

**The Art of Graffiti in the City...
Dialectics of Expression and Deformation**

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Abstract:

This research paper deals with the topic of the language of the wall "graffiti" in the Algerian city (the city of Constantine as a model), through the dialectic of expression and deformation. There are those who consider it a cultural expression through which the issues and problems of society related to urban space are translated, and there are those who classify it as a marginal subculture that harms the viewer by distorting the aesthetic view of the city and increasing the rate of visual pollution in it.

And thanks to an exploratory study in certain districts of the city of Constantine, we were able to arrive at numerous observations and results that made it possible to explain the phenomenon of graffiti in terms of its causes, its manifestations and its diffusion in the urban environment.

Keywords: graffiti ;city ;expression ;urban defacement ;deformation

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Introduction

The city is considered a center of interactions and social and cultural activities, in addition to being a center of money and economic and commercial activity, creating new social concepts and breaking old habits and traditions.

Based on modern changes in the urban lifestyle and the problems associated with it, many unknown and alien phenomena have appeared in conservative societies, including the "phenomenon of writing on the walls" or as it is called "graffiti", this ancient and modern phenomenon known to man, created by his urgent need for expression and his irresistible desire for change, so that it has become the language in which he communicates and interacts with others in a simple and primitive way in the form of images, symbols and writings that are still in use today.

However, despite the development and progress that the world has known in many social, economic and urban areas, graffiti still exists and is spreading, differing according to societies and cultures, as it takes on new dimensions in presentation and content, especially in urban spaces.

The urban environment, including housing, buildings, facilities, streets, and spaces resulting from human interaction with their surroundings, is a physical embodiment of the culture of society.(Meles,2022)

like the cities of the world, the Algerian city has experienced many changes and problems, where rapid urbanization is considered the most severe of these changes, thus disrupting the natural functions of the majority of its urban areas and transforming life into a bundle. crises and bottlenecks in all fields, thus becoming a fertile breeding ground for generating social phenomena that reflect different types of various exclusions, social alienation and civilizational decline in all its forms, the urban community has therefore begun to send messages expressing the social and psychological problems that it suffers from at one time and its opinion and aspirations at other times in an unknown way and language in an open space and readable by all except the wall, this space that has become the distinctive feature of an informal communicative reality in the city, where graffiti can be observed everywhere, on the streets, on the walls of schools and stadium buildings and even universities, it is thus considered as a phenomenon that reflects the categorical social multiplicity of the city's population, which is characterized by an acute contradiction, an excess sensitivity, material conflict and cultural and intellectual difference.

In this context, the subject of our research is part of an attempt to highlight the dialectic of the reality of this mural language, or as it is called graffiti, in the city of Constantine, the city of the rock and the suspended bridges, which has experienced in recent years a modern technological revolution in the field of urbanization, and this through an exploratory study which relied on the techniques of direct observation as well as observation by participation in order to answer questions about the real origin of the language of the wall in the streets of Constantine, are they drawings, writings, and even symbols through which its author seeks to express what he feels and believes without restriction, as well as to reveal problems, sufferings and psychological pressures whose causes are multiple (social, economic, political and even eco) pass?

Or are they drawings and writings of a random comic nature that have no connotations or goals, drawings that violate the aesthetics of the city and its urban system, indirectly

contribute to the visual pollution that the city of Constantine still suffers, despite the enormous development projects that have been entrusted to it in recent years?

1. The language of the wall... Towards a sociological approach:

The subject of wall writings is considered one of the most important topics that have inspired many researchers and scientists as a phenomenon that is not the result of the modern or contemporary era, but is as old as man himself. numerous academic studies, press articles, and even the new media, which have had the merit of evoking this phenomenon by posing the problem of its reality and the extent of the semantic depth it contains, and how to reach its depth and analyze its content.

Through these calligraphy, we will try to discuss what the pen of those interested in this phenomenon found at the end of the current century, in a dialectical sociological canvas that constructs the real dimensions of the phenomenon.

