

Mothering, Resistance and Survival in Kathleen Mary Fallon's *Paydirt* and Melissa Lucashenko's *Mullumbimby*

*The systematic removal of Indigenous Australian children was officially exposed over two decades ago, and the Australian Federal Government made an official apology for the practice in 2008, yet the removal rate of Indigenous Australian children by authorities remains disproportionately high. Child removal, inequalities in health, educational, and financial outcomes, and the pervasive ongoing cultural and systematic hostility against First Nations Australians, combine to create a hostile external culture for Indigenous children to grow up in. This article examines how the struggle to raise Indigenous Australian children within this hostile external context manifests in contemporary Australian literature, with respect to two texts: *Paydirt* (2007) by Kathleen Mary Fallon and *Mullumbimby* (2013) by Melissa Lucashenko. Both novels have partially autobiographical elements and feature women mothering teenage Indigenous Australian children. In each novel, the threat of child removal is used as a framing device, and reconnection to traditional Indigenous Australian culture forms both a remedy and an essential component of the survival of the children concerned. This article provides a close reading of the themes and narratives of these novels in relation to the Australian political and cultural context in order to examine how it is that the texts' authors integrate their characters' maternal practice with their essential resistance to hostile external forces and cultures.*

How does the struggle for individual and cultural survival within a hostile external social context manifest in contemporary matricentric Australian literature? This article examines the question with reference to *Paydirt* by Kathleen Mary Fallon (2007) and *Mullumbimby* by Melissa Lucashenko (2013).¹ Both novels depict determined single mothers raising Indigenous children within a culture that contests their children's very identities and they bring their children resilience, strength, and survival within a hostile

mainstream culture that disproportionately threatens them due to their racial backgrounds.² A study of these particular texts is apt given the partially autobiographical nature of their content regarding mothering Indigenous Australian children. Additionally, the supremacy of maternal work in each narrative, as well as the authors' refusal to subsume the respective protagonists' mothering beneath a more classical individualist quest, makes these texts suitable for analysis in the context of matricentric feminism. This article examines these texts with regards to the Australian historical and cultural context, especially the systematic forcible removal of Indigenous Australian children and the historical and continuing genocidal erasure of their culture. The article also looks at the literary context of each text as well as their decidedly matricentric nature.

Paydirt and Mullumbimby

Paydirt tells the story of Kate, the white Australian foster mother of Warren—a seventeen-year-old originally from Thursday Island in the Torres Strait—and Flo, Warren's biological mother, from whom he was removed by the state and institutionalized at age three. Former nurse Kate has been mothering Warren since he was five, but the authorities intend on reinstitutionalizing him on the cusp of adulthood, ostensibly on medical grounds. Warren, who lives with permanent disability, is inaccurately labelled by the state as "blind and profoundly retarded" (4), or as Kate's mother Dellmay states, "*black, blind and profoundly retarded*" (110). Although Dellmay has prejudiced motives, hers is perhaps a more truthful assessment of the state's low expectations for Warren: the intersections of Indigeneity and disability are a cynical but accurate explanation for the chronic systematic dehumanization that he has suffered. In an attempt to mitigate this threat of secondary removal, Kate is taking Warren to Brisbane to meet Flo, who lies ill in hospital, in the hopes that their reconnection will provide him with a sense of self and family and help him avoid reinstitutionalization. As Kate says, "he's guilty of turning eighteen and you're his only hope, Flo, you're his biological mother, he might listen to you" (15). Structurally, although the characters often address one another, the novel consists of four separate monologues; Kate and Flo open and close the novel respectively.³

Mullumbimby tells the story of Jo Breen, a Bundjalung woman who, postdivorce, has moved back to Bundjalung country with her thirteen-year-old daughter Ellen to seek connection to land and culture.⁴ Jo becomes embroiled in a Native Title battle between two local Aboriginal families, both of whom have claims to the local land. First by choice and then out of maternal necessity, Jo embraces local traditional Aboriginal culture and language in the hope of steering Ellen in a positive and fulfilling direction through connection to the land and culture.

