“poems are my kites
flying me, war-wearied, up
through skies, dark or bright”
— Ola Nowosad, Refugee Haiku

Cover artwork: Jason McLean
INTRODUCTION

Welcome to WordsFestZine, an ‘instant’ publication born out of a partnership among Words, Poetry London, Western University, Fanshawe College, and Insomniac Press. Our goal was to capture the energy, dynamism, and diversity of Words by putting together a collection of reactions and responses to the festival while it was happening. Our call was simple: Visit the Festival. Write About It. Get Published. We asked festival goers and our esteemed writers to send us poems, twitterverse, creative non-fiction, fiction, and sketches. These are not works “recollected in tranquility” — indeed, the ink may still be drying as you read this preface.

So how did we pull this off? With a team of tireless editors and producers working around the clock to edit, compile, design and, finally, print the zine within 24 hours of receiving the final submissions. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the participation of the public: this is London’s WordsFest; this is London’s WordsFestZine.

We have divided the WordsFestZine into 4 sections: “Words of Celebration,” “Words of Reaction,” “Words Aloud,” and “Words Unbound.” The “Words of Celebration” section contains pieces celebrating the festival. “Words of Reaction” contains poems responding to the festival and the events and authors at it. The “Words Aloud” contains poems read at the open mic night. And the “Words Unbound” section contains the heterogeneous oddments and tidbits that collect around a major literary event.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

An ambitious project of this nature could not have happened without a lot of coordinating efforts. WordsFestZine would like to thank all of the WordsFest organizers, and in particular, Josh Lambier, of the Public Humanities Program at Western, and Brian Meehan, of Museum London.

We would also like to thank Kathleen Fraser, of Western’s English and Writing Studies, for facilitating student and faculty involvement in this project; Poetry London for staffing the festival Zine table; and the many energetic and dedicated WordsFestZine volunteers.

We would also like to thank Jessica Bugorski, Chair of the School of Language and Liberal Studies at Fanshawe College, and the print shop at Fanshawe College. Jessica Bugorski gave her enthusiastic support to the WordsFestZine, and the print shop printed the WordsFestZine.

We are grateful for the many sponsors of Words, including the London Arts Council, who make the festival possible.

Finally, to all of those who submitted their creative works for this Zine: thank you!

Cover artwork: Jason McLean
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WORDS OF CELEBRATION

COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEARNING
by Penn Kemp

Students from The Local make for a delightful day at Souwesto Expo: wo/manning book tables galore:

Public Humanities in action! When town meets gown, expect fusion, confusion, fun and enthusiasm.

Here’s to Insomniac Press for living true to its name and calling, in creating wordfestzine. Bells on, books out!

WORD WORSHIPPERS
by Rebecca St. Pierre

Chilly fall air swept those smitten with the written word, past candy-coloured metal trees and a silver-tusked rhino, into a haven of creativity where words that were magically assembled and reassembled and fondly bonded to wooden tablets blushed with the monumental onslaught of praise.

Pews of worshippers raised hands to exalt those who dared to tame the nebulous into concrete tales. Timid souls gathered strength amongst the united. Overzealous internal critics cowered in fear.

Mighty Word Gatherers inscribed fresh print amongst their aged script to the delight of the followers who tucked the thousands upo thousands of carefully crafted words close to their chest, as with heads bowed they stepped into the chilly fall air to be swept once again past a silver-tusked rhino and candy-coloured metal trees.

In the dead of night, with stealthy delight, Word Worshippers reveled as they seized one precious hour from the spring’s daylight savings to extend the WordsFest celebrations.

ORIGINAL WORDS
by Marlene Laplante

“There is feeling in words. I trace their letters to feel the emotion.

Original words — words of the past — are more valuable than treasure. They hold time. They give reason, understanding, validation, comfort.

The original words of poetry wake passion, feed our senses, to see, to hear, to taste, to touch, and bring back the beauty of a memory.

Original words are words you remember. Written words preserve a place in time, a bundle of love letters, a note of sympathy, a letter from a fallen soldier.

I held it in my hand, written two weeks before he died,
the letter from my uncle to my mother in 1944.
It was an indescribable moment filled with emotion.

There really are no life records without words.
Words carry our story through time.
History holds on to them.

STUDENT EDITOR
by Shannon Scott

Empty coffee cups litter the boardroom table and
the sound of tapping keyboards fills the room.
As the lights over the art installation flicker,
I realize how lovely it is to edit poetry.

