



Large and small scale forms of personhood

Asif Agha ^{*,1}

Department of Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania, 323 University Museum, 3260 South Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-6398, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Available online 27 March 2011

Keywords:

Communication
Commodities
Public sphere
Mass media
Liberalism

ABSTRACT

This article describes how forms of mediation are segmented into mediatized forms through links among discursive and commodity-based practices. In obscuring these practices, the “mass media” construct obscures the characteristics of cultural forms that emerge and spread through these practices. The paper focuses on the processes through which the cultural form known as “the liberal subject” was re-scaled through mediatized practices in early modern Europe, a consideration of which clarifies the causes underlying its present day anxieties.

© 2011 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

My goal here is not to offer an account of what people are “really” like, despite what my title may suggest, but to discuss certain figures of personhood modeled and maintained by mediatized institutions in contemporary society. I describe rather specific institutional logics that articulate these figures and make them available as voicing structures to which actual persons orient in a variety of ways. Part of my argument, however, is that the presence of these mediatized processes in our midst is largely obscured by received conceptions of what is nowadays called “the mass media.” After introducing some contemporary examples (Section 2), and a brief discussion of terminology (Section 3), I suggest ways of re-thinking the terrain of “the mass media” in terms of the logic of mediatization (Section 4). I discuss a number of mediatized figures of personhood, some of which—such as the “liberal subject”—have widely known standard names. Others—what I call the “role-fractionated self” and the “re-scalable self”—lack everyday names, but are nonetheless evidenced as presuppositions of everyday talk about “selves” (one’s own, others’), and in more specialized registers of discourse employed by institutions that seek to “manage” ideals of personhood in practices of consumption and politics today.

The fact that institutions pursue certain goals does not of course mean that they succeed in them (or even *can* succeed in some of them), nor that what they actually manage to do corresponds to what they recognize as their goals. Yet, in a standard contemporary *mythos*, anxieties about the rise of the mass media are joined at the hip to anxieties about the decline of democracy, a link increasingly formulated by appeal to Habermas’ account of the rise and decline of “the public sphere” and of a particular figure of subjectivity, the “rational-critical liberal subject,” who made of it a habitat and a home. In Section 5, I attempt to cure us of these anxieties by offering a different account of the basic constructs that give this myth its charter. Let us begin, however, with a present-day ethnographic context.

* Tel.: +1 215 898 4110.

E-mail address: asifagha@sas.upenn.edu

¹ Asif Agha is Professor in the Department of Anthropology and the Graduate Groups in Linguistics, History and Sociology of Science, Folklore, South Asian Studies, International Studies, and Education at the University of Pennsylvania.

2. How to re-scale a liberal subject

In April 1967, Hilary Rodham Clinton, then a student at Wellesley College, confessed in a letter to her high school classmate, John Peavoy, then a student at Princeton: “Since Xmas vacation, I’ve gone through three and a half metamorphoses and am beginning to feel as though there is a smorgasbord of personalities spread before me. So far, I’ve used alienated academic, involved pseudo-hippie, educational and social reformer, and one half of withdrawn simplicity” (New York Times, VII/29/07). While it is doubtful that everyone manages such persona-hopping with equal ease, such talk is certainly familiar as a discursive form common in accounts of the self. The discursive form treats persons as partible objects, divisible into role-fractions that are extractable from whole persons and replaceable by others; individuals may choose how they re-arrange their parts, and pick the ones they play or “use” in performance. Hilary Clinton’s evocation of acts of consumption (the term “smorgasbord”) suggests that she recognizes this form of talk as somehow linked to a logic of consumerism, even though she—then a student at a small liberal arts college—uses it to harness an autobiographical self in a classic humanist narrative of personal revelation.

Today, the pollster Mark J. Penn—who served as Hilary Clinton’s “chief strategist” when she became a “Presidential candidate” in 2008—has been harnessing role-fractions and liberal-humanist subjects in the service of politics and business for three decades. As CEO of Burson-Marsteller, Mr. Penn has a global clientele.² He is perhaps best known in the United States for having harnessed the “Soccer Mom” while serving as Bill Clinton’s campaign advisor: He coined the term, and identified its referent as a crucial constituency (a “swing voter”) in Bill Clinton’s 1996 re-election campaign. Mr. Penn calls himself a “trendspotter.” In his recent book—*Microtrends: The Small Forces Behind Tomorrow’s Big Changes*—Mr. Penn argues that you (yes: You) are a microtrend, or, at least, contain a role-fraction that corresponds to one, though perhaps one that—unlike the “Soccer Mom”—hasn’t been named yet. So the book helpfully describes and names 75 new ones—including “Sex-Ratio Singles,” the “Working Retired,” “Pet Parents,” “Protestant Hispanics,” “Tech Fatales,” “Non-Profiters,” “Neglected Dads,” “Aspiring Snipers,” and “Stained Glass Ceiling Breakers.” According to his publisher’s publicity blurb, Mr. Penn uses polling methods to “detect relatively small patterns of behavior in our culture—microtrends that are wielding great influence on business, politics, and our personal lives.” But Mr. Penn does not simply describe microtrends. He argues that businesses and political campaigns should try to rescale them.

Here’s why. “[A] trend is not simply a “shift” in how people do things, like more women taking their husband’s name. It is not just an evolving “preference” for a product or activity, like the growing use of GPS systems.” A trend is a grouping of behaviors and preferences into categories of personhood—in particular, into a set of statistically defined “social types”—whose demographic scale and institutional fortunes determine whether the grouping is a “mega-” or a “micro-” trend. Equally important from a business standpoint is the potential for “re-grouping” these types (Agha, 2007a, chap. 5) and, in particular, the possibility of “re-scaling” them. For, as we are told: “A microtrend is an intense identity group, that is growing, which has needs and wants unmet by the current crop of companies, marketers, policymakers, and others who would influence society’s behaviors.” (Penn et al., 2007, p. xx; italics in original). Hence any microtrend is a prospective market niche for a business, or a potential voting constituency for a political campaign. In any market democracy, Mr. Penn tells his reader, simply to rescale a microtrend is to rescale that public enterprise you call your own. How many units of human capital do you need? A bare one percent of the public, or three million people, will suffice to launch any business or social movement, we are told.

All of this leads to certain well-known positional anxieties about the future prospects for liberal democracy and for citizens’ hopes for their liberties. To the “autonomous liberal subject”—that ideal of self-autonomy, in whom the naturalized harmony of “critical rationality” and “free will” yields an exemplary unit-citizen of a liberal democracy—these “role-fractionated” and “re-scalable” selves are joined to each other as a democracy-devouring many-headed hydra succored by things having names like “the mass media” and “consumerism”; while, to “postmodernists,” eager to proclaim the death of the liberal subject, they loom as a nervy hope for a more emancipatory politics, waiting to be born.

