interest, Falicov could have delved further into the possibilities and potentials offered by this musical genre. Like its Brazilian counterpart, the *chanchada*, the tango film provided a paradigm of low-cost filmmaking created out of pre-existing popular culture: Argentine audiences loved it, and it was exportable to other Spanish-speaking countries. And, like the *chanchada*, it suffered from America's wartime "good neighbor" policy, when U.S. product poured southward to glut local markets. Rejection by both elite "auteurist" directors and the more radical politically committed filmmakers further put the nail in the musical's coffin.

But many Brazilian scholars, such as Joao Luiz Vieira, have mounted a defense of the *chanchada* – a rethinking that, according to Falicov, happened in the case of the tango film, too. Fernando Solanas's *Tangos: Exiles of Gardel* clearly establishes a dialogue with that genre. As Robert Stam has pointed out in relation to Brazil, national cinema could learn a lot from national music, which continues to thrive and, often, to deal with important social issues as well. The point is not to duplicate the tango film, of course – that time is gone – but to see what lessons can be learned from it. In many ways, Falicov's book reveals the difficulties of trying to make films that can successfully reach audiences while still having artistic vision – and possibly, political or social value as well. It's possible that answers to some of those quandaries may actually be found in the *epoca de oro* and the films that spawned that golden age.

*Uncanny Bodies: The Coming of Sound Film and the Origins of the Horror* Genre.
By Robert Spadoni
Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

**Reviewed by Steffen Hantke**

Aside from brief excursions into American (and partially German) horror films of the late silent and early sound era, Robert Spadoni's *Uncanny Bodies* deals with a highly limited group of primary texts. Its two introductory chapters trace the early history of sound in American cinema, and the two central chapters of the book are, respectively, devoted to Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1930) and James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931).

This is not, as one might think, a concession to the canonical status of these two films and their significance for the development

and consolidation of the horror film genre. The two films' canonical status is hardly in question. Much—perhaps too much—has already been written about them, their stars, and their directors. And yet canonicity is the central focus of Spadoni as he tackles the question of why, among all possible choices, it has been these two films that have lasted and have even come to define horror film as a genre. It is to the credit of the book that its author manages to find a fresh angle from which to ask that question.

Why *have* these two films stood the test of time? Spadoni asks this question pointedly against many of the negative assessments that both films—Browning's perhaps more than Whale's—have had to suffer throughout the years. *Dracula*, Spadoni acknowledges, is in fact a notoriously bad film. Stagy and slow, it has acquired a reputation only to be valuable, and watchable, as a piece of high camp, thanks largely to Bela Lugosi's seminal performance as the eponymous Count. While *Frankenstein*'s long-term reputation has fared better than that of *Dracula*, Spadoni marshals quite a few sources, both from the time the film was released and from more contemporary viewers, that point out how rough and tumble especially the film's editing is. Compared to some of Whale's other, even earlier, work, *Frankenstein* seems not quite up to par. As historical documents, both films are still interesting; as horror films, however, they seem to fall behind the more accomplished entries in the genre.

But Spadoni is not out to undercut both films' claim to canonicity. What may come as a surprise to many contemporary viewers, whose perception of the films is, of course, filtered through layer after layer of successive critical and popular opinion, is that they were both considered highly effective machines for scaring their audiences at the time of their release. For someone unwilling to assume a patronizing attitude toward those audiences (what did they know, after all, back there in the dark ages?), this assessment, especially of the creaky, clumsy, plodding *Dracula*, posits a mystery worth puzzling over. Which is exactly what Spadoni is doing: asking a question seriously that has become facile as long as it is asked merely as a rhetorical question. What, indeed, did they know, back there in the dark ages? Good question.

