CHAPTER 1

Management Fictions

I. GLOBALIZE OR BUST

In his book *Secular Vocations* (1993), Bruce Robbins relates the following anecdote: “In the fall of 1972, when I was starting graduate school, the professor in charge of the first year colloquium asked us all what we would say if a businessman held a gun to our heads and demanded to know why society should pay for us to study literature.” This was met by a “painfully prolonged and embarrassed silence. . . . We did not seriously expect to have our brains blown out, but we were, I think, more nervous than usual” (84). This scenario, meant to dramatize what was, already a generation ago, the oncoming crisis of legitimacy of the humanities in the United States assumes, of course, that the legitimacy of business is not itself in question. And what, from the same conventional standpoint, could be less profitable than the work of the literary critic—especially if that work assumes a critical relationship to business and to capitalism generally? The anecdote reaffirms what most of us still tend to take for granted: that the relationship between those who work in the humanities and those in business (and in the academic disciplines associated with business) is an antagonistic one. And it is as evocative today as it must have been in 1972—no doubt even more so, given the increased defensiveness on the part of the humanities as the challenge from corporate interests has come to seem still more threatening and inevitable, virtually total, in the form of globalization.

In the last couple of decades, the term globalization and the kinds of issues associated with it have become familiar territory for literary and cultural critics. My concern here is not to document or question
this broad and obvious development, but first to note how it has often seemed—in a subtle replay of the above “gun-to-the-head” scenario—to force the humanist scholar to accept the basic tenets of a corporate-led, and acclaimed, globalization. Take, as one fairly typical example of this, Haun Saussy’s edited collection *Comparative Literature in the Age of Globalization* (2006), comprising essays by critics such as Emily Apter, Linda Hutcheon, and Jonathan Culler, and its attempt to take stock of the profession now that paradigms of globalization have become obligatory. Saussy’s essay “Exquisite Cadavers from Fresh Nightmares” is rife with questions of threatening budget cuts and the eroding status of literature in its national configurations. David Ferris, writing in the same collection, wonders if the humanities themselves might be a thing of the past (90). Explicitly or implicitly, this impending erasure is attributed to the increasing corporatization of society and the university, spearheaded and championed by business. Writing in a 2001 special issue of *PMLA* on “Globalizing Literary Studies” Giles Gunn confirms this disciplinary common sense, observing how globalization “conjures up in many minds the spectacle of instantaneous electronic financial transfers, the deprivations of free-market capitalism, the homogenization of culture, and the expansion of Western—by which is meant American—political hegemony” (19). For Gunn, corporate-driven globalization is a given, even if one remains opposed to it, and it requires literary studies to adapt or face possible extinction. Meanwhile, Grant Farred, himself certainly no celebrant of globalization, concedes that the “susceptibility to corporatization includes . . . not only ‘streamlining’ or ‘upgrading’ of academic or bureaucratic functions in the university but the restructuring of academic curricula themselves (“Reconfiguring the Humanities,” 42). And the list could go on. With increasing predictions of the end of humanities as we have known them, and the ever-impending threat of obsolescence,1 the field has felt compelled to theorize and justify its continued relevance—if any—in a global context.

Arguments for how to do this range from denationalizing literary studies to incorporating cultural material from the newly created global peripheries into the curriculum, to articulating more concretely how culture and literature continue to inform us about the intricacies of globalization. But while globalization’s internationalizing pull purportedly helps to challenge older, national and regional parochialisms, accepting this new reality appears to require accepting, however grudgingly, the “deprivations of free-market capitalism” and similar scripts. The emergent globalized version of literary studies, of course, rarely demonstrates any ideological sympathy for corporate-led globalization, nor, in prin-
ciple, any reluctance to be critical of corporate practice. But at the same time, one notes a tendency on the part of critics in the humanities to converge in fairly unmistakable ways with the corporate rhetoric of globalization. Take, for example, Paolo Virno’s *Multitude: Between Innovation and Negation*, in which the author celebrates the figure of the entrepreneur as an embodiment of innovation and creativity. Although, it is true, Virno is at pains to extract the notion of entrepreneurial innovation from its corporate integument, in the end it is hard to see how his entrepreneur differs in any significant way from the conventional self-image of a corporate CEO. At any rate, the distinction remains a vague one for Virno.

The more significant point, however, is that corporate/business structures themselves are seen as the driving forces of globalization. This widespread acceptance of the corporate narrative of globalization as a *fait accompli* has produced scholarship showing the effects of globalization on literary and cultural texts, and assessing what the larger implications of these effects supposedly are, not only for literary study but, in principle, for all its related disciplines as well. No one, of course, would dispute the importance of questioning these effects, but the questions themselves seem to be prompted by what is, a priori, a perceived need to globalize disciplines, curricula, and so forth, striking an unmistakable note of affinity with a corporate executive’s call for the technological upgrade and restructuring of the—in this case, literary-critical—workplace. Unquestioned here is the premise that requires us to imagine and project literary study as something that has to be changed *in direct response* to processes of globalization. Thus prompted by corporate capital, it might seem that literary studies has had in fact no other choice, if it is to preserve a place for itself as a discipline in the new world order, except to become globalized.

Of course, not all responses to globalization from within the humanities are so universally accommodating. A more critically and theoretically oriented cultural studies remains, in fact, one of the few intellectual milieus in which the corporate metanarrative of globalization is explicitly subject to question. Indeed, the critical response to globalization on the part of theorists such as Fredric Jameson, David Harvey, Immanuel Wallerstein, and Saskia Sassen—to mention only a few—has been to link the study of economics, finance, marketing and technology inseparably to the critique of culture. Nor, of course, is this an entirely new trend, reflecting the ways in which Marxist theory has shaped or influenced many of the humanities disciplines, most notably cultural studies itself. The latter field, by extending the tools of literary analysis to objects traditionally considered nonliterary and working via a variety of disciplines, has become, in a
sense, the ideal place to house the critique of corporate globalization and of corporate culture. Indeed, the work of cultural studies scholars such as Andrew Ross, Jeremy Brecher and Jim Costello, and Simon During has called for a direct engagement of scholarship with anti-corporate activism, urging an advocacy of corporate globalization’s victims that probably could not have been pursued anywhere but in the humanities and other closely related disciplines. Timothy Brennan, writing in At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now in 1997, had even called on scholars in the humanities to study and critique the highly influential work of corporate globalization’s analysts, mouthpieces, and management gurus, from Robert Reich to Tom Peters and the late Peter Drucker, pointing out that it is this literature that truly shapes decision making at the highest levels in the U.S. Indeed, the critique of global business and of business culture from within the humanities and cultural studies is an emergent field in itself, and includes recent work such as Richard Sennett’s The Culture of the New Capitalism (2006) Christopher Newfield’s Ivy and Industry: Business and the Making of the American University, 1880–1980 (2003), Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello’s The New Spirit of Capitalism (2006), and Bret Benjamin’s Invested Interests: Capital, Culture, and the World Bank (2007).

I locate my own work within literary and cultural studies and see it as an extension of this emergent study/critique of corporate globalization from within that discipline. My own analysis in this chapter, however, while it joins the effort to examine business cultures critically, also differs in its scope and focus by subjecting to theoretical scrutiny what has in fact been the turn of business, especially a trend within management as an academic disciplinary formation and a field of practice, to humanistic notions of culture. For while those of us who work in the humanities probably have had—to return to Bruce Robbins’s 1972 anecdote—to imagine the businessman’s gun held permanently to our heads, the emergent and largely consolidated reality of globalization has changed, in perhaps unexpected ways, the manner in which both the humanities and the business disciplines legitimate themselves and—in actual practice—reshape their own objects of study with respect to each other.

While others have examined and critiqued corporate capitalism’s own “cultural turn,” I hope to contribute to that critique by showing specifically how the American academic field of management has found in culture and literature and even in recent literary and cultural (especially postmodernist) theory a strategy for its own adaptation to globalization. This is the kind of adaptive strategy I refer to throughout this book as dislocalism. I have already introduced and briefly characterized this hypo-
retical concept in the foregoing introduction, but to repeat and clarify it at this point: what I term dislocalism is the overdetermining drive to preserve existing theoretical, institutional, and disciplinary boundaries, both within and beyond American literary and cultural studies, in response to the anxiety of the global, to enact certain changes at the sites of knowledge production so as to fend off other, more potentially radical ones. The term itself is intentionally double-edged. Thus, for example, when theorists, authors, critics, and other cultural producers are driven to displace the “local” in order to engage with what they understand as the “global,” they engage in a dislocalism. But, in doing so, I propose, they are simultaneously invested in remaining localized—adhering to a dislocalism—so that older institutional practices are not entirely displaced or rendered useless. Thus, as argued in the following chapters of this work, American institutional and literary practices often exemplify a pattern of dislocalism in which American identity must look increasingly to its global others in order to remain, globally, itself: thus American immigrant literary studies, travel writing, and tourism, among others, become sites for the containment of ethnicity and diversity within U.S. borders, helping to construct the United States as a place that is both local and global. The process of defining American identity in relationship to its others is not new in itself but has taken different dimensions in a global context.

But dislocalizing responses to globalization are not restricted to the humanities and cultural studies; in the case before us here, they characterize the changed and changing relation between the humanities and other, seemingly unconnected, or even opposed disciplinary formations. Thus I will focus in this chapter on how the discipline of management, whether in its more theoretically oriented scholarship in journals such as the Journal of Management Theory, in its own mass-marketed inspirational literature, or in its course curricula, engages with literary texts on the order of Antigone, Macbeth, and The Secret Sharer as well as with cultural theorists from Foucault to Baudrillard to James Clifford. This consummately dislocalizing phenomenon is, I will argue, part of management theory’s own globalization-inspired narrative of disciplinary obsolescence. My analysis will show, moreover, that this cultural and literary turn accords with the logic of an ideology that in one and the same moment must champion globalization and the breaking down of national boundaries and yet reinscribe a desire for consolidating the American as the only secure place within the new global order. This focus on management and its extradisciplinary, cultural excursions may seem arcane to those of us who practice in the field of literary/cultural studies. But if
we are indeed to critique and oppose forces of globalization, we have to understand the functional use of literature and culture for the corporate narrative of globalization and for management theorists in particular.\(^3\)

My choice of objects in what follows has also been shaped by the fact that, unlike what is generally said to be the case in the humanities, the discipline of management sees its central task to be training students—future members of the professional managerial class, or PMC—for nonacademic jobs. Management scholarship, though written for other academics, has a strong applied character, aimed at thinking through administrative work issues. No less than its academic literature, the theories of popular American management gurus such as Tom Peters and Peter Drucker—read both in academic circles as well as by the PMC out in the “real world”—have been influential in the way management as a field thinks about work structures. Analyzing such objects is necessary if one is to understand fully the functional nature of culture and literature for the world of management. I begin by looking at the most immediate implications of globalization as perceived and understood by management theorists and practitioners themselves, and more specifically the question of how these theorists confront the problem of defining what is American in the context of current management practices. I will then turn to an examination of how the question of culture as such becomes central to management discourse, leading finally into the highly specific, dislocalizing function of cultural theory and fiction themselves for global managers.

II. THE GLOBAL VILLAGE AND AMERICAN BUSINESS

As one might have expected, the new, global world order is, at first glance, aggressively championed in management literature. To confirm this one need only page through Tom Peters’s various best-selling books.\(^4\) The popular American management guru and famed (co)author of *In Search of Excellence* (1982) markets himself, and is widely acknowledged, as the “father of the postmodern corporation”\(^5\) and has even been likened to Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman for his writing on American business.\(^6\) (Such incongruous blending of the classical and the postmodern is, as we shall see below in another context, typical of management theory.) In *Reimagine!: Business Excellence in a Disruptive Age* (2003) for example, Peters proclaims: “The global village is here . . . with a vengeance. . . . The death of distance marks the beginning of (real) competition. The world is catching up. More freedom. Higher Standards of Living. Hooray!” (4). The stock figures of the “global village” and the “death of distance”
stand in here for the speed with which money and commodities move unfettered through dissolving national boundaries. Yet this celebration of globalization is accompanied by an ambivalent tone of anxiety and defensiveness: the global village also, says Peters, “puts us [Americans] under the gun. And if we want to continue to stay at or near the top then we must be working on our next act” (ibid.).

This ambivalent relation to the “global village” has become pervasive in management circles. Take, as only one further example here, Wallace Schmidt, Roger Conaway, Susan Easton, and William J. Wardrope, who—without Peters’s flamboyance—note in the introduction to their management textbook *Communicating Globally: Intercultural Communication and International Business* (2007) how policies from the 1980s such as the forging of strategic alliances between economic blocs have created “volatile change as globalism has come to dominate international business” (8). The U.S. itself, of course, was at the forefront in instituting these same globalizing policies, and yet it is this “volatile change,” as the authors of *Communicating Globally* admit, that has, ironically, threatened an erosion of American business hegemony. The book attributes this anxiety to the changed nature of business in a global context. “An American CEO” cited in the book states: “Before we used to be an American company operating overseas. Now we’re trying to become global and there’s a big difference in how you think about doing business” (7). The authors see it as necessary for American business to “reassert its leadership role” (8).

Such contradictory responses to globalization can be understood on a number of different levels and provide the occasion to think about two interrelated issues. First, they point to the fact that the globalization-inspired fear of obsolescence pervades management discourse no less than it does the humanities. In works dating from the first years of the “globalization frenzy” in the 1990s Peters, for example, has been relentless in calling on American business managers to keep up with the changing times or face what are likely to be the dire consequences. Post-9/11, in works such as *Re-imagine* and *Talent* (2005), this rhetoric has become increasingly aggressive. For example, in *Re-imagine*, Peters provocatively suggests that it is the “terrorists” who “conceived the ultimate ‘virtual organization’—fast, wily, flexible, determined” (4). Underlying this ironic compliment is of course righteous anger over the 9/11 attacks, but it is simultaneously delivered as a reprimand and warning to Americans themselves regarding the dangers not just of future attacks but also of letting the terrorists beat them on the organizational and managerial level. Himself a former Navy Seabee, Peters makes explicit use of
military metaphors, exhorting his American audience of businessmen and members of the PMC to take the offensive in rethinking business strategy: “while the American armed forces performed brilliantly in Iraq in 2003 . . . Business Matters! Economics Matters” (1). Perhaps, some years beyond the beginning of the war, such triumphalism would have to be turned down a notch or two, but the perceived dangers of being out-innovated and out-organized remain. American business, too, must fight the “war on terror”: the private sector of a “nation of nations” arrayed against “terrorists” who, whether pseudo-identified as Iraq or not, are, clearly enough, another, more sinister name here for globalization. Sounding a similar, but less sensationalist note, Schmidt, Conaway and others in *Communicating Globally*, also call on American business to intervene directly as a player on the global, post-9/11 scene of Realpolitik: “Just as Condoleezza Rice wants to lead the reshaping of America’s role in the world through transformational diplomacy,” American business should “reassert its leadership role in international business and give direction to this ever increasing globalism” (8).

