

The Banksoniain #2

An Iain (M.) Banks Fanzine

May 2004

Editorial

Some positive (and no negative) feedback was received concerning issue #1 so here is another. After the last edition looked at *The Wasp Factory* for its twentieth anniversary, the second issue moves on to look at Iain's next book with a biography of *Walking on Glass*. We also pay homage to the original Banks fanzine - *The Culture*.

The regulars are back. With eBaywatch providing a commentary on recently sold items, as well as spawning an interesting spin off with an assessment of Iain's doodling skills and relative celebrity status in a look at National Doodle Day. The Unwritten Banks looks at audio editions of his books and Banks Obscura covers those things you never even thought to ask about including more poetry, Viz and a real Wasp Factory. Banks in Translation examines his works in Italian whilst Not "THE" Iain Banks profiles the owner of iainbanks.com.

Further information concerning the film of *The Wasp Factory* has come to light and is reported in a follow-up to last issue's article, and more information about Banks's Next Book has been announced by the publishers. Media Scanner looks at Banks related news items.

Apart from emails saying the PDF file was broken or please put me on the mailing list the only letter received was from Mr Banks himself - so as he probably doesn't want a poster of himself nobody wins it.

Thanks to the Public Lending Right Registrar, Anna Feruglio Dal Dan, Barbara Rosenblat, Martin Morton (of Epilepsy Action), Neville Teller, Mic Cheetham, all those who have encouraged the project, and, of course, Iain M Banks.

Banks's Next Book

The new book is now due for publication in early October and is to be called *The Algebraist*, with Iain describing it as "complex non-Culture space opera with lots of aliens and wormholes and stuff...".

Information was posted on the Time Warner Books website by mid March with the following details, which may contain spoilers for the book if you dislike publisher's blurb.

It is 4034 AD. Humanity has made it to the stars. Fassin Taak, a Slow Seer at the Court of the Nasqueron Dwellers, will be fortunate if he makes it to the end of the year.

The Nasqueron Dwellers inhabit a gas giant on the outskirts of the galaxy, in a system awaiting its wormhole connection to the rest of civilisation. In the meantime, they are dismissed as decadents living in a state of highly developed barbarism, hoarding data without order, hunting their own young and fighting pointless formal wars.

Seconded to a military-religious order he's barely heard of - part of the baroque hierarchy of the Mercatoria, the latest galactic hegemony - Fassin Taak has to travel again amongst the Dwellers. He is in search of a secret hidden for half a billion years. But with each day that passes a war draws closer - a war that threatens to overwhelm everything and everyone he's ever known.

As complex, turbulent, flamboyant and spectacular as the gas giant on which it is set, the new science fiction novel from Iain M. Banks is space opera on a truly epic scale.

News of the *Raw Spirit* paperback and a US edition of *The State of the Art* can be found inside on page #2.

National Doodle Day

Friday February 27th 2004 was the first National Doodle Day in the UK. This was an event organised to raise money for epilepsy and neurofibromatosis charities. One of the first activities was an auction of over three hundred “celebrity” doodles that took place on eBay. Iain contributed a doodle that after twenty-seven bids achieved a price of £60. The other prices that were realised give an interesting insight into the current state of celebrity in the UK.

Overall Iain made the top forty just behind the rower Sir Stephen Redgrave (£62) and ahead of Frederick Forsyth (£56). Many of the contributors were writers and compared to most of these Iain fared pretty well. The writers that sold for higher prices than Iain were: Louis de Bernieres (£77), Sir John Mortimer (£89), Margaret Atwood (£102), John le Carre (£107.55), and James Herbert (£170.77). Those left trailing in Iain’s artistic and/or celebrity wake include Jilly Cooper (£17.05), Ken Follett (£12.62), Brian Aldiss (£16.02), Nicholas Evans (£16.67), Pete McCarthy (£20.59), Dick Francis (£22.01), Christopher Brookmyre (£26), and probably many others who I have not recognised as being authors at all.

The artistic merit of the doodles does seem to have played a part in the determining the final price, with the bids for the (distinctly non-doodle like) works of Ralph Steadman and Nick Park rising steadily until they reached £870 and £662 respectively. These two artists were ahead of the work of the actress Gillian Anderson who has some dedicated fans that pushed the price for her doodle up to £560.50 after 52 bids, and even that of her daughter, Piper, to £411. The auction had been publicised on Ms Anderson’s official website, and so this would have attracted extra bidders. The top five was rounded off by Fame Academy winner David Sneddon. The bidding for his doodle reached £340.

Iain’s doodle was one of the few that was not signed by its celebrity artist – some celebrities had interpreted the brief as just to provide an autograph. It also seems to be an actual doodle and not a sketch or drawing which is

what some contributors produced. There is what could be a self portrait at the bottom to go with the bulldozer, flowers and, er, other stuff - suggestions as to what it all is and means by email to the usual address please.



Iain Banks’s National Doodle Day Effort

The public were invited to buy special cards, doodle on them and send them in. They were then judged and some of these were incorporated into an exhibition in London at Whiteleys in Bayswater in April that also included a selection of the celebrity doodles.

