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Pre-transcript introduction

Queer Out Here

[Queer Out Here](#) is (or will be) an audio zine that explore the outdoors from queer perspectives. We're hoping to collect all kinds of interesting outdoors-related sound pieces to add to the mix for the first issue. Submissions for Issue 01 are open until 2 January 2018. You can read more about the zine and editors (Jonathan and Allysse) on the Queer Out Here website: <https://www.queerouther.com>.

Interview link

If you've somehow stumbled across this transcript and want to find the audio file, it's here: <https://www.queerouther.com/listen/issue-00>. Total length: 52:02.

Content notes

If you have specific anxieties or triggers, you may wish to ask a trusted friend to listen to this interview and give you feedback. You could also use the following transcript to search for specific words. There are two particular moments we'd like to flag:

- 06:13-08:30 - Allysse describes negotiating a situation that might have had the potential for homophobic violence (no physical or verbal violence occurred).
- 44:52-45:00 - Jonathan whispers close to microphone, which can be an odd sensory experience, especially if you're wearing headphones.

Transcript

Introduction (Allysse) - 00:00

Hello! I'm Allysse - and together with my friend Jonathan, we created Queer Out Here, an audio zine that explores the outdoors from queer perspectives. You're listening to Episode Zero [Issue 00], in which Jonathan and me interview each other for almost an hour.

This episode is quite different from what the following episodes will be, because for the following episodes to happen we need your help. If you're queer and you enjoy the outdoors, we want to hear from you. Whether it be stories about your adventures, poems, interviews, sound art or even field recordings, we want your voices in Queer Out Here. To send us your submissions and for more information, please visit our website at <https://www.queerouthere.com>.

Submissions for the first episode [Issue 01] close on the first full moon of January, so if you're listening to this episode when it was first aired, you still have just over a month to send us your pieces.

One last note, before this episode begins. In this interview, we discuss all things outdoors and queer and some of that may be a trigger for you. So if you're not sure, please refer to the show notes and the transcript on the website at <https://www.queerouthere.com>.

And now for the episode. Please enjoy!

Question 1 (Jonathan) - Does being queer affect your experience of being outdoors? - 01:36

Hi Allysse, I've just crawled into a little den that somebody's made in the woods outside our new house. It's quite exciting to find this. It's a fairly structurally sound looking piece of engineering, so you never know, I might come out here for a wild camp one night - or at least come out for a cup of tea or a picnic.

Anyway, I've been thinking about what to ask you for the first question for this little interview. And somebody asked me a question this week that I thought that I'd relay to you instead. So, they asked me, do you really think that there's any difference in the way that queer people experience the outdoors to the way that straight people experience the outdoors - or I guess, you know, how trans people versus cis people experience, you know, being outside or being in nature or things like that. And my immediate reaction to them was just, well, you know, I guess we'll see when we get some submissions. But I thought it was, ah, it was an interesting question anyway. And I kind of went on to say, you know, there are some obvious things like homophobia in sporting clubs or issues around embodiment for trans people - you know, swimming or doing anything where the body is an important part and might come under scrutiny from other people - or different cultures and travelling and what kind of impact that might have on people's decisions about where to go.

But I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about how you think that perhaps, you know, the experience - or the experiences - of queer people might be different outdoors to other people. And just tell us a little bit about how your experience of being outside might have been affected or impacted by being queer.

Alright, now I'm going to crawl back out of this little den and head on out into the woods again.

Answer 1 (Allysse) - 03:50

Hello. I'm currently sitting in my local park after having spent most of the day indoors. And I thought I'd take the time to answer your question today.

It's one I've been asking myself ever since we started working on Queer Out Here. And it's a question to which I have some answers based on my personal experiences, but my experiences feel very limited, so I'm really looking forward to listening to submissions as we get them and find out what people have made of this question. Whether it's a question they think is irrelevant, and being queer doesn't impact being in the outdoors, or on the contrary if being queer does matter in the context of the outdoors.

It's a question to which I really want to answer, "No, being queer doesn't affect your experience of the outdoors." But that would be a lie - at least from my personal experiences.

