

# The Implicated Subject: Psychoanalytic Interrogation of the Six-Word Film "He Dreamed The Library Dreamed Him"

April 8, 2025

## Abstract

This essay analyzes the experimental six-word film "He Dreamed The Library Dreamed Him" through a Lacanian psychoanalytic framework. It argues that the film explores the imbrication of the subject within a symbolic order (the Library), highlighting the alienation inherent in entering language and the illusory nature of autonomy. The film, therefore, does not merely depict a dreamer \*in\* a library, but a subject constituted \*by\* its symbolic environment, a condition of intersubjectivity so profound it questions the very boundaries of self and other. This interpretation challenges conventional readings that prioritize individual agency and narrative coherence, instead emphasizing the film's deconstruction of the subject as a unified entity.

## 1 Introduction: The Six-Word Film and the Impossible Real

### 1.1 The Compressed Narrative: Defining the Six-Word Film (0:00-0:05)

The cinematic landscape has long been defined by its capacity for expansive storytelling, for the weaving of intricate narratives that unfold over hours, if not entire series. Yet, the avant-garde has consistently challenged these conventions, seeking to distill the essence of cinematic expression into increasingly concise forms. From the early experiments of structural film to the more recent proliferation of micro-cinema, filmmakers have explored the limits of narrative compression, questioning the very notion of what constitutes a "story" in the moving image. Within this ongoing project of formal experimentation, the "six-word film" emerges as a particularly intriguing, and inherently paradoxical, genre. Echoing, and explicitly engaging with, the famous six-word story attributed to Ernest Hemingway ("For sale: baby shoes, never worn"), the six-word film seeks to encapsulate a complete narrative arc – or, perhaps more accurately, the \*suggestion\* of one – within the constraints of six carefully chosen words, integrated into a short filmic form. This is not merely a literary exercise transposed onto the screen, but a distinctly cinematic endeavor, one that leverages the power of visual imagery, sound design, and editing to amplify the resonance of these six linguistic signifiers.

The constraints of the six-word limit act as a profound provocation to cinematic language. The filmmaker is forced to abandon traditional exposition, character development, and plot progression, instead relying on implication, suggestion, and the viewer's own interpretative agency. This recalls Deleuze's concept of the "movement-image," particularly as expounded in *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*. Deleuze argues that classical cinema is characterized by a sensory-motor schema, where actions are directly linked to perceptions, creating a sense of linear causality. However, the six-word film actively disrupts this schema. The limited narrative information forces the viewer to fill in the gaps, to construct their own connections between the images and the words. In essence, the six-word film becomes a site of active co-creation, where the viewer is not merely a passive recipient of information, but an active participant in the narrative process. The film itself functions as a kind of Rorschach test, projecting the viewer's own experiences, desires, and anxieties onto the fragmented cinematic text. The relationship between image and text becomes inherently unstable. Are the words meant to clarify the image or deliberately obfuscate? Is it a causal relationship or a deliberate red herring that forces the viewer to perform the semiotic labor of sense-making? The beauty of this approach is the way the lack of structure pushes the viewer from passive consumption to active engagement and co-creation.

Furthermore, the inherent ambiguity and interpretative openness of the six-word film form render it particularly fertile ground for experimentation. Unlike more conventional narrative forms, which aim to provide a clear and definitive resolution, the six-word film thrives on uncertainty and irresolution. It embraces the power of suggestion, leaving the viewer to grapple with multiple possible interpretations,

each equally valid, yet none entirely satisfactory. This aligns with the broader trend in experimental cinema towards undermining traditional notions of narrative closure and embracing the power of ambiguity and open-endedness. The film invites the viewer to linger in a state of uncertainty, to contemplate the multiple possibilities inherent within the fragmented cinematic text. This creates a uniquely engaging and intellectually stimulating viewing experience, one that challenges the viewer to question their own assumptions about narrative, representation, and the nature of cinematic meaning. By rejecting the conventional need to neatly wrap up a story the genre opens itself up to a level of engagement that few other genres have.

The film under analysis, henceforth referred to as "The Library Dream," with its six-word core, "He dreamed the library dreamed him," serves as a prime example of the genre's potential. The phrase immediately conjures a complex web of philosophical and psychological questions, challenging our assumptions about subjectivity, reality, and the nature of the self. It suggests a blurring of boundaries between the individual and the environment, a state of profound intersubjectivity where the dreamer is not merely dreaming *of* the library, but is, in some sense, being dreamed *by* it. This seemingly simple phrase opens up a vast and complex terrain of interpretative possibilities, inviting us to explore the deeper implications of the film's visual and auditory landscape.

The initial impressions of "The Library Dream" are striking. The film opens in darkness, a pervasive sense of gloom that permeates every scene. The color palette is muted and desaturated, dominated by shades of brown, grey, and black, creating a somber and oppressive atmosphere. Books are a recurring motif, appearing in various forms and contexts throughout the film. From the ancient tome that the man is reading in the opening scene (0:00-0:05) to the seemingly endless rows of shelves in the circular library (0:06), books serve as both a physical and symbolic presence, representing knowledge, history, and the weight of the past. Figures are also prominent, often depicted in silhouette or obscured by shadows, further contributing to the film's atmosphere of mystery and unease. The film's opening immediately calls to mind the work of the surrealist artist Salvador Dali and sets the tone for a film that is more about feeling and suggestion than linear narrative.

The film's opening scene (0:00-0:05) establishes a mood of hushed intensity. A lone man, his face partially obscured by shadow, sits at a wooden table, engrossed in reading a massive, leather-bound book. The lighting is dim and atmospheric, casting long shadows across the table and the surrounding room. The only source of illumination appears to be a single lamp, its warm glow highlighting the pages of the book and the man's focused expression. The scene is intimate and claustrophobic, creating a sense of isolation and confinement. The man appears to be entirely absorbed in his reading, oblivious to the world outside. This initial image serves as a microcosm of the film's broader themes, suggesting a world where the individual is trapped within the confines of their own mind, lost in the labyrinthine corridors of knowledge and memory. The very opening seconds of the film establish the world as one of dark secrets and intense learning.

## 1.2 Hypothesis: Subjective Alienation and the Symbolic Order

The central argument of this essay is that "The Library Dream" stages the subject's alienated entry into the symbolic order, a process that is both constitutive and profoundly disruptive. The film, through its visual and auditory language, explores the imbrication of the individual within a system of signs, laws, and language, highlighting the inherent limitations and contradictions of human subjectivity. It is not merely a depiction of a dreamer *in* a library, but a profound meditation on the ways in which the library, as a symbol of the symbolic order itself, actively *shapes* and *defines* the dreamer's very being. In essence, the film proposes that the self is not a pre-existing entity, but a construct of the symbolic order, a product of language and social relations.

To unpack this argument, we will draw upon the theoretical framework of Lacanian psychoanalysis, paying particular attention to the concepts of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. Lacan argues that the human subject is constituted through a series of stages, beginning with the Imaginary, a realm of primary identification and narcissistic mirroring. In this stage, the infant experiences itself as a unified whole, but this is merely an illusion, based on a misrecognition of the self in the mirror image. The next stage, the Symbolic, marks the subject's entry into language and the realm of social relations. This is a traumatic process, as it involves a separation from the Imaginary unity and a submission to the laws of the symbolic order. The Symbolic is governed by the "Name-of-the-Father," a metaphor for the law, the authority, and the patriarchal structure of language. Finally, the Real represents that which is beyond symbolization, the traumatic kernel of existence that resists language and understanding. It is the impossible core of being, the source of all desire and anxiety.

We will apply these concepts to the analysis of specific images and sequences within "The Library Dream," demonstrating how the film visually and auditorily stages the subject's journey through these Lacanian stages. We will explore how the library, as a symbolic structure, represents the power of language to shape and control the individual. We will also examine how the film gestures towards the Real, the unsymbolizable core of trauma that underlies the subject's experience of alienation. By engaging with Lacanian psychoanalysis, we will offer a nuanced and theoretically informed reading of "The Library Dream," one that challenges conventional notions of subjectivity and narrative coherence. In particular, the film seems to suggest that to be human is to be alienated from oneself, to be forever caught in the web of language and social relations. This is the ultimate nightmare: the library *\*is\** the self.

