

**A CEMETERY OF FORGOTTEN BOOKS: LITERATURE, MEMORY, AND GENDER  
IN CARLOS RUIZ ZAFÓN**

Samantha Penina Ruckenstein

Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures

Hispanic Studies

McGill University, Montreal

April 2024

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

©Samantha Penina Ruckenstein, 2024

“Todavía recuerdo aquel amanecer en que mi padre me llevó por primera vez a visitar el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados.”

– Carlos Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra del viento*

“Las casualidades son las cicatrices del destino.”

– Carlos Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra del viento*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>RÉSUMÉ.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION: Creating the Cemetery.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: Books and Writers in “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” Saga.....</b>	<b>41</b>
1.1 The Role of Literature in “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” .....	41
1.2 Character Identity and Literature.....	74
1.3 Concluding Remarks.....	92
<b>CHAPTER 2: Memory Studies and Gothic Aesthetics in Carlos Ruiz Zafón’s “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” Series .....</b>	<b>94</b>
2.1 Ruiz Zafón and 21 <sup>st</sup> century Literature on The Spanish Civil War.....	95
2.2 A Gothic Barcelona and the Dictatorship.....	103
2.3 Punishments and Imprisonment: Barcelona Under Repression.....	111
2.4 Culture under Franco in “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” Series.....	138
2.5 Concluding Remarks.....	147
<b>CHAPTER 3: Female Representation in Carlos Ruiz Zafón’s “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” Saga .....</b>	<b>150</b>
3.1 Ruiz Zafón’s Female Archetypes.....	151
3.2 The Placement and Presentation of Women in Ruiz Zafón’s Literary Universe.....	183
3.3 Concluding Remarks.....	206
<b>CONCLUSIONS: After the Cemetery.....</b>	<b>209</b>
<b>WORKS CITED.....</b>	<b>233</b>

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the role of literature, memory, and gender in Spanish writer Carlos Ruiz Zafón's "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" tetralogy. The bestselling series, consisting of *La sombra del viento* (2001), *El juego del ángel* (2008), *El prisionero del cielo* (2011), and *El laberinto de los espíritus* (2016), follows the Sempere family, their friends, and their enemies in the years surrounding the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). This thesis presents a critical analysis of Ruiz Zafón's literary universe which covers the space before and during the war, the dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939-1975), and the booming literary period at the turn of this century focused on the war and its aftermath. Barcelona is a focal element in the saga, staged as a gothic space full of mystery and political violence. Key to Ruiz Zafón's depiction of the city is el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados, a labyrinthian library hidden beneath Barcelona, known by only those who have vowed to protect literature.

This investigation argues that Ruiz Zafón weaves his obsession with literature into the tetralogy, centering the saga on the practices of writing, publishing, and reading. The author demonstrates an attempt at the recuperation of memory through an anti-Francoist stance, presented through the Gothicisation of Barcelona. His representation of female characters provides additional commentary on twentieth-century Spanish society, a topic of study pertinent to the saga that has yet to be examined academically. Most importantly, this dissertation centers Ruiz Zafón's place within the Spanish literary tradition. According to pre-existing literature, while the first novel of the saga, *La sombra del viento*, has been the subject of academic study, the scope is limited. Most scholarship mainly concerns memory, evoking the historical past, and its genre classification. Instead of following this approach, I expand my corpus to include Ruiz Zafón's whole tetralogy, highlighting critical points of study within all four novels. Mediating the themes of literature, memory, and gender, this dissertation emphasizes the importance of considering Ruiz Zafón as a writer for more than just the masses.

## RESUMÉ

Cette thèse examine le rôle de la littérature, de la mémoire et du genre dans la tétralogie « Cimetière des livres oubliés » de l'écrivain espagnol Carlos Ruiz Zafón. La série fameuse, composée de *L'Ombre du vent* (2001), *Le Jeu de l'ange* (2008), *Le Prisonnier du ciel* (2011) et *Le Labyrinthe des esprits* (2016), suit la famille Sempere, ses amis et leurs ennemis dans les années entourant la guerre civile espagnole (1936-1939). Cette thèse présente une analyse critique de l'univers littéraire de Ruiz Zafón qui passe le temps avant et pendant la guerre, la dictature de Francisco Franco (1939-1975) et la période littéraire du tournant de ce siècle centrée sur la guerre et ses conséquences. Barcelone est un élément central de la saga, mise en scène comme un espace gothique pleine de mystère et de violence politique. La clé de la représentation de la ville par Ruiz Zafón est le Cimetière des livres oubliés, une bibliothèque labyrinthique cachée sous Barcelone, connue uniquement de ceux qui ont juré de protéger la littérature.

Cette enquête soutient que Ruiz Zafón intègre son obsession pour la littérature dans la tétralogie, centrant la saga sur les pratiques d'écriture, d'édition et de lecture. L'auteur démontre une tentative de récupération de la mémoire à travers une position antifranquiste, présentée à travers d'une Barcelone gothicisée. Sa représentation de personnages féminins fournit un commentaire supplémentaire sur la société espagnole du XXe siècle, un sujet d'étude pertinent pour la saga qui n'a pas encore été examiné académiquement. Plus important encore, cette thèse centralise de Ruiz Zafón dans la tradition littéraire espagnole. Selon la littérature préexistante, même si le premier roman de la saga, *L'Ombre du vent*, a fait l'objet d'études, la portée est limitée. La plupart des travaux portent principalement sur la mémoire, évoquant le passé historique et sa classification par genre. Au lieu de suivre cette approche, j'augmente mon corpus pour inclure l'ensemble de la tétralogie de Ruiz Zafón, en mettant en évidence les points d'étude critiques dans les quatre romans. En traitant des thèmes de la littérature, de la mémoire et du genre, cette thèse souligne l'importance de considérer Ruiz Zafón comme un écrivain destiné au-delà du simple grand public.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for funding my doctoral research. To my supervisor Dr. José R. Jouve-Martin, without your guidance over the last few years, I would not have been able to succeed. I also appreciate the support of my committee member Dr. Amanda Holmes and my Department chair Dr. Fernanda Macchi. The support from the Department of Literatures, Languages, and Cultures has facilitated my ability to thrive over the last few years. Thank you to my internal and external readers for your time in evaluating my work and providing insight on my research. I would like to thank Dr. Lauren Beck and Dr. Ailén Cruz for your constant guidance and mentorship. I appreciate you more than you will ever know. Thank you as well to executive members of the Asociación Canadiense de Hispanistas for your support, including, of course, Dr. Yolanda Iglesias, Dr. Dan Russek, Dr. Wojciech Tokarz, Dr. Pamela Bastante, and Dr. Francisco Peña, with whom I've had the chance to develop my interest in conference planning and working in the field of Hispanic Studies. To my parents, Allan, Judy, Mark, and Sue for believing in me and not letting me give up. Thanks to Maya and the Montreal clan for all of the pep talks and frozen yogurt. To all my friends and family for being so understanding of my grad school life. Thanks to the peers I've met along the way for the comic relieving PhD-themed memes. Thanks to my sweet senior pup Lily for all the much-needed walks and comfort, these years will always be tied to being your mom. And of course, to Stef O., for the book recommendation that changed my life.

## INTRODUCTION: Creating the Cemetery

“Yo creo que nada sucede por casualidad, ¿sabes? Que, en el fondo, las cosas tienen su plan secreto, aunque nosotros no lo entendamos.”

– Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra del viento*

The “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” saga begins when a young Daniel Sempere comes across a volume of Julián Carax’s novel, *La sombra del viento*. From there he becomes obsessed with the book and its author, falling into a labyrinth of mysteries. Little did I know, when I was handed a copy of Carlos Ruiz Zafón’s *La sombra del viento*, that I was about to imitate Daniel’s journey, falling into my own labyrinth. What was initially meant as a book recommendation to read over vacation, quickly became an obsession, turning Ruiz Zafón into my Julián Carax. When I realized the series was not just something I could enjoy for fun, the labyrinth expanded even more as I began to reread, research, and fall deeper within the narrative of the tetralogy. For me, opening up one of the novels immediately transported me into the literary universe that perfectly melded fiction and history, providing commentary on the past through a contemporary perspective. I found, even after I already knew what would come, I was still transfixed by the pages, entranced by how details and storylines came together. Most of all, I loved how Ruiz Zafón, his characters, and I all shared a love of books. In the following pages, I present the paths of my labyrinth and invite the reader to follow along its corridors with me.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Within this dissertation, the saga title is always seen as: “El cementerio de los libros olvidados,” within quotation marks, following Spanish titling practices. The space, el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados, omits quotation marks and uses noun capitalization. This allows for a clear and consistent differentiation between the saga and the space.

Carlos Ruiz Zafón (1964-2020), was a Barcelona-born Spanish author who split his time between Barcelona and Los Angeles. Starting his career in advertising, his move to LA, made possible financially after winning the Edebé prize for his young adult fiction, was prompted by his fascination with film and desire to write screenplays. Ultimately, while he was not successful in that field, the genre allowed him to write scenic pieces which influenced his writing style within “El cementerio de los libros olvidados.” Before this bestselling saga, Ruiz Zafón published his first series which consisted of *El príncipe de la niebla* (1993), *El palacio de la medianoche* (1994), and finally, *Las luces de septiembre* (1995). These three novels are now available as one larger tome, titled *La trilogía de la niebla*. While these early young adult novels garnered success, *Marina* (1999) was his most successful book, described by the author in a 2016 interview as: “the book that takes them into the world of *The Shadow of the Wind*, *The Angel’s Game*, and *The Cemetery of Forgotten Books*. And in many ways, it is. It is a coming-of-age story, it’s a gothic fairy tale, it’s a book that is a mixture of many things...I always say it’s a book for people who love to read and love books” (“Carlos Ruiz Zafón on ‘Marina’”). Indeed, *Marina* works as the perfect entryway into Ruiz Zafón’s literary universe, his writing style, and his Gothicisation of Barcelona. Shortly thereafter, the beginning of “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” emerged with *La sombra del viento* in 2001. Following the first instalment, the world received *El juego del ángel* (2008), *El prisionero del cielo* (2011), and finally, *El laberinto de los espíritus* (2016). All four stories create a literary universe connected through el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados – a fictional library, hidden deep within Barcelona – and can be read in any order. In the summer of 2020, Carlos Ruiz Zafón passed away, and his short story volume, *La ciudad de vapor* (2020), was released posthumously. In order to better understand Ruiz Zafón and the corpus analysed here, it is important to summarize his popular tetralogy. Each piece of



the saga presents stories within stories, mitigated through flashbacks and presentations of the past to better understand the present. The series, meant to be a labyrinth in and of itself, centers the characters through el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados, a labyrinthian library hidden under Barcelona protected by those who truly love and respect books. Focused on the Sempere family, their friends, their enemies, and their bookshop, Ruiz Zafón creates a space within Barcelona that is prime for mysteries of the best sort – mysteries about books.

Beginning the saga, *La sombra del viento* follows Daniel Sempere through his childhood and teenage years. The story begins as Daniel and his father go together for the first time to el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados and Daniel is allowed to select one book to protect. He chooses *La sombra del viento* by Julián Carax and reads the whole book immediately. Enthralled by Carax's work, Daniel hopes to find out more about the author and get copies of his other novels, assuming Carax to be world famous. To his surprise, his father had never heard of Carax and their friend, Gustavo Barceló tells him that no one has read his work in a long time as, after the war, someone went around stealing and burning all the copies of his novels. Daniel knows he must now protect this extant copy, the rest of the novel following Daniel and he tries to uncover Carax's past and the destruction of his books. Taking place between 1945-1956, the reader experiences Barcelona under Franco's dictatorship through Daniel's eyes, using storytelling techniques and flashbacks to provide backstory on Carax starting from 1899.

Next, *El juego del ángel* acts as a prequel to *La sombra del viento* with the main plot taking place between 1917-1934, just before the Spanish Civil War. The prequel follows author David Martín, a regular patron of the Sempere e hijos bookshop, becoming dear friends with Daniel Sempere's grandfather, señor Sempere, and father, Juan Sempere. Through his connection with the family, he is also introduced to Isabella Gispert, a young woman who

dreams of becoming an author. Though she annoys Martín, he agrees to take her on as an apprentice and convinces her to also work at the Sempere e hijos bookshop as part of a matchmaking plot for her and Juan who, ultimately, become Daniel's parents. There is a darkness to *El juego del ángel* and the reader must try their best to interpret the mystery behind Martín's relationship with a fear-inducing publisher, Andreas Corelli. Throughout the novel, Martín's sanity begins to deteriorate, forcing the reader to reconsider his perspective of events. The story, filled with police chases and suicides, tracks Ruiz Zafón's interest in literature through the process of writing, following Martín through his moral dilemma surrounding the book he must write for Corelli.

The third installment, *El prisionero del cielo*, moves back to the original timeline, following the end of *La sombra del viento*. Here, two main timelines control the novel: the present in 1957-8 and the past, 1939-41. The characters of *La sombra del viento* and *El juego del ángel* converge through these timelines. In the present, Daniel Sempere investigates his belief that Maurico Valls, a member of the literary elite within Spain known for his positions within Franco's regime, killed his mother. Mitigated through flashbacks, Fermín Romero de Torres, Daniel's best friend and confidant, recounts his past to Daniel, the second timeline, where he was once a prisoner in Montjuïc under prison director, Valls. At this time, David Martín of *El juego del ángel* is also an inmate, becoming a friend to Fermín. Within this novel, Ruiz Zafón creates a deeper investigation on the repression of the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship of Francisco Franco, highlighting examples of corruption and violence.

Finally, *El laberinto de los espíritus*, centers on the disappearance of Mauricio Valls. The case takes new lead, Alicia Gris, from Madrid to Barcelona to uncover the secrets of the disappearance. Here, as with Julián Carax in *La sombra del viento*, and David Martín in *El juego*

*del ángel* and *El prisionero del cielo*, Víctor Mataix acts as the author centered in the mystery as his book becomes a key clue of the investigation. While continuing to look at both Daniel and Fermín's perspectives, their interactions with Alicia, and their own investigation of Valls, the shift of including Alicia as a narrator is important to my study as, while in previous books, characters such as Isabella Gispert gained a small narrative voice, by placing Alicia at the center of the final novel's plot, it demonstrates a shift where female characters gain more agency. Though most of the account takes place within Ruiz Zafón's gothic Barcelona, the final novel also includes a storyline within the country's capital, Madrid. Ruiz Zafón believed this shift in settings was necessary as it presents:

Lo que es el momento a finales de los años 50 el corazón del régimen y evidentemente el corazón del régimen es Madrid, entonces hay un contrapeso. Salimos de esta Barcelona gótica, barroca, misteriosa...y nos vamos a un contrapeso que es un Madrid que a su vez también es más que un escenario, es un personaje que también es bastante particular.

(Ruiz Zafón qtd in "Late Motiv")

The base of this story is mainly set between 1959-60, again following the main timeline of the series, and ends, transported into the future in 1992 with the point of view of Daniel Sempere and Bea Aguilar's son, Julián Sempere. By including this perspective, Ruiz Zafón completes his tetralogy, spanning the twentieth century to create a more unified history of contemporary Spain. As Gustau Nerín comments: "*El laberint dels esperits* és l'obra més extensa de la saga i constitueix tot un homenatge al món del llibre i als seus professionals."

In terms of structure, there are clear elements incorporated within the novels such as the use of flashbacks, repetition of patterns, an anti-Francoist stance on history, and the staging of Barcelona as a gothic space. As a key storytelling technique, flashbacks are utilized in order to

inform characters, and the reader, of the past. Providing more context, these timelines fill in the missing details from the mysteries at hand. Ruiz Zafón engages with repetitions of patterns that mimic events and storylines, connecting characters and allowing for quick comparisons and foreshadowing of events. A fundamental theme within the saga is the implementation of books and authors as the focal points of storylines. The insertion of novels like Julián Carax's *La sombra del viento* or Víctor Mataix's *El laberinto de los espíritus* foment books as critical elements of the tetralogy, paying homage to the field of literature through both the exaltation of the object itself and the writing process. Ruiz Zafón's anti-Francoist stance also guides the literature, informing the reader of clear political divides between characters. Police brutality and regime corruption underscore the author's approach in depicting the recent past as key plot points throughout the volumes. The staging of Barcelona as a gothic space is seen through its costuming, presenting the city through a lens of gothic and neo-Gothic architecture, ruins caused by the war, and an uncanny feeling. The novels do not show the sunshiny tourism hub it is known for today, but a dark and twisted space filled with mystery and violence. The city is staged as well through politics and socioeconomic circumstances, showing the experiences of Francoist and anti-Francoist characters, and spaces of rich, middle class, and poor citizens. The Barcelona of booklovers is also central to the novels, cemented through el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados – the secret library into which only a few are allowed to enter. While *El laberinto de los espíritus* also includes narrative in Madrid, the use of Barcelona as a setting in Ruiz Zafón's adult work is quite fascinating as it centers the city as an expected element within his writing, making it an integral part of his narrative. Streets and neighbourhoods act as connectors between the characters, providing an atmosphere of mystery, shadows, and darkness. As Sergio Vila-Sanjuán notes, Ruiz Zafón's first trilogy takes place outside of Spain, pushing

Spain, most specifically Barcelona, to be a more central figure in his texts from *Marina* onwards (“Prólogo” 9-10). Indeed, the connection between *Marina* and *El laberinto de los espíritus* is seen, not just through the general use of a gothic Barcelona, but through an intertextual reference. In Ruiz Zafón’s *Marina*, his character, Oscar Draí, refers to Barcelona as “el laberinto de los espíritus” (Doria 102-3). This quote centers Ruiz Zafón’s position of creating a labyrinthian Barcelona with dark and mysterious costuming.

Ruiz Zafón’s tetralogy gained him immediate international success, with *La sombra del viento* as his most popular bestselling novel, translated in over forty languages and with over fifteen million copies sold across the globe. As Maarten Steenmeijer comments, *La sombra del viento* “achieved what no other modern Spanish literary work had managed to achieve before: to form part of a collective global memory” (“The New Capital” 87). Whether or not the reader is familiar with Spanish history, they can still understand the story, cueing up millions of international readers for an approachable text and creating a phenomenon around Ruiz Zafón’s work through their rapid market demand. I have all four installments of the series in both English and Spanish, as well as an edition of *La sombra del viento* in French, adding to my collection of Ruiz Zafón’s work. Comparing the language editions, looking at copies printed for the North American English market the Spanish market, an immediate difference I noticed was the inclusion of a series of maps within my English copy of *La sombra del viento* absent in my Spanish edition. These maps point out key settings and streets within the novel like the Sempere e hijos bookshop and Nuria Montfort’s apartment. In fact, on my own trip through the labyrinth, when last in Barcelona, I attempted to walk the city through the eyes of the characters, following the stops on the map, matching the fictional locations to the real city streets to create my own walking tour (something quite popular in the early 2000s). These maps aid in the visualization of

the city – both the contemporary one that exists today and Ruiz Zafón’s imagined spaces. The absence of the maps in the Spanish edition speaks to the various marketing techniques used for the different language copies, not needing to create the same visualization of the city for those more familiar with the space and its history.

In terms of genre, “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” has been subject to significant debate regarding its categorization. The reception of *La sombra del viento* affected the following installments of the series, considered a blending of genres, seen as a thriller, historical fiction, a bildungsroman, a gothic novel, and/or world fiction. Steenmeijer considers the text to be a “postmodern amalgam of genres” where *La sombra del viento* “fits in a relatively new trend in the literary book market” (“The Postnational” 189). While *La sombra del viento* is now considered a fundamental piece of literature within the contemporary Spanish gothic, Glennis Byron identifies that in 2004, the novel was actually considered to be more of a thriller, and documents how by 2007, only three years later, the novel was categorized as a gothic text instead, highlighting the role of marketing in the shift in this categorization (76). Perhaps unintentionally so, this use of the gothic (both in the use of spaces and character tropes) becomes a critical element of Ruiz Zafón’s tetralogy, realized just in time for a literary rejuvenation of the gothic across language traditions. The rise of this trend is exemplified in *New Urban Gothic* an edited volume that investigates contemporary uses of the Gothic where “the new urban Gothic landscape is almost never an exhaustive description of a place, but rather a series of references that suggest the feel or surrender of a place to the reader” (Millette 3). This is seen with Ruiz Zafón’s depiction of Barcelona, mixing the Gothic to depict the violent tone of the Spanish Civil War and dictatorship, telling the reader how to feel when experiencing the city (Aldana Reyes 2020). Indeed, as noted by Holly-Gale Millette, this re-emergence of gothic tropes “are, or act as,

bridges between aesthetics, politics, popular ideology and psychosocial haunting,” arguing that “such a hybrid reinterpretation of the Gothic has emerged and is here to stay” (4).

Ruiz Zafón’s label as a bestselling author excludes him from the Spanish literary canon. His work is seen for public consumption instead of for the true literary elite, making for a great case study for readers on the role of literature within society, especially when his exclusion from being labeled a “Catalan author” is taken into consideration, despite being Catalan and speaking the language. According to Stewart King, the contemporary debate on Catalan author identity became more prolific starting at the 2007 Frankfurt Book Fair:

While the Frankfurt Book Fair helped to gain international recognition for Catalan literature, it was not without controversy. The IRL’s decision to support only those authors who write in Catalan and the subsequent absence of Castilian language writers, such as the internationally renowned Juan Marsé, Eduardo Mendoza, Enrique Vila-Matas, Nuria Amat, and Carlos Ruiz Zafón, again raised the issue of how Catalan literature is defined. (“From Literature” 233)

Indeed, writing in Spanish or Castilian instead of Catalan has marked these authors by not conforming to “the national model,” creating means for their exclusion at events and market promotion (King, “From Literature” 233). Highlighting the history of Catalan language and identity politics, King notes:

Due to several centuries of persistent, if uneven, Hispanicization from the fifteenth century to the Franco regime (1939–1975), many Catalans were illiterate in their own language, a consequence of which was the adoption of Castilian as the primary vehicle for most literary production and consumption in Catalonia. This in turn led to a profound cultural and identity crisis that many Catalan writers and intellectuals from the nineteenth

century onwards sought to overcome by strengthening Catalan culture against the threat of Hispanicization. (“The Deceptive” 396)

This contemporary trend of promoting Catalan language within literature can be exemplified by the works of Mercè Rodoreda or Jaume Fuster, authors who write in Catalan and consistently promote the identity and culture of the region through their work (King, “The Deceptive” 397; 399). However, looking at the climate of language use today with both Catalan and Spanish seen across the region, King argues that: “the traditional understanding of Catalan literature as literature written in Catalan – while perhaps once relevant and even necessary – is an outmoded approach which can no longer adequately explain the diversity and complexity of literary production in those areas where Catalan is spoken today” (“From Literature” 233). Ruiz Zafón, not writing in Catalan, is labeled, not unproblematically, a Spanish author.

The question of identity is critical for understanding of the literary market; Ruiz Zafón considering himself as Catalan. He commented: “I consider myself a Catalan. I'm bilingual; I can read and write both languages. I write my fiction in Spanish because it's the first language I absorbed” (Ruiz Zafón qtd in Tonkin). Though in the post-Franco era it was permissible to write in Catalan instead of Spanish, the policies of the dictatorship still affected his education. The question of language and history is thus fully intertwined within Ruiz Zafón's work, affecting his identity as an author. Nevertheless, due to the popularity of Spanish across the globe, writing in Spanish does provide a more marketable option with a larger reader base from the start. With the example of crime novels, King confirms that the Catalan-language novels are less marketable as “their potential audience and, hence, their national and international reach are much reduced when compared to crime novels written in Castilian” (“The Deceptive” 397). The space of regional versus national literary recognition becomes a critical debate for authors – placing them



in a box based on language of publication. The case of Ruiz Zafón can be compared to authors like Vázquez Montalbán and Mendoza, authors from the region who gained international recognition for their work in Spanish. As seen in King's study, the language of use becomes a key qualifier for literature produced by Catalan authors, working as a means to label authors based on language identity politics ("The Deceptive" 396). The debate around Ruiz Zafón's identity is critical in understanding his work, his exclusion from the institution, and his opposition to the bestseller-to-film trajectory pushed on him.

Ruiz Zafón was adamant that a film adaptation of "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" was not an option. The author intended for the novels to stay as a literary series, unwavering in his decision that there would never be a production deal for film or television. Though he worked as a screenwriter, he commented: "they are books about the world of books. It just feels wrong to me to transform them into something else... Nothing can tell a story with the depth and the richness that a novel can – if it's done right" (Ruiz Zafón qtd in Tonkin). This confidence in his saga is demonstrated through its reception – making Ruiz Zafón a well-known name across the world. Indeed, Steenmeijer noted: "*La sombra del viento* turned out to be more than a best seller: it is concurrently a steady-seller, and, in the words of Emili Rosales, a long-seller" ("The New Capital" 87). Through his success, reception of the novels has differed across the world. In Steenmeijer's article, "The Postnational Reception of Carlos Ruiz Zafón's *La sombra del viento*," he examined the critical reception of the novel in Germany, France, the United States, and England. This article demonstrates the countries' responses based on Ruiz Zafón's inclusion of history and commentary on mixing of low, middle and high brow literary elements, highlighting how those elements were received by critics. The study proves that the reception of the novel was different in each country, with the audience and critics appreciating varying

elements. Based off of the first installment's success, Ruiz Zafón's later publications became popular amongst critics to review. However, as highlighted by Steenmeijer, "it is also true that they hardly reviewed *El juego del ángel* and *El prisionero del cielo* as literature, focusing mostly on the *zafonmania* and hardly on the text itself" ("The Postnational" 200). This *zafonmania* phenomenon created a boom in the market, forcing the series into this long-seller where it is still popular on bookshelves today. The author is compared in international markets to authors like Stephen King, Charles Dickens, Miguel de Cervantes, and Umberto Eco, placing his name among these literary legends.

Ruiz Zafón received glowing reviews for his work in newspapers. At the end of *La ciudad de vapor*, Ruiz Zafón's short story collection, the editor, Émile de Rosiers Castellaine includes a selection of some of the best reviews seen in international newspapers. *La Vanguardia* proclaimed that: "*La sombra del viento* anuncia un fenómeno de la literatura popular española" and *The New York Times* claimed: "García Márquez, Umberto Eco y Jorge Luis Borges se funden en un mágico y desbordante espectáculo, de inquietante perspicacia y definitivamente maravilloso," noting the cultural comparisons to other authors often made (*La ciudad* 207; 208).<sup>2</sup> *Irish Times* called Ruiz Zafón's final novel: "Emocionante y cautivador. *El laberinto de los espíritus* es una novela para perderse en ella, despierta la experiencia de lectura que recordamos de la infancia: completamente absortos en un mundo imaginario" (*La ciudad* 216). Even Stephen King was quoted: "Si alguien pensaba que la auténtica novela gótica había muerto en el XIX, este libro le haré cambiar la idea. Una novela llena de esplendor y de trampas secretas donde hasta las subtramas tienen subtramas... Hay que ser un romántico de verdad para llegar a apreciar todo su valor, pero si uno lo es, entonces es una lectura deslumbrante" and Margaret Atwood:

---

<sup>2</sup> These quotes are not included in the English edition of this collection.

“Carlos Ruiz Zafón es un gran contador de historias” (*La ciudad* 208). The accolades continue for pages, again, including only a selection of the many positive reviews Ruiz Zafón received both during his literary career, and in articles reflecting on his passing.

Furthermore, Ruiz Zafón’s tetralogy inserts itself within one of the great political, historical, and cultural polemics of contemporary Spain: The Spanish Civil War. The Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939 was the beginning of what would become General Francisco Franco’s 40-year dictatorship in Spain. Upon his passing in 1975, a wave of recuperation of memory began in many fields, but in particular, that of literature. Since the role of censorship was no longer as prevalent, authors were able to recount the past and try to understand the traumas that occurred during the war through fiction. This trend became most prominent in the early 2000s, coinciding with Ruiz Zafón’s own attempts of the recuperation of memory through “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” series. He joins many other authors in this quest, sharing company with Carmen Laforet, José María Gironella, Javier Cercas, Dulce Chacón, Almudena Grandes, and many more. These authors can be classified in two ways, by their status as an author and by their publication periods. Each of these authors, unlike Ruiz Zafón, are considered as core to the contemporary Spanish literary canon, their literary output the base of countless studies and accolades. In terms of temporal classification, both Laforet and Gironella published their novels during Franco’s regime. The others noted above, act as contemporaries to Ruiz Zafón, publishing their most popular works at the beginning of the 2000s, during Spanish democracy. Where Laforet and Gironella experienced the war firsthand, these younger authors approach the dictatorship and Spain’s recent past through a different lens, recovering stories of others to create their fictions. Ruiz Zafón’s work falls within this categorization both in terms of

temporality and approach, however, at least until now, his name has not been included among those canonical to the field.

Existing scholarship on “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” tends to center on three main themes: memory and trauma, literature, and the Gothic. These themes, while pertinent to my dissertation, are typically only analysed for *La sombra del viento* and not the whole saga. Beginning with scholarship on memory, the historical lens used within Ruiz Zafón’s work has spurred academic interest in the presentation of generational and collective memory of the Spanish Civil War. In “The Telling of Memory in *La sombra del viento* by Carlos Ruiz Zafón,” Judith Meddick proposes that the role of memory passes through the literature of Julián Carax to Daniel Sempere. Following Abraham and Torok’s concept of generational haunting, Meddick dissects the ways Daniel is informed on the Spanish Civil War through Carax’s haunting instead of through dialogue, understanding the violence of the past through the novel. Taking particular notice of the idea of silence, a collective generational decision to not discuss the war, the literature is used as a vehicle for recognizing the truths of the past as a means of recuperating memory.

Connecting memory and trauma, Cinta Ramblado in “The Shadow of the Dissident: Reflections on Francoism in Carlos Ruiz Zafón’s *The Shadow of the Wind*,” furthers the discussion of post-war Spain and the representation of the dictatorship in the first novel of the saga. Focusing on the binary of Fermín Romero de Torres and Francisco Javier Fumero, Ramblado highlights the contrasting characters’ political identities. Referencing Fermín in the title of her article, Ramblado seeks to explain the ways in which Ruiz Zafón demonstrates the political binary of left versus right-wing within the first novel of his saga. Here, she focuses on the historical and political memory of the past, demonstrating a collective memory that allowed

for those oppressed to stay in the shadows. Giving voice to Fermín and those subjugated by the regime, Ramblado underscores Ruiz Zafón's manipulation of Fermín to demonstrate political history and ramifications of state violence.

Looking specifically to the first installment of the series, Sara J. Brenneis in "Dictatorship *Noir*: Post-war Spanish History in Carlos Ruiz Zafón's *La Sombra del viento*" highlights the role of the dictatorship and the tone that it sets for 1940s-50s Barcelona. Brenneis documents examples of the historical undertone presented in Ruiz Zafón's novel. His depiction of the city, Barcelona, also aids her argument, in which she underscores the use of the city in order to understand history, and mixes fiction and fact. She argues that this anti-canonical work is still worth studying as Ruiz Zafón manages to make history approachable for various audiences, characterizing *La sombra del viento* as prime for both international and national study of the Spanish Civil War. As well, his genre-bending techniques drive her arguments; she notices how he uses different elements of genres in order to create the perfect narrative tone.

Meddick, Brenneis, and Ramblado's articles are fundamental for the study of Ruiz Zafón and the presentation of violence and memory in the series. However, it is important to note that these articles were published between 2008-2010, before the final two installments of the saga were released. This means that, unlike this dissertation, these articles do not provide a scope for the whole tetralogy. As well, most of the articles hinge on Daniel Sempere and Fermín Romero de Torres' experiences. My dissertation extends the concepts of memory, trauma, and violence onto other characters as well, going more in depth, in particular, with the female experience which is absent (or presented in a limited fashion) throughout current scholarship.

In Hrabrova et al.'s "Philological Concept of the Novel *The Shadow of the Wind* by Carlos Ruiz Zafon" (2020), the question of genre is also discussed. Here, the authors argue that

*La sombra del viento* is a philological novel, centered on the question of the fate of books. They argue that Ruiz Zafón sets up the reader for clear questioning surrounding the social and cultural life of books, trying to prove literature's value in his novel. Demonstrating the structure of the plot which combines history, Daniel Sempere, and Julián Carax's experiences, the authors dissect the use of the detective novel and neo-Gothic as reference guides to classifying Ruiz Zafón's work as philological. They also seek to substantiate the importance of books within Ruiz Zafón's literary world seen in *La sombra del viento* and prove his argument on the necessity of reading in society.

Similarly focused on literature, Robert Richmond Ellis' "Reading the Spanish past: library fantasies in Carlos Ruiz Zafón's *La sombra del viento*" (2006) underscores the spaces of literature in the first installment of the series, most notably, the titular space, el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados. Ellis argues that Ruiz Zafón follows the tradition of writing a book about books seen in authors like Cervantes, as well as the implementation of history in his work. Arguing that "reading is thus construed as both an act of memory and an expression of intersubjectivity," the author focuses on the presentation of literature in the novel (Ellis 839). In particular, Ellis underscores how Daniel Sempere's selection of the Carax novel from in el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados affects the rest of his life, the encounter with the text guiding all future choices.

Scholarship on the way Ruiz Zafón has been "branded" is a prominent theme of pre-existing Zafonista scholarship. In an interview with Dr. Gwen Kirkpatrick of Georgetown University at the 2016 Library of Congress Book Festival in Washington, D.C., Ruiz Zafón commented: "I think it's only recently through the twentieth century that the marketing of storytelling has forced us to consider different niches or different segments and to create genres

for the purpose of marketing them differently” (Ruiz Zafón qtd in “Carlos Ruiz Zafón: 2016”). Indeed, the way Ruiz Zafón has been branded, in particular, through the lens of the Gothic, is often debated. For example, Glennis Byron’s chapter, “Gothic, Grabbit and Run: Carlos Ruiz Zafón and the Gothic Marketplace” (2012), demonstrates the history of the Gothic branding of Ruiz Zafón’s novel. Throughout the article, Byron explains the commodification of the Gothic and the way it has been used as an economic tactic. The author argues for the purposeful use of the Gothic instead of the label of thriller to market Ruiz Zafón. She claims that when using the Gothic in today’s literary economy, in particular, since the genre has had a recent resurgence, there is an economic and socio-cultural benefit, enhancing sales. Overall, Byron believes that the label of Gothic for Ruiz Zafón functions as a successful marketing tactic.

Merging the topics of the Gothic with the presentation of Barcelona, Glennis and Gordon Byron (2012) discuss in “Barcelona Gothic: Carlos Ruiz Zafón’s *La sombra del viento* and the Omnipresent Past” the functions of the Gothic within Ruiz Zafón’s narrative. Here, Byron and Byron underscore the convergence of the Gothic text with memory text in order to present the historical past. While both memory and gothic texts function as a reminder of history, the authors demonstrate that the goals of the modes are different: memory texts seek to recuperate the past for the reader, and gothic ones seek to remind the reader of the horrors of the past. Fomenting the use of Gothic within Zafonista studies, the authors argue that the gothic mode within Ruiz Zafón’s work acts as a reminder for the reader of Spain’s historical past as if it were still present, mediated through the depiction of Ruiz Zafón’s Barcelona.

Tiffany Trotman in “Haunted Noir: Neo-Gothic Barcelona in Carlos Ruiz Zafón’s *La Sombra del Viento*” (2006) and Xavier Aldana Reyes in “A Gothic Barcelona?: Carlos Ruiz Zafón’s *The Cemetery of Forgotten Books* Series and Franco’s Legacy” (2020) further the

discussion on the place of Gothic within the saga, facilitated through the presentation of Barcelona. In Trotman's study of *La sombra del viento*, she identifies the influence of detective fiction and the gothic tradition infused in the novel. Focused on spaces seen in Ruiz Zafón's Barcelona, Trotman details their gothic features. Her analysis of the spaces is used to underscore their representation of Spanish historical past and the violence under Francoism, arguing that the use of the Gothic is purposeful in order to push the reader to confront the past. Aldana Reyes' investigation of Barcelona Gothic as a regional form of the genre, emphasises the use of the Gothic in Ruiz Zafón's Barcelona. Aldana Reyes argues Ruiz Zafón's Gothicisation of Barcelona mediates his presentation of history. The author underscores how the darkness of the Gothic and its traditional features function as markers to the darkness under Franco.

The importance of Ruiz Zafón's vision of Barcelona is further demonstrated in Sergi Doria's *Guia de la Barcelona de Carlos Ruiz Zafón* (2008). This text outlines key locations presented in the novels *La sombra del viento*, *El juego del ángel*, and his young adult fiction, *Marina*. This text, organized by neighbourhoods, includes descriptions of each neighbourhood, including a reflection of the space from Ruiz Zafón, and examples of key settings in each region seen in the novels. This includes examples of architecture and historical locations, highlighting the spaces with maps and images to support the narrative. At the end of the book there is also a reference section, noting literature, music, film, and tv series that appear in the narrative. Again, a gap exists within this pre-existing scholarship as not all four books of the saga are included in these texts, giving me space for expansion. However, this guide creates a clearer visualization of Ruiz Zafón's (gothic) Barcelona.

According to my research, there are no studies looking at cases of disability or gender on Ruiz Zafón's work, be it his tetralogy or his other texts. As noted in my literature review, the



topics of memory, literature, and the Gothic were more prominent, though, mainly focused on *La sombra del viento*. Articles on the topics of physical disabilities, mental health, and gender are needed to fill the gap. Since, to me, these topics are so critical within the saga, it is surprising to not find scholarly interest as of yet on these themes. Considering the ideas of disability and the Spanish Civil War, Stephanie Wright's article, "'My Husband...is an Authentic Psychopath': Spanish Civil War Veterans, Mental Illness and the Francoist Regime" (2021), seeks to illustrate the prevalence of mental illness in the nationalist army. This article demonstrates the need to analyse and understand the psychological trauma faced by those within the Francoist army and how it affected society during and after the war. Lisa Lines' "Female Combatants in the Spanish Civil War: Milicianas on the Front Lines and in the Rearguard" (2009) underscores the participation of women in the Spanish Civil War. This article provides context and examples for the military participation of women, in particular, during the first year of the war, aiming to demonstrate the equal role women held within the space. Lines argues woman's significant contribution and the way they impacted Republican success at the beginning of the war.

With my dissertation, I approach the saga from different theoretical lenses: literary historical, memory studies, disability studies, and gender studies. When considering the social lives of books, authors, and spaces of literature within Ruiz Zafón's work, one must also consider the literary tradition that preceded it and the literary communities that formed over time. Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault guide my analysis on the presentation of the author within Ruiz Zafón's saga. In Barthes' "Death of the Author" from *Image Music Text*, he argues that a writer and their text are intrinsically separated through the process of writing. Foucault's "What is an Author" also considers the relationship between author and production. Instead of a fully "dead" author, separated from the text, Foucault's author haunts, making the author a ghost.

These theories are of particular interest when studying the novels as the identity of an author is questioned across the novels, affecting how they are perceived both by themselves and by others. These ideas are also helpful when approaching the different narrative voices of the novels and their reliability. In terms of war and dictatorship, the place of authorship is fundamental to the study of Spain's literary history due to politics and censorship.

Ruiz Zafón scatters literary criticism throughout the series, referencing the intellectual life and success of authors. Through this rhetoric, Ruiz Zafón acts as judge to a community in which he himself exists or seeks to exist. So where does Ruiz Zafón fit in the literary tradition of Spain? How do his temporal settings correlate to history? To answer these questions, one must investigate the intellectual life of a writer in Spain before, during, and after the Spanish Civil War as these communities of authors create important contexts for the production of literature. Politics and war sent many authors, poets, and other artists into exile or, at minimum, with the necessity to flee the violence of the regime. As Nelson R. Orringer highlights, figures such as Ramón Menéndez Pidal and José Ortega y Gasset left Spain with the Civil War (Pidal four months into the war and Ortega y Gasset right before it began), both returning to Franco's Spain after the war (539; 541). Furthermore, Guillermo Carnero remarks: "Only three ranking members of the Generation of 1927 remained in Spain at the end of the Civil War: Dámaso Alonso (1898-1990), Vicente Aleixandre (1898-1984), and Gerardo Diego (1896-1987)" (643). When discussing the war, Ortega y Gasset wrote: "El régimen político en que viven les parece inmovible, fijo por toda la eternidad. Y asimismo las opciones sobre Dios y sobre el hombre. Y asimismo el gusto artístico y el código moral" (45). This consideration of war was thus engrained in the spirit of the Spanish population.

Writers in Spain inside these literary communities were also met with censorship, for example, from 1938-1977, as Gonzalo Vicente Pasamar Alzuria astutely comments (223). Michael Ugarte, when discussing post-war censorship, explains: “For Goytisolo, these prohibitions amounted to what he called ‘el toro de la censura,’ a bull that had gored many Spanish writers regardless of their literary skills” (611). Ugarte writes: “on the situation of the Spanish writer in the 1960s, Juan Goytisolo wrote ‘la literatura española contemporanea es un Espejo de la lucha oscura, humilde y cotidiana del pueblo español por su libertad perdida’” (Goytisolo qtd in Ugarte 611). When discussing censorship pre-Ruiz Zafón, Sara J. Brenneis comments on how Ramón J. Sender and Camilo José Cela both had to publish *Requiem por un campesino español* and *La colmena* abroad due to censorship (62). The act of censoring is critical to note as it affected all members of literary communities, even those like Cela who supported right-wing politics.

Themes of the war have also affected the writings of many Spanish authors. Javier Cercas, José María Gironella, Carmen Laforet, and Dulce Chacón, among others, have looked to the war as sources of inspiration and critique in their works, adding Ruiz Zafón to this literary tradition and community of writers. Pasamar Alzuria remarks: “la publicación de libros sobre la guerra civil durante los años del ‘desarrollismo’ y de la crisis del franquismo se puede considerar como parte de un fenómeno más amplio de modernización del mercado editorial” (223). Even so, in *Crónica sentimental de España* by Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, the author observes: “la guerra civil española, o casi mejor fuera llamarla la Spain’s Civil War, del mucho provecho historiográfico y político que han sacado de ella los anglosajones en general, había dejado una costumbre de irracionalidad que se plasmaba en el comportamiento personal y colectivo, en la épica personal y colectiva” (6).

In “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” tetralogy, the themes of war and politics are embedded throughout the text – underlining an anti-Franco stance. This political criticism, which for example can be seen with corrupt policeman Francisco Javier Fumero, extends to the literary world as Mauricio Valls attempts to reach high echelons of power and influence through letters. His connections to the dictatorship – and benefits from the same – are evident as his ambition promotes his abuse of power and corrupt nature: “está claro que Valls detesta verse relegado al papel de carcelero del régimen que su bragueta le había conseguido y aspiraba a mucho más” (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 394). Indeed, Valls’ aspirations and ego affect his treatment of others, in particular, his treatment of David Martín during his imprisonment at Montjüic prison. Feeling his position as prison director beneath him, by keeping Martín incarcerated, Valls acts as a censor in the series. Creating a binary of left versus right-wing politics, Ruiz Zafón reconciles the politics of the past throughout his narrative. According to Brenneis:

Supporters of the Franco regime in *La sombra del viento* are few and far between; instead, the novel is populated with the vanquished... In another metatextual twist, Fumero and his supporters despise books and consider reading to be frivolous and unpatriotic. In this way they aid in the creation of the underlying binary opposition in which the readers of the novel are manipulated to despise Fumero/Franco along with everything he represents. (66)

By incorporating his own political opinions, literature and historical experience is linked within the series. Ruiz Zafón’s ability to publish such opinions so freely is also demonstrative of the time and the dismantling of censorship structures that affected those before him. Overall, this intellectual space of literature, one that is not contained but created through communities of

writers, shared experiences (both positive and negative), and passion for writing, is also present in the saga as well as an influence on Ruiz Zafón's own writing.

When considering the field of memory studies, Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory immediately stands out. Hirsch states: "postmemory describes the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic, experiences that preceded their births but that were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right" (103). When applying this notion to "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" tetralogy, postmemory is seen in relation to the author, Carlos Ruiz Zafón, born after the war, as a means of recuperating the past, having personally been affected by the experience of postmemory and thus having incorporated the traumas of the past within his series. Moving towards the text, due to the temporality of "El cementerio de los libros olvidados," postmemory can also be assigned to Julián Sempere, a character born after the war. Since Julián Sempere is a foil for Julián Carax and Ruiz Zafón himself, the retelling of the saga functions as a regeneration of memory or, a writing of postmemory as the content has been passed on to the child.<sup>3</sup> Essentially, this study can

---

<sup>3</sup> While perhaps a more obvious figure to examine is Daniel, however, at the beginning of *La sombra del viento* in 1945, Daniel is 10 years old, meaning he would have been alive during the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939, excluding him from the process of postmemory. Though a child during the war, since he was alive, he would not bear this identity as the "postgeneration" (Hirsch 103). Other characters who do fit within this description would be the children of Fermín Romero de Torres and Bernarda. Comparatively, when reflecting on the generational effects of memory within *La sombra del viento*, Judith Meddick proposes Abraham and Torok's concept of trans-generational haunting which can be exemplified through the relationship of Daniel and Julián Carax (Meddick 250). This idea of haunting of the past is visible throughout the corpus as a reflection of collective memory that the reader is able to consume through the narrative structure.

be applied to the final installment of the saga, *El laberinto de los espíritus*, with Julián Sempere, the only main character presented in the series born after the Spanish Civil War. Since Julián ultimately functions as the author of the tetralogy at large, the character demonstrates how trauma before his time affected his life and understanding of his surroundings.

Though postmemory studies originated with the Holocaust, there is debate whether it can be applied to the Spanish Civil War. Some scholars like Sebastiaan Faber (2018) argue that it is difficult to apply this concept to Spain. Others, such as Matthew John O'Neill (2011), Isabel Cuñado (2012), and Katherine O. Stafford (2015) apply the theory to their work. For example, Stafford discusses the connection between postmemory and intertextuality in the Spanish context, noting that it is namely the grandchildren of the war interested in recovering the memory of the past (137). This generation fits perfectly within Hirsch's concept and is studied through literary and photographic examples. Within this dissertation, I apply both the concepts of postmemory and collective memory to the understanding of the historical traumas included in the saga. When approaching memory in Spain, the study of how history is recounted by the Left and the Right is pertinent. Through the use of silencing tactics and censorship, experiences of citizens were deleted or edited to fit a different frame. Narratives shared during the dictatorship and since the death of Francisco Franco no longer align. Lisa Lines underscores a trend in which both Spanish and Anglophone texts, a battle between truths emerges as Nationalist and Republican leaning authors write their stories as a means to recuperate and share the past ("Representations" 153). Indeed, Ángel Viñas critiques: "In Spain, the myths propagated by Francoism have survived, conveniently freshened up, and are mobilized in today's political conflicts. If the

---

Whether the reader follows Hirsch or Abraham and Torok, in both instances, there is a generational passing of memory and trauma.

Spanish Civil War is still a source of controversy, it is due to the fact that the Right does not wish to stir up a bloody past that puts it in a deeply negative light” (Viñas qtd in Faber 90).

Notwithstanding, this perception of the war as a controversy is visible within “El cementerio de los libros olvidados.” This is evident, as, observed by Jordon Tronsgard, “while the memory debate remains a polemical issue in Spanish culture, it has become a more open debate in the political arena” (4). By extending the memory debates into the political realm, authors are able to approach the topic of memory in a new way. For instance, Judith Meddick suggests: “the apparent disappearance of Carax’s history is a metonym for the silenced memory of the civil war in post-war Barcelona” (247). Even more, she notes that within *La sombra del viento*, “its focus on memory reflects the ongoing movement to recuperate memories of the war and post-war past within civil society” (Meddick 246). These comments solidify the place of memory and the recuperation of the trauma/memory of the Spanish Civil War within the tetralogy.

Across my dissertation I reflect on the presentation of disability, implementing theories from this discipline to support my arguments. More specifically, I examine the presentation of mental health, including the effects of psychological trauma and cases of suicide, and physical disabilities seen in female characters. Of particular note is Eva Feder Kittay’s theory on the ethics of care and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson’s theory on feminist disability studies. These theories focus on how disabled bodies are perceived and treated within society. In Feder Kittay’s work, she discusses the ways those with disabilities have lost autonomy and are maltreated in society. She argues that dependency can be re-evaluated to create a more equal relationship between those who are cared for and those who act as carers. Garland-Thomson investigates specifically how female bodies are perceived in disability studies. She argues for a reimagination

of how disability is treated in society. Connecting to the Civil War and Francoist regime, many of the disabilities are seen through a lens of oppression, caused because of the violence of the time. For example, the hip trauma Alicia Gris experiences in the Barcelona areal bombings during the war causes her chronic pain. Following their ideas on the treatment and dependency of disabled bodies, in particular, female bodies, I analyse many of Ruiz Zafón's female characters.

My framework regarding gender studies follows Carl Jung's ideas regarding archetypes, allowing me to identify and label the different personifications of women in the "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" tetralogy. Jung proposes archetypes as recurring patterns, prototypes of people found within the human psyche. According to Jung, there are different types of people found within the unconscious. Two personalities seen within the unconscious are the mother and the woman as a sexual object. Both of these archetypes are visible in Ruiz Zafón's work, with the mother and the sex worker as two of the four main female archetypes of the saga. The way women are presented is important as it allows Ruiz Zafón to provide commentary on the place of women in twentieth-century Spain. Moreover, Kellie et al. present in "What drives female objectification? An investigation of appearance-based interpersonal perceptions and the objectification of women" a clear study on the objectification of women. This contemporary study allows for a critical analysis of the place of women in the twenty-first-century, allowing for insight on the past. This article highlights the ways women are traditionally perceived within society as "less than fully human" (Kellie et al. 2). Their arguments drive my analysis of the objectification of female characters seen within Ruiz Zafón's tetralogy and the many cases of gendered violence experienced in the novels. This study is critical to my investigation of the representation of women as it can be applied to the twentieth century and the ways women were perceived under the dictatorship of Franco.



