

Textual “Awakenings:” Narrating the Lesbian Subject in
Contemporary Argentinian, Indian, and United States Novels

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Introduction: Female Homoeroticism on Trial

In an interview with *Manushi: A Journal About Women and Society*, Ismat Chughtai admits her amazement over the obscenity charges levied against her 1941 short story “Lihaf [The Quilt]”: the Indian colonial government condemned the depiction of *female* homoeroticism specifically, ignoring undertones of male homoeroticism (Gopinath 132). Chughtai makes clear in her interview that she had no knowledge of lesbianism prior to writing her story. She denies any didactic motivations for the story; if a purpose must be extrapolated, it is only to “make [the dirt] visible [so that] one’s attention can be drawn” to it (“Excerpts...” 442). Her lawyer argued at her trial that the erotic confusion of the child narrator could only be deciphered “by those who already had some knowledge” of the type of sexuality being described (Kumar 138). According to Chughtai and her lawyer, then, the only guilty party is the reader who extrapolates a particular meaning from the narrative. I will argue a similar conclusion as Chughtai from the comparison of five lesbian¹ novels, *En Breve Cárcel*, *El Niño Pez*, *Annie on My Mind*, *Keeping You a Secret* and *Babyji*, with one heteronormative² novel, *A Married Woman*. I focus more specifically on

¹ I define “lesbian” in this study as a woman who sexually or romantically desires another woman. The classification does not depend on a subject’s self-identification, or on any physical acts between women. She does not necessarily reject prescribed gender roles (e.g. motherhood and wifedom). Instead, the lesbian, as she is portrayed in these six novels, is a woman who defies the normative heterosexual model by supplanting the role reserved for men, as subjects who sexually desire female objects.

² Normative societies are based in the stipulation that certain social relationships are acceptable as standardized models. Heteronormative societies privilege sexual and romantic relationships between two people of opposite sex and gender. Heteronormativity structures heterosexual relationships as “natural” or “ideal,” and “as the basic idiom of the personal and the social.” This structure is distinct from heterosexuality, which distinguishes homosexuality as its opposite, because heteronormativity denies the legitimacy of any other structure (i.e. there can be no “homonormativity”). While heterosexuality is a practice, heteronormativity is an appearance or institution of “a sense of rightness” (Berlant and Warner 548). Couplings of the same or undefined sex and/or gender are not legitimate in heteronormative society. The woman-desiring woman falls into this disqualified category.

the various awakenings that lesbian protagonists, their texts, and their intended readers undergo; the realization that while heteronormative structures reject the legitimacy of lesbian desire, that desire is, in fact, a *part of* heteronormative structures. I will identify three kinds of awakenings that occur in the lesbian novels: first, an awakening of desire, an awakening of lesbian panic, and a final awakening of individuation. As Chughtai suggests, the intended reader's awakening results from an empathic connection with narrative and illuminates the awakening trope's larger ability to make sense of an otherwise nonnarratable³ identity. Furthermore, I argue that the dynamics of awakening in these novels operate across cultures and geographic locations, and across differences of belief in two major movements of lesbian literary criticism.

The lesbian novels employ comparable narrative strategies to heteronormative feminist literature from the 1970s and 1980s in the United States in order to destabilize any claim—heterosexual or lesbian—to normativity. *Annie on My Mind* attempts to formulate an alternative normativity instead of envisaging continuity among sexual identities like the other four lesbian novels, and as a result falls into the trap of “heteronarrative” (*Come as You Are* 159). The heteronormative novel and the five lesbian novels do not intend to indoctrinate their intended audiences with a new desire or ideology, as the Indian colonial government believed of “The Quilt [Lihaf]”, but rather to expose a preexisting, yet dormant, desire. In order to show that lesbian desire is as legitimate as heterosexual desire, and that they exist on the same spectrum of sexuality, these five novels also point out the performative nature of heteronormative values. The inclusion of the first two types of awakenings, of desire and panic, function dynamically

³ D.A. Miller calls any subject who fails conventional marriage or family plots of heterosexual narrative “nonnarratable.” These subjects must ultimately be eliminated from the plot because they defy the “secure” authority of heterosexuality over narrative (*Narrative Dynamics* 252). Narrating the lesbian as a part of normative plots prevents her removal.

I will base my analysis of lesbian narrative strategies on six novels, spanning approximately twenty years, from 1981 to 2005, and drawn from three countries in different geographic regions: Argentina, India, and the United States. These twenty years encompass the two great movements of essentialist and postmodern lesbian literary criticism, as well as a radical development in heteronormative feminist literary criticism.

The two novels from the United States are *Annie on My Mind* (1982) by Nancy Garden, and *Keeping You a Secret* (2003) by Julie Anne Peters. Liza, the protagonist of *Annie on My Mind*, struggles to name her blossoming sexual and emotional desire for Annie as she faces the pressure of her conservative school surroundings. She seeks refuge in the tutelage of her lesbian teachers as she is put on trial by her school for immoral behavior. In the end, Liza leaves her home in New York City for a more progressive university setting at MIT. From a distance, and after some time passes, she overcomes her fear of illegitimacy in the face of conservative society and repairs ties with her first love.

Published and set twenty years later, *Keeping You a Secret* narrates the awakening of another American teenaged girl. Try as she might to find sexual or emotional satisfaction in a heterosexual relationship, Holland cannot resist falling for a new, out and proud, lesbian schoolmate. She must come to terms with sacrificing her social popularity, social status in heteronormative groups, and all immediate family ties for the sake of her relationship with Cece. The two protagonists in the novels from the United States have “coming out” experiences because their sexual desire requires verbal identification of “lesbian,” as well as its distinction from “heterosexual” in order to have the third type of awakening, individuation. These novels’ reliance on definition as a source of identification indicates their distinctly essentialist themes,

rather than postmodern. *Annie on My Mind*, in particular, exhibits the fault of lesbian narrative's dependence on one type of lesbian feminist theory.

The two novels from Argentina chronologically mirror the novels from the United States, but utilize an opposing type of literary criticism than the United States novels. *En Breve Cárcel* (1981) by Sylvia Molloy is a postmodern narrative that relates the fragmented memories of a woman's first lover, Vera, that arise while she waits in a small room for her current lover, Renata, to arrive. The woman is never named, incarcerates herself in her small room out of fear of disappearing, and writes her memoir at the same time that the novel narrates in omniscient narration the memories she writes about. The woman considers the possible impact of her childhood experiences on her present mental instability, and the narrator relates dreams that haunt her. She ultimately abandons her room and the lover that never comes, resigned to live out a lonely life.

El Niño Pez (2004) by Lucía Puenzo narrates the crime of passion committed by Lala for the sake of her girlfriend, La Guayi. The story is told from the perspective of her dog, Serafín, and follows Lala after she kills her father for possibly raping La Guayi. Lala retreats to Paraguay to wait for La Guayi but the latter is put in jail in Argentina for Lala's murder. While in jail, La Guayi is pulled into a prostitution ring and Lala returns to Argentina in search of her lover. Lala risks her life, and Serafín loses his, in a brutal rescue shoot-out to free La Guayi. They end up on a bus to Paraguay, finally fulfilling their fantasy to run off with one another, but sadly estranged and out of love. As I discuss in the second chapter on awakenings of desire in the text, *En Breve Cárcel*, written in fragments from an omniscient third-person perspective, and *El Niño Pez*, jarringly written about a lesbian protagonist from the first-person perspective of her dog, embody

a postmodern narrative theory opposing the essentialist tendencies of *Annie on My Mind* and *Keeping You a Secret*.

Two of the most recent novels I look at come from Chughtai's home nation of India. *A Married Woman* (2004) by Manju Kapur is the outlier in my analysis of the six novels. It tells the story of Astha as she realizes she is unhappy in her role of wife and mother. She seeks refuge in political activism and a homoerotic relationship with Pipee. Astha and Pipee depend on one another to affirm aspirations and desires patriarchal society stifles. Their desires, however, are not lesbian; the women's relationship is a metaphor for the heteronormative woman's awakening to power outside her fixed gender roles that is not specific to any sexual or romantic desire. The narrative rejects lesbianism as that which could fulfill Astha and Pipee when it expels the latter from the narrative at the end, and leaves Astha desperate for individual identity.

Astha's counterpart is Anamika, the protagonist of Abha Dawesar's *Babyji* (2005) which, like *Keeping You a Secret*, is narrated in first-person voice. Anamika becomes entangled in four affairs—with a female servant, divorcee, female classmate, and father of a friend. From the moment she finds herself attracted to another woman for the first time, until she decides to give up all of her relationships in order to study abroad in the United States, Anamika struggles with what she believes is the monstrosity and perversity of her sexuality. These two novels from India are unique in this study because of a discrepancy in time of authorship and time of setting. They were both published at the same time as *El Niño Pez* and *Keeping You a Secret*, and set at the same time as *En Breve Cárcel* and *Annie on My Mind*—in the mid-1980s—but utilize narrative strategies from both movements of lesbian feminist theory. *Babyji* rewrites the narrative of an Indian lesbian from the first-person perspective of that lesbian, preventing her

ejection from the text by writing the lesbian in a similar nationalistic context as *A Married Woman*. Anamika's lesbian desire is not a metaphor for or replacement of political discourse, but is, instead, a parallel criticism of the nationalist chauvinism seen in the other Indian novel. *Babyji*'s subversive discourse is contingent on lesbian desire and its relevance to individual versus collective identity.

The very existence of the awakening trope as a lesbian plot structure is evidence of lesbian and feminist political movements that occurred in the 1970s and the 1980s. Lesbian desire appeared in literature before this time ("Lihaf [The Quilt]," written in 1941, is but one example), but Bonnie Zimmerman attributes to these two decades a radical advancement in lesbian-feminist literary criticism, marking the 1980s as the culmination of the first explorations of lesbian-focused literary criticism that began in the 1970s. Lesbianism advanced beyond simply having a presence in the narration of female relationships, and became self-reflective, assertive, and introspective of the real world implications of transgressive desire on heteronormative society. Lesbian desire declared itself as narratable and broke the silence surrounding it in plot and narrative theory. Finally, she says, normative social and narrative values were being questioned as narrative puts into words "what has never been" ("What Has Never Been..." 451). The dynamics of awakening in the heteronormative and lesbian narratives I look at reveal that lesbian-feminist literary criticism's newfound voice continues in literature well beyond its peak decades. Lesbian literary criticism adopted practices of second-wave feminist literature at the time, but the 2004 heteronormative novel I compare to the five other lesbian novels reveals a reversal of influence, an indication that the two sexualities can coexist within one normative structure and are not, in fact, opposites.

Because these six narratives all endeavor to represent an identity and desire that normative narrative structures negate, they, like Chughtai, must answer the concern that they are indoctrinating readers with a new sexual identity. Judith Roof, a postmodern lesbian theorist, generalizes the narratological relationship between reality and narrative, and in particular, the function of narrative as a medium of organization and interpretation of otherwise abstruse stories and ideologies. She refers to the previous theories of Roland Barthes and Hayden White as foundation for her own synthesis that “narrative’s pivotal operation [is] not [only] as the mere proliferation of stories but rather as a complete and definitive engagement with our concepts of culture...a complex, naturalized process of organization, relation and connection” (*Come as You Are...xv*). Roof suggests that there is an implicit connection between the ideologies, subjects, and experiences within narration, and the ideologies and experiences of the reader’s world outside of the narrative. What is more, narrative is not merely a reflection of the real world, but an engagement with it. Humans cannot objectively view the structure and temporality of their experiences, so those experiences appear to them as parts. Narrative, as an objective form outside the reader’s immediate experience, mediates those parts as a form with order. Connections appear between those parts and compile the reader’s world in one text into some semblance of a whole. Thus, narrative is a reflection and interpretation of what already is, rather a creation of something new.

Even with the defense that lesbian desire is a part of the continuum rather than an opposition, the lesbian subject in narrative still face what D.A. Miller calls their “restricted access” to a narrative system that belongs to the model of heteronormativity. Miller claims that heterosexuality holds a secure “entitlement” to the sexuality of narrative. This does not mean that all narrated content must have heterosexual components or characters, but rather that “the

heterosexual themes of marriage and the oedipalized family (the former linked to the latter as its means of transmission)” are the only “narratable” stories (Miller 44). Because narrative mimes society, it values the normative heterosexual model over all other types of relationships. Thus, traditional narrative does not legitimize nonnormative desires. Heteronormativity condemns lesbian identity to the margins of real society, and similarly delegitimizes lesbian subjects within narrative. I will look at the implications of heteronormativity’s rejection of lesbian desire in narrative in my third chapter on “lesbian panic,” where the protagonists and narratives contend with the anxiety that their marginalization means heterosexuality’s claim to originality is valid.

Lesbian narrative theory traditionally approaches this anxiety in two competing ways: through essentialist⁴ and postmodern⁵ understandings. Essentialist and postmodern theory alike believe that narrative represents realistic experience and politics, but while postmodern theory focuses on language, voice, and other narratological components of narrative, essentialist theory like that adopted by Bonnie Zimmerman, upholds imagistic representation of lesbian identity in narrative. Essentialist literary criticism stems from lesbian-feminist politics of the 1970s in the United States insofar as it believes that lesbian representations “cas[t] both lesbian and narrative into relatively unproblematic waters” (Farwell 10). Critics like Jane Rule and Dolores Klaich saw the lesbian as “a political metaphor for women’s alliances with one another,” and thus, unambiguously identified lesbian characters and authors (11). The lesbian narrative as a political

⁴ Lesbian-feminists who argue for an essentialist definition of lesbian identity believe that lesbians in narrative should serve as “a tool for change if not for representation.” For this reason, essentialist narrative portrayals of lesbians are “an unproblematic, empirical category—women who are sexually attracted to other women.” Even if the lesbian is presented more as a political metaphor, she is “still reflective of a unified and essentialist identity” (Farwell 10). Either way, the lesbian is visible and central in a plot, and her literary purpose as an imaging of the previously silenced identity can be identified. Essentialist lesbian narratives believe lesbian identity to be fixed and its literature as “a source of identity” (11).

⁵ Postmodern lesbian feminists disagree with an essentialist definition of lesbian, and argue instead that lesbian identity is “unstable” and “enacts an excess, specifically a bodily and therefore a textual excess, which subverts categorization itself” (Farwell 12). Postmodern lesbian literary criticism believes that a lesbian presence in narrative is more effectively a “disruption” of conventional narrative practices and gender boundaries. Its purpose is to subvert normativity and highlight performativity, but not to fix lesbian identity as any category of traits.

tool was “a source of identity” or “a means of survival” against the normative values which reject lesbian desire (11), and “work didactically, serving lesbians better than patriarchal stories” (*The Safe Sea of Women...* 25-6). Lesbian subjects in narrative should be “self-conscious” of their lesbian identity, and that desire should recognizably be the center and main motivation of plot movement.

An approach to emerging lesbian fiction like that of Zimmerman problematically presumes that this literature is being read by a “lesbian reader” (Zimmerman 454) who “will necessarily identify with lesbian texts” (*Come as You Are* 159). I do not limit the narratee of the six novels in this essay to a particular sexual or gender identity for this reason. In fact, this kind of inclusive definition is a concern that arises even with the most loosely defined categories of lesbian identity because eventually they can become normalizing structures themselves. A centralizing definition would exclude the novels *En Breve Cárcel*, *El Niño Pez*, and *A Married Woman* automatically. *En Breve Cárcel* does not define the protagonist even so far as to give her a name, nor does she ever leave her room or her thoughts long enough to engage in any socially affirming activism; *El Niño Pez* never labels Lala and La Guayi’s relationship, or their sexual identities, as “lesbian.” The protagonist of *A Married Woman* and her female lover are clear that their passion is a product of their situation and does not threaten their place as heterosexual members of Indian society. The novel ultimately eliminates lesbian desire from the plot. Even in its goal of politicized transgression of normative values, lesbian-feminism falls back on the same normalizing framework which excluded the lesbian subject to begin with.

Postmodernism takes the opposite stance in its belief that there is no fixed identity—normative or otherwise—and that all assumptions of original identity are performative. Postmodern lesbian theory sees the lesbian subject as a figure “exceeding the boundaries

assigned to [the woman's body] by culture, discourse, and the narrative...subvert[ing] categorization itself" (Farwell 12). Normative behaviors of gender and sexuality become camp: while heteronormative society upholds these roles as models of "correct" behavior, lesbians consciously appropriate these models and wear them outside of their proper place. One of the most powerful images of the lesbian subject as political theory is the butch-femme dichotomy, cited by Judith Butler and strongly portrayed in the fictional works of Monique Wittig as an attempt to "break the male centrality of the 'I'" (Butler 313; Farwell 34). Michele Foucault calls this strategy "reverse discourse," whereby an identity—in his study, specifically homosexual identities—demand authentication using "the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which they are denied legitimacy (Foucault 101). Foucault argues that homosexual identity cannot successfully assert its legitimacy by being a detached presence, categorization, and political discourse from the preexisting discourse as it is oftentimes presented in essentialist literary depictions. Postmodern lesbian discourse is not a separate or new discourse working against the preexisting one, but appears *within* the very discourse that oppresses in in order to reinforce the power of the discourse, and at the same time "undermin[e] and expos[e]" the instability of a single claim to legitimacy or power (100). In doing so, postmodern lesbian theory illustrates through the performative value of reverse discourse that there is no central definition to any categorization of identity, thus freeing a subject from gender boundaries. Assigning the "lesbian" the primary characteristic of pointing out performativity and disrupting preexisting discourse are but two strategies of postmodern lesbian narrative theory, but are the strategies most visible in *En Breve Cárcel* and *El Niño Pez*.

Postmodern lesbian narratives, then, are less dependent on the biography of a protagonist or author as identified lesbians, and more on "unstable textual boundaries" that destabilize

normative authority and sexuality (Farwell 13). These lesbian narratives are characterized mostly by their disruptive, “nonlinear” narrative style. Roof privileges postmodern lesbian narrative form because it enables the nonnormative narrative to avoid entanglement in conventional heteronormative plots. By avoiding any direct representation or imaging of the lesbian, the narrative avoids confrontation with the innate heterosexuality of narrative, thus preventing itself from becoming an object of concern or study within the normative system. Roof radically declares that “[i]dentification is heteronarrative in drag” and that a lesbian narrative is successful only when the lesbian stays to the side and remains undefined to prevent herself from being taken over by heterosexual narrative (*A Lure of Knowledge* 67; *Come as You Are* 161). The lesbian narrative does not find success in its politicization of lesbian identity, but in its disruption of linear narrative and language (e.g. free indirect discourse in *En Breve Cárcel*).

Marilyn Farwell describes the issue that arises with this “either/or” battle between essentialist lesbian narrative form and postmodern lesbian narrative form: when a narrative depends on essentialism, it creates a new normative structure that can easily exclude more ambiguously defined lesbian plot structures or characters. It relies too heavily on the biography of author, protagonist, and reader. On the other hand, when theorists privilege postmodern readings of lesbian narratives, they often present postmodern narrative strategies as the end and redemption of lesbian feminist theory of the 1970s. Postmodern theory finds fault in identification and reduces potential for progress within essentialist theorization, or for compromise between the two traditions of theory (Farwell 13). Postmodern theory “too easily dismiss the insights” of lesbian-feminism, condemning its theory as too unfaithful to the diversity and impermanence of lesbian identity to contribute anything substantive to the study of

lesbian identity and narrative (14). According to Farwell, one theory too often excludes the other, consequently leaving the study of lesbian narrative too vague or limited.