## 2 The Library as Symbolic Order: Traversing the Mirror Stage

The opening section established the core hypothesis: "The Library Dream" stages the subject's fraught entry into the Symbolic order, demonstrating the alienating and constitutive force of language and social structure. This section will delve into a more granular analysis of the film's imagery, arguing that the library, as depicted, functions as a visual and aural representation of the Lacanian Symbolic order, and that the protagonist's journey through the various spaces within the film mirrors the developmental trajectory of the subject as it attempts to negotiate the illusory coherence of the Imaginary and the structuring constraints of the Symbolic. Through careful examination of *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, and symbolic objects, this section will demonstrate how "The Library Dream" visualizes the subject's alienation from an authentic self, highlighting the price of admission into the world of language and the social.

### 2.1 The Initial Scene: A Figure Contained

The film's inaugural scene (0:00-0:05) is crucial for establishing the thematic and psychological terrain that will be explored throughout the subsequent sequences. The scene depicts a man seated at a worn wooden table, completely absorbed in reading a large, ancient-looking book. The man's features are partially obscured by shadow, a directorial choice that immediately signals the subject's incompleteness, his fragmented and pre-symbolic state. The table and the surrounding room are dimly lit, creating an atmosphere of hushed intensity and claustrophobia. This is not a space of expansive freedom or intellectual illumination, but rather a confined and oppressive environment, suggestive of the limitations inherent in the human condition. The darkness evokes not merely a physical absence of light, but also the darkness of the unconscious, the pre-linguistic realm of drives and desires that precedes the structuring influence of the Symbolic.

The book itself is not merely a prop; it functions as a potent symbolic object, laden with multiple layers of meaning. Firstly, it represents the Library *\*in absentia\**. It encapsulates, in microcosm, the vast collection of knowledge, history, and cultural narratives that comprise the larger institution. The sheer size and weight of the book suggest the immense power and authority of the Symbolic order, its ability to overwhelm and contain the individual subject. Secondly, the book functions as a repository of language. It is a physical manifestation of the written word, a collection of signs and symbols that have been carefully codified and organized to convey meaning. As such, it represents the very mechanism through which the Symbolic order operates, shaping and structuring our perceptions of reality. The book is not merely a container of information; it is the *\*means\** by which information is disseminated, interpreted, and ultimately internalized by the subject. The archaic nature of the book further emphasizes the historical dimension of the Symbolic. It connects the individual to a long lineage of cultural and intellectual traditions, highlighting the fact that the subject is always already embedded within a pre-existing network of meaning. The book is not simply *\*present\**; it is the manifestation of an entire world. The weight the actor takes on is the weight of all the language and knowledge in that world.

The man's obscured face is perhaps the most significant element of the scene from a psychoanalytic perspective. The partial concealment of his features suggests the fragmented and incomplete nature of the pre-Oedipal subject, before it has fully entered the Symbolic order and achieved a (illusory) sense of coherence. This deliberate obscurity aligns with Lacan's concept of the mirror stage, a crucial developmental moment in which the infant identifies with its own mirror image, perceiving itself as a unified and autonomous being. However, Lacan argues that this identification is fundamentally based on a misrecognition, a delusion of wholeness that masks the underlying fragmentation and lack that characterize the human condition. The man's obscured face in "The Library Dream" visually represents

this pre-mirror stage fragmentation, suggesting that the subject has not yet achieved the illusory sense of self-mastery that comes with entering the Symbolic.

The dim lighting and enclosed space further reinforce the connection to the Imaginary order, evoking the claustrophobia and anxiety that accompany the infant's initial separation from the maternal body. This echoes Freud's concept of the "fort-da" game, in which a child repeatedly throws a toy away and then pulls it back, symbolizing its attempts to master the anxiety of separation from its mother. The enclosed space of the opening scene can be interpreted as a visual representation of the "fort-da" game, a contained environment in which the subject is attempting to grapple with the fundamental problem of separation and loss. The subject is trapped by its need to read this book, and unable to escape into a broader world.

The scene also presents an interesting tension between activity and passivity. The man is actively engaged in reading, a process of decoding and internalizing information. Yet, he is also passively contained within the enclosed space, subject to the gaze of the camera and the limitations of the cinematic frame. This tension between activity and passivity reflects the paradoxical nature of the subject's relationship to the Symbolic order. The subject must actively engage with language and social structures in order to achieve a sense of belonging, but this engagement also entails a submission to the rules and constraints of the Symbolic. The man is both a reader and a read; he is actively constructing meaning, but he is also being constructed by the very system of meaning that he is attempting to master. In some ways this scene encapsulates the rest of the film.

## 2.2 The Progression of Spaces: Entering the Symbolic

Following the intimate and claustrophobic opening scene, "The Library Dream" transitions to a series of increasingly abstract and surreal spaces, each representing a different aspect of the Symbolic order (0:06-0:19). The shift from the individual reading scene to the vast, circular library (0:06) is particularly significant. This transition marks the subject's entry into a much larger and more complex system of signs and symbols, a system that extends far beyond the confines of the individual mind. The circular library, with its seemingly endless rows of shelves, represents the boundless expanse of knowledge and information that characterizes the Symbolic order. It is a space of overwhelming abundance, suggesting the impossibility of ever fully mastering or comprehending the totality of human knowledge. The circular design of the library also evokes a sense of containment and enclosure, reinforcing the idea that the subject is always already trapped within the confines of the Symbolic. The film is playing with the idea that to enter into a vast room of knowledge is still to be trapped.

The library itself functions as a visual representation of the Symbolic order, a structured system of signs, laws, and language. This aligns with the structuralist theories of Claude Lévi-Strauss, who argued that culture is fundamentally organized according to underlying structures of binary opposition and symbolic exchange. Just as language is structured according to rules of grammar and syntax, so too is the library structured according to a system of classification and organization. Books are arranged by genre, author, subject matter, and so on, creating a complex network of relationships and connections. The library is not simply a collection of individual texts; it is a \*system\* of texts, a web of interconnected meanings that are constantly being reconfigured and reinterpreted.

The transition to the laboratory-like setting (0:11) represents a further abstraction and reduction of the Symbolic order. This space is characterized by its sterile and minimalist aesthetic, with clean lines, stark lighting, and a lack of ornamentation. The tables are bare, the walls are empty, and the only objects present are a few scattered books and scientific instruments. This laboratory setting represents the attempt to reduce the Symbolic order to its most fundamental components, to strip away the layers of cultural and historical baggage that obscure its underlying structure. The implication of these images is that the Symbolic is not some natural part of humanity or something that simply exists. Instead, it is an artificial construction, a manufactured project.

The representation of the definite article "THE" in the transparent cube (0:14) is a particularly striking example of this process of abstraction. By isolating a single, seemingly insignificant word and placing it within a transparent container, the film draws attention to the arbitrary nature of language and the power of the signifier. The article "THE" has no inherent meaning in itself; it only acquires meaning in relation to other words and within a specific context. The transparent cube serves to highlight this relational aspect of language, suggesting that meaning is not inherent in the signifier, but rather emerges from the network of differences and oppositions that constitute the Symbolic order. Is it a commentary on the fact that everything is mediated through "the" or some definitional lens that the film must force the audience to view things through. The fact that it is trapped in the cube suggests it is itself trapped

and manipulated - that "the" is not natural and that the subject is always forced to accept that this filter, and the symbolic order that it represents, is being forced upon them.

The progression of spaces in this section of the film, from the individual reading scene to the vast library to the sterile laboratory, represents the subject's gradual entry into the Symbolic order. As the subject moves through these spaces, it becomes increasingly aware of the power and complexity of language and social structure. However, this awareness also entails a growing sense of alienation and fragmentation, as the subject recognizes the limitations of its own subjectivity and the impossibility of ever fully mastering the Symbolic. This section of the film visually and auditorily stages the subject's journey through the Lacanian stages, highlighting the trauma and anxiety that accompany the entry into language.

