Vimeo link for this week's film and **ALL** of Bruce Jackson's and Diane Christian's film introductions and post-film discussions in the virtual BFS

Zoom link for all FALL 2021 BFS Tuesday 7:00 PM post-screening discussions

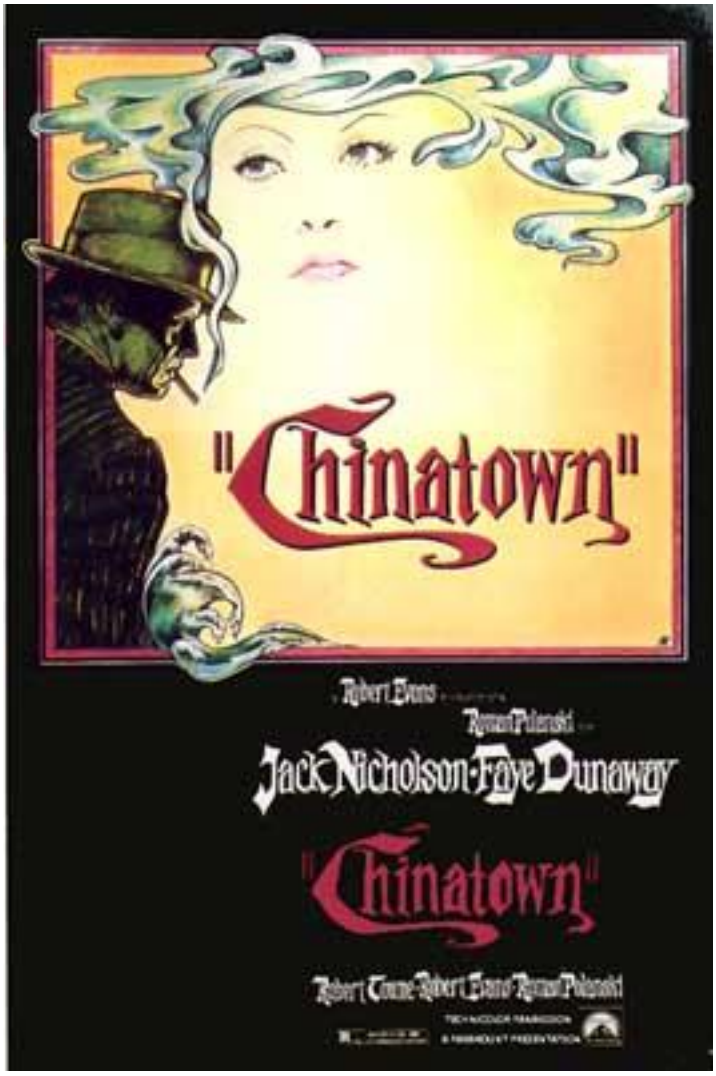
The film is available for streaming on Criterion and Amazon Prime. UB email account holders can access it free via the UB Library's Swank Digital Campus portal.

The Cinephilia & Beyond *Chinatown* page includes a 53-minute video interview with Polanski about the film, two long audios with writer Robert Towne,the script, and more.

Directed by Roman Polanski
Written by Robert Towne and (the ending) by Roman Polanski
Produced by Robert Evans
Original Music by Jerry Goldsmith
Cinematography by John A. Alonzo
Film Editing by Sam O'Steen

Won an Oscar for Best Original Screenplay (Robert Towne), and was nominated for Best Actor in a Leading Role (Jack Nicholson), Best Actress in a Leading Role (Faye Dunaway), Best Art Direction-Set Decoration (Richard Sylbert, W. Stewart Campbell, Ruby R. Levitt), Best Cinematography (John A. Alonzo), Best Costume Design (Anthea Sylbert), Best Director (Roman Polanski), Best Film Editing (Sam O'Steen), Best Music, Original Dramatic Score (Jerry Goldsmith), Best Picture (Robert Evans) and Best Sound (Charles Grenzbach, Larry Jost).

Selected for the National Film Registry by the National Film Preservation Board, USA, 1991.



CAST
Jack Nicholson...Jake 'J.J.' Gittes
Faye Dunaway...Evelyn Cross Mulwray
John Huston...Noah Cross
Perry Lopez...Lieutenant Lou Escobar
John Hillerman...Russ Yelburton
Darrell Zwerling...Hollis I. Mulwray
Diane Ladd...Ida Sessions
Roy Jenson...Claude Mulvihill
Roman Polanski...Man with Knife
James Hong...Kahn
Jerry Fujikawa...Mulwray's Gardener
Belinda Palmer...Katherine Cross
Noble Willingham...Councilman
Burt Young.. .Curly

Roman Polanski (18 August 1933, Paris) has directed 27 films, many of which he also wrote and produced himself. He received five Oscar nominations: Best Director for *The Pianist* (2002, which he won), Best Picture (for *The Pianist*), Best Director (*Tess* 1979), Best Director (*Chinatown*), and Best Screenplay Based on Material from Another Medium (*Rosemary's Baby* 1968). His latest film

The Palace is in pre-production. His most recent films have been : *An Officer and a Spy* (2019), *D'après une histoire vraie* (2017), *Venus in Fur* (2013), *Carnage* (2011), and *The Ghost Writer* (2010). Some of the other films he has directed are *Oliver Twist* (2005), *The Ninth Gate* (1999), *Death and the Maiden* (1994), *Frantic* (1988), *Le Locataire/The Tenant* (1976), *The Tragedy of Macbeth* (1971), *Repulsion* (1965), *Nóz w wodzie/Knife in the Water* (1962), *Le Gros et le maigre/The Fat and the Lean* (1961), and *Dwaj ludzie z szafa/Two Men and a Wardrobe* (1958).

Robert Towne (23 November 1934, Los Angeles) has written 38 screenplays and teleplays, in addition to directing, acting, and producing a number of films. Some of his screenplays are *Mission: Impossible II* (2000), *Mission: Impossible* (1996), *The Firm* (1993), *Tequila Sunrise* (1988), *Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes* (1984, *as P.H. Vazak), Personal Best* (1982), *Shampoo* (1975), *The Last Detail* (1973), and *My Daddy Can Lick Your Daddy* (1962). He directed *Tequila Sunrise* (1988) and *Personal Best* (1982).

John A. Alonzo (12 June 1934, Dallas, Texas—13 March 2001, Beverly Hills) shot 71 films, including *Star Trek: Generations* (1994), *Internal Affairs* (1990), *Steel Magnolias* (1989), *Jo Jo Dancer, Your Life Is Calling* (1986), *Scarface* (1983), *Blue Thunder* (1983), *Zorro, the Gay Blade* (1981), *Tom Horn* (1980), *Norma Rae* (1979), *The Cheap Detective* (1978), *Black Sunday* (1977), *The Bad News Bears* (1976), *Farewell, My Lovely* (1975), *Chinatown* (1974), *Sounder* (1972), *Harold and Maude* (1971), *and Bloody Mama* (1970).

