

MAPPING OUT LIBERATING TRACES OF THE FUN OF UNDISCIPLINED PLAY: A SEARCH FOR AN ALTERNATIVE AESTHETIC IN GRAFFITI

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ABSTRACT

Aim. The present study primarily engages with graffiti as a tactic of the weak who find pleasure in scandalising the dominant discourse. The prime focus here will be on the pleasure as resistance, on the construction of an alternative space into the



dominant space, and on the multiple forms of evasive and resisting techniques through which the subordinate asserts their power. Thus, Graffiti can be read as a popular text, a signifying construct of potential meanings and pleasures for the subordinate.

Concept. Conceptualised as the undisciplined play of the subordinate people that resists or evades hegemonic forces and a radical reimagining of the neo-liberal spaces, Graffiti has become a major expression of popular culture in recent times. The paper uses many such stances where the lateral thinking of the power helps to challenge the disciplinary discourses of the dominant.

Results and Conclusion. The paper offers a popular reading of graffiti that opens up the way to escape control, scandalise top-down power and to assert bottom-up power at the micro-level. The real pleasure lies in scandalising the dominant discourse. Graffiti is read here as self-assertion of the marginalised who acquire public visibility and power through graffiti creation.

Originality. The originality of the study depends on reviewing the manipulative actions of people in everyday lives and how this undisciplined play provides them with the opportunity to subvert the system and to escape social control. It supports the idea that the subordinate possesses transgressive deviation in relation to the everyday continuum.

Keywords: graffiti, popular, popular culture, popular resistance, power, space

INTRODUCTION

The notion of graffiti as vandalism has become dominant in general perception, but this expressive form of expression presages the voices of people, their aggression, and their rebelliousness. Graffiti is defined as an “internal language” (Lewisohn, 2009, p. 15) that expresses the social, political, and psychological turmoil of heterogeneous groups. From being an activity with less artistic value to becoming a major outlet of popular expression is evidence of the progress Graffiti has made over the years. The popular understanding of graffiti art is not constant across languages and cultures. “Graffiti” is generally perceived as an unofficial and unsanctioned art form applied onto a surface. But in the contemporary era, graffiti is seen as a form of reconciliation rather than as destruction and devastation.

Graffiti has been a major expression of popular culture in the present scenario as it is now used as a form of protest against authority. Thus, graffiti writing can be seen as an act of defiance, as a sign of opposition to over-organised power. Graffiti explains the liberating traces of the fun of undisciplined play. Sohaib Alam and Farhan Ahmad (2020) emphasize:

The comic performances of Dario Fo in Italy do not simply intend to entertain audiences but outline significant lines of thought about the liberation of repressed humanity through a critique of the notions of common sense which he cogitates is a construct of power relations ineluctably linked to and perpetuated by various social practices and institutions. They are the breeding ground of important civil conversations on issues related to class struggle, politics, religion, history, and culture as he wants to discern workers from the mercenary mob with no ideology (Alam & Ahmad, 2020, p. 5).

Similarly, this act of the weak is a carnival expression of their social power as Michel Foucault argues that power is a “hazardous play of dominations” that can take multifarious forms to replace each other in a “series of subjugations.” Graffiti expresses the voice of the subordinate in the set hierarchy of the hegemon. It provides some space for the subordinate to express and assert themselves. In this regard, Aleksander Kobylarek (2020, p. 5) says “knowledge constitutes the fuel for development.”

