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May 2013

Free online magazine from village earth



Zuade Kaufman

Publisher of Truthdig

in an exclusive interview with Mark Ulyseas



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Live Encounters is a not-for-profit free online magazine that was started in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. It showcases some of the best writing from around the world. Civil and human rights activists, animal rights activists, poets, writers, journalists, social workers and more have contributed their time and knowledge for the benefit of the readers of the magazine.

We are appealing for donations to pay for the administrative and technical aspects of the publication. Please help spread the free distribution of knowledge with any amount that you feel you want to give for this just cause.

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Live
encounters

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Everything has been said before, but since nobody listens we have to keep going back and beginning all over again - André Gide

Dear Readers,

In the midst of this fragmenting world where societies are held hostage by religious aficionados and deadly political intrigue there fortunately still exists an impassioned group of people, a kind of brains trust, who are in essence the conscience of humanity. They work tirelessly towards anchoring the truth and lifting the veil of deceit laid by corporations and governments that seek to profit from exploitation and war. Some representatives of this brains trust feature in this issue. **We thank Zuade Kaufman, Madhu Mehra, Shreerekha Subramanian, Chris Hedges, Terry McDonagh, Ivo Coelho, Natalie Wood, Budi Hernawan and Candess M Campbell** for sharing their knowledge with the readers of Live Encounters. Here is a poem by Rabindranath Tagore that sums it up.

*Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
Where knowledge is free
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls
Where words come out from the depth of truth
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
Where the mind is led forward by thee
Into ever-widening thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.*

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

**Mark Ulyseas
Publisher/Editor**

Cover: Chillies/design © Mark Ulyseas. Zuade Kaufman photo by Rosa Trieu

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Zuade Kaufman, Publisher of Truthdig in an exclusive interview with Mark Ulyseas

Kaufman is a former reporter for the Westside Weekly, a Los Angeles Times publication. She holds a master's degree in journalism from the University of Southern California and a bachelor's degree in film theory and criticism from the University of California at Santa Cruz and completed Stanford University's professional course in publishing. Kaufman's love of journalism and her deep-seated respect for the media resulted in her commitment to create Truthdig with co-founder and editor Robert Scheer.

www.truthdig.com



Taking stock of the recent anti-rape law in India Madhu Mehra

Mehra is a lawyer, a founding member and Executive Director of Partners for Law in Development, a resource group on women's rights in India. Her fields of expertise: CEDAW and international human rights law; feminist legal perspectives relating to women's rights: family, culture, sexuality and violence against women. Last 20 years, her work has spanned contexts in India, South Asia, Asia Pacific, in programming, training, research, and policy advocacy. She has engaged with the UN human rights system, through treaty body and special mechanisms and the UPR. www.cedawsouthasia.org



Women Writing Violence – The Novel and Radical Feminist Imaginaries Shreerekha Subramanian

Subramanian, Assistant Professor of Humanities, University of Houston-Clear Lake, teaches courses in humanities, literature, women's studies and cross-cultural studies and is the first recipient of Marilyn Miezkuc Professorship in Women's Studies in 2008. She finished her doctoral work in Comparative Literature at Rutgers University where she received awards for distinguished contribution to under-graduate education and teaching. She co-edited *Home and the World: South Asia in Transition* (2007) and has published chapters in several anthologies and also articles in academic journals. [Website](#)



The Crucifixion of Tomas Young Chris Hedges - This article was first published on Truthdig

Chris Hedges was a foreign correspondent for the New York Times and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Reporting, and his *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award in Nonfiction. Hedges is a senior fellow at the Nation Institute, a columnist for Truthdig, and the Anschutz Distinguished Fellow at Princeton University. He lives in Princeton, New Jersey.



Tree Music Terry McDonagh

Irish poet and dramatist, Terry McDonagh, taught creative writing at the University of Hamburg and was Drama Director at the Int. School Hamburg for 15 years. He now works freelance; has been writer in residence in Europe, Asia, Australia; published seven poetry collections, book of letters, prose and poetry for young people translated into Indonesian and German, distributed internationally by Syracuse Uni. Press; latest poetry collection *Ripple Effect* due for publication in May/June 2013, Arlen House; next children's story, *Michel the Merman*, illustrated by Marc Barnes (NZ) to be published in September 2013. He lives in Hamburg and Ireland. www.terry-mcdonagh.com



Ivo Coelho, priest, philosopher and Rector of Ratisbonne Monastery in an enlightening interview

Coelho earned his PhD in philosophy from the Gregorian University, Rome. He is Reader in Gnoseology and Metaphysics at Divyadaan: Salesian Institute of Philosophy, Nashik, India, and editor of Divyadaan: Journal of Philosophy and Education. Born in 1958 at Mumbai, he specialized in the hermeneutical thought of the Canadian philosopher, theologian and economist Bernard Lonergan. He is the author of *Hermeneutics and Method: The 'Universal Viewpoint'* in Bernard Lonergan and editor of *Brahman and Person: Essays* by Richard De Smet. <http://divyadaan.in>



The Children Who Die Too Soon Natalie Wood

Born in Birmingham, England, U.K., Natalie Wood began working in journalism a month prior to outbreak of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. She remained in regional Jewish journalism for over 20 years, leaving full-time writing to help run a family business and then completed a range of general office work. Wood and her husband, Brian Fink emigrated from Manchester to Israel in March 2010 and live in Karmiel, Galilee where she continues to work, concentrating on creative writing. She features in *Smith Magazine's* new *Six Word Memoirs On Jewish Life* and contributes to *Technorati*, *Blogcritics* and *Live Encounters* magazine. Her stories - www.perfectlywritefamilytales and journalism - www.alwayswriteagain



"He put electric shock on me": A glimpse of the persistent, widespread practice of torture in Papua Budi Hernawan

Budi Hernawan OFM is a Franciscan friar, a former director of the Office for Justice and Peace of the Catholic Church in Jayapura and a PhD scholar at the Regulatory Institutions Network, Australian National University. www.regnet.anu.edu.au



Assessing your Beliefs Candess M Campbell

Candess M. Campbell, PhD is an internationally known Intuitive Life Coach, Licensed Mental Health Counselor, Seminar leader, Hypnotherapist and Author. She specializes in assisting others to gain their own personal power and to live a life of abundance, happiness and joy. Early 2012 she will be releasing her book *12 Weeks to Self-Healing: Transforming Pain through Energy Medicine*. www.candesscampbell.com



Photo Gallery - Surfing in Bali Mark Ulyseas

These photographs are from a collection that I took with a small fixed lens camera while circumnavigating the island recording for posterity the here and now in words. www.coroflot.com/markulyseas



“You can chain me, you can torture me, you can even destroy this body, but you will never imprison my mind.” - Mahatma Gandhi

Zuade Kaufman

co-founder and publisher of [Truthdig](#)
in an exclusive interview with Mark Ulyseas

“The story of [Maria Altmann](#), which I brought to the L.A. Times and thus the media's attention after interviewing her at her home, was one I cared deeply about. Altmann was trying to get back several Gustav Klimt paintings that had been stolen from her family by the Nazis during World War II. After publicizing her plight and advocating on her behalf, Robert Scheer and I felt gratified when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Austrian National Museum must return the artworks to Altmann.

Whether large or small, the stories we covered in Our Times and Westside Weekly were important to our community. It was disappointing, therefore, that when the Tribune Company bought Times Mirror, including the L.A. Times, the new owner decided to stop publishing all of the local sections.

But from that major setback, other opportunities were born. I went back to school and got my Master of Arts in journalism at the University of Southern California.

In 2005, the year I graduated, Bob ([Robert Scheer](#)) and I launched Truthdig. We quickly discovered that the power of the Internet allows us to reach a broader audience than the geographically limited readership of the local newspaper section.

We’ve had more than 90 million unique visitors to our site till date.

Since launching, Truthdig has delivered thoughtful and provocative ideas from talented columnists and contributors including **Bob**, [Chris Hedges](#), [Gore Vidal](#), [Sam Harris](#) and [Amy Goodman](#). We strive to give a voice and a home to those whose opinions and ideas are often ignored by the corporate-owned media.”



Zuade Kaufman in Santa Monica outside the former offices of LA Times Westside offices where she used to work at Our Times and Westside Weekly. Photo by Rosa Trieu



My first print job was for the Los Angeles Times' Westside Weekly and Our Times hyperlocal editions. I began as a research assistant for Robert Scheer, then co-wrote stories, and after a couple of years, was asked to be a full-time reporter. We hit it off right away and made a great team. While working together, we realized that the ordinary person can often be victimized by government power, and also by government indifference. An example of one such realm was pedestrian safety, which we championed. The city bureaucracy was indifferent until someone was killed, but we had already been campaigning to get safety measures in place to prevent that.

Could you share with the readers a glimpse of your life and work?

Everyone can look back to his or her earlier life to help explain the present. I was the youngest of four, and being the baby in the family, I had to find my voice. Now I like to give voice to the powerless and represent the underrepresented. At Truthdig we often champion the underdog and shine a light on issues that may otherwise go unseen and unnoticed.

Journalism has always been a big part of my life. While growing up, my father subscribed to a lot of newspapers and magazines, and it was common for us to discuss current events at the dinner table. Afterward, we'd often watch the news together.

When I was 16 years old, I began volunteering at KCET, our local public broadcasting station. Later, the news production office created an internship position for me and I worked on two documentary series, "State of the City" and "Turning Points." KCET had a smart and dynamic staff, and we floated interesting documentary ideas, such as giving video cameras to gang members and then editing their footage together.

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We were able to get behind such nuts and bolts matters as owners' rights to keep their signs outside their businesses after new city signage code sought to homogenize the area.

We also addressed rent control legislation, living wages, and working conditions for hotel employees, among other issues.

The story of Maria Altmann, which I brought to the L.A. Times and thus the media's attention after interviewing her at her home, was one I cared deeply about. Altmann was trying to get back several

About a year after Truthdig started, we were the first to publish a piece by Kevin Tillman about his brother Pat Tillman, a former professional football player turned soldier whose cause of death during the war in Afghanistan was the subject of a major government cover-up. Kevin Tillman's story went viral, and was covered by every major media outlet including The Associated Press, BBC, The New York Times, The Washington Post, and Fox News. On CNN, Wolf Blitzer said that this important story had come out on this little website, and he walked over to his computer to show Truthdig to his viewers.

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We published Tillman's piece -- his call out to think for oneself and not be manipulated by the propaganda coming out of the Bush administration -- shortly before the 2006 midterm elections. Many observers speculated that it influenced the outcome of the election, a stirring victory for Democrats that resulted in them taking back control of the House and the Senate from the Republicans.

We've had other important stories by veterans such as **Ron Kovic** on the lasting wounds of war and by **Col. Ann Wright** shedding light on the rampant but little-discussed issue of rape in the military.

continued



Our lead columnist, Chris Hedges, is among the plaintiffs involved in a lawsuit against the Obama administration over the indefinite detention provision of the controversial National Defense Authorization Act. As he wrote when the first judges sided with the plaintiffs in the case: “None of us thought we would win. But every once in a while the gods smile on the damned.”

Could you share with the readers a glimpse of your life and work?(contd/-)

Recently, Truthdig published an open letter to former President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney by [Tomas Young](#), a veteran who was paralyzed in Iraq and is now under hospice care awaiting death. Young’s poignant and heart-wrenching “Last Letter” condemned the former top U.S. officials for taking the country into an unjust war. Within a day of this important piece going up on our site, news outlets from around the world had picked it up.

In addition to our pieces on the military, we’ve spoken truth to power on the recent financial meltdown, with Bob taking the lead on exposing the corruption of Wall Street bankers or, as he calls them, thieves who have robbed this country. We also provided in-depth coverage of Occupy Wall Street as it was unfolding and becoming a major movement in this country. Our lead columnist, Chris Hedges, is among the plaintiffs involved in a lawsuit against the Obama administration over the indefinite detention provision of the controversial National Defense Authorization Act. As he wrote when the first judges sided with the plaintiffs in the case: “None of us thought we would win. But every once in a while the gods smile on the damned.”

When we embark on such reporting, we often don’t know where it will lead us. For me, that path is exciting. When I’m not working at Truthdig, I still enjoy a good journey. Maybe that’s something I learned from riding my horses. I’ve always enjoyed an adventure whether skiing, scuba diving, racing motorcycles, skydiving or chasing compelling stories at Truthdig.

I have enjoyed dedicating much of my life to giving a voice to the voiceless and empowering those without power. Through Truthdig, I hope to continue to provide coverage that brings awareness and acts as a vehicle for positive change.

Why did you start Truthdig with Robert Scheer and what do you hope to achieve with it? And what is the mission statement?