The idea of the copy is also presented in this dissertation. In this case, female characters are often replaced with objects, reformulating their presence through a replication. Here, I follow the concept of the copy seen within Barthes' *Image Music Text* (1977). Barthes argues that "the type of consciousness the photograph involves is indeed truly unprecedented, since it establishes not a consciousness of the *being-there* of the thing (which any copy could provoke) but an awareness of its *having-been-there*" (44). This awareness of the copy informs my study of the replacement of female characters with objects as their replications point to the memory of having once been there. In Ruiz Zafón's saga, since many female characters die, the use of the copy allows the women to continue existing after their lives, for example, in photographs. Considering what was deemed as acceptable characteristics for a woman under Franco's regime, the woman is forced to copy the woman of the past, before the Spanish Republic where she was given the rights to vote and divorce. Instead, the ideal woman under the regime is conservative and follows the ideals of a religious woman. This, of course, is an archetype presented in my dissertation as the role of religion is internalized in the novels.

My dissertation focuses on Ruiz Zafón's four-book saga including *La sombra del viento*, *El juego del ángel*, *El prisionero del cielo*, and *El laberinto de los espíritus*. I chose this particular tetralogy as, when considering a dissertation topic, Ruiz Zafón's presentation of history within his contemporary series proved to be a point of departure for my studies. The way Ruiz Zafón includes history, namely through the representation of the Spanish Civil War and its following regime under Franco made this corpus a fascinating case study for the recuperation of memory of the past. For example, his presentation of female characters highlights a commentary on the treatment of women in twentieth-century Spain. The simple way he divided characters through the political binary of left and right-wing factions allows for a clear analysis of his

political thought, marking those who align with the regime as “bad” characters and those who oppose it as “good.” Indeed, this approach and inclusion of key sites of political oppression, such as Montjüic prison, allow for readers outside Spain to easily approach the historical content of the saga. This seamless insertion of history provides context for the novels’ plots, making it approachable for diverse audiences. Of particular interest to me was the use of the Gothic, both in terms of what was actually found in the pages of the novels, like the Gothic space of Montjüic prison, and in its marketing. Using the Gothic as a key technique to manipulate the city, Ruiz Zafón was able to present a dark Barcelona of the past, filled with violence and mystery.

Considering Ruiz Zafón’s position in both Spanish and international markets as a bestseller piqued my curiosity as to why he was excluded from the Hispanic canon after having experienced such literary success. Indeed, his identity as a Spanish author instead of being classified as a Catalan author and the questions of identity within the country posed a noteworthy question, affecting how he was perceived in the market. Finally, I appreciated the ways in which books were presented within the saga, focusing on the object itself, the spaces where they can be found, the process of writing, and the process of reading. Paying homage to books, my investigation of contemporary Spanish literature proves to be a fundamental example of the importance of literature within society, providing space to study core themes that merited more investigation.

Ruiz Zafón’s literary career can be divided into two stages: young adult fiction and adult fiction. Though his early work, young adult novels, are informative in understanding Ruiz Zafón’s style, his shift in target audience begins with *La sombra del viento*, creating a clear division between his first and second stage as a writer. Here, generating a corpus of purely adult fiction, I am able to more succinctly approach Ruiz Zafón’s writing and provide a stronger

commentary on his work. As well, by the time the author released *Marina* in 1999, he had a better understanding of his style, goals, and literary production, helping to solidify the tone and narrative structure within “El cementerio de los libros olvidados.” For this dissertation, I posit that his young adult novels had better use as reference points for the saga instead of main objects of study. Moreover, since his first three novels are not set in Barcelona, they were unable to aid in my deliberation of how Ruiz Zafón presents a gothic version of the city. When considering the length of the tetralogy versus selecting only one tome, I decided that, since the corpus acts as one complete story with four different entry points, it was necessary to use all four books as my corpus. Though each installment can be read individually, the web connecting characters and settings creates a thread through each novel, allowing me to complete a more profound investigation of Ruiz Zafón’s approach to his adult fiction. Especially since the publication of *El laberinto de los espíritus* in 2016, it seemed impossible to consider a corpus that did not include each piece of the cemetery’s puzzle. By using all four books, I am able to create a more holistic study of Ruiz Zafón’s narrative, particularly when considering the main themes of this dissertation, literature, memory, and gender. Furthermore, while there are connecting factors between Ruiz Zafón’s posthumously published short story collection, *La ciudad de vapor*, and “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” tetralogy, since it is not the same format, short stories instead of a novel, I chose to not include it in this second stage of literature, perhaps based on publication to be considered his third and final stage. Forming his stage of adult literature, “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” marks Ruiz Zafón’s most popular work. Since his literary output can be split between his young adult novels, “El cementerio de los libros olvidados,” and his short story collection, it is possible to study the tetralogy uniquely without a focus on his other work as their lack of engagement does not affect a reader’s connection to his titular saga.

For these reasons, my dissertation focuses solely on Ruiz Zafón's "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" and not on his complete nine-text oeuvre.

In terms of methodological techniques, I implement close-reading analysis, cultural analysis, and critical theory in order to unpack Ruiz Zafón's seminal work. Close reading analysis was used throughout my research to best approach Ruiz Zafón's work. Conducting in-depth dissections of his work, from storylines, use of genres, character development, to word choices between editions, allows for a clear analytical base for my research. This method of literary interpretation was a successful approach in my evaluation of the tetralogy, informing my process of analysing the literature. Twentieth-century theorists prominent in the development of close-reading in literary criticism include I.A. Richards, Allen Tate, and poet T.S. Eliot. My use of cultural analysis helps me prove that I can interpret a society through literature, literature acting as a mimetic device. Key to cultural analysis is Geert Hofstede's theory on cultural dimensions, highlighting how culture affects societal values. Indeed, cultural analysis allows for an understanding of both the behaviours of Ruiz Zafón's characters and the values in his literary universe which he pulls from twentieth-century Spain. Critical theory is also used in my dissertation to inform my critique of history and power dynamics demonstrated in the saga. Applying a critical theory lens to my work, I assert the ways Ruiz Zafón creates characters trapped in their social structures. This can be perceived, for example, in my investigation of Ruiz Zafón's female characters. Critical theory has contributions from theorists such as Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin among others, influencing scholarship across the globe since Max Horkheimer's 1937 essay defining the theory. These methods have allowed me to dissect Ruiz Zafón's texts, aiding in my analysis of the content. I have chosen these techniques as

fundamental as they allow me to place my voice and interpretation of Ruiz Zafón's work as central in my investigation.

Within my dissertation, I argue that this is a work that has been unjustly marginalized by critics due to its position in the "literary market" and the "Republic of Letters" in Spain, that has set it to been considered as a work of consumption, a "bestseller," and not a grand thesis nor meant for the intellectual elite of the country. In the following pages, I examine in detail the four books that constitute Carlos Ruiz Zafón's "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" saga: *La sombra del viento* (2001), *El juego del ángel* (2008), *El prisionero del cielo* (2011), and *El laberinto de los espíritus* (2016). By following the story of the Sempere family and their friends through mysteries enveloped by books and their authors, presented against a backdrop of the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship, it is possible for the reader to critically approximate themselves to the phenomenon of memory, gender, violence, identity, and politics. A key aim of my thesis is to provide context on how Ruiz Zafón portrays the use of the gothic mode throughout the series, in particular, with the representation of the city, Barcelona. Throughout this dissertation, I respond to questions such as: what are the achievements and challenges of the representation of literature in the saga? How does historical context affect the narrative? How does the use of Gothic affect the series? What patterns exist within the novels? How are mental health and psychological trauma demonstrated? What is the role of memory within the saga? And, how does Ruiz Zafón present female characters? Throughout my dissertation I aim to answer these questions and demonstrate the necessary role of my chosen themes in unpacking Ruiz Zafón's work. In general, my work seeks to demonstrate how traumas of the past affect Spain and its current literary production. Since pre-existing scholarship tends to only reflect research on *La sombra del viento*, I take a more holistic Zafonista approach by analysing all four

installments of the tetralogy in my work. In particular, since the final novel, *El laberinto de los espíritus* was only released in Spanish in 2016 and English in 2018, it is still a very new piece of literature, barely studied within the academic community as of yet. As well, a study regarding the saga's female characters has not yet been completed, allowing me to contribute even more to a current gap within the literature. This dissertation aims to improve reader's understanding of Ruiz Zafón's work through my approach that centers analysis on the presence of literature, memory, and gender within the tetralogy.

When exploring the themes mentioned above, this thesis is divided into three chapters, each one focusing on one of the core themes I identified, literature, memory, and gender. Concentrating on the topic of literature, the first chapter of my dissertation looks at the impact of books and writers in "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" saga. Since the base of the corpus is an homage to literature, I begin with an investigation on the influence of books and other types of literature presented in the novels. This is followed by an exploration of intertextual references seen in the books, including to the Gothic literary tradition, religious texts, and to canonical authors such as Charles Dickens and Miguel de Cervantes. In my consideration of the proliferation of literature in the saga, I also present the many spaces of literature in the series that act as community builders. Core spaces that I analyse in the tetralogy are the Sempere e hijos bookstore and, of course, the titular space, el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados. In the following section, I move from the physical book to the impact it has on character identity. Beginning with a breakdown of characters who dream of becoming authors, I investigate character development in conjunction to literature. Relationships with literature are also explored, in particular, through an investigation of how female characters are connected to the

literary field. And finally, I analyse the case of the “unreliable” narrator, David Martín, and how his deteriorating mental health affects his identity as an author and narrator in the saga.

In the second chapter of this dissertation, I explore the idea of memory connected to the recent past: the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco. This recuperation of memory begins through an analysis of 21<sup>st</sup>-century literature, a literary trend that focused on the exploration of the recent past through fiction in the post-Franco era. This is followed with a discussion on the way Ruiz Zafón depicts the main setting of the saga: Barcelona. I outline the ways in which Ruiz Zafón creates a gothic Barcelona, using the Gothic as a tool to reflect on the repression of the dictatorship. This formation of Barcelona is important for my analysis of sites of punishment and imprisonment depicted in the novels, and in Barcelona at large. The Gothicisation of the saga is further detailed through the use of characters who demonstrate political opposition and examples of psychological torture seen under the Francoist regime. A deliberation on culture seen under Franco within Ruiz Zafón’s novels closes this chapter, investigating the question of different socioeconomic positions of the characters, and the influence of film within society, namely the Americanisation of culture. Overall, this chapter seeks to connect Ruiz Zafón with the canon of literature that aims at recovering the memory of the past and identifies key elements of his series that allow for said inclusion.

In the third chapter, I proceed with an investigation of female representation within the saga, highlighting the ways Ruiz Zafón writes women. In order to best understand the female characters within the author’s literary universe, I identify and present four main archetypes: the mother, the sex worker, the religious woman, and the disabled woman. In each section, I demonstrate how Ruiz Zafón approaches these different types of female characters, outlining how these markers affect their identities. Once the female characters are established, I move on

to analyse their placement within the literary universe and how they are treated by male characters and the author. This section includes the many cases of violence against women seen within the saga. I also underscore the objectification of the female characters through patterns of sexualization, love triangles, and the replacement of women with objects. These patterns foment Ruiz Zafón's commentary on the treatment of women within twentieth-century Spain.

In my conclusion, I provide an overview of the ways in which Ruiz Zafón discussed his tetralogy, how the novels affected his other literary production, and how he fit within Catalan literature. I begin by presenting main topics of discussion seen in interviews with Ruiz Zafón, demonstrating the ways he perceived his work and intentions for the saga. Conversation points analysed include his personification of Barcelona, his rejection of adapting his novels into film, and his interest in language. I move on to discuss the post "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" text, the posthumously published collection of short stories. Here, I outline the publication history of each short story and discuss how the tales connect thematically to his tetralogy. It becomes evident to the reader within this section the deep impact that "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" held on his other literary production. The final point of exploration within my conclusion is how Ruiz Zafón fits into Catalan literature and how the Spanish Civil War, dictatorship of Francisco Franco, and the Catalan independence movement affect this literature. Through a reflection on history and works that depict these time periods within their narratives, I highlight their connections to Ruiz Zafón. Finally, I close this dissertation with a few words summarizing my work and the main themes presented.



## Chapter 1: Books and Writers in “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” Saga

“Cuando una novela nos impacta, somos lo que leemos”  
 – Sergi Doria, *Guía de la Barcelona de Carlos Ruiz Zafón*

Carlos Ruiz Zafón’s pays homage to literature in his bestselling series, “El cementerio de los libros olvidados.” His passion for literature is palpable through the narrative structures, the formation of the literary universe, the crux of the mysteries, and character development. The tetralogy is comprised of books about books (and their authors), creating storylines centered around literature. Two main themes drive this chapter: the role of literature within the series and character identity in relation to literature, prominent topics in Ruiz Zafón’s literary universe. I begin by presenting the different types of literature present within the saga as well as intertextual references and influences. This portion highlights Ruiz Zafón’s interest in literature as genre and author references proliferate in the novels. Here, I additionally explore the spaces reserved for literature, including the tetralogy’s titular space, el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados. In the second section, I exhibit key examples of how literature affects character development within the novels. This includes commentary on characters who dream of becoming authors, characters’ relationships with literature, and the unreliable narrator. Overall, this chapter aims at delineating the important role that literature holds within Ruiz Zafón’s “El cementerio de los libros olvidados.”

### 1.1 The Role of Literature in “El cementerio de los libros olvidados”

Literature is a cherished field in Ruiz Zafón’s tetralogy. Whether it is books or other forms of literature, texts permeate Ruiz Zafón’s work, influencing both character development

and storylines. In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Arjun Appadurai remarks that “we have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things” (6). Following Appadurai’s call to focus on objects and the social lives of said objects, I would like to discuss how books are perceived within “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” series. Books become essential to the main storylines, the objects affecting both plot and character development. For instance, *La sombra del viento* written by Julián Carax (in Ruiz Zafón’s novel *La sombra del viento*) is the guiding force of the first book. Similarly, in *El laberinto de los espíritus*, Mataix’s book of the same name acts as a connector between the different characters and as a key piece of Alicia Gris’ investigation. By inserting books as active plot enhancers to the text, Ruiz Zafón underscores the vitality of books throughout the tetralogy. Hence, if meaning is inscribed by the form of the object, books are seen as necessary puzzle pieces within the corpus.

Books themselves play a pivotal role in the series as almost pseudo characters, furthering their typical “use” through this transformation. Books in the saga serve to advance the careers of their authors and to engage readers. Similar to authors, the value placed on books mimics that placed on authorship – success is driven from the object. Finally, considering a book’s trajectory within the tetralogy, Ruiz Zafón pays close attention to the social life of the object and its creation, from writing to publishing to sales. For the books that are considered high literature, the object will be considered a higher value object. For a book that does not receive the same accolades, its value is not as blatant. Books live in bookshops until selected by a giddy reader or traded for other objects or currency – continuously shifting their locations or forever sitting on a

shelf. In the particular case of this saga, when a book needs protection, its life is furthered through its final resting place in el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados. If one of these protected books is selected by one knowledgeable of the space, the life of the text is furthered even more through its new home. Though the trajectory of the book is dependent on human transactions and interactions, the book still has meaning inscribed upon it. Or, as Hrabrova et al. present, “Books are like people with their individual spiritual world, experience, destiny” (346).

Questioning the place of the book is critical in the saga. Hrabrova et al. delineate key questions presented by Ruiz Zafón demonstrating this pattern. They note that Ruiz Zafón:

poses to the reader the most problematic issues of his concern: 1) What is the role of the book in human life? 2) What is the role of the book in the formation of the individual? 3) What is the fortune (fate) of books in the modern (post-war) world? 4) What are the prospects for book publishing in the 20th century? 5) How does a society that sends books to the “cemetery” feel and develop? 6) How to save books from undeserved oblivion? 7) How to imbibe into the minds of people a taste for reading? 8) What is the deep connection between the author and the reader and how is it realized? 9) How to support a young talented writer, torn by intrapersonal conflicts and reversals of fortune, in the modern world? (Hrabrova et al. 346)

These questions penetrate the text, informing the reader of the importance of books and the need to preserve them within society. This gives rise to the question: What is a book? It is more than its structure, printed paper with words, bound together. It is more than just a title and an author, year or location of publication. The contents of books gain meaning as the text is consumed by the reader. As David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery discuss regarding the act of reading, “The material form of the text influences or guides the formation of meaning, while our

individuality impresses itself upon it” (102). In the case of Ruiz Zafón, books are more than just “things” – they are meaningful objects whose use and own story drive the plots of his work. This is evidenced by characters randomly selecting books in el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados, often stating that the book chose them and feeling as though it was meant to be theirs. This places power on the object and forces a connection between the book and its owner. The value of a text can be evaluated based on content learned or through its commercial status. So, for Ruiz Zafón, what are books? They are the epicenter of his work.

Within Ruiz Zafón’s narrative, the author utilizes the presentation of many different kinds of literature. While there is a focus on books, other forms of literature, such as newspapers and letters are presented as a means to gather and share information. The importance of literature within twentieth-century Spain is exemplified within Ruiz Zafón’s work. He places value on the objects, creating an abundance of intertextual links in order to pay homage to the field. These intertextual references are included in all four novels of the saga, fomenting their place as a key literary technique within Ruiz Zafón’s work. Finally, Ruiz Zafón explores spaces of literature within his work, creating environments wherein which characters can interact with literature and build relationships with the texts.

### ***Types of Literature in The Text***

There are many different kinds of texts observed in “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” saga. While books are the most prominent form of literature, letters, newspapers, and other documents are also present within the narrative. This mass incorporation of different types of literature arguably demonstrates Ruiz Zafón’s obsession with literary production. Though literature is meant to be protected in the series, there are a few cases of destruction of literature.

This includes Laín Coubert (aka Julián Carax) burning his entire literary collection in *La sombra del viento*, and the work of Ignatius B. Samson (aka David Martín) in *El juego del ángel* destroyed in the fire at Barrido y Escobillas' publishing house. In both cases, the destruction of literature is meant to "free" the authors from their work – separating themselves from their texts. The tradition of burning books is also seen in Spanish history and literature. For a historical example, Visigoth King, Recared, once burned all the Arian texts in the region due to his conversion to Catholicism. Even in fictional examples, in Cervantes' *Don Quijote*, the priest, barber, and niece burn Alonso Quijano's books. In both cases, books are seen as potentially dangerous objects that can be used to undermine hegemony. Through these historical examples, along with the examples within Ruiz Zafón's work, it is implied that burning books is an act that connotes power, an attempt to erase the content from communal memory and to block it from future consumption.

Within the series, books are essential, used as a method to connect characters. In *La sombra del viento*, Daniel finding Julián Carax's *La sombra del viento* with his father, Juan, in el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados sets the stage for all future connections. Hoping to find out more information on Carax, Daniel and Juan go to meet with Gustavo Barceló, a knowledgeable bookseller and friend of Juan's. It is through Barceló that Daniel meets his niece, Clara, also a fan of Carax's work. Daniel and Clara become friends as Daniel reads to Clara from his copy of *La sombra del viento*, connecting the characters and fomenting their bond. The mystery behind Julián Carax, his disappearance, and the burning of all his books connects Daniel to both his best friend, Fermín Romero de Torres, and his love interest, Bea Aguilar, as he shares details on the case. Even so, the mystery surrounding the book and its author also connect Daniel to Julián's past, to Nuria Montfort who shares the truth about Julián's life, to the Aldaya mansion where

they discover Penélope and Julián had once conceived a child and where both the mother and child were laid to rest, and to the cop Francisco Javier Fumero, the jealous schoolmate of Julián Carax who was obsessed with Penélope and through his jealousy, vowed to kill Julián. And, of course, the book acts as a connector between Daniel Sempere and Julián Carax, linking their lives and their stories together.

In a similar fashion, in *El juego del ángel*, David Martín's *Lux Aeterna* connects him with the devil/publisher Andreas Corelli and to Isabella Gispert who acts as his assistant. His writing of *El juego del ángel* in *El prisionero del cielo* links him to Fermín, also a prisoner with Martín, and to Daniel Sempere when, in el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados, the gatekeeper, Isaac Montfort, gives Daniel and Fermín the manuscript written by Martín. This manuscript, as well as the accompanying note, alert Daniel and the reader of Martín's true connection to Isabella and to the role of Mauricio Valls in her death.

In *El laberinto de los espíritus*, Víctor Mataix's book, *El laberinto de los espíritus: VII Ariadna y el príncipe Escarlata* acts as a connector between the author and his backstory to Alicia Gris as she finds a copy of his book hidden in Mauricio Valls' desk, pushing her to believe that the book is a vital clue in her investigation. The book connects Mataix to Valls, to David Martín, and to Victoria Ubach and Mercedes Valls – Víctor's stolen daughters born with the names Ariadna and Sonia. The book also brings Alicia to Barcelona and to the Sempere e Hijos bookshop, linking the characters together. Little Julián Sempere also has a copy of this book, connecting him and his family to the storyline through the object. These examples demonstrate that books are the building blocks for Ruiz Zafón's storylines, allowing for him to shape his novels around the objects.

Correspondence is also utilized as a different form of literature to provide context to characters' backgrounds. For example, in *La sombra del viento*, Clara recounts how her father would send letters during the war while she and her mother were in exile in France (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 33). These letters allowed for Clara to unite with her father, a character who is killed in Montjuïc castle by Francisco Javier Fumero due to his political opposition. This example also provides historical context for the novels, commenting on the politics of Spain and the horrors of the war and the following dictatorship. Similarly, Daniel receives a letter from the Gobierno Militar de Barcelona Oficina de Reclutamiento informing him that he had been drafted into the military (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 392). This detail again adds layers to the politics as it is only through corruption and connection from right-wing figures that Daniel is sent a conscription notice. In *La sombra del viento*, Daniel finds a letter written years prior by Penélope Aldaya that was intended for Julián Carax (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 170-71). Julián never received the letter that spoke of her being trapped within her own home, unable to leave. This letter acts as a piece to the puzzle around Julián Carax's life. Perhaps the most important letter of the novel, Nuria Montfort's letter to Daniel Sempere alerts Daniel of Julián's past with the Aldaya family and the truth about his identity, their life and experience together, her fear of Francisco Javier Fumero, and Julián's transformation into Laín Coubert. It is after her death that Daniel gets to read her story, allowing Nuria to have agency of her tale only after her death.

Letters from Andreas Corelli to David Martín appear across *El juego del ángel*. These letters push Martín to believe that Corelli is real and force him to write *Lux Aeterna*. Letters to Martín from Cristina Vidal are also sent, however, Isabella hides them from Martín, breaking their trust when he finally discovers them (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 431-2). In *El prisionero del cielo*, Mauricio Valls interferes in the lives of Daniel Sempere and his wife, Bea Aguilar, by

convincing his employee and Bea's ex-fiancé, Pablo Cascos Buendía, to write a letter to Bea. This interference is a tactic to get closer to the Sempere family and try to obtain information on David Martín.

Fermín Romero de Torres carries a letter as he travels as a stowaway in the bottom of a boat from Valencia to Barcelona during the war. The reason for his journey is to deliver said letter to his friend's wife, Lucía (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 37). When Fermín arrives at her home, Lucía is not there, her mother-in-law alerting him that she had been taken by the police two months earlier and was likely dead (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 60). However, by journeying to the house with this purpose, Fermín was able to save a young Alicia Gris from being killed in the bombings (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 63). Another connection to the war and dictatorship is presented through a letter at Mauricio Vall's masked ball. At the event, a letter from Francisco Franco is read, highlighting Valls' political position:

Querido amigo Mauricio, español universal y colaborador indispensable que tanto has hecho por nuestro país y por nuestra cultura: Doña Carmen y yo mismo queremos hacerte llegar nuestro más afectuoso abrazo y nuestro agradecimiento en nombre de todos los españoles por veinte años de servicio ejemplar... (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 87)

This historical insertion suggests Valls' rank within the dictatorship, being high enough up in the system that Franco himself was invited to the party. It connotes his position of power and political status. In an attempt to psychologically torture Valls as part of her plan for revenge, Ariadna Mataix writes letters to Valls pretending to be David Martín (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 728-729). The letters do intimidate Valls, and represent the beginning to the end of his power and control. These cases all exemplify the importance of letters within the saga. The personalized



form of writing connects characters through this mode of communication. Letters are therefore used as a tool to provide context and knowledge to characters, providing missing links.

Newspapers constitute an additional form of literature in the series. The production of newspapers is visible in *El juego del ángel* when David Martín works at *La voz de la industria*. This job kicks off Martín's journey as a writer when his boss, Don Basilio allows him to publish some of his own work: "me ofreció la oportunidad de publicar un par más de relatos de corte similar. Pronto la dirección decidió que mi fulgurante carrera tendría periodicidad semanal, siempre y cuando siguiera desempeñando puntualmente mis labores en la redacción por el mismo precio" (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 19). Writing stories for the newspaper holds a special place in literary history, including for Ruiz Zafón who similarly had short stories published in the paper. Newspapers can also be manipulated, as is the case in *La sombra del viento*, where a headline declares that Nuria Montfort was stabbed to death with the tagline: "un indigente asesina a una mujer a plena luz del día" (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 405). While Nuria was indeed murdered, this article is planted in order to frame Fermín Romero de Torres for the crime, instead of the true killer, Francisco Javier Fumero. In *El laberinto de los espíritus* an image of a newspaper appears with the tagline: "fallece un gran español. Muere el ministro Mauricio Valls en un accidente de tráfico" (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 654).<sup>4</sup> After stating that the Generalissimo, Francisco Franco, due to the death, declares public mourning for three days, the article reads: "fue una luz resplandeciente en el firmamento de una nueva España grande y libre renacida en la gloria de las cenizas de la guerra. Encarnó los más altos valores del Movimiento y llevó las letras

---

<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that different editions have different images – the Spanish volume from 2016 has a large grey square acting as the newspaper whereas the 2018 English edition has an image mimicking that of a newspaper (see page 561 in the English edition).

y la cultura españolas a lo más alto” (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 654). While the article claims that Valls is dead, out of the public eye, Alicia Gris and her partner Vargas are sent to solve the mystery surrounding Valls’ disappearance. This story ultimately proves to be false, indicating the use of the media to sway the public. By including false headlines, Ruiz Zafón critiques the news industry and corruption during the dictatorship.

Legal documents are a final type of literature presented within the tetralogy. Legal documents are found in the office of the lawyer, Fernando Brians, in warehouses, notebooks, and archives throughout the novels. In fact, archival documents are manipulated in the series in order to create identities, both in *El prisionero del cielo* and *El laberinto de los espíritus*. In *El prisionero del cielo*, Fermín admits to Daniel that his name was not the one he was born with, signifying that he had no legal documents to prove his existence. He had needed to use a fake name for his own protection during the war and dictatorship. In an act of friendship, Daniel, with the help of Professor Albuquerque and the scribe, Oswaldo, is able to validate Fermín Romero de Torres’ identity. Since, as Professor Albuquerque comments, part of the archive had been destroyed during the war, it was easier to facilitate the installment of the counterfeit documents to the archive with little chance of being caught in the future (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 290). This act is lifechanging for Fermín who can finally live without fear of being caught without legal papers and allows him to legally marry his wife, Bernarda. In a similar case, the identities of Sonia and Ariadna Mataix were also manipulated through archival documents. In *El laberinto de los espíritus*, Alicia finds death certificates for the girls and hundreds of other children along with birth certificates with fake names. These documents proved the corruption of the dictatorship and people of power who had stolen babies and claimed them as their own children.

These cases establish a pattern of falsity among archives, demonstrating how common and easy it is to fabricate information.

Ruiz Zafón includes varying types of literature within his tetralogy. While it is evident that books are fundamental to the saga, the presence of multiple other formats of literature demonstrate how holistically Ruiz Zafón sees literature. From books to legal documents, the involvement of different formats of writing are transcendent to the novels, creating connection points between characters.

### ***Intertextuality***

Intertextual references exist throughout Carlos Ruiz Zafón's tetralogy. References to both Ruiz Zafón's own work and to the literary canon at large are seen across his novels, adding Easter eggs throughout the texts. Critics have compared Ruiz Zafón's work to that of Edgar Allan Poe, Arturo Perez Reverte, Stephen King, Bram Stoker, Wilkie Collins, Orsen Wells, Miguel de Cervantes, and Jorge Luis Borges. Due to his bestselling status across English markets, Ruiz Zafón is more often compared within this market instead of the contemporary Spanish market. Since Ruiz Zafón's work "linked multiple genres – fantasy, historical, romance, meta-fictional, police-procedural and political – through prose of atmospheric specificity," the author is able to pull from various literary genres and authors (Lawson). Different intertextualities that I will develop over the following pages include references to Ruiz Zafón's own work, religious texts, the Hispanic, English, and French literary canons, the crime novel, and Gothic fiction. These different pieces all play a part in influencing Ruiz Zafón's "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" saga.

When Daniel Sempere reads Julián Carax's novel, *La sombra del viento*, for the first time, he observes the following:

A medida que avanzaba, la estructura del relato empezó a recordarme a una de esas muñecas rusas que contienen innumerables miniaturas de sí mismas en su interior. Paso a paso, la narración se descomponía en mil historias, como si el relato hubiese penetrado en una galería de espejos y su identidad se escindiera en docenas de reflejos diferentes y al tiempo uno solo. Los minutos y las horas se deslizaron como un espejismo. (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 19)

This quote, though meant to describe Carax's novel, is used as a tool to also describe the novel by Ruiz Zafón. Indeed, the tetralogy is based on this premise, stories within stories within stories. A perfect example of this insertion of tales is the inclusion of books within the series that hold the same name as the author's own work. This fact acts as a continuous link across the saga and, ultimately, links Ruiz Zafón to his characters. At the end of *El laberinto de los espíritus*, Julián Sempere, son of Daniel and Bea, recounts his part of the story. In his tale, he narrates his interest in writing his family's story, asking permission to share their lives with the public (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 919). In order to write the novels, Julián Sempere seeks guidance from Julián Carax. The two strike a deal, and though Sempere writes the novels and Carax edits, Sempere insists that Carax must be named author. Through these details, the reader becomes aware that it is therefore Julián Sempere who is narrating Ruiz Zafón's four-book series, merging his voice and that of Ruiz Zafón's into one through Ruiz Zafón's alter ego, Carax. Within this section, Ruiz Zafón uses Julián Sempere's narrative to create a meta reality in the text. While it is a revealing plot enhancer to connect the three voices of Sempere, Carax, and Ruiz Zafón, the novel constantly seeks to decenter the idea of a single author. As Barthes notes: "to give a text an

Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing” (147). It is the reader’s job to decipher and reinterpret the different authorial voices across the saga.

Intertextual references also connect Julián Sempere’s publishing experience to Ruiz Zafón’s own publication history. In *El laberinto de los espíritus*, Julián Sempere meets Lucia Heargraves and Herr Peter Schwarzenbald in Paris (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 895). These figures mimic the real-life translators of the series, Lucia Graves, who translated all four books from “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” from Spanish to English, and Peter Schwaar who translated them from Spanish to German. In fact, translators are not the only remastered people included in the text. Ruiz Zafón’s editor, Emili Rosales i Castellà is credited as Parisian editor Émile de Rosiers (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 899).<sup>5</sup> Émile is set to publish Julián Sempere’s books under the firm Éditions de la Lumière, another intertextual reference as this publishing house is first introduced in *El juego del ángel* when David Martín gets a business card for the mysterious editor, Andreas Corelli (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 899; *El juego* 42). Ruiz Zafón also includes references to his friend, writer and journalist, Sergio Vila-Sanjuán as Sergio Vilajuana (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 267).<sup>6</sup> Catalan writer Alfons Brosel i Jordà is also referenced as local writer

---

<sup>5</sup> In Ruiz Zafón’s posthumously published *La ciudad de vapor*, the book begins with a note from the editor. Here again, lines are blurred between fiction and reality as instead of listing Emili de Rosales i Castellà, the name Émile de Rosiers Castellaine is listed (Ruiz Zafón, *La ciudad* 11).

<sup>6</sup> Vila-Sanjuán notably wrote the prologue to Sergi Doria’s *Guía de la Barcelona de Carlos Ruiz Zafón* (2008), at to *Barcelona Gothic*, a small collection of Ruiz Zafón’s short stories, to be published again in *La ciudad de vapor*, further connecting the friends and their work.

Alfons Brosel as well as French writer and translator, François Maspero (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 719; 896). By inserting reality into the fiction through real-life figures, and by including a version of himself as Julián Sempere, a version of Ruiz Zafón is manifested within the fictional world. Reminiscent of both Cervantes' *Don Quijote* and Borges' "Borges y yo," the author is inserted within the text as a separate entity and the same at once, Ruiz Zafón recreates himself as a fictional character within his literary universe. This narrative tool blurs the lines between writer, narrator, and voice, creating space for both Ruiz Zafón and his character Julián Sempere to claim a place of authorship. A perfect example of the mixing of the voices is seen through the following epithet on page 28 of *El laberinto de los espíritus*:

Fragmento de  
*El Laberinto de los Espíritus*  
 (El Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados, Volumen IV),  
 de Julián Carax.  
 Éditions de la Lumière, París, 1992. Edición a cargo de  
 Émile de Rosiers Castellaine

Here credit for the novel is given to Julián Carax and Émile de Rosiers Castellaine – it is only at the end of the novel that the reader learns that it was Julián Sempere who wrote the novels, and, that these four novels correlate to Ruiz Zafón's four novels of the same name.

Religious literature, most prominently the Christian Bible, makes an impact on Ruiz Zafón's writing. Religious iconography with the discussion and presence of angels and demons, heaven and hell, and the devil all penetrate the text. For instance, the very structure of el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados as an underworld creates this connotation to the religious imagery. In *La sombra del viento* by Julián Carax, Láin Coubert is the name used by the devil (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 87). When Daniel meets an intimidating figure who goes by the name

Laín Coubert, Daniel is immediately afraid, unaware that Laín is not the devil, but actually his hero, Julián Carax.

Section titles within the novels allude to religious ideology. In *El juego del ángel*, acts one and two are titled “La ciudad de los malditos” and “Lux Aeterna” (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 7; 199). These section titles, are consistent with references to angels, the devil, heaven and hell, and damnation. These themes, often contemplated by the novel’s lead character, David Martín, emphasize the idea of questioning religion. In *El prisionero del cielo* (again, a reference to Martín who was called this by fellow inmates while in prison due to his failing mental health), titles such as “De entre los muertos” and “Volver a nacer” continue with the rhetoric of religious ideologies (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 91; 199). Similar to *El juego del ángel*, *El laberinto de los espíritus* also includes Latin section titles such as “Dies Irae,” “Agnus Dei,” “Libera Me,” and “In Paradisum” which, again, enforce the religious rhetoric debated within the text (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 29; 657; 793; 817). Even more, the novels which focus more on David Martín, *El juego del ángel* and *El prisionero del cielo*, evoke connotations of hell through the use of “game” and “prisoner,” allowing for a reversal of meaning away from ideas of heaven and angels. Indeed, it is not an angel who is playing a game within *El juego del ángel*, but instead, the devil-like character, Andreas Corelli. Indirect references to the Bible are also present as the content of *El juego del ángel* prompts the reader to question religion and ideologies about life and death, heaven and hell. In this text, Martín is tasked by angel/devil Andreas Corelli to write a new religious manifesto, a new Bible. Martín’s manuscript, titled *Lux Aeterna*, has the intent to change minds through different rhetoric, anecdotes, and stories. This text is ultimately hidden in el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados as Martín finds the contents could lead to danger. With Ruiz Zafón’s layering of stories and narratives, a pseudo religion or rhetoric on religion is

contemplated by the author through Martín. Martín's likely case of schizophrenia enforces the idea of questioning reality and religion, allowing for Ruiz Zafón, in the twenty-first century, to reflect back on the role of religion within twentieth-century Spain.

The "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" saga is influenced by the Hispanic, English, and French literary canons. With the Hispanic canon in mind, the work of Miguel de Cervantes is one of the most prolific intertextualities seen within the tetralogy. Not only is Cervantes' *Don Quijote* mentioned in passing (like El Cid from *El cantar del mio Cid*), but it is used as a tool to develop his storytelling techniques and provide context to understand characters. Similar to Cervantes, Ruiz Zafón manipulates multiple layers of stories within his novels, playing with these layers to create one complete account. The use of the narrative voices and questioning of authorship fall directly into this intertextual reference, connecting the voice of Julián Sempere to that of Cide Hamete Benengeli and the role of Ruiz Zafón to that of Cervantes. In terms of characters, Ruiz Zafón mimics the relationship structure of Don Quijote and Sancho Panza to Daniel Sempere and Fermín Romero de Torres. Their banter and adventures run similarly to the famous pair, cementing from *La sombra del viento* Cervantes' influence on his work. Within *El juego del ángel* and subsequent examples of David Martín in the saga, the character echoes the separation from reality also experienced by Don Quijote. Where Don Quijote sees his lovely Dulcinea de Toboso, Martín sees Andreas Corelli. Where Don Quijote fights windmill monsters, Martín fights the police. The sanity of the characters is questioned in both cases, furthering the connection within these disconcerting scenes. Moreover, both Quijote and Martín's dedication to literature, though a perceived danger to them, furthers the mimetic approach. This is evidenced through Don Quijote's books being burned and Cristina's endeavouring to destroy Martín's



manuscript in attempts to protect the characters. The allusions to Cervantes' *Don Quijote* are indeed regularly made, in particular, when considering the popularity of Ruiz Zafón's work.

Since *el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados* is such an important space within the literary universe, it is also critical to comment on the obviously placed intertextual references to Jorge Luis Borges' "Biblioteca de Babel." Ruiz Zafón's space can be directly compared to Borges' infinite library. Ruiz Zafón takes from Borges' library and recreates it in his own way – in the form of a cemetery. This ode to the labyrinth of books is exemplified within the text, creating a new world of literature. In both texts, meaning is ascribed to the space itself as well as its contents, the books. Both Borges' library and Ruiz Zafón's cemetery are seen as protected spaces within time, however, their forms are where they differ. In Borges' "Biblioteca de Babel," there is structure – each floor is the same with the same number of books and hexagonal organization. Within Ruiz Zafón's space, the pathways twist and turn to different areas without such a rigid organization. Perhaps, this change is to make it more like a cemetery where the different graves are not all alike, where the different rooms are catacombs and the shelves rows of gravestones. Be it as it may, the reference to Borges lingers on throughout the text as a reminder of canonical literature, a requiem to the famous literary space.

Other connections to the Spanish literary canon are subtle. For instance, Gustavo Barceló has two birds, Ortega and Gasset, referencing the famous Spanish writer José Ortega y Gasset. This reference also acts, not only as an ode to the famous intellect, but as a political commentary as Ortega y Gasset was an integral thinker to the Republic. When reviewing the series, Mark Lawson observes influence from both Benito Pérez Galdós and Eduardo Mendoza. This is substantiated in *El juego del ángel*, when, working at the newspaper *La voz de la industria*, David Martín's boss makes reference to Galdós. Don Basilio, commenting on Martín's *The*

*Mysteries of Barcelona* stories in the paper, remarks: “tiene usted más oficio que buen gusto, Martín...Tendría que leer a los clásicos, o al menos a don Benito Pérez Galdós, para elevar sus aspiraciones literarias” (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 21). This reference exalts the canon, demonstrates distaste for popular literature, and connects to other parts of the saga where more references of the Spanish canon are mentioned. For instance, within *El laberinto de los espíritus* poetry from the Golden Age is mentioned as well as female writers when discussing Alicia Gris. When Alicia Gris contemplates what she will do with her life when she is finally able to quit her job with Leandro Montalva, she declares that she would like to be a writer (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 502). From here, characters debate whom she will be most like: the new Laforet or Pardo Bazán (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 502). The place of gender becomes clear within this scene as Alicia, within this society, could only ever be compared to female writers, and not the many male writers clearly exalted within the novels. Even so, including these two female writers within his list of intertextual references is still an important consideration as the series purposefully pulls from different parts of the Hispanic canon. According to Glennis Byron, Ruiz Zafón follows the “Hispanic tradition of books about books, a tradition moving from Cervantes through Borges to Pérez-Reverte. It is full of references to other books, other stories, from *The Odyssey* to *Le fantôme de l’opéra*. It is a book that is, quite self-consciously, produced from other books, and about books; even its title is the title of a book in the textual world” (77). This intertextual layering is visible throughout the saga (and not just in *La sombra del viento* – the subject of Byron’s article).

Charles Dickens, Alexander Dumas, and Lewis Carroll also influence Ruiz Zafón’s work. In *El juego del ángel*, *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens is presented as David Martín’s favourite book, used as an ongoing reference within the novel. Martín is introduced to the text

when he receives it as a gift, loving it immediately: “Sempere me hizo el mejor regalo que he recibido en toda mi vida” (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 52). Señor Sempere, Daniel Sempere’s grandfather, believed that the text would be impactful for a young Martín who already adored literature. Unfortunately for Martín, his father did not approve of him reading. Due to his father’s violent temper and distaste for books, Martín is forced to return the edition to the Sempere e Hijos bookshop to keep it safe (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 54). When his father dies, he returns to the bookshop to finally purchase the old copy of *Great Expectations*, however, señor Sempere informs him that the book had just been sold, meaning he was unable to reclaim the copy (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 63). Interestingly, before and after owning the novel, reference to the title’s name is evident. Martín expresses: “en mi mundo, las esperanzas, grandes y pequeñas, raramente se hacían realidad,” a phrase that is restructured a few pages later as: “en mi mundo, las grandes esperanzas sólo vivían entre las páginas de un libro” (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 48; 59). By noting that “great expectations” are only visible in a book, it not only references the book *Great Expectations* in of itself, but it also highlights Martín’s two realities: that of life and that of literature. These phrases also emphasize Martín’s sociopolitical situation by repeating “in my world,” accentuating his lived experience. Moreover, the progress and structure of Ruiz Zafón’s four books, following the different members of the Sempere family and their friends, creates a coming-of-age story with Daniel at the center. The reader watches him grow from a child to a father, uncovering secrets of the past. This web can be connected to that of Dickens’ where here, the Sempere family, acts as a focal point of transformation within the narrative.

If *Great Expectations* provides context for *El juego del ángel*, the French author Alexander Dumas’ *The Count of Monte Cristo* does the same for *El prisionero del cielo*. Dumas’ famous work provides inspiration for David Martín to create an escape plan to help Fermín

Romero de Torres to leave prison. In both scenarios, men have been wrongly convicted and need a way out. Using the text as a means to connect Martín and Fermín, Ruiz Zafón creates the implication that only men of letters would of course be knowledgeable of the text and its content. As well, by referencing this text, Ruiz Zafón provides a foreshadowing technique, showing that the escape plan will be successful.

For *El laberinto de los espíritus*, Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* fulfills the same pattern as Dickens and Dumas. When Alicia Gris first appears as a child in the novel, she is described as holding a copy of *Alice in Wonderland* (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 59). The reference to the novel is not lost on the reader, with even her name, Alicia, referencing Alice. This alerts the reader that something will soon occur, forcing Alicia into her own Wonderland. Immediately thereafter, areal bombings over Barcelona commence, and Alicia is forced to run to save her life. Fleeing the scene, she falls through a glass ceiling leading into el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados – literally into a Wonderland of sorts (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 68). Instead of falling into Wonderland, Alicia falls into the cemetery within Barcelona. Similar to the use of the Quixotesque rhetoric, the use of *Alice in Wonderland* mitigates a rupture of reality. Within Ruiz Zafón's work, he pushes to shock readers with the idea that things are not always what they seem. The rupture from logic seen within Carroll is therefore mimicked within "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" series, highlighting the farse that the author creates within the text. The intertextuality here is packed as Barcelona is re-established as a Wonderland, as a labyrinth, and as a city of horrors. Steenmeijer writes on Ruiz Zafón's use of Barcelona: "even the novel's setting is open to various interpretations. Is Ruiz Zafón's Barcelona 'real'? Is it a literary creation? Or is it both?" ("One Brand" 198). These questions force the reader to contemplate the

intertextual implications surrounding Ruiz Zafón's Barcelona, opening up for consideration the narrative techniques applied by the author.

Ariadna Mataix also connects to the reference of *Alice in Wonderland* within Ruiz Zafón's work. Within the saga, it is said that Víctor Mataix, her father, wrote his series of novels with his daughter as influence, using her name as that of the protagonist and her favourite book, *Alice in Wonderland* as inspiration: "Ariadna era su Alicia, y en vez de un País de las Maravillas Mataix inventó una Barcelona de los horrores, infernal, de pesadilla. Con cada libro, el escenario, que era tan o más protagonista que Ariadna y los extravagantes personajes que se va encontrando a lo largo de sus aventuras, de forma progresiva se hace más siniestro" (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 193). Meant to pay homage to Carroll's tale, the plot of Víctor Mataix's *El laberinto de los espíritus VII: Ariadna y el príncipe Escarlata* is described as follows:

En el primer libro de la serie, Ariadna encuentra un libro de encantamientos en el desván del caserón de Vallvidrera en el que vive con sus padres hasta que ellos desaparecen de forma misteriosa una noche de tormenta. Creyendo que si conjura un espíritu de las sombras tal vez pueda encontrarlos, Ariadna abre sin darse cuenta un pórtico entre Barcelona real y su reverso, un reflejo maldito de la ciudad. La Ciudad de los Espejos...El suelo se quiebra a sus pies y Ariadna cae por una escalera de caracol interminable rumbo a las tinieblas hasta llegar a esa otra Barcelona, el laberinto de los espíritus, donde queda condenada a vagar...mientras busca a sus padres desaparecidos. (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 265-6)

Ariadna's fall recalls that of Alice into Wonderland. Although this book would have been published before her kidnapping, Ruiz Zafón uses it to foreshadow Ariadna's reality and the fall she will take into the horrors of the regime. In Ariadna's reality, her parents are disappeared, she

is kidnapped, and she is trapped with guardians who are corrupt, abusive, and force her to live as Victoria Ubach. Of course, Ariadna's birth name is also intentional. If Alicia is the Alice of Wonderland, it makes Ariadna Theseus' helper from the Greek myth of the Labyrinth of Crete, helping him kill the Minotaur inside its lair. Here, it is Ariadna's plan for revenge that propels the novel, *El laberinto de los espíritus* transforming into the Labyrinth of Crete. Instead of Theseus, she helps Alicia Gris kill the Minotaur of Ruiz Zafón's literary universe: the Francoists.

Ruiz Zafón makes his opinions on literature clear within the tetralogy, mentioning authors who suit his literary taste. This is seen, for example, when Julián Carax is said to have been spending his time reading texts by Dickens, Zola, Balzac, and Hugo (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 500). In *El prisionero del cielo*, Dickens, Dumas, and Galdós are all listed as authors Mauricio Valls banned and removed from the prison library, demonstrating Ruiz Zafón's respect for the authors through Valls' opposition to them (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 122). By having the evil Valls censor the authors, it turns them into must-reads. Other mentions include Edgar Allan Poe in *El juego del ángel*, and Lord Byron in *La sombra del viento* (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 14; *La sombra* 22). Moreover, when Bea Aguilar is first brought to el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados, she, following the rules of the space, is allowed to select a text. She chooses a copy of Thomas Hardy's *Tess D'Urbervilles*, the classic English text that follows the tragic life of Tess and her misfortunes (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 21). Bea's selection both glorifies the British writer and is purposeful in the choice as it creates a scenario where a female character is drawn to a text centering on the female experience.

"El cementerio de los libros olvidados" tetralogy is influenced by a variety of different genres, notably crime fiction and the Gothic novel. As signaled by Steenmeijer, the saga is a blend of the "gothic novel, Bildungsroman, adventure novel, thriller, historical novel, romantic

novel, mystery novel, picaresque novel” (“One Brand” 198). Agreeingly, Tiffany Trotman notes that “the narrative is a hybrid novel that marries the suspense created through noir fiction, or *novela negra*, and Gothic fiction” (269). The blending of genres, perhaps chosen for its malleability in different markets, is a key literary feature of the series. When considering the influence of crime fiction, Ruiz Zafón’s work follows the tradition of the Spanish *novela negra* represented by authors such as Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, Eduardo Mendoza, Andreu Martín, and Alicia Giménez Bartlett. These famous authors have worked to create space for the Barcelona crime novel within the Spanish literary field. Ruiz Zafón acts as a continuation of these authors who also come from and write about Barcelona. Indeed, the trend of the Catalan crime novel has risen in recent years, cementing the genre within Spanish literature. Even so, Ruiz Zafón, a chameleon of sorts, also takes from crime fiction foreign to Spain. Agatha Christie’s storytelling techniques are evident in Ruiz Zafón – lining up a case that seems nearly impossible to solve. Ruiz Zafón’s characters, like those of Christie, manage to connect the dots of the mysteries and demonstrate resolutions. Or again, the influence of Borges is apparent when inspecting the role of the detective in literature, evidenced, for example, through his short story “La muerte y la brújula” where the detective, Erik Lönnrot, like Alicia Gris, has a mystery uncover and solve. The literary bending as well of Stieg Larson can be compared to Ruiz Zafón as his bestseller, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, which can be categorized as crime fiction, thriller, and psychological thriller. And yet, preferring to not fall within a genre’s confines, Ruiz Zafón merges many genres together within his work. However, perhaps the most evident example of crime fiction influence within the novels is the repeated use of police chase scenes. These types of encounters are visible in all four installments of the series, with police figures attempt to stop (and/or kill) the saga’s heroes. This is seen for example, at the end of *La sombra*

*del viento* when Francisco Fumero follows Daniel Sempere into the Aldaya mansion in the hopes of finally killing him and Julián Carax or in *El laberinto de los espíritus* when Hendaya, Fumero's protégée, chases and tries to kill Alicia Gris in el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados.

