A DARK JUNGLE: NOIR AND THE (DE)COLONIAL LANDSCAPE

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ABSTRACT

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Noir is typically considered a historicized, niche genre, in which specific works from roughly 1930-1950 are classified through their use of visual aesthetics of shadows and angles, a disenfranchised and disillusioned detective, and a problem situated within the underworlds of society. However, noir is much broader, working as a narrative ethos to reveal the alienation of the detective as he or she attempts to answer questions of intrigue. This is particularly the case in the moment of decolonization for the traditional British male subject; as various undergrounds, or non-normative groups, attempt to rewrite society, the male "detective" then tries to seek an answer to these problems. In the first half of the thesis, I discuss how J.G. Ballard's *The Crystal World* and Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* use both the visual stylizations and narrative devices of noir to show the process of detection and marginalization of any individual who cannot adapt. In the second half, I explore Ian Fleming's *Diamonds Are Forever* and J.G. Ballard's *The Drowned World* to show how intrigue works to create a noir narrative. Intrigue being a modernist problem showcases the fallacy of "all knowing" detective of 19th century literature, especially in a decolonial moment. Any solution brings forth new problems and alienation until the erasure of the disenfranchised individual is complete. These four texts then work together to show that noir is the logic that underpins the displacement, alienation, and ultimate death of the British male body within the (de)colonial world.

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Gary Floyd and Anne Marie Dazé Floyd, who shared their love of mysteries with me from an early age onward.

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Introduction

Often, noir is relegated to two categories: film noir and the novels that inspired those films. While film noir is mostly classified as a major Hollywood genre extending from the 1940s until the 1960s, noir novels have been relegated to a specific sub-genre within "Mystery". These "noir" novels, such as those by Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett, are seen as a specifically American detective story, in which the disenfranchised and disillusioned male detective wanders the American streets alone, dodging the underworlds of criminals and their fringe counterparts, and yet, regardless of whatever success, this detective is never able to completely re-establishing himself in the normative world. Aesthetically, film noir (and thus the novels the films are based on) is typically composed of the following elements:

> …noir characters and stories (drifters attracted to beautiful women, private eyes hired by femmes fatales, criminal gangs attempting to pull off heists); noir plot structures (flashbacks, subjective narration); noir sets (urban diners, shabby offices, swank nightclubs); noir decorations (venetian blinds, neon lights, "modern" art); noir costumes (snap-brim hats, trenchcoats, shoulder pads); and noir accessories (cigarettes, cocktails, snub-nosed revolvers). (Naremore 1)

These hyper-specific narrative devices and material objects then relegate noir to the position of a niche genre, rather than a broader category. However, this rigid definition seems problematic in both determining the boundaries of the genre and as an aesthetically and historically defined category. As James Naremore notes, it was not a term used by filmmakers or critics to describe their style until after film noir's major period of production (4). As Slavoj Žižek notes: "From the

beginning even film noir was not limited to hard-boiled detective stories: reverberations of *film noir* motifs are easily discernible in comedies (*Arsenic and Old Lace*), in westerns (*Pursued*), in political (*All the King's Men*) and social dramas (*Weekend's End*) etcetera" (199-200). As Žižek implies, film noir has become a mechanism to historicize certain films as purporting to a specific genre and aesthetic stylization, rather than an initial move by the directors to utilize various overlapping themes and motifs. One can then suggest that the previous considerations of what constitutes a "noir novel" are even more drastic mechanisms to historicize literature.

Noir then is something much broader than a specific aesthetic stylization of certain mysteries written roughly from 1930-1950. As Fredric Jameson notes in his essay, "The Synoptic Chandler", noir participates "in the logic of modernism" (33), suggesting that noir is part of the broader movement of modernist texts, rather than being a singular aesthetic categorization to describe the visual. In this case, noir demands a questioning of how intrigue perpetrates a further alienation of the individual, alienation being one of the crucial elements to the foregrounding of a "modernist" text (*Postmodernism* 11). In this essay, I will argue that noir is not just a specific genre, locked into certain prose styles and literary formulations, but rather an ethos and logic that integrates itself into a wide variety of novels dealing with questions of intrigue and the individual in the mid-20th century. This relationship then becomes integral to the question of a de-colonizing landscape and how that then further alienates individuals. Works such as *The Crystal World* and *The Heart of The Matter* use both the traditionally defined elements of the noir (such as aesthetic stylizations, the detective, and intrigue) to question the role of colonialism and the individual in a de-colonizing world; other novels such as *Diamonds Are Forever* and *The Drowned World* then work more broadly, using noir's philosophical underpinnings of intrigue and detection, to expose similar issues in terms of how an individual

functions in a (de)colonial world.[1] What then becomes crucial is how noir then becomes a philosophic theme that reveals the clash between individuals, their place in society, and the shifting landscape of the colonial world in the mid-20th century.

[1] In using the term "(de)colonial", I want to demonstrate this transitional moment within the space of the novels. While the states are in the process of becoming de-colonized and shifting to a post-colonial moment, it is still in transition. Various characters thus read the landscape as still being colonial or already transitioned to post-colonial, depending on their own positionality within it.

Noir, Colonialism, and the *Femme Fatale*

The novels, *The Crystal World* and *The Heart of the Matter*, both describe the experiences of two middle-aged, English men as they try to navigate African colonies in mid-twentieth century, right before colonial independence. These two narratives, while considering similar themes, are also extremely different stylistically: J.G. Ballard's *The Crystal World* is a science fiction parable, whereas Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* is a psychological drama. What makes these two novels striking though is how they address their contemporary moments and how the protagonists navigate their changing worlds. In both novels, the protagonists, Dr. Sanders and Major Scobie, are presented with a problem that they must solve and which is linked to the shady underworlds of colonial crime and intrigue. However, these protagonists are not the heroic adventurers; in many ways, they are anti-heroes, ill-equipped to deal with the changing world around them, whether though the isolation of the individual in modernity, the shifting power structures of the post-colonial world, or the influence of the powerful modern woman, they must confront these issues in order to solve the mysteries around them. While each novel presents a veiled social commentary, they both rely on the hallmarks of noir to create a compelling narrative and question the overarching problems of mid-twentieth century modernity, whether it is through the characters' understanding of the problems of society, the increasing isolation of the individual, or through the positioning of the powerful modern woman, the *femme fatale.*

While J.G. Ballard's *The Crystal World* recounts the story of a bizarre series of events in the African jungle that are often described as a science fiction parable, the novel is much more than a fantastical story. At its heart, *The Crystal World* explores the underworld of the post-colonial African jungle lurking within a colonial framework and asserts a noir sensibility through

its shadowy descriptions; its "detective" protagonist, Sanders; and the *femmes-fatales* of Suzanne Clair and Louise Peret. The novel continues the same concerns of the adventure/detective novel of the early 20th century, found in the early noir novels of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler.[2] Like Dashiell Hammett, Ballard alters the setting of the late Victorian adventure novel to address the problematic world of the decolonizing colony for the white bodies that inhabit them (Orr 18). As Orr notes, "Late-Victorian adventure stories reflect and reinscribe profound anxieties within the western cultural imagination, doubts not only about the failure of the colonial enterprise but also about the integrity of the metropolis" (5). *The Crystal World*, as a novel of the 1960s, must address what the lasting consequences of the failing colonial enterprise are and how that alters both the physical landscape, the boundaries of law and empire, and what this dissembling will mean for the subjects, especially the colonial women, both within and adjacent to them.[3]

