

## TRANSFORMATION OF THE IMAGE OF TARAS SHEVCHENKO DURING THE PERIOD OF DEFENSE OF UKRAINE 2014–2024: ON THE EXAMPLE OF STREET ART WORKS

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**Abstract.** During 2014–2024, Ukrainian society faced the existential challenges of preserving its unity, sovereignty and national identity. Against the background of current threats, there was a question about the future of the Ukrainian state, as well as about the lessons of the past. Therefore, figures of creators of the Ukrainian nation with a strong historical background, including politicians Mykhailo Hrushevskyi, Pavlo Skoropadskyi, as well as cultural figures Ivan Mykolaichuk, Ivan Franko, Hryhorii Skovoroda, Taras Shevchenko, have been returned to the space of public visual communication. The figure of Taras Shevchenko occupies a unique position in this context because starting from the period of protests on the Maidan through the Revolution of Dignity and up to the mobilization campaign that unfolded after the full-scale invasion began his image has always been in the spotlight, undergoing recontextualization and modernization. Shevchenko became a symbol of Ukrainian resistance in general, and not only of the state of national culture of the 19th century – the era in which he lived. Shevchenko became a timeless cultural symbol, so his semiotic recontextualization takes place without losing the valuable meaning of his figure for Ukrainian culture. This is the reason the image of Shevchenko appeared and became inseparable in the context of the Ukrainian resistance of 2014–2024. No other cultural figure was subject to such recontextualization but remained an expression of their era. The second feature of the use of Shevchenko's image in the visual space during the period of war challenges is the coexistence of “formal” and “grotesque” (or “political” and “poetic”) pictorial and semantic strategies. Under peaceful conditions, they are usually antagonistic, however, while Ukrainian resistance is going on, those visual strategies of use Shevchenko's image become complementary and mutually reinforcing, affecting the re-actualization of Ukrainian national identity milestones.

**Keywords:** Ukrainian visual culture, political and poetic visual strategies, cultural archetypes, recontextualization of Taras Shevchenko image in modern culture, culture of resistance

## Introduction

**The relevance of the study.** In 2014, a grand celebration of the 200th anniversary of the birth of Taras Shevchenko was planned in Ukraine. Beforehand, Kyiv was decorated with banners showing the image of young Kobzar (Shevchenko's literary pseudonym), and motivational lines from his poems. Therefore, when the protests on Independence Square began, which turned

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into more radical and fateful events, later called the Revolution of Dignity, and then the resistance to Russian military aggression unfolded, the image of Taras Shevchenko became an organic background of the modern Ukrainian struggle.

Serhiy Nigoyan, a Maidan guard and one of the first to die during the Revolution of Dignity, had been video-recorded reciting the exhortation lines “Keep fighting – you are sure to win! God helps you in your fight! For fame and freedom march with you, And right is on your side!” [1, p. 189] from Shevchenko’s poem “The Caucasus”.

Another memorable visual sign of those events is the graffiti “Icons of the Revolution”, which was created in February 2014 by a writer with the nickname Sociopath. They include images of Taras Shevchenko, Lesya Ukrainka, Ivan Franko and slogans under the images: “Fire does not burn the fierce”, “Who frees himself, those will be free”, “Our whole life is war”. What is interesting is that the textbook, well-recognized images of the classics of Ukrainian literature were contextually modernized. For example, Shevchenko was depicted wearing a fur hat and a bandana covering the lower part of his face – as Maidan activists wore during clashes with the police. Lesia Ukrainka was portrayed wearing a respirator, like the strikers who created a smoke screen by burning tires. Ivan Franko was painted in an embroidered shirt, a classical jacket and an orange helmet on his head. In addition, the background of each image had an emblem of crossed bottles with an ignition mixture.

