

Conversations over Gender and Ethnic Issues with International Authors

Ngugu Wa Thiong'o and Margaret Drabble

Eunjung Park: Good afternoon everybody. My honorable professors, colleagues, scholars, graduate students, and undergraduate students in the College of English, the Department of Africa, and other Departments at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. I'm greatly honored to be here as moderator to develop discussions on cultural issues concerning gender and ethnicity with international authors, Professor Ngugi Wa Thing'o and Ms. Margaret Drabble.

I'm Eunjung Park, research professor in the Institute of British and American Studies at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. Welcome, all of you here at this Conference and particularly you, our two internationally renowned guests!

Actually, as you know, this is the second International Seminar organized by our Institute of British and American Studies. Last spring, we hosted the British and American Studies in the Globalizing World, patronized by the Center for International Area Studies, the English Language and Literature Association of Korea and the British Council of Korea.

For our last session, we invited distinguished well-known scholars such as Shelley Fisher Fishkin, the current President of the American Studies Association, and teaching at Stanford University, Jeremy Hawthorn from Norway, David Hall from Australia, and Bruce Burgett from the University of Washington.

This time we are inviting, two distinguished international authors, Miss Margaret Drabble and Professor Ngugi Wa Thing'o to hold a literature forum, patronized by Daesan Foundation and the English Language and Literature Association of Korea. My heart-felt thanks go to these organizations for their support. We will have a congratulatory speech from Prof. Lee Dong-il, the director of the Institute of British and American Studies.

Dong-il Lee: Thank you, Dr. Park. I'm pleased to welcome two world-renowned writers, Ngugi Wa Thing'o and Margaret Drabble. I welcome also my colleagues at our university, research members of my Institute, and students of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. I think this forum will provide you with a peculiar chance to meet the writers and to get acquainted with their literary worlds. This conference doesn't presuppose any methodological direction, but I think we can get a very good inspiration if all participants, once upon a time international writer.

It is well, I always thought, if I become a professor, I want to become a Nobel Prize Winner for literature. Please don't give up your dreams. Try to get some inspiration from the world-renowned two writers. My institute has made great strides to the extent that we have successfully organized this international conference following last year's successful international conference. I hope you would enjoy this conference and obtain rich intellectual benefits. Thank you very much.

Park: Thank you! Then, let me introduce Mr. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o briefly for your information. He is a novelist, essayist, and playwright, and born in Kenya in 1938. He studied English Literature in Kampala (Uganda), and then went over to England for graduate studies in Leeds University. As a novelist Ngugi made his debut with *Weep Not, Child* (1964), followed by *The River Between* (1965), *A Grain Of Wheat* (1967), *Caitani Muthara-Ini* (in Gikuyu, *Devil on the Cross* 1980), *Decolonizing the Mind* (1986), *Moving the Center* (1993), *The Black Hermit*, 1963 (play).

Personally speaking, I'm delighted by the fact that this international conference is a literature forum for cultural issues relating to gender and ethnicity. I, as a scholar who researches contemporary American novels, gender and ethnic issues are my personal and academic concern as well.

Now, it is time to hear directly from Ngugi. Would you please come forward, and introduce yourself and your literary world in your own words?

An African Writer in the U.S.A : Ngugi Wa Thiong'o¹

The Age and the Writer

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o: I want to start by thanking the faculty of this University, the English Department for inviting me here to participate in the discussions you are having. But if I fall asleep while talking, please don't blame me. It's not because of jet lag, it's because of a very wonderful meal we were given just a few minutes before we came. So it was so delicious and sumptuous that I was very reluctant to leave the restaurant. But nevertheless, I'm very glad to be here, so we can at least share the food of thought and spiritual diet as well. It is as important as the material diet which we had at the restaurant.

I think the easiest way for me is to talk a little bit about myself, and then during the question time, we can develop any themes, any that may arise from your questions. I'll talk about myself

¹ A distinguished professor and director of International Center for Writing in the Department of English & Comparative Literature, University of California in Irvine.

a little bit, to be easier. You were already told at the introduction about my publications, particularly, *Weep Not Child* which came out in 1964, but actually written in 1962. Before *Weep Not Child*, I had written *The River Between*. So already by 1962, I had two novel manuscripts which were also at the end of that year accepted for publication by Heinemann Publishers in London, who later became very famous for publishing what is called *African Writers Series*. I just spoke of the two novels and the year 1962, because in that year I was actually a second-year student of English at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. Kenya was not yet independent, it was still under the colonial rule although we were to become independent, or independence was restored, in 1963. But I ask myself, on looking back to those years, how come that an English language literature student, from the colonial Kenya, being at the university for the first time in his life, had that kind of confidence to assume that one could write novels, and I proceeded to do those two novels in English. But not only those two novels, but in the course of my student years at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda for my first (i.e., BA) degree, I did two novels, I did the play *The Black Hermit*, I wrote a regular column for Kenyan newspapers every Sunday for two years, and I had still time and energy to keep up with the requirements of the English Department. So I tried to ask myself, "What produced that kind of confidence?" Is it individual genius or not? Is it simply a matter of individual talent, or is there something more to it than that? If we were to go back to the 60s of the last century, very very important, and if you look at that period of those sixties, it was a period of extreme struggles for decolonization in Africa, not only that, you can put that period of the 50s and 60s and it will become clear, if we put it in an international context, the world if you like, after the Second World War ... I'm not a historian, but if we think ... if we measure a couple of dates about events taking place in the world at that time, it might help us to see the picture which is emerging in the world after the Second World War. Let's start with this side of the world ... in fact if we start with Korea actually ... Because Korea, after Japanese colonialism you know, entered the face of the Korean War, broken out in 1950 or thereabouts if you remember, that's a very important year.

Now let us think about India. In 1947, India became independent. Let's think of 1948, there was a Chinese revolution. In Vietnam, the French were defeated in Dien Bien Phu in 1950 or something 1954 ... before the Americans came into the picture. We can also think about what happens in Malaysia. There was an insurrection, against the British at the time in Malaysia. We are talking about a very small space of time, if you like, because if you think about India's independence, in 1947, many of the events I mentioned took place within a period of the five years of each other. But let's go to Africa. Mau Mau War for independence in Kenya. I'll come back to that later. The Mau Mau War breaks out in 1952 at about the same time as the Korean War. We think of Algeria against the French at about the same time. An armed struggle against

the French in Algeria at about the same time. We think of Ghana becoming independent in 1957, and between 1950 and 1963 countries or nations in Africa were becoming independent or their independence was being restored.

