

Unit 3

Projection¹

Week 3_Wen Wen

- **Enquiry**

As Evil Women (悪女) gain growing popularity in TV and film, are we merely replacing old stereotypes with new biases?

- **Target Audience**

Young cultural creators and female audiences who are aware of patriarchal narrative patterns and find empowerment in female villains nowadays.

1. The Limitations of the Evil Woman

In popular media, a female villain is often labelled an “Evil Woman”. In mainstream storytelling, she is usually framed as a villain because she is **highly self-centred, ambitious, and close to power**. She is also often made “understandable” through either **beauty, pity, or a tragic past**.

What audiences condemn is not only her harm to others, but her rejection of what women are expected to be: caring, sexually modest, passive, and self-sacrificing – or to say, **be a mother**. In this sense, she becomes the **opposite of the patriarchal ideal**.

MONSTERS

A Fan's Dilemma



CLAIRE DEDERER

Dederer begins by listing the monstrous acts of male artists like Picasso and Woody Allen – crimes such as abuse and assault – distancing herself from such extremes. Yet, she argues that as a creator, she too is a “monster”. She asserts that while talent and grit matter, the primary necessity for a professional creator is selfishness: the act of closing the door on one’s family or ignoring the pram to focus on work.

Society defines "Motherhood" as total selflessness, whereas "Artistry" demands absolute selfishness. Furthermore, "ambition" is a compliment for men, but for women, it is often pathologised as a psychological “symptom”.

For modern audiences, the "evil" in these female antagonists has become a synonym for agency. We no longer see mere villainy; we see a manifesto for self-interest and a rejection of the "maternal contract".

Monsters: A Fan's Dilemma
Claire Dederer, published in 2023





When I started out,
people said a woman could never rob a bank
as well as a man.
Well, times change.



The Madwoman in the Attic

The Woman Writer and the
Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar

with an Introduction by Lisa Appignanesi



The authors use the "Magic Mirror" from Snow White as a metaphor for male-dominated narrative and authority. To regulate women, male narratives create two extreme archetypes: The Angel and The Monster.

The Angel (Snow White) is passive, selfless, and "dead-quiet". When a woman displays initiative, desire, or creativity, she "falls" from grace to become a Monster (The Queen). This theory highlights the historical lack of complexity in female characters and the binary nature of the "Villainess" archetype.

The Madwoman in the Attic

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, published in 2020

2. The Threshold of "Evil"

Today's enthusiasm for female villains often relies on sympathy or aesthetic pleasure: "she is terrible, but she is beautiful", or "she is cruel, but she suffered". Besides, some viewers support them because they represent rare moments of female subjectivity inside a patriarchal narrative system.

However, audiences can often accept male villains as purely evil, ordinary, or even pathetic. Can we accept a selfish female villain who is not beautiful, not pitiable, and not shaped by tragedy? If not, then the "evil woman" may still follow a compensation rule: her ambition and selfishness must be balanced by extreme beauty or extreme suffering. This suggests she is still not allowed to be simply ordinary in her evil – ordinary in the way a person can be.

2. The Threshold of "Evil"

If we remove beauty and victimhood, would we still feel drawn to the “evil woman”?

