The ethics of mediation: aspects of media criticism in Roger Silverstone's works

A ética da mediação: aspectos da crítica da mídia em Roger Silverstone

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ABSTRACT

This is a theoretical article that aims to contribute to a debate on the concept of mediation in Roger Silverstone's work. According to Silverstone, mediation is a multiple, transformative and asymmetrical process, which involves technological and social dimensions. Mediation is fundamental for the ways we relate to the other in everyday life and it has ethical implications. In this paper, I review some notions of authors as Raymond Williams, Martín-Barbero and Nick Couldry, which inform and/or dialogue with Silverstone's ideas. Some key points in this discussion highlight the need for criticism based on the challenging of mediation, what demands a reflection on our relations with the media and their representational modes.

Keywords: Mediation, media, ethics, criticism, Roger Silverstone

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RESUMO

Este é um artigo teórico que pretende contribuir para a discussão do conceito de mediação na obra de Roger Silverstone. Pare esse autor, a mediação é compreendida como um processo múltiplo, transformativo e assimétrico, que envolve dimensões tecnológicas e sociais. Fundamental para o modo como nos relacionamos com o outro no cotidiano, a mediação da mídia gera implicações éticas. Neste trabalho, recupero ainda, conceitos de autores como Raymond Williams, Martín-Barbero e Nick Couldry, que informam e/ou dialogam com a perspectiva de Silverstone. Desse debate, emergem apontamentos para uma crítica baseada no desafio de mediação, que demanda a reflexão acerca de nossas relações com a mídia e seus modelos de representação.

Palavras-chave: Mediação, mídia, ética, crítica, Roger Silverstone

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INTRODUCTION

THE TERM *MEDIATION* is complex and presents multiple uses even when confined to the field of communication, whose studies emphasize at least three faces of the phenomenon: language, socio-cultural and technological. In this article, I intend to examine the concept through Roger Silverstone's thought that, in the articulation of those faces, proposes that we reflect on ethical aspects of mediation in everyday life. For Silverstone (2002b), mediation is technological, as it depends increasingly on the media presence in everyday life, which puts into circulation several textualities, which we borrow as a symbolic resource to establish our conduct with each other and to produce meanings in the complexity of everyday life. But it is also fundamentally social, because it implies the constant cultural negotiation through everyday tactics.

The concept of mediation in Silverstone (2005) covers certain empirical implications, such as the importance, for more complete analysis of the process, of reading various levels of it, since institutions 'do not determine the content, which, in turn, does not 'determine the reception; "is the need to recognize flux and fluidity in the production and consumption of media texts and also to recognize that mediated meanings are not exhausted at the point of consumption" (Ibid.: 191) – those meanings reverberate beyond its fixity in the texts and become fluid in conversations and thoughts. The recognition that media power is diffused and both producers and receivers take part on it, although through different resources; the claim for both a general social theory and an approach that put in perspective, in the mediation analysis, historical aspects of the media, specific types of technology and forms of movement of meaning.

From those characteristics and implications, Silverstone (2002b) proposes a gesture of media criticism from the "challenge of mediation", and puts in question the representative schemas of the media and the relations established with them, through an engagement based on certain rules:

> This kind of critical relationship to the media is a precondition for any ethical or moral interrogation of the media. It is a precondition, too, for our ability to take responsibility for mediation. Without such informed interrogation, audiences become complicity with the media's representational strategies. (Ibid.: 774)

Silverstone's thought about mediation is clearly beholden to others, such as Raymond Williams and Martín-Barbero that will soon be resumed in this study. The definition given by Silverstone to mediation was, in turn, commented by Couldry (2008) in a proposed collation with the term mediatization, in

consideration of conceptual alternatives to investigate certain contemporary communicative phenomena.

Silverstone himself (2005: 189) believed that, in the 21st century, with the latest generation of media technologies and the emergence of network communication, the concept of mediation, implying multiplicity, would become even more central to the apprehension of media economy based on the promise of interactivity.

I start this article with the etymological recovery of the term and uses that pointed critically its ideological condition of intermediation to, then, pass to the notion of mediation as a transformative process, unfolding the intricate relations between media and everyday life.

