

System of Ethnocultural Codes in Contemporary Ukrainian Literature and Their Educational Potential

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Abstract. Contemporary Ukrainian literature increasingly functions as a cultural space in which historical memory, national identity, collective trauma, and value orientations are preserved, reinterpreted, and transmitted. Under the influence of globalization, digital transformation, postcolonial reassessment, and the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war, literary texts acquire not only aesthetic but also mnemonic, civic, cultural, and educational significance. The objective of the article is to substantiate a systemic model of ethnocultural codes in contemporary Ukrainian literature, define their structural components, analyse their artistic representation in selected literary works, and reveal their educational potential for the formation of learners' cultural competence, civic awareness, national identity, and value-based orientations. The study is based on an interdisciplinary methodological framework combining literary studies, cultural studies, semiotics, hermeneutics, cultural anthropology, cultural memory studies, and postcolonial theory. The research corpus includes works by Lina Kostenko, Oksana Zabuzhko, Maria Matios, Serhii Zhadan, and Tamara Horykha Zernia, which represent different narrative strategies for interpreting historical experience, cultural memory, identity, trauma, and war. The article demonstrates that ethnocultural codes function as an integrated, open, dynamic, and hierarchically organized system. This system includes historical-memory, linguistic, spatial, genealogical, civic-state, spiritual-religious, axiological, and mythopoetic dimensions. Their interaction forms a coherent cultural-semantic structure of the literary text and enables the artistic articulation of Ukrainian historical experience and national identity. Ethnocultural codes are identified as fundamental mechanisms of cultural continuity, identity formation, and value transmission in contemporary Ukrainian literature. Further studies may expand the corpus of analysed texts, include poetry, drama, essays, documentary prose, and children's literature, and develop practical didactic models for applying ethnocultural code analysis in literary education.

Keywords: ethnocultural codes; contemporary Ukrainian literature; cultural memory; national identity; historical memory; literary discourse; cultural heritage; literary education; civic education; value orientations; postcolonial studies; cultural competence.

JEL Classification: I21; I23; I24; Z11; Z13.

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Introduction. Contemporary Ukrainian literature of the early twenty-first century functions not only as a field of artistic reflection on social processes but also as a significant cultural space for representing historical memory, national identity, and the value orientations of the Ukrainian people (Aheieva, 2012, pp. 45–46). In the context of globalization, the digital transformation of culture, the reassessment of the colonial past, and the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war, literature increasingly performs the functions of preserving cultural memory, transmitting symbolic meanings, and shaping collective consciousness (Hundorova, 2005, pp. 112–113; Pukhonska, 2018, pp. 15–16). The problem of cultural memory occupies a central position in contemporary humanities, where it is interpreted as a socio-cultural mechanism for preserving and transmitting historical experience (Halbwachs, 1992, pp. 34–35; Assmann, 2011, pp. 19–20; Erll, 2011, pp. 21–22). Within this theoretical framework, the literary text functions as a medium of cultural communication that accumulates collective memory and contributes to the construction of national identity (Erll, 2011, pp. 58–59; Ricoeur, 2004, pp. 81–82).

A special role in this process belongs to ethnocultural codes, which function as systems of symbolic structures representing the national worldview and cultural values. From the perspective of cultural semiotics, ethnocultural codes ensure the continuity of historical memory, linguistic tradition, and collective cultural consciousness (Lotman, 1990, pp. 45–46; Geertz, 1973, pp. 67–68). Contemporary Ukrainian literature demonstrates a qualitatively new stage in the development of ethnocultural representation. Whereas the literature of the late twentieth century primarily focused on recovering suppressed historical narratives and reassessing the totalitarian past, literary works of the twenty-first century increasingly address the decolonization of consciousness, the experience of the Russian–Ukrainian war, cultural self-identification, the preservation of local memory, and the intergenerational transmission of cultural values (Aheieva, 2012, pp. 214–215; Hundorova, 2005, pp. 174–175; Pukhonska, 2018, pp. 96–97; Semkiv, 2017, pp. 84–85).

Literature Review. The issue of ethnocultural codes lies at the intersection of literary studies, cultural studies, semiotics, anthropology, cultural memory studies, and literary education. In contemporary humanities, it is regarded as part of broader research paradigms concerned with cultural identity, symbolic systems, collective memory, and mechanisms of cultural communication. The concept of ethnocultural codes has therefore become an important analytical tool for interpreting literary texts as carriers of cultural meanings and historical experience (Assmann, 2011, pp. 19–20; Honcharuk, 2018, pp. 58–59; Honcharuk et al., 2021, pp. 89–90; Matios, 2004, pp. 45–46). The theoretical foundations of contemporary research are largely based on studies devoted to cultural memory. Within this framework, literature is understood as one of the

principal mechanisms for preserving and transmitting historical experience, while literary texts are interpreted as spaces in which individual and collective memory are represented and negotiated. Scholars emphasize that literature not only reflects historical events but also shapes the ways in which societies comprehend and reinterpret them, thereby constructing systems of cultural meanings that ensure the continuity of national traditions and collective identity (Assmann, 2011, pp. 19–20; Honcharuk, 2018, pp. 58–59; Horikha Zernia, 2019, pp. 34–35; Pukhonska, 2018, pp. 15–16; Ricoeur, 2004, pp. 78–79).

In contemporary Ukrainian literary scholarship, considerable attention has been paid to the issues of postcolonial consciousness, historical trauma, memory, and national identity. Researchers argue that following Ukraine's independence, literature gradually evolved into a space for reassessing the national past, whereas the Russian aggression against Ukraine has further transformed literary discourse into a medium for documenting and artistically interpreting contemporary historical experience. Consequently, literary works increasingly combine personal memories with collective historical narratives, integrating individual biographies into the broader history of the nation (Aheieva, 2012, pp. 45–46; Zabuzhko, 2010, pp. 112–113; Semkiv, 2017, pp. 66–67; Tarnashynska, 2011, pp. 90–91). Another important area of research concerns ethnocultural traditions as a factor in strengthening Ukrainian society. Recent studies demonstrate that ethnocultural heritage ensures the continuity of national cultural development, contributes to civic responsibility, and reinforces cultural resilience under the conditions of war and globalization. In this context, ethnocultural meanings are regarded as the foundation of the contemporary Ukrainian cultural space, integrating historical memory, language, traditions, spirituality, and the system of national values into a coherent cultural framework (Hundorova, 2005, pp. 9–10; Eagleton, 1996, pp. 35–36; Erll, 2011, pp. 16–17).