In order to understand *The Crystal World* as a noir novel, it is important to determine which of its characteristics align with the distinct markers of the genre.[4] While the noir novel usually refers specifically to the hard-boil detective stories of Dashiell Hammett and various pulps, *film noir* has a broader definition according to James Naremore (5); *film noir* relies on chiaroscuro to create a visual night, a sense of alienation, and the struggling anti-hero on a quest. The anti-hero (or hero) then becomes involved in a specific underworld:

> The heroes of film noir repeatedly find themselves penetrating the dark world of an urban war zone and venturing into a disorienting, fascinating, and at the same

[2] Despite being written in 1966, this novel should not be considered in a postmodern framework as it does not create nostalgia for the noir colonial world that Stanley Orr suggests is mandatory for the postmodern noir (138).
[3] In the novel the process of crystallization of the jungle subsumes entire entities, whether they are part of the natural world or human; because of the constant references to the jungle as a "dark" place and it being the native Africans' home, it is clear that the crystals symbolize a form of Africanizing and the movement to a postcolonial world.
[4] Orr also states that "noir represents a continuation and recuperation of the colonial discourses immanent in both the late Victorian adventure and detective genres" (3), suggesting that there is an intrinsic relationship between the two.

> time threatening counterworld of corruption, intrigue, betrayal and decadence from which they can escape only through death. (Bronfen 71)

There is a pervasive construct of "world" in the noir, whether in fiction or film as Bronfen notes that perpetuates a dark and devious place operating under the surface of the normative world. While other critics list specific traits that determine the genre, Slavoj Žižek believes that noir is a logic, rather than a genre, in which "…the 'proper,' detective *film noir* as it were *arrives at its truth*—in Hegelese: realizes its notion only by way of its fusion with another genre" (200; emphasis in original). It is this logic in discourse with the theme of alienation and underworld that then create the *noir* novel, which while typically located in the detective novel, but can be found elsewhere. *The Crystal World* then fits into Žižek's construction of noir*:* Sanders tries to discover what happened to Suzanne Clair and her husband, Max, in the depths of the African jungle, and along the way, he finds a "darker" and more fantastic world that exists under the "normative" colonial outpost in which there is a rapid crystallization of the jungle and the people within it. Sanders process of discovering what the crystal world is and the impossibility of stopping it is how the novel arrives at its truth.

The first most obvious noir element of the novel is the description of the physical landscape, which supposedly located somewhere in Gabon, is absent of color. The opening image is of the river: "Above all, the darkness of the river was what impressed Dr. Sanders as he looked out for the first time across the mouth of the Matarre estuary" (*Crystal* 3). However, what is emphasized is not the actual place, but the darkness; this is what impresses Dr. Sanders and goes on to infiltrate every other scenic moment of the novel. It creates a chiaroscuro effect akin to the *film noir*, in which the contrast of light and dark create the ambience and stylistic hallmarks of the genre. This initial image of darkness is not coincidental; the first reference in

the novel is to the Bocklin painting, *Island of the Dead*, (6), which sets up an interesting port of entry – it literally mirrors the image of Sanders entering into Port Matarre, as the darkness of the jungle encroaches upon the light of the world, and calls into question of how Sanders sees the colonies. What the binary opposition of light and dark can mean in this transitioning landscape is divorced from any knowledge he possesses; he "pondered on this cryptic introduction" (9) because it is so foreign to him, despite his many years spent in the African colonies. He clearly sees this world through a European colonial lens.

What becomes significant then in this application of the chiaroscuro in visual descriptions is that everything is represented through manifestations of this light/dark binary, which can be read as symbolic of the relationship between colonized and colonizer and the literal white and black bodies found in 1960s Africa. Whatever Sanders's ultimate reading of this world is, the implication that things must be divided into distinct categories of light and dark is what drives the novel. If a color is referenced, it is a "shadow" or an abstract referent to color (i.e. "multi-colored dappling" (*Crystal* 78)) or approximation of these colors: leprosy is a "silver scale" (70), "clear water" (134), "blackwood cabinet" (148). This lack of color and the clear objective to avoid any sort of chromatic notion of a colorful palate helps to assert the novel as noir. Ballard even tempts the reader to construct the imagery as filmic in referencing cameras and the materials needed to create a film: "Everywhere the forest hung motionless in the warm air, and the speed and spray of the motor-boat seemed to Dr. Sanders like an illusionist trick, the flickering shutter of a defective cine-camera" (57). This focus on perception through the camera, and a defective one at that, helps suggest that Sanders is an unstable, and perhaps untrustworthy, narrator; the way he conceives of Port Matarre and the surrounding jungle is one that does not

quite work in terms of Sanders' normative world, whether back in the West or in his colonial leper colony.

If Sanders perceives of himself as the Dashiell Hammett detective, then he "must confront unruly exotics and corrupted colonials who threaten the integrity of the metropolis" (Orr 15). Sanders views his new location as another manifestation of the colonial: the light is a perfect colonial outpost, like his leper colony or the old Port Matarre, whereas the dark is the world that seeks to overturn these systems. As the Hammett detective, he must determine what influences this darkness in order to protect the remnants of the light; but he must also participate in this underworld in order to improve the surface. The African jungle, just like the criminal world of 1920s America, has its own code of laws that operate within the world of the shadow. As the novel progresses, this underworld becomes readily apparent through the character of Ventress, who is embroiled in some kind of intrigue over the crystals. This is first revealed in the scene at the harbor where the mulatto attempts to kill him (*Crystal* 45), and then through the later scenes with the mulatto's boss, Thorensen. Despite this initial mirroring to a gangster underworld, Sanders quickly learns that the crystallized jungle does not follow the same rules as the rest of the world; the crystals are not necessarily seen as negative. Sanders does not believe this until after his attempt to save Radek who has become subsumed by crystals, and it is only when he comes across the horror the man has now become, having been literally torn from the crystal world and forced back into Sanders' world, that he realizes his mistake (137). The crystal world, while eventually killing any life that becomes a part of it, also elevates the mind to a rapturous state. Even Sanders begins to experience this when looking at the crystalline jungle: "The beauty of the spectacle had turned the keys of memory, and a thousand images of childhood, forgotten nearly forty years, filled his mind, recalling the paradisal world when

everything seemed illuminated by prismatic light…" (77). Yet, despite this intense beauty, this world is also full of darkness and death, rejecting the social operatives of colonial society and thus being something that Sanders must reject as well.

The crystal world clearly cannot function according to the same social structure as colonial Port Matarre or Sanders' leper colony. Yet, the colonists who populate Port Matarre have their own devious qualities that keep them from participating fully in the normative European world and have been relegated to the colonies. Sanders keeps inferring to a devious past that no one can know; Ventress is neither the hero nor the anti-hero, but the strangely attune madman; Louise, the ingénue who while needing assistance in her quest (according to Sanders), markedly defines her own path and makes her own assertions. While many of the men are untrustworthy, so are the women; if *The Crystal World* is a noir novel, then these same women must function as byproducts of a paranoid world evolving out of the socio-political moment of the early 1960s (Bronfen 72). These women are the byproducts of a colonial system, the white colonists who have come to "help" the natives whether through medicine or journalism, and yet, they are still functioning within the same laws of white European society that Sanders or other colonial white men advocate. They must uphold a certain image of femininity and yet their physical location allows them to eschew some of the same social-norms and become self-sufficient and mobile. Suzanne Clair disappears into the jungle without her husband's knowledge and Louise wanders about on her own detective mission without Sanders. Unlike the men in the novel, the women, being socially displaced in terms of colonial hierarchy, are better equipped to participate in the newfound postcolonial crystal world. [5] It is through these two disparate social

[5] As Stoler notes, "In the late colonial order, such interventions [of "how to live"] operated on European colonials in gendered forms that were class-specific and racially coded. Management of home environments, childrearing practices, and sexual arrangements of European colonials were based on the notion that the domestic domain

realms in which the white women participate that they become the strange intermediary between the two worlds (without literally having to be split like Captain Radik).

