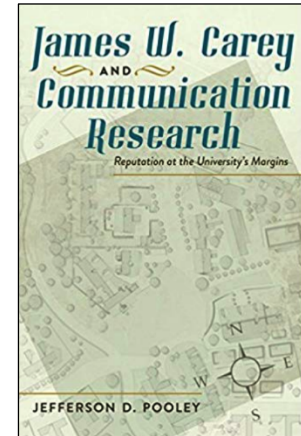


Jefferson D. Pooley, **James W. Carey and Communication Research: Reputation at the University's Margins**, New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2016, 234 pp., \$54.95 (paperback).

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James W. Carey (1934–2006) was among the most important figures in communication studies in the last half century. He was a leader in advancing interpretive and cultural studies in the field, and he compellingly advanced a wide-ranging humanistic style during the high-water mark of objectivist social science. He helped train three generations of students at the University of Illinois and Columbia University and was an anchoring intellectual influence for many more. *Communication as Culture*, which collected many of his most important essays and was the only book he published, currently has more than 5,700 citations on Google Scholar, nearly 800 in non-English languages. Yet, despite Carey's own interdisciplinary breadth and unquestioned mark upon the field, he is all but unknown outside communication studies. This is a puzzle that Jeff Pooley investigates in his erudite **James W. Carey and Communication Research: Reputation at the University's Margins**.

Pooley excavates the development of Carey's thought and casts it on the broader terrain of the sociology of knowledge. In the process, he illuminates key veins of the history of communication research and cultural studies since the 1960s. In the book's opening and closing chapters, Pooley casts sociological light on communication studies as a late-arriving academic field with persistent legitimacy problems. This sets up the broad dynamic through which Carey's work attained a commanding stature within the field but went all but unread outside it. Between those bookends, Pooley offers a careful reading of Carey's writings from his enrollment in the University of Illinois' doctoral program in communications in 1957 through the 1989 publication of *Communication as Culture*.

Over five core chapters, Pooley illuminates sequential stages of Carey's intellectual career: (1) graduate study at Illinois, the local context in which he first sought a third way between Marxism and behaviorism, capped by a 1963 dissertation indebted to Talcott Parsons but making strategic feints toward German interpretive cultural science (*Kulturwissenschaft*); (2) the first decade of his faculty years at Illinois, which saw him christen his third way as "cultural studies" (ca. 1963), engage deeply with Canadian media theory (critical of Marshall McLuhan, appreciative of Harold Innis), and turn to the cultural history of technology in the U.S.; (3) an extraordinarily rich period, ca. 1973–1975, when Carey energetically embraced Clifford Geertz's interpretive anthropology and published early versions of the two hugely influential opening essays of *Communication as Culture*, which laid out his vision for cultural studies of communication, constructed its intellectual genealogy, and introduced the now-canonic contrast between transmission and ritual models of communication; (4) a more explicitly pragmatist period after 1975 that saw him elevate John Dewey, villainize Walter Lippmann, claim the mantle of "the Chicago School" as a

bulwark against “the effects tradition” in media research, and write eloquently about the decline of democratic public life; (5) a deepening of that turn in the 1980s, when Richard Rorty’s neopragmatism helped inform Carey’s sometimes awkward dance with British Cultural Studies—whose harder Marxian turn complicated his earlier alliance with Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, and Stuart Hall—and carve out a cheerfully ethnocentric “American Cultural Studies” grounded in the particularities of the U.S. context. Each of these five periods find their way into *Communication as Culture*, whose internal inconsistencies, Pooley shows, were only partly rounded off by Carey’s editing of earlier essays for republication in the book.

Under one description, Pooley provides a deep intellectual map of one of the most influential books in the recent history of the field. In the process, he provides brief but insightful glosses on the interdisciplinary array of theory, history, and academic moments that shaped both Carey and communication studies from the 1960s through the 1980s. His compact accounts of Weberian Kulturwissenschaft, Geertzian interpretive anthropology, and Rortyeen neopragmatism, for example, are skillful digests that will be very helpful to graduate students who read the book. Beyond that intellectual unpacking, Pooley also throws illuminating light on the microcontext of communication study at the University of Illinois, particularly in the late 1950s and ’60s. He introduces us to key local figures and courses that helped shaped Carey’s thought, making important contributions to the institutional history of one of the most influential U.S. programs in the field.

