

Tipping the Velvet: A Novel

By Sarah Waters

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Lavishly crammed with the songs, smells, and costumes of late Victorian England (The Daily Telegraph), this delicious, steamy debut novel chronicles the adventures of a young girl whose fortunes are forever changed when she falls in love with a cross-dressing music-hall singer.

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Tipping the Velvet: A Novel By Sarah Waters Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

The heroine of Sarah Waters's audacious first novel knows her destiny, and seems content with it. Her place is in her father's seaside restaurant, shucking shellfish and stirring soup, singing all the while. "Although I didn't long believe the story told to me by Mother--that they had found me as a baby in an oyster-shell, and a greedy customer had almost eaten me for lunch--for eighteen years I never doubted my own oysterish sympathies, never looked far beyond my father's kitchen for occupation, or for love." At night Nancy Astley often ventures to the nearby music hall, not that she has illusions of being more than an audience member. But the moment she spies a new male impersonator--still something of a curiosity in England circa 1888--her years of innocence come to an end and a life of transformations begins.

Tipping the Velvet, all 472 pages of it, is as saucy, as tantalizing, and as touching as the narrator's first encounter with the seductive but shame-ridden Miss Kitty Butler. And at first even Nancy's family is thrilled with her gender-bending pal, all but her sister, best friend, and bedmate, Alice, "her eyes shining cold and dull, with starlight and suspicion." Not to worry. Soon Nancy and Kitty are off to London, their relationship close though (alas for our heroine) sisterly. We know that bliss will come, and it does, in an exceptionally charged moment. A lesser author would have been content to stop her story there, but Waters has much more in mind for her buttonholing heroine, and for us. In brief, her Everywoman with a sexual difference goes from success onstage to heartbreak to a stint as a male prostitute (necessity truly *is* the mother of invention) to keeping house for a brother and sister in the Labour movement. And did I mention her long stint as a plaything in the pleasure palace of a rich Sapphist extraordinaire? Diana Lethaby is as cruel as she is carnal, and even the well-concealed Cavendish Ladies' Club isn't *outré* enough for her. Kitting Nancy out in full, elegant drag, she dares the front desk to turn them away. "We are here," she mocks, "for the sake of the irregular."

Only after some seven years of hard twists and sensual turns does Nancy conclude that a life of sensation is not enough. Still, *Tipping the Velvet* is so entertaining that readers will wish her sentimental--and hedonistic--education had taken twice as long. --Kerry Fried

From Publishers Weekly

With a title that's a euphemism for cunnilingus and a plot awash with graphic lesbian sex, this lush tale fearlessly and feverishly exposes the political, social and sexual subversions of Victorian-era gender-benders: sapphists, libertines and passing women. Set in 1890s London against a backdrop of music halls and socialist demonstrations, Waters's debut (published to acclaim in England) is an engrossing story of a "tommish" woman battered and buoyed by the mores of the times. At 18, Nancy Astley is a fishmonger in coastal Whitstable, working with her sister and parents in the family oyster parlour. Smitten by male impersonator Kitty Butler, Nancy attends every show at the Canterbury Palace until the star notices her. A stunned Nancy finds herself Kitty's companion and dresser, and sexual tension keeps the pages turning as she becomes first Kitty's sweetheart, then her partner ("two lovely girls in trousers, instead of one!") in a wildly successful stage act. Kitty's shame over her sexual preference sends her into marriage to their manager, Walter Bliss, propelling devastated Nancy into a series of erotic excursions and a struggle for survival, first passing as a young man and hustling, then as wealthy widow Diana Lethaby's kept "tart," finally as the housekeeper for union organizer Florence Banner. Waters is a masterful storyteller, tantalizing the reader as Nancy endures melancholy squalor, betrayals, the lustful motives of swindling gay-girls and imperious ladies. The circumstances by which Nancy finally finds true love are unpredictable and moving. Amid the gentlemen trolling Piccadilly Circus for trysts with "renter" boys and the wealthy female guests of the

Cavendish Clubs "Sapphists Only" parties, Nancy's search for love and identity is a raucous, passionate adventure, and a rare, thrilling read. Agent, Judith Murray.

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From Library Journal

When Nancy Astley falls for Kitty Butler, a cross-dressing cabaret singer, she has no idea just how far she'll go from her roots shucking oysters in a seaside resort in Kent. Waters's rowdy debut novel strikes out for a woman finding her independence in turn-of-the-century England, while painting a colorful portrait of the time. (LJ 3/15/99)

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Edwards:

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Hector Duggan:

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Arlene Farrar:

A lot of people always spent all their free time to vacation as well as go to the outside with them household or their friend. Were you aware? Many a lot of people spent that they free time just watching TV, or even playing video games all day long. If you would like try to find a new activity here is look different you can read some sort of book. It is really fun to suit your needs. If you enjoy the book that you simply read you can spent all day every day to reading a reserve. The book Tipping the Velvet: A Novel it is quite good to read. There are a lot of people that recommended this book. These people were enjoying reading this book. Should you did not have enough space to bring this book you can buy typically the e-book. You can m0ore effortlessly to read this book from a smart phone. The price is not too expensive but this book possesses high quality.

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