Black Notice Short Guide

Black Notice by Patricia Cornwell

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Characters

Dr. Kay Scarpetta, the series's heroine, is, of course, the central character around whom the action turns. She is brilliant and distinguished, experienced, practical, creative, scientific, and intuitive. Yet, she fears a loss of control, and she has problems dealing with people. She loses herself in her work and fails to take the minimal actions necessary to maintain relationships, especially since Benton's death. Her loss has so traumatized her that she is blind to the barriers she has constructed between her family and friends and the obsession with work that her employees and associates can too easily misinterpret. In this vulnerable stage in her life, she is easy game for the predatory Deputy Chief Bray, who sees demolishing Scarpetta's public image as the pathway to higher office for herself. However, Scarpetta's true values are always quite clear. When her niece and her niece's girlfriend Jo brag about going undercover against the One-SixtyFivers, a French organized crime unit, and the two young women jokingly describe watching an autopsy, Scarpetta responds with horror. She asserts that they should always imagine that the dead are listening, so that when the living speak, they speak with respect, not cold indifference. She asks them to imagine someone they love on the autopsy table being mocked by toughsounding youths showing off for their friends and laughing about the size of his penis, the stench, or the manner of death.

This humane understanding of the psychology of death and this desire to be an advocate for the victims of the depraved and the indifferent makes Scarpetta more than an efficient technician and a competent medical examiner. Along with respect for the dead, her sense of justice and right drives her to seek accurate explanations and solutions to criminal violence.

Benton, though dead, figures prominently throughout the book for a number of reasons. First, the woman who masterminded his death and who almost destroyed both Scarpetta and her niece Lucy still affects Lucy's choices and actions. Second, Benton's letter from the grave and his advice awaken Scarpetta to her surroundings, to how much she has alienated her friends, relatives, and associates, and to the plot that threatens to destroy her career as well as the careers of Marino and Lucy. Finally, Benton's profiling keeps Scarpetta on target in her investigation, and his love gives her the courage to endure and, with time, find renewal in a new love relationship.

Scarpetta's niece Lucy is a complex character, a mixture of competence, immaturity, and self-destruction. She despises her feminine and selfish mother as much as her mother despises Scarpetta for stealing her daughter's affection and accepting her lesbianism rather than ranting against it.

She is bright, a quick learner, a computer whiz. Encouraged by Marino to consider law enforcement as a career choice, she has excelled in the FBI program at Quantico, trained to be an astronaut for NASA, then signed on as a helicopter pilot for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and later as an undercover agent. Physically tough, she is trained in assault techniques and assault weapons. However, having had her first lesbian affair with a psychopath has tainted her self-image. She blames herself for

Benton's death and seeks punishment by making herself the target of heavy fire when carrying out her missions. In doing so, she also endangers her new love, Jo Sanders, whose Drug Enforcement Agency position has led her to interagency undercover work. When Lucy's spiteful mother tells Jo's Southern Baptist parents that their daughters share a lesbian relationship, Lucy finds herself banned from Jo's hospital room and very much on her own. Despite her unquestionable skills, Lucy is psychologically on edge: Scarpetta's joy and her bane.

Marino is a throwback to the old-fashioned police style. Politically incorrect, he is nonetheless very good at what he does. He recently has finalized a divorce and has celebrated by trading in his Mustang for a red Corvette. He is estranged from his only child, Rocky, and will not say why. He is a mass of contradictions. He is a bodybuilder who drinks too much; a big-bellied Marlboro man, he carries a Sig-Sauer nine-millimeter pistol and calls women who offend him "babe." Yet, he is a tender, loyal friend who considers two competent women the most important people in his life. A conservative who disapproves of homosexuality, he has nonetheless taken Lucy under his wing, accepted her lesbian relationships, and treated her like the daughter he wishes he had. Scarpetta finds him a painful irritant and an irreplaceable friend and associate; he has worked alongside her on case after case, and she has come to depend on his instincts and his watchfulness. He has a nose for trouble, and the respect of the cops who work under him. He is insolent and insubordinate but a good person to have around in troubled times. A corrupt female detective calls him a "used-up, washed-up, redneck loser," but he is still around long after she has been kicked off the force.

