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The mystical and the political draw devoted readers to Miami Book Fair

By Connie Ogle

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Past-life regressions and present-day politics drew big crowds Wednesday night to Miami Book Fair International, with Dr. Brian Weiss and his daughter Amy discussing the former and CNN senior legal analyst for Jeffrey Toobin exploring the latter.

Weiss, once a traditional psychotherapist, said he was at first skeptical of the idea of past lives and reincarnation — he described himself as a “left-brained academic,” with degrees from Columbia University and the Yale School of Medicine — but was converted to a more -open mind after a patient began recalling past-life traumas. Since then he has performed regression therapies and written about his experiences in *Many Lives, Many Masters* and his new book *Miracles Happen*, in which he and Amy Weiss share patients’ stories.

One example he shared: A patient could manage to eat only two or three different foods. Through regression therapy, she learned that she had died eating poisoned yellow flowers. After the memory resurfaced, Weiss said, she was able to eat more food.

“We’ve lived hundreds and hundreds of lives,” Weiss said to his appreciative crowd, most of whom obeyed when daughter Amy suggested they close their eyes while she read a meditation.

Toobin, author of *The Oath*, *The Obama White House* and *The Supreme Court*, preferred to open eyes during his session as he chatted with Antonio Mora of CBS, who questioned him about Chief Justice John Roberts, his similarities and differences with President Barack Obama — who is “not as liberal as Roberts is conservative,” Toobin said — and the future of the Supreme Court.

Both are “princes of the meritocracy,” Toobin said, but “they’re different in approach to constitutional law.”

Toobin, who is also a staff writer at the *New Yorker* magazine, talked about the groundbreaking decision of *Citizens United*, the mere mention of which elicited hearty groans from the clearly left-leaning audience, and Roberts’ uncharacteristic vote for the Obama healthcare act, a rare decision siding with the liberal judges that is not likely to be repeated, to Toobin’s mind. But he also fascinated the audience with tales about how the present-day judges are friends, combative only on paper.

“Fortunately for all of us, there are nine very intelligent people on it,” he said of the Supreme Court, adding: “John Roberts is the most intelligent of them — and the best writer.”

As for the way the justices vote? “When you’re interpreting the Constitution,” he said, “there’s no way to take politics out.”

Thursday night’s appearance by Robert Caro, whose *The Passage of Power* is the fourth volume of his biography of President Lyndon B. Johnson, was canceled, but “An Evening With Adam Gopnik” will start at 8 p.m.

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