



Yarn: Remembering the Way Home

Kyoko Mori

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A memoir of crossing cultures, losing love, and finding home by a New York Times notable author. As steadily and quietly as her marriage falls apart, so Kyoko Mori's understanding of knitting deepens. From flawed school mittens to beautiful unmatched patterns of cardigans, hats and shawls, Kyoko draws the connection between knitting and the new life she tried to establish in the U.S. Interspersed with the story of knitting throughout, the narrative contemplates the nature of love, loss, and what holds a marriage together.

Yarn: Remembering the Way Home Details

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Author : Kyoko Mori

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From Reader Review Yarn: Remembering the Way Home for online ebook

Catherine says

Having read her previous book, “Polite Lies,” I was familiar with Mori’s personal story and there’s quite a lot of reiteration in this book. The “yarn” in the title refers not only to Mori’s love of knitting and weaving but also in the story or “yarn” of her life.

You don’t have to be a knitter to appreciate her stories, although I’d venture to guess that fellow knitters might find even deeper meaning in some of her observations and impressions.

Mori is a good writer and shares her most visceral thoughts in her writing. This is a lovely memoir.

John says

Although it sounds like a gimmick, Mori makes the knitting metaphor work (quite well actually) to structure her memoir. I got this book from the library after reading *Polite Lies: On Being a Woman Caught Between Cultures*, which I’d advise reading before this one. There is some overlap regarding her family background in Japan, but *Polite Lies* gives context that may be missing in reading *Yarn* first.

Definitely recommended

Jennifer says

I loved all the history of knitting. Well told and philosophical in all the good ways.

ModCloth says

The first scarf I knitted rolled up into itself like a turtle hiding in its shell. No amount of tugging, stretching, ironing, or whining would make it lay flat. This, you can imagine, irritated me greatly. I’d spent hours on the project, and when finally I had a finished product – one that I hoped would keep me warm all through the winter – its lame width left an unfortunate gap on my vulnerable neck.

Kyoko Mori’s new book, *Yarn: Remembering the Way Home*, opens in a similar vein. Her first knitting project – a pair of yellow mittens – earned her a D- in fourth grade home economics. But unlike my early knitting catastrophe, Mori recovers from her first attempt to ultimately master the craft. However, knitting hardly takes up the entire length of Mori’s memoir, but provides a foundation for the author to reflect upon her marriage, her family’s past, and her own future.

Read more about Kyoko Mori’s *Yarn* after the jump.

Mori's initial venture into knitting occurs during her childhood in Kobe, Japan, just a year after her mother's suicide. In the shadow of her mother's death, Mori's indifferent father quickly remarries a woman who constantly chastises the young, vulnerable girl. As soon as she is able, a college-aged Mori leaves Japan for an education in the United States. In doing so, she rejects the life that is expected of her – marriage and silence – the quiet fate that ultimately drove her mother to suicide. Mori moves to Green Bay, Wisconsin to immerse herself in her graduate work. It is there that she meets Chuck, a laid-back, Midwestern school teacher who is everything her turbulent past is not. They marry partly for love, but mostly out of convenience (Mori's deportation was looming), and soon Mori finds herself settling for life as a small town, college professor.

Mori constantly feels out of place in her small, conformed community and it is through her knitting that she finds a niche. As she falls into a deep rhythm with her needles, moving between delicate Fair Isle patterns and hearty sweaters built to battle a Wisconsin winter, her story unfolds – from the quest to understand her mother's choices, to the silent, passive breakdown of her own marriage, to the pursuit of finding her way in a place she struggles to call home.

We quickly fall into Mori's story and with it, the art of knitting. As she picks up complicated patterns, joins various knitting circles, even raises rabbits to spin her own yarn – so does she share with us the history of the relatively young craft. She takes us from the first knitted objects found in an Egyptian tomb, to Latvian girls knitting items for their dowry chests, to the posh knitting circles popping up in cities across the U.S. Swaying from anecdote to fact, memory to history, it quickly becomes clear that Mori has an uncanny ability to parallel her own complicated life to the seemingly simple stitches on her needle. Though the resentment in *Yarn* is at times thick, Mori's talent for weaving together the numerous strands of her memoir overcomes her rancor. Telling nearly four stories at once, without leaving her readers stranded, is a gift few writers are capable of accomplishing so seamlessly.

Pick up *Yarn* for a warm winter read, or if you are looking for a deeply affecting memoir. It may even inspire you to overcome that previous knitting catastrophe. Scarf, anyone? - Sarah, Fashion Writer

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Laurie Carlson says

Kyoko Mori, the author, spins a tale of her life here in the United States by weaving together all the details of her life and knitting them together making it as the pattern of her life unfolds into the finished product, always being worked on, as we all do. She connects her love of yarn into her daily life.