Scarpetta, in contrast, calls him "the most experienced, decent homicide detective" she has ever known.

A minor character who comes in near the end of the book is Jay Talley, an ATF agent acting as liaison for Interpol. Marino considers him a snotty, egotistical playboy and threatens to punch him out for having sex with Scarpetta. However, Talley is a talented agent. Barely thirty, he is strikingly handsome, with penetrating hazel eyes, dark good looks, broad shoulders, a Roman profile, full lips, and an aristocratic pedigree of wealth and privilege that he has rebelled against through his chosen career. The end of Black Notice suggests that he will play a significant role in Scarpetta's life in future novels in the series.

Basically, Cornwell likes to employ contrasting characters. She sets off the methodical and humane professional Scarpetta, who has worked her way to the top of her profession, against the selfish and ambitious amateur Bray, who has slept, cajoled, and blackmailed her way to the top, run roughshod over all in her way, and betrayed the values for which she is supposed to stand. Cornwell also sets the competent, though old-fashioned, former Deputy Chief Al Carson, head of investigations, against the modern, eminently fashionable new head, Deputy Chief Bray. Bray's choice of leading subordinate, Deputy Rene Anderson, a sloppy, gum-chewing amateur with an attitude, contrasts directly with the careful professionalism of Captain Marino.

While Anderson looks hip and modern, she is lazy and uncaring, proud of her high connections and unwilling to learn from those more knowledgeable and experienced than she. Marino, in contrast, is impatient and rude because he knows how things should be done and is horrified when his authority is undermined by neophytes with no idea about how to handle a crime scene so that the evidence will stand up in court.

Rose, Scarpetta's loyal, competent, and unquestionably honest secretary, is played off against the lazy, irresponsible, disloyal Chuck Ruffin. While Rose protects Scarpetta and the integrity of the office, Ruffin steals drugs he is supposed to destroy. Scarpetta, a nurturing woman but not a mother, is contrasted with her sister, Lucy's mother, Dorothy. Personal appearance and numerous affairs are the most important part of Dorothy's life; yet her need to control her daughter and twist her into an image of herself makes Dorothy spitefully jealous. "I want her [Lucy] to adore me, too!" she asserts; to which Scarpetta replies, "you're the most selfish person I've ever known."

Finally, Benton's maturity is contrasted with Talley's youth, his studious care with Talley's impetuosity, his forgiving love for Scarpetta with Talley's needy love for her. Such character contrasts provide an underlying structure and unity.

Social Concerns

Patricia Cornwell's Black Notice tacklesa number of social concerns. These include officials whose ambition, greed, and personal jealousies lead them to betray the public trust; wealthy families whose power and influence hide the depravity of blacksheep family members; administrators of justice who ignore or block the findings of forensic scientists and coroners for political reasons; and government agencies who reject competent employees because of their gender orientation, their old-fashioned lifestyles, or other private life choices. In sum, Cornwell attacks those who abuse their positions of authority, wealth, and power for private benefit or to further private visions of political reality.

Deputy Chief Diane Bray is the prototype of the corrupt official who has schemed her way into high position through political and sexual maneuvering, and whose actions interfere with the work of true professionals. She ferrets out the weaknesses of her opponents to undermine and defeat them. She resorts to gossip, innuendo, misdirection, and underhanded tricks (like putting a spy in Dr. Scarpetta's office to promote disharmony through petty theft and vandalism). She abuses her power, creating situations to justify getting rid of competent underlings like Police Captain Pete Marino with the excuse of insubordination or failure to implement orders, and replacing them with the less competent who owe their position and authority solely to her.