Graffiti has been defined by the Arabic Dictionary as "sculpture, regulation and formulation in any form" (Arab Dictionary, 1982, p. 56). Suhail Idris defined it as "an archaeological inscription or scribbles on walls or doors" (Idris, 2004, p. 586), and from there, graffiti is a set of writings, symbols and drawings written in various spaces such as images, walls, facades of buildings, educational institutions, and even mosques and cemeteries, came to express a many social, psychological and emotional as well as political and economic topics.

As for the beginnings of graffiti, Dr. Abd al-Jabbar Abbasi, his story, showing his age and his expressive and determined philosophical character, "In the year 3300 BC, the Sumerians knew the first form of writing, by printing a simplified image of things on wet clay sheets and then drying them, while the ancient Egyptians invented Hieroglyphs around the year 3000 BC, which began as formative symbols of things to be expressed, and then reduced to just symbols expressing words."(Abbassi, 2005, P. 38)

This is confirmed by the three stars painted on the walls of the Lascaux caves in France and the famous drawings of the pyramids and temples of Egypt, even Algeria ,the Tassili caves in the desert, discovered by the traveler "Berbanan" in 1938, are the best proof of this, because they contained drawings and symbols dating back thousands of years, studies and semiological analyzes were able to classify it as a communication language through which realistic events and expressions of that time are revealed. .

Recently, these graffiti writings have expressed the voice of the marginalized and poor classes of the community in general, especially the oppressed and teenagers who are trying to communicate their voice to the rest of the population on private property. Graffiti art was therefore considered a kind of violation of the law and a challenge for the community in general, so the most important areas that have been characterized by the mixing of graffiti art with the art of popular music (hip hop) are Latin America and New York, which have focused on the messages of the popular and political population. stories, including conflicts that are addressed directly to viewers.

This art was known on a larger scale when the artists Lee Quince and Freddie opened their first exhibition in Rome in 1979, then its use and employment spread around the world in many fields, including architecture, interior decoration and furniture. After that, he obtained his artistic position as one of the types of arts that keep pace with the times among Eastern and Western societies. (Obeid, 2005, p. 45)

However, what is controversial in our time is the inability of the majority of researchers and people interested in graffiti to qualify it as a positive or negative act, especially since it still meets rejection and acceptance in many societies, both developed and developing, according to a study by Omran Al-Qayeb, which is tagged with "scribbles of the Libyan revolution". and the use of democracy and transparency in governance, and this lies between the culture and the maturity of the perceptions and ideas of Libyan society. " (Al-Qayeb, 2013, p. 75, 76)

In an article by Heba al-Hariri entitled Graffiti in the Shadow of the Arab Spring (Scribble or Art), she stressed the duality of the reality of graffiti, because there are those who consider it vandalism and an illegal practice punishable by law, but in recent years graffiti has become remarkably famous, especially after the events that took place in our Arab countries , "The Arab Spring" is a project aimed at transmitting messages through the rebellion, and this has been confirmed by the Swedish photographer and journalist "Grondahl" who, when she saw the murals in Egypt, not only cared and took photos to document the revolution, but later she was shocked by the huge amount of wonderful and expressive murals, and she said that she was deeply impressed by Egyptian street art. She even wrote a book, "Graffiti of the Revolution, Street Art in Egypt", which contains 430 color shots, and has been distributed in America and the Middle East. " (Hariri, 2019)

In another context, the writer Omar Ali Muhammad explained in his article entitled Writing on the Walls... from art to the deformation of urbanization, that graffiti is emitted by an unreasonable person, and neither public nor private installations are spared from it, because it is an uncivilized behavior that distorts the view and is rejected by many, bearing various expressions, some of which are moral and others that transcend the limits of morality, writings issued by people who live in a psychological vacuum and complain about their worries to silent walls, doodles that neither fatten nor sing of hunger, but on the contrary distort urbanization and increase the anger of the population. " (Ali Mohamed, 2018)

The study of the graffiti artist Parol Belgium (1992) is considered one of the most important studies in this field, because the geometric shapes and the decoration of the complex Arabic script inspired the artist, through his use of the Latin script as graffiti art to tell what happened during his first night in Beirut, which resulted in a black witch decoration On a white surface thrilling with artistic life, movement and enrichment, and he confirmed through his study that Al-Qarafini is a refined art, used in the private and public domain , reflecting the culture and ideas of man since ancient times, and they are sometimes considered encrypted messages ; because it contains personal events that a person does not want to show (Campanario, 2011, p56).

