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French Cultural Policy in Question, 1981-2003

Philippe Poirrier

The guiding role played by the French government in regulating cultural and artistic affairs is often regarded, within the family of western democracies, as a curiosity.¹ The institution of an official policy for culture was consecrated in 1959, in the early days of the Fifth Republic, by the creation of a Ministry for Cultural Affairs headed by André Malraux. The fledgling administration was, however, able to draw on a long history with a substantial body of theory and legislation, and could count on a large number of cultural institutions concentrated in and around Paris.²

Malraux had been the target of much criticism, especially from adult educationists [*l'Éducation populaire*] who disputed the elitist nature of his policies.³ But a principal debate was triggered by the action of the left-wing government beginning in the early 1980s. Our contribution is intended to clarify the pattern of this debate from the 1980s to the present day, and to describe the main developments that have shaped France's cultural policy.⁴

A digression into historiography will help us understand how the French academic world has viewed the issues. Cultural policy studies, often government-sponsored, for a long time limited themselves to examining or assessing the socio-economic aspects of past and future policy.⁵ Interest in the history of cultural policies and institutions is comparatively recent in France.⁶ The social history of cultural habits is the field of action preferred by “modernist” historians.⁷ Scholars of the “contemporary” period who claim for themselves the

cultural history label are usually recycled political historians.⁸ The Ministry of Culture's History Committee, headed since 1993 by Augustin Girard and Geneviève Gentil, has done much to promote research in the field by holding conferences and seminars, compiling oral records, and issuing a score of publications. The effect has been to extend the field to all the social science disciplines.⁹

The Cultural Imperative: A Policy Under Debate, 1981-1993: Goal-Oriented Policy

When the Left came to power in 1981, a threefold break with the past occurred. The major change was the doubling of the Ministry of Culture's budget.¹⁰ Secondly, this change of scale was fittingly embodied in the public mind in the person of the new Minister of Culture, Jack Lang, who had the unswerving support of the President. Thirdly, the intentional linkage of culture with the economy amounted to a Copernican revolution in Socialist thinking. While every policy department benefited from these quantitative and qualitative changes, creative activities and the performing arts received more attention than the heritage sector [*le patrimoine*]. Further evidence of the Presidential role in cultural policy was provided by the grand-scale works program [*les Grands Travaux*], essentially devoted to heritage institutions.¹¹

The original 1959 Decree was officially amended for the first time under Mitterrand. The text promulgated on 10 May 1982 considerably altered the tasks allotted to the Ministry of Culture:

The Ministry of Culture serves the following purposes: to let all French citizens develop their inventive and creative abilities, freely exercise their talents and receive their choice of artistic training; to preserve national and regional heritage and the heritage of the various social groups for the common benefit of the entire community; to foster the creation of works of art and of

the mind and offer them the widest possible audience; to help propagate French culture and art in an unrestricted interchange of all the world's cultures.

The idea of culture for all was replaced by that of individual self-expression through creativity, each type of culture being respected. The intentional broadening of the culture field brought recognition—although not everyone approved—to cultural activities that had previously been considered unimportant. Jazz, pop music, break dancing, and cartoon strips all became worthy objects of government cultural support. Two remarks need to be made here. This cultural relativism was not invented in the 1980s. In the heritage field [*le patrimoine*], for example, the Ministry of Culture had begun to include “ethnological” and “industrial” heritage in the mid-1970s.¹² Furthermore, the nod given to the cultural activities listed above did not basically modify the system for defining cultural legitimacy. As Vincent Dubois points out, “Quite a distance separated the ‘everything is culture’ line and any real undermining of the established cultural ranking system.”¹³ Still, the growing role and independence of the various cultural occupations helped to strengthen the legitimacy of newly promoted activities and instill in them their own ways of doing things. Government, moreover, was only one factor contributing to a broader transformation of the cultural landscape. Also at work were mass education, the decline of a humanities education that had provided the food for the “cultivated mind,” and the rising power of the media as a standard of reference for art and culture.

The linking of culture with the economy was an equally central element. At a Mexico City conference in 1982, Jack Lang outlined his hopes for this new alliance. Commentators have put the accent on the speech's Third World and anti-American aspects while glossing over the Minister's new line of reasoning. Whereas Augustin Girard's ideas on cultural

industries' role in democratizing culture had raised a storm of protest on the Left, and especially among French Communists, in 1978,¹⁴ Jack Lang could now calmly list the positive effects expected from the new collaboration:

Economy and culture. The issue is the same. I should like to mention two seemingly contradictory facts in this connection. The first is that creation in culture and the arts suffers from a system of multinational financial domination that needs to be fought. The second, which seems to contradict the first, is that the international crisis can be solved by artistic and scientific creativity and invention. ...

There is another aspect: creativity can drive an economic recovery. ... To quote Nietzsche, "Art should not be a bauble hung up here and there to look pretty." Art and creation must, on the contrary, occupy a central, and not just ornamental or decorative place in our society.¹⁵

Cultural policy, through support for cultural industries [*les industries culturelles*], took on an economic and industrial dimension. Its central administration assumed a double charge: on the one hand, it was the Ministry for artists and artistic institutions and occupations; on the other hand, it was the Ministry for cultural industries.

Lang versus Malraux

Comparison with the 24 July 1959 Decree defining the assignments of the Ministry for Cultural Affairs under André Malraux is instructive. It reveals how much government theory had changed in the space of twenty years:

The Minister in charge of cultural affairs has the task of giving the largest possible number of French citizens access to the great works of mankind, and of France in particular; of ensuring the widest possible audience for our cultural heritage; and of fostering the creation of those works of art and mind which enrich that heritage.

The implementing paragraphs of this initial Decree consecrated the ideology of equality. The all-important intention was to democratize and give equal access to culture, a policy which formed part and parcel of the welfare state. Equal treatment for all was to be a matter of practice, not only words. The goal of the welfare state was to make cultural assets equally available to everyone. That goal was expressed in two parallel policies: giving citizens at large access to works of culture; and extending welfare benefits to the artistic community. Cultural policy was, in addition, molded by the Gaullist Republic's ideal of modernization. The state was required to play a driving role of guidance, incentive, and regulation. It would be a mistake, however, to think of this policy as an over-arching and carefully thought-out product of Gaullist ambition. The setting-up of the Ministry for Cultural Affairs resulted also in part from De Gaulle's desire to keep André Malraux inside his Cabinet.

