

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
Jason Zimmerman, MA

***Rich and Strange* (1931)**

Alfred Hitchcock

OVERVIEW

Director Sir Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980) is perhaps the best-known British filmmaker and a household name. With over 50 films to his credit, Hitchcock helped to shape the modern understanding of the thriller genre. His best-known films include *The Birds*, *Psycho*, *Vertigo*, and *Rear Window*, which have all earned accolades, including preservation by the US Film Registry. In 1960, Hitchcock was inducted into the Hollywood Walk of Fame with two stars for his work in both film and television. He was also the first recipient of the BAFTA Academy Fellowship Award.

Film The film's title is a reference to Ariel's song in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: "Full fathom five thy father lies, / Of his bones are coral made, / Those are pearls that were his eyes: / Nothing of him that doth fade, / But doth suffer a sea-change / Into something rich and strange." Although *Rich and Strange* depicts several seaports of France, Egypt, and the Far East, the entire production took place in London. The opening sequence was made in a specially-constructed set to be filmed in a single continuous pan shot. This film marks Hitchcock's first use of a full-sized ship replica shot in a special tank. There is little else to note about *Rich and Strange*, as many of the claims and reportage about this film describe scenes that don't exist or may have been jokes made by Hitchcock that were taken as serious statements by journalists.

Background In the USA, the film was initially released under the name *East of Shanghai*. This is unusual, given that the film was released as *Rich and Strange* in over 20 other countries. The film, under any title, was a box office failure in both the US and the UK. During this period of transition to sound film, many pictures were shot with the intent of both a silent and a talkie version being released. This means that, like 1929's *Blackmail*, *Rich and Strange* is actually a 'half-talkie'. The limited dialogue and overacting displeased viewers of the sound version while a lack of intertitle cards is blamed for the flop of the silent version.

CINEMATIC NARRATION

There is little to nothing striking in the cinematography of *Rich and Strange* beyond some creative depictions of seasickness and an expertly choreographed opening sequence -one of the director's trademarks. Close to the 18-minute mark, we can see shots of a steamship recycled from the production of *The Manxman*. We can also see sloppy editing throughout. Besides rough cuts and failed editing experiments, there are multiple poorly done overdubs at several points in the film. Several Asian characters have their spoken lines removed although we can clearly see them speaking. In addition, today's viewers may be put off by the overtly racist and orientalist attitudes of the film's characters. Still, *Rich and Strange* serves as a time capsule into colonial Britain and early Hitchcock film-making.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Fred Hill	A middle-class man married to Emily and who gains a large inheritance
Emily Hill	A middle-class woman married to Fred
Commander Gordon	A rich and dashing older man on his way to his estate in the Far East
The Princess	A noblewoman from a European country who isn't what she seems
The Old Maid	A ship's passenger who annoys the other cruise members

SYNOPSIS

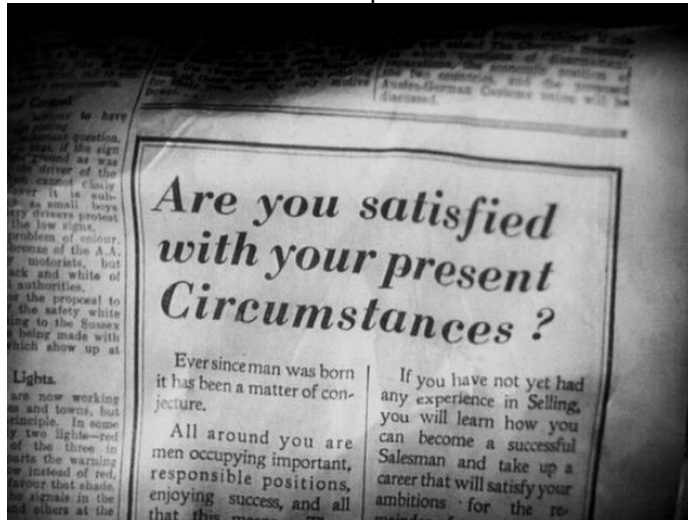
We follow Fred Hill home from work one rainy day in London. He is frustrated by his broken umbrella and some rudeness he encountered while riding the Underground. His wife, Emily, awaits him dutifully with dinner in the oven as she works at her sewing machine. Fred complains about his life while Emily tries to comfort him when there's a knock at the door. An older woman, a landlady perhaps, enters and greets the couple with a letter in her hand. Fred reads the letter, finding that a wealthy uncle has decided to give him his inheritance early. The couple celebrates and books tickets on a luxury cruise. They cross Europe and the Mediterranean while Fred is stuck in bed with seasickness. Emily meets and bonds with Commander Gordon, a wealthy man with an estate in the Far East. As they travel across the Indian Ocean, Fred encounters a woman called The Princess whom he falls for quickly. A conflict between Fred and Emily begins as they realize that each has fallen for another person. Eventually, while staying in Singapore, Emily decides to remain faithful to Fred when she declines the Commander's invitation to live with her at his estate in Kuala Lumpur. At the same time, Fred chooses to leave Emily for The Princess only to find that she is a scam artist who's stolen most of his money. Now they only have enough money to book a return trip on a budget ship. On the journey back, the ship encounters trouble and sinks with Fred and Emily trapped in their cabin. They wake up the next morning to find that the ship is only partially underwater and that an escape ladder sits right outside the window of their cabin. They are elated not to have drowned but are the only people left on the ship. A Chinese sailing ship approaches and the couple climbs aboard while the men on the ship quickly loot the sinking ocean liner. The people on the Chinese ship care for the stranded couple wordlessly and a child is born while they sail for the mainland. They return to rainy London and resume their normal lives, though they are closer and wiser from their experience abroad.

