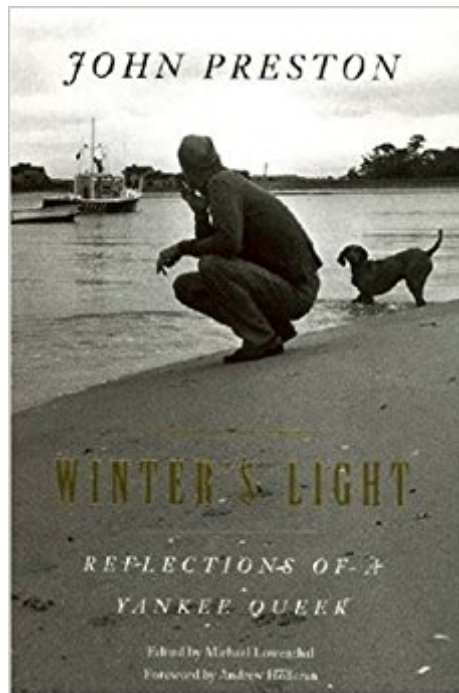




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Winter's Light: Reflections Of A Yankee Queer



Synopsis

In these stirring autobiographical essays and social commentaries, a prolific writer and gay rights pioneer--whose voice was stilled by AIDS in 1994--tells of the search for a place to belong. Preston's voice is as brave, honest, and clear-sighted as ever, which makes us miss it all the more sorely.--Anne Rice.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Preston, who died of AIDS-related illness in 1994, was a prolific editor of the *Advocate*, novelist (Franny, the Queen of Provincetown) and essayist. His was a prominent and brave if unpolished voice in gay literature. The pieces collected here--autobiographical sketches, polemical essays and tributes to the acceptance gays have come to enjoy in his native New England--are blunt and courageous. There is a memorable essay about the patrician, nonagenarian AIDS activist Franny Peabody; affecting interviews with gay New Englanders that are part of an uncompleted oral history of people with AIDS; and several pieces about Portland, Maine's surprising hospitality to gays and lesbians. The last section, entitled "Letters from Maine," a series of strident polemics against homophobia, is composed of less compelling forays into familiar territory. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Preston, a prolific writer and editor of fiction, nonfiction, and erotica moved to Portland, Maine, in 1979, where he frequently wrote about the challenges of expressing his gay identity in his native New England community. Preston was working on this collection of personal essays when he died

of AIDS in April 1994; of the 23 pieces, dating from 1982 to 1993, nine have been published previously. His self-aware and courageous voice finds expression in a variety of forms: character sketches, exploring the effect on the community of the murder of Charlie Howard in Bangor, and the challenge of living with AIDS. Preston's thoughtful and heartfelt approach to life, his sensitivity to places and people, and his sense of humor coalesce to make this final book a moving testament to the power of telling one's own story. James E. Van Buskirk, San Francisco P.L. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Well written

Great book

It's hard to believe John Preston has been gone for 15 years next month (April 2009). Yet his voice still speaks across the years, past the barrier separating this life and whatever comes after this life. His stories of what it means to be a New Englander, from a place whose people are so conscious of belonging to it and of being shaped by it, continue to touch and move and inspire. I re-read *Winter's Light*, this posthumous collection of John's New England writing, not long after I myself was diagnosed (like John) as HIV-positive. After years of living "away" (as New Englanders put it) in big cities--much like John--I was struck in middle age by the idea of returning to my own native Connecticut, the place I had always considered home even in the years since I'd fled it as a restless teenager eager to know a bigger world. I found in John's words a kindredness and validation of my own hunger for the authenticity and deep sense of belonging to a people and a history that are at the heart of what it means to be a New Englander. I was especially touched by John's description in one of the essays about the men who gathered at his neighborhood barbershop in Portland for camaraderie and local gossip. He recalled how they would rib him about being gay. But woe unto anyone else who might make anti-gay comments about John to them. It was one thing for them to tease him, but, John wrote, "I was their queer," and good tough Yankees look out for one another--chalking up their differences to "just the way it is." I highly recommend *Winter's Light*, particularly to anyone who has journeyed away from a place where s/he started out and still feels bound to. John Preston showed that we can go home again if we are able to continue being the people we have become while we were away. He showed that sometimes our journeys in life return us to where we began, but as changed people who come back with a new appreciation of our homeland, and wisdom about life we didn't have when we went away.

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