

THE ART OF WAR POETRY: PRECEDENT PHENOMENA AS TRANSMITTERS OF HISTORICAL AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY IN PAVLO VYSHEBABA'S POETRY

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Summary

War poetry, beyond its significant self-descriptive component, aims to capture the memory of events, diverse individuals, and comrades, and convey the truth about the war to the broader public. As a result, realistic narrative often prevails over artistic fiction. Truthfulness, historical accuracy, and the clear prioritization in the fight against Russian aggression transform the narratives of war poetry into a crucial element of information warfare.

This study explores the role of precedent phenomena as significant transmitters of historical and collective memory within the war poetry of Ukrainian poet Pavlo Vyshebababa. Through a close analysis of Vyshebababa's work, the article examines how references to notable figures and events function not merely as literary devices but as powerful tools for embedding cultural memory and national identity. This exploration situates Vyshebababa's poetry within a broader framework of cultural semiotics, demonstrating how historical allusions foster a shared consciousness, reinforce collective resilience, and contribute to the evolving narrative of Ukrainian identity amidst contemporary challenges.

Key words: war poetry, precedent phenomena, historical and collective memory, modern Ukrainian military poetry, Ukrainian poet, P. Vyshebababa.

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1. Introduction

War represents an extreme experience that is challenging to articulate. However, since ancient times, attempts have been made to comprehend it not only through documentary genres but also in artistic literature, particularly poetry. Poets often think in terms that directly appeal to eternity, referencing the historical and cultural memory of their people. They integrate their personal experiences with archetypes and the valuable legacy of previous generations, blending historical reflections with visions of the future, as well as values and ideas highlighted by tumultuous events. By interpreting recent or distant past events, writers functionally transform them into acts of the present, emphasizing historical experiences that must be preserved and passed on to future generations.

The development of foreign language competence, overcoming language barriers, broadening horizons, intercultural interaction, and deep understanding of cultural products are impossible without the knowledge of precedent phenomena, which play a significant role among the primary components of the cognitive base. The significance of precedent phenomena is emphasized by their role in preserving and transmitting cultural values and traditions. They function as bridges between generations, ensuring the continuity of shared knowledge and cultural identity within a linguistic community. The transmission of precedent phenomena

from one generation to the next becomes a key mechanism for maintaining cultural unity and collective memory.

The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in works from the fields of psycholinguistics, research focused on the specifics of proper names (O. Yu. Karpenko, et al.), studies on precedent phenomena and names (T. Yu. Kalchenko, V. V. Koroleva, R. S. Chornovol-Tkachenko, O. O. Selivanova, L. P. Yuldasheva, et al.), as well as research on the Turkish language (O. A. Virnyk, I. L. Pokrovska). The study also draws on scholarly investigations in historical and collective memory (A. Assmann, J. Assmann, M. Gibernau, A. Lyagusha) and literary studies (C. Kempf, C. Forche, N. Holovchenko, et al.).

In the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war, which began in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and escalated into a full-scale conflict in February 2022, the comprehension and memorialization of war experiences are also reflected in various interdisciplinary studies.

The object of this research is precedent phenomena (PF) within the poetry of P. Vyshebaba. **The subject** of the study focuses on the semantic and functional regularities of using precedent phenomena in poetry to preserve and transmit historical and collective memory.

Theoretical Significance. The theoretical significance lies in expanding academic discussions about the essence of precedent phenomena, their key features, classifications, and role in the recovery and preservation of historical and collective memory. The research aims to foster a better understanding of Ukraine on the international stage through literary translations and the development of a glossary based on analyzed precedent phenomena in poetry. **The practical value** of this work involves the publication of poetic translations of Ukrainian war poetry into English and Turkish, enriching European literature with relevant, sensitive, and inspiring texts by resilient Ukrainian poets.

The objective of the study is to identify and analyze precedent phenomena in the poetry of P. Vyshebaba from the point of view of their transmission of historical and collective memory and the experience of war.

