Why so many of the *protagonists* in *horror* films are mothers

Horror flicks, ***for all*** their ***sensationalist*** tendencies, have long ***interrogated*** expectations of motherhood. Pregnancy is shown not as a blessed state but as a dangerous, ***gory trauma***. Childbirth is frightening, and the resulting offspring often even more so. The assumption that women ought to become sweet, caring homemakers has been undermined by casting them as ***villains***.

protagonist　主角；主演

horror　惊骇；恐怖

for all　尽管

sensationalist　耸人听闻的；哗众取宠的

interrogate　审问；质问

gory　血淋淋的；残酷的

trauma　创伤

villain　坏人；恶棍

In recent years film-makers have returned to these ideas and put several mothers at the centre of stories.

The characters are often ***ambivalent*** about their responsibilities and the expectations placed on them. Both "The Babadook" (2014) and "***Hereditary***" (2018) include scenes in which the mother says the unsayable: they wish their children were dead, or had not been born.

ambivalent　矛盾的

hereditary　遗传的

Other films have cast women as formidable heroes. Evelyn (Emily Blunt), the survivalist mother in "A Quiet Place" (2018), helps to protect her family against monsters that hunt using sound. She gives birth noiselessly and without help, and takes charge when her husband dies.

Horror is most ***unsettling*** when it invites audiences to imagine danger in safe places, particularly the home, and so mothers make ideal protagonists. At the same time, these figures allow film-makers to undermine assumptions that women are vulnerable (especially when pregnant), weak and fearful, as well as the idea that motherhood is always a rewarding experience. This makes for complex and ***nuanced*** characters.

unsettling　使人不安的　　　　　　　nuanced　微妙的；有细微差别的