

**MECHANISMS OF EPISTEMIC VIOLENCE IN R.F. KUANG'S
*BABEL, OR THE NECESSITY OF VIOLENCE***

THESIS

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM MALANG
2026**

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THESIS

Presented to:

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Sarjana Sastra (S.S.)

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2026**

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I state that the thesis entitled **Mechanisms of Epistemic Violence in R.F. Kuang's *Babel, or the Necessity of Violence*** is my original work. I do not include any materials previously written or published by another person, except those cited as references and written in the bibliography. Hereby, if there is any objection or claim, I am the only person who is responsible for that

Malang, 17 June 2026
The Researcher



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APPROVAL SHEET

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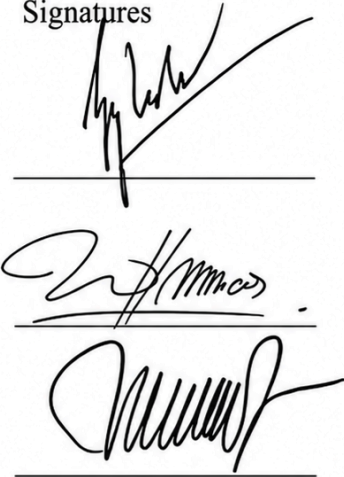
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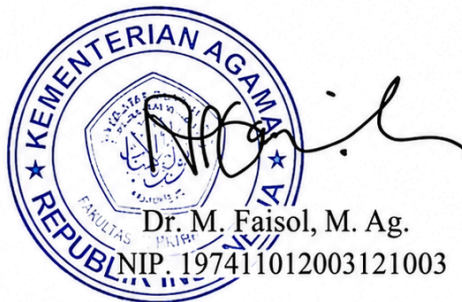
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MOTTO

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا ﴿٥﴾ إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا ﴿٦﴾

"tuhan berjanji; bersama kesulitan ada kemudahan." (QS. Al-Insyirah (94): 5–6)

مَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَلْتَمِسُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ بِهِ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ

"barangsiapa yang menempuh suatu jalan untuk mencari ilmu, maka Allah akan memudahkan baginya jalan menuju surga." (HR. Muslim)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ إِذَا عَمَلٌ أَحَدُكُمْ عَمَلًا أَنْ يُتْقِنَهُ

"sesungguhnya Allah mencintai seseorang yang apabila ia mengerjakan suatu pekerjaan, ia menyempurnakannya." – H.R Al-Baihaqi

Proud of me and my short list of accomplishments
Me and my lack of new news
Me and my selfishness
Me and myself
Wish you nothing but a happy new version of you

"bangga kepadaku, atas pencapaianku yang sedikit, aku dan sedikit ilmuku, aku dan egoku, aku dan diriku, tak mengharapkan apapun selain versi dirimu yang lebih bahagia." – Happiness by Rex Orange County

Good times for a change
See, the luck I've had
Can make a good man turn bad
So please, please, please
Let me, let me, let me
Let me get what I want this time

"terus-menerus gagal dan hanya berharap agar kali ini hidup akhirnya memberiku kebahagiaan yang layak aku dapatkan." – Please, please, please, Let me get what I want by The Smith

Writing a thesis is like translating a soul;
it is tedious, painful, but in the end
it makes the silence speak

"perjalanan akademik tak lepas dari malas dan pedih. Menjadikannya mulia karena mengubah kerja kerasmu menjadi suara yang bermakna." (Anonim)

DEDICATION

A journey is never short of obstacles. Behind each of these obstacles lie the prayers, support, and presence of people who have ensured that I never feel alone.

With deep gratitude, I dedicate this work to:

1. *Alm. Bunda Evi, Ayah Nanang, Ibuk Ida, Adik Fidya, Bu. Farida* and all members of the extended families of *Bani Su'ud, Bani Ismad, and Bani Anshori*. Thank you for your sincere love, unceasing prayers, and countless acts of patience and sacrifice. Your support has guided every step of my journey, and the trust you have given me.
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4. Finally, to myself. Thank you for persevering through all the challenges, staying consistent, and keeping moving forward even when it wasn't always easy. All the effort, doubts, and struggles I've gone through have finally led me to this point. Gotchuuu S.S!!

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The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the support, guidance, and contributions of many individuals. Therefore, with sincere respect and gratitude, the author would like to express appreciation to:

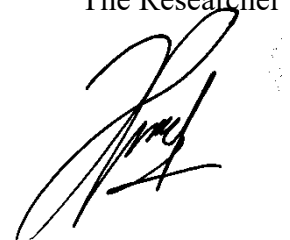
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The author also extends sincere thanks to all individuals who have contributed, directly or indirectly, to the completion of this thesis, whose names cannot be mentioned one by one. Every form of support has been meaningful throughout this journey. The author realizes that this thesis is not without limitations. Therefore, any shortcomings remain the sole responsibility of the author. It is hoped that this thesis will provide meaningful contributions to readers and future researchers. *Aamiin ya Rabbal 'Alamin.*

Wassalamu'alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

Malang, 17 June 2026
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ABSTRACT

Al Firdaus, Fadel Mochamad (2026) *Mechanisms of Epistemic Violence in R.F. Kuang's Babel, or the Necessity of Violence*. Undergraduate Thesis. Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Advisor Whida Rositama, M.Hum.

Key Words: Epistemic Violence, Postcolonial, Spivak, *Babel*, Colonialism.

This study falls under the category of literary criticism, employing a postcolonial approach. It examines R.F. Kuang's 2022 novel *Babel, or the Necessity of Violence*, as its object of study. The novel explores how colonial power operates through knowledge, language, and institutions. In line with this, the concept of epistemic violence introduced by Spivak (1988) in her essay "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" provides a clear theoretical framework to describe the phenomena occurring within this narrative. Therefore, this study aims to examine how the mechanisms of epistemic violence operate in the novel *Babel*. Furthermore, this study employs the close reading method to collect textual data, which are then analyzed into three mechanisms of epistemic violence adapted from Spivak's framework: colonial identity formation, extraction of indigenous knowledge and credit erasure, and delegitimization of the subaltern voice. The research findings indicate that these three elements operate in a way that systematically reinforces one another, thereby creating epistemic violence. In other words, institutional power enforces the construction of an inferior colonial identity, which in turn triggers the extraction and appropriation of knowledge without recognition, ultimately causing voices of resistance to emerge yet remain invalid and illegitimate because the system is fully aware of and deliberately constructs such conditions. Through these specific findings, this study concludes that epistemic violence in *Babel* is systematically institutionalized, demonstrating how academic institutions exploit and mask colonial subjugation under the guise of objective and neutral knowledge production.

ثحبال صلختسم

الفردوس، فضل محمد (٢٠٢٦). *Mechanisms of Epistemic Violence in R.F. Kuang's Babel, or the Necessity of Violence*. رسالة جامعية. قسم الأدب الإنجليزي، كلية العلوم الإنسانية، جامعة مولانا مالك إبراهيم الإسلامية الحكومية بمالانج. المشرفة: ويدا روسيتاما، الماجستير في العلوم الإنسانية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العنف المعرفي، ما بعد الاستعمار، سببفاك، *Babel*، الاستعمار.

تندرج هذه الدراسة ضمن فئة النقد الأدبي، وتعتمد منهج ما بعد الاستعمار. إذ تتخذ من رواية *Babel, or the Necessity of Violence* الصادرة عام ٢٠٢٢ للكاتبة ر. ف. كوانغ موضوعاً للدراسة. وتستكشف الرواية كيفية عمل السلطة الاستعمارية من خلال المعرفة واللغة والمؤسسات. وانسجاماً مع ذلك، يوفّر مفهوم العنف المعرفي الذي قدّمته سببفاك (١٩٨٨) في مقالها "Can the Subaltern Speak?" إطاراً نظرياً واضحاً لوصف الظواهر التي تجري في هذه السردية. وعليه، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى فحص كيفية اشتغال آليات العنف المعرفي في رواية *Babel*. علاوة على ذلك، تعتمد الدراسة أسلوب القراءة المعمّقة (close reading) لجمع البيانات النصية، والتي تُحلّل بعد ذلك في ضوء ثلاث آليات للعنف المعرفي مُستوحاة من إطار سببفاك النظري، وهي: تشكيل الهوية الاستعمارية، واستخراج المعرفة المحلية ومحو الاعتراف بأصحابها، وإزالة شرعية صوت التابع. وقد كشفت نتائج البحث أن هذه الآليات الثلاث تعمل بصورة منهجية يساند بعضها بعضاً، بما يؤدي إلى إنتاج العنف المعرفي. وبعبارة أخرى، تفرض السلطة المؤسسية تشكيل هوية استعمارية دونية، الأمر الذي يهيئ بدوره لانتزاع المعرفة والاستيلاء عليها دون الاعتراف بأصحابها، لينتهي الأمر بظهور أصوات المقاومة بوصفها أصواتاً غير صالحة وغير شرعية داخل النظام، لأن هذا النظام نفسه قد صُمم عمداً لإنتاج هذا الوضع واستدامته. ومن خلال هذه النتائج المحددة، تخلص الدراسة إلى أن العنف المعرفي في *Babel* قد تم تأسيسه بشكل منهجي، مما يوضح كيف توظّف المؤسسات الأكاديمية القمع الاستعماري وتخفيه تحت ستار إنتاج المعرفة الموضوعية والمحايدة.

ABSTRAK

Al Firdaus, Fadel Mochamad (2026) *Mechanisms of Epistemic Violence in R.F. Kuang's Babel, or the Necessity of Violence*. Skripsi Sarjana. Jurusan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Ilmu Budaya, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Malang. Pembimbing: Whida Rositama, M.Hum.

Kata Kunci: Kekerasan Epistemik, Pasca-kolonial, Spivak, Babel, Kolonialisme.

Penelitian ini termasuk dalam kategori kritik sastra, dengan menggunakan pendekatan pascakolonial. Penelitian ini mengkaji novel karya R.F. Kuang tahun 2022 berjudul *Babel, or the Necessity of Violence* sebagai objek studinya. Novel ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana kekuasaan kolonial beroperasi melalui pengetahuan, bahasa, dan institusi. Sejalan dengan hal ini, konsep kekerasan epistemik yang diperkenalkan oleh Spivak (1988) dalam esainya “Can the Subaltern Speak?” memberikan kerangka teoretis yang jelas untuk menggambarkan fenomena yang terjadi dalam narasi ini. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana mekanisme kekerasan epistemik beroperasi dalam novel *Babel*. Selain itu, penelitian ini menggunakan metode pembacaan mendalam (close reading) untuk mengumpulkan data tekstual, yang kemudian dianalisis ke dalam tiga mekanisme kekerasan epistemik yang diadaptasi dari kerangka kerja Spivak: pembentukan identitas kolonial, ekstraksi pengetahuan lokal dan penghapusan kredit, serta penghapusan legitimasi suara subaltern. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ketiga elemen ini beroperasi secara sistematis saling memperkuat satu sama lain, sehingga menciptakan kekerasan epistemik. Dengan kata lain, kekuasaan kelembagaan memaksakan pembentukan identitas kolonial yang inferior, yang pada gilirannya memicu pengambilan dan perampasan pengetahuan tanpa pengakuan, hingga pada akhirnya menyebabkan suara perlawanan muncul namun tidak valid dan legit karena sistem sepenuhnya sadar dan mengonstruksi demikian. Melalui temuan-temuan spesifik ini, penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kekerasan epistemik di *Babel* telah dilembagakan secara sistematis, yang menunjukkan bagaimana lembaga-lembaga akademis memanfaatkan dan menyamarkan penindasan kolonial di balik kedok produksi pengetahuan yang objektif dan netral.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This section provides the foundation of the research. It begins with the background of the study, which presents the empirical phenomenon. The research question identifies the focus of the study. There are both theoretical and practical study objectives. Then, the researcher determines and establishes the scope and limitations of the Study. Finally, it ends with an explanation of the definition of the key term.

A. Background of the Study

In recent year, a surprising fact was revealed that artificial intelligence models such as ChatGPT produce responses that reflect Western values and cultures (Santurkar et al., 2023). This phenomenon shows that AI systems are deliberately trained using Western data through English, making English essential for global knowledge. Furthermore, Ramírez-Castañeda (2020) notes that 98% of global scientific publications are published in English, even though only about 18-20% of the world's population uses it as a first or second language, with native speakers comprising an even smaller fraction (Eberhard et al., 2024). This paradox aligns with Govender's (2023) statement on “Epistemic Colonialism.” A condition in which local, indigenous, and non-Western knowledge systems are marginalized by dominant languages and epistemologies (Govender, 2023). This is what Spivak (1988) has long identified as “Epistemic Violence.” A form of violence that works through control over discourse, language, and the legitimization of knowledge.

A similar phenomenon can also be found in Indonesia's own history. Fitzpatrick (2000) documents how “Balai Pustaka” (a colonial publishing institution) standardized the Riau version of Malay as the official language, discredited works that were considered a threat to power, and manipulated local literary production in order to instill Western values while suppressing nationalism. Thus, colonial power through control over knowledge did not inflict physical harm but rather redefined and suppressed any potential that could undermine its dominance. This practice proves what Phillipson (1992) calls “Linguistic Imperialism”, which is the domination of language maintained through structural and cultural inequality. Meighan (2023) states that the preference for colonial language and knowledge is a mechanism that perpetuates the colonial legacy to this day. Thus, from “Balai Pustaka” in the 20th century to AI algorithms in the 21st century, the mechanism remains the same. Those who control language control knowledge; those who control knowledge control discourse, and those who control discourse hold the reins of power.