A significant body of contemporary literary criticism has been devoted to the works of Oksana Zabuzhko, Maria Matios, Serhii Zhadan, Lina Kostenko, and other prominent Ukrainian writers. These studies primarily focus on historical memory, national identity, cultural trauma, spatial symbolism, linguistic representation of culture, and literary interpretations of war. However, most of them remain author-centered and examine individual artistic strategies rather than proposing an integrated theoretical model capable of explaining the functioning of ethnocultural codes across a broader corpus of contemporary Ukrainian literature (Aheieva, 2012, pp. 118–119; Zabuzhko, 2010, pp. 112–113; Culler, 1997, pp. 318–319; Nora, 1996, pp. 73–74; Semkiv, 2017, pp. 66–67). At the same time, relatively little scholarly attention has been devoted to the educational potential of ethnocultural codes. Existing research mainly addresses methods of teaching particular literary works or developing students' reading competence,

whereas the application of ethnocultural codes as a comprehensive methodological framework for literary education remains insufficiently explored. This research gap determines the logic of the present study, in which ethnocultural codes are considered not only as a category of literary analysis but also as an effective instrument for fostering cultural competence, civic consciousness, and value orientations among learners (Hundorova, 2005, pp. 9–10; Eagleton, 1996, pp. 35–36; Erll, 2011, pp. 16–17).

Thus, despite the considerable achievements of contemporary literary scholarship in the fields of cultural memory, postcolonial studies, and identity research, a comprehensive interdisciplinary model integrating literary, cultural, and educational perspectives on ethnocultural codes has not yet been sufficiently developed. The present study seeks to address this gap by proposing a systematic approach to the analysis of ethnocultural codes in modern Ukrainian literature and by substantiating their educational significance in the formation of cultural identity, civic consciousness, and value orientations (Assmann, 2011, pp. 19–20; Honcharuk, 2018, pp. 144–145; Matios, 2004, pp. 102–103; Ricoeur, 2004, pp. 92–93).

Aims. The aim of the study is to provide a comprehensive theoretical substantiation of the system of ethnocultural codes in contemporary Ukrainian literature as a multidimensional model for representing cultural memory, national identity, and value orientations; to identify the specific features of the historical-memory, linguistic, spatial, family, spiritual-religious, and folklore-mythological codes in the works of contemporary Ukrainian writers; to determine the principles of their interaction in shaping the semantic structure of literary texts; and to substantiate the educational potential of ethnocultural codes as an effective instrument for developing learners' cultural competence, civic consciousness, national identity, and value orientations.

Methodology. The methodological framework of the study is based on an interdisciplinary approach that integrates literary studies, cultural studies, semiotics, hermeneutics, and postcolonial theory. Such a methodological perspective is determined by the multidimensional nature of ethnocultural codes, which function simultaneously as literary, cultural, historical, and educational phenomena.

The semiotic approach, grounded in the theory of Yuri Lotman, enables the interpretation of the literary text as a secondary modelling system in which ethnocultural codes function as meaning-producing structures that organize the semantic space of the work (Lotman, 1990, pp. 45–46). The hermeneutic approach, drawing upon the philosophical concepts of Paul Ricoeur, is employed to reveal the implicit meanings associated with cultural memory, historical experience, and narrative representation, allowing literary texts to be interpreted within their broader historical and cultural contexts (Ricoeur, 2004, pp. 78–79; Ricoeur, 1984, pp. 56–57). The cultural-historical approach makes it possible to analyse contemporary Ukrainian

literature as the result of a long-term process of cultural development in which literary texts preserve and transmit collective historical experience and national cultural traditions (Geertz, 1973, pp. 89–90; Halbwachs, 1992, pp. 41–42). The postcolonial approach, based on the theoretical concepts of Homi K. Bhabha and Edward W. Said, is applied to examine the deconstruction of imperial narratives, the reinterpretation of colonial experience, and the formation of contemporary models of Ukrainian national identity (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 64–65; Said, 1993, pp. 102–103).

The research corpus comprises selected works of contemporary Ukrainian literature, including Lina Kostenko's *Marusia Churai* (Kostenko, 1982), Oksana Zabuzhko's *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* (Zabuzhko, 2010), Maria Matios's *Sweet Darusia* (Matios, 2004), Serhiy Zhadan's *The Boarding School (Internat)* (Zhadan, 2017), and Tamara Horikha Zernia's *Dotsia* (Horikha Zernia, 2019). These literary works were selected because they represent different artistic models of interpreting historical memory, cultural identity, collective trauma, and the experience of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

The research methodology combines structural-semantic analysis, comparative literary analysis, hermeneutic interpretation, and elements of cultural analysis. This combination makes it possible to identify the mechanisms through which ethnocultural codes interact at different levels of the literary text and to substantiate their functioning as an integrated system of artistic representation.

Results. An analysis of scholarly literature suggests that the concept of the ethnocultural code is predominantly employed in contemporary humanities to denote symbolic, axiological, and cultural-historical components of a literary text that preserve and transmit the historical and cultural experience of a nation (Aheieva, 2012, pp. 36–37; Assmann, 2011, pp. 117–118; Bhabha, 1994, pp. 18–19; Pukhonska, 2018, pp. 42–43). At the same time, literary scholarship has not yet developed a comprehensive theoretical model capable of explaining the interaction of these components within the artistic structure of contemporary Ukrainian literature (Erll, 2011, pp. 15–16; Zabuzhko, 2010, pp. 63–64; Semkiv, 2017, pp. 102–103; Tarnashynska, 2011, pp. 54–55). Within the framework of this study, an ethnocultural code is defined as a semantic unit of a literary text that accumulates the historical, cultural, linguistic, axiological, and social experience of the Ukrainian people and ensures its artistic representation, interpretation, and transmission through cultural memory. Unlike an individual ethnocultural code, the system of ethnocultural codes is interpreted as an open, dynamic, and hierarchically organized set of interconnected codes functioning within a literary work as an integral mechanism for representing cultural memory, constructing historical consciousness, shaping national identity, and actualizing value-oriented

meanings (Aheieva, 2012, pp. 36–37; Halbwachs, 1992, pp. 9–10; Pukhonska, 2018, pp. 74–75; Semkiv, 2017, pp. 69–70).

The proposed model is based on the understanding of literature as a specific cultural space in which historical experience is not merely reflected but is constantly reinterpreted according to the social and cultural needs of each historical period (Barthes, 1957, pp. 18–19; Bhabha, 1994, pp. 47–48; Zabuzhko, 2010, pp. 101–102). Consequently, literary discourse functions not only as a repository of cultural memory but also as an active mechanism for producing new cultural meanings and preserving the continuity of national identity.

