



2016

# The Milk of Birds

Amelia Hillebrant

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr>

---

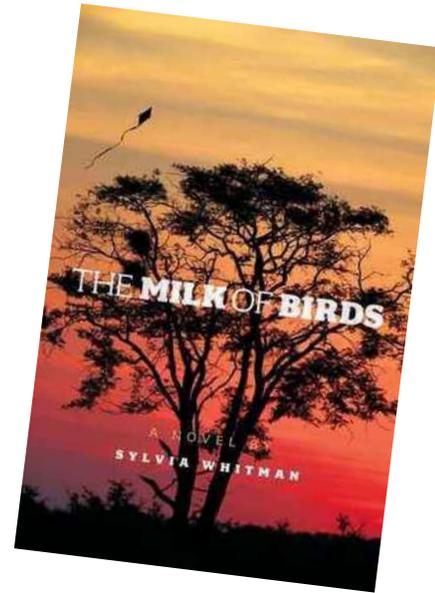
### BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Hillebrant, Amelia (2016) "The Milk of Birds," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 37 : Iss. 10 , Article 29.  
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol37/iss10/29>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Children's Book and Media Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact [scholarsarchive@byu.edu](mailto:scholarsarchive@byu.edu), [ellen\\_amatangelo@byu.edu](mailto:ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu).

# Book Review

**Title:** The Milk of Birds  
**Author:** Sylvia Whitman  
**Reviewer:** Amelia Hillebrant  
**Publisher:** Atheneum Books for Young Readers  
**Publication Year:** 2013  
**ISBN:** 9781442446823  
**Number of Pages:** 363  
**Interest Level:** Young Adult  
**Rating:** Outstanding



## Review

Nawra is a young woman living in a refugee camp in Sudan. In a country that is ravaged by war, Nawra has been subject to abuse, poverty, hunger, and the emotional absence of her mother. When an American charity program comes to her camp promising financial and emotional help for girls, Nawra signs up. On the other side of the world, KC is a young woman living in Virginia. KC struggles in school, has a difficult time focusing, and is eventually diagnosed with a learning disorder. When her mother signs her up for a pen pal program called Save the Girls, KC becomes invested in helping her pen pal Nawra as best as she can. Through a year's worth of letters to each other, KC and Nawra develop a remarkable friendship that brings Nawra joy in her afflictions and introduces KC to a passion she's never known before. When the year comes to a close, the girls have gained a bond that stretches over oceans and, ultimately, saves both of them.

In *The Milk of Birds*, we see Nawra's heartbreaking situation through her own eyes. Sylvia Whitman clearly did her research on refugee camps and the experiences of women in the camps, including details such as the difficulty of cooking with diminishing natural fuel, maintaining hygiene when there is no running water, and dealing with newborn children. These details imbue the novel with an aching reality. KC's experience is written with equal care, and a juxtaposition of her story with Nawra's is achieved through a split narration that includes both letters and storytelling by each girl in her unique voice. This juxtaposition helps the reader to see that adversity can be found in any situation, but so can hope. *The Milk of Birds* will inspire readers to seek ways in which they can give aid to girls in need. Young people who read this story will discover a similar passion to spread hope and come in contact with the lives of inspiring young people like Nawra.

\*Contains mild references to marital relationships, rape, and war.