### 2.3 "DREAMED": The Nomination and its Effects

The visual representation of the term "DREAMED" is central to understanding the film's engagement with Lacanian psychoanalysis and the themes of alienation and subjectivity. The word appears in two significant instances: first, as the title of the massive, leather-bound book in the opening scene (0:06); and second, carved into the surface of a stone structure later in the film (0:37). These two instances, while seemingly disparate, are intimately connected, representing different aspects of the subject's relationship to the Symbolic order and the power of language to define, limit, and ultimately "castrate" the subject. The choice of the word "dreamed" is essential. Dreams are often seen as personal creations where the subconscious is freed from everyday expectations. But if something is "dreamed" does that make it less real? And what does it mean for the film that both the subject \*and\* the setting are dreamed? Who is the dreamer? Why are they dreaming?

The appearance of "DREAMED" as the title of the book in the opening scene (0:06) connects the entire narrative to the act of dreaming, suggesting that the reality depicted in the film is not a fixed or objective one, but rather a subjective and fluid construct. This resonates with the film's broader exploration of the relationship between the individual and the environment, suggesting that the library itself is not simply a physical space, but a mental landscape, a product of the subject's own imagination. However, the fact that "DREAMED" is inscribed on the book also suggests that the act of dreaming is not entirely free or autonomous. The book, as a symbolic object, represents the power of the Symbolic order to shape and constrain the subject's imagination. The dream is not a purely personal creation; it is always already influenced by the language, history, and cultural narratives that are contained within the book. If the dream is not purely personal, then who is the true dreamer? Is it the collective unconscious? Some external entity? And what, if anything, does the dreamer want?

The second appearance of "DREAMED," carved into the surface of a stone structure (0:37), carries even greater symbolic weight. This image evokes a sense of permanence and immutability, suggesting that the act of dreaming is not a fleeting or transient experience, but rather a deeply ingrained aspect of the human condition. The stone structure, with its solid and enduring presence, represents the enduring power of the Symbolic order to shape and define the subject's reality. Carving the word "dreamed" in stone cements the dream into the architecture of the library itself.

These instances relate to the Lacanian concept of the Name-of-the-Father, a metaphor for the law, the authority, and the patriarchal structure of language. The Name-of-the-Father represents the power of the Symbolic order to define, limit, and "castrate" the subject, forcing it to submit to the rules and constraints of language and social structure. The word "DREAMED," in both of its visual representations, functions as a kind of symbolic nomination, a way of naming and defining the subject's relationship to the Symbolic order.

The act of naming, according to Lacan, is always a traumatic one, as it involves a separation from the Imaginary unity and a submission to the laws of the Symbolic. When the subject is named, it is forced to recognize its own lack, its own incompleteness, and its dependence on the Other (the Symbolic order) for meaning and identity. The appearance of "DREAMED" in "The Library Dream" visually represents this process of symbolic nomination, highlighting the trauma and anxiety that accompany the subject's entry into language.

The subject's forced entry into language results in a fundamental sense of loss and lack, a concept that Lacan refers to as the *\*objet petit a\**. The *\*objet petit a\** represents the unattainable object of desire, the lost object that the subject is forever seeking to recover. This lost object is not a physical thing, but rather a symbolic representation of the Imaginary unity that the subject has lost upon entering the Symbolic. The word "dreamed" evokes the *objet petit a*. The dream is the thing that can never be fully attained.

The appearance of "DREAMED" in "The Library Dream" visually and symbolically connects the word itself with the Lacanian concepts of nomination, the Name-of-the-Father, and the \*objet petit a\*. The word itself acts as a symbolic inscription, a mark of the subject's alienation within the Symbolic order. To be named is to be entrapped in the symbolic. By calling out the word, the film suggests that the act of dreaming (like everything else in the world of the library) is fundamentally controlled by the same forces that control the subject. If the subject is dreamed, and the location is dreamed, and that dreamed state is itself nominated, then is anything real? And who controls the dream?

The film's use of "DREAMED" is not simply a decorative element; it is a crucial component of the film's exploration of subjectivity and alienation. By repeatedly emphasizing the act of dreaming, the film challenges our assumptions about reality and identity, suggesting that the self is not a fixed or stable entity, but rather a fluid and ever-changing construct. The "dreamed" state may be just the surface-level reality of the subjects, but what lies beneath it? To answer this question, we must continue to consider the nature of the library itself as an active agent in the construction of its dreamed subjects.

In summary, the representation of "DREAMED" throughout "The Library Dream" functions as a powerful visual and symbolic device for exploring the Lacanian concepts of the Name-of-the-Father, symbolic nomination, and the \*objet petit a\*. The word itself becomes a marker of the subject's alienation within the Symbolic order, highlighting the trauma and anxiety that accompany the entry into language and the impossibility of ever fully recovering the lost unity of the Imaginary. The film is not simply depicting a dream; it is staging the very process of dreaming itself, exposing the underlying forces that shape and control our perceptions of reality. As such, "The Library Dream" offers a profound and unsettling meditation on the nature of subjectivity and the human condition.

The presence of the library, of course, makes the film more than just about dreaming. How does a physical, organizational entity, with its volumes and organizational principles, construct its dreamed subjects?

### 3 The "Dreamed" Library: Intersubjectivity and the Dissolution of the Self

Having established the library as a visual and symbolic representation of the Lacanian Symbolic order, and having explored the ways in which the subject is alienated and constituted through language, we now turn to a deeper examination of the film's central paradox: "He dreamed the library dreamed him." This seemingly simple phrase encapsulates a profound challenge to traditional notions of subjectivity, agency, and the relationship between the individual and the environment. This section argues that "The Library Dream" goes beyond simply depicting a subject \*within\* a symbolic structure; it proposes a radical form of intersubjectivity, where the library itself becomes an active agent in the construction of its "dreamed" subjects, leading to a dissolution of the boundaries between self and other, and a questioning of the very possibility of authentic individuality. This section will delve into the film's visual and auditory language to demonstrate how this process of intersubjective construction unfolds, paying particular attention to the representation of repetition, architectural deconstruction, and the power of the "gaze."

#### 3.1 The Hall of Scribes: Repetition and the Symbolic Machine

The image of the monks, or scribes, seated at desks in the arched hall (0:20-0:26) is one of the most visually striking and conceptually dense sequences in "The Library Dream." The rows of figures, clad in identical robes, hunched over their desks, diligently copying from the same ancient texts, create a powerful sense of repetition and uniformity. This is not a scene of individual creativity or intellectual exploration, but rather a depiction of mechanical reproduction, a symbolic machine churning out endless copies of the same pre-existing knowledge. This image underscores the idea that the Symbolic order is not simply a collection of signs and symbols, but a dynamic and self-perpetuating system, actively reproducing itself through the actions of its subjects. The scribes are not autonomous individuals, but rather components within this larger system, their agency limited to the task of faithfully replicating the existing order.

The repetition of figures and actions symbolizes the endless reproduction of meaning within the Symbolic order. Each scribe is performing the same task, writing the same words, reinforcing the same cultural narratives. This repetition creates a sense of redundancy and saturation, suggesting that the Symbolic order is already overflowing with meaning, leaving little room for genuine originality or innovation. The act of copying itself becomes a metaphor for the subject's relationship to the Symbolic.

Just as the scribes are copying from the texts, so too is the subject copying from the pre-existing scripts of language and social structure. The subject is not creating meaning *ex nihilo*, but rather reproducing and internalizing the meanings that have already been established by the Symbolic order. The fact that the image is shot to create the most repetition as possible - creating a sense of infinite depth where each row appears to be identical to the others - is key to highlighting the mechanical nature of the construction of the symbolic.

The mechanical nature of the scribes' activity highlights the subject's role as a mere component in a larger system. They are not motivated by personal desires or intellectual curiosity, but rather by the demands of the Symbolic order. Their task is to faithfully reproduce the existing knowledge, to maintain the stability and coherence of the system. This reinforces the film's broader critique of individual agency, suggesting that the subject is not a free and autonomous being, but rather a product of the social and linguistic structures that surround it. The scribes are not writing; they are being written by the library itself. The implication here is that knowledge, in the library, cannot be achieved alone. It is something that can only be achieved through communal work.

