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Author(s): Jerry Philogene

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**“DEAD CITIZEN” AND THE ABJECT NATION:  
SOCIAL DEATH, HAITI, AND THE STRATEGIC POWER OF THE IMAGE**

***Jerry Philogene***

*Dickinson College*

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*We need to account for not just the power of images but their powerlessness, their impotence, their abjection. We need . . . to grasp both sides of the paradox of the image; that is it alive—but also dead; powerful—but also weak; meaningful—but also meaningless.*

*W. J. T. Mitchell<sup>1</sup>*

At 4:53 p.m. on Tuesday, January 12, 2010, for thirty-five seconds, a catastrophic 7.0-magnitude earthquake devastated Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince. An estimated 300,000 lives were lost, nearly 1.5 million homes were destroyed, neighborhoods vanished, government buildings toppled, and historic sites were decimated.<sup>2</sup> For a country that engaged in a long and bloody struggle for freedom and continues to battle the ramifications of enslavement—underdevelopment, neoimperialism, and internal political conflicts—this was another disaster. For weeks afterward, the North American news media was inundated with images of Haitians being rescued from the rubble of destroyed buildings. An unprecedented outpouring of North American and European aid amounting to nearly \$1 billion was promised to Haiti.<sup>3</sup> As days passed, more images of mangled, dismembered, and dead bodies appeared in the national and global news media. Stories of bodies buried under buildings, rescued by Haitians and international rescue teams, captivated the global community. They accompanied images that captured the confusion, pain, and trauma launched on that horrific day. While most of the news coverage was filled with compassion and sympathy for the “poorest country in the Western hemisphere,” it was also peppered with narratives that reinforced the well-known and persistent stereotypes, misrepresentations, and pernicious clichés about Haiti and its people. The descriptive words and images paired with these narratives further emphasized a sense of perpetual hopelessness for Haiti. Posting on the blog of the Social Science Research Council, Colin Dayan wrote,

In their coverage of the earthquake, the media represented Haiti as a passive, neutered object of disaster, with no history, no culture, nothing except images of rubble, pain, dirt, and misery. How did the news dare to show piles of bodies being bulldozed into mass graves after the earthquake? To talk about the smell of urine? To focus on women in postures that could only be called abject? What do the representations of Haiti tell us about the force of metaphor? And why are these metaphors so crucial to North Americans? What is a metaphor a metaphor for?<sup>4</sup>

What is the appeal of metaphors about Haiti? What do they tell us?

These images circulated in the dominant US public culture as representatives of a grand narrative of the "shadowy specters of death" that, according to former presidential candidate and Christian televangelist Pat Robertson, permanently loom over Haiti.<sup>5</sup> Something systemic, deeply rooted, and profound was revealed in the wake of the earthquake: the fact that such graphic images and descriptive vocabularies have a sustained historical legacy. They are part of longstanding narratives and stereotypes that constitute Haiti as a perpetual and permanent ward of the global community, incapable of being rehabilitated due to its inherently flawed nature. While we may have heard and read stories of Haitians helping Haitians (through friends, family, and Caribbean-based media) what we *saw* in the popular US and international media were images that dehumanized individuals and rendered them anonymous beings to be pitied and aided, yet again.

I watched the images on the television screen as a member of the Haitian *diaspora*—one who feels Haiti deeply in her heart and celebrates its people, history, arts, literature, music, dance, food, and language in her private life and academic work; one who is shielded by US walls from Haiti's precarious economy and random violence; one who is pained by its bittersweet past, its tumultuous present, and its unknown future. I remained safely in my house, staying informed by the modern phenomenon that is twenty-four-hour media coverage brought to me by the "specialized tourist," the journalist and the photojournalist.<sup>6</sup> I made frantic calls hoping and praying, making sure that family and friends were okay . . . some were, some were not. How was I to make sense of these images, repelled yet fascinated to see more, know more? How was I to make sense of what these images *told* me had happened?

Despite the fact that Haiti's nation-state formation began with a calculated and strategic struggle for freedom and liberation, it is perceived

as a lawless nation filled with “unlawful” and powerless people.<sup>7</sup> In this essay, I argue that Haiti has been constructed, in part through a visual discourse, as a socially dead space, entangled in the dialectic of a postmodern enslavement. I use the term “dead citizen” to theorize the politicized Haitian body: as it comes into meaning within a visual frame, it is bound by historical, political, and cultural markers that have defined it as a tragically flawed nation with flawed citizens—individuals who are perceived as being ineligible for personhood. First, I establish my theoretical framework of “dead citizen” by briefly discussing the various ways in which Haiti has been rendered socially, politically, and economically “dead.” The historical visualization of Haiti, coupled with the media images of dead Haitian bodies, shown during the 2010 earthquake, languishing in the sun and piled on top of one another, further contributes to the notion of “dead citizen”: my term for a body that, due to the political consequences of pernicious racist sociohistorical forces, is perceived as inherently sinful, “lawless,” and lacking social agency. As a means to understand the discursive nature of photography and its ocular power, I analyze the 1919 black-and-white photograph of the dead body of François Borgia Charlemagne Péralte, a major leader of the oppositional fighters known as *cacos*, who was murdered by US marines during the 1915 occupation of Haiti.<sup>8</sup>

As a “disciplinary frame,” the photograph offers an opportunity for a rich analysis of the power of the visual field and its complex relation to violence and resistance, citizenship and domination.<sup>9</sup> I draw similarities between the public display of Péralte’s corpse and the images of the dead and injured bodies of the earthquake victims. I argue that both were left open to voyeuristic fascination, used to confirm that the Haitian dead, never having registered any subjectivity within a US perspective, had become what the live Haitian nation was believed to be: unruly and uncivilized, lacking financial resources and structural acumen, as well as any sense of democracy.<sup>10</sup> I assert that these anonymous dead bodies were imprisoned in a regulatory gaze of the global world that confirmed a discourse of deviance. Structurally engaged in disavowing Haiti as a space of viable citizens, this visual discourse reinforced the assumption that it is a cursed nation pathologically destined to its history of suffering. By analyzing images, I explore the discursive nature of photography and the institutional use and evidentiary value of the image of Péralte’s corpse.<sup>11</sup> Specifically, I detail the multiple “killings” of Péralte that occurred through the effective hegemonic act of photographing, the image’s reproduction and dissemination, and the public display of his half-naked corpse on one

of the most sacred and holy days of the Vodou religion, *Fèt dè Mò* (Day of the Dead). I draw connections between the concept of "dead citizen," the physically dead, and Haiti's social death.<sup>12</sup>