I isolate the shared trope of awakenings the six novels as a bridging narrative strategy across these two sides of the debate. Simply the existence of the first kind of awakening, the revelation of desire, in all six novels implies a natural, albeit dormant, desire that exceeds normative margins. This desire—whether heteronormative or lesbian—needs only to be revealed to have a presence within narrative. The desire exists independently of normative values, and finds an authoritative voice despite opposing resistance; this requisite aspect of the awakening is what I identify as an essentialist component of the awakening. The combination of essentialist thinking with postmodern narrative strategies, however, in the novels *A Married Woman*, *En Breve Cárcel*, *El Niño Pez*, *Keeping You a Secret*, and *Babyji* strikes a balance between disruptive desire and natural identity that avoids the self-normalizing trap that *Annie on My Mind* falls into. In other words, I will show that this balance that appears in *A Married Woman* prevents the inexpressible lesbian narrative from restricting itself to either limited or undetectable parameters.

In order to further understand whether one critical tradition holds more merit than the other, I will first elucidate key narrative strategies in *A Married Woman*, which I consider a heteronormative feminist novel that briefly relies on lesbian plotting. I identify this novel as heteronormative, despite its lesbian content, because as Miller warns, the lesbian subject is ultimately rejected from the narrative. Its disruptive narrative strategies are postmodern, but the novel adamantly casts off possible lesbian overtones. I begin with a heteronormative text so as to clarify the distinction between what I consider “heterosexual” and “lesbian” narratives, and to establish a foundation for my comparison of the use of voice in the lesbian novels. Here I will

also introduce the presence of the narratee⁶ as a common factor of heteronormative feminist narratives, reflected in the first type of lesbian textual awakening; they are both implied readers who have need of narrative to make sense of otherwise inaccessible ideologies, identities, and criticisms. They empathize with narrated experiences and revelations of lesbian desire, and come to their own understandings of that desire's validity in the spectrum of sexuality through their vicarious encounter with the protagonist. While these readers may have encountered lesbian desire previously, these texts awaken them to the legitimacy of that desire within the heteronormative structures they are accustomed to. Then I will move on to consider differences in the portrayals of lesbian awakenings across three different geographic regions and the two major time periods in the development of lesbian fiction.

By breaking down the study of lesbian awakenings into three parts, I will be able to closely identify the dissimilarities and continuities between lesbian fictions of both an essentialist and postmodern tradition. I will show through this cross-cultural comparison of first-love lesbian narratives, that each narrative exhibits a necessary balance between essentialist and postmodern narrative theory, and that this balance is possible through the dynamics of awakening. All six texts include a female protagonist who is awakened to her desire for another woman, four of whom successfully separate their sense of identity from their need to be legitimized by some "other," or by normative values (*Babyji* proves to be distinct because Anamika does not individuate herself; this last awakening is unnecessary as a result of its nationalist discourse). The awakening constitutes an element of fixed identity—this desire lies dormant in the protagonists until it is stirred by the narrative. The individuation, then, is the postmodern move: the lesbians recognize that no identity, including their own, can be defined

⁶ By narratee, I refer to Gerald Prince's concept of "the addressee of the narrator," or intended audience of a narrator (Schmid, n.pag)

clearly enough that it can be confirmed by any normative authority, whether society or even the person who awakens their desire. This union of awakening and individuation within a narrative allows for recognition of lesbian otherness within the heterosexual plot and implicitly beyond the narrative; but it requires the recognition and acceptance of exclusion from that space within the narrative. The same journey is asked of the narratee.

I look at awakenings in *A Married Woman* separately from the other lesbian novels because Astha's awakening rejects lesbians overtones, but exhibits heteronormative narrative strategies that are integral to the portrayal of the lesbian subject in the five novels I consider to be lesbian. This novel does exhibit characteristics of the other lesbian texts, but it also exemplifies many of the heteronormative conventions I utilize as lenses to better understand the other five novels. Astha is awakened to lesbian desire, but nationalist feminist discourse sublimates the effect of lesbian desire in the narrative, eventually rejecting its relevance entirely. Her lesbian relationship fails to fulfill her undefinable desire for a purpose beyond her role as mother and wife. Once Astha exhausts the purpose of her lesbian relationship—her most desperate attempt to make sense of her unmediated desire—the narrative finds no more use for lesbian desire and ends. Nonetheless, the novel's inclusion of lesbian desire as a narrative engine to explore feminist criticism of patriarchal structures situates the narrative as a transitional example from feminist to lesbian narrative strategies.

In her autobiography, Chughtai recollects telling the judge that her story “Lihaf [The Quilt]” only uncovered what was already there. The author does not claim that this argument won her the case, but one line after “[t]he Judge Sahib laughed,” Chughtai mentions her acquittal. The connection is not explicit, but the close proximity of the two statements leads to a fair inference that Chughtai could not be found guilty because the judge agreed with her

reasoning. I argue for a similar relationship between lesbian identity and narrative.

Traditionally heteronormative structures, like the heterosexual narrative, attempt to deny the authenticity of lesbian desire and identity. Chughtai's defense cites the narratee as the reason she cannot be blamed for portraying a new sexuality; instead, she revealed what was already there to the reader who was open to reading it in such a way that revealed female homoeroticism. Even the male judge was a narratee of the story. Whatever lesbianism can be found in her story is a product of the narratee's empathy with the narrator's awakening. Similarly, the five lesbian novels I examine in this essay do not present lesbian desire as something new, but as something that can be revealed to the implied reader. The narratives use the same theme of awakenings to represent lesbian desire and identity; moreover, they propose through the dynamics of awakening that lesbian sexuality is part of a spectrum which also includes heterosexuality, even though heteronormativity claims the authority to moderate that spectrum. Chughtai's defense foregrounds the power of the awakening trope and its objective to represent the lesbian as a legitimate subject within heteronormative structures. In this way, these five novels bridge the debate between essentialist and postmodern lesbian literary criticism.

I. *A Married Woman* and the Feminist Awakening as Prelude to the Lesbian Awakening

Before I examine the lesbian awakening of narrators, narrated subjects, and narratees to the existence of lesbian desire in *En Breve Carcel*, *Annie on My Mind*, *El Nino Pez*, *A Married*

Woman, Babyji, and Keeping You a Secret, I will explore the heterosexual⁷ woman's awakening narrative in *A Married Woman*. All six narratives present subversive, yet legitimate, female desire within traditional heterosexual hegemonic narrative; however, Astha's awakening in *A Married Woman* is more appropriately categorized as heteronormative literature, rather than lesbian literature. I include *A Married Woman* in this study because, as a feminist fiction, it establishes many strategies of narrative voice which its more lesbian counterparts appropriate. Textual strategies utilized in *A Married Woman*, such as free indirect discourse and body as text metaphors, portray a feminist awakening in the protagonist, the narrative, and the empathizing reader. The presence in this narrative of what Foucault terms "reverse discourse" foregrounds my discussion of lesbian awakenings in the other five novels. After identifying the feminist discursive tactics within *A Married Woman*, I will pinpoint the characteristics of Astha and Pipee's sexual relationship that distinguish this novel as more focused on heteronormative feminist than lesbian politics.

Hereafter I will refer to Carol Christ's definition of "awakening" as an accurate description of both the heterosexual and lesbian women's awakening in all six novels. In *Diving Deep and Surfacing*, Christ proposes that "'awakening' suggests that the self needs only to notice what is already there" (18). The awakening is not something new, learned, or adopted, but rather a desire or identity that lies dormant until it is revealed. Awakenings for both the heterosexual and lesbian subjects spur nonnormative desires which the dominating structures attempt to oppress. The heteronormative narrative of *A Married Woman* works against a patriarchal structure but does not ultimately reject heteronormative values, and the five lesbian

⁷ By "heterosexual" woman, I mean a woman who may question or transgress her normative gender roles within a male-centered structure (social or narratological), but as a more general and specifically gendered political statement. Sexual desire for another woman is not essential, whereas the lesbian's awakening will be shown to be founded in this desire.

texts work against a heteronormative structure and do argue that normative ideals are not “natural” or “original.” In the heteronormative text, the female presence exceeds the passive, fixed identity stipulated for her by a male-centered matrix; in the lesbian texts, a nonheteronormative desire transgresses gender and sexual roles set for women by eliminating the woman’s need for a male. I believe that by using the heteronormative text as a reference, the destabilizing narrative strategies used to illustrate the legitimate presence of nonhegemonic stories to a lesbian narrative’s narratees will be more visible within these novels of varying culture, voice, and chronology.

The history of feminist awakening narratives, visible still in the 2003 Indian novel *A Married Woman*, climaxed during second-wave feminism in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States. Esther Saxey describes this feminist movement as an action toward a mythology of shared, narrated experiences among women:

“It was a method of developing women’s awareness of gender oppression but not by introducing them to theories produced elsewhere; ideally, the women of each group extrapolated from their shared experiences an analysis that was both communal and deeply personal. This is certainly the case of the groups presented in fiction” (Saxey 17)

Second-wave feminist narratives collected stories that women could refer to as affirmations of their own experiences, as well as opportunities for vicarious explorations of suppressed desires. Lisa Hogeland calls these narratives “consciousness-raising (CR)” novels. CR novels proved to have noteworthy influence on the radicalization of the feminist movement of the 1970s and 1980s because they disseminated feminist ideas to the reading public. They were more effective than other political strategies, claims Hogeland, because they “moderat[ed]” and “soften[ed]” feminist ideologies by removing them from a predominately political discourse and “personalizing...feminist social criticism” (Hogeland ix). They articulated the existence and authority of a radical, nonhegemonic system to an otherwise unknowing audience; but the

conversation is not one-sided. More accurately, feminist fictions built political theory from women's experiences in narrative and from readers' encounters with those experiences, and vice-versa. Narrative remains an "engagement with around concepts of culture," a dialogue back-and-forth between reader and fiction (Roof xv). Second-wave feminism employed consciousness-raising novels to take advantage of this connection between reader and narrative to spur "awareness" of preexisting "oppression."

Hogeland and Saxey pick up on an implicitly essentialist perspective on consciousness-raising narratives. Feminist narratives do not discover a new "oppression:" the intended reader needs only to encounter "feminist social criticism" expressed as an experience in a novel. The subversive experience, narrated within a patriarchal structure, helps the reader realize its ideologies existed before that reader was made aware of them, and the connotations those ideologies could have on the reader's own world, built upon similar normative values as the narrative. Like Christ's definition of "awakening," female subjects (heteronormative and lesbian) and their narratees are awakened to a female desire that already exists within heteronormative matrices. The female subjects are themselves awakened when they realize that they sexually and emotionally desire another woman, *and* that that desire is a legitimate part of their identity.

According to Bonnie Zimmerman, a kind of "consciousness-raising" of the lesbian subject within politics and narrative occurred for the first time in the 1970s and 1980s in the United States. Lesbian existence, previously "unspeakable," suddenly found a language within narrative to articulate "what ha[d] never been." Zimmerman compares the new presence of lesbians within narrative to feminist literary criticism and its exploration of "'otherness,' suggesting dimensions previously ignored yet necessary to understand fully the female condition

and the creative work born from it” (“What Has Never Been...” 451). Lesbian stories of the 1970s and 1980s did as much as the feminist narrative: they were stories of developing identity based in nonnormative sexual desire, reflective of, and in conversation with, the lesbian political movement at the time. Politics affected the narratives, and the narratives related the political theory to its audience in a relatable way (Saxey 16). Both kinds of feminist fiction reflected newfound power of the woman within politics, social criticism, and narrative; I will further argue that the woman’s new power in narrative extends to the awakenings of the six novels’ narratees, expounding on my thesis that lesbianism and heterosexuality are part of a continuum of sexual identity. By proffering the awakening to a narratee, these narratives suggest legitimacy of lesbian desire beyond the fictional world.

“Narrative empathy” best describes the kind of relationship between reader and narrative elucidated by Saxey and Hodgeson. Suzanne Keen defines the relationship as “a vicarious, spontaneous sharing of affect...provoked by witnessing another’s emotional state, by hearing about another’s condition, or even by reading.” Empathy differs from “sympathy” because an empathic person “mirrors” another’s feelings, whereas a sympathetic person distances him/herself from another’s emotion; sympathy is an “apprehension” of emotion (Keen 214). Narrative empathy allows the reader to experience awakenings to criticisms in narrative without necessitating previous experience of that particular awakening; as in this study of six novels from India, the United States, and Argentina, empathy is possible across differences of time, place, and sexual and gender identities. The narratee, or intended reader, of the novel is the reader who empathizes with the protagonist and narrative’s awakening to desire. This narratee goes beyond sympathizing or acknowledging that these protagonists feel nonnormative desire, and empathizes with the desire by experiencing a vicarious awakening. I believe that in these six novels, when a

reader empathizes with the awakenings of narrative and protagonist to lesbian desire, the reader's own awakening goes beyond comprehension and tolerance of that desire (heteronormative or lesbian) to the realization that nonnormative desire is authentic in heteronormative structures outside of the narrative.

Saxey makes a careful distinction between narrative empathy and pedagogy in this tradition of dissemination of ideology. Feminist texts, while they may be didactic in tone, are more successful in disseminating feminist ideologies when they do not depend on political language or isolated leading characters; rather, more nuanced narratives are contingent on women within and without the narrative as the "source of their own enlightenment" (Saxey 18). This distinction harkens back to Chughtai's lawyer's claim in defense of "Lihaf [The Quilt]" that the experience of the girl narrator can be understood as a confrontation with female homoeroticism. Chughtai claimed she had never heard of lesbianism before writing her story, and merely wrote about that "which she cannot understand" in order to better understand it as a whole picture (Kumar 138). Chughtai narrated the experience, but the idea on trial was the readers' interpretations of that experience, "provoked by witnessing" the girl's shock at seeing Begum Jaan's quilt move.

Carol Christ further speculates on this connection between a mythology of stories and its empathizing readers' resulting awakenings. The reading woman's narrative empathy for her literature originates in shared "experience of nothingness" and leads to an "awakening." Her awakening is a feeling of validation by the larger collection of fiction which she cannot find in a male-centered society. Christ echoes Hogeland's theory of "consciousness-raising" narratives: Christ explains that storytelling within a female community is necessary for women to understand themselves and for other groups to understand them (*Diving Deep*... 5). Collections

of stories are crucial for women because male-centered structures of society and narratives confine femininity to a fixed role in relation to masculinity (*Womanspirit* 32). Christ argues that readers use this mythology to help them replace oppressive male egocentrism with liberating female egocentrism. Otherwise, the woman risks succumbing to “obliteration” of her identity and body due to the overwhelming patriarchal denial of her “story.” The female subject does not depend on her value as a social or economic commodity in the male eye when she has a female-centered structure to affirm desires which do not conform to her fixed role. The woman does not passively desire men, and her sexual behavior is not reduced to functional qualities like motherhood and wifedom (33). For Christ, a collection of women’s stories is the most essential instrument for women to articulate and explore their questions concerning the stasis of their gender identity.

Christ moderates the women’s mythology down to a more theological level than Hogeland or Saxey, but all three propose an empathic relationship between narratee and narrative as a foundational narrative engine of subversive fictions. Christ describes the empathic reader of women’s fiction as a woman in the midst of “an experience of nothingness.” This is a reader at risk of denying desires that do not align with her gendered roles in a patriarchal system. They experience emptiness of purpose, “self-hatred,” and “self-negation” (*Diving Deep* 13). No matter her individual achievements or experiences, she feels worthless in the male eye (15). If, however, she can read a story about a woman who succeeds in fulfilling a desire (for example, pursuing a career instead of a husband), a woman reader considering a similar desire feels “validated” in considering it as an alternative, yet legitimate option (5). This connection to narrated subject is her awakening, as it is her realization of an internal power that is not created by masculinity and is unique to her womanhood. The written stories of women articulate and

confirm desires the assumed readers would otherwise cast off; a desire that the male-centered story oppresses.

Nevertheless, there are dissimilarities between heteronormative feminist narratives and the lesbian awakening narratives I compare here. Astha typifies one distinction between the archetypal heteronormative protagonist and the lesbian protagonist. The narratives of *En Breve Cárcel*, *Annie on My Mind*, *El Nino Pez*, *Babyji*, and *Keeping You a Secret* begin with and center on the first-love awakening of desire in the lesbian subjects and narrative structure. Protagonists of feminist identity narratives, on the other hand, tend to be older, married, and with children at the time of her awakening. They are already settled in their gender roles when they realize that those roles do not express their individual desires (Saxey 16). Lesbian protagonists in the five novels I compare to *A Married Woman*—the protagonist of *En Breve Cárcel*, Lala, Liza, Holland, and Anamika—begin their narratives on the cusp of maturity and self-discovery. None of them are bound to social contracts like marriage and motherhood before their awakening occurs. Furthermore, awakenings to lesbian desire in the protagonists and the narratives occur at the outset of the novels. The five lesbian awakenings *are* the story itself, but in the more heteronormative narrative lesbian desire is a moment of evolution in Astha's feminist awakening.

The Indian novels present a particularly interesting case study of heteronormative versus lesbian narrative strategies because for both *A Married Woman* and *Babyji*, female gender and sexual identity are inextricable from national identity. Both are written in the 21st century but both are set in the 1980s. In her ethnography of lesbian communities in India, Naisargi N. Dave reviews the history of lesbian politics and community development. She explains that as in the United States, India experienced a feminist awakening in the 1980s, but “lesbian” was never

incorporated into its political discourse. Indian feminist activists “resisted ‘Western’ signifiers such as ‘lesbian’ in the name of cultural authenticity” (Dave 587). “Same-sex-desiring activist women” forged strong international ties with other lesbian communities at foreign conventions and conferences, but were unable to penetrate feminist politics within India. Lesbian identity was silenced by feminism for the sake of nationalism. These first Indian feminists refused an internal lesbian movement “in the name of cultural authenticity” (596-7). “Lesbian” and “Indian” were mutually exclusive identities for women in India.

Indian feminist rhetoric continued to exhibit nationalistic resistance to lesbian identity through the 1990s and early 2000s, despite the great multiplication of lesbian social networking organizations (Dave 602). For example, the release of Deepa Mehta’s film “Fire” in 1996 caused uproar from right-wing politicians and feminists due to the explicit visualization of lesbian sexuality, deemed by them as “a manifestation of promiscuous Western morality that would corrupt Indian values and Indian women” (Sharma 11). Lesbian rhetoric made little progression in the ten years after Mehta’s film as well. Caleri, the largest lesbian activist group at the end of the 1990s, demanded a focus on lesbian rights at the International Women’s Day 2000, but was denied for the reason that “sexual terminology would detract from important political issues” of women’s rights (14). Lesbians were allowed to participate in feminist politics only if they remained voiceless concerning their sexual identity. As a heteronormative feminist novel, *A Married Woman* does not acknowledge the legitimate value of lesbian desire, and utilizes a lesbian relationship only to enhance a nationalist feminist critique. *Babyji*, on the other hand, addresses national identity as a part of the essentialist lesbian narrative, and goes so far as to name the object of Anamika’s lesbian desire as “India.” *A Married Woman* struggles to use

lesbianism as an outlet for its feminist critique, but, in the end, rejects the lesbian as a subject of nationalist discourse.

In this study, *A Married Woman* is more appropriately classified a heteronormative novel than lesbian because, in comparison to *En Breve Cárcel*, *El Niño Pez*, *Annie on My Mind*, *Keeping You a Secret*, and *Babyji*, lesbian desire is not critical to the protagonist's awakening. Astha's lesbian relationship with Pipee is, instead, a derivative expression of Astha's feminist awakening within a patriarchal structure. The novel preserves heteronormativity in the end. The title itself indicates the kind of awakening found in the novel: the narrative identifies the female protagonist foremost by her social status in relation to a man—"married"—and her consequential adulthood—"woman" instead of "girl." The protagonist is "a" singular example out of a general group of "married women." Christ and Saxey emphasize the importance of group or community mentalities as systems to support women's empathy with one another's stories (*Diving Deep* 5; Saxey 17). The title establishes the protagonist's social value before the narrative even begins. Her governing identity is classified by her gender and by her legal relationship to a man. The woman's identity is thus initially sublimated by the social dominance of male authority. Her label defines her before her story of identification can reveal anything different than what is expected. Astha's, and the narratee's, "consciousness-raising" will be a battle against the fixedness of the presumptive role assigned to her.

