



## **Refuse**

*Elliott DeLine*

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Dean, a 22-year old female-to-male-transsexual, is no LGBT poster boy. Unemployed, depressed, mid-transition, friendless, and still living in the upstairs bedroom of his parents' house in a conservative suburb, he can think of little to do but write his memoir. In the third person, he tells the tale of his would-be love affair with his college roommate, Colin, another trans man with a girlfriend and a successful indie rock band. The plot is interrupted intermittently by Dean's first person commentary, often criticizing middle-class conformity-but also the queer counterculture from which he feels equally alienated. He is obsessed with Morrissey of The Smiths and wants nothing in life other than the same level of fame. As his far-fetched dreams become a foreseeable reality, he must decide between honesty and belonging, conformity or isolation, community or self....

## Refuse Details

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# From Reader Review Refuse for online ebook

## Ben Payne says

This was a really nice surprise. A coming-of-age novel about a trans (FTM) guy in college, coming to terms with his identity and relationships. It avoids cliches and presents a broad variety of trans characters. Dean, the narrator, is smart and cynical, spiky and hard to get to know. His defensiveness is by turns off-putting and charming. Dean is also obsessed with Morrissey and The Smiths, and the book is littered with indie music references that added to its charm. Ultimately I found it a moving and genuine novel.

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## Vince says

i love love LOVED this book!! I literally keep thinking about it, and I wish it was longer to keep reading. I don't want to let go and say bye to Dean. I just absolutely loved everything about this book; the writing style kept me wanting to read more. I loved the sarcasm, the quick witted come backs, and just the way i was kept engrossed into the story, and couldn't put it down. And there were some moments where it had me questioning life, and society.

Also, I'm from North Syracuse, as well, and i just kept getting excited reading a book where my hometown was the setting. Reading this made me miss Syracuse.

But anyways now on to the characters, I loved Dean, and i enjoy well developed characters with flaws and seeing them try to work through issues, and just figuring out their problems. Yes, Dean, was deeply flawed, but that's what i liked about him; He felt more real! Now as for Colin, hmmm i started out liking him, but then he kept toying with Dean, and it was so frustrating seeing him use, and just toy with Dean's emotions, and when he didn't even walk Dean back to their Dorm after that party! I was just like "the fuck dude?!?!" I don't know it just seemed like Colin, gave Dean the time of day when it convinced him. But aside from that! Colin's character was pretty cool, when he wasn't drinking that is. Gosh, I'm trying to think of other reasons i liked him, but i guess the way he treated Dean is clouding my perspective.

All said and done, i really really enjoyed reading this book, and it will definitely stick with me always.

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## EZRead eBookstore says

Summary: Dean is not your average, run of the mill, happy-go-lucky, young adult. Not only is he a transsexual male who questions his sexual preferences, but he seemingly hates everything around him, including himself. Then again, having rage against the world and not knowing who he really is could be considered a common trait amongst many of today's youth. What teenager or young adult doesn't feel awkward and out of place? Sadly, it is Dean's discomfort and self-hatred of himself that has him feeling his plight is worse than others around him, including those in his transgender community.

Review: Edgy may be an understatement for the tone of this book. From the first pages of the book, the reader undertakes the rants of the main character. Complaining about what is wrong with people and himself, this verbal self-abuse could be compared to the modern angry lyrics that so many teens delve into as a form

of venting their frustrations.

My own feelings for Dean were at a tug of war with each other. On one hand, I sympathize for Dean as he relates the struggle and persecution he deals with becoming a man. On the other hand, I wanted to slap him across the face for pushing away those who cared for him and often making his own life harder because of his own awkward feelings towards himself.

Confusion was also a big theme of this book. My inability to understand Dean's reasoning probably equaled his own. Like a jigsaw puzzle for a brain, his outlook was scattered across the table, and finding a single piece of the puzzle was never enough to understand the whole picture that made up Dean.

Does he like women, does he like men, or does he like transgender men or women? Does Dean ever find closure and acceptance with himself? Those are questions best answered by reading the book.