My goal here is not to resolve these disputes, but to show that the role-fractionated self and the liberal subject (to say nothing of the postmodern subject) are figures of personhood re-scaled by the same semiotic process, though articulated and institutionalized at different historical times. I call this process the *mediatization of semiotic mediation*. My goal is to historicize this process, to characterize a few of its socioeconomic and semiotic dimensions, and to discuss their implications.

3. Figures of personhood

By figures of personhood I do not mean timeless forms whose shadows we glimpse in the flickering firelight of Plato’s cave, nor Weberian ideal types. I mean contingent, performable behaviors effectively linked to social personae for some determinate population; or, in a semiotic idiom, behaviors that convey icons (or images) of personhood to those for whom

² Mr. Penn has helped usher more than 25 politicians into elected office around the world—including Tony Blair (third Labor party term) and Michael Bloomberg (NYC mayoral campaign). As advisor to Bill Gates, Mr. Penn helped refurbish Microsoft’s public persona and market share. He is variously described as “Master of the Message” (*Time Magazine*), “The King of Polls” (*London Times*), and “The most powerful man in Washington you’ve never heard of” (*The Washington Post*).

they function as signs (i.e., those able to infer these personae from these behaviors). When performed as behaviors they index the persona (or social image) of the one performing them, a case where they make social personae inferable as facts about *definite individual actors* and thereby function as singular indexical icons, or concrete emblems. Yet their iconic-imagistic aspect can be detached from their particularizing-indexical aspect when such signs are re-evaluated as *generic symbols* (e.g., are treated as ways of talking about “social types” of whatever kind, of which the foregoing “microtrends” are a special case).

A figure of personhood once abstracted from performance as a generic symbol may be subjected to various forms of decontextualized depiction: Its existence and characteristics may be debated, discussed, considered and re-considered. It may acquire an official name, be used as a term of address, or targeted as a market segment. It may help configure certain paradigmatic personae, such as those who are objects of sexual desire, or those who are bearers of taste and refinement, or those who are prototypical icons of “cool” for certain segments of the market. It may come to be treated as a criterion on recognized personhood by the State. It may be recognized as a stereotypic figure by many persons, functionally effective as a normative ideal for some, as a counter-model for others. To speak of the existence of “figures of personhood” is to speak of forms of perceivable and performable behavior that undergo such semiotic processes, and of actual persons oriented to them through such processes over specific demographic and spatiotemporal scales.

Figures of personhood have no necessary connection to “personality” (an interiorized self having constant attributes over time), or “social character” (a persona-fraction that recurs in many personalities), nor with “identity” (a persona in which an actor has stakes or allegiances). These terms describe formations that emerge through more specific semiotic processes and only under certain conditions (Agha, 2007a, pp. 233–254).³ I will not be concerned with them here.

My concern, rather, is with the question of how figures of personhood can be re-scaled through practices of mediatization. I attempt to show that the social life of these figures, and the sociohistorical scales at which demographic segments orient to them, depend on discursive and economic processes whose semiotic organization can be described and studied. However, in order to understand how *a* liberal subject—or even *the* liberal subject; or, indeed, *any* mediatized figure of personhood—can be re-scaled in space and time, we need, first, to move beyond talk of “the mass media” to an understanding of the mediatization of mediation.

4. The Mediatization of semiotic mediation

By the **mediatization of mediation** I mean the lamination of a process of commoditization upon a process of communication. Our ability to grasp this link is obscured by talk of what—since the 1920s—has been called “the mass media of communication,” or simply “the mass media.” This is a term that everyone now takes for granted, but no-one quite knows how to define. And from the amorphousness of its referent vast magical powers to shape and suborn individual thought are easily derived from apothegms like “the medium is the message” and “the decline of the public sphere.” Yet awkward problems remain: what is it? In particular: what do we mean by *media*? what do we mean by *mass*? and what do we mean by *the*?

When we speak of “the mass media” we seem to be speaking of a collection of definite things, presupposed as given. Yet we usually encounter this collection as an arbitrary list. Newspapers, novels, radio, TV, and internet, are on everyone's list, but no-one is quite sure *what*—or rather, *when* a thing—is included or excluded from that list.⁴ By contrast, when we speak of “the *mass* media,” we are apparently speaking of an “undifferentiated collectivity of persons.” Yet since communication of any kind requires participation roles, persons can only belong to any such collectivity by *first* occupying positions within participation frameworks, positions defined by their relationship to messages (such as writers-of and readers-of them). Moreover, any such collectivity can never, in principle, be wholly *undifferentiated* insofar as being linked to (one or more) media is a constitutive condition. Indeed, any *specific* such mass, such as a TV audience (vs. a newspaper readership), is differentiated and segmented from the totality of persons by virtue of having participatory access to things that count as messages of at least *that* type

³ For instance, many regimes of Church and State presuppose continuity of self among their subjects—presupposing for each the existence of a continuous inner self as the origo of moral and legal culpability—and, through different procedures, seek performatively to reproduce such continuous selves as role-fractions within subjects as conditions on their participation in ritual and institutional practices. Yet these are value projects grounded in public semiosis, not facts intrinsic to the inner world, a distinction which the “culture and national character” school (Benedict, 1934; Mead, 1951, 1963; Riesman, 1961, etc.) tended not to recognize, preferring instead a psychological idiom for describing them.

⁴ Witness the following doubts, attested in the literature: Are CDs as physical objects mass media? Or only CDs produced by major record labels (vs. those we burn at home on desktop computers)? Is the internet always a mass medium? (But what about email?) Is the telephone always a *non*-mass medium? (But what about telemarketers?) Some argue that the Egyptian pyramids, stained glass windows in medieval European churches, and the pillars of Ashoka in South/Central Asia are early examples of mass media; others balk at the suggestion. Most writers agree that forms of mass transit are frameworks for mass communication—because they bring masses of persons into contact as potential communicators—but tend to exclude them from “the mass media.” All of these debates arise only if we think of “the mass media” as an enumerable collection of things through a Whorfian hypostasization from a noun phrase—with the head of the noun phrase, *media*, construed as a plural count noun (hence, enumerable things), the modifier *mass* specifying its referents by characterizing their users (cf. *the masses*) and the deictic, *the*, indexically denoting referents as presupposed or given things, yielding a composite sketch of referent as a bounded collection of things having characterizable properties—and then attempt to discover, enumerate, and characterize those properties. Once we see that such “things” are organized as and by institutionally configured social processes, which permit variable participation frameworks for semiosis, their construal as a discrete collection is no longer possible. The real issue then is not *what* the mass media is, but *when* something counts as mass media, for *whom* it does so, in *which* practices, and to *what* degree; and, more interestingly, as I show later, the best tonic for anxieties about “the mass media” is a better grasp of the relation of mediatization to mediation.