Such a visual modernization of the Ukrainian literary classics, whose work was associated with revolutionary and militant appeals, fit so appropriately into the modern context that when in 2017 these graffiti were destroyed due to the repair of the facade by the new tenant of the shopping area, the sharp public discussions on the historical and aesthetic significance of “Maidan Icons” started. In the end, on the initiative of the Minister of Culture, the iconic graffiti was restored by the efforts of other artists. This was the first precedent of modernizing and reactualizing slogans of Ukrainian literary classics and legitimizing Maidan protest actions through the use of well-known images in modern visual culture.

In the period of 2014–2022, the image of Shevchenko, his creative legacy was re-actualized in culture and art. In particular, Kobzar’s poems turned into modern musical compositions, performed by such popular bands and singers as “Komu vnyz” (songs “From the Cold Ravine”, “Subotiv”, “I do not complain about God”), “Shpyliasti Kobzari” (“Sometimes it happens”), Khoreya Kozatska (“Oh, why did you turn black”), Tartak (“Cropper”), Telniuk Sisters (“Don’t marry a rich woman”, “Queen of Heaven and Earth”), Pyvovarov and Dorofeeva (“My thoughts”), etc.

Every year on March 9, the birthday of Taras Shevchenko, many commemorative events are held throughout the country, for example, in an increasing number of regions, thematic flash mobs are organized, as well as poetry readings in public places, and scout quests “In the footsteps of Kobzar”, festivals, media discussions, thematic educational films are shown in university film clubs and on television. The most honorable award of Ukraine for the contribution to the development of culture and art bears the name of the poet — the National Award of Ukraine named after Taras Shevchenko — and is awarded on the memorable days of March.

At the same time, further “modernization” of Kobzar’s visual image by dressing him in the clothes of a biker, rock star, or military man was sharply condemned and criticized. The official discourse of the established canonical shell maintained the bronze-faced Shevchenko — a patriot, a romantic poet, and a sufferer. On the other hand, artistic kitsch and protest experiments in dressing up and modernizing the image of Kobzar cause a huge public resonance, in particular among youth and geek subcultures.

**The purpose of the article** is to investigate visual strategies for the modernization of the image of Taras Shevchenko during the period of Ukrainian resistance in 2014-2024.

**Statement of the problem.** After the full-scale war started, the significance of the symbolic component of Ukrainian public communication increased, making the clash of visual ideologies and narratives even more significant. The issue of visual strategies for integrating cultural heritage into the narratives of the new Ukrainian national identity, on the example of the transformation of the image of Taras Shevchenko, requires a separate scientific analysis, which will be the subject of this study.

**Materials and methods.** Under the current conditions of developed visual culture, the greatest suggestive effect on people’s worldview and value beliefs is made by their personal everyday visual experience. Therefore, all surfaces become screens for narrative transmission: from city walls and fences to computer and smartphone displays. Therefore, the subject of this study is the visual strategies of using the image of Taras Shevchenko in the context of Ukrainian resistance to Russian aggression during 2014-2024. For this, the methodology of typology of visual strategies, developed by the Slovenian researcher Dr. Mitja Velikonja, was applied. Thus, in his book “Post-Socialist Political Graffiti in the Balkans and Central Europe” [2] it is proved that graffiti is a powerful means of everyday social communication. Considering such factors as the communicative and stylistic characteristics of the wall art, the content of messages, visual aesthetics, the way of contextualization and interpretation of images, graffiti is divided into “political” and “poetic”. Applying this approach to the analysis of visual strategies of the modern recontextualization of Kobzar’s image, it is also possible to single out antagonistic visual strategies that create binary pairs and which can be called “official” and “kitsch” or “political” and “romantic” or “general” and “experimental”. At the same time, a unique Ukrainian phenomenon is that in the conditions of active resistance to external aggression, these two visual strategies of using the image of Taras Shevchenko are not antagonistic, but complementary. Therefore, the object of analysis is the visual strategies of the depiction of Taras Shevchenko in the works of street art during the decade when the Ukrainian resistance continued.

