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Summary Article: **Polanski, Roman**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

1933–, Polish-French film director, b. Paris. His family returned to Kraków, Poland, when he was three. His parents were imprisoned in Nazi concentration camps and his mother died at Auschwitz, but Polanski, living partly on his own, escaped the Holocaust. He began to act after the war and later (1954–59) studied filmmaking in Łódź, where he made a number of notable shorts, e.g., *Two Men and a Wardrobe* (1958). His first feature-length work, the Polish-language *Knife in the Water* (1962), a sexually charged psychological drama, brought him international acclaim. From his earliest efforts and throughout his career, Polanski has exhibited a taste for dramatic situations presented with a cool lack of sentimentality and marked by unexpected violence and a sense of irony, black humor, and isolation and dread. Moving to England, he made three films, the best known of which is the intense, erotic, and terrifying *Repulsion* (1965).

Polanski went on to Hollywood in 1968 and that year made his American debut with the horror classic *Rosemary's Baby*, his greatest commercial success. In 1969 his pregnant wife, Sharon Tate, and a group of their friends were murdered by members of the Charles Manson “family.” Subsequently, Polanski settled in France but returned to the States to make the award-winning noir detective thriller *Chinatown* (1974). After pleading guilty to statutory rape in 1977, he fled (1978) before sentencing to France, where he had become (1976) a citizen, and has not returned to the United States. In 2009 he was arrested in Switzerland on an outstanding warrant arising from the case and placed under house arrest, but he was not extradited (2010) and was released. A request for extradition from Poland was also denied (2015–16).

Polanski's subsequent films include *Tess* (1980), based on a Thomas Hardy novel; the thriller *Frantic* (1988); the erotically compelling *Bitter Moon* (1992); and *Death and the Maiden* (1994), based on an Ariel Dorfman play. After a few largely forgettable films, he directed *The Pianist* (2002), a brooding, intimate, and fear-haunted drama based on the true story of a Holocaust survivor, for which Polanski received an Academy Award. His next major film was *The Ghost Writer* (2010), a moody contemporary political thriller that combines menace with irony. He also has acted in and written screenplays for a number of his films.

See his autobiography (1984);

biographies by T. Kiernan (1981), V. W. Wexman (1985), and C. Sandford (2008);

studies by I. Butler (1970), B. Leaming (1981), J. Parker (1993), and D. Bird (2001);

Corcetti, A. , dir., *Roman Polanski: Reflections of Darkness* (documentary, 2000);

Zenovich, M. , dir., *Roman Polanski: Wanted and Desired* (documentary, 2008).

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