



VOICES

2019



Message from The Women's Centre

VOICES is a collection of student artistic expression that is published annually on International Women's Day. This project is supported by the Federation of Students and The Women's Centre, which allow it to be shared with the broader student audience.

You are about to embark on a journey through the hearts, minds, fantasies, and experiences of various creators within our campus community. The next step is in allowing yourself to encounter and experience this perplexity; through an immersion in the intersectional experiences of others. **VOICES** is a celebration and commemoration of the moments where individuals have demonstrated the courage to abandon their silences and express their experiences through various artistic means, strong voices, or maybe just the faintest of whispers. It's a tribute to the times that we escape into our own solitudes: to write our own thoughts and feelings, to project out into the world in silence, or to celebrate a triumph or a moment of beauty.

We are only able to present to you the voices of artists that are eager to share their personal experiences with you. Therefore, we must remember to listen closely for the voices that we hear in both the streets and the classrooms, and those that are the most difficult of all to hear: the ones that fearfully speak against silence, and the loud ones which have been ignored.

Without further ado, we are honored to present the 2019 edition of **VOICES**, a creative piece that we are ecstatic and privileged to share with you.

Sincerely,

Vivien Pham & Kaleigh Campbell; Krystyna Oakman

Winter 2019 Women's Centre Coordinators; Literature Director

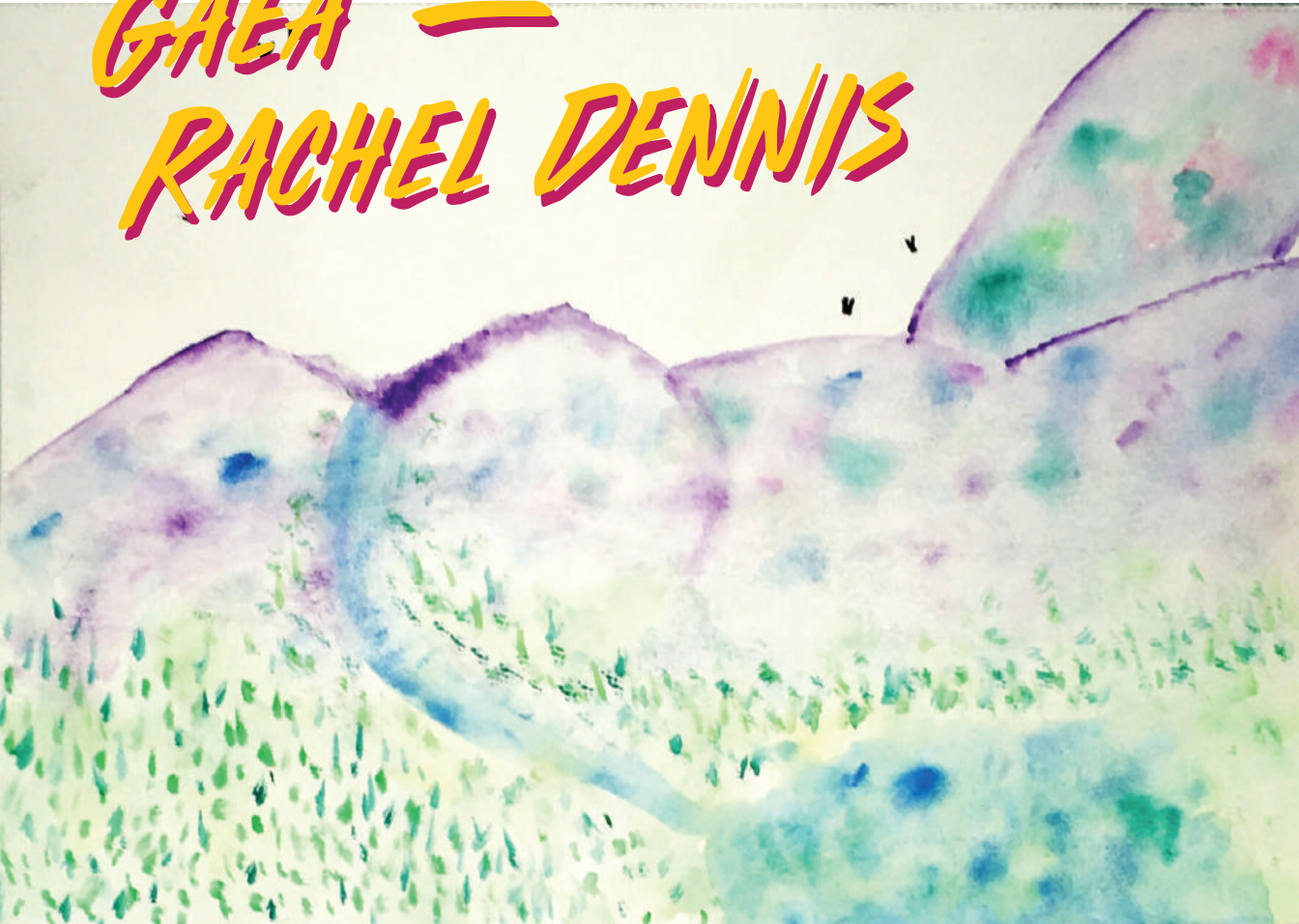


Sensitive

By Vivien Pham

The idea of tracing circles against skin
never resonated with my senses
Yet when your fingertips delicately danced on my wrist
I yearned for the sweet serenity I felt
emanate from your touch

GAEA —
RACHEL DENNIS





Midnight Popcorn

By Rachel Dennis

August 13th, 2018
On a balcony overlooking
Church Street
Toronto, Ontario
12:38am

For Nicole.

I wonder if any of this is going to mean
something someday.

I wonder if we'll forget about the
conversations we had,
what we thought was going to happen,
and who we used to be.

Will we remember how good this feels,
eating popcorn on the balcony,
high on separate occasions,
contemplating, the universe,
thirty years from now?

Will it matter?

Identity: Foundation

By Shaza Elnour

