

Roman Polanski is now facing a 5th accusation of sexual assault against a child

The long history of Roman Polanski's child rape charges, from 1977 to the present.

By Constance Grady | @constancegrady | Updated Oct 23, 2017, 9:57am EDT

Photo by Tristan Fewings/Getty Images

California artist Marianne Barnard has come forward with new accusations against director and convicted child rapist Roman Polanski, alleging that he sexually assaulted her when she was just 10 years old.

Barnard is the fifth woman to accuse Polanski of raping her as a child. Most famously, Polanski pleaded guilty to statutorily raping then-13-year-old Samantha Geimer (née Samantha Gailey) in 1979, but fled the country before he was sentenced. He now lives in France, where at 84 years old he continues to make movies and win awards.

According to the Sun, Barnard has filed an official report with the Los Angeles Police Department's Robbery-Homicide Division (RHD) sex crimes unit. She has also created a **petition** calling on the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to remove Polanski from its board, which as of this writing has amassed more than 16,000 signatures.

Barnard, who says she was inspired to break her long silence after watching **the downfall of Harvey Weinstein**, is the third of Polanski's accusers to come forward this year. **Earlier this month**, former actress Renate Langer filed a report with the French police alleging that Polanski raped her twice when she was a child model in 1972. And in August, a woman who gave her name only as Robin M. **accused Polanski of raping her when she was 16 years old**. Robin M. said she would not be pressing charges, as the statute of limitations had run out on her case, but she would be willing to testify in court if Polanski were extradited to the US for sentencing in the Geimer case — which Geimer herself **has said she is opposed to**. "I'm speaking out now so Samantha and the world

will know she is not the only minor Roman Polanski victimized,” Robin said.

Barnard’s allegation is only the latest entry in a long, labyrinthine story that’s spanned decades. The story of the Polanski trial is the story of a fiendishly complex case of extradition requests and potentially corrupt judges and discretionary plea bargains and secret off-the-record meetings, but the whole thing is built around one very simple, generally uncontested fact: In 1977, Roman Polanski fed a 13-year-old girl champagne and quaaludes. Then he raped and sodomized her.

Here’s the story of what Roman Polanski did to Samantha Geimer, and of what happened afterward.

Note that some details below are graphic.

“Everyone wants to fuck young girls,” says Roman Polanski

By his own admission, Polanski has always been drawn to girls in their teens. He met his current wife, Emmanuelle Seigner, **when she was 19 and he was 52**. In his autobiography, ***Roman***, he speaks candidly of going to bed with 15-year-old girls as a grown man.

And when he describes the girls, “all between 16 and 19 years old,” who visited him in the late ‘60s while he was grieving the death of his second wife, **Sharon Tate**, (“not necessarily to make love — although some of them did”) he writes that they were “more beautiful, in a natural, coltish way, than they ever would be again.”

Whenever he writes about this attraction, Polanski tends to paint the teen girl in question as a mature, fully grown human being who just happens to be fresher and more natural and more beautiful than adult women are. Teen girls have the power in the situation, he writes, and he is just a weak man, helpless against their charms — as he seems to believe is true of all men.

“Judges want to fuck young girls,” **he told Martin Ames in 1979**. “Juries want to fuck young girls — *everyone* wants to fuck young girls!” The idea that teenage girls might be children, and that not everyone wants to fuck them, doesn’t seem to have occurred to him.

In 1976, Polanski took an assignment from French Vogue that would allow him to explore his attraction to teenage girls: He would shoot a series of photographs about them, one that would, **he says in his autobiography**, “show girls as they really were these days — sexy, pert, and thoroughly human.”

That’s how he met Samantha Geimer. It was 1977, she was a 13-year-old aspiring actress, and her older sister’s boyfriend suggested that she might be a good subject for Polanski’s photoshoot.

Polanski photographed Geimer alone, without anyone there, so that she would react more naturally to the camera, he said. After taking a few pictures of her fully clothed, he instructed her to take off her top, and she complied. **Geimer testified** that she thought these photos would only show her naked from the shoulders up.

“She had nice breasts,” **Polanski wrote**. “I took pictures of her changing and topless.”

In her 2013 memoir ***The Girl*, Geimer writes** that she wasn’t yet wearing bras at the time, because at 13 she was still a child, and built like one.

A few months after the initial photoshoot, Polanski took Geimer to Jack Nicholson’s house to continue it. He photographed her drinking champagne, and urged her to keep drinking it for the pictures. After a while, he instructed her to take her top off once again. He gave her part of a quaalude (“I think I must have been pretty drunk or else I wouldn’t have [taken it],” Geimer said in court) and urged her to go into the Jacuzzi and take off her underwear. He photographed her for a while, and then took off his own clothes and joined her.

“We weren’t saying much now, and I could sense a certain erotic tension between us,” **Polanski wrote** in his autobiography.

"I didn't want to have sex," **Geimer wrote** in *The Girl*. "But apparently that is what was going to happen."

