

Decolonization Processes in User-Generated Content on Ukrainian YouTube During the Russo-Ukrainian War

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.11649/sn.3542>

Olha Tkachenko

Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0777-7897>

e-mail: olha.tkachenko@ispan.edu.pl

Abstract

This article investigates the processes of cultural decolonization in the Ukrainian YouTube sphere, positioning user-generated content as a significant site of resistance against imperial epistemologies and colonial narratives. The study examines selected Ukrainian YouTube channels, categorized by audience size and subject matter. The analysis identifies decolonial codes, including the exposure of colonial knowledge systems, cultural reappropriation, and the critique of imperial cultural paradigms. The findings illustrate the role of digital media in the contemporary decolonial process in Ukrainian media and demonstrate the scale of its impact on epistemic sovereignty during the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war.

Keywords: YouTube; decolonization; identity; Ukraine; post-colonial studies; Russo-Ukrainian war; media

This work was supported by the grant "Decolonization processes in Ukraine's YouTube segment after February 24, 2022", from the National Science Centre, Poland, under the programme Miniatura (2024/08/X/HS2/00066).

Competing interests: The author is one of the Editors-in-Charge of this volume and a member of the Editorial Team of the journal.

Publisher: Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits redistribution, commercial and non-commercial, provided that the article is properly cited. © The Author(s) 2025.

Introduction

Researching wartime Ukraine requires understanding the role of media and mass culture in identity construction, particularly in today's world, with its pervasive information flow. It also involves examining principal messages concerning cultural and mental decolonization addressed to a broad audience. When the "United News Marathon"¹ on Ukrainian TV channels failed to meet the information needs of Ukrainians, they turned to YouTube, a unique platform which combines the features of television and social media. According to a survey conducted by the non-governmental organization OPORA (2024), since 2022, it has been the most popular social media platform after Telegram – 59.5% of Ukrainians get information about news and current events from YouTube. This means that it has become one of the most important opinion-forming media in Ukraine, particularly among the youth. In this paper, I am interested in YouTube as a site of participatory culture in the sense of bottom-up initiatives (Androutsopoulos, 2013), that is, in channels created by users, not the YouTube versions of the mainstream media.

Ukrainian media expert Oksana Moroz notes that 2021 marked a turning point: on socio-political YouTube channels, Ukrainian content began to replace previously dominant pro-Russian content.² The growth of YouTube's popularity was quite evident, and Ukrainian users supported financially their favourite channels. In 2021, more than 12,000 Ukrainians supported 50 top channels via Patreon, contributing over 2.3 million hryvnias per month. The videos on these channels had up to 70 million views every month (Moroz, 2021).

This article proposes an analysis of Ukrainian YouTube content through the lens of decolonial studies. The paper begins with a brief outline of the theoretical background of post-colonial and decolonial studies, situating them within Ukrainian studies and the contemporary social and political realm. The following section presents the methods of data gathering and sampling applied in the study, including quantitative indicators and statistics of selected channels according to the number of subscribers and views. The qualitative part presents an in-depth analysis of the content of selected videos, conducted using a code framework developed to capture the broader decolonial discourse they convey. Qualitative and quantitative methods allow to estimate, in complex ways, the popularity of such content among users and the scale of its significance in contemporary Ukraine.

1 The United News Marathon (also called the Telemarathon) – a continuous 24/7 news broadcast that was launched after Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. It is a joint telethon (news broadcast) by multiple Ukrainian TV channels (public and private) to provide continuous updates, official news, alerts (e.g. air raid warnings), analyses, etc.

2 See the research conducted by the initiative "How not to become a vegetable" and digital media agency beTrue Media (*Doslidzhennia ukrains'koho suspil'no-politychnoho YouTube*, 2021).

An Outline of Decolonial Studies in the Ukrainian Context

The word “decolonization” is ubiquitous not only among scholars but also in Ukrainian media, public sphere, and society in general. Ashcroft et al. (2007) explain that decolonization is a process “of revealing and dismantling colonialist power in all its forms. This includes dismantling the hidden aspects of those institutional and cultural forces that had maintained the colonialist power and that remain even after political independence is achieved” (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p. 56). The processes in question, which take place in certain societies, are the focus of decolonial studies, where decolonization is approached not just as political and economic change, but also as a cultural shift that encourages abandoning norms established in the colonial period and rethinking art and cultural heritage in Latin America (Quintero et al., 2019), Asia, and Africa (Betts, 2012). Similarly to post-colonial studies, decolonial studies have also been adopted in the case of other regions, including Central-Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet space. Decolonial research has become more and more popular in Ukrainian studies, especially following the Russian full-scale invasion (Betlii, 2022; Demchuk & Levchenko, 2024; Korablyova, 2023; Kushnir, 2024).

However, adopting a decolonial perspective would not have been possible without first inscribing the Ukrainian context in a post-colonial one. Literary and cultural studies scholars, political scientists, and historians have applied postcolonial analysis in the study of various cultural processes, interpreting Russian domination in Ukraine and over Ukrainian culture as a relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. After Ukraine gained independence, research adopting a post-colonial perspective primarily focused on the ambiguities surrounding national identity formation (e.g. Riabchuk, 2000, 2012), hybridity, and conflict of memories (Törnquist-Plewa & Yurchuk, 2017). It also emphasized an anti-colonial response, which is especially evident in research on Ukrainian art (Demchuk & Levchenko, 2024; Shkandrij, 2019) and literature (Hundorova, 2013; Shkandrij, 2001).

In media studies, decolonial approach has been used intensively in the context of rethinking the main media theories, such as framing theory and agenda-setting theory (Mohammed, 2022). Some researchers emphasize the anti-Westernization of the media and the introduction of decolonial pluralism in non-Western states (Moyo, 2020). Such examples could be found in African studies, with their call for the rethinking of “the ‘legacies’ of colonization by paying attention to what media content on TV, radio, print, and digital media is viewed as valid and what media is not” (Mohammed, 2022, p. 9), or in the studies of indigenous cultures of North America as “empowering articulations of identity that resist coloniality” (Crandall, 2023, p. 3). In the Ukrainian context, decolonization of the media also concerns the above-mentioned points: rethinking the agenda (what is covered) and framing (how it is covered).

Before the full-scale war, Ukrainian YouTube did not receive much academic interest; the few studies from that period focus on issues such as user interaction concerning memory practices (Makhortykh, 2019, 2020). However, the Russian invasion has increased the interest of Ukrainian scholars in the decolonial process in the media, including YouTube, especially regarding the language shift from Russian to Ukrainian as an act of cultural resistance during the ongoing war (Burdin, 2023; Lytvynenko, 2023). The role of language is also emphasized in African studies – Fatima Mohammed stresses that, in the process of colonization, the English language was the main element in hegemonizing African media (Mohammed, 2022, p. 9). The situation in Ukraine clearly shows some parallels. Although, as noted above, Ukraine’s socio-political YouTube in 2021 started to replace pro-Russian content, the overall linguistic landscape was striking: before 2022, only 5% of all videos on Ukrainian YouTube were in Ukrainian. It was only in 2023 that this share rose to 45% of all content produced on YouTube in Ukraine (Stukanov, 2023). Nevertheless, the list of the most popular YouTube channels with “Ukraine” listed as a country of production is still dominated by entertainment channels in Russian (see Table 1).

Table 1. Top ten most popular YouTube channels with the country of production listed as Ukraine. Source: <https://socialblade.com/youtube/top/country/ua/mostsubscribed> (data from February 2025)

Rank	Grade	Username	Uploads	Subs	Lang	Video Views
1st	B+	 Познаватель	544	20.2M	RUS	10,592,810,075
2nd	A-	 Маша та Ведмідь	1,809	17.5M	UA	8,386,956,245
3rd	B	 Трум Трум	2,788	15.3M	RUS	7,432,694,507
4th	B+	 Lady Diana	1,453	14M	RUS	9,037,622,542
5th	B+	 DenLion TV	410	11.5M	ENG	3,688,310,806
6th	B	 Magic Five	591	10.9M	RUS/UA	1,976,263,997
7th	A-	 Натурал Альбертов	992	10.8M	RUS	9,788,309,531
8th	B+	 vanzai	341	10.3M	RUS	2,713,443,203
9th	B+	 OneDayAlex	271	9.18M	ENG/RUS	2,686,798,279
10th	B	 TheBrainDit	9,282	8.33M	RUS	3,198,450,093

The media's shift from Russian to Ukrainian can be read as an act of abrogation, in the sense proposed by postcolonial theory. Abrogation means a refusal to support the dominant status of the language of the colonizer, as well as disagreement with the mainstream imperial epistemology, which status quo has been reinforced among others through the imposition and dominance of the colonizer's language (*Ukrainian Decolonial Glossary*; Kiss et al., n.d.).³

In Ukraine, the process of abrogation, especially in media and popular culture, was fostered by factors such as the so-called Language Law of 2019⁴ and the earlier decommunization process, which not only strengthened the position of the Ukrainian language in mass media but also reoriented Ukrainian mass culture from pro-Russian to pro-Ukrainian sentiment. Therefore, de-Russification of Ukrainian mass media and popular culture as part of abrogation could be regarded as an act of decolonization. Tatiana Zhurzhenko observes that Russian cultural imperialism, regarded as the legacy of the USSR, and the dominance of Russian popular culture in Ukraine long after gaining political independence, could be approached in terms of post-colonial studies (Zhurzhenko, 2021, p. 1446). Therefore, drawing on Ashcroft et al. (2007), revealing hidden colonial messages and refusing Russian-oriented cultural products (including those of mass culture) and dismantling them is seen as decolonization. In the context of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war, which started over a decade ago, everyday choices of people as consumers of cultural products benefit one or the other side of the conflict.

I will add the consumption of mass culture as another important 'front': by making everyday choices to buy (or not to buy) a book, to watch a Ukrainian film instead of a Russian one, or to boycott an artist who supported the annexation of Crimea, the Ukrainian public was broadly involved in the culture war forged by elites. (Zhurzhenko, 2021, p. 1445)

As can be seen in this quotation, in her 2021 article Zhurzhenko writes about boycotting Russian cultural figures who supported the annexation of Crimea. Today, during the full-scale war, as a result of the process of decolonization, the boycott of Russian culture in Ukraine has expanded and includes the entire cultural sphere with Russian narratives.

