

LAPD Secrets and the Marquis de Sade

Crime is the soul of lust. What would be pleasure if it were not accompanied by crime? It is not the object of debauchery that excites us, rather the idea of evil.

—Marquis de Sade

RELATING TO THE BLACK Dahlia investigation, the LAPD possessed and was actually able to keep some “key questions” confidential, away from the press and public, for forty years, until they were finally leaked. Some of these secrets were learned from the unaltered photographs of Elizabeth Short’s body. Others came from police and coroner’s files, and were alleged to be “hand copied reproductions of originals.”* All of this “secret information” related to the autopsy findings, the horrific details that fully described exactly where and how the sadistic killer(s) tortured the victim.

Once I learned of these atrocities, I was shaken to my core. A hardened veteran who personally attended hundreds of postmortems, I thought I had seen everything. But I was wholly unprepared for what I learned. I believe for the sake of truth, accuracy, and above all, relevance, that the details, however gruesome, of the autopsy findings need to be disclosed.

Dr. Newbarr’s autopsy report describes a victim who endured a horrific and painful death at the hands of a suspect or suspects who took the infliction of physical punishment to the extreme. The young woman was trussed and bound by her hands and feet, was tortured initially by the

*The actual protocol (coroner’s formal report) to my knowledge has never been published, therefore I am unable to confirm the validity of some of the findings alleged in the “hand copied” versions. However, most of what is here reported is consistent with photographs that were released in the 1980s showing trauma to the body.

killer's inflicting minor cuts to her body and to her private parts, then cutting away her pubic hairs, which he would later insert into her vagina. She was then beaten about her entire body. She was forced to endure the overwhelming humiliation of being made to eat either her own or their fecal excrement. Finally, she was beaten to death, and her face and body were viciously lacerated and defiled. The killer(s) cut large pieces of flesh from her body, which they inserted into her vagina and/or her rectum. Her killer sliced her mouth from ear to ear into a bloody grin, lacerated her breasts, and cleanly and surgically bisected her body. To a trained forensic pathologist, of even greater significance was the four-inch gaping laceration cut into the victim's lower torso from her umbilicus down to the suprapubic region, a spot right above her pubic area, with numerous crisscross lacerations cut into that region as well. This incision in length, description, and location is consistent in every respect with that made by a skilled surgeon performing a hysterectomy. After the operation was performed, the body was drained of blood—exsanguinated—and her hair and skin were washed clean. Dr. Newbarr found fibers on the body that he believed to have originated from a scrub brush, and later told one of the newspapers, "From the nature of the knife cuts the girl was probably in a semi-recumbent position in a bathtub."

These were not random acts of violence and torture but were part of a discrete set of procedures carried out to gratify the killer's (or killers') enjoyment of the suffering of their victim. They reduced their victim, through such specific and defined stages as degradation, humiliation, terror, torture, and defilement, to a state of complete and abject surrender of her humanity. Then they killed her and began a new round of postmortem procedures.

These actions, unique in their execution, clearly demonstrated an intellectual familiarity with the philosophies and practices of a classical sadist.

Finally, by posing the body for discovery, the killer(s) intended to sustain themselves through the ensuing investigation and public horror over the discovery. At least one of the killers was not only possessed of surgical skill and a psychotic ability to enjoy the pain of others, but was also someone who might have known exactly how the police investigation would play out and how the newspapers would handle the story. What did the killer know?

For anyone experienced in homicide investigations or in the literature about homicide investigations, one thing is clear: this was not a random or one-time-only crime. This was a whole different category of homicide, far removed from the vast majority of homicides that are the result of uncontrolled passions, random acts of violence deriving from another felony, or

deliberate murders in which the killer wants the crime hidden from the police and the public. Both violent sexual and physical assaults upon the victims are not unusual in these types of homicides. What is unusual here is that what the killer did far outstrips any normal pattern of abuse. These were ritualistic, systematic, specifically defined, and volitional acts of torture, all of which indicate the pure focus of a highly sophisticated, skilled, and practicing sadist.

A powerful influence on my father, as well as on Man Ray, was the Marquis de Sade, a man whose life and writings are important to this case because of the tremendous influence his philosophy of the violent subjugation of others held over the four people I see at the center of the events that took place at the Franklin House: my father, Man Ray, John Huston, and Fred Sexton. Most people have a general understanding of who Sade was and what "sadism" means. But it's not until one reads some of Sade's actual material that one can truly understand the nature of the psychosexual deviancy that characterizes his thinking. This is a form of sexual nihilism that redefines the borders of deviant human behavior.

The Marquis de Sade's published writings and descriptions of his violence-driven, sexually psychopathic visions are unparalleled in literature, as are his vivid descriptions of the specific forms and types of sexual depravity and torture he advocates inflicting upon his victims. His images of sexual delights, which he calls "pleasures," are so dark and malignant that they surely were meant to disgust and outrage his contemporaries, a blueprint for evil.

