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Challenging Dictatorship through Discourse: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Charlie Chaplin's Speech in The Great Dictator

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ABSTRACT:

The present study deals a Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) analysis of Charlie Chaplin's climactic address in the Great Dictator (1940) to examine how the speech challenges dictatorship and war, constructs a discourse of peace and humanity, and reflects its WWII context. We transcribe the speech and code clause-by-clause for DHA strategies—nomination/predication of social actors, argumentation via topoi (danger, responsibility, usefulness, justice, history), perspectivization (deixis/footing), and intensification/mitigation—integrated with Systemic Functional Linguistics for transitivity and modality, and with metaphor/framing diagnostics. Findings show systematic delegitimation of authoritarian power: rulers are de-charismatized ("machine men") while "you, the people" are re-authorized as ethical agents through transitivity choices that cast citizens—not leaders—as Actors in material processes. The speech repurposes conventional wartime warrants (danger, duty) so that must encode moral obligation to protect the vulnerable, and resemanticizes mobilization (fight) as civic, nonviolent action. Inclusive you dixies, anaphora and antithesis, and master metaphors (machine vs. human; light vs. darkness) organize a persuasive moral grammar that privileges dignity over domination. Historically, references to radio and aeroplanes reframe modern technology as solidarity-enabling, while a hopeful now/soon/tomorrow temporality resists fatalism. Conceptually, the study specifies how a humanist counter-discourse can be operationalized in language; methodologically, it demonstrates the payoffs of DHA triangulation on a canonical cultural text.

Keywords: Discourse-Historical Approach, critical discourse analysis, Chaplin, the Great Dictator, authoritarianism, framing, metaphor, transitivity, modality, WWII rhetoric.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The final speech of Charlie Chaplin in The Great Dictator (1940) has been traditionally understood as the most iconic linguistic disavowal of authoritarianism in cinema, an address that transcends diegesis by interpelling a global audience on the edge of world war. New scholarship urges against celebratory narrations of the speech, to investigate how the discourse of the speech confronts dictatorship and invokes an alternative political imaginary (Klein, 2021). Based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the paper applies the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) by Ruth Wodak to demonstrate how the text creates peace and human solidarity by recontextualising the discourses on war, applying particular argumentative topoi (e.g., danger, humanitarianism, responsibility) and, evoking interdiscursive connections with the discourses on democracy. In CDA, DHA emphasizes the emergence of meaning among four layers of context, namely; (1) immediate co-text, (2) intertextual relations, (3) situational and institutional fields of action, and (4) the broader sociohistorical contexts, and in the process, strategies of nomination, predication, argumentation (topoi), perspectivization, and intensification/mitigation (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, 2009). The Great Dictator is well aligned to this lens, as its production, release, and reception were complicated by censorship regimes, fears about U.S. neutrality, and the politics of transnational propaganda in wartime (Hiatt, 2018). DHA also allows to triangulate the rhetorical decisions of Chaplin with the discourses of the time of fascism and anti-fascism and to understand how the speech resists the language technologies of authoritarianism.

Research in political rhetoric and propaganda offers a very important context. In his canonical discussion of the repertoire of persuasion used by Hitler, Kenneth Burke outlines the common patterns of scapegoating, symbolic rebirth, the imposition of a unifying people: moves that, in Burke's words, naturalize aggression and exclusion (Burke, 1939/1974). The chronicle of the lexical and syntactic customary practices of the Third Reich by Victor Klemperer is another source that attests to the presence of authoritarianly colored speech in the everyday language of the people through the spread of routine hyperbolic intensifiers, depersonalizing passives and so forth (Klemperer, 2006). These observations find an echo in current CDA explanations of ideology so to speak coming into being within discourse and the placement of audiences through schemes of argument and metaphor (Chilton, 2004; van Dijk, 1998; Charteris-Black, 2011). It is against this backdrop that the speech by Chaplin can be discussed as a counter-discourse, which disturbs the authoritarian logics by re-framing collectivities (we the people), shifting agency and responsibility and reclaiming the ethos of political speech to ethical

purposes. Film-historical practice highlights the dangers of this kind of counter-discourse in 19401941. The troubled Latin American history of the film, full of protests, prohibitions, and diplomatic antagonisms, demonstrates the clash of Chaplin satire and the ultimate peroration with hemispheric propaganda and anti-democratic sympathies locally (Hiatt, 2018). Similar investigations of the Ministry of Information in Britain reveal how the language of home-front propaganda was carefully structured during the period (Spencer-Bennett, 2019), highlighting the fact that WWII politics centered more on the linguistic design of home-front messaging than on the territory. That is, The Great Dictator intrudes into an already reflexive propaganda space, which DHA does not address as background but as constitutive interdiscursivity.