PLOT

Rush hour- The film begins in an office building as the clock strikes six. Accountants, secretaries, and other workers spill out of their offices into halls, cascading toward the entrance like a stream of water. Two by two, they open their umbrellas and step out into classic London drizzle. Fred Hill disrupts the synchrony when his umbrella breaks in his hand. He struggles for a moment before trudging into the rain unprotected. The camera follows Fred's descent into the underground as he squeezes into the Tube with dozens of other impatient commuters.



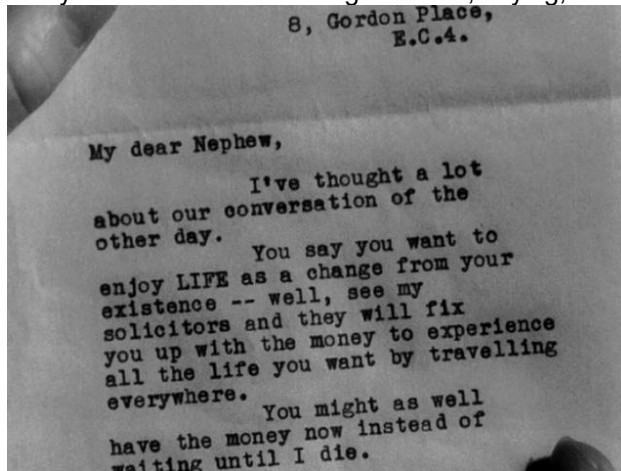
“Are you satisfied”- A bit of comedy ensues as people elbow their way toward any vacant seats. Fred accidentally plucks a feather from an older woman’s hat earning her ire. To avoid her gaze, Fred looks up and begins reading advertisements. He lowers his gaze to a man eating a poorly constructed sandwich. Bored, Fred removes a newspaper from his jacket and opens it, accidentally striking a nearby commuter. He begins to read after a hasty apology, his eyes resting on an ad that reads, “Are you satisfied with your present Circumstances?” His face tells us ‘no’ before the train lurches to a halt and causes him to grab the older woman’s head to keep his balance.



Home at last- We fade in on a middle-class neighborhood, its houses lit by streetlamps. Fred struggles once more with his umbrella, this time successfully, before entering one of the houses. His wife, Emily, smiles excitedly as he enters. She sits at the dining table with her sewing machine. “I think you’ll like me in this new dress,” she says after they kiss. The parasol portion of Fred’s umbrella falls to the floor and Emily asks if he’s broken it. He doesn’t respond, removing his hat and jacket with a disgruntled look on his face. He moves to the radio as Emily tells him about dinner and her hopes that they might catch a film later. He turns on the radio and dramatically throws himself into a nearby chair. “I want some life,” he complains. Emily tries to comfort him, saying all he needs is a little food and medication. “I don’t want any pills,” Fred replies, “I want some of the good things in life.”



Life-changing letter- Fred continues to complain about a lack of money and how rich ladies spend more on their poodles than Emily does on herself. Emily responds that she's never expected any of the nice things Fred mentions and they should be thankful for all they already have. A knock comes on the door and an old woman enters. She carries a letter, which she hands to Fred and leaves. Emily asks if it's a tax form as Fred reads. In the letter, his uncle states that he is giving Fred his inheritance early. "You might as well have the money now instead of waiting until I die." Fred and Emily are stunned. He tears Emily's dress from the sewing machine, saying, "Now you're going to have some real clothes."



“Hello, we’re off”- The scene begins with a title card showing an excerpt from *The Tempest*: “Doth suffer a sea change / Into something rich and strange.” We see Emily and a railway porter watching as Fred struggles to light a cigarette. A passerby says, “Hurry up, old man! We’ll be late for the office!” Emily and Fred laugh. The train offloads at a port along the English Channel as dozens of passengers march up the gangways of an ocean liner. A sailor tells Fred, “It’s a bit rough in the channel,” as the ship disembarks. “Hello,” says Fred, “We’re off.”



Seasick- On deck, Fred removes a camera from his coat pocket, saying to Emily, "Let's have a snap." Emily stands near the boat's railing with a view of the ocean behind her as Fred lines up his shot. We see the camera's viewfinder rocking with the waves. Fred looks up, dazed, before trying once more. When he tries again, he seems more affected, lights swirling across the screen and obscuring Emily. He says, mumbling as if sick, that he's going down to buy Emily some magazines before stumbling away. Emily looks after him, worried and confused, a stack of magazines already resting in her arms.



Paris- "To get to the Folies Bergere," a title card proclaims, "you have to cross Paris." We're shown many notable Paris landmarks such as the Arc de Triumph, the Eiffel Tower, and Notre Dame cathedral as Fred and Emily look around excitedly. The camera then pans along the busy streets. We see many of the same sights again, this time as the sun sets. As darkness falls, the city of Paris lights up and we see the brightly lit facade of a music hall.



Music Hall- A conductor strikes up the band as the house lights dim inside the music hall. Fred and Emily find their seats, smiling at one another. Fred lights a cigar and Emily slips off her high heels as the music swells. The curtain rises, revealing a swarm of scantily clad dancing girls. "The curtain's gone up too soon," says Emily, "They're not dressed!" She self-consciously adjusts her plunging neckline as the show begins. Canned footage of music hall acts including dance lines, ragtime performers, and tap dancers flashes across the screen. The audience applauds and begins to leave as the house lights come up once more. A ragtime band blares as the guests leave.



After-show drink- A man with a beard eyes Emily as the crowd exits the music hall. She jumps as he passes behind her. "Let's leave," she says to Fred, "I don't like it here. Somebody just pinched me!" "Where?" asks Fred. "You know where," Emily responds. They make their way through the Paris streets to a raucous little bar where they have a drink. Afterward, a title card says, "to get to your room, you have to cross the hotel lounge." In the hotel, Fred makes a show of stepping over a rude man's overextended legs as the couple makes their way to the elevator. Fred is obviously drunk, mistaking the elevator's level indicator for a clock. In the hotel room, Emily displays a new nightgown, commenting, "People will think we're not married," about the article's lack of modesty. "Don't feel a bit as if we are," says Fred, drunkenly.



