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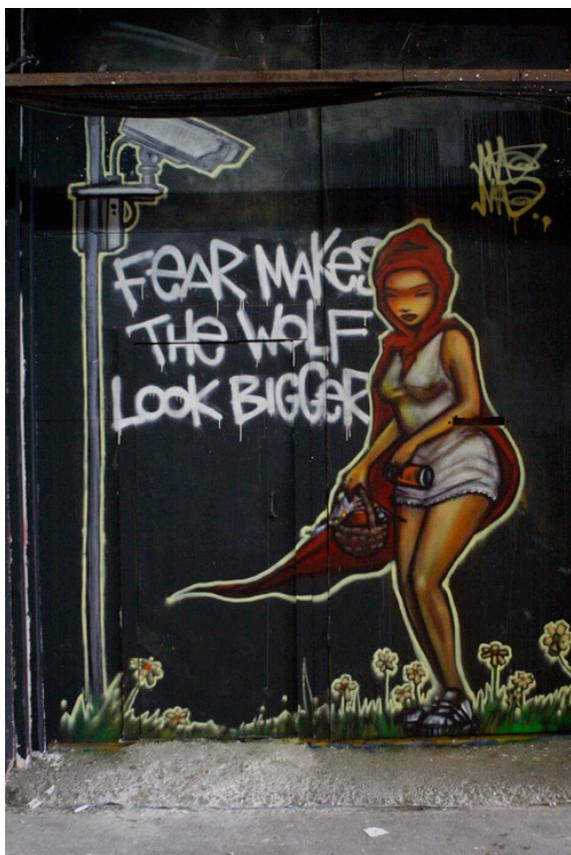
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**How Fear Makes the Wolf Look Bigger:  
Analysis of Foucault, Sandoval, & Fanon in the contemporary process of Graffiti Art**  
**Kyle Hutcheson**

In contemporary society, many critics say that fear is used as a tool to coerce people into adhering to the dominant ideologies. According to Sandoval, there are 5 techniques that can be used by marginalized groups. These differential modes of oppositional social movements connect and disrupt, actively resisting psychic disturbance and social praxis. With increasing governmental and financial impasses placed upon the citizens of Western countries, it only seems fit that there are more modes of resistance. The use of graffiti art stands as a challenge to the hegemony of government, big business, and finance firms. Graffiti art is a good representation of differential consciousness, as it is constantly changing the emphasis of each symbol and technique. As political identity/ideas are highly context-specific and historically particular, graffiti art is able to constantly change, develop, and become organized within the social/individual psyche, assuming that marginalized groups can relate to the symbols behind the picture itself. Contemporary society currently exists as a place of techno-consumerism; street-art/street-graffiti stands as an effective, visible and representative resistance to hegemonic ideology/systems of power. It changes the perception of an idea, inadvertently affecting the discourse of one's social reality. This social reality has the potentiality to affect other social realities. The image itself acts as a catalyst of social change.

Graffiti art challenges neocolonial imperial notions of the neoliberal agenda, fostering a sense of community by utilizing the 5 technologies Sandoval touches upon with regards to Roland Barthes' 1957 book, *Mythologies*. The first two technologies can be viewed as a part of consciousness itself. The first technology that Sandoval explores in Barthes' work is entitled 'sign-reading', which is a scientific deciphering of cultural denotations (81). This is known as the ability to read/share symbols that denote social realities, and a reading of signs to determine the power relations. The second technology is the process of 'mythology', where the dominant ideological forms are challenged via their deconstruction (81). The third is an outer technology, called 'revolutionary exnomination', which

is a form of what Sandoval refers to as meta-ideologizing, that appropriates dominant ideological forms, using their representation as a whole, as a way of transforming them (82). It is seen as a necessary action to intervene in social reality. The fourth technology is 'democratics', which is a process of locating positionality, one that further propels the first three technologies, with the aim of creating a central identity in the interest of love and social justice in the world (Sandoval 82). This would include spreading ideas of egalitarian social relations. Differential movement is the fifth technology, which the other four depend upon to be able to operate. It means that a change must occur in social realities, from which the possibility of a potential split in consciousness can occur within the mind of the individual who is actively engaging in a differential discourse.