If the noir is then the best means of accessing the eponymous crystal world, then it becomes integral to how the female characters are constructed, two of which are the most important to Sanders both in terms of his detective quest and sexual desire. The first is Dr. Suzanne Clair, a former lover of Sanders, and the person he is trying to find at the beginning of the novel. The second is the woman he meets upon his journey to the African outpost of Port Matarre, the French journalist, Louise Peret, who was born in the French Congo. These two women, products of the colonial world, then act as the *femmes fatales* of the noir.[6] As Bronfen notes, the *femme fatale* is both a product of and producer of anxiety for the male hero:

> Indeed, one might say that, precisely because the narration of these stories is focalized by men who want to be duped, the noir heroines not only mirror the desire and anxieties of their deluded lovers. Their mysterious attraction also corresponds to the unfathomability of the night itself…they function as the dark vanishing-point of a narrative which they call forth, even while it never fully contains them. (76)

These women not only echo the dangers of moving beyond the normalized European social structures but they insist upon the degeneration of colonialism as a structure and devaluation of the white male body in this system through their constant participation in the crystal world. Yet,

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harbored potential threats both to the 'defense of society' and to the future 'security' of the [European] population and the [colonial] state" (97). Any white woman in the colonial setting thus has a sanctioned "duty" to perpetuate European social norms that continue the divide between races. Yet, the women in *The Crystal World* are seen as dangerous because they not only do not follow these rules, they actively disavow them.

[6] The *femme fatale* is typically structured as a figure, who is nationalistically American, but in opposition to American optimism; it then becomes interesting that none of the female figures in *The Crystal World* are American. They are Europeans, who while not "American pessimists", still possess a world weariness attuned to the lingering pessimism of post-WWII Britain and Europe.

these women also elicit a strange new power as independent and dangerous objects straddling the two worlds of the past and the unknown. Ann Laura Stoler writes:

> If colonialism was indeed a class leveling project that produced a clear consensus about European superiority—a consoling narrative that novels, newspapers, and official documents were wont to rehearse—we are still left to explain the pervasive anxiety about white degeneration in the colonies, the insistent policing of those Europeans who fell from middle-class grace, the vast compendium of health manuals and housekeeping guides that threatened ill-health, ruin and even death if certain moral prescriptions and modes of conduct were not met. (102)

While Stoler describes the Victorian insistence upon the boundaries between colonizer and colonist, what is important is the anxiety that was pervasive among modern Europeans in regards to what happened to "whiteness" in the colonies. It is why the colonizers must stop the crystal world from overtaking everything, because as Captain Radek says to Sanders, "Outside this forest everything seems polarized, does it not, divided into black and white? Wait until you reach the trees, Doctor—there, perhaps, these things will be reconciled for you" (*Crystal* 79). If Sanders falls into this place where things are "reconciled", his known binaries cease to exist and threaten his own position as "the good doctor".

What makes the figures of Suzanne and Louise so dangerous is that they have in some manner succumbed to this erasure of this binary, and yet, they wield an intense sexual attractiveness for the men who are interested in them. They are both the referees for Western values and upholders of the "wild" colony; what makes them so enticing to Sanders is that these

women participate in this deviant world.[7] Not only has Sanders had an affair with the married Suzanne prior to the novel's start, but every aspect of her is rewritten as sexual; even her smile "beckons" to him (*Crystal* 149). Sanders acknowledges Louise's sexual power as being deviant because she both has a striking resemblance to Suzanne and because she helps him to evade sexual norms: he "…looked down at her, aware that for once all the inertia of sexual conventions, and his own reluctance to involve himself intimately with others, had slipped away" (37). In becoming the *femme fatale*, Suzanne and Louise can rework the same power that has been lost to them in becoming colonial women in order to uphold the boundaries of empire, as Anne McClintock notes (6). They can use their position as marginalized colonial women to repossess their sexuality, manipulate the men surrounding them, and rewrite their power to better fit the postcolonial world.

Suzanne then is the ultimate *femme fatale* of the novel because not only does she disappear into the dark of the forest, but she purports a dangerous sexuality for Sanders. Although Suzanne and Sanders had an affair two years prior to the beginning of the novel, every detail is focalized through Sanders and his interiority: "Suzanne's somber beauty had become identified in his mind with this dark side of the psyche, and their affair was an attempt to come to terms with himself and his own ambiguous motives" (*Crystal* 14). When Sanders finally finds Suzanne halfway through the novel, he notices something has changed; Suzanne is no longer the lighthearted person he has imagined. When Suzanne then refuses to participate in Sanders' definitions of her and runs off into the crystal jungle, he assumes she is mad and refers to her as a "poor woman" (73). Sanders clearly feels he must save Suzanne from the dangers of whatever

[7] Ann Laura Stoler writes "…what sustained racial membership was a middle-class morality, nationalist sentiments, bourgeois sensibilities, normalized sexuality, and a carefully circumscribed 'milieu' in school and home" (105). Because Suzanne uses crystals and prefers the darkness of the crystallized jungle, she is rejecting all the normative practices that Sanders believes in, socially and sexually. This makes her deviant and in Sanders' eyes, more mentally unstable.

the crystals possess, in addition to his own guilt over giving her leprosy. Later when she cannot be found and he admits to Max Clair about knowing she is somewhere within the crystalline jungle, he says, "Each of us has something we can't bear to be reminded of," (173), thinking it must be Suzanne's leprosy. Yet, this masking and unfathomability is crucial to the dark, night-like qualities a *femme fatale* needs in order to maintain any power over the detective figure. When Sanders attempts to analyze Suzanne's motives ("Who could blame you for trying to escape to the dark side of the sun?" he asks (149)), he fails to truly understand anything about Suzanne, and yet, this is attractive to Sanders as the detective who must seek out an answer. It is not surprising then that Sanders has sex with Suzanne once again because her mysterious state is desirable, exotic even, despite it also being morally deviant to sleep with a married and "diseased" woman.[8] Yet, this same attempt to understand Suzanne's interiority robs him of any power because he is wrong about her motivations; as much as he may want to, it is impossible to relegate her to her previous position in society as the colonial do-gooder.

Louise, on the other hand, is the antithesis to Suzanne: she is young, French, and retains a critical distance from Sanders' search for Suzanne. However, she is not uninvolved from trying to dissect the crystal world, and yet, she also does not need to accompany Sanders to do so. Like Suzanne, she relies on the characteristic *femme fatale* element of obscuring, although Louise prefers the trademark sunglasses to obscure her expressions and thoughts (Ballard 26). Compared to Suzanne, she is the divergent *femme fatale*, a woman who does not need to be confined to existing in the feminine no-man's-land of a rapidly disappearing colonial setting in order to restructure it; her world functions outside of this, and she, in her physical self-removal at the end of the narrative, structures a different identity and relationship to the crystal world. She

[8] Saunders sees Suzanne as "diseased" because she has Leprosy and he views her as mentally unstable.

becomes the female investigator version of the *femme fatale* that "seek[s] to light out the dark net of intrigue they find themselves embroiled in" (Bronfen 85) and yet the narrative focus on Sanders eliminates any possibility of her possessing the same kind of narrative agency as he does.