Although romance is not entirely absent, it is incidental to these texts' plots, which are both driven by single mothers connecting, communicating, and conspiring. And even though the absence of the voices of Indigenous fathers from these narratives might be considered problematic—particularly due to the gendered specificity of Indigenous Australian cultural education—prioritizing the voices of Indigenous mothers (Jo and Flo) brings forth the kinds of women's stories that are largely absent from Australian cultural dialogues.⁵

“White Australia has a Black History”⁶

The British invasion of Australia began in 1788, when Captain Arthur Philip landed eleven ships in Sydney Cove. Indigenous Australians were immediately affected by European violence, diseases, and the theft of water, land, and resources, but they also actively resisted between 1788 and 1960, in what has come to be known and documented as the Frontier Wars (Reynolds; Ryan et al.). Indigenous Australians continue to actively resist the ongoing negative effects of white invasion. There is a resurgence in activism surrounding the removal of Indigenous children, the institutional treatment of incarcerated Indigenous youths, and the increasing momentum for a constitutionally enshrined First Nations Voice to parliament as well as a treaty between the Australian Government and representatives of Indigenous Australians (Messer and Brookman 1; Mayor).

In 1997, the landmark Bringing Them Home Report (BTHR) detailed the systematic institutional removal of Indigenous Australian children from their families—known as the Stolen Generations⁷—and the resulting disconnection from traditional cultures and long term trauma that they suffered. The BTHR labelled the practices “genocidal,” “in breach of binding international law,” and “from late 1946... a crime against humanity” (239), and emphasized that “mixed motives are no excuse” (237). Furthermore, the labelling of the child removal practices as genocidal prompted fresh debate about the usage of the term “genocide” with regards to the treatment of Indigenous Australians (Tatz 1999; Langton 2001; Behrendt 2002; Veracini, Curthoys and Docker 2002). In 2007, the Little Children Are Sacred Report prompted the commencement of the contentious, ongoing, and harmful “Northern Territory Intervention⁸” (Zhou 2017). Despite the prominence of these reports and the Australian Government's subsequent National Apology to the Stolen Generations (2008), Indigenous Australians today face disproportionately high rates of youth suicide, sexual assault, domestic violence, juvenile detention, incarceration, and forcible child removal; there are also large disparities in wealth and health outcomes.

Although a formalized record of the children affected by the Stolen Generation has been kept in reports such as BTHR, recorded and publicly

accessible stories of the mothers whose children were removed are minimal. A discussion of *Paydirt* and *Mullumbimby* in this context is pertinent due to their matricentric plots. In *Mullumbimby*, Jo tries to reclaim her culture under the looming threat of systematic power imbalances, including forcible removal by authorities, whereas *Paydirt* presents a dialogue between two mothers of a child who was forcibly removed (Messer and Brookman 2). The maternal protagonists are aware of and resist the aforementioned systematic challenges faced by Indigenous Australians.

Literary Contexts

Both novels have autobiographical elements and represent a form of “coming to voice” for each author (hooks 1989). Lucashenko is of Russian, Ukrainian, and Indigenous Australian heritage; her Bundjalung great-grandmother was removed from country by authorities (Lucashenko, “Q&A”). She writes that all her books “reflect one version of modern Aboriginal life,” something that is also evident in her other novels, particularly *Too Much Lip* (2018). The *Mullumbimby* narrative is in part a reversal of her own journey on Bundjalung land, to which she moved with her daughter and then-husband but was forced to leave postdivorce (Lucashenko, “If I Live to Be 100”).

Fallon’s personal story is also intertwined with that of Kate in *Paydirt*. Fallon, a white Australian, fostered a five-year-old Torres Strait Islander boy named Henry, whom she met when working as a nurse at a home. Fallon has written about this experience across several media, including personal reflections, a short story, a film script, and a play. *Paydirt* was published during a year of governmental change in Australia, when the public discourse was increasingly in favour of an official apology to the Stolen Generations. In part, Fallon’s story charts this changing social discourse regarding Indigenous removal. Teenage Warren publicly refers to himself as having been “stolen” (59), but for Kate, the situation is more nuanced, as Warren would have been institutionalized in a place the nurses referred to as “the Tip” if not for her fostering. As she says, “even a fuck-up like me’s better than the Tip” (16).