These patterns of domination are related to the framework of postcolonialism as a critical reading of the colonial legacy. Within this framework, epistemic violence operates as the most subtle yet persistent mechanism, working through language, institutions, and the production of seemingly neutral knowledge. Through critical postcolonialism, literature often becomes a space where these representations are raised. R.F. Kuang's novel *Babel, or the Necessity of Violence* (2022) explicitly represents this mechanism through the narrative of the Oxford

Translation Institute as a center of colonial language, knowledge, and power. This magical realism novel is set in 19th-century England and tells the story of Robin, a Chinese child brought to England by Lovell to be educated and trained as a professional translator at the Royal Institute of Translation. This institution recruits translators from many colonized countries based on their talent and proficiency in their native languages. Eventually, they come to realize the “dark academia” operating behind the seemingly neutral institution, which exploits and manipulates knowledge as an instrument of colonial power. On that basis, the translators launched a revolutionary movement against the dominant system, a struggle that ultimately cost them their lives.

This narrative describes a form of invisible violence constructed in the name of knowledge by colonial institutions. To gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, this study is centered on the concept of epistemic violence introduced by Gayatri C. Spivak in “*Can the Subaltern Speak?*” This concept refers to a form of violence that silences and reduces subaltern knowledge through the ruling colonial regime (Spivak, 1988). This form of violence does not work physically but through discourse in the form of structured policies that limit and marginalize access to knowledge. As emphasized in the studies by Zembylas (2024) and Balarin (2024), this concept also explains how the colonial knowledge regime positions the Global South as an object of study rather than as a contributor to the production of knowledge itself. Building on this framework, this study aims to examine how the mechanisms of epistemic violence operate within R.F. Kuang's *Babel, or the*

Necessity of Violence, through a postcolonial literary criticism approach grounded in Spivak's theoretical lens.

A number of previous studies have shown how colonial power was maintained through language, translation practices, and knowledge regimes. Mondo (2022) examines British linguistic colonialism in Ireland and India, arguing that language-based colonial education created a social hierarchy that benefited the empire. Ahmad et al. (2023) examine the colonial translation of Kirmani's *History of Tipu Sultan* and demonstrate that translation is a device that transforms local historiography into colonial discourse. Conceptually, Brunner (2021) defines epistemic violence as a structural mechanism that regulates knowledge in academic and political fields, while De Schryver (2021) views practices of representation and attribution in language as forms of epistemic silencing of marginalized groups. Furthermore, Zembylas (2025) highlights the link between epistemic violence and affective injustice in higher education institutions that still operate within Eurocentrism. The common thread in all of these studies lies in how the production of knowledge (language, translation, and institutional) marginalizes non-Western voices. However, these studies have not yet mapped the mechanisms of epistemic violence in literary texts.

On the other hand, several studies have analyzed *Babel* through postcolonial and translation studies. Stein (2023) emphasizes how *Babel* reveals the "arcane history" of colonialism through silver-working and translation as forms of commodified intellectual labor. Ribeiro (2024) views the Oxford Translation

Institute as an epistemic power machine that regulates the flow of knowledge between Britain and its colonies. ElZayat (2024) uses the lens of character development to reveal the psychology and language of violence in *Babel*. Teliban (2025) explores the themes in the novel with narratology studies through the translational perspective. Meanwhile, Bosma (2024) analyzes several of Kuang's works (including *Babel*) and explores Kuang's interest in postcolonial themes in her work. The similarity between these studies lies in *Babel*'s position as a postcolonial text that criticizes the role of translation, institutions, and language in imperial power. However, none of these studies explore or apply Spivak's framework, such as the mechanism of epistemic violence in the narrative of *Babel, or the Necessity of Violence*.

Taken together, previous studies show that knowledge is a space for colonial power (Mondo, 2022; Ahmad et al., 2023), and the concept of epistemic violence plays a crucial role in capturing how specific knowledge is marginalized (Brunner, 2021; De Schryver, 2021; Zembylas, 2025). At the same time, postcolonial readings of *Babel* by Stein (2023), Ribeiro (2024), ElZayat (2024), Teliban (2025), and Bosma (2024) indicate the novel's critique of the ruling system and its effects on the identity of colonial subjects. However, none of these studies have applied Spivakian epistemic violence, particularly in terms of its mechanisms in the narrative text of *Babel*, as proposed by this study. This study aims to fill this gap in the link between postcolonial literary criticism approaches by presenting Spivakian frameworks and ideas on *Babel* as a literary research object. This gap then directs this study to focus on analyzing the mechanisms of epistemic violence and

understanding how these mechanisms operate in the narrative of *Babel, or the Necessity of Violence* through Spivakian.

B. Research Question

In line with the background of the study, this section focuses on the following research question: How do the mechanisms of Epistemic Violence operate in R.F. Kuang's *Babel, or the Necessity of Violence*, within Spivak's framework?

C. Significance of the Study

This section provides theoretical and practical contributions to the field of postcolonial literature studies.

1. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to postcolonial literary criticism by applying Gayatri Spivak's concept of epistemic violence to R.F. Kuang's novel *Babel, or the Necessity of Violence*. In line with this, how the concept is formed, used, and implemented as a mechanism of operation within the narrative is also an attempt of this study. Thus, the findings are expected to serve as a reference for further research that develops this theory, particularly through other literary works in the context of colonial power relations over language and knowledge.

2. Practical Significance

Practically, this study is expected to benefit novel readers, literature or cultural studies students, and teaching staff. For readers, this study allows them to develop a critical understanding of how colonial power works in literary texts, especially when this issue is not immediately apparent on the surface of the story. For students, this study is useful for studying and understanding how specific concepts (epistemic violence) in (postcolonial) theory can be applied to the analysis of literary works. Furthermore, for lecturers, this study is also able to provide illustrations and teaching references both inside and outside the classroom related to the concept of postcolonial reading in the analysis of fictional narratives.

D. Scope and Limitation

This section determines the specific aspects that are considered the research's focus as well as its limitations.

1. Scope of the Study

The primary focus of this study is on a critical reading of postcolonialism, particularly Gayatri C. Spivak's (1988) mechanism of epistemic violence in R.F. Kuang's narrative *Babel, or the Necessity of Violence* (2022). Another focus of this study is to examine how epistemic fields function as forms of violence throughout the narrative. The analysis primarily uses the main character as the analytical entry point to examine the mechanisms of epistemic violence. Therefore, this study particularly addresses the aspects related to context, narrative structure, and

conflict, patterns of representation, as well as character dynamics. Thus, this study is closely related to the research question and objectives.

2. Limitation of the Study

To maintain a coherent focus during the analysis, this study excludes broad historical accounts of British colonialism, the Opium Wars, and other real-world events that influenced the context of the novel's writing. Furthermore, rather than integrating diverse postcolonial frameworks such as those of Said, Bhabha, or Fanon, this research relies exclusively on Spivak's conceptual insights to ensure theoretical consistency. Although elements of linguistics and translation appear frequently in the text, they are examined solely within their narrative and representational functions. Consequently, this study refrains from expanding its scope to other literary works by R.F. Kuang or broader sociolinguistic discourses, including Englishization, Linguistic Imperialism, and English Neo-Imperialism. Through these boundaries, the analysis remains strictly anchored within the predefined scope.

E. Definition of Key Term

This section provides essential terms used in this research to avoid misinterpretation and ensure clarity.

1. Subalternity

Subaltern is a term borrowed by Spivak from Antonio Gramsci to define subordinate groups that do not have access to power. Those at the bottom of the

social, political, and epistemic hierarchy, who are furthest from having legitimate access to speak and be heard within the dominant structure (Spivak, 1988). Subalternity is not the main focus of this study, but it is directly related to Spivak's core concept of epistemic violence.

2. Epistemic Violence

Epistemic violence is a form of non-physical violence that operates through the systematic control and regulation of knowledge by determining which knowledge is legitimate, whose knowledge is recognized, and whose knowledge is silenced, particularly against the subaltern or marginalized groups (Spivak, 1988). This concept includes the deprivation of the right to speak and the application of a knowledge system considered superior to others (Halder & Sharma, 2024).

3. Colonial Subject

Conceptually, the colonial subject is the individual manifestation of what Spivak (1988) refers to as the subaltern. Simply, it refers to individuals within those groups who are under systematic colonial control (Brunner, 2021). The colonial subject is understood through the object-formation, meaning their identity and position are constructed from outside themselves by the colonizer (Spivak, 1988; Brunner, 2021).

4. Colonizer

The colonizer is understood as those who act on behalf of power and serve as direct representatives of the colonial order. The colonizer is understood through the

subject-constitution, meaning they actively position themselves and others as subjects within the dominant knowledge order (Spivak, 1988; Brunner, 2021).

5. Spivakian

This refers to the essay “*Can the Subaltern Speak?*” (Spivak, 1988), the term Spivakian refers to the theoretical framework and analytical approach derived from the thoughts of Gayatri C. Spivak, particularly in subalternity and epistemic violence. In this study, the term Spivakian is used to emphasize that the postcolonial reading is grounded in Spivak's perspective and theoretical logic.

6. Mechanisms

According to Bunge (2004), a mechanism is a process that explains how things work. In line with Machamer et al. (2000), the mechanisms in this study refer to the processes, patterns, or modes of operation through which epistemic violence operates within the *Babel* narrative. This term does not originate directly from Spivak's essay, but rather from an interpretive category applied to the concrete arguments Spivak puts forward. This category of mechanism is then used to identify specific forms of epistemic violence reflected in various aspects of the narrative. Thus, mechanisms are understood as analytical tools for mapping how epistemic violence is reflected in the text.

7. Babel

The term Babel in this study is used in two different meanings. *Babel* (in italics) refers to the material text of the study, namely the novel *Babel, or the*

Necessity of Violence by R.F. Kuang (2022), as the object of literary analysis. Babel (without italics) refers to the British Translation Institute in the narrative, which acts as a center of colonial knowledge production and the location where epistemic violence mechanisms operate. This distinction aims to maintain clarity in the analysis between the text as a literary work and the institution as a narrative element.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides the theoretical foundation of the research. It begins with the examination of postcolonial literary criticism in general. Then, it discusses Gayatri C. Spivak's thoughts on subalternity and epistemic violence. Finally, it offers an explanation of the mechanisms of epistemic violence and its connection to colonial power.

A. Postcolonial Literary Criticism

Postcolonialism is the study of the colonial legacy in various aspects of life, with a particular focus on examining the relationship between colonizers and colonized through texts and discourse. According to Ashcroft et al. (2000), this approach explores experiences such as migration, slavery, oppression, representation, difference, race, gender, resistance, and responses to Western imperialist discourse. Moreover, postcolonialism is not limited to a specific period, its legacy remains even after the colonial system has ended. Thus, the presence of this theory is an intellectual stance in criticizing and deconstructing colonial ways of thinking that have been embedded in culture and knowledge.

This theory was developed in the late 20th century. Through “*Orientalism*” (1978), Edward Said showed that “the East” was constructed as “the Other” in Western discourse to legitimize its domination. Frantz Fanon then highlighted the psychological and cultural impact of colonialism which dehumanized the colonized

and instilled racial inferiority through his work “*Black Skin, White Mask* (1952)”. In “*The Wretched of the Earth* (1961)”, he asserted that colonialism is systemic violence that can only be overthrown through decolonization as a transformation of the social order (Fanon, 1961, as cited in Kang, 2025). Furthermore, colonialism operates in a non-neutral manner by promoting the notion that “knowledge is power”. This idea underlies postcolonial readings through various aspects of history, politics, and even literature.

Postcolonial literary criticism seeks to challenge colonial discourses, reconstruct alternative historical narratives, and foreground marginalized voices that have been excluded from dominant representations (Kusnadi & Cahyadi, 2024). This concern with marginalized voices is also reflected in Rahayu's (2023) discussion of American Indigenous literature, which demonstrates how literary texts can function as sites for understanding Indigenous experiences and historically marginalized perspectives. Furthermore, this approach developed rapidly against the backdrop of decolonization movements in colonial territories, enabling colonial intellectuals to rewrite their history and identity from their own perspectives. Homi K. Bhabha, through “*The Location of Culture* (1994)”, focuses on the negotiation of identity by introducing the concepts of mimicry, hybridity, and third space to explain the ambivalence of colonial relations. Then, Gayatri C. Spivak, who is a vital part of this research. She and her thoughts are discussed in more depth in section B, which is also the frame of reference for analysis in the novel *Babel*.

B. Gayatri C. Spivak's Thought

Spivak was born in Kolkata, India in 1942. She earned her Ph.D. from Cornell University in the United States in 1967. As an intellectual who was educated in the West and had colonial blood, she brought a new perspective to postcolonialism by combining Western thought with her experience as a colonized woman in India. Furthermore, she is considered one of the “Holy Trinity” of postcolonial approaches, alongside Said and Bhabha, for emphasizing the inequality of knowledge and representation as tools of colonialism, as powerful as military conquest.

