

RESEARCH ARTICLE

WWW.PEGEGOG.NET

## Graffiti: From the Street to the Depths of the Palestinian Cause - A Cultural Study of Selected Models

Dr. Soumia Guendouzi <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>: University of Algiers 2 - Abou EL Kacem Saâdallah (Algeria), [soumeya.guendouzi@univ-alger2.dz](mailto:soumeya.guendouzi@univ-alger2.dz)

### Abstract

Graffiti has emerged as a significant outlet for youth expression across diverse domains. This creative medium serves as a vehicle for coded messages reflecting psychological, social, and political concerns, constituting a potent cultural force. Its increasing prominence challenges its previous marginal status, highlighting its cultural relevance. Literary graffiti, in particular, has become a key aspect of contemporary political discourse, acting as a mirror to the cultural anxieties of nations, civilizations, and societies. The Palestinian cause, a central concern within the Arab world, has frequently been represented in graffiti. This study examines the role of graffiti in advocating for and raising awareness of the Palestinian cause.

**Keywords:** graffiti, margin, center, Palestinian cause.

### Introduction

Literature, like other fields of knowledge, reflects the concept of centrality through the dominance of a philosophical and critical current that adheres to absolute and fixed monism. This current seeks to apply fixed rules to various literary works, thereby marginalizing any work that does not conform to these rules. This can be observed, for example, in the evolution of literary forms and criticism through its contextual and textual approaches and beyond, major narratives, the universality of literature and comparative studies, gender studies, cultural criticism, and the intersection of arts such as painting, music, and cinema.

Central literature is represented by "institutional literature" that adheres to established rules, while marginal literature encompasses anything that deviates from this system. This dichotomy creates other dualities, such as formal versus vernacular literature, classical Arabic poetry versus free verse, and male versus female literature. From a content perspective, the trinity of religion, sex, and politics represents the most prominent prohibited and marginalized topics.

Postmodernism rejected the traditional values of modernism, embracing experimentation and new artistic forms, including multimedia. Using these new forms, postmodern artists expanded the definition of art to include every idea in which there is creativity in terms of form and content, revealing the shortcomings of urban areas by writing

---

**Corresponding Author e-mail:** [soumeya.guendouzi@univ-alger2.dz](mailto:soumeya.guendouzi@univ-alger2.dz)

**How to cite this article:** Dr. Soumia Guendouzi 1. Graffiti: From the Street to the Depths of the Palestinian Cause - A Cultural Study of Selected Models. Pegem Journal of Education and Instruction, Vol. 15, No. 4, 2025, 444-451

**Source of support:** Nil **Conflicts**

**of Interest:** None. **DOI:**

10.47750/pegegog.15.04.33

**Received:** 29.12.2024

**Accepted:** 22.02.2025

**Published:** 11.05.2025

---

on walls with paint or drawing lines or engraving, through which discontent is expressed in some way, which is a reflection of what the marginalized classes may feel or think about, which makes it fall within the framework of what is known as marginal literature, which proves its existence through various images to paint a true picture of this world that is based on plurality and diversity.

Human attempts to find methods that translate their feelings do not stop, and when a person does not find someone who understands him by speaking frankly, he relies on silence or brings out one of the tools of art and creativity, either his pen for writing, his brush for drawing, or his musical instrument for weaving audio clips<sup>1</sup>.

Since we are in an era in which the image sweeps wide areas of our lives, what is called graffiti literature has emerged, which represents a new literary genre that does not differ in terms of topics from any other genre but rather embodies other literary forms in many cases, thus taking a completely different form, relying in its forms on diverse criteria in terms of colors, type of font, size, etc.

Graffiti has been, since its existence, a companion to man, simulating the details of his life and describing his style of coexisting with his environment in its various forms... even if times have changed and stone walls have been replaced by other cement walls, and even glass ones, the walls have a symbolic character and significance that indicates the containment of man, or rather the social individual... It is the support and the most comfortable place to express and reveal what is going on in the soul of suffering and psychological conflicts, and it is, for many adolescents and those who are shocked, despite the narrowness of its field, a crucible from which they inform the world of what they complain about. It is a space of hope and the giant newspaper because of the vastness of its area - the walls of destinations and the fences of institutions - in which the oppressed, marginalized, delinquent, and those wishing to change the pattern and style of life write, asking members of their society to read or understand their suffering.