The resurgence of the Gothic novel in twenty-first century literature in Spain greatly affected Ruiz Zafón's work. The use of Gothic literature influences is seen across the tetralogy, creating environments of fear that compel the reader to reach the end of the texts in order to seek relief and answers. The Gothic novel, influenced by the past and its architecture, traditionally European Gothic architecture, attempts to create stories built on other stories. Of course, Ruiz Zafón's narrative technique of creating stories within stories presented by different narrators serves as a firm example of Gothic influence within the saga. Indeed, Ruiz Zafón applies many narrative elements that belong to the Gothic, including layered histories, spaces of horror, and the use of the devil (Andreas Corelli). Other Gothic elements include: "stock events (a flight from a villain), particular settings (gloomy castles, labyrinths, and underground spaces), themes (taboo topics and extreme emotional states), a particular style (hyperbolic language and suspense) and narrative strategies (confusion, disjunction, dense sensationalist plots) as intrinsic features of the genre" (Trotman 270). The spaces of the Gothic are frequent in "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" where castles, prisons, and abandoned houses are all visible. In particular, the mixing of the traditional use of castle and prison is evidenced in the saga through Montjuïc prison, set in an old castle and used as a place of horror, of Francoist violence during the Spanish Civil War and dictatorship. The Aldaya mansion in *La sombra del viento*, with its own backstory of violence, represents the quintessential abandoned house. It is through this state of abandonment that Julián Carax, Daniel Sempere, and Bea Aguilar are able to connect – both with each other and to the past. Furthermore, el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados presents itself as



a Gothic space, a retelling of the past through the finding and protecting of books. Its architecture and mysterious location promote gothic tropes in the saga. The use of the Gothic within Ruiz Zafón's work can be seen through similar spaces like historical or abandoned architecture, the uncanny, the presence of "monsters," violence, a dark undertone, and the storytelling technique of including stories within stories. These elements come together to create the ideal backdrop for Ruiz Zafón's mystery, merging the Gothic with Spanish history.

Even so, when looking at the influence of the Gothic, Byron claims that the use of the descriptor is based purely on marketing techniques (72). Due to tactful branding, she asserts that "if Barcelona gothic previously conjured up little more than the Barrio Gótico, or a few gothic buildings like Santa María del Mar – it has now become firmly identified, at least for an English-speaking readership, with Zafón and his international bestsellers" (Byron 75). The Barrio Gótico, or in English, Gothic Quarter, in Barcelona is a quintessential space, of course, within previous Barcelona Gothic tales, however, its influence is palpable within Ruiz Zafón's work. The architecture and history of the area affecting the mood, tone, and setting of the author's novels.<sup>7</sup> While Byron believes the trait to be more connected to marketing tools, Trotman underscores many of the Gothic tropes present within *La sombra del viento*, stating:

Ruiz Zafón's novel incorporates one of the primary features of Gothic literature — social transgression. The narrative voice is highly critical of post-war conditions in Barcelona, the conservative social policies of the Franco regime, and the torture of innocent victims at the hands of Fascists. Like the Gothic narratives published in the wake of the French Revolution, Ruiz Zafón's narrative requires an environment free of censorship. (276)

---

<sup>7</sup> For more details on how Ruiz Zafón utilizes landmarks within the Gothic Quarter, see Sergi Doria, *Guía de la Barcelona de Carlos Ruiz Zafón*.

The Gothic influence on the series is therefore fomented even within the first novel, whether or not it was intentional. Intertextual links assert this connection, from the narrative techniques applied to the use of traditionally Gothic spaces. Here, intertextual references, like that of Charles Dickens and Edgar Allen Poe become even more obvious as the author points to others considered under this genre.

Texts that Ruiz Zafón deems worthy of reference are included within his saga, paying homage to literature. Since his series reflects a blending of genres, it allows for many different types of references to work together seamlessly. Creating a web of references, Ruiz Zafón writes his own labyrinth, linking the threads together to provide context for his own stories.

### ***Spaces of Literature***

Fundamental to Ruiz Zafón's tetralogy are the spaces reserved for literature in which characters connect with books. These spaces play a key role in driving the plot and creating a rich and diverse atmosphere, with books as the protagonists. Spaces of literature are vital: bookstores, libraries, and reading groups provide a place for the characters to bond and for an imagined community of readers and like-minded individuals to emerge (Finkelstein and McCleery 117). Indeed, within the series, the presence of bookstores, libraries and archives, publishing houses, and personal catalogues permeate the text, creating opportunities for community creation between characters. Two literary spaces, however, stand out within the tetralogy: the most important of the saga, el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados, and the Sempere e Hijos bookshop. These two locations ground the novel, connecting characters to a cherished space of literature as well as a main setting for the characters' lives.

El Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados acts as the main connector within Ruiz Zafón's literary universe, creating a clear line between protagonists and storylines. Reminiscent of the beginning of Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad*, the space is introduced in the very first line of the saga: "todavía recuerdo aquel amanecer en que mi padre me llevó por primera vez a visitar el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados" (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 13). The space is a secret hidden beneath Barcelona, only for those who value and want to preserve literature. Within the tetralogy, the Sempere, Bea Aguilar, Nuria Montfort, Fermín Romero de Torres, David Martín, and Alicia Gris, are among those who experience the cemetery. The rules of the literary space are clear: one may always bring books to the cemetery to save them,<sup>8</sup> each person can select a single book to remove from the cemetery, and it must be kept a secret – unless you share it with someone who will truly protect the space and follow its rules. The cemetery becomes a rite of passage for family members to share the space with the next generation. When Daniel Sempere enters el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados for the first time with his father, he narrates:

Llegamos a una gran sala circular donde una auténtica basílica de tinieblas yacía bajo una cúpula acuchillada por haces de luz que pendían desde lo alto. Un laberinto de corredores y estanterías repletas de libros ascendía desde la base hasta la cúspide, dibujando una colmena tramada de túneles, escalinatas, plataformas y puentes que dejaban adivinar una gigantesca biblioteca de geometría imposible. (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 16)

---

<sup>8</sup> Nuria Montfort saves a copy of each of Julián Carax's novels in el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados when she fears Laín Coubert will try to steal and burn all of the copies housed at Cabestany's warehouse. This act not only manages to save the books, but is the reason why Carax's novel was even in the cemetery, waiting for Daniel Sempere to find it (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 88, 496-97).

This description, evoking Jorge Luis Borges' "Biblioteca de Babel," reinforces the idea that the cemetery acts as a library, a safe haven for books.

El Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados dates back to approximately the beginning of the eighteenth century: "es el gran mito literario de la Barcelona del nuevo siglo, una imagen de amor a la lectura e identificación con el patrimonio escrito que a la vez resulta eminentemente representativa del espíritu de la capital catalana" (Vila-Sanjuán, "Prólogo" 19). When discussing the form of the setting, Byron comments "the labyrinthine library, like the city itself, is a gothic space that repeatedly compels the cohabitation of past and present, even while that past is, in many ways, both imported and imposed" (81). Instead of a library or shop where books are seen as alive, the underworld of the city protects books that would otherwise be "dead." This metaphor of buried books in a cemetery is fascinating as the books continue to live even when others think them destroyed. As commented by Sergi Doria, in its Greek etymology, "cemetery" means "bedroom" or really, resting place, creating imagery between rest, death, and protection of the texts (204). As Elisa Martí-López astutely comments: "as depositories of social relations and belief systems, cemeteries are at once the locus and the instrument of power" (211). This concept of a cemetery being a place of power is superimposed onto el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados where the power is centered through books.

El Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados, an underworld, ensures an afterlife for books. In this analogy, the space is protected at the gates by a guardian (angel) and only admits those who are "good" and are going to continue to honour the space and its contents (the books), creating a pseudo heaven. This biblical reference aligns with Ruiz Zafón's trend of including allusions of angels and demons, heaven and hell within the series. In this case, a cemetery, a space traditionally seen as a place of darkness, is met with a more positive and holy imagery.

The saga's title directly references el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados, fomenting the importance of the space within Ruiz Zafón's literary universe. Above the ground, the most prominent space of literature within the tetralogy is the Sempere e Hijos bookstore, a central location in all four books. Of course, the Sempere family works in the shop, connecting the main characters to the space, and acting as an extension to their home. Many other characters frequent the space, forming a personal connection to the store. For example, both Fermín Romero de Torres and David Martín form a relationship with the space. For Fermín Romero de Torres in *La sombra del viento*, the bookshop acts as a space of salvation, providing him income to extract him from homelessness. It also allows for him to build friendships and regain his sense of self. In *El juego del ángel*, David Martín notes his love for the shop: "mi lugar favorito en toda la ciudad era la librería de Sempere e Hijos en la calle Santa Ana. Aquel lugar que olía a papel viejo y a polvo era mi santuario y refugio" (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 52). Martín took solace in the space, considering it an important establishment: "me constaba que Sempere conocía a algunos escritores que frecuentaban su establecimiento y...pensé que a lo mejor el tal don Carlos [Dickens] era uno de ellos" (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 52). For these characters, along with others, the Sempere e Hijos bookstore is seen as this place of refuge, a favourite location within Barcelona. This space, like the cemetery, connects generations of booklovers and allows for a community to be created. As stated by Finkelstein and McCleery, "contemporary bookshops provide welcoming and comfortable environments" (131). Ruiz Zafón therefore establishes the Sempere e Hijos bookstore as a comfortable environment, a safe space for those who love books. This is pertinent as, according to Janet Perez, bookstores were under attack during Franco's regime. She comments: "the regime closed all bookstores and purged their inventories, destroying works tainted with liberalism...Medieval and Golden Age canonical works survived,

as did orthodox religious texts, Falangist political writings, and works by German, Italian, and Portuguese fascists” (Perez 629). The censorship under the regime underscores the importance of demonstrating the Sempere e Hijos bookshop as an unchanged setting, as well as highlights the importance of the existence of el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados, a space that could save these purged texts.

Publishing houses constitute another important space of literature in the novels. Ruiz Zafón includes four main publishing houses: Cabestany, Barrido y Escobillas, Éditions de la Lumière, and Ariadna. Toni Cabestany’s publishing house was the firm that took a chance on the young Julián Carax and published his novels in *La sombra del viento*. Upon his death, Cabestany’s son was left in charge, and unfortunately, was incapable in keeping it in business (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 499). As a result, Nuria Montfort, an employee at the firm, was unable to find work due to the new reputation of the publishing house and the beginning of the war. When she is finally able to find a job as an editor, the owner constantly sexually harasses her. In *El juego del ángel*, Barrido y Escobillas publish the works of David Martín under the pseudonym Ignatius B. Samson. It is evidenced in *El laberinto de los espíritus* that Víctor Mataix also published with Barrido y Escobillas, making him an associate of Martín (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 192). It is said that Mataix: “había publicado algunas novelas con seudónimo en una editorial de tres al cuarto ya desaparecida llamada Barrido y Escobillas” (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 192). By calling it third-rate or of little quality, the publishing house is critiqued, reminding the reader of its unjust practices towards authors. The firm is burnt down in a fire wherein which one of the directors, Barrido, is killed (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 202). David Martín, however, continues to write, now for Éditions de la Lumière, the mysterious publishing house under editor Andreas Corelli. It is only Martín who believes the publishing house exists and,

unknownst to him, he is the only person who can communicate with Corelli, a dead man who appears to him in hallucinations. In *El laberinto de los espíritus*, Julián Sempere publishes his family's story at a publishing house under the same name, under the editor, Émile de Rosiers. As a final example, in 1947, after leaving his position as director of the prison, Mauricio Valls starts his own publishing firm, Ariadna, a reference to both his daughter's birth sister and to Greek mythology (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 395). Valls interest in achieving literary glory is amplified through this addition to his literary portfolio, ensuring more status in the world of letters as an authority in the field of literature. The examples of publishing houses emphasize Ruiz Zafón's interest in the production of literature, engaging the process of creating books. Including these spaces within the narrative allows for Ruiz Zafón to expand the presence of spaces of literature within "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" universe and underscores the process of the creation of literature. These roles include authors, booksellers, publishers, agents, traders, critics, editors, and consumers. These relationships are mimetic to a real society's literary output and consumption. This technique further acknowledges the social lives of books.

Libraries and archives also hold a pivotal role within the saga, since characters use them as tools to solve mysteries and conduct research. In *El juego del ángel*, *El prisionero del cielo*, and *El laberinto de los espíritus*, David Marín, Daniel Sempere, and Alicia Gris each frequent libraries, acquiring important information from their visits. In the novels, Martín goes to the library to learn more about religious and children's tales to be able to write *Lux Aeterna* for Andreas Corelli. Daniel needs the library to investigate Mauricio Valls and his theory that Valls murdered his mother, Isabella. Alicia, in her investigation of Mauricio Valls' disappearance, goes to the library to speak to an old friend about the Mataix book and how it could be of importance. In all three of these cases, characters demonstrate a connection to the library and

create acquaintanceships with librarians. The library also presents as another safe space for books and therefore, important within Ruiz Zafón's Barcelona. The Civil Registry archive is additionally used as a space to gain knowledge. In *El laberinto de los espíritus*, Alicia's police partner, Vargas, finds a mysterious list of certificate numbers in Mauricio Valls' car. In hopes of finding out what the numbers represent, he goes to the Civil Registry. There he meets Lusía Alcaine, the director's secretary, who quickly identifies that the list consists of death certificates paired with new birth certificates (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 578). These certificates, all processed by the same person on the same day – an impossibility – were all for children, matching the “dead” children to new identities (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 581-2). Among these documents, Vargas finds death certificates for Víctor Mataix's daughters, Ariadna and Sonia, cementing their importance to the investigation and affirming their true identities (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 583). The traumas of the Civil War are made apparent, the abuse of power under the Regime uncovered within the archive.

Personal library catalogues serve as a final space of literature to explore within the saga. These spaces are formed through the creation of personal catalogues found within characters' homes. Ricardo Aldaya, in his pursuit to connect with his illegitimate son, Julián Carax, learns that Julián is obsessed with literature. Ricardo decides to invite Julián into his home with the excuse of sharing his personal catalogue with the young boy. Ricardo attempts to form a connection with his son, noting that his oldest, Jorge, has no interest in books, and his daughter, Penélope, is merely a girl and therefore will never be able to appreciate them to the same extent. Sharing this interest with Julián allows for him to create a bond with the child and offer him something he does not have at home. This home library is similar to that of Gustavo Barceló, who shares his books with his niece Clara. Indeed, reading in the comfort of one's home



becomes a consistent interest for Ruiz Zafón's characters. This is evidenced through Daniel Sempere reading his copy of Carax's *La sombra del viento*, Julián Sempere reading Víctor Mataix's *El laberinto de los espíritus VII: Ariadna y el príncipe Escarlata*, and Alicia Gris feeling comfort when looking at her bookshelf in her Barcelona apartment. Owning and enjoying books becomes fundamental for characters as connecting with literature is the most sacred experience within Ruiz Zafón's world. In the case of David Martín, owning books as an adult becomes a privilege as he was not allowed to show his interest in literature to his father as a child. Martín narrates:

Ya en aquellos tiempos mis únicos amigos estaban hechos de papel y tinta. En la escuela había aprendido a leer y escribir mucho antes que los demás críos del barrio...A mi padre no le gustaba ver libros por casa. Había algo en ellos, además de letras que no podía descifrar, que le ofendía. Me decía que en cuanto tuviese diez años me iba a poner a trabajar y que más me valía quitarme todos aquellos pájaros de la cabeza porque de lo contrario iba a acabar siendo un desgraciado y un muerto de hambre. Yo escondía los libros debajo de mi colchón y esperaba a que él hubiera salido o estuviese dormido para poder leer. En una ocasión, me sorprendió leyendo de noche y montó en colera. Me arrancó el libro de las manos y lo tiró por la ventana. (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 51)

Martín's love for literature, even as a child, is part of his identity. The fact that reading was seen as contraband within his household pushes Martín's respect for books as an adult. Enjoying the privilege of being in the presence of books becomes a life lesson within Ruiz Zafón's literary universe.

The different spaces of literature included within the novels demonstrate the prolific place they hold within the world of Ruiz Zafón's tetralogy. Be it for profit or for salvation,

spaces of literature permit moments for characters to connect with literary works, aiding in character development. Ruiz Zafón emphasizes the importance of these places within society, generating commentary on why these spaces should be protected. The inclusion of these spaces within Ruiz Zafón's rhetoric is consequently used as a call to action for his readers to protect these (or similar) spaces.

## 1.2 Character Identity & Literature

In "El cementerio de los libros olvidados," character development and identity are closely tied to each character's relationship to the art of writing. The desire to become an author is observed in many characters, those who do not already identify as authors constantly on the path to fulfill their dreams. Core characters to be analysed include authors Julián Carax (*La sombra del viento*), David Martín (*El juego del ángel* and *El prisionero del cielo*), and Víctor Mataix (*El laberinto de los espíritus*), whose books drive the storylines of the series. Pedro Vidal (*El juego del ángel*) and Mauricio Valls (*El prisionero del cielo* and *El laberinto de los espíritus*) are also authors, though distinguished from the others due to their social status. Also worth analysing is the Sempere family where Daniel, the main character of the saga, his son, Julián, and his mother, Isabella Gispert all aspire to become authors, creating a family line of shared interest. Carlos Ruiz Zafón additionally enters the conversation through author avatars within the tetralogy. Throughout this section, I distinguish Ruiz Zafón's approach to the idea of author versus writer – where writers are those who aspire to be authors and garner success in the field – the glorification of the vocation of writing, and critiques on the commercialization of literature. I pay particular attention to the commentary within the novels regarding female relationships with the

written word, and conclude with a discussion on the unreliable narrator and how they affect the reader's understanding of identity and reality.

### ***Dreams of Authorship***

Within Ruiz Zafón's literary universe, the vocation of author is the most sacred. At its core, the mysteries of the series hinge on books and their authors, *La sombra del viento* with Julián Carax, *El juego del ángel* and *El prisionero del cielo* with David Martín, and *El laberinto de los espíritus* with Víctor Mataix. Ruiz Zafón's interest in cementing authors as an ideal identity within Barcelona, and society at large, is illustrated through the establishment of these influential authors. Most notable is the influence of Julián Carax on Daniel Sempere and David Martín on Isabella Gispert, two leading characters who dream of becoming authors and place their role models on pedestals.

The question of writer versus author becomes a prominent theme within the saga. Authors are those who hold said title in the social sphere whereas writers are those who wish to achieve such status. This, according to Barthes, is a phenomenon where capitalism has pushed for the attachment of the person to their work (143). The position of author is demonstrated through the place of credibility and accolades associated with holding this role. Mauricio Valls, Julián Carax, Víctor Mataix, and Pedro Vidal, author-characters within the tetralogy, are all seen (or see themselves) as superior based on this status marker within the literary universe. As Michel Foucault affirms, an author's name "is the equivalent of a description" (209). This description holds power and becomes a point of questioning within the series as Ruiz Zafón creates scenarios in which the author and the work are separated. David Martín provides a prime example of an author who is never considered as such due to the use of his pseudonym, Ignatius

B. Samson. Though Martín spends all his time writing, his name is not attached to his work, allowing for praise for his fake persona. Martín becomes the ultimate ghost, his name always disconnected, “killing” the author. The separation between author and work becomes a vital inhibitor in Martín’s quest for authorship as it forces him to be blocked from potential laurels. Influenced by the work of Roland Barthes (1977) and Michel Foucault (1998) and the death of an author through the process of writing, Ruiz Zafón creates a polemic around Martín’s identity as an author. In a sense, as Andrew Bennet and Nicholas Royle have pointed out, this turns the “author” into a “ghost,” a figure who is “never fully present or fully absent, a figure of fantasy and elusiveness, the author only ever haunts” (22). David Martín feels as though he never reaches his potential since society is unaware of his name and talent. Ruiz Zafón’s distinction between authors and writers highlights the fact that authors are known by name while writers are anonymous.

David Martín’s interest in becoming an author stems from childhood, like Julián Carax, writing stories for neighbours and for himself, obsessed with storytelling. When he begins to work under contract with the publishers Barrido y Escobillas, he transforms into what Byron calls a “writer driven to accommodate market demand” (76). Conversely, it is not the market that Martín is interested in – he is interested in creating quality literature under his own name. In fact, Martín resents his pseudonym, Ignatius B. Samson, and wants to publish a story in which Ignatius commits suicide, dying with Chloé Permanyer, the *femme fatale* of his books, metaphorically killing off his alter ego (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 126). This dream never comes to fruition, and Martín is forced to continue writing without association to his birth name. Effectively becoming a ghost writer for his own work, Martín is characterized through the separation of identity and his work. This idea of ghost writing is repeated for the character in two

further instances: with Pedro Vidal and Mauricio Valls, “authors.” In *El juego del ángel*, Martín takes it upon himself to secretly re-write the book of his friend and mentor, Pedro Vidal. Cristina Vidal, Martín’s friend and love interest, comes to his house with pages from the upcoming book. Cristina was meant to re-type the pages, fixing the edits that Pedro had made. Instead, she would re-type the edits that Martín made, returning the improved manuscripts in the morning. This ghost writing was intentional, a decision made by Martín to help his friend. This sits in opposition to the forceful attempt to create a ghost writer out of Martín by Mauricio Valls in *El prisionero del cielo*. This scenario was made possible as Martín was a prisoner and Valls, the prison director. Using this imprisonment to his advantage, Valls tries to force Martín to write for him, hopeful that he can manipulate Martín’s talent into getting him the fame he desires. To Valls’ dismay, Martín does not re-write his pages, and instead writes *El juego del ángel*.<sup>9</sup> In these cases, the true author is (or would have been) completely disassociated from the text.

The question of authorship regarding David Martín is paramount to the saga as the role of the author is crucial within Ruiz Zafón’s literary universe. Though Martín is an author, the separation between his person and his work costs him the recognition he desires. As Latham pointedly puts it: “the history of authorship in the twentieth century turns on this new but persistent split between the radical expansiveness of mass culture on the one hand and a tightly restrictive economy of prestige on the other” (166). Martín, contributing to mass culture through his work as Ignatius, still wishes to be cast under the category of prestige like Pedro Vidal (or even Mauricio Valls). Ultimately, the case of authorship comes down to memory – the authors in

---

<sup>9</sup> In a similar case, abusing his position of power under Franco’s regime, Víctor Mataix, the author central to the plot of *El laberinto de los espíritus*, was also forced to act as a ghost writer for the banker, Miguel Ubach (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 429).

the text use writing as a means to be remembered. However, what happens when the name is struck from the public record like in the case of Martín? When the real author is ignored or hidden, what becomes of that person's legacy? Martín's aspiration to write with his own name demonstrates his yearning to be remembered.

In *El juego del ángel*, Isabella Gispert is another character who aspires to become an author. Isabella's passion for literature leads her to work for señor Sempere at the Sempere e Hijos bookshop and for David Martín as his assistant and mentee. Through their agreement, Martín even says he will evaluate some of her writing (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 368). Unfortunately, before her dreams of becoming an author are achieved, Isabella is assassinated, killing off the one female character who attempted to become an author.<sup>10</sup> For readers, this particular fact is alarming as it proves that while the role of the author holds clear value within Ruiz Zafón's work, it is only obtained by males. Here, Isabella would be considered a writer, a person who attempts to be an author but never reaches their objective. Indeed, as mentioned by Hrabrova et al. when analysing *La sombra del viento*, "not everyone is destined to become an outstanding writer" and perhaps, had she not been killed, her destiny towards authorship could have transpired differently (351).

Isabella's frustrating journey to becoming a writer is paralleled by her son, Daniel Sempere. At the beginning of *La sombra del viento*, a young Daniel hopes to one day become a novelist: "hubo un tiempo, de niño, en que quizá por haber crecido rodeado de libros y libreros, decidí que quería ser novelista y llevar una vida de melodrama" (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 43). His

---

<sup>10</sup> Alicia Gris in *El laberinto de los espíritus* considers changing careers to become an author, however, the reader is not privy to knowing if she succeeds in that goal or not (no comment on her literary career is noted or if she achieved her dream).

love of literature is influenced by three main facets: growing up in the Sempere e Hijos bookstore, his fascination in a Montblanc Meisterstück pen, the perfect tool for writing an acclaimed work, and finding Julián Carax's novel, *La sombra del viento*, in el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados. Growing up surrounded by books taught Daniel, even as a child, the importance of reading quality literature. The Montblanc Meisterstück pen, supposedly once owned by Victor Hugo, connects Daniel, Julián Carax, and Julián Sempere (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 44). And finally, perhaps the most important moment of the series, Daniel's first time in el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados, an impactful experience where he is able to first connect with the literature of Julián Carax. In this first visit, Daniel finds, as if it were meant for him, Carax's novel, influencing Daniel's ambition to be like his favourite author and uncover the truth surrounding his work.

Though Daniel dreams of following in Carax's footsteps, he never achieves his goal and ends up instead running the bookshop like his father and grandfather. This fact, however, causes Daniel to doubt himself and his potential, asking his best friend, Fermín Romero de Torres: "dígame la verdad. Usted que me conoce desde que era niño, ¿le he decepcionado? ¿He sido el Daniel que usted esperaba? ¿El que mi madre habría querido que fuera?" (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 24). These questions demonstrate Daniel's internal crisis on who he imagined himself to be, leading him to doubt himself, his potential, and his identity. For Daniel, becoming an author was the ideal, and letting go of that dream made him feel as though he were disappointing those around him. Even so, Daniel believes that he has a story to tell – he just is not able to put it together himself, constantly throwing away rejected pages.

### ***Relationships with Literature***

Character connections with literature serve as a building block to character development within the saga. For example, David Martín and Cristina Vidal's fathers are both noted to not be literate, documenting the generational shift where education and literacy became more important and accessible in society for all social classes after their time (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 139). Where Ruiz Zafón's female characters are concerned, literacy is a key consideration in the novels. For instance, when Jacinta Coronado moved from the country to Barcelona, she befriended her neighbour Ramoneta. When recalling the experience, the text narrates: "lo único que dejaron fue el que había sido su tesoro máspreciado: un libro. Jacinta lo reconoció, porque muchas noches la Ramoneta le había pedido si podía leerle una o dos páginas. Ella nunca había aprendido a leer" (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 313). This passage demonstrates two women's experiences with literacy, one who can, and one who cannot read, pointing to their potential connections with literature. For both, it connotes how literature is an important element to their lives. Examples like Jacinta and Ramoneta, or, as mentioned above, Isabella Gispert, are evident throughout the text. This commentary marks the female characters, adding value to those who appreciate books. In the following pages, I first outline key female relationships with literature, namely that of Clara Barceló, Bea Aguilar, Alicia Gris, Nuria Montfort, and Isabella Gispert. This discussion is followed by three key male relationships with literature, passionate, commercial, and disinterested. This gendered view on literature and the experiences characters have with literature, literacy, and opportunities in the field inform the reader of gendered stereotypes of the time.

The question of literacy and literary interest is vital to the descriptions of Clara Barceló's character in *La sombra del viento*. Clara, a blind woman, has others read to her, using her imagination to picture the scenes: "la madre de Clara leía las cartas en voz alta, disimulando mal



el llanto y saltándose los párrafos que su hija intuía sin necesidad de leerlos. Más tarde, a medianoche, Clara convencía a su prima Claudette para que le leyese de nuevo las cartas de su padre en su integridad. Así era cómo Clara leía, con ojos de prestado” (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 33). Indeed, Clara can participate as stories can be performed, or read, orally, allowing her to absorb the same knowledge as anyone else. With Daniel becoming her new “ojos de prestado,” they continue a friendship for many years as he reads to her regularly. As noted by Kleege, “the blind grow up, attend school, and lead adult lives among sighted people. The language we speak, the literature we read, the architecture we inhabit, were all designed by and for the sighted” (441). By allowing Clara to still engage with literature, she is included in the experience. Evident in Ruiz Zafón’s work is the joy a reader gains from reading. By not excluding Clara, it underscores Ruiz Zafón’s interest in promoting literature as an inclusive experience.

Bea Aguilar also demonstrates a relationship to literature across the series. In *El prisionero del cielo* and *El laberinto de los espíritus*, Bea is seen working at the Sempere e Hijos bookshop with her husband, Daniel Sempere. Bea helps him, her father-in-law, Juan, and their employee, Fermín Romero de Torres, to keep the store afloat. Following in Isabella’s footsteps, she is the second (of only two) female characters the reader sees working in the shop. But even before her marriage to Daniel and official entrance into the bookstore, Bea is the only main character of the series who is seen in a university setting. Importantly, when discussing her studies, Bea admits that she likes studying literature, though it was her only option as her father did not believe that science was for girls (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 132). This provides socio-historical commentary on gender as well as literature, allowing for Ruiz Zafón to highlight his disagreement with the idea. Though she attends university, there is never any indication that she finishes her degree, likely giving up her education to have her son, Julián Sempere.

Alicia Gris, the *femme fatale* in *El laberinto de los espíritus*, finds a copy of Víctor Mataix's book, and it immediately becomes a key clue in her investigation on the disappearance of Mauricio Valls, inextricably linking the book and its author to her character. Alicia's association to literature is fundamental as, her partner in the investigation, Vargas, and her boss, Leandro, do not feel as compelled to believe the novel acts as a meaningful part of the case. Alicia is sure that the Mataix book is a clue, allowing her interest in literature to guide her path. This brings her to the library, to the Sempere e Hijos bookshop, and to meet with bookseller, Gustavo Barceló, linking her character to Ruiz Zafón's world of literature. The case of Alicia demonstrates the importance of caring for literature as she protects the Mataix book throughout her investigation, valuing as well her own collection of books seen in her apartment. Indeed, her comfort in and personal connection to the spaces of literature foment Alicia as a character potentially worthy of the reader's trust.

Nuria Montfort, daughter of el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados's gatekeeper, Isaac, utilizes her interest in literature to work in the field. In *La sombra del viento* she works as an assistant in a publishing house as well as a translator to gain an income. Sadly, for Nuria, she does not have good luck in the field. Her first job, working as an assistant in Cabestany's publishing house, dissipates when his son is unable to properly run the business. Then, due to the war, she struggles to find work since publishing was no longer a core priority. And finally, when she does get another solid job in a publishing house, she is forced to leave due to sexual harassment from her boss. In between, she tries her best to get translation work that she can do at home, but it does not provide her with a proper salary. Nuria's experience demonstrates the difficulties of working in the field and the hardships that she needed to endure in order to gain a livelihood. Her experience can be most closely compared to David Martín's hardworking

experience at the beginning of *El juego del ángel* where he works countless hours at the newspaper, and then later, at the publishing house quickly writing and pumping out novels as Ignatius B. Samson.

While there are many male authors within the saga, I argue that the writing of Nuria Montfort in *La sombra del viento* and Isabella Gispert in *El laberinto de los espíritus* are the most important in the series. The words within Nuria's final letter to Daniel and in Isabella's notebook provide missing information in the novels' mysteries. In both cases, right before their deaths, the women provide missing links and context to allow others to understand the past. Isabella and Nuria exemplify Hélène Cixous' belief that "woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies – for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and into history – by her own movement" (875). Nuria and Isabella express their truths in their writing, writing themselves into the pages intended for Daniel to one day read.

In Nuria's letter, her attempt to write herself also sees her asking for forgiveness. She hopes that after reading her words, Daniel will pardon her for her actions and not judge her after her death. Her letter culminates in these final sentences:

cuando leas estas palabras, esta cárcel de recuerdos, significará que ya no podré despedirme de ti como hubiera querido, que no podré pedirte que nos perdones, sobre todo a Julián, y que cuides de él cuando yo no esté ahí para hacerlo. Sé que no puedo pedirte nada, salvo que te salves. Quizá tantas páginas me han llegado a convencer de que pase lo que pase, siempre tendré en ti a un amigo, que tú eres mi única y verdadera

esperanza...Recuérdame, Daniel, aunque sea en un rincón y a escondidas. No me dejes ir.

(Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 527)

Nuria seeks to stay alive through her writing, her words acting as a vehicle for memory. The essence of Nuria is therefore preserved within her narrative. The same can be said for Isabella's notebook. It begins:

mi nombre es Isabella Gispert y nací en Barcelona en el año 1917. Tengo veintidós años y sé que nunca cumpliré los veintitrés. Escribo estas líneas en la certeza de que apenas me quedan unos días de vida y que pronto abandonaré a quienes más debo en este mundo: mi hijo Daniel y mi esposo Juan Sempere...Escribo para mí misma, llevándome secretos que no me pertenecen y sabiendo que nunca leerá estas páginas. Escribo para rememorar y aferrarme a la vida. Mi única ambición es poder recordar y comprender quién fui y por qué hice lo que hice mientras aún tenga la capacidad de hacerlo y antes de que la consciencia que ya siento debilitarse me abandone. Escribo aunque me duela porque la pérdida y el dolor son lo único que me mantiene ya viva y me da miedo morir. Escribo para contarles a estas páginas lo que no puedo contar a quienes más quiero a riesgo de herirlos y poner su vida en peligro. Escribo porque mientras sea capaz de recordar estaré con ellos un minuto más... (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 469-70)

Again, the idea of memory is pertinent here as Isabella, on her deathbed, tries to recount her truth. According to Simone de Beauvoir, when writing in a diary, a girl "wishes to possess and pay homage to her whole self. Such is the purpose of those intimate diaries in which she can freely pour out her soul... In its pages is inscribed a truth hidden from relatives, comrades, teachers, a truth with which the author is enraptured in solitude" (380). Since her passion was writing, she dedicated even her last moments of life to literature.

Both Nuria and Isabella put themselves into their texts by documenting their stories. This gives both characters, through their last breaths, a moment of agency over their narratives. In both cases, the women are aware that their deaths are immanent. Indeed, the first and final installments of the series mirror each other through the writings of Nuria and Isabella, the pieces of materiality allowing for the women to remain in existence within the literary universe. According to Meddick, a trans-generational haunting occurs when Daniel Sempere connects with Julián Carax's novel, transferring memory to the young subject (2010). This theory can therefore be reapplied with the writings of Nuria and Isabella, as the effects on Daniel are similar – he gains knowledge of the past and of Francoist trauma through the written words of these female characters. Daniel, and the reader, experience the women through their ghosts, a memory of the past prepared to haunt the future with their writings.

Of course, it is not only the female characters who have relationships with literature. Male characters within the series demonstrate three different relationship types with the literary field: passionate, commercial, or disinterested. Examples of passionate relationships with literature within the tetralogy include those who wish to (and succeed in) writing, as well as those with careers in the field. For instance, Fermín Romero de Torres, as an employee at the Sempere e Hijos bookshop, is passionate about literature. Fermín takes his role very seriously, his dedication to literature evident through his vast knowledge and literary commentary. Bookshop owners like the Sempere and Gustavo Barceló base their livelihoods on the world of letters, underscoring their connection to the field. For instance, it is said that: “Gustavo Barceló estaba, técnicamente, forrado, y lo de la librería era más pasión que negaba rotundamente, si alguien entraba en su librería y se enamoraba de un ejemplar cuyo precio no podía costearse, lo rebajaba hasta donde fuese necesario, o incluso lo regalaba si estimaba que el comprador era un

lector de sata” (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 23). This commentary furthers Ruiz Zafón’s position on the importance and value of access to literature. Even more, the guardian of el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados, Isaac Montfort (and later Fermín), also creates a position where someone dedicates their life to the protection of literature. Allowing for people to enter and select and/or hide books places him in an important role within Ruiz Zafón’s Barcelona.

Commercial relationships with literature allow for Ruiz Zafón to critique the literary field and the idea of high versus low brow literature. Characters who have commercial relationships with literature are not interested in creating art but instead, only care about potential gains, be it financial or social. Two key examples of this relationship type in the tetralogy are David Martín’s publishers, Barrido and Escobillas, and the “intellectual,” Mauricio Valls. In *El juego del ángel*, the publishing house Barrido y Escobillas holds David Martín to a grueling contract with high expectations for mass production. The profits from Martín’s book sales are unjustly distributed between him and the publishers, allowing for Barrido and Escobillas to grossly profit off of Martín. The text narrates:

Barrido y Escobillas habían refinado al nivel de arreglo floral lo que en el gremio editorial barcelonés se conocía como la doble tirada. De cada título se hacía una edición oficial y declarada de unos pocos miles de ejemplares por los que se pagaba un margen ridículo al autor. Luego, si el libro funcionaba, había una o muchas ediciones reales y subterráneas de docenas de miles de ejemplares que nunca se declaraban y por las que el autor no veía una peseta. (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 125)

Rather than riches, Mauricio Valls is obsessed with being considered an elite writer, hoping to sell books based on his genius. Valls aspires to become the next director of the National Library in Madrid. Instead, he is assigned the role of prison director:

Don Mauricio era un hombre de letras de reconocido prestigio, poseedor de un cultivado intelecto y una fina erudición cosechada durante sus años de estudios en París y que, más allá de aquella estancia temporal en el sector penitenciario del régimen, tenía por destino y misión, con la ayuda de un selecto círculo de intelectuales afines, educar al pueblo llano de aquella España diezmada y enseñarle a pensar. (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 108; 110-11)

Mauricio Valls sees himself as a superior figure in Spanish society. His objective is to improve the world of art and culture in Spain to fit his ideals, hoping for fame, literary accolades, and recognition. He does not write for others to enjoy his work, but to “educate them,” differentiating himself from the other authors of the series who write because they love the craft. Later, taking advantage of his position of power, Valls tries to force Martín, as a prisoner, to edit his work, recognizing that Martín’s talent could provide him with even more recognition and literary attention.

A third relationship, that of disinterest or distaste in literature is also present throughout the tetralogy. This ideology is held by characters who represent a connection to nationalism, Francoist, or right-wing ideologies. These characters either look down on literature or see it as a gendered topic. Bea Aguilar’s father, for instance, sees literature as “lesser than” and therefore acceptable for women. Mirroring stories, Penélope’s father, Ricardo Aldaya, is also presented to have outdated gendered opinions concerning literature. While he has a personal library and appreciates literature, in the case of Ricardo, he does not think that reading is an appropriate activity for girls. This comes hand in hand with his gendered views of the early 1900s where he sees Penélope as a treasure but never a “treasurer” to follow in his footsteps since she is a woman (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 454). Cristina Vidal’s father in *El juego del ángel* also approaches

literature with a gendered bias, commenting: “no sea modesto, que hasta mi hija se lee esas aventuras que publica usted en el diario” (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 67). The “hasta mi hija” [“even my daughter”] is meant to make Martín feel good about his writing, showing his popularity. Instead, it underscores a woman’s ability to read and be aware of quality literature. Overall, these three fathers create gendered biases on literacy and the ability to appreciate literature. Finally, Francisco Javier Fumero, the villain of *La sombra del viento*, very openly dislikes literature and sees it as an evil connected to the left.

Whether it is as a side comment regarding a character’s description (be it positive or negative) or linked to the character’s vocation, Ruiz Zafón creates a clear commentary on the importance of literature within his literary universe, demonstrating that literature is meant to be respected. Placing literature at the center of the narrative becomes his *modus operandi*, fomenting literature as a core characteristic of the tetralogy.

### ***Schizophrenia and the “Unreliable Narrator”***

In “El cementerio de los libros olvidados,” Daniel Sempere, Fermín Romero de Torres, Alicia Gris, and David Martín are all presented as narrative voices, providing context through their perspectives within the novels. However, the problem with the construction of the “author” within “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” saga does not only manifest itself through the existence of these multiple narrator/authors, but also through the insertion of a mechanism that converts the story to be “unreliable”: schizophrenia. While in *La sombra del viento*, *El prisionero del cielo*, and *El laberinto de los espíritus* there are mysteries that seem magical, they always are resolved, making the mystery exist within the limitations of reality. For example, in *La sombra del viento*, the devil, Laín Coubert, from Julián Carax’s novel comes to life on the



streets of Barcelona, searching for and burning Carax's books. It is later revealed in the story that it is not the devil that Daniel meets, but the very Julián Carax that he was seeking. Julián, traumatized by the tragedies of his life, started committing crime and burning his own books, getting caught in one of the fires and becoming his fictionalized devil. This example, following the feelings of Todorov's uncanny, proves that though the devil was thought to be present, haunting Daniel's quest in finding Julián Carax, there was a logical, albeit sad, reasonable explanation behind the mystery. *El juego del ángel* acts as the exception to the rule where the limitations of reality are blurred.

The series' prequel, *El juego del ángel*, blends reality with magical elements. Indeed, David Martín, the narrator of this text, forces the reader to question whether or not his perspective can be trusted. Throughout the novel Martín's depiction of his reality becomes more and more unreliable. The reader is left with more questions than answers at the end of *El juego del ángel* with Ruiz Zafón admitting: "I felt that *The Shadow of the Wind* was a mechanism that did everything for you... This time I wanted to try something different, at the risk of providing something that would make readers uncomfortable" (Ruiz Zafón qtd in Tonkin). This discomfort is felt across the novel and multiple scenarios make the reader question reality and what Martín is experiencing. For instance, he has a sexual experience with a doll-like sex worker who reminds him of his character, Chloé, a plastic arm the only remainder of the event (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 39). The reader questions whether the sex worker was real or a fragment of Martín's imagination. When the publishing house that David Martín wanted to leave, Barrido y Escobillas, suddenly burns down, Martín becomes a key suspect in the investigation, even though he says he is not connected to the incident (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 202). Later, Martín sees a giant spider and has what he perceives to be a brain tumor removal operation which seem

impossible (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 39; 193), Furthermore, every conversation or receipt of letters from Andreas Corelli feel unrealistic (for examples see Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 183; 315). In particular, the epilogue of *El juego del ángel* poses questions om reality as Corelli gifts Martín the child version of Cristina, recreating the scene from her childhood photograph (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 666).

It is not until the third and fourth installment of the series that the reader learns of Martín's poor mental health, likely schizophrenia or a schizoaffective disorder. This idea is first introduced in *El prisionero del cielo* when one of David Martín's neighbouring cellmates, a doctor, is asked about Martín's mental health. The doctor says he believes him to be schizophrenic, however, since it was not his area of medicine, he cannot provide an official diagnosis (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 121). Indeed, diagnosing someone with schizophrenia is difficult and, as noted by Prendergast, "the schizophrenic is imagined here to be immediately recognizable with a disorder visible, and yet, because not seen, at the same time invisible and outside the social order" (233). The disability is never confirmed, maintaining Martín's narration cloudy and thus, open for interpretation. Many scenes can be analysed, perhaps, as metaphors, to which Prendergast remarks that "schizophrenia is always/already artistic, always/already literary, always/already metaphorical. What might usefully rescue schizophrenia from these metaphoric entrapments is a shift in focus toward a rhetorical exploration" (237). Here, the magical metaphors are meant to be reconsidered, forcing the reader to interpret events through Martín's reality, a psychological trick implemented by Ruiz Zafón.

Martín's narration is psychological, showing his vision of the world – applying a mechanism that allows for this world to not make sense. Martín's narrative pushes the reader's grasp on reality, deciding to believe or debate it. When other characters begin to question his

mental health, the reader gains a sense of sympathy for Martín. For example, in prison, due to his poor mental health, David is called “el prisionero del cielo” (giving the third novel of the series its name). In *El laberinto de los espíritus*, Alicia, in part of her investigation, finds out that Martín heard voices (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 417). Ariadna also provides context for Martín’s condition in the fourth installment of the saga. She admits to Leandro Montalva that Martín had not been murdered in prison as thought, a scene described in *El prisionero del cielo* as a magical coincidence. Though Martín told her Andreas Corelli helped him, reading the third installment of the series alerts the reader of his escape. Ariadna recounts when she stayed in a safehouse, one of Pedro Vidal’s homes in S’Agaró, with Martín, hiding from the Ubachs since she was pregnant from being raped by her “father,” Miguel Ubach (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 719). Martín’s health was deteriorating: “David estaba ya muy enfermo. Para cuando llegamos a la casa apenas distinguía entre la realidad y lo que creía ver y oír” (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 721). Ariadna confirms that only Martín could see Corelli and his conversations with him were becoming more frequent, proof that his health was deteriorating (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 722).

Despite his mental state, the reader experiences Martín’s reality, and his narration is equally as valid as that of Daniel Sempere, Fermín Romero de Torres, or Alicia Gris. This inclusion of an unreliable narrator creates a commentary on mental health and the psychological experience. Tonkin explains that Ruiz Zafón “thrillingly tiptoes along the fine line between paranormal events and psychological delusion that modern pioneers of the uncanny,” questioning “is this a novel of the occult, or of obsession? A melodrama, or a psychodrama?” Ruiz Zafón answers, “Depending on who you are, the story acquires different meanings, different interpretations” (Ruiz Zafón qtd in Tonkin). Though Martín’s prognosis is evidenced in the later installments of the saga, the reader experiences *El juego del ángel* as its own piece of work –

cementing its psychological tone as a mechanism that plays with the reader's understanding of fact. This unreliability of Martín's perspective acts as a clear identity marker for the character, connecting him to both his unfixed reality and place as an author.

As seen through this section, literature influences character development, whether through dreams of becoming an author or general interest in literature. Character identity is built on relationships to literature and to the process of writing. Within Ruiz Zafón's literary universe, it becomes evident that the role of the author is valued. However, the aspiration of holding the label of author is questioned within the saga as it forces characters to reflect on their identities and self-worth. Ruiz Zafón also plays with the concept of the narrative voice and how it affects reader's trust.

### **1.3 Concluding Remarks**

Literature is represented within Ruiz Zafón's "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" through two main facets: it is staging as a sacred object and the influence of said object on character identity. These fundamental presentations of literature influence every aspect of Ruiz Zafón's saga. At its core, the novels are motivated by literature, in which the books themselves, guide the storylines and influence the characters' actions. Ruiz Zafón creates literary communities within his work, unifying his characters through spaces of literature, be it real spaces (like bookshops, publishing houses, or libraries) or fictional spaces like el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados. Ruiz Zafón establishes a commentary on authorship, writing, and success in the field. By writing stories filled with stories filled with stories, Ruiz Zafón sets the vocation of writing and protection of the craft (and product) as a critical theme in his work. Moreover, his constant use of intertextual references amplifies the voices of the authors whom he exalts. The

reader becomes quickly aware of literature that the author respects, paying close attention to each reference for clues on character development or possible plotlines based on inferences.

The contents of this chapter function as a base for chapter two where I outline the role of memory through the violence of the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship of Francisco Franco. While the chapter focuses more on history, the role of literature is still prominent as the trend of writing about this time period fits into a Spanish literary boom of the early 2000s. Instead of investigating the spaces of literature, I shift to analyse spaces of repression under Francoism and the Gothicisation of Barcelona. Ruiz Zafón's attempt to recover the past through writing, like in the cases of Nuria Montfort and Isabella Gispert, demonstrates a clear interest in presenting the Republican voice within the literary field.

## CHAPTER 2: Memory Studies and Gothic Aesthetics in Carlos Ruiz Zafón's "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" Series

“Mientras se nos recuerda, seguimos vivos...Recuérdame, Daniel,  
aunque sea en un rincón y a escondidas. No me dejes ir.”  
– Carlos Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra del viento*

Before dying, Nuria Montfort writes to Daniel Sempere, asking to not be forgotten, keeping her alive through memory (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 527). Throughout Carlos Ruiz Zafón's "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" saga, memory is used as a tool to preserve the past. Using the preservation of memory as a lens, in this chapter, I investigate the portrayal of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and the Dictatorship of General Francisco Franco (1939-1975) in Ruiz Zafón's work. It is important to note that the Spanish Civil War is not a singular event to be studied, but one that is deeply connected to the politics before and following the war. Notably, Jordon Tronsgard comments that the war was "the culmination of simmering political tensions that subsequently forged the path of national development" connecting the Second Republic to the war, dictatorship, transition to democracy, and today's liberal democracy (1). The memory of the war has become polemical across fields. Looking to the field of literature, in this chapter, I begin by placing Ruiz Zafón within the canon of 21<sup>st</sup>-century literature that focuses on the war, a key literary trend of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>-century. After situating the corpus within current scholarship, I move from the world of books to the representation of the city, investigating how Barcelona, the main setting of the tetralogy, is depicted. Then, keeping the city in mind, I examine the depiction of punishment and imprisonment in the saga, examining both sites of violence and characters who are made to represent the conflict of "two Spains." I conclude with an analysis of both the general presentation of culture and of popular culture under Franco.

Through these topics, this chapter investigates the reproduction and restoration of memory of the Spanish Civil War and the Francoist State that follows in Ruiz Zafón's "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" series. Importantly, as highlighted by Salvador Cardús i Ros,

Memory...is not necessarily and fundamentally accumulative but is instead a permanent reconstruction...Memory is not so much the interpretation of the past as a justification of the present in terms of certain expectations about the future. In a strict sense, then, it is above all the change of expectations that makes it necessary to revise and re-memorize the past. (23)

Throughout this chapter I deconstruct the use of memory in Ruiz Zafón's work and underscore its presence in the saga as a mode of recuperation of the historical past. Consequently, the role of the Gothic will be present throughout this chapter as Ruiz Zafón mediates the recovery of the historical past through the Gothicisation of history.

## **2.1. Ruiz Zafón and 21<sup>st</sup> century Literature on The Spanish Civil War**

In *Memory Battles of the Spanish Civil War: History, Fiction, Photography*, Sebastiaan Faber asks: "what is the relative importance of literature and film in the general configuration of collective or historical memory? Does it make sense to analyse a contemporary novel about the Spanish Civil War if what we want to understand is the social or political evolution of Spain's collective memory?" (171). Faber chalks up the study to methodological training, enjoyment, and institutional incentive (174). He affirms: "the relation between the object of analysis and the more general social phenomenon that we want to talk about is often accepted as a given. But are not we then confusing the potential effect of a text with its actual effect?" (173).

When considering "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" saga, many of the references to the war/dictatorship are subtle and perhaps, as Faber comments "accepted as a given." The study

of literature, therefore, serves to take what is “given” and demonstrate how that element affects or reflects collective memory of the time. For instance, the increase in publications on the topic of the Civil War is apparent in the literary sphere, demonstrating society’s desire to recuperate the past. As Cuñado comments: “coincidiendo el 2005 con la conmemoración de los 30 años de democracia en España, los medios de comunicación y la crítica literaria han hecho eco de este fenómeno considerado un ‘despertar tras la amnesia’” thus putting the works of Ruiz Zafón right at the heart of this trend (1). She continues, “si bien es cierto que el tema de la guerra no es nuevo en la literatura del siglo XX, la reciente narrativa ofrece perspectivas sobre el conflicto que son particulares a una nueva generación de escritores que no la vivieron,<sup>11</sup> pero que desde sus respectivas creaciones intentan rememorarla” (Cuñado 3). Ruiz Zafón functions as a key example, included as one of the authors “que no la vivieron” yet still affected the past.