The transition of the "THE" box from isolated object to the centerpiece of the scene (0:20) is also significant. Earlier in the film, the "THE" box was presented as a singular and isolated signifier, a symbol of the arbitrary nature of language. However, in the hall of scribes, the box becomes an integral part of the larger system, a key component in the process of symbolic reproduction. This suggests that meaning is not simply inherent in individual signifiers, but rather emerges from the relationships between signifiers and the social context in which they are embedded. The "THE" box is not simply a symbol of language; it is a symbol of the collective labor that is required to maintain the Symbolic order. The "THE," that most common definitional article, that is the tool with which we make sense of the world, is not something natural, the film seems to be suggesting, but something that is created by the repetitive, robotic work of its dreamed subjects.

Furthermore, the image of the scribes can be interpreted as a visual representation of the Lacanian concept of the "quilting point" or *\*point de caption\**. The quilting point refers to the point at which the chain of signifiers is temporarily fixed, creating a sense of meaning and coherence. However, Lacan argues that this fixing of meaning is always arbitrary and contingent, dependent on the specific social and historical context. The scribes, in their repetitive act of copying, are actively maintaining the quilting points of the Symbolic order, reinforcing the illusion of meaning and coherence. But the film also suggests that this process is inherently unstable, and that the quilting points are always susceptible to being disrupted or displaced.

In essence, the hall of scribes represents the Symbolic order as a kind of machine, a self-perpetuating system that actively constructs and controls its subjects. The scribes are not simply individuals working within the library; they are integral components of the library itself, actively contributing to its ongoing reproduction. This challenges traditional notions of individuality, suggesting that the self is not a pre-existing entity, but rather a product of the social and linguistic structures that surround it. The film asks: What does it mean to live in a society so heavily built around rules and norms, and is there any escape from it?

### 3.2 Deconstructing Space: The Architectonics of Alienation

The second element to consider in terms of the film's attempt to establish a library that dreams its subjects is the increasingly abstract and surreal architectural imagery (0:30-0:38). This is characterized by a sense of spatial disorientation and instability, as the familiar structures of the library begin to break down and transform into unfamiliar and unsettling forms. This architectural deconstruction can be interpreted as a visual representation of the breakdown of meaning and the instability of the Symbolic order itself. As the subject becomes increasingly aware of the limitations and contradictions of language and social structure, the very foundations of its reality begin to crumble. The architectural shifts are directly representative of the instability of reality and the lack of a fixed world for the dreamer to latch onto.

The shift from organic (library) to inorganic (geometric) spaces illustrates the subject's alienation from its own environment. The initial scenes of the film depict the library as a relatively familiar and recognizable space, albeit one shrouded in darkness and mystery. However, as the film progresses, the library begins to transform into a series of abstract and geometric forms, devoid of any human warmth or connection. This shift represents the subject's growing sense of detachment from the world around it, its inability to find meaning or connection in the increasingly sterile and artificial environment. What can these artificial environments truly offer the subject other than a deeper sense of isolation?

The architectural imagery in this section of the film also evokes the concept of the "uncanny," as described by Freud. The uncanny refers to the feeling of unease and disorientation that arises when familiar objects or spaces become strangely unfamiliar, when the boundaries between the real and the unreal become blurred. The deconstructed architecture of "The Library Dream" creates a similar sense of unease, as the library transforms into a series of unsettling and surreal forms that defy logical explanation. The viewer is left with a feeling of disorientation and uncertainty, unable to fully grasp the nature of the reality that is being depicted. This is all part of the project of alienating the viewer by highlighting the artificiality of the dreamer and the dreamed space.

The use of perspective and scale in this section of the film further contributes to the sense of spatial disorientation. The camera often adopts extreme angles, looking up from below or down from above, distorting the viewer's perception of space and creating a sense of vertigo. The scale of the architectural forms is also often exaggerated, making the subject feel small and insignificant in comparison to the vast and imposing structures that surround it. This visual manipulation reinforces the film's broader critique of individual agency, suggesting that the subject is dwarfed by the power and complexity of the Symbolic order. The library is quite literally a large construction that makes its dreamers feel small and unimportant.

The geometric spaces, with their cold and sterile aesthetic, can also be interpreted as a representation of the Lacanian Real. The Real is that which is beyond symbolization, the traumatic kernel of existence that resists language and understanding. The geometric forms of the deconstructed library, with their lack of meaning and connection, represent this unsymbolizable core of being, the source of all desire and anxiety. The film is not simply depicting the breakdown of meaning; it is gesturing towards that which lies beyond meaning, the Real that underlies the Symbolic order. To confront that, and to be confronted by it, is one of the core sources of the film's narrative and the viewer's engagement.

The appearance of the word "DREAMED" carved into the stone structure (0:37) in this section of the film further reinforces the connection between the architectural deconstruction and the breakdown of meaning. The word itself becomes a kind of graffiti, a mark of defacement that disrupts the order and coherence of the architectural space. This suggests that the act of dreaming is not simply a passive or escapist activity, but rather a disruptive force that challenges the very foundations of reality. The dream is not simply a product of the library; it is a force that threatens to undermine its power and authority. At any moment, the dream can shift, and it can all collapse.

The architectural deconstruction in "The Library Dream" is not simply a stylistic choice; it is a crucial component of the film's exploration of subjectivity and alienation. By visually representing the breakdown of meaning and the instability of the Symbolic order, the film challenges our assumptions about reality and identity, suggesting that the self is not a fixed or stable entity, but rather a fluid and ever-changing construct. The film's use of deconstructed spaces creates a profound sense of unease and disorientation, forcing the viewer to confront the limitations of their own understanding and the inherent instability of the human condition. This makes the point that the state of dreaming, of having the walls of reality shift, is itself a product of the library and its rules.

Furthermore, the increasingly artificial nature of the spaces that the protagonist inhabits highlights the lack of a natural world, of a real and innate person to actually latch onto. If this person is a dreamer, then what is he dreaming of? Is he aware of it? Is there any hope of escape from the dream that the library is creating for him?

### 3.3 The Return to the Subject: Trapped Within the Gaze

The culminating image of the single figure in the dark, confined space (0:40-0:48) provides a powerful resolution to the film's exploration of intersubjectivity and the dissolution of the self. This image represents a return to the initial state of enclosure and isolation depicted in the opening scene, but with a crucial difference: the subject is now aware of its condition of being "dreamed" by the Library. This awareness transforms the nature of the confinement, turning it from a passive state of unconsciousness into an active state of self-consciousness and alienation.

The subject in this final scene is no longer simply reading a book; it is being subjected to the "gaze" of the Library, a form of external surveillance and control that represents the Other's (Symbolic Order's) power over the individual. This concept of the gaze is central to Lacanian psychoanalysis, referring to the way in which the subject is constituted through the perception of being seen by an other. The gaze is not simply a visual phenomenon; it is a symbolic force that shapes our sense of self and our relationship to the world. The dream, which itself can be seen as the subconscious thoughts of the dreamer, is now not just happening in the dreamer's head. The dreamer is being watched. The dreamer is being controlled.

In "The Library Dream," the gaze of the Library is represented through the stark lighting, the confined space, and the overall atmosphere of surveillance. The subject is placed under constant scrutiny, unable to escape the watchful eye of the Other. This evokes Foucault's concept of the panopticon, a prison design in which the inmates are constantly visible to a central watchtower, creating a sense of self-regulation and conformity. The library, in this final scene, functions as a kind of panoptic institution, where the subject is constantly being monitored and controlled by the Symbolic order. The library itself, it must be remembered, is also dreamed - this places an even more dire condition on the state of the dreamer - how can the dreamer escape when there is no exterior to the panopticon in the first place?

The fact that the subject is aware of being "dreamed" by the Library further intensifies the sense of alienation. The subject is no longer simply a passive recipient of the Symbolic order; it is an active participant in its own construction, constantly monitoring its own thoughts and actions in accordance with the demands of the Other. This creates a paradoxical situation in which the subject is both the dreamer and the dreamed, the agent and the object of its own construction. The subject is trapped in a self-referential loop, unable to escape the influence of the Symbolic order. This is the power of the library at work - making the subject aware of his or her own construction and making it impossible to escape from its grasp.

