

Satirising white Australia in Christina Stead's *For love alone*

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Christina Stead's *For love alone* is an iconic Australian text, but so far surprisingly few critics have addressed its satiric treatment of Australian racism and imperialism. Most critics of *For love alone* focus on its gender politics, casting Stead's protagonist, Teresa Hawkins, as a feminist heroine. On this analysis, Teresa's journey from Sydney to London signifies her refusal to accept the provincial, misogynous culture of 1930s Australia. Yet to adopt this view of Teresa is to underrate the satiric potency of *For love alone*. Stead's satiric portrait of Teresa links her subtly, but unmistakably, to the racism, imperialism and eugenic theories of her love object, Jonathan Crow. In this way, the novel identifies Teresa's one-way journey as a form of self-serving 'participation in... empire' (Woollacott 19). This reading of *For love alone* seeks to reclaim Stead from 'world literature' (During 57), by demonstrating her concern with specifically Australian forms of racism and colonial dispossession. It also seeks to illustrate the productive confluences between satire and postcolonial literary criticism.

Satire is notoriously elusive, whether it is regarded as a distinct genre or a more amorphous 'spirit or mode' of writing (Pender 2). Its most enduring feature is an impulse to amuse its audience by mocking human vice and folly; yet from the formal verse satires of Horace and Juvenal to twenty-first century novels like Houellebecq's *Platform*, satirists have employed such a wide range of strategies, and adopted so many literary forms, that most critics have 'retreat[ed] from large-scale theoretical claims' about satire (Griffin 31). In lieu of a conclusive definition, it is possible to identify certain recurring features of satiric writing: pervasive irony; parody and frequent intertextual references; exaggeration; vulgarity; grotesque renderings of the human body and a preoccupation with bodily functions; bombast and garrulity; a sense of chaos; images of degeneration, intoxication and sexual transgression; anticlimax and circular conclusions; and the ubiquitous presence of a 'self-assured and belligerent' authorial ego (Pavlovskis-Petit 511). Historically, critics have associated this satiric 'ego' with the conviction of a 'true believer' (Quintero 3) and a 'nostalgic' backward glance towards 'a privileged golden age' (Ball 9). This essentially conservative form of satire 'expects us to share, or at least approve, its author's attitudes and judgments' (Pavlovskis-Petit 510). Yet in Steven Weisenberger's view, the twentieth century witnessed the emergence of a more ambiguous 'degenerative' satire, that works to 'subvert hierarchies of value' while also 'reflect[ing] suspiciously on all ways of making meaning, including its own' (3). From this perspective, contemporary satire is not necessarily motivated by a desire to achieve 'consensus' or recuperate lost values but, rather, to express 'radical doubt' (1, 3).

This formulation demonstrates the difficulty of aligning satire with any 'moral program' (Lever 26), ideology or critical orientation, such as postcolonial literary criticism. Satiric texts accommodate multiple readings and often seem to shift between different points of view. An example is Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. This canonical work of satire is widely regarded as a 'critique of colonialism,' but it has also been read as an imperialist text that mocks the victims of colonialism—an 'apologia for colonial genocide' (Hawes 189, 207), grimly prefiguring 'the most troubling moral nightmares' of modern European history (Rawson 1). Undeterred by the protean nature of his subject, John Clement Ball identifies a

distinctive form of 'postcolonial satire' in the work of Salman Rushdie, V. S. Naipaul and Chinua Achebe. Defining 'postcolonialism' as 'a discourse of opposition to and liberation from coercive European political structures, epistemologies, and ideologies' (3) he argues that there is a natural affinity between postcolonial writing and satire, since both are 'innately oppositional' (4). However, Ball cautions against simplistic parallels between satire and postcolonial 'resistance,' conceived as 'unidirectional oppositionality and a simplistic politics of blame' (13). He suggests, rather, that 'multidirectional satire' can illustrate and interrogate the 'divisions *within* postcolonial societies,' as well as tensions between colonisers and colonised subjects (13).

