

Speaking of the origins of the LGBTQ+ poetry anthology, editor John Ennis shared, “The book grew out of a conversation I had with UCD student Moxie Lofton, who organised A Walk-in Poetry Workshop in Dublin in late January 2020. I wandered in, I might learn something. During snatches of intermittent conversation, Moxie remarked on new-found confidence among young LGBTQ+ poets about expressing their innermost thoughts and fears in the minefield of relationships.

“Having edited and published a number of anthologies, I suggested maybe there was a case for bringing out a modest pamphlet of poems reflective of this? We met a few times later to suss out the idea: Covid intervened but the notion gathered pace, eventually after many twists and turns ending up in a book of 198 pages featuring 25 poets.”

To celebrate I found a place at a bar. A lady
thanked me for all my dead legs, bleeding toes.
She could not have stomached asking people
to allow her marry her girlfriend.
My heart swelled with pride.
By nightfall I was with my friends,
drinking cocktails. I felt like a full citizen
of this country for the first time.
An Indian summer came early.
We lit paper lanterns.
They floated up and away
under the woolly clouds.

Count Day (an extract) – Diarmuid Fitzgerald

Ennis continued, “This bi-lingual anthology of 25 young LGBTQ+ poets living in Ireland disproves the notion of the stereotypical ‘gay’ still in the minds of many people, not least the ‘objectively disordered’ person of religious catholic fundamentalism. Some poets in the book still bear the scars of these put-downs.

“Each voice among the 25 is varied in itself, to begin with, and then flowers with that individuality, among the others, as the verse unfolds. In their own motley ways, the poets are ‘proud to be gay’, despite the fight some have to fight daily to defend their right to be gay, as individuals, human beings and fully committed members of society with equal rights due in all areas of life.”

Ireland does not welcome that which is strange,
for years ‘abnormal’ men loved out of range
of suspicious eyes and hateful glances,
they escaped from here given their chances.
The land of saints, of scholars, tales, and glee,
some stories were forgotten, never free.

The Song For Him (an extract) – SJ Saighead

There are poems dedicated to supportive parents who helped their children during the coming out process – which is a recurrent theme – and poems decrying the lack of support from extended family members. The creators describe, “Life as lived is the stuff of this book: life with its individual acts of thoughtfulness,” there are moments of self-reflection, scary moments, conversations (including one with a drag queen), and the day-to-day life of living as a queer person in Ireland.

Ennis described, “When Moxie Lofton and I sat down in an attempt to set some parameters for *Green Carnations, Glas na Gile*, we wondered if there might be traces of the wit of the original Oscar in the poems expected in. We were not to be disappointed.”

I never imagined the freedom
That could come
From being in a room
Surrounded by people just like me.
To know we all chafed at
The gender assigned to us by society
And struggled to find the courage
To truly be ourselves,
Gave me a sense of peace
That I never experienced before.
The minority became the majority;
Confidence and power in numbers.
Lighthouse (an extract) – SH Bramble