Kyoko Mori is originally from Japan and is here on a student visa. When her time has run out on her visa, she is not completely finished with her schooling. With her dissertation still needing to be finished, she faces having to return home to Japan, not being able to finish it. She has a friend named Chuck who offers to marry her in order for her to be able to stay here, in the United States. She takes him up on his offer, marries him, and is able to finish her schooling. She stays married to him over the years.

As she writes this book and tells us about her life, she weaves in stories about her life here, as well as it was in Japan. She also manages to skillfully talk about her love of knitting and incorporates it into the story as she tells it. She talks of the different things she knits, sweaters and mittens, shawls and more. As one event leads to another she talks about the knitting project she is currently undertaking for the events. She discusses how she was brought up in Japan, how she learned to knit, among other things in Home Economics classes in school back in Japan. She tells us of the customs back there, all the while talking about her knitting. She is

really talented in respect to how she weaves the knitting into her stories, as well as the other handcrafts she has done over the years, all in respect to yarn. She prides herself in the fact that she never used a pattern, but by the end of the book, she learns that following some patterns actually teaches her how to make 'fitted' garments, making her look more feminine. This is a nice boost to her lower self-image.

Divorce does finally happen to Kyoko, and this is when she really starts to come out of her shell she had lived in all the years prior. She feels freer to experiment more with actual patterns and to find new friends in the few new places she ends up living and teaching.

This story is a really neat page turning story making you want to learn more about her life and her yarn handcrafts she makes, now and back when she lived in Japan and the customs the Japanese followed. The way this story is written is very interesting. She teaches us a lot about yarns. From knitting, to weaving the yarn, the different types of yarns and how they are made, right down to the different animal coats used in making yarns using the spinning wheel.

This book was a very enjoyable read.

This book was provided to me by Bostwick Communications in exchange for a written review of the book.

Laurie Carlson

www.lauriehere.blogspot.com

Yarn, by Kyoko Mori

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This book was a very enjoyable read. I give this book a 4-star rating.

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Laurie Carlson

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Laurie Carlson

www.lauriehere.blogspot.com

Amy says

I love the author's voice in this book: it's quiet and sincere. The yarn metaphor had the potential to be seriously strained, but Mori does a good job of holding it back. Although the book is about the effects of her mother's suicide when Mori was a child (some might say it's about the dissolution of Mori's marriage, but in my view that's related pretty strongly to the suicide), there is no talk of unravelling, getting wound up, spinning a tale, or other cringe-worthy phrases. Instead, she writes about what she was knitting during the different phases of her life and lets the reader make the connection. This book is a good way to pass a few thoughtful hours, and I'll be checking out more of Mori's books.

Susan Hamilton says

As Mori's expertise in creating clothing from yarn increases, her marriage unravels yet she expertly weaves a new path for her career and life. Mori does a great job contrasting life to textiles, and the comparisons never grow thin or forced. Good reading.

Nanako Mizushima says

I noticed small paperback in the library with the cover photo of balls of yarn and the Japanese name. I do like to knit and the fact that it is a memoir caught my interest. Not surprisingly, the narrator's interest in knitting is a metaphor for her life. The titles of the five chapters - Yellow Mittens, Seamless Sweaters, Fair Isle, Intarsia and Flip-Flop Mittens - all hint at how her personal life challenges as an immigrant writer are woven (no pun intended) into her knitting and weaving. Although it was fun to learn about knitting, I was more impressed by her seemingly effortless anecdotes which gave me a A-Ha moment long after I had passed onto the next chapter. In fact, I tried but could not find one of those anecdotes! I apologize if I got it wrong. She told the story of a stubborn male writing student to illustrate her point "a small thing is a large thing." The athletic student has an epiphany while running with his girlfriend. As they both approach a pothole he realizes that unless one of them gives way to the other, they will both crash into the pothole. In that moment, he understands that this relationship is doomed. Mori has other gems on writing. I loved her story explaining how to "value a bad good story over a good bad story". A young black woman thinks she is writing about racial inequality but Mori points out important parts of her story that need to be addressed. In writing, I struggle with figuring out what the point of my story is and suspect that I am thinking way too much. Mori articulates that struggle and like a wise old teacher, uses wonderful stories to make the process of writing appear much easier than it really is. The tension between Mori's Japanese homeland and her American life is beautifully shown through the relationships between her family and herself. This book turned me into a fan of Kyoko Mori and I plan to read more of her work.

Linda says

Yarn: Remembering the Way Home

"Kyoko Mori is an artist with words. She stitches them together in phrases that make you catch your breath at the aptness of a metaphor or the sharp sting of truth."