Main Objectives: examine theoretical foundations, analyze the concepts of “precedence” and “intertextuality”, investigate how poetic texts interact with other literary and historical sources, identify and analyze the precedent phenomena employed in poetry to preserve and transmit the collective memory of war. Examine the social role of poetry in shaping and preserving collective memory, its impact on public opinion, and its contribution to the formation of national identity.

To explore the complex role of poetry in reflecting and shaping historical and collective memory of war, and to analyze precedent names, the study employs a **combination of methodologies**: **Literary Analysis:** Includes textual and intertextual analyses to examine the use and significance of precedent phenomena within poetic texts; **Historical Contextual Analysis:** Contextualization and comparative analysis to explore how historical conditions shape poetic narratives and the use of precedent names; **Cultural Analysis:** Uses an anthropological approach to study cultural codes, traditions, and symbols, and analyze cultural narratives within the poetry; **Sociological Analysis:** Investigates the role of poetry in society, its impact on public opinion, and its influence on the formation of national identity.

Research Material. The study material includes poetry collection of Ukrainian poet Pavlo Vyshebaba.

2. Precedent phenomena as the consequence of the interrelationship of the national cognitive base, language and culture

Despite different approaches to the phenomenon of precedence, in all cases it involves an appeal to the cultural memory of society. Every individual, as a member of a certain society

(family, religious, professional, etc.), shares knowledge, perceptions, and value orientations with other members of that society; they are members of a linguistic and cultural community, which possesses a certain set of “cultural objects” and their symbols common to all its members; and they are representatives of humanity, sharing knowledge and perceptions common to all people.

The main components of the knowledge and perceptions core shared by members of a linguistic and cultural community are recognized as precedent phenomena (PF) in modern linguistics. Precedent phenomena can be texts, names (PN), or expressions of any length (from a word / aphorism to an epic). According to O. Selivanova, precedent phenomena are “components of a conceptual system, the designation and content of which are well known to representatives of a certain ethno-cultural community, are significant and are used cognitively and communicatively” (*Selivanova, 2008*). The sum of the meanings of words that are components of a precedent phenomenon is not identical to its meaning, since the precedent expression itself is included in the cognitive base, repeatedly reproduced in native speech.

In modern linguistics, there is no single view on the relationship between precedent and intertextuality. R. Chornovol-Tkachenko believes that the realization of intertextuality as a text-creative category is made possible by the existence of precedent texts as systemic units of the thesaurus of the linguistic and cultural community, which have a socially determined significance for its members, who actualize certain aspects of the precedent of such texts in recipient texts (*Chornovol-Tkachenko, 2007*). In Western European and American linguistics, the concept of precedent is not used at all, instead tangential concepts are used (fixed expressions, allusions, idiomatic phrases, idioms, quotes, etc.) (*Bohdanova, 2016*).

The precedent phenomenon is a vivid manifestation of intertextuality, the mandatory features of which are encyclopedia and recognizability. Precedent phenomena play an important role in the verbalization of significant elements of life and the actualization of cultural memory. In fiction, they occupy a special place, as they influence the formation of the reader's picture of the world, the emotional perception of the work. Creating numerous associations with the help of allusions to events, facts, characters of other texts, precedent phenomena present historical and cultural knowledge about the world (*Shytyk, Yuldasheva, 2023*).

3. A New Language of Memorialization

Contemporary theorists of memory studies point to the direct connection between memory and identity. Jan Assmann characterizes memory as “knowledge with an index of identity,” meaning knowledge about oneself and one's diachronic identity as an individual and as a member of a family, generation, community, nation, or cultural and religious tradition (*Assman, 2008*). Aleida Assmann argues that a society's active functional memory (“canon”) defines and maintains the cultural identity of a group. Due to limited space, everything that enters active memory undergoes a strict selection process (“canonization”). She identifies three spheres of active cultural memory: religion, art, and history. In discussing history, Assmann emphasizes that nation-states produce narrative versions of their past that serve as collective autobiographies. This national history is taught in textbooks and presented publicly through monuments and commemorative dates. Thus, national memory is fostered through knowledge of key historical events, familiarity with national symbols, and connection with significant dates (*Assman, 2008*).