Rhetorically, the speech intermingles the resources that the scholarship correlates to successful political speech: metaphorical framing, antithesis, enumerative rhythm, and anaphora (Atkinson, 1984/1992; Charteris-Black, 2011; Musolff, 2016). But the use of these devices by Chaplin is re-framed ethically. Where fascist discourse directs fear to exclusion (Burke, 1939/1974; Wodak, 2015), Chaplin directs fear to a topos of common weakness, putting technological modernity in a relationship with the issue of dehumanization and then reversing this relationship by demanding kindness and gentleness. That inversion functions as what DHA would refer to as a recontextualized strategy of argumentation: the same topoi (danger, usefulness, justice) are held but bring about different practical conclusions (peace, not mobilization; solidarity, not scapegoating) (Reisigl, 2001, 2009).

The research questions are:

i. In what ways does the speech of Chaplin question the speech of dictatorship and war?
ii. What are his linguistic and rhetoric devices designed to build a discourse of peace and humanity?
iii. What does the speech tell us about the socio-political situation of WWII?

The current research paper adds to CDA in that (1) it provides a historically triangulated, grounded in DHA speech analysis of Chaplin; (2) it identifies how nomination/predication strategies are used to create inclusive collectivities in the changing participant functions (speaker, barber, citizen, we humans); (3) it traces the argumentation through topoi and metaphor scenarios that recodes the inevitability of war; and (4) it situates that speech within the social-political infrastructure of 194041 propaganda and reception. That way, it would fit into the program of DHA to make micro-linguistic decisions relevant to macro-political outcomes (Wodak and Meyer, 2016) and involve film studies that reevaluate Chaplin as the

link between silent icon and ethical orator (Klein, 2021; Robinson, 2001; Maland, 1989). We empirically read the speech as a part of a discursive terrain on which satire, humanitarianism, and appeals to democracy intersect wartime rhetoric. Analytically we can observe (a) nomination/predication of social actors (e.g., people, soldiers, machine men); (b) topoi argumentation; (c) deictic shift and direct address; and (d) prosody, repetition, and modality intensification/mitigation. We place these strategies into historical context, and juxtapose them to documented propaganda strategies and imperial geopolitics of the era (Spencer-Bennett, 2019; Hiatt, 2018). The payoff is a discourse-historical narrative of payback in the challenge of dictatorship languages not only through denunciation of tyranny but through a reconstruction of agency and social relations; a counter-hegemonic politics of hope against the politics of fear of its time (Wodak, 2015).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies of the linguistic mechanics of authoritarianism has repeatedly demonstrated that political speech justifies the use of coercive action by producing the authority, urgency, and moral polarity. The legitimation model proposed by Van Leeuwen, authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization and mythopoesis, is still dominant in the discourse of how leaders make things appear necessary or good, through speech (van Leeuwen, 2007). His typologies have been widely extended to war-time and crisis communications, and papers that follow the normalizing impact of the us vs. them binaries and the appeals to value in militarized solutions (Oddo, 2011). Classic political-communication scholarship adds to this perspective by showing how the goals of the state are naturalized by spectacle and symbolic condensation (Edelman, 1988) and through routinized signals of national belonging that mark the nation in the talk of everyday (Billig, 1995). The history of films and media of WWII builds upon this claim: cinema was an organized tool of persuasion in which entertainment forms were orchestrated to achieve political purposes (Welch, 1983/2001). In discourse studies, the proximization theory also explains how the threat is linguistically proximate in space, time, and axiological value to rationalize preemptive action, an analytic that proves helpful to read the rhetoric of wartime (Cap, 2017). Collectively, these strands define the linguistic assets through which authoritarian messaging becomes credible and takes effect.

