



Black Dahlia Avenger: A Genius for Murder

Steve Hodel, James Ellroy (Foreword by)

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In 1947, California's infamous Black Dahlia murder inspired the largest manhunt in Los Angeles history. Despite an unprecedented allocation of money and manpower, police investigators failed to identify the psychopath responsible for the sadistic murder and mutilation of beautiful twenty-two-year-old Elizabeth Short. Decades later, former LAPD homicide detective-turned-private investigator Steve Hodel launched his own investigation into the grisly unsolved crime—and it led him to a shockingly unexpected perpetrator: Hodel's own father.

A spellbinding tour de force of true-crime writing, this newly revised edition includes never-before-published forensic evidence, photos, and previously unreleased documents, definitively closing the case that has often been called "the most notorious unsolved murder of the twentieth century."

Black Dahlia Avenger: A Genius for Murder Details

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From Reader Review Black Dahlia Avenger: A Genius for Murder for online ebook

Katherine Addison says

Steven Hodel sets out to prove a number of things in this book:

1. His father, Dr. George Hill Hodel, was an abusive, controlling, sadistic, egotistical whack-job, with a thing for incest, pedophilia, and Asian girls, who was criminally involved in an abortion ring, every illegal depravity you can think of, and also tax evasion.
2. His father, with his friend and henchman Fred Sexton, killed Elizabeth Short.
3. There was a serial killer preying on women in Los Angeles in the 1940s.
4. This serial killer murdered Elizabeth Short.
5. THEREFORE, George Hill Hodel and Fred Sexton, together and separately, were this serial killer, and continued their "work" on into the '50s and even the '60s.
6. The person who killed Elizabeth Short, aside from being George Hill Hodel, serial killer and tax evader, was the person who sent *all* communications to either police or press about any of these killings and also left the words written in lipstick on Jeanne French's dead body.

Okay. So.

Hodel actually convinces me of (1) and (3) and I'll put an option on (2) even if I don't entirely buy it. (4) I have serious doubts about. (5) and (6) I'm not touching with a ten foot pole.

The basic problem with Hodel is that all of his logic looks like this:

1. George Hill Hodel was a sadistic whack job.
2. The serial killer was a sadistic whack job.
3. Therefore, George Hill Hodel was the serial killer.

Or:

1. (a.) The newspaper editor who talked once on the phone to a man who claimed to be the Black Dahlia Avenger described his voice as "soft" and "sly," the voice of an "egomaniac" (271)
(b.) This man's claim was true.
2. (a.) Many witnesses across the various crimes described the suspect they saw with the victim as having a "suave" and "cultured" voice. (271)
(b.) Therefore, the serial killer had a "suave" and "cultured" voice.
3. George Hill Hodel had a suave, cultured, and distinctively arresting voice.
4. THEREFORE, the man on the phone, the Black Dahlia Avenger (i.e., the murderer of Elizabeth Short), the serial killer, and George Hill Hodel are all the same man. (Because no other man in Hollywood could possibly have a suave and cultured voice.)

Hodel consistently assumes that things that are *probably* (or even only *possibly*) true ARE true. He consistently proceeds as if stating something to be true makes it true. Evidence for his premises is taken as evidence for his conclusion. (E.g., further evidence that Fred Sexton was a child molester is taken as further evidence that he was a serial killer). Anything that that does not *disprove* his thesis is proof of its truth. And he has the special conspiracy theorist's version of the *argumentum ex silencio*: the absence of evidence is proof that someone destroyed the evidence and THEREFORE is proof that his thesis is true. He takes an all-or-nothing approach to witness and victim testimony that I find singularly unhelpful, my prime example being his sister Tamar, who at 14 was the victim of statutory rape, incest, and abortion (like I said, I totally buy that George Hill Hodel was an abusive whack-job) and who *also* got caught up in the DA's panting eagerness to pin *something* on Dr. Hodel. It's clear from what Hodel says that Tamar was being bullied into testifying, and probably being coached on what to say, so that while I believe her initial claim, that she ran away from home because her father forced her to have an abortion after himself impregnating her, I just can't exclude the possibility that the DA's men were tampering with the witness for her subsequent testimony. This is not to say that Tamar was a pathological liar--the (successful) defense position--just that she was 14, in a cataclysmically horrible place (being the star witness in your father's trial for incest is not ANYBODY's idea of a good time), and being leaned on pretty hard by the DA. Without corroboration (real corroboration, not Hodel's version), I don't feel comfortable believing 100% of what she said. But for Hodel you either believe her entirely (prosecution) or disbelieve her entirely (defense). He doesn't allow for any middle ground.