Pooley also offers an insightful analysis of the writing strategies that made Carey’s essays both distinctive and influential. He traces three characteristic moves in the rhetoric of Carey’s intellectual prose: (1) a “roving ventriloquism” whereby Carey sequentially adopts the language and voice of Parsons, Innis, Geertz, Dewey, and Rorty; (2) an “intellectual importing” of ideas from other fields, which both indexes Carey’s position as a border-dweller and enhances his status as bearer of valuable insights from higher-prestige fields; (3) a consistent use of intellectual history as a mode of argument that issues in broad-brushed genealogies that dramatically pit forces of light and dark (e.g., Dewey vs. Lippmann) to make a point about the present. Coupled with Carey’s engaging storyteller’s voice and elegant essayistic style, these three rhetorical strategies helped Carey’s writings captivate so many readers. *Communication as Culture*, meanwhile, brought together scattered and sometimes hard to find essays in one volume where they could have a qualitatively new impact.

Pooley’s book cements his place as one of the most skilled and versatile historians of communication and media research working today. On its own terms, the book clearly succeeds in its aim “to restore . . . historicity” and “stretch out the accordion” of Carey’s thought (p. xix). Pooley’s careful reading of texts, his reconstruction of Carey’s intellectual turns and consequential revisions of published essays, and his meticulous footnotes all make significant contributions to our understanding of a major figure and the field he helped shape. Particularly striking is his work in showing how Carey’s reading of Geertz was the key scaffolding for his field-shaping essays charting a non-Marxian cultural approach to communication—only to see Geertz all but missing from the pages in the edited essays that made their way into *Communication as Culture*, where most readers encountered them.

The book is also a fitting extension of Carey’s own intellectual and pedagogical legacies. Carey was Pooley’s advisor at Columbia, and the 2006 defense of Pooley’s dissertation was among Carey’s final official

acts as a professor. Through his writings and influence, Carey helped make the history of the field a serious and legitimate intellectual endeavor. However, while Carey's histories were typically broad-brushed and in some cases bordered on fabrications justified by presentist concerns (e.g., "the Lippmann-Dewey debate"), Pooley combines textual hermeneutics with the historical sociology of academic fields to produce scholarly work of the highest order, written in elegant humanistic prose.

If I were to make constructive criticisms of the book, they would fall in two categories. One is consonant with the author's stated purposes, one lies beyond them. First, while Pooley sets out to untangle the paradox of Carey's contrasting reputations within and outside the field, the book does a better job with the former than the latter. We are provided a nuanced account of the intellectual achievements and rhetorical strategies that made Carey the singular and influential character in communication studies that he was. Yet on the flipside, Carey's virtual anonymity outside the field is largely attributed to the marginality and low status of communication studies as a whole, with an eye toward the idiosyncratic publication history of some of his essays. The book devotes less attention to the particularities of Carey's work and social position that made him all but unknown—in contrast to, e.g., his intellectual rival Elihu Katz or his student Lawrence Grossberg.

Related, the focus on Carey's published writings means that other, more social and contextual dynamics of his professional reputation and broader place in the field get shorter shrift, as Pooley acknowledges in explaining the scope of his study. Largely absent are Carey's role as dean at Illinois, the network of his students and their subsequent careers, and fuller attention to the contextual dynamics of the institutionalization and growth of communication studies from the 1960s through the 1980s. Also, though Pooley beautifully teases out Carey's shifting intellectual allegiance to European and American thought and his complex relations with British cultural studies, we don't get a sense of the broader international terrain of the field on which Carey's reputation played out. The 800-plus non-English references to *Communication as Culture* index still-untold stories about Carey's reception and reputation outside the Anglophone world, which this reader hopes Pooley might pursue in future work.

To do justice to these storylines would have added another hundred pages to this compact volume, and I only raise them to draw attention to what the book is and what it isn't. In a nutshell, *James W. Carey and Communication Research: Reputation at the University's Margins* is a valuable and extremely well-written study that would make an excellent addition to courses in media and communication theory and cultural studies or to graduate-level introductions to the history of the field. It makes important contributions to the historiography of communication studies and the human sciences in the United States, and it's a good read for anyone interested in the historical unfolding of intellectual work and the dynamics of scholarly reputation.