

WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

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This review presents the novel "I Live in the Television", written by Chloe Delaume, translated into Romanian by Mioara Izverna, at Art Publishing House. The novel is an experiment carried out by the authoress, intended to find out what it is like to be a contemporary person, who does nothing to find his/her identity, to distinguish himself/herself from the many around him, and indulges himself/herself into being manipulated by television. The authoress is eager to know if television will have the same effect on herself, who has a critical attitude on this reality. She assumes consciously this experiment not in an unaware way as the majority of people do.

Chloe Delaume is a French writer who considers herself to be "a fiction character". She confesses to be living in "a female body dating from from 10th March 1973". She creates an experimental literature, with investigations into self fiction with ludic and humorous feelings, with ironical pirouettes, distorting words, fracturing meaning and with aggressing sounds. The French media signaled in her books a surrealism meeting with a "Unidentified Literary Object". Chloe Delaume is a literary pseudonym: her first name coming from the main character of the novel "The Foam of Days" (which has determined her to write literature) by Boris Vian, and her family name comes from Antonin Artaud's book "L'Arve et l'Aume". Her real name is Nathalie Dalain.

All the books written by the young writer are challenging from the very title. She is the author of the novels: *Mes week-ends sont pires que les vôtres* (2001), *Le cri du sablier* (2001), *La Vanite des Sonnambules* (2002), *Corpus Simsi* (2003), *Certainement pas* (2004), *J'habite dans la television* (2007).

In *I Live in the Television*, the author makes an experiment. For 22 months (1451 hours), from

morning till night, she makes up her mind to turn into a television "sentinel", becoming her own object of study, exposing herself to the flow of media and advertising messages, swallowing reality-show programmes, to be able to pick up information about "reality". All this is done to understand what can happen to a human being who takes in television in excess. Chloe Delaume switched on the TV and, for almost two years, she lived connected to its reality-shows, its advertisements and to everything TV programmes offer people, in short, she joined the big family of TV fiction consumers.

More convincing than a theoretical book, Chloe Delaume's book demonstrates by an unwonted fictional game - a 27 piece puzzle - what kind of a product a man, permanently connected to TV, can become.

Although this book has mainly in view the French audience, it can be easily read in any country, as stupid programmes like the Big Brother and others of the kind have invaded the whole world, the news manipulators existing everywhere, and companies skilfully promoting useless products are aggressive and get good results, making our epoch a consumer one and people with an aim to obtain more and more objects. This might distract our attention from the fact that our life is empty. *I Live in the Television* makes a thorough analysis of the mechanisms behind the apparently harmless programmes, which try to prove that they have been made for the viewer's comfort.

The book starts with the awareness that "you are not here at hazard. There is nothing like hazard, you will understand this. In this moment you are here, in this moment you stay on your feet. Man should have a vertical position... you are the elite, aren't you? You are no longer the supporter of any idea, with the exception, maybe, of optimisation... (because) you never watch TV,

never indeed... You think like this: to stay upright means not to go down to television." You should say: "I am alive, life is not television".

This is the reality which determines the author to make this experiment. She will have an extreme experience with rightly so consequences: even during the experiment she will become aware that her body, her brain and speech is changing; enters lethargy; becomes the victim of a progressive anesthesia; she undergoes alarming physical modifications - headaches, getting fat, ocular congestions, hallucinations; she is seized with sadist impulses after watching the programme *Star Academy*, getting over them by turning the candidates into characters. Gradually, she begins feeling that she is in the television, her life loses any contact with reality, she becomes a character in the "collective fiction".

The main character of the book has no longer a personal life living almost exclusively with and through television. We are presented the successive stages she lives through, from getting thin to getting fat, from having a keen interest in some programmes to a total apathy and a complete identification with television.

For a better understanding of what television is, Chloe Delaume uses illustrating assertions made by Patrick Le Lay, President of TF1: "here the permanent change resides", "television is an activity without memory." When we commit ourselves to television we are confronted with two choices: 1. mild obedience: we relax in front of the TV set, we stare at the screen to forget about ourselves; 2. desertion: we turn our head away from the TV set, we do not want to watch it, we do not want to know, we do not want to be there.

Chloe Delaume calls television "the great everything", where you are whatever you must want for yourself to be. It reshapes our existence, it induces ideas into our mind, it offers us behaviour models. Television makes us like whatever the others like, in fact, what the big companies and those who get money as a result of our choices decide for us to enjoy.

After three weeks in front of the TV set, for 16 to 20 hours a day, Chloe Delaume says: "I feel that everything I see looks at me. I cannot put some order in what I have grasped." At the

beginning of the second month she found herself talking with the TV set, asking it "Why?" after each programme or documentary she has watched, and television used to answer her immediately. She said: "from now on I share the television way of thinking".

After three months in front of the TV, she takes a two day break and becomes aware of the fact that she no longer perceives the pulse of the social time. "For three months I have taken its rhythm, I am disoriented and take no decision, I am in a state of total lethargy, paralysed by loneliness." Television guides the unfolding of actions that give rhythm to daily life. We must not forget that the author exposes herself to this experiment being aware of the possible detrimental effects of watching television; she might have the illusion that she will be able to defeat television and will not be the other way round.

After 1451 hours in front of the TV, Chloe Delaume has body and behaviour modifications: constant increase in weight; changes at the level of her skin; impulses to an excessive consume; buying products advertised by TV; increase, diversity and redefinition of her needs; hallucinations, headaches.

Besides all these, she has confusion states, not being able to think clearly.

This experiment comes to an end when her fiancée is aware of Chloe's absence, without being aware where she might be. The doors and the windows of their house were locked, all keys were on the table in their right place, only Chloe had disappeared in a mysterious way. Her fiancée calls the police. We do not know whether the police manages to find her, but the reader knows that Chloe is already inside the TV set without a possible way out. The book ends with the following fragment expressing the author's feelings after this experiment: "I am only a piece of land. The collective fiction knows how to mark maps with territories on it, the idea belongs to the Dragon itself. I did not know how to protect my brain, my time is abolished, it is only available. But, as you may see, I have at least my narrative. Save yours until it is not too late." Let's thank the author for having made this experiment for us to be safer and let's try to make her experiment not to be in vain.