Highlighting memory as a trope became a trend culminating in the “memory boom” which impacted fields beyond the literary,<sup>12</sup> creating around the year 2000, “‘the memory movement’ or, rather more disparagingly, la moda de la memoria: the memory fad” (Faber 2). This “fad” focused on the war and the violence of the past, leading to the founding of the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory (ARMH) in 2000, Spanish Congress announcing 2006 to be the “Año de la Memoria Historica,” and the passing of the 2007 Historical Memory Law in government.<sup>13</sup> This shows that the ideas of memory of the war are “more than ever on the forefront of Spanish national awareness” (Tronsgard 2). As Lisa Lines

---

<sup>11</sup> Ruiz Zafón was born in 1964, after the war but in the last decade of the dictatorship.

<sup>12</sup> Another field impacted by the recovery of memory is film studies. See “Sentimental Objects: Nostalgia and the Child in Cinema of the Spanish memory Boom” (2017) by Sarah Thomas as an example of this trend.

<sup>13</sup> These function almost in opposition to the 1977 Amnesty Law.



discusses, “cultural, or collective, memory is integral to the process of restorative justice in that it may create a sense of collective responsibility” (“Representations” 151). Therefore, the importance of recuperating the past in everyday life and politics seeped into the literary sphere where authors in their own right attempted to manifest the same tropes.<sup>14</sup> Influenced by the newly important (and allowed – remember that there was censorship during the regime until 1975) topics, a boom of literature on Francoism in Spain emerged. For these reasons, Ruiz Zafón’s attempt to recuperate the theme of the Civil War and the dictatorship within his own literature is not surprising. Even so, the author comments, “things that have been inflicted between neighbours – it has a different quality, and you can feel that in Barcelona...My parents would never talk about the war. My grandparents would never talk about the war. Nobody who had been there would talk about the war. But it seemed that the walls were talking about it” (Ruiz Zafón qtd in Tonkin). Through his literature, Ruiz Zafón is able to create a dialogue about the war. This literary output fits directly within what Cuñado calls “la masiva corriente de recuperación de la memoria” in order to “recuperar las historias silenciadas de las víctimas de la guerra y, de algún modo, hacerles justicia póstuma” (8). Within the literary field, books pertaining to memory studies or as David Herzberger declares as “novels of memory” are: “those fictions in which the individual self seeks definition commingling the past and present through the process of remembering...the definition of the self is perceived always within the flow of history” (66-67). Even so, when reflecting on *La sombra del viento*, Hrabrova et al. notice:

---

<sup>14</sup> Meddick suggests that “*La sombra del viento* construes the past suppression of memory as a traumatic event” (255). Therefore, the place of memory is fomented within the series from the very beginning, rightfully conflating memory with the traumas of the past.

although the period of the literary work is very long, only a small part of the novel is designated for modernity. Everything else is the past, which is recalled through memories, letters, dreams, which the narrator learns from other characters. By doing it deliberately, the author aims to eliminate excessive pathos and melodramatics, which makes it possible to relate objectively the terrible and vile phenomena without embellishing or understating them. This technique affects the reader much more convincingly than vivid colorful description. (349)

This technique is critical in Ruiz Zafón's work as he is constantly going back in time and playing with memory in order to provide more context to storylines. The past is manifested through a mosaic of backstories provided by different characters, creating a more nuanced tale. In particular, the playfulness with memory not only aids in the conceptualization of stories within stories seen throughout the entire saga but allows for Ruiz Zafón to insert himself among those who utilize memory as a tool for understanding the past.

When placing Ruiz Zafón within the context of literature pertaining to the Spanish Civil War at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, he joins a longstanding tradition including authors such as Dulce Chacón, Javier Cercas, and Carmen Laforet. This tradition has carved a new space among genres, creating a subgenre deemed "the novel of the Spanish Civil War" which due to its popularity has boomed in the industry (Faber 156). Indeed, writing on the war and the dictatorship has become a popular mode to recuperate the past.<sup>15</sup> Understanding

---

<sup>15</sup> Consider Faber's line of questioning when regarding this subject: "why is it that wars inspire such great pieces of writing? Is it the conflicts themselves or a particular combination of political and historical elements that turn some periods of extreme violence into fertile ground for literary creation?" (155).

where Ruiz Zafón sits in the mix is therefore key to placing Ruiz Zafón amongst existing scholarship. Certainly, as noted by Steenmeijer, Ruiz Zafón's work, while deeply involved with the restoration of memory, is not traditionally included in literature looking at historical memory ("The Postnational" 198). However, when discussing *La sombra del viento*, Ellis notes that "the Civil War past is depicted as a tragedy (of broken families and a splintered society) that is transcended in the Francoist period through a patriarchal reordering of society. This telling of the past is in fact as true, if not truer, than many others" (853). This idea of retelling the past, of depicting truths, is therefore intrinsic to Ruiz Zafón, whether or not he is included by other scholars in this debate. Especially due to Ruiz Zafón's massive readership, including him within this debate is necessary for the study of contemporary Spanish literature as his work illustrates the trends of the last few decades of work being produced.

When comparing texts like *La sombra del viento* with that of Laforet's *Nada*, Sara J. Brenneis notes:

Unlike Laforet, Ruiz Zafón does not censor overt historical references for fear his novel will not otherwise reach publication; rather, he does so because his is a work of popular fiction and it is clear that he is generally averse to grandstanding or lecturing on Spanish history. Instead, history colours the noir, imparting a common hue to both the characters and the setting. (62)

This distinction or perhaps lack of fear is connected to the time of publication. Ruiz Zafón, publishing after the end of the dictatorship was in a much different literary atmosphere than Laforet who published in the Francoist State. Interestingly, Brenneis notes the lack of Catalan identity present in both Ruiz Zafón and Laforet despite the fact that the texts take place in Barcelona. She comments: "still, in both texts, the general absence of a specifically Catalan

identity, present solely in character and place names in Barcelona, drives at a missing component of post-war Barcelona society: a once-proud Catalan culture and heritage is severely restricted after the war” (Brenneis 67). Again, with both texts being published in very different literary and political environments, it is interesting to see both cases omitting the possible inclusion of a Catalan identity within the text. For Ruiz Zafón, this omission is not surprising as his literature is marketed toward a more homogenized Spanish audience instead of a Catalan audience.

Paramount to the inclusion of the Spanish Civil War and the Francoist State is the way in which Ruiz Zafón depicts the historical memory of the decades. By having these elements as mostly background details, the author is able to manipulate the literary tradition. For instance, Brenneis creates a distinction between Spanish and international readers and their ability to approach the material, noting: “it is in its accessibility as popular fiction that *La sombra del viento* makes its greatest historical impact” (71). This technique is pertinent to Ruiz Zafón’s writing style, as whether the reader is acutely aware or completely ignorant to Spanish history, the text remains appealing to its audience.

In comparison, other texts such as José María Gironella’s *Los cipreses creen en dios* (1953), Javier Cercas’ *Soldados de Salomina* (2001), and Dulce Chacón’s *La voz dormida* (2002) all demonstrate elements of the war/dictatorship in a more present sense. These texts create a deeper analysis and presentation of the traumas of Francoism from both a Republican and Nationalist standpoint.<sup>16</sup> In Lines’ study of *Guernica* (2008) by Boling, *The Return* (2009) by

---

<sup>16</sup> Gironella, for instance attempts a “neutral” stance in his series even though he was against the Republic. Indeed, even Vázquez Montalbán includes a commentary on this topic in his *Crónica sentimental de España*: “un gerundense llamado José María Gironella, que inició la costumbre de tratar con objetividad nuestra guerra civil. *Los cipreses creen en Dios*, un best-seller objetivo, con todas las consecuencias del adjetivo que, al fin y al cabo, deriva de la palabra

Hislop, and *Winter in Madrid* (2006) by Sansom, three key English texts about the Spanish Civil War, she notes that, unlike Ruiz Zafón's *La sombra del viento* or Cercas' *Soldados de Salamina*, these texts are missing the element of self-conscious reflection due to the shortened timeframe of the novels ("Representations" 155-156). Ultimately, "the result is that no character is sufficiently removed from the events and able to take a more objective, or at least less nostalgic, approach, which the passing of time may allow" (Lines, "Representations" 156).<sup>17</sup> Thus, Ruiz Zafón's saga is able to create a sense of nostalgia while looking back at the time period at hand, allowing for readers to reflect on the traumas of the past.

Other key figures of the genre include Ramón Sender, Max Aub, Manuel Rivas, Carmen Martín Gaité, María Dueñas, Almuneda Grandes, etc. Like Ruiz Zafón, these authors process the traumas of the time through their literature, further popularizing the genre and both the Spanish and international reader's understanding of the war and what followed. Indeed, while the Spanish Civil War novel has been popularized and set as a lucrative and "formative part of Spanish identity," it is pertinent to also ask what cements these authors into the popular field (Stafford 131). For instance, Faber questions the role of place of publication/origin and language: are the authors only writing in Castilian or are they in Galician, Catalan, Euskera, or written outside of Spain? (156-157). He comments: "together, these factors have long privileged writers residing in Spain, such as the best-selling José María Gironella, over those living abroad, like Max Aub"

---

objeto" (80). This neutral stance differs from that of Cercas who has been critiqued for humanizing the nationalist characters in his texts or be it, not holding them accountable for their acts of violence.

<sup>17</sup> Lines explores anglophone novels about the Spanish Civil War, an interesting perspective to compare with Ruiz Zafón who gained much of his fame in anglophone markets.

(Faber 159). Stafford agrees: “one factor that has greatly influenced Spanish Civil War literary production is the reality that the dictatorship oppressively silenced the Republican side for over forty years. Most Spanish Republican novelists such as Ramón Sender, Max Aub, and Francisco Ayala would not return to their country for many years, if ever” (131). In the case of Ruiz Zafón, writing the texts originally in Castilian instead of Catalan marks a clear market approach.

Finally, access to the literature and its time of publication also affects its popularity as well as audience. Curiously, “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” was written both in Spain, and in the United States. This dual location demonstrates how the change between exile versus immigration affect the access of literature. However, while the Spanish Civil War novel market has expanded exponentially over the years, there is still a polemic that exists within, favoring certain texts over others.

As Astrid Erll astutely comments, “literature permeates and resonates in memory culture” (144). This connection between literature and memory is critical to understanding Ruiz Zafón’s work and his recuperation of the past through his literature.<sup>18</sup> His work, by following the trend of investigating the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship that follows, inserts the author within the popularized genre. The increase of texts examining this era in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century also informs the reader that authors in Spain are working to recuperate the silenced memories of the

---

<sup>18</sup> While this recuperation of the past exists, it is a recuperation of memory and not a resurrection. As Ellis states: “this text does not resurrect the dead parent – Daniel’s mother and by extension all the dead parents of the Spanish Civil War remain gone despite the quixotic attempt to ‘read’ them back into existence” (854). I will approach the idea of the dead mother in chapter three of this dissertation.

past, making Ruiz Zafón a key participant in the field, and demonstrating a recuperation of a collective memory shared by authors.

## 2.2. A Gothic Barcelona and the Dictatorship

Fundamental to the portrayal of the Gothic within Ruiz Zafón's work is the representation of Barcelona. It is in the framework of the city where the author manifests a gothic world filled with mystery, history, and violence. In this section, I will join scholars Cinta Ramblado and Sara J. Brenneis in highlighting the representation of war/post-war Spain with the unification of geography and temporality. I will also demonstrate how memory is connected to the tone of the setting, in particular, through the use of the Gothic. I will thus outline how the use of Gothic to represent Barcelona affects memory as well as why it is important that Barcelona was used as the main setting of the series. "Barcelona Gothic" has been applied to Ruiz Zafón's work, first with a collection of four of his short stories published in 2008 which he titled "Barcelona Gothic," forever marking him with both the genre and the city.

In order to better understand the setting of the work in a gothic war/post-war Barcelona, and how memory is affected through this time and space, I look to Sergi Doria's *Guía de la Barcelona de Carlos Ruiz Zafón* as it outlines key locations presented in the novels.<sup>19</sup> This book helps underscore the general atmosphere of the space, highlighting the Gothic architecture seen in Barcelona, and accordingly, in Ruiz Zafón's series. Examples include the Barcelona Cathedral

---

<sup>19</sup> This text, published in 2008, excludes spaces from the third and fourth installments of "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" series, as said texts were not yet published. However, many of the spaces presented in Doria's work are repeated in the later installments, for example, the Sempere e Hijos bookshop.

and the Church Santa María del Mar, spaces frequented by Ruiz Zafón's characters (Doria 98; 124). According to Pierre Nora, spaces or sites of memory are critical to understanding memory and history, proposing:

our interest in *lieux de memoire* where memory crystallizes and secretes itself has occurred at a particular historical moment, a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn-but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists. There are *lieux de memoire*, sites of memory, because there are no longer *milieux de memoire*, real environments of memory. (7)

Therefore, the choice of location is a defining feature of Ruiz Zafón's text as it helps perpetuate the features of memory. The spaces included within the text help create an environment for memory to exist, creating an ambiance of collective memory across the pages.

Other authors who center Barcelona in their narratives include Ildefonso Falcones' *La cathedral del mar* (2006), Mercè Rodereda's *La plaça del Diamant* (1962), Eduardo Mendoza's *La ciudad de los prodigios* (1986), and Carmen Laforet's *Nada* (1945). However, it is critical to understand how the region is presented within the corpus. In "El cementerio de los libros olvidados," similar to the Barcelona of *Nada*, Barcelona is reconstructed as a dark and gloomy space. It is often raining and cold, showing pathetic fallacy and creating a mood not typically associated with the bright and sunny Mediterranean city. The gloomy tone shadows the past, providing a space to reflect on historical memory of the war and dictatorship within the space



(Trotman 276). This recuperation of the past creates a connection between the trauma saved within collective memory, and the space in which it occurred – in this case, Barcelona.<sup>20</sup>

War and post-war Spain are further developed in Ruiz Zafón's later installments, *El prisionero del cielo* and *El laberinto de los espíritus*. For example, at the beginning of *El laberinto de los espíritus*, Fermín and Alicia experience the bombing of Barcelona by Francoist aviation (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 61-68). This scene is pertinent to the text as it connects Fermín, a recurring character, to Alicia, the new “main” character of the final installment of the series. The event causes Alicia's disability<sup>21</sup> as well as provides a depiction of the violence of the war. This event creates a Barcelona in ruins, a dark space mutilated by violence.

Spanish history is manifested through Ruiz Zafón's fiction, recreating realistic emotions and scenarios for his characters within the lens of the coined “Barcelona Gothic.”<sup>22</sup> The characterization of the Gothic placed onto the saga is in part fact and in part marketing. While originally cast as a writer of thrillers, Ruiz Zafón, as noted by Xavier Aldana Reyes, “is now considered Spain's premier writer of gothic fictions by his international audience” (*Spanish Gothic* 73). Accordingly, Aldana Reyes highlights opposition between market placement of Ruiz Zafón. For example, he comments: “where the Spanish market has sought to sell Zafón as a popular literary writer—and a writer of place, too—and focused on the suspense aspects of his work, the Anglophone market has exploited the Gothic elements” (Aldana Reyes, *Spanish*

---

<sup>20</sup> In *El laberinto de los espíritus*, Madrid is also included as a main space, differentiating the novel from the rest of the corpus.

<sup>21</sup> This topic will be further investigated in the following chapter.

<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, Aldana Reyes, while promoting Ruiz Zafón as a contemporary Gothic writer, notes that *El laberinto de los espíritus* functions more as “a noir/thriller with only some sporadic Gothic elements and settings” (*Spanish Gothic* 180).

*Gothic* 175). Be it by marketing or by literary elements, the Gothic has become inseparable from Ruiz Zafón's saga. As Glennis and Gordon Byron dictate, *La sombra del viento*,

Like most gothic fictions, seems haunted by its past, by the gothic tradition from which it has emerged. The narrative contains a dizzying mix of gothic tropes that includes secrets, doubles, labyrinths, madness, incarceration, incest and live burial, to name just some of the most obvious, and the text repeatedly and insistently echoes other gothic fictions. (73)

Indeed, even el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados as a space can be seen as a gothic setting and place of memory preservation (as noted by Byron and Byron [2012] and Meddick [2010]). For instance, there is a clear thematic connection between the burial site of the books within the cemetery and that of the actual cemetery at Montjuïc (Byron and Byron 79).<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the Gothicisation of the space is visible through “the physical layout, sounds, smells and the mystery surrounding the existence of the Cemetery of Forgotten Books” (Trotman 274). There is a grounding to the space through the use of architecture and the Gothic to facilitate the recuperation of memory. Consequently, through the inclusion of Gothic locations and descriptive tropes throughout his narrative, Ruiz Zafón produces a Barcelona codified by the Gothic.

---

<sup>23</sup> Other Gothic spaces include the Aldaya mansion in *La sombra del viento* and David Martín's tower house in *El juego del ángel* (Byron and Byron 75; Aldana Reyes, *Spanish Gothic* 178). Additionally, as Trotman points out, *La sombra del viento* includes: “an abundance of additional Gothic spaces including the Ateneo, Els Quatre Gats, Señor Barceló's apartment, San Gabriel School, and Santa Lucía Hospice” (274). The inclusion of Gothic spaces is not out of character for Ruiz Zafón. As Aldana Reyes identifies, Ruiz Zafón's previous work *El Principe de la Niebla* (1993), *El Palacio de la Medianoche* (1994), *Las Luces de Septiembre* (1995), and *Marina* (1999) all present elements of the Gothic (*Spanish Gothic* 174-5).

Within “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” tetralogy, Ruiz Zafón manipulates the use of the Gothic to help define his vision of Barcelona. This “Gothicisation of Barcelona,” as Aldana Reyes notes, is crucial to the creation of tone for the novel and the way memory is cultivated (“A Gothic Barcelona” 242). Since “the gothic helps us negotiate and deal with traumas that might otherwise lay buried or unresolved,” the use of genre is thus vital to Ruiz Zafón’s depiction of Spain and dealing with the recent memory of the war, the dictatorship, and national anxieties of moving forward (Aldana Reyes, “Gothic Affect” 15). As Tiffany Trotman observes, “the city itself plays a central role in the story as a quintessentially Gothic backdrop for the intrigue of the narrative. The use of the Catalan capital as a setting for a Gothic tale is not surprising. Barcelona has long been noted for its neo-Gothic architecture, including its most noted building, Antoni Gaudí’s Sagrada Familia” (271). To better understand a city, architecture can be used as a tool to identify key trends and interests of its inhabitants. For example, the presence of both Gothic and modernist design is included in the tetralogy to demonstrate its architectural importance in Barcelona’s society. This is seen through examples of Gaudí’s work as well as Puig i Cadafalch, architects significant to Barcelona’s *modernisme* (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 285; Davidson 27). The streets of Barcelona, the Ramblas, Raval, and Gothic Quarter in particular, become core settings of Ruiz Zafón’s work, highlighting both the history and architecture of the spaces. Doria underscores: “en literatura, los paisajes y figuras son un mosaico de experiencias que maridan en la ficción. Casas y avenidas, transitables y habitables por la imaginación” (183-4). These imaginary spaces line up with reality, creating context for the stories by carving out their locations into memory. Most importantly, the space of Els Quatre Gats denotes the importance of architecture and artistic style as it is set in a modernist building and was filled with modernist art and artists. Perhaps the most famous of the lot, Picasso made

the first images for the Els Quatre Gats Menu and was the site of his first solo show (Doria 50; Falgàs 243). It was also a space where aspiring writers went to write and commiserate with other artists (Falgàs 255). By demonstrating examples of architecture through important cultural locations within the city, Ruiz Zafón recreates Barcelona within the saga, implementing a gothic tone to better facilitate the navigation of the city within his literature. Thus, while perhaps some elements of Catalan culture are omitted from the tetralogy, the presentation of key architectural sites, through their basis as gothic settings, allow for the interaction between the text and the space in which it is meant to exist.

According to Glennis Byron,

The contemporary prevalence of Gothic is, at least in part, the product of marketing.

Since the 1980s, we have moved from seeing Gothic as a genre to Gothic as a mode or discourse and from there to Gothic as commodity; perhaps now it is time to consider whether, at least in western popular culture, Gothic may well have begun to function very much like a brand. (72)

Placing the role of the Gothic into the hands of marketing campaigns, Byron comments that within *La sombra del viento*, “there is a sense of a gothic that is detextualised, reduced to a set of easily recognized and decoded images. Branding again becomes more a visual than a textual affair” (76). Whether or not intentional from the first of the four installments of the series, the Gothic is prevalent in the corpus. Aldana Reyes remarks: “it is unclear, for example, whether a gothic text is meant to convey a type of feeling, set up a type of mood, or merely shock its consumers. It is, of course, possible that successful gothic texts manage to do all these things at once” (“Gothic Affect” 15-16). In the case of Ruiz Zafón, he manages all three of these elements. The text sets up a discerning feeling and mood within the work; the reader feels the

darkness and dampness of the mysterious Barcelona displayed within the novels. Moreover, the use of “monsters,” mysteries, violence, and thrilling moments, both shock and put the reader on edge until the tropes are resolved.

According to Catherine Spooner, the Gothic looks at “the legacies of the past and its burdens on the present; the radically provisional or divided nature of the self; the construction of peoples or individuals as monstrous or ‘other’; the preoccupation with bodies that are modified, grotesque or diseased” (8). Ruiz Zafón checks these boxes with his use of the Gothic within the tetralogy. First, by discussing the war and the corruption of the dictatorship (for instance through the discovery of the birth certificates of children stolen from their parents for nationalist families, exemplified by the Mataix girls) in the corpus, Ruiz Zafón allows the tools of the genre to make a social commentary on the tragedies of the time. The author creates “monsters” and othered bodies through his saga, for example, Alicia, whose injury from the war leads to her body constantly being observed. When considering Ruiz Zafón’s corpus at large, his earlier young adult novels, including his *La Trilogía de la niebla* series (1993-95) and *Marina* (1999) use more of the fantastical or magical to tell his stories. While “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” seems magical at times, the “monsters” in the story all prove to be linked to reality. For example, at the end of *La sombra del viento*, the reader realizes that Láin Coubert, the “monster” with the burnt face is actually Julián Carax, whose face was burned in the fire he sets to destroy his own corpus.<sup>24</sup> Ellis writes:

---

<sup>24</sup> Corpus here referring both to his literary output and physical body. The fire demonstrates the deep connection between the author and his books as the destruction of the books leads to the destruction of himself. The burnt corpus acts as an analogy that represents both the body of literature and the author’s own body.

Not only does Julián lose his identity in a violent conflagration at the outset of the Civil War, but, during the repressive period that follows, he is perceived as a monster and ultimately an embodiment of evil. Through association he thus seems to represent the Spanish Republican past, severed from the national project of the present yet not entirely vanquished, for he continues to haunt the survivors and in particular Daniel. Julián and Daniel are in fact drawn to each other. Without Daniel (the Spanish present), Julián (the Spanish past) will irrevocably die. (846)

The connection forged between the characters is therefore indicative of the spreading of generational memory where Carax, without going through the process of retelling of memory, is passing it down to Daniel to process, emulating the effects of postmemory in Spain after the Spanish Civil War. Another “monster” created by Ruiz Zafón is the demon publisher Andreas Corelli who has tasked David Martín to write for him.<sup>25</sup> Later, it is discovered that Corelli does not actually exist and has been hallucinated by Martín due to his poor mental health. Therefore, while Ruiz Zafón still creates “monsters,” these figures, in time, are all unraveled to place them from the sphere of the unknown, enhancing the tone of fear correlating to the gothic trope, to that of the known world – showing how the “magical” exists within reality. Ultimately, this magic is just a trick of understanding or of a shifting perspective.

The setting of the corpus is filled with elements of the Gothic, seen for example with isolated spaces that pose the risk of danger (Aldana Reyes, “Gothic Affect” 18). This type of setting is found throughout “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” series, with *El Cementerio de*

---

<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, Fermín considers Martín’s previous series, *The City of the Damned*, to be of gothic romance, further connecting the literature to the gothic narrative of Ruiz Zafón (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 233).

los Libros Olvidados being a prime example. The Aldaya mansion can also be considered through this criterion as there is a layer of fear and uncertainty added to the narration each time the characters frequent the space. Furthermore, Ruiz Zafón uses Gothic horror to represent the city in order to demonstrate his own understanding of the past. He states: “my memories of Spain as a child were of intense mediocrity...What I perceived around me was a dulled, frozen world – because essentially Spain had been frozen for 40 years... Then, from the late 1970s and 1980s, there was an enormous modernisation of society. The country started moving at a really fast pace because it needed to catch up” (Ruiz Zafón qtd in Tonkin). Ruiz Zafón therefore inserts his own memory of Barcelona within the series – placing himself within the narrative. Memory therefore acts as a method of recuperation of the past; a manifestation of collective memory coming together throughout the narrative. The use of Barcelona situates the historical past and its associated traumas for both character development and the readers’ benefit. Moreover, the Gothicisation of the space creates a mode to separate the reader from reality, and place them into the darkness of the trauma that burdens the characters and their environment.

### **2.3. Punishments and Imprisonment: Barcelona Under Repression**

The concept of violence is linked to Barcelona within Ruiz Zafón’s saga. In this section, I analyse violent spaces connected to Francoist Spain, as well as key characters that establish a vision of repression during the Spanish Civil War and dictatorship. I start by discussing the spaces of violence and oppression that exist within the novel, reminiscent of the war and dictatorship. These spaces connect to the Gothic not just historically with their architectural style, but also imaginatively, tracing links from the Gothic to the mood within the spaces’ atmospheres. I divide this study based on the two main political factions of the war: Republicans

versus Nationalists, as seen in war/post-war times, or here repressed versus those in power.

Though there were many different political affiliations at the time, both in Spain at large and in Catalonia, these two main dividers serve as a more simplistic case study of politics of the region and present as such within the corpus. It is evident based on character descriptions that within Ruiz Zafón's oeuvre, "good" characters follow left-wing political beliefs, for example Daniel Sempere and Fermín Romero de Torres, and "bad" characters follow right-wing politics, like Francisco Javier Fumero and Mauricio Valls. In general, the characters presented, following the binary of Republican versus Nationalists, create gothic figures within the series, emulating the dichotomy of light versus darkness seen within a classic gothic trope.

### *Spaces of Oppression and State Violence*

Perhaps the clearest examples of state violence within the corpus occurs in none other than Montjuïc prison. Acting as a symbol of the violence of the past, this prison becomes a looming location that significantly affects the lives of the characters. Historically, the prison on Montjuïc holds an important space in Barcelona's collective memory as a site of violence over centuries. The prison stands on the mountain "Montjuïc," which means "Jewish Mount" in Catalan, identifying even by name that this mountain region was a part of the Jewish community within Barcelona. In 1391, however, pogroms hit the community and while some members were killed, many fled without their possessions. Any land that was no longer "claimed" automatically went to the King and Catholic Barcelona. Later in history, the castle on the mountain was constructed (and re-constructed), becoming a site of protection but also violence, the most notable example being the conversion of the castle into a prison during the Spanish Civil War and Franco's dictatorship. While violence within a prison is unfortunately common, this site



became recognized as a known space of oppression where those of opposing political views were held or killed. As noted by Robert Davidson, “reprisals in the form of torture and executions were carried out against suspected Republicans and Communists. The Modelo prison filled up and the stronghold of Montjuïc once again became a place of death while summary executions were carried out on the outskirts of the city” (32). This historical account is visible within “El cementerio de los libros olvidados,” where Mauricio Valls, the director of Montjuïc prison represents the Nationalist ideology against the Republican prisoners, including, of course, Fermín Romero de Torres and David Martín. On the prison grounds, there is also the cemetery and mass grave site. Taking from Martí-López, a cemetery can be seen as one of Nora’s *lieux de memoire* (211). This site of memory, here, acts as a site of violence or perhaps, a memory of violence. In relation to the concept of a gothic Barcelona, Montjuïc prison exemplifies this Gothicisation as a fundamental space of the Francoist State. Again, while this site is real, there is a sense of mystery involved in the creation of its narrative within the series. For instance, when Fermín recounts his experience in the prison in *El prisionero del cielo*, since flashbacks are used, it makes the site seem like more of a place from the past even though it continues to exist today. This technique darkens the space – trying to contrast it against their life in 1957.

Montjuïc is established as a space of violence from the beginning of the series. As noted by Doria: “el Castillo de Montjuïc condensa una memoria de represión y violencia fratricida” (135). Its first mention is within *La sombra del viento* in a conversation between Clara Barceló and Daniel Sempere. Clara explains to Daniel her personal history with the space as her father was taken and killed there. Clara laments: “tras meses de investigaciones, todo lo que el investigador consiguió recuperar fue un reloj de pulsera roto y el nombre del hombre que había matado a mi padre en los fosos del castillo de Montjuïc” (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 41). Later,

when at home with his father, Daniel brings up this conversation, to which his father agrees: “nada es igual después de una guerra. Y sí, es cierto que hubo mucha gente que entró en ese castillo y nunca salió” (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 51). This commentary cements the prison as a space of trauma during the period where many were killed. When analysing the space, Trotman underscores:

Montjuïc Castle, a seventeenth-century fortified building, also appears as a horrifying space, home to torture and death during and after the Civil War. Descriptions of this space mark the castle as another Gothic building in the city. The incorporation of this space is undoubtedly due to the connection between Montjuïc Castle and the historical memory of the city dating back to the years of the dictatorship. The site was the location of several executions including that of the President of the Generalitat at the beginning of the Civil War. (275)

The inclusion of this setting is thus a reminder of the real events and trauma of the war – enhancing the sense of collective memory through its inclusion. Even so, the space is utilized for erasure: to erase memory, erase stories, erase people. According to Cazorla-Sánchez, “those who could not escape from the Francoist forces either became prisoners (in November 1940, a year and a half after the end of the war, there were still 240,000 political prisoners) or were subject to purges and other legal and extra-legal persecution, physical and moral abuse, confiscation of property, dismissal, etc.” (508). These types of imprisonment are especially visible in *El prisionero del cielo* where the reader encounters Fermín and Martín’s experiences imprisoned within Montjuïc: “la fortaleza estaba anclada en lo más alto de la roca, suspendida entre el mar al este, la alfombra de sombras que desplegaba Barcelona al norte, y la infinita ciudad de los muertos al sur, el viejo cementerio de Montjuic cuyo hedor escalaba la roca y se filtraba entre las

grietas de la piedra y los barrotes de las celdas” (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 95). It is within prison that Martín gains the nickname “el Prisionero del Cielo,” providing the title for the third novel adding to the literary universe (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 129). When considering the idea of identity, like that of Fermín who uses a fake name for his own safety, the prisoners’ identities are also marked by a change in identification. Here, prisoners are named by their cell number, for example, Fermín becomes the new 13, along with his neighbours, 12, 14, and 15 (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 104). Referring to these men as numbers, instead of by name creates a form of dehumanization or Gothicisation that links them to their space of trauma instead of to their real life and identity. Looking back to Spooner’s definition of the Gothic, this concept of dehumanization is seen through the “divided nature of the self” where the prisoners are forced to detach from their past selves (8). Being marked as a prisoner also creates a monster – judged by their oppressors as an evil enemy whether or not, as seen with Fermín and David, they actually committed crimes. Linking the Gothic monster to the prison pushes the dehumanization of the cellmates. Even more, the bullfighter whose name Fermín now holds was also a victim of violence in Montjuïc and was killed there in 1940, causing Fermín to worry about the legality of his identity since “he” is dead (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 86-88). This layers trauma onto the space as he himself could have died in the same cell as his namesake.

When Fermín first enters his cell, he encounters a corpse, and unfortunately, is recommended to take the corpses’ clothes or else he will remain naked (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 102). Though most guards, and “the gov,” Mauricio Valls, are described as bad, stealing food and packages sent to the prisoners, Bebo is the one exception, providing extra food, water, and sugar cubes to Martín and others, and listening to Martín as he tells the other prisoners stories (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 106). Montjuïc is not seen as a happy place by any

means, with death and violence entrenched within. The scenes of death culminate when Fermín escapes, and ends up in a mass grave with rotting bodies (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 194). This scene foment the presence of death connected to the prison and the way that the prisoners were treated, even after their existence. In fact, as stated by Cazorla-Sánchez, “the latest estimate of the number of people killed because of political repression during the war is just under 200,000. The Francoists were responsible for approximately three-quarters of those deaths” (508). While of course people died all across the country, cementing this particular prison as a site of trauma and Francoist repression is evident within Ruiz Zafón’s writing.

Similar to Ruiz Zafón’s demonstration of the Francoist state within “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” series, Dulce Chacón’s *La voz dormida* (2002), also highlights state violence and spaces of oppression. While focusing on the female perspective in a woman’s prison, Chacón follows the lives of the inmates, their friendships, and the traumas that they experience within the prison. The prison scenes can consequently be compared to those within “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” as they both look to understand the repressive experience of Republicans in prison under Franco. The key difference between these texts (other than the obvious division between gendered oppression) is that Chacón’s narrative mainly takes place within the prison, whereas Ruiz Zafón uses prison scenes within flashbacks in order to add in the political commentary within his text. However, the use of the repressive spaces furthers the reader’s understanding on how Ruiz Zafón incorporates his anti-Franco rhetoric within his series.

Moreover, like the Aldaya mansion where Penélope is repressed by her father in *La sombra del viento*, the Valls’ mansion, Palecete Villa Mercedes, as well as Ubach’s home are other spaces where characters are repressed. In the cases of Mauricio Valls and Miguel Ángel Ubach, both homes are used to keep Ariadna and Sonia (Victoria and Mercedes) from their

parents and live a pretend life as if it were naturally theirs. This oppression is possible because of the corruption of both of these figures, taking advantage of their positions of authority and kidnapping the children. By raising the children in these homes, their lives were dictated by the repression of their true identities. El pinar, the house wherein which Valls is held as prisoner and Morgado is murdered, also acts as a space of repression (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 489). Here, violent acts are conducted by violent figures like Hendaya, but also in the form of revenge, since the plan is meant to vindicate Ariadna (Victoria) for the crimes committed against her birth family. Entangled through these settings is the sense of the Gothic, a darkness engulfing the locations, ebbed in mystery and tragedy.

It could also be argued that Ruiz Zafón attempts to manifest Barcelona – or Spain at large – as a repressive space within his series due to the process of Gothicisation. While most of the saga takes place in Barcelona, particularly within the Gothic Quarter, Ruiz Zafón includes Madrid in his final installment of the novels in order to expand the cultural scope of the work. Separating itself from the rest of the corpus that focused only on Catalonia, the final installment includes sites of memory and pop culture to grow past the singular space. This location connects characters who live in Madrid such as Valls, Leandro Montalvo (Alicia's boss), as well as Alicia back to the narrative taking place in Barcelona. By having both Valls and Leandro, figures of authority and of state violence coming from Madrid, Ruiz Zafón ubicates the location through politics and government. This centralization mirrors that of Spanish history, comparing the life of Barcelona to Madrid.

Finally, the use of gothic tone and description of these spaces allows for a mythicization of the locations – a mode to separate the traumas from reality. This technique allows Ruiz Zafón to address collective memory as a production of postmemory so to speak. Ultimately, through his

technique of Gothicisation, Ruiz Zafón manipulates spaces of repression and state violence within “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” saga.

***Constructing the Binary of Repression: Creating Gothic Figures in “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” Saga***

The binary of political leanings or ideologies acts as a divider between characters within Ruiz Zafón’s novels. In order to demonstrate this binary, I analyse the presentation of Fermín Romero de Torres followed by David Martín, two clear examples of figures imprisoned under the Francoist State (see *El prisionero del cielo*). Switching sides, I move to figures of “power,” namely Francisco Javier Fumero, who in not only name alone embodies Francisco Franco, and Mauricio Valls. These characters, representing a binary of repression, also follow the binary of light versus dark or good versus evil. This idea is intrinsic to the formation of a gothic narrative in which the “good,” here illustrated through Fermín’s character, counteracts the violence of dark, corrupt characters like Valls, Fumero, etc. Thus, through this juxtaposition, I posit that Ruiz Zafón presents characters through the mode of the Gothic in order to further his Gothicisation of the novels. Indeed, Ruiz Zafón attempts to create a world where the division between people is clear: those who support the dictatorship are bad and those who are against it are good. This is why, through minor characters, political positions are noted, helping to outline opposition to the regime through opposing political ideologies such as Marxism. As well, the liking or disliking of literature, as noted by Brenneis, provides the reader a clue in understanding the dichotomy of characters. She states: “Fumero and his supporters despise books and consider reading to be frivolous and unpatriotic. In this way they aid in the creation of the underlying binary opposition in which the readers of the novel are manipulated to despise Fumero/Franco

along with everything he represents” (Brenneis 66). It is evident within the saga whom the reader is supposed to like and dislike as well as what political ideologies they should support.

Throughout this section I will outline Ruiz Zafón’s clear anti-Francoist stance through a selection of oppositional characters.

Fermín Romero de Torres exemplifies a repressed Republican who suffered violence during the war and dictatorship. As noted by Ramblado, “Fermín represents the political enemy who has been purged and silenced by the erasure of his very identity” (71). As evidenced through the novel, Fermín has a clear political past and connection with the Republic and the Catalan government. His real name is never shared with other characters nor the reader – lost and silenced by the violence of the war. In fact, the name by which he is known from 1938 onwards is that of an old bullfighter – a key reference to Spanish culture and identity (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 34). Ramblado reflects: “Fermín’s lack of identity, lack of memory, and somewhat picaresque behavior are actually caused by the trauma of repression, imprisonment, and the experience in his own flesh of ‘the regeneration of the Spanish race,’ an integral part of the politics of the new regime” (77). As such, it is only in preparation for his wedding that Daniel is able to acquire forged identity documents for his friend in order to be presented as a legal citizen (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 296).

Fermín’s experience of the war and violence of the dictatorship are visible within three of the four installments of the series. He is first introduced in *La sombra del viento* as a beggar on the streets, who eventually is taken in by Daniel and his father, and “brought back to society” through the job they offer him at the Sempere e hijos bookshop. Going back in time, in *El prisionero del cielo*, the reader sees flashbacks of Fermín imprisoned under Franco and, in *El laberinto de los espíritus*, the reader observes Fermín trying to escape Nationalist violence

during the war. Additionally, throughout the tetralogy, it is established that Fumero is his nemesis. Fermín therefore is regularly trying to evade police violence provoked by Fumero. As Ramblado highlights,

According to Fumero's discourse, Fermín reveals all the features of the psychopathic Marxist against which Francoism was fighting, as not only was he Republican but also *catalanista*. Because of his dissidence, he had to do penance and pay the price of his *traición a la patria*; he had to be dispossessed of all rights, as clearly happens to him at Fumero's hands. (79)

The violence of the war, and the subsequent push for those in opposition to hide in the shadows is exemplified through Fermín. His trauma becomes evident as Daniel and his father see Fermín's body: "desnudo parecía una foto de Guerra y temblaba como un pollo desplumado. Tenía marcas profundas en las muñecas y los tobillos, y su torso y espalda estaban cubiertos de terribles cicatrices que dolían a la vista" (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 101). Daniel's observation of the marks acts as a reminder of Francoist violence, Fermín's skin recalling the trauma. In addition, any time that Fermín shares stories of the war with Daniel, for instance, his retelling of the past in *El prisionero del cielo*, it "is a significant act, as Fermín transmits his memory to someone else, breaking the silence imposed by the state" (Ramblado 76). This playing with memory allows for the reader to better comprehend the traumas of the war and the violence that Fermín endured. Fermín is "marked by trauma," demonstrating how the effects of the war did not stay in the past (Ramblado 74). As Byron and Byron observe:

memory of the past here is both violently inscribed upon, and spoken by, the body.

Fermín is a physical reminder, even the embodiment, of the horrors of the past, with the deep marks on his wrists and ankles and the terrible scars made by a soldering iron that



cover his back and trunk. His very body gives witness to past torture. And the madness that overcomes him soon after he starts work in the bookshop is further evidence that Fermín has by no means forgotten, that the horrors of his torture are still all too clearly remembered. (81)

Here, Fermín's body functions as a reminder of the past, reflecting the reality of many people who suffered similar fates. While Fermín and others like him were silenced for generations, their scars mark the trauma that they were unable to vocalize. These scars therefore function as a practice of Gothicisation by Ruiz Zafón, demonstrating a damaged and traumatized body as a product of the Francoist violence.

Even the bombing in Barcelona presented at the beginning of the fourth book of the series affects Fermín's character. In this case, he is made to believe he lost Alicia, unable to save her life during the violence of war. Ultimately, when the two reunite years later, he is absolved of his thoughts of her death as she was able to survive the war without him. While in this example Fermín was not a targeted victim (unlike with the violence he endured from Fumero), the event demonstrates how innocent lives were affected by the violence of war – making a regular street a site of trauma. Again, the idea of the Gothic is present here as it shifts the tone of the street from the everyday to a dark setting, deeply affecting the characters.

Furthermore, in the case of David, while *El prisionero del cielo* focuses on his time in jail under the Francoist government, he is unfortunately mostly unaware of the political implications due to his mental illness. Here, unlike in *El juego del ángel*, instead of the devil-publisher Andreas Corelli asking David to write a book for him, in *El prisionero del cielo*, Mauricio Valls

replaces Corelli with this request,<sup>26</sup> thus comparing the figure of Valls (as a representation of Franco(ism)) to the devil. To an extent – or when he is lucid – David understands that Valls wants him to write a book for him, but his mental illness prevents him from being able to advance in this project. At times, he is aware of the corruption and position of power that Valls holds, for example, when Valls uses a letter from Isabella as a method of torture (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 252).<sup>27</sup> Though he is in a position of power over David, it ultimately does not give Valls what he wants. David, here, represents those numb to the violence and repression of the Francoist state. David's lack of lucidity acts as a mode to protect him from the realization of the violence in place during the dictatorship. Indeed, this example is meant to reflect the corruption under Valls and his abuse of power within the prison system. While the character is fictional, Ruiz Zafón uses him as a commentary against the Francoist State and the repression of thousands of people. This therefore encourages the reader to understand Ruiz Zafón's anti-Franco stance present within the literature, depicted through the mode of the Gothic. As well, where Fumero acts as a foil for Fermín, Mauricio Valls acts as a foil for David Martín. The choice of name also represents a contrasting binary with the use of "F" and "M." This furthers the illumination of the

---

<sup>26</sup> Since Corelli is a figment of David's imagination, perhaps it is really Valls the entire time who is attempting to get David to write a book for him.

<sup>27</sup> This confiscated letter is representative as well of the many letters that were not given to prisoners during the war and dictatorship. This is also visible with the rumour: "el señor director solía recibir a mujeres, hijas, novias o incluso tías y abuelas de los presos en su despacho los viernes por la mañana...escuchaba súplicas...ofrecía un pañuelo para sus llantos, y aceptaba sus regalos y favores de otra índole, otorgados bajo la promesa de mejor alimentación y trato o de la revisión de turbias sentencias que nunca llegaban a resolución alguna" (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 112).

dichotomy – each set has a “light” and “dark” demonstrating that a pattern of Gothicisation exists within the narrative.

There are other clear victims of Francoist State violence, for example, Alicia, who loses her family during the war (her father due to his political leanings; her mother, taken because of her father’s position and never returned; and her grandmother during the bombings). This loss of family due to the war leaves Alicia an orphan as a young child. The Mataix family is also representative of the violence as both Víctor and his wife were killed through state violence and their daughters taken to be children of Nationalist supporters (Valls and Ubach), demonstrating the corruption of the time. When Alicia confronts Leandro asking how he could aid in kidnapping children to sell them to Nationalist supporters, he responds that “aquellos eran otros tiempos” (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 809). It was neither his nor Valls’ idea but opportunity – Ubach’s wife liked the Mataix children, and they used their position of power to get what they wanted (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 810). Additionally, both Isabella Gispert and Nuria Montfort are victims of repression as Isabella is murdered by Valls and Nuria by Fumero (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 176; *La sombra* 527).<sup>28</sup> In both cases, these women’s lives are taken in order to silence them and the truths that they hold, as well as in an act of torture for other men (in the case of Isabella, to affect David Martín, and for Nuria, Julián Carax, Daniel Sempere, and Fermín Romero de Torres). Consequently, the repetition of victims of violence affects the overall tone of

---

<sup>28</sup> Nuria even comments in her letter to Daniel that for fifteen years she was sure that Fumero would kill her; she was just waiting for it to happen as if it were her destiny (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 526). In its contrast, where Nuria and Isabella were murdered and unable to fight back against their oppression, Alicia kills Leandro, ending that legacy of power (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 812).

the corpus, furthering its connection to the Gothic, known for its mysteries and association with violent tropes.

Moving to those in positions of power, the two most visible characters within the saga to represent Francoist corruption are Francisco Javier Fumero and Mauricio Valls. These characters are recurring in multiple books within “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” series, while others, like Rodrigo Hendaya,<sup>29</sup> Leandro Montalvo, and Miguel Ángel Ubach only appear in *El laberinto de los espíritus*. It is through these characters, along with spaces of oppression above, that Ruiz Zafón demonstrates the repressive side of Franco’s dictatorship. The author places these fictional characters within real spaces in order to create a modified version of the dictatorship, or more precisely, a Gothicised version.

Francisco Javier Fumero, the most obvious representation of Franco within the series, is portrayed through overt violence. As Ramblado highlights, “the figure of Fumero can be interpreted as the representation of state crime and all the repressive and violent forces of state terror” (74). Brenneis agrees commenting: “infamous Inspector Francisco Fumero, a figure who by name alone suggests the spectre of Francisco Franco” (66). Additionally, Ellis notes:

he seemingly incarnates all the ills of modern Spanish history, switching political allegiance from left to right as the tide of the Civil War changes so as always to be in a position of power over others and engaging in acts of torture. But if Fumero is wantonly cruel, he is also emblematic of how the Ruiz Zafón text depoliticizes history, transmuting

---

<sup>29</sup> It is noted in *El laberinto de los espíritus* that Hendaya was trained by Fumero, continuing his legacy of violence and repression further into the saga (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 454-5). Knowing the context of Fumero, the reader assumes Hendaya’s character as being violent, cruel, and someone to fear, attributes visible within the text.

the violence of the war into a personal vendetta rooted in psychological trauma, and in the process laying the blame (perhaps inadvertently, though not without profound implications) on the only major working-class character. (845-6)

The character for Fumero henceforth acts as a foil for Ruiz Zafón's anti-Franco commentary. Through this figure, Ruiz Zafón denounces the violence caused by the regime and the political crisis for power. Similarly, Mauricio Valls is presented as a corrupt figure in power. While his acts are less violent in nature (the scenes with Fumero typically have him conducting an act of violence whereas Valls is more threat based), Valls puts acts of trauma onto other people's hands through his position of power in the prison. His character is perhaps more psychologically violent than physically, abusing his position of power to keep control within the prison – even if he believes the role is below his class level. In both cases, Ruiz Zafón manifests these characters into gothic figures, characters that represent the darkness of a gothic narrative.

Eventually, Mauricio Valls dies “a begger,” the end of his life mirroring the beginning of the life the reader sees with Fermín – on the streets of Barcelona (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 835). The juxtaposition of the two lives is pertinent to Ruiz Zafón's message on politics and memory: Fermín, opposed to Francoism, was able to live a long life after the violence he survived because of the war, whereas Valls, due to his contribution to the Francoist State, dies the way many were forced to live under his power. Ruiz Zafón's moral lesson acts to punish the corrupt for their actions. This is true as well for Rodrigo Hendaya, Leandro Montalvo, and Miguel Ángel Ubach, three corrupt men in positions of authority who ultimately are all killed. These deaths function as an attempt to re-write history and create a trope where Francoism is literally and figuratively killed off. These Francoist-coded characters also point to corruption within state systems such as the police. This creates a commentary around a lack of trust towards those in positions of

authority, questioning their merit achieved in those positions. For Valls, he enters positions of power through his marriage whereas Fumero's acts of violence are rewarded through promotions. Through these examples, Ruiz Zafón denounces the police and prison system during the dictatorship and urges his readers to re-evaluate those systems of power. Moreover, less than subtle commentary against right-wing politics is underscored through the saga. For instance, in Bea Aguilar's first love triangle with her falangist boyfriend Pablo Cascos Buendía and Ruiz Zafón's left-wing hero, Daniel Sempere. The text reads:

Bea tenía un novio haciendo el servicio militar como alférez en Murcia, un falangista engominado llamado Pablo Cascos Buendía, que pertenecía a una familia rancia y propietaria de numerosos astilleros en las rías. El alférez Cascos Buendía, que se pasaba media vida de permiso merced a un tío suyo en el Gobierno Militar, siempre andaba largando peroratas sobre la superioridad genética y espiritual de la raza española y el inminente declive del Imperio bolchevique. (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 119)

This description forces the reader to dislike Pablo before he is even seen within the series as it creates a clear opposition to Daniel and his qualities. Even though Bea has a boyfriend, the descriptions of Pablo push the reader to root for Daniel and hope that he and Bea can one day be together. The description is not flattering and looks to mock Pablo's beliefs. Overall, these characters follow a process of Gothicisation, allowing for Ruiz Zafón to openly critique these systems and enforcers of oppression.

Furthermore, Ruiz Zafón's narrative trope is not uncommon for the current Spanish Civil War novel trend. Stafford proclaims:

today, many Spaniards feel that there is an unjust imbalance in memory that must be offset. After the end of the Spanish Civil War, much was done to commemorate and

honor the Nationalist victims of Republican violence...The Republican side, however, suffered a brutal postwar repression, discrimination, and retribution...Most cultural products of the Spanish Civil War today (including novels) seek to honor and recognize the sufferings of the Republican victims, who were oppressed, forgotten, silenced, and alienated for so long. (157)

As a result, “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” as a cultural product, attempts to honour the Republican past and denounce those of Nationalist and pro-Franco power. However, not only are characters used to understand this dichotomy of political ideology, rather spaces of violence are also included to aid in defining the period. In conclusion, within “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” series, these spaces of memory (or as Pierre Nora would say, *lieux de memoires*), act as critical reminders of engaging with the past. The characters who help create the dichotomy between Republican and Nationalist, or here, figures who help illustrate the binary of “light” and “darkness” within the gothic narrative, define Ruiz Zafón’s engagement with Spain’s recent past. Through these cases, Ruiz Zafón is able to process the postmemory of the war and represent the dictatorship through a fictionalized recounting of history. This process of remembering foments the author’s views of the past and how Spain, or in the case of the series, Barcelona, was affected by Francoism.