Let's go across to the West, to the Atlantic. Even in the Caribbean Islands at that time, a lot of things were happening. In Jamaica, and in Barbados, there were labor organizations, labor strikes against the British colonial presence in the islands.

Let's go across to America in those same times. In 1954, something very very important happens. A certain lady called Rosa Parks refused to give her seat to a white person as it was expected because of the Jim Crow laws, which were then operating in America. Rosa Parks (and that year eventually) becomes a pivotal moment in the struggle for the right of black people in America. So, that decade is very important. The civil rights movement in America, in a climax, if you like, in the Voting Right Act of 1964. At about the same time again many African countries and Asian countries were getting independent.

Look at Europe at the same time. The rights of the welfare state were getting a situation up till the Second World War ... where labor or left-leaning governments came to power, or labor-associated governments came to power in most of Europe, the rise of the welfare state. So if you look at my moment in Makerere, I'm inserting myself into the moment in history when we see, we even call this the high noon of anti-imperialism in the world. This was happening in the world. I think the confidence we felt at that time, did not simply come from the individual talents It comes because I think the energy, the energy in the world, the energy of anti-imperialism, or the energy of the people, if you like, is rising everywhere and calling for a new world. That energy was also felt by the writers of the period. That is where the confidence comes from, because I cannot explain it in any other terms. But an undergraduate student at Makerere of the time would see himself as a novelist, playwright, director and journalist, and still feel confident that they could keep up with their lessons, with their classroom lessons.

The Colonial Experiences and the African Writer

You note, of course, that what we wrote, or rather what I wrote, *Weep Not Child* and *The River Between* were written in the English language. So you will begin to see a contradiction there. That what I'm writing, the energy comes from those anti-colonial struggles taking place in Kenya, in Africa and all over the world, and the novels which I produced, *Weep Not Child* and *The River Between*, they were both attempts to come to terms with my colonial history, with my colonial experience. What is that experience?

Kenya was colonized by the British from about 1895 to 1963. It was what is called a settler colony. This is important. There were two types of colonies in Africa. Or, I'm sure, everywhere else in the world. But in Africa, two very special types of colony ... One is what you might call a

protectorate like Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda. In these kinds of colony, there was no sizable white settlement. The crucial difference. There's no white settlement. But in the settler type of colony, there's a large white settlement from Britain or Portugal or France.

The difference between those two types of colony can be seen by what became the central issue in the political struggle. In the settler colony, land was the central issue. If you read literature from Kenya, or my literary works. In Kenya, the land as an issue is the very central basic issue. You feel it's there. OK. Land as a question becomes important in Zimbabwe, even today. In South Africa, even today. The land question is basic to the settler colony. The other thing is the difference between the two colonies is how they came to get their independence.

In a protectorate type of colony, although there was a tremendous struggle for independence, and the independence was won, not through armed struggles but by what you call it agitation, labor organizations, strikes or anything else, but NOT through armed struggles. People did not take up guns to go up the mountains to fight against the colonial state.

But in all settler colonies in Africa, in all of them ... there was armed struggle. Take Algeria, take Mozambique and Angola in the opposition to the Portuguese. Take Zimbabwe or South Africa's armed struggle. So the Kenyan situation has to be seen also in that category.

And this is history I was coming to terms with in writing my novels. Both *The River Between* about the coming of white settlement in Kenya and *Weep Not Child* which was much more closer to my time in which I was growing up. For, as you saw in the picture here, I was born in 1938, the beginning of the Second World War.

My childhood, when I went to school, is in the period of the Mau Mau Armed Struggle against the British. There was not one single family in the area that I came from, which was not affected by one, the Second World War, and the other, the war for independence in Kenya.

I lost a brother in the Second World War, but some of my brothers were also fighting against the British in the mountains of Kenya. Especially my older brother, whom I followed immediately ... but there were others, also in my family, who were fighting with the British.

So there is no single family in a way which was not affected by those struggles, and *Weep Not Child* tried to come to terms with that struggle. Its effect on families and so on. But, as I said there is a contradiction. That in the novels *Weep Not Child* and *The River Between*, I tried to come to terms with that history. But you note that the language in which those novels are written is the English language, the ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

The Language Question in African Literature

And in fact in my other novels which follow, like *A Grain of Wheat*, again written when I was a student at the University of Leeds. And *Petals of Blood*, and I understand they were translated into Korean. But they are all written in English. Amid the subject matter of those novels is

actually the coming into being if you like ... of African independence and the consequences of that independence. The question which became very, very important for me particularly after when I published *The Grain of Wheat* was ... For whom was I writing?

So in a way, it was not until 1976 that the question of language became even more central in my writing career. And I want to talk for a few minutes now, on the simply the language question in African literature. It is very, very important. The question of the English language in our lives. The place of English in particular in Africa and so on.

Again, let me draw your attention to contradictions. The subject matter of my novels is African people's struggle. But the language in which it is written is the English language, spoken by only a very tiny percent in terms of the Kenyan population as a whole. And even in terms of, say, the community I come from, Kikuyu speakers. It is only about 5% who speak or write or read in English. So, the question once again is "For whom was I writing?"

So let me briefly look at the question of language. If you look at any colonial situation, what I mean. Let me put it in this way. It was not until 1976 that the question of that contradiction came to me at a personal level, and this is when some of us moved to the University of Nairobi, where I was then professor of literature, and chairperson of the department And some of us intellectuals decided to go and work in the village with the community, with ordinary working people and so on. And the idea was to produce theater, what we now call community theatre. And of course we chose the language spoken by the community, because How else do you develop theater with the community unless you use the language of that community?

But what is interesting is not so much what we did. What's interesting was when you produce a play called *Ngaahika Ndeenda (I Will Marry When I Want)* as a consequence of our actions with the community. The fact that the play was stopped by the independent Kenyan government, because we got out independence in 1963. The play was stopped, and I myself was arrested on a midnight in December 1977, and put in Maximum Security Prison from being a professor of, of course, one of our leading institutions and the only one, and put in Maximum Security Prison. In a cell block ... which was a cell block between a block for those who were mentally deranged, and those who were condemned to death row, those who were waiting to be killed.

So, a writer was put somewhere between those two, the mentally deranged, crazy ... you know writers ... believe me ... they are a little bit crazy. All writers, including Korean writers, a little bit crazy (laughter). The congregation of that craziness is the way I was placed in.

The key thing was, that when I was in that Maximum Security Jail or Prison is when I started thinking about the language question much more basically than I had thought about it earlier. I will be very brief so that I can be asked questions later.

