

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Research

English literature is known to be a mirror to the real world. It discusses a wide variety of topics that people come to face through decades. According to Kolin, "English literature encompasses a wide range of themes that reflect the complexities of human experience. These themes include love and romance, identity and self-discovery, power and corruption, social inequality, the human condition, and the pursuit of truth and justice. Through the exploration of these themes, literature offers profound insights into the human psyche, challenges societal norms, and provides a mirror to the complexities of the world we inhabit." (2018) One of the many themes that are popularly discussed by English literature writers is the theme of Historical Fiction. Historical Fiction has been a long discussion in the area of literature, it affected the authors of well-known authors, but also readers who have experienced in day to day lives.

Babel: Or the Necessity of Violence: An Arcane History of the Oxford Translators' Revolution, or shortened by the present writer as *Babel* is a historical fiction dark academia fantasy written by R.F Kuang which was published on August 23, 2022. *Babel* tells the story of Robin Swift, a young boy from Canton, China whose family died by cholera and is saved by Professor Richard Lovell who then brings Robin to continue his life in London as a scholar in Babel: Oxford's prestigious Royal Institute of Translation. As he starts to study in Babel, Robin learns silver making (the art of manifesting the meaning lost in translation using enchanted silver bars) and the effects it causes for London and other countries. With this novel, R. F Kuang describes her representation of England's history in the era of Industrialization hand in hand with the archive history of Oxford as her story's background setting inspiration in which she added an alternate reality where magic exists. Silver bars became the world's necessity and with London becoming its primary factory, The Britain Empire became an unstoppable machine. But in every factory, there will always be workers and resources. This is where Robin and his mother language comes into play. With R. F Kuang's plot, it gives readers a dark yet

magically creative image towards the birth of colonisation of a community and the ending of the act.

The story itself discusses a variety of topics regarding imperialism and colonialism in the 19th century through the world of fiction fantasy, with language and culture diversity being the story's theme. The novel, whose name is rooted from the Bible's chapter of Genesis, *Babel*, unveils many discussions from the author, such as politics, post-colonial history issues, culture and friendship. One of the unique matters that this writer has come across is the depiction of capitalism inside the fictional world R.F Kuang has created. Based from multiple sources of old England colonialism history as well as a touch of the author's own experience during her studies in London, R.F Kuang sheds lights readers into the truth on the existence capitalism that has been happening in England's society for many generations through the eyes of younger generations such as Robin Swift. This sparks a new perspective for the present writer on the discussion of capitalism and the message that the author wanted to convey towards younger generations towards the related matter.

With this, the present writer's aim of this study is to find and show evidence of this research aimed to analyse the development that is presented in the novel *Babel*.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Problems that are discuss in this research are:

1. How does the representation of capitalism in *Babel* reflect and critique different forms of capitalist system?
2. How do the forms of capitalism effects themes such as mass movement, rebellion, and violence?
3. What messages do the text convey about capitalism in the novel *Babel*?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is:

- a. To show types of capitalism depicted in R.F Kuang's *Babel*.
- b. To examine the impacts of capitalism towards the setting and characters in the story's environment.

- c. To discuss the author's message on the topic of capitalism.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Capitalism has been an ongoing phenomenon in various backgrounds such as economical, historical, political, cultural, and many more. By analysing the capitalism that is depicted in R.F Kuang's writings, the present writer hopes that readers gain more perspective on the matters of capitalism towards younger and diverse generations as well as giving a clear view for readers enjoyment of the novel *Babel*.

1.5 Methodology of Study

This research will be using qualitative method. With the novel *Babel* by R.F Kuang as this research's main material, the present writer will be using deductive data to show evidence of capitalism and its types that is found in R.F Kuang's writings where it will be gained by qualitative observation in which is supported by multiple sources data of previous related oriented studies. These findings for this research will be given through a descriptive manner.

In order to collect the need data for this *skripsi*, the present writer will be reading the main material *Babel* by R.F Kuang along with understanding Capitalism. After understanding both materials, the present writer will analyse both materials which its findings will be presented later on.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

In this study, the primary focus will centre on the analysis of R.F. Kuang's novel *Babel*, as its central research objective. The scope of this research is specifically tailored to elucidate the themes of capitalism as depicted within this novel. The analysis will draw upon Adam Smith's theory of Capitalism as well as Edward Siad's Colonialism and Franz Fanon's theory of violence.

1.7 Status of the Study

Babel by R. F. Kuang is still to be considered a new subject of research due to the book being released mid-year of 2022, not long before this research is made. Yet, surprisingly, after conducting research on previous studies, the author has found several studies discussing the novel. In *The Weaponisation of the Language of Oppression:: Review of RF Kuang, Babel: Or the Necessity of Violence: An Arcane History of the Oxford Translators' Revolution* (Kohlke, 2022), It emphasises how the book prompts readers to contemplate the often-overlooked historical burdens and the historical injustices perpetrated by the West, which form the basis for prevalent anti-China narratives prevalent in Western politics and media today. This review also relates to the discussion in *Exploring the politics of fantasy: an in-depth analysis into the worlds of fantasy and science fiction* (Bongoyan, 2023) in which highlights the usage of fantasy to criticise political issues in fictive and metaphorical ways.

As for *The Biblical, Reinvented* (Hoke, 2022), its writer explores the ways in which science fiction authors reimagine biblical stories to contemplate the possibilities of human nature. One such author is R.F. Kuang, whose novel draws on the biblical story of the Tower of Babel. Kuang's novel uses the scattering of languages and peoples in Genesis 11 to explore the themes of empire, postcolonialism, and the ongoing colonization of languages.

As for *Nostalgia in dark academia* (Nguyen, 2022), its author explores the theme of campus nostalgia, focusing on its portrayal in a relatively new literary genre called dark academia. The discussion by Nguyen, of course, is accompanied by a further discussion of Dark Academia in English literature novels, *The Power of Dark Academia: Exposing the Violent Relationship Students Have with the Academy* (Golden, 2023). This thesis grasps a larger scope to what Nguyen has discussed before in her journal in which Golden highlights the bond that academic students in dark academia novels have with their academic institute; which is violent and tragic. Lastly, in *What Can Double Estrangement Reveal about Speculative Fiction?* (Sanchez-Taylor, 2023) in which discuss the benefits of double estrangement in order to grasp a better understanding of the genre of a certain book, in this case fiction with using R. F. Kuang's novel as the journal's one of many examples.

With the information that has been gained, the present writer found out that there has not been any study that further discusses the novel and capitalism that is found in it. Hence, this author has concluded that this research will discuss the relation between both.

1.8 Organization of the study

1. Chapter I – Introduction

Background research, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, methodology of the study, scope and limitation of the study, & status of the study and their detailed explanation is provided in this chapter.

2. Chapter II - Review of Related Literature

In this chapter, the methods and theory that had been chosen will be given further information and discussion in which will determine the making of this research.

3. Chapter III - Analysis and Discussion

All of the discussion of the problem, data analysis, and implication of theory is found in this chapter. This author will further discuss her findings of capitalism in the novel that will give results to the problems of the study.

4. Chapter IV – Conclusion

Lastly, this chapter brings forth results of the research that is gained which then leads to further suggestions and recommendation to both readers and other researchers that are fascinated to continue the topic of the research.