For Ball, the chaotic, hyperbolic and excessive qualities of satire are naturally suited to the 'multiplicity of targets' confronting the postcolonial writer (12). In many postcolonial societies, he argues, the damaging legacies of imperialism can be difficult to isolate from the misdeeds of post-independence governments and the influence of contemporary 'neoimperial powers' (12). In this context, it is both unnecessary and impracticable to attribute social ills to any single source; instead, the polyphonic voice of satire allows the writer to attack many targets simultaneously. To illustrate this, Ball cites Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, with its kaleidoscopic satire of 'war propaganda, election-day thuggery, political corruption... European self-centredness... and Indian mimicry,' and its equally savage mockery of Anglo-Indians, Islamists and Indian businessmen 'turning white' after Indian independence (126). For Ball, Rushdie's satire brilliantly evokes the pluralism and complexity of postcolonial Indian society (124). Its carnivalesque qualities 'captur[e]... the utopian spirit of freedom, optimism, and newness of the transitional period' after 1947 (124). At the same time, with a recurring trope of 'leaking' bodily fluids, Rushdie suggests the potential for corruption and contamination of the body politic (129). To this end, the 'grotesque aspect[s]' of the human body—for example, Saleem Sinai's perpetually runny nose—become increasingly expressive of 'a bitter, angry satire of negation and despair' (127), as the novel charts the rise of Indira Gandhi and her introduction of despotic 'Emergency' powers. So formulated, 'postcolonial satire' avoids any simplistic equation of satire with a particular political agenda or moral lesson. Rather, Ball shows how satiric techniques can enable writers to articulate the many contradictions within their postcolonial societies, in a vivid, engaging and irreverent fashion.

While Ball concentrates on Indian, African and Caribbean literature, his work suggests new ways of reading certain Australian texts as examples of postcolonial satire. Ball readily extends his concept of postcolonial satire to 'settler-invader' societies, and includes Patrick White, Peter Carey, Murray Bail and Mudrooroo among its foremost practitioners (7, 1). In Australian literary criticism, there is growing interest in Australia's satiric tradition, as distinct from its predominantly realist canon. To date, few critics have linked this satiric tradition to postcolonial themes. An exception is A. D. Cousins, who identifies the birth of Australian satire in Barron Field's *First fruits of Australian poetry* (1819, 1823). Cousins reads Field's overwrought, rather pompous Romanticism as a satiric reflection on Australia's postcolonial condition. It demonstrates 'the impossibility of translating... a Wordsworthian vision of nature' (Cousins [2]) to a land so 'prosaic, / Unpicturesque, unmusical, and where/ Nature-reflecting Art is not yet born' (Field 13). Another exception is Susan Lever, who identifies David Foster with a vibrant 'tradition of idiosyncratic satire,' inherited from Joseph Furphy, Miles Franklin, Xavier Herbert and Patrick White (2, 17), and looking back to an earlier 'oppositional tradition of British satire... practised by Swift, Sterne, Fielding, and Thomas Love Peacock, as a way to mock and curse the coloniser' (74). Stephen Harris also sees Foster's *Moonlite* as a work of postcolonial satire, a pungent "'counter-discursive"...

critique of imperial history' (Harris 72). Yet despite these promising beginnings, the notion of Australian postcolonial satire remains relatively undeveloped.

Scholars of Christina Stead are also increasingly interested in her use of satiric techniques, though these are rarely discussed in connection with postcolonial themes. Fiona Morrison discusses Stead's 'ambivalent engagement with femininity,' through a combination of misogynous caricature and the persona of 'female satirist as volcanic virago' ('Cruel book' 235). Anne Pender has produced a monograph on Stead's satire, but she focuses on Stead's later novels in which Australian and colonial themes do not figure strongly. Pender notes that *For love alone* addresses 'the more sinister eugenicist theories current during the 1930s' (2), but concludes that this 'historical dimension' is less important than the novel's psychological narrative of transformation (3). Diana Brydon's work is perhaps the most useful starting point for a discussion of satire in *For love alone*. Noting Stead's references to the Ulysses myth, Brydon places the novel within a parodic tradition of 'Australian buffoon Odyssey[s]' alongside the work of Shirley Hazzard and Jessica Anderson (Brydon, 'Buffoon Odysseys' 79). She observes that parody of earlier forms, such as the epic and the 'male *Kunstlerroman*,' allows these writers to participate in a Western, male-dominated literary tradition while also critiquing its biases (77). By including Stead in this parodic tradition, which 'fuses satiric and romantic elements' (79) into a complex narrative of female and colonial exile, Brydon identifies *For love alone* as ripe for analysis as a work of postcolonial satire.

