# Southern Cross Short Guide

## Southern Cross 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.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

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.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

BOOKRAGS

# Contents

Southern Cross Short Guide....1
Contents....2
Characters....3
Social Concerns....5
Techniques....7
Themes....10
Key Questions....12
Literary Precedents....13
Related Titles....14
Copyright Information....15

# Characters

Southern Cross's characters are varied and distinct but at times seem painted superficially. Police Chief Judy Hammer, whose husband has recently died and who is purposefully breaking her ties with the past, is driven by a vision of proper police organization, but her closest companion is a bugeyed Boston Terrier named Popeye (she talks to him about all her difficulties). Her deputy chief Virginia West is irritable, unhappy, and unbearably lonely; she has had an affair with a younger officer and feels inadequate, old, and unattractive. She expects infidelity so she finds it (though in fact it is nonexistent). She pushes Andy Brazil away when in reality she wants to hold him close. She too is dominated by a pet, a remarkably intelligent Abyssinian cat named Niles, who seems to intuitively make the computer work in his master's best interest. The private lives of both women repeatedly interfere with their public endeavors, and their pets seem to have more realistic and balanced visions of their owners' reality than do the owners themselves.

The love interest of the story, Andy Brazil, is a tall, handsome, blond with striking, chiseled features. Virginia West glares at him with anger at his defection and longs for his return. Brazil's father died when he was ten, and his mother was a miserable drunk who saw her son as simply an extension of her own sorrow. He is cocky and competent, a computer whiz. He relates easily to troubled youths like Weed, is kind to his nosy elderly landlady (whose calls to his office he has used to make West jealous), is adored by animals (both Popeye and Niles snuggle up to him), and is the only officer in the novel who comes close to understanding what is going on in the community. However, he has all the frailties of youth and is unable to decipher the complex mix of emotions that drives West.

The high school teachers and students make up another set of characters, with the teachers barely making an impact and with Weed and Smoke the two dominant figures in opposition. Weed is a decent youth with artistic talent, a love for his older brother who died, and a healthy sense of danger.

He gets involved with Smoke against his will, intimidated and harassed into being initiated into a club he wants no part of, but he does not trust adults enough to share his fears with them. However, when he gets taken into police custody and understands the depths of Smoke's violence, he willingly testifies against him, and, in doing so, helps prevent a massacre. Smoke, in contrast, looks like every parent's dream but, in fact, is every parent's nightmare. He has learned to manipulate the system, his parents, his teachers, and his classmates to attain his ends. He is clever and bloodthirsty and takes sexual delight in sadism, but he fails to consider the long-term repercussions of his acts. After the fact, the police learn that he has manipulated his school records, faked his identity, and done his best to avoid the usual links by which the authorities could trace his whereabouts and tie him to particular school activities.

Still another set of characters circle around Bubba Fluck. These include his erstwhile friends (like Smudge), mechanics, employers, and fellow employees, all local Richmond

types. Cornwell stereotypes them to a large degree as working-class Southern males with "good ol' boy" values, men who appreciate hunting and fishing more than anything else in life, who talk dogs, cars, cigars, and fish flies, and who have known each other—for good or ill—since childhood. Fluck, for example, has striven hard to overcome his name; he is an odd mixture of knowledgeability and incompetence, of efficiency and inefficiency, and the reports of his activities are both wonderfully comic and sadly pathetic.

Readers never truly enter the hearts of these characters though Cornwell does take time to humanize them to some degree as a counter to the stereotypes various characters have of each other: white stereotypes of blacks, black stereotypes of whites, outsider stereotypes of Southerners, Southern stereotypes of northerners, and so on. However, the authorial voice distances them from the readers and keeps them more figures of amusement and satiric targets than three-dimensional characters to whom readers can relate.

# Social Concerns

Patricia Cornwell's central law enforcement concern in Southern Cross is the law's inadequate method of dealing with juvenile offenders and the growing problem with juvenile delinquents from privileged homes. Her youthful villain Smoke, a "special needs" child whose real name is Alex Bailey, had been written up fifty-two times and arrested six times for crimes ranging from extortion, harassment, sexual assault, and larceny to murder (killing a crippled elderly woman). Charges of activities that began with disruptive dress, bus misconduct, cheating, plagiarism, truancy, gambling, and indecent literature have escalated to more and more serious wrongdoings while his parents have turned a blind eye to his nature. Cornwell blames the parents for not recognizing the psychopathic and criminal nature of their son and for not taking steps to control him or institutionalize him instead of excusing, covering up, and defending his behavior. Yet their motivations for protecting him are to some degree understandable: a beloved son, he is so very clean-cut, handsome, and well-mannered around them and their friends that he simply does not look or act the part of the juvenile delinquent in front of adults; and since their image of him does not match the view of authorities, they assume that he is being punished because of their money and position and therefore act to insulate him from such seemingly unwarranted accusations.

