forms and communication practices, ranging from traditional print media to social media, including newspapers, radio, television, websites and new media. Among these case studies, Chapter 7, by Jingrong Tong, “The Chinese Diaspora, Motherland and ‘June Fourth’: A Discourse Analysis of the BBC Chinese ‘Have Your Say’ forum, 2009-13,” is quite different from most studies of Chinese-language diasporic media. It chooses not to target minority media programs restricted by locality, focusing on media originating within Chinese diasporic communities, but focuses instead on the BBC Chinese HYS forum, which benefits from the mainstream media BBC’s global prominence and influence. Moreover, it uses the qualitative data analysis software package NVivo to do the detailed analysis of the 2,674 posts collected. Chapters 8, “Geo-Ethnic Storytelling: Chinese-Language Television in Canada,” and 9, “Cyber China and Evolving Transnational Identities: The Case of New Zealand,” both adopt a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Also worth noting is Chapter 11, “Xin Yimin: ‘New’ Chinese migration and new media in a Trinidadian town,” in which Jolynna Sinanan draws on twelve months of ethnographic fieldwork to discuss the intersection of new Chinese migrants and new media.

Nevertheless, there are some weaknesses in the volume. Despite the coverage of multiple media forms and communication practices throughout the volume, each chapter mainly focuses on one certain kind in its specific location. It would have been more useful and comprehensive if more types of traditional as well new media that may be used by particular Chinese communities could have been explored in each host country, which could not only have enriched the existing diasporic Chinese-language mediasphere, but also enabled readers to compare with other Chinese communities or host countries. Since the diasporic Chinese-language newspapers bear an ever-changing publication history, it would also have been more coherent and distinct if those newspapers’ names and years of publication could also have been enumerated as an illustration in those chapters.

On the whole, Media and Communication in the Chinese Diaspora is a rather impressive and useful book with unique and multiple perspectives toward specific cases in a wide range of locations across the world. I would highly recommend this book to scholars, researchers, students, policy makers, and media workers who are interested in media and communication studies as well as historical–cultural studies, especially in Chinese diaspora and transnationalism.


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Communications scholar James W. Carey (1934-2006) is well-known in media studies, but little known outside of the field. This contrast puzzles Jefferson D. Pooley,
Carey’s last PhD student, and furnishes him with the rationale for a lucid, probing, and sure-footed meditation on that most elusive of subjects: academic reputation.

Pooley’s book is, he freely admits, not a full-scale biography. Pooley quotes sparingly from Carey’s correspondence and says little about Carey’s 14-year tenure at Columbia University (1992–2006), during which Carey established the PhD program in communications in which I currently teach. Even so, Pooley has much to say about Carey’s life and times. Diagnosed with a heart ailment as a child, Carey grew up in a tight-knit working class neighborhood in Providence, Rhode Island, that was “bound by talk, shared struggle, and a common [Irish Catholic] religious-ethnic identity.” Homeschooled until ninth grade, Carey obtained a full disability scholarship to the University of Rhode Island. Carey’s never-published University of Illinois dissertation took its primary inspiration from the structural-functionalist sociological theory of Talcott Parsons (the Parsonian god-word “system” appears 3 times in its title). Upon graduation, Carey obtained a teaching position at Illinois, sparing him the hazards of the academic job market, a circumstance that probably helps explain Carey’s low-key approach to graduate training and disdain for premature professionalism.

Running through Pooley’s narrative is an eye-opening account of the making of the “impossibly eloquent” essays in Communication as Culture (1989), the only book Carey published. Yet Pooley’s main quarry is neither the merits of these essays as history, a contested topic, nor the literary devices that explain the “sheer beauty” of their prose. Rather, Pooley hones in on the “dynamics of reputation and relative field prestige.”

In assessing Carey’s influence, Pooley is less interested in the universe of academics who write about communications—a large and diverse group—than in the tiny guild to which Pooley belongs: namely, academics who specialize in “communication research.” No other communications scholar, Pooley flatly declares, has been more honored posthumously within this guild. The “key” to Carey’s reputation, in Pooley’s view, was his ability, as a “roving ventriloquist” for communication researchers (italics in the original), to appropriate for them the insights of luminaries whom they might otherwise never have encountered. Built atop a “motley cluster” of “barely compatible, legitimacy-starved skills training traditions,” communication research as Carey found it was an academic ghetto that, by virtue of its marginality, gave Carey the “hermeneutic license” to trade on the “reputational lucre” of “higher-status thought.” Like the cultural milieu chronicled in the pop song “Hotel California”—Pooley quips, in one of the book’s many memorable aperçus—the field was the academic equivalent of a black hole: “ideas flow in, but they can never leave.” Among the subjects of Carey’s “disciplinary story-telling” were the sociologist Talcott Parsons, the economist Harold Innis, the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, and the philosophers John Dewey and Richard Rorty.

The ideas Carey popularized fenced off an interpretative domain distinct from both the arid positivism of social-survey research and the sectarian orthodoxy of Marxism. Carey called this domain “cultural studies”—a concept similar to, yet distinct from, the Gramscian cultural studies tradition of Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall. Williams and Hall asked how “exploitative societies” produced consent among the exploited; Carey asked, instead, in a discernibly Parsonian spirit, how the “miracle of
social life” was “pulled off.” The “main motif” of Carey’s answer to this question, in Pooley’s view, was a communitarian critique of American public life that revolved around the opposition between a ritual view of culture, which Carey admired, and a rival transmission (or “transportation”) view, which he did not.

The most influential example of Carey’s “raconteurial license” was his popularization of the then-novel claim that in the 1920s, the journalist Walter Lippmann squared off against the philosopher John Dewey in an epochal debate over the merits of democracy. Lippmann the anti-democrat, Carey contended, wrongly defended a representational theory of public opinion that unfairly privileged elites; Dewey the pro-democrat, in contrast, correctly rested public opinion in open-ended discussion. The existence of such a debate would come to be widely accepted among communications scholars, at least in part because “the low-status discipline was notably bereft of, and therefore impressed by, imported erudition.” Unlike most of Carey’s ideas, it was also picked up high-status academics such as the historian Christopher Lasch. In one sense, this is unfortunate, since Pooley, following his colleagues Sue Curry Jansen and Michael Schudson, debunks the idea that such a debate ever took place. Dewey hugely admired Lippmann, and both Lippmann and Dewey were democrats, even if they differed on certain relatively minor matters of perspective. Carey’s most influential contribution to the wider world of scholarship, in short, was wrong.

Carey’s ideas, right or wrong, were but one reason he has proved so influential. Urbane yet unpretentious, Carey offered graduate students a “tweed, high-minded alternative” to the “professional social scientist’s cross-tabulated careerism.” The idea that communication research might be a “discipline” was, for Carey, little more than an administrative nicety. Unconfined by a particular method or corpus of ideas, communication researchers should embark on “cross-disciplinary foraging.” Pooley’s fine book—at once a contribution to the sociology of knowledge, intellectual history, and communication research—is a compelling tribute to the enduring value of a legendary teacher’s advice.