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Long Dumb Voices: Reading Historical Fiction to Hear Silenced Women Speak

By Patricia Goldblatt

"Long dumb voices...absences and silences that are as much a part of our history as the articulate voices."

—Maxine Greene (1993,14)

In a sixth grade social studies classroom in New Zealand, a teacher describes the colonization of New York City (Alton-Lee and Densem, 1993). During the lesson, "97.6% of the teacher's references to historical figures [are] to white European men"; the women being mentioned are either prostitutes or belong to devalued or marginalized groups. Interestingly in a class evenly divided between 14 girls and 15 boys, it is the boys who participate in the discussion that ensues from the presentation.

Is it the topic that makes the girls reticent to respond, or are they receiving a culturally transmitted message: that those of lowered status, like women, deserve little or no voice in history or even in the classroom? Is it the mention of the word "prostitute" that embarrasses and silences the girls, for do they sense that their place should be one of compliance and background to their male counterparts? Perhaps they intuitively know that their input will not be valued and, like the female Maori scientists cited in Elizabeth McKinley's research (April 2001), walk a tightrope, feeling silenced and torn between their personal goals and repressive societal expectations. McKinley's work reveals the isolation and alienation that occur when women, or young girls, demonstrate scholastic success. Indeed, "[s]ome educationalists argue that to be intellectual is to not be part of the people or the *subaltern* (tribal grouping made up of a number of related family groups)" (see Spivak in McKinley, 2001, 6).

Schools are places of socialization where children are readied for adulthood in a changing world. One would like to believe that schools provide the locales for liberating and empowering students in order to change society for the better. Paolo Freire has spoken of the tools that students can acquire to "remake [the world] into a better place," taking action against repressive structures that limit freedom (1970, 17). "Contradictorily, one of society's aims for its educational system is to transmit 'norms' to the next generation" (McKinley, 2001, 10). Therefore, identities, aspirations, and relationships are tried out, tested, accepted, or rejected in the context of peer and teacher approval and disapproval. And yet, this portrayal of a classroom in New Zealand in the later part of the twentieth century is disheartening. How ironic it is that Barth (1990, 5) describes schools as "four walls surrounding the future."

Schools should be the place where pupils are supported in claiming responsibility for seeking out their destinies and shaping the kind of world they will inherit (Reed and Learmonth, 2001), yet a multitude of taught and untaught lessons reinforce established routines that maintain ritualistic and repressive hierarchies. Established school patterns become accepted through ceaseless repetition, lived out over and over again, with those challenging the status quo finding themselves the butt of teachers' jokes and marginalized by their peers as well. One can only hope that the picture created of silenced girls is not endemic of schooling around the entire globe.

In order to counteract the plight of girls in mixed-sex classrooms, private girls' schools brag that all-girl classes promote venues for young women to

enter the "masculine" worlds of engineering and science. They say that girls feel safe from the dominating presence of males that encourages brash and bawdy intrusions on the "quieter, more thoughtful" girls. Perhaps in a class where everyone is the same, there is anonymity, a faceless quality of security and belonging. McKinley says, "I suggest...that you need to see yourself as 'not different' from those around you in order to think of yourself to be like them. In other words, you can take on or reflect those characteristics that you desire (2001, 9)." Consider the conflict implicit in tacitly conveying to a young woman that she must assume the mask of the authority whose work it is to silence minorities of people like herself!

So it would seem that rather than asserting one's own strengths as an individual, all must resort to blending identities in order not to attract attention. Yet even in a class full of girls, Mere Middleton, one of McKinley's future scientists, reports that she senses a difference. In spite of having been given a Maori name, Mere is nonetheless instructed by her mother to respond to a national census as "New Zealander." Although the spelling of her name is distinctively Maori, her teachers think of her as "Maire," a Scottish equivalent for the English name "Mary." In a sense, her teachers have become agents of her reconstruction. Given a name that suggests a common background with all of the girls, Maire is thus normalized, made acceptable by teacher perceptions within the context of her private school. From inside her family as well as from outside in a school setting, Maire learns to vacillate and to adapt her name and her thinking about identity to conform to her situation. The dichotomous situation weighs heavily on her.

