

## INTERVIEW<sup>1</sup> WITH PROFESSOR MONIKA REIF-HÜLSER<sup>2</sup>

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**C.D.:** Dear Professor Monika Reif-Hülser, welcome to our university, welcome again to Iași! We are very pleased to have you here, as a guest, a special guest for the *Interviewing Series* during our Television Cultural Talk-Show called *Portrete/Portraits* (a television program broadcasted by *Student-Club Television of Apollonia University of Iași*) that is designed to bring in front of our viewers important personalities of cultural and artistic, academic, research and scientific, religious and spiritual, social and political, business, economic and financial life and, in general, people who have success in their career, people who are models for the young generation and not only.

We are also going to provide (especially for our target audience, the young generation), niche reporting, including talk shows with specialists, experts and professionals, as well as celebrities in varied fields such as education, health, fitness, nutrition and alternative healing, beauty, style, fashion, environment, technology (including computers, the Internet and High Tech innovations), women's issues, children's and youth's topics, parenting, relationships, sports, film and culture industry, in general, travel and entertainment, career and job-related issues, perhaps home and garden improvement and maintenance, architecture and design, pets, making (and keeping/preserving) money (including stocks, investments, retirement, avoiding scams etc.), to mention just a few.

We will focus on the hyperlocal, city, regional, national and international events, bringing in front of our viewers both famous, legendary people (or celebrities) as well as everyday heroes, reporting on people and initiatives that are creating a more sustainable, equitable, healthy and fulfilling world.

If you don't mind, for today's interview, I will start by asking you a few questions about the

workshop that you are conducting at our university and I must say, to the viewers, that I am one of the participants to the workshop. First of all, therefore, would you tell us, Professor Hülser, why this title of your workshop: "Negotiating Communication: Theories, Forms, Media?"

**M.H.:** Yeah, so first of all thank you very much that I can be here, first of all thanks to *Apollonia* to have invited me to organize the workshop. I have two days experience with the workshop and I like it very much, so I have to say.

What about the title "Negotiating Communication?" I do think that communication is not easily to be defined, so we do not have a(n) once and for all answer what communication is, right? So, therefore, we can come through different media like I suggested, literary texts, films, paintings, works, photographs and so on, to an idea about what they communicate, right?... what they communicate to us; for instance, we started out with the Communication Theory, and we talked about Niklas Luhmann, already some time that he wrote his challenging book about communication, but given this, the ideas that he has in there are still valid and are still I think interesting to be discussed, appropriate to our time.

So, "Negotiating", coming back to your question, means to look from very different perspectives through the topic of communication. We really understand communication as a simple thing, "I talk to you, you talk to me, or we talk to the public" and then there is a communication but it isn't. OK, there is a differentiation, failed communication, successful communication and, of course, we want to have successful as much as possible.

**C.D.:** Thank you very much and I surely hope this interview will be a successful communication approach. Your definition, you know, even if you said there are no strict definitions, and the emphasis on successful communication is wonderful. Communication, as we know, has been derived from the Latin word "*communis*", meaning to share and we thank you, Professor Hülser, for you sharing with us your knowledge in the field of Communication.

Now, however, given your CV, one would have wondered why this interest in Communication for a professor who mainly teaches Literature: British Literature, American Literature, British and American Studies, Cultural Theories, Postcolonial Literature(s). Yet, nevertheless, your workshop focuses on Communication. But, you so nicely pointed out to this integrative approach, to the fact that everything connects and, thus, in the end, everything is nothing more nothing less than a communication act.

How do you view, thus, Professor Hülser, communication? Is it closed to rhetorics? Is it a rhetorical approach? Or do we move towards something else? I mean, where is the border line, if we could talk about such thing as a border line, between rhetorics and communication, and perhaps, if you don't mind, you could extend a little bit more even to institutional, maybe, and social goals of academic communication or academic rhetorics in the twenty-first century.

**M.H.:** OK, let me try to answer that. First of all, I'm not only a literary person, I also studied Sociology and while studying Sociology I came across the topic of Communication and across all those theories that were around at the time, in the eighties. So, that is the first attempt of an answer for your question, the second is that, in Konstanz, in general and also myself, view artistic phenomena or artistic representations, manifestations, whether they are literary or iconographic or filmic, we see them as manifestations of the cultural spirit of culture at the certain times, maybe put it this way.

So, let me give you an example, if I teach at the university to, I you know, a hundred and

twenty students the eighteenth century in England or Enlightenment in England, then of course I have to explain the terms, but I also have to explain the students why they should bother with the eighteenth century in the twenty-first and when I use literature I can show that there are many ideas that were thought for the first time or in a certain variation for the first time in the eighteenth century in the period called Enlightenment but there are still there, nowadays, only in a different set close, right?

