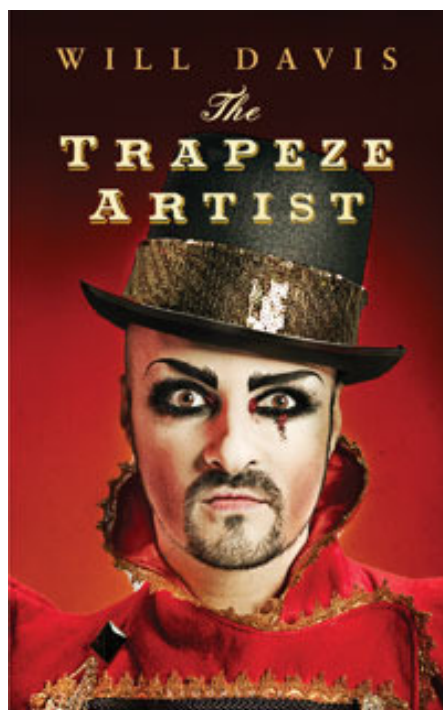




The Trapeze Artist

Will Davis

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A man will endlessly torture his muscles until they shriek and complain. But he will not give in. He will take a hammer to his ceiling until the neighbours begin to watch from the window and the journalists knock at the door. He will continue to train and hack away at the house until it is finished and the trapeze is in place.

Although his parents thought he was nice and kind-hearted and teachers saw him as a good boy, secretly he hated his drab, ordered world and longed for more. Then, when he was fourteen, a new boy arrived at his school. Edward exuded the coolness of a latter-day Oscar Wilde. Edward listened to Patti Smith, watched Fassbinder films and knew the writings of Gore Vidal, and one evening, would kiss him in the moonlight.

Forty years old and fleeing from a life he can no longer handle, he stumbles upon the circus. Not knowing why, only that he must, he gets in his car and follows after it, refusing to listen to the doubts that plague him, determined to build a new home and family.

The Trapeze Artist draws together the past, present and future of one life to create a work of startling dexterity and vision - a haunting and heartbreaking account of a child, a boy, a man, desperate to free himself from the suffocating weight of his desires, his family and his grief. It speaks of what it is to grow up gay in a straight world, to be unable to communicate with those you love, of the sweat, passions and tempers of circus life, and above all, the joyous longing to break free, and to swing higher and higher...

The Trapeze Artist Details

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Author : Will Davis

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From Reader Review The Trapeze Artist for online ebook

George Ilsley says

Two-thirds into this and finding it, quite frankly, boring. The structure's rapid jumps from one time frame to another is jarring, and most annoying, is the use of the future tense for the "present" time frame. This choice of tense is ill-advised, IMO, since it is distancing for the reader. The most engaging time frame is the teenage years. The aerialist training sequences are impossible to understand from the point of view of someone who knows nothing about it -- too much incomprehensible detail. Something that is a spectacle to watch can be a challenge to render into words. An author's passion, or obsession, is not always a gift to the reader.

Sorry, Edmund White, your cover blurb is seriously misleading.

The unnamed main character also leads to some confusion. In a scene with two males, if you say "he" which one do you mean? It's a challenge for an author to overcome this conceit, and unfortunately this challenge is often not met. "He realizes he is drunk." Who is drunk and who realizes it? There are too many of these confusing sentences, too much re-reading trying to sift the meaning.

... I will finish this book and I will write a review. Now that I will have finished I will wonder if the whole future tense part is meant to be a kind of fantasy, a morbid flowering of the unnamed character's suicidal ideation. I will wonder but I will not really care. The ending will redeem a lot but will not redeem quite enough. I will wonder why "he" has no friends, other than Paul, leftover from his teenage years, when apparently his whole life happened. I will wonder if I actually remember him saying he has not had sex for 20 years (not once in his 20's??) but will not care enough to go back and re-read. I will obsess over the section breaks, normally just a small gap with no indent to announce a new section (and shift in tense) but every now and then there are 3 stars in the gap. What on earth will they mean? What will the stars announce? Upon closer examination, they will appear only when the section breaks will be at the bottom of the page. I will guess that the publisher was concerned about jarring the reader, and reader confusion, but sadly, the publisher will not be concerned enough to actually do much about it.

