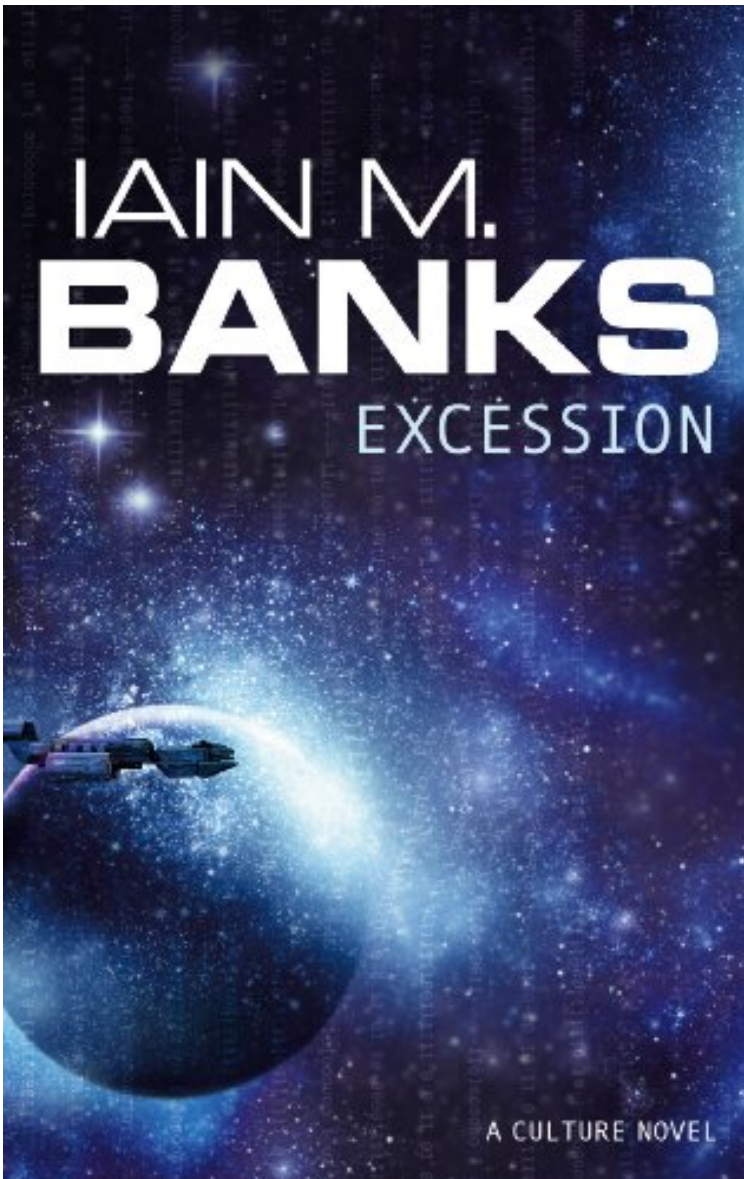


[Read ebook] File size: 53.Mb

# Excession



*Par Iain M. Banks*  
*ePub | \*DOC | audiobook | ebooks |*  
*Download PDF*

Dtails sur le produit Rang parmi les ventes : #99972 dans eBooksPubli le: 2008-09-04Sorti le: 2008-09-04Format: Ebook Kindle

[Read ebook] Excession

**Par Iain M. Banks : Excession** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Excession:

Download

Read Online

## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurTwo and a half millennia ago, the artifact appeared in a remote corner of space, beside a trillion-year-old dying sun from a different universe. It was a perfect black-body sphere, and it did nothing.

Then it disappeared. Now it is back.'Banks is a phenomenon ... wildly successful, fearlessly creative'

William Gibson'Thrilling, affecting and comic ... probably the finest science fiction he has written to date'

New Scientist'Banks has rewritten the libretto for the whole space-opera genre' The TimesExtraitThe ship shuddered; the few remaining lights flickered, dimmed and went out. The alarms dopplered down to silence.