The pioneering work of Orlando Patterson that theorizes the enslaved Black person as trapped in the precarious nature of social death—denied personhood—helps frame my comprehension of social death as it is tied to visual images and to "dead citizen." In neat cultural logic, Patterson defines the effect of slavery as a "social death." The enslaved is powerless and has "no social existence outside of his master."<sup>13</sup> Enslavement is not simply a *denial* of personhood; instead, there is no *existence* of a person due to "the permanent violent domination of natively alienated and generally dishonored persons."<sup>14</sup> In Patterson's definition, it is slavery, the effective human bondage and the enslaved individual's natal alienation that places her or him in the liminal existence of the socially dead. Here I want to suggest that the alienation that Haiti suffered was not biological and personalized. During enslavement and for the purposes of survival, enslaved Black people formed different patterns and means of kinship that were not defined or determined by blood lineage. The alienation that Haiti received at the hands of its former colonizer, France, existed and manifested itself on geopolitical and socioeconomic levels, in what Patterson calls a "secular excommunication."<sup>15</sup>

Similarly useful is Sharon Holland's resistant reading of death, race, and subjectivity. She remarks that in the space of a "living death," a social death, "there is no full embrace of the margin . . . only the chance to struggle [and prosper] against both a killing abstraction and a life-in-death."<sup>16</sup> Her trope of "killing abstraction," like Michel-Rolph Trouillot's "failures of narration," refers to the ways in which racialized populations are made unduly vulnerable and are erased by abjection, racism, and neoimperialism.<sup>17</sup> For this essay, I find both Holland's "killing abstraction" and Trouillot's "failures of narration," employed within a visual analysis, useful to provide a deep and textured understanding of "dead citizen" as a "life-in-death." I combine Patterson's articulation of the ineffectual existence created by social death with the resistance posited by Holland to make an ontological delineation suggesting that "dead citizen" is an individual who *exists/lives* within social death, excavating its transformative possibilities. Unlike "a" or "the" dead citizen, who no longer has a physical presence and is in effect silenced by death, "dead citizen" without the use of a definite or indefinite article is marked by agency existing/living within "life-in-death."

### **POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL DEATH**

Many in the Western Hemisphere in the early nineteenth century viewed the existence of a free and independent Black nation as a threat to the practice and economy of slavery. The idea that Blacks rose up from their enslaved conditions and fought whites for their freedom struck fear in the hearts of those who profited from enslaved Black bodies. Thus, Haiti became a pariah that needed to be eliminated—if not literally, then symbolically. Subsequently, Haiti was not recognized as a republic with diplomatic status and rights by the United States until 1862, fifty-eight years after it had declared itself a free Black sovereign nation.<sup>18</sup> The economic depletion of Haiti by its Western neighbors as well as its former European colonizer began during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Shannon Riley states that by 1897, “Haiti was indebted to the US in the form of loans made by US banks, totaling in the millions of dollars.”<sup>19</sup> Peter Hudson convincingly argues that in 1910, through what Scott Nearing and Joseph Freeman have termed “dollar diplomacy,” the National Bank of Haiti became the property of the National City Bank of New York due to these multi-million-dollar loans.<sup>20</sup> Millery Polyné writes that “Haiti’s systemic underdevelopment in relation to North American and European powers and other Hispanophone nation-states further cemented Haiti within a narrative of the other, of violence, of disorder within the Americas.”<sup>21</sup> While Haiti’s successful revolutionary history has been lauded at certain political moments in the United States, the singular focus on its rebellious past signaled the fascination with supposedly primitive modernity that supported Western ideologies of progress and cultural difference. What occupied the US imaginary was the routine caricature of Haiti as both incompetent and malevolent. Such representations fostered the portrayal of a bizarre anomaly, a culturally rich yet politically and economically “dead” nation—a striking incongruity.

### **FAILURES IN VISUAL NARRATION**

Images and visual materials from twentieth-century US plays and films have contributed to a skewed understanding of Haiti, based on exotic and primitive constructions. The plays and films were not *about* Haiti; instead, they created an iconicity that fostered a visual discourse of crisis, death, and abjection, a trope that intertwined political disorder with sexual fantasies and deviant abnormalities. The United States’ historically morbid fascination with Vodou, combined with its cautiously attentive interest in the persistent political disorder and social turmoil in Haiti, also played out on the Hollywood screen. The movie industry in the United States

augmented the creation of the image of Haiti as a place of mysterious black magic, zombies, and barbarous Vodou ceremonies, thus rendering it aberrant, abnormal, and peculiar. *The Emperor Jones* (1933), based on the 1920 play by Eugene O'Neill, starred African American actor Paul Robeson as the corrupt Brutus Jones. Staged in elaborate costumes, it featured carved "voodoo" dolls and "zombified" Haitians burying their dead, as well as a dictatorial figure who, like the mythical and cursed werewolf, could only be killed with a silver bullet. All of this reinforced the nonhuman quality of Haitians. Victor and Edward Halperin's *White Zombie* (1932), the first zombie horror film, as well as Jean Yarbrough's *King of the Zombies* (1941), Jacques Toumeur's *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943), and Reginald Leborg's *Voodoo Island* (1957), all contributed to the fascination with Haiti and its supposed primitivistic difference. Without regard for accuracy, these films depicted Black Haitian "natives" as bloodthirsty and demonic in stereotypical Hollywood fashion.

In addition, they offered US audiences a visual "reality" that had been previously imagined only through published travel diaries, travelogues, and novels.<sup>22</sup> The images that came alive onstage and were embodied onscreen verified what the international political world already believed: respectable, civilized individuals did not occupy Haiti. In fact, these visual presentations enabled the US public to draw a clear contrast between the civilized "North" and the primitive "South" whose citizenry consisted of malevolent people, easily disposable through either physical or metaphorical erasure and thus unsuitable to be part of the global community.