Montserrat Guibernau further details the relationship between national identity and collective memory, identifying five dimensions of national identity: psychological, cultural, territorial, historical, and political. The sense of kinship, central to the psychological dimension, is

not created by factual history alone, but by history as perceived or felt, which forms an emotional connection to ancestors and significant or tragic past events. The assimilation of national culture through the transmission of values, customs, traditions, rituals, language, and practices is essential to the formation of national identity. Moreover, the idea of a longstanding existence of a nation and its culture, constructed within collective memory, legitimizes this identity. Therefore, the selective remembrance of a heroic past and the crafting of a specific image of the nation form the main tasks of national history (*Gibernau, 2012*).

Barbara Szacka emphasizes that collective memory on a societal level supports group identity in three ways: as an awareness of a shared past, as a psychological bond uniting group members, and as a set of symbols. Collective memory encompasses the shared perceptions within a community about its past, including significant figures and events, as well as methods of memorializing and recounting this history. In other words, it involves all conscious references to the past that are present in the community's current life. Barbara Szacka considers "myth" an interdependent concept to "collective memory," or rather, she prefers to discuss the mythologization of the past. The key difference lies in the nature of these concepts: the reality of myth is sacred, whereas collective memory grows out of everyday life.

According to Szacka, collective memory, which spans events across several generations, consists of three elements. The first is an individual's memory of their own experiences of the past. The second is the memory of shared experiences within a group, upon which a collectively agreed-upon language for recounting these experiences is built. The third element is the officially represented image of the past within a culture (*Szacka, 2011*).

Precedent theory, rooted in intertextuality as a means of preserving culturally significant information, captures both cultural and historical-literary memory.

Cultural memory is a reference point of our identity, a compass that shapes us as a community that is capable of struggle and survival, preservation and development, creativity and weakness. It is a framework that shapes the relationship between the past and the present to build a path to the future. Working with cultural memory allows us to explain why, how and to what extent we remember something, and leave something outside the common memory space. It is this process that forms a collective identity (*Lyagusha, 2024*).

Cultural memory serves as an overarching concept under which all other types of memory and ways of remembering exist. The term was coined by German researcher, historian, and philosopher Jan Assmann, who described two types or modes of memory: communicative memory – living memory passed down for three or a maximum of four generations – and cultural memory, which can enter archives and become part of cultural memory (*Assman, 2008*).

Historical memory comprises pre-scientific, scientific, quasi-scientific, and non-scientific knowledge and collective representations of a society's shared past. It is one dimension of individual and collective memory of the historical past or, rather, its symbolic representation. The reconstruction of a society's history is impossible without historical memory, which is the inheritance of past experience embodied in relevant cultural forms (traditions, monuments, memoirs, etc.) and exists as a form of historical consciousness. One expression of this memory includes the recollections of those who witnessed historical events, whether through oral accounts or written testimonies. Memory, consciousness, and history are interconnected and interdependent. The primary function of historical memory is to transmit knowledge and experience of the past as the basis for self-identification.

In Ukraine, after Russia's full-scale invasion, academic institutions and civic organizations focused on memory, history, and culture not only continued but increased their activity. Programs like "Future of Heritage: History, Cultural Studies, Literature" at the Ukrainian

Catholic University or “Memory Studies and Public History” at the Kyiv School of Economics have become hubs where memory studies discourse is not only formally examined but developed into a completely new quality of understanding, critique, and creation of memorial culture.

4. Pavlo Vyshebababa – is a father, a soldier and a war poet

Pavlo Vyshebababa is a writer, soldier, musician, and environmental activist, who serves as a chronicler of his time. After the onset of the full-scale invasion, he joined the ranks of the 68th Separate Jager Brigade. In 2022, he published a poetry collection titled *Just Don't Write to Me About the War*, which was reissued twice within a year. The first print run of 15,000 copies sold out within 15 days in December 2022. The second, expanded edition was published in February 2023. Over four weeks, P. Vyshebababa's book was ranked among the top 20 most popular books in Ukraine's largest bookstore chain, “Knyharnya Ye,” holding the top spot for four weeks. He was listed among the top five most popular military figures by Forbes Ukraine. His author channel received the YouTube Silver Play Button.

