

**Sladana Stamenković\***  
Faculty of Philosophy  
University of Novi Sad

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## **TELEVISION CULTURE AND PERCEPTION OF REALITY IN DON DELILLO'S *WHITE NOISE* AND MILAN OKLOPDŽIĆ'S *VIDEO*\*\***

In media studies, the concept of television culture is one of the most prominent phenomena. Its influence on the behavioral patterns of the audience has been a topic of a heated discussion among theoreticians since the 80s. Moreover, the extent to which television content is able to affect people's perception of reality is the key question in two novels presented in this paper. Don DeLillo's *White Noise* and Milan Oklopdžić's *Video* both explore the influence of modern mass media on the individuals and their perception of reality, as well as their interpersonal relationships. This paper aims at comparing and contrasting the depiction of television culture as a dominant factor which influences the way the audience perceives reality. Both novels discuss the potency of television programmes and the possibility of passive masses who absorb the broadcast without processing the emitted information. By depicting the society of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, these novels offer an insight into the core of television culture and the mechanisms of its influence on the audience.

*Key words:* television culture, Don DeLillo, Milan Oklopdžić, media culture, television, mass media

### **1. TELEVISION CULTURE IN *WHITE NOISE* AND *VIDEO***

The concept of television culture appears in media studies as one of the most important phenomena featured in modern human civilization. Fiske describes television culture as one of the crucial elements of society and popular culture (Fiske 2002: 1). Television provides the audience with meaning and pleasure.

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\* sladjana.stamenkovic@ff.uns.ac.rs

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Meaning comes from factual information and useful knowledge about the world and social affairs that are part of the current global scene, in terms of politics, economy, standard and other news-worthy topics. Pleasure is provided by the entertainment industry that partly found its home on television (in addition to the movie industry and other means of popular mass entertainment). As opposed to television, Fiske claims, culture is related to the ways the aforementioned meanings and pleasure circulate within a generation (Fiske 2002: 1). In short, television culture discusses the informational and entertaining content that circulates within the social space. With such a strong influence on the way a society receives information about the world around it, television culture can be regarded as a major factor on how people perceive reality. Moreover, it observes the behavioral patterns that television imposes upon the audience, as well as the influence it has on the way spectators behave in real life.

One way we can regard television as a concept is as “an environment” (Tichi 1992: 3). By creating a specific hyperreality of spectacles and media events, television becomes a vast, virtual space that either spreads into the quotidian of its audience or it draws the very spectators into itself, thus affecting the spectator’s very perception of reality. It enters the real world by becoming relevant and inhabiting social discussions among people, and it absorbs the spectators into its fictive and scripted world by keeping them glued to the screen, engulfed in the intricate events depicted on the programme. One way or the other, television represents a specific space, a separate hyperreality, which makes a significant influence on the audience’s everyday lives. Tichi writes of television as of “cultural space” and describes it as being “as bold as it is baffling, provocative but lacking ready reference and thus apt to leave one mentally as blank as the turned-off screen itself” (Tichi 1992: 3). Hence, television as a cultural space usually implies negative traits of its content and the effects it has on spectators. In other words, its influence on its audience is not inspiring and enriching, but rather emptying and numbing. The problem arises once such influence becomes crucial for one’s own perception of the world and reality. Kellner notes that “[m]edia images help shape our view of the world and our deepest values: what we consider good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil” (Kellner 2011: 7). This implies that television teaches people not only what kind of world they inhabit, but also who they are. More precisely, television affects people’s identities, both on the individual and collective levels. Poststructuralists, like Lacan, regard identity as a social construct and different theoreticians of media culture tend to agree with them. Barker hypothesizes the concept of identity, in terms of culture, as “wholly social

construction” (Barker 1999: 169). He further discusses television and its crucial role in affecting and altering human identity, citing it as an important factor for both construction and perception of identity. Therefore, television and its programmes can be seen as a lens which filters and modifies the way people see not only the world, but also themselves and each other, and thus reality as a whole.

