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Natalie Stigall

### **A Wilderness of Cyborgs: Haraway, Shakespeare, and the Female Revenge Narrative in *Titus Andronicus* and *Titus***

Though an entire subset of Shakespeare criticism is devoted to study of the dramatist's "revenge plays" or "revenge tragedies," the concept of the revenge narrative is a modern one, according to Ronald Broude. The genre, unfamiliar to Elizabethan audiences and playwrights, works from modern subject matter, ethical principles, and definitions (38). Broude states that revenge in modern terms and as applied to the genre implies the enacting of a personal desire to hurt another in retaliation for mistreatment of oneself or those close to oneself. The plot of the revenge play, he says, follows this broad definition (38): "Revenge tragedy is usually understood to center around a figure who conceives himself to have been seriously wronged, and who, overcoming obstacles both within and outside himself, contrives eventually to exact retribution, becoming in the process as depraved as those by whom he had been wronged" (38-39). The gendered pronoun usage in this quote is telling; Marguerite A. Tassi notes in the introduction to *Women and Revenge in Shakespeare: Gender, Genre, and Ethics* that Western revenge narratives often "convey deeply entrenched cultural norms and expectations of masculine behavior" that might lead one to believe "that stories of revenge are 'almost excessively masculine' in their focus and concerns" (18). However, Tassi says, this assumption is inaccurate. Women throughout Western literature have sought vengeance for injuries inflicted on them and theirs, both actively and vicariously through men incited to take on the vendetta (19). And Shakespeare's approach to female vengeance, Tassi says, "forces readers and audiences to examine critical truisms and cultural assumptions, particularly those dealing with women's relationship to and participation in revenge" (21).

Given the great emphasis and significance Tassi assigns to female revenge narratives in Western literature – particularly in Shakespeare – it is surprising that she and so many other scholars should so uniformly neglect, minimize, or completely disregard Shakespeare's arguably most powerful, empowering female avenger: *Titus Andronicus*'s Goth queen Tamora. Critics

routinely portray Tamora as a hollow female— victim, whore, masculine tyrant – or disempower her role in the narrative’s revenge plot by reading her as a manipulated pawn of central antagonist Aaron or as a mirror/double of patriarchal Titus. Tassi herself argues that Tamora’s violent revenge narrative is in part morally rationalized by presenting Tamora as a mother “whose fierce maternal love inspires [her] strongest passions and actions,” a trope that also serves to feminize and humanize an otherwise monstrous “[usurper] of male traits and prerogatives” (117; 116). Though the scholar complicates this argument, it still seems to fall too easily into the victimization trope of Shakespeare’s tragic female characters that Tassi herself rejects. And scholars like Douglas E. Green claim that Tamora’s central function in the narrative of *Titus Andronicus* is to construct Titus’s role as “patriarch, tragic hero, and, from our vantage point, central consciousness” through her role as gendered Other (319). Little scholarship exists that establishes Tamora as an empowered, independent actor who carries out her own distinct revenge plot following Titus’s brutal sacrifice of her eldest son Alarbus.

In cinematic adaptation, however, Tamora has found a champion: Julie Taymor’s adaptation of Shakespeare’s hyper-violent revenge play *Titus* (1999). Courtney Lehmann notes that *Titus* was released at a time when both Shakespeare/Renaissance-period films and feminism had “gone Hollywood,” though the scholar argues that many of the films to come out of this intersection were decidedly antifeminist in their fetishization of sex as their heroine’s only mean of gaining professional power (260). It is not quite as an adaptation of a Renaissance revenge tragedy that I intend to approach *Titus*, however. While Taymor’s film is a largely faithful adaptation of *Titus Andronicus*, its empowering perspective of Tamora as an independent avenger and its equal focus on her plot within the narrative aligns the film, I would argue, with modern cinematic female revenge narratives.

