

'She wondered what her mother would have made of Amelia, Magnus, Gabriel, Clelia, and Annunciata, let alone Sebastian and Candida.'

Clara's mother would have made very little of them, but the girl from Northam was very much at home in their 'tender, blurred world'. After all, it was so much more 'real' than the world of the folks back home.

Clara could become the golden girl and have real affairs with married men, just like in the novels.

With this, her fourth novel, Margaret Drabble won the James Tait Black memorial prize for fiction.

Cover photograph by Bruce Rae