Specifically, Kellner believes that television, as the main provider of media stories, provides “the symbols, myths, and resources through which we constitute a common culture and through the appropriation of which we insert ourselves into this culture” (Kellner 2011: 7). If such an important element proves to be hollow and debilitating, its effects on the people and their perception are at least questionable, if not alarming. Following a similar approach, Fiske defines television as “a bearer/provoker of meanings and pleasures” (Fiske 2002: vii). He further explains that it is “a crucial part of the social dynamics by which the social structure maintains itself in a constant process of production and reproduction” (Fiske 2002: vii). Both definitions put stress on the large part television has in one’s comprehension of the environment they inhabit, which is something that provides an opportunity for manipulation. More specifically, the significant role television has in the lives of its audience presents a way for social or political indoctrination and implementation of different ideologies through entertainment formats.

Fiske also discusses the matter of audience and its homogeneity. He states that the term audience “implies that television reaches a homogeneous mass of people who are all essentially identical, who receive the same messages, meanings, and ideologies from the same programs and who are essentially passive” (Fiske 2002: 16). It is especially such passivity that represents the main trait of television spectators in different theoreticians’ works – Kellner and Debord being the most notable among them. Fiske also notes that “it sees the audience as relatively powerless and indiscriminating, at the mercy of the barons of the industry” (Fiske 2002: 16). Yet, such definitions imply that each spectator reacts to television in the same, or at least similar, manner. They are problematic insofar as they disregard the process of the audience’s interpretation of television programmes, which is a complex process in itself. The term audience implies a mass – usually hypnotized and manipulated – a homogenous entity of different individuals who are completely unaware of how their lives are affected by the mass media. While problematic in their nature, this definition’s implications of masses created by debilitating, spellbinding programmes offer fertile soil for exploring different social phenomena, not the least of which are concepts of family and interpersonal relationships. These negative implications of television culture and its effect on reality perception can be

seen in two very different novels – *White Noise* by Don DeLillo and *Video* by Milan Oklopdžić. Although focusing on different societies (American and Serbian, respectively), they both explore predominantly the manner in which television affects the audience and its perception of the world that surrounds them. By comparing the two novels and their use of television culture, this paper aims at discussing the extent to which television participates in modifying the audience's perception of immediate reality.

## 2. *WHITE NOISE* AND *VIDEO*: THE ROLE OF TELEVISION IN PEOPLE'S LIVES

The concept of television and its effects on the audience are thoroughly explored in both Don DeLillo's *White Noise* and Milan Oklopdžić's *Video*, although from a different standpoint. Whereas *White Noise* takes us in front of the screen and shows how the media affects the audience, *Video* takes us behind the camera and follows the making of a television programme. In both cases, people who have interacted with television, in one way or the other, are marked as radiated or even oversaturated. Their lives are heavily influenced by television and, for the most part, revolve around it. What is more, their lives at times resemble the entertaining content seen on television (TV shows, series, films etc.). Although different in approach and genre, these novels contain striking similarities in terms of the societies that are depicted. In both American and Serbian society of the 80s present in the novels, the element of Cold War and implicit fear of radiation is evident, despite not being openly mentioned. This fear of radiation is symbolically related to television, as well – the effects of its radiation are perhaps not as hazardous as those of the nuclear bomb radiation, but are sufficiently harmful in their own way, insofar as television radiation affects the audience's mind and their perception and experience of the world they live in. The novels include a myriad of different characters, all having similar relationship with television.

In *White Noise*, Jack Gladney resembles a parody of a university professor with a peculiar subject (Hitler studies) and even more peculiar life story, especially from the moment when he gets infected by the toxic substances spread through the air after the lethal airborne toxic event. Moreover, the story of his family that gathers in front of the TV set almost religiously is a testimony to the strong roots of television culture within the archetypal American way of living. LeClair notes that “[t]he Gladney children are also the primary channel by which [television] enters the parents' safe domesticity” (LeClair 2003: 15). He continues to describe television in this novel as, respectively, “conditioning and comforting, distorting

