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Course

Date

Film Analysis

'Modern Times' is black-and-white silent comedy directed, written and produced by Charles Spencer Chaplin in 1936. It is the last silent movie by Charlie Chaplin and his last appearance as a Tramp. Due to the specificity of the genre – black and white silent comedy, cardboards are quite common. 'Modern Times' opens with a phrase: "A story about the industry, individual initiative and the crusade of humanity in the pursuit of happiness" (Chaplin, 1936). So-called explanatory cardboards are quite common for silent movies. In case with 'Modern Times' this phrase reveals the message that the filmmaker is trying to send to the audience. The subject of the movie has to do with social life of the United States in 30th of XX century. The socio-economic processes under consideration are the following: industrialization, transition to machine production, unemployment, poverty, dispossession and bankruptcy – all caused by the Great Depression.

Being an artist means being sensitive to the most insignificant influences in politics, economy, therefore – in human relations and art. Charles Spencer Chaplin was a man of art, who had a great sense of the events. He understood the circumstances and the consequences of the influences in all the spheres of human activity. Therefore, he could not stay aside the burning issues of that time in the United States of America. Therefore, art and humor became Chaplin's way to express himself.

Working in chain, Chaplin's character tightens the bolts on an unidentified instrument detail. Suddenly, he becomes the one to be chosen to test a new feeding machine on, which, judging by his reaction, insults and debases him. Occasionally, the inspector distracts the

Tramp, so it happens that he paralyses the work of the conveyer for several times. Going under the tension, he suffers a nervous breakdown and is taken to the hospital.

On leaving hospital, he notices a flag that fell from a truck. Attempting to catch up to the car, he meets the crowd of protesters who immediately take him for a leader. Obviously, this is a strike, and the protesters are former employees of the mechanized factories. Arrested by the police, the Tramp is taken to prison.

His modal behavior helps him to avoid conflicts with other prisoners and the police. Unintentionally, the Tramp prevents prison breaking. In such a way he won over the jailers. Unwilling to be realized and so finding himself in the street again, the Tramp is protesting – an episode which reminded me about O. Henry's 'The Cop and the Anthem'. Against his grain, the vagabond is released, followed quickly by his acquaintance with a young girl.

The young girl whose father died and whose sisters were taken to the orphanage, soon becomes Tramp's companion. Together they decide to put an end to a stray life and find a home. Good news is after them: a Tramp is rehired as mechanic's assistant. But people are on strike again and the factory stops working. Soon he is hired as a night watchman in a department store. For one night he gives a shelter to the young woman. The morning that followed he was fired because a burglary happened at night. The Tramp is in prison again.

Hiding from the police, the girl is hired in a restaurant as a dancer. The times came when things got better for her. When the Tramps is released, on Girl's request he applies for a job as a singing waiter in that restaurant. The night of his first performance came. Since he failed to learn the words of the song by heart, the Girl advises him to write the lyrics on the cuffs. Unintentionally, he loses his cuffs – they fell off his wrists during the dance, and he has to improvise. And he starts singing in a gibberish language that slightly resembles Italian, helping himself by gestures and mimics. The performance was a success. When it came to

girl's dance, the police was there to arrest her. On the hop, the couple escapes from the restaurant.

In the final scene we may see the Tramp and the Girl walking down the road hand in hand. The rising sun is as if telling us that things will get better for them again, because they are together and they must hold on to each other.

Remarkable fact is that the talkies have already existed for more than ten years at the time of 1936. Chaplin was composing the music for his films himself. Intentionally, he refused to use voice, remaining unparalleled and recognized master of pantomime. Of course, apart from several cases when the voice and sound effects were used on purpose: the boss, giving instructions to his employees, and machinery noise.

Chaplin is truly a genius. In his last silent movie he foresees the loneliness and chaos of life in the industrialized society. Hopefully, the place will remain for humanity and feelings. The movie is as if Tramp's 'last bow' – he is not happy that much as it may seem, but he is no longer lonely. Hand in hand with the Girl he will go through all real troubles they may face. On the other hand, worries and problems of mechanized and dehumanized world will not hurt them anymore. This is Charlie Chaplin's philosophy: humanity, compassion, simplicity, wisdom and kindness.

Works Cited:

Chaplin, Charles, dir. *Modern Times*. Charlie Chaplin Studios, 1936. Film.