When I look at the colonial situation, I saw that whenever a people colonize another, the first thing they do is impose their language on those people. Whether it is the French, wherever they went, the Portuguese, the English ... wherever one colonizing agent imposes itself on another, they impose their language on those people. And I have to ask myself, "Why is this, why?"

And then at that place ... the language question, in a whole spectrum of the economics, the politics and the psychological aspects, if you like, of colonization. The fact is, when you colonize another, it is not for the sake of ... being the sort of ... of dancing and being happy if you colonize another, it is not for the sheer pleasure of colonizing. There are economic needs, consequences, the resources, of those people, both natural and human ... what you might call economic control. But economic control is not complete without political control. And political control is incomplete without cultural control. Because with cultural control, you control the mind. You control the mind of the colonized. You control how they look at themselves, how they look at the world. In other words, the colonizers always try to make the colonized look at the world through their own eyes. This is very, very important. You look at the world through the eyes of the person who is colonizing, or who is dominating.

This has consequences, of course. Because if you look at yourselves through the eyes of the colonizer, or the one who is dominating, of course you look at the cultural environment differently, you look at the political environment differently, and you look at the economic resources differently. You are again looking at them through the eyes of the one who is colonizing.

Language as the Way of Naming the World

Now if you look at language, language is a key component of that spectrum. Language. Language is the one which holds all those components together. So if you impose your language on another people, you've already done something which is very, very important: controlling the naming system of those people. How they see, how they name the world, You name the world, you own it. And I want to give you just one example, quickly from English literature.

Do you know ...? There are two texts which are very important in this respect. One is Shakespeare's *Tempest*. Do you know Shakespeare's *Tempest*? When Prospero takes on the island owned by Caliban, you remember, there is one moment of confrontation between Caliban and Prospero. When Prospero tells Caliban, "Hah! you! Ungrateful fellow, you refuse to work, you refuse to do this, look! I've even given you language. Before I came here, you didn't even know yourself, you are bumbling all day ... blah~, blah~. I gave you rationality, I gave you thought ... I gave you the means of knowing yourself, and now you are ungrateful." Caliban, of course, answers, yes, you've given me language. But now I know how to curse you in that language.

But there is another text which I find very interesting in this respect. This is in a novel by Defoe, called *Robinson Crusoe*. You remember it, *Robinson Crusoe*? You remember Crusoe actually ends up in an island, OK? And on this island, he encounters Friday. Just remember the encounter between Friday and Crusoe. And please remember the conversation they have. You might call it the education of Friday by Crusoe. You remember that scene? In which Crusoe tells him, the first thing that we do is ... "I'm going to tell you what your name is." And he tells him, "Your name is Friday. Because I discovered you on Friday." OK? Then he tells him ... "Do you know what my name is?" Which is very interesting because he does not say that his name is Crusoe. He says, "And my name is Master." OK? Your name is Friday, and mine is Master.

So you can imagine when Friday is going around, and you ask, Who is that? Oh, that's ... Master. Or ... Hello, Friday! Yes, Master. So their relationship is defined by ... is defined by LANGUAGE.

Language is a way of naming the world. Because these names are NAMES. Very, very important. If you look at my name, I used to be called James Ngugi. But later, I said, "No! James, OUT!" And I retained my name Ngugi Wa Thing'o which means Ngugi who is a son of Thing'o.

But anyway.....Language is part of the naming system. You name the world, you own it. In other words, the process of owning anything is by identifying it, naming it. So the first thing the colonial system does, is take away the naming system of a people and so on.

So when I was in prison, I thought about these things and I said, "No! from my own words. You are not going to write fiction in English anymore. So, my decision not to write in English anymore, particularly when it comes to fiction and so on ... was actually taken at that Maximum Security Prison in Kenya, in the cell number 16, in the year 1978.

And I've never gone back against that decision. All my novels which I have written since, including the one I wrote in prison, on toilet paper, *Devil on the Cross*, *Matigari* and the one I'm writing now, called *The Wizard and the Crow*, have all been written in Gĩkũyũ language.

Kim Ji-ha and Ngugi

But before I end the talk, let me just bring Korea into my writing in my struggle for decolonization. When in prison, and writing *Devil on a Cross*, on toilet paper. (I must hasten.) And you may ask, "Oh toilet paper. How can you do that on toilet paper?" Actually, the toilet paper that we were given were very hard. I think that was meant to punish the body. But what was not good for the biology, was actually very good for literature and for writing on.

But in those days, I was also thinking in prison ... when you are in prison, you think of many other people who are in similar conditions. And before I went to the prison in Kenya, I've been

working quite not hard, but I took part in the internationalization, if you like, of the Korean struggle for democracy and unification. In 1973 and in I think in 1984, (No ... it wasn't in 1973 ... anyway ...) I went to Japan on what was called an International Emergency Conference on democracy and reunification in Korea. And when I was in Tokyo, I came across a small book called A Cry of the People by Kim Ji-ha.

I'm only going to say this ... because that is another story altogether ... but let me say that Kim Ji-ha was very much in my mind when I was in prison. Because I was in the same kind of situation in which he was put one time. And not surprisingly, his text ... The Five Bandits, was very very inspiring to me when I came to write Devil on a Cross in prison. Because in a way Kim Ji-ha, a Korean poet, was with me, if you like, at that Maximum Security Prison in Kenya. When I'm writing Devil on a Cross, the first ever novel in the Gĩkũyũ language, the first one in the Gĩkũyũ language. It was a Korean poet, writing in Korean, and getting his inspiration from the poet who inspired me ... So that's how Korea comes actually later into my personal life ... directly while in Kenya, in Maximum Security Prison.

By the way, Devil on a Cross has become the basis of a new literature in Kenya, and of course, it has become part of a very important debate which is going on in all of Africa and all other places on the question of de-colonization. Language and de-colonization, which you can read by the way in my book called, Decolonizing the Mind. which is a book of lectures I gave at New Zealand University in 1984, when I theorized on the whole language situation.

So, part of being happy and being here, and being invited to this gathering ... I'm in Korea for the first time ... But in another sense, Korea has always been in my mind. Thank you.

A Woman and Cross-Borderland Writer : Margaret Drabble

Eunjung Park : Now, I'll introduce Ms. Margaret Drabble to all of you. She was born June 5, 1939 in Sheffield, Yorkshire, England. She attended the Mount School, York, a Quaker boarding-school and was awarded a major scholarship to Newnham College, Cambridge, where she read English and received double honors. After being graduated from Cambridge University,

she joined the Royal Shakespeare Company at Stratford before her first novel, *A Summer Bridgeway* was published in 1963.