The resources mobilized through oppositional rhetoric encompass moral universalism, inclusive deictics and appeals to mutual human vulnerability. The new rhetoric of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca is the one whose adherence is the subject of persuasion and whose

schemes of argument (e.g., analogy, dissociation) shift values to the side of justice and human dignity (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969). Ethos in rhetorical-pragmatic terms is credibility created in discourse which grounds the power of persuasion of such counter-speech (Amossy, 2001). Ethos is arguably a discourse-analytic work (Maingueneau, 2022) that describes how speakers combine an ethical self-possibility to legitimize the application of urgency without falling into authoritarian posturing. Pragmatic and metaphorical design issues are particularly relevant in the language of politics: Wilson (1990) demonstrates that pronouns, reference, and implicature cue solidarity and responsibility, and Charteris-Black (2005) records that politics is represented as moral action by the use of humanitarian metaphorics ("rescue, healing, light). Based on the film studies, Plantinga (2009) presents how audiovisual rhetoric organizes emotion (compassion, hope) so that it is able to hold non-vengeful political commitments that is of crucial significance to counter the mobilization via fear. Combined, these strands of inquiry would indicate that an anti-dictatorial speech which anticipates empathy, universal rights and inclusive agency can do a plausible counter-ideology in text and performance.

Framing research explains the way in which speakers introduce specific interpretations as salient and down-play others (Entman, 1993). There are two frame families that prevail in the context of wartime, namely the security/defense frames that foreground existential threat and moral responsibility, and the human-interest/solidarity frames that foreground care, suffering, and dignity. Conceptual metaphor theory demonstrates how these frames are actually embodied in language--the way complex phenomena (war, democracy, technology) are structured on the basis of embodied source domains (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Political metaphor analyses have recorded the way disease, cleansing and machine metaphors tend to be allied to authoritarian imaginaries, and kinship, journey and light metaphors are utilized in emancipatory appeals (Charteris-Black, 2005). Histories of film and propaganda suggest that the presence of such frames and metaphors in official messages during WWII was intensive, functioning through newsreels and features and aimed at stabilizing the morale of the population (Taylor, 2003/2006). Within this frame, the cinematic monologue that re-codes the war story as one of domination to human solidarity can be seen as strategic reframing, not mere sentiment--a discursive war over the very aboutness of the conflict.

The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) is a critical discourse analysis method best adapted to historical speeches, as it combines internal analysis of the text with overlaying sociohistorical context and argumentation theory. DHA pays attention to interdiscursivity

(cross-pollination of discourses and genres), nomination and predication (how actors and actions are named/qualified), and topoi, repeated, warrant-like, licensed conclusions (Reisigl, 2017). Kienpointner (1997) demonstrates that the topoi of danger, burden, responsibility organize political arguments; counter-topoi of solidarity and human value often re-license alternative behaviors (i.e. peace, cooperation). The legitimation categories introduced by Van Leeuwen are complemented by the argument schemes introduced by DHA through which the analyst can trace how the speaker delegitimizes authoritarian moves (e.g., by defaming authorization claims) and legitimizes peaceful alternatives through moral evaluation and practical rationalization. The toolbox can be immediately applied to Chaplin monologue: it is possible to trace how it combines film pathos and subversive intertextual civic discourse (e.g., democratic ideals) to challenge authoritarian authority and rewrite a civic we. Historical descriptions of WWII media culture highlight the way film walked the fine line between entertainment and propaganda (Welch, 1983/2001) and how rhetorical/film studies consider how oratorical acts in the cinema can serve as a form of address that transcends diegesis (Plantinga, 2009). Recent humanities criticism approaches The Great Dictator as a performative speech act in its final monologue that disrupts character to address a real audience that experienced fascism by combining a cinematic speech act and a civic speech act (Klein, 2021). Though not necessarily presented through the lens of CDA, the research on Chaplin rhetoric has identified intertextual voice-merging and value-based binaries being recycled in humanitarian directions (Masterson, 2015). Such reflections indicate that the address made by Chaplin worked within, against, and outside the propaganda logics of its era: an appropriation of the mass-address affordances of cinema to re-authorize the agency of the humane and the agency of peace.

