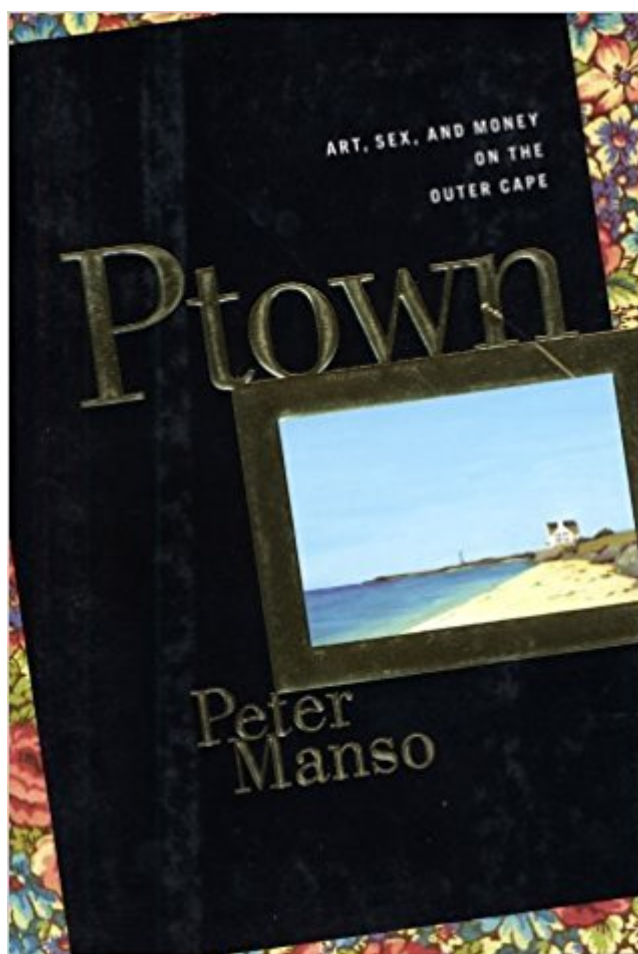


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Ptown: Art, Sex And Money On The Outer Cape



Synopsis

"WHEN YOU LOOK BACK AT ITS HISTORY, YOU CAN SEE A PROGRESSION IN PROVINCETOWN, THINGS GETTING WILDER AND WILDER, THE OUTLAW ELEMENT BECOMING THE NORM." Provincetown, Massachusetts, has long been one of the country's most celebrated enclaves for the rich, creative, and infamous. Acclaimed writer and longtime Provincetown resident Peter Manso brings fifty years of life and observation to this engaging, at times scandalous, portrait of the unique seaside town located at the furthestmost tip of Cape Cod. Filled with lively and intriguing anecdotes about some of its most notorious residents -- from Norman Mailer and Robert Motherwell to Tennessee Williams, John Waters, and Congressman Gerry Studds -- "Ptown" gives readers a rare and revealing glimpse into the lives of this eccentric community. Home for decades to pirates, communists, fishermen, drug smugglers, and artists, Provincetown has been a maverick society since its beginning, with residents who have always valued liberty over law. Its live-and-let-live mentality has enabled local fishermen to live side by side with America's most famous painters, novelists, and playwrights, making Provincetown an object of fascination throughout the country and a thriving tourist spot that brings more than one million visitors to the area each year. Provincetown today also has one of the largest homosexual populations per capita of any single city in the United States, a demographic shift that has altered the town's businesses, buildings, and schools -- only one birth took place in 2000, out of a year-round population of about 3,500. Drawing on Provincetown's rich and diverse cultural history, Manso brings his razor-sharp perception to this compulsively readable account of a people and a town as it evolved from a rustic fishing village to one of America's most exclusive resorts with the highest real estate values on the Cape. From the everyday lives of the store owners, restaurateurs, Realtors, and local police to the scandal that erupted over the recent murder of heiress Christa Worthington, "Ptown" offers an unparalleled glimpse into a rarefied world where old traditions and new money can create unusual -- and at times uneasy -- bedfellows. Lively, penetrating, and occasionally shocking, "Ptown: Art, Sex, and Money on the Outer Cape" captures Provincetown as never before.

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Customer Reviews

...an eloquently written, in-your-face cri de coeur... -- The Boston Globe, April 30, 2002

A well-defined and intelligent look at some of the characters...who have given texture and personality to Provincetown, Massachusetts. -- Kirkus Reviews, May 17, 2002
Nicholas von Hoffman columnist, New York Observer and opera librettist, Nicholas and Alexandra What a terrific book! It's rare to get your social history and analysis so nicely concealed in hypnotically fascinating reading. Ptown's got everything: drama, love, crime, humor, real estate, nostalgia, art, celebrities, you name it. --

Review[Ptown's] isolation and insularity--allows Manso to probe deeper...What he uncovers is that gentrification isn't just about the money. -- The San Francisco Examiner, June 3, 2002

from KIRKUS REVIEWS: "A well-defined and intelligent look at some of the characters--from colorful to determined to notorious--who have given texture and personality to Provincetown, Massachusetts. 'Existing in the liminal space where the eastern edge of America meets the Atlantic, Provincetown has remained throughout its history a haven for outsiders fleeing poverty and persecution,' writes Manso (BRANDO, 1994, etc.). Although he doesn't slight Provincetown as a geographical place, he appreciates that it's the people who have put Ptown on the map, and he has chosen a selection of them to capture the aura of the town: a Portuguese fisherman who managed to get caught for every (substantial) infraction, social and legal, he has committed; a woman preservationist whose work affords a glimpse into the workings of the town government; a police chief who kept the rule of law through a precarious balance of when to look and when not to; bar owners and drug smugglers; lost souls; and those who have found their true selves. The art community gets thorough coverage, starting back with the summer schools of art in the late-19th century through the time when the town served as home base for Abstract Expressionists, then Pop artists, and a whole gallimaufry of current painters. Some of Manso's most insightful material

concerns the evolution of the gay community, from its birth to its polymorphous diversity, and particularly its politics, which have always perked strongly: laid-back, radical, progressive, commercial, correct, incorrect. Manso endeavors, and mostly succeeds, to give each voice a fair hearing, providing good doses of history, whether of the fishing industry, the tourist trade, or the extraordinary explosion in real estate values that has, in the past few years, utterly changed the face of the town and the composition of the population. In a place that has always valued liberty over law, Manso has caught the intriguing angles that let him shed light on the heart of Ptown."