### ***Psychological Torture and Francoist Repression***

The role of the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship of Francisco Franco are pertinent in the representation of mental health within the saga, in particular, in conjunction to psychological trauma. Its importance is twofold: first, it follows the literary trend presented earlier in this chapter where authors recover the memory of the war and the traumas that

occurred in the recent past. Secondly, the historical reference functions to ground the concept of psychological trauma within the tetralogy through a series of examples connecting right-wing leaders or police to left-wing characters. The corpus provides various cases of psychological torture during the war. As well, in characters such as Fermín Romero de Torres, the idea of psychological trauma is further explored in the 50s, part of the dictatorship period, demonstrating how his trauma is still affecting his mental health. For instance, when recalling the war, Fermín notes:

Barcelona cayó en cuestión de días y la guido y la tortilla giró completamente. Pasé a ser un criminal perseguido y mis supervisores se vieron forzados a esconderse como ratas. Por supuesto, Fumero ya estaba al mando de la operación de “limpieza”. La purga a tiros se llevaba a cabo en plena calle, o en el castillo de Montjuïc. A mí me detuvieron en el puerto... (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 383)

Notably, this quote connects back to spaces of trauma by mentioning Montjuïc. Most importantly, the role of Francoism is demonstrated within the prison system, in particular, seen within *El prisionero del cielo* and *El laberinto de los espíritus*. Two main figures who allow for a perspective on mental disability and prison are David Martín and, of course, Fermín Romero de Torres. Martín, a prisoner held captive under Mauricio Valls from 1939-41, suffers from deteriorating mental health (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 200). As Brians narrates: “Bebo me ha contado que como Valls prohibió que le entregasen más papel y tinta, Martín empezó a escribir en el dorso de las páginas que le había tirado a la cara. A falta de tinta se hacía cortes en las manos y en los brazos y utilizaba su sangre... (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 252). This example of self-harm is motivated by the punishment proposed under Valls. Martín, always a writer,



sacrifices his own body for the task, perhaps even unaware of his actions and the pain that it causes.

The narration continues: “Ni siquiera reconocía su presencia. Bebo cree que al recibir la noticia de la muerte de Isabella, Martín perdió ya totalmente el juicio y vivía en el infierno que había construido en su mente...Por las noches gritaba y todo el mundo le podía oír” (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 252-3). Of course, it was fighting against Martín’s maltreatment within the prison under Valls that caused Isabella Gispert to be killed. Despite his guilt, Martín’s lucidity had been regularly questioned, even by Valls who nervously monitored his mental status as, should Martín die, he would have to write his book alone. While captive, Martín does not have access to help or resources to aid his mental health. Though one of his fellow prisoners is a doctor tasked with observing his health, he makes regular remarks that he cannot diagnose his (likely) schizophrenia as it was not his area of medicine (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 120). Overall, the case of Martín exhibits the lack of resources for prisoners, a form of torture.

Different from Martín, who already suffered from a mental illness that was only exacerbated in prison, Fermín’s experience with mental health is completely linked to Francoist repression and the psychological trauma he faced. Fermín’s character presents the effects of the psychological torture of the war and imprisonment during the dictatorship. Though never stated, Fermín exhibits symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD is defined as: “a mental disorder that may develop after exposure to exceptionally threatening or horrifying events...PTSD can occur after a single traumatic event or from prolonged exposure to trauma” (Bisson et al. 1). Criteria for a diagnosis of PTSD, according to Bisson et al. is: “exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violation” be it by direct experience, witnessing, learning or repeat exposure or “exposure to an extremely threatening or horrific

event or series of events” (Bisson et al. 2). This type of trauma experienced in the tetralogy fits the description of the mental illness provided, and can be seen through numerous examples, many of which I outline below. Importantly, it is clear that Ruiz Zafón takes interest in mental health and its different forms and explores different examples within his literature. This includes Martín’s schizophrenia and the many cases of suicide seen within the series, in particular, by female characters, to be explored in the final chapter of this dissertation. The role of Francoism, however, is pertinent to the case of Fermín as all of his trauma is strictly connected to the oppression he faced.

A key example of Fermín’s PTSD is exhibited in *La sombra del viento*, when, as Doria comments: “una noche, la transición de Fermín de mendigo a ciudadano ejemplar manifiesta ciertos problemas de adaptación psicológica en forma de ataque violento requiere asistencia médica” (87-9). The scene is as follows:

tres meses y medio después de que Fermín hubiera empezado a trabajar en la librería, el teléfono del piso de la calle Santa Ana nos despertó a las dos de la mañana de un domingo. Era la dueña de la pensión donde se hospedaba Fermín Romero de Torres. Con la voz entrecortada nos explicó que el señor Romero de Torres se había encerrado en su cuarto por dentro, estaba gritando como un loco, golpeando las paredes y jurando que si alguien entraba, se mataría allí mismo cortándose el cuello con una botella rota. (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 105)

Through this description, it is clear that Fermín is experiencing an episode in which the memories of the war and the psychological and physical torture that were forced upon him are revealed. His desperation and suicidal ideations are severe. This scene continues as Daniel and his father enter the room, seeing that Fermín “estaba desnudo, llorando y temblando de terror. La

habitación estaba destrozada, las paredes manchadas con lo que no sabría decir si era sangre o excremento” (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 108). This passage shocks the reader, highlighting the effects of the war on its citizens. Fermín is traumatized by the events that he lived through, suffering because of them even though he was considered safe in that moment.

Later, Fermín narrates a specific event of trauma to Daniel, providing both Daniel, and the reader, an example or reasoning behind his PTSD:

me llevaron a Montjuïc y me tuvieron dos días encerrado en una celda completamente oscura, sin agua y sin ventilación. Cuando volví a ver la luz era la de la llama de un soplete. Fumero y un tipo que sólo hablaba alemán me colgaron boca abajo por los pies. El alemán primero me deprendió la ropa con el soplete, quemándola. Me pareció que tenía práctica. Cuando me quedé en pelota picada y con todos los pelos del cuerpo chamuscados, Fumero me Dijo que si no le decía dónde estaban ocultos mis supervisores, la diversión empezaría de verdad. Yo no soy un hombre valiente, Daniel. Nunca he sido, pero el poco valor que tengo lo usé para cagarme en su madre y enviarle a la mierda. A un signo de Fumero, el alemán me inyectó no sé qué en el muslo y esperó unos minutos. Luego, mientras Fumero fumaba y me observaba sonriente, empezó a asarme concienzudamente con el soplete. Usted ha visto las marcas... (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 383-4)

Referencing the marks on his skin is important as it reminds the reader of the earlier instances within *La sombra del viento*, where Daniel sees, and is shocked by the visible memories of the war. By stating a place, Fermín’s trauma is centered in a space of repression, Montjuïc. This clear description, as well as Fermín’s episode of crisis, demonstrate how the damage caused on Fermín was much more than just physical. Fermín’s poor mental health associated with

Francoism is worth considering when reflecting on the space of mental health in literature. Ruiz Zafón's intent to explore this illness highlights the importance of recovering the traumas of the past and how they linger even after people were removed from sites of trauma. This reflection on the war creates a space for Ruiz Zafón to present the different forms of suffering that occurred across Spain during the war, the dictatorship, and the transition to democracy. Moreover, by focusing on psychological trauma, and not just physical trauma, Ruiz Zafón generates a space for this form of repression within literature. As society moves forward and mental health is more discussed, Ruiz Zafón's work will act as an important literary example of mental health.

Additionally, the mental devastation caused by the war is visible in *El laberinto de los espíritus* when Fermín, after the bombings, attempts to find Alicia Gris. In his search, bystanders believe she must be his dead daughter that he will never find, one of the hundred children killed in that bombing (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 73). It is through this experience that the reader sees the devastation of the war and all of the deaths. For instance, Fermín sees a woman with a corpse, and he realizes that all the bodies around her are dead (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 74). This idea of death continues when Fermín cries to a policeman about losing Alicia: “el guardia, que llevaba muchas horas sin descanso sacando cadáveres de entre los escombros, incluidos el de su esposa y su hijo de seis años, le escuchó con calma” (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 74). The constant vision of death affects one's wellbeing, and here, it only furthers Fermín's PTSD connected to the war.

Francisco Javier Fumero and Mauricio Valls as the contributors of psychological torture are critical to this discussion of mental health. Their actions, sanctioned under Francoism, affect other characters' psychological well-being. This torture affects the mental health of figures such as David Martín, Fermín Romero de Torres, and Nuria Montfort. For example, in Nuria's letter,

she predicts her death, noting that she believes that she will be killed by Fumero: “me ha visto morir durante años y solo espera el momento de asestarme el último golpe. Nunca he dudado que moriré en sus manos” (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 526). This premonition becomes reality as Fumero’s psychological torture culminates until her death. Later, when Fermín is attempting to return to Barcelona, he is caught by Fumero: “Fermín cerró los ojos como los cierra un niño aterrorizado por un ruido extraño en la oscuridad de su habitación... Tal vez no había en el mundo un rincón en el que pudiera esconderse y vivir un día más para contarlo” (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 45). This fear, like Nuria’s, again places Fumero as an actor of psychological torture. As Ramblado comments, for Fumero, Fermín is always connected to Marxism, mental illness, and crime (78-9). Stigmatized political ideologies combine with this idea of mental health in Spain instead of treated as legitimate. Even so, Aldana Reyes describes Fumero: “although clearly a traumatised man, Fumero is presented unsympathetically. Two of the few things known about his past is that he used to take pleasure in torturing animals and that he shot and killed his own mother while still a child” (*A Gothic Barcelona* 243). What triggers one’s mental health and their actions can culminate in different ways. Here the reader sees that Fumero’s triggers lead to violent ideations where he manipulates his trauma in order to traumatize others.

The anxiety about the war and dictatorship further the question of psychological torture with the case of the Mataix family. Víctor Mataix’s consideration on whether or not he should join “las tropas del llamado *bando nacional*” and ultimately, opting not to, helps the reader gauge political affiliations and further divides the Mataix family from the Valls and Ubachs, centering the Mataix family on the left-wing of politics (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 423).<sup>30</sup> Ruiz

---

<sup>30</sup> A similar questioning on how to engage with the war occurs in *La sombra del viento* when Clara notions to the question of loyalty and morals in times of violence and fear: “mi padre

Zafón is therefore purposeful in mentioning which side of the war Mataix would contribute toward. Víctor's decision is fomented when his wife, Susana, tells him not to leave her and their daughter Ariadna, stating: "tu patria somos Adriana y yo" (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 423). The idea of nation and nationalism here is significant as Susana essentially tells her spouse that he must fight for them instead of the idea of Spanish nationalism. The politics of the war enter into their lives again when the lawyer, Fernando Brians, goes to see Mataix. Brians had been approached via a third party to represent a client looking to have Mataix ghost write his autobiography since his wife is a fan of Mataix's work. Brians states that his "cliente y sus abogados se encuentran bajo los auspicios y la protección del general Franco" and that if Mataix does not agree to write it, there will be consequences: "si salgo por esa Puerta sin haber contratado sus servicios no creo que mañana siga con vida. Y usted y su familia tampoco (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 428-9). While Brians does not know the client's name, he does understand his position in Spanish society:

sé que es un banquero. Importante. Sé, o intuyo, que es uno de los dos o tres banqueros que están financiado el ejército del general Franco. Sé, o me han dado a entender, que es un hombre vanidoso y muy sensible al juicio que la historia pueda hacer de él y que su esposa, como le digo gran lectora y seguidora de su obra, ha convencido a su esposo de que necesita una biografía que plasme sus logros, su grandeza y su prodigiosa aportación al bien de España y del mundo. (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 430)

---

sabía desde el principio lo que iba a pasar...Permaneció al lado de sus amigos porque pensaba que ésa era su obligación. Le mató la lealtad a gentes que, cuando les llegó la hora, le traicionaron" (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 33). This commentary shows that in times of war, there are blurred lines between right and wrong.

The description of the unknown man alerts the reader of his connections to the regime and creates suspicion that the banker is Miguel Ángel Ubach.<sup>31</sup> From this line of thinking, it is recommended to Mataix that he take the money, write the “autobiography,” and flee to Argentina:

mire, Mataix. Hagla lo que haga, se la juega. Si gana el bando de Ubach, que tiene puntos de sobra, me dice la nariz que una vez ofrecidos sus servicios su existencia resultará incómoda y habrá quien prefiera verle desaparecido. Y si gana la República y alguien se entera de que ha colaborado usted con uno de los usureros de Franco, le veo en una checa con todos los gastos pagados. (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 434)

Even with this precarious situation, Mataix does not want to leave, claiming: “esta es mi casa, para bien o para mal. La llevo en la sangre” (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 434). At this point, due to Susana’s pregnancy with Sonia, they opt not to leave the city and accept the risk and psychological traumas of staying (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 435).

The Ubachs physically enter the lives of the Mataixs when, suddenly, they arrive at the Mataix house with four armed men in suits: “Doña Federica se convirtió en la mejor amiga de aquella pobre plebeya que a duras penas se tenía en pie, débil todavía tras el parto de su segunda hija. Aun así, doña Federica la dejó levantarse y acudir a la cocina para preparar un té que no se dignó a tocar, unas pastas resacas que ella no les hubiera dado ni a los perros” (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 437). While watching Susana, Federica sits with Ariadna and Sonia: “que inexplicablemente eran lo más hermoso que había visto en toda su existencia. ¿Cómo era posible que dos criaturas tan dulces, tan llenas de luz y vida, pudieran haber nacido de aquel par de

---

<sup>31</sup> Ubach is further connected to Valls via the bank as Valls’ father-in-law, Enrique Sarmiento, also helped to finance the nationalists (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 144).

muertos de hambre? Sí, tal vez Mataix tenía algo de talento, pero no dejaba de ser como todos los artistas, un criado” (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 437). Ariadna was nervous with Federica there, especially when she asks: “¿dime, Cielo, quién te parece más guapa, tu mamá o yo?” (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 438). One week later, Fumero arrives at the house and hits Mataix with a gun so that his men can drag him to the car (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 438). He then finds Susana with the girls in a wardrobe, kicks Susana when she would not hand him her children, and takes the girls (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 438). Of course, demonstrating his violence, when Susana tries to gain strength and attack him back to save her children, he attacks her:

Agarró a Susana del cuello y la lanzó contra el suelo. Se arrodilló sobre ella aplastándole el tórax y la miró a los ojos...Le vio extraer una navaja de afeitar del bolsillo y desplegarla...Los hombres la dejaron allí y partieron. Susana se arrastró sangrando escaleras abajo y escuchó el rumor de los vehículos alejándose entre los árboles hasta perder el sentido. (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 438-9)

This scene marks the end of the Mataix family. Susana tried to ask Federica Ubach for help in finding her children, but was denied aid and two days later was picked up by police and sent to a woman’s mental health hospital (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 445). A few years later, she managed to escape, only to be shot and killed in front of Sonia (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 170-1). Víctor Mataix was brought to prison, and it was there that he told the story to David Martín (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 445). As for Ariadna and Sonia Mataix, from that day forward, they were known as Victoria Ubach and Mercedes Valls, stolen children under Franco.

In the end, the Ubachs and the Valls, deemed as evil due to their kidnapping of the Mataix girls, all die, Federica and Miguel Ángel in a fire that Ariadna sets while they are sleeping, Elena Sarmiento by suffocation, and Mauricio unable to survive on the streets. While



Ruiz Zafón's narrative attempts to provide justice to those affected by the corrupt Francoist icons within the text, unfortunately, all the Mataixs die too, victims of the trauma of corruption.

Psychological trauma within the series becomes evident as Ruiz Zafón's narrative illustrates the long-lasting effects of the war. Even so, as outlined by Punamäki, "questions about mental health and psychological well-being are incompatible with the atmosphere of war, political repression, and national struggle" (3). This stance opens up the concept of psychological torture to more than only Franco's regime. As stated by Cazorla-Sánchez, "the memory of war and violence there is associated not only with 'fascism' but also with the failed democratic Second Republic (1931-39) and the tragedy of the Civil War (1936-39)" (503). Looking back even before the Second Spanish Republic, the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera caused identity trauma to Catalans as their culture was repressed. Davidson notes: "under his seven-year dictatorship the Catalan capital was once more an occupied city and saw such varied acts of cultural repression as a comprehensive system of press censorship, restrictions on the sardana and even the closing down for six months of FC Barcelona after supporters had dared to boo the Spanish anthem" (30). Franco's dictatorship thus follows that of Primo de Rivera's through the ideologies of homogeneity and oppression of those in opposition to his beliefs. Within the saga, though *El juego del ángel* and Julian Sempere's timeline in *La sombra del viento* pass through Primo de Rivera's 1923-1930 dictatorship and the Second Spanish Republic, it is not centralized within the story. Instead, Ruiz Zafón centers his narrative on Franco's regime, providing commentary within all four tomes. The dissection of this historical period and the violence caused within it become critical themes within this corpus. His investigation into the recent past allows for the recovery of memory and understanding of the psychological trauma that was still experienced by Spaniards even after Franco's death in 1975.

## 2.4. Culture under Franco in “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” Series

A recreation of historical memory is depicted throughout “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” saga as Ruiz Zafón displays elements of culture that existed under Franco. This manifestation of culture is seen both in references to historical sites and events (including even the announcement of Franco’s death or the use of the modernist/Gothic restaurant Els Quatre Gats<sup>32</sup>), and occasions of violence. This tactic of displaying elements of the everyday – like the restaurant or daily life in the bookstore – are thus juxtaposed against events of state violence.

Economic disparity is also a cultural cue demonstrated within “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” saga where cases of poverty, middle class, and wealth are all shown. Cases of poverty are highlighted with Fermín Romero de Torres, who the reader first encounters as a homeless person on the streets of Barcelona after the war, and Alicia Gris, orphaned because of the war. When comparing to other texts in the literary cannon, readers can connect Alicia to the girls in Ana María Matute’s *Fausto* or Carmen Laforet’s *Nada*. In all three instances, the reader sees young women dealing with poverty in very different ways. With Alicia, she is orphaned as her father dies in the war, her mother is taken away by the police, and her grandmother dies in

---

<sup>32</sup> This restaurant opened in 1897 and was a centre for modernist art. As noted by Falgàs, “Pere Romeu’s bar was a failure as a business, but for a few years, from its opening in June of 1897 until it closed in July of 1903, 4 Gats actually managed to emulate the mythical cafes of Montmartre that were its inspiration” (243-244). This mythical café enters into Ruiz Zafón’s narrative as the café would not have been open during the story’s time period. It is however eulogized within the stories and presented as a favourite to the characters, often frequented by Fermín and Daniel. For more information on the history of the restaurant, see their website: <https://4gats.com/historia/>.

the 1938 air raids. Alicia is not adopted and turns to crime in order to survive until she is hired and “taken in” by Leandro Montalvo who uses her as a pawn for investigating crimes. Since she needs the money, she is lured by the opportunity and works for him for many years – completely dependent. With the unnamed child in *Fausto*, while she has her grandfather, the child is filled with loneliness and is quite aware of the sickness and poverty around her. Ultimately, her sentiment manifests into violence against the cat she finds (and names), Fausto. Finally, in the case of *Nada*, Andrea, an orphan like Alicia, goes to her relatives’ house where her hunger is noted often, and scenes of violence and abuse are a constant occurrence within the home. These examples of poverty are juxtaposed against the Semperes and their friends, “regular people” in the middle class, most of whom have businesses of their own and survive within their family units.<sup>33</sup> Furthering the contrast of wealth are characters like Mauricio Valls and the Miguel Ángel Ubach who benefited from family inheritance and corruption from the war, marking elitist culture under Franco. For example, the masked ball hosted by Mauricio Valls at his mansion in Madrid in 1959 is attended by many high-ranking officials within the dictatorship and mentions their relationship to Franco – an invited guest who was not in attendance (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 87).<sup>34</sup> This juxtaposition of wealth also exemplifies the narrative that those with money are connected with the dictatorship – wealth under Franco is associated with being pro-Franco.

---

<sup>33</sup> In a similar comparison to Alicia, readers can compare Daniel (and Alicia) to Hortensia from Dulce Chacón’s *La voz dormida*. In this instance, both characters have a desire to write, however, where in Ruiz Zafón’s work the characters know how to write but just need to select a topic, Hortensia wants to learn how to write. This example demonstrates a shift in time and in education/opportunity.

<sup>34</sup> The reader sees the invitation to the party at the beginning of the fourth installment of the series (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 77).

An interesting commentary on social classes and political opposition is also seen through Doña María Luisa, the archivist whom Vargas meets during his investigation (which ultimately leads him to finding Victoria and Mercedes' true identities). Doña María Luisa explained that she had been falsely accused of the fire that destroyed all the documents in the archive from before 1944 – except those that she had taken home for Vargas believing he would need them (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 860-61).<sup>35</sup> In due course, when asked what she had been doing since, she responds: “morirme. En este país a la gente decente la matan poco a poco. La muerte rápida se la reservan a los sinvergüenzas. A las personas como yo nos matan ignorándonos, cerrándonos todas las puertas y haciendo ver que no existimos” (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 861). This commentary is quite interesting as it highlights this manifestation of corruption and destruction of historical documents, culminating in the hiding of truth. Ruiz Zafón includes this example as a means to recover the damage caused by the war and honour the identities that were lost. Again, this fits into Ruiz Zafón's attempt to recuperate the memory of the past and uncover the truths behind Spain's violent history.

Notwithstanding, the series also demonstrates an internal questioning regarding the war and the recent past as part of a cultural experience – be it the urge to forget or to talk about it. This reflects the postwar experience between generations. This can be seen through Daniel

---

<sup>35</sup> The archivist was paramount in discovering the reality of the misfiled documents and creation of fake records. In comparison to *el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados*, Byron and Byron note: “it is not without significance that books are intentionally misfiled in order to hide them” (79). Through this comparison, in both cases, articles are misfiled, however, one case is intentionally misfiling in order to destroy truths and identities, hiding corruption, while the other misfiles as an act of protection and preservation of thing-life.

Sempere and his father, Juan, characters who were alive during the war but experienced it from different ages, one as a young child, and the other as an adult. One night over dinner, Juan Sempere asks a young Daniel what he is contemplating, to which he responds: “la guerra” (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 49). This simple phrase shocks Juan, a man who has not liked to talk about the war. In fact, he has even gone as far as to promise Daniel’s mother, Isabella, to never discuss the war with their son as she did not want for him to remember the traumas that occurred (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 51). This again highlights the idea of wanting to ignore the past, functioning through avoidance and pain. However, even as a child, Daniel observed how the war and its aftermath affected his surroundings and his father:

era un hombre reservado y, aunque vivía en el pasado, casi nunca lo mencionaba. Yo había crecido en el convencimiento de que aquella lenta procesión de la posguerra, un mundo de quietud, miseria y rencores velados, era tan natural como el agua del grifo, y que aquella tristeza muda que sangraba por las paredes de la ciudad herida era el verdadero rostro de su alma... En tiempos de guerra ocurren cosas que son muy difíciles de explicar, Daniel. Muchas veces, ni yo sé lo que significan de verdad. A veces es mejor dejar las cosas como están. (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 49-50)

This passage is fundamental in the understanding of generational trauma and the way that said trauma appears in the day to day. Though perhaps too young to understand the events of the war, Daniel is still acutely aware of the damage that it caused even within his community. By trying to avoid the past, it stays within the present, creating a culture of avoidance in an attempt of self-preservation.

To create a more holistic vision of Spain in the 30s-60s, Ruiz Zafón also adds elements of popular culture within his novels to create a more complete view of Barcelona under the

dictatorship. As Erll perceptively notes: “the narrativization of historical occurrences and pre-narrative experience first allows their interpretation. Even the profoundly condensed, and arguably non-narrative, lieux de mémoire are generally entwined with and accompanied by stories, which circulate in social contexts and endow those sites with their changing meanings” (147). Therefore, the inclusion of social settings within the narrative allows for Ruiz Zafón to document historical trends of the time.

Instead of following classic Gothic tropes where the horrors are magical or fantastical, Ruiz Zafón experiments with the genre, centering the Gothic in reality, therefore creating a Gothicised historical novel. This proves important as popular culture becomes critical within the narrative. Here, Ruiz Zafón separates from purely historical memory of the war and presents a more robust example of society at the time. Perhaps then not so coincidentally, the place of cinema is paramount to the characters’ lives.<sup>36</sup> This activity was critical for Fermín Romero de Torres, who would spend Sundays at the theatre on dates with Rociño (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 249).<sup>37</sup> As Manuel Vázquez Montalbán writes, “de América llegó el cine en color” which here is especially relevant as with the arrival of American cinema styles, also arrives the introduction of American actresses to the Spanish public (47). For instance, Vázquez Montalbán mentions actresses like Rita Hayworth and Jane Russell in his work (33; 41). Additionally, he comments: “no muy a la zaga iba la raza femenina americana: Ava Gardner, Esther Williams, Ruth Roman, Jean Peters...” adding more American actresses to the dialogue (Vázquez Montalbán 73). Ruiz

---

<sup>36</sup> This implication is informed by the fact Ruiz Zafón worked as a screenwriter in LA, as well as includes many cinematic elements or descriptive modes throughout his work.

<sup>37</sup> They also do other activities such as going dancing at La Paloma or to the theme park at Tibidabo (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 249). These reference other popular spaces of young adults of the time – demonstrating the “fun” that was possible at the same time as the violence.

Zafón follows this trend of the inclusion of American actresses, including mentioning Hayworth, within his narrative (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 528). Thus, the comparison to *Crónica sentimental de España* de Vázquez Montalbán is pertinent here as Ruiz Zafón also has the intention of recuperating the past. The American actress Kim Novak (1933-), in particular, is mentioned many times within the saga (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 25, 284; *El laberinto* 24, 912). The continuous mentioning of Novak creates the idea that she is Fermín's favourite film star. Rather than her talent, most commentary regarding the actress is focused on her body: "sospechaba que ni un paquete de sugus ni un peliculón con Kim Novak en el Fémina luciendo *brassieres* en punta que desafiaban la ley de la gravedad conseguirían levantarle el ánimo" (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 284). Actress Ava Gardner (1922-1990) is also referenced in both the English and Spanish copy, however Myrna Loy (1905-1993) was only included in the English edition, replacing Mariona Rebull mentioned in the original Spanish (Ruiz Zafón, *The Labyrinth* 225; *El laberinto* 302; *The Labyrinth* 404; *El laberinto* 474). The replacement of Rebull for a third famous American actress demonstrates to the audience the Americanisation of culture. Other actors/actresses are also mentioned, such as the German-American actress Marlene Dietrich and Cary Grant (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 233; *La sombra* 59).

Within the series, American cinema (and actresses) is central compared to Spanish (or even Catalan) examples. Perhaps unsurprisingly, however, within Vázquez Montalbán, readers can also find this exemplification of American cultural elements. This is seen, like with cinema, with American/international music: "toda la juventud canta los éxitos de los Beatles, de los Rolling Stones, de Johnny Hallyday, y no saben ni inglés ni francés" (Vázquez Montalbán 128). Figures such as Elvis and Paul Anka are also included within Vázquez Montalbán's text (48). The influence of American culture is underscored through the transculturation existing during

this time period. During the dictatorship, the increase in technology – and accessibility to the media, at this time radio and cinema – allowed for Spaniards to engage with international materials. The popularization and globalization of American culture is therefore highlighted within “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” series as a means to engage with cultural interactions of the time. For instance, the text reads: “Radio Barcelona emitía aquella mañana una grabación clandestina que un coleccionista había hecho del magnífico concierto que el trompetista Louis Armstrong y su banda habían dado en el hotel Windsor Palace de la Diagonal” (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 24). While Armstrong is compared to Isaac Albéniz on the following page, the centralization of Armstrong furthers the cultural influences coming from outside of Spain.

Finally, even temporally speaking, Vázquez Montalbán comments on the americanization by stating: “la guerra civil española, o casi mejor fuera llamarla Spain’s Civil War, del mucho provecho historiográfico y político que han sacado de ella los anglosajones en general, había dejado una costumbre de irracionalidad que se plasmaba en el comportamiento personal y colectivo, en la épica personal y colectiva” (6). This commentary reflects Ruiz Zafón’s work as the cultural influence of the United States comes into focus within Spain’s pop culture. Interestingly, it seems as though Ruiz Zafón supports the increase of American cultural influence within the country, highlighting the films of American actresses like Novak and putting less focus on specifically Spanish film culture of the time. His fascination with American culture could also be influenced by his own immigration to the United States, living part-time in Los Angeles, California when not in Barcelona.

This time period also holds examples of cultural shifts based on technology, notably, the place of cinema, and later, television, art forms that tended to replace literature. Throughout the



series, Ruiz Zafón comments on cinema, positioning it as a lesser type of art, creating an almost dichotomy of good and bad through the media. Though some of the main characters frequent the theatre, the purpose of the pastime, typically to feel a sense of community or to sexualize the actresses. These characters are still deemed as “good” based on their devotion to literature. “Bad” characters, like Francisco Javier Fumero, like the cinema but dislike literature. Indeed, it is with Fumero that the reader engages with the clearest personal connection to cinema:

todavía recordaba a Carax besando a Penélope Aldaya en el caserón de la avenida del Tibidabo. Su Penélope. El suyo había sido un amor puro, de verdad, pensaba Fumero, como los que se veían en el cine. Fumero era muy aficionado al cine y acudía al menos dos veces por semana. Había sido en una sala de cine donde Fumero había comprendido que Penélope había sido el amor de su vida...Tuvo una visión, como en las películas que tanto disfrutaba: Aldaya le iba a servir a los demás en bandeja. Tarde o temprano, todos ellos acabarían atrapados en su red. (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 462).

By placing the lessons of cinema at the hands of Fumero, it furthers the position of cinema within society. Ultimately, Ruiz Zafón creates a hierarchy on the art forms, placing literature on the highest altar. Though a former screenplay writer, Ruiz Zafón rejected offers to convert his bestselling series into films: “They are books about the world of books. It just feels wrong to me to transform them into something else... Nothing can tell a story with the depth and the richness that a novel can – if it's done right” (Ruiz Zafón qtd in Tonkin). It is perhaps because of his lack of success in the film industry that he holds such opinions. Comparing himself to David Martín, he comments: “the worst aspects of his feeling trapped reflects more my experiences with screenplays...It's a source of self-destruction and unhappiness, and a lot of negative energy”

(Ruiz Zafón in Tonkin). This negative energy can again, be connected to characters like Fumero who frequent the cinema, or examples of loneliness presented within the spaces.

Although technology and American cultural references are situated as core to dictatorship Spain's own popular cultural identity, I would be remiss to not mention some of the Spanish pop culture references included within this corpus. For instance, the figure of a bullfighter is remembered within the text through the very Fermín Romero de Torres. Fermín takes on the bullfighter's name in 1938 in a moment of terror, never pronouncing his birth name again (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 34).<sup>38</sup> This character also acts as a means to present food culture in Spain. For instance, Ruiz Zafón writes in an homage to the character: "una dieta de salmorejo con tropezones de ibérico, rabo de torro y finos caldos de Rioja" ("Querido Fermín"). It is with Fermín that the reader experiences *Els Quatre Gats* and the appreciation for food and for the comfort of a space where one can become a "regular." There also exists a "looking back" to the past and to Spanish tradition.<sup>39</sup> Even the minor character don Federico (both in name and comments to sexuality) is meant to refer back to the poet Federico García Lorca (Ellis 849). Ellis agrees with this notion stating: "since the Civil War, García Lorca has been regarded almost universally as a martyr of Francoism, and in recent years has been claimed as the prototypical victim of homophobia. His death is arguably the most famous lacuna in Spanish Civil War

---

<sup>38</sup> In *La sombra del viento*, the fake news report claiming Fermín murdered Nuria calls him "Antonio José Gutiérrez Alcayete" (Ruiz Zafón 405). However, since this is a fake report, the reader is unsure if this name is truly Fermín's birth name, a fake name of the past, or simply an attempt to add a name to a face.

<sup>39</sup> Similarly, Vázquez Montalbán mentions "Isabel de Castilla y Colón," Don Quijote and el Cid, García Lorca, and "Ortega y Unamuno," recuperating the past through the inclusion of these figures (33-34; 81; 87).

history, the meaning of which several generations of literary and cultural historians have struggled to reconstruct” (849). Indeed, other references to famous Spaniards include Bella Dorita and Salvador Dalí, along with architects Gaudí and Puig i Cadafalch mentioned earlier in this chapter (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 38; 61). A recuperation of memory is therefore present through the references – cultural figures included to create a clearer image of “popular” Spain.

Overall, the inclusion of (popular) culture within the series aids in the creation of a more realistic space. While the saga is a manifestation of both the historical and the Gothic novel, the author attempts to push away from purely reflecting on historical violence by including cultural references. Ruiz Zafón incorporates these cultural elements as a way to invoke the past. The inclusion of American culture also demonstrates the transcultural exchanges occurring during 20<sup>th</sup> century Spain. “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” therefore attempts to recuperate the culture of the past within Spain, highlighting key references through collective memory, history, and the Gothic.

## 2.5. Concluding Remarks

The intersection between memory, literature, and history is critical for “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” series. According to Stafford, “the Civil War continues to be inscribed into many of the cultural practices, products, and activities in Spain, and reveals the war to be one of the primary defining elements of identity for Spain’s citizens” (167). This identity marker is thus inscribed on Ruiz Zafón as an author as his books act as a space of collective memory mediated by the use of the Gothic. As Erll notes, “literature as a medium of cultural memory is therefore first and foremost a phenomenon of reception” (160). Indeed, “El cementerio de los libros

olvidados” tetralogy functions as a vehicle for understanding collective and cultural memory in Spain, continuing the tradition of Spanish Civil War literature.

The concept of collective memory and recovering the past is visible through many facets of Ruiz Zafón’s work: following the literary trend, including a binary of characters that help define the era, the use of violence and the Gothic, and placement of (popular) cultural elements within his narrative. The manipulation of the Gothic throughout the saga provides an additional link to the setting, connecting the architectural spaces to the atmosphere of the trope. Barcelona’s identity is therefore marked within the series as a gothic space, perfect for a corpus where the Gothicisation of the past is a performative mode for a retelling of postmemory.

Even so, Ruiz Zafón plays with the concept of collective memory through his placement of Julián Sempere and Julián Carax as the authors of “El cementerio de los libros olvidados.” In doing so, Ruiz Zafón commemorates the concept of collective memory by merging their consciousnesses into one.<sup>40</sup> This leads the reader to question who is doing the remembering: Julián Carax, Julián Sempere, or Carlos Ruiz Zafón? And if in reality, none of the three lived through the war and the experiences, how are they being affected by postmemory? Ultimately, this produces a case of collective memory, merging them all together along with Spain’s post-war generations. Overall, the recovery of the past and the inclusion of state violence within the novels allow Ruiz Zafón to foment his position regarding the war. As Stafford dictates, after Franco’s death in 1975,

A new tendency arose in Spanish fiction toward memory novels as a way of processing Spain’s traumatic past. Because the defeated had never had the chance to...tell their story...a great deal of anger persists, along with a pressing need to know, make known,

---

<sup>40</sup> Even in “Querido Fermín,” Ruiz Zafón calls Carax his alter-ego.

vindicate, and retell the Republican leftist story that was silenced for so long during the dictatorship. (133)

This tendency is paramount in understanding Ruiz Zafón's narrative and how the series is constructed.

To conclude, the inclusion of memory studies regarding the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship under Francisco Franco is therefore pertinent to the analysis of "El cementerio de los libros olvidados," especially through the study of the Gothic. Mediated by this narrative device, Ruiz Zafón creates a novel that includes and yet also distances itself from literary traditions. This tetralogy is a rupture from the classic gothic narrative, as well as a rupture from the typical historical or social novel. By connecting elements of both of these traditions, the author enables a new form of memory to be produced – a memory facilitated by the Gothic in order to better express the traumas of the past. The use of the Gothic thus warns the reader about horrors yet to be discovered, however, through the additional use of the historical novel, Ruiz Zafón moves away from the mythical, and presents real horrors of Spanish history. This Gothicisation of history therefore recovers the memory of the past through a new method of writing.

Themes from this chapter prove vital for my final chapter, which focuses on the female characters of the saga. The social, historical, and political ideologies of the time contribute to the understanding of circumstance and Ruiz Zafón's depiction of the characters. The ideas of mental health and repression also connect in the analysis of these figures, demonstrated through examples of disability, suicide, and gendered violence.

### CHAPTER 3: Female Representation in Carlos Ruiz Zafón's "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" Saga

"Ese día la muerte visitaba Villa Mercedes."  
– Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto de los espíritus*

In "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" saga, women are dependent on their male counterparts, follow stereotypes, have little agency, and are, more often than not, killed off as part of the plots. There is little space for character development and when present, their value is judged based on appearance and/or relationship to male characters. Throughout this chapter, I explore Ruiz Zafón's representation of female characters within his tetralogy, developing how they depict tropes of the twentieth century. The women in this series can be categorized into a few archetypes, based on motherhood, religion, sex work, and disability.<sup>41</sup> This categorization enables a clearer exploration of the way in which women and their quotidian lives are epitomised. As outlined by Talbot, "feminist archetypal criticism, unlike other methodologies, examines the timeless patterns of women's lives – the rites of initiation and passage – and the distinctive female perspectives on society, roles, and expectations" (80). Following this idea of a feminist archetypal criticism, I establish the negative impact of these limiting archetypal options which, in turn, underscore the boundaries faced by female characters. I then move to a discussion

---

<sup>41</sup> Indeed, though Ruiz Zafón includes female characters within his earlier works, they are typically marked by sickness, near-death experiences, loss, and fear. Girls are often seen as helpless, in need of male counterparts to be able to solve mysteries and better their lives, and participate in few cases female friendships, causing an isolating female experience.

on patterns faced by female characters in the saga, including gendered violence and objectification. Here, I emphasise the impact of societal views and how they contribute to the limitations of female development in the tetralogy.

### 3.1 Ruiz Zafón's Female Archetypes

Archetypes in Carlos Ruiz Zafón's work represent real women from twentieth-century Spain. In his tetralogy, there are four key female archetypes in the series: the mother, the sex worker, the religious woman, and the disabled woman. As Carl Jung posits, "the first bearer of the soul-image is always the mother; later it is borne by those women who arouse the man's feelings, whether in a positive or a negative sense" (108). Through this ideology surrounding the woman, it becomes necessary to examine the mother first, followed by the other three main archetypes, those that affect the feelings of their male counterparts. This, of course, places female characters in a hierarchy of value, constantly scrutinized by male characters in the series based on the qualities they possess. The archetypes analysed in this section become a vital tool for classifying the female characters seen within the saga.

#### *Questions of Motherhood as Identity*

"El cementerio de los libros olvidados" tetralogy divides female characters into those who are mothers and those who are not. Nuria Montfort from *La sombra del viento* and Alicia Gris in *El laberinto de los espíritus*, for instance, act as foils for each other at the beginning and

end of the series as women that are purposefully childless.<sup>42</sup> Both are described as sexy *femme fatales* who are mysterious and dangerous, wanted by the men they encounter. The trope of the *femme fatale* is not limited to Ruiz Zafón's narrative. In fact, he follows a tradition of female characters set in Barcelona who present women as merely stereotypes. As noted by King, "much early crime fiction set in Barcelona was a decidedly masculine affair. Women, when they did appear, tended to conform to generic stereotypes as either victims or femmes fatales that threatened the autonomy of the typical male, heterosexual gumshoe" (405). This tradition, unfortunately, has persisted through contemporary Spanish fiction, as seen in Ruiz Zafón's Nuria and Alicia. Daniel for instance, despite being devoted to Bea, is tempted by and sexually attracted to both characters. Alicia and Nuria live as independent women who, for the most part, rely on themselves for their own income and livelihood. While Alicia is single, Nuria is part of a love triangle with Julián Carax and his best friend Miquel Moliner. In each case, neither woman is concerned with conception. Both women are also described as lonely, lacking family, and yet, neither pursues motherhood. The inclusion of female characters who are not defined by a maternal role is here placed on the other side of the binary, characterizing them through lack. The essentially single, lonely, motherless woman is not uncommon in literature, occupying the space of the outcast or unwanted spinster. This labels the women as the NoMO or the "no madre," a categorization of women within contemporary Spain marked by a lack of children.

A subcategory of the mother, the caretaker, seeks to be evaluated as a motherly figure. This is the case of Bernarda, who helps raise Clara, and Jacinta, who raises Penélope, both in *La*

---

<sup>42</sup> According to psychologist Cristina Agud, "47% de la población femenina entre 15 y 44 años no tiene hijos" (2021). This fact furthers the importance to include women who choose not to be mothers within the narrative.



*sombra del viento*. Demonstrating class dynamics, Bernarda and Jacinta both work as maids/caregivers in wealthy households, Bernarda in the Barceló household and Jacinta in the Aldaya mansion. Bernarda becomes an important figure both for Clara's upbringing, but also for Daniel. Since both characters lost their mothers, Bernarda acts as a pseudo replacement figure, providing care. Bernarda helps fill the space of mother for Daniel when he visits the Barceló house, giving him cookies and helping to mend his clothes – a fact that upsets his father, Juan Sempere as he feels as though Daniel is attempting to replace his irreplaceable mother. For Clara, who lost both of her parents, Bernarda also helps fill a void. Once Bernarda enters a romantic relationship with Fermín Romero de Torres, she becomes a biological mother and caretaker to their children. With Jacinta, her role as caregiver consumes her, placing her as pseudo-mother of Penélope. In fact, it is through a series of dreams featuring the angel, Zacarías, that Jacinta finds out the status of her motherhood:

le había anunciado que había algo malo clavado en su vientre, un espíritu muerto que la quería mal, y que sólo conocería el amor de un hombre, un amor vacío y egoísta que le rompería el alma en dos... Así, cuando los médicos diagnosticaron que nunca podría tener hijos, Jacinta no se sorprendió. Tampoco se sorprendió, aunque casi se murió de pena, cuando su esposo de tres años le anunció que la abandonaba por otra porque ella era como un campo yermo y baldío que no daba fruto, porque no era mujer... Todos sus monólogos con Dios versaban sobre el mismo tema: sólo deseaba una cosa en la vida, ser madre, ser mujer... Zacarías le dijo que no se preocupase porque, de un modo u otro, él le enviaría una criatura. Se inclinó sobre ella, susurró la palabra Tibidabo, y la besó en los labios muy tiernamente. Al contacto de aquellos labios finos, de caramelo, la Jacinta tuvo

una visión: tendría una niña sin necesidad de conocer varón. (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 310-11)

This passage is intrinsic to understanding Jacinta and the representation of motherhood in the series. By including the dream sequences with Zacarías, a typical narrative tool in Ruiz Zafón's literature, the reader approaches Jacinta through both the lens of the real and the imagined. The fact that Zacarías' premonitions all come true, helps Jacinta cope with what will come, already anticipating the losses of the future. Her husband berates her for her perceived inability to produce a child, stripping away from her a dream and a family. The erasure of Jacinta's identity due to her inability to reproduce is evident when she prays to be both a woman and a mother (instead of just a mother), being convinced herself that she is "lesser" for not being able to produce a child. Finally, Zacarías shares that she does not have to conceive to become a mother, making her a mother to Penélope through her job. Here, the lack of biological children is not a factor for Jacinta – she believes herself to be Penélope's mother and creates an important bond with the child, fulfilling her dream. This challenges the notion of a nuclear family during the twentieth century.

Jacinta demonstrates that being a woman and mother are intrinsically linked. Still, even when a child is lost, the removal of the role of motherhood affects the idea of womanhood. Ramoneta, Jacinta's neighbour and a sex worker, is stabbed to death by robbers outside their building, her six-month-old baby dying from cold in her arms (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 313). This instance shows the vulnerability of Ramoneta, a single woman who was targeted as an "easy" victim of violence. Ramoneta therefore suffers her attack in two ways, through the violence against her body and that against her child who she tried to save. Similar to Ramoneta, Penélope, Ariadna, and Susana all lose their children. Penélope witnesses her baby as a stillborn before

passing away herself, her final gaze on her dead child. Ariadna loses her child due to miscarriage – an event she is happy for as she did not want the child of her rapist. With Susana, her children are kidnapped from her, causing her to search for her stolen babies until she is killed. The women's bodies and minds, until their deaths, are marked by their loss, their final moments spent thinking about their lost children. These examples inform the reader of the position of womanhood within the saga – connecting the identity of a woman to the identity of the mother. This is visible even with Nuria and Alicia who chose not to be mothers, seen as cold, sexy, and mysterious objects but never motherly or feminine. With death, the possibility to be a mother dissipates, permanently dissociating them from their role as a mother, the highest honour for a woman within society. Through this pattern, the reader also ascertains that when a woman loses a child, they too will die, generating a pattern of tragedy.

While there are motherly figures like Jacinta who were unable to conceive, motherhood within the saga is rife with pre-marital conceptions – a concept that was not accepted under the more religious or traditional eras in Spain wherein which the series evolves. The question of religion and of female agency are thus underscored within the novels through this concept. In fact, other than Susana Mataix, almost all the pregnancies seen within the tetralogy are pre-marital, visible through Sophie Carax, Penélope Aldaya, Isabella Gispert, Beatriz Aguilar, Bernarda, Ariadna Mataix, and Valentina. This fact marks these mothers with religious sin and illegitimacy – a fact not placed on the children or the male counterparts, only on the mothers. Opening up a space for the women to be judged, the question of religion becomes pertinent as the idea of damnation is strewn throughout the novels. Conceptually speaking, mothers within the saga are judged through their sexual relationships while male characters are praised and congratulated by their peers, reflecting the societal beliefs and double standards of the time.

Women who become pregnant before marriage are therefore punished in a variety of ways, signaling the disapproval of the society to which they belonged.

The first pre-marital conception in the “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” timeline occurs with Sophie Carax. In 1899, Sophie meets a hatmaker, Antoni Fortuny, and accepts his proposal. However, through her job as a music teacher, she is introduced to Ricardo Aldaya, an upper-class man who had just recently married an heiress (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 451). Though he was married and she was in a relationship, the two of them embarked on a short affair, during which, Sophie becomes pregnant (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 452-53). Before Sophie could even admit to her situation, Ricardo confronts her:

le dio quinientas pesetas, una dirección en la calle Platería y la orden de que se deshiciese de la criatura. Cuando Sophie se negó, don Ricardo Aldaya la abofeteó hasta que le sangraron los oídos y la amenazó con hacerla matar si se atrevía a mencionar sus encuentros o a afirmar que el hijo era suyo. Cuando le dijo al sombrerero que unos truhanes la habían asaltado en la plaza del Pino, él la creyó. Cuando le dijo que quería ser su esposa, él la creyó. El día de su boda, alguien envió por error una gran corona funeraria a la iglesia. Todos rieron nerviosamente ante la confusión del florista. Todos menos Sophie, que sabía perfectamente que don Ricardo Aldaya seguía acordándose de ella en el día de su matrimonio. (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 453).

This passage highlights don Ricardo’s position of power and belief of his superiority over Sophie. It also acknowledges his own fear of status and how an illegitimate child could affect him and his future. By pushing an abortion and then beating her, he attempts to avoid a scandal and the potential loss of social status. Even then, the funeral wreath acts as a reminder to Sophie of the dangers that could await her and her child should she ever speak of what happened.

Ricardo places her in a difficult situation as she cannot afford to be an unwed mother within Spanish society. This forces her to advance her relationship with Fortuny so that she is not left as a single mother, ostracized by society. In this marriage, Sophie chooses to keep her child and hides the pregnancy from her husband for the first six months. This child is Julián Carax. While Sophie stays with Fortuny, it is a loveless marriage and after Julián leaves Barcelona, she too decides to leave her husband after many years of emotional and physical abuse. Growing up, Julián is never made aware of his true identity as an Aldaya. This becomes problematic as he quickly falls in love with Penélope Aldaya, Ricardo's daughter and, unknowingly, Julián's little sister who was born in 1902.

The love between Julián and Penélope develops over the years and they decide to escape to Paris together. After agreeing to the plan, the couple has sex in the Aldaya mansion with the plan to re-unite a few days later at the train station. Penélope's mother catches the two of them and Penélope is punished for her sexual endeavours, locked in her room for the rest of her life. Perhaps like Sophie, who's punishment was physical and emotional abuse from Ricardo and Fortuny, Penélope's incarceration in her own home acts as her punishment. Though, at least narratively, Julián and Penélope could never truly be together since they are siblings, Penélope's birthing and death scene are devastating to the reader:

Penélope Aldaya dio a luz un niño que nació cadáver el 26 de septiembre de 1919. Si un médico hubiera podido reconocerla, hubiese estado presente, quizá hubiera podido contener la hemorragia que se llevó la vida de Penélope entre alaridos, arañando la puerta cerrada, al otro lado de la cual su padre lloraba en silencio y su madre le miraba temblando. Si un médico hubiese estado presente, habría acusado a don Ricardo Aldaya de asesinato, pues no había una palabra que pudiera describir la visión que encerraba

aquella celda ensangrentada y oscura. Pero no había nadie allí, y cuando finalmente abrieron la puerta y encontraron a Penélope, muerta y tendida sobre un charco de su propia sangre, abrazando a una criatura púrpura y brillante, nadie fue capaz de despegar los labios. (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 456).

Penélope's loss represents the loss of her future as, had she been able to make it to the train station, she could have run away with Julián and lived happily ever after with the love of her life and their child. Her parents, by not intervening, ultimately kill their daughter – punishing her for her actions. Being a young, unmarried girl, the birth of a child would have blemished, if not tarnished altogether, her family's reputation. It was only her sexual activity that led to death, for, though Ricardo wanted to kill Julián, he was unable to prevail, only killing his daughter instead. Evidenced here is that women can expect punishment for having sex, highlighting the double standards within society.