In Malraux's eyes, only art had the power to rally people within a society dominated by cold reason and machines. Having access to culture meant putting works of art and the public in direct touch with one another, in an act of revelation and communion. The stricture requiring artistic creation of the highest level shut out the adult education movement's didacticism and amateurism. Lastly, the support given to the avant-garde was evidence of the intention to weaken the influence of the university crowd.¹⁶

Despite its merits, the Ministry for Cultural Affairs was a fragile construction. It had been set up in difficult conditions, with a small budget and persistent feuding between the Finance and Education Ministries. The Foreign Ministry kept a tight rein over France's external cultural policy and would continue to do so. The events of May 1968 severely shook the Ministry for Cultural Affairs, and it found itself under attack from the Left and Right. Leftists derided the fiction of cultural democracy, while order-lovers denounced government

support for artists considered as subversive. The bond between creative artists and the Ministry was torn asunder. Furthermore, at a time when mass consumption and mass culture were gathering momentum, the Ministry for Cultural Affairs was not paying the kind of attention to cultural industries [*les industries culturelles*] demanded by the situation. The rift with adult education [*l'Éducation populaire*] confirmed an impression of culture being reserved for an elite, out of touch with the cultural habits of ordinary French people.¹⁷ The Ministry, still strongly centralized and opposed to decentralization, was thinly present across the country, even though the few cultural centers [*les maisons de la culture*] that had been built were beginning, not without difficulty, to establish a partnership with the larger towns.

The 1970s were turbulent times for the Ministry. Georges Pompidou, who did not want to be hemmed in by his strictly Presidential functions, became a new actor on the scene.¹⁸ In spite of the instability of the era, the Ministry's structure was given permanent form. The idea of "cultural development" provided a response to the destabilization fomented by the events of May 1968. The Duhamel ministry (1971-73) attempted to modernize cultural policy by working on an inter-Ministerial basis, obtaining a substantially bigger budget and acknowledging the importance of local governments. "Cultural development," [*le développement culturel*] the third component of Prime Minister Jacques Chaban-Delmas's "New Society," expressed a philosophy in sharp contrast with André Malraux's cherished doctrine of cultural action [*l'action culturelle*]. While the goal of democratizing "culture" remained, two fresh approaches modified the concept itself. The anthropological sense of the word replaced the usual meaning of "high" culture; and the admission that many paths lead to democratization replaced the "esthetic shock" principle. The state, though, continued to occupy a leading role. Its task was to foster the propagation of culture and refuse market-

economy rules. Although the Duhamel ministry's policy sowed seeds for the future, it was seriously affected by the political misfortunes of Jacques Chaban-Delmas.¹⁹

The more economically liberal philosophy that prevailed after 1974 led to a wind-down in state funding, and President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing showed less passion for cultural policy. The public service vocation of the Ministry lost strength as liberalism took hold. The period was notable for the growth of urban cultural policies, varying in line with state directives. By the end of President Giscard's seven-year term, the state's guardianship of culture had greatly weakened, and it found itself confined essentially to heritage [*le patrimoine*] protection. Cultural policy, much to the discontent of cultural professionals, was no longer a government priority. Meanwhile, the opposition, and especially the revitalized Socialist Party, was offering a different sort of program. The Socialist culture platform had two highly political purposes: first, to pry the people working in the cultural field away from the still-strong influence of the French Communist Party and, second, to rally these people behind Presidential candidate François Mitterrand, at a time when the polemic over "totalitarianism" had estranged the intellectuals from the Socialists.²⁰ At the end of Giscard's term, the culture-state was a mere shadow of the "juggernaut" excoriated by its foes. Under the Ministers Françoise Giroud, Michel d'Ornano, and Jean-Philippe Lecat, the "system" dreamt of by Malraux was quietly but purposefully dismantled.

Public Media: A Defeat for the Ministry of Culture

The public media scene also went through a revolution in the 1980s. After Canal + (encrypted pay-TV) and two private channels (La Cinq and TV6) had been created and Channel One was privatized in 1986, competition among the several channels intensified. The

Ministry of Culture was unable to impose its views. Jack Lang spoke out vigorously, but in vain, against the handing over of La Cinq to the Seydoux-Berlusconi consortium. The film industry also opposed this choice, which ushered in a television service subordinated to the rule of money. Silvio Berlusconi, the Italian TV magnate, was seen as the incarnation of low-grade television consisting of variety programs, game shows, and sitcoms. What the Minister of Culture did obtain was a European TV channel focused on culture. The idea he proposed in 1984 grew into “La Sept” (February 1986), later to become Arte (*Association relative à la télévision européenne*). Arte, a Franco-German cultural channel broadcasting on the open air-waves since 1992, was something of an odd-man-out in a media world now dominated by commercial thinking. Certain commentators deplored the institution of a cultural “ghetto,” which would serve as a perfect pretext for commercial abuses by the other public channels.²¹ In 2003, the philosopher Catherine Clément, author of a report for the Minister of Culture, was obliged to acknowledge a state of affairs in which commercial pressures had been aggravated over the previous twenty years. Television had become French people’s main cultural practice, but programs labeled as “cultural” were consigned to non-prime time—“at night or in summer.”²²

French intellectuals—using the term in its broad sense of members of the intellectual professions—had for a long time had mixed feelings towards the audiovisual media, especially television. They were divided between condemning the propagation of a mass culture that watered down real culture [*la culture légitime*], and wanting to use the media for popularizing that same culture.²³ In academia, the cultural purism of French scholars had blocked the inclusion of these new issues in social science studies. British cultural studies, initiated outside of university circles, had been much bolder in exploring the subject.

