



Facultade de Filoloxía

Grao en Lingua e Literatura Inglesas

**The artist's moral principles in Joseph Conrad's
Heart of Darkness and Ingmar Bergman's Persona.**

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Título: The artist's moral principles in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Ingmar Bergman's *Persona*.

Resumo [na lingua en que se vai redactar o TFG; entre 1000 e 2000 caracteres]:

In this work I will analyse Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Ingmar Bergman's *Persona*, focusing on the moral principles that the characters hold and that also worry their authors. There are many novels and films in which a sort of heart of darkness could be identified. I have chosen these two masterpieces because they enter the heart of the heart of darkness and because it is an inner exploration that finally defines their main characters Marlow, Kurtz and Elisabet as artists full of moral thoughts and dilemmas. I will argue that an artist deals with moral principles in a different way than the rest of the people.

My aims are to show that these works deal with the moral principles of the artist, to explain why Marlow, Kurtz and Elisabet Vogler could be considered as artists, and to understand their moral inner debate and their decisions.

I will first carefully annotate the moral principles of these characters. I will then study the way in which the problem of the moral principles of the artist was dealt with in the historical and cultural context in which Conrad and Bergman created their respective works. I will also study the critical literature on these authors regarding the question of moral principles. Then I will analyse the thoughts and behaviour of the main characters of the novel and the film,

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focusing on their moral inner debate and decisions as artists. Finally, I will consider Elisabet as an artist and compare her to Marlow and Kurtz.

In the introduction I will explain the aims, the method and structure of my work. In the first section I will contextualise Conrad and Bergman. The second section will be dedicated to the analysis of the main characters. The third section will deal with the moral principles from the perspective of artist represented by Marlow, Kurtz, and Elisabet. Finally, I will end up with the conclusions and the bibliography.

Santiago de Compostela, 6 de novembro de 2018.

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INTRODUCTION

In this work, I will analyse Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Ingmar Bergman's *Persona*, focusing on the moral principles that the characters hold and that also worry their authors. There are many novels and films in which a sort of heart of darkness could be identified. I have chosen these two masterpieces because they enter the core of the heart of darkness and because it is their inner exploration that finally defines the characters Marlow, Kurtz, and Elisabet as artists full of moral thoughts and dilemmas. I will argue that an artist deals with moral principles in a different way than the rest of the people.

My AIMS are (1) to show that this work deals with the moral principles of the artist, (2) to explain why Marlow, Kurtz and Elisabet Vogler could be considered as artists, and (3) to understand their inner moral debate and their decisions.

ARGUMENT: The argument of this work will be focused on moral principles. Bergman and Conrad were very sensitive both to their time and to the problems of human beings. I will consider them as artists, and I will consider the main characters of their works as artists too. The work of art is normally something original and unique. In my view, the artist is someone with special sensitivity and a special perception of the world and who preserves them resisting the process of corruption. To do so, these souls build a strong and personal universe of moral principles that spins around the truth and the lies above all.

Truth and lies are the key concepts of this work. We will see that what makes them different from the rest of the people is the fact that they deeply explore an idea, and they cling to this idea. They will discover this idea, the truth, is not objective, as no objective truth really exists.

STRUCTURE: This work is composed of three chapters. The first one will deal with the authors and their works, the second chapter will deal with the characters, and the third one will deal with moral principles. Then I will provide a conclusion, a bibliography and an appendix.

METHOD: First of all, I will start providing the context of the lives of the authors. This chapter will be divided into four parts. I will begin with a little introduction to Ingmar Bergman and Joseph Conrad. I will then talk about their lives, not extensively but pointing some facts that I find relevant regarding the themes I am

going to touch, as I believe their experiences in life are crucial.

This will be a very short explanation, clarifying some points about them such as their own obsession for the truth.

Next, I will make a short presentation of *Heart of Darkness* and *Persona*. I will provide a small summary of both works.

In the second chapter, I will briefly introduce the main characters and their roles. Then I will explain who they are, their situations, and the relations between them. I will introduce Marlow and Kurtz and then Elisabet Vogler and Alma. As we shall see, it is not possible to talk about these characters without including the subject of the truth. In 2.3 I will show some points of connection between the works.

Chapter 3 analyses the moral principles of these characters. We will deeply explain the importance of truth and lies, and we will see how these characters behave with respect to this. We will also take into account some critical passages and scenes to clarify as much as possible the problem of truth and lies.

1 INGMAR BERGMAN & JOSEPH CONRAD AND THEIR WORKS

Ingmar Bergman and Joseph Conrad are two authors who compromised with moral principles. However, they are compromised in different ways.

Bergman has directed his work mainly towards existential issues. He narrows his search and focuses on the individual itself. We do not usually find the social critic in his work, and in the case, we can find it, it is generally set at a second level.

Conrad is very much aware of the problems of his time. Through his work, he tries to give us a moral lesson and criticize something he considers to be wrong. At the same time, he shows us how the individual acts in certain circumstances, and through their behaviour, we see their moral principles. Conrad displays a social as well as an inner crisis. It is a global crisis that causes personal torment. Bergman does not make it that clear, but in the end, he does the same. Both are aware of the problems of their time, but Bergman makes us forget a bit about the situation itself, submerging us completely inside the characters and their dilemmas while in Conrad we cannot easily forget what it is happening in the real world. Both Conrad and Bergman are immersed in a journey into their selves, into their own heart of darkness, and in a struggle against their demons. I am going to study Bergman's *Persona* (1966) and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899). *Persona* shows us some images that let us know what is happening outside, but in *Heart of Darkness*, we are all the time outside, and watching the tragedies of the Congo. It is essential to take into account the situation in which these authors lived. Bergman was outside the problematic conditions of his time, though he suffered for this too. However, Conrad was in the very centre of the tragedy. Sweden was one of the poorest countries in Europe in the 19 century when industrialization began to grow there; their economic problems started to disappear. During the two world wars, the country remained neutral, an important fact to understand that Bergman did not suffer the woes of a war. Conrad, on the contrary, was a witness. He saw with his own eyes what was happening in the Congo.

That is why I say that they are compromised with moral principles differently

because their experiences in life were different. However, they have reached the same conclusions, that are above all that they cannot stand the lack of truth and lies.

1.1 INGMAR BERGMAN:

14th July 1918 – 30 July 2007

Bergman (2007) used to say that every character of his films is himself. I will start by highlighting those aspects of Bergman's life that help to understand the point of his work that I am going to analyse in my TFG and that are crucially important to follow him and his films: his nihilism, his values, and death.

Ernst Ingmar Bergman was a well-known Swedish director and writer, who first worked mainly in theatre, then in film, and also television and radio. His career started in the theatre. He had been in touch with the theatre since he was a child. He initiated his studies in art and literature at Stockholm University in 1937, but he did not finish them. He wrote several plays and became the assistant director at the theatre. Some years later he had the chance to direct one of his first own scripts. Moreover, he directed more than one hundred seventy plays, and about sixty films and documentaries.

Bergman was born in Uppsala, Sweden, in a modest middle-class family. His mother was a nurse, and his father was a vicar. As his father had to give the last rites and to officiate funerals, Bergman has always lived close to death. This experience is something that would mark his entire life. He was also very impressed by the architecture and the paintings in the church. We can read this in his autobiography:

“I devoted my interest to the church's mysterious world of low arches, thick walls, the smell of eternity, the coloured sunlight quivering above the strangest vegetation of medieval paintings and carved figures on ceilings and walls. There was everything that one's imagination could desire—angels, saints, dragons, prophets, devils, humans ...” (Bergman, 2007:20)

In this religious context Bergman not only got some of the fears that would accompany him during his whole life, but also a source of ideas and food for his

imagination, and the starting point for many of his creations.

Bergman's films turn round faith and nihilism. As a child, he believed in God, but when he grew up, his faith came and went over the years. Due to his religion and education, he has always dealt with the problem of evil and moral principles. Also, due to his loss of faith, as well as his profound disappointment in humanity, he fell into a deep existential nihilism.

One significant experience for him was his journey to Germany where he went as an exchange student. He was amazed because the family with which he lived loved Hitler. Moreover, he acknowledged he was too. It was when he started to hear about the concentration camps that he saw what was happening, but at first, he thought the images of these concentration camps that were beginning to appear were a fake. He felt misinformed, stupid, and innocent, as everyone he knew there. This feeling has to do with this disappointment in humanity, and in his films, we can see characters like this family, who feel comfortable in their ignorance. It seems this might be the reason why he did not deal with politics in his films and why his discourse is focused on the human being.

There is a particular experience in his life that made him change his mind towards God. In the summer of 1936, Bergman fell in love with a young Jewish woman. One day she disappeared with her family. They were put into a Nazi concentration camp. He was shocked as no one he knew complained or said anything. He asked his father why God did not care about the death of a young, innocent woman or his feelings. He answered that God had no time to worry about these little things, and Bergman said: "Then, I'm not interested in God anymore." He was eighteen years old. In his biography, he states that he lost his faith at the age of eight – sometimes it was there, sometimes it just disappeared. Bergman experienced the silence of God, and consequently, he lost his faith. He concluded that God is unable to do anything because he does not exist.

Apart from these two experiences that lead Bergman to his existential nihilism and to be aware of the death, one of the reasons why Bergman is so obsessed with death is that he always had very frail health. He said he was born almost dead. Also, his education is a key to understand his obsessions

and the reason for his recurrent topics. Due to the work of his father, he was all the time surrounded by death, but also by solid values. He was used to seeing corpses in different stages of decomposition. I will mention this experience later on, because Bergman included this in his film, *Persona*.

Bergman suffered from the nervous belly that would accompany him almost all his life. He called this his demons inside. He was quite hypochondriac too, the kind of person who wakes up in the morning and examines his body. In *The Magic Lantern* (2007) we can read about one of these days; he says he wakes up as usual at five o'clock, "well... they awaken me", meaning the demons inside. Some evil spirit pulls him out of his deepest sleep. Now he is awake. To keep the hysteria and the sabotage of his intestines at bay, he immediately gets up and stands for a moment, motionless on the floor with his eyes closed. He reviews his current situation: how the body feels, how the soul feels, and above all, what needs to be done. He checks that his nose is clogged (the air is dry), his left testicle hurts (cancer, probably), his hip hurts (as usual), he has a sharp buzz in the lousy ear (unpleasant, but not too much disturbing.) These demons inside are his loss of faith and his disappointment with the world, a feeling of nonsense towards life, a fear of death. We can see these demons in all his films, and they are in *Persona* too.

It is possible that the relationship that his parents had, as it was not good, was crucial for him when representing love life in his films. He was quite different from the people he knew, from his schoolmates (he was depressed at school) and from his own family. He did not have a good relationship with his parents. He did not speak with his father almost all his life. For a long time, his father and his mother, although they lived together, they did not speak to each other. In *Persona*, we see something of this between Elisabeth and Alma, whose relationship departs from a full lack of communication.

1.2 JOSEPH CONRAD

3rd December 1857 – 3rd August 1924

Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski, Joseph Conrad, was a polish writer who

wrote in English. He used to say that when he had to talk his English was not very good, but there is no doubt that writing, he had great control over the language. That is the reason why, although English was not his mother tongue, he is considered to be one of the most celebrated novelists in the English language. He used to say that he did not adopt the English to write; it was English that took him. Conrad believed that if this had not happened, he probably would never have written at all.