Another case of pregnancy or motherhood that ends in tragedy is that of Isabella. Like Sophie, Isabella becomes pregnant through a secret sexual relationship with David Martín. While Juan Sempere had been courting her, Isabella's infatuation with Martín leads them to conceive a child. Although pregnant with Martín's child, she still marries Juan, who, like Fortuny, raises their son even though he is not the biological father. This creates a deeper comparison of the foils between Daniel and Julián Carax, characters whose storylines fall constantly into patterns of repetition. Though Isabella lives a happy life with Juan, she is still protective of Martín and actively works with the lawyer, Brians, to help him get out of prison after being wrongfully convicted and held there. This activism for her friend (and child's father) leads to Isabella's death as she too is killed. Like Penélope, Sophie is also punished with death for her pre-marital conception.

In the case of Bea, her conception of Julián Sempere in the Aldaya mansion with Daniel Sempere is also reminiscent of Julián Carax and Penélope's relationship. The series does conclude with Bea and Daniel having a second child, Isabella, who is born just before Juan Sempere, her grandfather, passes away and is buried next to her namesake, Isabella Gispert (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 912). Bernarda follows Bea's first pregnancy shortly thereafter, conceiving her first born before marrying Fermín. In both of these cases, the women do end up married to and happy with their children's fathers, unlike Sophie, Penélope, and Isabella. Though these are happy marriages, both women worry often for their husbands who, through the saga, are involved in many violent situations. Bea's loss, less scary than that of the other women, is of her social status and connection with her family, a loss she is willing to accept for her life with Daniel. For Bernarda, her religious devotion acts as punishment as she regularly judges herself for her actions, acting as her own harshest critic. Notwithstanding, the cases of Bea and Bernarda, along with Sophie, Penélope, and Isabella all stem from either love or lust. These pregnancies therefore stand in opposition to that of Ariadna Mataix's, one of violence as her conception is marked by rape. Whether happy or sad, these pregnancies affect the characters, not just physiologically, but in psychologically painful ways, their pregnancies drawing judgement from other characters.

The pregnancy of Valentina in *El laberinto de los espíritus* leads to a final example of pre-marital sex. Valentina and Julián Sempere conceive their daughter, Alicia Sempere, born in 1982, before Valentina ultimately chooses to leave Julián (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 914). Interestingly, Julián raising his daughter alone recalls señor Sempere raising Juan alone and Juan raising Daniel after Isabella's death. This creates a cycle of single Sempere men (other than Daniel) who raise the next generation instead of mothers. This pattern also illustrates the idea of

the absent mother which is tangible throughout the tetralogy. The judgement on Valentina is still consistent with the other mothers, however, since her pregnancy is during the post-Franco era, the more liberal environment almost creates an understanding for her leaving and looking for agency outside of the expectation of being a wife and mother.

The novels demonstrate that, although being a mother is the most acceptable role for a woman to fulfill, her aptitude for said role is also cause for judgement. Ruiz Zafón's mothers are presented as either "good" or "bad," with mothers' ineptitude serving as an indictment of their more general character. The failure of a woman as a mother alerts the reader to not trust or like the character. An example of a "good" mother would be Bea who is seen as attentive, caring, and present in Julián's life. Contrary to Bea, there are mothers such as Yvonne Fumero, Elena Sarmiento, and Federica Ubach who are seen as "bad." Critiques of motherhood are thus apparent through these women as they do not show stereotypical depictions of motherhood. Yvonne Fumero, for example, lacks moral fiber as demonstrated by her obsession with status. She is unaware of the embarrassment and trauma that she causes her son, mostly through her hypersexuality and sexual abuse. She is first introduced as:

una mujerona de escasas luces y delirios de princesa con trazas de fregona que gustaba de insinuarse ligera de ropas a la vista de su hijo y de los alumnos del colegio, cual era motivo de jolgorio y esperpento semanal. Su nombre de bautismo era María Craponica, pero ella se hacía llamar Yvonne, porque le parecía de más tono. Yvonne tenía por costumbre interrogar a su hijo respecto a las posibilidades de avance social que le iban a granjear las amistades que, ella creía, su hijo estaba entablando con la crema de la sociedad barcelonesa. (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 254)



Later, when thinking of his mother, Fumero reflects that other than Penélope, the love of his life, “el resto, especialmente su madre, habían sido solo putas,” demonstrating his damning views of his mother and her character (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 462). Fumero’s embarrassment is, for instance, shown when his mother forces him to attend Jorge’s birthday party. Fumero is made to wear a suit that does not fit him and Yvonne makes a big fuss at the door when they are unable to present the forgotten invitation (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 322-323). The humiliations and embarrassment from his mother add up, causing Fumero to resent her existence. Later, in an act of retaliation against Yvonne, Fumero has no hesitation in murdering her, creating one of the many dead mothers in the series (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 258). This pattern of the dead mother is indeed consistent throughout the saga, already exemplified through characters like Isabella and Penélope. Instead of Yvonne being punished for her pre-marital conception, a sexual act, here, her hypersexuality and abuse towards her son eventually leads to her death.

Elena Sarmiento and Federica Ubach become mothers by kidnapping the Mataix children, forcing Ariadna to be Victoria Ubach, and Sonia to be Mercedes Valls. While it is clear that Elena and Federica are villains, they still long to be mothers, abusing their positions within society to create families through kidnapping. This connects Franco’s dictatorship to the women as their social position within the dictatorship allows them to fulfil the role of mother. Furthermore, it opens up the discussion on the history of Spain’s “stolen babies,” children taken for the benefit of Franco’s men (Casey). The idea of a “bad” mother is associated with these female characters based on the way they acquired their children. As well, both are judged by their absences – Federica does not intervene to protect Ariadna from her husband’s sexual abuse and Elena, due to her congenital disability, is unable to leave her bed and participate in Sonia’s life. This type of absence can be traced to wealthy families throughout the series. For example,

Bea Aguilar and Penélope Aldaya's mothers, like Federica Ubach and Elena Sarmiento, are rarely seen nor do they have much connection with their daughters. It is noted that Bea's mother helps babysit Julián in *El prisionero del cielo*, but otherwise, she is only visible or talked about in *La sombra del viento* in conjunction to her husband and has no agency nor real speaking voice. In the case of señora Aldaya, she is portrayed as absent, vain, and ignorant to her husband's infidelities. Instead of acting as mother to Penélope, Jacinta takes on this role. Even Julián Sempere's love interest, Valentina, leaves him and their daughter, causing her to fit into the role of absent mother, choosing not to participate in her child's life. Through these examples, it is evident that the wealthy women in the series are not tied to responsibility or interaction with their children. This is seen in opposition to mothers like Isabella or Susana who, labeled as "good" mothers, would have been present should they not have been murdered. According to Jung, the mother is meant to protect a child from "the darkness of his psyche" (108). The absence of mothers is therefore purposeful, affecting the children psychologically whether or not their absence was by force or choice. As seen through this section, the identity marker of mother is displayed throughout the series, placing female characters within a hierarchy, judged by the way they become or act as a mother. This archetype is thus pertinent to the understanding of female characters in Ruiz Zafón's "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" tetralogy, forcing readers to connect with or judge women based on their role as a mother.

### ***Sex Workers & Religious Women***

Another dichotomy offered in Ruiz Zafón's work is that of the sex worker and the religious woman. This binary demonstrates a societal judgement placed upon women, marking religious women as virtuous and sex workers as lesser than. Both of these archetypes are visible

throughout the Spanish literary cannon, for example, the appearance of religious women as saintly and good is seen as far back as *El Cantar del Mio Cid* and the exhibition of sex workers can be traced to *La Celestina*, famous texts that mark Spanish literature and present elements of medieval history and societal norms. Within Ruiz Zafón's work, the use of these two archetypes are visible throughout his series, seen both through minor characters. The Sempres' neighbour Merceditas, for example, consistently makes religious-based comments when present and the inclusion of brothel owner, Irene Marceau, who saved Julián Carax from poverty in Paris by giving him a job playing piano, demonstrate the use of these archetypes. Women who have a larger role within the narrative, like Rociíto, a sex worker and Fermín's ex-lover, and Bernarda, a beloved religious maid are prime examples of the binary of archetypes. Importantly, the sex worker within the saga is only ever a female character, setting her up to perfectly sit in opposition to the religious woman, an ideal within Franco's Spanish society. Within this section, I will focus on Rociíto and Bernarda who exemplify this binary as they are placed in direct opposition to each other.

Rociíto is defined by her sexuality. She is introduced briefly in *La sombra del viento* when Daniel searches for Jacinta to procure information on Julián Carax and Penélope Aldaya and she is the pawn that is traded for information. Daniel makes a deal with an old man: provide information on Jacinta's location, and receive a young woman to have sex with. It is not until the third installment where the reader learns how Fermín and Rociíto met and formed a relationship, expanding on her character. Rociíto quickly fell for Fermín after defending her in public and showing her kindness, outweighing the fact that he had no money. Rociíto, hoping Fermín will let her take care of him, is left disappointed as instead, based on his past traumas, believes he is not deserving of love and would rather live on the streets. Although Fermín eventually recovers

and continues his friendship with Rociíto, Rociíto continues to only be defined by her profession and lifestyle (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 82). At the bachelor party she helps plans for Fermín, she is still considered entertainment due to her job. Her role is to be sexy, her presence “a gift.” Rociíto ends up broken hearted, watching the love of her life marry someone else, having never even been considered an option.

Bernarda, Fermín’s wife, presents as the opposite of Rociíto, as a respectable, devout woman. Women like Bernarda reflect the views on religion within Spanish society in the dictatorship era. The values of the dictatorship demonstrated a step back for women’s rights, where, within the Second Spanish Republic, they finally gained the right to vote and divorce. Francoism promoted more conservative and traditional values, with the devout homemaker sitting as a crown jewel. It is no surprise then, to see Bernarda defined by her religious devotion within this context. When first introduced, Bernarda’s description includes the following:

era muy de misa y devota de la virgen de Lourdes hasta el punto del delirio. Acudía a diario a la basílica de Santa María del Mar a oír el servicio de las ocho y se confesaba tres veces por semana como mínimo. Don Gustavo, que se declaraba agnóstico (lo cual la Bernarda sospechaba era una afección respiratoria, como el asma, pero de señoritos), opinaba que era matemáticamente imposible que la criada pecase lo suficiente como para mantener semejante ritmo de confesión. (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 58)

This passage highlights the rigorousness of Bernarda’s devotion, with similar commentary seen throughout the saga with comments on her Madonna collection and other religious habits. Later, her preoccupation with pre-marital sex and pregnancy makes her believe she is a sinner, praying for forgiveness for her actions. This takes away her agency as a sexual being as, while she is participating in sexual activities, she is punishing herself. This becomes a main theme within *El*

*prisionero del cielo* as Bernarda worries she will be judged both religiously and publicly for her pregnancy, potentially damaging her relationship with god and her community (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 330; 332).

Though Fermín alludes to past lovers, his main love interests within the tetralogy are Bernarda and Rociíto, ultimately choosing to marry Bernarda. A heartbroken Rociíto chooses to skip their wedding, instead, going to travel with and marry a kind client who had proposed – a proposal she accepted to end her loneliness and career. By having Fermín commit to Bernarda instead of Rociíto, Rociíto is shown as a sex object, an unsuitable marriage option who pales in comparison to Bernarda, her values, and way she lives her life. The binary between Rociíto and Bernarda reflects the society Ruiz Zafón writes in, demonstrating the societal judgement sure to follow one path of life or another. Pious Bernarda, is rewarded with Fermín whereas Rociíto, must settle for company instead of love.

### ***The “Disabled” Woman***

Within Ruiz Zafón’s tetralogy, the disabled woman also presents as a core archetype. I divide my focus on this archetype between the presentation of physical and mental disabilities, highlighting six female characters in order to establish this trend: Clara Barceló, Alicia Gris, and Elena Sarmiento for physical disabilities and Cristina Vidal and the Mataix sisters, Ariadna and Sonia as examples of mental disabilities. This allows me to compare their representations and highlight the patterns of dependency seen within “El cementerio de los libros olvidados.”

When introducing characters with physical disabilities, their conditions are noted as a key to their character descriptions. Clara, Daniel’s first love interest in *La sombra del viento* introduces the concept of disability within the saga through her blindness. In *El laberinto de los*

*espíritus*, main character Alicia is defined by her limp and chronic pain, consequence of having been caught in an explosion during the war. The bedridden Elena Sarmiento (or señora Valls) is defined in both *El prisionero del cielo* and *El laberinto de los espíritus* through her chronic illness. These three cases of physical disability provide insight on Ruiz Zafón's portrayal of female characters.

The reader first encounters Clara through Daniel's narration: "acepté la silla que Barceló me brindaba junto a él y a su misteriosa acompañante. Durante varios minutos, el librero se limitó a sonreír plácidamente, ajeno a mi presencia. Al poco abandoné toda esperanza de que me presentase a quien fuera que fuese la dama de blanco" (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 28). This introduction is important as it casts Clara as a mysterious subject. Though she is older than Daniel (he is almost 11 and she says she is "casi el doble"), Daniel becomes obsessed with spending time with her (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 30). Once Clara is introduced, Daniel quickly becomes aware of the fact that Clara is blind. Ruiz Zafón follows a literary tradition of including blindness within literature. Canonical inclusions of blindness include *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes*, Ramón del Valle-Inclán's *Lucas de Bohemia*, and Antonio Buero Vallejo's *En la ardiente oscuridad*. Seen in the latter two examples, as well as within the classic tragedy tradition, the blind characters are able to see beyond their blindness, beyond themselves. Clara Barceló however, follows more in line with blindness in *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes* where they are still able to function within the world, but do not have the knowledge or depth to see beyond themselves. This blindness marks Clara from the start, allowing for her to be an object of the gaze without being aware. Other than her apparent beauty, Clara's disability defines her, and, while it does not deter Daniels' love for her, it is regularly mentioned. This causes the reader to be constantly reminded of her blindness, regularly marking her as different (Ruiz Zafón, *La*

*sombra* 29; 50). Considering the binary of blindness versus sight, Georgina Kleege comments: “I hope we can also abandon the cliché’s that use the word “blindness” as a synonym for inattention, ignorance, or prejudice” (448). Despite her blindness, Clara is represented as woman with some agency over her body, demonstrated for instance when Daniel, thinking he is going to save her from Laín Coubert, catches Clara having sex with her piano teacher, Neri: “El cuerpo desnudo de Clara yacía sobre sábanas blancas que brillaban como seda lavada. Las manos del maestro Neri se deslizaban sobre sus labios, su cuello y su pecho. Sus ojos blancos se alzaban hacia el techo, estremeciéndose bajo las embestidas con que el profesor de música le penetraba entre sus muslos pálidos y temblorosos” (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 76). The scene is a clear demonstration of Clara’s ability to follow her physical needs, despite being described through her blindness. Even so, by not being aware of Daniel’s presence, it highlights her limitations on the seeing of the “beyond.”

In the case of Alicia Gris, her disability acts as a constant reminder of war, trauma, and pain. Alicia’s disability is determined by a socio-political matter: the Spanish Civil War. As Dan Goodley notes, within the 20<sup>th</sup> century, “as a direct riposte to medicalized and psychologized hegemonies of disability – that sited disability as a personal tragedy, biological deficiency and psychical trauma – disability studies relocated disability to social, cultural, economic and political registers” (84). This reflection fomented Alicia’s disability – irrevocably connecting her body to the trauma of the Spanish Civil War, marking her from her introduction in *El laberinto de los espíritus*. Alicia is only a child when Fermín arrives at her door to bring her mother a letter and the news that her husband, Juan Antonio, died in a prison cell in Seville (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 58-59). It is Alicia, home with her grandmother, who opens the door, setting the stage for the Barcelona bombings which destroy her home and kill her grandmother. Alicia runs for

safety, desperately holding onto her favourite book – *Alice in Wonderland*. Suddenly, something sharp blasts into her hip and with the impact, she is thrown through a glass dome. When she lands, she can not feel her right leg and can barely move her body from the waist down. She sees her book on the edge of the platform and tries to reach it, but another explosion makes it fall into the abyss, landing unknowingly in el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados, her own Wonderland of sorts, before losing consciousness (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 68-9).

Alicia's hip is described as a black stain of scars or black scar, a part of her body that is constantly causing her pain and yet, she brushes it off as a simple part of her life: “la mancha Negra de su vieja herida en la cadera derecha dibujaba una flor envenenada que extendía sus raíces bajo la piel. Se la palpó con los dedos y sintió una punzada leve, avisándola” (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 318; see also 108; 682). Her hip becomes the part of her body of which she (and the reader) is most aware and self-conscious. For instance, in a dream a stranger touches her scar, frightening her and making her feel violated (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 276). In her attempt to present as strong and independent, she refuses (and regrets) to use a cane (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 108; 117). To help mediate this constant pain, an old acquaintance, Matías, made her a harness that is meant to help her walk: “como si tratase de una extraña pieza de corsetería. Al ajustar los cierres, el arnés se ceñía a su cuerpo como una segunda piel y le confería el aspecto de una muñeca mecánica” made of “hueso de ballena y cintas de wolframio. Es lo que llamamos un exoesqueleto. Tan fino, ligero y articulado que es casi como una segunda piel” (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 107-8; 305). This harness is meant to reduce her pain however, it is noted that she does not wear it often. Alicia's physical pain is evidenced through her constant limp or painful episodes of hip spasms which she tries to suppress or hide (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 117; 119; 162; 203; 306; 535; 605). Within the text, there are regular comments of her in pain (Ruiz Zafón,



*El laberinto* 164; 535; 801). Though she has options to help her suffering, she chooses to be seen as strong instead and not accept help, independence and stubbornness defining her.

Under the control and manipulations of Leandro, Alicia takes pills and vials of injections, his insistence in helping her presenting as persuasion (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 117-18; 138; 175; 204-205; 217; 275; 307; 468; 536). While she is being told that the pills and injections help her, Alicia does not like them nor how they make her feel:

el frío en las venas de aquel veneno de medicamento siempre le abría la trastienda oscura de su mente. Era el precio que pagaba por acallar el dolor. Leandro lo sabía. Sabía que bajo aquel manto helado donde no había dolor ni conciencia, sus ojos eran capaces de ver a través de la oscuridad, de oír y sentir lo que otros demás creían haber enterrado a su paso. Leandro sabía que cada vez que Alicia se sumergía en aquellas aguas negras y regresaba con un trofeo en las manos se dejaba parte de la piel y del alma. Y que le odiaba por ello. Le odiaba con la rabia que solo una criatura que conoce a su creador y su inventario de miserias puede sentir. (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 211)

Alicia's rejection of Leandro's medications, and her hatred towards him for forcing her to continue consuming them, deeply affects her and her wellbeing. In terms of pain management, her drinking, namely white wine, and chain smoking are habits that she controls – it is her choice and not being forced onto her, proving why it is likely her preference over the mind-altering drugs. This preference is evident when Alicia gets angry seeing the drugs that Leandro leaves for her, medications that make her feel unwell after taking them (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 206). When in pain, she pushes off having to take the medication, even when suggested by others like her friend, Fernandito, who are genuinely trying to help her (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 606). To Alicia, she mediates between taking the pills and reducing her pain and the side effects of the

drugs: a blurred consciousness that stops her from being able to work (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 801). Eva Feder Kittay underscores: “people with disabilities have wanted to insist on their right to live independent lives and to be granted the same justice that is bestowed on people without disabilities, that is, the ‘temporarily abled’” (50). Alicia refusing or at least objecting to Leandro’s medications demonstrates her insistence on living an independent life. This independence is truncated by her wanting to stay lucid and to not have to work for/rely on Leandro to live her life. Alicia’s pain is indeed constant throughout the novel. It is only void when, after being assaulted, Alicia has emergency surgery and wakes up without pain for the first time in 20 years (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 647). It is with this doctor, who appears to her like an angel, that she finds out that taking so many of Leandro’s pills is bad for her liver, demonstrating how instead of helping Alicia, Leandro was slowly killing her (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 705).

A final case of physical disability is demonstrated through the body of Elena Sarmiento, Mauricio Valls’ wife, a character who suffers from an unknown congenital disease: “la novia, ocho años mayor que Mauricio, estaba postrada en una silla de ruedas desde los trece, carcomida por una enfermedad congénita que le devoraba los músculos y la vida. Ningún hombre la había mirado jamás a los ojos ni la había tomado de la mano para decirle que era hermosa y preguntarle su nombre” (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 108). Her value is partly denied due to men not looking at her or praising her beauty. Since sexualization of female characters is a trend within the literature, being labeled a “bad” character, Elena’s possibility for sexualization is removed. This commentary on her womanhood is fitting as it demonstrates society’s stigmatization of disabled bodies. Elena’s description casts her body as “less than,” demonstrating how no one had ever established value onto her figure, her marriage merely a tool

for social advancement. Their wedding is not about love – it is about status: “Mauricio, que como todos los literatos sin talento era en el fondo un hombre tan práctico como vanidoso, fue el primero y el último en hacerlo, y un año después la pareja contraía matrimonio en Sevilla con la asistencia estelar del general Quiapo de Llano y otras lumbreras del aparato nacional” (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 108). Here, the importance is in the emphasis on who is in attendance – key players from the nationalist front, highlighting Valls position in Spanish society. Mauricio Valls’ interest in power removes focus from his wife’s care, creating an environment with a lack of care attributed to the character, dehumanizing her based on her physical situation. These comments additionally aid in the Gothicisation of Elena, making her body follow that of the “monster.” No doctor had been able to find a cure for her disease and by the time the reader is introduced to her in *El laberinto de los espíritus*, she is already bedridden, no longer able to sit in a wheelchair, and unable to speak (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 80). Nurses provide her with injections and care, though Elena takes her anger, pain, and depression out on them, forcing them to quickly quit their posts (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 79). As Feder Kittay notes: “the situation is worse still in a world where independence is the norm of human functioning. To the degree that the impairment requires a carer for the disabled person to live her life, care (and the carer) is stigmatized by dependency” (51). Elena’s dependency takes away her dignity, stigmatizing her within the narrative.

Characters within the text reflect on Elena’s body, for example, when Alicia tries to provide comfort for Sonia (Mercedes) and caresses her cheek, Sonia realizes no one had done that since her mom’s hands “acabaron convertidos en anzuelos,” 10 years prior (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 169). This reflection demonstrates a feeling of loss for Sonia, not having moments of affection during her youth, as well as an indication of the progression of Elena’s illness. Instead

of being compassionate and understanding, Mauricio Valls is disgusted with his wife's condition. He thinks she smells bad and compares her hands to reptiles: "en nudos de piel áspera que le recordaban a las garras de un reptil o un ave rapaz" (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 80). Even more, after kissing her forehead, he wipes his mouth, further demonstrating his disgust towards the body (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 81). Ariadna, like Valls, also provides a rough description of Elena's body: "encontró una figura retorcida sobre sí misma, como si sus huesos se hubieran disuelto en gelatina y la tensión de la piel y el dolor hubiesen redibujado su anatomía... La señora de Valls había perdido el pelo, las uñas y la mayoría de los dientes" (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 799). Considering Ellis' critique on the appearance of Carax as a "monster and ultimately an embodiment of evil" one can attribute this description to Elena (846). Señora Valls is practically created to be another one of Ruiz Zafón's Gothicised beings, a monster. Intriguingly, while Aldana Reyes comments: "as is revealed in *The Shadow of the Wind*, Carax is not an evil Gothic villain, but a tragic victim for whom Daniel will ultimately risk his own life," the reader sees a stark contrast with Elena (*A Gothic Barcelona* 243). Here, no one is risking their life for her, and her disability is her defining characteristic within the series. Garland-Thomson writes: "women with disabilities, even more intensely than women in general, have been cast in the collective cultural imagination as inferior, lacking, excessive, incapable, unfit, and useless. In contrast to normatively feminine women, women with disabilities are often stereotypically considered undesirable, asexual, and unsuitable as parents" (1567). Elena fits within these stereotypes: she is not desired, she only becomes a mother through a stolen child, and is considered "useless" since she is unable to leave her room and contribute to the imagined role of the woman.

Patterns of dependency connect the three women. Considering "ethics of care," in all three cases, the women are being "cared for" to some capacity by men: Clara by her uncle, Gustavo

Barceló, Alicia by her boss, Leandro Montalva, and Elena by her husband, Mauricio Valls. This highlights the societal understanding of women as dependent on men, a reality highlighted throughout the tetralogy. The lack of autonomy is also depicted as being due to the women inhabiting disabled bodies. Notably, Eva Feder Kittay comments: “in most dominant theories of justice, dignity is coupled with the capacity for autonomy. A person’s well-being or welfare is usually a prerequisite to autonomy, but when individuals find themselves dependent on others (as many people with disabilities do) for self-care, economic security, and safety, the dignity which comes with autonomy appears threatened” (50). Feder Kittay’s theory is applicable to these three women as their dependency, whether or not by choice, is essential to their character developments.

Clara and Alicia can be further compared through their status as orphans and through the presentation of contrasting colour palettes representative of their character depictions. The reader learns in *La sombra del viento* that Clara is an orphan who is being raised by her uncle, Gustavo Barceló. Clara’s father, a political prisoner, was killed by Fumero: “desde una celda en el Castillo de Montjuïc donde, como a tantos, nadie le vio entrar y de donde nunca volvió a salir,” and her mother died shortly thereafter, implying she could not handle the heartbreak (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 33; 41). Though she is an orphan, Clara thrives with her uncle and the care of his maid, Bernarda. In *El laberinto de los espíritus* Alicia is introduced as a child with the loss of her parents and grandmother due to the war. At fifteen, she was thrown out of a Barcelona orphanage, lived on the streets, and worked in a gang of adolescent thieves before starting to work for Leandro at seventeen (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 109-10). As noted by Davis, “the parentage of characters in novels plays a crucial role. Rather than being self-creating beings, characters in novels have deep biological debts to their forebears, even if the characters are

orphans—or perhaps especially if they are orphans” (10). Both women suffered loss as orphans due to the war, exemplifying the destruction of so many families because of politics.

Colour theory can also be applied to the comparison of Clara Barceló and Alicia Gris. In terms of colour palettes, Clara is illustrated through a light palette of whites and blues. Her body is characterized by whiteness, her white and translucent china doll skin, white eyes, crystal (“white”) voice, and her name which reflects light by definition (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 30). She is seen for her fragility and daintiness, a faction of her beauty and a relation to her disability. When introduced, she is referred to as “la dama de blanco,” “una figura enfundada en un vestido de alpaca blanca que se me antojó un ángel esculpido en brumas” (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 28). Examples of the colour palette also appear when Clara has sex, noting that the sheets were white, and when she is with Daniel and wears blue dresses (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 76; 54). Her palette is associated with the Virgin Mary and purity, setting up Clara to be valued for these allusions. In her opposition, Alicia Gris is seen as her creepy contrast with blacks, reds, and purples. Alicia Gris’ name creates a trend that follows Clara’s example, as “gris” means grey. This palette of darkness is continued throughout, sexualizing the character in a different way (Clara is more infantilized whereas Alicia is seen as a “forbidden fruit”). She is often wearing black clothing, for example, a black dress Leandro purchased for her (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 476; 390; 400; 845). When she goes to visit Barceló, as part of uncovering the mystery of Valls’ disappearance, she dresses again in a black dress, with blood red lipstick and a red coat (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 244). Alicia is often seen wearing blood red or burgundy lipstick, with matching purple tones, colours used to sexualize the character (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 244; 320; 359; 319).

Colour theory emphasises the contrast of palettes seen between Clara and Alicia. For instance, in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s theory of colours, he remarks: “so we love to

contemplate blue, not because it advances to us, but because it draws us after it” (Goethe 311). This phrase is interesting as it is exactly what happens with Daniel looking towards Clara. Her characteristic blue creates a sense of wonderment. Likewise, his comment: “history relates many instances of the jealousy of sovereigns with regard to the quality of red” can connect the reader to the vision of Alicia, seen as dangerous (Goethe 315). In Michael Hemphill’s study “A Note on Adults’ Color-Emotion Associations,” he indicates: “responses showed that bright colors elicited mainly positive emotional associations, and dark colors elicited mainly negative emotional associations” (275). This helps amplify Goethe’s theory, as well as my identification of the characters’ colours. Furthering his argument, in Hemphill’s results he found that blue, in particular, elicited the highest number of positive responses (279). This result was due to the fact that “many participants associated blue with the ocean or sky. Both were seen to be limitless, calm, or serene” (Hemphill 279). According to Mohr et al.’s study, “some emotions were associated with the same colour across cultures/languages (anger with red and black, fear with black, jealousy with red)” (214). Thus, according to colour symbolism, dark colours such as red and black are considered to be dangerous and associated with anger. Ultimately, these characters open and close the series, demonstrating how the disabled woman can be represented in different ways within contemporary Spanish literature.

The disabled woman is therefore established throughout the saga as a core archetype of Ruiz Zafón’s female characters. Within disability studies, mental health is a main subcategory. Ruiz Zafón includes examples of female characters struggling with their mental health, exemplified by suicide. Unlike traditional cases of female suicide within literature – à la Melibea in *La Celestina* or Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* – the examples within Ruiz Zafón’s text are not caused by heartbreak and romance. Within Ruiz Zafón, suicide and deteriorating mental health

instead are related to feelings of loss due to family or social status and not romantic partners. This can also be exemplified in his short story “Una señorita de Barcelona” in which two women commit suicide, the first after her daughter’s death and the second after being ostracized from society due to her sexual activities (Ruiz Zafón, *La ciudad*). Examples of suicide are prevalent throughout the text. Brief mentionings of suicide include Martín wanting to write a story where his alter ego commits suicide with his character Chloé, when Grandes informs Martín that Cristina attempted suicide, and when Ernesto, the previous owner of the Mataix house’s first Cuban wife, Leonor,<sup>43</sup> committed suicide (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 126; 429; *El laberinto* 414). In one of Alicia’s investigations the murderer, Quimet, as a child, had spent a week locked up with his mother’s corpse, suspected of suicide because her husband left her (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 116). Irene Sabino commits suicide by drinking poison and, when Ariadna’s roommate who was only 16, she hung herself in their dorm room (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 615; *El laberinto* 726). The question of suicide is also evidenced through the graphic death of Pedro Vidal (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 633). Therefore, Ruiz Zafón presents suicide as a continuous theme within the series. Over

---

<sup>43</sup> This comment is also related to the case in *La sombra del viento* where the mulata maid (and likely lover) of Jausà, Marisela, the first owner of the Aldaya’s mansion, poisoned Jausà and his wife, killing the pregnant woman, and then slitting her own wrists, covering the house in blood, and dying herself (Ruiz Zafón 279-280). Not only is this a comparative case of suicide, but it also provides commentary regarding the failing/failed colonial project in Cuba and the tense relations between the two countries as they become more and more separate. The placement of mulata women in the series is always seen through the lens of sexualization, objectifying them based on race and place of origin. These characters never have agency and are always in background stories. The inclusion of a mulata woman in a story foreshadows their death, with the exception of Fermín’s tales of sexual relations with a mulata girl, someone he is not able to see again due to his forced imprisonment and hiding.



the following pages, I will center this discussion on the cases of Cristina Vidal and the Mataix sisters, Ariadna and Sonia, three impactful suicides of the saga.

The ailing mental health of Cristina Vidal is demonstrated throughout *El juego del ángel* where Cristina is one of two main female characters, set in contrast to Isabela Gispert, Daniel Sempere's future mother. Cristina is used as a love interest for David Martín, a love that cannot come to fruition as she marries his friend, Pedro Vidal. This relationship haunts Martín, only making him want her more. Similar to the love affair of Julián Carax and Penélope Aldaya in *La sombra del viento*, David and Cristina are meant to run away together by train. Like with the case of Julián and Penélope, however, Cristina does not meet Martín and spurs the representation of her mental trauma or "madness" seen for the remainder of her life. The concept of "madness" is typically linked to representations of women. In the case of Ruiz Zafón, madness is connected to Cristina Vidal through the magic of Andreas Corelli, David Martín's manuscript, and her own grief for losing her father. In order to control Cristina's health, she is institutionalized.

Cristina's first encounter with institutionalization begins when her father is sent to a sanitarium after suffering from an aneurysm (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 129). After his death, although Martín and she agree to run away together, she never returns, and Martín assumes that she has decided to instead stay with her husband, Pedro Vidal. Vidal, however, unaware of his wife's whereabouts, assumes that Cristina is with Martín, leaving her missing for a month since the men did not communicate regarding her absence (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 510). It is here that Martín believes that Cristina likely returned to the site of her father's death and finds her at the sanitarium in Puigcerdá (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 530). Dr. Sanjuán tells Martín:

hace cuatro semanas la encontraron no muy lejos de aquí, en el cementerio del pueblo, tendida sobre la lápida de su padre. Sufría de hipotermia y deliraba. La trajeron al

sanatorio porque uno de los guardias civiles la reconoció de cuando pasó meses aquí el año pasado visitando su padre. Mucha gente del pueblo la conocía. La ingresamos y estuvo en observación durante un par de días. Estaba deshidratada y posiblemente llevaba días sin dormir. Recuperaba la conciencia a ratos. Cuando lo hacía hablaba de usted. Decía que corría usted un gran peligro. Me hizo jurar que no avisaría a nadie, ni a su esposo ni a nadie, hasta que ella pudiera hacerlo por sí misma. (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 534).

The doctor's commentary on Cristina continues as he explains her worsening mental state. Allowing Martín to stay and help, the doctor admits that he did not alert her husband of her location (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 535). When Martín wants to take Cristina home, the doctor notes his lack of legal rights. Martín retorts: "¿Está mejor aquí encerrada en un caserón con usted, atada a una silla y drogada?" (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 536). This statement is important as Martín criticizes the treatment of Cristina in the sanitarium, keeping her against her will. As Cristina spends more time in the sanitarium, her mental state continues to deteriorate, constantly confusing her reality, sometimes assuming she was at the sanitarium to visit her father instead of being a patient herself. Her health quickly takes a turn for the worse when she locks herself in her room, talking to someone who was not there, and destroying anything in her path (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 545). When they are finally able to enter her room, Martín finds her in the bathroom: "el suelo estaba cubierto de cristales. Cristina estaba sentada en el piso, apoyada contra la bañera de metal como un muñeco roto. La sangraban las manos y los pies, sembrados de cortes y aristas de vidrio. Su sangre se deslizaba todavía por las grietas del espejo que había destrozado a puñetazos" and is immediately sedated (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 546-7). The

deterioration of Cristina's mental state acts as a tool for Ruiz Zafón to investigate the setting of the sanitarium in twentieth-century Spain.

Over the course of her visit, Cristina had been sedated and strapped down to her bed multiple times. This would follow episodes of shrieking, believing someone – Corelli – was going to get her, and moments of self-harm. Martín soon believes that Cristina needs to be freed from the institution, thinking that if they flee together, it will save her life: “llevármela de aquel lugar y de arrancarla de las manos de aquel doctor pusilánime y enamoradizo que había decidido hacer de ella su bella durmiente. Prendería fuego a la casa antes que permitir que nadie volviese a ponerle las manos encima. Me la llevaría a casa para morir a su lado. El odio y la rabia iluminarían mi camino” (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 552). The violent imagery underscores Martín's distaste of Cristina's treatment in the sanitarium, again, providing Ruiz Zafón a space to critique the institution. This idea is repeated as Martín compares Cristina to sleeping beauty, under a sleeping spell by the doctor's sedatives like the tricks of an evil witch (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 553). Considering this logic, Martín believes that his “true love's kiss” and rescue mission would ultimately be her cure – Cristina needs to escape the curse of the doctor and be with him to achieve her happily ever after.

Unfortunately, when Martín arrives at Cristina's room to break her out of the sanitarium, she is already gone. Martín follows her bloody footprints trying to find her before it is too late (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 553). Martín finds Cristina on the ice outside of the sanitarium, her weight breaking the ice and causing her to drown below the surface, illustrating her suicide:

nos separaban apenas unos metros cuando escuché el hielo quebrase y ceder bajo sus  
peis. Unas fauces negras se abrieron bajo ella y la engulleron como un pozo de alquitrán.  
Tan pronto desapareció bajo la superficie, las placas de hielo se unieron sellando la

apertura por la que Cristina se había precipitado. Se cuerpo se deslizó un par de metros bajo la lámina de hielo impulsado por la corriente. Conseguí arrastrarme hasta el lugar donde había quedado atrapada y golpeé el hielo con todas mis fuerzas. Cristina, los ojos abiertos y el pelo ondulando en la corriente, me observaba desde el otro lado de aquella lámina traslúcida. Golpeé hasta destrozarme las manos en vano. Cristina nunca apartó sus ojos de los míos. Posó su mano sobre el hielo y sonrió. Las últimas burbujas de aire escapaban ya de sus labios y sus pupilas se dilataban por última vez. Un segundo después, lentamente, empezó a hundirse para siempre en la negrura. (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 554).

*El juego del ángel* is meant to play with reality and blur psychological limitations. Though the focus is mainly placed on Martín, Cristina's tragic death acts as a clear example of a female character struggling with her mental health, ultimately choosing suicide instead of continued institutionalization as a means to remedy her suffering. Cristina's death is chilling. Smiling – aware of her actions – her choice is clear, underscoring the fragility and failing of her mental health.

Similar to Cristina, Jacinta in *La sombra del viento* and Susana in *El laberinto de los espíritus* are also held against their will in mental health hospitals. In these cases, both were put there by powerful families to get them “out of the way” even though they were not actually mentally ill. With Jacinta, using his position of power, Ricardo Aldaya places her in an institution including solitary confinement as a punishment for having allowed Julián and Penélope to have a secret relationship (which led to them conceiving a child in her room). While she was institutionalized, Penélope and her mother died, and Ricardo and Jorge moved away to Argentina – having Jacinta return to no home, no work, and no knowledge or communication

with any of the family members to know what happened to her beloved “daughter.” With Susana, Mauricio Valls also places her in an institution due to stalking allegations where she suffers from electric shock therapy for 5 years before being abandoned on the streets. When she is ultimately released and finds her daughter, Valls’ guards shoot her to death.

The case of the Mataix sisters, Ariadna and Sonia, in *El laberinto de los espíritus*, highlights a case of deteriorating mental health and suicide connected to the Spanish Civil War. The sisters are not introduced as their true identities until the end of the text, fulfilling a core piece of the novel’s mystery. Instead, they are introduced through their assigned names of Victoria Ubach (Ariadna) and Mercedes Valls (Sonia) as, it is only at the end of the book where Alicia discovers how Mauricio Valls and Miguel Ángel Ubach (with help from Fumero and Leandro) had kidnapped the Mataix sisters from their home in order to raise them as their own children. Thus, for a majority of the text, the women are only identified through their “new” names. Moving forward, I will continue to refer to them by their birth names.

The day of the Mataix sisters’ suicide, Sonia was waiting in Villa Mercedes, Valls’ home in Madrid, still unsure of whether her “father,” Mauricio Valls was dead or alive. Ariadna, on the other hand, had been held captive in a hotel room supervised by Leandro Montalva, constantly being drugged and asked to provide information of her past. The morning of their death, it is stated: “Ariadna supo que aquel era el día en que iba a morir” (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 736). Though Leandro planned on killing her, Ariadna manages to save herself. She manages to inject the poison meant to kill her into the doctor instead, escaping with the rest of the vials to find her sister (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 737-9). When Sonia sees her sister she contemplates: “hacía días que la esperaba. Había soñado con ella muchas veces. La Muerte, vestida de Pertagaz, visitaba por fin Villa Mercedes antes de que el infierno se la tragase...” and “ese día la muerte visitaba

Villa Mercedes” referring to Ariadna as death (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 799; 800). Sonia continues to personify Ariadna as death,<sup>44</sup> “la muerte vestida de blanco se acercó” (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 801). Sonia welcomes death and acknowledges she knows who she is as Ariadna promises that they will never be separated again from each other nor their parents (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 801).

When Alicia arrives on the scene, she searches for Sonia, finding her in a celestial themed nursery with her sister (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 815). The text reads:

el lecho era blanco y estaba Coronado por una cabecera de madera labrada en forma de ángel de alas desplegadas que contemplaba la estancia con devoción infinita. Ariadna y Mercedes estaban vestidas de blanco, tendidas sobre la cama cogidas de una mano y sosteniendo una rosa roja sobre el pecho con la otra. Un estuche con una jeringuilla y frascos de cristal reposaba sobre la mesita de noche, junto a Ariadna. (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 815)

In death, the sisters are called Ariadna and Mercedes and not Ariadna and Sonia or Victoria and Mercedes. The mix of their names (real and fake) highlights the sisters’ differing life experiences. Ariadna, being a few years older, was aware of what happened to her her whole life. She has memories being Ariadna, of being taken away from her family, and of the trauma suffered under the Ubachs. Sonia, being only a baby when kidnapped, has less of a connection to her past self, able to live unknowingly as Mercedes.

The joint suicide of the Mataix sisters symbolizes a reclamation of power over their bodies, ending the cycle of violence imposed on them due to corrupt Francoist powers. Their

---

<sup>44</sup> In the English volume, Ariadna is called “Death” with a capital “D” and the “Grim Reaper” (Ruiz Zafón, *The Labyrinth* 690).

kidnapping and forced identity change creates a continuous path of trauma and questioning of identity. In their deaths, the women are finally released from their place of oppression caused by the dictatorship. They are unified (symbolically/religiously) with their birth parents, who were also killed by the regime. In line with Ruiz Zafón's anti-Francoist rhetoric, this suicide is meant to rebel against the powers that harmed them, taking control of their deaths instead of letting themselves be killed. It is an attempt to reclaim power to end the trauma suffered by the whole Mataix family, escaping any further trauma in their deathly reunification. The possibility of further trauma is also halted through the deaths of the Ubachs, the Valls, and Leandro, their deaths symbolizing the end to the violence placed on these children, victims of violence under the corrupt regime. This is also echoed through the burning down of both the Ubach mansion and Villa Mercedes (Valls' mansion), eliminating the spaces of oppression. Even so, when Alicia burns down Villa Mercedes, she refers to it as "aquella casa de la muerte," furthering this concept of oppression and death connected to the space (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 816). Ultimately, the case of the Mataix sisters, as well as Cristina Vidal, demonstrates the impact of female suicide on "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" tetralogy.

### **3.2 The Placement and Presentation of Women in Ruiz Zafón's Literary Universe**

In the previous section, I demonstrated Ruiz Zafón's four archetypal options for female characters: the mother, the sex worker, the religious woman, and the disabled woman. However, to properly analyse female characters within the tetralogy, "El cementerio de los libros olvidados," it is important to discuss how the literary universe reflects societal truths on the treatment of women. Ruiz Zafón's writing reflects a reality in which females are victims of violence and beings that are objectified.

### *Violence Against Women*

According to Talbot, rape-trauma has become a prominent trait within Spanish literature, becoming more common within post-Franco literature (93).<sup>45</sup> Ruiz Zafón's work demonstrates this with the events that unfold regarding Bernarda, Ariadna Mataix, Nuria Montfort, and Bea Aguilar. It is important to note that in each scenario, the female characters are assaulted by people they know, be it a parental figure or a romantic partner. This is, unfortunately, a pattern based on reality as it is said that approximately one out of two women have experienced gendered violence by people they know (be it acquaintances, family members, partners, or friends) (Ministerio de Igualdad 2).

The first description of sexual violence within "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" saga follows Bernarda's introduction:

la Bernarda había llegado a Barcelona poco después de la guerra, huyendo de la pobreza y de un padre que a las buenas le pegaba palizas y la trataba de tonta, fea y guarra, y a las

---

<sup>45</sup> A recent study conducted under the Spanish Ministry of Equality and Sociological Research Centre, "Relationship between Sexual Violence and the Health of Spanish Women—A National Population-Based Study" (2023), demonstrates the polemic situation of violence against women in Spain. Their macro-survey collected data between September and December 2019 to identify cases of women who have experienced 1) partner or ex-partner sexual violence, 2) non-partner sexual violence, or 3) sexual harassment (García-Pérez et al. 3). The study found that "of the 9568 women interviewed, 4233 (44.24%) had been victims of one or more of the different forms of SV [Sexual Violence]" (García-Pérez et al. 4). This means that approximately four out of every ten women surveyed has experienced sexual violence. The prevalence of sexual violence in Spain entered into Ruiz Zafón's writing, making sexual violence a key trend against his female characters.



malas la acorralaba en las porquerizas, borracho, para mansearla hasta que ella lloraba de terror y él la dejaba ir, por mojigata y estúpida, como su madre...De Pascuas a Ramos, a la Bernarda le salían novios que le pegaban, le sacaban los pocos cuartos que tenía en una cartilla de ahorros, y tarde o temprano la dejaban tirada. (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 57-59)

This description provides context for Bernarda's past, centralizing sexual abuse as a core element of her character. It acts as motivation for her being in the series as, without her past, she would not have fled her home. It also connects her situation to the Spanish Civil War, demonstrating how she pursued an urban lifestyle in the hopes of gaining more opportunities. The quote creates an emotional response by the reader to feel bad for Bernarda, as her character presents as caring, motherly, and saintly. The reader sees her past and hopes that she is treated better in the future – cueing her up for her relationship with Fermín.

Like Bernarda, Ariadna also experiences sexual violence from her “father” (in this case, Miguel Ángel Ubach, the man who became her father after kidnapping her as a child). Ubach would regularly come into her room drunk and rape her:

muchas noches venía a mi habitación, bebido. Me decía que su mujer no le quería, que tenía amantes, que ya no compartían nada. Se echaba a llorar. Luego me forzaba. Cuando se cansaba me decía que era culpa mía, que yo le tentaba, que era una puta como mi madre. Me pegaba y me aseguraba que si le contaba algo a alguien haría que matasen a mi hermana, porque él sabía dónde estaba y con una sola llamada suya la enterrarían viva. (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 717).

This case demonstrates how the Ubachs, along with the sexual abuse, also use psychological abuse to manipulate Ariadna. It is evidenced that they all know that she was kidnapped and forced to live this life – holding it against her and threatening her family. Ubach uses and abuses

his position of authority under the dictatorship to continue Ariadna's trauma. The sexual violence that Ariadna faces causes her to become pregnant, a constant reminder of her abuse and abuser.

Nuria's case for sexual harassment is seen in the workplace. Even though Nuria presented as married, even dressing as a widow, her boss at the publishing house, Pedro Sanmartí, would constantly ask her out and make her uncomfortable since she was both uninterested and his subordinate (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 514-15). His persistence causes Nuria to look for other work, and unfortunately, one of the potential employers tells Sanmartí, who punishes Nuria by giving her more work and criticism for trying to leave him and not accepting his advances (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 516). This sexual harassment persists, sending home the other workers to isolate Nuria, and through attempts to become physical, manifested through massaging her without her consent and an attempt to fondle her – an act that made Nuria run away immediately, only to land in the arms of Fumero (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 517). The following day, rumours spread in the office against Nuria with homophobic slurs implying that she was involved with her co-worker Mercedes – another case of harassment due to Sanmartí's ego – and was forced to leave the environment altogether by the next week (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 518). Here, Nuria recounts her trauma to Julián Carax and soon after, Mrs. Sanmartí identifies her husband's body, implying that Carax murdered Sanmartí out of revenge and protection of Nuria (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 519). Unfortunately, with Fumero already following Nuria due to her suspected (and real) involvement with Carax, he brings her into the police station to be questioned for Sanmartí's murder (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 520). Typical for Fumero, he beats Nuria, pulling her hair and slapping her to the ground (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 521). He threatens to kill her and Carax and makes her wait in the station eleven hours without water. When they finally release her, she finds her apartment had been searched and left a mess with “puta” written on the wall

with excrement (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 521). Evidently, through these scenes of violence, the word “whore” is thrown around, further degrading the women. To top it all off, Julián had fled the apartment to not get caught, leaving Nuria to deal with both the literal mess of her apartment and the emotional burdens of the trauma.

In the cases of Bernarda, Ariadna, and Nuria, the men conducting the acts of sexual violence are portrayed as bad, alerting the reader that the characters were victims of evil people. Ubach and Sanmartí are prime examples of this characterization as they are both seen as corrupt Francoist characters, always deemed as “bad” in Ruiz Zafón’s literature. Having them conducting these acts is therefore meant to not be surprising to the reader and pushes the reader to dislike them further. These examples, however, contrast the sexual assault of Bea Aguilar. In this episode, Daniel starts to forcefully have sex with Bea until she gets her nails into his back and pushes him away. She tells him to never repeat his actions as he hurt her (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 823). This example shows that even seemingly “good” characters are still capable of acts of violence. In a similar fashion, in *La sombra del viento*, Nuria, jealous of Julián’s past love with Penélope, decides to ask Miquel for details about their past. Out of rage, and his own jealousy for Nuria’s interest in Julián, a drunken Miquel rapes Nuria. This violent scene has him call her a whore, rip off her clothes, and force himself on her while she cries (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 442). Though he apologizes after, Nuria also provides apologies for not loving him equally – almost presenting as if she deserved it. This is antithetical to the presentation of sexual violence by muting the negativity associated with the event due to the lack of consent.<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Since the case of the highly publicized and debated 2016 Sanfermines gang rape, the idea of consent has become even more discussed in Spanish society, the slogan “*No es No*” has shifted to “*Solo sí es sí*” (Recalde-Esnoz et al. 2023). The episodes with Nuria and Bea allow for

Death is a common theme within the tetralogy, especially the murder of female characters. In the series, Isabella, Susana, Nuria, Yvonne, Federica and Elena, are all murdered women. While other women die (naturally or by suicide), the murders of these women are quite jarring to the reader. Other than Nuria, all these women are mothers, underscoring the theme of the absent mother. The most felt absence is that of Isabella, whose death is blamed by cholera within *La sombra del viento*. It is not until the reader reaches the third installment of the series, *El prisionero del cielo*, where her real cause of death is unveiled: poison. When meeting to discuss David Martín's maltreatment in prison, Mauricio Valls adds poison to Isabella's tea before she arrives, killing her, leaving Martín without his advocate, Juan Semepré a widow, and Daniel without a mother (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 172-173). Valls perceived Isabella as a threat, as disposable, providing motivation for her murder. Isabella dies without alerting anyone of what she believed happened, however, in *El laberinto de los espíritus*, Alicia encounters Isabella's notebook where she affirms the encounter and her point of view of events (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 469). This murder is critical in story development throughout the tetralogy, planting seeds across the books. In *La sombra del viento*, Isabella is already dead, her absence affecting Daniel's character. When the reader experiences the vibrant Isabella in *El juego del ángel*, her absence is felt even deeper. However, these two experiences of Isabella help fuel interest in her character and, narratively, place her in the middle of the drama. In the second half of the series, Daniel's obsession with Mauricio Valls fuels the plot as he tries to uncover the mystery of his mothers' death and prove that Valls was her killer.

