

Biting Tongues/ Critical Theory as Creative Tool: Using Bakhtin's Theory of Double-Voiced Discourse to Edit a Short Novel

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Biting Tongues is a short, character-driven novel set in South East England in 2001. Central to its narrative present is the recovery of 27-year old Adam Strange from a 13-year coma and its repercussions on his mother, Peggy, his father, Bill and his sister, Jess. Although his recovery is initially welcomed, old tensions resurface to force a re-evaluation of each of the four central characters' senses of self and personal relationships, especially as the truth of the coma, and of events surrounding it, begin to emerge. The narrative is interspersed with segments depicting each character's personal history and the events leading up to and following Adam's coma. It is a novel of fragile identities and of alienation, not only of each character from another and from contemporary society, but also of inward alienation from perceived morals, values and sense of self.

Critical Theory as Creative Tool describes the process of adapting Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of double-voiced discourse and polyglossia to develop an editorial tool for critiquing an earlier draft of *Biting Tongues* which has assisted in creating the draft submitted here. It investigates why such an adaptation is relevant to structural problems posed by themes and content in *Biting Tongues* and evaluates the strengths of its implementation. Primarily using Bakhtin's essay 'Discourse in The Novel' and the chapter 'Discourse in Dostoevsky' from *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1984), this dissertation also uses the work of other Bakhtinian scholars and counterpoints the main argument with a structuralist reading of the theory of free-indirect discourse.

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