Decolonial Content on Ukrainian YouTube: Data Gathering and Sampling

To select the channels for analysis, I used the rankings of Ukrainian-speaking YouTube channels from the website Manifest.in.ua (*Manifest – reïtynh iutub-kanaliv ukraïns'koiu*, n.d.) and non-probability sampling. The number of subscribers was not decisive in the selection process. I scanned the channels listed there, starting from those with 10,000 subscribers

³ *Ukrainian Decolonial Glossary* (n.d.) is an online resource created by Ukrainian scholars to explain how postcolonial and decolonial studies relate to the Ukrainian context.

⁴ Law of Ukraine "On protecting the functioning of the Ukrainian language as the state language" (*Zakon Ukraïny "Pro zabezpechennia funktsionuvannia ukraïns'koï movy yak derzhavnoi"*, 2019).

and going up – to the most popular ones, with 4 million subscribers. I reviewed all the channels in this range and excluded those that did not match the decolonial codes developed for the analysis, which are described further below. I also excluded YouTube versions of public and private media outlets, as well as channels targeting age-specific or practically-minded audiences – such as children’s channels and ones devoted to topics like cooking (with exceptions), cars, crafting, knitting, or legal issues. Those channels are very niche and tend to offer broadly understood “how-to” content, or they belong to a distinct category that requires a separate analysis (e.g. children’s channels). However, I included levhen Klopotenko’s cooking channel because his videos present not only recipes but also broader narratives, such as the history and reappropriation of Ukrainian food culture and tradition.

I began to select material for analysis in April 2024; therefore, the quantitative indicators (the number of subscribers and views) are from that period; they are compared to March 2025 to trace the user dynamics. New channels that were started between April 2024 and March 2025 were not included. The analysed content comes from between February 2021 and April 2023. This time period was selected to capture the situation in the Ukrainian YouTube segment before the Russian invasion and in the first year of the full-scale war. As noted above, 2021 was a pivotal year for Ukrainian YouTube: socio-political content began to dominate over pro-Russian outlets. Then I conducted an in-depth qualitative analysis according to the codes (see Figure 1).

In total, I analysed 46 YouTube channels. I classified them into four groups depending on the number of subscribers, which allowed me to systematize and categorize the data for further investigation, and to estimate the significance and popularity of such content among users:

- (1) fewer than 100,000 subscribers:

Table 2. Number of subscribers and total views. Group 1. Data from March 2025

Channel	Subscribers	Total number of views
Bromance podcast	30,100	1,782,876
Na poshuky hramoty!	32,000	827,653
Asymetriia	38,800	2,968,672
Kult: Podcast	39,200	1,182,030
Shaleni avtor(k)y	41,800	1,475,880
TA	48,400	4,383,304
Vaibi	71,000	5,270,786
Kokhanets’ Klio	78,400	7,498,778
larema Dukh	90,400	10,005,340

(2) from 100,000 to 300,000 subscribers:

Table 3. Number of subscribers and total views. Group 2. Data from March 2025

Channel	Subscribers	Total number of views
AdrianZP	106,000	7,986,150
Bezlad Andriia Spivaka	106,000	9,672,240
Ideia Oleksandrivna	143,000	6,664,321
Bezodnya Music	145,000	23,245,662
STAND UP Battle Club	146,000	46,535,705
Palaie	155,000	17,212,109
Tse Nikhto Ne Bude Dyvytys'	160,000	13,293,845
UkrYutiubProiekt	167,000	18,656,576
Kul'turtryher	173,000	13,320,072
Tvoia Pidpil'na Humanitarka	176,000	7,735,687
Solov'iine shou	184,000	25,050,147
Grunt	212,000	47,563,500
Rozmova	220,000	48,521,292
Ragulivna	228,000	67,331,205
Pidpil'nyi Stendap	243,000	68,655,965
Nina - Ukraina	245,000	42,330,025
Roma Henii	247,000	13,264,839
Shoubisyky	280,000	64,352,018

(3) from 300,000 to 500,000 subscribers:

Table 4. Number of subscribers and total views. Group 3. Data from March 2025

Channel	Subscribers	Total number of views
Chotki Novyny	363,000	28,240,062
Samokhvalov	363,000	59,796,631
Geek Journal	365,000	46,329,612
Ukrainer	372,000	52,237,217
Kolegi Studio!	436,000	97,957,022
Oleksandr Alf'orov	482,000	102,988,367
Ievhen Klopotenko	490,000	44,587,579

(4) more than 500,000 subscribers:

Table 5. Number of subscribers and total views. Group 4. Data from March 2025

Channel	Subscribers	Total number of views
WAS: Populiarna istoriia	558,000	80,332,579
Serhii Prytula	653,000	92,920,635
Real'na istoriia	696,000	69,103,710
Zahin Kinomaniv	702,000	78,065,466
Zupyny Losia	768,000	271,169,082
Vitalii Portnikov	862,000	338,033,579
Istoriia bez Mifiv	896,000	176,943,541
Telebachennia Toronto	941,000	323,044,353
imeni T. H. Shevchenka	973,000	119,650,577
Ianina Sokolova	1,330,000	363,978,144
Sternenko	2,050,000	1,083,586,908
Chotkyi Patsa	4,420,000	806,233,297

As can be seen in Tables 2–5 the total number of views does not correspond to the number of subscribers. The former is much higher than the latter, which demonstrates considerable interest in such decolonial content. Table 6 presents the number of subscribers in April 2024 and March 2025. The figures, except few cases, show that this kind of content gained popularity.

Table 6. Number of subscribers in 2024 and 2025

Channel	Subscribers April 2024	Subscribers March 2025
Bromance podcast	18,300	30,100
Na poshuky hramoty!	32,100	32,000
Asymetriia	30,800	38,800
Kult: Podcast	28,600	39,200
Shaleni avtor(k)y	29,300	41,800
TA	50,000	48,400
Vaibi	50,200	71,000
Kokhanets' Klio	39,200	78,400
Iarema Dukh	63,100	90,400
AdrianZP	103,000	106,000
Bezlاد Andriia Spivaka	92,900	106,000

Channel	Subscribers April 2024	Subscribers March 2025
Ideia Oleksandrivna	136,000	143,000
Bezodnya Music	131,000	145,000
STAND UP Battle Club	132,000	146,000
Palaie	148,000	155,000
Tse Nikhto Ne Bude Dyvytys'	105,000	160,000
UkrYutiubProiekt	157,000	167,000
Kul'turtryher	152,000	173,000
Tvoia Pidpil'na Humanitarka	173,000	176,000
Solov'iine shou	192,000	184,000
Grunt	164,000	212,000
Rozmovia	214,000	220,000
Ragulivna	217,000	228,000
Pidpil'nyi Stendap	226,000	243,000
Nina – Ukraina	242,000	245,000
Roma Henii	225,000	247,000
Shoubisyky	238,000	280,000
Chotki Novyny	374,000	363,000
Samokhvalov	339,000	363,000
Geek Journal	364,000	365,000
Ukrainer	365,000	372,000
Kolegi Studio!	426,000	436,000
Oleksandr Alf'orov	432,000	482,000
Ievhen Klopotenko	449,000	490,000
WAS: Populiarna istoriia	450,000	558,000
Serhii Prytula	654,000	653,000
Real'na istoriia	495,000	696,000
Zahin Kinomaniv	673,000	702,000
Zupyny Losia	626,000	768,000
Vitalii Portnikov	581,000	862,000
Istoriia bez Mifiv	828,000	896,000
Telebachennia Toronto	916,000	941,000
imeni T. H. Shevchenka	933,000	973,000
Ianina Sokolova	1,060,000	1,330,000
Sternenko	1,910,000	2,050,000
Chotkyi Patsa	4,470,000	4,420,000

When I analysed the decolonization processes on Ukrainian YouTube, I found that pop culture and mass media, particularly TV, are frequently cited as sources producing imperial narratives about Ukraine, creating a common mental space, and blurring cultural boundaries. In my analysis, I use decolonial codes, which are presented in Figure 1. The most popular one is “Revealing epistemological crimes of the empire”, which appears on 33 channels, followed by “Popularization of knowledge about Ukrainian culture” (32); “Revealing ‘Little Russianism’ and the blurring of cultural boundaries” (20); “Refuting the myth of great Russian culture” (14); “Unmasking ‘good Russians’” (11); “‘Away from Moscow’ in culture” (10); “Revealing anti-Ukrainian aspects of Russian culture” (9); “Reclaiming Ukrainian artists” (7); “Humour and ridiculing the colonizer” (6).

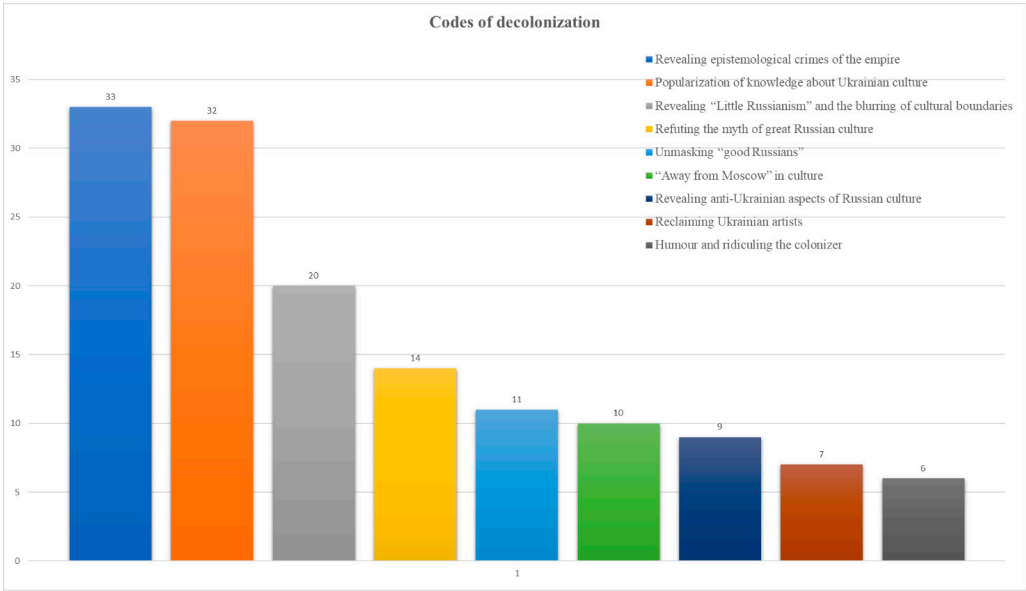


Fig. 1. Popularity of decolonial codes on Ukrainian YouTube

The study material comes from original channels which are run independently of other media and vary in terms of subject matter – from strictly historical, cultural or dealing with the issue of Ukrainian identity, through entertainment and show business channels, to popular science channels. I examined each channel based on the tags and titles of the videos and coded them according to the decolonial codes developed for this purpose. Then, for in-depth critical discourse analysis for this paper, I selected, using non-probability sampling, the most illustrative examples. The content analysis presented below adopts the description, interpretation, and explanation approach of Norman Fairclough’s model of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2001; Tkachenko, 2022), with elements of multimodal analysis (Kress, 2013; Maćkiewicz, 2017). I also draw on the analysis of narratives (Johnstone, 2001; Ochs, 1997) and actors and agencies in the produced content (van Leeuwen, 1996).