My thoughtspace like the footsteps of
my Ummi's stride
And quick quis of my mother's speech.

My Thoughts develop like brick brown
henna,
That which crawls up arms like vines,
And tattoos feet with burgundy.

I find comfort in decorated wraps -
It's a second skin.

The nourishment from the stories of my
ancestors - my past kin.

I've derived from them so much,
Like a second skin,

I now step in their shoes, every time I
slip mine on and leave the house.



Untitled - E.A.P

I am not here to float,
To casually coast
Down the river of
Sweet candy dreams -
No substance
And meaningless utterance
Is not my scene.
I am here to build.
Build brick by brick
Stone by stone -not a home
But a fountain.
A fountain that shoots our water ideas
Clear past the mountain summit
Surrounded by clouds designed
to prevent the plummet
Of all that I (no, we) have built.
Us and we.
You and me
Are creators, you see.
Blooming ideas like a field of sunflowers
- following all that is golden and warm.
Weathering every storm
we bloom better and brighter
After the onslaught of a torrential
downpour.
Our greater fertilizer - pressure

Is by which we measure
Ourselves against that which we have
conceived
Of us and we. Ideas retrieved
not from a T.V show or a magazine
But of radical and original ideas pure
and clean
That mean the two of us don't stand one
step above the other
On a staircase made of traditions that
make me shudder
no, we stand free of clutter
Eye to eye, pure and tougher.
For the water of our ideas rinsed the dirt
And scrubbed the poison
Allowing us to make choices in
Just how far reaching our water would
be over the summit
Of the mountain
From the fountain that we laid brick by brick
Sure and thick because
When I build, I build with permanence
that can withstand the turbulence
From the insurgency that
Us and we can bring -
And sometimes that may sting.

I wrote this piece in early spring of 2017. This work is about the kind of strong partnership I longed for and about how I cultivated my approach to attaining that strong of bond. This work came to me, as many do, on the cusp of sleep, and I awoke to write it down before it slipped away. On my mind had been the turmoil the pursuance of romantic partnerships had wrought upon my emotional state. I had decided to disengage from dating, focusing on developing my own passions and self. I decided that if I were to reengage with romance, it would be something quite the opposite of fleeting. This work helped me to conceptualize how that bond would manifest.