Graffiti falls within the simplest and oldest forms of traditional written communication and is also called wall drawings/writings the word graffiti has also become common to refer to it, and in its original meaning, it means archaeological inscription<sup>2</sup>.

Graffiti, as an art form, dates back to the dawn of humanity, with early examples found in cave paintings from the Paleolithic era (30,000 years ago). This practice of marking surfaces continued through various civilizations, including ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, and later in classical Greece and Rome. The tradition resurfaced in the Christian catacombs and has been re-employed in its modern form in the United States<sup>3</sup>.

Graffiti is often characterized by its spontaneous and informal nature, frequently conveying humorous or poignant messages, sometimes with hidden meanings or direct pronouncements. It is typically anonymously created on both interior and exterior walls using pens or spray paint in various colors.

However, graffiti has evolved beyond mere markings on walls. "Wall drawings can be considered an intellectual effort that does not necessarily carry only an aesthetic charge. It becomes, in its essence, a carrier of a vision and a communicative and interactive relationship based on interpretation, understanding, and taking specific positions. Art in our current era stems from the rich human experience. This artistic effect, in addition to its aesthetic and artistic symbolism, expresses cultural diversity and reflects the existence of social mobility at the level of relationships and the level of transformations in economic, cultural, and social structures. This practice, in its apparent indications, is a social act, a behavioral motive, a

conscious expression of a particular culture and identity, and in its hidden indications, a human artistic attempt to enter life, impose oneself, and achieve social recognition"<sup>4</sup>.

Graffiti has become part of society's culture, expressing its sentiments through scribbles and colors, sending various explicit or implicit messages to the world.

Graffiti discourse represents a new literary approach that focuses on presenting diverse viewpoints and raising various socio-cultural issues. It is a form of expressing identity, rejecting prevailing conditions and other topics, in a special aesthetic character that takes various expressive forms, whether images or wall scribbles... This approach remained, until recently, suffering from a kind of marginalization and exclusion, which was soon remedied, witnessing a distinguished activity to move this art from the category of marginalization to the horizon of the center, which resulted in a great transformation in recognition of the value and importance of graffiti art or wall discourse.

Several factors have contributed to this shift from margin to center:

1. Cultural Revolution: Increased interest in marginal and excluded art forms.
2. Political Changes: Graffiti often addresses political themes, bringing them to the forefront.
3. Prominent Works: Notable graffiti art has drawn attention to this art form.
4. Academic Efforts: Research and conferences have legitimized graffiti as a field of study.
5. Media and Social Media: Increased visibility through media channels has accelerated its spread.

While graffiti may appear superficial at first glance, it contains significant indicators that warrant attention. Graffiti, in its various forms, "symbols, phrases, drawings, or even caricatures,<sup>5</sup>" is meaningful in itself, expressing a specific idea or stance, whether supportive or opposing, seeking to break free from silence. Graffiti is the silent message of speaking consciences.

### **1. Factors Contributing to the Emergence of Graffiti**

The emergence of graffiti as an art form is attributed to a confluence of social, psychological, cultural, and political factors, which collectively created a fertile ground for its development.

#### **➤ Social Factors**

Graffiti is fundamentally a social phenomenon that reflects the unique character of communities, including their customs, traditions, ideas, and cultures. It also expresses the orientations and aspirations of individuals within these societies.

Some researchers assert that "violence and aggression are often acquired by individuals within their environment and through interaction with the group, particularly those in which an atmosphere of repression, frustration, suppression, and conflict prevails. This contributes to the social objectification of the individual, carrying the virus of violence within that upbringing, which manifests in forms of verbal or physical violence, as well as moral violence, such as sarcasm, satire, negotiation, aggression, and fighting"<sup>6</sup>. This statement discusses the social nature of graffiti, which is embodied in expressions of marginalization, exclusion, and unemployment. Society, particularly youth from various educational and social backgrounds, including the unemployed, the underprivileged, and other social groups, has embraced this phenomenon with joy, pride, and honor. Notably, graffiti addresses all social strata without exception, unlike some other forms of literature that cater to the academic elite, such as digital literature.