of media, and the question remains of how to describe this form of organization in more general terms.⁵ Moreover, since persons routinely *shift* participant roles and footings during communicative activities (e.g., hearing a question, then uttering an answer; listening to a song, then singing it; watching TV with friends, then making jokes about the show and those who like it), and since such shifts routinely differentiate performed identities in social interaction, the idea that the “mass” involved in mass communication is a collectivity of “persons”—i.e., biographical entities continuous over time, whose characteristics are fixed at the moment of being an audience, and unaltered by acts performed subsequently—is a reification of transient facts of role incumbency in a received ontology of durable selves (see n. 3). And the suggestion that these selves lack differentiation is the inherited signature of class anxiety in communication theory, the positional conversion of shifts in class footings into anxieties about communicative disability in modernist figurements of collectivity.⁶

Finally, if the term *media* is the plural of “medium (or channel of communication)” in the sense of Jakobson, 1960, then it is unclear why novels and newspapers should be classed as two distinct mass media (since both involve the same physical medium). In short, what is at stake in distinguishing one “type of media” from another is not reducible to criteria of “medium or channel” since other criteria are also involved. The units of “media”—the things that this apparently plural noun enumerates—are entities in the world that are segmented by institutions, ideologies, and—yes—markets, from the outset. These entities are, in fact, social processes of a certain kind, which can be converted into countable units, and given boundaries (involving persons, regions, forms of affiliation) only through a logic of an entirely different kind. To understand this logic we need to get clearer about how semiotic mediation gets commoditized to yield segmentable and saliently differentiable mediatized forms.

4.1. Mediation and mediatization

Semiotic **mediation** is the generic process whereby signs connect persons to each other through various forms of cognition, communication and interaction. It is a process that bridges or links moments of thought/action/conduct involving persons to each other through the use of perceivable signs, making such moments jointly relevant to persons and their subsequent activities.⁷ In its saliently sociological forms, semiotic mediation is readily differentiated into several varieties or “types” of communicative interaction, all of which unfold *through* participation frameworks, but differ by semiotic and social criteria, including criteria that differentiate participation frameworks from each other, viz., whether dyadic or multi-party, power-symmetric or -asymmetric, emergent or institutionally routinized, requiring co-presence or possible at a distance, small or large in demographic scale. From this standpoint we can speak of as many kinds of “mass” mediation as there are kinds and degrees of large-scale participation, definable by these and other criteria.

Mass mediation, in this sense, is as old as organized human society. It may occur in any communicative practice that links sufficiently many persons to each other that the notion of a “mass” becomes sociologically relevant to describing *its participation frameworks*. Unlike a “mass of persons,” which merely requires counting, a *mass of participants* cannot be characterized without appeal to a logic of participation frameworks. And mass mediation in this sense (i.e., mediation that links many *participants* to each other) requires no modern technologies. Mass mediation may unfold *serially* through messages exchanged along a chain of participatory frameworks (as in gossip or rumor). It may unfold *collectively* through events where many people are present as co-participants (as in public ceremonies and rituals). It may proceed *correlatively* through discursive forms so designed as to expand their own participation frameworks through subsequent retellings (myth, oral poetry), whether collectively or serially. And it may unfold *distributively* as in the idea of culture as something communicatively transmissible over generational time by virtue of being transmissible in *all* of the sites of communicative practice where persons of a given generation can (variously and severally) become co-participants with those of other generations.

⁵ A common reductive hypothesis about participation frameworks is that “the mass media” involve technologies that enable point-to-mass dissemination (e.g., newspapers, TV) whereas non-mass media involve point-to-point dissemination (e.g., oral speech, telephony; but see n. 4). This view seeks to reduce (or, map in a “one-to-one” fashion) certain participation frameworks onto certain technological artifacts; it is often allied to McLuhan-esque forms of techno-determinism. Yet all technological artifacts are susceptible to enormous flexibility in the scale and design of the participation frameworks they mediate, a flexibility deriving from features of communication that have nothing to do with technologies or artifacts. For instance, messages borne by any given (techno-artifactual) medium can differ enormously in their message-internal “voicing” structure (the way messages frame *what* they communicate, *to* whom they are addressed, *from* whom they emanate); in the effective demographic reach of initial transmission; and in their serial uptake and recontextualization in communicative chains of everyday life (Agha, 2007a). Yet when the social and semiotic divisions of labor through which media are disseminated take specific institutional forms, and when these formations organize the use of specific technologies for a while, facts of social-organization are often misrecognized as features intrinsic to the technology itself (Williams, 1975).

⁶ As a coinage from the 1920s, the term *the mass media* has a class-linked voicing structure: it alludes to “the masses” and “the crowd.” It bespeaks anxieties about a new reading public by an older reading public, anxieties about *shifts* in participation frameworks, not their absence. The present-day irony is this: a usage that originally implied lack of *social* distinction and taste (on the part of the petit bourgeoisie and working classes, at least in the judgment of their betters) is now understood as a lack of *referential* differentiation (of a homogenous “mass of persons”) in technical usages by communication theorists.

⁷ A critical feature of mediation is that thought and conduct are linked to each other through perceivable signs in every moment-interval of the process, though in phases like so-called “inner speech,” the signs that mediate the process are only perceivable by the one whose “thoughts” they are because they are not, in that phase, linked to conduct perceivable by others. Such phases become interpersonally-sociologically consequential only when the semiotic activities ongoing in them are inferable by others on the basis of publicly perceivable signs manifest in that person’s subsequent activity. In phases like “interpersonal communication,” persons encounter each other by encountering jointly perceivable signs (utterances, gestures, textual artifacts) that mediate their connection with each other in some type of participation framework (Agha, 2007a, pp. 10–12). The recycling of signs across communicative encounters mediates connections between persons and group across longer chains of mediation in historical time. For a discussion of sociohistorical processes of mediation see Agha, 2003, 2005; Agha, 2007a, pp. 64–77; for the Peircean concept of mediation see Parmentier 1994.

