

SEA WATER.

# Between Wind and Water

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*Queer Zines of Care on the Kent Coast* is a commission of three zines exploring the theme of care from a mix of queer perspectives, grounded in the three coastal towns of Dover, Margate and Folkestone.

The three artists - Bob Chicalors (Dover), Ray Felix Carter (Folkestone) and Greta Sharp (Margate) - have used writing, illustration and collage to reflect and share the experiences of the queer community in these places, capturing a moment in time and their relationship to, and experience of, care in these coastal communities.

The zines will be freely distributed in queer-welcoming spaces in each town in the hope that they will be read, gifted, shared and loved by the people who need them most.

*Queer Zines of Care on the Kent Coast* forms part of People United's *Future of Care*, a multi-faceted arts programme which took place across East Kent in 2021 and 2022, supported by Arts Council England, Creative Estuary, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, The Roger De Haan Charitable Trust and Kent County Council.

Andrea Spisto, People United

## INTRODUCTION

When I moved to Margate a year ago, I began exploring my personal relationship with the sea through writing, sound recordings, and drawing, as a survivor whose trauma is located in my bodymind with sounds, sights and smells of the British seaside. This research culminated in a workshop and publication series called 'Screaming At The Sea', that explored collective healing and expressions of rage and grief, using the voice as an anchor. The workshop aimed to share my personal journey of processing rage and grief by creating a safe space to invite others to feel and express, acknowledging that globally there are a multitude of traumas within / upon the sea, and offering a space where individually and collectively we could initiate a relationship with the sea. Creating this zine has been an opportunity to continue some of that research and creative process.

I was inspired by a talk on the artist Lizzy Rose by Mathew de Pulford and Katie Hare at an event by Art360 at the Turner Contemporary. Lizzy was a disabled artist who lived locally for much of her life, and Katie and Mathew showed us a photograph Lizzy took several years ago of a whale that beached in Margate. She was acutely aware of the circumstances of this whale's death, the relationship between illness and human harm, and it stuck with me as I was working through ideas for this zine.

Within 2 years I've 'come out' and received 2 medical diagnoses – things make a lot more sense: I'm no longer hiding myself and I have parameters as to why my body functions this way and why I struggle with things that other people don't, but it's been a lot to *grapple* with. After only living in Margate for 6 months, I became involved in Margate Pride. Being embedded, a part of, and an organiser within the queer community here, has been one of the most healing things, and this community has dissolved so much of my shame. The way I view myself, my gender and my sexuality has changed so drastically in such a short space of time. These parts of myself that are tied up in trauma have found freedom here.

Between Wind and Water

Greta Sharp

July 2019. A whale beaches at Palm Bay.  
Found by a dog walker, it is suspected to be a young Orca or a Porpoise. The mammal rots on the beach, flies swarm over, feasting; it's flesh turning pink, holes revealing insides.

We're partially to blame – whales beach themselves due to sickness or injury. Weakened animals might drift with the current until they are brought ashore. Our chemicals make their way into bodies, into lungs and tissue and muscle; plastic is ingested, or entangled in; noise pollution deafens and disorientates.

Beached whales die from dehydration and their body weight; their organs get crushed by the mass of their bodies. Whales need to be submerged in water to counter their heaviness, body weight supported by salt and sea and weeds.

\*

Niko Weaden I've been trying to return to my watery body, these words pound my head / *One does not need a womb to be moved by the tide / F\*ck drugs / The earth must be able to give me all I need /* circling, I think I understand, this must come together but I never get there, your words fall apart before themselves.

Karin Aminoto  
Ingersoll Earlier this year I hurriedly scrawled down: *In the sea I can be myself, there are no barriers to my body.* Despite how many times I try to rewrite this, there is no better way of putting it. In the sea I am not so aware of myself; I'm always restricting, making smaller, falling over, too big and too small in all the wrong places. *I become more agile in the water than on land: I can soar, glide, dive and spin.* The sea fits me perfectly and moulds itself around my body.

Maggie Nelson There are these moments of acceptance, where this body that does not fit, makes sense to me. And there are times where I witness someone as themselves and I am flooded with grief, need, and desire all at once. *How to explain that for some, or for some of the time, this irresolution is OK - desirable, even - whereas for others, or for others at some times, it stays a source of conflict or grief?* I'm still not sure where I situate myself - finding recognition in these moments of solidity before my understanding unravels again.

\*

March 2022. The rheumatologists office at The William Harvey Hospital in Ashford. I've been sent to the diabetes unit for an assessment that I waited 6 months for, although I am not diabetic. It is quiet here, calmer than in A&E where I entered.