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The major questions of the present study are articulated below:

- How graffiti has been used as an artistic expression of the marginalised?
- How pleasure is used as a form of resistance against the dominant discourse?
- How does consumption of spaces within the dominant places reverse the hierarchy of producers and consumers?
- What is the role of discipline in the dissemination of power?
- How the undisciplined play of the subjugated subverts the hegemonic power?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of the present study is to explore the topography of popular resistance through graffiti. Graffiti has been used as a medium for the disempowered to subvert the social order in multifarious ways. The study aims to foreground graffiti as creative resilience with the capacity to shake off the stability of the status quo and make its homogeneous power weaker for the time being. These manipulative actions of people need to be explored in their everyday lives where they use pleasure as a form of resistance at the micro level. The lateral thinking of the powerless is paramount as it helps to challenge the disciplinary discourses of the dominant.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The proposed study will be informed by John Fiske’s argument on popular culture along with Michel De Certeau’s (1984) idea of space and the Foucauldian notion of power. This approach allows the researchers to examine multiple forms of resisting and evasive techniques used by the marginalised to subvert their marginalisation and assert their voice.

GRAFFITI: CONCEPT AND BACKGROUND

The scope of unofficial art which includes almost everything from cave painting to flash-mobbing makes it difficult to pin down its boundaries and it creates its space into popular culture through its diverse journey since antiquity. Norman Mailer (1974) and *The New York Times* are credited to have used the term "graffiti" for the first time. The English word Graffiti comes from the Italian verb "to scratch." In layman's terms, Graffiti is simply marking scratches onto a surface whether of text or pictures. But graffiti can be made by a number of means besides scratching, such as inscribing, using charcoal, ink, or paint. Egypt is believed to be one of the places where some of the earliest graffiti exists but examples are very rare. If one travels back about 2500 years, one can discover more than 11000 specimens of graffiti texts documented in Pompeii. Historiographically, the Pompeian scholarship on Graffiti has shaped the discipline within the disciplines of History and Archaeology. The word "graffiti" emerged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century when visitors to Pompeii started talking about the graffiti text on the walls.

Graffiti had always been there, but nobody noticed it until the scholarship of Ancient Art became popular. Graffiti as an art form is often despised, being dubbed as uncultured. Pompeian graffiti consisted mainly of words and poetry. One can find many examples of murals at Pompeii which are seen by experts as official and sanctioned artworks. In Pompeii writing can be found on walls, in public spaces, inside houses, as well as, around workplaces.

Ancient Greco-Roman graffiti had a political overtone and was often sought as a popular way of hitting back at the authorities. The development of graffiti writing from the tagging up in the mid-1960s to a full-fledged movement which happened against the clock i.e., over a period of five years. Culturally, this was a unique phenomenon; a phenomenon of disaffected young people in New York City. People during the late 1970s and early 1980s started channelling their disaffection and frustration into making visual art. The art form they invented became the visual expression of their disgruntled feelings and a way to disrupt the status *quo* with some elements of pop culture in it.

Graffiti writing was undeniably a major influence on the iconography of hip hop during the 1980s. In New York graffiti writing moved from the walls onto the outside of trains, using single line tags at first, which were done quickly while the trains sat at the stations as passengers got on and off.

The competition among the graffiti writers propelled them to jump down on the railway tracks to tag the moving trains. This, of course, was precarious, as many people lost their lives in the pursuit. A stationery train still, however, bought enough time for the writers to write their tags, amplify those tags and add more elaborate details like stars or coloured outlines

making their words bolder and more noticeable that would capture the attention of the people. Crucially, this was a bottom-up development.

Figure 1

Trains by Lee



Source: Henry Chafant (1978).

Graffiti writing made its way from America to Europe around 1982 with writers such as Bando, Mode 2, and many others and got greater acceptance there as compared to the United States. It crossed over the Atlantic via mass media such as films, magazines, and pop videos with images of graffiti in the background. The momentum filtered upwards, as galleries helped to maintain it. The global diffusion of Graffiti and its place into the mainstream owes much to hip-hop culture.