Astha begins the novel as a young, romantic girl eager to fit in as many romances with boy schoolmates as she can before her parents arrange her marriage. Her parents support her through her post-secondary education while they orchestrate "the proposal" of her life (Kapur 33). She feels "stifl[ed]" during the marriage ceremony to Hemant, but Astha knows that in this moment she becomes "a grown woman" (37) It is not her higher education that signifies her

womanhood, nor her previous sexual promiscuities with men outside of marriage, but the legal and social possession of her welfare by a man which defines her maturity. The omniscient narrator exposes her “experience of nothingness” in a patriarchal society—her lack of value outside her position as a married woman—early on in the novel, as well as her compliance with her situation. When she accepts Hemant’s instruction to not “get upset” about the current political turmoil of communal wars and riots, “the wife” calms down (52). The narrator reminds the reader of Astha’s distance from her subjectivity by objectifying her as she is in the novel’s title. In her most compliant moments, this married woman does not have a name or an individual identity; she is indiscernible from the role Hemant assigns her. Astha accepts her confinement to a passive role previously demarcated for her. It is Astha’s “natural” duty to fill this role at the times decided for her.

The omniscient narrator’s engagement with Astha’s normative role when it calls her “the wife” or “the mother” is an example of the novel’s employment of “reverse discourse” using traditionally male narrative voice. While Astha “realiz[es]” her marriage as the “ordained” life “for her” (37), she does nothing in her passive frustration to resist the progress of her marriage. A “life ordained for her” implies Astha’s frustration at her passive role in the economy of her marriage. Her womanhood is forced upon her, happens *to* her, per a specific order. Her wedding day is extremely uncomfortable for her—the fire meant to unite the bridegroom and bride suffocates Astha and put her on the verge of fainting (37). Two paragraphs after the “trance” of the ceremony, she is suddenly a “grown woman.” “Trance” further suggests Astha’s lack of participation in the ritual of her maturity. Only the narrator hears the frustration of this girl caught in the patriarchal system. According to Judy Long, feminist expression becomes problematized when the only instrument of voice is the structure which oppresses feminism. She

asserts that first-person narration is the engine which overcomes limitations of third-person voice that inhibit honest development of the feminist mind in narrative: she echoes Christ when she says that “it is only through woman-centered inquiry that we can discover what experiences women are trying to communicate” (Long 8). Working backwards from Long and Christ, if third-person narration inhibits feminist expression, then third-person narration is not conducive to the woman’s story. Third-person narration is not obdurately inimical to representing women’s stories, but its “surety” of authority inhibits depictions of internal thoughts and identity in general (8). More specific to my analysis, omniscient narration traditionally privileges a male-centered authority above all other narrated voices. Third-person narratives with female subjects, like *A Married Woman*, risk perpetuating the self-hatred caused by patriarchal structures, and thus locking the female subject into the “experience of nothingness.”

Astha’s narrative entrapment within a male-centered framework marks *A Married Woman* as an ideal foundation for my comparison of heteronormative and lesbian narrative tactics because this novel seems to surrender to the normative narrative structure, while it in fact makes use of normative discourse in order to subvert it. This concession proves critical in this one heteronormative novel and the five lesbian awakening narratives as a strategy of “reverse discourse.” Even though the traditional narrative authority threatens to complicate the feminist discourse of Astha’s story, the feminist literary traditions previously discussed do not necessarily discredit *A Married Woman*. Susan S. Lanser points to the paradox of an argument like Long’s that believes a nonhegemonic subject must reject hegemonic discourse: “even novelists who challenge this [discursive] authority are constrained to adopt the authorizing conventions of narrative voice in order, paradoxically, to mount an authoritative critique of the authority that the text therefore also perpetuates” (Lanser 7). In order for the feminist text to criticize the

traditionally while-male narrative authority, it cannot avoid acknowledging, and consequently assuming, the structure which it fights against, consequently further authorizing that structure's dominance. The male narrative voice is a *part of* the feminist narrative, in that feminist politics recognizes its power in order to destabilize it.

Within the balance of traditional narrative and nonhegemonic narrative and protagonist, *A Married Woman* projects its feminist discourse to an intended reader, or "narratee," who, like Astha, initially has faith in the roles designed by a patriarchal structure. This narratee can be awakened by *A Married Woman* to the possibility of a legitimate yet alternative gender role of what patriarchal structure deems "natural" or "right." The narrative does not specify the gender or sexuality of the narratee, and the temporal distance between narrative and narratee allow this generalization; the narrative looks back on a political era twenty years before the novel itself is published. The gap of time between the setting of the narrative and reading of the narratee in *A Married Woman* permits a simultaneous objectification of Astha's story as a sort of "case study" of a married woman's situation in the 1980s and early 1990s, as well as a personalized story of her experience. The intended reader experiences Astha's story through a lens of retrospection and distance from the tyrannical system Astha struggles against in the narrative. The narratee is thus not only a female reader in need of an awakening in an exactly similar situation as Astha, but an intended reader of no particular gender who undergoes the realization of an alternative reading of female identity to the normative discourse's presentation of her.

The narrator's appeal to the narratee is most visible in the interruptions of the third-person narrative where Astha's feminist voice directs itself directly to the empathizing reader. Unlike the lesbian protagonists in this study which experience one supremely powerful awakening at the start of their narratives, driving the rest of the novel, Christ qualifies the

heteronormative woman's awakening as constantly repeating. "Experiences of nothingness" precede an awakening of power, but the woman, who contends with this nothingness her whole life, constantly moves in and out of her revelation. She may find relief from the mythology of women's stories, but the oppressive nature of male-centered structures puts her at permanent risk of regressing back into a state of self-annihilation. Her awakening is neither singular nor stable (*Diving Deep* 14). For that reason, Astha's awakening reoccurs numerous times throughout the narrative, and in varying magnitudes of power. Astha's creative voice interrupts the third-person narrative, asserting a larger, continuous theme of feminist awakening in the protagonist, as well as in the narrative structure. Both voices become aware of this subversive identity. Lanser explains that the fundamental narrative factors that perpetuate conventional male discursive authority are "the extent to which a narrator's status conforms to this dominant social power" and the "textual strategies that even socially unauthorized writers can appropriate" (Lanser 6-7). Therefore, the dominant discourse is only as authoritative as the narrative makes it, *and* that dominance can be undermined by the use of the same textual tactics which construct it. This dynamic use of the traditional hegemonic narrative reveals a necessary double consciousness in the discursive approaches of a subversive text, feminist or lesbian. *A Married Woman* utilizes traditional forms of hegemonic narrative, simultaneously undercutting its claim of supremacy.

A Married Woman often depends on what Mikhail Bakhtin calls "*heteroglossia*" to empower the competing narrating voices of patriarch and feminist. A diversity of competing voices and styles within a single narrative implies a fundamental belief, tone, and style of the overreaching narrative which unites the purpose of disunited forms (Bakhtin 263). Practices of *heteroglossia* in *A Married Woman's* are its core narrative strategies that undermine the conventions it appears to conscribe to. After Astha marries, bears two children, and settles in a

middle-class level neighborhood, she begins to question her value as a woman. Her passive duty as wife and mother are fulfilled so she scrambles to discover an experience that is not “clear” or laid out for her (Kapur 86); Astha yearns for a talent, possession, or space that is “more clearly hers” (89). Her husband thinks it unnecessary for her to work. Hemant repeatedly denies Astha of any capacity of “something to offer” outside her limited role as “married woman” and mother (143). Her father and husband bestow upon her the unsatisfying power they deem appropriate, leaving her in a state of despair and self-hatred.

Feeling worthless and dispossessed of a sense of self, Astha turns to artistic expression for validation—exactly what the narratee seeks in a mythology of women’s fiction. Astha presents one poem, entitled “Change” to her husband. Akin to the title of the novel, the title of Astha’s poem insinuates a certain influence on the content of the text. “A Married Woman” presumes complications the protagonist encounters with bearing the title, and “Change” implies that Astha undergoes some kind of transformation in her poem. She is shocked when her husband reads a few lines aloud: “Who promised me, that if I / Did gaze upon reality / Accept it, embrace it, befriend it / I would never suffer again” (Kapur 80). Hemant’s vocalization of Astha’s “Change” takes over Astha’s only unmediated expression in the narrative, but his voice’s literal silence, and Astha’s narrative exclamation, undermines his assumed male authority. Astha’s transformation visually breaks the narrative fluidity of the third-person narrative, subverting her husband’s power over her expression. Rather than hear the husband’s male voice vanquish Astha’s female voice, Astha’s poem finds expression through his authority. The narrative uses male discourse to articulate Astha’s misgivings, as well as challenge the male’s belittlement of her emotions. Astha is “horr[ified]” that her husband, “who promised” her comfort, reveals her real “suffer[ing].” Her husband’s voice is “puzzled” as he reads, but he

finishes the poem in its entirety. He challenges Astha after the reading, warning her that outside readers would question her own happiness. Astha “quickly” backs down as she assures him the poem is not about her (81). The narrative impact of the poem, however, cannot be undone by any skittish acquiescence. This *heteroglossia* of voices (Hemant and Astha) and styles (omniscient narration and first-person poetry) uncovers the novel’s main interest in conveying a destabilizing female voice within the presumptuous power of male voice.

A second, less physical assertion of Astha’s voice within conventional narrative—and a strategy that becomes essential to the lesbian narrative of *En Breve Cárcel*—is what Marie-Laure Ryan and Laura Buchholz call the “morphing” of narrative voices (Buchholz 200). Buchholz applies Ryan’s original analysis of “Cyberage Narratology” onto fiction. “Morphing” occurs when the distinction between two or more voices becomes so unclear that it is uncertain whether the omniscient narrator or a character is narrating. The melding of two agents of narrative authority “is especially helpful when considering a third-person narrative which abruptly changes to a first-person perspective, because it allows the ‘I’ to be identified in a fluid sense” (201). The “I” of the second agent is not as visually or authoritatively intrusive upon the narrative as a more straightforward component of *heteroglossia* might be, and is, therefore, possibly more subversive of traditional narrative and expressive of heterogeneity than an obvious change of form. As Astha’s awakenings become more frequent and more powerful, the narrative relies more heavily on the “morphing metaphor.” Boundaries become most ambiguous when the narrative asks questions. For example, when Astha declares to her husband that she will go on a political pilgrimage on her own, Hemant’s response is that “[a]s [his] wife” it is improper to abandon her duties as homemaker and mother. The narrative reacts with two questions: “Astha went into familiar distress. As his wife? Was that all she was?” (Kapur 188). No demarcated

shift occurs from third-person narration to first-person narration, but there is a shift from omniscient recorder of Astha's reaction to interpolator of the character's actual thoughts. Astha's assertive declaration of "I have decided" is clear in her dialogue with Hemant, but he easily convinces her to back down. These questions, on the other hand, render a voice that does not belong entirely to the third-person narrating voice, or Astha's passive voice but both. The married woman's discomfort fuses with authoritative narration and reveals a couched female power which questions its place within the male structure. Roof and Foucault would be more likely to call this a "successful" subversion of the hegemonic narrative since it does not rely on identified separation from the maleness of a structure, but on the use of the discourse, within the discourse, to illustrate normativity's fundamental instability.

The "morphing metaphor" feminist criticism is additionally a strategy to appeal to the narratee. The ambiguity of narrative authority morphs the narrator's and narrated subject's voice, as well as the narratee's voice, into a coalescent moment of feminist expression. Oftentimes, the narrative poses questions that contradict Astha's actions to provoke contemplation over the questions in an intended reader. In the same scene, Astha tries use her sexual appeal to calm Hemant's anger after she petitions him to go on pilgrimage. Inserted between the narrator's descriptions of Astha sidling up to her husband and rubbing her hands under his shirt, is another question: "Why was it like this between them?" (188-9). The paragraph does not break when the question is asked but is at the same time a part of, and a disturbance of, the normal third-person narrative. "[T]his" being questioned is Astha's reoccurring impulse to use her feminine allure to calm Hemant down, even when his reaction is irrational. She relinquishes whatever power she thinks she has in order to make her life as "a married woman" more comfortable. She depends on passive rhetoric to convince her husband

that her ideas are originally his, and degrades her potential as favors he beneficently grants her. Astha undercuts her assertive “I decided” with qualifiers such as “just two days” and “I hate to leave you alone” (189). The lone question interjecting the otherwise normative narrative, however, stands out against Astha’s submission in narrative and dialogue. Competing voices and styles almost overwhelm the question, but the tone of opposition comes through. The question is in third-person (“them”), so it is not a direct change to Astha as narrator, nor is it an objective report of the characters’ movements, dialogue, or feelings, like the surrounding narrative because the omniscient narrator is not reporting its knowledge, but questioning it. The question echoes Lanser’s belief in a balance between appropriation of homogenous narrative and disruption of it—how much must Astha exploit the role she hates in order to escape it?; at what point does that exploitation compromise her liberation? Neither narrator nor subject attempts to answer the hanging questions. The reader who is able to empathize with the narrative—or, in other words, who takes these elusive questions as lenses with which to analyze Astha’s submission—is the narratee because both this reader and narrative experience awakenings to a contravening female authority.

While *A Married Woman* exemplifies the narrative strategies of voice that foreground the feminist narrative precedence, the novel is more aptly classified as a heteronormative narrative rather than a lesbian narrative. Astha’s desire for another woman constitutes only a *part* of her awakening—the most desperate part. Although Astha has an explicitly sexual and emotional relationship with another woman, her story is not lesbian. Her relationship with Pipee is based in a connection of utter desperation for empathy of her “experience of nothingness.” Their lesbian desire is a metaphor of woman’s need for a community to affirm and express desires that transgress fixed gender roles. *A Married Woman* could be classified as a postmodern lesbian

novel if lesbianism were not mentioned at all and the communal wars that obsess Astha were the focus of the awakening. In this case, the lesbianness of the narrative would be an unidentified, yet disturbing, influence of female desire rather than a story with a lesbian character or plot (*Lure of Knowledge* 67). This novel neither an essentialist novel nor a postmodern novel: lesbianism is an unnecessary, almost not present aspect of the awakening, but briefly a blaring interruption in the narrative. “Love” for another woman is first mentioned in the introduction of Pipee (Kapur 129), then in a dream Astha has (155), and then not again until Astha and Pipee’s sexual relationship begins (199). Lesbian desire commands a presence in Astha’s story once it supplants a nationalist plot with a lesbian plot, but this does not occur until two-thirds of the way through the narrative. The locus of Astha and Pipee’s relationship is the feminist politics it reveals, not the lesbian desire. In the wider *heteroglossia* theme of the narrative, lesbian desire is not contingent of the awakening. This meager third of the novel about their relationship is a jarring departure from the plot before it. Pipee and Astha’s relationship mimes the political aesthetics that precede it, and, as I will show, only serves to expound upon the benefits and limitations of the heterosexual woman’s shared “experience of nothingness” and awakening within the novel.

The relationship between heteronormative and lesbian narratives is not one-sided: *A Married Woman* adopts a narrative trope conventional of homoerotic literature. Astha’s awakening climaxes in one moment where she finds meaning in the pain of her first headache. The headache makes her conscious of her body’s capacity to feel extreme pain after she has her first migraine. The persistent “throbbing” is a physical experience totally devoid of male participation and derived entirely from Astha’s own body, unlike her many sexual encounters before. After her first headache, she awakens to “a whole world [that] seem[s] new.” The

excruciating pain awes Astha to the point where she fears that “each small twinge” means the onset of another headache. This repeated painful experience forces Astha to “change [her life] to accommodate” the headaches (Kapur 75). In her study of eighteenth century novels, Katherine Binhammer connects pain and homoerotic—specifically lesbian—desire. First, she qualifies her argument by clarifying that she does not believe lesbian desire to be the opposite of heteronormative desire, but, instead, “a propensity that marks the extreme.” Lesbian and normative desires are “dynamic” sexualities along the same “continuum” (Binhammer 474). Lesbian desire is “excessive” of sexual practices moderated by social standards—practices judged as “normative” and in the middle of the sexual continuum (473). Pain as erotic or sexual epitomizes the most “transgressive” and “excessive” form of sexual identity that challenges normative “forms of domestic sexuality” (474). Astha’s headaches stimulate her body and arouse her sense of self, independent of outside pressures; her pain comes “as a herald of what was to come,” a vigor that alters her perspective of the world from then on (Kapur 74). Astha’s body identifies itself to her through extreme pain as a distinct text that continues to disrupt her comfort in her role. “Excessive” pain can be appropriated as a narrative trope by lesbian novels, but that does not mean that this scene reveals Astha’s latent homoerotic desire. Heteronormative feminist ideologies do violate patriarchal standards of the woman’s role even though they do not flout the woman’s heterosexuality. Binhammer’s theory of eroticized pain as expression of homoerotic desire is pertinent to identifying a climactic moment of Astha’s feminist awakening, but does not necessarily entail that the protagonist is a lesbian.

I do not claim that *A Married Woman* is not a lesbian novel, or not a “successful” one as Judith Roof might say, but I believe that the irrelevance of lesbian desire to the narrative more pertinently marks it as a heteronormative-feminist criticism of chauvinist discourse. Astha does

display lesbian desire, but that desire is not a crucial element of her awakening; lesbianism in the novel can be interpreted as heteronormative despair for the kind of community or group Saxey and Christ deem essential for women's awakenings. More specifically, sexual identity does not factor in to the discussion of nationalism. Astha's awakening arises from a specifically gendered "experience of nothingness," and contends with a similar chauvinist nationalist discourse that Anamika struggles with in *Babyji*. The married woman teaches her daughter to submit to the "woman's lot" in a patriarchal society, but she cannot convince herself that the "sacrifice" required by that role is "fair" (Kapur 169). Astha is "sick of sacrifice" and weary of being "pushed around" by a male authority demanding she fulfill her role. Moreover, she can no longer find value in the expectation that every woman is "the ideal of Indian womanhood, used to trap and jail" (168). Shamira A. Meghani explains in her study of the "articulation of 'Indianness'" that India has been imagined as woman and mother since the late nineteenth century. The metaphor of nation as "Great Mother" became markedly more burdensome during the years of independence and partition when nationalist discourse declared "the division of territory as a violation of the Motherland...as a violation of its body" and its "purity" (Meghani 60). Astha acknowledges the presumption that her body represents Indian identity, regardless of her individual sufferings and desires. She tarnishes her own purity, well before Pipee sparks any lesbian desire, with pre-marital affairs that keep "her insides churning" (Kapur 8). The headaches are more literal "violations" of the woman as Great Mother because the pain repeatedly molests Astha's comfort and sanity, leaving her "retch[ing]," "shaking," and "hurting" (75). *A Married Woman* spoils the fetishized female body that lies at the center of homogeneous nationalist discourse. Yet, the feminist criticism that results from this violation—

epitomized in Astha's headaches—manifests independently from male or female influence. The central argument addresses gender roles first and foremost, and sexuality only as an afterthought.

Astha's undefinable desire cannot be fulfilled or fully explored with a lesbian relationship, even though Meghani proposes lesbianism⁸ as the ideal medium for women's desires. The last chapters of the novel change to epistolary form and provide the reader with direct access into Astha's subjectivity. She considers breaking off her relationship with Pipee because no matter how sexually pleased she feels, Pipee is "one fragment" of the "wholeness" both women "hanke[r] after...But a fragment, however potent, is still a fragment" (Kapur 264). Astha's lesbian relationship affirms that she has legitimate, nonconforming desires that cannot be expressed in normative society; although it helps the woman articulate her desires, lesbianism does not satisfy them. Both women continue to search for other means of self-actualization, upholding a primarily heteronormative reading of this novel.

