

УДК 165.19

Television Myths Creation as an Analogue of Traditional Myth-Reality

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Received 3.01.2011, received in revised form 10.01.2011, accepted 17.01.2011

The modern mass media is a new mythological intermediate of the turn of XXI century, which independently creates the image of a new reality for people. Constructive function is an attributive function of mass media and, first of all, of television in the modern society. Possibilities of television are unlimited in the sphere of generation and implementation of set typo-images, essential neo-mythological characteristics of mass media allow speaking about the phenomenon as of the most active and even aggressive subject of sense-formation in the modern social cognition for the reason of their unprecedented intensity in time and space, because of their subconscious manipulative powers. Myths of television are much more rational in comparison with the traditional mythoimages – they are generated on the basis of real course of events and real personages. Though, images of these events and personages come in sight of the consumers emotionally colored, much interpreted, stereotyped, simplified, and encoded with the help of specific symbols of television object-language. Being fixed that way in the social conscious, they change the notions of values, change and even reform the way of people's lives.

As practical materials of the research we have used examples of television myth-creation of the period of the 2002 gubernator's elections in the Krasnoyarsk region: technologies of mythoimages implementation by means of television were mainly based on image-semantic rows with the usage of collective archetypes of Siberian sub-ethnos (paradigms «all-Russian-provincial», «strong-weak», «native-foreign», «new-old» and others.)

Keywords: Television myth-creation, mythology of mass media, Alexander Khloponin.

The project is financially supported by Krasnoyarsk regional fund of scientific support and scientific technical activity.

In the modern post-industrial society, mass media has become a sign of our time, a technology of life and of social standards formation. Unprecedented scales of mass media functioning in the sphere of social knowledge, the degree of its influence over the public conscious and over the formation of the integral world social space

have prevented us from considering mass media only as an instrument or as a communication channel. Having appeared at the end of XX century, phenomena of «global village», «virtual reality», «alternative culture», and «information explosion» point not only at the fact of rampant development of mass media communication and

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mass media information (MMI), being their most important component, but also at the fact that they acquire a functional, which differs from the one, being traditionally accepted in science.

The central scientific problem of the given research is a contradiction between the concept of mass media, which have been already formed in the fundamental science as a phenomenon, being infixed into the public conscious, as exclusively a channel of information transfer, on one hand, and that real role, which mass media plays in the processes of social cognition and the modern public conscious formation, on the other hand.

Point of View

In recent years, many a researcher agrees with the fact that MMI is not only a channel of people's conscious manipulation, not simply a conductor of another social-political or commercial mythology. M. Maccluen, an outstanding MMI researcher, was the first, who started speaking about the possibility of conscious mythologization of communication by means of television, pointing at the obvious ability of mass media to generate «this life (with all its collisions)», «to act as a primary reason, which endues the reality with its own features...» in human conscious².

Today, this problem is widely discussed in scientific circles. And there are more and more voices for the principle statement of the fact that the modern mass media communications is a new mythological intermediary at the turn of XXI century, which independently creates a new reality image for the public. «Newspapers, radio- and TV-channels have ceased to be the arena of various groups' struggle; they themselves have become fully-fledged participants of this struggle. They have become not so much objective myths translators, as their creators. Not the mirror of society, but the hammer of urge»¹.

Popular web-sites and internet blogs are very candid in their utterances on the topic,

their authors and participants assert that there is a social mythological space, being created by means of MMI: «MMI plays a dual role not only as re-translators, which are used by the politicians in order to influence their electorate, but also as translators, which create pseudo-reality by their own initiative»³.

Neither political scientists, nor social scientists, nor philosophers already doubt the fact that the object of MMI influence – the modern public conscious – is totally mythologized in the informational society. It is generally acknowledged that mass thinks by means of standard images, stereotypes, being based on ancient panhuman myths and archetypes. «Today, myth is the most significant principal of organization of the public conscious.»⁴

That is why most researchers consider MMI from the point of view of the fundamental theory of the world, which, by the way, has been drastically renewed in the last decade and now suggests new visions of the problem.

