

## THE FUNCTIONS OF THE CHARACTER/S IN THE NOVEL *THE PALACE OF DREAMS* BY ISMAIL KADARE

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**ABSTRACT:** *The Palace of Dreams* considering its anti-totalitarian meaning is a miracle of its own because it was published under the communist system of the time by virtue of the novel's text's coding in the best possible way. This feature, made the novel important, interesting and challenging to the scholars because it constitutes a literary model that can be studied from different points of view and still provides more new ones.

The aim of this paper is to examine the role of the character/s in decoding the hidden meaning layers of the novel by generally applying a formalist approach with a main focus on the structuralist method. These roles will be distinguished by performing a theoretical analysis regarding the involved components in their concretization, by carrying out stylistic analyses to decipher the figurative language and by utilizing these results through interpretive analyses thereby introducing yet another new way of studying the novel's coded contexts: the first one related to the exposure of the totalitarian dictatorships, the second one related to ethnic identity and the role in terms of the position of Albanians in the socio-political life of the empire and additionally covering an unexplored area in the existing literature.

Mark-Alem is delegated multi-functional roles: he becomes a figure, a theme, an idea and a link that holds up the narrative discourse itself. He is the tool that makes the difference between the readers' understanding of the “historical” events dealt with in this book and the coded contexts that lay under the storyline.

**KEYWORDS:** Character, Mark-Alem, function, totalitarian, ethnic

### Introduction

Ismail Kadare is one of the best contemporary Albanian writers. His well-deserved reputation as a writer is not narrowed only within the Albanian reader's borders because his works: novels, plays, screenplays, poetry, essays, story collections, etc. have been translated into more than 45 foreign languages and have reached readers in even more countries all over the world. He has won many international prizes: Prix mondial Cino Del Duca, Man Booker International Prize, Prince of Asturias Award, Jerusalem Prize, Order of Legion of Honour, Park Kyong-ni Prize and Neustadt International Prize for Literature. He has also been nominated many times for the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Ismail Kadare wrote and published many books under the dictatorial regime that was established after the Second World War and continued for 50 years in Albania, but the publication's importance of the novel *The Palace of Dreams* is based on the fact that even though the novel testifies the unmasking of the totalitarian utopia, it managed to pass successfully censorship and was published in Albania during a time when the country was suffering from the wild totalitarian regime of Enver Hoxha.

The anti-totalitarian and anti-dictatorship meaning of the novel *The Palace of Dreams* is not an open literary suggestion waiting to be “solved” like, for example, the one in Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Instead, *The Palace of Dreams* is a novel that constitutes the author's desperate attempt to write about something extremely dangerous, and at the same time, hide it so well that no one could say or prove definitively that this novel is an anti-communist work.

The novel *The Palace of Dreams* embodies a political theology (Gould, 2012) about totalitarianism. Through symbolic means, (Kokobobo, 2011) Kadare created a sharp satire (Morgan, 2002a), (Halliday, 2001) and an allegorical fantasy, (Byatt, 2001) making this book an anthem of ambiguity (Bosquet, 2011). In other words, *The Palace of Dreams* represents itself as a figure (Shala, 2007). This means that the first context of the novel conceals a second one that is related to dystopian totalitarianism, and another one that is related to ethnicity. One can realize the existence of a chain and logical effects through which every word, action and thought gains a particular value in the process of building these contexts. The latter, appearing as a system of discourse tools which are interrelated, constitutes Kadare's system of artistic thinking.

The novel *The Palace of Dreams* is structured with the purpose to load all the weight of the events over the main character Mark-Alem, the narration refers mostly to Mark-Alem's point of view too.

Naturally, one can see that the characters, notably the main character of the book, play to a considerable extent the role of a function and figure that contributes to the building of these stratified contexts.