The National Doodle Day organisers hope to publish a book with the best of the celebrity and public doodles, but this is still at the planning stage, so no details yet. More information can be found at the website:

<http://www.nationaldoodleday.org.uk/>

Raw Spirit Paperback

The paperback edition of Raw Spirit is listed to be published on 5th August 2004 by Arrow (ISBN: 0099460270) with a more landscapey cover than the hardback.

The State of the Art – US

Night Shade Books are issuing Banks's short story collection for the first time in the US as a trade paperback, and a signed limited edition, that tantalisingly offers unspecified extra material. Their website mentions both August and September as the date for publication. The novella had its original publication in the US by Ziesing as a stand alone volume in 1989.

Media Scanner

Now that Iain is in **Who's Who**, his 50th birthday was noted by many newspapers on 16th February, none of which had mentioned his 49th, although the **Coventry Evening Telegraph** did mention his 45th back in 1999. Iain shares his birth date with Ian Lavender (59), Ice T (46), John McEnroe (45), Andy Taylor (42), Amanda Holden (33), Christopher Eccleston (40) and Cathy Freeman (31). The record needs to set straight that despite what the **Birmingham Post** seems to think Iain did not win the Booker Prize in 1998 - that was Ian McEwan, with *Amsterdam*.

Conal Gillespie wrote a review of *Raw Spirit* in the Ulster-Scots language for **The News Letter** (21st February) that begins with the words "Hit wus snell an dreir aa gloaming tim tha nicht". The full text can be found at <http://www.ulsterscotsagency.com/crackfeb2104.asp>

In a profile in **SFX** (#115, March) Ken MacLeod mentioned the influence of the Golden Age American SF for its "gosh wow factor", and New Wave British SF for its "quality writing" had on himself and Iain when they were growing up.

Mid February saw the publication of various statistics from UK libraries and the big news was that Catherine Cookson had been knocked off top spot after 17 years by the children's writer Jacqueline Wilson. I emailed the registrar at the Public Lending Right (the organisation that sort out payments to authors based on the amount their books have been borrowed) to ask where Iain Banks had come in this ranking. They only had the top 150 on file, and he wasn't in that so they got their IT people to run a special query and he came out at #402.

Blicke windwärts (Look to Windward) has been nominated in the "Best Foreign Work" section of the 2004 Kurd Laßwitz Prize, as it was published in Germany in 2003. The German language SF prizes are named after the Kantian philosopher, historian of science and short-story writer. The other nominees are: Stephen Baxter, *Ursprung* (Origin), John Clute, *Sternentanz* (Appleseed), Nancy Farmer, *Das Skorpionenhaus* (The House of

the Scorpion), China Miéville, *König Ratte* (King Rat), Tatjana Tolstaja, Kys and Vernor Vinge, *Eine Tiefe am Himmel* (A Deepness in the Sky). Voting by the SF professionals of Germany, Switzerland and Austria was completed on April 30th, and the winner was Vernor Vinge. The awards will be presented at ElsterCon on 18th September.

Steen Christiansen will present a paper entitled 'Bridging Genres: Iain Banks' at the Science Fiction Foundation conference "A Commonwealth of Science Fiction", that is being held in Liverpool (5th – 8th August). Mr Christiansen works in the Department of Languages and Intercultural Studies at Aalborg University and is studying for a Ph.D. He is looking at science fiction genre participation, and Iain (M.) Banks is an obvious case study, with his alternate different genre books. Others he is studying are Kathy Acker, Peter Ackroyd, Paul Auster, Steve Erickson and Terry Gilliam (as he is looking at cinema as well as literature).

Details of the conference can be found at:

<http://homepages.enterprise.net/ambutler/acosf/index.html>

The Italian translation of *Inversions* (published by Nord) won the Best International Novel category of the 2004 Italia SF awards that were announced on March 13th at ITALCON 30. *L'altro Universo* (Excession) picked up this award in 1998. (See p #5 for more about Italian translations).

Raw Spirit made the long list of ten books for the travel section of the WH Smith 'People's Choice' Book Awards 2004, but after the 148,000+ votes were all counted and the results announced on March 16th, the winner of that section was *Yoga for People Who Can't be Bothered* by Geoff Dyer.

Inversions was the March choice of the Science Fiction Book Discussion Group at the Central Community Library, Manassas, Virginia (USA).

The Scotsman (2nd April) mentioned Iain Banks in its list of writers that were used to illustrate the point that "There are so many good Scottish writers out there it's almost embarrassing". This was #18 in a list of twenty things Scotland had to be cheerful

about in the wake of the latest defeat of their national football team.

Val McDermid won the Scottish Writer section of the Icons of Scotland poll that Iain had also been nominated for (see issue #1). The presentations were at the made on April 6th at the Tartan Day event in New York. Iain also lost out in the Personality section of the Icons of Whisky. The results were announced at the Whisky Live event in March and published in the April Issue of **Whisky Magazine** (#38). The winner was Jim McEwan the production director at Bruichladdich.