Big ship bound for the East- A title card reads “Marseilles –and the big ship bound for the East.” Men in turbans, women in sun hats, and men in English-style hats walk up the gangway as others stand at the portside rails. Fred stands with Emily by the rail. They can overhear two passengers speaking about the rough seas. Fred pulls a face and tells Emily that he’s going down to inspect the cabin. Emily remains by the railing, looking at the sea, as another man walks up beside her. He bumps into her as the waves toss the boat and apologies. A spectacled older woman approaches and inserts herself between the two, calling the man ‘Commander.’ She walks off, leaving Emily and the Commander alone as the ship disembarks.



Night at Sea- Emily stands at the railing in an elegant dress. The Commander enters the shot, smiling at her as he smokes his pipe. The sun’s last light flickers on the horizon before the Commander speaks: “It’s a marvelous night, isn’t it?” Emily agrees. After a moment of silence, he asks if her husband is feeling better. “Oh yes,” Emily says, joking that Fred is a good sailor but not used to such a large vessel. The Commander turns to see a group of women laughing and running. They stop and one addresses him, asking if he’ll join them. He says he’d like to finish his pipe first. The women laugh and run off. The Commander and Emily stand in silence for a moment before the Commander makes a comment about outgoing people. Emily says, “Oh I like to see people enjoying themselves.”



Room service- A sharp cut from Emily's last statement brings us to Fred lying in bed, seasick. He looks miserable, almost as if he's dying. The camera nods and sways as if rocked by the ocean waves. A porter knocks on the door and enters, asking if Fred feels like he can eat dinner. The porter hands Fred a menu. As he reads, the words bounce off the page in an exaggerated visualization of motion sickness. He tells the porter to ask his wife to bring him something. We cut back to the deck where Emily and the Commander stroll away from the camera.



The Mediterranean- We transition from the rolling waves of the Mediterranean to the ship's helm and shots of the ship itself. There is activity everywhere. People lounge and children play on the main deck. Men smoke cigars and play poker in cabins. The first mate increases the throttle and receives a response from below deck. The coal shovelers quicken their pace as the engine's pistons roar. We see Fred in bed once more, looking sick and annoyed before seeing Emily and the Commander sharing tea on deck. The Commander passes Emily a photograph showing him seated on the front porch of his estate in Malaysia. "Here's another," says the commander as he passes Emily another picture, a tight shot of the first location. Emily smiles: "May I draw on this?" The Commander chuckles and agrees.



“Have you ever been in love”- Emily sketches a rough female figure in the picture, smiling in the empty chair opposite the Commander. The Commander laughs when she passes it back and says, “You are the quaintest person, really.” When Emily asks what he means, he replies that he could sit and listen to her the entire afternoon. Emily explains further that people like her husband make her so anxious, but she feels like she can be open and silly with Commander Gordon. She goes on to ask, “Have you ever been in love, Mr. Gordon?” He responds that he hasn’t. Emily explains how she loves Fred so much, she fears being foolish in front of him because he’s so clever. “And I’m not?” Asks the Commander. He laughs when Emily responds, “No.”



Interrupted- Emily goes on to say she thinks love makes people timid: “Everything’s multiplied by two... it all means so much more.” The Commander jokes that he should try love sometime. The conversation between Emily and the Commander becomes more openly flirtatious as an elderly gentleman wanders onto the deck. He says hello to the Commander, interrupting them. “This, I presume, is Mrs. Gordon,” the man says before a woman with glasses enters the shot. The Old Maid, the spectacled woman from before, chastises the man politely, saying, “You promised me that you wouldn’t run away!”

After Dinner- A title card appears bearing the words “After Dinner.” Emily and the Commander sit in the dining room sharing tea once more. Emily smiles over at Commander Gordon before another hard cut to Fred sick in bed. When we cut back to the dining room, we see the Old Maid enter the room. She stares around the room, mouth agape until she singles out the Commander. He tries to get up to greet her, but she pulls him back down as she sits. She suggests to Emily a seasickness cure for Fred before leaning in close to the Commander and asking him questions about morality. When the Old Maid tries to convince Commander Gordon to dance with her, he says he already promised Emily a stroll. The two leave after saying their goodbyes, leaving the Old Maid comically alone to play solitaire.



“One bloke to another”- We see the sun setting as Commander Gordon and Emily begin their stroll. They pass sailors playing a squeezebox and poker as they continue on. They stand at the bow, looking at the water in the moonlight. “Like to see a ship we were once passengers on?” the Commander asks. Emily is shocked when she calls the Commander ‘Gordon.’ The Commander replies that he likes it and hopes she’ll continue to be so friendly, just like “one bloke to another.” Emily becomes dizzy looking at the sea and leans into Gordon. They look into each other’s eyes and kiss. The squeezebox in the sailor’s cabin squeals out a dissonant chord as Emily looks up at the Commander with a conflicted look on her face. “Let’s go back,” she says, and they leave.



In the vestibule- Emily and the Commander retrace their steps back toward the dining room. We see the gambling sailors once more. Three women pass the couple and nod in unison. Emily and Commander Gordon walk slowly and stand in the entryway to the cabin vestibules. When the Commander opens the door, the Old Maid appears as if she was waiting. “I’ve been looking for you everywhere,” she says to the Commander. She delivers a package of seasickness cure to Emily before flirtatiously teasing the Commander about losing his companion. She leaves and Emily steps forward, looking confused. “I guess I’d better say good night, too,” she says. The Commander asks, “Is it alright?” Emily nods and leaves after grasping his hand.



Deck games- The seasickness cure seems to have worked because the next morning Fred is on deck. He smiles as he and Emily watch a tennis match further across the deck. "Gosh, Em, I'm feeling fine," says Fred. He looks at the sea and pulls a face, but recovers quickly. A ring from a nearby deck game flies into shot and strikes Fred in the face. Emily comforts Fred as a woman walks into the shot. She apologizes and Fred scolds her. A man walks up to Fred and chastises him, saying, "The Princess couldn't help it." Fred and the Princess smile at one another. "Fred had met a Princess!" proclaims a title card.