Both Maire and Eva Hoffman in *Lost in Translation*—her memoir of her life as a refugee in Canada at the age of 12—experience the ambiguity a name change can bring, for a name is symbolic of the person herself. When a person freely chooses to set aside her name, it may indicate a fresh beginning, selected for a specific reason, a step taken independently. However, when that change is imposed for whatever reason, that person has been colonized by another's desire to reinvent her. The newly named self cannot help but feel unsure and displaced. Hoffman reflects that her original Polish name was unpronounceable for the teacher who renamed her. Hoffman, confused, feels separated from the child who experienced friends, piano lessons, and happiness in one language and the girl who must stand apart from her former life, stranded in a strange new uncomfortable language. Unlike a hat or a personal possession, a name is a house in which one stores memories, dreams dreams, and creates futures. In Maire and Eva's cases, the girls seem to belong, and yet know they do not. The fact that both Maire and Eva experienced these separations at school is an indictment of a system designed to "inculcate...the attitudes, knowledge, skills and values that will transform them from egocentric individuals into 'responsible' citizens, consumers and workers" (Levin, 2001, 51).

Without a sense of their former selves, Maire and Eva experience a *lacuna* and grow up to be "responsible" adults; as confessed in their narratives, their schooling provoked "a commitment to the ideology of the dominant school structure that structure[d] their academic effort and performance at school, motivating them to strive for academic excellence" (McKinley, 2001, 26). On reflection, they came to see this as a hollow victory. Paradoxically, postmodern theorists acknowledge that although they deplore the situations in which Maire and Eva found themselves, they also value these women's experiences as touchstones and key places. The women's accounts elucidate the struggles that must be confronted and fought if there is to be discourse, and through discourse, a way to deal with the complexity of issues of identity (Schultz, 2000, 215).

Re-establishing Identity: A Look at Three Stories

Postmodernism has imparted unique notions of the heroic in society. No longer are the stories of *just* the dominant and successful touted in society; those small and seemingly unnoted individuals, often belonging to unpopular or ostracized groups, now are empowered by the telling of their tales. Where crones, maidens, prostitutes, and even wives were ridiculed or unheeded in word and in actual society, now their narratives bring understanding to lives lived in diverse circumstances, imparting to the reader the social, political, and economic realities present in historical times or contexts. By being exposed to diverse works of historical fiction, students become enlightened about the human condition and better able to consider multiple perspectives, particularly ones that have been glossed over or omitted in the official versions sanctioned by schools.

Words shunned or considered to be inappropriate because of their associations become a catalyst for ways of knowing. By addressing those concepts or ideas that were once not mentioned in "polite" conversation, the negative attitudes surrounding diverse topics have been openly exposed and thrust into the public arena for scrutiny. Often where suspicion, ignorance, or fear has been aroused, now frank explanation helps in alleviating preconceived notions. Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues* has aided in removing the mystery and taboo surrounding the female anatomy part. Now that the play has been popularized and promoted by such notables as Jane Fonda and Oprah Winfrey, a new acceptance and comprehension have surfaced, removing the stigma from the word. No longer a dirty epithet or one eclipsed by giggles, winks, and smirks, the vagina has taken its place alongside "throat" or "knee." As the vagina represents women's experiences, it opens the door to new perspectives that deal with love, body, and relationships. It is interesting to observe how a simple word composed of unemotional letters or ciphers can alter a person's thinking and affect subsequent behavior.

In a similar way, Sheri Holman delves into unspeakable lives and thus invites forays into places once best believed hidden. *The Dress Lodger* recreates 1831 rural Sunderland in the United Kingdom, replete with the smells of bad fish, dead eels, and rotten plums; the sounds of yowling frogs and screaming, unfed babies; and the sight of matchstick painters whose lips glow from licking phosphorous, all reminiscent of Dickensian days of poverty. Partially based on Ruth Richardson's book, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute*, *The Dress Lodger* conjures the time of a cholera epidemic and the notorious body snatchers, Hare and Burke, who were charged with stealing corpses. One narrative voice in *The Dress Lodger* alerts the reader that there is a "tendency in our society (as there was in theirs) to speak of the teeming masses of poor as if they were vermin" (173).