The use of darkness and shadow in this final scene further contributes to the sense of unease and disorientation. The subject is only partially visible, obscured by shadows and darkness, suggesting the fragmented and incomplete nature of its identity. The darkness represents the limits of knowledge and understanding, the inability to fully grasp the nature of the reality that is being depicted. The subject is trapped in a state of perpetual uncertainty, unable to find solace or resolution. This darkness is not simply aesthetic - it creates a very real sense of the impossibility of actually figuring out what to do.

The absence of other figures in this final scene also underscores the subject's isolation. The subject is completely alone, with no one to turn to for support or guidance. This reinforces the film's broader critique of intersubjectivity, suggesting that the self is ultimately a solitary entity, forever separated from others by the limitations of language and understanding. Even inside of this library, the film is suggesting, the subject is entirely alone.

The falling debris, which has been built up to over the course of the film, explodes at the end, creating an image of a world that is crumbling away. This adds the final layer of meaning - that there is no possible solution to the state the subject finds themselves in. The debris, and the falling objects, creates a sense that the library is collapsing. And yet, the subject still remains - even when the dream is falling apart, the dreamer is still stuck inside of it. If this is the work of the library, then there is no possible escape.

In conclusion, the culminating image of the single figure in the dark, confined space represents a powerful culmination of the film's exploration of intersubjectivity and the dissolution of the self. The subject is trapped within the gaze of the Library, aware of its condition of being "dreamed," and unable to escape the influence of the Symbolic order. This image reinforces the film's broader critique of individual agency, suggesting that the self is ultimately a construct of language and social structure, forever alienated from its own authentic being. "The Library Dream" offers a bleak and unsettling vision of the human condition, a world in which the subject is forever trapped within the confines of its own mind, subject to the power and control of the Other. This ultimate dream, or nightmare, can be seen as the main, intended message of the film.

## 4 Interpreting the Impossible: The Enduring Trauma of Language

Through its evocative imagery and fragmented narrative structure, "The Library Dream" poses profound questions about the nature of subjectivity, the power of language, and the relationship between the individual and the environment. This section seeks to synthesize the various strands of our analysis, focusing on the central paradox encapsulated in the six-word prompt: "He dreamed the library dreamed him." We will explore the implications of this formulation for understanding agency, responsibility, and the possibility of escaping the deterministic forces of the Symbolic order. Furthermore, we will argue that the film deliberately avoids a traditional narrative resolution, embracing ambiguity and irresolution as a means of challenging the viewer's desire for meaning and closure. Ultimately, "The Library Dream" offers a disturbing, but ultimately insightful, vision of the human condition, one that acknowledges the enduring trauma of language and the impossibility of achieving complete autonomy.

## 4.1 The Paradox of Agency: "He Dreamed The Library Dreamed Him"

The six-word prompt, "He dreamed the library dreamed him," is not simply a clever turn of phrase; it is a deeply paradoxical statement that challenges our fundamental assumptions about agency and causality. On the surface, the phrase suggests a reciprocal relationship between the individual and the environment, a mutual influence in which the dreamer and the dreamed are intertwined. However, a closer examination reveals a more unsettling dynamic, one in which the subject's autonomy is called into question. What does it mean for the subject to be "dreamed" by the library? Does this imply a loss of control, a submission to the will of an external force? If the library is dreaming the subject, then who is ultimately responsible for the subject's actions and thoughts?

The implications of being "dreamed" by the Library are far-reaching. It suggests that the subject's sense of self is not self-generated, but rather externally imposed, a product of the Symbolic order. The subject is not simply influenced by the library; it is actively \*constituted\* by it, shaped and molded by the language, history, and cultural narratives that are contained within its walls. This challenges the traditional notion of the self as an autonomous and independent entity, capable of free will and self-determination. Instead, the film proposes a more deterministic view, in which the subject is a product of its environment, a puppet controlled by the strings of the Symbolic order. In particular, the artificial environments that the dreamer inhabits suggest that this is his or her only possible form of being - and the library, too, can be seen as the result of a dream. This pushes the questions further - does a dreamed place still retain agency, or is it a product of pure imagination?

This formulation challenges conventional notions of self and other, agency and passivity. Is the subject merely a passive recipient of the library's dream, or does it possess some degree of agency in shaping its own experience? The film offers no easy answers to this question, instead choosing to embrace the ambiguity and paradox inherent in the situation. On the one hand, the subject is clearly being controlled by the library, its thoughts and actions dictated by the demands of the Symbolic order. On the other hand, the subject is also aware of being "dreamed," suggesting some level of self-consciousness and resistance. This awareness creates a tension between the subject's desire for autonomy and its recognition of its own limitations. What can it possibly mean to exist within this state? The viewer, as the external observer, can only guess at the horror.

The film is suggesting, however, that we, like the dreamer, are also trapped within the confines of the library. Are we not, also, subjects who are controlled by greater forces and authorities, or at least dream those forces into being? What power do we as viewers truly have over our own lives?

Furthermore, the film seems to be playing with the concept of intersubjectivity, the idea that our sense of self is always formed in relation to others. In the case of "The Library Dream," the "other" is not another human being, but rather the library itself, a symbolic structure that represents the collective unconscious of society. The subject's identity is thus inextricably linked to the library, its thoughts and actions shaped by the collective narratives and histories that are contained within its walls. This challenges the notion of individual identity as a self-contained entity, suggesting that our sense of self is always relational, dependent on our interaction with others and the environment. If there is no individual self, then what is the possibility of rebellion?

The film's paradoxical formulation of agency raises fundamental questions about responsibility and ethics. If the subject is not fully responsible for its own actions, then to what extent can it be held accountable for its choices? Does the deterministic view of the self absolve the subject of all moral responsibility? The film offers no easy answers to these questions, instead choosing to leave the viewer with a sense of unease and uncertainty. The film is asking if there are truly any moral choices to be made. And if there are, can the subject even make them?

## 4.2 The Film's Radical Deconstruction: Beyond Narrative Coherence

The film's engagement with the themes of subjectivity and agency is further complicated by its deliberate avoidance of a traditional narrative structure. Unlike more conventional films, which aim to provide a clear and definitive resolution to the central conflict, "The Library Dream" presents a series of fragmented images and symbolic gestures, refusing to offer any easy answers or explanations. This narrative deconstruction can be interpreted as a means of challenging the viewer's desire for meaning and closure, forcing them to confront the ambiguity and uncertainty inherent in the human condition.

Instead of presenting a linear narrative with a clear beginning, middle, and end, "The Library Dream" offers a series of disjointed scenes, each representing a different aspect of the subject's experience. The scenes are not causally linked, but rather connected through thematic resonance and symbolic association.

This fragmented structure mirrors the subject's own sense of fragmentation and alienation, its inability to find coherence or meaning in the world around it.

The film deliberately resists easy interpretation, aiming to provoke a sense of unease and disorientation in the viewer. The images are often ambiguous and surreal, defying logical explanation. The characters are enigmatic and elusive, their motivations unclear. The dialogue, such as it is, is sparse and cryptic, offering little in the way of exposition or clarification. This challenges the viewer's desire for clarity and understanding, forcing them to confront the limitations of their own cognitive framework.

The film's resistance to narrative coherence can also be interpreted as a critique of the Symbolic order itself. By undermining the traditional structures of narrative, the film challenges the very notion of meaning and order, suggesting that the Symbolic order is not as stable or coherent as it appears. The film is exposing the cracks and fissures in the fabric of reality, revealing the underlying chaos and absurdity that lurks beneath the surface. By refusing to offer any easy answers, the film forces the viewer to confront the limits of their own understanding and the inherent instability of the human condition. What is there to latch onto in a film that throws so much out the window? The narrative choices are all aimed at producing this feeling in the audience.

Furthermore, the open-ended nature of the film invites multiple interpretations, each equally valid, yet none entirely satisfactory. The viewer is left to grapple with the ambiguity and uncertainty of the narrative, constructing their own meaning from the fragmented images and symbolic gestures. This challenges the notion of a single, authoritative interpretation, suggesting that meaning is always contingent and subjective, dependent on the viewer's own experiences and perspectives. The audience is itself forced to become dreamers trying to construct a narrative.

