



Sean Mahon plays Richard Hannay in Alfred Hitchcock's *39 Steps* which is based on John Buchan's novel. This long-running Broadway whodunnit sports over 150 zany characters (played by a talented cast of 4), award-winning stage effects, and some good old-fashioned romance.

deals with the alleged homoerotic notes some have found in his work, and includes an extended discussion of the treatment of women in his fiction. A chronological listing of all Buchan's books, an alphabetical listing of his fiction, and a short biography precede the main text; a 16-page annotated bibliography and seven-page index follow. This first in a new series, McFarland Companions to Mystery Fiction, edited by Elizabeth Foxwell, sets a high standard for future volumes, which I hope will be equally rich in scholarly rigor and critical acumen.

McDonald, Craig. *Rogue Males: Conversations & Confrontations About the Writing Life*. Madison, WI: Bleak House, 2009. 308pp. Bibl. \$24.95

The author of an earlier book of interviews, *Art in the Blood* (2006), talks to 15 writers, most major names, all male and associated with the hardboiled and/or noir school. Thanks to McDonald's preparation and skill as an interviewer, this is one of the better collections of its kind. The interviews include the dates they were conducted, important information other compilations often omit. All the pieces are in Q-and-A format save the last two, about James Sallis and Ken Bruen. Only Bruen, James Ellroy, and Lee Child are revisited from the earlier collection. Other subjects include James Crumley, the book's posthumous dedicatee; Elmore Leonard, Daniel Woodrell, Alistair MacLeod, Andrew Vachss, Max Allan Collins, Stephen J. Cannell, Craig Holden, Peter Dexter, Randy Wayne White, singer-songwriter Tom Russell, and Kinky Friedman, questioned during his unsuccessful 2005 campaign to be governor of Texas.

Occasional sweeping statements demand challenge. Considering how many notable poets have written distinguished mystery fiction (for example, Kenneth Fearing, author of the classic *The Big Clock*, and C. Day Lewis writing as Nicholas Blake), it's dubi-

What About Murder?

Reference Books Reviewed

by Jon L. Breen

Ackroyd, Peter. *Poe: A Life Cut Short*. London: Chatto & Windus, 2008. New York: Talese/Doubleday, 2009. x, 205pp. Illus., bibl., index. \$21.95

Ackroyd, whose Brief Lives series also includes Chaucer, Newton, and J.M.W. Turner, is a master of the brief but comprehensive, highly readable popular biography. There are no notes and only the barest bibliography, but all aspects of Poe's tortured life are covered, beginning and ending with the mystery of his last few days. (Illustrations were listed but not seen in my advance copy.)

Herron, Don. *The Dashiell Hammett Tour: Thirtieth Anniversary Guidebook*. Preface by Jo Hammett. Introduction by Charles Willeford. Maps by Mike Humbert. San Francisco: Vince Emery, 2009. 214pp. Illus., bibl., index. \$19.95

Reviewing a 1982 printing of this guide (WAM2 #257), I found the walk through Sam Spade's San Francisco "a splendidly worked-out tour, with numerous street maps showing the locations and a mix of historical

and contemporary photos of the various sites." It is still that but considerably expanded, adding an index, a ten-page afterword of tour guide's Herron's reminiscences, plus impressions of the tour by Hammett's daughter and the late Charles Willeford, whose introduction was first published in the *Miami Herald* in 1985. The fine annotated bibliography has been considerably updated and augmented. This is a must addition to the Hammett shelf. (The only error I noted in that earlier edition, the spelling of Nathanael West's first name, has been corrected.)

Macdonald, Kate. *John Buchan: A Companion to the Mystery Fiction*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009. x, 219pp. Illus., bibl., index. \$39.95

The subtitle is misleadingly modest about the scope of this superb scholarly volume, as is the fine 14-page bibliographic essay that has been diffidently advanced as a mere preface. Though the emphasis is on the Richard Hannay novels and other thrillers, the whole of Buchan's life and work is touched upon. Alphabetical entries identify titles, characters, themes, and other references in copious detail. The nine-page article on *The Thirty-Nine Steps* discusses not only the 1915 novel, but Alfred Hitchcock's classic 1935 film, and its two successors. The author finds the 1978 version superior because truer to Buchan's original. (Small error: in the Hitchcock version, a helicopter, not an airplane, hunted Hannay in Scotland.) Macdonald defends Buchan against charges of anti-Semitism,