*I feel each of her fingertips as a sharp object as she continues to press all the way up my legs. By this point I am holding my breath, silenced by what feels more like a procedure than a test, unable to say Yes in the agony. Every time I say Yes, my body is screaming No.*

Alice Hatrick

I'm sent for X-rays: back to A&E, I'm handed a shirt and gown and told to change in a locker in the hall way, the bathroom next to it doesn't lock, I need to pee; *I'll have to hold it*, I walk down the corridor in my gown and bare feet, I've only sat down for 3 minutes when I'm called into radiology by a student, she asks me to lie down under the machine, turn onto your left, now turn onto your right, I get up, change back into my clothes, and leave no longer just another patient.

I get my diagnosis that same day. There is no cure, *unfortunately. Unfortunately* I'll need to learn to manage it. Through illness, my body has become something to be managed, something to be monitored and documented through x-rays and symptoms.

Alice Hattrick writes: *With chronic illness, and in particular those that do not appear to have a physical cause, you might feel like an interloper, like you do not belong to either one.* Medical practice tells me I'm sick because my body does not function how it is 'supposed' to, and because of this I cannot be *healthy*. Health exists in a binary with sickness, and chronic illness makes me feel like an imposter, like I'm not quite a part of; there is no 'cause' as such, it simply is, a diagnosis made up of experiences.

\*

Over the course of a year I have settled on a name; I'm taking time to see what space it takes up inside of me, whether it fills in the gaps that my birth name has left. Paul B. Preciado describes his name change as *a deconstruction, a revolution, a leap without a net, and [another] bereavement.* We've heard about the parents who liken their child transitioning to the death of a daughter or son that they knew, or more importantly for them, named. But rather, this is a bereavement of the person who tried to be someone they are not. It is grief of the years lost not sharing myself with the world, of the relationships that could have been instead of the ones that were, and the bittersweet recognition that without those years I could not be who I am now, without those years I would undoubtedly be someone else.

*This is where grief is found, in these suddenly unfilled cracks.*

Jessie Greengrass

And if I'm honest I'm not yet fighting for the right to love who I want, because that love has never showed. Perhaps because I have not been ready, or I have not settled into or accepted my queerness and my transness enough. More simply, anyone I fancy never fancies me back. Or perhaps I am too trans and too queer, or perhaps I am not trans or queer enough. Perhaps anything that revolves around sex and love in my life will always undoubtedly be a battle with myself because of the way and what I was taught about love and sex as a child.

*We are perhaps most fully incarnated as humans when part of us does not want to be here.* These words reverberate in my mind, reminding me of the heaviness of trying to show up for a life you don't want, in a body you don't want, that doesn't work how medical professionals tell me it should. I am always trying to run, to flee from situations far from ideal - I moved to Margate for that exact reason, to quietly slip out of a relationship unnoticed. And still, I am left with me. I am left with the gut wrenching grief of not being chosen, over, and over, and over, and over again. And every time I am reminded of this, of my not being chosen, of my wrongness, my too much-ness and my not enough-ness - I am

David Whyte

learning to not run away from me, and my God, it is painful. It is humiliating and humbling and breathtakingly painful, leaving me dry and wanting to crack open to let my entire history pour out of me, every harsh word and harsh hand that lives inside and makes up the fabric of my being.

\*

Margate was the first UK coastal town known to build a purpose built sea-water-bath, following in the footsteps of Scarborough's spa, dating back to 1626. Dr Wittie, a physician from Hull, promoted sea-water bathing as a cure for a variety of illnesses, from jaunders to melancholia, and physician John Coakley Lettsom founded the Royal Sea Bathing in Margate in 1791 with the intention of it being a place for the poor to receive treatment for all kinds of illnesses. Patients would receive a medical examination from a board in London, and consequently be admitted on recommendation. Initially the hospital housed 30 patients, although throughout the 1800s various extensions were built, including a dining hall and school alongside wards for children, a heated indoor swimming pool and a chapel.

It was during this time that the first 'lunatic' asylums were established in England, although they functioned as places to confine mad people rather than help them. *A new absolutist,*

*capitalist order was emerging / the obligation to work was predominant in these institutions / they provided cheap manpower.* These asylums were private: owned and operated by physicians, who had no expertise in madness, yet they became the 'gatekeepers' and profited from confining 'lunatics'. Prior to 1774, a magistrate could send someone to one of these asylums, but an optimism in the use of medicine to relieve human pain meant that this position of authority was passed from the court to the physician.

\*

It seems that the whale that beaches dies of dehydration, and technically it does, but the whale dies because it beaches and the whale beaches because it is sick.