Fred & The Princess- The ship drops anchor at Port Said. Tourists look over the rails at the various merchants who have rowed their boats out to meet the ship. Each boat carries several people trying to sell blankets, clothes, and various gewgaws. We see Fred as the Princess approaches him. She is delighted to see him. She says she has to retrieve her bag. "Don't run away without me," she says as she leaves.

Grouchy Fred- The Old Maid appears, asking if Fred has seen the Colonel(a minor character). He says he hasn't, but the man is standing right next to him. The Old Maid grabs the older man by the arm and drags him away. Emily appears, smiling brightly as she asks, "Fred, Isn't it lovely?" We see the coast of Egypt. Fred responds by chastising her for bringing a camera: "It makes you look like a tourist." She seems a bit hurt but continues to talk, musing about the strange people with their strange lives. "Well, you don't think they built it especially for us overnight," says Fred. "You needn't snap at me like that," Emily says.



All ashore- A sailor calls for all the guests leaving to board the shuttle boat as the Princess reappears. She compliments Emily for having such an attractive husband before Fred and the Princess leave. Emily looks dejected as the Commander walks over to her. He smiles at her: "Aren't you going ashore?" Emily nods and Commander Gordon says, "There isn't much time left." We are shown a shot of the steam-powered shuttles docked next to the ocean liner. The Commander takes her camera and they join the other tourists flocking to the shuttles.

Strangers in a strange land- The tourists talk excitedly as they exit a horse-drawn trolley. They wander into the market as a group, bombarded by the sounds of salesmen and various hawkers shoving wares into their faces. Emily walks alone, smiling as she examines the architecture and people surrounding her. Then we see the Old Maid comically choosing a throw rug at a nearby stall. Emily watches as Fred disappears with the Princess on his arm, her smile fading. The Commander notices and approaches to console her.



Masquerade dance- The ship drifts down the Suez Canal. Aboard the ship, a raucous dance party on deck fills the screen with motion and light. The tourists have all dressed up, some as Arabian royalty, others as comic characters. Fred dances with the Princess. The sound cuts out as Emily and Commander Gordon hold each other somewhere away from the party. "Shall we go?" she asks, "Fred may be looking for me." The Commander agrees and they move to leave when they see Fred and the Princess strolling by, laughing together. Emily looks distraught and sinks into her seat once more.



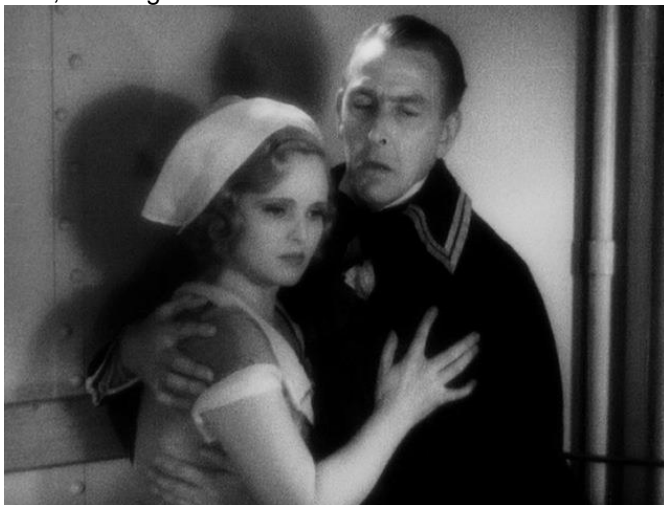
"Go have your dance"- Fred and the Princess sit down together. Although he's enamored with the Princess, he seems skittish, perhaps guilty about his infidelity. He shows some comically awkward affection to the Princess. Then, she moves towards him for a kiss. He struggles with her costume's veil for nearly a minute before they kiss. Before their lips touch, there is a hard cut to a high-angle shot of people waltzing across the deck. When we return to Fred and the Princess, they stare at each other for a moment. "Cabin number 19," the Princess says, smiling. Fred moves to leave and the Princess teasingly chastises him. She tells him to give the "gossip woman" the dance he promised her and meet the Princess in her cabin after. They part after another kiss.



Awkward tango- The band begins to play an ostentatious tango as the Old Maid and Fred wander into the crowd of dancers. Fred struggles to find his footing as the Old Maid manhandles him and overemphasizes her dance moves. After a few turns, Fred's eyes light on a placard bearing the number 19. He is dazed for a moment, only continuing to dance when the Old Maid jerks him around into another turn. Fred's bored expression and constant looking around gives him the appearance of a trapped animal as the dance continues. The Old Maid seems oblivious, comically asking him how old she looks in her costume. After some goading, Fred replies, "Nineteen." He desperately signals a violin player to stop the music when the Old Maid is distracted and quickly finds his way to the B deck. He stumbles into cabin 18 by mistake, quickly exiting and entering the next room.



“If you are, I am too”- The camera watches the dancers bouncing on deck before landing on Emily and Commander Gordon kissing. Both look conflicted as their faces part. “I’m drunk, Emily,” the Commander finally says. “Well if you are, I am too,” she replies. The Commander wanders away from her, muttering some apology. They find their way back into the dining room where they find Fred, already drunk. He invites them to sit, remaining in his seat. Emily does while the Commander walks off to order her a drink. The Princess appears and Emily notices that Fred stands to offer his seat. The Commander returns with a drink for Emily and strikes up a conversation with the Princess. Fred and Emily sit side by side, drinking in unison.