Results: Presentation of the Codes

1. Revealing Epistemological Crimes of the Empire

The most popular code is one called “Revealing epistemological crimes of the empire”, which appears on 33 channels. This code refers to the deconstruction of the previous colonial tradition of knowledge production, which imposed imperial discourses and imagination about the colonized, and distorted images of the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer. The YouTubers explain the coloniality of knowledge, reveal and deconstruct hidden aspects of the imperial image of Russian culture, and try to dismantle propaganda.

As an example of the code, I present the channel Na poshuky hramoty! [In Search of the Letter!]⁵ and the video entitled “Taras Bul’ba abo vsi konyky potrapliaiut’ do raiu” [Taras Bulba, or All Horses Go to Paradise], from 16 August 2021, that is, from the period before the full-scale war (Na poshuky hramoty!, 2021). The video offers an analysis of the 2009 Russian film *Taras Bulba*, directed by Vladimir Bortko, an adaptation of Mykola Hohol’s novel of the same title. The plot describes Zaporizhian Cossacks of the seventeenth century and their war with the Polish nobility. The main characters are Cossack colonel Taras Bulba and his two sons, Ostap and Andrii.

The author of the video deconstructs Bortko’s film as an artifact of colonialism and demonstrates the coloniality of knowledge produced by contemporary Russian mass culture. She shows the mechanisms of how the entire plot cultivates the myth of Ukraine and Russia as one nation, confirming the Russian propaganda about Ukraine as a fake state, divided into East and West and dependent on Russia. The aim of the video is to reveal and dismantle the propaganda of Russian imperialism and cultural and political hegemony. The author underlines that the Ukrainian Cossacks in the film repeatedly say that they are dying “for the Russian land”,⁶ which means that they were not fighting to establish their own Ukrainian state, and which implies that Ukraine and Russia are one country, again conforming to the imperial myth about Ukrainians and Russians being one nation.

The author analyses the film in complex ways and emphasizes Bortko’s anti-Ukrainian attitudes and his support of the Russian invasion. In 2014, the film was banned in Ukraine due to its harmful and propagandistic content. As it was put by the Ukrainian State Film Agency, “The film *Taras Bulba* distorts historical events, falsifies and discredits Ukrainian national ideas,

5 The name of the channel makes a reference to the classic of Ukrainian cinema *Propala hramota* [The Lost Letter] (1972), based on the short story by Mykola Hohol “Propavshaia gramota (Byl’, rasskazannaia d’iakom ***skoï tserkvi)” [The Lost Letter: A Tale Told by the Sexton of the N...Church] (an English translation appeared as “The Lost Letter”) from his collection *Vechera na khutore bliz Dikan’ki* (Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka).

6 “Za zemliu russkuiu”; not to be confused with the adjective from *Rus’*. In this film, the word *russkii* refers to Russia, not *Rus’*.

is anti-Ukrainian, and questions the very existence of Ukrainian people” (*Derzhkino vidmovylo u vydachi prokatnykh posvidchen' shche chotyri'om rosiis'kym fil'mam*, 2014). The Agency also stressed that Bortko had made a film adaptation of the second version of Hohol's novel, which is pro-Russian and was written by order of the imperial authorities. The first version was considered “too Ukrainophile”, so he was requested to rewrite it and make it more pro-Russian and pro-imperial. The author of the channel *Na poshuky hramoty!* also mentions this fact and explains how Hohol was made to create a version more aligned with imperial narratives. Russian literary critics rejected the first version, but praised the second, which has gained widespread recognition and is popular to this day, including in Ukraine.

This example demonstrates how the Russian Empire's hegemonic power engendered epistemic injustice and enforced the production of imperial knowledge, where Ukraine was portrayed as a failed state without a history or a unique national identity. Furthermore, contemporary products of popular culture, such as this film based on Hohol's novel, perpetuate the colonial gaze on Ukraine.

2. Popularization of Knowledge about Ukrainian Culture

The second code is “Popularization of knowledge about Ukrainian culture”, which appears on 32 analysed channels. This code is present in the videos aiming to raise awareness of Ukrainian identity, which was for a long time dominated and obscured by the colonizer. Popularization of knowledge about the culture of a colonized nation is inscribed in certain categories of decolonial vocabulary. The first one involves challenging imperial knowledge, which historically portrayed the colonized as lacking genuine culture or presented a biased view of their culture and language. In the case of Ukraine, it was a Russian narrative which diminished Ukrainian culture to the category of primitive, quasi-folk one, so-called *sharovarshchyna*,⁷ whereby Ukrainian folklore was presented as outdated and backward (Pavlyshyn, 2006). Moreover, the Russian Empire, while forbidding the Ukrainian language, maintained that this language had never existed (Dems'ka, 2023). In Soviet times, Russian propaganda claimed that Ukrainian could only be used for singing folk songs and was unsuitable for high culture or for science. Joanna Getka observes that spreading awareness of Ukrainian culture is part of decolonization, as it involves “disarming Russian cultural myths” and “reinterpreting the cultural heritage of the nations of Central-Eastern Europe, studied in the perspective of *longue durée*” (Getka, 2024, p. 177).

The next category of decolonial vocabulary in the context of popularization of one's own culture is *epistemic injustice* (Fricker, 2017; Langton, 2010), or, to be more precise, counteracting epistemic injustice. As originally proposed by Miranda Fricker, epistemic injustice is a phenomenon where a person is not trusted because of some external biases, or where a person, because of their subaltern status, does not have the resources to express the knowledge they

⁷ The term *sharovarshchyna* derives from *sharovary*, the name of wide, coloured trousers worn by the Cossacks.

possess, or access to goods or channels to obtain and disseminate knowledge (Acey et al., 2021; Fricker, 2017). Considering how epistemic injustice refers to the Ukrainian context, the authors of *Ukrainian Decolonial Glossary* explain that under the Soviet regime “Ukrainian humanities found themselves in the situation of a credibility deficit. Such consistent policies resulted in a total depreciation of knowledge and experience based on political bias, which is a clear sign of injustice, when trust in the speaker is undermined by prejudice” (Popil, n.d.).

There are many Ukrainian YouTube channels popularizing Ukrainian art, music, literature, cinema, and cultural peculiarities of the regions. For example, the channel Ukraïner presents Ukraine as a multicultural country with different ethnic groups; Tvoia Pidpil’na Humanitarka offers engaging and accessible content on the history of Ukrainian language, literature, mythology, etc.; Ideia Oleksandrivna focuses on the linguistic peculiarities of Ukrainian regions and their dialects. There are also channels popularizing Ukrainian literature (e.g. Shaleni avtor(k)y), art (e.g. Kul’turtryher), and philosophy (e.g. Kult: Podcast), and a number of historical channels, such as Istoriia bez Mifiv, imeni T. H. Shevchenka, Oleksandr Alf’orov, Kokhanets’ Klio, Real’na istoriia, and WAS: Populiarna istoriia.

As an example, I would like to refer to the channel Geek Journal and the way it popularizes knowledge about Ukrainian culture. The author, who uses the pseudonym Tayler Anderson, mainly creates content about cinema, TV, and mass culture; apart from reviews of new Ukrainian films, he has produced a series exploring the history of Ukrainian cinema, animation, TV channels, and TV shows. In his videos, he not only extols the virtues of Ukrainian culture but also highlights its shortcomings and potential for improvement. He reveals its unknown aspects and shows how Ukrainian identity could be represented and positioned in mass cultural products. He popularizes Ukrainian actors and film directors, and contributes to the creation of Ukraine’s own “idols” and “stars”, something that the country did not really have even after independence because of Russian domination in pop culture. This can be seen in videos such as “Chym ukraïns’ke kino krashche za hollivuds’ke: Inkliuzyvnist’ v kinematohrafii” [Why Ukrainian Cinema is Better than Hollywood: Inclusivity in Cinema] (26 October 2021) or “Ukraïns’ki fil’mi 2022, iaki varto chekaty!” [Ukrainian Films 2022 That Are Worth Waiting For!] (30 January 2022) (Geek Journal, 2021, 2022). Considering that Ukrainian culture was largely absent from the mass media, the popularization of knowledge about it can be interpreted both as a decolonial assertion of Ukrainian subjectivity and as an attempt to distance Ukrainians from the former colonizer.

3. Revealing “Little Russianism” and the Blurring of Cultural Boundaries

The third code I am going to explain is one called “Revealing ‘Little Russianism’ and the blurring of cultural boundaries”, which appears on 20 analysed channels. This code plays a significant role in decolonial discourse – it is a challenge to the imperial concept that defines Ukrainians as “Little Russians” (*malorosy*), living in a shared cultural, spiritual, and mental

space with Russia. The content with this code refutes a major imperial myth about Ukraine and Russia as a single nation. This code also reveals the concept of "*kakaia raznitsa*", which is Russian for "what's the difference" and is used in the sense of "who cares" or "it doesn't matter". It is a common phrase used by defenders of the Russian language in Ukraine in the discussion about what language to speak (Sivak, 2024). Initially focused on language, the concept has come to refer to a much broader cultural context. The code in question also refers to the deconstruction of imperial knowledge and shows how blurring cultural boundaries and mimicry, especially in popular mass culture, created the imperial myths about one nation and brotherly nations (Kuzio, 2019; Riabchuk, 2017).

