“The beauty of the world has two edges, one of laughter, one of anguish, cutting the heart asunder.”

I was laughing with the world; I had found that person that completes me. I loved him and he loved me, we were engaged to be married. The only thing that stood in our way was time. I waited and I waited for him to return from war. I wrote him everyday and read the words he wrote to me like they were gold. I waited. I waited, but you never came home. I never heard your voice again. I never saw your face. The face that made me feel whole, loved and no longer alone. I waited, but in a distant land someone else took you away from me.

Pain grips you by the heart and takes you to places you never thought you could go. I ran from what I knew. I left my home and followed my dreams. Everywhere I went I searched for your face and the way you loved me.

---

1 “FilmEdge.net | THE BLACK DAHLIA opens September 15th.” FILM EDGE.NET | Tomorrow's Films Today - movie reviews and upcoming previews. 14 Apr. 2008 <http://www.filmedge.net/BD/index>
Identified by her fingerprints the body of Elizabeth Short was found gruesomely sodomized. Her female anatomy, defiled. Her mouth was sliced into a menacing smile stretching from ear to ear. Her limbs extracted from her torso and lay out at an exact distance. Her breasts were sliced off and her genitalia removed. The author of this murder was sending a disturbing message. Time of death was determined to be around 12 a.m. Reports say her death was a result of a severe blow to the head, trauma and blood loss (Hodel).

The Dahlia is a decoration...

Elizabeth Short was commonly referred to as the Black Dahlia. Her name denoted by her striking beauty, henna darkened hair, red lipstick and black clothing. The way in which she presented herself implied cultural meanings especially to the opposite sex. It was common for her to have several relationships at a time. She preferred servicemen and spent most of her time among them. She used these relationships as a means of distraction and a financial remedy (ABC News).

The Dahlia is a strikingly, beautiful and exotic flower. It is commonly used for decorative purposes. There are over 30 species and each one brilliant in its own way. Betty was a Hollywood flower trying to follow her dreams. Men were extremely attracted to her appearance and charm (Wikipedia).

However, the way in which Betty presented herself brought about cultural implications. Men and women during 1947 were “in a wake of gender conservatism that had not been seen since the Victorian era.” This was due in part to WWII. People were tired of the instability of war and thought that returning to a patriarchal type system, in
the home, they could put the past behind them and feel secure in the comfort of consistency. Women were marrying younger and younger, even dropping out of high school to marry. Styles for women consisted of long skirts, restricting girdles and padded-pointed bras (Lois).

Therefore, the sexuality brought on by Elizabeth Short’s provocative dress and lifestyle caused controversy for that era. The crime against her, although brutal and undeserving was thought to be brought on by her controversial way of life. Betty was often flirtatious and was seen with many boyfriends. It is also known that she would do anything for the promise of fame. Furthermore, she has allowed nude photographs of her to be taken. Pornographic images during this time period were highly restrictive and often confiscated by officials (Hodel).

Black, a mixture of all pigments turns black.

Although, Betty was thought to have been represented as a provocative women and in some cases a prostitute autopsy reports show that Betty was incapable of having sexual intercourse. But, the mere way in which she represented herself allowed assumed connotations to follow. The crime was viewed as a punishment due to some type of rejection on her part. “Crime is the soul of lust, what would be pleasure if it were not accompanied by crime?” Betty’s toying with men for means of financial stability created a deep lust for her, that couldn’t be fulfilled and left her in pieces (Hodel).

Your stems were clipped and strewn across the lawn.

The crime scene is thought to represent two paintings done by the famous artist Man Ray. Man Ray was known for realism, artwork incorporating his dreams and
distorted-alternate realities. Many of his paintings and photographs are of nude women, their faces hidden. In this way he makes women appear more as objects of lust and less of a person. The body of Elizabeth Short was laid out like *Les Amoureux* (the lovers) and *Minotaur*, two of his most famous works. *Les Amoureux* shows the relational connection between the two. The Minotaur, a mythological monster with the head of a bull and the body of a man who was imprisoned on the Island of Crete and fed young maidens to sustain him (Hodel).

![Minotaur](image1.jpg) ![Les Amoureux](image2.jpg)

*The Dahlias blood forever stains...*

There are numerous myths, theories and stories as to who murdered Elizabeth Short, however in Steve Hodel’s novel *The Black Dahlia Avenger* he provides various pieces of evidence, testimonies, and more proving that his father, George Hodel is the murderer. Steve Hodel is a retired Los Angles detective. He is known for achieving the highest number of solved cases. His method is to follow thought patterns and eventually try to connect suspects to the crime. He does this by thoroughly investigating his father, a legendary genius. At age 9 his father was a musical protégée playing pieces for the renowned composer Rochmaninov. He excelled in all areas of school and went to college at the young age of 15. His genius abilities separated him from his pier group and caused him to become an outcast. He found comfort in the arms of a middle aged women and she
eventually became pregnant. George vowed to marry her and take care of the child, but she laughed at his youth and said she never wanted to see him again. Steve Hodel argues that this incident is the underlying reason for all of his father’s grotesque treatment toward women, including Elizabeth Short. He argues that Elizabeth was dating George for financial reasons and when George proposed to her she rejected him. This rejection triggered years of sorrow George was holding onto. He felt so betrayed and decided to punish Elizabeth for her actions (Hodel).