Although at face value the narrative might lend itself to the “white saviour mother” story archetype, Fallon uses the four separate, unconnected monologues of her protagonists to dissect Kate’s experiences and critique the paradigm with regards to the experiences. Comparing the white saviour mother narrative of the Hollywood film *The Blind Side* (2009) to her script for the film *Call Me Mum* (2006), Fallon writes the following: “The pure, naïve, ‘missionary’ story *The Blind Side* told was exactly what I did not, could not and would not tell in *Call Me Mum*. How could it be, written in the context of the Bringing Them Home report and the Stolen Generations narratives?” (“Broken Mothers”). Instead Fallon situates both *Call Me Mum* and *Paydirt*

within a complex and evolving Australian cultural context, which lays bare the long-term reality of a white foster mother, which has often been absent from Australian dialogues surrounding the Stolen Generations (Messer and Brookman 3). In *Paydirt*, the personal transcends the political, as accusations of Warren being a “White Man’s Burden” (43) and Kate “an assimilationist bitch” (10) are at stark odds with the genuine love, care, and intensive mothering that she describes, particularly in her quest to reunite him with Flo against the wishes of the authorities. Additionally, although it may appear problematic for Fallon to place the experiences of a white mother (Kate) beside the recollections of a disenfranchised Indigenous mother (Flo), she uses the characters’ respective monologues to explore colonial cause and effect: the pervasive cultural racism of white Australians and the effects of that racism on Indigenous Australians’ everyday lives; the violent suppression of Indigenous people both physically and culturally; and the dearth of appropriate cultural knowledge that Kate finds when trying to mother an Indigenous child away from his family. Presenting the monologues of a white Australian mother and Torres Strait Islander mother of the same child side by side also recalls Indigenous Australian academic Marcia Langton’s description of “Aboriginality” as:

a social *thing* in the Durkheimian sense ... [arising] from the experience of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who engage in a cultural dialogue, whether in actual lived experience or through a mediated experience such as a white person watching a program about Aboriginal people on television or reading a book. (Langton and Bowers 81)⁹

In airing the pervasive racist cultural dialogues of white Australia side by side with Indigenous hurt, shame, and inequality, Fallon openly links them to present a picture of modern Australia as a complex weave of racially determined power, privilege, trauma, poverty, and danger.

The Systematic Forcible Removal of Indigenous Children

For the protagonists in each text, the child removal authorities present as a menacing force that affects the mothers’ actions and words. The fear of removal of their children becomes an invisible guiding hand in the narratives and the potential for forcible removal is used as a framing device in each text. In *Paydirt*, forcible removal is woven into Warren’s past, present, and future. Warren was removed from Flo as a three-year-old for medical treatment but was soon permanently condemned to a life in institutions, as he was labelled not only “blind and profoundly retarded” but also “violent and crazy. Brain damaged” (11). “They never said he’d be gone forever,” says Flo (147), and her

grief at not being able to mother him permeates her chapter. Both Kate and Flo recall the predatory tactics of the bureaucrats, who lied to Flo in calling Warren “a vegetable” and patronized her when she objected to him being fostered (47, 126), while the threat of a secondary removal from Kate is “the immediate danger” (5) that drives the narrative. Among Kate’s appraisal of her maternal history, acting to mitigate this removal gives her a sense of purpose (46). For Kate, reinstitutionalization would undo her maternal work:

And now, after all that, here we are, back in the same position. Another [social worker] has your future all planned, baby. Forget that TAFE¹⁰ music course, she told the co-ordinator you weren’t an *appropriate candidate*.... If they Section Nine you their Woodbrook Rotary Bush Bash Minibus won’t be dropping you off to play gangsta rap with your Black bros, I can tell you that much sonny boy ... there’s not a damned thing I can do about it. (23)

