

# Surface Detail (Culture)

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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 center of it all is a young woman whose need for revenge masks another motive altogether.

SURFACE DETAIL is Iain M. Banks' new Culture novel, a breathtaking achievement from a writer whose body of work is without parallel in the modern history of science fiction. Iain Banks came to controversial public notice with the publication of his first novel, *The Wasp Factory*, in 1984. *Consider Phlebas*, his first science fiction novel, was published under the name Iain M. Banks in 1987. He is now widely acclaimed as one of the most powerful, innovative and exciting writers of his generation. Beginning with *Consider Phlebas* (1987), Banks' Culture novels have showcased his prodigious talent for world building, featuring extravagant vistas of superadvanced technological civilizations and their virtual-reality playgrounds. In the ninth outsize installment, Banks juggles multiple plot threads on a sweeping canvas, embracing Culture-based artificial worlds known as orbitals, supremely powerful artificial intelligences, and virtual heavens and hells. One story line follows the murder and AI-facilitated resurrection of tattooed sex slave Lededje Y'breq, who is willingly conscripted in a plan to exact revenge on her politician killer and shift the balance of power between embattled Culture factions. Another follows the efforts of two quadruped creatures called Pavuleans to pry their way out of a secret virtual hell and back into the Real, where wealthy moguls are gearing up for war among the digital realms. While each Culture novel can be read alone, newcomers are advised to breathe deeply before diving in, as Banks never lets up in a dizzying array of characters, mind-bending ideas, and dazzling action. --Carl Hays

#### Other Books

*Science Fiction and Narrative Form*, Locating science fiction as its own distinct and increasingly important narrative form, this book explores how the genre challenges pervasive perceptions of society as presented in the conventional modern novel. Inspired by, and building upon, Georg Lukács's criticism of the orthodox novel for its depiction of life as alienating and disjointed, Milner, Murphy and Roberts posit that science fiction steps beyond this contemporary form to be a more constructive literature, better able to conceive of society as complete, integrated and well-rounded. Taking stock of three kinds

of science fiction which lie outside the scope of the modern novel - theological or ontological science fiction, the science fiction of future history and epic science fiction - this book demonstrates science fiction's unique capacity to encapsulate the whole world, persons and events, things and objects in a glance, and address the motive behind the wish for a meaningful totality. With reference to a vast array of works by authors such as Michel Houellebecq, Elias Canetti, Isaac Asimov, Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, Aldous Huxley, Marge Piercy, Iain M. Banks, Margaret Atwood, Ursula K. Le Guin, William Gibson, Dirk C. Fleck, Philip K. Dick, George Orwell and Kazuo Ishiguro, this book offers a compelling argument for rethinking the position and potential of the science fiction novel and to challenge the way we perceive our culture.

Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ . Banks, I. M. (1996a), *Excession*, London: Orbit. Banks, I. M. (1996b), 'A Quick Chat with Iain M. Banks', *Richmond Review*. Accessed 24 November 2011. <http://archive.is/R4fbD>. Banks, I. M. (2000), *Look to Windward*, London: Orbit."