

"the secrets of haiti's living dead" by del guercio essay sample

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Writing About Reading, “ The Secrets of Haiti’s Living Dead” by del Guercio

People will believe anything if they want or expect it to be true. This is especially true if it is deeply woven into their culture. In “ The Secrets of Haiti’s Living Dead” by Gino Del Guercio, this idea is illustrated through the exploration of zombies in Haitian voodoo culture.

The essay describes the search by a Harvard student named Wade Davis for a drug causing zombie-like effects. Zombies are a fact of Haitian culture. But not in the way that we, Americans, usually perceive them to be. We tend to think of zombies as otherworldly and a source for tales of horror. As del Guercio puts it, “ As a sanction in Haiti, the fear is not of zombies, it’s of becoming one.”(para. 35) Davis soon finds this drug and discovers that zombies are faked in a material sense. Some people might wonder why he wouldn’t just make a general announcement and attempt to enlighten the Haitian people as to this fact. I am reminded of David Abrams’ essay entitled “ Making Magic.” When a magician, the main character of the essay, is asked to perform supernatural feats of healing by natives of Bali, he explains, “ like a fool I attempted to show that my magic feats were but illusions”.

I only insulted the people,”(p. 514) The same would be true of Davis’ attempt. Voodoo and Zombies are a part of their culture He realizes that he has to look at this culture to begin to understand the Zombie phenomenon. He discovers that zombification was an affective means of police by secret voodoo societies throughout Haiti. It was a punishment induced by the drug,

which Davis discovered. These secret societies had been around for 2 centuries and were, as del Guercio puts it, "as much or more in control of everyday life as the Haitian government." Truth is meaningless unless it is perceived as "true" in a cultural context.