-EZRead Staffer, Amelia

Buy the book here: <http://www.ezread.com/book.asp?EAN=97...>

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## **Nora says**

I loved this one! Six stars! This novel really spoke to my condition, so YMMV, but I will tell you why I liked it. I will let you live vicariously through my reading experience. As soon as I saw that Refuse was about a depressed young man who is transgender and obsessed with Morrissey, I knew that I had to read it. But terrific subject matter does not necessarily make a terrific self-published novel, so I was also very apprehensive about this book. Clearly before I even cracked the cover I had already endured a veritable roller coaster of emotions. My girlfriend saw the book and commented, "Oh look, you bought another book you don't even want to read." I assured her this one was different. Then I read the first few pages and I was enchanted. These opening pages were about how when the main character was a child, he had a speech impediment and couldn't pronounce his own original name; the best he could come up with was "Yahweh." I didn't have time to read the book right away, so I found myself actually looking forward to an upcoming grueling trip when I planned to read it. However, apparently I couldn't wait that long because I ended up waking up at 5am and tearing through the whole thing.

It's a very interior kind of story, very up in the characters' heads, but a lot happens in Refuse. I found it to be very nuanced and multi-layered, but at the same time accessible and straightforward. I got a definite feeling of the writer spitting in the eye of convention, but this is not some experimental gibberish that is hard work to read. It flows and has a simple narrative even while it defies certain expectations of what's supposed to happen in a novel and especially in a bildungsroman. This would make more sense if I gave an example, I guess. Okay, Refuse tosses aside the rules about "show don't tell," and it works. In an early scene, the main character—shy and melancholy Dean—discovers someone knocking on his door, an outgoing guitarist named Colin Mahr who is also transgender like Dean. They talk and are kind of testing each other out, and when Dean asks Colin to name a band that inspires him, Colin gives the answer he thinks will impress Dean, and it works. So I read that and I thought, oh, this is just like how Morrissey and Johnny Marr met, how fun. I figured that was just kind of an "easter egg," and obviously that similarity won't be referred to because that would lack subtlety. But then the narrator, who is Dean but in the first person in the present, explains it to you about ten pages later. And somehow that makes it even better. It sort of reminds me of the narrators of Victorian novels, who explain and even moralize at you; it's the same kind of direct but not simple approach.

Dean also tells us early on, "Close-read all you want, you philistines. Do a close-reading of this sentence. How did that go? I hate you."

What else did I like about this book? It's witty, made me smile. I loved the main character Dean; he's such a delicate petal. I liked how he was from the provincial North like Morrissey but in this case the North is Syracuse. Dean has very poor theory of mind in terms of empathizing with other people and seeing that it might make them feel bad if he says incredibly harsh things to them. His own pain mostly blinds him to the less-rarified feelings of others. But the writer is deeply aware of Dean's flaws and presents Dean's at-times controversial viewpoints tenderly so that I always felt sympathetic to Dean instead of annoyed. Did I say "deeply aware"? This story is nothing but stratum after stratum of self-awareness.

One big thing that this book was about was self-loathing/internalized transphobia. The easy out would have been if Dean had some big revelation and decided to accept himself and then he became happy, but essentially that never happened. (That's not a spoiler, is it? Is it?) I thought it was really brave and awesome to have a character mostly just go on hating himself and being miserable. But hard, it was hard to watch this lovable character suffer and not get to have a perfect ending all wrapped up with a bow. I'm only realizing now that I was sort of warned (in a *Mill On The Floss* "That girl will drown someday" kind of way) when Dean describes a book he read as a child where the dog hero dies at the end and how cruel that was. (I'm NOT saying anyone drowns or dies at the end of *Refuse*, only that it is artistically good but humanly cruel not to give your characters happiness, and I was duly warned.)

Anyway, all this self-loathing was very thought-provoking. It made me think about when I was a teenager and all the other girls were constantly whining about how they were fat, but I never did because I was a feminist and I thought it was all BS. But the result was, all the other girls got to have their friends coo over them and tell them that no they weren't really fat, while I had the same horrible thoughts in my head that they did but because I never spoke them aloud I never got all the nice cooing and reassurance. So really I was punished for being too highly evolved. And it is nice to express self-hatred if that is what we unfortunately feel and read about self-hatred, even when we know better and we know that we are all wonderful. And in this world there truly are people whose lives don't get better and they stay depressed always so it's sort of affirming to see that in a book instead of having everything be all inspirational. Inconsolably sad people, your life is validated in this book! And it makes me think there is more to life than YA books because pretty much you CAN'T have a self-loathing person whose life doesn't get that much better in a YA novel. And in all my other reviews of books with transgender characters I always say that no one should come away from such a book feeling alienated or worse about themselves, which I imagine could potentially happen with this book although it didn't to me. But those other books were all YA, and none of those rules apply here. So it makes me think I should widen my mind and read more contemporary literary fiction like this one instead of mostly YA, even though contemporary literary fiction is generally shitty and YA reliably rings all the cherries. BTW, because I heard about this book on Lee Wind's *I'm Here, I'm Queer, What The Hell Do I Read* blog, I thought it might be YA because that's what the blog is nominally about. So I was excited by the possibility that this book was the literary equivalent of a golden winged mer-unicorn, ie a YA novel with a transgender character or themes written by a person who is transgender. But, no.