A message of support that Iain sent to the protesters at the anti nuclear weapons demonstrations that took place at Faslane was reproduced in **The Scotsman's** (13th April) and other Scottish newspapers' coverage of the event.

Pat Gibson won the top prize on Who Wants to be a Millionaire. The press coverage of this also mentioned that he was due to appear on Mastermind, and that his specialist subjects were the books of Iain M Banks and the films of Quentin Tarantino. The **Manchester Evening News** (5th April) even gave a date (22nd April) for the recording of the show he was on. However, the BBC do not like to use contestants who have recently appeared on other shows, and later coverage, e.g. **Sunday Herald** (25th April) said he will have to reapply next year.

Scotland on Sunday (2nd May) reported than Iain had been dropped from their Scottish Power 100 List describing him as "too easy-going to be a figurehead for the nation's writers". Last time he had been at #70. J K Rowling moved up from #4 to #3.

On 7th May, Mirna Radin-Sabadoš of the University of Novi Sad, gave a paper entitled "Beyond crime and punishment: Violence as a metaphor in Iain Banks' Complicity" at the 1st International Conference of the Slovene Association for the Study of English in Ljubljana.

Iain's appearance at this year's Edinburgh Book Festival is expected be on Friday 20th August at 18:30. This will be confirmed when tickets go on sale from mid June.

The True Knowledge of Ken MacLeod

In the last issue the Media Scanner column noted the publication of this book (ISBN 0903007037) and that it contained a chapter by James Brown. The chapter title is in fact "Not Losing the Plot: Politics, Guilt and Storytelling in Banks and MacLeod", slightly different to what was reported last issue. It was a pleasant surprise to discover that as well as that section there is also some discussion of Banks's work in the introduction by Andrew Butler. In this he comments that some "characters and incidents in the Culture universe would not seem out of place in the Fall Revolution Quartet or the Engines of Light trilogy or vice versa", and also that MacLeod's first saga could be read as a "public argument" with *Use of Weapons* and *Excession*. The volume also contains the English language version of an introduction that Ken wrote for the German edition of *Consider Phlebas* that was published by Verlag in 2002.

The essay by Dr Brown begins with a quick discussion of plots commenting that having a plot is one of the things that has lead some to dismiss SF. A gallop through some literary theory from as far back as Greek tragedy (plot is fundamental) with a couple of stops in the nineteenth (plot as logic of cause and effect) and twentieth (plot moves from appearance to reality) centuries brings us to the works of Banks and MacLeod.

Brown describes Banks's Culture work as having something in common with a precursor of SF; the philosophical tale, providing various examples including Voltaire's *Candide*. Characters with mentors (*Use of Weapons / Inversions*) and characters on travels (*The Player of Games*) are given as typical storylines and examples of such tales, before he moves onto to discuss the isolated individual narrative type (*Use of Weapons*, *Look to Windward* and *The State of the Art*).

Banks in Translation

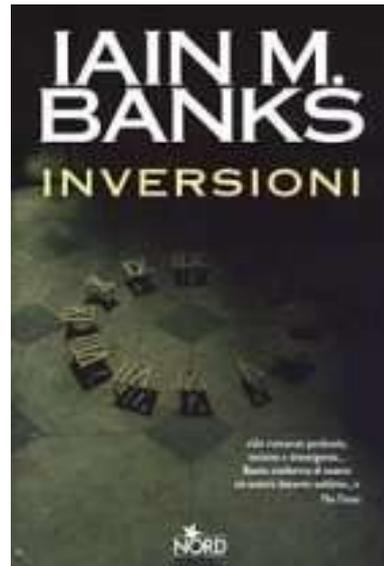
Italian Editions.

The majority of Iain's SF work has been translated into Italian, but just under half his mainstream titles. The first of his works to be published in Italy was the 1989 edition *La Mente di Schar* (Consider Phlebas). This was followed by *L'Impero di Azad* (The Player of Games) and *La Guerra di Zakalwe* (Use of Weapons), *L'Arma Finale* (Against a Dark Background) and *Criptosfera* (Feersum Endjinn), as well as the short story *Un dono della Cultura* (A Gift from the Culture) which appeared in an anthology called *Cyberpunk* along with stories from the likes of Pat Cadigan, Greg Egan and William Gibson.

All these came from the publishing house Nord which continued to publish Banks's SF with *L'Altro Universo* (Excession) in 1997 and *Inversioni* (Inversions) in 2003 which both won the Italia award for best foreign work. The translator of both these was Anna Feruglio Dal Dan, who had previously worked on *L'Impero di Azad*, and had long been a fan of all Banks's work, reading it in English, which she prefers, before getting a contract to translate it. She has also done the collection *Lo stato dell'arte* (The State of the Art) for Fanucci, which means that as she had translated the short story *Un dono della Cultura* for Nord she has done that twice.

