As was argued in Reading Harry Potter: Critical Essays (Praeger, 2003), interpreting the underlying messages and themes of the Harry Potter series is vital for understanding the ways in which we perceive and interact with each other in contemporary society. The novels and corresponding film adaptations have broken records with their astonishing sales and widespread acclaim. They have also generated a plethora of writing—by critics, academics, and fans. J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books could easily be called this generations most formative narratives, and thus certainly warrant critical attention.

This new volume of essays covers the entire seven-book sequence. Contributors consider myriad themes from a variety of perspectives. Areas addressed include religion, morality, race, magic, and other themes popular in discussing the books. With this book in hand, fans of the series—indeed anyone interested in the Harry Potter phenomenon—will better appreciate and understand Rowlings work and the impact of her stories on our culture and on our times.

My Personal Review:
I came across this book in the fall of 2009 as a recommendation from a professor when a fellow student and I were researching for a Harry Potter course to be taught to college sophomores the following semester. The project fell through, however the reading was still informative and fun for me as a fan.
This book, a sequel to "Reading Harry Potter," provides several follow-ups to the essays presented in the first book. A few essays of particular note to me were "Potterverse and the Pulpits Beyond Apologia and Banning," "Happily Ever After: Harry Potter and the Quest for the Domestic," and "Doubling Transfiguring, and Haunting: The Art of Adapting Harry Potter for Film."

The first essay I listed explores how preachers are using Harry Potter to teach Christian lessons during church. One particular preacher noted that he asked those who had yet to finish "Deathly Hallows" to leave the room if they did not want to be spoiled about the ending. It was touching and pleasurable to read about a relationship between religion and Rowling's work that wasn't antagonistic.

"Happily Ever After" follows "Cinderfella" from the first book in which the authors look at gender issues and "masculine" and "feminine" choices. This time the writers focus on Nymphadora Tonks, Dolores Umbridge, and Bellatrix Lestrange. The piece is insightful, and the authors did well in choosing three side characters rather than focusing on characters like Hermione, Ginny, and Luna.

"Doubling, Transfiguring, and Haunting" focuses on the adaptation of "Prisoner of Azakaban" to film. This was my least favorite of the movies, and yet this essay made me like it a little more. The writer notes the nuances and subtleties in the film and how it relates to the readings.

All in all, I would definitely recommend this book to someone looking to delve a little deeper into Rowling's world. During my research, I came across collections of essays that were poorly written and even more poorly fact-checked (Hermione being a half-witch, James and Voldemort being the same age to name a few), but this was perfectly edited, and its essays a joy to read. While one may want to read "Reading Harry Potter" first, this book will stand on its own with its insightful commentary.

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