Vyshebababa's poem “To My Daughter” and the short story “Martians” were included in the Ukrainian literature curriculum for general and secondary education institutions.

We would like to add into this research Vyshebababa's poem “To My Daughter” in the *original* and in English and Turkish translations (translated by O. Virnyk):

Тільки не пиши мені про війну, розкажи, чи є біля тебе сад, чи ти чуєш коників і цикад, і чи повзають равлики по в'юну.	Just don't write to me about the war, Tell me if there's a garden near you, If you can hear the crickets and cicadas, a few, And upon Morning-glories do the snails crawl!	Bana sadece savaş hakkında yazma sen, Yanında bahçe var mı, anlat bunu, Çekirgelerin, cırcır böceklerinin sesini duyuyor musun, Ve salyangozlar sürünüyor mu sarmal çiçekler üzerinde?
Як у тих далеких від нас краях, називають люди своїх котів? Те, чого найбільше би я хотів, щоб не було суму в твоїх рядках.	In those lands far away from us, in thousands of miles, How do people name their cats? What I wish more than the rest, Is that there's no sadness in your lines.	Bizden uzak o diyarlarda, İnsanlar ne isim verir kedilerine? En çok istediğim şey ise, Hüzün olmaması satırlarında.
Чи цвіте там вишня та абрикос? І якщо подарують тобі букет, не розкажуй, як бігла ти від ракет, розкажи, як добре нам тут жилося.	Do cherry and apricot trees bloom there? And if someone gives you a bou- quet, Don't tell how you ran from rocket, Tell them how well we lived here.	Orada kiraz ve kayısı ağaçları çiçek açıyor mu, evlat? Ve eğer sana verilerse bir buket, Anlatma nasıl seni öldürecekti o kadar çok roket, Burada ne kadar güzel yaşadığımızı anlat.
Запроси в Україну до нас гостей, всіх, кого зустрінеш на чужині, ми покажемо кожному по війні, як ми вдячні за спокій своїх дітей.	Invite guests to Ukraine, please, Everyone you meet in a foreign land, We will show to everyone after the war is end, How grateful we are for our chil- dren's peace.	Ukrayna'ya misafirleri davet et, Gurbet ellerde karşılaştığım herkesi, Herkesi göstereceğiz savaş sonrası, Çocuklarımızın huzuru için ne kadar doluyor kalplerimizi minnet.

5. Analysis of PF in the works of poet

Pavlo Vyshebaba has mentioned that “*Poetry explains our feelings – shows what we feel, being right here, on the front line. It is very important now because everyone reads poetry – both those Ukrainians abroad and those who remain in the country.*” The issues of personal, generational, and national identity are identified as the leitmotif of Vyshebaba’s debut poetry book “Just don’t Write to Me about the War” and the choice made by the lyrical hero determines his fate in the time-space of the war, outlined in the lyrics of the rank. It manifests itself in historically specific, literary, cultural, and autobiographical coordinates.

When modelling the image of war, the poet prefers to reflect on the meaning of existence, activates the motif of memory, and plunges into the psychological portrait of the hero. His idiostyle is characterised by biblical reminiscences and allusions, intertextual connections at the level of titles, poetic stylizations (prayer, carol, counting, lullaby ...) (*Halchuk, O., 2023*).

An important stage in the study of PF is the identification of its source base. In the corpus of precedent phenomena of Pavlo Vyshebaba's poetry, several groups are distinguished by sources of borrowing:

1. Precedential phenomena of literary origin are quite common, because fiction is the main source of their formation. Thus, P. Vyshebaba appeals to well-known poetry of Maksym Rylskyi. “Language”: *Hi «нарость», ні «солов’їну» – / хмільні сьогодення вірши.* Neither “*sprou*”, nor “*nightingale language*” – / intoxicating poems of today.