## Presentation of the main research material

Taras Shevchenko is an iconic figure in Ukrainian culture not only because of his contribution to literature or fine arts. But his life itself became a symbolic precedent no less important than his creative legacy. He had been born a serf but became an academician, a peasant son who sometimes broadcast prophetic insights, a poet who chose to express himself in the language of the colonized

people, not the colonizer, a former prisoner who was a leading star of the literary salons of that time. This was such a heart-breaking story of social upliftment that in Soviet times, to somewhat suppress its phenomenality, a martyrdom and pale-colored narrative of his biography arose.

It is difficult to fit Shevchenko into some single canon of perception. His uniqueness can be revealed by analyzing the cultural background of the era in which he had to live. The imperial order of the socio-political system is always based on hierarchy, institutional normalization, ideological unequivocal world-view principles, rejection or destruction of dissidents, and rewarding apologists and followers with privileges. Social mobility operates within imperial institutions, not in the space of civil society. At the same time, civil society, in turn, has a narrow sphere of self-expression, is presented by the official discourse as marginal, colonized, less significant compared to the machine of imperial institutions.

Empires are always monocentric — cultural and political life unfolds around the state institutions and, literally, around the “body of the ruler”, that is, in the capital. More or less ambitious people strive to get there, they are looking for influential acquaintances, quick crazy money, fame or just a stable job. As Theodore Zeldin noted in his book “A History of French Passions” [3], the periphery of the empire is always weak, not so dynamic, so the capital becomes the horizon of provincials’ dreams.

Oksana Zabuzhko in her study “Shevchenko’s myth of Ukraine” [4] explains the uniqueness of Shevchenko by the fact that he rejected the imperial worldview, namely the self-aggrandizement of the empire by devaluing all kinds of manifestations of cultural otherness within its borders and chose the language of a conquered ethnic group for poetic self-expression, rather than the language of the imperial elite. And he did it with unprecedented dignity and categoricalness.

Myroslav Popovych [5] was inclined to consider his image through the prism of Shevchenko-poet versus Shevchenko-artist dilemma. Being a painter could provide Kobzar with effective socialization such as getting an education, establishing a network of personal acquaintances which eventually led to his release from serfdom, appointment to public service (employees of educational institutions were then equated with officials) guaranteed financial support. These status privileges and guarantees determined the official’s loyalty to the ideological machine and the imperial institutional system. Shevchenko’s career as an artist and art teacher presupposed just such a loyal and institutional self-realization. Clear academic rules and artistic traditions had to be strictly adhered to. Kobzar died in the year when serfdom was abolished in the Russian empire. The industrialization of the region began just after that, as well as the formation of entrepreneurial culture, mass consumption, including works of art. He lived under the old order, when the donors of painting were representatives of the political class — nobles. Therefore, neither artistic protests (which would later become impressionism, and avant-garde) nor the extravagance of the artist were still impossible here. “Shevchenko the artist” is about the prospect of a convenient, comfortable and subordinated life.

Another field for Shevchenko’s self-realization was poetry. Here he expressed himself informally, extra-institutionally, he spoke and wrote in Ukrainian.

This activity unlikely promised him a career, material well-being, or acceptance by the Russian-speaking circles of the imperial elite. The painting could provide him with a solid position in society. Poetry returned him to his ethnic roots, a cultural particularity that had been discriminated in favor of imperial universality. And despite all possible advantages of being an artist, he chose the poetic path, where he implemented his creative ideas into life quickly and effortlessly.

Painting required him to be collected, rationally motivated, and disciplined, which he lacked in this area of self-realization. So, while still in exile, he planned to make a series of etchings based on the parable of the prodigal son, illustrating the moments of the biblical wandering with scenes of actual barracks and bourgeois life of that time. Later, he cooled to the idea without implementing it. However, he found real inspiration in poetry and was able to fully convey his socio-philosophical ideas.