*I can't say what I need to say. The words are tangled in the back of my throat. The words are not words, they are sounds.*

After years of searching I've found that the problem no longer resides in me, or, rather the problem never did reside in me. Next to my bed is a piece of paper taped to the wall with the words: *They will find you, let it go, you cannot fix yourself into being loved.* I never intend to read it: every now and then it catches me from the corner of my eye and I am reminded of what took me a very long time to

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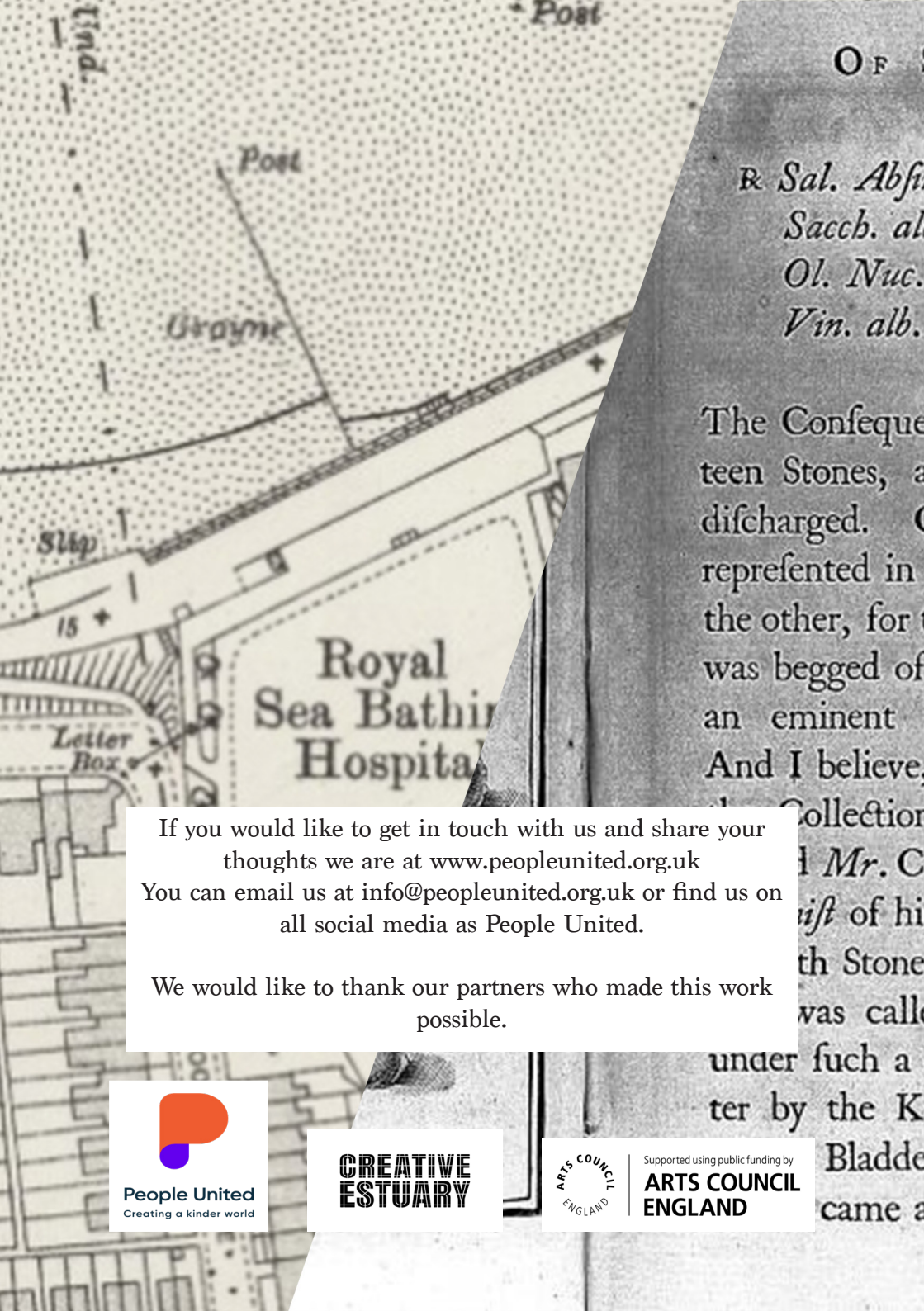
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learn. These unremarkable moments that come again and then again, a silent certainty that all is as it should be.

The whale beaches and we say it is because the whale is sick but we don't say why the whale is sick.

Alice Hattrick I am made up of the shame woven into these remarkable moments that came again and then again. *If chronic fatigue and pain are much like shame, they also affect how you perceive yourself, as a person with a body.* These moments I remember, as a haze: a smell or a sensation.





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You can email us at [info@peopleunited.org.uk](mailto:info@peopleunited.org.uk) or find us on all social media as People United.

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