As a genre, revenge film is less specific in its characterization: revenge films center on a character who seeks vengeance for injury inflicted on him/herself or another individual with whom the character shares a close bond. Furthermore, many revenge films justify the avenger’s actions through pathos that invests the audience in the character’s emotional trauma. However, a more specific subset of revenge film gaining popularity during the time of *Titus*’s release was the female-centered revenge narrative, according to Judith Franco. This gendered genre features at least one female character as an agent of violence – usually against a male victim or victims – seeking justice or revenge (Franco 1). From these narratives have evolved “‘psychofemmes’ – defined in a broad sense as women who counter the violence of men with a lunatic rationality,” according to Hilary Radner (Franco 1). Reading *Titus* as a film in this vein, and Tamora as a feminist prototype of this kind illustrates how the text “offer[s] empowerment to female viewers by engaging them in an energetic spectacle of violence and redemption,

while providing distance and mastery through irony, reflexivity and intertextuality” (2).

I would like to draw from feminist rather than film or literary theory to explore *Titus* as an empowering female revenge narrative and Tamora as a feminist prototype, however. More specifically, employing Donna Haraway’s theory of cyborg feminism to Taymor’s film and reading Tamora as a feminist cyborg exemplar serves to display Taymor’s use of the female revenge narrative to rescue Tamora from the disempowering and neglectful perspectives of modern criticism. In fact, reading Tamora as the psychofemme of film studies through Haraway’s cyborg feminism illuminates the extent to which these identities intersect in empowering cinematic revenge narratives. Tamora, then, is but one example of the cyborg in revenge film, and her likeness can be traced all the way into twenty-first century female revenge films like the *Kill Bill* series.

Haraway’s socialist-feminist theory reacts against naturalist, essentialist feminism that upholds strict politics of identity. The scholar argues that, in technologically mediated societies, the rigid boundaries between the organism and the machine (and within that between the human and the animal), between the biological and the technological should be transgressed: “This essay is an argument for *pleasure* in the confusion of boundaries and for *responsibility* in their construction” (Haraway 8, emphasis in original). Haraway’s seminal article “A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s” outlines the paradigm shifts between modern and post-modern epistemology, most notably the moves from reproduction to replication, from biological determinism to evolutionary inertia or constraints, from public/private to cyborg citizenship, and from White Capitalist Patriarchy to Informatics of Domination (20-21). Lehmann summarizes Haraway’s feminist call to action thus:

...what socialist-feminist practice must privilege, according to Haraway, is the *systems* environment of the cyborg, where the prevailing network of C3I – the command-control-communication-intelligence technology employed to police borders in a potentially liberatory nexus of information flow – becomes a locus of feminist opportunity for “recording communication and intelligence to subvert command and control” (270).

Haraway’s cyborg is the physical manifestation of these principles; a hybrid of organism and machine that populates this post-modern world in which the boundaries between nature and artificial construct are blurred. According to the scholar, the figure of the cyborg “is a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women’s experience in the late twentieth century” (8). In characterizing the prototype of the cyborg, Haraway identifies several key tenets: a reliance on affinity rather than identity, a blending of public and private, and a reliance on replication over biological reproduction. And applying these principles to the

character of Tamora in Taymor's *Titus* displays the extent to which this adaptation utilizes cyborg feminism to present Tamora as an empowered, independent feminist character and legitimate her role as a female avenger.

Taymor's *Titus* undoubtedly takes place in the technologically mediated, border-crossing world Haraway says the cyborg populates. Though Taymor never references the cyborg, Lehmann says, "it would be hard to find a term that better captures the 'powerful infidel heteroglossia' her oeuvre generates" (273). The director keeps Shakespeare's original setting, but Taymor's Rome is a stylized blend of the organic and the machine, the natural and the constructed. This world does not, in Haraway's terms, "mark time on an Oedipal calendar," seamlessly blending costumes, automobiles, and locations from the '40s and '50s, and the classic Roman period (8). Also contributing to this feeling of timelessness is the ambiguity of the passage of time established in *Titus Andronicus* and uncorrected by Taymor, as she notes in her director's commentary. Taymor's location sites include Hadrian's Villa and Mussolini's government center in Italy, the remains of a Roman coliseum in Croatia, and prosthetic nature landscapes such as the swamp and crossroads (Lehmann 274). These sites not only reflect a world out of time, but Haraway's dissolution of boundaries between the organic and constructed. Ironically, it is the artificial landscapes that, according to Lehmann, "implicitly resist the naturalizing imperatives of patriarchal command and control" and the pre-existing structures that "embody the 'informatics of domination'" (274). This is fitting to Haraway's theory, given that "the cyborg is resolutely committed to...irony" (9).