The analysis has demonstrated that the system of ethnocultural codes in contemporary Ukrainian literature possesses several fundamental characteristics. First, it is characterized by integrity, since individual codes function through continuous interaction and together form a unified semantic space of the literary text. Second, the system is hierarchical, involving both dominant and subsidiary codes whose significance varies according to the ideological and artistic structure of a particular work. Third, it is dynamic, as the dominance of individual ethnocultural codes changes depending on historical circumstances, social transformations, and the author's interpretative strategy. Fourth, the system is open, allowing the incorporation of new cultural meanings generated by social change, globalization, digital communication, and the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war. Another essential feature is its axiological orientation, through which literary texts construct systems of moral values, ethical norms, and civic ideals, thereby shaping readers' worldview. Finally, the system possesses considerable educational potential, enabling literary texts to promote the comprehension of historical experience, cultural heritage, national identity, and civic responsibility in educational practice (Pukhonska, 2018, pp. 96–97; Honcharuk, 2018, pp. 9–10; Honcharuk et al., 2021, pp. 16–17).

Accordingly, the system of ethnocultural codes should not be regarded as a mechanical combination of separate artistic elements. Rather, it constitutes a complex semiotic structure that ensures a multilevel interaction between literary discourse, cultural memory, and the reader. Such an understanding forms the methodological basis for the subsequent analysis of contemporary Ukrainian literary texts. The examination of the selected corpus demonstrates that ethnocultural codes never function in isolation. Instead, they form an integrated semantic system in which each code actualizes a particular dimension of national experience while simultaneously interacting with other codes. This interaction ensures a multidimensional artistic representation of cultural memory, historical experience, and national identity (Aheieva, 2012; Assmann, 2011; Bhabha, 1994; Pukhonska, 2018; Semkiv, 2017). The study reveals that the historical-memory code functions as the central system-forming element around which linguistic, genealogical, axiological, civic-state, spatial, and mythopoetic

codes are organized. Such an arrangement reflects the dominant tendency of contemporary Ukrainian literature to reinterpret historical trauma, collective memory, postcolonial experience, and the realities of the Russian–Ukrainian war (Barthes, 1957; Bhabha, 1994; Zabuzhko, 2010; Semkiv, 2017).

Unlike traditional literary approaches that analyze ethnocultural codes separately, the proposed model demonstrates their systemic interaction within a unified artistic structure. Consequently, the ethnocultural code acquires significance not merely as a semiotic unit but also as a structural element that generates new cultural meanings through its interaction with other components of the system. The findings demonstrate that the historical-memory code determines the internal organization of the entire system of ethnocultural codes in contemporary Ukrainian literature. Its dominant position is explained by the fact that literary discourse functions as a space for interpreting historical experience, where individual memory is constantly correlated with the memory of the family, the local community, and the nation. Such an understanding is consistent with the concepts of cultural memory proposed by Jan Assmann, Aleida Assmann, and Astrid Erll, who regard memory as a continuous process of cultural communication rather than merely the preservation of information (Assmann, 2011, pp. 117–118; Erll, 2011, pp. 15–16; Halbwachs, 1992, pp. 9–10).

Within the proposed model, the historical-memory code performs a system-forming function. It not only represents historical events but also integrates other ethnocultural codes into a coherent artistic system. Consequently, historical memory becomes the principal mechanism through which literary texts construct national identity, preserve cultural continuity, and actualize collective experience.

The most comprehensive realization of the historical-memory code can be observed in Oksana Zabuzhko's novel *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* (Zabuzhko, 2010). The very title functions as a complex cultural metaphor. The museum is represented not simply as an institution preserving historical artefacts but as an artistic image of collective memory in which different temporal layers of Ukrainian history coexist and interact. The compositional structure of the novel is organized so that the past constantly enters into dialogue with the present. The history of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, Soviet political repression, the traumatic experience of totalitarianism, and post-Soviet reality form a unified narrative continuum. As a result, history ceases to function as a completed chronological sequence and instead becomes an active factor shaping contemporary national consciousness (Zabuzhko, 2010, pp. 101–102).

A particularly significant role in the novel is assigned to family memory. The biographies of individual characters unfold through the experiences of several generations, demonstrating the continuity of cultural inheritance. Personal memories acquire national significance, while private family history becomes one of the principal mechanisms for preserving

historical truth. Consequently, the personal story of an individual gradually transforms into the collective history of the Ukrainian nation.

Within the artistic structure of the novel, the historical-memory code closely interacts with the linguistic, spatial, axiological, and genealogical codes. Their interaction creates a multilevel semantic system that enables readers to interpret historical events not merely as facts of the past but as active elements in the ongoing construction of contemporary Ukrainian identity. Thus, *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* demonstrates that historical memory in contemporary Ukrainian literature functions not simply as accumulated historical knowledge but as an active cultural mechanism responsible for constructing national identity. This feature provides sufficient grounds for identifying the historical-memory code as the system-forming component of the proposed model of ethnocultural codes.

From the perspective of literary education, the novel also possesses considerable pedagogical value. The actualization of the historical-memory code promotes students' historical consciousness, develops their ability to critically interpret the past, and strengthens their understanding of the continuity of Ukrainian statehood. Accordingly, the novel may be studied not only as a literary work but also as an educational instrument for cultivating historical memory, civic responsibility, and value-oriented attitudes toward Ukraine's cultural heritage (Honcharuk, 2018, pp. 9–10; Honcharuk et al., 2022, pp. 35–36; Honcharuk et al., 2021, pp. 16–17). The conducted analysis confirms that the historical-memory code functions as the central organizing component of the ethnocultural code system in contemporary Ukrainian literature. Its distinctive feature lies not only in representing historical events but also in transforming historical experience into the cultural experience of the reader. Through this process, literary texts contribute to the formation of national consciousness, civic identity, and value orientations while ensuring the continuity of Ukrainian cultural memory (Aheieva, 2012, pp. 36–37; Assmann, 2011, pp. 117–118; Barthes, 1957, pp. 18–19; Erll, 2011, pp. 15–16).

Temporal Mechanism. The first mechanism underlying the functioning of the historical-memory code is the temporal mechanism, which ensures the simultaneous presence and interaction of multiple temporal dimensions within a literary text. Contemporary Ukrainian literature is characterized by the rejection of a linear perception of historical time. The past is no longer represented as a completed historical stage; instead, it becomes an active constituent of the present. Consequently, literary time acquires a polyphonic structure in which historical experience is inseparable from the personal biographies of literary characters.