So, literature and journalism and written texts are paradigms for communication. I wouldn't go so far as to say it has to do with rhetoric, because if I confide myself to rhetoric then I confide myself to language and this is a very important medium, but I want to expand rather because images are almost, in particularly with the young people, today more important than language. They learn quite a lot about images and so and I think we have to be very careful what kind of images we throw at them, what kind of images we want them to receive.

**C.D.:** I find it interesting that you talk about this new generation, a generation that is both concerned with images and influenced by them. We certainly have no *Baby Boomers* students and less *Generation X* students. We mainly have *Generation Y* (*Millennial Generation* or *Echo Boomers*) and especially *Generation Z* (*Net Generation* or *Generation M*, from "multi-tasking") students. Today learners are not just visual, but digital, they are experiential and tend to have a very short attention span. They can text as fast as they speak and they love communicating through social media.

Concerns within educational policy about the need for new approaches in teaching have thus arisen everywhere in the world in response to changing communication practices, including this new dependence on digital environments. It has been argued that with our students, imagery is more pervasive and powerful than ever before, just as you have pointed out, since this visual *Generation Z* is immersed in (and dependent of) the multi-media culture, thus the concept of "visual literacy" has been promoted as an important aspect of learning today at our

university, too. Certainly, I can see that most of my students are visual not auditory or kinesthetic.

I was wondering, therefore, how do you conduct your classes, Professor Hülser do you employ certain technological, multi-media devices, the so-called instructional technology, do you use a mixture of written text and images? I am curious if are using (and if so to what extent and with what learning success rate) "Screen Casting", "Lecture Capture", "Twitter", "Live Question Tools", "Class Blogs" and "Wikis", "Podcasts", "Streamed Video Websites", "Interactive Whiteboards", "Clickers", "Smartphones" etc.

**M.H.:** Depends on the topic, actually, I mean I've taught two classes as a follow up, for instance in violence in movies. There are so many forms of violence that we see in movies, violence that we even cannot connote at the point when we see them as violence; they turn out later when we look at the consequences that they were violent. But when in the same class, I taught for instance Shakespeare's tragedies, and if they are not violent, I don't know what is violent, right? So, again, of course not in Enlightenment but Shakespeare's times were also full of violence and he showed how violence it's used to stabilize power structures, for instance. Either you keep it up with it or you overthrow it. So, violence would be a very important topic and that is shown.

I just came from the workshop, from the last session of the workshop and I discussed with the students there, photographs of Syria, photographs that I took out from a journal and there we could see people who fled from stones and bombs and gunfire and they had a certain, a particular, there was not text, but those people in the image had a certain body language so that everyone could see they were fleeing from something, right? So and to make students alert, to teach them, to concentrate on this kind of things, how particular topics are represented, I mean, in what way, right?

Then, maybe as in one of the important things in our time is that we learn to realize and

recognize when we should be guided in a certain direction by interpretation or by the offer of interpretation and I think that we often have to learn how to be careful, not to be guided in two ways that we don't want to go.

**C.D.:** Not to be misleading, you are such an interesting personality, you know... Following your arguments during this interview as during the workshop, I can see how you can easily take off in multiple directions. I mean, you started with the example of violence and I guess now I'll have to ask a few other questions based on your answer.

One question would be, and this is kind of a personal interest, if we think about certain communication theories such as *Uses and Gratification*, *Agenda Setting*, but especially George Gerbner's *Cultivation Theory* (he thinks that violence is TV's primary message) – further developed by Dmitri Williams in his study based on computer games, Albert Bandura's *Social Learning Theory* (human being learn by modeling), Ferguson's *Catalyst Model* (violence arises from a combination of genetic and social influences), as well as *Social Cognitive Theory* (aggression is activated by aggressive scripts), or the *Moral Panic Theory* of David Gauntlett, I was always curious, you know, some say that children become more violent because they watch violent cartoons. Then, there is another theory, well, children who are innately violent, actually watch violent cartoons, so it's not a connection between what they watch and their behaviour. And you having also this background in Sociology and a background, a little bit, in Psychology, what do you think of that?

**M.H.:** Of the "affecting effect" on children, if they watch violence? OK, that's not... I cannot answer that with a simple answer. First of all, I think children are violent, at a certain age, they do violent things, they, I don't know, shoot or kill birds or cats or whatever. But this is not, I would say that this is a kind of challenge to, in my opinion, to realize their power, what they can do to what and what sanctions do they have to expect if they do this and that. I mean, if I, as a parent, I'm a mother and as a mother, if I only

forbid my children “I’m going to hit you!” or “I’m going to punish you if you do this and that!” I can be quite sure that the next time birds have to suffer or cats or whatever.