and informing, even becoming [...] a source of mystery” (LeClair 2003: 15). The titular white noise, constantly present in the Gladneys’ house, enwraps this novel in an endless fragmentary jumbling, which constitutes a TV programme. In *Video*, the fragments of the individual stories represented in different chapters create an atmosphere of flicking through TV channels on a slow Saturday evening, during primetime. The stories themselves do not differ much from the plots of melodramas and soap operas, with an occasional slip into popular philosophical and almost religious-like talk shows. As fragmented as these stories are, what makes them special is the insight into the inner workings of television they offer, particularly the taping of one entertaining television programme. There is an orchestra, which is to do a special performance for television. At the beginning of the novel, the arrival of all members and executives starts off a fragmented depiction of their separate stories, while simultaneously depicting small details about television production as they prepare for a rehearsal. In a way, television represents a background for the protagonists’ lives as much as the white noise in DeLillo’s novel does. What is more, in both novels, television is an omnipresent entity, looming over the protagonists and their lives. In *Video*, it is implied in everything the characters do, since it is television that gives their life (as separate persons and as a group) a purpose. In *White Noise*, as the title implies, television fills in the background of the protagonists’ world, most specifically their family home. This very role of television is “an ‘environmental source’, or background noise” (Gauntlett 2002: 6). Much more than just a mere soundtrack, television is a dominant force that disrupts their thoughts and even reactions to some events. This is why Jack, when faced with overpowering events in his life, recites sets of different brands from the commercials he subconsciously remembers. Thus, the problem with white noise coming from the television is not its presence per se, but its perfidious manipulation of one’s conscious mind and subconsciousness. It introduces an aspect of triviality and undermines the reality it intrudes. When Jack recites commercials, he does so subconsciously replacing actual emotional reaction to the overwhelming events of the toxic spill, disease and marital problems. The triviality of television is also revealed in *Video* once Oklopdžić’s narration, for example, becomes literally fragmented, separated into video and audio levels that are represented parallelly, showing what is said and done in front of the camera. Immediately after this particular segment of fragmenting television content, a trivial dialogue takes place between the director and cameramen that pay more attention to one of the ballerinas’ mustaches than to the actual programme. At one moment, they even leave their cameras, which represents a lack of true interest and involvement in the

making of television content by those who are responsible for putting it together. This episode highlights the triviality and randomness of the very content of television programmes; it demonstrates the lack of any profound, substantial information in the broadcast that is constructed solely for entertainment, suggesting that it is created without much care or attention.

In both *White Noise* and *Video*, television also serves as a common topic that connects people, giving them a mutual point of interest, whether they are just the spectators or participants in the television business. For example, in *White Noise*, Jack and Murray use television (and consequently the sphere of popular culture it creates; i.e. television culture) as a starting point for their philosophical discussions. Murray usually assumes the role of the philosopher in charge, focusing on the messages that can be found in different programmes, repeatedly stating that there is a message that television programmes are trying to convey. His examination and close scrutiny of the Gladney children while they watch television highlights that the effect television has on its audience is something hypnotizing, and definitely something worth observing. For the Gladneys in general, television performs the role of a gathering element; spending entire evenings in front of the TV is a part of their weekly routine. What's more, television is such an important presence in their lives that it also fills the role of a physician for their family. The children start experiencing (or believing they experience) symptoms of the deadly disease only after they appear on television and in other media (ironically, Jack is the only one who does not react this way, and the only one in the family who is truly affected by the toxic spill). On the other hand, in *Video*, television programme is not only a common topic, but it quite literally connects the protagonists, because they met owing to it, in the first place – without television, their lives would follow completely different routes and it is questionable whether they would even know each other. Some of them do have relationships with each other outside the programme they are shooting (director and his wife, for example), but most of them are brought to the TV station only for the sake of shooting the programme. Furthermore, this particular show they are shooting, but also television in general (other programmes and television as a concept), triggers various wise observations and discussions of life and the society they are a part of. This is particularly seen in several episodes involving Metal Man and Blah Blah Blah, who discuss the negative effects television has on an individual. All of these examples constitute television as an element that is inseparable from the protagonists lives, and an element that somewhat shapes their interests, conversation topics and even perception of their physical health.