Through twentieth-century novels with sensational plots, and dramatically acted plays and films that displayed the impenetrable death, darkness, and grotesque "otherness" of Haiti and its people, the "unordinariness" of Haiti has become synonymous with the "truth" of evil and debauchery, reducing Haiti to an iconography rather than a reality.<sup>23</sup> Certain historical "truths" continue to permeate the perceptions of Haiti, like stubborn stains that cannot be washed out: persistent disease, continuous unruliness, and endless impoverishment. As Michel Foucault discusses, ideas of truth are largely coextensive with power structures. He suggests that discourses produce certain discursive truths, certain "regimes of truth."<sup>24</sup> The supposed "truth" of Haiti's cultural awkwardness as well as its savagery has shaped its image since the late nineteenth century, functioning as "biological referent" rather than "discursive logic."<sup>25</sup> Mischa Berlinski claims that suffering, disaster, and poverty are the truths of Haiti: they are "not the whole truth . . . but [they are] surely the most important truths."<sup>26</sup> Such "truths" appear eternal, immune to the passing of time"; they become "canonized, [as] the content and discursive structures of

these narratives are exempt from verification. Ensnared in the sphere of myth, they have become a sort of sacred history” and function as profound truth.<sup>27</sup>

Twentieth-century visual representations of Haitians—fleeing, on poorly constructed boats, state-sanctioned repression in the early 1980s and the violence that followed the two military coups that disposed Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1991 and 2004; individuals who were labeled “boat people”—set the stage for the fabrication of “dead citizen” and the perfunctory reception of the 2010 earthquake images. Those seeking asylum in the United States were depicted as stateless people fleeing a lawless nation. They were trapped between a country that they could no longer tolerate and a country that did not want them. The 2010 postearthquake media images have further concretized the understanding of Haitians as disposable, disenfranchised, and impoverished people.

### THE DIALECTIC “DEAD CITIZEN”

Given the nature of Haiti’s formation as a nation-state, Haitian citizenship has been inextricably tied to violence and a racialized neocolonial discourse.<sup>28</sup> If violence is part of Haiti’s historical landscape, the foundation of its freedom, then is the discourse of death sewn into the fabric of its national identity? How might the generative tensions between the living and images of the dead offer an understanding of what it means to live as “dead citizen”? How might we employ the figure of the dead body to suggest a narrative that does not ubiquitously revolve around suffering and death, but presents the redemptive possibilities of social death, attempting to create a visual discourse that suggests that the livability of “dead citizen” is a central ethos by which Haitians on the island *and* in the diaspora survive? I am not offering celebratory conclusions; instead, I employ a visual imagery to theorize a space, perhaps a condition, where “dead citizen” can exist *within* and *against* historical and political conditions of impossibility and create opportunities for Haitian subjectivity.

For decades, Haitians have battled tyrannical dictators, neoimperialist foreign forces, and massive manmade and natural disasters. Consequently, Haiti has been defined as “the poorest country in the Western hemisphere,” an easily quipped and written taxonomy. Among the visual images that commented on the devastation caused by the earthquake, many newspapers and magazines featured cartoons that reified the relation between Haiti and an ever-looming presence of death. One of the most striking to this author is a cartoon published in the *Toronto Star* a few weeks after the earthquake (Figure 1). In the drawing, we see four skeletal figures, shrouded in black, riding horses. One carries a scythe (for harvesting the



**FIGURE 1.** “HAITI APOCALYPSE,” BY PATRICK CORRIGAN. *TORONTO STAR*, JANUARY 15, 2010. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION—TORSTAR SYNDICATION SERVICES

soul); two carry banners signaling their arrival; the fourth figure carries a rod with a skull on top. On the lower left-hand side of the image, on the dry, barren earth, are two young Haitian boys who note the arrival of these figures in an indifferent manner. One notes, “Here they come again . . .” and the other responds, “They never left!” In this morbidly sardonic image, the cartoonist confirms the constant presence of the specter of death on Haitian soil. This cartoon is a satirical commentary of Haiti’s death visualized on the porous surface of the cartoonist’s page while Michel-Rolph Trouillot has commented on the social death (while he does not call it that) of Haiti as it is created through the exacting impenetrability of historical archives.

Trouillot wrote that Haiti has been positioned as “unique, bizarre, unnatural, odd, queer, freakish, or grotesque” and therefore “unexplainable.” He points to the dichotomy of Haiti as a deviant subject—seen as both aberrant and alluringly unique—and argues that Haiti is most attractive when presented as incomprehensible: this is an attraction lightly layered

with fetishistic presentation.<sup>29</sup> Trouillot methodically explores the powerful dynamics of historicity and historiography, contending that the “silencing” or erasing of the Haitian Revolution by Western historiographers is due to “an uneven power in the production [and analysis] of sources, archives, and narratives.”<sup>30</sup> He further contends that this “silencing” occurred even before the revolution happened. Even the thought of its occurrence was not remotely plausible in the minds of the eighteenth-century French colonists; a Haitian revolution was among the “‘unthinkable’ facts [and acts] in the framework of Western thought.”<sup>31</sup> Trouillot quotes from a letter from 1790 written by La Barre, a French colonialist, “reassuring his metropolitan wife of the peaceful nature of life in the tropics.” La Barre writes, “There is no movement among our Negroes. . . . They don’t even think of it. They are very tranquil and obedient. A revolt among them is impossible.”<sup>32</sup> La Barre further reassures his wife by suggesting that the colonialists sleep with their doors and windows open, never fearful of the constantly obedient “Negroes.” Another letter states, “I live tranquilly in the midst of them without a single thought of their uprising unless that was fomented by the whites themselves” because the “Negroes are very obedient and always will be. . . . [F]reedom for them is a chimera.”<sup>33</sup> Fast-forward many decades to Pat Robertson, former presidential candidate, televangelist, and host of *The 700 Club*, who, during an interview a day after the earthquake, stated:

Haitians need to have a “great turning to God.” . . . They were under the heel of the French, you know Napoleon the third and whatever. And they got together and swore a pact to the devil. They said “We will serve you if you will get us free from the prince.” True story. And so the devil said, “Ok it’s a deal.” And they kicked the French out. The Haitians revolted and got something themselves free [*sic*]. But ever since they have been cursed by one thing after another.<sup>34</sup>

On one hand, the possibility that slaves would *collectively* act upon and envision their own freedom was beyond Le Barre’s racist, colonialist imagination. La Barre marked these enslaved people as nonsubjects, incapable of self-understanding and self-consciousness. Thus, when the revolution began, their quest for freedom was seen not as a political and liberatory endeavor but instead as part of a desire for “bloodshed, rape, and boundless material destruction.”<sup>35</sup> For Robertson, on the other hand, Haitians were active satanically; freedom could be conceived only through a pact with the devil, thus setting the course for a cursed and flawed nation-state. Drawing from Trouillot, we can see that the need to “silence” Haiti’s revolutionary and cultural history has been instrumental in the

"deadening" of an "unimaginable" Haiti. Blaming Haitians for their country's current political, economic, and social conditions obscures the colonial and neocolonial hegemonic role played by the United States and Europe. To many, poverty, illiteracy, insubstantial infrastructures, and avaricious dictators were etched in the DNA of this *always already* devalued and dead nation-state.

