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FEMINIST AESTHETICS IN THE VISUAL CULTURE OF WARTIME UKRAINE

Abstract. *This article examines feminist aesthetics in the visual culture of wartime Ukraine as an interdisciplinary phenomenon emerging at the intersection of art history, cultural studies, media studies and gender studies. The main focus is on analysing the representation of female images, which undergo significant transformation in wartime and acquire new symbolic meanings. Based on an archetypal model, a classification of female images (Great Mother, Kora, Amazon, Anima) has been carried out, and the processes of their hybridisation in contemporary war art have been analysed. The study found that female images in Ukraine's visual culture function as dynamic hybrid constructs that combine traits of care, strength, vulnerability and reflection. They serve as important tools for shaping collective memory, representing traumatic experiences and articulating a national narrative of resistance. The proposed approach deepens our understanding of contemporary Ukrainian visual culture as a space for meaning-making and outlines prospects for further research in the fields of feminist aesthetics and war art.*

Key words: *feminist aesthetics, visual culture, wartime Ukraine, archetypes.*

Чемерис Г. Феміністична естетика у візуальній культурі воєнної України. У статті досліджується феміністична естетика у візуальній культурі воєнної України як міждисциплінарний феномен, що формується на перетині мистецтвознавства, культурології, медіа- та гендерних студій. Основна увага зосереджена на аналізі репрезентації жіночих образів, які в умовах війни зазнають суттєвої трансформації та набувають нових символічних значень. На основі архетипічної моделі здійснено класифікацію жіночих образів (Велика Мати, Кора, Амазонка, Аніма) та проаналізовано процеси їх гібридизації у сучасному воєнному мистецтві. У результаті дослідження встановлено, що жіночі образи у візуальній культурі України функціонують як динамічні гібридні утворення, які поєднують у собі риси турботи, сили, вразливості та рефлексії. Вони виступають важливими інструментами формування колективної пам'яті, репрезентації травматичного досвіду та артикуляції національного нарративу спротиву. Запропонований підхід дозволяє поглибити розуміння сучасної української візуальної культури як простору смислотворення та окреслює перспективи подальших досліджень у сфері феміністичної естетики та воєнного мистецтва.

Ключові слова: *феміністична естетика, візуальна культура, воєнна Україна, архетипи.*

The relevance of this study stems from the profound transformations in Ukraine's visual culture amidst a full-scale war, accompanied by a re-evaluation of the role and representation of women in society and art. Today, visual images fulfil not only aesthetic but also political, communicative and memorial functions, becoming tools for the formation of collective identity, mobilisation and the interpretation of wartime experience. In this context, the analysis of female images takes on particular significance, as they are increasingly represented as active agents of resistance, bearers of memory and agents of cultural change [1; 2].

Despite the growing number of studies devoted to Ukrainian visual culture during wartime, the issue of a systematic analysis of female representations through the lens of feminist aesthetics remains underdeveloped. Existing works predominantly focus on describing individual phenomena or thematic aspects, whilst a comprehensive approach combining a gender perspective with in-depth symbolic analysis requires further development. This necessitates the use of interdisciplinary methodologies, in particular the combination of feminist theory with an archetypal approach.

The application of the archetypal model allows us to identify not only superficial iconographic characteristics, but also the deep psychocultural structures that determine the formation of visual images. The conditions of war bring about processes of archetypal hybridisation, resulting in new types of female images that reflect the complexity and multidimensionality of contemporary experience. This, in turn, opens up opportunities for rethinking traditional gender roles and expanding the boundaries of feminist aesthetics within a national context.

Furthermore, the relevance of this research stems from the need to understand visual culture as a space for the formation of collective memory of war. Female images play a key role in this process, as they combine dimensions of trauma, care, resistance and reflection. Their analysis allows for a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of war representation, as well as the identification of gendered aspects of experience that are often overlooked.

The aim of the study is to identify and interpret the characteristics of the representation of female images in the visual culture of wartime Ukraine through the prism of feminist aesthetics, as well as to systematise them based on C. Jung's archetypal model.