Bob and I had worked together at the Westside Weekly and Our Times sections of the Los Angeles Times. Our editions were doing well for the paper, but when the Tribune Company bought the L.A. Times, it decided to get rid of all the community news sections. Bob and I had a good relationship and we wanted to keep working together. At first we thought we’d try to keep working in print, and so we looked into buying some local papers, or creating our own. I had a business plan drawn up to do a print publication, but given the latest trends, the numbers didn’t pan out. We could tell newspapers were in trouble.

One of Truthdig’s signature elements is our “digs,” in-depth reports led by experts in their fields that focus on a variety of contemporary topics. Past digs have centered on the Occupy movement, the financial crisis and the forgotten wounded veterans of the Iraq War. The latter one was recently updated to include the open letter from dying veteran Tomas Young, a piece that has since been translated into multiple languages.

Bob and I had worked on stories that meant something to us and to our community. As we were figuring out our next move, that is when I decided to go back to school and get a master’s degree in journalism.

I went to the University of Southern California, and though my emphasis was in print, I was part of the Annenberg School’s new convergence program. There I learned that going forward, print, broadcasting and online would be interdependent and it was essential that I learned the ins and outs of all three.

In class I learned basic HTML and built my first website. A visiting professor, Susie Gardner, along with Travis Smith of Hop Studios became the website developers for Truthdig. We launched the site in 2005, the year I graduated.

When we decided to start an Internet publication, we thought it best to go broad and appeal to a worldwide audience. We wanted to do work that mattered. **At Truthdig, we aim to go beneath the headlines and look at pivotal subjects in depth.** We cover a variety of topics that often go underreported, or ignored completely, by traditional mainstream media outlets. **We strive to provide accurate reporting along with thoughtful and insightful analysis and commentary from a bevy of talented columnists and contributors whose viewpoints are scarce in corporate owned media.** In addition to our original reports, our site features an engaging mix of aggregated content culled by our editors to keep our readers well informed about the news of the day.

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Additionally, we’ve shown we’re not afraid to challenge authority and power, something best exemplified by the fact that our columnist Chris Hedges is currently suing President Obama.

Bob and I believe that Chris Hedges is the most indispensable journalist of our time. He’s a moral conscience for us all, and he’s a master at reporting and writing a story. When Chris was too hot for The New York Times to handle, he found a home at Truthdig where he’s developed a huge following.

That triumphant transition speaks volumes about our site.

continued



Truthdig was won many prestigious awards for its work, including from the Society of Professional Journalists and the L.A. Press Club. **We just won a 2013 Webby Award for best political website. The Webbys honor outstanding achievement on the Internet,** and we are proud to have been recognized again after winning several in the past, especially because this latest time we were competing in an election year and the other nominees included sites that have much bigger staffs and budgets than ours.

In your opinion where does Truthdig stand in the crowded US media bazaar where sensationalism, puerile political alignments and skewered news appear to be the rule rather than the exception?

Boring as it may sound, we are determined to maintain the highest standards of traditional journalism. That's why when we launched, we brought on top copy editors, like **Thomas Caswell**, and writers, like former city and political editor **Bill Boyarsky**, from the Los Angeles Times. I hired these people for their professional competency. When it comes to fact checking, fairness and accuracy, they're the best. Our instruction to them was to maintain the same high standards they worked under at the Los Angeles Times.

But at the same time, we want to use the energy and reach of the Internet, which is inherently a global platform. We want to vigorously address the everyday problems that traditional media have not fully covered. Examples of our reporting on such vital matters include Bob's work on the economy and the reasons for the economic crisis, Chris Hedges' contributions on U.S. domestic and foreign policy, and Bill Boyarsky's columns analyzing politics. These pieces are indicative of our efforts to produce the kind of journalism a democracy needs for its survival.

As a source of independent journalism, Truthdig is not beholden to the corporate structure that has poisoned much of today's media. That pollution has led many outlets to put more of a premium on drawing high ratings and page views than covering actual news. At Truthdig, you won't find those sensationalistic, eyeball-grabbing stories that many sites use just to spike their traffic.

Although we consider our site to be progressive in nature, we are proud to feature voices that espouse a variety of political positions, from liberal to libertarian. We tend to focus on hard news topics such as the economy, social justice and politics, but we also publish cartoons and a robust arts and culture section with book reviews, film features and interviews with provocative people in the entertainment industry.

Truthdig has won many prestigious awards for its work, including from the Society of Professional Journalists and the L.A. Press Club. We just won a 2013 Webby Award for best political website. The Webbys honor outstanding achievement on the Internet, and we are proud to have been recognized again after winning several in the past, especially because this latest time we were competing in an election year and the other nominees included sites that have much bigger staffs and budgets than ours. We are a small team, but we like to think we make up for that by being deeply passionate and tenacious.

Our contributors thoroughly report their stories, but if there is an injustice being done, we will not cloak ourselves in journalistic neutrality. We are upfront about being a progressive-minded site. For me, that means we're not interested in upholding the status quo, but rather advocating for political, economic and social advancements. To do so, we uncover wrongful acts, expose hypocrisy and give voice to the otherwise unheard. We don't consider passion on the part of our writers to be an enemy of accuracy.

Is it possible for a publication like yours to maintain coherent objectivity to current affairs and social issues without being contaminated by the 'agendas' of contributors?

Our team of experienced copy editors come from established news outlets like the Los Angeles Times, where fact checking and fairness are the normal practices. We select our contributors because they are experts on a particular subject matter and have demonstrated a responsible approach to newsgathering. We guard against the prospect of contamination through our rigorous standards and meticulous editorial processes.

We don't consider passion on the part of our writers to be an enemy of accuracy.

On the contrary, as our name suggests, we bring people energetic reports that drill beneath the headlines for a truth that is often elusive but nonetheless critical to the health of society. A journalist's first obligation to the public, after all, is to dispense accurate and reliable information—to tell the truth—and that's what we do.

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I have my own opinions, but I never tell our reporters and contributors how to cover stories, nor do I tell our editors how they should alter or present them. We do not have hidden agendas. Ulterior motives and truth telling are not compatible.

Are people reading less and listening more to the news?

No, not at all. In fact **Pew's 2013 State of the News Media** report found that online was the only category of news that showed growth in 2012, with television and radio news consumption dropping. The survey revealed that roughly 39 percent of people in the U.S. turned to their computers or mobile devices for their news.

If you include all digital news sources, that figure rises to about 50 percent, which is a hair below the proportion who get their news from television. Mobile devices in particular have shown rapid growth.

continued



We can tell from our internal statistics that when we post the work of a Chris Hedges or a Tomas Young, readers stay with those articles through several jumps and they respond by passing them on to others. The data is quite encouraging that when the writing is engaging and relevant, people will read with enthusiasm. However, we also respect other forms of communication and that's why we have an A/V Booth. (We frequently link to Jon Stewart and others whom we think are doing an excellent job.).

Are people reading less and listening more to the news? *(contd/-)*

To stay ahead of that trend, Truthdig recently developed a mobile app - m.truthdig.com - so readers can better enjoy our work while on their smartphones.

We believe the Internet can be a great tool for meaningful mass education because it provides ready access to significant documents, international reporting, congressional hearings—a vast electronic library of information.

Our job, and the philosophy of our signature dig, are to arouse the curiosity of our readers and acquaint them with additional resources so they can explore matters further on their own.

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Have the scales tipped in favor of the electronic media? And is the day of reckoning for print media around the corner?

According to the Pew Research Center's 2013 State of the News Media report, the newspaper industry is only a bit more than half of the size it once was.

Broadcasters have also been experiencing cutbacks for years. As the audience for these media outlets declines, more and more people are flocking to online and digital sources to get their news.

With the dramatic change in the media landscape, we're seeing newspapers experimenting with, and in a few cases succeeding at, ways to turn a profit. Newspapers may be struggling, but they still publish important stories and thus play a crucial role in the field. Much of what made print such a vital news medium in the past, can now be found online at sites such as Truthdig. We may not be cutting down trees to deliver our stories, but they have been crafted with the same integrity and intelligence that have always marked the finest journalism.

The trouble with Internet advertising is that companies such as Google and Facebook are able to insert themselves between those who pay for advertising and those who produce the content that attracts the audience. This is problematic because the middlemen—in this instance, Google and Facebook—benefit the most from the arrangement. Those who create the content, on the other hand, get pennies on the dollar from the advertisers compared with those who serve up the ads.

Do advertisers select media based on the political profile of the publication?

Unless they're specifically political in nature, advertisers are not concerned with the politics of a website. Instead, they're looking at the potential of a reader to buy their product. When they place ads on websites or in newsletters, they're looking at the profiles of the readers. They want to know such information as average ages, incomes, hobbies and buying habits. Of course if they are promoting a political campaign or a ballot measure, then they'll look at the outlet's politics and weigh the likelihood that its particular audience will support their candidate or their cause.

Websites collect this data about their readership for advertisers. Right now at Truthdig, we have a poll running in which participants can win an iPhone and iPad. We get information about the survey takers that they provide in a question and answer format. We don't mine for their personal information ourselves and we always respect the privacy of our readers.

When it comes to ad placement on Truthdig, we maintain what was traditionally called the invisible wall in news organizations. In essence, our advertising business side works completely separately from our editorial side (unless it is in regard to promoting our site or its events).

Each ad is clearly marked as so and we don't endorse what we advertise, of course. We will run an ad on our site as long as it does not offend our sensibilities or those of our readers.

As a result of our advertising arrangement, for the most part we don't have control over what spots pop on our site. Most advertisements are served up by networks—like GoogleAds, for example, which is ubiquitous on the Internet because it's so easy to use—that automatically feed them to sites based on matching words in the content of their copy. As a news site, we feature all kinds of stories that can be highly critical of an issue, person or entity. Because of that, ads sometimes appear on our site that are inappropriate for our audience. When we catch those, we can block them. However, sometimes we don't see them and then it can be problematic, especially when they offend and upset our readers. Other than the ability to ban an ad, we generally don't select what pops up on our site.

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continued



A poll in 2000, for example, showed that 41 percent of journalists admitted to censoring themselves, whether it was to avoid a complex story or to make their organization look better. Speaking of the latter, one critical problem related to censorship is the fact that most of the media is corporately owned. Some editors at such outlets will purposely not run a story if they think it will reflect poorly on their employer or its parent company.

Does an insidious form of censorship exist in the USA? Or is the media truly free of such encumbrances? And what role does media play in the governance of the country?

A hallmark of democracy is a vibrant and free press. In America, the First Amendment to our constitution helps assure us that we have one. There are some restrictions, of course, but the government in the U.S. simply doesn't have the power to censor the media, unlike in some other countries.

The role of the press in America has been to act as the so-called Fourth Estate. Under this notion, the press is considered an essential watchdog that should operate independently of our three branches of government, the Executive, the Judicial and the Legislative. In addition, the press serves to educate the public about the political process and what is going on domestically and internationally.

That's not to say the government doesn't try to control what information the media receives—you see that all that time in press conferences, briefings and releases—but that's different from officials looking over the shoulder of a journalist at everything he or she publishes and warning, "No, you can't print or air this, or we'll arrest you."

That also doesn't mean there aren't some blatant attempts to censor the media. One recent example that comes to mind began under the administration of President George H.W. Bush. In that instance, the Pentagon prohibited the media from publishing and airing images of U.S. soldiers' coffins returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The main problem in this country is one of self-censorship — the media restricting itself in pursuit of ratings and profit.

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You likely won't see, for example, NBC broadcasting news stories that make owner General Electric look bad, or ABC running anything negative about Disney. In fact, one of the big reasons cited in the self-censorship study was "market pressures," that is to say a story was viewed as too boring or too complicated to cover. So although government censorship doesn't exist here as it does in some other countries, corporate media interests exert another type of undue influence.

And then, of course, there is the emphasis on profit, which dictates that stories need to grab the audience's attention and hold it for better ratings. That ensures that important stories that aren't deemed "interesting" by an editor or producer will be ignored in favor of ones that are frivolous but seen as captivating. In fact, one of the big reasons cited in the self-censorship study was "market pressures," that is to say a story was viewed as too boring or too complicated to cover.

So although government censorship doesn't exist here as it does in some other countries, corporate media interests exert another type of undue influence.

What is your message to aspiring journalists?

It will be a rocky career path for the foreseeable future, but if you approach it with passion, it can be very rewarding.



