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**Murderous Mothers: The Problem of Parenting in the Victorian Novel**

Since the time of Cinderella, fictional heroines have struggled against destructive maternal figures to the accompaniment of sympathy from writer and reader. This figure so commonly structures the story of women that we fail to give it the critical attention it demands: we cheer the heroine, hiss the villainous mother, and lean back in our seats satisfied that we have served the cause of justice. But our reaction makes us complicit in a set of standards that merit questioning. A closer look at this figure suggests that the destructive maternal character often possesses revolutionary energy. The Terrible Mother, far from being an individual deviant, frequently embodies a radical indictment of her society.

The nineteenth-century novel, which relies as a staple on the story of the maturing and marriage of the young girl, provides us with a range of Terrible Mothers for scrutiny. These women enjoy many characteristics of the archetype as described by Erich Neumann. They are devouring or disinterested, malicious or neglectful; they pose a serious threat to the lives of their offspring.

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**凶残的母亲:维多利亚时代小说中的养育问题**

自灰姑娘时代起，小说中的女主人公就一直在作家和读者的同情的陪伴下与破坏性的母性人物进行斗争。在女性故事中，这个人物往往对剧情塑造起到重要作用，以至于我们没有给予她本该得到的批判性关注：我们欢呼女主人公，倒喝邪恶的母亲，然后放松后靠在座椅上，满意地认为我们实现了正义的使命。但我们的所作所为让自己也陷入了一种尚存质疑的标准之中。仔细审视这个人物就会发现，具有破坏性的母性角色往往具有革命性的能量。这个“糟糕母亲”不仅不是一个离群索异的个体，而且甚至还常常表现出对所处社会的激进控诉。

这部19世纪的小说以年轻女孩的成熟和婚姻故事为主线，向我们展示了一系列“糟糕母亲”，供我们仔细审视。这些女性所具有的许多特征都与埃利希·诺伊曼（Erich Neumann）所描写的原型很相似。她们贪婪或冷漠，恶毒或失职；她们对自己后代的生存构成了严重威胁。

When we consider particular cases, however, we cannot help but be struck by the peculiarities of the phenomenon. Despite appearances, Terrible Mothers are often inadvertently helpful to their daughters, and despite their rhetoric, Victorian novelists often reveal a deep ambivalence about these dangerous women, an ambivalence which asks us to attend to them more carefully.

The reasons for this peculiar ambivalence are embedded in the complex historical realities served by the ideal of the Good Mother. This ideal was promulgated, with particular fervor and political consequence, as a result of the rise of industrialization. The Good Mother–noble, nurturing, necessary-hovered over all strata of Victorian England. The working woman was barraged by Her:

“If she be a mother, still higher, nobler is her mission. If to the weak hands is entrusted the task of rearing the young immortals, for service here, and glory hereafter; if the gem be given to her to polish which shall one day sparkle in the crown of the Saviour, let her walk softly, for angels might envy her high vocation, and the almighty looks to see how she is nursing the child for Him.”

So, too, was her middle-class counterpart:

（接上段）然而，当我们考虑特殊情况时，却又不得不为这一现象的独特性感到震惊。不论表象如何，“糟糕母亲”们往往会在不经意间对女儿们起到帮助作用，而且尽管维多利亚时代的小说家们往往会使用夸张的语言来塑造这些危险的女性，他们往往表现出对这些角色深深的矛盾心理，这种矛盾心理要求我们更加审慎地解读她们。

这种特殊的矛盾心理，究其原因，还是因为在复杂的历史现实中，“好母亲”这种理想状态根深蒂固。在工业化兴起的背景下，人们带着极大热情和政治目的对这一理想状态进行大肆宣扬。这类“好母亲”——高尚、慈爱、不可或缺——存在于维多利亚时代英国的各个阶层。各行各业的妇女都受到了“她”的裹挟：

“如果一名女性是母亲，那么变得更卓越，更高尚就是她的使命。如果把养育一代又一代年轻人的任务托付给这双柔弱的手，那么此刻的付出会在未来报以荣耀；如果交给她擦拭的那颗宝石有一天会在救世主冠冕上闪闪发光，那就让她不声不张地走吧，因为天使会嫉妒她~~的~~高尚的职业，全能的上帝也会注视着她，看她怎样为自己养育子子孙孙。”

与她相对应的中产阶级也是如此：

“The most anxious, however, if not the most important duty of married life, is that which is due to children, and which in their early years principally devolves upon the mother. None can supply her place, none can feel her interest; and as in infancy a mother is the best nurse so in childhood she is the best guardian and instructuress.”

