

Sexual Violence in Popular Media

MIA HARRISON and SCOTT WEBSTER

University of Sydney, Australia

This entry surveys the various ways sexual violence is framed in primarily US-based popular media, and how shifting politics necessitate an evolving understanding of consent. It also explores how sexual violence is complicated when understood within the context of intersecting sociopolitical identities.

Depictions of sexual violence and rape culture are ubiquitous in all forms of popular media, yet definitions of sexual violence and rape are inconsistent across scholarly and public opinion. In academic (often sociological and feminist) work, definitions of sexual violence can encompass a broad range of acts that extend far beyond popular understandings of rape. For example, Liz Kelly (1988) has argued that it may be more useful to understand sexual violence as a continuum rather than a single event. Kelly found that narratives of physical sexual violence often began with nonphysical threatening behavior such as obscene phone calls. This suggests that any understanding of sexual violence media depictions needs to be broadened to consider less explicit forms of sexual violence specifically as a way of framing the cultures that produce more recognizable acts of rape and sexual assault—applicable both within the fictional worlds portrayed and within the real-world contexts of the audiences consuming such portrayals.

In popular media, understandings may be significantly narrower, with rape restricted to (often stranger-perpetrated) acts of forced intercourse enacted by a man on a woman. In a longitudinal study of so-called prime-time television (broadcast between 8:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. in the United States) texts aired between 1976 and 1990, Lisa Cuklanz (2000) identified stranger-perpetrated acts as almost exclusively how sexual violence was presented in the earlier programs. It is only toward the mid- and late 1980s (following the feminist rape reform movement that campaigned during this time period) that date and acquaintance rape became more prominent in these texts. The gendered perception of the attacker/victim dynamic (male perpetrator/female victim) is entrenched to the point of requiring additional qualifiers to signal any deviation (i.e., male rape, woman on woman rape, etc.). These forms of sexual violence continue to experience invisibility, in both academic literature and representations on-screen, to varying degrees. This lack of depiction can also be tied to legacies of marginalized representation for certain affected identities, such as LGBTQI+. Qualified terms like “male rape” must additionally navigate sexuality with care in addressing insufficient visibility to avoid homophobic assumptions of sexual predation among nonheteronormative orientations. Additionally, perpetrator identities often have racialized dimensions, historically informed by racist and geopolitical anxieties, while intersectional analysis has highlighted how race also figures in constructions of “legitimate victimhood.”

The International Encyclopedia of Gender, Media, and Communication. Karen Ross (Editor-in-Chief), Ingrid Bachmann, Valentina Cardo, Sujata Moorti, and Marco Scarcelli (Associate Editors).

© 2020 John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Published 2020 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

DOI: 10.1002/9781119429128.iegmc180

Framing Consent and Sexual Violence in Popular Media

#MeToo and Shifting Understandings of Consensual Sexual Behavior

Historically, film and television rarely depicted characters asking for consent before engaging in sexual activity with another person, and likewise explicit affirmative consent is rarely given. Coercive and spontaneous sexual acts are often framed as romantic, particularly when instigated by a woman or preestablished love interest. For example, nonconsensual kissing is regularly portrayed as, at most, a minor violation, if not a romantic or comedic gesture. Research shows that even though initiating a kiss after consent has been denied is usually viewed as (slightly) unacceptable behavior, the act is still considered “complimenting” (Margolin, 1990; Semonsky & Rosenfeld, 1994). This nonconsensual kiss, the “stolen kiss,” is a mainstay of romance films and comedies and is frequently a source of romantic tension. This implies the kiss is sexually or romantically desired but denied for other social reasons.

More recently, the #MeToo digital movement has spearheaded a contested renegotiation of sexual mores, highlighting numerous concerns long covered in feminist critiques. This renegotiation has included academic and public reappraisals of popular culture, such as casting certain previously “unremarkable” behaviors as sexual harassment or worse. *Sleeping Beauty*, *Briar Rose*, and their representations of “nonconsensual kissing” provide a case in point. This follows a British mother’s attempt to have *Sleeping Beauty* removed from school curricula for promoting “inappropriate behavior.” The kiss, seemingly without explicit consent, becomes a form of molestation. Debates have focused on the absence or presence, as well as suitability of, literal and metaphorical consent within the narrative (i.e., briar rose hedges preventing unwanted advances until the princess is “ready”). The phenomenon of kissing as an irruptive act suspending body boundaries have also been examined. Here, the kiss necessarily involves “suspension of self-control,” highlighting an act difficult to socially regulate. The imposition of an expected predictability on modern sexuality (or, rather, a turn to “negotiated relationships”) is held against an identified “irrationality of sexuality.”

