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No one Told You When to Run-An Analysis of Charlie Chaplin's Films and *The Wizard of Oz*

*¹Indrajit*¹Research Scholar, Pursuing Ph.D., Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India.

Abstract

The forces of nature have been denied a sense of autonomy from man's hubris. Man's hubris and ambition have for long interfered with the autonomous dynamics of the realms of nature. Civilization, industry, culture and market led to a commodification of nature and wildlife. Man's interference with nature was also an outcome of a colonial sentiment which created an artificial band of heavens and hells instead of aligning man's intellectual wisdom with the rhythms of nature. There is a pressing need that human beings should go back to their primeval roots and live their lives in alignment with nature. The idea of harmony between humanity and nature was very active at one time. There was a sense of an open-ended communitarian living instead of privatization of lives which now is the fuel that runs families today. The following paper takes an interdisciplinary approach to discuss a romantic communion with nature. The paper thus argues and re-positions man as nature. It aims to explore the distortions of the relationship between man and nature under the spell of industrialization. The paper analyses the films, *Modern Times* (1936), *The Kid* (1921), *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and the novel, *Great Expectations* (1861) in respect to Pink Floyd's music.

Keywords: Rat, pink Floyd, nature, romance, felon

Introduction

Charlie Chaplin's film, *Modern Times* (1936) ^[3], begins with a dehumanizing display of the phallic power of machines which tame human expressions. The big machines, a representation of a stoic capitalist work ethic generates a sense of awe where man is alienated. There seems to be no organic contact between the obligation of work and happiness that one can seek in the nature of the work. Pink Floyd's "Welcome to the Machine" (1975) ^[8] through its sonic distortions signifies such a disintegration of a lost time of innocence and happiness further dehumanized in a transaction won by machines. The film, *The Kid* (1921) ^[3], surrogates a militarized and disciplined bestiality of machines in a street cop's behavior where the cop uses his stick to bully and control people on the streets through intimidation of the law. *Modern Times* and *The Kid*, both offer a critique of the industrial capitalism through a humorous duel between state and citizens where people at times get controlled and at times elude the jaws of control and intimidation through humor, defiance and crimes.

Felons and thieves in *Modern Times* are not represented as agents of malice. They are romanticized. Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861) ^[5] runs on a theme of romanticized innocence of a felon, Abel Magwitch who on the outside looks uncouth and dangerous but redefines the idea of humanity by extending a charitable favor to Pip. Abel is a felon but with a pure heart which contradicts the way in

which society perceives criminals and people on the margins. Charlie Chaplin in *The Kid* is also like a felon on the streets always outwitting the cops. Charlie Chaplin's agility and quickness is a metaphor of his critical response to machines and cops who act like machines. Through his agility, he always outruns any form of control or intimidation. His movements are like that of a rat or a rabbit who is everyday digging a hole somewhere for food, shelter and love. His idea of sustenance is not based upon ambition but is rather based upon a modest and utilitarian ecosystem of spontaneous existence where one works everyday to live everyday. His lifestyle represents a romantic escape from the claws of the banking system and regular jobs. He lives on things which have a utilitarian value as opposed to a materially fetishistic value. Charlie Chaplin's poverty in the film is not an economic deprivation. His poverty is a realm. It is a romanticized realm of social and ideological resistance to the grandeur of the world where the idea of happiness and sadness is being reimagined not on the basis of wealth or lofty ideas but on the basis of harmony, freedom, finding love and staying close to nature. Charlie Chaplin is not simply a prey of the machines and people who control machines. He is constantly fighting the capitalist system by offering us an escape towards a life where people don't need services and packaged commodities to live. People work for themselves to catch food and live. It is also a realm of existence where due to very less social inhibitions people can meet each other

