



Crandolin

Anna Tambour

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In a medieval cookbook in a special-collections library, near-future London, jaded food and drink authority Nick Kippax finds an alluring stain next to a recipe for the mythical crandolin. He tastes it, ravishing the page. Then he disappears.

So begins an adventour that quantum-leapfrogs time, place, singularities, and Quests – from the secrets of confectionery to the agonies of making a truly great moustache, from maidens in towers to tiffs between cosmic forces. Food, music, science, fruitloopery, superstition, railways, bladder-pipes and birth-marked Soviet statesmen; all are present in an extraordinary novel that is truly for the adventoursomme.

Crandolin Details

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Author : Anna Tambour

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From Reader Review Crandolin for online ebook

Jane says

Marvellous. A joyful romp through two (or maybe more) fantastical lands, one a lot like the USSR, the other some kind of Persian kingdom. Features honey-based sweets, carpets, work units, sunflower seeds, 'Pravda', donkeys, and the hair of virgins. Oh and writing, and whether fact or fancy makes a better book. A worthy and grown-up successor to my childhood favourite, 'The land of green ginger'

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1...>

Joseph says

Every word and conjuration in this stunning novel caresses your pleased with linguistic delights. This is a major work by a sadly overlooked master of lyric narration and limitless imagination. You will not want the awe on these pages to end!

Jayaprakash Satyamurthy says

It is impossible to even begin summing up Anna Tambour's novel 'Crandolin' without sounding a bit crazed. And that's not a bad thing at all. There's something insane about this whole enterprise, but it is an inspired insanity, internally coherent and completely mesmerising.

See, there's this fellow, Nick Kippax. He's looking for piquant flavours. He's been through wine snobbery and the all the usual forbidden fruits of the gourmet. But he's after the grail now, the most legendary and elusive dishes of all time, among them the fabled crandolin. In a musty old tome, he finds a stain on the page that contains the recipe for this dish. He tastes it - and is hurtled into a multiple existence as a red blotch on a variety of entities across time and space. These include an itinerant musician's bladder-pipe, the face of a Soviet railway cook, a nest belonging to a family of cinnamologus birds and a jar of very rare honey.

Are you with me so far? Good work, you're probably ready to read the book itself, then, and need no further prompting from me.

If a completely bonkers conceit isn't enough, Tambour's novel is peopled with a delightful array of, well, people. There's the hapless Kippax himself, Galina, the railway cook, a matronly woman who is blind to her own manifest charms, the many railway employees who yearn for her, a group of railway-enthusiast tourists including a phlegmatic retired Indian railway man and his recumbent wife, there are wandering princes seeking adventure, wannabe brigands, a honey merchant, a master sweetmaker, a virgin in a tower, the Omniscient narrator, the eternal Muse and more. Enough characters to populate a medium-sized and very weird province, maybe even a smallish peninsula. There are even people who aren't people: a donkey whose affections are not to be trifled with, and the crandolin him/herself.

Oh, themes? You want themes? How about the nature of love, the source of inspiration and the quandary of authorship? The diversity of food, the inner glory of donkeys and the elusiveness of truth. This book has enough themes for a bumper-sized Cliff's Notes and then some to spare.

Most of all, this book is completely original. And how many times do you find a book like that? I read a few hundred of the blasted things a year, and even I only encounter one or two really, really unique books on a good year. If I don't read another book as original, whimsical, witty and wondrous as this all year, it will still have been a very good year. Heck, a very good decade.

Tara says

As I said in one of my updates, this book defies summary. I was glad to see that the revelation I had around page 75 was both half wrong and half right.

All right. This story fractures at the very start and slowly some of the pieces pull back together, until the story is as whole as it can be. The plots are very disjointed and episodic at first, but elongate as they merge together.

Think of a single person, split into many independent, but captive pieces and spread out across time periods and places, connecting them simply by being part of them, and then, like a draw string, pulling them back together, some pieces connecting, others not, but all still part of the whole. That is this book. That is my best attempt at a summary beyond list each story line and character contained within the text.

The story is well-written and I did enjoy reading it, but I'm not sure I'd recommend it to anyone unless I knew for certain that their tastes ran toward weird.

Neda says

A fairy tale which takes you to a fairy land where your imagination would enjoy the divine smell and sweet taste of best "Helva" of the world, where you become to know about an in-love muse on a train somewhere in Russia and where you meet a wise donkey and a demanding musical instrument...

Leone Britt says

More fantastical craziness, loved it

Edwina Harvey says

Not the easiest book to categorize. Like a really good meal, it's a little bit of everything carefully put together so the flavours blend. A nod to ancient cook books, fantastic tales, all sorts of love, journeys and adventures, Filled with delightful writing, insights and imaginings. Sit in a comfortable armchair, or in the sun, and set your mind free on a voyage of discovery with this very enjoyable book! I loved all the characters, especially the donkey. REALLY enjoyed reading it! Suggest you read it too.

Ben Peek says

Anna Tambour's *Crandolin* is her second novel, her third book after the short story collection, *Monterra's Deliciosa & Other Tales* &, and the novel, *Spotted Lily*. As with all of Tambour's fiction, *Crandolin* remains a deft, well written, complex and demanding creature.

As an author in her home country of Australia, Tambour has skated beneath the radar, publishing to critical acclaim mostly in the States and UK. Her new novel, published by the independent press Chomu continues that trend. The recent release of award shortlists for Australian work is notable for the fact that Tambour is absent. While awards are reflective of the people who run them, rather than any merit of quality, it still remains a shame that Tambour's very fine *Crandolin* is not upon it, to garner more attention and press for a work that is intelligent and uncompromising and adult. There are authors worthy or support, of nationalist pride, of securing a position to ensure that such fine work is in a position to continue, and it would not be beneath Australia to support Anna Tambour more, if I may be as blunt to say.