Truthdig office. Photo by Rosa Trieu



Photographs in collage courtesy Google. Pic of Madhu Mehra © Madhu Mehra

Taking stock of the recent anti-rape law in India

Madhu Mehra



The Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2013, more popularly called the anti-rape bill, is now law. The outrage following the homicidal gang rape in Delhi unleashed events that lent force to the longstanding demand by the women's movement for comprehensive reform of laws relating to sexual assault. These demands were bolstered by the recommendations of the high level committee, headed by retired Justice Verma, that called for reform of criminal laws, police reforms, prevention and education interventions to effectively tackle impunity for sexual violence. With the new bill passed by the parliament and signed by the president, the law stands substantially changed.

This article takes stock of the ways in which the new amendments re-framed sexual offences in the law, their significance and the challenges that remain. While being far from comprehensive, these changes substantially transform the law relating to sexual offences. A few examples below contextualise the significance.

- The definition of rape in the penal code is now expanded beyond penile vaginal penetration, to include all forms of non-consensual penetrative sexual acts by men on women. Moving away from a patriarchal framing of the offence, the offence responds more accurately to how women experience penetrative sexual assault. The law has historically privileged penile penetration of the vagina, distinguishing it from penile-anus or penile-mouth penetration. This distinction served to protect purity of male lineage, and simultaneously, stigmatise non-penile vaginal intercourse, labeled as 'unnatural' carnal intercourse under section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. This is declared an offence not because of the existence of force, but simply because it was deemed 'against the order of nature', serving to criminalise homosexuality (currently the constitutionality of this provision is under consideration of the Supreme Court of India). The new definition of rape breaks that binary between natural and unnatural penetrative sex as far as men and women are concerned, punishing all forced penetrative sex by men on women. However, since the law specifies that the victims of rape to be women only, it excludes male, transgender and other victims of penetrative sexual violence from the scope of legal redress – thus leaving undisturbed, the stigma attached to homosexuality.
- The new amendment defines 'consent', to mean an unequivocal agreement to engage in a particular sexual act; clarifying further, that the absence of resistance will not imply consent. Non-consent is a key ingredient for commission of the offence of rape. The definition of consent therefore is key to the outcome of a rape trial, and has been interpreted systemically to degrade

and discredit victims of rape. Studies show how frequently rape judgments conclude that the sex was consensual, based on various factors, including that: the victim was not a virgin, that there were no injuries to show that she put up a stiff resistance, that the victim was 'habitual to sex', that the victim willingly took a ride with or accompanied the accused, that she was acquainted with one of the accused, that she mingled with male friends and so on. Rather than focus on the conduct and actions of the accused, rape trials have historically put the rape survivor under moral scrutiny. An amendment to the Indian Evidence Act in 2003 barred the use of previous sexual history of the victim to discredit the survivor's testimony in rape trials. Despite this change, sexual history, real or perceived, has continued to inform every step of the rape prosecution to the survivor's detriment. Against this backdrop, introduction of a clear definition of consent assumes immense importance. The amendment clearly places upon the accused, an obligation to show that an agreement to the sex act in question was obtained, striking at the hostile focus on the survivor's conduct.

- Another aspect to consent is the age set by the law when it recognises consent to be valid to the making or the unmaking of an offence. The age below which consent is irrelevant in law sets the benchmark for 'statutory rape', or the age below which the person is deemed to lack legal capacity to consent to the act. This serves to protect children from sexual acts, forced or otherwise, to secure them against abuse when they lack the capacity to negotiate or understand the nature and consequences of the actions. The cut off age, whatever it be is inevitably arbitrary, so its often recommended that the law nuance this cut off, to recognize consent between young persons of proximate age group, so as to not taint them with criminality for actions that are consensual; not forced, abusive or violent. In the course of debates leading to the amendment, women's groups and indeed, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights argued for restoring the age of statutory rape at 16 years, as the law did until the recent enactment of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, in May 2012. The amendment unfortunately retains the age of statutory rape at 18 years, rejecting the proposal to restore it to 16 years that was the law in the past. In doing so, the law collapses all legal minors as children, when the in fact, minors as a category includes infants, children and young persons, thus undermining the 'best interests' of young persons, who need to be protected from sexual harm and parental retribution alike. In the context of India, parental and community policing of inter-caste and inter-community relationships and marriages is so rampant, even in relation to adult offspring, that the law must not be blind to its indirect usage as a tool for retribution.

New offences such as forced disrobing, stalking, voyeurism and acid attacks have been introduced, each addressing a dangerous trend that is alarmingly on the rise. Public stripping and parading of women has been a common way of 'punishing' transgressions by women, real or perceived, in rural contexts, now increasingly reported in metros too. Acid attacks likewise are on the rise, with devastating and sometimes fatal consequences.

- A gradation of different kinds of sexual offences has been introduced to plug the legal vacuum that existed – with nothing in-between rape and the trivial offence of 'outraging' the modesty of a woman. New offences such as forced disrobing, stalking, voyeurism and acid attacks have been introduced, each addressing a dangerous trend that is alarmingly on the rise. Public stripping and parading of women has been a common way of 'punishing' transgressions by women, real or perceived, in rural contexts, now increasingly reported in metros too. Acid attacks likewise are on the rise, with devastating and sometimes fatal consequences. Reportedly perpetrated by jilted lovers, they are also a popular threat used by vigilante groups to enforce dictats against women's dress and mobility. Voyeurism makes punishable the watching, photographing or disseminating images of women in undress or when engaging in private acts. And finally, the persistent following or monitoring of women, physically or electronically, to foster personal interaction despite her disinterest is now punishable under stalking. These new offences plug longstanding gaps in legal protection against sexual intimidation and harm to women.

- Marital rape was criminalized in the unamended penal code only when the couple was 'judicially' separated (under a judicial order), not otherwise, for a maximum sentence of 2 years. The law has now expanded criminalization of marital rape to all cases of separation, whether under judicial order or otherwise, so long as the spouses are living separately. The sentence has been increased substantially, with a mandatory minimum of 2 years extendable to 7 years.

- The amendments have strengthened accountability of the police and public servants for acts of omission and commission in respect of sexual offences. Under the amended law, there is a minimum mandatory sentence of 6 months for dereliction of duty by public servants, for neglecting to act as required by the law, or disobeying the law to the detriment of a woman. The amendment also clarifies that no prior sanction is required from the government for prosecuting public servants for sexual offences. These changes provide a strong deterrent against police dereliction, providing tools to hold the police accountable for its actions and inaction. However, the amendment falls short of dispelling the requirement of prior sanction for prosecuting members of the security forces for similar crimes committed, although the Verma Committee recommended this.

- Justice for sexual offences under the law has thus far been limited to punitive redress. The amendment transforms this approach, introducing for the first time the beginnings of reparative justice. The amendments stipulate imposition of fine that may go towards the survivor, as well as compensation for injuries to the survivor from the legal aid board. In addition, it mandates all public

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- and private health facilities to provide immediate free treatment to the victims of sexual violence and acid attack, with penalties for refusal to provide such treatment.

What sets this moment apart from the three decades of uphill advocacy by women's groups for law reform, was the ownership and endorsement of the cause by a wide cross section of society in the aftermath of the Delhi rape case. From a concern limited to the women's constituency, the call to end impunity for sexual violence was echoed across progressive groups, youth movements and ordinary civil society.

The Justice Verma Committee recommendations set out the blue print for other changes that must follow the legislative reform, advancing the agenda to a larger one for prevention and institutional change. In terms of the legislative gains, legal procedure and interpretation will dilute and pull back the advances through processes of implementation.

The focus on implementation therefore must be a continuing one. It requires the establishment of support services to enable survivors to journey through the legal system with dignity and confidence. It also requires setting up monitoring processes that track implementation and invoke the accountability provisions available. In a larger environment of backlash, and increasing violence against women, the struggle involves working with implementation as well as prioritizing changes beyond the law that address sexism, masculinity and attitudes towards sexuality that render some women more vulnerable and less likely to secure redress.



Photographs in collage courtesy Google.



Shreerekha Subramanian

author **Women Writing Violence**

The Novel and Radical Feminist Imaginaries

in conversation with Mark Ulyseas

Why did you write this book?

Twentieth century has been a century of grand-scale massacre and violence at its most extreme. In the wake of September 11, 2001, my first semester as a graduate student at Rutgers University, as I underwent my studies on violence in the nineteenth century novel, I was immersed in thinking about absence. **What happens to the voice of the absent? The dispossessed? The disenfranchised? Perhaps my book is about 'hauntings' in general.**

For people of the global south, and women in general, these are not new questions. However for me, I was interested in meditating on absence and the way that the absent also exert their voice and agency upon communities of the living. For women, staking a place at the center while being quarantined at the margins is an age-old habit that somehow, I might have made into an episteme toward writing my book.

I wrote this book to think through and arrive at the radical potential coded in contemporary novels from the Americas and South Asia. I wished to make transnational connections that brings together and house disparate texts under one roof of a liminal community of both the living and the dead. And I wished to center the questions raised by those who have been divested of all the rights putatively promised to human beings in many nations of the world today – right to nourishment, shelter, safety, and life.

I wished to also push against the academic industrial complex which remains still very Eurocentric and center the theorizations and ideations posed by Toni Morrison to tether my argument. Instead of continental philosophy, I excavated Morrison's 1997 novel, *Paradise*, for a theoretical paradigm that brings together very disparate women's worlds together under an African-American literary imaginary.

What is arresting to me about Morrison is her decades-long project to write into the lacunae of normative American historiography – she has imagined and constructed a corpus of African American literature that spans centuries and raises questions on the way we imagine race, gender, America, and our own humanity. I find her impulse revolutionary and very illuminating for thinking about the gendered literary landscape of the global south.



The Novel and Radical Feminist Imaginaries

Shreerekha Subramanian

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Feminism births solidarities across borders. It is also an acknowledgment of the years of servitude, bondage, secondary citizenship, subalternity in which women have been historically placed. Feminism is further an acknowledgment and understanding of the brilliant contributions made by women and other marginalized groups to history, literature, sciences, and the arts, or human culture at large.

What is feminism and can it progress within the parameters of a present day social structure that continues to view women as receptacles for the male libido and as beasts of burden?

Feminism is an ongoing struggle of self-expression and an intellectual critique of existing power structures. It has been said in second wave feminism that women are equal and different, equal and deserving, equal and meriting consideration where and when it is found necessary to do so.

Thus, it is a project of epistemological redefinition, a tripartite process of self-reflexive retrospection, interrogation of the present, and contemplation toward the future.

Feminism is a critique of existing power structures – visible and invisible bodies that regulate who we are, how we dress, how we act, who we love, who we marry, how we think and live.

Feminism is “a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression” as the feminist intellectual activist, bell hooks puts it.

Feminism offers the tools to resist subjugation in a variety of forms, helps us recognize structures of power, have a sense of consciousness without which we are like cattle being led to the slaughter-house.

Feminism births solidarities across borders. It is also an acknowledgment of the years of servitude, bondage, secondary citizenship, subalternity in which women have been historically placed. Feminism is further an acknowledgment and understanding of the brilliant contributions made by women and other marginalized groups to history, literature, sciences, and the arts, or human culture at large.

Feminism has always been in a state of progress as an intellectual tool to navigate through the patriarchal machinery of law and society. I think grassroots activism along with intellectual labor of the writer, thinker, and theoretician has to forge ahead in order to bring radical transformations in accepted axioms and universal habits of misogyny.

Many like to say that we live in post-race or post-feminist hyper-modern world where all these struggles have become passé but every so often, with one more tragedy, whether it is the gang rape of a young woman in a bus in Delhi or shooting of a girl-activist in Pakistan or daily killings of women by their partners in North America, it seems like the discussions are rekindled on what is wrong, what can we do, along with a lot of hand-wringing and lip service.

The novels from the Americas reflect on violence against marginalized people as a public spectacle instrumentalized and sanctioned by law. The South Asian novels direct our attention to the more intimate confines of the domestic sphere, where law oppresses the dispossessed through the filial figure of the patriarch. Read together, these disparate texts alert us to the importance of the novel as a discourse of resistance to iniquity, as a theory of recovery from human loss.

It is about time to engage in some more serious political and ideological negotiations that involves men, women, children and all the people along the sexual spectrum who can discuss what it means to be a subject in the twenty-first century. In what ways can we re-imagine our own political and social moorings in order to make room for everyone to simply be?

Could you kindly give us a detailed overview of your book?

In my monograph, I focus on late twentieth century novels by women, exploring the emergence of an alternative epistemology of community, survival, and dignity in opposition to politics of statist majoritarian rule.

The purpose of my writing is to resist right wing nationalism and patriarchal ideologies. As a comparatist, my idea was to build a bridge between literatures and theories of the global south, and thus I concentrated on women’s literary productions in the Caribbean, African-American and South Asian traditions of modern novel-writing.