POPULAR AND POPULAR CULTURE

The term “popular” is determined by the forces of domination to the extent that it is always formed in opposition to the structure of dominance. Popular culture is the culture of the subjugated who deploy resistance at a micro level to resent the former meaning. The focus of top-down forces is to hold the subjectivities of the subordinate and constructs the common sense of society in their own interests. Thus, popular culture is a perpetual scuffle between the “Power-bloc” and the “people.” Power-bloc refers to the relatively unified and relatively stable forces of social alliances that try to construct their monosemic meaning. The struggle over popular culture is over the production and distribution of meanings that directs the formation of pleasure. “Language as a medium of expression not only defines the identity of individuals but also constructs them in one way or the other” (Alam et al., 2021, p. 377). It attempts to subvert the omnipresent hegemonic

meaning through everyday resistances and evasions of the under. Hence, popular culture is potentially progressive not reactionary.

Here, the discursive resources consist of mainly the strategies of the politics of production and consumption that is always put under the veil from “the people.”

Figure 2

No to fee hike



Source: Hindustan Times, Bhuyan Biplov (2019).

Though subordinate cannot produce or distribute the resources of the Culture Industry, yet can make their culture out of it. However, in De Certeau’s terms, the art of popular culture is “the art of making” (De Certeau, 1984, p. 15) that trick the system. Thus, resources carry the contradictory lines of forces to its core that are activated differently by different people. For instance, a notice board of Jawaharlal Nehru University is a resource of the dominant but is scandalised by the forces of subordinate. The authoritative meaning of the dominant is challenged and overpowered by the popular meaning of the weak. The message “No to fee hike,” is against the economical benefits of the dominant.

Popular culture creates its oppositional meanings of the resources given to them. To create one’s own meaning one should have the ability to “think differently.” Popular culture is a play on words whose meanings multiply and evade the norms of social order offering opportunities for subversion. It is inherently subversive. Popular culture investigates the popular vitality and the creativity of the weak instead of focussing on the devious workings of the hegemonic forces. So, popular culture is always produced from within and below that escape the hegemonic power of the hegemon. The terrain of struggle in popular culture may be tasteless or vulgar, obvious or superficial where the hegemony is weakest. Thus, popular culture is the interplay of power, knowledge, and pleasure.

Popular culture is tilted towards the subordinate that tries to threaten the stability of the system by staying within the system. This popular resistance shows the signs of resisting or evading the system through the tactical raids of the weak.

POPULAR RESISTANCE

Popular resistance shows the signs of resisting or evading the system through the tactical raids of the weak. Resistance and Evasion are the two forms opted for by the disempowered to show their resentment against the authoritative regime. Both are interrelated as the two involve the interchange of meaning as well as pleasure. Evasion is more pleasurable than meaningful whereas the prime focus of resistance is on meanings. On the one hand, top-down forces concentrate to construct the common sense of society and thus hold the subjectivities of the subordinate. Their power is the power imbued with meanings of the self and of social relations accepted or contested by the people. On the other hand, evading this power or inverting it becomes an act of defiance. Contending this idea in *Reading the popular* Fiske (1989, p. 9) says that "Evasion is the foundation of resistance." Fiske stated that semiotic or interior resistance will create some space in resources by contradicting it from within and against the system as argued by the critics of the progressive approach. Whereas, the radical approach side-lines the resistance at the micro level and believes that progressive resentment delays radical change. But, Fiske in both of his books *Understanding popular culture* (1994), and *Reading the popular* (1989) claims that the evading traits of tricksters, poaching, of guileful ruses, can erode and weaken the power structure. Structural changes at the level of the system itself occur only after the system has been eroded and weakened by the tactics of everyday life. Evasive art is central to popular culture.

In the light of the above context, graffiti can be read as a text; a signifying construct of potential meanings and pleasures for the subordinated. A text that is integrated into popular culture an embodiment of both; the forces of domination as well as the opportunities to speak against these forces.

Popular culture is productive and meaningful, an active process of generating and circulating meanings and pleasures within a social system. It involves making knowledge available to those underrepresented. Culture, for Fiske, is an on-going process of meaning-making of and from our collective experiences, and such meanings have the potential to construct the social identities of the people involved. Within the production and circulation of these meanings lies pleasure. The brevity of the paper lies in the production of popular meanings and pleasures where graffiti embraces subordinate voices.