On the other hand, the graffiti artist Ziva Toulouse (1988) participated in the development of the graffiti art movement in the late eighties by mixing different Arabic writing formations and abstracting them to write formations in which the Latin alphabet was also linked to produce a charming artistic group that has recorded its fame in many countries such as France, Tunisia, Lebanon, Spain and Qatar and Switzerland, he is an artist specialized in the installation of murals from abstract Arabic calligraphies, especially with regard to various types of abstraction methods, such as Especially with regard to various types of abstraction methods, such as various free-form lyrical abstraction.

Ziva stressed that graffiti art is an expressive and aesthetic artistic language, used since ancient times on the surfaces of stones and caves, but today it is being presented in many cities as design proposals for external and internal urban facades of centers composed of

white cement material as an architectural element inspired by graffiti art, and he chose three models of graffiti art incorporating the Diwani Arabic calligraphy with classic signatures in 1970 in New York, as well as the use of Islamic motifs on one of the streets of New York City, in different sizes, and in this experiment they tried to give the character of the spirit of Spanish dance beautifully by connecting Arabic calligraphy, graffiti and decoration with the spirit of art Flamenco(Ganter,2013,p87).

As for Dr. Amer Noura, she confirmed the close relationship between symbolic violence and graffiti through her study entitled "Social perceptions of symbolic violence through graffiti". It has been found that the graffiti is a violence against the Algerian citizen and the installations of the state.

The majority of these studies have confirmed that graffiti is a forbidden message exposed by the walls, which becomes a negative act whenever it loses its credibility and its purpose and distorts the space in which it has been placed, thus becoming a symbolic violence exercised against society and the urban environment, in an indirect and uncivilized way. But at the same time, mural writing is a way to express the opinion of individuals for positive change in many social, political and economic areas.

2. Mural writing in an urban environment (reality and issues) :

Graffiti appeared as a social phenomenon in the urban center in the United States of America, more precisely in the New York subways in the sixties, "where it was associated with hip-hop music in New York, and graffiti has spread since 1979 when the artists ' Lee Quince and Freddy' opened the first graffiti exhibition in Rome, and from that moment the world learned about the art of graffiti, its use spread in many fields, such as advertising and expression of opinion. "

Then it quickly spread to countries around the world, and it spread to working-class neighborhoods under the pretext that it distorts the view of the city on the one hand and expresses the social problems that young people suffer from, the most important of which is racism, marginalization and unemployment on the other hand, "In 1981, this phenomenon was known in Europe at first in England, then in France, then in the rest of the major European cities and in Switzerland to be known as street art." (Pirani, 1994, p63)

As for the Arab countries, their cities have experienced a great wave of graffiti, especially the State of Palestine, which considers graffiti as an intentional art, through which the individual seeks to deliver a message that can be linked to social or political issues or to a specific topic. According to journalist Amira Jamal, "Palestine is the first Arab country in which this type of art appeared coinciding with the stone uprising, so graffiti was considered one of the methods of resistance that the occupation had criminalized and imposed prison sentences for all those who practiced it, because it was the year 2000, the year when the occupation authorities decided to isolate the West Bank from Jerusalem and the occupied territories. This is the year when graffiti art has manifested itself strongly, as international artists have found a wide space in the apartheid wall to express their rejection of the wall itself and the occupation" (Jamal, 20016)

The city, with all its agglomerations, has become a space and a stage for the practice of the graffiti language despite the severity of the laws that are found there. However, this art still exists, allowing a group of society to express its opinion without fear or inhibition.