Her novel *The Millstone* won the John Llewelyn Rhys Prize and she was the recipient of a Society of Author's Traveling Fellowship in the mid-1960's. She also received the James Tait Black and the E.M. Forster awards and was awarded the CBE in 1980.

She is often described as being the author one should read to get a clear view of what it's like to live in England. The English personalities of her characters are tangible in her novels which, through the decades, have also reflected the dramatic political, economic and social changes that have taken place in Great Britain.

She is the editor of *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. And nowadays she's published *The Gates of Ivory* in 1991, *The Seven Sisters* in 2002, and finally this year *The Red Queen* is published.

A Woman Writer in the 1960s

Margaret Drabble: I would like to talk to you about my own writing, about women's studies, and about women's literature. But, as Professor Ngugi said, we're open to questions on other matters later.

Let me begin by introducing my own history in relation to the context of the times that I've lived through, which follows on very well from our earlier discourse on the rise of anti-colonial feeling in the colonies and the sense that one was carried along on the wave of energy and felt part of a generation that was moving forward together, rather than being a solitary struggler alone.

I was born in 1939, so later in the 1960s and 1970s I was very much of a generation of women for whom gender and ethnic issues coincided. Both were expressions of the women's political movement of the time. I am fortunate to have been part of this movement simply because, as a Korean woman poet pointed out to us yesterday at the Seoul Forum, "Women are half the human race." Whereas national and ethnic groups have become more fragmented in the political sphere, women have the hope of creating a common platform around the world. As she said yesterday, one of the things you can be sure of is that half of the people around the world are worrying what to cook for dinner, and that half are all women. This is a worry that binds women together all around the globe. It is a worry of which I am mercifully free this week being,

as I am, amongst the international guest invited by the Daesan Foundation to participate in the Seoul Forum. It is a pleasure to be able to think and to talk instead of having to worry about shopping and other domestic matters.

My mother was the first of her family to go to university, but women of her generation had to give up their careers if they had one when they married. Then the Second World War intervened and they were all called on to work because of the labor shortage during the war. When it thankfully ended the women were en masse dismissed from their jobs. That was the situation my mother's generation had to face trying just to have work let alone develop a career.

A History of Women Writing

I think that history has a lot to answer for here. If you look back at the very strong tradition of women's writing in England, and those of you who are studying English literature will know in our country in particular we have a very fine tradition of women novelists – Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte Emily Bronte, George Eliot – you cannot study the novel without studying these writers. And as Virginia Woolf wrote in 1928 in her now celebrated feminist polemic, “A Room of One's Own,” all women's writing owes a debt to their forebears who wrote in limiting conditions in the 17th and 18th centuries and then triumphantly in the 19th century. But, said Virginia Woolf, women will never be equal as writers until they have an income and a room of their own – a space to write in and an income to write on. Virginia Woolf herself was fortunate to have had both of those. However, what happened to her, we all know – she committed suicide. Although one of the most distinguished writers of the 20th century, tragically she killed herself.

Then the war came and perhaps it contributed to Woolf's death. The war certainly disrupted the lives of women and men throughout the world. After the war a whole generation of women born just before like myself were told that they could have everything. We were told that we can go to school, then to university, that we could get married, have a career, and even hope to become a distinguished person. Everything was apparently free. But it was not quite as easy as that. In fact what this generation of women discovered was that they had to make very hard choices - choices which women are still making around the world.

I myself was fortunate to go to college. I got married the week after I left university, which was quite usual in those days. I had my first baby during the first year of marriage, and I wrote my first novel while I was expecting my first baby. I now apply Ngugi's pointed question to himself. Where did I find the energy to do all of this? I wrote a second novel while I was expecting my second baby, and my third novel while I was expecting my third baby!

Then I thought, no more babies, but I will carry on writing novels. I have now published sixteen in all and other works, but only have three children. Combining these activities was to

be sure extraordinary difficult. What nobody had told the modern women was that she would have to shop and cook and look after the children and do all the household chores, as well as being a professional woman, a writer, a professor, a politician.

So my first novels were very much concerned with the women's rebellion. Not a political rebellion, but the rebellion of women against a male-dominated world which expected women to be superwomen. I was writing, without even knowing it, about the dilemma of the educated women. And as I went on writing I began to realize that I was not alone with my dilemma. When I wrote my first novel I was quite lonely. My first husband was an actor with the Royal Shakespeare Company. He was in the theater every night, and I was left alone. I had no friends in the theater. The first night of my married life I went to see a play by Shakespeare, which you may know, *The Taming of the Shrew*, which is his play about misogyny. I sat there in the audience watching my husband on the stage thinking is this the life? Do I now have to come like Katherina in the *Taming of the Shrew* and agree with everything my husband says? No, I could not do it. I wrote my novel and I continued to write fiction. I discovered that there was a whole generation of women writing with the same spirit about the same subjects as me. I had read, of course, the novels of Charlotte Bronte, Emily Bronte, Jane Austen, George Eliot, and Virginia Woolf. None of those famous women writers had children. I was in a different position. I was the New Woman - the writer with children. And I discovered that Sylvia Plath, Doris Lessing, and many other women writing in England were in the same position as me.

During the 1960s women's writing fed into and off the women's movement and most of us felt that we were on a kind of wave of euphoria and solidarity. The word "sisterhood" has been mocked by women as well as by men, but I did feel that we were part of some kind of family grouping and this was not only national it was also international. When I began to be invited to international conferences, it was always such a pleasure to find women with whom I could exchange ideas not only on a literary level, but on a human level, about our domestic problems, our children, our mothers, our husbands. There was a whole mutual overlap of communication.

My present husband, who is also a writer, when traveling with me always says when we arrive together at an airport he is like a man who is met by a very old man with white hair and a white beard because he wrote a book about Bernard Shaw. In contrast, I am always met by beautiful young women full of energy and joy and ideas. There is an element of truth in this. We still live in a male-dominated world, but I have been fortunate to work in a part of that world which has gained energy during my working life.

A Spectrum of Female Ambitions and Artifacts

I am sometimes asked if there is a political agenda in my work. Do I think of myself as a feminist author? When I sat down to write my first novel I didn't think of the word "feminist" as

a contemporary word. It was a word that belonged to the 19th century, to Virginia Woolf, to my mother, but not to me. It was only as I began to write and make contacts that I realized that there was a new feminism with which I could identify. I would like to give you one very small example of a way in which I think my writing and the kind of writing done by Sylvia Plath, Doris Lessing helped to change the conditions under which women live now. I want to briefly consider my novel *The Millstone*, which I wrote while I was expecting my third baby – a son who was forty years old yesterday. So now we know how old this book is and how old my baby is now!