Interestingly, both novels represent television in such a way that it can be interpreted as a form of religion, as well. It can be said that DeLillo explicitly deems television a path to the sacred, as well as a means to describe some crucial questions of life and death. This is represented through frequent monologues that Murray steers the conversations into, especially when he observes the Gladney children, but also from the scene in which Jack Gladney meets a German nun with whom he discusses faith and pretends to have it. In a similar manner, Oklopđžić confronts television and its numbing influence with several opposing spiritual mantras spoken by his characters. Metal Man and Blah Blah Blah do give an impression of people under the influence. Yet, their observations about the influence television has on the audience and its behavior sound quite rational and clear-thinking. Although not religious, their conversation veers towards the spiritual, although rather ironically. In both novels, indeed, television is depicted as full of symbolism and messages, almost as a medium that carries the message of some higher truth, similar to the one communicated by different religions. Murray says that television is “a problem only if you’ve forgotten how to look and listen. [...] Root out content. Find the codes and messages” (DeLillo 2011: 21). He is particularly interested in television, spending late nights in front of the TV, taking notes on what he sees (or thinks he sees) on screen. He refers to the experience of watching television as “close to mystical” and “a primal force in the American home” (DeLillo 2011: 60). He further elaborates: “It’s like a myth being born right there in our living room, like something we know in a dreamlike and preconscious way” (DeLillo 2011: 60). As different theoreticians agree, in modern society, it is necessary to regard media, culture and religion as “an interrelated web within society” (Hoover and Lundby 1997: 3). Even when television programmes are not necessarily linked to any known religion and its preaching, the set of values their content communicates behaves in a similar way to religious teaching. As Murray puts it, television can give us deeper knowledge of the world and our existence, all of them as sacred as any religious chants and mantras.

You have to learn how to look. You have to open yourself to the data. TV offers incredible amounts of psychic data. It opens ancient memories of world birth, it welcomes us into the grid, the network of little buzzing dots that make up the picture pattern. There is light, there is sound. I ask my students, ‘What more do you want?’ Look at the wealth of data concealed in the grid, in the bright packaging, the jingles, the slice-of-life commercials, the products hurtling out of darkness, the coded messages and endless repetitions, like chants, like mantras. [...] The medium practically overflows with sacred formulas if we can remember how to respond innocently and get past our irritation, weariness and disgust. (DeLillo 2011: 61).

His monologue resembles religious preaching, although Murray is not aware of this resemblance. The openness to the sacred knowledge and the return to one's innocence in order to absorb said sacred knowledge is something that both religion and television seem to require. While Murray's speech suggests a meeker surrender to television and its teaching, *Video* provides a much more troubling image of television as a religion. Metal Man and Blah Blah Blah discuss television as something that separated them from their true self and their habits (reading for Metal Man and music for Blah Blah Blah). The sheer abundance of content they absorbed seems to have possessed them, as if it were the power of a cult or a sect. Both novels, in fact, suggest such a scenario, with different protagonists in a trance-like state, completely under the influence of television. For example, in *White Noise*, apart from Murray, it is Babette and Jack's eldest son Heinrich (but other children as well), while in *Video*, it is practically everybody – although only Metal Man and Blah Blah Blah are aware of it. Therefore, DeLillo and Oklopdžić both depict groups of people whose lives are deeply immersed into television culture. By connecting so many aspects of their lives to television (directly or indirectly) their novels suggest that television cannot be disregarded as a factor which influences and even distorts their protagonists' perception of reality.

### 3. TELEVISED PERCEPTION OF REALITY

Both novels suggest that people's perception of reality is heavily influenced by television and its content. This is perhaps most openly stated in a simple question posed by Oklopdžić's protagonists: "Where is the beginning of television?" (Oklopdžić 2015:137). Once television starts interfering with the real, DeLillo and Oklopdžić's protagonists are faced with a challenge of separating television from their own lives, which is an attempt soon proved futile in both cases. Some of them seemingly exist only in relation to television and its production. For example, the directing secretary in *Video* is described as appearing out of the blue for the programme. Oklopdžić writes: "She would come out of the unknown and disappear in the same way after the show" (Oklopdžić 2015: 42). The entire enterprise makes an incredible effort to maintain the appearance of being true and realistic. Such a need for maintaining authenticity can be seen in the conductor's vehement demands to go live, for example.

