

Screen Analysis on *Shadow of A Doubt*

In Alfred Hitchcock's *Shadow of a Doubt*, Hitchcock visually portrays how and why a heroine's innocence can be threatened, and the supposed consequence of such an action. In the case of the character, Charlie, she loses her own innocence after her world is shattered by the discovery that what she believed to be an eternal truth, that her Uncle was a wonderful person, is in fact the reverse.

interesting
nice organization of our claims
In this film, Hitchcock uses situations and interactions that are visually similar, but contextually different to illustrate the changing relationship between Charlie and Uncle Charlie as a result of the discovery that he is a murder. Furthermore, because the relationship between Charlie and Uncle Charlie and Charlie's relationship with her innocence are directly correlated, the viewer is also able to see the slow decay of Charlie's innocence. The more Charlie uncovers about her uncle, the farther she moves away from the naiveté that kept her pure, guiltless and lighthearted. The threat to and the loss of Charlie's innocence therefore become key to her as a character and ultimately links Charlie to Hitchcock's other Heroines.

okay
Throughout the film, visual illusions are made that suggest that Charlie's innocence is in danger and therefore, the preservation of this quality slowly becomes of great importance and intrigue throughout the film. If Charlie's innocence can also be equivocated to her supposed virginity, than her innocence can be said to first be threatened by her Uncle's lust. As a result of the many illusions to the presence of the Electra complex, the sexual tension between Charlie and her Uncle is unveiled.

Therefore, the medium shot of Uncle Charlie first looking at the graduation picture of Charlie, a symbol of her as a young woman, his then plucking the petals from a flower, is perceived as an illustration of his desire to "deflower" her, thus physically and conceptually removing her innocence. This same purity belonging to the heroine is put into jeopardy again when Uncle Charlie, who at first was lovingly teasing Charlie, is depicted as snapping and physically harming her by grabbing her wrists tightly when she picks up the piece of newspaper from his pocket that he had previously

removed. Although she does verbally express that she is being hurt, what makes these shots so threatening is that Uncle Charlie so easily slides back into the act of wooing her and the position of a loving, almost sexual, embrace. Therefore, the mind is able to see how easily it is to go across the line of between hurtful to loving and sexual and back again. This therefore, evokes connotations of sexual rape in which something so passionate can quickly turn into something horrific.

Even though Charlie's innocence remains protected from the lust and abuse of her Uncle, it is her discovery that her Uncle Charlie is in fact evil that strips any innocence she had from her. The knowledge that the man she equivocated to a father is a murderer, that she too is committing a crime by not turning him in, and the fear of hurting her mother, is enough to spin her world upside down, so much so that she has lost her girlish innocence. Clues to her loosing her lively childlike nature and thus, her innocence, are also spread throughout the end of the film. The way the altered Charlie, who once hummed with glee the tune of the ~~Mary~~ ^{Mary} Widower, says in a harsh tone to her mother "Don't sing it" works as a metaphor that explores the change in ~~Mary~~ ^{Charlie}'s personality and perception. The contrast between the young, trusting and loving Charlie and the new hardened one is most accurately seen when Charlie is forced into a bar by her Uncle. The bar itself represents the threshold that Charlie crosses, being the innocent young girl to the now jaded young woman, emphasized by the waitress, Louise, remarking that she never expected to see Charlie in such a place. The table in-between them works as the visual barrier that never existed before, corresponding with Uncle Charlie's line "Now look Charlie, something has come between us." As well, the once overtly affectionate Charlie, almost skipping after seeing her Uncle at the train station and constantly in his embrace, letting him at one point even glide his hand down her cheek, will not even stand to let him rest his hand upon hers, made clear as she quickly withdraws his fingers while still looking at him. In addition, the removal of the ring Uncle Charlie gave her suggests the removal of her bondage to him and the grasp he had on the young girl version of her. The fixation Louise has on the ring also emphasizes the change in Charlie's viewpoint. Although her line "I could just die to have a ring like that" highlights the risks Uncle

Charlie is willing to take to obtain his material possessions and sadistic satisfaction, it also could be seen as helping to illuminate Charlie's new found stance, that by taking it off, she is no longer willing to "Just die" to have the ring, or thus, Uncle Charlie's love.

At the beginning of the film, Charlie is in an almost dream like state when she says "he heard me" in reference to her uncle. The way in which she not only says "he heard me!" but also later claims that it is Uncle Charlie who will save them suggests that she glorified him as a god and therefore, by loosing faith in Charlie, it is as if she has lost all her faith altogether. Furthermore, as a result of her knowing too much information and her innocence, she is no longer free from fear. Her innocence and ignorance is what protected her from being another of her Uncle's victims, but her knowing too much is what soon causes her to be at risk for her life.

The realization that her Uncle is in fact a type of devil is what finally causes Charlie to loose the prized possession of her innocence. However, it is this loss of innocence that helps to identify her character with Hitchcock's other female heroines. Not only does she suffer like most other leading ladies do as a result of their attachment to men, but many of Hitchcock's other heroines are defined by losing their innocence as a result of what they have experienced. In *Blackmail*, Alice White literally loses her innocence after defending herself against rape. Even the minor character of Margaret in *39 Steps* can be seen as losing her innocence in that she is hit by her husband after performing what she believed to be noble and romantic act, thus shattering whatever idealized dreams she had about doing good. However, it is truly in *Rebecca* that this concept of the female loosing her innocence is seen most evidently. After everything, Max says to his new wife, "It's gone forever, that funny young, lost look I loved won't ever come back. I killed that when I told you about Rebecca... In a few hours, you've grown so much older." Therefore, the loss of the central female character's innocence as a result of trusting another man in *Shadow of a Doubt* serves as a furthering of the idea that Hitchcock as an Auteur was playing with: that the safety of a woman's innocence directly correlates to her relationship with the central man in her life.

Savannah,
This is a very good first report. For your next one, you might attend more carefully to things like camera

angles, lighting, and the like. But overall you have done a good job of linking up your sections to the themes of the film overall. (B)

I think this might be organized more clearly

