



# Adam

*Ariel Schrag*

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## **Adam** Ariel Schrag

When Adam Freedman -- a skinny, awkward, inexperienced teenager from Piedmont, California -- goes to stay with his older sister Casey in New York City, he is hopeful that his life is about to change. And it sure does.

It is the Summer of 2006. Gay marriage and transgender rights are in the air, and Casey has thrust herself into a wild lesbian subculture. Soon Adam is tagging along to underground clubs, where there are hot older women everywhere he turns. It takes some time for him to realize that many in this new crowd assume he is trans -- a boy who was born a girl. Why else would this baby-faced guy always be around?

Then Adam meets Gillian, the girl of his dreams -- but she couldn't possibly be interested in him. Unless passing as a trans guy might actually work in his favor...

Ariel Schrag's scathingly funny and poignant debut novel puts a fresh spin on questions of love, attraction, self-definition, and what it takes to be at home in your own skin.

## **Adam Details**

Date : Published June 10th 2014 by Mariner Books (first published January 1st 2014)

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Author : Ariel Schrag

Format : Paperback 302 pages

Genre : Fiction, Lgbt, Young Adult, Glibt, Queer

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## From Reader Review Adam for online ebook

### AJ says

Probably the worst book in existence. The author has to be such a vile individual to even consider this idea. I was struggling to not vomit...and I need to take several showers now.

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### Christina (A Reader of Fictions) says

Pages Read: 43

This book is making me really uncomfortable. I wanted to read this because of the LGBTQ+ stuff, but I've not even gotten to that aspect. Basically, I hate the MC. He's a horrible person and I don't want to spend any more time in his head. The only LGBT stuff that's happened is his lesbian sister telling him that a summer in NYC will make everyone at his school want to suck his dick. Oh yeah, and Adam and his friend watching his sister and her girlfriend have sex. The swearing and stuff in this book even makes ME uncomfortable and I'm a big fan of swearing. I feel like it's being intentionally crude just to shock, rather than being real.

I really wanted to love this, but it's so obviously not for me.

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### Ian says

Look, all the deep and significant flaws with the representation in this book are reflected in other reviews. Yes-- they offended the heck out of me (me-- the 22 year old trans guy). Racism, antisemitism, transphobia, biphobia, etc etc were deeply ingrained in this book. Any one star review addresses those things. I have something I would like to add. The writing is just straight up bizarre. Besides reading like a queer theory 101 textbook with all kinds of stilted dialogue, there were some moments that left me scratching my head. Here are a few examples.

"The sandwiches all come with american cheese-- the kind we love that McDonald's uses."

Why do you need to explain what american cheese is to a seventeen year old boy living in america? Who are you explaining american cheese to? Are you trying to establish that their privileged upbringing mostly sheltered them from american cheese?

"Someone was using the toilet. A large fart erupted from the stall and Adam cringed. Something about women farting was just so much grosser than men farting. He gagged a little behind his mask and was about to leave when he heard the person's voice. She was on the phone and it was [his sister]."

What does this add to the story? He already finds out that it's his sister on the toilet by hearing her voice. Does his thought about women farting add some kind of element of characterization? I have to go with probably not.

There was another part where Adam's sister's roommate went on a date with a girl she met on an online dating site. This girl was: ugly, stupid, spoke exclusively in strange random non sequiturs, and picked her nose in public. Why is all of this necessary? The girl was in the book for maybe one chapter, played a very minor role in the drama of the apartment, and had absolutely no redeeming qualities or anything to make her seem like an actual real life human in any way at all. It's too much!!! It's heavy-handed!!! It comes off as ridiculous!!!

Also, there is no scale on earth by which I would be measured a prude but if this book is supposed to be YA, I have to say I would not recommend it for YA readers. Does sex exist? Yes. Should it be represented in YA? Absolutely. Should it be a constant barrage, assaulting the reader with vivid details of every form and function of sex imaginable? I don't think so. I mean, part of me has to admit that it's nice to see more than the standard insert tab a into slot b vanilla vaginal intercourse represented, but it was a lot. A lot a lot. So much.