Taymor further supports this reading by infusing into her vision imagery that contribute to Shakespeare's blurred boundaries between human and animal and populating her Rome with hybrids. Shakespeare's original text – to which Taymor's screenplay is largely faithful – is replete with language that relates characters to animals: both Aaron and Tamora are referred to as tigers – for Tamora this is a frequent charge – and Tamora is said to have lived a "bestly" life (5.3.199); Titus refers to Saturninus as a lion (4.1.98); and Tamora's surviving sons Chiron and Demetrius are called "bear-whelps" (4.1.96). Taymor emphasizes the hybridity of her characters with both subtle and overt references to their bestiality. Tamora and her sons all don animal furs at various points in the film, and Saturninus's wardrobe often contains animal prints, such as a matching jacket and hat emblazoned with zebra print. Taymor's commentary emphasizes the importance of this animal imagery to the characters' identification: "...costume, paraphernalia, horses or chariots or cars – these represent the essence of the character..." (Taymor). *Titus* is clearly operating within Haraway's post-modern informatics of domination, and her identification of her characters as hybrids reflect this reading.

Though several characters – both male and female – are identified as bestial hybrids in

Taymor's film adaptation, and Lehmann notes that Taymor's Lavinia displays certain similar qualities, it is the director's interpretation of "exquisite, powerful, Goth queen" Tamora that definitively engages in Haraway's cyborg feminism in order to subvert the dominant system of power (Taymor). Taymor's Tamora conforms to several of Haraway's principles of cyborg existence – including a reliance on affinity over identity, dissolution of the boundaries between public and private, and a privileging of replication over reproduction – that identify her as a cyborg prototype, and this identification is utilized within Taymor's film to create a strong female revenge narrative. The director's adaptation expands on Shakespeare's original text visually and narratively to highlight this reading of the character and present Tamora as the empowered feminist avenger and subverter of dominant hegemonies few other have read her as.

Perhaps Haraway's main critique of essentialist feminism is its emphasis on community through identity: "With the hard-won recognition of their social and historical constitution, gender, race, and class cannot provide the basis for belief in 'essential' unity" (Haraway 13-14). Instead, she argues for affinity, "a kind of post-modernist identity out of otherness and difference" (14). According to Haraway: "This identity marks out a self-consciously constructed space that cannot affirm the capacity to act on the basis of natural identification, but only on the basis of conscious coalition, of affinity, of political kinship" (14-15). This fully political method of unification against the dominant hegemony is not naturalized, requires no specific characteristics, and is therefore more inclusive and, ultimately, powerful than unification through identification.

And, as "an outsider whose survival is contingent on strategic interfacing with insiders, as well as 'unexpected others,'" Tamora fully conforms to this political strategy (Lehmann 275). The queen rejects naturalized forms of unity through identification, such as when Lavinia appeals to Tamora's mercy under threat of rape from Tamora's two sons: "O Tamora, thou bearest a woman's face –" (2.3.136); Tamora, however, refuses to even hear the remaining plea: "I will not hear her speak, away with her!" (2.3.137). The queen refuses Lavinia's attempt at unification with Tamora through their shared experiences as women; instead, she forms strategic connections with characters both inside the dominant hegemony – Saturninus – and self-identified Others – Aaron in order to subvert the informatics of domination and enact her vengeance on insider Titus.