She puts Marino back in uniform (an insult to a detective captain); she reprimands him in public and tries to kill his spirit because she cannot control him. She has contempt for her minions, but forgives the sloth, arrogance, incompetence, and even criminality of such subordinates in return for their loyalty and their willingness to forward her schemes to undercut the opposition and promote her causes. Her rush to power results from her need for personal aggrandizement, not concern for the public weal.

Deputy Chief Bray has big plans and is willing to resort to any means to achieve them. At the scene of one murder, Bray and Scarpetta clash over who is in charge, with Scarpetta pointing to the state law that gives the chief medical investigator jurisdiction over the victim's body until her collection of evidence is complete; yet Bray's underlings, with her permission, repeatedly contaminate crime scenes through amateurish bungling. Throughout the novel, Scarpetta's refrain is that too many people wander into the crime scene before her investigation is complete. Scarpetta's longtime associate, Captain Marino, attacks Bray for playing power games for sound bites over the bodies of the dead and thereby compromising evidence, making it questionable in court if a perpetrator is caught. Greed and ambition drive her to commit crimes and to shift blame for her mistakes and misdeeds. In previous works in the Scarpetta series, such overly ambitious, power-hungry characters were males who institutionalized sexism and directed it against Scarpetta, but in Black Notice Bray is a lesbian who directs her sexist attacks against straight males like Captain Marino while at the same time scheming to use the lesbianism of Scarpetta's niece Lucy Farinelli against Scarpetta. Bray employs her sexuality as a weapon to tempt males and seduce females. Only when she dies at the hands of the serial killer whose capture she has made more difficult do her superiors

begin to ask where she got the money to support the high-level lifestyle she flaunted. Hand in hand with Bray is the tyrannical chief of police, Rodney Harris, an aggressive political animal who puts personal benefit over public need. He is the one who raised Bray to her position of authority and delegated power to her without caring about the havoc she might wreak.

At the end, he seeks to shift responsibility for her misdeeds away from his office and can be manipulated into doing the right thing because it serves his interest. Cornwell blames his politically motivated choices for the near breakdown of the official investigative machine.

Another establishment villain is summed up by the Chandonne family. This powerful family has lived in one of the oldest, wealthiest parts of Paris, France (on the Ile Saint-Louis), since the seventeenth century.

They hide behind their aristocratic facade, their highly publicized philanthropy, and their highly placed political connections while running "one of the biggest, bloodiest organized crime cartels in the world."

Furthermore, they have concealed and protected a psychopathic elder son, nicknamed Loup-Garou because of his hairy body and his pattern of biting, slashing, and beating his victims as he butchers them. Knowing the hideous murders he commits, they continue to protect him, even when he kills his brother, Thomas, the dead body discovered at the beginning of the novel.

Interpol brings Scarpetta and Marino to talk to Parisian coroner Dr. Stvan, whose vital forensic evidence has been blocked by the French judicial system. In France, forensic pathologists lack investigative power, asserts Cornwell, and are commissioned only to determine cause of death. Thus, the police and the magistrates may disregard their evidence with impunity. The fact that such magistrates may be in the pocket of the wealthy and powerful means justice thwarted. Cornwell, like her fictive creation Scarpetta, believes that this lack of investigative power obviates a thorough investigation, one removed from politics and human prejudice, and her criticism of the French system warns of the pitfalls and dangers of limiting the power of the American coroner.

Techniques

Cornwell employs the standard techniques of the detective genre—a series of murders, a set of clues, an investigator with knowledgeable (and not so knowledgeable) assistants, suspense, and shifting suspects.

To these she adds a surprise assault on the sleuth and an unusual resolution to two types of crimes and criminals. That resolution not only explains the criminal activities of Deputy Chief Bray and the capture of the Loup-Garou, but also resolves the political conflicts involved (Scarpetta's power over the crime scene reconfirmed; Marino's authority and position as Captain reasserted) and resolves grief, with Lucy coming to terms with her violence, Marino facing his grief-driven desire to smash and injure, and Scarpetta opening her heart to the possibility of a new love.