### **Methodology**

The paper argues that the novel *The Palace of Dreams* written by Ismail Kadare, does not represent solely an interesting story/history focusing on an absurd institution such as the Palace of Dreams, but rather the analysis shows the fact that this work is universal and carefully and intentionally displays the dark side of human existence, in circumstances where the freedom of acting and speaking is denied by the totalitarian power, whereas the manic tendencies to have an absolute power and control on its citizens indicate the states' representatives' decisions and acts which appear to be out of the human rationality.

*The Palace of Dreams* is a novel that brinks more than one context. Besides other literary elements that enable the building of the hidden contexts within this novel, the character/s are one main feature whose functions make possible the encoding but also the decoding of these contexts.

While almost every other character of the book is used to empower and to develop gradually the main character, the latter by his peculiar role in the structure of the novel becomes a multi-functional asset for the understanding of the text.

In this paper we have used a formalist/structural approach by introducing a theory that focuses on patterns that display the character's function/s. These models / theoretical results are applied in a practical way, drawing the necessary conclusions about our analysis' object, i.e. search out, designate and analyze the functions of the main character Mark-Alem through the text, its content and its contexts.

This study also uses a stylistic and interpretative analysis in order to portray the process that transforms a mere character into a figure, a function and an essential mechanism of the narrative discourse.

### **Totalitarianism**

The novel *The Palace of Dreams* among other things is considered as one of the best and bravest novels of Ismail Kadare. A novel about bureaucracies and bureaucrats which as Zacka states is “a match so perfect that it has fascinated novelists as diverse as Georges Courteline, Nikolai Gogol, Franz Kafka, George Orwell, Naguib Mahfouz, Upamanyu Chatterjee, and Ismail Kadare; a pairing so dreadful and grotesque that it is, alternatively, the stuff of nightmares and that of satire” (2017, pp. 2-3).

This novel through its construction and the given text represents more than one context. The first one, is established through the creation of a historical background, although the time when the events unfold is not determined, hence this can be alluded through other elements which are given under the construction of the work/novel. The setting of events in the capital of the Ottoman Empire and the data that is given regarding this Empire, try to clarify this issue to some extent. However, this work cannot be set as a historical type of a novel. The main feature of the historical novel is the presentation of historical facts, which are treated through the artistic forms and means of literary art. At the center of these facts, one may see a historical figure, as we see it for example in "Skanderbeg" a novel by Sabri Godo. In addition, we have the other type of historical novel where a certain time and place is emphasized and the characters and every other tool used is put in function of the fable. These types of novels are built based on historical data, which despite their literary treatment; maintain a certain historical objectivity, which consists of historical figures, events, dates and toponyms that fit according to the historical order, etc. Such features do not stand out in the *The Palace of Dreams*.

More accurately, the novel can be considered to be “a fantasy about the great Ottoman bureaucracy that gathers people's dreams and reports the most dangerous ones to the Sultan. This is a parable about the folly of power – murderer and suicidal at the same time” (Eder, 2011, p. 200). This contextual plane of the novel through grotesque, paradoxical and ironic situations represents the way of how a totalitarian state functions, which can by no means be satisfied with just controlling the consciousness of the society it rules, but manages to create an institution of special importance, which controls the products of the unconscious, such as dreams. But, “while dreams may have an internal censor, regulating what is dreamt, the idea of an external censor belongs in the realm of fiction” (Holden, 2000, p. 62). Kadare while writing *The Palace of Dreams* used figurative language both ways: to censor and to expose the meaning of the text. Figurative language was both his hiding place and his redemption because “it seems that even though Kadare continued to write in service of the Albanian communist regime, his inner world was suffering. This masterpiece is

generally seen as a political allegory of totalitarianism and is often compared to Orwell's 1984. Meanwhile, in virtue of Kadare's impressive depiction of alienation, anxiety and absurdity, the novel is also compared to Kafka's works" (Ke, 2013, p. 14). The fact that this novel managed to be published during the communist regime in Albania has been valued by others as a miracle in itself, considering its hidden context on totalitarian dystopia.

