

## The Ethically Incomplete Editor

Darren Wershler

“Artists are channeled like service providers to manage the social.”

Miller and Yúdice 20–21

The technologies that govern the publication and circulation of books in Canada have much in common with the technologies that govern the training and working lives of professional and scholarly literary editors. Both are part of a larger set of political technologies called “cultural policy,” which manage the relationships of individual subjects and institutions to the state. The problem is that Canadian literary studies rarely addresses the topic of cultural policy, and when it does, it usually does so within the limits of its own critical canon.

This lack of scrutiny is worrisome for several reasons. Cultural policy orders and regulates the existence of the very objects that Canadian literary scholars typically study: books, magazines, genres, critical and political movements, authors, presses. Further, Canadian literary research is structured in part by those same technologies, to the extent that academic literary research is government-funded and that scholars participate in the daily operations of Canadian literary presses. And further still, the subjectivity of scholars, editors, and writers is structured by cultural policy as well. This set of relationships is of particular interest to me because I’ve been a professional literary editor (full-time and freelance at various moments) as well as a scholar. Like many of my academic colleagues, I continue to edit and design books for a number of literary small presses. This process is far from simple. It involves negotiating not just the differences between the academic and literary economies of production, but also a series of relationships with the state which determine the ongoing worthiness of a given press to receive funding to produce books. By implication, this is also an assessment not just of one’s ongoing worthiness to edit those books, but also of one’s worth as a citizen making contributions to national culture. Yet there’s very

little writing on the subject of how scholar-editors negotiate these complex and conflicted relationships—professionally, economically, personally, or otherwise.

In his writing on power and subjectivity, Michel Foucault argues that “the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state’s institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization linked to the state” (“Subject” 337). Closely studying the way that such individualization operates in Canadian cultural policy would be a crucial step in any attempt to imagine new forms of literary production, let alone new modes of subjectivity. I believe that it’s time for Canadian literary studies to make a disciplinary turn toward critical cultural policy studies on the scale of the turn toward literary theory that occurred in the 1980s (often associated with the work of critics like Eli Mandel, Frank Davey, Barbara Godard, and E.D. Blodgett).

Some of the scholar-editors who were major contributors to the theoretical moment in Canadian literary studies are the same people who began the call for a closer study of the literary aspects of Canadian cultural policy. In “The Critic, Institutional Culture, and Canadian Literature,” Barbara Godard comments to Smaro Kamboureli that the need for academic study of Canadian literary institutions is pressing and persistent (Godard and Kamboureli 33). To date, much of the work on questions of policy has focused on the discourses of feminism and postcolonialism. As Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin point out in *The Empire Writes Back*, this is the case because the precondition for recognizing discourses of exclusivity is a study of national literary traditions and the claims they make (17). One example is Alison Beale and Annette Van Den Bosch’s 1998 collection *Ghosts in the Machine: Women and Cultural Policy in Canada and Australia*. (Because of the strength of Australian cultural policy studies, and similarities between Australian and Canadian cultural policy due to their common colonial past, it’s not surprising to see such a convergence.) Arguments in this volume range from instrumental calls for greater involvement of the private sector in arts funding to a renewed sense of the importance of the public good, but all argue for a greater degree of feminist and anti-racist involvement in cultural policy formation and critique (Fiamengo, 126).

What’s currently missing is an explicit bridge between the analysis of the relations between cultural and economic institutions that feminism and postcolonialism exemplify and the projects of textual and discursive analysis. In his 2003 overview of cultural policy studies, Jim McGuigan argues that political economy–based approaches require some sort of “discursive form of analysis which is properly sensitive to the complexity of symbolic process and the meaning and use of cultural products in specific contexts,” and that merging political-economic analysis and textual and contextual interpretation would be

a laudable project (33). But the complement is also true: literary studies should be interested in political economy and cultural policy to a greater degree than it is currently, because it needs to understand the conditions of its own possibility at a moment when the system that has traditionally sustained it is labouring under new forms of strain.