**TL;DR: Bizarre, heavy-handed, would not recommend**

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### Emily says

I am obsessed with this book. My friend Bennett describes it as "the most LOL book" he's ever read, and I concur. Its funniness comes from a profound and compassionate understanding of what it's like to be young and dealing with complex issues of identity -- sexual and gender identity and just becoming a person in general. I recommend it to anyone who's ever been young and confused about who they had to be and how they had to act in order to be attractive, cool, and loved.

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### Thomas says

Warning: this review will contain an inappropriate quote. Because *Adam* has a lot of inappropriate things. Like recreational drug use and explicit sexual detail involving pornography. All within the first 20 pages. You have been cautioned.

Seventeen-year-old Adam Freedman has nothing to do over the summer. He decides to stay with his older sister Casey in her apartment in New York City, and right away he finds himself thrust into the lesbian subculture of 2006 - night clubs, trans people, and attractive women abound. Soon he meets Gillian, the redheaded girl of his dreams, and they fall in love - only after Adam pretends to be a trans guy. Adam would rather die than lose his new love interest, so he maintains the facade, but as his relationship with Gillian gets more and more intense, so does the deceit that drains him of his freedom.

*Adam* delves into the queer community and touches on often overlooked topics, especially trans culture. As a gay guy I like to think that I know a decent amount about lgbtq rights, but *Adam* still taught me a thing or two. Most importantly, Ariel Schrag creates honest characters - lesbians, straight men, transgender folk - all with real faults and strengths, all with the real, human desire to be loved. Some of Schrag's scenes turned into educational lessons and lost their authenticity as a result, but those moments were minor blips in the grand scheme of the novel.

Adam grew on me as a narrator. His cynical and disenchanting view of the world captured me, and he progressed from a whiny, privileged brat to a sympathetic, likeable young man. At the beginning of the book he had no direction, but that changed the moment he met Gillian, and Schrag pulled off his development well. Here's one of Adam's many interesting thoughts that exemplify how Schrag uses Adam's narrative to reflect on subversive topics in the LGBTQ community:

*Adam had always wondered about the whole gay masturbation thing. If you have the body parts you're fantasizing about, couldn't you just touch your own and pretend they were someone else's? Like when he sat on his hand to make it numb before jerking off. Being attracted to vaginas and having the option to touch one whenever you wanted. He felt wildly jealous. Something about it just much not work.*

However, I had two major issues with this book. First, Schrag did not conclude Adam's "pretending to be a trans guy" story arc well. By the end of the book I almost forgave him because he gained empathy through his facade, but he still never faced the consequences of his transgression. (view spoiler) felt too convenient. On a more minor note, I did not appreciate (view spoiler).

Overall, a good book, and I would recommend it to those interested in the plot synopsis. Some will love it, some will hate it, and I can see the reasoning behind both ends.

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## Terry says

if you heard that the writing was deplorable, insulting to your mom, lesbians, and trans folks to boot, you might want to know that it's also racist af. i picked this up out of curiosity for what the buzz was all about but eventually lost a bunch of respect for myself for doing so, as more and more racist comments unfolded throughout the story. it's kind of terrifying that it seems like i'm the first reviewer to point them out on here.

from pretty much featuring all white characters (in new york of all places) to comments about "weird asian pussies," the cracker lez who wrote this book has got her racism on lock. from the get go, adam pictures a "hot redhead" as the (white) girl he'll fall in love with in (the white version of) new york. there's one chapter that opens up by describing what adam sees in queens as he first arrives in new york and it's literally full of racist shit about black people ("it was weird to adam that the whole civil rights movement had pretty much started over a fight to not have to sit in the back, and now the back was the only cool place to sit. especially for black kids." p. 39). later on, he meets a black lesbian and the white author makes sure that a racist gesture is thrown in there ("what do you, adam?" asked jackie. jackie was butch, too, and black. you're black, thought adam." p. 187). we also even see the n word at one point. i'm sure our beloved author would just explain the advice imparted to her in her creative writing classes at columbia about "just getting into her characters." the thing with writing racist shit, bad white young adult fiction writers in denial, is that it's a bad move in every aspect and if at all attempted, should at least be in first person, rather than third, since that pretty much seals your place as our Racist Ass Narrator.

as a queer person who is kind of really interested in reading things that don't just feel like white people happily distributing white hegemony and flat out racism to my communities, i'd avoid this book at all costs. it's not worth the time you could have spent on another more unabashedly young adult fiction novel, trust me.