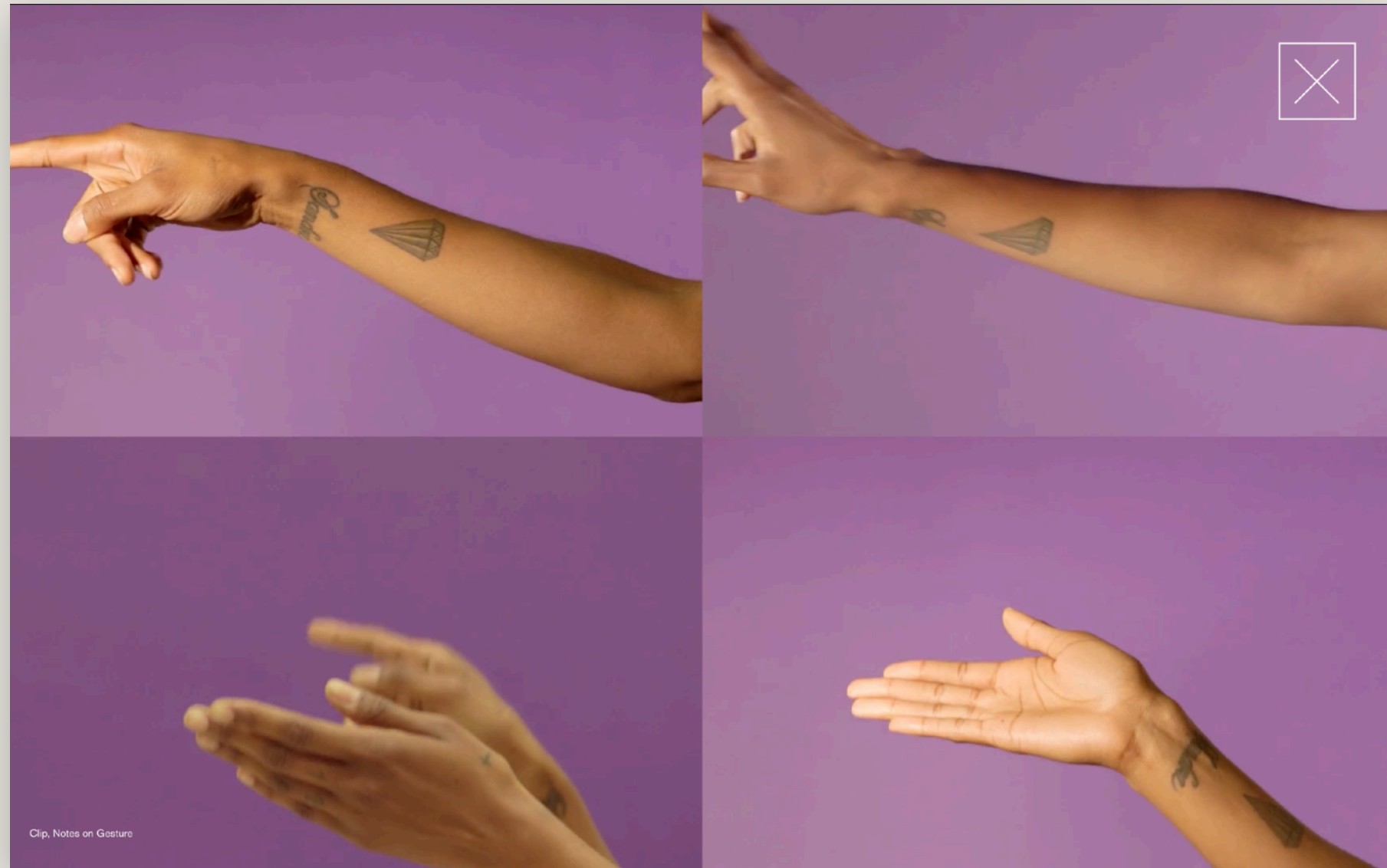


Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks
[4-channel video installation (color, sound), wall painting, color window film, 10:27 minute loop]
Martine Syms, 2015



In this exhibition, Wearing uses Deepfake AI and silicone masks to inhabit various roles: family members, celebrities of different genders, and herself at different ages. She challenges the boundary between reality and artifice, revealing how easily identity can be manipulated. Wearing suggests that masks are not for deception, but a necessary "shell" required to appear in society.

She retains the visual stereotypes of the original identity as recognisable symbols while maintaining her own "gaze". This led me to ask: if I preserve only the iconic symbols of a villain's "evil" acts, can the audience still identify the "villainy" through these fragmented parts?



This short film records a Black woman repeating a series of gestures against a purple backdrop. Syms fragments these movements, echoing the staccato rhythm of a GIF, to explore how gestures construct and convey Black femininity. She examines how specific movements are coded and stereotyped by the media.

Notes on Gesture

[4-channel video installation (color, sound), wall painting, color window film, 10:27 minute loop]

Martine Syms, 2015

Première, you are really my good sister.
Even after so many years of death,
You can still help me and protect me.