And then there's the part where he simply assumes that something he has not proven is true, and proceeds with his argument as if its truth were incontrovertible. For example. On p 325, discussing another of the possible victims, Jean Spangler, Hodel says, "Spangler, while working on a movie set at Columbia Pictures with actor Robert Cummings, told Cummings that she 'had a happy new romance' and was having the time of her life. She did not tell Cummings her new boyfriend's name." And then, six pages later, "Or perhaps things are exactly as they appear on the surface, and Jean Spangler, as she represented to Robert Cummings, did meet Father only a few days before her kidnap-murder" (331). But that's *not* how things appear on the surface, since p. 325 tells us explicitly that Spangler did not tell Cummings her new boyfriend's name. Hodel, having suggested the *possibility* that Spangler was killed by George Hill Hodel, is now simply forging ahead as if it were true and had been proven conclusively to be true.

After a couple of these maneuvers, it became increasingly impossible for me to trust Hodel or to believe anything he told me.

And it's a pity, because two of his theses I think are true and worth pursuing in different ways. (1) That George Hill Hodel was a criminally abusive parent and husband, as well as being up to his eyeballs in the corruption of 1940s Los Angeles. (2) That there was a serial killer active in 1940s Los Angeles and at least some of the horrifying slew of unsolved rape/murders can be laid at that unknown man's door. (1) is the memoir Hodel (pretty clearly) needed to write to come to terms with his relationship with his father, with his siblings, and with his mother. (2) would have made a fascinating piece of true crime writing, even if it never came to any definitive conclusions. (Notice that neither of these books is about the murder of Elizabeth Short.) Or, if he really wanted to try to pursue this cat's cradle of intertwined theses, he needed to slow down, separate them out--the man who killed Elizabeth Short, the man (or men) who preyed on Los Angeles in the '40s, and the man who claimed to be the Black Dahlia Avenger have to be *proven* to be the same man, never mind the idea that one or more of them was George Hill Hodel--and distinguish much *MUCH* more carefully between things he could prove and things he couldn't.

(I see from his bibliography that he has gone on to claim his father was also the Zodiac killer. That may tell you everything you need to know.)

Alicia says

Steve Hodel has entirely convinced himself of two things: his father's guilt in a number of murders, the most prominent being that of the infamous Black Dahlia; and the LAPD's complicit cover-up of him being considered as a suspect, which continues to this day, according to his book. I can appreciate the zeal with which he presents his case, both as a former investigator and as the offspring of an "evil" man, but the circularity and uncertainty of the evidence he uses to argue his point frustrate me. Perhaps if he had access to the physical evidence - which he continually refers to as things that would *potentially* verify his conclusions - I'd have taken his assumptions for more than face value. As it stands, the book is a very long assessment of evidence that ultimately proves nothing; his proximity to his suspect notwithstanding, this is simply a very well done work of historically-based fiction that can never be proven, much like James Ellroy's *The Black Dahlia*.

Licha says

Who is not fascinated by the story of the Black Dahlia? As old as this story is, it still captures my interest. So here's this guy who worked for LAPD, who claims that his dad killed the Black Dahlia. Great hook. I will give it to the author that this was an interesting book to read. He has a lot of detail in the book that will send you on a quest to search for more answers about other people mentioned in the book. There is a lot of great pictures included in the book as well. As for how valid Hodel's claims are that his father was the killer, I have my doubts. This all stemmed from a picture found in his father's belongings after his father died. I turned that picture at all kinds of angles and I never saw any resemblance to Elizabeth Short. Why, of all people, Hodel decided it looked like the Black Dahlia, I don't know. There's lots of interesting tidbits and history, and because this is one of those mysteries that will probably never be solved, there's a little part of you that wishes that Hodel had finally broken the case.

J.M. says

It takes a lot of courage to follow the clues and admit to the world that, based upon your investigations, one of the most notorious crimes of the 20th Century was committed by your own father. It must take even more courage to admit this after having served as a police officer in the very jurisdiction where the crime took place fifty years earlier.