Jack Nicholson (22 April 1937, Neptune, NJ) has acted in 79 films and television programs. His most recent films have been *How Do You Know* and *I'm Still Here* in 2010, *The Bucket List* in 2007, and Martin Scorsese's *The Departed* (2006). He has been nominated for eight Best Actor and four Best Supporting Oscars and won three of them: *As Good as it Gets* (1997, leading), *Terms of Endearment* (1983, supporting), *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (leading, 1975). The nominations were for *About Schmidt* (2002), *A Few Good Men* (1992), *Ironweed* (1987), *Reds* (1981), *Chinatown* (1974), *The Last Detail* (1973), *Five Easy Pieces* (1970) and *Easy Rider* (1969). Some of his other films are *Something's Gotta Give* (2003), *The Crossing Guard* (1995), *Hoffa* (1992), *A Few Good Men* (1992), *The Two Jakes* (1990), *Batman* (1989), *Broadcast News* (1987), *The Witches of Eastwick* (1987), *Heartburn* (1986), *Prizzi's Honor* (1985), *The Border* (1982), *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1981), *The Shining* (1980), *Goin' South* (1978), *The Last Tycoon* (1976), *The Missouri Breaks* (1976), *The Last Detail* (1973), *The King of Marvin Gardens* (1972), *Carnal Knowledge* (1971), *Hells Angels on Wheels* (1967), *The Shooting* (1967) *Ride in the Whirlwind* (1965), *The Little Shop of Horrors* (1960), and *The Cry Baby Killer (1958).* He directed *The Two Jakes* (1990), *Goin' South* (1978) and *Drive, He Said* (1971).

Faye Dunaway (14 January 1941, Bascom, Florida) has acted in 116 films and television programs. She won an Oscar for Best Actress in a Leading Role for *Network* (1976) in 1977. Her performance in *Visceral* is in pre-production, and her performance in *The American Connection* has been completed. Her most recent role was in 2021's *The Man Who Drew God*. Some of her other films are *Last Goodbye* (2004), *Yellow Bird* (2001), *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1999), *Albino Alligator* (1996), *The Temp* (1993), *The Handmaid's Tale* (1990), *Barfly* (1987), *Beverly Hills Madam* (1986), *Supergirl* (1984), *Mommie Dearest* (1981), *The First Deadly Sin* (1980), *The Champ* (1979), *Network* (1976), *Three Days of the Condor* (1975), *The Towering Inferno* (1974), *Chinatown* (1974), *Little Big Man* (1970), *The Arrangement* (1969), *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968), *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), *The Happening Hurry Sundown* (1967). She was nominated for Best Actress Oscars for *Chinatown* and *Bonnie and Clyde* and won for *Network.*

John Huston (5 August 1906, Nevada, Missouri—28 August 1987, Middletown, Rhode Island, emphysema) directed 48 films, acted in 47 and wrote 34. He is one of the few people to have been nominated for Oscars as Best Director (*Prizzi's Honor 1985, Moulin Rouge 1952, The African Queen 1951, The Asphalt Jungle* 1950), and Best Screenplay (*The Man Who Would Be King 1975, Heaven Knows, Mr. Allison 1957, The African Queen 1951, The Asphalt Jungle 1950,The Maltese Falcon* 1941, *Sergeant York* 1941 and *Dr. Ehrlich's Magic Bullet* 1940), and Best Supporting Actor (*The Cardinal* 1963). He won a Best Director and Best Screenplay Oscar for *Treasure of the Sierra Madre* 1948. Some of the other films he directed are *The Dead* (1987), *Under the Volcano* (1984), *Annie* (1982), *Wise Blood* (1979), *The Man Who Would Be King* (1975), *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (1967), *The Night of the Iguana* (1964), *Freud* (1962), *The Misfits* (1961), *The Unforgiven* (1960), *The Roots of Heaven* (1958), *Heaven Knows, Mr. Allison* (1957), *Moby Dick* (1956), *Beat the Devil* (1953), *Moulin Rouge* (1952), *The Red Badge of Courage* (1951), *Key Largo* (1948), *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1948), *Let There Be Light* (1946), *San*

Pietro (1945), *Report from the Aleutians* (1943), *Across the Pacific* (1942), and *In This Our Life* (1942).

Jeremy Carr: "Polanski, Roman" (Senses of Cinema *2015)*

It is difficult to get a handle on Roman Polanski. His eclectic body of work ranges from pinnacle achievements in European art cinema to camp goofiness; from blockbuster Hollywood thrillers to literary period pieces; from historical prestige pictures to modern-day stage adaptations. At the same time, his tumultuous personal life is marked by wartime atrocities, horrendous mass murder, a criminal conviction, global fame, great loves, and exile. Through it all – and however much the personal and the professional may overlap and influence one another – Polanski's cinema remains remarkably consistent in style, themes, narrative preferences, and, more often than not, end results.

Polanski's parents made the retrospectively unfortunate decision to move to Poland three years after his birth in 1933. When Germany invaded in 1939, his family was forced into the Krakow ghetto. His father was sent to the Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp in Austria, which he survived, and his mother to Auschwitz, where she was murdered. At nine, Polanski escaped the ghetto and travelled the countryside under the guise of being Catholic. Staying with strangers wherever he could, Polanski was occasionally abused but was generally sheltered from the Nazi storm.

Participation in a post-war Polish state radio program for children led to a stint with the Young Spectators' Theatre, where Polanski secured his first leading theatrical role at the age of 14. As a young boy in the ghetto, he had ignored warnings against watching the German propaganda films projected on walls, and had subsequently developed a love for that medium as well. His first screen appearance was in *Three Stories* (1953), and in 1955 he appeared in *A Generation*, the first film by groundbreaking Polish director Andrzej Wajda. Admitted to the National Film School in Lodz, Polanski studied art history and photography and was required to complete several films of varying lengths and forms. Following Lenin's dictum that, "To us, the cinema is the most important of all art forms," students had access to films not available to the public and to valuable equipment with which to gain hands-on experience.

The Bicycle (1955), Polanski's first short, was a dubious start. A mix-up with the negative resulted in a total loss. His first completed film, *Murder* (1957), a brief depiction of what the title suggests, takes place in the tight confines of one room, with Polanski's affinity for singular settings and few characters evident even at this preliminary stage. His second short, *Teeth Smile*(1957), is an early approach toward voyeurism, where the complex nature of sexual desire and malicious intent hints at several Polanski features to follow. With *Break Up The Dance* (1957), Polanski tried his hand at *cinema verite*, capturing life as it happens, but only after setting up the conflict and arranging for outside aggression to violate a walled in, complacent sense of security. *Two Men and a Wardrobe*, Polanski's award-winning 1958 breakthrough, again features an external force disturbing a generally sedate populous, as two men lug around a large cabinet causing much distress to those around them. Polanski's visual compositions are more fully developed than in the earlier shorts, particularly in his focal fluctuation above and below the horizon line and in his use of the wardrobe's mirror to create a deceiving visual humour. Like all his student films, the picture contains little to no dialogue, something Polanski felt had no place in a short.
The Lamp (1959) is a surreal work about a doll maker who toils in his cramped, grimy workshop, which soon burns down, perhaps as a result of the malevolent dolls. Polanski's thesis film,*When Angels Fall* (1959), is his most elaborate and intimate early portrait of a solitary individual. An elderly lavatory attendant recalls her war-ravaged past, as black and white shots of her gritty surroundings are juxtaposed with her memories in luxuriant colour. The work was accepted as Polanski's diploma film, but he neglected to compose the mandatory written assignment and subsequently never earned his graduation certificate.