Sexuality contributes to feminist criticism in *A Married Woman* only as far as it further develops Astha's capability to create and express her own desires. She requires a community of shared experience to do so, but she is the agent that creates that community. Astha's desire for other women is similarly a creation of her own because there is no other awakening agent other than her own imaginative power. Astha desires Pipee less as a lesbian desiring another woman for sexual and emotional fulfillment, and more as a woman seeking an empathic companion to share her experience. The first suggestion of a desire for women comes to Astha in a dream where the desired male object is transposed by a female object. She dreams Aijaz's body "entwined around her," (an image that physically traps the woman in the embrace of a man) who then suddenly transforms into Reshana, a female activist (155). Reshana replaces Aijaz in

⁸ Meghani defines lesbian relationships as relationships between women, sexual or emotional, that are absent of representations "in relation to men" (61).

Astha's story before Pipee's story intersects with Astha's when Reshana becomes Astha's regular commissioner of political paintings. Astha visualizes her desire for this support in her dream. Pipee is still a stranger to Astha, so rather than replace Aijaz with Pipee, Renata ousts the man. She more physically replaces Aijaz in the supportive role Astha believed a man could fulfill. The uproar of emotions and "disturbance" caused by the dream "demand[s] some kind of recognition" (155). She, and the male presence constricting her, can no longer ignore her desire. On the same page, Astha becomes more obsessed with her political painting than any other creative moment in the narrative. She finds power of expression in her political paintings, and comes to see the household and her children as tedious interruptions of her work. The space of her creativity becomes a refuge from the tedium of life as "a married woman" so much so, that she begins selling her paintings at higher prices in order to pay for a private studio (156). The narrative "disturbance" Pipee represents in Astha's story manifests for the first time in Astha's dream, and Astha's confidence in her creative power begins to grow once more. The men of Astha's story, Hemant and Aijaz, cannot fulfill this narrative function.

Pipee is introduced at the lowest point of Astha's self-hatred in the first half of the novel. Astha attempts to meld her yen for political activism against communal wars, with her quest for expression of her discomfort in the role of "married woman." Discouraged by her husband, she gives up on poetry, but discovers a new creative release in theater and Aijaz, her children's male theater camp instructor. For the first time Astha is told that her talent is "invaluable" and feels "less constricted" in her position (110). Astha's highest moment of confidence is quickly squashed by her husband before the play she writes goes on. Hemant tells her she should "[k]eep to what [she] knows best, the home, children, teaching" (116). The male power in Astha's story devalues her merit as an individual back down to the roles prescribed by his authority. Hemant

has the last word and Astha feels once more she is “nothing.” She falsely believes that she can find comfort in her new male friend, but the narrative proves her wrong by supplanting Aijaz with Pipee. Her only relief can come from sharing experience with fellow women.

Consciousness-raising narrative relies on the shared experiences of a group of women in order for feminist ideologies to be “extrapolated from their shared experiences” (Saxey 17). Thus, a shared experience with a man—the principle proponent of woman’s self-hatred—is not a sufficient aid to the woman’s awakening. Pipee’s story supplants Aijaz as an influential mechanism of Astha’s awakening while also illustrating the incapacity of a male agent in a feminist narrative.

Pipee remains a stranger to Astha’s until they meet eighty pages after the former is introduced (Kapur 117; 198), but her initial disturbance magnifies a necessity for the two foremost women in the novel to find a community of stories. Like Astha’s poem, Pipee’s story is a visual break of paragraphs of narration, as well as a change of voice. The change—coincidentally the title of Astha’s poem—signifies a disruption in the story, as of yet unclear. The narrative remains third-person, but the omniscient narration forgets Astha altogether and focuses on Pipee. The engagement of Pipee and Aijaz reveals that a woman will have an “experience of nothingness” even partnered to a man as supportive of Astha’s creative talents as Aijaz. He “yawn[s],” to Pipee’s “annoyance,” at her fantasies of domestic life with her partner and his family. Again, a question is asked with ambiguous narrative authority: “Why was the man so unwilling to discuss his family?” (125). The question hangs dispossessed and unanswered. Pipee’s uncertainty of her worth to Aijaz beyond satisfying his “ardour” (124) is a lens through which the narratee reads the surrounding narration. Pipee’s aspirations do not interest Aijaz and he continues to be unwilling to provide her with a feeling of acceptance by his

family. The narrative drives home Aijaz's irrelevance to the women's stories by killing him off in a brutal communal riot (138). Only Pipee and a setting of political unrest remain after this first narrative break.

Pipee articulates the purpose of her and Astha's relationship to the narrative as a natural desire for a mythology of shared experience, not of mutual sexual desire. As the women consider separation, Pipee declares that she cannot bear to leave Astha yet because she does not "wish to experience that kind of emptiness again" (Kapur 243). The emptiness she describes is her feeling of purposelessness without a male influence to give her a role. After Aijaz's death, Pipee is left without a father or a fiancée. Pipee almost exactly quotes Christ's *Diving Deep and Surfacing* when she implies that their relationship is based in a shared relief from the "nothingness." This shared feeling, Christ believes, precludes the woman's awakening to power. The women recognize in one another the legitimacy of their desires to deviate from normative gender roles, and are then able to escape the self-hatred Astha feels with Hemant, and the self-negation Pipee feels with and without Aijaz.

This feminist text is reluctant to validate female homoerotic desire any further than its potential as a narrative strategy for female awakenings. The narrative eliminates Pipee, like Aijaz, once she exhausts her ability to articulate desiring power in a woman. Pipee no longer needs to share experience with Astha once she decides to pursue her Ph.D. on the politics of communalism (Kapur 288). She declares herself as "single" and takes her leave into the public sphere of political activism and education. The prospect of graduate school reminds Pipee that there is a space outside of domesticity where she "realize[s] [she] is not alone" (288) and has "choices" (289). Pipee finds "wholeness" in a desire to better the social conditions of underprivileged women—a public expression of communal activism dedicated to her fellow

women. She separates from Astha's story as the culmination of a feminist awakening, no longer dependent on a female relationship secondary to a male-centered structure. Astha cannot overcome her powerlessness under patriarchy, even with the help of a shared story, so she is left in the last lines of the novel "stretched thin" with no individual identity (307). Astha is unable to feel a power of her own with Pipee permanently gone. Her relationship with Pipee was never an awakening of its own, but an agent of a broader awakening, a desire for change in her narrative that both narrative and narrated subject hide behind. Foucault warns that heavy dependency on subversive strategies—in the case of *A Married Woman*, Astha's desire for Pipee—can become a "stumbling block" for nonnormative discourse; that discourse becomes a victim of its own assumed power (Foucault 101). Astha's story depends too heavily on its lesbian components; therefore Astha is left powerless in the last line of the narrative. Pipee, more narrative strategy than narrated subject, releases herself from her dependency on too subversive a discourse when she realizes the relationship must remain unrequited and delegitimized in its necessitated secrecy. She finds expression of her power in the public sphere through her pursuit of higher education, financed and chosen on her own.

Astha and Pipee's transgressive desires in *A Married Woman* illustrate subversive narrative tactics in heteronormative feminist literature that reappear in *En Breve Cárcel*, *El Niño Pez*, *Annie on My Mind*, *Keeping You a Secret*, and *Babyji* as strategies of lesbian plots in heteronormative narratives. While some facets of *A Married Woman* do present the protagonist's desire as homoerotic, a heteronormative-feminist approach to the awakening permits a more comprehensive analysis of a woman's "experience of nothingness" and awakening, as well as feminist criticisms of nationalist discourse. The narrative makes only

temporary and transitional use of a woman's awakening to desire for other women, until its narrative function is no longer relevant to the text's feminist ideologies. The five lesbian narratives of awakening, on the other hand, depend upon the politics of a lesbian awakening to sexual desire for other women. These texts propose to their narratees the particular existence of a lesbian discursive authority within a heteronormative structure, rather than a more general women's authority. The lesbianism of the text is a part of the narrative strategies and cannot be segregated from the identity politics of the text.

II. The Lesbian Awakening Within the Heteronormative Text

Narratives of lesbian sexual awakenings portrayed in the five novels I will analyze in this chapter utilize traditional feminist literary criticism to illustrate three types of lesbian awakenings of varying degrees of importance to the lesbian story: most significant to the overall trope of awakening is the awakening of the narrative to a lesbian presence; second, the awakening of the narratee, facilitated by the narrative's *heteroglossia* of voices; third, the awakening of the narrated subject or lesbian. The initial awakening that sparks all other awakenings in these lesbian novels is that of the fundamental displacement⁹ of lesbian identity from heteronormativity, and its corresponding legitimacy in that displacement. I title this chapter

⁹ The item being "displaced" is a feeling of belonging or affirmation of one's desires. These female protagonists feel lesbian desire, so it exists regardless of heteronormativity's denial of it. Since lesbian desire does not conform to the behavior moralized as "right" or "natural," even if the desire is legitimized through the narrative strategies I discuss in this chapter, it remains out of place in the mediated "normal" dictated by heteronormativity.

“The Lesbian Awakening *Within* the Heteronormative Text” because the concept of a lesbian story necessarily entails a heteronormative context. As a point of “reverse discourse,” these lesbian texts address heteronormative pressures which attempt to deny them legitimacy *in order* to assert the legitimacy of lesbian desire as a part of a continuous spectrum of sexuality. Lesbian desire, as these novels see it, is not the opposite of heterosexuality, but rather a part of fluid sexuality which mediated social norms refuses to acknowledge¹⁰. In this way, the five lesbian works greatly resemble the “excess” of desire I previously attributed to Astha’s headaches. The lesbian stories acknowledge the domination of heteronormative matrices in order to undermine its assumed authority over what is and is not legitimate desire.

My study coincidentally closely follows the chronology of publication, with the exception of *El Niño Pez* because of its relevant comparison to *En Breve Cárcel*. I will discuss the five lesbian novels in order of the narrators’ perspectives. I begin with *En Breve Cárcel* and *El Niño Pez* because neither is told from the perspective of the lesbian protagonist. Then I move on to *Annie on My Mind* because of the novel’s combination of first-and third-person narration. Finally, I will use the narrative strategies that appear in the first three novels to enhance an understanding of the function of first-person voice in *Keeping You a Secret* and *Babyji*.

Although I categorize *En Breve Cárcel*, *El Niño Pez*, *Annie on My Mind*, *Keeping You a Secret*, and *Babyji* as lesbian novels, narrative empathy in these works does not attract specifically lesbian narratees. They utilize the trope of awakenings to reveal a preexisting lesbian desire to an unknowing reader, but not to awaken the desire in a repressed lesbian reader. Christ argues that women’s mythology is for women to empathize with—to affirm their desires which transgress their gender roles. Hogeland perceives feminist writings as having more

¹⁰ I adopt this idea of a “continuum” of sexuality from Katherine Binhammer. The perspective that sexuality is dynamic is more effective than the belief that lesbian desire is the opposite of heterosexual desire. Instead, homoerotic desire should be considered the “excess” or unmediated extreme of the norm.

general intended audiences than Christ allows: “consciousness-raising” novels of the 1970s and 1980s were “important and influential in introducing feminist ideas to a broader reading public” (Hogeland ix). CR novels demonstrated a female presence which exceeded constructs of male social structure. The six novels—heteronormative and lesbian alike—awaken protagonist, narrative, and narratee to the presence and legitimacy of marginal female desires. Astha, the protagonist of *En Breve Cárcel*, Lala, Liza, Holland, and Anamika’s feelings of displacement and “nothingness” push the empathic reader to acknowledge their desires.

Radical postmodern lesbian theorists like Judith Roof would likely oppose my inclusion of *Annie on My Mind*, *Babyji*, and *Keeping You a Secret* in this comparison of heteronormative and lesbian narratives because these three texts are “coming out novels” where declarations of gay or lesbian identity are the central plot movement. For Roof, a lesbian narrative that puts an identified “lesbian” plot at its center succumbs to the authority of what she calls “heteronarrative.” She cites D.A. Miller’s theory that heterosexuality claims a secure “entitlement” to the sexuality of narrative, even though narrative content does not need to be explicitly heterosexual. Family, marriage, and social anxieties motivate heterosexual plots (Miller 44). Lesbian plots with characters that identify as “lesbian” misguidedly assert their authenticity by the fact that they can wield the same power of “economy” which rejects them:

“[O]ur assumptions about identification’s presumptive sameness...demonstrate[s] the extent to which we normally suppose identification’s to be an economy of similitude even as it sometimes might represent the dreams, hopes, or delusions of similarity nursed by the obviously dissimilar” (*Come as You Are* 159)

Claiming an identity is legitimate because of its ability to articulate itself iterates the normative structure the identity attempts to free itself from. The identified “lesbian” can only define herself by the heteronormative qualities she does and does not demonstrate. These traits are mediated by the dominant discourse as “normal” or “right,” and consequently that discourse oppresses any

desire that exceeds its expectations. As Judith Butler states, “coming out” discourse is more likely “a return to the closet under the guise of an escape” than an actual articulation of liberation (Butler 310). Still, even Butler admits a political imperative to identifying the lesbian. She admits that some categorization is necessary to avoid utter “obliteration” by homophobic discourse (312).

Inevitable questions arise when identity is classified: which characteristics of gender or sexuality are included in the categorization? Excluded? What happens to the identities that face obliteration from this exclusive “lesbian” identity they previously imagined themselves a part of? These are all questions Roof and Butler struggle with in considering the “coming out” story as a lesbian text. While the awakening trope cannot answer all of these questions raised about the sameness of identity and identification, and the political benefits and risks of the latter, I will point out similar feminist narrative strategies found in *A Married Woman* which present identification as a subversion and part of a normative structure. The awakenings of the lesbian subjects, including the “coming out” stories, are steeped in a feminist tradition which equalizes the debate between essentialist and postmodern literary criticism. Feminist and lesbian narratives alike present their texts as opportunities for their narratees to awaken to the *presence* of a lesbian identity in a “heteronarrative,” rather than a specific “lesbian” identity or experience. The narrative leaves it up to the narratee to draw his/her own conclusions of the sexual or gender identities, based on his/her experiences of a particular subject example within the narrative. I refer to Monika Fludernik’s theory of “natural narratology,” or the use of voice to project constructions of the real world. Transformations, disruptions, and stresses of “narratological voice” contribute to “the humanistic project of making sense of *stories*” (Fludernik 709). Fludernik asserts that a holistic study of narratology should focus on the use of language as

realizations of “narratological voice,” as expressions and “echoes” of that humanistic objective that reaches beyond the text, and which is often lost in narratological studies (710).

Because intentional confusion and ordering through natural narratology is one of the most effective narrative strategies in these six novels, I do not prescribe the narratee as necessarily an unsocialized reader with no previous experience with lesbian desire, but rather a reader who finds use in these five narratives as a gluing together and ordering of parts of the world into a whole. Voice can be the most effective narratological strategy to convey an “illusion” of “meaning-effects from the language of the text” (708) because readers are prone to imagine an “embodiment of voice,” like they would expect to hear from spoken language (707). A “readerly” approach to stories seeks empathy in its telling, a relatable and mimetic issuing of narrative. Thus, as seen frequently in the six novels in this study, when a narrative is not consistent in its voices it can play with the reader’s empathy to the experience being narrated. Narratives collect real experiences and organize them temporally and spatially in novel form; these lesbian awakening narratives similarly attempt to “mak[e] sense” of real confusion. I claim, then, that the awakening that occurs in the narratee is a clarification and appreciation of the lesbian presence the narratee was previously unable to understand.

In her comparison of feminist “consciousness-raising” novels and lesbian “coming out” stories, Saxey arrives at a similar compromise between Roof’s objection to lesbian identification within the “heteronarrative” and the conspicuous presence of a lesbian subject in these particular stories. She terms the compromise “homoplot.” Saxey concurs with Roof that the “heteronarrative” dominates narrative and influences all readers’ cultural understanding of non-normative identities; however, Saxey qualifies that the coming-out narrative—and, I argue, the story of awakening—is more innovative than simply an iteration of this dominant structure.

With the exception of *Annie on my Mind*, the awakenings in these novels do not present lesbian identity as fixed. Much like the heterosexual women liberated from “experiences of nothingness” by a mythology of women’s literature, lesbian fictions “establish workable sexual identities.” The lesbian subject within a conventional “heteronarrative” becomes possible, accessible, and understandable to both their lesbian audience and “the straight mainstream... [T]hey have ‘conspired’ to selfhood, communication, and visibility” within a structure organized to deny their legitimacy (Saxey 8). Four of the five lesbian awakening narratives avoid essentialist specificity, yet maintain the lesbian as the protagonist of the narratives. Lesbian identity and desire remains malleable and customizable to its narratees. The awakening communicates the legitimate presence of this non-normative identity or desire within a preexisting heteronormative matrix.

Susan Lanser’s belief in a necessary concession of non-hegemonic discourse within narrative of authoritative dominance of “white, educated men of hegemonic ideology” (Lanser 7) is integral to the lesbian narrative as well, expanded on by Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality*. While it is difficult to avoid conventional discursive authority, Foucault makes an argument for the value of “reverse discourse” in the homosexual narrative. He explains that rather than search for an entirely new and separate homosexual authority, a more tactical approach is “to demand that its [homosexuality’s] legitimacy or ‘naturalness’ be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified” (Foucault 107). Such a form of discourse within the already established discourse commandeers the authority claimed by the oppressor, consequently making the primary discourse unstable and fragile. Foucault does warn that use of the heteronormative structure can be a “stumbling block” for homosexuality because the subversive discourse can attempt to assume normalizing

authority, resonating Roof's warning. But, unlike Roof, both Lanser and Foucault recognize a strategic and likely unavoidable use of traditional narrative authority. In the next chapter on lesbian panic, I will show further evidence of this "reverse discourse" in the five lesbian novels with the subjects' performances in normative society, and reflections of the lesbian subject during this stage.

The balance feminist and lesbian narratives strive to achieve becomes largely important in the discursive usurpation found in *En Breve Cárcel*, *Annie on My Mind*, *El Nino Pez*, *A Married Woman*, *Babyji*, and *Keeping You A Secret* and their struggle to maintain what David Wallace calls the "double consciousness" of gay and lesbian performative discourse. If double consciousness is not maintained in a political gay or lesbian text, the use of performative discourse remains trapped within the discursive homophobia it fights. The subversive discourse transforms cultural narratives of gender and sexuality by using (or "performing") the power of the language of the dominant discourse in order to reconstruct non-normative narratives within the dominant ideologies which marginalize non-normativity (Wallace 54). This performance would succumb to the homophobia of the dominant discourse if it did not maintain an awareness of both the identity being proposed, and the normative response to it (64). Double consciousness wants to avoid the internalized self-hatred that Christ claims drives women to depend on a mythology of narrative in the first place, and is found during moments of "morphed" voices in the narratives of the feminist text I examine in this chapter, and the lesbian texts I look at in the following chapter. Reflections on past performances of gender and sexuality are present in all texts, but the more effective application of double consciousness is in its disruption of traditional textual style. In this way, the double consciousness of the performance is an experience of the narratee, rather than solely of the narrated subject.