He was born in a family of the lower nobility. His father was a writer and translator. His father also dedicated part of his time to politics; he was a Polish nationalist, an activist who was expelled from the country. Before being deported, he was in jail, where he translated texts from Shakespeare, and Conrad used to visit him. During the following years, far from Poland, Conrad's mother fell ill and died of tuberculosis. His father died four years later. He could return to Poland due to the illness.

At the age of twelve, Conrad was totally on his own, and it was his uncle who would take care of him from then on. He found shelter in literature; he read a lot when he was young. Wieslaw Krajka says that Conrad's early experiences were responsible for a view of life that, for him, was closely allied to tragedy. (1999) These experiences, together with his experiences as a teenager and an adult, give rise to the existential nihilism of Conrad.

He became a sailor at the age of seventeen, and at the age of twenty, he went to the east (the first time as a second mate/official navigator) on board of a ship called "The Judea", with the slogan "do or die" written on it. This "do or die" was the beginning of everything; it expressed all the perseverance that he had needed to become a British sailor and would need when he wanted to dedicate his life to writing.

In 1878, he moved to England to avoid military recruitment. This year he tried to commit suicide, probably an unhappy love affair. He worked as a sailor in coasting-vessels and during his free time he read Shakespeare in depth. That is how he achieved an impressive control of English. Since then, he sailed in many ships such as, for example, "Narcissus". ('The Nigger of the Narcissus').

When he was nine years old, pointing the finger at Africa, he thought: "I will go there". So he went. He became a sailor and fell in love with the sea. He would travel to the Congo in 1890 as a merchant marine officer. The enthusiastic and young Conrad would discover the atrocities committed by the

colonizers. A childish dream turns into a bitter truth. This increased that feeling of meaninglessness towards life. Conrad saw growth as a nonsense one has to face. His journey to the Congo would be crucially important for his personality. Some would say he started to create a very pessimistic view of humanity, but in fact, Krajka (1999) wrote the following statement:

"Conrad [...] belongs to that secular brand of existentialism which has to seek its meaning in a Godless world and which regards with indifference man's unceasing travail. [...] I make this claim in defiance of many accusations that he was a pessimist."

He wrote to his friend Marguerite Proadowski the following words:

"A little self-deception, many dreams, a rare flash of happiness, then disillusionment, a little anger, and much suffering and then the end. Peace! There is the design, and we must see this tragi-comedy to the end. One must make up his mind to it" (Frederick R., 1979:284)

Conrad, due to his feelings and experiences, became a writer and almost a philosopher. His works are not just simple stories. Watt (1980) mentions that:

"If Conrad disclaims being a thinker, he strikes us as very thoughtful; and if we cannot call him a philosopher, the intimations of his fictional world steadily invite ethical and even metaphysical response."

I agree that Conrad, wrote in a way, at least in the Heart of darkness, that makes the reader wonder about moral principles, and look into them. He analyses these ethical principles looking around him and looking inside himself.

Probably his journey to the heart of Africa helped him to enhance his vision of the world. The cruelty, the murders, the betrayals, the lies, money, and power constitute a strange and cruel "heap of broken images", as T.S. Eliot (1998) wrote in *"The burial of Death"*. He glimpses a Waste Land, an immense drought in the human being.

"In the novella, Conrad sees a waste landscape of industrial junk: a 'boiler

wallowing in the grass'; an 'undersized railway truck' lying on its back, its wheels in the air. Once part of industry, it has now become part of a dying nature. [...] Marlow sees more 'pieces of decaying machinery' [...] the human beings working on it indistinguishable from the industrial waste surrounding them. [...] Human beings and machines join, in a 'grove of death'." (Frederick R., 1979:290)

This journey is a physical journey, but also a spiritual journey, for Marlow in the novel, and Conrad in real life. This drought in the human being and this waste landscape are physical too, in the sense that we can see it as we can read in Frederick's words, but it is also spiritual. Moreover, this physical and spiritual draught join in a 'grove of death'. Everything is dying, and no one seems to notice or care.

1.3 HEART OF DARKNESS

Heart of darkness is a novel by Joseph Conrad was published in three instalments in *the British magazine Blackwood's Magazine* 1899 and book form in 1902. He wrote this novel after returning from a ten years' trip from the Congo. His experience there and what he saw there marked him deeply. Conrad himself said that the story was a little, but only a little, beyond the real facts.

It tells the story of a sailor called Charles Marlow and his trip to the gloomy depths of the Congo in search of Kurtz, a commercial agent of an Ivory company. The story is narrated by Marlow to his fellow sailors aboard The Nellie, in the River Thames, as it gets dark.

He is not interested in money; he wants to fulfil his child's dream of going to that isle he saw in the maps. He insinuates his aunt who encourages him to go to the Company because they needed a captain to replace the one who had died recently, that what colonizers do there has nothing to do with saving people from ignorance and civilize them; they want money and ivory.

"I ventured to hint that the Company was run for profit." 'You forget, dear

Charles, that the labourer is worthy of his hire." (Conrad, 1996:14)

Marlow crosses the Channel and signs the contract.

The first part of the novel tells us about his journey from London to Africa, and his ascending the river aboard a french steamboat. Aboard this steamboat Marlow, horrified, witnesses the cruel domination of colonialism. During the journey, they cross with another boat that is shooting into the jungle.

"In the empty immensity of earth, sky, and water, there she was, incomprehensible, firing into a continent. Pop, would go one of the eight-inch guns; a small flame would dart and vanish, a little white smoke would disappear, a tiny projectile would give a feeble screech – and nothing happened. Nothing could happen. There was a touch of insanity in the proceeding, a sense of lugubrious drollery in sight; and it was not dissipated by somebody on board assuring me earnestly there was a camp of natives – he called them enemies! Hidden out of sight somewhere" (Conrad,1996:16)

The journey continues, after thirty days and many stops, they anchored off the seat of the government. However, it is two hundred miles further on when his work starts. Marlow had his passage on a little sea-going steamer and arrived at the station. Moreover, there, taking a look around before entering the stations, he sees something. First, he sees a group of black men walking:

"A slight clinking behind me made me turn my head. Six black men advance in a file, toiling up the path. They walked erect and slow, balancing small baskets full of earth on their heads [...] I could see every rib, the joints of their limbs were like knots in a rope; each had an iron collar on his neck, and all were connected together with a chain whose bights swung between them, rhythmically clinking." (Conrad,1996:16)

After this image, he sees some shadows, another horrible image for him, a consequence of the evil practices of the company.

"They were dying slowly – it was very clear. They were not enemies; they were not criminals; they were nothing earthly now – nothing but black shadows

of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom. Brought from all the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts, lost in uncongenial surroundings, fed on unfamiliar food, they sickened, became inefficient, and were then allowed to crawl away and rest. These moribund shapes were free as air – and nearly as thin." (Conrad,1996:20)

He enters the station and stays there for ten days. He meets the chief accountant of the company. This man tells Marlow about Kurtz, someone with a hopeful future for his exceptional capacity extracting ivory and for the effect he causes on the other employees and the aborigines; a mixture of mystery, terror, and envy.

Marlow leaves the station with a caravan of sixty men for a two-hundred-mile tramp.

Then Marlow meets the company general manager who tells him that his mission is to recover Kurtz from the Inner station, but before he has to fix the steamboat that is sunk at the bottom of the sea. So there will be a delay of three months.

Near the Inner Station, they find a hut with a stack of fire-wood and with a note that says hurry up. They feel they may be attacked. The river is narrow and shallow, and suddenly many arrows appear killing several crew members. The helmsman is killed. After the attack, they are very near the Inner Station where Kurtz is. Someone waves them, he is a Russian drifter, and this man explains that he is the one who left the note and that Kurtz is very ill. He tells Marlow that he is considered a God by the natives.

Marlow witnesses how the natives worship Kurtz as if he were a God. However, Marlow also sees the barbarism and the madness that surrounds him. He feels horrified to see several rows of natives heads on pots all around the station.

Kurtz realises that they want to bring them back to Europe, so he tries to escape. However, Marlow threatens him, and Kurtz regrets all his errors and the failings of his grand visions.

A connection between Marlow and Kurtz starts to grow. In the end, Marlow manages to convince Kurtz to return to Europe with him, but Kurtz is seriously ill and dies in Marlow's arms on their way back home as he utters the famous words: "the horror, the horror..." Kurtz gives some papers to Marlow and asks

Marlow not to show them to anyone and keep them as a secret.

Back in Europe, some went to visit Marlow and ask for the papers. Marlow decides to visit Kurtz's widow, who still keeps her mourning dress, and he gives the papers to her. She tells him how much she admired her husband. Marlow listens in silence, aware of the atrocities he had committed. Nonetheless, taking pity of her, he decides to lie and tell her that his last words were her name.

1.4 PERSONA

Persona is a film written and directed by Ingmar Bergman in 1966. A large part of the script was written while he was recovering from pneumonia at the Sophiahemmet hospital. Under these circumstances, he left his habit of writing complete scripts, to have more freedom when he was in the hospital. The text of Persona was completed on the fly as the film production progressed.

The film begins with a few confusing first minutes, where we are shown a series of images, such as a spider or a crucifixion. We also see a morgue with dead older people, a child who wakes up by the sound of a bell and who starts reading a book after running to a screen where an image of the two protagonists is shown.

Then Elisabeth Vogler appears. A well-known theatre actress who had fallen silent while performing the play Electra. She is in a hospital where a doctor, after checking that she is not sick and that she does not have any physical or mental problems and that her silence is voluntary. Alma is a nurse who has to take care of the actress. Elisabeth feels horrified by some images she sees on television, such as a monk's self-immolation during the Vietnam War. She also feels horrified by a letter of her husband that Alma reads to her, and a photo of her son.

The doctor has a house in the countryside near the beach, and she sends Elisabeth there with this young and inexperienced nurse. Alma thinks she is incapable of facing someone with such strong willpower to remain in his muteness.

Once they begin to live together in the countryside, they seem to get along

very well. Elisabeth stays in her muteness but agrees to listen to Alma, who tells her about her husband, her ambitions, what she expects of her future and her way of seeing the world. One night while Elisabeth is in bed and she is sitting on a small sofa, Alma confesses the traumatic experience of an abortion that is still taking its toll after an orgy on a beach with two young men and her friend Katarina. Alma became pregnant and had an abortion. She feels guilty because she is engaged to a man called Karl-Henrik. When she later finds out that Elisabeth has told her secret to the doctor Alma leaves a broken glass in the ground so Elisabeth will step on it. Then she threatens her with a cauldron of boiling water and makes Elisabeth speak. Elisabeth runs off, and Alma wants Elisabeth to forgive her.

As the film progresses, we see how the two protagonists attract each other, and they submerge in what appears to be a vampiric symbiosis that leads to the transformation and evolution of Alma.

