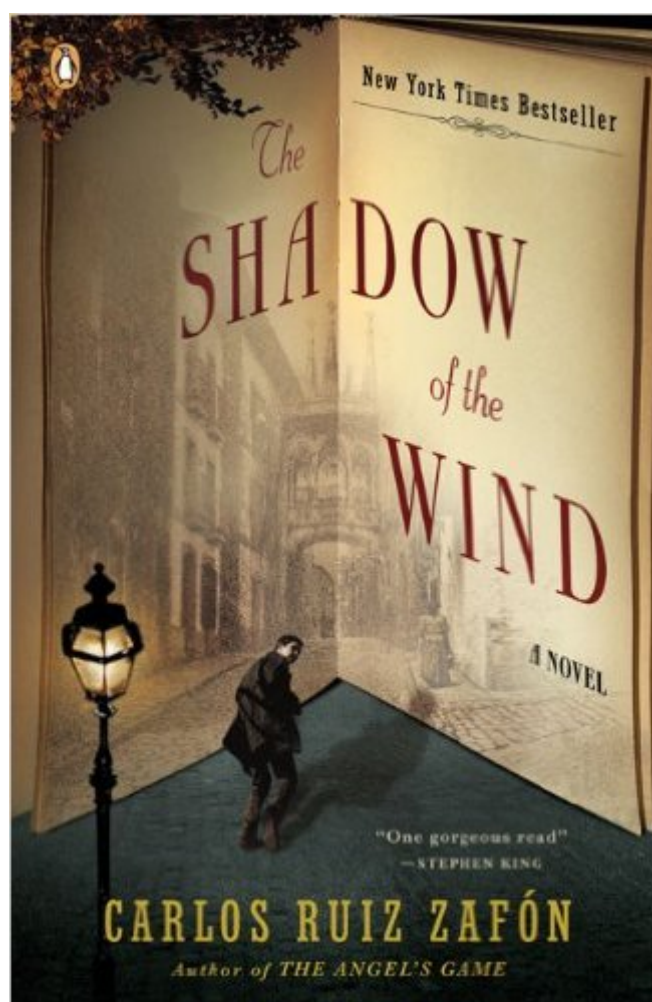


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The Shadow Of The Wind



Synopsis

"Gabriel Garc a M rquez meets Umberto Eco meets Jorge Luis Borges for a sprawling magic show." --The New York Times Book Review
A New York Times Bestseller
Barcelona, 1945: A city slowly heals in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War, and Daniel, an antiquarian book dealer's son who mourns the loss of his mother, finds solace in a mysterious book entitled *The Shadow of the Wind*, by one Juli n Carax. But when he sets out to find the author's other works, he makes a shocking discovery: someone has been systematically destroying every copy of every book Carax has written. In fact, Daniel may have the last of Carax's books in existence. Soon Daniel's seemingly innocent quest opens a door into one of Barcelona's darkest secrets--an epic story of murder, madness, and doomed love. Anyone who enjoys novels that are scary, erotic, touching, tragic and thrilling should rush right out to the nearest bookstore and pick up *The Shadow of the Wind*. Really, you should. • --Michael Dirda, *The Washington Post* "Wonderous... masterful... *The Shadow of the Wind* is ultimately a love letter to literature, intended for readers as passionate about storytelling as its young hero." --Entertainment Weekly (Editor's Choice) "One gorgeous read." --Stephen King

Book Information

Paperback: 487 pages

Publisher: Penguin Books (February 1, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0143034901

ISBN-13: 978-0143034902

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1.1 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (2,050 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

The enthusiastic praise and adulation which critics have accorded the english publication of Carlo Ruiz Zafon's first novel, "The Shadow of the Wind", may trouble the reader who begins the book, worried that little might match his expectations. After all, reviewers who compare a writer's work to a combination of Umberto Eco, or Jorge Luis Borges, or Gabriel Garcia Marquez, or other literary

giants, compel the reader to expect to be transported when they open the book. Not to worry. Once started, the single downside for the reader will be knowing that the experience must end. The plot is quite complex, the jacket cover's synopsis will give the reader all he needs to know. The important thing is to read it slowly and carefully. A mystery story, a fairy tale, a love story (actually several love stories), a passion for literature, a treatise on politics, a bawdy tale, with love, hate, courage, intrigue, loss of innocence, humor, cowardice, villainy, cruelty, compassion, regret, murder, incest, redemption, and more. Add to this delicious mixture characters who come alive, and whose thoughts and feelings you will feel deeply. What a great pleasure to discover; an extraordinary first work, one which towers over the endless and repetitive volumes which inhabit today's "Best Seller" lists. Read it, and become hypnotized. Edward Jawer Wyncote, Pa. ejawer@comcast.net