What they—these audiences in 1930, whose perception differs so dramatically from our own—knew was that the merging of sound and image, which we contemporary viewers have come to embrace unthinkingly and unknowingly, is, in fact, not as natural as we might want to believe. Sound, as Spadoni reminds us, only came into pictures

in 1927, most notably with Warner Bros.' release of *The Jazz Singer*. For all those who, literally, hadn't "heard anything yet," this was not only a momentous breakthrough but the beginning of a unsettling period of transition. Sound was neither universally embraced as an improvement upon the medium—a position fairly well known, if only through the detour of later films like *Singin' in the Rain*—nor accepted as a technology that contributed to the realism, the verisimilitude, or mimetic accuracy of cinema.

This was the result of the idiosyncrasies of early sound technologies, which often divorced sound from object and voice from body. But it was also, more generally, the result of an audience response that had been conditioned by preceding technologies—technologies that had taught viewers to suppress the knowledge of the essential artificiality of the medium. When sound entered the picture(s), disrupting these established forms of reception, it brought aspects of cinema to the audience's consciousness that had previously—and have ever since—vanished into patterns of repetition and habituation. During this brief moment of transition, however, the audience grew conscious of the medium itself and learned to be more savvy about its essential artifice.

At the heart of this moment, and of the aesthetics it fostered, was *Dracula*. Browning's film, Spadoni suggests, was particularly suited to explore and exploit the cognitive dissonances that the transition from silent to sound film created because of its monstrous creature's ability to be simultaneously absent and present. In detailed shot-by-shot analyses of scenes from *Dracula*, Spadoni shows how Browning and Lugosi create an interplay of image and sound (and, perhaps equally importantly, of off-screen events and silence) that played on a cinema that, thanks to the introduction of sound, had just become strange and uncanny to its contemporary audience. Much of what later audiences have criticized about the film—from the lack of narrative complexity to the long silences between moments of dialogue—Spadoni reconstructs as audiences at the time must have perceived it: an unsettling spectacle that reflected back on the experience of cinema itself.

Though released only a year after *Dracula*, James Whale's *Frankenstein* already marks a moment in which a horror film transcends the paradigm set by its predecessor and "propelled the horror genre into the mature sound era" (97). Unlike the ghostliness with which Dracula permeates Browning's film, Spadoni notes the visual directness, the bluntness, with which Karloff's body, aided by

the work of Universal make-up wizard Jack Pierce, dominates the frame. Aggressively visible yet conspicuously mute, this body served as a site for the film's evocation of "the uncanny of early and sound cinema at the same time that it evoked a silent cinema newly estranged by the same" (115).

Readers interested in the transition from silent to sound film will find *Uncanny Bodies* intriguing for its focus specifically on horror films, which, in contrast to, for example, the musical, are not generally considered in this context. For those interested in horror film, the book has even more to offer. Asking readers to consider *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* as two increasingly sophisticated and conceptually distinct responses to the arrival of sound in cinema, Spadoni rehabilitates the films themselves, their makers, and their contemporary audiences. These were *not* the clunky, creaky, awkward first steps of the genre; filmmakers were *not* cluelessly fumbling with a new technology; and viewers were *hardly* the simpletons we like to take them for. Although the book, with its tight argument and detailed background information on the period, is a far cry from a fan's plea for his favorite movies, fans of horror cinema might come away with a new appreciation of a moment in the history of their favorite genre that is largely dismissed as a stepping-stone for better things to come.

*The Philosophy of Martin Scorsese.*
Edited by Mark T. Conard
Lexington: University of Kentucky P, 2007.
256 pp. $35.00 (cloth).

**Reviewed by Matthew Schultz**

Similar to literary studies, where one rarely finds a monograph that considers a single author anymore, the academic attention film has increasingly received over the past few decades tends to see the film director as liminal rather than central to the critic's focus. Martin Scorsese, however, continues to require top billing in scholarship dealing with his work. Mark T. Conard's *The Philosophy of Martin Scorsese* is no exception. The thirteen collected essays pay tribute to the director's representation of philosophical maxims on screen in such a way that suggests the philosophy is supported by Scorsese's vision as much as Scorsese's films borrow from the philosophy.

Published in 2007, the point of departure for this book was