One night, Elisabeth's husband arrives and, without recognizing Alma nor Elisabeth, he approaches Alma. As with the myth of the vampire, Alma is under Elisabeth's control, and she behaves as if she were Elisabeth. Alma begins to feel confused; her way of seeing the world abandons her, and she loses her identity when interacting with Elisabeth. During this symbiosis, Alma talks as if she was Elisabeth, and has sex with Elisabeth's husband.

The vampiric symbiosis is complete when Alma cuts herself and forces Elisabeth to suck her blood. This ends with the fusion of the face of Elisabeth and the face of Alma. Through this symbiosis, they benefit and complete each other.

In the end, Alma returns to the place from which she left, to the safety of that life she had in the hospital and with her fiancé.

The film ends with the child examining the screen of the projector, while the tape stops working, ending the movie as if to say: The fiction is over.

1.5 KEY CONCEPT

We will be dealing with the concept of truth in this work. The question is, what does truth means and what is the truth?

We can talk about a collective truth. Everyone shares this truth. On the other

hand, we can speak of a firm belief or subjective truth. Moreover, also we have this strong belief brought to bear, someone with such an absolute truth that he divinizes himself.

We will deal with the truth as something that does not exist. We have this collective truth that means that they all share the same reality, and they assume that. However, our characters cannot assume this collective truth, so they built their truth, their own reality. We will see this in Elisabeth, Alma and Marlow. Some, like Kurtz, divinize themselves. We will be spinning all the time among these truths, and we will find out that none of them will be able to maintain their truth.

2 THE MAIN CHARACTERS

It is impossible to descend to the underworld without being prepared for it. Unfortunately, it is impossible to be prepared because there is no training method. It is during the very decline when one can start to understand oneself when one can start to glimpse a light inside the darkest gloom and to mistrust it if necessary.

The underworld, the darkness, can have many personifications depending on the story. Some characters in some stories go down in search of their dear ones, just as Orfeo does. He goes down in search of Euridice. Also, Dante goes down accompanied by Virgilio, in search of his beloved Beatrice. Others, like..., go down pushed by a strong hunger, a hunger for the truth. These are willing to behold, and they are full of a huge desire to see, things in their most original form. Others are ready to surrender to the darkness, half hypnotized and half-aware that they are being imbued with perversity.

"Often far away there, I thought of these two, guarding the door of Darkness, knitting black wool as for a warm pall, one introducing continuously to the unknown, the other scrutinising the cheery and foolish faces with unconcerned old eyes. Ave! Old knitter of black wool. Morituri te salutant!" (Conrad, 1996:12)

All our characters penetrate a sort of inferno; all of them want to avoid lies and find themselves. Moreover, at the same time, they are surrounded by this feeling of nonsense towards life, the same feeling that their authors cannot avoid.

"Droll thing life is – that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose. The most you can hope from it is some knowledge of yourself – that comes too late – a crop of inextinguishable regrets. (Conrad, 1996:87)

So, we have before us two stories, from different periods, but with a very similar plot and very similar characters. In fact, with a plot and characters as old as humanity. In *Heart of Darkness* and *Persona*, we can find these character models:

- **The innocent [Kurtz's fiancée].** We have the innocents this could be 90% of the society. They wholly give themselves to whoever promises them salvation.
- **The passivity of society.** This could be considered as a character itself, a vast character fed by little characters. These characters, together with their problems, clash with other characters and with their problems, leading to an unavoidable failure in terms of coexistence. Also, making almost impossible the success, at a spiritual and moral level, of a society that is based on money and power. So, we have a ruling class, characterised by its cynicism and irresponsibility, in contrast with a submissive class, used to kiss their chains because they are fearful and they even feel grateful that they do not make them suffer more than they already suffer. In *Persona*, we see this personified in Alma.
- **The eccentric character [Kurtz and Elisabeth].** This character is eloquent and able to persuade those around him/her (even being silent) making them participants of a perverse dance, a dance that celebrates emptiness and horror. A character that is destroyed, with a broken soul, but also a character that represents the truth, the rebellion. Finally, this character becomes a symbol, a sort of God, a judge with the ability to deliver judgements on the true and false, on now and tomorrow, present and future. However, this admirable character will be corrupted at the end and will become what he hates, a perverse and cynical being. The character will wish his own death, and he will wholly surrender to the darkness.
- **The hero [Marlow].** This character is tired of the lies told by a sick society. He tries to find himself. One that may feel an instinctive rejection towards the eccentric character, but at the same time, this hero feels a kind of attraction and easily fall under the enchantment of this eloquence, despite having contemplated for himself the inferno.
- **The beach (*Persona*) and the jungle (*Heart of darkness*).** We can

consider them characters too because they seem to be alive, and in fact, they have a significant effect on the characters. Natural spaces are outside the rules of society. As Panagopoulos (1998) wrote, "The jungle could be a metaphor for a society where men are reduced to beasts through the loss of that ethical and rational order. Something that used to provide their religious beliefs." Something similar can be applied to the beach and every natural space.

2.1 MARLOW AND KURTZ

Marlow and Kurtz, together with the jungle, represent the real key of the novel. Despite their differences, they have many things in common, and their existence is so related that it is impossible to talk about one without talking about the other. We will start at the beginning.

Kurtz may be inspired by Georges Antoine Klein. Klein means small in German, and Kurtz means short.

"Klein, who was twenty-seven when he died on the downriver journey of the *Roi des Belges*, need not concern us despite Conrad's use of his name since he was so little a model for Kurtz. He seems to be an ordinary agent [...] In some way; he touched Conrad's imagination – perhaps because of his relative youth, his lost hopes, his dreams shattered by illness – but he was conventional in life and conventional in death. He did not last out the three-year enlistment." (Frederick R., 1979:297)

Kurtz is a worker, who gained an excellent reputation, in a company in charge of exploiting ivory, in Congo. Despite Marlow's initial lack of interest at the beginning, he presents us at the beginning of the novel. Moreover, as the novel moves forward, we learn through the rest of the characters that he is a highly charismatic and eloquent man. These qualities have led him to become the man who extracts the largest amount of ivory, although his methods aroused confusion and envy among his companions.

"He [...] said he was a first-class agent. [...] 'He is a very remarkable person.'

[...] Mr Kurtz was at present in charge of a trading-post, a very important one, in the true ivory-country, at 'the very bottom of there. Sends in as much ivory as all the others put together...' (Conrad, 1996:22)

From the beginning of the novel, we see this character is misunderstood by the rest of the characters of the novel. No one seems to know him. All the information about him comes to us from rumours and myths that enhance his airs and graces.

The jungle, that oneiric and tenebrous world, together with the strange customs of its inhabitants provoke in him an immature attitude; he takes the form of an immature prince, a selfish and greedy prince who overcomes all limits. Although maybe it is wrong to say: 'who overcomes all limits' if we take into account that he feels outside the laws of society and morality. He places himself in a superior position.

The natives fall prey to his voice, as Marlow says. This is a voice that Marlow also wants to listen, and here we find the idea that Kurtz is someone you cannot see but hear.

"I made a strange Discovery that I had never imagined him as doing, you know, but as discoursing. I didn't say to myself, 'Now I will never see him' or 'Now I will never shake him by the hand', but 'Now I will never hear him'. The man presented himself as a voice." (Conrad, 1996:58)

Natives fall prey to his extraordinary eloquence, while Kurtz fall prey to them at the same time when he is considered a God by them.

They believe in him just as if he were a God. They trust him as if he were an enlightened being full of wisdom. Due to this worship he receives, he is unable to leave the place. This is caused by the feeling of responsibility towards his subjects. He believes they need him. Also, they believe they need him. This makes him feel so alone.

This self-imposed isolation from the civilization brings as a consequence, the complete incomprehension of his companions, and the incomprehension of his wife, who venerates him but does not know how he really is. She completely ignores his cruel and murderous acts, as well as his unstoppable and increasing ambition. The incomprehension of the harlequin, his disciple, who venerates

him as the natives do, and the incomprehension of the general manager, a man without an iota of imagination, who talks and talks without taking into account the emptiness of his own words. The sort of man whose lack of everything only leads to the irresponsible destruction of everything that is in his hands. It is this lack of everything, this lack of moral principles, of empathy, of responsibility, which makes him feel so jealous of Kurtz.

All this incomprehension, along with the destructive power that the darkness of the jungle has over his mind is what leads Kurtz to certain limits, forgetting his morality. We could say those limits border on madness, but in fact, this situation places him in a state of lucidity within so much darkness. And it is this lucidity what makes him fall ill and surrender to death little by little. This situation makes us feel not only that he gives himself up to death, but that he waits for someone. Someone like Marlow. Someone with as much determination in carrying out his obsessions as himself. Someone who wishes to abandon all falsehood and that hates the lies of the civilization as much as he does.

We are told that Kurtz went there with some moral ideas, although everything he does is far away from any morality.

"I would give some thought to Kurtz. I wasn't very interested in him. No. Still, I was curious to see whether this man, who had come out equipped with moral ideas of some sort, would climb to the top after all, and how he would set about his work when there." (Conrad, 1996:37)

Marlow and Kurtz are twin souls in some way. They are curious souls, seekers of knowledge in little-explored places. It is Marlow who gets to know Kurtz. Also, we could say that it is Kurtz the one who gets to know Marlow. They get to know their own nature thanks to the other. They both wish to know each other, and Kurtz seems to surrender to death but also Marlow, allowing him to accompany him in his last moments of life.

It is Marlow precisely to whom he confesses what he has done. He confesses in his moment of greater clarity. He pronounces the most overwhelming words of the whole novel. He whispers: "The horror, the horror..."

Kurtz went to the Congo as a man full of moral principles, but the horror he sees, the vision of the authentic truth of things, the experience of achieving an incredible lucidity and the horror caused by himself made him lose his lucidity.

When Kurtz says "The horror..." he means the terrible things he has done. It is that horror that Marlow sees in the jungle, the horror caused by the colonizers and the horror caused by Kurtz, that pushes Marlow, who hates lies and falsehood, to sympathize with Kurtz's fiancée and at the same time with Kurtz himself. Marlow pities them. This horror pushes him to lie and deceive Kurtz's fiancée. Marlow uses the lie to try to protect her from this dark side of her lover, to protect her from the jungle, from humanity. Or as Watt (1980) says the verdict on the essential depravity of man and his civilisation. He tries to keep her away from horror, the same horror that we try to hide from the children so they can stay in their passive naivety. It is an attempt to save them from suffering, and give them some hope.

Marlow is presented to us by another sailor as a British sailor from the upper class.

"The worst that could be said of him was that he did not represent his class. He was a seaman, but he was a wanderer too, while most seamen lead, if one may so express it, a sedentary life." (Conrad, 1996:5)

He is obsessed with Africa and decides to embark on an adventure, to find himself and the authentic truth of things. He will find out the cruel imperialism and the result of the colonization. Probably he is the alter ego of Joseph Conrad.

At first, he feels upset with what he sees when he meets the members of the company. Marlow seems to feel very disgusted by the superficiality he finds around him. The superficiality of the director and the workers of the company, those empty men with nothing inside. As Marlow says, "Men who come out here should have no entrails". (Conrad, 1996:26)

In terms of his relationship towards Kurtz, as we said before, Marlow does not feel a particular interest in him until he starts to listen to the things that the others say about him. He shows, in fact, a feeling of indifference, but it is broken and vanished with their first meeting. Kurtz's spells, enchantments and charms, strengthened with the visions of the jungle and the rites of the savages, start to have an impact on him. This causes contradictory feelings in him.

