

Variations on a Theme: The Soundtrack of Social Distancing

written by Guest Contributor | May 11, 2021



Everything within me died as my relationship ended. I was afraid I would not be able to leave him. I was afraid I had no value as a person, as a woman.

Prior to my relationship, I had always written feverishly. I passed short stories amongst middle school friends and spent college obsessively submitting poems to the school literary magazine. If I sat down to write while my relationship was ending, I would have been forced to acknowledge how deeply unhappy I was, and that my only option was to leave. The idea of writing had withered within me because of this.

As I began to grapple with my unhappiness in my relationship, I decided to try writing again. I fostered no inspiration, I was an empty shell. The writing was slow, awkward, and clunky—a lover who has not been touched for a long time.

Two years after I left him, the world was burning with a global pandemic. Everyone turned to baking and making pineapple whips to distract themselves from the horror of it all. I consciously decided to return to writing, to words that were truly my own.

I utilized all of my downtime to write, to revise, and to obsess about the craft. I found that the words came quickly and frantically, as they once had. I found myself waking up late at night, my new lover sleeping peacefully beside me. An idea for a poem had disrupted my sleep, and I had to type it out on the notes app on my phone so I wouldn't forget by morning. I was living and breathing poetry. Something had awoken in me, and it could not be put to rest.

During lockdown, I wrote a numerated behemoth of a poem. It explored what it

was like to end a relationship after 10 years and what it was like to swallow the truths associated with that. In a particularly painful part of this process, the lyrics “I am finally seeing why I was the one worth leaving” came to mind. One day while my new lover was out, I blasted the Postal Service song on repeat while I wrote. The words and the tears came and came. While others felt trapped by COVID, I was trapped in my small condo and choking on a song and heartbreak and my own failures. I had worked so hard to avoid the truth for years. But, this was the truth. And despite being quarantined, I was liberated.

Music can hold enormous power in memories and experiences, transporting us instantly to an age, location, or person. What sonic joys, mysteries, disbelief, and clarity have you experienced? Identify songs of influence in your life and explore them like variations on a theme, melding syntax and song structure, recalling the seriousness or levity that accompanies. Whether it's an account of when a specific song first entered your life, the process of learning to play a song, teaching someone a song, experiencing the same song in different places as it weaves through your life, unbelievable radio timing, sharing songs with those in need, tracking the passing down of songs, creative song analysis, music as politics, etc, I am interested in those ineffable moments and welcoming submissions of your own variations on a theme, as drawn from your life's soundtrack. Please email submissions to meganentropy@gmail.com and keep an eye out for others' [Variations](#).

("song" is a broad phrase: could be a pop song, a traditional tune, a symphony, commercial jingles, a hummed lullaby, 2nd grade recorder class horror stories, etc)



Callie S. Blackstone writes both poetry and prose. Her work appears or is forthcoming in *Plainsongs*, *Prime Number Magazine*, and others. Callie is a lifelong New Englander. She is lucky enough to wake up to the smell of saltwater and the call of seagulls everyday. You can find her online home at callieblackstone.wordpress.com.