The main activities I do when I'm outdoors are walking and cycling and I don't feel that walking or cycling has a particular link with being queer, and that when I'm outdoors the landscape and nature around me doesn't care whether I'm queer or not. There's no opinion there, no judgement being made.

But the outdoors is not devoid of people and to me that's when, from my experiences, I've had issues. When I'm in the outdoors and I meet people, being queer usually has no impact because it's not a question that is raised. But every now and again people will spot the ring on my finger or I'll have been spending more time with them and questions will start to arise around what I'm doing in life and if I'm living with anyone and etcetera and etcetera. And then, it's just sort of knowing the place that you're in and knowing if it's OK to share that information with people. So normally I can judge this very accurately, particularly when I'm in the UK because I share a common language and a common culture with people. So I'm more confident whether or not to say I'm a lesbian and that I have a partner, and talk more about it if people want to.

But last year when I was cycling in Spain and Portugal it occurred to me that it could become a problem. There was one particular time when I was in a public toilet that was being built in a park and it was pouring down with rain and there were these three guys that told me to just come and take shelter there. They didn't speak any English or French or Spanish, they only spoke Portuguese, and at that stage my Portuguese was still fairly limited so although I understood what they were saying, I couldn't really reply. And at one stage during the conversation, one guy asked if I had a boyfriend and if I was married. And there was a split second where I felt really

uncomfortable, because it hit me that I was in a closed space with three guys that could very easily overpower me, and that the rain was pouring down very loudly, and that the park was a bit isolated, and that if I screamed and yelled and kicked there would most likely be no-one around to hear me. And I just thought, if I tell them that I don't have a boyfriend but I have a girlfriend, how would they react? And if they reacted negatively what would I do, where could I go? I could go to the police, but then how would the police react, how is the authority and how is it perceived in the country as a whole?

Those were questions I never really asked myself before going because I didn't really think about it. It didn't come into play in my mind, I was just going to go cycling in Spain and Portugal and being queer wasn't going to be an issue. But for that instant, in that toilet with those three guys, it did become an issue. And because I didn't have the answers to the questions that were going through my mind, I told them I had a boyfriend. And I felt uncomfortable with this lie, because this is not who I am, and those guys were really, really nice, and I was lying to them. So I did all I could to veer away from the topic as quickly as possible. But the questions remain with me afterwards, and then I became a bit more on my guard, I guess, to sort of avoid the topic so I wouldn't have to lie again.

And for me this is mostly how being queer has impacted me in the outdoors - not so much in the outdoors themselves, but in the people I meet and the places where I can go. And there are some places in the world where I would like to go to, but where being gay is a criminal offense - and although it wouldn't stop me going there, because once again the outdoors have nothing to do with being queer, it means that it's a place where I can't go with my girlfriend and share it with her in a way that I would like to. Because we would have to behave in a certain way, we would have to be more on our guards, there would be a constant fear bringing a taint to the trip.

So in that respect, I can't answer that being queer is the same as being straight when outdoors.

That being said, there is another side to the coin, because being queer where you live might not be easy. Being queer might be something that you have to hide. And the outdoors can be a very liberating place in that they're a very non-judgemental place. If there's no people about and you're on your own and you're just having a walk, or cycling or kayaking or climbing or anything you might want to do in the outdoors, nature couldn't care less what you are. The risks that are involved are just the same if you're queer or if you're straight, and the benefits that you can get are the same as well. So I can see the outdoors as a place where you can escape, where you can be more yourself, and where you can be more at ease as well.

But then there's also what you briefly talked about with some activities where homophobia is quite high - and where the body is particularly exposed and where that could become an issue or maybe a barrier for some trans people. But on those examples, I don't have any personal experiences or stories from friends, so this is just speculation.

So yeah, that's my answer to your question and I hope it makes some kind of sense. But in short I think that yes, being queer does impact how you experience the outdoors compared to straight people. Whether it's a small thing or a big thing I think depends on each person's experience, and I'm really looking forward to hear what other people have to say in their submissions on the topic. And it may be that nobody answers the question and we'll be left wondering - but then that's not necessarily a bad thing!