This feature is most distinctly realized in Oksana Zabuzhko's novel *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* (Zabuzhko, 2010). Throughout the narrative, contemporary events remain in constant dialogue with the events of the mid-twentieth century. Rather than reconstructing history as a closed

chronological narrative, the author demonstrates its continuous presence in contemporary Ukrainian society. Historical memory therefore functions not as an archive of facts but as a means of interpreting the present, which fully corresponds to the concepts of cultural memory developed by Jan Assmann (Assmann, 2011) and Astrid Erll (Erll, 2011).

A similar artistic model is found in Maria Matios's novel *Sweet Darusia* (Matios, 2004). In this work, the tragic consequences of the totalitarian period determine the lives of several generations within a Bukovynian village. Literary time is organized so that the psychological consequences of historical trauma become even more significant than the historical events themselves. Memory functions as an ongoing cultural process that shapes both individual moral choices and the collective consciousness of the community. Thus, the temporal mechanism ensures the continuity of historical memory by demonstrating that the past never disappears; instead, it is continuously reinterpreted under new historical circumstances. This interaction between different temporal layers transforms historical experience into an active component of contemporary cultural identity.

Genealogical Mechanism. The second mechanism is the genealogical mechanism, which is realized through family memory and the intergenerational transmission of cultural experience. In contemporary Ukrainian literature, the family serves as the primary environment in which ethnocultural codes are preserved and reproduced, since it accumulates historical memory, moral values, linguistic traditions, and cultural practices. In *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets*, the histories of individual families gradually evolve into the history of the Ukrainian nation as a whole. The biographies of the protagonists are closely intertwined with major historical events, while family memory transcends chronological boundaries and guarantees the continuity of cultural tradition. Individual lives are therefore interpreted within the broader context of national history.

A comparable artistic principle is employed in Lina Kostenko's historical novel in verse *Marusia Churai* (Kostenko, 1982). The personal destiny of the heroine is inseparably connected with the historical destiny of Ukraine. Individual biography becomes a literary instrument for interpreting national history, while personal experience acquires universal cultural significance. Through the genealogical mechanism, the historical-memory code interacts primarily with the genealogical and axiological codes, thereby ensuring the continuity of national cultural tradition and preserving historical experience across successive generations.

Spatial Mechanism. An equally important mechanism is the spatial mechanism, which operates through the symbolic semantics of places of memory. In contemporary Ukrainian literature, space performs far more than the function of a physical setting; it becomes a symbolic bearer of historical and cultural experience.

In *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets*, Kyiv, archival collections, museums, family homes, and the locations associated with the Ukrainian Insurgent Army function as symbolic spaces of memory. Each of these locations possesses not only geographical but also profound cultural significance, preserving collective historical experience and facilitating the interaction between past and present. A similar interpretation of literary space appears in Serhii Zhadan's novel *The Boarding School* (Zhadan, 2017). In this work, Donbas is represented not merely as a territory affected by war but as a symbolic space of profound ideological and existential transformation, where the protagonist reconsiders his personal identity, civic responsibility, and national belonging. Consequently, the spatial mechanism establishes close interaction between the historical-memory, territorial, and civic-state codes. Literary space becomes an active participant in the construction of cultural memory rather than simply a background for narrative events.

Axiological Mechanism. Among all mechanisms of the historical-memory code, the axiological mechanism occupies a particularly significant position because it determines the formation of the reader's value system. In contemporary Ukrainian literature, historical experience is never presented as an ideologically neutral description of past events. Instead, it acquires an explicit ethical dimension through the representation of freedom, human dignity, historical justice, responsibility, sacrifice, solidarity, and national resilience. This feature is especially evident in Tamara Horikha Zernia's novel *Dotsia (Daughter)* (Horikha Zernia, 2019). The protagonist's personal development unfolds simultaneously with the formation of her civic consciousness. The Russian-Ukrainian war is represented not merely as a historical background but as a profound moral challenge that reveals authentic human values and transforms personal identity.

The axiological mechanism therefore ensures the transition from the artistic representation of historical events to the formation of readers' national identity and civic worldview. Literary texts become instruments not only of aesthetic perception but also of moral education, cultural continuity, and civic engagement. Accordingly, the interaction of the temporal, genealogical, spatial, and axiological mechanisms demonstrates that the historical-memory code functions as the principal organizing element of the entire system of ethnocultural codes. Through their mutual interaction, these mechanisms transform literary discourse into a multidimensional space where historical experience, cultural memory, national identity, and value orientations are integrated into a coherent artistic model.

The analysis of the selected corpus demonstrates that the linguistic code occupies a special place within the system of ethnocultural codes, as language functions not merely as a means of communication but also as one of the principal carriers of cultural memory and national identity. In contemporary Ukrainian literature, linguistic means preserve historical

experience, reproduce traditional cultural values, and actualize the collective worldview of the Ukrainian people. Consequently, language becomes an important mechanism for representing both individual and collective identity. Unlike traditional approaches that primarily examine language as a stylistic category, the present study considers the linguistic code as an independent structural component of the ethnocultural code system. It interacts closely with the historical-memory, genealogical, spatial, and axiological codes, thereby ensuring the integrity of the literary representation of national culture. The linguistic code is most comprehensively realized in Lina Kostenko's novel in verse *Marusia Churai* (Kostenko, 1982). The language of the work reproduces the historical worldview of the seventeenth century while simultaneously preserving its relevance for the modern reader. Archaic vocabulary, folklore phraseology, historical terminology, and poetic symbolism create a distinctive linguistic space through which Ukrainian cultural memory is transmitted across generations.

Equally significant is the linguistic organization of Oksana Zabuzhko's *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* (Zabuzhko, 2010). The author's narrative combines literary Ukrainian with dialectal forms, historical vocabulary, journalistic discourse, and documentary fragments. Such stylistic heterogeneity reflects the complexity of Ukrainian historical experience and demonstrates that language itself becomes a repository of collective memory. Each linguistic layer corresponds to a particular historical period, ideological context, or cultural tradition, thereby contributing to the polyphonic structure of the novel. A different model of the linguistic code is represented in Serhii Zhadan's *The Boarding School* (Zhadan, 2017). The novel reproduces the multilingual reality of eastern Ukraine, where Ukrainian and Russian coexist within the same communicative environment. This linguistic interaction is not merely a reflection of everyday speech practices but serves as a literary device for representing identity conflicts caused by the Russian-Ukrainian war. Language therefore becomes an indicator of cultural affiliation, civic self-identification, and ideological choice.