I highlight from Couldry (2008), the differences between the logics of mediatization and mediation to, then, understand the comparison that Silverstone makes between mediation and translation. I introduce, in discussion, considerations about a third term, interpretation, usually also qualified as a mediator process. Next, I trace the distinctive aspects of Silverstone's thought about communication, understood as the common founded in a diversity that cannot and must not be removed, if we aim to build a truly public domain, according to the concept of Arendt (2013).

Silverstone criticizes, thus, the resulting mediation in the annihilation of differences and of which we are accomplices or bound to. I describe, finally, what would be the proposal, pointed by Silverstone, to challenge this process by identifying and highlighting the gaps of mediation and the need to become responsible for it.

It is a theoretical article with the intention of contributing to the discussion of the concept of mediation in the mature work of Silverstone, poorly translated in Brazil. I am particularly interested in the paths pointed by this concept for the exercise of media criticism. It can guide in future works analytical approaches of media texts and their social repercussions.

MEDIATION AND MEDIA: ETYMOLOGIES

The term *mediation* entered the Portuguese language in the 17th century, rooted in the Latin word *mediare*, that, as notes Williams (2007), includes three meanings: (i) to divide in two, to separate in two parts; (ii) to act as a mediator, an intermediary (to mediate a conflict between enemies); (iii) to be between, to be between (two things). Mediation, as an act, is imbricated to the media, from the Latin *medium*, *intermediate element, mediating instrument*. Marcondes Filho (2005: 8) retrieves the origin of the term *medium* in

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Physics as an element that goes out to explain what it is mediating; it "is not perceived, but allows the perception, I mean, it conveys the features of an object (its forms) without changing it". Thus, according to the author, elements such as light, air or even sand, through their flexibility and ability to take forms, can act as *media*[1] that conduct objects. On another level, when they constitute intermediate elements in a more complex relationship between technology and cultural and artistic forms, such as photography, cinema, television and the internet, the media continues to operate for mediations, which tend to transparency – in the sense that media strategies of representation of the world do not make explicit. The feeling of presence of represented objects is given by the deletion of the medium and its mediations. To describe this effect, the English language uses the term immediacy, which, in certain contexts, can be conveniently translated as transparency, but that refers to the condition of what is immediate – the *i* as a prefix of negation, indicating the *no mediated*, i.e., as effect, is presented directly, without an intermediary agent.

In Flusser (2002), the concept of *technical image*, as one that, like photographic, is produced by devices, also refers to mediation which makes a window to the world, omitting its symbolic character. The technical image is objective and presents itself at the same level as real, but its objectivity is illusory, because this image is as symbolic as any other. On what it is refered to as "second-order magic" and "abstract spell", Flusser (2002: 15) proposes "to rip" the technical images, that is, to produce a review about them that problematizes them as "surfaces that transcode processes in scene" and that result from them, as well as spreading certain concepts about the world.

In a line of thought, linked mainly to the factual representation, the mediation of media presents to us dilemmas every time that is put to work in this illusory proposition of neutral and immediate relations with the world, which would omit its encoding strategies.

I understand as *codification* (Hall, 2009) the process by which events are placed under the sign of speech, making it narrative products served by media apparatus and distributed socially. Williams (2007) claims there is a recurrent use of mediation, which describes it as an essential process of ideology and ultimately oppose the mediated relationship to the real one, in which the first wants to go through the latter. Reconciled to the modern use of the media as a means of mass communication, this meaning leads to the notion "that certain social agencies are deliberately brought between reality and social conscience to prevent understanding of reality" (Ibid.: 174).

THE MULTIPLICITY OF MEDIATION

We know that none of those concepts was completely abandoned, but, we are also aware of the complexity of mediation in the current usage, especially after reception theory studies, initiated in the 1960s, and what Martín-Barbero (2004) considers as the "reinsertion of communication in the field of culture, which multiplied the actors and communicative dynamics. In terms of reception, considered today as mediation, the infinity of ways, many of them unpredictable, empirical reading — described by Verón (2004) as "recognition grammars" – and which are dependent on many variables, from taste to acquired knowledge. The way individuals devotes their attention to a text by choosing it, interpreting and making use of it, passes, of course, through the subjective issue, but that own subjectivity is built on dialogue with the mediations of groups and classes. Martín-Barbero (2004: 233) refers to ritualities that show "different uses of social media", as, for example:

> the expressive barroquism of popular modes to watch movies opposed to the sobriety and seriousness of the intellectual to whom any noise distracts his cinematographic contemplation, or the productive consumption that some young people make of computer opposed to the sharply playful elusive use of the majority.