### THE GHOSTLY TRACES OF POWER

Perhaps the image that best exemplifies both Haiti's death as a hegemonic and coercive disciplinary practice of control and my notion of "dead citizen" is the black-and-white 1919 photograph of the *caco* leader François Borgia Charlemagne Péralte (Figure 2).<sup>36</sup> As one of the most well-known resistance leaders during the 1915 occupation, Péralte fought against the presence of US military forces that had established Philippe Dartiguenave as a puppet president, forced a Haitian constitution that favored US foreign investments, and trained the *Gendarmerie d'Haïti*, precursor to the Haitian armed guards.<sup>37</sup> Péralte was a well-educated man who had served in the Haitian National Army and later became *commandant d'arrondissement*, a post that can be loosely translated as area or district commander. An ardent opponent of Dartiguenave, he was described as an "energetic young heir of a celebrated family of *caco* chieftains . . . handsome, brave and intelligent and a devoted voodooist [*sic*] and a patriot according to the standards of the class of black Haitian war-lords from which he had sprung, ninety per cent of whose patriotism consisted in hatred for the whites."<sup>38</sup> In addition to being a revolutionary who preached "holy war" against the *blancs*, "he was something of a Messiah. He performed magical feats, boasted that he was invulnerable to bullets and resurrected ancient prophecies," and had been "divinely called to his work."<sup>39</sup>

Convicted as an accomplice to a robbery in Hinche, Péralte was sentenced to five years of hard labor.<sup>40</sup> However, he spent only a few months sweeping the streets of Cap-Haïtien as part of the oppressive *corvée* system before he escaped.<sup>41</sup> Angered by what he and many Haitians thought of as their reenslavement, Péralte fled to the mountains and organized with other Haitian citizens who had become *caco* members. Péralte saw the *cacos* as a "patriot army," fighting "to drive the invaders into the sea and free Haiti."<sup>42</sup> After years of resisting the US occupying forces, Péralte was captured and killed on October 31, 1919, by two US marines, Herman Henry Hanneken and William Robert Button, who infiltrated his camp disguised in blackface. After four years in Haiti, Hanneken and Button spoke fluent Kreyòl, enabling them in their racialized performance to pass as *cacos* and kill Péralte. This "military blackface" bespoke the subterfuge



**FIGURE 2.** PHOTO OF THE BODY OF FRANÇOIS BORGIA CHARLEMAGNE PÉRALTE, NOVEMBER 1919. COURTESY OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS.

and violence instrumental to the US military occupation, yet the event was commemorated through celebratory retellings.<sup>43</sup> As Mary A. Renda discusses, the killing of this “bandit” was widely disseminated as an example of marine heroism and military deception.<sup>44</sup> In *Roaming through the West Indies*, Harry Alverson Franck quotes Hanneken confirming Péralte’s death in his official diary:

Nov. 1, 1919.—Killed Charlemagne Péralte, Commander-in-Chief of the Bandits. Brought Charlemagne’s body to Grande Rivière, arriving 9 A.M. Went to Cap Haitien with the body. Received orders to proceed [sic] to Fort Capois next morning. Went to Grand Rivière via handcar, arriving 9 P.M. Wrote report re death of Charlemagne.<sup>45</sup>

As Georges Michel describes the following events, Péralte’s partially naked corpse was tied to a wooden door and put on display at a “public park of Grande-Rivière du Nord . . . where all the dignitaries of the town and all who knew him while alive came to view him. The body crucified on a door was testimony to the vain wickedness and useless cruelty of the American military.”<sup>46</sup> The public display of his body was calculated to leave no doubt in the minds of his fellow *caco* members that their leader had been killed. Michel continues,

Above his head they placed the Péraltiste banner which consisted of a Haitian flag with a crucifix attached, bearing the image of the Jew crucified like our hero at age 33. . . . [T]hey had crucified Charlemagne Péralte on a door. After the fashion of Christ, Charlemagne had been crucified to redeem us of our sins, past, present, and future; and the poor corpse, martyred and glorious, adorned with the draped Haitian flag and the image of Christ, bore with him all the weight of our redemption.<sup>47</sup>

Péralte's body was displayed on the morning of November 1, 1919, the eve of one of the most important celebrations in the Vodou religion, *Fèt dè Mò* (Day of the Dead), which is a day to celebrate the *Gede lwa*, the spirits of the dead. It is not inconsequential that Button and Hanneken chose that day to parade Péralte's dead body as an object of public consumption.<sup>48</sup> Such a public, visible display of violence and retribution was a direct attempt to suppress the fight for a free and liberated Haiti.

Perhaps the most insidious action after the killing was that photographed copies of Péralte's body were distributed widely via aircraft. This was another coercive attempt on the part of the US marines to curtail any desire for a liberated citizenry. Michel writes, "The photo of Charlemagne crucified became famous afterwards, was reproduced by the thousands, and thrown from airplanes over the camps of the *cacos* to demoralize them and to prove that their venerated leader had been captured and put to death."<sup>49</sup> Through its discursive value, the photograph clearly delineated the power of the US marines, marking Péralte's body, and subsequently Haiti, as "other" within the social and political hierarchies constructed by the United States. As a terrorizing strategy of control in the interest of a certain social and political order, the photograph of Péralte's dead body operated at the center of a visual power dynamic. Similar to the photographs of African American men who were lynched in the United States from the 1890s through the 1920s, this photograph was a mechanism of discipline and the perfect authenticator of his death.<sup>50</sup> Its strategy of power clearly indicates that the social effectiveness of images derives not from what they *portray* but from what they *signify*.

#### **DEATH AND COPIOUS KILLINGS: THE SEMIOTICS OF THE PHOTOGRAPH**

As socially constructed objects, photographs reveal the vulnerability of the one who is being photographed and the domination of the one who is taking the photo. Accordingly, the act of photographing Péralte's body was another form of killing. This photograph is a trace of what was once a

live, powerful, and active human; that Peralte was now rendered, through the photograph, as an arrested and immobile body further confirms the moment of a bodily killing and participates in other killings that exceeded perhaps the photographer's own expectations of the snapshot's regulatory ocular power. Hanneken and Button infiltrated Peralte's camp in "military blackface" and shot him dead, directly in the torso. What made the actual killing so pernicious is the calculated method of infiltration as well as the fact that Haitians assisted Hanneken and Button in accessing Peralte's camp. Parading his semiclad, dead body in the town square for all to see on the eve of *Fèt de Mò* was a symbolic "cultural death" of this resisting citizen and an act of flagrant disregard for the Vodou religion. Given their four years in Haiti commanding a group of *gendarmérie*, we can assume that their fluency in Kreyòl enabled them to gain easy access to and infiltrate Peralte's camp. In addition, their time stationed in Haiti and their interactions with various Haitian communities made them aware of Haitian cultural traditions and spiritual celebrations, including the importance of *Fèt de Mò*.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, the *caco* uniform that carried the signs of authority and resistance was removed to expose Peralte's bruised and naked skin. The removal of his uniform stripped him of his rank and status and rendered him vulnerable to the gaze of the marines; this was another symbolic "killing."