The novel's crime subgenre is that of the forensic sleuth, with scientific scene-of-thecrime discoveries and autopsy results essential to the progress of the plot. Cornwell details the scene-of-the-crime procedure, the tools Scarpetta and her staff employ, and the physical signs of violence and rage (the severity of the lacerations, the pattern of round and linear wounds, the bits of bones and broken teeth, the knuckle bruises, and striated abrasions). She explains, for example, the process of "stringing," a tedious, methodical technique involving protractors and trigonometry to track the individual trajectory of each droplet of blood from the wound to a target surface in order to determine velocity, distance traveled, and angles. Cornwell's enumeration of the gory details of the initial investigation of the victim's body and of the autopsy which follows is tempered with explanations of how this knowledge furthers the criminal investigation and the identification of the criminal. Fine blonde hairs and an animal smell at the crime scene, for example, lead to a killer suffering from hypertrichosis, a disease in which hairiness progressively increases until almost the entire body is covered; the face is asymmetrical, the teeth pointed, the genitalia stunted, and the number of fingers and toes larger than normal.

Occasional metaphorical diction dramatizes the clinical details: "It was as if a wild animal had dragged her dying body off to its lair and mauled it."

Structurally, the private details of Scarpetta's love life frame the public duties and concerns of the body of the novel. The story begins with a lost love, introduces a new love interest at midpoint only to drop him, and then ends with that new love being confirmed. Cornwell sets her novel in two locations, Richmond, Virginia, and Paris, France. The crime that begins in Virginia leads Scarpetta to Interpol and Paris; then, once the serial killer is identified, the plot returns to Virginia for its denouement.

At the same time, local politics threaten the efficiency of Scarpetta's office, and she must detect and counter a troublemaker within her own department in order to defeat the schemes set in motion by Diane Bray. The Bray subplot seems far more developed than the serial murderer plot because it takes place on home territory and involves internal politics and direct competition between different branches of the same system.

It allows Cornwell to explore varying degrees of culpability, to demonstrate the destructive effects of politics in an investigation, and to contrast a model public official with her negative counterpart. In contrast, the serial murderer of the main plot never clearly comes into focus; readers never share his thoughts or motives; he is clearly genetically defective and, at the end, almost pathetic.

Themes

In addition to the themes of social justice and betrayal of the public welfare, Cornwell explores the nature and effects of grief. At the close of the previous novel in this series, Point of Origin (1998), Benton Wesley, Dr.

Kay Scarpetta's lover, fiance, and friend, was tortured, mutilated, and slaughtered by a maniacal serial killer who literally stole the faces of his victims as trophies that confirmed his power (twenty-seven faces were found at his residence). Black Notice explores the different ways in which characters deal with their grief for Benton.

Scarpetta, as the chief medical examiner for Virginia, buries herself in her duties, working long hours and driving herself to exhaustion. The novel begins with a missive from the dead, a letter Benton wrote Scarpetta and left with a friend (Senator Frank Lord) to be delivered a year from his death (during the Christmas holidays). Therein, Benton describes behavior that Scarpetta's associates confirm later in the novel: her rejection of the usual consolations of family and friends, and instead her half-life existence as a workaholic, racing to crime scenes, doing more autopsies than ever, being consumed by her duties to the court, by lecturing, running an institute, and with whatever else she can fill her days and nights.

Benton writes that he knows she will avoid the well-meant solicitude of her neighbors, worry about her niece Lucy, get irritated with Marino, and in general opt out of life.

Benton's postmortem advice is for her to stop dodging the pain, to take comfort from her memories of their life together, and, in a more practical vein, to invite Marino and Lucy to dinner and to talk openly about their shared loss, a topic they have avoided since Benton's death. Following Benton's targeted advice leads Scarpetta to the discoveries on which the novel turns: unknown associates have been using her grief to their advantage—to taint her public and private image and to undercut the credibility of her office.

