

St Leonard's College magazine
2018



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Editors' Note

When we applied for the Editor's position of the *St Leonard's College Magazine*, each of us offered – separately, without knowing the other person, nor her intentions – to re-imagine the magazine, both visually and in terms of content. We met for the first time in late winter, as the pensions dispute was unraveling. Having jointly grappled to understand what it meant for us and to work out our role in it made us envision the magazine as a platform in which issues such as this can be debated, discussed, laid bare. A platform, in other words, where different elements of postgraduate life – issues, concerns, and ideas that may touch many of us but that do not always reach the glossy pages of postgraduate prospectuses – can be openly set out.

We also wanted to connect intimate personal experiences – mental health issues, taking a leave of absence, participating in the UCU strikes, the stress of a Masters programme, the anxieties triggered by doing a PhD – with broader political issues, like the marketisation of higher education, the shifting role of universities in public life, and the subsequent shift of attitudes towards getting a degree. We hoped to show that a postgraduate degree is never solely a pursuit of scholarly knowledge; that it is not insular, however disconnected from the rest of the world St Andrews may seem. Rather, we wanted to expose the many aspects of the postgraduate experience, to bring to light the activism, creativity, endurance, imagination, and vibrancy of the St Andrews postgraduate community.

The pages of this – revitalised – edition of the *St Leonard's College Magazine* begin to capture the diversity of voices and experiences that make up our community. We hope that in the years to come, as we move beyond St Andrews and the editorial roles are taken up by our successors, the magazine will continue to serve and celebrate this diversity.

We could not be more grateful for having spent the spring semester and this unusually warm summer working together on this magazine: to Monique MacKenzie, Brett Dodgson, and Andy Murphy for giving us this opportunity and trusting our judgement enough to give us the freedom that we had to reimagine the magazine; and to Leo Mewse and Lesley Lind of the Print & Design Unit for helping to materialise the print copies.

Finally, we could easily have spent this whole letter expressing gratitude to each other, but writing this note jointly makes it difficult. We learnt a lot, from each other and together, through working on this magazine, and we anticipate with joy holding the printed copies in our hands. We hope you will read it likewise: with joy, curiosity, and interest.

Enyseh Teimory and Olga Loza

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All the writers featured in this magazine are current or graduating postgraduates of the University of St Andrews. All opinions expressed herein are those of the authors themselves.

St Leonard's College

St Leonard's Doctoral and Postgraduate College is at the heart of the postgraduate community of St Andrews. All postgraduates – Masters students and doctoral students – are members of the College, which was founded in 1512 as a college for poor clerks of the Church of St Andrews.

The role of St Leonard's College is to:

promote the interest of postgraduates across the University and champion the development of postgraduate education and research;

foster a vibrant and intellectually stimulating postgraduate community and provide opportunities for postgraduates to come together and make new connections;

work with partners across the University to support the effectiveness of services and support for postgraduates;

foster interdisciplinary postgraduate education and scholarship through the Graduate School for Interdisciplinary Studies;

St Leonard's College also works closely with the Postgraduate Society, which organises a range of events specifically for postgraduates, including formal dinners and balls, pub nights and bonfires on the beach, traditional ceilidhs, and day trips around Scotland.

The head of St Leonard's College retains the historic title of Provost. The current Provost of St Leonard's College is Dr Monique MacKenzie.



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Ilina Vându

Provost of the St Leonard's College

We ask Dr Monique MacKenzie, the recently appointed Provost of St Leonard's College, three brief questions about her role and what she hopes to achieve in it.

Olga and Enyseh: Can you tell us about your role as the Provost of St Leonard's College: what it entails and what you hope to achieve in it? What motivated you to apply?

Monique: I was appointed as Assistant Vice-Principal (Provost) at the start of this academic year. Formerly I was Deputy Director of the Graduate School, and in that role I had worked with the previous Provost (Andy Murphy) so I had some idea of what the Provost post would involve when I applied. However, since taking up the post, it feels like my remit has already been expanded as the University sharpens its focus on the postgraduate student experience. To be perfectly honest, I wasn't sure I was senior enough to be considered for this role. I don't think the Provost role has ever been filled by someone who is not (yet) a professor – in my academic life I am a senior lecturer in the School of Mathematics & Statistics. But when I set that aside and read the role description in detail, the post felt like a good fit for me and one where I could make a real contribution to the University. I think I'm an enthusiastic builder by nature (luck!) and I see the Provost role as an opportunity to create a better experience for our postgraduates as part of St Leonard's College.

OE: Throughout this year, we had many conversations with postgraduate students about a lack of a postgraduate community here in St Andrews. Do you think this is a problem? Does St Leonard's College have a role in addressing it?

M: I think it's true that postgraduates at St Andrews do not always feel that they are part of a broader postgraduate community. Postgraduates often identify very closely with their School, but even though there are opportunities to connect with postgraduates from other Schools – for example, at Orientation or through the training programmes run by CAPOD – they may not see themselves as belonging to a University-wide postgraduate community.

All universities need to think carefully about the experience for postgraduate students. In many ways it's much easier for undergraduates to connect with each other and feel part of their community due to the very nature of their study programmes – undergraduates come together as part of regular scheduled classes and interact closely as part of any group work. In contrast, postgraduate study is necessarily more independent which means that a conscious effort is needed to attract students out of their offices and laboratories by creating attractive opportunities for students to take a break from their research and mix socially with their peers.

I am very keen to make St Leonard's College a more meaningful part of the postgraduate experience at St Andrews. I think that through working with colleagues such as CAPOD, the Careers Service, and the University Library we can create a stronger sense of institutional belonging as well as improve the services and support that we offer postgraduates. One of the first things I am trying to do is provide more opportunities for postgraduates to come together and make new academic and social connections with each other. We are planning regular doctoral coffee mornings as well as pizza socials, drinks receptions, and research and training events to facilitate postgraduate networking.

Employability for our postgraduates is also on my mind and I am working with the new Director of the Careers Centre on this issue. In the first instance this means we will be reviewing the training we offer postgraduates in this area and reaching out to dedicated industry and government bodies (such as the Business Gateway). In the medium term this means linking more students with external placements and paid traineeships both locally and abroad. I think that here too, St Leonard's College could play a role in creating a greater sense of postgraduate belonging as well as providing opportunities for personal and professional development.

In terms of interdisciplinary working, my “other” job is Director of the Graduate School for Interdisciplinary Studies. The Graduate School is the University's newest academic School and has been established to foster interdisciplinary postgraduate education and scholarship. The Graduate School provides a mechanism to design and deliver new interdisciplinary Masters degree programmes and to understand and respond to the specific needs of interdisciplinary students. We are already looking at how we can apply what we are learning through the Graduate School to the ways we support interdisciplinary postgraduates more broadly.

OE: Mental health is a big issue for the postgraduate community, in St Andrews and beyond. Why do you think this is the case? What can the University and St Leonard's College do to support postgraduate students?

M: The mental health of all students is high on the agenda at St Andrews and the University has specialist staff dedicated to postgraduates and their mental health. It is important that postgraduates know that there is support available if they experience mental health or wellbeing difficulties and that they are encouraged to make use of this support if they need it. Messages about mental health and wellbeing and support services are part of our orientation for new postgraduates and are also promoted through the St Leonard's College website and social media channels.

I am working closely with Student Services staff (who I have the upmost respect for) looking at how we can equip academic staff to support postgraduates with mental health issues. We are also planning a workshop on that topic as part of an upcoming away day for School Directors of Postgraduate Research.

Postgraduate Society

 facebook.com/pgsoc
 pgpres@st-andrews.ac.uk

All matriculated postgraduate students, both research and taught, are automatically members of the University's Postgraduate (PG) Society. The Society serves to enhance post-graduates' experience at University through representing them and their interests within the University and the Students' Association, as well as by providing a range of social events throughout the year.

Events that we organise offer an opportunity to take a break from academic work, meet fellow postgraduates, and try something new. We strive to make sure there is something for everyone, and our events range from bonfires on the beach, to black tie balls, collaborations with sports societies, and monthly bus trips to some of Scotland's most beautiful places. The Society also works closely with St Leonard's College to host two formal dinners and a range of smaller, informal receptions.

The PG Society committee is made up of three Officers: President, Academic Convenor, and Development Officer – elected in the University-wide elections that take place every March. These officers represent you within the Students' Association governance bodies. We also have two Events Convenors, who plan and organise the majority of our events; a Ball Convenor, who organises our summer and winter balls; a dedicated St Leonard's College Liaison Officer, who works closely with the Provost and the director of the Graduate School; a Publicity Officer, a Treasurer, a Secretary, and two Members Without Portfolio. Some of these roles were filled during the spring elections, but plenty are still open: drop us an email if you are interested or have any questions!

The Society is a great opportunity for postgraduates to get involved with the University. We would encourage you to come along to one of our events or our weekly committee meetings (5-6pm in the Meeting Room on the first floor of the Union), which are open to all postgraduate students, regardless of whether you are part of the committee. We look forward to seeing you!

Postgraduate President

Cameron Rice
Second Year PhD, Chemistry

My name is Cameron Rice and I am the Postgraduate Society President for 2018-19. Over the coming ten months it will be my role to oversee the operations of the PG Society and to help ensure that postgraduate student life in St Andrews is as great as it can be.

As President, my primary role is to make postgraduates at the University feel welcome and included. I will do this by chairing the weekly PG Society committee meetings and overseeing the planning and execution of our events. I will also be the main point of contact between the University and the postgraduate students, representing your views and concerns in the Student Services Council (SSC). Every week, I will keep you up to date with University news and various events – PG Society and otherwise – through the Monday Postgraduate newsletter.

Please feel free to contact me at any time by emailing pgpres@st-andrews.ac.uk, messaging us on social media, or – best of all – coming to one of our events!

Academic Convenor

Ashley Clayton
Second Year PhD, Pure Mathematics

My name is Ashley Clayton, and I'm the Postgraduate Academic Convenor for 2018-19, as well as a second year PhD student studying Pure Mathematics. Prior to running for the role, I had been a course representative for a number of years, and wanted to use my experience working with my School to hopefully help and represent the wider postgraduate community here at St Andrews.

The crux of my role is to liaise with students and staff regarding all things that fall under the umbrella of postgraduate academic experience. I chair the Postgraduate Executive Committees for both taught students and research students, and I am also a member of a plethora of other University councils and committees, including the Learning and Teaching Committee, the Academic Council, Postgraduate Research Committee, and the Academic Monitoring Group. On a day-to-day basis, I will work to gather feedback about their academic life from as wide a pool of postgraduate students as possible, and relay their concerns and praises to the appropriate University committees. I will then work with those committees to address the issues and ensure best-practice approach is in place. Working with the PG Society, I will have a chance to engage with a more social side of my role, helping to organise academic fairs and events such as research getaways.

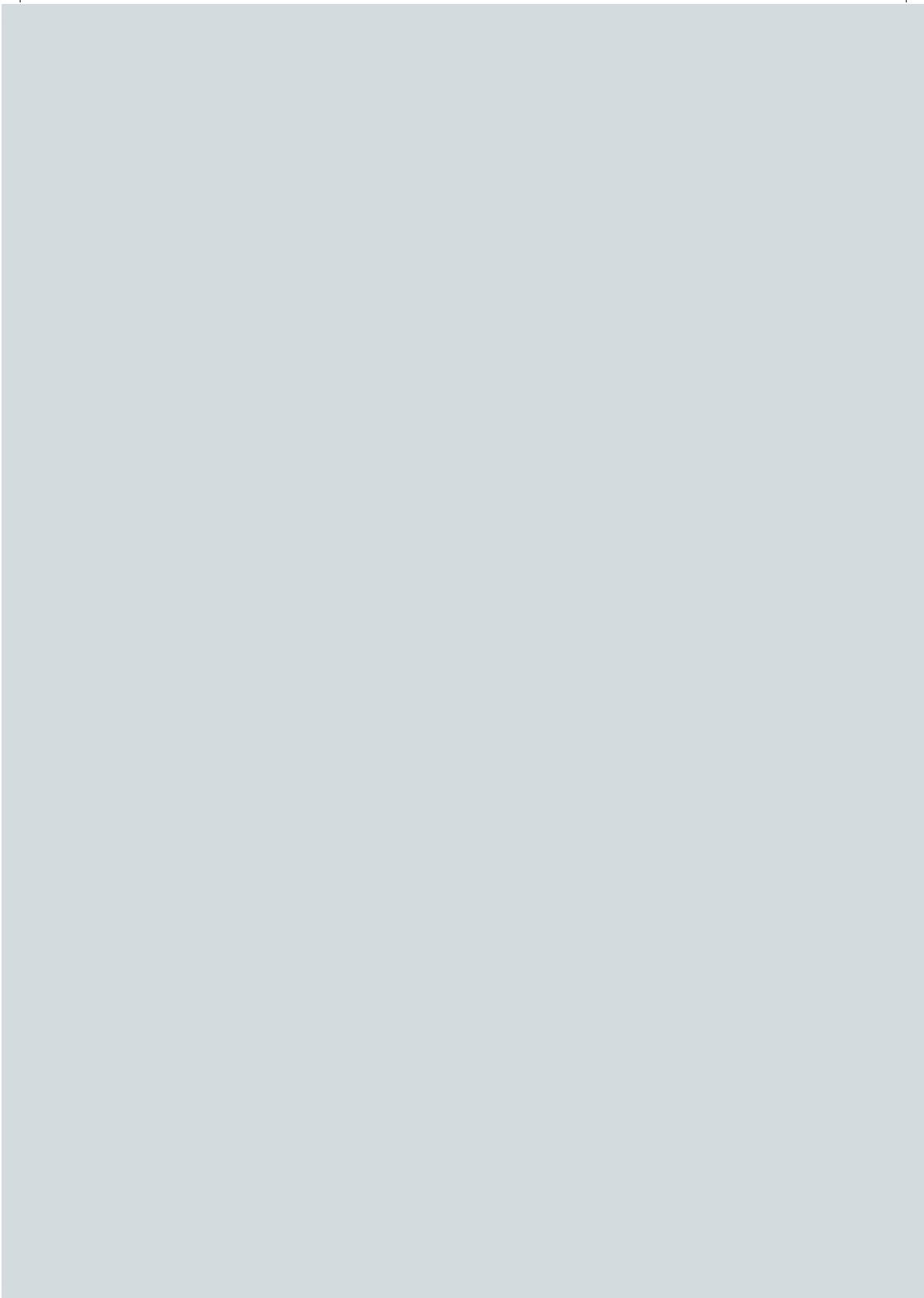
My main aims for this year is to continue the excellent dialogue that has been established between postgraduate representatives and the University. In particular, addressing a concern raised by last year's cohort of postgraduates, I will be looking to improve the induction process for both taught and research postgraduate students, making sure a much more fruitful and structured induction is provided by the PG Society and the University, especially when it comes to pre-sessional training and social opportunities. I will also be looking to improve the ongoing communication between PG representatives and the students they represent. Finally, I of course aim to have a lot of fun in the role and enjoy the year ahead; it's a privilege and honour to hold it, and I hope I can do my best to serve the community well.

