



A Republic of Wolves. A City of Ghosts

Colin Fisher

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A woman struggles to survive in the besieged city of Madrid during the Spanish Civil War. It's 1940 and María lives anonymously in the city which, despite what our history books tell us, has held out for four years and, with American help, may see its long siege lifted. A chance meeting with her son, a soldier in the army of General Franco, in the ruins of the city university will take her from the bombed streets of Madrid to the old Moorish city of Granada. Besieged by the Republican forces, it's the key to defeating Franco. Its Alhambra Palace in ruins, can she, the awkward Captain Gregorio and a group of Andalusian anarchists uncover the secret Lorca left behind shortly before his own execution in 1936?

A Republic of Wolves. A City of Ghosts Details

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From Reader Review A Republic of Wolves. A City of Ghosts for online ebook

T.B. Markinson says

The author sent me a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

What I enjoyed most about this novel was Fisher's way of inserting me into war-torn Madrid. Never for a moment did I think that he didn't know what he was talking about. It's obviously that Fisher is quite familiar with the city and the history. The battle scenes are realistic and the main character and supporting cast are entertaining. It's refreshing to have a woman as the heroine in a war novel. I'm not very familiar with this part of history and I learned some things while reading Fisher's novel. I love historical fiction since I learn but it doesn't really feel like I'm doing homework.

While I enjoyed reading this book, I do wish more care was taken during the editing process. I don't mean typos. I can live with a few typos. However, I think some of the scenes could have been shortened and a few of the characters just disappear from the book. Granted, this novel takes place during a war and people died unexpectedly and went missing all of the time. As a reader though, I would have liked more closure. Maybe Fisher plans to continue with the story. There's plenty to work with and this is a dynamic time period and his characters I think have much more to say and do.

Given that this is his first novel, I have to say it's a good start. And I encourage Colin Fisher to keep writing. I know I would like to read more by him and watch him hone his skills.

Hilary says

A challenging read but ultimately worth the necessary perseverance. This novel demands a lot from the reader in terms of commitment to the premise and attention to the complex and densely detailed narrative. Not one to put down for a while - like me the reader may well find it necessary to go back and re-read in order to keep a grip on the cast of characters and the plot.

The novel is set in a fictional Madrid in 1940, when the Civil War is still being fought. The heroine, Maria del Carmen Rodriguez, is a brave and resourceful woman, whose exploits near the front line lead her to be chosen to take part in a mission to Granada, as part of an irregular unit of the Republican army, to discover a final secret left by the poet Lorca.

The material is handled with great verve and skill. This is a novel of the brutality and heroism of war, full of the detail of conflict, and of what survives of goodness, honour and culture among the cruelty and betrayal of civil war.

This is my full review on Vulpes Libris:

<http://vulpeslibris.wordpress.com/201...>

Edith says

'A Republic of Wolves, A City of Ghosts' is quite a good read. It's a self-published work of Colin Fisher, a new author from Scotland who lived in Spain many years and I won it as a giveaway on GOODREADS. I must admit that the fact that a book is self-published always makes me doubt its quality because more often than not I found that such works aren't worth the paper which they are printed on... and even less my time. The textbook size of the novel certainly didn't improve my first impression, nor did the amateurish layout of the text.

The story of *'A Republic of Wolves, A City of Ghosts'* is set in 1940, thus during the final years of the Spanish Civil War in Madrid. The protagonist is María del Carmen Rodriguez, the widow of an executed falangist (a follower of the fascist General Franco) and mother of two (almost) grown-up boys fighting in the war on opposing sides. She scrapes through on her own delivering together with others relief goods to refugees. She knows little about politics and doesn't really care about it either. One day she survives an attack of the communists on her truck and her life is turned upside-down. She finds herself at the mercy of Captain Gregorio Velayos Arranz from Military Intelligence. He needs her help to get a man through the front lines who refuses to come if she isn't there. Things are complicated by Captain Lafuente from Military Security who is determined to arrest María as a supposed falangist (and a spy against the Republican forces). To rescue María Captain Gregorio makes her a Corporal of the Republican army and takes her on the mission to get Ignaz Gunter through the front lines and later to Granada to prepare an attack on the fascist bastion there.