The linguistic code also performs an important educational function. Through the interpretation of linguistic features, students become aware of the close relationship between language, history, culture, and national consciousness. Literary language contributes to the development of linguistic competence while simultaneously fostering respect for cultural heritage, historical continuity, and national values. Consequently, the study of linguistic codes in contemporary Ukrainian literature promotes the formation of both communicative and civic competences in educational practice (Honcharuk, 2018, pp. 9–10; Honcharuk et al., 2022, pp. 35–36; Honcharuk et al., 2021, pp. 16–17). The conducted analysis confirms that the linguistic code functions not as an autonomous textual element but as an integral component of the entire ethnocultural code system. Its interaction

with other codes significantly expands the semantic potential of literary discourse and strengthens its capacity to preserve and transmit Ukrainian cultural memory.

Genealogical Code: Family Memory as a Mechanism of Cultural Continuity. Another essential component of the proposed model is the genealogical code, which represents family memory as one of the principal mechanisms of preserving ethnocultural continuity. Contemporary Ukrainian literature consistently demonstrates that the history of the nation is comprehended through the history of individual families, while personal biographies become inseparable from collective historical experience.

The genealogical code is particularly evident in *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* (Zabuzhko, 2010), where the destinies of several generations form a unified narrative structure. Family stories preserve historical truth despite political repression, ideological censorship, and social transformations. Consequently, genealogy functions not merely as a record of biological succession but as a cultural mechanism through which values, traditions, historical memory, and national identity are transmitted.

A similar artistic strategy characterizes *Sweet Darusia* by Maria Matios (Matios, 2004). The traumatic experiences of one generation continue to influence the lives of subsequent generations, illustrating the continuity of cultural trauma as well as the persistence of moral values. Family memory thus becomes an essential form of collective memory that preserves historical experience beyond official historical narratives.

In *Marusia Churai* (Kostenko, 1982), Lina Kostenko likewise emphasizes the inseparable connection between individual destiny and the historical destiny of Ukraine. The heroine's personal experience acquires national significance, while family honour, loyalty, and moral responsibility become symbolic expressions of broader cultural values.

The educational significance of the genealogical code lies in its ability to cultivate students' understanding of historical continuity, respect for family traditions, and awareness of their own cultural roots. Through literary interpretation, family history is transformed into an important instrument for developing historical consciousness and civic identity. The conducted analysis demonstrates that the genealogical code performs a mediating function between individual memory and national cultural memory. It ensures the continuity of ethnocultural experience and strengthens the integrity of the entire system of ethnocultural codes. The analysis demonstrates that the civic-state code occupies a significant place within the proposed system of ethnocultural codes because it reflects the development of civic consciousness, national responsibility, and state-building values in contemporary Ukrainian literature. Unlike traditional literary representations of patriotism, contemporary Ukrainian prose conceptualizes citizenship as an ethical category grounded in personal responsibility, historical memory, and active participation in defending democratic values.

The civic-state code has become particularly prominent in literary works published after the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war. In these texts, national identity is represented not as an abstract ideological construct but as an existential choice shaped by historical experience and moral responsibility.

This tendency is most evident in Tamara Horikha Zernia's novel *Dotsia (Daughter)* (Horikha Zernia, 2019). The protagonist undergoes a profound transformation from an ordinary citizen into an individual who consciously assumes responsibility for her country and fellow citizens. The war serves not merely as a historical background but as a catalyst for personal and civic self-identification. Human dignity, solidarity, mutual assistance, and devotion to the homeland emerge as the central ethical values of the novel.

A comparable model is observed in Serhii Zhadan's *The Boarding School* (Zhadan, 2017). The protagonist's journey across the war-torn Donbas gradually evolves into a journey of self-discovery. Throughout this process, civic identity is reconstructed through direct confrontation with violence, occupation, and moral dilemmas. The novel demonstrates that citizenship is not defined solely by legal status but by ethical responsibility, conscious choice, and solidarity with one's national community. Within the proposed theoretical model, the civic-state code closely interacts with the historical-memory, spatial, and axiological codes. Historical memory provides the foundation for civic identity, while symbolic space and value orientations determine its artistic realization. Consequently, civic consciousness is represented as an integral component of Ukraine's cultural memory rather than as an isolated ideological concept.

From an educational perspective, the civic-state code possesses considerable pedagogical value. Literary texts enable students to develop democratic values, civic responsibility, historical awareness, and critical reflection on contemporary social challenges. Accordingly, contemporary Ukrainian literature becomes an important means of civic education and national identity formation (Honcharuk, 2018, pp. 9–15; Honcharuk et al., 2022, pp. 35–41; Honcharuk et al., 2021, pp. 16–25).

Spiritual and Religious Code: Moral Foundations of Cultural Memory. The analysis indicates that the spiritual and religious code constitutes another essential component of the ethnocultural code system. In contemporary Ukrainian literature, spirituality extends beyond the sphere of religious belief and functions as a cultural category encompassing moral values, ethical responsibility, historical continuity, and the search for existential meaning. The spiritual code is manifested through biblical allusions, Christian symbolism, traditional ethical concepts, ritual practices, and representations of faith as a source of individual and collective resilience. Rather than emphasizing institutional religion, contemporary Ukrainian writers focus primarily on the moral dimensions of spirituality and its role in preserving human dignity under conditions of historical catastrophe.

In Sweet Darusia (Matios, 2004), Maria Matios portrays spiritual suffering as an inseparable element of historical trauma. Silence, repentance, forgiveness, compassion, and sacrifice acquire profound symbolic significance, illustrating the moral consequences of totalitarian violence. Religious imagery functions not as decorative symbolism but as an essential instrument for interpreting human suffering and restoring ethical order.

Similarly, Lina Kostenko's Marusia Churai (Kostenko, 1982) presents spirituality through the inseparable unity of personal conscience, historical responsibility, and national destiny. Christian ethical values coexist with folk traditions, creating a holistic moral framework within which individual actions acquire broader cultural significance. The interaction between the spiritual-religious code and the historical-memory code demonstrates that moral values constitute an indispensable component of cultural memory. Historical experience is interpreted not solely through political events but also through ethical reflection, thereby enabling literature to preserve humanity under conditions of social upheaval. From the perspective of literary education, the spiritual-religious code contributes to the development of ethical competence, empathy, tolerance, and moral reasoning. Literary interpretation encourages students to reflect upon universal human values while simultaneously strengthening their awareness of Ukrainian cultural traditions.