Tamora enters *Titus Andronicus* and Taymor's film as a clearly identified racial Other: she and her sons are prisoners of war brought to Rome by Titus as spoils for the emperor, an identification heightened deliberately in Taymor's film by the three actors' matching blonde hair (Taymor). However, Tamora rejects her racial bonds publically when she consents to marry new

Roman emperor Saturninus, who is entranced by her “hue” (1.1.261), and privately in her sexual and vengeful alliance with the Moor, Aaron. Taymor emphasizes the unnatural quality of these unions through Tamora’s sons, whose reactions emote confusion when their mother accepts Saturninus’s hand, and shock and revulsion when they discover her relationship with Aaron.

These strategic political alliances afford Tamora the power to disrupt and re-code Rome’s informatics of domination and pursue her revenge of Titus. In fact, according to Lehmann, these are intersecting goals: “Central to Tamora’s revenge plot to hack into and reprogram her Roman ‘host’ is her mastery of data encryption – her ability to embed subversive messages within the dominant code” (276). The vengeful queen approaches this task through the political affinities she has created: Aaron plans and puts into effect the mechanisms that will ensure Titus’s fall from grace, and Tamora uses her connection with Saturninus to ensure his cooperation. Tamora’s re-coding of Rome’s “wild hot head” emperor is central to Taymor’s reading of Tamora: according to the director, Tamora is an “extraordinary actress” who uses her affinity with the emperor to revenge herself against Titus and the dominant hegemony of Rome: “You know this queen will be able to manipulate [Saturninus] so easily. And that is so dangerous. And Titus knows it” (Taymor). Titus acknowledges this danger in Shakespeare’s text, as well: “She’s [Tamora] with the lion [Saturninus] deeply still in league,/ and lulls him whilst she playeth on her back” (4.1.98-99). Taymor’s stage direction emphasizes this point: Jessica Lange’s Tamora consistently creates spacial distance between herself and Saturninus as a unit, and the other characters in the scene, whispering to him in asides, and using physical as well as eye contact to maximize the effect of her words. And through her control of Saturninus, emperor of Rome and its informatics of domination, she exacts revenge on Titus and comes to rule over and therefore subvert the dominant hegemony.

In the border-crossing cyborg world, Haraway says, one of the boundaries to be traversed is that between the public and private realms: “No longer structured by the polarity of public and private, the cyborg defines a technological polis based partly on a revolution of social relations in the *oikos* the household. Nature and culture are reworked; the one can no longer be the resource for appropriation or incorporation by the other” (Haraway 9, emphasis in original). According to the scholar, communications technologies in a post-modern, technologically mediated society have rendered naturalistic dichotomies like the public and private ideologically questionable; and “the boundary-maintaining images of base and superstructure, public and private, or material and ideal never seemed more feeble” (25).

In their very natures, both *Titus Andronicus* and *Titus* blur the boundary of this dichotomy as performances of very intimate, personal, and familial traumas. Broude reminds us that revenge is by nature an intimate act (38). And throughout the narrative Tamora’s revenges

on Titus are enacted in highly public spectacles: Titus's sons Martius and Quintus are falsely accused of murder amidst a large hunting party, and the same sons are publically executed while Titus, humiliated and out of favor, wails for mercy in the streets. All this, Tamora says, to "make them [the Andronici] know what 'tis to let a queen / Kneel in the streets and beg for grace in vain" after Titus publically executes Tamora's firstborn son (1.1.454-55). The very public nature of Tamora's intimate vengeance speaks to her role as feminist hybrid prototype: In dissolving the boundaries between public and private, she successfully revenges herself on Titus through his public humiliation and revenge; furthermore, her marriage to Saturninus and her intimate control over him display her successful strategy of employing private, intimate work to publically re-code Rome's dominant hegemony. Her intimate affinity with the emperor might be in essence a private act, but she displays in a very public manner the power it affords her – coaxing and prodding him in a courtyard filled with the Andronici and in the middle of a senate meeting, in Taymor's film. In this way, Tamora as cyborg rejects the established boundaries of an organic society and publically re-codes the methods of communication that dominate the C3I world order she inhabits.