Altogether it's a rather good plot for a novel and the topic (the Civil War in Spain) is definitely one which interests me. Also the writing is okay and quite captivating most of the time. Unfortunately, I've been pushed out of the story ever again because it took turns which seemed just too far-fetched to me. Especially the character of María is getting ever more unrealistic as the story goes on, somehow losing instead of gaining substance. I can't imagine that a forty-year-old woman, who managed for four years to survive all on her own in the besieged and bombarded city of Madrid, could be so terribly ignorant, naïve and stupidly stubborn or self-centred in the trenches with the soldiers! She puts herself and others needlessly at risk so often! The more I read of it, the angrier I got at her. The other characters of the story all remain rather superficial to my taste and I feel that they don't really come to life. Also their motives to act often stay in the shadow. For instance why on earth does Captain Lafuente want to arrest María at any cost? I still don't understand it. After all she's a woman of no importance, just one of thousands linked to fascism only through marriage and birth. At some point Captain Gregorio explicitly gives this as the reason why he doesn't arrest María.

As for the style of writing, in the beginning I struggled with it a little, but this may be because I'm not a native speaker of English. Some scenes felt overly lengthy, others somehow incomplete. What really annoyed me were the many typos and other mistakes which could have been eliminated so easily, if someone (other than the author) had proofread the text. I also stumbled across a few minor mistakes in the spelling of German words (my native language!) and in details from Austrian history (I'm Austrian). If the author should decide to revise his text, I'd advise him to do a little additional research. I'd also suggest a different password. I know little to nothing about the methods of military intelligence, but it seems risky to me to use a tongue-twister as a password, moreover one in a foreign language (German).

All in all *'A Republic of Wolves, A City of Ghosts'* by Colin Fisher may not be an award-winning novel, but

it definitely was an interesting and informative read which was worth the time.

Joseph says

A Republic of Wolves. A City of Ghosts by Colin Fisher is a fictional account of part of the Spanish Civil War. Fisher was born in 1961 in Kirkintilloch, Scotland and graduated with a masters degree in history from Edinburgh University in 1983. To supplement his writing Fisher teaches at a British school in Madrid. Spain has been his home for the last ten years.

In *A Republic of Wolves*, the Spanish Civil War did not end in April of 1939 but went on into 1940, and the trenches encroached on the city of Madrid. I wondered why the author would have the war extended into the next year, but I came to realize it created some interesting twists. First, the Communists supporting the Republican forces are neutralized by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, otherwise known as the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Treaty, in August of 1939. The Republican communists are viewed as traitors as the Soviets allied with the Nazis who supported the Nationalist fascists. It also opened up American support to the Republican forces. In the novel, America comes through with planes, tanks, and consumer goods. Propaganda posters originally showing the USSR as the Republican partner are slowly being replaced with ones showing Uncle Sam.

The story centers around Maria, a middle aged woman who delivers food to refugees in Madrid. She isolates herself from the war as much as she can. In Republican held territory, she needs to be. Her husband was a Falangist who influenced her oldest child. He was not a good husband and mistreated Maria. He did not survive in the war and appears to have been executed in the street. Maria also maintains a low profile as her oldest son is in the trenches of Madrid, on the Nationalist side. A chance meeting with her son changes her life. She gains the attention of Captain Gregorio and Sergeant Izaguirre and is the key in meeting with Ignaz Gunter who will only meet with Maria. Maria is also cautious around Republican officials because it appears her other son is a deserter from the Republican forces. Her low profile existence is about to change.

Captain Gregorio is an interesting character in himself. He has earned the respect of his men and soldiers in general. Gregorio does something every Marine will recognize; he puts sergeants in charge of the men and lets the experienced non-commissioned officers carry out his orders. He keeps a veteran, 50 year old, sergeant with him and has the sergeant execute orders. He takes Maria in to protect her from enemies on both sides. Gregorio is also on a mission of his own that he is determined complete.

Fisher does an excellent job of showing the chaos involved in the war. The Spanish Civil War was not a two sided war. It was made up of two opposing coalitions that were by no means cohesive. Extending the war a year shows the splintering of the sides, especially on the Republican side. There are points where people could no longer trust their own friends.