ICE —
SARA DECHANT



What was wrong with the relationship? Was the boyfriend abusive? Or was she just overwhelmed in the relationship because of her mental illness? "The interview was another traumatic event for me. It gutted me. I felt so violated. I think again, "I had to relive the night over and over and over again. Because I'd have to tell my story to one police officer and then another police officer would take the case, so I'd have to tell my dad was, 'I don't want to talk to them tonight and he was confused? Do you want him to end up in prison? Do you want to ruin his life?' "He just kept asking me to repeat the story and I assume it was in case I made a mistake. "What exactly happened? How long? Had it happened before?" [He asked] if I had said 'no.' If I tried walking away. Why I didn't just leave?" During the interview, Kerra remembers the female officer asked several times what she was wearing - the answer was a tank top and jeans - and whether "that would make them want to hook up later." The officer asked what she had suggested to the boys earlier in the night that she didn't call out for help. They tried to take a statement right away, but L.M. could barely piece together sentences, so they locked her in the back of the cruiser, thinking it would be a place for her to calm her down, before taking her to the hospital. "I went ballistic, I was punching the doors trying to get out," the 31-year-old artist says. "I had just been forcibly confined moments earlier." "I was told by the RCMP that I had to issue the statement, otherwise they couldn't hold him, or something. It was less than 24 hours. I hadn't slept. I was a mess and I had to go down to the RCMP [detachment] to give this statement," she says. "I got the sense that the RCMP were kind but they weren't really trauma-informed and did not really know what to do with me. They knew how to do their job, investigation-wise, but didn't know how to support me." The investigators asked her to give as much detail as possible. What was he wearing during the assault? and injuries associated with

she was calm. She asked, "Are you comfortable here? The officer would say "that reaction statement, the officer offered to come to her home for the interview. "After, [the female police officer] could see that I was physically upset and [she] shut off the video and we talked to her for a while. She was great." "She kept saying how sorry she was that I'm going through this." "When I met with the prosecutor, she said, 'First of all, I believe you.'" When approaching a sexual assault investigation, her first priority is to help the victim feel as at ease as possible. "They're sharing a very traumatizing experience and not only is it a very personal experience but it was also a very personal experience for that person," she said. "Even when I was in court she made me feel very comfortable - she talked to me. She knew I was nervous... She told me I was doing a good job and not to worry." "Don't worry, I'm here." She told me what I did and get a feel for what they're about. Make them feel comfortable. "The first thing I normally do is talk to them what happened, without going into a lot of detail." "I just tell them to take their time. Let them know [to tell me] if they need a break or a glass of water. If they're

RETRAUMATIZATION: A NEUROBIOLOGY PERSPECTIVE — TAYLOR LEGERE

Retraumatization: A Neurobiology Perspective Artist Statement

By Taylor Legere

I was inspired to create this piece after learning about the effects of trauma on memory in the class Trauma, Healing, and Conflict Resolution. I decided to create this piece because I am concerned about the treatment and line of questioning used when sexual assault victims in particular interact with legal and policing systems.

This really hit home for me after reading the feedback on Christine Blasey Ford's testimony against Brett Kavanaugh last year. I was shocked that some individuals were questioning her credibility considering traumatic memories are encoded in such a way that it bypasses the part of the brain that processes contextual information, making it extremely challenging to recall trauma memories chronologically or in complete detail.

False Values

By Anna Quijano

False Values were assigned to me as a child:
I was labelled to be worth so much and keep my wild spirit mild,
They praised me when I was skinny, working myself to death,
Words of hatred and appraisal seeping from their breath,
They reprimanded me when I wanted to eat

myself happy, so I was stuck in limbo
What was I to do to please their ever loving ego
They looked at me like meat from a store.
Ever too skinny, ever too fat,
But I am so much more than;
Their false values.

I am not your "chink"
I can see my own world through the eyes of
so many philosophers, scientists, leaders,
explorers,
fathers,
mothers,
lovers,
sisters and brothers before me.
Not just through a wide screen sense but in
panorama,
I am not your false value.