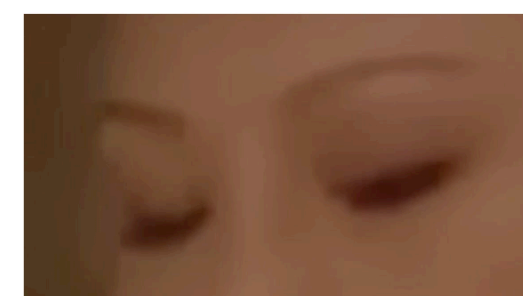
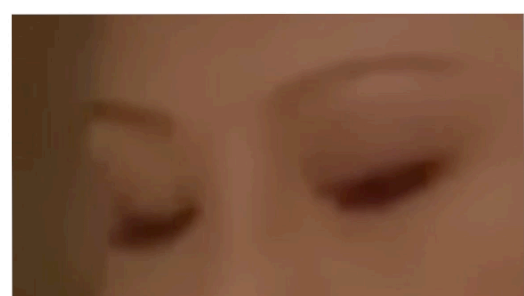
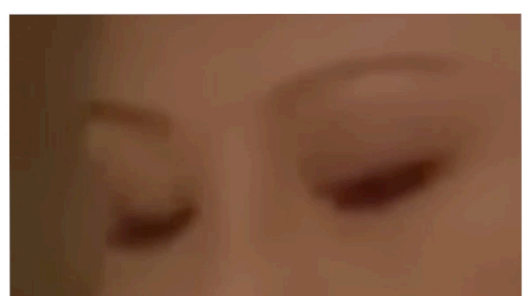
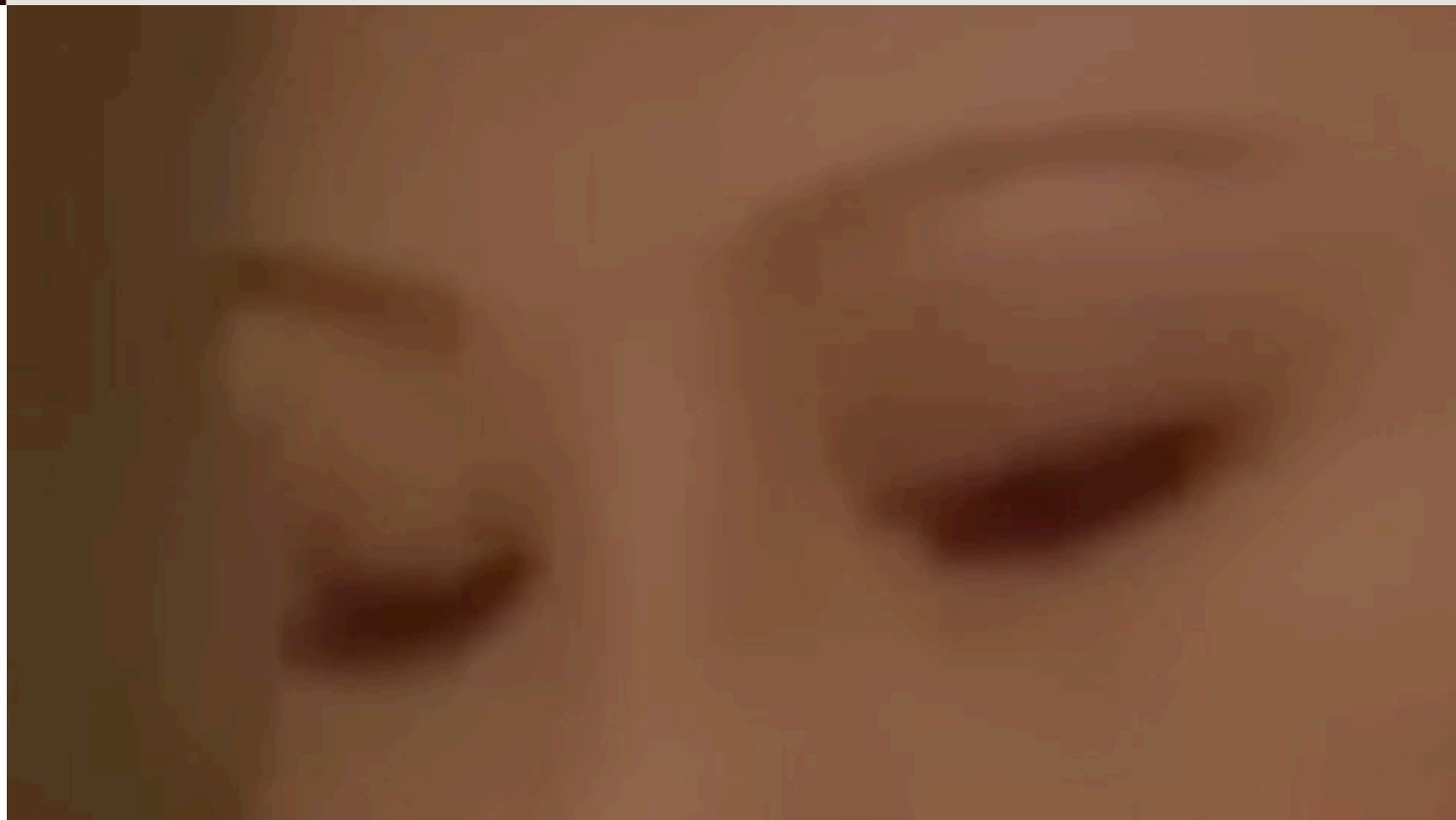