Ostensibly, *For love alone* is a *Bildungsroman*, a celebratory account of female development and artistic expression. Stead's protagonist, Teresa Hawkins, begins her quest as an obscure and impoverished school teacher in 1930s Sydney. Teresa evinces a creative temperament, a sensual nature and a fierce, though undirected, ambition which eventually finds an outlet in her decision to travel to England. She embarks on this quest in pursuit of a young man, Jonathan Crow, a university student and the winner of a travelling scholarship. Teresa develops an almost fanatical devotion to Jonathan, fuelled by a rarefied conception of romantic love, and adopts a regime of extreme self-discipline in order to save her fare to England. She eventually reaches London, but to her disappointment her reunion with Jonathan does not lead to a sexual relationship. Instead his sadistic, misogynous treatment of her almost drives her to despair, until she is 'rescued' (Lidoff 61) by another man, her employer James Quick. Finally attaining a happy union with James, and commencing work on her first novel, Teresa seems to have achieved her goals of sexual, creative and intellectual fulfilment. She indulges in a brief liaison with James's friend, Harry, but returns to James with renewed passion at the novel's conclusion.

Though several critics identify satiric elements in *For love alone*, they tend to view these as aspects of a larger feminist narrative of struggle and awakening. Many see Teresa as 'a female Quixote' (Morrison, 'Cruel book' 229), alluding to Stead's epigraph from *Don Quixote*. For Diana Brydon, this reference to Cervantes' foolish knight underscores Teresa's status as a feminist heroine. Just as Don Quixote attracts ridicule for his devotion to chivalry, Teresa's 'strenuous idealism often makes her ridiculous' in a sexist society that refuses to recognise female achievement (Brydon, *Christina Stead* 82). Susan Sheridan takes a similar view of Teresa's elaborate sexual fantasies, a mismatched 'philosophy of passion' (80) that draws variously on 'the disorderly loves of Ovid, the cruel luxury of Petronius' and 'the bestiality of the Bible' (Stead in Sheridan 80), as well as Shakespeare, Goethe, Brueghel,

Dürer and Pierre Louÿs. For Sheridan, this miscellaneous 'wardrobe of hand-me-downs' reflects Teresa's marginal position, as a woman and an autodidact, in relation to her 'patriarchal cultural inheritance' (80). Like a 'classic nineteenth-century male *Bildungsheld*,' Teresa 'apprentices herself' to her philosophy in an admirably serious fashion (80); its excessive and discordant qualities are, for Sheridan, a testament to Teresa's exceptionality. Similarly, Brigid Rooney cites the Homeric references in *For love alone* as evidence of Teresa's heroic potential. Where Brydon stresses the ironic inflection of Teresa's 'buffoon Odyssey' (Brydon, 'Buffoon Odysseys' 79), Rooney argues that this is merely a 'gentl[e] iron[y],' and that Stead's 'framing of Teresa as foolish or deluded in no way detracts from her heroism... because [Teresa] herself voices this perspective' (Rooney 57). Admittedly, Stead's portrayal of Teresa is highly inconsistent. Her tone varies between mockery, ironic detachment and a much more sympathetic rendering of Teresa's alienation and emotional pain. These readings capture a genuine note of ambiguity in Stead's presentation of Teresa. At the same time, they illustrate a widespread reluctance to recognise Teresa as a target of satire.

But Stead's satiric techniques in *For love alone* arguably present Teresa as a comic and deeply flawed figure, whose obsession with love masks a profound ignorance about sex and sexual relationships. Throughout the novel, Stead sustains an ironic contrast between Teresa's rarefied romantic ideals and the irrepressible, occasionally grotesque appetites of the body. The novel opens with the wedding of Teresa's cousin Malfi, a vivid, carnivalesque scene in which Stead emphasises the bodily sensations of intense summer heat, perspiration, hunger and thirst, intoxication and barely contained sexual excitement. The 'thought of the wedding-night' and the tantalising sight of the 'long banqueting table' represent 'a degenerative downward spiral of insatiable desire' (Morrison, 'Cruel book' 231), throwing the guests 'into a fever' as sweat trickles down their 'wet breasts and streaming thighs' (Stead 25, 31). Stead interpolates this highly sexualised imagery with references to 'ivory satin, watered silk [and] Chantilly lace' (31), emphasising the disjuncture between these icons of bridal virginity and the wild libidinal energy of the wedding guests. Teresa epitomises this conflict between sexual innocence and rampant carnality. Despite her conviction that 'everything in the world was produced by the act of love' (110), she knows very little about it; when she is sexually assaulted by an old man, she is puzzled by his onanistic 'gestures' and cannot understand 'why he d[oes] it' (165). Her erotic fantasies are overblown, but strangely bowdlerised. She imagines her marriage to Jonathan:

...[i]n a splendid garden of heavy-limbed southern flowers, white and odorous...
[h]e... pull[ing] her backwards by her long hair into his arms. But in this embrace
in the moon, apparently, they stood for ever. (248)

This comic tension between grotesque physicality and sanitised romance recurs throughout the novel, culminating in the passionate encounter between Teresa and Harry Girton. Filled with euphoria after their night together, Teresa repeatedly intones a line from John Donne's 'Epithalamium made at Lincoln's Inn': '*Today put on perfection and a woman's name*' (490). While Teresa invests the phrase with mystic significance, the poem is in fact a satire of the conventional epithalamium, making scurrilous reference to the bride's 'two-leaved gates' and 'hunger-starved womb' (Donne 57). Teresa's misreading of the poem ironically undermines her moment of serene, mystic 'chastity' (490), suggesting that even after her long apprenticeship, she remains, in her own words, a 'child at love' (488).

While this may seem far removed from the concerns of postcolonial criticism, Stead employs similar satiric techniques to mock Teresa's idiosyncratic notion of Australian identity. Teresa's reflections on the Australia national character display many features of satire, including 'macaronics, preciosity... bombast... flagrantly digressive' ideas, 'orations' and 'extreme distortions of argument' (Kirk in Morrison, 'Cruel book' 231). She asserts grandiloquently that 'each Australian is a Ulysses' (Stead 222) and considers herself 'a child of the sailors who, from de Quiros to Cook, had sailed all the seas and discovered Australia' (224). She suggests, implausibly, that Australia's mellow climate 'hardens' its people, because it means they can sleep in the park. Being unafraid of unemployment, she reasons, Australians are 'hardier about the future' than their European counterparts (190). She surmises that Australians are 'different from all other races but the Egyptians perhaps', and declaims theatrically, 'Where did you come from, O stranger, from what ship in the harbour, for I am sure you did not get here on foot?' (222), to the embarrassment and bafflement of Jonathan. This awkward speech, of uncertain provenance, echoes an earlier scene at Malfi's wedding, when the guests examine a pair of chamber pots among the wedding gifts. One reveals mischievously that she has seen chamber pots with eyes painted in their centres, prompting raucous laughter. Teresa fails to appreciate the joke and suggests ludicrously that the motif is 'Egyptian... the eye of Ra rising.' Amidst the even greater laughter that follows, she asserts that 'Venus can see at night without eyes' (35), a remark that strikes her listeners as obscene. With their recurring Egyptian imagery, these scenes draw a subtle parallel between Teresa's vague notions of love and her sense of nationalism, suggesting that they are equally naive and fanciful. This serves the dual purpose of confirming Teresa as a satiric target and identifying Australianness as a state of profound ontological uncertainty.

This relatively gentle mockery of Teresa's nationalism frames a much darker commentary on Australian racism and imperialism. As Louise Yelin points out, Jonathan Crow combines his violent misogyny with a distinctively Australian 'variant of eugenicist ideology that advocates "racial hygiene,"' demonstrating 'the racism [of] early-twentieth-century Australian self-representations' (48). In this sense, Teresa's passion for Jonathan reveals her 'acquiescence in ideologies of racial superiority' (47). Teresa also embraces imperialism and benefits from it, as a white woman in a racially hierarchical settler society; she values her imperial citizenship because it grants her the right to work in any part of the British Empire. As Yelin points out, this enabling form of white imperial citizenship is defined in contrast to 'cultural "others"' (46), the 'colour[ed]' men and 'native' women who form a backdrop to Teresa's adventure (Stead in Yelin 46). For Yelin, Teresa's challenge is to 'supersede' her ingrained Australian racism (Yelin 48) while retaining an authentic colonial identity; and in her view, Teresa achieves this at least in a 'provisional' sense (51) by writing her first novel. In this novel, according to Yelin, Teresa 'appropriates, recycles, and thereby asserts her own claim to the "old heritage" that European culture represents to her,' combining it with an 'antipodean epistemology' (52). While it remains 'inflected by hegemonic norms' (51), the novel goes some way towards reconciling Teresa's colonial identity with her European cultural tastes.