POWER, SPACE, AND UNDISCIPLINED PLAY

The construction of space and subversion of dominant power through the creativity of the disempowered. Space and power are the major phenomena of popular culture. Creative consumption subverts the dialectics of production and consumption. The politics of production and distribution of resources is in the hands of the dominant who is economically, and politically powerful. As in the capitalist society, the Bourgeoisie owns the means of production and distribution. They use many strategies for marketing to gain profit and power. The powerful intend to disseminate their power through the construction of places and attain pleasure when it is consumed by the people. Consumption is itself a form of power as it provides an agency to the disempowered whether to insert the product into their everyday life or to creatively consume the resource, which in Pressdee's term is "Proletarian Shopping" (Fiske, 1989, p. 16) that asserts their power. Pressdee uses the term to describe window shopping where the consumer has no intention to buy any product and just consume spaces; a kind of sensuous consumption. The prime focus is on the guerrilla's attainment of power, space, and pleasure where they are the producers of the resource by subverting the dominant meaning of resources.

Graffiti is the spontaneous creative output of counter-hegemonic groups who work under the veneer of anonymity. The act frequently contains a message of liberation from the oppressive power structure. Marxist theorists, such as Louis Althusser, believes in only a one-dimensional flow of power i.e. from the top to bottom, foregrounding the State's role in oppressing people. Fiske (1994) and De Certeau (1984) express their opposition to top-down power that provides no space for the weak.

Graffiti writers are guerrilla fighters who resist or evade the trap of power intended to discipline them and to maintain social control. In the contemporary era, mass media has emerged as a powerful propaganda system, a brainwashing machinery so efficient at influencing public opinion; media vested power to the forces of domination to develop and propagate false narratives to delegitimise their subjugation of the masses and to justify their policies of regression. But graffiti as semiotic guerrilla warfare embodies a critique or transgression that undoes ideological domination. For instance, a graffiti picture in Hong Kong's legislative council, taken in 2016 after being vandalised by the protesters at the Legislative council complex on 2nd July, opposes the message of the framed picture and constructs a new message that automatically side-lines the dominant discourse. This is how ideological domination of the state is overpowered by the tactics of the weak.

Figure 3

A painting hung in the Legislativoe Council in Hong Kong covered in graffiti after the protestors stormed the building

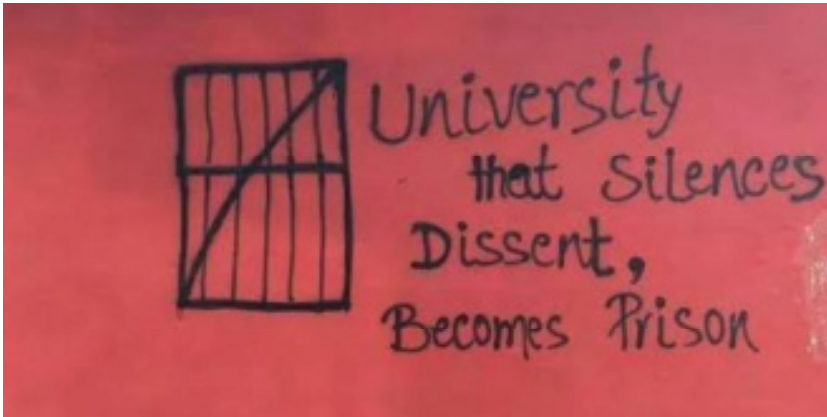


Source:Getty Images, Kwok, 2019.

POWER AND SPACE OF THE UNDISCIPLINED

“University that silences dissent becomes prison,” reads the graffiti slogan in Jamia Millia Islamia that has a prominent message. Here, the university is an agency of control where every individual has to behave according to certain decorum. The word “silence” has a great significance on a wall, as it represents the aim of the dominant. The motive of the hegemon is to disseminate power in the hegemonic sense where every action of an individual is put to surveillance and the voices of dissent are being suppressed. This slogan can extend to a larger landscape of society. From family institutions to political institutions, power is operated by the authority under the veneer of “goodness.” The powerful gains the consent of people by manipulating their original discourse. A prison according to Foucault is a metonym for society because both of them try to control the individual.