1. “*Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988)”

Throughout her career, Spivak produced important works, one of the most influential is “*Can the Subaltern Speak?*” (1988), first published in the book *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. This essay uses a dense, philosophical writing style and rejects solution-oriented writing. In it, Spivak questions the efforts of some intellectuals who claim to side with the oppressed, but unknowingly ignore their voices. Spivak begins by criticizing Foucault and Deleuze, who claim that the oppressed “*know perfectly well*” what they want and can speak for themselves. However, Spivak argues, “*Who determines what language is considered 'speaking' legitimately?*” Furthermore, she points out that Western intellectuals ignore the global order that makes colonial countries providers of cheap labor and raw materials that are monopolized and exploited, making the claim that “*the masses can speak for themselves*” naive. Spivak then gives an example of two types of

representation in German that are translated identically in English. Vertreten (political representation, speaking on behalf of others) and Darstellen (philosophical representation, describing or portraying), a situation that causes intellectuals to ignore how subalterns are constructed in discourse, so that only certain types of “*speaking*” are considered legitimate.

To support her argument, Spivak presents the debate surrounding the practice of “*sati*” (widows burning themselves on their husbands' funeral pyres) in 19th-century India. British colonialists spread the narrative that “*white men are saving brown women from brown men,*” while Indian nationalist elites argued that “*the women actually wanted to die.*” Spivak shows that both narratives (despite being contradictory) erase the women's own voices. Neither ever positions women as subjects with choices. Take the story of Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, a member of the Indian independence movement who committed suicide in 1926. She deliberately waited until her menstrual period before killing herself to avoid negative interpretations. However, the “*message*” conveyed through her actions was not understood, and society continued to interpret her as “*a luckless romantic Brahmin widow.*” This shows that even though Bhuvaneswari tried to speak, there was no position in the dominant discourse from which her voice could be heard as a political agent. In conclusion, Spivak asserts, “*The subaltern cannot speak,*” not because they are mute, but because the structure of discourse does not provide space for their voices to be heard and recognized as legitimate knowledge.

2. Subalternity

Spivak adopted the term subaltern from Marxist theorist A. Gramsci. However, Spivak developed it further by adding postcolonial and gender dimensions. Subaltern refers to groups that occupy the lowest position in the social, political, and epistemic hierarchy. In the context of colonial India, Spivak illustrates the subaltern as poor farmers, manual laborers, and especially women from these groups, who are economically and politically oppressed and do not have access to discourse that would make their voices heard.

A distinctive feature of Spivak's concept of subalternity is its focus on the epistemic dimension. For Spivak, being subaltern is not only a matter of economic deprivation, but primarily about not having a position as a legitimate subject of knowledge within the dominant knowledge structure. Subaltern knowledge is not counted as institutional, legitimate, and valid knowledge. Ironically, in some discourses, they become a source of data but are not recognized as co-producers of knowledge. Spivak refers to them as *“the silent, silenced center”* that is silenced by the existing system.

Spivak highlights the suffering of the subaltern, which is exacerbated by the gender hierarchy in addition to the colonial structure. Subaltern women experience *“double displacement,”* being displaced from the position of subject by class/caste/race subordination, as well as by gender subordination. Spivak emphasizes that subalternity is not a fixed category, but rather a position that

depends on context, meaning that someone can be subaltern in one context but not in another.

3. Epistemic Violence

Epistemic violence is one of Spivak's important theoretical concepts in postcolonial studies. This term refers to a form of non-physical violence that operates through knowledge or an epistemic framework by defining what counts as “*knowledge*”, who the legitimate “*knowers*” are, and how “*truth*” is determined. Spivak (1988) argues that colonialism is “*a remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as the Other*”. By using the term “*constitute*”, she emphasizes that epistemic violence goes beyond mere domination. Before colonialism, the identities of colonized peoples were complex, but colonialism arrived with an epistemic system that created new, inferior categories, causing colonized peoples to see themselves through these colonial categorizations. Similar concerns regarding non-physical domination can also be found in Rahayu's (2021) study on symbolic violence, which demonstrates how dominant groups exercise power through language and representation to maintain unequal social relations.

Back to the research approach, epistemic violence applies “*the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other in its precarious Subjectivity*” (Spivak, 1988), meaning that not only is local knowledge erased, but also the traces that they once had of their own subjectivity and way of understanding the world. As a result, subsequent generations justify the colonial perspective as the only civilized way of

understanding the world. Finally, what makes epistemic violence so insidious is that it is not always visible as “*violence*” in the conventional sense. Instead, it is often cloaked in the language of “*modernization*”, “*enlightenment*”, or “*progress*”. The colonial education system, for example, was not presented as violence, but as a gift from the colonizers to the colonized, a process of progress for the backward. This is what makes epistemic violence difficult to identify. It operates with claims of benevolence so that even its victims themselves claim colonial knowledge as “truth.”

C. Mechanisms of Epistemic Violence

In explaining the concept of epistemic violence, Spivak does not directly categorize its operational mechanisms. However, through a deep reading and identification of the arguments and examples she provides in “*Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988)”, three main mechanisms in the operation of epistemic violence can be identified. These mechanisms are based on direct quotations and recurring patterns in Spivak's text, thus remaining faithful to her original thinking as the main focus of the study.

1. Colonial Identity Formation

The first mechanism is a systematic process of creating, defining, and constructing colonial subjects as inferior “Others”, while erasing the historical traces of their subjectivity and knowledge systems. Through the formation of identity, Spivak (1988) states, “*The clearest available example of such epistemic violence is the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to*

constitute the colonial subject as Other.” The word “*constitute*” indicates that this is an active process in the formation of identity. This means that colonialism not only describes the colonial subject as inferior but also creates the category of “*colonial subject*” itself, which is inferior or known as “*the Other*”.

Beyond merely forming identity, Spivak (1988) also points to “*the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other in its precarious Subjectivity.*” This means not only knowledge, but also traces of their other ways of understanding themselves and the world are erased. As a result, subsequent generations will not even realize that alternatives once existed, leading them to believe that the colonial perspective is the only reasonable or civilized way of seeing things.

In line with this, Macaulay's Minute (1835, as cited in Spivak, 1988) states:

“At present, we must do our best to form a class that can serve as an intermediary between us and the millions we lead; a class of people who are Indian by blood and skin color, but British in taste, opinion, morals, and intellect.”

This statement is not merely a policy, but also evidence that reinforces the inferior position of colonial subjects. Macaulay's educational project created subjects who were physically Indian but mentally British, who then became agents of epistemic violence against their own communities by considering local traditions as negative and internalizing colonial values as “truth” and dismissing local traditions as “inferior”. In addition, the process of identity formation is closely related to discourse and social power. Rahayu's study on identity construction among young people also shows that identity is not fixed but continuously negotiated through social and cultural discourses (Rahayu, 2017).

2. Extraction of Indigenous Knowledge and Credit Erasure

The following mechanism is the heart of the concept of epistemic violence. This mechanism operates within colonial power through a system of knowledge that functions in two inseparable strands. First, a complex and conceptual system of knowledge is filtered and transformed into a universal, singular, static, and context-free form. Furthermore, the same knowledge is used as an instrument of colonial interests, and it is quite possible that the original producers of that knowledge are denied credit and status as the holders of that knowledge. In the practice of colonial power, these two actions occur within a single mechanism of epistemic violence that operates within the realm of indigenous knowledge.

Spivak (1988) illustrates this through the British codification of Hindu law at the end of the eighteenth century. Hindu law originally operated through a “*four-part episteme*”: (1) *sruti* (the heard), sacred texts transmitted orally. (2) *smriti* (remembered), laws and ethics that must be remembered. (3) *sastra* (learned from exchange), understanding gained through dialogue with experts. and (4) *vyavahara* (practiced), law as it was lived out in everyday life. These systems were alive, performative, and contextual. However, administrative requirements led Britain to decide that this four-part episteme should be consolidated into a single, fixed, universal text claimed as the “*True Hindu Law*”. In producing this text, the British relied on Pandits (Hindu legal experts from the Brahmin caste) as their key source, before writing the result in English and applying it as the official code within the colonial system.

During that codification process, the two mechanical movements met, the four-part episteme was filtered and transformed into a singular form, while the Pandits who supplied the knowledge were never granted authority over its final version. It was the British who decided which version counted as “correct.” The Pandits’ knowledge was extracted and used, but their epistemic authority was not recognized. They became “*native informants*” who supplied data, rather than co-producers of knowledge. In other words, the extraction of indigenous knowledge by the colonial system is simultaneously an entire set of actions that is inseparable from the colonial system’s denial of credit and authority to the indigenous knowledge owners.

In anticipating how such erasure operates, Spivak draws on Macherey’s concept of “measuring silences”, meaning the measuring of silence within a text or discourse. According to her, what matters is not only what is said, but what cannot be said because the structure provides no category through which to hear it. This is visible in the case of Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, who committed suicide in 1926 and deliberately waited until her menstruation began to prove that her act was not the result of an illicit pregnancy, but a political one. However, the institutions around her could not read her message, because they possessed only two available categories, “*suicide because of love*” or “*suicide because of sexual disgrace*”. No category existed for “*a young Indian woman as a political agent who committed suicide*”.

Furthermore, the same logic of extraction without acknowledgment appears in Spivak's critique of the appropriation of "*Maoism*" by French intellectuals: "*the innocent appropriation of the proper name 'Maoism' ... symptomatically renders 'Asia' transparent*". "*Maoism*" is a term drawn from a specific Chinese context, yet it is used to label a French intellectual philosophy that bears no real connection to its original meaning. Through this "*rendering Asia transparent*", Asia becomes a resource that can be taken for granted, used without any need to acknowledge the agency of the Asian subjects from whom the term originates.

Overall, the case study shows that the filtering of indigenous knowledge and the unwillingness to give credit to colonial subjects are two interrelated mechanisms that work together to sustain epistemic violence. In addition, this mechanism involved the institutional role as the holder and regulator of access to the curriculum or education. As a result, indigenous knowledge is institutionalized, legitimized, or silenced according to colonial interest, while the community that originally owned it loses the authority to claim it as its own.

3. Delegitimization of Subaltern Voices

The third and final mechanism arises from structural conditions that construct colonial subjects as object-formations, meaning that their position and status are fundamentally dependent on and entirely controlled by colonial power, and given no authority to represent themselves. In her essay, Spivak (1988) asserts that the subaltern are in fact capable of speaking, sharing their experiences, and expressing their views. However, these voices are not recognized as legitimate perspectives,

voices, or knowledge within the colonial power structure. In other words, the issue is not that subaltern voices do not exist or are silenced, but rather the lack of space within the colonial system to accommodate subaltern voices as legitimate and valid.

On the other hand, this situation is quite possible to be worsened by the efforts and public image-building of colonizers, intellectuals, and even national officials who attempt to speak in public on behalf of colonial subjects or the subaltern. This, of course, can never truly represent the subaltern's voice because, fundamentally, it is not the subaltern who is voicing their own opinions and perspectives; rather, it is the dominant system that speaks for them.

This idea stems from the core argument of Spivak's essay "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" She states that "*the subaltern as female cannot be heard or read*", but this does not mean that the subaltern is truly incapable of speaking. The problem lies in the social and epistemic structures that prevent their voices from being acknowledged or understood in the way they would like them to be.

Spivak explains this situation through the case of Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri. Although Bhuvaneswari attempted to convey the political significance behind her actions, society continued to interpret her death based on pre-existing categories, either as a suicide due to an out-of-wedlock pregnancy or due to a romantic relationship. As a result, a gap emerged between the message she intended to convey and the meaning subsequently understood by society, a phenomenon known as the "*slippage gap*". A similar dynamic is evident in the debate surrounding the practice of "*Sati*", where Indian women were the subject of discussion by both

colonizers and local elites but given no space to narrate their own perspectives. In situations like this, the subaltern does not lose their voices, but rather lose recognition of those voices. Therefore, what occurs is not the suppression or absence of a space to speak, but rather the delegitimization of the subaltern's voices and knowledge by dominant structures.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

This section provides the methodology used in this research. It began with the research design, which specified the research type. Then, the data source was the reference for the research. Next, the data collection outlined the procedure for collecting data. Finally, the data analysis included the techniques used to process the data.

A. Research Design

This research is categorized as literary criticism. Gillespie (2010) asserts that literary criticism involves a process of critical reading to reveal implicit meanings and patterns of representation in texts. This research used a postcolonial approach. Specifically, in the concept of epistemic violence proposed by Spivak in her essay “*Can the Subaltern Speak?*” (1988). The object of study used in this research is a literary text, a novel titled *Babel, or the necessity of violence: An Arcane History of the Oxford Translators' Revolution* (2022) written by R.F. Kuang. The choice of a postcolonial approach is in line with the themes addressed in the narrative, including colonialism, language, and knowledge.

B. Data Source

The data source in this study is the novel *Babel, or the Necessity of Violence*, written by R.F. Kuang and published by Harper Voyager in 2022. This novel served as the primary and only source of data in this research. The novel consisted of 571

pages and was written in English. All quotations, dialogues, narrative descriptions, and events analyzed in this study were taken from this novel.

To support contextual understanding, the researcher used the Indonesian translated version published by Shira Media Group and translated by Siska Nurohmah. However, the English version of the novel remained the main reference for data collection and analysis. Thus, the translated version was not used as a source of data, but only as a supporting reference to ensure interpretive accuracy.

