

Marwan M. Kraidy, **Hybridity, or the Cultural Logic of Globalization**, Temple University Press, 2005, 226 pp, \$22.95.

Reviewed by
Douglas Kellner
UCLA

Marwan Kraidy's *Hybridity, or the Cultural Logic of Globalization* presents an original and engaging text on the complex concept of hybridity that provides the best analyses of the literature on the concept, competing conceptions and debates, and ways that it functions in different discourses and theories. Kraidy provides a comprehensive overview of vast amounts of material on hybridity in global communications, cultural studies, politics, and theoretical texts on a wealth of topics. He provides as well, his own defense of the concept of hybridity, while signifying specific dangers and limitations, and makes some useful proposals concerning ways of using and contextualizing the concept.

The title of his book provides a playful reference to Jameson's famous article and then book "postmodernism, the cultural logic of late capitalism." Like Jameson, Kraidy strongly asserts that hybridity is a master-key to unpacking the cultural logic of globalization. With another nod to Stuart Hall, Kraidy sees hybridity as a concept "without guarantees." By this, he means that the concept does not ensure theoretical insight or progressive political value, and may well be used for in problematic theoretical registers and for regressive political purposes.

While Kraidy addresses a wealth of literatures and issues, he does not, however, possess the interdisciplinary sweep and depth of Jameson or Hall, nor does he share their political radicalism, operating instead, as I will argue, within the confines of critical communication studies and liberalism.

The strength of his methodological approach is that Kraidy overcomes sterile dichotomies between optics of cultural imperialism vs. cultural pluralism and the opposed dualities that globalization fundamentally produces either standardized homogenization or salutary heterogeneity and diversity. Kraidy shows how dichotomized positions developed and congealed into sterile oppositions and suggests how a critical take on hybridity can overcome these oppositions. But he also shows how certain liberal pluralist conceptions use hybridity to legitimate both neo-liberal globalization and certain nationalisms that celebrate a nation's mixed heritages and cultural identities.

In addition, Kraidy makes clear the "excess" of the concept that can be used in such a bewildering diversity of contexts and for such wide-ranging goals that it loses its specificity and precision. Against such excess, Kraidy warns that the concept must be understood in specific historical contexts and within specific fields like international communication studies, the main focus of his optic. He also insists that hybridity is a rhetorical as well as theoretical concept, and must be examined in specific public discourses and media, as well as theoretical texts. Thirdly, the concept for Kraidy must be "operationalized" in specific case studies, as he does in chapters dedicated to Mexican appropriation of "Teletubbies" and Lebanese appropriations of Western culture.

Against theoretically vague or ideological conceptions of hybridity, Kraidy argues for a "critical transculturalism" that is critical of how hybridities are often products of imbalanced flows in which, for instance, Hollywood films or U.S. corporate products may dominate local markets and be influences of unequal exchange and cultural influence in certain global contexts.

After opening chapters that map the discourses of hybridity and lay out his own approach, Kraidy provides "a multidisciplinary and comparative examination of the applications and critiques of hybridity and equivalent concepts such as syncretism, creolization, mestizaje, metissage, transculturalism, and others" (ix) in a chapter on "The Trails and Tales of Hybridity." His examination of literatures in this and other chapters is probing and insightful and his examples are illuminating and engaging.

Chapter Four on "Corporate Transculturalism," "examines how hybridity is used in contemporary public discourse" (x). Using critical discourse analysis, Kraidy shows how U.S. media use the term hybridity as a legitimating tool for neo-liberalism or global appropriations of American culture, thus leading him to propose the need for a critical concept of "corporate transculturalism." In a striking critique of two books that use hybridity to legitimate neo-liberal globalization, Kraidy shows how Pascal Zachary's *The Global Me* (2000) and Tyler Cown's *Creative Destruction* (2002) promote a neo-liberal concept of the global economy and serve interests of transnational corporations, while presenting overly rosy and uncritical pictures of globalization.

Chapters Five and Six provide grounded empirical studies of how Mexican TV Azteca's *Tele Chobis* provides a local hybridized version of the British TV series *Teletubbies*, while Chapter Six presents an ethnographic research project into how middle-class Christian Maronite Lebanese youth negotiate hybridized identities between Arab and Western cultures.

In a concluding chapter Kraidy argues for a concept of "critical transculturalism," arguing that "in order to understand the complex and active links between hybridity and power, we need to move beyond commonplace models of domination and resistance" (149). While Kraidy wants to overcome dualities of domination and resistance, he often fails to adequately stress powers of domination and does not really investigate current cultural struggles, contemporary forms of resistance, or radical media. The lack of Gramscian perspectives, such as one finds in Stuart Hall, which see contemporary culture as a contested terrain, is evident in the rather liberal and tamely pluralistic ethnographic study of Maronite Lebanese Christian youth. Little of Lebanon's turbulent recent struggles are evident in the ethnography, nor are there evidences of class, gender, religious, racial, or sexual struggles that have marked the past decades of Lebanese history.

In fact, although Marwan Kraidy engages a wealth of issues surrounding the concept of hybridity, there are no examples or discussion of struggles around class, gender, or sexuality, suggesting that the concept of hybridity, in ways unacknowledged by Kraidy, may cover over existing conflicts and struggles by stressing hybridized mixing and overcoming, or suppressing, of differences, and thus is ultimately part of the ideological repertoire of liberalism. Clearly global culture, and most national and local cultures, are riven with relations of power and domination in which hierarchy and inequality abound. The concept of hybridity ignores or covers over these divisions and multiple struggles against oppression.

Hence, while hybridity is undoubtedly a key feature of many local and national cultures, and certainly global culture, it needs to be articulated with difference, oppression, hierarchy, struggle and hegemony. One needs a Gramscian notion of hegemony to articulate the multiple forms of struggle, as well as cultural fusion and hybridization, going on in specific contexts.

In addition, critical analyses of media and globalization should valorize voices of the oppressed and their struggles against domination. It is symptomatic that there are no radical or alternative media examined in Kraidy's text which contest or subvert dominant hybridized forms of media. Kraidy's study thus points to the limits of a certain kind of critical communication studies that provide insight into contemporary configurations of culture, media, and communication. Such approaches, despite critique of corporate or U.S. domination of global culture, fail to articulate key struggles of the epoch and how the oppressed or oppositional groups and voices develop alternative media to communicate within the struggle. Thus, while Kraidy shows that hybridity is a key aspect of contemporary globalization, I find the concept insufficient to provide an anchor for a critical theory of globalization.