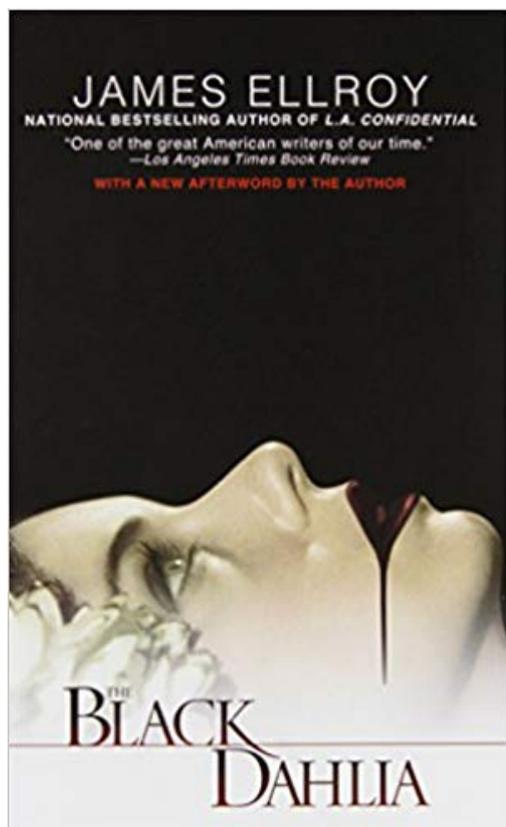


## The Black Dahlia *by* James Ellroy



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On January 15, 1947, the torture-ravished body of a beautiful young woman is found in a Los Angeles vacant lot. The victim makes headlines as the Black Dahlia-and so begins the greatest manhunt in California history. Caught up in the investigation are Bucky Bleichert and Lee Blanchard: Warrants Squad cops, friends, and rivals in love with the same woman. But both are obsessed with the Dahlia-driven by dark needs to know everything about her past, to capture her killer, to possess the woman even in death. Their quest will take them on a hellish journey through the underbelly of postwar Hollywood, to the core of the dead girl's twisted life, past the extremes of their own psyches-into a region of total madness.



## Reviews of the *The Black Dahlia* *by* James Ellroy

Faehn

James Ellroy's "The Black Dahlia" is almost too dark, too gripping and too believable. It stands out among a crowd of mysteries (sub-genre police procedural) as simply a great novel. Most mysteries I put down and forget that I've read them. The characters from Ellroy's noir vision of L.A. in the late 1940s and early 1950s are indelibly etched in my mind, as is Ellroy's characterization of the period

and location itself. This is the most visceral book I've ever read.

I picked up this book myself from Partners and Crime's Top 100 shelf (P&C is an awesome mystery bookstore in Manhattan's Greenwich Village). I loaned my copy to a friend, who gave it back to me a week later and said he didn't want to read the rest of the series or any other mystery novel again in his life -- this one was perfect and anything else would just ruin his ability to savor "The Black Dahlia". I loaned it to a second friend who finished it in a week, and then went out and bought the complete Ellroy oeuvre. This is not a one-night read unless you have strong eyes, strong coffee, heroic concentration and an iron will.

If you get a chance, hear Ellroy read from these books in person.

Sequencing Ellroy's books is tough, because they're all similar in terms of time frame, setting, and characters. The L.A. trilogy plus one is:

- \* 1947: The Black Dahlia
- \* 1950: The Big Nowhere
- \* 1951: L. A. Confidential
- \* 1958: White Jazz

Dudley Smith also appears in Ellroy's second novel, "Clandestine", set in 1951.

elegant stranger

Another brutal story, well told by Ellroy. Like LA Confidential, this may not be to everyone's taste, even to those who enjoy crime and noir, but it's certainly very good at what it is.

Also like LA Confidential, the story is set within the LA Police Department, following two main characters, Bucky Bleichart and Lee Blanchard, through their investigations of a tortured and murdered young woman. There are no angels in the story -- Bleichart and Blanchard lead twisted lives on the point of breaking, and the victim, Elizabeth Short, was broken well before her murder.

The story follows obsessions. Neither Bleichart nor Blanchard is a homicide detective, but, in their own ways, neither can look away from the Short murder. Blanchard's girlfriend, Kay, is drawn into the story as well, with her own twisted and nearly broken background. As the story escalates, so do the obsessions, with a kind of apocalyptic feel for the lives of everyone involved. We follow Bleichart though one more dark layer after another, tied together by Blanchard's advice, "Cherchez la femme, Bucky. Remember that."

In a very revealing Afterword to the book, Ellroy himself describes the story as set among "psychically maimed misfits running from World War II." He also gives us insight into his own obsession with the story, based on a true event -- a story he felt compelled to tell because of his own dark experiences. It's really pretty dark all the way down, from the true event, to the author, to the novel itself.

The characters in the story are constantly tested, and many if not most fail. That's what makes the book both hard to take but also hard to look away from. It tests our baser instincts.

Ces

I bought the Kindle version, but added the audio to it and ended up listening because of the excellent narration. I am still reeling from the author's powerful prose. Excellent "film noir" atmosphere - the narrator's performance was absolutely superb! His voice was so versatile and compelling, it really made me stick with this book. I know I would have put it down if I was just reading by myself. His voice and the narrative take you right back to the 1940's, right after WWII. The writing is excellent - the subject matter is almost beyond a nightmare, not for faint hearted. The narrative is gritty, somewhat pornographic and definitely not of our politically correct times. I have to admit I found parts of it offensive. It was not easy to listen to, but the dialogue sounded authentic to how policemen must have spoke at the time.

The storyline had so many highs and lows - twists and turns, especially near the end!

This book is a work of fiction, based on two murders, one famous murder of a young woman in California and another murder of the author's own mother. It's not just a crime drama, it's a study of obsession, guilt and redemption.

Rit

I am a voracious reader, but even then I usually read no more than 2 chapters a day on any novel. This is probably the first novel I've read in a long time that couldn't let me go. I would tell myself that I read only 1 chapter for the day and then 5 chapters later I was wanting more. It is very hackneyed and cliched to say that the book is better than the movie, but never in my lifetime has this been more true. Ellroy's craft is none like any other in which each simple sentence conveys depth deep within collective id of humanity's psyche.

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