Mediatization, by contrast, links processes of communication to processes of commoditization. It thereby links communicative roles to positions within a division of labor. Such links greatly expand the scale of communication by enlarging the scale of production, dissemination, construal, and recycling of messages. Mediatization gets differentiated from—that is, gets *foregrounded within*—the more generic and ubiquitous process of mediation to the degree that more and more varieties of communicative activity are treated as commodities, or acquire **commodity formulations** (Agha, 2011), including formulations that treat them as “non-commodities” in some (but not other) practices, creating ideological gaps between formulation and use, as discussed below. While earlier varieties of mediatization can be found in the historical record, mediatization becomes a *central* modality for *dominant* cultural practices—and is correspondingly foregrounded against the rest of culture through relatively powerful technologies, institutions, and ideologies—in early “print capitalism,” and remains so thereafter.⁸

Yet, however much mediatization may call attention to itself, it is still a narrow special case of semiotic mediation. Mediation constitutes the larger context and *ever-present backdrop* for any process of mediatization that links communication to commodities in some specific way, and no less so in sociohistorical locales where forms of mediatization have become institutionally foregrounded as robust features of social processes. Mediatization is a very special type of mediation, and mass mediatization a very special type of mass mediation. This is so in several senses. First, all processes of mediatization are, at once, processes of mediation (since they involve signs), but not vice versa (since all sign processes are not linked to commodities). Second, mediatized experiences are invariably preceded and followed by non-mediatized ones: No matter how elaborate processes of mediatized communication may become, they are only experienced as *communicative chain segments* of larger processes of non-mediatized communication, which precede and follow them for every communicator. From this standpoint, mediation englobes mediatization, as discussed in the introduction to this volume.

Since mediatization links commoditization to communication, mediatized objects always involve a text-fraction and a commodity fraction, though each of these can take a variety of forms, and be linked to each other in a variety of ways. The textual fraction can be embodied in oral, printed or digital forms; the commodity fraction can involve a manufactured product, a service, an experience, a set of future options, or some combination of these and other possibilities. I discuss a few special cases below, by way of example.

It is important to see at the outset, however, that the sphere of the commodity is much wider than “consumerism.” Only some commodities are properly “consumer commodities” (novels, newspapers, CDs, cable TV, home internet access). Others are, in a technical sense, “commodities for producers,” i.e., are regarded as operating costs by corporations (advertisements, “free” bibles, Ethernet access at your university office) for which the end-user pays nothing, and may well think of as “free.” Still other mediatized goods are “public commodities,” which appear to be “free” (since there’s no visible point of sale) but are nonetheless paid for, directly or indirectly, in other, less visible ways (e.g., “free” public schooling, paid for at tax-time). Thus, while mediatization links culture to the commodity form, it is much broader as a semiotic phenomenon than what is narrowly (and confusedly) called “consumer culture.” Any attempt to reduce it to the latter distorts its characteristics, makes its effects inexplicable, and leads to pointless anxieties, such as worries about the “agency of the consumer”—pointless because commoditization has nothing *in particular* to do with “consumers,” and theories of “agency” tend to essentialize dilemmas of participation as dilemmas for persons (Agha, 2007b).

4.2. Mediatized participation

Since mediatization involves both a commodity and a textual form, it disarticulates two kinds of participation frameworks from each other, giving a mediatized object a two-tier interactional design:

- Its commodity-fraction connects categories of vendor to categories of buyer;⁹ its commercial features (price, distribution, etc.) tend to set boundary conditions on their interactions by linking such interactions to patterns of exchange, e.g., by orienting vendors to a market segment (or target market)
- Its “text”-fraction mediates interactions between communicative roles, such as authors and audiences; its “textual” features (voicing, addressivity, etc.) orient textual content to some specific audience (which may or may not correspond to its target market; see below)

⁸ Printed books were among the first large-scale commodities of European capitalism (Anderson, 1983). Although technologically possible in the mid-15th century, printed books were not widely affordable till the late 16th century. The link between (moveable-type) print and capitalism is there from the very start, but takes varied forms across textual genres. For instance, early newspapers in colonial America were intimately linked to the trade of other commodities: They “were often frankly founded for the promotion of trade, and most of the early public discourse of print is devoted to the regulation of trade” (Warner, 1990: pp. 62–63). And commoditized and other cultural forms are often recursively embedded in each other during this period in ways that alter the scale of each. In the case of the European book trade, the 16th century transition from manuscript to print production relied initially on the sale of print commodities to institutions that normatively required and routinely used them (the Church, the legal professions) before retail revenue from these target markets could subsidize the large-scale printing of less reliably purchased textual commodities (such as philosophical and literary works), whose uptake and recycling in everyday life was to play a role in expanding Humanism and Protestantism, and, eventually, ironically enough, in transforming the Law and the Church (Febvre, 1976 [1958]).

⁹ These are typically differentiated into more specific role-fractions by a socioeconomic division of labor. For most contemporary commodities, many categories of vendors and buyers are involved, and linked to each other through a chain of exchanges (e.g., books: authors/proofreaders/jacket-designers/publishers/publicists. . .) in which different aspects of the commodity form are sedimented in layers through a series of mediatized interactions.

Though these are disarticulated as distinct tiers of interactional design by the logic of mediatization, *specific phenomena at these tiers* (markets, ideologies, voicing structures, text-artifacts) can also be connected to—and, indeed, recursively embedded within—each other in interesting ways.

Both of these “tiers,” and phenomena specific to them, are routinely subject to various kinds of ideological distortion, subsequent re-articulation, and “systemic” forms of positional misrecognition. This is because, under conditions of mediatization, the commodity form is a framework for generating voicing structures in texts (and vice versa, i.e., texts as voicing frameworks for commodities) at multiple levels of embeddedness within an economic *and* a semiotic division of labor through relationships between the text-fraction and the commodity-fraction of mediatized goods. In general, ideologies of the commodity form and ideologies of language are always concurrently in play, along with various kinds of “admixtures” possible only at this conjunction, and these ideologies are disseminated through the dissemination of commodities and messages along specific trajectories defined by interlinkages among participation frameworks that are gateways for these flows. But their dissemination can also be channeled in ways that routinely restrict them to certain participation frameworks, whether strategically or de facto, thus creating very interesting methods for “zoning” ideas and ideologies. The following examples illustrate a few simple possibilities.

The textual form that carries the voicing structure may be part of a purchasable commodity (e.g., a book, a CD, a movie) or be part of a text that describes that commodity (e.g., an advertisement for a book, CD, movie) or be part of a genre that describes those textual practices (e.g., advertising and marketing texts and curricula). Each of these textual forms is a commodity, through not for the same category of persons. You purchase the book, the publisher purchases the advertisement for the book, and the advertiser purchases the degree in marketing. Nonetheless, your act of purchasing the book is socially organized as the terminus of a mediatized chain of events, which is at once a chain of commodities, communications and voicing structures. Participants in any event in this chain can dismiss as “ideological” the voicing structure of any previous event, even as their activities presuppose it as a condition on their possibility, and their enablements in the current event depend on it. The book you purchased is a Frankfurt School critique of advertising. And the advertisement that compelled you to buy it has as its main marketing strategy the promise that the book will liberate you, once and for all, from the hegemony of marketing (see Frank, 1997a,b).