The confrontation between Shevchenko's artist and poet hypostases is similar to the struggle between Kobzar's artisan and prophetic identities. "The conflict, — according to Oksana Zabuzhko, — lay deeper — in the plane of self-identity, and rested on the artist's acute necessity of finding his authentic, uncluttered substantial being — his, so to speak, existence" [4, p. 96].

His self-existence was closely connected with the collective experience of Ukrainian being. Shevchenko's voice sounded in unison with the community's requests, the individual here is inseparable from the ethnic, personal experience embodied in archetypal universally understood images.

According to Hryhoriy Grabovych, the phenomenon of Shevchenko is not that he expressed the spirit of his era, which is characteristic of romantic poets who legitimized the modern national consciousness of European states and became fundamental, great figures of their cultures: George Gordon Byron — for Great Britain, Adam Mickiewicz — for Poland, Heinrich Heine — for Germany, Sandor Petefi — for Hungary, etc. Shevchenko conveyed not only the spirit of the era, but most importantly the spirit of the people, its main cultural archetypes. That is why the scale of Shevchenko's influence is a *longue duree* story. «Such Prophets as Mickiewicz and Shevchenko embody the collective self, personify national dreams and suffering, and it is as difficult to rethink them as it is to rethink the soul of the people, because the mechanism of projection turns into the organicity of culture. And yet — this is probably the most important thing — such a rethinking is necessary and becomes, as already mentioned, a measure of the vitality of culture» [6, p. 110].

Shevchenko became a cultural archetype, he set the coordinates of national self-awareness not only with his poetry, the themes that are raised in it but also with his life itself. Shevchenko-the-artist is about self-realization within the framework of imperial institutions, although he always depicted historical and Ukrainian ethnic themes. Shevchenko-the-poet is about the civic space of his self-realization, about authenticity and being beyond institutional control, as well as about "the world tried to catch me, but it failed".

Any archetype broadcasts entity meanings, the dimension of which is existence, not history. Any contextualization of the archetype could only be temporary. The archetype slips away and continuously develops in the history of culture, building up its interpretive shell.

In moments of social upheaval, interest in national history, culture, and the origin of collective identity usually increases. In Ukrainian culture, the call «back to the roots» sometimes turns into «as Shevchenko said about it».

The semantic layers of Shevchenko's image in the context of Ukrainian culture consist, firstly, of the significance of his creative heritage — poetry and painting, and secondly, of the strategies of mythologizing his biography. Shevchenko is known even by those Ukrainians who have not delved into his creative work.

Currently, there are 1,384 monuments to Shevchenko: 1,256 of them are in Ukraine (on the territory of schools, metro stations, parks, city centers, libraries, theaters), the remaining 128 locates abroad in 35 countries. This is the largest number of monuments in honor of a cultural figure in the world.

The first official monument to Kobzar was opened in 1918 in Romny, Poltava region. Earlier, a private memorial was erected in Kazakhstan in 1881 by Iraklii Noskov, the commandant of the Novopetrov fortress, where Kobzar served his exile. In 1900, a couple of Ukrainian industrialists and patrons, Khrystyna and Oleksiy Alchevski, set up a bust of the poet on the territory of their own estate.

In this way, Ukrainian emigrants marked the territory of their residence and created locations of their collective memory. Foreign monuments to Taras Shevchenko are very diverse and sometimes synthesize Ukrainian cultural narratives with the sculptural traditions of the host country. For instance, in Beijing the bust is located on a bright red base, reminiscent of a platform for political speeches, which indicates the social and political weight of the person whom the monument is dedicated to. In Lazio, Italy, a sculpture of Shevchenko is made of white marble, and the poet is depicted in the toga of an ancient Roman senator. In Canberra, Australia, a metaphorical monument called “Shevchenko's Thoughts” was erected in the form of a Ukrainian lute — a kobza with a bas-relief of Cossack riders. In Cleveland, Ohio, Oleksandr Arkhipenko in 1940 created a bust of Kobzar, where he leans his head with his hand and thoughtfully observes reality. Monuments to Taras Shevchenko around the world are diverse, multi-narrative, conveying the experiences and dreams of Ukrainians from different countries and times.

