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High Life
Roman Orgy

by [Taki Theodoracopulos](#) on October 29, 2009

NEW YORK—Something's bothering me about the Polanski business. No, unlike Harvey Weinstein and Bernard-Henri Lévy—not to mention that Mitterrand paedophile—I will not defend Roman's actions with a 13-year-old, but I will say that, with friends like his making fools of themselves defending him, it will be a miracle if he gets off with a slap on the wrist. Although this may sound pompous, I doubt if any of his defenders have known Polanski as long as I have—40 years and counting—but let's take it from the top.

What Hugo Rifkind wrote about him and his defenders in these pages on 3 October is spot-on. Hollywood has a lot to answer for, and mixing up global warming, Darfur, HIV and Roman's case is not exactly kosher. I particularly liked what he said about Mel Gibson, who was nearly hounded out of Tinseltown for a drunken anti-Semitic outburst, one for which he has apologized more times than I've had hangovers. "But Polanski shags an actual child and they love him." Ironically, the four people who failed to sign the petition for Roman were Woody Allen, Robert Blake, O.J. Simpson and Phil Spector, the last two being in the pokey as I write.

Yes, there are a lot of jokes about Polanski making the rounds, but in the meantime he is having a very bad time in a Swiss jail. Psychologically, that is. Let's face it, it does smell a bit of Inspector Javert, 32 years on. I first met Roman when he walked into my bedroom in Gstaad uninvited and insisted on watching me punch and kick a tiny piece of paper hanging from a string. (It was to speed up one's kicks and punches for an upcoming karate tournament.) We began hanging out together after that, and he even flew Bruce Lee over and I trained with him. Yes, we did have a falling-out after the events in Los Angeles, and I did write some mean things about him, but we have made up and only he knows the price he has paid for that one moment—or hour—of madness. Roman now has children, is happily married, and, as his good friend the wonderful Ronnie Harwood has said to me, no child, especially one as talented and as delightful as his boy Elvis, deserves this.

I will not try the line that phonies like Bernard-Henri Lévy have used, that artists are above the law and that then 13 was the new 18. Or that grotesque Whoopi Goldberg's that it wasn't 'rape-rape'. The one I will try is this: what in Heaven's name has happened to compassion? Polanski has been on the run for 32 years, has never come close to repeating his crime, and has rehabilitated himself in spades. What kind of society are we that in order to further the political career of an obscure California district attorney we use the full power of two states to punish a man who was born punished. First by the Nazis and then by the Manson gang. No wonder poor Roman feels hard done by.

And speaking of forgiveness, I don't remember Menachem Begin, a ferocious terrorist, ever apologising for murdering 91 people when he blew up the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, 28 of whom were British. He didn't even apologise for that while receiving the Nobel Peace Prize. Yet the world forgave and forgot once Israel became a big-time player thanks to Uncle Sam. The cold-blooded murderer Magee is received by those whose parents and families he killed, and he certainly hasn't apologised. The only one who got it right on this was, of course, the magnificent Norman Tebbit, whose wife, the brave Margaret, is living proof that those Irish animals should rot in jail instead of hanging out with polite society. I don't remember the egregious Ted Kennedy asking for Sirhan Sirhan to be set free after 41 years in a very tough jail. So where's Catholic and Irish compassion where the Palestinian is concerned?

The world is just one big double standard. So before anyone accuses me of defending child molestation, what about Jeffrey Epstein, a man who was tried and convicted of paying underage women to give him sexual rubdowns, but who served less than 13 months of a ridiculously soft sentence of 18 months? Epstein had the following going for him. He is a billionaire, despite the fact that no one knows how he made his pile, as he trained and worked as a maths researcher. Epstein also had letters recommending his character to the judge in Palm Beach from Governor Bill Richardson of New Mexico and Bill Clinton, whom Epstein flew all over the world in his private plane and who is a close friend of his.

So, a crime committed 32 years ago and paid for in full as far as I'm concerned by a man who has known more suffering than most of us is to be pursued to the bitter end, whereas Jeffrey Epstein, friend of the powerful and a billionaire, does only 12 months in a country-club jail in Palm Beach. If that's true justice, then the law is an ass — but I always knew that. Why don't we try compassion and forgiveness for a change, but not for truly bad guys, just for poor Roman Polanski.