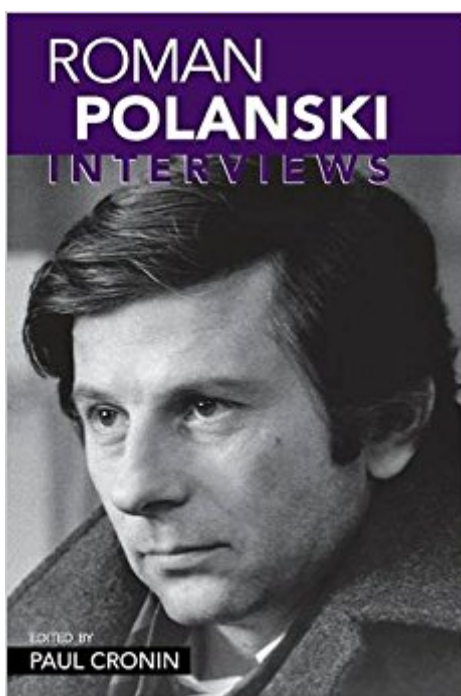


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# Roman Polanski: Interviews (Conversations With Filmmakers Series)



## Synopsis

Roman Polanski (b. 1933) arrived on the international scene in 1962 with his first feature film, *Knife in the Water*, and his face would be on the cover of *Time* magazine by the end of that year. His vibrant, disturbing, and often violent films--including the psychological thriller *Rosemary's Baby*, the film noir classic *Chinatown*, and the somber Holocaust drama *The Pianist*--have entertained and sometimes infuriated audiences. Stylistically unsettling and thematically varied, Polanski's films have established him as one of the most talented and controversial European filmmakers of his generation. Polanski's life has been troubled. He survived the Krakow ghetto and the Holocaust, but his mother died at Auschwitz. His wife Sharon Tate was brutally murdered in 1968 by members of Charles Manson's cult. After years of success in the United States, he fled the country in 1978 when he was convicted for having sex with a minor. He hasn't returned to America since that time. In *Roman Polanski: Interviews*, the acclaimed director talks openly about how incidents in his life have and have not influenced his artistic vision. This collection of interviews spans nearly forty years and comprises translations from French, German, and Spanish newspapers and magazines and transcripts of British and American television and radio appearances.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Polanski is the rare director who moved from the art house to the multiplex. Critically hailed for the rarefied, early-sixties *Knife in the Water* and *Repulsion*, he scored with the mainstream with

Rosemary's Baby in 1968 and even more powerfully with Chinatown in 1974. His career meandered during the eighties and nineties, bouncing back in 2002 with the Holocaust drama *The Pianist*, for which he won the best director Oscar. His dark, brutal films reflect a troubled life. As a child he escaped the Krakow ghetto, his wife was notoriously murdered by Charles Manson's followers, and he has been in self-imposed exile from the U.S. since a statutory rape conviction in 1978. Befitting his status as an international filmmaker and cineastes' favorite, most of these 28 interviews, which span four decades, come from foreign film journals, such as *Cahiers du Cinema*, though American TV interviews with Dick Cavett and Charlie Rose also appear. Recurrent in the conversations are Polanski's deep love of all types of cinema and disdain for Hollywood, "the kingdom of mediocrity." Gordon Flagg Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

This collection of interviews covering forty years of work from the director of *Knife in the Water*, *Rosemary's Baby*, *Chinatown*, *The Pianist*, and others: \* Offers the first English-language collection of interviews with Polanski \* Discusses fully his childhood in Poland, his training at the film school in Lodz, his acting, the aftermath of wife Sharon Tate's brutal murder by Charles Manson's cult, and Polanski's work in America, France, and England \* Offers translations of pieces from French, German, and Spanish publications now in English for the first time --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