The story focuses on Gustine, a 15-year-old prostitute, and her shadow, an older woman who follows her constantly and is known as "The Eye." Orphaned at age 12 after the death of her alcoholic mother, Gustine does not consider herself a common whore; rather, she conceives of herself as many other young local girls, that she is helping out with family expenses. Gustine works as a potter's assistant during the day, but "lodges" in her dress each evening in order to procure a better class of gentleman for a nightly *poke* and thus, more money. Aware of her lack of status, she knows she is marked as a person of few rights and certainly no influence—a person about whom no one would write. Gustine doubts that she is entitled to any acts of kindness, respect, or courtesy.

Gustine is not portrayed as a melodramatic character in spite of her life situation. Rather, she commands the reader's respect for her pragmatism: in finding a sitter for her child, paying her expenses, thinking of ways to ameliorate her condition. Not completely demoralized, she finds joy in her child and once, when taken on an outing, expresses "her sense of wonderment at an artichoke: [It] tastes like spring" (176). A person of few words but many actions, she is nonetheless enraged when a male acquaintance decides what she most needs.

"Darling," says he, "I am here to give you a voice." (92)

It is his voice he wants to hear as he imagines and fantasizes romantic "claptrap," for it is his desire "to write the unsentimentalized portrait of the British working class" (90). In fact, she asserts that she has used her voice to ask for clay, soothe her baby, and placate men. In spite of her silence, her story takes readers into unknown worlds, places of possibility where they can listen to words once hissed or mumbled or only thought.

Holman's portrait of Gustine develops her myriad qualities and thoughts that are shared by all human beings who must survive in desperate, bitter situations. She is resourceful and practical, using what talents she has, rarely stopping to consider that she herself has never had a childhood, and yet hoping to create a brighter day for her son—the universal wish of all parents! Aware perhaps of the inevitable future for her child, she never names him. She does not believe, perhaps, in the power of language to sustain and create him as having a definable worth. If her own reality is so evanescent and negotiable, will a name really impart substance to her child? Indeed, he hardly makes any noise to announce he has a stake in embracing life.

When the child veers close to death, Gustine does ponder a name for him. She reflects that William, their beloved king, would not be a good choice since the William she knew "left a xylophone of bruises down her spine... and forced her to her knees in front of his friends" (220). And when she does use words to implore Henry, an upper-class doctor, to help her (for she has located dead bodies for his experiments), she pleads in a language that she hopes will awaken his compassion. She implores him with a message that should evoke the expected, traditional role of a woman, "Take me as a maid... I will cook...clean...sew" (211), to no avail. He regards her as a "parasite." Judging her as too tainted by her reputation, too unclean to live in the same house with his bride, he dismisses her pleas, but nonetheless beds her, for after all, that is how he understands her as a woman—to be used and disregarded. The creation of Gustine allows the reader to contemplate and enter a historic time and a place in which stereotypes have replaced human beings

The Eye is Gustine's counterpart. Hideously deformed, "turnip-fleshed" (8), bent over, her one eye a single gray carbuncle, her job is to follow Gustine to ensure that *the dress* is properly maintained and does not disappear on the wearer's back. She does not speak, she does not argue; she only shadows Gustine. Feeling revulsion and hatred for the bag of a woman who tracks her every move, Gustine, along with the reader, eventually discovers that The Eye (who is never given a full name) is more than a malevolent presence.

Gradually The Eye's story is also revealed. As a child in Durham, she, a girl barely nine years of age, was required to stare down into a deep black hole in a coal field for 13 hours a day. Diverted by a rat that seized her bit of candy, The Eye abandoned the site. When an accident occurred and men were mangled, her master beat her, not for the injuries but for the loss of his machine. From that time, The Eye "has not even admitted hope of human contact" (270). When Gustine looks into her face, she sees compassion, regret, and "recognition that The Eye also loved her child" (168).

Having no one to speak with, only spiders and centipedes for company, The Eye has kept to herself. With her revelation, Gustine is able to offer The Eye kindness, even feeding her ginger and holding her hand when The Eye falls sick. In return, The Eye gives Gustine a vision that she will have a better life: She will marry, she will become a nurse, she will live a long life. Through this shared community of

female experience there is support that has not even been contemplated, let alone proffered, in a society in which these women of low status and means have been despised as outcasts and undesirables.