Anna's favourite Banks book is *Use of Weapons* and she was very disappointed not to have translated that. The hardest of those that she has worked on was *Excession*, which has multiple voices and also some words she thought Iain had made up. She did do some revisional work on *Feersum Endjinn* and commented that as Italian is much more of a phonetic language than English it was strangely easy to translate the passages that some native English speakers have had trouble reading. She met Banks in San Marino when he visited Italy in 1990 and got to accept the award for *Excession* on his behalf. Recently a different publisher, Fanucci, has been buying the rights to Iain's work. They have released *Pensa a Fleba* (a more literal titular translation of Consider Phlebas), and are preparing *Look to*

Windward. This has meant that Anna has not been involved in these translations.



The Italian cover of Inversions

The non-genre novels took longer to find an Italian home, and it was not until 1996 that *La Fabbrica degli Orrori* (The Wasp Factory) and *Complicità* (Complicity) appeared in Italian. The former courtesy of Fanucci and the latter from Longanesi. These have been joined by *Canto di Pietra* (A Song of Stone) and *Corpo a Corpo* (The Bridge) from Guanda, with paperback editions from TEA.

2004 has seen a reprint of *L'Altro Universo* but no sign of *The Business* which Longanesi have the rights to, or the expected *Look to Windward* from Fannuci.



The first Italian edition of The Wasp Factory

Walking on Glass

The second published novel of Iain Banks was issued in March 1995. Iain had written a draft of *Consider Phlebas* after *The Wasp Factory* but before Macmillan's decision to publish, so *Walking on Glass* was the first manuscript that he wrote after that confidence building acceptance, and itself was accepted by Macmillan in December 1983, so Iain had got what he described as "that always tricky" second novel out of the way before his first was published. Iain had planned for it to be quite different to its predecessor, and so the change of tack was not the result of the critical reaction to first published work.

There are three narratives, which at first seem unlinked. In the first Graham Park is in love with Sara who seems to be involved with someone called Stock, and how much does Graham's flamboyantly gay friend Slater know about it all? The second, which takes place in the London of 1983 like the first, Steven Grout looks to be paranoid with his claims of being an exiled intergalactic warrior. The third is told from the point of view of an imprisoned soldier from the Therapeutic Wars who is forced to play games in a castle with a prisoner from the opposing side. These stories progress a chapter at a time for each over five parts, with a sixth called Truth and Consequences closing the book and being just a single chapter.

So what is *Walking on Glass* about? The **Independent on Sunday** (25/07/1999) postulated that all Banks's books were about speculations that were followed to their logical conclusions, and that for *Walking on Glass* the construct was "what if we have no free will but are in fact controlled by drooling galactic criminals?"

There are many linkages between the three different stories. For example Stock's motorcycle is playing up as Grout has put sugar in the petrol tank, then Quiss "sees" the beer barrel that is going to hit Grout when he puts his head into the orb in the unlocked room in the castle basement. The problem for the reader is that the different stories move at different speeds over different time frames, and such linked events (if you believe they

are so) do not even occur in the same parts of the book or in a convenient linear order.

In the final chapters there is a tying together of some strands, but there are definitely still more than a few loose ends. The matchbox is important here, with the riddle that the game players are trying to solve printed on it – along with the answer. The box also contains three dead matches - an allusion to the three stories. The make of the matches is McGuffin - a McGuffin is a plot device primarily intended to motivate the action, the phrase originating from the name of Alfred Hitchcock's script editor. The inference is that the old couple playing games that are harassed by Grout's friend Williams are in fact Quiss and Ayjai, and even that perhaps by reading the book she picks up at the end Ayjai will find the answer. In another possibly self-referential passage, Slater mentions "a sort of Byzantine future, a degenerate technocratic empire".

The whole book can then be read as three different studies of paranoia. Graham being the most normal, but somewhat anxious in terms of his love life; Steven's paranoia developing until he is institutionalised; and the old man, who we never out the name of, living in a complete fantasy world. However, an alternative and more radical SF reading of the book contends that the "real" story is the fantasy strand that is set in the Earth's far future and that Grout's actions are influenced, perhaps even controlled, by previous prisoners of the castle who have given up the games and become immersed in the orbs, with Graham a counterpoint manipulated by people from Earth's present. This is supported by assuming Grout's equivalence to Godot / Goriot / Gerrut, the old man with his head permanently in an orb that Quiss finds, and also the parallels between inhabitants of Grout's world and characters from the castle, where Dirt = Earth – "it loses something in translation".

There are many explicit influences (noted by the titles of the books holding up the games table) including *Titus Groan* from Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast* trilogy, with the other books being *The Trial* (Kafka), *Labyrinths* (Borges) and *The Castle* (Kafka again).

Robert Binns has written about the similarity of the use of castles in Peake and Banks¹ in an article that therefore analyses *Walking on Glass* in some depth, as well as looking at *The Bridge*, and touching on the impact of large structures near where the authors had lived (Arundel Castle and The Forth Bridge respectively), as well as similarities in the characterization of both authors.