The Lang ministry had nevertheless thrown all its weight into binding the film and television industries together. This singular combination had been in the works since the early 1970s. Under the Act of 29 July 1982, television was constrained to accept a certain quota of French movies, and the way in which the different channels could broadcast outside-produced movies was defined in detail. The creation of the pay-view channel Canal + in 1985 provided the movie industry with a solid source of funds. Canal +, in exchange for an exceptionally generous operating charter, was to occupy a key position in French movie production for more than ten years. Television became the cinema industry's main funder and production outlet. Movie theater screenings were looked upon only as showcases and launch pads. In 1997, the creation of the TPS satellite bouquet spelled the end of the Canal + monopoly. A third party, the communication industry, with its trans-frontier outlook and strategies, was about to upset an already delicate balance.²⁴

Criticism from the Intelligentsia:

From Cultural Pessimism to the Contemporary Arts Crisis

The main charges made by the intelligentsia bore on cultural relativism. The publication of Alain Finkielkraut's *La défaite de la pensée* in 1987 unleashed a storm of controversy. The philosopher and essayist lamented the decline of culture. His polemic was, in fact, an attack on cultural laxity. It is true that the policy conducted by Jack Lang since 1981 and continued in its general outlines by François Léotard in 1986 under the "cohabitation" government was not the principal subject of debate. Alain Finkielkraut was nonetheless of the opinion that the policy had, by incorporating fields hitherto ignored by the Ministry (rock music, fashion, advertising, etc.), done much to dilute culture in a sort of

everything-goes cultural broth.²⁵ Bernard-Henri Lévy, in his *Eloge des Intellectuels* (1987), wrote in a similar vein. Lévy, the standard-bearer of the *nouveaux philosophes*, mentioned the “sick spirit in culture.” The Ministry of Culture was accused of compounding the sickness by giving respectability to the “minor” fringes of culture.²⁶ Perhaps it was a sign of the times but, the same year, the French translation of *The Closing of the American Mind* by American scholar Allan Bloom was published. The book criticized the United States education system which, in incorporating minority culture, was responsible for muddying values. The more or less simultaneous publication of the three books—and the stir created by the first two—provided theoretical ammunition for launching attacks against the Ministry. The subject of the dispute was not, however, multi-culturalism. In this respect, the French debate differed considerably from the one going on in the United States and Canada.

In 1990, the Ministry published a survey on the French population’s “cultural practices” that rekindled and expanded the debate.²⁷ The survey conclusions, which revealed the persistence of material and symbolic barriers restricting access to “high” culture, were interpreted as proof that cultural democratization had failed. Minister Jack Lang was shaken by the findings and by the way the survey was exploited, considering that the government had committed itself to an extremely bold policy over the previous ten years. Sociological studies, which had for a long time been a valuable adjunct to democratization policies, were now feeding the skepticism of the foes of the state as cultural arbiter.

In the Fall of 1991, the publication of Marc Fumaroli’s *L’Etat culturel* gave a new twist to the controversy. The French press, soon followed by television and radio, gave wide coverage to the argument generated by the author’s ideas. Two of France’s most eminent intellectual magazines, *Esprit* and *Le Débat*, gave space to partisans on both sides of the

fence. The public at large, especially after all the media treatment, also showed interest in the subject. The book remained on top of the specialized press' best-seller lists for many weeks.

It needs to be said that the author of *L'Etat culturel* is a member of one the most honorable of all French academic institutions, the *Collège de France*. Fumaroli, a historian of literary and artistic forms in modern Europe, has held the Chair of Rhetoric and Society in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Europe since 1986, and is the author of a series of works respected by the international scholarly community; they include *L'Age de l'éloquence* (1980) and *Héros et orateurs, rhétorique et dramaturgie cornéliennes* (1990). Little known by the public at large for his academic work, Marc Fumaroli chose to tackle the subject of cultural policy in contemporary France by writing not a scholarly treatise but a lively broadside. His academic standing indeed carried more weight than the style he chose to employ. He is considered, wrongly, by many critics as a reputable specialist on the issue under discussion.

His argument should not, however, be dismissed lightly. Cultural policy, he argues, has transformed the state into a mass supplier of “popular recreation” and “consumer products.” This makes the welfare state, using public money, a competitor in the culture market. The conflict of interest inherent in an everything-goes culture stems from confusing cultural action with a form of tourism. Culture of this kind, spread by a growing army of cultural bureaucrats, takes on the proportions of a modernist religion. The nationwide music festival held annually on 21 June [*la Fête de la Musique*], the *Fureur de Lire*, commemorative celebrations (notably the Bicentenary of the French Revolution in 1989), along with the Presidential “*Grands Travaux*,” are manifestations of state-inspired manipulation, the state being a neo-Leviathan of culture serving a political party and an

ideology. What is not said is that this “culture state” [*l’Etat culturel*] is the product of policies initiated well before the Socialists came to power in 1981. As a worthy disciple of the political philosophy of Tocqueville and Raymond Aron, Marc Fumaroli assumes the role of preacher for a “liberal” state that would equip our leisure and consumer societies with a certain number of firewalls—principally an education system and some legal and tax safeguards. Culture in this scheme of things would become an essentially personal matter. “The arts are not dishes that can be divided into an infinite number of equal portions,” he writes. “They are the rungs of an ascent; to be desired, not meted out.” In other words, the main enemy of liberal democracy is mass culture.

Marc Fumaroli’s book may be seen as a weather-vane, symptomatic of the uncertainty concerning the place and conception of culture in today’s societies. It also expresses the will to defend the fine arts and the humanities against the ravages of mass culture. The work thus belongs to a long-established polemical tradition, even though its media exposure was exceptional. Indeed, the ideas are not new, and Fumaroli himself aired most of them in a 1982 article in the magazine *Commentaire*. But their extensive popularization in France and abroad gave them an added impact. Although some historians seriously question the sequence of events recounted by Fumaroli, certain media reproduced his thesis without comment. The novel element was the fierce contestation of the Ministry of Culture’s very legitimacy. Marc Fumaroli refrains from demanding the complete dismantling of the Ministry, but he argues for its being limited to the heritage field [*le patrimoine*]. The success of *L’Etat culturel*—twenty-three thousand copies sold in the original printing and over twenty thousand in the paperback edition—probably amplified by the disputes over the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* and the run-up to the March 1993 parliamentary elections, revived an already

simmering debate. The book's success was further evidence that the cultural policy propelled by Jack Lang was losing steam, and this at a time when the second seven-year term of François Mitterrand was marred by a spate of scandals. Lastly, the confirmation in 1991 of a darkening in the economic and social forecast made it difficult to defend a cultural policy based on support for creative artists.

In 1992, *L'Utopie française: essai sur le patrimoine*, by Jean-Michel Leniaud, with a preface by Marc Fumaroli, proved that the debate was still very much alive.²⁸ With the Presidential elections only a few months away, books by Henry Bonnier—*Lettre recommandée à Jack Lang et aux fossoyeurs de la culture*—and Zadig, a pen-name for a group of intellectuals belonging to right-leaning university clubs—*L'Implosion française*—gave extreme and somewhat over-simplified form to the ideas of Marc Fumaroli.²⁹ The goal was perfectly clear: suppression of the Ministry of Culture. Zadig promptly listed the authors who were required reading: “It is vital to culture that those who tomorrow will hold the destiny of France in their hands should have read and pondered Steiner, Bloom, Lussato, Finkielkraut, Fumaroli, on the return of true culture.”