The graffiti art image 'Little Red Ridin'Hoody', can be perceived as the simultaneous split of multiple meanings and symbols. Graffiti artists such as 'Mau Mau' in England, attempt to evoke political messages out of those who are able to witness their imagery and symbolism.

The image 'Little Red Ridin Hoody', is an image of graffiti art done as part of the Cans Festival in London, England by an artist by the alias of 'Mau Mau'. The image itself is of a camera on a pole with a woman of colour in a 'Little Red Hood' costume, with a basket of fruit in one arm, and a spray-paint canister on the other. The image contains the phrase "Fear Makes the Wolf Look Bigger", that when analyzed in conjunction with the image itself, conjures multiple interpretations. Sandoval identifies 5 different technologies/techniques used by marginalized groups, which can be applied to the ideas behind this graffiti and the ideas/knowledge it is expected to actively project towards viewers. The art itself is transferred from a material external image to a point of individual and symbolic internalized perspective. The symbols used within the image 'Little Red Ridin Hoody', could be analyzed to the point of the young lady's colour of skin which is black- this could represent racialized oppression in terms of belonging to targeted neighbourhoods of video surveillance. It could suggest, in conjunction with the CCTV camera, the black skin of the girl, the historical oppression of racialized groups in English history, and very individual nature of the phrase 'Fear makes the wolf look bigger', that the image is open to many diverse interpretations such as on neo-colonialism, English classism, neo-liberalism, or the cyclical nature of fear etc. The story of Red Riding Hood denotes a threat, as it acts as a warning of male sexual aggression. The artist understood this and wanted to make a broader point about how the image itself takes on multiple meanings and functions. Franz Fanon argues that the powerless must read signs in order to survive, especially in relation to dominating forces (Black Skins, White Masks). Semiotics, or rather the ability to read relations between signs and what they mean, and the signs and effects they have on the people who use them, increases an individuals' ability

to 'read' labels allows one to project new revolutionary meanings in social discourse, and in the process deconstruct the meaning of relations within system itself.

One interpretation of the image, 'Little Red Ridin Hoody' symbolizes anti-government, as the wolves are portrayed as terrorists, muggers etc. It is because of this that there are lots of cameras in London, making an individual walking around there feel more threatened than they realistically might be. A terrorist is one who uses fear to advance their goals. However, in the picture, 'Little Red Ridin Hoody' is holding a can of spray paint, which doesn't make sense in this interpretation, as the picture is joined with the title 'Fear Makes the Wolf Look Bigger'. One possible interpretation is that Little Red Riding Hoody is standing up to the 'wolf' itself in order to express meaning through the use of graffiti imagery, much like Mau Mau did in 'Little Red Ridin Hoody'. A deeper interpretation can be understood as anti-government in that government officials are referred to as wolves. The 'closed circuit television' (CCTV) creates fear in any 'bad person', creating an almost paranoia-like state of feeling like one is always being watched. It is reminiscent of the concept of 'Big Brother' from George Orwell's novel, 1984. It is how the threat of a threat can take on a life of its own – denoted in Foucault's power dynamics based on Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon prison design (Foucault 1977). The idea of the CCTV is quite apparent when considering Jeremy Bentham's apparent 'advantages' of the Panopticon ideal. He claims that in a panopticon penal system the 'apparent omnipresence of the inspector' is combined with a 'real presence' (Letter VI). The Panopticon, much like the symbolic representation of the CCTV, functions like a surveillance machine. No prisoner can see the 'inspector' due to the privileged central location that they reside. The prisoner in turn, never knows when they actually are being surveilled, creating mental uncertainty that becomes a invaluable instrument of discipline. With the increased use of databases, new surveillance mechanisms, and the shift towards managerial action at a distance- such as in the utilization of remote monitoring. The social reality itself

has become more penalty of a 'technical project', an 'insidious extension' of disciplinary mechanisms. (Foucault 1977: 176-7, 257). As the penalty of surveillance has changed, so too has the penal subjects within society. The prisoner has accepted their active participation in a penal system. 'Lil Red Ridin Hoody' is the one who disrupts this with active refusal to cooperate.

