

demanded by the interpellation-isolations that the neoliberal capitalist knowledge market/machinery attempts to perform upon us.

Works Cited

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Witnessing the Growth of a Collective Animal

SEBASTIAN SAMUR

I write the account below as a future member of CUPE 3902. Though the University of Toronto strike did not affect me directly, its indirect effects for me were real and omnipresent. My classes were moved off campus in support of the strike and the growing rallies in which I occasionally participated sent a message that was loud and clear. It was fascinating to watch the growth of the strike movement in spring 2015, and though its conclusion left one with mixed feelings, it also left many reasons for optimism in the future.

I remember an early student's union meeting that addressed the likelihood of a strike. Many potential scenarios were discussed, and while the strike appeared likely to occur, it seemed as though it would only last a few days. The grievances expressed were relatively subdued, and the possible outcomes presented, from best to worst case, were not very encouraging. The weight and urgency of the situation had not set in, as students weren't particularly optimistic and heavy thoughts about the months ahead were either absent or held privately.

This all changed when the strike was called, albeit gradually. Given the time that had passed since the last strike in January 2000, there was a huge learning curve as the collective animal the strike movement would become learned to walk on its legs. What does it mean to strike and how do you do it effectively? The first days were marked by trial-and-error experimentation, as well as the continued belief that it would not last long. As a non-member of the union, I only saw brief glimpses through email and social media of what was taking place. Focus was fragmented with the uncertainty of what was beginning to unfold. It takes group coordination to make the animal move.

A week or so into the strike, two things became clear. First, the strike would likely last longer than anticipated. Second, and more importantly, came the realisation that individual problems relating to graduate life were anything but individual. As students between departments and faculties collaborated, it became clear there was a common struggle. Eased by its gradual erosion, many had learned to privately accept exacerbating difficulties, and subsequently forgot their gravity and ubiquity. But the strike served as a catalyst, leading to a growth spurt in the political animal. Suddenly focus became more united, outreach increased, and collective work creating songs, signs and puppets accelerated. As students stood side-by-side, leading to a number of rallies at Queen's Park, the

size of the animal became increasingly evident, serving to strengthen everyone performing within it.

In the final weeks of the strike, the complexity of the creature began to emerge. Differences in priorities and desired outcomes hampered the collective performance, eventually leading to unsatisfactory binding arbitration. It's not easy to unite thousands of people in opposition to a few in power. Division is the animal's greatest weakness, but it must be overcome as the shared objectives far outweigh the relatively minor differences.

The animal lies dormant now, but very much alive. In two years' time, it may wake up again. This time I'll be a part of it, contributing another body to the collective performance. The animal will continue to evolve, but not from infancy. The animal has grown, it has strength, and it has learned.



“How’s Work?” Tackling the Issues of Academic Labour One Scholar at a Time

SUSANNE SHAWYER

“How’s work?” I ask the theatre scholar who hesitates in front of my table. She surveys the cue cards arranged before me, each one filled with question prompts created by the American Society for Theatre Research’s Working Conditions Task Force with the goal of gathering information on the current reality of academic labour. We’ve set up a booth in a hotel hallway in Dallas at the annual ASTR conference, hoping to encourage organization members to address questions of working conditions, graduate training, and the academic marketplace. I’ve volunteered over six hours of my conference time to engage in dialogue about these issues with theatre artists, graduate students, and performance scholars from across North America and around the globe.

“You probably don’t want to hear from me,” the scholar hedges, “I’m not tenured.” I hear a similar response all weekend—“You probably don’t want to hear from me, I’m a graduate student . . . a full professor . . . I work in Canada . . . I like my job . . . My job isn’t typical.” Many conference attendees assume that, despite growing concerns among faculty and their professional organizations about an increasingly competitive job market, stagnant academic salaries, rising numbers of contingent faculty, and escalating service demands on fulltime faculty, their opinions on these issues are not valued. And despite the Task Force’s efforts to create a welcoming environment, most people who approach the table hesitate. The institutional feel of the academic conference—the chilly and soulless hotel rooms, the gendered and class-based tensions of professional dress codes, the occasional scholarly posturing—makes it initially difficult to engage in personal and open discussion.

Once assured that their opinions are needed and valued, however, the floodgates open. Participants speak passionately and forcefully. Some cry. Times are tough. Research funding is decreasing or non-existent. Graduate students are not getting jobs in the academy, and their scholarly faculty are not trained to help them prepare for non-academic employment.