As the marines rushed to document the death and establish a sense of order, the lifeless body of Peralte offered no resistance to manipulation; the black-and-white snapshot reflects the results of their hurried preparation. Positioned in dramatic relief against the door, Peralte's slack body occupies the center of the photograph. A white piece of cloth hangs loosely around the waist of his vulnerable body and the Haitian flag is draped over the top of his head. The frontal shot allows viewers to receive a full view of his body, which, in its central position, bears the full symbolic weight embedded in the photograph. The image at once confirms the fact that this resisting citizen is no more and declares that the *cacos'* concentrated but ill-fated battle to end the occupation has been successfully contained and brought under US military control. Symbolically, this is a killing of the *potentiality* of a viable nation-state. Later, Peralte's body was wrapped in a burlap bag, draped in the Haiti flag and "buried next to the soil, without a casket. . . . [T]hey placed him in concrete [in an unmarked grave] to avoid his being restored to life or to prevent his followers from exhuming the body."<sup>52</sup> I highlight the treatment of Peralte's broken body after his murder to indicate how it was no longer useful to the marines; he became "a perishable commodity."<sup>53</sup> However, the photograph of his dead body functioned as a ghostly reminder of the political nature of the

dead and the politicizing of the image of death. Furthermore, the fact that circumspect measures had to be taken to bury the corpse suggests that the marines were still wary of Peralte even in death.

The public distribution of the photograph exposed and documented the bodily injuries suffered by Peralte, and also created a photographic statement that *authenticated* and *confirmed* his brutal killing and *recorded* the actual event of his death, proving it to be true and forever immortalizing it in US marine history and in the US–Haiti neocolonial relationship. Like the lynching photographs that were published in US newspapers throughout the North and South and circulated nationwide as postcards, Peralte’s image was evidentiary material for those who were not able to witness the ambush but could witness its aftereffects. In photographic form, as an archival object, Peralte’s image participates in a colonizing visual project that ensnares vulnerable Black bodies. This project is part of a cultural phenomenon created through multiple vectors and molded within hegemonic apparatuses in particular historical and geopolitical contexts.<sup>54</sup>

**“THE VOICES OF THE DEAD MAY SPEAK FREELY NOW ONLY  
THROUGH THE BODIES OF THE LIVING”<sup>55</sup>**

Roland Barthes theorizes that “the photograph possesses an evidential force, and . . . its testimony bears not on the object but on time.”<sup>56</sup> For Barthes, an image has a complex cultural language; it brings new conditions and possibilities for visibility that, he suggests, create “meanings that are nameable” and “cultural meanings that we understand at once.”<sup>57</sup> These cultural meanings remain even after the photographic act is complete. On several diachronic levels, the complex and paternalistic relationship between Haiti and the United States, as well as the ways that Haiti has been conceived in the international community, can be summarized in the 1919 photograph of Peralte’s corpse. This image is the eyewitness to the brutality of the US military during the 1915 occupation, providing ocular testimony to military and state control. It provides a historical context for the contemporary images of victims and survivors of the earthquake as well as those associated with other social and political circumstances: the demonization of Haitians as carriers of HIV/AIDS, the criminalization of Haitians illegitimately seeking refuge from an inherently violent nation, INS attitudes toward Haitians as deceitful “illegal aliens” and “boat people,” and the historical perception of Haitians as uncontrollable, deviant agitators, disturbing social and racial hierarchies.<sup>58</sup> Peralte’s dead body is meaningful not only in itself but also through what his body represents and how it is construed. While alive, his active body represented the combative citizenry; once dead, within a larger discourse of independence

and resistance, his passive body came to represent the complexity of lives that struggled against coercive material and political forces.

For centuries, as a neocolonized nation, Haiti has been figured as one large, unruly, racialized body marked by disease, poverty, and contamination. Nowhere was this truer than in the 2010 images of dead rotting bodies laid out for public viewing. The images that inundated the global mainstream news media were of individuals haphazardly buried in massive shallow, makeshift, communal graves, individuals unable to obtain the appropriate rituals of burial normally granted to citizens due to the destruction caused by the earthquake and the mayhem that followed. Like that of Peralte, their death was a public event. Many of the anonymous dead were buried in a sparsely populated area north of Port-au-Prince called *Titanyen* (loosely translated as “little nothing”), which has historically served as a site of mass graves. Their carelessly discarded Black bodies are the inheritors of the blight of coercive neoimperialist global forces, malevolent Haitian dictators, inadequate infrastructure, and environmental destruction. These dead bodies stand in for the metaphorical death of Haiti; both are seen yet rarely mourned. It is in the disposable, dead body of Peralte that we can understand the violence associated with occupation, resistance, and citizenship and fully comprehend the “ontological-political” nature of “dead citizen.”<sup>59</sup> Like the photographed image of Peralte’s corpse, the postearthquake images present a perplexing dilemma that speaks to the affective powers and indexical nature of images and to the visibility of dead bodies as they are bounded by historical, political, and racial circumstances.