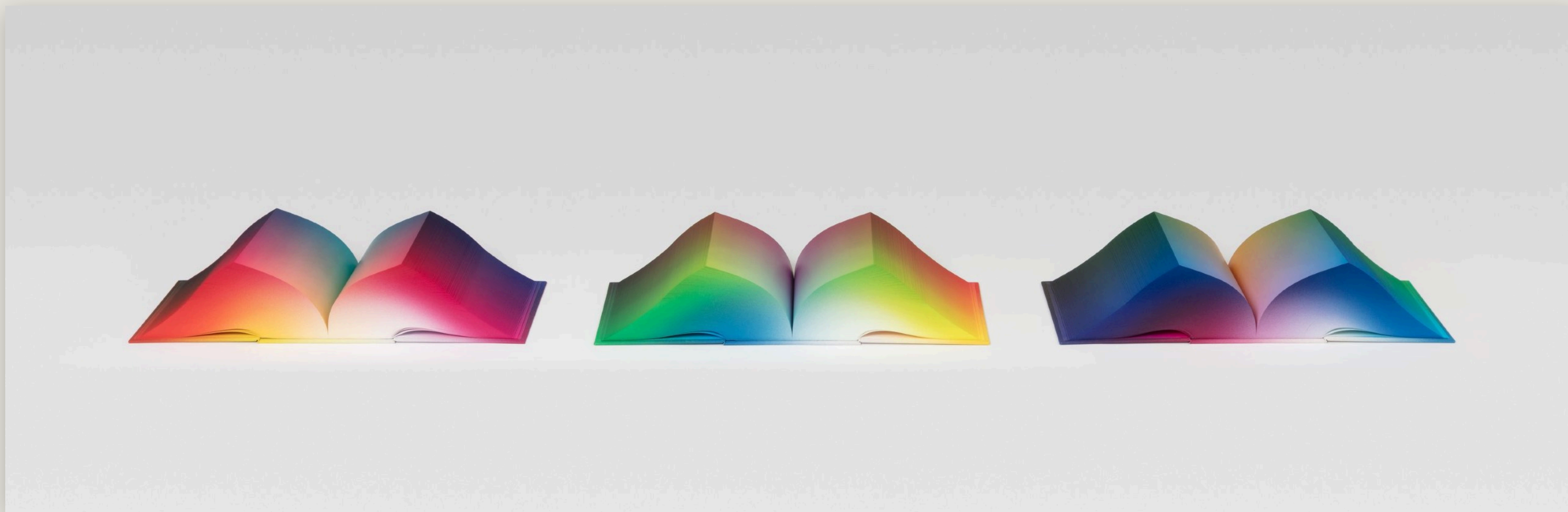


Première, you are really my good sister.
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3. When the “Evil Woman” becomes a new bias

If the “evil woman” becomes a repeated popular symbol, a new bias may be produced: only women who are destructive, ruthless, and highly aggressive are seen as truly subjective. Women are then pushed from one extreme – being watched as “angels” – to another extreme – being celebrated as “fascinating monsters”. In both cases, **the wide middle ground is still missing**: everyday, ordinary subjectivity, simply as a human being.