Yelin makes only passing reference to Stead's satiric techniques, but her work suggests several avenues for reading *For love alone* as postcolonial satire. The opening lines of the novel describe Australia as a 'fruitful island of the sea world, a great Ithaca,' where 'winter is in July, spring brides marry in September, and Christmas is consummated with roast beef... at 100 degrees in the shade...' (Stead 1). Yelin points out that this passage 'attempts to describe

the world from an Australian vantage point,' while at the same time self-consciously adopting the 'characteristic conventions of British and European literature,' in a way that paradoxically 'calls into question' the novel's 'narrative authority' (39). She shows how Stead uses the term 'antipodes' to 'characterize Australia as an upside-down, topsy-turvy land,' and points out that this 'motif of the world turned upside down has a long history in European literature as a figure of moral disorder, carnivalesque transgression, and political upheaval' (40). This analysis highlights the playful and subtly mischievous tone of the prologue, while also recalling Weisenberger's account of 'degenerative satire,' as a form that 'reflect[s] suspiciously' on its own authority (Weisenberger 3). With its self-reflexive, irreverent tone, and its characterisation of Australia as an irrational, upside-down world, the prologue points strongly to a satiric engagement with postcolonial themes.

The prologue's bombastic touches and elaborate, almost excessively poetic imagery also link it to an Australian tradition of mock-classic satire, epitomised by Barron Field. Critics like Susan Sheridan admire the prologue's 'virtuous[ic]' (Sheridan 60) imagery, evoking Australia's 'outcrops of silver, opal, and gold,' its desert, a 'salt-crusted bed of a pre-historic sea,' and its 'great stars and nebulae, spout[ing] thick as cow's milk from the udder' (Stead 1). By contrast, Jennifer Strauss deplores its 'grating... self-consciousness,' its grandiosity and incongruous Homeric references, which have an air of 'literary name-dropping' or 'stylistic hectoring' (Strauss 85). Strauss regards the whole passage as an aberration, 'an awkward hybrid between ingratiating apology to the superior "reality" of the Old World' and a 'prize-essay' nationalist 'extravaganza' (85). Yet the 'hectoring' tone she identifies can also be seen as the mark of an overbearing satiric 'ego' (Pavlovskis-Petit 511) announcing itself, with characteristic flourish. The prologue's rhetorical excess and improbable classical allusions are peculiarly evocative of Field's mock-classic *First fruits of Australian poetry*. Like Stead's prologue, Field recounts the arrival of European settlers, in his 'Sonnet, on visiting the spot where Captain Cook and Sir Joseph Banks first landed in Botany Bay.' His poem calls for a plaque to commemorate Cook's landing, exclaiming, 'Fix here th'Ephesian brass. 'Tis classic ground!' (Field 14). The improbability of this claim introduces a comic note, while the juxtaposition of Botany Bay with *real* 'classic ground' serves to highlight Australia's dearth of history and culture. In another poem, Field begins with the seemingly optimistic epigram, 'Anticipation is to a young country what antiquity is to an old.' He quickly reverts to a more cynical position, declaring that 'a ship's the only poetry' to be found in Australia. The ship's attraction lies in its connection to England and its promise to 'bear' the viewer from 'this prose-dull land' (Field 13). In a similar fashion, Stead's prologue seems to celebrate Australia as a 'great Ithaca', but obliquely concedes that Australians recoil from the landscape, 'hugging' the coast and gazing resolutely 'toward the water' (Stead 1). Just as Field's persona looks longingly to the ship that may one day bear him away, Stead's Australians seem maladapted to their environment, and as such, unlikely inheritors of a great classical tradition.