As an example, I present the YouTube channel Ragulivna. The channel's author, Tetiana Mykytenko, demonstrates how show business, pop culture, TV shows, films, comedy shows, and even religion, namely the Russian Orthodox Church, were the main sources of "Little Russianism" and the blurring of cultural boundaries between Russia and Ukraine. In almost every video, she talks about the harmful impact of Ukrainian show business, which is completely dominated by Russian money and the Russian language. Among others, Mykytenko has produced a cycle of videos entitled "Zoriani viiny" [Star Wars], with reference to a classic pop-culture saga about the fight between the empire and the subaltern. Talking about this idea, she calls her first video in the series "Episode IV: A New Hope" (as in the original *Star Wars*) (Ragulivna, 2022b). She shows how, right after gaining independence in the 1990s, Ukrainian show business and popular culture were noticeable, Ukrainian-speaking, and really gave new hope for development. She goes on to explain that this renaissance of pop culture was noticed by Russian media bosses, but initially probably by ideologists and propagandists of the Russian world (*ruskii mir*), and Ukrainian pop stars started to be tempted by a wider audience and bigger money. As she says, not only symbolically did the Ukrainian pop stage put on *kokoshnik* (Russian national headwear).⁸

As a result, mass culture, step by step, imposed imperial narratives about common cultural space – mental boundaries were blurred, and the myth of one nation was cultivated and shown on the screens. In the video "Zoriani viiny: Sestrynstvo z Bilorussiu i Rosiieiu, iakoho Ukraïna nikoly ne khotila" [Star Wars: The Sisterhood with Belarus and Russia That Ukraine Has Never Wanted] (21 July 2022), Mykytenko shows a clip from the 2009 edition of the Slavic Bazaar festival, held in Vitebsk, Belarus: three singers from Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia sing a song in Russian about three sisters who share a home. Her in-depth analysis of the song's narrative leads her to conclude that the myth of three brotherly nations is imposed even by seemingly non-political events such as the music festival in question (Ragulivna, 2022a).

Through her content, Mykytenko fosters critical thinking and helps the viewers to understand manipulation. She explains that, by blurring cultural boundaries and incorporating

⁸ It is a reference to Ukrainian pop star Olia Poliakova, who sang in Russian and used to wear a *kokoshnik* for her stage performances.

elements of Russian culture, mass culture has created a common cultural space with Russia, with common memories, including about the Soviet past. Mykytenko emphasizes that common mentality and common memories were constructed systematically and persistently in mass culture and show business by Russian propaganda: "The subject of sisterhood and the theme of brotherhood play and have always played a key role in Russian propaganda. In this way, we internalized the concepts of trust, endless love, and a sense of kinship. Cinema, media products, and songs, among others, drilled this into our minds" (Ragulivna, 2022a). She concludes that the only solution is to build strong cultural and language borders to get rid of "Little Russianism" and the imposed myth of brotherhood and one nation.

4. Refuting the Myth of Great Russian Culture

The next colonial narrative to unravel is the myth of great Russian culture, which is also present in the Ukrainian media sphere. "Great Russian culture" (*velikaia russkaia kul'tura*) is an imperial construct that was created over the centuries to popularize Russian hegemony among foreign audiences on the one hand, and, on the other, to humiliate cultures dominated by Russia (for example, Ukrainian) by referring to them as secondary and "little" in comparison. In an interview for *Ukraïns'ka Pravda*, Ukrainian literary scholar Vira Aheieva states that "the myth of [...] 'great Russian culture' is an imperial myth backed by big money"; she asks a question: "Have you ever heard of the 'great Polish culture' [...] or the 'great French culture'?" She also emphasizes that the Russian avant-garde art actually originated in Kyiv and Kharkiv (Romaniuk & Aheieva, 2023).

Back in 2012 Mykola Riabchuk disproved the myth concerning Russian history, which was deeply intertwined with the myth of "great Russian culture":

In a sense, Ukraine copes today with the consequences of a pernicious historical myth that, being internalized, heavily influenced Ukrainian identity and, being internationalized, heavily influenced the Western perception of both Ukraine and Russia. In brief, it is a myth of the "thousand-year-old Russian state", which in fact had neither been a "thousand-year-old" nor, actually, "Russian". Hardly any historical myth has ever made such a great international career in a garb of an indisputable historical "truth". No other myth was so broadly and uncritically accepted in academia, multiplied in mass media, and enshrined in mass consciousness and in popular discourse. (Riabchuk, 2012, pp. 440–441)

On Ukrainian YouTube, there are many channels that deconstruct and refute the myth of great Russian culture. In the material selected for analysis, this code appears in 14 cases. Ukrainian intellectuals continue to emphasize that the myth of great Russian culture remains deeply embedded in Western liberal thought and educational systems, to the extent that even open aggression and neo-colonial war have not significantly altered the prevailing fascination with and favourable perceptions of Russia in the West. This entails a lack of understanding in the West that Russian culture is also a weapon, while Russia physically

destroys Ukrainian culture and kills Ukrainian people of culture. As of 19 February 2025, UNESCO has verified damage to 485 sites since 24 February 2022 – 149 religious sites, 249 buildings of historical and/or artistic interest, 33 museums, 33 monuments, 18 libraries, 1 archive, and 2 archaeological sites.⁹

As an example of the code “Refuting the myth of great Russian culture”, I present the video entitled “Naïbil’shyi rosiï’s’kyi feïk: Shcho ne tak z ikhn’oiu kul’turoiu?” [The Biggest Russian Fake: What’s Wrong with Their Culture?] (23 June 2023) from the YouTube channel Palaie [It Burns] (Palaie, 2023). The authors of the channel, Iana Brenzei and Emma Antoniuk, start with an expert comment from Aheieva, already mentioned above, who states that Russia had neither Renaissance nor Baroque, that is, nothing that could inscribe its culture in the European context. Nevertheless, from the eighteenth century, the Russian Empire created the myth of great Russian culture and appropriated the heritage of the conquered nations. Aheieva goes on to explain that, for example, Ukrainian philosopher Hryhorii Skovoroda from Kharkiv was presented as Russian.

The authors of the channel explain and answer the question: “What is the nexus between Russian tanks and Russian literature?” One of the main answers is that admirers of Pushkin or Dostoyevsky maintain a positive image of Russia and its people, even despite Russian crimes. Another point is that even if Russian literature is not pro-imperialist, the empire uses it for its own needs and propaganda. Russia engages in the practice of so-called culture- or literature-washing to reject collective responsibility. Next in the video, Emma and Iana explain how – with the help of media, Soviet propaganda, and school education – Ukrainians were made to believe that their literature is poor and secondary, vernacular and peasant, and, on the other hand, Russian literature is noble, universal, and great.

An interesting concept in Russian literature is that of “little man” (“*malenkii chelovek*”). The authors of the channel explain that, in the nineteenth century, Russian literature created the image of “little men”, who are unable to resist the system and higher authorities. Although it is Hohol who is considered to have introduced the concept, the video provides an example of the story “Mumu” by Ivan Turgenev. The plot is that the mute servant named Gerasim cannot oppose his landlady, who orders him to kill a dog, Mumu, the only living soul who loves him and makes him happy. On the contrary, Ukrainian literature created mottos such as “Fight and you will win” (*Boritesia i poboryte*) by Taras Shevchenko or “No, I’m alive and I will live forever! I have something in my heart that cannot die” (*Ni, ia zhyva! Ia vichno budu zhyty! U sertsii maiu te, shcho ne vmyraie*) by Lesia Ukrainka.

In conclusion, talking about refuting the myth of great Russian culture, the authors present an expert comment from Ukrainian historian Iaroslav Hrytsak, who says that Russian literature failed the most important test to be great: it failed to educate the Russian nation not to “become barbarians, so it should be cancelled” (Palaie, 2023).

⁹ For more see *Damaged Cultural Sites in Ukraine Verified by UNESCO* (UNESCO, 2025).

5. Unmasking “Good Russians”

The term “good Russians” (*khorošie russkie*, sing. *khorošii russkii*) is used with reference to so-called Russian liberals or other Russian citizens who declare their anti-regime and anti-war stance. The code “Unmasking ‘good Russians’” appears on 11 of the analysed YouTube channels. The decolonial deconstruction of “good Russians” in the Ukrainian media sphere is caused firstly by the need to explain their imperial nature to Ukrainians themselves. Indeed, some Ukrainians, even after the full-scale invasion, praised and admired so-called Russian liberals or anti-regime Russians, supported them, and watched their media products; among those figures are YouTubers Iurii Dud’ and Ksenia Sobchak.

Ukrainian YouTubers critically reflect on the narratives produced by allegedly anti-regime Russians, arguing that these actors often continue to reproduce imperial narratives. Despite their declared opposition to the Kremlin, such figures tend to minimize the collective responsibility of Russian citizens for the genocidal war against Ukraine. Ukrainian creators emphasize that “good Russians” frequently frame the conflict as the result of Vladimir Putin’s personal actions, thereby dissociating Russian society from the war, and persuade Western audiences to reject the idea of collective responsibility. Ukrainian commentators emphasize potentially harmful narratives produced by the “good Russians” in the West. Therefore, deconstruction of “good Russians” stems also from the need to limit their international influence.

As an example, I would like to present the video entitled “Znyshchyty Ukraïnu v dobromu sensi: Shcho ne tak z Latyninoiu, Varlamovym, Shul’man, Bykovym” [Destroy Ukraine in a Good Sense: What Is Wrong with Latynina, Varlamov, Shulman, and Bykov?] from the YouTube channel Telebachennia Toronto [Toronto TV]; the content explains the anti-Ukrainian and pro-imperialist narrative of Russian liberals who are well known in the West (Telebachennia Toronto, 2022).

In the video, evidence of the imperialist and anti-Ukrainian stance of so-called Russian liberals, or “good Russians”, comes from the interviews they gave and their own writings. The video opens with a clip from Iurii Dud’'s interview with Russian “liberal” journalist Nikolai Solodnikov. Dud’ asks Solodnikov what he thinks about the well-known Ukrainophobic poem by Brodsky “Na nezavisimost’ Ukraïny” [On the Independence of Ukraine]. Solodnikov answers that the poem is very understandable; everything is clear there; it has an imperial vibe, but “in a good sense”. The presenter comments as follows:

Genocide, chauvinism, colonialism, Nazism, and imperialism – but in a good sense of these words. The collective West continues to search for “good Russians”. Even now, people refer to Russia’s war against Ukraine as “Putin’s war”. This implies that the genocide of Ukrainians is solely the fault of the vicious dictator, with no involvement from other Russians. The West naively believes that if fashionable Navalny were to lead Russia, we would be sent flowers, not [attacked with] cluster munitions. (Telebachennia Toronto, 2022)

The video unmasks “good Russians” by showing that their narratives coincide with official Russian state propaganda. Telebachennia Toronto provides exact quotations from public statements and articles by Russian liberals where they transmit imperialist narratives. Hence, apart from the informative function, the decolonial aspect of YouTube videos about unmasking “good Russians” consists in breaking the ingrained feeling of paternalism of the “master” and trust in the “wiser” and “helpful” lord, constructed by the colonizer.

