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*¿Pasarán? Kommunikation im Spanischen Bürgerkrieg. Interacting with the Spanish Civil War*, by Julia Kölbl, Iryna Orlova, Michaela Wolf (Hg.), Vienna, New Academic Press, 2020, 224 pp., \$XX.XX (paperback), \$XX.XX (e-book), ISBN 9783700321798

This book offers a culturally nuanced reflection on the art of translating and interpreting from the human conviction of those engaged in the Spanish Civil War. It is intimate as it is challenging.

The title is baffling at first. It is unusual for a title to have its parts written in three different languages. Yet it is no ruse, but a finely crafted overture for a book that addresses the multiplicity of instances of translation, interpretation, and language-learning that took place in the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). Most chapters in the collection focus on individual accounts or case studies, mostly of translators/interpreters, drawing on a variety of private and public documents, published and unpublished.

The metaphor of a Babel of Languages in the International Brigades appears early in the text (p. 15) and becomes a clear thread throughout the book, mentioned in various chapters. The myriad of languages becomes evident to the reader, as quotations are presented not only in Spanish, German and English—the languages in which each of the book chapters are written—but also Swedish (p. 15), Polish (p. 32), French (p. 92, p. 132), Serbian (p. 184), Russian (p. 185), and Bulgarian (p. 186), bringing multilingualism to the fore in the reading process. Thus, the book achieves its goal of “reflect[ing] the international solidarity efforts of the supporters of the Republic in their resistance against Franco” (p. 10), while also providing a challenge to the reader. It turns the book into a performance of multilingual competence that hammers home the central issues presented.

The reconstruction of translation, interpretation and language-teaching efforts during the Spanish Civil War is an evidently daunting task, because of the temporal distance away from the events and the ephemeral character of many of the instances where translation took place. The collection offers research based on letters, memoirs, interviews, photographs and other documents to piece together these fleeting moments of linguistic exchange. This is one of the strengths of the book. It manages to bring forth the relevance, complexity and everyday existence of interpreting and translation in a multilingual setting of war. The reconstruction feels vivid through the pictures and archival documents that some of the chapters include.

Finally, the book delivers on its promise. It brings the reader into the Spanish Civil War through the eyes of those who engaged, professionally or out of need, in the art of overcoming linguistic barriers. It made the situations and actors come to life in their respective networks of influence. The final section on the institutionalization of communication is noteworthy, placing the spotlight in the political value of these translation efforts for issues of (self)censorship, expected political allegiance and gender roles (p. 147–211), all touched upon in the preceding chapters. Perhaps the only drawback, in addition to the challenge of the book's multilingual composition, is the absence of a lengthier introduction or a concluding chapter. It is up to the reader to bridge the linguistic gap between the texts and read them as one single work. Still, the internal cohesion of the book is evident. It presents the struggles, negotiations and allegiances through and around linguistic practices that exemplify the cultural and ideological underpinnings of language use.

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