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## ? percy says

absolute fucking trash. i'm a trans guy and everything i've heard about this makes me want to throw up.

DO. BETTER.

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

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## **Oriana says**

*\*\*Update. This review is getting a lot more attention now that they've announced a movie, so I just want to clarify: This is a bad book. It takes me awhile in my review to wind around to that, but it's crucial that everyone know this upfront. The whole plot is based on a fundamental, fucked-up deception, which is not just irresponsible but downright dangerous for a community (trans people) who have long been derided, abused, and even murdered for being deemed "deceptive." I cannot believe Ariel Schrag did this, and that it's continuing to be celebrated with a movie deal.\*\**

The cover of this book includes the following endorsement by Alison Bechdel: "The sexual revolution is finally over, and Ariel Schrag has won." Flavorpill loved this too. Two brilliant GR-ers whose taste I totally trust both 5-starred it, one even saying that she's "obsessed" with it. So this was a slam-dunk in my head before it even arrived in the mail.

But you guys? I kind of hated it.

Let me start by saying this: I think that conceptually this book is important. It is in many ways groundbreaking and transgressive and necessary right now, seeing as how trans rights are the next frontier in the culture wars. And I am completely, obviously, 100% pro trans rights. As a cis & hetero lady, I do my best to be an ally, and to check my privilege, and to educate myself at every opportunity on gender and sexuality and all the proper theories.

So do not for one second think I am reacting negatively because this is a mainstream, basically YA novel that is filled with queer and trans characters, that portrays them as real people, that gives voice to their struggles and their thoughts and their reality. That is all fantastic.

So what's my problem? Well, two things.

First, I am not the audience for this book. The very reason this is so necessary is because the majority of folks in this backward-ass country do *not* educate themselves on gender theory and do *not* check their cis and hetero privilege, and so for the same reasons that we need racial diversity in movies, we need sexual diversity in literature. Duh, right? But I am neither a person being exposed to all this for the first time who needs to be educated about others' reality, nor a person who knows all of this inherently because it is their struggle but still really needs to see it all normalized in popular culture.

So the fact that this book is essentially Queer/Trans Theory 101 disguised as a novel just made me bored. Watching through the eyes of a seventeen-year-old as the gender continuum is explained made me bored. Being taught about the need for different gender pronouns made me bored. Being walked slowly through the difference between gender identity and sexual preference made me so. fucking. bored.

That part is my fault. The other part, though, is Ariel's fault.

Here's that: This is a book about a fundamental, massive, horrifying deception. I'm going to spoiler a little bit, but you already know this if you've read the book description, so here's what happens: (view spoiler).

This is SO FUCKED UP.

It's fucked up on a level worthy of a person who has NO comprehension of gender theory and history, NO sympathy for the plight of a trans or even queer person. The only way, you assume, that an author who clearly DOES have the right comprehensions and sympathies can let her main character do this is if he is roundly and completely punished in the end, made to understand just how horrible of a thing that was to do.

But does this happen? Uh, spoiler: nope.

Oh it's true that Adam kind of learns his lesson, but not really, and he just gets off the hook like goddamn *nothing*. And! What happens to his love interest in the rushed epilogue-y chapter after their affair is over is just *incomprehensible*.

Weirdly, as the book went on, the writing got stronger and tighter and better -- directly inversely proportional to the plot getting more and more and more appalling and problematic.

I don't get it, Ariel. What the fuck happened?

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## June Junebug says

**TRIGGER WARNINGS:** homophobia, transphobia, incestuous voyeurism, voyeur

Perpetuates every wrong thing that society does to oppress minorities. And don't say "oh but they *meant* to do that to show just how bad it is"—NO. If you wanted to show how bad it is, you don't do it like this. You lay down the problem, you confront the problem, you fix the problem with yourself. Not help your buddy watch your lesbian sister have sex with another woman and then watch with your friend. NO. That's deplorable and absolutely disrespectful. And then pretending to be trans to get into a girl's pants?