My analysis will show how the idea that globalization or the “global village” requires a reconsolidation of American business, although given new impetus by 9/11, develops since the 1980s in the context of neoliberalism. The figure of the “global village” convinced many leading management practitioners that if American business remains “just business” it will fall behind and lose the game.

The second thing to consider here is the ironic form of chauvinism underlying the idea that the “global village” places *Americans* “under the gun.” While it is obvious, even a cliché, to point out that the potentially negative effects of globalization are felt by people in all parts of the world, whether in the form of increased competition for businesses, or, for the rest of us, through rising food and gas prices, loss of jobs, stagnant salaries, or much worse, this is, at the same time, precisely the point: *everyone*, not just Americans, is affected by globalization. Everyone is “under the gun” and, if one takes the concept of globalization seriously, being American has nothing to do with it. Yet for Peters being “under the gun” becomes a bizarre form of American privilege or exceptionalism. This points to an idea that is perfectly explicit in Peter’s writing, if only implied in more sedate, academic management literature, namely that America has not only enjoyed business leadership in the past but possesses the unquestioned and sole legitimate right to that power and advantage for eternity and has a sacred duty not to become complacent about its declining place in the world. Rather than questioning whether national identity categories such as American haven’t *themselves* become
difficult to shore up, management’s response to globalization is a more abstract, and in many ways more extreme form of nationalism, as if the answer to the dangers of the “global village” were to populate it exclusively with Americans. This same “global American” chauvinism is articulated in a somewhat different way by Thomas Friedman, the New York Times columnist and neoliberal globalization cheerleader. In his book The World Is Flat, Friedman tries to sober up Americans by reminding them that nations such as China and India may well surpass the U.S. in the “race to the top.” Here too the “global village” is celebrated only as long as American business is the one sitting atop the globe itself. Otherwise, it becomes a sign of foreboding, a “race to the top” in which all that matters is how the entrance of more and more players such as China and India into global competition introduces a potential of instability for Americans. It is not the emergence of a new world order with porous boundaries, but only the potential loss of American control over that world order that is problematic here. As far as American corporate- and management-thinking is concerned, it doesn’t matter what globalization means for political governance in the rest of the world as long as the U.S. remains the global hegemon.

Yet, however obvious and self-serving on its face, such thinking indicates the need to think more precisely about the specific implications of globalization for the discipline of management. For, underlying the anxiety (and corresponding aggressiveness) condensed in the figure of the “global village,” whether for ideologues such as Peters and Friedman or for academics like Schmidt, Conaway et al. is the question of what it means, in a global context of porous and complex national boundaries, to speak at all of American business or management—and of how management theory attempts to grapple with this new dilemma. In fact the increased instability and volatility of life in the “global village” contains an implicit threat to undermine the very field of management itself, insofar as it is fundamentally predicated on the nationalist economic paradigms of the early and mid-twentieth century?

In exploring this question, one should probably begin by observing that both the field of management as well as business generally as an academic discipline has American origins. The University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School, whose existence dates from 1881, is commonly credited with being the first established school of business. The emergence of management itself as a discipline can be traced back to the early twentieth century and the rise of theories of scientific management in private industry. Its origins, that is, roughly coincide with those of Taylorism and Fordism, American capitalist innovations that were indeed to conquer the
It wasn’t until the 1950s that European universities began in any measurable way to offer their own programs in business and management. If management theory isn’t, historically speaking, American, it is indeed hard to imagine what is.

It is also important to understand here that business as a modern academic discipline divided into the various subdisciplines of accounting, finance, marketing, management, and so forth, matured and gained prominence during a period largely dominated by Keynesian economic theory. The latter, with its macroeconomic emphasis on the need for government-led monetarist intervention to prevent recessions and depressions may have ceased to dominate the discipline, but Keynesianism’s predication upon the secure existence of distinct, purportedly self-contained national economic spaces is something whose imprint can still be detected, even in the “global village” tirades of someone like Peters.

But it is, of course, the increasing change in the relationship between capital and national boundaries, unmistakable since the beginning of the neoliberal regimes of the 1980s when “globalization” first began to enter the corporate mind-set and lexicon, that shapes the mix of triumphalism and anxiety condensed in figures such as the “global village.” The fact that it has been the U.S., along with the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO and other U.S.-dominated international economic institutions, that have led the way in introducing the neoliberal policies that have in turn further destabilized the older national business paradigm only further enhances management’s anxious relationship to globalization. To be sure, as the realities of the “global village” have become more and more unnerving, there has also been an increasing tendency in business circles to attribute all change, whether for good or ill, to questions of managerial practice on the level of the individual enterprise or administrative structure. Knowing how to cut costs and increase profits by restructuring a company becomes, once global instability becomes the rule rather than the exception, an ironically new form of American macroeconomics. Yet, since the discipline of management has historically focused on strategies for work organizations that are themselves structured by legal, economic, and political conditions within the nation-state, the need to think about strategies within global structures introduces both a degree and a kind of complexity and volatility heretofore unseen. All of this is, in a sense, embedded in the essentially dislocalist metaphors of the “global village” and the “death of distance”: slogans whose very proclamation contains a not so concealed fear and a longing for the days when America was the village and the distance separating it from its economic rivals seemed fixed for life.
To get at the root of this duality, however, it is necessary to have a fuller understanding of the fundamental, underlying theoretical problem here. This problem concerns the relation between capital itself and a global market, the latter conventionally understood as comprised of multiple, competing local economies (or competing capitals) housed within nation-states. As suggested by popular slogans such as the “death of distance,” management theory has no illusions about the fact that this relation has changed dramatically. But, as a rule, this change, however dramatic, is represented as a purely quantitative one in which capital, understood in management theory (as in most areas of mainstream economics) as simply the inputs to production, whether in the form of raw materials, other commodities, or money, moves across the globe with ever fewer barriers and ever greater velocity. In the case of money itself, whether as a means of circulation or as “investment flows,” technologies of electronic transfer make this movement virtually instantaneous. Globalization, in this celebratory conception, becomes the providential and final realization of what Marx once famously referred to in the Grundrisse as the “annihilation of space by time.”

Capital, however, as Marx has shown in the Grundrisse and Capital, is not just a thing moving through space at greater or lesser speeds, but a process, an abstract but dynamic form of social relation that has its own, immanent laws of motion which are themselves subject to historical change. In this conception, capital does not simply move more rapidly and freely through space, but has the potential to restructure that space itself, altering, in the process, the fundamental relation between national-economic and global-economic forms of space. Globalization, accordingly, would not merely be understood as the quantitative increase in the speed and ease with which capital moves through the space of the global market once national and other protectionist barriers are removed, but rather as the qualitative change whereby capital reproduces itself simultaneously and directly on a plane that more and more approximates that of the global market as a single space. The latter, arguably, is no longer, if it ever was, the merely abstract sum of national economies (as, for example, in Friedman’s “flat world” slogan) but, however unequal and hierarchically structured, verges on something that, from the standpoint of capital as whole, supersedes national economic space.

In their representation of the new mobility of capital via the metaphor of a winner-take-all, final round of competition between national capitals whose boundaries have, at the same time, become more porous and less visible, management theorists clearly have more than an inkling of this change. But the phenomenon here is not grasped as one that changes the
very relation of national boundaries to capital itself—one in which com-
petition intensifies to the point that its very “law” now dictates the fate,
and in some cases even the existence of nations themselves. Much less
is this understood as a phenomenon that betokens, at least according
to some arguments, a severe and potentially epoch-making crisis of capital
of truly global proportions. Or to be still more precise: to the extent that
the American management theory under analysis here does sense what is
truly in the offing, its own subordinate relation to capital and the latter’s
logic of reproduction leaves it no other ideological way forward but to
equate global transformation, whether for good or for ill, with the des-
tiny of American capitalist hegemony. The fate of all nations can only be
comprehended as the fate of one, the nation that is a “nation of nations.”

III. MANAGEMENT’S “CULTURAL TURN”

To the extent, then, that the very categories of management theory
themselves presuppose a constitutive, structural relation between the
logic of capitalist reproduction as a whole and the existence of distinct,
well-defined national-economic spatial spheres, the progressive erosion
of such a relation will inevitably produce a kind of theoretical vacuum
for management and business generally. For if, as one might put it, glo-
balization has undermined and volatilized the spatial logic of American
capital itself, what, to refer back to our earlier speculative question, does
or could it now mean to manage a business, or individual capitalist enter-
prise? If America does not name a fixed, structurally integrated space of
capitalist reproduction, then what sort of thing does it name? The answer,
in a (deceptively simple) word, is culture.

Business, in fact, has a fairly long history of addressing cultural issues
when they are relevant to the bottom line. Managers have, for example,
long made use of cultural or ethnographic profiles on the groups of people
in its target markets to sell products/services or in the area of personnel
relations.12 Affirmative action policies as well as fear of lawsuits over dis-
crimination have led firms to institute diversity initiatives and sensitivity
training aimed at broadening the cultural perspectives of their employees
and giving the appearance, at least, of a culturally diverse workplace.
Here culture describes an object that many in management theory circles
such as, for example, Fons Trompenaars, have taken to calling “cultural
intelligence.”13 I will have more to say below, in my discussion of the sub-
discipline of international development management, about the dislocal-
izing propensities of this idea, but such a traditional, ethnographic notion
of culture will not answer to management theory’s need for—to borrow David Harvey’s useful term—a “spatial fix” able to give the appearance, at least, of closing the dislocating breach that globalization has threatened to open under the very feet of the discipline itself. For that purpose, a much more radical, more theoretically risky notion of culture as, so to speak, subject and not merely predicate of managerial theory and practice becomes increasingly necessary. And, indeed, beginning roughly in the 1980s such notions of culture begin more and more to take hold of the leading figures and movements within management theory.

As I hope to make clear below, this dislocating turn toward the concept of culture as subject would ultimately lead management theorists directly to cultural theory itself and even result in the folding of literary fiction into the discursive logic of managerial dislocalism. The burden of my analysis will be to show how such a cultural and literary turn is in itself an effect of how management theorists seek to understand the reproduction of capital on the global plane and their deeply contradictory relation to the latter. For, to reiterate, they must find a way to champion globalization’s uneven flux and dissolution of national boundaries while at the same time continuing to theorize about how to reproduce American know-how and business sense across the world. What I posit here, to formulate this same idea in terms more familiar to theory in the humanities and cultural studies, is that culture, literary fiction, and cultural theory—the latter, above all, in its postmodern variant—come to provide business theorists with a way to renarrate the nation in a new, global context. I will analyze this variant of dislocalism within two distinct areas of the field of management: organization studies and international aspects of the field as in international management, development management, or, as it is also sometimes referred to, international development. I will analyze both at some length, but for now I offer a thumbnail sketch of each area, stating my specific purpose for examining them.

Organization studies, or OS, arose in the 1980s as the notion of culture was gaining more currency among business theorists due to the perceived threat of competition from Japanese business. Michael Rowlinson and Stephen Procter in “Organizational Culture and Business History,” explain that “Japan’s economic success was believed to owe something to the cultural characteristics of its corporations. In response, several American writers perceived a need to celebrate the cultural virtues of successful American corporations” (370). Along with the idea of a national-cultural business organization, then, came a different notion of culture itself, one that was no longer limited to the “cultural intelligence” paradigm with its focus on better management of employee relations and target markets.

Culture was now also to provide managers with more effective ways of narrating American organizations themselves. The category of culture, that is, underwent a needed expansion so as to be able to link it directly to the national.

However, as, since the 1980s, global economic interlinking has increased, the ideas of corporate culture and identity have themselves become increasingly delinked from the national. Or to put it another way: analyzing the national specificity of organizations must now have factored into it the added complexity of the new, vastly increased mobility of capital. Along with this, there is a growing sense that all organizations must be run like for-profit corporate institutions, and the very distinction between public and private institutions is blurring. Here OS itself comes to overlap with public administration, the subfield that has traditionally theorized governmental and public sector organizations. That is, in the wake of an accelerating tendency toward the dissolution of both national and institutional boundaries as well, OS has implicitly come to think of the organization itself as something transcending the national and the regional. The organization becomes what is in effect a universal, leaving OS with the task of theorizing the idea of organization as a culture in itself. (But while presented in denationalized terms, OS as practiced nevertheless tends to theorize about management of people—their behaviors and social interactions in relationship to existing and emergent work structures. These concerns have also become more emphasized in the field of management as a whole.)

14 From here it is a relatively short step for management to turn to theories of postmodernism, given the latter’s emphasis on the ubiquity and sheer complexity of culture—on culture as that which, as Jameson once put it, appears to “coat” everything else.