My project poses the following elementary question: how do we read the novel as a record of the ways in which communities recuperate from violence? How is resistance to violence possible through the act of narration? My book project focuses on select contemporary novels in which women characters resist violence and redefine notions of community by imagining bonds with the dead, the exiled, and the disempowered. The inscription of state and family on women’s bodies is a prominent theme in the textual analysis framed by this study. It draws within its scope novels from the Americas and South Asia that explicitly address violence committed in the name of territoriality, religious orthodoxy, and racial supremacy.

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My project emphasizes remembering, recalling, and retelling stories of lost lives as a powerful mode of resistance and dwells on the place of the imagined communities with the dead in these texts. The critical focus is on ingenious ways in which women characters in novels restore dignity and agency to their kin and beloved by experimenting with voice and narrative techniques within the novel. The resilience of the women characters is a transcendent force which makes it possible to resist the domestic patriarch as well as injustices perpetrated in the name of law and state.

continued

The woman writer, put most clearly, in these contexts of difference and struggle, is obliged to break free and imagine in the wilderness of absolute possibility. While telling the truth can be one solid route for the authentic writer, it becomes even more profound to imagine alternatives that refuse to subscribe to the law that is omnipresent and pervasive.

What is the role of the woman writer?

I don't think the role of the woman writer is anything different than that of the writer. A woman can and ought to have the right to write anything she damn well pleases!

However the question of 'role' raises contexts of materiality in that it is raised because the woman writer still exists, especially when conscious of the project of ideological realignments, at the margins of normative discourse and it becomes imperative to impart a sense of social justice in the fabric of the creative universe.

For example, while many might argue that the world of fiction and poetics is apart from the world of politics, dismissing it as something vulgar and banal, political leanings reveal themselves in the literary imagination that is produced, most clearly revealed in the limitations of this imagination. The woman writer, put most clearly, in these contexts of difference and struggle, is obliged to break free and imagine in the wilderness of absolute possibility. While telling the truth can be one solid route for the authentic writer, it becomes even more profound to imagine alternatives that refuse to subscribe to the law that is omnipresent and pervasive.

Can a woman writer, through her writing, break free from the confines of an encapsulated society that demands a hideous form of obedience to man, and impact the lives of other women?

Yes. That is precisely what the woman writer has been doing for a few millennia now, at least since patriarchy became the universal principle. While many a female pen was perhaps exercised to valorize the phallus, we have a thriving tradition - especially marked by the Tamil akam/puram poets of the second century, Appar, Sundarar and Campantar of the sixth century and Virasaivites and bhakts - of transgression and writing from the womb.

Mahadeviyakka, the radical female saint of this remarkable Kannada tradition haunts me – when addressing Siva, or better yet, she is always addressing him, her *“Lord, white as jasmine,” she sings, “Take these husbands who die,/ decay, and feed them/ to your kitchen fires!”*

I love the iconicity and radicality of the sentiment which can be read in a deeply conservative sense as well – but for a woman in the twelfth century to speak of dismissing husbands to the fire certainly is prescient considering the deep phallogocentric Indian order that has kept a thriving intimacy between dismissed women and fire.

Part of writing is to unearth this burial and see the woman in her fullness. Perhaps this is a bit too frightening for the average reader, but for women, I believe, the act of writing is always an act against power, writing to resist, writing to connect, writing to exist, writing to 'right' the iniquities of the everyday.

Actually the story form always appealed to me because it is subversive. Each of us can read the story very differently, and it is something I have practiced from a very early age, perhaps honing my desire to see the world differently, or from less practiced eyes. To me, the many figures who uphold patriarchy in mainstream culture, such as Sita or Sati, have always had a radical potential that has been purposefully buried.

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What are you working on now?

I am traveling to India after a gap of ten years this summer. I will visit family and a whole new generation of people I have yet to meet for the first time. I am hoping I will also meet ideas for the next book.

I have also been sitting on a novel manuscript for well over a decade now that I might try to resuscitate. My first love has been poetry. At some point, I would like to gather some of these poems written over the last two decades and put together a slender volume of my poetry.

What is your message to the women readers of Live Encounters?

We have been interpellated in the simulacrum of media in ways that are completely confining. In many ways, whether it is North American reality television or the same from places in Asia or Africa, what we have is a reification of the neo-liberal late capitalist mode of production. Television serials often emphasize and order a normative femininity that pits women against one another within circles of kinship and power.

Critical reading and thinking skills are imperative in this context of a vanishing present where the habit of reading is fast disappearing. Whether it is the visual text of an art object, media product, a magazine, journal or a book, it is crucial to continue to read and do so with a mix of doubt, curiosity, and comprehension.

In fact, as Arundhati Roy cautions us in her online freely distributed film, “We,” unless we read and recognize our history, complicity, and empower ourselves with constant reading, we are doomed to failure. Read furiously, adamantly, and vigorously! Read your way into everything! When doors close, open books!



The Crucifixion of Tomas Young

This article was first published on [Truthdig](#)

Young will die for our sins. He will die for a war that should never have been fought. He will die for the lies of politicians. He will die for war profiteers. He will die for the careers of generals. He will die for a cheerleader press. He will die for a complacent public that made war possible. He bore all this upon his body. He was crucified. And there are hundreds of thousands of other crucified bodies like his in Baghdad and Kandahar and Peshawar and Walter Reed medical center. Mangled bodies and corpses, broken dreams, unending grief, betrayal, corporate profit, these are the true products of war. Tomas Young is the face of war they do not want you to see.

Pic of Tomas Young © Claudia Cuellar



“After the anoxic brain injury in 2008 [a complication that Young suffered] I lost a lot of dexterity and strength in my upper body. So I wouldn’t be able to shoot myself or even open the pill bottle to give myself an over-dose. The only way I could think of doing it was to have Claudia open the pill bottle for me, but I didn’t want her implicated.”

KANSAS CITY, Mo.—I flew to Kansas City last week to see Tomas Young. Young was paralyzed in Iraq in 2004. He is now receiving hospice care at his home. I knew him by reputation and the movie documentary “Body of War.” He was one of the first veterans to publicly oppose the war in Iraq. He fought as long and as hard as he could against the war that crippled him, until his physical deterioration caught up with him.

“I had been toying with the idea of suicide for a long time because I had become helpless,” he told me in his small house on the Kansas City outskirts where he intends to die. “I couldn’t dress myself. People have to help me with the most rudimentary of things. I decided I did not want to go through life like that anymore. The pain, the frustration. ...”

He stopped abruptly and called his wife. “Claudia, can I get some water?” She opened a bottle of water, took a swig so it would not spill when he sipped and handed it to him.

“I felt at the end of my rope,” the 33-year-old Army veteran went on. “I made the decision to go on hospice care, to stop feeding and fade away. This way, instead of committing the conventional suicide and I am out of the picture, people have a way to stop by or call and say their goodbyes. I felt this was a fairer way to treat people than to just go out with a note. After the anoxic brain injury in 2008 [a complication that Young suffered] I lost a lot of dexterity and strength in my upper body. So I wouldn’t be able to shoot myself or even open the pill bottle to give myself an overdose. The only way I could think of doing it was to have Claudia open the pill bottle for me, but I didn’t want her implicated.”

“After you made that decision how did you feel?” I asked.

“I felt relieved,” he answered. “I finally saw an end to this four-and-a-half-year fight. If I were in the same condition I was in during the filming of ‘Body of War,’ in a manual chair, able to feed and dress myself and transfer from my bed to the wheelchair, you and I would not be having this discussion. I can’t even watch the movie anymore because it makes me sad to see how I was, compared to how I am. ... Viewing the deterioration, I decided it was best to go out now rather than regress more.”

Young will die for our sins. He will die for a war that should never have been fought. He will die for the lies of politicians. He will die for war profiteers. He will die for the careers of generals. He will die for a cheerleader press. He will die for a complacent public that made war possible. He bore all this upon his body. He was crucified. And there are hundreds of thousands of other crucified bodies like his in Baghdad and Kandahar and Peshawar and Walter Reed medical center. Mangled bodies and corpses, broken dreams, unending grief, betrayal, corporate profit, these are the true products of war. Tomas Young is the face of war they do not want you to see.

On April 4, 2004, Young was crammed into the back of a two-and-a-half-ton Army truck with 20 other soldiers in Sadr City, Iraq. Insurgents opened fire on the truck from above. “It was like shooting ducks in a barrel,” he said. A bullet from an AK-47 severed his spinal column. A second bullet shattered his knee. At first he did not know he had been shot. He felt woozy. He tried to pick up his M16. He couldn’t lift his rifle from the truck bed. That was when he knew something was terribly wrong.

“I tried to say ‘I’m going to be paralyzed, someone shoot me right now,’ but there was only a hoarse whisper that came out because my lungs had collapsed,” he said. “I knew the damage. I wanted to be taken out of my misery.”

His squad leader, Staff Sgt. Robert Miltenberger, bent over and told him he would be all right. A few years later Young would see a clip of Miltenberger weeping as he recounted the story of how he had lied to Young.

“I tried to contact him,” said Young, whose long red hair and flowing beard make him look like a biblical prophet. “I can’t find him. I want to tell him it is OK.”

Young had been in Iraq five days. It was his first deployment. After being wounded he was sent to an Army hospital in Kuwait, and although his legs, now useless, lay straight in front of him he felt as if he was still sitting cross-legged on the floor of the truck. That sensation lasted for about three weeks. It was an odd and painful initiation into his life as a paraplegic. His body, from then on, would play tricks on him.

He was transferred from Kuwait to the U.S. military hospital at Landstuhl, Germany, and then to Walter Reed, in Washington, D.C. He asked if he could meet Ralph Nader, and Nader visited him in the hospital with Phil Donahue. Donahue, who had been fired by MSNBC a year earlier for speaking out against the war, would go on, with Ellen Spiro, to make the 2007 film “Body of War,” a brutally honest account of Young’s daily struggle with his physical and emotional scars of war.

In the documentary, he suffers dizzy spells that force him to lower his head into his hands. He wears frozen gel inserts in a cooling jacket because he cannot control his body temperature. He struggles to find a solution to his erectile dysfunction. He downs fistfuls of medications—carbamazepine, for nerve pain; coumadin, a blood thinner; tizanidine, an anti-spasm medication; gabapentin, another nerve pain medication, bupropion, an antidepressant; omeprazole, for morning nausea; and morphine. His mother has to insert a catheter into his penis. He joins Cindy Sheehan at Camp Casey in Crawford, Texas, to protest with Iraq Veterans Against the War.

His first wife leaves him.

continued

“I will miss most in my life is my wife. I want to spend a little more time with her. I want to spend a full year with someone without the problems that plagued my previous [marriage]. I don’t know how long it will take when I stop eating. If it takes too long I may take steps to quicken my departure. I have saved a bottle of liquid morphine. I can down that at one time with all my sleeping medication.”

“You know, you see a guy who’s paralyzed and in a wheelchair and you think he’s just in a wheel-chair,” he says in “Body of War.” “You don’t think about the, you know, the stuff inside that’s paralyzed. I can’t cough because my stomach muscles are paralyzed, so I can’t work up the full coughing energy. I’m more susceptible to urinary tract infections, and there’s a great big erection sidebar to this whole story.”

In early March 2008 a blood clot in his right arm—the arm that bears a color tattoo of a character from Maurice Sendak’s “Where the Wild Things Are”—caused his arm to swell. He was taken to the Kansas City Veterans Affairs hospital, where he was given the blood thinner coumadin before being released. One month later, the VA took him off coumadin and soon afterward the clot migrated to one of his lungs. He suffered a massive pulmonary embolism and fell into a coma. When he awoke from the coma in the hospital he could barely speak. He had lost most of his upper-body mobility and short-term memory, and his speech was slurred significantly.

It was then that he began to experience debilitating pain in his abdomen. The hospital would not give him narcotics because such drugs slow digestion, making it harder for the bowels to function. Young could digest only soup and Jell-O. In November, in a desperate bid to halt the pain, he had his colon removed. He was fitted with a colostomy bag. The pain disappeared for a few days and then came roaring back. He could not hold down food, even pureed food, because his stomach opening had shrunk. The doctors dilated his stomach. He could eat only soup and oatmeal. Three weeks ago he had his stomach stretched again. And that was enough.

“I will go off the feeding [tube] after me and my wife’s anniversary,” April 20, the date on which he married Claudia in 2012. “I was married once before. It didn’t end well. It was a non-amicable divorce. At first I thought I would [just] wait for my brother and his wife, my niece and my grandparents to visit me, but the one thing I will miss most in my life is my wife. I want to spend a little more time with her. I want to spend a full year with someone without the problems that plagued my previous [marriage]. I don’t know how long it will take when I stop eating. If it takes too long I may take steps to quicken my departure. I have saved a bottle of liquid morphine. I can down that at one time with all my sleeping medication.”