Though preproduction had already started on his first proposed feature, *Knife in the Water* (1962), the script did not receive the requisite governmental approval due to its lack of necessary social commitment. In wake of the objections, Polanski and his first wife, Barbara Kwiatkowska, moved to France where he made two additional shorts: *The Fat and the Lean* (1961), with André Katelbach as a slovenly lazy man and Polanski as his jester and servant, and *Mammals* (1962), a slapstick comedy with two men alienated in a snow-covered landscape. The silliness in these films would be relatively rare for Polanski; the focus on a few characters in a distinctly enshrouding environment would not be.

The open ending of *Knife in the Water*, its minimal social commentary, and its lack of condemnation regarding adultery drew widespread criticism and the film was

denied a premiere, stuck with a limited release, and was gone from Polish theatres in two weeks. Internationally, the picture was a phenomenon, landing on the cover of *Time* magazine and receiving an Oscar nomination for best foreign film….

Polanski struggled to garner interest in his next proposal, *If Katelbach Comes*, so in the meantime he directed *River of Diamonds*, part of the omnibus film *The World's Most Beautiful Swindlers* (1964).

With producer Eugene Gutowski, Polanski continued pitching *Katelbach* to no avail. Instead, the horror movie-seeking Compton Group, a British studio better known for exploitation pictures and soft porn, showed interest in another of the duo's projects, *Repulsion* (1965). Written by Polanski and Gérard Brach in 17 days, this was their first of eight feature film collaborations. In the psychological thriller, Carol, a mentally disturbed manicurist played by newcomer Catherine Deneuve, conveys an exterior meekness betrayed by paranoid hallucinations and eruptions of violence. Polanski chronicles her mad descent by twisting her subjective perspective via skewed imagery, exaggerated set design, and a focus on abject, inanimate objects. In this, *Repulsion* maintains a visual vantage-of-character association that Polanski continually applies, and is often integral to his thematic interest in the uncanny effects of isolation. We see the distressing world through the protagonist's wild eyes, their agony made evident by the overstated depiction of their formidable surroundings….

Popular though it may have been, Polanski viewed *Repulsion* as "an artistic compromise" that never achieved the full quality he sought. He described the special effects as "sloppy," and of all his films, "the shoddiest – technically well below the standard I try to achieve." Still, and most importantly for Polanski, it was "a means to an end."

That end was *Cul-de-Sac* (1966), as *Katelbach* became known, its new title suggesting the entrapment of the main characters. Polanski pits two solitary individuals against two others. The first pair, George (Donald Pleasence) and Teresa (Françoise Dorléac, Denevue's sister), are isolated by choice. The second, Richard (Lionel Stander) and the quickly deceased Albie (Jack MacGowran), are isolated by the necessity of a botched robbery. When the latter encroach on the former, potential violence creates a looming tension that merges comic eccentricity with sexual threat (and a threat to sexuality). As with the couple in *Knife in the Water*, there is animosity between George and Teresa before the others arrive, and Richard in particular only makes matters worse as an outsider crashing into already stormy waters. With an antagonism brought forth by competition, the three main protagonists are quick to quarrel and find a fight. High contrast black and white imagery gives the film an edgy appearance and the proximity of the characters results in palpable strain further stressed by tight close-ups emphasising gruelling anxiety, unsettling facial contortions, and absurdly amusing tonal shifts.

The troubled shoot was marred by bad food, worse weather, and contentious working relationships with the cast. The multilingual production often resulted in an abandonment of the script in favour of on-set deviations. Still, Polanski considers *Cul-de-Sac* among his finest works, calling it in 1970 his best – "true cinema," he added years later.

After Filmways producer Martin Ransohoff proved eager to secure US distribution for *Cul-de-Sac*, Polanski teamed with the interested supporter to release his next feature, "a fairy tale comedy about vampires") called *The Vampire Killers* (1967). Playing with the conventions and icons of the vampire film, Polanski clearly had some fun with his fourth feature. The narrative is all over the place and many of the performances are hackneyed to say the least, but the production design by Wilfred Shingleton is excellent, and certain sequences, like the concluding dance, are clever and quite funny….

In this Transylvania community where something is noticeably amiss, there is an obvious though unspoken fear. The townsfolk are comically in denial, in opposition to the paranoia that grips so many other Polanski characters. The exception is Professor Abronsius, played by MacGowran, apparently the one main actor from *Cul-de-Sac* Polanski got along with, and Alfred, played by Polanski himself. As the primary female character,

Ransohoff insisted on Texas-born starlet Sharon Tate, with whom Polanski fell in love and would soon marry.

Once filming was complete, Polanski found himself at odds with Ransohoff, who cut about ten minutes from the final picture, changed the title to *The Fearless Vampire Killers, Or: Pardon Me But Your Teeth Are In My Neck*, added a cartoon prologue, and rearranged the music. Upset with the whole process, Polanski refused to enter the 1967 Berlin Film Festival and attempted to take his name off the film. Further confusing the movie's history, it was released in the UK (where Polanski maintained distribution rights) as *Dance of the Vampires*.

Though *Vampire Killers* was something of a

divergence from the type of film that had garnered Polanski international attention, his reputation still stood as a director of thrillers, and the quality of the work was still evident. Based on Polanski's known fondness for skiing, Paramount's rising young producer Robert Evans tempted the director to Hollywood in order to work on *Downhill Racer* (1969). Upon arriving in California, Polanski also received the yet-to-be-published galleys of Ira Levin's novel *Rosemary's Baby*. However much he may have liked skiing, Polanski had found his next project.

Exploitation director William Castle had purchased the rights to the satanic story with the intention of directing the picture himself. Though he was initially sceptical of this foreigner – an attitude that extended to the studio heads when the film went $400,000 over budget and fell behind schedule – the film was a tremendous financial success, even if it unsurprisingly received a "Condemned" stamp from the National Catholic Office for Motion Pictures.

Unlike *Repulsion*'s Carol, Rosemary (Mia Farrow) is a sociable young woman, pleasant and not readily withdrawn at first. But her unease is grounded in a more tangible reality, however seemingly fantastic. Her paranoia is well founded – these aren't hallucinations. Hers is a very real terror and the maliciousness of those around her is genuine. Long before she suspects something wicked, the audience is alerted to the strangeness of her surroundings. People stare with perceived suspicion, strange noises emanate through the walls, and the apartment is in a state of disrepair, as if it were *Repulsion*'s dwelling post-Carol. Though the apartment is spacious, Rosemary grows insular, and soon the metaphoric walls begin closing in, leading to a full-fledged mental breakdown.

Polanski's lack of religious conviction led him to maintain a loophole in the film's narrative, by which he could cast doubt on the "child of Satan" scenario. He was intent on keeping the conclusion ambiguous, the result being a film that is "as much a psychological study of pre-natal delusion as it was an outright horror movie." Looked at another way, as David Ehrenstein ponders, what is worse – "a satanic child, or a woman who thinks she's given birth to a satanic child?".

For the first time working off someone else's material, Polanski's adaptation process took about a month (and the first draft was 270 pages), but he was ultimately rewarded for his efforts with an Oscar nomination for best adapted screenplay. Tragically, *Rosemary's Baby* marked the final score by Krzysztof Komeda, an essential Polanski faithful since 1958, who died as the result of an accident in April 1969.

