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CINEMA AS COUNTER-ARCHIVE IN RIDLEY SCOTT'S *THE LAST DUEL*: HISTORICAL SILENCE AND ETHICAL MEMORY

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ABSTRACT

This study interrogates Ridley Scott's *The Last Duel* (2021) as a paradigmatic historical cinema staging the formal and ethical dimensions of representation, the foreclosure of gendered testimony, and the epistemological operations of visual narrative. The film's tripartite design renders historical truth a contingent formation embedded in asymmetrical regimes of power, juridical authority, and cultural discourse. Situated at the crossroads of historiography, feminist epistemology, archival critique, and trauma theory, the analysis exposes the politics of representation, testimonial fragility, and the conditions governing audibility and silence. The belated emergence of Marguerite de Carrouges' account foregrounds the marginalization of the female subject and reconceptualizes testimony as a performative act of epistemic rupture unsettling patriarchal historiography. Spectatorship shifts from passivity to an ethically implicated stance confronting the entanglements of representation, memory, and juridical violence. Cinema emerges as a counter-archival dispositif, a transformative locus of epistemic production interrogating authority and remembrance. The study problematizes historical cinema's claim to truth and demonstrates how form may function both as an instrument of epistemic violence and as a modality of ethical engagement. *The Last Duel* materializes less as medieval reconstruction than as an ethical cinematic event compelling spectators to confront the limits of representation and witnessing's burden.

Keywords: Postmodern historical film, archival theory, crisis of representation, epistemic violence, *The Last Duel*

RIDLEY SCOTT'IN SON DÜELLO FİLMİNDE KARŞI-ARŞİV OLARAK SİNEMA: TARİHSEL SESSİZLİK VE ETİK BELLEK

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, Ridley Scott'ın *Son Düello* (2021) filmi üzerinden sinemada tarihsel temsilin biçimsel ve etik boyutlarını, cinsiyetlendirilmiş tanıklığın yapısal sınırlarını ve görsel anlatının epistemolojik işlevlerini incelemektedir. Üç farklı anlatıcı perspektifine dayalı yapısıyla film, tarihsel hakikatin sabit bir olgu değil, iktidar ilişkileri çerçevesinde kurulan çoğul ve kırılğan bir inşa süreci olduğunu ifşa eder. Çalışmada tarih yazımı, feminist epistemoloji, arşiv kuramı ile tanıklık ve travma teorileri disiplinlerarası bir kuramsal bütünlük içerisinde tartışılmıştır. Marguerite de Carrouges'in anlatısının sona yerleştirilmesi, kadın öznenin tarihsel söylemdeki bastırılmış, ertelenmiş ve sürekli olarak meşruiyeti sorgulanan konumuna işaret etmekte; tanıklığın aynı zamanda yüksek risk taşıyan performatif bir edim olarak işlediğini göstermektedir. Film, izleyiciyi edilgin bir konumdan çıkararak etik sorumluluk çerçevesine konumlandırır; görsel temsilin tanıklık, hafıza ve adaletle kurduğu karmaşık ilişkiyi eleştirel sorgulamanın zeminine taşır. Bu bağlamda sinema, yalnızca tarihsel olayların yeniden anlatımı değil, anlatının kendisini dönüştüren ve yeniden yapılandıran bir bilgi üretim mecrası olarak ele alınmaktadır. Çalışma, tarihsel sinemanın hakikati temsil etme iddiasını sorunsallaştırmakta ve bu tür anlatıların nasıl epistemik şiddet ya da etik bir adalet imkânı üretebileceğini analiz etmektedir. *Son Düello*, bu anlamda, yalnızca geçmiş sahneleyen bir tarihsel film değil; aynı zamanda temsil edilemeyen sınırlarında dolaşarak izleyiciyi tanıklığın sorumluluğuyla yüzleştiren etik bir sinema deneyimi sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Postmodern tarihsel film, arşiv kuramı, temsilin krizi, epistemik şiddet, *Son Düello*

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INTRODUCTION

Ridley Scott's *The Last Duel* (2021), a cinematic reworking of Eric Jager's *The Last Duel: A True Story of Trial by Combat in Medieval France* (2004), exceeds the parameters of a conventional medieval drama by reopening, through cinematic mediation, the very problem of how history is constituted, transmitted, and authorized. Although at first glance the film presents itself as a period reconstruction, its narrative form operates as a reflective dispositif that unsettles the epistemological stability of historical truth, foregrounds the systematic occlusion of women's testimony, and dramatizes the convergence of juridical sovereignty with epistemic violence. Situated within the interstice of historiography, feminist epistemology, and aesthetic form, *The Last Duel* simultaneously reenacts a past event and interrogates the cultural mechanisms through which the past is rendered intelligible and institutionally validated. Within this interpretive horizon, the film resonates with Robert Rosenstone's (2006: 6–7) conception of historical cinema as interpretive intervention and Marcia Landy's (1991: xi–xii) theorization of the aesthetic inscription of memory, in the past is refracted through competing discourses, ideological determinations, and ethical exigencies rather than secured as a seamless continuum.

Structured through a tripartite narrative, "The truth according to Jean de Carrouges," "The truth according to Jacques Le Gris," and "The truth according to Marguerite de Carrouges," the film refuses the reduction of narrative plurality to a unified truth claim and destabilizes the very assumption of a singularized and epistemically recoverable past. Beneath its ostensible guise as a narrational device, this tripartite structure must be apprehended as a sustained epistemological intervention that aligns the work with a genealogy of perspectival fracture inaugurated by Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950) and subsequently elaborated in theoretical debates on the constitutive instability of historical knowledge. Hayden White (1973: 5) has long argued that historical discourse is less a neutral retrieval of events than a narrativized construction structured by topological operations and ideological determinations, and Scott's film dramatizes this dynamic insofar as it stages the emergence of rival accounts within differentiated regimes of juridical, religious, and cultural authority. Each account enacts a double movement, inscribing the subjective orientation of its narrator and simultaneously revealing the institutional apparatuses that authorize audibility and enforce silence. In this interpretive constellation, the film exemplifies what Linda Hutcheon (1988: 92) theorizes as the logic of postmodern historiographic metafiction, a mode of cultural production that reflexively acknowledges its fictional status even as it insists upon engagement with the historical real. *The Last Duel*, in dramatizing a medieval past and thereby exposing the asymmetrical power relations embedded in its narration, renders legible the dialectical tension between representation and critique that constitutes the practice of historiographic cinema.

At the center of this stratified narrative stands Marguerite de Carrouges, historically consigned to structural marginality yet cinematically re-inscribed as a disruptive locus of meaning. Her belated testimony, positioned after the successive male accounts, functions not as an additive rectification but as an epistemological rupture that exposes the very conditions under which speech is rendered audible, credible, and institutionally ratified. Joan Scott (1988: 42) has argued that gender constitutes a primary category in the production of historical intelligibility, and Stuart Hall (1997: 15) has theorized representation as a discursive practice that configures the limits of visibility and enunciation. Taken together, these interventions elucidate how Marguerite's deferred voice reframes the narrative order as a contested arena of signification, one in which authority is simultaneously authorized, destabilized, and renegotiated. Her utterances circulate within juridical apparatuses that interrogate, discredit, and displace, while her body operates as the material substrate upon which sovereign power, disciplinary regulation, and epistemic violence inscribe themselves. In this configuration, Scott's feminist historiography intersects with Foucault's (1977: 47) account of disciplinary sovereignty, truth instituted not through disinterested evidence but through ritualized performance of authority, and with Butler's (1993: 22) theorization of the performative subjection of the gendered body, whose legibility remains conditioned by normative structures that simultaneously enable and constrain. Marguerite thereby emerges not as a passive vessel of historical truth but as an embodied site of contestation, a figure whose cinematic articulation unsettles the archival silences of patriarchal historiography and compels a reconsideration of the epistemological and political stakes of testimony itself.