Geimer, disoriented and confused from champagne and pills, faked an asthma attack to get out of the hot tub. She put her underwear back on, and Polanski followed her into the house.

According to Polanski, this is what happened next:

We dried ourselves and each other. She said she was feeling better. Then, very gently, I began to kiss and caress her. After this had gone on for some time, I led her over to the couch. There was no doubt about her experience and lack of inhibition. She spread herself and I entered her. She wasn't unresponsive.

According to Geimer's testimony before a grand jury, this is what happened:

Q: What did you do when he said, "Let's go in the other room?"

A: I was going, "No, I think I better go home," because I was afraid. So I just went and I sat down on the couch.

Q: What were you afraid of?

A: Him. ... He sat down beside me and asked me if I was okay.

Q: What did you say, if anything?

A: I said, "No."

Q: What did he say?

A: He goes, "Well, you'll be better." And I go, "No, I won't. I have to go home."

Q: What happened then?

A: He reached over and he kissed me. And I was telling him, "No," you know, "keep away." But I was kind of afraid of him because there was no one else there.

Geimer went on to testify that Polanski licked her vulva, over her protestations (in a moment that reads as very young in the transcript, she says that he "began performing cuddliness"), and then vaginally raped her. "I was mostly just on and off saying, 'No, stop,'" she said. "But I wasn't really fighting because I, you know, there was no one else there and I had no place to go."

After a while he asked her when her last period was, and whether she was on the pill. On learning that she wasn't, Geimer says, "He goes, 'Would you want me to go in through

your back?”

“No,” she said, but according to her testimony, Polanski ignored her and sodomized her.

When it was over, Geimer went out to the car and cried. Polanski drove her home and told her not to tell anyone.

Later that night, Geimer told her boyfriend what had happened. Her mother overheard and called the police, and the next night Polanski was arrested.

Polanski’s judge originally wanted him to get a pretty sweet plea bargain. It fell apart rapidly.

The Polanski trial promised to be sensational. Polanski was a celebrated artist, and after the death of Sharon Tate — who was murdered in the couple’s home, along with four other people, by members of the Manson family — he bore an attractive aura of grief and martyrdom. And now he was accused of a sex crime. The media salivated.

Geimer’s lawyer, Lawrence Silver, did not want his young client anywhere near the circus. She had already admitted in grand jury testimony that she was not a virgin when Polanski raped her and that she had taken quaaludes before, both facts with which the press would undoubtedly have a field day. He told the District Attorney’s office that he didn’t want her to testify, and the office offered Polanski a plea bargain. He took it.

Polanski pleaded guilty to felony statutory rape, the least serious of the charges he faced. Rape with the use of drugs, also on the table, carried a minimum sentence of three years, while the minimum sentence for statutory rape was one year — with the discretion of the presiding judge. In this case, the judge was Laurence J. Rittenband.

According to Polanski’s lawyer, Douglas Dalton, three days before Polanski was set to be sentenced, Rittenband invited Dalton and district attorney Robert Gunson to an off-the-record meeting in his chambers. Rittenband told the lawyers that he wanted to send Polanski to state prison on probation for a mental evaluation, one that would take no more than 90 days, before he sentenced him. As long as the evaluation came through with no problems, Rittenband said, Polanski would be released immediately on time served. He asked Gunson and Dalton to present this plan to him at the sentencing hearing as their own idea, which he would then approve. (**Gunson later confirmed**

Dalton's account of this meeting in court.)

Dalton agreed to the plan, with one caveat. Polanski was in the middle of directing a movie, he said. Could his mental evaluation wait until he was finished? Rittenband granted Polanski a 90-day stay and told Dalton he'd be willing to extend it if necessary.

Ten days later, **Polanski was photographed in West Germany**, merrily puffing on a cigar and quaffing beer, with his arm slung around a pretty young blonde. (He was reportedly negotiating a distribution deal.) In response, Rittenband gave a furious interview to gossip columnist Marilyn Beck.

"I had been told that 400 employees were waiting for Polanski to work on the film and I believed it," **he said**. "Though I don't want to pre judge the case, it does appear that I may have been innocently deceived." He informed Beck that he was calling a new hearing, adding, "It's not right to speculate on the outcome of the hearing, but I do feel that I have very possibly been imposed upon."

In the end, Rittenband agreed to let Polanski finish out his stay but refused to extend it. Polanski went to state prison for his mental evaluation, and left after its completion 42 days later, confident that he had served all the time in jail that would be required of him.

Two days before Polanski's official sentencing hearing, Rittenband called another private meeting with the lawyers on both sides. He felt that it looked as though he'd been unfairly lenient to a celebrity defendant, he said. He wanted to sentence Polanski to more time, at minimum an additional 48 days in prison so that he would at least serve all 90 days that they'd previously discussed, and then he wanted Polanski to leave the country permanently. (Polanski was born in Paris and did not have a US green card.) He might even, **Rittenband added**, sentence him to 50 years in prison.

