



Give It To Me

Ana Castillo

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Recently divorced, Palma, a forty-three-year-old Latina, takes stock of her life when she reconnects with her gangster younger cousin recently released from prison. Her sexual obsession with him flares as she checks out her other options, but their family secrets bring them together in unexpected ways. In this wildly entertaining and sexy novel, Castillo creates a memorable character with a flare for fashion, a longing for family, and a penchant for adventure. *Give It to Me* is "Sex in the City" for a Chicana babe who's looking for love in all the wrong places.

"In this gritty and entertaining novel, Ana Castillo paints a captivating portrait of a future that defies odds, questions stereotypes, and always maintains a sense of humor."

—Elena Poniatowka, author of *Massacre in Mexico*

"Cheeky, amoral, and a gritty survivor, Palma Piedras is a picaresque heroine for the 21st century. With an unflinching satirical flare, Castillo creates a vivid cast of rogues and helpless characters who alarmingly resemble people we know."

—Jaime Manrique, author of *Cervantes Street*

"In Ana Castillo's edgy new novel *Give It to Me*, no-holds barred Palma Piedras, 'lone satellite orbiting in space,' crash-lands on everybody's heart. Palma's escapades—erotic, sexy, comic and, by the end, devastating and poignant—illustrate how those who fling themselves onto love and desire are the same people who, at one time or another, must flee from it. An evocative page-turner."

—Rigoberto González, author of *Butterfly Boy, Memories of a Chicano Mariposa*

Give It To Me Details

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Author : Ana Castillo

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From Reader Review Give It To Me for online ebook

Frank García says

If you like dirty, nasty, hardcore sex that pushes back on the criminalization of women's sexual autonomy and agency, read it.

Marisa Gonzalez says

I had to give up on this one. Within the first few chapters the main character has sex with her cousin, a gay friend and a gardener who happens to work on her lawn while she is tanning. Really??? There's nothing sexy about any of that. Just a story of a sad, desperate woman who feels she needs to gain control of her life through sexual conquests. Don't bother with this one.

Alex N says

Castillo has written a book with a hilarious protagonist often a side character in other stories--a middle aged, bisexual latina. Instead, in Give It to Me, Palma Piedras shines. Despite her poor decisions and ridiculous antics, you can't help but rooting for her. The book is raunchy, hilarious and sarcastic, but also incredibly poignant. Through a search for family and love, Palma finds both in herself.

Ming says

This is a story of a bisexual woman. The arc of occurrences is edgy and rogue...and unapologetic. I did not care about Palma and her experiences.

My bigger criticism is that the attempts to be witty or sarcastic feel contrived and forced and thus fall flat.

Ryan says

What first attracted me to this book was the fact that I had read one of Castillo's other books entitled So Far From God. SFFG is Magical Realism, so I was prepared for a book not rooted in any kind of reality, but from reading about this book, I expected some reality.

I got it, some reality that is, from a character who is a struggling alcoholic and has sex with her cousin multiple times before, at the end, finding out that her cousin is in fact not her cousin.

Reading the book was like reading a tabloid at times...things would seem unreal, but be the reality of the main character, which is what life is really like for the majority of human beings. Reminds me of the saying that people overuse: "You couldn't write this!" So, I get it.

The thing that inspired me to finish this book was that I really wanted to know that Palma (the 40+ YO protagonist) was really not having sexual relations with her cousin and to see her find some stability. Her sassy responses to the dull parts of life, and those that are heartbreaking, are entertaining and make you feel for her, but it doesn't feel that Castillo really cared about writing the book. I really want to continue to want to read her books, but this one seemed to maybe bore her as an author.

Maybe I would appreciate this book if I were a woman, 40+, and a divorcee? I don't know and I feel like a jerk for saying that!

Julie says

I remember loving Castillo's first book and then her book, *So Far From God*. I then missed her next novel. I was thrilled to see The Feminist Press publishing Castillo's newest novel, *Give It To Me*. Palma Piedras is a fabulous character. What I love about this novel is Palma is in her mid-forties and in the midst of a life upheaval, and that upheaval involves lots of travel, wandering, and sex. Castillo has some of the best sex scenes that I've read in a while (though Donoghue's were great, too. I think we finally have some great women writing women's sexuality in sustained ways.) I enjoyed the character Palma and the other characters she encounters in the book, but it did find the plotting a little thin. An engaging read, though in spite of plot issues. Palma is someone I wanted to spend time with and there are many moments when Castillo's prose sings with beauty and more occasions when she is laugh out loud funny.

Meg says

I considered putting this book down many times, but something kept me going. Maybe it was just great to read about a bisexual protagonist? or a woman in her 40's who sleeps around? OTOH, the main character was not that likeable, and so much weird shit happened that it was hard to relate to the story.

Chela says

I really wanted to like this book, but it was fatphobic and vile to the point where I couldn't finish it. It was easy to read, and surely Castillo is one among few Latinxs who writes erotic fiction, but I just can't appreciate the book. It was, in one word, gross. If you're looking to reclaim / reaffirm yourself as a bisexual, sexual, Latina woman, you'd better look into something with more depth and less fat-shaming.