Also a poem by Vasyl Simonenko “You know that you are a human being”: *«Ти знаєш, що ти людина?» – / весь час питала мене. “Do you know you are human being?” – / asked me all the time. / Я знаю, що я людина, – / і мука моя єдина.* I know that I am a human being – / and my torment is the only one.

The lines by Lina Kostenko, “These may not even be poems, but flowers thrown to you,” are also reflected in Pavlo Vyshebaba's poetry in the following lines: *І це не вірши, хлопці, це не вірши, а квіти, що вам в кітелі кладу.* And these are not poems, boys, these are not poems, but flowers I place in your military jacket.

The lines *Жоден дублер змінити нас не хотів, / Кожна Августа втомилась від наших стансів.* No understudy wanted to change us, / Every *Augusta* is tired of our stanzas. – are correlated with “Stanzas to Augusta” by J. Byron.

Thus, poetry, as the most plastic, dynamic and emotional artistic system, reacted almost instantly to the events that resonated for the history of Ukraine and even highlighted and re-voiced older poetic works.

2. Precedent phenomena of mythological origin. P. Vyshebaba references the hero of the ancient Greek myth *Sisyphus* – a semi-legendary king of the city of Ephyra, condemned by the gods to an eternal punishment for his crimes (he must endlessly roll a heavy stone up a steep hill, performing a futile, grueling, and unending task): *Ти носитимеш камені льоду, новий Цізіф, / Іншим шлях розчищай, коли свій віднайти не зміг.* You will carry stones of ice, a new *Sisyphus*, / Clear the path for others if you could not find your own.

3. Precedent phenomena of biblical origin represent a significant portion among other types. Parallels with the Bible allow the author to sharply reflect the issues within the work. In particular, the use of such precedent phenomena enables the conveyance of duality, symbolism, and ambiguity within the imagery.

In war poetry, central precedent phenomena are figures like God, the Lord, etc.: *За мить як піти в атаку, ми молимося про спасіння, / якщо Бог і є, він носить форму мого*

покоління. A moment before the attack, we pray for salvation, / if **God** exists, He wears the uniform of my generation.

Дай їм, **Боже**, цю крихту з «навіки віків». / Амінь. Grant them, **Lord**, this crumb of “forever and ever.” / Amen.

Отче, я лише людина, як і ти. **Father**, I am just a man, like you.

Врятуй наші душі, **Господь**, врятуй. Save our souls, **Lord**, save us.

Бог дав нам війну, щоби нас змішати, / щоби ми дізнались про справжню дійсність. **God** gave us war to unsettle us, / so that we may learn of true reality.

All things connected to Russia are traditionally associated with such negative characters as Herod: Хоч **Ірода** військо стокриле / Ширяє з брудним батогом, / Під захистом вищої сили / Народ ся рождає, славімо його. Though **Herod's** army with wings unclean / soars with a filthy whip, / Under the protection of higher power / A people is born; let us praise Him.

У місті було нас сто тисяч люду, / Страшніше за сурми **Страшного суду**, / За дев'ять кіл пекла, узятих купи, / Місто-герой? – місто-мученик, Маріуполь. In the city were we, a hundred thousand souls, / More dreadful than the trumpets of **Judgment Day**, / Than nine circles of hell, all combined, / Hero-city? – city-martyr, Mariupol.

Judgment Day in Christianity, Judaism, and Islam represents the final judgment determining the fate of sinners and the righteous. In popular consciousness, the notion of Judgment Day is associated with unbearable, adverse conditions and circumstances, such as natural disasters, chaos, and turmoil.

For Whom the Bell Tolls is a novel by Ernest Hemingway (1940). This phrase was first used by J. Donne, prompting reflection on the transience of life, this phrase also hints that no one is safe from death and no one knows when death will come for him: Уночі невідомо за ким калатають дзвони, / Уночі наші ріки й струмки не такі червоні. At night, **bells toll for someone** unknown, / At night our rivers and streams are not so red.

4. Precedent phenomena originating from toponyms include the names of cities that have become victims and witnesses to the war crimes of Russian occupiers: Все, що трапилось в **Краматорську**, залишилось там. All that have happened in **Kramatorsk**, stayed there.

