Restoring the Female: A Dialogic Discourse in *Prince of Persia*

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Restoring the chastity, life and honour of an endangered beautiful maiden from the hands of a devil or a dragon is a theme that had been utilised throughout the ages in literatures around the globe. In the Middle Ages, following the codes of conduct of chivalry, a knight used to rescue an innocent girl. In the Renaissance period, to describe a 'perfect gentleman' Ronald Carter and John McRae says that a gentleman embodies "the mediaeval virtues of the knight (the noble warrior), the lover (the man of passion), and the scholar (the man of learning)" (51). In the eighteenth century when Gothic novels began to emerge; with *Frankenstein* (1818) we see how the mad scientist was busy in saving his lady from the hands of an enraged monster. In a video game of the twentieth century like the *Prince of Persia* this tradition is maintained throughout where a wise Prince endangers his life to rescue his countrymen and his love. Kaileena is the dream of the warrior Prince and she is the Princess of Time; she has magical powers, but she is constantly threatened by a terrible monster named Dahaka.

Roland Barthes's famous phrase "A text is a tissue of quotations" in the essay "The Death of the Author" and Julia Kristeva's theory of Intertextuality becomes relevant in this case as both of these are ways of harking back to the past and compare it with the present. In his seminal book *Intertextuality*, Graham Allen says that:

> Works of literature, after all, are built from systems, codes and traditions established by previous works of literature. The systems, codes and traditions of other art forms and of culture in general are also crucial to the meaning of a work of literature. Texts, whether they be literary or non-literary, are viewed by modern theorists as lacking in any kind of independent meaning. They are what theorists now call intertextual. (Allen, 1)

Following Allen's words we can see how different texts of different traditions are linked with each other, each of which refers to the tradition of the other. *Prince of Persia* is a video game by Ubisoft and it is a video game of the 21st century; and this game has three

parts, each referring to the other; the first, *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*, the second, *Prince of Persia: The Warrior Within* and the third, *Prince of Persia: Two Thrones*. The story of the video game is like this; the first part of this game, *The Sands of Time*, has a plot which involves India where King Shahraman and his son, the Prince, going en route through India to Azad to conquer the Maharajah of India and so to achieve honour and glory. After looting and plundering, they (Shahraman and his son) reached Azad where the Vizier of the Maharaja tricks the Prince in releasing the Sands of Time by using the Dagger of Time. The Sands turn everyone in the city into deadly monsters. The powers of evil forces also transform the well decorated city into a dark, hellish and seamy world of hell where none but the devil exists. Even if, the Prince manages to bring peace and order again, "the Dagger of Time into the Hourglass and revers[ing] time into night before the invasion of the Maharajah's kingdom" (Wikipedia), his life will be endangered by a "terrible beast" (according to the wise man in *The Warrior Within* part) who is the Guardian of Timeline. Thus, he is not free of the threat of the Dahaka, and so his battle continues through the second part of the game *The Warrior Within*. In this part there is an old man, who had guided the Prince from his childhood. According to this old man whoever releases the mysterious Sands has to face the Dahaka. *The Two Thrones* part is slightly different where the Prince is infected through an open wound on his arm with the mysterious sands causing him to fuse a daggertail with his body. Later on the Prince encounters two personalities within himself, one is the good Prince and the other is the wild and enraged Prince. However there is a story within the story: the Prince has to save Kaileena, the Empress of Time, who is in the grasp of the terrible beast the Dahaka. Kaileena's helpless condition in front of the beast needs a knightly saviour who must endanger his own life to save the female and the Prince saves the female by eliminating the demon with his swords.

In the Middle Ages, the Knight was a figure who used to assure his fellowmen safety, peace and wisdom. In the poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Sir Gawain's adventures and feats of courage brought him honour and prestige among his countrymen. He was engaged in a formal duel with the mysterious Green Knight where at first he was requested to behead the latter following the norms of the "beheading game". The later part of the poem refers to the facts described earlier that Sir Gawain was requested to abide by the rules of the game; he has to reach the Green Chapel where the Green Knight will try to behead him. Meanwhile several things occur before Sir Gawain reaches this place. Before reaching the Green Chapel Sir Gawain encounters three personalities among whom a queen offers him her

green belt to safeguard him from all kinds of physical danger. Similarly in *Prince of Persia* the Prince gets a magical sword from the maiden Kaileena which will help him to eliminate all kinds of danger. Also, this sword will help him in solving many riddles avoiding all sorts of obstructions in his pathway.