En Breve Cárcel is an Argentine novel about an agoraphobic, unnamed woman recollecting memories of her dreams, childhood, and first two loves. The setting is mentioned only once as Buenos Aires (Molloy 145), indicating that the only necessary information of setting is that she is confined to a room. Her memoirs are not in first person, like *Babyji*, *Keeping You a Secret*, and parts of *Annie on My Mind*, so this narrative is not a first-hand recollection of this woman's experience of self-exploration. Nor do any labels that are found in other lesbian narratives I look at, such as "gay," "lesbian," or "homosexual," appear. *En Breve Cárcel*, written in 1981, exhibits many of the postmodern narrative strategies found in later lesbian literary criticism in the United States during and after the 1990s. This discrepancy in chronology in fact supports a conclusion that certain lesbian narrative strategies, namely, awakenings, are fluid across cultures, geographic regions, and passages of time, indicating a degree of universality among these five lesbian novels. In her comparison of essentialist and postmodern uses and rejections of what she terms "the novel of self-discovery," Paulina Palmer makes a similar argument for the relevance of the awakening in both traditions of lesbian literary criticism. Whether the lesbian subject is believed to "uncover" an identity (essentialist) or "construct" one (postmodern), she depends on her "interaction with the world at large" to do so. By "interaction," Palmer refers to either a "group" of women¹¹ or a single lover (Palmer 41). I will call this "group" or person the "awakening agent." All the lesbian protagonists in the five novels I look at depend on an awakening agent to instigate the three levels of textual awakenings to lesbian desire.

¹¹ Saxey uses the same term, "group" of women, when describing the feminist "consciousness-raising novels" of the 1970s and 1980s United States. She claims that women within the narratives required communities of shared stories, or "groups," in order to affirm their suppressed desires (Saxey 17).

I argue that this dynamic supports, to an extent, an essentialist reading of a narrative even as postmodern as *En Breve Cárcel* where the “lesbian” is never identified. The woman protagonist is utterly isolated from all possible “interactions” with others, and all her memories of past experiences are reflections of those interactions. *En Breve Cárcel* is a novel of “self-discovery” as much as *Annie on My Mind* because of the woman’s inability to escape her “self.” The focus on her thoughts and desires expose an innate “lesbianness” of the protagonist and her narrative because the lack of social interactions during her period of reflection. True, a post-structuralist¹² reading of the novel can still be made—writing a memoir is less a remembrance of past experience and more a present experience with one’s self, so the woman’s self-discovery is structured by language. Postmodern tactics disrupt traditional discourse, rejecting the identification of even a name for the protagonist, but her mind is paradoxically confined to the physical space of a room. Her discovery is entirely self-realized because of her lack of access to an awakening agent other than her own thoughts.

Molloy’s novel heavily depends on the strategy of free indirect discourse sometimes used in *A Married Woman*, to the point where almost the entire narrative is made of morphed voices. Judith Roof prefers this kind of extreme narrative where the lesbian presence takes a “metaphorical...narrative position”¹³ (*Come as You Are* 129). Lesbian texts fall within a more

¹² I define post-structuralism as the idea that there is no “center,” or not fixedness to identity. It is a postmodern rejection of modernist beliefs that social structures can be understood, because it argues that individual identity cannot be extricated from social constructs enough to examine them objectively. Discourse and text are “social spaces” that both reflect and create identity politics (see Seidman 265).

¹³ Because of this novel’s heavy dependence on postmodern narrative strategies that avoid categorizing lesbian identity, I must address the question of whether any intrusive voice in narrative is necessarily lesbian. Roof vaguely distinguishes the postmodern and lesbian narratives: postmodern narrative, she says, generally addresses “a frustration of control and style,” (*Come as You Are* 129) whereas lesbian narrative utilizes “sexuality and/or identity” to “disar[m] confusion’s threat or fears of a lack of mastery” (130). As undefined as the protagonist’s sexual identity remains in *En Breve Cárcel*, she clearly desires women. The latter part of Roof’s distinction becomes more pertinent in my last two chapters, but during the levels of lesbian panic and individuation, the protagonist’s sexuality becomes the new locus of her identification. She feels legitimized despite a “lack of mastery.”

general category of postmodern techniques that destabilize the idea of a center to identity, so Roof distinguishes lesbian texts by its deliberate revolt against the valorization of a single model of behavior (130). To do this, the novel utilizes the metaphor of “morphing voices”¹⁴ to delegitimize a heteronormative claim to narrative.

The morphing of narrative voices in *En Breve Cárcel* appeals to the narratee trying to make sense of lesbian desire. There are three narrators and none can claim dominance: one is the omniscient third-person narrator, the second is the protagonist writing her memoirs, and the third is the story that forces the protagonist to write. Moments of morphed voices in *En Breve Cárcel* awaken the text to subversive appropriations of the narrative’s creative power. The narrative begins with a threat: “Comienza a escribir una historia que no la deja: Quiere fijar la historia para vengarse, quiere vengar la historia para conjurarla tal como fue, para evocarla tal como la añora” (Molloy 13). The protagonist mimes the creative authority of the omniscient narrator; the third-person narration is introduced as a frame around the woman who actually experienced and is now writing this story. This frame confines the third-person narrator to an observer’s position of the character who actively writes. The woman holds an authorized position in her own narrative, in a role mimetic of the narrator. Her story is “*una historia*,” not introduced as specific to the protagonist (like the title “*a married woman*”). She has no choice but to write her memoirs to appease the force of the story that “no la deja.” The story is a separate voice from the omniscient narrator and protagonist as it declares its own authority outside the control even of the character experiencing it. These three voices asserted in the first line of the narrative establish their competition which will destabilize discursive authority throughout the text.

¹⁴ I refer to Buchholz’s adaptation of Marie-Laure Ryan’s theory of the “morphing” of narrative voices. Fluid changes between third- and first-person voices allow “the ‘I’ to be identified” even in omniscient narration (Buchholz 201).

En Breve Cárcel most often depends on the kind of “morphing” of voices seen in *A Married Woman*, where the narrated subject, narrator, and narratee come together in one voice to recognize the disturbance the protagonist causes. One evocative example comes from an early description of the protagonist’s sexual encounter with Renata. This scene is a significant moment of the morphing metaphor because it not only brings together the three narrative voices, but it brings them together as a way to describe a moment of heightened lesbian passion. When she first recollects her time with Renata, she is baffled at “¿[c]ómo es posible creer en una voz y luego negarla?” (Molloy 25). This question is not in quotation marks so it is not a piece of dialogue from the protagonist, or even a quote from her memoirs; it is not first person narration from the perspective of the character experiencing the lesbian desire. It is unclear which “voz” the question asks about—it could be the protagonist’s, Renata’s, or the narrator’s. Because there is a lack of introductory expressions such as “dice” or “piensa,” it remains unclear which voice narrates the question. All three voices at once are contemplating the existence of lesbian desire and an attempt to “negarla.” Perspective and voice are not permanent traits of this novel’s narrative. No single voice can maintain dominance over the text while it is interjected with these kinds of hanging questions.

Francine Masiello equates this refusal to submit with the utterly isolated “cuarto” the narrated subject occupies as “defiend[iendo] su marginalidad y rehusa colaborar con las expectativas formulaicas de tradición escritural masculina” (Masiello 104). Masiello treats third-person narration in *En Breve Cárcel* as “masculine” voice. Her terminology differs from mine (I maintain that the lesbian voice struggles against *heteronormative* voice), but she refers to the same type of “reverse discourse” achieved in *A Married Woman* using free indirect discourse. The space of the room inside the narrative of *En Breve Cárcel* represents this process

of destabilization by lesbian voice because the confined and determinedly isolated space the woman writes in more literally makes her a product of her own creation, “un sujeto aislado de su propia producción” (Masiello 104). By completely isolating herself from the larger narrative of the world, the woman also isolates herself from the power of the omniscient narrator. The creative power is appropriated by the protagonist as she takes over the role of author. The narrative affirms the subject’s voice as “aislado” from the larger narrative, and defends it as a legitimate “sujeto” nonetheless. I would go so far as to argue that the question at the start of the second chapter calls for an awakening in the narratee similar to the way morphing voices addresses the narratee in *A Married Woman*. Again, the narrative surrounding the question in *En Breve Cárcel* does not propose an answer to the question, only a recollection of the protagonist’s experiences. The question itself is void of a singular narrative authority.

All three voices fight for power throughout the narrative, as exemplified in the first line of the novel, but in this question they find harmony in their appeal to the narratee. I will use the phrase “politically discursive”¹⁵ to describe narrative engines whose purpose is to subvert the textual authority of normative discourse. The politics of the two subversive voices (the writing protagonist and her objectified voice in the text of her story) within the larger third-person narrative disrupt the stability of an overreaching authoritative power in telling this woman’s story. When the three voices come together in the question “¿Cómo es posible creer en una voz y luego negarla?” at the start of a lengthy chapter, the morphing’s implicit disruption of the hegemonic narrative’s politics appeal to the intended reader, the only objective witness of the competition. The narratee awakens to the disruption of narrative caused by morphing discourse.

¹⁵ I take the idea from Michel Foucault’s “reverse discourse,” a form of discourse within the already established discourse which supplants the authority claimed by the oppressor, consequently making the primary discourse instable and fragile (Foucault 107).

The subversive quality of the question derives from the complicit participation of all three voices in the political discourse of the narrative. These politics present their ability to exist in a hegemonic narrative authority to the intended reader, who will keep the question in mind as he/she continues reading.

The question arises how the political discourse of *En Breve Cárcel*'s narrative and narratee are "lesbian." "Lesbian" must be used in relation to this novel as the metaphorical configuration described by Roof—more than simply a plot concerning a woman-desiring woman. In her study of the emergence of voices of desire in Molloy's novel, Laura A. Arnés concludes that the lesbian voice of the narrative is in fact in the narrative's "voces intrusivas...y agónicamente apremiantes (en su necesidad de ser leídas y escuchadas)" (Arnés 25). The lesbian voice—which I argue for this novel is the combination and competition of omniscient narrator, narrated subject, narrated story, and narratee—is more present in its apparent absence than if it were named. Lesbian desire is the disruptive discourse of the narrative, and through that disruption the lesbian voice finds representation within a heteronormative structure.

Since the "lesbian" of *En Breve Cárcel* is inextricable from the political discourse of the narrative, the awakenings of lesbian desire in narrative, narratee, and protagonist cannot be reduced down to single moments of the plot (the protagonist is awakened to lesbian desire before the novel begins—she has already had two female lovers) but rather the woman's desperate need for her writings to be "leídas y escuchadas" composes the main lesbian plot of *En Breve Cárcel*. The main expression of her desperation is the metaphor of violence which sustains the awakened lesbian voice as the disturber of the mastering heteronormative narrative. Pleasure does not come without violence for the woman. She recalls that "el placer" of sleeping next to Renata was streaked through with the "violencia" of their intertwined "voces nocturnas" (Molloy 56).

The woman repeatedly remembers her sexual relations with Renata as the cause of many “injurias” as they learn the details of one another’s bodies (57). Only in this violence are their “voces” audible. The protagonist equates lack of violence with lack of desire: “quizá haya necesitado forzas a su cuerpo—único interlocutor que la queda—y mostrarse intolerante con él” (105). The woman needs to feel her text, her body, and resorts to violence to emphasize the pleasure. Violence is more than a theme; it is a story or narrative principle homologous with the lesbian discursive project of disruption in this postmodern novel. She violates the rules of the heteronormative structure, destabilizes it with her appropriation of authority and appeal to the narratee. The existence of her lesbian desire depends not only on physical desire for other women that she feels, but the meta-violence she triggers in the narrative.

A similar, but less physical, discursive violence composes the lesbian awakening in the other postmodern novel I look at. *El Niño Pez* presents a second case of a unique narrative technique that presents a “lesbian” story without naming the lesbian. The main trick of the novel is that it is narrated by Lala’s male dog, Serafín. *El Niño Pez* is narrated in first-person, which would initially group this novel with the most recent lesbian novels also written in first person (*Keeping You a Secret* and *Babyji*); however, the first-person perspective limits the narratee’s access into the subjectivity of the lesbian protagonist because she is not the narrator. Instead, the narrative further distances the narratee from her vicarious experiences through Lala by permitting access to her only through the lens of a “negro, macho y malo” male voice (Puenzo, ch. 1).

It would seem that the narrative of *El Niño Pez* attempts to distance itself as far as it can from conventional male-centered narratives with the unconventional choice of dog as narrator. This is not true: the dog is male and has similar effects on females that Christ describes in *Diving*

Deep and Surfacing of human women. Lala sees a female dog, Cleo, and tells Serafín “Es tuya.” Serafín “hiz[o] lo que tenía que hacer” by inseminating the female dog. Cleo leaves the transaction “cabizbaja y depremida,” her virginity taken and genitals torn from her first sexual encounter; but the male dog’s obligation is complete. Regardless of her shame or self-hatred after intercourse, she will produce “cachorros” by Serafín (Puenzo ch. 2). Serafín is himself a possession of Lala’s, and turning the male voice into a dog is tacitly ironic and critical of the value of that male voice; nonetheless, I compare this social interaction between the male and female dog in order to emphasize that the narrative perspective is not cleansed of its male prejudice just because the voice comes from a dog. Serafín participates in a similar economic exchange of a female that forces her into what Christ calls an “experience of nothingness,” or a feeling of purposelessness outside her role as an object in a patriarchal society.

In addition to the male voice narrating, there is no clear demarcation of when the lesbian awakening occurs, and the crime plot eclipses a narrative of lesbian desire. The relationship between Lala and La Guayi begins before the arrival of Serafín to narrate the story. In his first day at the house the dog is confused by all the strange humans, but he does take time to notice how self-involved Lala and the maid are: “Se rozaban. No dejaban de tocarse” (Puenzo, ch. 1). Their relationship is assumed to have become physical before Serafín’s arrival because there is no mention of its beginning. The relationship between the girls may be “lesbian,” but the crime plot easily distracts from a lesbian narrative. This novel puts pressure on my bifurcation of one heteronormative novel and five lesbian novels as the foundation for my study because of the heavy crime plotting. Even so, *El Niño Pez* picks up on a similar homology of violence and discursive disruption as *En Breve Cárcel*, marking it as a postmodern lesbian narrative.

The male voice narrating yearns to see Lala suffer, but the lesbian characters defy his expectations. Serafín longs for “sus lágrimas” that excite him “más que sus caricias.” His excitement over her tears is sexual, as they give him “una erección” (Puenzo, ch. 1). Here, the male voice wants to commit violence against the lesbian protagonist, rather than the reverse; he finds perverse pleasure in watching Lala suffer. Lala flouts the narrator’s hunger and commits her own act of violence against him, but her violence is embedded in the very text of the novel that the male voice narrates. Lala tries once to convince La Guayi to let her call her “novia” (the word “lesbiana” is never used in the novel). The first time she attempts to categorize the relationship, La Guayi helps her realize that their desire cannot be contained thus; the language of the text breaks down. La Guayi agrees to let Lala call her “novia” on the condition that she can say “Quiero que seas mi novia” in Guaraní. Instead of “Roaychy. Roypota che chycara,” Lala says “Ro ai chi.” La Guayi breaks the saying down even further into “Ro jai ju...roy potá ye yicara.” Lala attempts several times, fails, and the label is forgotten as they begin “besándose...hasta que amanec[e]” (Puenzo, ch. 1). This is the moment of the lesbian awakening of Lala and the narrative to what I have been calling the “displacement and legitimacy” of lesbian desire within a heteronormative order: La Guayi awakens Lala to the frivolousness of categorizing a woman’s possession of another, and suggests that an articulated legitimization (“novia”) of their relationship is not essential to their desire (“besándose”). The dog fantasizes about his pleasure in watching Lala suffer, and instead of fulfill his desire, Lala and La Guayi break down his language of narration. Language disintegrates into nothing more than syllables with no meaning when faced with articulating the girls’ non-male and nonheteronormative desire. Lala’s presence in Serafín’s narrative reverses the expectation of violence into a postmodern assertion of lesbian desire.

At the same time as awakening Lala to the artifice of discourse concerning desire, La Guayi and Lala awaken the narrative to that desire's displacement in the hegemonic narrative. Because it cannot be authorized or categorized, the desire risks illegitimacy within dominant heteronormative discourse. Male heterosexual (human) characters in the narrative establish a similar marginalization of lesbian desire through another authoritatively male eye. Lala's brother comments to her father that he thinks the girls playing together constantly and ignoring all other interactions "no es normal... Hay que hacer algo" (Puenzo, ch. 1). The brother and father are anxious about the implications of the girls' desire and feel a need to "fix" them, or put them back in their normative place. Their normative values find something fundamentally othering about lesbian desire based on heteronormativity mediated values of "rightness."

Even in their judgment, the desire takes advantage of the very discourse which attempts to deny its legitimacy, in order to affirm its presence within the authoritative discourse. That is, once more, an example of the text's awakening to lesbian desire within it, inseparable from the lesbian subject's awakening. An acknowledgement of normalizing values in the scene with the father and the brother, using the voice which authorizes them, is an example "double consciousness."¹⁶ The text identifies the homophobic discourse the lesbian desire is displaced from in order to reconstruct what is "normal" for those experiencing the desire (narratee, narrative, and lesbian subject). The desire refuses to risk internalizing homophobic hatred because of a fear of the oppressive discourse. Like the voice of patriarchy reading Astha's poem, and like the hegemonic narrative voice narrating *En Breve Cárcel*, homophobia is expressed and subverted through the agent of homophobic discourse. La Guayi has already shown Lala the

¹⁶ According to W. E. B. Du Bois, "double consciousness" is the awareness of "split personality." The split happens because identity is pulled in two directions: on one side, the natural, spiritual identity, and on the other, the demands of daily life and social interactions which often force the individual to neglect the first side (Bruce Jr. 308).

instability of heteronarrative's dependency on categorization. The narratee, awakened to the instable nature of language and its inability to represent lesbian desire, is skeptical of another expression of heteronormative judgment of "right" and "wrong" labels. Lala's brother and father attempt to value the girls' desire, but language no longer dictates the authority they assume they have.

Perhaps the most evocative novel of the lesbian desire's simultaneous awakening to displacement and legitimacy is *Annie on My Mind*, a 1982 novel from the United States. This novel closely follows the recollections of Liza Winthrop and her first love with Annie Kenyon. The two seventeen year-olds meet at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Liza is immediately intrigued by a fascination with Annie, a public school girl from a lower-middle class family in Brooklyn. As their friendship grows, so does Liza's love for the girl, until Annie first admits her own suspicion that she is "gay." Liza's desire to be with Annie clashes with the value system of her family and the conservative private school she attends. Liza is forced to "come out" to both groups when she and Annie are caught nude by one of Liza's teachers.

I argue that *Annie on My Mind* is the most prototypical lesbian awakening narrative of these five novels because of its use of what Ellen Peel calls "alternating narration." In her contemporary article to *Annie on My Mind*, published in 1989, Peel names alternating third-and first-person narration as a narrative engine of feminist texts. The novel begins with an untitled prologue that narrates in omniscient third-person voice the present story of Liza. She has moved away from New York City and is in her college dorm attempting to write a letter to the now estranged Annie. Only one brief line is written of the letter before the narrative switches to third-person omniscient narration. The first line, "*It's raining, Annie,*" comes from a letter Liza writes, in first-person voice. The first line of all the relatively essentialist novels I include in this

chapter on lesbian awakenings—including *Annie on My Mind*, *Keeping You a Secret*, and *Babyji*—reveal a discursive conflict of identification that becomes central to all the lesbian awakenings of the novels I examine. As essentialist novels, they present the standards by which lesbian identity will be identified throughout the narrative at the outset of the novel. In *Annie on My Mind*, these few words italicized and separated by form from the following narration. The following line changes starkly to third-person narration as the omniscient narrator observes that “Liza—Eliza Winthrop—stared in surprise at the words she’d just written; it was as if they had appeared without her bidding on the page before her” (Garden 3). I identify three layers of voices in these first few lines that resemble the conflicting voices of *En Breve Cárcel*: one narrator is Liza writing the story, the second is an omniscient narrator who observes Liza write the story, and the third is the power of the story being told, which neither Liza nor the omniscient narrator can control.