C. Data Collection

In the data collection process, the researcher conducted an in-depth reading, also known as close reading. Gillespie (2010) states that “*close reading is simply a careful and disciplined reading process.*” In line with this, close reading is understood as the process of reading a text carefully and thoroughly, paying attention to linguistic details and narrative structure.

The researcher read the novel *Babel, or the Necessity of Violence*, repeatedly from beginning to end to grasp the general narrative on the first read. Subsequent readings focused on identifying quotations, dialogues, narration, and events that indicated epistemic violence in the narrative.

After the data were collected, the researcher conducted data classification. The data were classified (by using classification data table) based on the three mechanisms of epistemic violence derived from Spivak’s framework (1) Colonial Identity Formation, (2) Extraction of Indigenous Knowledge and Credit Erasure,

and (3) Delegitimization of Subaltern Voices. Each quotation was categorized into one of these mechanisms before entering the data analysis stage.

D. Data Analysis

Data analysis is conducted after the data has been collected and classified. Technically, the data in this study were processed through several structured steps. First, the researcher reviewed the classification data table. In this stage, the researcher selected the most relevant quotations that represented epistemic violence mechanisms. Second, theoretical interpretation. The chosen data were interpreted using Spivak's views on epistemic violence. In addition, the researcher also discussed data interpreted by Spivak's views by comparing them with relevant previous studies to seek similarities, differences, and contributions of this research.

Third, synthesize interpretively. The researcher concluded interpretatively to grasp how the mechanisms of epistemic violence operated within the narrative by ensuring that findings were relevant to the research focus (the problem, objectives, and answers). These three steps were performed in sequence and were repeated for each data point analyzed. That way, the analysis using Spivak's concept of epistemic violence in identifying the three mechanisms operating in R.F. Kuang's novel *Babel, or the Necessity of Violence*, was easier to explain.

CHAPTER IV

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This section provides the findings and analysis regarding the mechanisms of epistemic violence identified in the novel *Babel, or the Necessity of Violence* by R.F. Kuang (2022). The findings presented in this chapter are the data collected through the discussion in the previous chapter. Meanwhile, the data analysis in this study was conducted by referring to Spivak's theoretical framework as explained in Chapter 2, and supported by prior research if necessary.

In addressing the research questions, the researcher found that epistemic violence in the novel *Babel* actively operates in shaping a systematic structure of non-physical violence. Furthermore, the researcher also found that epistemic violence operates through three different but interrelated pathways and often works sequentially. First, Colonial Identity Formation. Second, Extraction of Indigenous Knowledge and Credit Erasure. Third, Delegitimization of Subaltern Voices. An analytical breakdown of each mechanism is presented in the following subchapters.

A. Colonial Identity Formation

Colonial Identity Formation is one way in which epistemic violence operates, involving the construction of a distinct (inferior) colonial subject through colonial discourse. Spivak adds that this mechanism goes beyond depicting the colonial subject, it deliberately constructs that position by erasing the subject's original identity and replacing it with one conforming to colonial standards (Spivak, 1988).

In Kuang's *Babel* (2022), this mechanism is shown in several ways, such as the erasure of names and language, the physical appearance change, and the construction of narratives of racial inferiority that are ultimately internalized into how the colonial subject perceives themselves.

This mechanism works from the very beginning of the narrative. The scene opens with Prof. Lovell asking the colonial subject to change his name to one that is more acceptable by “*Englishman*” standards. Meanwhile, the narrator attempts to explain how essential a name is to the colonial subject, yet he holds no authority whatsoever under the colonial system. This thing is clearly seen in the following excerpt.

“I have a name,” said the boy. “It’s—” “No, that won’t do. No Englishman can pronounce that. Did Miss Slate give you a name?” Family names were not things to be dropped and replaced at whim, he thought. They marked lineage; they marked belonging. “Very good. Robin Swift you’ll be. Mr Swift, good to meet you.” (Kuang, 2022, pp. 11–12)

The text explains that the colonial subject does not fully accept this, this is seen in his statement acknowledging that a name is not merely a label, it carries “*lineage*” and “*belonging*”. However, it didn’t give him any power, so he had to take on a new, random name that meant nothing to him (Robin Swift). This incident shows that Robin did not even have the chance to hold on to the identity he considered so important to himself. The words “*lineage*” and “*belonging*” underscore the magnitude of the loss Robin had to suffer from the very beginning of the story.

This mechanism continues even into the middle of the story. Robin finally found the bravery to make a life choice by joining and getting involved in the revolutionary organization, the Hermes Society. However, due to this involvement, Robin was arrested and interrogated directly by Prof. Lovell. During the interrogation, he once again humiliated Robin by trying to portray Robin's life as if he didn't exist, as seen in the following passage.

"You were a dock boy in Canton. Your mother was an outcast. Even if your father had been Chinese, your station would have been the same. You would have scraped along for pennies your entire life. You never would have seen the shores of England. You never would have read Horace, Homer, or Thucydides – you never would have opened a book, for that matter. You would have lived and died in squalor and ignorance, never imagining the world of opportunities that I have afforded you. I lifted you from destitution. I gifted you the world." (Kuang, 2022, p. 246)

In this agenda, Prof. Lovell is reconstructing Robin's past while simultaneously constructing a narrative that all of Robin's life values came from colonial intervention or influence. Robin's life before meeting Lovell is portrayed as having no future and being bleak, so that every achievement he attained is viewed as a liability that must be repaid through obedience. Thus, the perspective presented by Prof. Lovell places Robin in a difficult position because any form of resistance could be seen as an act of ingratitude toward the party that *"gifted the world."*

Through these quotes, the construction of the colonial subject continues even as that subject has been assimilated from childhood through adulthood within the colonial system. Thus, the colonial subject will never be accepted outside the form constructed by the colonizers. It is shown that Robin's past is depicted as *"nothingness"*, engulfed by poverty, uneducated, and worthless. In this regard, Spivak (1988) explains that epistemic violence operates, among other ways, by

erasing the traces of the "*Other*" in its own subjectivity, and the erasure of names here is a clear manifestation of that operation, in which the identity of the colonial subject is declared to be an identity that has no right to exist. Through Spivak's (1988) statement, "*asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other*," she asserts that there is no acknowledgment of the existence of the colonial subject's knowledge, relationships, or possibilities for life before colonialism.

Moreover, Spivak (1988) argues that "*the clearest available example of such epistemic violence is the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other*" (Spivak, 1988). She states that colonialism views the world of the colonial subject as nonexistent, thereby granting colonialism control to "*constitute*" the colonial subject's world but as the "*Other*." Spivak refers to this concept as "*Worlding*" in her essay. In the quote above, the phrase "*I gifted you the world*" is a manifestation of this concept. This phrase functions as a strong statement that before colonialism arrived and intervened, Robin had nothing that could be called a world. In other words, colonialism positions itself as the giver, but in reality, it takes over. Therefore, the phrase "*I gifted you the world*" positions Prof. Lovell (a figure of colonialism) the only source of Robin's valid subjectivity.

This pattern of reconstructing the identity of the colonial subject as inferior can also be traced in previous research that interprets the characters of Robin and Lovell as a reflection of colonial relations. Ribeiro (2024) also highlights this point by asserting that the cultural identity of the colony was viewed as inadequate and less

respectable. This action illustrates the extent to which Prof. Lovell attempted to erase his Chinese cultural identity and replace it with one appropriate to the colonial context. On the other hand, Ribeiro (2024) also emphasizes that Prof. Lovell's control over Robin is always constructed on Robin's life before being helped by Prof. Lovell. This is meant to set Robin's mindset to depend on the colonial system, making Robin unable to live a life outside the parameters Prof. Lovell has set for him.

The pressure that initially stemmed from Prof Lovell is now slowly taking Robin's mind. This occurs during the journey from Canton to London, where the narrator describes how Robin himself begins to actively shut down his old identity as a form of survival adaptation through the following quote.

“When thoughts popped up in Chinese, he quashed them. He buried his past life, not because it was so terrible but because abandoning it was the only way to survive. He pulled on his English accent like a new coat, adjusted everything he could about himself to make it fit, and, within weeks, wore it with comfort. In weeks, no one was asking him to speak a few words in Chinese for their entertainment. In weeks, no one seemed to remember he was Chinese at all.” (Kuang, 2022, p. 18)

In this scene, it is concerning that Robin is no longer being forced but has convinced himself that "abandoning it" (his identity) was *"the only way to survive."* Spivak (1988) identifies this condition as the success of epistemic violence in the process of shaping colonial identity, when the colonial subject begins to do so of his own accord through the phrase *"pulled on his English accent like a new coat,"* which indicates that Robin's identity has now been completely changed. Robin's adoption of a colonial identity while simultaneously abandoning his old identity as a form of self-defense is aligned with the findings of a previous study by ElZayat

(2024) on the impact of colonialism at a personal level. His research states that the colonial system in the *Babel* narrative oppresses the colonized subject even on a psychological level. In this case, Robin not only changes his name but also his way of thinking.

It didn't stop there, even Robin's appearance was altered as part of the process of shaping a colonial identity. Upon arriving in London, Prof. Lovell took Robin to various places to change his appearance to match colonial standards. This series of events took place entirely without Robin's approval, as seen in the following excerpt.

"Professor Lovell took Robin on a series of errands in the service of assimilating him into British civil society. They saw a physician who weighed him, examined him, and reluctantly declared him fit for life on the island... They saw a barber, who clipped Robin's unruly, chin-length curls into a short, neat crop above his ears. They saw a hatter, a bootmaker, and finally a tailor, who measured every inch of Robin's body and showed him several bolts of cloth among which Robin, overwhelmed, chose at random." (Kuang, 2022, pp. 22–23)

In that event, a doctor's statement by the word *"reluctantly"* that Robin was *"fit for life on the island"* implies that Robin's acceptance was against his will, not sincere. The subsequent series of events even treated Robin merely as an object in need of appearance change by *"clipping Robin's unruly hair"* without asking for his opinion. In this case, Spivak (1988) adds that the colonial subject is also shaped through the practices of colonial power, which positions them completely as an object rather than a subject who has rights over themselves. The aspect of adapting physical appearance as part of the formation of colonial identity is also emphasized by Ribeiro's (2024) research in explaining the bodily dimension, which is also a component of colonial control. His research describes this series of errands as Prof.

Lovell's attempt to remove all physical markers of his Chinese origins to facilitate his assimilation into Victorian society.

This mechanism reaches its peak when epistemic violence succeeds in becoming the justification or vehicle for physical violence. This event is seen in the narrative when Robin is late for a class session. That negligence triggers physical violence by Prof. Lovell, which is portrayed as something Robin deserves as a reflection of his people's nature, as in the following quote.

“As he neared the door, Professor Lovell drew his hand back and brought his knuckles hard against Robin's left cheek. Professor Lovell wasn't finished. As Robin rose to his knees, dazed, the professor pulled the poker from beside the fireplace and swung it diagonally against the right side of Robin's torso. Then he brought it down again. And again. 'Laziness and deceit are common traits among your kind. This is why China remains an indolent and backwards country while her neighbours hurtle towards progress. You are, by nature, foolish, weak-minded, and disinclined to hard work. You must resist these traits, Robin. You must learn to overcome the pollution of your blood.’” (Kuang, 2022, pp. 39–41)

In this event, the phrases *“by nature”* and *“pollution of your blood”* both emphasize inferiority as an absolute and inherent condition of the Robin's ethnic, as if that negligence were a natural behaviour of the Robin ethnic, causing them to always remain the underclass. That racial hate speech then served to justify physical violence as normal, as if the beating were deserved for a child who was only eleven years old. This interpretation aligns with Spivak's (1988) argument regarding how epistemic violence operates to construct the colonial subject as an inferior *“Other.”* The racial discrimination that subsequently served as a justification for the physical violence is relevant to the above analysis in line with ElZayat's (2024) findings, which states that Prof. Lovell's actions constitute a colonial discourse, one that

positions the authority figure as a guide, modernizer, and disciplinarian, as a narrative that justifies physical violence as an educational measure.

Furthermore, this mechanism operates beyond the interpersonal relationship between Lovell and Robin. Toward the end of the narrative, the issue appears on the public discourse stage, where the translators of Babel go on strike due to the revelation that the British were exploiting the intellectual capabilities to carry out military aggression against the colonies. Unlike before, this subsequent identity-forming event is no longer driven by individuals, but is also shaped by colonial discourse that spreads biased narratives which portray the translators in a negative light.

“They were malicious ingrates with no agenda at all except a desire to hurt England, to bite the hand that had fed them – and this required no further explanation, for it was a motive that the British public were all too ready to believe.” (Kuang, 2022, p. 515)

The use of the word “*ingrates*” in public discourse reflects a colonial approach to constructing the identities of colonial subjects in order to delegitimize their actions by framing them as imperial parasites in the phrase “*to hurt England*”. Meanwhile, the phrase “*required no further explanation*” serves to shut down other perspectives, and the discourse even seems to justify the colonial subject’s identity, which has been established as that of an ungrateful person, through the phrase “*to bite the hand that had fed them*.” Through Spivak’s (1988) framework, this event represents an epistemic condition in which the dominant discourse denies space or access to the subaltern by disqualifying their claims. On the other hand, the media’s involvement in spreading colonial discourse constitutes an operation of epistemic

violence on a far more massive scale than previous events. The expansion of systemic violence from the interpersonal sphere to the public discourse sphere underscores its relevance to ElZayat's (2024) findings in his study of media framing as a tool for the mass construction of colonial identity. His research notes that the narrative is portraying translators as traitors in public discourse and serves to undermine their actions, preventing them from being perceived as rational arguments and nothing more than clarifications of their inherently problematic nature.