The 34-year-old Polanski was riding high on the box office success of *Rosemary's Baby,* with his pick of films to follow: work on another Ira Levin novel, the science fiction project *A Perfect Day*, a film of Paganini, or perhaps even a retelling of the ill-fated Donner Party (a group of pioneers who became trapped in the Sierra Nevada and had to resort to cannibalism to survive). Eventually, he moved forward adapting Robert Merle's novel *The Day of the Dolphin*. This adaptation, however, would be thwarted by a second tragic event in Polanski's life – the brutal murder of his pregnant wife and several of their friends by members of Charles Manson's cult-like group "the Family."

While the country and especially Hollywood reeled in the chaos that ensued, the distraught Polanski carried on as best he could. Partially seeking to avoid the criticism he would have undoubtedly faced had he made a comedy or horror film after the murders (the emotional extremes at either end of the generic spectrum), Polanski chose a Shakespearian adaptation as his next picture, presumably a safe choice. Shown disinterest by conventional studios, Polanski partnered with the unlikely executives at Playboy Productions for *Macbeth* (1971), with Playboy securing $1.5 million of the budget and distributor Columbia supplying an additional $1 million. The shoot took six-months and the film went half a million dollars over budget; Columbia had director Peter Collinson waiting in the wings should Polanski need to be taken off the project.

Macbeth received a generally poor critical and commercial reception as well as a meagre release, with the connotations of the Playboy name something of a hindrance for "serious" filmgoers. In addition, the Manson murders led to distraction from the film itself. The brutality of the picture was commonly seen in light of this real life violence. No matter how vicious the source material may have been to begin with, it was widely assumed Polanski was exercising these horrors.

In any case, the film is a solemn, mournful, and visually satisfying version of one of Shakespeare's most cinematic works. Polanski does great justice to this story of desire, murder, and madness. As envisioned by the director, Macbeth (Jon Finch) is a "young, open-faced guy, who is gradually sucked into a whirlpool of events because of his ambition,"(7) and his transformation into a resolutely driven obsessive is a slow but steady

development. A snowball of violence rolls as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth (Francesca Annis) become anxiously paranoid and begin to mentally unravel. Delirious dream states of surreal panic torment the couple. Macbeth grows increasingly withdrawn and suspicious, and retreats within his castle, where Polanski stages a visually tightening drama.

After the doom and gloom of *Macbeth*, to say nothing of his recent personal life, Polanski looked to escape into lighter territory. Perhaps it was even as simple as James Greenberg contends: with *What?* (1972), Polanski "just wanted to have some fun with his friends."(8) A huge hit in Italy – where it was shot and where Polanski resided for several years – and a mild success throughout the rest of Europe, *What?* was a considerable flop in the US, even when it was later re-cut and re-released in the wake of Polanski's rape case as the exploitive and sleazy sounding *Roman Polanski's Diary of Forbidden Dreams*.

What? follows tourist Nancy (Sydne Rome) as she spends a few frivolous days at a large villa inhabited by an aimless motley crew of peculiar individuals, including an against-type Marcello Mastroianni as a slimy former pimp, and Polanski as the curiously named Mosquito. In this house of sexual decadence, there is a mutual dislike and distrust between the houseguests. To be sure though, this single setting – financial backer Carlo Ponti's own extravagant villa – is certainly not the uncomfortably intimidating enclosed space of *Repulsion* or *Rosemary's Baby*.

One could stretch to say that *What?* maintains the Polanski tradition of a character out of their element – Nancy is a foreigner who doesn't speak the language (shades of *Frantic* to come) – but such a parallel is wobbly to say the least. Still, as oddly out of his cinematic canon as *What?* may be, Polanski's foray into comedy was not in itself unusual. Even his serious films find room for humour, however dark. The final punch line of this sexual lark is a rare self-conscious gesture from the director, as the characters allude to the fact that they are in a film – a film called *What?*

With dwindling funds and no solid work in sight, Polanski started looking elsewhere for his next endeavour. That elsewhere was back to Hollywood and Paramount. Parsing through Robert Towne's 180-plus page first draft of *Chinatown* (1974), contention came as he and the screenwriter worked eight hours a day for eight weeks, whittling down the expansive script. Polanski envisioned a more pessimistic film with a "more truthful" unhappy ending,(9) concluding in "utter tragedy."(10) He also felt J.J. Gittes (Jack Nicholson) and Evelyn Mulwray (Faye Dunaway) should go to bed together at some point, and that in a film called *Chinatown*, a scene actually needed to take place there.

Polanski broadened his scope of intrigue and suspicion to encompass the wider ramifications of bureaucratic corruption, while bearing his continued preoccupation with character identification and having much of the story told subjectively through a primary protagonist. Like Rosemary, Gittes deals with the frustration of no one believing, no one understanding. People hold sway over others and there is an ever-present and deeply imbedded establishment of power and control, but here the conspiracy is undeniably valid. Atypical to this point in Polanski's work is a Hawksian exploration of a man who is good at his job and has a job to do, but the levels of sexual and political complexity prove to be vast and vastly disturbing to this unsuspecting detective. Initially with legendary cinematographer Stanley Cortez behind the camera (he was replaced by John Alonzo ten days into filming), Polanski's Chandleresque tale of a private dick's investigation into a shady land grab tinged with incest and murder was filmed in Panavision and colour, against the style of the classic Hollywood noir that it otherwise resembled. Though Polanski approached *Chinatown* more as a job than a passion project, years later he ranked it amongst his own work just below *The Pianist*, and it now stands as one of the greatest films from one of Hollywood's greatest decades….

In 1976, a deal was struck with Columbia for Polanski to adapt and direct Lawrence Sander's police procedural *The First Deadly Sin*, but this project, like *Day of the Dolphin*, had to be scrapped due to upheaval and scandal. This time, the disruption was of Polanski's own doing. As summarised by James Greenberg, Polanski, "agreed to a plea bargain in which he admitted having unlawful sexual intercourse with a minor, fulfilled about half of a ninety-day court order for psychiatric evaluation and expected to be released on probation."(13) Subsequently, Columbia swiftly dropped the development of *The First Deadly Sin*,

though Dino De Laurentiis admirably came to Polanski with a proposed remake of John Ford's *The Hurricane* (1937). Following more ensuing drama, that project likewise went by the wayside. When the "judge reneged on the bargain-plea that was accepted by all sides," according to Polanski,(14) and with additional, indeterminate prison time possible, Polanski left for Europe and has not returned to the United States since.

For his first film as an exile, Polanski chose a sweeping adaptation of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Filmed in France, where he would not face extradition to America, *Tess* (1979) had a $12 million budget, the largest ever for a French motion picture to that point, with the radiant 18-year-old Nastassja Kinski in the title role. Polanski's penchant for lurking danger is conveyed in sequences of unspoken, latent threats toward Tess, which disconcertingly contrast with the lushness of the settings. The camera remains outside, objective; Tess observes as much as she interacts. Locales frequently shift and Polanski carefully composes static tableaux of detached yet evocative beauty. Though his films are notable for their interior settings, *Tess* is at its sumptuous best in the exteriors, with dusk-tinged luminosity highlighting the first half of the picture and bucolic mud and muck inflecting the latter half.

After undergoing a rigorous post-production process (versions were mixed in English, German, and French, and editing stalwart Sam O'Steen trimmed 36 minutes of footage), Polanski's final cut of *Tess* opened to rave reviews. The film received four Academy Awards, including one for best cinematography, which was shared by Ghislain Cloquet and Geoffrey Unsworth, the latter posthumously after he passed away during filming.