The given research is mainly based on the myth theory, being developed at a time by several Russian philosophical and sociological schools. These schools suppose myth to be an inseparable part of conscious, which positively structures self-conscious of the individual and whole groups. Such scientists, as N.A. Khrenov, A.M. Lobok, O.A. Karlova, consider the question of old and new mythologies not simply as a process of conscious catastrophe, but as a question of myth changing mechanisms. These theories do not analyze the problems of mythologies formation and implementation in the frames of traditional paradigm «myth»- «non-myth», but crucially otherwise: «myth» – «other myth». O. Karlova has used this paradigm as a basis of her myth theory in the definition of the problem of total mythology of the human culture. «Birth of a new myth is connected with a long-lasting successive re-interpretation of myth senses from the «inside».

First of all, it starts from re-interpretation of word sense, which can be defined as a changing of one myth-name by the other. »⁵

In the given research we pay special attention to the role of mass media, which in particular is put in the bases of investigation of such a quite modern phenomenon, as image and advertising. In this process, O.A. Karlova and A.V. Kostina define MMI as the most important factor of myth construct-model formation. Here, the intermediate function of mass media as «substitutes» (substitutes-translators) turn it into the most important factor of image-making.

To the mind of A.M. Lobok, the individual starts creation of his subjective myth-model from discovery of the integral myth, which represents a sort of matrix body. Accepting this myth and, thus, subjectively changing it, most of people already finish their «mythological search» on this very stage. In this case, we do not deal with personalities-creators, but with «flock», with mass, with the majority. As a rule, in this case, connection with the absolute is traditionally set and then strengthened by means of an intermediate in the existing original myth. For centuries, the role of such an intermediate has been played in the society by the organization with a complicated hierarchy of interrelations, which has had a number of recipes of perfection achievement, being kept in sacred texts, i.e. kindred, community or church.

Some modern scientists suppose that the functions of such an intermediate pass to mass media in the informational society. In such researches, special place is given to television, as the most powerful mass media as far as it is widely spread and because of its audio-visual subconscious impact. «Precisely with the help of television, they create virtual, mythological reality, which is imposed on to the millions of viewers. Television is not simply an intermediate between myth-creators and spectators. It is a

special sphere, which possesses a row of unique features, which turn it not only into a channel of myth delivery, but into the fabrics of myth production. »⁶ Some researches compare the essence of the modern television right with the nature of mythology itself. Modern Russian scientist N. Zorkaja, V. Borev, A. Kovalenko, V. Mikhalkovich, B. Sapunov, K. Bogdanov, and M.A. Mjasnikova point directly at the connection of television picture with the folk and mythological vision of the world. «Television is a syncretism, i.e. an inseparable integration, which is simultaneously considered to be a kind of art, mass media information and communication, a social phenomenon and a mythological model of the world. And in general, it creates a new reality, constructs a specific, mythological picture of the world. »⁷

Example

Probably, there is no any other social sphere in modern Russia, where the creation of new mythologems and mythoimages has been as productive in the MMI context, as in the sphere of political leaders' image-making. And the Krasnoyarsk region gubernatorial elections in 1998 and 2002 have proved it to full extend: both events were mainly based not on the live communication of the candidates with the electorate, but on the image-semantic rows with the usage of collective archetypes of Siberian sub-ethnos (paradigms «all-Russian-provincial», «strong-weak», «native-foreign», «new-old» and others.). Our study is based on the materials of the Krasnoyarsk region gubernatorial's electoral campaign of 2002. In the result of that campaign, Alexander Khloponin won the elections, and today, he is a world-famous politician.

Our research gains new topicality because of Alexander Khloponin's appointment for the post of the vice prime minister of the Russian Government and the Presidential Envoy to the

most hazardous region of the country – the North Caucasus Federal District. It has become one of the most remarkable political events in Russia of the beginning of 2010.