Colombo A title card reads, “Colombo [Colombo] – but to Emily it was people – – not places that mattered now.” A sailor sings while cleaning the ship’s railing as Emily asks a ship’s officer if he has seen her husband. The officer replies that Fred went ashore with the Princess. The Commander appears and offers to go ashore with her. He flags down the officer and asks when the next ship is leaving. When he answers, “Five minutes,” they hurry away towards the shuttle. After a shot of the busy port, we see Emily and the Commander side by side in separate rickshaws. “You’ve been thinking a lot,” says the Commander, and Emily laughs it off at first. She does confide that the way Fred and the Princess were acting after the party concerned her.



Traffic Jam- The camera lands on another pair of rickshaws side by side. This time, it's Fred and the Princess. "Tell me, Fred," she says, "have you any regrets for tricking Emily so?" He flounders around trying to justify himself until she compares Emily to water and herself to champagne. "Having a better taste for champagne," he says, "what's the use trying to stick to water?" We hear a car horn and see traffic as the rickshaw runners nearly collide with a speeding automobile. A cacophony of arguing begins as Frank and Emily find themselves side by side. The camera fades as they awkwardly avert their gazes from one another.



The last night of the voyage- Emily and the Commander stand with their backs to the camera, looking out over the dark sea. Commander Gordon turns around and smiles before tapping Emily on the shoulder. "Like to see a ship," he asks, "that we were once passengers on?" She turns and smiles, looking with him. "It's running away from us now," he says. After a moment, Commander Gordon removes a picture from his pocket. "Is it going to be like this?" he asks. We see it is the same picture Emily drew the figure on earlier. Emily is conflicted. We hear Auld Lang Syne playing in the background as they embrace.



“Isn’t it marvelous?”- We cut to Fred and the Princess standing together in smart-looking outfits. “Isn’t it marvelous,” Fred asks, “to think that after tonight we shall always be together?” The Princess agrees and mentions that she must go ashore alone the next day. Fred brings up Emily, hoping that she’ll be alright when he leaves her. “If a woman cannot hold her man,” says the Princess, “there is no reason why you should take the blame.” “I suppose you’re right,” says Fred, “you always are.” Inside, the ship’s captain and guests ring in the new year with a cheer. The Old Maid elbows her way to the center of the group, comically adding a fourth cheer to the traditional three.



Singapore- There are several shots of the harbor and Singapore’s busy streets. In the back of a truck, we’re shown Emily and the Commander’s luggage tags. They bear the same address. Inside the car, Commander Gordon speaks to Emily, consoling her about her choice to leave Fred. By his description, the marriage was held together almost entirely by Emily’s effort. Emily still seems conflicted about leaving Fred. The Commander reveals that he knows that the Princess is a scam artist, saying it’s the only reason Fred saw success in wooing her. Emily asks why he didn’t warn them and he replies, “You can’t teach the Freds of this world.” Even though Commander Gordon continues to speak ill of Fred, Emily can’t help but worry about his fate.

Confrontation- Fred shaves in a hotel room as the Princess enters the scene. She tells Fred that Emily has left with Commander Gordon. Fred reacts but quickly resumes shaving. There's a knock on the door and the Princess assumes it's the bill she sent for. Emily enters the room. The Princess maintains the act that it's a porter with a bill. Fred enters the room and locks eyes with Emily. Then the Princess excuses herself, saying, "Perhaps you would wish to speak alone?" Fred goes to find a shirt. Before she exits, the Princess tells Emily she's "a damn little fool!" for not leaving with Commander Gordon.



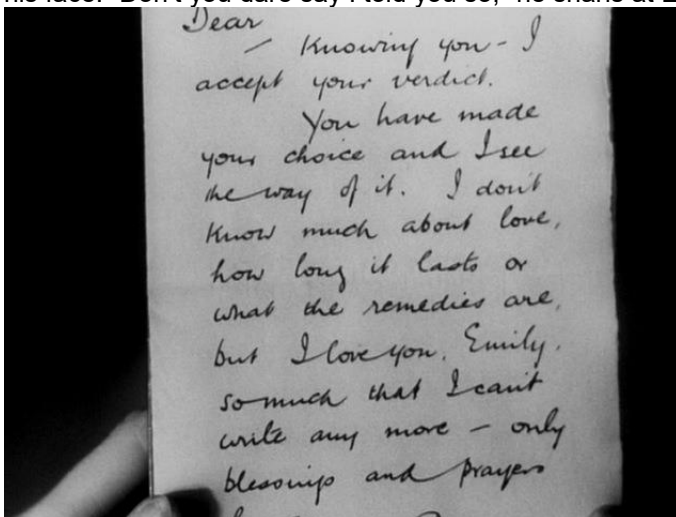
Love lost- Shaken by the Princess' last insult, Emily closes the door and composes herself. Fred returns with a shirt and a flimsy excuse for being with the Princess. He says Emily will probably be doing something with Gordon, sending her an accusatory look. "He's gone," Emily replies. Fred seems a little confused. "He wanted to take me with him," she says, "He loved me." Fred begins to bicker: "How far has this thing gone?" A long fight erupts as each blames the other for their marital unhappiness.



A sham- The porter the Princess called for enters the room, interrupting the fight. Fred angrily dismisses him. After a moment, Fred asks what the Commander had to say about him. "Just the truth," Emily replies, "He said you were a sham." Hurt by the Commander's insults, Fred plays the victim as the fight continues, becoming more dismissive of Emily. Emily changes tactics, begging him to do something before it's too late. "She's a sham too," she says of the Princess. Fred doesn't believe her. Fred becomes physically violent, shoving Emily and telling her to shut up. He calms down and puts on his jacket, saying he's going to find the Princess downstairs.