15 Nevertheless, this very embrace of cultural complexity and polymorphism as the key to understanding the universal corporate organization masks a nervousness and anxiety lest, in the end, OS should find itself adrift in a global, transnational no man’s land with nothing left any longer to organize or manage. It is this anxiety, I will argue, that then prompts OS’s academic and popular turn to literary fiction as a way of hedging its bets, of staging its restorationist desire for a simpler, more stable version of culture, and a reconsolidation of the nation on the level of the new, global cultural “rhizome” itself. That is, I argue that while OS purports to theorize the universal corporate organization, it is all the while unwittingly narrating and reconsolidating Americanism. This point becomes clearer if we juxtapose the field of organization studies with those areas of the field that explicitly deal with questions relating to man-
aging globally. As I read it, OS is part of the trend of the entire field of management focusing more on international aspects of management concerned with managing multi/transnational corporations. The institutionalization of organization studies has kept in step with the rise of multi- and transnational corporations that began to be theorized in the area of “International Management.” As a result we have seen an emphasis on organizational culture that at the same time attempts to deal with issues of management in different parts of the world. Moreover in an increasingly globalized world, there have been correspondingly increasing arguments for interdisciplinary work in international management so that issues of managerial expertise can be related to questions of policy and governance—an area that deals with international development issues. I will focus some of my analysis on the field of international development management, or IDM, by relating it to questions of management and managerial expertise in those areas of the world considered in need of development.

IDM addresses issues of concern to managers in a highly global network of institutions such as USAID and the World Bank, managers responsible for instituting U.S.-led neoliberal policies and for the global reproduction of American business interests and know-how. It also deals with management strategies for international agencies lending money to developing nations for specific projects and also with governance policies. As the international branch of public administration (encompassing governmental and nongovernmental organizations alike) IDM emerged after WWII as the principal academic discipline charged with the design and implementation of modernization policies for the developing world—the very developmentalist models that would be critiqued in places like Latin America by so-called dependency theory. OS, it should be noted, has maintained a distance from IDM, viewing the latter as more in the nature of a specialized subfield, whose concern for “nation-building” OS proper considers to be outside of its purview. It will thus come as no surprise that, in questions of culture, IDM often appears to fall back on what, from the OS perspective, are more traditional theories of “cultural intelligence.” Those charged with administering foreign loans must, after all, cultivate an understanding of the culture of their prospective debtors and client states. So, for IDM, the notion that American culture is essentially different from, say, Sudanese, Chinese, or Mexican culture remains very much in force.

However, in an increasingly globalized context, even IDM’s more conventional, nation-centered notion of culture has suffered complications,
and the national qualifiers of culture have had to be supplemented here theoretically by other kinds of cultural formations such as those of race/ethnicity and religion. It is thus now not uncommon to find in the management texts used to train future international development managers, discussions, say, of Islamic, Native American, or Chicano cultures. IDM, then, narrates America via concepts of race and ethnicity that in turn betray its own version of the desire for a simpler, more sustainable version of culture—given the specter of a total, global flux that would erase cultural boundaries of all kinds, be they national or not. If, for OS, the idea of organization as itself a culture supplements the lost unity of the national business entity, for IDM it is race and ethnicity that must be summoned to help restore the national-cultural boundaries underpinning the field itself.

It is important to note here as well that IDM is generally aware of radical critiques that charge it, along with the powerful institutions it serves, with implementing and defending neocolonial policies around the world. Such awareness has, in fact, led IDM to incorporate these critiques into its own discourse, so that it is not uncommon to find discussions of postcolonial theory cropping up in IDM circles. I argue that, in fact, by incorporating such theories as would-be self-critiques, IDM in effect attempts to Americanize itself, that is, to distance itself from a European-style colonialism. Here too, ironically, the vision of an American-originated, benevolent hand held out to the other, “developing” nations of the world must frame itself in a neutral, universal language of culture—a language that IDM, too, will find in notions of postmodernism and fiction. These notions remain unacknowledged but are nevertheless subtly operant.

I should also point out that, in addition to their ideological alliance with the concept of Americanism, both OS and IDM largely remain institutionally American in the sense that the publishing venues in the fields and those who write in them are mostly affiliated with American academic institutions. European academics, especially from the U.K., have some scholarly representation in this area; but there is very little representation from other parts of the world. I will first analyze OS at length and in greater detail by examining recent scholarship by management theorists and the curricula of management courses themselves. In my subsequent analysis of IDM, I will, in addition to scholarship and curricula, also examine several case studies appearing in management textbooks. And I will also fill in more historical and descriptive detail as needed.
The dislocal reshaping of OS, with its increasing emphasis on the active role of culture, is inextricably connected to what the field now imagines as its essential object, namely, the *global* enterprise and the latter’s changed relationship to the nation-state, as well as the role of managers in leading such new organizations. Analysis of this particular field-imaginary will also allow us a more detailed glimpse into management theory’s understanding and simultaneous mystification of the globalization of capital.

If, before the 1980s, the notion of culture was not explicitly connected to the notion of a national business organization, this reflected a historical context in which the lines between nation-states seemed more defined and fixed. Production and consumption were presumed to take place largely within national economic space, while nation-states themselves appeared, to some extent objectively, to exert greater control over economic and financial decisions. It is also important to remember that the post–World War II decades had seen the rise of many anti-colonial movements for national independence and sovereignty and for economic control over resources within the newly created nations—something that further helped to concretize the notion of firmly entrenched national boundaries. But during the 1980s the idea of a shrinking, spatio-temporally “compressed” world was already starting to take greater hold on management theory, and the corresponding need to establish a direct relationship between culture as such and the national business organization anticipated the delinking, qua capital, of nation and business organization that was to take hold of the field-imaginary (or unconscious) in the not too distant, global future. Take, for example, the case of the “father of modern management,” the late Peter F. Drucker. In “The New Society of Organizations,” Drucker pronounces that—in a “globalized knowledge economy”—“every organization has to build the management of change into its very structure.” (144). How to produce this structural change? For Drucker, significantly, it is the notion of the culture of the organization itself, disconnected from the culture of the locality surrounding it, that holds the key. He acknowledges that “an organization’s members live in a particular place,” and that there exists a “need to feel at home there” (ibid.). Yet, Drucker claims, “the organization cannot submerge itself in the community nor subordinate itself to the community’s ends. Its
culture has to transcend community” (ibid.). This emphasis on organizational culture appears in a variety of Drucker’s writings.

The question of the “transcendence” of organizational culture vis-à-vis the culture of the “community” has itself become a regular curricular topic in university courses. Consider, for example, “Organizational Culture and Culture Change,” a course that appears in the 2008 catalogue at the Dartmouth Business School. According to its catalogue description, the course seeks to “introduce organizational culture concepts and give [students] some first hand experience in understanding the cultural values of an organization.” It goes on to state that “after arming [students] with tools and frameworks that can be used to identify and evaluate the cultural values of an organization,” the course “will also equip [them] with some tools and techniques about changing the corporate culture to increase satisfaction and performance. At a personal level, these insights in organizational culture will help [students] find [their] fit for [a] future job and connect with [their] company’s culture” (The Tuck MBA: Organizational Culture and Culture Change).

There are several issues to be explicated here, beginning with the question of the nature of organizations themselves. Note that in both Drucker’s more abstract, almost philosophical formulations as well as in the boilerplate of the course description the culture of organization is also different from the culture of the people who make up the organization. Managers and members of the PMC are expected to cultivate a sense of organizational culture that is not shaped by the culture or identity of employees that the latter may have developed through other affiliations such as family, religion, ethnicity, or nationality. In this configuration, organizational culture is supposed to define the people affiliated with it and is itself free of any national, regional, or local referent such as American, Chinese, German, Midwestern, Eastern, Southern, and so forth. Note as well that there is no need of any reference here to other, legal distinctions as to the size and nature of the organizations, that is, whether they are small or large businesses, for profit, nonprofit, governmental, S corporation, C corporation, business trust, sole proprietorship, and so forth. At one level, of course, theorizing the organization as a whole, that is, as a form, is bound to introduce some level of generality. However, an increasingly global context has tended to theorize away not only the borders between nation-states but also the practical if not legal borders between different kinds of organizations as well. This is in keeping, as mentioned already, with the widespread belief that all institutions must be run efficiently in the manner of for-profit privatized firms. The overlap between the fields of OS and public administration (the latter charged
with theorizing governmental organizations and now also NGOs) then, is itself one further manifestation of how pervasive the rhetoric of dissolving boundaries of all kinds has become. Scholarship on notions of culture and literature from both disciplines continues to be published in the same journals—for example, the *Journal of Management Inquiry* and *Organization*—making OS even more the disciplinary default setting for management as a whole. Another reason behind the supposed need for organizations to define their own, “transcendent” cultures is the speed with which companies change affiliations, ownership, or locations—whatever that now means—in the course of having their stock bought and sold on the global market. The idea is that culture can remain the constant among the many, multiplying variables. But this, again, is precisely where the dislocalism of the field comes into purview.

For Drucker’s notion of the culture of the organization as transcending that of the community, while clearly a symptom of increasing globalization, also signals a definite limit intrinsic in OS and management theory’s understanding of the globalization of capital. According to OS, the increasing universalization of the organization—imagined as a structure with ever broadening operational ties spilling across national borders—is the direct result of increasing globalization. But, although OS explicitly refers to “transnational” and “multinational” corporations, terms Drucker himself has helped to define and popularize, such terms are implicitly inadequate to the idea of the universal, culturally autonomous, or “transcendent” organization. What Drucker and OS fail to articulate here is how the new, global firm has become not merely a transnational/multinational but what I want to call a *denationalized* structure. Regardless of whether organizations become international in their operations, or whether they move from one national or even regional location to another, their very relationship to the nation, and to the regional and local generally, has changed in the wake of globalization. It is, at any rate, safe to say that the idea of a transnational or multinational corporation/organization captures only one aspect of the nature of organization in a fully global context. In effect, despite having assumed the task of rationalizing emergent work structures, and even as it proclaims the delinking of organizational culture from the community, OS is still not quite able to put its finger on the realities of organizations themselves—structures whose connections to their localities are changing due to fundamental and unperceived changes in social relations themselves.

And yet, even as OS has, implicitly, reached the threshold of theorizing the universal organization as denationalized, as fully detached from the national, its own ideological affinity nevertheless lies with corporations
operating largely out of the global North and West, and primarily within
the U.S. (I will analyze this at length in the section on IDM.) Consider, for
example, that when Drucker advocates a delinking of organizational cul-
ture from that of its surrounding community, he links the importance and
necessity of this detachment to what he terms a “globalized knowledge
economy.” While the “knowledge economy” is an allusion to globaliza-
tion here, it is, even more specifically, a commonly employed descriptor
for the rise of a postindustrial service sector in the global North/West,
primarily in the United States. Though of course goods are still manufac-
tured in the U.S., even as more and more industrial production is farmed
out to the global peripheries, the term “knowledge economy” in Druck-
er’s conception does not describe the world at large. What it describes, in
a quintessentially dislocal move, is a “denationalized” United States. On
this level it becomes more apparent how the emptying out of the national
referent from culture has as much to do with OS’s own narrative of obso-
lescence as it does with the celebration of a transnational era.

There are, in fact, myriad sources for such dislocalizing contradictions,
but underlying them all is the fact that both the institutional and the
ideological apparatus for theorizing the global, transnational, or, more
accurately, the denationalized firm exists largely if not exclusively in the
United States. In this context, the denationalized “American” speaks to a
specific form of globalization anxiety. Celebrations of globalization, sum-
moning up the standard topos of the transnational organization with its
increasing international links, mask what is at the same time, and more
primordially, the fear of the denationalized organization. Implicit in the
rhetoric of the “global village” with its correspondingly global firm and
organizational culture is not only the fear of going out of business but an
underlying apprehension over the potential to rationalize away the func-
tion of management academics and the PMC themselves, leaving them
with no clear locus from or in which to manage, whether in theory or in
practice.

And this same tacit fear is, arguably, reflected in post-1980s curric-
ular changes that management theory and OS have undergone in the
American university as students are increasingly being trained to employ
culture as a tool of for business creativity and innovation. Behind the
innocuous-sounding emphasis on the ability to connect to and transform
an organization’s culture as key to the career success of the future PMC
in the above-cited Dartmouth course description, for example, there is
a palpable sense that culture may soon be all there is standing between
management and the void. Although the course does not state it as such,
a manager’s skill at shaping and sustaining organizational culture will likely appear to be most critical in times of layoffs and restructuring. The potential need for an (perhaps unsuccessful) attempt at arousing an organization’s cultural *esprit de corps* so as to make periods of crisis, increased extraction of labor power, and threatened job cuts more palatable does not bode well for the job of the manager either. The Dartmouth course also provides a suitable supplement to the aggressive but clearly defensive call to restore American business leadership sounded by Schmidt and Conaway’s and Peters’s specter of “Americans under the gun.”

There is, moreover, the irony here that in learning to utilize culture as a tool, the students are expected to develop cultural blueprints for what they consider to be efficient universal organizations exclusively from within *American* universities. The cultural universality of the latter is taken for granted. Once developed, these blueprints can then be exported globally. (This latter point will be made clearer in the section on international development management.) For this reason, the field of organization studies and management as a whole positions itself to theorize innovative up-to-date strategies using cultural theory and literary fiction as seemingly applicable to any global firm. Even as courses such as “Organizational Culture and Culture Change” adopt a consciously neutral tone, the dislocalizing contradictions implied in such an endeavor become all too clear. I will first address this dislocalism in the field’s adoption of cultural theory, largely postmodernism, and then move on to examine the same trend in management theory and OS’s turn toward literary fiction—a trend that solidified in the 1990s.

**A Manager’s Guide to Postmodern Cultural Theory?**

It should not come as any great surprise that, as its preoccupation with culture grows, management theory would eventually gravitate toward the humanities and cultural studies to seek out scholarship on the concept. In the same vein, it is also understandable how the notion of a denationalized knowledge-based firm would eventually discover a certain affinity for theories of the postmodern. As Tom Peters says in *Liberation Management*, “let’s hold applause for chaos theory” [the emphasis here being on “theory”]. Instead of the frantic pursuit of total comprehension (via central-control schemes) let’s revel in our very lack of comprehension!” (491). In some sense postmodernism, with its emphasis
on the nontotalizing virtues of chaos and the inevitable nonclosure of theoretical comprehension serves an immediately descriptive purpose simply by furnishing a preexisting language for representing the often seemingly incomprehensible appearance of global capital’s financial flows and fluxes. Postmodernism also seems as good a way as any in which to frame the issues brought into play by not only the speed with which organizations change locations and affiliations but also the reconfigurations of the spatio-temporal axes affecting notions of office space and work time, as managers telecommute and transact with each other across multiple time zones.

