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Mending the Past and Healing the Future with Soul Retrieval

Alberto Villoldo
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The healing traditions of indigenous peoples now embodied in shamanic practices don't look a bit like what most skeptical Westerners expect "healing" to look like nowadays, with hospital visits, surgeries, and pills. But when (as told in an anecdote in the book) one of the author's clients faces almost certain death within two months from a rare, fast-spreading cancer, Villoldo feels it may be worth exploring another way. Intrepid souls, willing to step outside the constructs of so-called "reality," are advised not to wait for such a health crisis or serious accident to follow these steps on an unusual healing path.

A psychologist and medical anthropologist, Villoldo has journeyed the paths of healing for more than twenty-five years, studying and training with elders and Inka shamans from the Amazon to the Andes. (That story was told in his previous book, *Shaman, Healer, Sage*.) Now, he adapts the practices, used over many generations by these healers, for a contemporary audience. He constructs a detailed roadmap and step-by-step trip planner so that anyone can safely traverse the path to reconnect with a lost part of the soul.

Says Villoldo, "Through journeying, we're able to access the 'living library' of our existence, which holds the landscapes, territories, and experiences of our past, present, and possible future. But unlike an actual library … the terrain of our lives is mysterious, changing, and experiential." Preparing to journey, readers learn whom they may meet, and the prayers, meditations, and guidance needed as they revisit the source of the original wounding and understand the contract made in response.

Following discrete meditative steps "in the language of the soul … rich in image, myth, archetypes, and mystery," they rediscover the grace of an innocent self, find the perfect tool, connect with a power animal, and navigate around the life momentum created by love, power, money, and health. They give up what's not needed, and learn to tap into possible new, healed futures. Along the way are exercises to create sacred space, journey safely, and journal in dialogue with the images that come up.

The author uses familiar stories (Parsifal, Adam and Eve, Psyche and Eros, and David and Goliath) to illuminate the possibilities that his readers, too, could engage in such heroic tasks. Anecdotes from his journals and journeys, plus reports from people he's helped, all combine to bring to life the tantalizing healing possibilities of following this path. This book feeds a persistent yearning to live fully into one's destiny even as it addresses a palpable and growing urgency for healing at all levels. It is a practical and highly recommended guide to unconventional ways to heal at the most profound and powerful levels.
BOBBYE MIDDENDORF (August 18, 2009)

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