Annie on My Mind does not focus as much on the subversive creative power of the protagonist and her story of broader heteronormative mastery, but the competition of two voices in particular compose the main lesbian discursive strategy of the novel. Peel calls third-person narration “mind-reading narration” because the narrator speaks “with the authority of one who can see into other minds” (Peel 109). The mind-reading narrator claims authoritative knowledge of each character’s interiority without that character’s consent. Mind-reading narration may be contrasted to “naturalistic narration,” limited to the narrator’s consciousness, which can describe only the narrator’s life with some authority, “but can only deduce that of other people” (109). This first line—and all other moments of first-person narration during the flashback—are naturalistic narration, whereas the interrupting sections of third-person narration are passages of “mind-reading narration.” The split of voices should be considered as a narrative strategy to

depict the “protagonist’s uneasy view of themselves as both subject and object, both self and other” (108).

The profundity of the relationship between these two voices in a “consciousness-raising” novel and its influence on a subject’s formulation of identity lies in the comparison of division and competition, and integration of the voices. Peel names two qualities of a competitive relationship: first, the changing of voices occurs frequently and visibly in the text (e.g. page breaks, change in font, etc.). A division as stated as Astha’s poem, or the separation of third-person voice in *Annie on My Mind* with untitled section breaks, is a greatly divided voice. Second, a competitive division is a division disruptive of the reader’s expectations of a stable, “comprehensible” relationship and authority of voices. Frequently competing voices confuse discursive authority (109). Peel argues that the degree to which these voices are able to integrate themselves with one another and with the overarching narrative is evidence of a more resolved narrative of “self” and “other.” This occurs when the narrated subject is able to negotiate the split between the identity she intuits as her subject, based in her own experiences and reflections in first-person narration, and the object identified by an “other.”

A feminist application of alternating voices brings Peel to the conclusion that female heroines are the strongest when they find an “integrated relationship” between the two voices (108). I make the distinction between feminist applications of this narrative strategy where this assessment may be true and a lesbian application where the opposite is true. As the two previous novels, *En Breve Cárcel* and *El Niño Pez* illustrate, the lesbian awakening is a realization of the narratee, narrated subject, and narrative structure to a simultaneous displacement and legitimacy of lesbian desire within a heteronormative matrix. Peel values unification over duality, a conclusion that diverges from the lesbian “displacement and legitimacy” trope. The conflict of

voices remains as competitive throughout the narratives as it is at the start. In fact, in *Annie on My Mind*, the intrusive third-person voice interrupts the first-person narrative more frequently as Liza progresses through her awakening and panic. The first time Annie says the word “gay” out loud is on the same page as Liza’s first profession of love (Garden 94). This passage is the culmination of essentialist awakening in the novel. Immediately after Liza recognizes her love for Annie as truthful, the naturalistic narrative breaks off into mind-reading narrative (95). The most intimate scene of Liza’s awakening is taken away as the narrative regresses to a time long after her epiphany. Time, setting, and the space that the break occupies in the printed text of the novel violate her verbalized awakening.

With this break in temporality, Liza’s perspective narrating her own story in first-person narration is forced into conflict with the omniscient narrator with this break. Liza’s voice in the letter is italicized, and the objectifying third-person voice assumes discursive and spatial authority. Liza’s confusion over her vision of self and object continue to compete as she is put on inquisition by her conservative school for “immoral” behavior (Garden 170). I will discuss the panic that results from this confusion in the next chapter, but as fair as its contribution as a narrative strategy for the text’s awakening to lesbian desire, alternating voices in *Annie on My Mind* physically manifests the displacement of lesbian identity within heteronormative discourse. The novel begins othering Liza’s voice, confined to her letter as a disturbance of the standard third-person narration. In the main bulk of the text, first-person narrative frames pieces of third-person passages. They compete with each other, yet they are both represented in narrative form, in the same novels, and continuous narratives of the same story. The lesbian subject is seen as removed from the larger framing narrative, but still a legitimate presence *within* the existing structure.

Annie on My Mind is the first novel I examine in this chapter where the awakening of lesbian desire is defined in essentialist terms; Liza's influence on the relationship of narratee and narrative is a break from that of Lala in *El Niño Pez* and the woman of *En Breve Cárcel* because Liza's personal awakening has a significant influence on both narrative and narratee, rather than serving primarily as a narrative strategy. This change can be attributed to emerging essentialist literary criticism in the United States contemporary to *Annie on My Mind* that emphasized "thematic and imagistic" representations of lesbian identity and "relatively unproblematic" depictions of lesbian desire and relationships (Farwell 10). The "lesbian" of essentialist works is meant to be identifiable within the narrative so that the political ideologies and social critiques presented through her experiences are similarly identifiable (11). *Annie on My Mind* attempts to verbalize Liza and Annie's category of sexual identity as clearly as possible in order to direct the narratee, much as the questions posed through morphing voices in *A Married Woman* and *En Breve Cárcel*, direct the narratee's to be skeptical of classifying desire in his/her encounter with the girls' experiences.

An example of this kind of guidance closely precedes the culminating essentialist awakening of the girls. Liza muses on how "far away" she feels she is sitting from Annie when Annie blurts out that "somewhere out there...there's someplace *right*, there's got to be" (Garden 73). Although the girls have not yet admitted their "gay" attraction to one another, Annie's despair before the final awakening is metaphorical of the essentialist position of the awakening that follows. For Annie, there is a place to feel "right," that there is a place where she must feel "wrong"—she is fixed, but the environment she is in can make her feel that her identity is out of place. Here is another example "double consciousness." Annie urges the narratee to recognize the discourse which gives her this feeling. The narrative is already aware of it because the

narrative is the guilty homophobic discourse. Like the heterosexual awakening, the lesbian realization of displacement and legitimacy comes with, but not necessarily from, self-negation. Annie's identity will not change; she only needs to find a situation where she does not feel dislocated.

The climax of Liza's awakening happens quickly and in a language meant to emphasize the essentialist "naturalness" of her lesbian identity as a desire she always knew but was never able to express until Annie helps her. Annie is afraid that she has imposed her "gayness" on Liza, almost convincing herself that her desire is freakish. Liza, however, falls into a succession of epiphanies to her shared desire with Annie. While listening to Annie, Liza realizes she had "always wanted to touch her," and that Annie's use of the word "gay" to describe her unidentified feelings "made sense" about her too. When Liza finally says out loud "I love you," she "knew more than [she'd] ever known anything that [the words] were true" (94). As Annie articulates her feelings for Liza, Liza has a revelation of "shared experience" (Saxey 17) that allows her to articulate a desire more "true" to her than any other. The awakening experience so far is personalized as the story of Liza, not of all lesbians, thus attracting a more general narratee than only a lesbian reader. The narratee's encounter with it echoes Saxey's explanation of the narratee in feminist critique in literature as the general reader unaware of more abstract political ideologies. Novelizing those ideologies permits access to the narratee who had not previously understood the ideology (16).

When *Annie on My Mind* does attempt to engage with a specifically lesbian audience, the narrative traps itself back in the very structure of normalizing identification which Roof warns essentialist narratives against. As Liza further explores her lesbian identity, the narrative momentarily places her in the role of the narratee of other awakening novels such as *Annie on*

My Mind. Liza tries to come to terms with her awakening by reading her father's encyclopedia. She looks at the entry under "Homosexuality" but is discouraged when she finds it lacks use of the word "love." The encyclopedic explanation is too medical for Liza; "they didn't know" what the term actually meant (Garden 143). Liza and Annie continue the search for literature together, enforcing the idea of shared effort in the creation of a community. In the "gay" books she does find helpful, Liza feels "as if [she] were meeting parts of [her]self in the gay people [she] read[s] about" (144). Liza becomes "calmer" and "more sure" of herself after reading shared stories. Liza, is the gay narratee of this gay literature because she recognizes similar qualities of her sexual identity as it portrayed in the literature, which puts her through a second awakening to her lesbian identity, and one more thorough than she has accomplished on her own. The irony of Liza's relationship with the gay texts is the paradox it creates within the essentialist literary criticism of the text: the lesbian presents itself as so fixed that it does not allow any room for individual discovery. True, she can recognize false depictions of the identity, as she does with the encyclopedia, but more influential on her confidence is what she does recognize in "gay" literature. Her readings evoke the "parts" Liza thinks she shares in common with the narrative, without problematizing any of her reactions. The literature she reads is presented as a canon of what she "is." Annie's personalized awakening is abrogated as literature takes the place of third-person narration as an othering agent, and intrudes in on the first-person narrative.

The movement from experiments with third-person and male narration to alternating voices as depictions of lesbian awakenings in narratives, narrated subjects, and narratees comes to a head in the two first-person narratives, *Keeping You a Secret* and *Babyji*. These two more recent novels still take an essentialist approach to identifying lesbian sexuality, basing the awakening mostly in the protagonist's desire than an abstract narrative strategy; but they work to

avoid the pitfall of *Annie on My Mind* by emphasizing experience over education as the shapers of identity.

Keeping You a Secret, a 2003 novel from the United States, is another novel about a girl who is forced to “come out” after falling in love with another girl. Like Liza, Holland has power in her heteronormative role: she is popular, has a popular boyfriend, and a mother who pushes her to apply for Ivy League schools. Holland finds herself “falling” for Cece—a whirlwind of emotions she cannot control and that she knows she has never felt with a boyfriend. She is caught by a family friend in the shower with Cece and must “come out” to her mother as a consequence. Holland’s mother, unable to cope with her sexuality, disowns her. Holland fights for financial and emotional survival as she moves in to a new apartment, chooses a community school and an art career, and continues her relationship with Cece.

Neither *Annie on My Mind* nor *Keeping You a Secret* bases the lesbian awakenings in the coming-out scene. The awakening to lesbian desire in both of these novels occurs in a different moment altogether that comes at the beginning of the narrative rather than near the end.

Although Liza’s own awakening occurs late in the novel when she says “I love you” after Annie says the word “gay,” the narrative’s and narratee’s awakenings occur in the first few lines of alternating voices. Verbalizing their desire is not essential to the main awakenings of lesbian desires in the heteronormative awakenings; the awakenings are caused by self-reflective moments of narrative double consciousness. The majority of narrative space afterward is dedicated to the panic and individuation of the protagonist while the narrative strategies which cause the awakening are sustained throughout.

Like Liza’s awakening, Holland’s awakening occurs in the first paragraph on the first page. Holland sees Cece as a reflection in her locker mirror—literal self-reflection in the image

of her awakening agent (Peters, ch.1). Immediately an essentialist theory of lesbian identity is proposed: a part of Holland is revealed in her experience with Cece, a part that always existed but needed help revealing itself. Holland sees Cece's odd style and regrets that she is "obligated to rag on her for violating the dress code" (ch. 1). Holland is a part of heteronormative discursive authority here, believing she has the authority to change Cece to conform to the code's standards. The novel's first line—"First time I saw her was in the mirror on my locker door"—suggests that the subsequent times when Holland sees Cece are what will comprise the remaining narrative. The start of *Keeping You a Secret* imitates *Annie on My Mind* but uses only what Peel calls naturalistic narration: on the one hand is Holland's connection with Cece which the narrating Holland does not yet understand, and on the other are her social obligations monitored by the normative "code." The two are in direct competition in these first two paragraphs, much like the first two lines of competing voices in *Annie on My Mind*.

Holland is still naïve about the implications of her connection with Cece, but that connection still has an effect on her sense of duty to the code:

"Forget it, I decided. My vote—the only dissenting one in the whole student council—still counted. With me, anyway. People could come to school buck naked for all I cared. It wasn't about clothes" (ch. 1).

She decides that her duty is not worth performing. For Holland, "dissenting" against the popular vote is more important than caring about the appearances of other people. Even this small instance shows that she is naturally disruptive of established order from the outset, once more supporting an essentialist reading of lesbian identity. Holland intuits that there is more meaning in a person's interior identity than external appearance. While the narrative supports a reading of fixed identity, protects itself from self-imposed normativity by qualifying essentialist identity

with as a broader category than it appears in *Annie on My Mind*, more concerned for the individual than the label.

The awakening Holland recognizes, reflects the earlier textual awakening, but occurs only paragraphs later at during the first direct encounter she has with Cece. Holland has a physical reaction to the first time her reflection acknowledges Holland's presence: her "stomach flutter[s]" when Cece says "Hi" (ch. 1). The textual awakening of the narrative is not apparent to Holland until the text becomes her own body. A similar transposition of awakening occurs in *A Married Woman* when Astha realizes her body's power after her first headache. Then Holland notices Cece's shirt with the letters "imru?" printed on the front. She does not understand the question until it "register[s]" together with the "rainbow triangle" below it; Holland lowers her eyes her eyes when she realizes that the question is "I am gay are you?" Still, she cannot help but lift her eyes to keep "her in sight." Holland's awakening as the narrated character closely iterates the awakening of Liza in *Annie on My Mind*. Liza "knew" her desire, could recognize it in Annie's use of the word "gay." Annie and Cece verbalize their identities and legitimize the category lesbian for the protagonist to relate to. The awakening agents who already "know" their sexual identities pose it as a question—Cece more literally than Annie—for the protagonists to consider. As they narrate in naturalistic voices, the narratee is given access to the intimacies of their "inner li[ves]" (Peel 109) and the more direct conflicts between codes and feelings. Holland's instinct is to deny her physical reaction and her understanding of the question with her downcast eyes, but this does not force her "dissenting" voice into submission. Both the urges to fulfill her duty and to watch Cece have potential control over Holland's actions and feeling, but one begins to express itself more loudly than the other to Holland's reluctance.

The most recent novel of my study, *Babyji* (2004) is also my second Indian novel, published only one year after *A Married Woman* and *Keeping You a Secret*. *Babyji* is set in 1979 around the same time as *A Married Woman*. Astha's story contends with communal wars, and Anamika's with the Mandal Commission. Both Indian novels take on eras of radical Indian-Hindu nationalist chauvinist discourse which occurred simultaneously with the first wave of Indian feminist criticism. *Babyji* is a first-person narrative of a fifteen year-old girl, Anamika, who falls in love with three women—Rani her servant, Sheela her classmate, and Tripta Adhikari, an older divorcee. Anamika comes from an upper middle-class *Brahmin* family, so she is in a social position privileged with comfort and status until the Mandal Commission declares that entrance to educational institutions will prefer the “backward” castes to aide in social mobility (Dawesar 139). An understanding of the awakening's place in the plot of socio-political upheaval surrounding Anamika's story is enhanced by a comparison with *A Married Woman*. In the previous chapter I concluded that *A Married Woman* is a feminist, heterosexual awakening narrative rather than a lesbian one, because the lesbian and socio-political plots are derivative of and ultimately serve the heterosexual feminist-political plot. I argue that conversely, in *Babyji*, the political plot is mimetic of the lesbian plot, accessed because of the lesbian awakening, rather than the reverse. Much of my analysis on the nationalist vein of identification in *Babyji* will be saved for the succeeding chapters on panic and individuation because the initial awakening of the novel focuses on Anamika's sexual desires, while the panic that ensues is more indissolubly tied to nationalist discourse.

Anamika's awakening happens much in the same way as Holland's in the first few paragraphs of the narrative, in that it begins as a textual awakening (of narrative and narratee) to the double consciousness of authoritative discourse. In *Babyji*, nationalist discourse is

established as iterative of the homophobic discourse all the lesbian subjects and narratives must compete against. *Babyji* begins: “Delhi is a city where things happen undercover” (Dawesar 3). Astha’s story is also set in Delhi as the site of communal riots in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Both novels locate stories of social chauvinist cleansing. The Mandal Commission sought to enable lower castes movement up in financial and educational opportunities. Communal riots and wars were acts of violence and discrimination between communities of ethnic and religious peoples, generally Hindus and Muslims. Amita Baviskar’s 2004 article points out the immediate significance of a Delhi setting during times of heightened turmoil surrounding nationalist discourse in novels written in 2003 and 2004: the two years prior to her study of the re-urbanization of Delhi saw “an extraordinarily powerful attempt to remake the urban landscape of Delhi...dependen[t] on the homogenizing, rationalising [sic] and partitioning of space” (Baviskar 90). Policies to eliminate squatter colonies and high-polluting factories reflected Indian nationalism’s “upper-class concerns around aesthetics, leisure, safety, and health” (90). Baviskar identifies Delhi as the symbol of this nationalist cleansing because of its “special status and visibility as national capital” (90). The capital city’s sterilization became a critical movement of the contemporary political movement, and is echoed in the similar cleansing ideologies of the Mandal Commission and communal wars. Yet the first line of Anamika’s story complicates Delhi’s “visibility” with an “undercover” identity. The capital of nationalist chauvinism is not at all what its discourse would like to present it to be. Anamika begins her narrative aware of the conflicting identities—what is presented and what is true—and the country’s failure to “ever tal[k] about it” (Dawesar 3). Nationalist discourse contemporary of *Babyji*, based in normalizing “homogenizing” ideologies, is a relevant analogy of heteronormative narrative discourse. Neither normative structure can accommodate nonhomogeneous identities.

A Delhi cleansed of citizens whose “passion[s]” and “secret[s]” cannot be spoken of represents an idealistic and unreal image of the Delhi Anamika “grew up in” (Dawesar 3); similarly, in this novel, a homophobic attempt to quell the existence of lesbian desire is false. The comparison of the two fallacies comes just a page after Anamika’s introduction when she is awakened to “some kind of knowledge [she cannot] immediately identify” (4). Her awakening occurs in the same moment as Holland’s, when they watch a woman they are confusedly attracted to walk away. The possibility of the awakening agent’s absence spurs the protagonist’s desire to desire them. *Annie on My Mind* is evoked in Anamika’s use of the word “knowledge,” implying a perspective that the desire always existed in the protagonist but needed only to be stimulated by a desired object. Anamika’s initial reaction to her desire is to find an allegorical name for Tripta, the woman she first sees. Here emerges a double consciousness within the lesbian-feminist political discourse of this novel: Anamika intuits that she cannot appropriately label her desire, yet has an urge to name something. *Babyji* relents to essentialist categorization only as far as Anamika can name what she desires, not the desire itself. She immediately thinks the name “India...[a] word that was not a name and that was still proportional to the immensity of the revelation unfolding within [her] “ (4). Thus, Anamika’s awakening to lesbian desire is indelibly linked to the socio-political critique of her narrative. The two plot lines are equals, mimetic of one another. Anamika’s awakening compares to a new awareness of nationalism’s false homogeneity and Indian nationalist discourse compares to homophobic sexual discourse. Each is the parallel text of the other in the awakening, and in particular during the panic and individuation of Anamika and her nationalist identity.

In more or less chronological order, the five lesbian novels I examine in this chapter exhibit in varying degrees a pattern of lesbian awakening. I begin with the Argentine novels *En Breve Cárcel* and *El Niño Pez* where the “lesbian” of the story is almost exclusively a postmodern narrative strategy. Both the 1981 and 2004 Argentine novels utilize postmodern tactics seen in lesbian theory after the 1990s. Placing them at the start of my analysis highlights the most prevalent narrative strategies that lesbian plots apply to traditionally male heteronormative narrative structures that continue in the next three novels. *Annie on My Mind*, contemporary to *En Breve Cárcel* does reflect the essentialist lesbian-feminist theories prevalent in the United States at the time. At times, however, the narrative becomes victim of its own essentialist thinking once it images Liza as the narratee of similar stories. These five novels are all narratives of lesbian desire because, unlike *A Married Woman*, the lesbian awakening is the driving force of plot and disruptive narrative discourse.

