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The Dark Side of the Screen – a resistance to the changing times

*Modern Times* known as “the last of the great silent feature comedies” reflects Charlie Chaplin’s resistance to the changing times. Synchronous dialog was everywhere ascendant by the time of the film’s release, yet this picture contains mostly sound effects, synchronous music, and a pattern song with nonsense syllables. *The Artist*, Oscar winner for the best picture nominee in 2012, inherited this resistant spirit paying homage to some of the greatest silent films of the first two or three decades of cinema history.  As a silent movie, it is screened in black and white and projected in the old-fashioned boxy Academy ratio, with its occasional lines of dialogue printed on intertitle cards. Its conceit is hardly revolutionary, because it has been done before, by Mel Brooks, in 1976’s *Silent Movie*. This same *old fashion* tendency continues in the so much acclaimed Portuguese movie, *Tabu*, by Miguel Gomes, awarded for opening new perspectives onto cinema, in spite of following the classic film traditions while subverting them with consistent narrative invention creating a lyrical immersion into colonialist metaphor and historical memory. Not to be confused with the F.W. Murnau movie of the same name, "Tabu" nonetheless borrows the expressionistic style of the earlier film's period, using luxurious black-and-white photography. What all these movies have in common is a desire to preserve the true essence of cinema showing what it really is and not only what it can do. All these directors believe that the best way to achieve this purpose is through a never changing power of that *phantasmagoria* so present in black and white movies, produced not only in the silent era but also in film *noir* by the lighting effects and camera angles that characterize the work of such major *noir* directors as Frtiz Lang, Billy Wilder and Orson Welles, who knew everything about the unutterable mysteries hidden in the dark side of the screen.