Critical Literary Studies

P-ISSN: 2676-699X E-ISSN: 2716-9928

Vol. VII, No. 2, Series 14

Spring and Summer 2025

CLS ACADEMIC JOURNAL https://cls.uok.ac.ir

UNIVERSITY OF KURDISTAN https://uok.ac.ir

Article Type: Original Research

Page Numbers: 17-37

Article History:

Received: 28 April 2024

Accepted: 17 September 2024

Published: 07 November 2024

DOI:

https://doi.org/10.22034/cls.2025.63763

Author Details:

1. Ph.D. Candidate of English Literature and Language, Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran. (Corresponding Author)
sareh.khosravi@yahoo.com

2. Professor of English Literature and Language, Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran.
mmarandi@ut.ac.ir

3. Assistant Professor of American Studies, Faculty of World Studies, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran.
ghasemitari@ut.ac.ir

A Decolonial Study of Postethnic Illusions: Universality vs. Pluriversality in *Klara and the Sun* and *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*

Sareh Khosravi[1*]; Seyed Mohammad Marandi[2]; Zeinab Ghasemi Tari[3]

Abstract: Through a decolonial approach, this study questions the concept of postethnicity, proposed by David Hollinger, arguing that Hollinger's vision of a rooted cosmopolitanism – a globally connected society built on shared values – is based upon narrow 'universal' values which solely align with Western standards. Decolonial critics like Walter D. Mignolo, in return, advocate for a 'pluriversal' world where multiple perspectives and voices coexist without being subsumed under a dominant Western narrative. The study uses two novels, Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* and Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, to illustrate this debate. It argues that Ishiguro's novel, while exploring universal themes, is ultimately rooted in a Western ethnocentric perspective, reflecting a zero-point view where Western paradigms are presented as global patterns. On the other hand, Roy's novel is situated in India, addressing local issues and challenging Western standards. The study concludes that Ishiguro's approach at best leads to rewesternization – a reassertion of Western perspectives even while attempting to move beyond them, while Roy's by integrating indigenous traditions, individual and local singularities, and global issues, contributes to the decolonization of Western paradigms advocating a pluriversal world where multiple voices are valued.

Keywords: Postethnicity; Decolonization; Universality; Pluriversality; Ethnocentrism; Rewesternization.

Citation: Khosravi, S. , , Marandi, S. M. , and Ghasemi Tari, Z. . "A Decolonial Study of Postethnic Illusions: Universality vs. Pluriversality in Klara and the Sun and The Ministry of Utmost Happiness", *Critical Literary Studies*, 7, 2, 2025, -. doi: 10.22034/cls.2025.63763

1. Introduction

There is a growing assumption that our world today is characterized by hybridity and multiple identities, where the rigid classifications of race, sex, and class are dissolving, leading us towards a post-ethnic and cosmopolitan society. Arthur Schlesinger, a well-known American historian and social commentator, argues that focusing on ethnicity not only diverts attention from important issues but also exacerbates existing problems. He contends that the recent emphasis on ethnicity, regardless of race, has revived the notion that American society is increasingly divided along ethnic lines and that this fixation on ethnicity amplifies distinctions, fosters animosity, and deepens divisions among different racial and national groups (102). David Hollinger shares a perspective akin to Arthur Schlesinger's in his *Postethnic America* (1995). Hollinger posits that postethnicity represents a shift in American identity construction, where conventional ethnic distinctions are blurred in favor of a greater emphasis on individuality and cultural diversity. However, despite this growing hybridity and interconnectedness, many decolonial critics such as Mignolo and Grosfoguel put into question the universality on which such postists' claims are based. The decolonial critics blame colonialism and believe that the legacy of colonialism, with its power imbalances and structures of dominance, continues to shape our world. Even as we see increased cultural exchange and the blurring of traditional boundaries, the West's influence remains deeply ingrained in our systems of knowledge, power, and representation. (Grosfoguel, "Structure of Knowledge" 74). The Western expansion since the sixteenth century has been portrayed by English colonial theorists as the fulfillment of a "universal mission" (Marandi and Shadpour 49), a grand narrative that has largely been put into question due to the imposition of Western values and systems onto other cultures and societies. This "universal mission" was a justification for the forced assimilation and subjugation of non-Western populations, often through violent means and exploitative practices.

Decolonial critics further argue that politics, economy, education, and media are still predominantly controlled by European and North-American elites. They contend that the Western philosophical tradition promotes an imperialist, authoritarian, racist, and sexist notion of the 'universal'. In response, they reject the limited concept of 'universal' and advocate for a different understanding of 'universal' that emerges from a different geopolitics and body-politics of knowledge, one that is 'pluri-versal' and originates from the Global South. This alternative perspective represents a more democratic and decolonial approach (Grosfoguel, "Decolonizing Western Universalisms" 100). While the West, throughout centuries, has tried to universalize its own idea of the world, the

pluriverse proposed by Arturo Escobar and developed by Mignolo, "inverts this seductive formula, suggesting pluriversality as a shared project based on a multiplicity of worlds and ways of worlding life" (Escobar 26).

