

# July REVIEWS

BOOKSELLER+PUBLISHER's star rating system gives readers an indication of the quality of the publication being reviewed in its context. Our reviewers have been asked to use the following guidelines to rate the book:

- ★★★★★ an exceptional book of the very highest quality, regardless of genre
- ★★★★ an excellent book
- ★★★ a good book, within its genre
- ★★ a passable example of the genre
- ★ caution advised

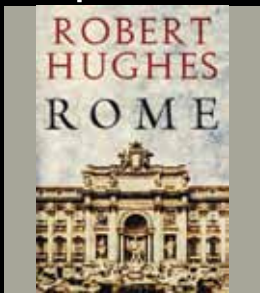
Each issue, **BOOKSELLER+PUBLISHER** asks booksellers and writers to review books due to be published in the following month or thereafter. All books reviewed originate in Australia or New Zealand.

☺ ebooks  
(simultaneous release unless otherwise specified)

🎧 audio

## Top Picks

Among our reviewers' top picks this issue are:



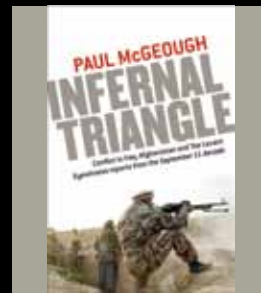
**Rome**  
★★★★★  
Page 26



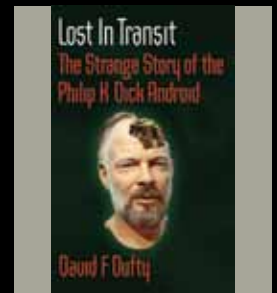
**Berlin Syndrome**  
★★★★★  
Page 27



**Two Greeks**  
★★★★★  
Page 28



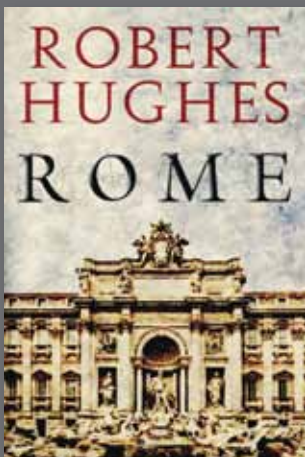
**Infernal Triangle**  
★★★★★  
Page 29



**Lost in Transit**  
★★★★★  
Page 29

'Who should read it? Anyone with any feeling for this magnificent city'—Max Oliver on *Rome*

The top picks in this issue are well travelled, taking readers to Rome, Berlin and the Middle East.



**Rome: A Personal, Visual and Cultural History** (Robert Hughes, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, \$50 hb, ISBN 9780297844648, July) ☺ (August) ★★★★★

The overarching achievement of this vibrant, opinionated, detailed new look at the Eternal City is that it forces the reader to look at Rome with new eyes. The approach is chronological, the method to take a mass of historical detail and shape it into a cohesive narrative, sweeping from one event, movement, influence or person to another, leaving us with so much information and rekindled curiosity that I suspect many will want to visit, or re-visit, Rome at the first opportunity.

Recreating Rome's earliest days, Robert Hughes reminds us that much of the story of Romulus and Remus is myth; that the aqueducts, now viewed as archaeological curiosities, were the lifeblood of the growing town; that political and artistic patronage was a reality as far back as Virgil; that the major influence on classical Roman architecture and sculpture was Greek; that for many years various forms of paganism and Christianity battled for control of people's souls, often with great cruelty and bloodshed; that the town was an ugly, dirty, overcrowded, dangerous place for most of its inhabitants; and that the Roman emperors, with a couple of exceptions, were a vicious, revolting lot.

In the Middle Ages we meet Cola Di Rienzo, a commoner who ruthlessly bettered himself, achieving the status of Tribune; soon after, we rediscover Brunelleschi, 'the father of Renaissance architecture' and Julius II, 'the first pope to lead an army from horseback'. We learn that the building of St Peter's took 120 years, involving several architects and principal artists including Raphael and Michelangelo. (A digression concerning the controversial cleaning of the Sistine Chapel ceiling in the 1970s is

typical of the author's encyclopaedic approach.)

Completing his breathtaking chapter on the Renaissance, Hughes plunges into the 17th century with the provocative words 'you cannot imagine modern Rome without the changes that a single pope, Sixtus V, imposed on it'. Writing about more recent history, he labels the gigantic Vittorio Emmanuele monument 'most stupefyingly pompous'. He spells out the deviousness with which Pope Pious IX imposed the dogma of papal infallibility on a reluctant priesthood and is at pains to stress the overriding influence of the Catholic church on Rome for much of the city's life. The book charges on through the 18th and 19th centuries, concluding with a concise, lively look at the major arts, political and literary movements of the 20th.

Who should read it? Anyone with any feeling for this magnificent city.

