

## Clara's Liberation from Her Mother in *Jerusalem the Golden*

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### Introduction

Margaret Drabble comes to control increasingly her story in *Jerusalem the Golden* (1967), which is her fourth novel. She employs the third person narrator for the first time in her works. This technique expresses not only a transition but also an objective description of Drabble. The narration, however, is almost entirely from the viewpoint of the protagonist, Clara, not Drabble herself. Drabble comments that she had suffered from writing by using this technique.

*Jerusalem the Golden* I had many problems with. I had even more problems with my next novel *The Waterfall*, which I began to write in the third person thinking that I, by now, should be able to cope with the third person narration which does seem to me ultimately more satisfying than the first person. But after writing the opening section I found myself unable to continue. So I then switched to the first person narration, then I switched back to the third person in considerable confusion. It now looks as though it was a deliberate choice and that I had planned very carefully to write an experimental novel with alternating sections of narration. But in fact I have to confess that this arose out of my own feelings of anxiety about the work and my uncertainty as to whether the first or third person would work best. (Suga, 81)

This confusion and struggle extends through her career as a writer and leads her to the James Tait Black Memorial Award. Margaret Moan Rowe points out 'The third-person narration follows the social progress of Clara Maugham'. (Rowe, 425) In her comment, she depicts the social development of Drabble too, since 'the social progress' means escaping from subjectivity.

The alternation of writing method is not only in narrative but also in characterization. For example, Sarah who is the upper middle-class protagonist of *A Summer Bird-Cage*, studies English literature in Oxford University. She belongs to the educated and intellectual elite. Although some characters in earlier novels of Drabble are the elite, Clara Maugham is not so intelligent and wealthy. Drabble increases her capacity as a writer through *Jerusalem the Golden*. This thesis will present findings on her advancement from several points of view. Especially, the relationship between mother and daughter is a remarkable point.

## Mother and daughter

Clara Maugham detests her hometown, Northam where her family, especially her mother, lives. The atmosphere of her family is far from warm, with loveless, antisocial and mean attitudes. The family does not love and does not try to understand each other. From the sympathetic narrator's point of view, there appears to be no love for Clara from her parents. Her father keeps his children at a distance because he does not know a way of dealing with children. Clara's father is killed in a traffic accident when Clara is sixteen years old, so his existence in the novel is brief. His absence highlights the connection between Clara and her mother, Mrs. Maugham, and moreover, a relationship between siblings is a failure. Clara comes to believe that the intimacy between sister and brother does not exist except in the world of literature. At the beginning of this novel, she is obsessed with the origin of her name. 'For Mrs. Maugham did not like the name any more than Clara and her school friends did, and she chose it through a characteristic mixture of duty and malice.' (Drabble, 1) This passage reveals that Clara does not feel her mother's love. Drabble comments on the name of Clara in an interview. 'Clara in *Jerusalem the Golden* has been given a name which in England is extremely unusual and very unfashionable indeed.' (Suga, 94) From the point of 'unfashionable', Clara accepts her mother's love as 'malice'. Besides, she suspects even her own existence. She recognizes that 'whose [Clara's] only offences at that tender age were her existence and her sex.' (Drabble, 1) Her birth as a daughter causes the complicated association with her mother. By knowing the origin of the name, 'Clara', she cannot feel her mother's affection.

Karyl McBride, Ph.D. (2008), focuses on the mother-daughter relationship and 'a narcissistic mother', and states the reason for this study of mother and daughter:

A mother, however, is her daughter's primary role model for developing as an individual, lover, wife, mother, and friend, and aspects of maternal narcissism tend to damage daughters in particularly insidious ways. (McBride, 6)

Thus, the connection between them is the important theme in *Jerusalem the Golden*, too. The behavior of Mrs. Maugham influences Clara. McBride describes a characteristic of a narcissistic mother. 'A narcissistic mother sees her daughter, more than her son, as a reflection and extension of herself rather than as a separate person with her own identity.' (7) This tendency can be seen in the relationship between Clara and Mrs. Maugham. In spite of having two sons, she especially projects her existence on her daughter, Clara.