Drawing from a different type of literary influence, the book has a couple of mentions of the second part of Douglas Adams's Hitch Hiker's Trilogy. There is a passage where Graham finds a copy of *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe* whilst waiting for Sara, but decides it would be better to be found reading something more consequential. Hotblack Desiato is utilised in the plot. As Iain was living near Islington at the time of writing the book he was most probably aware of the local estate agents which Adams used (with permission) as the name of the Disaster Area singer. Since publication the company has been accused of being named after the character. Banks uses this reality/fiction confusion to illustrate Grout's paranoia. Grout keeps some of the estate agent's sale literature in his evidence book as he recognises the name, and believes it to be a "leak" from his imagined reality, a clue that his Tormentors leave to remind him of his fallen warrior status. Most likely he half remembers reading it in one of the many science fiction books that clutter his room.

There are many other avenues to explore in terms of themes and imagery. Colours are important, with the different boots of the castle attendants being particularly intriguing. The chapter titles follow patterns: names of roads for Graham, names of people for Steven and names of games for Quiss and Ayjai. The imagery also provides linkages between the stories: with the towers of Grout's books being directly comparable to the castle made of books, and mazes making reoccurring appearances; the castle itself, Grout's books again and the drawing of Sara. The timeframe of the book is noteworthy, with the British General Election of 9th June 1983

¹ "Castles, books and bridges: Mervyn Peake and Iain Banks" in Peake Studies, vol. 1, no. 2 Winter 1990

anchoring the story, although the London based action mainly takes place on June 28th, but includes flashbacks. The final chapter in Grout's story – with the Doctor's report dated 16th February 1984. This is Iain's 30th birthday, and the publication date of *The Wasp Factory*.

As well as having many influences, *Walking on Glass* has influenced artistic creations itself. In the issue of **Scottish Book Collector** that has an interview with Banks (vol. 4, no. 9, March 1995) there is a short story called *The Man Who Collected Iain Banks* (written by Paul F. Cockburn) that you could probably call a pastiche. There is also a track called simply *Iain Banks* which is a reading from *Walking on Glass* set to music by Mick MacNeil, and another track that is actually called *Walking on Glass* on the **Then Jerico** album *Orgasmaphobia*. CD: Eagle Records (1998) EAGCD012.

Walking on Glass whilst not as extensively exported as Iain's first book has been translated into German, Swedish, Finnish, Polish, Spanish, Turkish and Russian. It was potentially going to be called *Chinese Scrabble* but the publishers, Macmillan, considered this a risk with the name Scrabble™ being a trademark.

This multi-layered book is deserving of careful consideration and at each reading divulges more to the reader. One fan has even gone as far as to plot Graham's journey to see Sara on a map in the hope that its shape may throw light upon the book – as discussed in the book's picnic scene. Some readers have dismissed the ending as contrived and messy, whilst others see it as a rung in his development as a writer leading directly onto his even more ambitious and ultimately more successful book *The Bridge*. However, we will leave the last assessment to Iain himself. He has commented that the book "didn't do exactly what it set out to do and I think you have failed to an extent if the reader can't understand what you're saying ... I worry sometimes that people will read *Walking on Glass* and think in some way I was trying to fool them, which I wasn't"².

² Interview with David Howe, Starburst #151

Banks Obscura

More Published Poetry

Banks wrote poetry at University, and as noted in issue #1, his first professionally published work was a poem. More of his poetry was unleashed on the world in a tome called *Overload*, which was the commemorative book of the 1995 convention Novacon 25. This limited edition of 500, was published by the convention organisers, the Birmingham Science Fiction Group, and contains works by Brian W Aldiss, Harry Harrison and Bob Shaw, the Guests of Honour at the convention, and Iain M Banks who is described as a Special Guest. The two short poems by Iain in the book are called *New* and *Debriefing*, and are accompanied by illustrations by Dave Mooring.

A Photo Story

Another non-novel format for Iain Banks is the photo-story called *Forbidden Love* that he wrote in 1989. The photographs to go with the story were taken at that year's Eastercon in Jersey by Dave Holmes. It was originally intended for *Viz*, but that publication requested that a very small cut be made which Iain refused to do. The original beer stained manuscript was by 1998 in the hands of a book dealer and is now presumably in a private collection, but the text was eventually published in issue #4 of the fanzine *The Culture*, which reported that Mr Holmes still had the original photographs that were meant to accompany it in his possession, although these were not published in the zine.

The Wasp (Textile) Factory

There is an "Industrial Sewing" business in Lancashire listed in the Yellow Pages which has an address of: The Wasp Factory, Hope Mill, Dalton Street, Todmorden, OL14 5HJ.

Managing Director Tom Graham is a big fan of Banks's novels, and as the company has an odd range of products (his words, not mine) wanted a name that would reflect that. The sorts of things they produce are padded straps for musical instruments, rucksacks for surveyors GPS gear and gear for paragliders, as well as padded rooms for special needs kids.

Eastercon 2004

The 55th British National Science Fiction Convention, but my first, was in a not so sunny Blackpool. I picked up a copy of *The True Knowledge of Ken MacLeod* (see review on p #4) from the stand that the Science Fiction Foundation had in the dealer room, and the artist Colin Odell picked up the Art award from the BSFA for its cover.