There may be more interpretations, but this interpretation views fear as an internalization of social stigma/labels symbolizing fear itself. Foucault's theory, that knowledge is power, is the power that one can gain by observing others (hence why espionage is so 'valuable' in international politics). The danger is that when certain people/groups control knowledge, it can be oppressive. It means questioning where the line is drawn between freedom and security.

In the third interpretation, 'Little Red Ridin Hoody' herself is portrayed as the wolf, with her eyes glaring from under her cloak without fear of being surveilled. The fear that the establishment (government, business etc) has of a non-existent wolf (groups of resistance) makes it look bigger than it actually is. The fear of the wolf, as a threat to the established power, makes it a necessity to install external technologies such as CCTV. It could mean that the government is afraid of its own people (or the people are just as afraid if they're conscious of their conditions). To stretch this further, the (UK) government is so busy looking for wolves that maybe even 'little Red Ridin Hood' starts to become seen as a threatening wolf. They are caught in their own political discourse making it difficult to see things for what they actually are.

Politics aside, the image acts as a successful framing technique for daily life or sports. A person builds up an activity or opponent in their head in a certain way, and they will often act accordingly (whether it's an illusion or reality). [This is what gives an idea power as the idea itself that eventually manifests an action in response - meaning that the mental uncertainty produced as a result of individual

perception of stimuli is once again a crucial instrument of discipline in a penal system. Whatever the interpretation may be, it is clear that there is increasing social unease and unrest under certain technological conditions. The graffiti art itself takes on the idea of Fanon's 'black skin' by being the non-legitimate form, always subject to the alienated white norm of high art culture – this would be the identity of the artists themselves. The white mask is simultaneously an 'alias' that the artist uses as a way of remaining a part of the system while still employing the methods of the oppressed that Sandoval denotes. This is the inversion of the relationship with the two identities, where the alias becomes the identity of the person, and the identity of the person is identified through the graffiti art. The white-mask could represent the physical masking of the artist himself through graffiti art. Fanon demonstrates this in, 'Black Skin, White Masks', a blurring of technology (mask), and skin (humanity), challenging the binary oppositions that exist between race, nature/culture, insides/outside (Sandoval 84). What Fanon is describing is the chiasmus, where three things are happening. Imagine the first version of the image as the thesis, the beginning point of action. From there the thesis was found to be invalid, going to the second interpretation, which seems to be the anti-thesis of Foucault's interpretation of power/knowledge. However, the relations between the thesis and antithesis are set into a reactionary binary and as such they can eventually synthesize into a third interpretation which can go either way in terms of the dualisms in which it is perceived. The interpretation of the image itself is dependent upon the 'interspaces' that power dynamics have allotted for it (Sandoval 82) – The potentiality of a reinterpretation allows an individual to call into question their preconceived notion of an image as a particular social symbol, enabling new/recycled forms of social action as a result.

Foucault suggested that power was solely a mode of actions, acting upon the actions of others, adding that this hegemonic and totalizing mode of actions is in fact a hindrance to the local individualized character. The local character is the localized manifestation of the individual in relation