Taymor's own complication of the public and private dichotomy speaks to the nature of film itself. Taymor emphasizes *Titus* as a performance or spectacle throughout the film, using, according to Judith Buchanan, multiple proxies that "[remind] us, if anything, how implicitly present we, the *off-screen* audience, are throughout the film" (248, emphasis in original). Her expansion of the character of young Lucius and her inclusion of both a phantom and real audience bookending the narrative arc of the film highlights the nature of film as spectacle and this private story of revenge as public entertainment. In Shakespeare's original text, young Lucius is a small background character; in Taymor's adaptation, he serves as a physical manifestation of audience within the film. The character, Buchanan says, "most in the film...is witness to things being done to other people" (248). The boy is frequently in the background of scenes, the camera panning to him as he stands away from the action or peeks around a corner, quietly observing the personal actions of the other characters. Nothing, it seems, is private while he – and, by extension, the audience – are captive observers.

Young Lucius enters and exits the narrative through the ruins of a Roman coliseum, and the use of this particular setting in the opening and closing of the narrative is significant.<sup>1</sup> When the boy enters the scene, held aloft in victory by the recurring figure of the leather-clad "clown,"

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<sup>1</sup>There is, of course, the impact of the coliseum's role as, in Buchanan's words, "the archetypal theatre of violence," but to adequately explore the theme of violence as spectacle in Taymor's film would require a separate, extensive research project unrelated to the theory of cyborg feminism (248). Therefore, I don't mean to address it in this argument.



we see from a rotating shot that the auditorium galleries are empty of spectators; however, we very clearly hear the cheers of a phantom audience. Buchanan reads this initial absence of physical bodies as Taymor's comment on stage to screen adaptation: "The sense that there is an audience implicit in this playing space, but one which cannot be seen, graphically illustrates the separation between actor and audience, the necessary sacrifice of shared space, that is part of the process of adapting a play from stage to screen" (248). Though there is a spacial distance between those doing the action and those observing it – a distance narrowed by young Lucius's presence – Taymor's phantom audience reinforces the idea that no act occurring onscreen is completely private; an unseen audience can still be a captive one. By the time Taymor returns to the coliseum at the close of the film, however, an audience has materialized. Taymor uses "time slice" to freeze the final action of the horrific dinner scene – Lucius spitting on and subsequently shooting Saturninus – and transport the table and its occupants to a raised platform at the center of the coliseum. The galleries are now filled with a silent, blank-faced audience, who seemingly were watching the events of the film unfold in the arena below them. Buchanan notes that the absence of a crowd in the opening scene serves to heighten the impact of the full auditorium in this closing scene (251). And, indeed, the presence of the audience implies a deeper level of observation and public spectacle to this private narrative. The space between actor and audience has shrunk, and the characters seem further confined: scenes that took place on prosthetic natural sets are now re-coded as stage sets, and private monologues – even if delivered directly to the camera – are re-interpreted as overheard utterings rather than one-way conversations. Taymor's final setting of a packed coliseum emphasizes the breakdown of the boundaries between public and private action in the film, and re-codes the entire narrative as public spectacle of private events.

As with any other partially organic being, the cyborg is invested in populating the world with others similar to itself. However, according to Haraway, traditional principles of organic sexual reproduction must be re-coded to suit a technologically mediated society: "Sexual reproduction is one kind of reproductive strategy among many, with costs and benefits as a function of the system environment. Ideologies of sexual reproduction can no longer reasonably call on the notions of sex and sex role as organic aspects in natural objects like organisms and families" (21). This naturalistic form of reproduction is therefore irrelevant to the cyborg, which thrives in a C3I society; according to the scholar, cyborgs "have more to do with regeneration and are suspicious of the reproductive matrix and of most birthing" (Haraway 38). Cyborg reproduction, then, privileges regeneration and replication over organic reproduction; in fact, cyborg "sex" is completely "uncoupled" from naturalistic reproduction (8). Cyborg reproduction can thus be summarized as non-biological generation that reproduces or replicated the cyborg itself rather than an independent, organic being with similar genetic properties.