Smoke is indeed good looking, neatly attired, and unusually bright, but at his center he is angry, mean-spirited, sly, sadistic, and irreparably warped. His father is a banker so he is accustomed to wealth and privilege, and his mother, who has always spoiled and protected him, believes he can do no wrong in spite of the evidence before her. Her explanation is that he has been set up by jealous classmates, resentful teachers, and corrupt police. His parents do not provide Smoke a set of demanding rules because, in their opinion, any teenager would just naturally feel challenged to break the adult imposed strictures. Smoke spent time in C. A. Training School in Burner for juvenile offenders, despite scathing letters from his parents to the district attorney, governor, and U.S. Senator, but his juvenile records have been expunged, his fingerprint records and mug shot destroyed. When Smoke turned sixteen, the age of accountability by North Carolina law, his family moved to Virginia where he would still be deemed a minor. These actions reveal that despite their protestations about their son's innocence, somewhere deep inside his parents understand that all is not well.

Cornwell clearly believes that evil is genetic, that some people are just born to be trouble, no matter how upscale their family environment. Despite his youth, Smoke's predatory, destructive relationship to the world is clearly adult in its malignancy. As the novel begins he is victimizing and robbing ATM users, but such acts quickly escalate to include the murder of a helpless old woman who resists and whom he takes pleasure in tormenting. He shoplifts ten garage remote controls from Sears and uses them to break into the garage-stored weapons locker of a local working man (a stereotypical redneck in the view of the Charlotte investigators); the collection of high powered weapons from this one robbery could arm a small militia. When police officers Brazil and West visit the local high school, Smoke asks them tantalizing and self-revelatory questions about whether a person is born bad or chooses evil and about how police can protect citizens

from such bad seeds, and he goes on to argue that these people are probably smart and hard to catch. Their cocky replies about personal responsibility and police competence make Smoke anxious for open combat with them. He fantasizes about shooting off a continual stream of bullets with an AR-15 assault rifle from a downtown rooftop, taking out half of the city cops, "shooting down helicopters and slaughtering the National Guard" (55)—fantasies he later tries to enact on a lesser scale.

A charismatic gang leader, Smoke spurs fellow juveniles to violent acts, and he tortures and terrifies the young males at his school. His Richmond gang consists of Divinity, a dark-skinned teenage exhibitionist obsessed with sex, alcohol, and violence, and three "slaves" (called Dog, Sick and Beeper), younger boys Smoke takes pleasure in ordering around and sending on crime sprees. He tells them where to go and what to do and they follow instructions to prove their manhood and worth (and to avoid Smoke's ire). At the start of the novel Smoke has used intimidation and violence to recruit another youth nicknamed Weed, but the initial tattooing while high on vodka is enough to send Weed running. At the close of the novel Smoke, wearing tool pouches containing a stolen Beretta, four ten-round clips, two fifteen-round clips, and a Glock with three seventeen-round clips, plans to make himself "king" of the Azalea Parade by shooting as many participants and bystanders as he can. His nickname Smoke sums up his ability to mingle with any crowd, look the part of the bystander, and fade out of sight like drifting smoke, but where there is smoke there is fire, in this case firepower, and this juvenile psychopath plans to "smoke" (in the sense of "kill") as many victims as he can.

Thus, through Smoke, Cornwell addresses a number of tough modern concerns: the generation gap, gangs, inept parenting, motiveless violence, drugs and alcohol for minors, the nature of evil, nature versus nurture, the judicial question of the age of accountability, and the legal loopholes through which psychopathic juveniles can escape full retribution or tracking by law enforcement officials. At a time in which mass killings are perpetrated by high school students at good schools, Cromwell's subject matter leads the reader to wonder about the kind of youth that would explode in public violence that results in multiple deaths of strangers. Her answer is a seemingly bright, normal, well-brought up, welladjusted youth from a moneyed family, a youth who has been forgiven every wrong, who has always had what he wanted, who is brighter than many of his teachers—a bully with a taste for violence—alienated, disfunctional, and criminal.