Question 2 (Allysse) - How is your creativity influenced by being outdoors? - 011:22

My question to you, and it's on a completely different topic - and it has more to do with creativity and the outdoors, in that I'm wondering how much of your creativity is impacted by the time you spend outdoors and what you do outdoors? Is there a correlation between your inspiration and the outdoors? Or is there none at all - would you still be as creative and as inspired without going outdoors?

Answer 2 (Jonathan) - 11:58

I love the sound of all this birdsong. I'm sitting outside a church beside a river in Kent, in the UK's - I think it's the UK's smallest town, or at least England's smallest town. We've been Champing overnight - which is camping in a church - and I'm just waiting for the others to wake up and get up and I thought I'd take this time to answer your question.

But before I did that, I wanted to say thank you for your considered and comprehensive response. I was quite interested to hear you speaking to that tension between not wanting being queer to be an issue in the outdoors, and the non-judgement of nature, and also that recognition that when other people get involved, things become more complicated.

And I thought in the example that you gave, for me anyway, listening to it, it was clear that it's not just queerness that has an impact on these interactions, but gender, culture and language. And I do hope we get some submissions that talk to the intersections of being queer and things like race and disability, class or poverty, body size, mental health, culture. I'm just going to wait for that aeroplane to go over and I'll come back. . .

Right so, in the process of waiting for that aeroplane to go over, my voice recorder ran out of batteries. So, now I am recording the rest of this on an iPhone.

I was saying that I hope that we get some submissions that talk to the intersections of identity. And I was also going to say that I hope we get some submissions that talk about the positive aspects of being queer in the outdoors as well. Because there are positive aspects! And for me that mainly involves, I guess, the social nature of being queer in the outdoors. So, for example, I currently belong to an LGBT walking group in East Sussex in the UK, and I was also thinking about the queer and trans picnics that I'd been on in Melbourne - picnics and festivals. And they are experiences that were a lot of fun and they are experiences that I would not have had if I wasn't queer.

And so on to your question, which was, how is my creativity influenced by being outdoors?

Well, I found this quite a tricky question, and I think that there are kind of three elements to it. So, one is, you know, do the things that I observe outdoors make it into my creative pieces? Secondly, does being outside influence my creative process? And third, do I approach being outside in a creative way?

When I think of my creative output over the last few years - and I'm thinking mainly of things that have an audience beyond just me and maybe one or two people that I get to read over them or whatever, so I'm thinking about the photos and videos and sound pieces that I've put on my blog or I've shared with you online, and also [my illustrations for the 30 Days Wild campaign from the Wildlife Trusts in 2016](#) - and almost all of those have been directly influenced by nature, by being outdoors. So, that's either documenting what I see or what I hear, or finding inspiration there. And also, I guess the stuff that I haven't shared that widely, like stories and poems - in those, I think landscape does play a really important role. Because to me, I think the landscape or the location is just as important, or sometimes more important, than the characters - and that's probably why I don't get published, because my characterisation of humans is rubbish!

I also think that perhaps I approach being outside in a kind of creative or abstract way. And what I mean by that is not just seeing the views as fodder for the camera or, you know, hearing the audio as something that I can record, but, kind of, walking as a creative process. So, I did a little project, several years ago now, called Walking out of the City, which on the surface of it was just a walk from one of the inner suburbs of Melbourne to out beyond one of the outer suburbs. But as part of that I spent a lot of time reflecting on what a city is, what the signifiers are of cities and suburbs, the history and meaning of place, where borders were, what kind of borderlands and liminal spaces exist within a city. So, that's kind of walking as research, but also the walk as the product of research and reporting on the walk being a kind of creative or research output from that.

One of the artists who I really, really like is [Richard Long](#), who has these amazing artworks where the concept, the act and the documenting of a walk are all kind of creative. So he has these text pieces that are, and I'm paraphrasing here, things like, "A day's walk following the drift of clouds," or "Walking from a full moon to a new moon," or all these walks that are kind of based on prime numbers or mathematical concepts. And I really love this stuff, this kind of way of be-

Oh my goodness! I just saw a kingfisher fly past! That's very cool!

Anyway. Yeah, so Richard Long - you should look him up if you haven't before.