This study argues that the fiction of Kazuo Ishiguro and Arundhati Roy can effectively demonstrate the contrasting perspectives in the ongoing debate. There are figures like Frederick Luis Almada who consider these two writers as belonging to the same category as in his *Postethnic Narrative Criticism* he grouped them together as belonging to "a late-twentieth-century British canon" (Aldama 28), but Kazuo Ishiguro and Arundhati Roy's worldviews, writing styles and narrative choices greatly differ. Ishiguro, who was born in Japan but raised in England, has been categorized in various ways throughout his career, including as a Japanese writer, a British or British-ethnic writer, a postcolonial writer, and even a "black British writer" (Skinner 129) and there are those who call him international and postethnic (Wong 7). However, he does not fit neatly into any of these categories. What sets Ishiguro apart as an ethnic writer is his deliberate detachment from ethnic matters. Unlike other writers, he has chosen to ignore his ethnic backgrounds and themes, instead focusing on writing about universal and humanistic issues. In an interview, Ishiguro expresses his desire to write a global novel that addresses broad topics rather than being confined to a narrow, parochial perspective (Bigsby 25). He emphasizes his interest in exploring "universal themes and humanist concerns" (Wong 3) in his work. Following his initial novels, *A Pale View of the Hills* (1982) and *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986), which were set in Japan with Japanese characters, Ishiguro shifted to English settings, explaining this shift by expressing his ambition to contribute to the creation of an international body of literature: "If the novel survives as an important form into the next century, it will be because writers have succeeded in creating a body of literature that is convincingly international. It is my ambition to contribute to it" (qtd in Sim 20). However, Ishiguro's subsequent novel, *The Remains of the Day* (1989), cannot be considered truly global. It is distinctly English, much like his first two novels were Japanese.

Arundhati Roy, an Indian novelist and political activist, began her career as a novelist with *The God of Small Things* (1997), but there was a twenty-year gap before she published her second novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017). During this time, she focused on writing essays about her native land, specifically addressing topics such as on "the rise of nationalist propaganda, the persistence of ethnic conflicts, the climate of religious intolerance, the constant violation of human and civil rights, and the exploitation of the environment" (Monaco 67). The current research argues that Roy's

emphasis on indigenous traditions and global issues serves as a contrast to Ishiguro's universality. Among the works of the two writers, the current study chooses Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* (2021) and Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) for the following reasons. Firstly, the two mentioned novels are the most recent fiction the two writers have written, enabling the researchers to have access to the freshest worldviews of the two novelists. Secondly, Ishiguro's disembodied universalism and Roy's employment of indigenous culture and diversity are more pronounced in the selected novels. By investigating the aforementioned novels, the study claims that Ishiguro's use of universal and humanistic themes, along with his postethnic stance, is rooted in Western ethnocentrism. On the other hand, Roy's choice in highlighting indigenous culture and tradition, in addition to addressing global issues, aligns more with the decolonization of Western knowledge.

2. Literature Review

Several scholars have examined Ishiguro's tendency to downplay his Anglo-Japanese heritage and his exploration of universal themes. Sheng-mei Ma, in "Kazuo Ishiguro's Persistent Dream for Postethnicity: Performance in Whiteface" (1999), argues that Ishiguro's characters, particularly in *The Remains of the Day* and *The Unconsoled*, serve as a reaction to readers' ethnic stereotypes stemming from his previous "Japanese" novels. Ma posits that this suppression of ethnicity and denial of emotions reflect Ishiguro's own anxieties about identity, ultimately hindering his ability to truly transcend ethnicity (72). Chu-chueh Cheng, in "Making and Marketing Kazuo Ishiguro's Alterity" (2005), further explores Ishiguro's efforts to position himself as a writer addressing universal human issues, highlighting the impact of his ethnicity on his identity and his shift towards more universal themes over time. However, neither Ma nor Cheng explicitly engage with the potential implications of this shift within a decolonial framework. Tingxuan Liu (2021), offers a nuanced perspective on Ishiguro's cosmopolitanism, arguing that it is characterized by ambivalence. Liu suggests that Ishiguro's reluctance to fully engage with the complexities of different cultures reveals his negotiation and resistance as a cosmopolitan writer, highlighting his deliberate de-privileging and cultural alienation. This expands the understanding of cosmopolitanism as a complex and dynamic process rather than a simplistic blend of identities (Liu 614). Shikhar and Ray, in "Role of 'Artificial' Hope at the Failure of Medical Science: A Study of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and The Sun*," focus on the novel's geographical setting, highlighting how Ishiguro presents a futuristic society where technology and capitalism create a stark divide between those who embrace the new order and those who resist it. This exploration of the future

reinforces Ishiguro's tendency to explore themes of technology, social change, and human connection.

Turning to Arundhati Roy, several scholars have examined her work through the lens of postcolonialism and decolonization. Nalini Iyer, in "Narrating a Fragmented Nation: Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*" (2018), argues that Roy aims to portray the history of a postcolonial nation through the lens of marginalized individuals, challenging the dominant narratives of nationhood and revealing the shortcomings of a secular democratic state (Iyer 163). Angelo Monaco, in "Arundhati Roy as a Transmodern Intellectual: Gender Troubles, Ethnic Conflicts and Vulnerable Ecology" (2019), examines Roy's fusion of anti-global activism and literary imagination, highlighting her transmodern intellectual perspective that engages with issues of gender, ethnicity, and ecology (Monaco 67). This study, in particular, provides a valuable framework for understanding Roy's decolonial project.

As far as Roy' use of English is concerned, there are researches that have focused on her unique use of hybrid language. Brigit Neumann (2021) analyzes the complex use of English in Roy's novel, highlighting its potential for both inclusion and exclusion. Neumann argues that Roy's deployment of multiple languages explores the challenges and limitations of representing marginalized worlds within a dominant language (Neumann 1). Qazalbash et al. (2023) further examine the inclusion of code mixing between Hindi-Urdu and English in Roy's *Ministry*, arguing that it serves as a means to challenge the dominance of Standard English and celebrate hybrid identities. Khosravi (2024), through a comparative study, has moved further by examining both Ishiguro and Roy's contrasting approaches to the English language. She argues that Ishiguro employs Standard English in *Klara and the Sun*, creating a novel that resonates easily with Western audiences and embodies a sense of universality. In contrast, Roy incorporates a hybrid form of English in her novel, infused with Indian cultural elements, fostering a sense of pluriversality that emphasizes diversity over a singular norm (Khosravi 265).