Just

He gets the girl in the end despite her specifically saying she's a lesbian and doesn't like penises. This just reinforces the idea that the cis white guy gets the girl and can change a lesbian's mind. That doesn't happen in real life and it's really disrespectful towards lesbians. Now guys are gonna read this or hear about it and think "dude, I'm gonna just go for it and keep sexually harassing this girl because my dick will change her mind."

Bottom line: if you don't know how to write about being part of the LGBTQIAP community in a respectable way, then you can fuck the fuck off.

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## Gregory Baird says

When I first picked up Adam, I confess I was simultaneously intrigued and repulsed by its premise. You see, Adam has the audacious idea to take the standard rom-com premise where someone pretends to be someone/something they're not, and throw in gender norms and sexuality as a twist. It all starts when 17 year-old Adam goes to visit his lesbian sister in New York City for the summer. He's determined to lose his virginity and make all his friends back home jealous, but finds himself surrounded by his sister's lesbian and

trans friends. When he falls for a lesbian at a party, Adam pretends to be trans in order to date her. Done right, it has the potential to be a scurrilous take-down of society and what is considered normal. Done wrong, it's just plain offensive.

Well, Ariel Schrag has a lot to answer for. Because she did it wrong. Big time.

To start with, Adam has some hideously unlikable characters. You don't need likable characters to make a book succeed (just look at *Lolita*--a book that made its controversial premise pay off, I might add), but I feel like in order for this book to work you need to be on Adam's side. And you're not. He's a selfish, spoiled, self-involved brat. We're supposed to think that Adam grows up as the story progresses because he eschews his prior desperation for popularity, but that doesn't make what he does any less reprehensible.

I think Schrag was trying to make some astute points about how hard it is to figure out who you are in a world so caught up with labels, bless her heart, but the message got seriously diluted. Oh, and the story is set in 2006, but it doesn't seem that there's a reason for this beyond allowing characters to make constant (constant) references to the TV show *The L Word*, which--wouldn't you know?--Ariel Schrag wrote for.

I don't usually like to get into spoiler territory, but there's no way to discuss what's so awful about this book without going there. So if you don't want to know, turn away now.

(view spoiler)

Prior to this book, there was only one novel I ever threw across the room in frustration and anger: *Angels & Demons*, by Dan Brown. Now there are two.

Grade: F

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## Alex Maynard says

As a gay trans man, this book is absolutely vile and sickening to read.

This book describes trans men attracted to women as 'lesbians', which is completely transphobic to say the least - they are not lesbians because they are not women, they are straight trans men. The book implies that a trans man is still a woman if he hasn't had gender reassignment surgery yet. The author clearly did no research on actual trans people, as I have never met a single straight trans man who identified as a lesbian, because we are NOT WOMEN.

The main character made me incredibly uncomfortable and disgusted me. He (a cis boy) pretends to be a trans man in order to get a lesbian to like him and become attracted to men - this is essentially CONVERSION THERAPY. His girlfriend in question even says she started fantasising about Adam being a 'real guy' which is horrendously transphobic as it implies that we are not real men, which simply isn't true. At one point Adam is even described as 'feeling trans in his own way'. This makes it seem like our identity is

something that can be stolen and taken advantage of by cis people who shouldn't have it, when we are dealing with the real struggle every day.

At another point in the book, Adam and his girlfriend Gillian are getting it on, and Adam claims to be penetrating her with a strapon but is in fact using his actual penis. This is RAPE. This cannot be defined as anything but rape. He is lying to her and penetrating her without her consent. She did not consent to that. Anything that happens in the bedroom without both people's consent is RAPE, and this book treats it as if it is nothing.

In summary, I have never read a book that repulsed me more than 'Adam' and I would not recommend it to anyone else if it were the last book on earth. This is not 'groundbreaking', this is not 'hilarious', this is in no way 'revolutionary'. This is not representation. This is not what we need as a community. After publishing this monstrosity, Schrag does not deserve a place in our community any more. Do not give this book the attention it does not deserve. This is a book that demonises trans men and women, glorifies rape and dishonesty within a relationship, dehumanises all members of the LGBTQ community and should never be read by a single person on this planet ever again. I am utterly appalled and disgusted by it.