#MeToo has also amplified feminist critiques of chivalric discourses and their modern manifestations. Chivalric narratives involve a performance of male abasement in the presence of pure beauty (typically upper-class women). This conduct continues to inform relations today through rhetoric on “giving and doing everything,” or “worshipping” the woman. Its “romantic” framing disguises the domination and control that these norms confer, as well as perpetuate sexist notions of men (active and dominant) pursuing women (passive and submissive), which persist as themes in many sit- and rom-coms (e.g., Ross Gellar in *Friends*, 1994–2004; Ted Mosby in *How I Met Your Mother*, 2005–2014). Such individuals narrativize their experiences as though they embody modern chivalry though have been likened, in reality, to being more akin to *Beauty and the Beast’s* Gaston—expecting chivalric overtures to triumph over the woman’s clear resistance (Harrison & Webster, 2017b). These norms also inform backlash against #MeToo insofar as identifying habitualized “chivalric” behaviors (grand romantic gestures; commenting frequently on beauty) as inappropriate and unwanted is framed as women mistreating men who “give all.” Adding to this is the

socialization of women to be gentle, polite, and not firm in rejection, often with subtle body language so as not to “hurt” men’s feelings.

Scholars anticipate an emerging canon on affirmative consent emphasizing the interplay of words rather than bodies. *To All the Boys I’ve Loved Before* (2018) has already been held as an example. Lara Jean, the central heroine in this romantic comedy, has agency where past heroines had to passively wait for their desired partner to reciprocate feelings. Lara Jean draws a “contract” to regulate behavior with Peter, a fellow student and participant in the ruse that they are dating. Lara Jean, and not Peter, performs the “grand gesture” that confirms their (genuine) relationship, which also foregoes the male’s “persistent pursuit” trope. This dynamic, with the parameters of behavior articulated and respected, is argued to be a healthier representation of teen romance for (presumably impressionable) youth audiences.

Mystical and Science Fiction Forms of Sexual Violence

Stories set in fantasy, science fiction, and supernatural genres can make use of plot contrivances that would be impossible in contemporary reality. This means our frameworks (legal, ethical, biological, and philosophical) for understanding violations of consent and forms of sexual violence are limited. Perhaps the most well-known critical example is the use of love spells, potions, or anything equivalent. This may involve an individual mystically or technologically influenced to be attracted to the perpetrator, or may cause *anyone* to become attracted to the perpetrator (usually following heteronormative conventions, e.g., only women are attracted to male perpetrators). This representation is witnessed in a range of fantasy and supernatural media, even those aimed at children and teenagers (e.g., *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, 2009; *Shrek 2*, 2004). *Harry Potter* fandom has raised concerns that such potions would be available for sale to underage wizards in the fictional universe, the topic being heavily debated in online forums. The use of love spells in popular media has drawn parallels to date rape drugs as the nearest real-world equivalent, with the television series *The IT Crowd* (2006–2013) satirizing this idea by revealing a supposed “love potion” to actually be the date rape drug Rohypnol. This comparison is apt due to the targeted nature of love spells: they involve an individual actively compromising the lucidity of another to pursue a romantic or sexual relationship with them without consent.

Another common trope made possible (or more plausible) in fantasy, science fiction, and supernatural genres is a person engaging in sexual behavior while appearing as another, through either a body swap or mystical illusion (e.g., *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, 1996–2003; *True Blood*, 2008–2014). This has been described as “rape by deception” and critics have noted that this violation is particularly underplayed when the victim is a man deceived by a woman (Harrison & Webster, 2017a). This adheres to culturally embedded ideas of men being “unrapeable” by women. Film and television outside of these genres also present examples of impersonation, whereby face masks, darkness, or biological resemblance hide one’s true identity (e.g., *Revenge of the Nerds*, 1984; *That 70’s Show*, 1998–2006). This trope is further complicated when underage characters engage in sexual activity while mystically appearing as an adult. Though stories with this plot contrivance sometimes manage to (narrowly) avoid sexual contact (e.g., *Freaky*

Friday, 2003; *17 Again*, 2009), *13 Going on 30* (2004) has a 13-year-old kiss an adult while in an adult body, and *Big* (1988) has a 13-year-old have sexual intercourse with an adult while in an adult body, an act that critics have identified as constituting statutory rape.