However, many management theorists have also sought to make a case for postmodernism as a direct tool for problem solving and a source of innovation. For example, in the essay “Decoding Postmodernism for Busy Public Managers,” appearing in the Spring 2007 issue of The Public Manager, Kenneth Nichols writes, “postmodernism encourages organization theory, and public administration . . . to rethink fundamental assumptions and concepts, mind the larger perspective and the longer view—much like what good public managers do” (63). Similarly in “Strategy as Simulacra,” published in the Journal of Management Studies, Gina Grandy and Albert J. Mills, following Baudrillard, explain that postmodernism makes it possible to think about “strategic management as a model of simulation” and to examine the “practice of strategy as a discourse attempting to understand the ‘truth effects’ of the those discursive practices” (1153). And Jay D. White in “Knowledge Development: Views from Postpositivism, Poststructuralism, and Postmodernism,” references the works of theorists such as Jameson, Derrida, Lacan, and Lyotard, among others, for their usefulness in explaining “local interconnected problems” in public administration (171). “The narratives that guide public administration,” White openly affirms, should be “considered in light of postmodernism” (173). Invoking the postmodern disbelief in grand narratives, he further claims that “problem-solving in the postmodern era will proceed incrementally as small problems are addressed one at a time using local knowledge” (174). It is, again, fairly obvious how postmodernism—especially when the grand narratives of global capital take on increasingly overwhelming proportions—could come to serve as a conceptual back-stop for a preexisting inclination to focus on the local knowledges and micro-practices of OS and public administration, and also how it lends a theoretical gloss to the post-Fordist flexibility of labor that David Harvey analyzes in The Condition of Postmodernity. But what are these organizational and administrative problems that postmodernism can purportedly help solve?
The Labor-Intensifying Virtues of Egalitarian Postmodernism

As the internal contradictions of capital deepen along with its increasing mobility and volatility, the PMC, as I have argued, finds itself in need of new ways to produce cultural identification with the firm. To this extent, a postmodern-inflected organization theory steps in to assist the PMC to better manage employees and build a culture of employee participation in the newly globalized context by legitimating the adoption of a more egalitarian managerial pose. Such a turn to postmodernism represents itself, in part, as a reaction to the traditional approach to organization theory, which typically emphasizes rationality, formality, rule-reliance, and hierarchy. According to Nichols, “postmodernism refers to a skeptical approach to orthodox theories of organization, management, and culture, with an emphasis on adapting to circumstances” (60). Such “adaptation” will require openness to difference and the multiplicity of management “narratives.” Writing in “The Role of the Researcher,” Mary Jo Hatch cites Gérard Genette along with Derrida, Geertz, and Foucault to argue that “different ways of knowing are constructed within and through different narrative perspectives” (370) and that “the analysis of the narrating practices of organizational researchers may have direct benefit for managers” (371). “The acceptance of varied writing practices with respect to narrative positions,” reasons Hatch, “should contribute to greater pluralism of perspectives” in management (374), a pluralism that could help “organizations transition from the authoritarian relationships typical of hierarchical structures to the influence-based, largely egalitarian relationships” (371). Hatch’s notion of pluralism in fact fits perfectly well within the contours of a corporate ideology, which, ever since the adoption of affirmative action policies has moved to, in effect, redefine discriminatory policies as “pluralistic” through retooled corporate and managerial rhetorics and mission statements. As the looming shadow of globalization has driven management theorists in the direction of postmodernism, the question of pluralism has become all the more emphatic as corporations realize that to compete in a global market they need to employ in a systematic way the expertise of diverse sets of people from across the world. Even so, however, pluralism, in addition to being an ideology to be cultivated in keeping with the postmodern leanings of various corporations, has also emerged as a problem. So, for instance, in “Managing Multicultural Teams,” a 2006 article by Jeanne Brett, Kristin Behfar, and Mary C. Kern, published in the Harvard Business Review, the authors acknowledge that, while “multiculturalism teams” can offer many advantages, a number of problems nevertheless arise due to such
things as miscommunication based on differences in accents, in work values, and so forth. Although the authors propose dealing with such issues by implementing better communicative systems, the subtext here is clearly enough the fact that pluralism has become as much a part of the problem as it is part of the solution.

That is, in addition to being an ideological guide for purportedly less hierarchical employee relations, postmodernism also, in an even more overtly and ironically dislocalizing move, offers a chance for management to adapt to new, globalized conditions while at the same time reconsolidating its own disciplinary position. For White, here representing the view from public administration, postmodern theories can help identify and solve problems such as those resulting from “job dissatisfaction, or low organizational commitment, or job stress, or work overload, or occupational burnout”—and in so doing “preserve a greater sense of public administration as a whole” (175). It is as though the postmodern advocacy of the horizontal and nonclosure offered the PMC a way, not just to put a more positive spin on a crisis of management and administration, but to translate that crisis into an image of management itself.

But, however genuine the egalitarian desire may be here in the abstract, there is nothing in either White’s or Hatch’s analysis to suggest that such egalitarianism would really be the outcome—even if it were possible—of a postmodern managerial style. The emphasis here seems purely to be on getting conservative, top-down managers to understand how an egalitarian pose might help them motivate their employees into becoming more productive workers—and perhaps on getting rewarded for better managerial performance in the process. Whatever its merits may or may not be per se, postmodernism, no less than the idea of culture, functions within management discourse in a quintessentially dislocalist mode: apart from standing in for a new theory to match the sense that global capital has become a bewilderingly complex question of accelerating flows and fluxes without any apparent stable ground, it gives closure to management’s narrative of obsolescence by recasting the centrifugal forces of globalization that threaten to undo it as if these were already contained within the field itself.

Such dislocalism becomes especially clear in White’s appropriation of postmodernism. White begins by claiming that postmodernism can help solve administrative problems by licensing managers to reframe such problems as stories—stories that thereby become open to reinterpretations leading to “creative solutions.” But in further thinking through this idea an odd sort of switch comes into play, and White appears to end up
arguing *against* the application of postmodernism for such a purpose. This becomes apparent in his discussion of Jameson’s well-known analysis of postmodernism:

Jameson argues that Westerners have lost their ability to deal with the present or the future. He calls this “pastiche,” meaning the imitation of dead styles. One example he uses is the Western fascination with nostalgia film, suggesting that only the past is meaningful . . . His second argument starts with Lacan’s definition of schizophrenia as the inability to engage fully in speech and language . . . One corrective for the problems of pastiche and schizophrenia is the willingness to engage in telling stories about the past, the present, the future. (171)

Although Jameson’s general characterization of the postmodern is vaguely recognizable here, note that White does not distinguish Jameson’s profoundly critical metacommentary on postmodernism from those postmodern theories that are more affirming of “fragmentation” and the “dissolution of metanarratives” as interpretive strategies. Jameson, as we may recall from *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, does not claim that pastiche is merely an imitation of “dead styles,” nor that pastiche in its postmodern form could be overcome by storytelling, the latter conceived here by White as a sort of executive tool capable of solving muddled administrative problems. What drops out of the picture entirely here is the fundamental difference between the Jamesonian theory of the postmodern as an attempt to read the contemporary narrative of capital itself and what White and other postmodern management theorists are doing, namely, reading the organizational forms of capital themselves as just narratives. Why, then, if the content of the theory is either glossed over or itself converted into a pastiche, invoke the authority of Jameson at all—or that of the other cultural theorists of postmodernity making regular appearances in management theory? Part of the answer here is simply that it authorizes management theorists such as White to introduce the concepts of culture and narrative into a management discourse in which such notions are otherwise unavailable. White invests in the narrative of “dead styles” because this reading of pastiche allows him to imply that those who continue to use older or past management practices to solve present and perhaps future problems employ dead *management* styles. The concept of pastiche is employed so as to code certain practices and people as obsolete in favor of those considered up-to-date. According to White, storytelling can be a corrective
to these outmoded management methodologies. His claim is that scholarship in management theory and public administration “most closely approximates the conventional meaning of a story” because it “include[s] case studies, descriptions of administrative and political events, logical arguments, and interpretations” (172). While case studies and “administrative events” can indeed be treated as stories, postmodern theorists would probably not even agree on what the conventional meaning of a story might be, much less on how to apply it to solve administrative problems.

White’s appropriation of the cultural theorists of postmodernism is thus deeply paradoxical. On the one hand, he sees himself as their proponent, reading them in a purely instrumental spirit as providing ways to identify problems. He advocates casting aside the possibility of “a grand narrative for public administration as a whole” so as to study only “the development of interconnected, local problems of society” (175). Although lacking entirely the philosophical overtones of, say, a Lyotard, the distrust of totality typical of much postmodern theory (Jameson obviously excepted) here seems to have found a secure home in the world of organizational administration. But, in that very moment, White equates postmodernism with pastiche, or as he says, with “dead styles,” suggesting that postmodernism is a pathology that is to be overcome by storytelling. He asks: “What should be the role of public administration, if any, in dealing with the problems of postmodernism such as the pastiche and schizophrenia that Jameson fears? If society is really as fragmented as Lyotard claims, what role, if any, does public administration have in bringing it together?” (173). That is, the fact that the “grand narratives” have become eroded within the organizational wing of business (as well as in the world at large) is itself seen as purely a problem of organization. Evidently the underlying anxiety in business circles—that the complexities of globalization have now exceeded the organizational capacities of conventional business and management thinking—is to be dispelled by a corresponding panacea, according to which all one has to do is insert, somehow, this new level of complexity itself into the offices, production lines, and boardrooms in order for the grand narrative of global capital to piece itself back together again.

But the contradictions in White’s appropriation of postmodernism reach their full expression only in management theory’s instrumentalization of literary fiction—one in which fiction becomes not only a central form of knowledge for organization studies but also a model for organizations themselves.
V. THE TURN TO LITERATURE AND FICTION

It would perhaps have come as a surprise to the imagined, gun-wielding businessman in Bruce Robbins’s 1972 graduate school anecdote—or to the professor who used it to humble his literature students—to learn that in the late 1980s Harvard Business School introduced and has regularly offered a course entitled “The Moral Leader” in which students have been required to read, inter alia, Shakespeare’s Macbeth, Conrad’s The Secret Sharer, Fitzgerald’s The Last Tycoon, and Ishiguro’s Remains of the Day, along with selections from the philosophy of Aristotle, Confucius, and Machiavelli. Such readings, according to the course catalogue description in 2003, will help future corporate leaders and managers think through “issues of personal character and sound practical judgment” (Elective Curriculum MBA Courses, Harvard Business School).¹⁸

A light meal of “cultural capital” in what is otherwise a no-nonsense curriculum aimed at schooling America’s future business leaders in the practical, hard-nosed realities of competing in the global marketplace? One might think so, but in fact a survey of business and management programs in American universities since the 1990s suggests otherwise. Along with the increase in combined BA/MBA programs that encourage business students to engage in a serious study of the humanities, courses like “The Moral Leader,” in which works of literary fiction take center stage, have come to occupy a more stable place in management curricula.¹⁹ What, to any advanced contemporary student of the humanities, must seem the superannuated, Arnoldian or Leavisian overtones of such catalogue descriptions are obvious and ironic enough. But the increasingly literary turn of the management academy indicates a widespread conviction among business educators not just that the great works of literature will make you “a better person”—or make you feel like one when you are faced with the “moral” dilemmas of having to “restructure” a company or wipe out your competition—but that they will make you a better business-space.

Fiction, however, offers management much more than simply a way to measure what is immeasurable, say, in a productivity or feasibility report. Even more than learning from the “leadership roles” depicted in Macbeth or the Secret Sharer, such fictions, in some sense the purest possible instances of storytelling (and to this extent in keeping with management’s reading of postmodern theory), become a tool for problem solving. For example, “Literature, Ethics and Authority,” a course offered at MIT’s Sloan School in which students are assigned readings such as Melville’s
Billy Budd, Sophocles’ Antigone, and Timothy Mo’s The Monkey King, explicitly states in its 2003 catalogue description that “unwittingly, we use stories and story-telling as managerial tools: properly applied, they help us motivate a workforce, define a company mission, focus our thinking in moments of crisis” (my emphasis; MIT OpenCourseWare). The point of the course, then, is to make this unwittingly literary approach to management conscious and methodical. Stories and the practice of storytelling here become a way of dealing with employee-related problems by furnishing direct models of organizational process and behavior, helping to shape and guide a culture of innovation and change in a globalized context. In effect, the concept of fiction has become an integral part of that cultural development.

But OS’s penchant for fiction goes further still. Alongside helping to guide managers in their organizational decision-making by providing ethical templates and by furnishing simple and compelling behavioral models capable of reflecting complex situations, fiction itself becomes a blueprint for organization. Thus the ever trend-setting Tom Peters, writing in Liberation Management asks “if fiction and poetry (drama, opera, etc.) capture life better . . . then why not think of fiction as a model for organization?” (375). But he goes even further here than advocating the use of literary fiction to infuse organization with newness and creative thinking, openly declaring that “organizations are fiction—especially the knowledge based, professional service firms that are tomorrow’s best models” (ibid.). Why pose fiction as model for organizations? According to Liberation Management:

If you’re lucky, your organization—that is “organization”—doesn’t exist. You can’t find it. People aren’t in their offices. They’re not doing what they’re supposed to be doing—not passing paper to and from . . . Where are they damn it? If you can answer that question you are Newtonian and in trouble. In the old days we wanted an answer to that question . . . “He’s in the office . . .” But now ambiguity defines the market. So doesn’t it follow, as day follows night, that ambiguity must be . . . the organization? Um, how do you do a “chart-and-boxes” depiction of ambiguity? (379)

At this point, not only does Robbins’s anecdote about the Benthamite businessman holding a gun to the head of the literary scholar begin to lose its terrors, but, to hear Peters tell it, it becomes curiously reversed. But organization itself as fiction? Apart from Peters’s customary hyperbole, there are, of course, certain obvious caveats here. As is generally
the case with Peters’s brand of management discourse, it is the so-called knowledge-based firm, tacitly assumed to belong in the global North and particularly in the U.S., that is claimed to have crossed over into the “fictional” realm. And in this context it perhaps makes some sense to observe that the more employees telecommute and the less time they spend physically located in any single, nonvirtual office space, the more does their organizational presence appear to be a “fiction.”