Another important television phenomenon – oversaturation – is discussed between its two of the most charismatic characters: the Rock Chick (who says her name is Blah Blah Blah) and the Metal Man. The two of them talk about being radiated by television, with him describing his daily habits: "I was watching the

news, and then they aired the show programme, then I switched to sports, and then they finally TKO-ed me with commercials... I exposed myself to radiation, several times, with no reason..." (Oklopđžić 2015: 95). The radiation that they talk about has nothing to do with physical exposure to deadly substances and waves, like in *White Noise*. In *Video*, radiation affects the mind rather than the body; it corrupts the way people function on a daily basis. Moreover, it affects one's very existence. Watching Lee Marvin on the screen, Blah Blah Blah's comment shows the extent to which television is closely related to human identity, but also the perception of other people. When the image disappears, she says: "This guy's gone. [...] This guy, what's his name? While he was on the screen, he had a name, now he's completely anonymous" (Oklopđžić 2015: 98). Even her existence is inseparable from her TV persona; she says to him: "You've seen me. We've never talked. You've seen me on television opening and closing my mouth" (Oklopđžić 2015: 145). Furthermore, she seems to exist in two different realms – when he says that he saw her on television looking sad, she says "That wasn't me" with no hesitation (Oklopđžić 2015: 147). He joins her, talking about himself in terms of his resemblance with a screen, or the TV set. He states: "Every square is within me. It's not about screen multiplying, every screen is divided into small ones, each of them into even smaller ones, and so on, infinitely... We tend to miniaturize, you said" (Oklopđžić 2015: 147). One way or the other, they perceive television as something that is interwoven with the real, and most importantly, something they cannot escape. Their perception of reality, therefore, can be described as distorted, since they cannot separate the real from the televised.

In *White Noise*, a similar discussion about television and oversaturation occurs between Jack's university colleagues. Although they seemingly can separate the reality they inhabit and the televised content they see as low in both quality and meaning, television is still a significant element in their lives, since it is the culture indirectly created by television and its principles that they discuss and research in their studies. They discuss oversaturation in terms of the concept of spectacles. Oversaturation comes as a result of too much information existing on TV and being available to the audience to such an extent that the only thing that manages to catch their attention is something catastrophic. Kellner writes excessively about the concept of spectacle. He notes that "spectacle itself is becoming one of the organizing principles of the economy, polity, society, and everyday life" (Kellner 2003: 1). Concerning spectacles, it is inevitable to mention Guy Debord and his society of the spectacle. Kellner relies on Debord's definition of spectacle as a unifying force that connects different social phenomena (Kellner 2003: 2).

Furthermore, he describes the “media and consumer society organized around the production and consumption of images, commodities, and staged events” (Kellner 2003: 2). In such a society, spectacles “are those phenomena of media culture that embody contemporary society’s basic values, serve to initiate individuals into its way of life, and dramatize its controversies and struggles, as well as its modes of conflict resolution” (Kellner 2003: 2). In DeLillo’s novel, these spectacles are constant. Yet, what is peculiar about them is that they tend to focus on the negative and violent, or more specifically, on catastrophes.

“The flow is constant,” Alfonse said. “Words, pictures, numbers, facts, graphics, statistics, specks, waves, particles, motes. Only a catastrophe gets our attention. We want them, we need them, we depend on them. As long as they happen somewhere else. [...] We not only enjoy seeing them punished for their relaxed life-style and progressive social ideas but we know we’re not missing anything. The cameras are right there. They’re standing by. Nothing terrible escapes their scrutiny.” (DeLillo 2011: 78)