Under the guise of light mockery, this prologue inaugurates the novel's sharp satire of Australian racism and colonial oppression. It concludes with 'the famous question: "Oh, Australian, have you just come from the harbour? ... Men of what nation put you down, for I am sure you did not get here on foot?"' (2). Like the image of Australians turning their backs on the continent, this question casts significant doubt on the relationship between white Australians and their adopted home. If the Australian 'come from the harbour' is the first European settler, the questioner must be the true indigene. Teresa's invocation of this

'famous question' thus undermines her claims to belong to an autochthonous Australian 'race' (222), much as her quotation from John Donne undermines her erotic epiphany later in the novel. The prologue never identifies the questioner and the question remains unanswered. In this way, it gives a romanticised account of first contact between Australia's indigenous people and its European settlers, glossing over the historical facts of violence, dispossession and genocide. With its deliberately overwrought poetic language, the prologue ironically alludes to the attempt by white Australians to deny or rewrite their colonial history. By reciting the question, Teresa demonstrates her complicity with this denial.

With its ghostly figuration of Aboriginal Australia, the prologue functions as an ironic counterpoint to the novel's opening scene, in which Stead presents two contemporary Aboriginal characters. The chapter begins with a graphic description of Teresa's father, Andrew, a garrulous, physically grotesque caricature of colonial and masculine hubris. Andrew appears 'naked, except for a white towel rolled into a loin-cloth... covered with flaccid yellow-white flesh,' with 'thick tufts of red hair' protruding from his armpits (5). Despite his unattractiveness, Andrew is convinced of his overwhelming sexual allure. By way of illustration, he describes an encounter with an admiring Aboriginal woman, in a distinctively Australian racist idiom. '[S]he... was black as a hat,' he relates: '[She] tittered behind her hand... [t]hen she said something to her husband and he... translated for me, grinning from ear to ear: she asked how it was possible for a man to have such beautiful white feet as mine' (5). Unaware that the Aboriginal couple are sharing a joke at his expense, Andrew is in one sense a comic figure. Yet with his 'muscular' torso and arms that 'see[m] to thrust back the walls' (1), he also symbolises the real power of white men in Australian colonial society. He swiftly reveals the tyrannical force of his egotism, launching a vicious attack on Teresa and reducing her to tears with a 'terrifying roar' (15). In this sudden transformation from buffoon to villain, Andrew emerges as a highly ambivalent, vaguely sinister embodiment of colonial and masculine authority.

Against this backdrop, Teresa's seemingly iconoclastic journey to London takes on a new character, as an enactment of complicity with imperialism. Though Teresa regards her journey as a kind of rebellion, the voyage to London was a conventional rite of passage for early twentieth century Australians, as Angela Woollacott points out. Woollacott explains that travelling to England was, for many Australians, a mark of 'bourgeois status, of belonging to a privileged cultural elite' (24). The large numbers of professionals, students and artists undertaking the journey 'added to [its] social cachet' and linked it to 'the pursuit of higher education, the professions, and the arts' (26). Stead lampoons this high-brow ideal of international travel with her caricatures of boozy and lecherous Australian tourists, '[m]iddle-aged women and old hags, flaunting their paint and powder and the youngsters smeared over with lipstick showing their breasts in their sun-suits—starting their cocktail parties in the corridors at eleven in the morning' (Stead 299). This highly satiric imagery is a direct attack on the wealthy 'other half' (299), the spoilt children of the Australian bourgeoisie. Superficially, it seems to exonerate Teresa, who spends the voyage below decks, nursing a dipsomaniacal heiress.

Yet Teresa also participates in the socially stratified, 'racialized... cultural logic' of the voyage (Woollacott 7). Stead hints as much with her abrupt narrative shift from Sydney to London, eliding the 'vast range of exotic colonies' passed en route (Woollacott 21).