#### **➤ Cultural Factors**

Graffiti represents a form of cultural expression, embodying the prevailing cultural norms within a society, including customs, traditions, conventions, perceptions, and values. These elements contribute to shaping the cultural content of graffiti in any civilization or society during its emergence and development.

Graffiti has been classified as marginal literature, with its culture being considered informal and non-official. This is because it represents a movement of a different kind of organization, and it has been labeled as a counter-culture, marginal, and folkloric, produced by a non-elite popular culture.

➤ **Political Factors**

Graffiti/wall writing reflects various conflicts and ideologies, whether partisan or sectarian, that have been suppressed, marginalized, and set aside (which is a characteristic of all countries worldwide).

These factors have contributed to the rise of this art form in various countries, particularly Arab countries. Graffiti has carried political symbols that have varied between the pursuit of freedom on the one hand and the rejection of authority, political orientations, and colonialism on the other. Some young people are tasked with writing on walls for "propaganda or promotional purposes for programs and plans of political opinion leaders in their urban environment. The reason for this is the inability of official media to approach the masses and gain their trust, away from political discourse, as is the case in Palestine and Iraq"<sup>7</sup>.

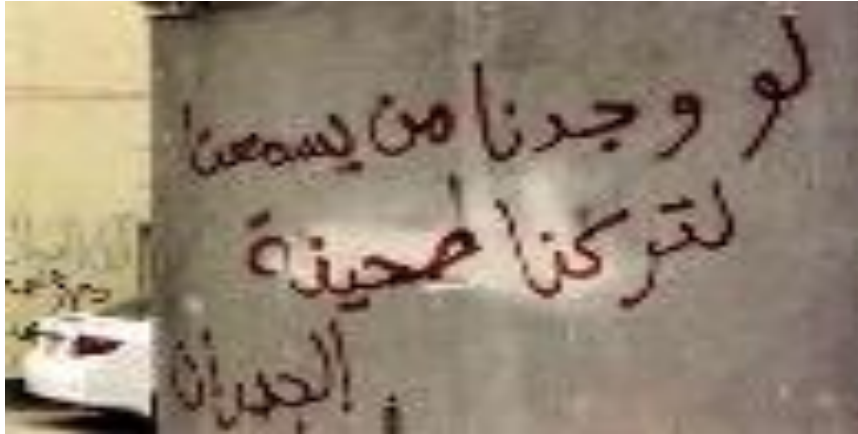
In Algeria, for example, wall writing during the "Black Decade" was a means of: "communication, revolutionary, and political, directed towards serving the people and informing national and international public opinion. Its primary goal was to mobilize political support for the national cause"<sup>8</sup>.

Graffiti emerged between 1994 and 1995 using various writing mediums: "from paint to writing using blood, which represented a qualitative and unprecedented shift in the history of Algerian graffiti"<sup>9</sup>.

➤ **Psychological Factors**

This phenomenon carries psychological components, emotional charges, and intense, expressive energies, especially as a large proportion of those who engage in this practice are young people and adolescents. Graffiti embodies their internal conflicts and diverse feelings, providing them with an outlet and a refuge through which they find a way out of these negative energies and feelings, such as "anxiety, depression, disruption of human relations, and a feeling of psychological insecurity. It has often become difficult for some to live their humanity..."<sup>10</sup>.

Individuals in society resort to this type of writing to: "embody the conflict between the ego and the other, and the individual's attempt to seek self-realization in society"<sup>11</sup>. "



Graffiti serves as a free and comprehensive medium of expression, addressing diverse societal issues, whether psychological, social, historical, economic, or political. This form of writing grants individuals absolute freedom to express their opinions and thoughts without legal or censorship constraints.