The ideal of the Good Mother served a coherent system: with the world divided between public and private spheres, pressure was on the latter to compensate for the increasing ravages of the former. The Angel in the House was caught in a dialectical dance with the demons at the door. The Good Mother was a guardian of the hearth, a refuge from the harshness of the new industrialization: "This is the nature of home–it is the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt and division. In so far as it is not this, it is not home." Because the fantasy of such a shelter compensated for the "terror, doubt, and division" of the workplace, the seemingly apolitical ideal of the Good Mother was actually charged with political and economic implications.

“然而，在婚姻生活中，即便不是最重要的责任，最令人担忧的也是应由孩子来承担的责任，而这些责任在孩子幼年时期主要落在了母亲的肩上。没有人能代替她的位置，也没有人能感受到她的快乐；就像在婴儿时期，母亲是最好的保姆，在童年时期，她也是最好的监护人和老师。”

“好母亲”的理想状态有助于形成一个连贯的体系：当世界被划分为公共领域和私人领域时，后者就面临这样一种压力，即弥补前者所遭到的日益严重的破坏。这个“房中天使”被困在与门外恶魔们的舞蹈中，进行着思维上的交织。“好母亲”是传统壁炉的守护者，是躲避新型工业化严酷环境的避难所：“这就是家的本质——安宁之地；在这个避难所，不仅可以躲避所有的伤害，还可以逃离所有的恐惧、怀疑和分裂。一个家庭，如果做不到如此，那就不能算家。”因为这种对避难所的构想弥补了工作场所的“恐惧、怀疑和分裂”，“好母亲”这种看似与政治无关的理想状态，实际上受到了政治和经济影响。

A complete examination of these implications lies outside the domain of this paper, but we can note several instances which suggest their scope. The ideal of the Good Mother was often invoked, at the expense of actual mothers, to support male economic interests. For example, we find appeals to the ideal of the Good Mother employed to dissuade mothers from working. Impassioned appeals to maternal devotion and diatribes against working mothers greeted the devastating statistics about the rising infant mortality rate, but the rhetoric invites suspicion. Victorians, in fact, were remarkably complacent about the exploitation and death of children: on one day in February 1814, for example, five children were condemned to death at the Old Bailey for petty larceny. Such evidence has invited historians to speculate that the dedication and skills of working mothers were felt more seriously as a threat to men's jobs than to children's lives. Infant mortality may have been the occasion for which the ideal was invoked; the protection of male economic interest was the more likely motive. That the ideal of the Good Mother camouflaged male interests is further suggested by the divorce laws of the time.

尽管对于上文中这些可能存在的因素，本文并不欲进行详尽研究，但是我们可以通过几个实例来稍作探究。为了支持男性经济利益，人们常常援引理想型的“好母亲”，于是牺牲了现实生活中的母亲们。例如，我们发现，这种对理想型“好母亲”的呼吁阻碍了母亲走向职场。面对统计数据中婴儿死亡率持续攀升这一现实，人们慷慨激昂地呼唤着母亲的奉献精神，并对职场母亲进行抨击，但这些言辞却引起了人们的质疑。事实上，维多利亚时代的人对儿童受到剥削和死亡的情况非常自满：例如，1814年2月的一天，5名儿童因轻微盗窃罪在伦敦中央刑事法庭(Old Bailey)被判处死刑。根据此类证据，历史学家们推测，比起对孩子生命的威胁，职场母亲的奉献精神和技能在人们心中更是对男性工作的威胁。虽然婴儿日益升高的死亡率可能是人们呼吁这一理想型的原因；但保护男性的经济利益才可能是其背后最重要的动机。通过当时的离婚法，我们也能进一步看到，对理想型“好母亲”的呼吁掩盖了对男性利益的维护。

(Continue) For all the insistence on the beneficence of maternal childcare and despite instances which outraged even the judges handing down the rulings, the divorce laws discriminated against maternal custody until 1925. This typical endorsement of male prerogative raises questions about the sincerity of the prevalent propaganda.