— A blurb from the back cover of Mori's novel, "Stone Field, True Arrow," taken from my review of the book in The Capital Times newspaper

On my bookshelf are two hardcover books by Kyoko Mori: one a novel, the other a collection of essays. I'll probably never read either one again, which suggests they should go to make space for other books. But they were so affecting when I first read them that I keep them as reminders. As you can see from the quote at the top of this post, I think Mori is an impressive writer.

Like many authors she mines her own life for material; a life suffused with tragedy, sorrow, strangeness, and

a long struggle to make sense of it all. Mori spent half her life in Japan and half in the American midwest: Green Bay, Wisconsin to be exact; and was an outsider in both cultures.

Mori's latest volume, "Yarn: Remembering the Way Home," continues this exploration. This time she uses fiber as the thread that binds these stories into a narrative quilt. Thus the book has lots of detail (and trivia) about spinning, knitting, weaving, the Shetland Islands, sweater design and more. Mori's story is endlessly fascinating and her prior re-tellings of it have been fully engaging.

But this time I felt as though Mori were going through the motions; that she had thought of another way to approach the tale using traditional female fiber arts she practices as the framework. As someone who has experience with many of the same arts as Mori, I admit that's what drew me initially to the story. Perhaps I am too familiar with Mori's history and that's what made this book so much less satisfying. But I never found myself re-reading a sentence or stopping to savor a phrase or remembering anything at all once I closed the cover. She does, however, continue to be spot-on in her description of small town life and evocation of the midwestern landscape.

To fully appreciate Mori's story and her talent, I'd forego this latest book and read one of these earlier titles. For those who prefer memoir and essays, read "Polite Lies;" for fans of fiction, pick "Stone Field, True Arrow."

Benjamin Kass says

I really enjoyed this book, though at times it seemed the most miserable view of reality I've seen. I hope the author is kinder on herself (less critical) in the future.

Jody says

3.5

Jen Vaughn says

A memoir into the young to mid-life of writer, Kyoto Mori, as a girl estranging herself from her family and Japanese social culture to being an immigrant in the mid-western United States. Woven (or knit and purled) with stories of learning knitting, it's a compassionate read for strong women.

Kasey Jueds says

This book could not be more up my alley: it's a memoir, it's by a writer I love (whose earlier memoir is one of my favorites ever), and it's about (drumroll) knitting. Hooray! So I was thrilled to find it at our local Borders' closing sale. And it is wonderful, plain-spoken, honest, and thoughtful. Among other things, it's inspiring to read such a forthright book about a woman's unusual life choices; it always makes me feel a little more courageous and inspired. And it's also fascinating to me, as someone who's spent a fair amount of time

in Wisconsin, that so much of the book is set there, and Mori has such a sharp-eyed perspective on it.

Laurie Carlson says

Yarn by Kyoko Mori

NonFiction and Autobiography

This book is not just about yarn, as I thought it was at first. It is a very nice novel to read. It flows very nicely as Kyoko Mori, a New York Times Notable author takes us through her life from the point where her Visa is set to expire before she is done with all her college degrees she is after. College is what got her her Visa here to the States. She did not want to go back home to Japan without having finished them.

A friend of hers asks her to marry him, and that way she can stay in the country. She does. She marries him and they start to build a life together. She takes us on a journey through her life, including using her passion of knitting, and weaves a story telling us her story through her use of her knitting. As life goes through patterns, so does her knitting.

We learn all about her life in Japan, the customs from Japan and all about her family in Japan. She tells us how they relate to her now in her life here in the States. Things are definitely different in Japan. This information was very interesting.

Kyoko does eventually end up getting divorced, and through her knitting, tells us all about it and her new life. She tells us of the difficulties of her divorce, moving on to a new life, adjusting and more. It shows through her knitting as well. Mostly, it is how her knitting had stayed the same, yet grew in intricacy, and how her life did as well, all the comparisons. Her dedication to knitting continued, and so she remained dedicated to her life. Many things changed, yet many things stayed the same.

Kyoko Mori tells a story so beautifully and elegantly, I would compare it to cutting through a very large wedding cake. It is so soft, smooth and with ease. The words just flow onto the paper. You want to keep reading this book because the words are so soft, smooth and written with ease.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. I would suggest it to anyone who likes knitting and likes autobiographies, as the book is equally full of both.

This book was provided to me for free by GemmaMedia Publishers through NetGalley.com, in exchange for a written review. No monies were exchanged whatsoever.

A huge thanks to the Publisher and NetGalley for allowing me the opportunity to read such an enjoyable book.

Laurie Carlson

Marilyn says

I enjoyed reading about how knitting serves as a stabilizing influence in common lives. This writing is good, but I guess the cultural differences kept me from going gaga over it. I never connected with the author.