Her niece Lucy has blamed herself for Benton's death because the murderer had once been her lesbian lover, and Scarpetta must help her understand that Lucy herself was the targeted prey from the very start of the relationship and that she was in no way to blame for the nightmare acts of a very clever but insane killer. Lucy expresses her grief by a disturbing disdain for her own life and a fascination with guns and other weapons of destruction; she volunteers for dangerous missions (the most recent against the crime organization run by the Chandonne family) and employs deadly force that endangers her life and career and the life of her partner. At the novel's close she must decide whether to ruin her prospects by an unnecessary kill or revel in the self-destructive violence that reflects her sense of personal responsibility for Benton's death.

Marino handles his grief in yet another way, with tough-guy cynicism that seeks conspiracies, including the possibility that Benton is still alive, on a secret mission, and using his death as misdirection to prevent detection. He is irritable and antagonistic, and

takes pride in pushing his image as an out-of-date dinosaur. In France, when he realizes Scarpetta has spent the night with their Interpol contact, he explodes in anger, attacking Scarpetta for betraying Benton's memory. He starts a brawl in the hotel lobby, trying to punch out everyone within arm's length until Scarpetta helps him see that he is doing exactly what Lucy was doing—using violent confrontation as a way of striking out against the universe for the unfair death of the man who was Scarpetta's lover and friend, Lucy's father figure, and Marino's best buddy.

Cornwell also uses her medical examiner sleuth to comment on the spread of violence in America, the growing need for international connections between law enforcement officers as killers move rapidly from state to state and country to country, and the superiority of the American investigatory system's reliance on forensic evidence. In Black Notice, the first victim shows up in a cargo container shipped from Europe, and the evidence ties in the psychopathic son of the rich and influential Parisian family Lucy has been investigating indirectly through a Florida sting operation against their crime organization. The French system has been unable or unwilling to identify their serial murderer, and now his violence spills over into Richmond, Virginia, Scarpetta's hometown.

The Internet proves a major tool for criminals in Cornwell's novels. Here, someone has broken into Scarpetta's e-mail system and has rudely or insidiously answered messages she knew nothing about—messages from friends, associates, superiors, and fellow investigators—rejecting invitations, turning down opportunities to comfort the families of victims, alienating all, and creating the illusion of nervous exhaustion. Someone has also set up an online chat room that features expert medical commentary mixed with inept, uncaring advice, both in Scarpetta's name, an embarrassing fraud that suggests she is on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

Those who know her (like her long-time secretary, Rose) assume her unwillingness to deal with problems and her supposed extreme statements online are a measure of her grief, and they try even harder to protect her from herself. But when Scarpetta finds out, she realizes someone is out to undermine her authority, to reduce the power of her investigative office, and to injure those closest to her as well. Memos marked private and confidential have never arrived, and Scarpetta begins to realize that a nasty scenario is at work: someone wants her out of her office so it will be vulnerable to takeover by Public Safety, the division that Bray has her eye on for her next step up the political rungs.

Through Scarpetta, Cornwell asserts the rights of the dead and the respect due them; her detailed descriptions of autopsy results, of what the medical evidence reveals about the suffering of the victims and of the effects of violent assault, and of the nature and acts of the murderer speak eloquently for the dead and for the need for official retribution. Her descriptions of the meticulous steps taken by the coroner's office to protect forensic evidence; to find trace elements, fingerprints, chemicals, and fibers; to do DNA testing and profiling; and to provide the police a modus operandi for identifying the criminal confirms the importance of this office in any fair investigation. In addition to the physical evidence recovery kit (PERK), the Halliburton aluminum scene case,

lasers, Luma-Lite (which uses fiber optics to detect body fluids, drugs, fingerprints, and trace evidence not evident to the naked eye), and the support of criminalists, forensic psychiatrists, forensic pathologists, and computer programs for accessing police, FBI, and Interpol files, Cornwell makes clear that Scarpetta must also bring to her investigation and analysis personal experience and an almost paranoid awareness of the political ramifications of her medico-legal investigation of death. This combination of disciplined scientific techniques and intuitive analysis of the results and their personal, political, and judicial ramifications brings-to life a profession normally dismissed as morbid by the general population.

