

The Banksoniain #16

An Iain (M.) Banks Fanzine

September 2010

Editorial

This edition should be out before *Surface Detail* with a chronology of the book's development traced through the various pronouncements of Iain and his publishers as this issue's centre page spread (pp #6-7).

The Iain Banks App is an important development making background material available, and it would have been reviewed if anyone at **The Banksoniain** had any hardware that we could run it on. A bone of contention for fans? Possibly, see pp #4-5.

A recent work trip to Hungary saw your editor's collection of editions of *The Wasp Factory* increased by one and provided the inspiration for this issue's Banks in Translation (p #11).

There are the usual reports of Iain's public appearances in Banks on Tour (pp #8-9), as well as his interviews and articles about him in Media Scanner (pp #2-3) Last, but not least the Banksoniain Calendar (p #12) lists all the future appearances known at the time of publication.

Thanks this issue to Ostravar beer, Darren at iainbanks.net, the guys of the Iain Banks Forum, Jude Roberts for the Stirling report, and of course, the man himself, Iain Banks.

Unwritten Banks 1

A Gift From The Culture

The Film & Media Entertainment production is still in development. The latest update came as part of a general news update the company's website (18/05/2010) which reported that the script was still being worked on, and that filming was due to start in September in South Africa.

Banks's Next Books

The centre feature looks at the development of *Surface Detail* as the next Iain M Banks book is called. It is currently listed for UK publication on October 7th 2010. If that is all you want to know, then don't turn to the middle page spread.

Iain has also made some comments about the book after *Surface Detail*, an Iain Banks one, as yet unnamed. At Eastercon he said that his aim was to use *The Wasp Factory* as a template and keep it "short, shape and shocking" – probably around 65,000 words in length, similar to his first published novel.

As of September 2010, Iain should be on the cusp of his "thinking about thinking" and his "thinking" phases before the "writing" phase starts in the New Year. However, there is the little matter of the *Surface Detail* promotional tour to get out of the way, more about this on the back page.

Unwritten Banks 2

The Wasp Factory Film Saga

At Eastercon Iain was asked about this subject and gave a potted history of the saga that he said, "cost me a lot of money". Having sold it to an Irish company it was then purchased by an American one which moved the action to the States, and depressingly Iain saw a script that opened "with Frank in a box-car going across of the wheat fields of Kansas or wherever". However, Iain finished the story on a positive note saying that that company's rights had lapsed, and that "there are two, highly recognisable, film company / director names involved that are very interested. So, with a bit of luck we'll sign an agreement this year. Fingers crossed, but as they say in Hollywood, 'Don't hold your breath.'"

Media Scanner

In 2010 Iain became a patron of the **Environmental Justice Foundation**, an organisation with the aim of, “Protecting People and Planet” through “a direct link between the need for environmental security and the defence of basic human rights.” Their website <http://www.ejfoundation.org> quoted Iain as saying, “The Environmental Justice Foundation has my full backing and support in helping to make us, the relatively rich, aware of the responsibilities we have towards our fellow human beings round the planet and helping those less fortunate than us in their struggle to claim what is only their rightful, sustainable share of what our world offers”.

During the air travel chaos caused by an Icelandic volcano, the **Daily Mail** (22/04/2010) reporting on London based football team Fulham’s trip to Hamburg described the team’s then manager, Roy Hodgson, as reading **The Bridge** by Iain Banks, whilst the players listened to music or watched TV.

A snippet from the **Scottish Daily Express** (15/05/2010). In an article by Dorothy-Grace Elder bemoaning the plethora of sequels at the movies. She asked the Scottish Book Trust to name books they’d love to see filmed, and one of the books on the list was *The Algebraist*.

An **Open University** press release (20/05/2010) said Iain would be receiving an honorary degree for “his prolific contribution to mainstream and science fiction.”

A **BBC Radio Scotland** interview with Edi Stark (19/05/2010) lived up to the programme’s name, **Stark Talk**, taking Iain’s honesty in discussing his personal life to uncomfortable levels. Although the interview did cover Iain’s writing and more light-hearted topics near the end the discussion turned to his late ex-wife and her alcoholism. He and Annie had been together since before his writing success having met in the early eighties in London and married in Hawaii in 1992. Iain also revealed that he had not seen her for three years by the time of her death last autumn, although they had spoken on the telephone. The divorce had not been finalised until a couple of months before her death. Iain

admitted he had nagging doubts that he could have saved her, but when he had given her the ultimatum that it was either him or something else, she chose the something else.

An interview with **Radio Prague** was published at the beginning of the city’s Writers’ Festival (07/06/2010). Iain and the interviewer mainly discuss *Transition*, with it described as a crossover book using *The Bridge* as a template, and being about the corruption of a large bureaucratic organisation, The Concern, that has grown up to control the ability of an individual consciousness to flit from one to another in the multiverse. The ten-minute interview online as an MP3 and transcript at: <http://www.radio.cz/en/article/128712>

An interview with Iain was published the same day in **The Herald**, which headlined with the news that Iain once turned down an OBE. This had previously been mentioned in **The Irish Times** (17/04/2007) and reported in **Banksoniain** #12. This time he revealed that it was “about 10 years ago” but that he kept it quiet in case his mother found out. Banks also talked about his trip to the Greek island of Crete, but by travelling overland rather than flying. Iain explained that he was taking the whole of July off for a two week holiday with some friends, having to leave five days before they were to get the train to Venice and then a ferry to Patras a bus to Piraeus and then another ferry, when he wasn’t even sure it was more environmentally friendly than a two hour flight.

