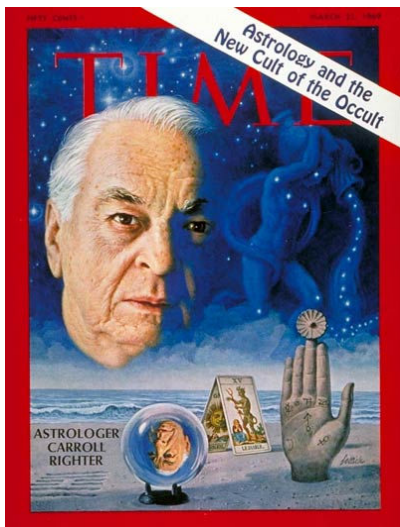


## **FAQ 52** (August 29, 2007)

### **52.1**

**Q: Was your ex-wife, KIYO, a professional astrologer, or did she just dabble in it?**

To my knowledge, Kiyo didn't "dabble" in anything. For those of you who follow astrology, I need only say, "she had six planets in Leo." Kiyo was an "accredited astrologer" and graduated from a local, "College of Astrology." Kiyo taught astrology from our home in Laurel Canyon, and was quite well known and respected for her in-depth knowledge of the subject. In a 1963 "reading" of Ronald Reagan's birth chart she predicted to her class members that, "Reagan would be elected governor of California and then go on to be elected President of the United States." Whether it was a lucky guess or her skill in the arcane arts, she was most certainly well ahead of the CW. (Reagan was elected Governor of California in 1966, and President in 1980.)



TIME, MARCH 21, 1969

**(SKH- I am informed Kiyo's unidentified "client" seen above in this feature article for *TIME MAGAZINE* is a fellow Scorpio by the name of NEIL YOUNG, who after three years, had just separated from Buffalo Springfield. The groups "Retrospective" was released a month earlier would go platinum, surpassing sales of one million.)**

## TIME MAGAZINE

Friday, Mar. 21, 1969

# Astrology: Fad and Phenomenon

...

The young, too, are exploiting the boom, although less cynically. A California rock group called The Fool has recorded several zodiacal songs—not because they believe only in astrology, but because they feel generally tuned in to the entire occult world (the Fool is the card in the fortunetelling Tarot deck that stands for Man). "This is a very brilliant generation," says Kiyo, a young half-Japanese astrologer who works mostly among pop groups and folk singers. "They're interested in astrology because they've found the material things failing them, and they're trying to find their souls." In Manhattan, one of the brightest young astrologers is 28-year-old Barbara Birdfeather, who is writing a column for Eye magazine and draws private clients from the under-30 set.

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52.2

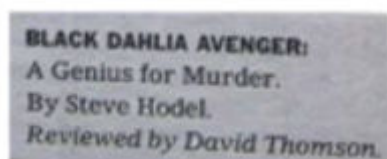
**Q: Do you have a favorite book review of BDA?**

I do. Interestingly it was also the FIRST review published.

The review is from the *New York Times Book Review*, May 18, 2003, and was written by best selling author and respected film critic, David Thomson.

Here are my two favorite excerpts from his review along with the full review as it originally appeared in the NYT:

### EXCERPTS



...

"As for George Hodel, the best thing I can say for him is that someone like Kevin Spacey should buy the film rights to this book quickly. He was tall, dark and handsome in a rather mournful way, he was a precocious child, a first class doctor, a dabbler in art, a man of the world, and a disdainful connoisseur of woman. That he ever escaped being nailed as the Black Dahlia killer (leave the other killings aside) is a measure of that L.A.P.D. we have come to know from the Ellroy thrillers. "

...

"George Hodel I think is fit company for some of noir's most civilized villains—like Waldo Lydecker in "Laura," Harry Lime in "The Third Man" or even Noah Cross in "Chinatown," the man who (thanks to the screenwriter, Robert Towne) warned us, "Most people never have to face the fact that at the right time and right place, they're capable of anything." And what had Cross done? Raped his daughter and his city and lived into old age."