---

perfect case studies on how to (and how not to) approach consent for future generations. Following the Feminist Movement in Spain, these cases demonstrate how consent is always necessary, fomenting gendered violence as a repeated theme in the tetralogy.

Valls' corruption and personal motivations cause a second mother to be murdered: Susana Mataix. After enduring physical violence from Fumero who attacks her, leaving her for dead, and stealing her children, Susana, attempts to find her daughters. Serendipitously, she comes across a picture of Sonia in the newspaper presented as Mercedes Valls who lives in Madrid. Susana makes her way from Barcelona to Madrid and finds Sonia at school. When she gains the nerve to get in touch with her daughter and approach her, Valls' security team shoots her down and kills her right in front of the child (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 673). Here, Valls' motivation to eliminate Susana steamed from not wanting her to disrupt his life and tell Sonia the truth regarding her identity. By killing her, he continues to force Sonia into a false life and removes her chance of reuniting with her birth mother. His motivations are selfish, causing Sonia trauma not only in terms of her identity, but through having to watch a woman be killed before her eyes.

In *La sombra del viento*, two female characters are murdered by Francisco Javier Fumero: Nuria Montfort and Yvonne, his mother. The description of both deaths is quite gruesome, unsurprising for Fumero's character. Unlike Valls who used poison and someone else's hand to accomplish his murders, Fumero's innate violence dictates the scenes. For Nuria, Fumero stabbed her to death, leaving her to die in Palacio's arms after the assault (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 544; 419). Her death acts as a culminative moment within the story's plot as it connects Daniel and Fermín to the truth about Carax – and Fumero's intent to kill them all. For knowing and aiding Carax, Fumero kills Nuria, causing him to feel her loss, like the loss he felt when Penélope chose Carax instead of him. This revenge was anticipated as Nuria felt psychologically traumatized by Carax for years. Fumero is never seen to regret killing Nuria, though he does feel satisfaction for killing her as well as his mother, Yvonne, murdered at

gunpoint: “años más tarde, cada vez que introducía su revolver en la boca de un prisionero y apretaba el gatillo, el inspector jefe Francisco Javier Fumero habría de evocar el día en que vio el cráneo de su madre estallar como una sandía madura en las inmediaciones de un merendero de Las Planas y no sintió nada, apenas el tedio de las cosas muertas” (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 258). Knowing that Fumero is sadistic, there is an extra layer of perversion to these murders. The sexualization of their bodies becomes a feature of his violent acts. The fact that Fumero recalls killing his mother as a foundational moment of his life is also telling of his violent nature. It is after he is found with the revolver and his dead mother that Fumero announces he would like to join the military, stating that this death was merely an accident, and beginning the rest of his prolific, vicious career.

It is critical to underscore that all four of these women, Isabella, Susana, Nuria, and Yvonne were killed by the story's lead fascist characters. This fact not only enhances Ruiz Zafón's anti-Francoist platform but furthers these characters as “bad guys” in comparison to the left-wing characters who are not presented as murderers. This critique of power in the series marks Ruiz Zafón's literary agenda and political position throughout the tetralogy. Different from these four murders, the reader experiences those committed by Ariadna against other women: Federica Ubach and Elena Valls. In an act of retaliation, Federica was killed, along with her husband, when Ariadna sets fire to their mansion, murdering them for having stolen her and for their sexual and emotional abuse. Though Ariadna wanted to kill Mauricio Valls' for the trauma caused to her family, she was unable to achieve her goal, though, she manages to murder the fourth “parent” who ruined her life, Elena Valls. This final murder (three of the four she intended to commit) occurred just before her joint suicide with Sonia.

At the end of *El laberinto de los espíritus*, Elena pleads with Ariadna to kill her, her wish coming true as Ariadna seeks and completes her revenge: “la figura de blanco estaba inclinada como un ángel sobre el lecho de la señora...la figura tomó uno de los cojines y, cubriendo el rostro de la señora, apretó con fuerza mientras su cuerpo se agitaba en sacudidas hasta quedar inerte” (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 800-1). Here a moral equivalency is established: the death of Víctor and Susana Mataix come at the price of the Ubachs and the Valls. Ariadna avenges her family through these murders, almost presenting them as a positive within the storyline compared to the previous deaths outlined since the reader is not meant to like these families. Nevertheless, through these examples, it becomes clear that the value of women within society, the same society Ruiz Zafón attempts to emulate in his literary world, prefers women to exist within the realm of the dead.

### ***Women as Objects: Patterns of Sexualization, Love Triangles, and Objectification***

Intrinsic to the presentation of female characters within the “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” saga is the representation of women as objects, creating a patriarchal environment where female characters are seen as sexualized and replaceable. According to Kellie et al.:

women who are objectified are viewed as less than fully human, perceived to have less of a mind for thoughts or decisions and viewed as less deserving of moral treatment by others. This denial of mental capacity and moral status has been found to have negative repercussions for objectified women, including increasing men’s willingness to commit sexually aggressive actions towards them, and decreasing perceived suffering in cases of sexual assault. (2)

Following Kellie et al.'s research, objectification of women and sexual violence are linked, underscoring the environment created within Ruiz Zafón's fiction. This pattern is fomented from the very beginning of *La sombra del viento* where, at only ten years old, Daniel sexualizes Clara. Though she is almost twice his age, this act of objectification shifts the power dynamic between the character, giving Daniel more power. As the story continues between them and Clara rejects Daniel, her beauty begins to fade. Since her beauty was a core character trait, this rejection of his objectification comes at a cost, "punishing" her through her aging and loneliness (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 565). Even when Daniel thinks back to his past in *El prisionero del cielo*, he thinks of "la piel de mi primer amor imposible, la ciega Clara," solidifying her as a relic of the past, marked by both Daniel's "suffering" for his unrequited love, and by her disability (Ruiz Zafón 308). Clara's rejection of Daniel has a great effect on the way she is represented in the novel. At the end of *La sombra del viento*, the loss of her beauty as well as a sense of loneliness is apparent:

la lista de sus amantes sigue siendo prolija, aunque encoge año a año, como su belleza. Ahora vive sola en el piso de la plaza Real del que cada día sale menos. Hubo un tiempo en que la visitaba, más porque Bea me recordaba su soledad y su mala suerte que por mi propio deseo. Con los años he visto brotar en ella una amargura que quiere vestir de ironía y despeto. A veces creo que sigue esperando que aquel Daniel hechizado de quince años acuda a adorarla en la sombra. La presencia de Bea, o de cualquier otra mujer, la envenena. La última vez que la vi se buscaba las arrugas del rostro con las manos. (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 565-6)

In this narrative, it presents her past sexualization as good – Clara was seen as beautiful and wanted by many men. As she ages and rejects Daniel's interest in her, this objectification is rescinded, as if her vanity would miss it. Clara is, however, the first of many female characters to



be sexualized within the saga – even by Daniel who goes on to sexualize Bea Aguilar, Nuria Montfort, and even when he is married, Alicia Gris.

Objectification is used as a tool in *El laberinto de los espíritus* to differentiate Alicia from the other female characters. Perhaps attempting to make her seem confident and comfortable in her own space as an independent woman, it pushes the sexualization of her body for the reader, placing her in a more vulnerable and intimate position. For example, after showering, the text describes her wearing a towel, reading while holding wine (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 209). In the novel, even little 4-year-old Julián Sempere is characterized by being attracted to Alicia – perhaps not sexually, but still fixated and obsessed with her and her appearance. This curiosity matches the energy of the adult men who perceive her, even going as far as to name his daughter after her years later due to his obsession. Throughout *El laberinto de los espíritus* Alicia's sexualization is palpable, especially with comments on her appearance: “al salir de la *boutique*, Leandro la llevó a cenar a La Puñalada, donde casi todas las mesas estaban ocupadas por aquello que caritativamente se denomina hombres de negocios, que se relamieron como gatos hambrientos al verla pasar para luego mirar con envidia a Leandro. ‘Te miran así porque creen que eres una furcia de lujo’” (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 476). Commentary on Alicia's appearance often alludes to dolls, forcing objectification of her body. For example, in a dream, Alicia compares her body to a puppet, visualizing the doctor who saved her after her fall into el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados saying “esa muñeca está rota,” referring to her body as a broken doll (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 243). This idea is also connected to her harness which improves her walking and pain management, though, she believes wearing it makes her look plastic, like a doll. She considers herself to be a “muñeca perversa, de marioneta de oscura belleza” who is only missing the strings to make her into a real puppet (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto*

319). Alicia is also compared to the creepy dolls in Sonia's collection (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 165; 175). These comparisons to puppets and dolls are not missed on the reader as the inanimate objects are present throughout Ruiz Zafón's narratives. However, here the metaphor is important as Alicia is being played like a puppet throughout the book by Leandro. It is only at the end when she solves the mystery of the stolen children and kills Leandro that the strings are cut, freeing her. The analogy is therefore symbolic to Alicia's character and the development of the novel's plot.

Moreover, patterns of objectification for Alicia often stem from comparisons between her and animals or paranormal beings. She is constantly compared to cats, be it catlike movements or to have "esas sonrisas dulces y felinas que tanto irritaban a Leandro" (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 140; 363; 391; 850). The text states that she paces "como un animal enjaulado," is a minx, and her doctor notes that while cats have seven lives, Alicia is running out of them (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 467; 503; 705).<sup>47</sup> Her green eyes are assessed as "ojos felinos" as well as similar to a snake's eyes and her general comparison to a snake is made by both her police partner in the investigation, Vargas, and Fermín Romero de Torres (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 848; 359; 370; 526). For instance, when Fermín and Daniel follow Alicia, Fermín says: "hela ahí, cual serpiente del paraíso" (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 506). The snake comparison is important as she is likened to a temptress – the snake being the blame for Eve eating the forbidden fruit – placing Alicia as an evil temptation. Fermín even compares her to a lamia, a seductive, blood thirsty, mythical

---

<sup>47</sup> There is an interesting cultural comment between the Spanish and English edition as the English expression is that a cat has nine lives, but the Spanish expression is that a cat has seven lives (Ruiz Zafón, *The Labyrinth* 605; *El laberinto* 705). Either way, it is meant to show that Alicia is running out of time based on her lifestyle choices.

monster made of part woman and part snake (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 525). Symbolically, using these animals to describe Alicia is meant to create a lack of trust with the character, making her seem evil, mysterious, and sexy.<sup>48</sup>

Paranormal assessments include imagery of a fallen angel, a ghost, or a vampire. When Fermín watches Alicia disembark a train, he analyses her appearance: “se parecía a uno de aquellos espectrales ángeles de la medianoche que asomaban a veces entre las páginas de las novelas de su antiguo compañero de galería carcelaria en el castillo de Montjuïc, David Martín, particularmente a la inefable Chloé (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 233) This commentary, through the idea of the angel, links Alicia to Chloé, furthering her description as a *femme fatale*, dark and mysterious (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 757). The term *femme fatal* is not used specifically in the Spanish editions, but translated to be included in the English copies, for instance, here, the corresponding English page, 653, includes the term. Julián Sempere refers to Alicia as his “ángel de las tinieblas favorito” and even Alicia refers to herself as a fallen angel (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 887; 268). Her pale complexion also contributes to the Gothicisation of Alicia, comparing her looks to a ghost and a vampire (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 534; 308-9). In another moment of following Alicia, Fermín states their goal: “a la caza de la vampiresa” (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 506). Again, the English edition uses *femme fatale* here, replacing the term vampiress (Ruiz Zafón, *The Labyrinth* 429). Alicia is aware of these types of judgements, admitting to Vargas that Leandro typically tells her that she looks like “la novia de Drácula,” likening her

---

<sup>48</sup> Interestingly, Fumero is also characterized with similes referencing cats and snakes (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 44-45). These animals, associated with evil are used to further this characterization of Alicia and provoke the reader in not trusting her, just like they are meant to not trust Fumero.

again to the vampire (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 176). In general, this darkness or hauntedness about Alicia is meant to be apparent to the reader, having even a passerby photographer claiming she is “una criatura de luz y sombra, como esta ciudad” to affirm these descriptions of her character (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 478). Bea even likens Alicia’s appearance to a witch: “las trazas de aquella mujer le recordaron a las brujas estilizadas y exquisitamente malvadas de los cuentos que tanto agradaban a Julián” (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 358). Even when Alicia asks Fermín what time it is he says: “la hora de las brujas. O sea, la suya” (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 698). Through these descriptions and comparisons of Alicia to animals and paranormal beings, there is meant to be an edge of creepiness, connecting Alicia to the mysterious gothic Barcelona and Mataix’s literature. This is captured perfectly when Leandro comments that the Mataix text, central to their investigation, was made for Alicia since it is so disturbing (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 208). These degrading comparisons separate Alicia from her body, sexualizing her further.

The objectification and constant commentary on Alicia’s body is pertinent to the analysis of Ruiz Zafón’s work as it creates a completely different tone from the previous narrations. The sections focusing on Daniel, David, or even Fermín’s point of views spend little to no time reflecting on their bodies (perhaps the only exceptions being to comment on Daniel’s youth, David’s health, and Fermín’s nose and skinniness due to the war). With Alicia, every character appraises and judges her. This differentiation stems from the presentation of gender within the series, allowing for the author, the reader, and the other characters within the text to comment on her body since it is a body of a women, an object for observation.

Important to analysing the patterns of sexualization within the text is to also highlight two male characters who are perpetrators of sexualization: Francisco Javier Fumero and Fermín

Romero de Torres. Fumero is the cause of many perverse examples of sexualization, mixing violence with masturbation: “una noche, después de haberla seguido hasta el portal de su casa en la plaza del Pino, Fumero volvió a su casa y se masturbó furiosamente mientras se imaginaba hundiendo la hoja de su cuchillo en el cuerpo de aquella mujer, lenta y metódicamente, mirándole a los ojos” (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 462). This quote, like others, defines Fumero’s nature, where violence is mixed with pleasure. These cases of sexualization are meant to make the reader feel uncomfortable and worry for the victims of Fumero’s gaze. In his opposition, Fermín’s constant sexualization is meant to be charming and funny, sexualizing women in his advice to Daniel or pinching nurses when being helped. His constant commentary is deemed acceptable, even though it can still be considered harassment. It is meant to present as Fermín “just cannot help himself” and that the women should take his objectification as a compliment. Thus, the position and characterization of the male characters within the novels is crucial in the patterns of objectification seen within the series at large, marking sexualization as acceptable and forgivable when coming from a “good” character.

The objectification of female characters is furthered through their participation in love triangles. This pattern forces the women to be considered objects worth wanting, and worth taking away from their “opponents.” Below, I outline the love triangles where Daniel Sempere, Julián Carax, and David Martín are involved, three leading male characters of the series. Of the love triangles, all but one consist of two men and one woman, the exception being the love triangle between Julián Carax, Nuria Montfort, and Penélope Aldaya. However, even in this case, there is truly only one woman in the triangle as Penélope is already dead. Overall, Ruiz Zafón creates a repetition of stories within the saga, not only through the comparison of relationships (for example, Daniel’s story often reflects that of Carax), but in the placement of

women within his literary universe. As a means to represent twentieth-century Spanish society, Ruiz Zafón places them in a position of objectification. This representation of objectification of women can first be seen with Clara Barceló, Daniel Sempere, and Antoni Neri in *La sombra del viento* where both men aspire to have a sexual relationship with Clara. Daniel, jealous of Neri and the time he gets to spend with Clara, thinks little of him and his talent. Neri also thinks little of Daniel, mostly since he is a young child. When Daniel catches Neri and Clara having sex, Neri beats Daniel and threatens him to never return, claiming stake to Clara (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 76-77). Daniel is heartbroken that he was not chosen by his first love and did not understand that there was no real possibility for him and Clara to be together since he was still only a child. Even so, his unrequited love caused the constant sexualization of Clara.

Daniel appears in a second love triangle when he falls for Beatriz Aguilar who is already engaged to a Pablo Cascos Buendía in *La sombra del viento*. The reader roots for Daniel even though Bea is in a relationship, deeming their moments together moments of love and passion instead of cheating. After having pre-marital sex with Daniel, becoming pregnant with their son, and realizing Daniel's devotion to her, Bea decides to write a letter to Pablo to end their engagement. This triangle appears again in *El prisionero del cielo* when Pablo is tasked to write a love letter to his ex-fiancé asking her to meet with him as part of a plan under Valls to reconnect to the Sempere family and find information on David Martín. When Daniel finds the letter, he becomes quite jealous and worried, upset that Bea's ex is still trying to "steal" her back (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 71-73). This idea foments the concept that Bea is an object that both men wish to obtain. Unfortunately, Daniel thinks little of his wife and goes to the meeting spot outlined in the letter, prepared to catch his wife cheating on him. Bea, however, never considered attending the requested meeting and instead, attends a dress fitting for Bernarda's wedding dress

(Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 330). The scene demonstrates Daniel's lack of trust and insecurity as he worries that he could lose his most valued "possession" – his wife – to the same man he "stole" her from. It also highlights Bea as trustworthy and loyal to Daniel, the man for whom she risked everything: her social status, her family, and her wealthy livelihood.

In *La sombra del viento*, Julián is also involved in three love triangles. The first triangle exists between himself, Penélope Aldaya, and Francisco Javier Fumero. Fumero's obsession with Penélope causes tension in his friendship with Julián and the other boys at school. Fumero often considered his love for Penélope as pure and compared the experience to romantic movies at the cinema (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 462). When Fumero spots Julián and Penélope kissing at Jorge's birthday party, his jealousy leads him to violence, attempting to murder Julián at school. Fumero is unable to kill him in that moment and spends the rest of his life wanting vengeance against his rival. It is only at the end of *La sombra del viento* where Julián (or really, his evil persona, Láin Coubert) manages to murder Fumero instead. While Fumero never really had a chance with Penélope since she was in love with Julián, Julián never really had a chance to be with her either, as, unbeknownst to him, she was his sister. Nevertheless, Julián and his best friend, Miquel Moliner, created a plan where Julián and Penélope could run away to be together in Paris. However, after being caught having sex by Penélope's mother, she is locked in her room and confirmed to be pregnant, ensuring that Penélope is unable to flee (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 333-334). While Julián is led to believe that Penélope does not love him, he does not find out until years later that she had died.

Julián Carax later builds connection with Nuria Montfort. This creates a secondary love triangle where Nuria wishes to be with Carax but Carax still wishes to be with Penélope. Though he enjoys his time with Nuria, after losing his potential life with Penélope, Julián feels he is not

deserving of love. When Nuria realises she will never fully be with Julián, she turns to Miquel to feel connected. This impacts a tertiary love triangle, formed between Julián, Nuria, and Miquel. Nuria becomes aware that similar to how Julián will never match her feelings, she will never match the feelings Miquel has for her. Creating another scenario of unrequited love, Nuria still chooses to marry Miquel. When Miquel dies protecting Julián, Julián lives the rest of his life “legally” as Miquel: “fui la amante de Julián durante dos semanas, pero sería la mujer de Miquel el resto de mi vida” (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 466). In her last words, Nuria sends a message to Julián, telling him to let go of Penélope, reminding the reader that even in her last moments, Nuria is still thinking of Julián and knows Julián is still thinking of Penélope (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 420). Within these triangles, both women are again seen as objects for possession, their value judged by their suitors.

If Daniel and Julián fall into multiple love triangles, it is only fitting in the repetition of patterns solidified within Ruiz Zafón’s work that David Martín would also fall under this same pattern. Martín’s first love triangle is with Cristina and Pedro Vidal and the second with Isabella and Juan Sempere in *El juego del ángel*. Martín’s interest in Cristina does not diminish when she becomes engaged and marries his friend and mentor, Pedro Vidal. In fact, it is as if their relationship grew stronger while she was married. Cristina and Martín spend countless hours re-writing Pedro’s book together and fall in love. Cristina’s unavailability due to her marriage does not hinder Martín’s attempt to obtain her. Their plan to run away and be together officially is stopped by Corelli, her failing mental health, and sadly, her death. Pedro also commits suicide, leaving only Martín alive from this particular triangle. Later, though he is aware of Juan’s interest in Isabella, Martín begins a sexual relationship with her, although this is not revealed



until much later in the saga. Though Isabella becomes pregnant, she chooses to marry Juan, eventually falling in love with him, even though she still loves Martín until her death.

Women are given few options within society, a condition more generally seen in a conservative culture. Creating a societal commentary on the limited options of women, Ruiz Zafón demonstrates the bleak picture of society as protest, providing commentary on twentieth-century Spain through his recreation of the time period within his saga. Women have been conditioned to want male validation on a societal level and Ruiz Zafón reports on these realities within his writing, playing with stereotypes of women's behaviour and perception within society. The author's use of love triangles, including other examples such as Fermín, Bernarda, and Roció or Sophie Carax, Ricardo Aldaya, and Antoni Fortuny, furthers this pattern of sexualizing female characters. All these romances convert the female characters into objects for men to obtain as the value of each of the women is defined by their relationships with the male characters. Conceptually, this objectification of women is not new within literature, but it demonstrates how Ruiz Zafón follows strict stereotypes regarding women and their worth.

When women are not present within the saga, they are often replaced with objects, most commonly, photographs and dolls. Like the use of female writing (notebooks and letters) to emulate the voice of female characters after their death, this technique of replacing women with photographs and dolls creates a new type of objectification – substituting the female for an object instead of including her. This tactic again, demonstrates society's distaste for female presence, forcing her exclusion and placing more value on her replacement. Since women are frequently seen through a voyeuristic lens, the use of photographs compels this gaze. Photographs are used in the tetralogy to evoke the memory of women from the past. This trend of using photographs in the absence of female characters is visible with images of Cristina Vidal, Isabella Gispert, Nuria

Montfort, and Penélope Aldaya. These characters are most present within the text when they are not really there – mediated through their frozen images.

Cristina Vidal, after having her dying father confuse her for her mother, Marta, shows David Martín photographs of her mother to demonstrate their resemblance (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 140).<sup>49</sup> The photo album contained the essence of Marta, a woman never shown in the text, establishing her only through her photograph. Among the images is a photograph of Cristina as a child, accompanied by a man in a white suit (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 140-141). While she does not remember that day nor the image, it becomes a reoccurring photograph within the series. David Martín cherishes this photograph of Cristina long after her death, even when he is in prison and does not remember who she is, he knows the image is important to him (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 114-115).<sup>50</sup> The photographs of Cristina and her mother cement the concept of the absent woman, keeping her alive only through the replication. This is true as well in the case of Isabella. In the Sempere household, a wedding photograph of Isabella and Juan keeps her present in the room (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 354). Daniel, who was only a child when his mother passed away, uses the image to supplement his memory, helping him to recollect her face. The image therefore acts to preserve the memory of his mother, a key theme of the saga. Along with the photograph in their living room, Daniel carries a picture of his mother with him in his pocket (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 868). Nuria is also remembered by family, in her case, by her father,

---

<sup>49</sup> Later, Isabella looks at Cristina's photo album (Ruiz Zafón, *El juego* 233).

<sup>50</sup> Interestingly, while women are constantly seen in images, in *El juego del ángel*, Andreas Corelli is also regularly seen in images. This is curious as it follows this pattern of viewing those who are not there. While the women of the series are seen within photographs after they had passed away, Corelli is seen by Martín, furthering the readers' questioning of his existence.

Isaac Montfort. Isaac has a photograph of Nuria in his office in el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados, noticed by characters after her death (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 363). Isaac even shows Alicia pictures of Nuria after telling her that she reminds him of his late daughter (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 701). Finally, the case of Penélope again presents a gaze toward a dead woman. When a picture is suddenly left at the Sempere e Hijos bookshop, Daniel identifies the couple in the image as Julián Carax and Pelélope Aldaya (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 148). This image allows for Daniel, born years after Penélope's death, to visualize the young girl, perceiving and preserving her through the photograph. In all these cases, the women are remembered by men, continuing the objectification of the male gaze towards the women, even after their deaths.

Photographs are used as a tool to connect to absent women. For example, the reader finds Antoni Fortuny in his old age looking at photographs of his wife, Sophie, and son, Julián, a family he lost due to his abuse towards them (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 505). Looking at these images provides Fortuny space to process the past, to feel less lonely, and to sit in his regret. A family portrait of Fortuny, Sophie, and a young Julián is also seen by Daniel when he enters their home, demonstrating Fortuny's need to remember the past (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 144). Susana Mataix was also able to find closeness to her daughter Sonia after she was kidnapped because of an image. Susana, looking through the newspaper, identified a photograph with Mercedes Valls to be her daughter, Sonia (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 672). This influenced Susana to travel to Madrid to try to recover her stolen daughter, providing her a moment of hope. Wives and girlfriends of the prisoners of Montjuïc are also remembered through their photographs, a symbol of home that the men guarded with their lives (Ruiz Zafón, *El prisionero* 113). These examples of photographs seen with Fortuny, Susana, and the prisoners all symbolize moments of hope for

the viewers: hope for reunification with the women they love. This hope, however, is tinged with fear, loss, and worry that the object replicating the women will never be replaced with the real person again.

Alicia Gris is often replaced with photographs, furthering her objectification by male characters. Hendaya uses a photograph of Alicia to try to find her and Alicia sends images along with postcards to the Semperes at Christmas (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 689; 921). When Valls dies, he is holding a photograph of Alicia. The policeman who finds the photograph at the scene keeps the photo for years, convinced she is Death (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 835). This thought furthers the connection between women and the concept of death. Perhaps the most intense viewing of images of Alicia comes when she finds Rovira's mosaic of photographs: "el mosaico estaba formado por docenas, centenares de fotografías, recortes y apuntes. Había sido confeccionado con extraordinaria precisión y con empeño de orfebre. Todas las imágenes, sin excepción, eran de Alicia" (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 615). The scene causes the reader to worry for Alicia's life, made aware through the mosaic that Rovira had been lying to Alicia throughout *El laberinto de los espíritus* and had actually been stalking her. The mosaic alerts the reader, and Alicia, to the danger of Rovira's obsession. Rovira's gaze of Alicia makes the reader uncomfortable. This uncomfortable feeling is reminiscent of Fumero's sexualization of female characters. In this case, Rovira's objectification of Alicia presents as a sign of perverse obsession. Her photographs and personal items make him feel as if he knows her, the mosaic manifesting a replication of Alicia and her life.

According to Walter Benjamin, the photograph is the "first truly revolutionary means of reproduction" (6). In the case of Ruiz Zafón, if a woman is being reproduced, it is often through this type of reproduction, allowing for her to be copied before her physical removal. The concept

of the copy becomes fundamental when analysing female presence and absence within the tetralogy. Following Barthes' idea of the copy in *Image Music Text* (1977), the use of the copy allows for the women to continue existing after their lives. The images signify the existence of the women, fomenting their importance in time passed, and yet, through their copy, continue their existence through the visual form. The copy never satisfies the need, the original always deemed superior. Through the absences of so many women, their essence is preserved in their image, creating a faux space for the woman within the series. This space permits only her replication, creating an object of the figure instead of admitting her true presence.

The objectification process of female characters also exists within the tetralogy through the use of dolls. For Ruiz Zafón, dolls and mechanical and/or magical toys are ubiquitous throughout his earlier children's literature. He manifests objects as beings, bringing them to life through different stories. In "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" saga, dolls are used to represent and replace women. In *El laberinto de los espíritus*, Alicia reflects on a past murder case that she solved where the murderer, Quimet, made corpse brides, making dolls out of the sex workers he killed (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 115). These perverse dolls, influenced by a photo album of porcelain dolls used as a reference guide, allowed for him to replace live women with an object (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 115). This act, linked to the sexualization of female bodies, demonstrates how Quimet was unable to connect with living women, and instead, created corpse brides as an attempt to generate spaces of connection and control.

In *La sombra del viento*, Daniel explores the Aldaya mansion and comes across mannequins of Penélope (Ruiz Zafón, *La sombra* 362). These dolls or replications of her figure would have been used for wardrobe fittings, not needing her to be physically present. Similarly, dolls are used to replace Sonia's parents in *El laberinto de los espíritus*. On the property of Villa

Mercedes (named after Sonia's compulsory name, Mercedes Valls), exists a small building filled with dolls. The dolls are described as creepy, with Mauricio Valls even having a nightmare that his daughter was killed by the dolls in her doll house, but allow for Sonia to feel comfort (Ruiz Zafón, *El laberinto* 165; 399). The doll house provides Sonia a space to exist – and hide – creating caregivers out of the dolls. Especially since Elena was bedridden through most of Sonia's life, the dolls replace her mother, creating a system of care between her and her objects.

These manifestations of the copy demonstrate the replacement of live women with objects within Ruiz Zafón's narrative. This pattern of replacement therefore emphasises their limited space within their society. Like with photographs, dolls act as replications, copies of the female body in order to exclude her. In conjunction to the patterns of sexual violence, murder, and objectification (including sexualizing through character descriptions and love triangles), equating the space of the woman to the space of the object underscores Ruiz Zafón's efforts to reflect the society of the time. His vision of twentieth-century Spain is recreated and critiqued across the pages, demonstrating past perceptions on the place of women within society.

### 3.3 Concluding Remarks

In Carlos Ruiz Zafón's "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" tetralogy, the representation of women is used to demonstrate societal trends and stereotypes. Female characters are not allowed to hold too much space, inhibiting them to be fully developed beings. By incorporating women from all four of the installments within this analysis, I have been able to create a more holistic view of the ways in which Ruiz Zafón attempts to recreate, at least partially, twentieth-century Spanish views on women. Following the society of the time, Ruiz Zafón creates a patriarchal literary universe, centering his stories on male characters and

perspectives. For example, women within the series are not shown to have strong female friendships or conversations with other women on topics not related to men. This lack of space for female friendship and connection is palpable, the distinction evidently contrasting female-written texts like Martín Gaité's *Entre visillos* and Chacón's *La voz dormida* where female friendship is intrinsic to the novels' plot development. These authors seek to move away from the patriarchal realities of the time, whereas Ruiz Zafón uses the established attitudes to depict his stories. Indeed, the absent woman becomes an important theme of the series, linking her to the concept of death. Of the eight women who can be considered potential "main" characters, namely, Isabella Gispert, Nuria Montfort, Bea Aguilar, Clara Barceló, Penélope Aldaya, Alicia Gris, Cristina Vidal, and Bernarda, four of them die within the novels. This excludes the many other marginal female characters who hold a smaller space within the narrative who also die (be it through age, murder, or suicide). This includes, Jacinta, Elena Sarmiento, Yvonne, Ariadna, Sonia, and Susana Mataix, among other, even smaller characters like señora Aldaya, Federica Ubach, and Ramoneta. These examples demonstrate the constant pattern of removing female characters from the narrative, making the space of the woman even smaller as the series progresses.

When female characters are given more space within the saga it is typically at the end of the novel, allowing their little character development to appear as an afterthought. For example, Nuria's letter in *La sombra del viento* and Isabella's notebook in *El laberinto de los espíritus* shed light on their histories, only providing context to the past post-mortem and omitting their opportunity to further explain their truth. This both provides and removes space for their voices within the novels. The end of the book also includes more details (through Nuria's letter) on Penélope and more development of Bea and Daniel's relationship. *El juego del ángel* culminates

with Cristina's deteriorating mental health, ending the novel with Corelli presenting a child-Cristina to Martín, mirroring the photograph seen within the book. In *El prisionero del cielo*, the ending focuses on the wedding of Bernarda and Fermín, allowing the reader to also see Rociño's feelings for Fermín and question of her self-worth. And finally, in *El laberinto de los espíritus*, the end of the novel centers on Ariadna, her final meeting with her sister, and a closing to Alicia's character. The presence of women is therefore left for the margins of the tetralogy, emulating the space of the woman in Francoist society and even in democratic Spain.



## Conclusions: After the Cemetery

“The rabbit hole is very deep.”

– Carlos Ruiz Zafón

Due to his status as a bestselling author, Carlos Ruiz Zafón gave a considerable number of interviews. Whether at book fairs, television appearances, and radio shows, Ruiz Zafón presented a coherent narrative about his work, his explanations allowing the audience to better understand his perception on his “gran obra.” Admitting his goal was merely to be able to survive from his writing, he claimed: “la verdad es que nunca he esperado nada,” comparing his reality to “un regalo y un privilegio” (Ruiz Zafón qtd in “Late Motiv”). Becoming famous was never an expectation: “supongo que el de todos los escritores, es esperar lo mejor y prepararse para lo peor. Como siempre, cuando llevas muchos años trabajando en una cosa, esperas que sea bien recibido, pero a saber. Nunca me hago ilusiones, la verdad. Ya llevo tantos años haciendo esto que no me tomo nada por hecho” (Ruiz Zafón qtd in Torres). Though he anticipated the worst, Ruiz Zafón managed to fill his career with milestones, awards, and accolades. Believing this was the only possible way for him to exist, he stated: “I write because I really have no other choice. This is what I do. This is what I am... I became a writer, a teller of tales, because otherwise I would have died, or worse” (Ruiz Zafón, “Why I write”). Ruiz Zafón’s identity became inseparable from the act of writing, describing his sense of self through the lens of literature.

At the 2016 National Book Festival in Washington D.C., Ruiz Zafón explained that books act as characters within his saga: “I wanted to write something about literature, about reading, about writing, about the meaning of it all, about the rhythm of words, about language,

about the world of books, the people who write them, read them, love them, hate them, sell them...this is how the Cemetery of Forgotten Books came about” (Ruiz Zafón qtd in “Carlos Ruiz Zafón on ‘Marina’”). This obsession with literature and its creation is palpable across the corpus, centering the novels on both reality and fantasy. Once he finished the tetralogy comprised of *La sombra del viento*, *El juego del ángel*, *El prisionero del cielo*, and *El laberinto de los espíritus*, he admitted: “sí, tengo en general una sensación de cierta serenidad, de dejar atrás” (Ruiz Zafón qtd in Torres). Excited to travel and write new stories, he did not expect a cancer diagnosis only a few years after the publication of *El laberinto de los espíritus*.

Be it an interview on the release of *El juego del ángel*, *El prisionero del cielo*, or even the English publications of his young adult novels, in particular, *Marina*, Ruiz Zafón created excitement for his upcoming projects, explaining that the saga was meant to have four parts. He confessed: “tenían ganas de verlo terminado exactamente como yo lo había soñado. Tenía ganas de poderlo compartir con los lectores y de que fuera pues lo que tenía que ser” (Ruiz Zafón qtd in “Late Motiv”). What he described as a labyrinth with four entrances took just over fifteen years to complete. He commented: “I never really planned it as a sequence of stories or a saga that you would go one after the other, but as this kind of labyrinth of stories in which there are different points of entry. You can read the books in different orders, and depending on the order...your perception of the story is going to be different...like a haunted house of stories” (Ruiz Zafón qtd in “Carlos Ruiz Zafón on ‘Marina’”). Removing the need for a reading order, the structure of each individual novel still allows for an understanding of the main storylines and themes. Reflecting on his father, Ruiz Zafón stated: “como no tuvo demasiadas oportunidades de cultivarse, idealizaba el mundo de la cultura. Los libros, para él, tenían una connotación mágica; nunca me dijo que no cuando le pedí uno” (Ruiz Zafón qtd in Vila-Sanjuán, “Palabra”). This

magical feeling gifted by literature and cultivated by family is exhibited across Ruiz Zafón's narrative, writing with such style that he hoped the reader allows for the object to disappear, forgetting the book in their hands as they are transported within his literary universe ("An Evening").

A common topic of discussion in Ruiz Zafón interviews was his depiction of Barcelona. Staging Barcelona as a main character of his tetralogy, he claimed he did not want to represent the Barcelona of tourists and of sunshine, but instead, the "real" Barcelona, "a very old city with many secrets, a dramatic history, and has many layers" ("An Evening"; Ruiz Zafón qtd in "Carlos Ruiz Zafón on 'Marina'"). Taking influence from Dickens, Ruiz Zafón aimed to write a city through a dramatic function, converting the city into a character ("An Evening"). He cast Barcelona as more than just a backdrop, but a core piece to his saga, cementing both the author's past and its gothic costuming within the series. The central space of the novels, Barcelona's Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados, is meant to represent more than just a secret space of a city. Indeed, Ruiz Zafón confirmed that the cemetery: "is a metaphor not just for forgotten books but for forgotten ideas, for forgotten people, for memory" (Ruiz Zafón qtd in "Carlos Ruiz Zafón: The orchestrator"). This space acted as a vehicle for Ruiz Zafón to approach history, in particular, since Barcelona was a key territory during the Spanish Civil War and dictatorship. As stated by Ruiz Zafón: "Barcelona had been the capital of rebellion against Franco," making it a great environment for stories of the past, of politics, and of trauma (Ruiz Zafón qtd in "Interview").

Another commonly asked question, be it from audience Q&A sessions or directly from interviewers, was whether or not he had the intention of adapting the saga into film or television. Over the years, his answer was always the same: no. Even though he received many offers to

transform his tetralogy for the screen – and claimed a deep respect for the industry – he did not believe that everything had to be converted into a different medium (Ruiz Zafón qtd in “Interview”). Since he worked firsthand as a screenwriter, Ruiz Zafón remarked: “I don’t have a romantic view of the film industry as many writers do” (Ruiz Zafón qtd in “Interview Carlos Ruiz Zafón”). His dedication to literature as an art form is therefore evidenced through his confident response. He explained: “estos libros especialmente estos cuatro libros nacieron como un homenaje a la literatura, a la palabra escrita, lenguaje literario” (“Late Motiv”). Ruiz Zafón asserted that there will never be an adaptation of the saga as “readers have already seen this movie in their mind” (Ruiz Zafón qtd in “Interview”).

The question of language and translation practices regularly appeared in interviews with Carlos Ruiz Zafón. Considering himself to be “an orchestrator,” he believed in a connection between music and language: “when I’m writing something and constructing a sentence, a paragraph, I think of it as a piece of music that needs to tell a story” (Ruiz Zafón qtd in “Carlos Ruiz Zafon: The orchestrator”). Mixing his love of music and writing, Ruiz Zafón composed music for *La sombra del viento*, even premiering a 25 minute composition at the Palau de la Musica in 2014 (“Carlos Premieres”). His interest in “the language of storytelling” is documented through both his conceptualization of the novels through compositions and language use, cementing his storytelling technique as a technology of human kind (“An Evening”). He believed that “the real essence of storytelling is about the staging,” presenting language in such a way that it compels the reader to continue forward (Ruiz Zafón qtd in “Carlos Ruiz Zafon: The orchestrator”). In terms of written language, Ruiz Zafón always explained that he wrote his work in Spanish, believing that the language associated with one’s education is more approachable and malleable. Though he was raised in Barcelona and was exposed to Catalan, making him fluent,

due to Franco's dictatorship, his schooling was completed in Spanish ("An Evening").

Captivated with language, Ruiz Zafón was also involved in the translation process, working with translators to best keep the essence of his novels. Often discussed in interviews for the English market was his work with Lucia Graves who translated all of his novels into English, keeping Ruiz Zafón actively involved in the process as he was fluent in English.

Commentary on the specific pieces of the saga is pertinent to understanding Ruiz Zafón's intentionality towards his texts. With *La sombra del viento* he commented that it: "takes the point of view of the reader. Therefore, it's a much sweeter story...it's about falling in love with literature, it's how readers perceive the discovery of literature...It's taking you by the hand and it's telling you exactly how things are" (Ruiz Zafón qtd in "An Evening"). Here, he described the text as a redemption story, placing the act of reading at its core. As its opposite, *El juego del ángel*, instead of a story of redemption, is a story of damnation ("An Evening"). Calling *El juego del ángel* a "feel-bad story" he explained that: "it's not about the perspective of the reader [unlike *La sombra del viento*], it's about the perspective of the storyteller, about the writing process, and in many ways, this story is seen through the perspective of this character who is a writer who is essentially descending into madness. His sanity is decomposing through the story" (Ruiz Zafón qtd in "An Evening"). One of the games of the story is meant for the reader, forcing them to enter into the narrative and interpret events ("An Evening"). This Faustian tale was meant to demonstrate the cost of moral choices and dogmatic thought, inviting the reader to consider questions of morality and ideology ("An Evening"). Reflecting on *El prisionero del cielo*, discussion guided toward the presentation of Fermín and the implication of his character within Spanish history: "the identity of Fermín Romero de Torres, his character, is very much linked to the history of Spain in the twentieth century...and the secret that Fermín is holding that

has to do with his own identity...is hidden in the worst times in the history of Spain in the twentieth century which is right after the Spanish Civil War. This is a time of revenge” (Ruiz Zafón qtd in “Interview”). Though meant to represent the violence of the regime, Fermín’s character was used as comedic relief, Ruiz Zafón maintained that: “essentially 20% of my brain is Fermín...Fermín is an embodiment of my sense of humour” (Ruiz Zafón qtd in “An Evening”).

The saga culminates in what Ruiz Zafón refers to as the “gran final.” He remarked that, with the last installment, it is finally “when you get the payback. For the first three books you are raising stakes, you’re planting things, but then finally you reap all of the consequences...and you go into this grand Gothic finale that is this novel” (“Carlos Ruiz Zafón on ‘Marina’”). Claiming it to be his favourite of the novels, Ruiz Zafón enjoyed closing all of the loose ends: “es un poco la pieza de encaje, la que suma todos los elementos que estaban planteados en los anteriores” (Ruiz Zafón qtd in Torres). Completing his fourth entryway into his labyrinth of stories, he perceived the saga as one complete work, over two thousand pages fulfilling his tale. This, of course, follows the influence of the Gothic where there are stories within stories within stories – here all four tomes can be read individually or in any order, affecting how the reader approaches the characters, the setting, and the corpus at large. According to Ruiz Zafón in 2016, “aquí queda todo completamente cerrado y se acabó” (Ruiz Zafón qtd in “Late Motiv”).

In 2020, Carlos Ruiz Zafón sadly passed away, dying from cancer at only fifty-five. A few months after his death, a collection of all his short stories was posthumously published. This collection, *La ciudad de vapor*, consists of eleven tales, eight of which were originally published between 2002 and 2015, the remaining stories brand new for publication. This marks the final contribution of Ruiz Zafón’s work to the literary field, acting as homage to the author. Before

entering into an analysis on the stories and how they connect to “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” tetralogy, it is important to establish a publication timeline which outlines connections and influence. The first of the stories to be released was “Gaudí en Manhattan,” a tale about a young architecture student working for Antoni Gaudí, published in *La Vanguardia* in 2002. This was followed by “Leyenda de Navidad” in 2004, also in *La Vanguardia*, a story that blurs the boundaries of reality and reflects on life and death. In 2005, along with the publication of “La mujer de vapor,” a heartbreaking hallucination of an ex-prisoner, the story, “Gaudí en Manhattan,” was reprinted in an edition under Editorial Planeta titled *La mujer de vapor*. In 2008, under Planeta, the author published “Alicia, al Alba,” a story that contemplates poverty during the war, and “Hombres de gris,” which centers on the concept of political murders. In the same year, four of Ruiz Zafón’s short stories were reprinted together in a small collection titled *Barcelona Gothic* published by Libros de Vanguardia. This edition included “La mujer de vapor,” “Gaudí en Manhattan,” “Leyenda de Navidad,” and “Alicia, al Alba” along with a special prologue written by his friend, Sergio Vila-Sanjuán. In 2012, he published “El príncipe de Parnaso,” his longest short story that merges the Sempere family, Andreas Corelli, and Cervantes, under Editorial Planeta along with “Rosa de fuego” in *Magazine*. “Rosa de fuego” is written as one of David Martín’s stories, recounted to his fellow inmates. As part of the “Cultivating Thought” Author Series, in 2015, Ruiz Zafón contributed “Apocalipsis en dos minutos” a brief story about finding love at the end of the world, translated and presented in English by Alex Guardia Berdiell as “Two-Minute Apocalypse.” The project, under the direction of Johnathan Safran Foer in conjunction with the Chipotle Mexican Grill chain restaurant, curated short stories to be printed on Chipotle cups and bags. This particular campaign consisted of twelve authors and comedians, each paired with an illustrator. Ruiz Zafón’s cup was

illustrated by artist Rachel Herzig (“Chipotle Cup”). *La Vanguardia* reprinted both “Gaudí en Manhattan” and “Leyenda de Navidad” in 2020. Finally, “Blanca y el adiós,” “Sin nombre,” and “Una señorita de Barcelona,” three brand new stories, were published for the first time in *La ciudad de vapor*. Coming back to the perspective of David Martín, “Blanca y el adiós” follows a story of making and losing a friend as a child. “Sin nombre” is a tragic tale of a dying pregnant woman, and “Una señorita de Barcelona” plays with the ideas of identity and conning. Placing all eleven of these stories together acts as a tribute to Ruiz Zafón and his literary career, highlighted even by the editor’s note, closing with: “Bienvenido a un nuevo libro – desgraciadamente el último – zafoniano” (de Rosiers Castellaine in *La ciudad de vapor* 11).

The study of this collection allows for the understanding of Ruiz Zafón’s genesis as an author and how his bestselling series impacted his writing. The influence of “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” is evident within the short story collection. Acting as smaller literary projects in between installments of the tetralogy, Ruiz Zafón’s development of tone becomes clear, the influence of the Gothic highly influential across *La ciudad de vapor*. Incorporating similar settings, namely Barcelona, and repeated characters within the collection, Ruiz Zafón added to his literary universe. All of these short stories come after *La sombra del viento*, with “Gaudí en Manhattan,” “Leyenda de Navidad,” and “La mujer de vapor” all published before the 2008 publication of *El juego del ángel*. 2008 was indeed a busy year for the author who also published “Alicia, al Alba” and “Hombres de gris.” After *El prisionero del cielo*, “El príncipe de Parnaso,” “Rosa de fuego,” and “Apocalipsis en dos minutos” were released, with all eight previously published short stories out before *El laberinto de los espíritus*. His three final short stories are the only texts that can be analysed through a post “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” lens. This timeline demonstrates the intertwining web created by Ruiz Zafón, linking



stories, environments, and characters to his bestselling saga. Following thematic connections within *La ciudad de vapor*, I provide context to the stories and their relationships with “El cementerio de los libros olvidados.”

Three of the collection’s short stories connect directly to Ruiz Zafón’s quintessential character, David Martín from *El juego del ángel*. Right from the title, “Blanca y el adiós (De las memorias nunca acontecidas de un tal David Martín),” the reader is transported into the world of “El cementerio de los libros olvidados” through the perspective of an eight-year-old Martín. Walking through La Ribera neighbourhood, Martín meets a wealthy girl named Blanca outside of a bookshop. Though their social classes were noted as apparent, the children bond over their love of stories. Martín sees her again with her nanny at the Basilica of Santa María del Mar and they make a plan to meet every other day, Martín telling her his made-up stories at each visit, a fact she appreciates as her ailing father, a writer, stopped making up tales for her, instead only writing for a man who scares Blanca. This character is reminiscent of Andreas Corelli, the devil/editor who taunts Martín throughout *El juego del ángel*, and the allusion to the ailing father is evocative of the storyline in *Marina* where it is said that Marina’s father is ill, and to Martín himself, who matches the description of Blanca’s father as an adult: a sick writer who is subjected to work for a scary figure. Blanca stops attending their visits, Martín seeing her one final time as she ran away to find him. Her nanny catches her and takes her away. Chasing after her, Martín stumbles into a ditch and is instantly covered in spiders – and spider bites. The story ends with Martín in a venom-induced dream sequence where a scary angel takes Blanca away forever. Connecting the tale further to “El cementerio de los libros olvidados,” in the first story that Martín tells Blanca, it ends with: “cuando la heroína se hundía en las aguas heladas de un lago negro con una rosa maldita en las manos...” (Ruiz Zafón, *La ciudad* 23). This concept, a

woman drowning in a lake, is copied from *El juego del ángel* with Cristina's death. Though she is not holding a rose, she is bloody from her escape, linking the colour red to the scene. This short story therefore plays with the reader as it forces a line of questioning on the true events of Cristina's death. Did she commit suicide in this manner? Was she murdered by Martín? Was the whole scene a figment of his imagination and a recollection of his childhood storytelling? Ruiz Zafón anticipates the effects of these questions on loyal readers, provoking them.

The fourth story of the collection, "Rosa de fuego," presents as a lost fragment of Martín's *El prisionero del cielo*, already a clear reference to Ruiz Zafón's work and the novel of the same name by himself, Julián Sempere and Julián Carax. It is St. George's day at Montjuïc prison and Martín recounts a tale set in 1454, reminiscent of medieval plague stories where members of the Jewish community of Barcelona are accused of poisoning the water and killed by the Christian population who now believe they will be punished for the murders. A shipwreck comes to shore with only one survivor, Edmond de Luna, a labyrinth maker who is barely alive. Raimundo Sempere, a distant relative of the Sempere family who runs a printing workshop, is given Edmond's notebook by the Grand inquisitor in the hopes that Raimundo can translate the text. After reading the notebook, the Grand inquisitor and Raimundo make two distinct choices: the inquisitor searches for Edmond's vile of dragon's blood, the secret to immortality, given to him by Emperor Constantine of Constantinople. He immediately transforms into a dragon, the curse coming true, Edmond sacrificing himself to save everyone. Raimundo, however, is not interested in the secret to immortality, instead, he searches for Edmond's plans meant for the emperor to build a labyrinthian library to protect books, knowing he will one day find someone able to follow through with the plans. This short story, of course, provides a genesis tale to el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados, the labyrinthian library created in Barcelona. This origin

story also links the Sempere family back to the space, centering them as a family who truly does respect literature. Moreover, the story is filled with Christian tones and religion, unsurprising for a tale created by Martín who often discusses these topics of dogmatic thought.