Auerbach translates the abstract, invisible RGB color model into a tangible, 3D cube of books. It demonstrates that no color exists in isolation; personality should be viewed with the same full-spectrum continuity.

However, binary female characters lack this completeness. Like the cube, the "transitional colors" (ordinary agency) are hidden inside and ignored, while only the "extreme edges" (pure evil or pure virtue) are consumed.



RGB Colorspace Atlas
[Three books, 8x8x8 inches each]
Tauba Auerbach, 2011

播放按钮 自动刷新 Confusion file

p5.js 1.11.11 设置按钮

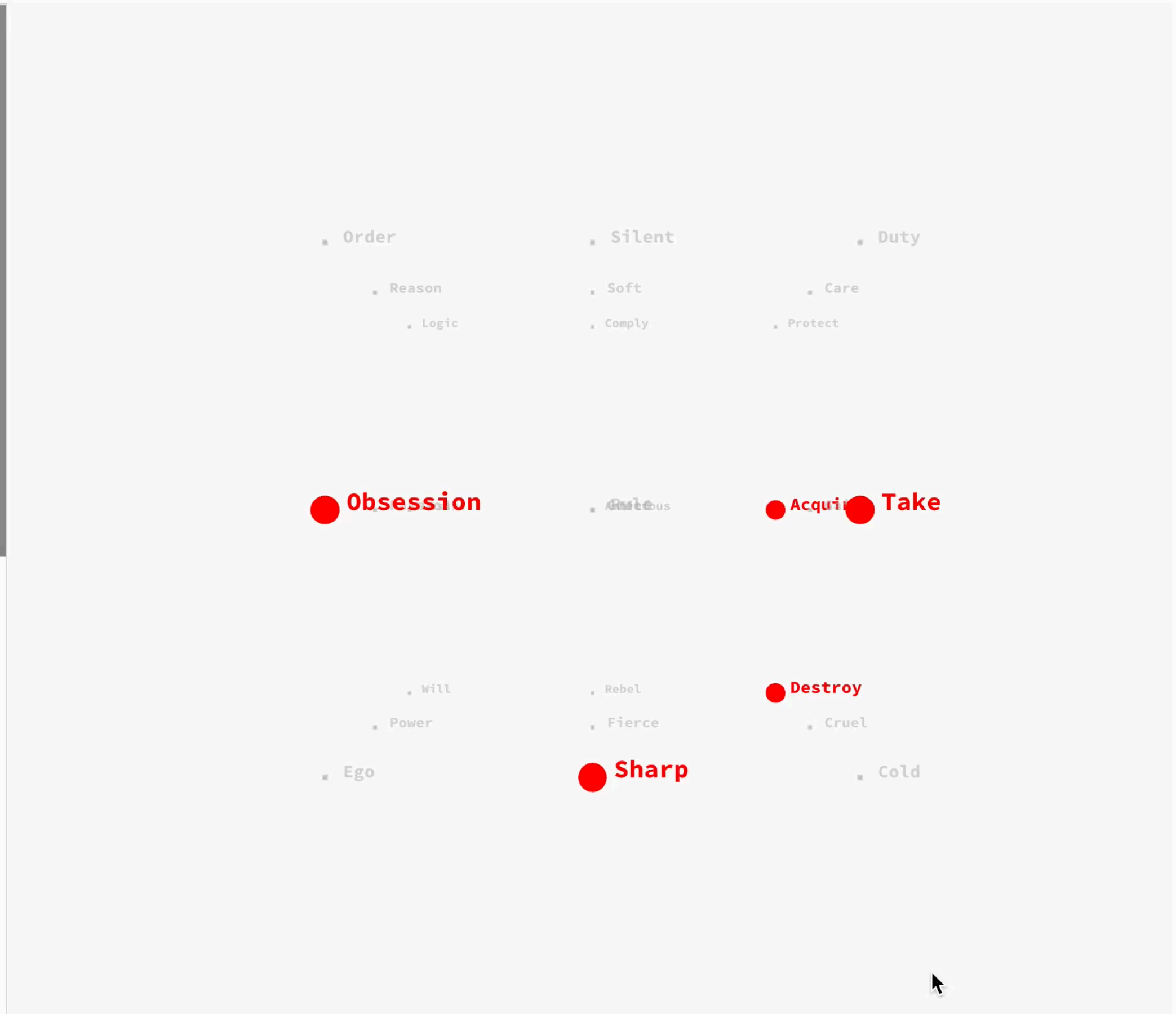
sketch.js

预览

```

1 let dim = 3;
2 let spacing = 150;
3 let myFont;
4
5 // 27个独立词汇, 分布在 3x3x3 的空间中
6 // 逻辑: X轴(内心), Y轴(社会), Z轴(行为)
7 let words = [
8   "Logic", "Reason", "Order",      // X=0 (理智区)
9   "Desire", "Passion", "Obsession", // X=1 (欲望区)
10  "Will", "Power", "Ego",          // X=2 (意志区)
11
12  "Comply", "Soft", "Silent",       // Y=1
13  "Ambitious", "Greed", "Rule",     // Y=2
14  "Rebel", "Fierce", "Sharp",      // Y=3
15
16  "Protect", "Care", "Duty",        // Z=1
17  "Acquire", "Gain", "Take",        // Z=2
18  "Destroy", "Cruel", "Cold"       // Z=3
19 ];
20
21 // 标红的特质坐标 (代表宜修: 意志、野心、权力、冷酷等)
22 let activePoints = ["2,1,2", "2,1,0", "0,1,2", "1,2,2", "2,2,0"];
23
24 function preload() {
25   // 使用 CDN 字体确保加载
26   myFont =
27   loadFont('https://cdnjs.cloudflare.com/ajax/libs/topcoat/0.8.0/font/SourceCodePro-Bold.otf');
28 }
29 function setup() {
30   createCanvas(800, 700, WEBGL);
31   textFont(myFont);
32   textSize(14);
33 }
34
35 function draw() {
36   background(250);
37
38   // 开启鼠标交互控制旋转, 不自动旋转

