

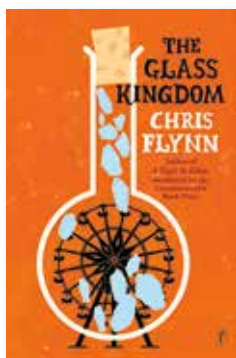
WORDS PAUL ROBINSON



ESPIONAGE

NIGHT HERON

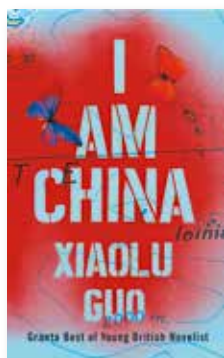
Adam Brookes (Sphere, \$30) After two decades banged up in a Chinese labour camp for selling state military secrets, Li Huasheng (code name Peanut) is on the run and looking to resume his former career as a mole for MI6. As he bumbles about spilling the beans on PLA missile program problems, his UK spymasters task a journalist with aiding his escape. Striding confidently into Le Carré country, Brookes, a former BBC China correspondent, delivers an impressive first foray into fiction.



RURAL UNDERBELLY

THE GLASS KINGDOM

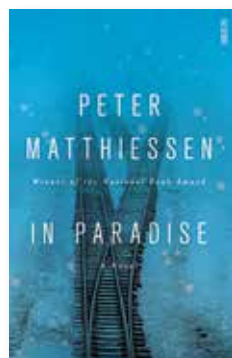
Chris Flynn (Text, \$30) Conning the beery marks who stagger down Sideshow Alley out of their hard-earned is what it's all about for a pair of itinerant carnival workers – one an Afghanistan vet, the other a wannabe rapper who attracts trouble like roadkill does flies. However, the fluffy koalas that some lucky punters walk away with are stuffed with more than cotton, for soldier Ben also runs a mobile meth-dealing business. This is one rollercoaster bucolic frolic through the badlands.



CHINA CRISIS

I AM CHINA

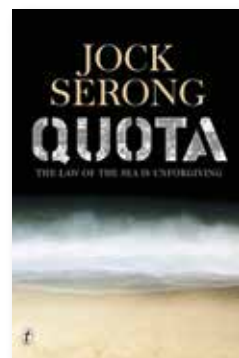
Xiaolu Guo (Random House, \$30) As Iona, a London translator, works her way through a chaotic jumble of letters between Jian, a dissident Chinese musician and Mu, his punk poet girlfriend, it becomes clear she is unravelling a tragic love story. The further she proceeds, the more Iona is caught up in the emotional spiderweb of their lives. Addressing heavy issues such as *Fen Qing* (disenchanted youth) and asylum seekers, this prolific author/filmmaker has created something both poignant and powerful.



SINS OF THE PAST

IN PARADISE

Peter Matthiessen (Scribe, \$28) Literally the last word from the only writer ever to win a National Book Award for both non-fiction (*The Snow Leopard*) and fiction (*Shadow Country*), who died in April. The plot revolves around a middle-aged American academic on a week-long spiritual retreat in the former Nazi death camp of Auschwitz – surely not everyone's cup of Zen. Understandably bleak and wistful, this attempt to comprehend the *über* evil of the Holocaust raises more questions than it answers.



CRIME

QUOTA **Jock Serong**

(Text, \$30) The body of a fisherman is found on an abandoned boat off a small Victorian town, boasting a third eye courtesy of a bullet in his forehead. Rumours are rife. The feral locals appear to be up to their red necks in the illegal abalone trade and drug smuggling – and one of them is a murderer. An almost washed-up lawyer has the job of sorting out the mess for the prosecution. This gritty debut maintains the pace and suspense, but surprisingly, given that the author is also a lawyer, is slightly more convincing *out* of court.

A MINUTE OF YOUR TIME

IAN BURUMA **YEAR ZERO** (Atlantic) *In 1945, the world crawled out of the rubble and chaos of WWII into what was optimistically expected to be a "return to normality". Subsequent events rapidly exposed this as delusion. Europe and Asia were reconstructed, but nothing would ever be the same again. A fascinatingly detailed history of the aftermath of world war.*

Q&A **I wrote this book because...** *I wanted to know what my father's generation lived through and because people tend to forget that even justified wars leave disasters in their wake.* **I wish I'd written...** *Dangerous Liaisons, but since I'm not French, did not live in the 18th century and know few aristocrats, it was never on the cards.* **My favourite turn of phrase is...** *I like "Imprisoned in every fat man, a thin man is wildly signalling to be let out." Cyril Connolly said that. He was a fat man. I am not. I still wish I had said it.*