As 1993 dawned, a critique not only from the nominal Left but from within the cultural administration fold itself, joined the chorus of protests from the “liberals” close to what was then the political opposition. Michel Schneider, a senior civil servant, Director of Music and Dance at the Ministry of Culture from 1988 to 1991, an authority on Schumann and Glenn Gould, conceded to Marc Fumaroli a number of points: the dissolution of Art in “Culture”; the political exploitation of the arts by a Ministry turned towards the “creators”; the disproportionate attention paid to media use. In his *La comédie de la culture*, Schneider countered the free-choice solutions proposed by Marc Fumaroli with the necessity for public

service, i.e., the obligation for a democratic nation to provide education in the arts in order to attenuate unequal access to works of culture. This vital education function would round out a Ministry of Culture limited to two other duties: heritage protection and the democratic propagation of art. The book—regarded by some as a settling of scores—received plentiful coverage in the national and regional press. It also was a resounding public success, with over thirty-two thousand copies sold.³⁰ A year later, *Culture et contre-cultures*, by the jurist Jean-Louis Harouel, revisited the subject, but in a broader framework. Harouel wrote of the “decline” in Western culture dating from the advent of avant-gardism up until the alleged clash with the lower forms of “counter-culture.” The author tied up his argument with the conclusion that the Ministry of Culture should be scrapped and replaced with a Ministry for Heritage flanked by a small-scale national arts fund.³¹

A second line of criticism, again well-publicized by the media, had to do with the *Grands Travaux*. Jean-François Revel attacked them as “the President’s private playground” and held them up as an example of what his essay denounced as “inefficient absolutism.”³² What struck many observers were the personal nature of *Grands Travaux* policy decisions, their attachment to a political agenda, and their staggering cost. The three factors kept the controversy alive. Once his decision was taken, the President kept a close eye on each project’s progress.

The opponents of the *Grands Travaux* castigated the fortunes spent on the different programs. *Le Canard Enchaîné* called them Pharaonic and derided the choices of “Tontonkhamen.”³³ Over a period of ten years, the “Grand Works” ended up costing roughly thirty-four billion francs. More than the initial outlay, it was the operating budget needed for running the new cultural facilities which was to cause a problem in the following years.

Although a few projects were located in the provinces, local officeholders berated a policy which, as always, mostly benefited Paris.

Cost of the *Grands Travaux*³⁴

Name	Architect(s)	Cost in billions of French francs	Year
Musée d'Orsay	Gae Aulenti	1.3	1986
Parc de la Villette	Bernard Tshumi	1.3	1986
Musée des Sciences	Adiren Fainsilber	5.4	1986
Institut du Monde Arabe	Jean Nouvel	0.424	1987
Opéra Bastille	Carlos Ott	2.8	1989
Arche de la Défense	Paul Andreu, Otto von Spreckelsen	3.175	1989
Ministry of Finance	Paul Chemetov, Borja Huidobro	3.7	1989
Cité de la Musique	Christian de Portzamparc	1.1	1994
Muséum	Paul Chemetov, Borja Huidobro	1	1994
Grand Louvre	Ieoh Pei	5.7	1995
Bibliothèque de France	Dominique Perrault	7.8	1995
Total		34.239	

The Grand Louvre, later acclaimed as a model of its kind, was at first the subject of heated controversy. The plans of American architect Ieoh Pei for the Louvre Pyramid stirred intense debate. Among those taking sides were former Minister of Culture, Michel Guy, and the authors (Bruno Foucart, Antoine Schnapper, and Sébastien Loste) of *Paris mystifié*, published in 1985. The favorable opinion expressed by the curators of the Louvre in 1984 was a deciding factor. With the agreement of the Mayor of Paris, Jacques Chirac, and the unwavering support of François Mitterrand, the team led by Emile Biasini was able to carry the project through to completion. The violent debate over the daring construction of a glass pyramid at the heart of the old Louvre palace buildings was soon forgotten when its public success became apparent.

During François Mitterrand's second seven-year term, it was the new *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* [BNF] which set passions aflame. This time, the opposition came less

from political factions, as had been the case with the Grand Louvre, than from the scientific community. The supervising team, the architect, Dominique Perrault, and the prospective scientific users argued at length over the functions and shape of the future building. The researchers organized themselves into a pressure group, with the journal *Le Débat* playing an active role, and obtained significant alterations to the original plans. The dispute reshaped the intellectual landscape, one of its side-effects being to harmonize the positions on cultural matters of the magazines *Commentaire* and *Le Débat*. Two different conceptions of the future library, which many commentators believed to be incompatible, underlay the divergence: it was conceived, on the one hand, as a public library offering a sort of agora for cultural interaction, and, on the other hand, as a new *Bibliothèque Nationale* with a primarily heritage mission catering to scholars. This twin purpose, set out in the Decree of 3 January 1994 defining the BNF's tasks, was to prove extremely difficult to manage institutionally in terms of everyday running.

Beginning in 1991, another polemic hatched up by the magazines *Esprit* and *Télérama* on the “crisis in contemporary art” had an influence on the Ministry of Culture's fine arts policy. The nub of this very “in-house” French debate turned on an attack against avant-garde aesthetics. Government policy was cited as evidence for the prosecution; the state was accused of aesthetic partiality. It has always been tempting to belittle “official art.” The neo-liberals Marc Fumaroli and Yves Michaud believed that the state should retire from the field and allow more independence to other institutions. Philippe Dagen was one of the few protagonists to state that government support for the fine arts was still inadequate. He did not deny that a certain official academicism existed, but he felt that it was of minor importance and was not sure that the market would fill the void if the state pulled out.³⁵ The

debate took a more political turn in November 1996 when an issue of the review *Krisis*, sympathetic to the far-right, edited by Alain de Benoist, expatiated on the subject. Upholders of contemporary art, such as the magazine *Art Press*, edited by Catherine Millet, or *Le Monde*'s art critic, Philippe Dagen, quickly assimilated the attack on contemporary art with conservative reaction and fascism. Admittedly, the political context of the day, marked by the gains of the National Front in town council elections, tended to make parties on all sides exaggerate their positions.³⁶

The three controversies—cultural relativism debates (Fumaroli), the *Grands Travaux*, and the “crisis of contemporary art” controversy—crisscrossing from time to time, were instrumental in casting doubt on cultural policy's purpose and legitimacy. But their impact, outside a small coterie of intellectuals and specialists, should not be overstated. The artists themselves had no say in the proceedings. Polls bore out the fact that the great majority of the French population did not contest the government's cultural policy. That policy, especially from 1993 on, was basically one of continuity. The fact remains that the principles used to adjust cultural policy to a gloomier financial outlook and the onslaughts of globalization were grounded partly in argumentation heard during the 1980s.