Despite mothering him since he was five, Kate’s legal status as Warren’s mother is tenuous. Thirteen years of mothering means little to the authorities, but Kate aims to ensure Warren’s survival as an autonomous individual, which she surmises is contingent on reconnection with his parents’ traditional culture. Supporting Warren’s Indigeneity and survival means embracing Flo and their joint cause, despite Kate’s maternal reservations (5, 38-39). In closing the novel, Flo provides answers to Kate’s questions about mothering Warren in his first three years while linking the personal with the political and the historical. Flo’s monologue situates forcible child removal within the broader pattern of systematic power imbalances and hostility faced by Indigenous Australians.

The opening scene of *Mullumbimby* depicts Jo reading what Ellen has drawn on her younger cousin’s arm. Among the messages are, “Better pay or I ring DOCS,”¹¹ a reference to the child welfare authorities, which depicts how normalized messages like this are for Indigenous Australian children. As in *Paydirt*, forcible child removal acts as a contextual framing device—a mechanism to show the reader the kind of normalized hostility that a young Indigenous child grows up in. The threat of removal also arises when Ellen is in hospital later in the novel:

“Miz Breen, has Ellen tried to hurt herself before, to your knowledge?” asked a mental health nurse. Jo opened her eyes and tried to focus. Christ. Now it begins.

“No. Never.”

“And she wasn’t at school. You say you weren’t at home with her...”
A meaningful pause.

... A different tact was required. She swallowed the tears. “Is there a Koori liaison?”

“Are you part-Aboriginal?” The nurse seemed surprised.

Are you part-fuckwit?

... The nurse standing in front of her wasn't unsympathetic, but Jo could feel Ellen being dragged inexorably in the direction of the psych ward or DOCS or both, if she couldn't find a Goorie in a uniform who understood that you might have certain inexplicable reasons to stick both your hands in an open flame and still not be exactly mad. And that, far from neglecting Ellen, she had been trying to find her some help. (266)

Jo has an acute awareness of how insensitivity to Indigenous cultural beliefs and traditions can have devastating effects on families and the importance that Indigenous cultural awareness and connection have in mainstream contemporary Australia.

Genocidal Cultural Erasure

Aboriginal peoples in Australia are the keepers of the oldest stories and the oldest story systems in the world. Aboriginal story systems and songlines imbue Country with meaning.... My mother and grandmother always taught me about the importance of stories in understanding and knowing and that it was through stories that we learn the truth about the world.—Jill Milroy (Milroy 1-2)

As Indigenous women, the roles of Flo and Jo include the cultural education of their offspring; thus, the cultural severance brought by colonization and child removal makes their maternal roles heavier and Kate's role as an ally crucial. They are saddled not only with the regular load of educating their children but also with the responsibility of resisting the multigenerational genocide wrought by white invasion. Connection to and understanding of the land is integral to Indigenous Australian culture, so cultural erasure has been an integral part of the systematic child removal wrought on Indigenous Australian families.

The BTHR says that the systematic cultural erasure as part of the removal of Indigenous children from their families was variously referred to as “merging,” “absorption,” and “assimilation” in government policy and discussions (25). The report also refers to the effectiveness of this erasure: a three-year longitudinal study undertaken in Melbourne in the mid-eighties revealed that children who were forcibly removed were less likely to have a strong sense of their Aboriginal cultural identity, more likely to have discovered their

Aboriginality later in life and less likely to know about their Aboriginal cultural traditions (12). But this tactic has not been condemned to history; mainstream news outlets still report similar examples of deliberate cultural dispossession as a result of removal.¹²