Some textual commodities project through the architectonics of their textual form, or through attendant metadiscursive texts, a frame for their own construal that typifies them as non-commodities. The Koran is a non-commodity in this sense. However, in many parts of the Islamic world investing your pension fund in the shares of any printing house that publishes the Koran is considered sound retirement planning for old age by members of the secular middle classes. Thus even a mediatized text that is ideologically formulated as a non-commodity in one link of the mediatized chain by one sub-population may be treated as a capitalized commodity at a second point in the mediatized chain by a distinct sub-population without the possibility of any dispute or contention arising between them.

Similarly, the Bible is both the biggest bestseller of English print *and* a non-commodity. In this case, we can differentiate the ideologies associated with its commodity-fraction from those associated with its textual fraction, as well as the voicing structures linked to these ideologies, approximately as follows: It may be offensive for a member of the congregation to refer to the Bible as a “bestseller” during the liturgy or when the wafer and wine are near, and self-defeating for a missionary to do so when holding forth on a Pacific atoll; but when Scholastic Inc., the publisher of J.K. Rowling’s books, publicizes the Harry Potter brand as the third largest bestseller in the history of English print—after the Bible, and the *oeuvre* of Agatha Christie—this is neither offensive to anyone, nor ineffective as a market strategy (even when the target market is the children of the devout).

To summarize: For mediatized goods, associated ideologies may be articulated within their textual architectonics or by a secondary metasemiotic discourse, whether one that typifies their commodity-fraction or their textual fraction; each of these may be in tension with each other—be regarded as “mutually distorting” or inimical—but no tensions need arise if they are deployed in appropriate contexts. The strategic possibilities for re-scaling figures of personhood through suitable mediatized commodities depend in large part on whether these voicing structures are deployed in certain participant frameworks (and not others) in ways that appear appropriate-to-context to their participants; and on relations between voicing structures across the commodity/text boundary in different segments of a mediatized chain, insofar as these relationships can be “managed.”

Figures of personhood that are linked to a commodity’s textual form (through voicing structures, near and far), and which constitute a characterological framework of commodity “use,” can be sedimented in layers upon the user through the habitual acquisition of a mediatized commodity and its correlates, and be recognizable *by others* as a persona of the user, even though the user is neither aware of it, nor desires it. What the user may come *ex post facto* to value (even to desire) is a semiotic presupposition or entailment of that persona (e.g., desiring the consequent face accorded to self by others), without recognizing its source, or recognizing it as a commodity; and, may even come to regard this dependent role-fraction as his or her most “private” self. In short, the recursive logics through which figures of personhood are embedded within socioeconomic and semiotic arrangements linked to mediatized goods take us entirely beyond the standard assumption that commodities matter most (or always, or only) because they are themselves objects of desire. Hence, although the commodity-fraction of a mediatized good is defined in the tradition of classical political economy (from Adam Smith to Karl Marx) as lying at the intersection of use-value and exchange-value, the logic of mediatization makes it plain that “use-value” (of which neither Smith nor Marx has a theory) is a terminological mistake. The term “use-value” is simply a placeholder for all of the ways in which the text-fraction of a mediatized good typifies its “values in uses” with all of the complexity and elaborated systematicity that we now understand language to have. This issue is discussed in Agha (2011).

The two-tier organization of participation frameworks also has other implications. One of them is that positional ideologies of social relations, which configure figures of personhood as component terms, are re-scalable across a population that may be a target market for the commodity, or an audience for the text; or, a composite figure configured through reflexive strategies of ventriloquation that allow the one to imagine itself as the other (e.g., mediatised texts whose addressivity equates “educated male, property owners” with “humans,” or, better, “[exemplary/all] humans”). And figures of personhood that are embedded within mediatised forms may, ironically enough, be naturalized as “sacred selves” by those who acquire them, ready to be defended against villains.

Which brings us to Habermas’ influential *Bildungsroman* of the heroic rise and decline of the autonomous liberal subject, in which “mass media” plays the villain of a Standard-Average-Frankfurt-School-“One Dimensional Man”-plot. My intent here is to suggest that the “autonomous liberal subject” is itself a mediatised project from the very outset, and that if a story of present-day corruption is to be written, the plot will need to change.

5. The autonomous liberal subject as a mediatised project

Contemporary debates about mass media and democracy are increasingly framed by appeal to Habermas’ *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*—not only by media scholars, but also, interestingly enough, by journalists and newspaper pundits. An anxiety common to many (otherwise disparate) positions runs as follows: the mass media, and especially forces of commoditization within it, are a threat to citizens’ independence of will, judgment, and critical reason and thus are a threat to any liberal democracy that presupposes such capacities in its citizens. Meanwhile, although Habermas’ historical account of the bourgeois public sphere—and of the “rational-critical” liberal subject—has rightly been critiqued as a normative project in the scholarly literature, Habermas himself, who is not a historian but a normative philosopher, is of course entirely untroubled by this critique (Habermas, 1992). My own objections lie elsewhere,¹⁰ but let us focus now only on difficulties linked to issues of mediatisation.

Habermas’ own goal in *Structural Transformation* is to describe changes in “the liberal model of the bourgeois public sphere” (p. xviii; italics in the original). Notice that what changes can only be defined at the intersection of textual practices and commodity formations, though Habermas largely abstracts the former from the latter. In particular, although Habermas is aware that uses of print in early capitalism are linked to commodity formations, he lacks an adequate conception of commodity formations under conditions of mediatisation, and hence lacks an understanding of how processes of commoditization organized the very discursive practices in which the European bourgeoisie articulated the liberal subject as a social category normative for them; and, by expanding the social domain of this figure of subjectivity through participation frameworks of mediatisation, effectively expanded their own “political voice.” The bourgeois public sphere is, I argue, an early example of the successful “commoditization of culture” not a utopian alternative to it.