3. Graffiti in the Algerian city (Constantine City as a model)

Graffiti appeared in Algeria thousands of years ago in the form of drawings and symbols that were concentrated in abundance in its vast desert, and this phenomenon has developed especially after the conditions known to the country from French colonization, and then the events of the Black decade, which was a clear and explicit reason for the spread of Wall writing in its cities to express the Exploratory Mission in the city of Constantine to find out the causes of this phenomenon and the extent of its impact on society and the urban environment .

3.1 Constantine: History, Heritage and Modernity':

The city of Constantine is considered one of the largest and oldest Algerian cities, because its construction dates back more than three thousand years. Ibn al-Nu'man and many rulers of the Aghlabids, Fatimids, Zirids, Hammadians and Almowahids settled in it to become, at the time Hafsids, the second capital after Tunisia. The purpose of its occupation by the French colonialists in the year 1837 AD" (Dahdouh, 2015, p. 571)

And always attesting to this ancient history of this city, monuments of great historical and archaeological importance, because there are many bridges that connect the city, as well as many ancient architectures that branch out into many Islamic and Western types, the most important of which is the Great Mosque, which is one of the oldest mosques in Algeria, which still exists, the Sidi El Kettani Mosque, the Ghazal Market, and many schools, such as the Al Kettani School and the Green Mosque School, in addition to the Ahmed Bey Palace, which is an architectural and artistic masterpiece, and one of the most luxurious palaces in Algeria, and other residential buildings, bathrooms and hotels.

Due to the rugged terrain of the city and the deep gorge of the sand valley that bisects it, seven bridges were erected there to facilitate travel, and Constantine later became famous as the city of "suspended bridges", namely: Bab Al-Qantara Bridge, Sidi Rashid Bridge, Sidi Mesaid Bridge, Malah Suleiman Bridge, Mazza Al-Ghanam Bridge. , Devil's Bridge, Shallalat Bridge, Jinan Al-Zaytoun Bridge.

Constantine, by its geographical setting, as an inland city, is the city of the rock, and by virtue of its royal law, it was the capital of many kings, because it enjoys a historical specificity also determined by its Punic culture. , and it is through his Scythian kingdom "relative to the Roman ruler Silius" that Caesar establishes in the beginning of the Roman occupation, which fascinated many historians, in particular by its origins companies "relative to the region of Campania of Rome", its real name is Cirta, which is the truth of the name Abonica wanted by the city, as it has been mentioned several times on Numidian coins and in ancient sources. " (Qachi, 2009, pp. 17, 19)

It is a fortified city, strategically located, with its rock and its ramparts, which were in the form of a castle, which made it a commercial city at the same time as a political capital, and an obligatory passage from east to west and from north to south.

As for the municipality of Constantine, its creation dates back to the decree of April 26, 1854, when the mayor and his deputies were appointed to a mandate by imperial decree, and the municipal council was appointed for the same period by a decision of the governor general to direct municipal affairs by deliberations The election and inauguration of the first municipal council, but it continued to be headed by a certain president, and the question changed only in 1884, when Constantine became headed by an elected president and municipal council, and the municipal house of Constantine is built, which is designed by the

architect 'Pierre Aruix' between 1895 and 1902, and inaugurated in 1903 by the president Emile Loubet. (Qachi, 2009, p. 192)

From there, the city of Constantine has acquired many landmarks, adapted to the taste of the French, and inspired by the architectural perceptions inherited from Mother France at the time.

From the above, we emerge a renewed understanding of Constantine, formerly Cirta, because it has been the double city since antiquity, its duality has been confirmed by successive ancient civilizations, as well as by French colonial policy in the nineteenth century.

In its urban growth, Constantine has gone through many stages that have been characterized by the mechanisms of modern urban and residential growth, before and after French colonization, during which planned urban expansions have intervened, especially in recent years, which have seen the emergence of new housing policies. through which new cities were built to loosen the screws on the mother city, such as: The new city of Ali Menjli and the city of Massinissa.