Interestingly, when one of these women, Gustine, finally speaks out to Henry, she is turned aside and no help is given. However, when the other, The Eye, *wordlessly* conveys her caring to Gustine, she is able to communicate to another woman who understands and responds. The Eye is given voice by Gustine, who can for the first time read what is in the face of her former antagonist. The story is narrated by the voices of murderers, drunkards, prostitutes, and unbaptized babies, "th[o]se you have forgotten." They have arisen to direct the reader's eyes and ears to the unwanted in society, the hidden and unsavory, the debris of existence that for too long have lain buried. Now forced to confront the marginalized of society, the reader hears the ghostly omniscient storytellers who have been resurrected in the story.

Just as *The Dress Lodger* illustrates the community of caring through the demonstration of support for one woman by a second, so Ben Attar's two wives in *Journey to the End of the Millennium* by A. B. Yehoshua reveal that instead of jealousy and antipathy, two women placed in untenable relationships can overcome their confining situations and enter into new roles even in the year 1000. When Ben Attar's nephew, Abulafia, decides he will remarry many years after his wife has died, he proposes to a scholarly widow, Esther-Minna, from Worms, Germany. Learning of her fiancé's connection to a polygamous arrangement, Esther-Minna's "cheeks blush and lips twist with curiosity [as] Abulafia explains that not only in North Africa but in the Andalus, men may wed three or four women" (87).

Because Esther-Minna repudiates dual marriages in the story, Ben Attar must prove the validity of the marital arrangement. He convenes a small hearing at Villa Le Juif outside of Paris where a court of seven good men (which does include a woman) upholds his nephew's right to two wives. However, his nephew, wanting to placate and not lose his beloved, agrees to the ruling of a second Judge in Worms, a rabbi acceptable to both parties. When the rabbi interviews the wives, what he hears informs and surprises him. He learns that the two women, previously kept apart, have become friends during the journey to determine their status as wives. In spite of the fact that there is a difference of age, and more importantly, language, they have become "silent comrades" (167). Not only is the stereotype of competing wives pierced here, but an unexpected response from an acquiescent wife provokes an interesting conundrum. And again, meaningful communication takes place without words, just as it had between Gustine and The Eye.

Not a word of "calumny" (208) by the first wife against the second is uttered as the rabbi questions the first wife.

> ...if previously the first wife's love for the second wife had been distant, because she had not known her, after traveling with her for sixty days on board an old guardship and for a further twelve days on a cramped wagon, the first wife's soul had become so closely bound to the other's that this quality, which had journeyed to the heart of Europe for its life would return home united so much stronger and more united that it would no longer need two separate homes but could make do with a single house. (208)

What is revealed here is a kind of sisterhood that surpasses the stereotype of scheming, hateful women desirous of being first in their husbands' eyes and hearts; evolving is a relationship between two women whose primary connection might otherwise have been one of jealousy.

The first wife contemplates and goes even further when, in her discussions with the rabbi, she queries why women cannot take more than one husband. If the wife provides a paradigm for a sanctioned societal arrangement, the benefits of extending the possibilities of loving a person would seem to expand and enhance the soul. It is as if love in its purest sense might infect the earth with goodness, caring, and compassion. Understood from her point of view, she has intellectualized the notions of love and marriage. The reader is startled by the fresh and unconventional approach that has arisen from the first wife, a closeted woman who should weep for a loss of power and control as more people enter into the marriage. The rabbi contemplates her response but fears what might be considered today "an open marriage." She is not suggesting sexual promiscuity, I believe, but a kind of spirituality and love that unites, enfolds, and makes more of the individual who enters into a loving situation. This concept terrifies the rabbi.

In *The Red Tent*, Anita Diamant also presents a community of wives. In the retelling of Dinah's story from Genesis 34 in the Bible, several damning sentences relating her fate have become a catalyst for an entire narrative that substantiates a voice for a previously doomed woman, daughter of Jacob. Dinah provides the reader with contextual material for women in the Bible as she chronicles her emergent life, filling in all the details deleted in the Bible and imagined by Diamant.

Dinah's mothers, Leah and Rachel, and their handmaids, Bilhah and Zilpah, are not described as squabbling housewives. Instead, they provide a scaffolding and infrastructure for one another: Each is endowed with a plethora of gifts, such as intuition, business sense, music, and spiritual insight, to name just a few. They nurture one another and their combined

Continued on page 40

children. The red tent as a place of gathering for women of child-bearing age during menstruation is perhaps initially construed by the modern-day reader as a way to marginalize or demoralize women, yet Diamant makes one aware that the opposite might be true. Diamant lauds the tent as a special place of cakes and songs and

stories where women are free from the presence of men. Set aside, the women can tell their stories, relax, and refrain from the onerous work of an agrarian society. Women usually silent or in obeisance to their patriarchal society are free to sing, bear witness, and provide a living legacy through their words passed down to their daughters, who will endure to tell the story of their lives. As well, in this secluded place, young women are initiated into rites and procedures that pertain exclusively to women. For example, Rachel, who is said to be infertile, observes ways to promote pregnancy.