Yet Peters is not the exception here, for, as with the case of postmodernism, the more scholarly and academic wing of management theory has for some time now been making much the same kinds of argument. Moreover, according to Peters and the standard corporate view of globalization, it is the “knowledge-based firms” that, along with the financial sector itself, ultimately organize not only knowledge and finance but also all of production worldwide. Odd as it may at first seem, the theory of organization as fiction is meant and is to be taken quite literally here. Analogy gives way to homology. For Peters, the essential attribute of fiction—and its great virtue as a model over the “Newtonian” school of OS—is its “ambiguity,” the fact that flux and indeterminacy are perfectly at home in the fictional realm. Organizations must be ambiguous and in flux, hence must be “fictional,” so as to match, to internalize directly within their own structure, what is universally understood as the flux and ambiguity of the market itself.

It is hard to avoid the speculative conclusion here that, however unwittingly, unsystematically, and, so to speak, facing backwards, management theory and OS have been driven to formulate or at least to imagine something like the Marxian category of—as it now tends to be termed—“fictional capital.” In the third volume of Capital, Marx refers to the system of credit in general as “fictitious capital.” So, for example, the buying and selling of shares on the stock market neither creates new value nor injects increased capital into the firm whose shares are being traded. “Fictitious capital” is different from the money originally supplied for use in production. It is an additional amount of money that simply allows for the circulation of income or profit. In fact, this circulation represents claims to future, still unrealized surplus value, making it appear that the amount of capital has increased. Thus the increase in the price of shares, to take the most obvious example of fictitious capital, creates the illusion—the stuff of everyday economic life on Wall Street—that the stock market itself is creating value. Essentially, fictitious capital refers to a form of financialization—the listing of a given amount of prospective money capital on the books—that makes a claim on the future generation of real, nonfictional profits or surplus value.
None of this poses any real threat to the reproduction of capital as a whole as long as such claims themselves are eventually made good and fictional is converted into real capital. But what happens if—or when—a point is reached beyond which this realization (in more than one sense here) ceases to be possible, and, to avoid defaulting on the claims already lodged against fictional capital, still more fictional capital must be injected into circulation in the hopes of putting off the inevitable day of reckoning? Here one encounters what has become a major question in discussions of contemporary political economy, one to which I cannot do real justice here. The most recent U.S. financial crisis, set off in 2007–8 by massive defaults on subprime home mortgages and the resulting deflation of what had been Wall Street’s latest, real estate–based speculative bubble is only the latest indication that such a point—what we might term hyper-fictionalization—may have been reached.

But one does not have to be knowledgeable on this point of Marxian critical political economy to have more than an inkling that, as increasing masses of fictional capital remain unrealized, as more and more “good” money is thrown after “bad,” a “tipping point” will be reached beyond which capital itself must come to function more as a “fiction,” a financial fictio juris, than as anything with a real basis in production. If, however, for ideological reasons, “theory” is prevented from entertaining the thought that such hyper-fictionalization calls into question the continued viability of global capitalism itself, then, as bizarre as this undoubtedly may appear, it is hard to see what alternative remains but to complete the ideological inversion itself and conclude that the whole business is a fiction anyway, and the sooner one realizes this, and sets about the task of selecting the fictions best suited to getting the job done, the better.

Affirming the business organization as fiction is, after all, one way of dislocalizing the more deep-seated, largely unconscious anxiety, observed repeatedly above, that globalization and the volatilization of capital have pulled the rug from under the organization as such, have made capital borderless and, in a sense, unorganizable. At least “fictions” have boundaries.

To put this ideological escapade into perspective one must be reminded of just how unmanageable and bewildering the current global scene with its huge proliferation and decentralization of financial markets and instruments must seem to anyone charged with the task of managing a firm who is somehow to register all this and act accordingly. As David Harvey remarked in The Condition of Postmodernity, the global financial system has become “so complicated that it surpasses most people’s understanding. The boundaries between distinctive functions like banking, bro-
kerja, financial services, housing finance, consumer credit, and the like have become increasingly porous at the same time that new markets in commodity, stock, currency, or debt futures have sprung up, discounting time future into time present in baffling ways” (161).

Indeed, the giddiness of life in the moment of hyper-fictionalization appears, if anything, to magnify a sense of empowerment in the case of the management and marketing disciplines responsible for coming up with cultural or fictional strategies for gaining market share or managing cultural diversity. If the valorization of capital itself depends on a future return to general profitability that may turn out to be fictional, that is, if it all comes to depend on what buyers and sellers imagine will happen, why waste efforts on “Newtonian” organizational structures? Consider, as one indication of this, the article “Truth or Consequences,” collaboratively written by Hans Hansen, Daved Barry, David M. Boje, and Mary Jo Hatch. The authors affirm that “not only is there truth in fiction, there is truth through fiction,” further observing “fiction’s special capacity to furnish us with knowledge about the ‘actual’ world that the ‘actual’ world cannot provide” (113). This is a plausible, not to say conventional view insofar as works of literary fiction themselves are concerned. But when, as here, it is adduced as an organizational or managerial principle in the face of globalization, it suggests that the “actual” world has become too volatile and unknowable to be “managed” except through its fictionalization. The authors of “Truth or Consequences” also cite Barbara Czarniawska’s Narrating the Organization, another management theory text that draws upon fiction and culture, stating that “stories capture organizational life in a way that no compilation of facts ever can; this is because they are carriers of life itself, not just reports on it” (ibid).24

Like Peters, who in Liberation Management muses that the “conundrums” of running an organization have “more in common with convolution within convolution in Norman Mailer’s Harlot’s Ghost than with [management theory’s] latest pronouncements,” the authors of “Truth or Consequences” again indicate how literary fictions not only are claimed to assist in producing novel and creative thinking but have come to stand in for the complex relations of fictional capital themselves (379). It would seem that the current realities of finance capital—especially its increasing flight forward into the realm of essentially fictional future realization and profits—have become so complicated that attempts to understand them slide out of the business narrative entirely, leaving behind only the cultural as that which encompasses the fictional in both senses, literary and financial.
Management Narrates the Nation

But the dislocalism evident in management’s penchant for fiction and high postmodern theory has still another surprise in store here: for it will perhaps already have been noted above that OS’s affinity for postmodern theory is not matched, as one might have expected, by a taste for more of the contemporary or postmodern fiction. Certainly Peters’s bold, “liberated” willingness to question whether organizations really do exist and his fascination for postmodern ideologemes such as chaos, conundrum, convolution, ambiguity, and the like, also ought to lead him and the conceptual mindset of management theory he represents toward a corresponding interest in primarily postmodernist fiction on the order, say, the work of Kathy Acker, or at least of Don DeLillo. But for Peters, Norman Mailer’s work seems to be as close as it gets. This could be said to be true of management theory generally. Jay White’s simultaneous argument both for and against postmodernist theories is again symptomatic of this contradiction. What attracts White and other OS and public administration theorists to postmodernism is its emphasis on the fluidity and free-floating properties of culture—analogs for and even, so to speak, possible homeopathic cures for the hyper-complex and boundaryless world of the global market and fictional capital. But in OS this attraction goes hand in hand with a no less persistent longing for a simpler, homogeneous culture, before postmodern pastiche, and able to restore the loss of both national and disciplinary boundaries.

That is, management theorists effectively dislocalize postmodernism itself, making it the cultural-theoretical accompaniment to authors and titles that for the most part are not an easy fit with postmodernist paradigms. Typical reading lists in management theory courses follow the canonical pattern evident in the Harvard and MIT business courses already cited above: an ancient or medieval classic, along with something by Shakespeare; a nineteenth century standard by writers such as Conrad or Melville; and one or two lesser known contemporary works that stay well within the mainstream. Some lists include one or two works by non–Euro-American authors such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, or Toni Morrison. But these works are also generally part of the canon of literary readings in the United States. I see the inclusion of such texts as part of the process of utilizing multiculturalism in the corporate and management sector analyzed later in this chapter. The course description for “Management through Literature” at Maryville College in Tennessee in 2002 explains the value for the future PMC of what it terms “great” literature as follows: “Great literature affords us the opportunity to learn
from others who have wrestled with . . . perennial questions about our nature, our experience, and our existence” (Management through Literature, Maryville College). Even as literary fictions offer management theory a way to infuse the field with newness, that is, literature also provides it a secure anchor in what is “perennial.” After all, “perennial questions,” even if they must be wrestled with, can still appear to have answers in a world mystified by the global and increasingly fictional nature of finance and capital itself. Narratives and storytelling may, as we have seen, provide management theory with risk-free ways to promote diversity and egalitarianism in the workplace, but classical fiction is nevertheless clearly preferable thanks to its perceived emphasis on purportedly universal motivations and behavior, categories that, in a time of increasingly diverse markets, appear to be in ever scarcer supply. “Great” works that have “passed the test of time,” seem in a better position to provide answers for an incomprehensible present in apparently constant flux. In a sense, the postmodern and the premodern converge on each other in management theory’s literary aesthetic. Indeed, in a maneuver that demonstrates just how abstract and tenuous the game has become, management theory eventually finds that it must turn to classical literature and philosophy for the “knowledge” needed to run the “knowledge-based” firms. Here again we are lead back to the literal double meaning of “fictional capital,” since, with industrial production being farmed out to the peripheries, such a fictional principle helps to cement the illusion that firms do not sell products at all but only “knowledge.” It is as if the potential crisis of fictional capital—given the distinct likelihood that the future valorization of this capital through real production and profits will not come about—could be warded off by reverting to a dimension in which “knowledge” and indeed all values are the stuff of fiction. Such a readiness to mine literature and culture for purposes of supplying the product itself to “knowledge-based firms”—always tacitly assumed to be of U.S. and European provenance—is symptomatic of the way the discipline of management, no less than literary and cultural studies, is plagued with anxiety over globalization and what it takes to be the implicit threat of its own obsolescence and potential disappearance. At the very least, the turn to these particular works of fiction in management theory masks a nervousness about capitalism to which management theory may be understandably unwilling to admit.

Finally, and not least importantly here, there is the fact that canonical fiction not only provides to the world of business and management the welcome sense of being able to slow down time in the spatio-temporally compressed universe of globalization. It also offers an indirect, imagi-
inary way of reproducing national boundaries themselves, given that fiction—in this unlike globalized capital—appears to have a spontaneously national character. Although, management courses generally do not stress the organization of their literary reading lists along national lines per se, the fact remains that it is difficult, not to say impossible to discuss these works of literary fiction (especially those on management reading lists) without references to settings, time of publication, a minimum of historical context, and indeed a definite geographical location—all of which betoken the presence of a nation-state, whether real or projected back into the past. Even if a novel, say, is set in different parts of the world it generally narrates the lives of characters as they move from one place to another—safe, as it were, from the abstract vertigo of globalization. A survey of such courses reveals, not surprisingly, what is, with few exceptions, a decided penchant for North American and British authors and texts. Schools of business and management on the whole regard English as the language—and the Anglo-North-American global sphere of influence as the space—in which to “wrestle with the perennial questions.” And this is clearly no coincidence, given the implicit and near universal desire of management theory to be a discipline for preserving, or restoring, American business hegemony.25

To this degree, management’s turn to literary fiction, as a function of its more general cultural turn, can be read as an indirect method for “narrating the nation”—given that the nonliterary, nonfictional nation itself no longer has a place in management’s own globalization-inspired narrative of obsolescence. OS’s fascination for the idea of the virtual, postmodern organization, with its professed respect for the varied cultural perspectives or narratives of its personnel and its anti-hierarchical pose, exists, here as well, in a simultaneously overlapping and contradictory relationship to an aggressive rhetoric of Americanism and a fixation on the nation-state in general. In consummate dislocalist fashion, OS celebrates the global village in the very moment it is nervously attempting to reconsolidate national boundaries and Americanness. The postmodern move to appropriate a traditional, mainly Anglo-American literary and philosophical canon that is itself at odds with postmodernist paradigms speaks to that nervousness, since affirming the relativizing and anti-universalist principles of postmodernist fiction might be tantamount to an admission that those who have been responsible for understanding (so as to exploit) the workings of capital may not be competent to do so any longer. Even this ambiguous nostalgia for the history of Western thought and great literature seems somehow coerced, a displaced form of globalization anxiety. What is “new” to the disciplines of business and manage-
VI. FROM POSTMODERNISM TO MODERNIZATION

International Development Management (IDM)

The shift from an interest in culture as a predicate of organizations to the theory of organization itself as culture that has characterized OS and produced its preoccupation with literary fiction and postmodern theory appears on the surface not to have influenced the other major area in management, international development management (IDM). As already noted, the field of IDM addresses issues of concern to managers who are part of the global network of institutions responsible for instituting U.S.-led neoliberal policies as well as disseminating American business know-how abroad. This field, sometimes referred to simply as development management, has traditionally been considered the international branch of public administration. It is generally distinguished institutionally from organization studies (even perhaps from international management insofar as it arose to theorize managerial issues in a global context). Given its involvement with the so-called developing world, it includes the work of “nation-building.” Although of late, the emphasis on the rhetoric of “nation-building” per se has been downplayed while still looking at politics and policy analyzing conceptual and technical issues of pertinence to officials in charge of modernization projects across the world. In addition, as mentioned above, ideas that international management could benefit from a closer relationship with development management so that managerial questions can be considered in relationship to questions of governmental policy are also being explored. My analysis of the material under the label of IDM then is cognizant of the divergence and convergence of these areas of management.

