

into the silence: the fishing story

A Novel by America Hart

ISBN 978-1-59709-540-2

Binding: Tradepaper

Size: 5 x 8; Pages: 160

Price: US \$15.95

Pub Date: September 23, 2014



America Hart



For more information contact:

Alisa Trager

Marketing Associate
marketing@redhen.org

Keaton Maddox

Publicist
publicity@redhen.org

Distributed to the book trade by:

Ingram Publisher Services

Tel: 800-252-7012

ips@ingramcontent.com

ipage.ingramcontent.com

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A NOVEL

America Hart

A lush, hypnotic debut novel that eschews conventional structures, building motives and voices into a polyphonic tale of creativity, family, history, and the power of music.

As a child Natalia goes fishing with her father, Walker, but spends more time humming songs than catching fish. When Walker comes upon Natalia sitting beside a stream, he hears her singing and asks what the music is. Natalia tells him that it's the music she hears in her dreams, music she wants to write and perform.

So begins *into the silence: the fishing story*, America Hart's genre-bending, time-warping debut novel. Natalia does become an accomplished musician, but even with her father's encouragement, she struggles with her family—especially her younger sister Nadine—to be understood. She sets off on her own, dropping out of school and following Dan, a ballet dancer, to his new job in a new city. There, too, she encounters obstacles to her creative vision.

Throughout her journey, Natalia and her father are visited by apparitions of Walker's mother, America, and his grandmother, Anastasia. Their stories are told through diaries found by Natalia and Nadine; reading them, the two sisters make surprising discoveries about their family's history.

With echoes of Woolf & Burroughs, employing structures found more commonly in art music, *into the silence* weaves together voices and motives, past and present, into a haunting, polyphonic song of striking and original beauty.

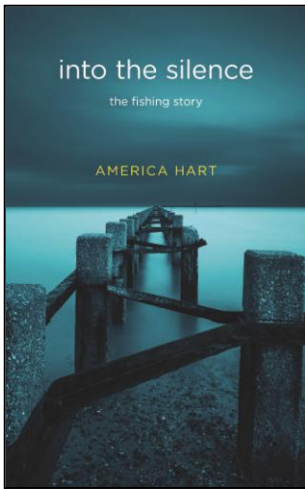
Praise for *into the silence*

"The writing takes you over like a chant or haunting pulses from childhood. Beautiful, like a piece of forgotten music brought back to mind."

—Tessa McWatt, author of *Dragons Cry*

Biographical Note

America Hart formerly directed the MA Creative Writing Program at London Metropolitan University. Born and raised in Colorado, she lived in Boston and New York City before moving to London, where she lives with her partner, Seraphin. Her work has appeared in journals and publications such as *Black Ice*, *Sniper Logic*, *Blackbox Manifold*, *Shearsman Magazine*, *Stride Magazine*, and the *Journal of African Cultural Studies*. Her honors include a Rocky Mountain Women's Institute Fellowship and the Jovanovich Award from the University of Colorado. She has received research grants to conduct fieldwork in Jamaica, Zimbabwe, and Ghana. *into the silence: the fishing story* is her first novel.



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More Praise for *into the silence*

“This is the overlooked childhood of wonder and barely suppressed terror—the death of a wriggling fish against a rock, a father who won’t speak to his daughter after she cuts her long hair, the ferocious need to extend out of yourself and into another, the haunting image of a woman singing a sad song alone in a meadow—overlooked because we’ve forgotten what America Hart knows so well: that the small, the incomplete, the ephemeral are all we have, despite the world’s bluster. She’s written a mesmerizing novel of womanhood and song as powerfully affecting in its own way as Alice Munro’s *Lives of Girls and Women*.”

—Scott Blackwood, author of *See How Small*, winner of the 2016 PEN Center USA Award for Best Work of Fiction

From *into the silence*

without a pink frock on, natalia looks down at her dress. it is not that her hair is not long and flowing down her back in waves of dark brown; but she carries no walking stick to balance with, no straw hat sits perched upon her head, that would float lightly above her on the breeze, to be carried by the river current, to be blown off her head in some whimsical way; no pink ribbon is then tied around the brim, there is no light colored lace, doe’s eyes beneath dark lashes; her eyes are more like the men’s in her family: the dark eyes of walker, she has inherited these. she wears a cream-colored fishing vest, dark corduroy trousers, a flannel shirt and heavy hiking boots; gold hoops in her ears, and three copper bracelets on her arm, that jangle every time she casts, if she doesn’t push them up her arm far enough. she cannot understand why her sister and mother have both cut their hair so short, as she has decided on growing hers longer every year.

walker has by now appeared once again on the trail, three large and fairly full grown trout in his creel, that they will clean, he says, once they get to camp. natalia grimaces, at the thought that she must help clean the fish. this is a distasteful task that she does not enjoy; nor does she enjoy eating the fish, two tasks, she knows, that will be relegated to her: she and walker will slit the cold fish bellies, driving the knife up under the skin; pulling out the entrails, and she can imagine now the feel of sharp teeth, the ripping sound, the soft entrails falling out; her father has shown her how to push her thumbnail against the large vein that lines the fishes’ backs, how to push up against the bone; but she has not told walker how she feels about this—about the fish that will not be skinned until they eat them, until they have been thrown above the coals on the grate of their campfire. natalia prefers to eat brook trout, their pink succulent meat; but she doesn’t enjoy the picking out of bones or, worse yet, sharp bones poking into her tongue or gums, beneath her teeth. once, her sister nadine got a fish bone stuck down her throat, and so natalia is in some sense sorry that walker has caught the trout. but enough for a meal, and this will please her mother, she knows. so she picks up her fishing rod and creel to hike with walker back downhill, happy that the sun has not set, happy that she can still see by the light to pick flowers for her mother, that together they will set in a vase.