

Abiding or: How I Learned to March to the Beat of my Own Drum (Kind Of)

London. Bayes. Where to start? Not the beginning certainly. Afterall, timekeeping seems like a futile exercise ever since the pandemic arrived. But really where to start? The weather maybe? “*How’s the weather today?*” No no no, quickly before I fall into the trap of answering my own rhetoric let’s move on.

Unlike the “wonderful” courseworks we’ve grown accustomed to, there are no true guidelines for this retrospective account of my experience in Bayes. So I have decided to start with how I start my days on main campus. With Dan’s coffee.

Dan and Debbie’s coffee place perfectly sums up Bayes and City uni for me. Apart from the obvious shared custody of Northampton square, they both harbor an open arms zeitgeist that leaves little of both to distinguish apart. A clean *epanadiplosis* if I’ve ever seen one in the sentence above; but niche literary devices aside, it is true that his coffee place is an extension of the melting pot that is Bayes. People from every corner in the world flew to London to receive the best of educations, and the best chicken escalope sandwich. Both delivered dare I say.

What follows? The people I guess. Everyone here is writing their own unique story. Some of us **write it in bold characters**. Others *write it in modest italics*. In the end, we all end up writing gibberish to deliver for the expected word count. With the writing theme in mind, I speak to myself, my contemporaries and to whomever the shoe may fit, when I say that we often forget that we are a work in progress and that our story will go through many rough drafts. We must be idiosyncratic with our narratives and remember to celebrate them. Thankfully, our unfolding stories are set in a place (Bayes) that invites us to thicken the plot. The exposure to different cultures, parallel and oblique ideologies can only bring eclectic elements to our stories. Let this chapter be a fusion of styles, movements and choices that in whatever years time will have us asking ourselves in either nostalgia or contempt: - “*What led me to that?*”

As we employ and exercise these newfound muscles in this new environment of ours, the struggle to shed some light to our roots begins. We all bring 'home' with us as an element of distinction. Full merit to those people who manage to balance their two merging worlds and make themselves a fully realized hybrid of both of them. I myself struggle with this issue. When one world is on the wheel I become one of those drivers who hates listening to the merely suggesting co-pilot. It was once said of me: "*He marches to the beat of his own drum.*" They probably forgot I am not a percussionist. However, this year managed to tame in me that carefree belief that one can deal with problems on their own. A dual effort from friends, family members, beliefs and habits from both of my worlds (London & El Salvador) achieved that. London brought to the table the drive to get on my feet and keep going. El Salvador (home) brought the much needed "take some time to make peace with these things". Life is fast paced and one must try to keep up with it, but sweeping everything under the rug will only make you carry a bank of unsolved dilemmas. I am still very much incompetent as a percussionist, but I do march at the beat of some drum. I like to think both London and El Salvador joined forces in my rhythm section.

The end is nigh for my first year here in Bayes. Mistakes have been made and the pitiful white lie of learning from them has been thrown around countless times. With little to no reassurance of this, I can say that I have learned from this one common misconception most of us (yes, you too probably) fall under. It is erroneous to think that these are the years to "find" ourselves. It is very romantic, charming and certainly devil-may-care to caress such thoughts. Probably because it comfortably preserves the inexplicable nature of life as we know it. Nevertheless, with blissful ignorance to those who disagree with me, I believe that these years are about "creating" ourselves. In uni and in life we don't find things. Such mind-set demerits the process of education. We learn and we create. Most of us are inventing a version of ourselves and our experiences in Bayes will shape that portrait.

(Gibberish incoming to get to a decent word count).

The universal "we" has been at the forefront of every statement made so far. I might benefit from saying that "we" comes from my constant need to create a sense of community in everything "I" say. Hope it went unnoticed for the most part, but rest assured I don't want to drag anyone with

me, even though little effort was made not to do so. Having said that, the use of “we” only shows how my experience in Bayes has been a communal one. In this year of reintegration to a “structured abnormal” where I tested positive for covid twice, had an *emotional haircut* and flirted with existentialism (all standard stuff), I abide not thanks to a selfless path, but by the open arms of Bayes and my willingness to be embraced.

Epanadiplosis - a figure of speech involving the same word being used at the beginning and the end of a sentence. Collins English Dictionary. Copyright © HarperCollins Publishers.

Emotional haircut - A nonsensical haircut one adopts because, “You've got numbers on your phone of the dead that you can't delete and you got life-affirming moments in your past that you can't repeat”. James Murphy/ LCD Soundsystem.