At first, it appears that Jack and his colleagues dismiss television and its love of catastrophic spectacles as the content of low quality, something below them and their intellect. They also give an impression that television is something they can disregard in their approach to the real. However, when the catastrophe happens to them, they, like all the citizens of this town, need television to give legitimacy to their suffering. In other words, they need television to validate the real, to confirm that the reality they perceive around them is, in fact, real. The frustration that comes from the fact that there is no television coverage of the events they experience proves the extent to which they depend on television to provide a framework through which they can trust their own eyes and senses. In one particular scene, for example, the lack of television coverage of the toxic spill event makes people enraged, because they feel unworthy. While away from their houses during the evacuation, a man walks all over the room with a tiny TV set, complaining there is no news about the toxic cloud. He says: “Not a word, not a picture. [...] No film footage, no live report. Does this kind of thing happen so often that nobody cares anymore? Don’t those people know what we’ve been through?” (DeLillo 2011: 188). The same man directly relates the value of their experience to the television representation of their suffering, or rather lack thereof. He shouts: “It was a deadly specter, right there above us. Is it possible nobody gives substantial coverage to such a thing? Half a minute, twenty seconds? Are they telling us it was insignificant, it was piddling? Are they so callous? Are they so bored by spills and contaminations and wastes?” (DeLillo 2011: 188). He then brings his rant to

culmination by asking: “Do they think this is just television?” (DeLillo 2011: 188). This perception of what happened to them and the relevance of the event ascribed by the media is both painfully symptomatic (of even the contemporary society, not only of the 80s DeLillo depicts in *White Noise*) and thoroughly underrating. By demanding media coverage of the event, this man diminishes the real experience, deeming it almost worthless without sufficient television representation. At the same time, he mocks television, by superimposing real events to it, proclaiming it scripted and artificial. However, in *White Noise*, the treatment of the Airborne Toxic Event is quite symptomatic of the media and what they are going to become. The media coverage of the toxic event becomes constant at first, focusing on different symptoms and illnesses caused by toxic substances. Yet, the media keeps focusing on the aspects of the event that hold entertainment or spectacle value – i.e. the ability to shock or amuse its audience. This extends to symptoms and the accompanying illnesses, but not to the effect such an event has on the community, nor the people’s lives and experiences. This makes people, in turn, have problematic reactions towards both reality and television, showing that they are not entirely sure which of them they believe or value more.

To highlight the negative aspect television has on the perception of reality, a TV set, in DeLillo’s novel is also “where the torment lurks, causing fears and secret desires” (DeLillo 2011: 101). Similarly to *Video*, this novel suggests a rotten influence of television programmes on an individual. It alters people’s perception of reality so much so that they cannot recognize their loved ones if they happen to appear on television. Such is the case with the Gladneys who stand baffled in front of the screen, not being able to grasp the fact that their wife and mother was interviewed for one TV programme. DeLillo notes that “confusion, fear, astonishment spilled from [their] faces” (DeLillo 2011: 123). Jack notes that Babette gets “projected on their bodies”, or rather her image, “Babette of electrons and photons, of whatever forces produced that gray light we took to be her face” (DeLillo 2011: 124). His inability to deal with what he sees is a testimony of a crumbling perception of reality.

A strangeness gripped me, as a sense of psychic disorientation. It was her all right, the face, the hair, the way she blinks in rapid twos and threes. I’d seen her just an hour ago, eating eggs, but her appearance on the screen made me think of her as some distant figure from the past, some ex-wife and absentee mother, a walker in the mists of the dead. If she wasn’t dead, was I? (DeLillo 2011:123).

Jack’s reaction to the clash of his imminent present and reality and the world of television has him questioning the very existence. A passive spectator at

first, he becomes aware of the interaction only when the television realm attacks his quotidian in a direct, large enough manner. Apart from Jack, Murray, Metal Man and Blah Blah Blah seem to be the only ones in these two novels who react to the television programme in any conscious manner. Murray at least questions the symbolical values and messages television emits and recognizes that it has a manipulative effect on the audience, altering the way people think, feel and see things around them. Metal Man and Blah Blah Blah also approach television somewhat critically, although both of them do not show any will or motivation to separate themselves from the world of television. It is related to their profession and everyday lives to that extent that they see it as inevitable, despite being aware of the negative effects it has on them and any individual spectator. The rest of the characters, however, maintain their passive role in information absorption. Moreover, they do not demonstrate even the slightest hint of critical opinion or awareness of their altered reality perception. Rather, they function as parts of the perfect passive mass that Debord and Fiske describe – a massive audience that accepts the simulated and televised version of reality they are served through their TV sets.

