

Lisa Timmermann

**Trauma as Trademark: The Textual and Extratextual Significance of Psychological
Wounds in Roman Polanski's Films**

A Thesis

In

The Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts (Film Studies) at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

May 2007

© Lisa Timmermann, 2007



Library and
Archives Canada

Bibliothèque et
Archives Canada

Published Heritage
Branch

Direction du
Patrimoine de l'édition

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-34466-8
Our file *Notre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-34466-8

NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.


Canada

ABSTRACT

Trauma as Trademark

The Textual and Extra-textual Significance of Psychological Wounds in Roman

Polanski's Films

Lisa Timmermann

This study deals with the representation of traumatic experience in Roman Polanski's oeuvre. I focus particularly on four films: *Chinatown* (1974), *Bitter Moon* (1992), *Death & the Maiden* (1994), and *The Pianist* (2002). My argument is that in these films, trauma acts not only as a textual (thematic *and* formal) motif, but also as an extra-textual element that offers insights into the emotional and psychological effects of traumatic experience. Polanski's own traumatic history – beginning with his experience of the Holocaust – makes him a fascinating and tragically fitting candidate for study. By examining Polanski's work from an authorial perspective as well as in relation to various psychoanalytic concepts, I trace the director's signature in the films' portrayal of male and female traumas. Through my analyses, I hope to show that a psychoanalytic auteur study generates an insightful point of entry into the discussion and understanding of Polanski's work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction. Trauma as Trademark.....	1
Chapter 1. The Artist and the Holocaust: Polanski's portrayal of a personal and historical trauma in <i>The Pianist</i> (2002).....	21
Chapter 2. The Maiden's Trauma: Polanski and the female victim, a case study of <i>Death and the Maiden</i> (1994).....	46
Chapter 3. The Evil and the Helpless: Male characters and trauma in Polanski's <i>Chinatown</i> (1974) and <i>Bitter Moon</i> (1992).....	69
Conclusion. The Outcome of Trauma.....	94
Works Cited.....	99

Introduction: Trauma as Trademark
The Textual and Extra-textual Significance of Psychological Wounds in Roman
Polanski's Films

“I realize today I'm scarred for life.” (Polanski 1984, in Cronin 2000, p. 107)

“You can consider movies as some kind of an X-ray of the director's mind or soul. Even if he tries to hide he can't because it's him.” (Polanski 2000, in Cronin 2000, p. 186)

This study explores the fundamental notion of trauma and how it can be applied to a discussion of Roman Polanski's cinematic oeuvre. Janet Walker defines 'trauma cinema' as “a group of films that deal with a world-shattering event or events, whether public or personal” (2005, p. 19). I argue that Polanski's films largely fit in this category. Using a psychoanalytic framework, I want to examine the cinematic work of Roman Polanski from an authorial perspective in order to shed some light on his idiosyncratic representation of trauma. I will focus primarily on four films: *The Pianist* (2002), *Death and the Maiden* (1994), *Chinatown* (1974) and *Bitter Moon* (1992). I selected this corpus for its explicit (thematic) as well as implicit (stylistic) treatment of trauma. Moreover, each film provides a different perspective on trauma that, in my view, can be linked to Polanski's biography. My main argument is that in these four films, trauma constitutes a textual motif and an extra-textual element that illuminates aspects of Polanski's overall work and its relations to his personal history. My overall purpose is to demonstrate that in Polanski's oeuvre, trauma represents not only a recurring theme, but also a psychological condition producing authorial discourse.

Definition of Trauma

The word 'trauma' comes from the Greek and signifies "wound". In medicine, it is used to describe an "injury or wound to tissue caused by external force or violence" (Brodzki 2004, p. 123). In psychology and psychoanalysis, trauma is understood as a world-shattering personal or group experience that could not have been prevented by the person or people affected by it. Disastrous events such as torture, sexual abuse, severe accidents, military combat and war imprisonment all have a profound impact upon their victims' psyches and therefore count as traumatic experiences (Walker 2005, 3). In Roman Polanski's biography, we can find at least two forms of severe traumatic experience: the loss of his mother to the Holocaust in his childhood, as well as the shock at his wife Sharon Tate's brutal murder in 1969. In the following pages, I will make reference to important psychological and psychoanalytic concepts that form the basis of trauma theory and will be applied in my analysis of Polanski's cinematic representation of trauma.

Judith Herman explains that cultural interest in psychological trauma first emerged in the form of studies on 'hysteria', the "archetypal psychological disorder of women" (1997, p. 9), most notably those made by Jean-Martin Charcot, Pierre Janet and Sigmund Freud. Janet and Freud found out that hysterical symptoms were caused by the patient's altered state of consciousness resulting from a traumatic experience. Janet termed this altered state of mind 'dissociation', while Freud named it 'double consciousness' (Herman 1997, p. 12). In 1926, Freud wrote that, "we know that in hysteria a traumatic experience is able to be overtaken by amnesia" (1948, p. 76). He thus

admitted that the mind represses not only internal drives, but also emotionally intolerable experiences.

After WWI, a second form of trauma emerged in the public consciousness, variously referred to as 'shell shock' or 'combat neurosis', suffered by soldiers and war veterans (Herman 1997, p. 9). Mental breakdowns of soldiers became more and more common; however, it took several years for psychologists to realize the emotional cause of these breakdowns. Rather, the "symptoms of mental breakdown were attributed to a physical cause" (1997, p. 20). Only after the anti-war movement during the Vietnam War, psychological trauma was acknowledged as "a lasting and inevitable legacy of war" (1997, p. 27), resulting in the American Psychiatric Association's addition of a new category to their manual of mental disorders in 1980, namely that of 'post-traumatic stress disorder'.

'Survivor syndrome', a term introduced by the psychiatrist William Niederland in 1964 to describe the common symptoms of Holocaust survivors (Hass 1990, p.8), is recognized today as a form of post-traumatic stress disorder. Since the 1950s, psychologists have researched the long-term effects of the Holocaust on survivors' psyches. Arguably the most severe trauma in history, the Holocaust has produced a wide range of psychological symptoms, such as the experience of survivor guilt (Lifton 1980, p. 118).

Unlike the biographies of Holocaust survivors, the widespread female experiences of sexual and domestic violence have only begun to be publicly recognized and documented as forms of trauma in the 1970s, thanks to American and European feminist

movements. Today, traumatic events in women's personal and domestic lives are known as the most common cause of post-traumatic stress disorder (Herman 1997, p. 28).

Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder are generally identified in terms of the following three categories: 'hyperarousal', 'intrusions' and 'avoidance' (see American Psychiatric Association 2000, p.467; Herman 1997, pp. 35ff). Hyperarousal describes possibly the most noticeable and physical response to emotional trauma. This term defines a state in which the victim is easily startled and in a constant state of distress. Intrusions are flashbacks, nightmares and hallucinations that mark the uncontrollable return of the traumatic experience in the victim's mind. Avoidance can be defined as the victim's attempt to evade anything that might evoke intrusions. Relating to this, Herman uses the term 'constriction' in her discussion of the topic, including symptoms such as emotional detachment, numbing, amnesia, and a limited awareness of time and reality (1997, pp. 43ff.). All of these symptoms can be identified as elements of the state of dissociation. Some of these symptoms will prove relevant in my discussion of different characters in Polanski's films.

In addition to the abovementioned concepts, I will make use of Karyn Freedman's notions of the 'shattered self' and 'shattered worldview' (2006, pp. 104-125), which the author perceives as the two dominant lasting effects of trauma on the victim's psyche. 'Shattered self' describes the unstable emotional state of the trauma victim, while 'shattered worldview' refers to the victim's loss of previously held beliefs. These concepts have not yet been used in studies of a filmic corpus, and will be useful in exploring potential links between Polanski's films and his biography.

Cultural Applications of Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalytic concepts have widely been used in studies of art and culture. Freud himself has studied art and literature in relation to the unconscious desires they reveal about the artist/ author. One example is his book on the famous painter Leonardo da Vinci, *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood* (1965), in which he interprets one of the artist's childhood memories as a symptom of his sexual repression, which Freud perceives as the cause of da Vinci's later preoccupation as an artist. For Freud, art thus works as a substitute for the painter's early lack of sexual fulfillment. In his lecture 'The Paths to the Formation of Symptoms', Freud stated that

An artist is [...] in rudiments an introvert, not far removed from neurosis. He is oppressed by excessively powerful instinctual needs. [...] Their constitution probably includes a strong capacity for sublimation and a certain degree of laxity in the repressions which are decisive for a conflict. (Freud 1917b, p. 376)

My analysis of Polanski's films will be inspired by some of Freud's ideas, especially those concerning psychological defense mechanisms. Anna Freud explains that defense mechanisms are directed against unwanted impulses, such as instincts and affects. In her view, these impulses are mainly of a sexual or aggressive nature and thus incompatible with social behavior (1966, 30ff.). This is why the human psyche attempts to fight them through acts of repression, denial, projection, displacement, and sublimation.

The most prominent psychoanalytic concepts used in film and cultural studies are arguably the Freudian notions of the repressed, the uncanny and the Oedipus complex. Several film theorists, including Linda Williams (1984), Noel Carroll (1990), Carol Clover (1992) and Steven Jay Schneider (2004), have used psychoanalytic concepts in

their discussions of horror films, particularly in relation to sexuality and gender. Freudian notions such as the 'Other' and castration anxiety (see, for instance, Barbara Creed 2004) have frequently been applied to explore hidden meanings of the horror genre. Others, including Laura Mulvey (1975), Tania Modlesky (1988), Mary Ann Doane (1991), and Janet Bergstrom (1999), have employed psychoanalysis to examine specific films or filmmakers from a feminist angle.

Trauma has often been the subject of analysis and discussion in film studies, but predominantly in relation to Holocaust films (see Avisar 1988; Colombat 1993; Zelizer 2001; Insdorf 2002; Baron 2005). In recent years, some film scholars have also begun to examine the representation of bodily and historical trauma in the horror genre. One example is Adam Lowenstein's *Shocking Representation: Historical Trauma, National Cinema, and the Modern Horror Film* (2005).

Another important cinematic genre dealing with trauma and largely neglected within film studies is the rape film. Sarah Projansky's book *Watching Rape – Film and Television in Postfeminist Culture* (2001) offers a significant contribution to the field. Approaching films such as *The Accused* (Jonathan Kaplan 1988) and *Trial By Jury* (Heywood Gould 1994) from a feminist perspective, she examines the ideological patterns of recent rape narratives, and demonstrates that they mostly support a patriarchal, 'postfeminist' worldview. I will draw on some of her ideas for my discussion of female sexual trauma as represented in Polanski's films.

The two works that inspired me to write about the topic of trauma are *Trauma & Cinema – Cross-Cultural Explorations* (E. Ann Kaplan and Ban Wang 2004), and Janet Walker's *Trauma Cinema – Documenting Incest and the Holocaust* (2005), both of

which deal with not only different forms of trauma, but also the ways in which films lend their narratives as well as their formal expression to the idea of trauma. For instance, films may utilize multiple perspectives, a lack of context, and a fragmented narrative structure to evoke different elements of the experience of trauma and its effects on the victim's psyche. Walker claims that, "I define trauma films and videos as those that deal with traumatic events in a nonrealist mode characterized by disturbance and fragmentation of the films' narrative and stylistic regimes. Trauma films depart from 'Hollywood classical realism'" (2005, p. 19). As Walker considers only experimental and documentary films as examples of trauma cinema, I want to demonstrate that even mainstream narrative films can formally render elements of psychological trauma. In my analyses, I will reveal that not only Polanski's early, surrealist-inspired films reflect the experience of psychological trauma in their mise-en-scene and narrative structure, but also his later, realist-based films.

The main psychoanalytic concepts employed by Walker and Kaplan et al and relevant for my discussion of trauma are the notions of repression, denial, dissociation (see Kaplan and Wang 2004, p. 4-6; Walker 2004, p. 127), 'acting out' and 'working through' (Kaplan and Wang 2004, p. 5). Each of these concepts describes a potential psychological response to a traumatic, or at least undesired, personal experience. The latter notions describe two opposite forms of reactions to the loss of a loved object. Freud perceives acting out as an indication of a person's state of 'melancholia', and working through as the behavior of a person in 'mourning'. According to him, 'melancholia' marks the pathological response to a personal loss, while 'mourning' describes a healthy reaction (1917a, p. 310). Both responses contain a "painful mood, the loss of interest in

the outside world [...] the loss of ability to choose any new love-object – which would mean replacing the mourned one – turning away from any task that is not related to the memory of the deceased” (p. 311).

For Freud, there are two major differences between mourning and melancholia. Firstly, he perceives a person in ‘mourning’ as someone who is fully conscious of what he has lost, while in ‘melancholia’, the lost object might be “withdrawn from consciousness” (p. 312). Secondly, he states that “in mourning, the world has become poor and empty, in melancholia it is the ego that has become so” (p. 313).

Walker introduces another psychological concept for the discussion of trauma films, namely the process of what she calls ‘disremembering’. She defines the term as “remembering with a difference” (2005, p. 17), and uses it to describe the “inherent contradiction of traumatic memory”, which, on the one hand, can be “*more* veridical than memories for everyday events when it comes to the ‘gist’ of memory” (p. 4). On the other hand, “traumatic events can and do produce the very amnesias and mistakes in memory that are generally considered to undermine the legitimacy of a retrospective report about a remembered incident” (p. 4). This ambiguity in traumatic memory appears to mirror the state of dissociation, which Kaplan and Wang define as a “split in the psyche’s symbolic function” (2004, p. 4). In my study, I want to demonstrate that amnesias, inner contradictions and ambivalence are dominant features of Polanski’s films.

Trauma & Polanski

In order to understand the significance of trauma in Polanski’s oeuvre, it is important to explore his biography. Leaming offers an accurate description of Polanski’s personal

history when she refers to it as “a life infected by violence and crime” (1981, p. 12).

Polanski was born in Paris in 1933 to Polish émigrés Bula and Ryszard Polanski (Denis Meikle 2006, p. 19). Due to growing anti-Semitism in France (Ryszard was Jewish, Bula part-Jewish), his parents decided to move back to Poland in 1937 (Meikle 2006, p. 21). In 1941, the Nazis resettled the Jewish residents of Krakow to a ghetto. 15,000 ‘working’ Jews and their families were forced to live in a part of the city that, up to this point, had supported only 3,000 inhabitants (p. 23). In 1943, Polanski’s mother was deported and murdered in the concentration camp in Auschwitz. Only weeks later, his father was deported to a labor camp. For two years, Polanski lived with different families, first in the city and later in a village called Wysoka, until he was reunited with his father at the end of the war. From early on, Polanski developed a passion for cinema that was so strong that he would watch Nazi propaganda films because no other films were being shown at the cinemas during the German occupation (Meikle 2006, p. 28). Later, in the Soviet regime, Polanski gained acting experience from the age of 13, and enrolled in Krakow’s School of Fine Arts in 1950, soon afterward receiving training at the Lodz Film School and then the Polish National Film School (Feeney 2006, p. 186). At age 15, Polanski was nearly killed by a man pretending to be interested in buying Polanski’s bicycle. After hitting Polanski on the head with a stone, the man left with the bicycle. In interviews, Polanski has repeatedly discussed this experience.

After a brief marriage to actress Barbara Kwiatkowska and an Oscar nomination for his first feature film *Knife in the Water* (1962), Polanski emigrated to France and formed what Feeney calls “a lifelong creative partnership with Gerard Brach” (2006, p. 187), who from that point on co-wrote the screenplays for most of Polanski’s films,

including *Repulsion* (1964), *The Tenant* (1976), *Frantic* (1988) and *Bitter Moon* (co-written with John Brownjohn, 1992). During their collaboration on *The Fearless Vampire Killers*, Polanski met his second wife Sharon Tate. Less than two years into their marriage, Tate – who was in her last month of pregnancy – was murdered, along with three friends and a passerby, by four members of the Manson ‘family’ in August 1969. The sensationalization of the events by the American press, recurrently blaming the victims and Polanski himself for the murders, left Polanski embittered: “I despise the press tremendously for inaccuracy, for its irresponsibility, for its often even deliberate cruelty” (Polanski 1971, in Cronin 2005, p. 55). Leaming states in her book that “in the coverage of the murders, [Polanski’s] image became a media property; his image linked him to violence, an association that he had long cultivated on screen and that resulted in the tastelessness of the media coverage with its recurrent references to his films” (1981, p. 112).

Polanski’s image in the media did not exactly improve when, eight years later, he was arrested on charges of having sexual relations with a 13-year-old girl. In court, the girl testified that he had given her drugs and performed different sexual acts on her against her will. Polanski was imprisoned for 42 days to receive diagnostic tests (Leaming 1981, p.189), after which psychologists deemed him to be in a healthy mental state. Facing an ‘indefinite’ time in prison followed by deportation (Feeney 2006, p. 187), Polanski voluntarily left the country before the actual court decision, generating a bench warrant for his arrest in the United States (Leaming 1981, p. 189). Since then, Polanski

has never returned to the USA¹. In 1992, he re-married and today has two children with his wife, French actress Emmanuelle Seigner.

According to the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, emotional trauma depends on three factors: in order for an event to be called traumatic and a person traumatized, the event must have been unexpected, the person affected must have been unprepared, and lastly, the person affected must have been unable to prevent the event (2000, pp. 463f.). Those factors apply to several events in Polanski's life: his experiences during the Holocaust as a Jewish child in Poland – living in the ghetto, the deportation of his parents, the murder of his mother – and his experiences as an adult, namely the murder of his wife Sharon Tate in 1969. With regard to the accusation of statutory rape of a thirteen-year-old girl in 1977, however, for which Polanski offered a plea-bargained partial guilty plea before fleeing what he and many others considered a judicial lynching, the application of trauma theory may need to change at this point in his artistic biography. More complexity may be required in our understanding of the director's historical position in relation to trauma, whether this entails inflicting trauma on someone else or the director's experience of self-perceived legal and media persecution and subsequent exile.

Relating to his recurring emotional traumas, Polanski's life has been marked by another physical and emotional experience: exile. Virginia Wright Wexman asserts that

¹ At this point, it is important to note that it is not my intention to impose judgment on Polanski's actions, and that I am striving to offer a modulated and unbiased interpretation of these events in my film analyses of chapters two and three. As the incident has not been proven to have had occurred in the form of rape, I will refer to it as 'alleged' throughout the document.

Historically, Poland has been overrun by almost every country in Europe; and during World War I, Poles were drafted into the Austrian, German, and Russian armies. [...] Poles feel displaced not only geographically but also chronologically. [...] After the [Second World] war, Poles confronted another threat to their culture in the form of Communist repression. (Virginia Wright Wexman 1985, pp. 1-2)

We might therefore conclude that Polanski has experienced exile and oppression *doubly*, not only as a Jewish person, but also as a Polish person. Also, since 1963, Polanski has been living away from his homeland Poland, and since 1977, he has been forced to stay outside the USA. Accordingly, many of his films deal not only with trauma, but also with the notion of exile. Examples abound: Carol, the main character of *Repulsion*, lives in London, but is originally from Belgium; the protagonists of *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Tenant*, and *Death and the Maiden* all experience the feeling of exile in their own homes; and the Jewish character Wladyslaw Szpilman of *The Pianist* is forced to leave his home and move into the Warsaw Ghetto with his family, and is later forced to live in isolation.