Probably, the Krasnoyarsk region electoral campaign of 2002 has remained in the history of modern Russia as one of the latest bright political struggles of the Russian elites, where one could foresee the result, but still there was some hope for some game or «civil justice». In the light of the given research, we have studied the role of the mass media (and, first of all, of the television), which at that period had already become not an instrument, but a fully-fledged, economically-profitable and psychologically-efficient subject of the electoral process. First of all, it is a study of the process of myth generation and introduction into the mass conscious of the explored and prepared audience, the study being carried out on the bases of the Jung's theory of archetypes, of the concept of «mass man», and paying special attention to the role of specific television object-language in this process.

As it is well-known, myth differs from artistic phenomenon because it is perceived by the people, being plunged into it, as reality. And it is exactly the target of mass media, which fulfills a pragmatic task and strives to turn its own subjective interpretation of some fact or event (mythologem) into reality for its viewer or reader.

Mythological foundations of television were most vividly demonstrated by the media coverage of the 2002 gubernatorial elections in the Krasnoyarsk region. At that period of time, the mass media had almost fully encroached the mission of image-makers. The informational space was activated, expanded, and hardened; it had become the sphere of information wars. The MMI, and first of all, electronic media used all the existing means in order to purposefully change the information – starting from data omission and suppression up to semantic fields deformation and

complete disinformation. All the TV ideology was built on the negative data, on exclusively negative characteristics, facts and estimations. They chose most discrediting information, most unpleasant angles for the candidates. On one hand, taking into consideration the pro-communist sentiments of the electorate, they used the image of «oligarch» and «stranger» in the adverse publicity. And on the other hand, in order to influence successful people, who were waiting for turns for the better, they exploited the images of «the old-fashioned man», «the local narrow-minded chieftain». And they stuck to this predetermined sense course, while giving all the information and disinformation about the candidates. Thereat, all the positive facts of their biographies and characters were categorically avoided; even their attractive looks and behavior were used against the candidates with the help of discriminating contrapositives. Most often, they persistently placed video images of a smiling and self-satisfied candidate right near by the pictures of poor, sick and unemployed people of the region on the background of scrap-heaps and ruins.

Moreover, these gubernatorial elections in the Krasnoyarsk region have demonstrated one more very important component of the manipulative role of mass media – that is handling with the images, having been already fixed in the social conscious. Here, we are to pay attention to the fact that negative images of politicians can be created not only by means of certain data omitting or hiding, but with the help of constant and steady selective returning to some «images-meanings», which already exist in the social conscious. This fact is underlined by a row of scientists, in particular, by Dotsenko: «more «advanced» methods of manipulation presuppose preliminary fabrication of opinions or wishes, and their fixation in the mass conscious or in the notions of a concrete person, in order to have a possibility of referring to him»⁸.

At the 2002 Krasnoyarsk region elections, they widely used a regional stereotype, which already existed at that time. It was the stereotype of attitude to powers, which ascended to the archetypical paradigm «native – foreign». The image of «foreigners» was started to be formed by the local mass media in the course of the Krasnoyarsk region gubernatorial elections of 1998, when Alexander Lebed won the elections. The paradigm «native – foreign» had got its real force in the time of Lebed by means of the mass media and mainly in the regional center. It had been well-fixed in the social conscious, and gave its fruition in the course of the Krasnoyarsk region legislative assembly elections of 2001, when the bloc under the given title «Ours» was a strong leader, being the image carrier of «the native, local». Some mass media, which had been efficiently working as image-makers at that period, used that «mine» as a ready part of the future construct later, at the gubernatorial elections of 2002.

It has been proved on practice of several elections that most efficient technique of already formed image-stereotype usage is not its appliance to a new political subject, but a steady reference of this new subject to the subject, being a traditional carrier of this image. Further, they fix coinciding characteristics, factors, tendencies and senses of the «old» and the «new» image carriers in the public conscious. Though, for that purpose it is necessary to have, firstly, quite comprehensive materials and, secondly, a rather long period of time.

