From Limbo to Lethe: A Study of the Grotesque Imagery in Dante’s Inferno

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Abstract: The Grotesque is a style of art, architecture and literature that infuses paradoxical elements like tragedy and comedy, horror and laughter and fear and the festive spirit in one piece of work. The Grotesque leads to the Sublime because it corrects, unlike the Monstrous which merely entertains. This is usually done through imagery, in the case of literature. Dante’s Inferno is a compendium of such Grotesque paradoxes. This paper aims at analyzing and explaining such images, their types and provides reasons for the artist/poet creating such works. Examples from other literature and art, and areas of further research are also provided.

Key words: Grotesque, Dante, Inferno, images.

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