A handful of essays written over the past two decades, such as Margery Fee's "Canadian Literature and English Studies in the Canadian University," Aritha van Herk's "Publishing and Perishing with No Parachute," Danielle Fuller and DeNel Rehberg Sedo's "A Reading Spectacle for the Nation: The CBC and 'Canada Reads,'" exemplify the sort of work that needs to be done in terms of documenting and critiquing the functions of the institutions that determine what counts as Canadian literature. These authors carefully describe the material and ideological factors that underpin the particular sense of literary value that these institutions promulgate in ways that highlight the value for literary studies of political economy and critical cultural policy theory, and vice versa. But despite the value of these interventions, there still isn't much contact between the worlds of cultural policy studies and literary studies.

As Sophie McCall points out, though, despite frequent invocations of the importance of interdisciplinary work in the contemporary academy, the gap in critical approaches to cultural policy between the humanities and the social scientists may actually be widening (95). McCall bases this observation on the contrast between two critical anthologies published in 2005: Caroline Andrew, Monica Gattinger, M. Sharon Jeannette, and Will Straw's *Accounting for Culture: Thinking Through Cultural Citizenship*, and Chelva Kanaganayakam's *Moveable Margins: The Shifting Spaces of Canadian Literature*. Though McCall sees in Andrew and her colleagues "the potentially reductive imperative to count and itemize cultural difference" (96), her criticism of Kanaganayakam's collection is more pointed, and more apposite for this discussion: "the notion of literature occupying a privileged space outside bureaucracy is also symptomatic of the disciplinary norms in Canadian literary studies whereby critics opportunistically tune out the material constraints within which Canadian culture is produced, packaged, and sold today" (96). But these two modes of analysis need each other very much, because of a particular shell game that governments play with cultural production: "When governments create policy to support funding initiatives, the emphasis is always on 'culture.' Later, when the same bureaucrats design mechanisms of delivery, the emphasis shifts to 'industry'" (Côté 201). Each perspective recognizes something obscure to the other. In an environment where "the Canadian retail book market is shaped by government policy and practice more than any other industry, including banking" (Côté 200), it's incumbent on editors and scholars to consider the conditions of possibility of the spaces they occupy.

Scholars like van Herk, Fuller, Sedo, and McCall, whose object of study is primarily literary but who have a strong sense of the importance of cultural policy issues, can make a difference. Pedagogical shifts are slowly changing the sort of research that students produce. With projects such as *The Book of MPub*, students in the Master of Publishing program at Simon Fraser University are producing original research on the publishing industry and the policy that shapes it. The work coming out of the MPub program is encouraging, but it needs to be articulated to some form of critical analysis to a greater degree than it is at the moment in order to move beyond the instrumental. Recent doctoral dissertations, such as Karis Shearer's "Constructing Canons: Postmodern Cultural Workers and the Canadian Long Poem" (2008) and Owen Percy's "Prize Possession: Literary Awards, the GGs, and the CanLit Nation" (2010), indicate that a shift toward a greater concern with cultural policy is under way, if still a minor tendency.

To recap: The bad news is that even in instances when Canadian literary studies does venture away from literary theory into questions of policy, it rarely considers critical and theoretical work written by scholars outside of its own canon. This is a problem to the extent that without recourse to such writing, literary scholars find themselves in the position of having to reinvent useful concepts and tools that are already available elsewhere. The good news is that there is a growing body of international research into critical cultural policy studies that is extremely pertinent to Canadian literary studies. Some of the primary documents and key essays that would provide a historical groundwork for such study, to which Godard alludes, have been gathered in recent volumes such as Sourayan Mookerjea, Imre Szeman, and Gail Farschou's massive *Canadian Cultural Studies: A Reader*. For a sense of the breadth of this research, Justin Lewis and Toby Miller's *Critical Cultural Policy Studies: A Reader* is a good place to start.

The portion of critical cultural policy studies that I want to focus on for the remainder of this paper has to do with "ethical incompleteness," a key concept that emerges in the work of Toby Miller. He has been developing the notion of ethical incompleteness since its appearance in his first book, *The Well-Tempered Self: Citizenship, Culture, and the Postmodern Subject* (1993), in which he lays the philosophical groundwork for its use. In *Cultural Policy* (with George Yúdice, 2002) and *Critical Cultural Policy Studies: A Reader* (edited with Justin Lewis, 2003), Miller presents a general overview of the role the concept plays in the subjectivity of citizens under liberal democracy. His recent work on the increasing tendency toward substituting the notion of the "creative industries" for "cultural industries" ("Creative" 2008) is edging closer to the subjectivity of Canadian literary and scholarly editors, especially in terms of their relationship

to the state, but it's worth doing some conceptual unpacking before proceeding further.