Dispossession is prominent in both *Paydirt* and *Mullumbimby*; traditional culture must be relearned, rebuilt, retaught, and deliberately replicated by the Indigenous mothers for the survival and growth of their children. Cultural learning is a deliberate part of their maternal practice, a means of strengthening their children and giving them context so that they can thrive as Indigenous children in mainstream contemporary Australian society. In *Paydirt*, Warren's cultural dispossession manifests in the medical regression he suffered while in institutional care (129). Kate expresses that although her focus was on improving Warren's health, there was little support for maintaining his cultural connections. Supposed experts she has confided in—such as her therapist (9) and “a drunk land-rights lawyer at a party” (10)—have been more likely to chide her for her own racial identity, with few offering constructive advice: “[Link-up] said they didn't have the resources to deal with white foster parents and it was outside their ‘brief’... I couldn't work out whether it was because I was white or because he was an Islander ... that they wouldn't talk to me” (3). Warren's cultural dispossession is also evident in the example of what Kate calls Warren's “little nonsense song” (12, 19), which he sings as “whale car knock/ie” (12, 19, 67), but which Flo says is a (misremembered) traditional song, “*awaial gar naki*,” taught to Warren by his father (137). Kate sang Warren's version to him to comfort him as a child (19), which further underscores the cultural disconnection inherent in the system regardless of professed good intentions. But Fallon also exposes that in the context of the white foster mothering of Indigenous children, increasing social awareness about child removal as genocide can be almost counter-productive in some situations: “we know first hand the effect the singular, overarching ‘stolen’ narrative can have on a teenaged child searching for an identity as all young people do” (“Broken Mothers”). This manifests in *Paydirt* when Warren is informed by a journalist that Kate's insistence he wear deodorant and brush his teeth to “make [him] white like her” amounts to what he mistakenly calls “Similar Relationsist Genderslide” (60).

In *Mullumbimby*, Jo's grandparents were taken away “to assimilate [their] families and fuck up [their] connections to the land” (50). Jo found herself “dragged” by her ex-husband Paul into his “tight white world” (4), and so has made a conscious choice, postdivorce, to embrace her Indigenous culture and heritage and help situate her daughter on country. The impact of white invasion on her Aboriginality was so substantial that her now deceased elder Auntie Barb took her aside for instruction in what she called “*You are a blackfella 101*” (11).¹³ Jo's memory of this instruction, “a lot of it forgotten” (11), forms a

deliberate cultural practice, particularly in her use of Bundjalung, Yugambah, and Australian Aboriginal English language in daily speech and thought. Lucashenko provides a glossary of this language at the end of the novel, thereby inviting the reader to engage with a (re)learning and replication of traditional culture (283).

As Flo speaks of the cultural lessons she will pass on to Warren, she explores the institutional oppression of Torres Strait Islanders by the white authorities in policy and in practice. Here Flo unleashes a tsunami of grief histories of cultural suppression, segregation, police brutality, and the general oppressive systematic mistreatment of Indigenous Australians, and the ensuing personal effects of alcoholism, domestic abuse, and violence that were rife in her marriage with Warren's father. Lucashenko describes the difficulty that many Indigenous women face in exposing "Black-on-Black violence":

In the situation where Black men are dispossessed, brutalised by police, and generally as poor and unhealthy as Black women ... [t]alking about the bashings, rapes, murders, and incest for which Black men themselves are responsible... is seen as threatening in the extreme. (Lucashenko "Violence" 379)

Although Flo's recollections paint a bleak and honest history of the white treatment of Indigenous Australians, and the ensuing effects of that oppression in the community, she resolves to suppress that bleakness; she hopes that by protecting Warren from the negativity, she will strengthen him: "all my sad stories will go to the grave with me.... I'll never burden you with them love" (158). As a mother-teacher, Flo possesses agency, and self-censorship is part of her maternal practice. The repeated refrain "la cook-a-racha," which refers to her skill as a cook, becomes a metaphor for serving Warren positive cultural lessons to nourish his brain and body into adulthood as well as a vehicle for resistance. The notion of positivity from grief is not subliminal; it is a conscious, recognized dichotomy in the text and is something reflected in *Paydirt's* afterword by Mer Islander Ricardo Idagi:

The characters in this book are a mirror image of us. The book exposes the scars we harbour deep within us; scars we dare not reveal ourselves for fear of shame, guilt and backlash from our society and our community... We feel a sense of relief that someone as bold as the author has spoken for us. (163)

For Flo, "shame has come back. But it's not just shame, it's pride" (153). Mothering Warren once more by providing him with positive stories is not just nourishing for him but restorative for her, akin to natural justice: "Things are returned. Evil is reversed" (153).

