



The Reality of Illusion: A Critical Evaluation of the Similarities between the Great Gatsby and the Shadow of the Wind

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ABSTRACT: Carlos Ruiz Zafón's first novel, *El Príncipe de la Niebla* (*The Prince of Mist*, 1993), earned the Edebé literary prize for fiction. The author of three more novels, *El palacio de la Medianoche* (1994), *Las luces de Septiembre* (1995) and *Marina* (1999). The English version of *El Príncipe de la Niebla* was published in 2010 and followed it closely by *La Sombra del Viento* (*The Shadow of the Wind*) - a story "about accursed books, about the man who wrote them, about a character who broke out of the pages of the novel so that he could burn it, about a betrayal and a lost friendship. It's a story of love, of hatred, and of the dreams that live in the shadow of the wind"

Keyword: Carlos Ruiz Zafón, Barcelona, *The Cemetery of Forgotten Books*, Daniel Sempere, Clara Barcelo, *The Endymion Myth*, *Wasteland Myth*, Time and memory, Julian Carax, Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, Daisy.

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An Inappropriate Introduction:

In an interview by Paul Bleazard, Zafon interprets the making of his masterpiece: "Take all the great ambition in all those nineteenth-century novels, but try to reconstruct those big novels – the Tolstoy, the Dickens, the Wilkie Collins – but try to reconstruct all of that with all the narrative elements that the twentieth century has given us, from the grammar of cinema, from multimedia, from general fiction, from everything that is out there, to create a much more intense reading experience for the readers. So that was the idea, and that was the experiment to create with *The Shadow of the Wind*. So, in a way, *The Shadow of the Wind* is like a novel of novels; it is a story that is made of many stories; it's a story that combines humour, it combines mystery, it combines a love story, it combines historical fiction – it combines many different genres, to great a new one, a new genre, a hybrid that does all those things as well."

The Cemetery and the Sempere – all ensconced in Barcelona, a darkly magical city with a terrible history – appear in every volume. Fast forwarded to the 1920s in Angel's Game, in which a young writer, David Martin, survives a brutal childhood during which Sempere & Sons was his only refuge: "My favourite place in the whole city." He begins his career writing newspaper articles and falls in love with an elusive woman he loses, but is forever adored by a young girl Isabella who refuses to leave him. When the one and only title that bears his true name is ignominiously dismissed, he begins to write a new book in fulfilment of a shockingly lucrative contract for a mysterious foreign publisher, Cordeali. Almost three decades later, in *The Shadow of the*

Wind, the Sempere son, Daniel, follows the trail of “burnt books” and a big saga with many characters, many stories, spanning five decades, and structured in a way like Russian dolls opens up before the readers where every mystery leads us to another mystery and every character leads us to a different character. “So this whole cathedral of words, of fictions, this whole world ... it’s like a labyrinth, and it’s opening constantly, and progressively it starts closing, so all the mysteries are solved, all the stories, are these arcs of the lives of many characters become one, and at the end this book we’ve been reading about, which is *The Shadow of the Wind* – which is the same book we are reading – become one, and the whole mystery of this meta-fictional experiment works.” (Excerpt from interview by Paul Blezard)

In 2001 he published his first adult novel *La Sombra del Viento* (*The Shadow of the Wind*) that reflects with an uncanny similarity, the sentiments that Fitzgerald portrays in his seminal work, *The Great Gatsby*. “That afternoon of mist and drizzle, Clara Barcelo stole my heart, my breath, and my sleep. In the haunted shade of the Ateneo, her hands wrote a curse on my skin that wasn’t to be broken for years.” Readers notice the situational similarity between these two texts as they are reminded of one such rainy afternoon that Daisy and Gatsby would re-unite and mark the narrative of *The Great Gatsby* to unfold. *The Great Gatsby*, published in 1925, is widely considered to be the masterpiece of F. Scott Fitzgerald, it is considered a seminal work on the fallibility of not only the American Dream but the breakdown of hope by the cruel onslaught of gross materialism.

The Cynthia Myth:

“Wherein lies happiness? In that which becks
Our ready minds to fellowship divine,
A fellowship with essence; till we shine,
Full alchemiz’d, and free of space.”