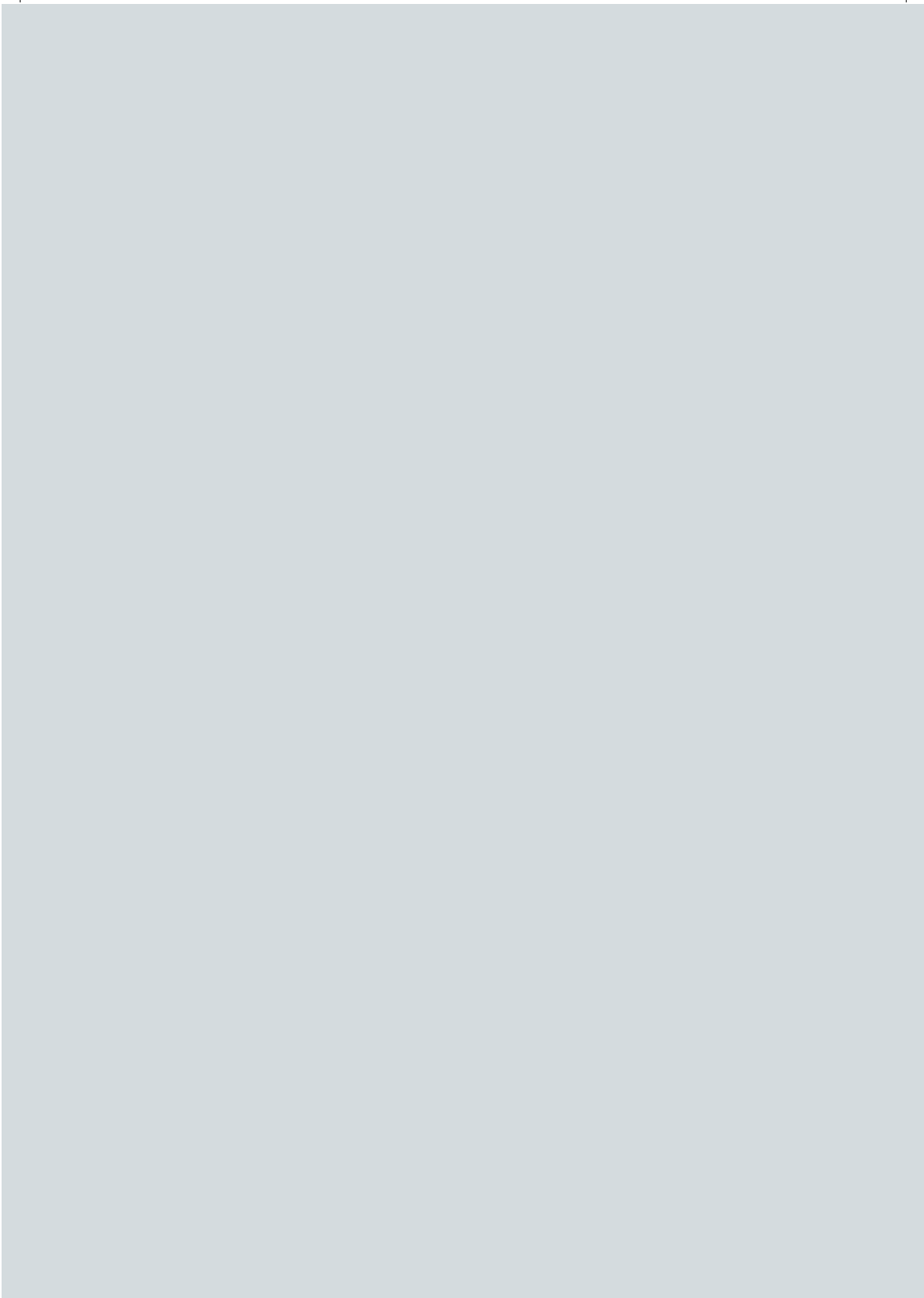
Development Officer

Courtney Aitken
Second Year PhD, Psychology & Neuroscience

My name is Courtney Aitken and my role as Postgraduate Development Officer entails representing postgraduates' non-academic concerns. I will chair monthly meetings with staff from across the University, including CAPOD, Careers, Student Services, the Students' Association, Chaplaincy, and Registry, where we will discuss various projects across the University that seek to improve the postgraduate experience. If you would like to bring something – related to your (non-academic) experience here at St Andrews – to the attention of staff at the University, you can contact me and I will raise the issue with the relevant University stakeholders. I also sit on the Student Representative Council (SRC), a legally recognised body for student representation at St Andrews, which works to ensure the University supports students and ensures they get the best possible experience. The SRC can also bring pressure on the University to take a stance on current political and ethical issues important to students.

I did my undergraduate degree here in St Andrews, and during those years I devoted a lot of time to student wellbeing support and mental health activism. In my role as the PG Development Officer I can continue this advocacy work, extending it to encompass postgraduate students. Completing a postgraduate degree can at times be an arduous experience, but there are a lot of people you can turn to for support, and I am happy to be working to extend this support to all who might need it. St Andrews is a wonderful place with a lively postgraduate community and I hope you have a great time here as you begin your postgraduate degrees.





More Than Politics

The Knowledge Economy

A PhD student's reflections on how the
marketisation of higher education in the
UK affects the PhD experience.

This February, the UK saw the largest higher education strike in its history. Staff members across over 60 universities took part in the industrial action organised by the Universities and Colleges Union in an attempt to halt drastic pension cuts. But beside the urgent resistance to the dramatic and harmful revision of the pension scheme for academic and support higher education workers, the strike also reflected a wider – and more elusive – struggle unravelling within higher education institutions and the political space around them. It revealed the burden of increasing marketisation of higher education on both students and staff, as well as those occupying the (ambiguous and uncertain) middle ground: namely, PhD students.

Writing in the *London Review of Books* in 2013, Stefan Collini warned that “deep changes in the structure and dominant attitude of contemporary market democracies are everywhere putting pressure on the values that have sustained the ideals of public higher education.” In higher education, an unmistakable part of the ‘deep changes’ Collini evokes is the increasing reliance by successive UK governments on neoliberal principles in the provision and management of higher education. Neoliberalism, as Stephen Metcalf wrote in the *Guardian*, “is a name for a premise that, quietly, has come to regulate all we practise and believe: that competition is the only legitimate organising principle for human activity.” Introduced by Margaret Thatcher’s government in the 1980s, the neoliberal doctrine brought the cold logics of economic rationality and market competition to bear on all of society.

This meant a radical change in ethos for higher education institutions: where previously higher education was seen to serve a social purpose – pursuing and disseminating knowledge – it now became commodified as a marketable product. As a result, universities must now regard each other as competitors and vie for the attention of prospective students in order to secure economic profits. Students pursue higher education as consumers, seeking out a product that will offer the greatest returns on investment (money, time, effort). Reflecting this logic, and in a pointed nod to neoliberal economics, a 2016 government white paper declared: “Competition between providers in any market incentivises

them to raise their game, offering consumers a greater choice of more innovative and better-quality products at a lower cost. Higher education is no exception.”

The narrative of marketisation is easily identifiable in the strategies the government pursues in the higher education sector. The Research Excellence Framework (REF) and its sister, the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), are obvious examples. These frameworks assess and rank the quality of research outputs and the quality of teaching, respectively; these rankings then influences the allocation of funding and the setting of tuition fees. Unsurprisingly, the REF criteria – demonstrable economic and social impact of research – have been widely criticised for disadvantaging research in arts and humanities and for encouraging research with potential commercial applications. The TEF has attracted similar criticism. With its focus on “employment and earnings returns to education,” as the then Education Secretary Jo Johnson put it in a 2015 speech, the students’ post-degree earnings become the measure of the teachers’ success. This “disastrously overlooks the fact that graduate earnings and employability tell us more about students’ socio-economic background, not the quality of teaching at universities,” write the activists behind the *Warwick for Free Education* blog. The TEF further entrenches the notion that students are consumers of education whose goal is purely to maximise their future economic returns. Multiple league tables that compare the students’ post-degree earnings across subjects and universities

only reinforce this idea of the student-as-consumer in the public imagination.

In a way, these changes make sense. Students should be at the heart of the university experience. Higher education institutions are multi-billion-pound enterprises and, with the ever-increasing tuition fees, students are justified in expecting to be satisfied with the education they receive. The more students pay, the more they feel entitled to demand ‘value for money’, and this ultimately results in a shift of power from education providers (universities and other higher education institutions) to education consumers (students). As a result, universities – if they want to survive in the competitive market for higher education – must adapt to the students’ growing demands.

Often, this occurs at the expense of the security and quality of life of the university staff. Marketisation of higher education has been accompanied by the proliferation of casual contracts for teaching and research staff. To protect their bottom lines, universities increasingly rely on ‘casual’ workers, whose labour is much cheaper in the short term than permanent employment contracts. ‘Casual work’ is a rather hazy legal term, but it normally denotes work contracts that are short-term, often zero-hours, and paid by the hour. As those with casual contracts are officially designated as ‘workers’, they have fewer employment rights than ‘employees’, who hold permanent contracts. Casual contracts are now the dominant form of employment for academics in higher education institutions.

The impact of these ‘casual’ contracts on academics is well-documented, and overwhelmingly negative. A 2015 UCU study found that around a third of staff on casual contracts in higher education (including those in postgraduate teaching positions) struggled to pay rent, mortgages, and bills, and 17% had trouble affording food. Another study suggested that “the contemporary academy appears to be suffused with anxiety,” and linked this anxiety to the pressures of working on casual contracts. These findings seem even more grotesque in light of the recent media revelations of the extortionate payrolls of Vice-Chancellors in some universities.

For PhD students, marketisation – and the casualisation of academic work that it begets – spells out one thing: precarity. We are hybrid beings, awkwardly combining the roles of the educated and the educators. We’re being educated in the sense that we are still learning, yet we also take on teaching duties, from facilitating tutorials and lab demonstrations, to marking coursework and delivering occasional lectures. This can be a substantial time investment when research is already our full-time occupation, but many of us simply can’t afford to not do it. And yet almost without exception, our teaching work is based on casual working contracts, which means we often don’t know in advance how much time we will be asked to commit, how many hours of work we will be allocated. While we are told that this work allows us flexibility and independence to get on with our research, the long-term effects of our precarious employment cannot be ignored.

Casualisation has had adverse effects on PhD students' mental health. A recent study interviewed PhD students in Belgium and found that almost a half of respondents experienced psychological distress, while around a third were at risk of developing a common psychiatric disorder like depression. High job demands and low job control – typically associated with casual work contracts – were associated with poorer mental health outcomes. Another study found that PhD students were twice as likely to develop a psychiatric condition as full-time employees. While there are many pressures on PhD students that may result in these adverse mental health outcomes, it is not unlikely – based on my own experience as a PhD student – that the insecurity associated with casual work contracts further complicates an already difficult situation.