Like Artegal in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, the Prince is a fierce fighter for justice. The Prince is also like Ares who is "identified with the Roman God Mars [and] was escorted by the gory Enyo, Eris (Discord), Diemos (Terror), and Phobos (Fear)" (Comte, 50). The Prince also resembles Heracles, the one who "[leads] a life of achievement and superhuman suffering" (Comte, 100). The Prince is also an embodiment of Jason (the Greek hero) whose "long, hard and perilous adventures showed…[him] to be courageous yet fickle" (Comte, 115). The Prince shows different skills to drive away the monsters and the audience is awestruck by his "amazing strength [in] choking the [monsters], serpents sent to him" (Comte, 100). The Prince is also identical with Perseus, the Greek hero who had slayed the Gorgon (Medusa). Gorgons were monsters in particular and in *Prince of Persia* the Dahaka is like a Gorgon who needs to be slain by some fearsome warrior (the Prince). Also like Baal, the Phoenician God who had to "recover his palace, his realm and his power" (Comte, 59) and fought against Yam (the God of the Sea), the Prince endangers his own life to recover his life, glory and wisdom. Cú Chulain's 'ruthless' attitudes and dare-devil attitude is also present in the Prince and he becomes a desperate warrior to free his kingdom Babylon from all sorts of evil. Aten, the Egyptian God, is identified with the radiant sun disc. Like Aten the Prince has a radiant disc on the bronze armour right at the middle of his chest. This radiant disc helps the Prince in collecting mysterious sands which makes the Prince gradually more and more powerful. Fixed near the heart of the Prince the radiant disc also symbolizes the radiance of wisdom, truthfulness, and power achieved through perseverance and hardship. A skilled warrior and a master swordsman, the prince is also an expert in acrobatics. He is also a great magician who can control Time to get back to his safer state amidst all dangers. Further the Prince's desire for Kaileena, who resides in a 'World of Evil', also refers to his love for the occult. But he cannot control his sexual desire for the sultry siren Kaileena and ultimately sleeps with her. However, he is also an emblem of wisdom, a saviour like the Amitabha (Buddha's other name) who holds the 'Infinite Light' as he holds up his sword against all evil. He also represents Arthur, the Celtic hero who is a practitioner of "valour, chivalry, conquests and the service" (Comte, 54) offered to his countrymen. Finally like

Asclepius, the Greek and Roman God, the Prince is "the one who loved mortals the most [and one] who possesses magical powers ('metis') to "cure and revitalize" (Comte, 55).

Like Victor Frankenstein who tries to save his maiden, however fails, the Prince tries to save his maiden from the Dahaka and he succeeds. This Dahaka is a devil, a demon in Persian mythology. The Dahaka is a descent of Angra Mainyu who is the controlling force of all evils.

Following the tradition of the Gothic, *Prince of Persia* show this game replays the themes of usurpation of the female-self shown in Bram Stoker's *The Dracula*. The vampire named Dracula becomes a threat to civilized young maidens and they need to be protected by somebody who must encounter the Count. In the game *Prince of Persia* the Prince behaves similarly, in that, he holds his sword against the raging monsters who pose a threat to female virginity and chastity. The Dahaka's attempt to absorb Kaileena is symptomatic of the devil's fulfilment of unquenched thirst of the female body of Kaileena. Whoever is beautiful, chaste and innocent is threatened by the demon and the Dahaka is performing the same.

Together with this the Dahaka is the revelation of the unconscious fears of the virgin maiden. The very nature of the Dahaka seems to be an exposure of the repressed psyche of the devil that needs to be challenged. However postcolonial approaches to this theorization of the game will argue on the 'othering' of the devil. The devil is being treated as the uncivilized other, a deliberate brute, barbaric and primitive who is thwarted by the civilized order of valour and aristocracy from the Knight or the Prince.

Finally, restoring the endangered female, keeping herself safe from the labyrinths of strategies of the evil is a well celebrated theme from *Beowulf* to *Prince of Persia*; a theme that is maintained throughout in literature as well as in a virtual media.

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