

The

ETHICALLY INCOMPLETE

*Intellectual*

concerning the

TRUE RELATION

of ARTISTS and their BETTERS

as UNDERSTOOD by Darren Wershler and SO EMBODIED by RM Vaughan

under the AUSPICES of The Emergency Response Unit

in ACCORDANCE with the wishes of The Scream Literary Festival

*"Artists are channeled like service providers to manage the social." — Toby Miller and George Yúdice*

**Y**OU HAVE TOO MANY JOBS. You are an actor, director, novelist, poet, playwright. You are also a journalist, arts critic, blogger, visual artist, performance artist, restaurant critic, writer in residence, jurist, curator...the list is never complete. Who are you trying to impress?

**YOUR TRUE LOVE IS MIDDLE MANAGEMENT.**

Like many Canadian *artists*, you got the Althusserian phonecall early. As soon as it became clear that you could fill out forms as well as write poems, you became a *bureaucrat* too. It would require concerted effort for a working *artist* or scholar in this country to avoid also being an editor, board member, jury member, commentator and/or consultant for arts bureaucracies at the municipal, provincial and/or federal levels at some point in their career. And yet, culture at large presupposes a neatly divided world, where *artists*, academics, *bureaucrats*, consultants and audience members all stay in their respective cultural cubicles. **YOU NEED A GRANT.** You're a Canadian *artist*, aren't you? You're not sure. Your relationship to the state is ambivalent. You're hyphenated in at least five ways. Something is missing. But you want that grant. And the government wants to give it to you, as soon as it can locate you, recognize you, develop your career path. The name for the thing that wants to find you, to nurture your sense of belonging, is policy. And it works because, in some way, you have been found wanting already. There's a space on the form to explain why, in 500 words or less. **YOU COULD BE A BETTER CITIZEN.** Feel excluded? Okay. Fill out a form. Access the cultural machinery. Claim some resources. You can even use those resources to challenge government policies

and develop an "oppositional critique." Canada's nice that way. The government is happy

to grow with you. At least until your next project. There's another form for that. How much have you grown as an *artist* and a person since your last report? You're not feeling anxious, are you? **YOU'D LIKE TO RESIST, BUT THAT'S BEEN TABLED.** Art's command metaphors are refusal, resistance, opposition. You'd like to see the *bureaucrats* as stodgy, flawed, incomplete, uneducated. But that risks critique without understanding. There's another problem: you're on the jury too, remember? So what about reforming the bureaucracy "from within"? That merely replaces one form of incompleteness with another. Enjoy your symptom; it's the first item on your To Do list. **YOU'RE IN A BIND.** Caught between the cultural trustees and those who validate their individual experience beyond everything else, what can you do? **YOU CAN EMBRACE YOUR ETHICAL INCOMPLETENESS.** Go back to the start, with a difference. Insist that living with culture isn't, and never was, exactly as illustrated. That art is slightly abject, slightly hopeful. That social ideals should start living down to your standards.

That art is not an industry, but a public good. Or, at least, good enough.

**TO LIVE WITHOUT BOOKS**