An analysis of the source base demonstrates the interdisciplinary nature of the corpus of works used, combining art history, cultural studies, media studies and gender studies. First and foremost, the conceptual foundation is formed by works on the theory of feminist aesthetics, which examines visual practices through the prism of gender hierarchy, canon criticism and the representation of women's experience in culture. This allows us to interpret Ukraine's visual culture during wartime both as a politically and ideologically charged field of representations and as an aesthetic phenomenon.

The Ukrainian research segment itself is represented by a series of recent academic publications from 2022–2025, which document the transformation of visual culture in the context of full-scale war. In particular, an article on the sacralisation of the female image in war art analyses iconographic and compositional models of the representation of women – from allegorical figures to the image of a direct participant in combat operations [4]. Importantly, the author highlights a shift from the traditional symbolic role of the «guardian» to the visualisation of female agency, which directly correlates with feminist discourse on the deconstruction of gender roles.

Also relevant is a study devoted to the transformation of symbolic female images in contemporary culture, which views them as dynamic cultural codes that respond to socio-political changes [10]. In the context of war, this implies a rethinking of femininity as an active, resistant and politically significant category. This approach broadens the classical framework of feminist aesthetics, integrating it into a nationally oriented visual narrative.

A significant body of sources consists of studies on the visual culture of memory and the representation of traumatic experience. In particular, an analysis of Ukrainian visual design from 2022 to 2025 emphasises the ethical aspects of depicting war and the mechanisms of collective memory formation [6]. Similarly, [3] on digital art platforms demonstrates how war is articulated through emotional, political and memorial categories, forming a globalised yet locally specific visual discourse. In this field, a feminist perspective allows us to highlight the gendered dimensions of trauma and memory.

A separate group comprises works that analyse the visual frameworks of war within a broader cultural context. Monographic studies point to the combination of traditional cultural codes with contemporary media forms in the representation of the Russian-Ukrainian war [7]. This provides a basis for understanding how feminist images are integrated into the national narrative and, at the same time, transform it.

An important component of the source base is research into digital media and social networks. In particular, an analysis of Ukraine's visual communication policy reveals a systematic presence of gendered images – ranging from the «victim» to the «female soldier» and symbolic figures such as «Saint Javelin» [8]. These visual typologies confirm that feminist aesthetics in a wartime context function as a tool for mobilisation, empathy and the legitimisation of the struggle.

Philosophical and aesthetic studies of contemporary Ukrainian art in wartime emphasise a shift in the very experience of aesthetic perception, where trauma, resistance and solidarity become key categories [9]. In this context, feminist aesthetics functions not only as a critical tool, but as a means of articulating a new sensory experience of war.

Outline of the main material. Within the framework of research into feminist aesthetics in the visual culture of wartime Ukraine, it is appropriate to classify female images based on Carl Gustav Jung's archetypal model [5], which allows representations to be systematised not only according to iconographic or stylistic features, but also according to deep psychocultural structures. This approach is consistent with the methodology of analytical psychology, in which archetypes are regarded as universal models of the collective unconscious that manifest themselves in symbolic forms, particularly in the visual arts.

The application of Jungian typology in the context of Ukraine's military visual culture is justified given the high symbolic density of female images, which function as carriers of ideological, emotional and memorial meanings [4; 6]. The relevance of such a classification stems from the fact that contemporary military visual culture is characterised by a high level of semiotic density: a single image often combines several levels of meaning – documentary, symbolic, emotional and ideological. This is precisely why the identification of archetypes is carried out by comparing visual markers with archetypal models (see Table 1), which involves

analysing not only obvious iconographic elements (e.g. military uniform, weapons, a child in one's arms), but also latent characteristics – gaze, posture, interaction with space, colour scheme, and light-and-shadow accents.

Consequently, the identification of archetypes is carried out by comparing visual markers (postures, attributes, colour codes, compositional solutions) with corresponding archetypal models (see Fig. 1), which allows us to move beyond a purely descriptive analysis and proceed to the interpretation of deeper meanings.