And finally I think you asked would I be as creative without spending time outdoors. And that kind of relates to whether being outside is part of my creative process. And I mean, I guess it is, in that if I get stuck inside for too long I don't really feel like doing anything, including creating anything. But I, I really don't know how to, what the answer to that is. Who knows whether it would make a difference! So, you know, getting outside is good for processing and finding ideas and I'm sure that I'd create different stuff if I wasn't spending time outside. But then again I might have more time to actually create things if I wasn't off gallivanting around the countryside at every opportunity. I'd be interested to hear a bit from you as well on that question.

Question 3 (Jonathan) - What do you love about field recordings? - 18:50

So, my question for you kind of relates to your question for me, in that it's a little bit about creativity. And I'm curious to hear you talk a little bit more about field recording - as a format, as a craft, or art, or a practice. Because it's something that you are really involved in and [you've just put out an album of field recordings](#), but I think of all the formats that we've mentioned in our call for submissions, it's possibly the thing that people will be least familiar with. So, quite a broad question, you can take it in whichever way you'd like, but I guess, primarily, I'd like to know what you love about creating and listening to field recordings, and why.

Answer 3 (Allysse) - 19:35

I'm in my local nature reserve and I came in with my longboard. Been a while since I've been able to use it so it was nice to take it for a little trip.

Well, thanks for answering my question. It was really interesting to hear your answer and how the last few years your creative output has really been sort of based on your outdoor time, but also how your outdoor time in a sense restricts your creative time by the mere fact that you're doing something else. And I thought it was quite interesting, because for me my creativity really is fuelled by my time outdoors. So, when I'm outside even though I'm not necessarily creating, I'm gathering material for creation at later time, be it by doing field recordings or just having a walk that I'll write up about later or taking some photos, or anything. My outdoor time is, um, is essential for all of that to happen. So, it's like the first stage of my creativity. And it also helps me be more present and more aware of what's going on around me. Because usually I know - if I'm going to use a walk or a cycle, if I'm going to use it for something else later on - and it forces me to pay more attention to my surroundings, what I'm doing, what's going on. While when I know that I won't be using my experiences, I'm not always as focussed or as present.

So, I'm now going to walk on for a little bit and find a little spot to sit and answer the question about field recording in a little more depth.

So. Field recording. When I first began my journey into sound a couple of years ago, when I started recording sounds rather than photos on holiday - and the reason was my camera battery died and I only had a recorder with me to keep a trace of my holiday. So I recorded sound. And when I came back home, those sounds were a lot more evocative than the photos were. And on top of that I felt that I could Google the places that I had been and I'd find photos, or I'd use Google Street [View] and I'd find back the same imagery than the one I took. While the sounds? I couldn't find them. And they were very specific to a time and place and even to my position in that place. So then I began recording sound after that on a lot more regular basis. And that memory aspect, that evocative aspect, of field recording was and still is a part of what attracts me the most about the practice. Because sound has a power that an image or words don't really have, I find. There's something really universal about sound, in that it's a language everybody can understand.

It also, to me, has a little more truth to it, is more able to capture an atmosphere of a place, a sense of a place. While a photo can do it to some extent, a photo is always a lot more subjective than a field recording. I mean, field recording is not an objective practice at all - the choice of gear, the choice of when to press record and when to stop, the choice of where to stand and then the post-production, make it a subjective practice. But I feel there's a little more truth to it.

One example that I use a lot is Richmond Park in London in the UK. It's a park in the south west of London and it's very popular with tourists and locals because it's a big, wide, open space and there's deers in it. And it's a great park and I do really like it, but when I see photos of it or read stories about it nobody ever mentions that there's two massive roads going through it - so a lot of cars - and an airplane going over it every two minutes. And I feel that something's not quite true about those accounts and those photos if you omit that. Because what stopped me from loving Richmond Park is all the noise in it. If I go to a park in a city, or an open space, I want to escape that more urban noise, I want to find birds and quiet and just lie down and hear the wind through the leaves, not the motors of cars or planes. In that sense I feel that field recording is a little more truthful and a little more evocative than a photo or words.

