

The National Endowment for the Arts in the 1990s

A Black Eye on the Arts?

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This article seeks to explain the battering sustained by the United States' National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) during the ongoing culture wars over federal subsidies, by situating the NEA in the conjoined histories of both U.S. cultural policy and contemporary debates about citizenship. On the basis of this analysis, it is suggested that the policy options of leaving culture to the market, base, or existing systems of support all lack a base in democratic politics.

When he signed the legislation that birthed the United States' National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in 1965 as an agency dispensing public money for the production and distribution of art, President Lyndon Johnson explained that "it is in our works of art that we reveal to ourselves, and to others, the inner vision which guides us as a nation" (quoted in Martin, 1998, p. 90). Three decades later, the public face of that interior had taken a battering: Representative Dick Armey referred to the Endowment as the "single most visible and deplorable black eye on the arts in America." This article seeks to explain what happened to Johnson's vision during the intervening years, and the implications for the future, by situating the NEA in the history of U.S. cultural policy and contemporary debates about citizenship. In the 1990s, the Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations, themselves modeled on ancient regime aristocratic patronage but in a demotic vein, are setting the trend for Europe and the other Americas, whereas the rise and decline of the Endowment mirrors Europe's state socialist, national socialist, and welfare-state systems of cultural provision in a telescoped form. What does this history tell us about citizenship and U.S. cultural policy, both "cultural and artistic activity" fostered by the state and "the production of social relations and identities" (Volkerling, 1996, p. 191), that derived from such art? I come down against the current fashion for civil society and in favor of a radical-democratic culture. This article argues that the options of leaving culture to the market, foundations, or existing systems of support lack a base in democratic politics.

THE HISTORY OF U.S. CULTURAL SUBVENTION

The ethos of democracy identified by de Tocqueville in his eulogy to early 19th-century America forcefully rejected European ruling-class accounts of civilization and how to stimulate it.¹ de Tocqueville identified a belief that equality militated against artistic transcendence: There could be few patrons in an economic democracy, and so profoundly utilitarian a country as the United States would not recognize the value of aesthetics. So from the first, the issue of migration and a new kind of citizenship were critical to the relationship between government and art. An egalitarian philosophy supposedly flattened tastes through cultural relativism, denying the age-old route to artistic distinction provided by a socially hierarchical rank order. Ennoblement was in the eye of the ennobled rather than a universal quality. Practicality was preferred to artistry in a New World driven by market pressures to manufacture large amounts of product at cheap cost as opposed to satisfying a single, discriminating paymaster-patron. de Tocqueville's account is more than a description of its time. It has become a touchstone of U.S. folklore and political culture (Filicko, 1996).

This utilitarian faith in the market allocating cultural resources was evident early on: The relationship of the U.S. federal government and the arts began with copyright provisions authorized by the Founding Parents as a means of encouraging innovation (Van Camp, 1996). However, in 1825, when President John Quincy Adams asked Congress for money to start a national university, observatories, and related programs, this led to accusations of centralization from Martin van Buren and John C. Calhoun. There is continuity in this distaste for connecting culture to the state. The U.S. government's paper at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) 1969 Monaco Round Table on Cultural Policies began with the famous line: "The United States has no official cultural position, either public or private" (cited in Kammen, 1996, pp. 795, 798). Put another way, a profound American commitment to keeping the state separate from the production and restriction of meaning, notably evident in the First Amendment, meant that the federal government supposedly declined to elevate, discriminate, or even differentiate artistically.

Despite all the rhetoric and its international image, one might argue that the United States actually invented modern cultural policy in a federal frame. In 1872, Congress purchased Thomas Moran's painting of the Grand Canyon, which so engaged spectators that the area depicted was later secured for conservation. In 1917-1918, the United States was the first nation to permit tax deductions for gifts to nonprofit organizations. National parks were first established in the United States, which was also the nation that pressed for the United Nations to have a cultural organization. There is nothing in any democracy to compare with the Works Progress Administration's arts projects of the 1930s, and the 1973 Comprehensive Employment and Training Act also had an important influence through its Artists-in-Residence program, which provided income

security to artists, unintentionally fostering social critique (Dubin, 1987; French, 1997; Kammen, 1996).