These educational institutions in a similar sense become prison as they suppress popular tricks and aim to shape individuals in the “normal” sense. The undisciplined play, the poaching tricks of disempowered even at the micro level is put under surveillance by the authority. Thus, institutions operate on a range of conflicting and contradictory forces where the power of the dominant is tricked by the raids of the resisting play though at a subtle level.

Figure 4*Why students are protesting*

Source: Scoopwhoop, Faridi Furqan (2017).

The motive of authoritarian regimes is to discipline the subordinate in a manner to make them “civilised” beings. Foucault (1977) asserts, discipline is a set of strategies, procedures and patterns of behaving that can be defined within certain institutional contexts including the hospital, the clinic, the prison, and school, college, university. Discipline is something which is to be inculcated in each individual who belongs to an institution with a concern to control and make subservient to the system. The control implies an inhibition of one’s posture and bodily functions, concentration, and immediate desires and emotions. Let’s cite the role of educational institutions in disciplining students. From day one of schooling, a toddler is taught the lessons of being on time, sit this way, eat food in this manner, do not damage the infrastructure such as writing on the wall, or bench, and so it goes on and on. And if there is an undisciplined student who violates these conventions, he is punished. These disciplinary pressures push the individual to conform to a set of procedures that is external, but whose intention is to discipline the self by the self. Here, dissent refers to heterogeneous subordinates in the hierarchy of the dominant. The suppression of voices is prevalent everywhere in society: from family institutions to political institutions. Flow of societal norms within society is legitimised through certain discourses and discursive practices that operate the suppression of voices. Thus, the voice of the individual should come to front and graffiti paves way into this functioning. Graffiti foregrounds the voices of the heterogeneity right up to the front. The potential subversive meaning of graffiti derives from the desire that it dares to articulate an alternative or shifting perspective in opposition to the one produced by the hegemonic culture. The opposition here lies in the negation of the control or power reinforced by dominant structure. Foucault (1982), in his essay “The subject

and power," calls popular struggles "An opposition to the effects of power which are linked with knowledge, competence, and qualification" (Foucault, 1982, p. 781). All these struggles are described by Foucault as "local" or "immediate" struggles.

In his book, *The history of sexuality: An introduction*, Foucault (1990, p. 92) claims, "Power must be understood as the multiplicity of force relation, as the process, as the support, and lastly as the strategies." Foucault associates power with knowledge production as something which brings about forms of behaviour and events rather than simply constraining individuals and curtailing their freedom. Thus, the traces of graffiti on our walls can be analysed as productive power that inverts the official discourse of the dominant. These multiple voices turn the tables as "discipline" a means of control is overpowered by the nimble act of the subjugated and the hegemony of the dominant becomes weakest which is the ultimate pleasure for the disempowered.

Controlling the places and the commodities that keep the everyday lives of the people going is one of the most effective strategies for upholding power. The powerful constructs "places" such as cities, shopping malls, schools, universities, and workplaces where they can exercise their power. And the tactics of the weak are to subvert those places of the powerful creating a space of their own. They make those spaces temporarily theirs as they move through them, occupying them as long as they wish to have them.

For instance, Jamia Millia Islamia University is a resource of government, i.e. the status quo and the students are mere consumers of the resource (weak in Certeau's term). The weak actors have tactics to manipulate the events and turn them into opportunities to flip the narrative. They set their own rules of the game by foiling the rules imposed from outside, trying to get away with the system by manipulation and defacement of the dominant resource. This appropriation of the hegemonic resources by the weak is an attempt at disrupting the status quo, finding ways to assert their identities and to make their voices heard. By appropriating the dominant space the weak curacy of space for themselves; is a sphere of autonomous action and self-determination within the constraints that are imposed on them. These diversions are creative rather than being directly oppositional. It is imaginative, probing, challenging, undisciplined, and disrespectful offering an alternative perspective of looking at things. This is how the University students made the "university wall" as a space for their manipulative action against the authoritarian regime. The graffiti expresses the voice of the subordinate in the set hierarchy of the hegemon. This act of the weak is a carnival expression of their social power. They grab small, fleeting victories, and some territory for themselves through manipulative action.