The climactic spectacle of the duel constitutes the culminating site for the disclosure of the juridico-political logic of history as performance rather than revelation. Michel Foucault's (1977: 47) theorization of public rituals of punishment as instruments for the theatrical inscription of sovereign power rather than the revelation of truth finds cinematic articulation in Scott's configuration, a configuration that critical discourse analysis and cinematic narrative analysis illuminate through attention to the orchestration of *mise-en-scène*, the dialectic of panoramic vistas and intimate close-ups, and the corporeal positioning of Marguerite as both witness and guarantor of juridical outcome. The oscillation of the camera between ritualized violence and Marguerite's immobilized visage generates a transformation of spectatorship into complicity and a relocation of the viewer within an ethical economy of witnessing. The ceremonial architecture, the ecclesiastical decorum, and the acoustic intensity of collective acclamation effect a transmutation of the duel into a juridical liturgy, an apparatus in which Marguerite's body undergoes instrumentalization as the terrain for the inscription of patriarchal honor. Her survival emerges as a condition of dependence upon her husband's corporeal endurance, an instantiation that recalls Elaine Scarry's (1985: 18) theorization of pain as the privileged medium of the materialization of political authority. The framing of Marguerite's silent face produces a dislocation of the conventional dynamics of Laura Mulvey's (1975: 11) male gaze, resulting in a reconfiguration of the female figure from an object of desire into an index of trauma and ethical unsettlement. The conclusion of the combat, marked by Le Gris's refusal of confession and his violent death, culminates in the withholding of catharsis; Marguerite's gaze provides an emphasis on exhaustion rather than vindication, a gesture signifying the irresolvability of juridical violence. The spectator, positioned within this visual

economy through cinematic framing, experiences an implication as witness in the foreclosure of justice. From this analytical vantage, the duel sequence provides a materialization of Gayatri Spivak's (1988: 287) conception of the subaltern, a subject situated within structures of representation yet condemned to structural inaudibility.

The interrogation of aesthetic and narrative mechanisms that render history visible in *The Last Duel* transforms spectatorship into an ethical practice of witnessing. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (1992: 57) conceptualize testimony as a performative act that institutes a crisis of addressability rather than a neutral transfer of information, and Scott's film inscribes this conception in cinematic form through a constellation of formal strategies. The stillness of Marguerite's face captured in close-up during juridical interrogation, the enforced silence by ecclesiastical authority during her attempted articulation, and the concluding garden tableau marked by a gaze suspended in exhaustion rather than triumph exemplify a cinematic registration of the crisis delineated by Felman and Laub. Critical discourse analysis and cinematic narrative analysis illuminate how close framing, auditory suppression, and spatial isolation generate a discursive locus in which silenced subjectivity undergoes partial articulation. Spectatorship acquires implication through visual coercion rather than narrative identification, as silence, immobility, and repetition impose ethical attention and compel recognition of trauma's irreducibility. The economy of representation thereby shifts from the affirmation of historical continuity to the disclosure of rupture, transforming spectatorship into a practice of ethical witnessing.

This article situates *The Last Duel* as a paradigmatic instance of cinematic historiography, a mode where formal composition, thematic density, and gendered perspective converge to unsettle the epistemic premises of conventional historical narration. In contrast to traditional accounts that reduce historical cinema to dramatization of past events or aesthetic mediation of cultural memory, the film enacts what Rosenstone (2006) identifies as interpretive intervention, yet radicalizes this gesture through feminist epistemology, trauma theory, and archival critique. The integration of feminist historiography, narrative ethics, and postmodern theory produces not an additive commentary but a reconfiguration of cinematic historiography, one that foregrounds testimony, silence, and representation as contested terrains of intelligibility. The narrative architecture destabilizes linear temporality, fractures epistemological coherence, and exposes the exclusions and asymmetries embedded in patriarchal historiography. Cinematic narration consequently emerges as a politically and ethically inflected practice of visual inscription, a practice that transforms history from an ostensibly continuous record into a field of contestation marked by negotiation of authority, exposure of epistemic violence, and reimagining of justice.

1. Methodology

1.1. Research Design

The investigation situates itself within a qualitative paradigm privileging hermeneutic density over quantitative generalization, construing cinema as an epistemologically saturated medium in which juridical discourse, aesthetic form, and cultural memory intersect. Ridley Scott's *The Last Duel* (2021), directed by Scott and performed by Jodie Comer, Matt Damon, and Adam Driver under the production of 20th Century Studios with a duration of 152 minutes, accessed via Disney+ (*The Last Duel*, 2021), serves as the singular corpus of inquiry. Exclusive concentration on one cinematic text emerges from the recognition of historical cinema as a performative reconstruction of authority, memory, and subjectivity rather than a transparent transcript of past events. Such a design necessitates analytic engagement with the layered strata of signification through which history attains cultural legibility, demanding interpretive strategies oriented toward discursive, semiotic, and visual economies instead of empirical verification (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018: 11). In this sense, the design articulates an epistemological wager privileging interpretive rigor over positivist adequacy.

1.2. Critical Discourse Analysis

The first methodological axis proceeds through critical discourse analysis, mobilized as an instrument for the excavation of rhetorical economies consolidating institutional authority and relegating alternative testimonies to structural inaudibility. Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model (1995) and Teun van Dijk's theorization of ideological structures (1997) provide the conceptual scaffolding for interpreting juridical lexicon, ecclesiastical pronouncements, and feudal rhetoric as ritualized inscriptions of domination. In the juridical interrogation of Marguerite, Fairclough's account of institutionalized audibility (1995: 36) materializes with clarity; Carrouges' repeated invocation of "honor" exemplifies van Dijk's ideological square (1997: 25), where reiteration secures patriarchal legitimacy. Analytical segmentation operates through the isolation of juridical scenes organized under the categories of *authority*, *credibility*, and *silencing*, a classification that exposes the foreclosure of dissent within the very apparatus claiming to adjudicate truth. Discourse analysis thereby renders visible the juridical archive as a mechanism of epistemic violence sustained by repetition, exclusion, and ritualized assertion.

1.3. Cinematic Narratology

Discursive scrutiny, though indispensable, remains insufficient for apprehending the epistemological work of the cinematic apparatus, since authority consolidates itself not only in language but also in visual and auditory inscription. A second methodological axis therefore unfolds through cinematic narratology, elaborated by David Bordwell (1985), Edward Branigan (1992), and Christian Metz (1974). This analytic mode conceives mise-en-scène, framing, rhythm, and sonic texture as epistemic operators regulating intelligibility. In Marguerite's chapter, the rape sequence, presented in an unembellished static shot devoid of musical accompaniment, instantiates Bordwell's parametric narration (1985: 157),

whereby austerity itself performs argumentative labor. The duel sequence, structured through oscillation between corporeal violence and the immobilized face of Marguerite, enacts Branigan's focalization (1992: 65), foregrounding the disparity between masculine spectacle and feminine precarity. Sequence segmentation and categorical coding under *spectacle*, *silence*, and *trauma* disclose the inscription of trauma through form. Narratological inquiry thus demonstrates cinema's capacity to operate as a grammar of suffering, transforming austerity, stillness, and sonic voids into semiotic indices of vulnerability and resistance.

1.4. Theoretical Integration

Methodological strands attain theoretical profundity through integration with feminist historiography, archival critique, and trauma studies. Joan Scott's analysis of gendered intelligibility (1988: 43), Judith Butler's theorization of performative subjection (1993: 22), Derrida's conception of archontic power (1996: 17), and Felman and Laub's reflections on testimony (1992: 57) anchor the interpretive procedure. Juridical silencing of Marguerite corresponds to Butler's theorization of constrained performativity; the final silent tableau, in turn, aligns with Felman and Laub's account of testimony's incompleteness. The conjunctive deployment of CDA and narratology, upon integration with these theoretical horizons, transforms methodology into a praxis of critique, disclosing cinematic form, juridical discourse, and embodied subjectivity as intersecting regimes of authority, intelligibility, and ethical rupture. Through this integration, methodology emerges as a locus of epistemological intervention, a site where analysis and theory converge in the exposure of historiography's exclusions.