A series of sharp impacts registered through the companionway shell walls with resonations in the craft's

secondary and primary structure. The atmosphere pulsed with impact echoes; a breeze picked up, then disappeared. The shifting air brought with it a smell of burning and vaporization; aluminium, polymers associated with carbon fibre and diamond film, superconductor cabling. Somewhere, the drone Sisela Ytheleus could hear a human, shouting; then, radiating wildly over the electromagnetic bands came a voice signal similar to that carried by the air. It became garbled almost immediately, then degraded quickly into meaningless static. The human shout changed to a scream, then the EM signal cut off; so did the sound. Pulses of radiation blasted in from various directions, virtually information-free. The ship's inertial field wobbled uncertainly, then drew steady and settled again. A shell of neutrinos swept through the space around the companionway. Noises faded. EM signatures murmured to silence; the ship's engines and main life support systems were off-line. The whole EM spectrum was empty of meaning. Probably the battle had now switched to the ship's AI core and back-up photonic nuclei. Then a pulse of energy shot through a multi-purpose cable buried in the wall behind, oscillating wildly then settling back to a steady, utterly unrecognisable pattern. An internal camera patch on a structural beam nearby awakened and started scanning. It can't be over that quickly, can it? Hiding in the darkness, the drone suspected it was already too late. It was supposed to wait until the attack had reached a plateau phase and the aggressor thought that it was just a matter of mopping up the last dregs of opposition before it made its move, but the attack had been too sudden, too extreme, too capable. The plans the ship had made, of which it was such an important part, could only anticipate so much, only allow for so proportionally greater a technical capability on the part of the attacker. Beyond a certain point, there was simply nothing you could do; there was no brilliant plan you could draw up or cunning stratagem you could employ that would not seem laughably simple and unsophisticated to a profoundly more developed enemy. In this instance they were not perhaps quite at the juncture where resistance became genuinely without point, but--from the ease with which the Elencher ship was being taken over--they were not that far away from it, either. Remain calm, the machine told itself. Look at the overview; place this and yourself in context. You are prepared, you are hardened, you are proof. You will do all that you can to survive as you are or at the very least to prevail. There is a plan to be put into effect here. Play your part with skill, courage and honour and no ill will be thought of you by those who survive and succeed. The Elench had spent many thousands of years pitting themselves against every kind of technology and every type of civilisational artifact the vast spaces of the greater galaxy could provide, seeking always to understand rather than to overpower, to be changed rather than to enforce change upon others, to incorporate and to share rather than to infect and impose, and in that cause, and with that relatively unmenacing modes operandi, had become perhaps more adept than any--with the possible exception of the mainstream culture's semi-military emissaries known as the Contact Section--at resisting outright attack without seeming to threaten it; but for all that the galaxy had been penetrated by so many different explorers in all obvious primary directions to every periphery however distant, enormous volumes of that encompassing arena remained effectively unexplored by the current crop of in-play civilizations, including the Elench (quite how utterly that region, and beyond, was comprehended by the elder species, or even whether they really cared about it at all was simply unknown). And in those swallowingly vast volumes, amongst those spaces between the spaces between the stars, around suns, dwarfs, nebulae and holes it had been determined from some distance were of no immediate interest or threat, it was of course always possible that some danger waited, some peril lurked, comparatively small measured against the physical scale of the galaxy's present active cultures, but capable--through a developmental peculiarity or as a result of some form of temporal limbo or exclusionary dormancy--of challenging and besting even a representative of a society as technologically advanced and contactually experienced as the Elench. The drone felt calm, thinking as coldly and detachedly as it could for those few moments on the background to its current predicament. It was prepared, it was ready, and it was no ordinary machine; it was at the cutting edge of its civilisation's technology, designed to evade detection by the most sophisticated instruments, to survive in almost unimaginably hostile conditions, to take on virtually any opponent and to suffer practically any damage in concentric stages of resistance. That its ship, its own manufacturer, the one entity that probably knew it better than it knew itself, was apparently being at this moment corrupted, seduced, taken over, must not affect its judgement or its confidence. The displacer, it thought. All I've got to do is get near the Displace Pod, that's all... Then it felt its body scanned by a point source located near the ship's AI core, and knew its time had come. The attack was as elegant as it was ferocious and the take-over abrupt almost to the point of instantaneity, the battle-memes of the invading alien consciousness aided by the thought processes and shared knowledge of the by now obviously completely overwhelmed ship. With no interval to provide a

margin for error at all, the drone shunted its personality from its own AI core to its back-up picofoam complex and at the same time readied the signal cascade that would transfer its most important concepts, programs and instructions first to electronic nanocircuitry, then to an atomechanical substrate and finally--absolutely as a last resort--to a crude little (though at several cubic centimetres also wastefully large) semi-biological brain. The drone shut off and shut down what had been its true mind, the only place it had ever really existed in all its life, and let whatever pattern of consciousness had taken root there perish for lack of energy, its collapsing consciousness impinging on the machine's new mind as a faint, informationless exhalation of neutrinos. The drone was already moving; out from its body-niche in the wall and into the companionway space. It accelerated along the corridor, sensing the gaze of the ceiling-beam camera patch following it. Fields of radiation swept over the drone's militarised body, caressing, probing, penetrating. An inspection hatch burst open in the companionway just ahead of the drone and something exploded out of it; cables burst free, filling to overflowing with electrical power. The drone zoomed then swooped; a discharge of electricity crackled across the air immediately above the machine and blew a hole in the far wall; the drone twisted through the wreckage and powered down the corridor, turning flat to its direction of travel and extending a disc-field through the air to brake for a corner, then slamming off the far wall and accelerating up another companionway. It was one of the full cross-axis corridors, and so long; the drone quickly reached the speed of sound in the human-breathable atmosphere; an emergency door slammed shut behind it a full second after it had passed. A space suit shot upwards out of a descending vertical tubeway near the end of the companionway, crumpled to a stop, then reared up and stumbled out to intercept the machine. The drone had already scanned the suit and knew the suit was empty and unarmed; it went straight through it, leaving it flapping halved against floor and ceiling like a collapsed balloon. The drone threw another disc of field around itself to match the companionway's diameter and rode almost to a stop on a piston of compressed air, then darted round the next corner and accelerated again. A human figure inside a space suit lay half-way up the next corridor, which was pressurising rapidly with a distant roar of gas. Smoke was filling the companionway in the distance, then it ignited and the mixture of gases exploded down the tube. The smoke was transparent to the drone and far too cool to do it any harm, but the thickening atmosphere was going to slow it up, which was doubtless exactly the idea. The drone scanned the human and the suit as best it could as it tore up the smoke-filled corridor towards it. It knew the person in the suit well; he had been on the ship for five years. The suit was without weaponry, its systems quiet but doubtless already taken over; the man was in shock and under fierce chemical sedation from the suit's medical unit. As the drone approached the suit it raised one arm towards the fleeing machine. To a human the arm would have appeared to move almost impossibly quickly, flicking up at the machine, but to the drone the gesture looked languid, almost leisurely; surely this could not be all the threat the suit was capable of--The drone had only the briefest warning of the suit's holstered gun exploding; until that instant the gun hadn't even been apparent to the machine's senses, shielded somehow. There was no time to stop, no opportunity to use its own EM effector on the gun's controls to prevent it from overloading, nowhere to take cover, and--in the thick mist of gases flooding the corridor--no way of accelerating beyond the danger. At the same moment, the ship's inertial field fluctuated again, and flipped a quarter-turn; suddenly down was directly behind the drone, and the field strength doubled, then redoubled. The gun exploded, tearing the suit and the human it contained apart. *Revue de presse* "Banks is a phenomenon...wildly successful, fearlessly creative."--William Gibson