

Trying to Escape the Past

Suspended Sentences

by Jim Napier

The philosopher George Santayana said that those who do not know history are condemned to repeat it. He meant that history is a continuum: the past has a way of catching up with the present and shaping the future. Nowhere is this more true than in the troubled land that is the former Yugoslavia, where atrocities committed centuries ago still simmer in the collective consciousness, boiling over into current events that draw outsiders into their conflict. This week's pick graphically illustrates that theme, as it weaves together the violent history of the Slavs with an engrossing tale of Canadian Peacekeeping Forces, and brings it home to Ottawa.

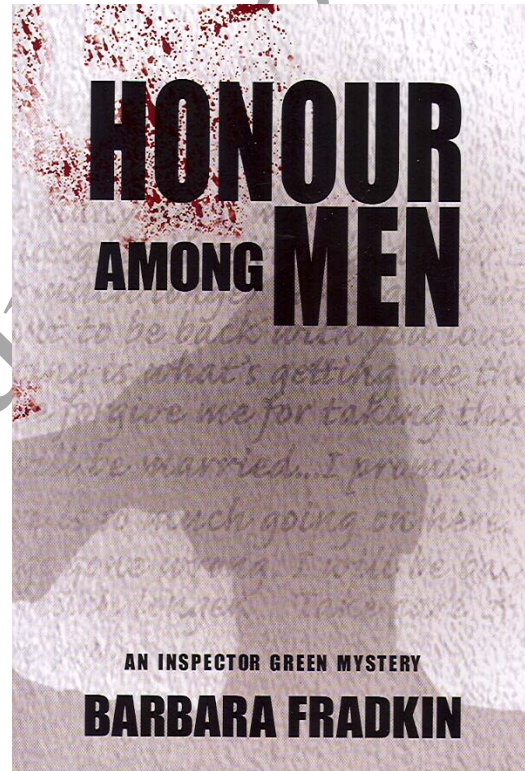
Barbara Fradkin

Barbara Fradkin is a familiar face on the Canadian crime writers' scene. Born in Montreal, she attended McGill and the University of Toronto before obtaining her Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Ottawa. An experienced short-story writer, her work has been published in numerous anthologies and magazines, and has been shortlisted three times for an Arthur Ellis Award for Best Short Story given out by the Crime Writers of Canada.

Honour Among Men is the fifth novel in Barbara's much-acclaimed Inspector Green series. Her second novel, *Once Upon a Time*, was shortlisted for the Crime Writers of Canada Arthur Ellis Award for Best Novel, and the fourth in

the series, *Fifth Son*, won the Ellis Award for Best Novel in 2005.

Barbara lives in Ottawa with assorted pets and children, where she is a member of the aptly-named Ladies' Killing Circle, a coven of similarly-minded women crime writers.



***Honour Among Men* (RendezVous Press, 2006)**

A middle-aged, overweight bag lady incongruously nicknamed Twiggy wanders the streets of Ottawa, looking for a place to bed down for the night. Making her way to a favourite spot, a wall next to an embankment on the Ottawa River, she stumbles across the body of a

woman, half out of the still-frigid water. Dismissing the woman as sleeping it off, she settles in for the night. When she awakens the next morning, she realizes the woman is dead.

When the Ottawa Police investigate, Inspector Michael Green of the Major Crimes Squad is on hand. Although the victims' clothing suggests she may have been a prostitute, he is not convinced. She looks thin and sickly, her hair is graying, and her clothing seems to have been chosen more for warmth than to attract men. Her handbag yields a VIA Rail ticket stub from Halifax, and, most interestingly, a Medal of Bravery awarded to Ian MacDonald, a soldier on a peacekeeping mission in Croatia in 1993.

When a fingerprint search comes up empty, Green faxes a photo of the dead woman to the Halifax Regional Police. There, Sergeant Kate McGrath notices the victim's resemblance to Patricia Ross, a woman in a photo from a long-dormant case involving the apparent suicide of her fiancé, Ian MacDonald. She contacts Green, and sets in motion an enquiry that will put one of Inspector Green's officers in the hospital in critical condition, and lead to a web of deceit and cover-up involving a candidate running for Parliament and a police officer in Green's own investigative unit. Along the way, he will enter dangerous waters with the attractive Kate McGrath, do battle with department superiors who want to reign in his investigation, and struggle to keep Twiggy alive as a dangerous antagonist moves in for the kill.

***Finely-crafted tale
raises social issues***

Nominated for this year's Arthur Ellis Award for Best Novel, *Honour Among Men* is a well-crafted story of how the effects of war can linger on for years, and how fine the line can become between victim, villain, and hero. In this era of Canadian military involvement in such complex theatres as Rwanda, Somalia, and Afghanistan, and when Canada feels the tug of forces from our neighbours to the south, *Honour Among Men* raises important social and ethical issues, and treats them sensitively and compellingly. I recommend it highly.

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