When I was writing *The Millstone* I was very preoccupied with the question of motherhood, and in this novel, which is about a woman who has no husband, which was very unusual in those days, she has a baby, and she discovers that her baby is ill with a serious heart condition. She takes her baby to a hospital for an operation. She is told by the hospital that they will look after her child and so to leave it there and not to come back for two days time. The mother finds it impossible to leave her child, to begin with. However, she leaves the baby and she goes out from the hospital like a polite Englishwoman – or just like a polite Korean mother would do, she leaves the hospital and then she thinks, no, I can't leave my child, my child will cry, will become agitated, will not recover from the operation. The mother returns to the hospital and insists on seeing the baby, the nurses try to prevent her, the ward sister comes and physically tries to remove her from the hospital, but she refuses to move. She sits there in the office of the nurses and she screams and screams until the surgeon hears her and comes and says she may stay with her child.

Now that situation was a very small domestic victory of sorts which required no guns, no ammunition, but which needed a certain amount of courage and it has had an effect, because mothers all through England were feeling like me –you cannot abandon your child, at this critical life in your child's life.

A film was made of my novel *The Millstone* and an extract of when the mother insists on her mother's right has been used to train nurses and now mothers are allowed to accompany their children into hospital, to stay with them through an operation, and to be there when the child comes round. Yes this was a very small but important victory and it shows that only when women raise their voices in literature, in life, in art, and say this is what we want changed that change just might occur.

I went back to the same hospital where my eldest son was threatened with an operation to see my granddaughter who is five-years old. When she was a very little baby, she had to have a very small operation on her hand, and I went into see her. The atmosphere was so different. There were mothers, fathers, pushchairs, beds for the parents, everybody was milling and thronging around. It was a happy atmosphere and when my granddaughter opened her eyes from the

anesthetic and smiled broadly. I just felt what an extraordinary change over forty years has taken place even if the progress had been slow.

So my novels have mainly been about the lives of educated women who have been insisting on their rights, mainly middle class women who have been articulate and who have been trying to move forward the agenda of women in the world. But not all the women I have dealt with have been powerful women. Some of them have been powerful; some of them have been domestic in their interests. Importantly, first and foremost though is that they have been mothers before they have been career people.

In my novels have tried to cover a spectrum of female ambitions and satisfactions. I have also written about men because I am not a separatist feminist and I believe that in the same novel you should be able to represent the male point of view as well as the female one. I do not believe in a separation of spheres. So as I got more practice at writing novels, I was able to write about men with consideration as well as about my women characters with sympathy.

In my more recent novels I've tried to widen my scope even further to write across ethnic barriers, which I have found more difficult than writing across the gender barrier. But a writer who is committed to writing will always be looking for new experiences to extend her field of interests.

Three novels ago I wrote a book in which I was brave enough to have a black male British politician, but I was very worried about trying to write from the point of view of a black man. However, I think I was able to make a satisfactory portrait. My novel would have been unrepresentative of Britain today if I had not included a black politician because the country today is an extraordinarily multicultural society. Living in London as I do what you see is a society that comes from everywhere. There are faces from every nation upon earth and we are all mixed together, so a novel which tries to represent this mixture of people in Britain today should I believe try to represent the variety of ethnic groupings.

Crossing the Barriers of Ethnicity and Gender

Now I would like to mention three novels published in the last three years by young women British writers that cross the barriers of ethnicity and gender in the most extraordinary ways. One is by a writer called Zadie Smith; it is called *White Teeth* (2000), and it is a work of great intellectual bravura. She is a young woman not yet in her thirties and she writes about the whole of London with a Dickensian sweep of characters from every section of society. It has been called Dickensian, for its comic panache, its complexity of plot, and its interconnected host of characters. It is metropolitan and polyphonic, flamboyant and energetic, and it takes on some of the great ideological issues of the twenty-first century: racism, immigration, urban terrorism, religious fundamentalism, and genetic engineering. Her novel is crowded with characters from

the West Indies and from Asia and the Middle East: she marries the Anglo-Caribbean, the Anglo-Indian, and the English Victorian novel. *White Teeth* is altogether an intellectual novel, a comic novel, and indeed a very brave and daring work of contemporary fiction. It has been an enormous success in Britain, in the very Britain which has had to work very hard to translate foreign writers and which had to have programs to promote Africa and West Indian writing. But now we have this strange phenomenon of a British Bangladeshi women writing a huge bestseller in Britain and getting a readership all around the world.

Another novel by another young British woman writer is *Brick Lane* (2003) by Monica Ali, which is set in part in Tower Hamlets, a Bangladesh community, in East London, and in part in Bangladesh. Monica was born in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and the novel contrasts the life of two sisters, one living in a Bengali immigrant working class community in London, married to an aspiring but unsuccessful husband who had high hopes of life in England, the other trying to survive in her home country. This book likewise bravely crosses a lot of barriers and has also been a huge popular success around the world. It is in a quieter, more domestic key than *White Teeth*, but it tackles similar questions, about nationality, identity, and culture. (It caused controversy in the Bengali community, some of whom complained that their experiences had been mocked and mis-described in *Brick Lane*.) Undoubtedly these are novels that could not have been written two or three decades ago.

The third novel is by Andrea Levy called *Small Island* (2004), which is also about the immigrant experience in Britain. I'm in the middle of reading it now. Again it is a novel that crosses a lot of barriers and has been an enormous bestseller in Britain and in other parts of the world.

So with these three notable novels by young women British writers we can witness a change of the complexion and direction of "English" literature today. I am proud to say that I have been part of the changing contemporary genealogy of the British novel written by women which now is branching everywhere.

I want to finish by mentioning my most recent novel because, like Prof. Ngugi, I, too, have a Korean connection. All my novels up to *The Red Queen* have been set in England because England is my country.

I came to Seoul in the year 2000 to the first International Forum, and I discovered whilst here the text of *The Memoirs of the Crown Princess of Korea, Lady Hong*, or Lady Hyegong, the *Hanjoongrok*, which is very well translated into English. I read this text and I was completely captivated by it. Needless to say, it is all but completely unknown in England, but in my opinion it is a world-class text which deserves to be on university literature syllabuses everywhere.

