

non-profit organizations, the economic differences found between urban and rural communities must be examined in relation to the privileging of urban queerness. Economic autonomy or membership in a privileged class provides increased personal freedom. The increased autonomy provided by broader urban economies creates a plane upon which class is interwoven with queer identity. Here, an urban style of queer identity itself is inherently linked to class privilege. The more economically privileged or independent you are from your immediate community, the greater your autonomy around identity. The degrees of this autonomy vary, but the options for a queer individual living in a small town with certain economic privileges, are vastly different from a chronically poor queer in that same town. With the decline of localized and family-run business, increasing numbers of non-urban residents experience unemployment, seasonal employment or minimum wage service industry jobs. Rural residents have decreased access to services such as health care, educational options, and community services, which also means that there are fewer higher paying jobs in these industries. Reduced economic autonomy results in different choices around queer identity and privilege.

In order to bring together the work and accomplishments of rural and urban queers, shifts in perceptions are necessary. This is not only on the part of urban communities who must learn to appreciate diverse lifestyle choices, but also on the part of rural queers who need to feel confidence in the presentation of our lives in broader queer forums. Rurality needs to be respected as a choice, a choice that brings with it significant challenges and hardships, but which also allows for privileges that are not experienced within the urban context. Within the broader queer community, the rural queer needs space to talk about areas of struggle, without being dismissed with the familiar

quote "why don't you just move to the city?" as though urban life is the solution to queer challenges. Queer oppression is not unique within rural communities, and removal of queers from the rural sphere is not going to remedy this social flaw for either the queers or the communities in question. The rural queer does exist beyond urban stereotypes of lesbians who grow organic produce and gay men who run bed and breakfasts. We are political, organized, informed, and present, lurking beyond your urban sprawl, changing our commu-

nities, and inserting a queer tinge in the most unlikely of places.

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References

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ALISON PRYER

urchin

when I was a girl
 northern summers were enchanted,
 each pale dusk dissolving
 into a white dawn,
 endless days of luminosity and grace
 stretching before me.
 i played wild at the shore in low tide
 rock pools, my womb
 as pristine as a sea urchin,
 til a man's invading hand reached inside me
 tearing open my vulnerable core,
 leaving,
 only a fragile shell in its place.
 the tide came in and
 soon washed the husk
 away.

Alison Pryer has taught in Germany, Japan, Egypt, and Canada. Her work has appeared in numerous North American and international academic and literary journals.