Young’s room is painted a midnight blue and has a large cutout of Batman on one wall. He loved the superhero as a child because “he was a regular person who had a horrible thing happen to him and wanted to save society.”

Young joined the Army immediately after 9/11 to go to Afghanistan and hunt down the people behind the attacks. He did not oppose the Afghanistan war. “In fact, if I had been injured in Afghanistan, there would be no ‘Body of War’ movie to begin with,” he said. But he never understood the call to invade Iraq. “When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor we didn’t invade China just because they looked the same,” he said.

He has not decided what will be done with his ashes. He flirted with the idea of having them plowed into ground where marijuana would be planted but then wondered if anyone would want to smoke the crop. He knows there will be no clergy at the memorial service held after his death. “It will just be people reminiscing over my life,” he said.

He became increasingly depressed about his impending deployment to Iraq when he was in basic training at Fort Benning, Ga. He asked the battalion doctor for antidepressants. The doctor said he had to meet first with the unit’s chaplain, who told him, “I think you will be happier when you get over to Iraq and start killing Iraqis.”

“I was dumbstruck by his response,” Young said.

He has not decided what will be done with his ashes. He flirted with the idea of having them plowed into ground where marijuana would be planted but then wondered if anyone would want to smoke the crop. He knows there will be no clergy at the memorial service held after his death. “It will just be people reminiscing over my life,” he said.

“I spend a lot of time sitting here in my bedroom, watching TV or sleeping,” he said. “I have found—I don’t know if it is the result of my decision or not—[it is] equally hard to be alone or to be around people. This includes my wife. I am rarely happy. Maybe it is because when I am alone all I have with me are my thoughts, and my mind is a very hazardous place to go. When I am around people I feel as if I have to put on a facade of being the happy little soldier.”

He listens, when he is well enough, to audiobooks with Claudia. Among them have been Al Franken’s satirical book “Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them” and Michael Moore’s “The Official Fahrenheit 9/11 Reader.” He was a voracious reader but can no longer turn the pages of a book. He finds some solace in the French film “The Intouchables,” about a paraplegic and his caregiver, and “The Sessions,” a film based on an essay by the paralyzed poet Mark O’Brien.

Young, when he was in a wheelchair, found that many people behaved as if he was mentally disabled, or not even there. When he was being fitted for a tuxedo for a friend’s wedding the salesman turned to his mother and asked her in front of him whether he could wear the company’s shoes.

“I look at the TV through the lens of his eyes and can see he is invisible,” said Claudia, standing in the living room as her husband rested in the bedroom. An array of books on death, the afterlife and dying are spread out around her. “No one is sick [on television]. No one is disabled. No one faces death. Dying in America is a very lonely business.”

“If I had known then what I know now,” Young said, “I would not have gone into the military. But I was 22, working various menial jobs, waiting tables, [working] in the copy department of an OfficeMax. My life was going nowhere. Sept. 11 happened. I saw us being attacked. I wanted to respond. I signed up two days later. I wanted to be a combat journalist. I thought the military would help me out of my financial rut. I thought I could use the GI Bill to go to school.”



Young is not the first young man to be lured into war by the false sirens of glory and honor and then callously discarded by the war makers. His story has been told many times. It is the story of Hector in “The Iliad.” It is the story of Joe Bonham, the protagonist in Dalton Trumbo’s 1939 novel “Johnny Got His Gun,” whose arms, legs and face are blown away by an artillery shell, leaving him trapped in the inert remains of his body.

Bonham ruminates in the novel: “Inside me I’m screaming, nobody pays any attention. If I had arms, I could kill myself. If I had legs, I could run away. If I had a voice, I could talk and be some kind of company for myself. I could yell for help, but nobody would help me.”

For Young, the war, the wound, the paralysis, the wheelchair, the anti-war demonstrations, the wife who left him and the one who didn’t, the embolism, the loss of motor control, the slurred speech, the colostomy, the IV line for narcotics implanted in his chest, the open bed sores that expose his bones, the despair—the crushing despair—the decision to die, have come down to a girl. Aleksus, his only niece. She will not remember her uncle. But he lies in his dimly lit room, painkillers flowing into his broken body, and he thinks of her. He does not know exactly when he will die. But it must be before her second birthday, in June. He will not mar that day with his death.

And though he is an atheist, though he believes that there is nothing after death—that, as he says, “the body is like a toy that runs out of batteries, only there are no replacements”—his final act honors the promise of Aleksus’ life. As he spoke to me softly of this child—it hurts, even now, he said, to know she will grow up without him—I wondered, sitting next to him on his bed, if he saw it, the glory of it, his final bow not before the specter of his death but the sanctity of her life.

The resurrection.

My thanks to Janet Buehl, Assistant to the Publisher of [truthdig](#) - Zuade Kaufman, for facilitating the special permission required to reprint this article. - Mark Ulyseas

Terry McDonagh

Ripple Effect



This short poem, *Tree Music*, came to me one morning while looking out of the kitchen window into our wild Irish garden. I grew up here. It was early morning. *Joanna*, my wife, drew my attention to the rising sun blazing onto a young beech tree we had planted a few years previously. As Irish sun does not blaze all that often, the moment was all the more special. Rain is never far away.

The poem is included in my latest poetry collection, **Ripple Effect**, (publisher: Arlen House), to be launched at the Irish Embassy in Berlin in the first week in June.

Tree Music

There's a young beech
in the heart
of our wild garden
and this morning as
summer sun pierced
the thick outer hedge
to light up the tree,
you just knew there
was a god of a kind
and when a light breeze
joined in
I couldn't choose to hear
or not to hear.



Ivo Coelho

Priest - Philosopher and Rector of Ratisbonne Monastery, Jerusalem, Israel, *in conversation with Mark Ulyseas*



"Let us believe in peace. Let us believe in the brotherhood and sisterhood of all human beings. This is what it means to believe in the Fatherhood of God: we become one family. This is the central message of Jesus. But wonderfully, the unity of all human beings is a conviction in which we can all be united, regardless of whether we belong to this religion or that, or to no religion at all.

Sometimes it is difficult to believe that there will be peace here in the Holy Land, but we continue to believe, to do our little part, to say what has to be said, as the former Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah said to us, but to keep loving, believing and hoping.

The monthly '*Taize prayer experience*' conducted by our students in our chapel is also a moment that draws people young and old, mostly Christians of all denominations, but also a smattering of Jews.

For me this has been an opportunity to meet Jewish people who are sincerely interested in peace, and who work in their own little ways towards this end. Like, for example, the gentleman who lives in one of the nearby settlements, whose way of working for peace is to give lifts to just any Palestinian person who he sees on the road. His own settler friends call him mad, but he goes on, and is appreciated by many of the Palestinian people for his openness. He told me that he also makes it a point to visit homes in the nearby Arab village, and to take along, when possible, some of his more politically radical friends, and he says that such direct contact is surprisingly powerful in bringing about positive changes in attitudes."

Top: Ratisbonne 1947. Middle: Brothers and Students 1918-1920, Alphonse Marie Ratisbonne 1814-1884 Bottom: Visit of bishop 1947



L to R : Theodore Ratisbonne 1802-1884, St Peter's Feast Day.29.06.1947, Community © Ratisbonne Monastery

Is it true that a Jewish convert built the monastery and that in 1948 Jewish refugees, women and children, were given shelter in the monastery? Kindly give us a historical perspective of the significance of the monastery?

The Salesians came to Ratisbonne Monastery in 2004, at the pressing request of the Vatican. The monastery itself was founded way back in 1877, and is an impressive building designed by the French architect M. Daujat. It was probably the very first building outside the walls of the Old City, in those days when it was somewhat dangerous to live outside the city walls, and it has its own place in the history of Jerusalem, even finding a place in the museum housed in David's Citadel at Jaffa Gate.

The founder was Alphonse Ratisbonne (1814-1884), a famous Jewish convert of the nineteenth century, whose story finds a mention, I believe, even in William James' The Varieties of Religious Experience. Alphonse's brother Theodor had converted to Catholicism before him.

In 1842, Alphonse himself made a journey to Rome with a friend, who persuaded him to step into the church of Sant'Andrea delle Fratte. He came out of that church converted, convinced that he had to join the Catholic church. He reports that the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to him – and he remained deeply devoted to Mary all his life. He went on to become a Jesuit like his brother, and eventually the two brothers founded the religious congregation of Notre Dame de Sion, with the express purpose of bringing their brethren to the Christian faith. Alphonse decided to go to Jerusalem, where he first settled in the Old City, buying a place pointed out to him by the Muslims as the place where Jesus had been judged by Pilate.

He began here a work for children of all faiths, Jewish, Christian and Muslim, a sort of professional school if I am not mistaken. The convent still exists, going by the name of Ecce Homo – Behold the Man, the famous words of Pilate to the crowd seeking Jesus' death. When the work grew and the house became too small, Alphonse looked around for property outside the City, and eventually bought a site on a hill overlooking the Old City from Greek Orthodox owners.

Why did he choose just this site? Because it is not far from the Upper Mamilla Pool, which, according

to what we know, is the place where Isaiah made his famous prophecy of the Virgin Birth: The virgin shall conceive and bear a son. That pool still exists, just down the hill from Ratisbonne, at the edge of Independence Park, just before the Alrov Mamilla Shopping Arcade begins, but it is so well hidden that most tourists and pilgrims simply pass it by. At any rate, Alphonse constructed the monastery on the hill, and he must have bought a good part of the hill. Much of that property has been gradually alienated over the years, so that now the monastery has just a little space around itself, a little garden at the entrance, basketball court behind, and the Turkish Tower, the most ancient edifice on the campus dating back to Ottoman times. The professional school for children was shifted from the Old City to the new monastery, and I suppose it went on for many years, with a farm, cowshed and dairy, and so on.

The great changes took place with the creation of the State of Israel in 1947 and the war of 1948. It was at that time that the house was emptied of the children and boarders, and that the Fathers decided to take in refugees, mostly from Gush Etzion, which was one of the kibbutzes on the warfront. The refugees were naturally women and children; the men were out fighting, mostly. There are books that recount the interesting experience of these Jewish people living cheek to cheek with Catholic religious and priests, and many of them are still very attached to the place, which accounts for the many Jewish tourists who visit Ratisbonne.

Ratisbonne Monastery therefore has, in many ways, entered into the Jewish imagination: because it was the first building in what later became the New City of Jerusalem, because of the fact that its founders were Jewish in origin, because of the way it opened itself up to the Jewish refugees of the War of Independence of 1948, and because, after the Second Vatican Council, the Religious of Sion re-invented themselves, pledging to love the Jewish people (which they had always done), to study of the Jewish faith (which also perhaps they had done for a long time), and to engage in dialogue with the Jewish people. A centre for Jewish Studies was set up (the Centre Chrétien d'Études Juives - CCEJ). Ratisbonne can boast of major scholars like M.J. Stiasny, who even contributed to the entry on the Ratisbonne Brothers in the Encyclopedia Judaica. In 1984, the Religious of Sion decided to offer the monastery to the Vatican, on condition that the Vatican continue to support and sustain the CCEJ.

continued



L to R : Sancti.petri.intitutio.1918-1920, Basement corridor 1910, Dining room 1940 © Ratisbonne Monastery

Is it true that a Jewish convert built the monastery and that in 1948 Jewish refugees, women and children, were given shelter in the monastery? Kindly give us a historical perspective of the significance of the monastery? (cont./-)

In 1998 the centre became a Pontifical Institute. In 2001, the Pontifical Institute was transferred to the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, and incorporated with the Centro Cardinal Bea per gli Studi Giudaici. The Fathers of Sion retained the north wing of the monastery, where they continue to run the CCEJ, though in its former non-pontifical status. The rest of the monastery remained largely empty for several years.

Eventually the Vatican began looking for a large religious congregation to take it over. The Franciscans had enough on their plate in the Holy Land, the Dominicans had their École Biblique, and the Jesuits had their Pontifical Biblical Institute on Rehov Emile Botta. So in the end the Salesians, who had their theology centre in Cremisan, were persuaded to take over. And that was how, in 2004, the Salesians entered the monastery. One part of the monastery still belongs to the Fathers of Sion, but the larger part is now occupied by us with our formation community and study centre.

I must add that the Fathers of Sion still run a small Centre for Jewish-Christian Studies. Ecce Homo in the Old City is run by the Sisters of Sion, and in Ain Karem there is another monastery run by the Fathers and the Sisters, if I am not mistaken: that is the place where Alphonse died, where the little house where he lived and worked is still lovingly preserved, and where the grave of this man who loved his Jewish people may be found.

Why did you become a priest?