Further distancing herself from Suzanne, she possesses her own intrigue and power: "Louise had withdrawn into herself. As she smoked her cigarette after the meal she avoided Sanders eyes" (*Crystal* 60). When Sanders finds her next, it is to his surprise in the ruined plantation after she has appeared as a ghostly apparition in the window. "Did I frighten you?—I'm sorry," (61) Louise states, allowing us to glimpse her independence from Sanders in the surprise appearance. She does not need Sanders any more than he her and she makes it clear that Sanders is merely a convenience to her, perhaps even a joke. Louise clearly is a specific version of the *femme fatale*: "She [the *femme fatale*] does not think of herself as an innocent victim of dark circumstances, but rather shamelessly manipulates her lover, even while recognizing the fatality of her actions" (Bronfen 78). After Sanders reprimands her for scaring him, Louise "saunters" around the room while her "eyes sharpen" (*Crystal* 61). This is a woman who refuses to be the victim, even though by the end of the novel, she could easily claim to be one. Louise allows Sanders to continue his relationship with Suzanne, never commenting or suggesting much interest, and yet this is the same reaction she gives him when he first asks her to dinner: "her face motionless and without expression" (30); in fact, as the novel is a filtering of Sanders' perceptions as the detective/explorer, what we see of Louise is what he sees. While she stays with him at the hotel after Suzanne's disappearance, it is not entirely clear why, until it is revealed that she is still looking for her lost colleague Anderson, a detail obscured in the novel because it is not relevant to Sanders (204-205). It is then that it is revealed that Louise is nothing

but a female detective, and a dangerously independent woman: "Sanders noticed she had begun to wear her sunglasses again, unconsciously revealing her own private decision about Sanders and his future, and their own inevitable separation" (204). Louise understands that Sanders will not fail to disappoint her and yet, she still is there with him at the end of the novel; whether this is because she is using Sanders as much he her is unclear. Nevertheless, she finally retreats back into the world she came from, sunglasses preventing Sanders and thus us from ever knowing her motivations.

In discussing the questions of noir, the political world, and the women who navigate it, it is worth considering Graham Greene's novel, *The Heart of the Matter*.[9] Like *The Crystal World* in which a narrative quest unfolds, *The Heart of the Matter* attempts to solve the mystery surrounding diamond smuggling; however, it is also a process of self-detecting by Major Scobie, the deputy commissioner of police and the anti-hero of the novel. The literal quest Scobie undertakes to find the diamond smugglers eventually is solved, but unlike the typical detective story in which the narrative arrives at closure and a solution, any attempt at a solution reveals the fragmentation of the individual detective. As Orr notes, "In contrast to the classical detective story,…[the noir novel] features a hero dependent upon the antagonistic confrontation of rational consciousness and an irrational world distilled in the colonial periphery" (25).[10] Like Sanders, Scobie finds himself as the intermediary between two worlds – that of the ruling English colonial

[9] The relationship between J.G. Ballard and Graham Greene is an interesting one artistically: Ballard cited Graham Greene as being an early influence in his 1997 book *A User's Guide to the Millennium,* whereas Greene stated that Ballard's work was some of the best new writing in *Conversations with Graham Greene* (1992).

[10] Fredric Jameson also notes similar themes of a thwarting of closure in the narrative structure of Raymond Chandler, "…these lines of inquiry converge on the ultimate matter of narrative closure, which, whatever its fate in the modern and postmodern novel, continues to reign supreme in the mass culture of this period, and is if anything exacerbated by the peculiar nature of the detective story… Yet Chandler liked to argue that in matters of style he tricked his audience into by giving them something other (and better) than what they wanted, thereby satisfying them in spite of themselves. Perhaps in the matter of closure something similar is going on, so that the satisfaction of the detective-story puzzle has in reality been assuaged by something else…" ("Synoptic Chandler" 35). In the case of *The Heart of the Matter* any solution Scobie arrives at only further undermines his own self and destroys the illusion he has created for himself.

society and that of the pedestrian world of policing and crime, which then elicit this rational confrontation for the individual.

This distinction between the rational and irrational, truth and fiction then frame the aesthetic and narrative structure within *The Heart of the Matter*. While the novel does not use the literal shadowing of black and white and angular perspectives typical of the film noir (as *The Crystal World* does through a narrative chiaroscuro), it uses political plots and intrigue to create the same sense of "shadowing". These devices, such as criminal gangs, illicit underworld activities (diamond smuggling in this case), and disenfranchised urban spaces (the docks or other "shady" locales under the guise of night), in addition to the more typical "modernist" urban buildings (offices and individual homes), [11] to help structure a noir "aesthetic" and encode a discourse of normative versus underground systems and places. To heighten this precarious and "dangerous" landscape, Greene then inserts a constant discourse of trust and distrust in order to create a sense of instability and moral binaries. Scobie's detective work is dull, but also highlights elements of distrust within the colony: "From eight-thirty in the morning until eleven he dealt with a case of petty larceny: there were six witnesses to examine, and he didn't believe a word that any of them said" (148). Of all six witnesses, Scobie does not believe a single one, revealing his inherent lack of trust in any native subject and the colonial discourse between the police and natives. This scene exposes the idea that this is the very world of "unruly exotics and corrupted colonials who threaten the integrity of the metropolis" (Orr 15). Scobie's general policing also illuminates the constant questioning within the narrative of what is "fact", rather

[11] In fact, the office seems to be a crucial component for any noir novel as it asserts both the move to a modern cityscape in which various forms of work, whether blue or white color, need an office to function. As Jameson notes in Raymond Chandler's novels: "I am tempted to say that in Chandler the office – if not a well-nigh ontological category – then at least one that subsumes a much wider variety of social activity than it is normally understood to do" (39). As later described in this essay, the office also becomes the space in which work also demands a colonial component. For Scobie, as a colonial police officer, the colonial world infiltrates the British concepts of work.

than impression, at a more abstract level, and Scobie's personal inability to find the "truth". Because the very nature of Scobie's work (and the plot of the novel) depends on his determining how involved the local Syrian merchants are with diamond smuggling, he is always questioning the visible versus the actual.[12] This search for a higher "truth" begins to undermine Scobie and everything he considers, penetrating all levels of his conscious and interior space, including his religion and faith, and eventually reveals his displacement and unstableness in a colonial world.

This sense of displacement and unstableness can be seen in Lisa Fluet's essay, "Hit-Man Modernism", in which the figure of the hit-man becomes the upholder of what she calls "bad modernism": "He [the contract killer] shares both modernism's and cultural studies' ambivalence about the utilization of culture" (274).[13] As the detective, Scobie also purports this same ambivalence in working through the various problems of crime and violence (although from the opposite position of the hit-man). Scobie then internalizes this ambivalence and uses it to question everything around him: "Turning this way and that down the avenues of tarpaulin and wood, he was aware of a nerve in his forehead that beat out the whereabouts of Ali" (Greene 276). The warehouse is reduced to its contents (tarpaulin and wood) rather than being a "modern" building or piece of the city. This constant reduction of place and situation only foregrounds Scobie's interiority; it is as if the nerve in Scobie's forehead, alluding to his interiority, is his compass and the mechanism to determine the fate of his world. Scobie's only

[12] This exploration of corruption is central to what Bronfen sees working in the thematics of noir: "The heroes of film noir repeatedly find themselves penetrating the dark world of an urban war zone and venturing into a disorienting, fascinating, and at the same time threatening world of corruption, intrigue, betrayal, and decadence from which they can escape only through death" (71). Scobie's normal police work is boring, whereas the overt criminality of the diamond smuggling industry is what compels him to find some sort of coherence and truth since it is "disorienting" and "fascinating" and an immediate threat to the colonial society.