Mark-Alem is the main character of this novel. The others hold mainly episodic and supportive roles in creating and concretizing the main one. Through an affinity approach, the author manages to organize these characters, in favour of the final maturation of this figure. "In the creation of figure/characters of Kadare, one can find an insight and wide vision, imaginative force, intuition; its structure emerges from an original conceptualization, from various ways of connecting and interrelating/combining words, phraseological units, actions expressed through their words, events, etc., through this approach it is expressed the author's intention to present the movement of the outside and inside life of the character. In the poetics of Kadare's novel, one can realize the existence of a chain and logical effects, through which, every word, every action and thought gains a particular value in the process of building the figure/character. The latter, appearing as a system of discourse tools, which are interrelated, represents in fact Kadare's system of artistic thinking." (Dado, 2003, p. 296). The process of the characters' organization in the novel *The Palace of Dreams* focuses on a dependent relationship among them. Mark-Alem, as a main/central figure, appears to get an adequate shape when he enters in an interrelation with others. These characters can be divided into two categories. The first category has a kinship relationship with Mark-Alem, and the second one is work related with him. The two categories function to establish two codified strata within the novel: the one which is related to identity, Albanian inherence, and the other one which is related to the totalitarian state politics and policies.

The stratum that is related to Albanian identity is constructed through an inductive ontological approach. It starts with the character of Mark-Alem, and then gets along by passing through his kindred affiliation, the latter following its roots of Albanian identity affiliation which finds its ways to get incorporated into the novel, through different historical, geographical, cultural and folkloric ways – with a special emphasis on Albanian epos. The second stratum that is related to the totalitarian state politics and policies is constructed by marking Mark-Alem's character as a figure that is placed in between two realities: the reality of history/events and the one of alluded reality/figure. Both of the two realities have in common an echo of totalitarian authority of policymaking, where the individual turns into a negligible miniature in front of the monstrous machinery of the power.

In Phelan's view, as Balossi (2014, p. 23) points out, there can be distinguished three involved components in the concretization of the characters: the "mimetic" one (the character as an individual person), the "synthetic" one (the character as an artificial construct) and the "thematic" one (the character as an idea). According to the author, these three components are always present in the story in different combinations and this difference depends on our developed interest, while the narrative advances. For example in the realist narrative, usually in the first forefront stand mimetic and thematic components of the character. In non-realist forms, the mimetic has tendencies to stand in the background, or to be present although this determines a violation, and in this case, the "synthetic" appears in the first frontline.

The "mimetic" component includes the appearance, speaking, thought and action of the character thus it represents him as an individual, whereas the "synthetic" one serves as a mechanism of the structure of the novel, hence playing an important role in the construction and organization of the narrative discourse, while the "thematic" component involves an idea that may be covered by the character, thus introducing it as a representative entity, an idea carried by the conclusion of the novel itself. Each of these components has its own functions, but one should take into consideration that the synthetic function may involve within itself the mimetic and thematic function, while the last ones may also not include the synthetic function. The character of Mark-Alem functions as a mimetic figure, as his profile is constructed through thoughts and actions, but is rounded off as a synthetic figure in the service of decoding the figure context that the text encodes through allegory. The mimetic characterization of Mark-Alem is intentionally disregarded. Despite his age, other personal characteristics are left aside and missing. Hence, his physical appearance is completely neglected, his thoughts and actions are presented mainly only when they are related to his job.

On the other side, an important role in the mimetic characterization of Mark-Alem, is played by *nonverbal features* (Culpeper, 2014, pp. 215-216) or by the *description of the environment where he lives* (Culpeper, 2014, pp. 225-226), his actions or relations that he creates with his family members, his mother, the nanny, his family relatives, in particular Kurt, but also with his colleagues and later on with his employees and the state's rulers in general.