Iain continues to send letters to **The Guardian**; often as part of a group or organisation. Recent letters include: calling for a UK election debate to cover Afghanistan (22/04/201); suggesting a cultural boycott on Israel in response to the storming of the Turkish ships trying to lift the blockade on Gaza (03/06/2010); a further call to the UK government to heed the wishes of the public and withdraw from Afghanistan (26/06/2010); opposing the cuts in public services announced in the new UK government’s budget (04/08/2010); and calling on Waterstone’s not to host a signing by Tony Blair promoting his autobiography (18/08/2010).

There was some reaction to these with the Wikipedia entry on Iain Banks being vandalised a few times because of his stance on Israel, and a new poster turning up on his publisher run forum at iainbanksforum.net to suggest that Iain himself be boycotted, and another that compared Iain's sanity unfavourably with that of Elton John. Follow-up letters to the newspaper were both for and against the position. The Israeli cultural boycott letter included Iain saying, "For the little it's worth, I've told my agent to turn down any further book translation deals with Israeli publishers." The last example of a Hebrew edition of a Banks book being published I could find was *The Player of Games* in 2002, and before that *Complicity* (2000), *Whit* (1997) and *The Wasp Factory* (1988). A counter letter to the Tony Blair stance was published in **The Guardian** (19/08/2010) criticising the anti-free speech aspects of such a boycott call.

Transition made the final list of contenders for the 2010 John W. Campbell Memorial Award. He was up against a very strong set of contender that stretched to a dozen writers, and included Margaret Atwood, China Miéville, Bruce Sterling and Kim Stanley Robinson, who all lost out to Paolo Bacigalupi with *The Windup Girl*.

The BBC's twenty-first century re-imagining of **Sherlock Holmes** included the UK hardback of Iain's latest as a plot point (01/08/2010). A cipher based on words in books was being used and so Holmes and Watson set about comparing the books belonging to two characters. The first one in common was *Transition*, but the code turned out to use the *London A-Z*.

An odd little interview published in **The List** (5/8/2010) was one of those with standard questions that don't tend to elicit much from the mischievous Mr Banks, who takes the questions more literally than usually intended. So although we do find out that the first concert he went to was, "Jack Bruce, in Paisley (Town Hall, I think), back in 1970 or 1971." The last thing he thinks of at night is, "Muesli? ...or bacon roll?" Whilst the first film to move him was "Possibly *Greysfriars Bobby*".

By coincidence on the same day another standardish question interview with Iain was also published. However, the "Pilau Talk" interview on Scottish curry website, **Trampy And The Tramp's Glasgow Of Curry**, was intended to be taken light-heartedly. Iain revealed that the chicken jaipuri of Edinburgh curry house Omar Khayyam is his favourite all time dish, and that he judges a restaurant by the quality of their tarka dall. The final question was what would the curries be like in The Culture, to which Iain replied, "I've never thought. But very good, I'm sure."

In a **Daily Telegraph** (12/08/2010) article about Vogue photographer Tim Walker's new film the final paragraph was intriguing for Banks fans: "Walker's next plan is for the feature film he dreams of making. Currently in his sights is Iain Banks's *The Wasp Factory*. 'It has been in and out of being optioned. I don't know where it's at now. But that would be the dream project,' he says."

Will Self interviewed by the **Edinburgh Evening News** (27/08/2010) commented that he was such a fan of the Forth (Rail) Bridge that he had a "lurking affection for Iain Banks's novel *The Bridge*."

The October issue of **SFX** was #200. It had a section on secrets and Iain's contribution was three steps to coming up with memorable new character names.

#1 Declutching bits of the brain. "You can do it by getting a load of scrabble letters and flinging them on the table! The only trouble is that everybody's name comes out sounding Polish. So it doesn't work perfectly with letters. You have to do it with phonemes or syllables".

#2 Keeping notes so he doesn't repeat himself, and when he starts a new book having a piece of paper with the alphabet written on it. "It's a sort of fetish I have. I like to have at least one character in all my science fiction novels that covers every letter of the alphabet – so there'll always be somebody whose name starts with a Q or an X!"

#3 Going into a trance. "I sit there and try and let the syllables come to me."

Transition was one of the twenty books in the shortlist for the 2010 Tesco Bank Summer Read, which was for books set in Scotland or

written by Scottish authors and were published between March 1, 2009 and March 31, 2010. 554 libraries were involved in getting the public to vote. The winner was announced at an event on September 2, at the Edinburgh Central Library, with the results reported in **The Herald** (03/09/2010) newspaper which had also facilitated the public vote via its website. From the diverse shortlist comedian Frankie Boyle won for *My Shit Life So Far*, taking 14% of the vote. *Transition* was fifth.