The six data points presented above conclude that the mechanism of Colonial Identity Formation actively participates in shaping and enacting epistemic violence, as Spivak explains in "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" In the *Babel* narrative, this mechanism operates by erasing identities at the personal, institutional, and even psychological levels. Furthermore, it reshapes identities, both physically and intellectually, according to the standards imposed by the colonial system. Across these various layers, the pattern remains consistent that the identity of the colonial subject is shaped by colonial power, with a single purpose is to place them in an inferior position (Spivak, 1988). Beyond that, this mechanism also replaces the colonial subject's world through what Spivak (1988) calls "*worlding*"; as a result, the colonial subject is shaped in such a way that they have no conception of a world beyond colonialism. Thus, *Babel* illustrates the operation of epistemic violence through identity formation, which also erases the subjectivity of colonial subjects and replaces it with an identity that legitimizes colonial interests.

B. Extraction of Indigenous Knowledge and Credit Erasure

Extraction of Indigenous Knowledge and Credit Erasure is a mechanism that involves two operations, simultaneous and inseparable. The filtering of indigenous knowledge into forms that serve colonial interests, and the systematic denial of credit to the colonial subjects whose knowledge is being used. Within Spivak's (1988) framework, these two aspects influence each other, where the extraction is always already an erasure, and the erasure is what makes the extraction possible without resistance. In its operation, this mechanism is often accompanied and supported by the role of institutions in spreading and legitimizing it. This aligns with the narrative in Kuang's *Babel* (2022), which portrays the Babel translation institution using etymological and linguistic inquiry not merely to understand the meaning of language itself, but also as a tool for control over the bodies of colonial subjects, even to the level of torture, while simultaneously denying any acknowledgment to those who originally held such knowledge

The first element of this mechanism is demonstrated through the system of silver magic that operates within the narrative. Through a scene in which the colonial subject realizes *Babel's* evil plan to extract the colony's knowledge through etymological science into a form of silver magic and use it to control slavery. This can be seen in the following conversation between Victoire and Letty.

"Capitale," Victoire said. "The Latin capitale, derived from caput, becomes the Old French chatel, which in English becomes chattel... they fix those bars to iron chains so that slaves can't escape. You know how? It makes them docile. Like animals." (Kuang, 2022, p. 373)

In this dialogue, the progression of terms from “*Capitale*” to “*chate!*” and finally to “*chattel*” demonstrates how etymological derivations were manipulated to reinforce the dehumanization. This shows that even knowledge can be biased if it is manipulated. As a result, knowledge is no longer used to understand the world but rather as a subtle agent of violence. In essence, silver magic operates by involving knowledge of colonies to be filtered and then repurposed according to colonial desires.

Not only controlling slavery, the transformation of knowledge also served as a vehicle for physical violence, such as torture. A colonial figure (Sterling) proudly used the etymological knowledge he had learned in Babel to craft silver spells, which he used to torture colonial subjects in prison, as in the following quote.

"The Greek agōnia means a contest, originally, a sports gathering between athletes. It gained the connotation of suffering much later. But I'm translating from English back into the Greek, so the bar knows to induce suffering, not remove it. Clever, no?" (Kuang, 2022, p. 436)

Beyond torture, Sterling's awareness and pride in explaining the process of transforming knowledge into a form of torture constitute a form of the inappropriate use of knowledge. In practice, “*I'm translating from English back into the Greek, so the bar knows to induce suffering*”, a directional shift of knowledge produces the opposite effect (torment). Nevertheless, Sterling showed no sign of regret or even shame when explaining how knowledge had been transformed into violence. Besides, he viewed this ability as a source of pride and something worthy of admiration, regardless of the consequences of such manipulation.

Across both events, Spivak's (1988) view applies consistently where epistemic violence can be enacted through the transformation of knowledge as a tool of power managed by colonial institutions. Spivak (1988) further emphasizes that colonialism works by constructing local knowledge as “*a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy*”. In line with the quote above, which describes how knowledge is treated merely as material that can be filtered and adapted to control slavery or inflict physical suffering.

Thus, Babel is not a neutral institution of knowledge. It also functions to serve colonial systems, whether slavery or torture. Meanwhile, knowledge itself, which should be pure, is manipulated, in one case to make human beings “*docile. Like animals,*” and in another to “*induce suffering*”. This is the transformation of knowledge designed to demonstrate colonial cleverness over colonial subjects, where colonialism operates epistemic violence through knowledge not to understand the world, but to demonstrate its dominance (Spivak, 1988). This transformation of knowledge into an instrument of domination is also addressed in ElZayat’s (2024) study, which explains that Babel's silver-magic system describes colonialism in weaponized knowledge.

Furthermore, another aspect (the erasure of the credit given to the owner of the knowledge) of the same mechanism is revealed directly to Robin by Griffin, a revolutionary. During a secret meeting, Griffin attempted to persuade Robin to join the revolution by explaining that the institution he loved not only advanced

civilization but also facilitated military aggression, the slave trade, and the exploitation of the languages and talents of the colonies. This explanation is captured in the following quote.

"Would you like to know the second and third largest sources of income at Babel?' 'Legal?' 'No. Militaries, both state and private,' said Griffin. 'And then slave traders. Legal makes pennies in comparison.' [...] 'Babel collects foreign languages and foreign talent the same way it hoards silver and uses them to produce translation magic that benefits England and England only.'" (Kuang, 2022, p. 103)

In the event, Griffin used the analogy *"the same way it hoards silver"* to liken Babel's collection of languages and talents of colonies. This states that the knowledge and abilities of colonial subjects are regarded by the colonizers as merely material resources to be exploited and commodified. By positioning language and talent as merely a means of silver, this indirectly treats intellectual capacity as an asset to be accumulated and exploited. This indicates that Babel evaluates things not from a humanistic perspective but rather in terms of their utility to the colonial power.

Furthermore, this mechanism was explicitly initiated directly by a colonial figure and intellectual toward the colonial subject. During a conversation, Robin asked Prof. Chakravarti about the possibility of undertaking a research trip to Beijing. However, Prof. Chakravarti explained that this was not possible, then patted Robin on the shoulder while saying something along the lines of the following quote.

"But it makes things a bit hard when the Qing Emperor has decreed it punishable by death to teach a foreigner Chinese, you see.' He patted Robin's shoulder. 'We make do with what we have. You're the next best thing.'" (Kuang, 2022, p. 116)

The phrase "*the next best thing*" in this quote appears to be a compliment to Robin, but it actually contains a hidden meaning that reinforces Robin's position. Here, Robin is not a knowledge partner, but merely a substitute or an alternative way of acquiring and adopting the Chinese language because "*Qing Emperor has decreed it punishable by death to teach a foreigner Chinese.*" Thus, Robin's presence in Babel is significant solely because of the alternative access it offers to something beyond colonial control. In other words, this relationship appears more like a tool in the hands of the controller than an equal partnership

Across both events, the colonial subject is never recognized as a "*Knower*" or "*Co-producer of Knowledge*" (Spivak, 1988). Meanwhile, the colonial subjects themselves never receive credit, authority, or benefit from such practices. Through Spivak's framework (1988), these two events demonstrate that the colonial system does not accommodate recognition of the colonial subject's ownership of knowledge. In other words, the colonizers only sought access to and the benefits of the knowledge possessed by the colonized. As seen in the narrative, Robin is valued for his expertise in language and culture that the colonizers cannot access. Thus, Robin's position illustrates Spivak's concept of the "*native informant*", wherein the colonial subject is reduced to a conduit of information useful to the colonial project, while his right to be recognized as an equal producer of knowledge remains unfulfilled.

The role of the native informant positions the colonial subject as a knowledge partner who has never been acknowledged. This forms the basis for comparison

with the studies by ElZayat (2024) and Ribeiro (2024). ElZayat (2024) emphasizes the position of the colonial translator, who is never regarded as a partner in the production of knowledge. Furthermore, Ribeiro (2024) describes the equivalence of the Babel translator's position, where their value is determined by how effectively the translator can facilitate access to a specific region. Therefore, in both cases, the colonial subject is not only constructed as a native informant but also as a resource whose utility is defined entirely by the colonial system

On the other hand, this practice also took place through the way institutions viewed the abilities of colonial subjects with hidden intentions. During the lecture, Prof. Playfair explained why Babel recruited them from diverse foreign backgrounds. He described this as an extraordinary distinction, and it was what attracted Babel. As can be seen from the following quote.

"That's why you're here [...] Wonderful, no, to hold such power by virtue of your foreign birth? I'm quite good with new languages, yet it would take me years to invoke Urdu the way you can without hesitation." (Kuang, 2022, p. 168–169)

What he says here sounds like praise for their abilities, but in fact reveals an implicit meaning. Prof. Playfair assumes that the abilities they possess are a form of power *"by virtue of their foreign birth"*, as if external factors such as life experiences, cultural values, and their growth environment did not contribute to the abilities that Prof. Playfair considers *"such power."* Thus, this statement suggests that the process is not important to colonialism; indeed, this *"such power"* is portrayed as something natural rather than the result of a complex process.

This pattern became increasingly obvious when Prof. Leblanc attempted to extract knowledge from Victoire. Victoire, who experienced this incident, later recounted it to her friends. She recounted it in the following passage, which describes how Prof. Leblanc constantly shifted their Kreyòl research project to a discussion of Vodou, a sacred Haitian tradition.

"I want to work on Krèyòl, which he's not wholly opposed to despite thinking it's a degenerate language, but all he wants to know about is Vodou. [...] He keeps asking about Vodou spells and poems [...] Would you be content to sit hour after hour with a white man as he asks you the story behind every metaphor, every god's name, so he can pilfer through your people's beliefs for a match-pair that might make a silver bar glow?" (Kuang, 2022, p. 201-202)

In this passage, there are two events that show the occurrence of appropriation at the same time. First, Prof. Leblanc assumes that Kreyòl is "degenerate," yet makes no such assumption about Vodou, which is knowledge within the same culture. Furthermore, Vodou, a sacred tradition for Haiti and Victoire, is treated as raw material for the purposes of research on silver-working. Thus, Prof. Leblanc not only exploits Victoire's knowledge in a rush but also degrades the language that gave birth to that culture. Additionally, the word "*pilfer*" indicates that this action was not carried out at Victoire's will, but is more accurately described as epistemic theft. This situation reveals an unseen reality in which colonialism effectively determines which knowledge is considered legitimate and which is merely viewed as degraded.

Across both events, Spivak (1988) explains that this mechanism does not just appropriate knowledge but also erases the legitimacy of the subjects who produce that knowledge. In other words, Prof. Playfair acknowledged their extraordinary

abilities, yet at the same time deliberately ignored the reasons behind those abilities and treated them as natural gifts, separating knowledge from its ownership or the underlying causes. Furthermore, when Prof. Playfair praised their abilities "*by virtue of their foreign birth*" and Prof. Leblanc extracted Vodou knowledge from Victoire, both were doing the same thing, according to Spivak (1988). They acknowledged the product but not its producer. Knowledge was appropriated, transformed, and legitimized by colonial institutions, while its producers remained in a position no more than sources. In this regard, Spivak (1988) emphasizes the role of the "native informant" in her statement, "*certain varieties of the Indian elite are at best native informants for first-world intellectuals interested in the voice of the Other.*" This position can never shift into that of an equal as "*knower,*" because the colonial system constructed this category precisely to ensure that knowledge flows in only one direction.

This model of appropriation, which acknowledges the products of knowledge but disregards their creators, aligns with what ElZayat (2024) identified in his study. His research adds that Prof. Leblanc's attitude reflects a pattern of colonialism, in which non-Western cultural knowledge is considered unworthy of being respected, yet still worthy of being exploited. ElZayat (2024) further refers to this broader pattern as the commodification of the colonial subject's background, where their identity and life experiences are treated as productive capital that can be directly exploited, even ignoring their authority. Thus, the colonial subject is never recognized as an equal knower because this mechanism does not acknowledge the colonial subject's ownership of knowledge.

The six data points presented above demonstrate that the mechanism of Extraction of Indigenous Knowledge and Credit Erasure plays the most consistently present mechanism of epistemic violence in *Babel*, operating across individual relationships, institutional practices, and the very structure of Babel's silver-magic system itself. Operating in a systematic way in which the knowledge, experience, skills, and cultural background of the colonial subject are gently exploited and utilized for colonial purposes, yet the colonial subject's agency over their own knowledge is never acknowledged. Spivak (1988) asserts that as long as the colonial subject is positioned only as a native informant and never as an equal knower, this mechanism will always be part of epistemic violence. In its practice in *Babel*, this pattern is movingly operating in the relationship between the subject colonial and the institutional concerning what kind of knowledge is valid and how knowledge producers do not get the credit.

C. Delegitimization of Subaltern Voices

Delegitimization of Subaltern Voices is the final mechanism which forms the core of Spivak's argument in her essay "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" This mechanism perpetuates epistemic violence not by closing off the space for colonial subjects to be heard but by denying spaces considered or recognized as legitimate specifically the availability of "knower" status for colonial subject within the colonial system. Spivak (1988) asserts that subjects in this position did not mean that they are mute or unable to speak. Instead, the system itself does not possess the capacity to accept or even acknowledge the subject's view as valid. In the *Babel*

narrative, this mechanism is identified through various agendas. It begins with Robin's denial of the colonially constructed identity, the adaptation of the narrative to be heard, until the painful reality that the voice of the colonial subject is accepted only when they no longer exist.