As a cyborg prototype, Tamora privileges the products of her cyborg replication over those of her organic sex. Though the biological mother of four sons, Tamora's treatment and coding of these characters speaks more to replication and affinity than reproduction and familial identification. Tamora seeks to enlist her sons in her revenge narrative when she encourages them to murder Bassianus and Lavinia by threatening them with disownment: "This vengeance on me had they executed: / Revenge it, as you love your mother's life, / Or be ye not henceforth call'd my children" (2.3.113-15). Though appealing to them through the naturalistic identity they privilege, Tamora is strategically threatening to dissolve this connection unless they also prove their affinity to her and their commitment to their shared goal. Of course, in building their relationship through affinity, their naturalized unity has been cast off, no longer privileged. And, of course, after the birth of her fourth biological son, Tamora rejects the illegitimate baby, sending it to Aaron to "christen it with thy dagger's point" because it could jeopardize her unity with Saturninus (4.1.70). Even with her biological sons, Tamora favors replication: Lavinia, in her pleas for mercy to Chiron and Demetrius, insists that the vengeful spirit the boys embody is not their own, but Tamora's: "O, do not learn her wrath – she taught it thee; / The milk thou suck'st from her did turn to marble, / Even at thy teat thou hadst thy tyranny / Yet every mother breeds not sons alike –" (2.3.143-46). Though the product of biological sex, Lavinia's words imply that Tamora raised her two sons to be violent, vengeful copies of herself, despite their inherent dissimilarities.

Taymor's *Titus* emphasizes this privilege of replication over reproduction almost in spite of the director herself. Taymor explains in the director's commentary that she wanted to emphasize the familial bond between Tamora and her sons, and describes their on-screen relationship as "almost incestuous" (Taymor). This choice, however, denaturalizes the bond between the family members, and illegitimizes their identity as a family. As the text shows, their affinity as politically strategic collaborators is much stronger; the incestuous nature of Tamora's relationship with her two sons emphasizes this unity. So, in a warped version of a family portrait, Tamora and her sons are depicted lounging naked in a huge bed together, giggling gleefully at Titus's seemingly mad rantings delivered by bow and arrow. This is clearly not a loving familial scene between a mother and her sons; instead, it depicts the celebrations of a group of political conspirators who read success in Titus's apparent madness, according to Taymor.

Tamora not only rejects biological reproduction in *Titus Andronicus*, she also participates in cyborg "sex" via replication in her game of vengeful one-upsmanship with Titus. Revenge is, by nature, an infinite cycle of retaliation, according to Deborah Willis:

Since revenge requires excess to contain the emotional legacy of trauma, it is hardly

surprising that it creates the conditions for a potentially endless cycle of retaliatory killings. What seems to the injured family like justice – “righting a wrong” – is perceived by the family’s enemies as unjust and produces new traumas in need of...revenge. (33)

What’s more, Willis says, this cycle naturally increases in severity as “revengers enact increasingly over-the-top spectacles of violence, ‘getting even’ with enemies by outdoing them” (28). So, Tamora instigates a revenge narrative in retaliation for the honorific sacrifice of her son by slaughtering Titus’s sons and instigating the rape of his daughter, which replicates her trauma in Titus and re-codes him as avenger. Titus replicates and outdoes Tamora’s violence by slaughtering her sons, baking them in a meat pie she unwittingly eats, revealing his murder and her forced cannibalism, and killing Tamora. This act then spawns another avenger in Saturninus, who kills Titus in revenge for the death of his wife. Lucius then turns avenger and kills Saturninus for killing his father. Tamora therefore creates no less than three replicated versions of herself as cyborg avenger within a five-act play. And this competitive replication is noted by other characters, such as Aaron, who says of Titus’s bow-and-arrow messages that, were Tamora to see them, “[s]he would applaud [his] conceit” (4.2.27; 30).