#### 4. CONCLUSION: IS TELEVISION CORRUPTING THE REAL?

A question that has divided different theoreticians to this day, the true effect of television on the viewers is still difficult to define. Fiske maintains that television does not truly affect people's lives or cause some changes in their behavior, although he admits it can “work ideologically to promote and prefer certain meanings of the world” (Fiske 2002: 19). In these two novels, however, it appears that the effect of television opposes such beliefs, at least on the collective level. In *White Noise*, no one is truly free of television influences, in spite of Jack's conscious refusal to surrender to the surrounding hysteria around the illnesses caused by the toxic spills. Babette continues to be under the biggest influence of television, constantly expecting her life to resemble the events she watches on screen. Murray, too, stays under the dazing influence of television programme, even though he is somewhat aware of the hidden meaning it radiates onto its audience. The problem is that he does not see television influence as something negative, as he is only interested in the hidden higher knowledge he might gain, if he is proven worthy enough. Similarly, in *Video*, the majority of the protagonists remain under the numbing influence of television. Yet, at least partial victory over television and its programmes is won by Blah Blah Blah and Metal Man, when they use magnets and urine to alter the TV image.

Metal Man approached a group of screens, unzipped his fly and started pissing all over the lowest one. The programme started to water down.

My contribution, he said.

Then he bent down and took a magnet. He moved the magnet across the screen and caused a visible distortion. Blah Blah Blah started clapping. Metal Man took one video mic out and plugged it directly into the screen. He started to comment on the image. Blah Blah Blah was having a wonderful time. She took the magnet and started doodling over all the screens. Metal Man would plug into programmes, sing, shout. Then the screens started to break down, one by one. Metal Man didn't care. (Oklopdžić 2015:150).

Once the two of them start directly interfering with the television programme, they become somewhat liberated of its control, at least temporarily. They manage to reach a state of consciousness that is able to surpass the effect television had on their behavior and reality perception. Both novels seem to suggest that the escape from the confusing hyperreality of television culture is possible only on the individual level. The rarest among the spectators are able to push through the oversaturation and imposed patterns of perception and behavior. For most of them, however, such an endeavor is sadly unreachable. Television, therefore, remains the silent shepherd dictating the rhythms of everyday life in these novels, creating the very thing different theoreticians claim to be non-existent – the passive masses of information absorbents.

Sladana Stamenković

TELEVIZIJSKA KULTURA U ROMANIMA *BELI ŠUM* DONA DELILA I *VIDEO*  
MILANA OKLOPDŽIĆA

*Rezime*

Rad prikazuje pojam televizijske kulture predstavljene na primeru dva romana – jedan američke i jedan srpske književnosti 80-ih godina 20. veka. *Beli šum* Dona DeLila i *Video* Milana Oklopdžića predstavljaju moderno društvo koje pod uticajem televizije i televizijskog programa nesvesno menja svoje obrasce ponašanja. Ovakve promene utiču pre svega na društvenu sferu, menjajući prirodu i navike osnovnih društvenih jedinica, poput porodice i bračne zajednice. Način na koji DeLilo i Oklopdžić opisuju uticaj televizije na svoje junake, pruža jedinstven uvid u mehanizme manipulacije i menjanja ljudske svesti, počev od njihovog identiteta, pa sve do poimanja stvarnosti. Ovaj rad upoređuje pristupe kojima autori ova dva romana pokušavaju da prikažu uticaj koji televizija ima na percepciju i poimanje stvarnosti publike na individualnom i kolektivnom nivou. U oba romana, televizija se pokazuje kao značajan uticaj na to kako ljudi vide stvarnost oko sebe i pored

toga što su prikazana dva društva, naizgled različita i teško uporediva. Slične reakcije publike na televiziju ukazuju na globalnu prirodu televizije kao fenomena, te na njeno duboko ukorenjeno mesto u životima raznih društava 20. veka.

*Ključne reči:* televizijska kultura, Don DeLillo, Milan Oklopđić, medijske studije, televizija, masovni mediji

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