This has been a tale of uneven development, however. In the 1950s, U.S. conservatism took a turn against what was variously termed *rationalism*, *statism*, and *collectivism*: legacies of the Roosevelt Administration's use of government money and agency to stem the ideological tide and social misery of the Great Depression. Republicans in the 1950s reacted against the subsequent consolidation of centralized governmental authority in the Second World War, but were themselves divided as a movement between libertarians (collective was bad, individual was good) and those reasserting the character of the United States as a Christian nation (collective was bad, familial was good) (Himmelman & Zald, 1984). This was the era when the egghead professor developed a plural form (the little-remembered "eggmass"), not to mention some horns. Anticommunism continued in the 1960s, but it produced additional divergences. Many on the Right concurred with liberal Democrats in favoring massive internal and external federal action to counter the resources of state socialism. The aim was to best the Soviet Union in every sphere, in a way that was homologous, analogous, and aetiological—battles on all fronts, from book bounties to bomb ballistics.²

In the 1960s, U.S. not-for-profit foundations, principally Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller, helped generate an infrastructure of artistic diversity at the same time as the federal government and state and private colleges stimulated development. This transformation was legitimized by economic studies of the time, which established that the performing arts were inherently prone to cost overruns, unlike mechanically or electronically reproducible art. The very values of live performance—its mutability and uniqueness—set limits on its profitability. Expenses were high with no prospect of economies of scale through increased production or adjusted inventory (Hirsch, 1997; Zolberg, 1996). So the market would not be sufficient to ensure a wide range of cultural production.

From 1960, John F. Kennedy, Johnson, and Richard Nixon were all worried that Nelson Rockefeller's wealth might buy him the Presidency, and Rockefeller's support for the arts was an important means of product differentiation from his competitors. So they smiled on the public subvention of culture until Nixon muttered to H.R. Haldeman, after years of abuse from liberals, "the arts are not our people. We should dump the whole culture business" (cited in Kammen, 1996, p. 796).³ Despite Nixon's anxieties, the 1960s and 1970s were a time of burgeoning faith in immigration and government cultural policy, mutually reinforcing signs that the U.S. model of free traffic in persons and ideas could generate better, as well as fairer, outcomes than command economies could (Dittgen, 1997). On the other side, the liberal foundations certainly feared both polarities, of market-driven and government-driven systems, so they sought a third way, pouring millions into making partnerships across the three sectors. This was equally a response to another impetus to federal arts funding: the chaos of American inner cities in the mid-1960s. The Business Council for

the Arts and the Rockefeller Foundation argued for arts infrastructure as an alternative to the grave peril of "leisure" in these areas (Martin, 1998, p. 90).

The result was enormous growth. In 1965, when the NEA was enacted, the United States had a total of 100 orchestras and dance, theatre, and opera companies. Today, the number is 800. Six hundred local arts agencies then have turned into 3,800 now, and equivalent state arts bureaux have increased from 6 to 56 (NEA, n.d.). In the first 20 years of the endowment, professional arts organizations grew by 700% (Bayles, 1995). It has been estimated that each dollar of NEA money provides a 20-fold return in contracts, services, and jobs (American Arts Alliance [AAA], n.d.-a). Given this economic interdependency, we might ask what the loss of this financial and political multiplier effect would be, acknowledging that prior to 1965, the United States already housed, no thanks to federal funds, more museums than Western Europe, more libraries than any other country, and half the world's symphony orchestras (Moen, 1997).

THE PROBLEM

How did the NEA become a problem? The answers lie in four adjacent domains: party politics, constitutional law and lore, the function of art, and debates about sex and race. Each one is interlaced with the notion of what constitutes Americanness: private enterprise versus centralized power, the separation of the state from the generation and suppression of meaning, and changes in national citizenship occasioned by migration, public sexual subjectivity, and their expression in cultural forms.

Because their leader had scored zero on political morality, post-Watergate Republicans proclaimed the need for a return to traditional Christian standards of personal morality. In the name of this morality, they attacked the Left and social movements, notably civil rights and feminism. Areas of symbolic power, such as cultural products, attracted particularly intense criticism. Corporations were major supporters of the growth of right-wing think tanks from the 1970s, as arguments from *Commentary* and other periodicals about a Left elite "using" government grew in appeal. Coors, the Scaife family, and the Hearst Foundation funded antiarts groups (Himmelstein & Zald, 1984, p. 179). "Defund the Left" was on the letterhead of the conservative caucus by the late 1970s. Immediately upon its election, the Reagan Administration's 1981 budget proposed a 50% cut in the NEA's vote. Reagan's faction of the Republican party had long opposed UNESCO in a move that was simultaneously ideological and an instance of real-politik: a belief in the wrong-headedness of state support to culture coalesced with a belief that left-liberal forces were entirely dependent on government funds to do their work, and hence could be destroyed by organizing the Right to get at these reserves. Pressure from a Democrat-dominated Congress saw half the NEA cuts restored that year and again in 1983 (Himmelstein & Zald, 1984). The way was clear, however, should the Republicans gain control of the legislature.