6. “Away from Moscow” in Culture

This code appears on 10 of the analysed channels; the phrasing makes a reference to the slogan “Away from Moscow”, originally used in the Ukrainian literary debate of the 1920s and often attributed to Mykola Khvylovyi, one of the leading figures of the “Executed Renaissance”.¹⁰ In his pamphlets, he advocated the non-Moscow-oriented, European path of development of Ukrainian culture (Pavlychko, 2002, pp. 204–205).

The Russian colonial view is that there is no separate Ukrainian culture which would develop and function independently, without Russian influences. Colonial narratives claim that Ukrainian culture is primarily local, peasant, and dependent on Russian cultural trends. According to my research of Ukrainian YouTube, the code “Away from Moscow” appears in videos about the development of Ukrainian culture separately from Russia and in line with European trends and cultural traditions. As an example, I present content from the channel Shaleni avtor(k)y [Crazy (Women) Authors], run by professors of Kyiv Mohyla Academy Rostyslav Semkiv and Vira Aheieva. Although it is not the most popular channel on Ukrainian YouTube (see Table 2), their videos are very valuable in the decolonial process in Ukrainian media.

The code “‘Away from Moscow’ in culture” appears in the videos where the authors of the channel talk about Ukrainian culture as a part of European tradition. This can be seen in videos such as “Lesia Ukraïнка, feminizm i ‘osoruzhna Moskva’” [Lesia Ukrainka, Feminism, and “Disgusting Moscow”] (29 December 2021); “Mariia Bashkyrtseva: Ikona stylu u vyshyvantsi” [Mariia Bashkyrtseva (Marie Bashkirtseff): A Style Icon in a vyshyvanka Blouse] (26 January 2022); “‘Marsiany na Khreshchatyku’: Istorii kyïvs’koho renesansu” [Martians on Khreshchatyk: Stories of the Kyiv Renaissance] (15 February 2023); and “Chomu samohubstvo Khvylovoho stalo trahediïeu tsiloho pokolinnia?” [Why Did Khvylovyi’s Suicide Become a Tragedy for an Entire Generation?] (10 May 2023).

10 The term “Executed Renaissance” (*Rozstriliane vidrodzhennia*), first used in 1958 by Polish émigré intellectual Jerzy Giedroyc, refers to Ukrainian cultural figures of the 1920s who were executed by the Soviets in the 1930s. Solomiia Pavlychko writes that this term “does not represent the phenomenon of Ukrainian literature of the first post-revolutionary decade; it only records the fact of an unprecedented outbreak of creative activity of Ukrainian writers and the Bolshevik massacre” (Pavlychko, 2002, p. 175).

As an example of the code, I present the video “Lesia Ukrainka, Feminism, and ‘Disgusting Moscow’”¹¹ (29 December 2021), where Aheieva and Semkiv discuss Ukrainka’s historical drama-poem *Boiarynia (Her Excellency)* (1910) (Shaleni avtor(k)y, 2021). It is a story of Oksana, a young woman who marries Stepan, a Cossack nobleman who has become a boyar in the service of Muscovy. Oksana moves with him to Moscow, where she discovers that it has a completely different culture. She cannot stand the autocratic city, which suppresses her identity as a Ukrainian and as a woman. The drama shows the pain of her inner struggle for personal and national freedom. By contrast, preservation of freedom is not something that preoccupies Stepan: he is more concerned about saving his position at the imperial court.

Aheieva and Semkiv start their video with the information that *Boiarynia* was banned in Soviet times; it was not included in any of the Soviet collections of Lesia Ukrainka’s works. Aheieva emphasizes that, at some point in the text, the protagonist voices her contempt for Russian culture: “She [Oksana] states, ‘This Moscow has grown sickening to me.’” The scholar comments on this as follows:

[Lesia Ukrainka] was aware of the fact that “Rome went to school in Greece”, and she was conscious of the cultural superiority of Ukraine over Russia. Well, Russia is an empire. What is unique about Russia as an empire is that it captured culturally superior peoples, Ukrainians and Poles, in the West. (Shaleni avtor(k)y, 2021)

Aheieva goes on to explain that Ukrainka saw that superiority first and foremost in the attitude towards women in society, because the situation of women in Ukraine was much better.

In a video devoted to Lesia Ukrainka, Shaleni avtor(k)y position Ukrainian culture within the broader European context by emphasizing that Ukrainka addressed highly progressive issues related to women’s rights at the beginning of the twentieth century – a period when the suffragist movement was gaining visibility across Europe but remained largely absent in the Russian Empire. “And this is what makes us distinct from Russians,” says Aheieva, implying different contexts of Russian and Ukrainian societies. All female protagonists of Ukrainka’s writings are strong women who do not want to be the “second sex” (Shaleni avtor(k)y, 2021).

In general, the code “‘Away from Moscow’ in culture” appears in content that presents Ukrainian high culture as independent from Russia and unique, and one that has followed the European path of development.

¹¹ Here is my translation. The phrase originally comes from Lesia Ukrainka’s drama-poem *Boiarynia* (1910): “Ta i osoruzhyla zh sia meni Moskva!” English translation of this line by Vera Rich is as follows: “This Moscow has grown sickening to me” (*Her Excellency: A Dramatic Poem in Five Acts*, by Lesia Ukrainka, trans. Vera Rich; Ukrainka, 1992, p. 28).

7. Revealing Anti-Ukrainian Aspects of Russian Culture

This code features on nine of the analysed channels, where it is intertwined with “Refuting the myth of great Russian culture”. While the latter concerns mainly Russian culture itself rather than its relationships with other nations, the code “Revealing anti-Ukrainian aspects of Russian culture” refers to the videos where Ukrainian YouTubers discuss how Ukraine is presented in Russian cultural products.

Under this code, I analysed YouTube videos about both Russian culture in a historical perspective and present-day Russian cultural products, including those of mass culture – TV, cinema, music, and show business. The videos in question include “Chomu rosiis’ka ku’tura – tse zbroia?” [Why Russian Culture is a Weapon] (Ukrainian); “Rosiiis’ka ku’tura iak chastyna hibrydnoi viiny” [Russian Culture as a Part of Hybrid War] (Ukrainian); “Ukraïna v rosiis’kykh fil’makh! Istoriia promyvannia mizkiv narodu” [Ukraine in Russian Films: A Story of Brainwashing] (Zahin Kinomaniv); and “Bulhakov: Impers’ka liubov do Kyieva, nasmishky z ukraiins’koï movy ta ‘Bila hvardiia” [Bulgakov: Imperial Love to Kyiv, Making Fun of Ukrainian Language and *The White Guard*] (Telebachennia Toronto).

As an example, I would like to discuss the video entitled “Ukraine in Russian Films: A Story of Brainwashing” from the channel Zahin Kinomaniv [Cinema Squad] (30 March 2022). The author, Vitalii Hordiienko, starts his analysis of several Russian films by saying that he wants to show “how Russia over the years nurtured hate towards Ukrainians to the crazy high level. They craftily coded the mentality of their nation with the help of art and, at the same time, imposed an inferiority complex on us, because all this shit was shown on our TV channels and in our cinemas” (Zahin Kinomaniv, 2022).

He emphasizes that long before the annexation of Crimea, Russian films conveyed the idea that it should be “taken back”, and “the one who will do it will be a hero, because Crimea is ‘iskonno nash’ [Rus. ‘natively ours’]” (film *Brat 2* [Brother 2]) or “was ours”, and even children know it (TV series *Esli zavtra v pokhod* [If Tomorrow We March], 2004). He also notes that almost every Russian film from the 1990s praises Russian armed forces. As he says, these productions played a key role in the justification of Russian military campaigns (the wars in Chechnya and Georgia served as notable examples) and nurtured trust in the Russian army not only in Russia but also in the entire post-Soviet cultural space, including Ukraine, where they were shown on TV and in cinemas.

Another aspect in focus is the portrayal of Ukrainians. They are shown as stupid arrogant cowards (e.g. film *Kandahar*, 2010). They are always in an inferior position and are badly treated by Russians; they are presented in the worst possible light, as in a scene from the film *9 rota* [9th Company] (2005), where the Ukrainian and the Georgian throw insults at each other. As can be seen, then, in Russian films, not only Ukrainians but also other nations are humiliated and their image is distorted. As pictured, Ukrainians are

embarrassed about being called Ukrainian, and they hide their true identity pretending to be Russians. Hordiienko provides as an example a scene from the 2004 film *72 metry* [72 Metres]: "Listen, you, Chernenko, aren't you a *khokhol*,¹² are you? – What does this have to do with it? I am Russian!" (as cited in Zahin Kinomaniv, 2022).

Hordiienko also talks about openly Ukrainophobic films, such as *Taras Bulba* (already mentioned above, banned in Ukraine in 2014), *My iz budushchego 2* [We Are from the Future 2] (2010) (banned in Ukraine in 2010), or *Belaia gvardiia* [The White Guard] after Bulgakov. He notes that Ukrainians are presented as fascists, antisemites, and traitors (*My iz budushchego 2*, *Match* [The Match], 2012), or cruel murderers of innocent civilians (*The White Guard*). They always eat *salo* (pork fat) and drink *horilka* (vodka). They are cowards, and only together with Russia can they do something good, such as defeat Nazism.

These cultural products constructed for Russian audiences an image of Ukraine as a failed state – one that is incomplete without Russia. At the same time, they imposed on Ukrainian viewers the idea that Russia is the cultural and political centre to which they must orient themselves and aspire. In this logic, any attempt by Ukrainians to detach themselves from Russia is portrayed as illegitimate or punishable. This narrative is vividly expressed in the TV series *The White Guard*, where the actor Mikhail Porechenkov's character threatens that Ukrainians will be "chopped out" if they try to separate from Russia. The series presents Kyiv as a fundamentally Russian city, while depicting Ukrainians as those attempting to seize it – reversing the historical reality.