**“THERE MIGHT BE USEFUL MATERIAL IN THE NEW SUBJECTIVITIES THAT THE DEAD BRING TO LIFE”<sup>60</sup>**

What sorts of generative power reside in the image of Peralte’s slain body? To answer this question, I explore the “social life” of the photograph and turn to Sharon Holland who asks, “What if some subjects *never* achieve, in the eyes of others, the status of the ‘living’? When ‘living’ is something to be *achieved* and not *experienced* and figurative and literal deaths are very much a part of the social landscape, how do people of color gain a sense of empowerment?”<sup>61</sup> To live as “dead citizen” is to live *within* and *among* the forces and energies that disempower and disenfranchise the citizen; it is to live in the material and protean conditions that are intertwined in the effects and objects of everyday life. Returning to an earlier question, how might we employ the figure of the dead body to suggest redemptive possibilities? How can we create a visual discourse that suggests the

**FIGURE 3.**

PHILOMÉ OBIN (HAITIAN, 1891–1986)

*THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHARLEMAGNE*

*PÉRALTE FOR FREEDOM*

[*CRUCIFIXION DE CHARLEMAGNE*

*PÉRALTE POUR LA LIBERTÉ*], 1970

OIL ON MASONITE

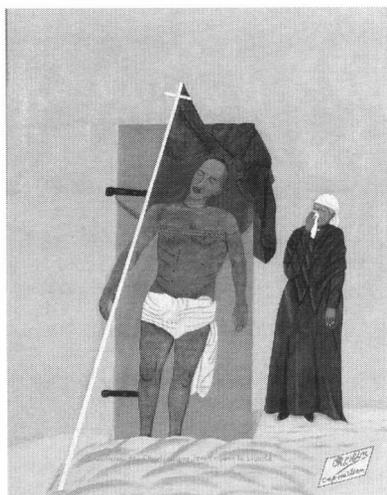
19 1/4 x 15 1/2 IN. (48.9 x 39.37 CM)

MILWAUKEE ART MUSEUM,

GIFT OF RICHARD AND ERNA FLAGG

M1991.139

PHOTO CREDIT EFRAIM LEV-ER



livability of “dead citizen” as a means of survival? In these concluding sentences, I offer a reading of the image of Peralte that might allow for an empowered sense of what it means to live a viable life as “dead citizen.”

While the US marines’ goal was to demoralize the *cacos* to prevent further rebellion, Hans Schmidt points out that Peralte’s image, propped like Christ on the cross, emerged as an iconic symbol of martyrdom and a “continuing source of inspiration to nationalists.”<sup>62</sup> In 1970, Philomé Obin (1892–1986), a well-known northern Haitian artist whose paintings often feature historical events and religious subjects, painted *Crucifixion de Charlemagne Peralte pour la Liberté* (The crucifixion of Charlemagne Peralte for freedom) (Figure 3). I use Obin’s painting to offer an alternate reading of Peralte’s dead body. In his signature flat brushstrokes, solid hues, and economic painting style, Obin renders the Christlike figure of Peralte in a way that emphasizes his martyrdom as well as his saintlike status among Haitian freedom fighters. Obin replicates the iconic photographic image on the pictorial space. Occupying the center of the canvas, Peralte’s body evokes the depiction of Jesus Christ as he lay dying, nailed to the cross. Conspicuously, next to Peralte’s dead body is a crying woman dressed in black, a color often associated with mourning, representing perhaps Jesus’s mother, Mary, as she watched her son suffer for his nation. Peralte’s body, tied to a sky-blue-colored door, floats on a bed of clouds, giving an almost celestial impression. Obin has rendered the death of this Haitian citizen in terms that are both religiously poignant and politically and culturally salient, drawing connections to apotheosis elements in classic religious paintings.

Evoking tragic pathos and divine adoration as an artistic apotheosis, *Crucifixion de Charlemagne Péralte pour la Liberté* is a colorful pictorial retelling of Péralte's dying. Six small bullet holes pierce his chest; his body appears gaunt yet smooth, not mutilated or bloody. Like the photograph, the painting depicts a rope encircling his chest holding him up; at the top of his head is a Haitian flag in dark blue and vivid red. His death is mythical, spiritual; it does not illustrate the bloody murder that killed this unruly citizen, this *corps sauvage*. Viewers' eyes are drawn to the blue and red of the flag under Péralte's hanging head. The bold chromatic of the solid blues punctuated by areas of white that highlight his groin area and his mother's handkerchief and headscarf provide a well-balanced pictorial space; compositionally, the mother figure acts as an anchor, further emphasizing the allegorical invocation of the slain Christian leader. The painting appeals in some of the same ways that images of martyred saints do. For example, in the many paintings depicting the Catholic saint Sebastian, there is a combination of spiritual passion and physical pain evident on his face due to the arrows piecing his bound body. However, in this image, with eyes shut, Péralte appears peaceful, almost heavenly. Obin's central purpose in this painting was to immortalize Péralte and make a clear connection between Christ's murder and painful death at thirty-three and Péralte's murder and death at the same age. Perhaps those who witnessed Péralte's murder and the subsequent public display of his corpse were not allowed to grieve; in Obin's hallowed rendition of the event, however, we can see how the photographic image came to signify an effective visual power and meaning for Haitians contemporarily.

How can the image of Péralte's dead body—photographed by the marines in 1919 and painted by Obin in 1970—be understood alongside the images of the Haitian earthquake victims that populated the media coverage in 2010? This image crystallizes a significant political moment in Haiti's history, but embedded outside those tempered lines of history is also resistance to a *particular* event and time. This image has come to symbolize divergent political and cultural ideologies that are integral for the process of Haitian national identity. Writers of Haitian history have rightly placed Péralte at the center of the resistance to the US occupation. He is a potent icon serving as a reminder of the Haitian citizens who resisted. His image graces Haitian coins, stamps, and sculptures that have been created in his likeness. In using his image, modern and contemporary artists of Haitian descent offer a counterbalance to the images and representations that occupied the US visual landscape in the early twentieth century and continue to do so. I am not suggesting that images of the earthquake victims be subject material for contemporary art practices; the excess of

seeing bodies in trauma, the visualization of destruction and lives that are *in extremis* can promote a particular type of disembodied voyeurism. But I am proposing that we contemplate how certain "failures of narration" have engendered ocular practices concerning Haiti. Perhaps it is through a rearticulated visual historicity that an understanding of the subjectivity and transformative powers of "dead citizen" can allow for an understanding of the dead in relation to the living, not only in the ways they live but also in the ways they die and the reasons *why* they die. It is then that we can fully understand the agency of "dead citizen," the livability of a social death, and their relations to the cultural logic and material conditions of history, heritage, and image making.<sup>63</sup>

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?*, 10.
- <sup>2</sup> The earthquake destroyed the second floor of the Presidential Palace and demolished the cathedrals of Notre Dame de l'Assomption and Sainte Trinité. In September 2012, the palace was demolished. More than three years after the earthquake, according to the International Organization for Migration, there were 279,000 people still living in tents and squalid encampments. Postearthquake housing is being built, albeit at a slow rate. Now, 171,974 people are still living in the gloomy shelter camps. See International Organization for Migration, "Haiti Earthquake Victims Remain in Camps 2.5 Years On," <http://haiti.iom.int/haiti-earthquake-victims-remain-camps-35-years>.
- <sup>3</sup> Schuller and Morales, *Tectonic Shifts*, 2.
- <sup>4</sup> "The Immanent Frame" is a blog of the Social Science Research Council that publishes "interdisciplinary perspectives on secularism, religion, and the public sphere." Colin Dayan, "What Is a Metaphor a Metaphor for?," March 24, 2010, <http://blogs.src.org/tif/2010/03/24/a-metaphor-for/>.
- <sup>5</sup> Ellis, *If We Must Die*, 12.
- <sup>6</sup> Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, 18.
- <sup>7</sup> Here I am not using "lawless" to suggest any form of subversiveness. What I am suggesting is a nation and its people who are perceived as *not* having any societal and/or governmental laws, and not adhering to any governing principles—in effect "lawless."
- <sup>8</sup> Sometimes he is referenced as Charles Masséna Péralte.
- <sup>9</sup> Tagg, *The Disciplinary Frame*, 8.
- <sup>10</sup> Holland, *Raising the Dead*, 18–19.