III. Panicked Obsession and the Exposure of Performative Identity

Because heteronormative narrative rejects lesbian desire as legitimate, or claims that it is the opposite of heterosexual desire, lesbian identity must continuously contend with the oppressive hegemonic values within which it is displaced. Lesbian desire is legitimized within heterosexual texts for the narratee, and lesbian protagonist, as I elucidate in the previous chapter., I argue that the complement of the lesbian awakening in narrative is, for this reason, what Patricia Juliana Smith calls “lesbian panic.” Panic as a result of awakenings in *En Breve Cárcel*, *Annie on My Mind*, *El Niño Pez*, *Keeping You a Secret*, and *Babyji* functions as a particular

narrative strategy which integrates double consciousness into the lesbian awakening . While Smith proposes the strategy of panic as a limiting characteristic of lesbian novels, I believe that it makes the representation of lesbian identity stronger. During the panicked times of lesbian protagonists, the narrative further destabilizes heteronormative matrices by pointing out their performative qualities, usurping any claim to an authoritative normalization. These five first-love lesbian novels utilize lesbian panic as a strategic move to destabilize any claim to normativity, originality, or morality.

The term “lesbian panic” originates in what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick terms “homosexual panic.” She borrows this term from a common defense strategy used for “gay-bashers.” She notices that society’s acceptance of panic as a defense is an increasingly relevant and systemic condition of narratives of gay plots. The defense pathologizes the violent actions of a person (in Sedgwick’s study, males) accused of antigay violence. “Homosexual panic” legitimizes violent reactions against what are assumed to be predacious homosexuals. The axiomatic fallacy of this defense—among others—is that it rests on the belief that

“hatred of homosexuals is so private and so atypical...as to be classifiable as an accountability-reducing illness. The widespread acceptance of this defense really seems to show, to the contrary, that hatred of homosexuals is even more public, more typical, hence harder to find any leverage against than hatred of other disadvantaged groups [e.g. ‘race panic’ or ‘gender panic’]” (Sedgwick 19)

The systematized acceptance of hatred is the hatred’s foundation in the psychiatric classification of the same name. The original diagnosis “refers to the supposed uncertainty about his [the perpetrator’s] own sexual identity” (20). Sedgwick suggests that violence, explained away by the threat of a homosexual man’s violence against a heterosexual person, reflects a panic in that supposed heterosexual person’s sexual identity; if the identity were stable, the perpetrator would not need to defend himself from a nonnormative threat.

The psychoanalysis of “homosexual panic” is thus twofold: the defense redoubles the threat of homosexuality to heterosexuals because it involves one party of homosexual people, and a second of “latent homosexuals” whose threat is so anomalous from the larger group of supposedly heteronormative people that it deserves a pathologizing excuse (20). Acts of violence are necessary to prove to heteronormative members of society that the threat of homosexuality can be quelled and that the heterosexual person in panic is not homosexual; yet the recognition of a threat at all implies detection within the heterosexual members of something that can be threatened. I argued for a similar threat of presence of the lesbian awakening within the heteronormative narrative structure, exhibited most insidiously in narrative strategies of morphing and alternating voices. Homosexual panic, as it reflects on the insecurities of the ones actually fearing the homosexual “threat,” will be further embellished by an analysis of performativity and lesbian panic.

Lesbian panic occurs in narrative when homosexual panic is internalized: “lesbian panic is, quite simply, the disruptive action or reaction that occurs when a character...is either unable or unwilling to confront or reveal her own lesbianism or lesbian desire” (Smith 569). Panic in these five first-love novels is the reaction to the action of the awakening: now that recognition of lesbian desire has occurred, what place does the subject or narrative have left? As a result of this question that arises in lesbian plots, the lesbian subject is at risk of denying her newly-recognized identity.

Unfortunately, according to Smith, the narratability lesbian desire acquires in heteronormative narrative “virtually necessitate[s] lesbian panic as a narrative adjunct” (Smith 577). The legitimization of lesbian desire is thus simultaneously, if only partially, delegitimizing of itself. Its presence comes through inevitably marginalizing discourse. This is where, I

believe, an evaluation of lesbian panic's quality of performativity comes in: by enhancing the performative nature of heteronormativity—by which I mean articulating the fallacy that any sexual identity can claim authority as “natural” or “normal”—through lesbian panic, the presence of lesbian desire qualifies all sexual identities as excessive of the mediated ideal of heteronormativity on the continuum of sexuality.

I will base my discussion of performativity in these five novels on Judith Butler's philosophy as presented in “Imitation and Gender Insubordination,” which iterates the subversive narrative strategy of lesbian panic. In a structure where heterosexuality is the normative model, homosexuality is considered to be a defective derivation of what is “original” or “natural” (Butler 308). Yet, paradoxically, in order for a model to be “original” it must differentiate itself from its copies or imitations; the normative model is only “original” *because* it can be copied. One could similarly invert the relationship and claim that the imitation is in fact the original because of the existence of what thinks itself as original (309). Categories of identity are “performances,” according to Butler, because of their compulsion to repeat the “I” of the identity. There is no constant “I.” All identifiers—hetero- or homosexual—are secondary to the “I” (311).

Butler concedes that categorization to a limited extent is necessary to maintain a political presence in discourse which threatens to obliterate the identity altogether, but that categorization must be doubled with an appreciation of its limitations in representing actual sexual identity (Butler 312). Another discursive imperative for “double consciousness” arises: in order to prevent self-imposed homophobic normalization of identity (an issue which arises, in particular, in *Annie on My Mind*), lesbian discourse must constantly remind its audience that it uses homophobic structures to dislodge all claims to authority.

Butler's philosophy speaks more of performance by gays and lesbians, but the main performance in these lesbian texts are the performances of heterosexual characters in contrast to the lesbian protagonists. The lesbians highlight "an incessant and *panicked*" idealization of normative values that become absurd when the protagonists realize that those values are artifices ("Imitation...314). Destabilization of heteronormative authority is not an attempt of homosexual claim to a gay or lesbian originality in these novels. Homosexual identity's ability to perform traits of heterosexual identity, or, in many cases in these five novels, the revelatory juxtaposition of lesbian panic and heterosexual performance, demonstrates that no categorization of identity is identical to natural sexuality.

The woman's self-confinement in the four walls of her "cárcel" exemplifies the lesbian panic she feels in her duality within the normative world. Although she is never given a name, the narrator uses feminine pronouns and adjectives. The text is allowed to value her female gender. She depends on the limitations of the walls and of her memories as a new normalizing pressure to place her. The woman's obsession with Vera is her "refugio" from the panic of disintegration as a woman, and her motivation for writing her memoirs (Molloy 37). The woman is not agoraphobic; to reduce her confinement down to a term never used in the novel in order to describe her fear of the outside world is not accurate. She is reluctant to leave the room because she fears the dissolution of her "self" without her memories and her four walls: "Vuelve y se dice que esa tarde saldrá de Nuevo, que se siente otra en cuanto cierra la puerta y deja atrás esas cuatro paredes. Pero no sale, no puede salir" (70). She wants to leave and "estar complete cuando compre su pan" but her panic imprisons her. The woman cannot fulfill even the most domestic parts of her gender role without fear that being able to sustain her wholeness. She

depends on her memories of Vera to keep her feeling whole, and cannot imagine her existence without the memories of Vera to prove her wholeness to her.

The woman obsesses over a particular imagining of her mother as a woman who can fulfill her gender role, but soon she realizes that her mother's value as a heterosexual woman is a superficial judgment of her worth. The woman's mother is the normative counterpart to the marginalized and isolated lesbian character: she is part of a heterosexual marriage and bears her husband's children as proof. As her pregnant belly grows, the woman caresses and pets the mother's "vientre que encuentra más grande que antes, en el que quizás lata algo que puede percibir" (77). The woman as a girl imagines her mother's belly as a keeper of information, to be observed and understood. But after waiting for months, the growing stomach disappears and no child is born—whether this is due to miscarriage or false pregnancy remains unclear. The woman realizes that she was "equivocada" and "ignoraba entonces la palabra [fecundidad]" (77). The woman no longer yearns for more brothers and sisters, and begins even to drink her mother's breast milk with suspicion. Her expectations and excitement over what that belly would divulge are disappointed and her mother's passive performance as wife and mother is revealed. What she once thought was her mother's pleasure—to have children and provide brothers and sisters for the woman—is upset by the mother's failure to complete the role. Now, even the completion of normative female roles cannot satisfy the woman; she compares her disappointment with her mother to her disgust of her cat's reproduction of a litter of kittens.

The protagonist encounters panic over her illegitimacy in heteronormative society in a dream near the beginning of the narrative:

"Más de una vez ha soñado con despellejamientos, con su propio despellejamiento. Por ejemplo, se ha desdoblado, queda como una corteza pero no se ve, ve en cambio a un muchacho enfermo que tiene de la cintura para abajo el cuerpo despellejado, y a ella le ha tocado conservar la piel inútil de él. El muchacho de su sueño no tiene pies, tiene

muñones, no puede caminar, se cae y llora roncamente; entonces ella teme que se muera, teme también que la vean las piernas llagadas, se apresura a levantarlo. Pero no logra hacerlo porque cambia la escena. Cuando ve la fusión de los dos, del despellejado y de ella misma que se ha quedado con la piel inútil, aparece un escenario: dos figuras bailan, representando los dos papeles y ella, ya espectadora, no se siente afectada” (Molloy 16).

The woman’s identity is split threefold in her dream: one part is the narrator describing her dream. The second is the “ella” who has the dream and starts feeling “su propio despellejamiento.” This part of her identity begins with her own body, and position within the action of the dream. The third identity, I propose, is herself as the boy whom she watches be skinned and stumble around on “muñones.” He is skinned from the waist down and consequently mutilated and androgenized as a representation of the woman. Without specifically gendered genitals, he is neither fully masculine nor feminine. She is disembodied from her second identity and is relegated to a voyeuristic place in the “escena.” She wants to help him, support him, but is useless. When she is partitioned off as an “espectadora,” she watches the dancers who embody the union of her three identities in a staged performance. Here she literally fails to join in on the performance of the women in her dream. The protagonist is clearly a woman, identified only by her pronoun, yet cannot perform as woman. Her identities are all external to and fail to integrate with her self, leaving all performances as strangers.

Lala experiences a similar revelation to the fallacy of performative identity when she returns from Paraguay to free La Guayi from prison. Her panicked obsession is contrasted with heteronormative performance in the same scene, and her frantic panic calms as she makes this realization. First, Lala’s panic is described. When she sees her reflection in the water, “no se gustaba; sin la Guayi mirándola se había puesto fea” (Puenzo, ch. 7). Like the first line of *Keeping You a Secret*, Lala needs la Guayi as an awakening agent to reflect what she cannot see of herself. La Guayi’s gaze replaces the male eye for Lala, giving her image worth, creating her

beauty with a look. Lala still views herself “as the object of exchange” and dependent on la Guayi for her “perceived worth” (Smith 572). Heterosexual male partners out of the plot, Lala seeks social security in her lesbian lover as replacement.

The adjacent scene to Lala’s reflection is her run-in with an old friend, Rocho, who is desperate for gossip to entertain him. Rocho and Lala’s interaction so soon after the moment of panic contrasts Lala’s passion with the heterosexual man’s boredom in a role he plays out of duty. All Rocho can manage to talk about is his cousin’s birthday party and the gossip surrounding Lala’s family scandal. Serafín can tell that Lala “le gustaba verlo gordo, pelado, con un anillo de compromiso en el dedo. Viejo. Aburrido de su vida. Apasionado por un drama que ni siquiera era suyo...” (Puenzo, ch. 7). Rocho’s unrelenting insults against la Guayi do not incite anger in Serafín or Lala; in fact, the exchanges following these insults is described as “no...compasivos.” Instead, Lala feels pity for Rocho that he, married, can only find excitement in the stories of other people. Lala’s panic is a result of her desperate love for la Guayi and her search for an alternative authority to authenticate her place. “Le gustaba verlo” pathetic and bored, contrasted with her passionate lesbian panic only a few lines before. Lala and the female protagonist of *En Breve Cárcel* are disappointed by their expectations of normative identities; in the shadow of their impassioned panicking and obsession (albeit fearful), characteristics of heteronormative desire reveal themselves as dull masks.

Annie on My Mind narrates Liza’s panicked need to amalgamate hers and Annie’s identities, akin to Lala and the woman of *En Breve Cárcel*. When, however, it comes to asserting her lesbian identity to her heterosexual mother, Liza knowingly inflicts lesbian panic on herself in order to permit her mother to maintain her ignorance. The mother is desperate to preserve her naiveté, and Liza is willing to help her, yet the narrating Liza introduces her

passionate awakening scene in the first part of the novel by describing her incomprehension of how one person “and [an]other person [can] have two separate bodies, two separate skins” (Garden 91). Liza is zealously unwilling to see herself as separate from Liza after her awakening. She feels connected to her first-love, but, like the protagonists of *En Breve Cárcel* and *El Niño Pez*, is unable in her panic to individuate her “self” from the awakening agent. The image of Liza’s body merging with Annie’s is a vivid visualization in opposition to the alternating narrative voices, or texts of the novel. Liza finds comfort and ecstasy in the morphing of her “text” with Annie’s, in contrast to the lesbian and heteronormative voices that cannot compromise space or perspective.

Similar to *El Niño Pez*, lesbian panic and heteronormative performance are presented through a juxtaposition of Liza’s panicked passion and her interactions with heteronormative values, highlighting the latter’s performative fallacy. Liza’s mother pleads Liza to admit that nothing significantly sexual, beyond kissing, occurred between her and Annie, and that their relationship is a “phase.” The girl lies to her mother when she sees the “fear,” “pain,” and “love” in her eyes (Garden 188). Her mother implores Liza to tell the truth, but only the truth she moderates as “normal,” or, as an “experiment...at [Liza’s] age” (187). She tells an anecdote from her past of kissing her girlhood friend in order to normalize a certain degree of non-normative desire from the authoritative vantage-point of a heterosexual wife and mother. Liza, knows it would be a lie to do so, but she concedes and denies the nonnormativity of her passion. She inflicts a degree of lesbian panic on herself as she consciously negates her lesbianism for fear of discovery (Smith 569). The mother admits her compromised heterosexual identity when she tells the story from her childhood, and yet she continues to speak with the authority of knowing what is and is not “normal.” This striking moment of homosexual panic in the

nonheteronormative mother combined with Liza's conscious panic and the narrative's appreciation of Liza's panicked love, emphasize the heteronormative (but not necessarily heterosexual) mother's desperation to preserve what "should" be normal despite her awareness otherwise. Liza's mother repeats the adjective "normal" and "usual" three times as she attempts to convince herself and Liza to what degree Liza's desire can be accepted (187-8). That heteronormativity can, and must, be redefined in this confrontation exposes the inability of normative identity to encapsulate individual experiences, and its propensity to lie and falsely homogenize for the sake of aesthetic bliss

Keeping You a Secret does not approach the dynamic of panic and performativity as subtly as the previous three novels; in fact, the narrative straightforward on the matter, portrayed directly by the lesbian protagonist. Holland maintains her heterosexual relationship with Seth until she can admit her obsession for Cece. Her boyfriend attempts to initiate intercourse with her, but Holland "can't" because Cece "was in me, invading every cell in my body. She was the one I wanted. She was the one I saw, felt, desired. This was wrong. He was wrong. It was all so wrong" (Peters, ch. 11). What should be "right," according to Liza's mother, is a heteronormative relationship, but Holland cannot make herself physically or emotionally attached to Seth once she lets herself feel her obsession for Cece. The pervasiveness and persistence of Holland's ardor for Cece is likened to a disease or infection that alters the very structure of Holland's body; she cannot have relations with Seth because she now shares her body with Cece.

Soon after this panicked epiphany, Holland decides she must end her fake relationship with Seth: "I realized now I only ever loved him as a friend. That the physical aspect of our relationship evolved because that's what was expected...Expectations. They ruled my life"

(Peters, ch. 14). Seth is totally unaware of Holland's thoughts while he attempts to seduce her. The main performance of *Keeping You a Secret*, is exhibited by the lesbian herself. Holland's lesbian desire seems "familiar" to her, yet she spends years dating and sleeping with a male, acting as a heterosexual in a heteronormative relationship. She finds that although she was never heterosexual, she could *perform* as a heterosexual, whether aware that she was performing or not. As long as she satisfied the "expectations," she was a part of heteronormative society. Characteristics of the normative identity can be affected by nonnormative identities. Homosexual panic exposes the insecurity of homogenized identity in heterosexual characters, and Holland's revelation in her lesbian panic shows that, moreover, the traits which make up the homogenized identity by which the lesbians are disenfranchised can be appropriated and played by that same disqualified group.

Lesbian panic and performativity in *Babyji* extend beyond sexual discourse into nationalist discourse. I concluded in the after the examination of lesbian awakening that lesbian discourse and nationalist discourse are mimetic in this Indian novel, and that neither one is derivative of the other; in the same way, I argue that criticisms of heteronormative performance in *Babyji* mime criticisms of nationalist chauvinism represented in this 2005 narrative set in Delhi. One of the more concise portrayals of Anamika's panicked obsession occurs after a vacation she and India take together: "I owned her more than I owned myself and was immersed in her more than I had ever been immersed in my own self. Me, I had not yet discovered" (Dawesar 231). India is the woman who awakens Anamika to her lesbian desire only a couple pages into the narrative, and here, Anamika fears that India owns that awakening. The protagonist believes her "immers[ion]" in her love for India the woman and India the nation precludes her individual self-discovery; Anamika knows herself only as far as she knows her

lover. Anamika's vision of India dispossesses the former of her individual identity, leaving her in the same obsessed state as the four other awakened protagonists.

Through this inextricable connection between Anamika's lesbian lover and her love of her nation, *Babyji* merges nationalist and lesbian ideologies. *Babyji* does not exclude lesbian desire from the discussion of a feminist reimagining of Indian nationalist discourse like *A Married Woman*. Anamika's panic is distinct from that of the other protagonists, however, because the narrative does not require her to individuate herself from her obsession, as I will show the other four lesbian protagonists do. On the contrary, Anamika integrates her sexual identity fully into the idea of her awakening agent. She overcomes her fear of becoming so "immersed" she loses her self when she takes control of a new nationalistic discourse that includes excessive desire in its definition. Her story concludes when she redefines "India" as an ideal which Anamika creates and which she defines, rather than the reverse.

Anamika's refashioning of nationalist discourse flourishes in the narrative's setting during the establishment of the Mandal Commission and the resulting self-immolation epidemic among *Brahmins* in India. According to A. Ramaiah's comparison of the terms of the commission with India's constitution, the Mandal Commission found that "given the heterogeneity in the existing socio-economic status [of India]," an egalitarian society would not be possible without government intervention. As a result, policies reserving 27% of government jobs for the "Backward Classes" were instated per the Mandal Commission's recommendations (Ramaiah 1203). Anamika's school shuts down for a large portion of her academic year because of an epidemic of self-immolation, mostly by protesting *Brahmins*. The policies instated during the period of Anamika's narrative are attempts to aestheticize and homogenize Indian nationality, also seen during the year *Babyji* is published (Baviskar 90).