This is a fascinating book that takes an investigative approach to the Black Dahlia slaying. What appealed to me most was the way the author returned to the original media of the time and didn't rely on all that's been written since on the case, showing in one book for the first time exactly what was happening in Los Angeles when the crime occurred.

He makes a very compelling case against his father, whose death inadvertently triggered the investigation when personal photos of Elizabeth Short, a.k.a. The Black Dahlia, were found among his father's belongings.

Very interesting. Would appeal to true crime enthusiasts.

Jeff says

As a huge true-crime fan, this book was a great disappointment to me. First, the crime-scene photos in the book are very cheaply printed and not glossy, so the quality is poor. Second, the author starts with a very contentious proposition; that photos found in his father's album are of the Black Dahlia. From this "fact", the author constructs a "house of cards" plot, every fact dependent on the previous one. The problem is, that the initial "fact" is just speculation, and everything offered after that is anything but evidence, a biased and filtered view of grainy images, half-remembered conversations and some very questionable handwriting analysis. It is irritating to read, as it is all supposition and theory, masquerading as fact, and the author leans heavily on his previous career as an LAPD Homicide Detective to add credibility to a story that has holes in it large enough to fly a blimp through. I hope he had more evidence in some of his murder convictions than he found in writing this book! Do yourself a favour and save your money, unless you're running short of toilet paper.

Niki says

I've read every single book on the market about the Black Dahlia Murder to date and Steve Hodel's theory is the only theory that makes any sense. I think most people who are skeptical haven't done the amount of research that I have done and I'll admit, if you have only read one book on the subject, it's quite easy to be skeptical. But if you're really and truly interested in the Black Dahlia Murder, go out and read every other book out there about it. Then re-read Steve's book(s). For me, Steve has solved this case. Bravo, Steve!

Kelsey Stewart says

I'm not much of a crime gal, but this one spoke to me on many levels. First of all, I admit that the death of the Black Dahlia has its own gratuitous appeal. The method, the brutality, the sinister nature, and of course the unending mystery. It's so sick you want to know more. And yet, I'm such a wuss that I could only read this book during daylight hours.

Second of all, when the author's whole deal is that he thinks his own father killed her - you can't help but want to hear what this guy has to say. And he puts together a pretty solid case. Hodel's investigation is both an objective pursuit of justice, and the self-reflexive voice of a son trying to understand the man who was his father.

And lastly, the book enticed me the way a haunted walking tour appeals to a tourist. Living in the city of Los Angeles, where all of Hodel's crime scenes take place, made me feel an accessibility and familiarity I don't think I would've experienced had the murder taken place in some other city.

I did get disinterested in certain chapters, and some of his pieces of evidence felt like a bit of a stretch to me. But all in all, it was worth my little foray into the true crime genre.

Shy Di says

this book is pretty gruesome. I read it a few years back and it was a bit of an eye opener for me, a bit of a rude awaking if you will. Corruption of the government, the circle of people who paid the the law to protect them against, rape, abortions (which weren't legal then), murders, etc...

It's interesting because this book is published as a fiction, yet this man, the aurther goes the lengths to name his father as the murderer. Provides facts and dates of his attempt to bring Elizabeth Short's name to justice. It's a fascinating story! the press, one of the first to arrive and trample all over the crime scene.

Jackie says

Until this book was recommended by a friend, I purposefully avoided knowing much about this crime because I knew (a) that it would never be solved, and (b) that I would start obsessing about solving it (e.g., JonBenet Ramsey). I realized that I should have followed my gut when at 1 a.m. last night I found myself googling "Black Dahlia" and perusing the black dahlia foia documents on the Net. The book is much better than I expected -- I couldn't put it down -- but it really does raise more questions than answers.

Adam says

Former LAPD detective Steve Hodel is convinced that his late father, Dr. George Hodel, killed the Black Dahlia.

After reading his book, I am not.

Many strong cases are built on a preponderance of circumstantial evidence. The problem with this book is that most of the "evidence" Hodel presents isn't circumstantial. It's supposition and conjecture.

Circumstantial evidence is when an item belonging to a suspect is found at a crime scene, or an eyewitness can place a suspect in the vicinity of a crime scene around the time the crime took place.