[13] This, as Fluet notes, is readily apparent in Greene's earlier novel, *A Gun for Sale*, which explores the relationship between modernism and those who have been rejected from society: "The class 'no-place' where Hoggart's scholarship boy awkwardly finds himself bears critical resemblance to the contract killer's perennially cosmopolitan, border-crossing 'no place'. The killer, however, turns both class and national alienation into advantages, compensating for a felt lack of poise with a combination of outward coolness and metropolitan mobility characteristic with some literary moderns" (274).

way to moderate his anxiety regarding modernity is to maintain some kind of constancy through his police work. When this begins to fail with the arrival of Wilson and pressure to stop the illegal diamond trade, modernity overtakes Scobie. Any thoughts of the future reveal his anxiety: "I've landed her here, he thought, with the odd premonitory sense of guilt he always felt, as though he were responsible for something in the future he couldn't even forsee" (10). This premonition echoes the modern world Scobie is trying to moderate and cannot quite fit into; before the start of the novel, he was able to modulate this with the rules of colonial world and temporary solutions. As his landscape evolves, though, he experiences the "disorienting, fascinating, and at the same time threatening counterworld of corruption, intrigue, betrayal and decadence" that is crucial to the figure of the noir detective (Bronfen 76). While the detective must engage with intrigue and corruption as his personal task, it also undermines the detective's authority within society; although Scobie eventually "solves" who is key to the diamond smuggling ring, this process augments his inability to adapt to a changing society during World War II and the rapidly disappearing British colonial system. As in the typical noir structure, the more Scobie becomes alienated from society and pushed to the margins, the closer he moves to his own death.

The question of detection and truth, if not already present, then comes to the forefront of the novel as Scobie pursues his quest; Scobie, as the uncorrupt policeman, is a model of honesty compared to the corrupt officials around him. With the arrival of the war, it becomes more difficult for him to navigate the morally ambiguous society; for example, he destroys the Portuguese captain's letter to his daughter in Leipzig, rather than report it as pro-German material (Greene 53-56). This one incident triggers his so-called moral downfall and the intensification of his interior questioning. Because the novel is usually structured through

Scobie's perspective, the idea of detection filters through him constantly, indicating the noir logic that Žižek sees as crucial for the arrival at a truth, and becomes a meta-narrative for these thoughts: he starts imagining detective stories—the missionary book, *A Bishop Among the Bantus*, becomes a detective story revolving around British secret agents (134-135)) and Wilson is seen as the spy sent to report on him. This filtering of the narrative through Scobie is akin to the same sort of voice-over narration that Jameson identifies as crucial part of earlier radio and film noir ("Synoptic Chandler" 36).[14] However, Scobie seems ill-equipped to navigate the changing world of intrigue as the old colonial detective moving into a post-colonial world: "It seemed to Wilson that Scobie was still a novice in the world of deceit: he hadn't lived in it since childhood, and he felt an odd elderly envy for Scobie, much as an old lag might envy the young crook serving his first sentence to whom all this was new" (Greene 182). If Wilson, the spy, sees Scobie as unable to fully adjust to the present world of intrigue and losing the past, it then becomes unclear whether he will be able to resolve the questions and turmoil around and within him.

Although Scobie clearly fits into the model of noir detective, the women surrounding him both subsume and reject the traditional figures of the *femme fatale*, working to undermine his stability and illusions of the past.[15] His wife, Louise Scobie, and the young woman refugee, Helen Rolt, act as embodiments of the colony of Sierra Leone and of England. Louise has been

[14] "It is at any rate clear that the voice-over of a hard-boiled detective in general, and of Marlowe in particular, offers a specifically radio pleasure which must be paid for by a kind of closure that allows the novel's past tenses to resonate with doom and foreboding and marks the detective's daily life with the promise of adventure" ("Synoptic Chandler" 35-36).

[15] While there are several African women mentioned in the text, they are used more as details to flesh out the landscape and to suggest a "realistic" backdrop for the narrative rather than as developed characters. These women are seen as desirable, both in Scobie's analysis of Miss Wilberforce's physical beauty and Wilson's visit to the brothel, but just as bell hooks mentions in her essay, "The Oppositional Gaze: Black Female Spectatorship", these women fit into the stereotypes of the stylized world of the colonial male perspective (and thus the noir) as "bodies and beings [that] were there to serve" (96), rather than as protagonists or *femmes fatales*.

with Scobie since he arrived in Sierra Leone; she is first introduced in the initial pages of the novel as a sick and insecure woman. "His wife was sitting up under the mosquito net, and for a moment he had the impression of a joint under a meat cover. But pity trod on the heels of the cruel image and hustled it away" (Greene 17). However, these images of Louise as sick, insecure, and a joint of meat are filtered through Scobie and his own dissatisfaction: "He gave her a bright fake smile; so much of life was a putting off of unhappiness for another time" (17). This unhappiness and internal questioning are emblematic of his entire life: his wife, his lack of advancement in the police force, and his overwhelming need to avoid the corruption around him work to this end. Clearly, Scobie sees his wife as a hindrance and a burden; her "hysteria" is another mechanism in which he is unfulfilled and feels the world bearing down upon him.

This unhappiness shades the character of Louise and it not until Wilson, the spy sent to uncover the diamond smuggling ring, declares his love to her that her double nature is revealed. Wilson may be somewhat of a fool,[16] but he also sees value in Louise that Scobie and the old colonial world has rejected. Instead of thinking of her as simply a "joint of meat" or as "Literary Louise" (Greene 27), Wilson desires and romanticizes her: "There was a faint smell of face powder in the room—it seemed to him the most memorable scent he had ever known" (81). In this moment, Louise becomes the *femme fatale* for Wilson and a conflation of "the savage and exotic" (Orr 32). She asserts a dangerous sexuality that he cannot control, walking between the two worlds of the married colonial woman and that of the independent modern woman; this liminal space is what Stoler and McClintock imply leave the white woman without a place in the English colonial world. Louise, in her discomfort among the officers and colonial society

[16] This is somewhat filtered by Scobie's perspective. Wilson "pants after Louise" as Scobie watches (Greene 79), but he also hunts cockroaches for entertainment with Harris (73-76) and publishes his poem in his secondary school, Old Downham's, alumni publication (180) without Scobie's spectatorship. Whether or not this actually proves Wilson a "fool", it does emphasize his youth in contrast to Scobie.

constantly, straddles the borders of the colonial hierarchy, and throughout the novel, the "good" colonists feel uncomfortable with her inability to fit in their society. Her decision to go to South Africa only emphasizes this duality further; she still loves Scobie, insists on leaving him, writes him letters frequently, and yet, returns. When Wilson tries to undermine Louise's affection for Scobie by revealing his (Scobie's) affair with Helen Rolt, Louise's reaction is unexpected and "savage": "Louise struck at his cheek, and, missing, got his nose, which began to bleed copiously. She said, 'That's for calling him Ticki. Nobody's going to do that expect me. You know he hates it" (Greene 238). She does not strike Wilson because he accuses her husband of infidelity; instead, Louise hits Wilson because he has appropriated one of her modes of power over Scobie. In this moment, it becomes clear that Louise is not just the simpering wife, but rather a powerful woman with agency. Just as Bronfen notes about the *femme fatale,* Louise mirrors the desire and anxiety of Scobie and Wilson, and it is clear that the narrative cannot fully hold her (76). For Scobie, she is tired, bored, and sickly, and in need of an escape, whereas for Wilson she is intelligent, youthful, and passionate. Early in the novel, Scobie notes, "This was what he always left out of account—the accuracy of her observation" (Greene 60); this idea of leaving out portions of the story only emphasizes how unreliable Scobie's (and Wilson's) accounts of Louise are and it is in this omission, they can try to subsume some of her power as the *femme fatale*.