Towards a New Cultural Policy Model, 1993-2003:

Cultural Policy and “Social Fracture”

The return to power of the parliamentary Right in 1993 ushered in a new period. Cultural policy was definitely no longer a government priority, and Presidential backing was less in evidence after Jacques Chirac's election in 1995. The trimming of the budget was felt all the more keenly in that the overheads of the *Grands Travaux* monuments and institutions

made heavy inroads into the Ministry of Culture's finances. The desire for a new cultural policy model was illustrated by the idea of "reformulation" [*la refondation*] elaborated by Jacques Rigaud for Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy in 1996. Discussion had shifted to mending the "social fracture." Cultural policy at the approach of the twenty-first century seemed destined to take a more "liberal" turn.

After the 1993 parliamentary elections, the Ministerial policy pursued by Jacques Toubon was quick to follow the path traced by his predecessor Jack Lang. The first *cohabitation*, from 1986 to 1988, had to a large degree remained faithful to the policy in place since 1981. François Léotard, who advocated a "retiring state," to use Michel Crozier's term, had sought to push cultural policy in a more rightwards direction. The emphasis was placed back on heritage; education in the arts was promoted; and "cultural development" lost its priority status. In 1993, the Ministry of Culture adopted three guiding principles: territorial development (one of the avowed hobbyhorses of Prime Minister Édouard Balladur's government), intensified projection of French culture abroad, and education and promotion of culture for all. The debate in the Fall of 1993 over Europe's right to "cultural exception" forged broad agreement among the public and politicians alike. The Minister of Culture drew attention, over and above the technical issues and the trade imbalance between Europe and the U.S.—in the latter's favor—to broader questions of symbolic importance and the defense of a cultural identity under threat:

We do not want our spirits to be stifled, our eyes blinded, our industries enslaved. We want to breathe freely, to breathe our own air, the air that has vivified every culture in the world, and could tomorrow be lacking to mankind. On both sides of the Atlantic and the Pacific, let us mobilize for this battle for survival.³⁷

The return of the Right, in other words, picked up the thread of the earlier concerns of the Left. There was no longer any question of a financial upturn or a priority proclaimed by the government. Moreover, the absence of Presidential backing, combined with the traditional stinginess of the Ministry of Finance, weakened the Ministry of Culture's position. In retrospect, the two major advances of the 1980s could be better appreciated: the budget increases won for the Ministry by Jack Lang, and the backing, sometimes distant but unflinching, of President François Mitterrand.

The 1995 Presidential campaign was not concerned with cultural policy. Philippe Douste-Blazy, the Centrist Minister of Culture in Prime Minister Alain Juppé's cabinet, ordered a remodeling of the Ministry's policy. The deliberations were the first step towards establishing a new type of policy for culture that would take account together of the advances made in the previous decade, the criticisms that had been expressed, and the international economic situation as affected by rising globalization. The Rigaud Report submitted to the Minister in October 1996 reasserted the validity of the French system of cultural action as a public service. The state's role as an instrument for government action, in consultation with local bodies, was firmly asserted. The Ministry's financial muscle should be restored, and the Report noted the Ministry of Finance's mistrust, if not downright hostility, towards government spending on culture. There were several suggestions for reorganizing the Ministry of Culture's central administration. Education in art and culture was termed a "national cause." Another priority was the harmonization of state policies concerning cultural industries.³⁸ The "remodeling" process was brutally interrupted in the Spring of 1997, when President Jacques Chirac chose to dissolve National Assembly.³⁹

Restoring the Republican Social Pact

Catherine Trautmann, Minister of Culture and Communication in the new cabinet headed by Socialist Lionel Jospin, tailored her action to the pattern devised by her predecessor. An administrative overhaul was accompanied by a “reconstruction” budget (15.1 billion French francs in 1998). Further deconcentration and the signing of contracts with local bodies showed that the Ministry was willing to take part in the reform of the state’s structure. A “Charter on the Public Service Duties of the Performing Arts” stressed the need to write public service clauses into contracts covering public aid for cultural institutions. The Charter was a genuine attempt to break with past practices. In the same vein, a charter signed in June 1999 with the main adult education federations endeavored to end the divorce, dating back to Malraux’s time, between cultural action and further education.⁴⁰ The new partnership satisfied two of the Ministry of Culture’s primary objectives: to strengthen education in arts and culture, and to encourage amateur artistic activity. On the political far-right, populism was again on the rise. Catherine Trautmann, like Douste-Blazy before her, took action to assert the state’s role in preserving cultural pluralism. The authority of the Minister, who had tried to escape from interest-group domination, was irremediably sapped, however, by pressure from the performing arts lobbies, abetted by the national press.

Catherine Tasca, who took over from Catherine Trautmann following a Jospin cabinet shuffle in March 2000, geared her action to three main principles: promoting cultural diversity, improving access to culture, and advancing cultural decentralization. The political background was also of great importance—with an eye to the next elections, the Minister had to defuse the rebellion of the performing arts movement leaders. The Ministry of Culture’s participation in the new round of decentralization demanded by the government was

expressed through a set of “cultural decentralization protocols.” One of the protocol’s goals was to establish a clear apportionment of responsibilities between central and local government. The late parliamentary term also saw the conclusion of several long-awaited legislative measures, including those on rescue archeology, museums, and the art market. The intention to support education in the arts, which politicians had been talking about since the early 1990s, led to closer cooperation between the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education.⁴¹ The Ministry of Culture, having noted the nationwide proliferation of locally based artistic endeavors that owed little to institutions or the market, set about alerting public authorities to the scale of the phenomenon and introducing measures to support these ventures, since they promised to play a major role in local cultural life and the development of art activities.⁴² The media scene continued to be occupied by the war between haters and admirers of cultural policy *à la française*.⁴³ In the field, the prevailing discussion had turned to the new problems, nearly all relating to globalization, facing French cultural policy. The sharp debate over paying for borrowing in public libraries, which had the book trade divided, showed how much the public cultural services were being buffeted by the commercial logic of increasingly trans-national cultural industries—television in particular—and the globalized habits of individual cultural consumption.⁴⁴