Another point that I really like about field recording is its archival capacity, because this is something we haven't be able to do for a very long time. We've had words and we had visual means - painting, photography, drawings, all of that, film even. But sound is really new. We don't know what the middle ages sounded like. We can guess. We can reconstruct from the visuals and from the texts that we have. But it's only a guess. But nowadays we can keep a record of what we sound like and what the world around us sounds like. Because animal species are dying and if we record their cry we have a trace of it, otherwise we'll never know, or future generations will never know - and that feels important as well. I mean, it's a side of field recording that I haven't explored a lot, but I do have a few recordings of temporary places that are gone. And I feel like this may be the only record of how the space sounded like. That does feel important, even though I haven't explored that side of it a lot and my work is lot more of an archive of me, an archive of my experiences, rather than an archive for the world. But field recording definitely has that capacity and is definitely used by some people in that respect in trying to make an objective recording of a place.

Another thing I use field recording for is to make people more aware of the sounds around them. Ever since I started exploring field recording and the world in terms of sounds, I've become a lot more aware of how noisy a society we are. We're so noisy that some birds have had to become louder to still hear each other, that some marine life have had to change their songs - to change their song - to still be able to hear one another. And that seems very drastic and very wrong, for something that we can change. We can make boats quieter, we can make cars quieter, we can live a quieter life in general - but we choose not to, because most of us don't hear the world around us any more. At least, not what we would consider noise or background noise. And so I also use field recordings to help raise awareness of that. I mean, I'm not going to change the world, I know that, but I'm hoping that by talking about it to people, that I can gradually help the people around me realise how noisy they can be and how easily they can stop that noise.

I'm not sure if that answers your question of why field recordings, but I hope it does, and that it makes some kind of sense. And that maybe it will make some people a little more curious about what it is - and maybe we'll get some field recording submissions. That'd be great!

Now, there was also another part to your question, which was listening to field recordings. And to me, it's really linked to why I press record. As mentioned for me it's a lot more evocative than a photo so it transports me to a place a lot more than a photo or a text does. I close my eyes and I can be there, wherever there is. So that's one big part of why I listen to field recordings is to be transported somewhere else and to discover other places, and to travel without having to take the plane and add a lot of noise pollution and a lot of CO2 pollution into the world.

But it's also a kind of music. I almost exclusively listen to field recordings, I don't listen to a lot of music. Music is a language I've always struggled with, a language I was never taught and a language that does not come naturally to me. I'm getting better at it, but it's still quite a struggle, where field recordings is a lot more accessible because it's sounds that I recognise or sounds that I can associate with something - and it's a sound that I know comes from something on this planet and I find that easier to process than music. That being said, field recordings can be used in music and are used in music. But they're also used in compositions of field recordings to create what would be called, I guess, sound art, although I would call it music. So, for example, I'm currently working on an album about the cycle journey I took last year in Spain and Portugal and I'm using the field recordings that I did to transmit the story of the journey. If I want to transmit the fact that I was struggling and I was sad and I was scared and I was a little bit lost, I'm using sound that's the wind and the rain and the roaring of the waves, because those sounds make you feel a little more trapped, a little more in despair, rather than cricket sounds and bird songs that are much more relaxing.

So yeah, so that's why I listen to field recordings a lot. It's that being transported somewhere else, and to me, it's music. So I guess the reasons people listen to music can be applied to why you would listen to a field recording. And I would really encourage people to just give it a try and see if they like it, see if they can get something out of it as well and maybe become more aware of our world in terms of sound, sort of add a layer of experience to their time in this world.

Question 4 (Allysse) - What kinds of outdoor places are you drawn to? - 31:05

But enough on that. It's my turn to ask you another question, and my question for you is still related to the outdoors. I would like to know if there are places that you are drawn to. Like some people keep going back to mountains, or some people just want to be in the sea or just want to swim. I'm just wondering if there is something like that for you? If there is a space outdoors that you find yourself going back to again and again - or if not going back to, wanting to go back to again and again - or if you don't have any preferences as to where you go outdoors. But if you do have preferences, if you can maybe explain why? Which I know can be really difficult, because it's not necessarily always a rational reason why, it's just, sometimes it's just an impulse, something that we just feel. But if you can and if you have, it would be nice to know why.