David Thomson  
New York Times  
May 18, 2003

## FULL REVIEW NYT

## L.A. Confidential

A killer stalked 1940's Los Angeles, and for this book's author he came all too close to home.

**BLACK DAHLIA AVENGER**

A Genius for Murder.

By Steve Hodel.

Illustrated. 481 pp. New York: Arcade Publishing. \$27.95.

By David Thomson

ONE day in Bellingham, Wash., in 1999, at 1 o'clock in the morning, Steve Hodel's phone rings. At that hour, it has to be bad news. His father, Dr. George Hodel, has died in San Francisco. This is hardly surprising: the doctor is 91, the son 57. But for decades the doctor has lived in Asia and the two have been estranged. Over the years, he has had four marriages, and ten children. But recently Steve and his father have started talking. Is that part of cruelty's trap?

The doctor's ashes are scattered under the Golden Gate Bridge. He has left orders that there be no funeral. But there is a small, palm-size photograph album, and the doctor's last wife thinks Steve should have it. There are pictures inside: Steve as a little boy, on his father's knee, when they lived in Los Angeles; Steve's mother; the doctor's father. This is where we need tingling music. This is where the horror begins. For Steve turns the small page and sees two pictures of a young Eurasian woman. It is Steve's wife (divorced now), Kiyo — yet it is Kiyo younger than Steve ever saw her. It can only be a Kiyo whom his own father had known, had possessed. Steve remembers his father's pale face when he once met his daughter-in-law.

A few pages farther on there are two pictures of another young woman: Caucasian, with black hair. In both pictures her eyes are cast down. In one, she has two white flowers in her dark hair. In the other, she could be naked. Or asleep. She might be dead. Steve Hodel is stirred by this face. But he can't remember why. Until he realizes, hours later, that the flowers are dahlias. And the woman could be... Elizabeth Short.

You see, Steve Hodel is not long retired from nearly 24 years' service with the Los Angeles Police Department, an organization for which Elizabeth Short is a ghost who cannot rest. On the morning of Jan. 15, 1947, passers-by saw gaping white flesh on a vacant lot at 39th and Norton in Los Angeles. The young female body was cut in half, at the waist. The arms were raised above the head in a curious, arty pose. The mouth was extended in a grotesque gash; a hysterectomy had been performed. But death had been caused by blows to the head. The corpse was Elizabeth Short, from the Boston area, who had been a few years in California in the attempt to get herself into classier pictures than morgue shots. It turned out that sailors

David Thomson's books include "The New Biographical Dictionary of Film" and "Rosebud: The Story of Orson Welles."

in Long Beach had called her the Black Dahlia. Until this book, that case had never been solved.

And even that closure, I suppose, is something the L.A.P.D. must rule on — and it may not be entirely relieved to have the case over. Steve Hodel speaks of himself as a good solid cop, and that's the way he writes. Don't pick up this book for the jazzy rage of James Ellroy or the melancholy atmospherics of Raymond Chandler. At the same time, you'll be too busy clinging to the narrative to complain about the prose. It's only at the end of the book, as you realize how thoroughly Steve Hodel has identified his father as the killer of the Black Dahlia — and the inspiration for an alphabet of other murders, including the mother Ellroy lost at the age of 10 — that you realize how detached he is from the creepy blood ties of tracking down his own father. Is that a lack of skill — or a protective numbness? Does he guess that the photograph album may have been meant to infect a steadfast son?

As for George Hodel, the best thing I can say for him is that someone like Kevin Spacey should buy the film rights to this book quickly. He was tall, dark and handsome in a rather mournful way; he was a precocious child, a first-class doctor, a dabbler in art, a man of the world; and a disdainful connoisseur of women. That he ever escaped being



LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT SPECIAL BULLETIN FROM "BLACK DAHLIA AVENGER"

Elizabeth Short, a.k.a. the Black Dahlia.

nailed as the Black Dahlia killer (leave the other killings aside) is a measure of that L.A.P.D. we have come to know from the Ellroy thrillers.