Transition didn't make the Hugo shortlist, perhaps being a non-M in the UK it was not considered by some potential nomination casters. The winner of the World Science Fiction Society award for best novel was announced on 5th September at this year's Worldcon, Auusicon4, in Melbourne. Excitingly it was a tie between *The City and the City* and *The Windup Girl*. After the announcement the top twenty-five nominations was published and showed that Iain's book was equal 20th on the list with 24. 62 were needed to get onto the final ballot.

Scotland on Sunday (05/09/2010) reported on the Humanist Society of Scotland's (HSS) 'Good without God' campaign coinciding with the Pope's UK visit included this quote from Iain, "While I think this particular Pope is a fairly unpleasant individual, the entire Roman Catholic hierarchy has been tainted by its reaction to the various abuse scandals, and the whole institution is essentially inane, preposterous and reactionary."

Meanwhile the Scottish **Sunday Times** (05/09/2010) reported that Banks supported another HSS campaign, this one called 'Let Me Choose' and about legalising assisted suicide. He was quoted as saying, "We all have to die, but we don't have to die in pain and misery and deterioration. I take a very strong line on torture. I think it is cruel to leave people alive in those circumstances."

The Guardian (09/09/2010) reported that Banks's name was one of 4000 that had been put together in a couple of days by PD James in her guise as president of the Society of Authors in defence of the payments to authors through the Public Lending Right for users reading their books for free in UK libraries.

Iain Banks – The App

To go with the UK paperback publication of *Transition* on July 1, a free iPhone application was issued that allowed users to get background information about Iain Banks and the book. Billed as the first of its kind it took the paperback edition into the realms of a DVD that has extras. Iain was quoted as saying, "My own app... how deeply cool. This pleases as much as seeing my first novel in print."

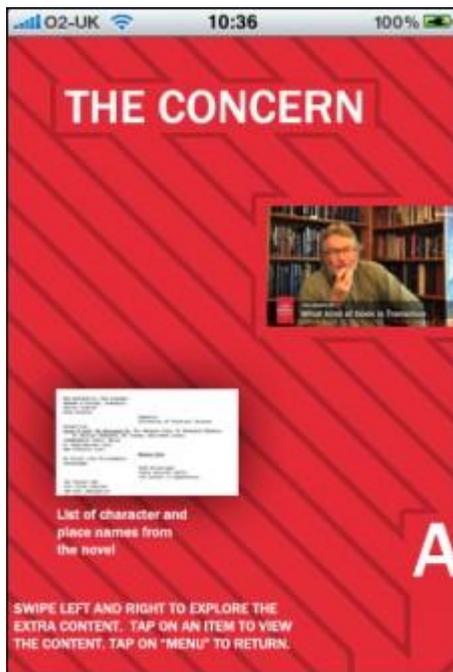
There were two types of content on the App. Firstly unlocked content that was free to all, and secondly content that could be accessed by pointing the camera of an iPhone with the App at a special square barcode (aka a matrix barcode) in the paperback. There was also a way of unlocking that content via looking up a word from the hardback edition so as not to leave early adopters of Banks books out in the cold.



Screenshot from Iain Banks App

The unlocked content was fairly limited, a timeline of Iain Banks, along with an RSS feed of the news from his publisher run website. The locked content was listed in a review as being: 3 page list of characters and places from *Transition*; 15 page synopsis of *Transition*; Video interview about the context of *Transition*; Video interview about the context and timeframe of *Transition*; 2 part

Video interview about “The Concern”; 17 page essay on *The Sphere*; and a Video interview about *Surface Detail*.



Screenshot from Iain Banks App

Press coverage varied. **The Guardian** (28/06/2010) enthused about how quickly the book industry was interacting with digital media, and had quotes from Banks, his publishers and the App developers on why such a move is a good thing. With a complex book like *Transition* the makers, a company called TradeMobile, say that this allows readers to “tap in a page number and get back all the characters, scenes and locations which may be relevant to that page.”

Rob Sharp writing in **The Independent** (01/07/2010) was more circumspect with his article’s subheading asking, “is it the end for serious book culture or a leap forward for literature?” He linked his discussion to the 2008 article by Nicholas Carr entitled, “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” which, “argues that the compulsive skimming, linking and multi-tasking of internet browsing undermines the deep, immersive focus that has traditionally defined book culture and long-form journalism.” Sharp’s thesis is that if you go to the App to look something up whilst reading the book, “what does this mean for reading? Will it not be easier to be distracted from Banks’s text as you go to the app to scrutinise his research?”

A number of comments directly on the Iain Banks website run by Little, Brown, and also in the forum attached to that website wondered why his publishers were making background content available only to fans with specific Apple hardware to run it on. The content may, or may not, end up on iainbanks.net, the website run by his publishers. There was also some querying of why the App was iPhone only when it could easily run on the iPad or iPod touch. There were also comments about why a lock was necessary in the first place given the highly specific nature of the content.

It is planned that the App will be updated with content in the future and is not just for the specific book *Transition*, replying to comments on iainbanks.net, the webmaster mentioned that content related to *Surface Detail* will be made available in due course. **The Guardian** article did suggest that the App creators were talking to Little, Brown “about extending the application to other handsets”. For some eager Banks fans that cannot come fast enough, for others, who use phones to text and make calls, it will still not make a difference and they will be locked out of what appears to be fascinating background material.