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### **Elise (TheBookishActress) says**

no

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### **Shelley M. says**

I'm not sure why I thought this book would NOT be totally effed up. The premise is creepy, a cisgendered straight boy pretending to be trans to get with a queer woman who isn't interested in dating cis guys. But I knew that Ariel Schrag is queer, and she's mentioned in "Hot Topic" by Le Tigre, so I was hopeful. I imagined sort of a *Hard Love* by Ellen Wittlinger vibe, but this book just drips with unchecked cis/straight/male privilege. I know, it's written by a queer woman, and it got a positive review by Alison Bechdel, but I did not like it. If I were to review this book with a t-shirt, it would be this one:

I'm going to call the whole rest of the review a spoiler.

(view spoiler)

## Jessica says

In a more normal world, I'd agree that a book where characters can't express the simplest thought without dropping six "f-bombs" and which includes a graphic (and hilarious) jaunt through a sex club is maybe a bit racy for the tykes. However, I'm not sure why, in this troubled world of ours where seven-year-olds are regularly exposed to Miley Cyrus, a book like this can't be marketed as YA.

Fortunately, despite meeting the criteria (except the PG test) for classic YA, *Adam* is sophisticated, funny, and fascinating enough for all but the crustiest adult readers. Novels should be novel, and as such they fail if their readers sense they've been written before.

This book definitely hasn't been written before. It's totally novel and exciting and so much of its (our!) time, while maintaining the timeless elements of a classic coming-of-age story. *Adam* is hilarious and brave, with its pitch-perfect fun-poking at a group of people who are often ignored, exoticized, derided, or treated with carefully policed phrasing and a stifling sensitivity. Schrag portrays her trans characters, young lesbians, hapless straight-boy hero, and other players as largely driven by their own insecurities and anxiety and desire to be accepted -- in other words, as human beings. Somehow *Adam* pulls off a balancing of honest but not mean, comic while insightful, transgressive and fun while ultimately pretty darn sweet. The plot was engaging and I read the whole thing in basically one sitting because I felt pulled along and simply wanted to know what would happen -- would Adam get the girl? Where was this going? Could Schrag pull it off? How could this possibly end??

One thing I thought was cool was that I imagined this book would make sense to a young heterosexual man who hasn't really been exposed to queer culture or thinking about gender or LGBTWHATEVERGATRILLIONLETTERSAREBEINGPROMOTEDNOW issues, and I'm really curious if that's true. From what I understand Ariel Schrag must resemble a horny teenage boy herself, and I think *Adam* successfully uses the currency of adolescent hormones and insecurity to explain important things that otherwise might elude that demographic, helping to elevate the wider population's grasp of sexuality and gender past the "How do lesbians have sex?" and "Dude look like a lady" stage.

In the end, I felt I'd seen a fascinating and astute snapshot of a certain time and place, and seen human beings caught, on the one hand, in the specifics of their situation, while behaving pretty much the way that we always do. That is, the characters seemed real to me, both in terms of the history and sociology being represented, and as acting like real-life young people. Finally, *Adam* delivered a satisfying, complete story and a commentary on the complexity and fluidity of gender, sexuality, and growing up. Highly recommended!

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## Kats says

In *Adam* our eponymous 17 year old hero from the San Francisco Bay area manages to persuade his mother to let him spend the summer before his final year at high school with his lesbian sister, Casey, in New York City. Apparently, their parents don't know that their daughter is lesbian nor what she gets up to in New York (she's a student at Columbia but she seems to be spending most of her time attending "queer sex" parties and other orgies).