Kristina Brown says

The story of a life in freefall. This story is told in the past, present and future throughout until all three parts join up at the end to conclude the narrative. At the beginning of the book they seem almost unrelated and the key to the tale is what brings each part of his life to the next.

There is never any name given to the central character which leads to moments of confusion over who is actually speaking (he could refer to any number of people) but overall this adds to the 'everyman' nature of the hero.

Robyn says

I didn't get out of bed all day to finish this book! It requires no disturbances whatsoever. Beautiful book, with a gasp of an ending it tells us of the beauty and danger of the circus acts. I am probably a little biased in the enjoyment of this book due to my involvement in aerial silks but it was lovely to read. Turns out the author is a trapeze artist himself, which always make for fabulous reading, as well as silks and rope. This story of a young gay boy, is told in two parallel lines, one as he is growing up and one now as he runs away to join the

circus. I thought it was absolutely brilliant!

willowdog says

Told in the narrative of past, present, and future, a gay man, suffering from guilt, bullying, and an oppressive home life, leaves home to join the circus and follow his love, a trapeze artist. The future narrative bogs down in the technical aspects of the trapeze.

Kim says

This is an odd book, but I liked it. The main character, who is unnamed and lives with his elderly mother, runs off at age 40 to join the circus but ends up being about as miserable as he was before he ran off. He gets involved with a circus performer who treats him like garbage and is worked like a slave by the circus owners. What's interesting is the way Will Davis entwines three time periods here. You get the main character's flashbacks to his teen years, him as an adult with the circus, and his post-circus life. I found the story odd and fascinating. It is also quite sad so if you're looking for sunshine, rainbows, and a HEA ending, you won't find it here. But it does show one man's struggle with himself and his small attempt to change his life.

Amanda E says

quite confusing at the start which lead to not really being able to follow what was happening until the end

Racine Mártir says

This book is compelling and haunting. One I will not be able to remove from my mind for a while.

Christine Ricci says

Chilling. Haunting. Tragic.

At first I thought this novel was going to be happy. Guess you can't judge a book by its cover. Then as I read more into it, and just thought it was trying to be all profound in a stereotypically, melodramatic, unoriginal, "modern art" type of way with the past-present-future and not naming the protagonist. However, the more I read, the harder it was to turn away. I became so attached to this pitiful main character, I just had to keep reading through all the tragedy, all the hurt, all the pain. And while at times terribly predictable, I still had to read on. It was as if reading more would somehow help me feel better. For instance, once I realized the main character's mother was still alive, I knew Edward had to die. Otherwise, where was he in the present and future stories? But when Edward did die, it was heart-wrenching. All I could think about was how empty life would feel if the love of your life were suddenly ripped out of it in such a grotesque manner. With this thought I started to understand the main character more fully. Each new revelation leading to a stronger

connection until finally, we have to say good-bye.

As readers, we are taken through the main character's entire life. I am surprised it fit into such a small book. I am also surprised with the main character's death. It seems death follows him when his life seems to be in the height of its swing. I still contemplate his death, Edward's death, and lingering sentiments leave me haunted by this book.

Aside: I think the main character's name is mentioned once, "Mavis." Edward says it. Did anyone else see that?

Graeme Aitken says

Will Davis is quite unique. He's a well-known writer with three novels published but is also an aerialist with a long list of performances to his credit. This new novel utilises his aerialist background and creates a work that is fresh, unique and compelling. The Trapeze Artist unfolds the life of an unnamed narrator at three different stages of his life through three separate narrative strands. The first strand focuses on the narrator's teenage years and how his dull, ordered world is shaken up by the arrival of Edward, a new pupil at school. Edward is worldly, daring, and charismatic. He quickly confides that he is gay, presuming the narrator is too. The second strand is set 25 years later. The narrator is 40 and enduring a deadly existence: in a job he loathes and still living at home with his mother. But after a one night stand with a sexy Romanian aerialist, he makes an impulsive decision to run away and join the circus. The third strand is set shortly after his circus sojourn, when the narrator has decided to become an aerialist himself. He semi-demolishes his mother's house to build a trapeze to practise on, much to the consternation of his neighbours. The narrative structure means that a great deal of information is withheld and it becomes increasingly intriguing as the three strands advance and entwine, culminating in a very satisfying and surprising climax.