“El príncipe de Parnaso,” the longest story in the collection, creates another backstory to the Sempere family, mixing reality with the magical. Here, the reader encounters Antoni de Sempere in 1616, known as the maker of books as he and *El juego del ángel*’s Andreas Corelli see the funeral procession of Miguel de Cervantes. This points to Ruiz Zafón’s use of intertextual references by implementing the Sempres, Corelli, and Cervantes within his work. Classic to Ruiz Zafón’s style, this short story presents as stories within the story set up into five periods: 1569, *Un poeta en los infiernos*, 1569, 1610, and finally, back to the present in 1616. It begins with a reflection on when Antoni first met Cervantes and his Italian lover, Francesca di Parma, through their Barcelona guide, Sancho Fermín de la Torre. Cervantes’ backstory on meeting Francesca and writing the first draft of his play, *Un poeta en los infiernos* is depicted in the next section where the reader sees Cervantes and Corelli meet for the first time, Corelli offering a deal: write him something better, a masterpiece, and in exchange for it being exalted, Cervantes will gain a hole in his heart and lose what he loves most. Cervantes agrees, fleeing with a poisoned Francesca to Barcelona, writing the second draft of his play by night. This part is presented as an excerpt from Ignatius B. Samson’s *Las crónicas secretas de la ciudad de los malditos*, published by Barrido y Escobillas in 1924. The fact that it is listed as a part of Ignatius aka David Martín’s writing is interesting based on the timeline and the apparition of Andreas Corelli within the narrative, fomenting Corelli as a figure of Martín’s imagination. Back to 1569, Cervantes buries Francesca in a plot of land that, during the inquisition, the Sempere family used to bury books in coffins to protect them. This idea is reminiscent, of course, of el Cementerio de

los Libros Olvidados where books are buried in the underworld library for their protection.

Cervantes leaves Barcelona, burning his manuscript where Sansón Carrasco and Alonso Quijano will one day fight, referencing *Don Quijote*. In 1610, he returns to Barcelona, finally seen as a success due to the now published *Don Quijote*. Like David Martín entering and enjoying the Sempere bookstore, Cervantes visits the Sempere printing workshop, feeling comfort in the space. When Sempere tells Cervantes that someone, Corelli, tried to purchase the only extant copy of *Un poeta en los infiernos*, Cervantes knows he must speak with Corelli, this time tasked with writing part two of *Don Quijote*. Finally, back to 1616, Corelli opens up Cervantes' tomb, laying to rest with the author the third part of *Don Quijote*. Sempere knows in that moment that the burial site will one day become el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados and welcomes Cervantes to the space. This creates the allusion that Cervantes and his book are of the first protected in the sacred space of books, demonstrating Ruiz Zafón's respect for the author. Following the story, there is a brief description of the narrative tools used within the tale in italics and on the backside of the page, he includes a map of Barcelona from 1600. This story plays with the idea of memory and of intertextuality seen across "El cementerio de los libros olvidados." Indeed, Ruiz Zafón's direct insertion of Cervantes within his short story furthers these connections, along with the new character, Sancho Fermín de la Torre, a combination of *Don Quijote*'s Sancho Panza and Ruiz Zafón's Fermín Romero de Torres. Similarities to *El juego del ángel* are also present where the reader could consider Cervantes as David Martín, Francesca as Cristina Vidal. There is also reference to Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda who wrote a sequel to *Don Quijote*, and the famous comparison to arms and letters.

A second prominent theme within the collection is Ruiz Zafón's use of the magical or his playing with reality. In his first published short story, "Gaudí en Manhattan," Ruiz Zafón merges

magic and history as the narrator, Miranda, remembers meeting Gaudí. Miranda had arrived in Barcelona, the central location within Ruiz Zafón's narrative, on a scholarship to architecture school, visibly less well-off than his classmates. In 1908, telling him he looked like a beggar, the head of the department asked if he had heard of Gaudí. Miranda admits his obsession with the architect, and the department head tells him Gaudí is in search for an assistant: "Gaudí necesita alguien que hable inglés, no me pregunte para qué. Lo que necesita es un intérprete de castellano, porque el muy cabestro se niega a hablar otra cosa que no sea catalán, especialmente cuando le presentan a ministros, infantas y príncipitos...*Du llu ispic inglich*, Miranda?" a perfect set up for Miranda to meet his hero (Ruiz Zafón, *La ciudad* 191). This commentary on language reflects the importance of linguistic identity of the time and the significance of Catalan to the region, something that will soon be repressed under the dictatorship. It also demonstrates Ruiz Zafón's interest in language. Miranda is sent to the Sagrada Familia that afternoon where Gaudí explains he requires an interpreter to go with him to New York where he has been offered to build a skyscraper, a building for people who believe in money instead of God. At the meeting, Miranda sees the magical client: "un cronista victoriano la habría descrito como un ángel, pero yo no vi nada angélica en su presencia. Sus movimientos eran felinos; su sonrisa, reptil," descriptions reminiscent of Alicia Gris (Ruiz Zafón, *La ciudad* 196). On the ship back, Gaudí throws his sketches into the water, the moral toll of building the skyscraper not worth the money he would earn for the Sagrada Familia. This reminds the reader of the moral dilemmas presented later in *El juego del ángel* or even "El príncipe de Parnaso." When Miranda later visits the Sagrada Familia, he recognizes the face of the woman in white surrounded by snakes in sculpture. When Gaudí dies and Miranda returns to Barcelona for the funeral, he decides to take on Gaudí's work. Similar to Ruiz Zafón playing with Cervantes, his use of Gaudí within his story creates a

fictional world surrounded by Barcelona history. La Sagrada Familia as well, as a neo-Gothic site within Barcelona, is key to the architecture of Ruiz Zafón's gothic Barcelona, in particular, since the structure is nearly complete, over a hundred years later.

In "Leyenda de Navidad," the richest man in town, Eveli Escrutx, lives in a Gothic tower. Escrutx follows a Christmas Eve tradition where he invites a guest for dinner to play chess, promising his fortune and properties if he lost, and if he wins, gaining the ownership of the opponent's immortal soul. Escrutx never lost, capturing the souls of his opponents into little vials. When his blind servant said to be a witch, Candela, returns with his next opponent, a woman who reminds Escrutx of his late wife, rife with jealousy, Candela sets the tower on fire. After it burned down, the legend reflects that the tower's presence was still felt but that Escrutx was erased from the collective memory of Barcelona. This tale connects thematically to "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" through the depictions of Barcelona as a gothic space. Moreover, the idea of being remembered is fomented within this short story, a theme spread across his bestselling saga. This story, in fact, is also reminiscent of Ruiz Zafón's previous young adult novels which are presented as more magical, allowing for the story to bridge his earlier work with the tetralogy. The question of mortality is also presented within "Apocalipsis en dos minutos," where a man is approached by a woman claiming to be a fallen angel, announcing the end of the world. She offers him three wishes, the third of which he requests to know the feeling of being in love. He proceeds to fall in love with her immediately, the man realizing for the first time in his life, he is truly happy. In terms of Zafonist connections, the idea of the Gothic is present throughout the story, in both comparing the woman to "una de las esposas de Drácula" and noting Gothic architecture (Ruiz Zafón, *La ciudad* 203; 204). Furthermore, Ruiz Zafón's commentary on technology is also present in this short story. Here, instead of critiquing cinema

and television, he critiques cell phones: “¿Te has dado cuenta de que cuanto más inteligentes son los móviles, más tonta se vuelve la gente?” (Ruiz Zafón, *La ciudad* 203).

Pregnancy, poverty, and the impact of war also unite Ruiz Zafón’s short stories. “Sin nombre,” begins on a cold and snowy night in 1905 when an unnamed woman walks alone through Barcelona, in labour and exhausted, surrounded by Gothic architecture typical of Ruiz Zafón. Frantic for help, the woman is rejected and left in the snow until, hours later, she is brought inside to a kitchen and cared for quickly, stating that her son will be named David. A doctor arrives and cuts the child out of her body, handing the baby to the rich woman who rejected the woman’s pleas for help, and leaving the unnamed woman for dead before discarding her body. The narration switches voices at the end from omniscient to the voice of the child thinking of his mother’s last minutes. Though his name reminds the reader of David Martín, the year does not align with character’s birth based on age descriptors in *El juego del ángel*, with Martín born in 1900, and, though his mother is absent, she was still alive, confirming that this woman was not his mother. Nevertheless, this story does connect to the world of Ruiz Zafón’s writing with the death of the mother, pregnancy, and a child experiencing absence. In “Una señorita de Barcelona,” Eduardo Sentís, is tasked with photographing the corpse five-year-old Margarita Pons in 1901. Eduardo arrives with his daughter, Laia, and upon seeing her, Margarita’s mother, Eulalia, believes her to be the angel of her late daughter. The Pons make an offer: for a sum of money, Eduardo is to bring Laia to their house to spend the day, pretending to be the little angel. Laia goes for seven days until, on the final day, Eulalia wakes up without seeing her angel and her frantic search culminates in her drowning herself in the pond. The game of pretending to replace lost souls continues for years with Laia and her father moving from city to city to make their fortune – a fortune that Eduardo loses constantly by gambling and drinking,

forcing them to continue the game. When Laia's father one day realizes that she is pregnant, he takes her to a witch to perform an illegal abortion, witnesses her heart stop, and leaves town immediately – before Laia's heart could restart and he could see that she was not actually dead. Laia, feeling both abandoned and freed, connects to general themes of Ruiz Zafón's saga such as questioning identity, traumatic pregnancy (like in "Sin nombre"), and suicide.

"Alicia, al alba" follows a young narrator, an errand boy in a pawn shop barely thirteen in 1938, remembering meeting a girl named Alicia. The narrator is tasked with following the girl home after she rejects an unfair offer by his boss for an expensive necklace. The girl, about seventeen, lets him into the home she was squatting in and makes them a fire with newspapers, reading aloud as they cuddle by the fire, falling asleep. In the morning, the narrator runs away, stealing the expensive necklace. Feeling guilty, he returns to the house, bringing back the piece he stole. Similar to "Sin nombre" where the reader questions if the story is reflective of David Martín, "Alicia, al alba," to a current zafonista reader, would ponder if this Alicia is the same as *El laberinto de los espíritus*' Alicia Gris. However, based on the timeline, this is not possible, as Alicia was only seven in the 1938 bombings. Nevertheless, the use of the political climate, the Barcelona areal bombings, and notes of the National front advancing towards Barcelona are reflective in his work. This story is likely an influence for Alicia Gris and the storyline within *El laberinto de los espíritus* where the topic of orphans being a product of the war is evident. In "Hombres de gris," the never-named narrator reflects on his life as a gunman. It's 1942 and the narrator is given an envelope of money and the details of the client he must kill in Barcelona from a messenger in the Retiro park in Madrid. On the train, he prepares his revolver and reviews the file as snapshots of Barcelona are revealed as he enters the city, including Montjuïc, Santa María del Mar, and ruins from the air raids, all regularly cited in "El cementerio de los



libros olvidados” saga. The narrator refers to himself as a grey man, merging with the other grey men on the streets as he arrives at the Hotel Oriente. Getting his usual room and surprised to not find his mentor Sanabria there, the narrator goes to sleep and is awoken by the sex worker, Candela. After, the narrator reflects on when he first met Sanabria in 1917, a man who had learned to kill in the Moroccan war and when he returned, was a gunman for the FAI before moving around, taking the best deals, similar to *La sombra del viento*’s Francisco Javier Fumero. Here, unlike Fumero, the reader is meant to sympathize with the narrator and Sanabria, understanding their position instead of feeling fear. The narrator, back in the present, goes to a puppet show, expecting to find Sanabria there, the show acting as a metaphor for the grey men, murderers strung around like puppets, and connects to the same imagery used in *El laberinto de los espíritus*. It is after the show begins that Sanabria approaches the narrator, affirming to the reader that it is he who the narrator must kill, the task completed that night. The narrator returns to his hotel room only to find Candela dead, the messenger there to kill him as well. Instead, the narrator, following Sanabria’s moves, kills the messenger and goes back to Madrid: “la larga noche de la historia no había hecho más que comenzar” (Ruiz Zafón, *La ciudad* 179).

Finally, “La mujer de vapor” follows again, an un-named narrator who by fluke is offered a place to stay, a miracle since as an ex-prisoner, he had no financial or personal references. Laura, the girl who worked in the building, offered him the space and at night, would come to his room for sex. His neighbours all made him feel welcomed and appreciated for the first time in his life. One day, a demolition crew arrives at the building and tells the man he cannot squat there anymore. He searches for Laura and his neighbours but cannot find anyone. A crew member alerts him that the property had been closed since 1938 when, due to the bombings, it was left beyond repair and needed to be demolished. The narrator, upset, pushes the crew

member and the judge sends him back to jail. There, in the library, he encounters an article about the building from ten years prior, showing a picture where Laura is recognizable amongst the mutilated dead bodies. Over the next two years as he stays in prison, Laura visits him every night. The heartbreaking hallucinations of the narrator remind the reader of David Martín and Ruiz Zafón's technique of playing with reality. The physical damage caused by the war is also present through the destroyed building.

As evidenced throughout the abovementioned examples, Ruiz Zafón's short story collection is intrinsically linked to "El cementerio de los libros olvidados" saga. Even from its beginning, the collection starts with an epigraph from *La sombra del viento*: "al poco, figuras de vapor, padre e hijo se confunden entre el gentío de las Ramblas, sus pasos perdidos para siempre en la sombra del viento" (ix). The collection presents key themes and characters seen in the tetralogy including members of the Sempere family, David Martín, and Andreas Corelli. The foundational space, el Cementerio de los Libros Olvidados is also included within the stories, as well as Barcelona as a vital setting. Indeed, the idea of the Gothic, or even more, a gothic Barcelona, is connected to his tales. In particular, the 2008 reprint of "La mujer de vapor," "Gaudí en Manhattan," "Leyenda de Navidad," and "Alicia, al Alba" all together in a collection titled *Barcelona Gothic* situates the author within the genre. This tactic forces both the Gothic and Barcelona to become part of his branding and narrative identity, cuing up his future texts to also include this expectation. Other themes including sickness and death, angels and heaven, blindness, prostitution, and wealth disparity showing a juxtaposition of rich versus poor, are all evidenced across the saga, with characters questioning identity, religion, imprisonment, war, magic, and socioeconomic situations. Ruiz Zafón also played with weather and atmosphere within the stories, including scenes of snow, shadows, and rain, fomenting a dark and cold mood.

The short stories therefore created a space for Ruiz Zafón to work with the different themes inserted within his tetralogy over the years, honing in on his craft, and reinforcing his literary identity.

Ruiz Zafón's literary identity was intrinsically connected to Barcelona. In order to properly consider what it means to be a Catalan author today, one must investigate the political climate of twentieth and twenty-first-century Catalonia. For example, considering the language of writers in Catalonia, those who write in Catalan are seen as more nationalistic-centered. As stated by Stewart King, "the works of Castilian-language Catalan writers should be analysed for the way in which they engage with, complement or disrupt Castilian-language literature from the rest of Spain" and not be disregarded as unrepresentative of the region ("From Literature" 241). Of particular note is the effect of the Spanish Civil War and independence movement on Catalonia identity and politics. Though the history of Catalan national identity spans hundreds of years, for example, the revival of Catalan language during the *Renaixença* in the nineteenth century, contemporary Catalan identity politics is heavily linked to Franco's treatment of their culture during his regime. The treatment of Catalan culture and language, or really, their repression, under Francoism surmounted in a cultural resurgence in the post-Franco era. This regional pride, putting Catalan back into schools and daily life was seen as both a recuperation of spirit and a thread into nationalist thought. Political tensions and debates surrounding Catalan rights in Spain, in particular, starting from the 1978 constitution implemented after Franco's death, allowed for the growth of Catalan nationalism which, in turn, impacted the independence movement of the twenty-first century.

In an article titled "10 años del proceso independentista catalán: ¿qué ha pasado en esta década?" (2022), Juanita Samper Ospina comments on the history of the separatist movement

between 2012-2022. In 2012: “las burbujas del independentismo empezaban a subir” when a fiscal pact was proposed to and rejected by Spain’s Prime Minister of the time, Mariano Rajoy, and the region entered into an economic crisis needing saving (Samper Ospina). That year, organized marches with colourful imagery started to appear, for example, at the celebrations for la Díada. Indeed, the first decades of the twenty-first-century were a culminating moment for the Catalan independence movement, the goal of self-determination becoming more popularized (and therefore oppressed within the country). By 2014, different political parties, were gearing up their platforms and joining forces, pushing towards an independent Catalonia, dividing society (Samper Ospina). The 2017 referendum was a culminating point of the movement where, “on October 1, 2017, of those eligible to vote from among the 7.5 million-strong Catalan nation, two million (42%) showed up for the referendum on independence from Spain. Of those who cast their vote, 90% favored peaceful separation” (Ciprut 1). According to Satre et al.: “the announcement of the unilateral Declaration of Independence, supported by the illegal referendum vote, led to a series of legal repercussions that are still being protested by civil society groups in Catalonia” (1). Political instability abounded as beliefs were debated across the region, in particular, after the arrests and exiles of those leaders who were promising an independent Catalonia. Still even in recent years, protests demand the release of the many politicians arrested (Satre et al. 1).

While the matter of independence is still polemic in Catalonia politics and identity, the global pandemic pushed it to the backburner. The health catastrophe and fall of tourism, a key economic stronghold in cities like Barcelona, deeply marked the region. Though there has now been an improvement in public health, tourism, and economic growth, the independence movement in Catalonia has not recovered. Indeed, “el rechazo a la independencia sigue

aumentado y la opción unilateral de romper amarras con España está en los niveles más bajo desde 2012” (Toni Bolaño qtd in Samper Ospina). This is evidenced, for example, by the decline in participants in the Díada demonstrations. Of course, the question of Catalonia still persists in the news, as *El País* has new headlines as recent as March 2024 discussing the region’s politics. For example, “Resurrección de Puigdemont” by Víctor Lapuente from March 26<sup>th</sup>, referencing Puigdemont’s return from his exile to Catalonia. Other articles such as José María Brunet’s “El futuro de Cataluña queda en manos del Constitucional” published March 27<sup>th</sup> and “El independentismo ‘folclórico’ que apoya a Pedro Sánchez” by Estefanía Molina from March 28<sup>th</sup> also demonstrate the constant debate of the region within the news.

The “procés català,” as a main cultural movement of the twenty-first-century, impacted literature and authors. Many authors protested against the independence movement with figures such as Javier Cercas commenting: “el independentismo catalán no es un movimiento progresista, es profundamente reaccionario y antidemocrático” (Cercas qtd in Zunini). Indeed, Cercas’ novel *Independencia* uses the Catalan independence movement as a backdrop to his novel (like with the Spanish Civil War in *Soldados de Salamina*) (Zunini). This tool, like within Ruiz Zafón’s work, creates a more believable setting for his fiction by implementing history. Cercas admitted that politics have affected his life over the years: “he perdido amigos por mi literatura y cuestiones políticas” and asserted: “lo que ocurrió en 2017 no tiene ninguna justificación, puso al país al borde de un enfrentamiento civil y de la ruina económica” (Cercas qtd in “La Matemática”). Juan Marsé agreed: “yo no soy nacionalista y todas las banderas me repugnan. Con mi huerto me basta” (Marsé qtd in Ellakuria). The authors choosing to be outspoken against the trendy politics of the time is important as they are perceived as cultural figures, their opinions recognized by the public. Moreover, the topic of independence in

the literary field has become almost a genre of its own. For example, *Otra Cataluña* (2018) by Ruiz Zafón's friend, Sergio Vila-Sanjuán, acts as a reference guide on Catalan history, including discussion on the beginning of the movement. Eduardo Mendoza's *Qué está pasando en Cataluña* (2017) attempts to explain how the independence movement gained power in the twenty-first century. These texts, among others, demonstrate the proliferation of the independence movement into literary works, allowing space for writers, journalists, and philosophers to explain the political crisis occurring in Spain in real time. Ruiz Zafón's identification as more of a Spanish author, writing in Spanish, instead of a Catalan author who writes in Catalan, falls into the politics of the independence movement, classifying him as an outsider who is rhetorically for the homogenization of the country.

Similar to the case of the independence movement, the impact of the Spanish Civil War is evident in Catalan literature, exemplified by the work of Carlos Ruiz Zafón. Post-Ruiz Zafón literature on the Spanish Civil War has also extended past Spanish writers, following the influence of authors such as British writer George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* (1938). This includes, for example, American author Ruta Sepetys' *The Fountains of Silence* (2019), a novel that explores the traumas of the Franco dictatorship. Chilean author Isabel Allende's 2019 novel *Largo pétalo de mar* also looks at the Spanish Civil War period. This anti-Francoist novel follows Victor Dalmau as he flees Spain as a refugee to Chile, following the themes of war, loss, and repression. This story, like Ruiz Zafón's, begins with the war in Barcelona before shifting to the refugee experience. Instead of France, Allende's characters flee to Chile. This recalls Almudena Grandes' *El corazón helado* (2007) where exile in France is also prominent across the pages. British writer Rosanna Ley also discusses Civil War and post-war Spain in *Bay of Secrets* (2013) where, like Ruiz Zafón's *El laberinto de los espíritus*, the question of adoption practices

is explored. This story follows Sister Julia as she considers questions of religion, trauma, and the growing orphan situation. This text, like María Dueñas' *El tiempo entre costuras* (2009), also focuses on a female main character and her experience in the war/dictatorship era. These titles constitute examples of the prevalence of the Spanish Civil War and its outcome within world literature. Indeed, Ruiz Zafón astutely commented that: “el siglo veinte...en España y en todo Europa es realmente un lugar enormemente rico para un escritor” (“Late Motiv”). This belief clarifies even further the popularity of this time period within literature.

Throughout this dissertation, three key themes of Ruiz Zafón's work were investigated: literature, memory, and gender. Within his tetralogy, the role of the author, spaces of literature, character development through a literary experience, and the process of writing are all established concepts. His respect for literature is seen through intertextual references and his intention of reworking genres and narrative techniques of both the nineteenth-century novel and multimedia technology (including film, television, and music). Perhaps most evident is the grueling process of creating a novel seen within his work from the lens of publishing, bookselling, and writing. Indeed, as Ruiz Zafón remarked: “you have to work and work and work. A writer should write thousands of pages no one's going to read before you earn the right to write one page that deserves somebody's time” (Ruiz Zafón qtd in “An Evening”). It is with his saga that Ruiz Zafón hoped to earn reader's time, something that, based on sales alone seems like he achieved. The topic of memory, developed through the second chapter of this dissertation is also evident as one of Ruiz Zafón's preoccupations within literature. He reflected on his concern about: “the way we're losing our identity by forgetting the past. Because I think we essentially as human beings, we are what we remember. The less we remember, the less we are” (Ruiz Zafón qtd in “Interview”). In his attempt to recover the past through the recuperation of

memory from the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship of Francisco Franco, Ruiz Zafón manifested the past through a Gothicised version of his hometown. Fomenting memory as a key theme, Ruiz Zafón included settings of repression and characters who represented the political spectrum and opposition, fitting seamlessly within the literary boom of the early 2000s that focused on these themes. And finally, the reflections on the presentation of female characters in the final chapter of this dissertation highlights the ways in which Ruiz Zafón wrote women, reflecting the social cues of the time period. Through the development of female characters, both young and old, he admitted: “I find women more interesting than men. They’re more complex creatures...I don’t have the pretension to try to understand what is going on in a woman’s brain, but the creatures interest me” (Ruiz Zafón qtd in “An Evening”). The study here provided on Ruiz Zafón’s female characters is the first of its kind, cementing it as a key contribution to the field of zafonista studies. These three themes function as entrance points for Ruiz Zafón’s labyrinth, which offers so much to discover, be it religious ideology, questioning of mental health, socioeconomic positions, and the life of an orphan among other points of departure. I plan to continue tumbling down Ruiz Zafón’s rabbit hole, always remembering my first stroll through “El cementerio de los libros olvidados.”



## WORKS CITED

- Agud, Cristina. "El movimiento NoMO, ¿qué es?" *Salud. Blogs MAPFRE*, 2021,  
<https://www.salud.mapfre.es/cuerpo-y-mente/psicologia/el-movimiento-nomo-que-es/>.
- Aldana Reyes, Xavier. "A Gothic Barcelona?: Carlos Ruiz Zafón's *The Cemetery of Forgotten Books* Series and Franco's Legacy." *The New Urban Gothic. Global Gothic in the Age of the Anthropocene*, edited by Holly-Gale Millette and Ruth Heholt. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, pp. 237-250.
- . "Gothic Affect: An Alternative Approach to Critical Models of the Contemporary Gothic." *New Directions in 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Gothic*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., edited by Lorna Piatti-Farnell and Donna Lee Brien, Routledge, 2015, pp. 11-23.
- . *Spanish Gothic*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.
- Allende, Isabel. *Largo pétalo de mar*. Plaza & Janés, 2019.
- "An Evening with Carlos Ruiz Zafón." *Vimeo*, uploaded by Zócalo Public Square, 6 May 2019, [vimeo.com/334374585](https://vimeo.com/334374585).
- Anónimo. *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes y de sus fortunas y adversidades*. *Cervantesvirtual.com*, [www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/la-vida-de-lazarillo-de-tormes-y-de-sus-fortunas-y-adversidades--0/html/fedb2f54-82b1-11df-acc7-002185ce6064\\_2.html#I\\_0\\_](http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/la-vida-de-lazarillo-de-tormes-y-de-sus-fortunas-y-adversidades--0/html/fedb2f54-82b1-11df-acc7-002185ce6064_2.html#I_0_).
- Appadurai, Arjun, ed. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge UP, 1986.
- Barthes, Roland. *Image Music Text*. Fontana, 1977.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. 1952. Translated by H. M. Parshley, Vintage Books, 1974.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." *Illuminations*.

Edited by Hannah Arendt, Translated by Harry Zohn, Schocken Books, 1969, pp. 1-26,  
web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/benjamin.pdf.

Bennet, Andrew and Nicholas Royle. *Introduction to Literature, Criticism, and Theory*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.  
Pearson, 2004.

Bisson, Jonathan I., et al. "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder." *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, vol. 351,  
2015, pp. 1-7. [www.jstor.org/stable/26523549](http://www.jstor.org/stable/26523549).

Borges, Jorge Luis. "La Biblioteca De Babel." *Obras Completas*. Emecé, 1974, pp. 465–71.

Brenneis, Sara J. "Dictatorship Noir: Post-war Spanish History in Carlos Ruiz Zafon's *La sombra del viento*." *Romance Studies*, vol. 26 no. 1, 2008, pp. 61-73, *Francis & Taylor Online*  
doi: 10.1179/174581508X254280.

Brunet, José María. "El future de Cataluña queda en manos del Constitucional." *El País*, 2024,  
[elpais.com/espana/2024-03-27/el-futuro-de-cataluna-queda-en-manos-del-constitucional.html](https://elpais.com/espana/2024-03-27/el-futuro-de-cataluna-queda-en-manos-del-constitucional.html).

Buero Vallerjo, Antonio. *En la ardiente oscuridad*. Stockcero, 2004.  
[https://www.stockcero.com/pdfs/987-1136-16-1\\_SAMP.pdf](https://www.stockcero.com/pdfs/987-1136-16-1_SAMP.pdf).

Byron, Glennis. "Gothic, Grabbit and Run: Carlos Ruiz Zafón and the Gothic Marketplace." *The Gothic in Contemporary Literature and Popular Culture*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Edited by Justin D. Edwards and Agnieszka Soltysik Monnet, Routledge, 2012, pp. 71-83.

Byron, Glennis and Gordon Byron. "Barcelona Gothic: Carlos Ruiz Zafón's *La sombra del viento* and the Omnipresent Past." *Journal of Romance Studies*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2012, pp. 72–84. doi:10.3167/jrs.2012.120106.

Cardús i Ros, Salvador. "Politics and the Invention of Memory. For a Sociology of the Transition to Democracy in Spain." *Disremembering the Dictatorship: The Politics of Memory in the Spanish Transition to Democracy*, edited by Joan Ramon Resina, Rodopi, 2000. 17-28.

"Carlos premieres music at a Barcelona Concert." *carlosruizzafon.co.uk*, <https://www.carlosruizzafon.co.uk/carlos-ruiz-zafon-news/2014/04/10/carlos-premieres-music-at-a-barcelona-concert/>.

"Carlos Ruiz Zafon on 'Marina' at the 2016 National Book Festival." *Youtube*, uploaded by PBS Books, 25 September 2016, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1DYZKBDv-U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1DYZKBDv-U).

"Carlos Ruiz Zafon: The orchestrator of literature." *Youtube*, uploaded by CGTN America, 23 November 2016, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4syx6-yNUE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4syx6-yNUE).

"Carlos Ruiz Zafón: 2016 National Book Festival." *Youtube*, uploaded by Library of Congress, 21 November 2016, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=dKfTU7mGYcM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dKfTU7mGYcM).

Carnero, Guillermo. "Poetry in Franco Spain." *The Cambridge History of Spanish Literature*, edited by David T. Gies, Cambridge UP, 2009, pp. 643-658.

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. The Millennium Fulcrum Edition 3.0, *Project Gutenberg*, [www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/11/pg11-images.html](http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/11/pg11-images.html).

Casey, Nicholas. "Taken Under Fascism, Spain's 'Stolen Babies' Are Learning the Truth." *The New York Times Magazine*, 2022, [www.nytimes.com/2022/09/27/magazine/spain-stolen-babies.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/27/magazine/spain-stolen-babies.html).

Cazorla-Sánchez, Antonio. "'Beyond 'They Shall Not Pass'. How the Experience of Violence Reshaped Political Values in Franco's Spain." *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2005, pp. 503–520, [www.jstor.org/stable/30036340](http://www.jstor.org/stable/30036340).

Cercas, Javier. *Soldados de Salamina*. Penguin Random House, 2016.

Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de. *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha*.

*Cervantesvirtual.com*, [www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/el-ingenioso-hidalgo-don-quijote-de-la-mancha-6/html/05f86699-4b53-4d9b-8ab8-b40ab63fb0b3\\_2.html#I\\_0\\_](http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/el-ingenioso-hidalgo-don-quijote-de-la-mancha-6/html/05f86699-4b53-4d9b-8ab8-b40ab63fb0b3_2.html#I_0_).

Chacón, Dulce. *La voz dormida*. Debolsillo, 2016.

“Chipotle cup/The Cultivating thought author: Two Minute Apocalypse.” *Goodreads.com*, 2015, [www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/28447211](http://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/28447211).

Ciprut, Jose V. “The Kurdish and Catalan Referenda.” *Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies*, 2017, [www.jstor.org/stable/resrep04706](http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep04706).

Cixous, Hélène. “The Laugh of the Medusa.” Translated by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1976, pp. 875-893, [www.jstor.org/stable/3173239](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173239).

Cuñado, Isabel. “Despertar tras la amnesia: guerra civil y postmemoria en la novela española del siglo XXI.” *Dissidences: Hispanic Journal of Theory and Criticism*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2012, pp. 1-11. [digitalcommons.bowdoin.edu/dissidences/vol2/iss3/8](http://digitalcommons.bowdoin.edu/dissidences/vol2/iss3/8).

Davidson, Robert. “Barcelona: The Siege City.” *The Barcelona Reader: Cultural Readings of a City*, edited by Enric Bou and Jaume Subirana. Liverpool UP, 2017. pp. 21-42.

Davis, Lennard J. “Introduction: Disability, Normality, and Power.” *The Disability Studies Reader*. Fifth ed., Routledge, 2017.

Doria, Sergi. *Guía de la Barcelona de Carlos Ruiz Zafón*, Planeta, 2008.

Dueñas, María. *El tiempo entre costuras*. 2009. Atria español, 2011.

Ellakuria, Iñaki. “Juan Marsé: el escritor señalado por nacionalismo catalán.” *Elmundo.es*, 2020, [www.elmundo.es/cultura/literatura/2020/07/19/5f144c22fc6c83205d8b463e.html/](http://www.elmundo.es/cultura/literatura/2020/07/19/5f144c22fc6c83205d8b463e.html/).

- Ellis, Robert Richmond. "Reading the Spanish past: library fantasies in Carlos Ruiz Zafón's *La sombra del viento*." *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, vol. 83, no. 6, 2006, pp. 839–54.
- Erll, Astrid. *Memory in Culture*. Translated by Sarah B. Young, Palgrave MacMillan, 2011.
- Faber, Sebastiaan. *Memory Battles of the Spanish Civil War: History, Fiction, Photography*. Vanderbilt UP, 2018. *Project MUSE*, [muse.jhu.edu/book/57507](https://muse.jhu.edu/book/57507).
- Falgàs, Jordi. "Picasso among His Fellows at 4 Gats: Beyond Modernisme?" *The Barcelona Reader: Cultural Readings of a City*, edited by Enric Bou and Jaume Subirana, Liverpool UP, 2017, pp. 243-64.
- Feder Kittay, Eva. "The Ethics of Care, Dependence, and Disability" *Ratio Juris*, vol. 24 no. 1, 2011, pp. 49-58, [evafederkittay.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/The-ethics-of-care.pdf](https://www.evafederkittay.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/The-ethics-of-care.pdf).
- Finkelstein, David and Alistair McCleery. *An introduction to Book History*. Routledge, 2013.
- Foucault, Michel. "What is an Author?" *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, edited by James D. Faubion, translated by Robert Hurley et al., vol. 2, The New Press, 1998, pp. 205-222.
- García-Pérez, Selene et al. "Relationship between Sexual Violence and the Health of Spanish Women-A National Population-Based Study." *International journal of environmental research and public health* vol. 20, no. 4, 3365, 2023, doi:10.3390/ijerph20043365.
- Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. "Feminist Disability Studies." *Signs*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2005, pp. 1557-87, [doi.org/10.1086/423352](https://doi.org/10.1086/423352).
- Gironella, José María. *Los cipreses crecen en Dios*. 1953. Planeta, 2021.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. *Goethe's Theory of Colours*. Translated by Charles Lock Eastlake, Routledge, 2018.
- Goodley, Dan. "Dis/Entangling Critical Disability Studies." *Culture – Theory – Disability: Encounters between Disability Studies and Cultural Studies*, edited by Anne Waldschmidt,

- Hanjo Berressem, Moritz Ingwersen, Transcript Verlag, 2017, pp. 81-110,  
[www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1xxs3r.10](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1xxs3r.10).
- Grandes, Almudena. *El corazón helado*. Tusquets Editores, 2007.
- Hemphill, Michael. "A Note on Adults' Color-Emotion Associations." *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 1996, pp. 275-280.
- Herzberger, David. *Narrating the Past: Fiction and Historiography in Postwar Spain*. Duke UP, 1995.
- Hirsch, Marianne. "The Generation of Postmemory." *Poetics Today*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2008, pp. 103-128, [urokiistorii.ru/sites/all/files/hirsch\\_generation\\_of\\_postmemory.pdf](http://urokiistorii.ru/sites/all/files/hirsch_generation_of_postmemory.pdf).
- Hrabrova, Valeria, et al. "Philological Concept of the Novel "The Shadow of the Wind" by Carlos Ruiz Zafon." *Revista Inclusiones*, vol. 7, Special Ed., 2020, pp. 344-352, [revistainclusiones.org/pdf25/26%20VOL%207%20NUM%20OCTDIC%20ESPECIAL2020%20REVISINCLUSIII.pdf](http://revistainclusiones.org/pdf25/26%20VOL%207%20NUM%20OCTDIC%20ESPECIAL2020%20REVISINCLUSIII.pdf).
- "Interview Carlos Ruiz Zafon – Fnac.com." *Youtube*, uploaded by Fnac, 2 April 2013, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=DsDR7Fu720Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DsDR7Fu720Y).
- Jung, Carl G. *The Essential Jung: Selected and introduced by Anthony Storr*, Princeton UP, 2014, [doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt46n45n](https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt46n45n).
- Kellie, Dax J et al. "What drives female objectification? An investigation of appearance-based interpersonal perceptions and the objectification of women." *PloS one* vol. 14, no. 8, e0221388, 2019, [doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0221388](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0221388).
- King, Stewart. "The Deceptive Dame: Criminal Revelations of the Catalan Capital." *The Barcelona Reader: Cultural Readings of a City*, edited by Enric Bou and Jaume Subirana, Liverpool UP, 2017, pp. 395–416.

- . "From Literature to Letters: Rethinking Catalan Literary History" *New Spain, New Literatures*. Vanderbilt UP, 2010, pp. 233-244, *Project MUSE* [muse.jhu.edu/book/754](https://muse.jhu.edu/book/754).
- Kleege, Georgina. "Blindness and Visual Culture: An Eyewitness Account." *The Disability Studies Reader*, edited by Lennard J. Davis. Fifth ed., Routledge, 2017.
- Laforet, Carmen. *Nada*. 1945. Modern Library, 2005.
- "La Matemática del Espejo. Javier Cercas: 'He perdido amigos por mi literature y cuestiones políticas.'" *RTVE.es*, 2021, [www.rtve.es/television/20211111/javier-cercas-perdida-amigos-familia-cuestiones-politicas-literatura-independencia/2220985.shtml](https://www.rtve.es/television/20211111/javier-cercas-perdida-amigos-familia-cuestiones-politicas-literatura-independencia/2220985.shtml).
- Lapiente, Víctor. "Resurrección de Puigdemont." *El País*, 2024, [elpais.com/opinion/2024-03-26/resurreccion-de-puigdemont.html](https://elpais.com/opinion/2024-03-26/resurreccion-de-puigdemont.html).
- "Late Motiv: Entrevista a Carlos Ruiz Zafón #LateMotiv152 | #0." *Youtube*, uploaded by Qué Ver en Movistar Plus+, 22 November 2016, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=9NmCCtjdcQ8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9NmCCtjdcQ8).
- Latham, Sean. "Industrialized Print. Modernism and Authorship." *The Cambridge Handbook of Literary Authorship*, edited by Ingo Berensmeyer, Gert Buelens, and Marysa Demoor, Cambridge UP, 2019, pp. 165–182.
- Lawson, Mark. "The Labyrinth of the Spirits by Carlos Ruiz Zafón review – a colossal achievement." *The Guardian*, 2018, [www.theguardian.com/books/2018/sep/14/labyrinth-spirits-carlos-ruiz-zafon-cemetery-forgotten-books-quartet-final-review](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/sep/14/labyrinth-spirits-carlos-ruiz-zafon-cemetery-forgotten-books-quartet-final-review).
- Ley, Rosanna. *Bay of Secrets*. Quercus, 2013.
- Lines, Lisa. "Female Combatants in the Spanish Civil War: Milicianas on the Front Lines and in the Rearguard." *Journal of International Women's Studies*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2009, pp. 168-187, [vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1265&context=jiws](https://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1265&context=jiws).

- . "Representations of the Spanish Civil War in Twenty-First Century Anglophone Novels (2000–14)." *Journal of War & Culture Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2017, pp. 150-164, doi: 10.1080/17526272.2016.1215051.
- Martí-López, Elisa. "Memory and the City in Barcelona's Cemeteries." *The Barcelona Reader: Cultural Readings of a City*, edited by Enric Bou and Jaume Subirana. Liverpool UP, 2017, pp. 209-40.
- Matute, Ana María. *Fausto*. 1971. In *Texto y vida. Introducción a la literatura Española*, edited by Bárbara Mujica, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002, pp. 572-581.
- Meddick, Judith. "The Telling of Memory in *La sombra del viento* by Carlos Ruiz Zafón." *Romance Studies*, vol. 28, no. 4, 2010, pp. 246-258, doi.org/10.1179/174581510X12817121842092.
- Mendoza, Eduardo. *Qué está pasando en Cataluña*. Seix Barral, 2017.
- Millette, Holly-Gale. "The New Urban Gothic: Introduction." *The New Urban Gothic. Global Gothic in the Age of the Anthropocene*, edited by Holly-Gale Millette and Ruth Heholt, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, pp. 1-18.
- Ministerio de Igualdad. "Executive summary of the 2019 Macro-Survey on Violence Against Women." Madrid, November 19, 2021, [violenciagenero.igualdad.gob.es/violenciaEnCifras/macroencuesta2015/pdf/RE\\_\\_Macroencuesta2019\\_\\_EN.pdf](https://violenciagenero.igualdad.gob.es/violenciaEnCifras/macroencuesta2015/pdf/RE__Macroencuesta2019__EN.pdf)
- Mohr, Christine, et al. "Unifying research on colour and emotion" *Progress in Colour studies: Cognition, Language and Beyond*. John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2018, pp. 209-222.



- Molina, Estefanía. "El independentismo 'folclórico' que apoya a Pedro Sánchez." *El País*, 2024, [elpais.com/opinion/2024-03-28/el-independentismo-folclorico-que-apoya-a-pedro-sanchez.html](https://elpais.com/opinion/2024-03-28/el-independentismo-folclorico-que-apoya-a-pedro-sanchez.html).
- Nerín, Gustau. "Ruiz Zafón tanca el cicle iniciat amb 'L'ombra del vent'." *El Nacional Cat*, 2016, [www.elnacional.cat/ca/cultura/ruiz-zafon-laberint-esperits\\_121431\\_102.html](http://www.elnacional.cat/ca/cultura/ruiz-zafon-laberint-esperits_121431_102.html).
- Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire." *Representations* no. 26, 1989, pp. 7-24.
- O'Neill, Matthew John. *The Persistence of Memory: The Spanish Civil War in Contemporary Spanish Narrative* (PhD Dissertation). University of California, Riverside, June 2011. [escholarship.org/uc/item/9zc0d8fj](https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9zc0d8fj).
- Orringer, Nelson R. "Ideas, aesthetics, historical studies." *The Cambridge History of Spanish Literature*, edited by David T. Gies, Cambridge UP, 2009, pp. 538-544.
- Ortega y Gasset, José. *El Espectador* I. El Arquero: Revista de Occidente, 1968.
- Orwell, George. *Homage to Catalonia*. 1938. 1st ed, Mariner Books, 2011.
- Pasamar Alzuria, Gonzalo Vicente. "El papel del libro sobre la guerra civil durante los años de la Transición." *España en democracia: actas del IV Congreso de Historia de Nuestro Tiempo*, edited by Carlos Navajas Zubeldía and Diego Iturriaga Barco, Universidad de La Rioja, 2014, pp. 223-233.
- Perez, Janet. "Prose in Franco Spain." *The Cambridge History of Spanish Literature*, edited by David T. Gies, Cambridge UP, 2009, pp. 628-642.
- Prendergast, Catherine. "The Unexceptional Schizophrenic: A Post-Postmodern Introduction." *The Disability Studies Reader*, edited by Lennard J. Davis. Fifth ed., Routledge, 2017, pp. 55-65.

Punamäki, Raija-Leena. "Political Violence and Mental Health." *International Journal of Mental Health*, vol. 17, no. 4, 1988, pp. 3-15. [www.jstor.org/stable/41344519](http://www.jstor.org/stable/41344519).

Ramblado, Cinta. "The Shadow of the Dissident: Reflections on Francoism in Carlos Ruiz Zafón's *The Shadow of the Wind*." *Clues*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2008, pp. 70-85.

Recalde-Esnoz, Irantzu, et al. "Key Elements in the Representation of Sexual Violence in Spain: Consent, Myths and Stigma." *Sexual Violence - Issues in Prevention, Treatment, and Policy*, edited by Kathleen Monahan, 2023, doi:10.5772/intechopen.110577.

Rojas, Fernando de. *La Celestina*. Dorothy Shernan Severin Edition, translated by James Mabbe (1631), Aris & Philips Ltd., 1998.

Ruiz Zafón, Carlos. *El juego del ángel*. 2008. Editorial Planeta, 2016.

---. *El laberinto de los espíritus*. 2016. Vintage Español, 2017.

---. *El prisionero del cielo*. 2011. Vintage Español, 2012.

---. *La ciudad de vapor: todos los cuentos*. Editorial Planeta, 2020.

---. *La sombra del viento*. 2001. Vintage Español, 2009.

---. *La trilogía de la niebla*. Editorial Planeta, 2020.

---. *Marina*. 1999. Vintage español, 2015.

---. "Querido Fermín Romero de Torres." *El País*, 2016, [elpais.com/elpais/2016/11/13/eps/1478991909\\_147899.html?event=fa&event\\_log=fa&prod=REGCRART&o=cerrado](http://elpais.com/elpais/2016/11/13/eps/1478991909_147899.html?event=fa&event_log=fa&prod=REGCRART&o=cerrado).

---. *The Labyrinth of the Spirits*, translated by Lucia Graves. HarperCollins, 2018.

---. "Why I Write." *Carlos Ruiz Zafón.co.uk*, <https://www.carlosruizzafon.co.uk/landing-page/carlos-ruiz-zafon/carlos-ruiz-zafon-why-i-write/>.

Samper Ospina, Juanita. “10 años del proceso independentista catalán: ¿qué ha pasado en esta década?” *El tiempo*, 2022, [www.eltiempo.com/mundo/europa/espana-que-ha-pasado-a-10-anos-del-proceso-independentista-catalan-705248](http://www.eltiempo.com/mundo/europa/espana-que-ha-pasado-a-10-anos-del-proceso-independentista-catalan-705248).

Satre, Josh, et al. “Spain: Basque and Catalan Separatism.” *Political Disorder in Europe: 10 Cases From ACLED’s New Expansion*, edited by Elliott Bynum et al., Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, 2021, pp. 15-17, [www.jstor.org/stable/resrep28647.8](http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep28647.8).

Sepetys, Ruta. *The Fountains of Silence*. Philomel Books, 2019.

Spooner, Catherine. *Contemporary Gothic*. Reaktion, 2006.

Stafford, Katherine O. *Narrating War in Peace: The Spanish Civil War in the Transition and Today*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Steenmeijer, Maarten. “One Brand is Another Book’s Fame: Covering the Dutch Cover of Carlos Ruiz Zafón’s *La sombra del viento*.” *Branding Books Across the Ages: Strategies and Key Concepts in Literary Branding*, edited by Helleke van den Braber, Jeroen Dera, Jos Joosten, and Maarten Steenmeijer, Amsterdam UP, 2021, pp. 197-214, [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1m8d6qv.11](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1m8d6qv.11).

---. “The New Capital of Spanish Literature: The Best Sellers.” *New Spain, New Literatures*, edited by Luis Martín-Estudillo and Nicholas Spadaccini, Vanderbilt UP, 2010, pp. 81-97, [repository.ubn.ru.nl/handle/2066/85961](http://repository.ubn.ru.nl/handle/2066/85961).

---. “The Postnational Reception of Carlos Ruiz Zafón’s *La sombra del viento*.” *Postnational Perspectives on Contemporary Hispanic Literature*, edited by Heike Scharm and Natalia Matta-Jara, UP of Florida, 2017. pp. 187-200. [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvx06x7h](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvx06x7h).

- Talbot, Lynn K. "Female Archetypes in Carmen Martín Gaité's 'Entre Visillos.'" *Anales de La Literatura Española Contemporánea*, vol. 12, no. 1/2, 1987, pp. 79-94, [www.jstor.org/stable/27741806](http://www.jstor.org/stable/27741806). Accessed 28 Feb. 2024
- Thomas, Sarah. "Sentimental Objects: Nostalgia and the Child in Cinema of the Spanish Memory Boom." *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2017, pp. 145–71. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26451453>.
- Tonkin, Boyd. "In the shadow of a lost city: The secrets and struggles behind Carlos Ruiz Zafón's success." *The Independent*, 2009, [www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/in-the-shadow-of-a-lost-city-the-secrets-and-struggles-behind-carlos-ruiz-zafon-s-success-1696924.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/in-the-shadow-of-a-lost-city-the-secrets-and-struggles-behind-carlos-ruiz-zafon-s-success-1696924.html).
- Torres, Laura G. "Carlos Ruiz Zafón: 'Siempre es una equivocación hacer las cosas pensando que vayan a tener éxito.'" *Rtve*, 2016, <https://www.rtve.es/noticias/20161122/ruiz-zafon-siempre-equivocacion-hacer-cosas-pensando-vayan-a-tener-exito/1446182.shtml>.
- Trongsard, Jordon. *Writing the Spanish Civil War: The Ironic Collision of Fiction, Non-Fiction, and Fantasy in Four Novels at the New Millenium* (PhD Dissertation). University of Ottawa, Ottawa, 2009. [ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/29903/1/NR61250.PDF](http://ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/29903/1/NR61250.PDF).
- Trotman, Tiffany. "Haunted Noir: Neo-Gothic Barcelona in Carlos Ruiz Zafón's *La Sombra del Viento*." *Romance Studies*, vol. 25 no. 4, 2007, pp. 269-277, doi: 10.1179/174581507x235598.
- Ugarte, Michael. "The literature of Franco Spain, 1939-1975." *The Cambridge History of Spanish Literature*, edited by David T. Gies, Cambridge UP, 2009, pp. 611-619.
- Valle-Inclán, Ramón del. *Luces de bohemia. Esperpento*. 1924. Alonso Zamora Vicente Edition, Austral teatro, 2007.

Vázquez Montalbán, Manuel. *Crónica sentimental de España*, Editorial Lumen, 1971.

Vila-Sanjuán, Sergio. *Otra Cataluña*. Destino, 2018.

---. “Prólogo: A la sombra de Gaudí y del libro antiguo.” *Guía de la Barcelona de Carlos*

*Ruiz Zafón*, by Sergi Doria, Planeta, 2008, pp. 7-22.

---. “Palabra de Carlos Ruiz Zafón.” *La Vanguardia*, 2020,

[www.lavanguardia.com/cultura/libros/20200620/481862064199/zafon-entrevistas-palabras-muerte.html](http://www.lavanguardia.com/cultura/libros/20200620/481862064199/zafon-entrevistas-palabras-muerte.html).

Wright, Stephanie. ““My husband...is an Authentic Psychopath’: Spanish Civil War Veterans,

Mental Illness and the Francoist Regime.” *Social History of Medicine*, vol. 34, no. 4, 2021, pp. 1236-1255, [doi.org/10.1093/shm/hkaa072](https://doi.org/10.1093/shm/hkaa072).

Zunini, Patricio. “Javier Cercas: ‘El independentismo catalán no es un movimiento progresista,

es profundamente reaccionario y antidemocrático.’” *Infobae.com*, 2021,

[www.infobae.com/cultura/2021/04/11/javier-cercas-frente-a-tanta-literatura-pomposa-con-pretensiones-la-humildad-aparente-del-policia-es-maravillosa/](http://www.infobae.com/cultura/2021/04/11/javier-cercas-frente-a-tanta-literatura-pomposa-con-pretensiones-la-humildad-aparente-del-policia-es-maravillosa/).

“4Gats història.” *4Gats*, [4gats.com/historia/](http://4gats.com/historia/).