



Robert Ludlum: A Critical Companion (Critical Companions to Popular Contemporary Writers)

Gina Macdonald

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There's more than meets the eye in the fiction of the master of the espionage thriller Robert Ludlum. In a study that examines seventeen of Ludlum's novels in depth, including the latest, *The Apocalypse Watch* (1995), Macdonald uncovers the serious themes running through the novels: the role of the individual in preserving democracy, the value of competing voices, the failure of educational institutions to preserve ideals, the temptations of power, the importance of personal loyalties in the face of impersonal organizations, and the nature of evil. She shows how Ludlum's novels are valuable in helping us to understand modern paranoia—our fear of conspiracies, terrorism, barbarism, and intolerance. A personal interview granted by Ludlum for this book illuminates the influences on his craft, especially his long experience in the theater, which affects his sense of pacing, characterization, humor, and suspense.

After an initial biographical chapter, Macdonald examines Ludlum's literary roots in suspense novels and discusses the genre. Each succeeding chapter examines a group of his novels tied together thematically or, in the case of the Bourne series, by recurring characters. The discussion of each novel is organized into sections on plot and structure, character, and theme, and features an alternate critical interpretation, such as Freudian, Marxist, or reader response criticism, which offers the reader another fresh perspective from which to examine the concerns of the novel. Novels covered in depth are: *Trevayne*, *The Cry of the Halidon*, *The Scarlatti Inheritance*, *The Rhinemann Exchange*, *The Gemini Contenders*, *The Holcroft Covenant*, *The Road to Gandolfo*, *The Road to Omaha*, *The Bourne Identity*, *The Bourne Supremacy*, *The Bourne Ultimatum*, *The Matarese Circle*, *The Parsifal Mosaic*, *The Aquitaine Progression*, *The Icarus Agenda*, *The Scorpio Illusion*, and *The Apocalypse Watch*. This critical companion includes an up-to-date bibliography of all of Ludlum's published works, as well as selected reviews of all works examined in this study.

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