# Techniques

Cornwell's approach in Southern Cross is at odds with that of her other detective novels. In this story, the key crime investigators, Chief Judy Hammer, Deputy Chief Virginia West, and Officer Andy Brazil, all three formerly from Charlotte, North Carolina, are out of their depth and out of their territory in Richmond, Virginia, and their "northern" take on crime, efficiency, and methodology are totally at odds with the sleepier patterns of their Virginia colleagues.

The clash between investigative forces weakens the detective pattern and makes it vulnerable to digressions. Instead of the usual straight line from crime to detection, Cornwell leaves her investigators misdirected and misinformed. Hammer hears a muddled conversation that breaks in over her cell phone and leaps to the erroneous conclusion that a commonplace discussion of hunting and hound dogs is two rednecks planning a racially motivated hate crime, a homicide involving robbery. The "cold nose" of the dog she takes to be slang for a snub-nosed revolver and the dog's name "blue" she assumes to mean a blue steel gun (as opposed to a stainless steel or nickel-plated one). Thus, she chases down a non-existent conspiracy and never knows anything about the real threat to her new city. Communication breaks down between West and Brazil (she thinks he has a new lover; he thinks she used him and then rejected him because of his youth), and only Brazil's accidental contact with some of the city's young people (at one point they try to steal his car) connects him with the ongoing crime spree and final attempted massacre.

The Richmond police mock their new supervisors and revel in their mistakes.

Consequently, instead of a tight focus on crime, investigation, and the processes of justice, this novel employs the strategies of satire, with many of its many characters and with organizational politics bearing the brunt of Cornwell's attack. One level of Cornwell's satiric attack occurs at the verbal level, such as calling the Civil War "the war that was not forgotten," naming a rural character Burner Fluck IV (whose cruel childhood classmates have variously called him "Fluck-head," "Mother-But-Flucker," and so on), or setting up parallel series that end in deflation: "Thomas Jefferson designed Monticello, the Capitol, and the state penitentiary" and he "founded the University of Virginia, drafted the Declaration of Independence, and was accused of fathering mulatto children." A teenaged black youth mispronounces "mead" and "pact" in his Western Civilization class and defines them as follows: "Med is what you feel when someone disses you. And paced is what you use in art class." The humor and the tragedy is that he is not trying to make a joke; he is earnestly striving for a right answer.

Another satiric method Cornwell employs is the sight gag. In one instance, the gag centers around the statue of Jefferson Davis, the symbol of the South and for Richmonders, a reminder of past glories lost. Forced by Smoke to vandalize and desecrate the statue of Jefferson Davis in the local cemetery park, Weed chooses disposable water-based paints that will wash off in the first rain over more permanent paints whose defacement would be longer lasting. However, no one knows this, and the

city fathers believe they are stuck with a real embarrassment. Weed, in tribute to his dead brother who was a successful basketball player, has transformed the only president of the ill-fated Confederacy into a black basketball player, wearing the redand-white uniform of the University of Richmond Spiders; his footwear has been painted as Nikes, the hat Davis holds in his left hand has been made to resemble a basketball, and the marble base that supports him has become day-glow orange.

Cornwell includes traditional satiric figures like the malaprop and the rustic. Her bubbleheaded Lelia Ehrhart, a vocal community spokesperson originally from Yugoslavia, repeatedly mispronounces and confuses words and grammar to create a tangle of nonsense. She adds "s's" to verbs where none are needed, transposes word order, mixes pronoun references, speaks of "a front to our unalien rights," "cold-bloody juvenile delinquents" that "descegraded everyone sitting in their room'" and calls Hammer a "Jack Footed Thung" who does not give a "hoo" about crime prevention.