As this ideological buildup developed with the dismantling of the Cold War, aesthetic forms of life were attacked in a manner homologous to assaults on ethnic and sexual minorities. Many such groups had found public representation in the arts, which simultaneously increased their visibility and vulnerability (Yudice, 1990). These minorities were largely opposed to Republican politics.

At the same time as the Republicans geared up to shut down the NEA, there was a gathering philosophical and aesthetic anxiety over the issue of disinterestedness. The idea of supporting art for selfless motives in a sphere cordoned off from profit making or politics was strong (Zolberg, 1996). Whenever cultural organizations appeared to be building themselves as institutions rather than allocating resources to art, or were engaged in social critique, they became vulnerable. In constitutional law, art has generally been regarded, at least since 1952, as a source of social commentary that can be translated into political speech. Protection of free expression is given to it on the basis that art can embody the social criticisms designed to be encouraged by the First Amendment. This disturbs those conservative libertarians who see art as a mystical form of life that beggars communicative norms and rationality. Neither mimetic nor counterfactual, art is claimed as a beneficial "condition for imaginatively living" that, like religion, may subvert the state in the interests of liberty (Hamilton, 1996). But it suits those who maintain that the capacity of art to speak with *truth* and *purity* (and so influence public affairs to the good) is the very reason why it should not be subject to funding from governments. Hamilton (1996) argues that "the inconsequential size of the NEA budget" clouds a "coercion of culture" behind "benign assistance" (p. 116). She claims that "AIDS awareness and multiculturalism" have been favored by the endowment. Such social goals serve to chill original artistic expression, with the result that avant-garde art is subordinated to art that fits policy priorities. The argument follows that governments should not promote speech, but simply permit its free expression, which would logically entail an end to the Government Printing Office, the Congressional Record, campaign financing, and virtually all education (AAA, n.d.-b).

From a slightly different angle, but one that is more agnostic about social amelioration, consider the words of David Boaz, Executive Vice-President of the right-wing think tank the Cato Institute, addressing Delaware's Center for Contemporary Arts in 1995:

There are only two basic ways to organize society: coercively, through government dictates, or voluntarily, through the myriad interactions among individuals and private associations. . . . Because art has power, it deals with basic human truths . . . it must be kept separate from government. . . . Take a typical American taxpayer. She's on her feet eight hours a day selling blue jeans at Wal-Mart. She serves spaghetti twice a week because meat is expensive, and when she can scrape together a little extra she likes to hear Randy Travis or take her daughter to see Mariah Carey. Now what gives us the right to tax her so that lawyers and lobbyists can save a few bucks on Kennedy Center tickets? (Boaz, 1995, p. 541)

Such talk combines common-folk demotics with anti-elitism. It assumes that government has nothing to do with democracy, while consumption has nothing to do with boardrooms; or put another way, that citizens have no power over the state, and that company directors have no power over corporations. Other figures are in control: in the case of the state, shadowy bureaucrats and rent-seeking politicians, in the case of business, sovereign consumers. Some adherents of this argument also claim that the arts and their appreciation are part of individual human capital at both supply and demand ends of the relationship. Arts laborers elect to work in the industry, foregoing accumulation elsewhere, and so are voluntarily offering discounted labor for their nonfinancial benefit. Arts audiences add to their utility through aesthetic improvement; so if they truly value culture, they will pay for it directly rather than through subsidies that burden others. Either way, there is no need for state funds. This human capital argument (Becker, 1993) sometimes merges with libertarian discourses.

Many conservative figures dispute such neoliberal logic: They believe that values are partly instilled through high culture in a process that is not supported by pure market structures. Excellence is beyond the collective grasp of the great unwashed, and the higher calling of the arts will be debased if it is left to the tastes of the American public. The NEA is misguided in seeking to broaden the audience for art and in encouraging politicized topics, but governments are right to fund the maintenance of a civilization's memory (Dworkin, 1985; Himmelstein & Zald, 1984). This thinking follows Friedrich Schiller's dictum that "to please many is bad" and Victor Cousin's "l'art pour l'art." Their anxiety is that the federal arts budget has a perverse multiplier effect, instilling conservatism (in the sense of constraints on artistic innovation) because corporate and foundation buyers look to the NEA's systems of peer review as a guide (Schiller & Cousin quoted in Cargo, 1995, pp. 215-216; see also Benedict, 1991; Hamilton, 1996; Smith & Berman, 1992).

