

CONSTRUCTING THE HYPERREALITY OF SIMULACRA IN RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA

Vladlenova I.V.

National Technical University "Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute", Kharkiv

The paper examines the issues of the formation of simulacra in Russian propaganda. A simulacra is a philosophical concept from Jean Baudrillard's theory, referring to a sign or image that does not reflect reality but replaces it. A simulacra appears as something real, but in fact it lacks any originality – it signifies something that has never truly existed. Baudrillard identifies four stages of the image: It reflects reality – the sign accurately mirrors the real. It distorts reality – the sign misrepresents the real but still refers to it. The sign pretends to reflect reality – it masks itself as a reflection, but in truth, it no longer corresponds to any reality [1]. The simulacra – a sign with no relation to reality whatsoever, existing independently within the space of hyperreality. A simulacrum is a single sign or image that has lost its connection to the real and now replaces it. It is like a counterfeit coin that has no original but is still accepted as genuine. Hyperreality is the system or world made up of simulacra, in which distinguishing the real from the imagined becomes impossible. It is no longer a mere imitation of reality – it is a new "reality" entirely constructed by simulacra. The secret of the simulacra in propaganda lies in its ability to replace reality so thoroughly that people stop questioning whether it ever existed at all. Propaganda does not persuade – it creates a world in which alternatives become unthinkable. The simulacra completely eliminates the original. For example, in Russian propaganda, the image of the enemy creates a fully autonomous, emotionally charged construct that has nothing to do with reality. Words such as "liberation," "the people," "war," and "victory" are not used to describe facts, but function as signs that form an emotional reality entirely disconnected from actual events and facts. Propaganda simulates reality – it replaces truth with a convenient illusion that cannot be refuted, because it does not rely on facts. Its foundation lies in values, emotions, and cultural preferences.

"A simulacra is not what hides the truth – it is the truth that hides that there is none. The simulacra is true" [1, p. 15]. "Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation of models of the real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" [1, p. 25]. Baudrillard introduces the concept of precession to explain the mechanism by which reality transitions into illusion: "The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. From now on, it is the map that precedes the territory – the precession of simulacra – it is the map that engenders the territory... the desert of the real itself"[1, c.35]. The precession of simulacra is the shift from the real to the illusion that is taken as real. In Russian propaganda, the simulacra of "Nazism in Ukraine" is actively used – an alleged threat. This simulacra has no clear original: no party, no specific ideology is identified – only an emotionally charged image.

Another simulacra is the concept of the “Russian World,” a supposed unified cultural and spiritual entity that allegedly needs protection. It is a simulacra embedded in a symbolic, mythological system, lacking clear ontological, geographic, legal, or cultural boundaries. It is used to justify interventions: a symbolic construct that replaces political reality. The terms “foreign agent” and “fifth column” also function as simulacra. The Russian media space has constructed a vast hyperreality populated by simulacra. The media construct a world in which Russia is endowed with supreme virtues, surrounded by enemies, and engaged in a “liberation” mission. This is a self-contained, parallel reality: “Hyperreality represents a much more advanced stage, in which the contradiction between the real and the imaginary is erased altogether. Unreality here is no longer the unreality of dreams or fantasy, of something pre- or super-real; it is the unreality of the hallucination of reality’s self-similarity.” A key construct of Russian propaganda is the Victory Parade as an eternal triumph. The constant reproduction of the 1945 victory image turns a historical fact into an eternal myth, in which Russia always defeats evil. Hyperreality is connected to apotropia. Russian propaganda actively employs simulacra that have no basis in reality but are perceived as credible. These constructions do not describe reality so much as replace it, forming pre-packaged models of perception in the space of hyperreality. Russian propaganda is a complex system of simulation in which myth, symbol, and hyperreality become tools for controlling mass consciousness. It does not merely distort reality – it creates an alternative reality in which millions of people are immersed.

Literature:

1. Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Translated by Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994. 164 pages. ISBN 978-0-472-06521-9.