Let us consider the attempt, which was undertaken by the mass media in the summer of 2002, to draw an analogy between «Lebed and Khloponin», using the image-stereotype «foreign». To our mind, it was a failure, because of following two reasons. Firstly, the content of the «image-knowledge» of candidate A.G. Khloponin did not correspond to the «image-

meaning» («foreign for the region»), which had been selected for promotion in the public conscious. He started the electoral campaign as a Siberian gubernator (a citizen of Norilsk, the gubernator of Taimyr), and axiological integrity of the image-construct, having been presented by the opponents, failed. Secondly, there was no any other opportunity to refer in emotional-image way the short young agile successful crisis manager of the new generation to the figure of powerful and soldierly smart Alexander Lebed, looking like «a Mohican of 90-s». In the given case, the mass media failed to present the public behavioral and visual video- and audio-proofs of resemblance between Lebed and Khloponin. And precisely such kinds of video- and audio-instruments have been used by the mass media in recent years in order to influence the public.

Though, this result does not mean that the image-stereotype of «ours» became less popular in 2002, then it had been a year earlier (in the period of regional legislative assembly elections); the first round of the 2002 regional gubernatorial elections is eloquent of that fact. It is plain that the public conceived the political images of other candidates within the frames of the paradigm «native – foreign». And the PR managers of A.G. Khloponin succeeded in promotion of another paradigm in to the public conscious: «new, successful, federal – old, stagnant, local». It also appeared not from nothing: it was not a secret that in the time of Gubernator Alexander Lebed, the later had strained relations with the Center and, it had hindered the development of the Region, to the mind of many people.

As it has been already mentioned, the leading semantic field mythoimages of that period had been generated in the public conscious yet in 1998. And precisely on that very basis, the mass media formed a renewed myth-reality of the 2002 elections. As practical materials for the given research we have used broadcast materials of one

of the leading Krasnoyarsk television companies, of the highest rating product – TV news in the electoral campaign period of July – September of 2002.

Already on the first stage of the electoral campaign, they formed an image of «starving Taimyr» in the block of news of the given TV Company, the region where A.G. Khloponin was the gubernator at that time. The image of oligarch, who was satisfied with his life, «living on his people», «being too far from the common, working men», «a foreigner, and an alien outsider», was aimed not only to anger the viewer, but to enforce the image of the second candidate – «our, honest, close to the common people» A.V. Uss, whose image was accompanied by several positive TV pictures.

They organized in the air of the channel and brightly (from the point of view of practical creation of mythological reality) carried out the media-action «Help Taimyr» in the form of an everyday topic of the news-show. Daily, famous journalists and «patriots of the region» appealed to the public to help «starving and dying from cold» citizens of Taimyr, the region where A.G. Khloponin was the gubernator at that time. Black and white video of cold, ruined and decayed houses, ragged clothes, exhausted old faces, empty, unemotional children's eyes, exaggerated with the help of blackout and rapid special computer effects, all that could not fail to cause the feeling of pity, «tugs of people's heartstrings», and anger against those, who were responsible for all that. The topic «Help Taimyr» is an example of the negative background aspect of the candidate's mythimage, which had been projected and created by means of TV language, and which the channel-myth-creator was persistently forming at that time. This example persuasively proves the fact that television is able to produce and implement a new emotionally-substantial image, which exploits deeply-lying archetypes of the

Russian collective conscious (in the given case, compassion to the poor – hatred to the rich, injustice, the habit to count one's money and so on), in to the mass conscious within a short period of time. An obligatory condition of such images formation is a high rate of its presentation. In the given case, the mentioned images were on the air up to 10-15 times a day in the form of regular and obtrusive trails.

