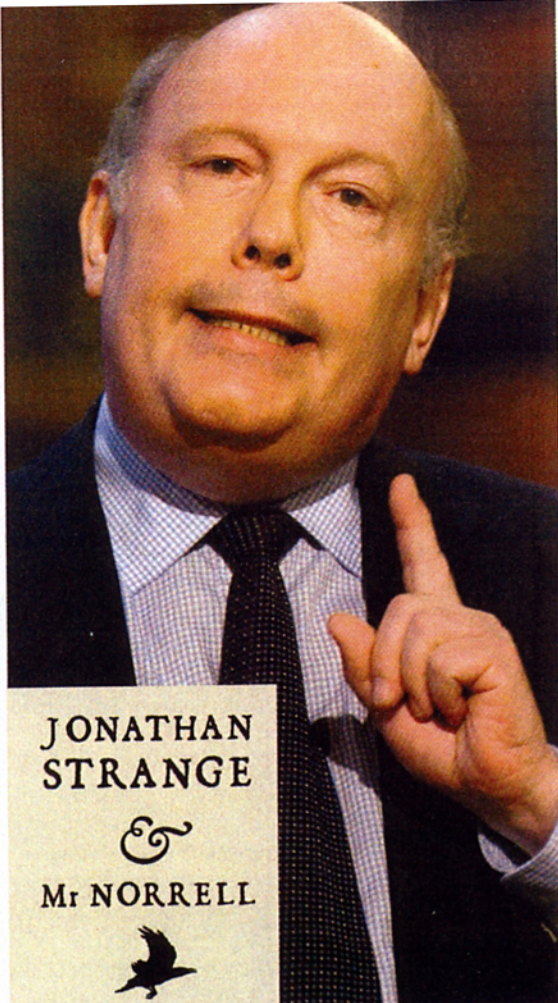


YOU MUST HAVE READ MY MIND

Take their word for it – the literati know which books to give this year, says Olivia Cole



JONATHAN STRANGE

Mr NORRELL



by
Susanna Clarke

AA GILL

Cressida Connolly's story of the Garman sisters, **The Rare and the Beautiful**, made me give it to everyone I know and think: if they don't like it, I don't think I like them. **Mountains of the Mind**, by Robert Macfarlane, is about man's obsession with mountains. I'm so not into mountains but I am into enthusiasm – and whether someone's cooking for you or climbing you, the best thing they can have is enthusiasm.

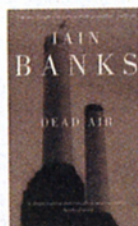
JULIAN FELLOWES

To be honest, my topic for a gathering, my page-turner, my mind-improver, my talking point and my train reading are all really one and the same book: **Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell** by Susanna Clarke, a novel of magic for adults, set in the Regency – reinvented, of course, through Miss Clarke's eyes. It's long but, for this reader, it couldn't be too long. I am literally unable to put it down. I might also mention Angela Huth's new anthology of eulogies, **Well-Remembered Friends**. It is a wonderful, if rather tear-inducing, volume. to dip into.



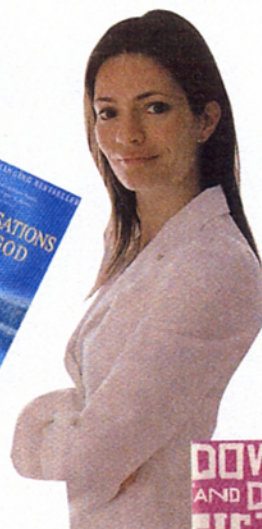
THE MARQUESS OF WORCESTER

In **Dead Air** Iain Banks is on territory to which he is ideally suited, chronicling the disasters that befall a left-leaning shock-jock among the Blairite establishment. The best factual book I have read this year is Niall Ferguson's **Empire**, which not only provides a fascinating history of the British Empire but also an insight from a historical perspective into the actions of present-day America.



CHRISTIAN SLATER

Conversations with God by Neale Donald Walsch taught me that the fastest way to know who you are is to know who you're not.



PLUM SYKES

Moi will be giving everyone **Snobs** by Julian Fellowes.

Down and Dirty Pictures: Miramax, Sundance, and the Rise of Independent Film by Peter Biskind is a fabulous gift. A cracking good page-turner is **The Veiled Kingdom** by Carmen bin Ladin. **Us** by Richard Mason is excellent, as is **The Devil in the White City** by Erik Larson. And all girlfriends will be given **Love and Friendship**, a collection of short stories by Jane Austen that haven't been as widely read as the novels.



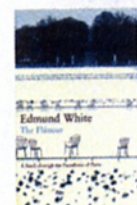
ALANNAH WESTON

A great book to cheer up a dull party is **Sextrology** by Starsky and Cox, which does exactly what it says on the tin. People either squirm with delight or mortification when they hear their sign's predilections. My fashionista friends will get **Tom Ford**. The best book I've read this year is Jon McGregor's **If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things**. I'm giving it to everyone I know in the movie business because I think it would make an amazing film.



VIOLET FRASER

Anything by Edmund White – **The Flaneur: A Stroll**



through the Paradoxes of Paris is wonderful. For something mind-improving, **Napoleon and Josephine: An Improbable Marriage** by Evangeline Bruce. ▷

People squirm with delight or mortification when they hear their sign's predilections