Another way that sexual and bodily autonomy is compromised in science fiction, fantasy, and supernatural genres is through forced pregnancy. Though this is occasionally carried out through the use of more mundane medical technologies such as nonconsensual artificial insemination (e.g., *Orphan Black*, 2013–2017), a more common realization of this story is through the nonconsensual impregnation of a woman with an alien or demon offspring (e.g., *Torchwood*, 2006–2011; *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, 1987–1994). Popularly referred to as “mystical pregnancy,” this trope was addressed by popular feminist commentator Anita Sarkeesian (2011) as part of the *Tropes vs. Women* video series created for *Bitch* magazine. Sarkeesian argued that storylines such as these reduced (cisgender) women to incubators and presented their biological functions as monstrous and threatening.

The cultural legacy of monster-types featured in science fiction and fantasy fiction also complicates definitions of sexual violence. For example, vampires have traditionally been coded as sexual creatures, with their physical threat often metaphorically (and sometimes literally) representing a sexual threat. The vampire bite is often read as symbolic of oral sex and/or sexual penetration, and is sometimes explicitly linked with sexual encounters (Hughes, 2012). This cultural legacy means that all violent encounters with vampires in media, particularly conventionally attractive vampires, can be arguably read as examples of sexual violence.

Intersections of Sexual Violence and Identity

Gender and Sexuality

Persistent across analyses of rape and sexual violence—including that which departs from the presumed male attacker/female victim dynamic—is the role of sexual violence in constructing hegemonic masculinity (typically physically aggressive in establishing dominance, over women and subordinated masculinities, while restraining any signs of vulnerability). Cuklanz (2000) observes that, while noting how rapist identity in prime-time television shifted to reflect feminist advocacy by the late 1980s, such depictions remain about masculinity. Earlier programs exhibited a “basic rape formula”: rape was almost exclusively perpetrated by a male stranger that inflicted severe physical and psychological trauma for the victim. The plot would center on the efforts of the male protagonist—usually a detective—to avenge the crime by arresting or even killing the perpetrator. Only minimal attention was paid to the victim. This notably changes as later portrayals began to include date and acquaintance rape. Nevertheless Cuklanz (2000) argues that rape plots continued to project an ideal hegemonic masculinity that partially incorporated feminist critiques. These texts enable a demonstration of newly adapted masculinity counterposed against the regressive masculinities of rapist antagonists. The male protagonist is sensitive, particularly when interacting with the

victim, but maintains an aggressive volatility in (often physically) avenging a rape. The male protagonist also frequently vents anger at the injustice of “the system” and its deficiencies in responding to rape but never explicitly recognizes the source of these arguments—the feminist movements for social change. These representations therefore adapt to feminist critiques but contain them within patriarchal ideology through continuing male-/avenger-centric focuses.

The relationship between hegemonic masculinity and depictions of sexual violence has also been explored with regard to male rape (defined as an adult man raping another adult man). Like all acts that deviate from the standard gendered representation of rape in popular media, male rape is comparatively underrepresented across academic, political, and popular media domains. This invisibility has been attributed to an unconscious reluctance to recognize vulnerability in men and masculinity as well as stigma tied to homophobia. The exception is male rape that occurs within prisons.

Prison rape is the most common reference to male rape in popular media. Since the 1960s it has become an enduring feature of popular prison dramas highlighting a perception that male rape is endemic in prisons. This perception is also apparent in the prevalence of prison rape jokes in various comedy. These have a generalizing, dehumanizing effect as prisoners are stripped of sympathy. The “prisoner that deserves it” narrative—a type of karmic justice for crimes committed—becomes an angle on which these stories sometimes lean. The threat of rape is typically established early to suggest almost inevitable sexual violence as part of the incarceration experience, especially for certain identities: the victim is commonly depicted as young, White, medium build, and devoid of criminal network or gang affiliation. This is true of the popular prison drama *Oz* (1997–2003), which is noted for racial and ethnic diversity in its cast, yet (with few exceptions) centers sexual violence around White male vulnerability. Conversely, the perpetrator in this subgenre is also typically White and possessing a medium-to-large muscular build. Criticisms of rape’s prevalence in prison dramas like *Oz* note a sensationalism serving only as shock value. This is witnessed in the “scared straight” advertising, which not only leaned on *Oz*’s reputation for depicting violence, but also specifically sexual violence targeted at White, middle-class men. The implication is that *Oz* deters even petty crimes through its content. Alternatively, depictions of prisoner rape can achieve a previously unrealized visibility for the issue.

