

BOOK REVIEW

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The Green Boat: Reviving Ourselves in Our Capsized Culture, by Mary Pipher. New York, NY: Riverhead Trade, 2013, 240 pages.

*Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune without the words...*

— Emily Dickinson

MARY PIPHER, LIKE EMILY DICKINSON, was given solace, inspiration and renewal from the natural world; for her, it came from the prairie, hills and rivers of Nebraska. However, it also led Pipher to despair over the losses and potential losses in that ecosystem due to the accelerated human impact on the planet, global warming, and specifically the TransCanada Keystone pipeline. From her own experiences with despair and incapacitating knowledge, she—along with her family and other members of the community—began a grassroots effort to protect the sandhills. From their small committee they hosted potlucks and rallies, concerts and other fundraising efforts and political forays. They offered and delivered a homemade apple pie to Nebraska’s governor in return for his help with the project.

Pipher’s psychotherapy-born group facilitation furthered the coalescence and integration of the group. Interspersed throughout *The Green Boat* are discussions of pertinent psychological principals that facilitated or restricted their progress. They had to find a common language which would enable them to interrupt those who would deny or dismiss their concern. Pipher describes the “Awareness to Action Cycle,” the movement from traumatic paralysis to purposeful engagement. She illustrates the power of groups to heal, to transcend limitations and setbacks together, to have a wisdom wider than that of a single individual, and to buoy one another in perseverance. In those connections, and through action, Pipher comes to hope and joy in the place where she had known despair. She offers a roadmap to environmental activism that she herself has traveled.

There are two significant, though perhaps unintended, gifts of the book in addition to the environmental call to action. As a dedicated follower of psychologist and writer Mary Pipher, I believe her body of work offers a rare view of the unfolding into maturity of one of our own. And, to that end, she is a model like that of an older professional sister, forging a path that others might follow. *The Green Boat* describes Pipher as a citizen of the universe, along with the grasses, the animals, and the night sky. And with this book, she offers herself as a model for key issues in giving her perspective as Grandmother, steward of hope for her own grandchildren and all children of the future.

A second unexpected offering of *The Green Boat* is its engagement with the challenge and process of hope. Pipher sings to us “the tune without the words.” She narrates for us her own journey, her small and reasonable steps. By her



In It Together by Mary de Wit

example, she inspires hope in an ever widening circle, including her readers, for the greater good. Her story is a gift for our common green boat, and a contribution to our understanding of the application of hope to other pressing concerns of our clients, our communities and our world.

Perhaps the truth depends on a walk around the lake.
— Wallace Stevens