Quoting Beatriz Sarlo, Martín-Barbero refers to "action grammars" as regulators of ways to look, listen and read that mediate our relationship with media. We, again, note the emphasis in the plural, which, as we will see, is one of the hallmarks of mediation.

In his later writings, Silverstone understands mediation as a transformative and dialectic process – although uneven – increasingly miscible, which involves not only media encoding, but the different ways of decoding, on the interaction of individuals with media, and the interaction between the individuals, groups and institutions that use symbolic resources, provided mediatically, in their actions and everyday relationships. The *world of mediation* is of great inclusiveness, and even our practices and texts as analysts and critics of media are included in this movement of meanings.

> Mediation is dialectical because while it is perfectly possible to privilege those mass media as defining and perhaps even determining social meanings, such privileging would miss the continuous and often creative engagement that listeners and viewers have with the products of mass communication. And it is uneven, precisely because the power to work with, or against, the dominant

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or deeply entrenched meanings that the media provide is unevenly distributed across and within societies. (Silverstone, 2002b: 762)

The asymmetrical character that Silverstone gives to mediation is an important point of his thought, establishing relations with the critical perspective of Raymond Williams (2003). At the same time that he emphasizes the cultural dimension of the phenomenon, its unpredictability and dynamic social circulation of meanings, Silverstone also marks the inequality of the process. The way a particular society engages in the use and in the confrontation of the "dominant meanings" would not be the same in all classes, and neither the possibilities are identical in societies that, for example, have experienced different developments in media public and commercial services, such as those of television systems. Mediation is conflicting, but like Williams, Silverstone recognized the pressures and the power of established media institutions to conform uses of technology, narratives and representative schemes. Therefore, media criticism, as we will see, must always be attentive to unexpected mediation, but also to the concentration of symbolic power in society.

The conflicting character of mediation made Couldry (2008) prefer the term to the concept of mediatization to the study of phenomena such as *digital storytelling*, which refers to a set of personal stories told in social networks. For Couldry, the concept of mediation is more productive in this case because, instead of working with the idea of a single media logic of forming an entire social space, he emphasizes the heterogeneity of relationships and of the emerging transformations of media relationship.

From Silverstone, and in the dialectical extension for a prospect to take account of the various aspects of non-linearity of the process, Couldry (2008: 383) understands mediation "as a result of production flows, movement, interpretation and recirculation". At this point, the multiplicity of mediation differs from the linear logic of mediatization, which, however, as a theory, has the advantage, according to Couldry, to encourage us to seek common standards which, in fact, pass by several fields.

On the mediatization theory, the phenomenon is, therefore, considered as a controller. Sodré (2002: 21), comprises mediatization as "an order of mediations socially conducted towards communication understood as an informational process, followed by business organizations", makes us think, through it, the emergence of a media bios, i.e., a new life form, a field of social actions conformed by the entanglement of linear or reticular communication technology. This field is, according to Sodré (2002: 255), an "imaginative refiguration of traditional life by the 'narrative' of the capitalist market".

In the approach that inherits the culturalist perspective, the multiplicity of mediations is confirmed, which Silverstone (2002b), however, as we have seen, exposes as asymmetrical. Even if we recognize the transformative character of the process and that, there is always a battle for meaning – a "fight in the speech", referred by Hall (2009) – we cannot disregard the power of dominant media in crystallizing meanings. Martín-Barbero (2014: 32) refers to the existence of a "sedimented symbolic", consisting of stereotypes and narratives constantly repeated.

To describe the transformative mediation movement, Silverstone (2002a) compares it with translation. The stigma of translation, as Seligmann-Silva (2005: 189) emphasizes, is to be a passage and, more than that, a primary movement of abandonment. The process involves creative investment, notably when dealing with high-performance aesthetic texts that demand, from the translator, an intervention in a migration not only between languages, but also primarily between cultures.

