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| Modern Times (1936) |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| *Modern Times* is a black-and-white film written and directed by Charlie Chaplin. It is the last film to feature the Tramp persona, which had already brought Chaplin worldwide fame with English and non-English audiences. It is Chaplin’s last silent movie, although its innovative use of sound (use of speech through gramophone speakers, the Tramp’s gibberish song) makes it a hybrid talkie. The episodic narrative features the Tramp as a factory worker who suffers a nervous breakdown, is fired from several jobs, is jailed multiple times, and meets and falls in love with ‘The Gamin’ played by Paulette Goddard. Alluding to the Great Depression of the 1930s, *Modern Times* shows the factory as a nightmarish place with machines big enough to swallow a human being, run by callous businessmen for profit. Although Chaplin was interested in Bolshevism, he resisted outright support for the Communist cause in part to avoid the Production Code’s ire (Lynn 369); nonetheless, the film shows police violence against civilians, widespread strikes and factory closings, and abject poverty. In the final scene, the Tramp and Gamin walk off into the sunrise in an ambivalent happy ending. The comedy in *Modern Times* has such dark overtones that André Bazin has called it ‘the only cinematographic fable equal to the dimension of the human distress of the 20th century facing social and industrial mechanization’ (7). |
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| Further reading:  (Bazin)  (Bilton)  (Lynn)  (Maland)  (Mellen) |