In Ukraine, numerous monuments to Kobzar appeared in Soviet times, thanks to the ideological goals and propaganda policy. His motivational words were pressed into the context of the Bolshevik revolution, because of which the image of Taras Shevchenko lost its multifaceted and anti-Russian context. Their meaning was simplified to the anti-royal, anti-elitist exclamations.

After Ukraine became an independent state, the academic discourse was enriched by the historical and literary works of Ukrainian scholars abroad, in which Shevchenko was interpreted as a national mythmaker, an exponent of cultural archetypes, and his creative work was analyzed from an existential-philosophical, psycho-biographical, and linguistic-cultural point of view. His image required and underwent reinterpretation moving away from the ideology of the revolutionary sufferer.

The social challenges Ukraine is going through create new requests for modernization and reinterpretation of Shevchenko's image, which is a projection of the request for reinterpretation of the national identity. Ukrainian

researcher N. Kovtonyuk in her article “The Image of T. H. Shevchenko in the Discourse of the Revolution of Dignity: Anticolonial and Postcolonial Aspects” [7] distinguishes three narrative strategies of contextualizing Kobzar’s image — colonial, anti-colonial, post-colonial. The first strategy aimed to position him as a fighter for populist and then egalitarian-socialist ideals, but within the limited canon “of an ordinary peasant”. The second one was to show the poet as a fighter against imperial colonial intentions. The third strategy was to express proper Ukrainian cultural archetypes in his poetry outside any context of coercion and Shevchenko’s features as a person.

An example of the implementation of the post-colonial strategy is the adoption of actual historical contextualization of the image of Shevchenko by means of modern art — the depiction of him as a participant in social and political events with the use of postmodern irony techniques.

In 2014, a series of paintings by the Ukrainian conceptual artist Yuriy Shapoval appeared under the name “Hryhorovych”. The first work was “Hryhorovych against”, where Taras Shevchenko heads towards the square protest fires with a tire over his shoulder. After the exhibition of this picture on the social network, the artist gained instant popularity. This very image was on a charity postage stamp issued by the Association of Ukrainians of New Zealand. The series was supplemented by other critical and satirical works, for instance “Mobilization of Hryhorovych”, where the poet is depicted in a military uniform against the background of a blue-yellow flag and a plaque marking the settlement with the inscription “Chongar”; “Choosing a life path”, where the young Taras, choosing social masks, takes his own — the mustachioed elderly Kobzar; “Sachem of the Ukrainian people” — Shevchenko in an Indian feather crown, etc. Individual works of the “Hryhorovych” series are widely reproduced and easily recognizable in the modern visual space.

In November 2021, the Art Barbakan project was launched in the Gallery of Protest Art, dedicated to the events of the Revolution of Dignity and the subsequent struggle for the territorial integrity of Ukraine in the ATO zone. A series of paintings by Anatoly Yermolenko “Shevchenkiada” was presented there. Kobzar’s image was modernized and contextualized by means of pop-art.

The third stage of the reactualization of Taras Shevchenko’s cultural heritage is his image, which reflects modern Ukrainian military resistance to Russian aggression.

The stylistic characteristic of this stage is the reduction of the role of kitsch techniques and the formation of alternative-historical projects, that is, the creation of a fantasy-alternative reality that answers the question “what if”, for example, what if Kobzar were our contemporary. During the fighting for the liberation of Kyiv region in 2022, another globally recognizable image of Kobzar appeared. In Borodyanka, in the middle of a destroyed quarter of a once flourishing suburb of the capital, a monument to the poet was shot so that it has a bullet hole in its bronze forehead. This image combines several metaphors: suffering, resilience and the will to fight back. Therefore, the military context gradually becomes dominant — Taras is dressed in the uniform of the armed forces and holds a Javelin portable anti-tank weapon on his shoulder, etc. It is significant that most often these images can be found on city walls, in public places, and not in private galleries visited by representatives of artistic subcultures.