Cornwell's rustic, Bubba Fluck, is unlike other "fearless men devoted to pickup trucks, guns, topless bars, and the Southern Cross" because, as the son of a theologian with a deaf ear to the possibilities of his son's name, he has had to strive hard to fit in as a redneck hick for whom hunting, cars, dogs, and weapons are the most important part of his life. Cornwell makes fun of his excesses (a garage full of lovingly cared for weapons capable of terrible destruction) and his vulnerability to being ripped off by his supposed friends, but at the novel's end she locates him in the right place at the right time to give the police a hand with the real evil. In effect, Cornwell suggests that, to outsiders like her detective team, Bubba is the stereotypical Southern bigot and potential criminal, when, in fact, he is a decent, law-abiding citizen with grander dreams than he can attain, while the real villain is an assimilated urbanite, handsome, smooth-talking, and seemingly presentable but wicked to his core. Her metaphors about Bubba Fluck carry a satiric edge, as when she describes his intolerance for tailgaters resulting from his being "a cowboy herding cattle on the open prairie of motoring life." Her descriptions of everything associated with him are tinged with comedy. Typical are several pages devoted to a running conversation with his mechanic about his failures at home car repairs, getting turn signals on backwards, setting the trouble light to come on inside the car trunk so the battery dies, forgetting the cotter pin so the wheels drop off—details not comic in themselves but comic in mass.

In keeping with her customary reliance on contrast, Cornwell alternates between sets of characters: Bubba, his family, and friends; Smoke and his gang, sometimes including Weed; Weed and his desperate attempts to escape Smoke's control; Hammer, West, and Brazil; and the Richmond police. These characters meet and interact in surprising ways. For example, Smoke visits a car repair shop and meets Bubba, whose chatter with his friendly mechanic yields information about a Sears remote control for Bubba's garage, where he keeps not only expensive machinery but also an impressive collection of weaponry. Smoke's theft of these weapons brings the police back to Bubba as a murder suspect. The accidental interruption of Hammer's cellular phone call by Bubba's conversation with his friend Smudge sends Hammer searching for racist killers but makes Bubba think he has a mandate from heaven to protect Hammer. Thus,

throughout the novel, Cornwell interlocks the lives and actionsof her characters through odd nexuses.

# Themes

A recurring theme of Southern Cross is regional differences, the differences in mindsets and ways of acting between northerners and southerners and between the citizens of Charlotte, North Carolina, who look to the north for models of propriety and efficiency, and those of Richmond, Virginia, whose southern attitudes are still shaped by the Civil War. From a Richmond point of view, the citizens of Charlotte are "Yankees," "turncoats," and "carpetbaggers." Cornwell mocks Richmonders for their continued devotion to the Lost Cause, the Confederacy, the Southern Cross (the Rebel flag), and Jefferson Davis, the first and last Confederate president. The novel begins with a tongue-in-cheek description of the history of Richmond, from its founding in 1607 by "fortune-hunting English explorers," its "firewater" trade with the Indians, its importation of African slaves, its part in the secession from the Union in 1861, its moment of glory as the capital of the Confederacy, its survival of "other terrible wars that were not their problem because they were fought elsewhere," and its modern-day plight of a shrinking tax base, abandoned downtown businesses, knifewielding schoolkids, a homicide rate that is the second highest in the nation, and a location on the traffic route of drug dealers moving north and south. Cornwell calls the social chaos and violence of the city "clear evidence that the Civil War continued to be lost by the South."

Furthermore, Richmond's new police chief, Judy Hammer, has come from Charlotte to bring "enlightenment" to the beleaguered Richmond police department, to "hammer" home her ideas. Cornwell says tongue-in-cheek, "She decided it was her calling to move on to other southern cities [from Charlotte] and occupy and raze and reconstruct." Her blueprint for reconstructive action is the New York Crime Control Model, COMSTATE, or computerdriven statistics, a northern "battle plan" for mapping crime patterns and identifying city hot spots and for holding every police officer accountable for everything so there can be no passing the buck and no excuses for failure. Hammer's attempt to introduce a new department shield with the New York motto Courtesy, Professionalism, and Respect, or CPR, is met with groans and boos, and gibes about getting hand-medown NYPD uniforms too. Attempts to add "accountability" to the set of three results in acronyms like CRAP. Cornwell hilariously details Hammer's "occupation of Richmond" and the Richmond police force's rebellion against anything "Yankee" and anything out of the "turncoat" city of Charlotte. Inevitably, the plan proves disastrous. The Richmond cops are "unfriendly" and "unappreciative," and their ways are not northern (nor North Carolina) ways.

Ultimately, southern solidarity defeats the aggressive northern assault and sends the outsiders seeking more familiar territory in which to practice their questionable professionalism.