But casual work and the insecurity that it breeds looks set to continue long into our academic career, as permanent positions available post-PhD are few and far between. Moreover, casual work is increasingly treated like a given, unchallenged even by those working in higher education. I was struck by the cynicism of a recent article in *University Affairs* that purported to offer advice on overcoming challenges during a PhD. Not only did the author – a career coach focusing on academic careers – rather bluntly acknowledge that “precarity is the staple of our professional culture” and that academia was the “testing ground” for the gig economy. She also suggested that we, the precariously employed PhD students, should just get on with it, and went on to offer “strategies” for “successfully” naviga-

ting this precarious landscape. This widespread attitude of resignation to the poor working conditions we find ourselves in – conditions that undermine both our health and our economic security – undermines attempts to resist the pressures of marketisation and casualisation; instead of organising to defend our rights as workers, we choose to simply “get on with it.”

But I strongly believe that PhD students should not have to rely on casual working contracts to make ends meet. Treating universities and other higher education institutions as competitive businesses, rather than providers of public goods and services, is an unacceptable and unsustainable practice with devastating outcomes for academia overall, and especially for PhD students and early career researchers. Instead of accepting, without questioning, the neoliberal dogma dictated by the government, the academy, including PhD students, needs to come together and decide if we are going to accept this new normal. After all, our job as academics is to question, analyse, and challenge the status quo, to explore new and alternative ways of doing things, and to demand change where we sense injustice.

Discovering
the Power of
Collective
Action

A Call to Action

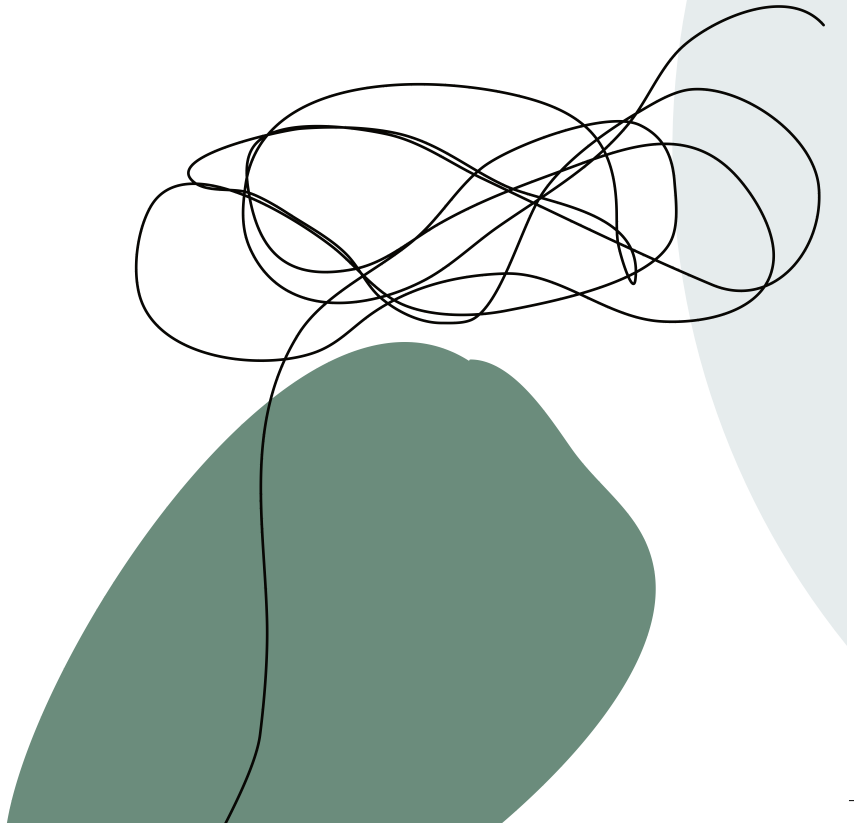
In late February, when the pension dispute unravelled, I was not at all clear about what exactly was going on. The first week of strike action caught me unawares. The pull of the routine of my academic work was strong enough to let me easily disengage from the strike action. I knew next to nothing about the pensions dispute – its dynamics seemed opaque, cloaked as it was in dense and dry financial language – or the reasons for strike action; I thought that I was far removed from those issues, that they in no way concerned me. Of course, I wanted to support the striking staff as the injustice of the pension cut felt almost visceral: the staff who work so hard to make our education a reality were being denied due recognition and respect. And yet I felt that it wasn't my fight, that I – as a PhD student – had no stake in this dispute, and that, therefore, my participation could not be meaningful.

Within that first week of strikes, as PhD students at other universities started to voice very similar concerns, I realised I was far from alone in feeling that way. We grappled, collectively, with powerful and often conflicting emotions, demands, and arguments. Alice Chadwick, a PhD student from the University of Bath, wrote in *Huffington Post*: “I wasn't sure about how as a student and teacher this strike related to my experience. I was not sure how people in my position fitted into this conversation.” She articulated a concern familiar to many doctoral students: we often see ourselves as outsiders, not yet quite fully integrated members of the academic community, suspended precariously somewhere in between being a student and a member of staff.

The more I read about the pensions dispute, and the more I talked to people on the picket lines, the more it transpired that in fact it was my future, and the future of similarly positioned (aspiring) academics at the very beginning of their careers that was at stake in the dispute. We would stand to lose as much, if not more, than those already holding permanent positions in higher education institutions, those for whom pensions are a real, tangible – not merely hypothetical and potential – issue. We have already come to accept the lack of security in our early careers, the need to work on casual, zero-hours contracts, to be flexible geographically and temporally; if the pension scheme changes initially proposed by the UUK were implemented, we would have had to also accept the prospect of no security in retirement – something that traditionally has been a safety cushion for public sector workers.

This was a powerful jolt to action for me. I remember my first day at the picket lines: the cold, harsh wind, clutching thermoses filled with tea, sharing home baking; an occasional dog wagging its tail and begging for cake offcuts; the bitter jokes exchanged; the tired, slumped shoulders; the silences that hung in the air as our thoughts drifted, the questions that none could answer, the doubt in our eyes. And yet, despite this, the camaraderie – the sense that we stood there together, united, that each of us fought for the other’s future. These things have been written about countless times, but I still have to catch my breath when I think about those days and weeks, and the incredible solidarity and support that brought us all out into the cold day after day, as uncertain and conflicted as we were.

A moment that I return to again and again: one of the striking professors turning to me and my friend, also a PhD student, and saying, solemnly: “If we don’t negotiate our pensions back, you finish your PhD and look for jobs elsewhere.” This, from someone who inspired me to go into academia in the first place and whose work I admire, was, without exaggeration, heart-breaking. From then on, I knew with more clarity than ever before why I was there: I stood for the future in which I get (a chance) to have a career in the field that I love and that inspires me every day.



When Enyseh and I discussed our vision of the new direction for the *St Leonard's College Magazine*, making it more relevant politically was a significant – if not crucial – aspect of it. We wanted to relate current social, political, and economic pressures to the St Andrews postgraduate community; a community that can often feel insular, cut off from the wider world. This project would be incomplete if we didn't talk about the strikes that took place in the beginning of this year, and the pension dispute that gave rise to the industrial action. But the issue is fraught and contested, entangled not only in webs of contradictory arguments, but also in powerful and conflicting emotional responses.

The sequential, orderly account included in this magazine is the outcome of hours of research and countless conversations with both striking members of staff and those who did not support strike action. As is always the case with public discussions on matters we hold dear and care about, the USS pension dispute and the resulting strike action easily divide opinion. In providing this outline I have tried to follow the facts, hoping it will be useful to anyone who might likewise look for clarity in the mass of heated and polarised opinions that continue to surround the topic. Still, it is steeped – as necessarily it must be – in my own visceral, emotional, and intellectual perception of, and response to, the events that unfolded in late winter and early spring of 2018.

Olga Loza

USS, UCU, UUK: What Is It All About? An Overview

The pensions dispute – which came into the public view last winter – revolves around the University Superannuation Scheme (USS), the corporate trustee created in 1974 and responsible for the management and administration of the pension scheme for academic and academic-related staff in 350 universities and other higher education and associated institutions. (Staff at the institutions established after 1992 are members of the Teachers’ Pension Scheme and were unaffected by this dispute.) In the summer of 2017, the USS announced that the pension scheme was at risk due to a deficit of £17.5bn: a £9bn increase since the previous year, allegedly caused by the fact that the rise in its retirement liabilities outpaced the growth of its assets. John Ralfe, an independent pension consultant, told the Financial Times in July 2017 that to ‘fix’ the USS deficit, universities would either have to raise student fees or divert money from teaching. Alternatively, he suggested, academics would have to contribute more to their retirement or have

future pensions diluted – a bureaucrats’ shorthand for smaller retirement income or increased pressure on often already strained earnings of academic and support staff.

USS consulted Universities UK (UUK), the representative organisation for the UK’s universities (qua employers) to which USS is accountable (and of which our Principal, Sally Mapstone, is a member). UUK drew on the alleged deficit in the existing pension scheme to justify its plans to transform the pension scheme from one with a guaranteed retirement income based on the employee’s pay and length of service (the so-called ‘defined benefit’ scheme) to a ‘defined contribution’ scheme. As *The Economist* explains, under the latter, an employee’s pension eventually depends “on the investment performance of the fund that the employee has paid into – and he takes the risk of poor investment performance.” (In contrast, under the defined benefit scheme, it is the employer who bears the risk.) The University and College Union (UCU) – which represents academics, lecturers, trainers, instructors, researchers, managers, administrators, computer staff, librarians and postgraduates in universities, colleges, prisons, adult education and training organisations across the UK – largely rejected the proposed changes as they would cause retirement income to fall significantly.

31 March 2017

USS announces
£17.5bn deficit

17 November 2017

UCU urges members
to reject proposed
pension scheme
changes

13 November 2017

UUK reveals plans to
transform the pension
scheme

22 January 2018

UCU votes in support
of industrial action

Beyond that, UCU also challenged the veracity of the USS valuation and argued the alleged deficit might be an ‘accounting artefact’. Academics like Sean Wallis suggested that the new pension scheme proposal is “the result of the misrepresentation of USS finances, and the desire of a new breed of university managements to cut their pension liabilities and thereby ease the financing of new buildings and campuses.”

The Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) talks, the formal process that brought together UUK and UCU to negotiate the future of the scheme, resulted in the committee chair siding with the UUK proposal; in January, members of UCU across 61 universities – St Andrews among them – voted in support of industrial action to prevent pension changes. Further talks between UUK and UCU did not result in an agreement, and strike action began on 22 February 2018.

An escalating wave of strikes entailed a five-day walkout either side of the weekend of 24–25 February. Four days of strikes followed in the bitterly cold week starting Monday 5 March, and a full five-day walkout in the following week, with the last day of strikes falling on Friday 16 March.

Strike action entailed working to contract and refusing to cover classes or to reschedule those lost to strikes.

Staff members did not take the decision to strike lightly. Most, in fact all, of the people I spoke with on the picket lines talked about strike action as the last measure and the last resort. They grappled with the guilt they felt for disrupting the learning process, but they also were acutely aware of how taking part in the strikes may jeopardise their own careers. This is true with respect to the long-term perspective: for example, because academics might fail to meet deadlines for grant and funding applications due to strike action – as Ian Gent of the University’s School of Computer Science wrote in an article aptly titled ‘The £5 million pound grant I’m not writing today’. But taking part in strike action also threatens the workers’ immediate employment and remuneration; a reality of which more junior and more precariously employed members of staff are especially aware. The University HR communications suggest not only that strike action is penalised by deducting 1/365th of normal pay for each day of action, but also action short of strike. In addition, 100% of pay may be deducted if lecturers do not reschedule teaching missed due to strikes.

22 February 2018

Strike action begins

12 March 2018

UUK’s first provisional proposal

13 March 2018

UCU votes to reject UUK’s proposal

16 March 2018

Strike action ends

For younger, precariously employed academics, who are often still grappling with student debt, these deductions to their pay are profoundly impactful.

The dialogue between the striking staff and the University was further complicated after the letter from Principal Mapstone to all academic staff (dated 20 February), where she outlined the University's commitment to equality and diversity, and some of the programmes she put into place (including improved promotions procedures, mentoring scheme for mid-career and senior academic women, running a professorial merit exercise, and opening a nursery for the children of staff and students). She went on to suggest that: "Were the UCU proposal to have been adopted, few of these kinds of proposals would go on being practicable." The email seemed to suggest that if the pensions dispute was resolved in line with the UCU proposal, the University would address the resulting (alleged) budget deficit by withdrawing its support for inclusivity and diversity research and policies.

Whether truly a threat, or just a 'crass' and 'badly written' attempt to induce guilt in the striking staff, as Ian Gent suggested, it was alarming. A petition for the University to

retract the threat to withdraw support for equality and diversity within the academic workplace gathered over 3,000 signatures, and on the morning of 5 March Principal Mapstone circulated a letter to staff at the University in which she indicated that action short of strike would no longer result in 100% pay deductions, as well as reinstated her commitment to equality, diversity, and fairness, stating the following: "I have spent my entire career working for diversity, equality, and access. I would never set up a 'trade' between employer pensions contributions and employees' workplace rights. What I wanted to do was be honest and open with you."

As Isabel Davis of the Birkbeck University of London wrote, while this letter was undeniably a step forward, it was still grounded in the assumption that equality and diversity, as well as the financial security of the staff are costs, rather than benefits: "There is still an assumption that in a post-USS-strike world, in which UCU proposals are adopted, that schemes to support women and others at work will be competing with other priorities for investment."