As I am a novelist, not an academic, so what I did with this story was to adapt it into a contemporary novel, a time-travel novel in which the crown princess tells her story to a contemporary British character. The two stories are interwoven and they comment upon each another. It is as if the reader is looking through different lenses each with a different focus. You see Korea through the ideas of a very ignorant Englishwomen on her first visit, and you see England through the eyes of a Korean woman who has been dead for two hundred years. But as the Crown Princess said, she has been reading books and reading history and she is amazed that so little progress has happened in the world.

So my novel is both a Korean novel and an English novel, and a novel out of time. I found writing it a very liberating experience because the novel which I had written just before *The Red Queen*, *The Seven Sisters*, was deeply rooted in one small area of London in which I did a similar thing. I tried to describe multicultural London through the eyes of an Englishwomen who did not know the city. On a bigger urban scale the novelistic experience in *The Seven Sisters* quite claustrophobic, because I was describing part of the city of London I know very well, although I was trying to see it with fresh eyes. But in *The Red Queen* I felt liberated from my own age, my own time, my own country, and was able for a little while to look at human nature from a greater distance as though from a different planet almost.

Alec Gordon: Thank you, for inviting me today. I should say that I used to teach here for 4 years. Most of you will not know this, some of the professors will...I came here in 1997, and I was recruited into the English Department, which later became the School of English. And the time in Korea, when we had President Kim Young-sam, you had the HUFS be one of the nine universities selected to start new Schools of Interantional and Area Studies.

And I was teaching both in the English Department and in that School. And four years later, I went on to SNU, but I very much enjoyed my time here, and I'm very happy to be invited back by Professor Park and Dr. Lee.

And as to my identity here, I'm not quite sure, but what I mean this is obviously, here in Korea and at conferences, the speakers are introduced from which university they are here and what their major is. But what if I tell you that I've written 28 books of poetry which people don't know about. So if I change my hat from a teacher to poet, then I could talk quite differently.

How about if I talk about what my identity is in terms of my country. I'm from England, but I'm from the border country between England and Scotland, or the part of England called the Lake District. I did my Ph.D. at the University of Leeds, so I have something in common. Leeds is next to Yorkshire and so on. And I could talk all about this, but of course, I'm not here to be talking as me and so to speak, and my own background and interest, as invited to try and raise

certain topics which might be interest for us. And so I'll try to move on and try to focus on small number of what I think might be themes that we might share.

The first thing is to do with...in the title of this seminar, we have two writers, one, and African writer, one, a UK writer, or an European writer, who are called international writers. But I'm sure, neither of them flying on the plane over here or when they go to bed in their five star hotel, are thinking of themselves as international writers.

What we've had in their personal histories is to find out that they are NATIONAL writers, and even local writers. So we've obviously got this question of levels of contents and identity, national, local and possibly even regional, inside of a country and England is a very regional country, although it is actually physically small, and then there is a question of which hat do you wear.

If you are a professor on the west coast of Africa, who's from an East African country, what is your identity? I could go on about this more, but I would like to throw out a question, which is here, at a Korean univerisity, which is unique not only because it's got its own subway, but because it's got its own subway, but because it is the Hagwon in Korea in the best sense, teaching many foreign languages.

The English name is Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. But a westerner might want to interpret that as being ... "Oh, that's international studies ... isn't it" But then the meaning of "international" would be rather different here. It might get linked up with what's your major? Is it international relations, or international politics ... ? So, the word foreign, I think has got a resonance which you Koreans understand much better than I'm sure our guests today, and perhaps some of you may want to ask about this.

But I wonder if our two guest today might comment on their identity as a women's writer and an African writer writing about race and so on. And in fact the change of identity that can happen with coming from their home countries here to the conference here today.

A second point following up about language ... Language in relation to literature, literary language...literary modes of language. Language on the side of race or ethnicity, language on the side of gender. From an academic point of view, I would like to ask the writers if they might comment about the genre, the genre...this is the word using literary studies, genre means type or kind ... I don't ... that they write novels, but what kind of novel, given that international means inter-cultural, it means inter-linguistic, and all of this possibly mixed up together.

And in a certain studies like Post-Colonial Studies, Cultural Studies, there is much talk about hybrids, mixtures...intermixing of forms of culture and language and so on.

So this is about genre. And what mode of literary language and how that might have changed and transformed from an African writer going from East Africa to England and back again of course to the West coast of the United States. In comparison with a women writer, born in the

North of England, her mother went to university etc. etc. we heard the story from Mademoiselle Drabble. That's the question about genre. I leave it there for the moment. Thank you.

Margaret Drabble: So we had questions about identity, and language and genre. Identity I feel very much an English person, I do feel deeply English, and I still feel as though I am a North of England person, although I've lived in London nearly all my life. Because where you are born has a very deep impact on you. Your family come from there, it remains with you. And I feel as though I am a Yorkshire woman, a Londoner and English. But I also like to think that I travel a lot, so I am multiculturally curious. But I do feel English but I complain about England, but I want to live in England, because it is my country it is my material. So I do think of myself on that airplane as I travel to a conference, this English person going somewhere else. So that's who I am.

In terms of language and gender, this is an enormous subject. I think that when I started to write, I was very much aware that there was a difficulty for women for writing about certain areas of experience, such as sexuality which, the language seem to belong to men, men seem to be much more comfortable in writing about certain areas of experience and I being an Englishwoman of a certain age, still feel that inhibition and prohibition. Other women don't, but I do.

And as for genre, I feel rather the same. I was...I started writing novels I still write novels I tried write a play, it was very very bad, I stick with writing novels. And I'm an English woman novelist.

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o: What shall I say, I'm an African and obviously it is important...But remember that we all carry different identities at any moment. For instance, one may say, I'm Korean. But one can also say, I'm South Korean. So you can be Korean, South Korean, and you can say I'm Asian. And there are moments when one can say, that meaningfully I'm Asian, as supposed to another kind of identity what I can say, I am English student. I studied English literature and so when I meet another person that studies English literature, I may feel that I am part of that community of those who studied English literature, and so on.

I studied Swahili literature and Swahili language, when I meet somebody, I may feel closer to that person and that identity than to say my other identity.

If you look at for me, for me, every phenomena, in nature, in society and thought, to me, has always two sides to it. One is the individuality and the particularity of that phenomenon, like when you say that this is a bottle, or but the idea of the bottle is shared by many other bottles, if you like. So this bottle is both particular but it as a reaching out, a universality in the very particularity...So I'd like to look at even identities as both particular, but also containing in them, a reaching out, a universality and those two sides or phenomenon are very important to me

because when I look at the world, I see the tendency all the time for one particularity, whatever it is to see itself as a universality often closing the real universality in that particularity...In other words, the tendency to see the form of a --- society as the universality instead of actually seeing the universality in that particularity and seeing its connection with other universalities. Very very important.