Answer 4 (Jonathan) - 32:05

So, speaking of the noisy environment, as you can probably tell I am not in some secluded rural area now, I am in a garden in North London, drinking gin and tonic green tea, which is delicious. But anyway, apologies in advance - there will be cars going past and aeroplanes going overhead and I will not be pausing the recording this time to let them go past. But there you go, that is the truthfulness of this particular recording in this particular place.

And I did like that idea of truthfulness that you talked about - the comparison that you made between field photography and field recording. And I can see where you're coming from - it is a lot easier to manipulate what's in the frame of a photograph, in production and in post-production, and it is more difficult to do that with a field recording. I mean, I guess it's not impossible, with the right gear and skills, to be more specific about what you record or to edit it in a particular way. But I think it is harder. And I guess as a result of that and because listening to field recording demands your time, I can definitely see how listening to and creating field recordings can be a more immersive and evocative experience for people than producing and looking at photographs.

And I think that immersion is part of what I love about field recordings. There's something really intimate about it - or there can be. I like to think that I am listening to something just as the person recording it listened to it. So, in a way, I'm inhabiting their space. And that's especially true when I think, "Oh, somebody was wearing headphones and I'm wearing headphones." It's a very physical connection. It can be quite kind of personal and intense. And it's different to the closeness you get with images or written text. And I guess the extreme with that with audio are things like ASMR and binaural recordings, but even just straight recording of maybe somebody walking down a street or through a market, there can be something kind of voyeuristic, in a way, about hearing the world through somebody else's ears.

So, onto your question about outdoor spaces and places that I am drawn to. I mean, I could go on for ages about this, but I'll try to keep it short and sweet and give you the abridged version.

There are a few, kind of, themes, I guess. The first are spaces that I don't go out deliberately to try to find, and in fact I don't think you can necessarily go out to try to find them because they're slightly secret or unexpected spaces, and they're often very human-sized, as well. So, little footpaths or twittens (which are quite small alleyways, that's what they call them in Sussex), laneways and little alcoves, secret corners and overgrown garden pathways and benches tucked into hillsides, or, you know, that space of being underneath a tree where the branches go right down and the leaves touch the ground all the way around you, that kind of green, enclosed magic. Or the spaces like that - like hushed holloways and green lanes. Or also just pockets of space that don't really seem to fit the pattern, that are kind of opportunistic - places where you might be trespassing (or where you are definitely trespassing, but there's some kind of plausible deniability about it!). And I think all of those spaces or places kind of relate precisely, on a precise scale, to the human body, because often it's that repeated, almost mundane, manual actions of the human body that bring those spaces into existence. Like, years of repeated walking that wear down a path and make it into a holloway. And so, like I said, they're not necessarily places that I deliberately seek out, but when I do come across them, I am really drawn to explore them! And I think that's

maybe partly what I like about wild camping, as well: the smallness of a bivvy bag and a tarp, and creating my own little secret burrow or den in the corner of a field or something like that.

Another kind of space that I like and am drawn to, is rivers and creeks, so, flowing fresh water. I grew up beside the Snowy River in Australia, and I lived beside the Merri Creek and also did a lot of walking alongside the Yarra River in Melbourne. I didn't really like living in London - but the main places I did like about that, physically, were kind of beside the Thames or along the canals or along the Dollis Valley Green Walk in North London. You know, I guess natural water generally. I like swimming in rivers but also in lakes and the sea. I guess I'm very self-conscious, which is one of the reasons I don't go to swimming pools - I mean, the other one is also I just really don't like all that chlorine. But, yeah, outdoor watery spaces. It's not just swimming, I like kayaking and canoeing - jeepers, that was loud! Ah, yeah, kayaking, canoeing or like walking along towpaths and boating and looking at bridges and admiring waterfalls. But I think mostly with water, what I like to do is just muck around in the shallows - so I think of paddling along a beach, or wading across a river or a creek while I'm on a walk, or taking off my shoes and socks and dangling my feet in the water during a lunch break on a long walk, or if we're camping kind of dunking my head in the creek to wake up in the morning. Dan and I have a bit of a running joke that whenever we see some water I always say to him, "Go for a swim?" And the grottier the bit of water is, the better. But I guess with rivers specifically, I also like the concept of them. I like the way they forge a completely different kind of path through the landscape - so not at all like human ways. A different sort of highway - for fish and wildlife, for sound that echoes down the valley, and also for humans, for boats and swimmers - different ways of moving through a landscape. And rivers can kind of wind through such different landscapes, as well - it sometimes feels like the only thing that connects those different places, is the fact that the same river runs through them all.