Among other comparative studies undertaken on the two novelists, Abu Baker and Almostafa (2015) explore the complexities of identity in *The Remains of the Day* and *The God of Small Things*, highlighting the struggles of characters to navigate societal constraints and embrace their uniqueness. They contrast Roy's characters who embrace their individuality despite hardship with Ishiguro's Stevens, who suffers due to his delayed moral realization and resistance to change (Abu Baker and Almostafa 50). This study, though, focuses solely on the texts and does not delve into the worldviews of the

two writers, which the present research aims to address. In another comparative study, Mrinalini Chakravorty (2015) contrasts Roy and Ishiguro's different ways of depicting dystopias. She categorizes Ishiguro's dystopias as distilling "the terrors of modern life onto a terribly estranged future time" (Chakravorty 268) while considers Roy's novels as belonging to postcolonial dystopias "not located in the future" (270).

Despite extensive research on Ishiguro and Roy, there are gaps that this study aims to address. Firstly, there has been no decolonial examination of Ishiguro's works, specifically questioning the universality of his themes. Secondly, postethnicity has always been considered as a positive concept while this research offers a critical perspective on it. In regard to Roy, most research focuses on postcolonial studies, neglecting her portrayal of pluriversal worlds. Therefore, this study aims to expand decolonial concepts to highlight her potential in depicting pluriversal worlds.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Postethnicity

Postethnicity emerged in the late 20th century in the United States as a response to the increasing diversity of society and the challenges posed by multiculturalism. According to Arthur Schlesinger the preoccupation with ethnicity accentuates differences, fosters resentment and hostility, and further divides races and nationalities. This ultimately leads to feelings of victimhood and isolation within one's own ethnic group (102). Critics like Schlesinger argue that without an emphasis on ethnicity, "we might again have the hopes of a society of free-thinking individuals who could rationally debate the public good" (qtd in Alcoff 100). Similar worldviews led to the publication of the cultural critic and historian David Hollinger's influential book, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (1995). Hollinger argues that postethnicity marked a new phase in American identity formation, characterized by the blending of traditional ethnic boundaries and an increasing focus on individual and cultural hybridity. It involved acknowledging the intricate and diverse nature of identity, and moving beyond the limited and localized ethnic identities that had historically shaped American society (115).

The notion of postethnicity became increasingly popular in the late 1990s and early 2000s, particularly within academic and cultural spheres. It was regarded as a means of transcending the divisive and essentialist aspects of conventional ethnic identities, and instead acknowledging the multifaceted and varied experiences of individuals and communities in modern society (Hollinger 11). Postethnicity was also linked to the

concept of cosmopolitanism, which highlights the significance of adopting a global viewpoint and acknowledging our shared humanity. It also "promotes multiple identities, stresses the dynamic and changing character of many groups, and is responsive to the potential for creating new cultural combinations." (Hollinger 2). Hollinger states that postethnicity is a "rooted cosmopolitanism" (6), because, according to him, "many of the great cosmopolitans of history have been proudly rootless. But postethnicity is the critical renewal of cosmopolitanism in the context of today's greater sensitivity to roots" (6). In this context, postethnicity entailed transcending limited and localized ethnic identities in favor of a broader and more inclusive sense of belonging that encompassed a universal perspective.

3.2. Decolonial Studies

Critics of postethnicity, particularly those aligned with decolonial theory, raise significant concerns about its emphasis on universality. According to decolonial theorists, such a notion of the universal is disembodied and "dissolves all particulars into the universal" (Grosfoguel, "Decolonizing Western Universalisms" 95). Important decolonial terms including pluriversality, rewesternization, Western ethnocentrism as put forth by Walter D. Mignolo and Serene Khader will be examined.

Pluriversality, as discussed by decolonial critics like Mignolo, challenges the universalist perspective that assumes there is only one legitimate way of knowing, existing, and organizing society. (Mignolo, *Local Histories* xvi). Mignolo asserts that it is essential to recognize and validate the existence of diverse worldviews, knowledge systems, and cultural practices. According to decolonial thinkers, the colonial project enforced a singular Western-centric worldview, which resulted in the erasure and marginalization of alternative ways of knowing and existing (Grosfoguel, "Decolonizing Post-Colonial Studies" 4). In contrast, pluriversality acknowledges and appreciates the variety of knowledge and perspectives that exist within different cultures and societies.

To rebuild the confidence the world once had in the West is what Mignolo calls rewesternization (Mignolo, *Darker Side* 36). Mignolo laments that "rewesternization consists in the effort to re-inscribe European modernity's own tradition into the future (251). This concept encompasses not only political aspects but also economic, knowledge, and subjective dimensions, all working in unison to "maintain its leadership in international relations" (36). Mignolo describes 'rewesternization' as the process of reaffirming Western cultural, political, and economic dominance by imposing Western-centric ideologies, policies, and practices on non-Western societies. This involves the

dominance of Western power and influence, often to the detriment of non-Western cultures and perspectives (36).

Ethnocentrism, according to Khader, means judging others based on the "moral standards of one's own culture. Ethnocentric judgments always run the risk of being morally arbitrary, because ethnocentrists refuse to raise questions about whether what is culturally familiar is genuinely morally important" (Khader 30). Ethnocentrism does not regard the Westerners as "objects of normative scrutiny" (22) because the Western Man is seen as the criterion beyond the prying eyes of the critic or the inspector. This lack of critical examination from within the Western cultural context can lead to a perpetuation of ethnocentric attitudes and a reluctance to acknowledge the validity of alternative moral viewpoints. The inherent bias in ethnocentrism, rooted in the assumption of Western cultural superiority, hinders the development of a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of morality on a global scale.

