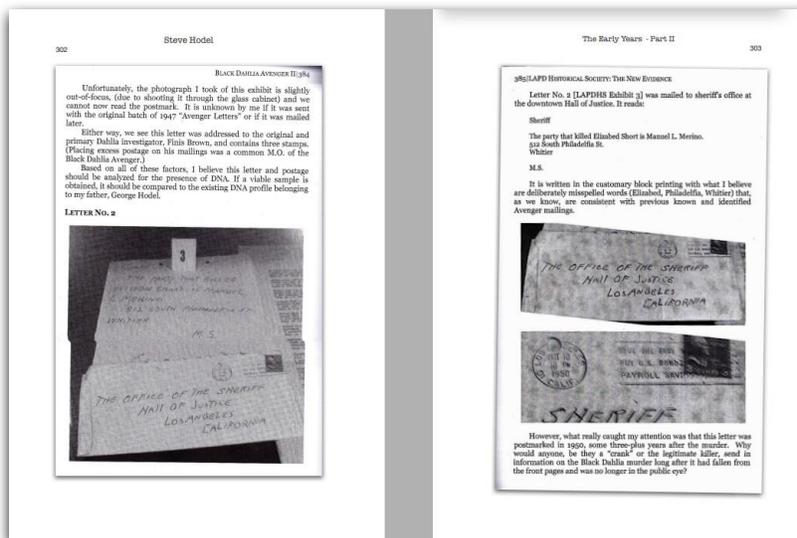
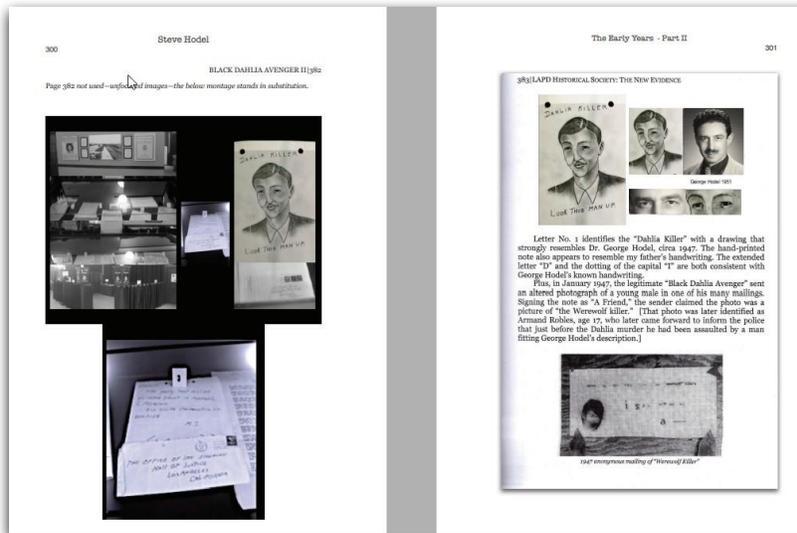


# THE REES KEY

Graphics by Robert J. Sadler

**Black Dahlia Avenger II**, the pages 382-385 were reproduced in **The Early Years - Part II**, pages 300-303 where author Steve Hodel discusses finding an envelope and letter on display at the Los Angeles Police Academy. The envelope was addressed to: "The Office Of The Sheriff / Hall of Justice / Los Angeles / California, and it was post marked "OCT 10 1950" (which date Steve recognized as his father's birthday). The hand printed block letters of the envelope's address and the text of the letter inside, were identified by Steve as identical to previously identified "Avenger" letters—in which the printing was recognized by Steve as identical to his father's known printing exemplars. Also characteristic of other "Avenger" related letters, the text of the enclosed letter demonstrated contrived misspellings.

The 'bombshell' revelation in the letter was the naming of Elizabeth Short's killer as one: Manuel L. Merino. A very specific name, presumably attached to a very specific person. The person with that name was never identified... until now.



Recently, a man in Illinois, by the name of Ron Rees, who has the kind of mind that questions and turns over questions again and again until he finds an answer recontacted Steve. As an avid reader and careful follower of Steve Hodel's twenty-plus year investigation Ron has previously uncovered and has been credited with finding hidden 'clews'. (See **Black Dahlia Avenger III** pages 222-226 documenting Ron's discovery of the letters **GHH** hidden as an anagram in the 1970 'Halloween Card' sent by Zodiac to the *San Francisco Chronicle*.)