Banks was mentioned by the panellists in a number of programme items I went to. The first of these was called "Beyond Money--Neverness, the Culture ..." where the central question was the believability of SF worlds where money has no meaning. Only three people knew anything about David Zindell's *Neverness* so that was quickly passed over. Cheryl Morgan commented that The Culture was one of the more believable moneyless society, and also stated that she thought that the people were pets of the Minds. She made the same observation in the "After Cyberpunk" panel, coupled with a comment that Wintermute (from William Gibson's *Neuromancer*) could maybe be considered as the first Mind. There was also a somewhat peculiar comparison in another talk where Alexandre Dumas père (author of *The Three Musketeers* etc.) was described as a "nineteenth century Iain Banks" in the context of always having time for his fans.

I managed to chat to the artist SMS in a queue at a bar. I asked him about a proposed joint venture with Iain for a graphic novel that I had read of in an old Banks interview. He was amazed and cheered to be reminded of it, commenting that he thought it was very Gothic and bloody with possibly a King Lear motif to the story. He said that he had got as far as doing some character designs, and had recollections of drawing giant semaphore machines on hilltops, but that given this all happened in the late 1980s he thinks he probably consigned them to the bin when the project didn't come off.

By the way, Ken MacLeod will be a Guest of Honour at next year's Eastercon (see <http://www.paragon2.org.uk>).

eBay Watch

A full set of the dozen editions of *The Culture* fanzine (see p #12) recently sold for £51.01 attracting twenty bids from ten different people, one of whom made eight different bids and still did not manage to get the lot.

A first edition of *The Wasp Factory* sold for £74, and a signed edition made £139, whilst a different unsigned one failed to get a register of a bid of £75. A nice looking copy of *The Bridge* failed to reach its reserve despite a top bid of £48.50. First editions of *Canal Dreams* are less sought after and fairly stable in price with copies selling recently for £16.01, £17.10, £18.70, £19.02 and £19.99. A copy of *The Crow Road* sold for £14.95, with a signed edition from a respected book-dealer reaching £49.10. On the SF side a *Use of Weapons* first sold for £31 and a *Consider Phlebas* for £25.88.

A set of Iain's nine SF hardback editions sold for £163.50, one was a second printing, but the rest were true firsts although one of them was an ex-library edition. Whilst a set of the ten non SF hardback novels sold for £295 despite a somewhat vague description that said "*The Wasp Factory* and a few others are thought to be first edition copies". Caveat Emptor.

A signed copy of the US stand alone novella of *The State of the Art* published by Ziesing failed to sell although it attracted 18 bids that took the price to £31. A first edition of the UK published Orbit collection of the same name did sell, but for just £4.70. That may have something to do with the lack of a photograph to judge the condition of the book.

A copy of the programme for the 1997 West Yorkshire Playhouse version of the stage play of *The Wasp Factory* sold for £4.72 after 4 bids. This starred Martin Freeman of *The Office* and currently filming as Arthur Dent in the long awaited big screen version of *The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, as Frank, although, of course, more than one actor played the role.

The video of the award winning BBC TV series of *The Crow Road* was deleted from the

BBC catalogue just before Christmas 2003. Prices on eBay have subsequently jumped a little with various copies going for steadily rising prices £5.50, £9.01 and £14.50. A sealed example even reached a nice round £20.

An omnibus edition of *The Wasp Factory*, *The Bridge* and *Espedair Street*, all bound together in one paperback with a front cover based on that of *The Wasp Factory* sold for £3.70. I understand this to be a bookclub edition from QPD. Even more of an oddity, and advertised as such, a hardback book with a cover identifying it as *The Business* by Iain Banks but with the text actually being Bill Bryson's *The Lost Continent*. This failed to meet the seller's opening requirement of a £5 bid.

Some odd ways of obtaining Iain's signature. A Tintin postcard with a note to what looks like Brian Robbins with a signed bookplate sold for £1.04, and a pair of signed bookplates (with the logo of Iain's publisher) sold for £20. A week later an identical pair only made £14.02. Just ask him guys.

Some lucky person got a bargain - the unabridged recording of Barbara Rosenblat reading *The Business* sold for £4.99 (even adding the postage of £2.60) this is still less than a pound per cassette, and way off the retail price of around £40. A copy of the abridged version of *Dead Air* five CDs went for £6.50. The PolyGram cassette editions usually sell for £3 or £4.

A tee-shirt with the cover image of *A Song of Stone* and the words "Break into Banks" as a back print that was a promotional item when the book was published sold for £3.99.

A couple of particularly rare items sold recently. *Consider Phlebas* and *The Player of Games* had limited signed slipcase editions of 176 and 201 respectively, when they were first published. Sold individually the former made £47 and the latter £73.50.

A copy of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group published *Cleaning Up* sold for £35.88. The second example this year of what was a limited edition of 400.

