

Trapeze

By Simon Mawer

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A propulsive novel of World War II espionage by the author of *New York Times* best seller *The Glass Room*.

Barely out of school and doing her bit for the British war effort, Marian Sutro has one quality that makes her stand out—she is a native French speaker. It is this that attracts the attention of the SOE, the Special Operations Executive, which trains agents to operate in occupied Europe. Drawn into this strange, secret world at the age of nineteen, she finds herself undergoing commando training, attending a “school for spies,” and ultimately, one autumn night, parachuting into France from an RAF bomber to join the WORDSMITH resistance network.

But there’s more to Marian’s mission than meets the eye of her SOE controllers; her mission has been hijacked by another secret organization that wants her to go to Paris and persuade a friend—a research physicist—to join the Allied war effort. The outcome could affect the whole course of the war.

A fascinating blend of fact and fiction, *Trapeze* is both an old-fashioned adventure story and a modern exploration of a young woman’s growth into adulthood. There is violence, and there is love. There is death and betrayal, deception and revelation. But above all there is Marian Sutro, an ordinary young woman who, like her real-life counterparts in the SOE, did the most extraordinary things at a time when the ordinary was not enough.

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Trapeze By Simon Mawer Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
Amazon Best Books of the Month, May 2012: When Marian Sutro is recruited by the Special Operations Executive to become a British spy in Nazi-occupied France, she views it as an adventure—a reason to return to her beloved Paris. It quickly becomes apparent that this won't be a vacation, however, when in training she learns different ways to kill men and is given a cyanide pill to hide in her jacket. And then her first mission becomes two missions--one of which she has to hide from her own team. As Marian—or is it Ann-Marie? Or Alice?—goes deeper undercover, things begin to unravel around her, forcing her to make difficult, life-altering choices. *Trapeze* is a smart, well-paced spy thriller based on the true, extraordinary story of the SOE recruiting French-speaking British women during World War II to go undercover. Marian's journey from a young naïve school-girl to a cunning spy is well-developed and realistic, making her a memorable heroine. --*Caley Anderson*

A Letter from the Author
Inspiration for Trapeze
In the five years of its existence, the British Special Operations Executive trained and dispatched thousands of agents to work behind enemy lines in almost every theatre of war, from Europe to South East Asia. Living a clandestine life under false identities these men and women were not spies. The role of SOE was destruction, not intelligence--in the famous words of Winston Churchill, they were to "set Europe ablaze". Since the war particular SOE exploits have gained much attention – the attack on the Norwegian heavy water plant in Rjukan and the assassination of Heydrich in Prague being among the best known – but it is surely the French operations which capture the imagination, and in particular, the story of the women agents of F Section. Among the western Allies these were the only women to be trained for combat and between 1941 and 1944 fifty women agents of F Section were infiltrated into France. They ranged from the middle-aged to the barely out of school, and covered all manner of types, from Princess Noor Inayat Khan, daughter of an Indian Sufi mystic, to Violette Szabo, a working class cockney girl who was wife of a French Foreign Legionnaire and was a dead shot in fairground shooting ranges. But many were just ordinary women who by accident of birth happened to possess one distinguishing feature: they spoke fluent French. Their stories of the clandestine life are as varied as the women themselves but my personal interest goes back to one woman's story, that of Anne-Marie Walters. I was about ten when my mother passed the book on to me. Battered and well-thumbed and missing its spine, it stands on my bookshelf as I write. The title is *Moondrop to Gascony* and it recounts, in vivid first person, the experiences of the author after she was recruited by SOE in 1943. The reason for my mother's interest was that at the time of her recruitment Anne-Marie was a WAAF (member of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force), serving alongside my mother at Fighter Command HQ in Stanmore just north of London. Even my father had a connection to this intrepid young woman. During the war he had been a pilot on an RAF special operations squadron flying from Algeria. The role of this squadron was to supply arms and agents to resistance groups in southern Europe. As Anne-Marie's network, code-named WHEELWRIGHT, operated in the southwest of France, it is almost certain that my father dropped supplies to her and her companions. My parents never met up with Anne-Marie after the war--she spent most of her life in France and Spain working as an editor and translator--so my personal connection was always at one remove: being captivated, for as long as I can remember, by the book itself, Anne-Marie Walters's own remarkable story, narrated with a young woman's élan but tempered with a mature, objective honesty. SOE agents used a field name when they were on operations. Hers was Colette; it is to Colette that I have dedicated my own celebration of the women of SOE.