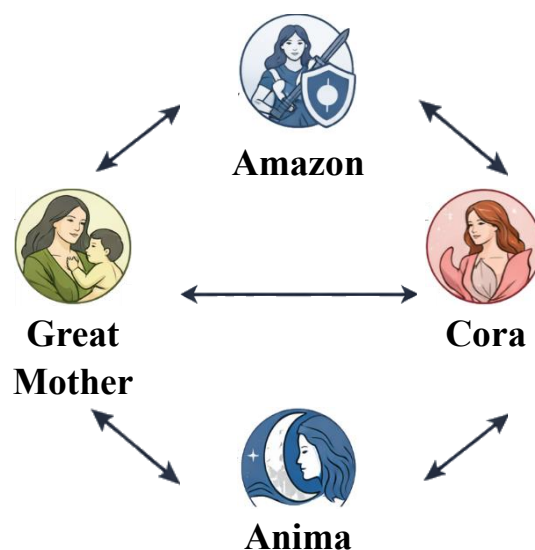


Fig. 1. Feminine archetypes

In this respect, the Amazon archetype takes on new connotations in the Ukrainian military context: whilst in the classical interpretation it is associated with autonomous, combative femininity, in contemporary depictions it is often combined with the ethos of collective resistance, where individual strength is subordinated to a common goal. Visually, this manifests in representations of female soldiers, volunteers and medics operating in the public sphere, demonstrating subjectivity and agency.

The Great Mother archetype, in turn, is transforming from the traditional image of the «guardian» into a more complex model that includes functions of protection, resistance and even aggression. In military iconography, this archetype is often visualised through images of women who simultaneously care for others and fight, creating the conditions for hybridisation with the Amazon archetype. It is here that one of the most representative hybrid types is formed – the Warrior Mother, who embodies the synthesis of care and strength.

The Kora (child/girl) archetype takes on a particular poignancy in a military context, as it is linked to themes of vulnerability, loss and trauma. Visual representations of this archetype often draw on images of civilian women and girls who have suffered from war, which creates an emotional connection with the viewer









and heightens the effect of empathy. When combined with the Mother archetype, a "woman-child" hybrid emerges, reflecting a state of existential vulnerability.

The Anima archetype, as a representation of the inner, psychological dimension, manifests in war visual culture through images of memory, grief and reflection. These may be figures lost in thought, or compositions that appeal to absence (empty space, shadows, symbolic objects). In combination with the Mother archetype, a «woman-memory» type is formed, which serves to preserve the collective experience of war and transmit it into cultural memory.

This diagram demonstrates that archetypes do not exist in isolation, but are in constant interaction, forming new configurations of meaning. Consequently, hybrid archetypes emerge between the nodes, which have been compiled into a matrix of hybridisation of female archetypes (Table 1).

Table 1

Matrix of hybridisation of female archetypes in the art of war

Primary	 Great Mother	 Cora	 Amazon	 Anima
Secondary				
 Great Mother	—	Child-woman Premature puberty	Mother-Warrior protection through struggle	Woman-memory care + trauma
 Cora	A wise woman Knowledge, experience, intuition	—	Warrior-witness traumatic coming of age	Traumatised innocence inner breakdown
 Amazon	Protectress Protection + strength	The Virgin of Resistance youth + war	—	Introspective Warrior Reflection on war
 Anima	Shadow emotional depth	Girl-memory lost future	Post-traumatic warrior post-war experience	—

Methodologically, this signifies a shift from a static classification to a dynamic model, in which each image is viewed as a process rather than a fixed category. This approach allows for the contextual nature of visual representations to

be taken into account. The matrix of hybridisation of female archetypes, based on Carl Gustav Jung's concept, demonstrates that in contemporary military art, female images function not as isolated archetypes, but as dynamic formations arising from their interplay. Each archetype (the Great Mother, Kora, the Amazon, Anima) can act as both a dominant and a secondary component, forming new semantic configurations.

When the Great Mother archetype interacts with other archetypes, her traditional caring function is expanded. In combination with Kora, a «woman-child» hybrid emerges, combining vulnerability and a need for protection with a simultaneous capacity for care. This creates a tense image characteristic of a wartime context, where the boundary between childhood and adulthood is blurred. In combination with the Amazon, the “mother-warrior” emerges as one of the key hybrids of contemporary Ukrainian military art, combining the functions of protection and combat, transforming passive care into active defence. The interaction between the Great Mother and the Anima forms the image of the «woman of memory», in which care takes on an internal, reflective dimension and is linked to the experience of loss and trauma.