Helen Rolt, on the other hand, is clearly an emblem of past England and the good colonial subject that McClintock describes as "the atavistic and authentic body of national tradition (inert, backward-looking and natural)" (359). Her recollections of school and her stamp collecting help Scobie structure a woman untouched by the colonies; Helen Rolt cannot be the *femme fatale* because she does not know how to mediate boundaries and borders. Everything

about her becomes a model for a romanticized England and it is then easy for Scobie to see her as a replacement for his dead child: "Again he had that vision of someone who didn't know her way around: no wonder Bagster was scared of her. Bagster was not a man to accept responsibility, and how could anyone lay the responsibility for any action, he thought, on this stupid bewildered child?" (Greene 170). Unlike Louise, Scobie can direct and fashion Helen; she has been untainted by knowledge of any kind. "He had no sense of responsibility towards the beautiful and the graceful and the intelligent. They could find their own way" (172) and it is in this juxtaposition that one can see that Louise is dangerous because of her intelligence, beauty, and her inability to be molded. This is only confirmed with the end of the novel, in which Helen Rolt completely falls apart without the guidance of Scobie. Wilson states, "I saw her on the beach this afternoon with Bagster. And I hear she was a bit pickled last night at the Club" (300). The final section leaves it unclear to whether or not she will survive in this new world: "…perhaps after all there was one chance in a thousand she was not alone, and if she were not alone now she would never be alone again" (304). As the emblem for the old England, Helen's future is just as unknown in this moment as colonialism begins to end and there are no clear consequences for the aftermath of World War II.

Both *The Crystal World* and *The Heart of the Matter* consider whether an individual can navigate the changing landscapes of the (de)colonial world and ultimately, those who fail to adapt are reminded of their mortality. However, in utilizing the structure of the noir, there is a possibility for a world that works outside of the normative expectations of colonialism and it is with the rewriting of this system that there is a possibility for happiness. By using noir, though, both novels leave unanswered questions in their process of detection and suggest that any attempt to find an answer only brings forth more questions and instability. In *The Crystal World*,

this instability then is foregrounded by a landscape that is literally shades of white and black, with the question of bodies ever-present. What is the crystal world? It could be the new post-colonial African society, a foreign place to Europeans and literally their "death" in Africa. These possibilities are never completely revealed except to suggest different forms of alienation; by focusing on the female characters, it becomes clear that these women function as the *femmes fatales* of the noir and through this role they can offer a new entryway into the decolonizing world. They are marginalized as women in the colonial world and yet as white Europeans, they do not belong to the African world. However, it is in the underworld of the crystal jungle that they can find a new power structure and bridge their past identities with a new future. Instead of relying on the roles prescribed to them as colonists, they rewrite their positions in society by using the crystal world: Suzanne literally runs off into the jungle to join the native tribe, while Louise uses it as the source of her inspiration as the unknowable detective. This rewriting of social position in a colonial landscape then makes them very dangerous for Sanders and those who are leftovers from a colonial era; not only are these women sexually attractive but refuse to grant access to their interiority. Thus they are unknown entities, the dangerous women of an emerging and future world.

In *The Heart of the Matter*, the women are the survivors; they are the ones who can transition to a future world as they have continually mediated the borders of society and adapted to a modern world. When Scobie dies, Louise is left with more options than before in terms of her own autonomy. It is as if she foreshadows her own future when she suggests that Scobie will be happier without her when she leaves for South Africa (Greene 60); he can only truly be happy in death and then she can be happy without him. Scobie's denial of Louise's desirability is rejected by the end of the novel and she becomes the master *femme fatale* as her interiority is

never revealed. Helen Rolt's position in this burgeoning world is more complicated; Scobie made it clear she is a naïf in terms of colonialism, and her reliance on English romanticism makes her unsuited for colonial life. However, the ambiguous end of the novel leaves her future open to speculation, just as the future for a post-colonial England is up in the air. Greene does not seem as preoccupied as Ballard in regards to the future of Sierra Leone as a postcolonial society; throughout the novel he seems to suggest the country has always had modes of independence from colonial domination, whether through profiteering, rejection of colonial customs by the Africans, and the subterfuge of an oppressed society. However, the question of intrigue still remains at the end of the novel. How much of this is a function of a burgeoning modernity? Clearly, someone like Louise Scobie, who is constantly rejected by the colonial society, works within the cosmopolitan modernities that all *femmes fatales* operate, and through autonomy and sophistication becomes the victor of the novel. Perhaps the most dangerous element for these detective men, like Scobie, is their failure to recognize a society, in which women, regardless of their race, refuse access to their interiority. This then becomes the dangerous space, the underground that is lurking for the male detective.

As Bronfen states, the ultimate escape for the disassociated male detective in noir is death (71) and in both novels, death is the final solution for the men: Scobie dies in the final pages of *The Heart of the Matter*, and it is clear that Dr. Sanders will eventually be taken over by the crystal world wherever he goes. However, the survivors of the final pages are the women; both Louises, the French Louise of *The Crystal World* and the English Louise of *The Heart of the Matter*, have an undetermined and hopeful future. As *femmes fatales*, they are allowed to write their own stories, literally in their professions as reporter and literary cultivator. They do not possess the same anxiety as the displaced men, and perhaps having never had a role in the

colonial world, can write a new one in the post-colonial world. However, both novels end in darkness. It is unclear whether the bounds of the noir go beyond the men's disillusionment and will affect future constructs of modernity, as isolation and alienation simply moving to new areas, just as the crystals continue spreading throughout the pages of the novel.

The Landscape of Intrigue

While the detective's quest affects him or her individually, solving a "mystery" and the process of detection reflects broader social and political issues. However, the way noir has been typically read as a formulaic genre with specific motifs and as a response to the historical events surrounding World War II rather than a literary style thus ignores the position of intrigue within multiple texts and as a broader literary trope. As Fredric Jameson notes in *The Political Unconscious*, this kind of periodization and the creating of a historical totality within literature is reductive, demonstrating:

> …the way in which the construction of a historical totality necessarily involves the isolation and the privileging of one of the elements *within* that totality (a kind of thought habit, a predilection for specific forms, a certain type of belief, a "characteristic" political structure or form of domination) such that the element in question becomes a master code or "inner essence" capable of explicating the other elements or features of the "whole" in question. (27-28)

The previous conceptions of noir rely specifically on two things to demonstrate "inner essence": the aesthetics of black and white angularities and the alienated detective within the American city to show the liminality of individuals within the modernist city. While these stylistic elements and narrative themes are present in many works as noted by the critics of noir, they are not the only markers of noir, or even the means to explicate the "the whole". What then becomes integral to noir as a genre is its discourse around intrigue and the individual; the noir ethos is thus the attempts of an individual in navigating intrigue, as that intrigue reveals alternative structures, through underground or non-normative worlds in the (de)colonial space. Novels like *The Crystal*

World and *The Heart of the Matter* draw specifically upon noir aesthetics in addition to a noir ethos; other texts, like *Diamonds Are Forever* and *The Drowned World* are less clearly a typical noir in their stylizations. However, despite the seeming lack of chiaroscuro, angles, and trenchcoats, these novels still fit within the overall genre. By developing a plot around an individual attempting to solve some kind of intrigue located within the (de)colonial space, they purport a noir ethos and offer a new reading for the position of the British man within that same (de)colonial space.