So, the last stage of Taras Shevchenko's image reception in modern culture is characterized by the involvement of a wide audience, the formation of an alternative historical context, and the use of easily accessible "screens" such as city walls, which contributes to greater recognizability of the images.

Graffiti is a modern means of visual communication, as is social networks. Any wall, especially if it is in a crowded place and attracts a lot of attention, is the same screen where a person can leave messages to the community. Slovenian street art researcher Mitja Velikonja draws attention to the liveliness of socio-political communication through graffiti. He admits that its dynamics are not inferior to network communications.

Graffiti appeals to a wide and diverse audience, it tells about socially significant and painful issues. It makes a visual intervention, provoking protest where speaking is prohibited or impossible. Therefore, at first glance, street graphic communication is a brutal intervention in an ordered living space, i.e. vandalism. Garby Vanderveer points to the ambiguous status of unauthorized street art «...graffiti is an 'art crime' because it is criminal and artistic at the same time, which makes it also difficult to distinguish 'artists' from 'criminals'. Even graffiti writers recognize that graffiti, while for them in the first place art, in some contexts is damaging or inappropriate» [8, p. 110].

In the absence of sufficient space, graffiti relies on the language of figurative expression rather than text. Apt graffiti can accumulate large, subversive content in terms of significance and credibility in a small symbolic volume. Mitya Velikonya cites several genre artistic metaphors for graffiti: for people with a classical education, it is a "street haiku", for book lovers — "street literature", for tactile people — it is an "urban tattoo", for historians — "urboglyphs", for the digital generation — a "street tweet". ... Unlike other visual artists, graffiti writers have neither time, opportunity, nor desire for lengthy explanations. Their motto could be something like this: express as much as possible in the shortest form as quickly as possible. Literally, "drop-and-run" [2, p. 56].

Graffiti creators do not call themselves artists, instead they use the term "writers", indicating independence and non-academic nature of their activity, its social and communicative orientation.

Graffiti is a type of street art, but they are different from murals in terms of their meaning. Murals belong to legalized art, often initiated by the government or other social institutions. Their narratives usually have official justification, financing, and often a competitive selection of the artist-performer. Graffiti, on the other hand, is a spontaneous act, anonymous, unsanctioned, officially unfounded or even prohibited, and therefore rebellious and ambiguous (hence the dilemma of "vandalism or art").

To understand the meaning of graffiti, several structural components must be considered: the context, the personality of the author, the location of the image, and the hypothetical audience of readers. The context appeals to a set of social ties and current issues that concern the community, such as political elections, economic situation, discussion of geopolitical strategy, rights of social minorities, gender equality, etc. Graffiti writers are usually included in defending some views or acting as a critic or mediator, they have an artistic education or are social activists. The place for putting an unauthorized image (or an authorized one) is a public space the memorial value or functional pur-



pose of which does not involve visual interventions. Therefore, the appearance of inscriptions and images on such “status screens”, regardless of their aesthetic characteristics, is insolence and protest.

Murals as a type of street art are mainly an ideological screen. They express the assertions of the pro-government discourse, therefore they receive priority according to all structural criteria — context, authorship, place and audience.

Considering the principle of content narratives, Mitja Velikonja distinguishes two genres of street art — poetic and political. The poetic strategy uses methods of embellishment and aestheticization of surfaces, it soothes, pacifies, laughs, quotes, and creates an impression of well-being, mainly where its acute lack is obvious and undisguised. Poetic graffiti live a long time, receive protection and restoration, and people get used to them. Dominant political forces resort to poetic graffiti, because this type of street art is not irritating, but rather — conciliatory, recognizable, and conveying the expected contents and images.

Instead, political street art is bold, mostly literal, sharply sarcastic, interpretive, simple in execution technique, anonymous, dialogical-provocative, and rebellious. It is destroyed or transformed with the help of new posts and corrections. It is continuously destroyed or transformed with the help of new posts and corrections. It is eye-catching, provoking, and suggestive.