Zafón's storytelling skill is quite remarkable, his prose doesn't just take you into the story, it completely transports you. In only a few sentences. Zafón crafts a world of remarkable visions and events--just a little bit magical (as all the best stories really are) but grounded in characters who live, breathe, and merrily cavort off the page and into your heart. But Zafón isn't just a strong storyteller with an exact sense of prose (and my compliments to the excellent translation!), *Shadow of the Wind* connects to people, it's almost a watershed. It's been a long time since I've been so excited about a book. I tell -everyone- to read it: best friends, my mom, relatives, people I work with--they're all hearing raves from me. And I don't do that lightly, but this book is joyous and sad, heartfelt and even wise. But most important of all is that *Shadow of the Wind* is true. It's one of those rare books where you don't just hear 'their' story, it becomes your story as well. To loosely quote Carfax, "it holds up a mirror and a window to your soul," because it teaches us about who we are--about the communities that bind and define you. And every single moment Fermín Romero de Torres was 'on screen' I had the biggest grins on my face, truly one of the great characters of literature. I've not a single criticism or reservation about this book, and that puts Zafón on an extremely short list with Mark Twain, Frank Herbert and Orson Scott Card.

That it's so tempting to read *SHADOW OF THE WIND* is a tribute to clever marketing. Comparisons to Marquez, Borges, and Dickens mix with gushing tributes from Stephen King and references to best-sellerdom in Spain. The literary come-on is hard to resist. In the end however, the way you respond to this book will depend on what expectations you bring to it. If you anticipate a reading experience worthy of those heady literary comparisons, you'll be sorely disappointed - Zafón is little closer to Garcia Marquez than Stephen King is. The closest he comes is having the temerity to give

a minor character, a boyfriend of Beatriz Aguilar's, the family name Buendia, the prolific clan from ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE. If you plan, however, on a fantastical romp through a mid-century Barcelona converted wholesale into a gothic swamp of ghosts, shadows, haunted houses, malevolent, revenge-seeking, jilted lovers, swooning virginal maidens, improbably picaresque characters, unbelievable coincidences, parallelisms, and twists of fate, and a host of pseudo-Freudian relationships, you'll love every minute. The story line of SHADOW OF THE WIND is so complex and convoluted, it's nearly impossible to relate in less space than the book's own 487 pages. Suffice to say, the premise is drawn from the search of a teenaged boy named Daniel for the truth about the fate of Julian Carax, the author of a mystery story (also named "Shadow of the Wind") that Daniel has adopted and read after his bibliophilic father takes him on a "coming of age" excursion to the aptly metaphorical Cemetery of Forgotten Books. Carax has apparently written a number of other books, all of them commercial failures, yet someone has been traveling Europe to find and burn every extant copy of Carax's works. With twists and turns that would make the Minotaur's head spin in his Labyrinth, Zafon spins multiple parallel tales of Platonic love, blind love (both literal and figurative), failed love, enduring love, filial love, forbidden love, and unrequited love. Through it all looms the mystery of Julian Carax. Is he alive or dead? Who is burning his books, and why? Who is the char-faced phantom? Why does the evil Fumero seek such hate-filled revenge? Will young Daniel ever find his true love? Zafon's book could be easily parodied or brushed aside as little more than a Barbara Cartland romance, but his writing is better than that despite being too often over the top. From the opening page where Daniel describes his mother's death as "a deafening silence I had not learned to stifle with words," Zafon mixes searing images and thoughtful observations with engagingly quirky characters such as Fermin Romero de Torres who capture the reader's imagination and heart like 20th century Sancho Panzas and Dulcineas to Daniel's idealistically questing Quixote. Unfortunately, these pluses are offset by unrelenting and heavy-handed atmospherics in which every page is marked by clouds, shadows, mists, flickering candles, twilights, smoke, rubble, ruins, twisted heaps, blood, and "glutinous darkness," and the like. Florid prose abounds: "The white marble was scored with black tears of dampness that looked like blood dripping out of the clefts left by the engraver's chisel. They lay side by side, like chained maledictions." Readers must also contend with two laughably miraculous conceptions, both occurring after first night trysts (a tribute perhaps to the ineffable virility of Spanish males?), and an unfortunately anachronistic request by a Barcelona doctor in 1954 for a "brain scan" of an injured Fermin (page 288). Net net, SHADOW OF THE WINDS is entertaining escapism with modest literary pretensions. Enjoy it for what it is, but don't expect it to be more than it is.

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