The Unwritten Banks

Audio books used to be somewhat of an afterthought in the publishing business, but nowadays one quite often accompanies, or follows very soon after, the first publication of a book.

The majority of Iain's work in audio book form has been read by Peter Capaldi, who played Uncle Rory in the TV adaptation of *The Crow Road*, and also read various book extracts for the 1997 South Bank Show profile of Iain. These were produced in 1998/9, and the first to be released was *The Wasp Factory*, accompanied by *A Song of Stone*. The latter works particularly well in this format, with the lyrical quality of the work coming through in the abridgement's reading - perhaps this is a case of better heard than read. *Walking on Glass* was the third in the series, and was followed by *The Bridge*, which to my disappointment has all of the Barbarian scenes cut from it. After the release of *Whit* the PolyGram / Cult Listening productions came to a halt, although the initial plans had been to release the full set of Iain's books. These recordings are now available from HarperCollins Audio.

These 3 hour abridgements were the work of experienced abridger Neville Teller, who also abridged *The Business* into a 10x15 minute version that was read by Valerie Edmond on BBC Radio 4 in 1999. He had previously abridged *The Crow Road* and *Complicity* in May 1995 for a company called Redback, and the Internet retailer Amazon lists audio books with these titles as being produced by Carlton Books and read by Billy Connolly. However, checking with the publishers they could only comment that they were currently unavailable, whereas Iain's agent confirmed they were never recorded.

Mr Teller commented that a ten episode 15 minute abridgement is about 22,000 words long. This means that the three hour versions are around 30,000 words and so these abridgements contain approximately 25% - 40% of the original novels. Unlike printed abridgements, audio books generally do not always contain just the words of the original as the dialogue usually needs to be re-

arranged to make sense when heard rather than when read which are quite separate things. Neville found it hard to choose a favourite but in the ends nominated *A Song of Stone* for "the human yet timeless quality of its theme".

The vocal talent of Peter Capaldi was once again utilised for the recording of the six hour abridgement (by Kati Nicholl) of *Dead Air*. An unabridged, 13¼ hour, version of this book is also available - read by Kenny Blyth.

There are also unabridged readings of *The Crow Road* (14¼ hours) narrated by Ewan Stewart, and *The Business* read by Barbara Rosenblat. The mid-Atlantic tone that Barbara adopts for Kate Telman in hits exactly the right note, and the range of voices she creates for the other characters are impressive and work well. In fact Kate's accent varies depending on the context - when in Scotland or drunk or being girly she slips into broader Scots than usual. Barbara had not read any Banks before recording this book which took in the region of 24 hours of studio time to create the 12 hours of recordings. This is after doing her own slow and close reading of the book in order to "get all the ebbs, flows and colours". She has since read more Banks and mentioned to her bosses that she would love to do an unabridged recording of *Whit*.

BBC radio readings have also included *The Crow Road* produced by BBC Scotland read by Kenneth Glenaan, recently repeated in BBC7, and *The Wasp Factory* read by Joseph McFadden soon after he played Prentice in the TV adaptation of *The Crow Road*. These were both in the BBC's preferred format of ten 15 minute parts.

The only "M" work to have been released is the unabridged, 14¼ hour long, *Look to Windward* read by Robert Lister. *The Culture* fanzine had reported back in 1999 that Robert Llewellyn (Kryten from *Red Dwarf*) was due to record all these for PolyGram like Peter Capaldi was to do with the non genre fiction. Unfortunately, like the Billy Connolly tapes they may have been announced but were never recorded.

Wasp Factory Film

More information on the unfinished film project has come to light. A Mr Banks, from Fife, writes to clear up some errors that crept into last issue's account of the saga that is the film of *The Wasp Factory*. He explained that the rights that were returned after the court case were those for the prequel and sequel to the story. The original article in issue #1 suggested that all the rights had been returned to Mr Banks. An assumption I made as the **Evening News** (05/09/2002) article that stated "*The Wasp Factory* now looks set to be adapted for the big screen", and quoted Iain as saying "there were ongoing problems with *The Wasp Factory* which have only just been settled". This and the fact that the film had not been released made me assume that the rights issue was the reason for that.

This raises the interesting point that the film that has been made is legitimate and so it is now even more intriguing as to whether it was finally finished or not. Unfortunately it seems that it was not. I managed to contact one of the actors from the original shooting. He had played Eric and told me that all his LA based shooting had been finished by February 1995, and he only had two further scenes to do - the baby scene and running down a hill with flaming sheep - but has never heard from the producers since then, although he was contacted a couple of years later by Iain's lawyers. Just as I was framing a series of questions to ask him about the production I read the last line of his email which said that the non completion of the movie was a great disappointment at an early stage of his career and he didn't want to talk about it anymore.

Another interesting discovery occurred when I was looking at the web pages for the Computer Animation department of the University of Teesside (see Not "THE" Iain Banks article below for why I was there). In the academic year 1995/6 there was a degree project sponsored by Windmill Lane Productions (a company involved in the post-production of the film) which was described in the list of projects as "Wasp Factory - modelling wasp behaviour for a film based on the book". On investigation it turns out that

two students were involved and there is a video of their work in the archives.