Just as Orr sees the Victorian adventure novel promoting a certain anxiety about the colonies, noir continues this anxiety in trying to determine where the individual fits within the (de)colonial landscape in the 20th century. This anxiety then is enacted through intrigue and the attempts to discover some sort of "truth"; [17] as Allan Hepburn notes in his book, *Intrigue*: "The policing of boundaries became a means of calculating differences between natives and aliens…Intrigue plots create and manage a crisis of belonging" (11). These plots focused on the question of invasion by foreign bodies in terms of British identity and how this then affects the overarching question of "belonging". While Hepburn is working with the concept of spies as seen in early intrigue novels like Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, the noir detective can be seen as a further extension of this alienation. Hepburn defines intrigue using Lukács' structuring of inner worlds, outer worlds, and the gap in between (6); intrigue then becomes the decisive thread that allows the individual to undergo a process of mediation between boundaries as he or she "detects" an answer.

[17] Intrigue is also different from espionage; espionage denotes the process of watching by the state and its parties, whereas intrigue is a question of a deficiency in knowledge, which often leads to a sinister confrontation. Often a spy is addressing a question of intrigue through the process of espionage. A detective on the other hand is usually attempting to navigate intrigue and occasionally using the tools of espionage, although by unsanctioned and illicit means.

In both *The Crystal World* and *The Heart of the Matter*, the pro-colonial, pro-imperial discourse is underscored as destructive for the male detective; however, both novels offer a sense that there can be a hopeful outcome for certain characters as they transition to a post-colonial British space. However, not all novels that utilize the noir are so moderate in their interpretation of the process of decolonization. What then becomes important in other novels is how the process of intrigue than asserts a specific position about decolonization and the mechanisms to survive the transition. The noir detective, who as previously defined is satisfying some sort of quest, whether physical or psychological, has a commitment to a certain agenda. At times, this might be a personal code or philosophy, and in other moments becomes a way of perpetuating the colonial system. While Ian Fleming's *Diamonds Are Forever* would not be considered a typical noir, it works within the broader ethos of noir, in which the (de)colonial discourse becomes a mode of intrigue, asking who belongs to these new societies and what that then means for the individual seeking an answer. The novel begins in Africa, as diamonds are being smuggled from British held mines; the Secret Service investigates because the smuggling operation is affecting British interests. James Bond is brought in as an undercover agent and asked to infiltrate the Spangler gang that is supposedly running the smuggling operation. The gang, while operating internationally, is mostly based in the United States, running a variety of typical mafia related "businesses". James Bond then must go to the United States, first New York and then Las Vegas, in order to determine who is involved in this operation and find some kind of evidence to connect the criminals to the smuggling operation.

While America is far from existing colonies of Britain in 1956, the year of the novel's publication, the plot around the novel treats the landscape as being decisively different from the rational world of Europe. Like *The Heart of the Matter* in which colonial police forces are still

dictating systems of law and justice, *Diamonds Are Forever* demonstrates how the British government still inserts itself in "solving crime" and intrigue. James Bond as a government agent moves through America autonomously from the American government in order to hunt down American gangsters. In describing the setting of America, the novel uses language that issues a tone of exploration and exoticism:

> The magnificent six-lane highway stretched on through a forest of multi-coloured signs and frontages until it lost itself downtown in a dancing lake of heat waves. The day was as hot and sultry as an opal. The swollen sun burned straight down the middle of the frying concrete, and there was no shade anywhere except under the few scattered palms in the forecourts of the motels. A glittering spray of light-splinters pierced Bond's eyes from the windshields and the chrome of oncoming cars, and he felt his shirt clinging stickily to his skin. (Fleming 123)

This landscape is a far cry from the tempered scenes in Britain, in which the streets do not glitter or heat dances. There is a constant physical oppression in this scene, with the heat making Bond sweating and the light "piercing" his eyes. This brutality demands conquering and what is striking is that with no reference to the actual location of Las Vegas, this scene could be mistaken for any hot colonial landscape. In fact, in the two chapters situated in Africa, the landscape is decidedly similar:

> The moonlight, glittering down through the great thornbush, threw sapphire highlights off the hard block polish of the six-inch body and glinted palely on the moist white sting which protruded from the last segment of the tail, now curved over parallel with the scorpion's flat back (1).

Both scenes "glitter" regardless of day or night, and French Guinea, where the mines are situated, is also "hot and sticky" (206). The two continents appear to be interchangeable and yet still foreign to the English individual; they echo a brutality unlike the rationalized world of cool London as the "knowable community" in which social relationships, characters, and setting are static (Thompson 101). In describing the American landscape as interchangeable from that of Britain's African colonies, it is clear that the novel treats America as a colonial space. James Bond sees the land as something that needs to be conquered, just as the smuggling operation uncovered.

Even more noteworthy is Bond's view of the criminals he finds in the United States. The people who inhabit the landscape are equal to any other colonial counterparts in the mind of Bond. He describes the gangsters:

> What did these people amount to? Bond remembered cold, dedicated, chess-playing Russians; brilliant neurotic Germans; silent, deadly, anonymous men from Central Europe…Compared to such men, Bond decided, these people were just teen-age pillow fantasies. (91)

The American criminals have none of the sophistication of the European ones; they are simple and childish in Bond's mind. It is no different from the colonist's perspective in other colonies; both Dr. Sanders and Major Scobie view the Africans as simplistic and brutal and Americans are simply the same in *Diamonds are Forever*. This is a matter of Bond's "knowing" his enemy and despite almost being outsmarted by the Las Vegas mafia machine, Bond is still reluctant to admit their sophistication, stating:

> I used to think your gangsters were just a bunch of Italian greaseballs who filled themselves up with pizza pie and beer all week and on Saturday knocked off a garage or a drugstore so as to pay their way at the races. But they've certainly got plenty of violence on the payroll. (173)

American criminals, he concedes are just as violent as any other group, but there is a reticence to allow them any autonomy or ability to dictate their own system and are the same "unruly exotics and corrupt colonials" who threaten the imperial order and the integrity of the metropolis (Orr 15) in their attempts to thwart the British systems.

However, while James Bond is not the typical noir detective, *Diamonds are Forever* works within the same framework as the novels previously discussed. In returning to Žižek's definition of noir as logic, in which there is a fusion between genres to arrive at its truth, *Diamonds are Forever* then combines the world of intrigue and spies with that of the process of detection and underworlds. Bond is the clear protagonist, but rather than being the alienated figure, he is strangely static, never demonstrating an anxiety about modernity. The novel then shifts to Bond's former CIA counterpart, Felix Leiter, to expose this anxiety about the position of the individual in a changing world. As a former government agent, he previously had access to the same world as Bond, and yet was rejected due to the loss of his arm; now, in being the "hired gun" as a Pinkerton detective, Leiter is akin to the classic film noir detective, moving among the shady underground working between two different worlds and never fully being taken up by either. In fact, Leiter positions himself differently from Bond; he tells Bond at one point, "Maybe you can strike a blow for Freedom, Home and Beauty with that rusty old equalizer of yours" (Fleming 118), suggesting that he, Leiter, no longer has faith that his actions led to any kind of "greater good" and an overall distrust of modern society. However, as a former intelligence

officer, he also shows that Bond should be anxious about the modern world; Leiter is an example of someone who has been failed by the system and pushed to the margins.

