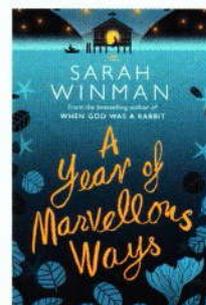
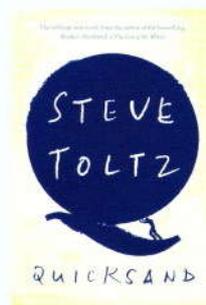
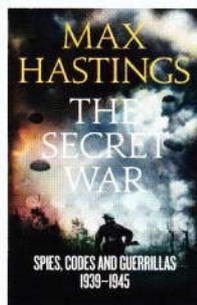
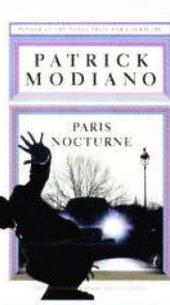
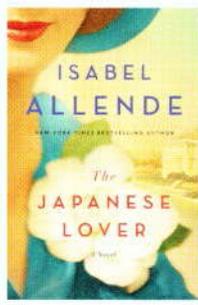
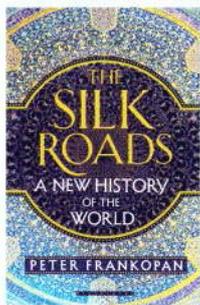


+ REVIEW

international books edited by stacey anyan



THE SILK ROADS PETER FRANKOPAN (ALLEN & UNWIN, \$32.99)

A thousand years ago, Muslim intellectuals were marvelling at Western disdain for science and learning. The so-called “Dark Ages” may have been gloomy and illiterate in London and Paris, but not so in the booming cities of Asia. Furs from Siberia, silks from China, spices from India and horses from the steppes criss-crossed “the ‘stans” in awe-inspiring quantities, pouring a river of silver – not to mention technology, ideas and culture – into cities like Samarkand, Baghdad, Khiva, Merv and Herat. Oxford historian Peter Frankopan has delved into contemporary accounts for a fresh look at an unfairly obscure region. His learned pages are filled with exotic humanity, from the slave-trading Vikings, tattooed from head to toe in dark green, who founded Russia, to the modern-day poppy farmers of Afghanistan. **JENNY NICHOLLS**

THE JAPANESE LOVER ISABEL ALLENDE (SIMON & SCHUSTER, \$39.99)

If you judge a book by its cover, you’d bypass this

one. Which is a shame, because the words that lie within are beautiful. In 1939, as the Nazis push into Poland, young Alma Belasco is sent to live with her wealthy relatives in San Francisco. There she meets and falls in love with Ichimei, the gentle son of the family’s Japanese gardener. Throughout their lives, they reunite often, but can never be together. Decades later, Alma meets care-worker Irina Bazili, whose narrative of loss and separation mirrors her own. Fans of Allende’s *The House of the Spirits* will adore this story that cherry-picks from generations, continents, classes and cultures, but does so with a quiet and magical dignity. **SHARON STEPHENSON**

PARIS NOCTURNE PATRICK MODIANO (TEXT, \$35)

In Place des Pyramides one night, a young man is hit by a car. Is the accident chance – or something more? Unsettled, our nameless narrator searches the arrondissements and avenues of Paris for the strangely familiar woman behind the wheel. As he searches, childhood incidents surface then disappear. Side roads

to seemingly important people become culs-de-sac and the accident – a catalyst for this exploration of memory and identity – becomes almost incidental. The reader is now second-guessing the significance of everything, as off-balance as the narrator, who seems increasingly unreliable. The ending leaves more questions than answers, which seems somehow fitting. Patrick Modiano, winner of the 2014 Nobel Prize for Literature, has produced a slim volume of lyrical, elegant writing, a tale of substantial detail on the nebulous nature of memory. **JULIE COOK**

THE SECRET WAR MAX HASTINGS (HARPER COLLINS, \$39.99)

Required reading for would-be spies everywhere. Sir Max Hastings, historian and former editor of the *Telegraph*, has got his hands on surely the most embarrassing documents of World War II. No side escapes unscathed from an analysis that reads like a stream of icy martini being poured down James Bond’s Savile Row boxers. MI6 had no spy network in place in Europe, partly because it was run by stingy old duffers who thought it

defeatist. English honour was saved by the brilliance of Bletchley – signals intelligence, not agents in the field. Stalin, on the other hand, had incredible spy networks in Europe, but either shot or ignored his agents. A passenger’s demands for her tea set to be rescued from a scuttled ship’s mailroom led a German captain to an envelope packed with British secrets. This was passed to Tokyo, where it certainly bloated Japanese confidence, just before Pearl Harbor. And the biggest Allied secret of the war was nearly revealed by a nameless New Zealander who used the wrong kind of post. Ripping. **JENNY NICHOLLS**

QUICKSAND STEVE TOLTZ (PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE, \$40)

Bad luck stalks Aldo Benjamin. But the unsuccessful serial entrepreneur, delinquent debtor and failed suicider has been lucky, in a way, in his life-long friendship with Liam. A cop, a failed novelist and an enabler, Liam keeps bailing out Aldo, protecting him from some of the consequences. It all sounds bloody bleak – and it is – but it’s also