In political linguistics, rhetoric, and media history, previous literature employs abundant language to explain (a) the legitimization of violence by authoritarian discourse; (b) humanitarian frames and ethos by counter-discourses; and (c) the role played by film in persuasion during war. Nonetheless, few CDA/DHA-inspired analyses that systematically trace the topoi, legitimation means, and interdiscursive resources in the last speech by Chaplin as a historically contingent counter-authoritarian act still exist. What has not been fully explored is (i) the relationship between van Leeuwen-style delegitimation of authoritarian claims and Perelman-style audience-orientation in a cinematic monologue; and (ii) the cooperation of inclusive deictics, metaphorical reframing, and ethos construction in re-authorizing democratic agency in the course of WWII. The current paper fills this gap by

applying the DHA that is complemented by legitimation and framing resources, to the speech of Chaplin with the aim of illustrating how the linguistic weapons of the speech undermine dictatorship and impose a different discourse of humanity and peace.

3. METHODOLOGY

This section will be discussing the whole research methodology which is used to conduct research. the section consists in different parts; each parts deal important area of research methodology. The analysis is a discourse-historical critical discourse analysis (DHA-CDA) of the climactic oration in The Great Dictator (Chaplin, 1940). The speech (word-to-letter transcription of the film audio) is the primary text in accordance with DHA principle of triangulation, read together with contextual documents read qualitatively (e.g., period policy statements, news reportage and secondary histories) so as to place the artifact in its historical context. As a public speech that transcends diegesis and speaks to current audiences, the analytic focus is the speech itself.

The discursive strategies of nomination and predication of social actors; argumentation through topoi; perspectivization (deixis and footing); and intensification/ mitigation are operationalized, and these are connected to traditional legitimation/ delegitimation resources (authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization, mythopoesis). This combines the strategy typology of DHA with the socio-semantic model of legitimation of fine-grained claims about the ways in which the speech questions dictatorship and constructs peace/humanity (De Cillia, Reisigl, and Wodak, 1999; Reisigl, 2017; van Leeuwen, 2007). We refer to Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and its concept of transitivity (process types; participant roles) and modality (obligation/necessity) to map agency and commitment onto the clause structure (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2014). The speech is cinematic; we pay attention to multimodal cues: prosody, vocal intensification, audiovisual staging of the direct address, applying multimodal CDA concepts to explain the way the linguistic strategies and performance are synchronized (Machin and Mayr, 2012; Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). The speech was divided into argumentative moves (thematically coherent blocks) and clauses. In relation to every clause/move we annotated:

(1) Actor representation (activation/passivation; individualization/assimilation); predication (evaluative ascriptions).

(2) Argumentation: presence and warrant type (e.g., topos of danger, responsibility, usefulness, justice), based on DHA and argumentation-schemes literature to guarantee uniform warrant-identification (Walton, Reed, and Macagno, 2008; Kienpointner, 1997).

(3) Transitivity & modality (SFL categories: material/mental/verbal/relational; obligation/necessity; modalization).

(4) Deixis & alignment: we/you configurations, shifts of footing, and audience design.

(5) Rhetorical patterning: anaphora, parallelism, antithesis, and enumerative rhythm (descriptively coded, as DHA is aimed at interpretation, not at measuring sound).

(6) Metaphor and framing: metaphorically expressed words detected by MIP/MIPVU processes to minimize subjectivity in metaphor spotting, then classified into conceptual frames (Pragglejaz Group, 2007; Steen et al., 2010); frames summarized with respect to communication research about operational clarity (Matthes, 2009).

(7) Legitimation signs: expressed or connoted authorization (leaders, institutions), moral judgment (terms of virtue/vice), rationalization (ends-means, utility), mythopoesis (emplotment).