The 'Polanskian' Themes & Style

Many structural and symbolic elements connected to the experience of trauma (and exile) are present in Polanski's films. These elements can be interpreted as authorial markers of Polanski's trauma-tainted worldview. Furthermore, these motifs point to collective traumas connected with the socio-cultural context of Polanski's films. Among the recurring features in his oeuvre are specific themes, such as evil, power, violence, sadism, and sexual deviance; as well as formal and structural aspects, including confined settings,

lack of narrative closure and/or tragic endings, the symbolic use of water, and a somber atmosphere created by low-key lighting and the heightened use of 'everyday' sounds (such as dripping taps and ticking clocks).

Polanski's aesthetic and thematic influences are largely modernist. The director is conscious of the way his works have been inspired by surrealism and the theatre of the absurd (Wexman 1985, pp. 13 ff.), which has also shaped the French New Wave. Like many Polish filmmakers of his generation, Polanski has been influenced both stylistically and thematically by this movement, evident in his affinity for existential themes, location shooting, tracking shots, long takes, etc. These elements are especially pronounced in *Knife in the Water*, *The Pianist*, and *Death and the Maiden*.

Absurdist elements in Polanski's films can be found not only in the narratives, but also in the mise-en-scène. In Wexman's view, the mise-en-scène typical of Polanski's work mirrors his pessimism about the possibility of free will:

His compositions reflect [his] negation of free will, for they tend either to be closed and constricting, communicating entrapment, like the boat's cabin in *Knife in the Water*, or open and featureless, offering no guidelines or direction to their human inhabitants, like the snow-covered meadows in *Mammals* (1962).

(Wexman 1985, p. 15)

The isolated and largely confined settings of Polanski's films remind us of another influence in his oeuvre, namely the conventions of the horror film. The frequent shots of dark spaces such as corridors, the heightened use of sounds, the voyeuristic framing of shots through keyholes and camera lenses, and elements of the supernatural in several of his films demonstrate an affinity with the horror genre. Several of his features have been

classified as horror films and discussed largely in relation to this genre. This is particularly true for *Repulsion*, *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Tenant* (1976), and *The Ninth Gate* (1999). Each of these films is also clearly influenced by surrealism, centering on a single character's ambivalent and (possibly) distorted perspective on the world.

While surrealism marks a largely stylistic influence on Polanski's work, absurdist theatre has shaped the films' themes. For instance, like the absurdist plays by Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco etc, Polanski's films almost always revolve around a single character that feels and acts completely different from the people around him. This is true for the protagonists of *The Pianist*, *Death and the Maiden* and *Chinatown*, whose difference and isolation can be linked to their traumatic experiences. Alienation is an overarching theme and can be linked to the notion of exile. Wexman states that Polanski's work shows an "emphasis on isolated individuals rather than large social panoramas" (1985, p. 6). In her view,

Whether 'sane' or 'insane', all of the protagonists of [Polanski's] horror films are marked by a sense of disassociation between self and body. This sense is closely related to their feelings of sexual dis-ease. [...] This discomforting sense of physical alienation is also projected outward onto the environment. Accordingly, what often appears superficially as a natural mise-en-scene is revealed as a subjective expression of the protagonist's disturbed perception. (Wexman 1985, pp. 46-47)

The 'sexual dis-ease' described by Wexman appears mainly in the form of traumas suffered by the films' protagonists. In my second and third chapter, I will talk about the – mostly female – sexual traumas affecting characters in *Death and the Maiden*,

Chinatown, *Bitter Moon*, *Repulsion*, *Tess*, and *Rosemary's Baby*. I interpret Polanski's overreaching interest in female victims as an effect of the loss of his mother during the Holocaust.

In psychoanalytic terms, Polanski's representation of female psychology and experiences can be viewed both as an indication of his desire to comprehend his mother's suffering and as a psychological defense against his own trauma (caused by her trauma); in other words, an attempt at displacing the anger and grief over his mother's suffering and death by way of artistic creation. To me, repression and displacement seem to be particularly significant concepts in a discussion of Polanski's oeuvre and biography. In my first chapter, I will draw attention to the fact that *The Pianist* is his first and only film to date to deal explicitly with the Holocaust. The director's long refusal to make a film about the Holocaust leads us to believe that he has repressed the experience up until this point. As Polanski has pointed out himself, "wherever I really suffered grief [...] I understand now that my mind just tends to reject certain things, to forget them quickly" (1984, in Cronin 2005, p. 101). This idea is confirmed by the omnipresence of trauma in his films, which reminds us of Freud's notion of the 'return of the repressed' (see e.g. Breuer and Freud 1953). Freud describes repetition as synonymous with acting out (1914, p. 395). The compulsion to repeat is therefore an element of the state of melancholia. I will argue that this condition is firmly imprinted on much of Polanski's oeuvre, as virtually all of his films before *The Pianist* deal *implicitly* and thus, unconsciously, with Polanski's traumatic experience of the Holocaust.

In *Death and the Maiden*, *Tess*, and particularly in his early films *Repulsion* and *Rosemary's Baby*, Polanski concentrates on female victims and represents the world

around them from their perspectives, thereby guiding the spectator to follow these characters and identify with their point-of-view. In the two later films, the female protagonists still invoke the viewer's empathy, but Polanski now rejects a demonization of the male perpetrator in favor of a more ambivalent representation of the infliction of trauma. In my second and third chapter, I will examine the inner contradictions forming in the portrayals of victims and perpetrators in Polanski's work after the rape case, and will reveal links between the films' ambivalence (especially in *Death and the Maiden*, *Tess* and *Bitter Moon*) and the changes in Polanski's personal life.

Concepts of authorship: Polanski, the trauma *auteur*

Interestingly enough, Polanski has frequently been discussed in relation to his sensational and often tragic life, but much less in terms of his work as a film director. The only major work discussing Polanski's biography in relation to his films is Barbara Leaming's book *Polanski – A Biography: The Filmmaker as Voyeur* (1981). According to Leaming, Polanski's "own violent life and times – from Hitler to the Manson 'family' – form the subtext of his cinema" (1981, p. 11), and therefore his films cannot "be separated from him" (p. 12).

Examining the films in relation to the director's biography and proposing an argument about their expression of his shattered self and worldview, I will defend the position that Polanski is an *auteur*. However, as any use of theory in film studies, *auteurist* approaches to a given director essentially rely on hypotheses, not facts. I would therefore like to emphasize that my analysis of Polanski's films is not aimed at unearthing a definitive truth about Polanski and his work, but rather at identifying

suggestive correspondences between the films' (sub)textual patterns and the director's personal history. The definition of 'auteur' as it applies to my study is a combination of different theories of authorship. First of all, my analysis of the four films will adhere to the structural approach advanced by critics such as Peter Wollen and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith who have examined recurring themes and narrative devices in single directors' bodies of work.

In her chapter 'Authorship Approaches' in *Authorship and Film* (2003), Janet Staiger names several different ways in which film authorship has been conceptualized over time. I will sum up some of her concepts, most of which apply to my study of Polanski. Staiger describes the idea of the author as the 'origin' of a text. In this concept, the author is viewed as "a free agent, the message is a direct expression of the author's agency, and production is untroubled philosophically or linguistically" (2003, p. 30). This definition sums up the initial way in which the cinematic *auteur* was conceptualized. However, it does not reflect my understanding of the term in relation to Polanski. Rather, my conceptualization of Polanski as an *auteur* is mirrored in the second interpretation offered by Staiger, namely the notion of the author as 'personality'. In this model, authorial intention does not play a significant role, as the author is not necessarily conscious of his intentions or of what he is creating. Staiger explains that "causal force (control over parts of the parts of production) is overlaid with personal idiosyncrasies", meaning that "context or family or trauma may produce distortions and repressions or even cover-ups in an author's external flowing of self into the medium" (2003, p. 33). This perception of the author has often been used to differentiate national cinemas, such as the distinction between French cinema and classical Hollywood films (p. 34).

Confirming my earlier statements about Polanski's films, Staiger also mentions that in this theory, "*repetition* is where the critic finds the director's perspective" (p. 35), and that the director is perceived as a possibly ambivalent, but nonetheless consistent personality (p. 40). John Caughie sums up the idea of the author as 'personality' by stating that the authorial text is regarded as "a play of tensions, silences and repressions, in which the author is a problematic 'inscription' rather than an intentional source of meaning, a personality or a principle of unity" (1981, p. 14). Caughie regards Andrew Sarris' famous essay 'Notes on the Auteur Theory' (1962) as a good example of this view on authorship, as it detects 'interior meaning' in the "tension between the director's personality and his material" (1981, p. 14). In my view, Polanski's history of trauma produces 'interior meaning' in his films by forming a "play of tensions, silences and repressions." The films reveal the director's ambivalent personality and shattered worldview caused by his traumatic experiences.

In another closely related approach, the notion of authorship as 'signature', the repetitions in a director's work are regarded as unconscious, due to the individual's position "within historical structures" (Staiger 2003, p. 43). Staiger elaborates this point by writing that "in the signature approach to authorship, the author is known by repetition among the various texts 'signed' by a historical person. The message is an expression of the variable features produced unintentionally but traceable across a set of films because of the continuing and coherent presence of the person writing those texts" (2003, p. 43). According to Staiger, essays by Jim Kitses, Alan Lovell, Nowell-Smith and Wollen make use of this theory. In my study, I argue that the motifs in Polanski's films are not

(necessarily) intentional, but hint rather at an ongoing unconscious influence of Polanski's traumatic history on his interests, preoccupations, and worldview.

My study will also emphasize the idea of authorship as a 'site of discourses'. In this conceptualization, the author is "a body devoid of agency and continuity and, potentially, of significance" (Staiger 2003, p. 46). The author's intentions are ambiguous and not important. He is understood most of all as "a tablet upon and through which culture writes its historical discourses." (p. 46). I regard Polanski as an *auteur* whose authorship is a result not so much of his individuality but of his *biography* – the historical events that shaped his life and personality.

Tom Gunning argues that "the idea of an author can be valuable insofar as it opens texts to historical forces, and pernicious insofar as it insulates films in an ahistorical cult of personality" (Gunning 2002, p. 189). As I have mentioned, my study will relate to history and politics, as I will examine the relationship between Polanski's filmography and the traumatic events occurring in his life – events which were largely beyond his control, the most severe of which were not merely personal, but also collective, as they affected an entire people, i.e. the Jewish population in Europe. Stephen Crofts confirms that an understanding of the author as a 'social subject' draws attention away from the author onto the political, historical and cultural influences on his work (Crofts 2000, p. 94). My study will demonstrate that Polanski's art has largely been shaped by historical and personal events rather than solely his own creative mind.

Finally, I am hoping to make a contribution to the discussion of authorship, especially with regards to Polanski's oeuvre – firstly, by using psychoanalytic theories in combination with the aforementioned concepts of authorship: as noted by Linda Badley,

“discourses surrounding film authorship have shown little interest in psychoanalysis” (2004, p. 222); and secondly, by analyzing the director’s work in the acknowledgement of gender. Central examples of ‘gendered-author studies’ are Laura Mulvey’s and Tania Modleski’s works on Hitchcock (Crofts 2000, p. 94). Apart from Herbert Eagle’s chapter ‘Polanski’ in Daniel J. Goulding’s *Five Filmmakers* (1994) and Helena Goscilo’s chapter ‘Polanski’s Existential Body – As Somebody, Nobody and Anybody’ in *The Cinema of Roman Polanski – Dark Spaces of the World* (John Orr and Elzbieta Ostrowska 2006), no recent publication has thoroughly examined Polanski’s oeuvre in relation to gender issues.

Chapter 1

The Artist and the Holocaust

Polanski's portrayal of a historical and personal trauma in *The Pianist* (2002)

“Pessimism, in fact, is what life experience teaches us.” (Polanski 1984, in Cronin 2005, p. 103)

“[Violence] interests me. It has to interest me – as a serious human expression, as a mysterious but somehow unavoidable fact.” (Polanski 1974, in Cronin 2005, p. 63)

Ronald Harwood's screenplay for Roman Polanski's film *The Pianist* (2002) is based on the memoirs *Death of a City* (1945; trans. Anthea Bell 1999) by Wladyslaw Szpilman, a Jewish pianist and Holocaust survivor. In his book, Szpilman recounts his experiences in the Warsaw Ghetto and after the deportation of his family to the concentration camps. He lived in hiding for three years until the liberation of the city by the Soviets in 1945. For Polanski, who survived the Krakow Ghetto and also escaped deportation, this was the first book about this period that he was so moved by that he aspired to adapt it to the screen (Szpilman 1999). *The Pianist* is his first and only film to date that deals explicitly with the Holocaust.

This chapter will deal with the representation of trauma in *The Pianist*, both in relation to Szpilman's and Polanski's similar experiences, and to Polanski's overall work. In analyzing the film from an auteurist and psychoanalytic perspective, I will argue that

The Pianist represents the Holocaust as a collective and personal trauma, by developing a narrative at the same time historical and symbolic. The film offers a faithful and objective recreation of the events and social conditions of the Jewish population in the Warsaw Ghetto, drawing on newsreels and photographs from the period and detailed accounts of events experienced or witnessed by Szpilman in his memoirs. Nonetheless, *The Pianist* makes use of a variety of formal techniques to portray the characters' psychological experience of trauma.

Most discussions of Holocaust films concentrate on sociological or ethical issues. In contrast, my examination of *The Pianist* will be based on psychoanalytical concepts of trauma. Using an authorial approach, I will explore the film's analogies to Polanski's other work, as well as the historical and psychological links between Szpilman and Polanski's experiences. In this film, Polanski brings together the collective and personal dimensions implicit in the traumatic experience of the Holocaust. In my study, I will focus on the manifestation of these two dimensions in the film's narrative and style.

At the outset, I will sum up the historical events depicted in the film. Both Szpilman's memoirs and Polanski's film recount the gradual escalation of Nazi persecution of the Jewish people in Warsaw from the beginning of the war in 1939 up until the defeat of the Germans by the Soviets in 1945. Soon after the Nazis had taken over the city, they started to randomly execute Jewish citizens. Even though they initially promised the Jewish people that they would keep "all their rights, the inviolability of their property, and that their lives would be absolutely secure" (Szpilman 1999, p. 41), they soon issued decrees specifically targeting the Jewish citizens, such as an allowance of "no more than two thousand zloty at home" and the obligation to hand over their real

estate to the Germans (p. 45). Public degradation of Jewish people began with the requirement to bow to every German soldier (p. 49). From November 1939, Jews were forced to leave their houses after 5pm (Dor 2003), and to wear armbands displaying the Star of David (Szpilman 1999, p. 54). Within the next two months, public Jewish places such as schools and synagogues were shut down (Dor 2003). Soon after, transports of Jewish people to labor camps in Belzec and Hrubieszow began (Szpilman 1999, p. 57), and in November 1940, all Jewish inhabitants of Warsaw were transferred to a district chosen by the Germans to serve as Jewish ghetto (Dor 2003).

The Warsaw ghetto was the largest of all Jewish ghettos established by the Nazis in the Holocaust. During the three years of its existence, the ghetto's initial population of 450,000 dropped to 37,000 (*Warsaw ghetto* 2007), due mainly to mass deportations to concentration and extermination camps, but also due to the harsh conditions in the ghetto itself, causing a multitude of deaths by starvation and diseases such as typhus. Szpilman had to witness his family's deportation when a Jewish policeman pulled him out of the crowd at the *Umschlagplatz*. He survived the Holocaust thanks to the help of several friends and a German officer named Wilm Hosenfeld.

Roman Polanski's experiences in the Krakow Ghetto were comparably traumatic. Born in Paris in 1933 to a Polish-Jewish man and a Russian woman, Polanski and his family moved to Poland in 1937 due to growing anti-Semitism in France. Soon, the Polanski family was forced to move to the Kracow ghetto. In 1941, Polanski's mother was deported to Auschwitz; only weeks later followed the deportation of his father to the Austrian concentration camp of Mauthausen (Leaming 1981, p. 16). From this time on, Polanski lived in hiding with different families until in 1945, he was reunited with his

father. Polanski's mother had died in Auschwitz (Leaming 1981, p. 17). As Polanski himself has stated about life in the ghetto, "among all the possible types of suffering, the greatest was the separation from the parents. I think for a child, this is the saddest and most tragic [...] thing. Lack of comfort, hunger, [...], it's absolutely secondary" (Interview in *A Story of Survival* [DVD feature] 2003).

As mentioned before, *The Pianist* is Polanski's first and only film to date that deals explicitly with the Holocaust. As noted by Izabela Kalinowska, author of multiple publications on Polish cinema, "although the traumas he sustained have left a mark on Polanski's way of interpreting reality, all of his works prior to *The Pianist* have been devoid of any overt references either to his or Poland's traumatic past" (2006, p. 133). His long artistic silence about the Holocaust appears all the more peculiar in view of the gravity of Polanski's personal traumas during this period, particularly the loss of his mother. We might understand this deferral as a signal of Polanski's repression of these traumatic experiences. Also, even though *The Pianist* contains references to some of Polanski's personal experiences, the film is for the most part based on another person's memoirs. The fact that Polanski chooses not to address his own firsthand experience of the Holocaust not only points to the weight of his personal trauma, but also suggests its deep-seated containment within his psyche. In fact, his entire oeuvre has been marked by the representation of trauma, yet largely implicitly and thus possibly unconsciously.

I propose that the conscious re-enactment of the past in *The Pianist* offers Polanski an attempt at 'working through' the most violent traumatic experiences in his life. In my view, the film could be perceived as the manifestation of Polanski's process of 'mourning' the Holocaust, in contrast to the "pathological condition" of 'melancholia'

(Freud 1917a, p. 310) that can be detected in Polanski's earlier work, and which I will discuss in more detail in the following chapters. Freud used the terms 'mourning' and 'melancholia' to describe two different psychological processes resulting from an experience of loss. According to Freud, melancholia is defined by

A profoundly painful depression, a loss of interest in the outside world, the loss of the ability to love, the inhibition of any kind of performance and a reduction in the sense of self, expressed in self-recrimination and self-directed insults, intensifying into the delusory expectation of punishment. (Freud 1917a, p. 311)

For Freud, the major difference between melancholia and mourning exists in the fact that, in mourning, we do not experience a "disorder of self-esteem" (p. 311). Further, Freud distinguishes the two responses on the basis of the lost object's presence in the affected person's mind: "... the obvious thing is for us somehow to relate melancholia to the loss of an object that is withdrawn from consciousness, unlike mourning, in which no aspect of the loss is unconscious". Hence, Freud assumes that a melancholic patient "cannot consciously grasp what he has lost" (p. 312). Freud uses the aforementioned concept of 'working through' and the concept of 'acting out' to describe the distinct forms of behavior resulting from the states of mourning and melancholia, respectively. While acting out can be defined as the "melancholy possession of the subject by the repressed past" (Kaplan and Wang 2004, p. 5), working through describes the process of analyzing the trauma, accepting "certain repressed elements and [thereby freeing oneself] from the grip of mechanisms of repetition" (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, p. 488). Repression, generally understood as the psyche's defense mechanism against "primitive, forbidden, Id-impulses, especially of a sexual nature", has also been defined as the psyche's

resistance to traumatic memories (Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 1995, p. 168).

According to psychoanalytic opinion, repressed memories are bound to be repeated in the traumatized person's subconscious mind, taking the shape of hallucinations and nightmares (Caruth 1995, p. 4; Erikson 1995, p. 184). In the context of trauma, the second sense of the word prevails.