There is a sense of comfort in reading over another person’s work,
concentrating deeply and thinking critically.

It’s almost as if you can hear our minds working:
“Where should I put this semicolon?”
“Should this line be capitalized?”
“I love the phrasing of this line.”

To talk about poems,
to be surrounded by writers,
to have your thoughts consumed by words;
it feels so right, so write.

HIGHLIGHT REEL
by Erin Anderson

cold cylinder
fog climbs above lights
flicker
rain beats in time
to keys
under finger pads
flicker
precarious decision-making
edit emotions
to fit into a box
or onto a page
flicker
energy arc
connecting minds unique
as whirls and swirls
on those pads
fabric of community
flicker

rain beats in time
to keys
under finger pads

— Erin Anderson

6 — Word Fest Zine 2017
Blurry words
fill the creased palm of my hand.

— Christine JC Ellwood

**THOUGHTS TO WORDS**
by Christine JC Ellwood

Flowing ink from a long silver pen:
Inked letters
melt across a lined notebook.
Jittery sounds
create words on a screen.
Blurry words
fill the creased palm of my hand.
Pencilled
onto a restaurant napkin.

Thoughts.
Words.
Lines.
Print.
Share.

Read words spark thoughts.

**WORDS DANGLE IN BLUE VELOUR**
by Marta and Emma Croll-Baehre

droop down from semi-cylinders
no genocide here (in america, but not really)
absences stagger into purple faux-fur
tickets to parch     tickets to remember uterine
deserts of consumed milk teat
we gurgle     sad sounds in a dental white
auditorium slippy discs from kinky tips
octopus heels and wet wet teeth

if you wear the W     you can’t be in
doppel dear     hot consonants drip
upward to black sticks of verbiage
rabbit-like cross-sections make supple vowels
sit cross-legged in suburbs
far into this rhino shell     I will eat zucchini
cheese watch cream blobs stutter
pinch my cheeks and finger paper

**POETRY IS HARD, GODDAMMIT**
by Lyss

Sitting here fishing with nothing to write.
Hoping.
Waiting.
Ideas,
please bite.

**THE COMMA**
by Evan Suntres

A brief pause for breath in the current
Allows the stream of symbols to flow;
For without this dam the damage done
Will prove to destroy the prose.
In its absence lines run long
Resulting in ceaseless continuation.
The comma serves to correct this conflict
By providing precise punctuation.

Clauses cannot connect without break --
Adverbs and adjectives and all the rest.
As words walk and the comma confidently
Runs along the baseline of the text.

Though up to now it’s nowhere to be found;
Is it really so essential?
Yes, or else the rain of words
Will be tiresome, and torrential.

LOSS FOR WORDS
by Lyss

I count four women of colour in a room of some-hundred Including myself

For the first time in my writing career I am reminded of my race Involuntarily

I shift uncomfortably in my seat Squirming in my own skin Wondering if the woman With the diamond watch behind me Can see me trying to shed
This armour

This shell
Once felt like home
And now I am a shy turtle wearing snake’s skin

Surrounded by creatives By artists starving to create To purge
Was once so calming

Now I think they watch me Bloat
Binge
Maybe I’m doing this all wrong
Perhaps I am not “write” enough for them Perhaps I’m just not “write”

These words don’t feel like magic anymore
These words
Feel like a dark curse I leave early

WORDS
by Jennifer Wenn

Mysterious, mystical, and yet material:
Words, language, source of untold power, Power to bridge, power to divide,
Power to bind, power to sever, Power to heal, power to wound;
Magnificent gift, awesome responsibility.
II
Forcing their way to the surface
From depths unknown,
Modulated by my spirit,
Hesitatingly, delayed,
And yet inevitable,
Finally moulding into my own unique voice.

STRONG LANGUAGE
by Amelia Goetz

Pedal and burn
under four layers
of fallen
oak leaves.

I arrive with thoughts, at least.
Slick, slimy, and wet; can’t grip
the soaped-up ground
under my tire and lining my skull.

Long teeth
distracted by what I mean.
Never malicious,
too weak to bite down hard.

Imagine on the page—
the bite.

FERVENT
by Linda Lucas

A writers’ festival is one in which
every pen tilts crazily
across a page, a notebook, a journal—
or two thumbs piston
furiously on a touch screen—
but no one is taking notes.

Night minds are on the loose
and the administrivia police are on lockdown.

We are feeding.