Steve Hodel also says his father had a dark past of using drugs, alcohol and pornography as an escape from his life. He was especially fond of the artist Man Ray. As a tribute to him he geniusly devised a plan to murder Betty and honor Man Ray. The way in which he went about the crime left detectives puzzled. It is also thought that George was a very powerful man, with connections within the police. His experience as serving in the military allowed him to be overlooked. To make things even more interesting George eventually flees the country (Hodel, L.A Times).

There are others who speculate and offer theories as to who killed Betty Short. Mary Pacios, a distant neighbor to Betty has written a novel claiming that Orson Welles is the murderer. She comes to this conclusion by arguing that Welles has a fetish for bisection. “In The Lady from Shanghai (filmed in ‘46) showed off bisected mannequins and a plastic face which was cut from one cheek side to the other.” She also points about that Welles entertained servicemen by performing a magic trick, cutting a women in half. She speculates that Betty and Welles met at a dinner and Betty showed interest in him, due to his ties to Hollywood (Hazelton).
The case has caused over 50 people to give testimonies confessing to be the author of the crime. However, after the police interviewed the confessors their testimonies did not provide valid methods as to how they murdered Elizabeth Short. Furthermore, their have been far-fetched theories published as well. One woman argues that her father is the murderer. She says after his death she began to see flashes of repressed memories. She claims that these memories show Betty as her “Aunt Betty.” She says her father was a very violent man and had incestuous relations with her and therefore, fits the profile of a disturbed murderer. Several memories show Betty being gruesomely murdered by her father and with her secretly viewing. Another non-factual theory accounts for a woman receiving messages from Betty in the afterlife. These messages do not directly state who the murderer is, but do provide haunting messages from Betty, such as to how she was murdered (Hazelton).

“There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it s...”

The Black Dahlia case has become one of the most notorious cases of our time. The case took place in 1947 and today, 60 years later is still being referenced. There are over 17 novels that were written solely about the case or dedicated several chapters to it. Recently, the Black Dahlia movie was released. While the movie is entitled The Black Dahlia, it focuses on the struggle of characters within the plot and slightly addresses the murder. The movie attracts its audience by simply using the name. There are CD’s released consisting of music from 1947 and entitled The Black Dahlia. There is a famous heavy metal band that has created numerous songs about the murder and the sad life of the young, beautiful Betty Short. What’s more, people are even permanently tattooing
images that relate to the case. Many television programs have been created to inform the public of the case, even video games have been developed (Hazelton).

Why is America so obsessed with this murder? Elizabeth Short is not the first women to be murdered. There are many arguments that try to address the issue. First, the murder contains elements that combine to create a very entertaining story. There is a beautiful heroine, trying to find fame in Hollywood, a budding romance and a mysterious crime.

In addition, many people could identify with Betty. She stood for the American dream, running off to find fame in Hollywood. Others identified with her on a darker level, one of their loved ones murdered or gone missing. The crime scene composed the most mystery of all. Betty’s torso laid in the grass with her arms a specific measurement from her body. Her body drained of all its fluids and her organs taken out. This type of work could have only been performed by a disturbed surgeon. Clearly, the author of the murder was trying to communicate a disturbed message (Hazelton, Russel).

The media caused the case to grow in fame as well. It caught on to the intriguing mystery and played into the theme of the Black Dahlia. At that time the press was allowed at the crime scene, never before that time in history had there been such graphic images captured on film. The public responded to the gruesome scene and couldn’t get the vivid image out of their minds (Russel).

Finally, we all have something inside us that eats away at us, something that hates not knowing. If the case would have been solved it wouldn’t have become so notorious. Many people hear something about the case and begin investigating and slowly become
obsessed with the case. The internet is full of web-pages dedicated to Betty and containing theories to the murder (Russel).

“Light dispels darkness…” 4

Steve Hodel, the author of The Black Dahlia Avenger worked for years investigating the case and convicting his own father. He says “the preparation of this novel has been most difficult, because of the obvious personal conflicts that arose during the discovery of the murder.” However, he has brought Elizabeth Short to justice. This story comes to a powerful conclusion. The son of the murderer is convinced that his own loving father was responsible for one of the most gruesome murder cases. A line from Steve Hodel’s novel says “his blood mingled with my own.” Although the world is filled with darkness there is a prevalent light. The same blood that murdered Elizabeth Short brought her to justice (Hodel).

“Even truth itself decays, and lo, from truths sad ashes a flower blossoms.” 4

Sources Cited