Furthermore, Cornwell captures, to some extent, the convoluted dynamics of psychopaths, though she is less interested in the psychopath in this novel than in the political conflicts. In the Scarpetta series, her villains are frequently murderous deviants who kill again and again in hideous ways, like those depicted by Thomas Harris in Manhunter (1981) and Silence of the Lambs (1988). They are clever, inventive, and demented. They stalk their prey using the Internet, police radios, or whatever tools they can acquire. They revel in blood and slaughter. Benton, whose presence is inescapable in this novel despite his death, was a criminal profiler whose psychological training enabled him to interpret forensic evidence and predict the patterns and psychoses of serial killers. With his death, Scarpetta is missing an essential part of her detection team and has greater difficulty intuiting where the killer she seeks will strike next. Perhaps this is one reason her Chandonne "werewolf" killer never comes to life as a malignant personality and seems as much offended against as offending, a twisted, pathetic freak of nature.

Key Questions

This novel is about learning to cope with grief and about carrying on with life and responsibility. In this case, responsibility means unmasking serial killers, despite interference from the very officials and agencies commissioned to assist in such cases.

Cornwell depends on contrasts to establish character, carry theme, and assert social concerns.

1. What is the significance of the title?

Who in the book receives a Black Notice? Why?

2. Cornwell captures the debilitating effects of grief. Why is Kay Scarpetta grieving? What form does her grief take?

How do her enemies use her grief against her?

3. What series of events or realizations help her finally come to terms with her grief?

4. Scarpetta's niece Lucy and her associate Marino also are grieving, but their grief takes a very different form. Explain.

5. Scarpetta sees conspiracies everywhere.

How many conspiracies does she suspect? Which prove genuine? Which false?

6. What early clues prepare readers for the unusual nature of the serial killer?

Is he credible? Why or why not? Ultimately, which figure seems more evil, Deputy Chief Diane Bray or the werewolf serial killer? Why?

7. Cornwell carefully contrasts two successful professional women who have risen in the ranks through very different means. What do Chief Bray and Dr.

Scarpetta have in common? How are they different? How significant are these differences? Explain.

8. What role does Lucy play in the story?

How does she help humanize Dr.

Scarpetta?

Literary Precedents

Cornwell's Kay Scarpetta novels are set firmly in the detective fiction subgenre of forensic pathology. Scarpetta is a pathologist who also actively detects. While the role of coroner or forensics expert has recurred in detective fiction from its earliest days—for example, R. Austin Freeman's Dr. Thorndyke, a forensic pathologist and forensic scientist (early 1900s), H. C. Bailey's crusading Reggie Fortune, critic of police bungling of evidence (1920s), C. St.

John Sprigg's Sir Colin Vansteen, consultant pathologist to His Majesty's Home Office (1930s), and George Harmon Coxe's Dr.

Paul Standish, medical examiner of Union City, Connecticut—the early fictional forensic experts were short on biochemical expertise, asserting knowledge about the victim and crime that, from a modern perspective, seems highly dubious, though their detection may well hold up in other areas.

In contrast, the modern coroner or forensic pathologist as detective is unquestionably a medical authority, whose expertise in matters of tissue, blood samples, blood spatter patterns, rigor mortis, and so on is stunningly impressive and horrifying. Modern forensic novels take readers through detailed autopsies, with technical descriptions of wounds, stomach contents, cell trauma, etc.