(*Endymion* Bk. I, II. 777-780)

If Daisy and Clara remind us of Cynthia, so does Gatsby and Daniel resemble Endymion, who after falling in love with the moon goddess, is entirely obsessed with thoughts of her and reject all earthly pleasures and values. They must now set themselves apart from other mortal characters and embark on a “voyage interior”; an ever elusive journey for the Grail. After falling in love with Daisy, Gatsby “found that he had committed himself to the following of a grail” (p. 170)

Fitzgerald and Zafon thus culminate a Keatsian version of the quest. The man of imagination, however comprised, quests perpetually for an immortal female, more daemonic than human. Daisy may seem an inadequate version of a Lamia, but she is a possible American *La Belle Dame Sans Marci* of 1925 as Clara Barcelo a phantom that haunts the pages of *Shadow of the Wind* and in extension, also the reader’s psyche. For both Daniel and Gatsby, the object of their adoration remains illusionary but their drive is Transcendental. What matters is what the Yeatsian quester of *A Full Moon in March* calls “the image in my head” and the distortion of innocent values with the disillusioned perspective of Experience in the fallen world- a realisation that

“She dwells with Beauty- Beauty that must die;
Bidding adieu, and aching Pleasure night,
In the very temple of Delight
Veiled Melancholy has her sovereign shrine”

The Endymion myth serves as a bridge between both Zafon and Fitzgerald in the protagonists’ falling in love with inaccessible ideals while the impact of the transgression is felt not by their lovers who, like the goddess of the moon, remains “gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the struggles of the poor” . Daisy Fray’s voice has been frequently mentioned as mysteriously enchanting- it is the typifying feature of her role as *La Belle Dame Sans Marci*- and throughout her action it serves to suggest her loveliness and desirability. But only Gatsby, in a rare moment of vision, is able to make explicit the reason for its subtle and elusive magic- “it was full of money- that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbal’s song of it... high in a white palace, the king’s daughter, the golden girl...” Daniel similarly also recalls Clara by: “Her voice was pure crystal, transparent and so fragile I feared that her words would break if I interrupted them.”

Two Versions of the Hero:

David Parker believes that there are, in English literature, two chief versions of the hero. Often they share characteristics, and sometimes a hero is a blend of the two, but there remains an essential tendency for polarisation in one direction or the other, towards distinct patterns of behaviour and character. The first kind of hero is the one whose prototype we find in medieval romances and ancient epic- an idealist, loyal to some transcending object and relentless in his quest for it. He seeks honour, love, or the Sangreal and he affects the reader with all the potency of myth. The second kind, though doubtless developed from the first, is in sharp contrast. If it has a quest, it is essentially an inward one- like the fictions of Conrad or Henry James. Philip Rahv

comments that this dichotomy is one “between experience and consciousness- dissociation between energy and sensibility, between conduct and theories of conduct, between life conceived as an opportunity and life conceived as a discipline.” The achievement of both Zafon and Fitzgerald is that they both manage to include both versions of the hero in one vision, balancing each against the other, and avoiding the “blight of one-sidedness”.

Just as Gatsby represents like a medieval knight the heroic ideals of the past in his unattainable quest for Daisy, the journey is profoundly an inward one too. Gatsby’s greatest strength is “a platonic conception of himself,” which gives him the hope that he can roll back time, that he and the unlikely Daisy can somehow be like Adam and Eve early in the morning. Despite the absurd distance of his dream from reality, Gatsby never yields up his hope. The refusal to surrender to reality destroys him, yet it also gives him his peculiar greatness, justifying the book's title as being more than just an irony. In *Shadow of the Wind*, the young Daniel Sempere, manages to transcend like a phoenix from the ashes of the “burnt out days” and matures more readily like the boy in *Araby* into metamorphosing his dream into reality by finally uniting with Beatrice.