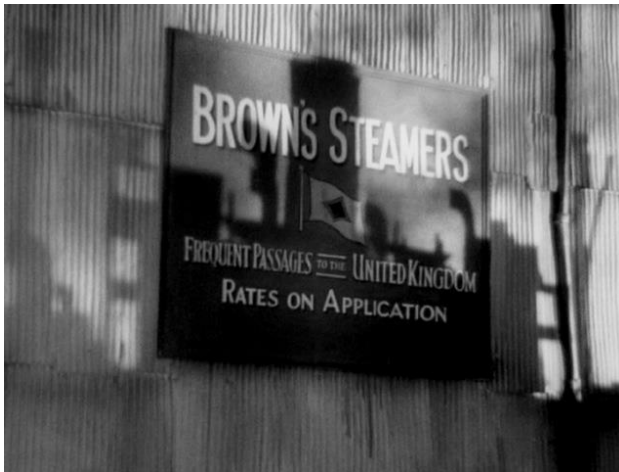
Gordon's farewell- After Fred leaves, there's a knock at the door. "Just a minute," Emily says as she straightens her hair and wipes away tears. A porter enters with several letters and leaves. Emily glances at them, quickly ripping one envelope open as she sinks to a seat. We hear Gordon's voice as Emily reads Commander Gordon's farewell letter, tears dripping from her eyes. He says that he accepts her decision even though he loves her. When she's finished, Fred enters the room, a haunted expression on his face. "Don't you dare say I told you so," he snarls at Emily.



"The swine" - Fred contemplates the Princess' reasons for leaving with the money, desperately trying to avoid the conclusion that he's been had. Emily offers Fred the rest of the mail that came. He recognizes the Princess' handwriting and greedily snatches the envelope, accusing Emily of hiding his mail. He reads quickly, sinking into a chair as he finishes. "She's gone," he says. "She's a fraud." There's a visible rage on his face as he speaks again, "The swine." Emily enthusiastically agrees. "What a fool she's made of me," Fred laments. Emily tries to comfort him, but Fred throws her off: "If you say I told you so, I'll strangle you." As they continue to fight, we learn that the Princess has stolen Fred's money, leaving them just enough for a cheap ship back to England.



Budget liner- The shadow of a steamship passes in front of a sign that says “Brown’s Steamers – Frequent passages to the United Kingdom.” Then a ship at sea during a foggy night blows its foghorn. A helmsman takes the wheel as the ship’s captain takes his tea. There’s a quick shot of Emily and Fred asleep in their cabin before the camera returns to the captain, who strains to look through the fog. Deep in the bowels of the ship, water rushes in through a sudden breach, knocking over stacks of crates. Fred jolts awake only to be knocked unconscious by falling china. Emily reacts quickly though she’s distraught, pressing a towel to the wound on his head. We hear an officer cry “all hands on deck” as Emily tries a buzzer to get someone’s attention. Fred awakens, confused. He becomes panicked when Emily can’t answer his questions. They try to exit the cabin but find their door blocked. They begin pounding on the door to no avail.



Rising waters- Unable to open the door, Fred rushes to the window. As he draws back the curtain, the sea rises over the circular window. “Help! Help!” he and Emily cry as they resume pounding on the cabin door. Suddenly, the overhead light dims and dies. Fred and Emily stare up into the darkness. “Where are the lights, Em?” Fred asks, panicked, as he begins to pound on the door again. “It’s no use,” says Emily. They sit down on one of the beds and hold each other. The sea churns and rises behind them in the window as they watch the water trickle in under the cabin door. They tell each other that their infidelity during the voyage is forgiven.



Alone together- The scene opens with sunlight shining through the cabin window. Emily and Fred sleep soundly. She's the first to wake, looking around as if confused. She rouses Fred. He tells her not to open the porthole: "You'll let the sea in!" To his surprise, the water laps well below their window. When Emily notices that a gangway rests right below the window, the two laugh giddily, glad to have survived the disaster. They make their way upstairs, only finding a cat and an empty bar. They treat themselves to a drink, celebrating their survival until they realize that they're stranded on what is most likely a slowly sinking ship.



Pirates- Through the fog, they hear singing and the lapping of waves against a prow. "Look!" Emily cries as we see a small Chinese junk emerge from the fog. A few dozen men clamber onto the sinking steam liner, ignoring Emily and Fred. The couple quickly finds their way onto the junk after the ship lurches beneath them, bringing the cat with them. Having lost whatever buoyancy was keeping it afloat, the crippled sea liner begins going down quickly. The pirates return, clambering over the railing to board the junk. One man gets tangled in some ropes and goes down with the ship. Emily and Fred are shocked as the pirates stand and watch unflinchingly, doing nothing to help.



A strange meal- The junk sails along swiftly, a strong wind tilting it towards one side. Emily and Fred sit among items in the front of the ship as a woman with a swollen belly approaches with some bowls. "Um... How do you do?" asks Emily. Fred begins wolfing down food as Emily notes that the pregnant woman will have a baby soon. "Seems alright, Em," Fred says of the food, looking inquisitively at his chopsticks. "Best meal I've ate for ages," Emily says through a mouthful. They continue eating their fill as they watch the sailors work. Fred sees several men staring at them and waves hello. "Lot of dummies, aren't they?" he asks Emily. He pulls a bone out of his mouth before he notices a man pinning something to the wall. The man nails a black fur to the wall of the ship and walks away. The couple recognizes the fur as the cat that came aboard with them and quickly put two and two together. Both head for the railing, suddenly sick.



Birth at sea- Emily complains about the hardness of her seat as the ship sails onward. They're making plans about what to do when they make it to land when someone cries out from inside the ship. "The baby!" Emily coos. Fred seems confused when Emily confirms the pregnant woman has given birth. "How could she," he asks as if it's impossible to give birth on a sailing ship. Emily moves to help, but Fred holds her back, saying, "We'd only be in the way." When she expresses further concern, Fred says, "These darn Chinese breed like rabbits. We're alright, Em. We've got each other." Fred makes a good point when Emily laments that they are washing the newborn with cold seawater: "How would you like a chinaman to tell you how to manage your baby?"