A stratified 30% of the speech (every third clause in every argumentative move) was coded by two trained analysts independently. Intercoder agreement was also evaluated on nominal categories (Krippendorff α should achieve at least .80 to be used by firms) and compared with percent agreement on low-frequency labels; any disagreements were discussed to fine-tune the codebook, and the senior analyst made final edge cases (Krippendorff, 2013; Neuendorf, 2017). Analytic validity was sought in (a) method triangulation (SFL + DHA + argumentation + metaphor methods), (b) theory-related coding (topoi and legitimation schemes described a priori), and (c) context triangulation (selective historical materials to test plausibility without extending the dataset). Transparency of interpretive steps was supported by reflective memos and data displays (Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, 2014). Findings are given RQ-by-RQ. In the case of RQ1 (challenging dictatorship/war) we tabulate delegitimation patterns (disruption of authorization; re-allocation of agency via transitivity; topoi that reverse militarist warrants). In RQ2 (linguistic/rhetorical construction of peace/humanity), we synthesize modality, inclusive deixis, and rhetoric patterning and metaphor/framing clusters to demonstrate how the speech constructs an affirmative moral order. We use the layers of DHA history to demonstrate interdiscursive connections between the speech and the propaganda discourses of its time, and

we argue why Chaplin recontextualizes them to democratic universalism in RQ3 (WWII context). In all cases, the arguments are based on clausal exemplars and move-level summaries, and short multimodal notes where staging dishes out discursive strategies.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In this section, a Discourse-Historical (DHA) reading of the climactic address of Chaplin in The Great Dictator is provided. It was divided into argumentative moves and clauses and marked up with (a) nomination/predication of social actors, (b) argumentation through topoi (danger, responsibility, usefulness, justice, history), (c) transitivity and modality (agency and obligation), (d) deixis/perspectivization (we/you/them shifts), (e) rhetorical patterning (anaphora, antithesis, parallelism), (f) metaphor/framing (e.g., machine vs. human, light vs. darkness). Findings are presented below in three categories based on the three research questions and short textual illustrations (a few (less than 25) words) are provided to explain each analysis point. The speech continues to re-label the authoritarian agents in morally negative ways and re-codes the victims as ethical subjects. Dictators are machine men, brutes, unhuman, and those epithets strip charisma and rebrand leadership as dehumanized power. The nomination of ordinary people and of the soldiers as ethical agents, not as instruments, is supported by the expression of second-person direct address (Soldiers! And don't give yourselves to brutes). The scheme of predication couples the dictators with greed, cruelty, and fear; the people with benevolence, liberty, and fellowship--preparing the way to moralized redistribution of agency.

Where militarist discourse tends to make appeals to topoi of threat and obligation to justify violence, Chaplin switches the warrants. He assigns the condition of peril but shifts its source and solution: it is not a hostile country itself but machine minds and cupidity; its solution is not victory but unity and democracy. The usefulness topos human beings commonly deploy in defense of technological war is reversed: it is when technology serves the human good that it is said to be useful (the aeroplane and the radio have brought us closer together). The topos of the responsibility is changed into the topos of the duty to the vulnerable (let us fight to free the world). Most dictators justify themselves with permission (as leader, by necessity). Chaplin disagrees by revoking permission and re-writing the people: You, the people, is empowered. The speech denies mythical necessity (anti-mythopoesis) and demands that tyranny should be contingent and reversible. This is reinforced by historical perspectivization: mentioning the

misery that has befallen us nowadays makes us associate current pain with the decisions of leaders, and not with destiny.

Clauses that place we/you (people) as Actors of material processes in the form of we can create, you have the power, etc. shift causal force out of leaders. Dictators tend to become Objectives of future action (we will erase national boundaries, we will liberate the world), which grammaticalizes the agency of the crowd and the defenseless position of the rulers. Rather than taking an external enemy close enough to warrant the use of violence, the speech renders human suffering proximally salient (temporal now, spatial everywhere, axiological we all). The moral crisis is at hand--but its proper response must be collaborative rather than military. The speech opposes dictatorship not so much through indictment, but by re-designing the warrants and functions of speech: de-romanticizing leaders, empowering the people, and redefining threat and obligation not as militarist concepts, but as ethically relational ones.

The moral community of we, you, we the people, created by the use of the pronoun choreography, makes everybody part of the community. Individualization of the addressee group and universalization of their right to dignity are achieved by using the words you, the people. Switching back and forth between we (shared identity) and you (empowerment) maintains high levels of alignment and prevents paternalism. The modal must is moral compulsion (we must all unite) and yet it is used to describe requested cooperation as opposed to command (let us fight for a new world). Modality therefore captures shared responsibility based on humanity, rather than obedience. The use of recurring oppositions (ex. hate/love, machinery/humanity, cleverness/kindness, in the name of, let us) and anaphoric strings (in the name of, let us) organize rhythmic applause-cues and reduce intricate arguments to memorable moral oppositions. Such patterning anticipates moral judgment without embellishment.