I really liked all the Morrissey/The Smiths references and quotations (usually embedded into the dialogue or description so that I expect you won't notice them if you don't already know them.) I don't think there's any requirement to be a Morrissey fan to like this book, but it just makes it that much better. Probably even the Moz-haters will get a little frisson of "Hah, just as I always suspected, these fans are crazy freaks," so really this book is for everyone. As it turned out, the day I read this novel was a not-great Morrissey news day, so I was glad to have bracing reading material.

While I was reading this book, I kept thinking about the Enneagram, which is a personality typing system with 9 types of personalities that is a constant topic of conversation in my house because my girlfriend is really big into it. You may say that the whole idea of labeling personalities is inherently dumb and of course there are more than nine kinds of people, and I can't argue with you, but it can be a nice heuristic for viewing the world and understanding people who are different from yourself. Anyway, I just kept thinking "Dean is a Four! Dean is such a Four! Dean is a foury Four!" The Fours' central wish is for someone to see them for who they really are, but they also don't want you to look at them. They are all about identity, depth, and introspection, and they can get so wrapped up in their own emotions that they are basically living in a fantasy world and never actually do anything in the real world. They tend to be withdrawn, over-identified with their own feelings, and envious of others, and have a tough time just being themselves. But their saving grace is that they can be unspeakably creative, self-aware, emotionally authentic, sensitive, self-expressive and they find meaning everywhere. I think Dean is a Four with a Five wing, unlike Morrissey, the world's Fouriest Four, who has a Three wing. Anyway, if you are interested in the Enneagram or enjoy reading about characters like that, this book will be like crack for you.

In conclusion, this book pleases me more than anything I've been reading lately (except my brother's new novel but I am only up to chapter 9 in that.) I can't stop thinking about Refuse. I also liked the cover. I think if I had seen the cover without any description of what the book was about, I would basically get the idea. I'm looking forward to re-reading it already. I feel a certain willingness to read any fiction this guy will ever write. This book has inspired me to the greatest heights of word count and incoherence ever in my Goodreads reviews. The only other book that this reminds me of a little is (You) Set Me on Fire by Mariko Tamaki. (Forget what I said about The Mill on the Floss, that was silly.) Oh yeah, did I mention that this novel has a love story in it? It looks like I didn't describe the plot at all, which is the whole point of reviews. Oh well.

Were there things I didn't like? But of course. The interior book design was atrocious; I did not like the way it was laid out at all, and the formatting was inconsistent and there were plenty of typos. This makes me sad. Does a pastry chef create an incredibly delicious dessert only to smush it all over the plate in a haphazard way? I also had a tiny credibility problem with the ending. Dean refuses something that I don't think anyone could. (I'm not talking about the graveyard scene, I mean the conversation at the end.) Even if the offer made to Dean would lead to ruin and he knew it, I still don't see how he could possibly say no.

When I tried to look this book up on Goodreads by title and author, and then by author, I came up with nothing. I finally had to enter the ISBN. It turns out the problem is that I cannot spell the name "Elliott" with the correct number of T's. But if it's true that there's no great loss without some small gain, then now that Goodreads has been taken over by the evil empire Amazon, why can't Goodreads have superior searchability like Amazon has? I should be allowed to be one letter off and still find the book. Speaking of Amazon, why don't you buy this book directly from the author's website so he gets all the money?

<http://elliottdeline.tumblr.com/Books>

Unless you truly cannot afford the \$2 price difference or whatever it is.

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## **Andrew says**

Dean's Holden Caulfield attitude got on my nerves a whole awful lot, but the further I got into the book I started to disregard it and it began to bother me less because I was getting wrapped up in the story. Based the first-person pieces throughout the book, I could tell that none of this was going to end all that well. My "review" is probably going to be a random assortment of what I thought of all the characters.