4. Analysis

4.1. Illusive Postethnicity and Western Ethnocentrism in *Klara and the Sun*

In *Klara and the Sun*, Ishiguro has once again stuck to one of his favorite tricks; that is evading the topic of ethnicity. His previous attempt was in *The Unconsoled* where the reader was neither able to detect the nationality of the protagonist, Ryder, nor able to know in which country the events of the story were set. Choosing the protagonist of *Klara and the Sun* as an AF, Ishiguro has further proved to evade the topic of ethnicity since dealing with an AI does not require involving the topic of ethnicity. Klara is not defined by her ethnicity or cultural background, but rather by her ability to connect with others on an emotional level.

Ishiguro has tended toward Hollinger's postethnicity which involves acknowledging the intricate and diverse nature of identity, and moving beyond the limited and localized ethnic identities that have historically shaped American society (Hollinger 115). The novel does not explicitly mention a specific location or cultural background which can narrow-mindedly be passed as universal. Although Ishiguro has gone out of his way not to set *Klara and the Sun* in a particular geographical space and although insisting that he has an urge to write a novel which "is not in any sense parochial" (qtd in Bigsby 25), he justifies his choice of an American setting in one of his interviews: "I thought America was a more suitable place because many of these innovations are coming from America, but also because it's a country that's always trying to reorganize itself" (Ishiguro & Miller). Ishiguro's choice of setting not only

inadvertently favors American cultural and ethnic backgrounds but also redirects the reader's focus away from making ethnic judgments. This is because, by presenting America as a representative setting, Ishiguro implies that it can stand as a microcosm of the entire world. This approach shifts the reader's attention from considering the nuances of various ethnic backgrounds to a more generalized understanding that overlooks the complexities and diversity of global cultures.

Since its publication in 2021, much research has been done on *Klara and the Sun* but none has targeted the Western ethnocentric attitudes of its writer. The novel's portrayal of AI, particularly the AFs like Klara, reflects a Western-centric perspective on science and its implications. The novel subtly demonstrates the ethnocentric tendency to downplay religion, particularly in a non-Western context, reflecting the very critique Mignolo makes about secular epistemology eclipsing theological perspectives. As per Mignolo, secular epistemology asserted over theological one in the internal history of the West, discrediting "all non-Western epistemologies by inventing concepts such as tradition, myth, cosmologies, beliefs, etc." (Mignolo "Enduring Enchantment" 273). While Klara initially appears to be a devout believer, her understanding of religion is framed within a Western secular lens, inadvertently revealing the novel's underlying ethnocentric bias. Firstly, Klara's belief that the Sun can nourish and save humans stems from her own experience: "because we often couldn't see the Sun from mid-store, we'd grow weaker and weaker" (*Klara* 8). Since she draws energy from the Sun to function, she extrapolates this to humans, assuming the Sun holds a similar power. Over time, her conversations with the Sun evolve into prayers, performed within a worship structure. Klara designates a barn as her sacred space, as it allows her to be in close proximity to the Sun: "Please make Josie better. Just as you did Beggar Man" (*Klara* 125). Josie's cure, though seemingly miraculous, is explained away by Klara's naive belief in the Sun, minimizing the potential for any spiritual dimension to the event. Klara's faith is ultimately dismissed by Rick, a character presented as progressive and enlightened. He labels Klara's belief as "AF superstition. Something just to bring us good luck" (*Klara* 217).

This dismissal reinforces the Western perspective that religion is a relic of the past, a notion that reinforces the dominance of secular values. Secondly, Klara's faith in the Sun, viewed as a deity, stems from a misunderstanding of natural processes. Her belief that the Sun provides "nourishment" to both humans and the natural world echoes the Western scientific view of the Sun as a source of energy, not a divine entity: "When I looked over to the spot where Beggar Man and the dog had died, I saw they weren't dead

at all – that a special kind of nourishment from the Sun had saved them" (*Klara* 32). Ishiguro's seemingly innocent portrayal of Klara's faith, while appearing empathetic, unwittingly perpetuates the ethnocentric view of religion as flawed, irrational, and ultimately replaceable by scientific understanding.

The names given to characters in *Klara and the Sun* reflect a Western influence, with names like Klara, Josie, Rick, Chrissie, Paul, Rosa, Helen, etc. being commonly associated with Western cultures. While these names may seem innocuous at first glance, they serve to anchor the narrative within a specific cultural context that is distinctly Western, potentially alienating readers from non-Western backgrounds. The choice of names can subtly inform readers not only about the characters' identities but also about what one expects from them. For instance, basically Klara as an AF should not belong to a particular ethnic background but her Western name invites the reader to consider her an American like the rest of the characters. Moreover, Helen and Rick come from a different background than the rest of the characters as they are British but their names does not make them any different from the rest of the characters. "And why do you keep saying I'm English? I've never actually lived there, you know that […] But why would an English person know any more than anyone else?'" (*Klara* 129). Ishiguro's use of Western names, thus, serves to create a sense of universality that aligns more closely with a homogenized worldview than with the principles of decoloniality that advocate for pluriversality or "a world which many worlds would coexist" (Mignolo, *Darker Side* 209).