Another psychoanalytic concept that will prove relevant in my analysis is the notion of 'dissociation', a term first proposed by Pierre Janet and defined by Elizabeth Waites as "a psychobiological mechanism that allows the mind [after the experience of a trauma] to flee what the body is experiencing, thus maintaining a selective conscious awareness that has survival value" (quoted by Walker 2004, p. 127).

I will begin my analysis of *The Pianist* by tracking some of the film's structural deviations from Szpilman's memoirs which prove essential to the ways in which trauma is represented, and will continue by examining Polanski's formal choices in relation to the traumas depicted. Even though both the script by Ronald Harwood and Polanski's filmic adaptation are predominantly faithful to Szpilman's memoirs, there are some significant differences. In his memoirs, Szpilman tells us first about life in the Warsaw Ghetto, describing the inhumane conditions under which so many Jewish people had to live. Then, in the second chapter, he takes us back to the beginning of the war, thereby contrasting the Jewish people's free and equal lives before the Nazis' invasion of Poland with the inhumane conditions of the ghetto described in the previous chapter. Polanski chooses not to include any flashbacks in his film, and thus starts his narrative from the beginning of the Nazi invasion in Warsaw. It is important to note that in Polanski's films, flashbacks are rarely used, the only notable exception being those found in *Bitter Moon*.

For Kalinowska, the fact that Polanski rejects the very “narrative device that best represents the process of remembering” reveals his “need for distance, or perhaps even a clear break, from the past” (2006, p. 134), suggesting symptoms of repression and avoidance, common in trauma victims. Another factor in Polanski’s artistic choices for this particular film is the fact that he strives to deliver an objective and accurate account of the historical and personal events as described in Szpilman’s memoirs. In reading these accounts, Polanski was impressed by Szpilman’s use of a predominantly detached, matter-of-fact writing style (Interview in *A Story of Survival*). While Szpilman meticulously follows the process of ever-exacerbating dehumanizing procedures of the Nazis against Jewish Poles in preparation of the genocide, providing detailed descriptions of many atrocities he witnessed during the period, he rarely provides insights into his own emotional state. However, the few passages in which he describes his feelings are not depicted in the film. For instance, Szpilman writes that shortly after his family’s deportation, he had a revealing dream in which his brother told him, “We are dead now” (Szpilman 1999, p. 116).

Polanski, on the other hand, avoids any use of dream or fantasy sequences involving Szpilman’s past, and never reaches for strategies to directly convey Szpilman’s state of mind. However, the director frequently chooses to frame Brody’s Szpilman in medium close-ups, hence triggering the desired emotional involvement on the part of the spectator, and conveying through Brody’s facial expressions the symptoms of trauma that Polanski envisions in Szpilman. In so doing, Polanski may unwittingly express symptoms of his own. Brody’s character offers the vantage point from which the audience views the action. At the same time, the film is predominantly framed in long or medium shots,

maintaining physical distance to the events and thereby keeping the audience aware of their own (psychological and historical) distance from them. *The Pianist* thus places emphasis on one of three dominant symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder: constriction; and renounces another symptom: intrusion. Judith Herman sums up the three symptoms as follows: “Hyperarousal reflects the persistent expectation of danger; intrusion reflects the indelible imprint of the traumatic moment; constriction reflects the numbing response of surrender” (Herman 1997, p.35). By denying us an inspection of the character’s inner world, apart from a reading of outward gestures and facial expressions, Polanski leads the audience to assume that Szpilman is not only numbed in his behavior, suggested by his frequent appearance as helpless witness to the horrifying events around him; but also numbed internally, in that he is unable to grasp the traumatic events on an intellectual or emotional level.

Donald Kalsched links the inner detachment characteristic of constriction with the psychoanalytic concept of dissociation by stating that “the psyche’s normal reaction to a traumatic experience is to withdraw from the scene of the injury. If withdrawal is not possible, then a part of the self must be withdrawn, and for this to happen the otherwise integrated ego must split into fragments or *disassociate*” (Kalsched 1996, pp. 12-13). This response can be seen as the human brain’s way of enduring trauma by repressing essential parts of the experience. We might argue that Szpilman’s evasion of the psychological processing of trauma played a significant role in his survival of the Holocaust.

In *The Pianist*, dissociation is also reflected in the narrative structure. Polanski dedicates equal screen time to the Szpilman family’s experience in the ghetto as he does

to the period following their deportation, which depicts Szpilman by himself, in hiding. The film thus deals with two socially and emotionally separate periods in Szpilman's life. This creates the sense that the narrative is split in two, or dissociated. The first half of the film marks the rapid transition from the Szpilmans' situation as a well-off, respected family to a family existing in constant fear, degradation and increasing poverty. The second half of the film begins with Wladyslaw Szpilman's sudden loss of everything that mattered to him, namely his family and his career as a pianist. As Szpilman's life completely changes within a single day, the film also changes at this point of the narrative. Polanski emphasizes the gap between the two periods by excluding any references of the traumatic events depicted in the first half of the film from the second half. His refusal to follow the mainstream conventions of flashbacks and voice-over narration as a way of communicating Szpilman's emotions to the audience might be explained by a desire to stress the psychological *complexity* of trauma, to avoid overt and therefore simplified renditions of inner turmoil and change. The film thereby also complicates the audience's involvement with the character. The film withholds information such as Szpilman's recognition of his family's death in the above-mentioned dream, and in so doing indirectly depicts Szpilman's emotional experience as that of the dissociated state of melancholia, while at the same time making us aware of our impossibility to fully comprehend Szpilman's experiences and their effects on his psyche.

In this way, Polanski portrays Szpilman as a more enigmatic person than the narrator of the memoirs himself. Nonetheless, he uses different strategies to indirectly convey Szpilman's state of mind and to bestow him with human qualities we can easily identify with. One of these strategies is the rather conventional method of creating a love

interest for Szpilman, the character Dorota who is never mentioned in the memoirs.

Another way in which Polanski makes Szpilman a sympathetic character is by focusing on his love for music. For instance, the film includes a piano in one of Szpilman's hiding places, the building opposite a German hospital. In one scene, Szpilman sits down in front of this piano. As he must not provoke any noise to remain safe in his hiding place, Szpilman runs his fingers along the keys but does not touch them. The audience hears the music as he is supposedly playing it in his head. This scene evokes a sense of tragic irony and illustrates not only Szpilman's isolation and ongoing lack of freedom, but also his inner craving to play the piano, without explicitly revealing his state of mind to us.

Polanski emphasizes the importance of music for Szpilman in many other scenes, particularly the sequence involving the Nazi officer Wilm Hosenfeld, who found Szpilman in a state of near starvation in one of his hiding places and ended up helping him. In contrast to most other conversations described in the memoirs and included in the film, the first dialogue between Szpilman and Hosenfeld has been modified significantly in content and tone. In his memoirs, Szpilman remembers Hosenfeld assuring him that he had "no intention of doing anything" to him (1999, p. 177), and responding to Szpilman's question whether he was German with "Yes, I am! And ashamed of it, after everything that's been happening" (p. 179). The film excludes those lines and thus leaves Hosenfeld's intentions unclear until the end of the scene. When, in the film, Hosenfeld asks Szpilman to play the piano for him, we do not know whether Hosenfeld will kill Szpilman or help him. As Lawrence Baron, author and professor of Jewish history, has observed,

Polanski presents Hosenfeld as an enigmatic figure whose benevolence appears to be situational rather than ethical. Did he spare Szpilman because he loved music? Did he feel he had no reason to kill Szpilman since the war was lost? Did he want Szpilman to testify before a Soviet tribunal that he had treated him decently? Appalled by Nazi brutality against Polish civilians, particularly Jews, the real Hosenfeld saved a number of them during the war. (Baron 2005, pp. 246-247)

One can say that the ambiguity of the film's characterization of Hosenfeld creates a certain degree of tension and suspense that would not arise in a faithful adaptation of the memoirs which describe Hosenfeld not as a menacing figure, but as an instantly helpful and trustworthy person.

More importantly, the modification allows for a stronger impact of Szpilman's piano performance on the film's spectator, and guides our attention to Szpilman's response to Hosenfeld's surprising behavior. When he sees the German officer standing in the doorway, he freezes and stares at Hosenfeld with wide eyes, his hands shaking slightly. Szpilman is filmed in medium shots, whereas Hosenfeld is framed in medium close-ups shot from a low angle that gives him a powerful and menacing appearance. When he questions Szpilman about his residence and work, Hosenfeld's face reveals no expression, neither of sympathy nor malice.

Asked to play the piano, Szpilman performs Chopin's Ballade No.1 in G Minor, Op. 23, even though Szpilman's memoirs mention him actually playing Chopin's Nocturne in C Sharp Minor. With its dark tone and continual change in rhythm and pitch, the piece used in the film expresses different emotions such as madness, terror, grief, and rage, reminding the viewer of Szpilman's horrifying experiences during the Holocaust.

The uncertainty of Hosenfeld's intentions adds a sense of urgency to Szpilman's piano performance. Only when he starts playing, does Hosenfeld's expression turn soft; sitting down, he watches Szpilman attentively. Afterwards, Hosenfeld leaves, despite having discovered Szpilman's hiding place in the attic. Once alone, Szpilman begins to cry. Hosenfeld returns twice more, each time providing food for Szpilman.

In focusing on Hosenfeld's emotional transformation during the piano performance, the scene implies that his final decision to help Szpilman comes as a response to the music. In Polanski's view, Szpilman survived the Holocaust "thanks to his passion for the art, and for the music in particular, thanks to his willpower" (Polanski, interview in *A Story of Survival*). Moreover, Hosenfeld's display of compassion contradicts Szpilman's previous experience with the Germans. Szpilman's emotional breakdown at the end of the scene might be linked to this contradiction. According to Karyn Freedman, trauma victims often suffer a state of 'cognitive dissonance' (Leon Festinger 1957), which arises out of the fact that their old worldviews have been shattered by traumatic experience and cannot be reconciled with their new set of beliefs. According to Freedman, "Festinger argued that individuals tend to seek consistency among their beliefs, and that when an individual holds contradictory or conflicting beliefs (cognitions) the result is a psychological state of anxiety (dissonance)" (Freedman 2006, p. 111). The Holocaust has taught Szpilman that trust in the human spirit can only be disappointed. Meeting a Nazi whom he *can* trust is paradoxical and can therefore only result in cognitive dissonance.

In spite of the fact that the film offers a less positive portrayal of Hosenfeld than the memoirs, *The Pianist* generally avoids the stereotyping of Nazis and other social

groups and nationalities that is common to most popular American Holocaust dramas, such as *Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg, 1993) and the TV series *Holocaust* (Martin J. Chomsky, 1978). In her book *Indelible Shadows – Film and the Holocaust*, Annette Insdorf writes that *Schindler's List* is “a story of moral polarities – between the demented, omnipotent Nazi commandant Goeth (Ralph Fiennes) and the vulnerable, self-effacing Jewish accountant Stern (Ben Kingsley)” (2003, p. 259). By contrast, in Polanski's film, Jews are not solely represented as victims; some of them are traitors, collaborating with the Nazis for their own survival, such as the number of Jewish policemen teaming up with the SS; and some of them are heroes, fighting against the Nazis in the Ghetto Uprising. Polanski himself has stated that “there are good Jews and bad Jews in the film. And that's how it was. There were good Germans and bad Germans, there were good Poles and bad Poles” (Interview, *A Story of Survival*). Hence, we can argue that Polanski's ultimate goal was to stay faithful to the memoirs while creating a complex, diversified portrayal of the nationalities and cultures involved in the narrative.

The Pianist remains faithful to the memoirs also in terms of the depiction of the brutal and dehumanizing events that occurred in the Warsaw Ghetto. One of the most striking examples is Szpilman's futile attempt to rescue a boy who tries to get back into the ghetto through a hole in the wall but who is beaten to death by a Nazi on the other side (Szpilman 1999, p. 13). At another instance, Szpilman witnesses a group of Nazis forcing a crowd of Jewish people, including the weak and the elderly, to dance on the street (p. 67). In a later scene, he observes the quarrel between a 'grabber' and a woman over her can of food, which ends with the can dropping and spilling over the pavement, and the man eating the contents off the street (p. 74). Other graphic examples include the

Gestapo's murder of a crippled, old man by callously pushing him off a balcony in front of his family (pp. 79-80); the Nazis' frequent execution of Jewish workers; the events at the *Umschlagplatz* (pp. 100-107), where thousands of Jewish people waited for deportation; as well as Szpilman's eyewitness view of Jews jumping from the windows of a burning building (p. 138).

Though the horrors of the Holocaust can never be fully rendered in narrative films, *The Pianist* omits only very few of the gruesome details described in the book, thus showing us the scope of brutality and degradation that Szpilman experienced in the Warsaw Ghetto and at the *Umschlagplatz*. As Baron has observed, the film includes various explicit scenes of violence that "symbolize the ubiquitous danger and deprivation Jews confronted in the ghetto" (p. 245). Some of these I have outlined above.

Polanski's contribution of a few personal experiences helped create the film's mood of terror and despair. According to the filmmaker, "I used a great deal of my own recollection" (Polanski, Interview in *A Story of Survival*). The director integrated some of his most disturbing memories of the Krakow ghetto into the film. Perhaps the most affecting example is the moment in which a Jewish woman standing in line with other Jewish people asks one of the SS officers watching them "Where will you bring us?" and he reacts by immediately shooting her in the head (Polanski, Interview in *A Story of Survival*). This event reveals the pervasive danger of the period. Another of Polanski's personal contributions appears when, in an early scene, Szpilman's father gets slapped for not walking in the gutter. Polanski remembers this act of public degradation occurring to his own father before the Krakow ghetto even existed (*A Story of Survival*). These autobiographical scenes show which traumatic events Polanski remembers most clearly

from his childhood: unexpected, random acts of violence and the humiliating treatment of people close to him. Polanski depicts these events in a direct and detached manner, shooting the action from a distance with a static camera, and eschewing non-diegetic sound. The de-dramatized presentation of scenes leaves the audience unprepared for each of the traumatic incidents; the SS officer's abrupt execution of the Jewish woman being a prime example. Polanski thus places the audience in the very position he found himself in experiencing these events: uncertain of future events and increasingly apprehensive. By depicting the traumatic incidents in a way unexpected by the audience, Polanski renders them all the more shocking and disturbing.

Polanski's clear memories of the experiences described above can be considered the very sign of their traumatizing effect on his psyche. Defining her notion of the 'traumatic paradox', Janet Walker explains that even though traumatic events often interrupt memory processing and cause amnesias, "memories for traumatic events are known for being *more* veridical than memories for everyday events when it comes to the "gist" of memory" (2005, p. 4).

When, in the most tragic moment in the film, Szpilman is separated from his family and given the chance to flee from the *Umschlagplatz*, Polanski, again, "interjects his childhood memories into the story":

In the memoir, Szpilman darts away as quickly as he can. In Polanski's case, he asked a Polish guard if he could fetch some food for the journey. The guard warned him not to run but to walk slowly so that he wouldn't attract attention. Polanski retains Szpilman's rescue by a Jewish policeman but adds the advice about not running. (Baron 2005, p. 245)

Through this modification, Polanski places emphasis on the high, ever-present risk of getting caught, and the necessity of remaining calm in the face of danger. It also provides the sense of ubiquitous evil of evil and imminent danger that pervaded Polanski's and Szpilman's lives during the Holocaust.

As these scenes make clear, like Szpilman, Polanski has witnessed the Nazis' brutality towards the Jewish people. Both also experienced the deportation of their family, along with many other survivors of the Holocaust. The Holocaust evidently represents a personal as well as collective trauma for Jewish survivors. Erikson's definition of 'collective trauma' constitutes a "blow to the basic tissues of social life that damages the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of community" (1995, p. 187). Genocide survivors will probably always feel, to some degree, different and disconnected from the rest of the population. Survival can therefore be described as a trauma in itself. As per Caruth, Freud's theory of the death drive offers us the insight that, "for those who undergo trauma, it is not only the moment of the event, but of the passing out of it that is traumatic" (1995, p. 9). For this reason, "trauma is not simply an effect of destruction but also, fundamentally, an enigma of survival" (Caruth 1996, p. 58). Survival guilt is another common experience for victims of chronic trauma. According to Judith Herman, "feelings of guilt are especially severe when the survivor has been a witness to the suffering or death of other people. To be spared oneself, in the knowledge that others have met a worse fate, creates a severe burden of conscience" (1997, p. 54).

Szpilman and Polanski share more than the experience and memory of the Holocaust as Jewish survivors: their memories similarly contain artistic influences. As a

pianist, Szpilman paid close attention to sound. In his memoirs, he gives detailed and vivid descriptions of sounds, associating each one with a different mood or feeling. This is evident, for instance, in the section in which he narrates his performance for Wilm Hosenfeld:

I played Chopin's Nocturne in C sharp minor. The glassy, tinkling sound of the untuned strings rang through the empty flat and the stairway, floated through the ruins of the villa on the other side of the street and returned as a muted, melancholy echo. When I had finished, the silence seemed even gloomier and more eerie than before. A cat mewed in a street somewhere. I heard a shot down below outside the building – a harsh, loud German noise. (Szpilman 1999, p. 178)

Moreover, even years into the war, Szpilman did not give up his hopes of continuing his career as a pianist after the war (see p. 171). Polanski's film highlights the idea that music played a large role in Szpilman's survival of the Holocaust. This idea is furthered in the film's ending. By employing a clearly-resolved 'Hollywoodian' conclusion, depicting a well-dressed Szpilman gracefully playing the piano for a packed theatre, Polanski articulates the significance of Szpilman's chosen art form vis-à-vis his recovery from the trauma of the Holocaust. In this way, Polanski implicitly suggests that his own chosen art form, filmmaking, may have played an equally significant part in his recovery from his own traumatic experience of the Holocaust.

Polanski chooses an effective way to depict traumatic experience in *The Pianist*. Even though he presents events centered on Szpilman, the director shoots the action predominantly in long and medium shots, thus assuming a generally detached perspective of the events. In contrast to many Hollywood films about the Holocaust, such as

Schindler's List, Polanski refrains from shooting dramatic incidents in close-up or resorting to manipulative non-diegetic music. Instead, he frames brutal scenes predominantly in static long shots. This strategy not only suggests an avoidance of sensationalized violence, but imbues every image with a documentary tone; the detached perspective implying an external witness of events.

The absence of additional sound contributes to the sense of authenticity generated by the images. Knowing that close-ups of the protagonist and sentimental music would have shaped the spectator's response to the images, Polanski largely renounces the use of both aesthetic techniques. One case in point is a scene occurring shortly after the deportation of Szpilman's family, when an SS officer orders seven Jewish men to step out of their group and to lie face down; after complying, the men are executed. Almost the entire scene unfolds in one long take and is framed in a static long shot. When the SS officer stands in front of the seventh man, Szpilman's friend Benek, the officer discovers he has run out of bullets.