Derick W. and Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff, academics who also consult for development banks and other agencies, write in their 2007 essay “International Development Management: Definitions, Debates, and
Dilemmas,” that “the field addresses organizational and managerial problems in the developing countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and in the transitional economies of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union” (823). But IDM has also recently begun to consider that “the same types of problems that confront the developing/transitional world can be found in pockets of poverty, marginalization, and inequality in industrialized countries as well” and that, therefore, IDM can also be applied to “poverty alleviation and community organizing in the industrialized world” (ibid.). I will subsequently analyze the way in which this latter “first world” encroachment of IDM is lending implicit managerial support to the policing of ethnic and racial minorities in the United States. But for the most part development management is connected to projects in developing nations that are “sponsored by international money donor agencies” (ibid.)—all of which have their own priorities and corresponding agendas. IDM professionals are often dispatched from a donor agency to an onsite assignment (in the global periphery) for a “pre-determined task or a sponsored development project” (829). While this paradigm of lender and debtor nation may be consistent with a more generalized East/West, North/South model of center and periphery, the centrality of American hegemony in terms of both financial power and the ability to dictate management practices cannot be denied here. Some of the most prominent donor agencies served by IDM include the World Bank, the IMF, and USAID, whose legions of consultants and officials in developing nations are in many ways today’s version of erstwhile colonial administrators, still working to help these nations “find their place” in imperial modernity. As a result of its neocolonial reputation, IDM has, not surprisingly, been the object of widespread criticisms, including many organized protests at public meetings and events. But, perhaps even more significantly, the response from IDM has been to try to accommodate such criticisms within its own theoretical discourse, to distance itself from charges of imperialism by adopting some of the language of postcolonial theory (more on this below as well). As it tries to reposition American-sponsored neoliberal policies and its vision of modernizing corporate practices in what is purportedly a departure from older colonial and neocolonial models, a more traditional, ethnographic idea of culture and a corresponding notion of “cultural intelligence” come into play as important tools in this endeavor.

“Globalization, Culture, and Management: Managing Across Cultures,” a course that has been offered periodically in the last eight years at the Harvard Business School, is a good example of how the older, cultural intelligence paradigm still retains its importance for managerial
work in a global arena. As the course description (2003) puts it: “the liberalization of markets around the world has created new opportunities and challenges for managers everywhere. Increasingly, they must develop effective working relationships with people of diverse cultural backgrounds” (Elective Curriculum MBA Courses, Harvard University). Managers, the blurb continues, “must decide whether principles, practices, and strategies that make sense in one cultural context are equally suitable for another. As they build organizations that span the globe, they must take into account a complex set of cultural variables that shape the attitudes and expectations of their varied constituencies.”

Here we clearly have an ethnographic notion of culture being used to theorize employee relations and target markets. But note that its deployment has in fact already moved beyond a local, more conventionally ethnographic to a global, transnational context. For example, “Globalization, Culture, and Management” declares its intention to study “Latin American, Hindu-Buddhist, Japanese, Chinese, Russian, Islamic, and African cultures,” making this diverse set the lens through which to “take a global perspective.” The course promises to examine the “difficult choices for managers whose activities span many cultures” and, eventually, even to “explore the possibility of a transcultural model of corporate excellence.” The image of globally mobile executives interacting with multiple cultures and standing in need of training in the latter’s complexities has, of course, long been a familiar one. But note that, as would not have been the case, say, a generation ago, the notion of “culture” itself no longer lends itself here to ready differentiation along national lines. The juxtaposition of Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic cultures alongside Russian and African is already a clear indication of this. While the notion of the “transcultural” can help understand the complexity of group dynamics, it presence represents an implicit admission of how difficult is has become to organize this complexity along traditionally national lines. As a result of hyper-mobility and time/space compression, culture in the conventional national or ethnic sense has become too “messy” to articulate the movement of peoples and capital across the globe. All the various “cultures” listed in the Harvard course description, for example, are to be found both within and outside the borders of the U.S. It is not so much that this complexity of culture is new per se, but the unprecedented scale of cultural complexity presents particular challenges for the purposes of “managing” capital and its reproduction. Thus, for example, Michael Veseth, who writes on marketing and management, points out in Selling Globalization that “international marketing textbooks are filled with studies of global strategies defeated by language, culture, or local
practice” (53). It is just such cases of “international failure” that have led management theorists to the conclusion that previously held notions of culture and cultural intelligence have to be carefully rethought if management as a field is to avoid becoming globally obsolete. And yet, as the analysis to follow will attempt to show, this very recognition takes a dislocated form, articulating, at the same time, an anxious desire for a return to a simpler, prelapsarian state of culture that could allow for a clear differentiation among the nations over which to reassert IDM’s *sine qua non* here: American business hegemony. Much like OS, although in different contexts and via a different route, IDM theorists, nervous about the effects of the mobility of capital and time/space compression, betray a semi- or unconscious wish to restore and fix the distance between nations even as they champion the speed with which global capital travels through a borderless space.

Indeed, although on the whole culture remains, for IDM, an object to be “managed” via an enhanced “cultural intelligence”—while for OS culture has, so to speak, moved into the subject position itself—the very form of this relative difference within management theory speaks to the fact of globalization and its dislocating effects on the business disciplines. For in the case of the “developing” nations that are the focus of IDM, whose aim it is to place these countries firmly on the path of a metropolitan-guided capitalist modernization, the nation itself seemingly remains a coherent, unified cultural entity. Globalization as a socio-historical process is uneven: the same globalized capital that reproduces itself directly on the plane of the individual denationalized capitalist enterprise, thereby pulling the rug out from under the national identity of these organizations themselves, simultaneously requires for its reproduction the “modernization” of the “developing” economies—that is, their firm incorporation into the global capitalist order. IDM trains and assists those members of the PMC who oversee the investment of capital via “donor agencies” such as the World Bank in the expectation that it will yield ample returns for corporate and financial elites in the U.S. and elsewhere—but mainly in the U.S. In effect, the same dynamic within global capital that threatens to denationalize the major capitalist enterprise renationalizes the socio-economic formations of the “developing” world from the standpoint of these global enterprises themselves. For this reason the “developing” nation retains what looks like its traditional role for capitalist reproduction—whence what also appears as a greater stability and fixity of the cultural. To this degree, ironically, globalization positions the peripheral nation in a more direct, immediate relation to the firm itself, thus—with the assistance of IDM—making it easier, in one
sense at least, for an American-based PMC to draw the national-cultural lines between the U.S. and, say, Mexico.

This relative difference becomes clearer in relation to what is, for IDM as well as OS, a distinct move in the direction of the postmodern. In their focus on modernization, IDM professionals, unlike their OS counterparts, do not sense any compulsion to argue for postmodern theories per se. In the context of management theory, just as in the humanities, postmodernism, for all its claim to de-centeredness, is a tacitly metropolitan prerogative, a kind of code for reinventing and updating the field that also functions as a qualifier for a denationalized U.S., helping to position the global North as ahead in time of the developing global South.²⁸

However, even if the theories themselves are not directly invoked, the very language employed by IDM in this context, echoing OS’s emphasis on the multiplicity of perspectives and an “egalitarian” destabilizing of traditional hierarchies, indicates the influence of postmodernism here as well. And here dislocalism is again at work, for postmodernism effectively steps in to help IDM rethink, from the corporate standpoint, the task of peripheral modernization itself in an age when global, neoliberal capitalism, with its far greater and more locally mediated penetration of the economies of the global South, requires a deepened appreciation of the cultural pluralism and complexity of the markets it is driven to exploit. What is new and different—postmodern—about contemporary IDM is the explicit acknowledgment that in order for the PMC charged with managing development internationally as well as in less-developed pockets of the global North/West, it must learn to drop the notion of a single, standardized culture of modernity even as its pursues the economic and technical objectives of modernization.

This tacitly postmodern standpoint is reflected as well in the way that, as already noted above, IDM parries the charges often leveled against it, and its donor agency sponsors, of complicity with neocolonialism. But rather than strike back at its critics—say by employing the old, Cold War tactic of dismissing them as left-wing radicals—IDM simply deploys the more neutral postmodern language of egalitarian de-centeredness and diversity of perspective, thereby appearing to distance itself from a self-evidently centered and hierarchical policy of neocolonial exploitation.

IDM has, in fact, managed to build what appears to be its own critique of imperialism into its theoretical metalanguage. The Brinkerhoffs, for example, openly concede that “development management is a means to enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of projects and programs determined and designed by outside actors,” acknowledging the view, albeit characterizing it as “radical,” that IDM retains a “connection to
the imperialist agendas of colonialism, and that today’s development management is the instrument of donor-imposed priorities just as colonial administration enabled Western imperialists to rule their acquired territories for their own purposes” (827). They admit the potential for conflict within IDM between the latter, when viewed as an “instrument of external institutional agendas” and “the agendas of groups within developing/transitional countries” (838). “This,” they go on to say, “is often a contest among unequal actors, with predominant power residing with the international donors in the case of negotiations between international funders and national governments” while, moreover, “internal to the recipient country, power tends to be concentrated in political and economic elites, whose agendas overrule those of the poor and marginalized” (838).

This may sound like the script for a left critique of corporate structures, albeit just distanced and descriptive enough to place IDM somehow in the rhetorical middle space between the “outside” and the “internal.” But it is precisely alongside and through such a slightly displaced—more precisely, a dislocalized—critique of imperialism that IDM opens up a rhetorical space for resituating a “postmodern” American, and, so to speak, “nonimperialist” imperialism, seemingly as far removed from European colonialism as are the local, internal recipients in potential conflict with the outside actors of the donor agencies—and leaving an American PMC to play the role of innocent, potentially helpful actor.29

The crucial rhetorical instrument here is the seemingly neutral language of management theory itself. The Brinkerhoffs and other management theorists may in fact be genuinely sympathetic to the plight of nations being restructured according to the neoliberal agenda. However, the problem as they—“managerially”—see it is not that developing nations are being exploited to further the interests of the donor agencies—how can a donor be an exploiter or expropriator?—but that these same agencies have tended to work according to agendas that make it “difficult (although not impossible) to accommodate local political realities, or to take a process approach” (830). And this in turn leads to an even more serious problem when local priorities contradict those of a “foreign assistance funder” but the recipient country governments give in simply in order to receive the funds, leading to a “superficial commitment to reform and pro forma meeting of targets” (830). The problem here is not the existence of an unequal relationship itself but rather the perception of unequal frameworks, a failure to incorporate “local realities” or take a “process” approach to following through on donor priorities. Note here as well that this is precisely the rhetorical moment at which management
theory must check its own instinctive celebration of globalization’s dissolution of national borders and revert to the dislocal drive for a more coherent notion of the nation-state, one that can accept donor agency priorities and reforms on behalf of its citizenry without potential conflicts.

Still further evidence of IDM’s dislocalized, modernizing postmodernism can be detected in the name of the discipline itself. As the Brinkerhoffs tell us, the field of international or development management (IDM) previously went under the rubric of “Development Administration,” a “sub-field of the field of public administration [but] in the developing world” (824). The replacement of term “administration” by “management,” they further explain, reflects the change in emphasis from the “tasks and tools of routine administration in bureaucracies” to emphasis on “nimble organizations, flexible strategies, and proactive managerial styles” (824). “Flowing from [a more] polycentric concept, where numerous actors are actively engaged in the tasks of improving people’s lives and generating socio-economic benefits, development management is not restricted to the public sector” (824).

Several things need unpacking here. The first is simply to note how, in what has become one of the most familiar and insidious rhetorical sleights of neoliberalism, the language of the “nimble” and the “flexible,” here qua “organizations” and “strategies,” turns what is for the majority of the global population the social catastrophe accompanying the qualitatively increased mobility of global capital into a managerial virtue. The second is to note how, by replacing the term “administration” with “management” IDM already distances itself semantically from charges of neocolonialism: one speaks customarily of colonial “administrators” or bureaucrats, but not necessarily of colonial “managers.” Finally, the switch from “administration” to “management” here—or rather, the collapse of the public/private sector distinction implied in the difference—paints as a purely technical, managerial advance in the direction of “flexibility” and “process” what is, for those targeted by the donor agencies, the effective removal of all local state barriers to globalization and the penetration of capital. In relation to the management of development, such barriers come to seem little more than outdated, parochial practices.

But of course management does have available to it, when needed, a political synonym, and one that is perhaps more at home in a postmodernist, globalized cultural register than ever: “democracy.” According to the Brinkerhoffs, development management “is crucial in helping governments build the capacity to respond to citizen expectations and to put in place the institutional structures that allow democracy to func-
tion effectively” (839). The note of similarity here between George W. Bush’s post-9/11 call for the U.S. to lead a world crusade for “democracy” is striking, but it is culture rather than guns that has become the weapon of choice here. The Brinkerhoffs exhort IDM to explore “various institutional options for democratization that fit with particular country circumstances, and of recognizing that the U.S. model is but one path among many” (836). The figure of the “one path among many” seems to be adapted right from a manager’s guide to postmodernism. Thus traditional village governance structures in Africa, for example, despite what are perceived as their political limitations qua models of consensual or representative organization, are conceded to be as worthy of being considered as “democratic” as the U.S. model. Still, whether U.S. style or not, “democracy” is to be encouraged, or, when necessary, ushered in under the strict guidance of American-dominated donor agencies armed with managerial know-how. Here, as noted above, the postmodern inflection is precisely what allows IDM both to appear to critique an older style of European colonialism and to position itself, and its U.S. sponsors, as modernizers, as coming to the aid of developing nations that aspire to catch up in time. The emphasis on “flexible” and “participatory” structures becomes a managerial rhetoric for modernizing in a postmodern way. The Brinkerhoffs advise managers to place emphasis on “multi-sectoral solutions” as “no single discipline or perspective has a corner on ‘the truth’; the best solutions emerge when the insights of many viewpoints and sources of expertise are brought to bear” (840). Just as, for OS, management must become conscious of the existence of its own, as well as that of other “master-narratives,” IDM officials need to be aware of what their values are and then make those values explicit in order that the process of democratization can become more egalitarian. But note here how postmodernism, à la IDM, not only culturalizes and pluralizes what would otherwise be a too transparently U.S.-identified “democracy.” It also becomes a way for the management theorist to narrate the nation even while championing globalization and the sweeping away of national borders. The very language of postmodernity, here functioning as a code in which to represent the flux of global, increasing fictionalized capital, also becomes a way to appear to undo the time-space compression that has produced the “global village.” The ideal manager emerges here as someone who plays up the rhetoric of globalization, participation, and democracy for all, but precisely in order to put in place the institutional structures that will make it possible for the U.S. to remain a “nation of nations.”
Narrating American Business in the World

The question of practice remains, however: how are these theories actually supposed to work “on the ground”? Recall that for management theorists and academics, theory is required to produce—or appear to produce—workplace and organizational results. One of the principal, pedagogical methods the field at large employs in order to attempt to mediate theory and practice is that of working through case studies that are intended to simulate real-life scenarios. The case studies themselves are either purely fictional or quasi-fictionalized narratives based on actual events that present a set of problems for students to assess and analyze from different points of view, in the manner of an exercise. I want now to turn to a close analysis of several of such case studies, taken from editors Linda Catlin and Thomas White’s 2001 textbook, *International Business: Cultural Sourcebook and Case Studies*. I have chosen to analyze this text because it is typical of numerous textbooks in the area of international business used in university classrooms since the 1990s that attempt to teach students issues in “cross-cultural management.” In particular, I want to explore two theses here: 1) how management’s own form of the dislocalized drive to return to or preserve a simpler, localizable culture amidst the flux and vertigo of globalization also produces a gravitation toward a certain kind of fiction; and 2) how the undermining of the national point of view and the transnationalizing of cultures has led management to focus increasingly on race and ethnicity themselves, both outside and within the U.S.

