Homework 4

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Zombies are commonplace in media in current times. There’s television shows, video games, comics and a ton of movies to go through. That being determined, what about the real world? Are there actually zombies and if so what is the culture behind their creation? Well in “The Secrets of Haiti’s Living Dead,” these questions and quite a few more are answered in detail.

Most of the article follows a biologist by the name of Wade Davis as he discovers the roots behind the zombification process. However, before he takes the majority of the piece’s focus, there is another man covered. Clairvius Narcisse. Doctors pronounced him dead after finding no heartbeat and put him in cold storage for twenty hours before he was buried. Clairvius was aware and alive for every second. After the funeral, a man came and took him out of the grave, using him as a slave until his owner’s death. During that time, Clairvius had no freedom of will, only being able to do what his new owner told him to. He was a zombie. Later in Haiti, Davis discovers that many of the impoverished people of the land practice the arts of voodoo. While investigating this religion and Clairvius’s case, Davis meets a voodoo sorcerer named Marcel Pierre. Pierre is paid a fine sum of cash to gather the ingredients to the zombification poison, but instead leads Davis around as he gathers ingredients that apparently have no effects relating to it. Eventually, Davis has enough and calls Pierre out on his lies, to which the voodoo priest responds by showing him the real methods of preparing a zombie potion. Davis was able to determine that the paralysis came about from the poison of a puffer fish which, when overly ingested, can cause paralysis and a slowing of the metabolism, simulating death. However, this doesn’t explain how the victims remain zombified after being unearthed and recovered. Well Davis also believes that after their abduction, the victims are given a Datura paste to keep them docile and useful. The mystery of how essentially solved, all that Davis had left to understand was why. He asked around and came to an understanding after some time. Zombification in the world of voodoo was some sort of capital punishment and innocents had nothing to worry about. As it turned out, Clairvius had stolen quite a sum of land from his own brother so he was sold to a voodoo slave owner. It seems this was some form of justice to be dispensed.

Well that’s all there was to the zombie situation in Haiti. The people picked to be zombies were drugged with a combination of puffer fish poison and Datura paste but were only chosen for this if a perceived crime was committed against someone. The society of voodoo believed that what was happening was a piece of that individual’s soul was being controlled. It was all quite interesting to Davis and his peers.

Cited Works

Del Guercio, G. (n.d.). The Secrets of Haiti's Living Dead. Retrieved July 21, 2016, from https://sunywcc.sln.suny.edu/courses/1/5047\_2165OL/content/\_1400573\_1/voodoo davis.pdf