Mythopoetic Code: Archetypes and Cultural Symbols. The mythopoetic code represents one of the deepest structural levels of the ethnocultural code system because it preserves archetypal images and symbolic models that have evolved throughout centuries of Ukrainian cultural development. Contemporary Ukrainian literature actively reinterprets mythological structures, folklore motifs, legends, and archetypes, integrating them into modern artistic discourse.

Unlike traditional folklore, where myth functions as a stable narrative model, contemporary literary works reinterpret mythological images in accordance with present-day historical realities. Myth therefore becomes an instrument for understanding collective trauma, national resilience, and cultural continuity.

In Lina Kostenko's Marusia Churai (Kostenko, 1982), the heroine transcends the limits of an individual historical figure and gradually assumes the characteristics of a national cultural archetype. Marusia embodies the unity of artistic creativity, moral integrity, historical memory, and national identity. Consequently, the literary image acquires symbolic significance extending far beyond its immediate historical context.

Mythopoetic elements are likewise present in *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets* (Zabuzhko, 2010), where recurring symbolic motifs – including memory, the road, the house, the archive, and the museum – function as archetypal representations of Ukrainian historical consciousness.

These symbols organize the semantic structure of the novel and reinforce its interpretation as a multidimensional narrative of cultural memory.

The mythopoetic code also interacts closely with the linguistic, historical-memory, spatial, and spiritual-religious codes. The conducted analysis demonstrates that ethnocultural codes in contemporary Ukrainian literature do not function as isolated artistic elements. Instead, they constitute an integrated and dynamic system in which each code actualizes a particular dimension of the Ukrainian cultural experience while simultaneously interacting with other structural components. This interaction produces a multidimensional semantic space through which literary texts represent cultural memory, historical experience, national identity, and value orientations.

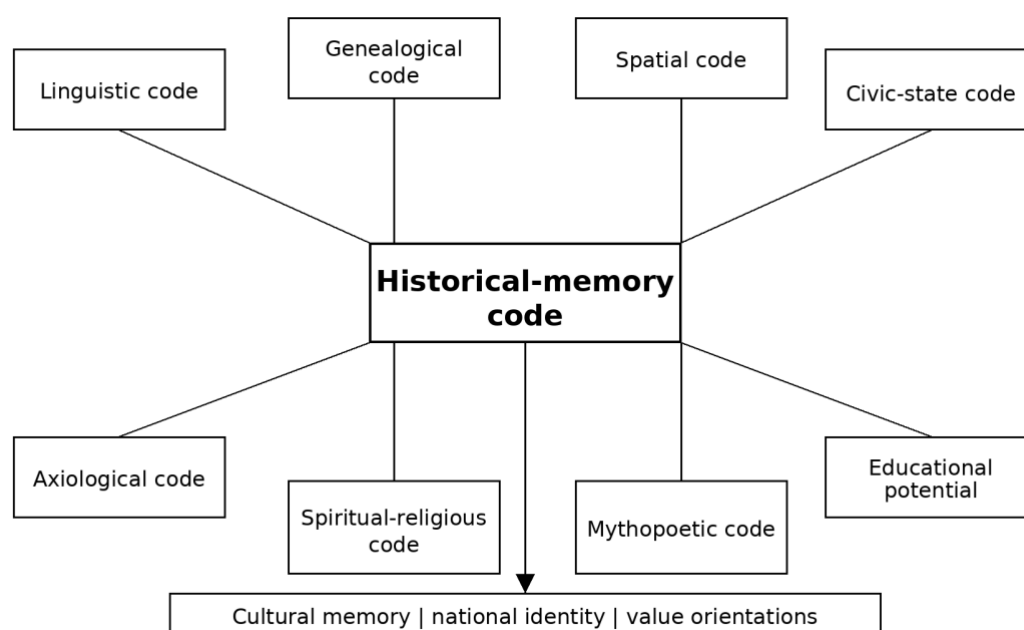


Figure 1. Systemic interaction of ethnocultural codes in contemporary Ukrainian literature

Source: developed by the author based on Assmann (2011), Erll (2011), Lotman (1990), Ricoeur (2004), Aheieva (2012), Pukhonska (2018), and Semkiv (2017).

The proposed model confirms that the historical-memory code performs the principal system-forming function. It determines the internal organization of the ethnocultural code system by integrating linguistic, genealogical, spatial, civic-state, spiritual-religious, axiological, and mythopoetic codes into a coherent artistic structure. Such interaction transforms literary discourse into a cultural mechanism capable of preserving, interpreting, and transmitting historical experience across generations.

The study has also demonstrated that the interaction among ethnocultural codes is characterized by several essential regularities. First,

no code operates independently; each acquires its semantic significance only through its relationship with other components of the system. Second, the hierarchy of codes remains dynamic rather than fixed, since the dominant code may vary according to the historical context, the author's artistic intention, and the genre-specific features of a literary work. Third, the entire system remains open to the incorporation of new cultural meanings generated by contemporary social transformations, particularly those associated with the Russian–Ukrainian war and the ongoing processes of decolonization.

The analysis further indicates that the interaction of ethnocultural codes extends beyond the purely literary dimension. Their functioning contributes to the preservation of cultural continuity, strengthens collective historical consciousness, and facilitates the formation of national identity. Literary texts therefore perform not only aesthetic but also cultural, educational, and civic functions within contemporary Ukrainian society.

From an educational perspective, the proposed model considerably expands the methodological possibilities for teaching contemporary Ukrainian literature. Interpreting literary works through the interaction of ethnocultural codes enables students to perceive artistic texts as multidimensional cultural phenomena rather than merely as collections of literary devices or historical facts. Such an approach promotes the development of historical thinking, cultural competence, civic responsibility, critical reflection, and value-based interpretation.

Accordingly, the system of ethnocultural codes may be regarded as an effective methodological framework for integrating literary studies, cultural studies, memory studies, and literary education. Its interdisciplinary character significantly broadens the interpretative potential of contemporary Ukrainian literature and provides new perspectives for investigating the relationships among literature, cultural memory, historical experience, and national identity.

Overall, the findings confirm that the proposed system of ethnocultural codes represents a coherent theoretical model capable of explaining the mechanisms through which contemporary Ukrainian literature constructs cultural meanings. The interaction of historical memory, language, genealogy, space, spirituality, civic consciousness, and mythopoetic symbolism forms a unified artistic system that ensures the continuity of Ukrainian cultural tradition while responding to the challenges of the contemporary historical moment. The educational significance of this model lies in its ability to transform literary interpretation into a process of developing cultural identity, historical awareness, civic competence, and value orientations among students. Consequently, the proposed model possesses both theoretical relevance for literary scholarship and practical importance for contemporary literary education.

