



Unraveling Madness: Linguistic Complexities in ‘Waiting for the Barbarian’ and ‘The Secret History’

Shayan Aqdas¹, Zunaira Aslam², Ayyaz Ahmed³

¹University of Stavanger, Stavanger, Norway, shayanaqdas@gmail.com

²University of Stavanger, Stavanger, Norway, zunairaaslam32@gmail.com

³University of Technology and Applied Sciences, Ibra, Oman, chayyazahmed@gmail.com

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Abstract— *The research paper is a qualitative study of the multifaceted role of language as a potent tool of power and its connection to the theme of madness within the novels "Waiting for the Barbarians" by Coetzee and "The Secret History" by Tartt. Within the world of fiction, language emerges as a dynamic force, enabling creators to craft narratives that draw upon intricate emotions and characterizations. Close textual reading and analysis serve as the primary instruments for data collection, and this research contextualizes itself within the broader landscape of literary analysis, postcolonial studies, and discourse analysis, and unveils the dynamic ways in which language becomes a tool for wielding power, from economic and political dominance to coercive control. Ultimately, the paper underscores the impact of language on societal power structures, and its role in constructing and dismantling narratives, offering a compelling lens through which to examine the theme of madness in these literary works.*



Keywords— *Power, identity, manipulation, isolation*

I. INTRODUCTION

Fiction, arising from a creator’s imaginative thinking and expanding to different genres, serves the purpose of forming and modeling a narrative. The narratives usually revolve around characters, presenting a story to them and unfolding their tales to the audience. To make these characters a central piece in fiction, emotions are associated with them. Through fiction, a person can be transferred to another place or a mindset to experience new things; it not only allows him to expand his mind but also enables him to undergo an array of emotions. He projects his own emotions and understanding of life onto the characters of fiction to comprehend their narrative in a better way. Fiction can depict emotions through several ways, namely through the narration, including dialogues and monologues, description of settings and objects, the characters’ thinking processes, the situations they encounter, their relationships, etc. Language is a system of symbols by which human beings express themselves, it is

used by people to convey their ideas, express themselves, communicate and coordinate with others.

Language changes its meaning according to the speaker, it can be used to assert authority, control narratives, and manipulate perceptions; therefore, it is believed that language and power are deeply interconnected. The speakers exhibit their power through the usage of language by creating or affirming their ideologies in society. Foucault (1978) explains that power is not just held by individuals or institutions but is instead diffused throughout society with the help of language. According to Fairclough (1995), language is a “social process” as well as a “socially conditioned process”. It plays an important role in the construction and maintenance of social structures. This makes the language a form of social practice which produces social identities and hierarchies based on class, gender, race and sexuality. Therefore, language and discourse are a system of ideologies, knowledge and beliefs which gets imposed on an oppressed group by dominant group by social and discursive practices.

This study builds upon a well-established tradition of scholarship in the social sciences and humanities, drawing from influential theorists like Foucault, Said, and Althusser. It also incorporates contemporary linguistic theories, such as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, to enrich the analysis of the role of language in shaping thought, cognition, and cultural perspectives. This paper explores a distinctive perspective by demonstrating how language, when manipulated by those in power, can contribute to the disintegration of the human psyche, ultimately leading to madness by analyzing *Waiting for the Barbarians* (Coetzee, 1982) and *The Secret History* (Tartt, 2002). Coetzee examines the roles of power and oppression in his work *Waiting for the Barbarians* while Donna Tartt delves into the themes of identity and deceit in her work in *The Secret History*. A strong novelty in this study is its comprehensive examination of the intricate relationship between language and madness within the selected novels, "Waiting for the Barbarians" and "The Secret History." While previous research has explored the role of language as a tool of power and control, this study takes a fresh approach by specifically connecting linguistic complexities to the theme of madness in literature. It highlights how language is not only a means of communication but a dynamic force that can lead characters and societies towards states of madness.

II. METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in this study is centered around close textual reading and analysis, aligned with established literary analysis and discourse analysis frameworks. The study focuses on two novels, "Waiting for the Barbarians" and "The Secret History," and examines the language used within these texts to portray the theme of madness. The selection of the novels is based on their thematic relevance to madness and for their rich narrative content and potential for linguistic analysis. This study involves systematic reading of the texts, paying specific attention to dialogues, monologues, character descriptions, and narrative strategies that contribute to the portrayal of madness. Quotes and textual excerpts that exemplify linguistic complexities related to madness have been documented.

III. FINDINGS

The collected textual data has undergone a rigorous analysis process. Initially, thematic coding has been employed to identify sections of text related to madness and linguistic nuances associated with it. Subsequently, a close linguistic analysis has been conducted to dissect the language used, including rhetorical devices, figurative language, and narrative techniques. The

analysis of the textual data has revealed several significant findings. Language is a potent tool used by characters in both novels to assert power, manipulate perceptions, and construct narratives. Linguistic complexities, such as the use of specific vocabulary, metaphors, and narrative strategies, contribute to the thematic portrayal of madness. Power dynamics in the novels are reinforced through linguistic manipulation, leading to the dehumanization of marginalized groups and the creation of societal divisions. Characters who mimic the language and behaviors of others may be perceived as mad by those who hold power, adding layers to the exploration of madness in the text.

IV. DISCUSSION

The study of language and power has been a prominent area of interest in literary and cultural studies. It stems from the recognition that language is not merely a means of communication but a potent instrument through which individuals and groups exert influence, assert authority, and construct narratives that shape perceptions of reality. This research context draws from the broader field of literary analysis, postcolonial studies, discourse analysis, and the examination of language as a social and political force. The paper's exploration of language as a potent tool of power and its connection to the theme of madness finds its roots in a well-established tradition of scholarship in the social sciences and humanities. This research draws on the seminal contributions of influential theorists and scholars who have extensively examined the dynamic interplay between language and power, as well as the ways in which discourse shapes social realities. There have been multiple studies exploring the impact of language on thought, one of such studies is by an American linguist Benjamin Lee Whorf, the Linguistic Relativity Theory. Whorf analyzed the Hopi language for his theory of relativity, he stopped his study when he found irregularities while interpreting the Hopi grammar according to the Indo-European languages. The rules and patterns of Hopi language were significantly different from English; therefore, he concluded that "all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe". (Hussein, 2012). Thus, language can influence thought, cognition, and even cultural perspectives.

The dehumanization of marginalized groups through linguistic manipulation and power structures is a recurring theme in literature and critical discourse. It further revolves around the concept of 'other', which is understood as someone or something outside of one's own space of identity. According to a literary critic, Julian Wolfrey, it is defined as, "the quality or state of existence of being other or different from established norms and social groups"

(Wolfreys, Robbins, & Womack, 2013, p. 76). The concept of otherness or othering gives rise to another aspect of postcolonial discourse i.e., mimicry. As evident through the term, this aspect explores the idea of imitations. Bhabha mocks this act of imitation because he believes that this is an exaggerated way of being influenced by the colonizer's ideas. The act of mimicry shows that the individual is ready to sacrifice his own identity for the sake of a façade, because of imitation, the characters are disillusioned and lost. (Bhabha, 1997). This aspect explores the disintegration of self-identity and getting lost in the spiral of imitation. The concept of mimicry can add complexity to the portrayal of madness in literature. Characters who mimic the language and behaviors of others may be perceived as mad by those who hold power, while their actions may be seen as acts of resistance or attempts to gain agency. This ambiguity adds layers to the exploration of madness in the text.