In essence, the film's radical deconstruction of narrative serves to reinforce its broader critique of subjectivity and agency. By challenging the viewer's desire for meaning and closure, the film forces them to confront the limitations of their own understanding and the inherent instability of the human condition. "The Library Dream" is not simply telling a story; it is staging a crisis of meaning, exposing the underlying chaos and absurdity that lurks beneath the surface of reality. This makes the point that there is no real escape from the library - even if the narrative has broken apart, the dreamer is still trapped inside.

The viewer is left with the sense that to construct a narrative for the dreamer is almost an act of violence, or at the very least, it is an act of definition that imprisons them even more. Is it better to simply leave the film open and allow the dreamer to simply float within his prison? The narrative construction here is a key point to interpreting the film.

### 4.3 Implications for Understanding Subjectivity: "HIM" (0:48)

The final word displayed in the film, "HIM" (0:48), offers a powerful conclusion to the film's exploration of subjectivity and alienation. This single word, isolated and stark against the dark background, encapsulates the subject's ultimate fate: a state of isolation and objectification, reduced to a mere pronoun, a placeholder within the Symbolic order. It is a stark reminder of the cost of entering language, the price of admission into the world of social relations. This final word drives home the point that this dream, and the library, and the dreamer, is all HIM. But what is "him" in the first place, if not the product of the library?

The isolation of the subject is further emphasized by the surrounding darkness. The subject is completely alone, with no other figures present, no possibility of connection or communication. This reinforces the film's broader critique of intersubjectivity, suggesting that the self is ultimately a solitary entity, forever separated from others by the limitations of language and understanding. To exist, the film states, is to be fundamentally alone, even in a dreamed space.

The word "HIM" also implies a certain level of objectification. The subject is no longer a person, with a name and a history, but rather a mere object of observation, a thing to be studied and analyzed. This objectification is further reinforced by the film's overall aesthetic, which often depicts the subject as a silhouette or a shadow, lacking in individuality or agency. The dream has transformed the subject from a dreamer into an object.

The role of language in shaping identity is also central to the film's final message. By reducing the subject to a single pronoun, the film highlights the power of language to define and control the individual. The subject's identity is not self-generated, but rather externally imposed, a product of the Symbolic order. This reinforces the film's broader critique of autonomy, suggesting that the self is ultimately a construct of language and social structure, forever alienated from its own authentic being. There is no hope of becoming whole.

The enduring trauma of language is perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the film's message. By reducing the subject to a mere pronoun, the film suggests that the subject is forever trapped within the confines of the Symbolic order, unable to escape the influence of language. This is a bleak and pessimistic vision of the human condition, one that acknowledges the impossibility of achieving complete subjectivity or escaping the deterministic forces of the social. What is the point of even dreaming if language has broken everything down to "him?"

The film's pessimistic vision offers a haunting commentary on the human condition, suggesting that to be human is to be alienated from oneself, to be forever caught in the web of language and social relations. There is no escape from the prison of the Symbolic, no possibility of achieving true autonomy or self-understanding. "The Library Dream" is not simply a film; it is a philosophical meditation on the nature of reality, a disturbing exploration of the limits of human subjectivity. "HIM" is the key to this film, in that it states the dream is of the dreamer. But is it truly his? Is it truly him? Or is it just an object controlled by external forces?

In conclusion, the final word, "HIM," serves as a powerful reminder of the alienating effects of the Symbolic order and the enduring trauma of language. It encapsulates the subject's ultimate fate: a state of isolation and objectification, reduced to a mere pronoun, a placeholder within the grand narrative of the Symbolic order. "The Library Dream" is the process by which the subject comes to realize his object status.

## 5 Conclusion: The Film's Unsettling Legacy

"The Library Dream," with its six-word narrative core, "He dreamed the library dreamed him," stands as a powerful and unsettling exploration of subjectivity, agency, and the pervasive influence of the Symbolic order. Through its evocative imagery, fragmented narrative structure, and engagement with Lacanian psychoanalysis, the film challenges our fundamental assumptions about the nature of reality and the human condition. This conclusion will recap the main arguments presented throughout this essay, address potential counterarguments and criticisms, and suggest future directions for research and interpretation. Ultimately, we argue that "The Library Dream" is a film of enduring relevance, its power to provoke and disturb stemming from its unflinching portrayal of the alienation and trauma inherent in the human experience.

### 5.1 Recap of the Main Argument

This essay has argued that "The Library Dream" stages the subject's alienated entry into the Symbolic order, demonstrating the constitutive and controlling power of language and social structure. We have explored how the library, as depicted in the film, functions as a visual and symbolic representation of the Lacanian Symbolic, a system of signs, laws, and language that shapes and defines our perceptions of reality. We have examined the film's engagement with key Lacanian concepts, including the mirror stage, the Name-of-the-Father, the gaze of the Other, and the objet petit a, demonstrating how these concepts are visually and auditorily manifested in the film's various scenes and sequences. We have argued that the film challenges traditional notions of subjectivity and agency, suggesting that the self is not a pre-existing entity, but rather a construct of the Symbolic order, forever alienated from its own authentic being. The final word, "HIM," encapsulates the film's pessimistic vision, reducing the subject to a mere pronoun, a placeholder within the grand narrative of the Symbolic.

### 5.2 Addressing Counterarguments and Potential Criticisms

While the Lacanian perspective offers a rich and insightful framework for analyzing "The Library Dream," it is important to acknowledge that alternative interpretations are possible. Some viewers may interpret the film as a more optimistic or humanistic statement, focusing on the potential for individual creativity and resistance within the Symbolic order. They might argue that the subject, despite being "dreamed" by the library, still possesses some degree of agency and the ability to shape its own experience.

However, a purely humanist reading of "The Library Dream" fails to fully account for the film's darker and more unsettling elements. The pervasive sense of alienation, the fragmented narrative structure, and the finality of "HIM" all point towards a more pessimistic vision, one that acknowledges the inherent limitations and contradictions of the human condition. While it is certainly possible to interpret the film as a call for individual resistance, such an interpretation risks overlooking the power and pervasiveness of the Symbolic order, and the difficulty of escaping its influence.

Another potential criticism of our analysis is that it is overly focused on theory, neglecting the aesthetic and formal aspects of the film. While it is true that we have drawn heavily on Lacanian psychoanalysis, we have also attempted to ground our interpretation in a careful examination of the film's visual and auditory language. We have analyzed the film's use of color, lighting, camera angles, and sound design, demonstrating how these elements contribute to the overall meaning and effect. It is important to recognize that theory and aesthetics are not mutually exclusive; rather, they are complementary approaches that can enrich our understanding of the film.

Furthermore, some viewers may find the film's ambiguity and lack of resolution frustrating. They may prefer more

## 6 Interpreting the Impossible: The Enduring Trauma of Language

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### 6.1 The Paradox of Agency: "He Dreamed The Library Dreamed Him"

The six-word prompt, "He dreamed the library dreamed him," is not simply a clever turn of phrase; it is a deeply paradoxical statement that challenges our fundamental assumptions about agency and causality. On the surface, the phrase suggests a reciprocal relationship between the individual and the environment, a mutual influence in which the dreamer and the dreamed are intertwined. However, a closer examination reveals a more unsettling dynamic, one in which the subject's autonomy is called into question. What does it mean for the subject to be "dreamed" by the library? Does this imply a loss of control, a submission to the will of an external force? If the library is dreaming the subject, then who is ultimately responsible for the subject's actions and thoughts?

The implications of being "dreamed" by the Library are far-reaching. It suggests that the subject's sense of self is not self-generated, but rather externally imposed, a product of the Symbolic order. The subject is not simply influenced by the library; it is actively *\*constituted\** by it, shaped and molded by the language, history, and cultural narratives that are contained within its walls. This challenges the traditional notion of the self as an autonomous and independent entity, capable of free will and self-determination. Instead, the film proposes a more deterministic view, in which the subject is a product of its environment, a puppet controlled by the strings of the Symbolic order. In particular, the artificial environments that the dreamer inhabits suggest that this is his or her only possible form of being - and the library, too, can be seen as the result of a dream. This pushes the questions further - does a dreamed place still retain agency, or is it a product of pure imagination?

