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I started running in my mid 20's when I was a post-grad student living just off London Road, Brighton. Back then my running was functional. I had no real desire to run in the busy urban environment, I simply made myself do it to keep fit. Now in my early 30's I have discovered a passion for trail running. Since moving to the outskirts of the city in the summer of 2019, I have been running a 10 kilometre route around Castle Hill nature reserve three times per week. The only time I don't run is when it is thundering, or after it has rained so hard that the fields at the base of the reserve are flooded. Sitting at my desk, I trace the route I ran earlier this morning on Google Earth as I think about relations between my running routine, my queerness, and this particular landscape.

The Nature reserve lies four miles east of my home next to Brighton Racecourse, slightly north of Woodingdean village. It is part of the chalk downland hills that stretch 260 miles across the south of England. From the summit of Kingston Ridge, 200 metres above sea level, there are fine views West towards the Amex Football stadium and Ditchling Beacon, North over the County town of Lewes, East across the Ouse Valley and Firle Beacon, South towards the channel. From various points along the ridge, paths lead down into Balsdean valley, once home to a small village of which little remains, save a scattering of agricultural buildings, a ruined chapel, and cottage foundations. The area is permanently grazed by sheep and cows that keep the grasslands short, allowing indigenous flora to flourish, such as the rare 'early spider orchid'. The valley is also home to a multitude of butterfly species and boasts the largest population of the near extinct 'wart-biter cricket'. Birdsong reverberates throughout the valley – crows, dippers, gulls, skylarks, yellowhammers...

At the core of Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* is the concept of 'orientations', i.e. how we position ourselves in relation to ideas, objects, others, and specific cultural practices. These past couple of years I have begun to think of my running routine as less a sporting activity or fitness necessity, than an embodied psycho-spiritual pursuit. Running in the nature reserve is my meditation. I think of each run as an adventure I go on by myself, *within* myself, close to nature, far away from other people and the concerns of my day-to-day responsibilities. This physical and mental distance helps me to tune into inner voices that guide my work as an artist. It helps cultivate a deeper sense of awareness in terms of my body's material limits and pain thresholds, subtle changes of gaining-and-losing-and-regaining muscle tissue and fat, the process of aging. Running reminds me that my body, like my queerness, is not temporally or spatially fixed, and yet is always defined somehow by time and space. For Ahmed, being orientated is feeling 'at home', and I feel at home in my body, at this time, running in these hills.

#### Works consulted

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James William Murray

Jameswilliammurray.com

@jameswilliammurray