1.5. Limitations and Contributions

Despite its density, the methodological framework is delimited by exclusive concentration on a single cinematic corpus, a decision that restricts comparative breadth yet enables analytic intensity. Reliance on interpretive strategies entails the hermeneutic subjectivity intrinsic to qualitative work, with audience reception and extratextual archival documents excluded from the analytical horizon. These delimitations nonetheless permit the excavation of cinema as counter-archive. Through the conjunctive deployment of CDA and narratology within feminist and archival theory, the inquiry discloses the possibility of recuperating marginalized voices within cultural memory. The methodological significance materializes in the reconfiguration of interpretation as epistemological labor inseparable from ethical responsibility, each analytic gesture participating in the adjudication of legibility and erasure. Such a framework renders explicit the necessity of treating method as political practice, since analysis intervenes in the distribution of memory, visibility, and authority. Ultimately, the design exemplifies an interdisciplinary praxis whereby film analysis is transfigured into critical historiography, destabilizing hegemonic narratives and affirming the epistemic dignity of silenced testimony. Anchored within this methodological constellation, the ensuing analysis undertakes a sustained hermeneutic interrogation of the film, articulated through successive examinations of narrative multiplicity, juridical spectacle, gendered testimony, archival inscription, and the ethics of witnessing, each construed as a locus in which discursive regimes, aesthetic structures, and relations of power coalesce to regulate the conditions of historical intelligibility and the horizons of cultural memory.

2. Analysis and Findings

2.1. Narrative Multiplicity and the Crisis of Historical Truth

Within this tripartite configuration, each segment materializes as a discursive re-inscription of identical occurrences, and the divergences across these narrative strata disclose the narrativized constitution of historical intelligibility. Carrouges' account emerges as a discursive formation of martial valor and wounded masculine pride, with Marguerite's subject-position configured through the institutional constitution of a regime of deferential spousal duty, a formation manifesting Fairclough's theorization of credibility as an institutional effect of discourse (1995: 36). Le Gris' version assumes the form of a rhetorical performance of seduction, the staging of the rape sequence through softened lighting, slow-motion rhythm, and romanticized mise-en-scène operating as a narratological inscription of self-legitimation. Marguerite's testimony registers an epistemological rupture: the assault, preserved in stark daylight and sustained within a single unembellished shot, instantiates Bordwell's concept of parametric narration (1985: 157), whereby austerity itself acquires argumentative force. The structural design enacts the logic of Kurosawa's *Rashomon* and its tradition of perspectival fracture; the gendered deferral of narrative authority corresponds to Scott's theorization of intelligibility as contingent upon the systematic exclusion of female experience (1988: 42). The reflexive acknowledgment of fictionality articulates the dynamic theorized by Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction (1988: 92), a configuration in which narrative form is rendered inseparable from ideological investment. Multiplicity assumes the status of a critical dispositif, transfiguring narration into the locus of epistemic struggle and situating gender, power, and perspective at the threshold of archival constitution.

The cinematic negotiation with perspectivism recalls the architecture canonized by Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950), a paradigm predicated upon the multiplication of contradictory testimonies and the consequent dissolution of singularized truth. *The Last Duel* rearticulates this paradigm within a juridico-gendered matrix through which misrepresentation acquires corporeal and existential gravity. Carrouges' narration crystallizes as a rhetorical formation of wounded pride and patriarchal anxiety; Le Gris' account emerges as a configuration of performative charm and self-legitimation; Marguerite's testimony, defined by visual austerity and narratological restraint, discloses an asymmetrical distribution of authority that regulates recollection and simultaneously conditions the very possibility of narratability (Hutcheon, 1988:

112). This tripartite structure exemplifies Butler's theorization of performative subjection (1993: 22), whereby gendered intelligibility is instituted through normative constraint, transforming Marguerite's deferred audibility into a precarious negotiation rather than an institutional recognition.

Each narrative inscription consolidates a frame calibrated toward the projection of moral and social legitimacy. Carrouges' version configures Marguerite as deferential spouse, her subject-position subordinated to a constellation of martial valor, aggrieved masculinity, and juridical entitlement, reinforced through compressed framing and emphatic facial close-ups. Le Gris' perspective constructs Marguerite as a flirtatious and ambiguous figure, the rape reframed as a consensual encounter through romanticized lighting, ornamental mise-en-scène, and slow-motion rhythm, a visual economy sustaining his deluded self-justification. Marguerite's account, by contrast, establishes an epistemological rupture: the assault, inscribed in stark daylight, sustained through static composition, and deprived of sonic ornamentation, institutes a regime of unflinching realism that dismantles the preceding male testimonies as ideologically overdetermined constructs. The deferred emergence of her voice corresponds to Scott's theorization of historical intelligibility as predicated upon the systemic exclusion of female experience (1988: 42), situating Marguerite's testimony within an economy of power where silence, authority, and memory converge.

Marguerite's deferred narrative presence constitutes an instantiation of Joan Scott's theorization of historical intelligibility as gendered, an intelligibility predicated on the filtration of women's experience through dominant male-centered discourse (1988: 53). The positioning of her account as the final segment foregrounds the performative constitution of historical voice and the mechanisms through which testimony attains privilege or is consigned to erasure. This sequential arrangement produces a denaturalization of male authority, disclosing the contradictions and ideological investments embedded in the preceding narratives. Carrouges' and Le Gris' testimonies consistently suppress Marguerite's independent thought and affective complexity; her articulation, in contradistinction, configures her as an agent endowed with political discernment and moral resolve. The representation of suffering emerges not as romanticized spectacle but as an analytic site within a broader critique of gendered injustice. Butler's conceptualization of performative subjection (1993: 22) clarifies the precarious audibility of female voice under normative constraint, and Spivak's formulation of subaltern silencing (1988: 287) underscores the structural impossibility of unmediated articulation within patriarchal regimes of narration.

The structural layering generates a hermeneutic aperture enabling apprehension of the dialectic between articulation and omission. Silence, exclusion, and visual framing operate as instruments of historiographic critique, transforming the cinematic apparatus into an argumentative dispositif. The camera's selective registration, its inclusions, prolongations, and omissions, functions as a modality of visual reasoning that interrogates narrative authority. Sequences delineating Marguerite's isolation after accusation, her communal shunning, her juridical interrogation concerning sexual practice, and her fear of execution, absent from the male testimonies, attain visibility solely through her articulation. Their cinematic inscription exposes the consequences of patriarchal epistemologies that condition female audibility on male corroboration and perpetuate structures of epistemic exclusion. The result is not a restoration of justice but a visual record of its absence.

The film functions as an experimental dispositif for the interrogation of historical narration, exposing the fragility of truth claims alongside the violence embedded in their institutional codification. Narrative authority attains dramatic presence by way of Marguerite's embodied vulnerability: the juridical interrogation that converts her sexuality into an object of public scrutiny and the imminent threat of execution contingent upon her husband's corporeal endurance constitute emblematic moments where law is staged as spectacle. These episodes instantiate the logic of critical discourse analysis, revealing juridical language as a mechanism for the fabrication of credibility through ritualized humiliation, while narratological austerity, harsh daylight, static composition, and sonic restraint, renders perceptible the precarious economy of female audibility. Hayden White's account of the ideological encoding of causality and agency (1973: 10) converges with Butler's theorization of performative subjection (1993: 22), Scott's articulation of gendered intelligibility (1988: 53), and Spivak's analysis of subaltern silencing (1988: 287). The tripartite structure of *The Last Duel* materializes the constitutive crisis of historical representation: impartiality becomes foreclosed, ethical reckoning emerges as unavoidable, and each narrative articulation simultaneously enacts the exclusions of patriarchal power and the demand for justice in contexts of gendered violence. The orchestration of discursive, visual, and embodied tensions reconfigures juridical spectacle as a stage for the inscription of asymmetries of power and gender, thereby establishing the conditions for the subsequent analysis of justice as theatrical violence.