seamlessly without any sense of ownership over each other or things. The idea of poverty as a social and ideological resistance to the grand narratives of the state is also a lifestyle which is based upon an escape from many societal obligations such as orderliness, marriage, ownership, family that a lot of students in universities choose to have. Such a lifestyle is not simply a state of squalor or deprivation. It is also an ideological and philosophic posturing against an indoctrinated existence which the state wants us to have to control us. Charlie Chaplin's poverty is a romanticized realm where people choose to live like people choose to live in dreams. It is a reimagined order of the world which is an alternative to the existing order of the world where living is based upon sustenance, greater freedom, utility, and a harmony with nature. There is a moment in *Modern Times* where Charlie Chaplin runs towards his hut and opens the door and slams it very hard after he gets inside. The slamming of the door is so hard that other door on the backside reverberates causing it to break and fall leaving nothing between the hut and the river on the other side. The broken or distorted hut evokes a sense of paradise in which Charlie Chaplin and his fugitive lover, an orphaned woman perhaps too good for this world, subliminally run into their arms in front of the view of the river. It is a moment in which a fallen door, and a broken hut, now in disorder, in chaos, creates a romantic distortion. The distorted hut is an extension of the natural world because it offers no barriers against the river and the two lovers inside also have no inhibitions. It is almost as if the clouds filled in the sky and the moment became sublime. Both Charlie Chaplin and Ellen are fugitive lovers or lovers on the run, with no greater ambition than freedom to find love and life in a broken hut. Charlie Chaplin's men, women, kids and animals, nature and the river in his films are all equally small and they dissolve into each other to create a sense of paradise on earth which subverts the idea of man as a grand being. The moment in which the two fugitives chaotically embrace as lovers inside a broken hut which leads an open space to a river evokes a sense of paradise in the midst of nature where poverty and lawlessness is celebrated through love. In the ending dream sequence of the film, *The Kid* (1921)^[3], all the villains like the authoritarian cop and everyone including Charlie Chaplin regardless of the story's context all become equal as they start dancing in a utopia of shared innocence before the disruption. Such brief distortions threaten to reshuffle civilizational concepts of morality and life in a dream-space where there is an absence of narratives and an absence of the human role-play such as the hunter-hunted, oppressor-oppressed, cop-thief. Within these artistic and cinematic moments, we get a glimpse into what the world could look like if it were to be transported in such a dream-space. The theme of a life based on greater harmony with nature is also linked to *Dark Side of the Rainbow* (1973)^[7] which is a pairing of Pink Floyd's Album, *The Dark Side of the Moon* and the film, *The Wizard of Oz* (1939)^[6]. The film's visual storytelling is synced with Pink Floyd's soundtracks. Each soundtrack represents a set of ideas such as innocence, obliviousness, loss, utopia and a romantic escape from the jaws of a changing world. The soundtracks convey a certain sentiment which is synced with the visual responses in the film.

The girl, Dorothy Gale, does not want to lose her dog, Toto. She wants to defy her aunt who wants to send away Toto. Dorothy's love of her dog, Toto supersedes traditional norms of relationships where people honor obligations to each other within families. Dorothy is free from any obligation because

she fantasizes running away with Toto. She can lose her family. But she decides she cannot lose Toto because both the girl and the dog are creatures of supreme innocence. And it is a terrible storm, an extension of the natural world which finally blows them off into a dreamland, a paradise with forests, flowers and animals gifted with unworldly freedom. Dorothy and Toto want to lose themselves in the new-found realm of nature and the utopia within it. Dorothy and Toto run to an escapist paradise thus creating an experiential act of one of Pink Floyd's line from the band's songs, "No one told you when to run". The film through Pink Floyd's sound reestablishes a rejection of conventional society through the innocence of two characters who perhaps want to forever be lost in a dreamy world which is much closer to nature. Toto is a representation of nature in the film. Toto like Charlie Chaplin is on the run and is always out of grasp of a policing society. Like Charlie Chaplin, Toto through his raw impulses and his quickness forever outruns his hunters. If Charlie Chaplin's romanticized poverty was a counter to the grandeur of the Renaissance man thus establishing man's communion with nature, *Dark Side of the Rainbow* evokes a realm of nature through the combined innocence of Dorothy and Toto. Because it is impossible to exist in the real world based on conventionality with such innocence. One can only exist with such innocence in the realm of nature. It is the combined innocence of the girl and the dog which weaves nature out of nowhere in the film. And it is this idea of innocence which again runs counter to the grandness of man where innocence instead of ambition is given free reign. Both films create an idea of life which is steering away from a repressive society into a realm which is based on lawlessness, romanticism, chaos, freedom, nature and innocence.

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