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***Why the Cocks Fight: Dominicans, Haitians, and the Struggle for Hispaniola.* By Michele Wucker. New York: Hill and Wang, 1999. ISBN: 080903719X. 281 pp. \$27.50 cloth, \$15.00 paper.**

Reviewed by Sheridan Wigginton, University of Missouri—St. Louis.

In her book, *Why the Cocks Fight: Dominicans, Haitians, and the Struggle for Hispaniola*, Wucker creates an effective parallel between the highly ritualized, superstitious, and bloody sport of cockfighting to the similarly opaque and often treacherous dealings of Haitian and Dominican governments, businesses, and religious groups. She gives an explicit answer to her book's driving question in the Preface. "Both the Dominican Republic and Haiti have strongman political traditions in which the word of the man at the top deeply influences how the people act and speak" (p. x). Wucker explains that for centuries Haitian and Dominican leaders have acted as, and also been treated by their countrymen as, champion fighting cocks who have used the island of Hispaniola as their arena. She finds it to be no accident that Haitian president Jean-Bertrand Aristide and former Dominican president Joaquín Balaguer both chose the fighting cock as the symbol of their respective political parties. Throughout the book's nine chapters, Wucker demonstrates how the "actions and speech" of Haitians and Dominicans perpetuate the literal and symbolic place of the cockfight as the most meaningful cultural lens for understanding the strained relationship between Hispaniola's neighboring countries.

In the first chapter, "Roosters," Wucker outlines the hierarchical structure and detailed ceremony to cockfighting; both aspects are particularly difficult to understand for those who are new to the sport's intricacies. She gives a vivid report of an afternoon spent at a Dominican cockfighting arena located in Manoguayabo, an economically depressed area located to the northwest of Santo Domingo. This chapter immediately gives to readers the vocabulary they need to follow Wucker's alternately symbolic and literal approach to writing about the history of Hispaniola. "The cockfight is not about the roosters. It is about the men. That is the essence of the symbol of Hispaniola's two countries, where cockfighting and life imitate each other" (p. 26).

Wucker continues to demystify culturally specific terminology in the next chapter, "The Massacre River." Wucker guides her readers toward an understanding of how racial categorization played an integral role in the island's history and in the two countries separate paths toward developing national identities. She cites works by Dominican and Haitian historians and sociologists such as Frank Moya Pons, Franklin J. Franco, Roberto Cassá, and Micheline Labelle to describe the myriad words used to distinguish physical appearance in the Dominican Republic and Haiti. In "The Massacre River," Wucker connects the island's obsessive need to name skin colors, hair textures and facial features to the slaughter of tens of thousands of Haitians and dark complexioned Dominicans who lived near the border town of Dajabón. In October 1937, Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo ordered the killing

of Haitians living in the border region, specifically along the Massacre River, in an effort to rid the Dominican Republic of its Haitian “problem.” According to Trujillo, the “problem” was that Haitians were darkening the overall complexion of the country. One’s fate was decided by how he or she pronounced the Spanish word for “parsley.” A violent death immediately met those who pronounced the Spanish word “perejil” with a Haitian-Kreyol accent.

Wucker ends “The Massacre River” by emphasizing her earlier point that the words of political strongman figures, in this case Trujillo, are meant to be played out in the actions of the masses. “He invoked history in the name of the Dominican nation as to hide the horror of what he had ordered. With the help of a coterie of nationalist, racist, and particularly anti-Haitian intellectuals, he launched a massive propaganda campaign to portray himself as the savior of Dominican nationhood: Catholic, white, and oriented toward Europe” (p. 52).

As in “Roosters,” the next two chapters show Wucker’s ease in allowing outsiders a glimpse into worlds that are often difficult to penetrate. In “The Land Columbus Loved Best” she introduces readers to the Little Haiti district of Santo Domingo, and in “Life on the Batey” readers come to know the backbreaking and dangerous work of Haitian sugarcane harvesters working in the Dominican Republic. Wucker’s writing follows a similar pattern in these chapters. Both begin with a no-nonsense history lesson and then make a rather abrupt shift to the present, which neatly focuses on how modern-day society still grapples with the same issues from the chapters’ beginning.

“The Land Columbus Loved Best” quickly jumps from Columbus’s arrival, the defense of the indigenous population by Bartolomé de las Casas, and the 1882 romanticized Dominican myth-turned-novel *Enriquillo* to present-day Little Haiti. Wucker lets Hispaniola’s slave past echo forth in her description of Haitians who now live and work, both legally and illegally, in the Dominican Republic. “Once, they imagined themselves as kings and queens in a land of promise and opportunity. But soon, they find these strange new worlds offer harsh welcomes, and they are no longer kings or queens but instead treated by their hostile hosts as barely human, barely people” (p. 90).