### ETHICAL INCOMPLETENESS

The overall goal of cultural policy in a contemporary democracy, writes Miller, is “to produce loyal citizens who learn to govern themselves in the interests of the cultural-capitalist polity” (*Well-Tempered* ix). In contemporary democracies, this process of constructing citizens occurs more often through cultural means than it does by main force. As Michel Foucault argues, an intricate set of disciplinary systems provides power over contemporary subjects even as it furnishes them with the power to function effectively and autonomously (*Discipline* 222). This is important because for Miller, the techniques for producing civil subjects are the basis for “the discursive tactics of cultural policy” (*Well-Tempered* 40).

Moreover, “there is a continuity and coincidence between cultural policy and textual analysis” in terms of the techniques of self-scrutiny that they employ (Miller, *Well-Tempered* 95). Kathleen Fitzpatrick concurs, and provides an example from the specific milieu of academic publishing. Just as subjects internalize state discipline through micro-techniques of power, disciplinary techniques of academic editing such as peer review transform state censorship into a system of self-policing, producing “the conditions of possibility for the academic disciplines that it authorizes” (21). As each generation of students replaces the previous generation of professors, the former objects of discipline become its subjects, and the system of values and practices reproduces itself (Fitzpatrick 22). The discourses and techniques that produce Canadian citizens and teach us how to behave are also the low-level components of the institutions (ideological state apparatuses, if you like) that manage Canadian publishing, inside and outside of the academy. Both involve copious editing processes, and neither is ever really finished.

The name Miller gives this unending, apprehensive process of self-examination that defines our relationship to the state is “ethical incompleteness” (*Well-Tempered* xii). A scholar-editor's life is largely defined by this relationship, which consists of endless production of budgets, e-mails, applications, and reports that supplicate various government bodies for the funds to continue operating. Did I complete the copy edits on the manuscripts that go to press this week? Did I sign all of the royalty cheques? Did I file the grant application on time? Did I book the space for next month's book launch? Did I finish cleaning up the raw image scans for the book cover I'm designing? Did I return the latest round of panicked e-mails from our highest-maintenance author? Did I finish writing the bump for the sales force? Did I fix the font-matching problem in the Quark document that I'm trying to output to the platemaker that's crashing

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the PostScript rip? Did I remember about the elementary school that's booked a field trip to the press tomorrow? Did I get the annual reports on our existing grant in on time? Did I write all of those letters of reference? Did I finish reading the slush pile?

Of course not. Get back to work.

Editing is fractal by its very nature, producing more and more versions of texts that can be examined on a bewildering number of levels with increasing degrees of magnitude. As the edits pile up, so do the various administrative and affective tasks necessary to the continued daily operation of a literary press. The more successful the press, the greater the amount of paperwork, especially where the programs that sustain Canadian literary presses are concerned: the Canada Council Block Grant, the Book Publishing Industry Development Program, various provincial and municipal arts council grants. And editors just can't say no to any of it. Not if they want to remain editors.

Dealing with this perceived lack is "self-editing" in a very literal sense. As Miller and McHoul point out, since the writing of Immanuel Kant, it has been far from voluntary:

The ability to draw on moral codes to order conduct becomes a requirement, an endless exercise of competition between desire, practice, individuality, and the collective. Self-determined subjectivity and broader social needs enter an ongoing struggle ... Originally whole, each person's ethical substance is split by the division of labor, when an aesthetically derived sense of full personhood separates from its social equivalent, and only cultivation (the humanities or therapy) can reconcile them. We can trace an entire series of dialectical investigations from this presumption that industrial society alienates human subjects from themselves, stretching from Hegel to Marx and beyond. (130)

The ethically incomplete editor is someone who is working hard to mend the split in his ethical substance by immersing himself in the making of culture itself. But the notion of "culture" has been ambivalent from the beginning. Not only does this mean that resorting to cultural practices as part of an attempt to become a better person or a better citizen is never a pure or easy solution; it also reasserts the very problems one is trying to escape. "With the emergence of capitalism's division of labor," writes Miller, "culture came both to embody instrumentalism and to abjure it, via the industrialization of farming, on the one hand, and the cultivation of individual taste, on the other hand" ("Creative" 89). Culture was industrial and instrumental before it was individual and aesthetic.