Discussion. The findings of the present study substantially expand existing scholarly understanding of the mechanisms through which cultural memory, historical experience, and national identity are represented in contemporary Ukrainian literature. Whereas most previous studies have interpreted ethnocultural codes primarily as separate symbolic, linguistic, or semiotic components of literary discourse, the proposed model demonstrates that they function as interdependent elements of an integrated and dynamic system. Such an approach makes it possible to explain not only the semantic significance of individual ethnocultural codes but also the principles governing their interaction within the artistic structure of literary texts.

The theoretical foundation of the proposed model is consistent with the concept of cultural memory developed by Jan Assmann, who argues that memory should be understood as a culturally organized process through which societies preserve, interpret, and transmit socially significant meanings across generations (Assmann, 2011, pp. 36–37). From this perspective, literary texts perform not merely an aesthetic function but also serve as cultural media that ensure the continuity of historical consciousness. The present research confirms this theoretical proposition while simultaneously demonstrating that contemporary Ukrainian literature develops its own internal mechanisms of cultural memory through the interaction of ethnocultural codes.

A similar conclusion may be drawn from the theory of Aleida Assmann, according to which cultural memory represents a dynamic process of continuous reinterpretation rather than the passive preservation of historical facts. The analysed literary works reveal that memory is constantly reconstructed according to the challenges of contemporary society. Historical events therefore acquire new meanings within changing cultural contexts, while literary discourse becomes an active participant in shaping collective memory rather than merely recording it.

The obtained results also correspond with Astrid Erll's conception of literary memory, which emphasizes the role of literature as one of the principal media through which societies construct and negotiate historical experience (Erll, 2011, pp. 18–19). Nevertheless, the present study extends Erll's theoretical framework by demonstrating that literary representation of memory is organized through a coherent interaction among historical-memory, linguistic, genealogical, spatial, civic-state, axiological, spiritual, and mythopoetic codes. Consequently, cultural memory should be understood not as an isolated thematic component but as a multidimensional artistic system.

The systemic character of ethnocultural codes likewise correlates with Yuri Lotman's semiotic theory of culture. According to Lotman, literary texts constitute secondary modelling systems that transform cultural information into complex sign structures capable of generating new meanings (Lotman, 1990, pp. 31–32). The conducted analysis confirms that

contemporary Ukrainian literary works operate precisely in this manner. Individual ethnocultural codes function as interconnected semiotic structures rather than autonomous symbols. Their interaction produces new semantic configurations that cannot be reduced to the sum of their separate components.

The proposed interpretation also develops Paul Ricoeur's philosophical understanding of memory and narrative. Ricoeur maintains that historical memory acquires meaning through narrative organization, which transforms historical events into coherent cultural experience (Ricoeur, 2004, pp. 75–76). The novels analysed in the present study demonstrate that narrative structures simultaneously organize temporal, spatial, genealogical, and value-oriented dimensions of historical experience. Consequently, ethnocultural codes should be interpreted not only as symbolic representations of national culture but also as narrative mechanisms through which cultural identity is continuously reconstructed.

Particular significance should also be attributed to Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire*. Nora argues that collective memory becomes concentrated within symbolic places, texts, rituals, and cultural practices (Nora, 1996, pp. 12–13). The present findings, however, indicate that contemporary Ukrainian literature transcends the representation of individual «sites of memory». Instead, literary texts construct extensive networks of interacting ethnocultural codes that transform historical memory into an active cultural process. Memory therefore emerges not as a collection of isolated historical references but as an integrative artistic principle organizing the entire semantic structure of literary discourse.

This conclusion is especially evident in the analysis of Oksana Zabuzhko's *The Museum of Abandoned Secrets*. The novel demonstrates that historical memory extends beyond documentary reconstruction of the past. Rather, it functions as the principal organizing principle connecting family history, national identity, political experience, linguistic representation, and ethical values into a unified narrative system. Such interaction confirms the hypothesis that the historical-memory code performs the dominant system-forming role within the proposed model.

A comparable structural organization can be observed in Maria Matios's *Sweet Darusia*, where collective trauma is represented through the interaction of temporal, genealogical, and moral dimensions of cultural memory. The psychological consequences of historical violence become inseparable from family history and local cultural traditions. Historical experience thus transcends individual biography and becomes an essential component of collective national consciousness.

Similarly, Serhiy Zhadan's *The Orphanage (Internat)* illustrates how spatial, civic-state, and historical-memory codes interact under the conditions of contemporary warfare. The literary representation of the Donbas region no longer functions merely as geographical description;

instead, space becomes a symbolic medium through which questions of identity, civic responsibility, and historical continuity are negotiated. Such artistic organization confirms that ethnocultural codes are capable of integrating new historical realities while preserving the continuity of Ukrainian cultural memory.

The same tendency is evident in Tamara Horikha Zernia's *Dotsia*, where the civic-state code acquires particular significance. The protagonist's personal transformation develops simultaneously with the formation of civic consciousness, demonstrating that individual identity is inseparable from collective historical responsibility. Consequently, historical experience is transformed into a system of ethical values that shapes both personal and national identity.

Finally, Lina Kostenko's *Marusia Churai* illustrates the interaction between historical-memory, genealogical, linguistic, and mythopoetic codes. The historical novel in verse transforms an individual biography into a symbolic representation of national destiny. The heroine's personal experience becomes inseparable from the historical development of Ukrainian culture, thereby confirming the integrative function of the historical-memory code within the overall system of ethnocultural meanings.

The findings of this study also correlate with contemporary Ukrainian literary scholarship devoted to cultural memory, historical consciousness, and postcolonial identity. Research conducted by Vira Aheieva, Tamara Hundorova, Oksana Pukhonska, and Rostyslav Semkiv has significantly expanded scholarly understanding of the artistic representation of historical experience in contemporary Ukrainian literature (Aheieva, 2012, pp. 42–43; Hundorova, 2005, pp. 84–85; Pukhonska, 2018, pp. 117–118; Semkiv, 2017, pp. 63–64). These studies convincingly demonstrate that modern Ukrainian prose has become one of the principal cultural spaces in which national identity, historical trauma, and collective memory are reconsidered after the collapse of the Soviet imperial system.

At the same time, the conducted analysis indicates that previous literary studies have focused primarily on individual authors, particular literary texts, or specific manifestations of historical memory. Comparatively little attention has been paid to the interaction of different ethnocultural components within a unified artistic system. The present study addresses this research gap by proposing a comprehensive model in which ethnocultural codes are interpreted as hierarchically organized and mutually dependent structural elements rather than isolated symbolic units.