The analysis of some nonverbal features of mimetic characterization can suggest a certain attitude that sheds light on the personality of the protagonist. The novel often features a description of the face of Mark-Alem, where one can perceive the "inner physiognomy": anxiety, yellowing, fatigue, indifference, nervousness, insecurity, etc. The grieving over the loss of Kurt appears to be also a nonverbal feature which sheds light on his character. Meanwhile, his environment: the neighbourhood, the street, the house where he lives and the family to which he belongs tend to define the social position he actually fits into. Those few sequences that display Mark-Alem's relationship with others reflect what he is, what he will be, and what he ultimately becomes.

Mark-Alem's mimetic characterization serves to insert him as naturally as possible as a character in the narrated story. His connection with the other characters is presented as natural as possible too, although sometimes quite rigid. But once an event in a given space (the Ottoman Empire) is established, everything resembles a facade indicating that this (mimetic) characterization, in fact, enters into the function of synthetic characterization. This can be noticed all along from the figure construction of Mark-Alem. Paradoxes appear to be the characteristics of the construction of this figure, which one sees right from the naming and joining together of two names: the first one Mark, which is a Christian name, and the second one Alem, which is a Muslim name. However, the specifics of these two names go beyond their religious belongings. Mark is the name of one of the Disciples of Christ, the writer of one of the four gospels, one of the four pillars on which the whole Christian philosophy is based. This name conveys a great and profound symbolism. Mark's name is presented as an associative reminiscence, a name that gives value to the psychological personality of the character, a name that, through its analogy, describes the strength of Mark's character. Alem, is the second name of the character, which holds the same importance as the first name. Alem is one of the most common epithets given to God during lectures or prayers. Allah – alem (doublet alam), means the omniscient God. Hence 'alem' means omniscient. Given that Kadare leaves nothing to chance when he constructs his work, it is believed that the choice regarding this name was not random, it was made with the purpose to have a function.

While the character and strength of Mark-Alem's intellect is unfolded, it is important to move to the next paradox. How is it possible that a man of such intellect and indomitable character could fall victim to a conspiracy – a ruse which hit his family very hard? Through the situations that justify his innocence in the first contextual plane, the paradox emerges in fact in the second contextual plane, by presenting this character as indirectly guilty of the death of his uncle. Here it is presented how the invisible, but real force of the threads pulled by the system use any kind of method to ensure continuity. The individual is hypnotized and is able to violate anyone at any time, even himself in order to avoid failing in the eyes of power. This can be clearly seen in Mark-Alem's own progress. While until the penultimate chapter his character is built within a framework that can define him in the limits of humanity, in the concluding chapter he has already crossed these limits; he has already become a devout bureaucrat/official of totalitarian politics, by embracing this system Mark-Alem becomes cold and cruel, for example one can notice the indifference he shows towards the vegetable seller's death even though he is aware that he is not guilty. Although almost the whole novel focuses on this figure and the events are presented more or less from the perspective of the latter, (not to be confused with the narrator) nothing but the intertitles foretells that the character will be reformed in such a way. Despite everything, he chooses "inadvertently" to be part of the system and this is best given by the final construction of his physical and psychological profile, a profile that takes on the same characteristics and is equated with the characteristics of the system/power itself.

Mark-Alem synthesizes the individual in a totalitarian society, the one who is controlled to the point of absurdity and is scared to the core. The actions done by the individual do not correspond to his will, but can be seen as merely an attempt to survive. His consciousness is constantly in alarm, because above his head, like the sword of Damocles, stands the power of the system. He could be eliminated, as it is seen

in the novel, even because of a dream meaning even for the most absurd thing. The arbitrary way used by the power to eradicate opponents becomes quite clear in the novel through Kurt's murder, or through the alluding thought of Mark-Alem – he has no desire to be seduced by the explosion of life outside – because he is sure that one day “they” will also come for him to take his life. The loss of the blessings that offers the life outside of the Palace awakens in him the longing, which together with the fear and the awareness that one day “those” who robbed him of his vitality will be back to take his life, evokes within him a catharsis that can be seen in the novel's ending text when tears blur Mark-Alem's vision while he is thinking about his death.