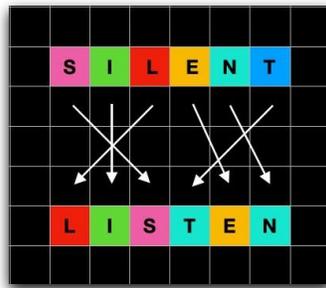
For sometime, Ron has wondered about the name in the letter: Manuel L. Merino, which contains thirteen letters.

Quite early on Rees realized that the focus of Steve's investigation was his father: George Hodel MD; a name and title which coincidentally also contains thirteen letters.

Mr. Rees tried, time and again, to create a meaningful anagram with the letters in the name of this 'murderer'.

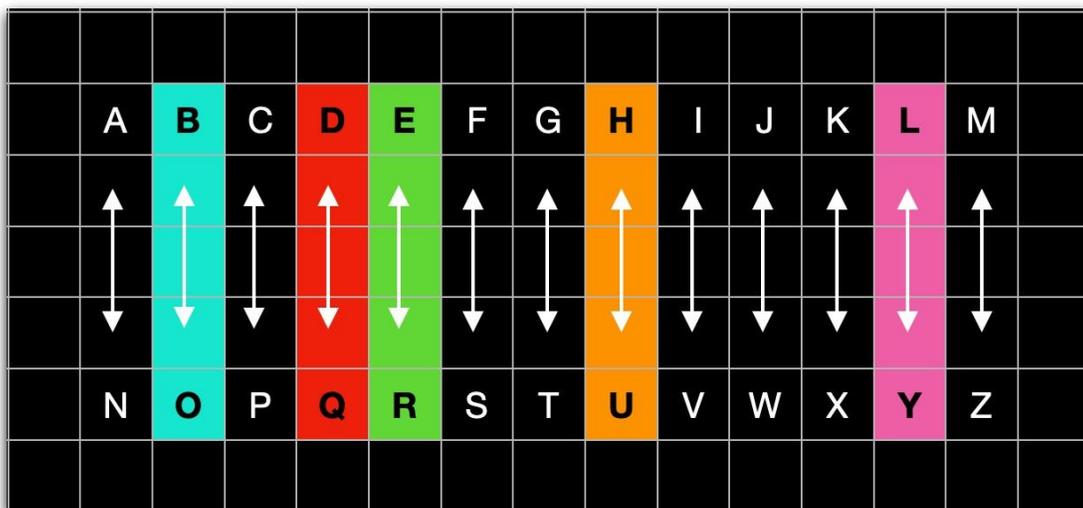
As a mental refresher, an anagram is a word or phrase formed from rearranging the letters of the subject/original word or phrase. Primarily the original letters are used only once—however there are variations in which the same letter can be represented by two different letters. That was the case in Mr. Rees' solving of the killer's name. [The 3rd E.]

Here is a popular example of an anagram:



When Rees was unable to obtain a suitable or meaningful anagram from rearranging the letters in the name Manuel L. Merino, he tried using a 'substitution cypher.'

Here is an example of a simple substitution cypher using the twenty-six (26) letters of the English alphabet. One divides the alphabet (in alphabetical order) into two lines of thirteen (13) letters each. Each of the 13 letters in the top line are paired with the 13 letters in the bottom line.



If for example you wanted to write the name **HODEL** using the above substitution method it is pretty straight forward. The letter **H** becomes “**U**”, **O** becomes “**B**”, **D** becomes “**Q**”, **E** becomes “**R**” and **L** becomes “**Y**” to form: **UBQRY**.

Even the variations of this simple key are mathematically monstrous, thus knowing the key is an eponymous understatement. But what if you don't have ‘a’ key, much less ‘the’ key? What if all you have are the two referent words that may be the key in and of themselves—then you must mix and match letters until some recognizable word or letter sequence appears that makes sense and then try to pair up the remaining letters.