However inarticulate his own poetic vision is, Gatsby seems to grasp that Daisy indeed is his fiction. To believe in one's own fiction, while knowing it to be a fiction, is the nicer knowledge of belief, according to Wallace Stevens. Gatsby by transcending the ironies of his own story; earns his greatness. Thus, there is transcendence in both the narratives. Transcendence from the mundane to a more ethereal plane of existence

The Waste-Land Myth:

The Waste Land was Eliot’s response to a post-war Europe experiencing radical change. Letha Audhuy traces how “historically, one empire after another had fallen, the last being the Hapsburgs, with Great Britain in line to be the next “falling tower”. Eliot depicts a world coming morally apart, a world that has no principle to hold it together. Like Henry Adams, Eliot believed that every society needed some kind of mythic meaning to give it centre and direction; an obsession for profit was not enough. Man had lost his primitive energy, had lost the basis for the Fisher King whose sacrificial vitality had been handed down in the form of Osiris, Adonis, Atiz, Tamuz to Christ. Their vitality was now being played out, exhausted in the post-Enlightenment era of science and technology.” Both Gatsby and Daniel bring this lost vision to life, complete with its religious vision. Such intensity takes on a romantic vitality that the protagonists invest on their female counterparts.

This sense of the exhaustion of romantic possibility was inseparable from the post-war sense of world weariness that ties all the three stories- the one Nick Carraway tells, Tiresias tells in *The Waste Land* and in Nuria Monford’s letter. Eliot in turn drew upon Hermann Hesse’s *Blickens Chaos*. But the work that perhaps most subsumes all the three narratives is one that Spengler depicts in *Decline of the West*. The sense of both religious and romantic intensity that Eliot, Fitzgerald and Zafon saw slipping away, Spengler saw embodied in Faustian man, whose spirit was also being exhausted: “Force, Will has an aim,” Spengler tells us, “and where there is an aim, there is, for the inquiring eye, an end... the Faust... is dying... What the myth of *Götterdämmerung* signified of old, the irreligious form of it, the theory of Entropy signifies today.” The change of terminology here is important: to move from the idea of romantic depletion (as suggested in metaphors of waste and ashes) to the idea of entropy moves the discussion from a religious/ mythic context to the scientific one involving entropy.

“Like all old cities, Barcelona is a sum of its ruins. The great glories of so many people are proud of- palaces, factories and monuments, the emblems with which we identify- are nothing more than relics of an extinguished civilization”. As a precursor to both *The Wasteland* and *The Great Gatsby*, Zafon writes “We set off toward La Barceloneta. Before we knew it, we were walking along the breakwater until the whole city, shining with silence, spread out at our feet like the greatest mirage in the universe, emerging from the pool of the harbour waters. We sat on the edge of the jetty to gaze at the sight.

“This city is a sorceress, you know, Daniel? It gets under your skin and steals your soul without you knowing it.”

“...I sat on the stony steps that descended into the dark waters next to the docks that sheltered the pleasure boats. Someone had charted a night trip, and I could hear laughter and music wafting across from the procession of lights and reflections in the inner harbour.”

Reminds us of the topographical likeness between the three “wastelands” threaded in the same string.

“The valley of ashes is bounded on one side by a foul river” which brings into the reader’s consciousness the “dull canal” along “the arid plain” in which the protagonist of *The Waste Land* was fishing in vain (Part III, l.189, and Part V,II.424-5) ; the “Sweet Thames” flowing in *The Waste Land*, in Autumn when :

The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends,

Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed. (Part III, 11.177-9)

Both these desolate lands are emblematic of sterility and waste, and they underscore the main theme of each work. Eliot is of course concerned with the loss of faith and love in the modern world, while Fitzgerald explores the more limited field of the corruption of the American Dream by materialism for Zafon, "hooded spirits came out of the wall and ate people's ideas while they slept" and speaks of "buildings that were alive, walked and devoured the unsuspecting", portraying the corruption of a greater dream by base materialism.

Against the backdrop of the decay of civilization, the wastelands of Eliot, Fitzgerald and Zafon surround pub and palace alike. Their "hollow men" come from both the lower and upper classes (Tom Buchanan and Pedro Vidal) the poor and the rich, their meaninglessness and lust linking them to the aristocrats of the Renaissance and the antiquity. Their picture of society are thematically related everywhere; at all levels of the society, prevail the same sterility, the same failure to love, the same empty relationships, whether it be Lil and her husband, the typist and the clerk, or Myrtle and Wilson, Tom and Daisy, Nick and Jordan, or even Gatsby and Daisy or Daniel and Clara. The predominant image is the same; only the settings change from England to America or to Spain.