The archetype of Kora (the Virgin), in turn, reveals transformations associated primarily with the theme of the loss of innocence. In combination with the Amazon, a hybrid «warrior-witness» emerges, representing the process of traumatic coming of age: the young woman not only experiences war but also becomes an active participant in it. In interaction with the Anima, “traumatised innocence” or the “girl-memory” emerges – an image that concentrates the inner experience of loss and rupture, emphasising the psychological consequences of war for the younger generation. Thus, in wartime, Kora almost always loses its original semantics of beginning and potential, acquiring the characteristics of a traumatic experience.

The Amazon (Warrior) archetype, in hybrid combinations, demonstrates a shift from power as autonomy to power as responsibility. In combination with the Anima, an «introspective warrior» or «post-traumatic warrior» emerges, combining external activity with internal reflection. This image highlights the psychological complexity of the experience of war and challenges the one-dimensional interpretation of strength as an exclusively heroic phenomenon. In combination with the Kora (as noted above), the Amazon forms the image of the warrior-witness, emphasising the premature assumption of adult roles.

The Anima archetype plays a special role in the structure of the matrix, as it is precisely this archetype that provides the hybrids with inner depth and psychological intensity. In interaction with the Great Mother, it forms the image of the woman-memory; in combination with Kora, the girl-memory; and with the Amazon, the post-traumatic warrior. In all these cases, the Anima acts as a

mechanism for the internalisation of the experience of war, translating external events into an internal, emotionally charged dimension.

Overall, the matrix demonstrates that the hybridisation of archetypes occurs along several key vectors: firstly, through the combination of care and strength (Mother-Amazon), secondly, through the interaction of innocence and trauma (Cora-Anima), and thirdly, through the synthesis of action and reflection (Amazon-nima). These vectors reflect the primary ways in which the female experience of war is conceptualised in visual art.

Thus, the matrix model allows us to interpret contemporary female images not as fixed types, but as processual structures that change depending on the context. Hybrid archetypes are not only the result of the combination of basic models, but also indicators of social and cultural transformations, particularly those brought about by the experience of war.

Ultimately, the proposed classification has not only descriptive but also heuristic value: it allows us to identify how feminist aesthetics in the wartime context of Ukraine reinterprets traditional archetypes, transforming them in accordance with new historical conditions. This, in turn, contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of female images in shaping the contemporary visual narrative of war, where they act as key agents of meaning-making, memory and resistance.

Results and discussion. In summarising the findings of this study, it should be emphasised that the use of Carl Jung's archetypal model in this work is not universalist in nature, but rather instrumental. Archetypes are viewed not as fixed and ahistorical entities, but as analytical constructs that enable the identification of recurring symbolic patterns in wartime visual culture. In this context, the Jungian perspective is combined with approaches from contemporary cultural and gender studies, which interpret gender images as socially and historically constructed, contextually determined, and open to transformation.

Consequently, the archetypal classification in this article does not claim to provide an exhaustive or universal explanation of female representations, but functions as one of several possible interpretative frameworks relevant to the analysis of the symbolic density of wartime visual culture. Its application allows us not so much to identify fixed types as to trace the processes of their hybridisation, shifts in meaning and reinterpretation in wartime conditions, where traditional notions of gender undergo significant transformation. Thus, the archetypal approach is integrated into a broader interdisciplinary field and complemented by a critical perspective that takes into account the dynamism, historicity and political conditioning of visual images.

Conclusions. Thus, the classification of feminist images in the visual culture of wartime Ukraine based on Carl Gustav Jung's model is an effective tool for in-depth analysis. It allows us to identify not only the external characteristics of the

images but also their symbolic and cultural meanings. Female representations emerge as dynamic hybrid formations, shaped through the interaction of the archetypes of the Amazon, the Great Mother, Kora and Anima, reflecting the transformation of gender roles and emphasising women's active agency in the war narrative. Thus, the archetypal approach facilitates the systematisation of visual material and a deeper understanding of contemporary Ukrainian war culture as a space of meaning-making, memory and resistance.

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