In recent years, many new and modern establishments have been known in many sectors and fields, in particular: In the field of tourism, the hotel "Marriott" of the Marriott International chain, which was created specifically to support the tourist sector of the city, and to attract many guests of the city, especially in the period of "Constantine, capital of Arab culture 2015", as it has increased its beauty and splendor because it is an architectural and cultural masterpiece.

In the field of transport and roads, the city of Constantine has experienced many new developments, including :

- Cable car station:** which connects the Alfobour district and the city center.
- The Giant's Bridge:** which is one of the important developments and major projects of Constantine, which was part of the five-year plan 2010-2014 and helped to relieve traffic congestion suffered by the city.
- Constantine Tramway:** It is also a huge project in the city. He also helped to loosen the noose in the city. It connects the two stations of Zouaghi Suleiman and Ben Abdelmalek. In 2016, work began to open a new line, which is Ben Abdelmalek - Zouaghi Slimane - New Medina Ali Mengli, which will help facilitate traffic between the two regions.

Without forgetting, the architectural masterpiece, the Ahmed Bey room "Zenit Constantine", where the Zenit Constantine room is characterized by an authentic architecture that combines beauty and quality , which is the first of its kind in Algeria with a glass facade and covered with aluminum.

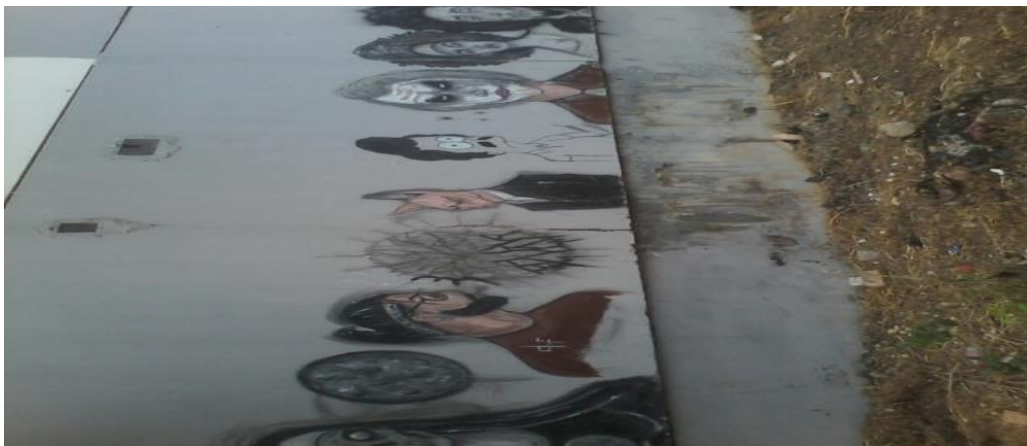
3.2 Constantine and the language of the wall (dialectical expression and deformation)

Despite all the development projects that the city of Constantine has experienced in the field of urban planning, it still suffers from many problems, in particular urbanization and the problem of urban housing ,this has contributed to the presence of suffocation in its streets and the appearance of many slums in it, but the visitor to this city is stopped by a widespread phenomenon in several of its streets, which is graffiti, which led the researcher to conduct an exploratory study in some of its neighborhoods by adopting the technique of observation.

As we know that the majority of studies on this subject adopt the semiotic approach as a way of identifying lexical units and traits in the language of the wall and trying to understand and read them, but in our current study, observation and observation through participation are among the most important research techniques in this field, in particular by asking some questions to some individuals to investigate the truth this phenomenon and its dimensions and its prevalence in society.

The most important observations recorded in this study show the difference and the diversity of the wall paintings in terms of writing and drawing method as well as place and subject. In the Al-Daksi Abd al-Salam neighborhood, we noticed many random, sarcastic and even immoral drawings on the walls of the Fergani Al-Taher secondary school, and this is what the photo below shows.

Photo 01: shows a random drawings the " Daksi neighborhood "



Source: Researcher (15.08.2021)

The statements of some young people in that area have confirmed that the majority of high school students are doing these drawings.