2.2. Gendered Justice and the Spectacle of the Duel

The juridical architecture of *The Last Duel* is reconfigured into a spectacle of sovereign display, a configuration that fuses adjudication with ritualized domination and dissolves the conventional boundary between law and theatrical violence. The climactic duel, formally staged as the procedural conclusion of a system devised to adjudicate culpability, is revealed as a gendered performance of sovereignty in which the epistemic legitimacy of Marguerite de Carrouges' testimony is subordinated to patriarchal protocols of recognition. Appears to operate as legal resolution becomes an enactment of Butler's theorization of performative subjection (1993: 22), where credibility derives not from evidentiary validation but from the symbolic positioning of the female subject within circuits of male power. Critical discourse analysis renders visible this mechanism by exposing juridical rhetoric as an apparatus that regulates audibility, transforming Marguerite's voice into an effect of patriarchal inscription rather than an autonomous articulation of truth.

The duel sequence, visually stylized and narratively extended, unfolds as a disciplinary liturgy in Foucauldian terms (1977: 55). In place of juridical deliberation anchored in rational procedure, combat operates as a residual modality of medieval sovereignty in which justice attains legibility only through bodily domination. Narratological inquiry elucidates this transformation: panoramic vistas of collective acclamation alternate with close framings of Marguerite's immobilized visage, producing a visual economy that locates the axis of meaning in her silence. The orchestration of sound, the clash of weapons, the resonance of collective voices, the solemnity of ritual pronouncements, intensifies the scene's ceremonial quality, situating Marguerite simultaneously as erased subject and hyper-visible emblem. Her survival, conditioned by the corporeal endurance of her husband, exemplifies Scarry's theorization of the body as the site where power engraves authority (1985: 18). Scott's account of gendered intelligibility (1988: 53) illuminates the paradoxical structure whereby Marguerite's truth remains deferred, rendered intelligible only as the corollary of male triumph, her body rendered both battleground and juridical instrument.

Spectatorship in this sequence is configured not as detached viewing but as an ethically implicated position, structured by the camera's oscillation between the violence of combat and Marguerite's immobilized face. The cinematic gaze is displaced from its conventional role as a locus of desire into an index of trauma, unsettling Mulvey's theorization of the male gaze (1975: 11) and converging instead with Felman and Laub's account of testimony as performative event beyond factual recounting (1992: 57). Silence and stillness acquire the status of visual inscriptions that compel the spectatorial position into complicity, obliging sustained attention to the precariousness of Marguerite's existence. Agamben's reflections on spectacle as the staging of power (2000: 77) resonate here: justice is reframed from juridical adjudication into theatrical manifestation, a manifestation that implicates not only the *dramatis personae* within the narrative but also the audience, positioned as historiographic witnesses to the violence of gendered sovereignty.

The *mise-en-scène* of the duel operates as a visual dispositif that embeds domination within ceremonial form, the arena reconstituted simultaneously as tribunal and coliseum. Architectural monumentality, suffused with ecclesiastical resonance, situates Marguerite in funereal attire at the periphery of the frame, her figure diminished by the mass of stone and the armored male bodies that enclose her. Narratological inquiry discloses how the camera's alternation between the corporeal brutality of combat and Marguerite's immobilized body establishes a rhythm relocating narrative weight from masculine violence to feminine vulnerability. The chromatic austerity of her dress, accentuated by harsh lighting and static composition, generates a physiognomic register of precarity, a cinematic grammar translating somatic details, the contracted jaw, the inscription of fear upon the body, into a rhetoric of endangered existence. Butler's theorization of performative subjection (1993: 22) clarifies this dispositif, wherein the female body acquires legibility only within disciplinary protocols that simultaneously expose and constrain its visibility.

Mulvey's account of the male gaze (1975: 11) undergoes reconstitution in this economy: the female image ceases to operate as an object of desire and is transposed into a locus of ethical disturbance. The acclamation of the crowd, the metallic resonance of weapons, and the cadence of ritual pronouncements, interpreted through critical discourse analysis, emerge as discursive rituals of patriarchal sovereignty consonant with Foucault's theorization of power staged in spectacle (1977: 55). Silence, inserted into moments of visual focus on Marguerite, functions narratologically as rupture, converting the spectatorial position into an ethically implicated stance. The fixed camera lingers on her gaze, a gaze that does not restore voice but confronts spectatorship with its complicity, positioning the audience as historiographic witnesses to her precarious condition. Scott's theorization of gendered intelligibility (1988: 53) and Spivak's analysis of subaltern silencing (1988: 287) further clarify this structural aporia: Marguerite's image is rendered hyper-visible even as her testimony remains confined to structural silence, dramatizing the contradictory economy of female audibility under patriarchal justice.

The defeat of Le Gris stages the culmination of juridical and ethical intensity, the absence of confession converting death into equivocal spectacle rather than juridical resolution. The alternation of camera focus between contorted physiognomy, suspended respiration, and unrepentant silence institutes a narratological economy of temporal elongation that prolongs ambiguity and withholds closure. Marguerite's visage is simultaneously drawn into this suspended temporality: drained complexion, immobilized gaze, erased affect of triumph. Such inscription establishes a cinematic grammar of depletion, translating survival into a rhetoric of non-recognition. Critical discourse analysis discloses the operative logic of sovereignty, relocating credibility from discursive testimony to corporeal endurance and reducing Marguerite's truth to the status of bodily performance instead of epistemic authority. Butler's theorization of performative subjection (1993: 22) together with Kristeva's reflections on abjection (1982: 4) illuminate this dispositif, wherein female agency is rendered intelligible only under disciplinary conditions that simultaneously degrade and constrain.

The aftermath intensifies juridical absence. Carrouges' triumph and Marguerite's reprieve from execution mark sovereign withdrawal rather than juridical resolution, enacted through the king's refusal of recognition and the dispersal of the ritual crowd. Narratological attention reveals a strategy of deferred catharsis: the protracted duration of Marguerite's solitary figure, immobilized at the center of an emptied frame, relocates narrative weight from masculine triumph to feminine abandonment. The austerity of framing, the contrast between collective acclamation and subsequent silence, and the attenuation of sound configure a visual rhetoric of sovereign neglect. Agamben's theorization of spectacle as choreography of domination (2000: 77) converges with Scott's account of gendered intelligibility (1988: 53), producing an aporia in Marguerite is rendered overexposed as image and simultaneously muted as voice, exemplifying the contradictory economy of female audibility within patriarchal adjudication.

The epistemological implications are articulated in Felman's theorization of testimony as performative act that institutes a crisis of addressability (1992: 56). *The Last Duel* enacts this crisis by registering Marguerite's trauma visually rather than discursively, thereby implicating spectatorship in the collapse of juridical authority. Narratological devices such as repeated close framings, extended silences, and the immobilized camera construct a visual testimony irreducible to verbalization. Spectatorship assumes the form of ethical complicity, positioning the audience as historiographic witness instead of neutral observer. Cavarero's reflections on voice and exposure (2005: 168) sharpen this paradox: Marguerite's voice is withheld from restoration as speech and refracted as gaze, a gaze that exposes spectatorship to its implication in patriarchal silencing. Justice, within this constellation, is articulated as absence, a void in testimony persists solely as image and imposes the necessity of ethical witnessing in place of juridical recognition.