A quick comparison of Sade's manuscript, *The 120 Days of Sodom*, with the coroner's findings of Elizabeth Short's death goes a long way toward explaining what her killer was doing: he was following Sade's details of sexual atrocities as closely as he could. I submit as evidence Sade's entry on January 15—the date of Elizabeth's murder—from which one recognizes that what Sade prescribed—including bloodletting—the killer(s) executed. (Another Sadean entry of that same date—"He writes letters and words upon her breasts"—was inflicted upon his subsequent victim Jeanne French.)*

It's clear from even a cursory review of Sade's manuscript that he was the source of inspiration to my father, Man Ray, and their friends. Even the description of the castle as an enclosed fortress opening onto an inner courtyard is an exact description of the Franklin House and might even have been the reason, consciously or not, that George Hodel bought the

* *The 120 Days of Sodom and Other Writings*, Grove Press, 1967, p. 610.

property. That Father, like Man Ray, read and studied all of Sade's writings seems clear. And Father, being endowed with what roomer Joe Barrett described as "his perfect photographic memory," no doubt retained each and every one of those six hundred savage images in his mind.

Even my father's funeral instructions in his last will and testament echo Sade's own last will:

I do not wish to have funeral services of any kind. There is to be no meeting or speeches or music and no gravestone or tablet.

I direct that my physical remains be cremated and that my ashes be scattered over the ocean.

Sade's written funeral instructions:

Finally, I absolutely forbid that my body be opened upon any pretext whatsoever.

I would have it laid to rest, without ceremony of any kind.

Dad's friends John Huston and Fred Sexton were also in the circle of friends under the intellectual influence of Sade. Huston's love for Sade is well-known and well documented. He enjoyed Sade's writings and he indulged himself in living his legend as "a genius and a monster." The lightly veiled characterization of John Huston as sadistic egotist in Peter Viertel's novel *White Hunter, Black Heart* is one indication. Describing Huston's personality and, for our purposes, his fondness for sadism, Lawrence Grobel, in his book *The Hustons*, referring to a conversation between Huston and screenwriter John Milius (*Apocalypse Now*), who had written the script for Huston's movie *Judge Roy Bean*, recounted:

When Milius asked him what was the best part of being a director, John answered in one word: "Sadism." He recommended that Milius read the Marquis de Sade at night and Jim Corbett during the day. "If you read Corbett at night," he warned, "it will scare the holy shit out of you. De Sade you can read anytime."

When Milius asked John about women, John's advice was, "Be anything they want. Mold to their caresses. Tell them anything. Just fuck 'em! Fuck 'em all!" (p. 641)

Fred Sexton, we know, was a close friend of Father's, so close in fact that the two of them frequently shared sexual experiences, experiments,

and fantasies with their women at the Franklin House. Sexton was also a longtime school chum and friend of Huston's, and sold him some of his artworks. Sexton's friendship with Man Ray derived from their shared passion as artists and their relationships with my father. From the perspective of such eyewitnesses as my sister, I can represent with absolute certainty that this "gang of four" socialized with one another, partied together, and, in the case of my father, Fred, and John, even shared women.

With a sense of what my father's background was, his predilections, the violence-driven sexual deviancy that colored his relationships with just about everybody, and the group of friends with whom he shared an artistic fascination with sadistic sexual perversions, some of the aspects of the Black Dahlia murder come into clearer focus. However—and this to my mind is crucial—no sexual offender who inflicts the levels of violence inflicted on Elizabeth Short can be a one-time killer. These killers are serial offenders, who, as Dr. Joel Norris has said in *Serial Killers: A Growing Menace*, engage in "episodic violence," reenacting the same kind of psychodrama from crime to crime. They taunt police to prolong their sexual thrill after each murder, and not only troll for victims, but live within their victim pool as predators lying in wait for their next opportunity.

Accordingly, if my father fits any part of this psychological profile, there should be ample evidence of a series of crimes he committed, probably upon the same type of victims and probably within a circumscribed geographical area and timeframe. In other words, thirty years before Ted Bundy, the Hillside Stranglers, the Son of Sam, and even the Green River Killer, my father, most likely some of the time with Fred Sexton, was a long-term, serial sexual killer of defenseless women in the areas of Hollywood, Beverly Hills, and downtown Los Angeles.

Amazingly, these serial murders not only remain unsolved today, but the LAPD does not even acknowledge the possibility that the killings were connected or related to each other. As the evidence will soon reveal, however, the relationships among the killings are so strong they cry out for resolution even within their dust-covered LAPD murder books shelved into cold storage a half century ago.