The study showed that the majority of graffiti in the region revolves around the theme of the recent presidential election and the rejection of the fifth reign.

Photo 02: "Shows a drawings that reject the fifth reign "kateriam neighbourhood"



Source: Researcher (15.08.2021)

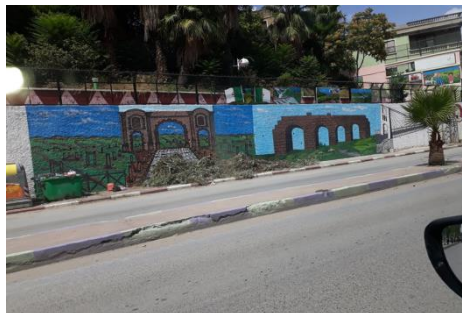
On the other hand, in the Abbas brothers neighborhood, we did not have meaningful and expressive photos, which showed the extent of awareness of the residents of the neighborhood about the cleanliness of the place, and it turned out that the residents of the neighborhood carried out extensive cleaning and organizing campaigns with the help of the neighborhood committees, and they made purposeful drawings showing the extent of the awareness of the residents about the ecological aspect, and the following photos are the best proof of this.

Photo 03: "shows the environmental awareness of the "Abbas brothers neighborhood""



Source: Researcher (15.08.2021)

Photo 04: "shows the landmarks of Constantine "Abbas brothers neighbourhood""



Source: Researcher (15.08.2021)

The study confirmed in certain districts of the city of Constantine that it is often young people who practice graffiti in the neighborhood in a bold, strong and violent way at the same time, such as drawings of skulls and threatening texts, which we have largely noticed. As for the tool, the pen and black dye are the most used.

As for the messages and topics, they are of great diversity, including social, psychological, sexual, incendiary, political and sports topics in the form of drawings and writings as well as sometimes incomprehensible symbols, but they carry in them many dimensional multi-meanings that reflected a state of escape from a lived reality and an attempt to change for the better.

The practice of the language of the wall is considered as a means of attracting attention, distinction and expression, its author refuses direct communication and confrontation, and at the same time damages public and private facilities, and distorts the aesthetics of neighborhoods, especially when it is random and unorganized, so that the writing on the walls

of the city of Constantine has taken on new and contradictory dimensions, purposefully directed. a form of visual pollution in the city that must be combated and eliminated.

4. Conclusion:

At the end of this study, it turns out that the language of the wall or graffiti in the Algerian city in general and the city of Constantine in particular is a silent language that has no specific religion or ideology, but in return it has a social, cultural and political dimension Communities, especially young people, and the problems, pressures, poverty and marginalization that they suffer Despite the rejection of the majority of countries and decision-makers for this language because of its negative moral and material effects, such as a method of incitement and abuse of power on the one hand, and denaturation of the aesthetics of urban neighborhoods on the other hand, it is still widespread everywhere.

In this context, we agree on graffiti affecting the privacy of the street Yes, the streets and public and private facilities must be respected and kept clean for the sake of sustainable environmental development.

The study also confirmed that the art of graffiti is one of the fine arts that has its fans and its pioneers, because it is an art through which a person of all ages, whether teenage or adult, expresses the emotions that inhabit him with the greatest freedom, using the art of graffiti in its different forms, whether drawings, words or phrases, it is considered (street art) as the art of the people.

When graffiti art is used in a limited way as an aesthetic justification, it must follow the function of the interior space in a way that adds an aesthetic touch to its owner, but if it is used in public spaces, it is preferable that these spaces be artistic centers of learning and skill development, so it must not be deformed on the facades of buildings that harm the public visually and psychologically, and it must not violate the public freedoms of members of society because, according to the opinion of many specialists in architecture, it is considered a branch of fine arts and should be used to serve and provide pleasure to the human being as long as it is used in a functional and aesthetic way in which the person expresses a little intimacy without harming the rest of the members of society.

But despite the rejection of the majority of societies by the art of graffiti, it still exists strongly, as a means of communication, and muffled cry that makes walls and sidewalks pronounce what languages cannot articulate.

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