Furthermore, language through literature offers the reader an opportunity to empathize with certain characters and to project their hatred towards others. The portrayal of characters as heroes and villains gives the author an agency to present ideas of morality and immorality to their readers, consequently shaping the beliefs of a society. As evident by a research study that reading phrases related to actions activates the sensorimotor areas in the brain and assists in better comprehension (Terje, Theresa, & Anne, 2022). The technique of invoking emotions through the description of setting has also been studied in a psychological experiment, according to which "mere mentioning of affect-laden words produces a measurable bodily effect and influences the mental make-up of the person hearing or reading them" (Lyytikäinen, 2017, p. 255), thus literature employs these techniques by using such a language which can present diverse themes.

Madness cannot be defined in one certain way for there is no single pattern of madness in medieval literature. Ancient Greek philosophy thought of madness to be a physiological disorder caused by hormonal disorder such as imbalances in the body's humors and some believed it to be caused by moral or spiritual deficiencies such as demonic possession. In medieval times, madness was seen as a demonstration of a sickly soul, rather than a mental sickness. Later, this view got adopted by Christian theologians who believed madness to be a spiritual scarcity. According to Saunders (2004), madness could be defined as inefficacy of the rational mind to control behavior. Man turned to beasts and became a slave of their passions. Thomas Aquinas', medieval theologian and philosopher, views of madness are also reflective of the society of that time. He believes madness to be caused by irrational and unconscionable movements of the body resulting from sinful habits such as lust, pride or gluttony. This corruption

of the soul being the root cause of all can be observed in religious and biblical texts.

Madness has been depicted by several authors in their work, one of these notable works is *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë; the portrayal of madness as a dark and unsettling force aligns with the gothic genre's themes of the uncanny and the supernatural in her novel. She portrays the character of Bertha Mason as a madwoman through descriptive language to paint vivid pictures of her behavior, "Bertha Mason is mad; and she came of a mad family; idiots and maniacs through three generations" (Brontë, 2011, p. 286). Bertha is depicted as mentally unstable, and her presence in the Rochester household is hidden from Jane for much of the novel. She is confined "in a room without window" (Brontë, 2011, p. 287), where she is kept away from public view. This confinement symbolizes the Victorian-era approach to dealing with mental illness, which often involved isolation and concealment. This paper further expands on this research context to review the aforementioned works to explain the problematization of language to demonstrate the theme of madness.

The novel *Waiting for the Barbarians* starts with the arrival of Colonel Joll as a representative of an imaginary Empire in a border town separating the territory of civilization from the area of the barbarians. The title of the novel itself is ironic and displays the central role of language in constructing an identity of the other "barbarians". Umberto Eco (Eco, 2012) states that the existence of an enemy is crucial for a nation's success and if there is no enemy, one must invent it. The imaginary empire in the novel creates the identity of the natives of the town as barbarians because they look different, speak different languages, and have different cultures. The empire perpetuates this fear of barbarians as brutal and thirsty for blood without any evidence to solidify their stance in exercising their power over the indigenous tribes of that area, "The barbarian tribes were arming, the rumor went; the Empire should take precautionary measures, for there would certainly be war" (Coetzee J. M., 1982, p. 7). The magistrate who is the narrator of the novel talks about the arising hysteria about the barbarians looting, breaking and raping people among every generation but no sign of actual barbarians doing the same, thus, he creates a picture of savagery and madness. This is a colonial tactic to secure the position of "self" as righteous and rational and the "other" as a brutal, irrational enemy. The excavation of the wooden slips by the magistrate which are in a different language that has no record in the entire Empire also exhibit the loss of language and culture of the aboriginals during the rule of the Empire and the treatment of nomadic language and culture as alien thus barbaric and mad.

The usage of language as a tool to establish and maintain control over each other has been highlighted by both authors in their works. Different types of power have been identified in the novels, such as economic, political, and coercive, and these powers are mostly ascertained by the usage of language. The first type of power lies in the possession of wealth, or the means by which wealth is generated, those who have such means are considered powerful and the ones deprived of it are powerless, for instance, in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the protagonist, the Magistrate and his townsmen are shown to have access to material goods and resources that are denied to the barbarians, who are portrayed as impoverished and marginalized as they have to resort to stealing in order to avoid starving, "They steal a few sheep or cut out a pack-animal from a train. Sometimes we raid them in return. They are mainly destitute tribespeople" (Coetzee J. M., 1982, p. 4). Similarly, the second one is linked with decision-making arising from the position of being elected, appointed or inherited, such as the power of the magistrate and Colonel Joll in Coetzee's novel and Julian in Tartt's work. The third one rests in the use of Repressive State Apparatuses, as defined by Althusser (1970) such as army, courts and prisons, for instance, usage of violence in the prisons by the soldiers in *Waiting for the Barbarians* and FBI agents Sciola and Davenport in *The Secret History*.

Consequently, people possessing such types of power are deemed powerful, and their language holds a certain dominance over the other constituents of their society and shapes their identities. To substantiate their superiority the powerful present the powerless as inferior to them through the help of different means of representations, which is the opposite of the actual reality of the powerless, this failure of correspondence between the identity and its representation of the powerless is also mentioned by Said (1979) where he explains that often how the Orient is represented relies very little on the Orient as such. As evident in the statement, "Worlds exist by means of languages" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2004), hegemonies are created with the help of language, for instance, the repeated use of the word "barbarians" for the indigenous people in *Waiting for the Barbarians* creates a sense of otherness by which the empire dehumanizes a certain group of people to establish and justify its control over them. It also builds a clear distinction between the civilized and the savages, as mentioned in "to find you and bring you back to civilization." (Coetzee J. M., 1982, p. 12), as the nomads are considered barbarians, therefore, the frontier settlement and the people living there are believed to be the representatives of the civilized nation.

The group of classics students led by their professor in *The Secret History* (Tartt, 2002) employs a

specialized and secretive language. This language creates an exclusive atmosphere that isolates them from the rest of the world and deepens their sense of detachment from societal norms and isolation. Language helps one to feel connected to others and to define one's own identity through it "we also have social identities based upon the various groups to which we belong. Thus, we can maintain and enhance self-esteem through valued social affiliations" (Edwards, 2012, p. 27). Thus, the students' use of Latin phrases, obscure references, and cryptic dialogues serves as a linguistic manifestation of their belonging to each other and isolating themselves from the larger society. This language reinforces their shared delusions and deviant behavior. Additionally, Richard, the protagonist, further feels like an outsider among his classmates, and his struggle to understand their specialized language and rituals underscores his growing sense of detachment. This linguistic barrier contributes to his increasing sense of madness as he fails to untangle his friends' dark secrets, the alienation brought by the usage of language serves as a way towards madness. Analogously, in *Waiting for the Barbarians* the indigenous people are isolated through language by being referred to as "barbarians,". Their inability to communicate with the Empire's officials due to linguistic differences intensifies their marginalization and reinforces the theme of madness as they are cast as the "other".

Coetzee thematizes madness in the voyeuristic nature of torture and violence inflicted on the nomads in the name of safeguarding the Empire. Colonel Joll's bloodthirst for the truth about the barbarians and the destructive nature of that quest display madness. The Empire's fear of the natives and their constant preparation of a potential attack from the barbarians resulted in violence and oppression of the native tribes. Thus, madness is reflected in the fear and paranoia of the unknown, the "other". Colonel Joll's obsession with the everything barbarian reveals the insane and brutal nature of othering within power systems. Another example of the manipulation of the language to exert power over the "other" is the report that the magistrate receives about the prisoner attacking the investigating officer and hitting his head on the wall during the scuffle when the reader is shown through the magistrate's narrative the torture he suffered from. "The grey beard is caked with blood. The lips are crushed and drawn back; the teeth are broken. One eye is rolled back, the other eye-socket is a bloody hole" (Coetzee J. M., 1982, p. 6). This manipulation of the language of the report shows the assertion of authority and perpetuation of ideology of power. The torture inflicted on the prisoner and the bruises and marks on the injured body becomes a form of writing which communicates the power of the Empire. The suffering body deprives the

"other" of humanity and turns them into subhuman which justifies the torture of the dominant system.