So, that's rivers and secret kind of spaces, but really the first thing that sprang to mind when I heard your question was: views. When I think of places that make my heart sing, they're usually places with wonderful views. So, one of my favourites is the view over the Wye Valley from Gospel Pass in Wales. If you go up there in the car and then you park it, you can climb up to Hay Bluff - and I remember doing that once with Dan and we watched the sunset and it was just so beautiful. Thinking about it makes me ache to be there again. And I've experienced a similar kind of feeling, like, up on the South Downs looking out over the Levels on a sunny day, or half way up a mountain in Switzerland - in Heidi country! - with the goat bells and cow bells and the wildflowers all around, or on a fire trail up in the hills above the Snowy River in some quite kind of remote and rugged country. And I remember that feeling of, as you climb up this really steep, broken kind of gravel road, fire trail, and you climb higher and higher - and it's so steep you have to stop a lot to catch your breath, but that is a good reason to turn around and look at the view. But as you climb up you kind of get higher than one hill, and then you get higher than the next, and this landscape just rolls out around you and in front of you, and the horizon kind of unfurls into this huge, almost rippling sea of hazy blue, forested hills. So, yeah, those kind of views are things that just take my breath away. Although it doesn't follow that I love mountains, because I'm not a climber and I don't do very well with heights. But there is something about hills and the views from hills, I guess. I do like that bit of exertion to precede the wonderful view because I think it just makes the experience a little bit sharper and a little bit sweeter.

When we were up in the hills above the Snowy River that day, Dan and I kind of talked about that feeling - and he asked me how I felt looking out over that country, because to him, he said, he sees it and he thinks, "Oh, that's a nice view." I don't think it affects him the way that it affects me. I

don't really know how to articulate that feeling, there's just something kind of uplifting, or expansive, or kind of awesome in the older sense of the word. And I guess, if you want to be kind of philosophical about it, it involves elements of the Sublime - that idea of: you are such a small person and the world is so vast. And it's vast spatially, and it's vast in terms of time, and it's vast in terms of just the amount of life that is within your view, so, you know, not just people or animals, but insects and all the different kinds of trees and all the different, kind of, geological life, if you can call it that, that's gone into creating the country that you're on. And I think that's quite amazing.

And I suppose, finally, the other thing that I'm drawn to is the sky, which is accessible from almost anywhere if you just look up. What do I like about the sky? I like the clouds - I love clouds, I love cloud formations - there's a great book called *The Cloudspotter's Guide* [by Gavin Pretor-Pinney], which helped me learn a little bit more about what kind of clouds there were and what they might mean in terms of weather patterns. And one of my favourite things about flying, as well, is just sailing past those lumpy towers and mountains of cumulus clouds, or breaking through the different layers and looking out the window and seeing this amazing kind of fantasy landscape that clouds have created below the plane.

And I also love the night sky. So, stargazing, spotting satellites and meteors, you know, staring at the moon and looking at all the craters. And especially on a clear night when you're somewhere without too much light pollution - it's absolutely awesome, I love it. So, I grew up in the bush in Australia, and it's very rare to see a night sky like that over here - you know, where the Milky Way really does live up to its name - it's just this milky kind of translucent splash that stretches right across the sky. And many a night wild camping I've been too distracted by the stars to fall asleep properly.

In conclusion, there are a few kinds of places or spaces and outdoors things that I feel drawn to - from the very small, human scale, up to the, literally, to the infinite - to the universe.

Right, so I did say that I would try to keep this short and sweet and I do not think I've been very successful. But hopefully there's something of interest for you in there. If you'd like to tell me a bit about what draws you to certain places, I'd be interested to hear that. But I think for now this concludes at least my part of the interview. And I just wanted to say thanks very much for taking the time to answer my questions - it's been really fun talking to you this way.