In "Black Dahlia Avenger," Hodel presents such "evidence" as the fact that a black military-style watch was found at the crime scene (during a second canvassing of the site, much later than the body was first discovered). There's a picture of his father from before the murder wearing a black military-style watch, and then a picture from a few years after the murder where he's wearing a different watch.

He also isn't even able to really place his father in L.A. at the time of the murder, but uses "evidence" like the fact that his father had art objects shipped to L.A. from China, where he was living in late 1946, as evidence that his father's return to L.A. was imminent. But it's equally possible that he had things shipped to his home in L.A. and DIDN'T return home until many months later.

Hodel uses a lot of phrases like "I strongly believe," which might convince people who are unable to think critically, but it doesn't change the fact that they're merely his opinions.

Hodel writes extremely well, and the parts of this book that aren't about his theories are actually fascinating.

I knew almost nothing about the Black Dahlia murder before this book, and learned a lot about the facts surrounding the case.

But when he gets into presenting his case, it's a difficult book to get through, mostly because his reasoning is so faulty and preposterous.

He first got an inkling that his father might have killed Elizabeth Short (the Black Dahlia) after finding pictures of Short in his father's personal photo album after his father's death. The problem with these pictures (which are reproduced several times in this book) is that they look absolutely nothing like Elizabeth Short. He claims that he doesn't want to get into a "pissing contest" with people who doubt that they're really pictures of her, and that he has "no doubt" that it is she. He also claims that people who don't think it's she are Dahlia theorists with their own theory to peddle.

I'm not one of those people, and the woman in the photographs looks nothing like Elizabeth Short. They both are young white women with black hair, but that's it.

He also links his father to a number of murders of other women in L.A. in the '40s (as well as a presumed accomplice, Fred Sexton), even though the M.O. in those cases doesn't seem to match the Black Dahlia in any way. There was a handsome, well-dressed, dark-haired man about 5'11" who was linked to these women, which matches his father's description, but it's not exactly a strange or unique description, is it?

Of course, none of this means that Dr. George Hodel didn't kill the Black Dahlia, but the same could be said of many people. In fairness, the picture Steve Hodel paints of his father is a grim one. He doesn't sound like a very good or decent person, but after reading this book, I wasn't convinced by any of Hodel's suppositions or theories about his father's secret career as a murderer.

Also, Hodel continually falls back on the last resort of all conspiracy theorists. Namely, that he's not able to produce definitive evidence because it's being hidden from him. He accuses the LAPD of a massive cover-up, and of protecting Dr. George Hodel and either hiding or having destroyed critical evidence.

He also wrote a follow-up book to this one in which he accuses his father of being the Zodiac killer.

Whatever.

Steve Duffy says

Oh dear. What to say? Well, Steve Hodel is a man on a mission; this mission being, so far as can be ascertained, to link his father to every series of unsolved murders you can shake a stick at. Since Dr George Hodel was in fact a DA's office suspect in the original investigation of the Black Dahlia murder case, he's on reasonably safe ground here, in "Black Dahlia Avenger", the first of his two books. He amasses a range of more or less significant circumstantial evidence, some admittedly suggestive, some barely even coincidental. He goes badly astray with some attempts at "Photoshop investigation" which involve blowing up poor-resolution scans of 50-year-old crime scene photos and passing off the fuzzy, blurry results as unarguable proof. He throws in some - to these untrained eyes - less than conclusive handwriting analyses, none of which was developed from the actual documents in the Dahlia case (thus rendering them speculative at best, I'd have thought, and probably unusable as evidence in a court of law). None of it carries any real probative force as evidence. In the matter of the Dahlia, then, it's case not proven.

In the follow-up volume, "Most Evil", Hodel loses it completely. He goes off at a series of increasingly barmy tangents, attempting to link his dad to the Lipstick Slayer killings in Chicago, the so-called Jigsaw slaying in the Philippines, and - why not? - the Zodiac murders in the Bay area. The fact that Dr George was resident in the Far East during the timespan of Zodiac's activities might be thought by some to prove a bit of a stumbling block; also, the unvarying identification by survivor eyewitnesses of a younger, stockier man than Hodel's dad. No matter: Dr H, we're assured with no corroborative evidence whatsoever, flew in, wreaked his bloody wrath on the Bay communities and jetted, cackling, back to Manila. In the place of evidence, we have more handwriting analysis, which (again, to these eyes at least) seems even more wayward than the previous Dahlia work-ups, together with - you'll have to believe me on this one - ley lines.