Recounting the voyage to Jonathan, Teresa skims over her glimpses of Suez and Stromboli to dwell on her travel companion's luxurious 'chiffon nightdresses' (Stead 300) and elegant scents purchased in the Champs Elysées. For Fiona Morrison, this encounter with the rich girl is a 'liminal and interstitial moment' in Teresa's journey, a crucial scene of feminine 'pedagogy' and a 'cautionary tale' of 'commodi[fied]' female sexuality (Morrison, 'Elided middle' 156-57, 171). Yet if Teresa is vaguely shocked by her friend's dissolution, she is also frankly fascinated by her wealth. In this way, Stead hints that like the vapid cocktail-drinkers on deck, Teresa is travelling to London in order to elevate herself socially, as much as to see the world. This narrative of social ascension contains a racist element, as Woollacott observes. For white Australian women in this era, she writes, the journey to London constituted a 'claim to the status of colonize[r],' a claim rendered all the more urgent by Australians' ambiguous status as settler colonial subjects (24). Teresa makes just such a claim when she first envisions her journey, while looking at a map of the British Empire. Teresa 's[ees] the significance' of the map and its 'chain' of 'pink patches' in terms of her personal ambition: '[i]n every one of those pink patches, no matter what the colour or kind of men there... she could get a job, she was a citizen...' (Stead 83). With the ambivalent image of a chain, Stead obliquely suggests the oppressive nature of this imperial polity; yet Teresa remains oblivious or indifferent to this possibility.

The racialised subtext of the journey to London becomes more explicit in the heavily satirised figure of Jonathan Crow. As Yelin observes, Jonathan embodies 'Australian appropriations of Friedrich Nietzsche, Charles Darwin, and turn-of-the-century eugenics' (48). Like Teresa and Andrew Hawkins, Jonathan enjoys making histrionic speeches, and employs dubious logic to propound his racist views. He warns against 'miscegenation, against marrying Japanese, Chinese, Bantus, or Malays, not only because they weaken the breed... but because white women could never know what was going in the[ir] brains... He knew an Australian woman who had married a Japanese gentleman and had never been happy' (183-84). Like Teresa, Jonathan draws ideas haphazardly from a wide variety of sources including the Bible, Rudyard Kipling and Leibnitz, and his PhD is a chaotic pastiche of racist, sexist and Darwinist ideology. In it he writes that 'the white European male has natural superiority' for 'neither the Jew, the Chinese, the Japanese nor the woman of talent, these four precocious groups, achieve anything proportionate to their numbers' (414). 'Precocity' in this context means sexual activity, as becomes clear in an ensuing passage, which explains why 'the precocious... fail in later life' and why it is therefore 'better to be slow in coming to flower and fruit' (415). Stead's irony here is exquisite: we know from early in the novel that Jonathan has struggled to achieve sexual maturity. When he meets Teresa, he is 'timid... a bookworm with scarcely any knowledge of women,' who 'ha[s] not the courage' to consummate his early, faltering romantic liaisons (195). By the time he meets Teresa again in London, Jonathan has acquired a swagger and knowing demeanour suggestive of sexual experience. In reality, however, he is still lonely and socially inept, and his sex life consists of 'lifting the unwashed skirts of miserable servants who cannot refuse' (451). In this context, Jonathan's obsession with the sexual 'precocity' of other races seems merely a reflection of his own sexual anxiety, a pseudo-scientific equivalent to Teresa's esoteric, literary notion of love.

It is deeply ironic that the racist Jonathan Crow should be a strident critic of imperialism. He 'look[s] down upon the English as a provincial race,' and contemptuously dismisses London's 'famous squares, into which the loot of an empire had been poured' (293, 313). Stead reinforces this critique in the more authoritative voice of James Quick, who observes that the English 'really believe that the Lord farmed out the fullness thereof to them...

masters of India, robbers of South Africa, bedevillers of all Europe...' (363, 365). Yet she discredits Jonathan's anti-imperial diatribes as mere self-interest and wounded pride. 'I haven't a chance of a good academic job with my accent,' he complains to James. 'I'm a blanky colonial' (433). Jonathan's resentment of the English, or more specifically, the English university system, is only further evidence of his monstrous egotism and *arrivisme*. Through Jonathan, Stead lampoons the self-pity of white colonial subjects, casting them as hypocritical, self-serving and complicit with imperial power structures.

