

INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC AND
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MODERN SCIENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL CHALLENGES: TRENDS, INNOVATIONS, AND DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS

Conference Proceedings



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USA





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**PAVLO VYSHEBABA'S *MARGINALIA* AS AN
ESCHATOLOGICAL-TRANSITIONAL
ANTHROPOLOGICAL MODEL OF EXPERIENCING WAR**

In the poetry collection *Marginalia* (2026), the combatant poet Pavlo Vyshebaba presents war as an analogy of Dante's descent into Hell, a space of anthropological trial and moral self-discovery. The author constructs his own model of wartime experience in which images of “the human within hell” prevail, while the vertical axis of light and the possibility of inner purification remain preserved. War appears not only as an anthropological catastrophe but also as an eschatological experience of existing on the threshold between the destruction and the renewal of the world.

One of the defining poetic features of *Marginalia* is the reception of such structural and semantic components of the Dantean code as the Dantean model of *katabasis*, Dantean topography, Dantean anthropology, the Dantean mode of testimony, and the Dantean poetics of the boundary between the living and the dead. The title itself possesses a double semantic dimension: marginalia as notes written in the margins and as stories about people, events, and phenomena situated on the threshold. This ambiguity resonates with Dante's principle of textual polysemy. The poems are organized into nine cycles of three poems each, and each thematic cluster is explored from three perspectives. Through these three lenses, Vyshebaba creates a comprehensive image of his world, one in which values and meanings are determined by war. Each problem is viewed through three projections, suggesting a trinitarian principle of vision that may be interpreted as a hidden analogy of Dante's mode of understanding reality.

The opening cycle, *Renewal*, functions as a poetic declaration of a new reality and of a transformed lyrical self for whom war has become an inseparable component of existence. The cycle serves as a prologue to the subsequent “descent,” presenting war as a source of existential longing for lost harmony and ultimately as the space that determines the further movement of the lyrical protagonist. This new reality is reinforced at the

formal level by the use of zero punctuation. The predominance of parataxis creates the effect of a stream of consciousness, transforming the text into a continuous flow, intensifying the reader’s sense of participation, and emphasizing the chaotic nature of the depicted world.

The Dantean model of *katabasis* occupies a central place in Vyshebaba’s poetics. In *The Divine Comedy*, *katabasis* ceases to be merely a journey into the afterlife and becomes an existential trial necessary for spiritual enlightenment and moral transformation. Such an understanding proves particularly productive for contemporary war poetry, where the descent into “hell” no longer implies a literal passage into the realm of the dead but rather the experience of a liminal state.

In Vyshebaba’s poetry, the Dantean model of *katabasis* manifests itself implicitly, with war functioning as the infernal space that leads the lyrical protagonist toward a deeper understanding of life and death. This is especially evident in the cycle *Dystopia*, where the author constructs the infernal topography of a new world, recreates a modern form of Dantean descent, and reflects upon the anthropological consequences of war. The dominant motif here is that of “descending downward.” The cycle depicts a human being living in a post-apocalyptic era characterized by unfreedom, informational waste, and military violence. The descent does not signify movement into the afterlife but immersion into a new historical reality in which traditional notions of space, time, and humanity collapse. Like Dante’s journey, this descent transforms personal experience into a search for existential truth. Yet unlike Dante’s model, Vyshebaba’s descent remains temporary and implies the possibility of transition toward a kind of purgatory-peace.

If the Dantean model of *katabasis* determines the logic of the hero’s movement, Dantean topography defines the space within which this movement unfolds. In *Marginalia*, the topography of war acquires symbolic significance. The frontline becomes a space between life and death; the trench functions as a liminal locus; the road or evacuation route appears as a form of pilgrimage; and the basement emerges as a transitional space between different modes of existence. The imagery of urban ruins and devastated villages, especially in the cycle *The Heart of the River*, creates a post-apocalyptic geography. Unlike Dante’s universe, whose spatial organization is governed by transcendent law, the topography of contemporary war poetry lacks a clear teleology: the path does not guarantee an exit, and movement does not necessarily lead to spiritual ascent.

In Dante’s worldview, space and humanity generate one another: sin creates space, while space reveals the essence of the human being. Consequently, topography functions as an objectification of anthropology. Dante not only anticipates Renaissance humanism but also establishes a

tradition of understanding humanity through experiences of existential extremity. This tendency proves particularly productive in contemporary war poetry, where war becomes a space of radical testing of human nature.