The connotation of Fitzgerald's ashes image (i.e. "dead fire") for his characters unfaithfulness in love are the same as those of Eliot's "Fire Sermon" stigmatising the lustful. And the oppressive heat in Chapter VIII of Gatsby creates an unreal atmosphere. "Hot! Hot! Hot!" of Gatsby recalls Eliot's "Burning, burning, burning" as the characters burn in the hell-fire of their own psyche- a well-wrought prison of their own design. For Zafon, he dedicates an entire chapter- "Days of Ashes" as a fitting epilogue to the rest of the novel.

A pervasive sense of a degrading religious sanctity overwhelms both the texts. "The room was infested with crucifixes. They hung from the ceiling, dangling from the ends of strings. There were dozens of them. In every corner, curved with a knife on the wooden furniture, scratched on the floor tile, painted red on the mirror." This motif of a degraded religious sentiment pervades The Great Gatsby too. A modern society where religion provides a placid sanctity no more.

One aspect of sterility is the characters' aimlessness; as they fail to realise what is to be done with time. One notes a verbal correspondence between the two works: the woman in A Game of Chess says despairingly:

"What shall I do now? What shall I do?"

I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street

With my hair down, so. What shall I do tomorrow?

What shall we ever do?"

And Daisy, first in Chapter I:

"What'll we plan?" she turned to me helplessly: "What do people plan?" and again in Chapter VII: "What'll we do with ourselves this afternoon?" cried Daisy, "and the day after that, and the next thirty years" Much like Daisy, for Clara Barcelo, her days would be spending in her palatial mansion of "glass-paned gallery", in the company of "half a dozen cats and a couple of cockatoos (of a violent colour and encyclopaedic size)... Dressed in a diaphanous turquoise-blue cotton dress, the object of my confused desire was playing the piano beneath a weak light from the rose-window" intent on spending time while playing "the piano... with no sense of rhythm and mistaking half the notes" and eating "the most breathtaking cinnamon sponge cakes"

Life in this world is thus meaningless, in Eliot without spiritual meaning and significance, in Fitzgerald, devoid of purposeful idealism while Zafon's protagonist Daniel muses "it occurred to me that perhaps the papier-mâché world that I accepted as real was only a stage setting. Much like the arrival of Spanish trains, in those stolen years you never knew when the end of childhood was due."

Characters and their Elusive Rhythm:

The characters in A Great Gatsby are part of a world that was evidently changing. The previous world orders with its institutions were lost. Though the new order promised its own institutions to replace them, the entire nation and its people were in a flux, like rudderless boats looking for a harbour to launch anchor. When people like Senor Fortuny, Jacinta, Isaac, Gustavo Barcelo or Wilson represent a generation fading slowly away, Don Aldiyas and Tom Buchanans take over.

Fitzgerald was genuinely aware that he was creating what can be called a destiny novel, where the destinies of the characters would mirror that of the society and the life they inhabit and of America in general. It was to be, in short, as Prigozy writes, "the artistic consummation of his life"

Daisy or Beatrice does not simply represent or incarnate the magical world that Gatsby or Daniel desire, they are themselves the ultimate object in it. It is them for whom men compete and possessing them is the clearest sign that one has made it to the magical world. Gatsby's desire for Daisy is enhanced by the fact that she is desired by so many other men: "it excited him too that so many men had already loved Daisy- it increased her value in his eyes." Their desire ratified his sense of her symbolic significance. Money is coin of the realm of romance and the golden girl is valued not just because she provides access to the "king's palace" or because she is expensive, but she is valued for the connotation that shimmers in the words "high" and "white"- a rarefied

kingdom, pure and free where the imagination reigns unsullied by the ashy wasteland of the real world and romps like the mind of God. Daniel recounts, "I could only shake my head, unable to take my eyes off the woman with the china doll's complexion and white eyes, the saddest eyes I have ever seen" that contrasts the porcelain complex of Beatrice with the sordidness of the real world.