Critical analysis of male rape in popular media—specifically occurring in prison settings—tends to focus on how hegemonic masculinity is established and projected. Prison rape in *Oz* functions in this way; victims are feminized, coded as small, weak, and gay, and subordinated into performing traditionally feminine domestic roles (cell cleaning and sexual submission). A common theme of perceived deficient masculinity in the victims emerges which simultaneously confirms the perpetrator’s hegemonic masculinity. Perceptions of deficient masculinity also manifest as trauma within the victims (of male rape). In such cases, the stigma of deficient masculinity becomes internalized. *Outlander* (2014–present) features this as a significant aspect of the emotional fallout of its male lead’s rape while held prisoner. Jaime Fraser connects his trauma with cowardice—jarring with his reputation as a Scottish rebel soldier capable of withstanding immense pain (signified by his whip-scarred back)—and an incapacity to continue as a husband. However, masculinity can remain intact or be restored through “fighting

back” (e.g., *Escape from Alcatraz*, 1979; *Midnight Express*, 1978; *The Shawshank Redemption*, 1994). For example, critics have noted the protagonist’s arc away from victimhood in *Oz* shifts as he bites the tip off a penis during forced oral sex and defecates on his long-term violator.

Meanwhile presumptions about sexuality, especially that of the perpetrator, often distort understandings about rape and sexual violence. Hence why phrases like “male rape” and “woman on woman rape” are preferred to “gay rape” and “lesbian rape” respectively. These preferred labels disentangle sexual violence from assumptions about sexuality as well as avoid any seeming endorsement of homophobic stereotypes of sexual predation. Neither form of rape requires any individual involved to be same-sex attracted. For example, the perpetrators of sexual violence in prison-based stories often retain a stable heterosexuality despite actively pursuing same-sex sexual intercourse.

The relationship between hegemonic masculinity and representations of rape has been explored beyond cisgender identities. *Boys Don’t Cry* (1999) figures as a significant text in this respect, with its narrative centered on the rape and subsequent murder of Brandon Teena on discovering that he was assigned female at birth. The confronting depictions of sexual violence have been argued to dismantle privileged positions of heteronormativity and hegemonic masculinity through its portrayal of Teena’s rapist-murderers. Their practice of rape again figures as violent enforcement of a masculine hierarchy subordinating all other gender forms. Other critiques focus on how the violence anchors Teena’s characterization in long-standing issues of realizing trans identities on-screen. These perspectives note the sexual violence that confirms Teena’s performance as a performance—a “failed performance”—reconfigures the character as female and lesbian. The masculine performance becomes an exercise of female masculinity and collapses any potential “transgender gaze” into a lesbian one. Rape and sexual violence here lean into the trope of interrogating the trans body as a site within normative systems of sex and gender.

The issues in realizing trans identities on-screen also result in difficulties in appropriately representing what constitutes a sexual violation. Criticism of content in *The L Word* (2004–2009) identifies this problem: when Lisa (a character often perceived by audiences to be a transgender woman, but frequently referred to and self-described as a “lesbian-identified man”) has sexual intercourse with bisexual Alice, Alice insists on having sex with Lisa’s biological penis rather than a toy. Discussion regarding this scene—particularly Lisa’s obvious discomfort framed as comedy—note that it functions as a dismissal of Lisa’s identity and reads as sexual violation. *The L Word* also features in critical discourse regarding the invisibility of “woman on woman” rape, which is often tied to the hypersexualization of queer and/or sapphic women. The breakdown of Bette and Tina’s lesbian relationship in *The L Word* has drawn attention for how it scantily addresses the instance of domestic violence and (textually unlabeled) rape that precipitates it. Instead it focuses on the infidelity as the reason for the breakdown. Meanwhile the comparative invisibility of adult women sexually assaulting adult men has been explained as the product of gender norms—women are passive and sexually submissive whereas men are active, rational, and strong. This is mirrored in the absent representation of such acts as explicitly labeled “rape” in popular media.