I grew up in a Salesian (Don Bosco) parish in Mumbai, and I had a good experience of the priests there. There was one who was especially good, he spent time with us youngsters, organized games, movies, outings and formative meetings, besides teaching us catechism in what is perhaps the most creative way I have ever seen. (All those years ago, instead of teaching plain doctrine, he was presenting us with lives of outstanding Christians of the twentieth century. It was probably in his classes that I first heard the names of Miguel Pro of Mexico and Teilhard de Chardin.)

It was he who popped the question to me, Would you like to become a priest, and I said yes, let's try, though not without hesitation, since somehow I had had other plans. There is of course a long process between this and the final decision, a process with many experiences of the life to which I was aspiring, opportunities to pray and reflect, and the guidance of several outstanding priests. I was looking at the priesthood in a Catholic religious congregation, the Salesians of Don Bosco, and, like any other choice that one makes, one goes along and asks whether one is happy, peaceful with the choice and so on. I liked what I was seeing, and at all the major points I felt – though certainly not without self-doubt and moments of difficulty – that God was calling me to serve in this congregation that works especially for poorer young people and young people in difficulty.

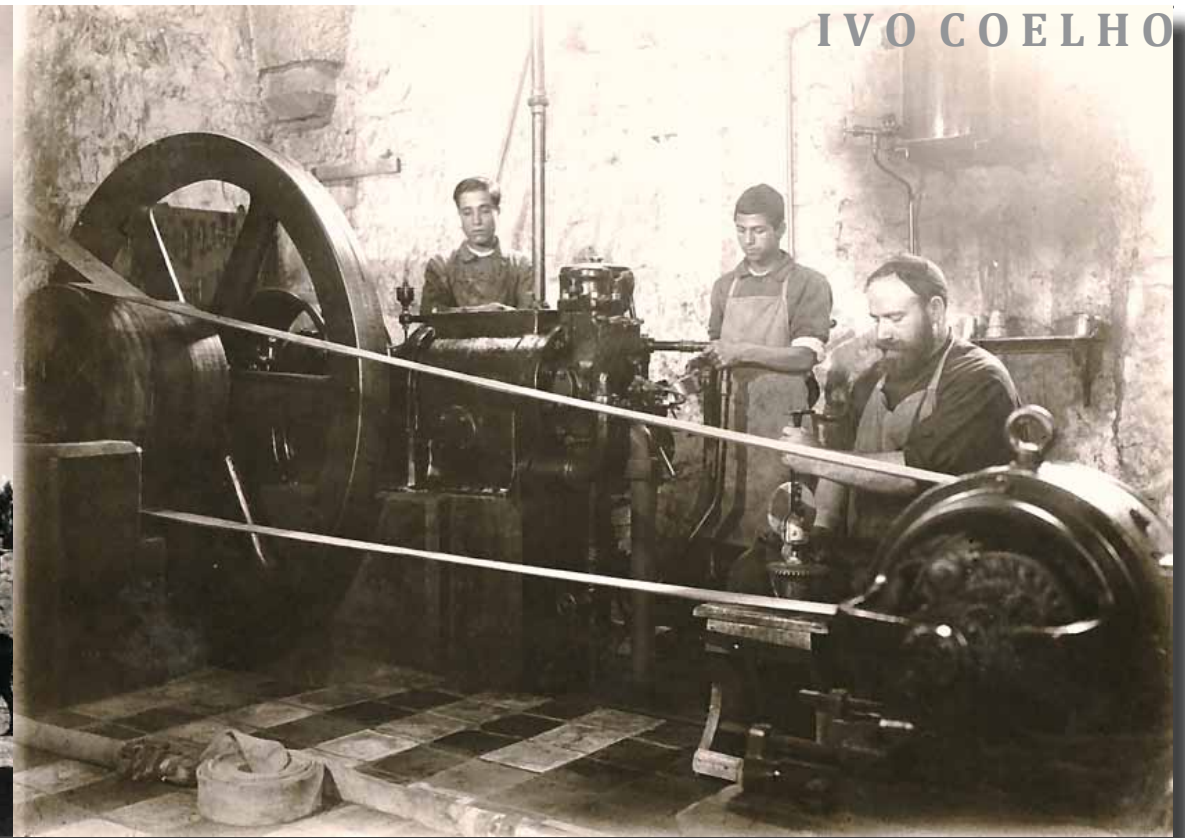
All along the way, naturally, there was predominant the figure of Jesus and that of the wonderfully charismatic founder of the Salesians, Don Bosco. At some point along the journey – during my years of philosophy, actually – I sort of became highly critical of everything, and 'lost' Don Bosco, and every now and then my inherited Christian faith also went into crisis. But then there was also a process of rediscovery of Don Bosco, and, more slowly and in a more complex way, a reappropriation of the faith into which I was born.

Does that answer the question? Yes and no, I guess. I suppose it is like when people fall in love. You feel this is the person for you, there is no voice of God and there is no angel telling you things most of the time, and if you hang on long enough the first enthusiasm and the first flush of love wanes, but if you do go along, hopefully, often, life confirms the choice you have made, though not without ups and downs. So I find myself happy to be a priest and a Salesian, with every passing year the faith opens up in a deeper way, and I am very grateful for that.

And when did you become a philosopher?

Quite early in the longish process of becoming a Salesian priest. In fact, already in the first major stage, that of the novitiate, our young provincial of the time simply asked me to go to the Jesuit-run Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth at Pune. This was something quite extraordinary at a time when all my other companions stayed on in a smallish Salesian-run centre of philosophical studies.

continued



L to R : The Turkish tower 2013, The Turkish tower 1920, Power generation 1940 © Ratisbonne Monastery

And when did you become a philosopher? (contd/-)

Quite early in the longish process of becoming a Salesian priest. In fact, already in the first major stage, that of the novitiate, our young provincial of the time simply asked me to go to the Jesuit-run **Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth at Pune**. This was something quite extraordinary at a time when all my other companions stayed on in a smallish Salesian-run centre of philosophical studies. So I *'became a philosopher'* because of this decision. I accepted the invitation in religious obedience. I had no idea what philosophy was or what it entailed. But Jnana Deepa Vidyapeeth was an exciting place to be in. We had extraordinary men as our professors, people like the **Indologist Richard De Smet, Gasper Koelman, Jean de Marneffe, Salvino Azzopardi, Subhash Anand, and Cyril Desbruslais**.

I was excited about philosophy, I worked hard, and went on to do a master's degree in philosophy. Soon after obtaining the degree I began teaching in our little newly opened centre of philosophy, Divyadaan, which at the time was in Pune, and it was a good way of getting deeper into things. That was when I did a mad thing: I was asked to teach metaphysics, and I taught philosophy of knowing. Naturally, the principal was mad, and then he had to give me the philosophy of knowing course so that I could teach metaphysics. The problem was that I had decided to follow Bernard Lonergan's Insight, and that required that I begin from knowing in order then to reach being. That was how I began to get into Insight in a more systematic way, though we had had some acquaintance with him during our master of philosophy years.

Eventually, after priestly ordination, when I went on to the **Gregorian University in Rome** to do a PhD in philosophy, I decided to work on Lonergan's hermeneutics. That decision was not as natural as it sounds, because I thought I had had enough of Lonergan, and that he was somehow also too intellectual. I was searching for something more exciting, and also something on the borders of philosophy and theology.

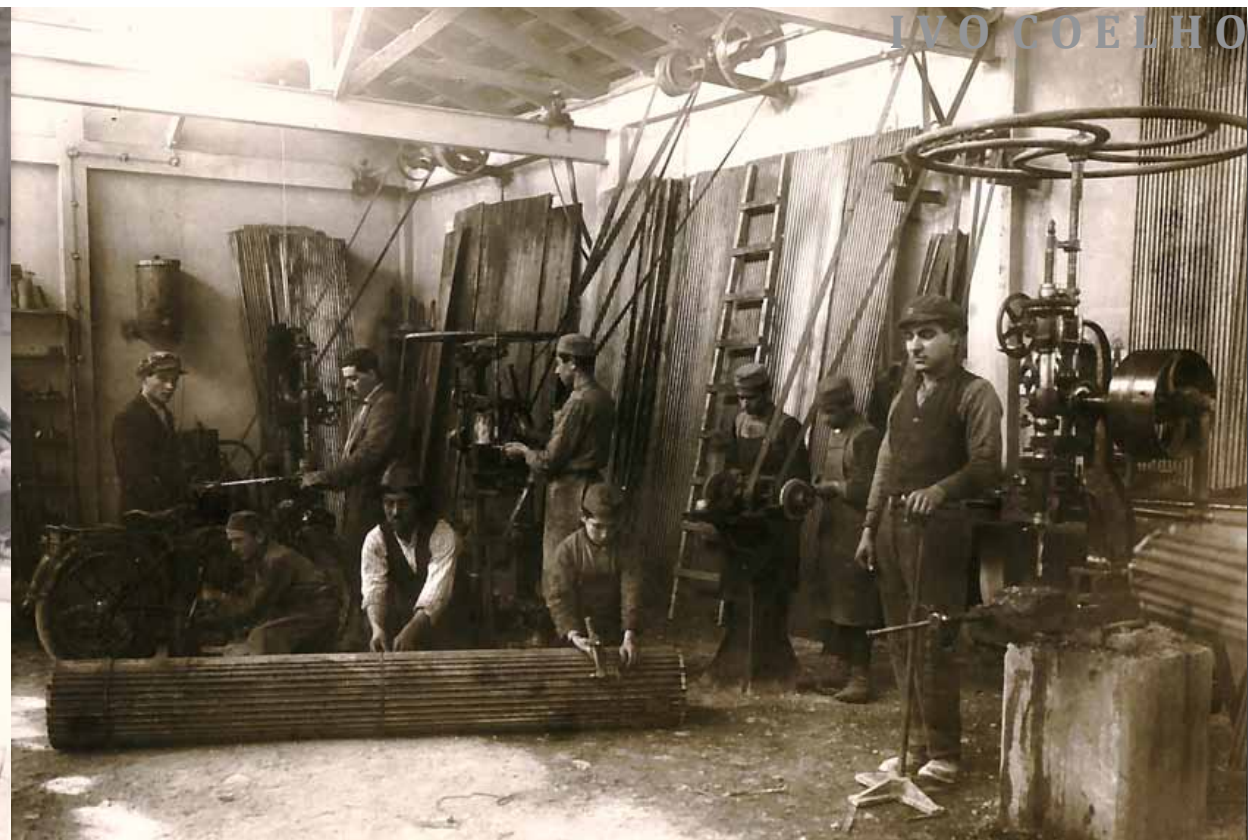
Hermeneutics therefore suited my purpose very well, but the decision to go along with Lonergan was, at its root, very practical: Lonergan had written largely in English, and I did not have the time and energy required to really master the German that was required for reading Gadamer or the

French for Ricoeur. I have never regretted, however, my decision to study Lonergan. And all thought of *'excessive intellectualism'* disappeared as I delved into his corpus and followed him in his trajectory of thought. The Lonergan of the post-Insight years moves securely into the other aspects of being human, what you might call the existential, affective and religious aspects. He was true to his word in Insight, that feelings were best treated in a theological context. In the process of writing Method in Theology, he did just that. The Lonergan of Method in Theology speaks no longer merely of the pure desire to know, but of the passionateness of being, and the Lonergan of the post-Method years securely reverses the priority of knowing over loving with his extraordinary notion of the two vectors of human development. When I first came across that notion, it was like a clap of thunder: the two vectors (the 'way up' which goes from knowing to loving, and the 'way down' that descends from loving to knowing), like all vectors, are simultaneous. And that explained to me why it is sometimes so difficult to make calm and proper sense of the conflicting claims of faith and reason.

What does it entail to be Rector of Ratisbonne Monastery? And what is the duration of the post?

'Rector' in a Salesian context means 'religious superior' of the community, and he has a term of three years, usually renewable once. **The Rector is the one who is ultimately responsible for all sectors of the life of the community, which in our case is a 'formation' community with a theology study centre attached, the Studium Theologicum Salesianum.**

Our community consists of 46 members, of which 11 are staff and 35 students, hailing from about 25 nations. Our students are in the final phase of their preparation for the priesthood, which means they have behind them the year of novitiate, some years of philosophical studies, and a few years of field work in different, mostly youth-related contexts. **Concretely, most of my time goes in meetings with my council, and individual meetings – usually monthly – with the students. Since I do not have a theology degree, I do not teach theology, but I pitch in with the history and spirituality of the Salesian congregation. I also continue to be associated with Divyadaan: Salesian Institute of Philosophy, Nashik, India, teaching there every summer and editing Divyadaan: Journal of Philosophy and Education, so I don't regret at all the lack of substantial teaching here in Jerusalem.**



L to R : St.Peter of Zion chapel 1920, Tailoring workshop 1940, Blacksmith workshop 1940 © Ratisbonne Monastery

Does the institution interact with other faiths?

