

Martin Prechtel on Grief

When I divine the Earth Bodies of many people of today, their worlds look like a post-war country, bombed out, dry, flowerless, and tired. The flat devastation wreaked upon these people's Earth Body needs renewing. Their World House needs reassembling, replastering; it has to be remembered back to life, so that the faraway native souls, their natural indigenous beings, can return to their homes. Maybe this is why Chiviliu (his Shaman teacher in Guatemala) sent me away, to sing and speak these people's lives back together. After all, he said that the destruction was coming from them. Our world was being killed by people whose naturalness had been disenfranchised long ago. The violence they leveled upon us came from their soulless minds and angry, homeless souls, looking for permanence through violent business growth, killing, forgetting, and mocking everything that reminded them of their inadequacies.

For there to be a world at all, every indigenous, original and natural thing must start singing its song, dancing its dance, moving and breathing, each according to its own nature, saying its name, manifesting simultaneously its secret spiritual signature. Every Gypsy must be singing her ancient tune, every Bushman, Croat, Arab, Jew, Chuckchee, Hmong, Papuan, Celt, Yoruba, Saxon, Cree, Guarani, Sami, Inuit, Kazaki, Tahitian, Balinese, jaguar, honey creeper, anteater, beetle, butterfly, oak, birch, ceiba, baobab, dog, mosquito, shark, coral, lighting, tornado, mist, mountain, deer, desert, and so on forever, each must be making its magic sound. When any of these stops singing for being killed or destroyed, a piece of the World's House is lost. This in a village is the equivalent of losing a family. When this happens in the village, it's a call for all the people to come together to find or renew the family's lost tribe - or to grieve their gaping loss. Our grief, when deeply expressed communally, as it is in a village, sends the lost sound like an echo back to its home. This puts some mud back into the void left in the World House.

If done passionately, grief strengthens the World House, because the creative substance of our songs is perceived by the spirits as canoes to take the dead home. Our tears are jade beads to adorn the Face of Life, the Earth Fruit.

Shamans say the Village Heart can grow a brand-new World House if it is well-dressed in the layered clothing of each indigenous soul's magic sound, ancestral songs, and indigenous ingenuity. The wrecked landscape of our World House could sprout a renewed world, but a new language has to be found. We can't make the old world come alive again, but from its old seeds, the next layer could sprout.

This new language would have to grow from the indigenous hearts we all have hidden. It shouldn't be the tongue of oneness, not one language, not a computer tongue of homogenization, but a diverse, beautiful, badly made thing whose flimsiness and inefficiency force people to sing together to keep it well-spoken and sung into life over and over again, so that nobody forgets to remember. We need to find gorgeous, unsellable, ritual words to reanimate, remeasure, rebuild, and replaster the ruined, depressed flatness left by the hollow failure of this mechanized, orphaned culture.

For this, we need all peoples: our poets, our shamans, our dreamers, our youth, our elders, our women, our men, our ancestors, and our real old memories from before we were people. We live in a kind of dark age, craftily lit with synthetic light, so that no one can tell how dark it has really gotten. But our exiled spirits can tell. Deep in our bones resides an ancient, singing couple who just won't give up making their beautiful, wild noise. The world won't end if we can find them.