Closer and wiser- We see the bright night lights of London before seeing Emily and Fred exit a taxi and enter their home. The landlady welcomes them excitedly, saying she's prepared dinner. She exits quickly, leaving the couple alone. They both lay eyes on the cat. Fred makes a face and removes the cat from the table. He turns on the radio, shivering comically as he hears the weather report. He begins to tend the fire as Emily approaches. She puts her arm around Fred and kisses him as he stands up. They part as Fred wanders towards the front door, speculating about home improvements they could make. Emily states that when he finds a new job, they can afford a far better accommodation than this. The two begin to bicker as the screen fades to black.



THEMES

Love/Infidelity- Love and infidelity drive the plot of this romantic comedy. Throughout *Rich and Strange*, we see Fred and Emily fall in and out of love several times. Emily falls in love with the Commander when Fred is sick in bed during the voyage's first leg. They seem ashamed of their infidelity initially, though both eventually grow to accept it. The Commander admits that he dislikes Fred who is, among other things, a coward. He believes that Fred deserves whatever pain comes to him after neglecting kind and attentive Emily. After showing disinterest in Emily, Fred begins spending time with the Princess. They spend some time together in the Princess' cabin during the masquerade ball on the voyage through the Suez Canal. In the Far East, Fred regularly leaves the boat with the Princess without telling Emily, showing that his love for her is fading. The main characters also display different attitudes toward infidelity. When Emily talks about leaving Fred, she is anxious and doubtful. Although her love is waning, she still values their relationship. Fred, however, shows little remorse for his own infidelity, planning to leave with the Princess. Hypocritically, he resents Emily's infidelity and plays the victim when she tells him she's chosen not to go with the Commander. During the final leg of their journey, misfortune

and the fear of death drive them closer together. They forgive each other and return home to their normal lives.

Class- A sudden change in class moves the plot of this film forward. Fred is frustrated with his middle-class existence. Upon receiving his early inheritance, Fred begins living lavishly. Not only does he purchase the expensive luxury cruise to the East, but he also showers Emily with expensive clothes and jewelry. We see that along with his simple charm, Emily is attracted to the Commander's class. The idea of living in his Malaysian estate excites her so much, she subconsciously draws herself into one of the pictures the Commander shows her. The Princess uses the appearance of high class to lull Fred into a false sense of security. When she does steal his money, she reveals that she is lowborn. Throughout the film, we see Fred treating the low-class staff with disdain. Both higher and lower classes are used comically in *Rich and Strange*. We see this in the Old Maid whose high class status doesn't stop her from being a comic nuisance. Most of the low-class humor coincides with racism throughout *Rich and Strange*. Incidents such as Fred and Emily being fed a cat, harassing hotel porters, and castigating over-enthusiastic hawkers in the many ports fall into this category.

Appearance/Deception- Appearance and deception are embodied by several of the characters in *Rich and Strange*. We see the importance of appearance first during the couple's trip to Paris when Emily becomes concerned about the dancing girl's costumes and the nightgown Fred gives her in the hotel room. Notably, the Princess uses her ostentatious foreign accent and manner of dress to disguise herself as nobility, stealing what remains of Fred's inheritance towards the film's end. Emily and Fred use the appearance of their relationship with someone else -the Commander and the Princess respectively- to deceive the other in various ways, making little excuses for spending time away from each other. Fred does this heavily while Emily's shame and morality spur her to eventually tell the truth and break it off with Commander Gordon. In the more racist elements of *Rich and Strange*, we see appearance and deception appear as well. Time and time again, Emily comments on the bizarreness of people living outside Europe. The appearance of various Asian people sets the couple on edge several times throughout the film, such as when the pirates stare at them on the junk. The appearance of typical food and the subtle deception of the pirates leads Fred and Emily to consume cat meat. We know now that these aspects are fantasies constructed by blowing a small population's cultural norms out of proportion. Americans and Europeans were obsessed with these seemingly 'barbarous' survival strategies of eating animals that Europeans typically avoid.

Responsibility- Responsibility is a minor theme in *Rich and Strange*. The couple's voyage to the East begins when Fred, sick of the day-to-day responsibilities of his middle-class life, asks his rich uncle for money to see the world. When he receives his early inheritance, Fred and Emily immediately take an expensive vacation. We see them laugh at a man who worries about getting to the office on time, showing Fred's transformation from a stressed accountant to a relaxed tourist. Emily begins feeling responsible for the rift between herself and Fred early on in her affair with Commander Gordon. We can see, however, that Fred's complete lack of respect for Emily and his desire for the Princess drive him to further alienate Emily to the point where he blames his ungentlemanly actions on her. During their confrontation in the hotel room in Singapore, Fred refuses to take responsibility for falling for a scam artist, threatening to strangle Emily if she speaks about the subject further. His inability to take responsibility for anything may come from cowardice, but today's viewers may feel that he simply doesn't love Emily at all because of his lack of tenderness and care.

Morality- Morality is a minor but relatively constant theme in *Rich and Strange*. We see Emily concerned with the amount of flesh she and other women are showing at several points during the beginning of the film. She remarks that people won't believe she and Fred are married when he gives her a new nightgown in Paris because of its revealing nature. Similarly, she becomes self-conscious about her neckline during the dance hall scene after seeing the scantily clad dancing girls on stage. She and the Commander seem conflicted about their attraction on moral grounds while the Princess and Fred reject morality in the pursuit of pleasure and profit. On the Chinese junk after the shipwreck, Emily takes a moral stand on caring for the newborn infant and becomes highly emotional. Fred responds with surprising nuance, saying that she wouldn't like a Chinese person requesting specific care for her infant, showing he values ethical arguments over moral ones. Although he devalues non-European people and their

societies several times during the film, Fred feels it's their right to exist as they want where Emily sees amorality or ignorance.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Fred Hill- Fred is a chartered accountant working and living in London. He is disgruntled with his life. He gets the chance of a lifetime when his rich uncle agrees to give him an early inheritance.