We come now to the 19th-century romanticism of the solitary artists who reject the Old World of Europe in favor of transcendence through a self unfettered by social standing or origin, a potent U.S. myth via the Puritan ethos of self-reliance. The myth can work both ways: It can be antigovernmental and foster nostalgia for individualism, or it can provoke laments for the impoverished intersubjectivity of electronic commodification and governmentality. This line emphasizes the loss of face-to-face community produced by the spread of microelectronic communication. The loss of community is held to be a reason to have a NEA because "live events will begin to seem like some of the few authentic experiences we have. . . . That is really what the Arts Endowment is all about—helping people connect with their families, their culture and their community" (Alexander, 1996, pp. 210-211). This recalls the comments of Representative Frank Thompson, an early NEA advocate, who urged that it was essential to ensure that "our supply of humanists is large enough so that in future years machines remain the servant of mankind, and not vice versa" (quoted in Moen, 1997, p. 186). Consider also another anecdote about arts funding—populist and

mythic like Boaz's story. A few weeks after Boaz braved the arts rentiers, NEA Chair Jane Alexander talked with bourgeois rentiers: the Economic Club of Detroit. Her story is of being escorted through the city by two policemen "since I had such a tight schedule and wanted to see as much as I could."

One of the last places we visited was the Detroit Institute of the Arts which has a fine collection of African and Egyptian art and does significant outreach to the community, and one of the police officers became more and more interested in the collection as we went through it. As we said our goodbyes at the airport, he said, "You got to me today. I'm taking my kids to the Mosaic Youth Theatre tomorrow night. I think they'll really like it, and the Museum, there's a lot there for them! I haven't been there since I was a kid, and it's changed. I can see my face and those of my kids reflected there now." (Alexander, 1996, p. 210)

The anecdote echoes two centuries of government-sponsored cultural elevation and moral improvement, delivering opportunities for citizens to improve their lives (Bennett, 2000 [this issue]).

Today, of course, it is argued that the state has an obligation to maintain the variant identities that compose its citizenry. We currently confront claims that there is such a thing as cultural citizenship (Miller, 1998). Proponents argue that social identity is developed and secured through a cultural context where collective senses of self are more important than individual ones. Rights and responsibilities therefore ought to be determined in accord with cultural membership rather than in terms of the general category of the singular human subject (Fierlbeck, 1996). For some, this flexibility can be achieved through a doctrine of cultural rights. For opponents of cultural rights, however, this flexibility is a by-product of universal access to education, a "primary condition of free and equal citizen participation in public life" (Rorty, 1995, p. 162). The latter oppose public funding to sustain specific cultural norms of familial or religious origin (norms that are often contestable even within the cultures in question). Instead, they emphasize cosmopolitanism: People should be able to learn about their own country's public life and their "global neighbors" without having cultural identity prescribed for them in terms of their culture of origin and in a manner that does not adjudicate between a range of roles and forms of life (as worker, believer, etc.) that they inhabit (Rorty, 1995, p. 164). Such a position is the flip side to the human capital argument in that it is concerned about social practice in the aggregate rather than in the atom.

The cultural rights argument draws heat when it touches on the politics of identity. During the summer 1997 congressional debate, Representative Duncan Hunter offered on the floor of the House the comment that NEA money goes to "aging hippies . . . to desecrate the crucifix." He was referring to 1989 controversies surrounding *Piss Christ* by Andrés Serrano and to a posthumous exhibition of homo- and autoerotic photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe (Bolton, 1992). The resulting debate gave rise to the NEA's Jesse Helms Amendment, which prohibited the endowment from supporting "obscene or indecent materials."

The amendment passed with very few senators present and was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1998 (Moen, 1997; Plagens, 1998).⁴

These conservative voices claim to speak in the name of most Americans. Yet, public opinion is solidly behind some form of relationship between government and the arts. A 1981 poll showed that 26% of Americans said that government should not be involved in the arts, 24% approved participation by local government, 19% expressed support for the states being in on it, and 14% supported involvement from Washington. In both 1980 and 1992, about half the people polled were prepared to pay an extra \$25 in taxes annually to help the arts. In 1990, 76% of the U.S. population thought that the NEA directed money to appropriate organizations, 69% disagreed that it was wasting tax dollars, and 83% felt that it served "a useful purpose for American society" (all this at the height of the so-called culture wars) (Filicko, 1996, pp. 230, 237, 238). There was great controversy about the National Museum of American Art's 1991 display of Western art and the 1994-1995 cancellation of *The Last Act*, an exhibition about World War II in the Pacific Theatre planned for the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum. Taken together, these debates, which raised issues about both taste and heritage, indicate a strong level of popular concern about representations of a unitary heritage now seen as compromised by revisionist history from below and by demographic transformations in American life.

