



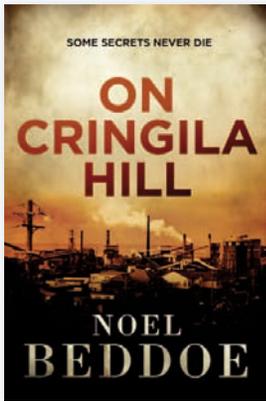
Suzanne McCourt

The Lost Child (Suzanne McCourt, Text, \$29.99 pb, ISBN 9781922147783, March) ☹ ★★★☆

This poignant and atmospheric debut novel set in a 1950s Australian fishing village is told from the perspective of Sylvie, who is five when the story opens. Confused by her father's violent moods and desperate to be allowed the freedoms afforded her older brother, Dunc, who spends his free time reading *Phantom* comics and hunting for birds' eggs, Sylvie tries to make sense of the world around her as her parents' marriage crumbles. When her father moves out and commits a cruel act against Sylvie and her mother, Sylvie can't help but tell Dunc when he returns home from boarding school—so when her brother disappears, she's convinced it's her fault. But gradually, as the years go by, Sylvie begins to accept the past and understand how it can shape her future and her sense of

self. *The Lost Child* is an assured and bittersweet coming-of-age tale with a vivid sense of time and place. Suzanne McCourt does a particularly effective job of capturing Sylvie's slowly maturing voice, carefully balancing the story's sadder moments with her protagonist's wryly humorous observations. This novel is a strong addition to the shelves of Australian literary fiction.

Carody Culver is a freelance writer and editor and a part-time bookseller at Brisbane's Avid Reader and Black Cat Books


On Cringila Hill (Noel Beddoe, UQP, \$29.95 tpb, ISBN 9780702249976, February) ☹ ★★★

A gritty story about drug wars, drive-bys, sexual assault and long-buried secrets, Noel Beddoe's latest novel draws loosely on real events and is set in and around the Wollongong suburb of Cringila Hill—a place where hope and choice for young people are in short supply. One of the most multiculturally diverse areas in New South Wales due to the large influx of migrants who were employed at the Port Kembla steelworks, this was once a thriving centre of industry. It's different now. 'You must confront certain matters, on Cringila Hill. Inevitably you'll learn certain things about yourself which you may have been better off not knowing,' says a character who knows it well. Drug dealers Piggy and Jimmy have formed a friendship that is strengthened when they

witness the drive-by murder of Abdul, one of their peers, and Detective Winter feels a deep, personal commitment to solving the crime. Beddoe has convincingly built the novel's tough, male-centric world using a big cast of characters and a wide range of voices depicting the intricacies of the community's interracial tensions. In saying that, on occasion the dialogue didn't always ring true for me. This is recommended for readers who enjoy part detective, part coming-of-age stories.

Paula Grunseit is a freelance journalist, editor and reviewer



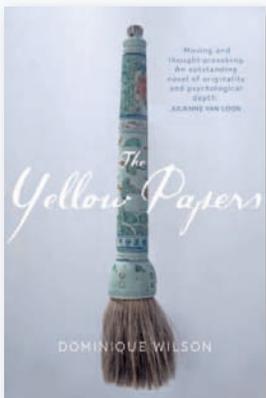
Stephen Orr

One Boy Missing (Stephen Orr, Text, \$29.99 tpb, ISBN 9781922147271, February) ☹ ★★★

Detective Sergeant Bart Moy has given up on life. His young son is dead (in an accident, it is slowly revealed) and his wife has divorced him. He's retreated to his childhood home, the rusting wheatbelt town of Guilderton, where he keeps a half-hearted eye on both Guilderton's petty lawbreakers and the ageing curmudgeon he calls Dad. However, when someone witnesses the possible kidnapping of a young boy, Moy is forced to surface from his grief-stricken lethargy to rescue the fatherless child (and by so doing assuage the guilt he feels about his own son). I loved Stephen Orr's 2009 novel *Time's Long Ruin*, which was based on the disappearance of the Beaumont children in Adelaide in 1966; in unembellished prose Orr captured the era, and the horror, perfectly. In *One Boy*

Missing he realises the slow rhythms of country Australia, its language and landscape, just as skilfully. This is not a thriller, but an Australian pastoral with a dark heart. If I have one criticism it would be that *One Boy Missing* suffers from the classic crime novel malaise of a rushed ending. That said, it is great holiday reading, whether at home or abroad.

Viki Dun is the editor of the Gleebooks Gleaner


The Yellow Papers (Dominique Wilson, Transit Lounge, \$29.95 tpb, ISBN 9781921924613, March) ☹ ★★★☆

The first full-length novel from short story writer Dominique Wilson is a sorrowful but captivating historical epic, and a unique view of the formation of modern China. Spanning nine decades, *The Yellow Papers* charts the destinies of three main characters: a lowly Chinese peasant who flees to Australia following an unsuccessful mission to obtain 'the secrets of the West' in the US; a wealthy Australian man obsessed with his oriental lover; and a child of China's Cultural Revolution. Wilson's impeccable research helps her to convey a realistic impression of some of the significant political, intellectual and social changes in China's development, and the impact this evolution has had on Western culture, particularly Australia. While this attention to historical

detail adds authenticity to the narrative, it is Wilson's well-crafted characters and shrewd storytelling that arouse all the emotions that great tragedy is supposed to evoke. To compare *The Yellow Papers* to the historical sagas of the kind that consistently rise to the tops of bestseller lists may seem to trivialise the importance of its subject matter, but the book will still satisfy a readership hungry for a gripping, grandiose read.

Jennifer Peterson-Ward is a freelance reviewer and professional writing and publishing academic