From Cultural Exception to Cultural Diversity

During international trade talks, France did not budge from its position and shaped the European Union’s attitude. In 1998, in negotiations with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development over a Multilateral Investment Agreement, France pleaded for what it called “cultural exception.” The Jospin government decided to oppose any inclusion

of a culture clause and refused to take part in the negotiations. In 1999, on the eve of the World Trade Organization [WTO] meetings in Seattle, France strove in the European Union to retain its “cultural exception.” The Commission’s mandate, approved by member states on 26 October 1999, endorsed the French position: “The Union will, during the forthcoming WTO negotiations, take care to guarantee, as in the Uruguay Round, the possibility for the Community and its member states to preserve and develop their capacity to determine and implement their cultural and audiovisual policies so as to conserve their cultural diversity.” Catherine Trautmann added, “Cultural exception is the legal tool; cultural diversity is our objective.” This semantic shift enabled a frail consensus to be reached within the European Union. “Cultural diversity” continued to be defended. On 15 October 2001, President Chirac in his speech at the opening of the Thirty-First UNESCO General Conference solemnly reiterated France’s position: “The answer to culture-crushing globalization is cultural diversity. Diversity based on the conviction that each people has a unique message to transmit to the world, and that each people can enrich humanity by contributing its share of beauty and its share of truth.”

The shift towards cultural diversity was not universally appreciated by art and culture professionals. The exact meaning of the phrase remained highly ambiguous. On 17 December 2001, when taking control of USA Networks, Jean-Marie Messier, then CEO of Vivendi-Universal, declared in New York: “The French cultural exception is dead ... and domestic French anxieties are archaisms.” The declaration quickly had culture professionals up in arms; they denounced what they saw as an attack on the French system for funding movie-making. Politicians of every stripe—from the Communist Party to the far-right—also castigated Messier’s pronouncement. Everyone was wondering in private what would now be

the policy of Canal +, part of Messier's empire, which was a vital partner in French movie production.

The official reaction "at the state's highest level" shows just how important this question was. Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, who had already raised the point in presenting his greetings to the press on 15 January 2002, took the opportunity six days later when inaugurating the Palais de Tokyo site for contemporary creation to restate the government's position. He implicitly condemned Jean-Marie Messier's remarks:

Our vision in no way implies retiring into our national shell; on the contrary, it betokens a desire to reach out to the world. Through culture, we celebrate all cultures. Their diversity is mankind's priceless heritage.

President Chirac, for his part, formally confirmed France's position regarding cultural diversity, on February 12th:

As we can well see, in these times of uncertainty, when traditional borders are becoming blurred, when there are justified fears that the rule of the market will replace the rule of governments, when people no longer feel that they are in charge of their agenda, the need to assert one's identity is making a strong comeback all over the world. It is like a vital instinct, since everyone feels that the snuffing out of traditions, languages, cultures and knowledge is akin to throwing away chances, or closing doors that we shall never be able to open again. Let us then be vigilant. Uniformization, when it acts like a steamroller, has the backlash effect of encouraging ghetto attitudes and fanaticism. Affirming diversity is quite the opposite: it is one the keys to assuaging contemporary fears. ... That is why not everything can be a tradable good, and why not everything can be abandoned to market rule.

Until the official opening of the Presidential election campaign, the battle of views swirled.

On 9 March, certain artists, incensed by business mogul Jean-Marie Messier's statements, took advantage of the *Victoires de la Musique* ceremony to make their opinions known.

Messier had quoted as an example of cultural diversity the inclusion of "rebels" such as Noir

Désir and Zebda in the catalogue of the music major he had just acquired. From the mid-1990s, the government received support from the main professional organizations as well as from the associations opposed to globalization. The sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, who had become a new icon of intellectual activism, on several occasions warned against reducing culture to the status of merchandise, “To reintroduce commercialism into systems crafted, piece by piece, ... is to endanger mankind’s noblest achievements: art, literature, and even science.”⁴⁵

Jacques Chirac, following his reelection as President in 2002, returned more than once to the theme of defending cultural diversity, increasingly presented as the backbone of France’s cultural policy. France also did its best to change the forum of discussion from the WTO to UNESCO.⁴⁶ On 2 February 2003, President Chirac, speaking at the Second International Meeting of Cultural Professional Organizations, proposed “establishing [cultural] diversity as a principle in international law” and called for the “adoption by the international community of a world convention on cultural diversity.” France also wanted “promotion of and respect for cultural diversity” to be included in the future Treaty on European Unity.

A Model in Search of Its Bearings

The election campaign in the Spring of 2002 was not notable, however, for the public attention accorded to cultural policy, although all the candidates mentioned it in their platforms. The qualification of the populist leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, for the second round of the Presidential elections triggered an “anti-Fascist” reflex on the part of the art and culture world. In the following weeks, the discussions on the condition of French society included

references to the limits of cultural democratization. Cultural institutions were blamed for having deepened the cultural divide between the “*cognoscenti*” and the “people” because of their highbrow policies.

The appointment of the former Curator of the Georges Pompidou Center, Jean-Jacques Aillagon, as Minister of Culture and Communication in the Jean-Pierre Raffarin Cabinet was on the whole well-received by arts professionals. The text setting out the Minister’s terms of reference indicated that there would be no break with previous policy. Still, the reduction in the culture budget (2,490,72 million Euros, or a 4.3 percent cut) was perceived in culture circles as a worrying sign. Several priorities were set, backed by official reports: heritage and decentralization (Bady Report), violence on television (Kriegel Report), and cultural content on television (Clément Report). The Ministerial agenda displayed right from the first months an intention to encourage private patronage and allow greater independence to the major cultural institutions. A symposium held in March 2003 by the French-American Foundation and the *Centre Français des Fondations* under the auspices of the Minister of Culture and the Minister for the Budget and State Reform—“Culture Funding and Management in the United States and France: New Synergies and Interdependences of Private and Public Sources”—produced arguments for a shift towards liberalism in France’s cultural policy model. In April 2003, the Minister of Culture and Communication told the National Assembly that reform of patronage and the status of foundations was a necessity, “expressing, alongside deconcentration and decentralization, the government’s trust in an assumption of responsibility by civil society, individuals, business institutions and foundations, since it aims at associating their commitments more closely with the action of the state.” He drew attention to France’s backwardness in this respect, comparing the

situation to that in the United States where patronage contributed roughly two hundred and seventeen billion euros, or 2.1 percent of GDP, as against only 0.09 percent in France.