Thus, the wall is transformed into a space by graffiti writers. They, like guerillas push through the spaces of the dominant transforming them into their own space; an unequivocal proof of their imaginative and creative

forces. In short, space is a practiced place. Henri Lefebvre (1991) makes a distinction between the “compulsion” and “adaptation” to point up the opposition between compulsion (the strategy of the powerful) and adaptation (the tactics of the weak). He argues, “Who adapts to circumstances has overcome compulsion adaptation absorbs compulsions, transforms and turns them into products” (Fiske, 1994, p. 33). One cannot change the system sometimes with or without any physical force. The best way is to adapt oneself within the system and try to weaken the system while staying in the system though at the micro level itself. This Micro resistance will bring some change at a larger level also such as one graffiti on the wall creates a graffiti revolution amongst the students, sparking an interest in youth activism. They try to express their resentment through “the art of making do.” They want their voices to be heard unequivocally and aesthetically.

Figure 5

Writing on the Wall



Source: The Telegraph Online India (2019).

Public universities like Jawaharlal Nehru University, Jamia Millia Islamia University and so on have so much exposure to graffiti. This creative act can be conceptualised in political acts because of its capacity to laugh at the powerholders such as graffiti on the wall with texts written “Good days will come,” “Everything is ok,” “No CAA and NRC, We will fight”, “Amit Shah leave the World,” “Walls speaks, Speak freedom,” “Safron will be fired,” “University that silences dissent becomes a prison,” “Those who are alive, will not wait for 5 years,” and many more. Public Universities are constrained by government policies and plans, that set rules of the status quo and suppress the voice of the voiceless. But these petty pilferings of space that students’ acquire, make them the producers of the product, though it does not provide any economic benefit to them, yet provides a sense of power in their hands. These foot-dragging actions of the disem-

powered empower them in the semiotic-cultural meaning of the product. Thus, there is a need to chart popular resistance because of disparities in accessing resources.

In a consumer society, everyone is the consumer. The only way of procuring the resources of everyday life is through consumption. All the resources of economic capitalism have material function as well as semiotic-cultural function. The material function of the product refers to the use of product in the precise way it is meant, like a chair is to sit on and it is used for sitting on only. Whereas, the semiotic-cultural function that exceeds the basic power of the dominant basically to earn a profit, disempowered, constructs its own meanings. The resources carry the interest of the powerful who control the means of production and distribution; they capitalise on the hegemonic structure and support the status quo. But resources must have the capacity to construct the meaning of the people and social identities. For instance, shoe is a resource that has its material function but the brand sign over it constructs a sense of superiority among the one who is using it and they feel themselves distinct from those who are not using it or cannot afford it. This cultural meaning of the shoe is totally different from the material meaning of the product and it has no link with producers' profit. Thus, every act of consumption can be described as an act of cultural production, for consumption is always about the meaning of production. The productivity of the consumption is always detached from wealth or class. Fiske argues that the poor are the most productive consumers whose creativity is not determined by cost. This productive consumption is another form of the tactical raid upon the system.

This tactical consumption though has no place of its own to exercise power, yet only has the space of its moments of being. The text "Walls are the publishers of poor and oppressed" explicitly states "the politics of consumption." Fiske believes that in our society people have no control, and no choice in the conditions of production but consumption offers a sense of control over the product. Here, the wall is a publisher of the oppositional meaning of the tricksters. They brushed off the taste of the status quo as the taste is a means of social control. This semiotic consumption of the wall is creatively exposed and has some sense of control over the territory without having any monetary investment. Hence, they acquire a cultural economy. The discipline of the disciplined is in competition with the undisciplined guerrillas. These raids of graffiti help students to exploit the dominant though elsewhere they are exploited by the powerful. This is what Fiske (1989, p. 17) calls "Ethics of tenacity i.e. myriad ways of refusing to adapt to the established order, the status of a law, a meaning or a fatality invade into the place of the capitalist to subvert the subjugation."