On the one hand, he feels repulsion. On the other hand, he feels and intrigue he cannot resist. When he arrives at the Inner Station he says something that

could be also be applied to Kurtz:

“It was sombre enough too – and pitiful – not extraordinary in any way – not very clear either. No, not very clear. And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light.” (Conrad, 1996:8)

As we said, both Marlow and Kurtz, are curious beings, moved by a voracious hunger for knowledge. Both of them want to escape from the falsehood and the superficiality, these two forces which dominate the rest of the mortals.

"The only real feeling was a desire to get appointed to a trading-post where ivory was to be had, so that they could earn percentages. They intrigued and slandered and hated each other only on that account." (Conrad, 1996:29)

Also, Marlow owns a certain air of divinity. He is apart from the company, and he feels morally and intellectually superior to the rest of the characters. Also, this is precisely the reason why he feels so terribly attracted to Kurtz. Marlow says that the river led him directly to Kurtz. Marlow was led to Kurtz, whose hypnotic and charming voice seduces him completely. However, his cruel, selfish and absurd methods made him question what it is said about Kurtz as he sees Kurtz can commit terrible crimes. Kurtz is able to assassinate innumerable natives in order to get more ivory. Ivory that deep inside does not really interest him.

“But his soul was mad. Being alone in the wilderness, it had looked within itself, and, by heavens! I tell you, it had gone mad. I had – for my sins, I suppose – to go through the ordeal of looking into myself.” (Conrad, 1996:83)

Marlow begins to consider Kurtz's attitude as childish. He contemplates Kurtz as a capricious child who plays with ants and changes the natural course of their lives. He knows Kurtz is comfortable representing the figure of God among the natives and that Kurtz sees in Marlow a possible substitute or someone who would help him. Marlow reveals himself to us as a healing and compassionate divinity, someone who is beyond good and evil. He is the one who ends up

healing Kurtz. He helps him to reach the end, the end of his own journey to the end of the night, his journey to his heart of darkness. It is on this point where Marlow takes the shape of God, or as Conrad wrote, a Buddha who judges:

"Marlow ceased, and sat apart, indistinct and silent, in the pose of a meditating Buddha." (Conrad,1996)

Marlow convinces Kurtz to turn back, but this dies in his arms. He is impassive and compassionate, and he ends up commiserating with Kurtz, also with Kurtz's fiancée. He finally commiserates with the whole humanity for its self-destructive and irresponsible character with its own existence. He feels compassion for humanity that deforms a world in which perhaps the authentic truth has no place, as human beings are naive and passive, unable to assume the truth without setting the world on fire

2.2 ELISABETH AND ALMA

As in most of Bergman's works, the main characters of his films are in the midst of a conflict with themselves and with the world surrounding them. In this case, both Alma and Elisabeth are very young characters, in the prime of their lives. Despite being so young, they suffer the same problems as Isak Borg from *Wild Strawberries* (1957), Andreas Winkelmann in *The passion of Anna* (1969), or Monika and Henry in *Summer with Monika* (1953), who is even younger than Alma and Elisabeth. All of them are characters, frequently immersed in silence, a silence that comes from desolate beaches and fields from a grey and lugubrious Sweden, this silence that comes from the reading of Sartre and Kierkegaard. The silence of a God that is absent. The silence as a representation of nothingness and life as nonsense. Even the dialogues are full of silence, dialogues with no answers, with no escape. This is the silence of suffering that serves as a protective wall, to hide the horror of the world and the very horror that each character has inside.

This silence comparable to the jungle that Conrad describes in *Heart of darkness*.

In Alma and Elisabeth, we find the game of the self, the person/the mask and the shadow proposed by Carl Jung in *Las relaciones entre el yo y el*

inconsciente (1993). The self represents the conscious part, what we think we are, what we think of ourselves. "Persona" is the mask we wear depending on our wishes and what we want to be in front of the society the shadow is the darkness inside ourselves, that intervenes again and again between the self and the person. Jumping from mask to mask, from person to person, Elisabeth and Alma exchange their masks taking place a kind of symbiosis of vampiric nature. Jung (1993) says that Persona is an adequate expression because the word person means originally the mask wore by the actor to indicate his role. While the shadow is the unconscious part of our minds that we cannot dominate.

Before analysing our characters, it is crucial to have in mind the beginning of the film. Just observing the first minutes of the film, we can realise what Bergman tries to show us through the rest of the film. The story begins when the film projector starts working as if it wanted to announce that what we are about to see is fiction, or at least that it does not happen in the present, in real life, that it may be a dream, a nightmare or a vision. Bergman does this insistently, making us understand that it is not merely a reverence to the cinema and film production, but a way of introducing us into this dream, nightmare or vision where everything we try to hide, all the shadows that Carl Jung talks about, are revealed.

The film starts with "a heap of broken images" as if they were thoughts that come to our minds. We see this unexpected phallus, with absolutely nothing to prepare its appearance, and much less its erection. It appears violently, to awaken something inside the viewer, inside our repressed unconscious. In this film, the protagonists are women, so this image appears before us as something decontextualized. It is something that has been removed, just as the water of the animated cartoon that appears inverted. This cartoon washes her face and her breast, but there is no water. The same happens with the head and the scattered viscera of the slaughtered sheep. We also have an image of the hands of someone being crucified and of the hands of someone as if they spoke in sign language. The image of corpses of older people on stretchers, this, is a real experience, Bergman used to see this quite often thanks to a peculiar friendship he had with the goalkeeper of the hospital. This goalkeeper was in charge of transporting the corpses between the hospital and the chapel. Finally, we have the image of a man escaping from a skeleton that comes out of

a trunk. He escapes and hides in bed, just as children would do when a nightmare bursts into the night. All this reaffirms that oneiric atmosphere. After the image of Alma and Elisabeth's faces we see the child, he wakes up among the death. While the phone is ringing he hides under the sheets, he leans back and covers his feet. He tries to get comfortable but he cannot. Afterwards he starts reading a children's book, sits up in bed and examines the screen where we can see again the symbiosis between Alma and Elisabeth. He caresses the faces trying to clarify the image.

This oneiric introduction gives way to a film that deals mostly with the shadows under masks that end up fading until they are exchanged between Alma and Elisabeth. The narration begins and tells us the story of Elisabeth. She is an actress that during her Electra's representation remained silent. It is voluntary mutism. A silence that shows that moral superiority that the artist sometimes feels above the others and good and evil, considering herself the owner of the truth. This is a childish silence, as it reminds us of the attitude of a child when he gets angry. However, it is severe at the same time, because it shows an admirable strength. by the mere fact of seeking to renounce the lie and the dishonesty that governs the world.

It is through her silence that she rebels against and against its corrupted instincts. But, she is corrupted too in some way just like everyone else when she writes a letter to the doctor telling all the confidences about Alma, betraying Alma's confidence.

Alma is the nurse who takes care of Elisabeth. She is a young woman without much experience in the world of work, and she is planning to marry a man. It seems that she intends to devote herself entirely to her husband and abandon her profession just as her mother did. She explains it in one of her first appearances. Alma is the real protagonist of the film, which who is shown to us through Elisabeth's eyes. She is a naive woman duped by the apparent greatness a mental strength of Elisabeth, the successful actress, with supposed knowledge of life and of the truth that she does not know.

Alma opens her heart to Elisabeth and tells her repressed desires and her most embarrassing memories that she had never unveiled to anyone, as the perverse sexual experience she had with another woman on a beach with two men they did not know. Elisabeth glimpses part of the shadow behind Alma's mask. Elisabeth betrays her unveiling Alma's secrets to the doctor as if she

could have the right of judging Alma from the superior position of her silence. Elisabeth is like a God who watches everything from her throne and laughs.

Elisabeth laughs, but she is not aware of betraying her moral principles. She abandoned her husband and her son without giving them an explanation. She breaks the photo she is given in one of the first scenes, just as if she wanted to reject a thought or something that generates bad conscience.

We see how Elisabeth and Alma exchange their masks little by little. We have Alma who is a nurse in charge of taking care and try to heal Elisabeth, but they both help each other by exchanging their masks. Elisabeth heals Alma by helping her to free herself from some of the shadows inside her. It is interesting to observe the moment when Elisabeth ends with her mutism. This happens when Alma realises that Elisabeth has betrayed her. Alma gets very angry. There is a struggle between them, and Elisabeth hits Alma. Alma hits her back, and Elisabeth laughs. She laughs flaunting her moral superiority.

She laughs, and Alma takes the boiler full with boiling water, and she is determined to throw it. It is right here when Elisabeth renounces to her mutism and talks, due to the same horror (the horror of the world, the war, the passivity of the human being) and truth (as she identifies life as a farce, life in general and also her own life) that lead her to decide to remain.

Bergman presents the truth as something painful, something real. We can see this when Elisabeth feels horrified when she watches the news about the Vietnam War on television. She feels horrified when she sees the monk burning alive with his hand held high, firm, stable, defending an idea.

Elisabeth, who seemed to be the honest one, is now under the control of Alma, and it is now Alma the one who shows some honesty and strength. They exchange roles in that scene.

Elisabeth feeds on Alma as a vampire. At the same time, she heals her and makes Alma a stronger person. Alma collapses in some scene, but it gives her confidence, and this allows her to face Elisabeth.

They wear the same mask at a certain point, when they are caressing each other in front of the mirror they show us their mask. They exhibit it to us. They seem a bit more comfortable with their masks

Vampiric symbiosis: There are two key moments where we can see their vampiric symbiosis. The moment when Elisabeth's husband appears and Alma talks. Her husband does not recognize Elisabeth and Alma talks in her place.

Here Alma gets to know the darkest side of Elisabeth. Alma says this words that are, in fact, Elisabeth's words:

“Anaesthetise me... throw me away! No. I can't! I can't take any more! Leave me alone! It's shame! It's all shame! Leave me alone! I'm cold and rotten and indifferent!” (Persona, 1966)

The other moment is placed at the end of the film when both faces are joined together.

2.3 SOME POINTS OF CONNECTION

As we have already seen, we are dealing with two stories that revolve around the search for truth and the defence of moral principles. This is probably too idealistic for the world our characters and authors live in, and that is why they choose the retirement, the silence, or the jungle. They want to find peace, a place in the world where they can live without getting corrupted. Nevertheless, their stories show that even those human beings that are in search for the truth are corrupted.

Now that the characters of these two works have been described, we are going to relate them and display the elements they have in common.

- **The symbiosis:** In both works, we can see two protagonists who get to know each other. In the beginning, they are reluctant to accept each other, but over time, they end up feeling affection one for the other. Little by little, they destroy all the barriers they put in the middle so as not to show their true self to the other. Somehow, both Elisabeth and Alma as well as Marlow and Kurtz exchange their roles. Thus, they heal the sick part of the other, and at the same time, they get to know the darkest side of each other.
- **The place where they are:** At first glance, they are not similar at all. One

takes place in the depths of the Congo jungle and the other on a quiet and lonely coast of Sweden. However, both are desolated landscapes devoided of everything and filled with a silence that has the same function. This function is to emphasise their isolation.

