

Dark Side of the City

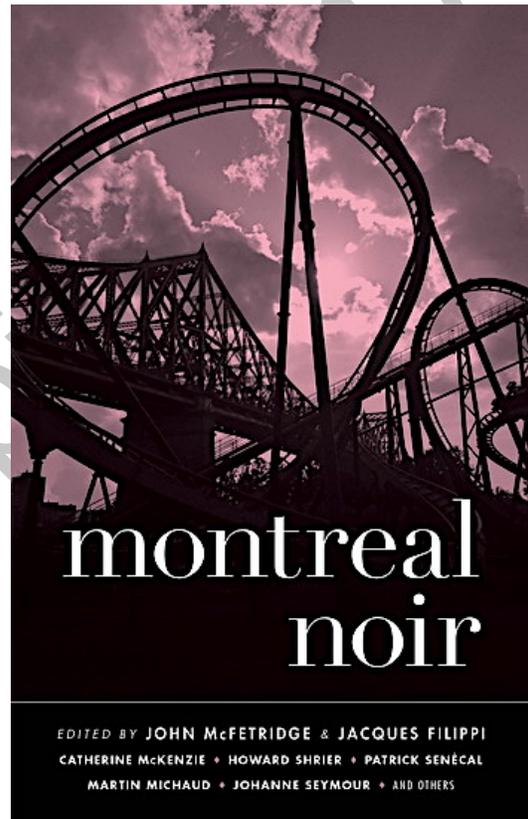
Montreal shines in jaded anthology

Suspended Sentences

by Jim Napier

Akashik Books is well known, and deservedly so, for its fine series of noir anthologies, each of which is set in cities around the world. At last count they'd published well over eighty such works, with another sixteen currently in the works. The series showcases some of the very best crime writers in the business, each of whom can lay claim to a special knowledge of some aspect of the city in question. It's a brilliant concept, and makes for some of the most compelling reading you're likely to encounter.

Montreal Noir is edited by two seasoned veterans of crime fiction, John McFetridge and Jacques Filippi. Together they have assembled some of the most accomplished writers around. The list includes award-winning and best-selling authors such as Catherine McKenzie, Brad Smith, Peter Kirby, Robert Pobi, Johanne Semour, Melissa Yi, and Howard Shrier, along with a host of others. Their tales will keep you up nights, first to finish them, and then because you can't get to sleep.



In *Rush Hour* **Patrick Senécal** takes us downtown to relate the story of a morning traffic radio reporter who is targeted by a man with a grudge. He wants to get even with the reporter, but his plan involves putting the lives of innocent civilians at risk in a race-against-time scheme that has the reporter scrambling to outwit him.

In *The Joke's On You* **Catherine McKenzie** introduces us to a woman in NDG whose grandfather has just died. He was elderly, and his death was not unexpected. But after his funeral she pulls a birthday card from her pocket. Written by her grandfather two weeks earlier, she'd been saving it as a precious memento. But now was the time. She opens it and reads *I did not die of natural causes*.

Award-winning crime writer **Peter Kirby** takes readers to the little-known Ile Sainte-Thérèse, an isolated scrap of land only ten minutes from the city, and inhabited by squatters. It's a good place for his protagonist, who's on the run from killers who think he's an informer. But some of the islanders are anything but normal, and used to making their own rules. With no police around, the newcomer is forced to look after himself—and, as it turns out, after others.

Johanne Seymour takes a hike up to the artsy world of the Plateau Mont-Royal to spin a tale about a

writer grappling with insanity who views everyone around him as a threat, and whose blurb on the cover of his book seems to foreshadow his own fate.

Finally, setting her story in Côte-des-Neiges, **Melissa Yi** draws on her own experience as a doctor to profile a young medical resident who is drawn into the murky world of plastic surgery, where, by definition, people are not always what they seem. Smart and sassy, this time she might be in over her head.

And so it goes. The fifteen gripping tales within the covers of *Montreal Noir* are as unique as the gifted writers that relate them, and in the dark reaches of noir, where no one is without guilt, justice, if it comes at all, is a human and imperfect thing.

Expertly crafted and shrewdly edited, *Montreal Noir* is a perfect Christmas gift for the person who doesn't mind missing a good night's sleep, and a fine addition to an already-strong series.

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Since 2005 more than 500 of Jim Napier's reviews and interviews have appeared in several Canadian newspapers and on websites. His own crime novel, *Legacy*, was published in April of 2017. He can be reached at jnapier@deadlydiversions.com