Beyond the agricultural origins of the metaphor of culture in its broadest sense, though, publishing and literature have always been part of the project of cultivating better citizens. The dilemma that ethical incompleteness presents is

that, on the one hand, a certain amount of the anxiety it produces is necessary not just for personal growth, but for the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of that nebulous entity we call “the public good.” On the other hand, the degree of politesse that ethical incompleteness instills is the best way of ensuring that none of the basic premises that determine the overall structure of the state, and the way that subjects are interpellated into it, are successfully challenged: “As the spread of literacy and printing saw customs and laws passed on, governed, and adjudicated through the written word, cultural texts supplemented and supplanted physical force as guarantors of authority” (Miller, “Creative” 89). Editing inserts the subject further into the snares of government bureaucracy and further into dilemmas of incompleteness. Yes, Canadian editors help make culture, but they also inevitably evaluate and produce it for the state, acting as cultural gatekeepers, determining what is valuable and what isn’t, and who has access to it. Moreover, they do it for a pittance.

### EDITING AS OUTSOURCING

The results of a 2009 survey on the Editors Association of Canada (EAC) website provide some starting points for an assessment of what actual working conditions are like for an editor in this country.

The survey respondents were overwhelmingly female (88%) university educated (89%) freelancers (85%).<sup>1</sup> A large majority worked from an urban home office (70%) for local clients (67%). Signs of ethical incompleteness start to manifest themselves with statistics about their education; almost all were university educated (89%), but also regularly participated in continuing education (64%) and EAC workshops and seminars (78%).

Regarding the terms of their employment, 66% of the survey’s respondents worked full-time as freelance editors. Only 12% worked exclusively in-house as employees. Another 20% indicated that they worked both in-house and freelance.

There are already warning indicators here that Canadian editors are not particularly well paid for their work. Aritha van Herk bluntly summarizes the situation: “The publishing industry flourishes on the dedication and hard work of mostly economically marginalized people” (“Publishing” 140). Having to work freelance as well as in-house is often an indicator that you need another job to pay for your job. That only 12% of the respondents to the survey worked in-house is perhaps as indicative of who the EAC draws its membership from (freelancers) as anything else, but it does indicate that a tiny fraction of the country’s working editors have even a *chance* of receiving any sort of workplace benefits as part of their employment.

The reported salary range is large: 90% of full-time editors earned between \$20,000 and \$89,000 annually, with 66% earning between \$30,000 and \$70,000. The average income for this group was approximately \$48,500, with at least two weeks' vacation.

It's important to remember that in the case of freelance editors, these salaries would be diminished greatly after taxes and expenses, not to mention niceties like dental, medical, and optical plans, and various forms of insurance. The notion of "at least two weeks' vacation" is freelance code for "no clients."

Being male, I was never a typical editor. But from a personal standpoint, these salaries seem high to me. While I was the Senior Editor (in-house) at Coach House Books (1997–2002), I never made more than \$25,000/year before taxes, with no benefits of any sort. During the period before, during, and after my tenure at Coach House, my freelance editorial and consulting work never brought my annual gross over \$50,000 (and this says nothing of the difficulties in getting paid when you invoice). Anecdotally, almost none of the literary editors I know are EAC members, so I suspect that the high end of the EAC salary range represents people who work in professional publishing (i.e. PR and advertising).

The preponderance of freelance editors over in-house editors points to something else that's worth considering: the role of outsourcing in large publishing companies. Many of the editors who receive a decent salary don't actually do all that much editing. They acquire titles (if they're lucky), and they manage the circulation of their texts through the company, which is more about logistics and bureaucracy than an assertion of one's aesthetics. The freelance population is as large as it is because most of the bigger publishers contract freelancers to do their copy editing and substantive editing. Editing at the professional level, if it is in-house, *is* bureaucracy.