The bleakest illustration of this complicity comes at the end of the novel, in Teresa's affair with Harry Girton. Though several critics have sought to construe the episode as a triumph of feminist self-assertion, it has a distinctly 'contrived or false quality' (Rooney 62). As in the prologue, this jarring note suggests the satiric spirit at work, an impression that is reinforced by Harry's striking physical resemblance to Andrew Hawkins, with his blond hair and 'pale yellowish flesh' (471). Teresa perceives Harry in typically cloying terms as an 'Englishman of Englishmen... formed by England's sea-story and the brilliant pages of imperial... history' (Stead 466). She imagines him masterfully 'print[ing] his foot on the world' (492) and 'pricking his way through a very alien land' (466). Yet like Andrew, Harry is an ambivalent figure with selfish and sadistic tendencies. Even his friends call him a liar and a 'rake' (472-73), while the Irishman Nigel Fippenny denounces him as an English 'oppressor' (475). Despite his pretensions to radicalism, Harry is an 'armchair' Marxist (475); moreover, he is routinely unfaithful to his common law wife, Manette, while protesting his innocence and 'threaten[ing] to leave her if she harrie[s] him' (470). Manette loves Harry 'hopelessly' (482) but observes with 'justified' (472) bitterness that he is 'too modern' to marry her. It is for this reason, she tells James, 'that he's going first to fight for Spain and then to Tanganyika... and after that to the ends of the earth. The Kipling ideal, and all to avoid a woman of fifty' (482, 484). Mocking Harry both for his self-styled 'modernity' and for his Kipling-esque persona, Stead draws a parallel between his exploitation of Manette and England's exploitation of its colonies. One might expect that as a colonial, Teresa would share Nigel Fippenny's resentment of Harry; yet she sides with Harry in mocking the 'irritable Orangeman' (474) and feels nothing but contempt for the unfortunate Manette.

Teresa's violent antipathy for Manette confirms her status as an anti-heroine and bears out her acceptance of Jonathan's racist, pseudo-Darwinist views. Aware of her own ambiguous, 'in-between ranking' in the imperial hierarchy (Woollacott 9), Teresa seeks to raise her status by replacing the vaguely foreign Manette in Harry's affections. Teresa is strikingly unsympathetic to Manette, who she regards as a harridan, 'an ugly savage woman' with 'wild looks,' 'loosened hair' and a 'black shouting mouth' (469). These terms strongly associate Manette with the racial Other, while Teresa also derides Manette in vaguely Darwinian terms, as the descendant of an 'ancient forest race... stupid and brooding, shaken by forgotten pangs' (482), presumably 'picked up' by Harry 'somewhere in the marshes of the Thames' (482). In contrast to Manette's apparent foreignness and primitiveness, Teresa is eager to impress Harry with her English pedigree. She tells Harry that her 'people... live at Leamington' (479) and asks Manette, disingenuously, where she 'come[s] from' (482). It can of course be argued that Teresa renounces this project by returning to her life with James Quick. Yet the concluding pages of the novel suggest otherwise. In the closing passage, Teresa glimpses Jonathan walking in the street and scornfully imagines him retreating to a 'semi-detached villa with a black rusty-browed wife and two dirty-skinned children' (500-501). By implication, Teresa associates an interracial marriage with ignominy and failure, in stark

contrast to her edifying love affair with blond haired, blue eyed Harry Girton. In the same scene, Teresa looks from her window and sees an old beggar being tormented by his 'parasite, a vicious slum youth' who steals his money and beats him when 'no one else [is] looking' (498). As an allegory of exploitation, this scene is emblematic of the relations between Jonathan and Teresa, Harry and Manette, and also between England and its colonies. Yet Teresa only observes fatalistically that 'it will go on being repeated forever...!' (502) Implicating both the coloniser and the colonised in a dehumanising cycle of cruelty and degradation, this vignette confirms the novel's status as a deeply pessimistic postcolonial satire.

In contrast to the prevailing view of *For love alone* as a feminist Bildungsroman, this essay has sought to identify Teresa Hawkins as a satiric figure, whose one-way journey from Sydney to London illustrates her complicity with racist and imperialist ideologies. Far from pitting herself against these paradigms, Teresa seeks personal advancement by exploiting her status as a white imperial citizen. In this sense, both Teresa and Jonathan Crow present a deeply unflattering picture of twentieth century white Australia. This reading of *For love alone* challenges the view that Stead takes 'her Australian identity for granted' (Brydon, *Christina Stead* 13), suggesting, on the contrary, that Stead was deeply interested in the political and ethical consequences of Australia's colonial history. This powerful anti-imperial critique, buried within *For love alone*'s anarchic, polyvocal narrative, suggests that there is much to be gained from reading the novel as an example of postcolonial satire.

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