Dalton reported on the meeting to Polanski, and Polanski promptly got on a plane to London, and from there flew to Paris. He has not returned to the US since.

The Polanski case makes headlines now and then, but it has mostly been in stasis for years

In the 21st century, the Polanski case has become a major news story twice: once in 2003, when ***The Pianist*** was up for the Best Picture and Best Director Oscars, and again

in 2009, when Polanski was arrested in Zurich and extradition to the US became a real possibility.

The Pianist is considered one of Polanski's best films, and it was widely admired when it came out in 2002 — but Polanski had no way of attending the Oscars. He'd be arrested.

“Should he come back?” **wrote the now adult Samantha Geimer in an op-ed for the LA Times.** “Personally, I would like to see that happen.” It wasn't that what he'd did to her wasn't awful, she said, but he'd been offered a fair sentence that the judge later reneged on for no good reason, and that was unjust. Besides, “the publicity surrounding [the trial] was so traumatic that what he did to me seemed to pale in comparison.”

“If he could resolve his problems, I'd be happy,” she wrote. “I hope that would mean I'd never have to talk about this again. Sometimes I feel like we both got a life sentence.”

In the end, Polanski won the Oscar for Best Director but didn't attend the ceremony. **Harrison Ford delivered it to him personally in France.**

In September of 2009, Polanski traveled to Zurich to accept a lifetime achievement award at the Zurich film festival. **He was detained at immigration,** and then placed into custody to await possible extradition to America. After he made bail, he was placed under house arrest in the Swiss chalet he owned.

Prominent celebrities across America were outraged; **138 of them signed a petition against his arrest,** including Natalie Portman, Tilda Swinton, Isabelle Huppert, Penelope Cruz, Diane von Furstenberg, Wes Anderson, Darren Aronofsky, Martin Scorsese, Monica Bellucci, Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu, Harmony Korine, Ethan Cohen, David Lynch, and Harrison Ford.

The arguments were many: The trial was a long time ago; the judge was corrupt; Polanski is a great artist; and anyway, **as Whoopi Goldberg put it,** he had only pleaded guilty to statutory rape, not “rape-rape.”

In the end, **Switzerland ruled against extradition,** and Polanski went free.

In the meantime, the Polanski case has quietly continued to remain in stasis. In 2016,

Poland declined a request from the US to extradite him, although as Polanski was not in Poland at the time (he does have dual Polish citizenship), it was always a theoretical question. In April, a Los Angeles judge **denied Polanski's request that his case be resolved** in his absence. In June, Geimer filed a request that the state drop the charges against Polanski, **which was denied**.

And earlier this month, in a rare interview at the Zurich Film Festival, Polanski **commented on the decades-old case**, declaring, "As far as what I did: It's over. I pleaded guilty. I went to jail. I came back to the United States to do it, people forget about that, or don't even know. I then was locked up here [in Zurich] after this festival. So in the sum, I did about four or five times more than what was promised to me."

But more alleged victims have continued to come forward, suggesting a pattern of abuse on Polanski's part. **In 2010**, British actress Charlotte Lewis said that Polanski sexually abused her "in the worst possible way" in 1983, when she was 16 and working on his movie ***Pirates***. "He took advantage of me, and I have lived with the effects of his behavior ever since it occurred," Lewis said. "All I want is justice."

Then there was Robin M. in August, who alleges that Polanski assaulted her when she was a child. **She said that** she told one friend at the time of the incident, but did not tell anyone else for fear that her father would "do something that might cause him to go to prison for the rest of his life." Now, she wants Polanski extradited to the US for sentencing in Geimer's case. "I am not over it," she says.

Earlier this month came Polanski's fourth accuser, Langer. **According to the New York Times**, Langer says that Polanski contacted her through her modeling agency when she was 15 and told her he was interested in casting her in a movie. She went to visit him, she says, and he raped her in his home. A few months later he called her, apologized, and told her he wanted to cast her in his movie. He promised her that he would behave professionally toward her. Then after filming started, he got her alone and raped her again. Langer told only her boyfriend, and is coming forward now in part because her parents are dead, so they can't be hurt by the news.

"This had an influence on all of my life," she said.

Finally, there is Polanski's fifth and most recent accuser, Barnard. **In an interview with the Sun**, Barnard says that when she was 10 years old and a child model in 1975, Polanski took her to a deserted beach, ostensibly for a modeling shoot. He had her remove her clothes as he photographed her, and then, she says, he molested her.

"I felt like I wasn't doing the right thing by being quiet and I needed to speak out," Barnard says. "I want him to be exposed so he cannot carry on this behavior."

Update: This article was first published in August 2016 to discuss the accusations made against Polanski by Robin M., and has since been updated to include the accusations from Barnard and Langer.

Correction: This article originally listed the date of Polanski's assault against Geimer as both 1976 and 1977. It was 1977.