Disloyal Fred's lack of loyalty shows prominently at several points in the film. His initial jealousy of the Commander's interest in Emily leads him to fall even more quickly for the Princess. When it's implied that he has committed adultery, he begins planning his life with the Princess whereas Emily shows remorse for having cheated on Fred. He is ready to leave Emily without a word once they arrive in Singapore. When Emily tries to warn him about the Princess' scheme, Fred reacts violently, threatening her, shoving her, and breaking dishes once he learns that the Princess has left with his money.

Moody Fred is incredibly moody throughout the film. He treats Emily poorly because of it, constantly snipping at her and dismissing her thoughts. His initial moodiness about wage labor drives his desire to travel. Once he's on the ship, his mood changes as he's affected by seasickness. We see his mood improve in Paris, but he goes back to his complaints when seasickness strikes again. Instead of being thankful that Emily has provided a cure for his seasickness, he mocks her for bringing a camera ashore and leaves the ship with another woman. His moodiness strikes again in Singapore as he becomes violent when Emily confronts him with the truth about the Commander and the Princess. We see one final glimpse into his moody nature when the couple finally returns home. The screen fades to black as the two argue about living expenses and moving.

Trusting Despite some of his weaker qualities, Fred is quite trusting. We see him defer to Emily several times during his seasickness for treatment and assistance. It doesn't occur to him until the ship nears Singapore that Emily might be having an affair with Commander Gordon even though he is in the middle of committing infidelity, planning to leave with the Princess. Moreover, he wholeheartedly trusts the Princess, although his trust is misplaced, as she is playing a confidence game. Fred's trust remains unbroken even when Emily tries to warn him of the Princess' scheme and the Princess admits to stealing his money. He refuses to believe it at first, becoming violent towards Emily before finally accepting that he has been used.

Emily Hill- Emily is Fred's wife. She is doting and dutiful despite her husband's lack of care. When she falls in love with the Commander, we see the main conflict of the film unfold.

Helpful Emily is especially helpful toward her husband. In her first appearance on screen, we see her as an enthusiastic housewife. She offers dinner and hopes Fred will want to see a movie later, enamored with the man she loves. During the first legs of the ocean cruise, Emily helps Fred several times as he suffers from seasickness, eventually finding him a lasting cure. Her helpful nature doesn't stop when she begins her affair with the Commander, and she eventually chooses Fred over Commander Gordon. Her desire to protect Fred from the Princess' scheme shows her helpfulness further. And when Fred is knocked unconscious during the shipwreck, she immediately tends to his wound and tries to call for help. These repeated acts of service show her capacity for love and a desire to be helpful or useful.

Anxious Emily can be quite confident in some situations but she is also prone to anxiety. She worries about what others think of her. In Paris, she makes several comments about the appearance of other women, shocked that they would wear such skimpy outfits. It causes her to show some anxiety about her own clothes and appearance. When she falls for the Commander, she shows anxiety about betraying Fred. Anxious to save Fred from the Princess' scheme, she abandons her plan to leave with Commander Gordon. Despite this, she is too late. We see her anxiety a final time during the birth at sea when she works herself into a panic when she sees the parents washing the infant with cold seawater.

Sensitive Emily Hill is a sensitive soul. She cares greatly for the suffering of others and can't bear to bring suffering to anyone. For this reason, she is repeatedly conflicted about leaving Fred: She doesn't

want to hurt him even if she's happier with the Commander. Several times, she steps down from arguments or confrontations when Fred reveals his hurt feelings or his struggles. While this isn't a healthy relationship dynamic, it does show Emily's sensitivity and compassion.

Commander Gordon- Commander Gordon is a rich man traveling to his estate in Malaysia. During the cruise, he becomes closer to Emily. When their friendship blossoms into love, it drives a wedge between Emily and her husband, Fred.

Friendly Commander Gordon doesn't lack friends. It seems everyone on the ship knows him and wants to spend time with him. His kind nature is incredibly attractive to Emily whose marriage to moody and unappreciative Fred begins to crumble as the cruise continues. Despite severe reservations about Fred and the Princess, he holds his tongue, unwilling to spoil the friendly air of the cruise with accusations. He reveals these facts and feelings to Emily in Singapore, but it's the only time we see him act in an unfriendly manner. We agree with many of his conclusions as well, as Fred seems primarily concerned with his own happiness.

Relaxed The Commander's relaxed attitude acts as a foil for Fred. Fred's moody attitude and mistreatment of his wife mark him and the Commander as opposites. The Commander's frequent appearances show us gentle and easy conversations and leisurely teatimes. We never see the Commander flustered, even when his anger towards Fred shows during the car ride in Singapore. Even as he insults the man, the Commander is straightforward and clear-spoken.

The Princess- The Princess claims to be a noblewoman from a Germanic-speaking country. She is ostentatious and quite interested in Fred's affection. Towards the film's end, we learn she is a confidence trickster who uses her sex appeal to steal money from unsuspecting men.

Controlled The Princess' control of her emotions makes her an outstanding conman. The viewer may not suspect anything until the Commander reveals her true nature to Emily. The Princess appears as a wealthy noble effortlessly. This control of herself allows her to wrap Fred around her finger quickly. Even as her scheme nears its climax, she maintains control. When Emily enters the hotel in Singapore instead of a porter with the bill, the Princess controls herself, acting as if she's still a porter even though she sees Emily in the mirror. She absconds quickly, putting her plan to steal Fred's money into motion while he argues with his wife.

Spoiler The Princess is an obvious spoiler in *Rich and Strange*. She sees Emily's attraction to the Commander and takes a chance with Fred, pulling him into her web with promises of riches and an extramarital fling. While this seems to be a simple plot device at the beginning, we learn that she is a repeat offender, a confidence trickster who lurks on cruise liners, using her feminine charms to trick rich men out of their fortunes. Her greed creates trouble for Fred and Emily. They barely have enough money left for a budget line home after she absconds with Fred's inherited fortune.