For Judith Fetterley, the high white palace is an analogue for Gatsby's "secret place above the trees" from which he can look down on the world and "suck on the pap of life, gulp down the incomparable milk of wonder" and Daisy herself becomes, as the metaphors suggest, the symbol of the possibilities for which his imagination creates. The pervasive spatial metaphor, however, reveals another aspect of the golden girl crucial to her holding onto the impersonality of the romantic imagination. She is hard to get, dragons must be fought, castles penetrated and walls scaled. And the harder she is to get, the more she is valued because the quest for and possession of her gives the pink-suited knight his identity. When Gatsby weds "his unutterable visions" to Daisy's "perishable breath" and makes her his holy grail, she becomes the organizing point of his existence, providing him with a structure that determines what he will do and who he will be. She becomes his access to a certain self-image: "he wanted to recover something, some idea of himself perhaps that had gone into loving Daisy."

The English critic Malcolm Bradbury memorably termed Gatsby "a coarse Platonist", yet, any Platonist is ultimately not a materialist. Since Gatsby's dream of love depends on an alchemy that metamorphoses wealth into Eros, we can be reminded of Emerson's wonderful irony: "Money, in some of its effect, is as beautiful as roses"

"There are no second chances in life, except to feel remorse" It is the desire to escape this state of remorseful existence that fuels Gatsby's lavish parties thronged by "moths drawn to star" and Nuria Monford to envision a life with Julian Carax. The motif of waiting is pervasive in all the characters and looms large over their existence. As Daisy is for Gatsby, for Nuria Monford, Carax is just an idea of the ideal. The existence of Carax is as elusive as Lalin Cubet or probably Cordeali- the alter ego of the narrator's psyche who inspires the other to exist and make that existence complete. It is through Daisy that Gatsby acquires the image of himself as the faithful unto death, the one for whom time and change mean nothing, whose love is a pure flame that feeds upon and fires itself.

Time that Transcends Beyond Space:

"Time goes faster the more hollow it is" (Zafon) The Great Gatsby is a novel deeply concerned with time; bearing repeated allusions to hours, days and seasons suggestive of change. At the beginning of the novel, Nick has the familiar conviction that that "life was beginning again with summer". in chapter five, he speaks of the ends of the afternoon, "the hour of profound human change"; in chapter six of "a cool night with the mysterious excitement in it which comes at the two changes of the year". Jordan says, in chapter seven, "Life starts all over again when it gets crisp in the fall". On the morning after Mrs Wilson's death, Nick notices "an autumnal flavour in the air" and at the end of the novel, "when the blue smoke of brittle leaves was in the air and the wind blew the wet laundry stiff on the line," he "decided to come back home". Most of these observations on time and change are made by Nick in his role as a narrator. He had learned to respect time. But during the course of the events he described in the novel, he was tempted to forget it. The notion of time and memory plays a significant part in *The Shadow of the Wind* as most of the events seem to be played out in the minds of the characters. Inlaid within the mainframe of the book Daniel discovered in *The Cemetery of Forgotten books*, he muses: "every book has a soul, the soul of the person who wrote it and of those who read it and dreamed with it." All the events thus seem to write themselves under the authorial gaze of Julian Carax. Much like Gatsby, *The Shadow of the Wind* becomes a memory novel where time and space merge and blend into one harmonious fusion. The novel; constructed and materialised from the letters of Penelope Aldiya, Nuria Monford, or of Miquel; flows gently like a river into the final epilogue: "The Waters of March"

Nick and Gatsby see different realities; Gatsby's is naturally that of the hero of romance. The everyday is unreal for him; reality is what he has discovered through his dreams. The hero of the novel of sentimental education lives in a world where reality is elusive; the hero of romance, on the other hand, is, from the beginning acquainted with reality, though he may have to wait to possess it, as Childe Roland has to wait for the Dark Tower.

Sagnik Banarjee in his introductory notes to Gatsby" points out that among the post war aspects of the novel, another which is essential is the very setting which conceptualises the novel. The Great Gatsby is a novel of space. A piece of literature where space, both time and spatial influences the characters in acting out the drama of their existence. Their motivations, faith, issues are all raised by the moment that they all inhabit. The spatial space in the novel, the post war New York City with its money centered, chaotic vulgar life moved around its open pursuit of sex, liquor, immorality plunging itself in an early form of a psychedelic trance. The city and the life in it fed on spectacles, and the life responded to it. Modernists, specially Eliot's *The Waste Land*, gave writers like Fitzgerald, the model they needed to delve into a figurative, symbolic and yet a realistic treatment of the cityscape. The taste had itself changed, as bleak factory buildings, scrap yards and billboard

stacked avenues became the subject of photography, being as beautiful by modern taste, as any church, or idyllic pastoral landscape. Chaplin's films like *City Lights*; *Modern Times* all explore the modern city as a subject. The city in *Gatsby*, as well as *The Shadow of the Wind* makes its presence felt and transcends almost to an idea in the novel, symbolically referring to various issues manifest in the novel.