This is one of our great weak points. If we are not careful, we could end up pretty much living our own life, teaching and studying theology, and so on. We became quite sharply aware of this lacuna, and so, especially since this year, we took steps to remedy the situation. In the current year the focus has been on Judaism; in the next year we will focus on Islam.

Then there is also the situation of the Christian churches: Jerusalem is full of a variety of churches, Catholic, Orthodox, Apostolic Armenian, and Protestant. The Catholic presence itself is a kaleidoscope with the many different rites, Latin, Melkite, Maronite, Syrian and Chaldean. So there is much to do not only on the interreligious front but also on the ecumenical front. The monastery plays host every month to the meetings of the Ecumenical Fraternity, which draws not only Christians but also Jews, but I must confess that we hardly make time to attend these meetings. The Religious of Sion were far more prolific in their contacts, most especially with the Jewish world. In fact, they still run a small Centre of Jewish-Christian Studies in the part of the monastery that they still retain next door.

Having said this, I must say that we do have our own ways of making contact.

Our students have weekend ministries, and some of them go to Bethlehem and Cremisan, where they are in contact with largely Muslim boys and girls. This is an extremely fruitful and enriching contact. The young people are very friendly, and our students have the most cordial interactions with them. The lack of Arabic does pose a barrier, but it is quite amazing what can still be done. We have far less contact with the Jewish world, despite the fact that the monastery is situated smack in the middle of the new part of Jerusalem, off King George Street, not far from the Central Synagogue.

One problem again is the lack of Hebrew. Learning the local languages is probably the biggest single step that anyone can take in wanting to interact with people, and that is something we have not yet succeeded in doing. Still, in the current year we have had an series of lectures by Jewish people on their faith, a visit to a synagogue to participate in a Sabbath service, and so on.

The monthly *'Taize prayer experience'* conducted by our students in our chapel is also a moment that draws people young and old, mostly Christians of all denominations, but also a smattering of Jews. For me this has been an opportunity to meet Jewish people who are sincerely interested in peace, and who work in their own little ways towards this end. Like, for example, the gentleman who lives in one of the nearby settlements, whose way of working for peace is to give lifts to just any Palestinian person who he sees on the road. His own settler friends call him mad, but he goes on, and is appreciated by many of the Palestinian people for his openness. He told me that he also makes it a point to visit homes in the nearby Arab village, and to take along, when possible, some of his more politically radical friends, and he says that such direct contact is surprisingly powerful in bringing about positive changes in attitudes.

I think one of the ways of getting in touch with Jewish people would be to attend the many cultural events that go on in the city around us. But that will mean somehow making time or creating time, and Salesian life tends to be rather busy.

In this context, I was really struck by a recent visit to the Olivetan Benedictine monastery at Abu Ghosh, down the hill from Kiriath Yearim, which is the place where the Ark of the Covenant rested till David decided to take it to Jerusalem. The monastery is in itself extremely beautiful, an oasis of green and quiet and beauty in the midst of a town that is quite beautiful in itself. But the really remarkable thing about this monastery is the hospitality and friendliness of the monks.

Here is where I began to understand the remarkable possibilities today of the monastic life. The monks are not busy like us. They have time for people. They have no other ministry, no 'outside' apostolate. They are there when people come. The monk who received us, Bro Olivier, was a remarkable example of this kind of 'being there.' He spent two hours with us, and he left us terribly impressed.

Bro Olivier meets many people from all walks of life and all religions. For his diaconate ordination last year he said he was surprised by the number of people who turned up: Christians of course, but also Muslims, both men and women, Palestinians as well as Israelis, religious Jews as well as soldiers, and even 20 bikers with their Harley-Davidsons.

continued



L to R : Shoe making by students 1920, Students studying to become priests 2013, the Studium Theologicum Salesianum © Ratisbonne Monastery

Does the institution interact with other faiths? (contd/-)

I think the secret is that Olivier and most of the other monks speak Hebrew, and that they have time to waste with people. That is the wonderful thing about being a monk: no other apostolate, and the great value of hospitality. They speak Hebrew, and pray in French, Latin and Hebrew. So naturally a whole world opens up. And they have the time. It's a great apostolate, truly an oasis of peace. **"We show that we must live together, and that we can," said Bro Oliver. "I can tell you that my political views are quite different, but I experience that people love me just the same." Wonderful. "I received an sms from a soldier that made me cry and laugh: I miss you. Take care of yourself. Don't go out into the sun."**

Do you make your own wine?

Ratisbonne does not! But a sister institution, the Cremisan monastery in Palestine (where, in fact, our theology community and centre was, till we shifted to Ratisbonne), does, and has been doing so for more than a hundred years.

Is there anything more you would like to share with the readers?

I think I have said more than enough! But only this: let us believe in peace. Let us believe in the brotherhood and sisterhood of all human beings. This is what it means to believe in the Fatherhood of God: we become one family.

This is the central message of Jesus.

But wonderfully, the unity of all human beings is a conviction in which we can all be united, regardless of whether we belong to this religion or that, or to no religion at all. Sometimes it is difficult to believe that there will be peace here in the Holy Land, but we continue to believe, to do our little part, to say what has to be said, as the former Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah said to us, but to keep loving, believing and hoping.

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MUSINGS <http://ivocoelho.blogspot.com>

PHILOSOPHICAL MUSINGS <http://ivophil.blogspot.com>

Other weblinks:

<http://www.ratisbannesdb.net/>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marie-Alphonse_Ratisbonne

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ratisbonne_Monastery





The Children Who Die Too Soon



Elizabeth Gaskell's poem for her stillborn daughter, 1836

On Visiting the Grave of My Stillborn Little Girl

*I made a vow within my soul, O child,
When thou wert laid beside my weary heart,
With marks of Death on every tender part,
That, if in time a living infant smiled,
Winning my ear with gentle sounds of love
In sunshine of such joy, I still would save
A green rest for thy memory, O Dove!
And oft times visit thy small, nameless grave.
Thee have I not forgot, my firstborn, thou
Whose eyes ne'er opened to my wistful gaze,
Whose suff'rings stamped with pain thy little brow;
I think of thee in these far happier days,
And thou, my child, from thy bright heaven see
How well I keep my faithful vow to thee*

It's late January 1996 and a terrible day. My father has died barely three weeks before and my brother and I are sharing the sad, sacred duty of wheeling my mother's coffin down the neatly tended paths of the Orthodox Jewish cemetery at Waltham Abbey, Greater London.

Suddenly I'm distracted. As we trundle Mum to her final rest, we pass a small plot filled with tiny graves and miniature headstones. While my mother had lived her biblically allotted seventy years, I realise these children's lives had been snuffed out before they'd truly begun. Unjust; upside-down; quite cruelly against the natural order. However, these youngsters were accorded full funeral rites and headstones mark their graves.

But what of those who are miscarried, born 'out of wedlock' or considered too young to be 'real' people and are therefore buried swiftly, anonymously and without honour?

When the previous Pope Benedict XVI formally abolished the Catholic doctrine of 'Limbo' in 2007, he overturned a belief held since the Middle Ages. Meanwhile, Orthodox Jewish tradition still dictates that if a baby does not survive for 30 days, it is as if the child has not lived.

Although my mother did miscarry one of my siblings, I have no children myself and therefore am unable to offer personal experience on the subject. But **Terry McDonagh's** finely crafted poem, *Limbo* which appeared in the March edition of this magazine, persuaded me to examine further how ultra early infant death is treated by different religious traditions.

The Jewish concept of '*illegitimacy*' is different from other faiths. But that aside, I've been forced to conclude that Orthodox Judaism is still implacably indifferent to the plight of families bereaved by neonatal or early infant death, especially compared to the current approaches of Progressive Judaism, the Christian faiths and Islam, all of which are far more sympathetic. No wonder then, that while the non-Jewish world has produced several marvellously sensitive pieces like those of Gaskell and McDonagh, which reflect the pain of such bereavement, there is nothing comparable I can find in Jewish sources.

When the previous Pope Benedict XVI formally abolished the Catholic doctrine of '*Limbo*' in 2007, he overturned a belief held since the Middle Ages. Meanwhile, Orthodox Jewish tradition still dictates that if a baby does not survive for 30 days, it is as if the child has not lived.

What is worse? To be forced, as per the former Catholic doctrine, to believe your darling child dwells somewhere on the border of Hell or to be told by a Jewish authority that the perfectly formed individual you created never really existed and is the equivalent of an amputated limb?

McDonagh explains: **"Growing up in a very Catholic environment in the west of Ireland, I was very conscious of Limbo as a state or place where non-baptised children were to exist, without ever seeing the face of God, for all eternity. It was bad enough for a mother to lose a child, but the thought of Limbo was tragic. These children could not be buried in consecrated ground, but it is said that mothers baptised their stillborn babies themselves in the hope that they could see the face of God. Burial often took place after dark, in secret, by fathers or close relatives. I found this so unjust as a child. Thankfully Limbo is no longer an article of faith."**

This is a subject which surely concentrates the minds of Irish writers, as McDonagh's countryman, the Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney has tackled it famously in a poem also entitled *Limbo*, published in his great 1966 collection, *Death of a Naturalist*, which volume coincidentally also includes a moving piece about the death of his four-year-old brother (*Mid-Term Break*).

I wonder now how either of them would describe the plight of **Darren Clift** who, I earnestly hope, was allowed to organise a full funeral for his stillborn daughter as well as for his late wife, Lindsay.

What is worse? To be forced, as per the former Catholic doctrine, to believe your darling child dwells somewhere on the border of Hell or to be told by a Jewish authority that the perfectly formed individual you created never really existed and is the equivalent of an amputated limb?

Or how would they cope with the story of nine-day-old Australian infant, **Jaylea Thompson** who died cradled in the crook of her mother's arm as they slept on a couch after an early morning feed? Jaylea's passing may have been through Sudden Infant Death Syndrome or perhaps accidental asphyxiation. The Coroner at the Inquest was not fully certain. But again, we can hope only that if her parents wanted to organise a formal burial and headstone, they were allowed to do so.

Research advises that rituals pertaining to miscarriage, stillbirth and death among **Muslim children** depend on the age of the child or the stage of a foetus's development. However, "full Islamic ritual is carried out for foetuses that have developed; stillborn babies and children".

It is not so long ago, before the evolution of modern antibiotics and surgical techniques, that people often had large families as they realised that many of their children may die well before adulthood. So traditional Judaism, in line with these earlier social norms, made little of perinatal deaths and a dead baby was treated as outlined above and buried in an unmarked grave, in the general section of a cemetery to avoid ritual impurity for a Cohen (a man recognised as a member of the priestly clan).

There is only one explanation that I can give for this ruling: that the spiritual welfare of an individual who considers himself superior to other Jews is put above the welfare of a grieving family. Here, I must confess is an area where modern Orthodox Judaism trails badly.

Where **Progressive Judaism** now agrees that times have changed from the days of common infant deaths and allows families "personal autonomy (allowing) laypeople and rabbis to observe or not observe as they see fit", **Orthodoxy** still denies parents the right to hold a funeral, to mark a grave with a headstone and to 'sit *shiva*' the formal seven-day mourning period and the infant is buried as described above.

I firmly believe it's time for a change here. 'Counselling' sessions and sympathy are not enough and I now challenge the Orthodox Jewish authorities to find a way around the law and devise new traditions for the present age.



This pattern resonates with Darius Rejali's 2010 description of torture as a "civic marker." That is, torture serves as means of "separating gradations of citizenship." In other words, torture is used to govern citizens and to discriminate against non-citizens throughout the history of humankind. What has changed, according to Rejali, is the technology. When states are more democratic, more hidden technologies of torture are employed.



"He put electric shock on me"

A glimpse of the persistent, widespread practice of torture in Papua

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As a civic marker, torture has become a mode of governance for the Indonesian state to establish and maintain its control over Papuan territory. Torture is not merely a technique to inflict pain over the body. Rather, it has become an effective machinery to colonise the Papuan space, which is marked with **Papuan resistance movements**.