If *Adam* was written with a teenage readership in mind, I worry about what language has become acceptable

in that generation, and more importantly what kind of behaviour. Sorry - I turned 40 last year, and I'm clearly embracing middle aged grumpiness with a passion; most likely I'm just out of touch. I'm no prude, and those who know me can vouch that I'm partial to a "bit" of swearing myself when opportunity arises, but the gratuitous coarse language in this book was worse than in *The Slap* where Christos Tsiolkas managed to drop more than 400 f-bombs in a 485 page book. My e-copy of *Adam* didn't allow me a quick tally of those words, but it was horrid to read when all that foul language was supposed to be coming from the mouths and minds of 17-year-olds. Okay, I believe that some/many teenage boys have a notorious obsession with sex, but Adam's mindset was so sex focussed, it actually made him an incredibly dull person. Furthermore, I suspect that the author's objective was to shock older readers and entertain younger readers, but the dialogues were cringe-worthy to me, even without all the disgusting expressions these kids used.

The storyline was unlikely (how many transgender 22 year olds happen to be hanging out in the same place?!), the characters largely unsympathetic, the protagonist an egocentric dullard, the slew of sex scenes pretty revolting, the "humour" seriously unfunny, and the writing nothing special. Another off-putting thing were the many racist as well as sexist remarks, the mocking and prejudice directed at Jews by Adam's sister and flatmates (perhaps the author thought she could get away with it, sporting a Jewish name herself, but it was all very uncouth) and the fact that these kids seemed to live in a very, very white world, albeit in the middle of New York. I am amazed that this book was entered for the Tournament of Books 2015 - the only reason I finished reading it was to see if it would get better. It didn't.

For a much better read on teenage sex and transgender issues, I recommend *The Art of Being Normal* by Lisa Williamson.

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### **Kara says**

So horribly offensive that I DNFed it on page 112. I'm lucky I made it that far. Trans folks and lesbians deserve better than this.

AND UPDATE. It's being made into a movie now? UGHHHHH. BOYCOTTTTTTTTTTTT.

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### **Meghan says**

[and tricking a girl into having sex or a relationship with you is a dick move that apparently just happens in the story without much reprisal or reflection? (hide spoiler)]

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### **Emma says**

An awful, repulsive, transphobic, mess.

I didn't have high expectations going into this, I've had about enough of well-intentioned cis opinions on trans people, but I was willing to give Schrag the benefit of the doubt. And at first it seemed like it might actually not be that bad. Yes, the protagonist is a terrible person, but the implication was that he would grow. Yes, the trans people we see at the beginning of the novel were all one-dimensional, self-centered skater

bros, but EVERY character was pretty terrible so it was just a minor annoyance.

But Adam does not grow. He is just as much of a transphobe at the end of the book as at the beginning, viewing the trans bodies at Camp Trans as disgusting, and thinking of cis people as inherently "biological". And the reader is stuck in his head for the ENTIRE BOOK. The use of Adam as an 'everyman' protagonist implies that Schrag believes that the natural thought process of the reader is that trans people are illegitimate and gross.

While every character is awful, the trans people are awful in stereotypically transphobic ways. The ONLY real trans woman character is an aggressive, domineering cheater. The trans men are depicted as being perpetually adolescent and self-obsessed.

Moving away from the trans milieu is seen as an act of maturity, for example Adam's sister's reaffirmation of herself as "gay" rather than "queer" at the end.

I am appalled that this book has been promoted as some great breakthrough in LGBT fiction, or YA fiction. Schrag is clearly writing from intimate personal experience of the queer community she depicts, yes, and there are moments of uncomfortable (and comic) recognition in the first half of the book. But ultimately it is not her identity that is at stake here, and not she that stands to lose from the, I would argue inevitable, misconceptions about trans lives that will follow from Adam's new exemplary status. A "warts-and-all" portrayal of any in-group is only courageous if the dominant portrayal of said group is improbably clear-skinned. For trans people, no such corpus of positive images exists--women tend to exist as walk-on punchlines, murder victims, predators, or at best vacuous agents of cis people's personal growth, while men don't exist at all. For a cis author to shrug and claim, as Schrag has in interviews, that she is simply telling an honest story is to ignore the profound political and cultural implications involved in producing a heavily-publicized "authoritative" portrayal of a vulnerable group to which one does not personally belong.