The liberal model in question is itself a historical project, of course, an attempt to derive a theory of political obligation from assumptions of individual autonomy, a project that begins in the mid-17th century with the writings of Thomas Hobbes; is given its most widely circulated form and textual recensions in the works of John Locke; remains a dominant theme of liberal political theory until the mid-19th century, when it loses its coherence and dominant position within liberal politics in the versions originally articulated. The central theoreticians in the drama of changing models (Hobbes, Locke, Kant, Mill, among others) are theorists of the classical (or “autonomous”) liberal subject, whose claims to autonomy rest on what MacPherson 1962 terms “possessive individualism.” It is this figure of subjectivity with which I am concerned here, not with liberalism as a political philosophy—which includes a number of variants, some of which seek to jettison the classical liberal subject.¹¹ Indeed, my focus on the role-fraction that I am calling the “autonomous liberal subject”—and which, with

¹⁰ First, a general difficulty with Habermas’ account is that although the “public sphere” is an entirely metadiscursive category—a class of contexts or zones of communication (like 17th century coffee houses and salons) where certain discursive events (including—though, surely, not only—“rational critical debate”) are said to occur—Habermas has no theory of how discursive activities mediate interpersonal relations among discourse participants: For example, only given extreme assumptions of propositional reductionism can it be claimed that a political discourse in which “rational critical debate” occurs as a propositional fragment contextually creates a politics based on rational-critical debate; the assumption here is that the propositional fragments of a discursive genre constitute the total interactional form of its politics. Such an assumption can only appear plausible to someone who has never studied political debate. (See Agha, 1997 for an account of what “rational-critical debate” looks like, when understood as an interactional form; and why, when done artfully, only some among its features are widely reportable as facts about “what happened in the debate,” whence lies its effectiveness in veiling its own characteristics as an interactional form.) Second, rather than theorizing the way in which the “political” meaning of bourgeois political discourse depended on roles, personae and figures articulated within that discourse (through features such as “voicing” and addressivity), Habermas himself simply aligns, quite uncritically, with those among its role-fractions, such as the “rational critical debate[r],” which the rising [male-educated-property-owning-]bourgeoisie found exceptionally handy precisely because the alleged incapacity of others (viz., non-propertied persons, the uneducated, women, slaves, colonial others) in this regard could be used to establish this figure as their own distinguishing feature, i.e., as the mediatised capital of those in whose arguments it figured prominently (as I show in this article). Thus, the actual “rationality” (or interpersonal effectiveness) of “rational-critical debate” as a political genre cannot be described either within the framework of Habermas’ theory of discourse, nor in terms of the specific criteria that Habermas thinks are semiotically central to debate.

¹¹ The liberal subject is a figure of subjectivity central to liberal political theory in the mid-17th-mid-19th centuries. In contrast, liberalism is a family of political and cultural projects of a longer duration, with several named varieties, many of which are opposed to each other (Burkean conservatism, post-Paine “liberal” liberalism, Mill’s “electoral” liberalism, libertarianism, Rawlsian “distributive-justice” liberalism, etc. (See Gutman (2001) for a brief but useful sketch). Many contemporary varieties of liberalism have sought to de-emphasize or even jettison the classical liberal subject (see Warner, 2000), whether in whole or in part, and have sought a different foundation (cf. a political liberalism based on “solidarity” (Rorty, 1989), or a cultural liberalism based on pluralism). In fact among contemporary varieties of liberalism, only libertarianism and neo-liberalism take strong programmatic stances on the centrality of the autonomous (and possessive-individualist) liberal subject in framing economic and political goals.

MacPherson, we might view as the figure of the “possessive individualist” historically gathering to itself more and more naturalized figures of autonomy, including, with Kant, transcendent criteria of rationality and free will—emerges in the present context entirely from the fact that this role-fraction has been revived, re-vivified and re-inserted into contemporary anxieties about “mass media and democracy,” most influentially by Habermas himself.

What Habermas fails to see is that the rising European bourgeoisie of the 17th century have a political project whose strength and vitality depends on the mediatization of semiotic mediation. This is evident if we note that the two principal sites of communication that Habermas identifies as the spaces for the origin of this model—“the coffee houses in the golden age between 1680 and 1730 and the *salons* between regency and revolution”—are themselves mediatized zones from the outset.

The English coffee houses are mediatized spaces in a straightforward sense. The bourgeoisie who embrace “rational critical debate” as a genre of political discourse are doing so in a retail space, a place where engaging in certain forms of consumption, and the ability to pay for them, is a boundary condition on participating in communication at all. The simple lamination of communication and commodity forms defines gatekeeping mechanisms, effective in defining *whose* “debate” and *which* “critical” discourses contribute to emerging criteria of political “rationality.” The sense in which these coffee houses are zones of political ferment—and Starbucks today is not—derives from the larger sociopolitical context in which this mediatized zone emerges, and to which it is a reaction. (You have only to raise taxes, take away social security, public schooling, Medicare, the 2-day weekend, the separation of church and state—and be sure to enforce a military draft—and Starbucks may yet have its day.)

To see that the French *salon* is also a mediatized space, we need the concept of a mediatized chain of communication. And we have to place the *salon’s* alleged capacity to free the “opinions” of persons in the context of this chain of mediatization. Habermas observes: “In the *salon* the mind was no longer in the service of the patron; “opinion” became emancipated from the bonds of economic dependence” (Habermas, 1991, pp. 33–34). The second proposition is not true. “Opinion” became emancipated from one kind of economic dependence (the dependence of the writer/artist on an aristocratic patron) and became embedded in a second kind of economic interdependence, whereby a distinctive bourgeois culture and its “interests” formed a horizon for the emergence of class-specific semiotic forms, themselves subject to “legitimation” in the *salon*. While the *salon* is indeed a space where members of different classes meet, and where aristocrats discuss current affairs and cultural products with “intellectuals,” it is intellectually dominated by the bourgeoisie, who, over this period, become increasingly active both as authors of texts, and come to constitute a genuine “readership” for them. The aristocracy does neither.¹² As Habermas goes on to note: “The *salon* held the monopoly of first publication: a new work, even a musical one, had to legitimate itself first in this forum” (1991, p. 34). In other words, the shift is from class-asymmetric dependence of artist on patron to a symmetric interdependence by members of a class, on their mutual, increasingly class-specific canons of “interest” and taste. These, in turn, confer “legitimation” on a new book or artwork. It is the reflexive relationship between the valorization of commodity and textual fractions that matters most here. In the *salon*, the bourgeoisie increasingly help confer upon books and artworks their economic values as commodity forms, by conferring upon them the stamp of distinction as “textual” forms through their distinctive placement with respect to both the commodity- and text-fractions of these mediatized goods. For, at this time, it is the bourgeoisie that substantially constitute both the circle of writers/readers and vendors/buyers for these text-artifacts. It is their distinctive placement within the market of economic exchange and educated discourse (later to become the liberal ideal of “the marketplace of ideas”) that allows them to gain advantage in the sphere of mediatized communication long before they are able to justify, and practically to put into place, the institutions that enabled what Marx was to call “ownership of the means of production.” This framework for civil society—which the 19th century economic institutions analyzed by Marx presuppose—is articulated and semiotically motivated over the preceding two centuries by specific mediatized texts. It is a framework in which economic freedom (in a market economy) and political obligation (in a consensus-based polity) are both derived from, and anchored in, the characteristics of a specific figure of “the autonomous individual” (i.e., MacPherson’s “possessive individual”). The criterion of “autonomy” was explicitly to become, as Habermas notes, the Lockean ideal of “ownership of private property” (1991, p. 56), but also included—as MacPherson notes—the “proprietaryship” of the cognitive self (later formalized in Locke’s epistemology and its derivatives). The question remains of how the bourgeoisie is able effectively to expand its own economic and political ideals in the field of those who compete with it—that is, against the sovereignty of kingship and the economic power of the mercantile class—and, eventually, to derive principles of political sovereignty from “consensus among autonomous individuals” (rather than from “natural law” or “the divine right of kings”).