At this point, Polanski does not frame the officer's face, but instead offers a medium close-up of the officer's hands, retrieving ammunition and calmly loading the pistol. In this way, he emphasizes the officer's anonymity and the cold arbitrariness of his murders, as well as the namelessness and exchangeability of the victims in the Nazis' eyes. The next shot reveals Benek's reaction, his face framed in a medium close-up as he looks up in terror. Then the officer shoots him. Polanski follows this image with a medium close-up of Szpilman who swallows and looks down. The scene ends with a low-angle shot of the victims with Benek in the foreground. With the exception of the sound of bullets firing and the loading of the gun, this scene is completely devoid of sound,

reflecting the absent meaning in the killings and the paralysis of the bystanders, unable to prevent them. Szpilman's powerlessness to prevent the murder of his friend is proof of the event's traumatic impact on him. As Van der Kolk and Van der Hart suggest, "a feeling of helplessness, of physical or emotional paralysis, is fundamental to making an experience traumatic" (1995, p. 175). Szpilman's lack of an external response demonstrates the numbness characteristic of the symptom of constriction, defined earlier in this chapter.

Throughout *The Pianist*, Szpilman becomes a witness to various forms of degradation, brutality and murder, none of which he is able to prevent or bring to a halt. Most scenes, as previously discussed, contain minimal sound. Through this formal choice, Polanski's film reflects Caruth's notion of the 'breakdown of language' in trauma (Kaplan and Wang 2004, p. 4). Van der Kolk and Van der Hart explain this idea by stating that traumatic experiences "cannot be organized on a linguistic level, and this failure to arrange the memory in words and symbols leaves it to be organized on somatosensory or iconic levels" (Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 1995, p. 172). Most of the second half of the film is marked by an extreme lack of speech, which can be explained by Szpilman's isolation in hiding and the requirement to stay as silent as possible so that he will not get caught.

Polanski does not include any monologues or voice-overs to express Szpilman's state of mind, and thereby leaves us in the unknown about Szpilman's thoughts and feelings. This formal choice highlights not only the contrast between the first and second part of the film and thus stresses the physical and emotional deprivation suffered by Szpilman, but it also mirrors the fact that traumatic memories are visual and sensational

rather than 'verbal' (Herman 1997, p. 38). We may therefore argue that, as Szpilman's memories are largely visceral and emotional, they cannot be adequately expressed in words. As numerous psychoanalysts have pointed out, traumatic experiences have "affect only, not meaning" (Kaplan and Wang 1994, p. 5).

This is further expressed in the complete silence of the static long shot depicting the deserted *Umschlagplatz*, where masses of Jewish people had to wait before their deportation to concentration camps. Like the color shots of a deserted Auschwitz in *Night & Fog* (Alain Resnais 1955), this singular image constitutes a symbol of the director's grief with regards to the genocide. At first sight, the yard bears nothing but a mass of strewn luggage that the Jewish people were asked to leave behind before deportation. However, the spectator then notices several corpses lying within the pile, barely distinguishable from the bags and suitcases; the near-invisibility of the bodies is attributed not only to the flatness of the image, but also the lack of colors and contrast. The interchangeability of the luggage and corpses reflects the people's subsequent fate as nameless, indistinguishable victims. The viewer recognizes the mass of luggage as a symbol for the mass of victims of the Holocaust. Additionally, the absence of sound underscores the lifelessness expressed in the shot, as well as the sense of gloom and despair generated by the monochromatic color scheme of browns and grays.

The film uses increasingly bleak colors to emphasize the split between the characters' lives before and after the establishment of the Warsaw Ghetto. The costume designer of the film, Anna Sheppard, commented on the film's color design as follows:

What I wanted to achieve myself was to create a certain atmosphere with the costumes, and [...] start with a film full of color, typical colors from the 40s, which [includes] browns, and salmon pinks, and reds, and beautiful yellows, and then lose the color completely. And when the people are in the ghetto [...], we don't see color." (Sheppard, Interview in *A Story of Survival*)

The film thus contrasts the events preceding the establishment of the Warsaw Ghetto with those following the Szpilman's move to the ghetto through the color scheme of the images, initially using various intense colors, then changing the mood through a predominant use of grey, brown and blue tones in order to connote the deteriorating lives of the Jewish characters. The use of low-key lighting also helps create this effect. Drabness pervades all the shots depicting the streets of the ghetto, the starving people, the *Umschlagplatz*, the selections and shootings of people, and also Szpilman's hiding places.

In the sequence depicting the Ghetto Uprising of 1943, Polanski includes several shots of burning buildings, where darkness equally permeates the images, despite the brightness of the fire. Those shots are followed by images of Szpilman's bedroom, in which the lights of the shooting and bombing outside are reflected on the walls as well as on Szpilman's face as he is lying awake. Here, Polanski employs one of the film's thematic tunes, drawn out in soft tones as a contrast to the diegetic noise of bombs and fire. This stresses the idea that the only comfort Szpilman may find is in his thoughts of music. The film conveys this notion in a close-up of Szpilman's fingers moving along imaginary piano keys. Here, again, Polanski makes a point of stressing Szpilman's fixation on music, which appears to constitute the only aid in Szpilman's coping with his

traumatic experiences. In general, non-diegetic music is used sparingly in the film; more often, music appears diegetically, when we see Szpilman playing the piano.

As in most of his films, Polanski places more emphasis on diegetic sounds to create a specific atmosphere. Both in *Repulsion* and *Rosemary's Baby*, Polanski uses ordinary sounds, such as the ticking of a clock or dripping water, and renders them uncanny through the low-key lighting and a lack of non-diegetic sounds. In the second half of *The Pianist*, the dangers and brutality of the outside are often communicated in the form of off-screen sound to both the entrapped protagonist and the audience. Bombs, gunshots, cars and German voices all represent nearby threats, and signify Szpilman's continual fear of being discovered and murdered. At one point, a German army car halts in front of the building where Szpilman has been hiding, causing him to get ready for a possible suicide. He quickly opens the window, places a chair in front of it and moves the table out of the way. He then stands in the room for a moment, waiting and listening to different voices and the sound of doors opening and closing. Szpilman looks outside and watches two Germans as they order two men to get in the car, and then drive off. Scenes such as this depict Szpilman's vulnerability and the instability of his situation, in which off-screen sounds can represent approaching help, but mostly constitute imminent threats. Szpilman's behavior in this scene mirrors his state of hyperarousal, mentioned earlier as one of three basic symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Herman states that, in this state, "the traumatized person startles easily, reacts irritably to small provocations, and sleeps poorly" (1997, p. 35). Szpilman's insomnia is implied by several scenes where he is depicted lying awake in bed.

Off-screen space plays an important role in *The Pianist*. The most traumatic events in Szpilman's life, i.e. the deportation and murder of his family, happen outside of his view and control. Loss of control over personal space is a significant part of the traumatic experiences of both Szpilman and his family. After being entrapped in the Warsaw Ghetto for three years, the Szpilmans are pushed into a crowded cattle truck that will deport them to a concentration camp. Furthermore, the protagonist is forced to hide in different apartments, where he finds himself locked in when needing to escape. Spatial confinement is a motif in *The Pianist* and many other Polanski films. Claustrophobic environments play an important role in *Repulsion*, *Cul-de-Sac*, *Rosemary's Baby*, and *Bitter Moon*. Some of his films, such as *Knife in the Water*, *Pirates* and *Death and the Maiden*, take place almost exclusively in a single location. Nonetheless, the idea of off-screen space is especially important in *The Pianist*, which moves from safe, open spaces to large, menacing spaces or to small, confined spaces, mirroring the Jewish characters' growing isolation and entrapment. Like the narrative itself, the filmic space reveals the gradual exclusion of the Jewish people from the rest of Warsaw society, the seizure of their rights, homes, freedom and safety. Moreover, the worst trauma for Szpilman, namely the death of his family, happens off-screen, out of his (and our) sight and control, in a concentration camp.

The Pianist depicts Szpilman's gradual loss of personal space, but also a loss in the viewer's sense of time. The second part of the film frequently shows Szpilman waiting and looking out of windows from his hiding places, forced by his circumstances to become a passive observer of life outside rather than a participant. As a consequence, the spectator gradually loses his/her sense of time, due to the character's inactivity, but

mostly to the absence of speech, which I identified earlier as signaling the 'breakdown of language' in trauma. Only occasionally does the film provide captions informing the viewer about a given date, which, in each case, indicates a larger historical development. According to Caruth, "what causes trauma [...] is a shock that appears to work very much like a bodily threat but is in fact a break in the mind's experience of time" (1996, p. 61). By excluding any references to Szpilman's former life and rejecting the use of voice-overs in the predominantly silent scenes showing Szpilman's life in hiding, Polanski consciously recreates part of the experience of trauma, including the emotional paralysis characteristic of constriction, and the sense that "time becomes fragmented and uncontrollable" (Hirsch 2004, p.103).

Both time and space, then, change and are depicted differently in the second part of the film, through a lack of speech and action involving the protagonist, and its larger focus on off-screen space, respectively. These methods allow the film to capture major symptoms of traumatic experience, such as constriction and hyperarousal on a formal level.

In conclusion, *The Pianist* marks Polanski's effort to recreate a true story of the Holocaust while also reflecting different psychological elements of traumatic experience in the film's mise-en-scène at the same time. Polanski employs different strategies, such as the use of long shots and an absence of non-diegetic sound, to portray the historical events as accurately as possible. His conscious strategy can be interpreted as a sign of his process of mourning, which stands in opposition to the state of melancholia, in which trauma is repressed and repeatedly returns in the unconscious of the traumatized. Polanski's preference of simple, naturalistic images over extreme stylization of the

depicted events appears all the more conspicuous in view of his general affinity for surrealistic images, evident in films such as *Repulsion*, *Rosemary's Baby*, *Macbeth*, *The Tenant* and *The Ninth Gate*. Such a departure can be explained by the desire to “tell the story honestly, to our best recollections of those who remember those times, to tell it the way it was” (Polanski, *A Story of Survival*). The film offers a complex depiction of events surrounding the Warsaw Ghetto, which, according to Ivan Avisar, “encompassed the harshest conditions outside the Nazi death camps and the greatest trial of Jewish endurance” (1988, p. 38).

As my analysis has shown, *The Pianist* is not purely an accurate recreation of the events described in Szpilman's memoirs. Polanski makes use of various structural and formal techniques to convey different psychological elements of Szpilman's, and arguably Polanski's own, traumatic experiences. Even though Walker does not include narrative film in her definition of 'trauma cinema', *The Pianist* can be viewed as an example of this genre, due to the fact that, like the films discussed by Walker, Polanski's film “borrow[s] the mise-en-scène of psychological trauma and tend[s] toward the use of (auto)biographical elements” (Walker 2005, p. 190).

The psychiatrist Dori Laub has observed that, “there is, in each [Holocaust] survivor, an imperative need to *tell* and thus to come to *know* one's story, unimpeded by ghosts from the past against which one has to protect oneself” (1995, p. 63). The example of *The Pianist* demonstrates that art can be an effective way of revealing and preserving cultural as well as personal memories. For Polanski, the art of filmmaking seems to be a form of self-expression that offers the chance of working through the most severe trauma of his past.

Chapter 2

The Maiden's Trauma

Polanski and the female victim, a case study of *Death and the Maiden* (1994)

"I've always preferred the central protagonists of my films to be female, and though I generally like female characters who are victims, Paulina [the female protagonist of *Death and the Maiden*] is very different in this respect." (Polanski 1995, in Cronin 2005, p. 159)

"It's true that I like unhappy endings because to me they're more truthful." (Polanski 1995, in Cronin 2005, p. 160)

This chapter deals with the representation of female trauma in Roman Polanski's films, with specific attention placed on *Death and the Maiden* (1994). Like *The Pianist*, this film addresses a personal and collective type of trauma. The film is adapted from Ariel Dorfman's play *La Muerte y la Doncella* (1990; trans. *Death and the Maiden*, 1994) which was staged, for instance, by directors Lindsay Posner (1991) and Mike Nichols (1992). Dorfman is a Chilean citizen who was born in Argentina in 1942. After the military coup that overthrew Salvador Allende in 1973, Dorfman was forced into exile. He has co-written the screenplay for Polanski's film together with the screenwriter Rafael Yglesias. Though not credited, the director appears to have had a great influence on the writing process (as in the case of *The Pianist*). This is suggested in interviews with Polanski, in which he makes statements such as, "we had to make the film more realistic in places because the play was too contrived and conventional" (1995, in Cronin 2005,

p.159). His use of the first person plural demonstrates that he regards the writing of the film as a collaborative process between Yglesias, Dorfman and himself.

Both the play's and the film's plot focuses solely on three characters: Paulina Escobar, her husband Gerardo – a civil rights lawyer – and the doctor Roberto Miranda. The story is set in a South American country that is recovering from a long dictatorship. Fifteen years earlier, Paulina has been kidnapped and held as a political prisoner. While in jail, she was interrogated, tortured and raped several times before finally being released. Even one of the prison doctors, who was supervising the tortures and supposedly making sure that none of the prisoners died, raped her. As she was blindfolded throughout her imprisonment, she did not see his face.

Fifteen years later, Paulina's husband receives a lift home from a doctor called Roberto Miranda, and invites him to stay over until the morning. Paulina believes to recognize Miranda's voice as that of the doctor who raped her. She ties him to a chair and demands a confession, which Miranda refuses to give. Gerardo is shocked when he discovers what Paulina is doing. He doubts that Miranda is really her former rapist, and attempts to convince her to let him go.

The play ends ambiguously; Miranda's culpability as Paulina's former rapist remains a mystery. The stage instructions read as follows: "ROBERTO enters, under a light which has a faint phantasmagoric moonlight quality. He could be real or he could be an illusion in PAULINA's head" (Dorfman 1994, p. 46). Dorfman thus maintains the possibility that Paulina's certainty about Miranda's identity can be explained and undermined by her mental instability. Unlike the play, the film includes an unambiguous final confession from Miranda, which erases any doubts about his guilt. In this

confession, Miranda provides details about his crimes he could not have known unless he was the perpetrator and admits to having derived pleasure from the power and dominance he had over Paulina while she was imprisoned. Polanski has indicated in different interviews that the inclusion of this scene was his decision (see, for instance, Cronin 2005, pp. 154, 159 f.). To him, the film's conclusion made "the story more coherent. The play is ambiguous right up until the end, but I'd say this ambiguity is more accidental than by design" (Polanski 1995, in Cronin, p. 154). The film hence provides closure to the central 'mystery' of the story by making clear that Miranda really *is* the perpetrator. However, neither the play nor the film offers closure to Paulina's trauma at the end. Having initially planned to kill Miranda, Paulina releases him without any apparent reason. The perpetrator is never brought to justice.

In Polanski's view, "Dorfman's play is about reconciliation" (1995 in Cronin, p.160), while his film seems to be more about the prevalence of injustice. As the director has stated, "if Paulina had exacted her revenge on Miranda it would have been a much weaker ending. [...] It's true that I like unhappy endings because to me they're more truthful" (p.160). As I will show in my analysis of the film, Miranda's final confession does not evoke any change or improvement to Paulina's situation in relation to her traumas other than her and Gerardo's knowledge of the perpetrator's identity.

The cinematic adaptation diverges from its dramatic source in other ways as well. As I will explain in more detail, the film's portrayal of Paulina and Gerardo is largely sympathetic, and, while the cinematic rendering of Miranda appears altogether more hostile than in the play, the film shows a stronger interest in *his* perspective as the perpetrator. Moreover, some of the lengthy monologues of the play are cut from the film

and attention is focused instead on the central traumatic experience – the rape – as Paulina gives a fuller account of this incident.

Female trauma is a recurring theme in Polanski's work, and figures in each of his films focusing on a female character: *Repulsion* (1965), *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), *Tess* (1979), *Death and the Maiden* (1994), and, to some degree, *The Tenant* (1976). Even though *Chinatown* (1974) revolves around the male character of private detective Jack Gittes, this film is another example of Polanski's pervasive interest in female trauma, as its central conflict arises from Noah Cross' double abuse (economic and sexual) of power, the symbolic rape of the country and the actual rape of his daughter. Each of the examples cited above, with the exception of *The Tenant*, deals with sexual trauma. Rosemary, *Chinatown's* Evelyn Mulwray, Tess and Paulina are all rape survivors while *Repulsion's* psychotic protagonist, Carol, appears to suffer from the post-traumatic effects of early sexual abuse.

In my view, all the films cited above showcase the lasting effects of Polanski's own traumatic experiences on his psyche, particularly the loss of his mother when he was a young boy. Polanski's preoccupation with the female psyche, evident in his repeated portrayal of female trauma and experience, can be identified as an attempt to sublimate the grief at the loss of his mother and the absence of a maternal figure. In Sigmund Freud's theory, sublimation represents one of the psyche's defense mechanisms against threatening impulses or overwhelming experiences, and is commonly achieved by transforming a sexual or aggressive impulse into a constructive goal or behavior (Freud 1916, p. 23). I suggest that in Polanski's case, an artistic identification with female victims compensates for his inability as a child to comprehend his mother's death and

indicates his displaced grief over the impossibility of a reunification with his mother. Following this hypothesis, I argue that Polanski's yearning for the mother is sublimated through his films.

Apart from his mother's death in Auschwitz, two other biographical circumstances may be associated with Polanski's cinematic preoccupation with female trauma: the murder of his wife Sharon Tate in 1969, and his presumed rape of a 13-year-old girl in 1977. Whether or not the preoccupation with the subject of female trauma in the aforementioned films can be traced back to those incidents remains hypothetical, since Polanski has never publicly commented on the subject. However, the representation of female trauma significantly changes in the course of his oeuvre.

Polanski's earliest films dealing with female trauma, *Repulsion* and *Rosemary's Baby*, both foreground the female victim's point-of-view. The next two major films dealing with female trauma, *Chinatown* and *The Tenant*, both made only a few years after the murder of Sharon Tate, encourage the spectator's identification with the male character, namely Jack Gittes and Trelovsky, respectively. Finally, *Tess*, the first film Polanski directed after the rape case, and the more recent *Death and the Maiden* centre on a female protagonist but elicit emotional involvement with both female and male characters. Both films show an interest in the perspective of the victim *and* the perpetrator and initially depict the male abusers as fairly sympathetic characters. For instance, at the beginning of *Tess*, before Alec rapes Tess, he can be perceived as generous and caring. Likewise, in *Death and the Maiden*, Miranda is initially presented as a helpful and friendly man and therefore appears as a victim when he is inexplicably taken hostage by Paulina.

Polanski's representation of the female victims is equally complex. Both the female protagonist from *Tess* and the character Paulina in *Death & the Maiden* turn into perpetrators as they (unsuccessfully) attempt to take revenge on their former torturers. In *Tess*, the heroine eventually kills her former rapist Alec, whom she had to marry for her family's financial survival. Yet the murder appears pointless: when her first husband Angel has found her and asks her to come with him, Tess does not join him immediately; instead, she decides to murder Alec and only then follows Angel. As the film does not depict the actual killing, the spectator remains unaware of the circumstances of the crime and is left uncertain of Tess' emotions and intentions. The spectator is thus unable to understand and empathize entirely with this character.

In *Death and the Maiden*, when Paulina ties up her former abuser, she initially intends to kill him, but then tells her husband that she will let Miranda go if he confesses to his crimes. Later, she retracts this promise, and decides to kill Miranda nonetheless – a decision she eventually revokes again. Consequently, the spectator does not know whether she is a reliable character.

The ambivalent portrayal of both Tess and Paulina might be explained by Polanski's ambiguous biographical position vis-à-vis female trauma. In the rape case, he is no longer a survivor of trauma in the simple one-dimensional sense, charged with having perpetrated trauma himself, nor is he close to a female victim of trauma, though he may well have experienced trauma as scapegoat of media and legal panic and as fugitive. I argue that this complex position endows him with the ability to identify with both the role of victim and of perpetrator.