I am not your prize to be won.
Though you have told me many a time that I
am beautiful, gorgeous, sexy,
And though it took be a long time to see for
myself,
I am not your false value.

False Values are lies, told every day to the
ones you love with a straight face that can
fool a poker player.
False Values are nasty little words whispered
about by your neighbour or your own flesh
and blood as if they are better than you are/
False Values are the ones who walk into
Sunday worship, turn their noses up at the
poor, the promiscuous, the queer and the
"wrong". Who think they are better,
But go on to break the hearts of the ones
they love.
False Values are in my life,
But I promise I will not succumb to their
seductive powers.
I know my true value.





FOXY LADY —
LUCIA LAKATOS

Magic Mirror

By Victoria Lumax

Smoke and mirrors. How I wish this were
the case.
That the truth could be hidden for just a
minute.

Sometimes I feel that the mirror enjoys
blowing smoke -
reminds me of the truth I try to ignore.

I can only believe illusions for so long until
I have to grow up and face
reality.

I feel like I've become an expert escape
artist by now,
fleeing from my problems.

My mind is like a three-ring circus -
a place of chaos as labels upon labels
devour my thoughts.

Beautiful. Repulsive.
Passionate. Obnoxious.
Connected.

Isolated.

Why have I become gravity's favorite?
Why do I not look like everyone else?
Why must I constantly be reminded of
my regrets?

With each step.
Each movement.
Each motion.

The heaviness of my mind has now caught
up to the heaviness of my body.
The weight is sometimes too much to bear.

No wave of a magic wand will stop my eyes
from seeing what they want to see when
they gaze upon that
wretched glass plane.

Is the seclusion I feel self-imposed? I need a
magic word to snap me out of this
trance.

Abracadabra. Alakazam. Hocus pocus.
Open sesame?
If only I could open myself up to opportunities
that will actually help me.

All of my good qualities disappear once I'm
reminded of my appearance.
I'm not asking to be the powerful magician,
just the assistant.

Though qualifications are something I lack.

I seem to exist in a way that just isn't right.
In a way that is shameful.
In a way that holds me back from doing every-
thing I long to do.

Maybe I don't need wizardry to love who I am -
to believe in my potential.

Maybe I've forgotten all along that glass also
has the power to help heighten one's vision -
bring forth a new perspective.

It is up to me the way I use it.



STOIC — SARA DECHANT

The Weight of It

By Lesley George

What a vice you are.
I didn't know a lock
could be so appealing
& so silent when
clamping around
my free will.
Maybe I bought it myself.
Either way,
I still wear it.
But to your surprise
I'm stronger from the
weight of it.

Goldent Harvest

By Lesley George

I've only wanted to be held
without gaze.
Eyes are too harsh an instrument
fear too profound a vice
for the state of my body lays.
Someday I wish to meet your stare.
Take all of me in.
Consume my existence.
Like you would the flest of golden harvest.
To someday be just as sweet,
just as savored,
just as devoured.

*EVIDENCE OF
OCCUPATION
KAILAS CASSIDY*



No Boys - Fabiha Jahan Ahmad

Afreen was dressing up to attend her cousin's wedding. So was her mom and her younger sister, Afia. The only one who was laid back was her dad. He will get up exactly ten minutes before leaving to get dressed.

Afreen also didn't take too much time to get ready, but she was not nearly as quick as her dad. Chic make-up and clothing did not appeal to her as much. She dressed, not to kill, but to look presentable.

Another reason may be that she never know what to do with her appearance: A dusky skin tone and curly hair. Her mom had tied her hair in a tight french braid, the only hair style that could tame her otherwise untameable locks.

After she was done, she turned to look at Afia, a girl with silky straight hair, styling her hair. Afreen was hypnotised. Afia was prepping her hair with precision no less than a brain surgeon while simultaneously watching a YouTube video of an influencer; pausing and rewinding every thirty seconds.

The family got in the car. As the car dragged through the notorious traffic of the metropolitan city, Dhaka, Afreen looked out the window. The traffic jam did not repel her as much as others. She kind of liked it.

