



Valencia

By Michelle Tea

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Valencia is the fast-paced account of one girl's search for love and high times in the drama-filled dyke world of San Francisco's Mission District. Michelle Tea records a year lived in a world of girls: there's knife-wielding Marta, who introduces Michelle to a new world of radical sex; Willa, Michelle's tormented poet-girlfriend; Iris, the beautiful boy-dyke who ran away from the South in a dust cloud of drama; and Iris's ex, Magdalena Squalor, to whom Michelle turns when Iris breaks her heart.

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Valencia By Michelle Tea Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

You don't have to be part of the emerging postpunk subculture of queer urban girls to relish this smooth ride of a novel, like Kathy Acker on Prozac on a sunny day, in which many exciting things happen without affecting much of anything, and one of the most profound moments is a mild, drug-induced insight into the meaninglessness of life. Michelle, the main character, is a person for whom blue hair is as big a style change as blue pants. She lurches between women, more in love with the idea of love than with Iris or Willa or Gwynne or Petra. Her work experiences are equally brief, although she can't bring herself to actually quit jobs. She just stops showing up. "Are you going to work?" her current lover asks one morning.

No, I was not going to work. I was an artist, a lover, a lover of women, of the oppressed and downtrodden, a warrior really. I should have been somewhere leading an armed revolution in the name of love and no, I was not going to work. Willa didn't work. I mean, she did, but it's a stretch to call it work. She bartended at a dyke bar a few nights a week, drank free beer, and bummed all her cigarettes.... All week she was free, writing angsty brilliant poems, drawing comic books, painting gigantic painful pictures, you know, living. I wanted to live.

Michelle Tea's characters are a peculiar fin-de-siècle blend of jaded idealists and thoughtful egotists: sex workers, poets, and mad hatters who end up making breakfast for roomfuls of stoned strangers. The occasional flash of clarity doesn't alter the basically anarchic nature of Tea's meandering narrative, so much like the tales of an incidental figure from *Valencia*, a loud redhead named Iggy who told stories "so incredible you wondered if they were true but ultimately didn't care because you were so enraptured by her grand gestures and re-enactments." --*Regina Marler*

From Publishers Weekly

Tea, a modern-day Beat, is also a kind of pop ambassador to the world of the tattooed, pierced, politicized and sex-radical queer-grrls of San Francisco. Her second novel (after *The Passionate Mistakes and Intricate Corruption of One Girl in America*) dramatizes the hopes and hurts, apathies and ambitions of young lesbians looking for love in the Mission District, focusing on Michelle, a poet navigating the druggy, boozy dyke scene while consorting with a series of wacky lady loves. Among these are Petra, who thrills Michelle by brandishing a knife and being bossy in bed; Willa, a depressive who won't take off her clothes even in the heat of passion; Iris, originally from Georgia; and Scrumptious, who Michelle falls for before she realizes she's the type of girl who wears corny "freedom rings" and white jeans. While the trivialities of these courtships are entertaining and the book is far more coherent than the author's first novel, Tea hasn't entirely figured out how to make her characters come to life beyond predictable bounds. Organized as a series of loosely linked character profiles, the book self-consciously relies on the hipster grooviness and inside jokes of S.F. culture to energize the narrative. And although Tea's writing is consistently uncommon and textured - "the mushrooms tasted like a trunk of moth-eaten clothes and after we ate them we went out to the stoop and waited for the world to turn weird"--folks waiting for the truly weird, breakthrough novel in downtown alt-chick literature will be disappointed by this sometimes-superficial, stylized entry. (May)

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From Library Journal

The eponymous lesbian heroine of Tea's *Valencia* lives in a dirty San Franciscan haze of cigarettes, cheap beer, hip fashion, and girlfriend after girlfriend. As she moves from one confused affair to the next, she drifts from job to job and passion to passion. In this continuation of Tea's *The Passionate Mistakes* and the

Intricate Corruption of One Girl in America (Semiotext(e), 1999), the twentysomething characters desperately search for love and usually find only an unrequited crush or hollow sex. There's no real plot here, but there is immediacy in the stream-of-consciousness style, as if Tea were in the room offering the reader a late-night confession. Recommended for those seeking a glimpse into the angst of a dramatically self-absorbed if ultimately aimless youth culture.

-Devon C. Thomas, *Hass Assocs.*, Ann Arbor, MI

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Daryl Biddle:

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