In a brief paraphrase of George Steiner's theory of translation, Silverstone describes mediation through four steps: (i) trust: the notion that there is value in the text and that it deserves to be translated; (ii) aggression: to translate is an act of plunder (Steiner uses an image of colonization, in which the wealth of a foreign territory is extracted and taken to another context),"the translator invades, extracts, and brings home" (Steiner, 1975: 298); (iii) appropriation: a movement that involves "personification", "consummation", "domestication" (Silverstone, 2002a: 36) – the original term in English is *incorporation*, but Steiner also uses *embodiment*, suggesting the process of assimilation; (iv) restitution: the translator "gives the meaning back", with possible additions.

In a way, the translator must compensate the predatory act performed. "The primitive glory of the original may be gone, but what we see instead is something new, certainly; something better, possibly; something different, obviously "(Ibid.: 36).

Silverstone completes the approaches between translation and mediation with a quotation from the short story *Pierre Menard*, *author of Quixote*, by Borges (1999), in which the protagonist takes the project to rewrite, word by word, the work of Cervantes – and yet turns out to produce a different book.

Translation, interpretation[2] and mediation are terms constantly compared, being translation a creative interlingual transposition (Jakobson, 1969), and interpretation, an understanding speech, which can be seen as the most marked types of mediation, but, still, in the condition of mediation, always transformative. For Eco (1986: 43), we can freely use a text as a stimulus for the imagination, because the act of reading is desiderative. In contrast, "inter-

2. For Bosi (2003: 473), the interpreter is a mediator, being the act of interpreting a mediation between the form and the event of the text in search of a "written understanding", which remakes, in hermeneutics, the symbolic experience of the other.

pretation always involves a dialectic between the author's strategies and the response of a model reader". Therefore, it is up to the interpreter to identify and understand the strategies that both conform an enunciator voice as the relation proposed, in the text, with the enunciatee – the intradiegetic reader, expected as a contributor.

From the understanding of those strategies, given by an analytical procedure that handles knowledge about genres, historical perspectives, intertextual dialogism and so on, a sense that what is proposed in the case of a work of art, it does not reveal itself immediately. However, the difference of interpretation, the mediation in the media is extremely diverse – and may even include some beacons, because, as we said, our own criticism of the media is part of it, but what seems to define it is precisely the use.

In common, the three terms refer to this work of decryption or decoding required in relation to the thickness of the language. For Bosi (2003), the symbolic power that crosses the language expresses a will, a "need to say" something which, however, needs to be reconstituted, with doubts. Martín-Barbero reminds us of that *symbol* means, in Greek, something divided into two (hence, *mediated*, in one of the renderings seen before), in which a part is introduced to another for recognition.

> Mediation par excellence, the symbol fills the universe of man marking his impossible instant access to things (Cassirer, 1965: 45), forcing to accept that other mediation introduced by deciphering the meaning. In addition, therefore, constitutively linked to the speech: all symbol makes you think, or rather, "gives you something to think" (Ricoeur, 1968: 323). Not from a reference that develops in its exterior, but contained within the enigma that the symbol itself contains. Therein lies its *provocation to think*. (Martín-Barbero, 2014: 31)

When he mentions the logic of the differences, Silverstone notes that mediation is *less* and *more* than translation. Mediation is considered, in this context, as the circulation of meanings in the field of culture and media in its entanglement and unfolding in everyday life. Mediation is less than translation because it is less certain.

Translators take care of the object they want to translate, worrying about the fragility of the structure that will need to be moved and recreated. However, "the mediator [in the media practices] is not necessarily linked to his text, nor his object by love, although it may be in individual cases" (Silverstone, 2002a: 37). Our relationship with media, although moved by affection (even so), is, in general, abusive, devoid of equity concerns, replacement and com-

pensation. At the same time, mediation is more because it unfolds beyond the copyright work of translation – involving institutions, groups and technologies – and beyond media textualities. If mediation materializes itself in movies, soap operas, talk shows, newspapers, blogs and so on, it also becomes fluid in the talks and in our thoughts and actions, reaching dimensions of daily life.

