



Pat Conroy: A Critical Companion (Critical Companions to Popular Contemporary Writers)

Landon C. Burns

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No one who has read Pat Conroy's novels of family wounds and healing can fail to be moved by their emotional appeal. But Conroy is also a major contemporary American novelist who follows in the tradition of Southern fiction established by William Faulkner and Thomas Wolfe. This companion is the first book-length study of his work. It explores the recurring motifs in his fiction and his special writing talents as a prose stylist of uncommon distinction. A separate chapter for *The Boo* and *The Water is Wide* and each novel—*The Great Santini*, *The Lords of Discipline*, *The Prince of Tides*, and his most recent, *Beach Music*—provides a detailed analysis of the books and the common threads that unite all the novels.

A biographical chapter draws connections between Conroy's life and the autobiographical nature of his fiction. A chapter on genre traces Conroy's roots in southern fiction and shows how all the novels fall into the rite-of-passage genre. Each novel is analyzed for plot structure, characterization, thematic elements, and Conroy's increasingly elaborate style and development as a master of the art of the novel. In addition, Burns defines and applies a variety of alternative approaches to the novels to widen the reader's perspective. A complete bibliography of Conroy's fiction as well as selected reviews and criticism complete the work. Because of Pat Conroy's popularity among adults and teenagers, this first critical work of a major contemporary American writer is a necessary purchase by public and secondary school libraries.

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