

the Party-state itself. Jiang recognizes that his proposals are a “high-flying political ideal, very far from China’s current situation” (p. 67). Firm in his beliefs, Jiang is prepared to wait decades (if not centuries) for a complete revival of Confucianism in state and society in order to see them realized.

In summary, if you are looking for an accurate reflection of Confucianism as historically practiced, or a political proposal with real feasibility, this is not the book for you. But it does offer a unique (and excellently translated) look into how some intellectuals, dissatisfied with China’s frozen political system and the debates surrounding its reform, are attempting to re-appropriate their historical heritage in an urgent search for a way out.

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The Party Line: How the Media Dictates Public Opinion in Modern China

DOUG YOUNG

Singapore: John Wiley & Sons, 2013

xv + 256 pp. \$24.95

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As an associate professor of journalism at the prestigious Fudan University in Shanghai, a rare appointment for a non-Chinese, Doug Young would seem almost uniquely positioned to have an inside track on thinking and practices of news work in China. He obviously is well informed, he writes in a lively and straightforward manner, and his long residency in China suggests that he likes the place and the people. His book is a prodigious undertaking with no overt ideological agenda. Yet *The Party Line*, perhaps in spite of the best of intentions, ultimately serves some of the most enduring stereotypes about Chinese news media.

The central argument of the book is aptly subsumed in the title, positing a cohesive propaganda system imposing a homogeneous message with uniform persuasive results. In this rendering, a monolithic entity, the Chinese Communist Party, relays the permissible and withholds the impermissible via news media conceptualized as singular rather than plural; and these missives are presumed to shape the thinking and behaviour of the audiences at whom they are aimed, the Chinese citizenry.

I have oversimplified, of course, but this is the gist. It’s an old argument that’s been qualified and superseded by a good deal of fine mass communication scholarship over the past three decades, chronicling and analysing the multitude of complications and negotiations, shifting alliances and fractures, interpenetrations and innovations that roil the Chinese media landscape – scholarship that goes largely neglected in this book beyond a nod in the acknowledgments (p. ix) to the excellent, rigorous work of New Zealand political scientist Anne-Marie Brady on China’s media control apparatus.

That’s not to say Young hasn’t perused the literature, for *The Party Line* offers a broad-ranging survey of Chinese journalism in the post-Mao reform era, with ample accounting of major developments and key events. The author is nothing if not thorough, and his book clearly draws on a panoply of information, the scholarly as well as the journalistic, along with his own experience and knowledge acquired as a long-time China correspondent for Reuters and other news organizations. Yet, peculiarly, the book has neither bibliography nor footnotes to credit what surely was extensive use of secondary sources. Its provenance from a leading global academic publisher makes this all the more curious. And the author’s own introduction

adds a swath of irony, for he begins with an allegorical critique of Chinese journalism that finds a major fault of typical news reporting in China to be “lack of attribution” (p. xiii).

The problem of lack of citations is most glaring in the first four chapters, which offer an overview of China’s media, characterized overall as a well-oiled machine producing predictable fare designed to promote and legitimate Party power, with detailed elaboration and many examples that introduce nuance and subtlety but never retreat from the overriding thesis. Woven through this background section are many conversations the author has held with undefined numbers of unnamed journalists, compounding the lack of specificity in sourcing; these informants generally are introduced as one or another reporter, as in “One old-time reporter I talked to...” (p. 5) or “One former Xinhua reporter I talked with...” (p. 12). Maintaining anonymity reinforces the idea that disclosing the inner workings of the propaganda machinery or, worse yet, criticizing its workings could draw retribution. The absence of clarification as to time, place or circumstance of these conversations, meanwhile, makes it impossible to gauge whether the interviewing was systematic, serendipitous or otherwise.

Nine subsequent chapters present case studies of Chinese media coverage of specific topics arising since the founding of the People’s Republic, ranging from the Korean War and the “liberation” of Tibet to the Cultural Revolution, Nixon’s 1972 visit and Mao’s death to the Tiananmen Square demonstrations and *falun gong*. Here, Young should be commended for his enterprise in reviving important historical episodes and raising interesting questions. His research is seriously constrained, however, by his reliance in most instances on one single media source per topic – *People’s Daily* or another Party newspaper; consequently (although an argument might be made for the representativeness of *People’s Daily* in certain periods), the studies provide little basis for generalizability across media or comparability across time. He offers some catchy labels for recurring motifs he discovers, such as “public announcement” formats and “guerrilla-style” coverage, that confuse more than clarify, and makes overly generous inferences about origins, purposes and likely effects.

Lest I be accused – as a member of that very community of international scholars studying media in China whose work I wish this author had consulted more closely – of sour grapes, let me emphasize that nothing makes me happier than new understandings of the subject preoccupying me for most of my academic career. I consider this book a good effort and an interesting read – despite a great deal of redundancy and a penchant for turns of phrase (out of the blue, bang for the buck, force to be reckoned with...) in need of stronger editorial abridgement – that unfortunately lends ammunition to outmoded conventional wisdom. It represents a considerable drift – if not a great leap – backward.

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Environmental Litigation in China: A Study in Political Ambivalence

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Ten years ago, when I told people I was writing a book on intellectual property in China, they joked that it must be a very short book. Such a response betrays a