This mechanism was first identified in the context of a colonial dinner party. Robin, whose colonial identity had been shaped up to that point, suddenly shifted his claim by declaring that his identity was "*Chinaman*" when he overheard Mr. Baylis describing the Chinese as an "inferior race." This incident is described in the following quote.

"Mr Baylis. Mr Baylis, I'm a Chinaman." Mr Baylis, for once, fell silent. His eyes roved over Robin's face, as if trying to detect the truth of this statement in his features. Then, to Robin's great surprise, he burst out laughing. "No, you're not." He leaned back and clasped his hands over his chest, still guffawing. "Good Lord. That's hilarious. No, you're not." (Kuang, 2022, p. 315)

In that scene, Mr. Baylis's reaction is quite surprising. Rather than responding to the rejection of Robin's identity with anger, he treats the whole thing as nothing more than a joke "*That's hilarious.*" However, the fact remains that Robin is indeed a "*Chinaman*," and he will never be able to escape that identity. Yet Mr. Baylis's reaction says it all. Robin's claim as a colonial subject is heard, but it holds no legitimate authority in Mr. Baylis's view. Within Spivak's (1988) framework, this scene illustrates the "*slippage gap*," a condition in which the colonial or subaltern subject is capable of speaking, yet the system lacks the categories to accept that statement as fact. Robin is there, speaking clearly, his voice heard, but received

only as a joke, not as a legitimate claim, since Mr. Baylis treats it as something to laugh at rather than something to validate.

Through the scene where language preferences are adjusted to attract colonial public attention, we see evidence that this mechanism is actively at work throughout the narrative. This occurs when Anthony instructs Robin on how to write anti-colonial pamphlets to influence British public opinion and attention. The colonial subjects realize that they need to win over public opinion, and Anthony, who is more experienced in this arena, offers his insights on how to speak in the face of a system that refuses to listen them.

"You'll want to avoid rhetoric about anticolonialism and respecting national sovereignty. Use terms like scandal, collusion, corruption, lack of transparency... cast things in terms that the average Londoner will get worked up about, and don't make it an issue of race." / "You want me to translate things for white people," said Robin. / "Precisely." (Kuang, 2022, p. 416)

In this quote, a dark truth emerges that the colonial subjects were the entities most affected by the colonial system. Nevertheless, they could not express this directly to the public. On the other hand, they had to discard all vocabulary and language that literally expressed their resistance. They had to replace it with something that would resonate with the colonial public. Thus, the topic of “*anti-colonialism*” would not succeed. However, terms like “*scandal, collusion, corruption, lack of transparency*” might succeed. Robin eventually realized everything about “*translating things for white people.*” Spivak (1988) describes this condition as the core of delegitimization: the space to speak is open to Robin, but only on the condition that his own voice is replaced by one the colonial public

already deems legitimate. They seek alternatives by speaking through ventriloquism, borrowing the language and vocabulary of the system of power. In other words, being heard requires Robin to stop speaking as himself and instead let the system speak through him.

Previous events have taken this mechanism to a more problematic level. Previously, the Babel translators' resistance against colonialism was carried out by spreading narratives. This time, their resistance has gone deeper by striking and demanding political justice against the colonial system. However, the response they received seemed to underestimate the problem and appeared apathetic, as seen in the following quote.

"They crowded around the machine, watching nervously as Professor Chakravarti took down the message and transcribed it. He blinked at it for a moment, then said, 'They've more or less told us to shove it.' 'What?' Robin reached for the telegram. 'There's nothing else?' 'PLEASE REOPEN TOWER TO REGULAR BUSINESS STOP,' read Professor Chakravarti. 'That's all it says.' 'It's not even signed?' 'I can only assume it's coming direct from the Foreign Office,' said Professor Chakravarti. 'They don't take private messages this late.' 'There's no word about Playfair?' Victoire asked. 'Just the one line,' said Professor Chakravarti. 'That's it.'" (Kuang, 2022, p. 488)

In that scene, the response they received via Telegram was merely a one-line legal notice, not even signed. After all the demands, efforts, and risks they had taken, the colonial system simply replied, *"PLEASE REOPEN TOWER TO REGULAR BUSINESS STOP,"* as if the Babel translators' resistance had no chance of receiving a legitimate response. In response to the message, one translator even interpreted it as *"They've more or less told us to shove it."* This confirms that the voices, resistance, and discourse of the colonized subjects are indeed heard, yet treated as having no legitimate standing within the colonial system. Furthermore, while the colonial system did not outright reject their demands, what is even more

tragic is that they did not even acknowledge that there were demands worth being rejected. Thus, the colonial system's response revealed its unwillingness to take the demands of the colonized seriously. As a result, the urgency of their demands simply faded away because the system failed to make any tangible concessions.

Within Spivak's framework (1988), this event constitutes the delegitimization of space at the highest level where colonial subjects, whose identities have been constructed by the colonial system itself, can speak as political actors, yet the colonial power does not regard their demands as worthy of legitimate engagement. This suggests that epistemic violence operates through institutional attitudes that consider the demands of colonial subjects unworthy of recognition. On the other hand, the response given reduces the translators' efforts to mere administrative disruptions rather than acts of resistance against oppression. As a result, colonial subjects feel they are still able to speak out, but it is useless if the system hears them yet refuses to validate their voices and demands as legitimate.

The entire operational framework of this mechanism reaches its peak when it is no longer driven solely by external factors, but also by internal ones. The colonial subject, Victoire, begins to reconcile and internalize the realization that her voices will always be heard, yet never granted the legitimacy of belonging. She expresses this to her fellow colonial subject, Letty, in response to Letty's offer for her to become a completely colonial part. As can be seen in the following excerpt.

"We'll never be British...That identity is foreclosed to us. We are foreign because this nation has marked us so, and as long as we're punished daily for our ties to our homelands, we might as well defend them." (Kuang, 2022, p. 546)

Victoire conveys a deep meaning through the phrase “*That identity is foreclosed to us.*” The word “*foreclosed*” implies that their opportunity to “*be British*” was indeed destined never to be theirs. She chose not to use the term “rejected” because “rejected” implies a process of selection, whereas “*foreclosed*” is different. It signifies that such an opportunity never existed and was never even a possibility for them. In other words, Victoire and the other colonial subjects are free to speak and claim belonging, but that claim is never recognized as legitimate. On the other hand, Victoire is aware that this reality is a structural condition she has experienced throughout years of living alongside the colonial. No matter how hard they try to become part of the colonial order, they remain “*foreign because this nation has marked us so.*”

As previously mentioned, the operation of the following mechanism also involves internal factors within the colonial subject. In the translators’ resistance agenda, Robin initiates a climactic act of resistance, which he presents as the struggle’s resolution. However, this act comes with the cost of their lives. On the other hand, Victoire refuses because she does not want to end up this way. She does not want to be a mere ornament; she wants a future as depicted in the following quote.

"We have to die to get their pity. We have to die for them to find us noble. Our deaths are thus great acts of rebellion, a wretched lament that highlights their inhumanity. Our deaths become their battle cry. But I don't want to die, Robin. Her throat hitched. 'I don't want to die. I don't want to be their Imoinda, their Oroonoko. † I don't want to be their tragic, lovely lacquer figure. I want to live.' She fell against his shoulder. He wrapped his arms around her and held her tight, rocking back and forth. 'I want to live,' she repeated, 'and live, and thrive, and survive them. I want a future. I don't think death is a reprieve. I think it's – it's just the end. It forecloses everything.'" (Kuang, 2022, p. 552)

Based on that quote, Victoire is fully aware that in any case, the voices of colonial subjects are of no importance to the colonial system. Even their deaths might only be regarded as “*noble*,” a “*wretched lament*,” or even a “*battle cry*,” and not as a representation of their voices. For Victoire, that climactic act “*forecloses everything*.” She does not want to be a heroic figure. All she desires is to live happily, even though she is conscious that the colonial systems would only ever grant her recognition through death, never through her voice while alive. This means that she does not see sacrifice as a path to positive change. For her, the loss of life is not equal to the reward after death.

Across both events, Spivak (1988) explains, this condition is a construction of the dominant power’s subject-position that will never grant legitimacy to colonial subject or subalterns, however clearly, they speak. She explains that this is not a matter of the colonial subject’s effort or will to gain recognition or a space to be heard. Instead, it is a reality that the dominant system is constructed to hear them while withholding that recognition. In the end, the dominant system will prevail. This occurs because the mechanisms of epistemic violence implemented by the colonizers have succeeded completely. Colonial subjects are aware that no form of their speech will be recognized as legitimate by the colonial system. Within Spivak’s (1988) framework, this represents a radical form of the delegitimization of subaltern voices. Even when colonial subjects resist to the point of self-sacrifice, their voices of resistance are indeed heard, yet never granted the legitimacy or validity they sought.

Spivak (1988) states that the colonial system can only legitimate them under two conditions: as obedient objects or as martyrs who are no longer alive. Outside of these two conditions, their voices remain heard but unrecognized. This is what Victoire realized, yet she was unable to resist it and chose “*I want to live,*” forcing herself to close her eyes and ears to the epistemic violence she faced. Ultimately, Spivak (1988) concludes that “*The subaltern cannot speak*”; regardless of how loudly the subaltern or colonial subject may voice their concerns, it is heard yet never legitimized, because the system was never designed to validate it. Even death (in her narratives and essays) is confirmed not as an escape but rather as something that “*forecloses everything*”.

The fact that colonial subjects began to acknowledge the system’s refusal to legitimize their voice represents the ironic point that ElZayat (2024) also confirms through an analysis of the character Victoire. He reinforces this interpretation by asserting that Victoire’s refusal is an act that actually emphasizes that legitimate recognition for a colonial subject’s voices was never truly available from the beginning, whether in life or in death.

The five data points presented above indicate that the Delegitimization of Subalterns’ Voices mechanism operates dominantly in *Babel* to reveal the workings of epistemic violence. This mechanism is also central to Spivak’s (1988) argument in “*Can the Subaltern Speak?*”, which explains that the subaltern is not heard because the system structurally lacks the space to respond to the subaltern voices as properly as it might. In *Babel*, this mechanism is found in the final sections of

the narrative through a sequence of events starting from the interpersonal level, authoritative institutions or governments, to the intrapersonal level. Therefore, these events demonstrate that when colonial subjects or the subaltern begin to resist, this is when their voices are most clearly heard, yet most firmly denied legitimacy. Ultimately, this leads to Spivak's (1988) conclusion that "the subalterns cannot speak" as a radical assertion that no form of resistance, however audible, is ever granted legitimacy within the system of colonialism. has a space to be heard within the system of colonialism. Furthermore, this mechanism continues the sequence of previous mechanisms as a final stage or a confirmation that the space to be heard was never the same as the space to be legitimized. In other words, it closes all possibilities that colonial subjects might stand as legitimate entities.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This section provides conclusions and suggestions from literary research on the mechanisms of epistemic violence in Kuang's novel *Babel, or the Necessity of Violence*, through a Spivakian reading. The conclusion includes a summary of the findings and a synthesis of the core research, particularly in addressing the research questions outlined in Chapter I. Meanwhile, the suggestions consist of recommendations and ideas obtained during the research process and are intended for stakeholders in the academic sphere, particularly future researchers.

A. Conclusion

This study reveals that the epistemic violence conceptualized by Spivak in her essay “*Can the Subaltern Speak?*” operates extensively in the 2022 literary work by R.F. Kuang entitled *Babel, or the Necessity of Violence*. In this study, the researcher seeks to identify epistemic violence through its operational mechanisms. However, since Spivak does not directly construct her narrative of epistemic violence based on these operational mechanisms, the researcher conducts an in-depth analysis and subsequently categorizes Spivak’s arguments presented in her essay. Based on this analysis, three mechanisms were identified that operate sequentially within the dominant system or colonialism to shape epistemic violence, particularly against colonial subjects or those who may also be referred to as the subaltern.

Thus, this study finds that the three mechanisms of epistemic violence actively operate sequentially and mutually reinforce one another throughout the narrative. First, Colonial Identity Formation is the most intensely manifested mechanism, operating by defining the colonial subject as an inferior entity through the alteration of names, physical appearance, and even the indigenous identity attached to the colonial subject, in accordance with the will and standards of the colonial system. This is identified through the scene of the reconstruction of Robin's original name while simultaneously erasing and burying his old identity as a form of adaptation to the colonial system's standards of acceptability. This mechanism also constructs the foundation for subsequent mechanisms to operate.

Furthermore, the Extraction of Indigenous Knowledge and Credit Erasure emerge as the most impactful mechanisms, functioning by transforming colonies' knowledge into a tool of colonial domination that benefits a single-sided power system. Rather than being used to understand the world, knowledge is filtered, repurposed, and weaponized to sustain colonial interests, including the control of slavery and the infliction of physical suffering. Not only operating within the knowledge realm, but this mechanism also denies the subaltern credit as the owner of the specific knowledge. It worked by reducing the position of colonial subjects as knowledge producers to mere native informants. This is identified in the narrative where colonial agents exploit the linguistic abilities of Robin, Ramy, and Victoire as production assets without ever acknowledging them as the rightful owners of that knowledge. Throughout these practices, colonial institutions recognize the value of

knowledge while denying recognition to those who produce it, ensuring that knowledge flows only in ways that benefit colonial power.