Crandolin is a difficult novel to give a quick, one line synopsis of. It begins with the discovery of a medieval cookbook by Nick Kippax, a food critic, who notes a stain upon it. The stain is made from quince, rose, grains of paradise, ambergris, pearl, cinnamon and, of course, the blood of a virgin. After tasting the stain, Kippax is fractured and hurled through time and space. The narrative fractures with him to follow a honey merchant in the Middle East, a pregnant cook in Russia, literary inspirations, a train driver and, naturally, a man who collects the pubic hair of virgins. Except, you know, he is being somewhat thwarted by elderly women with good hair dye. Drawn along by its narrators, Tambour's narrative draws on themes of inspiration and creation, of the ownership of art, of love and responsibility, and of notions of truth. The latter, in particular, is explored in one of the books many highlights in Russia.

Due to the nature of Tambour's narrative structure, *Crandolin* is demanding in terms of a reader who expects a linear plot, or for every character to fold against the other immediately. Her chapters, kept uniformly short so as better to stitch her cast together, succeed in maintaining a short, punchy flow to the work that offsets the fact that no clear narrative flow (either plot or thematic) is apparent. It creates a different sense to it than the book I was reminded of in the early pages, which was Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*. While Tambour's book is not a mirror or even directly inspired by it--in as far as I know--there remains a similar quality about it when the main narrative with the Devil splits off to the narrative of Pontius Pilate. Yet, whereas Bulgakov is happy to allow long chapters to unfold his narrative, Tambour, her own never as clearly related as the formers, uses the shorter chapters to hold the reader in place, to ensure that they are never allowed enough narrative rope to lose their way.

It is a complex trick and I would argue that despite holding it together for the majority of *Crandolin*, Tambour stumbles in the final pages of the book. I will leave for others to decide if they agree with that, rather than to discuss it entirely, because to do so is a fairly sold spoiling of the end of the book. Sufficient to say that the end isn't as successful or, to be more precise, isn't what I wanted. There will be others, I suspect, who like how it the end arrives--and let me be honest, there's nothing wrong with it from a technique point of view, or from the construction of a narrative, but yet if I had to speak of a part of *Crandolin* where I was let down but just, it was the end. Nevertheless, that did not distract from the very excellent work that proceeded it, from the writing that was, at times, whimsical, funny, romantic, madcap, and beautifully written.

Crandolin is a novel I fully recommend to people. It is the work of an original, interesting, and important

voice in fiction, an Australian who deserves more readers than what she has.

Gareth says

I have no idea what I just read, but I think I enjoyed it.

Thoraiya says

I loved this book, but I'm giving it four stars, like I did to Joanna Russ' "The Female Man," in recognition of the fact that I can't think of anyone to pass it to next that I can be 100% sure will find it a completely worthy struggle to try to hold this amazing lucid dream inside their head.

(Note: I'm not really sure why surreal or absurd writing isn't more popular. What makes another human being's dreams less worthy than their waking life? As separate awarenesses, to me it seems just as magical to enter another person's beautiful and strange imaginings as it is to enter their memoirs.)

Anyway. *Crandolin*. An incredible, five-senses experience, containing neither too little weirdness ("madness seizes you") nor too much ("Death swoops you up").

Kyla Ward says

How do you describe the indescribable? Crammed *Amphisbaena* and *Pillows of Delight* are the least of the delicacies on offer. Not a love story, but rather a meditation on love, not a quest but an interconnected web where innumerable lives may hang on a single (lustrous, black and fragrant) hair.

planetkimi says

I desperately wanted to like *Crandolin* for a variety of reasons: fascinating and unique topic, indy press, recognized for the World Fantasy award. Unfortunately, I just could not get into it. The jaunty initial chapters didn't keep my interest because they presented precious little context for cryptic goings-on. Then the next chapter would be in a completely different setting with different characters and no clear relation to the preceding chapters.

At any rate, I have to go with one star for "did not like it." I think it may be basically a bit post-post-modern for my taste.

I also found the typeface a bit hard to read. The lines of the letters are so thin that it makes the text look a bit faint overall. Usually I don't give the typeface of a book a second thought, but this stuck out in my mind because it required an unusual amount of concentration.

Ricardo Mendes says

I'm not... sure what to think about this book.

Teodor says

"Kiss the beast you cannot eat."

One of the most joyous and inspired books I've ever read. Its plot is difficult to summarise, but that's a big part of what makes this mischevious book so great. The various stories are both unconnected from each other and yet racing to some sort of focal point, egged on by the titular creature that acts as both MacGuffin and demi-urge puppet-mastering the chaos. To say that Tambour 'commands' the language wouldn't be wholly accurate - she is entirely assured but equally playful, so that while you never doubt that the crazy story is in safe hands, you're surprised by every twist, play on words or irreverent, exquisitely constructed image that comes your way. Comparisons are odious but let's make a couple anyway:

1) Palimpsest by Catherynne Valente: cast of characters crowding around a hedonistic pursuit. Equally baroque, but funnier.

2) The Master and Margarita by Mikhail Bulgakov: has none of the Russian master's political subtext/text-text, but an equally mad, seemingly improvised (by virtue of its energetic plenty) forward motion.

What could be better than a fun book that has no qualms about being clever? And a clever book that, when all is said and done, is just happy to be a fun one? Crandolin is all this and more, and deserves all the readers in the world.

Alexandra says

I'm calling it. Sad as it makes me, since I don't actually know where the book is and haven't for a while, it is officially abandoned.