In both cases, significantly, culture remains a crucial, guiding term. Like OS, IDM operates on the assumption that the political, economic, and legal changes required to ensure the successful management of capital investment cannot take place without cultural change. Because, in the case of IDM or international management, culture itself is potentially an exotic and complex entity, the PMC it is charged with training must, as we have seen, develop a minimum quota of cultural intelligence. But if the international management textbooks of the 1980s tended to employ case studies largely focused on distinct national cultures, then since the 1990s textbooks have steadily complicated this pattern. *International Business*, for example, includes case studies relating to cultural patterns in Germany, Australia, Japan, and Mexico, but also exercises involving the more ambiguously “national case” of Puerto Rico and those of the explicitly U.S. regional cultures of Native Americans and of the American Southwest. Without at any point questioning its own implicitly Ameri-
canist point of view *International Business* concedes the need of management and the PMC to manage and develop the cultural otherness not only of overseas markets but of the U.S.’s own ethnic minorities—in relation to whom the aspiring manager is, of course, consistently if also implicitly coded as white. To the degree that acknowledging cultural complexity *within* national boundaries makes that a more difficult task conceptually, the categories of race and ethnicity step in here as dislocalizing agents, able both to displace and to reconsolidate national boundaries. But it is also, as we shall see, the fictional, if nonliterary quality of these case studies that provides invaluable assistance here in dislocalizing—and re-Americanizing—the global, and helping to protect the field of management itself against increasing suspicions of its own obsolescence.

So as to further narrow down my narrative object here, I have chosen to analyze case studies in *International Business* that deal explicitly with cultural issues of time and space. Here the underlying link (within the dislocalized imaginary) between culture, nation, ethnicity, and the abstract fungibility of globalized capital becomes especially vivid. Framing the case studies are short write-ups and articles asking students to consider the ways in which cultural values affect people’s perception of time and space, as, for example, in statements such as: “Time is money. Don’t stand so close. You’re breathing down my neck.” Such clichés, according to Caitlin and White, in fact describe “ideas held by many Americans about the value of time and appropriate amount of physical space between individuals,” and they advise students to consider that “all cultures have specific values related to time and space. When your cultural values relating to time or space conflict with another culture’s values misunderstandings or even animosity can occur” (26).

An article entitled “Relearning How to Tell Time” is introduced to help coach students into greater flexibility in relation to the “time” of other cultures, focusing, as one example of such flexibility, on the many thousands of Mexicans who live in Tijuana and commute daily to jobs on the California side of the U.S.–Mexico border. It includes an anecdote about a Mexican psychologist, Vicente López, who spent five years making the Tijuana-to-San Diego commute and is indirectly quoted as saying “that each time he crossed the border, it felt like a button was pushed inside him. When entering the U.S., he felt his whole being switch to rapid clock-time mode: he would walk faster, drive faster, talk faster, meet deadlines. When returning home, his body would relax and slow down the moment he saw the Mexican customs agents” (93). According to Catlin and White, the case of Vicente López shows that people can master unfamiliar time patterns.
But note how telling this anecdote of postmodern existence is of the ways in which people’s bodies must be adjusted to the needs of capital. Under the cover of a cultural relativization of time, here the mobility of capital comes to be narrated and represented as if it were simply a question of the mobility of people. Spatio-temporality here is deployed in such a way as to maintain the conceptual and narrative boundaries between Mexico and the U.S. even as global capital itself is presumed to be free to ignore them. And the U.S.–Mexico border setting is surely no coincidence, Mexican workers standing in here as stereotypical embodiments of the flexible and the temporary, as a population easier to dominate and police than others. For those looking to move their businesses across the border to Mexico, *International Business* even has a section that contains a list of guidelines on Mexican labor, observing that Mexicans are flexible, respectful of authority, and always poised to show camaraderie to their peers. But, the book adds, “most employees desire that authority over them be wielded in a kind and sensitive manner” (88).

To be sure, “Relearning How to Tell Time” is also intended as advice to managers on how to adjust themselves to other time-cultures, for, as the textbook states, “most intercultural travelers would prefer to avoid the five years of onsite mistakes that López endured before achieving multi-temporal proficiency” (94). *Inter alia*, managers in need of “multi-temporal proficiency” are advised to learn a culture’s customs for making and keeping appointments as well as the line between work time and social time. Mastering the language of time will, of course, require time and practice, and so the student manager is also exhorted to follow management theory’s version of postmodernism by becoming more aware of his or her own cultural values as well as humble and open to criticism in relation to the spatio-temporal values of others. But managerial postmodernism goes only so far here. Contrasting the “multi-temporally proficient” border-crossing Mexicans to those who live and work in Mexico proper, *International Business* states that the latter “may permit themselves to be guided by their own inner clock rather than the clock on the wall. Consequently many U.S. firms provide buses to pick up workers at various locations so at to avoid uncertain arrival times as well as complications due to traffic problems” (90). Again, although there is a formal recognition of the nonhierarchical and diverse here, there is also, when work is involved, really only one clock on the wall, and cultures in the developing world that lag behind will, however worthy of cultural respect, have to learn to tell its time. Consider that the same book that advises American managers to respect—so as to correct for—the internal clock of Mexicans advises them never to adopt the persona of the “relaxed
American” and be late for an appointment in Germany. In some places even Americans can be “Mexicans.”

Such scenarios are thus, in a sense, perfect examples of dislocalism itself. Ethnocentric views of culture are displaced in favor of diverse cultural points of view, but this in turn becomes a technique for managing diversity itself, and ultimately for fixing cultures and people in a newly framed spatio-temporality in which the PMC is permitted the time and space to learn and practice “multi-temporal proficiency” the more effectively to speed up the work of their cultural “equals” and limit their mobility in relation to capital. This slowing down in order to reaccelerate, de-centering in order to cement more securely in place becomes even more evident in the consciously fictional—and themselves effectively fictionalizing—management scenarios to which I now turn.

FICTIONALIZED CASE STUDIES

United States/Mexico: “Fish Farming Enterprise in Mexico”

“Fish Farming Enterprise in Mexico,” one of the fictionalized case studies/exercises included in International Business, tells the story of the Amica Corporation, a construction company in Albuquerque, New Mexico owned and operated by a chemical engineer, Arthur Jackson. Jackson wants to sell this business and start a catfish farm in a small town in Mexico. Students are asked to imagine themselves as consultants to Jackson, providing analysis that would “complement the Mexican perspective” (24). They are also to imagine that they have conducted an interview with the Mexican Consul-General in Denver, “discussing the subtle cultural differences between Mexicans and Americans and how a knowledge of these differences is important to business success in Mexico” (24). The students are instructed to advise Jackson primarily on cultural matters, including language, religion, social class structure, gender roles, values related to work, and time. But the fictional exercise also provides the students with additional cues for aligning their own point of view with Jackson’s. They are told, for example, that Jackson and his family used to own a fish farm in Louisiana; thus he is framed not just as an entrepreneur but also as someone who is carrying on an American family tradition. Jackson is also, according to the fictional case study, aware that “U.S.–Mexican relations have been characterized by war, and misunderstandings,” as well as by numerous and important cul-
tural differences (23). He is presented as a sympathetic character, who, although his “primary goal is to make a profit,” nevertheless has the goal of supplying “inexpensive, high quality protein” to customers in both Mexico and the U.S. while bringing new jobs to poor and unemployed Mexicans (23–24).

Here, however, the foregrounding of cultural differences becomes a way of displacing—and, in the process, mystifying—the various economic, profit-driven factors that form the real “story” in this case study. Among the reasons Jackson wants to operate his fish farm in Mexico are the availability of a cheaper source for labor, land, and water and a warmer climate in which the catfish will mature faster (23). Also factors here are the relaxation of laws restricting foreign company ownership in Mexico and reports that “Mexico is interested in importing agricultural products from the U.S.” (ibid). In effect, Mexico here could be anywhere that offered Jackson’s new venture the same legal, geographical, climatic, and cost advantages. The fact that the case study narrative centers on notions of cultural awareness and sensitivity becomes, in the end, a kind of tautology, a way of re-producing the idea that there are fixed differences between Mexicans and Americans. This cultural difference in turn obfuscates the fact that, in the current global order, national borders do not neatly divide off the center from the periphery and that the movement of production facilities, whether across national boundaries or within them, invariably works to concentrate resources in the hands of a select few. Since Mexico already functions as a naturalized, self-evident periphery in the U.S. business imaginary here, Mexico’s purported interest in importing U.S. agricultural products need never be subject to question. Neither does the case study indicate why or how it happens that the laws restricting foreign firms have been relaxed. This too falls outside the culture-driven “plot”—so to speak—of “Fish Farming.” The practical, historical realities of globalization already foreground the story so completely that, within its diegesis as such, the “global” can become simply a question of managing cultural complexity and difference. The deeper, nontautological narrative function of culture here, however, is not to remind prospective managers of the need to learn about the life-ways of others but to naturalize and thereby to deflect any possible critique of the center/periphery relation itself. It confirms preexisting notions about Mexicans as cheap laborers, and Mexico itself as a dehistoricized cultural and natural resource. Like the warm weather that will make the catfish grow faster and the physical location of the land and water themselves, cheap labor is transformed into something inherent, culturally if not naturally, to Mexico. Culture is what has already drawn the national
boundary between Mexico and (North) America such that capital lies to the north and labor to the south of it. The fact that Jackson is presented as a would-be “postmodern manager” who would be sensitive to the unfamiliar culture of his Mexican employees deflects from the fact that the cultural awareness, say, of the supposed fact that Mexicans sense time as slower than do Americans is an advantage if one’s goal is the speeding up production.

Puerto Rico/United States: “Script for Juan Perillo and Jean Moore”

Written as a series of dialogues, “Script for Juan Perillo and Jean Moore” again asks students to consider their own “culturally determined values of time and space” in order to gain a better understanding of such values in the case of others. Jean Moore is the American manager who works at the Dayton, Ohio-based plant of the same firm that operates a subsidiary in Puerto Rico, the latter managed by Juan Perillo. The Puerto Rican plant is given the responsibility of manufacturing newly designed computers ordered by the U.S. Department of Defense. This fictionalized scenario takes Jean’s point of view, assumed here to correspond to that of the students. On her visit to Puerto Rico, Juan greets her, and they exchange pleasantries. He tells her that his daughter has broken her arm while playing rough with other children. Juan further starts to say “just last week, my son . . .” (28), but before he can finish Jean says that she’s sorry to hear about his daughter and immediately asks Juan if his plant can deliver the computers by June 1 (ibid.). He is hesitant, but Jean insists: “you have a lot of new employees and you have all of the new manufacturing and assembling equipment that we have in Dayton. So you’re as ready to make the new product as we are” (ibid). Juan agrees and says he sees no reason why they shouldn’t be able to fill the order on time. On May 1 they have a further interaction via the telephone in which Jean asks if the order is ready. Juan then tells her that he has had to take time off to see that his daughter gets medical treatment and that a few of the other Puerto Rico-based employees have had to work reduced hours as well. He is not sure if the order can be filled on time. The exchange between them ends here.

Perhaps inadvertently, this scenario illustrates the problems that can arise in the spatial rationalization of production. Moving production to sites with lower costs often entails other, unforeseen expenses that threaten to eliminate any savings, as exemplified here by potentially greater diffi-
cultures in guaranteeing on time delivery of orders. The fact that the presumably lower-cost location here is Puerto Rico—formally a part of the United States but at the same time culturally Latin, not North American and hence “foreign”—draws our attention to the relative meaningless of national borders in the movement of capital. But this fictionalized case study narrates the problem strictly in terms of ethnic identity, making it a point to draw a clear line of demarcation between Puerto Rico and the U.S. And although race is not explicitly mentioned, the scenario is narrated in such a way as to imply that Puerto Ricans are racial others. (I will analyze this ethnic/racial dimension below in relationship to a case study on Native Americans.) Here, too, fictional devices such as point of view and dramatization become key elements in conveying the central, problematic importance of cultural misunderstanding. Jean Moore, for example, is referred to as the “American Manager” while Juan, legally just as American as Jean, is not. Although, to be sure, this accords with the fact that most Puerto Ricans do not consider themselves “Americans,” nevertheless this casual distinction is one of several ways that the narrative posits the continental U.S. as the cultural norm against which Puerto Rico is defined, and to which it must catch up and become temporarily commensurate if it is to do business with—or as—the U.S.

