Book Review: Hybridity, or the cultural logic of globalization. By Marwan M. Kraidy. Philadelphia: Temple University Press 2005. ISBN 1-59213-144-1

Christophers, Brett

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Cultural geographers have seen suburbs primarily in terms of the traditional marriage of town and country for the middle classes. However, evidence here of different ideologies, economic and social processes and actors fuelling suburban development demands a new cultural politics of suburbia, which can, in both historic and contemporary contexts, address the material base of these places and the lives within them.

The primary concern of *Manufacturing suburbs* is industrial location. However, in a number of the more theoretically broad-based contributions to the volume, such as those by Richard Walker and Robert Lewis, Gunter Gad and Richard Harris's concluding chapter, links between issues in the book and questions addressed by cultural geographers begin to be raised. *Manufacturing suburbs* also offers the novel prospect of a cultural geography of industrial location.

Department of Geography Nicola Higgins
University of Cambridge

Hybridity, or the cultural logic of globalization. By Marwan M. Kraidy. Philadelphia. Temple University Press. 2005. xiv + 226 pp. £52 cloth; £14.95 paper. ISBN cloth; 1 59213 144 1 paper.

'Hybridity' is a notoriously slippery term that the author of this short book, Marwan Kraidy, does little to demystify, himself describing it by turns as 'maddeningly elastic' (p. 3) and 'conceptually unstable' (p. 47). Rather than trying to define hybridity – perhaps the closest he gets is when he says hybridity 'entails that traces of other cultures exist in every culture' (p. 148) – Kraidy's twofold aim is to trace its history and to give it a new spin from his particular vantage point as a scholar of media and communications. Kraidy makes three main arguments. First, he insists on giving hybridity in all its incarnations 'historical, geographical' grounding, noting its 'dubious usefulness if employed as a broad conceptual umbrella' (p. x). Second, he believes that a focus specifically on the role of the mass media in shaping cultures can give the concept of hybridity renewed potency. And third, he says we need to consider both 'structure' (by which he essentially means political economy) and 'agency' (individual entanglements with the media) in any empirical examination of what hybridity means and how it materializes.

Kraidy is clearly well-versed in the literatures he cites, and I found his dissection of the debates on 'cultural imperialism' and 'cultural globalization' (Chapter 2), for example, a real strong point. But the book is weighed down, to my mind, by several important limitations. First, despite claims to the contrary (and fancy new phrases – Kraidy styles his approach 'critical transculturalism'), there is really little novel in what he is saying. Numerous others have examined the implication of the media in constituting complex cultural identities, have done so in great historical and geographical detail and with explicit consideration of both 'structure' and 'agency', and have offered far more convincing narratives than we find here;

Lila Abu-Lughod's *Dramas of nationhood* (University of Chicago Press, 2005) is one very good example. Second, the book is unbalanced, with the empirics too limited and too scattered to support the theory; and, at times, structurally confusing (Chapter 1 seems to offer merely a condensed and redundant version of what follows in Chapters 2 and 3).

Third, and most important, the two case studies – an analysis of a Mexican children's television programme, and interviews with a group of young Maronite Lebanese who engage both Arab and Western world-views and media products – do not directly buttress the macro-arguments. Kraidy says, for example, we should always integrate audience reception of media texts into the analysis of cultural hybridity, but signally fails to do just that in discussing Mexico's *Tele Chobis* (a copycat version of *Teletubbies*). He also says that the 'hybridity of media texts is explained by the media's transnational economy' (p. 114); in other words, that producers, with global markets increasingly accessible, make media texts (films, television programmes and so on) that will appeal to as many people as possible internationally in order to maximize distribution and profitability. Fine (and already widely discussed): but to support this argument, why choose, in *Tele Chobis*, a program conceived and produced solely with domestic exploitation in mind?

In sum, *Hybridity* fails by some margin to live up to the grandiose billing promised by the subtitle and its surely deliberate allusion to Fredric Jameson's influential *Postmodernism, or, The cultural logic of late capitalism* (Duke University Press, 1991).

School of Geography and Environmental Science   BRETT CHRISTOPHERS
University of Auckland

Disposable cities: garbage, governance and sustainable development in urban Africa. By Garth Andrew Myers. Aldershot and Burlington. Ashgate. 2005. xv + 187 pp. cloth; ISBN 0 7546 4374 3.

The title *Disposable cities* draws attention to two different matters. The first is the manner in which the cities of Sub-Saharan Africa have come to be discarded or disregarded, and hence underrepresented in urban studies. The second is the issue of waste management in the context of sustainable development: garbage is an underresearched aspect of urban planning.

The first chapter introduces the rapidly growing African city. The author then outlines four basic themes used to structure the argument, economic, environmental, political and cultural in orientation, which he elaborates as neoliberalism, sustainable development, good governance and the politics of cultural difference. Woven together with garbage disposal, these themes constitute the perspective of 'political ecology'. Chapter 2 outlines the United Nations Sustainable Cities Programme and sets it in the African context. The remainder of the chapter examines the problems of aid donor dependence, and the combative and exclusive character of the local urban settings of implementation.