In *Mullumbimby*, Jo is both student and teacher, practicing what she has

learned while replicating it by mothering; she is aware that “her version of culture” (42) may be different to that of someone who has grown up on country. Even though Jo actively embraces Bundjalung culture, she also refuses to allow its importance to surpass that of her maternal work. When Jo’s romantic interest Twoboy asks her to compromise Ellen’s wellbeing by forcing her to participate in his Native Title claim, Jo calls on the strength of her foremothers:

The army of women clustered close around her. She could feel them softly breathing.

“You can do it, bub. Talk straight, now,” said Aunty Barb...

“I’d rather sink that blade into your neck,” Jo said quietly, pointing at the knife box. “Now go...” (252)

This represents a powerful matricentric feminist moment for the book. Ellen’s survival and nurturance surpass the romantic plot element and the individualist goal of a male character. In Jo’s maternal resistance, as in *Paydirt*, we are shown both an assertion of the validity of maternal work and a child’s right to be mothered.

Literary Matricentricism

Jo’s mothering is also centred when the culturally significant pattern on Ellen’s hands frightens Ellen to the point that she thrusts her hands into a fire in a bid to erase them. In desperation, Jo begs for cultural answers from a local elder: “This jalgani wasn’t going to give up her fight anytime soon... She was ready to kill somebody if she had to, to protect her jahjam” (277).¹⁴ In achieving answers, Jo not only provides her child with a sense of cultural identity and purpose but also mitigates the immediate potential threat of intervention and removal by DOCS.

Centring the maternal goals also brings strength to the mothers of *Paydirt*. Although they never meet or converse, Warren’s two mothers present a conspiratorial, anticipatory, and hopeful intercultural maternal dialogue. The separation of their respective expression gives the characters the freedom of honest self-reflection and the voicing of doubts, regrets, and their respective truths, which are often uncomfortable. The stories that these women tell become a vehicle for healing. Together (but also apart), they not only work towards a common maternal goal but also air grievances that have not yet been remedied in white Australia’s relationship with Indigenous Australians.

The strength of Kate and Flo’s maternal dyad is reflected in Flo’s insistence that she and Kate call one another “Mum,” with reference to Islander traditions (4,141, 160). Calling one another “Mum” not only brings Torres Strait Islander culture to the forefront of the novel but also reiterates the place of

mothering at the forefront of their quest. It also gives them a greater degree of intimacy through which to cathartically confide in one another:

I want to tell you Flo, Mum, tell you, look, I haven't made much of a fist of mothering him either. (Kate 46)

You've grown him up well, my little sick, ruined Bub ... like a monster when I last saw him Mum.... I'm so happy that my poor baby found someone to love him and look after him. (Flo 160)

Conclusion

In *Paydirt* and *Mullumbimby*, the universality of mothering is centred by each author as a means to comment on the past, present, and future status of Indigenous Australians and to explore what it means to mother an Indigenous child in a still hostile white Australian society. The consequences of white invasion continue to wreak havoc against Indigenous Australians, which presents a problematic world for Indigenous children to grow up in, since they must navigate around systematic forcible removal, ingrained cultural racism, multigenerational trauma and poverty, and a severance of connection to culture and country.

By centring mothering, Fallon and Lucashenko provide a window into what it means for First Nations Australians to physically and culturally resist, survive, and thrive within this volatile environment. Connection with traditional Indigenous culture is not only necessary for their children's survival but also a profound statement of maternal and anticolonial resistance. Through their dual pursuits of protection for their children and reconnection with traditional culture, these matricentric texts present strong narratives that not only recognize the sins of the past but also hope for the future.