[Whispering] And thank you to the listener for listening. [Talking] That was my attempt at some [whispering] ASMR. [Talking] Hope you enjoyed it!

See you later. Bye.

Conclusion (Allysse) - 45:06

I'm in the closest bit of outdoor space I have from my home, and that's my garden. I haven't gone far today to record the last bit of our interview, because sometimes you don't need to go far to spend time outdoors - a back garden, a local park can do wonders. And so I'm here.

It's getting late and it's dark outside. I can guess at where the moon is in the sky, because I can see a bright spot in the clouds. But otherwise it's very overcast. There's no stars other than the occasional flashing light for an airplane.

And it feels a bit weird to end this interview - I've really enjoyed our back and forth. And I kind of want to just go on, but at one point we have to end this and close the interview. But before I do I thought I'd share some of my thoughts about your last answer.

I can really relate to rivers. I have a strange attraction to water in that I both love it and absolutely fear it. There's something unknown about it that attracts me - the idea of travelling by boat or swimming and seeing places that are only accessible and only visible from the water's edge - because rivers go where footpaths don't always go. And so there's landscape and views that I'll never know, and yet they are the most natural path that we have in the countryside - they've always been there.

And that attracts me as well, the idea that they've always been there and that there are centuries of history along their banks and on their water. But at the same time, as I was mentioning, I fear water, because it's not an element that I should be in, it doesn't feel right, it's not an element that I feel as humans we've mastered. It's an element that tolerates us, but can overturn us and kill us if it chooses to. And so in that respect, I'm really, really afraid of water and have a deep respect for it. I sort of always put off a boat trip because I'm quite scared of it, really. So I just walk along rivers and I feel safer. But one day, one day I'll get over it and have a proper boat trip!

One of the other things that you mentioned, and that is views and the feeling that you get from them. I thought that was really interesting because I could relate to what you were saying, but not necessarily about views. I feel it's not views that give me that kind of feeling, but places and moments in time.

So, I remember particularly a trip a few years ago that I did in Kent, where I was just cycling about. And I'd reached Whitstable and the seaside - and that had been a vague destination, but it had also been something that I'd heard about for a long time, when I first read Sarah Waters and Whitstable was the place of origin of one of the characters in *Tipping the Velvet*. And so that place had etched itself into my mind from years and years ago and reaching it, even though I knew it was completely different, felt like a milestone of sorts. Like placing a name on the map and being finally able to see it, and maybe to gain some more understanding for a character and a book that had some importance to me at one stage in my life.

I tend to seek out places that are full of stories - and all places are full of stories of one kind or another - but I mean stories that are meaningful to me, stories that I know, stories that I've sought out, or stories that I can just see as I see the landscape. So for example, when I was cycling in the Orkney Islands a few years back, I was travelling with a book of myth and legends from those very islands. And that added a very visceral dimension to the landscape, because all I was seeing, I could suddenly interpret in the eyes of the people that first lived there and created those legends. A hill wasn't just a hill and a stone circle wasn't just a stone circle and a lake wasn't just a lake: there were stories behind them, there were meanings behind them. There were giants throwing earth, there were giants splitting waters, there were faeries going about, there were people going missing, there were people falling in love, there were people tricking other people and marking the landscape and turning into what it now is.

But in the same instance, it doesn't always have to be about legends and myth. It can be about history. Like, I'm currently trying to make my way along Offa's Dyke Path - whenever I have a day off that allows me to travel that way - and there's a lot of history along that border, and that is definitely one of the reasons why I'm attracted to this particular walk. I'm not necessarily drawn to particular places, like a mountain or the seaside or stuff like that; I'm more drawn to stories and histories that have shaped a place - and that has a meaning to me.

And I think I'll stop here, because it's time to close the interview. So thank you, Jonathan, first of all for taking the time to answer the questions and ask questions that were both meaningful and thought-provoking.

And thank you to you, the listener, whoever you may be, right at this moment, and wherever you may be. I hope that you found this interview interesting and that it provokes some reactions and maybe some thoughts and ideas for a submission. And if it did and you do want to send us something, you just need to head to queerouthere.com - so that's queerouthere.com. And we look forward to hearing from you!

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