Taymor’s production is able to highlight this grotesque replication of violence in a more visceral way. And a perfect example of this is the climactic banquet scene, a zany, grotesque explosion of retaliatory violence. The scene opens to the upbeat “Vivere” sung by Carlo Butti and a picturesque open kitchen window in front of which two comically large, steaming meat pies known to contain the flesh of Tamora’s sons sit to cool. The scene quickly escalates following Titus’ revelation that the party has consumed human flesh: Titus stabs Tamora with a kitchen knife; Saturninus charges across the table top, rips a candle from the candelabra centerpiece with his teeth, and stabs Titus in the chest with it; and Lucius slides Saturninus across the length of the table on his back, force-feeds a large spoon down his throat, spits on him, and finally shoots him for good measure. Buchanan notes that “Hopkins’ Titus even allows himself briefly to register his appreciation for the artistry of his own death just before being impaled” (246). And this over-the-top display of violent retaliation is made possible by Tamora, whose vengeful desire to inflict her own pain on Titus and make a mirror of herself in him lead to the production of numerous vengeful replications of Tamora. These replications, furthermore, effectively annihilate the rulers of the dominant hegemony – the emperor and his brother, Titus, the military hero and nearly his entire family – and so completely re-code the informatics of domination in Taymor’s Rome.

Neither Shakespeare nor Taymor were consciously working within a literary or cinematic drama; Shakespeare wrote a tragedy, and Taymor produced an adaptation. But the comparison of these texts with future female revenge narratives of literature and cinema clearly displays

their adherence to the genre and their contribution to the protagonist's prototype. The evolution of the female revenge narrative and its main protagonist displays the extent to which particularly Taymor's use of cyborg feminism in *Titus* impacted the production of films in this genre. Take, for example, Quentin Tarantino's wildly popular *Kill Bill* series (2003) and his main protagonist, The Bride. Like Haraway's cyborg and like Tamora, The Bride has no Western origin story to identify her – she has not even a real name until deep into the final film. She is on a single-minded quest to kill Bill and the members of his Deadly Viper Assassination Squad in revenge for massacring her fiancé, friends and family, and, presumably, her unborn child. She rejects naturalized identity with her victims, who are mostly female and – in one notable instance – a mother; instead, she forms affinities with those who share her common language and purpose – revenge against Bill.

And, returning to *Kill Bill: Volume 1*'s opening scene in which The Bride faces down a mother, it is clear that The Bride's rampage of revenge is the first of many. The Bride is battling with Vernita Green, a retired member of the squad who now has a husband and young daughter. The epic fight takes place in Vernita's house, travelling from her living room to kitchen and interrupted by Vernita's daughter, who is sent upstairs to her room. The violent struggle ends with Vernita's death, but as The Bride turns to leave, she is confronted with Vernita's young daughter standing in the doorway. The Bride speaks calmly to the girl: "It was not my intention to do this in front of you. For that, I'm sorry. But you can take my word for it your mother had it coming. When you grow up, if you still feel raw about it, I'll be waiting." The Bride leaves, fully aware that her actions have set in motion a future violent narrative of revenge that could continue endlessly.

It seems a testament to Haraway's theory of cyborg feminism that the female revenge narrative that utilize cyborg prototypes as main protagonists are growing increasingly more optimistic. *Titus*'s Tamora successfully re-coded the dominant hegemony, though partially through the brutal murder of those in authority and to her own ultimate demise. But Tarantino's *Kill Bill* ends with the destruction of the dominant authority figure of Bill and the future re-coding of The Bride's surviving child, Bebe. In exploring cyborg feminism, Haraway hoped to "see if cyborgs can subvert the apocalypse of returning to nuclear dust in the manic compulsion to name the Enemy" (9). And increasingly in female revenge narratives that employ the feminist cyborg, this goal is reached through the destruction of dominant hegemonies and re-coding of the informatics system that is becoming increasingly non-hostile to the post-modern feminist figures.

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