The only exceptions to this situation that I know of are in the literary small presses. There, in exchange for retaining some degree of control over the editing and design of your books, you often have to place your own money on the line to run your publishing company yourself. Creating the conditions in which one has access to the full spectrum of editorial work requires a substantial degree of financial and personal risk in order to even presume to have one's hand on the levers of culture. One good question is how long the vague promises of eventual rewards (the Order of Canada? A civic Arts Award? Literary prizes for your titles?) will be enough to motivate people to continue to try. Another question is whether the mechanisms of sales reporting that digital culture has produced that are ostensibly there to help Canadian publishing might do more harm than good.



### BEFORE AND AFTER THE *ANNUS HORRIBILIS*

A large part of the reason for the perpetual anxiety that characterizes the life of the literary editor is the peculiar structure of the publishing process. Most book retailers don't actually pay publishers for the books they receive for several months (the standard during the period when I was editing was ninety days, though many booksellers of all sizes habitually took longer than that). Furthermore, unlike almost every other form of industry, publishers usually sell books to retailers on a consignment basis. In other words, most books can be returned by the retailer to the publisher for full credit—in some cases, even before the bills have come due. If the publisher has already been paid for the returned books, booksellers subtract credit from the invoice for the next season's titles.

In *The Perilous Trade: Book Publishing in Canada 1946–2006*, Roy MacSkimming notes that in the late 1990s, the industry standard for the proportion of returns on purchased titles was 20–30%, except at Chapters, the largest book retailer the country had ever seen. Their wholesale operation, Pegasus, habitually returned 50–60% of its purchases—and this after demanding a sales discount of more than 50% of the cover cost, which was also unusually high at the time (*Perilous* 365). The result of this system was a sort of shell game where booksellers filled their stores with titles they didn't actually pay for. Publishers had to hope that the books that they thought they sold actually did sell, or they could and would find themselves in a situation where they owed retailers credit for the previous season's returned books, their warehouse and distributors for restocking fees, and their printers for new books that they thought they had the funds to produce.

Referring to Canadian publishing as an “industry” is a polite neoliberal fiction that ignores the fact that the whole system is held together by the duct tape of government grants in the name of the public good. As Marc Côté has observed: “Whether or not reports and studies from UNESCO say otherwise, the simple truth is that this country does not have the necessary population with a common language to sustain a viable industry. Basic economics work against Canada sustaining four hundred companies producing six thousand titles a year in two official languages” (Côté 200). When any one element of this system encounters difficulties, it threatens to bring the whole mess crashing down with it.

This is exactly what happened during the years I was working at Coach House: a near-collapse of the Canadian literary publishing system. The Chapters chain failed due to overexpansion and was acquired by Trilogy Retail Enterprises (owners of Indigo) in 2001, destroying any remaining illusions of competition in Canadian book retailing by merging the two largest book retailers in the country. At the same time, and in part due to its inability to process the massive returns

from Chapters, General Distribution, which managed warehousing and shipping for 62 Canadian publishers and about 140 other publishers, first stopped paying its bills to publishers, then lurched into bankruptcy after a shaky series of refinancing attempts (MacSkimming, *Perilous* 377–78). For these reasons, Aritha van Herk dubbed 2001 Canadian publishing's "*annus horribilis*" (129).

Coach House was one of twenty-five publishers that made it through this period in part due to an emergency bailout from the Book Publishing Industry Development Program (BPDIP). That, and we had just published one of the most successful books of poetry in Canadian history: Christian Bök's *Eunoia*. Alana Wilcox, Jason McBride, and I spent a very hot, sweaty, dirty summer doing all of our own shipping and mailing for *Eunoia* and our other titles, plus fighting with General to get our books and money back, plus all of the "normal" work that editing entails. On the one hand, Coach House very probably survived because of the success of *Eunoia*. On the other, it's teeth-grindingly maddening to think that the supply chain failed at the precise moment of the press's greatest success, because of what we might have accomplished with proper sales and distribution.