Another theme is failures of communication. Such failures include the inability of parents to communicate with their children, children to communicate with adults, teachers to communicate with students, lovers to communicate with each other, administrators, managers, and employers to communicate with employees, inhabitants of different cities to communicate with each other, and so on. The breakdowns in communication

occur across barriers of age, class, gender, race, and region. Oftentimes, such breakdowns are based on erroneous assumptions about the actions, motivations, reactions, and reasoning of others, or on fears taken for truths, or on truths too damning to be faced. Other times the breakdown is born of indifference or pride, snobbery or alienation.

Young Weed sends what he thinks is a clear computer warning to the police about where to find Smoke and his gang's hideout (a screensaver with roving fish homing in on Smoke's territory), but the police mistake it for a sophisticated criminal infiltration of their computer system and are on the alert for a high-level terrorist hacker.

The Richmond Times-Dispatch police reporter, in turn, is certain that "fish spill" (the covert phrase for the computer fish) is police code for "big trouble" and seeks the big story behind the scenes. Likewise, spurred to an act of defacement by Smoke, Weed paints Richmond's prized statue of Confederate president Jefferson Davis to look like Weed's much beloved, dead brother as a call for help; however, doing so only gets the city up in arms about what citizens think is a racial attack made against the city government, the Confederacy, and whites in general. Mr. Pretty, Weed's Western Civilization teacher, has no idea how to communicate with his youthful charges about his subject or about themselves, while the art teacher, Mrs. Grannis does know how to communicate with them about art but not how to get them to open up to her about the problems and conflicts in their private lives.

She can motivate Weed to artistic endeavors but she can not get him to explain how his paintings reflect his inner conflicts, his troubled family life, and the threats from dangerous older students like Smoke. She can touch his heart but not open it to examination. When he refuses to deliver a report he has worked on diligently for weeks, she accepts his failure to perform as a sign of his laziness rather than as a sign that something is truly amiss in his life. Deputy Chief West hides her fear of rejection behind curses and orders and blunt statements of discontent, distancing herself from her former lover when all he and she want is to be in each other's arms. He, in turn, is blind to West's need for him and actively works to increase her jealousy when, in fact, it is jealousy that keeps them apart. Bubba's mechanic tries to convey to Bubba the need to distrust his former school chum, Smudge, who sells him a car that is a lemon (it has been previously wrecked) and takes advantage of him in a number of ways, but Bubba can not see past the illusion of friendship to the reality of exploitation. The police officer who pulls Bubba over can not see past the Southern Cross on Bubba's fender and the whiteness of his face, and reads racism where none is intended, just as Bubba misunderstands the black police officer's fears and imagines he is purposefully mocking his name, as so many former classmates did. On every level, among every group in the novel, characters fail to communicate in both minor and significant ways.

Other minor themes include the inevitable conflicts that result from factions with competing interests in the workplace and in the political realm, the conflict between tradition and modernity in city councils, the vulnerability of the elderly to urban crime, and the inadequacy of schools to deal with youths with easy access to drugs, alcohol, weapons, and information.

# Key Questions

Because Southern Cross departs widely from Cornwell's usual detective pattern, it is worth considering how and why. How does adding an element of satire to the traditional format change the detective genre and the reader's reaction to it? Certainly, where normally the narrative voice is distant or "transparent," the detectives are competent, and the suspect deserves investigation, in the satiric detective novel certainties and verities are missing. In this case, police actions are bungled; their complex computer systems are defeated by a well-meaning and ill-educated youth; and regional antagonisms dominate their responses. Cornwell emphasizes the clumsiness of her detectives, their preconceptions and prejudices, their difficulty adjusting to a new social environment, and the personal motives that affect their performance. At the same time she shows the humanity behind the "redneck" country-boy suspect: the superficial behavior and characteristics that arouse police suspicions and blackwhite antagonisms but that are really harmless patterns of a class and a region. The fact that her villain would seem, to all outward appearances, the best of youngsters from the high school crowd confirms her overriding theme of the deceptive nature of appearances.

1. As a satire, this novel is intentionally critical. List Cornwell's satiric targets.

Comment briefly on each.

2. What is the function of Weed in the story? Why is he included? How is he set in contrast to Smoke and why? What makes him sympathetic? How does he further the plot?

3. What is the significance of the episode with the statue of Jefferson Davis?

4. Bubba is a stereotypical redneck, and yet he rises above this limiting role.

Explain.

5. Cornwell always builds her novels around contrasts in characters. What particular contrasts dominate Southern Cross? Why are these contrasts important?

6. This article discusses some breakdowns in communication in the story. Find three additional examples of such breakdowns and explain how they affect the action.