Race

Depictions of sexual violence in popular media are frequently shaped not only by gendered expectations but also by cultural notions about race and ethnicity. Thus, an intersectional feminist lens is required to understand the complex role of race in such media representations. In proposing the concept of “intersectionality,” Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) describes how “sexist expectations of chastity and racist assumptions of sexual promiscuity combined to create a distinct set of issues” for Black women that have been marginalized in feminist approaches to rape. In other words, whereas past feminist critiques of victimhood and women in rape narratives have had an assumed broad applicability (unconsciously) anchored in the experiences of “White women,” intersectional analysis highlights how intersecting racial, gender, class, and so on, circumstances compound to create distinct experiences of oppression. This extends to experiences of sexual violence and how they filter into media representations (if at all). Subsequent intersectional interventions have identified other racial and class dimensions embedded within rape and sexual assault myths. Namely this ascribes so-called legitimate victimhood when the perpetrator fulfills a lower-class and/or racialized identity (often, both real and assumed, a combination of both), especially if the victim is a White woman. These racist and classist stereotypes position these men as more innately prone to sexual violence.

The ubiquity and variety of rape narratives present throughout the history of cinema has meant that such narratives often address other social issues (such as racial injustice, class expectations, gender inequality, etc.). Though depictions of sexual violence intersect with all social spheres in cinema, racial politics have historically been a prominent undercurrent in many films addressing the subject of rape. This dates back to early cinema with *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Her Debt of Honor* (1916), which respectively feature an African American man, and a Native American man, attempting to rape a White woman. Such films frequently place a White man in the role of savior, who arrives to rescue the woman at the last moment. The “White savior” role is common even in films critiquing racism. For example, in *Eskimo* (1934), when a White man rapes an Indigenous woman, the White Mounties provide a sympathetic alternative to the film’s villains. In *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962), an African American man is wrongly accused of rape and is defended by a sympathetic White man. Crucially, as many film scholars note, though a single White man might sometimes be constructed as a villain in a film when he rapes a non-White woman, when the opposite is portrayed (particularly in early cinema), the villain is generally implied to be representative of an entire culture or ethnicity.

US combat/war films set in both World War II and Vietnam present variations on this. Feminist scholarship has explored how the rape of non-White (specifically Asian) women by American troops functions as a critical metaphor for US imperialism—especially in Vietnam War films (*Casualties of War*, 1989; *Redacted*, 2007). However, despite the allegorical function of the raped woman (standing in for Vietnam as a whole) and her rapists (representing US military and foreign policy), it is a fellow soldier who witnesses and reports the crime. Thus, even within these examples, variation is allowed to prevent it being “scaled up” to a broader cultural

or racial scale. World War II films, on the other hand, neatly adhere to the White savior trope. Asia became the most common backdrop for placing civilian (White) American women in peril with the Japanese as primary antagonists, trading on their reputation for ruthless rape and pillage during the war. Many of these films, still subject to Production Code-era restrictions on depicting sex, violence, and interracial relationships, ultimately have secondary Asian women raped in their place. Usually the White woman compels the male White savior to act and intervene—justifying, more broadly, support for US intervention (*China*, 1943; *Women in the Night*, 1948).

Taking this a step further, early cinema sometimes used rape as justification or explanation for racist systems such as westerns which rationalized colonization, in part, as a reaction to Native Americans raping White women. Similarly rape and sexual violence serves geopolitical purpose. These representations fall within a “rape by culture” trope, which reimagine colonialist civilizational and nationalist narratives for the contemporary global order. Instances of sexual violence, such as in India or the Middle East, become emblematic of a larger cultural and societal-level issue. This “scaling up” typically casts the nation as incomplete or failed modernity caught in a struggle with (pervasively patriarchal) traditions. *India’s Daughter* (2015), a documentary film based on the 2012 Delhi gang rape and murder of Jyoti Singh, which made international headlines, presents an example. The film, released as part of the BBC’s documentary series *Storyville*, was critically received with praise for “its determination to shed light on the country’s rape crisis.” Similarly Western critical reception of *Pink* (2016), a Bollywood film about three female flatmates living in Delhi, highlights this “scaling up” through headlines like “subtle drama that grapples with India’s rape culture” or “Bollywood film about India’s rape culture.” These reviews include links to current affairs articles covering this (specifically Indian) phenomenon, which contrasts with the inverse “scaling down” of local sexual violence coverage and representation as not symptomatic of a culture-wide “rape culture.”