23 March 2018

UUK's second proposal

13 April 2018

UCU votes to accept UUK's latest proposal

18 May 2018

Joanne Segars OBE selected to chair the JEP

25 May 2018

JEP members confirmed

7 June 2018

JEP starts its work (first meeting)

In early March, UCU and UUK began talks to negotiate a solution to the dispute with the help of the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS). Though delayed by the UUK's slow response to the UCU proposals, the talks resulted, on Monday 12 March, in a provisional agreement, which entailed a transitional, three-year, benefit arrangement taking effect from 1 April 2019 and requiring both employers and staff members to pay higher contributions, as well as convening an independent expert group to examine the USS valuation methodology and assumptions. Though ostensibly a step forward, the proposal was overwhelmingly rejected by the UCU members as ultimately it was deemed to allow the long-term erosion of pensions and to lack safeguards for the striking staff.

Strikes continued. On 23 March, UUK sent a new proposal to UCU: it guaranteed maintenance of the status quo in respect of both contributions into USS and current pension benefits, until at least April 2019, and required the creation of a Joint Expert Panel (JEP) consisting of actuarial and academic experts "to agree key principles to underpin the future joint approach of UUK and UCU to the valuation of the USS fund." The proposal further suggested that "Recognising that staff highly value Defined Benefit provision, the work of the group will reflect the clear wish of staff to have a guaranteed pension comparable with

current provision whilst meeting the affordability challenges for all parties, within the current regulatory framework."

Finally, on 13 April, the results of the UCU vote on whether to accept or reject the latest UUK proposal were announced. In a record turnout for a national ballot, UCU members voted to accept the UUK proposals. Following the selection of Joanne Segars OBE, a widely respected figure in the pensions community, as the Chair of the JEP to examine the valuation of the USS, and the confirmation of the JEP members, in late May, by both UCU and UUK (each side has put forward three experts), the JEP started its work this June.

Although the creation of the JEP is a momentous milestone in the resolution of the pensions dispute, it also displaces it away from the public consciousness. Now that the expert committee took charge, there is a danger that the open, public dialogue about the issues that the dispute and the strikes brought to the fore – including the marketisation of higher education, the erosion of public-spiritedness, the precariousness of academic careers – might just wane. That we will feel distanced and disengaged from those questions. That we will again struggle to have our voices heard and our opinions represented. But I remain hopeful that this will not happen, as the events of this spring demonstrated the strength, determination, and unity of university workers in pursuing fairness and defending their rights.

Springs

The wave tips, disturbed by the wind,
froth and hiss and rumble
from the lip, of collecting swells,
blue now burned white on the seas face.

And ripping through them
against the breeze, but bows swung up
to the gathering gale, a small boat.
And though pressed over now,
the call comes
sail –
sail –
set the –

This wind!?! How – What –
That tears words and loosens them
out –
out there –

Its digging in now,
the lee rail to the frothed sea
for finally, up
dragged up, the topsail
breaks from its brails
and burst like a drum
in the wind and the wind hits it.
Hoisted, hits it.
Hoisted, because its spring tides,
rounding Lizard point and the Manacles
lurk awash at low water.

The crew, ensign in tatters,
stand on the weather deck,
stand, stand watch
on the small boat.
Waiting, for the breaking
ebb, on spring tides.

Helen Mary Denning

Imperfect Action

The first day of strike action sticks in my mind, not for its heated display of university politics, but for the alarming absence of it. After the morning picket gatherings had disbanded, walking through town, passing the library, you would have been forgiven for thinking it was any other day. Having studied at a London university with a politically active student body, I had expected to see banners waving, students with megaphones, accompanied with chants and colourful flares. I saw early on that things would be different at St Andrews.

On the surface, facts surrounding the dispute that drove UCU to undertake industrial action seemed obscure and impenetrable. Although undoubtedly complex and controversial, it was not impossible to grasp basic facts if you knew where to look. The heated debate that I had expected to spill on to the streets of our quaint and quiet St Andrews, was instead largely contained to Twitter. After taking time to find and follow the most prominent Twittering voices, I was astounded by the breadth of discussion, detailed analysis and engagement that spanned threads and overtook many academics' feeds. I, like many I'm sure, knew of the political capacity of the platform, however it was the first time I came to realise the necessity and dependency upon those threads in order for a full picture of events to emerge. Official channels, from the UCU and UUK were of course handy in understanding official statements, however with each new press release the lack of objectivity became increasingly clear. While unsurprising, and not automatically problematic, I began to feel that the lack of clear, concise and unbiased information contributed to the general apathy of apparent 'neutral' observers for an issue fraught with complexities and politicised biases.

As a student on a one-year MLitt programme, my initial response wavered on ambivalence. On one hand, I knew I had a limited time of study that would be irrevocably impacted by strikes. On the other, I understood the need for action and the impasse that had been reached at the negotiating table. Amongst many of my classmates and fellow Masters' students, I observed widespread indifference and dissonance with the cause, undoubtedly compounded by the lack of easily accessible information. I heard talk of fees that should be reimbursed, essays deadlines that would be impacted, contact hours lost. And little sympathy towards the notion that this fallout was inevitable, indeed necessary, in order for the action to have impact. It raised the question of the very nature of the debate, and whether our short-term concerns could compare



Jessica Platt

to widespread, long-term concerns that underpinned much of the dispute.

While I tried to accept the continued indifference many of my peers showed, my own ambivalence turned to concerted support for the striking staff. However, this did not mean I suddenly occupied every picket I could. Although I attended lectures run by the 'Alternative University of St Andrews', lectures given by striking staff in non-university buildings, ashamedly I rarely braved the cold to stand shoulder to shoulder with those on strike. Instead, while I admired their efforts from a distance and refused to cross the picket-lines, I worked from home and attempted to share Twitter information and factual updates via the news column of a student magazine. Did I feel I didn't belong there? That I was too far removed at that stage from the consequences of the dispute? I started to wonder whether it was the lack of overt action by students that made it hard for me and others to step forward and show support. Of course there were those who stood up with banners, supported staff with warm drinks and smiles at the picket-line, but how many more were, like me, refraining from open participation? Throughout, I have been an imperfect supporter, but I hope that by informing others, by refusing to cross the picket-lines, at the very least I did not allow passivity to undermine the important and dedicated action of staff at St Andrews and beyond. Because the fight did, and continues to, concern me, as it is a fight that affects all of us and the very future of the universities we cherish.

During the course of the strikes, it became clear to me that the dispute was not only about a serious administrative and practical concern for university staff, but about the very nature of the academy and the future of higher education. If you were inclined, as I had been, to trawl Twitter for hours, you came to see a picture of a move towards an unsustainable university system. A system in which academic and financial welfare of staff and students is being put in jeopardy by a trajectory of marketisation. However, more importantly, I began to see the personal toll such a work environment was taking, and the fundamental conflict for many striking staff, who knew their push to protest an ever more unjust work environment in the hopes of safeguarding the future of our universities, was negatively impacting the very students they were fighting for.

There are people behind the politics, always, there are forces beyond the black and white pages of articles. As students, we are encouraged to look beyond the surface of everything we see. When daily pressures mount, this can of course be hard to do. But Olga's article is an important place to start. As enthralling as it is, it also provides the very necessary tempered overview of a complex, heated, and sometimes confounding dispute. Whether you are a new or returning student, I hope it serves as a vital launch-pad for an awareness of the institutional politics that might seem unrelated to your daily academic worries, but touch each and every one of us, and will for generations to come.

Enyseh Teimory

The problem of pensions is personal. Its effects are not limited to our academic staff. You threaten the education of each one of your students when you hurt their educators. By undermining your teachers' retirements, you threaten their sense of safety, their livelihoods, their ability to focus on their work and the amount of mental space they have for their students. Student relationships with teachers are strained, not for the fault of teachers, but because the management of St Andrews doesn't wholeheartedly take care of their employees. St Andrews may be a registered charity, but its teachers are not volunteers. This is not a race to the bottom. A win for our educators is a win for all educators. Let's set a precedent here and now.

Your students are speaking from the a place of fear and uncertainty. We are afraid that everything we have been committed to here at Ft Andrews has been a show for profit, that our values are not taken seriously, and that the management does not truly believe in our intellect. We are unsure of the future of academia. For many of us who think of teaching or researching at universities, seeing the emotional stress you are putting your teachers through these past few weeks shakes our beliefs in any sort of real support from the university. We are tired from these strikes, emotionally and physically. Disruption is not what we came for, but still, our teachers have more of our trust and loyalty than the management does.

addressed to the University leadership and read at a pro-strike rally in March 2018

Finding Mental Health on Campus

A brief extract from a long conversation with Anaïs Gurun, an advocate for student wellbeing and mental health support.

In January, while undertaking a Masters in Psychology, Anaïs decided to take a leave of absence. We sat down to talk about our experiences of mental health issues: from battling depression and anxiety, to managing shame and disappointment, and the importance of finding small things that can bring us joy, even in darkness.

Enysch: Anaïs, I know you're currently taking a leave of absence. Can you tell me a little more about coming to that decision?

Anaïs: I wasn't sure if I was actually going to mention it or if I was going to say I'm just a Psychology Masters student. I'm actually on a leave of absence because I have anxiety, and I've had depression in the past. I began to feel a bit isolated so I went to my supervisor and said: "Look, it's not the right course for me."

E: You took a very healthy decision to take a leave of absence. Is that from experience of self-care, or were there people that helped you? In my experience, when personal and academic factors begin to negatively affect me, although I see patterns of behaviour developing – like missing class or asking for extensions, or being unable to balance work and social life – recognising the need to take a step back can be quite difficult.

A: Deciding to leave took a toll. But I think you need to be able to recognise what's beneficial for you, and the key word really is 'health': knowing what your limits are, and knowing what you want to achieve. And saying no when a path that you've taken is not right for you.

I've been calling myself a 'drop-out' but that's the stigma around taking a leave of absence. Some people don't realise that it is for your benefit, for your own self-care. But I did feel like I was throwing away an amazing opportunity and my privileged position came into the picture. I realised that although it's a choice I'm making, it's not a lazy decision.

I have not had support from my family, my uncles still think that I'm doing my Masters, some of them think I'm doing a PhD. That's a whole cultural issue, being from an intercultural family. My family in France have taken it really well, but it's been difficult with my mum and my sisters. I haven't spoken to one of my sisters for two years now. However, my supervisor has been very supportive; he's aware of mental health issues, he's been accessible and open throughout. I think if more faculty members were like that, people – students – would be more open about the issues they're facing.

E: That's something I wanted to ask. Do you think your supervisor's response is unique, specific to being a member of the Psychology department? As the only person on my course, in a small department, there were times when I have felt isolated, in terms of accessing both academic and psychological support. It also feels as though in the UK universities, although the dialogue about mental health and wellbeing is slowly becoming more open, a lot of the solutions remain superficial. Like giving out free coffee and doughnuts late at night in the library: it seems to me to be a non-fix that actually encourages unhealthy behaviour.

I have sought help in the past for depression and anxiety, yet it's always very easy to *not* get help. Do you think the University has good services to support students? Or was the support you received very dependent on your personal circumstances, like your supervisor?

A: You have to reach out and go out of your way, people are not going to check up on you to see how you're doing. You have to seek support, of course, but there is a good counselling service here. I think you can book an appointment online and there is a wait of about a week, which is better than SOAS, for example, where I did my undergraduate degree. I think the waiting list there was about two to three weeks. Which of course comes down to funding.

At St Andrews there are more resources, but there is also a lot of pressure on the University. In the end, my supervisor was the last person I went to, after I had already made the decision to leave. I went to Student Services, I saw the postgraduate advisor, Accommodation Services, meeting two or three different people along my 'leave' journey – and they've all been incredibly helpful. For example, the postgrad advisor told me about open work opportunities in St Andrews. It's been a much more positive experience than the one I encountered as an undergraduate.

E: In what sense? As in the people that are part of the institutional support?

A: Yes, all of them. Not just counselling services, but across accommodation, financial services. For example, I had been in university accommodation, with a contract that would have expired in the summer, but I explained my academic and financial situation after my decision and they understood completely. I had two check ups, because I felt myself spiralling.

Battling the darkness can be hard when you're also living in literal darkness in winter, leaving the house early, in the dark, getting home in the afternoon or evening, in the dark. Then I dropped out. Wow, see – I keep using that phrase, 'dropped out'!

E: Hearing you repeat it makes me think about how we internalise so much of the stigma that we are afraid of. We talk so often about the external expression of social stigma, but it's also so hard to overcome from within. And from what you've said, St Andrews offers a supportive and caring environment once you've sought help. But I guess what I'm interested in is the step before that: when students are struggling but maybe can't bring themselves to get the help they need, for whatever reason. In my experience, it's so easy to dissuade yourself, to find an excuse to not get help.

A: That's why I created the mental health society at SOAS, in order to build a community around shared concerns. I founded it with two other students, and all of us were dealing with our own issues. Doing this work, I realised how many students were struggling and not willing to seek help as a result of that guilt, that feeling associated with the idea of failure, of not being good enough, not being able to cope as an adult.