7. What traditional elements of detective fiction remain in this novel? What is traditional about the ending?

8. How are the traditional elements changed by the satire?

# Literary Precedents

In Southern Cross, Cornwell moves into the territory of the Southern Gothic and of the satiric. Her literary precedents are Flannery O'Connor, as in the short story "A Good Man is Hard to Find," and John Kennedy O'Toole, as in the novel A Confederacy of Dunces. These are stories which depict Southern regional types with a satiric edge and which capture the differences between their world view and mainstream views. O'Connor captures the religious obsessions and metaphysical speculations that produce a coldblooded existential killer, a rural misfit striking out at the emptiness and meaninglessness of the universe; O'Toole, in turn, spoofs Southern ways (in this case, South Louisi ana ways) of thinking and acting, and paints hilarious portraits of eccentric behavior and Southern urban oddities.

In general, detective fiction lends itself easily to satire as a means by which to attack human frailties and the limitations of human institutions. The infusion of satire into the detective fiction medium is a means of breaking with formula and of adding further dimensions to a form usually characterized by clear-cut conventions. Sometimes such satire has been aimed at the detective genre itself, as in E. C. Bentley's parody of the contemporary detective in Trent's Last Case (1913) or in Agatha Christie's spoof on mystery writers in Cards on the Table (1936). Michael Innes's archly-written classical mystery spoofs are almost as abstract, convoluted, and obscure as stories by Jorge Borges. Death at the President's Lodging, (1989), for example, involves a puzzle-like mystery solved by a socially and intellectually superior detective who is quite at home in the elevated milieu of an Oxbridge college and who is as snobbish as those with whom he must deal. The third-person objective narrator stands above the lowly beings whose voices he records. Cornwell's affectionate but mocking portraits of her Charlotte detectives in Richmond are very much in this literary tradition, but are much more concrete and personal. The snobbish overtones of the third-person objective narrator are there, but so is a concrete delineation of the specifics that merit such snobbery.

However, in addition to spoofing the genre, Cornwell is also satiric about the region and the city in which her action takes place. A number of detective stories have mocked the pretensions of the types their characters portray. These include literary snobs, aristocratic twits, and artistic dabblers. Robert Barnard's Death of an Old Goat (1974) is a devastatingly humorous depiction of the smug hypocrites of Australian academia, while the Emma Lathen series of Wall Street mysteries expose the deviousness, greed, and falsity of the business world. Even the stories of Dashiell Hammett have a tinge of satire in their portraits of urban corruption and sleazy politicians. Cornwell, in this tradition, lays bare a city, its problems, its dreams, its pretensions, and its interior conflicts.

# Related Titles

The satiric detective story is rare in modern publishing, but does, occasionally, appear. However, it is more often a British than an American form. Robert Barnard's The Bad Samaritan (1997) is a good example of the genre, with its seamlessly plotted whodunit tale and yet its droll humor at the expense of small town gossips and tattletales. Therein, a pastor's wife who has lost her faith takes a seaside outing to rethink how her new mind-set changes her marital role. At her seaside hotel, she befriends a young Bosnian employee, whose wife and daughter remain in his beleaguered homeland, but when he follows her to her husband's parish, enlists her aid in his search for employment, and ends up a suspect in a murder case, she begins to see her village and her relationship to it in a new, less agreeable light. Barnard's The Corpse at Haworth Tandoori (1999) is closer in its satiric method to Cornwell's, for it features a black detective constable, Charlie Peace, whose skin coloring marks him as an oddity in the small English villages where he seeks answers to questions about murder, and its suspects are a small, eccentric set of people quite different from those normally experienced by the investigating detectives— an artist's colony consisting of a famous but irascible, aged painter, his haughty wife, their truculent son and daughter, a parttime cook with regional characteristics, and a number of oddballs living in the little cottages edging the great man's quarters.

The offbeat characters and bizarre yet ultimately credible scenario make this British study of region, character, and eccentricity very much in the same vein as Southern Cross.

Cornwell's Hornet's Nest (1997), a prequel to Southern Cross set in Charlotte, North Carolina, is also a satire about crime and police but is somewhat less zany than Southern Cross.

# 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

Copyright ©, 1994, by Walton Beacham. All rights to this book are reserved. No part of this work may be used or reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or in any information or storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the copyright owner, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews. For information, write the publisher, Beacham Publishing, Inc., 2100 "S" Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008.

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