Just as characters like the older *Gatsby* or George Wilson seems to be caught in an age long gone, in *The Shadow of the Wind*, figures like Don Gustavo Barcelo, Miquel Moliner thrive the alleys and passageways of the text. The society is one in transition when the rattle of the first motorcars are making their presence felt. In both the texts, motor cars play a vital role in denoting the rising upper class. In her memoir, the lonely housekeeper, Dona Aurora, another anachronistic figure that seems to live perpetually in the past like Jacinta, recounts of Julian's dreams of a little girl who "came out of mirrors and as if she were made of thin air and that she lived in a palace at the bottom of a lake"- the utopia of lost innocence we forever seek to attain and fail.

Zafon's narrative revolves wholly in Barcelona where the city appears as a living, feeling organism, capable of eating the dreams of those who inhabit it. A dream image of a moving city that walks by itself collaborates to this idea. The cold stone angels in the Aldayas family mansion thus seem to come alive into emissaries of the bleakness of the world within and without. The fading away of an era is captured with unparalleled beauty when time seems to stop or move at a more languid pace; infinitely alien to this age of micro-conductors, bullet-trains, the shrill ringing of tele-communicators or the general cacophony that pervades modern life- "That Sunday, clouds spilled down from the sky and swamped the streets with a hot mist that made the thermometers on the walls perspire. Halfway through the afternoon, the temperature was already grazing the nineties as I set off toward Calle Canuda for my appointment with Barcelo, carrying my book under my arm. The Ateneo was—and remains—one of the many places in Barcelona where the nineteenth century has not yet been served its eviction notice. A grand stone staircase led up from a palatial courtyard to a ghostly network of passageways and reading rooms. There, inventions such as the telephone, the wristwatch, and haste seemed futuristic anachronisms. The porter, or perhaps it was a statue in uniform, barely noticed my arrival. I glided up to the first floor, blessing the blades of a fan that swirled above the sleepy readers, melting like ice cubes over their books."

Narrative Techniques:

Linda Hutcheon, in *Beginning to Theorize Adaptation*, portrays that as early as 1926, Virginia Woolf, commenting on the fledgling art of cinema, deplored the simplification of the literary work that inevitably occurred in its transposition to its new visual medium and called film a "parasite" and literature its "prey" and "victim". Yet, she also foresaw that film had the potential to develop its own independent idiom: "cinema has within its grasp, innumerable symbols for emotions that has so far failed to find expression in words" in the view of film semiotician Christian Metz, cinema tells us continuous stories. It "says" differently things that could also be conveyed through words. And although Rabindranath Tagore points out in 1929 that "Cinema is still playing second fiddle to literature" it is evident how heavily Fitzgerald borrows the various cinematic techniques of his times and invests them in his narrative *The Great Gatsby*. Zafon, himself a screen writer in Hollywood, follows the same tradition and gives his creation a visual dimension-

"The lamps along the Rambalás marked out an avenue in the early morning haze as the city awoke, like a watercolour slowly coming to life. The brightness of dawn filtered down from balconies and cornices in streaks of slanting light that dissolved before touching the ground"

"One of my ambitions has been to go back to what those great authors were doing then, and try to reinvent . . . the language through deconstruction and reconstruction. That's always the direction I'm trying to hit. Marina on a small scale tries to do that, to bridge that sensibility of old Victorian Gothic tales and reconstruct them in a modern way." (Zafon)

Both the texts challenge the concepts and constructs of authorship, identity, so-called truth, perspectives of good and evil and every grey zone in between. From *Great Expectations* to *The Count of Monte Cristo*; the 2013 paperback version of *Prisoner* includes a "P.S." section that ends with Zafon's own eclectic list of "Dead Fellows You Should See and Read Frequently" (from Bronte to Faulkner to Dos Passos). Although each novel stands alone, but when read together, the connections become sublime, even at the price of our own memory (sanity?); interwoven and overlapping, whose story is reliable, who is even able to speak the truth, who will deceive the readers once again, while proving to be the most daunting mysteries of all.