Having first started work on the *Pirates* script in 1974, the time finally came for Polanski to embark on what is an adventure film, pure and simple. Nothing about the actual production, however, was quite so uncomplicated. It was, according to Polanski, "torture, a real nightmare,"(15) and weather related delays resulted in an ultimate loss of $35 million.

Original starring choice Jack Nicholson was now well beyond the budget of the film, so Polanski attained the 64-year-old Walter Matthau in the peg-legged lead. While *Pirates* (1986) lacks much of what marks Polanski's best films in style and content, it does continue a career-long fascination with the balance of power, with master/slave allusions to *The Fat and the Lean* and *Vampire Killers*. Some of the fumbling, bumbling foolishness falls flat, but the most disappointing feature of the film is the relative lack of energetic cinematic action. The picture looks great, with vibrant cinematography, and there are plenty of action sequences, but Polanski's standard style is not well suited to all the commotion. Yet *Pirates* is in many ways just what he intended: "something of a parody of the genre."

After time away from home and dealing with the debacle that was *Pirates*, Polanski set his sights more locally and more commercially. *Frantic* (1988), a Paris-set Hitchcockian stranger-in-a-strange-land thriller, has the hapless Dr. Richard Walker (Harrison Ford) in pursuit of his suddenly missing wife. It is, especially compared to *Pirates*, a more prototypical Polanski feature. Walker isn't super rich, he has no political ties, he doesn't speak French, and he expresses no exceptional strength or cunning. He is just a man in over his head, caught in a plot of espionage and deception, all hinging on a classically ambiguous MacGuffin. While Walker and sidekick Michelle (Emmanuelle Seigner, Polanski's third and current wife) make their way through multiple locations, and a more mobile camera is utilised than is typical for Polanski, *Frantic* is nonetheless most compelling in its localised frustration and personal anxiety, as Polanski builds a taut pressure by keeping his focus tightly on Ford….

With a flashback structure unique for Polanski, *Bitter Moon* (1992), a "one-stop anthology of classic Polanskian themes,"(18) sets the present day sequences aboard a cruise ship and the past in Paris. In both arenas, cruelty and sexual tension cause fractures in the complacency of those involved, revealing underlying animosity, which in turn leads to continual bouts of one-upmanship, sadistic duels, and combustible humiliation. In classic Polanski style, the drama first unfolds as a result of a chance encounter with a stranger, who provides the initiation into uncharted waters for Nigel and Fiona (Hugh Grant and Kristin Scott Thomas), the naive newlyweds who become involved in a psychosexual game beyond their range of knowledge, comfort, and experience. The wheelchair-bound Oscar (Peter Coyote) warns Nigel that his own wife, Mimi (Seigner), whom Nigel has had his eyes on since their first meeting, is a "walking man trap." In the flashbacks, the two hole away in the rapturous seclusion of their apartment, where progressively exposed violence grows from unbridled sexuality, comingling in a way that reflects the intertwining of passion and danger that exists in the present, as Nigel struggles with his own temptations.

When playwright Ariel Dorfman selected Polanski to take on his hit 1991 play, the choice was similarly

appropriate. *Death and the Maiden* (1994) seems tailor-made for the director. With a more than $11 million budget, this essentially one-room chamber drama cost about as much as *Tess*, but, as Greenberg point out, the work offered Polanski "his trademark claustrophobia—in spades.".

Though *Death* gets its narrative motivation from historical mayhem in an unnamed Latin American country, the film is more concerned with personal drama than political ramifications. The intimate story of Paulina Escobar's recovery from rape and torture at the hands of a fascist soldier is of more concern than any inherent political statement. Paulina (Weaver) is remote and cagey, her traumatic past at odds with, yet strongly connected to, her husband's judicial line of work. When a stranger arrives at their isolated home, her paranoia seems to be well founded. The man is apparently her former torturer. As with *Knife*, the presence of the third party only aggravates pre-existing marital tension, and one questions Paulina's sanity as she brutally interrogates the man, wondering about her righteous revenge and crazed suspicion. She is obviously scarred, but is there a chance the trauma has clouded her judgment and perception? *Death* is the ultimate Polanski power play, with a constant jockeying between positions of command and intimidation, between the weak and the strong.

When a collaboration with John Travolta dramatically fell through just prior to shooting, after the actor claimed the final screenplay was not the same as what he had initially been shown, Polanski teamed with another major star, Johnny Depp, on a new project. In *The Ninth Gate* (1999), Dean Corso's profession as a "book detective" leads to his involvement in a world out of his hands and beyond his normal endeavours. He starts to wonder who is in charge, who is pulling the strings that have entwined him. "Someone's playing a game with me," he says in a line that could be taken from nearly every Polanski film. Similar warning such as, "You don't know what you've gotten yourself into…" are also echoed from earlier works. This is classic entertaining, escapist Polanski, his technical perfection and keen aesthetic approach revelling in generic design and tone.
Many saw the film as yet another Polanski exploration of the demonic, and were quick to tack on autobiographical significance, which the director was equally quick to shut down. "I'm not interested at all in witchcraft and the occult as a philosophy. To an atheist like myself it's exotic. The devil makes me laugh." Not everyone was laughing though, and the film's critical reception was not what Polanski had in mind. "I wanted the film to be more of a comedy… But it seems like nobody really got it." *The Ninth Gate* was not released until more than a year after its completion, but once it was it achieved a nearly $58 million return – a rare financial gain for a recent Polanski feature.

Having passed on *Schindler's List* (1993) due to its disquietingly familiar Krakow setting, Polanski next embarked on arguably his most personal film, tackling Wladyslaw Szpilman's Warsaw-based memoirs originally published as *Death of a City* in 1946. Though not a thriller in its strictest sense, *The Pianist* (2002) allowed for Polanski's continued thematic interests, particularly concerning confinement. As Greenberg argues, "What could be more claustrophobic – physically and psychologically – than living within the confines of the Warsaw ghetto and hiding in tiny rooms locked from the outside?"(22) Like so many Polanski protagonists, Szpilman (Adrien Brody) unwittingly finds himself entangled in the ultimate plot, a scheme most devastating, leading to an incomparable tension. He hides wherever possible, seeking a safe, secluded enclosure that results in his living in a true state of paranoia and terror. Polanski takes frightening wartime concerns on a macro scale and condenses them to the emotional tale of one man's survival. Yet while Szpilman is the point of focus throughout, Polanski favours a largely restrained objectivity, a reluctance to sentimentalise or melodramatically manipulate being part of what drew him to the original text.

Polanski was widely – and justly – heralded for *The Pianist*. He and the film received a multitude of international awards: a BAFTA for best picture and director, César awards for best film and director, the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival, and Oscar wins for Brody and Polanski. *The Pianist* still stands as the film he considers his finest achievement.

Riding this wave of praise (if not box office success), Polanski chose an adaptation of *Oliver Twist* (2005) as his next feature. Shot on a nearly $60 million budget – Polanski's largest ever – this time he sought to deliberately make something for his children. But he would not do so without figuring in inevitable familiar tropes. Young Oliver is subjected to both the cruelty and kindness of strangers. He lives in a world

where authority and regimentation are frequently confronted by disorder. His helplessness is beyond his control and he seems destined to be something of a solitary roamer. The plight of young Oliver and his well-being is suspenseful, rife with danger and volatile personalities. If this is Polanski's children's movie, it is a portentous one indeed.