So when I think of myself as an African novelist, a writer, Kenyan writer...but I am many other things as well. So I'm a Kenyan writer and many other things. When you look at, as all of us, me in particular, we are also shaped by so many experiences. I'm an African writer, but I am an English literature student. Before I wrote my first novel...I've read Dickens, I've read George Eliot, Jane Austen, I've read Shakespeare, I've read all those...But I've also read and listened to African stories, and I'm part of that. I've read Russian literature in translation, I've read Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and so on. I've not read so much Korean literature, but I know Kim Ji-ha and I love his work and so on. So I like to see connections, when Margaret was talking yesterday, she quoted from a novel by Foster, *Howards End*, in which the phrase, "only connect" keeps on recurring. Only connect, only connect, Connection, and so on. And this brings me to one more thing and I'll wait for the next question.

A quotation from Aime Cesaire. Aime Cesaire is a very important writer for the Martinique, and he wrote a famous poem called the *Return to My Native Land*. He is a poet, dramatist and so on...political activist and so many things. But in his little book called '*Discourse on Colonialism*,' he says that cultures that do not ... which remain enclosed in themselves, they atrophy, they get asphyxiated...That cultural contact or contact between cultures, the phrase he uses is the oxygen of civilization. I say the same thing about identities. Our identities are very, very important to us. To all of us. The sense of place, the sense of who I am...But that sense of who I am, should be the basis of reaching out to others who are the same as who we are. So "I am" should also contain within it, the notion I belong to the other.

Tae-sang Jang: Thank you very much. My name is Tae-sang Jang. I'm teaching African oral literature, particularly Hausa oral language. Hausa language is spoken in Western Nigeria, West Africa. Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, are some of the countries in West Africa.

I'm teaching African oral literature, but I'm also teaching Introduction to African literature. At every semester, Prof. Ngugi's works attract many students' attention.

I have two questions, I think it's mere coincidence, but my first question is the same as Prof. Gordon's question. It's the question of identity. So I must improvise my question...Anyway Prof. Ngugi succinctly outlined his career as a writer in combination with some cultural and political issues.

1976 is a very important year of your life. Some new concepts arose, such as communal theatre and communal work, and the community language.

And finally, the problem of language choice and language consciousness. But I think before that time, I think you also have that type of consciousness and that type of problems.

And with regard to this, I'd like to ask two questions, and the first question is, as I told, is about the problem of identity. One day, Prof. Ngugi gave up English since then, he used Kikuyu as a medium of expression. And I think it is not just mere code-switching from one language to another, it is never mere translation from one language to another. I think it is a total change. So at that time, I think it was a big shock to many people who studied African literatures.

Originally I wanted to ask this question. Do you think you are a Kikuyu writer or a Kenyan writer, a Afro-English writer or African writer?

The question of identity may be a sensitive issue to many African writers. I think the problem of identity in many African writers are closely related to the problem of politics. As in the case of Ngugi's work, the issue of imperialism or neo-imperialism. As Professor Ngugi mentioned just a few minutes ago, it may be stretched outward. So people tend to think about identity as only the inner concept, but, every inner concept is inevitably related to outer concepts. So identity problem is the political problem. So if the identity problem is related to political problem, it's a little bit confusing.

So even though we kept on thinking about ideological identity or ethnic identity, for example, I'm Korean and this is American...and we also think about the cultural identity but, what I am concerning about is an identity as a writer as an artist. So maybe we have to separate this type of concept from that type of concept. So again my question is the identity as an artist.

Ngugi: Yes ... I'm a Kikuyu writer, a Kenyan writer, an African writer. and an writer. Yes, all those things are me. It's very very important. The sense of place. That's not mean that one is not connected. One always talk about things...about colonialism for instance, is what I keep on calling alienation. The sense of taking people away from their sense of place. So they begin to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves. For instance, one of the terrible things about colonialism and domination is the way it tries to alienate people from their sense of place. By making identify with that is furthest removed from themselves. So if you are Korean I begin to get excited more about America or Britain, or somewhere else than I am exited about what is happening around me. This is what I call alienation from a sense of place. Whereas it might be the other way round. For example when I study English literature or Korean literature, or it should make me feel an even better sense of my Kenyaness. In other words, my Kenyaness should not be removed from my sense of connection with Korea, with England, with America, and so on. And even in terms of generic identities, personally I don't put very big boundaries between theater, the novel, political essays and so on. It's that each form once again has its own

identity. In other words, when I write a play, obviously, it has its own form. That makes us say, this is a play, and not a novel obviously. And one has to try as much as possible and be faithful to that form, if you like. And it's the same with the novel, there are certain features that make me say, oh, that is a novel, not a poem, not a play...and so on. But at the same time, they are no sort of boundaries and you know.

Obviously, I'm not a poet, but when you read my prose, you find some passages which rise to the level of poetry and so on. Ms. Drabble has not written poems but I'm sure in her novels, her experience in drama comes across in terms of conversations among characters and so on. So you want to be very very careful about boundaries, but it's also very important, because the particularity is also very important. It is the connection...Only connect, only connect...that is the key. It's not to rub out the particularities...I don't go around saying, I'm not Kenyan, I'm not African, I'm not black, But also I'm part of the world. It is the connection, which seems to be important. Only connect.

One of the beauties of literature for me, quite frankly, is that if you read a Korean play or novel or an English tale or novel, it's discovering those commonalities. The way a novel set in England speaks to me. What is it that makes it speak to me, although it has a sense of place, is that other element which is contained in ... which is the universal contained in the particular.

Question 1: *If you apply your identity as a writer, Kenyan writer, in order to connect to other ethnic cultures and genders and etc. But do you think it is also applicable to the situation of Korean writer who has a political issue and ideological issue as you have?*

Ngugi: It is important ... a Korean writer in my view ... OK, let me tell you one phrase which I will say aloud. I was trying to find a chance to say this particular phrase, is actually a line from William Blake. "To see the world in a grain of sand." "To see the world in a grain of sand." It seems to me that the grain of sand is in Korea, in Kenya, is in England, is in America, but that sense of the grain is very very important but note, "To see the world ... in a grain of sand." It is not to discount the particularity of the grain. What is Korean, Kenyan, African or whatever, but rather to see the world in a grain ... To see the world in Korean. To be Korean and to see the world contained in the fact of being Korean. To see the world contained in the fact of my blackness. To see the world. I keep on saying that if you look at carefully at systems of domination, they do not try to release that connectedness, they try to say that the particularity which can be Korean or Kenyan, that particularity...That particular grain of sand is oh, the whole world. And they miss the point about Blake, to see the world in a grain of sand. They say no, no, no, this grain is the world.