Iain is quoted in **The Guardian** article as saying, “It’s there if you want it – and that’s the beauty of it, it’s an opt-in thing. It’s not being forced down your neck; if you just want the story, you can have it”. Well, there are those that want to opt in, but are wondering why they need have to have an iPhone to do so?



Screenshot from Iain Banks App

Surface Detail

This is a contemporary chronology of the forthcoming Iain M Banks book including publisher's blurb and comments that Iain made when talking about the book before publication. If you don't want to know anything other than the title before you read it then look away now.

January 2010 – Online booksellers and then littlebrown.co.uk move the listed publication date from September 2010 to February 2011.

Late January 2010 – In response to a query for **Banksoniain** #15 Iain revealed the title of the book and said that he was about a third of the way through it.

March 2010 – The Fall 2010 / Winter 2011 catalogue for the US side of Little, Brown and Company was posted on the hachettebookgroup.com website. It included a listing for *Surface Detail*. The blurb said:

“It starts with a young woman being murdered.

Miraculously, a secret deal means she lives again within the Culture. Now, she vows to return and kill her own murderer.

Meanwhile, a war in heaven is brewing. Or rather a war between the Heavens.

Heavens are the network of uploaded consciousnesses—a cyber life after death. But where there are Heavens, Hells soon follow. Wars between these realms are formal digital affairs, but now there are rumours of secret factories building warships and all signs point to the factions of the long-dead and digitized.

One man holds the key to making this war manifest in the Real. And a young woman wants her revenge on him.”

The catalogue also included a cover illustration, but beneath it were the words “COVER NOT FINAL”, and it bore no relation, apart from author and title, to the covers that were revealed in June.

03/04/2010 – Iain was one of the Guests of Honour at the 61st British National Science Fiction Convention and talked about the book in a number of programme items. In his Guest of Honour interview with Jane Killick he said that he finished the first draft “last week” and wrote about 17,000 words a week on average

in the writing phase of the book. He also said that he had not known about the publication date being put back until he had read **Banksoniain** #15. His description was similar to the blurb in the US catalogue: the big story is about the use of soul-keeper technology to keep the consciousness going after death – “a better version of World of Warcraft plus the Sims”. Some civilisations have hells, which The Culture regards as morally wrong, “being very much down on torture in any form. At the same time there is a revenge story.”

The next day in a panel item with his old friend Ken MacLeod he described the book as “big and bumptious” and needed no research. In a conversation with him before the Whisky tasting Banks said he did not read from the book as it was too fresh and a number of things might change during the editing process. Iain also revealed that a character from a previous Culture novel might appear.

Early May 2010 – Released date moved back to 2010. After finding out about the change of date to February 2011 just before Easter, Iain commented at Eastercon that that was when he was expecting to write his next book. After setting his agent onto the publishers a new date was announced, 7th October 2010. This announcement was accompanied by an expanded and more detailed blurb on the Little, Brown website:

“It begins in the realm of the Real, where matter still matters. It begins with a murder. And it will not end until the Culture has gone to war with death itself.

Lededje Y'breq is one of the Intagliated, her marked body bearing witness to a family shame, her life belonging to a man whose lust for power is without limit. Prepared to risk everything for her freedom, her release, when it comes, is at a price, and to put things right she will need the help of the Culture.

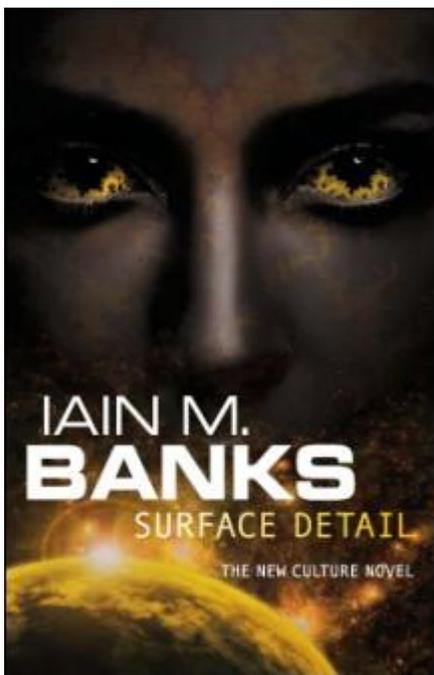
Benevolent, enlightened and almost infinitely resourceful though it may be, the Culture can only do so much for any individual. With the assistance of one of its most powerful - and arguably deranged - warships, Lededje finds herself heading into a combat zone not even sure which side the Culture is really on. A war - brutal, far-reaching - is already raging within the digital realms that store the souls of

the dead, and it's about to erupt into reality. It started in the realm of the Real and that is where it will end. It will touch countless lives and affect entire civilizations, but at the centre of it all is a young woman whose need for revenge masks another motive altogether.”