"Most Evil" is a shoddy, piffling cash-in, which leaves a nasty exploitative taste in the mouth. It does Hodel's reputation no favours whatsoever, and actually serves to cast doubt on any good points he may have made in his previous volume. It deserves no stars. I'm giving "Black Dahlia Avenger" two; not because I'm convinced by Hodel's thesis - I'm not - but because I'm intrigued by the portrait he paints of his father. George Hodel was a for-real enigma: an educated man, a concert pianist turned abortionist, moving in a dizzy variety of social circles in which he went from hobnobbing with Man Ray and John Huston to being tried for, and dubiously acquitted of, incest with his daughter. It's Hollywood Noir come alive - you can see what attracted James Ellroy to the case. Ellroy, by the way, provides a customarily gushing Intro to the book, in which all his well-demonstrated cop worship tendencies come to the fore. I note, however, that he no longer likes to be asked about the Dahlia, and specifically about Hodel's book. Perhaps he read the sequel, and realised he'd backed a wrong 'un.

Kerry Casey says

Well, well, well. I've got to say, I tend to agree that the BD case is probably solved! Everything displayed here makes a lot of sense. What a warped and twisted world and power hungry, off, man George Hodel was. Quite disgusting, though he was certainly a depravity of his era.

I dont believe the woman in the photo to be Elizabeth, but none the less, it lead the author (whose father WAS George Hodel) on the right path to really investigating this notorious crime.

I found some of the 'links' a little far fetched (or are they?) such as the similarities between works of art and the killers choice of murder and displaying the body. However, if you're adept to the outer reach, it will prob work for you.

I found the parts about the life Hodel had very disturbing, (not to do with Elizabeth) such as him having a relationship that was kept quite with the woman who was to become the son and author, Steve Hodel's wife. (ew. creepy especially that Steve had married her never knowing she and his father were intense lovers prior) and the incest and parties- just yuck, you can't believe some people have these lives, the whole book does read like a movie!

I would like to get the 2nd part and read even more things - paper copies of letters, articles and so forth, 'facts' that cannot apparently be disputed, to 'solidify' that 100% George Hodel, and no one else, was the killer.

Sucks that with such an intense and full investigation, no one will ever be brought to justice as Hodel is now dead.

A note on the character of Smart, not that it matters as her murder is awful, but she really doesn't come off as

that much of a genuine, nice, good person, which i found a bit 'sucky' lol.

HODEL PSYCH 1: *Revered as special/gifted/prodigy/genius from young. (constant reaffirmation from early childhood built into psyche.) This backed by his ***High IQ (186)** (studied in Paris at 5, became prodigy pianist, newspapers reported on his child genius. He graduated H.S @14 & by 28 was an MD) ***DETERMINED Personality and Ability to get what he wants.** 1) Quickly got promoted to reporting homicide in LA due to his colourful pieces on clubs etc. 2) at 16 **published his own magazine named Fantasia (lasted 2 issues) Where he wanted to PORTRAY the BIZZAR BEAUTY of the arts & the strange which could be found he says in BROTHELS, JAILS AND IN SIN.** 3) Promoted to running VD unit. 4) Then built own med practice 5) although his desire to join the military to serve was rejected due to a heart condition, he ended up being sent to China anyhow through Med and had the say on WHO LIVES AND WHO DIES in a way through who got treated..= **had a taste of being in charge of who lived/who died = power**

*He had been a **REPORTER for HOMICIDE** = 1) Able to engage himself around violence and the taboo/darker side of life's 'beauty' while still be praised for his dedication and brilliance in writing colourful pieces (Thus feeding his fantasies such as his magazine tended to AND reaffirming his brilliance.

LINKING HIM:

He had a thorough knowledge of LA, HOLLYWOOD & the BILTMORE HOTEL (which would be **the last place Elizabeth Short TBD was seen alive**) due to his driving a cab for a long time from approx 17-20. **He was a SURGEON** (Dahlia body was cleanly cut in 2 with vertebrates perfectly dissected and body drained of blood, before it was placed and posed.)

STRANGE BEHAVIOURS as his passing approached.

*Note found after death TOLD WIFE DIRECTLY that 'As your last act of love for me (*Manipulation tactic) **You will destroy all my personal effects** (*why...what's to hide?)