From this point of view, this character not only has an essential role as a mechanism that serves in the organization and construction of narrative discourse, but despite his synthetic function, the thematic function takes place as well, becoming the bearer of the idea conveyed by the novel. This idea, except for being related to the plane of totalitarianism and the existence of the individual/society within it, is also related to the plane of ethnic identity.

### **Ethnicity**

Alongside the political one runs a second type of satire – the intricately coded theme of ethnic identity at a time of decline and change in power-relationships in the Empire (Morgan, 2002b, p. 366). This topic takes a very important place in terms of the role of Albanians and their position in the socio-political life of the country. The Quprili family is the typical example that proves the progress of this relationship.

The fact that the time when the events take place is not determined, although alluded, contributes to the marking of this family as a figure that to some extent represents and creates analogies with all other Albanian families, which have managed to occupy high positions and very often the highest ones after the head of the empire, giving their contribution over the centuries in the state's establishment. On the other hand, the preservation of the identity and the permanent search for Albanian roots are strongly emphasized. Here the epic is functionalized, as one of the living, but also older evidence, which not only awakens the national consciousness of the Quprilis but also symbolizes the existence of Albanians, their antiquity. The epic reflects a wide range of important events, which narrate the story of a Nation, the story of this Nation's people over the centuries, so this evidence (epic) is a “living claim to identity and authenticity for a country that existed, then as today, on the margins of world history” (Weitzman, 2016, p. 820). Its importance gets more valuable when the attitude and reaction of the government towards it becomes clear. According to Kadare “the legends recited by Illyrian rhapsodists have been more influential in shaping Albania than any regime, which is why those who tried to conquer Albania considered these legends as highly dangerous” (Ossewaarde, 2015, p. 716). The example of Kurt's execution suggests some very important details about this issue. First, that an invading state such as the Ottoman Empire could easily raise an individual to the highest leadership positions, even positions dealing with the most sensitive political issues, such as the position of vizier, and use this individual's capacity and diapason, regardless of their nationality. But, secondly, the state's strength is presented precisely by its vigilance towards the raising of national consciousness. It is clear that the main goal of this empire, which carried under its umbrella over 40 different states and nationalities, was to pursue assimilation. The arrival of rhapsodists, in the heart of the Ottoman Empire, and the singing in Albanian of the Albanian epic has a function, the epic they sing symbolizes precisely the opposition to assimilation and what is more, the insistence on the preservation of everything that is national. Therefore, the dream used as a cause to strike the Quprilis, whether planted by the enemies of the mentioned family or dreamed of by a citizen “alerts the Sultan to Kurt's new-found ethnicity, and leads him to suspect Kurt of fomenting ethno-national unrest and laying himself open to the influence of the Austrian Habsburgs sitting in the western wings of the Empire” (Morgan, 2002a, p. 49).

The existence of the epic, on the other hand, given its centuries-old origin, proves that the Albanians have a multi-centenarian ethnic identity legacy that they had managed to preserve until then, and that they would undoubtedly succeed in preserving it even further. The message given by the singing of the epic in the house of the Vizier, the most powerful Quprili at that time emerges as a challenge to the state's structures of the Ottoman Empire and their policies in relation, not only to the Albanian state, but also to all the other countries that were inadvertently kept under their occupation. This is a challenge that receives immediate and direct answers, meaning fatal consequences for the expressed courage. As such, the treatment of this

motive takes on universal values, going beyond any historical context and reflecting the nations' permanent aspirations for freedom, regardless of the price to be paid.