Vitalii Hordiienko concludes that after watching all these films, it is very easy to get under the influence of the narratives they convey. That is why Russians, who consume such cultural products, believe in the propaganda they spread. Hordiienko says that even he, as a Ukrainian, for a moment started to empathize with pro-Russian characters and think, "What if I am mistaken, Russia is right, and we are truly a non-existing, hybrid nation?" (Zahin Kinomaniv, 2022). This clearly demonstrates how manipulation works in mass culture, and how it can influence the minds and emotions of people who do not think critically.

8. Reclaiming Ukrainian Artists

This code concerns the process opposite to appropriation. In the times of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, many cultural figures of Ukrainian origin were appropriated and called "Russian". However, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, museums all over the world began changing the labels next to paintings. For example, since February 2023, the labels in the Metropolitan Museum of Art no longer refer to Illia Ripyn, Ivan Aivazovskii, and Arkhyt Kuindzhi as Russian artists: they are now called Ukrainian.¹³

¹² A derogatory Russian term for Ukrainians.

¹³ For more see Pavlenko et al. (2023).

Even before the full-scale war and all the campaigns for the reclamation of Ukrainian artists, Myroslav Shkandrij, in his book *Avant-Garde Art in Ukraine, 1910–1930: Contested Memory* (2019), pointed out their great influence on the international avant-garde, with examples including “Kazimir Malevich’s suprematism, Tatlin’s constructivism, Burliuk’s futurism, Archipenko’s cubist sculptures, Exter’s theater art, and Boichuk’s monumentalism or neo-Byzantinism” (Shkandrij, 2019, p. xi).

In this section, I present the channel Kul’turtryher [Culturetrigger], run by Bohdan-Oleh Horobchuk, a cultural scientist and art expert. He has a series of popular videos which reveal the mechanism of cultural appropriation of Ukrainian artists by Russia and deconstruct years of imperial narratives about art, including titles such as “lak rosiia (sic) krade ukrains’ke mystetstvo” [How Russia Steals Ukrainian Art] (11 August 2022); “lak rosiia (sic) krade v nas Malevycha” [How Russia is Stealing Malevych from Us] (28 July 2022); “10 dokaziv: RIPYN – ukrains’kyi khudozhnyk” [10 Proofs: RIPYN is a Ukrainian Artist] (27 December 2022); “Ukrains’kyi fenomen Kuindzhi: Naïpopuliarnishyi khudozhnyk v rosiis’kii imperii” [Ukrainian Phenomenon Kuindzhi: The Most Popular Artist in the Russian Empire] (10 January 2023).

In the video “10 Proofs: Ripyn is a Ukrainian Artist” (Kul’turtryher, 2022), Horobchuk provides evidence of the Ukrainian identity of Illia Ripyn (Riepin). He begins by explaining how Russia appropriated the cultural heritage of colonized peoples; according to the colonizer, the colonized (in this case Ukrainians) are unable to produce any valuable cultural or artistic products and, consequently, do not deserve to have their own states.

The author starts with the information that Ripyn’s ancestors were a Cossack family called Ripa. Their surname originated from the Ukrainian word *ripa* ‘turnip’ (*Brassica rapa* L.), and it was written with the letter *iat*’ (ѣ ѣ). In Russian, this letter is pronounced *yie* (ie); therefore, the Ukrainian surname *Ripyn* became Russified to *Riepin*.

He goes on to present facts from Ripyn’s biography and the artist’s own words from his memoirs:

Ripyn was surrounded by Ukrainian culture from childhood. It is logical, because he spent his entire childhood in a Ukrainian town [Chuhuiv, Kharkiv region] [...]. Ripyn earned his first money, just imagine, by making *pysanky*.¹⁴ This is how he remembers it in his book of memoirs *Daleke blyz’ke* [Far and Close]: “And the most important thing in my art was painting *pysanky* for Easter. Even now I remember this mystery with a thrill.” (Kul’turtryher, 2022)

Horobchuk states that Ripyn criticized Russian authoritarianism, and talks about his famous painting of Ivan the Terrible: “Unlike [Viktor] Vasnetsov, Ripyn depicted [Ivan] the Terrible not as a majestic monarch but as a mad old man committing a vile sin, the murder of his son. A clear allusion to the characteristics of any Russian government ever. Killing your children is the norm because ‘women will still give birth’”¹⁵ (Kul’turtryher, 2022).

¹⁴ Easter eggs painted with wax.

¹⁵ Originally in Russian: “*baby eshche narozhaiut*”; a well-known saying which signifies a total lack of respect for human life.

As explained in the video, although Ripyn also presented Russian authorities in a neutral or positive light, most experts say that these works are artistically poor because he painted them only to make money. In opposition to Russian authoritarianism, Ripyn painted the Cossacks:

This is clearly visible if you compare paintings from his Cossack cycle, like *Reply of the Zaporozhian Cossacks to Sultan Mehmed IV* and *Black Sea Freedom*, with, for example, his painting of the freedomless, voiceless *Barge Haulers on the Volga*. Obviously, Ripyn contrasts the Ukrainian democratic tradition, the personification of which are the Cossacks, with the bloody tradition of the Russian state, and with the unfreedom of the Russian people, captured in *Barge Haulers*. (Kul'turtryher, 2022)

Horobchuk concludes as follows:

The view that Illia Ripyn is a Russian artist has been created artificially, and the main factor here is explained by the well-known phrase "History is written by the winners", and the history of art as well. Of course, the Russians do not deny the obvious truth – Ripyn was born on the territory of contemporary Ukraine, in Chuhuiv. However, they hide this fact in every possible way; they refer to Chuhuiv as a town in the Russian Empire. It is clear that neither in the Russian Empire nor in the Soviet Union could anyone say that Ripyn is a Ukrainian artist, because this would be a clear sign of Ukrainian nationalism. (Kul'turtryher, 2022)

Appropriation of Ukrainian artists by Russia is a result of colonial knowledge production and epistemic injustice. The discourse of reclamation of Ukrainian cultural figures in the Ukrainian media is a part of a broader decolonial process known as *unlearning*. This notion means revising and changing hegemonic models of knowledge in the context of decolonization, which includes abandoning the dominant influence of colonial epistemology and focusing on more diverse and inclusive forms of knowledge (Marinichenko & Karpan, n.d.). According to Maria Sonevytsky, the full-scale invasion forced both Ukraine and Western institutions to move beyond epistemic imperialism – that is, beyond the long-standing tendency to let external powers define what Ukraine is. Traditionally, dominant centres of knowledge production – located in former and current imperial states – have circulated highly predetermined narratives about Ukraine, often bypassing the knowledge produced within Ukraine itself or by scholars specialising in Ukrainian studies (Sonevytsky, 2022).

9. Humour and Ridiculing the Colonizer

Finally, the code "Humour and ridiculing the colonizer" refers to the use of laughter in the media space in wartime. This code appears on six analysed YouTube channels, which mostly feature stand-up or thematic comedy and include forms such as satirical news segments, sketch parodies, parody songs, conversational videos, and comedy

dubbing. Creators of such content ridicule Russian liberals, Russian culture, colonial politics towards Ukraine, the blurring of cultural boundaries, Soviet times, or present-day situation.

For example, in 2022, the authors of the channel Chotkyi Patsa,¹⁶ working together with Vitalii Hordiienko (who runs his channel Zahin Kinomaniv), created an amusing song called "Bez Rashky".¹⁷ The lyrics present the ideal world without Russia and ridicule colonization practices; they also reveal various aspects of Russian colonization of Ukraine.

I haven't checked YouTube trends for a while,
But it's still Russian trash in the usual style.
On the bus, I begged them – twice – to turn down
Meladze was blasting all over the town.
At Tolstoy Square, I stepped off the ride,
Though Stus Square was where I was meant to arrive. (Chotkyi Patsa, 2022)¹⁸

In this ironic verse, we can see that the Russian colonization has led to the blurring of cultural boundaries, especially in media and mass culture. The first line highlights that Russian content is ubiquitous in Ukrainian media and entertainment, even after the full-scale invasion; Russian productions top the lists of trending content on YouTube, and people listen to Russian pop music. The protagonist asks "to turn down Meladze" on the *marshrutka* minibus (i.e. he asks for the music to be turned down). Valerii Meladze is a Russian and Soviet singer of Georgian origin. His songs in Russian are well known and present in the mass media in all former Soviet republics. Despite Meladze's condemnation of the military actions of the Russian Federation in Ukraine in 2022, his name is synonymous with the common cultural space with Russia. Therefore, the protagonist asks "to turn down Meladze" so that he would not be reminded of the Russified media space in Ukraine.

The verse also refers to the colonization of urban space by Russian cultural products, and belated politics of decolonization in the public sphere: the names of squares and streets continue to celebrate imperial Russian culture rather than honour Ukrainian dissidents or cultural figures. The mention of Lev Tolstoy is not accidental; his novels played a big role in spreading a positive image of the Russian Empire. For contrast, we have the Ukrainian dissident poet Vasyl' Stus, who was imprisoned for his anti-Soviet activity and died in a Gulag camp in the Perm region in Russia in 1985. Stus is a symbol of the uncompromising fight for the freedom of Ukraine, against the oppressive Russian and Soviet systems. In this way, this allegedly comic, unserious content reveals the mechanisms of colonial politics from imperial to post-Soviet times.

¹⁶ *Chotkyi patsa* is a colloquial, mocking name for "real guy".

¹⁷ *Rashka* is an insulting name for Russia, so the title of the video could be translated as "Without Russia".

¹⁸ Translation by AI. Original: "В трендах Ютуба не лазив давно, / а там досі російське лайно. / Поки їхав маршрутці два рази / просив тихіше зробити Меладзе. / На площі Толстого, я вийшов із буса, / хоча мав вийти на площі Стуса."

Conclusions

This paper has presented an analysis of Ukrainian YouTube through the lens of decolonial studies. YouTube plays a significant role in the decolonization processes in Ukraine's cultural and media space. The analysis was conducted according to the nine decolonial codes developed for this purpose, and makes it possible to conclude that the decolonial content on Ukrainian YouTube relies on two main strategies: deconstructive and constructive.

