



Death and the Mother from Dickens to Freud: Victorian Fiction and the Anxiety of Origins (Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture)

By Carolyn Dever

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Victorian culture is famous for its idealization of mothers and families, yet the popular novels of this period frequently feature mothers who are dead or otherwise absent. Through an analysis of the work of Dickens, Collins, Eliot, Darwin and Woolf, Carolyn Dever discusses this apparent paradox. She shows how the idealized dead mother is fundamental to the Victorians' idea of origins, and later becomes the central figure of Freudian psychoanalysis. Dever demonstrates that Victorian literature and psychoanalysis have much to teach us about each other.

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"Carolyn Dever's book is well-researched and excellent study about the actual medical and idealized literary versions of mothers dying in childbirth in Victorian England." Monika Elbert, Journal of the Association for Research in Mothering

"...[an] often brilliantly illuminating, always compelling discussion of the significance of maternal death in Victorian narrative. Dever's close, theoretically sophisticated, often delightfully witty readings display both her originality and her synthetic skill. Her analysis of the analysts is a tour de force (she is a superb reader of Klein in particular), and her discussion of Victorian narrative as an elaborate fort-da game - where the mother's absence is controlled and displaced by its representation - is splendid." Eileen Gilloly, Victorian Studies

"Carolyn Dever's *Death and the Mother from Dickens to Freud: Victorian Fiction and the Anxiety of Origins* is a shrewd and elegant account of the meaning of maternal loss in psychoanalysis...and in *Bleak House*, *The Woman in White*, *Daniel Deronda*, Charles Darwin's *Autobiography*, and *To the Lighthouse*. Dever understands Freudian psychoanalytic theory and the Victorian novel to dwell within a common horizon of cultural assumptions, which is why she is able so persuasively to read Freud's case studies as exemplifying mid-Victorian fictional tropes." Linda Dowling, *Studies in English Literature*

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