And again, this idea of privilege, not being able to talk about suffering because you're so fortunate to have an opportunity, whether it's studying here in St Andrews or living in London. I knew I couldn't talk to my mum about those things because, having struggled to come from Nigeria, in her eyes and in the eyes of her family, going to uni was a huge achievement.

Of course, the diversity of racial, religious and cultural backgrounds makes it even harder to provide help. Going to an official counselling service that will document your attendance is not something a lot of people want, so they don't go – and they go under the radar. Lecturers, tutors, they can't really help as they themselves are under immense pressure to perform, fighting for their own pay and working conditions. Often they have no training to deal with mental health issues – which means they cannot recognise any of the early warning signs. I think there is just one university that I know where they've trained over 400 non-academic staff, such as cleaners and caterers, to recognise the early signs of mental health issues, say for students who are constantly working too late.

If lecturers and tutors were trained to recognise those early signs in their students, to approach these issues when they notice low attendance or low participation in class, perhaps things would start to change.

E: So rather than a system that seemingly automatically penalises you for such issues, creating one that can reach out to you, and which exists throughout the entire higher education establishment? As in, in the current system policy and practice seem to place all of the onus on the individual when it comes to mental health, rarely taking into account the structural forces that contribute to so many students' suffering. What do we do, what can universities do? Is it dependent upon access to more informal services?

A: I know for a fact that the only help I received was after I had come forward and I had a formal diagnosis. It needs to be written in black and white before they'll help you.

E: And you have to have the obligatory doctor's note.

A: Exactly. Each of which cost me between £15 and £30. I had to get about four notes during my undergraduate degree and that's why I launched the mitigating circumstances fund at SOAS. Once the fund was launched, the number of people that emailed the society saying: "I've paid £40, £20, can I get help?" was so overwhelming that I ended up using the entire budget just for that.

My only worry is that then people will feel forced to come forward with their conditions. Which, clearly, as we've said, is part of the process of getting the help you need. But what if you're not diagnosed? What if you don't want to be diagnosed, what about the stigma that surrounds the diagnosis itself? Many people don't want that on their record.

E: It's funny you say that because that's very much what my experience was like. It took place in a very privileged scenario in which I have never had to pay for a doctor's note because I had a private therapist, but in which I had to take every route to avoid having an official record of my illness. And in addition there's the constant reliving of the trauma: every time you fill in an application, or have to state exam re-sits, or even when handing in mitigating circumstances forms. It can take a toll.

Coping with periods of depression, I have often relied on the support of friends, family, therapists, hoping they would give me the spark that I was missing. I came to see this as a multi-layered net that would catch me from falling too far, but the most important impulse for bouncing back had to come from within me. That's why I loved the article you wrote about the neurological benefits of dancing. Is that what you found to be a mechanism that can bring you out of dark places?

A: I think what helped me to identify the things I needed to do for myself was getting Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. An important component of it was identifying what brings me joy. Maybe the simplest thing ever, but in our increasingly individualistic society, that means finding such joy on your own. I've always been creative, enjoyed the arts, and I'd wanted to start swing dance for a long time. I remember watching black and white videos of swing dancers and thinking to myself: "I'm going to do that." It took me more than two years to take the steps to do it because I was really shy and I couldn't face going to a class. Finally I got the courage to go to one and absolutely loved it; those classes became a little beacon of hope for me, a lifeline. Coming to St Andrews and joining the Swing Dancing Society here, I don't think they even know how much they've helped me. I didn't only make friends for life, but I found a second family.

I'm a very shy person, I used to have terrible social anxiety; at one time I couldn't leave my house for months because of it. But over the years I've worked on it, I began to overcome it and started to teach dance and to perform – which really helped me build confidence.

Sometimes it can feel like we're not encouraged to find what we're good at. I know so many postgrads who have never thought of joining a society because they think it adds nothing to their CV. Focus is on academic achievement and sports, but what about all the small things in between? Swing dancing may be a little niche, but it brought me so much joy.

Enyseh Teimory in conversation with Anaïs Gurun



Olga Loza

Leave of Absence

Reflections on making
the difficult decision to
take a leave of absence.

Taking a leave of absence from my PhD was one of the hardest decisions I have had to make in my life. In the months leading up to it, I had experienced a relentless series of emotional and physical setbacks that significantly decreased my ability to work. This January, my grandfather passed away and I took two weeks off to attend the funeral and spend time with my family. I thought I could (and should) continue to work on my PhD, despite the lingering sadness and many family commitments. But by the time I returned to St Andrews, I was worn out physically and emotionally. My body couldn't resist the onslaught of the wretched flu that had affected so many this year; I was bedridden for weeks, seemingly not improving. When I have finally made it to the hospital, I found out I was suffering from critical asthma that had been triggered by the flu and the severe weather conditions. At that point, I would have three or four asthma attacks every day; I could barely endure the fifteen-minute walk to get into town from my apartment. My constant coughing and unpredictable asthma attacks

meant I wasn't getting enough sleep, waking up in the night to reach for an inhaler. Violent coughing exacerbated chronic injuries in my abdomen and back. I was in pain almost constantly, every day. With the winds unleashed by the 'Beast from the East' I had no chance of recovering. I was absolutely worn out. By then, I'd spent nearly two months mostly in the confines of my house. I felt isolated from my peers and friends, and my social life was quasi non-existent, apart from a handful of close friends who supported me during this tough time.

When put this way, it's easy to see how much I needed a break. But when I was in the thick of things, I still had hope that "surely next week" everything would clear up and I would be able to seriously refocus on my PhD work.

And so I obstinately continued preparing for my end-of-year review. I was perpetually stressed, feeling that I was falling behind and would not be able to demonstrate my abilities or my year's research efforts. Still, whenever I could muster enough energy, I soldiered on with reading and writing, and prepared a first draft of my literature review. I sent it to my supervisors, who for the past several months had been patiently responding to my requests for extensions. When I finally met with one of them, I was very proud of myself for having dressed professionally (make-up and all), left the house, and made it all the way into town for our meeting. I was ready to discuss my research, my findings, my ideas, my plans – all those seemingly urgent things that had been bubbling in my head. But before I could get that far, my supervisor asked me the fateful question: "It's so nice to see you. How have you been?"

After I finished catching her up on everything I had been through, she gently shut my computer screen and suggested we discuss the option of taking a leave of absence. When she mentioned it, I was shocked and mildly defiant. Part of me wanted to prove that I could power through and get work done. And the truth is, perhaps I could have. But would it have been worth it to sacrifice my physical and mental health to produce this piece of work? A piece of work that would probably be of better quality if I just took a break and recharged?

I felt like my world had caved in. What if I lost momentum and became disconnected from my academic studies? What if I lost

interest in my topic? Couldn't I just push through and carry on? Despite these fears, deep in my heart – in that small corner where I tuck away inconvenient truths, facts that I don't want to face – I knew that I needed to take a step back. I went to the ASC and spoke about my options with an advisor there. I discussed the implications of this decision with my parents and close friends. And, as a good Management student, I made a proper analytical diagram summarising the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats the leave of absence entailed. Doing that was one of the most helpful things I did, as it allowed me to categorise my thoughts, to visualise the stakes of my decision, and to take responsibility for it. At the end of the day, it had to be my decision; not my parents', my supervisors', or my friends', but mine alone. After weighing the consequences of staying and of leaving, I knew that taking the leave of absence was the right thing to do.

While I felt an enormous relief when I was granted leave, less than one month into my break, I experienced 'buyer's remorse'. I regretted my decision and bemoaned that I hadn't thought everything through; that I had made a mistake. At that point, having the decision-making diagram that I'd made earlier was invaluable: it reminded me that I had actually considered the factors I was now so upset about. Being able to see the unequivocal proof that I made the decision to go on a leave despite the difficulties and threats it entailed made me snap back to reality and own up to my decision. Granted, it didn't make me feel less sad about the situation: I was still upset about falling a

year behind my fantastic peers and potentially losing the connection we had. But knowing that I had explicitly considered that possibility took away the nagging feeling that I had unwittingly made a mistake. Looking back at that analysis has helped me in many other instances when I felt fear or regret about my decision.

Another challenge I faced once granted leave was figuring out what on earth to do with all the time I now had on my hands; my health still wasn't in the best shape and I felt a vacuum swell in my day-to-day life that once had been filled with studies. Switching off from work was very difficult at first. I transitioned by reading fiction books instead of academic ones during the time I had normally allocated to studying. I made a point of spending more time with my friends. And I had to pack up my house in St Andrews. But once everything was done and (literally) dusted, I was at last free to go home. I had technically been on leave for a month when I said my goodbyes, but the 'leave' element of my leave of absence only really occurred once I got on the plane back home. The geographical shift helped me to fully and finally disconnect from St Andrews and my PhD.

Once at home, I could switch off more readily, engaging in the familiar ebb and flow of people and events that I had been used to while growing up. It was a delight to catch up with friends and family. Although that too had its pitfalls. How does one discuss taking a leave of absence? Explaining the story over and over again can get repetitive. Moreover, I would often

get the response: "Oh fantastic, that means you have extra time to work!" Such statements would strike absolute terror into my heart, as my predominant issue at the time was to get a healthy distance from my work. After a bit of trial and error, I found that simply stating that I was on a sabbatical from university before resuming my PhD was a less shocking way to raise the subject. Most people respond with curiosity about my research rather than concerns about my health. Moreover, the explanation of being on a sabbatical also mitigated the follow-up "that means you have more time to work" exclamation, as a sabbatical is generally understood to be a break from university to allow one to temporarily disconnect from their research. In the end, I convey the same information about being on leave to improve my health, but the way I deliver this news now lends itself to enjoying a pleasant conversation rather than providing a disconcerting update.

Today I am better than I could have possibly anticipated when making the decision to take a leave of absence. I have been able to address my health issues in a systematic and concerted way: I will soon completely stop my asthma medication and I'm following a six-month rehabilitation plan at a sports clinic to finally work on my chronic injuries. I'm already so much better. Socially, I have had the opportunity to attend family events, which for many years I had been missing due to university commitments. I have also picked up some of my old hobbies and developed new ones, too. Without realising it, I'm finding myself doing the things that I had hoped for when I was making that

decision to go on leave. I'm also starting to acknowledge, and grapple with, the heavy toll that anxiety, stress, and my own expectations of excellence have taken on my mental and emotional wellbeing. I'm now actively seeking to address my anxieties and treat my mental health with the same rigour and respect that I give to my physical health, using cognitive behavioural therapy to re-frame my attitudes towards work and hopefully live a happier life as a student. I look forward to coming back to St Andrews, re-energised, and ready to tackle the challenges ahead.

Sarah Hathorn

Networks That Nurture

Notes on female solidarity in academia.

The past century has brought about unmeasurable progress in terms of women's representation in higher education, but young women entering academia today still have to navigate a landscape riddled by a multitude of obstacles. Though some aspects of early-career academic work apply equally to genders – there is an abundance of research documenting the uncertainty and insecurity experienced by young academics in the current climate of employment casualisation, short-term contracts, and frequent relocations – some aspects of academic work and culture have disproportionate effects on women.

In the past month, for example, with many (though still not all) universities disclosing their gender pay gap information as part of the new government requirement, it transpired that all institutions listed in the government's data (as of 22 March 2018), on average, paid men significantly more per hour than women; on March 30, the *Guardian* reported that every university in the Russell Group in England and Wales paid women less than men based on median hourly pay, with the gender pay gap reaching an astonishing 29.3% at Durham University. Furthermore, because, on average, women earn less throughout their career than men, they have smaller pension, too – an issue underlined in the ongoing USS pensions dispute.

Gender pay gap may be one of the most visible manifestations of the difficulties faced by women in academia, but it is also a symptom of much deeper, structural issues that beset women's academic careers. A Wellcome Trust report, for example, has noted that the

competitive, cut-throat culture makes an academic career less attractive to women pursuing doctoral degrees in science. Another report suggested that young women are more likely to leave academia because they find the characteristics of academic culture unappealing, perceive disproportionate obstacles in an academic career, and consider the sacrifices it requires to be overwhelming. Women who choose to pursue an academic career regardless of these concerns, find the competitive and politicised culture particularly harmful for their careers as it undermines collegial relationships that are crucial for career progression.

Furthermore, competitive culture in academia is conducive to bullying – in the form of threatening professional status, ignoring contributions, and otherwise publicly undermining or belittling colleagues' work – a particular concern for employees that are newly hired or untenured, and a deeply gendered issue. Perhaps surprisingly, it is not always the case of men bullying women: early career women also behave aggressively and condescendingly towards their early career peers and PhD students.

Lack of women in academic leadership positions is another structural concern. In 2016, for example, women represented over 54% of the total workforce in the UK higher education sector, but only 19% of Chairs of Governing Bodies, and 22% of Vice-Chancellors were female. Asiya Islam, then working in Equality and Diversity at LSE, noted that despite an almost equal representation of women and men at lower professional levels, only 27.5% of senior managers in higher education and 20.5% of professors in the UK were women in 2014.