After initially showing interest in Robert Harris' *Pompeii* as his follow-up, Polanski was given the proofs of the author's *The Ghost* as a gift. He quickly shifted his interest to the newer work. Ewan McGregor's unnamed ghostwriter is an individual whose occupation proves to be integral to his eventual involvement in an ongoing drama, not unlike Gittes or Corso. In this post-9/11 world, however, there is also discussion about torture, the war on terror, and a new sense of global political stratagem, with obscured figures as guiding forces behind world leaders. All this gives *The Ghost Writer* (2010) an international relevance, with secrets and things unsaid, the full ramifications of which are likewise veiled.

The Ghost Writer is another example of a character consciously creating two personalities in Polanski's work. In this case, the former UK Prime Minister Adam Lang (Pierce Brosnan) crafts a public persona that belies his private anxieties and actions. Meanwhile, The Ghost struggles with a conflict of conscience, where the tension brought on by gestating matrimonial troubles and potentially murderous deception tests his own moral culpability. Against the wider panorama of global politics, Polanski again hones in his narrative and visual focus. The action remains relatively isolated on Martha's Vineyard and within that, in the confines of Lang's secluded home. There is also the importance of a singular object, this time, as in *The Ninth Gate*, a manuscript that becomes something of a character in itself.

During post-production, Polanski was arrested in Zurich on the 1977 unlawful sexual intercourse charges. While incarcerated, he had longtime editor Herve de Luze send him the latest versions of the film on disc, which he would then watch on his laptop and make notes. He was eventually able to have de Luze visit him in prison and obtained full editing equipment, finishing the cutting while still incarcerated. After posting bail, he was placed under house arrest for nine months and was eventually freed. Polanski's two most recent films are further examples of his evolving yet consistent preoccupation with the tumult that develops when people find themselves in an isolated or enclosed space, something with which he has now had his fair share of experience. Though we see the instigating drama in the opening credits, *Carnage* (2011), adapted from Yasmina Reza's *God of Carnage*, begins when this initial action is already over. The concerned parties – the parents of two children involved in a fight – have more or less reached an agreement and one couple is about to leave. But through the course of the 80 minutes that follow, marital wounds are (re)exposed, with each of the four characters at various points taking sides and swapping allegiances. Antagonism is born from subtle words and phrasing, and wild insinuations. It's not always clear if the aggression is based on purposeful hostility or innocuous and accidental interpretations, but the polite manners of this upper class foursome are quickly and comically brushed aside as trivialities cause frustration and anger, and everyone takes passing blame.

With relatively little space to operate in, Polanski and cinematographer Pawel Edelman (his DP since *The Pianist*) make the most of the anamorphic frame, employing a variety of camera angles, alternating shot sizes and distance. Wider shots balance all four characters while close-ups stress the change in moods and reactions via both subtle and intense facial expressions. "I've made films before set in an enclosed space," Polanski noted, "but not as rigorously self-contained."(23) As Denic Meikle writes concerning *Death and the Maiden* in a comment the at times hilarious "peeling away of the layers of civilized behaviour to reveal the raw emotions, and the real nature of the relationships which lie beneath." A Roman Polanski film in a nutshell.

After completing the short film *A Therapy* in 2012, Polanski's most recent work was again set in a single location, this time with just two characters pursuing that ever elusive and perpetually necessary throne of supremacy. David Ives' *Venus in Fur* is another project that seems as if only Polanski could have brought it to the screen. The work is a battle for creative control and a simultaneously sexually charged contest of manipulation. With Seigner as Vanda, the seductive aspiring actress, and Mathieu Amalric as Thomas, the conflicted director, *Venus in Fur* (2013) shows once and for all that, as Christopher Sandford puts it, "claustrophobia is to Polanski as the frontier is to John Ford."

While most obviously known as a feature film director, Polanski has embarked on a number of other creative projects. His acting turns have been in movies as wide ranging as Giuseppe Tornatore's *A Pure Formality* (1994) and Brett Ratner's *Rush Hour 3* (2007). In 2002, he reunited with Wajda to star in *The Revenge*. Script work for films he would not direct include *A Taste for Women* (1964), *The Girl Opposite* (1965), *The Girl Across*

the Way (1968) and *A Day at the Beach* (1972). Several more aborted writing collaborations spot his career. Other seemingly incongruous projects include producing the 1972 Grand Prix racing documentary, *Weekend of a Champion*, and an on-again-off-again attempt at an erotic animated film.

He has also embarked on his fair share of theatre work, directing *Lulu* in Spoleto, *Rigoletto* in Munich, directing and starring in *Amadeus*, playing Gregor Samsa in a production of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, and directing John Patrick Shanley's *Doubt*, among others. At one point, there was even discussion regarding a musical adaptation of *Fearless Vampire Killers* in Vienna. "Theatre," Polanski stated, "is like therapy after making a movie." Regularly reluctant to analyse his own work – "I don't know about that, I'm just the filmmaker" – Polanski remains evasive about his films and their autobiographical significance, despite the fact that so much of his work seems so apropos to his life and worldview. On the other hand, he has not shied away from discussing his craft in general. "Filmmaking is about translating the ideas in your head to life," he explains. "In this respect, it's the work of only one person – a one-man art form – because I'm the only person who knows what's going inside my head." He wants to make the kinds of films, he says, "where you feel the walls around you," and he is, "rather more interested in the behaviour of people under stress, when they are no longer in comfortable, everyday situations where they can afford to respect the conventional rules and morals of society." Interestingly, Polanski is also one of the first modern filmmakers to consider cinema as an absorptive medium, saying in 1966 that he would make "scented" films if he could, and tinkering with 3D tests as early as 1971, many decades before the contemporary rival of interest in the format.

Still, Polanski remains something of an enigma. He is "too commercial to be avant-garde and too avant-garde to be commercial," according to James Morrison, who also contends the director operates in a "*post*-generic" form of cinema, where "the comedy is sometimes excruciating, while the melodrama is often funny." In response to observations regarding his treading of varying generic grounds, Polanski argues that he likes film too much to be happy doing only one thing: "Genre is what cinema is all about," he says. "If I am eclectic it's because of my love for cinema."

As of early 2015, Polanski is working on a film about the Alfred Dreyfus scandal of the late 1890s. Noting the suitability of such a topic in these modern times (as well as, presumably, in his body of work), he observes that the story involves the "age-old spectacle of the witch-hunt of a minority group, security paranoia, secret military tribunals, out-of-control intelligence agencies, governmental cover-ups and a rabid press." This would certainly seem to coincide exceptionally well with what has come to define a Roman Polanski film. As Meikle puts it, from his film school days through his award-winning feature filmmaking career, Polanski's films "exhibit an originality of vision, both stylistically and thematically. Whether they are dark and morbid and psychotically-disposed, or merely frivolous and disposable, they are

plainly the work of a singular intelligence, a unique psychology, a rare aesthetic."

from *Roman Polanski Interviews*. Ed. Paul Cronin. University of Mississippi, Jackson, 2005. "I Was Part of the Welles Group" Piotr Kaminski, 1983.

K: *What did you think of the film school at Lodz?*
P: Making films had been my dream for a long time, but during that era of Polish Stalinism the chances of getting into such an elitist school—where the students enjoyed so many privileges—were very small. My social background didn't really work in my favor as I was neither working class nor a peasant.