As far as the image was repeated so often and was so emotionally intensive, in a short period of time it became a rather powerful factor of emotional exposure over the mass conscious, and first of all, not so much the stereotype of «foreigner», but the stereotype of «oligarch» was being fed up and, in its turn, was feeding in Krasnoyarsk. Indeed, sometime later, on air there appeared the image of «oligarch» on the background of the given media-action, the «oligarch», who was «far from his people», who lived on the account of «starving Taimyr» and was absolutely careless about the people living there. Being shown on the screen, the candidate was constantly «dancing, drinking wine, having much fun», and «living up to the hilt». All these images on the screen were constantly opposed within the frames of one and the same program (the story about Taimyr gave way to the video about «the glamorous life» of the oligarch in Moscow and abroad), and even within the frames of one story. They used very often black and white video, which exaggerated the technique of antithesis by its nature.

Images of the political opponent of A.G. Khloponin – A.V. Uss – were expressed in the following audio-visual images: «native, simple, ours, being close to his people», «of native origin, knowing the problems of the citizens». On air of the same TV channel, right near by the «oligarch» there appeared «a lightful face» of «our region-man», who was accompanied with additional positive characteristics:

- «confident in his victory, calm», that was achieved by «highlight» shooting, selective editing, and key words such as «Uss is sure in our victory, he believes in the sound sense of Siberians»;
- «our, native, understanding people», that was formed with the help of picture montage, usage of images of «ordinary countrymen», and the mental image of «bread and salt handling»;
- «unjustly offended», that was done with the help of everyday items about «black PR», about trials on complaints against A.V. Uss, and provocations at the meetings with the electorate;
- «significant, honored» – by means of positioning the figure of A.V. Uss near by symbolic persons, accompanying him by the words of support of opinion shapers.

Thus, at the 2002 elections they used almost all the spectrum of the mass media's object language in the process of formation of the new reality, and first of all, «audio-video» language of the television, wherein there were harmoniously combined specifics of television and mythological techniques:

- proper television techniques: black and white or color video, computer special effects, persistent everyday translation of set TV mythoimages and key phrases, selective montage of pictures and speeches, special running time of the air, usage of the image of the mass media itself and of well-known journalists, and so on;
- mythological techniques: mental images, sense antithesis, parallelism, refrain, circular plot-semantic closing of the narration, reticence, semantic field corruption, disinformation.

The technique of antithesis became the basic principle of formation of the television paradigm

«Uss – Khloponin». As a rule, A.G. Khloponin was presented all alone in the screen, other people were placed in «other» screenshots, i.e. in a distance, almost in «some other dimension»; A.V. Uss was always surrounded by people, workers, youth. Khloponin spoke from tribunes, from podiums – he was «afar from people»; Uss was always surrounded by a crowd, he was «ours, simple-minded, native». The mass media widely used the technique of refrain and circular parallelism, when one and the same phrase, one and the same screenshot was started, finalized and repeated several times in the course of one and the same news item (thus, the Taimyr news reportings were always started and closed by the images of doors, swinging in the wind, hopeless eyes of children; and the plots about Khloponin were often started and closed by the picture of the «dancing» candidate).

To our opinion, the result of the first round of the election was the consequence of such an intensive mass media's involvement into the mass conscious of the electorate, when A.V. Uss won, having got 27.53% voices of the voters against 25.25% voices for A.G. Khloponin. Secondly, in spite of his general failure in the second round in the region, A.V. Uss kept his steady leading position in the Krasnoyarsk city– here, we may observe a significant gap (49,6% voices against 24,8%) on the main territory of the given TV channel activity.

Evolution of the political image of Alexander Khloponin and his relations with the mass media in the period of his governing in the region (2002-2009) deserves special attention in the context of the given research. Informational attack of the mass media in the period of the election campaign of 2002 made the new gubernator pay special attention to the local mass media. Informational policy became a strategic direction of the regional powers' activity. All these years, a professional team of political image-makers and

Alexander Khloponin himself kept an eye on the administration and the creative elite of the local mass media. In the result of such a policy, there was formed a steady, irreproachable image of the leader of the new generation, the professional manager, making precise decisions for the benefit of the citizens of the region, being respected and trusted by the people, and having precise notions of the future of the region and the country on the whole. The central place in realization of the informational policy was again taken by technologists of TV myth-creation. Though, it is a subject of a separate research work.