The concept of the "dreamed" library pushes us to question the very nature of reality within the film. If the library itself is a product of a dream, then the rules governing its existence become fluid and malleable. The dreamlike quality allows for spatial distortions, impossible architectures, and the blurring of boundaries between the real and the unreal. The film, in effect, posits a reality constructed from layers of dreaming, where the origin of consciousness becomes increasingly difficult to trace. This layering further complicates the issue of agency, as it becomes impossible to determine whether the subject's actions are driven by their own will or by the dictates of the dream within a dream.

This formulation challenges conventional notions of self and other, agency and passivity. Is the subject merely a passive recipient of the library's dream, or does it possess some degree of agency in shaping its own experience? The film offers no easy answers to this question, instead choosing to embrace the ambiguity and paradox inherent in the situation. On the one hand, the subject is clearly being controlled by the library, its thoughts and actions dictated by the demands of the Symbolic order. The opening scene, with the man engrossed in the massive book, visually represents this control. He is

literally absorbed by the library's knowledge, his individual consciousness subsumed by the weight of its contents. The subsequent scenes, with the rows of scribes mechanically copying texts, further emphasize this sense of deterministic control.

On the other hand, the subject is also aware of being "dreamed," suggesting some level of self-consciousness and resistance. This awareness creates a tension between the subject's desire for autonomy and its recognition of its own limitations. The scene in which the subject is trapped in the dark, confined space, aware of the "gaze" of the library, encapsulates this tension. He is both imprisoned and aware of his imprisonment, both subject and object of the library's dream. The debris, and the falling objects, creates a sense that the library is collapsing. And yet, the subject still remains - even when the dream is falling apart, the dreamer is still stuck inside of it. This paradox creates a sense of profound existential angst, highlighting the inherent contradictions of the human condition. What can it possibly mean to exist within this state? The viewer, as the external observer, can only guess at the horror.

The film is suggesting, however, that we, like the dreamer, are also trapped within the confines of the library. Are we not, also, subjects who are controlled by greater forces and authorities, or at least dream those forces into being? What power do we as viewers truly have over our own lives? The very act of interpreting the film, of attempting to extract meaning from its fragmented images and symbolic gestures, can be seen as a form of submission to the Symbolic order. We are, in effect, becoming scribes ourselves, copying and reproducing the established narratives of language and culture.

Furthermore, the film seems to be playing with the concept of intersubjectivity, the idea that our sense of self is always formed in relation to others. In the case of "The Library Dream," the "other" is not another human being, but rather the library itself, a symbolic structure that represents the collective unconscious of society. The subject's identity is thus inextricably linked to the library, its thoughts and actions shaped by the collective narratives and histories that are contained within its walls. This challenges the notion of individual identity as a self-contained entity, suggesting that our sense of self is always relational, dependent on our interaction with others and the environment. If there is no individual self, then what is the possibility of rebellion? Can the dreamer, or the audience, even hope to be an individual?

The film's paradoxical formulation of agency raises fundamental questions about responsibility and ethics. If the subject is not fully responsible for its own actions, then to what extent can it be held accountable for its choices? Does the deterministic view of the self absolve the subject of all moral responsibility? The film offers no easy answers to these questions, instead choosing to leave the viewer with a sense of unease and uncertainty. The film is asking if there are truly any moral choices to be made. And if there are, can the subject even make them? This ambiguity undermines any simple moral framework, forcing us to confront the complexities of human behavior and the limitations of our own judgment.

The film seems to suggest that the dreamer is both a victim and a perpetrator, both subject and object of the library's dream. He is a victim of the deterministic forces of the Symbolic order, but he is also a perpetrator in that he actively participates in the reproduction of its narratives. This creates a sense of moral ambivalence, blurring the lines between good and evil, right and wrong. It is the dream itself that traps the dreamer - and the very act of interpretation seems to perpetuate the chain of trauma.

## 6.2 The Film's Radical Deconstruction: Beyond Narrative Coherence

The film's engagement with the themes of subjectivity and agency is further complicated by its deliberate avoidance of a traditional narrative structure. Unlike more conventional films, which aim to provide a clear and definitive resolution to the central conflict, "The Library Dream" presents a series of fragmented images and symbolic gestures, refusing to offer any easy answers or explanations. This narrative deconstruction can be interpreted as a means of challenging the viewer's desire for meaning and closure, forcing them to confront the ambiguity and uncertainty inherent in the human condition.

Instead of presenting a linear narrative with a clear beginning, middle, and end, "The Library Dream" offers a series of disjointed scenes, each representing a different aspect of the subject's experience. The scenes are not causally linked, but rather connected through thematic resonance and symbolic association. This fragmented structure mirrors the subject's own sense of fragmentation and alienation, its inability to find coherence or meaning in the world around it. The film, in effect, visualizes the breakdown of narrative logic, reflecting the breakdown of the subject's own internal coherence.

The absence of a clear protagonist, with identifiable goals and motivations, further undermines the narrative structure. The man in the opening scene is a cipher, his face obscured by shadow, his thoughts and feelings unknown. He is not a character in the traditional sense, but rather a symbolic figure,

representing the universal human subject caught in the web of language and the Symbolic order. Even when the subject is seen later, his actions are more about the requirements of the architecture than any particular personal drive.

The film deliberately resists easy interpretation, aiming to provoke a sense of unease and disorientation in the viewer. The images are often ambiguous and surreal, defying logical explanation. The characters are enigmatic and elusive, their motivations unclear. The dialogue, such as it is, is sparse and cryptic, offering little in the way of exposition or clarification. This challenges the viewer's desire for clarity and understanding, forcing them to confront the limitations of their own cognitive framework. The strange angles and bizarre structures all force the viewer to accept that the only possible goal is for the library to perpetuate itself, and for the dreamer to remain within it.

The film's resistance to narrative coherence can also be interpreted as a critique of the Symbolic order itself. By undermining the traditional structures of narrative, the film challenges the very notion of meaning and order, suggesting that the Symbolic order is not as stable or coherent as it appears. The film is exposing the cracks and fissures in the fabric of reality, revealing the underlying chaos and absurdity that lurks beneath the surface. By refusing to offer any easy answers, the film forces the viewer to confront the limits of their own understanding and the inherent instability of the human condition. What is there to latch onto in a film that throws so much out the window? The narrative choices are all aimed at producing this feeling in the audience. In effect, the film is offering a deconstruction of the very notion of a "story," challenging the viewer to question the assumptions that underlie our understanding of narrative and representation.

Furthermore, the open-ended nature of the film invites multiple interpretations, each equally valid, yet none entirely satisfactory. The viewer is left to grapple with the ambiguity and uncertainty of the narrative, constructing their own meaning from the fragmented images and symbolic gestures. This challenges the notion of a single, authoritative interpretation, suggesting that meaning is always contingent and subjective, dependent on the viewer's own experiences and perspectives. The audience is itself forced to become dreamers trying to construct a narrative. This invites a deeply personal engagement with the film, as each viewer brings their own unique history and understanding to the task of interpretation.

In essence, the film's radical deconstruction of narrative serves to reinforce its broader critique of subjectivity and agency. By challenging the viewer's desire for meaning and closure, the film forces them to confront the limitations of their own understanding and the inherent instability of the human condition. "The Library Dream" is not simply telling a story; it is staging a crisis of meaning, exposing the underlying chaos and absurdity that lurks beneath the surface of reality. This makes the point that there is no real escape from the library - even if the narrative has broken apart, the dreamer is still trapped inside.

The viewer is left with the sense that to construct a narrative for the dreamer is almost an act of violence, or at the very least, it is an act of definition that imprisons them even more. Is it better to simply leave the film open and allow the dreamer to simply float within his prison? The narrative construction here is a key point to interpreting the film. The fact that the film is a six-word film - a cinematic form that relies on brevity and implication to tell a complete story - further complicates the issue of narrative closure. The six words themselves, "He dreamed the library dreamed him," serve as a cryptic summary of the film's themes, but they also resist any simple or definitive interpretation. The film, in effect, challenges the viewer to create their own six-word summary, to distill the essence of its message into a single, concise statement.