07/05/2010 – Ullapool Book Festival. Iain treated the audience to a reading from the book. The **Scotland on Sunday** (16/05/2010) report on the festival called the book *Surface Tensions*, and said that Banks “reduced the audience to hysterics, particularly when he tested his microphone with the words ‘just some bigoted woman’.”

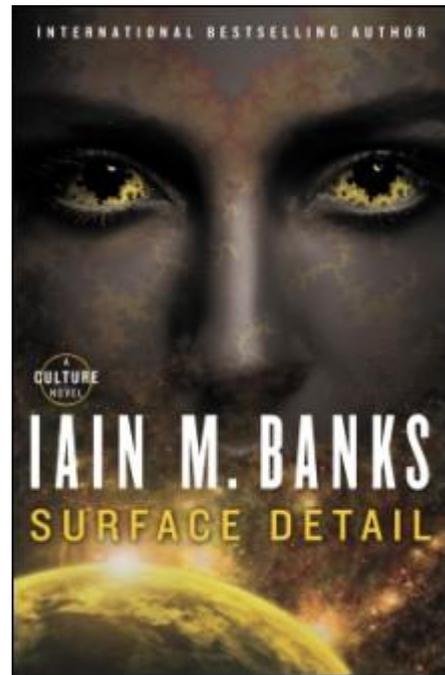
07/06/2010 – Radio Prague Interview. When asked about what he is working on at the moment Iain says he has just finished the second draft of his latest work, and described it as “full on space operatic science fiction, back to the space ships and sarcastic machines and so on.” Adding that there was just the copyediting to do.

23/06/2010 – Cover Launch. Little Brown press release for the cover of the book, with a few more pieces of information: The title “refers to a number of things, not least one of the principal characters, who is covered, externally and internally, with congenitally administered tattoos.”



UK Cover

The cover is by Lauren Panepinto who is the Creative Director for Orbit Books and Yen Press in the United States.



US Cover

01/07/2010 – The Iain Banks App. A video about *Surface Detail* is included on the iPhone App released to coincide with the UK paperback launch of *Transition*. In the video Iain says the book is his longest so far, around 200,000 words, about ten percent more than *Consider Phlebas*.

Early July 2010 – On the strength of pre-orders on Amazon, *Surface Detail*, made it to #1 in the company's UK Science Fiction chart, up against books that have already been published.

Late July 2010 – Uncorrected proofs start to go out, i.e. mentioned by a couple of bloggers and tweeters. They are numbered and have an extra cover that is completely black and is an embossed version of the UK cover shown. They literally have surface detail.

16/08/2010 – Edinburgh Book Festival. One blog report states it “is set 800 years after the last Culture novel, and there have been Big Changes in the Culture. There are some new agencies, and this has led to inter-agency turf wars.” There was also mention of a Culture ship called, ‘Falling Outside the Normal Moral Constraints’.

Banks on Tour 2010

The 61st British National Science Fiction Convention was held over the Easter weekend, as it is each year, hence being more commonly known as Eastercon. Iain was one of the Guests of Honour at the 2010, which was given the name Odyssey by its organisers. Iain had his big interview in the main hall, which was video recorded but this has not been made available yet. He was on a double-headed panel with his old school friend and fellow science fiction writer Ken MacLeod, and a panel talking about dialect in science fiction. There was also a whisky tasting – you had to queue for a special pass early in the morning – organised in his honour. A couple of programme items concerning, but not involving, the man himself, also took place.

The Guest of Honour interview began discussing Iain's early works that did not get published, and his writing process before getting onto *Surface Detail* [see p#6]. An interesting tidbit was that Iain has plenty of notes left over from his last book so is confident that he has enough Culture ideas for at least another novel and probably more, adding that it is such a vast canvas he just has to zoom in on a particular area for a new book. In the questioning he was asked if he would write another book in the universe of *The Algebraist*. Iain said he had lots of background material but needed a big idea for a story and then joked about the Dwellers not letting others use the wormholes. He was also asked about his non-linear storytelling style and what it brought to his novels. "Confusion" was the one word answer, before he added that having multiple character sets can provide narrative drive, allowing the author to jump cut from scene to scene leaving the reader to fill in the gaps. The questioner persevered saying that Banks never said '1000 years earlier' at the start of a chapter and the author replied that a little confusion was good for the brain.

'Approaches to Writing' began with Ken MacLeod describing what he thought Iain's was, saying that Iain had an "eagle eye" and mapped everything out beforehand and so had a GPS telling him exactly where he was when

he was writing, and contrasted this with Ken's own approach of closing his eyes and running at it fast for ten thousand words and then hitting a wall. Iain's response to this was to say that his propaganda was efficient, and that nowadays he gave himself a little more leeway with his plans being more open ended than they used to be.

Ken also brought up the R word, research, and Iain admitted that he did actually do some but only when it was absolutely necessary. In *Matter* he did some research on waterfalls and archaeology. For *Transition* he went to Venice, and claimed it against tax. For *Canal Dreams* he did a lot of research and let too much into the book, it displeases him that he shows his working to the reader. Ken agreed that you should probably only let 10% of your research into the book, but like advertising, when you are doing it you don't know which 10% it will be. Iain chimed in saying it is about having the confidence to write about what you don't know.