So, returning to the street art created during the decade of Ukrainian resistance to Russian aggression, where the image of Shevchenko appeared, and he was depicted more often than other Ukrainian historical figures, it is worth finding out which graffiti strategy prevails — poetic or political.

Since 2014, when the 200th anniversary of Kobzar’s birthday was aimed to be grandiosely celebrated, poetic (pro-government) visual ideology prevailed, and the official initiative to create a logo for Kobzar’s 200th anniversary is a testimony, as it’s demonstrated by Larysa Osadchuk [9]. At first, these were recognizable textbook images of Shevchenko, for example, in the traditional peasant hat and coat. The original portrait was made in 1871 after Kobzar’s death by Ivan Kramskyi, where an elegant suit, silk tie, and a fragment of a snow-white shirt can be seen from under a peasant overcoat. The huge mural that copied this image was made in Kharkiv, on the wall of a 16-story building, and its area is 570 square meters [10]. It is included in the National Register of Records of Ukraine. Such signs as the recognizability of the used image, gigantism, accompanying the portrayal with national symbols such as the coat of arms, contextual transcription through the inscription “Shevchenko Taras Hryhorovych. 200 years”, indicate the clear ideological framework of visual communication.

A portrait of Shevchenko made by Fotii Krasytyskyi, Kobzar’s great-nephew, a grandson of his older sister, Kateryna, who took care of little Taras and was mentioned by him in his autobiographical poetic lines, also became widely used in street art. This portrait depicts Shevchenko as an elderly man in an intelligent suit and tie, who meets a viewer with a direct piercing gaze. It was the exact image that became popularly beloved, its photocopies were kept in almost every Ukrainian house until the middle of the 20th century.

This portrait is depicted on the Kyiv mural of 2014 “In my house — my truth and strength and will”. The image appeared on murals in other

Ukrainian cities over the following years, but as the invasion unfolded, the initiative to visualize Kobzar in street and media art increasingly shifted to independent artists and community activists who painted and wrote on their own. Therefore, the murals began to be increasingly modernized with relevant contexts. For example, the 2019 mural in Kremenchuk called “Keep fighting — you are sure to win” used the motifs of the same portrait of Shevchenko by Fotii Krasyt'skyi, but its background included outlines of the Maidan strikers with tires and incendiary mixture bottles in their hands [11].

Gradually, the trend of modernization and topical contextualization of Shevchenko's image has been increasing, which shakes the bronzed narrative of his official perception and resistance among some members of the public. Thus, on February 10, 2018, the exhibition “Quantum Leap of Shevchenko. Subway” of the illustrator Oleksandr Grikhov opened at the Taras Shevchenko underground station in Kyiv [12], which was supposed to last for a month. However, it was closed earlier, because 8 days after the start of the exhibition, some works were damaged, and a criminal case was opened for vandalism. The ambiguous reaction of the public to the presented works was caused by the use of pop art and mass culture techniques to portray Kobzar, for instance, he was depicted with a laser eye, like the Terminator, with gray hair, like Albert Einstein, with round glasses and a lightning bolt on his forehead, like Harry Potter, in a Che Guevara beret, then in a Batman costume with a lush mustache over a mask, etc. The application of ironic contextualization undermined the framework of ideological clichés that had enveloped the image of Shevchenko for decades, and therefore, instead of poeticization, the visual strategy of the exhibition was politicized, which led to public resonance and damage to the works.

However, voices on the revision and modernization of Shevchenko's image continued to be heard. For example, the Lviv graffiti of 2021, entitled “Take that coat off me already” [13], depicts four figures of Shevchenko crossing the road on a “zebra” (a visual reference to a photograph of the Beatles taken by Iain Macmillan in 1969), where the first silhouette of Kobzar is still dressed in a coat and a fur hat, then he evolves into a jacket and a cap, and the last figure is dressed in modern hoodies and jeans.