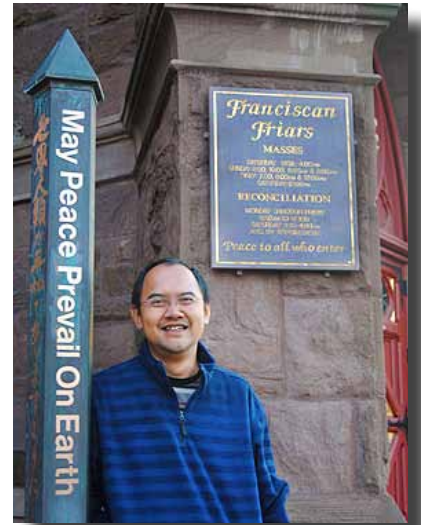
The direct and deliberate involvement of state apparatus suggests a disturbing feature of torture in Papua because the primary responsibility and obligation of state apparatus is to protect its own citizens, not to act as an agent of terror. It may not be surprising for us to learn that the Indonesian justice system seems unable to hold the state apparatus accountable. On the contrary, innocent Papuans, like Klembiap, are put on trial simply for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Both utilitarian and shock and awe torture not only leave deep scars in the body and psyche of Papuans but, more importantly, treat Papuans as non-citizens.

Above Pic - Matan Klembiap

Photograph courtesy of Anum Siregar, Democratic Alliance for Papua



Put in a broader context of the politics of torture in Papua, the cases of Gobay and Klembiap are not uncommon or isolated. Rather, they reveal a glimpse of the ways the Indonesian state has governed Papua for the last fifty years. In this context, torture is widespread and has become “a standard procedure” of the Indonesian state security apparatus in targeting pro-Papuan independence activists. As we notice here, the police use torture to extract confessions from suspects, to collect intelligence information and/or simply to exact shock and awe effects. If torture fails, suspects are charged with anachronistic laws such as Regulation 12/1951. This law was the product of the Dutch colonial power in its attempt to justify any arrest of pro-Indonesian activists back in early days of independence struggle. The maximum penalty of carrying a weapon is 10-year imprisonment.



On 15 February 2013, in the sub-district of Depapre (approximately 30 kilometres west of the Papuan provincial capital of Jayapura), six Papuan men were arrested and detained by the local police. *Daniel Gobay (30)*, *Arsel Kobak (23)*, *Eneko Pahabol (23)*, *Yosafat Satto (41)*, and *Salim Yaru (35)* were in a car when the police stopped and searched them. *Matan Klembiap (40)*, who was on his motorbike behind the car that the police stopped, was also detained. During the police interrogation all of the men were tortured to confess that they knew the whereabouts of two key pro-Papuan independence activists, Sebby Sambom and Terrianus Sato, who have gone into hiding. On the following day, four of the men were released without any charge; Daniel Gobay and Matan Klembiap remain in police custody, charged with “possessing a sharp weapon” under the Emergency Regulation 12/1951, a legacy from the Dutch colonial laws.

In testimony to his lawyers, Ms Anum Siregar and Ms Cory Silpa from a local NGO, the [Democratic Alliance for Papua](#), Klembiap complained that he was electrocuted on the back of his head and was beaten on his legs by the police during the interrogation, leaving visible black marks on his body.

Klembiap works as a cleaner at the local state hospital and knows nothing about the police accusation of the targeted Papuan fugitives. The police found him carrying an axe which he had found abandoned on the street when they stopped him. However, the police did not accept his explanation and instead charged him. His case will soon be tried in Jayapura magistrate’s court.

Put in a broader context of the politics of torture in Papua, the cases of Gobay and Klembiap are not uncommon or isolated. Rather, they reveal a glimpse of the ways the Indonesian state has governed Papua for the last fifty years. In this context, torture is widespread and has become “a standard procedure” of the Indonesian state security apparatus in targeting pro-Papuan independence activists. As we notice here, the police use torture to extract confessions from suspects, to collect intelligence information and/or simply to exact shock and awe effects. If torture fails, suspects are charged with anachronistic laws such as Regulation 12/1951. This law was the product of the Dutch colonial power in its attempt to justify any arrest of pro-Indonesian activists back in early days of independence struggle. The maximum penalty of carrying a weapon is 10-year imprisonment.

The other four suspects were released after being tortured. This element is important to highlight. Torturing suspects and releasing them because they were found innocent exemplify the use of “shock and awe” by the Indonesian state. This element is quite distinct from utilitarian notions of torture (e.g. gaining confessions). With shock and awe effects, the police are not interested in collecting intelligence information. Rather, they aim to display the unrestrained sovereign power of the Indonesian state over the bodies of the suspects.

The police deliberately mark the bodies of the suspects despite the absence of any legal and moral reasons. The police act can be interpreted as the penetration of the sovereign power of the Indonesian state into Papuan bodies.

This pattern resonates with Darius Rejali’s 2010 description of torture as a “civic marker.” That is, torture serves as means of “separating gradations of citizenship.” In other words, torture is used to govern citizens and to discriminate against non-citizens throughout the history of humankind. What has changed, according to Rejali, is the technology. When states are more democratic, more hidden technologies of torture are employed.

As a civic marker, torture has become a mode of governance for the Indonesian state to establish and maintain its control over Papuan territory. Torture is not merely a technique to inflict pain over the body. Rather, it has become an effective machinery to colonise the Papuan space, which is marked with Papuan resistance movements. The direct and deliberate involvement of state apparatus suggests a disturbing feature of torture in Papua because the primary responsibility and obligation of state apparatus is to protect its own citizens, not to act as an agent of terror. It may not be surprising for us to learn that the Indonesian justice system seems unable to hold the state apparatus accountable. On the contrary, innocent Papuans, like Klembiap, are put on trial simply for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Both utilitarian and shock and awe torture not only leave deep scars in the body and psyche of Papuans but, more importantly, treat Papuans as non-citizens.

Please join [Amnesty International Australia’s petition](#) to call on the Indonesian authorities to address these cases of torture in its restive province of Papua.



Assessing your Beliefs

How important are your beliefs anyway? In Week Five of 12 Weeks to Self-Healing: Transforming Pain through Energy Medicine, assessing your beliefs is explored. So first of all, what are beliefs? You may find they are attitudes, viewpoints, ideas, thoughts, values, perceptions, and more.

A recent video I listened to by Greg Reid in my iLA program talked about how we are most influenced by the people we are around and the books we read. You may notice how you developed your beliefs based on the people and books that influenced you. He said that you are the average of the five people you are around the most. This means in your lifestyle, your income, your values, etc. Therefore, your choices of what you do and with whom you do it, really does affect the quality of your life.

A foundational belief presented in my book is that physical illness has its origin in beliefs, and beliefs create emotional responses. When I assess a client to create a treatment plan, I focus on the person's history, the stories they tell themselves about the past, and their emotional response to those stories. When a client comes in with a physical ailment, more often than not, the pain changes or goes away due to the use of the tools provided to them. Pain, like emotion, comes and goes. When the pain returns, these tools provide the opportunity for people to impact their lives in a healing way. You can access the tools in the book and some on my website.

It is important to know that you choose your beliefs and each person gets only a glimpse of the truth. In a workshop I facilitated entitled Essential Peacemaking: Women and Men; this one-day workshop brings men and women together in communication. One of the sessions covers the Truth Box and collaborative sharing, which offers a great example of perception. Three sides of the box have a hole. During the workshop, we insist that the content of the box is the Absolute Truth! Each person looks into a hole to find the truth, and inside the box are three different pictures. One person looks in and sees a beautiful mountain. Another sees a warm beach, and the third sees the picture of a gorilla. Each person is encouraged to defend their perception and find others who agree. Each picture is the truth, but not the whole truth. This exercise, coupled with the processes of the whole day, help participants to open their minds to the perceptions of others.

“The universe was created once, but we re-create ourselves with every thought.”
- Deepak Chopra

We all have only a slice of the truth. This is our perception, upon which we build our beliefs. As a therapist, I have been honored to hear the beliefs of many people and learn how their lives are intertwined with their beliefs.

Another influence around belief for me was when I attained a certification in Reality Therapy, a concept developed by Dr. William Glasser. You can find more on this in his book Choice Theory.

At the time I was the Clinical Director of a Chemical Dependency and married to a man who also worked at the agency. We had completed the certification together and both tended to be what I refer to as “heady.” Our conversations were often intellectual and creative. What I found was the pattern of getting home from work, having a nice dinner cooked by my husband, and resting. When it was time to sleep, my mind would race and I’d ruminate for hours. Continually reliving the day, reworking conversations, and second-guessing my choices in words or works wasn’t conducive to sleep! I was very aware of my self-talk. Although it was not always negative, it was all encompassing. Choosing to just live with it, I accepted my self-talk as a necessary evil in running a treatment program.

I have since learned to challenge the negative self-talk and quiet my mind. This was done through a deliberate and challenging process using hypnotherapy, which we covered in Week Four, as well as meditation, which is covered in Week Eight. You can stop the chatter in your head and replace it with loving, supportive thoughts and the tools at the end of this article and in my book. First, let’s look at the danger and drawback in the New Age concept of “creating with our beliefs.” Given the premise that we create and manifest with our beliefs, the natural next step is to believe we create our illness. At some level this is true, but I remember at a Medical Intuition Training, Caroline Myss said that most of us are not able to manifest healing or create illness instantaneously, because in order to do so, we need to have our attention in present time. Most of us hold our attention in the past or future. Works on energy medicine often explain that illness is created in our etheric field—our subtle energy body that is around our body—years before it manifests within our body.

Also, in his 1990 book, Quantum Healing: Exploring the Frontiers of Mind/Body Medicine, Deepak Chopra said he “would argue that our inner space is a rich field of silent intelligence, and that it exerts a powerful influence on us.” Although we have a constant stream of consciousness, Chopra focuses on the healing aspect of your inner self as this silent intelligence, which he explains to be the silent gap between your thoughts.

He elaborates: “The universe was created once, but we re-create ourselves with every thought.” When discussing whether it is the head or heart that determines our interpretation of situations, he explains, “Something deeper, in the realm of silence, creates our view of reality.” It is the constant chatter in your mind that keeps you from this inner intelligence, which is the part of you that is all-intelligent; it is this constant chatter that keeps you from the self-healing part of your being.



Chopra notes, “It is possible to spend a lifetime listening to the inventory of the mind without ever dipping into its source.” We must learn to access the gap between each thought, which is the place in which the intelligence lies. Chopra suggests that just before falling asleep, the mind gradually leaves the waking state. It withdraws the senses, shuts out the waking world, and a brief gap opens at the junction point before the mind actually falls asleep. This gap is identical to the one that flashes by between each thought. It is like a little window into the field that is beyond either wakefulness or sleep.

I also described this light trance “twilight state” in the week on hypnotherapy. It is a good time to give yourself suggestions, as well as to go inward to your own inner silence. In addition to accessing the gap between each thought through hypnotherapy and meditation, here are some tools and exercises to help you access and shift your beliefs. Be aware of your response and find what works best for you.

Take some time to think about your beliefs. Talk with your friends and family about them, and journal as well. You can do so in the following format:

- A. Write about your attitudes, viewpoints, ideas, thoughts, values, and perceptions that are absolute. They are unchangeable.
- B. Write down attitudes, viewpoints, ideas, thoughts, values, and perceptions that you are unsure about. They may be changeable.
- C. Write about attitudes, viewpoints, ideas, thoughts, values, and perceptions that you would be terrified to change.
- D. What are your attitudes, viewpoints, ideas, thoughts, values, and perceptions that keep you ill?
- E. What attitudes, viewpoints, ideas, thoughts, values, and perceptions may allow you to heal?

Having read about the subconscious and conscious minds, write out some beliefs you would like to change. Use the self-hypnosis tools you learned in the fourth week to change these beliefs. You can do this by intention. Write down the belief, and allow your subconscious mind to grant your intention.

You can find more information about the book 12 Weeks to Self-Healing: Transforming Pain through Energy Medicine here. [LINK](#)
 More information on the iLA program can be found here - [LINK](#)

These photographs are from a collection that I took with a small fixed lens camera while circumnavigating the island recording for posterity the here and now in words.

Enjoy



Just before twilight I was taking a pic of the boat when the plane and surfer came into the frame as I clicked. Kuta beach, Bali, Indonesia. Pic © Mark Ulyseas





Kuta Cowboy showing off. Kuta beach, Bali, Indonesia. Pic © Mark Ulyseas



The message on her t-shirt says it all. Kuta beach, Bali, Indonesia. Pic © Mark Ulyseas



Kuta Cowboy. Kuta beach, Bali, Indonesia. Pic © Mark Ulyseas



Tourist. Kuta beach, Bali, Indonesia. Pic © Mark Ulyseas



Going to battle the waves. Kuta beach, Bali, Indonesia. Pic © Mark Ulyseas



Lost at sea. Kuta beach, Bali, Indonesia. Pic © Mark Ulyseas

A close-up photograph of a large pile of chili peppers. Most are green and elongated, with some showing signs of aging or damage. Several peppers are bright red, indicating they are ripe. The peppers are piled together, creating a textured and colorful background.

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