THE CRISIS

The 1994 congressional elections saw Republican takeovers of both Houses for the first time in decades. The Grand Old Party (GOP) swept to power in an antipolitical, antiprofessional wave of reactionary sentiment hailed and codified by the *Contract With America*. Since that time (predictably, given the history outlined above), federal cultural policy has been in crisis, with the GOP voting in the House of Representatives in the summer of 1997 to reduce the NEA's 1998 appropriation to \$10 million, which would be used to close down operations. Representative Armev called on his Republican allies to "vote for freedom, vote for the children, vote for the parents, and vote against elite control of Art in America," and they did (Association for Theatre in Higher Education, n.d.). The score was 217 to 216 to include the endowment in a point of order that wound up agencies that had not been reauthorized. Congress had previously cut the 1996 budget by almost 40%, from \$162.4 million to \$99.5 million, on top of 15 years of declining purchasing power (Alexander, 1996).

Some Republican members of Congress proposed that an amount equivalent to the NEA's 1996 disbursements should go to the states in block grants: \$80 million, 40% to arts agencies and 60% to school districts. At the same time, 28 GOP Congresspeople wrote to then House Speaker Newt Gingrich, indicating their support for the NEA in light of the \$3.4 billion in revenue given back to the federal government by the arts each year in federal taxation. They were also

acknowledging the \$37 billion a year generated by the industry in externalities. The Clinton administration threatened to veto the Interiors Bill, an omnibus supply package that included the NEA's wind-up vote, and the Senate wrote an alternative bill restoring \$100 million to the endowment. The upper house, long more favorable to the NEA, made it safe with an eventual budget of \$98 million, and that figure was retained during the summer 1998 appropriations vote, as many Republicans in the House of Representatives changed their minds (it being an election year). The NEA was supported by 253 votes to 173 votes. It remains to be seen whether this is a temporary, psephological reprieve, or a seriously rethought response to the endowment's promise to cut the New York liberal art scene's hold on 25% of all funds. It was assuredly a major reversal for the Christian Coalition and a source of pleasure to those Republican funders who are patrons of the arts or associated with businesses that thrive on art exhibits and theatrical shows (Seelye, 1998).

During the 1994 campaign, promises were made on the GOP side (quickly borrowed by the executive branch) to balance the federal budget. How was this to be achieved? Once Congress was under its control, the far Right established what were called "Conservative Action Teams," loose groupings of about 60 Congresspeople. The NEA was a purely symbolic target: Despite its perceived multiplier effects, defunding it would not have sufficiently affected the deficit.⁵ The other three aims (abolishing affirmative action, cutting taxes, and balancing the budget) were both substantive and symbolic, involving vast sums of money and immense implications for a diverse workforce (Gee, 1997). Although welfare reform was the principal item for discussion, high-profile minor cuts, such as those to the NEA, were also a priority. Cuts to the endowment represented easy delivery of a Contract With America item, one that posed no threat to the corporate welfare that underwrites companies, which in turn underwrite Republican (and Democrat) electoral expenditure.⁶

We are seeing a coalition at work here between two wings of the Republican party. One is composed of fiscal conservatives who want reductions in public expenditure and regulation. They are barely ideological, more accumulationist. The other wing defines the country's problems in expressly ideological terms. Cutting budgets meets defunding the Left in a way that does not hurt right-wing pork barreling (Himmelstein & Zald, 1984). Virtually since its inception, the endowment has had problems with Republicans and southern Democrats in the House of Representatives, where opposition to government participation in culture matches a desire for expenditure patterns that assist constituents. House conservatives routinely recommend winding up the NEA when Democrats are in the White House (Moen, 1997; for concerns about returns to constituents, see Gilmore, 1993, p. 138). By contrast, Senate Republicans are much more positive about the endowment, recognizing both the multiplier effect and the appeal, for their statewide electorates, of boosterism in federal arts expenditure (Moen, 1997). Sometimes, attempts to cater to this diverse Republican reaction produce their own problems. The recent shift by the NEA away from discipline-based

review panels such as dance to issue areas such as heritage, education, creation, and stabilization (a shift designed to answer charges of revolving-door rent seeking) simply adds to the Right's accusations of cultural engineering.

In 1996, Alexander, then chair of the NEA, spoke of a tripod of arts institutions. The civil society of volunteerism and localism was one leg, a disinterested but concerned business community the second, and committed legislatures the third. With the global waning of governmental solutions to social issues, this civil-society model of philanthropic and corporate underwriting is increasingly popular both in the United States and overseas. This distinctive partnership of the private and the public, driven by tax exemptions and plutocrats in search of cultural capital (Ostrower, 1997), has become internationally revered to the point where it is now proliferating throughout Europe and Latin America. In the case of Latin America, the neoliberal push for reduced governmental expenditure merges with a democratizing influence that associates state-driven cultural engineering with the totalitarian dictatorships of the 1960s-1980s period. The United States is increasingly developing and exporting a notion of corporate citizenship, essentially unaccountable and yet supposedly principled. The most powerful export is the idea that U.S. private philanthropy and corporate support generate at least as much diversity and quality in the arts as taxation revenue does (Zolberg, 1996). Instead of an uplift model in which welfarist doctrines prompted governments to give money to the arts to improve their citizenry, the model is a cultural-industry one. The state underwrites new market infrastructures, such as art fairs, where consumer preferences determine the canon (Ardenne, 1995). But at the same time as this neoliberal/industry policy rapprochement was under way, there were dirigiste pressures as well. The United States saw repeated assaults on migrants, ranging from the denial of benefits to legal residents to crackdowns on employed workers without papers. Meanwhile, Europe saw a renewed nationalism that merged anti-immigration rhetoric on the Right with the Left's call for national cultural policy (Ingram, 1998).