So, I think it’s very important to explain that animals also suffer and as children wouldn’t like to be cut into pieces, so this is kind of an intimate relationship between suffering creatures, right? So, we can teach them if... we don’t necessarily need *The Bible* to tell us this, I mean it is also... as something in *The Bible* that you shouldn’t do this, what you don’t want to be done to you. So, I think we can teach children to do that and as to the... submerging of images coming from TV or particularly video games and that kind of thing(s), I think that parents have a big responsibility and probably they would have to watch... when the children come up with this kinds of desires.

Then it’s no use to say: “I take the TV out” or “I take the computer out” or something like that. Maybe it’s one thing to go about this problem and watch a few of the things with them, together and then try to discuss, you can’t discuss with very, very little children who do not have much “rhetoric” elaboration already. So, I think, we can, as parents, we can influence children quite a lot and, personally, I think it’s not the task of schools, it is the parents’ responsibility to make the first step into this learning direction.

**C.D.:** Fascinating, as I said before, now we move towards Education. You make us better comprehend that children don’t understand that sometimes there are no consequences in cartoons, but that in real life that’s a different story. Take for instance, Tom and Jerry, one hits the other and one second later they are both fine. So children have to understand that there are consequences to their violent acts... I have another kind of personal interest type of question for you: when did you decide that you wanted to teach and how come you followed this career?

**M.H.:** Well... yeah...OK, I started out as an interpreter; I’m trained as an interpreter, a consecutive and a simultaneous one. So, there

were three years in my life that I was educated with the things in the ears and then interpreted in conferences and so forth. And then, as I (was) always saying, I was becoming a standard sentence when I’m asked: “How come you have (not) an academic career?”

I didn’t start out with academia in the first place and then I didn’t really intend to become a researcher but then, translating and interpreting, I thought, ok, those people have thought the ideas that I’m translating now, I have my own ken so I can do my own thinking and then I decided to go back to school, in an adult phase, having worked for five years as an interpreter and then I took up, after finishing this kind of schools for adults, I took up studies and then I started...

I’m not going to tell you with all I started out, but Sociology was always one of the points, I studied Russian at a certain time, I studied Psychology at a certain time, History, but then I focused on English and American and Sociology and French, yes, also French literature.

**C.D.:** A varied background that explains the fact that you have knowledge from so many different fields and a lot of expertise and speaking of that, I also know that you both travelled and studied and you also worked abroad in different countries. I know that you have been to Canada, in Toronto and not only, to China, in Shanghai, again to France, in Paris and Lyon, to Romania you were for a while visiting professor at *Alexandru Ioan Cuza* University, now you are again visiting us at *Apollonia* University of Iași (it’s actually your fourth time in Iași you told me earlier) and other countries as well: you’ve been to India and you write about Indian literature, Postcolonial Literature, you write about South Africa, so a lot of places where you travelled, studied and worked.

I would like to know first, if it’s about the students from those countries, if you find or if you have found differences in between students, let’s say students from/in Romania, students in Germany, students in Canada, students in the States – I forgot to mention that you were in the States, as well. How do Romanian students compare to students from your home-country,



Germany, as well as to students from the other countries where you have taught?

Would you mind approaching this topic, and then the educational system, in general: if it's one educational system that you favour more than the others and if so, why is that? Did you find that policy and institutional variation help to explain variation in student performance from country to country? If so, which policies and institutions are most conducive to student performance from your perspective, based on your international teaching experience?

**M.H.:** You mean country-wise?

**C.D.:** Right, country-wise and also a comparative-contrast approach among countries, among the different educational systems you are most familiar with.

**M.H.:** Alright, as for the students, I mean, I've experienced students wherever I taught and this is not just a trivial side remark but this is, I mean it. I focus experienced students as very interested, as it is with children. If you want to teach them not to be cruel, then it is a way how to convey that and with the students I have to experience the same thing or approximately the same thing. You have to interest them and you have to, I think... we as teachers have to draw a line to their own life world so that they do not... are not confronted with a lot of tradition, a huge amount, a huge mountain of tradition which they never can be able to climb. So, but, from time to time, we always make links to their own life world, yeah, and this is also a way of communicating and communication that you can learn.