Unlike the later films, *Repulsion* and *Rosemary's Baby* use a surrealistic style, including dream and fantasy sequences, uncanny sounds and unusual framing, to express the sexual traumas suffered by female protagonists. In *Repulsion*, Carol hallucinates that a man breaks into her room and rapes her, whereas in *Rosemary's Baby*, the female protagonist dreams that she is being raped by the devil, discovering later that it happened in actuality. Not only does this indicative use of hallucinations and nightmares create a tense atmosphere in the two films: it also provides insight into Carol and Rosemary's emotional condition, thereby raising the spectator's empathy for these characters.

Like *Chinatown*, *Death and the Maiden* renounces dream and fantasy sequences in favor of a more implicit representation of female trauma. In both films, rape is not depicted visually, but rather evoked through the characters' confessions and the victim's behavior. In this sense, we learn about Paulina's traumas not by seeing them from her point-of-view, but by observing her as the other characters do. At the same time, however, we witness the lingering psychological effects of Paulina's traumatic experience fifteen years after it has occurred, in the form of symptoms that Herman characterizes as typical of post-traumatic stress disorder, such as symptoms of hyperarousal (Herman 1997, p. 35f.)². In this respect, the actor playing Paulina, Sigourney Weaver, delivers a powerful performance, using facial expressions, gestures and tone of voice to communicate the character's inner tension and distress caused by her traumatic experience. From the beginning, she externalizes Paulina's hyperarousal in different ways. For instance, the actor's movements are hectic and clumsy, her breathing

² The symptom of avoidance appears only once (and indirectly) in this film, namely when Paulina tells Miranda that she has never been able to listen to Schubert's music following her time in captivity.

is heavy, and she often runs her hand through her hair in what we presume to be a nervous tendency. Techniques like these aid in visualizing Paulina's inner torment.

The film's mise-en-scène also aids in portraying Paulina's psychological condition. First of all, most of the action takes place in a single location, namely within the walls of Paulina and Gerardo's house. As in most of Polanski's films, the use of a confined space creates a claustrophobic atmosphere and underscores the oppressive experience of emotional trauma. It is only when Paulina drives Miranda's car off a cliff, and at the end, a critical point when Miranda confesses the truth, that the action takes place outside. For most of the film, the play's original unity of time and space (see Aristotle's *Poetics* 350 BC) is preserved. Therefore, all those scenes that do *not* abide by Aristotle's rules appear all the more striking and significant. The narrative unfolds over one night, except for the first and final scenes, which are set at some point in the future. The plot ends at the dawn of the next day with the climactic scene depicting Miranda's final confession. This scene takes place on a road near the couple's house, the camera facing Miranda and the tumbling sea behind him as Paulina threatens to push him down the cliffs.

The open landscape forms a counterpoint to the constricted indoor space where the characters interact throughout the rest of the film, including the room only imagined by the audience – the one where Paulina was tortured and raped. The confinement of the characters' external space mirrors the confinement of their internal space, i.e. the limitations of their ongoing thoughts, which, for Paulina, revolve around her traumatic experience and create inner conflicts. The fact that the couple's house lies by the ocean in

isolation highlights Paulina's own feelings of isolation and the couple's estrangement from one another.

The use of the sea as the setting for the film's most dramatic scene is a meaningful directorial choice. Water emerges as a symbolic motif in much of Polanski's oeuvre, shaping many of his early and his recent films, including *Knife and the Water*, *Cul-de-Sac*, *Chinatown*, *Pirates*, and *Bitter Moon*. In these films, water symbolizes the circular flow of events, simultaneously static and in constant motion. Similarly, characters in Polanski's films rarely transform or advance. Rather, they end up in the same hopeless situation they found themselves in at the beginning. The use of the sea as a backdrop to *Death and the Maiden* stresses the narrative's circular structure, achieved through the dual function of the film's final scene, which also figures as a flash-forward at the beginning of the film. This structure only exists in the film; in the play, the final scene only appears once, at the end. This alteration in the adaptation process suggests an endless cycle of events in which the characters' lives are bound to stay the same. Paulina's trauma will always linger in her mind and cannot be resolved. The film thus offers no sense of redemption at the end.

Paulina's behavior offers the most significant indications of her psychological condition. In the first scene within the Escobar's house, the camera follows her as she prepares the dinner table while listening to news on the radio, which informs her of political developments concerning human rights offences under the country's former government; as she turns up the volume on the radio, one hears:

On his second day in office, President Ramiro fulfilled a campaign promise

today. He announced the formation of a commission on human rights violations.

The commission will investigate acts of torture and murder that took place between 1975 and 1980 under the military junta.

When the thunderstorm outside causes a power failure, Paulina shudders, and then runs over to a battery-driven radio to hear the rest of the news. The piece of information concerns her husband Gerardo Escobar, a civil rights activist who is likely to chair the committee to be investigating these political crimes. At this point, the film spectator does not know yet that Paulina is among the victims of those crimes, yet her behavior provides clues to her emotional involvement.

Paulina's behavior alarms the audience from the outset: when she sees an unknown car appearing in the driveway, Paulina automatically runs inside, routinely locking the door, turning off all lights, grabbing a flashlight and drawing a gun from her night table. She stands waiting by the door and opens it only when she hears her husband's voice telling her "it's ok, it's me." The spectator is thus immediately aware of the fact that Paulina is scared of something, yet we do not know that this menace comes not from outside – typical of thrillers and horror films – but from 'within'. Tony McKibbin argues that in this scene, Polanski "inverts the 'woman in peril' film", turning it "not into a series of external threats, but a series of internal memory threats" (2006, p. 55). Paulina is haunted not by a present force, but by the traumas of her past.

The sense of being haunted can also be applied to Carol in *Repulsion*, whose psychotic behavior appears to stem from the traumatic experience of early sexual abuse. In his chapter in Daniel J. Goulding's book *Five Filmmakers*, Herbert Eagle refers back to the last shot of the film, in which the camera zooms in on an old photograph depicting

Carol and her family when she was little. The film ends with an extreme close-up of her face, revealing the same expression as that on Catherine Deneuve's face throughout the film: a "fixed stare, catatonic and intense" (Eagle 1994, p.123). Eagle points out that the photo also depicts two middle-aged men, and argues that, "an experience of incest and sexual molestation in childhood is not only suggested here but inscribed in Carol's simultaneously childlike and sexual image throughout the film" (p. 124). Carol's symptoms, however, are very different from those of Paulina. While Carol finds herself in a constant state of disassociation, evident in her aphasic, passive and detached personality, Paulina's trauma manifests itself most clearly in her state of hyperarousal. Not only is Paulina easily startled and always prepared for bad things to happen, she also lacks patience and trust in her relationship with Gerardo. Her irritability and constant alertness contrasts with Carol's numbness and lethargy. What they have in common, however, is that they both suffer from intrusions such as nightmares and flashbacks. Yet in *Death and the Maiden*, we learn about Paulina's intrusions only through the film's dialogues, as when she tells Gerardo: "Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night, I get so angry I want to hit myself. The street was crowded, crowded with students, maybe they would have fought for me." Paulina's flashbacks and insomnia expose, and maybe even intensify, her inner feelings of guilt and self-hatred. Judith Herman claims that "in the aftermath of traumatic events, as survivors review and judge their own conduct, feelings of guilt and inferiority are practically universal" (1997, p. 53).

The scene in which Paulina recounts her traumatic experience to Gerardo is especially revealing in terms of the reflection of Paulina's inner state through her outer behavior, in particular her facial and vocal expression. In this scene, her facial expression

changes frequently, and the camera, framing her in medium-close-ups, catches her half-laughing, half-crying. At times, she winces and covers her mouth with her hand, demonstrating her ongoing shock at the events she is about to recount, and her difficulty to speak about them. While she apparently attempts to maintain an authoritative tone of voice, she frequently switches from low to high pitch, her voice turning shrill as her emotions intensify. Whenever she reaches a hysterical state, she starts whispering, as though she were struggling not to lose her composure and confidence. During the confession, Paulina's voice is initially calm and composed, but then grows ever more nervous and high, louder and suddenly weak again, faltering and trembling repeatedly. Paulina makes longer pauses, stutters, repeats words, and gasps when she is about to reveal her most traumatic experience, i.e. being raped by the very person who was assigned to prevent the prisoners' death, who initially cleaned up her wounds and talked to her, and whom she had therefore believed she could trust. Paulina's sentences get shorter and less connected when she recounts the actual rape: "... I hurt, fire, I screamed, I screamed as hard as when they shocked me. But he wouldn't stop, he wouldn't stop." The repetitions in her last sentence emphasize the gravity of her trauma and lasting emotional pain. In sum, the scene shows that Paulina's speaking patterns as well as the pitch and volume of her voice are just as essential in creating a picture of her suffering as her gestures and facial expressions.

Paulina's vocal expression is interesting in yet another way. She often expresses dominance by adopting a masculine voice, most noticeably when she imitates the phrases of her male abusers or when she insults Miranda with expressions such as "shut up, bitch". This subversion of gender roles is also evident in the film's choice in costume:

Paulina can be seen as being dressed increasingly masculine. Initially wearing merely underwear, she puts on first a red skirt, then a blue nightgown, and lastly a loose dark coat, which we will see her wear until the end of the film. The fact that she puts on more clothes after Miranda appears reveals her subconscious attempt to protect herself from his objectifying 'gaze'. Here, the film seems to make an implicit comment about the representation of women in mainstream cinema. According to feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey, the cinematic gaze is implicitly male, as it reflects pre-existing social patterns as well as aesthetic traditions. This type of gaze is suggested by dominant formal choices, modes of cinematic production and reception. In other words, the male gaze is "naturalized" through cinematic codes and techniques used in classical narrative cinema.

As per Mulvey, male characters typically assume the role of the active protagonists, while female characters merely represent the male protagonists' love interests or otherwise passive objects constituting a 'visual pleasure' for the films' male spectators (Mulvey 1975). The author states that "in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly" (Mulvey 1975, p. 487).

Evidently, *Death and the Maiden* does not adhere to this norm, and neither do most other Polanski films, which frequently focus on female rather than male characters. Paulina often appears as very dominant and tough, much more so in the film than in the play. For instance, in the film she knows how to handle the gun, even pointing it at her own husband, while in the play she does not. She also humiliates Miranda when he needs to use the bathroom, by refusing him the right to go by himself. The film thus subverts

Mulvey's claim that "the power to subject another person to the will sadistically or to the gaze voyeuristically is turned onto the woman as the object of both" (Mulvey 1975, p. 491). In her pursuit to take revenge, Paulina has to assume the role of the perpetrator, and perform the same acts of subordination and intimidation that Miranda had formerly used on her.

Judith Herman argues that, "in situations of captivity, the perpetrator becomes the most powerful person in the life of the victim, and the psychology of the victim is shaped by the actions and beliefs of the perpetrator" (1997, p. 75). In a way, Paulina takes over Miranda's sadistic attitude. After her account of her traumatic experiences, Paulina admits to Gerardo that she has been fantasizing about taking revenge on the prison doctor ever since her release. She wants him "to know what it's like" to feel the same pain and humiliation that he had caused in her fifteen years earlier.

By depicting Paulina as more aggressive than passive, the film indirectly comments on the stereotypical gender associations of the categories sadism (male) and masochism (female) in narrative cinema. Paulina's actions create a reversal of this stereotype. Nonetheless, there are a few scenes indicating masochistic elements in Paulina's behavior. After tying the half-conscious Miranda up in a chair, Paulina takes off her panties and stuffs them into his mouth, apparently in an attempt to remind him of the rape, which represented a severe physical and psychological trauma for her, but a sexually fulfilling experience for him. Later in the same scene, she smells his neck and sits down on his lap, a gesture typically ascribed to little children who try to be close to their parents. Moreover, Paulina's strongest desire is to hear Miranda confess to, i.e. to verbally repeat her traumatic experiences by giving a full account of his abuse and the

pleasure he derived from it. These hints of masochism are understandable in view of the fact that traumatic experiences frequently cause victims to lose their positive sense of self. Herman explains that “trauma forces the survivor to relive all her earlier struggles over autonomy, initiative, competence, identity, and intimacy” (1997, p. 52). The victim’s resulting feelings of degradation, powerlessness, inadequacy, and dependency create what Herman refers to as the ‘damaged self’, and Karyn Freedman calls the ‘shattered self’. For Freedman, the shattered self – the victim’s emotional response to psychological trauma – is distinct from the ‘shattered worldview’, which covers the cognitive side of the traumatized psyche (Freedman 2006, p. 105).

In this respect, *Death and the Maiden* is analogous to Liliana Cavani’s controversial *The Night Porter* (1974), which equally reflects on the effects of traumatic historical events through the perspective of a female survivor. Significantly, both Lucia, the film’s female protagonist, and Paulina suffer from the shattered-self syndrome, choosing masochistic life patterns and regressing to their traumatic pasts by upholding an undesirable situation (in Paulina’s case) or repeating the formerly traumatic situation in the present (in Lucia’s case). Paulina’s masochism is hidden in her passivity: instead of starting a new life somewhere else, she stays in the place where she faced torture and multiple rape fifteen years ago and accepts the possibility of running into her former abuser at any time. Lucia’s masochism, on the other hand, is much more obvious, due to her active behavior: several years after her liberation from a concentration camp, the woman resumes her sado-masochistic relationship with SS officer Max, who humiliated and sexually abused her in the camp. Judith Herman claims that, for victims of chronic trauma,

the sense that the perpetrator is still present, even after liberation, signifies a major alteration in the victim's relational world. The enforced relationship during captivity, which of necessity monopolizes the victim's attention, becomes part of the victim's inner life and continues to engross her attention after release.

(Herman 1997, p. 91)

In Paulina's case, not only does she 'sense' that her perpetrator is "still present", but he *is* in fact present, and Paulina eventually accepts the possibility that she will meet him again. Also, the fact that he is part of her "inner life" is clearly inscribed in *Death and the Maiden*. This is evident especially in Paulina's revenge fantasies. Up until Paulina lets Miranda go, she appears preoccupied most of all with thoughts about her abuser and how to avenge the traumas he has inflicted on her.

Sarah Projansky claims that many rape-revenge scenarios portray rape as "a painful, but ultimately *positive* event" (2001, p. 100). This is evident in the stereotypical endings of rape films, which commonly depict the rape victim in an improved situation that contrasts with her life before the rape, thereby implying that the rape had a positive effect on the victim's life. This does not apply to *Death and the Maiden*, which represents Paulina's experience of the rape as a highly destructive event for which, as the ending shows, neither revenge nor any other form of behavior can offer any resolution. *Death and the Maiden* diverges from most mainstream films dealing with rape in that it does not offer a happy ending that "successfully incorporates the woman into a stable heterosexual family setting" (2001, p. 30). In contrast to those films, *Death and the Maiden* does not support a patriarchal, 'postfeminist' worldview. The final scene shows Paulina and her husband at a concert, watching a performance of Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* with a

grave look – and, in Paulina’s case, tears – in their eyes, Miranda and his family sitting high above them, in the loge of the theatre. Paulina’s motives for listening to the very music the prison doctor played while he raped her are left unclear: is it because she has resolved her negative feelings associated with the music by forcing Miranda to listen to it while he was tied up? Or is she still regressing to her emotional state during the abuse, in a painful (and thus, partly, masochistic) attempt to regain control over herself and the trauma? Paulina’s grave expression during the concert contradicts the first possibility. Even before they become aware of Miranda’s presence, Paulina and her husband sit motionless with somber expressions on their faces, holding hands. This ending fulfils none of the viewer’s hopes for closure, emphasizing instead the complexity of human relationships and the severity of Paulina’s emotional trauma.

Moreover, unlike the ‘postfeminist’ narratives described by Projansky, the film depicts the childless couple’s relationship as generally disharmonious and marked by a lack of mutual trust and understanding. Neither of the characters emerges as the ‘hero’ of the story. While Paulina wordlessly releases Miranda after hearing his confession, Gerardo finds himself incapable not only of avenging Miranda’s multiple abuse of his wife, but also of helping her come to terms with her trauma. The fact that Miranda sits in the loge while Paulina and her husband are sitting on the ground level of the theatre creates the idea that the personal triumph belongs to Miranda, who was able to follow his sadistic inclinations without any feelings of guilt or compassion for his victims and without facing punishment. As in most of Polanski’s films, the ending does not provide satisfactory closure to the characters’ conflicts. In Polanski’s cinema, sympathetic characters often die (*Repulsion*’s Colin, Evelyn Mulwray, *The Tenant*’s Trelkovsky,

Tess), or else are powerless to prevent a tragic outcome of events (Rosemary, Jake Gittes, Szpilman). In his essay 'Power and the Visual Semantics of Polanski's Films', Herbert J. Eagle remarks that "with only a few exceptions either the protagonist is defeated, returned to a disempowered state, or the protagonist succeeds, only to become the very evil he has struggled against" (2006, p. 50).

The film's ending differs highly from that of the original play. While Dorfman prefers not to specify Miranda's actual responsibility and motivations, Polanski's film establishes Miranda as the perpetrator and thereby stresses the accuracy of Paulina's memory and judgment. In the play, the final scene set in the theatre depicts Miranda in a "faint phantasmagoric moonlight quality. He could be real or he could be an illusion in Paulina's head" (Dorfman 1994, p. 46). Polanski, on the other hand, never questions Paulina's sanity.

The relationship between Paulina and Gerardo helps us to better understand Paulina's emotional and psychological state as a trauma survivor. In her book *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Herman states that "traumatic events [...] shatter the sense of connection between individual and community, creating a crisis of faith" (Herman 1997, p. 55). This description sheds light on Paulina's problematic relationship with Gerardo. Constantly changing her tone, she appears to be torn between conflicting feelings. Her inconsistent behavior towards him appears to be common to trauma victims, who, according to Herman, habitually form "intense, unstable relationships that fluctuate between extremes" (1997, p. 56). This can be explained by the fact that survivors of chronic trauma often experience a sense of imminent doom and state of constant anxiety, which consequently narrows various aspects of their lives, including their social activities

and relationships (p. 87). A trauma victim can form intimate connections with other people, and at the same time experience feelings of alienation and aloneness (p. 93). This is true for the character of Paulina, whose feelings for Gerardo oscillate between mistrust and faith, resignation and hope, estrangement and intimacy.

The first scenes between the two characters express this ambivalence quite clearly: when Gerardo comes home, Paulina does not smile, greet or kiss him, and does not otherwise show him that she is pleased to see him. On the contrary, after several cynical and provocative remarks (“Was she pretty at least?”, “I was patiently waiting for my captain to return from the sea”, “Well, that was stupid.”), she begins to ask him about his meeting with the president who had asked him to chair the committee. When he is unwilling to talk about it, she guesses rightly that he has accepted the offer, and impulsively throws the plate he had just been eating from in the garbage. She perceives his decision to chair the committee as a “betrayal”, due to the fact that the committee will limit itself to investigating only those crimes that ended in prisoners’ death, thus excluding her and other victims who survived the tortures. However, soon after, Paulina’s feelings for Gerardo seem to change, as her tone abruptly shifts from dominant and harsh to soft and vulnerable, and she tells him, “I want us to live like suburban idiots” and “adopt a boy”.