Projection is the best understood as a process by which a person takes her own emotions and sees them as coming from someone else, believing that the other person actually originated those emotions. People do this when they are not dealing with their own pain or inner conflicts and blame other people for their

own turmoil. Daughters of narcissistic mothers are generally the scapegoats for their mother's projections, including fragile ego and self-loathing. (156-7)

As Suhasini Tapaswi (2004) notes 'At every stage, Mrs. Maugham has derided and undermined her daughter' (Tapaswi, 54), Mrs. Maugham oppresses and tries to spoil her daughter's life. She derides Clara's attitude for everything, so Clara fears her opinion. For example, when Clara needs a party dress, which is required by school for school trip, Mrs. Maugham refuses to buy a new one and makes her daughter wear a secondhand dress, which is in their home. For another example, Mrs. Maugham is displeased at the intelligence of Clara when she gets a good score on a test. These facts explain that Mrs. Maugham hopes Clara does not become an attractive daughter. It is hard to face that fact since Mrs. Maugham could not drive her own life as she wished. Although she is an intellectual person, she cannot show this ability in her educated age. For women in 1920s, it is important to be housewife more than having intelligence. In addition to this fact, there is no proper environment for women studying at high levels. For these reasons, Mrs. Maugham becomes a wife and gives birth to three children. Then, her frustration is projected on Clara.

The mother-daughter relationship between Clara and Mrs. Maugham cannot get along well. They do not understand each other. Clara hopes to escape from an uncomfortable position and attach herself to her dreamlike world at the same time.

### **The Denhams**

Clara searches for her ideal world, where is written in 'Jerusalem the Golden/ With milk and honey blest' (Drabble, 27). This hymn, which J.M. Neale wrote, is Clara's favorite in grammar school. She imagines that there is another world, where she could live, somewhere. This hymn impresses Clara with the image, which is

not the pearly gates and crystal walls and golden towers of some heavenly city,  
but some truly terrestrial paradise, where beautiful people in beautiful houses  
spoke of beautiful things. (27)

Psalms 137 in Old Testament contains the word, 'Jerusalem' where is the symbol of richness because God lives there. Clara's desire for Utopia is similar to Babylonian captivity. Babylonians captured Jews from their home in Jerusalem and sent them to Babylon. Jews suffered in this environment and adorned for Jerusalem.

The encounter with the Denhams is salvation for Clara. She desires to approach and be accepted by persons who are sophisticated and intelligent. The members of Denham's family have artistic jobs such as writer, poet, and manager of an art gallery. In addition, this family is filled with love and always tries to understand each other deeply as if they had relations of 'incest' which the wife of Gabriel Denham dislikes. These facts fascinate Clara;

however, she is bound with a superficial idea.

The meeting with Clelia Denham is the beginning of the attachment, which Clara needs. Clelia is intense, smart, and communicative, and these characteristics are those which Clara desires. Especially, Clelia is similar to Clara in some points. In other words, Clara tries to imitate and absorb her behaviors. She is as old as Clara is, and her name is like Clara in pronunciation and spelling. However, how to decide their name is different. Mrs. Maugham named her daughter Clara 'through a characteristic mixture of duty and malice.' (1) She wants to baptize the daughter as soon as possible. It implies her unloving attitude, and later, Clara comes to think that she is not important to her mother. On the other hand, Mrs. Maugham takes considering a name and Clelia. Furthermore, Mrs. Denham may have chosen the name, Clara, which is another choice when 'looking for'. (90) Since a name expresses the roots of identity, this fact enhances the value of Clara and lets her feel comfortable. Mrs. Denham takes a role of Clara's ideal mother. These feminine relationships fill up Clara's expectation of connecting with her ideal mother and world. Then, Clara meets Gabriel Denham who is the other key person for her because he gratifies Clara's wishes.

### **Gabriel Denham**

Clara wants to be liberated by having the affair with Gabriel since she thinks that breaking a social rule makes her free. In the age when Clara was a student of grammar school, she notices the fact which 'the possession of big breasts, like the possession of tendency to acquire good examination results, implies power.' (41) This incident carries sexual awakening for Clara. Consequently, when a strange man touches her body, 'she acquires that the feeling of 'living' and 'the thick complexity of what had happened satisfied something in her that had never before had satisfaction.' (65) She is satisfied with recognizing her value as a woman. Before that, her power was intelligence, likewise a science technic. 'She liked it [to switch on a gas fire] also because of the power which she most rapidly acquired over Mrs. Hill, her science teacher: the first power of her [Clara's] life'. (31) It is useful for Clara to own sexual attraction and intelligence. Both of them value Clara in an androcentric society. Sexual awaking of Clara brings her the meaning and realization of life. Clara notices that expression of her attractive point is one step to self-realization. She desires to have sexual relationship with Gabriel because a love affair is one way that salvages her.

