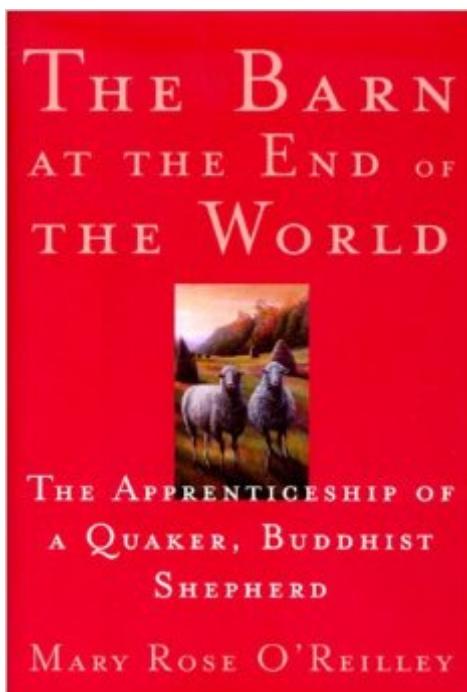


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The Barn At The End Of The World : The Apprenticeship Of A Quaker, Buddhist Shepherd



Synopsis

In this seriocomic work of guerrilla spirituality, O'Reilley takes the reader into a working barn, where she learns to flip sheep, inoculate them, and help them lamb (among other, earlier things), as she spends a year tending sheep.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

While I own a few books with both "spiritual" and "quest" in the title, I confess that I've not been able to finish many of them. They get too dry, weighty, or ascetic. O'Reilley is the antidote. Like her earlier book, *The Peaceable Classroom*, she takes a wry, sincere cut on the journey to find the "we in me". This book reveals the power of a light touch to heady matters. If you've read Thomas Merton, Thich Nat Nhat Hanh or other heavier religious voices, you'll appreciate O'Reilley's keen insight into matters of the heart and soul. She brings the wit of H.L. Mencken to the subject matter of St. Augustine.

I loved reading Ms. O'Reilley's thoughts as she delved into her spiritual life through the retelling of the "everyday." As a fairly young woman with children myself, I enjoyed this author's empty-nester vitality and exploration of a life she obviously enjoys living. She does things that I hope I would do someday when I no longer have the children at home. Again, as a woman with children, I could relate in a very earthy way to finding holiness in... well... "dirty work." I like that Ms. O'Reilly doesn't

mince the details in an attempt to be pious or meek. On the other hand, much of her writing style is absolutely delicious to read, no matter what the subject matter. This author can make sheep rectums something wonderful to read about! I also love the way the author lives, something I would describe as very loving living. I love the value she places on many aspects of different spiritual traditions. It comes together in wonderful harmony, something that is very soothing and pleasing to read. (I would agree with some other reviewers that this book is not a solid reference for Buddhism or Quaker beliefs, but it certainly has a wonderfully lovely tone!) This book is about spiritual living - with or without a denominational label. I often found myself feeling a great sense of peace and calm while reading it, and enjoyed it immensely. This book is heartily recommended!

The calm, witty, and down-to-sheep insights offered by Mary Rose O'Reilley are a wonderful antidote to hectic days. I read a bit each lunchtime and am transported to college days of Zen meditation and current deepening involvement in Quaker worship and testimonies. When I can't get to Quaker meeting on Sunday, I look forward to meeting this simple testimony on Monday. Quakers usually do not proselytize, having a horror of trying to persuade, but this Friendly book makes a most convincing account of the abiding appeal and basic truth of the Inner Light. Highly recommended.

In the past 15 years, I've read two, "personal memoir"-type books by women writers that totally blew my doors off: Terry Tempest Williams' "Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place" and Mary Rose O'Reilly's "The Barn at the End of the World: The Apprenticeship of a Quaker, Buddhist Shepherd." Very different books, at the end of the day, but both women think and write from deep religious traditions in their lives. Likewise, both have an abiding love for "the land," concretely and metaphorically, so what you hear at the end of that same day are calm but passionate voices that make you listen, make you want to listen hard to the observations, but with sense of deep fulfillment for the experience of it. As for "Barn," I am neither a Quaker, a Buddhist, a farmer, a teacher nor an "older, adventurous woman" (as one reviewer suggested would be the type of person who would enjoy "Barn"). SO WHAT! "Barn" is a truly a banquet of wise and penetrating insights into the essence work (and working with and caring for animals in particular), of friendship, love, responsibility, accountability to yourself and to others, silence, mediation, the sacred, and, ultimately living honestly. There is much humor, gentleness, and "character" (for want of a better word to describe her inner strength) in the 90-odd "chapters" (some as short as 1 page) that are more like mini-essays on discrete but interrelated topics, so much so that I found myself going back, often,

re-reading passages, savoring her prose and her insights, shutting the book, just letting the writing sink in. "Barn," resonated with me (an "semi-older, adventurous man") on more levels than I could ever have predicted. I'm a big fan of Thich Nhat Hanh's work, so the chapters recounting her experience at Plum Village and Thay's "dharma talks" were an added "bonus." Give it a shot, and take your time reading it; it's worth it.

I first read this book some years ago when I found it in my public library. It is one of those slightly addictive books you fall in love with. Mary Rose shares her story so easily and naturally, while gently weaving in her life-philosophy. I used to borrow the book for a once a year refreshing and inspiring read, and if I saw it on the shelf in the library on other visits, it would greet me as an invaluable friend. I subsequently bought a copy, then later gave it away to someone who needed it more than I, and mourned its loss. It is with delight I now have a kindle version so I can dip into its short chapters when I have a few moments to spare. It would be the book I most talk about in my role as a spiritual advisor.

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