- **The truth:** All the main characters take truth very seriously. In this search for the truth and the absolute rejection of lies, they abandon their social lives to seclude themselves in lonely and forsaken places, except Marlow, that does not isolate himself but starts a journey to find an explanation to justify all the horror he sees.
- **Kurtz and Elisabeth:** both are shattered beings with a confuse past and a present that evades them. They consider themselves above the ordinary human morality, in which they do not believe. They hate lies and liars. They carry out a self-imposed exile in order to avoid becoming what they hate, although, in the end, they end up committing the same evil as those they hate.
- **Alma and Kurtz's fiancée:** We can also establish a connection between these two characters. They represent the naivety of society. They also represent the more conformist side of some human beings, those with no more aspiration than to survive in a society that they do not understand. This causes them a dissatisfaction that accompanies them throughout their lives.
- **Marlow and Kurtz and Elisabeth and Alma:** these characters get involved in a relationship that changes them forever. They nourish themselves as vampires, hungry for truth and hungry to find themselves. They want to abandon all sterile and dishonest act as well as to free themselves from their repressed traumas, feelings and secrets.

3 MORAL PRINCIPLES

In his book *The Magic Lantern* (2007) Ingmar Bergman wrote that his brother once said to him:

" Take Grandmother's umbrella. Put it up. I'll help you. Now, if you jump from the upstairs balcony, you'll fly." After this, he says: "I was stopped at the last minute and wept with rage, not because I had been deceived, but because one couldn't fly with Grandmother's umbrella."

By merely examining that experience that at first sight, some would consider innocent, we could explain almost everything. That was one of the first experiences of disappointment that children often suffer. Although he says "not because I had been deceived" it is in fact because he has been deceived that he gets angry. He realises he could not fly because he was told he could fly. And when he discovers it is not true, he sees a world in which not only do people say things that are not true but also you cannot fly. It is this innocence that pushes them to behave as they do, to become obsessed with the truth and to reject the lie. Because it is this innocence what makes Elisabeth remain silent in a way that recalls a little child that in the absence of fantasy gets angry, and Marlow to pursue the truth of things.

It is just another example, but Bergman tells it in such a beautiful and poetic way that he manages to convey that feeling that accompanied him throughout his life in such a clear way. That is precisely what we have before us, a series of individuals who at the bottom of themselves still keep the scraps of their childhood. They still hold the scraps of a child who believed in magic, who thought that an umbrella could make you fly. We are before people who really suffer and face the absence of the truth, or to speak properly, they have suffered and faced the presence of the one and only truth the world is a hostile place full of lies whose single exit gate is the greatest fear of every living thing, to cease to be, to die.

Our protagonists grew up surrounded by these thoughts. They fed on the incomprehension and the rejection they generated around them.

"Nobody paid attention to me. I tried to initiate contacts with prudence but they rejected me abruptly " (Bergman, 2007)

Notwithstanding, it is not just the incomprehension and the rejection what makes them act in that particular way in which they act. It is anger; it is the same rage Bergman felt when he discovered he could not fly with that umbrella. It is precisely that rage when discovering that things are not what they should

be that the world is full of lies that falsehood, arrogance and money rule the world. Our characters are searching for truth, but also meaning in life.

3.1 ELISABETH, ALMA, MARLOW AND KURTZ'S MORAL PRINCIPLES

All these characters seek meaning in life. Elisabeth, Alma and Marlow's they have built a reality in which lies can never take place, and the truth is essential. Nonetheless, they all betray their own principles.

Elisabeth:

We have just said that Elisabeth is the silent protagonist of *Persona*, the Ingmar Bergman's film, whose idealism almost borders on madness. Her voluntary and conscious silence demonstrates that she has quite rigid and firm solid moral principles.

We can see how complicated it is for a person like her to live in a world and in a society that is far away from her ideas. A society that does not have time to answer the big questions, nor to contemplate beauty, nor to enjoy life and its little pleasures. Society oppresses the individual since its birth and forces the individual to fit in a hostile organization which discards artistic, imaginative, pure or honest sensitivity.

Elisabeth is a person who has had luck in life despite everything. She has achieved considerable success in the world of acting. This situation enables her to enjoy an accommodated life which others cannot enjoy. And it is this accommodated way of living that leads her to escape from acting. She is onstage when she starts feeling that everything she is doing is false, that all her life is a sort of fiction, a kind of play, and as a consequence everything she had come to be was just a mirage. After this strong vision, she makes up her mind to remain silent, as a way of escaping from all this lack of truth surrounding her life.

“Everything is a lie or imitations! Everything!” (*Persona*, 1966)

Her silence is nothing else than a new lie. A new fiction that she has seized to survive, and as the doctor said at the beginning of the film, she will remain silent until it no longer seems appealing.

Elisabeth is a person who possesses a vision of morality, apparently solid and rigid as we have already said but which in reality is nothing more than rejection. It is a childish rejection. We could say that the moral principles of this character are very similar to those of a child, in the sense that they seem to be pure in thought, they are innocent.

Elisabeth hates lies and the game of masks that everybody plays. But those moral principles break down along the film.

Alma:

In this case, we have a young woman, who is a nurse just as her mother. She is engaged, and she is planning to leave her profession when she gets married also as her mother did when she was young. In a short monologue, Alma says:

“It’s strange. One goes through life doing the same things. Doing the same things. I will marry Karl-Henrik and we will have some children that I will raise. All of this is decided. It is inside me. There is nothing to think. It is an enormous feeling of security. I have a good job and I am happy with him. That is also good, but on the other hand... but it is good. It’s good.” (Persona, 1966)

This character represents the passivity of the vast majority of the people, possibly have never had the opportunity and time to rethink their lives, their personalities, their self since society does not offer the chance to find out who you are.

As Company (1999) says, her monologue is the representation? of the social mask that provides her with security that only a social role can offer.

Alma faces life almost with reckless abandon and with such irresponsibility over her own existence that it is impossible for her to look through a little hole inside her soul and aspire to become what she really is or what she could become if at least she dared to look and discover it. Alma adopts the moral principles imposed by society. What should be done and what is well accepted?

These are the questions that rule her mind as they govern the mind of most people.

When Alma meets Elisabeth, she starts to reconsider herself as a person. And by sharing an intimate confession with Elisabeth, she ends up adopting part of her the moral principles and ideas. Alma admires Elisabeth and wants to be like her at the beginning. After Elisabeth's betrayal, Alma starts to hate her, and does not want to be like her... Alma claims Elisabeth that truth and honesty that Elisabeth herself expects from the world

“I knew you'd refuse. You can't know how I feel. I always thought great artists felt great compassion for other people. That they created from a sense of great sympathy and a need to help. That was stupid of me. You've used me. Now that you don't need me you just throw me away. Yes, I hear very well how it sounds, how false it sounds! You've used me, now you're discarding me. Every word! And then these glasses!” (Persona, 1966)

Marlow:

His moral principles are as robust as those of Elisabeth, although he seems to know how to adapt himself better to the world. Despite detesting the world, he knows how to deal with it.

This may sound ironic as Marlow flees from the horror of society to enter and discover the horrors of Congo, but Congo is not only a place full of horrors but also a journey inside himself. Marlow's highest aspiration is to discover himself.

His Buddhist appearance manifests Marlow's integrity and even wisdom at the beginning of the narration. (Kafka, 1999) Marlow is like a Buddha he describes the reality he sees, the horror, politics, but without making any judgment, trying to unravel what there is of himself in all of it. And a person who seeks above all to discover himself hates lies, hypocrisy and dishonesty.

Marlow is looking for truth, but also some hope:

“Although Marlow never believed that the Company went to Africa to do anything other than make money, he is still looking for that ‘unselfish belief in the idea’ that would redeem colonialism. The idealistic Kurtz who first venture into the heart of the Congo seems to offer the hope that corruption and greed are not the final words about life and that spiritual values still exist somewhere

deep inside a man.” (Panagopoulos, 1998:91)

Kurtz:

Kurtz is presented by Marlow as someone able to enlighten; at the same time, we are told about his horrible acts. Kurtz's principles are not specified in the novel, but they seem to be so high that they lead him to establish himself as a deity amid the darkness of the Congo. He has released himself from conventions. While Marlow mistrusts the darkness of the jungle, Kurtz gets drunk with darkness. He has no one nor anything to oppress him, and as if he were beyond good and evil, he commits horrible acts. We could say that this character represents those who have freed themselves from moral principles as an übermensch (superman) as Nietzsche would say, whose ambition stripped of compassion makes him overcome all the limits. He places himself in a controlling God-like status, which is worshipped by everybody, and finally, he becomes a prisoner of all the disgusting acts he has committed. Krajka (1999) wrote that Conrad protagonists often discover the reality of their values through defeat or contradiction.

3.2 TRUTH AND LIES

As we have seen so far, the protagonists of these two works have a true concern for the truth. They hate lies and liars. They flee from the lies and the people who are involved in them as well as from everything they consider to be false. They are willing to wander in search of the truth constantly. <-> Even though they know that the human being is a being that tends to be corrupted and sometimes they cannot avoid lying and betray their own moral principles.

They are absolutely against the lie, but at the same time, they need it. We see this in Marlow who says the following words; nonetheless he lies:

"You know I hate, detest, and can't bear a lie, not because I am straighter than the rest of us, but simply because it appals me. There is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies - which is exactly what I hate and detest in the world - what I want to forget. It makes me miserable and sick, like biting something rotten would do. Temperament, I suppose. Well, I went near enough to it by letting the young fool there believe anything he liked to imagine as to my

influence in Europe. I became in an instant as much of a pretence as the rest of the bewitched pilgrims." (Conrad, 1996:32)

In *El último existencialista* (2007) Jordi Puigdomènech says that the individual being must save his identity against the environment that tends to merge it, to depersonalize it. That is exactly what they try to do, to escape from the collective truth and make a bigger one, their own truth and reality. Marlow talks about this own reality that you can achieve if you have the chance to find yourself.

"No, I don't like work. I had rather laze about a think of all the fine things that can be done. I don't like work – no man does – **but I like what is in the work – the chance to find yourself. Your own reality** – for yourself, not for others – what no other man can ever know. They can only see the mere show, and never can tell what it really means." (Conrad, 1996:35)

The only truth they find in the world is this reality they create. This is their refuge; it is their palace of truth where their dreams, as well as their self-realization, can take place.

We have just talked about the personalities of these characters and their moral principles. Now, in this section, we will go deep into truth and lies, as it is the centre of their moral principles.