K: *But you still made it.*
P: Apparently it was less important than I thought, After graduating from high school I tried to get into the theater school in Krakow as an actor but they didn't want me,and I went to Warsaw with the same result. Around this time Andrzej Wajda, who was a student at the film school, asked me to be in *A Generation*, his first full-length production. Because of this I felt a connection to Lodz—I knew the students and I had worked with them, so it all seemed less inaccessible.

There was also the Young Spectators' Theater in Krakow where I acted and where Antoni Bohdziewicz, a film director and a professor at the film school, noticed me.He sometimes worked at the theater and gave me a job on a movie produced by two film students. This was in 1952. Bohdziewicz was a very fashionable and sophisticated man and a big admirer of Western culture, something frowned upon by the ruling class. Yet he had an influential position at the school as he'd been one of its original founders.

When I failed my drama school examinations it was Bohdziewicz who encouraged me to try something else, saying, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained." Before sitting the exams at the Lodz film school there was a

preliminary round where the professors sifted through the four hundred candidates from around the country and ruled out those who didn't stand a chance. Soon afterwards I found myself in Lodz with about a hundred other people taking the entrance exams which lasted ten days. There were screenings and different professors gave discussions about films that we'd seen, as well as acting and drawing exercises. At the end came the decisive exam before a committee. Of course the main subject was Marxist-Leninism, something I was terribly ignorant of—quite unacceptably so. But it seemed that Bohdziewicz—who must have strongly believed in my talent—had fought a battle with these committee members, these representatives of the state. He won and I got in. It goes without saying that I couldn't believe my luck. My studies there lasted five years and I graduated in 1959.

K: *Who else got in that same year?*
P: Only eight other students, among them two of my old friends from Krakow: Wieslaw Zubrzychi, a very cosmopolitan Catholic intellectual, and Janusz Majewski, an architect. Majewski eventually graduated and became a filmmaker. Wieslaw left after the second year.

The school consisted of three faculties: *mise-en-scène*, cinematography, and production. The acting department wasn't established until later. For the first year all classes were taken together, then little by little we went our own ways. The school was very well-equipped, and there were actually more employees than students. We studied things directly related to the cinema, for example art direction and music, but also art history and literature. There was a complete filmmaking facility there and already in our third year we started to make films. There was a little studio outside town with electricians and mechanics, and a production office with editing and projection rooms. The most amazing thing is that even with all this there were some students who didn't do anything. They'd got into the school by pretending they wanted to make movies, but backed out when actually confronted with all these opportunities.

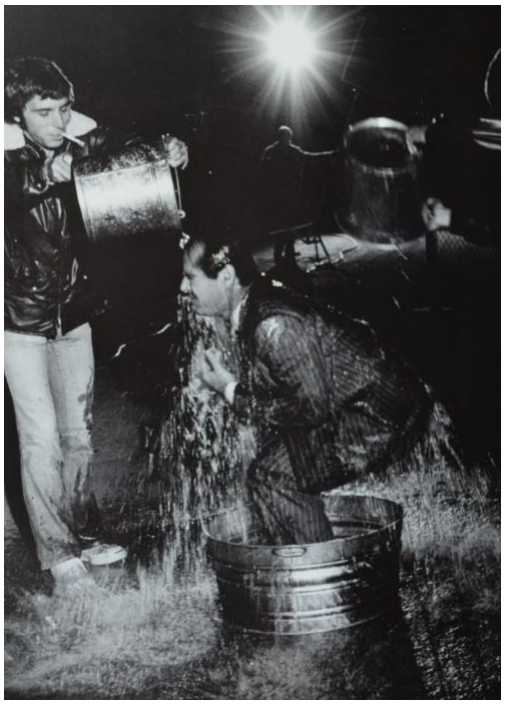
K: *How was such luxury possible in a country that had been so devastated by war?*
P: This is easy to explain. Lenin had said, "Amongst all the arts, cinema is the most important." Obviously in those days television didn't exist and fortunately comments like Lenin's were followed to the letter, which meant that the authorities were aware of the political importance of documentaries and fiction films. That's why we had far more freedom at the school than students of other colleges and universities, and even the whole country.

K: *Why was the school in Lodz and not Warsaw?*
P: Warsaw had been destroyed during the war and the authorities were in a hurry to establish a film school as quickly as possible. When deciding where to build production studios they opted for the city closest to Warsaw that wasn't in ruins. It was a logical choice as Lodz is only about a hundred kilometers away. Our classes took place as much within the confines of the school as on location, which meant we really got the best practical training possible. According to the regulations, during the five years of study every student had to make two silent films, two short documentaries, a short fiction movie, and a final work the length of which wasn't specified. But because there were so many directing students we all ended up writing and acting as much as we directed. We got through a vast amount of film stock. What was expected of us from the first year was complete familiarity with photographic techniques, so we spent weeks taking still photographs which were, on the whole, not bad, though Zubrzycki's weren't great and he was thrown out.

K: *What kind of films did they show you?*
P: We saw lots of different things thanks to the elitist character of the school. We had access to the national archive and watched lots of films that the general public generally couldn't see. All we had to do was fill out a form and give a reason—any reason—and they would send us the film. Though some titles weren't distributed, as was always the case in the Eastern countries, copies were always kept for use by party officials and as students we were able to make use of this source ourselves. So filmmakers in Poland never really felt as isolated as, for example, writers and painters did, most of whom had to wait until 1956 and even later before discovering the fruits of a decade of Western culture. For us, Orson Welles, Kurosawa, and Buñuel were common currency. Personally, I was part of the Welles group, but there were also groups of neorealists and students who liked the heroic Soviet cinema. A friend if mine, Roman Hajnberg, admits to having seen [the Vasilyev Brothers' 1934 film] *Chapayev* twenty-five times.

K: *The atmosphere of the school during those days is legendary.*
P: And for good reason. It really was unique and totally unprecedented. The school was a true haven, a refuge of peace—both politically and culturally. Putting aside the eternal lessons of Marxist-Leninism, everything was geared toward a single goal: the efficient schooling of professional filmmakers. Those were the only criteria, even if it meant savaging the system a little bit.

Instead of going to class, students often spent time in the projection rooms. There was also a huge wooden staircase which was the epicenter of the school. It's said that postwar Polish cinema was born on this staircase, though to complete the image I should add that there was a bar at the bottom. The life of the whole school revolved around these two monuments, and whenever there wasn't a screening—which wasn't often—you could always find us there, drinking beer, talking arguing. It just went on and on.



K: *You didn't feel the political presence of the regime?*
P: Well, of course. We had politicization lessons and even undertook military training like everybody else. This was, after all, at a time when "imperialistic forces" were preparing for the Third World War. Naturally our views on art were profoundly conditioned by the pervading ideology and we were constantly debating the virtues of "content" over the vices of "form."

K: *How did the 1956 crisis affect the school?*
P: Like everywhere else. We burned party cards and stormed the personnel offices, taking confidential files which for a few days were a great source of amusement. The office head ended up running the canteen. He fit there perfectly—the man had found his true vocation.

K: *So today you would say that your experience at Lodz was a positive one.*
P: Yes, Extremely positive, though like most of the other students I wasn't aware of it at the time. We never stopped complaining about how much time we were wasting—and those five years did seem like a very long time. But I quickly realized how much I actually owe to the school. There's no doubt it's where I learned my job.

