

TRANSFORMATIONS

ON BEING A MOTHER, IN A WORLD THAT STOOD STILL.

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She is not a baby anymore. She talks. She walks. She holds opinions. She makes sure we know those opinions. She is not a baby anymore. I was a single mum; close friends had to vanish. How do you explain to a just turned three-year-old and a baby why they cannot see family anymore? How do you capture those ‘firsts’ on Zoom? How do you explain to a child what Zoom even is when – let us be honest – nobody had heard of it before?

She is not a baby anymore.

How do you try to hold still time, to beg into the silence for their development to pause, to pause along with the world that has ground to an eerie halt, except time does not know that?

Time does not know that wildlife has taken over places in its freedom from humans.

Time does not know that we ended our sense of it in March 2020.

Time does not know that I want my baby to stay a baby until all of this is over.

Time does not know the heartache mothers feel at watching their babies grow fast whilst the world slows to a stop.

Time does not know the guilt mothers hold at feeling this heartache.

How dare I feel grief when my children are healthy and alive? How dare I feel grief when I have lost nobody to this terrible ordeal? How dare I feel grief when my baby grew so beautifully? So full of smiles, of giggles, of wonder. *How dare I?*

And yet, grief is what I feel and will allow myself to feel. To let the waves of grief wash over me.

I am grieving time because time ran away from us.

She isn't a baby anymore.

I introduce her now as a stranger to the very people who would have been by her side.

I ease her gently into this world she has long forgotten. I hold back tears as my once-baby runs back to me for reassurance when a stranger simply walks too close to her in a park. My eldest, now four, was never this unsure of strangers, never this scared by busy parks.

She is not a baby anymore.

In Lockdown 1.0, she went from sitting to crawling. From crawling to standing.

In Lockdown 2.0, she went from standing to walking, from babbling to talking.

In Lockdown 3.0, she went from walking to running, from talking to singing.

She was a docile baby, now a toddler of excitement and tantrums.

A baby taking it in, to a toddler in active awe and demanding charge.

She isn't a baby anymore; she's my darling girl.

My darling, who I love intensely, and who I grieve for, despite her being right in front of me.

Because in time, she transformed whilst the world stood still.

She isn't a baby anymore. She's a beautiful transformation of wonder in a world of deadened time.

She is Elizabeth.



BIOGRAPHY

Georgina Lewis is a current PhD candidate at the University of Exeter. Her research focuses on assessing the form and impact of violence towards refugees in Europe, paying particular regard to the role of visio-audio senses when examining political violence. Her research interests surrounding this include typologies of violence, sociology of senses, and political ideologies and mechanisms. Current articles include *A Pathway to Dystopia: An Exploration into the Relationship between Populist Ideology and Necropolitical Regimes* (*Kairos: A Journal of Critical Symposium*, 2020) and “Let Your Secrets Sing Out”: An Auto-Ethnographic Analysis on How Music Can Afford Recovery From Child Abuse (*Voices*, 2017).