The Dynamics of Shifting Perspectives:

Zafon in *A Writer's Only True Country* is Literature comments, "I always envisioned the four novels of the cemetery of the forgotten books as a Chinese box of fictions, a labyrinth of stories with four doors of entry in which depending on the direction the reader took, the tale would rearrange itself, the perspectives would

shift and the whole narrative, as alive as the reader, would change and mutate into something new... and we finally get a glimpse of the chess game of stories we have been playing is all about”

The characters in *The Great Gatsby* are presented as fragments. Even the protagonist himself is drawn in sketchy brush strokes. Fitzgerald himself admitted the fact. “You are right about Gatsby being blurred and patchy. I never at one time saw him clearly myself.” For Fitzgerald, he started as a different person and ended being a persona of the author himself. *The Shadow of the Wind* commences as the story of Daniel until Julian blends into it as the alter-ego of the narrative personae. The mystery in Gatsby’s identity is essential to the narrative of the plot which in a way depends on a series of unmasking. The mystery never gets resolved, possibly the characters do not wish them to be, and ends with a moral commentary on what the narrator has viewed or experienced in the course of the novel. The theme of unmasking or revelation is chosen deftly for the novel’s unmasking through various situations that act as revelations about its various characters. Ruth Prigozy writes, “We should not forget that Fitzgerald’s structure is Nick’s structure; we are reminded by the text that Gatsby’s story is a “history” that Nick is writing as part of his own struggle to make sense of the fragments that comprise his experience of the haunted summer” much like *The Shadow of the Wind* being a memoir of Julian Carax narrated in artfully incomplete details by Daniel. *The Great Gatsby* is as much the story of Nick Carraway as it is of Gatsby’s and *The Shadow of Daniel Sempere’s* as much as it is of Julian’s. Thus, by employing a first person narrator, both the masterpieces aim at taking the readers a step closer to their elusive protagonists.

Days of Ashes: A City of Shadows:

“In my world death was like a nameless and incomprehensible hand, a door-to-door salesman who took away mothers, beggars, or ninety-year-old neighbours, like a hellish lottery. But I couldn’t absorb the idea that death could actually walk by my side, with a human face and a heart that was poisoned with hatred, that death could be dressed in a uniform or a raincoat, queue up at a cinema, laugh in bars, or take his children out for a walk to Ciudadela Park in the morning, and then, in the afternoon, make someone disappear in the dungeons of Montjuïc Castle or in a common grave with no name or ceremony.”

Shadow of the Wind sets a historical story within the story. Set in a prison castle after the victory of Franco in the civil war, with an ambiance of lice, cold and summary executions, it features a novelist, imprisoned and denounced as “the worst writer in the world” and Zafon, the splendidly solicitous craftsman, comments, “it (the setting) was clear that it was a visual metaphor, not just for forgotten books, but forgotten people and ideas.” In an interview by Linda M. Castellitto, Zafon elaborates: “I’m fascinated by the period that goes from the Industrial Revolution to right after World War II. There’s something about that period that’s epic and tragic. There’s a point after the industrial period where it seems like humanity’s finally going to make it right. There were advances in medicine and technology and education. People are going to be able to live longer lives; literacy is starting to spread. It seemed like finally, after centuries of toiling and misery, that humanity was going to get to a better stage. And then what happens is precisely the contrary. Humanity betrays itself.

The Great Gatsby also focuses on the issue of war. The impact of the First World War where more than three hundred thousand Americans lost their lives had a huge impact on the psyche of the land. The vain rhetoric which had which had prepared the country for its participation, had, in the face of death, turned blank hollow. Much like Clara’s father who disappeared in a nameless grave in the backdrop of the war, issues of the war presents itself as an undercurrent in the novel. Though Nick satirically dismisses the war as “delayed Teutonic migration”, Fitzgerald found within it possibilities of a sense of heroism which would present a romantic aspect in a society characterised by the absence of it. Both the narratives are based on the murky desolations the war leaves behind- nameless entities, shadowy memories, shards of the past that merge and blend; into a mauve display of pain, isolation or banality.