На **Донбасі** міста не прокинуться від сирени, / їх покинули люди, як кров полишає вени. In **Donbas**, cities won't wake to the sound of sirens, / people have left them as blood leaves veins.

The Donbas is a region in eastern Ukraine that includes the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. Known for its vast coal deposits and industrial development, the Donbas has been a vital economic center in Ukraine, especially for heavy industries such as coal mining, metallurgy, and machinery production. Culturally, it is a diverse area with strong Ukrainian and Russian influences, and its identity reflects the complex history and interactions of these communities. Since 2014, when Russian-backed separatists took control of parts of Donetsk and Luhansk following Russia's annexation of Crimea, the Donbas has been at the center of ongoing conflict. In 2022, with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the significance of the Donbas has deepened. For Ukrainians, the Donbas is now not just an industrial heartland but also a powerful symbol of sovereignty, resilience, and national unity. The region's defense has become a focal point of Ukrainian resistance, representing a stand against aggression and occupation.

Amid devastating destruction, including the near leveling of Ukrainian cities like Mariupol and the displacement of millions of residents, the Donbas has come to embody the cost of defending Ukrainian identity and sovereignty. It symbolizes both the immense sacrifice made by Ukrainians and the commitment to a free and unified Ukraine.

Український світанок зійде над Донецьким кряжем, / хтось із нас неодмінно до ночі в цю землю ляже. The Ukrainian dawn will rise over the **Donetsk Ridge**, / and some of us will certainly lie in this soil by nightfall.

The *Donetsk Ridge* is a highland region in eastern Ukraine that stretches through Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. Geologically, it is part of the larger Ukrainian crystalline shield and is rich in coal and other minerals, which historically made it a key area for mining and industrial activities, especially around the cities of Donetsk and Luhansk. Since the Russian full-scale invasion in 2022, the Donetsk Ridge has taken on even greater symbolic and strategic significance. As a natural elevated terrain, it has become a focal point in the defense and control of eastern Ukraine. The area has seen intense military action as both Ukrainian and Russian forces have vied for control over high ground.

For Ukrainians, the Donetsk Ridge has also become a symbol of resilience and a reminder of the deep connection between the land and its people. Many towns and landscapes around the ridge have endured severe destruction and tragic loss, reinforcing the area's role as a testament to Ukrainian perseverance.

6. Conclusions

The imagery in the poetry collection "*Just Don't Write to Me About the War*" emerges as lived poetics, capturing the experience of war from the perspective of a man, father, public figure, soldier, and "Chaplain." These narratives are marked by autobiographical elements, factual accuracy, and sometimes contain documentary or memoir-like features. Pavlo Vyshebababa's poems preserve a chronicle of events (what is not recorded is forgotten, and to document is to save it in memory, to give it a new resonance, to preserve it eternally), alongside personal insights and reflections that might otherwise be lost within official historical narratives.

The precedent phenomena used by the author serve as a powerful tool for preserving the cultural memory of the ethnic group, reflecting the historical and collective memory of the people and contributing to its further development. Analyzing the source base of these phenomena, particularly those derived from other literary texts, mythology, biblical texts, and city names that have imprinted themselves on public consciousness as heroic cities or cities that suffered under Russian occupation, highlights the social role of poetry in forming and preserving historical and collective memory, its impact on public opinion, and its contribution to the shaping of national identity.

Precedent phenomena play a crucial role in verbalizing significant elements of existence and actualizing cultural memory. In literary works, they hold a special place as they influence the reader's worldview and emotional perception of the text. By creating numerous associations through references to events, facts, and characters from other texts, precedent phenomena convey historical and cultural knowledge about the world.

War poetry plays a crucial role in preserving and transmitting collective memory about events, people, and their experiences, gathering knowledge and experience for future generations. It helps to shape national identity and strengthen a sense of unity among citizens.

The poetry of Ukrainian poets aspires to be part of today's collective consciousness, channeling its energy toward a future where hopes for positive change for the Ukrainian people – both within the country and abroad – come to fruition, along with hopes for peace and universal justice.

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