She slept with her belly against the trees said to be sacred to local goddesses. When- ever she saw running water, she lay down in it, hoping for the life of the river; to inspire life within her. (46-48)

When Rachel's attempts to conceive are unsuccessful, she apprentices to a midwife, Inna. Rachel learns the powers of herbs and unguents in order to aid others in their desire to become mothers.

In the seclusion of a space devoted specifically to women and their needs, fears and dreams are shared, for a safe environment encourages respite from criticism and disapproval. Rachel's inability to become pregnant evokes compassion in Bilhah, who asks Rachel's permission to go to Jacob in order to bear a child for Rachel. Bilhah understands Rachel's longing as if it were her own. As a surrogate, Bilhah will provide Rachel with a child. Compassion and knowledge of life's cycles as connected and embodied by women are acknowledged here. The work of birthing as an area of female expertise, caring, and healing provides universal lessons to be gleaned by those who will be responsible for the continuation of generations. One narrator comprehends that "[i]n the red tent, we knew that death was the shadow of birth, the price a woman pays for the honor of giving birth. Thus, our sorrow was measured" (48). And later, it is asserted that "life costs blood (158)," a difficult truth observed and experienced by women whose births often ended in death.

But there are other deaths, too. Forgetting the traditions and rituals linked to growth, life, and fertility is an abomination to women like Jacob's mother, Rebeccah. When she hears that one of her daughters-in-law, Adah, married to her son, Esau, has eschewed the ritual of celebrating the onset of womanhood for her own daughter, Tabea, Rebeccah flies into a rage. She upbraids and ultimately exiles her own family for disparaging and banishing the ceremony, saying, "You are not fit to be in my tent. Be cursed and leave this place and never let me see you again" (156). As harbingers of the future, the women of the past insist on the continuous ebb and flow of time, their knowledge maintaining a kind of stability in a harsh world. However, Dinah cannot comprehend her grandmother's actions. Leah, her mother, attempts to explain:

She [Rebeccah] had no choice. She was defending her mother and herself, and your aunties, you and your daughters after you. She was defending the ways of our mothers and their mothers, and the great mother who goes by many names, but who is in danger of being forgotten. (157)

Ironically, the notion of a great mother as creator has indeed been forgotten, lost along with its rituals-the celebrations and songs that proclaim the wondrous transitions that ann-ounce and frame women's lives.

Often stories that dwell on the lives of women or girls add to the reader's understanding of what it means to grow up as a woman and participate in the routines that surround the entry into womanhood. Marked by celebrations or hooded in secret, the entrance to a new stage of development is often fraught with fear and mystery. With every story, more insight and even compassion are vicariously experienced. There are no predictable universals to be gleaned in any narrative that frames a girl's awakening to a new stage of her life. Rather, what is presented in these works of historical fiction is a glimpse into the variety of ways in which individuals respond and are treated in society and socialized. As always, individuals react in unique ways.

Recovering a History Denied: The "Comfort Women" of *A Gesture Life*

Where prostitutes were not spoken of and rarely considered as humans, second wives continued to be acknowledged in the societies of the Middle East and even named in the Bible. In East Asia, the existence of "comfort women" has been denied, making these words of mystery without meaning. In fact, not until the 1990s, when three "comfort women " came forward in Japan to ask the court for an apology from the government, was the expression even used. Sadly, the women's successful claims were overturned with the proclamation that "no serious constitutional violation took place" (Adams, 2001).

Chang-rae Lee's novel *A Gesture Life*, originally entitled "Comfort Women," tells the story of Doc Hata and the impact one "comfort woman" had on his life. Korea had been invaded in 1592 and in 1910 was again invaded and colonized by the Japanese. During the Second World War, Korean cultural identity was stripped away, including the national anthem and the traditional dress (Wu, 2001). Millions of Koreans were shipped off to labor camps, and from 1931 to 1945, young Korean women were forced or tricked into government-sanctioned sexual slavery for the Japanese army.