to their position and experiences in society, and the meanings and representations that are built upon at the local and personal level. Foucault might argue that the graffiti art is “essentially a local character of criticism... (this) indicates that reality is an autonomous, non-centralized kind of theoretical production, one that is to say whose validity is not dependent on the approval of the established regimes of thought” (Foucault 81). This allows for a space in which the subject is able to differ their behaviour, and ultimately act out what Fanon describes as new forms of resistance, not adhering to the dominant ideals. Foucault argues that ‘rationality’ and ‘reason’ were enlightenment concepts created and utilized by dominant forces to enforce and repeat ideology consistently. Foucault may also argue that the insurrection of subjugated knowledge(s) is what this image/the artist/ the representation is subject to. The “historical contents ... have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemization” (Foucault 81). It is only these historical contents of symbols, representations, identities, and the knowledge that flows through these, that allows somebody, who is (re)interpreting the particular image, the ability to “rediscover the ruptural effects of conflict and struggle that the order...is designed to mask” (Foucault 82). This is what has been revealed, through reinvisioning/reimagining these historical contents, the ‘order’ is brought together by the solidarity of the image, which was created by the artists themselves. This is where the artist utilizes Sandoval’s take on Barthes’ technologies of the oppressed.

The functional interpretation of graffiti art is what is important. It is not only a beginning point for ability to ‘sign-read’ -- that is, to share symbols/meanings with others. Some of the symbols in the image are that of ‘being surveilled’, ‘little red riding hoody’, ‘fear’ amongst others. ‘Mythology’ is used as a way of reinterpreting the images of power. By breaking down the level of mythical understanding and showing ‘Red Ridin Hoody’ as image that challenges the norms of feminine representation, this “picture” even stares down masculine hegemonic aggression (again, that’s just one

suggestion for correcting the grammar). ‘Meta-ideologizing’ is the physical and ideological appropriation of dominant ideological forms. In this graffiti art, the idea of the ‘fear’ and the idea of ‘Wolf’ are manipulated, asking the question: who is the one that really is being surveilled? The graffiti art itself leads to what Barthes would describe as ‘democratics’ in that it brings together symbols, mythology, and meta-ideologizing, which orients social identities towards social justice. It brings to consciousness the power that fear itself has over human psyche.

The point of good art such as the graffiti art found in ‘Little Red Ridin Hoody’ is to get a person asking questions and thinking about issues, to question the origins of their fear. This would lead to what those in dominant positions themselves fear: a differential movement. Sandoval claims that differential movement enables “meta-ideologizing as political intervention” (Sandoval 111), and this has political goals. Mau Mau’s graffiti art shows the “flexibility –of perception, consciousness, identity and tactics in relation to power... moves in, through, then outside of dominant ideology” (Sandoval 111). For Sandoval, in order for this to function effectively, the marginalized group must not accept the dominant ideology as the origins of their identity, but rather be able to move outside of that ideology by challenging the system directly. The psychological effects of neocolonial subjugation can be represented through the artist, the artwork itself, and the symbols involved. A resistance to this struggle is resonated within the individual artists’ differential movement utilized technologies within society and through their unique representations of imagery.

The act of graffiti art stands as a concrete challenge to hegemonic authority, while the image itself plays with the dominant/mainstream representations, and manipulates these to symbolize changes in the perception and identity and tactics that are related to the subjects’ position in relation to power. It challenges the systematizing effects by not relying on validity/legitimacy to approve the oppressed/subjugated regimes of thought, but rather by going outside of these ‘rules’ and making a

statement through representation and exchange of symbols and meanings. Graffiti art is the wolf's prey becoming the wolf, in the process of what Fanon would deem the synthesis of the thesis and antithesis. This is the moment where the power starts turning on the oppressor and either he gives up power, or comes down harder on the oppressed. This further perpetuates the cycle of oppression and resistance. The artist is both an agent of differential consciousness and of an image and symbol re-design, in order to deconstruct reality, and as such the art begins to be a very useful tool of the oppressed. The result is what Sandoval would characterize as differential consciousness – a form of revolutionary consciousness that is able to escape/transcend the ideological binaries. Maybe Bob Marley was right when he said 'exodus' would be the way out, the liberation – through the 'movement of the people' (84).

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Image 1. 'Little Red Ridin Hoody'. Mau Mau. <http://www.mau-mau.co.uk/gallery.php?action=buildFull&artSection=Gallery&articleID=111&page=2&lang=1>

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