



THE BEAUTIFUL AND THE SINISTER: AN ILLUSTRATED INTERPRETATION

*Alfredo Zárate Flores, Ph.D., professor in the Department of Art,
University of Guanajuato, Mexico*

*Dana Paola Bautista Rangel, Digital Art student,
University of Guanajuato, Mexico.*

Abstract. *This paper explores the concept of the sinister (Unheimlich) through the theories of Sigmund Freud, Eugenio Trías, and Pablo Oyarzún, focusing on the relationship between beauty and hidden disturbance. The analysis examines how the coexistence of the animate and the inanimate creates uncertainty and discomfort within an apparently familiar birthday scene interrupted by the presence of a monstrous figure. The artwork reveals how the sinister emerges when the hidden breaks into everyday reality, transforming beauty into an unsettling experience.*

Keywords: *the sinister, unheimlich, beauty, Freud, monstrosity, the uncanny, aesthetic experience.*

Sigmund Freud [1] associates the Sinister (*Unheimlich*) with the distressing. Furthermore, it affirms that the sinister is linked to the hidden, the hostile and the disturbing. In his analysis, Freud equates this concept with the unusual. Following Freud, Eugenio Trías [2] defines the sinister as “condition and limit of the beautiful” (p. 29). According to him, the sinister must remain hidden. The sinister is condition and limit of the beautiful. The sinister “produces a rupture of the aesthetic effect” (p. 30), as it is associated with the strange, the curse and everything that is not one's own or belongs to the home.

For Eugenio Trías, one of the expressions of the sinister is associated with an ambivalence between the animate and the inanimate. This produces a sensation that problematizes the identification of objects causing a problematic effect for the subject. This sensation is in the sphere of the sinister because it reveals something that should remain hidden.

According to Pablo Oyarzún [3], the sinister is a consequence of the inability of the subject to recognize the real world of the fantastic world. Another aspect that Oyarzún points out is the opinion that the sinister is associated with a returning anguish. That is, “something that was always familiar to psychic life and that was only strange during the process of its repression” [3, p. 72].

The following illustration presents this coexistence between the animate and the inanimate and the way in which the characters that make up the image express the doubt that the inanimate comes to life or appears as a living form. This composition reveals the sinister.

To create this work we started from Eugenio Trías's explanation of the beautiful and the sinister. According to him, both concepts were identified with the beautiful and familiar and the disturbing that is normally hidden. The birthday scene is linked to the celebration, the home and the joy that the presence of the monster breaks. The figure of the monster disables the subject, forcing him to go beyond the limit of beauty.



According to Freud, Trías and Oyarzún, beauty always has a shadow behind it. This means that there is no pure beauty and that the mysterious always accompanies it. The work sought to describe how an apparently happy situation can be transformed when the hidden manifests itself. In this way, the monster represents the sinister because it makes us uncomfortable because it does not fit into the familiar symbolized by the light of the cake, the lit candles and the table that help us maintain the “beautiful” part of the scene. The dark figure and his strange smile cause a problematic effect because it provokes a mixture of curiosity and fear.



Figure 1 – *Lo bello y lo siniestro* (source: own elaboration)

In conclusion, the work shows how the beautiful and the sinister coexist in the same space, and how even a birthday party can become disturbing when what we normally prefer not to see appears. It is an image that tries to reflect that exact point where the beautiful begins to become terrible, but can still be endured.

References

1. Freud, S. (1919). “CIX. Lo siniestro”. Sigmund Freud: Obras Completas», en «Freud total, 1.
2. Trías, Eugenio, (1982). *Lo bello y lo siniestro*, España, Epublibre.
3. Oyarzún, P. (2003). La cuestión de lo siniestro en Freud. Revista de Teoría del Arte, 8, 53-94.