In addition to the names of characters reflecting a Western influence, the language used throughout the novel further supports the idea of a Western-centric perspective. The language an author employs in their novel is instrumental in shaping the reader's experience and understanding of the text, often serving as a vehicle for deeper thematic messages. In *Klara and the Sun*, Ishigur's choice to utilize standard English is particularly noteworthy. He employs standard English throughout the novel, deliberately avoiding any traces of hybrid language. This choice "reflects his intention to appeal to a universal readership, while also acknowledging that the Western reader often serves as a dominant force in the literary world" (Khosravi, "Standard English" 267-268) and underscores the familiarity and accessibility of the story to Western readers. The only potential exception to this accessible language is the term "Cootings Machine." Klara, the protagonist, encounters this term and interprets it as related to road work equipment: "I named it that in my mind because it had 'Cootings' in big letters across its side" (*Klara* 25). However, "Cootings" refers merely to the brand name of the machine, devoid of any implications of hybrid cultures.

4.2. Rewesternization in *Klara and the Sun*

In spite of the above-mentioned ethnocentric streaks in the novel, one cannot ignore that Ishiguro is still preoccupied with questioning Western ways of life as he deals with the issues of 'the other' and 'discrimination' manifested in the characters of Klara, Josie and Rick. However, these criticisms, as the paper asserts, do not negate his ethnocentric attitudes, as they ultimately lead to what Mignolo calls rewesternization. After illustrating manifestations of discrimination, the study will show how these criticisms merely create a new Western society. For instance, Klara is inherently different from human beings. She grapples with her own identity and struggles to navigate a world where she is marginalized due to her non-human status. When Klara and Josie's father first meet, Chrissie asks the father to say hello to Klara and the father responds: "Part of the family. Is that what you're saying?" (*Klara* 144). Somewhere else, Klara faces ridicule because of her status as a B2 model of AF and not a B3: "You're not a B3, right?' Danny asked […] Then another voice asked: 'Why didn't you get a B3, Josie?" (60-61).

A significant manifestation of discrimination, though, happens due to the upliftment. "In the world of *Klara and the Sun*, most wealthy families pay to have their children "lifted," a genetic engineering procedure that enhances academic performance without which there are minimal educational and professional opportunities" (Hui and Ping 39). Josie has an unknown illness which has been caused by the upliftment. "Her walk […] was fragile, and she made no fuss about receiving Melania Housekeeper's support" (*Klara* 64). Her condition sets her apart from her peers and influences her educational experience, primarily conducted online. She also is not allowed to go the waterfalls with her mother and Klara due to the illness. "Well, it's simple. Josie's too sick to go. She might have told us that earlier, but she chose not to. Okay, so she stays behind" (*Klara* 63). This isolation from other children underscores the impact of her illness on her social interactions and the challenges she faces in finding acceptance. Rick experiences marginalization and neglect due to his lack of being lifted. Unlike the other children who undergo the costly process of genetic enhancement, Rick remains unaltered. This results in limited educational prospects for him, as lifting is seen as a requirement for admission to most colleges. The "society is currently making a grave error in not allowing those talents to come to full fruition" (*Klara* 155) The extent of this discrimination becomes apparent during a gathering where Rick becomes a target of mockery for not being lifted: "I'd never lend you anything. Why would I? You shouldn't even be here" (63). As per Shikhar and Ray, the novel illustrates a hierarchical distinction between the uplifted and non-uplifted children, akin to a class structure. In this context, the concept of 'upliftment'

is closely linked to achievement and financial prosperity, serving as the foundational element or 'base'. Other aspects such as social status, access to higher education, and similar factors are depicted as the 'superstructure' within the societal framework, mirroring a Marxian interpretation of society (Shikhar & Ray 1013). Additionally, Ishiguro has situated the story in a fictional urban setting within the United States, described as a marketplace for French goods, with a central capitalist influence (1012).

This consumer society attempts to establish a distinct "upper" that promotes artificial rather than natural selection. Ishiguro disrupts the norm and seeks to portray the world in a fresh light. In this anticipated new world, human nature is characterized by self-centered and utilitarian instincts, compelling individuals to adhere to harsh survival laws reminiscent of the jungle (Hui and Ping 40). As Mignolo points out, one of the tasks of rewesternization in the sphere of economy is "to save capitalism, to re-imagine the future of capitalism" (*Darker Side* 36). Ishiguro's criticism of the Western society follows rewesternization or the reestablishment of a new Western society rather than following decolonization or departure from Western standards. Ishiguro is still at the service of the Western way of life and, as Mignolo further points out, he merely changes the content of the conversation rather than the terms (122).

4.3. Pluriversality in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*

According to Roy, "if a novel can have an enemy, then the enemy of this novel is the idea of one nation, one religion, one language" ("Lecture"). *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is a novel that embraces pluriversality through its exploration of diverse perspectives, intersectional identities, and the celebration of local cultures. Set in India, the story follows a multitude of characters from marginalized communities, including Hijra individuals (a distinctive South Asian sexual form known for their gender and sexual difference), Dalits (the lowest stratum of the castes in the Indian subcontinent) and Kashmiris. It also addresses global issues such as political unrest and environmental degradation, connecting local struggles to broader concerns. Roy disrupts Western literary conventions, incorporating elements non-linear storytelling to offer alternative narratives. By amplifying marginalized voices, emphasizing solidarity, and advocating for justice, the novel promotes a more inclusive and diverse understanding of the world.

Roy has put a character at the center of her novel who is strongly linked to South Asian and more specifically Indian traditions. Hijras are distinct social and cultural groups in South Asia, particularly in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. They are often referred to as a third gender, as they do not fit into the binary categorizations of male or

female. Hijras have been a part of South Asian society for centuries and have a unique cultural and social role. Anjum, the protagonist of the novel, "was a rare example of a Hermaphrodite, with both male and female characteristics, though outwardly, the male characteristics appeared to be more dominant" (*Ministry* 15).