“When there’s a war, things happen that are very hard to explain, Daniel. Often even I don’t know what they really mean. Sometimes it’s best to leave things alone.”

He sighed and sipped his soup with no appetite. I watched him without saying a word.

“Before your mother died, she made me promise that I would never talk to you about the war, that I wouldn’t let you remember any of what happened.” My father half closed his eyes, as if he were searching for something in the air—looks, silences, or perhaps my mother, to corroborate what he had just said. “Nothing is ever the same after a war. And yes, it’s true that lots of people who went into that castle never came out.” Our eyes met briefly. After a while my father got up and took refuge in his bedroom. When I returned to the sitting room, I turned off the light and sat in my father’s old armchair. The breeze from the street made the curtains flutter.”

Characters like Frances Javier Fumero (who “started off as a hired gunman with the FAI anarchist syndicate and had then flirted with the communists and the fascists, tricking them all, selling his services to the highest bidder... after the fall of Barcelona, he had gone over to the winning side and joined the police force. Now he is a famous bemedaled inspector.”) or Cordeali from *The Angel’s Game* suggest in the epilogue that the devil (abetted by David) is somehow responsible for the real-life horrors of World War II. The smell of

gunpowder and a fascist regime, of blood and excreta soaked walls of the police lock-up where Fermin Romero de Torres or Federico Flavia are tortured; pervades the narrative as Zafon paints the cobbled streets and narrow alley ways of Barcelona where "night falls on the city and the streets carry the smell of gunpowder like the breathe of a curse"

The "illusory rhythm, the fragment of lost words" that Nick Carraway tries to recall, is the rhythm and words of an American myth. "But they made no sound, and what I had almost remembered was uncommunicable forever" Life in the west would never again be like before. "The last days of the war were the prelude to an inferno. The city had lived through the combat from afar, like a wound that throbs dully, with months of skirmishes and battles, bombardments and hunger. The spectacle of murder, fights and conspiracies had been corroding the city's heart for years. When the storm broke, there was no compassion." War has an overwhelming impact on both the texts. The characters rise from the murky turmoil of wars and under its cloud they develop. Gatsby amasses his fortune from the post war turbulence and so does Pedro Vidal or Aldiya whose mansions are built on money garnered by dubious means in war. After the war, characters like Aldiya, Pedro Vidal, Gatsby or Wolfsheim's find themselves emperors of a new world where they can start anew without a history to bind them to their past for "Nothing feeds forgetfulness better than war. We all remain silent and they try to convince us that what we've seen, what we've done, what we've learned about ourselves and about others, is an illusion, a nightmare that will pass. Wars have no memory and nobody has the courage to understand them until there are no voices left to tell what really happened, until they return with another face and another name and devour everything they left behind"

An Incomplete Conclusion:

The Great Gatsby and The Shadow of the Wind balance the mundane against the eternal. On a scale of high poetic seriousness, they allude to Ovidian transmutation, and to Vergilian moments. Below transmutation- and at a considerable spiritual distance- is its gross and earthly form, social mobility. Gatsby is in love neither with Daisy, nor with love itself, but rather with a moment out of time that he persuades himself he shared with Daisy. Like the Mangan Sister of James Joyce's Dubliners and Fitzgerald's Daisy, Zafon's Clara Barcelo became tantamount to a grail for the young Daniel, even as she "vanished into her rich house, into her rich, full life, leaving" Daniel "nothing". All the characters remain united by pain and gloom- agencies of anger that are laid latent, buried deep within their soul and appear as apparitions, calling from time to time their dismayed selves to return to the altar of healing, to let their mind and soul be at rest in a placid sanctuary. There is no new light to languish in life's own charm in all its abundance of hues and colours, nor an overwhelming desire to drink the intoxicating nectar of life makes them detest death and beckons them to grab onto life and never let go of it.

Both the texts may be summed up as "this was a story about lonely people, about absence and loss, and that was why i had taken refuge in it, until it became confused with my own life, like someone who has escaped into the pages of a novel because those whom he needed to love seem nothing more than ghosts inhabiting the minds of a stranger... I thought there were no more ghosts than those of absence and loss, and that the light that smiled on me was borrowed light, only real as long as I could hold it in my eyes, second by second"

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