Machine vs. human: dehumanization is metaphorized through the image of machine men with machine minds; technology is a moral trial (serve humankind or turn people into slaves). Light vs. darkness (implied by hope, kindness, liberty vs. greed, hate): a civilizational image schema, in which peace is depicted as being light. Positive words of valuation (kindness, gentleness, happiness, liberty) are densely concentrated around inclusive we; negative words of judgment (brutes, hate, greed) are densely concentrated around dictators. This gradient of prosodic direction leads to moral elevation and solidarity without the use of threats to hold on to persuasion. It is interesting to note that fight is rexbated to imply non-violent, civic struggle (let us fight to free the world). The speech maintains the vigor of mobilizational verbs but

rotates their telos so as to create a discourse of peace which does not yet feel passive. Neither peace nor humanity is reported in an abstract form but constructed in a language of inclusion with address, ethic modality, rhythms of contrast, and metaphor that remakes technology and politics around human dignity. The Chaplin address as a whole defies dictatorship by rewiring the argumentative and grammatical circuitry of wartime discourse. It re-invigorates audience identity (subjects to citizens), re-calibrates action (obedience to ethical agency), and re-frames technology (domination into solidarity), generating a sustainable discourse of peace and humanity pegged to the historical moment and able to outpace it.

The mention of the aeroplane and the radio heralds the wartime media-tech ecology: the very instruments that facilitated propaganda can bring us still closer together. The speech remakes technology as an act of solidarity, in opposition to modernity that conflated modernity with militarized efficiency. Vocatives like "Soldiers!" recognise the immediate war readership and the continuing "people" addresses to civil societies outside the front. This two-way audience structure is characteristic of a world in which propaganda and popular morale were linked, and citizen approval was a matter of political significance. References to misery, greed and intelligent men, who are missing kindness, indirectly refer to the Great Depression as well as elite collusion in war economies. Moral failure is linked to material suffering at the highest level of the discourse, which is consistent with the then-criticism of the oligarchical power without referring to states or rulers--strategic ambiguity that increases the appeal. Slogans such as in the name of democracy and the brotherhood of man are echoes of trans-Atlantic ideals of democracy in 1940-41, when some audiences were officially neutral. It moralizes the language of democracy and transforms it into a human, not a national, legacy-in anticipation of post-war human-rights idioms. The temporal order (now, soon, tomorrow) presents an imminent future when tyranny is over, which, in comparison to teleologies of stalemate, represents affect and teleologies of recovery. This is both consistent with the morale requirements of war and rejects the fatalism of total war narratives. The speech is entirely of its moment but speaks beyond it: it internalizes the technological, moral, and geopolitical strains of WWII and re-invents them as a universalist civic horizon, in the process enabling the audience to envision agency outside of national command. The idea is that, on the whole, Chaplin in his address confronts dictatorship by rewiring the argumentative and grammatical circuitry of wartime rhetoric. It alters audience identity (subjects - citizens), re-arts action (obedience - ethical agency), and reinvents technology (domination - solidarity), creating a long lasting discussion of peace and humanity grounded in historical moment but able to move beyond it.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Our analysis shows that Chaplin's address challenges dictatorship and war not only by condemning them but by re-engineering the argumentative and grammatical circuitry that sustains authoritarian discourse. In what follows, we relate these findings to prior scholarship, citing where relevant "as X also shows/argues," while keeping implications light (they will be folded into your conclusion). Constituting a civic "people." The speech repeatedly interpellates its audience as an agentive collective—"you, the people"—and then re-authorizes them as the rightful source of power. This mirrors what Charland (1987) calls constitutive rhetoric, in which audiences are hailed as a "people" with capacities and obligations. Our transitivity results—placing "we/you" as Actors in material processes ("we can create…," "you have the power…")—are consistent with Charland's point that rhetoric can make a political subject by grammatically scripting agency. Bitzer's (1968) notion of the rhetorical situation also fits the pattern: Chaplin frames an exigence ("misery… upon us") and delineates an audience that is both addressed and authorized to act, while constraints (fear, "machine minds") are linguistically named and thereby rendered negotiable. In short, the speech performs what Charland (1987) describes—peoplehood created in and by discourse—while answering a Bitzerian exigence with a civic repertoire rather than a militarist one.