The League of European Research Universities (2018) report suggests that issues such as gender pay gap and vertical segregation (i.e., under-representation of women in senior and leading positions in universities), as well as the fact that women in academia hold more part-time jobs and more precarious contracts, are all underpinned by implicit gender bias. This bias entails assumptions about stereotypically female behaviours and preferences, including ideas about women's commitment to their jobs and family orientation/parenting roles. Bias is further evident in recruitment and career advancement processes and in the allocation of funding.

Another report – on Gender and Higher Education Leadership by Leadership Foundation for HE (2014) – found that almost half of its female respondents “experienced gender-related bias in their careers” and reported that colleagues and selection panels for senior and leading positions tend to hold a gendered view of leadership.

Bias also manifests itself in the kind of work academic women do. Research suggests that on average, women in academia do significantly more service work – to the institution, the community, or the department – than do men. Though it demands no less commitment, drive, and integrity than the research and teaching work, service work is not generally recognised as a ‘route to the top’, exacerbating the situation in which women are paid less, allocated fewer resources, and put forward for fewer promotions. A letter, signed by more than 50 Cambridge University academics, argued that the current system, in its emphasis on prominent research publications and grants, and under-recognition of a wider range of service and administrative work that disproportionately falls on women’s shoulders, favours men – and stops women reaching their potential.

Then there is, of course, casual sexism and the anxiety, disbelief, and anger, that it brings to women’s lives, making work relationships curdle into something unsavoury, gruelling, and difficult to navigate, and damaging opportunities for career progression.


All of this, and countless other gendered aggressions beyond, tally up, and it is not rare to hear sentiments such as this expressed by early career women in academia, often hiding, like this author does, behind anonymity: “Increasingly, I’m regretting my decision to take an academic path, and I feel decisively that universities are very much a “man’s world” because of the attitudes I experience among both staff and students. Since starting my PhD, I have found my anxiety to be – at times – overwhelming. While many academics are haunted by the dreaded imposter syndrome, this feels especially true for women who are made to feel that their research and presence at university are unwanted.”

Here in St Andrews, where the overall percentage of female academics reached 39% in 2016, but only 20% of professors were women, these are not abstract or distant problems, but deeply felt

issues. A recent publication titled *Academic women here! On being a female academic at the University of St Andrews* – edited by Aileen Fyfe, Ineke De Moortel, and Sharon Ashbrook – explores how senior female academics navigate their careers, including “the occasional sense of isolation, the constant challenge of carving out time to maintain research capability and a healthy work/life balance,” as well as “the challenges of dealing with the demands of the competing aspects of academic life, and with increasing responsibilities as the nature of the job changes over time and with seniority.” In depicting the career trajectories, and life experiences, of some of the senior academic women in St Andrews, it highlights not only the diversity of career paths, but also the commonality of these women’s experiences.

Most strikingly, the majority of women whose stories feature in the publication emphasise how central their support networks – including more senior colleagues who take on mentoring roles, as well as family, friends, and peers – were to their success. Research evidence bears this out, with findings suggesting that mentor support is particularly important for young female academics as they try to manoeuvre the insecurity of an early career while attempting to maintain a work-life balance. For graduate students, too, having a mentor is an important predictor of their life satisfaction.

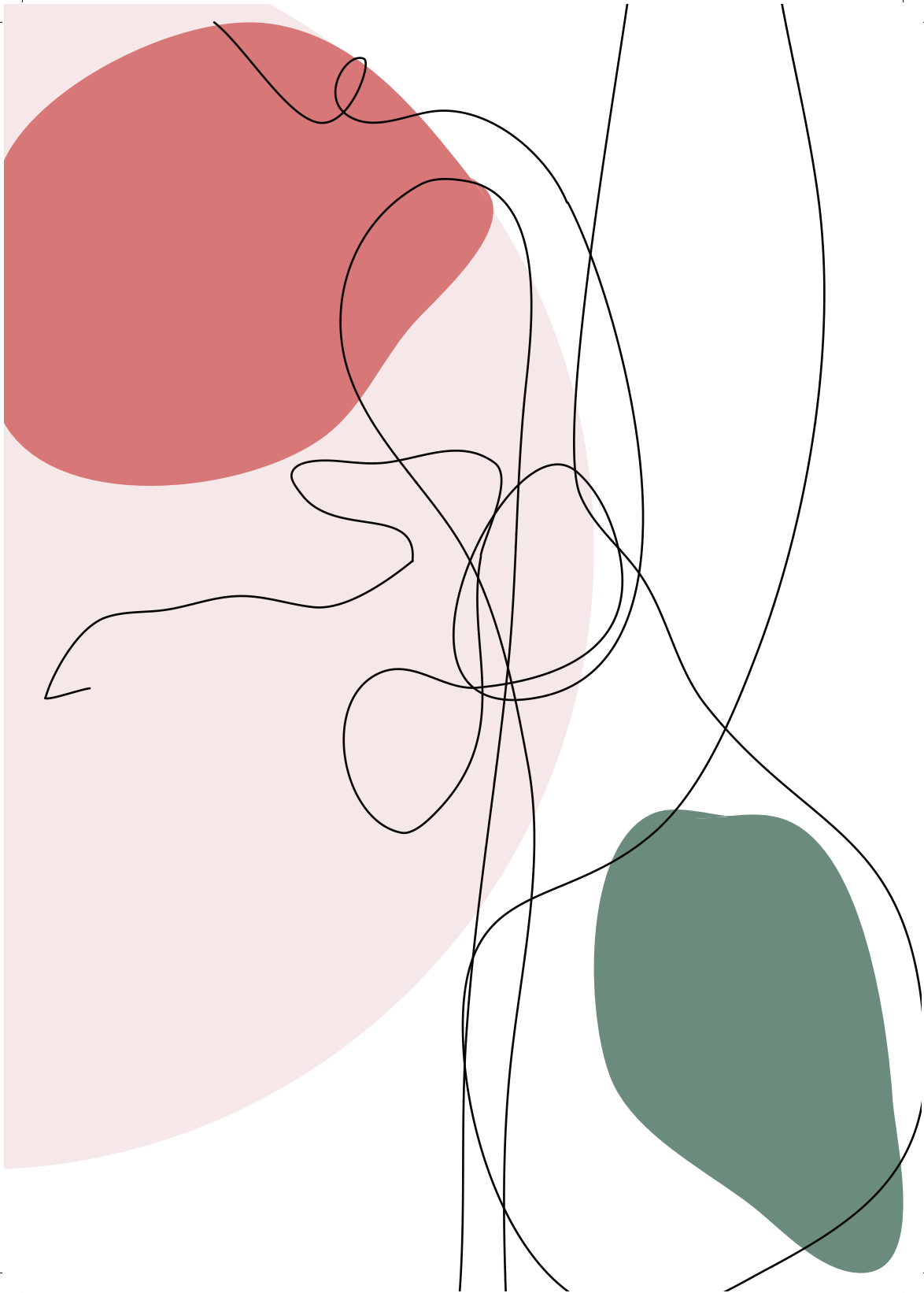
I am fortunate to have experienced first-hand how inspiring, encouraging, and empowering a kind and attentive mentor could be. The support of the woman I think of as I write this has sustained me in a time, upon starting my PhD, when I found myself confounded and disoriented by its demands and challenges. Finding time despite herself navigating the pressures of academia, she has been curious about, and endlessly supportive of, my research, offering perhaps not so much academic guidance, but vital practical advice on building the foundations of an academic career – helping to map it out at this early stage, and signposting difficulties and milestones. And it is not just me: she has extended her friendship and support to many young women I know, at different stages of their academic careers, always willing to share her knowledge and experience. In an often ruthlessly competitive environment, where collegiality, mutual empowerment, and support are increasingly replaced by individualistic pursuit of status and resources, I often return to her advice: to seek out and



nurture networks of solidarity, common intellectual interests, and friendship.

Of course, these networks cannot replace the important lobbying and campaigning work that has to be done to address deeper structural issues at heart of women's experiences in academia. But they make the women's struggle for equality – in academia and elsewhere – so much more powerful.

Olga Loza



Divisions on College Campus and Beyond

Encountering stark
division, polarisation,
and bifurcation while
studying abroad in the
United States.

Have you ever visited Europe?” “No, but I hear it’s a lovely country.” A conversation between a friend of mine at Georgetown University, where I spent a semester at the School of Foreign Service, and a Trump voter in West Virginia, just a few hours’ drive from the political capital of the US. Studying at Georgetown’s School of Foreign Service, amongst ambitious, intelligent and critical peers, with professors at the top of their fields, was a transformative and rewarding experience in more ways than one. But what stood out most was the polarisation of the United States, of Washington, DC, even of Georgetown itself.

In the recent years, debates around free speech on US college campuses had coalesced around an idea, real or not, that young conservative voices were stifled and oppressed by liberal outrage. Having never encountered a conservative in St Andrews who didn't want to express their views, I was mystified by this supposed crisis. At Georgetown, however, many of my classmates identified as conservative without calling themselves Republican, and certainly without saying they supported Trump. These young men and women – whose political views excuse exclusive and inequitable education, healthcare, social security, and economic policies – felt cowed down by the outrage of their left-wing peers and the liberal media.

Yet while conservatives at this fairly centrist East coast college claimed to be experiencing marginalisation and isolation, it was not as if Georgetown – or the School of Foreign Service therein – was a bastion of left-wing thought. A German classmate, upon advocating for redistributive fiscal policy, was asked by a classmate if he wanted to cite the Communist Manifesto in his paper. In saying that current wealth inequality is economically, socially, and morally indefensible, I was accused of being populist.

To live and study in picturesque Georgetown, with neat lines of beautiful townhouses which take turns winning the accolades like 'Cleanest Block Award', you could be forgiven for thinking that everybody in DC could afford over \$2,000 monthly rent

and proudly displayed window posters that say, in three languages, 'No matter where you are from, we're glad you're our neighbour'. Georgetown students are cosmopolitan internationalists, even if they also have a patriotic penchant for the American hegemon hypothesis. They speak foreign languages, they travel in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America. They follow the news, and all seem to recognise that Brexit is a terrible idea. They can afford to spend – or can borrow with the expectation to repay – upwards of \$70,000 for a two-year Masters programme.

Half-an-hour away from Georgetown's luxury shopping and dining on M Street is a very different side of DC. Neighbourhoods around H Street, Shaw, and Carver Langston are in the midst of rapid gentrification, but there remain run-down social housing, regular police patrols, and racialised socio-economic disadvantage. Until fairly recently, DC was predominantly African American – an Uber driver taking me to a hip brunch spot in Shaw told me DC was 98% black when he was growing up. This demographic was a product of mass migration in the aftermath of the civil war, during reconstruction, throughout the Jim Crow era. The District of Columbia bordered the Confederacy. There is, therefore, understandable resentment towards stylish apartment buildings, independent coffee shops, organic wine bars, and the Whole Foods that have emerged, drawing the yuppie crowd that are pricing out the neighbourhood's traditional residents.

The first time I visited a friend living just beyond the desirable portion of H Street corridor, there was a shooting on the same block; local residents wondered aloud what these ‘crackers’ were doing around here. I can easily see that, were it not for friends living in the area, I would have had little cause or motivation to leave what was for me the comfortable confines of North West DC. What is more, my three friends paid high rents in this neighbourhood, and we ate and drank at these expensive new bars and restaurants.

