

my culture fix

The broadcaster lets us into her cultural life

Joan Bakewell



My favourite author or book

I have many, but Sebastian Barry writes lyrical prose telling tales of sadness and pity often from the heart of Ireland's Troubles. The latest, *A Thousand Moons*, however, is set in post Civil War America. Another favourite is Gabriel García Márquez, a pioneer of magical realism. Who can resist the first line of *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*: "On the day they were going to kill him, Santiago Nasar got up at 5.30 in the morning to wait for the boat the bishop was coming on." He's good at titles too: *Love in the Time of Cholera*, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Every one a winner!

The book I'm reading

Prodigal by Michael Waterhouse, a first

novel of enormous power, telling the story of a hostage in Afghanistan and his relationship with family back home. The family are steeped in music and the sound of Vivaldi and Bach echoes through the appalling conditions their son is enduring. Inspirational.

The book I wish I had written

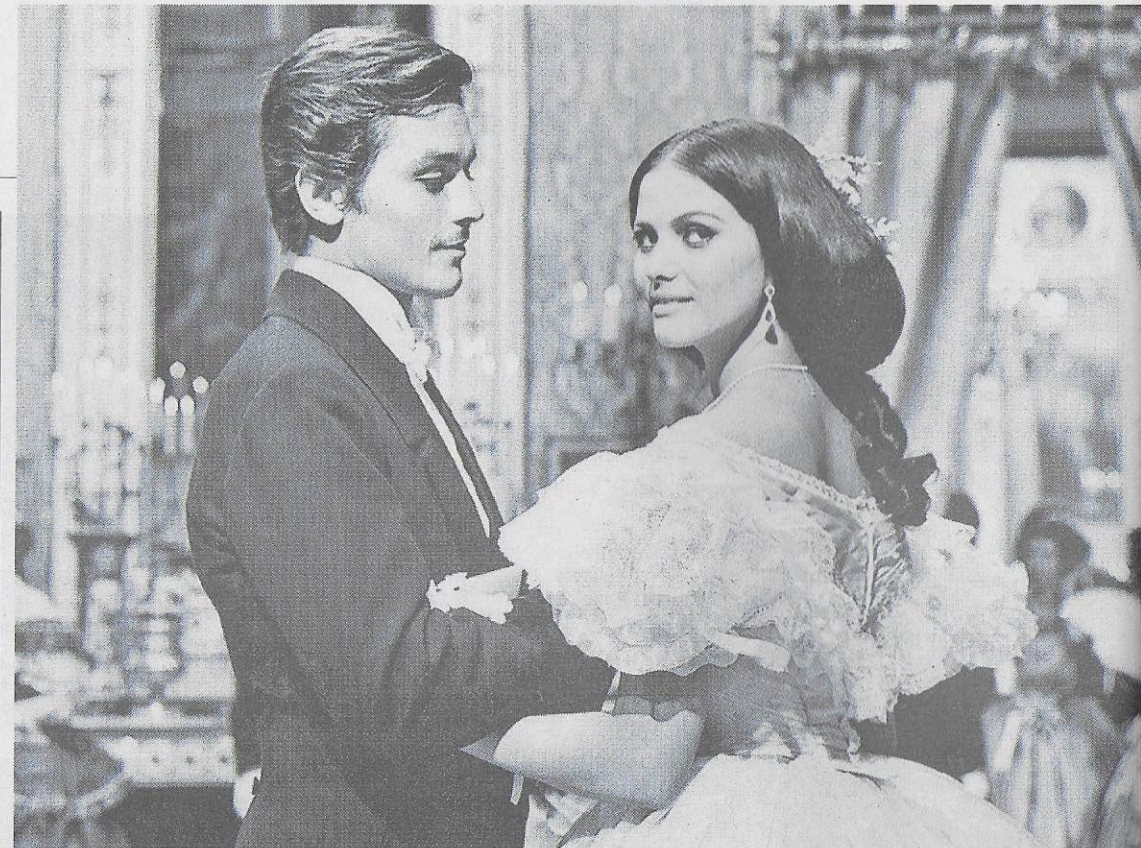
Any of Jane Austen's novels. How does she squeeze such wit and insight from such mundane lives? My favourite changes from year to year; at the moment I'm most fond of *Mansfield Park*, although I struggle to like the rather smug heroine Fanny Price.

The book I couldn't finish

Moby-Dick. I started and all went well, lots of vigorous descriptions of a totally strange world... Then I got stuck in all the digressions about whaling.

The book I am ashamed I haven't read

Don Quixote by Cervantes. I simply don't

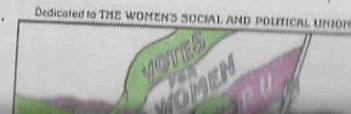


fancy a mad old gent traipsing around the countryside with a fat lackey in tow. However, I like Terry Gilliam's film, and followed it through his trials and tribulations.

LOST WORLD Alain Delon and Claudia Cardinale in the 1963 film of *The Leopard*. Below: the music of Ethel Smyth and Dolly Parton

My favourite film

The Leopard, adapted in 1963 from the book by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, directed by Luchino Visconti with



The lyric I wish I'd written

The whole of Bob Dylan's *Blowin' in the Wind*. He captured the mood of his generation. It came as a shock to him when he won the Nobel prize for literature, but not to me. He's a fine poet.

The poem that saved me

I Am the Great Sun by Charles