Nonetheless, the rhetoric was not totally hypocritical. The interests it defended were merely more complex than it could afford to admit. The intensity of propagandistic appeals to maternal duty throughout the century suggests the centrality of the stable home and family in Victorian culture. Still concern for these at times assumed the characteristics of hysteria. While hunger, disease, and dangerous housing were recognized as necessitating state aid to the children of the poor, a terror of the effect of such aid on the stability of the family froze the machinery of the state. Celebrations of the warmth and efficacy of mothers, as opposed to the coldness of government aid, framed the state's defense of its inaction. Such questionable reasoning which preserved the myth of maternal child care at the expense of the reality encourages a skeptical attitude toward the cult of the Good Mother: whose interest does this ideal woman serve?

（接上段）尽管人们一直坚持母亲照顾孩子是有益的，尽管有些案例甚至激怒了做出裁决的法官，但直到1925年，离婚法都对母亲的监护权存在歧视。这种对男性特权的一贯维护引发了人们对普遍宣传真诚性的质疑。

尽管如此，这种说法也并不完全是虚伪的。只不过是，它所维护的利益比其所能承认的更为复杂而已。整个世纪对母亲职责的强烈宣传诉求表明了，在维多利亚文化中，稳定的家庭占据了中心地位。对这些问题的关注有时带有一些歇斯底里的特征。虽然饥饿、疾病和危房被认为是贫困儿童获得国家援助的必要条件，但由于人们担心这种援助会对家庭的稳定产生影响，政府机构就暂停了这一政策。与政府援助的冷漠相比，国家通过大肆宣扬母亲们的温情和作用来对其自身的不作为进行辩护。以牺牲现实为代价来保留母亲育儿神话的，这种可疑的论调激起了人们对“好母亲”崇拜的怀疑态度：这些理想型女人究竟在为谁的利益服务?

Even a dim awareness of such historical circumstances might explain ambivalence in an artist treating the ideal of the Good Mother or her terrible counterpart. Victorian novelists were certainly not immune to the prevalent propaganda; celebrations of contented mothering are frequent in the fiction of the time.  
 Bella Wilfer in Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*, free from her mistaken, lofty ambitions, studies furiously to express her joy as John Rokesmith’s poor wife and the mother of his child. Thackeray’s Amelia Sedley in *Vanity Fair*, scrounging, economizing, sacrificing everything for her child, is but another example of the type. The ideal ignores class boundaries: Lady Jane, the wife of Pitt Crawley in the same novel, is all gentleness and mildness, severe only in the protection of her home and in outrage against Becky's cruelty toward her child and husband.

The cult of the Good Mother achieves its ultimate expression just after the turn of the century in Lawrence's apostrophe to Anna, the resolute mother of *The Rainbow*:

一个人即使只是对这样的历史背景有一些模糊的认识，也大概可以解释文学家对待理想型“好母亲”和其相对的“糟糕母亲”的矛盾心理。维多利亚时代的小说家当然不能幸免于四处充斥的思想宣传；在那个时代的小说中，颂扬母亲贴心呵护的这一主题比比皆是。

在狄更斯的作品《我们共同的朋友》中，贝拉·威尔弗（Bella Wilfer）从她错误的、高傲的野心中解脱出来，疯狂地学习，以表达她作为约翰·洛克史密斯（John Rokesmith）可怜的妻子和孩子的母亲的喜悦。在《名利场》中，萨克雷塑造的阿米莉亚·赛德丽（Amelia Sedley）这一角色四处乞讨，省吃俭用，为孩子牺牲一切，不过是另一个典型罢了。这种理想状态忽略了阶级界限：在同一部小说中，皮特·克劳利（Pitt Crawley）的妻子简女士是非常温柔和善的，只有在保护自己的家庭时才会态度强硬，也只有在愤怒的贝基残害她的孩子和丈夫时才会无比愤怒。