So, that is the difference, in this sense there is not really a difference, I wouldn't say I have seen any difference, though there is a significant difference between German school and South African students, because in Germany, at the moment we are very much preoccupied with the "question of *memory*", how to remember the past and what to do with the remembrance of past that has to do with our history, with the German history. Because of what Jewish people in our

country had to suffer through the Third Reich, right? And so that *memory* has a place in the cultural history, so to speak. And when I went for the first time to South Africa to teach there, the first reaction of my students was: "Why do you always look back?", "Why don't you look forward?" and I was completely astonished and thought: "OK, that's also that, you can see that also in this way." So, this was really a big difference because that South Africa, let's say four years ago, maybe that was, is a country that... at that time didn't want to look back so much, it wanted to look forward, it wanted to create a democracy and that was the main interest.

In Germany, maybe we are running up the problem of redefining and reconstructing, renegotiating democracy, again. But, at the moment we feel rather safe in our political system, whether we like it or not, that it's not important. So, it depends, to answer your question a little more directly, I would say it depends on the situation, culture or a country or a state is in, whether the students see the necessity or feel the necessity that education and intellectuals have a task in a certain society. This is not self understood and trivial because it's a long, relatively long way to become an intellectual and you also have to... form a position, from which you speak, not in the sense of "I'm an older person and, therefore, I have more experience", I don't mean that, I mean the more experience you have, the more you have to negotiate your experience as in your memories.

So, yeah... I think it depends, the answer to your question would be: "It depends on the country and the situation in which the country is, so that the young students behave and are interested in certain things."

**C.D.:** Thank you, Professor Hülser. We will now take a very short break.

We remind our viewers that today's guest for the *Interviewing Series* during our Television Cultural Talk-Show *Portraits* is University Professor Doctor Monika Reif-Hülser, PhD, Priv. Doz. Dr., from University of Konstanz, Germany, coordinator of the very interesting workshop

titled "Negotiating Communication: Theories, Forms, Media," workshop conducted by Professor Hülser at *Apollonia* University of Iași and open to the large public.

**C.D.:** After a brief break, we are back in our TV studio to continue our talk about Education with our special guest, University Professor Doctor Monika Reif-Hülser, from University of Konstanz, Germany.

Also, I would like to address with you a completely different issue later on during our interview, something dear to our students and our viewers. It is about "blogging". So, either today, if emission time allows us, if we have time during our live broadcasted TV interview, or later on, during a subsequent TV interview with you, I would like to make a point of asking you what you think of blogging. As I have just said, our students and also our viewers really seem to like this phenomenon. Is the blogosphere an adequate substitute for journalism? Is blogging, a new journalistic genre? Should bloggers adhere to journalistic standards when they publish information, even if they're not trained journalists? And, thus, are ideas like objectivity outdated? Where does objectivity fit in a world where social media makes publishing less corporate and more human? Coming back to bloggers, are bloggers an effective enough government watchdog? And do you subscribe to blogs and if you do, what blogs do you subscribe to?

Leaving, however, blogging aside, at least for right now, we are back to our TV talk about Education.

**M.H.:** OK. So I'd like to bring Education together with Communication, right? As I said earlier already in this interview, I consider the study of cultural products or cultural materials if we should put it this way as a kind of mirroring the culture. So...Then, there's the first idea and then the second, when I teach at university over, and I also gave a talk here at a school in Iași, and at that time, and that was last year, and I had the title "What Is Literature Good For." So...because everybody is interested in

Economics, maybe Physics, maybe Biology, but Literature?! That seems to be out of the world or something, out of any kind of life world interests. And then I try to discuss and I want to offer this as an answer to your introduction also.

I think we can learn from literature, not in the sense that we learn the values that literatures of certain historical periods offer us but we can learn from literature the power of language, the power of language to gear and to move our own ideas and imaginations in the sense that either we resist the movement that the literature offers or we go along.

Let me give you an example out of my own research work perhaps that might fit us, an explanation coming from Postcolonial, I mean coming from English Studies, right. I concentrated on Postcolonialism because I was also interested in how Britain went about its colonies and what Britain did after the colonies in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century became independent. What is very interesting, or what was very interesting to observe in every kind of independence was followed by a military regime first and then only along way later, long time later there was a democratic sort of thrift or drive, OK?

So when we look into or to the literature and the journalism also in South Africa, then we see that it was the intellectuals and the journalists, in particular the journalists, who brought about the end the end of the Apartheid Regime. So because they on the one hand they made the world outside aware of what's going on, I mean was going on in South Africa and the journalists and the writers of poems and stories and so forth and so on, they really activated the public awareness outside South Africa in such a way that the South African Apartheid regime could not resist any longer and not keep itself in power.

