

Book Review: Yesteryear  
By Caro Claire Burke

Thanks to NetGalley and Knopf, Pantheon and Vintage for this advance reader's copy, in exchange for an honest review. "Yesteryear" is scheduled for release on April 7, 2026.

I will state up front that either I'm not in the target audience for this book, or I'm just not getting it. Because this review, while not alone in its thoughts, is definitely in the minority.

Natalie Heller Mills is a 32-year-old wife (to Caleb) and mother to five children with number six on the way. They live on a large farm in Idaho where she frames herself as "perfect at being alive" while presenting herself as a tradwife (traditional wife) to her millions of social media followers. In other words, she's an online influencer.

What her followers don't know, however, is that there are two nannies, a producer, and an ultra-modern kitchen featuring industrial-grade fridges and ovens that never appear on camera. So, is Natalie a phony?

One thing for certain (in my opinion) is that she is extremely dislikable. Not a redeeming thing I can say about her. She's a hypocrite who acts pious but doesn't hesitate to curse out old friends before apologizing to the Lord.

Then one morning she awakens to find herself, it seems, in 1805. In a house, with a husband and children, who seem familiar but not. And of course she freaks out. Is she losing her mind? Did she go back in time? Is she caught in some brutal reality show? Or is the Lord forcing her to live the life she has been pretending to?

Those questions eventually get answered. But getting there is the problem.

The book is divided into three parts, plus an Epilogue. Part 1 is called The Past, yet it seems to focus on events currently happening. Part 2 is called The Present, yet the chapters alternate between life in 1805 and how Natalie and her husband met in college and began a life

together, the latter receiving the bulk of the section's focus. Not sure why, and not sure how that constitutes the present.

Part 3 is called The Future, yet it's here where all the pieces are attempted to be put together. And it more accurately seems like it's the present.

In addition to this disjointed narrative, it's not clear (at least not to me until near the very end) what the focus or point of the story is. And once that became clear, my reaction was, "Oh, so why did it take the scenic route to get here?"

I understand that Anne Hathaway is slated to star in the movie adaptation of the book. I don't know how the book will translate as film, but I hope it's not as obtuse as the print version.

Two stars, and disappointment.