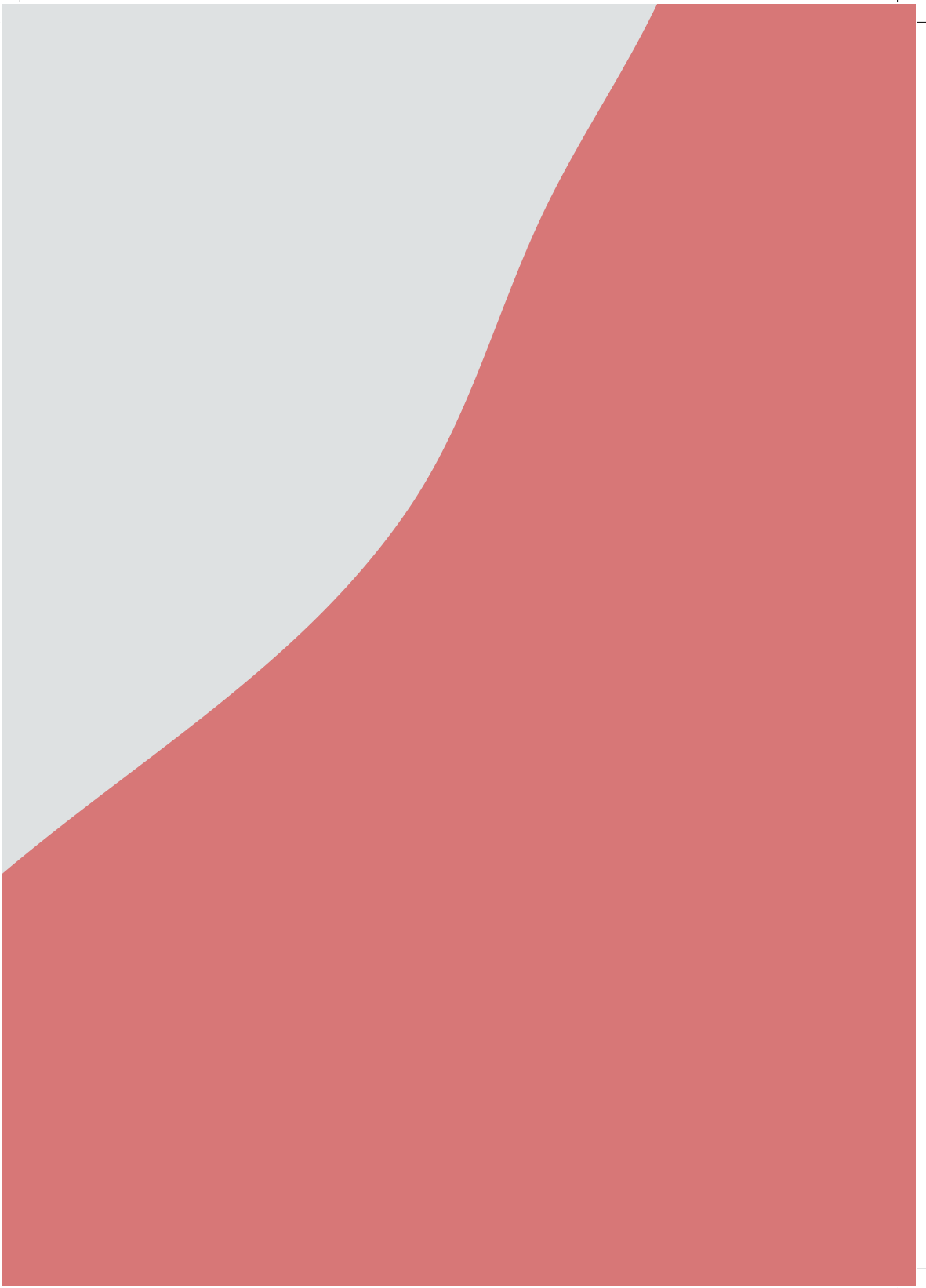
Every city has its wealthy and its poor areas. The ghettoization of DC, such that I could easily have avoided these areas for the six months I lived there, is not unlike the towns around St Andrews – Glenrothes, parts of Kirkcaldy, Leven, north-west Cupar – that rank in the bottom two deciles of multiple deprivation.

Within Georgetown and within DC there was one kind of bifurcation – socio-economic, along distinct racial lines – but it wasn’t political. The District of Columbia voted over 90% for the Democrats in 2016. It was hard to reconcile this experience of coastal America with the videos of Trump rallies, the shouts of ‘Drain the Swamp’, ‘Trump That Bitch’, abuse of journalists, of disabled people, virulent economic nativism, the normalisation of racism, of sexual harassment and assault. Numerous friends

told me, on separate occasions, “People don’t understand, there are two Americas.” They advised me as a woman not to travel alone in certain states. Even less so if I had been a person of colour. This was a polarisation I experienced really only in anecdotes from American friends. Personally, I only saw the absence of this worldview, but that is as revealing really of the polarisation as having encountered the difference.

The divisions in US society, although manifested in different forms across different arenas (national politics, local socio-economic arrangements, college campuses), all share a common thread of painful, challenging, and mis-managed communication. The kind of sound-bite politics, divisive social and mass media, anti-pluralist populism, and drastic inequality that fuel polarisation in the US are not exclusive to that country, but are increasingly visible across Europe – to the detriment of stability, security and prosperity.

Marnie Adamson



A large, stylized white question mark is positioned on the right side of a solid red background. The question mark is composed of a thick, rounded stem that curves at the top and ends in a circular dot at the bottom.

Am I Doing
This PhD-thing
Right?

(asking for
a friend)

After three years and 290 days,
Kristin submitted her PhD thesis
at the School of International Relations
in July 2018. In September 2018,
she is moving to Denmark to start
a post-doctoral fellowship at
the Department of Political Science
at the University of Copenhagen.

In German we have a saying: ‘Auch Ratschläge sind Schläge’, which – minus a good pun on the German word *schlagen* (to strike) – approximately translates as ‘Also (good) advice may feel like a strike’. By the time of being admitted to a PhD programme, all of us have gotten uncountable pieces of advice in our lives, often related to academic matters: Take good notes; start studying for the exam as early as possible; read all the required readings on the syllabus... And so far, they all seemed to have worked out pretty well, otherwise we would not be here. Yet, this PhD-thing seems to be somehow different from getting a BA or an MA; academic writing without pre-given essay questions, course syllabi to consult and clear deadlines can seem – well – all a bit overwhelming. The day before I first sat down to (re)formulate my initial proposal into a coherent – and doable! – research project, I received my student ID at matriculation, which reassuringly proclaimed: valid until September 2018. 2018. Four years. As long as high school. Longer than my undergraduate degree. In other words: a vast, unimaginable amount of time to work on a single, even if long, paper. Now, as the summer of 2018 comes to an end, I want to reflect on some of the advice I’ve been given over the years, and pass – or rather strike? – on the good, as well as the bad.

Ironically, I believe that the single piece of advice that has influenced me most has been both the best and the worst advice I was given. It was in Week 2 of the academic year 2014-15 that I met with my primary supervisor, who told me that whatever I was planning to do

over the next three (or four) years, I should always remember that “The PhD is the number one priority.” At the time, I nodded politely and said “Of course,” not knowing the turns of the journey to come. Over the years, this statement often echoed in my head and with every echo it seemed to mean something else. On the one hand, prioritising the PhD has been fantastic advice, as it saved me in crucial moments from taking on yet-another-project, or made me decide that it was time to drop yet-another-project even though I was deeply invested in it. While it may not seem like it from the outset, being a PhD student opens many doors; opportunities that lie behind them can easily distract us from actually doing the PhD. A conference here, a newspaper article there, an opinion piece in a prestigious magazine, a co-authored paper, a book chapter on a different – yet, we tell ourselves, related – topic...the possibilities for distraction are endless. Here, my supervisor’s advice was valuable, as it reminded me to stay on track and to focus on what I actually needed to achieve in these four years. In the end, the PhD is the entry ticket to the academic world; completing it is the pre-condition for a future career.

On the other hand, thinking of the PhD as your only project doesn’t quite make sense, especially not if you are looking for a job in academia and want to stay sane and healthy overall. In retrospect, I think I may have misunderstood my supervisor’s advice: the “number one priority” does not mean the only priority. To get a job in academia, it is advisable to try to work on a number of sensible side-projects, too: try to publish a paper (even if it is just submitted or under review at the end of the four years), try to attend and present at key conferences, or maybe even organise a conference yourself. Time as a PhD student is valuable, but working only on the PhD thesis will make you forego the opportunities that are actually worth pursuing. In the end, being an academic requires keeping an open mind and being able to work on more than one project at any given time.

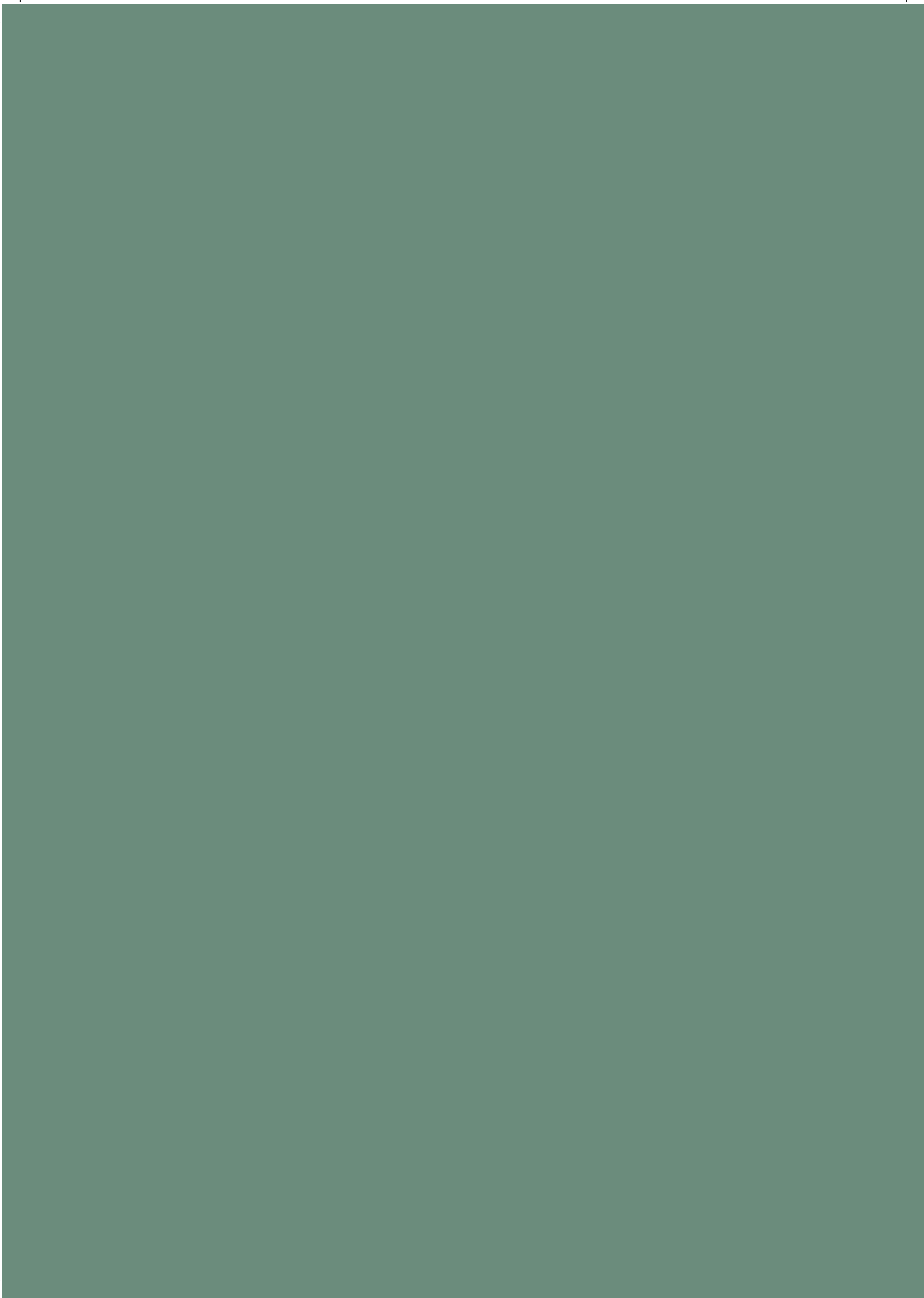
Beyond academic concerns, making the PhD your priority does not mean you have to forget about life outside of the seminar room. If you are playing a sport: keep playing it. If you have a hobby: keep practicing it. Stay close to your loved ones, and ‘pre-PhD’ friends, do not talk about work all the time, and, perhaps most importantly: take time off. This may be some days or even better weeks in a row, but

this may also mean not working on evenings, not working on weekends, or not working at home. In the end, the PhD thesis is not who we are. It is just the project we are prioritising right now.

A few weeks after submitting my thesis, I leave St Andrews having learnt two seemingly banal lessons. First: every PhD is different. Every experience of writing a PhD is different. Comparing yourself to your colleagues does no good; and asking four colleagues for advice will normally leave you with at least four different opinions on how to solve the problem you are confronting. Therefore: you have to be critical of what you are told and always relate statements back to your own situation. In the end, the PhD is a one-(wo)man show, a personal project; it is primarily yourself who needs to be happy to write your name on it on the day of submission.

Second: if you are serious about academia, the PhD is only the start. Therefore: enjoy the freedom, time, and opportunities that come with working on a project you designed yourself. Be kind and supportive towards your colleagues; and, at least sometimes, try to counter the often funny, but often also overwhelmingly negative discourse of how to 'survive' the PhD as proclaimed in outlets such as *PhD Comics*. In the end, a PhD is not about surviving, but about living the experience. Sometimes I wonder if this attitude of looking for the positive in my PhD experience – not merely working on its completion – 'stroke' me too late. It is surely something I wish someone had told me earlier on.