So this I think is so interesting and so fascinating in cultural history, in political history that the intellectuals of a country not the rebels and not the resistance movement or whatever brought about the end of Apartheid but the intellectuals, without weapons. I mean, they had to suffer quite enough because they went for years into prison but there are South African writers when they, as soon as they got out of

the prison again they started writing and then they had another prison punishment and then again they started from new so I think this is admirable and this shows when we studied this, this shows... the power of, of not only language but also stylized language, formed language, when you write a poem about resisting a certain power structure. There are many poems, not only poems that elevate us or something like that but really to the point. Then there's a lyric or lyricism that usually we do not connect with to intervene in a political way.

So, I think I mentioned already that in a country that changes its political structure it needs time then find a new way for the social organization, political organization, and the value system that people want, to have, all right? So take in the example of the South Africa. We see that it almost took 25 years because the, until the events of 1990 when Mandela was elected president, these events became topics of writings, of stories, not resistant poems but stories, telling narratives. And you mentioned already the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* in South Africa.

That was also an experience or an experiment that was taken up by other countries with similar pasts for instance Latin America. They took it up without the "Reconciliation part" only the "Truth part" so we want to know what happened, that would have been the framing question, right?

Now, I'm also interested in India and this is also what I want to explain, why the study of literature is important. From, from studying Indian Literature we learn that many Indians went to South Africa because they didn't have enough jobs in India and then Gandhi also went to India and tried to help the Indian, his Indian people there and so there is through migration, there's this very close relation between South African and Indian politics, and South African economics and Indian economics.

Today things change a bit because there's a new partner, quotation marks, that is China. China has its interests like the Indians also in the African continent and now the frictions are not any more between Black and White in South Africa, the frictions are economically speaking between Chinese people who come there and

want to invest their money and Indian people who come there and invest their money, the South African people open arms, right, and say OK, yes, please help us, but all this, this is a politically pure question and economic question but you can retrace the sources in literary texts. So Education through literature, I want to say in a short sentence.

**C.D.:** That's great what you say. It gives us hope that perhaps through literature intellectuals can still change the world, make it a better place...

And you have made me think about André P. Brink, Breyten Breytenbach, Nadine Gordimer and other writers with anti-Apartheid commitment within Afrikaner literature... not to forget South African anti-Apartheid journalists such as Donald Woods, Benjamin Pogrand, Thenjive Mtintso, and especially legendary Henry Nxumalo, also known as Henry "Mr. Drum" Nxumalo, pioneer under Apartheid... and many others...

I now have a shorter question for you, and a longer one, and I will ask them together. The shorter one is based on what you have just said and it is the following: Do you think that there are more writers who write during oppressive regimes than during open democracies? Because in Romania, for example, we have this theory that people, writers wrote much more when they could not publish their works because they were against the Socialist regime of the time, then after that (when they had all the freedom to do so, yet they wrote less and of unequal value).

The second question deals more with the other issues, aspects you have raised as well during this interview, since you have so many research interests. Thus, you write about and are interested in Human Rights, in race and racism, in migration, as well as in postcolonial literature in general and in what is called "in - between" or "borderland issues", "Third World issues" and I know that you have even edited a book on the topic of borderlands, which is a wonderful book, I happen to have read it, it is a collection of texts called *Borderlands: Negotiating Boundaries in Post-Colonial Writing*, texts dealing with different borderland issues and "Thirdworldism", a book

that appeared at Rodopi in 1991 and perhaps you could talk a little bit about the texts included there and the different borderland issues and borderlands and third world issues and "Thirdworldism".

Then, I will ask more questions about your other books after I give you a chance to first answer the question about the subversive "drawer literature", and then address the question about boundaries and the political geography of the "global village" and the social and ideological construction of the "illegal", the "Other", as well as the racialization of space and Human Rights issues as they arise in the borderlands [something we talked about just before the TV interview and it connect with what you have just told our viewers].

*M.H.:* OK. So first to your shorter question. Is it, is the observation correct that people write more or feel more compelled to write literary works or poems under suppression or oppression?... Might be... might be... Because I think the possibility to let out the pressure that builds up inside I mean when you live in an, under an oppressive regime you cannot speak up, you cannot talk and you cannot move like you like to move so maybe this is a kind of an outlet or an opening to the world so yes, might be, I would think so, I would not be able to say it is so in this country, I only know that there's a lot of literature in South Africa that used to be a lot of literature in Germany also and in India I already drew the connection between South Africa and India in India this literature is coming up well you might say this is not an oppressive system that's a democracy, the largest democracy we have. Yes, but it is a very, it is a country that suffers enormously under poverty that is incredible when you walk or drive through Indian cities it's incredible what one will see. I think that there's a tension, a social tension. I don't know what Indians do in order to work with this or against it or bring it about that people can live together in not in such poverty but it is a topic of literature, it begins, it starts to be a topic, and enormous topic of literature.