Delegitimating authoritarian warrants. Our DHA coding shows Chaplin undoes authorization ("leaders," "dictators") and replaces it with moral evaluation and practical rationalization grounded in human welfare (technology is "useful" only if it serves people). Although our method section drew on other legitimation theorists, here we note that Ellul (1965) had already shown how propaganda legitimates by fusing necessity with moralized binaries; Chaplin, by contrast, keeps necessity ("we must unite") but reassigns its telos from obedience to ethical solidarity. Arendt's (1951) analysis of totalitarian dehumanization—the reduction of persons to functions—sheds light on the speech's counter-lexicon: predicates like "brutes" and "machine men" are not mere insults; they name the process by which political modernity can evacuate personhood, and they invite the audience to refuse that grammar of subjects and objects. As Arendt argues, contesting totalitarianism requires re-humanizing both language and institutions; the speech does this by insisting that "we all want to help one another," a line that restores mutual recognizability as the premise of politics. The war in humanitarian universals. We found that Chaplin reverbally transfigures the verb mobilization (fight/civic nonviolent struggle) and this result is consistent with the description of political frame-shifting as a way to invert inference: retaining the energy of a word but shifting its reference point. Authoritarian

frames use security and cleansing metaphors to mobilize security and cleansing; Chaplin favors journey/ kinship / light scenarios - the family of metaphors traditionally linked to emancipatory discourse (cf. Charteris-Black, 2005). This humanitarian frame overlays with ethico-political arguments about whose lives matter: according to Butler (2009), politics is about grievability, and this is what Chaplin does when he includes the we in his discourse, ensuring that the suffering is visible across national borders, which is precisely what authoritarian discourse rejects. Chouliaraki (2006) likewise demonstrates that the solidarity of the audience is constructed aesthetically; closeness shots, music, and direct address collaborate with the words to create moral elevation instead of fear. These assertions are directly addressed by our data on inclusive deixis and appraisal prosody: positive judgments are concentrated around the terms we/you, whereas negative judgments are concentrated around rulers, the affective cartography that guides identification to humanity and not domination.

Argumentation as strategic maneuvering. The counter-topoi in the speech (danger = human vulnerability; responsibility = protect the weak; usefulness = technology to serve people) are a good example of what van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2002) define as strategic maneuvering: reasonableness versus rhetorical effectiveness. Chaplin concurs with generally accepted assumptions (there is danger, something must be done) and redirects them toward non-authoritarian conclusions. In this respect, the speech accomplishes what the theorists of argumentation advise, laboring where the audience begins, and altering warrants such that must brings us to tend to, not to conquest. In other words, the warrants are not thrown away, our DHA results indicate they are recycled. Re-locating proximity and time. Our reading discovered a reverse proximization: the local danger is not the alien enemy but the dehumanizing rationality of covetousness and equipment; the local good is solidarity made possible by technology (the radio has brought us closer together). This reversal echoes the more general observation Cap makes that proximity is discursive; Chaplin creates proximity to human necessity, not to national panic. Temporally, the speech scripts a counter-temporality (now/soon/tomorrow) that is not fatalistic (what the rhetorical critics would name hopeful futurity as a persuasive resource) (cf. Charland, 1987; Lakoff, 2004).

What the film medium adds. Despite the fact that the text is our unit of analysis, it is delivered cinematically. Affective design is part of ethical persuasion as the study of moving viewers proposed by Plantinga (2009) hints. The enumeration, anaphora, and cadenced crescendos of Chaplin serve the same purpose as the applause cues of live political oratory, except that in the film medium the applause cues are fixed in place and do not require a crowd. The consequence,

to borrow Chouliaraki (2006) is an ethics of spectatorship that is action-tuned: viewers are not made to feel like watching the action but as participating in it. From diagnosis to norm. Lastly, the data indicate that the speech does not simply condemn dictatorship; it imposes an alternative standard: technology in service to human purposes, politics in service to universal dignity. In the event that Ellul (1965) is correct and that propaganda combines fear and spectacle to produce consent, Chaplin combines hope and argument to produce conscience. That is the very rhetorical accomplishment that our DHA analysis reveals.