She describes impression of Gabriel as 'a paradise from which Gabriel had perhaps fallen, for she might surely never ascend?' (110) Clara explains Gabriel as a holy existence, like the archangel he is named for the name of Gabriel means the angel of the Annunciation who is a messenger of God. (Hallam, 93) The role of Gabriel brings good luck to Clara;

however, Gabriel in this novel is a 'fallen' angel because he is in a sexual relationship with Clara.

She thought, sitting next to him once more, of how beautifully his name reflected his ambivalent nature: she had always assumed that Gabriel was a girl's name, until enlightened by Thomas Hardy, just as she had always as a child assumed that angels were ladies. So beautiful, and with such long hair, what other could they be? And Gabriel, she felt, was drawn in more ways than one: she felt his nature, uncircumscribed, rich perpetually blessed by the possibility of choice. (116)

Her words 'ambivalent nature' echoes her image of Gabriel which implies femininity, in other words, the opposite sex of men. She thinks that ambivalence of his nature brings him perpetual happiness. This idea is based on an allegory of 'The Two Weeds' which is the most favorite story of Clara. This tale shocks her and satisfies profoundly. From this experience, she comes to prefer the complexity and ambivalence of everything. It seems to Clara that Gabriel has a complexity in part of him; therefore, she hopes to connect with Gabriel in complexity situation like an affair. Then, she experiences a trip to Paris with him. Through this travel, she feels 'free' (182) and realizes what she wants. 'It was not one man that she needed, but through one man a view of other things, a sensation of other ways of being, she wished to feel herself attached to the world.' (164) The main contributions of this experience is development of Clara to understand the vision of men.

#### **The settlement of the relationship between Clara and her mother**

In the last chapter of this novel, Clara succeeds in matricide as a symbol by going on a trip with Gabriel.

I have killed my mother. By willing her death, I have killed her. By taking her name in vain, I have killed her. She thought, let them tell me no more that we are free, we cannot draw a breath without guilt, for my freedom she dies. (185)

It implies her development, which she liberates from her mother with the sensation of guilty. After that, Clara finds her mother's verse, in which her mother seems to be filled with hope to marvelous future. 'O let us seek a brighter world/ Where darkness plays no part.' (190) Likewise this phrase, the ideal world of Clara which is 'terrestrial paradise' is similar to her mother. Both of them search for the Utopian world which is 'Jerusalem the Golden' in their realistic lives. Since the meaning of the name 'Clara' is 'bright', her mother may have desired Clara to obtain ideal world. Since Clara can find her 'decent' from this experience, her aspiration more grows bigger and she decides to live herself.

Her mother was dying, but she herself would survive it, she would survive even the guilt and convenience and grief of her mother's death, she would survive

because she had willed herself to survive, because she did not have it in her to die. Even the mercy and kindness of destiny she would survive; they would not get her that way, they would not get her at all. (200)

In the last sentence of this novel, Clara has strong will to live herself and it reveals revelation of Clara.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout this essay, the conflicts of Clara are described. In the beginning of this novel, there is the problem which is the relationship between Clara and her mother does not work well. Clara thinks that her mother does not love her; however it is not appropriate judgment. The reason for her mother names 'Clara' is that she entrusts her hope which she could not realize to Clara. Their dreams for a bright future are inherited from mother to daughter. It makes Clara satisfy by feeling the ties of blood and recognize their relationship.

The opposite family, the Denhams as if an inhabitant of Utopia, satisfies the desire of Clara. Especially, the value of Gabriel Denham leads her to individual stages. Clara's sexual attraction affects the relationship with Gabriel Denham; however, she does not seduce him since this connection is prepared by both of them. Gabriel, as a 'fallen' angel, hopes to escape from his own family, and this situation is similar to Clara. By this connection, Clara can realize what she wants to know and determine her will to 'survive' by herself. These main points create the liberation of Clara. From this result, Drabble tries to produce the character that will live powerful.

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