Understanding the way that the Canadian publishing industry was restructured after the Chapters/General debacles is necessary for any comprehension of the current, disastrous publishing environment. In response to calls for help from publishers and editors, and with their assistance after extensive consultation and research, the federal government put in place a system that was ostensibly designed to eliminate the problem of excessive returns, but ultimately remade the entire supply chain according to the logic of the Chapters-Indigo and Amazon databases. Ironically, BookNet, the arms-length agency that was established to bring order to chaos by mediating between publishers and retailers, aided and abetted by data supplied by Canadian publishers themselves, made it more difficult and time-consuming than ever before to sell small press literature in Canada. And all of this occurred not despite but *because of* the good intentions and extra work of all parties involved.

By 2001–2, the Canadian government was well aware of the issues plaguing the publishing industry. Canadian Heritage's announcement in 2001 of the launch of its Supply Chain Initiative (SCI) funding program was the result of a process that began in 1999, at the behest of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage (MacLean 20). In 1999–2000, fourteen of the forty-four meetings the Standing Committee held concerned Canadian publishing, with extensive involvement from publishers and industry associations (21). During the same period, the committee also commissioned a group of Library of Parliament researchers and consultants to conduct an extensive background study (27). The SCI was thus part of the government's formal response to the

twenty-five recommendations in the Standing Committee's report, *The Challenge of Change: A Consideration of the Canadian Book Industry* (30–34).

The SCI had three components: a new electronic data interchange (EDI) infrastructure for circulating standardized purchase orders and invoices; a protocol for standardized bibliographic data; and a national infrastructure for collecting, aggregating, and analyzing sales data culled from book retailers' point-of-sale systems and information from the publishers themselves. These modernizations were launched under the assurance that Chapters-Indigo, which now held a near-monopoly on physical book retail in Canada, would be mandating such standards for all suppliers in the near future (Maxwell 330–31). All three of these components were shepherded by BookNet Canada, a not-for-profit arm's-length agency established as part of the SCI.

BookNet is part and parcel of the changes that digital media have brought to the way the Canadian publishing supply chain operates. BookNet now tracks 75% of all Canadian book sales ("About BookNet") and conducts extensive, detailed analyses of bibliographic and sales data.

Scholars and scholarly institutions such as libraries have no access to BookNet's live data but may purchase *The Canadian Book Market* (C\$109.99 for "non-subscriber" individuals, \$399.99 for a company intranet licence). This is a dense collection of charts and graphs pertaining to the top-selling book titles of the year, including information on average weekly sales, peak week, and peak season sales; the market shares of particular publishers and distributors; comparative performance analyses organized by publication date, format, and price; and unit sales by week, median, and average pricing and summary statistics ("The Canadian Book Market").

Where do the raw data behind these statistics come from? It's supplied, voluntarily, by publishers on one end of the supply chain, and retailers on the other. In return for supplying this information, BookNet currently limits the availability of much of its data to subscribing publishers and retailers.

The relationship between literary editors and BookNet is a classic example of ethical incompleteness. Information that editors submit voluntarily (after a substantial amount of work, of course) is processed and handled by the cheerful, competent people at BookNet, who then make it available to the editors who submitted it, so that they can use it to diagnose their own relative successes and failures. However, they also make that information available to other members of the supply chain that editors might not always appreciate having that information, such as wholesalers and literary agents.

The result of the circulation of this information, as Stephen Henighan outlines in *Geist* magazine, is ambiguous at best:

BookNet figures prevent authors from growing: your previous sales become your ceiling. It used to be common practice for writers to “move up” from smaller to bigger presses. Today, BookNet wisdom will decree that the author who has a track record of more than one or two books with literary presses, where sales are generally measured in the hundreds rather than the thousands, will sell only a predetermined number of copies. Chapters-Indigo, which controls more than 70 percent of book sales in Canada, will order only the copies required for a writer at this level of anticipated sales. The result is to render improbable publication of the author by a large press with a longer print run. Each book the author publishes closes down opportunities by confirming, or even reducing, the upper limit of his potential sales. Not surprisingly, agents, too, are now using BookNet figures to decide which manuscripts to represent. (Henighan n.pag.)