FOR A MEDIA CRITICISM IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The way Silverstone describes media as second nature, without, however, replacing the world of immediate experience, is important to understand the ethical implications of mediation. Silverstone refuses Baudrillard's idea of simulacrum and the notion of mediation referred previously as a process in which media presents itself as a screen or a hologram. In contrast, media is the experiential world, running continuously closely tied to it.

> The lived and the represented consequently become the warp and the weft of the everyday, and what is at stake in any investigation of their interrelationship is the historical and sociological specificity of the ensuing fabric, its strengths and its weaknesses, its coincidences and its contradictions: the touch and the feel of culture – the ethics and aesthetics of experience. (Silverstone, 2002b: 763)

For the author, our common, in terms of humanity and solidarity, is created in daily life. The actions and interactions that happen on a daily basis tend to be (or not) an ethic of care and responsibility that we assumed before the others. He starts here, from the philosophy of Emmanuel Lévinas (1980), which criticizes the ontological basis of Western thought and affirms the primordially ethics in its relational character, about the nature of being.

For Lévinas, *to be for the others*, the responsibility that I establish, unconditionally, in relation to the others, which constantly challenges me, should be seen as a constituent principle of the subject. No ethics of daily life, however, can be conceived without communication, which, in turn, is the result of representations that circulate and are appropriate; the images I get and produce on the others; what is presented to me as similarity and difference from those others; and how I work out and turn those meanings in circulation. Increasingly dependent on media technologies, this mediation was in the 20th century, markedly of broadcasting, hence the concern, especially after the 1950's, to conduct studies on the media effects on society. The 21st century proposes other challenges with the spread of digital networks technologies and constant passages between the *mass*, targeted and social media.

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The entanglement of everyday media became central to the way people manage their lives. Media provides frames, symbolic resources so we can move on the complexity of everyday life and produce sense from their intricate relationships. We are increasingly dependent on it to define our conduct in relation to the others, especially the others away that just makes us visible through media.

> I intend to argue that there are profound moral and ethics issues to be addressed in confronting the mediation of everyday life. I also intend to argue that insofar as the persisting representational characteristics of contemporary media, above all in our media's representation of the other, remain unchallenged – as for the most part they are – then those who receive and accept them are neither mere prisoners of a dominant ideology nor innocents in a world of false consciousness; rather they are willing participants, that is, complicit, or even actively engaged, that is, collusive, in a mediated culture that fails to deliver its promises of communication and connection, with enduring, powerful and largely negative consequences for our status as human beings. (Silverstone, 2002b: 762)

Media fails in communication, according to Silverstone, because it "erases" others. Its representation strategies annihilate the difference, operating through the assimilation of the others; or, in a contrary motion, propose an absolute abyss, denying any possibility of establishing a humanity in common or a form of proximity to each other. The examples Silverstone works are clear and relate, on one hand, to the way the difference is annihilated in advertising, talk shows or even in documentaries, in which, for example, African and Caribbean people are smiling and friendly displayed, the marginal and invisible subjects socially domesticated or appear poor are invariably represented "swollen bellies and flies in their eyes" (Ibid.: 770). On the other hand, there are representations that outline otherness as something unattainable and that cannot be understood, as the persistent images of Palestinians as terrorists. Silverstone places, then, the problem of adequate distance, because "communication can never incorporate the other fully, nor should it aim to" (Ibid.: 768). If we are not all the same nor inexorably different, ethics in my relationship with the others would be in recognition of this difference and would accept that the other is always a problem, that is, however "a necessary precondition of what it means to be human" (Ibid.: 768).

The otherness that Silverstone seeks to say is, therefore, from another absolute, whose humanity we share, although this is from a really different substance. The notion brings us back again to Lévinas (1980), who claims a

relationship with each other that does not make him/her the "same", in mirror of my representation.

