

The essays in this section, then, are acutely aware of the blurring between the crisis of a zombie apocalypse in imaginative space and the very real concerns of a new millennium in which global interconnectedness is a given, identities are as much virtual as physical, bioengineering is commonplace, and violence in society often seems to come "from within." The texts are intersected by the consistently collapsed binary of us and them, and illustrate some of the ways in which zombies seem to bleed over—insidiously but relentlessly—into real life. They also document the diversity of audiences engaging with these narratives, and reinforce the ways in which the zombie can mean different things to different people. The zombie-like ghoul in the 1964 Vincent Price movie *The Last Man on Earth* shunned the mirror that Price hung on his door, loath to witness firsthand what they have become.³ The lead zombie eventually figures out how to knock the mirror off the door by approaching it from the side. The unambitious, unprepossessing zombie—however simplistic, however ugly, however self-conscious—is itself a mirror for us, one we cannot knock off so easily.

Slacker Bites Back: *Shaun of the Dead* Finds New Life for Deadbeats

Lynn Pifer

Zombies and slackers get the same bad rap: unproductive deadbeats feeding off society. But Simon Pegg and Edgar Wright reveal another side to these societal monsters in their 2004 film *Shaun of the Dead*. In *Shaun*, the zombie functions as the Other who is, nonetheless, uncannily familiar, and the slacker, rather than feeding off society, becomes its hero. If a society's monsters expose the deepest anxieties of the culture that created them, then Pegg and Wright's zombies follow George Romero's tradition of critiquing capitalistic culture by revealing the life-sucking effects of modern urban culture on working-class London. But *Shaun of the Dead* does not conform neatly to typical portrayals of the monster any more than it conforms to the zombie conventions we've come to expect from Romero's popular films, particularly *Dawn of the Dead*, which *Shaun's* title parodies. Rather, *Shaun* both reflects and deflects established monster theory and depictions of the conventional hero by representing its zombies as even more familiar than the uncanny familiarity we've come to associate with the zombie, and portraying its hero, Shaun, as an ironic defender of slacker values rather than the next zombie slayer.

Pegg and Wright take an existing cultural monster, the zombie—specifically the classic Romero zombie—and show that these horrible monsters are not all that different from the people desperately trying to