A tangible energy sparks about the room,
not vampiric, exactly,
but charged with the same frantic hunger
and fastidious need to find the exact
wriggling specimens required for sustenance.
We convince them to give up
their lifeblood and be led, willingly,
onto the sacrificial page.

WORDS OF REACTION
[7:59]
by Chelsea Heathcote

My reflection is the spitting image of me
tonight, and yet so much more than I could
ever be. Amidst the bitter stench of alcohol
and half-hearted banter, she strolls in, adorned
in better reds, softer blues, and bolder blacks. I
consider if I know her well enough to wave,
think better of it, and duck my head down
when she walks past. What will people say
when they see us? How will I explain our-
selves? Two halves of a whole, but they do not
match. I’ll say, “Perhaps it’s her who doesn’t
belong here tonight, looking far too glamorous
to the point she looks shabby, don’t you
think?”

“Such a vulgar vermilion, have you ever
seen a sapphire more snobbish? And the
black—bold is the new boring.”

My head inflates, fills up the room until I
tumble over beneath the weight of the insecu-
At the grocery store, the lady in the produce aisle gives me a sample of legacy.

— Laura Brooks

WRITE WHAT YOU KNOW
by Laura Brooks

I tighten the scarf around my neck as the wind whispers to me it’s autumn. When I throw the ends over my shoulder, a word escapes through the tassels and flutters away in the breeze. The only thing I’m able to catch is a glimpse at paramour before it flutters onto the windshield of the bus I just missed.

At the grocery store, the lady in the produce aisle gives me a sample of legacy. I chew the morsel slowly, imagining the meal I can make out of it.

When I sit down to write, I stare into my steeping tea, half expecting words to float to the surface so I can taste them infused with hints of apple and cinnamon. I begin to twirl my pencil slowly and soon unobtainable drops heavily from the eraser end, falling into the tea and sinking slowly to the bottom. When I take a break for dinner, all there is on my page is a tea stain.

I open my cupboard when washing the dishes and anticipate an avalanche of Tupperware, but no words can be found among the mess.

SOFA
by David Barrick

Sit around long enough repeating a word, any word, and it starts sounding funny—udder, apocalypse, waddle, bludgeon, evisceration, inanition, backpfeifengesicht—soon it’s all just syllables that crack you up.

One word that never quite works is sofa. Say it ‘til your jaw’s sore: still sounds like it’s asking a question, then sighing. Like it disapproves of you. Like it’s waiting for you to take the hint and get up already.
ONLY WORDS ON A PAGE
by Mary-lyn Hopper

Only words on a page,
yet—intricately woven—they
become a transcendent world,
giving us cause to contemplate the forces
which guide the actions and decisions
of those who momentarily inhabit our
thoughts and passions.
How can it be that we are saddened to leave
those worlds behind?
Worlds that only exist
on a page.

WORDS
by Danielle Bryl-Dam

A slip of the tongue
like a mouth with a flurry of bees
once opened, teeth swabbed with fuzzy
black bodies
I vomit, they target
a hundred “I’m sorrys”
dripping with cream and honey
liqueurs that cannot extinguish

(but that hasn’t stopped us from trying)

CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE
by Elaine Ballantyne

I love connecting with people. Today was
one of those days. I attended Words to help
writer Elaine Cougler at her table. It was great
to have conversations with so many people
who are passionate and enthused over words!

I have always loved the quote by Will Du-
rant that says, “Civilization is a stream with
banks. The stream is sometimes filled with
blood from people killing, stealing, shouting
and doing things historians usually record;
while on the banks, unnoticed, people build
homes, make love, raise children, sing songs,
write poetry and even whittle statues. The
story of civilization is the story of what hap-
pened on the banks.”

Today felt like being on one of those banks.
It was ordinary people sharing and supporting
each other through telling stories. By using
and delighting in words, we writers explore
the quest of understanding the human experi-
ence. The words we use and carefully choose
give us comfort and meaning.
words between covers hover in the vibe
— Laura Whyte

BOOK EXPO
by Laura Whyte

The Souwesto Book Expo is a hum with talk. Not the sound of serious late-night coffee talk or the raucous shouts in a bar when the home team scores. Not the drone of an under-breath reader determined to finish the page, her thoughts in the real world—her new lover, her credit card balance, dinner. The hum in the gallery is of hellos, introductions, shared moments, and the buzz of being in a space where design and words come together, where words between covers hover in the vibe.