Likewise, Tartt (2002) also presents the concept of hegemonies and divisions by the usage of language, Richard hailing from a small family, and belonging to working class fails to enter the group of elite classical majors as he is repeatedly left out of conversations and is not let in on several things by using languages which are not understood by Richard, "in private jokes... which I was well aware were meant to go over my head." (Tartt, 2002, p. 105). Furthermore, language is also used to generate and shift narratives, those who have power over distribution of a certain discourse possess the ability to shape the narrative of the said discourse, for instance, Tartt (2002) mentions how reporters shape the discourse around Mrs. Corcoran, from "well-dressed," "striking," the family "perfect," (p. 413) to the "unflattering position" (p. 413) involving drugs and alcohol, and linking it with madness and loss of self-control with the help of media, essentially a linguistic tool. Likewise, Richard time and again uses language to create a narrative for himself which is set in contrast to the reality; at first, he conjures up a "fictive childhood" (p. 16) to narrate a story to others which would help him enter the circle of the elite students. Later, he covers for the murder of the farmer by creating a narrative in which he distances himself from the group when they confess to him, "Who were these people? How well did I know them?" (p. 219). As put forward by Fairclough (1989), discourse creates social structures which in turn reflect and alter the reality; thus, in a similar vein, Richard attempts to absolve himself of Bunny's murder by forming his own perception, as evident through his thoughts, "I do not consider myself an evil person" (p. 297). The usage of language to make himself a part of the group whenever he pleases, "we were not ordinary friends, but friends till-death-do-us-part." (p.494), and isolating himself as it benefits him is the perfect example of employing language as a tool of power by constructing realities.

Additionally, Tartt (2002) employs a first-person narrative through Richard, when a reader fully understands the speaker's discourse and believes that the character has a close relation with the narration being told, he becomes a more involved reader (Margolin, 2009). The use of language and narrative structure, however, in this context serves to highlight the unreliability of the protagonist's perspective. As Richard becomes more entangled in the group's actions, his narration becomes increasingly fragmented and unreliable. Tartt (2002) uses the strategy of stream of consciousness to depict the continuous flow of thoughts and feelings in a character's mind. In Richard's case, his stream of consciousness reflects his inner turmoil and confusion as he becomes more involved in the dark

activities of his friends; his narrative becomes a battleground for his conscious and unconscious desires and fears, contributing to the overall sense of madness in the novel. His fragmented thoughts and erratic narrative style reveal his growing madness. This linguistic fragmentation mirrors his deteriorating mental state, blurring the boundary between reality and madness

The magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians* behaves almost in the similar manner as Richard, throughout the novel, his usage of language demonstrates his efforts of justifying his actions; firstly, he encounters a barbarian girl and perceives her as a helpless beggar and repeatedly uses phrases which make him appear as a savior, "help to seat her on a stool" (p. 26), "help her to her feet" (p. 27), he brings her home in attempts to offer her a refuge, but ends up sexually exploiting her, "I lose myself in the rhythm of what I'm doing what I'm doing" (p. 28). Moreover, the double subjection of this colonized woman is also evident through his language, as Spivak quotes in *The Empire Writes Back* that "There is no space from where the subaltern (sexed) subject can speak" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2004, p. 175); the magistrate takes advantage of the girl as he wishes but refuses to comply to her wishes, thus, her language fails to create any impact as she does not possess enough social power, "Though my heart goes out to her, there is nothing I can do. Yet what humiliation for her!" (p.55). The otherness of the girl is shifted to her body by the magistrate's language, as he refers to her as "ugly" and her body as "maimed, scarred, harmed" (p. 56), therefore sets her in contrast to the other women in the empire who are mentioned as "beautiful creatures" (p. 45). According to Foucault, the physical body becomes a political vessel which is used as form of communication within the power systems. He explains that "the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks..." (Foucault, *The Body of the Condemned*, 1984, p. 173). This is expressed in the relationship of the magistrate and the barbarian woman he saves and brings into his place. He is fascinated by the scars and marks on her body and keeps probing her on to tell him the truth behind those injuries. With the barrier of language difference between them, the torture on her body becomes the medium of communication. The magistrate tries to look for the truth behind the torture of the body because subconsciously he believes the colonel's words of "truth is pain". And if the scars on her body could be read like words, they would communicate the Empire's power and oppression against the "other".