Question 2: *Some people suggest that we learn English as a second language. I think that makes us change our thoughts, because you said language makes thoughts and ideas.*

English is used as a global communication way because even though you have your own Kikuyu language, but we have to communicate internationally with English. In Korea, English is a second language.

Ngugi: There is also nothing that prevents Korean also being a language of global communication. What I'm trying to say is that when the problem is not English language, per se...It is the question of English language and other languages. The situation in the past has been one of the particulars of English language, being used to oppress other languages.

Otherwise language can also be one that enables communication across other groups and so on. But there is no reason why except for history and power relationships that language...It can also be other languages. If it happen to be English, that's fine. That's no problem. In the center where I work, at the International Center for Writing and Translation in California, we're saying, we take the group languages into two, broadly speaking: marginalized languages and dominant languages. We use the phrase marginalized not because those languages are not necessarily marginal, but we use the phrase marginalized, we're talking about power relationship between languages. And we're trying to encourage conversation through translation among marginalized languages as well as of course between marginalized and the dominant. In order to encourage a more complex way of looking at relationships between and among languages. And what we're saying is this. In such a world, English and other languages which record history, whatever we may think of that history, have come to occupy a place which they occupy, we can use them to enable and not disable. Enable without disabling.

What has been happening in the past and currently in the global scene is English language has enabled visibility of a number of intellectual productions from Asia and Africa. But it has enabled visibility my making those intellectuals become invisible in their own languages and cultures. So you get intellectuals from Africa like myself, who will ... I become visible, *Weep Not, Child* become visible in English in Kenyan, invisible in African languages. And all you can say it challenge languages to enable that kind of visibility without making those having to become invisible in their languages and cultures.

Question 3 (from Plumlee): *I also have two questions, one to follow on with what you were just saying. In terms of using English, you would say standard English, what is your position, what do you say to your colleagues and friends and the scholars who talk about world Englishes. And people such as BB Kachru, Salman Rushdie, Achebe people who promote and write in Other Englishes, African English or Indian English or etc. I'd like to know how*

you...what the dialogue is that you have with those people. Also, I'm kind of a voice for one of my students, who had a question for Ms. Drabble.

Ngugi: I'll be very quick in answering about this. When somebody feels that they won't write in English, fine. I've got no problem. But the problem I have is when people abandon their languages in favor of other languages out of a colonial power relationship. In other words, I don't see why as an African intellectual, as an African writer, I should abandon my language, which is fully formed, or which needs me most to go and start some kind of campaign for a certain type of English. I don't see why I leave one fully formed language which is in need of me ... to go and fight for an aspect of African English, Kikuyu English and so on ... but that's fine. If somebody ... if I'm born in England and grew up in England, obviously English language is my language, and all those black writers, and other writers who now grew up in England, and they are writing and publishing novels and so on ... There are Africans who are writing in English and there's nothing wrong with that. Conrad was Polish and he wrote in English. But if it is meant the uprooting of Polish intellectuals in total into English and so on, with abandonment of Polish and so on ... then I would say that there is something wrong here. That is what I have been fighting against all the time, that if you look at translation today, not even today ... but translation is language of languages, that's what I call it. Translation as a language of languages, or translation as a language spoken by all languages. And translation has played probably the most important place in both national and communal form of intellectual formation. If you look at even national literature in Europe at the Renaissance, they depended very heavily on translations. If you look at the Bible for instance, the Bible reaches us not through the original language spoken by Jesus, and disciples and so on, most of us know the bible through translations into Korean, into Kikuyu, into French, into other languages. And we claim it as our book and whatever, through translation. We've been talking about Shakespeare for instance, Do we realize how much, every Shakespearean scholar knows, or even any casual reader of Shakespeare will see that all his plays, there are very few of them which are in a sense based, specifically on English and so on. Hamlet is Denmark, Macbeth is Scotland, he's drawing on other stories, and characters from Italy and so on ... And Shakespeare is seen as an foundation, an important voice in the development of English literature. If people find their creativity flowers in a certain type of English, fair enough. I've no problem with that. But for me, the most important thing, is for a Korean writer for them to know that the we can also get international or global visibility through the act of translation.

Question 4: *The student's question was, it's a bilingual student who has a kind of double identity and he was very intrigued by your description of the Red Queen story and how you were*

portraying different ethnicities and the Koreans were looking into the eyes of the English. And the English were looking into the eyes of the Koreans, and he was asking if you could give an example, because he hasn't read the book. How are you able to break through these ethnic barriers, and this is a person with a double identity himself, how were you able to cross over the barriers, how were you able to show that the Koreans were understanding the English and the English were understanding the Korean, perhaps you could explain how you handled that.

Drabble: I would like to point out that they were misunderstanding one another, it is quite easy to describe misunderstanding. You misread, you get lost, you are confused by what you see, so you're in a different culture, you are forever wondering around, wondering what you're looking at. And it's quite fun to do. It's a work of imagination, it's not a work of history. It's a work about cultural misunderstanding. That is my theme. So I had fun with the Red Queen coming back as a ghost and being horrified by the kind of food they eat in England, and you know...and you can have fun with the idea of the lack of progress. Do they still have capital punishment in the United States of America, do they still execute minors, children, who were under sixteen when they committed their crime? The answer is yes, they do. She is horrified by the lack of progress, and all these are my questions about culture, why the cultures progress, why do they stand still, why do they retain barbaric customs as the United States in this instance has done. So I'm not really portray either culture. I'm using the novel as a medium for asking questions about culture. I'd just like to say that one of the novels that inspired me to use this time travel was Mark Twain's novel, a Connecticut Yankee in the court of King Arthur in which in this Mark Twain novel, this character falls asleep and in late 19th century America, and he wakes up in the court of King Arthur in medieval England. And of course he is completely horrified by the way they behave they're completely horrified by the way he behaves, and it's a comedy but it's a very dark comedy because it is a satire on American capitalism, on medieval stupidity, on brutality of every sort. And I think, I was trying to say, what are we poor human beings doing...when we can't even meet and understand one another, with an image or symbol. But you have to read the book to find instances of this. .