These first measures produced mixed reactions. Debate focused on two topics. The first was the question of non-salaried performing artists.⁴⁷ Employers and unions asked questions of the government concerning the special unemployment insurance scheme applying to performing arts professionals. At stake was the survival of a large section of the country's cultural activity. The Minister of Culture, who expressed his attachment to the scheme, failed to convince labor representatives opposed to the employers' demands that he had the capacity to act. The second topic concerned the decentralization process set in motion by Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin. The Prime Minister, a proponent of a "decentralized France," hoped to strengthen the cultural prerogatives of the regions. Art and culture professionals, especially in the performing arts, criticized a possible divestment by the state at the very moment when many urban cultural systems were being threatened by the reluctant attitudes of certain local authorities.⁴⁸ Local officeholders themselves appeared afraid of a transfer of expenditures in their disfavor and a retreat by the state towards institutions having exclusively national stature. Some voices pointed out that the government's program remained silent about other projects in the works, such as "intercommunality" (partnerships among several Communes), particularly in rural districts, of "home areas" and "settled communities." The hesitancy could also have been a sign of the local authorities' difficulty in assimilating and practicing the new rules of the game imposed by the growing localization of government action.⁴⁹ The Ministry of Culture's own staff began to worry. The "culture" inter-union group at the Ministry of Culture issued a strike call for 24 April 2003 to protest what it

called a “scheduled dismantling of the Ministry” by a “bogus decentralization which does not pursue any goal of improving and consolidating public service.”

The government continued, however, to present state commitment to art and culture as a fundamental requirement of democracy. The primary objective remained the popularization of cultural habits. It was equally important to guarantee maximum freedom for the citizen in his choice of cultural activities. To that end, the state has proclaimed its determination to support artists, while ensuring them absolute freedom in their work of creation and dissemination. A seeming contradiction may be noted here. The defense of cultural diversity in the international arena has been accompanied domestically by an avowed “liberal” shift, which many observers have seen as a serious threat to the public service cultural ideal.

For nearly half a century now, government cultural policies in France seem, despite certain changes in trajectory, to have followed a continuous path. There can be no denying their role in regulating the national culture scene; yet this can in no way be likened to a “straitjacketing” of the country’s art and culture. The small size of official budgets, the growing influence of world-scale cultural industries, and highly eclectic cultural habits have prevented the state from becoming the string-puller of France’s cultural life. Arguing over cultural policy has never really stopped since the early 1980s, from the condemnation of the all-is-culture credo to criticism of decentralization, experienced by art and culture professionals as a whittling away of state-guided policy. In truth, these disputes have had little impact on the nature of public policies as practiced, and the public in general has always seemed quite happy with them. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, one trend seems to be emerging: criticism is giving way to defense of state policy, recognized as a bulwark against the erosion of cultural identities and the resurgence of populist philistinism.

Notes

Our gratitude goes to the Ministry of Culture's History Committee for financing the translation, and to Augustin Girard and Julian Bourg for their thoughtful revision of the French text.

¹ Robert Wangermée, "Tendances de l'administration de la culture en Europe occidentale," *Revue française d'administration publique* 65 (January-March 1993): 11-24. Kevin Mulkahty, "Cultural Patronage in Comparative Perspective: Public Support for the Arts in France, Germany, Norway, and Canada," *The Journal of Arts Management Law and Society* 27, 4 (Winter 1998): 247-63.

² See my anthology, Philippe Poirrier, ed., *Les Politiques culturelles en France* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 2002).

³ Brian Rigby, *Popular Culture in Modern France: A Study of Cultural Discourse* (London: Routledge, 1991).

⁴ For details, see David Looseley, *The Politics of Fun: Cultural Policy and Debate in Contemporary France* (Oxford : Berg Publishers, 1995). *Dictionnaire des politiques culturelles de la France depuis 1959* (Paris: Larousse-CNRS, 2001).

⁵ A. J. Wiesand, "Comparative Cultural Policy Research in Europe: A Change of Paradigm," *Canadian Journal of Communication* 27 (2002): 369-78. J. M. Schuster, *Informing Cultural Policy: The Research and Information Infrastructure* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Center for Urban Policy Research, 2002).

⁶ See my essay, Poirrier, *Les Enjeux de l'histoire culturelle* (Paris: Seuil, 2004).

⁷ The most representative author, whose work is easily available in English, is Roger Chartier, *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations* (Polity Press-Cornell

University Press, Cambridge-Ithaca, 1988); and *On the Edge of the Cliff: History, Language, and Practices* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

⁸ Jean-Pierre Rioux and Jean-François Sirinelli, *Pour une histoire culturelle* (Paris: Seuil, 1997).

⁹ See Poirrier, “L’histoire des politiques culturelles: un territoire pour l’historien,” in *Bibliographie de l’histoire des politiques culturelles: France, XIXe-XXe siècles* (Paris: La Documentation Française—Comité d’histoire du Ministère de la Culture, 1999), 7-27. For a description of the History Committee’s action, see “L’historien, la culture et les institutions,” *Culture & Recherche* 95 (March-April 2003).

¹⁰ The budget approved for the fiscal year 1982 amounted to 5.99 billion French francs, up from 2.97 billion in 1981. The 1993 budget rose even further, to 13.79 billion FF.

¹¹ Pascal Ory, “La décision en politique culturelle: l’exemple de la présidence Mitterrand,” in *Les Années Mitterrand: les années du changement, 1981-1984* (Paris: Perrin, 2001), 818-38.

¹² Poirrier, “Heritage and Cultural Policy in France under the Fifth Republic,” *The International Journal of Cultural Policy* 9, 2 (2003) : 215-226.

¹³ Vincent Dubois, “Une politique pour quelle(s) culture(s),” *Les Cahiers français* 312 (January-February 2003): 22.

¹⁴ Augustin Girard, “Industries culturelles,” *Futuribles* 17 (September-October 1978): 598-605; trans. as “Cultural Industries,” in Jeremy Ahearne, ed., *French Cultural Policy Debates: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002), 102-8.