First, TJ. I'm so, so glad that he was shown as such an annoying character. People like him drive me fucking crazy. Like Dean and Craig had discussed, he had such a juvenile attitude when it came to queer people and community, the whole reclaiming of words like "tranny", "fag", etc, I just can't stand people like that, and I'm glad that for once a character with that attitude isn't the best friend of the protagonist. The kind of guy that tells you that as a trans\* person if you're not comfortable with yourself, you're "Body Shaming" yourself and if you don't care too much for such over-the-top-in-your-face queerness, you're "oppressing the queer community".

Next, Colin. I liked him a lot at first, but he began to infuriate me more and more throughout the book. I feel pity for him, kind of, because of how much he's in denial of himself. Something tells me that once he gets married to Maggie (or if he ever does, we'll never know) he'll regret it and end up looking around for other trans men or cis men. With all of his "forget about everything I said last night because I don't remember any of it" excuses, my heart was breaking along with Dean's. I'm happy that at the end, Dean finally stood up and said "no" to his outrageous behavior to him and Craig. I also was really irritated with his hypocrisy about how at the start, he said he didn't want to be a queer role model musician, but then ended up caving in to the pressure, AND THEN trying to make a gimmick out of his music by inviting Dean! Colin, pardon me, just go fuck yourself.

Maggie. I think she definitely had a transman fetish. It blew my mind how Colin kept going back to her. It's obviously not meant to be. He even admitted himself that she fetishized him. I can't stand her. I'm glad that she (from what I understood, at least) and Dean didn't remain friends after everything. She and Colin can go live in a land of denial together.

I really, really liked Craig's character. I was hoping that he and Dean would become more of an item, and I'd like to think that after the book, that happened, somehow. I was hoping they would bond over the ways that Colin had screwed them both over, but it appears they never brought it up all that much. Craig may not have been a very good songwriter from what we understand, but he was a really great person. Again, I'm very proud of Dean for standing up for him.

Vivian; I wish that she and Dean were able to reconcile, but at the same time, I'm kind of glad that they didn't. They always have that in a book, where the protagonist and his best friend get into a dramatic fight, but somehow they end up being friends again. Let's face it, that hardly actually happens in the real world if you screw someone over. In general, I really love how real this book was, with your friendships and relationships to others. Vivian was justified to her anger towards Dean.

Of course, there were a lot of other characters, but these are all the thoughts I felt like sharing about the characters I thought really mattered, and if I wrote more about the others I don't think I'd have much to say. Needless to say, I really, really enjoyed this book, with its ups and downs, and I felt a lot of emotions, and it all flowed really nicely. I could have done without some of the first-person paragraphs, because some of it got old/repetitive/ Holden Caulfield really fast, but other than that, everything was most definitely enjoyable.

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## Mirrordance says

Eccessivo, crudo, ossessivo. Uno spaccato di eccessi giovanili, ricerca di identità e del sé. Forse ho superato l'età in cui posso identificarmi. Di sicuro i disagi, il male di vivere e le psicosi sono tipici di una generazione e non solo. In particolare il problema identità di genere e transizione sono solo una delle tante sfaccettature del disagio. Il protagonista potrebbe semplicemente essere, gay, nero, drogato o con turbe caratteriali. Libro cupo, in cui nessuno si salva, in cui emergono le debolezze e le fragilità, in cui rimane pochissimo spazio per sentimenti diversi da un narcisismo distruttivo. Amicizia, solidarietà, fiducia e lealtà sembrano solo parole vuote con cui il mondo vuole turlupinarti. Una frase sulle labbra di uno dei protagonisti pare molto vera... che i transgender sembrano spesso scrivere storie lamentose di incomprensione. Dando per scontato quanto sia difficile il percorso di transizione ci sono pochissimi libri che offrano esempi positivi di trasformazione o riscatto, mi chiedo se perché una volta finito il percorso vogliono solo lasciarsi alle spalle il passato, dimenticarlo e mimetizzarsi o se il racconto sia una dimensione catartica che dà forza.

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## Christopher Moss says

So many transgender novels I have read are light, humorous, safe, but not this one. The dark mood of this novel as an authenticity not often found in the genre, baring the self-absorbed and sarcastically pitiable world view of late adolescents. It follows transgender student Dean as he enters college and starts to find his fellow transmen. Obsessed with the British indie rock band The Smiths Dean is drawn to his new roommate, himself a musician bound for success in the indie rock industry, also a transman but one with a girl friend. Just like *Real Life*, the thrust of college life for Dean is the social environment rather than the classes, as a young person learns to cope in the world no longer dependent, albeit resentfully, on the family of origin, no longer able to rely on that excuse. Dean manages to make his way through it, more or less successfully, finding his place in his insular community of transmen and his voice as a writer.