Finally, the Delegitimization of Subaltern Voices emerges as the mechanism of highest intensity at the narrative climax, blocking the gaps of resistance for colonial subjects by closing off the legitimate space for subalterns or colonial subjects to speak. It works by the absence of a system that accommodates the voices of colonial subjects. This is identified through scenes where the demands of the translators are ignored by the government and criminalized by the media. This mechanism also constructs Spivak's (1988) central idea as a form of lockdown against all forms of resistance resulting from the implementation of previous mechanisms of epistemic violence.

This pattern confirms that epistemic violence in *Babel* is not accidental but rather structured. It begins with the construction of an inferior identity, continues with the exploitation of knowledge and the dismantling of the subalterns' credit, and finally culminates in the complete silencing of subaltern legitimate and valid voices. Thus, these three mechanisms form a structure of violence that is non-physical and invisible, yet remains harmful because it operates at the epistemic and knowledge level.

B. Suggestion

Based on the findings of this research, the researcher strongly recommends that research on postcolonial issues or topics in the field of literature continue to be developed. This recommendation is grounded in the researcher's conviction that the

integration of these topics and approaches holds significant potential. For future researchers, there are several points that need to be emphasized. First, Spivak's theoretical framework, which explores the experiences of the subaltern, has been relatively under-researched in other literary works. It is an opportunity for future researchers to identify novelties for their future research. Second, this study is limited to Spivak's framework and does not integrate it with another postcolonial concept. However, based on the data collection and analysis process, the researcher concludes that the *Babel* narrative is highly possible to explore with another postcolonial approach that has not been explored in this study, such as Bhabha's concept. This is the gap in this research that is highly possible to be filled by future studies.

Furthermore, for teachers and educators, particularly those in the fields of English literature or cultural studies, the researcher suggests several actions that can be taken to support teaching and learning activities based on the data collection and analysis process. Firstly, the categorization and classification of data on epistemic violence mechanisms in this study's classification data table can be adapted as a practical text-based analytical tool in lecture courses, so that the theory or analytical approach is not merely understood abstractly but also practically. Finally, the researcher suggests that lecturers teaching professional translation courses utilize the findings, particularly regarding the second and third mechanisms, in their classes as discussion material on translation ethics. Specifically, regarding how to respect the source language and how wisely such knowledge should be used to advance civilization rather than colonize specific communities.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

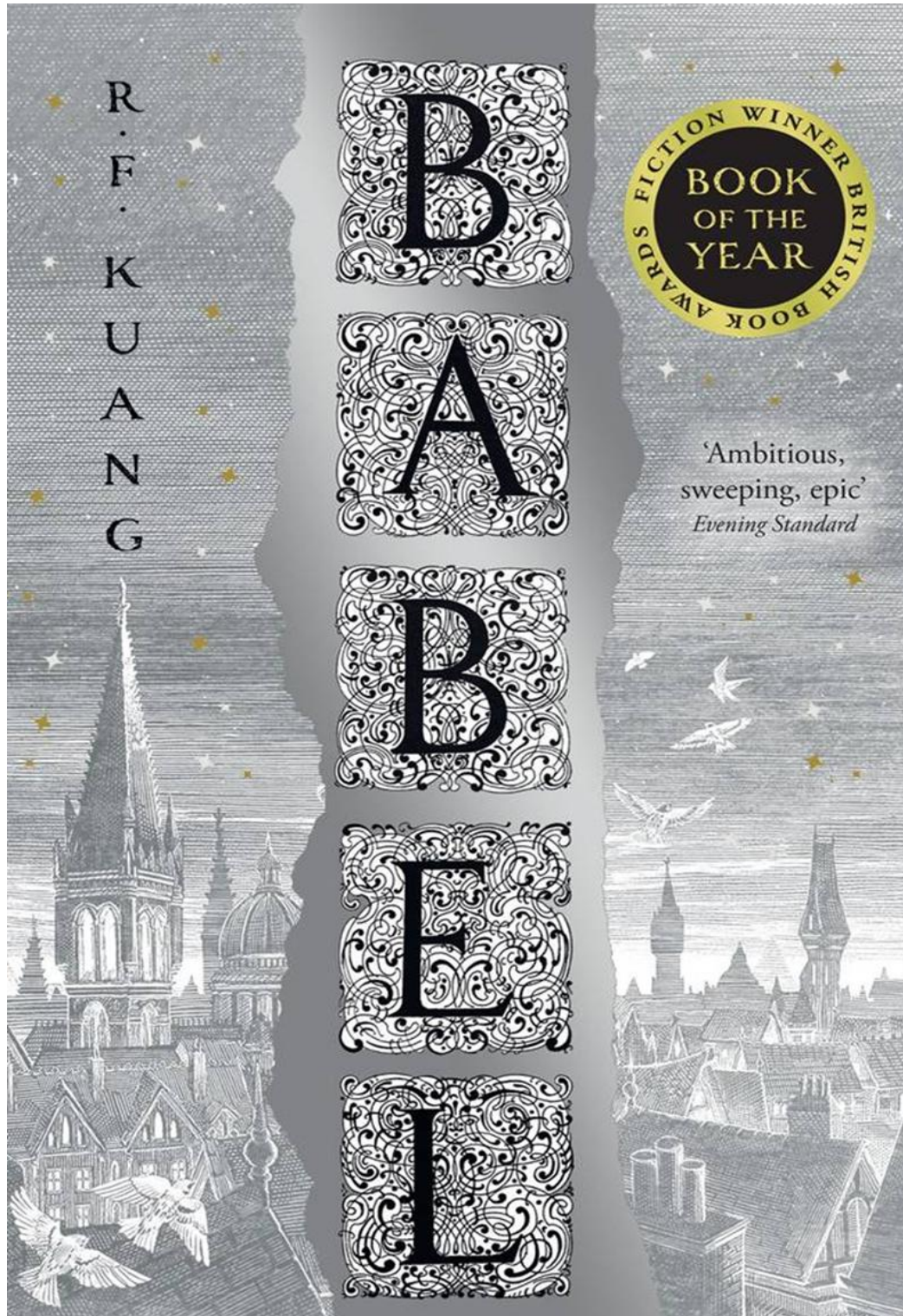


Born in Kediri in 2004 and an alumnus of SMAN 1 Plemahan, **Fadel Mochamad Al Firdaus** is a scholar whose journey is defined by a relentless pursuit of excellence and a profound reverence for the human experience. During high school, he actively contributes to the MPK. He is excellent in taking steps toward student aspirations through high-impact initiatives. Now, as an English Literature student at UIN Malang, he views the intricacies of language not merely as a field of

study, but as a divine gift that orchestrates the very fabric of human interaction and behaviorism. Within the academic sphere, he has masterfully curated a personal brand as nonchalant, independent, gentle, and impeccably professional. Allowing him to build a seamless rapport with peers and faculty alike. His hallmark is an uncompromising focus on strategic targets; by synthesizing a perfectionist's discipline with a logical, 'realist-first' management style, he ensures that every ambition is transformed into an achievable reality through structured, high-stakes precision.

APPENDIX

A. Literary Work's Cover



B. Literary Work's URL

https://books.google.co.id/books/about/Babel.html?id=ZWRQEAAAQBAJ&redir_esc=y

C. Literary Work's Synopsis

The novel *Babel: Or the Necessity of Violence: An Arcane History of the Oxford Translators' Revolution* by Rebecca F. Kuang (2022) is a work of magic realism that follows the life of Robin Swift, a boy from China who is taken in by Professor Lovell and brought to London. From an early age, Robin is intensively trained in languages with a single purpose: to enter Babel, the Royal Institute of Translation at Oxford University. Within the institute, a form of magic known as Silver-Working is produced to facilitate various kinds of labor, operating through the subtle differences in meaning between words from different languages. When he is finally admitted to Babel, Robin discovers the world he has long dreamed of. He immerses himself in linguistic studies, embraces the academic atmosphere, and forms close friendships with other multilingual students. For Robin, Babel becomes a space where he can nurture his love for linguistics. However, over time, he begins to realize that the silver magic generated through translation is used as a source of power for the British Empire, sustaining its dominance over colonies through the monopoly of knowledge and language.

Robin's moral dilemma deepens when he is secretly recruited by Hermes, an organization seeking to disrupt Babel's operations and challenge imperial authority. Torn between the comfort of academic life and the urge to resist injustice, Robin starts questioning the role of language that he has long cherished. He witnesses how scholarly institutions can function as instruments of power, and gradually understands that translation is not a neutral practice but one deeply entangled with complex power relations. The conflict reaches its peak when Robin ultimately chooses the path of resistance and becomes involved in an effort to dismantle the Silver-Working system at Babel. This decision leads him toward a path of sacrifice, positioning him as a symbol of resistance against imperialism and colonial domination, and ultimately contributing to the collapse of the very institution that had once become his home.

D. Biography of the Novelist

Rebecca F. Kuang was born in Guangzhou, China, on May 29, 1996, and later grew up in the United States. She pursued her undergraduate studies at Georgetown University, majoring in History. She later completed an MPhil in Chinese Studies

at Magdalene College, University of Cambridge. This academic background shaped her interest in themes such as colonialism, translation, war, and power relations.

Kuang began her career as a writer and is now widely recognized as one of the prominent Chinese American novelists in the fictional genre. Through her debut trilogy, *The Poppy War* (2018), followed by *The Dragon Republic* (2019) and *The Burning God* (2020), she gained international recognition and critical acclaim for her exploration of dark themes, including war, colonialism, and identity. She later published *Babel: Or the Necessity of Violence: An Arcane History of the Oxford Translators' Revolution* (2022), which attracted global attention and became a #1 New York Times bestseller.

In addition to her career as a novelist, Kuang has continued her academic work in the field of East Asian languages and literature. Her writing is known for combining strong historical research with explorations of issues such as imperialism, resistance, cultural identity, and the politics of knowledge. Through both her academic and fictional works, Kuang contributes to contemporary discussions on colonialism, knowledge production, and the politics of language.

E. Data Extraction

The following information covers, (1) Data Extraction Table, used to document each selected quote consistently. (2) Column Transcription, used to explain the purpose, function, and intent of each column in point 1 above. (3) Mechanisms Code Labels, used to simplify the identification of each mechanism of epistemic violence by assigning a code label. (4) Mechanisms Operational Definitions, used to provide an overview and define the meaning, purpose, and objectives of each mechanism of epistemic violence.

1. Classification Data Table Format

Quote ID (Book.Chapter.Page.)	Scene Context	Character(s)	Quote (verbatim)	Context Summary	Primary Mechanism Code

2. Column Transcription

a. Quote_ID

Unique identifier for each extracted quotation. Format: Book – Chapter - Page. Eg: 1.1.1 for Book 1 – Chapter 1 – Page 1 etc.. Sequential numbering throughout the dataset.

b. Scene Context

Brief description of the scene or setting. Examples: "Robin's first day at Babel", "Silver-working demonstration", "Hermes Society meeting". Length: 3-5 words maximum.

c. Character(s)

Characters involved in the quoted passage. Include all relevant speakers and subjects. Optional: Note power dynamics (e.g., "Prof. Lovell → Robin").

d. Quote (verbatim)

Direct quotation from the text. Must be exact transcription. Use ellipsis [...] for omitted portions. Maintain original punctuation and formatting.

e. Context Summary

2-3 sentence summary providing narrative context. Clarifies circumstances surrounding the quotation. Includes relevant background information for interpretation.

f. Primary Mechanism Code

Main epistemic violence mechanism identified. Use codes: M1, M2, M3. Only one primary code per entry.

3. Mechanisms Code Labels

a. M-1 Colonial Identity Formation

Indonesian: *Pembentukan Identitas Kolonial*

b. M-2 Extraction of Indigenous Knowledge and Credit Erasure

Indonesian: *Ekstraksi Pengetahuan Lokal dan Penghapusan Kredit*

c. M-3 Delegitimization of Subaltern Voices

Indonesian: *Penghapusan Legitimasi Suara Kaum Subaltern*

4. Mechanisms Operational Definitions

a. M-1 Colonial Identity Formation

The systematic and organized process of creating, defining, and constructing colonial subjects as inferior "Other" while simultaneously obliterating traces of their pre-colonial subjectivity and indigenous knowledge systems.

b. M-2 Extraction of Indigenous Knowledge and Credit Erasure

The process of converting complex, dynamic, diverse, and contextual knowledge systems into singular, fixed, and decontextualized forms (codification) by combined with institutional mediation that filters, controls, and regulates access to knowledge. It worked without recognizing

the subjects who produced that knowledge as legitimate knowers or authoritative epistemic agents.

c. M-3 Delegitimization of Subaltern Voices

The structural condition wherein subalterns lack valid subject-positions within dominant knowledge and discourse structures from which they can speak and be heard as rational, authoritative subjects. This is not about physical inability to speak, but about the absence of enunciative positions from which subaltern speech registers as meaningful and legitimate.