## **2. Manifestations of the Palestinian Cause in Graffiti**

The Palestinian cause has remained a central issue of concern for political, religious, and cultural bodies in the Arab world in general and in Algeria in particular. The Algerian people have shared this concern for the cause and its repercussions through their positions. Algerians, in general, have not been late in supporting the Palestinian people, raising awareness of their cause, and exposing the political conspiracies and intrigues that were being hatched against it, starting with Jewish immigration, the Balfour Declaration, partition plans, and Western positions supporting the Zionist movement at the expense of the defenseless Palestinians.

The Palestinian cause is considered one of the most important issues raised by global and Arab literature alike, such as Spanish, Sudanese, and Turkish literature. It is a human issue that extends its roots to the beginning of the Palestinian-Zionist war on the holy land. The Arab person feels helpless and oppressed as a result of the usurpation of land and freedoms, so he interacts with the Palestinian people and draws inspiration from them for his literary themes, both poetry and prose and the revolution against the forms of the occupier who worked to desecrate and trivialize the sanctities. Therefore, the decision was firm in standing hand in hand against the Zionist settlement in Al Quds and, from it, fighting colonialism in all its forms. The literature of resistance was manifested in Arab poetry and prose and descended to murals in particular because it is the literature of the people who tasted the bitterness of the occupation with the colonialism that robbed and plundered society, its wealth, and its life values.

The Palestinian cause stands out as the most fundamental issue in graffiti writings because it is a sensitive national issue that touches the soul of the nation and is linked to its identity and authenticity. For this, graffiti was written expressing images of resistance and struggle and spreading awareness among Arabs to rise for resistance. These writings were replete with symbolism, poetry, and the depth of their connotations and suggestiveness.

Graffiti writings were and still are used as a means of supporting liberation movements and revolutions against colonialism, and the drawings and phrases carry solidarity slogans with



the revolutionaries and mujahideen and an expression of their support and endorsement of the nation's cause and its honor. Graffiti writings are used as a means of supporting liberation movements and revolutions against Zionist colonialism. The drawings and phrases carry solidarity slogans with the revolutionaries, and an expression of their support and endorsement, and graffiti writings are considered a historical witness to the struggle against colonialism. The drawings and phrases document historical events, battles, and national figures that formed part of the cause.

In the beginning, we must understand the meaning of visual formation, which expresses "line, color, writing, space, or what arises from that of complex relationships, harmony, rhythm, contrast, and consistency, which is all that the text gives to the vision, whether the vision is at the level of sight / the naked eye, or the level of insight, the eye of imagination. The visual formation has been associated with various forms of literature, especially poetic texts, both in terms of the form of the poem, the arrangement of its verses, the type of script, and the white space, and sometimes, these texts are accompanied by images and expressive drawings.

Although the use of murals has taken on an aesthetic form, it still retains its basic principle: to express freedom and reject all forms of control and violence. This art has been able to spread widely and achieve its endeavors, as it is an art that addresses the general public and is embraced by all classes. Perhaps the most prominent issue expressed by graffiti art is the Palestinian cause, and what it faces at present and what it faced in the past of repression and persecution, so the walls have become a breathing space for many young people, whether in Palestine or the rest of the world, taking drawing on the walls and writing as a kind of resistance. Here are some of the paintings that can be relied upon in the analysis:



Image number 1<sup>12</sup>



Image number 2 <sup>13</sup>

Graffiti related to the Palestinian Cause often features a prominent symbol: the victory sign. This motif is ubiquitous, appearing on walls not only throughout Palestine but also in other Arab nations. Often depicted against a black backdrop, it poignantly reflects the reality of occupied Palestine. However, the victory sign's appearance, often etched in blood-like hues, evokes the sacrifices inherent in achieving such triumph, while its form suggests an embrace of the spirit of resistance.

These images are representative of the myriad artworks adorning walls worldwide in solidarity with the Palestinian cause. This proliferation underscores the contemporary emphasis on accessible and impactful forms of expression. Visual media, including graffiti, have emerged as powerful tools, rich in symbolic meaning derived from their use of color, line, and composition. They provide an outlet for voices on issues often marginalized or silenced in other public forums.