Persona:

We have already discussed the effect of the vampiric symbiosis between the two protagonists of the Ingmar Bergman's movie. Something similar occurs with the truth and the lies. At the beginning, there is Elisabeth, who refuses to continue speaking after getting paralyzed performing Electra. She chooses to remain silent. She gives up talking because she despises everything she hears and sees. She prefers not to talk because it is the easiest way to avoid the lie, to avoid becoming everything she does not believe in and being swallow by falsehood

The Doctor says the following words to Elisabeth:

"I understand, all right. The hopeless dream of being - not seeming, but being. At every waking moment, alert. The gulf between what you are with

others and what you are alone. The vertigo and the constant hunger to be exposed, to be seen through, perhaps even wiped out. **Every inflection and every gesture a lie, every smile a grimace.** Suicide? No, too vulgar. But you can refuse to move, refuse to talk, so that you don't have to lie. You can shut yourself in. Then you needn't play any parts or make wrong gestures. Or so you thought. But reality is diabolical. Your hiding place isn't watertight. Life trickles in from the outside, and you're forced to react. No one asks if it is true or false, if you're genuine or just a sham. Such things matter only in the theatre, and hardly there either. I understand why you don't speak, why you don't move, why you've created a part for yourself out of apathy. I understand. I admire. You should go on with this part until it is played out, until it loses interest for you. Then you can leave it, just as you've left your other parts one by one." (Persona, 1966)

This is also explained by Company (1999), who says that we can also see this when Alma reads the letter that Elisabeth's husband wrote to her and she breaks the paper together with the photo of her son. The actress rejects the rhetoric of feelings ostentatiously because she sees on a mask, a speech that hides, for example, violence and humiliation in interpersonal relations.

Elisabeth takes refuge in herself, and she hides inside a reality created by herself that is drowning her slowly. It looks like she is waiting for the arrival of someone like Alma to breathe.

She remains silent throughout the whole movie, driving another character crazy. Alma speaks and speaks, almost in a confessional mode, until she loses control in what is an exercise of resistance and a demonstration of mental strength, something that she thinks she does not have due to her inexperience and youth.

Elisabeth adopts an attitude of superiority, but she is a woman deeply immersed in a crisis. Her silence seems a sign of disdain towards others, but actually, she flees. As the doctor says when she dissects and examines her, Elisabeth is fleeing from her responsibility as a mother and as a wife.

"What are you hiding under your hand? Let me see. It's the photo of your little boy. The one you tore up. We must talk about it. Tell me about it, Elisabeth. Then I will. It was one night at a party, isn't that right? It got late

and quite rowdy. Towards morning someone in the group said: "Elisabeth, you virtually have it all in your armoury as woman and artist. But you lack motherliness." You laughed because you thought it sounded silly. But after a while you noticed you thought about what he'd said. You became more and more worried. You let your husband impregnate you. You wanted to be a mother. When you realized it was definite, you became frightened. Frightened of responsibility, of being tied down, of leaving the theatre. frightened of your body swelling up. But you played the role. The role of a happy, young, expectant mother. Everyone said, "Isn't she beautiful? She's never been so beautiful." Meanwhile you tried to abort the foetus several times. But you failed. When you saw it was irreversible... you started to hate the baby. And you wished it would be stillborn. You wished the baby would be dead. You wished for a dead baby. The delivery was difficult and long. You were in agony for days. Finally, the baby was delivered with forceps. You looked with disgust and terror at your squealing baby and whispered "Can't you die soon? Can't you die?" (Persona, 1966)

Elisabeth flees from her marriage and her son. She and immersed in the dream of being herself, not to be what she is supposed to be for the rest, or what the rest believe she is.

So, we could say that she is fleeing from the truth to lock herself in her own truth. But her own truth is just some lies that she tells herself to be able to go on living and feel good about herself. This behaviour allows her not to have to confront her true fears. She flees from the truth, and although she takes refuge in her own truth she is already immersed in lies. Elisabeth felt horrified as she sees the world as a great farce.

"As Schopenhauer observed, 'our civilized world is [...] only a great masquerade. One meets with knights, parsons, soldiers, doctors, advocates, priests, philosophers, and what not! But they are not what they represent themselves: they are mere masks under which are hidden as a rule money maker.'" Panagopoulos (1998)

Company (1999) explains that she also feels terrorized by a sort of

spectacular representation of violence, legitimized through the immediate transmissibility, one of the main characteristics of television.

Therefore, that aura and that light that she seemed to transmit at the beginning and that intimidated Alma so much ("I don't know what to say, Doctor. First her face looks soft, almost childish. Then you see her eyes... She's got such a severe look, I think" *Persona*, 1966) is nothing but more lies. In turn, we see how Alma is becoming strong in that game of resistance. The one that seemed to live in that world of lies and falsehood that Elisabeth despises ends up becoming a stronger person even than Elisabeth herself.

When Elisabeth writes to the doctor, we cannot consider that Elisabeth is telling a lie, but she is betraying her own principles. She tells the truth to the doctor, but this is not her own truth but Alma confession.

Elisabeth is searching for his own truth. Alma who has never thought about that becomes dominated by the situation and starts to ask herself some of the big questions. One crucial question she makes herself is, "Can you be one and the same person at the same time?" She makes this question when she tells Elisabeth about her sexual experience. Her fiancée knows nothing about that experience she lived, and she feels guilty. She does not feel she really did what she did. It seems evil is something we cannot avoid, as something that lives inside every human being. Elisabeth wants to free herself from the farce and Alma does not want to be like Elisabeth when she discovers her dark side. But Alma also has a dark side.

"Schopenhauer pointed out: man is at bottom a wild horrible creature. We know him as merely broken in and tamed by civilization and hence the occasional outbreaks of his nature shock us." (Panagopoulos, 1998:82)

The very title of the film is the key to understand this. *Persona* is a word used in the world of theatre. It is a Latin word whose meaning is "theatre mask".

Also, the first images we have just mentioned are important in this section. We have this phallus, all these sacrifices and fears and nonsense images like the cartoon who washes her face with no water, and death. Here we could probably find thousands of interpretations, but I see it as the life cycle. We have the beginning of life represented by the phallus, life itself surrounded by horrible

things, and finally dead. All this accompanied by nonsense images. Moreover, at the end of the film, the word the end does not appear, Bergman even wrote in the script that it should not appear. So, it is a fiction that could start again, and finish again, and start again, endlessly.

Our characters finally realise somehow that there is nothing they can do. Elisabeth comes back to the theatre and Alma comes back with her fiancée.

Heart of darkness:

We have just said that Marlow hates lies. He flees from lies and falsehood, and he is obsessed with the truth and finding himself. Then we have Kurtz, this ambitious, selfish man, free of the morality of the society, declared a deity, worshipped and revered by all. He has a high impact on Marlow. He admires him. He seems to be the person in which Marlow would love to become. Someone who has found himself. Someone who has thrown away the false morality, someone who lives according to the truth. It is when he realises what Kurtz has been doing, all the horrible things (the murders and cruel, bloodthirsty acts stripped of all humanity) that Marlow starts to see him as a careless child playing God. We can say that it is when Kurtz dies in his arms and pronounce the famous words "The horror, the horror" when Marlow understands that finally, he has found himself.

"Marlow got transformed as he watched Kurtz die. He got enlightened."
(Krafka,1999)

Now that he is aware of everything done, of all the horror in the world, of how difficult it is merely to live. Marlow contemplates it as he has contemplated everything since the start, with moral superiority, like a Buddha. This pose of Buddha that he adopts, as Krafka (1999) says, is significant as Conrad had decided to treat evil not as a mythical enigma in the way most religions explain it, but as conceptual in the manner clearly defined by Buddhism. Buddha is the symbol and incarnation of wisdom.

Marlow's journey into the jungle, into his own personality, becomes something more significant. He is searching for meaning. Despite showing us him as a Buddha, Marlow also discovers his dark side. Panagopoulos (1998) points out that the closer Marlow gets to the centre of Africa, the more the latent

darkness within his own personality comes to the surface. When a human being is far away from society may be exposed to lose control, as their rules and principles do not belong to the jungle.

There is a moment when Marlow, during his first meeting with the general manager, changes his behaviour.

"He forgets his manners and interrupts twice: "being hungry, you know, and kept on my feet too, I was getting savage" he explains." Panagopoulos (1998)

Although Marlow does not commit horrible acts, he is exposed to the darkness, and that this darkness can have an impact on him too.

Marlow's obsessive search makes him go back to the place where he was, without having resolved anything and reaffirming the spectral character of the truth-lie dichotomy. But he has reached wisdom in a way; he has learned that the answer was not in Kurtz nor the search for the truth.

"Marlow wishes Kurtz to explain to him the white man's wanton killing of blacks under the pretence of their criminality. He seeks an explanation for the whole sequence of absurd events that commence upon his landing in Africa: 'objectless blasting', the wanton smash-up of drainage pipes, the brickmaker who makes no bricks [...]. Marlow seeks Kurtz, a modern Messiah whose words, Marlow supposes, will illuminate with a 'pulsating stream of light' the dark flow of events that have challenged Marlow's innocence and understanding." (Krafka, 1999)

Kurtz was not able to explain Marlow anything; he had no justification for all the evil things that he had done. Kurtz is established as a saviour at the beginning of the novel, Krafka (1999) calls it a Modern spiritual drama of a Fall and attempted redemption. But in fact, Kurtz has been swallowed up by the darkness. Conrad originally painted the picture of an unrepentant Kurtz.

"I have lived supremely" says Kurtz, "I have been dead – damned. Let me go – I want more of it... More blood, more heads on stakes, more adoration, rapine and murder." (Krafka, 1999)

Conrad deleted these words. But it makes it easier to understand why Marlow decides to lie for him. Marlow needs to lie to himself. Not only he lies because he needs a sort of saviour or something to give life a meaning, but also to give the rest of the world some hope in the human being

“Marlow originally thinks that the corruption and decay in the Congo is emanating from the company’s sordid activities and so turns to Kurtz positively for relief but he discovers that it is in fact emanating from Kurtz who is a sort of unburied corpse in the heart of the wilderness representing everything that Marlow is trying to forget and escape from. [...] The real Kurtz cannot save Marlow from the mendacity and corruption of life nor make him forget his mortality but having elevated Kurtz to the role of saviour, Marlow is obliged to sustain him there by any means possible – including lying. This realization marks the final phase of Marlow’s quest for knowledge and corresponds to the idea of Nietzsche’s that “without a continual falsification of the world, mankind could not live.” (Krafka, 1999)

For this reason, Marlow decides to lie and sacrifices, as Krafka (1999) explains, what used to be his most prized belief, that is his belief in the truth.

3.3 MORAL SUPERIORITY

When we talk about the concept "moral superiority" what we are trying to do is to encompass everything we have explained so far, but explaining something else.

We indeed gather all these characters who have seemingly overcome the old habits. They have ignored what people may say, and they have rejected the lie. They have built their own reality to escape from the masquerade. But they are quite contradictory beings, as any being in fact, and it is as well the concept of moral superiority. It is a spectral concept, just like the dichotomy truth-lie. They feel with the right to judge others since they think they do not take part in the farce.

There are some critical scenes in *Persona* and some moments in *Heart of Darkness* that we have just mentioned where we can see this.

- **Elisabeth silence:** The very moment when Elisabeth laughs and decides to remain silent. She wants to show her strength and ability to live apart from everything she despises. She does not need to communicate or have any contact with the world as she believes she is beyond everything. Arthur Schopenhauer (Schopenhauer, 1961) said that the vain should know that the high opinion of the others, to which one could aspire, it's easier to obtain by keeping silence than speaking, even when the most beautiful things in the world could be said. Elisabeth remains voluntary silent for a similar thought. It is important to remember again what she said once: "everything is a lie or imitation". She considers that the words are not reliable or precise. She rejects the world, but at the same time by behaving like this, she expects to reach a high opinion of the others. She thinks that it is a superior decision. And in fact, she obtains this high opinion of Alma at first.