Unlike Paulina, both Gerardo and Miranda are less ambivalent characters in the film than in the play. In my view, the sympathetic portrayal of Gerardo in the film positively influences the spectator’s impression of Paulina herself. While in the play, Gerardo maintains the position that “if he [Miranda]’s guilty, more reason to set him free” (Dorfman 1994, p. 26), the film’s Gerardo wants to “bring [Paulina] justice”. In the

film, Gerardo does not seem as self-righteous, defends his wife when she fights with Miranda, and shows honest compassion when she has recounted her trauma, telling her that he is sorry and that he would like to hold her. Also, he seems to want to hear her story not simply because he is plotting to deceive her, unlike the play, in which he tells Miranda to “humor her” (p. 31). When Miranda calls her a lunatic, only the film has Gerardo reply, “she’s crazy, but so is the whole country.” In the drama, he answers instead that, “when crazy people have power, you have to indulge them” (p. 32). I argue that the compassion Gerardo shows with Paulina in the film increases the spectator’s own respect and understanding for this character.

While the film depicts Gerardo quite positively, Miranda is portrayed in a predominantly negative light. The denial of his actions reflects his refusal to repent. He might be experiencing shame, but no guilt. At the end of his long confession, he tells Paulina, “I owned you, I owned all of them. Fell in love with it. I could hurt you, I could fuck you. And you couldn’t tell me not to. You had to thank me. I loved it. I was sorry it ended. I was very sorry it ended.” As apparent in the sentence “I owned you”, Miranda derived pleasure mostly from his complete control over the victims. In his confession, he justifies his actions by implicitly relating them to an internal drive that he was no longer able to control and therefore had no responsibility for: “no-one fought [against the urge to rape] as hard as I did. I was the last one. The last one to have a taste.” After shooting most of the film in medium shots and medium close-ups, Polanski frames Miranda’s face exclusively in close-ups when he confesses his crimes to Paulina. Miranda’s gestures during this scene are ambivalent, suggesting shame, pride and amusement at the same time.

This scene, like many others in Polanski's oeuvre, suggests that the oppression of women is inextricably linked to males striving for power and domination. According to Helena Goscilo, "all the rapes and all the violent deaths of women in Polanski's cinema are inflicted by men or by the patriarchal 'system' (as in *Tess*)" (2006, p. 32). Due to this fact, we might interpret some of Polanski's work as feminist (though his being charged with statutory rape in 1977 seems to conflict greatly with this idea). Most of the female characters in his films are victims, yet they are rarely objectified. Polanski's oeuvre shows a strong interest in the female psyche. The female victims in his films are complex and largely sympathetic characters. However, the representation of female victims and male perpetrators in the films produced *prior* to the rape case differs from that in the films released *after* the incident.

This apparent shift in focus suggests a transformation in Polanski's perception of female trauma. While the female victims of *Repulsion* and *Rosemary's Baby* were still timid, unstable and mostly passive (if we ignore Carol's killing of two men at the end of *Repulsion*), Tess and Paulina are active, resourceful, and resilient. Male characters, on the other hand, are always depicted as either helpless or evil, as bystanders or perpetrators. They do not sufficiently trust the female victims, even when they are their partners, but are themselves rarely trustworthy. Gerardo tries to deceive his wife by helping Miranda write his confession, Angel abandons Tess after she tells him about the rape and the baby she had and lost soon after. Rosemary's husband makes a deal with the devil, whereas Jake Gittes' mistrust of Evelyn Mulwray causes his failure to save her from getting killed. I will examine the character of Jake Gittes more closely in the next chapter.

Parallel to the portrayal of female victims, the depiction of perpetrators in Polanski's cinema changes after the rape case. Whereas in *Repulsion*, *Rosemary's Baby*, and *Chinatown*, the abuser remains largely out of sight, in *Tess* and *Death and the Maiden*, they occupy central roles in the narrative. In the earlier films, the perpetrators are demonized: not only literally, in *Rosemary's Baby*, but also symbolically in *Chinatown*, where Noah Cross possesses an almost superhuman power over both the city and his family, exploiting everyone to his personal advantage. In contrast, Alec in *Tess* and Miranda in *Death and the Maiden* are utterly cruel and detestable characters, but they show rare hints of kindness and generosity that render them more true-to-life. This transformation in Polanski's films indicates a stronger interest in the role of the perpetrator after the rape case. One might argue that this incident led Polanski to revise his perspective on female trauma and depict it more as an issue of the patriarchal system than of a male individual's evil.

In conclusion, *Death & the Maiden* depicts the female character's sexual trauma as a physical as well as psychological assault that destroys the victim's sense of personal and sexual identity. The murders of his mother and his wife might explain Polanski's ongoing interest in the female psyche and his largely empathetic portrayal of female characters. On the one hand, *Death & the Maiden* might be considered an effort of Polanski's to 'redeem' himself after his conviction of statutory rape, as, in this film, he demonstrates his enduring sympathy with female victims of trauma and stresses the life-long effects of trauma on the victim's psyche. On the other hand, since the rape case, Polanski's films on female trauma have shifted focus as he is drawing more attention to

the complex dynamics between victimizer and victim, and offering a more complex and arguably humanized portrayal of male perpetrators.

Finally, the dynamic between the three characters of *Death & the Maiden* can be seen as a mirror of the gender relations in a post-fascist society. The way these characters deal, or do not sufficiently deal, with the traumatic events of the past reveals the long-term effects of historical traumas on society. Repression and denial emerge as the major defense mechanisms of a national psyche. The film's ending suggests that unresolved political injustice creates a traumatized nation, marked by miscommunication, tension, and a loss of identity. The ending also suggests that revenge cannot replace public justice.

In Polanski's cinema, every female victim fails in her attempt to achieve personal justice. Even when she completes her act of revenge, as in *Tess* and *Bitter Moon*, she does not find happiness, but gets punished for her crimes. This injustice can be interpreted as a mirror of women's position in patriarchal society. Virtually all the male characters in Polanski's cinema lack empathy for the female victims and are unable to understand the women's very different, and at times contradictory, feelings and behavior. However, most of his films dealing with female trauma reveal the circumstances of the female characters' difference and elicit our understanding for their 'shattered selves'.

Chapter 3 – The Evil and the Helpless: Male Characters and Trauma in Polanski's

Chinatown (1974) and *Bitter Moon* (1992)

“Evil is part of our personality.” (Polanski 1999, in Cronin 2005, p. 175)

“... Don't you agree that whatever we experience has a result on our activity, on our passions, loves, manias?” (Polanski 2000, in Cronin 2005, p. 182)

This chapter deals with the representation of male trauma in *Chinatown* (1974) and *Bitter Moon* (1992). In Polanski's oeuvre, trauma is associated with both female and male characters. In *Chinatown* and *Bitter Moon*, however, trauma presents strikingly different connotations across gender lines, regardless of whether it affects victims or perpetrators. In my analysis, I will explain the gender-specific treatment of trauma in *Chinatown* and *Bitter Moon* with reference to circumstances in Polanski's life, concentrating mainly on the representation of the films' male protagonists.

Chinatown is Polanski's first Hollywood project after the murder of his wife, actress Sharon Tate, in 1969. The film takes place in Los Angeles, the city in which Polanski and Tate lived until her death. Tate, who was nine months pregnant, was murdered along with three friends in her and Polanski's home. The killers were members of a sect of Devil-worshipping fanatics led by serial killer Charles Manson. When the crime had been solved, Polanski went to Europe, where he spent several months in Paris and Switzerland (Meikle 2006, p. 168).

Chinatown, made five years later, is set in Los Angeles during the 1930s and centers on a political scandal that the main character, private detective Jake Gittes (Jack

Nicholson), is striving to expose. When the chief engineer for Water & Power in Los Angeles, Hollis Mulwray, is found dead, Gittes discovers that the supposed draught in the city is a lie, and that the former head of L.A.'s water department, Noah Cross (John Huston), had cheaply and illegally purchased 50,000 acres of land in the Owens Valley, making enormous profits by unofficially using the city's water. Meanwhile, Gittes also attempts to reveal the truth about Cross' daughter Evelyn Mulwray (Faye Dunaway), who is hiding a girl Gittes initially believes to be someone Hollis Mulwray had an affair with before his death. At the end, however, he finds out that this girl is in fact Evelyn's sister and daughter. Thus, Cross has not only been exploiting the city's land for his personal profit, but also his own daughter. Gittes' attempt to bring him to justice remains futile, due to Cross' overwhelming power, corrupting even the local police force.

Bitter Moon was made in a different epoch and under very different circumstances than *Chinatown*. Three years before the making of *Bitter Moon*, Polanski had remarried. He cast his French wife, Emmanuelle Seigner, as the film's female lead. The director had left the USA in 1978 and has never returned since, due to his conviction of statutory rape of a 13-year old girl. *Bitter Moon* was shot in France and the UK, and was adapted from a novel by Pascal Bruckner. The main plot is set on a cruise ship and features two couples, Nigel (Hugh Grant) and Fiona (Kristin Scott Thomas), and Oscar (Peter Coyote) and Mimi (Emmanuelle Seigner). Oscar, a failed writer paralyzed from the waist down, tells Nigel the story of his love affair with Mimi. His tale constitutes the basis of several long flashbacks, which unfold throughout the film and show how Oscar (not yet disabled) and Mimi's relationship changed over time, shifting from mutual attraction and affection to routine and boredom, and finally to disrespect (on Oscar's side) and dependency (on

Mimi's side). After a futile attempt to maintain their passion through sexual power games, Oscar's behavior towards Mimi gets increasingly abusive, while Mimi becomes all the more passive and submissive. A few years later, however, she takes revenge on him by rendering him disabled and thus physically dependent on her. Nigel listens to Oscar's story with increasing fascination and sexual attraction to Mimi. His desire is left unfulfilled and even mocked when Mimi chooses, rather, to sleep with Nigel's wife. The film ends with Oscar shooting Mimi and himself. Fiona and Nigel, both left unharmed, reconcile.

Like *Chinatown*, *Bitter Moon* offers a depiction of female as well as of male experience of trauma, in contrast to Polanski's near-exclusive concentration on female trauma in previous films, most evidently in *Repulsion* and *Rosemary's Baby*. After the murder of Sharon Tate, male trauma becomes more prominent in his work. The shock following the brutal murder of his wife in the filmmaker's private life is arguably the source of this new focus on male traumatized characters, not only in *Chinatown* and *Bitter Moon*, but also in *Macbeth* (1971), *The Tenant* (1976), and *The Pianist* (2002).

In *Chinatown*, Evelyn Mulwray is ostensibly the most traumatized character: having been sexually abused by her father, she suffers from the consequences of this trauma on a personal and a social level, since she has to hide the child she has had with him. Nonetheless, she is not the character we empathize with most in this film: Jake Gittes is the film's tragic hero. His trauma is not only linked to personal losses, but also to a sense of inadequacy and impotence, which arguably echoes Polanski's feelings vis-à-vis his wife's murder. Gittes' inability to protect the women he loves also affects his professional performances: at the end, he is unable to convict the perpetrator Cross for his

private and public crimes. His trauma is thus caused not only by a loved person's death and his own survival, but also by his partial responsibility for this person's death, due to his powerlessness to defeat the perpetrator. There is an obvious comparison to draw between Gittes' position at the end of the film and Polanski's own situation after the murder of his wife. Like Gittes, Polanski did not foresee the tragedy and was powerless to change the course of events. However, Gittes would have been able to stand on Evelyn Mulwray's side when she pointed the gun at her father. We might interpret his incapacity to interfere as a manifestation of Polanski's own feelings of survivor guilt and the sense that he might have been able to prevent the murder if he had been with his wife at the time.

At this point, it is important to note that during the making of *Chinatown*, Polanski and his screenwriter Robert Towne had several disagreements concerning the film's ending: Towne suggested an optimistic conclusion, whereas Polanski envisioned a disturbing and bleak ending. About his position at the time, Polanski has stated, "I was absolutely adamant that [the heroine] has to die at the end if the film is to have any kind of meaning" (*Chinatown Revisited* [DVD feature] 1999). In the end, Polanski succeeded in imposing his vision, and the film indeed ends with the heroine's death and the villain's triumph. I interpret the bleakness of the film's ending as a reflection of Polanski's shattered worldview resulting from the murder of his wife.

In *Bitter Moon*, Polanski's interest in male trauma appears to originate in a very different event in his life, that is his conviction of statutory rape in 1977. Even though in two of the films made after this event, namely *Tess* and *Death and the Maiden*, a focus on female trauma reemerges, male characters in those films are no longer depicted primarily

as perpetrators (as had been the case in *Repulsion* and *Rosemary's Baby*), but often are or become victims themselves as they are affected by the women's traumas. One case in point is Paulina's husband Gerardo in *Death and the Maiden*, who suffers with her and wants to "bring [her] justice". While Gerardo's involvement is emotional, the perpetrator Miranda becomes affected physically, as Paulina decides to avenge his crimes against her.

The shifts in Polanski's cinematic representation of male and female trauma after the rape case might be perceived as an indication of his psychological denial of responsibility for this incident. In several interviews, Polanski has expressed his resentment about being slandered by the media following the accusation, and has indicated that he perceives himself as the central victim in this affair. Both in *Tess* and *Death and the Maiden*, the female characters are victims, yet they are not entirely innocent, but turn into aggressors themselves. In *Bitter Moon*, however, the line between victim and perpetrator disappears completely. Each of the film's four main characters can be seen as experiencing different forms of trauma, though Nigel and Fiona to a much lesser degree than Oscar and Mimi.

At the beginning of the film, the central trauma victim is Mimi, who endures a degrading treatment at the hands of Oscar. While his passion for Mimi slowly weakens, her masochistic fixation on him intensifies. Initially enjoying her submissiveness, Oscar exacerbates his sadistic treatment of his partner, towards whom he grows more and more indifferent and contemptuous. When Mimi gets pregnant and refuses to leave him against his request, Oscar sets her on a plane to Martinique, pretending to go on vacation with her, and abandons her right before take-off. When she returns, she takes revenge on him

by disabling him and thus gaining control over his life. From this point on, the dynamics between the two are reversed: Mimi takes over the dominant, often sadistic role while Oscar passively endures his degradation. Not only is he now continually dependent on Mimi's help, but he is also forced to give up his formerly central preoccupations: writing and sex. He cannot have sex because his disability has left him impotent, but he also cannot publish his novel because Mimi will not allow him to meet or speak to an editor.

The film's other couple, Nigel and Fiona, suffers a trauma when they see Oscar kill Mimi and then himself. However, it is indicated that this shocking experience will help Nigel and Fiona come to terms with their mutual betrayal and mend their disintegrating marriage. In my analysis, I will concentrate on the trauma-related depiction of Oscar and Mimi, by far the most significant and central to the narrative development. Both Mimi and Oscar can be described as shattered selves (Freedman 2006). Both characters are victims and perpetrators at some point in the film. Polanski thus deconstructs the Manichean worldview expressed in previous films such as *Chinatown*. Unlike his earlier films, *Bitter Moon* creates no moral differences between its characters. Still, the viewer is encouraged to root most of all for the male character, Oscar, which leads us to assume that Polanski communicates an aspect of his own traumas through this character.

My central argument is that, like most of Polanski's films, both *Chinatown* and *Bitter Moon* feature characters whose personalities or actions point to trauma-related symptoms and which may be approached from an authorial perspective linked to Polanski's personal traumas. From this perspective, trauma appears not only in association with different characters in Polanski's films, but also in the form of thematic

and stylistic motifs that punctuate Polanski's oeuvre. Some of the motifs I will examine are the frequent depiction of verbal and physical violence, the symbolic treatment of water, and the lack of closure to characters' conflicts.

I want to start my analysis by focusing on the plot and characters of *Chinatown*. As mentioned before, the film deals with two major conflicts: the water scandal and Evelyn Mulwray's trauma of incest. Due to the theme of incest and its symbolism relating to blindness, ignorance and misunderstanding, *Chinatown* has frequently been analyzed in relation to the myth of Oedipus. Those symbols are used mostly in association with Gittes, who emerges as the film's tragic hero. Like Oedipus, Gittes only recognizes the gravity of the situation once it is already too late, and he is unable to alter the course of events. As mentioned earlier, Polanski wrote the film's bleak ending himself, conflicting with Robert Towne who had envisioned a more conventional conclusion in which Evelyn and her daughter escape to Mexico and Cross is killed. In view of the tragedy happening in Polanski's life five years earlier, Gittes' oblivion and his powerlessness to save Evelyn can be identified as a reflection of Polanski's own helplessness and inability to prevent his wife and child from getting murdered. In his artistic 'reenactment' of this traumatic experience in this film, Polanski demonstrates his melancholia following Sharon Tate's death. Polanski structures the internal focus of the film's narrative through Gittes' point of view, thus encouraging the film spectator to sympathize most of all with this character. I associate this narrative point-of-view with Polanski's. In this respect, Gittes is not just Polanski's double as a male traumatized character: his Oedipal trajectory mirrors that of Polanski in his real life, trying to clarify

his role in the Tate murder. Like Gittes, Polanski is a (secondary) trauma victim who attempts to master his survivor guilt.

Chinatown is characterized by a circular narrative structure, though not as explicitly as *Death and the Maiden*, which features the same scene at the beginning and the end. Still haunted by an event occurring in L.A.'s Chinatown, after which Gittes lost his job in the police force and became a low-life detective handling cases of adultery, he ends up in the same part of town again at the end, only to experience his trauma being repeated: again, a woman dies whom he was trying to protect. Her death also signifies the repetition of another trauma, namely the trauma of incest, now likely to affect Evelyn's daughter, who is the very result of Evelyn's traumatic experience. The doubling of trauma, both for Gittes and for Cross' offspring, makes us aware of the repetition of traumatic incidents in Polanski's own life: after losing his mother in the Holocaust, he lost his wife and unborn child in the Tate massacre. The film's ending therefore reflects not only Polanski's hopelessness and pessimism following his wife's murder, but it also mirrors the tragic quality of Polanski's whole life and the sense of impending doom resulting from the repeated experience of trauma.

In Polanski's version of the screenplay, *Chinatown* emerges as a symbol of the mystery and prevalence of evil. For Gittes, as for Polanski himself, the second trauma confirms his already shattered worldview. Gittes hides his disillusionment well behind a superficial attitude, and expresses his state of mind to nobody except for Evelyn (and only when they are lying in bed together). Up until this scene, he appears as a tough, superficial macho, telling racist and sexist jokes to impress his male colleagues. His emotional detachment, ignorance and lack of sophistication are not only established

through his jokes, but also through his language and interpersonal behavior. In his conversations with Evelyn, Gittes has obvious difficulties hiding his modest social background, unsuccessfully trying to avoid the use of vulgar terms and coarse manners when she is around. Gittes' seeming lack of tact and emotions can be interpreted as a sign of his repression of the trauma in his past, namely the tragic events in Chinatown he still cannot fully comprehend. The repressed returns, but in Polanski's film as well as in his life, it does not merely repeat itself in the victim's subconscious mind, but also in reality, without them having any influence on the events, thus surprising and traumatizing the victim once again. Gittes' advice to one of his clients early in the film, "let sleeping dogs lie", proves not to work out for Gittes himself.

Like Gittes, Evelyn Mulwray fails to repress her traumatic past, which in turn manifests itself in psychosomatic symptoms, especially that of hyperarousal. For instance, Evelyn begins to stutter every time she uses the word "father", and she lights a second cigarette while she is still holding the first one when Gittes asks her questions about Cross. Whenever Gittes mentions her secrecy, she reacts defensively or turns away. Only when she sees no other way out, she tells Gittes the truth. Her final act of revenge fails and kills her, instead of the enemy: her father. The tragic irony in the film's ending is the fact that, in trying to protect her daughter against the father, Evelyn actually provokes the opposite: she dies, and Cross regains control over their daughter.