Ken then related a story about recently being asked about his typical working day saying how he discussed a "good day" when he only wasted the first two hours on the Internet. He then asked Iain about his work computer that is not connected to the Internet and Iain answered that was so "no one could nick his brilliant novel". Iain actually has two computers in his study, one connected to the Internet and one not. He revealed that his doesn't have an email alert but he does answer the phone when he is writing, and suggested to Ken that the time spent on the Internet before writing is rolling his sleeves up. Ken thought this dignified the process a bit much adding that it could be stimulating (at which point there a brief aside for some joking about pornography being their little secret) but it was also a time sink and a source of disinformation as well as information.

The conversation then turned to the online SF community and Ken's blog. Iain said that he didn't do any of this as he didn't need another excuse to spend time at the keyboard, and speculated that he might break in the States if he did, to which Ken agreed. This produced an expletive from Iain who said that he pitied his US publisher's, and that he had had a few,

because he didn't want to go there and do book tours. Ken then asked Iain why he stopped writing short stories, and Iain replied "miserliness". Admitting the last one was probably in 1987 he said that he has the ideas but uses them in novels when he can get more use out of them, and that his tendency to waffle does not lend itself to short works. During questions from the audience the origins of *The Culture* were touched on. Ken said that Iain worked it all out from first principles, and Iain said that he started at school and Ken helped.

At the start of the whisky panel Iain said the *Raw Spirit* was the book that he liked doing the research for and that he was hoping for a coffee table edition or TV series to revisit the topic. During the tasting of six types of whisky the conversations wandered and Iain talked about his cars, missing the M5 most he has splashed out on a soft-top mini. I am afraid the quality of my note taking declined over the course of the tasting. We drank six different ones from light to heavily peaty, one of which in my opinion was undrinkable, and I passed straight behind me. At the end of official tasting one of the audience brought out a bottle of English whisky. This was only three years old, the legal minimum age for something to be called a whisky, as the company had only been set up recently. Iain declared that the panel had been a great disappointment because, "the English make quite good whisky."

The start of the language dialect panel focussed on Iain's work. He said that he used dialect for a number of reasons, including: making the reader work harder, evoking a feeling of strangeness / alienness, and making a short book read longer. He also revealed that the Barbarian from *The Bridge* started being written as a bastardised English that he later changed to Scottish. Banks recognises his character names by their pattern rather than pronouncing them, which annoys John Clute who complains about trying to read them in his reviews. Asked how difficult it was to misspell on purpose Iain said it was surprisingly easy, the hard part was going back to normal. He added that he had given the proofreader of *Feersum Endjinn* a bottle of Champagne for their troubles.

Dr Iain Banks was listed as appearing at the **Oxford Union** on Friday 30 April, and it was necessary to read the description to make sure it was the novelist rather than the archaeologist (see **Banksoniain** #1 p#11). Iain was interviewed for the Oxford University newspaper beforehand, but no reports of this event have come to light.

Iain didn't read at the event at St Albans on Wednesday 16 June. He initially talked about his background saying he came from a working class family with pretensions, but in a good way. Iain revealed a further detail about his mother's career, which is usually listed as professional ice-skater, he said she was a chorus line performer in a travelling ice show. He said his parents made him feel special and loved which is a great start in life but added this meant he had a security problem rather than an insecurity one and would therefore never be a great artist as he hadn't suffered enough. He regards himself as an entertainer. The most traumatic thing that happened to him was moving from the east of Scotland to the west when he was nine, and as they sometime went to visit friends as it was only a ninety minute drive (even before the motorway) it was not much of a trauma. The death of his cousin Bill in the Derbyshire sinking in 1980 was the next trauma. Iain also expounded on his theory about "great art" often being cheap self psycho analysis, and so sometimes worried that what he did was just bollocks, as he writes what he wants to read which is where the twiddly bits and big explosions come from.

He then took questions. Asked about why his mainstream was so difficult to classify, and if he reinvented his style on purpose answering that it was showing off, "pure male preening". He could write to a formula as those sell very well but he does not want to. Even with *The Culture* it is the furniture that is the same and hardly ever the characters. Recent authors he admires are people like Alan Warner and David Mitchell (for *Cloud Atlas*). He is secretly proud of *A Song of Stone* despite the lack of regard others have for it. Asked whether he had a preoccupation with things in the air: kites, towers, airships etc., he said he thought not, but liked his landscapes to be

three-dimensional and this was a way of doing that. Asked about unpublished works ever making an appearance he said not whilst he was alive, but speculated that a University may for completeness want to published what there was after he was dead, and it didn't matter as he wouldn't be around for the reaction.

Iain also reported that the SFX Fannish Inquisition had taken place earlier that day in London. The magazine **SFX** had asked for questions for Iain on its website and will presumably be using the results in the "November" edition published in on September 22 that will preview the October release of *Surface Detail*.

Dr Dr Dr Dr Dr Iain Banks appeared at the English Studies Postgraduate Conference of his old University at Stirling the day after receiving his latest honorary doctorate. The sixth one was from the Open University and was presented at one of their graduation ceremonies in Glasgow. The theme of the Stirling conference was Transgression in Literature and so Iain read the first murder scene from *The Wasp Factory* and took questions. Jude Roberts from the Iain Banks Forum was there and posted a comprehensive report which has been cherry picked.

Asked about his first published novel Iain replied that he did not set out to shock that it was just meant to be black humour, and when he did set out to shock, with *Complicity*, nobody noticed as they were used to him having "developed the literary antibodies". His response to whether he was a Scottish Writer or not, was that he was, obviously, to some extent being Scottish and a writer, but not with a capital S and W. On the spectrum of Scottish Writerness if you include the SF then he's probably somewhere between the middle and the not at all end, excluding the SF puts him the other side of the mid point.

Iain did manage to make it to Prague this June for the Writers' Festival. He made two appearances, one in conversation with Viktor Janiš the translator of the Czech edition of *The Wasp Factory*, and another as part of a panel entitled, Heresy, with Peter Matthiessen and Bahaa Taher and moderator Jan Urban. A signing at the Big Ben Bookshop was also

listed in the programme. The festival website has video of the events: <http://www.pwf.cz>

Iain's reading was preceded with a montage of images from his home country, a number of which included the Queen, something he commented on as he walked onto the stage. If you find the video it starts at about 43:50 and he and Viktor chat for half an hour or so before Iain does a ten minute reading from *The Player of Games*, which is very interesting if you have only heard him read from more recent books.

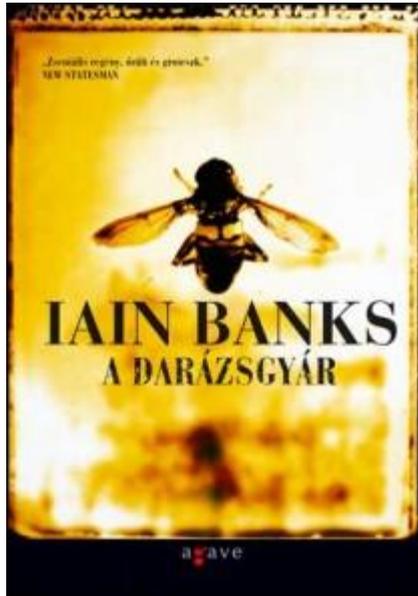
Iain did two events at the 2010 Edinburgh International Book Festival. The first was his usual reading / interview / QA which took place on Monday 16 August Kenneth Scott's report was posted on edinburghguide.com and noted that Iain was introduced by host Al Senter as the "Sage of North Queensferry". The pair discussed *Transition*, and also Iain's anger at various political situations around the work, mainly in the Middle East. Another blogger, Rebekah, provided some bullet points: "Book he had most fun writing was *Dead Air* - easy because it was ranting. Book he wrote most quickly was *Player of Games* - first draft took 3 weeks. Book he's most proud of is *The Bridge*."

The second was a panel discussion called, 'Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger? From Science Fiction to Reality: The Human being In Transition' on Saturday 28 August, where Iain appeared with scientists Kevin Warwick and Steve Yearley. The **Caledonian Mercury** (31/08/2010) described it thus: "The session on transhuman improvement felt at times like a cross between that scene in the new Star Trek movie – the one where Spock scans the history of the known universe in his learning pod – and a Monty Python gig (that bit thanks to Iain M Banks)." A report in **Scotland on Sunday** (05/09/2010) described the debate as splendid, declaring that "the best moment was during the discussion of life extension technologies, where Iain Banks declared he was worried it would only be for the rich. 'Say what you like about Rupert Murdoch or Margaret Thatcher, but at least, at the moment, they're going to die some day,' he opined."

Banks in Translation

Hungarian

The publishing company Agave Könyvek started publishing Iain's books in 2003. They have concentrated on the science fiction side of things with the only non M book so far being *A Darázsgyár* (The Wasp Factory) in late 2006.



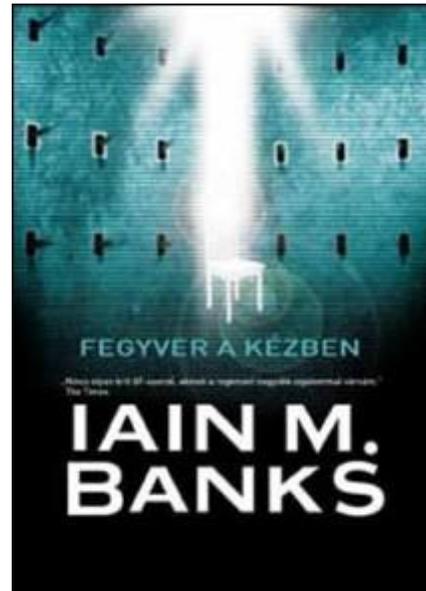
Cover by Viki Sigmond

An interesting feature of foreign language editions is that the translator occasionally sees fit to add in footnotes to explain cultural references. *A Darázsgyár* has seven such notes that explain things such as John Peel and *Myra Breckinridge*.