The duel in *The Last Duel* is articulated as a ritualized manifestation of patriarchal sovereignty, a sovereign choreography where juridical form collapses into theatrical domination and female testimony is structurally annulled. Critical discourse analysis and narratological inquiry together delineate a juridical economy predicated on the displacement of legitimacy from discursive articulation to corporeal endurance, a transfer that transforms violence into the operative medium of sanction. The female body assumes the dual function of substrate of inscription and instrument of display, a paradox central to Joan Scott's theorization of gendered intelligibility (1988: 53). Butler's account of performative subjection (1993: 22) identifies the disciplinary protocols that tether Marguerite's credibility to the spectacle of male endurance, while Kristeva's notion of abjection (1982: 4) situates her legibility in a regime of degradation. Felman's conception of testimony as performative address (1992: 56) designates the film as a practice of witnessing that implicates spectatorship in an ethical relation irreducible to juridical recognition. Agamben's analysis of spectacle as sovereign display (2000: 77) defines the duel as a theatrical manifestation of domination rather than adjudication, a performance that exposes the constitutive violence underpinning patriarchal law. This interpretive constellation dismantles the mythology of historical masculinity, reframes juridical truth as absence rather than resolution, and configures cinema as the site at which the silences of patriarchal sovereignty are rendered legible as both historical residue and contemporary imperative. By foregrounding the duel as a sovereign spectacle that simultaneously inscribes and effaces female presence, the analysis opens directly onto the broader problematic of gendered testimony and historical silence, where the paradox of visibility without audibility assumes its most decisive form.

2.3. Gendered Testimony and Historical Silence

In *The Last Duel*, the voice of Marguerite de Carrouges is configured as a locus of historiographic rupture, disrupting the continuity of masculine narration. The relegation of her testimony to the concluding section of the tripartite structure institutes a regime of juridical deferral that reproduces medieval practices of subordinating or annulling female speech. This structural arrangement exemplifies the epistemic dispositif identified by Joan Scott as gendered intelligibility (1988: 43), an order organizing historical legibility through hierarchical protocols of recognition. Critical discourse analysis renders legible the displacement of authority, disclosing the contrast between the discursive weight invested in terms such as "honor" and "duty" in the male accounts and the systematic foreclosure of Marguerite's voice. Butler's theorization of performative subjection (1993: 2) inscribes this binding of credibility within disciplinary regimes; Felman's conception of testimony as performative address (1992: 56) situates her enunciation in a precarious relation of demand and recognition. Kristeva's notion of abjection (1982: 4) configures this legibility as degradation, and Spivak's account of the subaltern (1988: 287) exposes the impossibility of unmediated female voice under patriarchal historiography.

Marguerite's narrative articulation interrupts the visual economy of the film through austerity of form and restraint of tone, instituting a rupture in the cinematic regime of spectacle. Extended duration, stark illumination, and pared-down mise-en-scène establish a narratological topology of temporal elongation and visual withholding; rhetorical assertion yields to the inscription of embodied vulnerability. The static shot of the rape sequence registers trauma as visual testimony resistant to stylization; this refusal of aesthetic mediation renders trauma as crisis of addressability in Felman's terms. Silence functions as discursive interruption: the withholding of non-diegetic music, the attenuation of ambient noise, and the contrast with collective acclamation configure an aural rhetoric of isolation. Spatial composition intensifies this condition, situating Marguerite at the frame's edge, monumental architecture and armored figures compressing her into visual marginality; shallow depth of field confines her legibility to a circumscribed zone. Narratological interpretation identifies these devices as juridical exposure, a modality converting cinematic form into a structure of enforced visibility. Cavarero's reflections on voice and relationality (2005: 168) deepen this aporia, refracting exposure into substitution for expression and designating the female body as the locus of testimony deprived of vocal authority.

Marguerite's attempts to be heard before the juridical apparatus unfold as a choreography of degradation that discloses the structural suspicion attached to female speech. The interrogation focuses insistently on her sexuality, intentions, and alleged provocations, producing a discursive ritual that reproduces the logic of medieval jurisprudence, a system in which women's testimony was juridically diminished unless ratified by male corroboration. These exchanges occur in interiors marked by constriction, shadow, and narrow framing, the mise-en-scène operating as a visual rhetoric of claustrophobia. The camera sustains close-up duration on her face, registering the contraction of the jaw and the downward cast of the eyes, gestures that inscribe vulnerability into the image itself. Silence punctuates the sequence, the withholding of ambient resonance amplifying the violence of juridical discourse. Critical discourse analysis reveals in these rhetorical maneuvers the displacement of testimony into suspicion, while narratological inquiry interprets spatial compression and

sonic attenuation as formal strategies that translate systemic misogyny into cinematic representation. Butler's theorization of speech acts as conditioned by normative authority (1997: 25) underscores the fragility of utterances deprived of performative efficacy under domination, and Felman and Laub's account of testimony as performative transmission of trauma (1992: 57) clarifies the precarious suspension of Marguerite's words between audibility and annulment.

The positioning of her account after the two male testimonies functions as a historiographical reinscription that dramatizes the epistemic burden of belatedness. Her narrative intervenes only after interpretive frames have already been established by the preceding accounts, compelling her to bear the cost of speaking last. The cumulative force of this sequencing conditions juridical as well as spectatorial reception, predisposing interpretation to suspicion and mistrust. Narratological analysis designates this temporal ordering as a mechanism of deferral embedding patriarchal hierarchy within narrative time. The effect acquires a meta-discursive dimension: Marguerite's testimony operates simultaneously as an act of resistance and as a commentary on the epistemological regimes that regulate the audibility of female voice. Scott's theorization of gender as a category of historical intelligibility (1988, p. 43) elucidates the structural protocols that organize recognition, and Cavarero's reflections on voice and relationality (2005: 168) explicate the paradox in which exposure substitutes for expression, rendering the female body the site of testimony stripped of authoritative voice. Marguerite's narrative thereby emerges as a cinematic enactment of the double bind of female speech: hyper-visible in image, legible as trauma, yet deprived of juridical ratification as authoritative truth.

The asymmetry of Marguerite's juridical position is articulated through spatial organization and perspectival mediation that translate patriarchal suspicion into cinematic form. Her solitary passage through monumental corridors, her confinement in constricted chambers, and her positioning within juridical assemblies saturated by male authority establish spatial choreographies that institute a visual economy of isolation and an architecture of silence. Occasional alignment of the camera with her field of vision enacts a narratological rupture, destabilizing the grammar of mastery and foregrounding a subjectivity circumscribed by juridical invalidation. Critical discourse analysis identifies these rhetorical and spatial dispositifs as reenactments of medieval protocols through which female testimony was juridically subordinated and required male corroboration for recognition. Trouillot's theorization of historical silences (1995: 48) situates this process as erasure embedded in the very procedures of fact creation, assembly, and retrospective framing. Narratological inquiry interprets the belated emergence of Marguerite's account as a temporal mechanism of deferral embedding patriarchal hierarchy into narrative order. Scott's formulation of gendered intelligibility (1988: 43) elucidates the epistemic protocols that regulate recognition, and Cavarero's reflections on voice and relationality (2005: 68) illuminate the paradox of visibility without authority and exposure without expression.

The terminal tableau in the garden intensifies this paradox by refusing resolution and configuring survival as historiographic residue. The immobilized frame, the severity of daylight, and the suspension of non-diegetic sound construct a representational dispositif that negates catharsis and translates endurance into an image unrati ed by juridical validation. Narratological analysis conceptualizes this tableau as visual testimony, an inscription of trauma resistant to narrative redemption and irreducible to discursive closure. Felman's theorization of testimony as performative address (1992: 56) explicates the scene as an appeal structurally denied acknowledgment, while Alcoff's critique of "speaking for others" (1991: 9) designates the ethical volatility inherent in cinematic mediation of silenced experience. The sequence assumes the force of historiographic critique: survival is inscribed as evidence of juridical void, representation becomes a site of epistemic violence and ethical demand, and cinema is reconstituted as an apparatus of witnessing that obliges its audience to confront the residues of silence and the impossibility of restitution.

2.4. Is Cinema an Archive? Visual Inscription and Counter-Narratives

The archival problematic delineates the epistemic horizon through which *The Last Duel* is apprehended as an intervention in historiographic practice rather than a conventional reconstruction of the medieval past. Institutional repositories consolidate authority through the stabilization of factual continuity, yet cinematic practice institutes an affective and contested terrain where suppressed or delegitimized memories acquire contingent visibility. Derrida's theorization of the archive as a locus of institutional power (1996: 17) clarifies the dual operation of preservation and erasure, the simultaneous production of legibility and silence. The film disrupts this logic by configuring a counter-archival dispositif through its tripartite design, in which the competing testimonies of Jean, Jacques, and Marguerite function as historiographic strata layered in antagonism. The concluding segment discloses the ideological investments that structure the earlier accounts and materializes the archival "death drive" identified by Derrida, the compulsion to overwrite and suppress dissenting memory. Marguerite's testimony articulates a modality of mnemonic inscription distinct from the spectacles of masculine honor: extended durations, restrictive framings, and muted chromatic registers recalibrate the cinematic idiom of remembrance. Narratological inquiry situates these strategies as a stratification of memory that replaces juridical spectacle with an economy of embodied vulnerability and affective intensity. Her recollections remain irreducible to juridical documentation, positioning cinema not as a neutral archive of events but as a historiographic apparatus of selection, contestation, and ethical exposure.

The inscription of Marguerite's juridical marginality is articulated through a constellation of spatial and acoustic dispositifs that transpose patriarchal exclusion into the domain of cinematic memory. Recurrent framings locate her in solitary traversals of stone corridors, in the immobilized stillness of the courtroom, and in the cloistered enclosure of the garden, spatial choreographies that sediment solitude as a mnemonic index of erasure. This visual economy resonates

with Hirsch's theorization of "postmemory" (2008: 107), understood as a modality of transmission in which traumatic histories, inaccessible to direct inheritance, are reconstituted through representational reimagination. In contradistinction, the juridical archive, scrolls, scribes, institutional protocols, abstracts lived experience into bureaucratic codifications. Marguerite's utterances undergo mediation by male transcription, juridical interrogation, and institutional framing, generating a regime that extracts, categorizes, and disciplines corporeal and sexualized detail. Critical discourse analysis elucidates this process as the discursive neutralization of female enunciation, and narratological inquiry situates suffocating interiors, constricted framings, and attenuated sonic fields as formal translations of systemic misogyny into the idiom of cinema. Hartman's notion of the "afterlife of slavery" (2008: 12) clarifies the structural continuity of violence, in which inscription itself becomes a modality of domination. Against the juridical apparatus, cinema institutes a counter-archival register: Marks's concept of "haptic visuality" (2000: 150) illuminates the rape sequence in Marguerite's chapter, the camera's refusal of montage or stylization configuring a visual archive of pain irreducible to rationalization and compelling presence that exceeds discursive explanation.

The terminal tableau in the garden consolidates this counter-archival stance through an image that suspends narrative telos and reframes survival as historiographic residue. Static framing, severity of daylight, and withdrawal of extradiegetic sound institute a representational dispositif that negates the logic of closure and reconfigures endurance as an unratified image of persistence. Narratological analysis conceptualizes this tableau as visual testimony, an inscription of trauma resistant to juridical adjudication and unassimilable to documentary protocols. Felman and Laub's reflections on the collapse of witnessing in trauma (1992: 72) theorize the aporia of transmission, in which impossibility and ethical necessity remain indissolubly conjoined. In this configuration, the silence of the final image operates as archival remainder, a fragment that reframes historiographic intelligibility. Alcoff's critique of "speaking for others" (1991: 19) explicates the ethical precarity of mediation, disclosing how Marguerite's survival attains visibility exclusively through structures that delimit her speech. The sequence assumes the status of historiographic critique: cinema displaces the sterility of state-sanctioned archives through a mnemonic apparatus predicated on vulnerability, affect, and incompleteness, preserving marginalized experience as fragment, remainder, and ethical demand.

The Last Duel articulates an alternative configuration of historical memory by reconstituting cinema as a counter-archival dispositif situated against the authority of institutional repositories. Whereas juridical archives consolidate power through the stabilization of factual continuity, cinematic practice inaugurates a contested mnemonic field in which erasure and silence are rendered perceptible as constitutive elements of historical production. Derrida's theorization of the archive as a locus of institutional authority (1996: 17) elucidates the dialectic of preservation and suppression, a dialectic materialized through the tripartite layering of Jean's, Jacques's, and Marguerite's testimonies as antagonistic strata of historiographic inscription. Marguerite's testimony, distinguished by extended duration, static framing, and attenuated sonority, institutes a mode of mnemonic registration resistant to assimilation within patriarchal discourse. Narratological analysis situates these formal strategies as inscriptions of vulnerability, while critical discourse analysis identifies the juridical interrogation of her body as discursive foreclosure. Scott's account of gendered intelligibility (1988: 43) explicates the protocols governing recognition, and Butler's reflections on performative subjection (1997: 25) underscore the fragility of speech acts articulated under conditions of domination. Through this constellation, the film reorients its own medium into the position of witness, sustaining Marguerite's presence in fractured visibility without ventriloquizing her voice.

The terminal tableau in the garden intensifies this counter-archival logic by suspending narrative teleology and inscribing survival as historiographic residue rather than juridical redemption. The immobilized frame, the severity of daylight, and the absence of extradiegetic sound constitute a representational dispositif that interrupts the conventions of closure and refracts endurance into an image of persistence lacking institutional sanction. Narratological inquiry interprets this image as visual testimony irreducible to juridical adjudication, and Felman and Laub's theorization of the collapse of witnessing in trauma (1992: 72) conceptualizes the aporia of transmission, the indissoluble conjunction of impossibility and ethical necessity. Cavarero's meditation on voice and relationality (2005: 168) discloses the paradox of visibility deprived of authority and testimony detached from recognition. The silence of this final image operates as an archival remainder that destabilizes the epistemic economy of historiography. Alcoff's critique of "speaking for others" (1991: 19) frames the ethical precarity of mediation, revealing Marguerite's survival acquires visibility only within structures that delimit her speech. In its refusal of catharsis, the sequence assumes the form of historiographic critique: cinema displaces the sterility of state-sanctioned archives through a mnemonic practice predicated on vulnerability, affect, and incompleteness, preserving marginalized experience as an unfinished demand for recognition and an ethical imperative for spectatorship.

2.5. The Ethics of Witnessing and Cinematic Memory

The Last Duel positions witnessing as an epistemic and ethical category that reconfigures cinema into a counter-archival dispositif and renders juridical silences as fragments of historical memory. The belated emergence of Marguerite de Carrouges's testimony after two male narratives that inscribe and pre-empt her experience dramatizes patriarchal protocols through which female enunciation has historically been relegated to suspicion or annulment. Felman and Laub's theorization of testimony as a performative act exceeding factual discourse and inhabiting the traumatic register (1992: 57) elucidates the ethical force of this belated positioning, while Caruth's conception of trauma as constitutively deferred and fractured (1996: 5) clarifies the temporality embedded in her speech. Juridical interrogation of her sexuality, physiology, and motives, presented in constricted interiors and suffocating close-ups, exemplifies discursive foreclosure;

critical discourse analysis interprets these rhetorical maneuvers as institutional mechanisms of neutralization. Narratological inquiry identifies the camera's oscillation between Marguerite's immobilized physiognomy and the spatial geometry of the courtroom as a formal inscription of exposure coupled with containment. Scott's account of gendered intelligibility (1988: 43) explicates the epistemic regimes structuring recognition, Butler's reflections on performative subjection (1997: 25) underscore the fragility of utterance under domination, and Cavarero's meditation on voice (2005: 168) illuminates the paradox of visibility severed from authority. Through the convergence of these discursive and cinematic modalities, Marguerite's testimony emerges as the ethical fulcrum of the film, a practice of witnessing that resists juridical assimilation and compels acknowledgment of trauma, memory, and injustice as fractured presences whose force remains unresolved yet ethically insistent.