Formal techniques help convey Gittes' and Mulwray's experience of trauma, and also reflect the lasting effects of Polanski's trauma of losing his wife. Unlike most of Polanski's films, *Chinatown* is set in a seemingly boundless space. The setting is a city, Los Angeles of the 1930s. However, the narrative depicts this city as an insecure,

unpredictable and menacing place that is controlled by powerful individuals such as Noah Cross. The use of water as a visual and thematic motif aids in creating this picture. In *Chinatown*, water serves not only as a plot device and part of the setting, but also as an indication of the contradictions of the human condition. A symbol of life and development, water also reflects the instability and unpredictability of human nature and the unchanging, never-ending cycle of history. Additionally, the deficiency of water comes to symbolize the deprivation and corruption within the filmic space.

On yet another level of psychological analysis, we can detect a tension between open and restricted space, namely between the large external (physical) space and the confined inner (psychological) space of the characters, who are not only stifled by their respective pasts, but also trapped in their surroundings. While Gittes cannot escape Chinatown, Evelyn cannot escape her father. As in *The Pianist*, off-screen space plays a significant role: major conflicts – the water scandal and the incest – happen out of our sight and stay long hidden. Both Gittes and the audience misinterpret every clue and learn the truth only when it appears to be too late. The past traumas remain off-screen, but are nonetheless omnipresent throughout the film, communicated not only through the dialogues, but also implicitly, through the characters' silences. Good examples of the diffused representation of traumatic events can be found in the characterization of Evelyn. She avoids Gittes' questions about her father or "the girl" (her daughter) and ignores Gittes' remarks such as "You can't always tell what's going on. Like with you." Instead, she asks him to trust her, which he (being a detective) does not, preferring to draw his own conclusions.

As for Gittes, his tendency to observe people talking when he is not able to hear what they are saying is another reason why he keeps misinterpreting or misjudging the situations he witnesses or finds himself in. This occurs, for instance, when he watches Mulwray talk to a Mexican boy or when he sees Evelyn speaking with the girl who turns out to be her daughter. Gittes' pronounced voyeurism is established right at the beginning of the film, when the camera centers on a group of photos he has taken of a couple in the middle of a sexual act. In another scene, the camera offers a frame within the frame, offering us Gittes' point-of-view by showing us exactly what, and how, he sees through his binoculars. His recurrent misinterpretation could be read as a prominent symptom of his shattered worldview. As mentioned in the first chapter, the experience of cognitive dissonance is fundamental to a shattered worldview (see Freedman 2006).

The film provides not only aural, but also visual clues to the protagonists' inner torment and vulnerability. After having his nose slit by one of Cross' henchmen, played by Polanski himself, Gittes wears a striking white bandage on his nose for most of the film. When he checks out the Valley, the workers in the orange groves attack Gittes, and his sunglasses get shattered. Later, when Evelyn is looking after him and checking his wounds, Gates notices a black spot in one of her eyes. She explains that it is "a flaw in the iris, it's a sort of birthmark." These examples demonstrate that both Gates and Evelyn appear as wounded. Their physical vulnerability can be read as a symbol for their emotional wound and vulnerability.

As indicated above, *Chinatown* generally depicts only the action in which Gittes is directly involved, thus making him the central figure of identification and empathy for the audience. Nonetheless, we are also led to perceive him critically at different points in

the film, and not only by his racist jokes. In a couple of brief moments, the camera stays with Evelyn when Gittes has already left the scene, thus triggering our involvement with her character. According to Dana Polan, the two only moments that “are directly beyond Gittes’ point-of-view” and focus on Evelyn Mulwray demonstrate Gittes’ ignorance and lack of concern for her (Polan 2006, p. 118f.). The first of those instances occurs when Gittes asks her to join her on his investigation and she refuses. As he leaves and goes over to his car, the camera remains fixed on Evelyn, who calls out his name when he passes her in his car, but he does not seem to hear her and drives away. The second moment centering on her point-of-view happens when Gittes has followed her to her daughter and, still believing the girl is Hollis Mulwray’s mistress, accuses Evelyn of holding the girl captive. When she desperately asks him if he will come home with her, Gittes refuses and leaves the car. At this point, the camera stays on Evelyn. Polan interprets these two scenes as follows:

If the hard-boiled detective genre is often about the omnipresence of the investigating male consciousness in virtually every scene, here for an instant, another consciousness emerges. Here, a woman starts hesitantly to voice her own interests but the man holds no awareness of her attempt. [...] If in one way, *Chinatown* is about men who are wounded by what they see as the conspiracy of the world – from Curly with his photos to Gittes lost in the morass of city politics – another side of *Chinatown* has to do with a vulnerability and voicelessness of women, a fragility that is also a lack of full agency. (Polan 2006, p. 119)

As indicated earlier, before *Chinatown* Polanski centered mainly on female “vulnerability and voicelessness”. Even though in the two above-mentioned scenes this interest is still

evident, *Chinatown* essentially marks a step away from this preoccupation in that this film does not adopt the point-of-view of the female victim. Rather, the film concentrates on the perspective of the male character whose life is affected by the female trauma, suffering what David V. Baldwin, PhD calls 'secondary traumatization' (2007). This form of trauma is commonly a result of frequent exposure, and an emotional relationship to, other people's traumatic experiences. We might draw a link between the repetition of Gittes' exposure to female trauma and the murder of Sharon Tate, which marks the repetition of Polanski's earliest and most affecting trauma, the loss of his mother, in the sense that it represented the loss of the central female figure in his life. Through the character of Gittes, whom the ending depicts as defeated and drained of all human emotion, Polanski expresses his own shock and void following the murder of his wife.

The film makes use of a specific color scheme to express those feelings. Among others, the Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein has pointed out the symbolic associations of colors in his films, and the value of color in the synchronization of sound and image (2006 p. 111). As in *The Pianist*, drab colors help visualize the despair of the characters – in this case, Jake Gittes and Evelyn Mulwray – by creating a somber atmosphere. Pale browns largely overwhelm the screen. With the costumes, colors are used for ironic effect: while the innocent woman, Evelyn, is dressed mainly in black – the color usually associated with the classical *noirs'* *femme fatales* – the film's villain Noah Cross wears white shirts and a beige hat. Fittingly, Gittes' suits are generally either grey or brown, emphasizing his ambiguous role as the unheroic hero.

The film's depiction of the perpetrator contributes to the bleak mood created by the *mise-en-scene*. The figure of Noah Cross is an unambiguous villain, comparable in

Polanski's oeuvre only with the devil of *Rosemary's Baby*. Feeling not the slightest hint of shame or guilt, Cross does not hide his desire to own and dominate the world. When Gittes asks him why he has been exploiting the city's water and land: "how much better can you eat? What can you buy that you can't already afford?", Cross replies, "the future, Mr. Gittes, the future!" Cross' straightforwardness about his immoral and megalomaniac goals and his lack of positive attributes create a Manichean picture of evil that we will see being countered by the complexity and ambivalence of *Bitter Moon*, in which domination and surrender, malice and suffering, are contradictory elements featured in each character's psychology and behavior.

Made nearly twenty years after *Chinatown* and under very different circumstances, *Bitter Moon* is marked by a change in focus and position concerning trauma and gender relations. However, the two films share various themes – not only trauma, but also oppression, domination, and evil – as well as some formal and structural elements. Similarly to *Chinatown*, *Bitter Moon* is characterized by a dual structure, resulting in two narratives (one set in the past and told in flashbacks, the other set in the present), two couples, and two contrasting sexual inclinations, i.e. sadism and masochism.

In its flashback scenes, *Bitter Moon* initially raises genre expectations by employing different cliché elements common to the standard Hollywood romance, but then disappoints those expectations through its gradually emerging central themes of sexual domination, submission, and betrayal. As in *Chinatown*, the main conflict of *Bitter Moon* ends with the death of one (or, in this case, two) of the central characters. If *Chinatown* de-mythologizes the detective genre, *Bitter Moon* deconstructs the generic

conventions of romantic dramas and comedies. The film's flashback scenes are frequently accompanied by a score, composed by Vangelis, that has a dreamlike and romantic tone, but at the same time also an eerie and uncanny quality. Oscar's voice-over narration is marked by an excessively poetical language which the film seems to use as a distancing device. For example, Oscar comments on his first rendezvous with Mimi as follows: "There was a freshness and innocence about her, an almost disconcerting blend of sexual maturity and childish-naïve take that touched my world very hard and effaced the age difference between us." The sentimentality in his descriptions is complimented with the romantic setting (a Parisian restaurant) and lighting (candle light) of the scene. Through this visual and verbal excess, the characters' romanticism is ironized and, as a result, the viewer stays emotionally detached.

Bitter Moon does not represent the first cinematic example dealing with the male preference for much younger women, which Polanski has proven to be true for himself in his personal life, particularly through his famous sexual offense in 1977. As noted by John Orr, age difference is a motif in Polanski's oeuvre and occurs in "the destructive marriages of *Cul-de-Sac* and *Bitter Moon*, those two fractitious encounters between jaundiced, middle-aged husbands and beautiful girl-brides" (2006, p. 6), as well as in the couples depicted in *What?*, *Rosemary's Baby* and *Tess* (p. 6). In *Chinatown*, age disparity assumes its most perverse variation, with the old generation represented by Noah Cross' breaking the incest taboo. According to Orr, "in all these features there is a misconceived exchange between youth and maturity that goes eerily wrong and in which one will devour the other. Polanski thus explores, either as fate or tragedy or both, this interchange of generations" (2006, p. 6).

In my view, *Bitter Moon* offers his most honest and thought-provoking exploration of intergenerational sexual relationships. Even though the film does not necessarily create a realistic portrayal of human problems resulting from desire and sexual obsession, it nonetheless encourages us to reflect on idealized notions of love and relationships. Human sexuality is portrayed as fundamentally perverse, demanding either dominance or subordination, an active or a passive role, from its 'consumers'. While Oscar is a "verbal exhibitionist" (as Nigel calls him towards the beginning of the film), openly telling Nigel about his sexual experiences with Mimi, Nigel takes on the position of the voyeur, sucked in because of his growing desire for Mimi, passively enjoying the insight into the couple's sexual escapades and, thus, Mimi's sexuality. In one of the early sexual encounters between Oscar and Mimi, she plays the role of the sadist, wearing a black latex costume when she ties him up and playfully uses a knife and a whip to 'threaten' and thus seduce him.

Discussing the relationship between trauma victims and their perpetrators, Judith Herman claims that, "total control over another person is the power dynamic at the heart of pornography" (1997, p. 76). Mimi also noticeably takes sexual pleasure from his fear when, in another early scene, she cuts him with a razor and then licks off the blood on his neck. These scenes foreshadow the tragic developments later in the film, in which we will witness the full dimension of her sadistic tendencies, demonstrated in her revenge acts on Oscar.

Several critics have perceived *Bitter Moon* as a misogynistic film (see e.g. Julian Graffy 1992; Helena Goscilo 2006), and this response is understandable if we consider the fact that the film is told mainly from the perspective of its male protagonist. When

Oscar, gradually losing both his attraction to and respect for Mimi, begins to degrade and humiliate her, it appears to be understandable and necessary: after trying to end the relationship in a cold, but still fairly reasonable manner, and at a time when, as Oscar puts it, they “still have a few shreds of dignity left”, Mimi is not ready to leave him and keeps begging him to give her “one last chance”.

In *Bitter Moon* as well as in *Chinatown*, acts of violence, which the male protagonist directs against the female character, are portrayed as justified by the woman’s obstinacy. For instance, when Oscar accepts Mimi’s first breakdown and refusal to leave, mainly because he feels pity for her, his voice-over narration describe his feelings as follows: “I felt like a rat in a trap”, “I craved variety, hungered for noise and excitement.” Led to feel sympathy for his situation, the viewer sees the point of Oscar’s increasingly impatient and degrading behavior towards Mimi. Initially, she is still confident enough to defend herself, as when they have an argument about their respective knowledge of the other one’s native language (Oscar is American, Mimi is French), demeaning each other by focusing on the other one’s weakest spot – Mimi using Oscar’s lack of success as a writer, Oscar using what he sees as Mimi’s lack of intellectuality in being a waitress and dancer. In this scene, we can relate more to Mimi than Oscar and are able to understand her frustration with Oscar’s growing arrogance towards her. Nonetheless, Oscar’s passionate and explanatory voice-over comments make us comprehend his outburst of violence at the end of the scene. After hitting Mimi so hard that she falls to the floor and is unconscious for several minutes, Oscar apologizes repeatedly, evidently realizing that he has gone too far. Mimi forgives him right away.

Likewise, in *Chinatown*, the climactic scene in which Gittes repeatedly slaps Evelyn and eventually pushes her to the wall is famous for the shocking revelation of incest it offers, but has rarely been noticed by critics for Gittes' questionable act of aggression against Evelyn. In my view, this is not only because Gittes' behavior raises the scene's suspense and enhances the impact of Evelyn's revelation, but also because violence appears to be *required* for Gittes in order to get Evelyn to tell him the truth and to then believe the truth himself. In both films, then, Polanski depicts the male protagonist's acts of violence against the respective woman not as a taboo being broken, but as a justified reaction to prior events.

Mimi's submissiveness and self-abandonment in the second major development in their relationship (following the first phase of mutual passion and understanding between them) supports negative stereotypes of womanhood and femininity. Her painfully embarrassing and self-degrading behavior provokes little understanding in the viewer, but suggests rather that Oscar's increasingly sadistic behavior is caused by her 'weakness' and can thus be seen as her fault. Unlike most of Polanski's films, the male perpetrator is here depicted as a victim of circumstances that originate in the female character's self-sacrifice. Mimi thus appears not so much as a victim of male violence, but rather as a victim of her own violence against herself.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Sarah Projansky has identified two contrasting narrative patterns in rape films (2001, p. 30). The author states that women are often vulnerable in rape films, but the relationship between rape and women's vulnerability is complex. Specifically, two seemingly antithetical types of narratives are common: those that depict women's vulnerability as leading to

rape and those that depict the rape of an independent woman as making her vulnerable. (2001, 30)

Although *Bitter Moon* does not deal with rape, the first pattern Projansky describes can be found in Polanski's film as well. The portrayal of the traumas that we witness Oscar inflict upon Mimi demonstrates that the moral implication of the film is that the central cause of the female trauma is less the male domination itself than the female lack of resistance to male domination. Another example makes this quite clear: after Oscar has unsuccessfully broken up with Mimi for the second time and she hysterically breaks down in front of his feet, the camera focuses on Oscar's face as he smirks to himself and calmly lights a cigarette. In his voice-over commentary, Oscar tells Nigel:

Everyone has a sadistic streak. Nothing brings it out better than the knowledge that you got someone at your mercy. If she really fancied living in a living hell, I would make it so hot even *she* would want out.

From this point in the narrative, Oscar constantly attempts to hurt Mimi, while she makes an increased effort to please him. Soon, she appears to lose all her former individuality and identity as she assumes a traditional female role, representing little else but Oscar's housemaid and cook. Oscar's acts of sadism include intentionally saying another girl's name while he and Mimi have sex, habitually insulting her looks and making fun of her together with other girls. The viewer notices that Mimi's obsessive fixation on Oscar, his growing contempt for her, and her loss of all other human connections, have effects on her outer appearance.

Mimi's deteriorating emotional state is mirrored in the transformation of her looks during the narrative. In a voice-over, Oscar condescendingly remarks, "she was losing

her looks, her figure, wasting away, breaking out in nervous rashes, developing spots.” Whether or not Oscar is aware of the psychological effects of his behavior on Mimi, his control of her appearance counts as one of the ways in which he inflicts psychological trauma and destroys her sense of identity and autonomy in relation to others (Herman 1997, p. 77). According to Herman, the “systematic, repetitive infliction of psychological trauma” leads the victim into a state of “disempowerment and disconnection” (p. 77). When Oscar asks Mimi why she has not been going to her dance classes anymore, she replies: “Dancing has to come from the heart... My heart is broken.” Mimi’s loss of autonomy and self-esteem, as well as her complete surrender to Oscar’s power, mirror reactions typical in victims of chronic trauma, such as Holocaust survivors. Only after Oscar abandons her on the plane to Martinique does Mimi regain her confidence.

Mimi’s newfound self-esteem is reflected in her healthy, mature, and erotic appearance when she returns years later to avenge the traumas she suffered in her relationship with Oscar. Visiting him in the hospital after an accident, she violently pulls the injured Oscar out of bed and thereby breaks his back, then whispers: “Asshole – did you think I’d forgotten?” As Oscar recounts,

She came to see me when I got out of intensive care. She said there’s bad news and there’s good news. You’re paralyzed from the waist down. Okay, I said, let’s have the good news. That was the good news, she said. The bad news is that from now on, I’m taking care of you.

This statement reveals that revenge constitutes Mimi’s central ambition. Her physical recovery from her traumas thus does not symbolize an emotional recovery, but rather reflects the reversal of the power dynamic between them: from this point on, she will be

the one who dominates and humiliates her partner. As I have explained in the previous chapter, revenge fantasies are common in the minds of trauma victims. Herman describes this experience as follows:

The revenge fantasy is often a mirror of the traumatic memory, in which the roles of the perpetrator and victim are reversed. [...] The revenge fantasy is one form of the wish for catharsis. [...] In her humiliated fury, the victim imagines that revenge is the only way to restore her own sense of power. She may also imagine that this is the only way to force the perpetrator to acknowledge the harm he has done her. (Herman 1997, p. 189)

Mimi acts out this fantasy, and from this point on, Oscar emerges as the film's central trauma victim. As with Mimi, his traumatic experiences can be seen as a result of *his own* failures. However, while Oscar appeared to be seeing no other way to get rid of Mimi than through acts of degradation (which he, nonetheless, sadistically enjoyed), Mimi has the choice of accepting the end of her relationship with Oscar as the chance of a new beginning without him, or returning to the 'scene of a crime' and fulfilling her fantasies of revenge.

The previous dynamics between the couple are reversed when Oscar assumes the masochistic role, submissively accepting the way Mimi treats him out of feelings of guilt. Sensing that he deserves every cruelty, Oscar remains passive and gradually loses his will to live. According to Herman, suicidability and masochistic patterns of behavior such as self-injury (Herman 1997, p. 109 f.) are common in trauma victims. Suicide attempts often mark the victim's response to feelings of guilt and self-hatred (p. 95).

Inversely, Mimi now enjoys complete power over Oscar: her actions reverse the traditional gender associations of active and passive, sadism and masochism. Freud has observed that, “for distinguishing between male and female in emotional life we make use of what is an obviously inadequate empirical and conventional equation: we call everything that is strong and active male, and everything that is weak and passive female” (Freud 1949, p. 70). The triumph of ultimate sexual humiliation belongs to her, not to Oscar: she performs an erotic dance with one of the friends from her dance class in front of the immobile Oscar and then has sex with him in the next room, leaving Oscar sitting hopelessly at the dinner table. Exposed to her moans of pleasure, Oscar is made painfully aware of his own (sexual as well as emotional) impotence. In this film, then, sexual trauma affects – for the first time in Polanski’s oeuvre – the male and not the female character. We might consider this scene as an attempt of Polanski’s to express his own sense of sexual failure following his conviction of statutory rape, as well as the shame and humiliation connected with his public exposure. As the abovementioned scenes have shown, Oscar’s voice-over narration guides the audience to identify mainly with him, and not the female victim Mimi. In this sense, *Bitter Moon* differs highly from Polanski’s other films, and reveals his stronger understanding for the role of the male perpetrator. It is hence Polanski’s first film to depict *male* sexual trauma as well as encourage identification with the male rather than the female character.