The technique of changing the poet's traditional clothes into modern outfits was also used by government institutions, in 2015, on the initiative of the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine, the poster “Shevchenko mobilizes” [14] was created, where the poet is depicted in the military uniform of the ATO fighter.

After the full-scale invasion began in 2022, the number of experimental military images of Kobzar increased significantly. They even became the new canon, through which the news was reflected on the city walls. A mural “Shevchenko with Javelin” appeared in Ivano-Frankivsk [15], which thematically resonates with another portrayal “Holy Javelina” in Kyiv, that demonstrated the importance of this type of anti-tank missile system at the beginning of the defense operation in Ukraine.

In May 2023, a long, multi-plot mural “Cossack dynasty will not disappear” appeared in Dnipro [16], which visualized the heroic discourse of Ukrainian history – from Kievan Rus and the Cossacks to modern defenders and “Konotop witches”. One of the fragments also depicts an equipped Kobzar. Significantly, his portrait is placed next to images of modern defenders of Ukraine.

The tendencies for modernization and contextual actualization of the image of Taras Shevchenko in Ukrainian culture attest to his transformation into an archetype of national culture. Any cultural archetype is rich in contexts and transcends the linear history of a community. It has sacred, visionary, even prophetic features. The image of Taras Shevchenko during the period of Ukrainian resistance and repulsion of external aggression in 2014-2024 was enriched with new contexts and became a visual demonstration of Ukrainian historical stability and the connection of generations.

## Conclusion

French scientist Fernand Braudel [17] divided all historical phenomena into short-term, medium-term and long-term according to their influence over time. The political agenda is an example of short-term temporality, it is relevant from months to several years. The medium-term cycle is inherent in economic processes and is calculated in decades. Social processes and transformations are an example of long-term history stretching back centuries. However, the American social philosopher Francis Fukuyama in the work "Primacy of culture" [18] argued that the dynamics of cultural processes (customs, traditions, mentality, national archetypes) is the longest and can span millennia, becoming a metahistorical factor and the basis of the stability of civilization regions. Archetypes are facts of culture, not history, and therefore they overcome the particularity of historical circumstances and move into the dimension of "civilizational history".

Cultural archetypes and images are re-actualized in times of change and historical challenges, becoming a background for the formation and manifestation of current value priorities and visions of the future.

The image of Taras Shevchenko is archetypal for Ukrainian culture, he conveys the original principles of the Ukrainian community, such as stability, devotion, sacrifice, focus on the future, etc. Therefore, it is not surprising that during the Ukrainian resistance of 2014-2024, his image was re-actualized in the cultural discourse of Ukraine and acquired modern visual connotations. Artworks dedicated both to the reflection of Shevchenko's vision of Ukraine and to established Ukrainian formats of perception of Shevchenko's personality were created by both professional artists and amateurs, exhibited in galleries, on the screens of digital gadgets, and on buildings of Ukrainian cities or on the walls of public spaces. Once again it proves the national recognition and timeless significance of Shevchenko for Ukrainian culture.

Objects of Ukrainian street art dedicated to Taras Shevchenko were in the focus of the proposed research. According to Mitja Velikonja's classification methodology for analyzing street artworks, political and poetic types of art are distinguished. The political one is rebellious and protesting, created by social minorities dissatisfied with certain aspects of social reality. The poetic type of graffiti aestheticized reality conveyed approval of the existing order of things or is generally apolitical.

Stylistically and in terms of performance, these types of street art are radically opposite. Given the obstacles Ukraine has to contend with, these two artistic strategies are not antagonistic. But if in the post-Maidan years, the

contextual modernization of Shevchenko's image was criticized and perceived as a very bold artistic experiment, then over time the authorities picked up and joined this trend. After the full-scale attack on Ukraine, the struggle narrative of Shevchenko's poetry and biography came to the fore, combining both official and civil visual-semantic discourses of Ukrainian culture during the period of military protection.

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