In this contextual plane, the dream is presented with the function of a product of the unconscious, which enables and institutionalizes arbitrary strikes against potential dangers that may attack the state and ruling order of the Ottoman Empire. The product of consciousness, then, is the opposite of the dream, staying awake, in other words – insomnia. Insomnia symbolizes the raising of awareness; national consciousness. In the novel, the states that are gripped by insomnia are exactly those ones that organize uprisings, gain independence, or aspire to secede from the Ottoman Empire, an allusion given for the Albanian state too. Albania was an area which was gripped by insomnia, thus manifesting the rise of national consciousness and aspirations for secession from the Ottoman Empire and the proclamation of an independent state.

Meanwhile even though the Quprilis deeply seek and idealize their ethnic roots, due to the circumstances, they are powerless to embrace this identity. Albania remains simply the country for which they dream of (following the example of Mark-Alem), the country they must again and again give up. “Suppression of identity leads to “Quprilian sadness,” the sense of loss felt by this dynasty which has traded ethnic identity for political power. “Quprilian sadness” is represented in this novel as having recurred throughout the history of the family’s collaboration with the Ottoman Empire. It is linked with the theme of the betrayal of Albania symbolized by the blood on the bridge, the immurement of the sacrificial victim, and in the family’s name-change first to the Albanian *Ura* and then to the Slav *Quprili*” (Morgan, 2002a, p. 54).

The function of Mark-Alem’s character becomes crucial for the reader to understand the “Quprilian sadness”. Mark-Alem synthesises the Quprilis’ need to remain connected with their ethnic roots as well as their decision to trade it for power. Through his story is told the untold story of all the other Quprilis that over time chose power above identity. As a result because of the void left behind by this choice they became sad and seeing that this choice recurred constantly the sadness became a family feature – “Quprilian sadness”. Mark-Alem, in both cases: as a character of his own story but also as a figure or a representation of the Quprilis’ family “is embodied as an anti-hero, the Albanian bureaucrat who thrives under “Ottoman identity”” (Raymond, 2006, p. 75), which is very well reflected at the end of the novel when Mark-Alem, though constantly withdrawn from his ethnic identity roots, decides to set them aside. Therefore, replacing the name of Albania with the pronoun *there* in the family Chronicle book, he represents the final distancing, the choice to be alienated. Writing about Kurt’s death immediately in this family Chronicle, Mark-Alem also gives the reason why – he could not search for his identity roots like Kurt, because he did not want to end up like him. In order to adapt to power and his position within this power Mark-Alem must become *hypocrite*, a “man without qualities” (Morgan, 2000a, p. 53) as he must be willing to follow the dictates of political power regardless of his personal loyalty to himself or others.

The characters of Kurt and the Vizier within the narrative discourse can be seen as textual sings that indicate the further untold fate of Mark-Alem. Mark-Alem chose to alienate himself from his ethnic roots in order to save himself from the fatal experience that underwent his uncle Kurt. However, by opting for a political career and power, seeing also the final transformation of his personality in the end of the novel, it can be said that Mark-Alem will follow the steps of his other uncle the Vizier. In a way, these two characters complement each other. Mark-Alem’s character displays the ways of climbing up (sacrifices, compromises, injustices, etc.) and gaining power, while Vizier’s character displays the ways of maintaining power (secrecy, conspiracy, crimes, terror, etc.). It is one story, the story, fragmented into the life of two characters. The character of the Vizier in the novel plays a significant role. Although this figure is a secondary one and has a little involvement in the storyline, the impact this character employs through the *syuzhet* is undeniable. Related to the ethnic theme the Vizier’s character function is fair. He is a descendent of the Albanian Quprili family who, as many of his progenitors before him, has traded ethnic identity for political power; this example is followed later on from his nephew Mark-Alem too. Meanwhile, related to the totalitarian theme his function is indispensable. This character symbolizes a powerful political force. Kadare describes in the best way not only the relationship between the tyrant and the people, but also the intrigues, the conspiracies, the surveys, the plots, the persecutions, the vicious measures, the mystery and

incomprehensible situations that arise from the struggle between the individuals with the most power (in the party). The silent but fierce and merciless war for power between the Vizier and the Sultan symbolizes the conflicts between important and potent political players in a totalitarian state in order to gain and maintain power which brought turmoiled hurricanes, dismissals from employment, open files, restructuring of the institutional hierarchies with political sensitivity, trials, imprisonment, and death. Besides the thematic function this character employs the synthetic function as well: the Vizier functions as a figurative tool that helps to build up the allegory that is related to totalitarian states and which is one of the main components of the novel's structure.