Conclusions

Thus, resuming the above-mentioned analysis, we may state the following:

1. Heavy media coverage of the electoral campaign of 2002 in the Krasnoyarsk region proves convincingly the ability of television to myth-creation, to production of new mythoimages and myth-metaphors, to creation of its own myth-reality by means of its own specific language.

2. being created as a construct-model in that or this time, image is a phenomenon, which can be divide into separate elements, from which one can create other variations, «stretching» them on to the imaginative entirety as an essential quality of image perception. And this phenomenon demonstrates mass media and, first of all, television as an audio-visual myth-world at its full extent, being entire in its complexity, which is perceived not critically, but as something authentic precisely because of this complexity and image visualization dominance.

3. The analysis has revealed some «typo-images» in the modern mass communication. In comparison with the archetypes, they do not

have universal nature; they are situational, but steady within the frames of the given social situation. As a rational-irrational construct, these images are not only translated by television, but also generated by TV as «neo-typo-images» on the bases of already existing ones. Thus, in the modern society, constructive function is an attributive function of mass media and, first of all, of television.

4. Possibilities of television are unlimited in the sphere of generation and implementation of set typo-images, essential neo-mythological characteristics of mass media allow speaking about the phenomenon as of the most active and even aggressive subject of sense-formation in the modern social cognition. While most traditional social mythoimages have been formed for centuries, the images of television can be formed in the course of a month for the reason of their unprecedented intensity in time and space, because of their subconscious manipulative powers. Myths of television are much more rational in comparison with the traditional mythoimages – they are generated on the basis of real course of events and real personages. Though, images of these events and personages come in sight of the consumers emotionally colored, much interpreted, stereotyped, simplified, and encoded with the help of specific symbols of television object-language. Being fixed that way in the social conscious, they change the notions of values, change and even reform the way of people's lives.

Proceeding from the mentioned above, we may conclude, that the modern means of mass media act in the sphere of social communication as a sort of myth analogy, but being not equal to it.

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² McLuhan M., Understanding Media, op. cit., p. 41.

³ Blog of Alexander Abrochnov <http://abrochnov.blogspot.com/2008/10/blog-post.html>

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Телевизионное мифотворчество как аналог традиционной мифореальности

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Современные средства массовой информации – это новый мифологический посредник рубежа XXI в., самостоятельно создающий для населения образ новой реальности. Конструкционная функция является в современном обществе атрибутивной функцией средств массовой информации – в первую очередь, телевидения. Безграничные возможности телевидения в области продуцирования и внедрения устойчивых типобразов, сущностные неомифологические характеристики средств массовой информации позволяют говорить об этом феномене как о наиболее активном и даже агрессивном субъекте смыслопостроения в современном социальном познании по причине беспрецедентной интенсивности во времени и пространстве, в силу подсознательных манипулятивных мощностей. Мифы телевидения являются существенно более рациональными по сравнению с традиционными мифообразами – они формируются на основе реальной событийности и реальных героев. Однако образы этих событий и героев поступают к потребителю эмоционально окрашенными, существенно интерпретированными, стереотипизированными, упрощенными, закодированными с помощью специфических символов телевизионного объект-языка. Зафиксированные таким образом в общественном сознании, они меняют представления о ценностях, изменяют и даже заново формируют образ жизни людей.

В качестве практического материала исследования использованы примеры телевизионного мифотворчества периода губернаторских выборов в Красноярском крае 2002 гг.: технологии внедрения мифообразов посредством телевидения были основаны, главным образом, на имиджево-семантических рядах с использованием коллективных архетипов сибирского субэтноса (парадигмы «всероссийский-провинциальный», «сильный-слабый», «наш-чужой», «старый-новый» и др.).

Ключевые слова: телевизионное мифотворчество, мифология СМИ, Александр Хлопонин.

Проект финансово поддерживается Красноярским краевым фондом поддержки научной и научно-технической деятельности.