Up until the end, at which Oscar ends both his and Mimi’s lives to punish both of them for their ‘greediness’, Oscar stays under Mimi’s control and bears the physical and emotional pain she causes in him. Herman identifies two stages in the “breaking” of a person: in the first, “there is a shutting down of feelings, thoughts, initiative, and

judgment” (Herman 1997, p. 84). In this stage, the victim is “reduced to a nonhuman life form” (p. 84), which Mimi achieves by physically disabling Oscar, rendering him not only impotent and thus unable to continue his life as before, but also dependent on her care and powerless to defend himself against her. According to Herman,

the second, irreversible stage in the breaking of a person is reached when the victim loses the will to live. This [i.e., the will to live] is not the same thing as becoming suicidal: people in captivity live constantly with the fantasy of suicide, and occasional suicide attempts are inconsistent with a general determination to survive. (1997, p. 85)

At one point in the film, Mimi leaves Oscar alone for an entire night, causing him to wet himself. She embarrasses him additionally by pointing at the urine puddle on the floor and exclaiming “what is that?”. To further intensify his humiliation, she tells him that he stinks and that she needs to change his diapers, thus infantilizing him. Degraded and completely hopeless, Oscar asks her “why can’t you finish me off?” As a response, Mimi hands him the birthday present she bought for him: a gun. Despite his despondency, Oscar chooses not to make use of it, but rather stays with her and even agrees to marry her soon after.

As for its stylistic treatment of the characters’ traumas, *Bitter Moon* shares different formal elements with *Chinatown*. The setting of the action occurring in the present – the cruise ship on the way to Istanbul – is marked by a conflict between enclosed space (the ship) and open space (the water). As in *Chinatown*, water is used as a symbol of the circularity of the characters’ history and their emotional imprisonment.

Colors and costumes are used to set Mimi apart from the other characters. Her

open sexuality and playfulness are highlighted in the strong colors of her clothes, especially the recurrent use of red in make-up and dresses, contrasting not only with the drabness of all the characters' clothes, but also with her own appearance during her traumatic relationship with Oscar. The use of nationalities and languages further works to emphasize Mimi's exotic impression – as the only Parisian among British and American people on the ship. Jonathan Rosenbaum argues that, “with its American, English, and French characters representing the three cultures [Polanski] has known since he left Poland, it's probably his most personal and emotionally complex movie to date” (1997, p. 30). The theme of exile, a significant element of Gittes' experience in Chinatown, also plays into the characterization of Oscar, an American living in Paris.

In conclusion, both *Chinatown* and *Bitter Moon* differ from Polanski's previous work in their representation of not only female, but also male trauma. Both films deal implicitly with the traumatic events occurring a few years earlier in Polanski's personal life: the Tate massacre and the rape case, respectively. *Chinatown* expresses Polanski's shattered worldview resulting from the murder of his wife, while *Bitter Moon* might be seen as reflecting Polanski's shattered self after his conviction for statutory rape. Both films present the narrative events from the male protagonists' perspectives, thus encouraging the spectator to identify most of all with these characters.

The analyses have shown that Polanski's changing historical position in relation to female traumas has led him to alter his artistic perspective on trauma. In the films Polanski made after the murder of Sharon Tate, he has shown less interest in the role of the female victim, but rather in traumatized male characters. Since the rape case, his films have undergone a shift in focus again, as his depictions of victims and perpetrators have

become more ambivalent, and women now largely emerge as perpetrators who underwent a traumatic experience in the past, rather than solely as victims. Here, it is important to make a distinction between *Bitter Moon* and *Death and the Maiden*. Though the latter film was made only two years after *Bitter Moon*, it evokes empathy for the type of female victim-turned-perpetrator described above, whereas the earlier film encourages identification largely with the male trauma victim. This paradox reveals Polanski's ongoing struggle to maintain concern and empathy for both the role of the male victim – and thus, implicitly, for himself – and that of the female victim of trauma, which is variously represented in his life: by his mother who perished in the Holocaust, by his murdered wife, and by his alleged rape victim.

Conclusion

The Outcome of Trauma

In this study, I have tried to demonstrate the existence of a relationship between Polanski's cinematic oeuvre and his biography. I have defined Polanski's films in terms of what Janet Walker calls 'trauma cinema' (2005). These films invoke the experience of trauma thematically and stylistically. While Walker includes only documentaries and experimental films in her discussion, I have used her framework to describe Polanski's enduring preoccupation with trauma, evident in his films' narratives as well as their formal motifs.

Even though films such as *Repulsion*, *Rosemary's Baby* and *Chinatown* have been examined from a psychoanalytic perspective, Polanski's oeuvre has never been analyzed specifically in relation to psychoanalytical concepts of trauma and their impact on the form and narrative of his films. While trauma is presently becoming a more popular topic in cultural and film studies, it has rarely been explored as a motif within the work of a single filmmaker.

Polanski offers a unique case study. Traumatic events have dominated his life. After the experience of the Holocaust in his childhood, the director faced another severe trauma in 1969 with the brutal murder of his pregnant wife. In 1977, he became the spotlight of the international press again, as he was charged with statutory rape. This experience, however, needs to be differentiated from the two earlier traumas in his life: in this affair, his central role was not that of a trauma survivor but rather, as the alleged perpetrator of someone else's trauma.

I consider Polanski as an *auteur*, but one less of agency and control than of unconscious personal and historical influences. My view of Polanski's authorship is a combination of three approaches, termed by Janet Staiger as the concepts of 'authorship as personality', 'signature' and 'site of discourses', respectively (2002, pp. 33ff). Herbert Eagle writes that,

[unlike filmmakers such as Bergman and Fellini,] the term 'auteur' is not so often used in Polanski's case. The body of his work does not seem to have the same kind of coherence in the realm of ideas, although certain stylistic tendencies are more easily noted. Representations of his philosophy, when they are asserted, rely as much on the tragic and bizarre circumstances of his personal life as they do on his films. (Eagle 1994, p. 92)

My understanding of Polanski's authorship establishes his representation of trauma as a function of discourses created by the historical and social influences on his biography. In this sense, my analysis of Polanski's work as an *auteur* is inspired by Tom Gunning's Foucaultian definition of the biological author "not as a personality who expresses himself through [these] films, but as a force in their production, through which other forces enter" (Gunning 2002, p. 189). Stephen Crofts points out that "authorship has increasingly become a commercial as well as a critical strategy, installing the author-name as a cult personality in the 1970s" (Crofts 2000, p. 95). I argue that approaches to authorship have to be considered in an analysis of Polanski's corpus, especially those defining authorship as signature and personality. In order to fully appreciate Polanski's work, we have to pay respect to the potential (unconscious) influence of events and circumstances on his life and work.

I have developed a symptomatic analysis of the films selected, and highlighted formal and thematic elements that I relate to aspects of Polanski's emotional and psychological trauma. My overall premise is that trauma has a strong impact on Polanski's approach to filmmaking, and informs his signature and agency in terms of style and worldview. I also argue that these elements resonate with the vaster socio-cultural context in which they circulate, particularly as when they refer to collective traumas. As Herbert Eagle puts it,

Indeed, style and structure must be considered the key to [Polanski's] obsessive thematic concerns. *What* Polanski chooses to heighten visually and *how* he achieves this heightening have to do directly with his most enduring preoccupations. And many of his films have been so compelling because those preoccupations are broadly shared by audiences across international and cultural boundaries: the predominance of pain in the world; [...] our early acquiescence to evil for personal gain or pleasure; the rape of innocents (both figuratively and literally). (Eagle 1994, p. 93)

The themes of pain and evil relate closely to the notion of trauma and have informed many of Polanski's films. Leaming argues that, "victim of a violent tragedy, Polanski became a participant in a scenario he was no longer directing. After both the tragedies of his adult life – the murders and the rape case – Polanski made films that imaginatively repeated and reworked those dark events in order to gain mastery over what he had not controlled in reality" (1981, p. 207). I would add that, most of all, Polanski unconsciously reworks aspects of his experience of the Holocaust, particularly the loss of his mother.

As I have demonstrated in chapters 1 and 3, repression and survivor guilt are significant structural elements in both *Chinatown* and *The Pianist*. In the latter, they are established by the absence of flashbacks and references to Szpilman's past, as well as by Polanski's detached camera work. However, I suggest that the film showcases the (healthy) beginning of the director's mourning process and the end of his (pathological) response of melancholia, stemming from his awareness of the motives behind his work, as well as his desire to offer the most detailed and naturalistic portrayal of the cruelties witnessed by Szpilman as possible. In my analysis of *Death and the Maiden*, I have suggested that Polanski's focus on female trauma and the female point-of-view in many of his films can be seen as indications of the lasting traumatic effects of losing his mother in the Holocaust. At the same time however, the film assumes a twofold position vis-à-vis female trauma and male perpetrators, which I have related to the circumstances of the rape case. In *Bitter Moon*, I have detected issues of repressed guilt, sexual dysfunction and ideological ambiguity as the central 'symptoms' of a presumed trauma that Polanski has created 'for himself'.

Denial figures as an important effect of the trauma he purportedly inflicted upon somebody else. Both *Death and the Maiden* and *Bitter Moon* present the capacity for evil as innate and thus present in everyone. Thereby, the films may be interpreted as (either conscious or unconscious) attempts on behalf of the director to euphemize and thus rationalize (both for himself and his audience) the trauma he was accused of inflicting on a teenage girl.

In conclusion, I support Buscombe's statement, "can't we say that the films of a director may reveal both an unconscious structure *and* a meaning which he has put

there?" (cited in Heath 1981, p. 218). While the films' idiosyncratic style appears to be largely intentional and a mirror of Polanski's gift as an artist, there are nonetheless many structural elements in his films that may be identified as uncontrolled and symptomatic of the director's history of trauma. As I hope to have shown in my analyses, trauma has been the defining element in Polanski's life as well as his films.

Works cited

- American Psychiatric Association 2000, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th Edition, Text Revision*, American Psychiatric Association, Washington, DC.
- Aristotle 350 BC, *Poetics*, trans. G. Whalley 1997, McGill-Queen's University Press, Quebec.
- A Story of Survival* 2003, special feature on *The Pianist*, DVD, TVA Films, Toronto, Ontario.
- Avisar, I. 1988, *Screening the Holocaust: Cinema's Images of the Unimaginable*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- Badley, L. 2004, 'The Darker Side of Genius: The (Horror) Auteur Meets Freud's Theory', in S. J. Schneider (ed.), *Horror Film and Psychoanalysis: Freud's worst nightmare*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 222- 239.
- Baldwin, D. 2007, 'Secondary Traumatization' in *David Baldwin's Trauma Pages*, Eugene, Oregon. Retrieved September 12, 2006, from:
<http://www.trauma-pages.com/trauma.php>
- Baron, L. 2005, *Projecting the Holocaust into the Present: The Changing Focus of Contemporary Holocaust Cinema*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, Maryland.
- Breuer, J. & Freud, S. 1953, *Studies on Hysteria*, trans. N. Lockhurst 2004, Penguin, London.
- Brodzki, B. 2004, 'Teaching Trauma and Transmission', in M. Hirsch & I. Kacandes (eds), *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust*, The Modern Language Association of America, New York, pp.123-134.

- Caruth, C. (ed) 1995, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- Caruth, C. 1996, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1996.
- Caughie, J. (ed.) 1981, *Theories of Authorship*, Routledge, London.
- Colombat, A. P. 1993, *The Holocaust in French Film*, The Scarecrow Press, Metuchen, New Jersey.
- Chinatown Revisited* 1999, special feature on *Chinatown*, DVD, Paramount Pictures, Hollywood, California.
- Creed, B. 2004, 'Freud's Worst Nightmare: Dining with Dr. Hannibal Lecter', in S. J. Schneider (ed.), *Horror Film and Psychoanalysis: Freud's worst nightmare*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Crofts, S. 2000, 'Authorship & Hollywood' in J. Hill & P. Church Gibson (eds) *American Cinema and Hollywood: Critical Approaches*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Cronin, P. (ed.) 2005, *Roman Polanski Interviews*, University Press of Mississippi, Jackson.
- Dor, D. 2003 'Decrees Directed Against the Jews of Warsaw' in *Jewish Virtual Library*
Retrieved October 28, 2006, from:
<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/decrees1.html>
- Dorfman, A. 1994, *Death & the Maiden*, Nick Hern Books, London.
- Eagle, H. 1994, 'Polanski', in D. Goulding (ed.), *Five Filmmakers: Tarkovsky, Forman, Polanski, Szabó, Makavejev*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, pp. 92- 155.

- Eagle, H. 2006, 'Power and the Visual Semantics of Polanski's Films', in J. Orr & E. Ostrowska (eds) *The Cinema of Roman Polanski: Dark Spaces of the World*, Wallflower Press, London, pp. 38- 50.
- Eisenstein, S. 2006, 'On Colour', in A. D. Vacche & B. Price (eds) *Color: The Film Reader*, Routledge, London, pp.105- 117.
- Erikson, K. 1995, 'Notes on Trauma and Community', in C. Caruth (ed), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- Feeney, F. X. 2006, *Roman Polanski*, ed. P. Duncan, Taschen, Köln.
- Freedman, K. 2006, 'The Epistemological Significance of Psychic Trauma', in *Hypatia*, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 104-125.
- Freud, A. 1966, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense, revised edition*, International Universities Press, New York.
- Freud, S. 1914, 'Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through', in A. Phillips (ed) 2006, *The Penguin Freud Reader*, Penguin, London, pp. 391- 401.
- Freud, S. 1916, 'Lecture 1: Introduction', in J. Strachey (ed., trans.) 1964, *Sigmund Freud: The Complete Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, George Allen & Unwin, London, pp. 15-24.
- Freud, S. 1917a, 'Mourning and Melancholia', in A. Phillips (ed) 2006, *The Penguin Freud Reader*, Penguin, London, pp. 310- 326.
- Freud, S. 1917b, 'The Paths to the Formation of Symptoms', in J. Strachey (ed., trans.) 1964, *Sigmund Freud: The Complete Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, George Allen & Unwin, London, pp. 358- 377.

- Freud, S. 1948, *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, trans. A. Strachey, The Hogarth Press, London.
- Freud, S. 1949, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, trans. J. Strachey, W.W. Norton, New York.
- Freud, S. 1965, *Leonardo DaVinci and a Memory of his Childhood*, trans. J. Strachey, W.W. Norton, New York.
- Goscilo, H. 2006, 'Polanski's Existential Body – as Somebody, Nobody and Anybody', in J. Orr & E. Ostrowska (eds), *The Cinema of Roman Polanski: Dark Spaces of the World*, Wallflower Press, London, pp. 22-37.
- Graffy, J. 1992 'Lunes de fiel (Bitter Moon)' in *Sight & Sound*, vol. 2, no. 6, p. 54.
- Gunning, T. 2002, 'D. W. Griffith: Historical Figure, Film Director, and Ideological Shadow' in V. Wexman (ed.) *Film and Authorship*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, pp. 181- 191.
- Hass, A. 1990, *In the Shadow of the Holocaust: The Second Generation*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca.
- Heath, S. 1973 'Comment on "The Idea of Authorship"' in J. Caughie (ed.) 1981, *Theories of Authorship*, Routledge, London, pp. 214- 220.
- Herman, J. 2007, *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, Pandora, London.
- Hirsch, J. 2004, 'Post-traumatic Cinema and the Holocaust Documentary', in E. Kaplan & B. Wang (eds) *Trauma & Cinema: Cross-Cultural Explorations*, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, pp. 93- 122.

- Insdorf, A. 2002, *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Kalinowska, I. 2006, 'Polanski's Iconoclastic Journeys in Time: *When Angels Fall* and *Bitter Moon*', in J. Orr & E. Ostrowska (eds), *The Cinema of Roman Polanski: Dark Spaces of the World*, Wallflower Press, London, pp. 133- 145.
- Kalsched, D. 1996, *The Inner World of Trauma: Archetypal Defenses of the Personal Spirit*, Routledge, London, 1996.
- Kaplan, E. & Wang, B. 2004, 'Introduction: From Traumatic Paralysis to the Force Field of Modernity', in *Trauma & Cinema: Cross-Cultural Explorations*, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, pp. 1- 22.
- Laplanche, J. & Pontalis, J.-B. 1973, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. D. Nicholson-Smith, W.W. Norton, New York.
- Laub, D. 1995, 'Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle', in C. Caruth (ed), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- Leaming, B. 1981, *Polanski, A Biography: The Filmmaker as Voyeur*, Simon & Schuster, New York.
- Lifton, R. J. 'The Concept of the Survivor', in J. Dimsdale (ed.), *Survivors, Victims, and Perpetrators: Essays on the Nazi Holocaust*, Hemisphere Publishing, Washington, pp. 113-126.
- Lowenstein, A. 2005, *Shocking Representation: Historical Trauma, National Cinema, and the Modern Horror Film*, Columbia University Press, New York.

- McKibbin, T. 2006, 'Polanski and the Horror From Within', in J. Orr & E. Ostrowska (eds), *The Cinema of Roman Polanski: Dark Spaces of the World*, Wallflower Press, London, pp.51- 61.
- Meikle, D. 2006, *Roman Polanski: Odd Man Out*, Reynolds & Hearn, London.
- Mulvey, L. 1975, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in R. Stam & T. Miller (eds), *Film and Theory: An anthology*, pp. 483- 494.
- Orr, J. 2006, 'Polanski: The Art of Perceiving', in J. Orr & E. Ostrowska (eds), *The Cinema of Roman Polanski: Dark Spaces of the World*, Wallflower Press, London, pp. 4- 21.
- Polan, D. 2006, 'Chinatown: Politics as Perspective, Perspective as Politics', in J. Orr & E. Ostrowska (eds), *The Cinema of Roman Polanski: Dark Spaces of the World*, Wallflower Press, London, pp. 108- 120.
- Projansky, S. 2001, *Watching Rape: Film and Television in Postfeminist Culture*, New York University Press, New York.
- Sarris, A. 1962, 'Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962', in *Film Culture*, no. 27, pp. 1- 8.
- Staiger, J. 2003, 'Authorship Approaches', in D. Gerstner & J. Staiger (eds), *Authorship and Film*, Routledge, London, pp. 27-60.
- Szpilman, W. 1945, *Death of a City*, trans. A. Bell 1999, *The Pianist*, Picador, New York.
- Van der Kolk, B. & Van der Hart, O. 1995, 'The Intrusive Past: The Flexibility of Memory and the Engraving of Trauma', in C. Caruth (ed), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.

Walker, J. 2004, 'The Vicissitudes of Traumatic Memory and the Postmodern History Films', in E. Kaplan & B. Wang (eds), *Trauma & Cinema: Cross-Cultural Explorations*, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, pp. 123- 144.

Walker, J. 2005, *Trauma Cinema: Documenting Incest and the Holocaust*, University of California Press, Berkeley.

Warsaw Ghetto 2007. Retrieved October 30, 2006, from
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warsaw_ghetto

Wexman, V. W. 1985, *Roman Polanski*, Twayne Publishers, Boston.

Zelizer, B. (ed.) 2001, *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick.