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*Paydirt* is a bitter, violent blast of a novel in four intense stream-of-conscioussness word-portraits. Kate has fostered a disabled Indigenous boy and she is tormented with exasperation, guilt and thwarted love for him. Memories, poems, and fragments of nursery rhymes jostle together as she flies with him to Queensland to reunite him with his mother and revisit her own parents after many years’ absence.

Pastiche is the dominant mode, with irritating repeated catch phrases, although much of the writing is powerful. The bigoted stupidity of Kate’s parents is as implausible as the gentle forgivingness of the boy’s birth mother. *Paydirt* is difficult to like, despite moments of humour and hope.