Anjum's choice to move on to Khwabgah and later on to the graveyard represents a rejection of Western standards of validation and acceptance. Instead of seeking approval or taking shelter in Western countries who support such fluidities, Anjum finds solace and strength within her own local context. By choosing to create her own community within the graveyard (Jannat Guest House), Anjum demonstrates a commitment to finding local solutions to her problems. "Gradually Jannat Guest House became a hub for Hijras who, for one reason or another, had fallen out of, or been expelled from, the tightly administered grid of Hijra Gharanas" (*Ministry* 39). She forges connections with others who have also been marginalized by society, forming a network of support and resilience that is rooted in their shared experiences and cultural context.

Anjum's identity and experiences are presented in a way that challenges the dominant colonial discourses. For instance, when Anjum establishes the "Jannat Guest House" (39) in a graveyard, it can be seen as an act of reclaiming space traditionally associated with death and exclusion (*Ministry* 34). But she makes it a place of life and inclusion. This act of resistance and reclamation aligns with decolonial principles, as it challenges the colonial imposition of norms and reclaims agency over one's own body and space.

Roy embraces local cultures, traditions, and languages throughout the narrative. By incorporating indigenous traditions, folklore, and local languages, the novel challenges the homogenizing tendencies of Western cultural dominance. Arundhati Roy's use of the Indian dish "khichdi" at the beginning of the novel goes beyond mere food description, serving as a potent metaphor that resonates differently for Indian and Western readers. In the passage, "'You mean I've made a khichdi of their story?' she asked," (Roy, 2017, p. 9), "khichdi" carries a deeper, contextual significance. While Indian readers might readily grasp its implications of a messy or convoluted mixture, Western readers might require further exploration to understand its symbolic weight. This linguistic subtlety embodies the concept of "pluriversality," highlighting the diverse cultural perspectives and interpretations that language can convey. By incorporating such culturally specific references, Roy not only enriches the narrative with cultural depth but also invites readers from different backgrounds to delve into and appreciate the multi-layered

meanings woven into the story. Also, at the beginning of the novel, there is reference to the story of Laila and Majnu, familiarizing the English reader with the eastern version of Romeo and Juliet. "In the English version of the story of Laila and Majnu, he said, Majnu was called Romeo and Laila was Juliet." (*Ministry* 9). This deliberate comparison not only enriches the readers' cultural understanding but also prompts a critical reflection on the dominance of Western literary traditions. By highlighting diverse cultural narratives, the novel challenges the notion that Western stories are the sole standard of literary excellence, inviting readers to explore and appreciate the richness of global storytelling traditions.

Near the end of the novel, a chapter is narrated from the point of view of 'The Landlord' who voices his interest in starting a yesteryear music channel on radio: "Naga would do the Western music, rock 'n' roll, blues, jazz, and I'd do world music. I have an interesting, and I believe excellent, collection of Afghan, Iranian and Syrian folk music." (*Ministry* 200-201). Roy implicitly considers 'rock and roll' as Western music, while implying that music from Afghanistan, Iran and Syria are deemed to be world music. Here, the West has been limited to its own local culture and has not been extended to the whole world. Additionally, the later choices have not been considered as Eastern music, but rather as belonging to the whole world, as if they are the center of the world.

Roy uses language as a tool for resistance and pluriversality. The inclusion of local languages, dialects, and slang adds depth and authenticity to the narrative, challenging the dominance of English as a global language and asserting the importance of linguistic diversity. The novel is full of non-English words which encourages the English reader to look them up in the dictionary. Words like 'Hijra', 'Khwabgah', 'Majnu', 'Khuda', 'Masjid', 'Jihad' and 'Dargah' (Qazalbash et.al 54) are only a few examples of non-English terms in the novel. As Neumann has pointed out, Roy has also tried to use nouns as verbs (for example, 'warehoused' (58), 'ghettoized' (15), 'double-deckered' (319)), and adjectives as nouns (for example 'stupidification' (371) (Neumann 13). Neumann continues that "the inscription of India's vernaculars into English makes ex-centric, often ignored characters audible, thus enabling more open understandings of the world" (14).

The novel also challenges traditional narrative structures, embracing a non-linear approach that reflects the fragmented and diverse reality of human experiences. The novel jumps between time periods and locations, weaving together multiple storylines and perspectives, mirroring the complexity and interconnectedness of life. This fragmented structure, as Nalini Iyer argues, is a deliberate rejection of Western literary

forms that have been adapted and developed by Indian writers (Iyer 171). Roy, in Iyer's view, believes that the current state of nations necessitates new literary forms that amplify diverse voices and resist the dominance of a single narrative. *Ministry*, with its exploration of both justice and innovative storytelling, exemplifies this commitment (172).

Ministry skillfully weaves together a tapestry of diverse perspectives, amplifying the voices of characters hailing from varied backgrounds, ethnicities, and social strata. This inclusive approach not only enriches the narrative but also enables a nuanced exploration of different realities and experiences, effectively challenging the hegemony of a singular narrative. Characters such as Anjum, Tilo, Musa, Garson Hobart, and a myriad of other minor figures, each grappling with their own forms of neglect, collectively embody the multifaceted viewpoints present in the novel. Joy elucidates the narrative structure, noting the transition from a third-person omniscient narrator in the initial half of the story, focusing on Anjum's life, to a shift in perspective with Biplab Das taking on the role of the narrator in the latter part, initially introduced as "The Landlord" and later revealed as Hobart Garson (20). This narrative technique not only underscores the complexity of the characters but also underscores the intricate layers of storytelling employed in *Ministry*, inviting readers to delve deeper into the intricacies of each character's journey and the interconnectedness of their experiences.