A Republic of Wolves starts slow and builds up fairly quickly into a fairly intense story. Maria is a very likeable character who is dragged into the war by events beyond her control. Gregorio makes for the perfect officer, smart, determined, and unemotional. When others rant he remains calm. Sergeant Izaguirre is the model non-commissioned officer and looks out for his people including Maria. Great characters and setting make for excellent reading, and the alternative war history allows for some interesting plot twists. *A City of Ghosts* is plausible alternative history with a very well written story.

Ashish Johnson says

Awesome Book

AnHeC the Paperback Obliterator says

Word count: about 160 000

Rating: Didn't finish - I have problems.

I can't. I just can't. **I've been trying to read this book**, which I've won in goodreads giveaway. Out of all the giveaways I've entered... Nvm.

During last two days I've seen a 3 hour program about queen Victoria's children, countless episodes of dog whisperer, a few films and even considered watching glee. That's how badly I don't feel like reading that book. Two days! So it's time to give up. Had potential - didn't use it.

I will not rate this book, because I haven't finished it, but I'll tell you what was my problem.

Am I just a stupid kid that can't take a realistic, historical fiction? No, in fact I'm shocked I didn't like it. I love history. I like a good piece of fiction set in a different time. I like it when books have educational value. I do immensely enjoy reading about life of normal people during world war II. So where is a problem? **It should be a perfect fit!**

- let's start with technical issues - **the very lay out of the text. Ever heard of 'justify' button in a text editor? Fucking use it!** How can you publish a book like that, when my teachers wouldn't accept a paper with text aligned to the left. Ever. Even when I was in a middle school (13-16 years old). It's annoying. It looks bad. And can be fixed so effortlessly, there's just no excuse.

- Was that enough to put me off? No, I'm not such a bitch, come on! I gave it a shot! And found **mistakes - grammar, punctuation, even spelling (!) could be improved.**

- So THAT's it, ha? That's mean bitch's problem? Nope. That usually doesn't bother me that much. You know what does? When I **suddenly loose it while reading! Yep, just like that. I'm reading, it's going well, and BAM! Now I have no idea who's who, what's going on, if I missed a paragraph, did I turn more than one page...** THAT is unforgivable. It takes reader right out of the story. And it happened often enough to make me angry with the author.

- But that's not the only problem, oh no. That I'd endure. **If** there were **other redeeming qualities!** Yeah, we like that, don't we? Having things to like in a story. It's nice. I'd even dare to say it's why we read them in a first place!

- The action takes place in Spain (duh). That was a problem for me because a) I don't know enough about

Spanish history to know wtf is going on (and the book does nothing to help with it) b) Spanish names of places/people annoy, because reading them is hard (that one is minor, I could deal, but things just kept piling on...)

- **The book has no direction.** Now, we can have books like that, but they still need focus. There was none

- **There's no plot. Really.**

It doesn't explain enough about war situation for me to say it's about war. It doesn't focus enough on the life of people, to be about people. **It's about nothing** NOTHING I SAY! Not about action, not about human struggle, not about military strategy, not about atmosphere, moral dilemmas, hardships, war crime, beautiful acts of goodness and kindness... Just fuck you, Colin Fisher. If this book got a push in any direction, it could be good. As it is... A waste of time. Not funny, not heartbreaking, not interesting. You don't really connect with the main character, but you don't have a story to connect to either. You're just floating like a big turd in a sewer. Great. Just great. Have I gone too far? I've probably gone to far. Sorry *mutters* I'm just frustrated.

Could I finish it? Yes, but why bother? I liked the fact the MC was a widow with two grown up sons fighting for different armies (against each other in other words). I liked the way her thoughts were interwoven into dialogues. I liked quite a few things, but this book badly needed to decide what it wanted to be. It didn't. Maybe it's just not for me? Am I stupid, below average IQ reader that just doesn't understand the genius of it? Maybe. I probably will finish it sooner or later, but not now. Just not now. (that's what we say to a diet... Damn. That sounds like a horrible plan XD)
