

Academic Book Review of Harry Potter and the Other
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Harry Potter and the Other is an edited collection focused on J.K. Rowling's superficial attempts to diversify her series. Editors Dahlen and Thomas argue that, as a result of this superficiality and race as an afterthought, the series upholds "white supremacist views that people of color or others are not essential, even in a fantasy world" (p. 6). Inspired by Rowling's misrepresentation of people indigenous to North America as well as her choosing "not to see everyone as whole persons" in regard to marginalized racial groups and the transgender community, this collection is different from other literature on the world of Harry Potter. The authors explore Rowling's record on race and who can use magic in this heavily white and British series. They also set out to "help readers come to an informed decision about what diversity in the wizarding world will mean going forward" (p. 8).

Edited by scholars of children's literature, *Harry Potter and the Other* overlaps with women and gender studies, ethnic studies, media studies, library studies, and sociology. The collection draws on theories such as the racial contract, the imagination gap, the dark fantastic, and critical race theory. *Harry Potter and the Other* is valuable for scholars in these fields as well as educators, youth librarians, and fans of the series. Authors of the chapters include Black, Latina, and Asian scholars. The perspective of Black nonbinary scholar Tolonda Henderson is vital to this collection considering Rowling's transphobic statements and the implications for readers of her work.

Harry Potter and the Other contains 16 chapters organized by the intersectionality of race and gender in the series (part 1), the radicalness of reading a main character as Black when the author has made race an afterthought (part 2), and pedagogy, history, and liberation (part 3). "...All the chapters in the volume force readers to reckon with how the Harry Potter series has shaped how the collective imagination in the 21st century positions the other" (p. 10).

In the most extensive section of this collection (part 1), Horne explores past debates about otherness in the series and whether Rowling promotes anti-racist values or pedagogy for youth. Horne determines that Rowling takes a multicultural approach rather than using social justice anti-racism to examine or dismantle oppressive structures in her fictional world. She argues that Rowling does not encourage youth to think about systemic racism, but rather working for justice on a personal level. Additionally, the enslavement of house elves and the othering of goblins is used to discuss Rowling's approach. In "Realism and Race" Westman dives into the complicated concept of genre and its implications related to race. She argues that, although *Harry Potter* is often thought of as fantasy, its "dominant aesthetic" is realism – which Rowling fails at due to her treatment of Native American culture among other marginalized racial groups. Chica's "The Magical (Racial) Contract" draws on Mills' concept of the racial contract to discuss non-white othering and how this is revealed in "the structural context of magical beings" (p. 71). For instance, blood status in Rowling's series mirrors whiteness and interracial dynamics. Magical tools (wands) are synonymous with power and only accessible to wizards, which mirrors keeping people of color

from accessing power. In “Cho Chang Is Trending” Dahlen and Schell explore how Rowling perpetuates Orientalism. This is based on identities other than white having no impact on plot or character development, undeveloped cultural backgrounds, and the white male gaze. Sims’ “When the Subaltern Speak Parseltongue” fits well with Dahlen and Schell’s chapter as it addresses Orientalist stereotyping due to the homogenization of Asian cultures. Coto’s “Racebending Potter” would fit better in part 2, as it explores racebending as an “activist tool” (p. 120) and provides visual examples of art used to resist whitewashing in Rowling’s work. Tamai and Spickard’s “Half-Blood” addresses mixed-race in the series using the concept of the “tragic mulatto” – the idea that mixed individuals are victims. They argue that Voldemort is a villain because he is tormented by his mixed blood status. Henderson’s “Chosen Names, Changed Appearances, and Unchallenged Binaries” argues that Voldemort can be viewed through a trans lens because he is frequently deadnamed, and thus the series has trans-exclusionary themes. Henderson compares the gender binary to the “magic/non-magic binary” present in Rowling’s work and discusses the idea of biological essentialism in terms of race and transgender people.

In part 2, Thomas’ “Hermione Is Black” asserts that fanfiction is a radical way for (queer) people of color to appropriate works as their own. Thomas’ theory of The Dark Fantastic is used to question the imagination gap in children’s literature like *Harry Potter*. Kunze, Maätita, and Hernandez’s chapters in part 2 emphasize Rowling’s afterthought in eventually claiming that a main character (Hermione) could be Black. Kunze discusses the significance of hiring a Black woman to play Hermione in *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*, but argues it did little to address systemic racism in theater or popular culture. Maätita and Hernandez address racist reactions to Black Hermione.

In part 3, Wade posits that Rowling’s series can actually be valuable if taught through a Black feminist perspective. Howard argues that the series can be an effective way to learn about race and blood caste systems when taught by educators of color. Rao and Goreki explore the character Dobby and the oppressive cycle in the series. Wilson’s chapter concludes the collection by providing a critique of the justice system in *Harry Potter* and discussing how it perpetuates othering.

Overall, *Harry Potter and the Other* provides an extensive exploration of othering in the *Harry Potter* series and critique of Rowling’s choices. It is accessible to those who have not engaged with all of the series. Considering the setting of Rowling’s series, the book would be strengthened by including British authors of color who have a deeper understanding of racial dynamics in British society.