文学作品中最后一次表达对“好母亲”的狂热追捧，是在在世纪之交之后。在劳伦斯的《彩虹》中，他对安娜这个果决的母亲是这样描写的：

There was another child coming, and Anna lapsed into vague content. If she were not the wayfarer to the unknown, if she were arrived now, settled in her builded house, a rich woman, still her doors opened under the arch of the rainbow, her threshold reflected the passing of the sun and moon, the great travellers, her house was full of the echo of journeying.

She was a door and a threshold, she herself. Through her another soul was coming, to stand upon her as upon the threshold, looking out, shading its eyes for the direction to take.  
 Anna's Victorian predecessors enjoy a similar stability and lack of self-consciousness; but they are rarely treated to such a powerful celebration. Instead the Milquetoast consistency of many Victorian Good Mothers raises questions about the vigor of the ideal which they embody; and these questions are echoed by other peculiarities surrounding the treatment of mothers in fiction throughout the century.

又一个孩子来到这个世界上，安娜陷入了茫然的状态。假如她不是朝着未知走去的旅人，假如她现在已经到达目的地，在自己建造的房子里定居下来，成为一个富有的女人，她仍然在彩虹拱门下敞开着房门，门槛见证着太阳和月亮的一次次路过，它们是最棒的旅人。她的房子充满了旅行的回声。

她自己就是一扇门，就是一道门槛。另一个灵魂从她身边走来，立于她之上，就像站在门槛上一样，手搭在眼睛上方遮着光，向外张望着，找寻着方向。

与维多利亚时代的前辈们一样，安娜也稳定而缺乏自我意识；但她们很少会受到如此隆重的颂扬。相反，许多维多利亚时代的“好母亲”们都十分卑微，这就引发了关于她们所体现的理想活力的问题；这些问题在整个时代的小说中都反映在对待母亲独特的态度上。

According to standard rhetoric, the loss of a Good Mother is crippling to the child, but despite their postures of pity, nineteenth-century novels resound with the success of orphans. Jane Eyre, Emma, Dinah Morris, Becky Sharp – all have the absence of a mother to thank for their social mobility. While Thackeray explicitly regrets Becky's orphan status, his regret is blatantly insincere. Without a mother, Becky is free to manipulate her audience: her actual mother, an opera girl, would have prohibited her access to the households in which Becky's fictional mother – a French lady – is an added charm. Similarly Jane Eyre's status as an orphan forces her to travel and thus to acquire the knowledge she needs to effect a personally and socially successful marriage. The conjunction of motherlessness and power so frequently enjoyed by the novel's heroine implies an experience familiar to contemporary women – that the life of the mother necessarily impinges on the life of the child. Dickens, in general so ignorant about women, understood this perfectly and gave voice to it on the assumptions governing the life of Georgiana Podsnap:

在通常的文学作品中，失去一个“好母亲”对孩子来说会造成严重的后果，但是尽管作家们出怜悯的姿态，19世纪的小说中仍然充斥着孤儿的成功。简·爱、艾玛、黛娜·莫里斯、贝基·夏普——她们都因为没有母亲而实现了社会阶层的流动。虽然萨克雷明确表示为贝基的孤儿身份感到遗憾，但他的遗憾显然是不真诚的因为没有母亲，贝基可以随心所欲地操纵她的玩弄对象：她真实的母亲是一个歌剧演员，所以肯定不会让她进入那些家庭，而贝基自己虚构出来的母亲——一位法国女士——则为她增添了魅力。同样，简·爱的孤儿身份迫使她去旅行，从而获得她所需要的知识，由此促成了个人和社会意义上都十分成功的婚姻。小说中的女主人公经常具备的母爱缺失与权力的结合暗示了一种现代女性所熟悉的经历——母亲的生活必然会影响到孩子的生活。总体看来，狄更斯对女人一无所知，但他完全理解这一点，并通过支配乔治亚娜·波德一生那些假设来表现出来：