- **Elisabeth's letter to the doctor:** Schopenhauer (Schopenhauer, 1961) also said that the world is hell, and men are divided into tormented souls and tormenting devils. Elisabeth is a tormented soul, but in that scene, she becomes a tormenting devil for Alma. She remained silent to avoid the lie, to avoid taking part in the play because the world for her is a theatre play. Nonetheless, she breaks her silence writing. It seems that not even silence can save us. She writes to the doctor, making fun of her weakness and her intimate experiences. She does not realise her betrayal, and what she feels is that she has the right to do what she is doing, because of her decision to reject the world.

- **Kurtz adored by the natives:** Both Marlow and Kurtz went to the Congo in search of knowledge. Kurtz indeed got a lot of ivory, but that is not what was valuable to him. He did not return to Europe with his ivory. He stayed there and became a sort of God. Again Schopenhauer (Schopenhauer, 1961) said that it has often been assumed that the most limited man in spirit is, in fact, the happiest man. But nobody will envy him this happiness. He said that Sophocles had issued two opposed judgments; one that said in verse 1328 of his Antigone: 'Knowledge is by

far the main part of happiness' and elsewhere, this time in verse 550 of the Ajax tragedy: 'The life of the wise is not the most pleasant'. Kurtz has found his happiness and his misfortune. And he cannot renounce to his misfortune if he wants to preserve his happiness. He has known horror, but he prefers horror to ignorance. This decision and this feeling are what places him in a superior position. He thinks he has got a vision no one else, or at least not everyone can perceive. Moreover, he is worshipped by the natives who listen carefully to everything he has to say, reinforcing this thought he has of himself.

"The young man looked at me with surprise. I suppose it did not occur to him Mr. Kurtz was no idol of mine. He forgot I hadn't heard any of these splendid monologues on, what was it? On love, justice, conduct of life..." (Conrad, 1996:73)

- **Marlow thoughts:** In Marlow's thoughts, we can see how corrupted he feels the world is.

"They grabbed what they could get and for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind – as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness" (Conrad, 1996:7)

"I venture to hint that the Company was run for profit" (Conrad, 1996:14)

"His appearance was certainly that of a hairdresser's dummy; but in the great demoralisation of the land he kept up his appearance. That's backbone! His starched collars and got-up shirt-fronts were achievements of character. He had been out nearly three years; and, later on, I could not help asking him how he managed to sport such linen" (Conrad, 1996:21)

"I couldn't help asking him once what he meant by coming there at all. 'To make money, of course'" (Conrad, 1996:24)

“This devoted band called itself the Dorado Exploring Expeditions, and I believed they were sworn to secrecy. Their talk, however, was the talk of a sordid buccaneers: it was reckless without hardihood, greedy without audacity, and cruel without courage, there was not an atom of foresight or of serious intention in the whole batch of them, and they did not seem aware these things are wanted for the work of the world. To tear treasure out of the bowels of the land was their desire, with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe.”
(Conrad, 1996:37)

Marlow hates lies above all, but he hates the coldness with which people lives, their poor interests such as money and fame, violence.

But he lies, for example when he tells Kurtz that his success in Europe is assured. Watt (1980) points out that Marlow finds the cost of moral choice greedy, but the hard truth seems to be that to keep our leaky craft afloat we need rivets, and to get rivets we have to tell lies.

- **Marlow conversation with Kurtz's fiancée:** Friedrich Nietzsche wrote in his work *Aurora* (1932) that men are constantly lying, but then they forget they have lied nor they do believe that they have done it. Marlow decides to lie to Kurtz's fiancée. We could say this is a white lie. Nonetheless, Marlow, as well as Kurtz, Elisabeth or Alma, do not seem to be in favour of white lies. They seem to prefer the truth at all costs. Probably they would consider that kind of lies a betrayal because they consider they deserve the truth; it does not matter what it is. However, Marlow feels that his fiancée is not prepared to hear the truth, and he takes a right to lie. He does it from a superior position because he probably does not feel he is lying. And why he does not feel this? We are not told in the novel, but all along the story he has been complaining about the lie, he has been telling us how much he hates this no matter the situation he says no to lies. And yet, he decides to lie and tell her that the last words of Kurtz were her name.
- **Alma's confrontation with Elisabeth:** Alma has learned quite a lot from Elisabeth, and if at the beginning of the film we could not consider her to

have the vision of the world of Elisabeth, finally she opened her eyes. Thanks to Elisabeth she changed, she empathised in such a way with her that she almost become like her. There is this moment of confrontation between them where we can see how Alma has also placed herself in a superior position. Nietzsche (1932) also said that every supreme man drove to destroy the yoke of any morale and to proclaim new laws if they are not mad, they probably felt forced to pretend they were or they went mad. Alma has now the power to judge Elisabeth as she has betrayed her moral principles. Alma considers that this silence of her is just nonsense, because not saying a word cannot free us from the corruption of the mind. There is another moment in fact, where Alma says to Elisabeth:

“Maybe you would be better if you allow yourself to be what you are. They said you were mentally healthy but your madness is the worst. You’re acting healthy so well that everyone believes you. Everyone but me, because I know how rotten you are.” (Persona, 1966)

Alma suggests Elisabeth get rid of the mask. Elisabeth silence seemed to be the perfect way to avoid using any mask, but this silence became her new one. Alma matures with her, and she shares now her hate for lies. If this happened at the beginning of the film Alma probably would believe that Elisabeth is crazy, she would leave the job and forget about that. But Alma is now part of her, and Elisabeth is part of Alma. They need each other in a way, and that's why Alma gets so angry. They are like a mirror to each other.

4 CONCLUSION

To conclude, Elisabeth, Alma, Marlow and Kurtz are a sort of Vladimir and Estragon¹, always searching for answers, answers to such big questions that deep inside they know they will never be answered. They all know that Godot will never come. But this is not a reason to stop searching.

¹ The main characters of Samuel Beckett’s play “Waiting for Godot”

Nietzsche (1932) said that moral feelings and moral concepts are transmitted by inheritance and education, as we can see in children, whose developed instinct of imitation impels them to appropriate the set of sympathies and antipathies of the adults surrounding them.

Our characters are against this inheritance; the inheritance is the collective truth we mentioned before, they realise those moral principles are imposed, and besides, they do not feel identify with them.

Moreover, those are full of lies. On the other hand, any moral principle will be created by the human being, so moral principles do not really exist.

Joseph Beuys (documental, 2019) says that there are other dimensions of life, that other forces very different from the world do exist, and that human beings are being isolated systematically of these dimensions and forces by the political systems. Our characters are not blinded by these forces.

Joseph Beuys (documental, 2019) is considered to be very good to induce those who are willing to hear him because he knows how to persuade them that he is convinced of his work and ideas.

Our characters are awake, convince of their ideas. But it does not mean that they are exempt from corruption.

Götz Adriani (documental, 2019) said that artists are engaged with the utopia. In a way, our characters are engaged with the utopia. That is why they behave as they do. Whether they are right or wrong is not important. None of our characters solves any of their dilemmas; life is simply meaningless.

In *Persona*, we have this the end, which is not the end. Maybe Bergman is trying to say that these dilemmas will appear again and again, in many human beings, and they will never be solved.

Marlow realises that even the search is a waste of time.

"It is while engaged in superficial, mechanical work that Marlow admits for the first time that it may not be altogether beneficial to be aware of 'the inner truth' of 'life'" (Panagopoulos, 1998)

And not only is it a waste of time but also it is not "beneficial". Here we have this engagement with the utopia. Marlow needs to keep some hope for himself, and he also wants to keep some hope for the rest of the world. He lies because, in a way, he feels it is his duty to lie. Conrad deletes the horrible last words of

Kurtz to give us a little light.

"Just as his author deleted these dark words from the manuscript of the novel, Marlow offers his listener an optimistic rendering of Kurtz' verdict, reflecting the Conrad who felt it the artist's duty to sustain the illusions of civilization. [...] Marlow seems to have transcended the horror of his Congo experience by representing it artistically through the narrative." (Panagopoulos, 1998)

We cannot say openly that our characters are artists, as it is not clear. Elisabeth an actress; Marlow is probably a writer, in fact, he narrates the story to the sailors:

"The yarns of seamen have an effective simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracket nut. But, as has been said, Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted), and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale." (Conrad,1996:6)

and Kurtz may have been a great musician or a painter, what Kurtz used to do is not that clear, but it is clear that he was brilliant.

"Incidentally he gave me to understand that Kurtz had been essentially a great musician. [...] I am unable to say what was Kurtz's profession, whether he ever had any – which was the greatest of his talents. I had taken him for a painter who wrote for the papers, or else for a journalist who could paint – but even the cousin [...] could not tell me what he had been – exactly. He was a universal genius." (Conrad,1996:88)

But we can say that they share with its authors very strong ideas and a dream, because they dream with a utopian world, and though they know it is something impossible to achieve, they do not stop dreaming and searching. As we said in the introduction, they are different from the rest of the world because they deeply explore this idea of the truth, and they extremely believe in this. They are convinced, even when they know there is no

objective truth.

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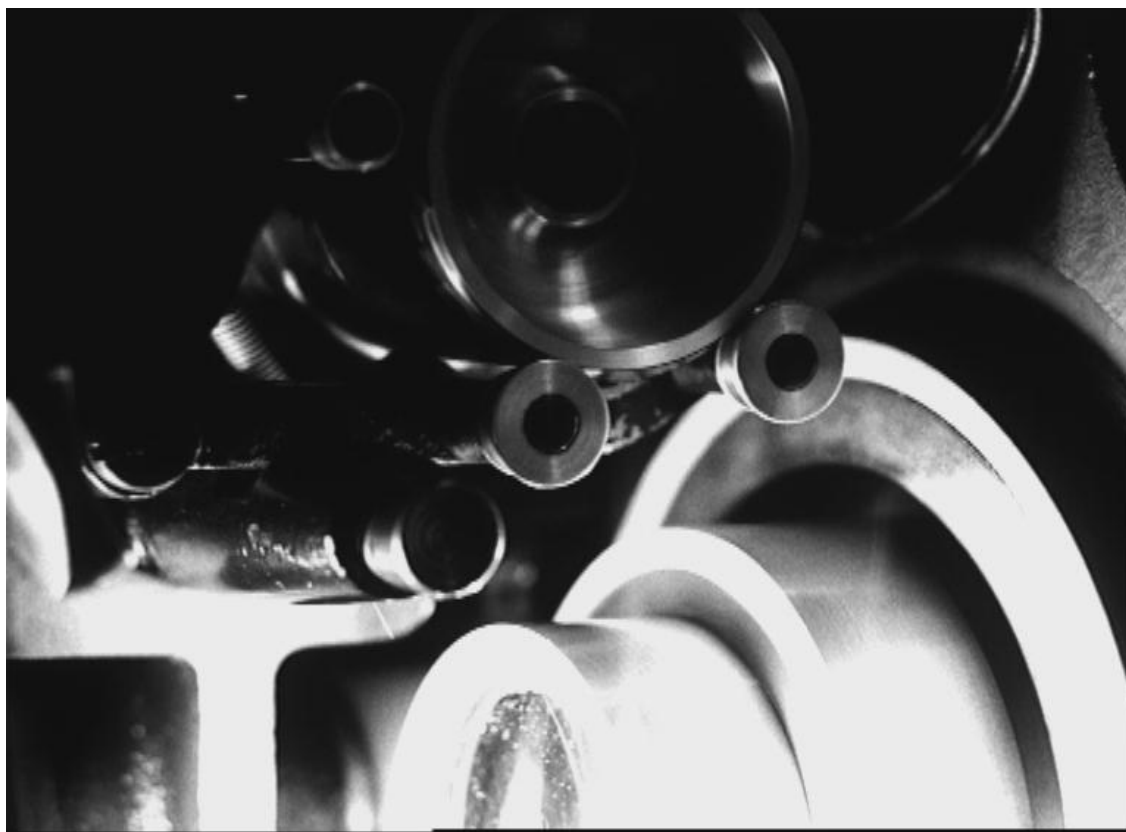
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6 APPENDIX