Their inversion blurred the boundaries between the public place and the individual space. This worked tactically as it amplified the reach and tone of the local resistance and made it noticeable. The disempowered consumer actually "makes do with what they have." As students can only consume

the walls, the pillars, the gates, and the roads of the university, or carve something on the benches, or misuse the washrooms and other places. This provides an opportunity for them to break the decorum of the university. Thus, the feeling of possession of some territory ends up giving pleasure to the weak. The imposed place is now their own space, own resource, and own territory where they can craft tasteless and vulgar, obvious and superficial meanings and carnival pleasures of their own confrontation in non-violent ways.

The essence of graffiti is in the construction of space within the territory of the hegemon. It explores the deviant ways of asserting the voice which had been marginalised within the system. People in society basically seek some power in their hands that provides a sense of pleasure. In contemporary times, power is limited to a few who wish to assert their monopoly by controlling the means of production and distribution. And, here lies the relevance of graffiti, as it foregrounds the popular vitality of the weak, their voice, and their sense of belongingness to the space in the territory. This section of the present study proves that the voices of the voiceless are not the hegemonic traces of the dominant rather a producer of the semiotic-cultural economy. The production of heterogeneous meanings of the subordinate either by ignoring or by deviating the discourse of a status quo leads to the production of pleasure and challenges the official knowledge.

CONCLUSION

Graffiti is a resource bank of potential meanings because of its semiotic richness. Graffiti texts are used to seek out new and exciting possibilities for ways of being that feel liberating. Graffiti is an anomalous category of text. But dominant prohibits anomalous activities to exert ideological closure, discipline people, and to make them receptive and passive. As Kobylarek, Peter Plavčan, Taher Amini Golestani (2021, p. 7) emphasize "Ideology and belief in an imposed, non-antiquated and unconsolidated value system are the opposite of critical thinking and negotiation skills." Graffiti opens up the way to escape control, to scandalise top-down power and to assert bottom-up power at the micro level. The distinction of top-down and bottom-up power can easily be understood in the Foucauldian notion of power as "Hazardous play of dominations that can take multifarious forms that replace each other in series of subjugations" (Fiske, 1989, p. 151). Foucault believes that conflict and contradiction is the precondition for the emergence of discourse. He offers a discursive understanding of power in terms of its ability to impose a particular knowledge over resisting, competitive knowledge. Power and resistance are interchangeable lines of force. Resistance is itself a form of power. The pleasure in this power is the pleasure of resisting it, the pleasure of knowing the unruliness of events. The real

pleasure lies in “scandalising” the hegemonic sense. It escapes the ideological notion of pleasure or muted pleasure.

Graffiti can be seen as an act of defiance, as a sign of opposition to over-organised power. Graffiti explains the liberating traces of the fun of undisciplined play. It supports the “heteroglossia” that is flexible, nimble, and creative. The complex heterogeneous groups opt for interior assaults over the strategic management of the status quo to threaten the stability of the system. The downtrodden possess transgressive deviation in relation to the everyday continuum. Graffiti aligns itself to the arena of difference and is an oppositional, competitive act that is a source of achievement, self-esteem, and power. Graffiti is read here not in connection with the market forces rather as the self-assertion of the marginalised who acquire some public visibility and power through graffiti writing. As Alam and Shafey Anwarul Haque (2021, p. 491) say “the role of language in communicating stigma and stereotypes is pivotal.” Marginality becomes an unprecedented source of creative energy. Thus, graffiti writing has largely been absorbed into street culture. And the study sketches out, how graffiti writing evades the subalternisation of disempowered as oppressed.

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