cific needs. It is the only country in Latin America with near-universal literacy and newspapers of national reach.

English-language readers will now be able to see that North American critics clustered largely in the Union for Democratic Communications are not isolated but are part of a worldwide movement of scholars. The "information blockade" against Cuba works in both directions.

Dialogical energy

Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society by James W. Carey. Media and Popular Culture, Volume 1. Winchester, Mass.: Unwin Hyman, 1988. xiii + 241 pages. $34.95 (hard), $12.95 (soft).

A review by John Corner
University of Liverpool

James Carey's distinctive kind of communications analysis is carried out on the broadest of canvases and is in part a dialogue with thinkers who, very different in approach, have themselves relished the expansive view. Innis, Geertz, Lippmann, and Dewey are prominent among those referenced here. The dangers of adopting too cosmic a perspective on the topic are all too apparent in recent literature—a debilitating loss of contact with particular instances and a shift toward a weirdly autonomous metadiscourse in which it is no longer possible to discern quite what the consequences or implications are of any proposition or assertion offered, even assuming the writer were so unfashionable as to presume there were any.

The quality of Carey's writing lies in his ability to sustain generality and extended theoretical inquiry while still addressing his readers in the dialogic tones of common critical endeavor and while still connecting to the local and the specific. This way of conducting intellectual business seems almost anachronistic alongside the professionalized utterances of the eighties, yet its vigor, clarity, and sheer enthusiasm of inquiry give Carey's work a value and originality well beyond the abstractable conclusions of any particular thesis he pursues.

In this collection, the theses turn mostly around the relationships between changing communications technologies and the changing coordinates of social space and social time, relationships that are, finally, political in character, as Carey is himself keen to point out. Although collected here in two broad sections, his pieces—all of which previously have been published elsewhere in one form or another—seem to me to divide naturally under three headings.

First, there are those pieces that consider the general character and development of U.S. democracy, culture, and trade in relation to the rise of the media. Second, there are related pieces that focus more tightly on electric and electronic technologies and the peculiar utopian rhetorics that continue to accompany their penetration of social life (creating almost an established genre, "the electrical sublime"). This theme allows Carey to consider the political uses to which the idea of "the

Future" has been put by commentators whose excited celebration of "information" goes along with a virtual neglect of the social and cultural conditions of "knowledge." Third, there are essays that reflect on ideas and methods available for studying communication, assessing in particular the contribution of British and European "cultural studies."

Perhaps the first area shows Carey at his most impressive—as the possessor of a highly original and scholarly imagination, drawing richly on both European and North American traditions. Following the arguments of those who see U.S. geography and U.S. democracy as tightly interconnected—space and polity—he explores the national and regional consequences of the successive communications revolutions following the arrival of the telegraph in the middle of the nineteenth century and its decisive severing of communication from transportation. The way in which the U.S. tradition of democratic rationalism variously incorporated these new constituents of public life into its philosophies and debates attracts Carey's special attention.

Indeed, some of the best pages of the book are to be found in his consideration of Lippmann's positivistic science of public opinion, with its faith in data and experts, alongside Dewey's emphasis on the discursive process itself, on community life, engagement, and on knowledge as a product of social action. Although Carey is careful to identify the flaws in Dewey's thought (in particular, a romantic view of "community" that compares interestingly with F. R. Leavis's), his own judgment clearly rejects technocratic optimism, together with its statistics and bureaucratic proliferation. An intensive interest in the uses and consequences of technology is informed both by a rejection of technological determinism and by a brilliantly scathing assessment of the prophets of electronic paradise. A discussion of McLuhan in the context of a reappraisal of Innis is splendidly instructive on this count and does much to restore a proper interest in Innis's exceptional qualities as a theorist of communication.

Perhaps one of the potential weaknesses in Carey's way of thinking results from the manner in which his otherwise exemplary humanism, rejecting the various reductivist accounts proffered by conventional social science and by materialist and postmodernist critiques, pushes him toward images of resolution through transcendence. We find it in sentences like the following: "A critical theory of communication must affirm what is before our eyes and transcend it by imagining, at the very least, a world more desirable" (p. 88). The principle of this may command agreement, but even allowing for "at the very least" it doesn't seem like an imperative that can decisively inform *action*—especially the "countervailing" action that Carey supports—in terms of either public policy or academic teaching and research.

In this sense Carey affords himself a rather more contemplative stance than either of the two main British thinkers he cites, Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall, might think appropriate. The sharper British experience of social class inequality and its relation

to the politics of culture may be a factor here, making less tenable the kind of anthropologizing stance in which "ritual" starts to become superordinate to "power" in the conceptual scheme. In any event, Carey remains one of the most sympathetic and thoughtful of commentators upon the project of Cultural Studies, particularly in regard to its hermeneutic and ethnographic dimensions, and this collection contains a number of cogent defenses of "communication as culture" against institutionally entrenched objections from U.S. social science.

All these essays are a pleasure to read and debate with, and it is to be hoped that their dialogical energy will set the blood running a bit faster in some of the more torpid parts of current communications inquiry.

One of their own

Beyond Malice: The Media's Years of Reckoning by Richard M. Clurman. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1988. 306 pages. $24.95 (hard).

A review by Robert M. Entman
Duke University

Beyond Malice probes the Westmoreland and Sharon libel cases and their implications for journalism. The book offers a careful and lively account of the two libel trials and their principals, a discussion of the media's civic responsibilities and performance, and a pair of simple yet potentially useful proposals for reform. The strongest point of the book is that, unlike some journalists who write in this vein, former *Time* editor Richard Clurman is not defensive about his craft; the book is frankly critical of journalism.

The book's most serious shortcoming arises from its author's apparent unfamiliarity with the scholarly literature on the media. This leads to such problematic overstatements as: "The media, more than any other group, became the leaders and dominators of our culture." Or: "The fact—yes, the fact—that the U.S. press, publication for publication, network for network, is still the best and the freest in the world." A closer look at the work of Gans, Tuchman, Gitlin, and others might have enabled Clurman to offer a more complex meditation on the true nature and limitations of the media's cultural power and on what "best" and "free" mean.

The other major problem here is the author's acceptance of the common fallacy that the public's hostility toward the press grew to inordinate proportions during the 1980s. The very same claims of alarming recent growth in public hostility have been made almost continually since the late 1960s, when the Nixon administration began its antimedia campaign. Surveys such as those of Andrew Kohut and Michael Robinson show a more complex public sentiment compounded of resentment, suspicion, respect, and reliance. Moreover, I am not sure we need a press bathed in public admiration; perhaps a healthy, independent journalistic enterprise always antagonizes, and maybe even more Americans should become skeptical readers and viewers.

Clurman's repetition of the shibboleth of burgeoning public disap-