Roman Polanski. Charlie Rose, 2000.

R: *I hate to see that the fear of the media-trial fire prevents someone from closing the circle.*
P: But don't you realize that the media maybe took over the judicial system in your country? In any case it was all because of the media. The judge himself said at one point, "They will have what they want." You know?

R: *Your head?*
P: Yes, they wanted my head. Look, it all started so long ago. It started after *Rosemary's Baby*, after the Manson murders. There was a long period before they found the culprit where they were clearly blaming the victims for their own deaths and me for somehow being involved. The absurdity of it was so awesome, that they could suggest it had something to do with black magic or that there was a Ouija board found on the property. I remember my astonishment. I was all right with the press before that. My real problems started with the murder of Sharon Tate and they wouldn't let it go. It's all somehow mixed up with the supernatural, with the Devil. "Why do you make so many films about the Devil? I made two: *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Ninth Gate*. My answer usually is, "Which one are you talking about? *Tess* or *Knife in the* Water or *Chinatown* or *Death and the Maiden?*

R: *It goes back to what we said, "It's hard to make a good movie."*
P: It's very hard to make a movie, period. To make a good movie, it's really a question of luck, I would say.

R: *Why is it so difficult to make a good movie?*
P: It's a tremendously complex form of art. It just doesn't depend only on your canvas and paint and paints and colors and brushes. You need an army around you, you need means of production and all the hardware. What's difficult about it? I'll tell you. It's made of pieces, and to maintain the coherence between those pieces is difficult. When a director intends to make a movie, he's got the model of it in his head and the making the movie consists of making that model available to others. There are a lot of people who imagine beautifully, except nobody knows what they're imagining. Directing is making this imagination physical, material. After all, at the end of the day, it's only a piece of film on a reel. When you start doing it there are so many elements that you are using that you get further and further away from the model you have in your head.

First there is the choice of the actors. You imagined certain characters, you're trying to be as close as possible, but there are other options that you come across which are not necessarily like the one you had. An actor is very popular at the moment, for example, and the studio wants him. But he's not what you thought. Sometimes

when you're lucky enough you can be as close in reality to what you imagined. There is a physical reality in which the scene will happen, like a room. And that room. even if you build it in the studio, even according to your instructions and plans, is not exactly like the one you imagined. I personally try to concentrate and remember that first vision, that first conception which I liked so much, and see how it relates to this new reality that superimposes itself on my imagined movie. The closer I am to it, the better off I am in the end. And sometimes I literally stand on the set, close my eyes, and try to remember how I imagined the scene before the casting, before the arguing with the producers, before the talk about money, before hiring the actors.

When you're doing the film, you don't—as everyone knows—do it in continuity. You do it in pieces, and there are so many elements to distract you that, when you put it all together, it's not what it's supposed to be. Rushes always look great—even in mediocre films, everybody's always happy. The tragic moment is the rough cut when you put it all together for the first time. Usually the director goes to rest for a few weeks and leaves it with the editor to put it all together. Sometimes he goes to a clinic. Then he returns and sits, and he projection starts. This is the moment when he wants to hang himself because almost inevitably it looks terrible, even with all my experience—and I've been doing this for years and years. So that's why it's so difficult. It's difficult because it's ammosaic of things, because you don't see the whole thing. I went to art school and I know you're supposed to draft the whole thing and then go to the details. Filmmaking is the opposite. You start with the details and then you put it all together.

from *The Cinema of Roman Polanski dark spaces of the world.* Ed. by John Orr & Elzbieta Ostrowski. Wallflower Press, London & NY, 2006. "Foreword *Polanski's Fourth Wall Aesthetic."* Mark Cousins.

If the bleakness in Polanski's work comes from his life, it is surely the case that his interest in spatial confinement does too. But anti-modernism also derives directly from another element dealt to him by fortune: his technical talent. Whereas Truffaut and the like had their films shot roughly, with few lights, Polanski's collaborators on *Rosemary's Baby,* his first American film. were astonished at his exacting camera requirements and precise understanding of the optics and geometry of lenses. New Wave filmmakers loved the flickering aspect of films but the causticity of *Chinatown* (1974), *Cul-de-Sac, Repulsion* and *The Tenant*—and the reason they prevail—is that they do *not* flicker. At the human and technical level, they are devastatingly clear.

This, then, rather than his extraordinary biography, is the lasting significance of a director who is cited today as a major influence by filmmakers such as the brothers Coen and Wachowski….In the age of the Danish film movement Dogme95, of handheld shooting and digital

imagery, he once again looks like one of the most distinctive filmmakers of the last half-century.

"Polanski: The Art of Perceiving" John Orr

His camera techniques are close to those praised by Bazin but the consequences are totally different. Perception does not naturally reveal a knowable world, a new undiscovered world of poverty or enchantment that we can lock into with a ready-made system of signs. In Polanski when we 'see' something new we are never sure what we see. For the framing of that uncertainty and of the tensions it creates Polanski uses the inspiration of Welles, a Bazin favourite, for staking out a post-mimetic form. Polanski often favours the use of a wide-angle lens with depth of field to encompass action in long takes and at the same time project the detail of the scene that is always, in his way of filming, precise and meticulous. The celebrated triangles, or three-shots, of *Knife in the Water* and *Cul-de-Sac* seem Wellesian in origin, and owe their triadic frame to the famous snow sequence early in *Citizen Kane* (1941), a three-shot where the distant figure of the young Kane outside the window bisects the two adults inside the cabin who are deciding his future. (Such 'triangles' are also seen in the court sequences of Olivier's *Hamlet*, where the camera films the distant hero in long shot from behind and between the near-field thrones of king and queen.) Shooting on location, Polanski constantly renews this deep-focus strategy to create a sense of uncertainty and mistrust between his characters. In the yacht sequences of *Knife in the Water* on the Mazurian Lakes his nameless student (Zygmunt Malanowicz) constantly bisects in middle distance the profiles of his bored married couple captured close-in,cueing his status as outsider but also his powers of disruptive intervention….

Unlike Welles and Zulawski, Polanski sticks to the human scale; he makes no attempt to outrun it and dazzle us in the process. Welles made space and time uncanny by constantly undermining it; Polanski makes space and time uncanny by establishing its fixity. In the age of relativity, we might say, these are two sides of the same coin….

Polanski is one of the great directors in exploring

the dark spaces of the world. They often seem to loom out of nothing, out of the banal, the ordinary, the unthreatening. Hence the gothic is not normally the source of Polanski's horror though often as in *Cul-de-Sac, The Fearless Vampire Killers,* and *The Ninth Gate* it can be a vital accompaniment, a source of dark humor and his mockery. But normally horror emerges out of the humdrum detail of everyday life.

COMING UP IN THE FALL 2021 BUFFALO FILM SEMINARS 43:

October 26 Roland Joffé THE MISSION (1986))
November 2 Mike Nichols CHARLIE WILSON'S WAR (2007)
November 9 Asghar Farhadi A SEPARATION (2011)
November 16 Hsiao-Hsien Hou THE ASSASSIN (2015)
November 23 Chloé Zhan NOMADLAND (2020)
November 30 Rob Reiner THE PRINCESS BRIDE (1987)

CONTACTS:

...email Diane Christian: **engdc@buffalo.edu**
…email Bruce Jackson **bjackson@buffalo.edu**
....for cast and crew info on any film: **http://imdb.com/**

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