In conclusion, while graffiti may have been considered a marginal form of expression in the past, it has demonstrably permeated public spaces, providing a platform for discourse on numerous topics, including those deemed taboo. Furthermore, in recent times, graffiti has evolved aesthetically, moving beyond its rudimentary beginnings to embrace more refined artistic techniques. The result is artwork that conveys the profound depth of national and pan-Arab concerns, most notably, the Palestinian.

#### -Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup>Various/Walls-Streets-Algeria-Creativity-and-Outlet-for-Emotions,  
<https://www.independentarabia.com/node/496046/>

<sup>2</sup>See: Jabbour Abdel Nour and Suheil Idris: *Al-Manhal*, Dar Al-Ilm Lil-Malayeen (Beirut), 1st ed., 1983, p. 492.

<sup>3</sup> Abu Saleh Al-Alfi: *The Concise History of General Art*, Dar Nahdat Misr for Printing and Publishing (Egypt), 1st ed., 1985, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Mayada Fahmi Hussein, Wasef Radwan Al-Momani, *Aesthetics of Graffiti Art in Contemporary Interior Space*, *The Jordanian Journal of Arts*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2017 (35-48).

<sup>5</sup> Moukhtar Mansouri, *Official Media, and Unofficial Media: Writing on Walls as a Model*, PhD thesis, University of Oran, Algeria, p. 181.

<sup>6</sup> Hamed Abdel Salam Zahran, *Social Psychology*, Alam Al-Kutub, Cairo 1984, p. 101.

<sup>7</sup> Noura Amer, *Social Perceptions of Symbolic Violence through Wall Writing*, Master's thesis in Psychology and Educational Sciences, Department of Psychology and Educational Sciences and Orthophony, University of Mentouri 1, Constantine, Algeria, 2005/2006, p. 224.

<sup>8</sup> Statement by Abdel Hamid Ben Zein: Swiss Television, 1990, p. 178.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 180.

<sup>10</sup> Philippe Braud: State Violence and Refusal Violence in Western Europe, translated by Fouad Al-Dahan, research within the proceedings of the Fifth Egyptian-French Symposium, Cairo, 1993, p. 105.

<sup>11</sup> Noura Amer: Social Perceptions of Symbolic Violence through Wall Writing, p. 225.

<sup>12</sup> See the Pinterest application, via the image link: <https://pin.it/14p1xCzlb>

<sup>13</sup> Baqaa Camp murals: <https://www.google.com>

## **Bibliography:**

1. Various/Walls-Streets-Algeria-Creativity-and-Outlet-for-Emotions, <https://www.independentarabia.com/node/496046/>
2. See: Jabbour Abdel Nour and Suheil Idris: Al-Manhal, Dar Al-Ilm Lil-Malayeen (Beirut), 1st ed., 1983.
3. Abu Saleh Al-Alfi: The Concise History of General Art, Dar Nahdat Misr for Printing and Publishing (Egypt), 1st ed., 1985.
4. Mayada Fahmi Hussein, Wasef Radwan Al-Momani, Aesthetics of Graffiti Art in Contemporary Interior Space, The Jordanian Journal of Arts, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2017.
5. Moukhtar Mansouri, Official Media, and Unofficial Media: Writing on Walls as a Model, PhD thesis, University of Oran, Algeria.
6. Hamed Abdel Salam Zahran, Social Psychology, Alam Al-Kutub, Cairo 1984.
7. Noura Amer, Social Perceptions of Symbolic Violence through Wall Writing, Master's thesis in Psychology and Educational Sciences, Department of Psychology and Educational Sciences and Orthophony, University of Mentouri 1, Constantine, Algeria, 2005/2006.
8. Statement by Abdel Hamid Ben Zein: Swiss Television, 1990.
9. Ibid., p. 180.
10. Philippe Braud: State Violence and Refusal Violence in Western Europe, translated by Fouad Al-Dahan, research within the proceedings of the Fifth Egyptian-French Symposium, Cairo, 1993.
11. Noura Amer: Social Perceptions of Symbolic Violence through Wall Writing.
12. See the Pinterest application, via the image link: <https://pin.it/14p1xCzlb>
13. Baqaa Camp murals: <https://www.google.com>