Review
“A fascinating WWII novel based in fact…Coming-of-age story meets old-fashioned tale of adventure.” *–Publishers Weekly*

“Much-lauded British author Mawer vividly describes the deprivations in a war occupied country and its once-vibrant capital and provides testimony to the courage of countless members of the French Resistance. But this is primarily a masterfully crafted homage to the 53 extraordinary women of the French section of the SOE on whose actual exploits the novel is based. With its lyrical yet spare prose and heart-pounding climax, this is a compelling historical thriller of the highest order.” *–Booklist* (starred review)

"The book is full of the fascinating minutiae of espionage–aircraft drops, code-cracking, double agents, scrambled radio messages. There's a romance, too, though Mawer isn't one to dwell on his characters' inner lives, and Marian, who is "trained to keep secrets," remains frustratingly unknowable. Still, Mawer exhibits a great feeling for suspence, and produces memorable episodes in dark alleyways, deserted cafes, and shadowy corners of Père Lachaise" *–The New Yorker*

“Incorporating many of the finest elements of spy thrillers and even romance novels, *Trapeze* is a fascinating tale of and homage to the resistance fighters and members of the SOE.” *–New York Journal of Books*

“Like the best historical fiction, the book is very much of its intended time, full of clandestine tidbits and Churchillian attitude, but not to the exclusion of the human elements that are required of any compelling story.” *–The Daily Beast*

“*Trapeze* sets a thriller-like pace, and Mawer writes compellingly about the deprivations of wartime France as well as the everyday dangers of occupied Paris…Though very much a story about the intricacies of the spy network, *Trapeze* is also about a young woman who is called upon to do something extraordinary and is thus forever changed.” *–Bookpage*

“Where his last Booker-shortlisted novel, *The Glass Room*, gave an expansive overview of a whole country over the course of 50 years, Mawer’s latest is a more intense and tightly-focused story. Radiating an atmosphere of tense suspicion and claustrophobia, it is utterly gripping from start to finish.” *–Daily Mail* (UK)

“In this literary thriller, inspired by real female agents during WWII, an Englishwoman is recruited into a dangerous espionage mission.” –Karen Holt, *O Magazine*

“Simon Mawer is an elegant writer and a meticulous researcher…[*Trapeze*] combines a stirring adventure with a potent reflection on the allure of desire, duty and danger.” *–London Evening Standard* (UK)

“Mawer’s representations of England and France — both rural and urban — are at once eerily quiet and bustling with confusion, as he illustrates the fateful moments in a war and in a young woman’s life.” *–Historical Novel Society*

“Mawer's crisp prose, erudite science and subtle bilingual details raise *Trapeze* above the genre riff-raff.” *–Shelf Awareness*

“There are many shades of Graham Greene here…[*Trapeze*] delivers its story with the same delicate, stropped-razor deadliness that creeps up on you like Harry Lime in the shadows, nastily irresistible.” *–Financial Times*

“Readers will be stunned as they read the final pages of this fast-paced and exhilarating historical novel about a young woman’s path to maturity.” *–The Columbus Dispatch*

“Readers who empathize with Marian, and many will, will be stunned as they read the final pages of this fast-paced and exhilarating historical novel about a young woman's path to maturity” *–Shelf Awareness*

“A brilliant and engaging blend of fact and fiction, this novel will hook readers from the start and amaze them with a story of adventure, betrayal, growing into adulthood and love.” *–KSL*

“In a perfect combination of intrigue, romance, betrayal and incredible bravery, Mawer has, once again, as he did in *The Glass Room*, told a story that is factual and fictional with the edges blurred just so.” *–Seattle Times*

"*Trapeze*...is a stark, focused adventure...[a] skillfully and intelligently executed thriller." *–Washington Post*

"*Trapeze*…is a stark, focused adventure…Although narrower in scope than Mawer's earlier work, *Trapeze* is no less rich and provocative. And in Marian he's created a marvelous heroine.” *–Newday*

About the Author
Simon Mawer is the author of the *New York Times* best-selling novel *The Glass Room* (Other Press), which was short-listed for the Man Booker Prize. His previous novels include *The Fall* (winner of the Boardman Tasker Prize), *The Gospel of Judas,* and *Mendel’s Dwarf* (long-listed for the Man Booker Prize). English by birth, he has made Italy his home for more than thirty years. www.simonmawer.com

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Christine Willis:

Book is to be different for each and every grade. Book for children right up until adult are different content. We all know that that book is very important normally. The book Trapeze ended up being making you to know about other information and of course you can take more information. It is rather advantages for you. The e-book Trapeze is not only giving you a lot more new information but also to get your friend when you truly feel bored. You can spend your spend time to read your reserve. Try to make relationship together with the book Trapeze. You never really feel lose out for everything when you read some books.

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