Ella Dawson says

One of my most memorable tasks as an intern with the Feminist Press last summer was writing up the advance information sheets for Anna Castillo's novel *Give It To Me*, then a manuscript in the early stages of copy-editing. The AI sheets would be used to pitch the book to sales representatives and bookstores. It was a tutorial in marketing at the most basic level: who did we think should read this book and why? I sat down with two of the other interns, my friends Meredith and Victoria, and we laughed awkwardly at the task of neatly summarizing Castillo's stunning, uncategorizable novel.

Give It To Me is a book that defies a tidy description—its plotlines are outrageous while remaining deeply human and real, its emotional struggles are both absurdly funny and wounding. I vividly remember reading the manuscript on printed double-spaced, double sided pages on my commute home from Manhattan and finding myself stunned as if kidnapped, no longer an intern sweltering on a packed peak train. Instead I followed pansexual Palma Piedras from Albuquerque to Chicago to Los Angeles as she discovered her family's secrets and figured out who she was in the wake of divorce, abuse and heartbreak. The journey was a ruthlessly entertaining pleasure, and receiving the final, published copy of the book in the mail a few weeks ago made me giddy and nostalgic.

The paratext of the novel—its pop art cover of a woman in a bikini and the spunky summary on the back—makes Give It To Me seem like chick lit, a dismissively named genre implying fluff and romance. Having already read the book, I know the cover art is tonally perfect, as Palma consistently finds herself on the less glamorous side of star-studded LA culture, dating an arrogant, social-climbing chef to the stars and befriending a stylist who is all posturing and debt behind his designer sunglasses. Give It To Me is what I wish mainstream chick lit were: smart and daring, sexy and embarrassing. It remains one of my favorite novels, and rereading it a year later was like getting drinks with an old friend to cringe and gush over previous misadventures. When brainstorming taglines for the novel with Victoria and Meredith, I remember suggesting a ‘What would Palma do?’ tumblr meme campaign. The answer: ‘What wouldn’t Palma do?’

In the end we settled on some riff about Palma ‘looking for love in all the wrong places,’ which did little to capture the cutting situational and observational humor of the book but did get at its heroine’s unruly adventures. In just over 250 pages, Palma Piedras becomes deeply infatuated with her younger cousin recently released from prison, has several poorly chosen flings, thinks she meets the Dalai Lama, crashes a quinceañera with her married female lover, is an extra in a Tommy Lee Jones movie, etc. etc. What I missed at the time but can appreciate a year later is that this is a novel about a Latina in her early forties looking for herself—rather than love—in the wake of a confused family history, a story reveling in its racial and sexual diversity. Books like Give It To Me are desperately needed, and Castillo’s biting work belongs in Chicana/Chicano and Gender and Sexuality studies courses. Beyond its intersectional awesomeness, Give It To Me is incredibly readable and addictive, its fast pace a perfect match for those of us looking for a more daring beach read this summer. This is a book that will latch onto your brain and not let you go for months. I certainly haven’t stopped thinking about it since last July, a reading experience I cannot remember ever having had before.

CaseyTheCanadianLesbrarian says

Doesn’t it always seem that the books that you have the highest expectations for are the ones that let you down? That was my experience reading *Give It to Me* by Ana Castillo, this year’s winner in the bisexual fiction category at the Lambda Literary awards. This novel left me with a lot of mixed feelings, ones even two months or so after reading I haven’t managed to sort out.

Give It to Me is one of those hard to describe books. The tone is all over the place. On the one hand, it’s kind of a romp, with the main character Palma Piedras’s bisexual sexcapades featured throughout the story and lots of random antics, like being an extra in a Tommy Lee Jones movie and randomly meeting a Dalai Lama-like Buddhist guru who gives you life advice. So at first the novel feels like it’s going to be light-hearted and escapist. It is definitely not. On the other hand, this novel is aching with (be)longing, and Palma is so desperate at times beneath her façade it’s heartbreakingly. There is also some serious shit that goes down in this book, some of which shows Palma in quite an unflattering light.

This is a book by a Latina author about a Latina woman, and the tone got me thinking about Latin American music, which I hear a fair amount of because both my partner and a good friend are Latino. Sometimes what feels really foreign to me about that music is the combination of melodies that sound happy, and lyrics that are sad. Often sad Latin American music doesn't sound sad to me. I felt similarly confused about this book. I think it's quite likely this is an entirely cultural issue, and that my mixed feelings are a result of my white cultural and racial background. I'd be interested to hear what Latin@ readers think about the tone!

At times, *Give It to Me* is laugh-out-loud funny: Castillo has a dark, biting sense of humour that straddles the border between comedy and tragedy, much like the tone of the book. This was definitely one aspect of the book that I liked. Only a few pages in, I was chuckling to myself while reading.