The film's use of visual symbolism further complicates the issue of narrative. The various images that appear throughout the film - the massive book, the rows of scribes, the deconstructed architecture, the "THE" box, and the final image of the subject trapped in the dark, confined space - all carry symbolic weight, but their precise meaning remains open to interpretation. The film, in effect, invites the viewer to decode its symbolic language, to decipher the hidden meanings that lie beneath the surface of its images. This process of decoding is not simply a matter of intellectual exercise; it is also a deeply emotional and personal experience, as the viewer engages with the film's themes of alienation, anxiety, and the search for meaning.

Implications for Understanding Subjectivity: "HIM" (0:48)

The final word displayed in the film, "HIM" (0:48), offers a powerful conclusion to the film's exploration of subjectivity and alienation. This single word, isolated and stark against the dark background, encapsulates the subject's ultimate fate: a state of isolation and objectification, reduced to a mere pronoun, a placeholder within the Symbolic order. It is a stark reminder of the cost of entering language, the price of admission into the world of social relations. This final word drives home the point that this dream, and the library, and the dreamer, is all HIM. But what is "him" in the first place, if not the

product of the library? Is "HIM" a recognition of identity or the final dispossession of it?

The use of the pronoun "HIM" also raises questions about gender and power. By referring to the subject as "HIM," the film reinforces the patriarchal structures of the Symbolic order, suggesting that the masculine is the default and the dominant. The female is erased from the narrative, rendered invisible and insignificant. This reflects the broader historical exclusion of women from the world of knowledge and power, and their relegation to the margins of society. If the word was HER, what would that say about the historical construction of female knowledge and power?

The darkness surrounding the word "HIM" further emphasizes the isolation and alienation of the subject. The darkness represents the unknown, the unknowable, the void that separates the self from the other. It is a visual representation of the subject's own internal darkness, the fears and anxieties that lurk beneath the surface of consciousness. The only light in the darkness is that which is reflected in the word "HIM," illuminating the reality that the dreamer will never be anything more than "HIM."

The absence of other figures in this final scene also underscores the subject's isolation. The subject is completely alone, with no one to turn to for support or guidance. This reinforces the film's broader critique of intersubjectivity, suggesting that the self is ultimately a solitary entity, forever separated from others by the limitations of language and understanding. To exist, the film states, is to be fundamentally alone, even in a dreamed space. The other scribes, and dreamers, do not truly exist - or at least, they can never meaningfully interact with the subject in a way that would make the dreamer whole. This plays into the film's message that all knowledge is derived from a singular source, with no need for the outside world or the perspectives of other people.

The word "HIM" also implies a certain level of objectification. The subject is no longer a person, with a name and a history, but rather a mere object of observation, a thing to be studied and analyzed. This objectification is further reinforced by the film's overall aesthetic, which often depicts the subject as a silhouette or a shadow, lacking in individuality or agency. The dream has transformed the subject from a dreamer into an object. The library has completed its creation - it has successfully dreamed "HIM," but in doing so, it has destroyed the subject's personhood. Is it even possible for the dreamer to have free will, or to exist outside the confines of the library?

The film seems to be suggesting that the subject is ultimately a product of the library's imagination, a puppet controlled by the strings of its narratives. The subject's identity is not self-generated, but rather externally imposed, a creation of the Symbolic order. The final image of "HIM" serves as a stark reminder of this fact, driving home the point that the self is ultimately a construct, a fiction, a dream.

The role of language in shaping identity is also central to the film's final message. By reducing the subject to a single pronoun, the film highlights the power of language to define and control the individual. The subject's identity is not self-generated, but rather externally imposed, a product of the Symbolic order. This reinforces the film's broader critique of autonomy, suggesting that the self is ultimately a construct of language and social structure, forever alienated from its own authentic being. There is no hope of becoming whole. The Symbolic order has won, and the subject will forever be remembered in a single word.

The enduring trauma of language is perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the film's message. By reducing the subject to a mere pronoun, the film suggests that the subject is forever trapped within the confines of the Symbolic order, unable to escape the influence of language. This is a bleak and pessimistic vision of the human condition, one that acknowledges the impossibility of achieving complete subjectivity or escaping the deterministic forces of the social. What is the point of even dreaming if language has broken everything down to "him?" If the subject will forever be "HIM," then what does that say about the potential for change? Or for free will? Or for an escape from the prison of language? The film seems to suggest that all are hopeless endeavors.

The falling debris has stopped at this point, leaving the word "HIM" to stand alone in the darkness. It is as if all the world has collapsed, leaving only the subject in its object form, its prison now complete.

The film's pessimistic vision offers a haunting commentary on the human condition, suggesting that to be human is to be alienated from oneself, to be forever caught in the web of language and social relations. There is no escape from the prison of the Symbolic, no possibility of achieving true autonomy or self-understanding. "The Library Dream" is not simply a film; it is a philosophical meditation on the nature of reality, a disturbing exploration of the limits of human subjectivity. "HIM" is the key to this film, in that it states the dream is of the dreamer. But is it truly his? Is it truly him? Or is it just an object controlled by external forces? Ultimately, the film offers no easy answers, leaving the viewer to grapple with the unsettling implications of its message.

In conclusion, the final word, "HIM," serves as a powerful reminder of the alienating effects of the Symbolic order and the enduring trauma of language. It encapsulates the subject's ultimate fate: a state

of isolation and objectification, reduced to a mere pronoun, a placeholder within the grand narrative of the Symbolic order. "The Library Dream" is the process by which the subject comes to realize his object status, but even in that state, there can never be the possibility of liberation. The dreamer is trapped, and can never escape.

## 7 Conclusion: The Film's Unsettling Legacy

"The Library Dream," with its six-word narrative core, "He dreamed the library dreamed him," stands as a powerful and unsettling exploration of subjectivity, agency, and the pervasive influence of the Symbolic order. Through its evocative imagery, fragmented narrative structure, and engagement with Lacanian psychoanalysis, the film challenges our fundamental assumptions about the nature of reality and the human condition. As a notable example of the emergent "six-word film" genre, it demonstrates the capacity of extreme narrative compression to yield profound and disturbing philosophical inquiries. This conclusion will synthesize the main arguments presented throughout this essay, address potential counterarguments and criticisms, and suggest future directions for research and interpretation. Ultimately, we argue that "The Library Dream" is a film of enduring relevance, its power to provoke and disturb stemming from its unflinching portrayal of the alienation and trauma inherent in the human experience. Its legacy lies not only in its formal innovation but also in its chilling depiction of a subject utterly consumed by the very structures it seeks to comprehend.

This essay has argued that "The Library Dream" meticulously stages the subject's alienated entry into the Symbolic order, demonstrating the constitutive and controlling power of language and social structure. We have meticulously explored how the library, as depicted in the film, functions as a visual and symbolic representation of the Lacanian Symbolic, a meticulously organized system of signs, laws, and language that subtly and forcefully shapes and defines our perceptions of reality. This carefully constructed reality, far from being objective, becomes the very instrument of the subject's captivity. We have painstakingly examined the film's engagement with key Lacanian concepts, including the mirror stage, the Name-of-the-Father, the gaze of the Other, and the *\*objet petit a\**, demonstrating how these abstract theoretical constructs are visually and auditorily manifested in the film's various meticulously crafted scenes and sequences. The obscured face of the initial reader, the monolithic inscription of "DREAMED," the omnipresent architecture of the library, and the echoing chants of the scribes all serve as potent symbols within this psychoanalytic framework.

Furthermore, we have argued that the film fundamentally challenges traditional notions of subjectivity and agency, persuasively suggesting that the self is not a pre-existing, autonomous entity, but rather a carefully constructed artifact of the Symbolic order, forever alienated from its own authentic being. The initial illusion of individual agency, represented by the solitary reader, is gradually eroded as the subject is drawn deeper into the library's labyrinthine structure. The carefully staged progression from individual study to mass conformity underscores the suppression of individual expression within the Symbolic order. The final word, "HIM," chillingly encapsulates the film's bleakly deterministic vision, reducing the subject to a mere pronoun, a nameless, faceless placeholder meticulously positioned within the grand, all-encompassing narrative of the Symbolic. It is not merely a label; it is a symbolic erasure of individuality, a testament to the complete subordination of the self to the demands of the system.