Although Silverstone claims that media fails in communication annihilating the others, either by proximity or by creating insurmountable hiatus, it is appropriate to consider whether the question of proper distance is always, regardless of media, a dilemma for the moral, that is, of an *I* created and strengthened from the disinterested, unconditional responsibility that we take to the others. Zygmunt Bauman (1997: 131) argues that morality is necessarily so-called paradoxical, since the closeness and excessive care result in repression, when the authority of the other is removed and he/she is "refunded as my creation".[3]

Communication must be, then, a bridge for the common, based on diversity – an idea that Silverstone formulates from the thought of Hannah Arendt (2013) about the meaning of public life, in *The human condition*. For Arendt, the term *public* refers to two related phenomena, neither overlapping nor identical. First, *public* refers to what everybody can see and hear. Only when things become apparent, in addition to the privacy and intimacy, they assume the condition of reality. The endorsement of the world reality and of man depends on appearance "and, therefore, the existence of a public domain in which things can emerge from the darkness of a sheltered existence" (Arendt, 2013: 63).

Second, the term *public* designates the world that, as an artifact, is created by men and established as a common domain we gathered, occupying different positions. "The importance of being seen and heard by others comes from the fact that everyone sees and hears from different angles" (Ibid.: 70). This meeting is possible only through the interest in a common object, seen from different perspectives, by many people, what makes its identity recognized in the diversity of approaches. Public domain reality depends on that concurrency of perspectives:

> Only when things can be seen by many people, in a variety of aspects, without changing identity, so that those who are around know they see identity in the most complete diversity, world reality can appear real and reliably. (Ibid.: 70)

Conversely, the common world ends when we get from it just one point, presented in a unique perspective. In this case, we become public, not private, i.e., deprived of seeing and hearing, to finally feel the others; and be apparent to them, as if we were in family life. Media would overlap this common prismatic domain not only for the already mentioned reducing modes of representation,

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but due to one of its dimensions of power that operates on a common constitution without edges, without the risks of a face to face situation. For Couldry, media is a trusted system that gives us the sense of collective, when, for example, we share the same event by means of a television broadcast. However, as he points out, this framework of social works without the need of a real co-presence, soon, "media provide an 'abstract' form of togetherness which operates without altering the actual segregation in society" (Couldry, 2004: 43-44).

Even the network technologies, which, at first, would come to remedy weaknesses of contemporary sociability, provide, for Silverstone (2002b), only the illusion of connectivity. At best, they can be seen as a form of "privatization of sociability", since they are focused on individuals, in their lifestyles and private interests, and with little space, in fact, to deal with the dispute. "The me-centered network survives for only as long as I do. It has little capacity for reproduction, nor does it have de patience for the struggle with contradiction" (Ibid.: 767).

The world in which Silverstone writes is the internet, however, before the social media, which, of course, opened new possibilities of expression on the others and reinforced, as pointed out by the author, the multiple character of mediations. However, just like Williams, Silverstone rejects technological determinism and the notion of emergence of new devices can change, by itself, our society.

In fact, as we can grasp of polarizations recurrently set out in social media about political positioning, religious, gender, sexual diversity, among others, the reticularity in media communications has not eliminated the difficulty of the encounter with the others, doing that, often, a reductive logic of the dominant media also operates in those environments, although not exclusively, as it is characteristic of the plurality of mediations. The reduction of the differences and contradictions features functionality in everyday life, and, according to Silverstone, we took advantage of it to move the complexity of everyday life. The compliment that the intellectuality of everyday life as a space for the heterologic and the unpredictable, which celebrate creativity and playfulness, is for Silverstone, an approach marked by the "luxury of elites", because everyday life is hard for most people. "Ambiguities are threats not comforts in the material struggles of the everyday" (Ibid.: 763).

Media and its forms of ordering (through narratives, genres, and scheduling) offer ways for resolving this ambiguity and, therefore, means to increase safety and create a degree of comfort. When we accept, as audience, this proposed mode of gearbox engagement with the world, we become accomplices of this media.

In the state of dictionary, *complicity* means both the participation in a crime as, in a more comprehensive and neutral form, the collaboration or partnership in the realization of something. Silverstone (2002b) advances in the discussion of the term from an essay by George Marcus on relations between the anthropologist and his objects in the post-colonial world.

In this case, a complicity is established, when the parties involved recognize that they are involved in a project generator of inadequate knowledge, but, still, accept it. Similarly, the complicity in media culture comes from the involvement of three parties: the represented subject, producers and audiences.