```



控制台 清空

>

Conclusion/Questions

Overall, my enquiry develops in three steps:

1. **Essence:** Is the label “evil woman” essentially a judgement that she has failed an expected duty of care, especially a duty tied to motherhood?
2. **Threshold:** Does public tolerance of female ambition depend on her aesthetic value, or on a victim narrative that makes her “deserving” of sympathy?
3. **New Bias:** When the “evil woman” becomes fashionable, are we expanding female subjectivity? Or creating a new stereotype that restricts it again?

- Dederer, C. (2023) 'AM I a Monster?', in *Monsters: A Fan's Dilemma*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, pp. 139–151.
- Gilbert, S.M. and Gubar, S. (2020) 'The queen's looking glass: female creativity, male images of women, and the metaphor of literary paternity', in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 3–44. Available at: ProQuest Ebook Central (Accessed: 28 January 2026).
- Wearing, G. (2021–2022) *Gillian Wearing: Wearing Masks* [Exhibition]. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. 5 November, 2021 – 4 April, 2022. Available at: <https://www.guggenheim.org/video/gillian-wearing-wearing-masks> (Accessed: 28 January 2026).
- Syms, M. (2015) *Notes on Gesture* [Video installation]. In: *Borrowed Lady* [Exhibition]. Audain Gallery, Vancouver. 13 October–10 December 2016. Available at: <https://shopgoldenage.com/martinesy.ms/projects/notes-on-gesture> (Accessed: 28 January 2026).
- Auerbach, T. (2011) *RGB Colorspace Atlas* [Art book]. Available at: <https://taubaauerbach.com/view.php?id=286&alt=2946> (Accessed: 28 January 2026).