While rooted in the local context of India, the novel also addresses global issues such as political unrest, human rights violations, and environmental degradation. Roy connects the local struggles to broader global concerns, emphasizing the interconnectedness of different struggles and the need for collective action. Roy questions the disembodied universality of human rights through a character called Amrik Singh: "The people he didn't just disrespect but truly despised were human rights activists […]. To him, they were vermin who spoiled and distorted the rules of engagement of the great game with their constant complaints and whining" (*Ministry* 159). Singh perceives these activists as hindrances to the established norms and practices, believing that they disrupt the dynamics of what he considers to be a significant and strategic "game". By characterizing human rights activists as "vermin" who disrupt the rules of engagement, Roy prompts readers to contemplate the inherent tensions between universal principles of human rights and the practical realities of power dynamics and strategic interests.

The novel also addresses environmental degradation as the following excerpts show: "Plumes of black smoke climbed into the sky from the fires all over the city" (*Ministry*

76). Or "The newspapers were full of accounts of people trying to flee the poisonous cloud that pursued them, their eyes and lungs on fire" (76). Roy laments over destructive impacts of development and industrialization on marginalized communities. By highlighting the ecological struggles faced by communities affected by large-scale projects, she connects local struggles for justice to broader environmental concerns. Furthermore, Roy's exploration of the ecological struggles faced by communities affected by large-scale projects goes beyond mere environmental concerns. By linking these local struggles for justice to broader environmental issues, she underscores the interconnectedness of social and environmental justice. This interconnected approach highlights the importance of recognizing and addressing the disproportionate burden of environmental harm borne by marginalized communities.

5. Conclusion

Through a decolonial analysis of Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* and Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, the study explored how their works reflect and challenge Western ethnocentric perspectives respectively. In *Klara and the Sun*, the protagonist is Klara, a robot with no specific ethnicity, representing a universalized figure devoid of cultural markers. This absence of ethnic identity allows for a more generalized and Western-centric interpretation of the story. On the other hand, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* centers around the protagonist Anjum, a hijra embedded in Indian culture. Anjum's character is firmly rooted in the local context, showcasing the rich cultural heritage and experiences of the hijra community in South Asia. The Western ethnocentric lens through which *Klara and the Sun* is presented is evident in the language, settings, and themes of the novel. The language employed in the book is standard English, with familiar terms and expressions that cater to Western readers. The story unfolds in a technologically advanced society that supposedly mirrors Western societies, focusing on themes such as artificial intelligence and ethics. While Ishiguro skillfully explores universal themes of love, acceptance, and the human condition, the narrative remains largely detached from specific cultural and regional contexts.

In contrast, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* immerses readers in the vibrant tapestry of Indian culture, with its rich traditions, religious diversity, and socio-political complexities. Roy's prose is infused with local languages, dialects, and cultural references, offering a more authentic and localized experience. Anjum's journey as a hijra and the exploration of themes such as gender identity, political activism, and social injustice are deeply intertwined with the Indian context. This localized approach allows

readers to engage with the complexities and nuances of Indian society, shedding light on the experiences of marginalized communities within the country.

The research concludes that while *Klara and the Sun* presents a universalized and ethnocentric perspective through its robot protagonist, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* by embracing the local and specific experiences of a hijra character within Indian society offers a pluriversal perspective. Ishiguro's Western-centric approach only achieves a very illusive postethnicity, one that, like Hollinger's, is based on a disembodied universalism. While his criticism of Western society remains valid, it inadvertently contributes to what Mignolo refers to as rewesternization, resulting in the creation of a new Western perspective. His ethnocentric viewpoint limits the transformative potential of his critique, as it merely changes the content of the conversation without challenging the underlying terms. As a result, Ishiguro's perspective remains linked to Western standards and fails to fully delink from western ethnocentric paradigms. In contrast, Roy's engagement with pluriversal elements facilitates decolonization and brings about a more profound transformation. Her works not only address local issues but also challenge Western norms by altering both the content and terms of the conversation to use Mignolo's terms. By embracing a pluriversal framework that embraces diverse perspectives and challenges the dominance of Western paradigms, Roy's writings actively contribute to the process of delinking from Western standards.

Funding:
There is no funding support.

Authors' Contribution:
The authors have written the article in a complete collaboration.

Conflict of Interests:
This research does not conflict with personal and/or organizational interests.

References

Abu Baker, Ahmad. M. S., Almostafa, Mohammad. "Resistance/Acceptance of Inferiority, Invisibility and Marginalization in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* & Kazu Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*." *Studies in Literature and Language*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 2015, pp. 50-58.

Alcoff, Linda. "Against Postethnic Futures." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy, New Series*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2004, pp. 99-117.

Aldama, Federick. Luis. *Postethnic Narrative Criticism*. Austin, University of Texas Press, 2003.

Bigsby, Christopher. "In Conversation with Kazuo Ishiguro." In *Conversations with Kazuo Ishiguro*, edited by Brian Shaffer and Cynthia Wong, Jackson, University of Mississippi Press, 2008, pp. 15-26.

Chakravorty, Mrinalini. "Of Dystopias and Deliriums: The Millennial Novel in India." In *A History of the Indian Novel in English*, edited by Ulka Anjaria, Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 267-281.

Cheng, Chu-chueh. "Making and Marketing Kazuo Ishiguro's Alterity." *Post identity*. Vol.4, No. 2, 2005. http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.pid9999.0004.202.

Escobar, Arturo. *Pluriversal Politics: The Real and the Possible*. Translated by David Frye, London, Duke University Press, 2020.