> Subjects are complicit when they play according to the rules, when they accept the limitations of genre, when they fail to recognize the impossibility, and partiality, of representation. Producers are complicity likewise when they fail to reflect on the limitations of their practice and fail to communicate these both to their subjects and their audiences. Audiences are complicit insofar as they uncritically accept the media's representational claims and insofar as their knowing acknowledgment of its limitations remains tacit. (Ibid.: 775)

Complicity becomes collusion – an adjustment or a combination inherently evil – when we accept mediation of media without questioning its shortcomings and incompleteness and make use of it to negate the other and build a *shrine* of everyday life, where we live.

We watch the suffering of others through television and other media channels, and we believe that this attention is enough to assume responsibility for them and engage in their cause. In fact, media usually invites us to accept the challenge of the other. In *Why study the media*, Silverstone (2002a: 34) has already denounced this collusion in saying that, many times, "we use the meanings of media to avoid the world, away from it, perhaps challenges imposed by the responsibility and care, to escape the recognition of difference".

Therefore, Silverstone's proposal is that media criticism must pass necessarily by the challenge of mediation, involving both the analysis of media texts as well as the understanding of the modes of engagement, shared vocabulary, of genres offered to us on a daily basis by the playing of which we are part. As Silverstone points out, if the ratings are active, they are responsible for their actions and the ways to engage with media, often accepting and pointing to its communicative failures. Although Silverstone does not systematize the elements into the challenge of mediation, it is possible to list, from the reading of his texts, some paths to this practice. First, you need to know and question the context and the intent of the one who initiates the communication.

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Second, although we recognize the importance of media mediation or even the impossibility of living outside it today, we must either assume that it is necessarily incomplete as evidence media strategies in construction of an illusory fill in the representation of the others. To challenge the measurement involves identifying and putting in relief those gaps and the reducing aspects of forms of representation that act on deletion of the other. Third, it is not enough for the critical reception, to relate what is seen in the immediate life; it is also essential to question the rules of media engagement and the rules of the game, accepted when, for example, we watch a particular program.

Finally, you need to know and challenge the genres and the many inter-sections among them. To reflect on how they socially become naturalized, re-iterating speech places, representation models and forms of participation and engagement of the audience. These are some identifiable points in Silverstone's debate about mediation, which suggests that the critical work must be exercised continuously by means of a negotiation in which we must become also responsible for mediation, which involves opportunities to challenge or refuse it.

SOME FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Mediation, in Silverstone's thought, can be regarded as an essentially *transformative* process, resulting from production flows, circulation, reception and recirculation of meanings. It is a *multiple* process and, therefore, the difference of mediatization, non-linear, unfolding "in primary and secondary texts" (Silverstone, 2002a: 34), produced and materialized in the media, but also outside of them. In this stream, the meanings become fluid also in our thoughts, discussions and interactions. While recognizing the social character of mediation, Silverstone draws our attention to the way it has become, today, dependent on the communication technologies, which provide symbolic resources so that we can give meaning to everyday life and establish our conduct with the other. Therefore, mediation generates strong *ethical* implications. The process is, finally, asymmetric since we must consider that the power of questioning meanings produced by hegemonic media is distributed unequally within a society and between different ones.

The establishment of a critical relationship with media must pass, necessarily, by the challenge of mediation, which is media and communication that fails in the recognition of otherness and diversity. This practice begins, however, by reflection as we provided subject represented and self-determined in hearings with the genres and media texts and do their everyday uses, especially with regard to our conduct in relation to the others.

Media mediation is highly inclusive because communication technologies have enmeshed in everyday life, being virtually impossible to be outside of it. However, much of its strength also lies in the ability it has to comfort us through a symbolic addict, not provocative, but familiar and reductive and that helps us to deal with the complexity of life. However, as Silverstone denounces, this has very little to do with communication or with a truly public domain able to open ourselves up to the challenge that is the other. If we cannot, in fact, live outside of this mediation, it is up to us, all the time, to think about relationships and the cracks between the lived and the represented and acknowledge that, although necessary, mediation is necessarily incomplete and must not be used to move farther away from the world. ◼

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