At first, it seems as if Anamika agrees with this policy of homogenization: “Much the same as India herself, her sacred geography intersecting many states and making it impossible for political language brokers and separatist movements to divide her up with any precision” (Dawesar 145). Her description of “India” here as a location and idea indicates she speaks of the nation, not the woman. Anamika sees any attempt to partition her country as acts of violence against the real identity; a homogenized view of the language and land, regardless of the given “heterogeneity” the Mandal Commission struggles with. She continues on to describe her “new feeling of belonging, adventure sharing, and being something greater than one small person” (Dawesar 145-6). I return to the first line of *Babyji*, which I claim is evocative of Anamika and the narrative’s awakening to the *nonhomogeneity* of Indian culture: “Delhi is a city where things happen undercover” (3). Secrets and hidden traits that appear only “undercover,” or in spaces of obscurity and illegality, do not complement the “visibility” Delhi seeks in its aestheticization as “national capital” (Baviskar 90). Anamika first believes that “the system works;” even as corrupt and unbalanced a system as Indian society is, its survival for “thousands” of years is evidence of its relevance (Dawesar 5). It is not until India the woman disillusioned Anamika of India’s perfection that Anamika begins to understand that India has “a hundred different moods...all at the same time” (251). She still believes that she will “always be in [the] grip” of one “inspiration, a nation, a land,” but now the unity Anamika has faith in unites multitudes of varying identities. Anamika concludes that India is a product of the very *heterogeneity* the Mandal Commission attempts to eradicate. She cannot, and does not want to, escape her desire for a national identity, so she must appease her nonnormative sexual identity with a conventionally normalizing discourse. She comes to the conclusion that India is not a

hegemonic power that wants to neutralize all differences in her citizens; Anamika sees her as a single lover who appreciates and changes with the differences among all her protectors.

Anamika's paradoxical relationship to national identity can be explained by her recognition of the performance of the normative Indian identity which chauvinist nationalist discourse utilizes as its normative model. Once she dismantles the belief that there is an Indian "model," she can accept a nationalist discourse based in *heteroglossia* rather than in *monoglossia*. Anamika idealizes India the woman and India her nation, often compounding the two into one, and does not know how to react when the "enigma" (6) turns out to be less than ideal. When they go on vacation together, Anamika witnesses her lover "smoking a joint" and drinking beer. India remains "entirely beautiful" even in her "immoral" behavior (238), so Anamika considers participating in the behavior which goes against "[t]he love of [her] parents, [her] education, every moral lesson [she] had learned" (239). Anamika is torn between her moralized conditioning and what she would do "if [she] loved India" (238). The girl who began the narrative believing that "[t]he system works" (5) realizes that the system's idealization of itself does not truthfully represent Indian identity; she can no longer "relate" to the India she fell in love with (239). This new India violates the normative value system Anamika was conditioned to model herself against; according to that system, India's behavior is immoral and betrays the trusting authority that taught her those moral standards. Disconnection with the ideal identity, after believing in her panic that this identity defined her own, jars Anamika to realize that there is no normative "Indian," only the "small" people who characterize it.

Thus, Anamika's "feeling of belonging" is not a belief in the homogeneity of Indian nationalist identity, but, instead, a belief that Indian identity is a narrative of the *heteroglossia* of voices which makes it up. The lesbian protagonist appropriates the power of a normative

structure to identify and exclude its members, as the Mandal Commission attempts to do, as she reinterprets a national discourse that glorifies *heteroglossia*. Lesbian panic drives Anamika into the obsessive relationship that results in her final awakening. Contrary to *A Married Woman*, *Babyji* is a lesbian text that transposes lesbian literary criticism onto nationalist criticism.

Because her lesbian identity leads her to what the narrative believes is a more truthful envisioning of Indian national identity, and because a love that leaves Anamika forever in India's "grip" is a part of that identity, the narrative does not require Anamika to separate herself from her obsessive love.

As an essentially displaced identity in heteronormative structures, lesbian identity contends with its marginalized position in heteronormative texts. One of the consequences of that marginalization is homosexual panic; but, because heterosexuals feel the need to defend themselves against a lesbian "threat," they implicitly acknowledge the authority of the threatening identity, and the unstable authority of their own normative identity. The irony of panic's function occurs in the related narrative strategy of lesbian panic. Lesbian panic takes the awakenings of the texts, narratees, and protagonists of *En Breve Cárcel*, *El Niño Pez*, *Annie on My Mind*, *Keeping You a Secret*, and *Babyji* one step further beyond just awareness of lesbian desire's existence, and to its existence as a part of a fluid spectrum of sexuality. Lesbian panic debunks heterosexuality's claim to originality because the protagonists' panicked obsessions underscore the performativity of those who claim to have the normative standard of sexuality. Because no one can claim an identical identity to the normative model, all sexuality is an excess of that model, lesbianism included.

IV. Jungian Individuation and the Last Proclamation of Legitimacy

My three previous chapters have all described a kind of awakening. First, the heterosexual woman's feminist awakening which foregrounds narrative strategies of lesbian awakenings; second, the textual awakenings to the presence and legitimacy of lesbian desire; and third, the panicked lesbian's awakening to the performative nature of heteronormativity. The fourth and final kind of awakening I will examine is the lesbian's integration of self with transgressive desire which I call "individuation." Here she separates from her panicked obsession of the awakening agent and an authority that can legitimize her identity. I will look at narrative strategies of individuation in four of the five works I consider lesbian. *Babyji* is an exception to this chapter because Anamika does not individuate herself from her panicked desire. Instead, she unifies herself with her obsession of India in order to formulate a new figuration of Indian national identity.

I will base my analysis of the lesbian's individuation on Carl Jung and ML von Franz's conceptualization of "the process of individuation" in *Man and His Symbols*. Von Franz expounds on Jung's dream theory to describe the process which occurs when "an arrangement or pattern" is found in an individual's collection of unconscious dreams and conscious experiences. He borrows the phrase "the process of individuation" from Jung to describe this effect. I will not focus on psychoanalysis of dreams, as Jung and von Franz do, but I will borrow their definition of "individuation" as it relates to the protagonists' experiences in narrative. Von Franz gives two conditions for individuation: first, "the individual is aware of it," and second, the individual is "rid of all purposive and wishful aims and tries to get a deeper, more basic form of existence" (*Man and His Symbols*, n.pag). To reach a level of individuation, the self must rid itself of

superfluous, superficial concerns that have no impact on creation of the self. These would be the kind of daily tasks that W. E. B. Dubois contrasts to spiritual enlightenment, and which leads to split identities or double consciousness (Bruce Jr. 308). In this state, the self is only concerned with the maturity of the individual identity and its unity with universal, or “suprapersonal” natures (*The Archetypes...*3-4). The lesbian protagonists become “aware” of their individuation as a final awakening in their stories. The awakening is their final separation from dependency on the space and identity of their awakening agents, which I will examine in this chapter. The lesbians “rid” themselves of “purposeful and wishful aims” when they realize heteronormative identity is performative—they know of normative identity as a farce and can no longer pretend it is their identity.

In Chapter 2, I distinguish the lesbian awakening from heteronormative awakening. My central argument is that the lesbian does not “overcome[e] the dualisms of self and world” as Christ claims the woman does (*Diving Deep...*13). Jung and von Franz maintain that individuation is a process of integration and unification between the parts of consciousness and unconsciousness, but the lesbian’s duality does not eject her from this process. Instead, as I illustrated in the subsequent chapter on lesbian panic and performativity, the “world” is not part of any sexual identity’s consciousness or unconsciousness. It is a fallacious performance of identity that is not a truthful representation of the real identity. Thus, by excluding the “world” in her individuation process, the lesbian finds wholeness. All four of the lesbian individuations I will examine appear at the end of the narratives, in the last pages of the novels. Regardless of whether the narrative utilizes lesbian-feminist or postmodern narrative strategies, individuation is the resolution of the lesbian plots in *En Breve Cárcel*, *El Niño Pez*, *Annie on My Mind*, and *Keeping You a Secret*.

Jung prefaces von Franz's analysis of individuation with his own interpretation of the importance of the unconscious, and specifically, dreams, in any examination of symbols and individuation. He believes that symbolic words and images possess meaning of what is "vague, unknown, or hidden from us" in our daily encounters. One cannot disregard the magnitude of symbols stored in the unconscious because that is where many symbols are stored (one cannot, after all, remember and actively process every image one sees or experience one encounters). These stored symbols are produced "unconsciously and spontaneously, in the form of dreams" (*Man and His Symbols*, n.pag). This protagonist of *En Breve Cárcel*'s dream of being flayed alive which I analyze in the previous chapter, according to Jung, would be a symbol with "connotations" of additional meaning beyond its appearance (Molloy 16). Her dream of split identities and a performative ending contradict the two characteristics of individuation von Franz outlines in his chapter: because it is a dream, and the woman is narrated as objective "ella" rather than the one remembering the dream, she is not conscious of the symbol. Neither is the dream rid of "purposive," or, in this case, performative characteristics.

Her dream at the start of *En Breve Cárcel* exposes the symbol that the woman needs to interpret in order to complete her "process of individuation," and which she successfully completes in the end of the novel. The woman leaves the physical enclosure of her panic to sit alone at an airport bar; from the "cárcel" of her memories to a public space in a location of movement. She writes in her notebook "que vuelva a ver a Renata—o a Vera, o a Clara, o a su madre—pero sabe que es mentira: no volverá a ver a ninguna" (Molloy 156). The woman is no longer trapped by her four walls or her compulsion to write down her memories; she lies in her journal that she will continue caring for the memories she has been narrating. She is now *conscious* of the possessive hold all these female fixations had on her identity, and ready to "rid"

herself of them. She fulfills the process of individuation when she sees the “pattern” that runs through her dreams and her waking experiences.

Two of Jung’s analyses of the human unconscious come together in *El Niño Pez* to accentuate the magnitude of Lala’s individuation in the narrative. Lala’s loss of “self” in her panicked obsession for la Guayi drives her to fulfill the most violent of expectations of lesbian panic, and, eventually, causes her individuation from the object that awakens her panic. The girls finally find their way onto a “micro” headed to Paraguay after their shootout at the brothel. Their reunion in Paraguay drives the plot and passion of Lala’s awakening up until this point, but then in the last lines of the narrative Lala realizes that “[e]n realidad eran extrañas. Enamoradas de un recuerdo que no era más que eso” (Puenzo, ch. 20). The girls try to convince one another that “[e]s un final feliz,” but the last line interprets their optimism as a performance; the girls love the “recuerdos” of what the other once was, not what the plot has transformed them into (murderers and fugitives). One part of the process of individuation is satisfied with Lala’s ridding of her “wishful aims” to be integrated with an identity (La Guayi’s) not her own.

The final line of *El Niño Pez* utilizes Jung’s theorization of the “collective unconscious” to demonstrate the individuation of both narrator and narrated subject: as they get closer to the border of Argentina and Paraguay, “el aire se fue cargando de inconscientes, ecos de un sueño en los otros, un caldo en el que, al final, todos soñamos lo mismo” (Puenzo, ch. 20). Serafín describes a collection of “inconscientes” that are “not individual but universal...identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a suprapersonal nature which is present in every one of us” (*The Archetypes*...3-4). Serafín’s last words speak of a common unconsciousness, or dream, that every one—including the dog—has. This is not the same

conclusion as Anamika concerning Indian national identity; *Babyji*'s protagonist revisions Indian national Identity as more than a single person, but adaptable to a single person's consciousness.

Unlike *Babyji*, *El Niño Pez* presents an argument of relatively hegemonized human identity in its formulation of Lala's ending individuation. Jung believes the *personal unconscious*, which Anamika values more, rests upon the "deeper layer" of *collective unconscious*, which constructs archetypes of behavior and character. Yet, Lala still successfully individuates herself from her panic in a similar way to the woman of *En Breve Cárcel*. Lala and the woman both awaken to their subjective "self" as they separate their identities from their awakening agents. Lala's experience, though, shows more signs of "secret design" or pattern guiding her toward "a coming to terms between the inborn germ of wholeness and the outer acts of fate" (*Man and His Symbols*, n.pag). It is when the individual endeavors to know this "deeper, more basic form of existence...that inner urge toward growth" that individuation can be completed (n.pag). In both cases, the lesbian achieves individuation when she strips her identity of artifice and dependency on an "other" for self-identification. *El Niño Pez* conscribes more stringently to Jung and von Franz's philosophy of individuation than *En Breve Cárcel*, yet both protagonists emerge as legitimized and individuated "selves" as lesbian.

The remaining two novels, *Annie on My Mind* and *Keeping You a Secret*, do not engage with Jungian psychology as intensely as *En Breve Cárcel* and *El Niño Pez*, but the individuation of the lesbians cannot be ignored because the final pages of the narratives complete the lesbian awakening. Liza and Holland do not experience dreams like the woman of *En Breve Cárcel* or the collective unconscious like Lala and Serafín, yet they come to the same kind of individuation, made conscious of their split identities and receptive of individuation.

Furthermore, all four lesbian protagonists arrive at this resolution by separating themselves spatially and temporally from their panicked obsessions.

Annie on My Mind directly addresses panicked obsession as it relates to the protagonist's final individuation. Liza decides to phone Annie and reestablish communication after their long separation. Until this point, Liza has been unable to complete a single letter to Annie, but then suddenly feels the urge to directly contact her former lover. Liza's last words in the novel render the transformation of Liza's panic into individuation: "Ms. Widmer was right. Remember—about the truth making one free? Annie—I'm free now. I love you" (Garden 234). Ms. Widmer is a locus of homosexual and lesbian panic over pedagogy, but here, Liza associates her to freedom. Lesbian panic is not "liberatory" (Smith 572) until it is disassociated from desperation and obsession so that what remains is lesbian desire stripped of its anxiety over performative behavior. Liza and the narrator do not fear admitting that the teacher had some influence on Liza's awakening; but instead of a persuasive influence, Ms. Widmer's effect is revelatory. The lesbian is freed from her internalized homosexual panic and delighted to admit her desire to herself and the person she desires. Her identity releases its hold on panicked obsessions of both the heterosexual and lesbian identities, and permits the lesbian's pursuit of "truth" and love—Liza's "deeper...existence."

I return to the use of alternating voices in *Annie on My Mind* to better examine Liza's individuation at the end of her narrative and its implications on the narrative's awakening to lesbian individuation. The last section of narration, like the very first, is untitled as a chapter or epilogue. The narrative returns to its use of third-person omniscient voice—which I previously established as hegemonic discursive authority—and the present description of Liza half a year after the events with Annie. It stands separate from the aesthetics, space, and temporality of

Liza's first-person narration. The contrast between "mind-reading narration" (Peel 109) and Liza's lesbian story represents the displacement of lesbian desire in heteronormative structures because it depicts the lesbian's "uneasy view of themselves as both subject and object, both self and other (108). Liza's individuation within "mind-reading narration" does not propose integration between the normative authority and the lesbian's displacement, as Peel argues is the case in strong feminist narratives (108). On the contrary, Liza's individuation in this last section strengthens her separation from the competing voice. Once more I recount von Franz's conclusion that the process of individuation can triumph splits in identity "only when the ego gets rid of all purposive and wishful aims and tries to get to a deeper, more basic form of existence" (*Man and His Symbols*, n.pag). Liza's individuation lends power to the lesbian voice and subverts heterosexuality's claim to authority over the narration of a woman's experience. The possibility of her liberation within the structure that prevents her individuation and forces her into panic concludes the lesbian's story with a final assertion of her subversive, non-normative legitimacy.

Holland experiences individuation much like Lala in *El Niño Pez*, although the narrative does not mention "collective unconscious." At the end of her narrative, Holland lives exiled from her family, impoverished, and still in love with Cece. She never before considered attending community college—her mother planned for Holland to attend Ivy League schools—but in her ending situation, reconsiders:

"Wow, they had a great art department. I could get a degree in graphic arts, or fine arts, or even art education. Did I want to teach? Did I even want to go into art? There was so much to choose from. Too much. And too much I didn't know about myself, too many possibilities to explore...Let nature take its course. On the last line I printed, 'Undeclared'" (Peters, ch. 26)

I compare Holland's individuation to Lala's because both give in to the "urge toward growth." Lala ends up at this point when she and her narrator recognize their legitimate place within the "collective unconscious;" Holland arrives at this same feeling by giving in to what is "natur[al]" and unknown. Von Franz, in fact, points out this kind of acceptance as a keystone of the process: he explains that an individual should not approach obstacles to growth with frustration or concrete plans, because assumed certainty is an obstruction of its own. One finds individuation when one listens to "the urge toward unique, creative self-realization" (*Man and His Symbols*, n.pag). Holland's questions of "I," her indecisiveness of what movement to make, and willingness to listen to "nature" guide her toward a (literally) "creative" path. Her willingness to make decisions—or not to make decisions—based on her impulses, concludes von Franz, "come, not from the ego, but from the totality of the psyche" (n.pag). Although the narrative does not specifically refer to a "collective unconscious," Holland gives herself over to the same unification of fate and identity which delineates Lala's individuation.

Lesbian-feminist and postmodern alike, the five lesbian novels I examine incorporate various manners of awakening. The awakenings do not follow a necessary chronology or adhere to one particular narrative strategy to portray the awakenings, but, with the final exception of *Babyji*, all incorporate the same types of awakenings. *Babyji* is an exception because of the relationship between lesbian desire and nationalist discourse in this Indian novel. Awakening to the lesbian's presence in heteronormative structure, awakening to homosexual panic, awakening to lesbian panic, and then the awakening to individuation comprise the lesbian plot of *En Breve Cárcel*, *El Niño Pez*, *Annie on My Mind*, and *Keeping You a Secret*. In their final awakening of individuation, the lesbian subjects become just that: they themselves realize that they are subjects

of their own identities, not objects of heteronormative structures. In the last words of their narratives their presence asserts, one last time, their unique authority and claim to legitimacy.

Conclusion: The Unnarratable Becomes Narratable

The three levels of awakenings found in the five lesbian novels *En Breve Cárcel*, *El Niño Pez*, *Annie on My Mind*, *Keeping You a Secret*, and *Babyji* tackle the problem of portraying an identity within the very hegemonic textual structure which constantly denies its legitimacy. These five novels narrate the awakening stories of lesbian protagonists who are considered “unnarratable” or threatening to heteronormative values. Ismat Chughtai bore the brunt of legal charges condemning the depiction of female homoeroticism in her 1941 short story “Lihaf [The Quilt].” I pick up on the same empathic connection between narrative and narratee which Chughtai argues frees the text from any threat of indoctrination of readers. I further argue that this empathy narrates the lesbian subject as a part of a spectrum of sexuality that include heterosexuality, and not a new or opposing identity. The awakening trope I isolate in the narratives of these texts, beginning with the heteronormative tradition of second-wave feminist texts in 1970s and 1980s United States, is the core narrative strategy these six novels utilize to subvert the normalizing discourse that claims sexuality is limited to one “right” or “original” identity.

I find a national trajectory through my comparison of six novels from three distinct geographic regions that group the texts into three theoretical approaches to portraying the lesbian subject in narrative: the two novels from the United States, *Annie on My Mind* and *Keeping You*

a Secret, rely on lesbian-feminist or essentialist thinking; the two Argentinian novels, *En Breve Cárcel* and *El Niño Pez*, rely on postmodern lesbian literary criticism as a way to destabilize all identity categories; and the Indian novels, *A Married Woman* and *Babyji* merge feminist and nationalist criticism. *A Married Woman* rejects lesbianism as a means to a new feminist-nationalist vision of India, but *Babyji* presents lesbian desire as an end beyond the self, a mimetic discourse of Indian nationalism that revisions national identity as a larger hegemonic force beyond any single self, but that can be identified only as the self sees it; each self, each individual desire contributes to the wider “suprapersonal” nature of identity.

In the same way, the discursive strategy of formulating the lesbian subject through three levels of awakenings integrates the lesbian’s excessive desire *into* the mastering heteronormative structure which others lesbian desire. These five lesbian novels cross cultural, geographic, and temporal boundaries, and bridge the debate between essentialist and postmodern thinking in their collective conclusion that lesbian identity can be legitimized as a *part of* heteronormative structures.

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