Presumably CGI wasps were to be used as real ones are difficult to train and also that the all important endorsement of the American Humane Association (AHA) could be obtained and the "No Animals Were Harmed..."™ logo displayed at the end of the film. Recommended reading is section 805 of the AHA guidelines which covers the on set treatment of "Insects and Arachnids".

Researching into the film also threw up the fact that the BBC dramatized an extract from *The Wasp Factory* when the book was featured on their **Bookmark** TV programme. **The Times** (10/02/1984) reported that the BBC were looking for a WWI bunker in which to film, but in the end had to settle for the cellar of a house in Tooting Bec.

Not "THE" Iain Banks

This fanzine deals with Iain (Menzies) Banks the novelist, not Iain (Ashley) Banks the Computer Animation student at the University of Teesside. This Iain is from Northern Ireland and is the registered owner of the Internet domain **iainbanks.com**. He uses the website www.iainbanks.com as an online portfolio for his work that includes 2D pictures and 3D models as well as his animations. He has a small goatee (Do all Iain Bankses have facial hair?) and reports that people do recognise the name, but when they see him he is obviously too young to be the writer. He has never read any of his namesake's books, although he did buy his father *Consider Phlebas* - who apparently enjoyed it. Nor has he ever met the novelist, although as a child he was once treated by a doctor with the same name who gave him his name tag as a memento.

Time Warner, owners of Iain's publishers Orbit and Little Brown own the domain **iainbanks.net** and use the website to publicise Iain's works of fiction. There is also a public forum for discussion of the works.

The Original Fanzine

This is the second exclusively Iain (M.) Banks fanzine as far as I know. There was a publication called *The Culture* the first issue of which was published in April 1997, and was roughly quarterly for 12 issues, with the last appearing in the spring of 2000. It was produced by Dave Clayton and Nick Scott from Manchester, and was sold via subscription and in shops like the Forbidden Planet chain.

More substantial than *The Banksoniain* each issue was at least 32 pages, and included scoops such as the first publication of *Forbidden Love* (see Banks Obscura, p #8). The article *A Few Notes on Marain* that can now be found on the Internet first appeared in the fanzine, along with some of Iain's own drawings of what GCU Arbitrary and GOU Limiting Factor look like and a map of the island in *The Wasp Factory*, and the Gevant Plate of the Chiark Orbital from *The Player of Games*.

There were also a couple of interviews with Iain himself and many with the large cast of supporting characters in the Iain Banks story from actors: Peter Capaldi, Joseph McFadden and Valerie Edmonds, through friends and colleagues: Ken MacLeod, Gary Lloyd and Roger Gray, to those in publishing: James Hale, Tom Holman and Iain's then publicist Michelle Hogdson. Particularly well covered were the book cover artists. The editors even managed to track down Leslie Howard who produced the black and white covers for the first few Futura paperbacks that went on to set the trend for his mainstream fiction. He had gone back to doing textile design that he started with. Perhaps that is why they were so intricate and tactile?

Using these artist contacts made through interviewing them, *The Culture* also moved into the realms of merchandising. The early editions had featured interviews with the artists that provided Iain with his distinctive covers, and questions about whether prints were available always met with the answer no - lead to them being made available. Peter Brown provided an exclusive montage of his black and white covers, whilst a series of A2

prints of Mark Salwowski's SF covers were also available. In one issue there was another exclusive from Peter Brown - an alternative, but rejected, cover for *The Business* showing a plane, prayer flags and a mountain.

They kept a close eye on the proposed adaptations of Banks's works into films. The first page of the draft *Espedair Street* script by Roger Gray graced an issue, and when they covered the filming of *Complicity* they managed to arrange a set visit and took part as extras. The scene that David appeared in was lost to the cutting room floor, Nick's scene did make it to the released version.

There was an annual questionnaire where readers could vote for their favourite Banks book with *Use of Weapons* and *The Bridge* usually winning in the two main categories. Plus analysis of sales figures for all his books on an annual basis as well.

The Culture had its own website to publicise the fanzine, and to report on Banks related news between issues. This was featured in Carol Vorderman's WWW column in **The Mirror** (25/02/2000) when it discussed literature on the Internet.

The National Library of Scotland has a listing for *The Culture* under the subject heading; "Banks, Iain Periodicals", with the shelfmark HJ3.1597 PER, between *Harden's London Restaurants* and the *Glasgow Review* if you pop along to George IV Bridge. However, they do not seem to have a complete run.

Unfortunately the attempts made to contact the editors have failed. So Dave and Nick if you are out there - thanks for the fanzine, and thanks for the inspiration. As you can see from the first entry in eBay Watch (p #9) people still value your work.

The Banksoniain is available as a PDF from <http://efanzines.com>

If you have any comments, suggestions or contributions to make then please email us at: banksoniain@gmail.com

If you have any Banks related news, or want us to delve further into topics covered in this issue then please also use that address

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