These traffic jams allowed her to steal some leisure time, which was much needed and almost non-existent in her life. The night was lit, not by the stars in the sky above but by the neon lights on the ground below.

They were warmly welcomed by their folks at the venue. Her mom and dad proceeded to get themselves acquainted with their newly formed relatives. Afreen's mom introduced Afreen and Afia to one of the aunts.

"These are my two daughters, Afreen and Afia." she said, "Afreen is a first-year student of Dhaka Medical College and Afia is in high school." The aunty asked casually in response, "No boys?" "No", her mom replied in an apathetic tone, "No boys."

Brown

By Aniqah Beharry

To be brown
But not brown enough
Is to have watched more Bollywood
movies than them
But they make fun of your pronunciation
of Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham.

To be brown
But not brown enough
Is to have not lived in Asia and not be
an immigrant
But a descendant of indentured labourers.

To be brown
But not brown enough
Is to wear desi clothes and play your
bangles
But they joke that you don't know the
difference between a kurta and shalwar
kameez.

To be brown
But not brown enough
Is to grow up stuffing your face with
jalebi, barfi, pera, and all kinda curry
and roti
But they laugh because your ancestors
said fat kurma was gulab jamun is
rasghulla.

To be brown
But not brown enough
Is to know where you're from -
Tacarigua, Trinidad and Tobago, born
and raised, trini to the bone

But not know which box to tick on
official forms - how could I belong to
Asia, a place I have never been?

To be brown
But not brown enough
Is to scold and scorn the racist "I can
be your chutney" and "You know how to
cook Indian food?" from white boys
But shut your mouth when they tell you
"You people make it wrong" like every-
thing is black and white, and I can't be
grey.

To be brown
But not brown enough
Is to face oppression from
Not only outsiders to your culture
Not only the same face, same coloured
people,
But also from yourself
Every time you look in a mirror
And wonder what you are.

