

Grains of Sand*

If I say that culture is in danger today, if I say that it is threatened by the rule of money and commerce and by a mercenary spirit that takes many forms—audience ratings, market research, pressure from advertisers, sales figures, the best-seller list—it will be said that I am exaggerating.

If I say that politicians, who sign international agreements consigning cultural works to the common fate of interchangeable commodities subject to the same laws that apply to corn, bananas, or citrus fruit, are contributing (without always knowing it) to the abasement of culture and minds, it will be said that I am exaggerating.

If I say that publishers, film producers, critics, distributors, and heads of TV and radio stations, who rush to submit to the law of commercial circulation, that of the pursuit of best-sellers, media stars, and of the production and glorification of success in the short term and at all costs, but also to the law of the circular exchange of worldly favors and concessions—if I say that all of them are collaborating with the imbecile forces of the market and participating in their triumph, it will be said that I am exaggerating.

* This piece first appeared in the French TV listings magazine *Télérama*, 4 October 2000.

And yet . . .

If I recall now that the possibility of stopping this infernal machine in its tracks lies with all those who, having some power over cultural, artistic, and literary matters, can, each in their own place and their own fashion, and to however small an extent, throw their grain of sand into the well-oiled machinery of resigned complicities; and if, lastly, I add that those who have the good fortune to work for *Télérama* (not necessarily in the most eminent or most visible positions) would, by conviction and tradition, be among the best placed to do this, it will be said perhaps, for once, that I am being desperately optimistic.

And yet . . .