IF only Steve had been young enough to handle the case himself. As it is, he uncovers the sordid and seemingly secure evidence against his father for running orgies in the grand Lloyd Wright (son of Frank) house on Franklin Avenue, especially ones that involved the rape upon rape of Steve's older half sister, Tamar. George got away with that because a shameless lawyer created the idea of "Tamar the liar," and because the L.A.P.D. wasn't as judiciously hostile to Dr. George as it might have been.

He was part of an abortionists' circle in Los Angeles, and he knew which cops you could lean on. So he never made it past the level of "prime suspect" in the Elizabeth Short case. But the sardonic doctor seems to have understood his hazardous liberty. He was a sophisticated, a man who mixed freely with Man Ray and John Huston; indeed, George's second wife, Steve's mother, Dorothy, had also been John Huston's first wife. Throw in Fred Sexton, who Steve Hodel is convinced was a regular accomplice (and the killer of Ellroy's mother), and you have a sinister gang. (It was

Sexton, a bit of a sculptor, who did the bird for Huston's film of "The Maltese Falcon.")

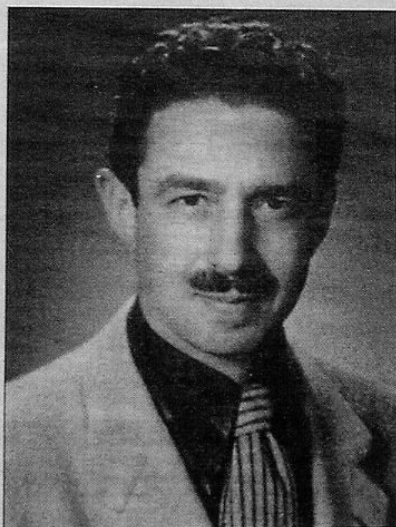
That doesn't mean that Man Ray or Huston was an accomplice, but neither does it exclude them from knowing damning stuff about the suave doctor and his hobby. And although Steve Hodel doesn't set himself up as a critic of film noir or a social historian of Los Angeles, still it's in this background and atmosphere that his book is most intriguing.

Ray and Huston were alike in their simultaneous adoration of women and the gloomy certainty that they couldn't be trusted. For Ray, the crucial experience had been his love affair with the beautiful Lee Miller, their joint development of the solarized photograph and his discovery that he could no more hold or own Miller than he could the light. It had left him strangely remote, a chilly observer of human vagary.

Huston had his own strains of cruelty and cynicism. He could do nearly anything he turned his hand to — it was inevitable that he became a hit in Hollywood. (He once said that the secret to direction was the sadism it required.) But he drank, he believed in very little except risk, and he was a victim of that boredom that so often fell upon talent in the mid-20th century. In the early 30's, driving drunk, he had killed a woman pedestrian. It took influence to hush the matter up without damaging his career.

They were not alone as brilliant men, naturally creative, yet hardly capable of believing in what they might do in the poisoned dawn of concentration camps and atom bombs. And George Hodel was their friend, their fellow partygoer, and someone eager to impress more famous men. As it turned out, murder was his art, especially the cut-up jobs on attractive young women, just the sort who hoped that Man Ray might photograph them, or John Huston give them a test. (In 1950, as it happens, one such woman had a striking cameo in Huston's "Asphalt Jungle"; her name was Marilyn Monroe.)

Crime was as rampant as musicals in Los Angeles in the postwar years — this is the age of Bugsy Siegel, the founding of Las Vegas, Mickey Cohen and gun battles on Sunset Boulevard loud enough to wake Norma Desmond herself. And it's the age of film noir, which is often assessed as the result of German Expressionism being crossed with American B pictures. But noir went deeper than that; it was also the mood of idle, affluent, talented guys *après* orgy mulling over dreams of *actes gratuits*, and worse. George Hodel, I think, is fit company for some of noir's most civilized villains — like Waldo Lydecker in "Laura," Harry Lime in "The Third Man" or even Noah Cross in "Chinatown," the man who (thanks to the screenwriter, Robert Towne) warned us, "Most people never have to face the fact that at the right time and right place, they're capable of anything." And what had Cross done? Raped his daughter, and his city, and lived into old age. □



FROM "BLACK DAHLIA AVENGER"

George Hodel, the author's father, circa 1952.