In other words, it's possible to debate how "honest" the depiction of the queer scene in Adam is. But this is not the moment--as transgender people are just beginning to crest the cultural horizon as actual people, not case studies or symbols--for such a disingenuous defense of (cis) artistic license.

Should anyone doubt that misconceptions about trans people are being left entirely intact by this book, incidentally, I would point them to the headlines of many of the reviews--"Boys Will Be Boys (And Sometimes Girls)" in the Miami Herald, for example.

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## Ocean says

Seriously, why is this woman considered to be a queer icon? That's not a rhetorical question. Has anyone actually read any of her books? They're full of hatred towards queer people, especially gender-non-conforming queer women. Like, if a straight person said the things that she says, their books would be protested, but she's queer and she wrote some cute and insightful comic books when she was in high school nearly two decades ago, so we should just let her say this shit unchecked?

No.

In this book: butch queer women are repeatedly called ugly. Trans people are called ugly and freaky. A straight boy pretends to be trans because trans people are oh so much more privileged than cis people! There's some racist shit thrown in there for good measure. And some sexual coercion, why the fuck not? Why not go all out?

I'm sure this book's fans will be all, "OMG this is how people really talk, get over it." But you know what? I'm not interested in that. Queer literature shouldn't be a jagged mirror of straight society, reflecting back the hateful and frankly boring rhetoric that people spew at us. It should be a space that's about our resilience, our strength, our beauty, our brilliantly unsafe lives. Of course, not all queer life is perfect. Queer people do shitty things and can be just as horrible as anyone else. But this just feels...mean-spirited? Unnecessary? Like it's really not good writing?

This book doesn't deserve to be labeled as queer literature. Ariel Schrag seems to be, for all intents and purposes, someone who wishes they were a completely obnoxious straight dude and is angry that they aren't and is letting the entire world know it throughout their completely mediocre writing. That's fine, but why's it gotta be aimed at queer people? Why are you telling all the baby butches and tiny trans tots that they're ugly when they're just trying to find themselves reflected in a book? They're not showing up in books as often as they're showing up in real life. They need this space. In "Adam," the space is essentially being desecrated. The BEST part is that the characters all go to a L word viewing party...for a season where Schrag was a staff writer! JUST IN CASE it wasn't obnoxious and self-referential enough. I'm surprised one of the (one-dimensional and unlikeable) lesbian characters doesn't whip out her copy of "Definition" while we're at it. Librarians, booksellers—do the world a favor and take this book out of the queer section. Put it in general fiction, where it belongs. (In case you're wondering why I'm ranting about this book that everyone else forgot about 2 years ago, it's because it appeared on a list of Recommended Queer Reads at the San Francisco Public Library of all places. I thought, "aah, what the hell." As my partner said recently, hate-reading is my second-favorite activity (right after snuggling).) Stop uncritically lauding queer authors just because they're queer and pay attention to the bullshit they're spewing. Question why there are brilliant authors (I'm thinking Gabby Rivera of "Juliet Takes A Breath" fame for starters) whose books don't have half the distribution that this book does. I guess homophobia, transphobia and racism are just more marketable. More palatable. And that...leaves me feeling very hopeless.

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## **Danny says**

Relentlessly transphobic, which I found personally offensive as a trans person. Gratuitous use of the "r" word for no reason at all-- many other, and less offensive, terms could have been used instead. Misrepresentation of trans men as misogynistic, hypersexual, assholes-- or them being represented as being only this way. Over-usage of "ugly" to describe butch/MOC women, emphasizing the expectation of all women to adhere to cisnormative, heteronormative standards of beauty. I found this especially disappointing coming from a queer woman writer. I don't care if this was supposed to be a reflection of an immature and unexperienced 17-year-old boy, still unnecessary.

The main plot line follows a 17-year-old boy pretending to be trans so that he can date a 22-year-old queer woman (because she's so beautiful and he's too scared to venture outside of his queer sister's social world and seek out straight women), lose his virginity, and be popular with his bros back home/ impress his best friend who is coming to visit him in New York. I find this to be a particularly dangerous rhetoric in a time when anti-transgender bathroom bills are backed by the idea that trans people are "faking" it in order to take advantage of women.

## **Here are more of my thoughts about this gross book**

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