SPECIFIC FUNERAL DIRECTIONS No funeral/no words said/no gathering/spread my ashes in the ocean (Most people hope they are remembered for something or as something. He lived an amazing life therefore why go out so quietly and secretly)

D.J. Adamson says

Below is the shocking revelation Steve Hodel's sister stated in court. More shocking still, retired LAPD, Steve Hodel investigates the Black Dahlia cold case, clue by clue, analysis by analysis, stringing together evidence how the murder links to his family history. The evidence is circumstantial, since most involved are dead, but Hodel hits the mark at many levels.

A fascinating case study. A fascinating read.

Thorough investigative work, Hodel is relentless in his pursuit for the truth.

Hodel's bravery to look at his family's criminal history is admirable; the acceptance that yes, his father may have been the Dahlia killer shows his law enforcement professionalism remains at seeking the truth no matter the cost.

Stellar read if you are a true crime reader.

"My father is the murderer of the Black Dahlia. My father is going to kill me and all the rest of the members of this household because he has a lust for blood. He is insane?"

--Le Coeur de l'Artiste

Trin says

OOF. This starts out compelling -- Hodel's investigation into his father's past, and gradual (or was it?) realization that the man was an absolute monster, and maybe famous murderer, is well done, and (for the most part) convincingly presented. But the longer this book goes on -- and it goes on way, way, way too long -- the further Hodel goes off the rails. Tiny scraps of possible evidence are produced as DEFINITIVE PROOF!!!! The more assured Hodel becomes of his case -- that his father, Dr. George Hodel, murdered Elizabeth Short, "The Black Dahlia," and likely several other women -- the less convincing it is to the reader.

The author says a lot of things like, "AND SO WE HAVE CONCLUSIVELY PROVEN [thing not in any way conclusively proven]." The reader calls bullshit.

Whereas, if he'd said, "I think the evidence points toward this being probably true because of x, y, and z, although I cannot prove it definitively," the reader is much more like to go, "Yeah, sounds legit! Made a good case there, bud!"

Look. I think George Hodel *has* been definitively shown to have been an evil man, a serial abuser without doubt and almost certainly a rapist. And I think, even if only subconsciously, his son knew this long before he found the photos in his father's album that he claims he recognized as Elizabeth Short and which spurred this investigation into motion. (One of these photos has since been conclusively proved not to be her, and the other is, uh...a loose match at best, in my opinion.) I think he always knew that his dad was a giant piece of shit. And that's gotta be rough. But instead of going to therapy, he chose to write this 700-page obsessive spiral (and several more volumes besides!).

The question is, why did I read it???

Well...because honestly, I think Steve Hodel is likely right, in his most basic premise: George Hodel murdered Elizabeth Short. But oh boy, this is not the best way to prove it.

Thor Garcia says

Hollywood "acting hopeful" Elizabeth Short's body was cut in half and left in a vacant lot in what became famous as the Black Dahlia murder (still officially unsolved). In a style that was highly popular but is no longer all the rage among killers, Short's murderer taunted police with notes assembled from letters and words cut from newspapers and magazines. This was in the astounding year of 1947, when the Cold War formally started, the CIA and IMF were established, and whatever happened at Roswell occurred (crash of alien spaceship). The first public display of police crime scene photos of Elizabeth Short's body, showing it cleanly, or "surgically," bisected at the waist were published in 1984, in the scandal-rehashing book "Hollywood Babylon II" by Kenneth Anger, the Satanist goofball, masturbator for Alfred Kinsey's "studies," and black-magic bewitcher of Led Zeppelin.

In 2003, former LAPD officer Steve Hodel published "Black Dahlia Avenger: A Genius for Murder." It made a strong case that his father, Dr. George Hill Hodel, knew Elizabeth Short and was likely one of the men involved in the Black Dahlia murder. My paperback copy has a foreword by Black Dahlia enthusiast and promoter James Ellroy, who strongly backs Steve Hodel's conclusions. Later, however, when questions were raised about Steve Hodel's research and whether he had truly "solved the case," Ellroy seemed to publicly disown Hodel. Ellroy now says he no longer discusses the Black Dahlia at all because "we are never going to know" who killed Short and he's tired of talking about it.