- <sup>11</sup> April Shemak's recent book *Asylum Speakers* in part discusses the territorial and psychological status of refugees, spending time with an analysis of refugees both in visual and literary texts. Particularly useful is her focus on the US Coast Guard's photographs of Haitians being intercepted at sea; see pages 89–130.
- <sup>12</sup> Orlando Patterson uses the term “social death” to posit a metaphorical “social death” as a fundamental condition of slavery. Because “the slave had no socially recognized existence,” Patterson argues, “he became a social non-person.” However, I am using the term more broadly to refer to the negation and denial of personhood and subjectivity of Haitian people. I argue that “social death” in the case of Haiti pertained to an ostracizing and silencing via hegemonic political and economic means, as I discuss in the next section of this article. Patterson's work has been instrumental to the study of the social conditions and the psychological effects of Black enslavement in the United States. See Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 38, 5.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.
- <sup>16</sup> Holland, *Raising the Dead*, 17.
- <sup>17</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot presents two powerful tropes that are part of these failures of narration: “formulas of erasure” and “formulas of banalization.” See Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 96.
- <sup>18</sup> However, in 1847 the United States attempted to gain control of Môle-Saint-Nicolas, in the northwest coast of Haiti, and Samana Bay on Santo Domingo's border to build naval bases. See Nearing and Freeman, *Dollar Diplomacy*, and Langley, *The Banana Wars*.
- <sup>19</sup> Riley, *Imagi-Nations in Black and White*, 52.
- <sup>20</sup> Hudson, “The National City Bank of New York and Haiti,” 91–114; and Nearing and Freeman, *Dollar Diplomacy*, 135–148 for a full detailing of the seizure of the Haitian banking/monetary system by the United States.
- <sup>21</sup> Polyné, *The Idea of Haiti*, xix.
- <sup>22</sup> Well-publicized and widely circulated posters produced for the plays and films were replete with outlandish Vodou imagery, barbarous-looking individuals, and demonic “zombie” leaders. Theatre also functioned as a space for confirming perceptions about Haiti based on cultural fantasies launched in the nineteenth century. Two of the most well-received and publicly acclaimed plays performed by the Harlem Negro Unit of the Federal Theater Project were Orson Welles's 1936 *Macbeth*, set in early nineteenth-century Haiti, and *New York Times* journalist William Du Bois's *Haiti* in 1938. For a thorough discussion of both plays, see “Epaulets and Leaf Skirts, Warriors and Subversives: Exoticism in the Performance of the Haitian Revolution,” in Batiste, *Darkening Mirrors*, 70–114. For a discussion about these plays and Black masculinity as performed in Eugene

O’Neill’s *The Emperor Jones*, see Clare Corbould, “At the Feet of Dessalines: Performing Haiti’s Revolution during the New Negro Renaissance,” in *Beyond Blackface*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage, 259–288.

- <sup>23</sup> Dash, *Haiti and the United States*, 145.
- <sup>24</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 30.
- <sup>25</sup> Hall, “Subject in History,” 290.
- <sup>26</sup> Berlinski, “Farewell to Haiti,” 8.
- <sup>27</sup> San Miguel, *The Imagined Island*, 1, 2.
- <sup>28</sup> Haiti shaped its road to *liberté, égalité, fraternité* (liberty, equality, fraternity) on a dark and rainy night on August 14, 1791, at the famous Bois Caïman Vodou ceremony that preceded the slave uprising. Many scholars of Haitian history believe that this ceremony was the precursor of the Haitian Revolution. A Jamaican-born *houngan* named Dutty Boukman presided over the ceremony. The 1805 Haitian Constitution written by Jean-Jacques Dessalines stated that white foreigners could not own land and all those who fought for Haiti’s freedom against Napoleon, regardless of skin color, were considered *noir* (Black). Thus, for Haitians during the revolutionary period, *noir* was a unifying force to combat the racial hierarchies and inequalities brought upon them by colonialism. *Noir* was not envisioned as a racial marker, but one that was tied to a proven commitment to Haiti’s freedom. See Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, 227–244.
- <sup>29</sup> Trouillot, “The Odd and the Ordinary,” 6. This dichotomy is further explored and supported by J. Michael Dash, Mimi Sheller, Sibylle Fischer, Mary Renda, and Brenda Gayle Plummer.
- <sup>30</sup> Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 27.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 72. The letter is quoted in Dorsinville, *Toussaint Louverture*, n.p.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 72–73, previously quoted in Cauna, *Au temps des isles à sucre*, 204. A chimera is a mythical, hybrid animal.
- <sup>34</sup> Pat Robertson, *The 700 Club*, Christian Broadcasting Network, January 13, 2010.
- <sup>35</sup> Fischer, “Haiti: Fantasies of Bare Life,” 2. In this thought-provoking essay, Fischer discusses Bruce Gilden’s award-winning, high-gloss 1996 book *Haiti*, which features photographs of “animal carcasses . . . street dogs . . . bodies sweating, bodies covered in dust, bodies dripping with mud . . . a corpse lying unattended, eyes open, face covered with flies.” Fischer argues that Gilden’s images and their authorial presentation are a continuation of the troubling decontextualized and depoliticized ways of presenting the history of Haiti, which erase “any political space or historical reference[,] produc[ing] a Haiti that is opaque and incomprehensible: suffering bodies, violent death, zombie-like figures, a world that does not draw a categorical distinction between the

life of animal and of humans, or even between life and death.” Fischer, “Haiti: Fantasies of Bare Life,” 9, 14.