The *deconstructive strategy* consists in the critique and dismantling of the knowledge system established by Russian epistemological hegemony over the centuries of imperial presence in Ukrainian lands. This strategy also involves questioning the meanings and cultural paradigms that were produced by Russia outside its traditional scope of influence – i.e. in the West. Those cultural paradigms already became a part of popular culture or element of liberal education in the traditionally understood Western world.

The deconstructive strategy appears in the videos with the most popular code: **Revealing epistemological crimes of the empire**. The videos analysed with this code transmit narratives directed at the dismantling of the mechanisms of imperial knowledge production, which aimed at limiting, diminishing, and erasing the identity and culture of the colonized, in this case Ukraine. This YouTube content deconstructs imperial messages and propaganda, which have been destructive to Ukrainian culture and impeded its identity construction process, thus causing inferiority complexes. This code is very close to the code **Revealing "Little Russianism" and the blurring of cultural boundaries**. While the first one appears in the content dismantling colonial narratives created by Russian culture, historiography, or media about Ukraine, the second reveals the outcomes of the first for Ukrainian society and culture. The latter code appears in the content about Ukrainian discursive actors, who, by their actions, asserted and promoted Russian imperial myths and narratives in Ukrainian society. The next three codes, namely **Revealing anti-Ukrainian aspects of Russian culture**, **Unmasking "good Russians"**, and **Refuting the myth of great Russian culture**, also belong to the deconstructive decolonial strategy. These codes dismantle the often hidden imperialistic and anti-Ukrainian narratives present in the messages of Russian literature, Russian liberals, and Russian culture in general.

The second group of codes forms the *constructive strategy* of the decolonial turn in Ukrainian mass media; it is directed at promoting and popularizing Ukrainian culture, and creating the national "imagined community" (Anderson, 1991), with common lands, memory, and traditions (Hobsbawm, 1992; Smith, 1991).

The constructive decolonial strategy is seen in the following codes: **Popularization of knowledge about Ukrainian culture**, **Reclaiming Ukrainian artists**, and **"Away from Moscow" in culture**. By separating Ukrainian culture from the one imposed by Russian and Soviet

tradition, and by showing the genuine Ukrainian culture and refuting the myth of it being secondary and peasant, this media content contributes to getting rid of many inferiority complexes created by the colonizer. Constructive strategy also encompasses the disarming of the enemy by means of **Humour and ridiculing the colonizer**. The constructive strategy of this code refers to building confidence and a fearless attitude with the help of laughter and comedy by demonstrating the drawbacks and ridiculousness of the colonizer.

The limitation of this study is that I assigned a particular decolonial code to each channel in general, not to a particular video. This limitation is caused by the large amount of material to analyse. It could be addressed in future studies by conducting further quantitative research using large language models and artificial intelligence tools.

Nonetheless, considering quantitative indicators, Ukrainian YouTube is still dominated by content in Russian, although it does not necessary mean that all the subscribers are Ukrainians. However, the fact is that in recent years, numerous Ukrainian YouTubers have produced valuable, high-quality content in opposition to ubiquitous Russian-centric streams. The rising popularity of the decolonial content in 2025 compared to 2024 (see Table 6) indicates the need for such content among users. Owing to the specifics of its functionality, YouTube could be perceived and researched, on the one hand, as traditionally understood audio-visual entertainment media, but on the other hand, as a separate and unique element representing a particular segment of the socio-cultural landscape. Therefore, the analysis of decolonization tendencies in the Ukrainian segment of YouTube sheds additional light on contemporary socio-cultural and identity-making processes in Ukraine.

References

- Acey, C. E., Bouterse, S., Ghoshal, S., Menking, A., Sengupta, A., & Vrana, A. G. (2021). Decolonizing the Internet by decolonizing ourselves: Challenging epistemic injustice through feminist practice. *Global Perspectives*, 2(1), Article 21268. <https://doi.org/10.1525/gp.2021.21268>
- Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Rev. ed.). Verso.
- Androutsopoulos, J. (2013). Participatory culture and metalinguistic discourse: Performing and negotiating German dialects on YouTube. In D. Tannen & A. M. Trester (Eds.), *Discourse 2.0: Language and new media* (pp. 47–72). Georgetown University Press.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2007). *Post-colonial studies: The key concepts* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Betlii, O. (2022). The identity politics of heritage: Decommunization, decolonization, and derussification of Kyiv monuments after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. *Journal of Applied History*, 4(1–2), 149–169. <https://doi.org/10.1163/25895893-bja10031>

- Betts, R. F. (2012). Decolonization: A brief history of the word. In E. Bogaerts & R. Raben (Eds.), *Beyond empire and nation: The decolonization of African and Asian societies, 1930s–1970s* (pp. 23–38). Brill. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctt1w8h2zm.5>
- Burdin, I.A. (2023). Ukraïnizatsiia YouTube-kontentu iak proiav kul'turnoho sprotyvu ukraïntsiv pid chas rosiï's'ko-ukraïns'koï viïny. *Sotsiologichni studii / Sociological Studies*, 2023(2(23)), 62–72. <https://doi.org/10.29038/2306-3971-2023-02-31-31>
- Crandall, J. (2023). Videographic, musical, and linguistic partnerships for decolonization: Engaging with place-based articulations of Indigenous identity and Wâhkôhtowin. *Humanities*, 12(4), Article 72. <https://doi.org/10.3390/h12040072>
- Demchuk, S., & Levchenko, I. (2024). Decolonizing Ukrainian art history. *Nationalities Papers*, 1–25. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2024.58>
- Dems'ka, O. (2023). *Ukraïns'ka mova: Podorozh iz Bad Emsa do Strasburha*. Vivat. <https://vivat.com.ua/product/ukrainska-mova-podorozh-iz-bad-ems-a-do-strasburha>
- Derzhkino vidmovylo u vydachi prokatnykh posvidchen' shche chotyri'om rosiï's'kym fil'mam. (2014, December 22). Derzhavne Ahtentstvo Ukraïny z Pytan' Kino. Retrieved April 25, 2024, from https://web.archive.org/web/20141225053330/http://dergkino.gov.ua/ua/events/show/318/derzhkino_vidmovilo_u_vidachi_prokatnih_posvidchen_shche_chotirom_rosiyskim_filmam.html
- Doslidzhennia ukraïns'koho suspil'no-politychnoho YouTube – 2021 (lystopad 2021). (2021). <https://www.oksanamoroz.com/doslidzhennia>
- Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and power*. Longman.
- Fricker, M. (2017). Evolving concepts of epistemic injustice. In I. J. Kidd, J. Medina, & G. Pohlhaus Jr. (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of epistemic injustice* (pp. 53–60). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315212043-5>
- Getka, J. (2024). "Dekolonizacja i deimperializacja potrzebne od zaraz!" Dekonstrukcja rosyjskiej imperialnej narracji kulturowej jako wyzwanie dla współczesnej sławistyki. *Studia Interkulturowe Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, 17, 165–188. <https://doi.org/10.31338/2544-3143.si.2024-17.10>
- Hobsbawm, E. J. (1992). *Nations and nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth, reality* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL0521439612>
- Hundorova, T. (2013). *Tranzytna kul'tura: Symptomy postkolonial'noï travmy: Statti ta eseï*. Hrani-T.
- Johnstone, B. (2001). Discourse analysis and narrative. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H. E. Hamilton (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 635–649). Blackwell. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9780470753460.ch33>
- Kiss, N., Pidkuimukha, L., Skintey, L., & Orobchuk, D. (n.d.). Abrogation (G. Kotliuk, Trans.). In *Ukrainian Decolonial Glossary*. Retrieved April 27, 2024, from <https://decolonialglossary.com.ua/abrogation-en-1>
- Korablyova, V. (2023). The decolonization of education and research in Belarus and Ukraine: Theoretical challenges and practical tasks. *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 65(3–4), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00085006.2023.2274194>

- Kress, G. (2013). Multimodal discourse analysis. In M. Handford & J. P. Gee (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 35–50). Routledge.
- Kushnir, O. (2024). Decolonising knowledge production about Ukraine: A security aspect. *Polish Political Science Yearbook*, 53(3), 139–153. <https://doi.org/10.15804/ppsy202434>
- Kuzio, T. (2019). Russian stereotypes and myths of Ukraine and Ukrainians and why Novorossiia failed. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 52(4), 297–309. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2019.10.007>
- Langton, R. (2010). *Epistemic injustice: Power and the ethics of knowing* by Miranda Fricker. *Hypatia*, 25(2), 459–464. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2010.01098.x>
- Lytvynenko, A. (2023). Ukraïns'ki Youtube-kanaly na kul'turno-mystets'ku tematyku pid chas povnomasshtabnoho vtorhnennia rosii do Ukraïny. *Obraz*, 2023(2(42)), 25–37. [https://doi.org/10.21272/Obraz.2023.2\(42\)-25-37](https://doi.org/10.21272/Obraz.2023.2(42)-25-37)
- Maćkiewicz, J. (2017). Badanie mediów multimodalnych – multimodalne badanie mediów. *Studia Medioznawcze*, 2017(2), 33–42. <https://doi.org/10.33077/uw.24511617.ms.2017.69.388>
- Makhortykh, M. (2019). Nurturing the pain: Audiovisual tributes to the Holocaust on YouTube. *Holocaust Studies*, 25(4), 441–466. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17504902.2018.1468667>
- Makhortykh, M. (2020). Remediating the past: YouTube and Second World War memory in Ukraine and Russia. *Memory Studies*, 13(2), 146–161. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698017730867>
- Manifest – reïtynh iutub-kanaliv ukraïns'koïu. (n.d.). Retrieved April 17, 2024, from <https://manifest.in.ua/>
- Marinichenko, M., & Karpan, V. (n.d.). Unlearning (V. Grivina, Trans.). In *Ukrainian Decolonial Glossary*. Retrieved April 27, 2024, from <https://decolonialglossary.com.ua/unlearning-en>
- Mohammed, W. F. (2022). Bilchiinsi philosophy: Decolonizing methodologies in media studies. *Review of Communication*, 22(1), 7–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15358593.2021.2024870>
- Moroz, O. (2021, November 24). Renesans ukraïns'koho YouTube: Iak zakinchuiet'sia era prorosii's'kykh kanaliv v Ukraïni. *Ukraïns'ka Pravda*. Retrieved April 5, 2024, from <https://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2021/11/24/7314996>
- Moyo, L. (2020). *The decolonial turn in media studies in Africa and the Global South*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-52832-4>
- Ochs, E. (1997). Narrative. In T. A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse as structure and process* (pp. 185–207). Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446221884.n7>
- OPORA. (2024, July 10). *Doslidzhennia. Mediaspozhyvannia ukraïntsiv: Tretiï rik povnomasshtabnoï viïny*. Retrieved December 5, 2024, from <https://www.oporaua.org/viyna/doslidzhennya-mediaspozhyvannya-ukrayinciv-tretyi-rik-povnomasshtabnoyi-viyni-25292>
- Pavlenko, V., Kel'm, N., & Nabozhniak, O. (2023, May 18). *Vkradeni Rosiïeiu: Iak Ukraïna povertaïe imena svoïkh khudozhnykiv u svitovyykh muzeïakh*. Texty.org.ua. Retrieved April 24, 2025, from <https://texty.org.ua/articles/109643/my-ne-mozhemo-chekaty-20-rokiv-ukrayina-pochynaye-systemnu-ukrayinizaciyu-muzejnyh-kolekcij-po-vsomu-svitu>
- Pavlychko, S. (2002). *Teoriia literatury* (V. Aheieva & B. Kravchenko, Eds.). Vydavnytstvo Solomii Pavlychko "Osnovy".