*Max Oliver is an Australian bookseller and enthusiastic traveller*

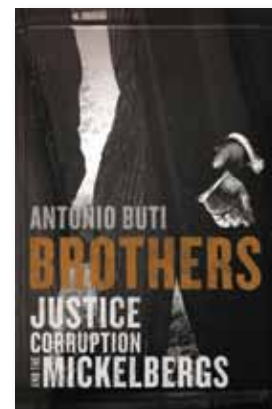
Feature review: Nonfiction ▶

**Brothers: Justice, Corruption and the Mickelbergs** (Antonio Buti, Fremantle Press, \$32.95 tpb, ISBN 9781921888472, July) ☹ ★★★

Set against the excesses of the 1980s and populated with scandals, corrupt cops and corporate cowboys, *Brothers* is the saga of the notorious Perth Mint Swindle of 1982 in which more than half a million dollars' worth of gold disappeared, and Brian, Peter and Ray Mickelberg were eventually jailed. The story follows the ensuing 25 years of courtroom battles, including eight court appeals by the Mickelbergs. The brothers claimed they had been 'verballed' by police (the events took place before mandatory recording of police interviews), were convicted on circumstantial evidence, and that their statements had been fabricated. WA author, lawyer and politician Antonio Buti spent three years researching this intriguing case using a wide range of sources, including interviews,

court transcripts and other books on the case. His 'inside story' of Avon Lovell's *The Mickelberg Stitch* makes a great read in itself. Buti's intricate rendering of the legal process, accompanied by abundant endnotes, sometimes distracts from the flow of the narrative. *Brothers* will appeal to readers of true crime, lawyers, law students and anyone interested in our legal system.

*Paula Grunseit is a freelance journalist, editor and reviewer*

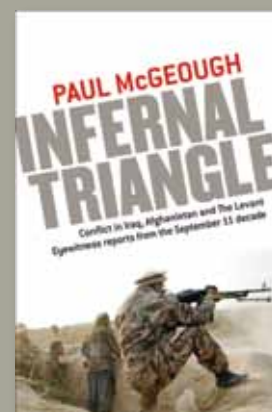


**Infernal Triangle** (Paul McGeough, A&U, \$32.99 pb, ISBN 9781742375632, July) ☹★★★★

This collection of reports by the award-winning Australian foreign correspondent and author Paul McGeough is essential reading. It covers his observations of significant events in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Levant over a decade, opening with the September 11 attacks and closing with the more recent spate of civilian uprisings across the Arab world. It also includes his paper 'Controlling the Narrative in Israel and Palestine', given at the 2010 Festival of Dangerous Ideas. McGeough is able to offer a unique perspective of these events, having been on the scene at so many of them, including the September 11 attacks and the 'Free Gaza' flotilla. He has also had access to numerous key figures, from political leaders to dissidents and Islamic jihad fighters. Few can claim

to have travelled with a US convoy in the Middle East, been inside Hamas HQ or seen the bizarre Blood Koran (written in 24 litres of Saddam Hussein's donated 'ink'). The 'ordinary' person is not forgotten either, and McGeough's accounts reveal the real effects on populations in the aftermath of 'US intervention'. This collection includes historical background vital to gaining an understanding of the complexities of the region, and should be of interest to anyone who follows international news and current affairs.

*Paula Grunseit is a freelance journalist, editor and reviewer*

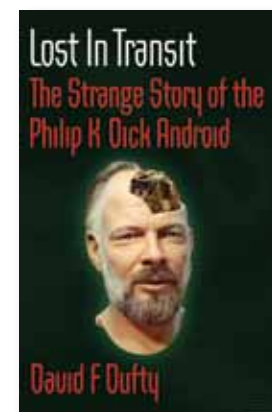


**Lost in Transit: The Strange Story of the Philip K Dick Android** (David F Dufty, MUP, \$34.99 tpb, ISBN 9780522860627, July) ☹★★★★

Imagine talking to a life-size robot version of your favourite dead author. Crafted by a skilled sculptor and controlled by artificial intelligence, the android could—in the author's voice and with human gestures and facial movements—answer questions about his life, his books and any topic you asked him. Now imagine the author was Philip K Dick, the paranoid sci-fi visionary whose most famous work, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, featured conscious androids almost indistinguishable from their human makers. The stranger-than-fiction Philip K Dick android was built by a team of young scientists at Memphis University's Institute of Intelligent Systems, led by roboticist David Hanson and programmer Andrew Olney. In 2005 it briefly captured the world's

attention, appearing at technology conventions around the US, before going missing on a flight between Dallas and Las Vegas, never to be seen again. Dufty's insider's account blends the android's story with that of artificial intelligence, robotics and Dick himself in a combination that will be fascinating to sci-fi buffs, popular science readers and nerds of all stripes (like me). It's the best kind of popular science—a book that doesn't require any previous knowledge, but leaves you hungry to know more, and wondering at the possibilities that may lie ahead.

*Lachlan Jobbins is an editor, reviewer and ex-bookseller*



**Navy Divers** (Gregor Salmon, Ebury Australia, \$34.95 tpb, ISBN 9781741666571, July) ☹★★★

*Navy Divers* arrives at time when the Australian military is desperately in need of positive PR. This exhaustively researched book follows the history of Australian Navy divers from the extraordinary bravery of relatively untrained mine disposal technicians during WWII through to the potentially spirit-shattering ordeals faced by today's trainees attempting to qualify as elite Navy clearance divers. Similar to previous histories of Australia's elite military forces such as Ian McPhedran's *The Amazing SAS*, *Navy Divers* is likely to be a strong seller leading into Father's Day. Salmon details countless tales of bravery and heroism under extreme duress, but it is when he touches on the human side of military life that *Navy Divers* is at its best. One such chapter details the inspirational story

of a navy diver who lost an arm and leg in a shark attack but, with the aid of two prosthetic limbs, was soon scuba diving again and currently aspires to return to operational service. The historical scope of Salmon's book leaves little opportunity to pause to consider the impact of military life on individuals, so unfortunately such stories are relatively scarce. This may discourage some readers and the absence of women in the Navy's elite unit will do little to expel its 'boy's own' reputation. However, the heroic exploits of the book's subjects are a timely reminder that the work of our armed forces should not be taken for granted.

*Andrew Rankin is a buyer for REDgroup Retail*