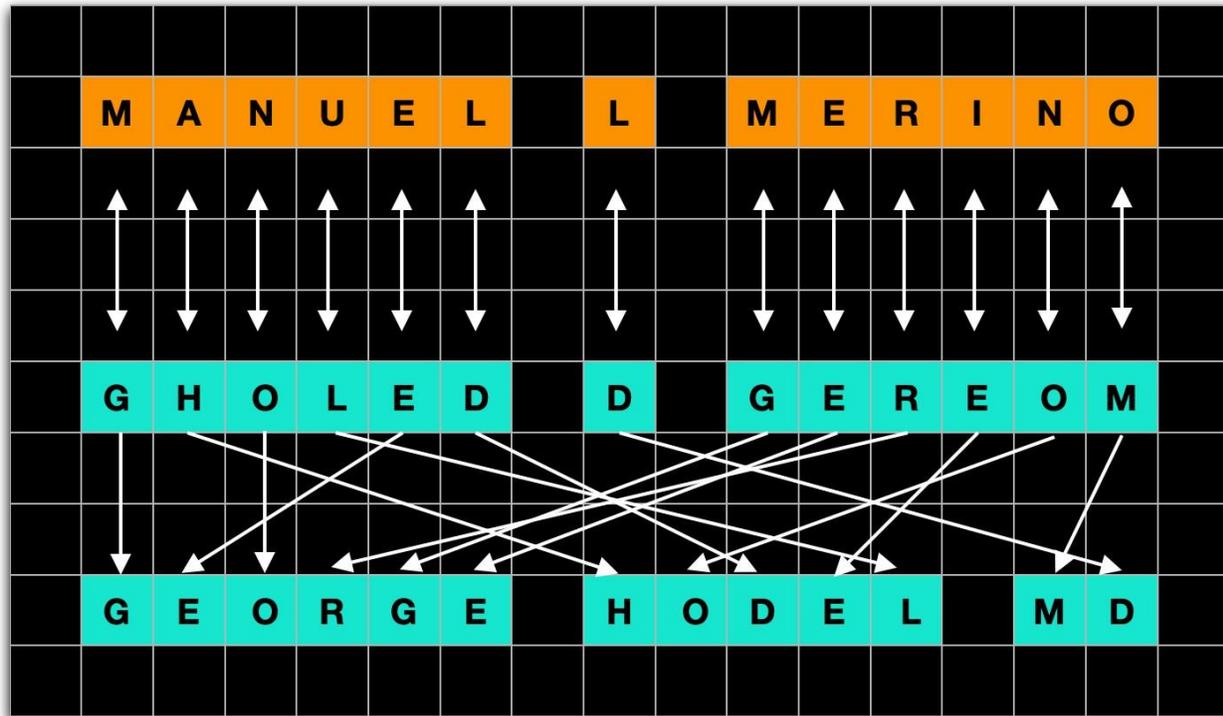
In Rees' case, he believed, given his understanding of George Hodel's penchant for disguising his handwriting and his use of codes and cyphers that the thirteen letters in **MANUEL L. MERINO** and the thirteen letters in **GEORGE HODEL MD** just might not be a coincidence. It might just be Hodel's way of proclaiming himself to be the killer of Elizabeth Short via a substitution cypher.

He began by realizing, in the two names he had pairs of letters: two G's and Two M's. He then questioned what if those two pairs were a simple match: G's for M's and he did the same with the Two O's and the Two D's?

In about an hour he came up with a workable key.

Rees Key		
M = G	Twice	
E = E	Twice	
N = O	Once	
R = R	Once	
A = H	Once	
N = O	Twice	
L = D	Twice	
I = E	3rd E	
U = L	Once	

From there the Rees Key substitution proved the solution:



Ron Rees' Key proved, in "The party that killed Elizabeth Short is Manuel L. Merino.", that MANUEL L. MERINO is a substitution cypher for GEORGE HODEL MD.

Thank you, Ron, for this incredible solve. Is there, could there be another answer, another solution—possibly? But unquestionably, this is 'a' solution, however improbable you think it may be.

What was the mystery writer, Arthur Conan Doyle's, famous quote from his greatest detective character in *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*: "When you have eliminated all which is impossible, then whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth."