

But zombies are just the type of monsters who refuse "to participate in the classificatory 'order of things'" and are dangerous because they are "suspended between forms that threaten to smash distinctions."<sup>22</sup> These monsters are beings suspended between life and death. That they are not alive and thus are unable to respond to appeals to reason or emotion is noted by folklore sources such as Hurston<sup>23</sup> and is portrayed in popular literature such as *The Zombie Survival Guide*.<sup>24</sup> And yet, despite the fact that the person inside the body has died, the body is still animated and quite emphatically dangerous. Zombies seem placed squarely at the crossroads between the living and the dead. What *Shaun* emphasizes is that the simple living/dead binary is insufficient to describe the relationship between the film's zombies and the living characters; the dead walk among and threaten the living, yet the living themselves resemble the dead. At first glance, the film and its trailer appear to emphasize the binary opposition between living and dead. Living friends must be saved; dead ones must be destroyed. But *Shaun's* zombies are like Cohen's monster, who "breaks apart bifurcating, 'either/or' syllogistic logic with a kind of resolution closer to 'and/or,' introducing what Barbara Johnson has called 'a revolution in the very logic of meaning.'"<sup>25</sup> Thus the monster destroys categories because it cannot be labeled either/or—the zombie is not living or dead. In fact, upon closer examination, *Shaun's* zombies resemble the living more than earlier film zombies do. By the end of the film, the remaining zombies have been incorporated into Shaun's society. Controlled by chains and collars, zombies perform slave labor. They are the new grocery cart jockeys and the latest hilarious contestants on humiliating television game shows. Newscasters have even adopted a more politically correct term for them: the "mobile deceased."<sup>26</sup> Finally, with the image of Zombie Noel chained to his grocery cart corral, we return to the Hurston-style zombie: an enslaved worker. In Noel's case, his master is a

grocery chain instead of a voodoo *lucifer*.

One scene, in particular, undercuts the conventional idea, held by human characters in zombie films, that zombies no longer resemble the living. Shaun has gathered his friends and family and they are escaping in his stepfather's Jaguar. His stepfather, Philip, has been bitten and cannot drive, so Ed drives the Jag, playing heavy metal music at top volume, speeding through the streets and hitting zombies left and right, as if he's playing his favorite video game instead of taking his friends to safety. Philip, of course, cannot stand "that racket!" or the reckless way Ed is handling his beloved car, but he is too weak to intervene. When Philip dies and turns into a zombie, they stop the car and all pile out, looking

Zombie Philip inside. Shaun's mum, Barbara, is reluctant to leave Philip behind, and Shaun exclaims, "That's not even your husband in there, okay? I know it looks like him, but there's nothing left of the man you loved in that car now. Nothing!" At that moment, Zombie Philip, who has been snarling and waving his arm about, finally manages to turn Ed's music off, and he sighs and relaxes. A classic Romero zombie would have never stopped trying to get out of the car to pursue its living victims. This zombie just seems to want some peace and quiet, just as the living Philip would have. The zombies in *Shaun of the Dead* are part of a living/dead binary, yet they simultaneously deconstruct this binary, appearing to be more "and/or" than "either/or," as Barbara Johnson suggests. Likewise, when Shaun's mother becomes a zombie and the others call on Shaun to shoot her before she devours them, she looks on Shaun's face sadly, looking more mum than monster. She snarls only after David attempts to step between them. In addition to dead zombies resembling their living selves, as Philip and Barbara do, living characters seem like "zombies," due to the deadening effects of "modern life."

The monsters Shaun must battle at the end of the film were all seen going about their daily lives at the beginning of the film, and, aside from the fact that they now have opaque eyes and "some red" on them, the dead don't look that much different from their living selves. Indeed, the filmmakers play up Shaun's inability to discern when he is surrounded by zombies. He rides the bus with infected victims; he and Ed scoff at the zombie trying to enter the pub after hours; and they sing call and response to the howls of a zombie approaching them in the alley, assuming he is drunk like them. Shaun can stagger down to his local convenience store, hung over and oblivious to the car alarms, the pool of blood he slips in, or the moaning zombie in the street whom he mistakes for a panhandler. Finally, neither Shaun nor Ed is able to recognize that the girl in the garden isn't just drunk and looking for a cuddle. Even when she gets up after being impaled on a pipe, Ed's first response is not to run for safety but to wind his instant camera so he can take a picture of her.

Our protagonists' prolonged inability to perceive the monsters around them is not the only twist on conventional zombie film plots. Cohen argues that monster stories contain two narratives: "one that describes how the monster came to be and another . . . detailing what cultural use the monster serves. The monster of prohibition exists to . . . call horrid attention to the borders that cannot—must not—be crossed."<sup>26</sup> But this doesn't seem to be the case in *Shaun of the Dead*. In the first place, Pegg and Wright's film deliberately refuses to provide the narrative of how the