Grosfoguel, Ramon. "Decolonizing Post-Colonial Studies and Paradigms of Political-Economy: Transmodernity, Decolonial Thinking, and Global Coloniality." *TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, Vol.1, No.1, 2011. pp. 1-38. https://escholarship.org/uc/item/21k6t3fq.

---"Decolonizing Western Uni-versalisms: Decolonial Pluri-versalism from Aimé Césaire to the Zapatistas." *TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World,* Vol. 1, No.3, 2012, pp. 88-104.

---. "The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities: Epistemic Racism/Sexism, Westernized Universities and the Four Genocides/Epistemicides of the Long 16th Century." *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge,* vol. 1, no. 1, 2013, pp. 73-90.

Hollinger, David. *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism*. New York, Basic Books, 1995.

Hui, Liu. & Yan Ping. "Analysis of Klara and the Sun from the Perspective of Defamiliarization". *Higher Education of Social Science*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2021, pp. 39-42.

Ishiguro, Kazuo. *A Pale View of the Hills*. London, Faber and Faber, 1982.

---. *An Artist of the Floating World*. London, Faber and Faber, 1986.

---. *The Remains of the Day*. New York, Vintage, 1989.

---. *The Unconsoled*. London, Faber and Faber, 1995.

---. *Klara and the Sun*. New York, Penguin Random House, 2021.

Ishiguro, Kazuo and Madeline Miller. "New & Noted with Kazuo Ishiguro, in conversation with Madeline Miller at Pittsburgh Arts & Lectures." Pittsburgh Arts & Lectures, [April 15, 2021], https://www.pghcitypaper.com/arts-entertainment/a-conversation-with-kazuo-ishiguro-on-latest-novel-klara-and-the sun.

Iyer, Nalini. "Narrating a Fragmented Nation: Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*". *Revista Canaria De Estudios Ingleses*, Vol. 76, No.12, 2018, pp. 163-73.

Joy, Ann. Theres. "Seaming a Shattered Story: Roy's Narrative Patterns in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*". *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*, Vol. 6, No. 12, 2018, pp. 20-23.

Khader, Serene J. *Decolonizing Universalism: A Transnational Feminist Ethic*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2019.

Khosravi, Sareh. "*Disnarration* in Kazuo Ishiguro's The Remains of the Day", *K@ta*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 2022, pp. 22-28.

Khosravi, Sareh. "Standard English vs. Hybrid English in Kazuo Ishiguro's Klara and the Sun and Arundhati Roy's The Ministry of Utmost Happiness". Иностранные языки в странах Азии и Африки: Коллективная монография, Moscow, March 15. Edited by M.B. Vorontsova, T.L. Kononova and O. A. Pavlovskaya, КДУ Publishing House, 2024. pp. 265-273. Khosravi, Sareh and Behzad Barekat. "The Suppression of meaning in Kazuo Ishiguro's The Remains of the Day", *Language Art*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 2020, pp. 97-114.

Liu, Tingxuan. "Ambivalence of Cosmopolitanism: A Study of Kazuo Ishiguro's Writing". *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 2-21, pp. 611-615.

Ma, Sheng-mei. "Kazuo Ishiguro's Persistent Dream for Postethnicity: Performance in Whiteface." *Post-Identity,* Vol. 2, No. 1, 1999, 71-88.

Marandi, Seyed Mohammad and Reyhaneh Sadat Shadpour. "Christianity as an Ideological Instrument: A postcolonial reading of Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God*". *African Journal of History and Culture*. Vol. 3, No. 4, 2011, pp. 48-53.

Mignolo, Walter. D. *Local histories/global designs: Coloniality, subaltern knowledges, and border thinking*. Princton, Princeton University Press. 2000.

---. "Enduring Enchantment: Secularism and the Epistemic Privileges of Modernity." In *Postcolonial Philosophy of Religion*, edited by P. Bilimoria and A.B. Irvine, Springer, Dordrecht. 2009. pp. 273-292. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-481-2538-8_15

---. *The Darker Side of Modernity*. Durham, Duke University Press, 2011.

Monaco, Angelo. "Arundhati Roy as a Transmodern Intellectual. Gender Troubles, Ethnic Conflicts and Vulnerable Ecology." *Anglistica AION*, Vol 23, No. 2, 2019, pp. 67-81.

Neumann, Brigit. "An ocean of languages? Multilingualism in Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*". *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, Vol. 58, No. 3, 2021, pp. 1-17.

Qazalbash, Farwa, Irfan, Humaira and Zehra Batool. "Hybridisation and Lexical Variation: An In-depth Analysis of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*". *Linguistics and Literature Review*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2023, pp. 47-73.

Roy, Arundhati. *The God of Small Things*. New York, Random House, 1997.

---. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. London, Penguin, 2017.

---. "In what language does rain fall over tormented cities? The W. G. Sebald Lecture on Literary Translation." *British Centre for Literary Translation and the National Centre for Writing, 5 June. 2018. British Library, London, Lecture.*

Schlesinger, Arthur M., Jr. *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society*. New York, W.W. Norton, 1991.

Shikhar, Divya and Kasturi Sinha Ray. "Role of 'Artificial' Hope at the Failure of Medical Science: A Study of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and The Sun*." Journal of Pharmaceutical Negative Results. Vol. 3, No. 8, 2022, pp. 1012-1015.

Skinner, John. "Black British Interventions." In: *A Companion to the British and Irish Novel 1945–2000*, edited by Brian W. Shaffer, New Jersey, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005, pp. 128-143.

Wong, Cynthia, F. *Kazuo Ishiguro*. Devon, Northcote House Publishers, 2000.