F. Classification Outcomes or Classification Data Table

No	Quote_ID	Scene Context	Character(s)	Quote (verbatim)	Context Summary	Code
1	1.1.11-12	The main character's name was rewritten to suit colonial preferences	Prof. Lovell, Robin	<i>'I have a name,' said the boy. 'It's—'</i> <i>'No, that won't do. No Englishman can pronounce that. Did Miss Slate give you a name?'</i> <i>Family names were not things to be dropped and replaced at whim, he thought. They marked lineage; they marked belonging.</i> <i>'Very good. Robin Swift you'll be. Mr Swift, good to meet you.'</i>	While in Canton, the conversation between Prof. Lovell and Robin (the boy) focused on renaming "the boy" with the aim of choosing a name that would be easier for English speakers to pronounce. "The boy" asked to use the name Lovell, but Prof. Lovell refused and left the decision to "the boy" to choose his own new name, so he chose the name Robin Swift, inspired by the books he read during his childhood.	M1
2	1.1.18	Deep down, Robin tried to suppress his native language and identity	Robin	<i>When thoughts popped up in Chinese, he quashed them.</i> <i>He buried his past life, not because it was so terrible but because abandoning it was the only way to survive. He pulled on his English accent like a new coat, adjusted everything he could about himself to make it fit, and, within weeks, wore it with comfort. In weeks, no one was asking him to speak a few words in Chinese for their entertainment. In weeks, no one seemed to remember he was Chinese at all.</i>	On the journey from Canton to London, as seen through a third-person perspective, Robin tries to bury his true identity deep within himself. He does this not because he hates it, but because he is determined to survive by adapting to the language, customs, and culture of the colonial world.	M1
3	1.2.22-23	The legalization process to make Robin a full-fledged British citizen.	Prof. Lovell, Robin, Solicitor	<i>Professor Lovell took Robin on a series of errands in the service of assimilating him into British civil society. They saw a physician who weighed him, examined him, and reluctantly declared him fit for life on the island: 'No tropical diseases nor fleas, thank heavens. He's a bit small for his age, but raise him on mutton and mash and he'll be fine. Now let's have a</i>	Upon arriving in London, Lovell took Robin to a series of places to transform him into an Englishman. A doctor who reluctantly certified Robin as a legal resident, a barber who cut his hair, a hatmaker, a shoemaker, and a tailor who measured every inch of Robin's body. However, none of this was done with Robin's consent.	M1

No	Quote_ID	Scene Context	Character(s)	Quote (verbatim)	Context Summary	Code
				<i>smallpox jab – roll that sleeve up, please, thank you. It won't hurt. Count to three.'</i> <i>They saw a barber, who clipped Robin's unruly, chin-length curls into a short, neat crop above his ears. They saw a hatter, a bootmaker, and finally a tailor, who measured every inch of Robin's body and showed him several bolts of cloth among which Robin, overwhelmed, chose at random.</i>		
4	1.2.39-41	Prof. Lovell beat Robin while hurling racial slurs	Prof. Lovell, Robin	<i>As he neared the door, Professor Lovell drew his hand back and brought his knuckles hard against Robin's left cheek. [p.39]</i> <i>Professor Lovell wasn't finished. As Robin rose to his knees, dazed, the professor pulled the poker from beside the fireplace and swung it diagonally against the right side of Robin's torso. Then he brought it down again. And again. [p.40]</i> <i>'Laziness and deceit are common traits among your kind. This is why China remains an indolent and backwards country while her neighbours hurtle towards progress. You are, by nature, foolish, weak-minded, and disinclined to hard work. You must resist these traits, Robin. You must learn to overcome the pollution of your blood.'</i> [p.41]	When Robin forgot about his tutoring session because he was engrossed in reading, Lovell brutally beat him with his fists and an iron poker. After the physical violence stopped, Lovell made racist and derogatory remarks claiming that laziness and dishonesty were "natural traits" of Chinese people. Robin was forced to choose between submitting completely or returning to poverty in Canton.	M1
5	2.5.103	Griffin unveils Babel's dark-academia	Griffin, Robin	<i>'Would you like to know the second and third largest sources of income at Babel?' 'Legal?' 'No. Militaries, both state and private,' said Griffin. 'And then slave traders. Legal makes pennies in comparison.' [...] 'Babel collects foreign languages and foreign talent the same way it hoards silver and uses them to produce translation magic that benefits England and England only.'</i>	Griffin asked Robin to steal resources from Babel. He claimed that the stolen goods would be used for humanitarian purposes. Furthermore, he revealed how Babel operated by manipulating and exploiting the colonies' resources, then commercializing them for the slave trade and the military. In his view, all of Babel's "knowledge production" ultimately only benefited Britain.	M2
6	2.6.116	Prof. Chakravarti appointed Robin as a substitute for the research trip	Prof. Chakravarti, Robin	<i>'But it makes things a bit hard when the Qing Emperor has decreed it punishable by death to teach a foreigner Chinese, you see.' He patted Robin's shoulder. 'We make do</i>	Robin asked if they could go to Beijing to study the Chinese language. Chakravarti explained that field research in China wasn't possible, then patted Robin on the shoulder and called him "the next best thing."	M2

No	Quote_ID	Scene Context	Character(s)	Quote (verbatim)	Context Summary	Code
				<i>with what we have. You're the next best thing.'</i>	(meaning Robin was a substitute for direct access to China)	
7	2.9.168-169	Playfair praised the "power of international students"	Prof. Playfair, Robin, Ramy, Victoire	<i>'That's why you're here [...] Wonderful, no, to hold such power by virtue of your foreign birth? I'm quite good with new languages, yet it would take me years to invoke Urdu the way you can without hesitation.'</i>	Playfair explained that students like Robin, Ramy, and Victoire were recruited to Babel because they were already fluent in the languages Babel needed without having to study them. Playfair called this an extraordinary "gift."	M2
8	2.11.201-202	Prof. Leblanc drew on Vodou knowledge from Victoire	Prof. Leblanc, Victoire	<i>'I want to work on Krèyòl, which he's not wholly opposed to despite thinking it's a degenerate language, but all he wants to know about is Vodou. [...] He keeps asking about Vodou spells and poems [...] Would you be content to sit hour after hour with a white man as he asks you the story behind every metaphor, every god's name, so he can pilfer through your people's beliefs for a match-pair that might make a silver bar glow?'</i>	Victoire expressed her frustration with Prof. Leblanc, who kept diverting the Kreyòl project to questions about Vodou. Leblanc regarded Kreyòl as a "degenerate language" but was interested in Vodou as a source of silver match-pairs.	M2
9	3.13.246	Due to Exams reslut, Robin got interrogated	Prof. Lovell, Robin	<i>"You were a dock boy in Canton. Your mother was an outcast. Even if your father had been Chinese, your station would have been the same. You would have scraped along for pennies your entire life. You never would have seen the shores of England. You never would have read Horace, Homer, or Thucydides – you never would have opened a book, for that matter. You would have lived and died in squalor and ignorance, never imagining the world of opportunities that I have afforded you. I lifted you from destitution. I gifted you the world."</i>	Robin was arrested on charges of theft involving Hermes and interrogated by Prof. Lovell in his office. In the course of his questioning, Lovell launched into a lengthy account describing Robin's life before entering Oxford as one of inferiority and lowly status.	M1
10	3.17.315	English Factory Dinner	Robin, Mr. Baylis	<i>"Mr Baylis. Mr Baylis, I'm a Chinaman." Mr Baylis, for once, fell silent. His eyes roved over Robin's face, as if trying to detect the truth of this statement in his features. Then, to Robin's great surprise, he burst out laughing. "No, you're not." He leaned back and clasped his hands over his chest, still guffawing. "Good Lord. That's hilarious. No, you're not."</i>	After Baylis referred to Chinese people as an "inferior race," Robin tried to assert his identity by saying, "I am Chinese." Instead of receiving acknowledgment, his statement was met with laughter. Baylis refused to acknowledge the identity Robin claimed, viewing his appearance as inconsistent with the identity he asserted.	M3
11	4.20.373	Victoire's Testimony	Victoire, Letty	<i>"Capitale," Victoire said. "The Latin capitale, derived from caput,</i>	Victoire explained to Letty that Babel was researching a silver rod derived from the	M2

No	Quote_ID	Scene Context	Character(s)	Quote (verbatim)	Context Summary	Code
				<i>becomes the Old French chatel, which in English becomes chattel... they fix those bars to iron chains so that slaves can't escape. You know how? It makes them docile. Like animals."</i>	etymological connection between the words "capitale" and "chattel." This linguistic chain was then used to create a device capable of making enslaved people obedient. Victoire also emphasized that the effect made humans as submissive as animals.	
12	4.23.416	Anthony taught Robin about pamphlets	Anthony, Robin	<i>"You'll want to avoid rhetoric about anticolonialism and respecting national sovereignty. Use terms like scandal, collusion, corruption, lack of transparency... cast things in terms that the average Londoner will get worked up about, and don't make it an issue of race." / "You want me to translate things for white people," said Robin. / "Precisely."</i>	Anthony taught Robin how to write pamphlets that would resonate with British readers. He advised against using anti-colonial language or directly addressing racial issues. Instead, they should use terms like "corruption" or "scandal" to make their message more palatable to the public. Robin realized that he had to "translate" colonial issues to align with the British perspective. Anthony agreed that this was indeed the strategy needed to ensure their message was heard.	M3
13	4.24.436	In prison, Robin was tortured	Robin, Sterling Jones	<i>"The Greek agōnia means a contest – originally, a sports gathering between athletes. It gained the connotation of suffering much later. But I'm translating from English back into the Greek, so the bar knows to induce suffering, not remove it. Clever, no?"</i>	Sterling explains that the silver rod he used to torture Robin was derived from the etymological root of the word "agony." He traced the English word back to its Greek root, "agōnia," to evoke a sense of suffering. The linguistic knowledge taught at Babel was used to activate the device. This process transformed linguistic knowledge into a mechanism of torture. Robin was forced to endure suffering through a system derived from his own studies.	M2
14	5.27.488	Parliament's telegram response	(-) Parliament or Foreign Office, Babel stikers	<i>They crowded around the machine, watching nervously as Professor Chakravarti took down the message and transcribed it. He blinked at it for a moment, then said, 'They've more or less told us to shove it.' 'What?' Robin reached for the telegram. 'There's nothing else?' 'PLEASE REOPEN TOWER TO REGULAR BUSINESS STOP,' read Professor Chakravarti. 'That's all it says.' 'It's not even signed?' 'I can only assume it's coming direct from the Foreign Office,' said Professor Chakravarti. 'They don't take private messages this late.' 'There's no word about Playfair?' Victoire asked.</i>	After the Babel translators went on strike, they sent political demands to the government. The only response they received was a one-line telegram instructing them to reopen the tower as usual. There was no response to their demands regarding the war in China or the violence against Hermes. The government treated the action merely as an operational disruption, not a political statement. The students realized that their message was not being taken seriously at all.	M3

No	Quote_ID	Scene Context	Character(s)	Quote (verbatim)	Context Summary	Code
				<i>'Just the one line,' said Professor Chakravarti. 'That's it.'</i>		
15	5.28.515	Newspaper framing of the strike	(-) Newspapers or public discourse	<i>They were malicious ingrates with no agenda at all except a desire to hurt England, to bite the hand that had fed them – and this required no further explanation, for it was a motive that the British public were all too ready to believe.</i>	The British media portrayed the Babel translators as ungrateful individuals intent on harming Britain. The public accepted this narrative without requiring further evidence. Their actions were not interpreted as political demands, but as an act of treason. The public believed it immediately because it aligned with existing stereotypes about colonial students. Any other explanation was deemed unnecessary.	M1
16	5.31.546	Victoire turned down Letty's offer	Victoire, Letty	<i>'We'll never be British...That identity is foreclosed to us. We are foreign because this nation has marked us so, and as long as we're punished daily for our ties to our homelands, we might as well defend them.'</i>	Letty suggested that the translators could leave their original identities behind and become part of British society. Victoire refused, saying that they would never be considered British. She explained that the country had already labeled them as foreigners. As long as they continued to be punished for their origins, a British identity was not a realistic option. For that reason, she chose to defend her homeland.	M3
17	5.32.552	Victoire rejects the narrative of self-sacrifice	Victoire, Robin	<i>'We have to die to get their pity. We have to die for them to find us noble. Our deaths are thus great acts of rebellion, a wretched lament that highlights their inhumanity. Our deaths become their battle cry. But I don't want to die, Robin.'</i>	Robin suggested destroying the tower, even if it meant they would die. Victoire refused, saying that the colonial system would only acknowledge their humanity if they died. She realized that their deaths would be turned into a symbol by the dominant group. In other words, they would only be heard after becoming victims. Victoire did not want to accept death as the only way for their voices to be heard.	M3

No	Code	Transcribe	Table Number	Frequency	Percentage	Note	Color
1	M1	Colonial Identity Formation	1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 15	6 Data	35.29%	Identity Control	
2	M2	Extraction of Indigenous Knowledge and Credit Erasure	5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13	6 Data	35.29%	Extraction and Weaponized Knowledge	
3	M3	Delegitimization of Subaltern Voices	10, 12, 14, 16, 17	5 Data	29.41%	Unable to Speak Legitimately	
Total				17 Data	100		

G. Turnitin Sheets



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- Program Studi : Sastra Inggris
- Judul Skripsi : Mechanisms of Epistemic Violence in R.F. Kuang's *Babel, or the Necessity of Violence*

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