Donald says

. . .Tbh, although well written, as the three strands of this story intertwine to the conclusion, this was quite a depressing read

Denise says

A compelling novel that jumps back and forth between three stages of the unnamed protagonist's life.

Shradhanjali says

A book with a gay protagonist, it was heartfelt at times and downright boring at others. It moves back and forth in the life of the main character who is only referred to as 'he'. The one thing I couldn't digest was how he decides to be gay just because he thought that his gay uncle was very cool!!!

Seraphina says

This book really is suburb! It's really entertaining and keeps you turning the pages as the story jumps back and forth in time and unfolds to a heart pounding ending.

Karen says

I don't think there was anyone likeable in this book, and nothing happy happened.

Tracey says

Sadly this was a terrible read , but I never can abandon a book . The characters were ones that I couldn't like or have ant sympathy for .

The writing style was confusing in the way it kept haphazardly changing direction. It's a book I wouldn't recommend sadly as I feel it was a very disappointing read.

Ellie says

One day, a man walks away from his life and joins the circus. It's not for the glamour; he meets Vlad, the aerialist one night at the circus and follows him back to his trailer for a one night stand. The next day he follows and begs to be allowed to stay. His time at the circus isn't full of excitement and showmanship; mostly he's cleaning out the toilets and being insulted by the alcoholic clown or the angry ringmaster.

We never find out the protagonist's name, he is constantly referred to as "he" and is a little confusing until you work out what's going on. The narrative is split into alternating past, present and future tenses which, combined with the anonymity, caused me to struggle to get into the story. The past covers his childhood and his friendship, and ensuing relationship, with the slightly pretentious Edward. It soon becomes clear that something must have happened in the past to make him such a needy, wet blanket. He is one of the most emotionless main characters I have encountered, even the scene where he breaks down in front of Vlad, it seems a bit distant, especially as the reader is not told the story at that time.

The present is his time with the circus. It is a modern day affair with caravans and acrobatics but no animals. The story doesn't really go into the inner workings of the industry which I was a bit disappointed with; I'd like to have compared it to what I've read on the golden age of the circus, but that's entirely personal. "He" is around about 40 from what I gather yet he still lives at home and hasn't done a single thing with his life. I suppose by the end, there is some justification for this, but it's hard to read through his apathy.

Then there were the passages in future tense which I found really hard going. It's not a style that is natural to read and, although I thought it was an interesting exercise in narrative, I felt it went on a little too long to be comfortable. This part deals with his time after he returns home from the circus, where something has happened to his mother and the neighbours are overly concerned about his welfare. Because he's erecting a trapeze in his suburban home. Yet the writing about the trapeze is still absorbing, being something that Will Davis obviously has a passion for, himself having trained in corde lisse, tissu and static trapeze.

Septembre says

This book didn't really grab me and I have up halfway through. So much promise but no follow through.

Jessica says

ABANDONED - Don't let this cover fool you folks. It's not as entertaining as it looks.

Whizzing from one time to the next and back again, I found this story very confusing and held no sympathy for the main character.

Yam Doyev says

This book was so compelling I managed to finish it in 48 h (and I am a very slow reader!). This is a great book written by a great aerialist too (I train with him).

Will's other 2 books (My side of the story and Dream machine) are great as well.

Marco (Barely a blogger) says

No matter how I tried I could not read this book. For me the jumping around, in 3 different sectioned timelines with almost indication, was the reason I had to stop.

This style is not for me, but after 4 tries and still barely finishing a few pages, I had to call it quits.