Another example of the physical body functioning as a form of communication is when colonel Joll have gathered the barbarian prisoners in the town and they are

bent over a "long heavy poll" and a "cord runs from the loop of wire through the first man's mouth, under the pole, up to the second man's loop" (Coetzee J. M., 1982, p. 74) and the soldiers tighten the rope making the prisoners writhe in pain. The colonel rubs sand over the body of each prisoner and writes with charcoal "ENEMY... ENEMY... ENEMY... ENEMY" and the magistrate realizes that the soldiers are going to beat them until the word is erased. The very act of writing enemy on the bodies of the prisoners portrays the Empire as the inscribers of power. The Empire constructs the enemy and then uses power to manipulate and destroy the enemy.

Hence, the usage of language as a tool of power and control often results in abuse of the language which in turn leads to madness not only in the speaker but also the addressee and their society. Fairclough (1989) explains that ideologies are linked to power and are a way of legitimizing the social conventions of a certain group by the help power differences arising from the language. As mentioned earlier, language is utilized to formulate and alter reality by the user, for instance, Tartt (2002) shows how Julian establishes a clique which is united by language understood only by them, the example of Henry demonstrates the power of using a language to build closeness, "irritable, cautious 'Hello,'" as compared to "irresistible delight of his 'Khairi!'" (p. 221). Likewise, Coetzee (1982) draws a clear border between the barbarians and the civilization by assigning them different languages, incomprehensible by each other. Furthermore, both groups possessing power are not governed by any rules as they have their own ideologies and quirks, for instance Julian being above the rules of institution, "The administration doesn't like it much, but there's nothing they can do." (Tartt, 2002, p. 41) and the prisoners being subjected to violence which is termed as "procedures" (Coetzee J. M., 1982, p. 4) by Joll. Their ideologies are further reaffirmed by their usage of language by isolating themselves; in case of the Greek pupils, their distance from the other students, and in case of the empire, their distancing themselves from the tribespeople by perceiving them as savages.

As a result, the isolated state of lawlessness and lack of discipline caused by the usage of language leads them to commit heinous crimes; Tartt (2002) illustrates the murder of a friend; the chain of events beginning with their attempts to experience the "Dionysiac frenzy" (p. 182). The group endeavors towards a state of mania, beyond all rules and concepts; as stated by Foucault (2001) in a manic audacity and fury is found, even though the language fails to make them aware of everything surrounding their act of transcending the being, they perform the ritual without any guidance, "There are other advantages, more difficult to speak of" (p. 182). The consequences of their actions are

met by different reactions by each of them, murdering Bunny to avoid being caught and later going through an intensive investigation which takes a toll on them. Charles explain how he had to deal with the police, and the federal agents' coercive use of language makes him suffer, "Do you know how hard that was?" (p. 484). By the end of the novel, the usage of language to instigate others is again evident, when Henry uses "belligerent, bullying tone" (p. 527) with Charles who is already at the verge of state of madness. Correspondingly, magistrate's perception of the girl as a savage and barbarian distances himself from his act of sexual abuse, he refuses to admit that he could be attracted to her and therefore, believes that he is not indeed corrupted. The altered reality pushes him into madness, as he begins to question everything around him, "What depravity is it that is creeping upon me?" (Coetzee J. M., 1982, p. 32). In his efforts to liberate himself of his sins, he ends up on the other side of the boundary created by Coetzee, and is shown as a savage himself.