The film projector



The cartoon washing her face and breast



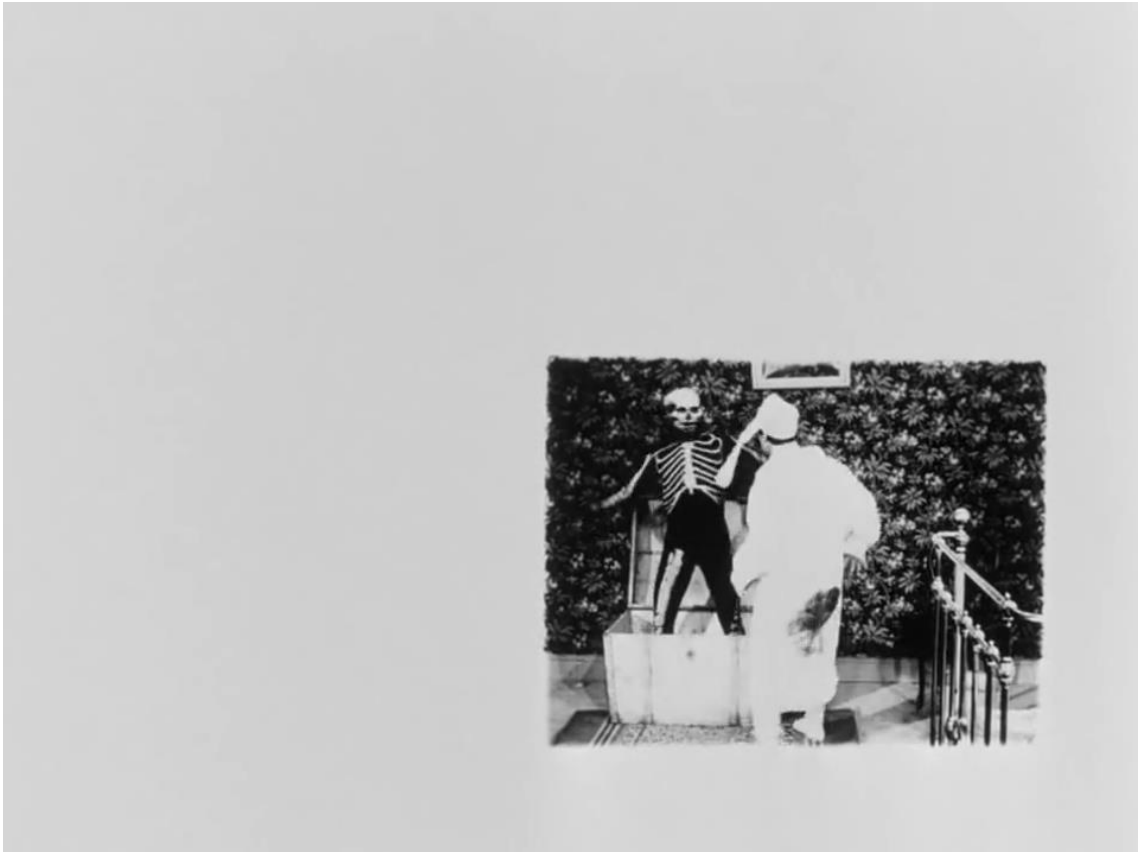
The phallus



The slaughtered sheep



The man escaping from a skeleton



The crucified hand



The child who awakes among the death



The boy clarifying the image of Elisabeth and Alma



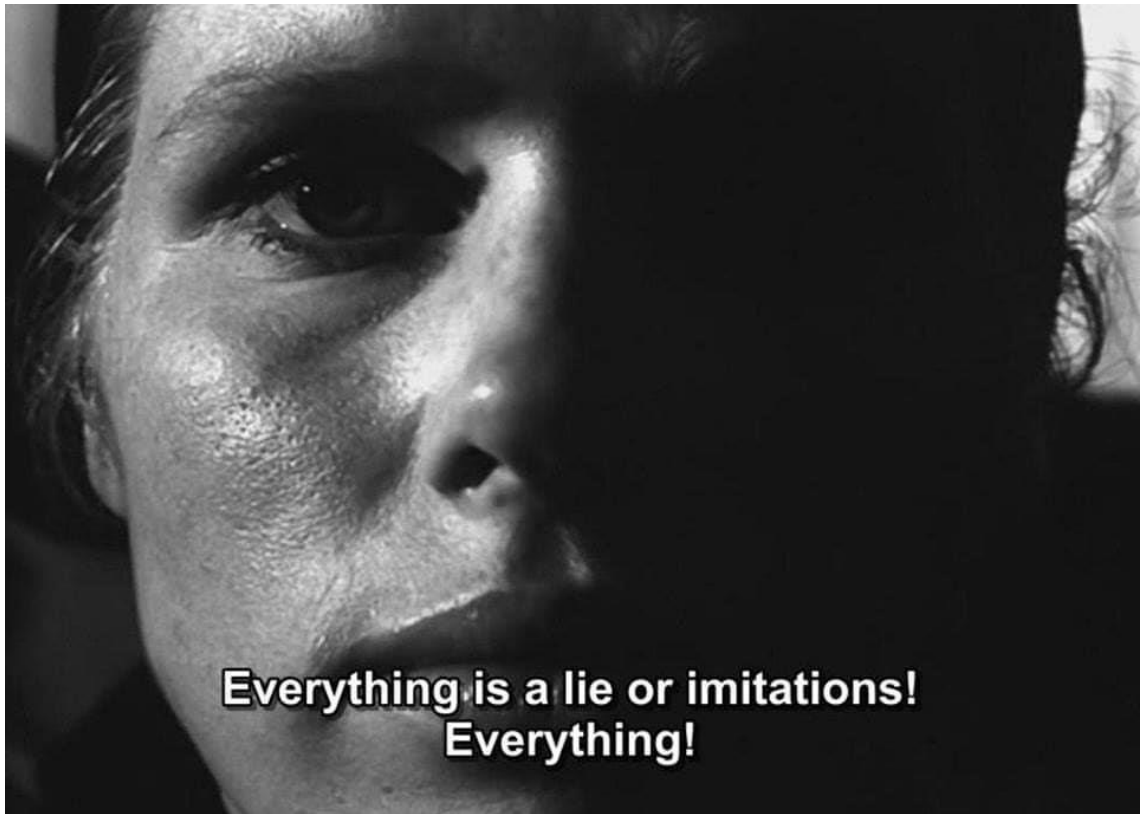
Alma short monologue



The image of the monk burning



Elisabeth



Alma

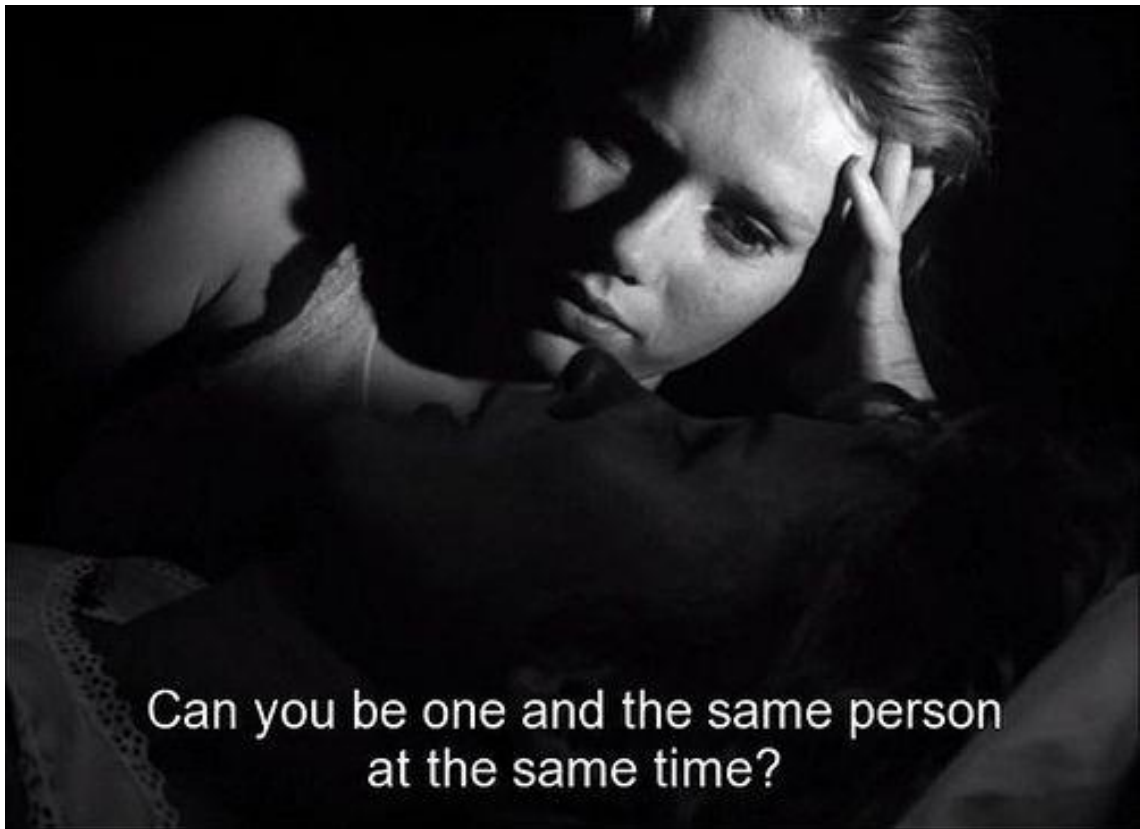




**Maybe you would be better if you
allowed yourself to be what you are.**



**They said you were mentally healthy,
but your madness is the worst.**



The moment of confrontation between Elisabeth and Alma



Vampiric symbiosis (Alma, Elisabeth's husband and Elisabeth)



Elisabeth sucking Alma's blood



Symbiosis



Symbiosis (this image is formed by the face of Elisabeth and the face of Alma)