OK. That was the first question. The second one is "negotiation the boundaries" part now

you see that negotiating seems to be a hobbyhorse expression in my writing and thinking. I think negotiation allows me to approach a phenomenon that is complicated from very different angles and I don't want to approach them all on my own but the best thing to do is to gather people together who are interested in the same topic and then one can negotiate by communicating and this is also an educational move, on education of oneself, the young colleagues, the young academic colleagues, they learn of course from us to a certain extent.

So "Negotiating Boundaries", you asked for the title, what we had in mind I was with a group of people of course, we had in mind when we discussed that well people say human beings need limits and other creatures need limits and the question of limits and boundaries I think is an anthropological question. Our body is already a limit, right, and we cannot transcend our bodily boundaries at our will. So boundaries are everywhere. We meet them everywhere, metaphorical, physical, concrete things but boundaries have always been I think a challenge for human development because, it's my thesis, once I realize there's a boundary I want to know how far I can push it, all right. And if I can push it to a certain point I widened my realm of activity quite to a significantly, to a significant extent so boundaries are inhibiting... bringing me to or seemingly talking freedom to move but they are also a challenge to act out the most, my outmost possibilities that I have. And this is in that book you mentioned; we approached in this issue from different disciplines. There's a colleague that wrote about Sports, about football, then we wrote about boundaries of thinking then we discussed, we presented talks about philosophy: are we physical beings rational beings in the first part and this kinds of things, we tried to bring all this kinds of things together.

*C.D.:* And it's a wonderful collection of a variety of texts on this issue, I think.

*M.H.:* Thank you.



**C.D.:** You are welcome. Perhaps you could say a few things about your other books. This [*Borderlands: Negotiating Boundaries in Post-Colonial Writing*] is a book that you edited. But you also have two books of your own. They are in German. I know that one of the books deals with the movies but I'll let you present it to our viewers, say a few words about it. You also have a third book coming which it is in English, if I understand correctly. So perhaps you could talk a little bit about these projects.

**M.H.:** The project I am working on?

**C.D.:** Both: About the two books that are already published – just a few main things about them, and then you could talk about your work in progress.

**M.H.:** OK. I can start with the boundaries and the communication in a sense of translation and that leads me back to my first book that deals with translating literary texts into films. And when we talk about translation there's always a translocation, right, the bringing from one part to another part, and when, this is a kind of the translating of literary texts into films is an intermedial task, let's say. We cannot only say that the narrative, or the topic or the story is the translated but it also the technical giving of the medium, that are translated and then there is a general saying that films are always worse than the book. I don't believe that. And this is what challenged me to write that book because I think it is not always the case, but I would say most of the time. The films have a very individuality of their own because they can present the story in a different way, they make us see things that we cannot of course see in a literary text, we can only imagine or create mental images in a text, so I thought I wanted to talk about that, about the proliferation that is most always be worse or not as good as the literary texts.

So this was the first book, and the third I think you mentioning, the postcolonial, or the approach to the postcolonialism question again it has to do with translating because I write about rewriting canonical English texts or even paintings and

form new narratives out of them and the "newness" of them and of course, by the way this would be a term by Bhabha, Homi Bhabha, how this newness came into the world is a title of one of his essays, the newness of the rewritten text itself is a mirror of what has changed.

Let me give you an example. I don't know if the viewers would know that, there's a relatively known English writer, a woman, in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Charlotte Brontë, and Charlotte Brontë is written a text called, that has the title *Jane Eyre*. And *Jane Eyre* deals with in the middle of the Victorian period in England and the code of female behavior or so on and so forth but it is also a love story. But it is also a relatively covered story about colonialism because the protagonist of the story goes on to the West Indies and brings a wife back for himself. Now that poor wife cannot live in England because in England, in London, everything is grey, and the sun doesn't shine and the houses are old and cold and all that and then she under the pressure of expectations of the London society she breaks down. And then she is labeled crazy, mad, no wonder she is mad, because she comes from the West Indies, right? So this is a kind of prejudicial labeling of course and a judgment that destroys, completely destroys that woman. She is, then her husband shuts her up under the roof, and does not want to show her. OK.