CRAWL OUT OF BED
by Ivy Minjung Koo

November 4th, 2017; alarm rang at 1PM.
Souwesto Book Expo; missed workshop events.
Uber; cost 20 dollars.
Museum London; unfamiliar faces.

WordsFestZine volunteering; a girl waves at me.
Sigh of relief.

WORDS ALOUD

A PAPER DISGUISE
by Leah Kuiack

I’m writing this poem in hopes that someone is Unfazed by eloquent metaphors and imagery. I need someone to grab hold of my collarbones When I say, “I’m fine,” and shake Until I regain consciousness and Vomit the truth all down my front.

My depression is exhausted by sycophants, Impressed by my ability to put Suicidal thoughts down on paper And add a simile or two.
When a high school teacher applauded My “self-deprecating tone,” I smiled and accepted the easiest ‘A’ I would ever receive.

Tell me I’m captivating. Tell me I fascinate. Tell me I loathe myself more impressively
Than anyone you’ve ever met.
I’ll tell you that I’m embarrassed by your
Overzealous attempts to make me blush.
I’ll tell you that I’m not listening anyways
And that I prefer these words
[these ones right here]
Over any that have ever tumbled from
Your impure intentions.
My motives are not void of sin either,
But they don’t have to be
Because they’re mine.

I never minded the rain, but even less so
lately.
It blisters in the best way possible.
When it chokes me, I breathe better.
I’ve only ever succeeded under the pressure of
Something larger than myself.
I got caught in a storm today and life went on

YOU AUTO-COMPLETE ME
by Becca Serena

I’m trying to get a good time
to be a good man and I think
I have a good time to do with it
All I want to do is so I can do it better
I love love it and I love love them
I hope you like this love, Love
It so so cute and I mean it to you

You love me like I miss him
and you so cute and cute so cute

I love love you, so much harder to be happy
and I love you—so much harder to love
love you—so much harder to make you happy
I miss your smile I miss him too You can
make it
through the same thing again to my heart
and you will be my life
Love you so much harder love love it
I mean you love me love love you
So much harder to make you feel
like you are so happy and happy with your life
You will be my life love

I hope so much better hope you’re so happy
Thank him love—so much harder to love
love you. So much harder to love
love it when you’re submissive with your
heart
I miss your amazing love
He never knew what it means for your life
and love you so much harder

DE IUSTITIA
by Tyler Miller

I beat my dog for peeing on the rug.
He hasn’t stopped.
He just pees at the sight of me.  
I whipped my horse for disobedience.  
He didn't learn to obey.  
He just rears at the sight of my whip.  
I scolded a man for being wrong.  
He's not any better.  
So I had him put in chains and locked up  
in a correctional facility.  
He's not correct.  
He just hates me now.  
I don't do wrong willingly.  
I just make the world  
in my own image.  

Why should I think  
I can beat it out  
from theirs?  

I must not think ill,  
or I've consigned  
myself to war,  
where evil thoughts  
go to flourish.  

No idea died  
on a battlefield  
anyway.  

My hate dies  
in your humanity.  
I'll offer them mine  
and kill them with  
kindness.  

DE CONDITIONIBUS PACIS  
by Tyler Miller  

I must not think ill,  
there's no hope in that.  
Revenge accepts evil  
and gives it primacy.  

Forgiveness is hope.  
My wound is still there,  
but it will get better.  
It must  
or what's the point?  

No one can beat  
belief from my body.  

HOT CHOCOLATE GHOST  
by Clinton Ruttan  

It has that lost at sea taste, that salty finish to a  
"used to be sweet" appeal. A flavour that inspires  
lonely dreams on lazy Sunday mornings spent  
better with others. The scent of brine and sugar  
candies haunts my brain as I walk down regular  
streets with regular people. No more hot choco-  
late ghosts to remind me of the inevitable loss of  

"How easily we forget about the little things that make our existence possible.  
— Clinton Ruttan"
light that comes before entropy's greatest tune, hummed lightly by those who pass by without realizing the world has yet to start shrinking. Mortal clay is wetted for the mould, made as fresh as possible to refrain from cracking under the pressures of a society obsessed with outward appearances and social media surrogates. Half-measures only cover half the canvas with half the paints that won’t stick with half the force of a halfway home’s rejected dreamer. Spinning round and round in this samsara existence, an endless loop of causality and cause/effect bull-shit. Twisted tree lines on a lacklustre horizon without two nickels to rub together for fear of disrupting magnetic fields and chakra sensors. Where did the good get going? When did all of the above become so bloody mundane that even the most curious individual soon is left sated with the knowledge that everything changes and yet nothing is different. When did we realize that our childhoods were dead and gone no matter how nostalgic we force ourselves to feel? We are not all special snowflakes; we cannot all be rock stars, movie stars, painters, poets, and playwrights... someone has to shovel the shit, someone has to sell you your ticket, someone has to cook the meals and scrub the dishes, someone has to do the mundane or else trash fills the streets and sewers overflow. How easily we forget about the little things that make our existence possible. And comfortable.