I'll be honest, I did not much care for Dean throughout much of this novel, but I know full well that liking a main character is not the point of reading a novel. I found him self-absorbed, adolescent, unstable, but then that's who he is.

Consider the lack of models for transgender people. Just who should Dean turn to for someone to show him how to be in the world? So often the only community we have is our peers, just as directionless and lost as we. How can I expect Dean to be wiser, more philosophical or more mature than those young people who have precedent to guide them?

His relationship with Teddy, a transwoman is the most moving part of the novel and showcases DeLine's exquisite prose as no other.

He placed the angel on the footer beside the silk plant. He realized it would seem a typical talisman to passersby, just as Theodore Patrick Foley would seem a typical man. The gesture felt powerful nonetheless. He curled up over the grave, hugging his knees. He put his lips to the dirt between the grass and closed his eyes. After a few moments, he whispered into the ground, a variation of something he'd accidentally memorized by heart "And alien tears will fill for her Pity's long broken urn. For her mourners will be outcast men And outcasts always mourn."



I am reminded that even people with whom I could never get along have some gift for me if I pay attention. In this case it is grace.

That's All I Read, <http://kitmossreviews.blogspot.com>  
GLBT Bookshelf, <http://glbtbookshelf.com>

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## **Kaleb Fischer says**

Let me begin by saying that Refuse had a lot of potential. DeLine is clearly skilled in prose, but the overall impression I received in reading this was that it could have benefited from more substantial editing.

Yeah, I get that it's edgy and radical or whatever to self-publish, but DeLine just doesn't get there with this novel. One can maintain the indie image just as effectively through radical/queer publishers of which there is a plethora.

One of my chief criticisms of Refuse is the diatribe sandwich of which the introduction and conclusion are comprised which truly contributes little in stylistic or narrative value. They are sophomoric, grating, narcissistic, and most of all, pretentious. This may have been a stylistic choice for character development, but really, it could have been achieved with more nuance in a manner that did not impel me to chuck the book across the room.

The overall novel just exudes affectation and not just from the standpoint of Dean's character, which could have worked if it was actually warranted. It wasn't. We get it, he has a BA, but this is a debut novel and he's not actually David Foster Wallace.

A second complaint is that Refuse is not at all accessible outside of a very niche audience and attempts and fails to accurately represent the transmasculine community. Maybe there aren't many gay transmasculine individuals in Syracuse, but overall, homosexuality isn't that uncommon in the trans\* community. Refuse supports the wide misconception of the general populace that it's "weird" to be gay and trans. I concede that it is not the job of every trans\* narrative to be didactic, but there is currently so little representation, that any misrepresentation has a potential for deleterious impact. Also, don't use the "t-word". It's not even possible to justify its use by using the cop-out of "the characters to not necessarily represent the author.

But seriously, if Refuse isn't accessible to anyone outside of the transmasculine or trans\* community, then what purpose does it serve other than as a circlejerk? To be fair, it would be much more accessible if the aforementioned "diatribe sandwich" was simply excluded. While I understand that many of the stylistic choices were employed to echo Dean's experiences and thought processes, they were not executed cohesively or with the intended nuance. I really don't think the random breaks into screenplay structure, glossary and message board comment style are working.

As is often the case with niche works, I think that the positive reception of Refuse has more to do with the identity of the author and characters than actual merit.

Okay, let's throw some positives out there. Refuse represents (though inadequately) an underexplored narrative. There is a lot of potential, especially in describing internal struggle, but perhaps this could be done without the overdone "Hey look at how edgy, apathetic, narcissistic and affected this guy is!" vibe. There is

beauty in DeLine's prose, however, Refuse has substantial structural inadequacies. Also, from the enjoyment of the experience standpoint, (with the exception of the diatribe sandwich) Refuse was a fun time. I am interested in reading further works of DeLine's in hopes that he has progressed and grown as a writer since the publication of Refuse.

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### **Akiva says**

I really fucking appreciate Dean's cynical, pessimistic, dysphoric, mythology-soaked feelings on being trans, even though "miserable people making other people miserable" isn't my favorite genre. Everyone's been there (and the people who haven't are even more insufferable), but no one skewers it as well as Dean does.

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### **Francisco says**

Potentially really offensive (and obnoxious!), but it was thrilling to finally read a novel with characters whose lives are like mine (trans & queer).