- Pavlyshyn, M. (2006). Envisioning Europe: Ruslana's rhetoric of identity. *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 50(3), 469–485. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20459314>
- Popil, D. (n.d.). Epistemic injustice (G. Kotliuk, Trans.). In *Ukrainian Decolonial Glossary*. Retrieved April 27, 2024, from <https://decolonialglossary.com.ua/epistemic-injustice-en>
- Quintero, P., Figueira, P., & Elizalde, P. (2019). A brief history of decolonial studies. *MASP Afterall*. <https://www.scribd.com/document/837230757/A-Brief-History-of-Decolonial-Studies>
- Riabchuk, M. (2000). *Vid Malorosii do Ukraïny: Paradoksy zapizniloho natsiietvorennya*. Krytyka.
- Riabchuk, M. (2012). Ukraine's 'muddling through': National identity and postcommunist transition. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 45(3–4), 439–446. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2012.06.007>
- Riabchuk, M. (2017). "Maïzhe ody narod": Osoblyvosti vykorystannia propahandysts'koï mifolohemy v umovakh neoholoshenoï viïny. *Naukovi zapysky Instytutu politychnykh i etnonatsional'nykh doslidzhen' imeni I. F. Kurasa NAN Ukraïny*, 2017(5–6), 213–231.
- Romaniuk, R., & Aheieva, V. (2023, November 12). Vira Aheieva: "Great Russian culture" is a myth with big money behind it (O. Loza, Trans.; T. Pearce, Ed.). *Ukraïns'ka Pravda*. Retrieved March 29, 2025, from <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/articles/2023/11/12/7428378>
- Shkandrij, M. (2001). *Russia and Ukraine: Literature and the discourse of empire from Napoleonic to postcolonial times*. McGill-Queen's University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780773569492>
- Shkandrij, M. (2019). *Avant-garde art in Ukraine, 1910–1930: Contested memory*. Academic Studies Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1zjg820>
- Sivak, K. (2024). Pirates' voices: Motivations of pirate film translators and distributors in Ukraine. In J. Morrison & S. Pedersen (Eds.), *Silenced voices and the media: Who gets to speak?* (pp. 275–292). Springer Nature Switzerland. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-65403-9_18
- Smith, A. D. (1991). *National identity*. Penguin Books.
- Sonevsky, M. (2022). What is Ukraine? Notes on epistemic imperialism. *Topos*, 2, 21–30. <https://doi.org/10.24412/1815-0047-2022-2-21-30>
- Stukanov, S. (2023). *Ukraïns'ka mova posyliuie svoï pozytsii u sotsial'nykh merezhakh: YouTube tezh postupovo ukraïnizuiet'sia*. TSentr Kontent-Analizu. Retrieved April 27, 2024, from <https://ukrcontent.com/reports/ukrayinska-mova-posylyuye-svoyi-pozyciyi-u-socialnyx-merezhax-youtube-tezh-postupovo-ukrayinizuetsia.html>
- Tkachenko, O. (2022). *Discourse of Ukrainian identity in the Polish opinion-forming press during the Orange Revolution and the Euromaidan: Media linguistic analysis*. Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego. <https://doi.org/10.31338/uw.9788323556879>
- Törnquist-Plewa, B., & Yurchuk, Y. (2017). Memory politics in contemporary Ukraine: Reflections from the postcolonial perspective. *Memory Studies*, 12(6), 699–720. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698017727806>
- Ukrainian Decolonial Glossary*. (n.d.). <https://decolonialglossary.com.ua/home-en>
- Ukrainka, L. (1992). *Her Excellency: A dramatic poem in five acts* (V. Rich, Trans.; Acts 3–4). *The Ukrainian Review: A Quarterly Journal Devoted to the Study of Ukraine*, 40(2), 23–37. <https://diasporiana.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/books/14437/file.pdf>

UNESCO. (2025, March 20). *Damaged cultural sites in Ukraine verified by UNESCO*. Retrieved April 24, 2025, from <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/damaged-cultural-sites-ukraine-verified-unesco>

van Leeuwen, T. (1996). The representation of social actors. In C. R. Caldas-Coulthard & M. Coulthard (Eds.), *Texts and practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis* (pp. 32–70). Routledge.

Zakon Ukraïny “Pro zabezpechennia funktsionuvannia ukraïns’koï movy iak derzhavnoi” (Vidomosti Verkhovnoi Rady (VVR), 2019, № 21, st. 81). (2019). <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2704-19#Text>

Zhurzhenko, T. (2021). Fighting empire, weaponising culture: The conflict with Russia and the restrictions on Russian mass culture in post-Maidan Ukraine. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 73(8), 1441–1466. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2021.1944990>

YouTube sources

Chotkyi Patsa. (2022, September 7). *Bez R*shkn! Novyi khit tsiiei oseni! Lastivky (ne parodiia) Chico & Qatoshi* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved April 28, 2024, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7_K1FfzIDDA&ab_channel=ChotkyiPatsa

Geek Journal. (2021, October 26). *Chym ukraïns’ke kino krashche za hollivuds’ke: Inkliuzyvnist’ v kinematohrafi* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved March 23, 2024, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4YkaiEiPII&ab_channel=GeekJournal

Geek Journal. (2022, January 30). *Ukraïns’ki fil’mi 2022, iaki varto chekati! Top vid Geek Journal* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved March 24, 2024, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lw-COUJvAug&t=1s&ab_channel=GeekJournal

Kul’turtryher. (2022, December 27). *10 dokaziv: RIPYN – ukraïns’kyi khudozhnyk* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved April 28, 2024, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TY_SwjjvPt7I&pp=ygULI9GA0ZbQv9C40L0=

Na poshuky hramoty! (2021, August 16). *Taras Bul’ba abo vsi konyky potrapliaiut’ do raiu* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved March 23, 2024, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7I4Jdj9RpAQ&ab_channel=Naposhukyhramoty!

Palaie. (2023, June 23). *Naïbil’shyi rosiï’s’kyi feïk: Shcho ne tak z ikhn’oiu kul’turoiu?* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved June 26, 2024, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4eg3VFVc2c&ab_channel=Палає

Ragulivna. (2022a, July 21). *Zoriani viïny: Sestrystvo z Bilorussiu i Rosiïieu, iakoho Ukraïna nikoly ne khotila* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved July 23, 2022, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ki12iCxtz34&list=PLm_74D8nBXXcliVvYKSXmtd9yxCZtselD&index=14&t=6045s&ab_channel=Ragulivna

Ragulivna. (2022b, July 11). *Zoriani viïny: Zvidky vzialosia shoubiznesove dehradantstvo?* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved July 23, 2022, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wd_b4am4nNE&list=PLm_74D8nBXXcliVvYKSXmtd9yxCZtselD&index=14&ab_channel=Ragulivna

Shaleni avtor(k)y. (2021, December 29). *Lesia Ukraïka, feminizm i "osoruzhna Moskva"* | Shaleni avtor(k)y | Vira Aheieva, Rostyslav Semkiv [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved April 24, 2024, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v4WXxtaqlTQ&t=1593s&ab_channel=Shaleniavtorky

Telebachennia Toronto. (2022, June 19). *Znyshchyty Ukraïnu v dobromu sensi: Shcho ne tak z Latyninoiu, Varlamovym, Shul'man, Bykovym* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved June 25, 2023, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxK3S5DKQjA&ab_channel=TelebachenniaToronto

Zahin Kinomaniv. (2022, March 30). *Ukraïna v rosiï's'kykh fil'makh! Istoriia promyvannia mizkiv narodu* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved April 28, 2024, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=evkr6wG3BY0>

Procesy dekolonizacyjne w treściach tworzonych przez użytkowników na ukraińskim YouTube w czasie wojny rosyjsko-ukraińskiej

Abstrakt

Artykuł analizuje procesy dekolonizacji kulturowej na ukraińskim YouTube, sytuując treści tworzone przez użytkowników jako istotne miejsce oporu (*site of resistance*) wobec imperialnych epistemologii i narracji kolonialnych. W badaniu przeanalizowano wybrane ukraińskie kanały YouTube, sklasyfikowane według wielkości grupy odbiorców i poruszanej tematyki. Określono kody dekolonizacyjne, takie jak ujawnianie kolonialnej epistemologii, odzyskiwanie zawłaszczonych elementów kultury czy krytyka imperialnych paradygmatów kulturowych. Uzyskane wyniki ukazują rolę mediów cyfrowych we współczesnym procesie dekolonizacji w mediach ukraińskich oraz skalę ich wpływu na suwerenność epistemiczną w czasie trwającej wojny rosyjsko-ukraińskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: YouTube; dekolonizacja; tożsamość; Ukraina; studia postkolonialne; wojna rosyjsko-ukraińska; media

Citation

Tkachenko, O. (2025). Decolonization processes in user-generated content on Ukrainian YouTube during the Russo-Ukrainian war. *Sprawy Narodowościowe: Seria nowa*, 2025(57), Article 3542. <https://doi.org/10.11649/sn.3542>