### Conclusion

The characters of the novel *The Palace of Dreams* are shaped with limited or no character traits at all, so they have limited or no personality, consequently their involvement in the novel remains only a function. One of the main functions of the narrative discourse in the novel is Mark-Alem. By analysing the functions of the character/s in the studied novel we conclude that Mark-Alem as a main character and the other characters as well are crucial elements of the text which function to decode the stratified contexts of the novel. In the context related to totalitarianism Mark-Alem represents the individual in a totalitarian and dictatorship state, also Mark-Alem grouped with the other work related characters to him, all together, represent the society within this kind of government regime that requires complete subservience to the state. He obtains both: the synthetic function by becoming an essential segment of the narrative discourse, i.e. the structure of the novel; and the thematic function by constituting the whole idea of the book, i.e. the one of anti-totalitarianism. In the context related to ethnicity this paper concludes that Mark-Alem functions as a figure. At the same time he is a character that adapts to achieving political power by denying his ethnic identity but above that he is a figure that synthesises the Quprili's family position in the socio-political life of the country, their repeated choice over the past and present times, throughout the history of the family's collaboration with the Ottoman Empire, to go over their ethnic identity in order to gain political power. Mark-Alem and the Qyprilis in this context are characterized by the thematic function. In a broader literary discourse, the functions of the character/s in *The Palace of Dreams* contribute also to our general understanding of totalitarianism and ethnicity in literature. By analyzing the involved components in the concretization of a character we define these components' functions and by analyzing these functions inside a narrative text it becomes possible to understanding the narrative's meaning. Therefore the defining of the character/s' functions in *The Palace of Dreams* can become a model analyses to understand other literary works that display different contextual meanings through the character/s' functions. For example *The Trial* by Franz Kafka is a typical novel where this kind of analyses can be exploited to unfold the theme of totalitarianism. However, this kind of approach can fail in the novel *Animal Farm* by George Orwell because the totalitarian theme it not structured to weigh on the back of the characters and their functions but comes into view through the course/progress of the storyline and its figurative language. On the other hand La Retaquita in Mario Vargas Llosa's novel *Cinco Esquinas* [*Five Corners*] could be an interesting character to be analysed. Through the thematic function of this character the book context brings to light a complex self- and national identity theme/idea. The limitations of this study mainly reveal the absence of an exhaustive analysis. For example the text of *The Palace of Dreams* manifests elements that are related to the absurd, anxiety, alienation and these elements are closely linked to the contribution of the character/s' functions to a better understanding of the totalitarian context. Also, the novel displays historic data which are directly linked to the ethnic context. To investigate these data a further analyses is needed that would trace the functions of the main character Mark-Alem and to some extent the functions of the Qyprilis as well, especially that of Kurt. But in order to follow this lead, besides the character/s' functions' analysis, it is required to carry out a very detailed analysis of the text's figurative language and also a deep semiotic exploration of the novel's language and its discourse. This method would change the direction of the objectives of this paper and would affect the conclusions of the study as well as its length. On the other hand this design suggests potential avenues for future research.

As this study is drawing to a close, we can conclude that based on the theoretical analysis used to establish the character/s' functions that are determined by their characterization and by employing a stylistic and interpretative analysis it is made possible to decode the unseen contexts of the novel *The Palace of*

*Dreams*. The findings reveal that the character/s' functions, in specific cases in literature, may have an indispensable role in coding and decoding the meaning/context of a literary work and this is argued through unraveling the two concealed contexts of the novel *The Palace of Dreams*: the totalitarian one and the ethnic identity one.

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