*Wild Milk,* by Sabrina Orah Mark rev. by Jasmine Venegas

Dorothy

Sabrina Orah Mark is the author of the poetry collections *The Babies* and *Tsim Tsim.* She earned a BA from Barnard College, Columbia University, an MFA from the Iowa Writers’ Workshop, and a PHD in English from the University of Georgia. Her most recent work is a collection of short stories called *Wild Milk. Wild Milk* was published in 2018 by Dorothy, a publishing project. This collection of short stories focuses on the fairy-tale side of fiction and brings to life many situations in which the ordinary meets the weird. Most of Mark’s work, including her other work aside from this collection, holds a balance between reality and fiction that makes readers feel like dreaming in their wake. In this collection, there are multiple shifts in imagery, lots of movement and motion, and interesting form that occurs in almost every chapter. Each of these elements takes part in manifesting the dream-like quality of the stories.

Something interesting Mark includes in her work is the regular, normal things in life. She begins each chapter with a new situation that begins fairly normal with nothing out of the ordinary, but midway throughout the chapters, there are shifts in motion and imagery. With these shifts comes a new perspective on the situation at hand and the readers begin to lose balance of the real and nonreal. Though some readers may find these shifts to be confusing at first, by the end of the collection there comes a realization that these stories aren’t really meant to make sense, but rather depict emotions and images that one would feel in a dream-like state. For example, in the story “MY BROTHER GARY MADE A MOVIE AND THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED,” the narrator begins to describe a time in which she is interacting with her family who is helping her brother, Gary, make a movie. There is a somewhat normal conversation between the two about cameras and actors, but a shift in imagery brings out the unrealistic. When asked about who will be the actors in Gary’s film, the narrator is led behind a couch in which lies a heap of almost twenty family members, including her mother, father, grandpa, eleven brothers, and some aunts and uncles literally stacked on top of one another. By the way these people acted like this type of interaction was normal/comfortable and continued to have one on one conversations with each other, the reader understands that the author is trying to merge the unusual with the normal.

This collection follows no set plotline, but rather focuses on multiple situations—a new one in each chapter that completely differs from the last. None of the stories are directly correlated with one another and, in each, the reader is introduced to new characters and settings. This non-chronological form and style of writing can sum up some confusion within the audience however, this kind of writing gives a new outlook into writing that most don’t bother reading or pay attention to, but should. After some time, the form begins to create its own style of non-correlating and unchronological situations that becomes a norm to the reader and there is a rhythm of unusualness within the collection. There are situations within some of the stories where it feels like there may be too much happening at the same time and the plot within the chapter begins to intertwine with the interactions between characters. Admittedly, this collection was hard to begin reading as it takes a while to uncover what exactly is happening, but after fighting through and rereading the stories there is a general knowledge of Mark’s writing style that can conjure and inspire others to follow.

The movement and motion for Mark's collection also hold a point of interest. Throughout most of her stories, there is always something or somebody moving, sometimes slow and other times really fast. Mark does well in creating a rhythm within her stories that make them entertaining and worth reading. While reading, the audience can be expected to break away from the book quite frequently, not for the reason of boredom, but because it may feel like a lot is happening at the same time—in a good way. Take this excerpt, for example:

*I lie beside Mother Mother’s quietly dying soft , brown body, and fall asleep and dream I am walking up and down the aisles of a supermarket. In my cart is an old orange. It cost seven thousand dollars, and when I open my purse all I have is an ocean. “We do not accept,” says the cashier who is really the maid who is not herself, “an ocean.” The waves crash, which embarrasses me.*

In this excerpt from the chapter “THE MAID, THE MOTHER, THE SNAIL, AND I,” though there is imagery that merges and creates a sense of chaos, it is clear to feel the motion of the words and thoughts being told by the narrator of the story.

Sabrina Orah Mark’s collection of short stories, *Wild Milk,* inspires a new style of writing full of chaos, motion, images, concepts, and more. There is great use of many writing elements that combine well to accomplish Mark’s task in rebuilding her own reality. Mark changes your ideas of writing and how to write by showing the audience how crazy stories can be. These stories throw a lot into the minds of readers that creates a fun mental roller coaster and leaves a resonating impact on readers and writers.