In the story, Doc Hata becomes infatuated with a young girl, much like the real-life Soon Duk Kim, who at 16 years of age believed that she was to become a "nurse" in a Japanese army camp. The terrible reality for her was "rape by as many as 40 soldiers

a day" (Wu, 2001). Unbeknownst to the young girls arriving to service the camp, tickets were distributed to the men. In *A Gesture Life*, set in an outpost in Burma in 1944, five girls are forced into military brothels. Lee's fictional soldiers have mixed reactions to the situation, ranging from lust and excitement to nervousness and even regret for the pitiable young women who appear shoeless, in crumpled trousers and loose shirts, merely girls. They are unloaded along with pickled radishes and dried fish. The women look frightened, and one who hesitates is immediately struck in the face, "the blow plummeting her to her knees" (165).

Doc Hata is not really a doctor. He is merely an assistant to the camp's medical person, but his job is to ready the girls for the men and attend to them to make sure they can continue their work in the camp. He is "transfixed by the strangeness of it all" (183), in particular by the girls who stand covering themselves with their hands, "their private parts swollen and bruised" (183) after their first forced sexual attacks. Hata is aware of "the faint, sour odors of dried sweat and spilled rice wine and blood and sexual relations" (184). When he tries to examine the victims, they curl their hips away from him, crying and whimpering. These young girls, confused and violated, have been betrayed.

Kaeteach or K., one of the girls, discerns that Hata is not Japanese, but Korean like herself. He even reminds her of her brother, as she tells him, "I thought there was something different about you. I think you are not like everyone else" (253). Hata, raised as Japanese, denies her suggestion, although he is, in fact, Korean. She hopes that perhaps her deliverance might come through Hata. And, indeed, Hata does spend time talking with her, and he does bring her extra food rations. She needs the help, for she has been set aside by Captain Ono, Hata's superior, for his own sadistic pleasure.

When K.'s sister's throat is slashed, K. envies her. Rather than receiving punishment for killing another human being, the perpetrator must pay the penalty for committing treason against the corps as "any saboteur who has stolen or despoiled the camp's armaments or rations" (189). So a human woman is measured, just as The Eye in *The Dress Lodger* had been punished for ruining the machinery of men. Fearing for her own debasement, K. tells Hata that she prefers her sister's fate to the one she anticipates will befall her. She entreats him to help her end her life.

But Hata is a man of words and gestures who believes that he takes the moral high road; he is incapable of ending her torment. Instead, he rests in daydreams, imagining that they will marry and have a life after the war. He colors his daydream with blooming plum trees and humble fishing villages. Yet K. knows that Hata's "dreaming talk" will not stall the inevitable. She knows that she must act, "whether it was deference or detainment in a keening heart of fear" (252). When the opportunity presents itself, K. grabs a scalpel and strikes out. The repercussions of her actions are violent, as she is descended upon by a blood-hungry hoard. The aftermath is sickening.

Finally today, the crimes of the past are being addressed by these Korean women for whom no one would act. Used and discarded, their existence denied, these "comfort women" are silent no longer, seeking retribution for war crimes.

In June 1990, the UN human rights body ruled that Japan should provide compensation to the women who were forced to work as sex slaves. In August 1999, it passed a resolution that governments are responsible for war crimes and other human rights violations committed by their soldiers. (Wu, 2001)

Yet the Japanese government still refuses to admit the existence of these women, ignoring their place in history books and in the minds of many patriotic Japanese.

Stories that focus on girls and women may be of particular interest to females. The stories serve as meters of reference to female lives and provide comparisons and contrasts that may or not be pertinent to the individual reader. Not necessarily instructive but a form nonetheless of documentation, the stories bear witness to diverse lives and deaths by the telling and retelling of what it means to be a girl in a particular society, particularly when girls and women are not valued in society. Some stories, like those of the comfort women, must be addressed so that people are able to honor the memory of those whom society would like to forget forever.

By establishing a body of literature, by using forbidden words and revealing forbidden tales that speak to, and not just for or about, women, myriad voices emerge that announce they have something to say and they will be heard. Not obscuring or silencing the words of others, women's voices add to the richness of what is created when many instruments combine to play the music of life.

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