Consider again the manner in which Juan explains the possible delay in meeting the production schedule. A few employees had to attend to “serious illnesses in their families” and that his own daughter’s medical treatment for her broken arm took more time than expected (29). To this Jean responds by asking what that has to do with the computers being delivered on time (ibid.). The tension in this scenario is thus built around potential misunderstandings having to do with different and potentially conflicting ways of assigning value to time. The exercise prompts students to become aware of the need for cultural flexibility on the part of the managers and gives them clues as to where they can look for Jean Moore’s cultural insensitivity. Juan says: “My daughter Marianna broke her arm. She was out playing with some other children when it happened. They are rough and it’s amazing they don’t have more injuries. Why just last week my son. . . .” The ellipses here represent Juan’s unfinished sentence as Jean breaks in: “I’m very sorry to hear about Marianna and I’m sure everything will go well with the surgery. Now shall we start work on the production schedule?” Jean’s comment functions as an alienating rupture in their conversation rather as a moment of connection between them. The textbook editors explicitly instruct students to take away from this case study an awareness that the U.S. works on “monochronic” time—in the office, work takes precedence over personal con-
cerns—while those outside the United States may often function within a “polychronic” time in which social concerns are part of the work culture itself. But at the same time that the students are asked to become aware of their own cultural norms regarding time, the fictional exercise tacitly assumes that these norms are “monochronic,” thus forcibly and from the outset aligning their own implied viewpoint with Jean’s. Successful management requires cultural intelligence, but making a profit requires strict adherence to the monochronic clock. Indeed, the case hints at the fact that better cultural understanding on Jean’s part is, in the end, not going to solve the strictly profit-related problems resulting from different time cultures.

Indeed, the important unasked question here is: how could cultural flexibility on the part of American managers, touted as a virtue, work as a strategy of adaptation to space/time compression? The spatial rationalization of production requires changes in social structures that in turn require time and expense. So in some sense, the spatial fix of outsourcing production overseas does, in fact, become especially meaningful in the case of Puerto Rico—highlighting the reality that it may not matter much in the end whether companies relocate overseas or move across town: the effects of the corresponding consolidation and concentration of capital will be experienced everywhere, however unevenly, in terms of job loss, unmet production deadlines, and the need for employee retraining. In fact the ending of this particular narrative illustrates this well, as Juan says to Jean: “you have many of the same problems in the Dayton plant, don’t you?” This is the last line in the scenario.

We don’t get to hear Jean’s answer, but, at one level, there is a clear acknowledgment here that certain cities, given the current form taken by the mobility of capital, are connected to each other directly within a spatiality that is not nationally divisible, even if, as the case study itself indicates in dramatic terms, such sites retain their differences. Dayton is generally known to be an economically depressed city, suffering from a steady drain of manufacturing jobs. The outsourcing of such manufacturing to places like Puerto Rico, of course, obeys the abstract capitalist dictate of rationalizing production and reducing costs. But such rationalization itself also connects one place to another here by helping to better police potentially restive workers in Dayton. At one point Jean mentions to Juan that if Puerto Rico can deliver the computers on time “then they will be doing as well as the Dayton plant” (28–29). Add to this the fact that outsourcing or relocating production can often end up costing more than it saves, and we get an especially keen, if unintended insight into the very real potential significance, for capital, of policing and speeding
up workers via cultural management techniques. But fictionalization here again steps into this case study to coax students into assuming that the Dayton plant does not have these problems, redrawing the boundaries erased by capital. The cultural solution sought here then must take place within the framework of what is, for the students, the process of understanding a “foreign” culture. Here again, borrowing from management theory’s version of postmodernism becomes a roundabout, but more adaptive way of reaffirming the fundamental supremacy of “monochronic” production time. Culture emerges as a significant category here precisely because the fictional narrative purposefully shapes it as such. By advising students to slow down and become more aware of diverse cultural values, a more egalitarian, process-oriented, and participatory management paradigm, inspired by postmodernism, is reinstrumentalized in the service of pushing Puerto Rican workers to adjust to the time standards of the U.S.—even though they, unlike the border-crossing Mexicans, are not moving anywhere themselves. They too must be molded into flexible workers and keep up with the one time that, finally, measures all the others.

**Peripheries in the United States: “Southwest Manufacturing Company”**

The convergence of race and problems relating to time and space emerge even more sharply in the fictional case study that follows, entitled “Southwestern Manufacturing Company” (51). The latter is narrated from the point of view Judith Vincent, the co-owner, along with her husband Ken, of the Southwestern Manufacturing Company in Lobos City, New Mexico. The company manufactures and sells Native American artifacts such as drums and lampshades. The story begins as Judith completes a drive from Lobos City to Dallas to attend a trade show. After checking into the hotel, she calls home and finds out that there has been a fire at the factory. She decides to drive back immediately. The rest of the narrative is made up of her internal monologue, as she thinks about the trials and tribulations she and her husband have suffered over the past three years in trying to build a business that was just beginning to be successful. The problems are mainly related to their workers. We learn that their “fifteen employees represent the three ethnic groups who make up the population of northern New Mexico: Pueblo Indians, Hispanics, and Anglos” (52). Judith wonders to herself whether in fact it would be worth rebuilding the business at all, given the way in which numerous and severe problems
of cultural misunderstandings (primarily between the Native American and the other ethnic groups in the factory) have slowed the successful development of the business. The scenario ends as she arrives home, but without having reached a decision about whether to rebuild.

That decision is left to the student readers of the case study, who are asked to imagine themselves in the role of cultural advisors to the Vincents. “How,” the textbook editors ask, framing the problem, as in the above examples, as a potential deficit of “cultural intelligence” on the part of management, “would you suggest [Judith and Ken] educate themselves regarding their employees?” (56). As an aid to the students, the textbook points them to supplementary sections containing digestible informational capsules about Native American cultural practices and stressing the importance of becoming familiar with Native American governance and business structures as well. Becoming better educated about such matters in “regions of relatively large proportions of American Indians,” argue Catlin and White, can “help improve economic development activities” for Native Americans themselves and work as a “as a postcolonial bridge” between American Indians and other communities to create greater awareness (104). The textbook refers students to “recent work by postcolonial scholars that exposes biases and assumptions of Western scholarship” (Guerrero, Jaimes, Mohanty) and that can help management scholars to “question dominant culture assumptions of pedagogy and research in which historical legacies are omitted” thereby helping to undo the “white man’s version of warfare and conquest and its racioethnic stereotypes” (104). Positioning itself as a potential benefactor to Native American businesses, IDM explicitly sees itself as coming to the aid of poverty-stricken Native Americans. As a subset, in this context, of postmodern theory, postcolonial theory is directly invoked as a means of helping managers and owners strike a more benevolent and egalitarian pose—but betraying, at the same time, a definite set of rather less than egalitarian attitudes about race and ethnicity. Just as the latest cultural theories have come to the aid of development theory’s task of exporting neoliberal policies abroad, here postcolonialism will, it is hoped, help to pry open native American governance and business structures. Advocating what is called “developmental economics” in relationship to Native Americans, Catlin and White here embark on what is in fact an explicit attempt at “narrating the nation” in terms of race.

The structuring of the fictional narrative itself, however—as in the case of “Script for Jean Moore and Juan Perillo”—implicitly foregrounds Judith’s point of view, thus, in the end, aligning the students’ “postcolonial” point of view with that of the white owner/manager. The difficul-
ties in running the business that Judith recalls on her drive back to New Mexico are narrated in such a way as to single out the Native American employees and blame them for the tensions with the other, mainly Hispanic workers. We learn that the Pueblo men, Carlos and Juan, make the drums, while the Pueblo women, all relatives of Carlos and Juan, make lampshades, together with one Hispanic woman. Another woman, an Anglo, makes drums, but she works from home. The Anglo male employees work in a separate room doing shipping and billing. In fact, all the employees in the case study are consistently referred to in terms of their racial and ethnic identities, but the Pueblos are made out to be the most problematic group because, according to Judith, they do not seem to understand what makes a successful business. Judith runs down a kind of checklist of Pueblo maladjustment. For example, one day all of the Pueblo men fail to show up for work because instead they go out to “irrigate their fields” (54). By contrast, and in an ironic twist, they are irritated by the decision to close the factory for the long Thanksgiving weekend and have no inclination to take the day off for the Fourth of July—an attitude that does not prevent one of the Pueblo workers taking an entire month off for a series of important Native American ceremonies. Judith also recalls the tense work atmosphere that had resulted when minor squabbles erupted between the Pueblos and the Hispanic women. One of the latter, Rosa, for example, had complained that the Pueblos were saying “something bad about [her]” but didn’t know exactly what because they were speaking Tewa (55). These recollections are framed by the question that concludes Judith’s internal monologue, namely, whether to rebuild or not—a question that appears to hinge on whether it will be possible to resolve the problems caused by the Pueblo employees.

This narrative points to issues of time as well. In effect, Judith and Ken become frustrated with what they see as the Pueblo’s disregard for the factory clock. But the temporal structure of the case study is itself a case in point here. The incidents at the factory have taken place at irregular intervals and over a long period of time. But Judith recalls and narrates all of the problematic incidents with the Pueblo workers sequentially, weighing each in connection with all the others on a scale of severity. Indeed, the story reads almost like a national allegory, restructured along an axis of “empty, homogeneous time,” with the Vincents depicted as concerned owners and benefactors, frustrated with the apparent national disunity that threatens due to the discord arising between native populations and more recent immigrants.

Once again, as in the above case studies, problems relating to spatio-temporal compression and mobility of capital are articulated exclusively
as cultural, even, here, as openly racial/ethnic in nature, and then reformulated as forms of knowledge useful in the management—that is, in effect, the policing—of ethnic and racial groups. The fracturing of ethnic groups in the workplace, in direct relation to the needs of valorizing capital, while acknowledged by management theory as a problem that cannot be resolved by purely administrative, top-down measures, is so acknowledged only by being recast as a cultural problem. Pueblos, like Puerto Ricans, have evidently not learned the lessons of postmodernity that the Tijuana, border-crossing Mexicans of “Relearning to Tell Time” have. They have not learned to install or when to push the automatic button that would make them speed up at the factory. As the “postmodern” owners, Judith and Ken’s attempts to bring people together, described as benevolent “team building,” are foiled because of the ethnic/racial tensions among employees, and especially because of Pueblo intransigence. Ken’s requests for universal participation from the employees so as to come up with ways of cooperating are, according to the case study, met with silence and resistance. So, disappointedly, Ken decides to “appoint a leader for each group, rather than allowing leaders to emerge as he had hoped would happen when the employees got together for their discussions” (55). Such details are obviously intended to represent the Vincents as enlightened managers, concerned for their employees, and to facilitate the identification with them on the part of the student readers of the case study, even as they comply with the exercise and propose strategies for improvement. But, if anything, “Southwest Manufacturing Company” sounds, at this point, like the story of a frustrated but benevolent colonial administrator, unable to quell intertribal warfare among his local wards. Enter, then, postcolonial theory, which, like postmodern theory generally for management discourse, will, it is hoped, help suture the organization like it would the nation.

But, with the latter already assumed to belong to its white owners/benefactors, what this “postcolonial” narrative in fact signifies is that a nationalized global capital must be ready to pry open the seemingly irrational enclosures and special protections inscribed in earlier policies regarding Native Americans. Thus, for example, in the supplementary material included along with the case study narrative, Catlin and White advance the view that paying greater attention to Native American business structures and culture, along with admitting more Native Americans into university business programs, would help them adjust and become more productive. This is conveyed in the story through Judith’s frustration at the fact the Pueblo workers have refused their bosses’ offers to help them make more money for themselves by making rattles (after reg-
ular work hours) on a piecework basis, an offer which they refuse. This behavior is contrasted with that of the only Anglo woman drum-maker, who, according to the case study, earns more than the other employees by working at home, exclusively on a piecework basis. Her productivity levels are reported to be higher than those of the men who work during regular hours inside the factory. The fire, raising the question of whether it is worthwhile to reopen the factory at all, well illustrates the fact that by choosing stability over the “flexibility” of piecework and perhaps higher earnings, the work and time culture of the Pueblos translates into greater instability for the owners. In fact, Judith and Ken now see themselves forced to pay their Pueblo and Hispanic employees for making the drums that burned in the factory fire, and even perhaps forced to compensate their workers for the time the factory is out of production. Finally, it is related in Judith’s narrative that the Pueblo workers had, in fact, refused to accompany her to the trade show, evidently not swayed by the “excitement of crowds” and the “intensity of the big city” (56). They have refused, in essence, not only to internalize the factory clock but to enter into the life world of business culture itself. The postmodern advice the students are expected to devise for Judith and Ken—for example, seeking a better understanding of the cultural and family practices of tribalism and communalism—must not only help rationalize the work practices of Native Americans but help the owners to incorporate the latter into the time of capitalist modernity itself.

Carefully read and analyzed, such case studies, emblematic microcosms of management theory’s dislocalized deployment of culture, literature, fiction, and postmodern cultural theory, can be made to disclose the ideological workings of the field itself. Analysis of the functional quality of concepts, categories, and theories originating from within the humanities for the purposes of the seemingly antithetical and hostile discipline of management shows what is in fact their dual and seemingly contradictory nature. This functional quality is both an answer to a perceived need on the part of management—to reinvigorate and adapt itself as proof against the implicit threat of obsolescence represented by globalization—and yet at the same time a strategy for nonadaptation, for keeping the boundaries of the field itself fixed within their familiar coordinates. But alongside such a critique of the field of management, I have also attempted to reveal, however indirectly up to now, some of the blind spots in cultural theory itself—blind spots in its own assumptions and perceptions of business and its affiliated academic disciplines. Oppositional practices and currents within cultural studies cannot, in my view, successfully form and advance without understanding the ways in which business theory under-
stands itself, and how, in accordance with this self-understanding, it neither ignores nor dismisses but in fact seeks to appropriate cultural theory. Although definite radical developments in cultural studies have been able to formulate a genuinely critical approach to the corporate world and to management theory, it seems safe to say that a good deal of what passes for radical critique in the humanities and the cultural disciplines, transfixed by the discursive idols of globalization, still imagines the proverbial businessman’s gun held to its head and thus fails to grasp how, for example, theories of postmodernism lend themselves with relative ease to the theoretical needs of corporate capital. But this then, obviously, raises the question of dislocalist practices in the humanities itself. As such, this is a subject far too extensive to fit within the pages of this book, but I want to begin to explore it in what follows through the critical analysis of dislocalism at select set of sites within humanistic and cultural theory and practice. One of these is the field of immigrant literary studies, and it is to this topic that I turn in the next chapter.