Furthermore, the novels have incorporated the theme of manipulative language to create identities, which in turn leads to savagery and madness. The officials of the Empire use manipulative language to construct a specific colonial identity. They frame themselves as the defenders of civilization against the perceived threat of the "barbarians." (Coetzee J. M., 1982). This identity is constructed through language, reinforcing their sense of superiority and moral justification for their actions. The manipulative discourse serves to shape the colonial identity of those in power, and isolated and alienated narrative of the barbarians. Manipulative language is employed to dehumanize the indigenous people, depicting them as "barbarians" and "savages." This process of dehumanization not only justifies the Empire's oppressive policies but also reinforces the identity divide between the colonizers and the colonized. The use of derogatory language contributes to the construction of an "othered" identity for the indigenous people. For the magistrate, who serves as the novel's protagonist, manipulative language and the actions of the Empire create an identity crisis. He initially identifies with the colonial power but becomes increasingly aware of the moral atrocities committed in its name. His evolving identity is marked by a rejection of the manipulative language used by the Empire, and he grapples with the madness of his own complicity in the oppressive system. Likewise, Tart (2002) shows the students usage of language to display themselves as intellectually and culturally superior to others. This identity is reinforced by their use of manipulative language, which serves to isolate them from mainstream society and heighten their sense of elitism. As the group becomes involved in criminal activities, including murder, their identity becomes

increasingly marked by moral erosion. Manipulative language is used to justify their actions and rationalize their descent into darkness. The discourse they employ reflects their changing moral identity, as they move further away from conventional ethical norms.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the usage of language as a tool of power and this problematization of language not only creates narratives but also fortifies the already established power dimensions. As evident in both novels, the dynamic between the oppressor and oppressed is reinforced by the language and leads to a society devoid of empathy and humanity. This loss of humanity is further reflected in the language used to describe those who are oppressed, reducing them to objects that exist solely for the benefit of those who hold power. The characters in both novels use language to create an isolated version of their society in a world with divisions and borders, but this version is ultimately revealed to be unstable and unsustainable. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, language is utilized to justify and reinforce the dominant power structure and in *The Secret History* the characters' use of language serves as a means of power to create and manipulate narrative. Language acts as an instrument to exert power whether it is in the form of construction of an identity of the other or the extinction of one's language. In both the novels, the issue of identity is foregrounded with the help of language. Where one's language begins to die out, the dominant group gains power and maintains the cycle of power through the employment of language. Yet only language can become the savior in the face of annihilation of the world when indifference and apathy become the norm. Both novels emphasize the role of language in constructing and manipulating narratives, with profound consequences for the characters and their societies. The power struggles, identity crises, and moral erosion depicted in these works highlight the complex interplay between language, power, and madness. Language acts as a double-edged sword, capable of both construction and destruction.

Language is not only a tool of communication but a reflection of power dynamics, social hierarchies, and moral complexities. It can lead characters and societies towards states of madness or moral erosion when wielded as a weapon of control and manipulation. Ultimately, the novels "Waiting for the Barbarians" and "The Secret History" serve as powerful literary examples of how language can shape and unravel human experience. The methodological framework, based on close textual reading and analysis, has provided valuable insights into the role of language as a tool of power and its profound connection to

the theme of madness in fiction. The findings contribute to the broader understanding of how language is employed to assert dominance, manipulate perceptions, and shape narratives within literary works. This study's robust methodology and thematic exploration pave the way for further research in the intersection of language, power, and madness in literature, emphasizing the significance of linguistic analysis in literary studies. Ultimately, the power of language in shaping thought, identity, and social structures remains a compelling area of study within the realm of literature and beyond.

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