CITIZENSHIP

Traditionally conceived as a means of instilling loyalty in citizens, cultural policy is now thought of by the Left as related to citizen rights, as a means of realizing the aspirations of social movements by translating them into actionable policy. On the Right, culture is subject to privatization pressures. Citizens and consumers continue their uncertain dance in the rhetoric of political philosophy, neoclassical economics, and neoliberal policy mandarinism (Miller, 1993; Zolberg, 1996). The new Democrats and the *New York Times* subscribe to a form of communitarianism, whereas the radical wing of the Republicans and the *Wall Street Journal* adhere to a form of liberalism. On the Right, the division in crude terms is between those who hold that there are responsibilities beyond the self and those who do not. On the Left, citizenship is regarded as a newly

valuable form of entitlement that transcends the category of class and provides protection from the excesses of both the market and state socialism.

Such traditional antinomies have been thrown into confusion, however, by immigration and multiculturalism (Feldblum, 1997). Where Republican doctrines of citizenship figure a subject who throws off prior loyalties in order to become a citizen, or nationals of the same country who put aside social divisions in the common interest, multiculturalism blurs the lines between liberal individualism (part of the transcendence promised by identity politics) and collaborative communitarianism (part of the recognition procedures of identity politics). This new form of citizenship does not locate fealty in the sovereign state nor does it necessarily articulate with democracy, because subjects of the trade in labor lack the access to power of native-born sons and daughters (Preuss, 1998). Liberalism assumes, with neoclassical economics, that people emerge into citizenship fully formed as sovereign individuals with personal preferences. Multiculturalism assumes, with communitarianism, that group loyalties override this notion. But where communitarianism assumes that people find their collective identity through political participation, multiculturalism assumes, with liberalism, that this subjectivity is ordained prior to politics (Shafir, 1998). In this way, U.S. cultural policy has seen a series of debates in which apparently polar opposites—the Republican Right and multicultural arts—seem to be logocentrically interdependent. Each group dismisses traditional aesthetics in favor of a struggle to use art to represent identity and social purpose (Yudice, 1990). Multiculturalism stresses the need for a grassroots and marginal arts activism focused on civil rights and a combination of demographic and artistic representation or representativeness. Conservatism calls for an arts practice that heralds Western values and progress while obeying the dictates of Christian taste.

Orthodox histories of citizenship (cf. Hindess, 1998) postulate it as the Western outcome of “fixed identities, unproblematic nationhood, indivisible sovereignty, ethnic homogeneity, and exclusive citizenship” (Mahmud, 1997, p. 633). This history ignores the fact that theories of citizenship were forged in relation to the imperial and colonial encounters of West and East as a justification of extra-territorial subjugation, followed by incorporation of the periphery into an international system of labor (Mahmud, 1997). These conditions led in turn to cultural policy concerns with language, heritage, and identity, expressed by both metropole and periphery as they exchanged people and cultures. In the postcolonial states of Southeast Asia, the generation of a discourse about Asian values became a distinctive means of policing the populace in the name of an abiding idea of personhood that is in fact a reaction to the growth of capitalism and participation in international cultural exchange (Birch, 1998).

As Honig (1998) has shown, immigrants have long been the limit-case for loyalty, back to Ruth the Moabite in the Bible. Such figures are both perilous for the sovereign state (where does their fealty lie?) and essential (as the only citizens who make a deliberate decision to swear allegiance to an otherwise mythic social contract). In the case of the United States, immigrants are crucial to the