**BLUE**
by Michael Couchie

Typically, my days are gray, or different shades of beige.

At times, I feel my days have always been this way, and that’s the way they’ll always stay.

Then there are those other days — those rare and precious few — filled with green and gold, and clearest ocean blue.

**NIGHT**
by Naomi Marcus

Night has fallen, Darkness crept. Silence — the moonlit blanket kept. There seems a difference from night to day, But they’re only lit up in a different way. In the sky now it’s true, Where once was sun There now is moon, And when it’s there, always nigh, The little lanterns of the sky. And too, In this starlit time of night,
Silence—the moonlit blanket kept.
— Naomi Marcus

Flying fast, behold more lights.
Bright and blinking in the sky
A group of nightlights—
Fireflies.
Though as quick as they come
They now are gone,
Their light unseen with the break of dawn.
Taking their cue,
Away stars fly
Until next night, concealed only to the eye.
In the sky, now it’s true,
There now is sun
Where once was moon.
Yes, there’s a difference from night to day.
They’re both lit up in their own way.

Ha-ha,
We’re laughing with you, not at
You
Are beautiful
Inside and
Outside
It is spring

And with spring
Comes a new beginning,
A new light,
And new reason to live life
To the fullest
Where there’s a way there’s a
Will
You help me with
This
Makes no
Sense
Of direction is important when you’re
Trying to find your way back
To me
This is just
Perfect
Is only what you want it
To be
Or not to be
That is
The question
I’m asking is:

FLOWWORDS
by Naomi Marcus

Words like I’m
Sorry
Are just another way of saying
I love
You
Are like a star, shining
The way
To do
This
Is funny,
Strange not
Did you know,
That I did, and I do, and I will,
Love you forever?

**UGLY**
by Vivianne Quang

Hi, my name is Vivianne
And I’m ugly

Now before you deny that for me
Let me explain to you how society defines beauty

To be beautiful is to have your torso mirror an hourglass
And your thighs, smooth and curvy
For them to pass
Well, I’m definitely curvy
But curving in the wrong direction
And in the wrong places
Wrong, as if there’s a right way for bodies to be shaped
Wrong, as if I’m a broken body needing to be fixed and taped

To be beautiful is to have the hair on your head lush, luminous, and lustrous
And to have the hair on the rest of your body gone
As if the little black hairs on my arms are a big secret, needing to be hidden from the world

To be beautiful is to have your nose straight and narrow
But not too narrow
And your eyes wide
But not too wide
And your lips full
But not too full

To be beautiful is to wear expensive clothing that is elegant and stylish
Clothing that reveals your body
But not too much
Because then you’ll be “asking for it”
And it doesn’t matter if the cloth wraps around your body a little too tight
And it doesn’t matter if the price is unreasonably high, making it not feel right
It’s not about what you feel
It’s about what men feel when they see you

Perhaps you’re thinking, “Well, if you’re so discontent, just ignore the standards”
You see, I would love to
But I look up and I see billboards plastered with pretty, voluptuous women in expensive clothing
I look in front of me and I see television shows plastered with pretty, voluptuous women in expensive clothing
I look down and I see magazines plastered with pretty, voluptuous women in expensive clothing
All of them are screaming “Look, look! This should be you!”