Endnotes

1. Lucashenko explores white hostility against Indigenous Australians, including instances of cultural erasure, in other scholarly and fictional contexts, particularly with regards to cultural and familial disconnection. Her short story "Dreamers" (2017) explores it from an historical context, after the 1967 Referendum, whereas her most recent novel *Too Much Lip* (2018) draws on the contemporary experience of an Indigenous Australian family in a regional context, focusing on the systematic power differentials that affect their lives acutely.
2. "Indigenous Australians" refers to First Nations peoples of Australia. It is used as an umbrella term for two groups of First Nations people in Australia: Aboriginal people (of the Australian mainland and Tasmania)

- and Torres Strait Islanders (from the many islands of the Torres Strait to the North of the Australian continent)
3. The other monologues are from the perspectives of Warren and Kate’s parents, Dellmay and Keith.
 4. Bundjalung country, which includes the regional town of Mullumbimby, spreads across an area of northeastern New South Wales and southeastern Queensland.
 5. “If Aboriginal Australians have been invisible generally, then this has been doubly true for Aboriginal women” (Lucashenko “Violence” 1996).
 6. “White Australia has a Black History” is a decades-old slogan used by Indigenous activists and others in Australia to invoke the (often willful) cultural ignorance to the atrocities committed against Indigenous Australians after white invasion. In 2016 an activist wearing a t-shirt with that slogan on it was refused entry to Australia’s Parliament House until they turned the offending shirt inside out (Pearson).
 7. “Stolen Generations” is an important term in the lexicon of Australian history, culture, and politics. It refers to the historical removal of Indigenous children as described in the BTHR. It continues to be used in contemporary dialogue to describe the continued removal of Australian children, particularly as a term of warning against those who would remove children but still claim that the Stolen Generations is purely an historical event. There are important distinctions between what would typically be described as a Stolen Generations case and the situation that is described in *Paydirt*. Fallon herself does not accept that her case qualifies as a Stolen Generations case. However, her text does recognize that her experience cannot be read in isolation from the Stolen Generation experience or the negative effects of colonization on Indigenous Australians.
 8. The “intervention” was based in the Northern Territory, an area of Australia with a high proportion of Indigenous people and Indigenous townships. The Australian Federal Government dispatched uniformed troops into these areas, suspended the Racial Discrimination Act, compulsorily acquired rights over Aboriginal land, instituted bans on alcohol and pornography in selected predominantly Aboriginal communities, instituted “income management” for all community residents receiving welfare payments, linked income support payments to children’s school attendance, and abolished heretofore successful employment programs. Community police presence was increased and customary law ceased to be considered in sentencing and bail applications (Perche).
 9. Though not entirely unproblematic in relation to contemporary debates about cultural appropriation and the need for diverse voices from nonwhite backgrounds to speak for themselves, Fallon anticipates this objection to a certain extent by including an epigraph by Mer Islander Ricardo Idagi (163).

10. TAFE stands for “Technical and Further Education”, a set of public vocational education institutions in Australia.
11. “DOCS” refers to the Department of Community Services, the government department responsible for child removal in New South Wales, where *Mullumbimby* is set. It is now named Family and Community Services (FACS), although DOCS is still used colloquially.
12. See, for example, reporting by the journalist Dan Conifer.
13. Lucashenko herself grew up divorced from her traditional culture for a substantial part of her life, which she explains in “Not Quite White in the Head”:
A dark teenager in Joh[Bjelke-Petersen]’s Queensland, I was quizzed constantly about where I was “from”, and given careful instruction in the following mantra: Your father is Russian. Your mother is Scots, Irish and English. When I was 14 my mother confessed, lightly, as though her attention had lapsed: we were Aboriginal. In the same decade, the Government stopped removing Aboriginal babies in Queensland.
14. *Jalgani* means woman., and *Jahjam* means child in the Bundjalung language.

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