George Hodel, an arts enthusiast and V.D. and abortion doctor who had connections to the LAPD, was detained in 1949 on charges of sexual abuse of his 14-year-old daughter, Tamar. Tamar had run away from home and the only reason the case went to court was because Tamar was detained by L.A. juvenile authorities, who logged her allegations into the official record—as opposed to the regular L.A. police, who probably would have done no such thing to impugn the reputation of their V.D.-scrape doctor friend, Dr. George Hodel.

An October 7, 1949, article in the Los Angeles Times said Tamar Hodel implicated George and 19 other people, including 13 boys, some of them her fellow students at Hollywood High School, in her abuse. The report said detectives seized "many questionable photographs and pornographic art objects" from the Hodel home. George Hodel was quoted in the article as saying he was involved in "delving into the mystery of love and the universe." Hodel said the sexual abuse acts he was accused of were "unclear, like a dream . . . I can't figure out whether someone is hypnotizing me or I am hypnotizing someone."

Dr. George H. Hodel was acquitted after Tamar, under pressure from defense attorneys, reportedly denied she had told a guest at the Hodel house that her father was the Black Dahlia killer and that she feared for her life because George Hodel was "insane." Defense lawyers also used witnesses to create doubt about other aspects of the girl's recollections.

Tamar Hodel, strangely enough, would later become a friend of Michelle Phillips, singer of Mamas and Papas fame. In 1967, during a visit to San Francisco, Tamar reportedly arranged a meeting between George Hodel and Michelle Phillips at a hotel. In 2009, actress Mackenzie Phillips, daughter of U.S. military scion and Mamas and Papas honcho John Phillips (and the stepdaughter of Michelle Phillips), would allege that John Phillips raped her and that father and daughter carried out a 10-year incestuous affair (beginning when she was 19). Mackenzie Phillips claimed she first used cocaine when she was 11 years old and that her father also injected her with cocaine when she was a young girl.

The "coincidences" get even more strangely odd and coincidental the further you swirl down this cesspool of a rabbit hole. Steve Hodel's mother's first husband, for example, was legendary film director and actor John Huston, who was also said to be a close friend of George H. Hodel. Huston reportedly took part in orgies and other events at the Hodel home as George Hodel went increasingly avant-garde in his explorations of "love and the universe." My eyes really bugged out when I remembered that crusty ol' John Huston starred in the Roman Polanski-directed "Chinatown"—which, lest we forget, features themes of incest, murder, deception and general sordidness. The neo-noir from 1974 also stars Jack Nicholson as private investigator "Jake Gittes" and Faye Dunaway as "Evelyn Cross Mulwray," who was raped and impregnated by her greedy and corrupt father, "Noah Cross," played by Huston.

Steve Hodel claims the surrealist artist Man Ray was another of George H. Hodel's famous friends who visited the Hodel home. Steve Hodel and other researchers have noted that the wounds and placement of Elizabeth Short's dead body resemble Man Ray's (semi-famous) photograph of a nude female torso, *The Minotaur*, from 1936. They suggest that the Black Dahlia killer, or killers, purposely tried to mimic, or

“recreate,” Man Ray’s work using Elizabeth Short’s corpse as a prop.

Super-intense Black Dahlia enthusiasts (and there are many) say Steve Hodel’s conclusions are pure hogwash and that he hasn’t “proven” much of anything except his father was a leading L.A. sleazeball of the 1940s. As an example of Steve’s bad detective work, they cite his promotion of two photos found among his father’s possessions that Steve claims are pictures of Elizabeth Short (they’re obviously not pictures of Short—and this was a pretty big blunder by Steve Hodel. One wonders how a major publisher, HarperCollins in this case, lets this through—doesn’t anybody look at the book beforehand?).

The critics say Steve Hodel is a publicity hog who’ll accuse his father of almost anything to drum up book sales. Indeed, Steve Hodel has also claimed his father probably committed the “Red Lipstick Murder” of Jeanne French in Los Angeles in February 1947, and the 1946 “Lipstick Killer” decapitation murder of a six-year-old girl in Chicago. Far less plausibly, and in fact ridiculously, Steve Hodel claimed his father was also the “Zodiac Killer” who allegedly terrorized Northern California in the late 1960s and early 1970s (another “officially unsolved” case). Steve Hodel published “Most Evil: Avenger, Zodiac and the Further Murders of Dr. George Hill Hodel” in 2009. George Hodel died in 1999.