But this has never been attacked really until postcolonialism came about and then there is a writer by the name of Jan Rhys who wrote a novel, who rewrote *Jane Eyre*, in the way that she wrote the story before the story. Right? She wrote the Rochester's (that's the name of the protagonist) journey to the West Indies and the way he came to know his then wife that he brought to England. So this is a way of negotiating again, negotiating the way how we consider human beings. What is a human being? Is a human being a fully fetched human being if he so she behaves according to the social norms or cultural norms or is the aberration of behavior is that necessary mad? This is something that Foucault has touched quite a lot on that. It is very easy for society to say that it is mad each other in the way.

So, OK, I have collected a few examples of that kind, right? Why, what has changed and what do, how do writers see their own coloniality when they find a canonical text in which British imperialist writer, right, told the story from the perspective of British imperialism.

**C.D.:** And you touched on Gender Studies as well with this figure of the “mad woman,” or sometimes the “mad women in the attic,” so Feminism and Gender Studies. In both Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and especially Jean Rhys’ (alias Ella Gwendolen Rees Williams) novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*, written as a “prequel” to Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* are also studies of femininity and masculinity in colonialism, depicting the relations between women and men, and the differential power structures that create these social categories. Jean Rhys’s novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* plays with the idea that a woman can become lost in her own society and thus driven out of her mind, à la Charlotte Brontë’s “mad woman in the attic”.

So, Professor Hülser, how do the images and the ways men and women are portrayed in literature and the media affect society? The literary feminist critic bell hooks, for instance, said different forms of media display the values that are established and maintained by our “white supremacist capitalist patriarchy”.

Also, your discussion frames questions of gender and feminisms in ways that connect the local to the global and promote an understanding of relations of power in multiple contexts. What do you use in you teaching, what different research tools, methodologies and substantive approaches to central questions in Women’s and Gender Studies? How do you strengthen critical thinking and inquiry through a focus on women’s experiences and the social construction of gender in its relation to race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, disability and age in both the past and present?

**M.H.:** I am indeed interested in Genders Studies and Cultural Studies and Feminism and I teach them in my classes and use a variety of research tools, methodologies and substantive

approaches to central questions in Women’s and Gender Studies

**C.D.:** Would you like to develop more in this topic?

**M.H.:** Not right now.

**C.D.:** OK. Then coming back to your books. Which one of them is your biggest achievement?

**M.H.:** My biggest achievement is the one with the rewriting. It is not really finished yet. I mean all that kind of rewriting idea follows me into my research about South Africa and India and the migration there and it also, of course, follows me into that completely new topic for me that when I try to compare postcolonialism to postcommunism and this is also one of my interests why I am here and why I want to go to other countries that have suffered or that have experienced communism or postcommunism. I want to see whether the structures are comparable or they aren’t how people deal with that.

**C.D.:** Very interesting. Do you have some postcolonial writers or postcommunist writers that you see closer to you, you like them more? Perhaps you could talk about such favourite books and/or beloved authors.

**M.H.:** Sorry, I cannot answer that question because I am not deep enough into that material, postcommunism.

**C.D.:** Then how about just the postcolonial part? Which are your favourite postcolonial writers, and/or seminal books, works that you like more than others?

**M.H.:** Yeah. I mean one of my favourite writers is a South African one, J. M. Coetzee who wrote *Disgrace*. The novel *Disgrace* is by him. He is an ironic skeptic, if something like that exists.

And he is one of the first, If I can judge that, one of the first South African writers who said or coveted to his readers through his books “I don’t believe in this utopia that we can create a new

democracy in South Africa" He didn't believe in that and he wrote against it not in journalistic form but in the form of novels and because he didn't see enough change after 1990, after he got the Nobel prize in 2003, if I am not mistaken, and then the Stockholm people were debating should we give him the Nobel Prize for literature or shouldn't we since he left South Africa. For us he is a Nobel Prize writer South African but now he is in Australia and shall we give him the prize or shouldn't we give it to him? He left South Africa because he did not see enough optimism, find much optimism, but I think his books are very clear in preview; clear in vision let me put it this way.

**C.D.:** Similar a little bit to the situation of postcolonial writer V.S. Naipaul, also a Nobel Prize winner. V.S. Naipaul is a Caribbean writer but he lived most of his life in the United Kingdom even if he travelled to Africa and Asia quite frequently. I was wondering what is the postcolonial thinking position in regards to Europe? Is there an anti-European current of thought, does it adopt Europe's values, shouldn't the reflection of the postcolonial school be understood maybe as a decentering of the European thought? You know, we talk about the Canon and what should and should not get into the Canon.