foundational ethos of consent, for they represent alienation from elsewhere and endorsement of the New World. This makes a national culture all the more fraught, for just as memory of what has been lost by choice is strong, so is the necessity to shore up the preference expressed for U.S. norms. In Europe, the creation of supranational citizenship in 1992 problematized the coupling of citizenship with national culture. At the same time that this recognized a new international division of labor, there were equivalent, powerful moves to limit the rights of guest workers. In each case, it is clear that citizenship has ceased to be based on soil, blood, or culture. With the impact of new nationalisms and cross-border affinities and of pressures on the international labour market that no single governmental apparatus can contain, the sovereign state is no longer the key frame of reference for citizenship (Feldblum, 1997). This has had significant effects on those who, like Asian Australians since the 1970s, have been transformed by changing socioeconomic conditions into officially acceptable migrant citizens. For most of the 20th century, excluding and brutalizing Asians had been critical to Australian national identity, so Asian Australians' latter-day take on citizenship is, not surprisingly, instrumental (Ip, Inglis, & Wu, 1997). Of course, many migrant workers around the world are neither citizens nor immigrants. Their identity is quite separate from their domicile and source of sustenance, with equitable treatment guaranteed not by a sovereign state, but through the supranational discourse of human rights and a notion of everyday custom and belief superintending the legal obligations of conventional citizenship (Shafir, 1998).

Activists in these areas frequently turn to cultural policy to assist in the maintenance and development of collective identities and their expression in artistic form. However, the warm, fuzzy Whiggishness of Marshall's (1964) teleology of Western European citizenry (in which the state is an ever-expanding womb of security that progressively grants civic freedoms, political representation, and welfare) is clearly inadequate to the new models derived from U.S. experience and applied across the globe (Shafir, 1998).

In the art world, the new international division of labor and associated racism has meant that the NEA has found it difficult to attract minority applicants for grants, so profound is their alienation from organs of governance, which are seen to police them and service others (Gilmore, 1993). Dominant doctrines of citizenship and the arts have largely ignored such people. The discourse on culture and citizenship has seen a right-wing split between those, like Bill Clinton, who see a small role for government in the arts (to provide for the public what the market cannot), and those who think that all art should be dictated by consumption. The Left sees the arts in a far more transformative way, harking back to the ideals of socialist man as a new being. Somewhere in between resides Hughes (1996), who favors the NEA because it gives a "sense of community with other citizens . . . the creation of mutuality, the passage from feeling into shared meaning." That is a nice sentiment, but it appears to be at odds with much of the art world's allergic reaction to such talk as nationalistic and imperialist (Plagens,

1998). The precise nature of this mission has also varied by genre. Whereas the major U.S. museums, for example, foster blockbuster shows and free admission days as a way of avoiding charges of elitism, NEA-assisted performing organizations have done little for the general public. When classical music orchestras hold free or accessible events, these are cordoned off from the norm and are one-off affairs that do not inflect typical offerings and structures of power (Zolberg, 1996).

The NEA's reaction to such pressures has been to call for citizenship by artists and the public that is about collaborative endeavor outside politics—a renewal of volunteerism that has always been the nation's response to the damage of market capitalism (Larson, 1997). This folksy notion of people muddling through their troubles together, without the powerful forms of expertise, technology, and compulsion available to corporations and governments, is little more than emotionally appealing. In the arts field, its impact is laughable. Money holds art together, and voluntary grassroots associations do not have those resources. Citizenship is the way to go, but not this kind of citizenship.

CONCLUSION

What does the gradual erosion of the NEA portend, and how should citizenship be framed within the associated debates? There has been lower direct corporate support for culture since the end of the art-market boom in the late 1980s and subsequent recessions. In 1991, about 12% of corporate giving went to the arts; in 1994, the proportion was 9.5%. Total donations to the humanities and the arts declined by \$270 million in the 3 years to 1995 (Alexander, 1996; Policy.com, 1997). They can hardly be expected to step into the breach. From the other side, Gingrich was sent a letter from 114 business leaders, including the Xerox Corporation and John Brademas, a Congressional sponsor of the NEA's enabling legislation, stating that "the corporate world is not able to carry the entire burden of the cost of cultural access, awareness and education." As Mulcahy (1997) suggests, without the NEA, state and community arts agencies might increase in importance, but would struggle with the still-unclear outcome of the general devolution of welfare payments to the states. (For example, will the disemployed leave poor states for rich ones once federal assistance is no longer available?). The focus of new art forms on everyday life may be left to the market, as NEA supporters rally around "distant and difficult" art that transcends the quotidian in search of difference and newness (Danto, 1997, p. 6), appealing to an elite.