The ethical import of *The Last Duel* is articulated through its systematic refusal of narrative closure and its configuration of cinematic form as a counter-archival dispositif that inscribes juridical silences as mnemonic residues within the economy of historical intelligibility. The belated emergence of Marguerite de Carrouges's testimony subsequent to two male narratives that already codify and distort her experience dramatizes the patriarchal regimes that have historically relegated female enunciation to suspicion or erasure. Felman and Laub's theorization of testimony as a performative act that exceeds factual discourse and inhabits the aporetic register of trauma (1992: 57) illuminates the ethical weight of this positioning, and Caruth's account of trauma as constitutively deferred and fractured (1996: 5) clarifies the temporal logic sedimented in her speech. Juridical interrogation of her sexuality, physiology, and motives, visualized through constricted interiors and suffocating framings, configures a regime of discursive foreclosure; critical discourse analysis interprets these rhetorical maneuvers as institutional mechanisms designed to neutralize testimonial authority. Narratological inquiry refracts the camera's oscillation between Marguerite's immobilized physiognomy and the spatial geometry of the courtroom into a formal inscription of simultaneous exposure and containment. Scott's analysis of gendered intelligibility (1988: 43) elucidates the epistemic protocols that regulate recognition, Butler's reflections on performative subjection (1997: 25) underscore the precarity of utterance under domination, and Cavarero's meditation on voice (2005: 168) discloses the paradox of visibility severed from authority. Through the convergence of these discursive and cinematic dispositifs, Marguerite's testimony anchors the ethical fulcrum of the film, a modality of witnessing resistant to juridical assimilation and compelling acknowledgment of mnemonic fracture, juridical void, and corporeal precarity as unresolved yet ethically insistent presences.

The closing silence of *The Last Duel* constitutes an archival residue that reconfigures testimony, spectatorship, and historiographic intelligibility within an ethical economy of responsibility. Felman's theorization of silence as a modality of speech (1992: 73) illuminates the conversion of withheld dialogue, absent music, and suspended textuality into a performative register of protest and mnemonic burden. The final image of Marguerite in the garden, immobilized within a static composition and exposed to uncompromising daylight, materializes narratological austerity, a formal strategy effecting the suspension of closure and the transfiguration of survival into historiographic remainder rather than juridical redemption. Critical discourse analysis situates the preceding juridical interrogations as a foreclosure apparatus, mechanisms of institutional inscription that neutralize female enunciation, and narratological inquiry designates the visual restraint of the closing tableau as an inscriptional mode that encodes vulnerability as resistant trace. Scott's account of gendered intelligibility (1988: 43) explicates the epistemic regimes structuring recognition, Butler's analysis of performative subjection (1997: 25) underscores the precariousness of enunciatory force under domination, and Cavarero's meditation on voice (2005: 168) conceptualizes the paradox of visibility severed from authority. Through the convergence of these discursive and cinematic dispositifs, the film institutes an ethics of witnessing predicated on the preservation of fracture, the sedimentation of mnemonic residues, and the inscription of juridical indeterminacy, obliging spectatorship to engage testimony as unresolved presence and ethical demand.

CONCLUSION

The Last Duel articulates a historiographic dispositif that destabilizes patriarchal regimes of representation through the inscription of epistemic indeterminacy, juridical foreclosure, and the ethical precarity of spectatorship. Its tripartite architecture and deployment of silence, framing, and juridical spectacle configure history not as linear continuity but as a contested domain constituted by omission, antagonism, and mnemonic aporia. The film, and this study, demonstrate cinema as a counter-archival apparatus in which silenced residues of the past surface as resistant fragments and spectral traces demanding critical engagement rather than assimilation into narrative continuity.

The methodological orientation consolidates critical discourse analysis and narratological inquiry into an interpretive framework delineating the convergence of discursive foreclosure and cinematic inscription. CDA situates juridical interrogation as a linguistic apparatus of neutralization, institutionalizing suspicion toward female testimony, whereas narratology identifies the austerity of unbroken takes, static framings, and sonic attenuation as inscriptional dispositifs that encode corporeal precarity. White's theorization of historiography as rhetorical emplotment (1973) and Derrida's conception of the archive as archontic regime (1996) construct the historiographic horizon. Felman and Laub's analysis of testimony as performative event beyond factuality (1992), Caruth's theorization of trauma as deferred temporality (1996), Scott's conceptualization of gendered intelligibility (1988), Butler's reflections on performative subjection (1997), and Cavarero's meditation on voice as relational exposure (2005) collectively produce the epistemological matrix within which Marguerite's testimony is intelligible as rupture in patriarchal discourse.

The structural and aesthetic dispositifs of the film instantiate this theoretical matrix through recursive narration and formal austerity. The reiteration of events across three perspectives materializes historiography as antagonistic stratification of subjectivities. The rape sequence, sustained in a single uncut shot devoid of musical score or editorial stylization, registers a cinematic archive of trauma resistant to spectacularization and enforcing temporal co-presence. Juridical interrogations, staged in claustrophobic interiors saturated by hostile rhetoric, exemplify discursive foreclosure materialized as visual form. The terminal tableau in the garden, immobilized in static composition under uncompromising daylight and devoid of textual closure, consolidates an ethics of witnessing by translating survival into historiographic remainder. Collectively these dispositifs inscribe memory as discontinuity, justice as juridical indeterminacy, and testimony as aporetic presence.

The implications of this reading extend into wider debates on truth, memory, and representation in contemporary visual culture. In a climate defined by post-truth epistemologies, algorithmic mediation, and resurgent authoritarianisms, *The Last Duel* models a cinematic practice predicated on ethical responsibility rather than historical certainty. Its counter-archival aesthetics displace the triumphalist logic of conventional historical drama and rearticulate feminist historiography as a modality of critical resistance. The insistence on Marguerite's testimony as both revelation and refusal transforms cinema into a mnemonic apparatus through which absence, fracture, and silence acquire epistemic and political force. In this capacity, *The Last Duel* reframes historical cinema as a practice of ethical witnessing that obligates both scholarship and spectatorship to confront historiographic destabilization, juridical voids, and mnemonic residues that remain unresolved yet ethically insistent. In sum, *The Last Duel* consolidates a model of historical cinema that reconstitutes representation as an ethics of witnessing, displaces archival authority through counter-archival inscription, and positions feminist historiography as the horizon for confronting unfinished residues of the past and juridical voids that persist in the present.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

RIDLEY SCOTT'IN SON DÜELLO FİLMİNDE KARŞI-ARŞİV OLARAK SİNEMA: TARİHSEL SESSİZLİK VE ETİK BELLEK

Giriş ve Çalışmanın Amacı

Bu çalışma, *Son Düello* (*The Last Duel*) adlı sinema yapıtını tarih yazımı, feminist kuram, arşiv düşüncesi ve tanıklık teorileri kesişiminde ele alarak, alternatif tarihsel anlatının sinemasal düzlemde hangi estetik ve ideolojik stratejiler aracılığıyla yeniden inşa edildiğini çözümlemektedir. Çalışmanın merkezî sorunsalı, kadın tanıklığının tarihsel söylem içerisindeki temsiliyet biçimlerinin, görsel ve işitsel kodların düzenleniş yoluyla hangi koşullarda yeniden anlam kazandığı ve hangi söylemsel çerçeveler altında açımlandığıdır. Marguerite karakterinin anlatıdaki konumlanışı, bireysel deneyimin yalnızca özel alana hapsedilmediğini; tersine, tarihsel belleğin dışladığı kolektif travmalarla eklemlenerek politik bir yük kazandığını gösterir. Bu bağlamda çalışma, sinemayı yalnızca geçmiş sahneye alan bir yeniden-anlatım aracı değil, temsilin epistemolojik sınırlarını sorgulayan ve tarihsel-etik sorumluluk üstlenen eleştirel bir bilgi üretim alanı olarak konumlandırmaktadır.