Well, no
That can’t be
Because I am me
And this is my body

I live in a society where unrealistic expectations define beauty
Men need to have big, muscular bodies
Women need to have curvy, smooth bodies
People who don’t fit into the binary need to just not exist
Because that’s too confusing, am I right?
I’m a bird in a cage plastered with rules to
dress, rules to act, rules to live
As if my life is comparable to a kitchen appli-
ance that comes with a manual script
As if the terms and conditions of my body
were already encrypted

To all that I say
Hi, my name is Vivianne
And I’m ugly

WORDS UNBOUND

UNTITLED
by Nic Bylsma

To the lady that adopted me at the toddler age
I don’t know how to feel so I got these
words on the page
People telling me Wright Nic write everyone
expresses pain in their own way
But my head’s been spinning like a turbine all
day!
Sometimes I wish I could dump my thoughts
like a tea poured but I’m always hooked up
everywhere I go like an extension cord
Because you see my mom’s got cancer I’m
just here looking for answers
But the chemo is starting to take her hair
She’s like the nicest lady out there

Wow this just ain’t fair
She always told me to stay on my feet ‘til my
goals were complete
When I was alone, placed a hand on my shoul-
der now I just want to be there for you pay-
ing it forward
I feel like I’m putting blank puzzle pieces to-
gether and all I want to do is help my mother
and be there for my sister and brother
And help all of you
Like look to the guy next to you
Lots of you gonna get cancer
Like what the fuck we supposed to do
I wish I could fix this like my shoe add some
gorilla glue, but reality check cancer is the
real killer here do I really gotta go door-to-
door for the cure, Nickeli
In time of pain they don’t know how much
time my mom has left

THE ROOM
by Kaela Morin

A half-tube, swaddled
in tawny light.
Focus the eye.
At eye level,
the Soup Can, the Cheese Wheel,
the Peacock, framed
beside a small white card.
Downtown gathered around black tables, tables covered in silk, curling paper shadows, bright silvery chips cast by glass, watches, rings swallowing thin-skinned fingers. A gold dagger cuts a grey man’s tie in half; glistening, a woman’s fur stole.

The foam from my beer smears the inside of the glass in my hand. The Room rumbles, throaty—the appetite whets in this climate—mouth and mind split open, catching, holding.

The Room is a heart, is a cup.

Five empty stools wait.

— Kaela Morin

THE BABY (THE WRITER)
by Sydney Brooman

ripped wrapper lips give you paper cuts

choosing the groves of teeth means choking on crumpled prescription receipts and pocket paper feels softer cause it’s been there so long—

floss with fake-ass frat boy business cards

they wash out the words that are not yes

words sit stoic and spill from the stick of rotting rose stems killed by cold drafts

stomachs sick with plot
“Long way from the days as a slave.  
Now I'm paving the road to a master's degree;  
I mastered my own destiny.”
—Mandela Massina

stuff sleep number mattresses  
with napkin serenades

immortalize it  
   all.

DARK IS NOT EVIL  
By Mandela Massina

Son of a skin tone most hated,  
thankful to know hatred but separate it  
from what is love-related.

Long way from the days as a slave.  
Now I'm paving the road to a master's degree;  
I mastered my own destiny.

Rejected the image they project on me.  
The picture of a boy from the projects,  
not an academic prospect.

Young, black, and gifted.  
Not what the KKK wanted for Christmas,  
but exactly what Malcolm X wanted to wit-  
ness.

Copied and traced, but would never trade  
placement.

Appropriation confused for adoration.  
The pain of a nation used as inspiration.

REFUGEE HAIKU  
by Ola Nowosad

longing for release,  
refugees in crowded tents  
recite old poems

as always, not far,  
ignorant armies still clash,  
wordless bullets fly

I forage for food:  
language is my sustenance,  
tongue untied by words

poems are wagons  
pulling me from world’s madness  
to green grass of youth

poems are my kites  
   flying me, war-wearied, up  
through skies, dark or bright
SLEEP//WAKE
By: Josh Thompson-Persaud

I keep my phone on do-not-disturb these days because my head is so loud, full of crowds cheering my demise at the hands of a beast so twisted it would make a corkscrew look straight.

To date, I haven't picked up a single call for help, and I feel numb like a drumbeat that kept going after the song finished. I feel dumb for holding on to something said three years ago on a park bench where the stench of dead leaves was just starting to rise, and the trenches we dug were never deep enough in our eyes.

I forgot how to remember to smile and laugh and cheer, and I fear I'll never taste ice cream the same way again, twisting around a cone, trying get at the inside before it melts.

But life isn’t fair—that’s what my mother told me, and I’m tired of excuses for an abusive mind that sentences me to life in prison and holds a gun to my head asking if this is triggering. I’m still figuring out how to survive mental illness, and the truth is an icepick lobotomy doesn’t sound so bad. Maybe that’s a tad overdramatic, but when words are not enough, what am I left with?