My daughter bought this book to use a source for a paper she had to write about Polanski's great 1974 movie, "Chinatown." I picked it up to read as a diversion and read it straight through. Somehow Roman Polanski managed to survive one of the most difficult, controversial and tragic lives I have ever heard of. Yet he never let it overwhelm his reason or lost his sense of humor. He was an extremely imaginative and hard working film director. He also worked as an actor in both films and the theater, and he staged and directed plays and the occasional opera. He lived through WWII as a child after escaping from the Krakow, Poland ghetto. His wife, Sharon Tate, was brutally murdered by the Charles Manson Family, and he confessed to statutory rape of a minor, for which he served a year in prison. After he was released from prison, the judge made it clear that he was going to break the plea bargain so Polanski fled to Europe never to return to the US. At the time Sharon Tate (who was 8 months pregnant), her friends, and the La Bianca family were murdered Polanski was in London. When he returned there was a media uproar and he was considered to be a suspect. The Manson Family murders were not solved for quite a long time. All of the perps are

currently serving sentences of life without parole in California. The story of Charles Manson and his so-called family of zombies is told by the Los Angeles County District Attorney Vincent Bugliosi, who prosecuted the defendants. The book is called "Helter Skelter." The book was written in the 70's but ought to be around in used book stores. It's a very strange and fascinating story in itself. Polanski was persecuted by the media after his wife's death in part, I think, because California's philistines in the media and the LA police thought he was obsessed with violence, part of the Hollywood counterculture. He made some movies, especially "Rosemary's Baby," (which I haven't seen) which many middleclass Americans found very offensive. Polanski learned his craft at the great Polish film school in Lodz during the 50's. He began making films in England, France and the US during the 60's. Many of his films did not make money. Judging from the questions asked by the interviewers in the book not many critics understood his movies. However, over the decades he built a body of work that has stood the test of time. I haven't seen many of Polanski's movies. Some of them sound kind of scary. I've seen the classic "Chinatown," "Tess," and "The Pianist." I have to say the American interviewers asked extremely personal questions about his wife's murder and his statutory rape charge. Their curiosity sickened me. The interviews are arranged chronologically from the 60s to 2002. Polanski comes across as a modest, warm, intelligent, and interesting as well as creative man.

Polanski is perhaps my favorite director. I was excited upon the release of this book of selected interviews... it is always great to hear from the director himself. Four stars for the following reasons (though for some these may be positive points):- Some of the interviews are quite dated, going as far back as the mid-sixties. While interesting to hear of the director's evolution, it can also be disorienting since questions such as "The Fearless Vampire Killers seems to be your most important film to date..." while, later on, the same question is asked, just replaced with another film such as "Pianist" (which the book does cover)- There is not a lot of focus on technical questions and aspects of the films. As a filmmaker myself, I am always interested in how things come together technically and how many of the scenes are executed. There was not much emphasis on this, which leads me to another criticism...- As it may be expected, many of the interviewers harp on the questions about his late wife Sharon Tate, and the statutory rape episode. It may be interesting to some, but for me it's all old... just let it go. I am really more interested in what he has to say about his films.- Though I have a lot of issues with the book, as a whole it is very interesting. Especially if you are a fan of Polanski. Though his admirers will know much of what is talked about in the book (such as the Manson murders), much is still to be learned. He often talks about how a film came to

frutation... sometimes of a personal nature, but at times from a small detail that the film is then based around. Relationships with actors, issues with studios, influences... this book touches base with a little bit of everything. Polanski fans should definitely pick this up. Others, maybe not...but the entire 'Conversations with Filmmakers' series should be invaluable to all with an avid interest in film.

Polanski polarizes people. His films have spanned a scope of virtuosity and emotion that is admired while his personal life has been reviled. In the context of these contradictions, this book offers us interviews that do not flinch from asking uncomfortable questions of a man who does not back down from answering them. Polanski comes from a world of pain, and his films mirror that world. Gripping reading which gives us a unique look at how, in his own words, he escaped The Holocaust and Hollywood. Whether you love or hate Polanski, his story never fails to engage and provoke.

very interesting and helpful for class.

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