The first Hungarian Iain M Banks book to be published was *A Játékmester* (The Player of Games) in 2003 with the translation by Eszter Torma, who also produced the Hungarian version of *Against a Dark Background*, *Sötét Háttér Előtt* published the next year. Benedek Totth then took up the translator duties, and along with Csaba Olasz produced *Emlékezz Phlebasra* (Consider Phlebas) published in 2005, but managed *Fegyver a Kézben* (Use of Weapons) by himself in 2006. Since then Nóra Gálla has picked up the reins and translated: *Nézz a szélbe* (Look to Windward, 2007), *Holtpont* (Excession, 2007) and latest of all, *A száműző* (The Algebraist, 2009).

Nóra also translated Iain's essay, *A Kulturáról diohejban* (A Few Notes On The

Culture). This was in a book called *Agave 100*, and it celebrated the hundredth book published by the company in the five years since their establishment. The contents was translated short pieces or extracts from fourteen writers including: Philip K Dick, Neil Gaiman Dashiell Hammett, and Susannah Clarke. Iain's "Culture" name in Hungarian is Nap-Földi Iain Hetet-havat Banks von North Queensferry.



Cover by Rajmund Kuszko

Banks's Backlist

Friedrich Mader has translated *Transition* for the German publisher Heyne and it was published in May under the title, *Welten*. ISBN: 978-3-453-52710-2

Materia, the Spanish edition of *Matter* was published by La Factoría de Ideas with the translation by Marta García Martínez. The UK/US art by Debra Lill was localised for the cover. ISBN: 978-84-9800-590-5

A second French edition of *Against a Dark Background* has appeared via Pocket reissuing Bernard Sigaud's translation of *La Plage de Verre* originally done in 2006 for Fleuve Noir. ISBN: 978-2-266-20380-7

Open Books published 대수 학자, The Algebraist, in two volumes. ISBNs 978-89-329-1050-5 and 978-89-329-1051-2. The company also has the Korean rights to The Player of Games and The Business.

Banksoniain Calendar

2010

19:30, Wednesday, 15 September

Stirling Tollbooth. An Evening with Iain Banks chaired by Professor Rory Watson.
<http://www.stirling.gov.uk/tolbooth/>

16:30, Saturday, 2 October

Wigtown Book Festival.
<http://www.wigtownbookfestival.com>

19:30, Wednesday, 6 October

The Roundhouse, London. Iain does a reading and Q&A in the Studio Theatre.
<http://roundhouse.org.uk/whats-on/productions/iain-m-banks>

Thursday, 7 October

Surface Detail - **Official UK Publication Date**

18:00, Thursday, 7 October

Forbidden Planet, London. A signing at the famous bookshop.
<http://forbiddenplanet.com/events/2010/10/07/iain-m-banks-signing-surface-detail/>

18:00, Tuesday, 12 October

Waterstone's West End, Edinburgh. Talk and signing in association with Waterstone's.
<http://www.waterstones.com>

19:00, Thursday, 14 October

Waterstone's Deansgate, Manchester. Talk and signing in association with Waterstone's.
<http://www.waterstones.com>

19:30, Friday, 15 October

Morley Literature Festival, Leeds.
<http://www.morleyliteraturefestival.co.uk/events/iain-m-banks/>

18:30, Saturday, 16 October

Cheltenham Literary Festival. A signing also expected in the bookselling tent.
<http://cheltenhamfestivals.com/literature-2010/iain-m-banks/>

16:00, Sunday, 17 October

Cheltenham Literary Festival. British Science Fiction panel along with Gwyneth Jones, Michael Moorcock and China Miéville.
<http://cheltenhamfestivals.com/literature-2010/iain-m-banks-gwyneth-jones-michael-moorcock-and-china-mierville-british-science-fiction/>

19:30 Monday, 18 October

Salisbury Arts Centre. Talk and signing in association with Waterstone's.
<http://www.waterstones.com>

19:30, Wednesday, 20 October

Chepstow Library. A talk and signing in association with The Chepstow Bookshop.
<http://chepstowbooks.webplus.net/page4.html>

18:30 Thursday, 21 October

De La Warr Pavillion, Bexhill. Talk and signing in association with City Books.
<http://www.city-books.co.uk/events.html#banks>

19:45, Monday, 1 November

The Paragon, Bath. Talk and signing in association with Topping Books.
<http://www.toppingbooks.co.uk/events/bath/iain-m-banks/>

19:30, Tuesday, 2 November

Ely. Talk and signing in association with Topping Books.
<http://www.toppingbooks.co.uk/events/ely/iain-m-banks-2/>

19:30, Wednesday, 3 November

Assembly House, Norwich. Talk and signing in association with Waterstone's.
<http://www.waterstones.com>

Friday - Sunday, 12-14 November

Novacon 40, at Nottingham Park Inn, has Iain as Guest of Honour. As usual there will be a limited-edition souvenir chapbook by the guest. Iain was going to use a section that was cut from *Transition*, but this ended up on the iPhone App, so we may have something new.
<http://www.novacon.org.uk/>

N.B. Other Iain (M.) Banks events may be available. Any calendar updates will appear in our publically available Google Calendar:
<http://www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=banksoniain%40gmail.com>

Do confirm event details and Iain's attendance with organisers before travelling.

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

If you have any corrections, comments, contributions, or want a paper copy then email: banksoniain@gmail.com

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