Manso is rude and biased; however, certain parts are quite funny and it keeps you hooked

I first visited Ptown just after the mid-Sixties when two gay artist friends of mine bought a house there and turned it into a very barebones B&B with a gallery attached. Ptown was a great place, and I have returned there many times since. I found Manso's book to be well written and entertaining, despite a minority of reviewers who found it quite otherwise. His style is straightforward, and the narrative is a combination of history, storytelling and gossip interwoven in a very deft manner. He develops various topics in the story of Ptown and does an excellent job of weaving in the life stories of a wide spectrum of Ptown's inhabitants. If you have a problem reading Manso's book, then "walk/don't walk" signs must be daily life threatening situations. The author sketches in the pre-colonial and 19th century history of Ptown with interesting anecdotes; however it is in his presentations of the development of the Portuguese fishing community, the beginning of the arts colony and the arrival of the earlier gay settlers in the 60s and 70s - and their battles, cominglings and final integration - where he excels. The lives of many people are explored and they weave in and out of the Ptown story over the years so that one gets a real feel for the community. There were three reviewers who claimed that the book is homophobic, though one of those reviews has now disappeared. As a gay man, I really feel compelled to comment on those claims. And my response is "!" One of these complainers after making that assertion, then goes on to also complain that certain topics are treated at too great a length - one of them being a gay man who has been at the center of Ptown's life for decades, and has been involved in many of community service projects. Maybe she read so fast she didn't realize he was gay. Several members of the established gay community are featured repeatedly, prominently and positively in the book. Manso has certainly balanced his attentions very fairly among the Portuguese, artistic, and gay communities of Ptown, and he has done a great job showing how the town various elements could pull together when faced with crises. However, in the end this is not just the story of the life, but the death by strangulation of

an old diverse - get that word, "diverse" - rock 'em, sock 'em town funky old place. The impact in the Nineties of luxury real estate development aimed overwhelmingly at wealthy gay people and a flashy commercial environment for gay visitors has all but killed the town. The powerful arts and business conglomerates - very heavily gay in their makeup - are advocating more and more economic development and centralization; however, failing to point out that it will primarily benefit them, and not the old long time communities of Ptown. The Portuguese, the artists and the old time gay residents are not only being pushed out by the sky-high costs of life in Ptown, they are not wanted by the wave of gay arrivistes who are indifferent, when not antagonistic, to Ptown's past history and traditions - and the new arrivals make no bones about it. It is ironic that we gay people who make so much - in our political campaigning - about diversity are actively and with malice destroying it in Ptown. Manso is not homophobic on this score even, from my own personal experience I would say he's been, if anything, extremely lightheaded. I had decided in the 90's to investigate Ptown as a place to settle in year around. I was fortunate enough to have enough money to consider purchasing an apartment there and felt that if it were well enough situated I could deal with the hordes of summer visitors that almost suffocate Ptown. However, I wanted to get a picture of the all-year residents, and, therefore, stayed for three off-season months with two gay friends who lived in Ptown. During that time they seemed to be constantly and unwillingly sucked into "us against them" conversations. Twice they were visited by recent gay female residents who proceeded to instruct them on what their attitudes should be on local issues, and in each case departed with a shameless warning that "If you don't support us, you'll be sorry you live here." I was stunned - my friends were established gay residents in town. I left convinced - and Manso's book confirms the rightness of my decision - that the new Ptown was not run by the kind of people I would want for neighbors. Ultimately I found that Europe offered more congenially integrated gay-straight society.

If you want to know anything intimate about the folks who dwell and stand out in Provincetown, you must read this book. Not only informative, but totally exciting and it would interest anyone in its close details of the lives of the people there. In fact, most of their names, telephone numbers and addresses are in the Cape Cod telephone books: Orleans and Hyannis. Norman Mailer, Jay Critchley and others are discussed, also a famous murder, Christa Worthington, and more. Traveling to P'Town and Cape Cod is a bit expensive, coming from Central MA where I live, but if I could, I'd be happy as a writer to travel there often to interview some of the well known people there.

Not at all the gossip-ridden quick-read i had been led to expect--but a really tragic story of the destruction of one of America's most special and historic towns--a place where innovative art has been created for decades, a place where everyone was welcome, but a place that now is being erased from the face of the earth by big money and political correctness. There's a lesson here for every community.

Good book! I loved it. Moving to truro next week. Good to get some history about the nearby area.

This post-modernist hybrid is a joy to read. Part local history, part travelogue, part whodunit, the book shows how a politically and culturally fashionable pressure group was able to succeed where the Puritans failed: homogenize a town that was famous for its diversity.

I hated this book! While the Tony Jackett, Ginny Binder and Jay Critchley stories were interesting, the rest was junk. The author seems anti-lesbian to me since most of his stories about lesbians portrayed them in a negative light, angry, bossy, just nasty and I'm a straight person saying that. Other than the three mentioned above, I just didn't care about anyone in this book. And for the editors - it is Lincoln Steffens, not Steffans, and Angiulo, not Angiullo. Try doing some research....

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