¹⁵ Repr. in Poirrier, *Les Politiques culturelles en France*, 391-95.

¹⁶ Philippe Urfalino, *L'Invention de la politique culturelle* (Paris: Comité d'histoire du Ministère de la Culture-La Documentation Française, 1996). Augustin Girard and Geneviève Gentil, eds., *Les Affaires culturelles au temps d'André Malraux* (Paris: Comité d'histoire du Ministère de la Culture-La Documentation Française, 1996).

¹⁷ Jean-Pierre Rioux and Jean-François Sirinelli, eds., *La Culture de masse en France: de la Belle Époque à aujourd'hui* (Paris: Fayard, 2002).

¹⁸ Jean-Claude Grohens and Jean-François Sirinelli, *Culture et action chez Georges Pompidou* (Paris: PUF, 2000).

¹⁹ *Les Affaires culturelles au temps de Jacques Duhamel: 1971-1973* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1995).

²⁰ Pierre Gremion, "Écrivains et intellectuels à Paris: une esquisse," *Le Débat* 103 (January-February 1999): 74-99.

²¹ Dominique Wolton, "Télévision culturelle: "l'apartheid" distingué," *Pouvoirs* 51 (1989): 99-113. Jean Cluzel, "Une ambition justifiée, une réalisation contestable," *Le Débat* 121 (September-October 2002): 178-83.

²² Catherine Clément, *La Nuit et l'été: rapport sur la culture à la télévision* (Paris: Seuil-La Documentation Française, 2003).

²³ See Hélène Eck, "Médias audiovisuels et intellectuels," in Michel Leymare and Jean-François Sirinelli, eds., *L'Histoire des intellectuels aujourd'hui* (Paris: PUF, 2003): 201-25.

²⁴ Laurent Creton, *Le Cinéma à l'épreuve du système télévisuel* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2002).

²⁵ Alain Finkielkraut, *La Défaite de la pensée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987).

²⁶ Bernard-Henri Lévy, *Eloge des intellectuels* (Paris: Grasset, 1987).

²⁷ Olivier Donnat and Denis Cogneau, *Les Pratiques culturelles des Français* (Paris: La Découverte-La Documentation Française, 1990). The poll was based largely on attendance at and use of cultural facilities. Not much detail was given on audio-visual media habits.

²⁸ Jean-Michel Leniaud, *L'Utopie française: essai sur le patrimoine* (Paris : Mengès, 1992).

²⁹ Henri Bonnier, *Lettre recommandée à Jack Lang et aux fossoyeurs de la culture* (Monaco: Editions du Rocher, 1992). Zadig, *L'Implosion française* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1992).

³⁰ Michel Schneider, *La Comédie de la culture* (Paris: Seuil, 1993).

³¹ Jean-Louis Harouel, *Culture et contre-cultures* (Paris: PUF, 1994).

³² Jean-François Revel, *L'Absolutisme inefficace ou contre le présidentialisme à la française* (Paris: Plon, 1992).

³³ A play on word, *tonton*, meaning “uncle,” the popular nickname for François Mitterrand.

³⁴ F. Benhamou, *L'Économie de la culture* (Paris: La Découverte, 1996), 60.

³⁵ Philippe Dagen, *La Haine de l'art* (Paris: Grasset, 1997).

³⁶ The arguments used in the dispute are set out in Yves Michaud, *La Crise de l'art contemporain: utopie, démocratie et comédie* (Paris: PUF, 1997). The main texts can be found in an anthology compiled by Patrick Barrer, ed., *(Tout) l'art contemporain est-il nul? Le débat sur l'art contemporain en France avec ceux qui l'ont lancé: bilan et mise en perspective* (Lausanne: Favre, 2000).

³⁷ Jacques Toubon, “Laisser respirer nos âmes!” *Le Monde*, 1 October 1993, repr. in Poirrier, *Les Politiques culturelles en France*, 486-89.

³⁸ Jacques Rigaud, *Pour une refondation de la politique culturelle* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1996).

³⁹ See Jacques Rigaud's account, *Les Deniers du rêve: essai sur l'avenir des politiques culturelles* (Paris: Grasset, 2001).

⁴⁰ The two texts may be found in Poirrier, *Les Politiques culturelles en France*, 537-39, 551-59.

⁴¹ Pascale Lismonde, *Les Arts à l'école: le Plan de Jack Lang et Catherine Tasca* (Paris: Cndp-Gallimard, 2002).

⁴² Fabrice Lextrait, *Une Nouvelle Étape de l'action culturelle* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 2001); and "Les valeurs de l'art: entre marché et institutions," *Mouvements* 17 (September-October 2001).

⁴³ Two books published in the Fall of 1999 were received with great interest: Maryvonne de Saint-Pulgent, *Le Gouvernement de la culture* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999); and Claude Mollard, *Le Cinquième Pouvoir: la culture et l'Etat de Malraux à Lang* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1999).

⁴⁴ Jean-Yves Mollier, *Où va le livre?* (Paris: La Dispute, 2002).

⁴⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, "Questions aux vrais maîtres du monde," *Le Monde*, 14 October 1999. See also Pierre Bourdieu, "La culture est en danger," in *Contre-feux 2: pour un mouvement social européen* (Paris: Raisons d'agir éditions, 2001), 75-91.

⁴⁶ The adoption in November 2001 of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity was a success for this strategy. It should be recalled that the United States had not yet rejoined UNESCO at that point.

⁴⁷ This French peculiarity—an unemployment benefits scheme for performing artists (singers, actors, musicians, dancers, producers, directors, technicians, set designers, etc.)—is explained by the insecure nature of their work and the number of their employers. The sharp rise in beneficiaries—up from 41,000 in 1991 to 96,500 in 2001—is responsible for the scheme’s deficit (739 million euros in 2001). Unemployment insurance thus indirectly funds the performing arts sector.

⁴⁸ Periodicals have reflected this fear: “Quelle culture de la décentralisation?,” *Mouvement: Revue interdisciplinaire des arts vivants* 19 (November-December 2002); and “La décentralisation culturelle pervertie,” *Cahier du Groupe Reflex[e]* 1 (March-April 2003).

⁴⁹ The most recent account of the territorial game in action: Guy Saez, “L’action des collectivités territoriales en matière culturelle,” *Les Cahiers français* 312 (January-February 2003), 12-18.