Dantean anthropology manifests itself in Vyshebaba's work through the recurring motif of “the human being at war.” The cycles address the transformation of identity, the experience of fear, guilt, memory, death, and the preservation of humanity in liminal circumstances. Particularly significant in this regard is the cycle *Undeveloped Film*. As in Dante, where individuals continue to exist through memory, confession, and the narrative of their deeds, Vyshebaba's protagonists are constituted through memory, which becomes a means of self-knowledge. However, unlike Dante, where guilt is primarily associated with moral choice, Vyshebaba introduces the specifically wartime phenomenon of survivor's guilt. The protagonist cannot answer the question posed by grieving mothers: why did one soldier die while another survived? Survival itself becomes an existential problem and a component of self-definition.

The collection also develops an anthropology of love reminiscent of Dante's story with Beatrice. In the cycle *Letters to the Shore*, love appears as a force capable of preserving human identity from dissolution within the chaos of war. The theme continues in the cycle *Distances*, where love creates its own harmonious chronotope, a space in which a person regains integrity, protection, and selfhood. Thus, Vyshebaba reactivates the Dantean understanding of love as a force that perfects the human soul and restores order to the world. These cycles do not exist separately from the wartime experience; rather, they function as a response to it. If Dantean anthropology reveals humanity through moral choice, then one of the most significant choices in Vyshebaba's poetry is the ability to preserve love despite war, distance, loneliness, and trauma.

A similar anthropological dimension is developed in the cycle *Everything About My Father*. Here war appears less as the source of trauma than as the space in which trauma becomes comprehensible. Within a liminal situation, the protagonist gains the possibility of rethinking his relationship with his father, overcoming destructive models of self-identification, and discovering the inner foundations of forgiveness.

Another important feature of *The Divine Comedy* is its distinctive mode of testimony, which combines personal experience with a claim to universal knowledge about humanity and the world. In Vyshebaba's poetry, this mode emerges through the combination of external and internal perspectives. The lyrical protagonist is simultaneously a participant in events and their reflective observer. In the cycle *451° Fahrenheit*, this function acquires broader significance: the artist no longer merely records catastrophe but reflects upon his own place within it and upon his responsibility for preserving cultural memory. Through the recurring images

of fire, ashes, books, and the light of literature, Vyshebaba constructs the figure of the poet-witness whose task is to preserve the memory of catastrophe and to guard cultural values.

The image of the poet as a “sentry” may also be interpreted as a metaphor for the author himself. Existing within the space of war, he performs the function of a guardian of culture and memory. Like Dante, who returns from his journey through the afterlife to bear witness to what he has seen, Vyshebaba’s lyrical protagonist stands between destruction and meaning, refusing to let war erase human experience entirely.

If Dante’s journey represents the *katabasis* of a living man among the dead, Vyshebaba’s protagonist inhabits a liminal state, constantly entering the realm of death. This idea reaches its culmination in the final cycle, *Marginalia*, where the ambiguity of the collection’s title is fully revealed. The lyrical voice speaks on behalf of those who exist perpetually on the margin between life and death, addressing the world of the living. The image of marginalia acquires an existential dimension, becoming a metaphor for the wartime individual’s condition. As Dante’s souls suspended between earthly and transcendent existence, Vyshebaba’s generation finds itself on the threshold between life and death, preservation and destruction, civilization and catastrophe. The margin thus becomes the space of ultimate human experience from which the voice of contemporary war speaks.

In Vyshebaba’s poetry, the Dantean code functions primarily as a model for passing through the experience of war rather than as a system of isolated quotations and allusions. The key motifs are movement, crossing, the road, descent, and return. War becomes a contemporary analogy of infernal space; however, this space is never completely closed. The possibility of another shore, of return, memory, love, and peace remains preserved. Consequently, *Marginalia* presents an eschatological-transitional anthropological model of experiencing war in which the poet stands between chaos and meaning, destruction and memory. Whereas Dante’s *katabasis* culminates in emergence into light through the transcendent order of the universe, Vyshebaba’s passage through the hell of war offers no guarantee of salvation. Nevertheless, it preserves the possibility of returning to humanity through memory, love, and testimony.