**M.H.:** OK. I think at this point I should introduce a differentiation with respect to postcolonialism which I haven't mentioned up to now. I think there's a big difference between British colonialism, between French colonialism, Portuguese colonialism and Belgium... right... and also German. We also had colonies in Africa. And hence the postcolonial period is also different or the periods in those colonized, from different states or countries colonized, countries.

So, I stick and refrain myself to the English postcolonialism. I read of course the others also, of course, the French, the Spanish and the Portuguese but I don't work on them. So because I'm not an expert in them. So I stick to the English and, therefore, I cannot really compare. It certainly is not, this I may venture to say, it certainly is not a kind of communal movement

like Europe... right... you see, because the countries, European countries were very different when they colonized, and they had very different interests in their colonies on the colonization periods so that I personally try to find another, a new term. I have not been happy enough to have one yet, but I think that postcolonial connotes a certain period in history and this period seems to come to an end. Right.

We can describe as postcolonialism the period say 20-30 years after liberation of the countries. But now they start having an individual kind of culture that develops and they confront with globalization, they confront with completely different problems, right? So.

**C.D.:** Speaking about globalization and the European Union... What do you think: Is Europe now broken or broke or neither?

**M.H.:** Ha-ha. OK. I don't think... Well... I mean... OK, Europe, I mean we look at Europe now since a few days without Britain, without England. That is a question, whether England will stay out, whether another countries might follow, I do not dare any kind of prognosis because financial and economic crises are very difficult to prognose. They have perhaps triggered off movements or developments that we cannot even think of at the moment when they are not there yet. But I'm not very pessimistic if I can, personally I am not very pessimistic that anything breaks apart, neither the EU nor the Euro. I don't think it breaks apart. I think it, it... I hope our politicians are clever and responsible enough to see what is dangerous, what kind of moves ate dangerous.

**C.D.:** Thank you. You have so many interesting things to say and, regrettably, we have just barely touched the top of the iceberg. We are, unfortunately, getting towards the end of our TV show. Consequently, we will have to leave the questions about blogging, (and other questions, too) for a following interview. Yet, I would perhaps still like to raise, if possible, another issue the "memory one", an issue that you have touched upon a few times during today's interview.

Salman Rushdie, for instance, in his *Imaginary Homelands* book, professes that this “notion of memory” is a postcolonial struggle when he says, “The struggle of man against power... is the struggle of *memory* against forgetting” (14).

Now towards the end of our TV program, perhaps you could you say a bit more about the role of *memory* in both journalism and literature, especially postcolonial literature? And since you also have philosophical preoccupations and your current research also includes Ethics, Aesthetics, and Politics perhaps you could address the role of memory from those perspectives as well.

**M.H.:** Hmmm. A very interesting topic that I would like to talk more about in extent, not briefly.

**C.D.:** So maybe next time, then?

**M.H.:** Definitely.

**C.D.:** Subsequently, I’m going to ask you just a very brief final question, our last question for tonight. Here we go: If you were to think about it, how would you like to be remembered, Professor Hülser?

**M.H.:** Hmmm... As a mother of my children. That’s my first wish. And the second, if I’m able to give a few ideas, to hand over a few ideas, ask questions to my students, that would be the second satisfaction.

**C.D.:** We are grateful, Professor Hülser, for you accepting the invitation to be our guest for tonight’s Television Cultural Talk-Show *Portraits/Portrete*.

Dear viewers, we thank you for having tuned in to tonight’s edition of *Portraits* and, as always, we are looking forward to all your comments, suggestions, perhaps criticism, rating and general feedback on *Student Club’s* online site whose address is now written on your TV screen.

We remind you that tonight’s guest was University Professor Doctor Monika Reif-Hülser, PhD from University of Konstanz, Germany, coordinator of the “Negotiating Communication: Theories, Forms, Media”, workshop at *Apollonia* University of Iași.

I am Associate University Professor Cristina-Emanuela Dascălu, PhD, your *Portraits/Portrete* TV host, and till next time, I wish you all good night and only useful readings!

### **Endnotes**

- 1 The above *TV Interview* with Professor Monika Reif-Hülser, PhD was broadcasted live by *Student-Club* Television of *Apollonia* University of Iași, Romania as part of the weekly *Interviewing Series* during the Television Cultural Talk-Show called *Portrete/Portraits* and it is partly/partially archived online and available to view on the *Student-Club* Television site at: <http://www.sclubtv.ro/index.php/portrete/217-portrete-21-03-2013>.
- 2 University Professor Dr. Monika Reif-Hülser, PhD, Priv. Doz. Dr., University of Konstanz, Germany.