- <sup>36</sup> See Michel, *Charlemagne Péralte*, for an in-depth biography of this Haitian independence fighter. See Alexis, “Remembering Charlemagne Péralte,” for an account of Péralte’s resistance to the US occupation and his symbolism as a martyr as well as her “Nationalism & the Politics of Historical Memory,” which gives a well-researched and detailed history of Péralte and his involvement as a resistance leader during the occupation.
- <sup>37</sup> Philippe Sudré Dartiguenave was put in place by the United States as president of Haiti from August 12, 1915, to May 15, 1922, during the US military occupation. Dartiguenave’s presidency oversaw the disbanding of the Haitian National Army and implementation of the *corvée*, a forced, conscripted labor system. Under Dartiguenave’s presidency, the United States gained a control of Haiti’s finances that lasted until 1935.
- <sup>38</sup> John Houston Craige, *Cannibal Cousins*, 64. The author is aware of Craige’s penchant for a primitivistic narration of Haiti and its various cultural traditions; thus this quote is used, along with others, to present the various perceptions of Péralte.
- <sup>39</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>40</sup> Different explanations of why he was imprisoned exist; see Alexis, “Nationalism & the Politics of Historical Memory,” 63, for various arguments.
- <sup>41</sup> Under the US occupation, poor Haitians were forced to labor without pay to build public projects. Overseen by the marines, the conditions mirrored slavery and chain-gang regiments. Introduced in 1916, the *corvée* was a provision of an 1863 Haitian law that called on poor Haitians to help maintain local roads by either paying taxes for their maintenance or working as laborers without pay.
- <sup>42</sup> Heint and Heint, *Written in Blood*, 432; Alexis, “Nationalism & the Politics of Historical Memory”; Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 151.
- <sup>43</sup> Riley, *Imagi-Nations in Black and White*, 196.
- <sup>44</sup> In his memoir *Cannibal Cousins*, John Houston Craige, a captain in the US Marine Corps., describes the event in glowing details and valorizes the bravery of the marines. He calls Hanneken “a dashing magnificent soldier” and says that “Button was one of the most remarkable men we have ever had in the Gendarmerie. He could speak all varieties of Creole. He loved to wander in native disguises and could pass as a Haitian of any class. One of his favorite disguises was that of a market-woman. Later I commanded a district where Button had lived. The natives still spoke of him as a master-magician. They attributed his uncanny powers to witchcraft.” See *Cannibal Cousins*, 64–65, 93. But in *Taking Haiti*, Renda attributes the effectiveness of their disguise to “the cover of the night and the seventeen Haitians who surrounded them on this expedition” (343n159). Colonel Frederic M. Wise writes about the duplicitous nature of these two white marines as they “stripped and blackened themselves

all over with burnt cork” (quoted in Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 173). See Renda, *Taking Haiti*, 171–173, 343n159.

- <sup>45</sup> Franck, *Roaming through the West Indies*.
- <sup>46</sup> Michel, *Charlemagne Péralte*, 40. US marine captain Hermann H. Hanneken gained access to Péralte’s camp with the assistance of Jean-Baptiste Conzé and Jean-Edmond François, who posed as guards to infiltrate the *cacos*. Hanneken shot Péralte point-blank in the heart on October 31, 1919. Hanneken was awarded the “Médaille militaire” by President Dartiguenave for Péralte’s murder.
- <sup>47</sup> Michel, *Charlemagne Péralte*, 39.
- <sup>48</sup> Riley, *Imagi-Nations in Black and White*, 225–231.
- <sup>49</sup> Michel, *Charlemagne Péralte*, 42.
- <sup>50</sup> Leigh Raiford reminds us that “the intense circulation of [lynching] photographs as postcards, trade cards, posters, buttons, and in newspapers suggest that the image was always in danger of reproducing the violence or spectacularizing the figures it documents . . . engendering [fear,] shock and silence.” See *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare*, 8.
- <sup>51</sup> See Craige, *Cannibal Cousins*, 64–65.
- <sup>52</sup> Michel, *Charlemagne Péralte*, 42.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.
- <sup>54</sup> See Raiford, “Photography and the Practices of Critical Black Memory,” 112–129 in relation to the visual power of lynching photographs.
- <sup>55</sup> Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, xiii.
- <sup>56</sup> Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 88–89.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.
- <sup>58</sup> April Shemak’s recent book provides a history of the “refugee,” drawing an analysis of their treatment in both visual and literary texts. Particularly useful is her focus on the US Coast Guard’s photographs of Haitians being intercepted at sea during the late twentieth century. See Shemak, *Asylum Speakers*, 91. Most recently, during *State of Florida vs. George Zimmerman*, Rachel Jeantel, a US woman of Haitian and Dominican descent testifying for the state, was deemed “not credible” by the defense attorneys. Zimmerman’s attorneys attested that due to the inconsistencies of Jeantel’s story, her tale of the last few minutes of Trayvon Martin’s life were not to be believed. However, I argue that it is not only her narrative that was in question, but also the Black Haitian body that was telling the story. The cultural inflections of her diction, her ethnicity, and her defiant demeanor were all read and understood as deceitful and not credible. I thank my colleague Patricia Van Leeuwaarde Moonsammy for sharing this insight.
- <sup>59</sup> Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, 23.
- <sup>60</sup> Holland, *Raising the Dead*, 8–9.

- <sup>61</sup> Campt, *Image Matters*, 6; Holland, *Raising the Dead*, 16.
- <sup>62</sup> Schmidt, *The United States Occupation of Haiti*, 103. On November 26, 1934, Péralte was given a state funeral that was attended by his mother and a massive crowd.
- <sup>63</sup> In a forthcoming essay, I discuss the use of Péralte's image in the work of Jean-Ulrick Désert and Vladimir Cybil Charlier, two contemporary artists of Haitian descent. Charlier uses Péralte's image in her photography series *Double Crossed* (2014), in which she superimposes the image of Péralte's corpse among the bodies of the earthquake victims and has dressed Péralte's wounds with beads and sequins. Désert uses Péralte's image in his large faux-stained-glass installation *Goddess Project: Shrine of the Divine Negress No. 1* (2009), which is a *memento mori* to Josephine Baker, the African American dancer and singer who captivated the French audience during the 1930s and 1940s. In *Zou Zou* (1934), Baker played a caged Haitian songbird pining for her beloved Haiti. In the installation, the photograph taken by the marines of Péralte's dead body is printed on a white linen blanket that covers a bench strategically placed in front of the "stained glass" image of Baker. Both artists, I argue, draw attention in various ways to the strategic and flagrant circulation and display of images of dead Haitian bodies, connecting this to the public display and circulation of Baker's often-naked Black body.

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