Kuramsal Çerçeve

Çalışmanın kuramsal temeli, tarihsel anlatının estetik ve ideolojik kurgulanış biçimlerini sorgulayan düşünsel arka planlara dayandırılmaktadır. Hayden White'in tarih yazımında retorik yapılar üzerinden estetik kategorilerin işlevselliğine ilişkin çözümlemeleri, filmdeki anlatı çoğulluğunu anlamlandırmak açısından kurucu bir zemin oluşturmaktadır. Feminist bilgi kuramı bağlamında Joan W. Scott'ın toplumsal cinsiyetin tarihsel temsildeki belirleyici rolüne dair yaklaşımları, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak'ın "alt-özne" (subaltern woman) kavramsallaştırmasıyla ilişkilendirilerek Marguerite'in anlatıdaki yerinin ve sesinin geçitli, kırılmalı ve ertelenmiş doğası epistemolojik düzlemde belirginleştirilmektedir. Jacques Derrida'nın arşiv kavramına ilişkin çözümlemeleri, hegemonik tarih anlatılarının dışında konumlanan görsel belleğin imkânlarını kuramsal bağlamda tartışmaya açarken; Cathy Caruth ve Shoshana Felman'ın travma ve tanıklık kuramları, anlatının etik yükünü ve temsilin sınırlarını değerlendirmede temel kuramsal dayanaklar olarak işlev görmektedir. Çalışma, bu kuramsal zemin aracılığıyla sinemanın yalnızca içerik düzeyinde değil, aynı zamanda biçimsel ve estetik stratejiler üzerinden de tarihsel söyleme eleştirel müdahalede bulunabileceği varsayımı etrafında inşa edilmektedir.

Yöntem ve Bulgular

Çalışma, nitel araştırma yöntemine dayalı olarak gerçekleştirilmiş ve eleştirel söylem çözümlemesi ile sinemasal anlatı analizi tekniklerinin birlikte kullanılmasıyla yürütülmüştür. Filmdeki çok katmanlı anlatı yapısı, karakterlerin mekânla ve zamanla ilişkileri, sinematografik tercihler, ışık-gölge dengesi, mekânsal yerleşim, sesin ve sessizliğin dramatik işlevi gibi unsurlar kuramsal arka plana dayandırılarak ayrıntılı biçimde incelenmiştir. Bulgular, filmin özellikle Marguerite de Carrouges'in anlatısında görsel temsilin estetik aşırılıklardan bilinçli olarak arındırıldığını, sessizliğin yalnızca boşluk değil, aktif bir anlam taşıyıcısı olarak işlev gördüğünü ve travmatik deneyimlerin etik sınırlarla çerçevelenerek temsile açıldığını göstermektedir. Kadın tanıklığının film boyunca sürekli ötelenmesi, yalnızca kurguya dair bir zamanlama tercihi değil, kadın öznenin tarihsel temsildeki yapısal marjinalleşmesine yönelik eleştirel bir müdahale biçimi olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Marguerite'in tanıklığı, mahkemede ifade vermenin ötesine geçen, bedeni, toplumsal konumu ve bireysel riskleri içeren bütünlüklü bir etik eylem olarak temsil edilmektedir. Film, bu anlamda adalet kavramını yeniden düşünmeye çağırarak; tanıklığın imkânsızlığı üzerinden şekillenen bir sinemasal etik alan önermektedir.

Sonuç ve Öneriler

Elde edilen bulgular, *Son Düello* filminin klasik tarihsel anlatı kalıplarını aşarak sinemayı yalnızca geçmişten yeniden üretmeye yarayan edilgin bir temsil mecrası değil, epistemik işlevleriyle öne çıkan ve arşivin sınırlarını zorlayarak alternatif bellek biçimlerini gündeme taşıyan bir karşı-arşiv olarak yeniden çerçevelendiğini ve bu süreçte temsilin ideolojik kodlarını sorunsallaştıran özgün bir strateji geliştirdiğini göstermektedir. Film, resmi tarih söylemlerinin dışladığı öznel deneyimleri görsel belleğe dahil ederek tanıklığın epistemolojik statüsünü yeniden tartışmaya açmakta, belleğin yalnızca yazılı belgeler ve kurumsal kayıtlarla değil, bastırılan, suskunlaştırılan ve dile getirilemeyen deneyimlerle de şekillendiğini ifade alanına açmaktadır. Bu bağlamda sinema, salt tarihsel olayların dramatik yeniden üretimi olarak değil, bastırılmış seslerin temsil ufkuna taşındığı, etik tanıklığın sahnelendiği ve alternatif tarihsel imgelemlerin dolaşıma sokulduğu eleştirel bir bilgi üretim alanı olarak konumlanmaktadır.

Çalışma, feminist tarih yazımı, travma estetiği ve etik sinema kuramlarının kesişiminde kendini yerleştirerek, sinemanın estetik bir deneyim olmanın ötesinde, bilgi üretimini kuramsal bir sorumluluk olarak üstlenen, tarihsel eleştiriye mümkün kılan ve toplumsal adalet arayışını kültürel düzlemde yeniden kurgulayan bir epistemik pratik olarak işlev gördüğünü temellendirmektedir. Marguerite'in anlatısı, eril tarih yazımının marjinalleştirdiği öznel deneyimleri temsil edilebilirlik ufkuna taşıyarak, arşivin dışında bırakılan bedenlerin etik düzlemde yeniden okunmasına zemin hazırlamaktadır. Tanıklığın hem bireysel bir ifade biçimi hem de kolektif bir tarihsel sorumluluk alanı olarak kavramsallaştırılması, çalışmanın kuramsal derinliğini yoğunlaştırmakta ve feminist epistemoloji bağlamında sinemanın politik ve etik boyutlarını kuvvetlendirmektedir. Bu yönüyle film, yalnızca sanatsal bir ifade biçimi değil, aynı zamanda etik-politik bir eylem alanı, yani temsilin epistemolojik sınırlarını tartışmaya açan kurucu bir deneyim olarak yeniden yorumlanmalıdır.

Çalışmanın sınırlılığı, anlatı ve biçimsel düzeyde bu denli karmaşık, etik eksensiz tarihsel film örneklerinin sayıca azlığı nedeniyle karşılaştırmalı çözümlemelerde ortaya çıkan güçlüklerden kaynaklanmaktadır. Ancak bu sınırlılık, önerilen kuramsal modelin evrensel geçerliliğini zayıflatmamakta; tersine, temsil çözümlemelerinin farklı tarihsel ve kültürel bağlamlara aktarılabilirliğini kanıtlamaktadır. Gelecek araştırmalarda feminist tarihsel anlatıların sinemasal biçimleniş, arşiv estetiği, sessizlik stratejileri ve etik izleyici konumlanması gibi kavramlar etrafında farklı sinema metinlerinin karşılaştırmalı olarak değerlendirilmesi, feminist epistemolojinin sinema ile temsil ilişkisini yeni yönelimlerle zenginleştirecek; böylelikle sinemanın yalnızca bir estetik alan değil, aynı zamanda tarihsel ve etik sorumluluk üstlenen bir kültürel pratik olarak yeniden kavramsallaştırılmasına katkı sağlayacaktır.

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