We will probably see heightened cultural commodification, shrinkage of arts organizations, and a decrease in assistance to minorities unless the growing Black, Hispanic, and Asian middle class funds cultural diversity through philanthropy or corporate giving. Business support will increasingly require product placement: The NEA announced a record-tied grant in 1996 for school arts

education from H.J. Heinz. The trade-off was that Mr. Heinz announced a contest for school children to redesign the firm's ketchup label during class, and Alexander proudly referred to ketchup as "the nation's favorite condiment." During her tenure, the NEA also welcomed and publicized tiny contributions from Grand Marnier and Borders Books—not to the arts, but to the NEA itself—through its new Office for Enterprise Development (Association for Theatre in Higher Education, 1996; Alexander quoted in Winer, 1996). Perhaps we will move to a federal cultural policy that focuses on its own agencies such as the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Institution, and the National Gallery of Art, leaving indirect assistance to its continued subvention of bourgeois taste (Cargo, 1995). Other possibilities include block grants to the states, national grants to large organizations, or merging the NEA with the National Endowment for the Humanities. It is a time of great flux. Renewed American world economic power may be built on cultural export, but domestic policy flails about in that very area.

Does the future of the NEA matter for democratic culture? The NEA has assuredly assisted official, institutional culture, whether at the level of the Metropolitan Museum of Art or local galleries, but its criteria for funding require incorporation, boards of directors, and auditable books. Schedules must be made a year in advance, and a range of nominated communities addressed: "In short, be co-opted or lie" (Schechner, 1996, p. 8). Schechner (1996) suggests that American performance has lost its vibrancy because of such bureaucratization and reportage. ACT UP, the best avant-garde around, gets no money from Philip Morris or the state.

Now we are in the final act of *Death of a Salesman* and Willy is realizing he's been had. It's not just that the NEA is shutting down or redefining itself, it never was that big a deal in the first place. (Schechner, 1996, p. 9)

The relationship of citizenship to culture needs redefinition. To go on as we are would be to permit multicultural and neoconservative forces to push citizenship further into the unaccountable realm of civil society. This is straightforwardly implausible as a means of ensuring a devolved, plural, and equitably distributed public culture. Consider these statistics about the work of U.S. philanthropy. First, 40% of arts money comes from 0.07% of foundations. Second, 1% of arts organizations receive 32% of philanthropic money. Third, 65% of that money goes to just five states (Larson, 1997). The NEA also has a poor record of granting money outside the major arts areas (Rice, 1997). Why? Private agencies are only accountable to civil society—their shareholders and boards of governance decide where money is allocated. For its part, the NEA is caught up in a form of cultural capital that appeals to upholders of Old World norms as superior to U.S. immigrant and popular culture.

This is no way to democratize the arts. It is no way to make expenditure sensitive to the will of the people. Put simply, that will is concretely expressed in

either purchasing (markets) or political preferences (government subvention). The NEA's decision-making panels should be selected from among local politicians, artists' unions, Congress, academics, small popular-culture businesses, and community groups, and these people should decide what happens to foundation funds derived from tax revenue foregone. The largesse of 19th- and 20th-century plutocrats may be liberal or conservative, but under existing arrangements it will never be democratically arrived at or dispersed. I recognize that the notion of transforming the state into a major source of direct cultural funding will not fly in the United States, and that it is increasingly regarded as outmoded in the rest of the developed world, as neoliberal economic ideology rolls back the state from participation in the everyday. We can at least hope, however, for a model of cultural provision that acknowledges ideals of publicness, inscribed in social-movement organization, as a return.

NOTES

1. Thanks to the editors for comments.
2. My favorite instance of this is an occasion when hearings of the House Committee on Education and Labor in 1954 found a New Jersey Democrat anxious lest the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics "picture our citizens as gum-chewing, insensitive, materialistic barbarians" (cited in Kammen, 1996, p. 801). Of course, we should not go overboard in stressing the significance of culture within the State Department. For many years, cultural diplomats were apparently selected from those in the foreign service who suffered from mental illness or severe physical disorders—also a feature of decolonizing powers, such as France, where intellectual enfeeblement and chronic professional failure were qualifications for cultural governance (Ingram, 1998; Wieck, 1992).
3. Nixon might have been happier with covert CIA arts funding, exemplified in Cold War assistance to the Congress for Cultural Freedom, which brought together anti-Communists of every hue to push the value of culture created without state interference.
4. Of course, the numerous sex scandals involving U.S. military personnel these past few years have had no discernible impact on funding in that area. Incidents of rape do not see an end to the military, but a particular artistic representation of consensual sex is imagined by religious mavens, anxious critics, and cultural politicians to threaten the arts community.
5. In 1995, the NEA cost each taxpayer 64¢; in 1996, 38¢ per person. Its budget has never exceeded the amount the Defense Department spends each year on military bands and is currently half that figure (Plagens, 1998; Schechner, 1996). In 1996, Congress approved the purchase of 80 C-17s costing \$300 million each (240 times the annual NEA appropriation) and voted the Pentagon \$7 billion more than it had requested (Alexander, 1996; Hughes, 1996).
6. In addition, the Right's populist side argues that removing the NEA would save the equivalent to the total tax bill for more than 400,000 working-class families (Policy.com, 1997).

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