



# **Tony Hillerman: A Critical Companion (Critical Companions to Popular Contemporary Writers)**

*John Reilly*

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Edgar Award-winning writer Tony Hillerman has earned a reputation as a Grand Master of the popular mystery. This is the first full-length examination of his work. One of the most successful contemporary American writers, Hillerman has made his stories of Native American detectives instrumental in understanding modern American life. Through the creation of his Navajo detective characters, Hillerman has given new vigor to the popular genre of mystery fiction with his treatment of the problems of order and identity in modern society. This study examines each of his 13 novels in turn and includes a biographical chapter and a chapter on his innovations in the genre of detective fiction.

This careful study of the narrative techniques and thematic investigations of Hillerman's detective fiction illuminates the way he has crafted a new and profound method for understanding the conditions of modern life. A biographical chapter traces the influence of his life on his writing. Individual chapters on his novels are divided into sections on setting, plot, generic conventions, character development, and themes. In addition, Reilly offers alternate approaches?such as feminist criticism or post-colonialism?from which to read the novel, which gives the reader another perspective on the fiction. This study discusses all of Hillerman's novels: *The Blessing Way*, *The Fly on The Wall*, *Dance Hall of the Dead*, *People of Darkness*, *The Dark Wind*, *Listening Woman*, *The Ghostway*, *Skinwalkers*, *A Thief of Time*, *Talking God*, *Coyote Waits*, *Sacred Clowns*, and *Finding Moon*. A complete bibliography of Hillerman's work, critical and biographical sources, and a list of reviews of each of his novels completes the work. Because Hillerman is considered a serious writer of popular detective fiction and has a wide following of adult and young readers, this work is an essential purchase by public and secondary school libraries, as well as college and university libraries.

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