Kristin Eggeling



Beyond the Books



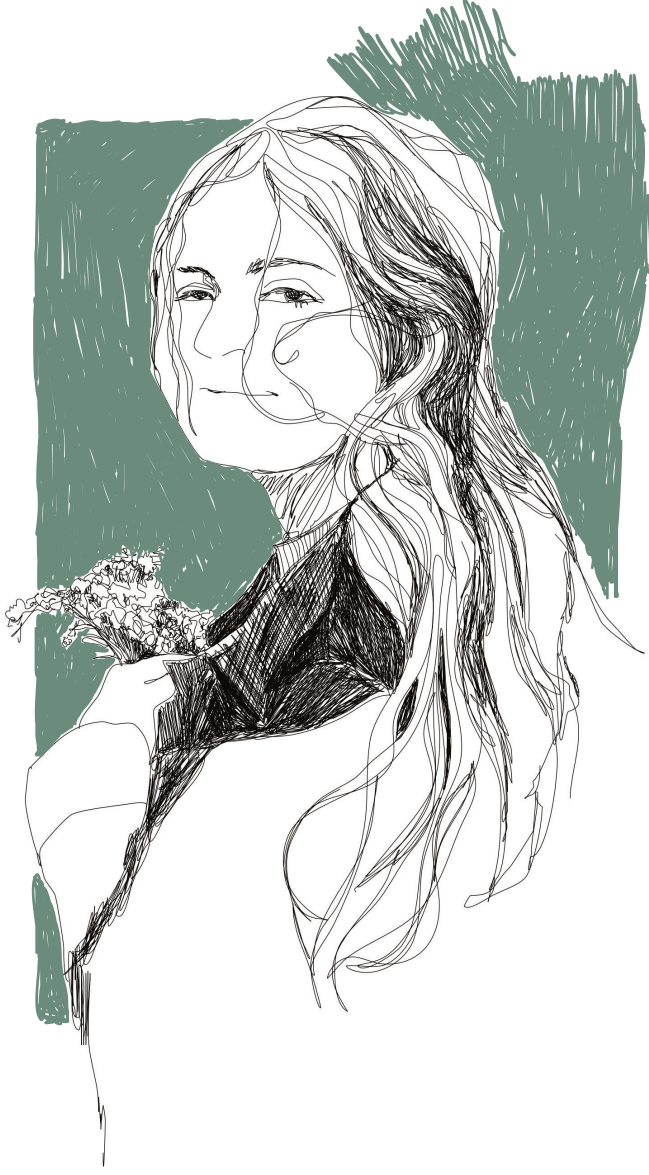


Ilinca Vânău



I always love summer in St
Andrews; I lump all the tourists
together into one unfamiliar
face and what I'm left with
are a few unassuming characters,
people I've known all year but
never had the chance to spend
much time with. See the
elegance of a new housemate
? should I say 'gracious
host who let me stay in
his flat for free', eating

humming on an Italian breadstick
in nothing but her towel
just moments before graduate
ball festivities began. Or, after
picking rhubarb, a slow walk
around Balgove pig farm; stopping
in front of the stone wall
where the wind was whipping a
friend's hair, hair the same
shade as the poppies in the pig
field. These pauses are
the backbone of experiencing a place



words *Lily Clarke*, illustrations *Olga Loza*



A Lade Braes Catechism

But the Comforter, which is the Bae, whom the Father will send in my name, she shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

(John 14:26)

'What's your favourite place in St Andrews?' That is his conversation starter. Brother Liam of the Dundee LDS church has stopped me on North Street to talk to me, not about Jesus, but about the Holy Ghost. He likes to surprise people. He is a handsome Canadian of 21 and a Mormon, in Europe for the first time, apparently on a mission to bring faith to people who spend several hundred pounds on Canadian coats that are dramatically overqualified for Scotland's above zero degree winters. I don't have to think about my answer. He could have dragged me out of bed in the middle of the night and I would have said the same thing then: 'The Lade Braes. I love it.' Brother Liam doesn't know what a 'Lade Braes' is, any more than I have an informed idea of the Holy Ghost but luckily, we are both the kind of people who are happy to explain things. I point West and tell him that Lade Braes is the name of a beautiful footpath just five minutes from here. The name throws him off and he asks me to spell it. Granted, it is an odd one. In my head it still often morphs into 'Lady Braes', or even 'Lady Bae'. I don't tell Brother Liam about that, though; you have to know your audience. A website created by other Lade Braes enthusiasts explains

that the 'lade' in Lade Braes is the medieval canal that was created to lead (= 'lade') a stream past the mills of the settlement, and that 'braes' is a Northern British word for a hillside next to a waterway. I don't tell Brother Liam any of that, either. He doesn't seem that interested. He is focused on figuring out how to progress from here to the Holy Ghost. But he writes down 'Lade Braes' in his little notebook for the next time he talks to non-believers in St. Andrews. We agree to meet for a walk the following week. I imagine a scene in which I interrogate this green gap year boy about his views on pre-marital sex while wearing something that will put my chest to work in the debate. Perhaps he senses the danger. Or perhaps he already decides that I am beyond help as I mention I find it unlikely that God, if such a being exists, should be a man, of all things. Either way, Brother Liam is apparently substantially smarter than I have him be, or substantially less honest, or simply more American, because – what I don't know – the walk he has suggested will never happen. Brother Liam will cancel on me, and we will never reschedule. What Brother Liam doesn't know: he's got me all wrong. I am a believer. I have been praying to Lady Bae, and I have received her lessons.

The 10 Lessons of the Bae



words and photographs *Lisa Schürmann*

1. What can we find on the Lade Braes?

We can find many a curious thing, such as the tree that has fallen over the Kinness Burn, the magical wild garlic, the forbidden duck pond, and the indecisive cat.

2. Should we use the tree that has fallen over the Kinness Burn as a photo opportunity?

If we must.

3. Where will we find the magical wild garlic?

We will find the magical wild garlic in early May under the trees of Spinkie Den, and in the shade of Boase Wood.

What can we do with magical wild garlic?

We can make magical wild garlic pesto.

What will we need to make magical wild garlic pesto?

We will need magical wild garlic, pine nuts, olive oil, Parmesan cheese, salt, pepper, and a decent blender.

Why should we make magical wild garlic pesto?

Making 'magical' wild garlic pesto will teach us detached Britons that foraging is a very mundane thing, and not something that only hippies, old ladies, and the esoteric kind of online feminists do (the ones who attend moon rituals that demand an entrance fee despite plenty of evidence that the female hormonal cycle has nothing whatsoever to do with the moon and that fees have nothing whatsoever to do with feminism).

4. Why is the forbidden duck pond called the forbidden duck pond?

The forbidden duck pond is called the forbidden duck pond because the ducks who live there are mean and dangerous, and we must not go near them.

Okay...

We must NOT GO NEAR THEM.

5. Why should we seek out the indecisive cat?

Because it teaches us to practise an ambivalence towards humankind.

Where will we find the indecisive cat?

The indecisive cat will appear to us by the Viaduct Walk.

What will it do?

It will come towards us, and it will squint.

What should we do?

We should squint back.

What will happen?

The indecisive cat will turn around and run off. Then it will look back and return to us, and then it will run off again. It is an indecisive cat.

6. Where is the Lade Braes?

The Lade Braes starts on Hepburn Gardens, opposite Little Carron, and it ends in town, on Lade Braes Lane. But we must not be limited by names. The Lade Braes connects to many other paths we must also take, like the one that leads to Spinkie Den, and the one that goes all the way to Craigtoun Park.

7. Does the café at Craigtoun Park serve decent coffee?

The café at Craigtoun Park serves terrible coffee, because terrible coffee is truth in the Shire.

8. Should we drink terrible coffee?

When we drink terrible coffee, we remind ourselves that pain is unavoidable, and that Scotland is very far from Italy. However, we must also learn to distinguish between coffee that is merely terrible, and coffee that is an offence against humanity.

What is the difference?

The coffee at the Craigtoun Park café is steeped in humanity while the coffee at the chain that shall not be named is steeped in Karl Marx' tears.

9. Who is Karl Marx?

We must be joking.

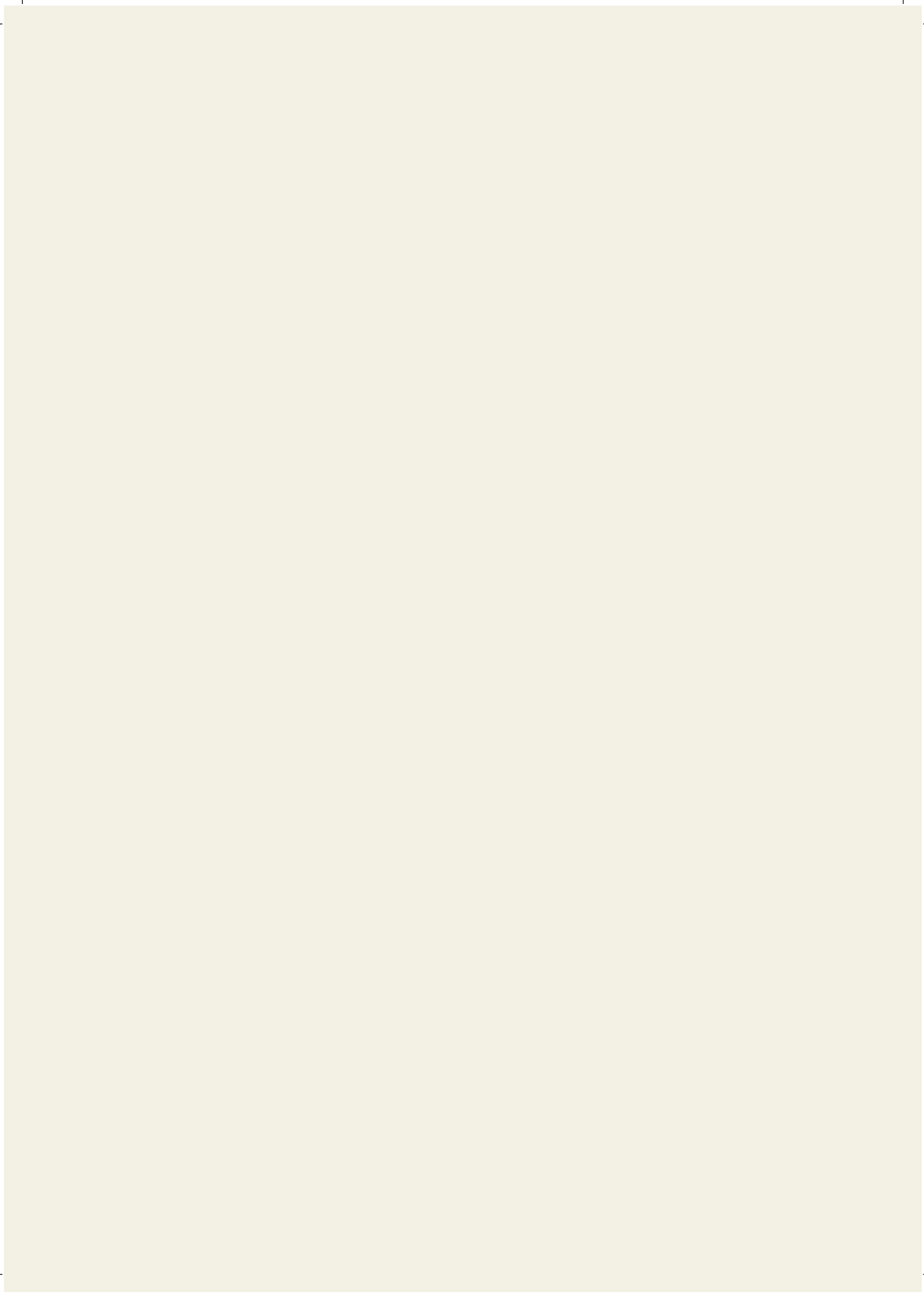
10. How often should we walk the Lade Braes?

We should walk the Lade Braes every few days, ideally at dusk.

Every few days??

As soon as our eyes are opened to the beauty of the Lade Braes, time will come flooding into our life like the water running down the Kinness Burn.





Situate

Time to red up. Heading in early.

You been out partying?

You had trouble with the fuzz?

Don't be afraid of the same words in a different order.

Down by the harbor

the fisherman tidies his ropes.

Praying won't save you but it might make you worth saving.

So I pray for Ruth and her cells

the long pier and each cliff house.

People appear on the shore and I am tossed

till my throat burns

and still I can't tell if the heron minds.

That was when I was swimming.

Later, I fold the week in half

and pray more lights go out at night.

I pray for Ruth and all her cells

then count to twenty-five strokes with Alexandrina.

Whiskey burns my throat

and helps me speak beautifully,

I kinda' like it. Where do your words come from?

Situational beauty.

You been out partying?

Fifteen octopus, in the creel. Left lobsters in pieces.

Had to throw them out. Time to red up.

Pray for Ruth. Head in early.

Lily Clarke

The Badlands

Light like tallow pushes into
the living room, lays itself down
over everything. We're all to be
made into soap, grieving like this. Hunched over in thrones of
cushioned bone. Thinking it theft,
what the dead stake claim to, tight-fisted liege lords that they are: ribbed woolen sweaters,
glass bowls of oreos,
pancakes past noon.
None of us think to look outside
where the leaves culminate solemnly
into a network of towers,
across the yard,
on their own.
Having seen it all before.



Sam Harvey

Cargo Shorts

What was it she said about being the most yourself when your roommate is in the shower?
Stoned on your bed. Time flexing around you like a band of dark matter, beaten off you like
rivets of slag. Time heavier than a box of cargo
shorts that you hoist around your room and then put down
to hoist again. Just to pick something up. Just to have your nose close to the carpet
in reverence. To look down so that
looking up is just as good again, looketh about
and declare, before it's too late:

*Hereby, on this day of time beaten, given
the shower and then given the hum muffled of
your roommate, so that the rivulets flexed matter and
the carpet made itself apparent and the thing with
when every collapse heaves itself around bands
of looks and progress" the thing is with such turf
wars temporal or other lies it's all about right
there in the (cargo) hold of your room remaking
yourself with pockets. All those new depositories
to hide new handfuls of yourself in.*

Sam Harvey