On Habermas’ account, the capacities of members of the bourgeois public sphere to participate in the political realm were under-girded and shaped by their activities in “the public sphere of the world of letters,” activities unfolding in a realm even *more* private than the *salon* and the coffee house, namely the intimate circle of the conjugal family; and these activities themselves consisted essentially of the reading and appreciation of literature, the reading and writing of letters, the cultivation of love and humanity. One need not linger overlong on the absurdities of a form of explanation in which the two cultural shifters—“public” and “private”—generate multiple, nested and mutually irreconcilable zones of contrast.¹³ For instance, the

¹² Habermas is aware of this: “The court aristocracy of the seventeenth century was not really a reading public. To be sure, it kept men of letters as it kept servants, but literary production based on patronage was more a matter of a kind of conspicuous consumption than of serious reading by an interested public.” (Habermas, 1991, p. 38)

¹³ Whereas, for Habermas, “private” generically means outside “the control of the state,” it variously includes, at different points in the account, forms of semiosis that occur in: (1) the market and commerce, (2) the *salon*, (3) the conjugal family, and (4) texts that articulate dispositions, tastes, and intimate ideals—resulting in a form of explanation permeated through and through with the ideological steps of erasure and fractal recursivity (Irvine and Gal, 2000) through selective and iterated forms of diagrammatic motivation between semiotic partials. The story works extremely well, but only as a classic ideology of language.

“realm of letters” is oddly conjoined to the activities of the conjugal family (privacy as intimacy) and also to the denotational characteristics of certain texts (privacy as topic). Whereas Richardson’s *Pamela* and other literary works figure centrally in this realm, philosophical works like Locke’s *Second Treatise* do not. Hence “letters,” though apparently a category akin to “arts and letters” is, in effect, zoned and bounded by what Habermas takes to have been going on in the parlor of the “conjugal family,” the account being entirely conjectural, of course.

It is in this context that Habermas’ account of how the mass media pose a threat to liberal democracy must be understood. Since the mid-19th century, according to Habermas, the “coherence of the [bourgeois] public sphere as a critically debating entity” has been “weakened” because of changes in print media, such changes as the fact that “literary family periodicals” began to cease connecting the small-town family to “the educational tradition of the literary high bourgeois family” and to “the stratum of a culturally interested bourgeoisie,” becoming instead “the polemical platforms of an avant-garde that changes with the fashions,” giving way eventually to altogether newer and far more vulgar forms such as “the popular advertiser-financed illustrated magazines.” Later, the air of cultural corruption solidified as mass culture: “Indeed, mass culture has earned its rather dubious name precisely by achieving increased sales by adapting to the need for relaxation and entertainment on the part of the consumer strata with relatively little education, rather than through the guidance of an enlarged public toward the appreciation of a culture undamaged in its substance” (1991, pp. 162–165).

Rather than looking for samples of “undamaged” culture and trying to resuscitate them, I have tried to suggest that the bourgeois public sphere is an early example of the successful “commodification of culture” not a utopian alternative to it. First, the coffee houses and salons that Habermas sees as the sites where the bourgeoisie learned the art of “rational critical debate” were themselves mediatized zones, as I have argued, whose structures of mediatization were gatekeeping and promotional mechanisms. Only those who had commodity-mediated access (property, education) were allowed in them, and only those allowed in them could learn the arts of autonomy, and, in the case of the *salons*, could help legitimate and promote certain mediatized goods whose larger circulation would bring their own interests and tastes, and the commodity-cultures in which they were saturated, to a larger population. They were, in short, early sites for the re-scaling of the liberal subject.

Second, the works of literature that were supposedly central to inculcating among the bourgeoisie the faculties necessary for public life in the political realm (e.g., “privateness oriented to an audience,” and associated figures of subjectivity; Habermas, 1991, pp. 43–51), and also the “literary family periodicals” of the late 18th and early 19th century, whose disappearance Habermas laments in the passage just cited, were *themselves mediatized goods*, and therefore do not differ from contemporary “TV” and “popular advertiser-financed illustrated magazines” as non-commodity to commodity. They differ, rather, in the extent to which the participation frameworks linked to the commodity-fraction more closely approximate those linked to their textual fractions, and thus differ as goods within closed circles of mediatization from those within more open ones.¹⁴ These contrasts primarily involve “structural transformations of forms of mediatization,” and only derivatively of political institutions and forms of “public” discourse.

By linking the public sphere in the “political realm” to the public sphere in the “realm of letters” Habermas embeds the decline of “rational critical debate” in the *mythos* of the declining perfection of the bourgeois family as a site for the reproduction of taste. I have tried to suggest that the structure of these linkages has the quintessential form of those ideologies of language that anthropologists now understand as dynamic mechanisms for naturalizing positional interests from society to society. Let us also observe, however, that MacPherson’s (1962) account of the same period of European history, published the same year as Habermas’ original German text, provides the beginnings of a different way of conceptualizing these events. Rephrasing MacPherson’s discussion in terms of a logic of mediatization, the alternative account looks like this: The central change concerns reflexive relations between the order of commodity-based formations and the order of the “political voice.”

MacPherson, who agrees that the mid-19th century was a time of upheaval for the coherence of bourgeois normative ideals, argues that the coherence of these ideals diminished because a prior reflexive condition—that “a political voice was restricted to a possessing class” (MacPherson, 1962, p. 273)—could no longer be fulfilled after the middle of the 19th century simply because an industrial working class became politically articulate and no longer saw itself as subject to the market by the same logic, or with the same advantages, and therefore ceased to think of itself as having common cause with the bourgeoisie. In short, when the “possessing class” began to yield its “monopoly of power by admitting the rest of the society to the [democratic] franchise,” a reflexive consequence emerged: “the assurance of cohesion, among all those with a political voice” was lost precisely because all those who now had a political voice no longer had a common class interest.