This book also had a lot of smart, real things to say about gender, race, (bi)sexuality, and class. One of the more interesting parts was when Palma was thinking especially about being mestizo, a "Native red-brown" in comparison to a black friend/lover:

She'd have given anything to be that color. Or white as his porcelain toilet. Either black or white. The in-between thing hadn't worked out in her most recent incarnation. The brown woman was taken for the chambermaid in hotels or the housekeeper . . . Did she speak English? Spanish? Would she nanny for them? Did she clean windows? Maybe it was the look of the future owners of the world but not yet.

Despite gems like that, about halfway through the book I began to get tired of the meandering / lack of plot. I thought maybe in the second half the novel would pick up and would start going somewhere plot-wise, but I figured out three quarters through that what I was waiting for wasn't going to happen, and then that felt too late to re-evaluate and change my expectations. It isn't much of a spoiler to say that Palma ends up pretty much where she started at the end of the book, but it is a disheartening end when you've followed a character make bad decision after bad decision, fuck someone new every time as a coping mechanism, and then never learn anything. It's not even that Palma has "lost her way"; it's that at forty-something *she has never found it*. If that's not a depressing thought, I don't know what is.

One last note: there are two instances of sexual assault in this book (one with a man, another with a woman), both of which were dealt with (in my opinion) in a relatively dismissive way. The scene with the man especially was fairly graphic, and then there was little mention of it afterwards, which disturbed me. Palma does enact revenge on the woman, although this is after continuing to date her (mostly for her money) for months. I was pretty uncomfortable with how the book dealt with this.

Linda Doyle says

Was it good for you . . . um . . . well, it was okay. Actually, there is a lot to enjoy in Castillo's tale other than the graphic sex scenes. She has a sharp sense of humor that resonates throughout this story of a fortysomething divorcee, Palma Piedras, who has lost her way. The author's comments about socioeconomic conditions, family relations, and issues of race are insightful. One of my favorite comments: "As Native red-brown, Palma couldn't get her stories on Lifetime, B.E.T., or Univision, where heroines normally looked like Croatian beauty contestants with extremely poor acting skills." Here is another one of Palma's thoughts when she is hanging around with an African-American buddy: "She'd have given anything to be that color. Or white as his porcelain toilet. Either black or white. The in-between thing hadn't worked out in her most recent incarnation. The brown woman was taken for the chambermaid in hotels or the housekeeper . . . Did

she speak English? Spanish? Would she nanny for them? Did she clean windows? Maybe it was the look of the future owners of the world but not yet."

Palma is a woman in search of herself, a family, a purpose in life. Her search leads to indiscriminate sexual unions that have sometimes outrageous or hilarious results. Eventually, though, I found her search, and the story, tiresome and without focus. The plot is thin, and it is written in a style that excludes quotation marks. Though it's a style becoming more common recently, in this book I often found it difficult to discern who was speaking. Also, I believe the style creates distance between the reader and the action of the story.

Palma is not a likable person, but in the end I felt sympathy for her and the need for belonging that she sought to fill.

Nicki Hill says

i wanted to like this so much. i didn't. palma is a women in her 40s who is flailing in unhappiness, unrequited love and low self esteem who constantly and continuously ends up getting hurt. the frustrating part that palma goes into these situations/relationships knowing exactly what she's getting into which just made me so sad. a journey to self discovery that ultimately leads to nowhere. i was intrigued by the themes of race, gender, sexuality etc but all of that got lost for me in the lack of plot and character development.

Vladimir Foronda says

I found this book on a Chicano/Latino recommended reading list. I found it to be a nice read and entertaining. I didn't really know what to expect so I just went along for the ride and enjoyed the honest descriptions and dialogue. Also, as a bonus for me, there aren't any good/bad guy setups as I really appreciate complicated characters with warts and all.

One particular passage stood out for me. Well, it made me contemplate the issue a bit more since as a male (Latino), it's not something that I've encountered from other males of color. Or if I did, I was clueless to it. The passage involves the main character, Palma Piedras, arriving at a wine bar alone and encounters a hostess I assume is Latina:

"...Just one? The hostess said, eyeballs giving Palma the woman-of-color to woman-of-color once-over. Not exactly the evil eye but something like it. In the spectrum of women of color giving killer looks to each other in public, African Americans were least interested, Latinas were bad but Asians---forget about it. Worst of all. From India to Vietnam. Nothing like Filipinas and Koreans, however, to each other."

Anyway, I found the passage intriguing. I wonder if I'll find myself studying the looks women of color give to each other upon meeting each other for the first time? There are other passages throughout the book that offer some interesting insight or viewpoint on other themes that provoke a bit of thought that others may pick up on as well.

ACRL says

Read by ACRL Member of the Week Cynthia Mari Orozco. Learn more about Cynthia on the ACRL Insider blog.

Mary Hawley says

This is a very funny book, but I can't call it a romp because the protagonist, Palma Piedras, has too many genuinely sad and desperate moments. She is looking for happiness in all the wrong places--but happily for the reader, her search involves sex, a lot of sex, in scenes that are described with boldness, creativity, and humor. As the epic highs and lows of her life reveal, Palma is a woman who may not have found the right path, but she has developed a glorious resilience by exploring all the wrong ones.