Also, the narrator hints at some really compelling issues of identity and being --especially in the conversations between Dean and Teddy-- but then quickly retreats. I would've enjoyed further explorations of those themes. (Sure, I've read tons theory about gender and transness, and I've done a lot of thinking of my own, but sometimes I wonder what it all *means* in the grand scheme of things. Maybe I'm asking too much from this book, but it came so close that it was disappointing.)

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### **Logan Plonski says**

This was generally an enjoyable read, but suffered from a lot of structural and grammatical problems which could have been easily prevented if DeLine had bothered to hire a copy editor.

The cover photo was low-quality and pixellated, which gives the whole thing an unprofessional, juvenile appearance. DeLine didn't seem to have a whole lot of respect for the book itself, while also seeming to think of himself as the writer of a contemporary queer classic. That's actually the problem I had with the writing, too; it's simultaneously pretentious and self-deprecating, just like the main character himself.

Overall I don't regret reading it, but it could have used some serious editing and it failed to expand on some potentially interesting plot lines and characters, like Adrian and Teddy. Actually every character could have used more attention, with the notable exception of Dean, who I got really tired of. But I'm glad that trans literature is getting some new perspectives and voices.

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### **Iseult says**

I'm sorry but this writing was bad, so I only pushed myself through the first half. I've read many pieces of fanfiction for free that were better than this. The main character is insufferably annoying. There were like 10 spelling mistakes and the cover image was blurry cause it was too stretched out, which I feel is a result of

lack of effort, because honestly I'm sure it's not that hard to fix. As others have said, this is in desperate need of an editor, but also a serious rethinking of why Dean is so annoying.

The author is constantly referencing the fact that Dean likes The Smiths and has a cool hairstyle, and Dean writing about himself is constantly acknowledging how he's arrogant and then continues talking about himself. There's little reason why anyone would want to hang out with Dean, who doesn't willingly offer anything in terms of friendship, other than "he's the only other trans guy on campus and we feel bad." I feel like there was probably a lot of self-insert in his contrarian opinions too, but some of them made little to no sense other than wanting to sound controversial, which made me roll my eyes too many times until I finally said enough. Awkward phrases and unnatural dialogue were everywhere, like describing a girl's chest as a "partially exposed bosom."

I wish I liked this because I had to buy it, as it wasn't in any library and I as a transmasculine person like reading some books from the transmasculine perspective. Also, the main character was in a similar situation as me in a certain way so maybe I can skim to the end and see what happens. I knew that most self-published books weren't the greatest in terms of writing, but seeing as this came out in 2009 before "transgender" became a term everyone knew, I thought maybe it had to be self-published because no one wanted to publish a story about us or thought it wouldn't sell. But now I think it was the writing. Sorry to be so critical, but I'm being honest.

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### **Kate says**

Like many coming of age books, this one has plenty of heavy handed, self pitying sections that make the author seem very full of himself. But that's what it's like to be learning who you are and how you fit in to the world around you. I had to remind myself of that, and when I did, I really liked the story.

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### **Hope says**

I love that I hated this book yet couldn't stop reading the trainwreck it became. I hate that all the young people talked like they were in their forties and fifties or were living in the 1940s and 1950s. I mean, I know they wore cardigans and some had money, but still...it was too much (including the endless references to cardigans) and they all sounded the same. And if Dean bit his lip on more time...! This book reminded me of Donna Tartt's *The Secret History* - though without the murder or well-crafted writing. Just terrible, self-absorbed college students and lots of wine/whine. Very juvenile writing in need of serious copyediting.

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### **Alex Everette says**

Dean, who named himself for his legendary hero, James Dean, takes a step back to narrate time in college he spent falling in and out of love with Colin Mahr, soon-to-be-famous guitarist. They're introduced on the assumption that the only two trans guys on their college campus would want to know each other, and they do hit it off. Colin finds Dean's Holden Caulfield-esque personality endearing rather than repulsive, as Dean insists many others have.

To say they wind up in a love triangle with Maggie, Colin's girlfriend, would be both understatement and overstatement. One drunk kiss doesn't make love, even if it does make for jealousy and a breakup, and

eventually it turns out to be the story of the one who got away. To say more may spoil the drama for future readers.

The only real drawbacks to this book (if you don't find Dean's abrasive personality repellant) is that it could have used one or two more line-reads for editing, as is mentioned in a zillion other reviews. Even this I'm willing to overlook, for an engaging story, a cast of queer kids, and a narrator who really grew on me over the course of 193 pages.

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