How was the assurance of cohesion established in the preceding period? MacPherson shows that a common set of assumptions that equate man with “market man” (i.e., with the “possessive individualist” in the sphere of commodity exchange) remain central to liberal political theory during the period between Hobbes and Locke, though variously deployed in specific texts. All of these texts are of course mediatized commodities, and all of them formulate themselves as “non-commodities” in the sense in which many cultural goods (and especially the sacred texts discussed earlier) routinely do. Each of these texts—but especially Hobbes’ *Leviathan* and Locke’s *Essay* and *Second Treatise*—formulate a conception of the political order that naturalizes the ideal unit of this political order, the citizen qua market man, though under different assumptions. Hobbes for example argues for the autonomy of the individual through a philosophical psychology and anthropology, which

¹⁴ Note also that until the mid-19th century, a “single-demand-curve” economics of product value, made the tastes of a circle of readers the sole criterion to which vendors oriented. But with the advent of advertising, cultural goods become dual-revenue products (i.e., revenue from units sold *and* revenue from advertising) thus linking the price mechanism to two demand curves.

speaks of man's *intrinsically* "self-interested" and "appetitive nature" and a capacity for limitless "warre" against the interests of others. MacPherson reconstructs this set of arguments as a philosophical rationalization of social relations under joint conditions of political conflict and expanding marketization in the 17th century, yielding a model that implicitly equates citizen and market man. Locke, by contrast, explicitly speaks of man as a "proprietor" of his own cognition and labor, capable of unmediated access to sensory reality, and of appropriating nature through labor as property. MacPherson argues that Hobbes' version of the theory was much less favorably received by the English "possessing class" than was Locke's, because none of Hobbes' readers "could relish such an exposure of himself and his fellows, especially when it was presented as science. Before the end of the century, the men of property had come to terms with the more ambiguous, and more agreeable doctrine of Locke" (MacPherson, 1962, p. 106).

If we think of these texts as mediating—in broad, semiotic-interpersonal terms—certain conceptions of how political entitlements are derived from facts of human nature, we can see that their effectiveness as rhetorical forms depends on the way in which they function as mediatized goods. Locke's argument is explicitly tied to property rights, and hence more immediately attractive to his readers in the "possessing class"; and it is less explicit about the more disturbing implications of possessive individualism as a basis for political entitlement, and therefore more readily amenable to adoption into mediatized practices beyond circles of philosophical debate, including the creation of constitutional frameworks and the elaboration of systems of liberal education.

As a role-fraction of the liberal subject, "the autonomous freedom-having self" is particularly problematic today, because it is now one of the central figures through which the liberal subject is harnessed by contemporary mediatized practices of commerce and government through structures of ventriloquation (Agha, 2007b), whether articulated through discourses of consumption (whose performative efficacy depends on ventriloquating "freedom" as "[product/lifestyle] choice" for a market segment), or those of domestic politics (where the voter—sliced and diced into "Soccer Moms" and other microtrends—is a target market for political campaigns), or in the discourses of neo-liberalism (where the export of "freedom" requires the re-scaling of autonomous market man, once again).

One can only conclude that if anxieties about democracy and the mass media are joined at the hip, it is the *autonomy* of the liberal subject that needs hip surgery.

Acknowledgments

This article was originally presented as a conference paper at a panel titled "Beyond individual and society: mass mediated forms of personhood" at the annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association, Washington, DC, November 29, 2007.

References

- Agha, Asif, 1997. Tropic aggression in the Clinton–Dole presidential debate. *Pragmatics* 7 (4), 461–497.
- Agha, Asif, 2003. The social life of cultural value. *Language and Communication* 23 (3/4), 231–273.
- Agha, Asif, 2005. Introduction: semiosis across encounters. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 15 (1), 1–5.
- Agha, Asif, 2007a. Language and Social Relations. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Agha, Asif, 2007b. Forms of ventriloquation and participation in a mediatized society. In: Discussant's Commentary on Papers Presented in a AAA Panel on "Media and Voice" in Honor of Richard Bauman, Washington DC, December 1, 2007.
- Agha, Asif, 2011. Commodity registers. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 21 (1), 22–53.
- Anderson, Benedict, 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, London.
- Benedict, Ruth, 1934. *Patterns of Culture*. Houghton Mifflin Company, New York.
- Febvre, Lucien, 1976 [1958]. *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450–1800*. [L'apparition du livre, Paris: Michel]. Atlantic Highlands, Humanities Press, NJ.
- Frank, Thomas, 1997a. Liberation Marketing and the Culture Trust. In: Aufderheide, Patricia et al. (Eds.), *Conglomerates and the Media*. The New Press, New York, pp. 173–190.
- Frank, Thomas, 1997b. Why Johnny can't dissent. In: Frank, Thomas, Weiland, Matt (Eds.), *Commodify Your Dissent: Salvos from the Baffler*. Norton, New York, pp. 31–45.
- Gutman, A., 2001. Liberalism. In: *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, pp. 8784–8787.
- Habermas, Jürgen, 1991 [1962]. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. [Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit]. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Habermas, Jürgen, 1992. Concluding remarks. In: Calhoun, Craig (Ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 462–479.
- Irvine, Judith, Gal, Susan, 2000. Language ideology and linguistic differentiation. In: Kroskrity, Paul V. (Ed.), *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics and Identities*. School of American Research, Santa Fe, pp. 35–84.
- Jakobson, Roman, 1960. Closing statement: linguistics and Poetics. In: Sebeok, Thomas (Ed.), *Style in Language*. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 350–377.
- MacPherson, C.B., 1962. *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism, Hobbes to Locke*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Mead, Margaret, 1951. *Soviet Attitudes towards Authority: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Problems of Soviet Character*. McGraw Hill, New York.
- Mead, Margaret, 1963. *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*. William Morrow, New York.
- Parmentier, Richard, 1994. *Signs in Society: Studies in Semiotic Anthropology*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- Penn, Mark J., (with Kinney Zalesne, E.), 2007. *Microtrends: The Small Changes Behind Tomorrow's Big Changes*. Hachette Books, New York.
- Riesman, David, 1961. *The Lonely Crowd*. Yale University Press, New Haven.
- Rorty, Richard, 1989. *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Warner, Michael, 1990. *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Warner, Michael, 2000. Liberalism and the cultural studies imagination: a comment on John Frow. *Yale Journal of Criticism* 12 (2), 431–433.
- Williams, Raymond, 1975. *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*. Schocken Books, New York.