SEE ALSO: Gendered Victims; Media Representation of Rape and Sexual Assault; Rape Porn, Cultural Harm, and the Law; Sexual Violence; The Prevalence of Female Rape Fantasy Blogs on the Tumblr Sexblogosphere

References

- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 140, 139–167.
- Cuklanz, L. M. (2000). *Rape on prime time: Television, masculinity, and sexual violence*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Harrison, M., & Webster, S. (2017a, August 6). *Consent and love spells in Harry Potter and Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Trope Watchers. Retrieved from <https://www.tropewatchers.com/tropewatchers>
- Harrison, M., & Webster, S. (2017b, October 2). *Why is Gaston a villain, but Ross and Ted “nice guys”?* Trope Watchers. Retrieved from <https://www.tropewatchers.com/tropewatchers>
- Hughes, W. (2012). Fictional vampires in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In D. Punter (Ed.), *A new companion to the Gothic* (pp. 197–210). Chichester, UK: Wiley Blackwell.

- Kelly, L. (1988). *Surviving sexual violence*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Margolin, L. (1990). Gender and the stolen kiss: The social support of male and female to violate a partner's sexual consent in a noncoercive situation. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 19(3), 281–291.
- Sarkeesian, A. (2011, July 28). Tropes vs. women: #5 The mystical pregnancy. *Feminist Frequency*. Retrieved from <https://feministfrequency.com/video/tropes-vs-women-5-the-mystical-pregnancy>
- Semonsky, M. R., & Rosenfeld, L. B. (1994). Perceptions of sexual violations: Denying a kiss, stealing a kiss. *Sex Roles*, 30(7–8), 503–520.

Further Reading

- Boyle, K. (2005). *Media and violence: Gendering the debates*. London, UK: Sage.
- Clover, C. J. (1992). *Men, women, and chain saws: Gender in the modern horror film* (2nd ed.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Eigenberg, H., & Baro, A. (2003). If you drop the soap in the shower you are on your own: Images of male rape in selected prison movies. *Sexuality and Culture*, 7(4), 56–89. doi:10.1007/s12119-003-1018-2
- Haskell, M. (1987). *From reverence to rape: The treatment of women in the movies* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Heller-Nicholas, A. (2011). *Rape-revenge films: A critical study*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Moorti, S. (2002). *Color of rape: Gender and race in television's public spheres*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Poole, R. J. (2017). Towards a queer futurity: New trans television. *European Journal of American Studies*, 12(2). doi:10.4000/ejas.12093
- Projansky, S. (2001). *Watching rape: Film and television in postfeminist culture*. New York: NYU Press.
- Wlodarz, J. (2005). Maximum insecurity: Genre trouble and closet erotics in and out of HBO's *Oz*. *Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies*, 20(1), 59–105. doi:10.1215/02705346-20-1_58-59

Mia Harrison is a PhD candidate in the Gender and Cultural Studies Department at the University of Sydney. Her research uses the figure of the zombie as a modeling tool to critically think about hegemonic biomedical narratives of the body. She is a research associate in the Digital Ethnography Research Centre at RMIT University in Melbourne as well as the Sydney project manager for the ARC-funded research project, Interfaith Childhoods. She is the cohost of two scholarly pop culture podcasts: *Trope Watchers* and *A Clash of Critics*. Her research interests include disability studies, body studies, gender studies, and cultural studies.

Scott Webster is a PhD candidate in the Department of Gender and Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney. His research explores the intersections of memory, space, and technology and their potential to augment existing mnemonic practices—in particular those resisting the deliberate erasure of memory. He currently cohosts two scholarly pop culture podcasts: *Trope Watchers—On Pop Culture and Why It Matters* and *A Clash of Critics—A Scholarly Podcast about Game of Thrones and A Song of Ice and Fire*. His research interests include cultural studies, critical race studies, gender studies, and memory studies.