The proposed approach also contributes to the further development of postcolonial studies of Ukrainian literature. The interaction between historical-memory, linguistic, civic-state, and spatial codes demonstrates that literary discourse actively participates in the deconstruction of imperial narratives and the reconstruction of Ukrainian national identity. Contemporary Ukrainian writers therefore do not merely depict historical

events; they create new cultural models through which society interprets both the past and the present. This function has become particularly significant in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, when literature increasingly performs the role of preserving historical truth, strengthening civic consciousness, and resisting cultural aggression. An equally important outcome of the research concerns the educational dimension of the proposed model. The findings indicate that the system of ethnocultural codes possesses considerable pedagogical potential for teaching contemporary Ukrainian literature in secondary and higher education. Traditional literary analysis often concentrates on plot structure, genre characteristics, stylistic devices, or historical background. While these components remain essential, they do not fully explain the mechanisms through which literary texts construct cultural meanings and shape students' value orientations.

The proposed model substantially broadens methodological possibilities by enabling teachers to analyse literary works as multidimensional cultural systems. Through the identification of historical-memory, linguistic, genealogical, spatial, civic-state, spiritual, axiological, and mythopoetic codes, students acquire a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between literature and national culture. Such an interpretative strategy contributes to the development of historical consciousness, critical thinking, cultural competence, civic responsibility, and national identity.

The educational significance of the model is particularly evident when analysing literary works devoted to the Russian-Ukrainian war. Novels such as *The Orphanage* and *Dotsia* allow students to understand contemporary historical events not only through factual information but also through their artistic representation and ethical interpretation. Literature thereby becomes an effective means of cultivating empathy, moral reflection, civic engagement, and awareness of national cultural continuity.

The interdisciplinary character of the proposed system further enhances its practical value. Since ethnocultural codes integrate literary, cultural, historical, linguistic, philosophical, and educational dimensions, the model may be employed not only in literary education but also in interdisciplinary humanities courses devoted to Ukrainian studies, cultural studies, memory studies, and civic education. Nevertheless, certain limitations of the present research should be acknowledged. The analysed corpus includes only selected prose works and one historical novel in verse that represent the principal tendencies of contemporary Ukrainian literature. Consequently, the proposed model should not be regarded as exhaustive or universally applicable to all literary genres. Additional research involving poetry, drama, documentary prose, essays, and children's literature may reveal new ethnocultural codes or alternative patterns of their interaction.

Furthermore, ethnocultural codes remain dynamic cultural structures whose semantic organization changes in response to historical circumstances

and social transformations. Contemporary Ukrainian literature increasingly incorporates digital, media, and visual forms of cultural communication, suggesting that future studies may identify additional components that complement the present model. Future research may also focus on comparative analyses of ethnocultural codes in Ukrainian and other European literatures, investigations into the transformation of cultural memory during wartime, and the development of didactic methodologies based on the proposed system. Such interdisciplinary perspectives may significantly expand current understanding of the relationships among literature, memory, education, and national identity.

Overall, the findings confirm that ethnocultural codes constitute a coherent artistic and cultural system rather than a collection of independent symbolic elements. Their interaction provides the structural foundation through which contemporary Ukrainian literature preserves cultural continuity, reconstructs historical experience, and shapes national identity. The proposed model therefore contributes not only to literary theory but also to cultural studies and educational research, offering a comprehensive methodological framework for analysing literary texts as multidimensional cultural phenomena.

Thus, the study demonstrates that the interaction of ethnocultural codes represents one of the principal mechanisms through which contemporary Ukrainian literature performs its cultural, educational, and nation-building functions. This conclusion provides the conceptual basis for the final conclusions presented below.

Conclusions. The present study has demonstrated that ethnocultural codes constitute an integral, dynamic, and hierarchically organized system that serves as one of the principal mechanisms for representing cultural memory, historical experience, and national identity in contemporary Ukrainian literature. Unlike traditional approaches, which primarily interpret ethnocultural codes as individual symbolic or semiotic elements, the proposed model substantiates their functioning as interconnected structural components whose interaction generates a multidimensional artistic space of cultural meanings.

The research confirms that the historical-memory code performs a system-forming function within the proposed model. It integrates linguistic, genealogical, spatial, civic-state, axiological, spiritual-religious, and mythopoetic codes into a coherent semantic structure, thereby ensuring the continuity of Ukrainian cultural memory and the artistic interpretation of historical experience. The interaction of these codes enables literary texts to transform historical facts into culturally significant narratives that contribute to the construction of national identity and collective historical consciousness.

The analysis of the selected literary works by Lina Kostenko, Oksana Zabuzhko, Maria Matios, Serhiy Zhadan, and Tamara Horikha Zernia has

shown that contemporary Ukrainian literature functions not only as an artistic reflection of historical reality but also as an active cultural mechanism for preserving, reinterpreting, and transmitting national memory. Through the interaction of ethnocultural codes, literary texts create a complex system of meanings that connects individual experience with collective history and national cultural tradition.

The study also confirms the considerable educational potential of the proposed model. The interpretation of literary works through the system of ethnocultural codes promotes a deeper understanding of cultural heritage, develops historical thinking, strengthens civic responsibility, and contributes to the formation of students' cultural competence, national identity, and value orientations. Consequently, the proposed framework may serve as an effective methodological instrument for teaching contemporary Ukrainian literature in both secondary and higher education.

The scientific novelty of the research lies in the development of a comprehensive theoretical model that conceptualizes ethnocultural codes as an open and dynamic system rather than as isolated textual phenomena. This approach expands current literary scholarship by integrating the perspectives of literary studies, cultural studies, memory studies, and educational research into a unified interpretative framework.

At the same time, the proposed model should not be regarded as exhaustive. Ethnocultural codes remain historically variable structures that evolve under the influence of social, political, and cultural transformations. Future research should therefore extend the corpus of analysed texts, include additional literary genres, investigate the transformation of ethnocultural codes in literature devoted to the Russian-Ukrainian war, and develop pedagogical methodologies for applying the proposed model in literary education.

Overall, the findings confirm that the system of ethnocultural codes represents a productive analytical framework for investigating the cultural functions of contemporary Ukrainian literature. Its interdisciplinary character opens new perspectives for further research at the intersection of literary studies, cultural memory, national identity, and education while reinforcing the role of literature as a significant factor in preserving cultural continuity and strengthening the spiritual resilience of Ukrainian society.

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