Where I'd part company with Henighan is in his implication that BookNet is a causative force in this relationship when it is actually symptomatic of a larger systemic logic. BookNet, or something like it, became necessary a decade ago, when Chapters-Indigo and Amazon began to demand increased efficiencies in the supply chain, requiring publishers to adapt to their database formats and their terms of service. Whatever their rationale, editors and publishers did the requested work.

BookNet is nothing if not well-meaning and well-liked among editors and publishers. Its annual PubFight game, a sort of fantasy sports league for publishers, is eagerly anticipated and receives a high degree of participation from Canadian publishers. Everyone plays along, without stopping to think too hard about how such a game reimagines the making of culture as part and parcel of the ruthless logic of the marketplace. Detailed sales data analysis is both poison and cure. We can't get rid of the former without losing the latter, so we're left in the difficult situation of having to figure out what to do next. Again, the notion of ethical incompleteness is useful here because it gives us a vocabulary to describe a situation where we have no choice but to begin in a compromised position. The question is what happens next.

### **NONE OF THIS WILL BE YOURS**

As Slavoj Žižek has insisted repeatedly over the years, the mode of contemporary ideology is no longer “They do not know what they are doing” but “They know exactly what they are doing, and they are still doing it” (28–29). It is at the precise moment that we believe that ideology has left us a little wiggle room and a little autonomy that it has us most firmly in its grasp (49). In his recent work on the applicability of Actor-Network Theory to Cultural Studies, Tony Bennett concurs, observing that many kinds of resistances operate “on the same level and by the same means as the forms of power they counter” (623). In my

reading, this doesn't mean that the struggle takes place on even terrain; rather, that it's incapable of effecting systemic change.

The current politesse of relationships between scholar-editors and grant officers needs to be redefined. For Miller, the citizen is simply too polite, always operating within the borders of acceptable behaviour (*Well-Tempered* 223). And who could be more polite than a Canadian literary editor? While the protocols of ethical incompleteness may allow individuals to argue for equal rights as citizens, the imbrication of the notion of citizenship with doctrines of nation and economy places hard limits on what it's possible to accomplish under their sway.

The collective desire for greater efficiency in the publishing supply chain initially looked like it would help booksellers; after all, its first manifestation after the General Publishing collapse was in the form of bailout money that was reasonably easy to obtain. But a decade later, after all of the consulting and all of the meetings and all of the reports written by earnest, serious people trying to make things better, the outlook for Canadian small press literary publishing is much, much worse. The concentration of the field of Canadian book retailing in the hands of a few enormous companies continues; as of this writing, Amazon.com has abruptly pulled more than four thousand e-books from its site after trying to force the Independent Publisher's Group (IPG) to sell to them at a cheaper price. The change in terms Amazon demanded would see publishers and authors lose nearly another 10% of revenue to the retailer on both print and e-books, in the United States and Canada (Streitfield n.pag.). Those titles include books that I have written, and, if you're reading this, likely books that you have written as well. While the revenues that I stand to lose personally are tiny, the effect on my publishers is much greater. And I'd rather have a country where it's still possible for institutions like literary small presses to continue to exist.

Writers, editors, and publishers of small press literature in Canada need to find a way of proceeding that isn't mired in melancholy and nostalgia. The production and analysis of detailed sales data isn't going to go away, nor are the pressures on editors to continue to do more with less going to subside. Every new, potentially helpful development in the world of digital publishing will also have its downside. The current excitement around the efficacy of crowdfunding tools like Kickstarter and Indiegogo for the subvention of avant-garde publishing projects such as Caroline Bergvall, Laynie Brown, Teresa Carmody, and Vanessa Place's anthology *I'll Drown My Book: Conceptual Writing by Women*, for example, has the spectre of neoliberal funding cuts lurking behind it. In the face of *I'll Drown My Book's* success—180 backers contributed a total of \$8,904 when the project only required \$4,000 to proceed (Les Figues Press)—an arts-hostile bureaucrat might reason as follows: if a direct appeal to the market can fund such things, then why do we need a Canada Council publishing program at all? Faced with such dilemmas, we need to imagine what it might be like

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to be editors who are also, improbably, both policy wonks and shit-disturbers. Otherwise, to paraphrase Will Self, one day none of this will be yours (21).