*You’re Pretty Gay,* by Drew Pisarra rev. by Masa Shah

Chaffinch Press

Drew Pisarra is a published poet and fiction writer. He published his first book of poetry, *Infinity Standing Up*, in 2019 through Capturing Fire Press. He also has a short story collection *Publick Spanking* published by Future Tense Books. He has been awarded the literary grant from Café Royal Cultural Foundation. He is also a co-founder of a poetry activation project named Saint Flashlight.

*You’re Pretty Gay* is a collection of stories published by Chaffinch Press and written by Drew Pisarra. Within these stories are intimate, queer, and confessional voices that tell their stories of yearning, pain, and adventures.

The narrators of these stories were intimate with the tellings of their stories, and they were also intimate with the readers themselves. Pisarra writes, in “Fickle”, “You’re not reading this because you need to read this. You’re reading this because you want to. You believe in the power of choice. Don’t you? (15)”. In this line, the narrator is addressing the reader in an unconventional and uncanny way. The reader is not simply immersed by the narration but also commanded to attention by the narrator.

The intimacy of these stories continues throughout these short stories with the confessional tone. The narrator confesses in the short story, “Every Man for Myself, “For the moment, I simply wanted to love everybody – aggressively or passively, sloppily or hurriedly as the situation required” (80). These revelations create a bond between the narrator and the reader.

Pisarra’s poetic side is clearly visible in this collection as he uses repetition throughout his short stories to create a rhythmic and musical reading. The narrators will often repeat phrases and sentence structures to convey the intensity of the emotions taking place. The narrator describes, in the short story “The Hat from Hell '', “And each of these wood planks had a nail in it. And they hit me in the head. And they hit me in the head. And they hit me in the head.” (24). Pisarra engages with magical realism in this short story. Pisarra writes, “I heard the gates clang behind me and found myself standing in the middle of a strange kitchen with a rabbit attached to my dick. I tried pulling it by its ears to get it off. I thought if I could just get it off some sort of inverse magic might occur and out of the rabbit’s mouth would come the voice of God (23)”. In “The Hat from Hell”, the narrator is in a house full of queerness and oddities. This place is described as hell. The story is complex with a religious undertone. The narrator has to confront his queerness directly.

I would recommend *You’re Pretty Gay* to any readers who enjoy confessional narratives with a strong emphasis on tone. I would also recommend it to readers who enjoy musicality and experimental narrative techniques.