In Flowers

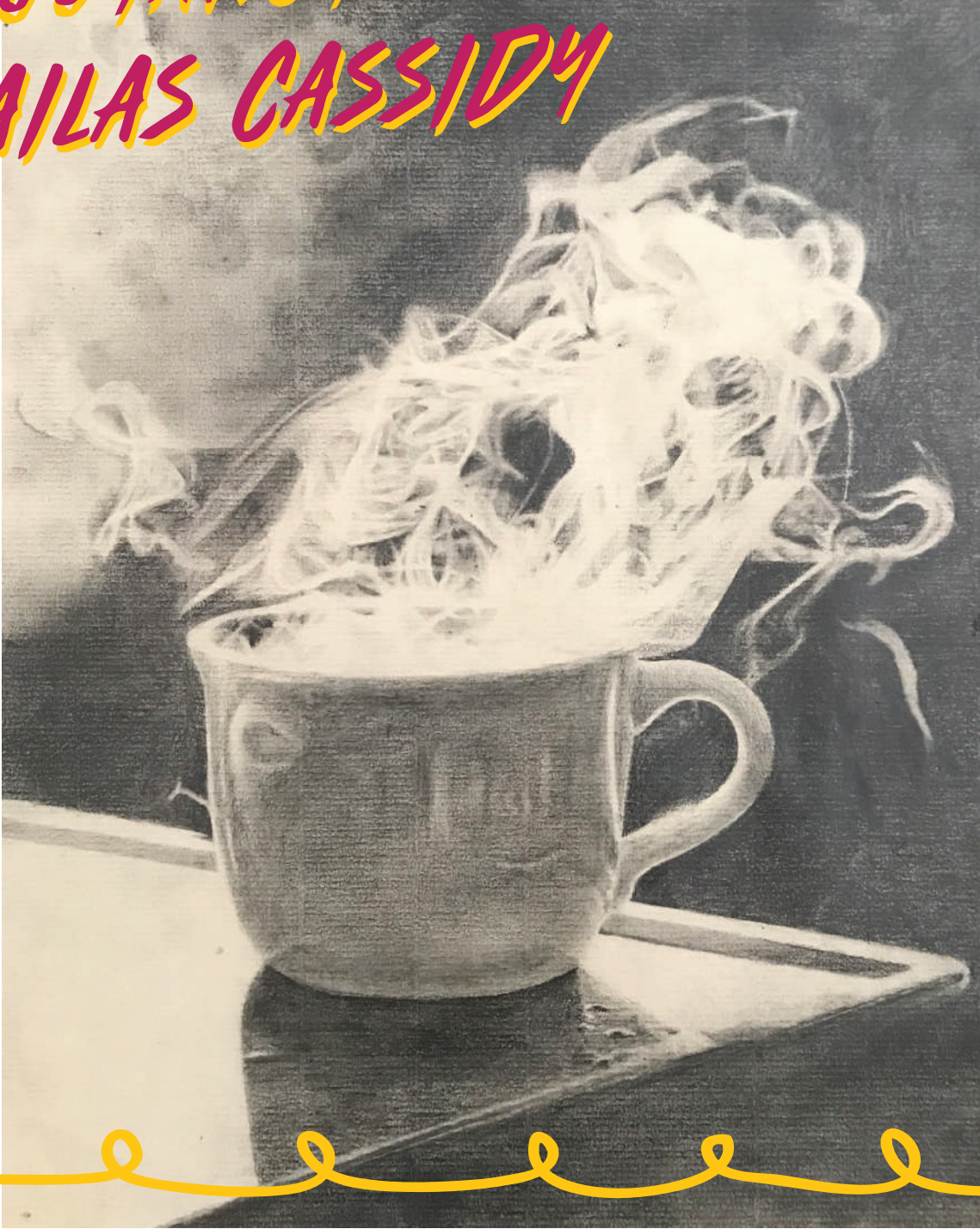
By Lesley George

A reflection only tells so
much.
May I hold a mirror
to your glory,
your wit,
your undying stubbornness.
Mere light and glass
Could never do you justice.
Crowned in flowers,
that is how I see you.
If we were to trade eyes
you'd weep at what you've
never seen before.

*CLAIRABELL —
KAILAS CASSIDY*



**BUOYANCY —
KAILAS CASSIDY**





FIRE — SARA DECHANT

The Road to You By Vivien Pham

I always thought the mission to you was as easy as driving on a smooth, straight road at 6am in the morning. There would be no traffic in my way; I had the road to myself, and the slow hum of the engine accompanying me for the ride.

I don't think I planned for how the drive would be.

I pass 9am and the horns are honking. My coffee has turned cold, yet I still consume it in hopes it will still give me the same effect I needed.

By noon the potholes become more apparent and the rainclouds start to hover on the brink of the horizon. Yet I drive, your subtle whispers of desire that keep the gas pedal pressed down. Raindrops grow heavy like anxiety, pounding against my windows as my heart pounds out of my chest.

I've made it so far - I might as well continue, right?

It's 3pm. The exhaustion sinks into my mind.

The silence in my car is protruding my heart.

My sanity is at stake here.

Why am I even driving all the way for you? Why are you not meeting me halfway?

4pm. Who am I kidding - you're exhausting, your silence is what's killing me. And when you do speak, the games you play with your words will no longer string me along.

6pm. I'm getting out of the vehicle.

We Never Met

By Rachel Dennis

July 30th, 2018
Dundas Station
10:23pm

I only had one headphone in,
which is weird for me.

I am not usually out this late at
night alone,
nor would I ever pay to get on a
subway three stops from home.

But at this hour,
in this place,
at this moment,
for whatever reason...
I did.

You fell into me when the subway
started moving.
You begin a long winded apology.
Your eyes seeing me.
Time slowed.

You also had one headphone in.

“You didn’t mean it, it’s okay”.
I wouldn’t usually say anything.

We looked at one another.
I put my phone away,
seeing you.

You took your headphones off.

Two strangers looking at each other,
in a crowded subway,
in silence.

In four minutes,
a lifetime passes,
between Dundas and Bloor-Yonge
Station.

We never met each other,
but in another time,
in another place...

Maybe we did.

*ADOLESCENCE —
KAILAS CASSIDY*





*A Federation
of Students' Service*