“Life on the Batey” and “Bitter Sugar” are the book’s next chapters. The chapters work together to detail the way in which Hispaniola’s sugar-based economic policies have left an indelible mark on the land, the people and the politics of the entire island. “Life on the Batey” is a rich illustration of a Dominican sugar plantation. Wucker describes how Haitian-immigrant sugarcane cutters, known as “braceros,” and their families suffer a relentless cycle of abject poverty, marginal education and blatant discrimination by the Dominican government and people generation after generation. Wucker writes of one bracero in a particularly poignant moment of the chapter. “Sego Germain scratches his stomach through his white T-shirt, which has been cut to make long, knotted hanging fringes. Like most of the others here, he has no passport, because the soldiers tore up his papers when he first arrived years ago” (p.96). Wucker shows how sugar and politics have not mixed well on the other side of the island either. “Bitter Sugar” connects the 1971 death

of Haitian strongman “Papa Doc” Duvalier, the inept government of his son “Baby Doc” Duvalier, and the political ascent of former priest Jean-Bertrand Aristide to the plight of Haitian braceros who clamored for better treatment at the hands of the Dominican government. Aristide was quick to take on Dominican president Balaguer over this issue; Aristide’s staunch protection of his fellow countrymen in the Dominican Republic would squarely win him the Haitian presidency. “In the spring of 1991, wasting little time after his February inauguration, Aristide denounced the treatment of Haitians in the cane fields as no better than the slavery of colonial times” (p. 130).

Political intrigue as described through the book’s central metaphor is the focus of the chapters “The Cockfight” and “The Old Man.” Wucker continues her pattern of going back and forth between Haiti and the Dominican Republic as the backdrop of her discussion. Readers may often find themselves struggling to keep track of the many instances of political maneuvering between Haitian government officials, Dominican president Balaguer and former U.S. ambassador to the Dominican Republic Robert Pastorino. In “The Cockfight,” Wucker breaks up the sometimes dense political accounts with another familiar strategy; she shows how high level political decisions have currency in everyday life. In reaction to the Dominican government’s clamping down on Kreyol-language radio newscasts, Haitian immigrants showed their resolve to fight back. “In June, help arrived from Haiti when an exiled singer showed up at the station with a guitar and a sheaf of protest songs. Under the alias Mark, he sang the news to a ten-note melody repeated again and again...” (p. 157). “The Old Man” is a depiction of Joaquin Balaguer’s pathological hatred of Haitians and their dark skin, which he simultaneously recognized and despised in himself. Wucker easily transitions from Balaguer as a bright and curious youth who wrote poetry and surrounded himself with European literature and philosophy to a blind and nearly deaf octogenarian who refused to lose the “cockfight” to a competitor from the other side of the island. Wucker gives an account of a political rally in support of Balaguer. “Inside the truck, Balaguer’s aides were on the floor, unbuckling the straps that held his chair down. When it was released, they tipped it back slowly and gently lifted him, like an oversize baby, out the door” (p. 179).

Wucker completes her portrait of the island’s political strongman tradition in the final chapters, which relocate Hispaniola’s political arena to the United States. “Across the Water” and “The Other Side” bring into clear focus the central role of the United States to the issues of Hispaniola. From strangling the island’s “sugarocracy” by restricting U.S. imports, to willfully ignoring Trujillo’s and “Papa Doc” Duvalier’s decades of torture and demagogic behavior because they were better alternatives than Cuba’s Fidel Castro, the United States is an entirely appropriate setting for Wucker’s concluding pages. Dominican and Haitian immigrants now living in Manhattan’s Washington Heights section have proven to be a meaningful force in politics of the United States and in their native country. By protesting unfair neighborhood zoning laws, by demanding public school curriculum that reflects their own ethnic and cultural experiences, and by contributing millions of dollars to numerous political parties in their native countries, Haitians and Dominicans

show that their struggle for Hispaniola has not ended, but instead has expanded the arena of the “cockfight.”

“Why the Cocks Fight” emphasizes the “story” component of history, which is a rather innovative approach to previous literature on this topic. This particular writing style makes the book at once informative and highly accessible to a broad range of readers, from academic scholars to vacation travelers to the Caribbean. It is not surprising that the book can serve as a comprehensive historical perspective of Hispaniola; the book progresses in a mostly chronological fashion, moved along by important moments in the island’s history. However, it is wonderfully surprising that the book also guides readers toward understanding the cultures and peoples of Haiti and the Dominican Republic as told through the insightful and vivid words of Michele Wucker.

***Trends in Ethnic Identification Among Second-Generation Haitian Immigrants in New York City*, by Flore Zéphir. New York: Bergin & Garvey, 2001. ISBN 0-8978-9701-3. 256 pp. \$85.00.**

Reviewed by Carole M. Berotte Joseph, Dutchess Community College, SUNY.

From 1996-99, Flore Zéphir conducted interviews in Brooklyn, NY, with over 100 high school students, college students and college graduates as well as their parents and several first-generation Haitian educators. In addition to these interviews, conducted in Haitian Creole and in English, she corroborated her data with participant observations.

The goal of her study was to determine “to what extent the strong sense of membership in a separate ethnic group, so prevalent among first-generation Haitian immigrants, would be carried out into the second generation” (p.189). As social scientists have found with other ethnic minorities, this determination cannot be easily made; much depends on the many variables that make a community what it is. Variables include: the strength of the families and the community as well as that of the overall population; family capital; the length of time lived in the neighborhood and the ages of the members of that community; their educational levels; and educational achievements as well as the types of schools available in a particular community. After exploring these variables, Zéphir found that economically-stable, middle-class Haitian parents are able to ensure that their children accept their Haitianess while succeeding in NYC schools. The second-generation lower-income families are more likely to experience more aggression as immigrants, in general, and therefore are more likely to be on the defensive; those Haitian children consequently reject their Haitianess on a larger scale, preferring to blend in.

Overall, this study found that second-generation Haitians tend to favor “biculturalism.” They are therefore inclined to identify themselves as “Haitian-Americans” and therefore experience less of a connection to Haiti regardless of their