Hope.
Some days that’s 4 hours of sleep, leaving me wired into the word, tired, like jumper cables into a car, trying to restart, restart, restart. Some days it’s one more break—one more break will get me through. Some days it’s staring at the back of my eyelids till the colours dance, entrancing no one but myself. And some days—it’s you. It’s knowing there are people out there surviving this war-torn desert, one day at a time, fighting ghosts from the past more violent than the living. Marching through sandstorms of time, barely clinging to belief that one day it will be better. Maybe not today. Maybe not tomorrow. But one day.

I live for that day. I live for the possibility that I will one day turn my do-not-disturb off and not be disturbed by the jingle of my cell phone. And maybe then the crowds won’t be so loud, the beast a little less twisted. And if not, at least I'll know I persisted.

ANTI-APOCALYPSE
by Tom Cull

no nuclear winter
no zombie apocalypse
no ice age
no superbug
no second coming
no robot revolution
no alien invasion

a pear tree
buckthorn
plastic bags
a river
turtles
BIOS:

Erin Anderson is a second-year English and Creative Writing student at Western.
Elaine Ballantyne attended WordsFest.
David Barrick writes poetry, fiction, and songs in London, Ontario. Thanks to Steven Heighton for the word backpfeifengesicht.
Laura Brooks is a fourth-year student studying at Western University.
Sydney Brooman is Western University’s Student Writer-in-Residence and an avid lover of bios.
Danielle Bryl-Dam is a second-year Western University student studying English and Creative Writing. She enjoys a good dark roast, 1920s typewriters, and long bus rides filled with good music.
Nic Bylsma contributed to the WordsFest Zine.
Mary-lyn Hopper has been an avid reader for as long as she can remember. As a parent and teacher, she delights in discovering and sharing books with children. She appreciates the insights into the writing process provided by the authors showcased at WordsFest.
Penn Kemp’s new book of poetry, *Local Heroes*, will be published by Insomniac Press in spring, 2018. Her next performance will be in Couplets #15 with Marta Croll-Baehre.
Ivy Minjung Koo attended WordsFest.
Leah Kuiack, a London native, is currently completing her Honors Specialization in Creative Writing and English at Western University.
Marlene Laplante has been writing poetry for about ten years.
Linda Lucas is a teacher of French at Clarke Road Secondary School and a part-time singer-songwriter who is currently revising her first novel, *The Undertaker’s Wife*. She was accidentally born in France but has lived in British Columbia and Alberta. She has spent most of her life in Southwestern Ontario, particularly London.
Lyss loves pho and thinks that the world is a simulation.
C.M.M. is a poetry representative for her hometown, the youngest to compete in the Canadian Festival of Spoken Word, and a lover of literature. Obviously, she hopes to publish novels one day.
Naomi Marcus is an eleven-year old girl who has been making rhymes since she was
two.

**Mandala Massina** is a second-year student at Western.

**Tyler Miller** attended WordsFest.

**Kaela Morin** is a fourth-year student in the Honours Specialization in English Language and Literature program at Western University.

**Ola Nowosad** attended WordsFest.

**Vivianne Quang** is a first year nursing student at Western University. They hope to use their words to resonate within the hearts of others.

**Clinton Ruttan** hates most people. Animals and plants are chill. I speak too loudly. I can get manic pretty often. I sleep a lot. I get distracted easily. I adore winter. I suffer from extreme FOMO. I am the first to laugh at my own jokes. I am the last to fall asleep. I will always hold the door open for you. I am super excitable. I don’t always text back. I am dysfunctional. I am the best warm body for cuddles. I wing it way too often. I am an aspiring writer. I work in a kitchen.

**Shannon Scott** is a first-year student in the English program at Western University and a student editor for this year’s WordsFestZine.

**Becca Serena** is the editor-in-chief of Her Campus Western. She read at the WordsFest event Poetry Live!: An Evening of Open Mic Poetry.

**Rebecca St. Pierre** is a writer, photographer, and Londoner.

**Evan Suntres** is a fourth-year English student at King’s University College.

**Josh Thompson-Persaud** is an aspiring artist and third-year student at Western University studying English and Creative Writing.

**Jennifer Wenn** is a London resident. Professionally, she is a systems analyst; vocationally, she is a writer and speaker. Her latest journey is into the wonderful world of poetry.

**Laura Whyte** attended WordsFest.
“poems are my kites
flying me, war-wearied, up
through skies, dark or bright”
— Ola Nowosad, Refugee Haiku