Lawrence G. Blockman's Daniel Webster Coffee, the pathologist at Pasteur Hospital, Northback, plies his trade competently though, perhaps, tediously in Diagnosis: Homicide (1950) and in Clues for Dr. Coffee (1964), both of which are introduced by real and distinguished medical examiners. John Feegel's Death Sails the Bay (1978), along with the other books in Feegel's series, made autopsy procedures an exciting search for scientifically discovered clues unavailable any other way. Michael Butterworth, writing as Sarah Kemp, introduced Dr. Tina May in the 1980s, but her forays into forensic psychiatry on the basis of pathological evidence made her seem more stylish than wise. Noreen Ayres's Smokey Brandon is another 1980s investigating pathologist in Carcass Trade and A World the Color of Salt.

Patricia Cornwell's Scarpetta novels carry this tradition a step further. As fictional chief medical examiner for the Commonwealth of Virginia, Scarpetta applies the latest technology of forensic science to criminal investigation. She draws on experts in forensic pathology, forensic psychiatry, criminalistics, profiling, and so on, and as a result of the concrete factual information she has at her command, she can direct the police investigation and even run her own investigation, oftentimes in cooperation with outside agencies like the ATF, FBI, and Interpol.

Related Titles

Recent fictive forensic detectives include Clare Rayner's Dr. George Barnabas, Nigel McCrery's Dr. Samantha Ryan, Kathy Reichs's Dr. Temperance Brennan, and Leonard S. Goldberg's Joanna Blalock. Clare Rayner's novels like Flanders: The Poppy Chronicles feature historical settings, whereas the other two writers focus on the present. In McCrery's Silent Witness (1998), the police fix on an unsavory club owner as perpetrator in a pair of ritual killings in Cambridge's fen country (garroting, mutilation, and placement on consecrated ground), but Dr.

Samantha Ryan, the Home Office pathologist, finds compelling forensic evidence that Bird has been framed. In The Spider's Web (1999), Ryan is called in for a second opinion on the autopsy of what seems like an accident victim only to discover forensic evidence of foul play that neither the police forensic expert nor the police superintendent accept until her investigation, assisted by forensic scientist Marcia Evans, unravels a bizarre series of related murders. Kathy Reichs's Deadly Decisions (2000), like Deja Dead (1998) and Death du Jour (1999), features Temperance Brennan, a fictional forensic anthropologist with a very long commute between jobs in North Carolina and Montreal. She links a skull in Montreal, the partial skeleton of a North Carolina teenager who has been dead since 1984, and a nine-year-old girl who is the shooting victim of a Canadian outlaw motorcycle gang war. In Leonard S. Goldberg's Deadly Exposure (1998) forensic pathologist Blalock's discovery of cholera in a dead Chinese infant in Los Angeles leads to a floating laboratory off the coast of Alaska and an iceberg that seems to be releasing a deadly, 65,000,000year-old toxin. Other titles in the Blalock series include Deadly Medicine, A Deadly Practice, Deadly Harvest, and Lethal Measures.

These titles build on the formulas and conventions established and popularized by Patricia Cornwell throughout her Kay Scarpetta forensic series. Cornwell's Postmortem (1990), Body of Evidence (1991), and Point of Origin (1998) all feature serial killers.

Copyright Information

Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults

Editor - Kirk H. Beetz, Ph.D.

Library of Congress
Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults
Includes bibliographical references.
Summary: A multi-volume compilation of analytical essays on and study activities for fiction, nonfiction, and biographies written for young adults.
Includes a short biography for the author of each analyzed work.
1. Young adults□Books and reading. 2.Young adult literature□History and criticism. 3. Young adult literature□Bio-bibliography. 4. Biography□Bio-bibliography.
[1. Literature□History and criticism. 2. Literature□Bio-bibliography]
I. Beetz, Kirk H., 1952
Z1037.A1G85 1994 028.1'62 94-18048ISBN 0-933833-32-6

Printed in the United States of America First Printing, November 1994