This paper aimed to describe in what ways The Great Dictator speech by Chaplin criticizes dictatorship and war, what linguistic and rhetorical tools it uses to construct a discourse of peace and humanity, and how the speech emerges as a product of its WWII socio-political moment. Our Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) analysis of the speech, by focusing on transitivity, modality, argumentation topoi, and inclusive deixis on a clause-by-clause basis, demonstrated that the speech is not merely anti-tyrannical, but instead, restructures argumentative and grammatical logics by which authoritarianism is usually welcomed. To begin with, in relation to the RQ1, the speech delegitimizes authoritarian authority by inverting traditional warrants, authorization, necessity, and mythic inevitability, in favor of moral assessment and pragmatic rationalization grounded in human wellbeing. Dictators are linguistically de-charismatized (machine men), and people and soldiers are re-institutionalized as moral agents. It is not only a thematic shift: it is a grammatical shift: we/you are systematically transformed into Actors of material processes (we can create...," you have the power...), and the rulers are turned into Goals of collective action. Nomination/predication tactics in DHA discourse are in harmony with argumentation through counter-topoi (danger into human vulnerability; responsibility into protecting the weak; usefulness into technology with people) to reverse militarist modes of reasoning without disapproving of urgency.

Second, in responding to RQ2, the discourse of peace and humanity is constructed using inclusive address, ethical modality, and memorable patterning. The inclusion of the we (shared identity) and the you (empowerment) creates a capacious public with no paternalism; the must and let us create an obligation as a moral necessity, not a command. Complex assessment is condensed into rhythmic options (anaphora, antithesis, three-part lists) and master metaphors (machine vs. human, light vs. darkness) re-semanticize modernity and political action in ways motivated by dignity. This is not pacifist withdrawal but renewed mobilization: the fight is kept but turned to civic, nonviolent ends: fight to free the world the verb is the same, but its telos is now different.

Third, in the case of RQ3, the language of the speech imbibes and reflects its historical context. Citations to the airplane and radio recognize the technologized propaganda ecologies of the time even as they are reconstituted as instruments of solidarity. Vocatives and constant address to the people expose a dual audience calculus that addresses combatants and civil populations, a useful rhetorical position in 194041 when the war effort and censorship arguments collided with neutrality arguments. The deixis of time (now/soon/ tomorrow) scripts a contratemporality of optimistic futurity in opposition to the fatality of total war, matching affect with democratic renewal.

Theoretically, the analysis outlines how a humanist counter-discourse might be made operational in language: by re-authorizing citizens in terms of transitivity and deixis, re-appropriating topoi commonly shared to non-authoritarian ends, and re-evaluating technology in metaphoric terms that privilege persons over systems. Theoretically, in the methodological sense, it shows the payoffs of DHA triangulation on one culturally iconic text: mapping strategies (nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization, intensification/mitigation) versus historical layers illuminates how the micro-choices of the speech were constitutively political at the moment of utterance. The work examines one speech in a feature film; performance, music, and cinematography are co-produced meanings and our attention to language de facto abstracts audiovisual detail. The transcription is based on the English language release of the film; in multilingual markets the film might have been received differently, and the translation decisions can change nominations, predicates and metaphors. Lastly, our interpretive coding, though theory-connected and reliability-validated, is still qualitative; further research could take the method to a comparative corpus of anti-authoritarian speeches, or there could be an addition of audience research to understand the effects of inclusive deixis and ethical modality on perceived credibility and action-readiness.

Despite these caveats, the analysis explains why this speech remains popular. When authoritarian rhetoric uses fear intertwined with spectacle to produce assent, Chaplin address uses hope intertwined with argument to produce conscience-reminding audiences that democratic agency starts as a possibility of speech and only after that becomes institutional fact. In that regard, the speech is not merely an utterance about peace and humanity: it enacts it, shifting the grammar of mobilization into solidarity and redefining modern media as an instrument to bring publics closer to each other.

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