Another anxiety Leiter helps expose is the problem surrounding an individual's corporality and the imminence of death. In losing his hand and becoming a mutilated body, he is rejected by the CIA and relegated to a space that must operate in the periphery (Fleming 61). This bodily loss then becomes integral to the structuring of the noir; Leiter is neither the master of the underworld as perpetrated by the Spangled gang nor the upholder of the normative world, who in this case, is James Bond restoring equilibrium between the government and criminals. This marginality is because of Leiter's corporeality: he is rejected by the CIA because he is damaged, missing his gun hand. This does not prevent him from working as a detective and navigating the criminal worlds however. Yet, this highlights the tenuous status the individual has in terms of normative society; there is a constant anxiety (and rightly so for Leiter) that any flaw or deviation from the norm pushes the individual closer to a liminal space, and ultimately, to death. One of the reasons James Bond ignores his physicality and bodily limits is that they will move him outside of the normative world. In fact, in the moments that James Bond is injured, often verging on fatally, he ignores his own physical suffering to continue the mission, rather than fail at his task and thus leave the question of intrigue unanswered. When he is beaten up by Mr. Spang's goons, he still tries to rescue Tiffany Case: "Bond gritted his teeth and crawled onto the moonlit platform, and when he saw the dark path on the ground, rage gave him strength and he got clumsily to his feet…" (Fleming 160). Bond has recognized the effects and marginal position Leiter is in and is reluctant to let go of his position. The other Pinkerton employee in the novel, Ernie Cureo, almost dies in the process of aiding Bond, and is fully incapacitated for the rest of the novel; he is not the machine that Bond is, able to ignore his own corporeality. Rather,

like Dr. Sanders and Major Scobie, as middle-aged men, the world of colonial intrigue is slowly eradicating figures that exist in-between or outside of the binary of normative/underworld, furthering their alienation from a "modern" society.

This noir ethos, the attempt of individuals to navigate an answer to intrigue in a changing society, also appears in J.G. Ballard's *The Drowned World*. Like *The Crystal World,* the novel describes an apocalyptic tale, in which the majority of the world's land has been overtaken by water; the continents and inhabitable land are increasingly disappearing, as water slowly overtakes everything. The novel suggests that the setting is several centuries past the initial moment of writing in 1962, although it is clear that there is still a "British" system of rule and of class hierarchies. These hierarchies are composed of a team of biologists, studying the effects of the rising temperatures upon the human body and its drastic evolution in the foreboding climate; the military issuing a kind of martial law of these "territories"; and the anarchic "mobster", Strangman, who raids the various underwater worlds with his entourage of dark sailors. The novel's protagonist, Kerans, a biologist, is attempting to understand what is happening in this decaying landscape and the radically evolving ecosystem, in cooperation with the military. Meanwhile, with the water levels increasing and the quick overtaking of the inhabitable land, the military led by Colonel Riggs is preparing an evacuation. However, Kerans is unwilling to go, partially due to his attempts to maintain autonomous, and partially due to his allegiance to Beatrice Dahl, the sole woman left on this section of land who adamantly refuses to leave. Like *The Crystal World*, this novel is considered one of J.G. Ballard's science fiction disaster novels, and yet, it works with the same themes of a protagonist who must "detect" an answer to his problem, the disappearing "familiar" world, and the constant anxiety of trying to navigate both the normative and the underworld in a landscape that is quickly unraveling.

The defining stylistic element of *The Drowned World* is its science fiction setting in a future world.[18] Unlike the other novels, it does not offer a scenario that is directly connected to the political moment that surrounds the novel's construction. However, although this scenario can be read as "futuristic", "dystopian", or "science fiction", the novel still possesses an inherent link to the questions of national boundaries, intrigue, and the positioning of alienated figures in a decolonizing moment. Like Dr. Sanders in *The Crystal World*, Kerans is trying to maintain some of the hallmarks of "normativity" in a landscape that absolutely forbids it. At first it seems that Kerans' quest is to protect Beatrice Dahl from the natural ravages of nature as well as protect the "land". He even tells Riggs, "I've always understood that our duty was to stay on here as long as possible and make every sacrifice necessary to that end…that was the reason my grandfather was given when the Government confiscated most of his property" (*Drowned* 27). His rhetoric takes up one of duty and honor, akin to the typical British colonial notion that tied within the land is a specific responsibility to maintain it for greater nationalistic purposes. Like either Dr. Sanders or Major Scobie, Kerans perpetuates the old system of colonialism in his actions and behavior. Of course, this is a problem in *The Drowned World* where not only is the land being physically erased through the process of "drowning", but there are no coherent boundaries or order.

Yet, this also seems to echo a nostalgia for an old system of rule (i.e. colonial rule) and while Kerans may not be personally aware of this rule, it trickles down into his psyche. What makes this particularly interesting is that the majority of the novel is set in what was once London. Only Dr. Bodkin, as the oldest character, has any recollection of the city and it is his

[18] We could also say that *The Crystal World* is a science fiction novel because it is set in an imaginary location and based on a scientific "impossibility" of the natural world mutating in "improbable" ways (although our current moment in which climatology is front and center seems to suggest this is ever-likely scenario). What makes *The Drowned World* stand apart novelistically is that it thinks through a disaster situation that is located in a future time; *The Crystal World* is located in a present moment and offers stylistic elements that make it more "realistic" in setting: the African country as it decolonizes.

memories that inscribe the greatest sense of nostalgia for the once great empire (*Drowned* 75-76). Yet, the characters still try to perpetuate the cultural elements of the British Empire as a mechanism of preservation. Beatrice's home has a swimming pool "with a covered patio, bright deck-chairs drawn up in the shade by the diving board. Yellow venetian blinds masked the windows…they could see the cool shadows of the interior lounge, the cut-glass and silver on the occasional table" (24). This is a far cry from the actual decay of the city or the brutal jungle landscape as "Everything in this private haven seemed clean and discreet, thousands of miles away from the fly-blown vegetation and tepid jungle water twenty storeys below" (24-25). This clearly is part of Stanley Orr's argument that the noir is a rewriting of the colonial adventure novel, in which a major element of a detective's quest is the battle against the "oppressive" landscape. Raymond Chandler's *The Long Goodbye*, a prototypical noir fiction describes a similar landscape: "The island of California has not been conquered by adventurous men and civilized by angelic metropolitan women, as Truman had predicted; conversely, these figures have been assimilated into savagery" (72). What induces fear then is this how the landscape moves the "sophisticated Englishman" into the "jungle man", whether in the American goons of *Diamonds Are Forever* or Strangman's black henchmen. Kerans then purports a belief in maintaining land and protecting hierarchies as a rational measure and yet, as the novel progresses and more questions arise, these beliefs unravel.

Kerans, like Bond, is then the noir protagonist attempting to solve a problem; the anxiety moving to the very actions within the narrative, rather than being positioned within his interiority. Kerans is wary of subscribing to one system of control though and physically exists between two states of mind: that of the rational and that of the dream-world of the "evolving"

human. It becomes apparent that the military only operates according to rationality and logic, failing to see the benefit of the dream world and the non-normative human:

> What completely separated them now was the single fact that Riggs had not seen the dream, not felt its immense hallucinatory power. He was still obeying reason and logic, buzzing around his diminished, unimportant world with his little parcels of instructions like a worker bee about to return to the home nest. (75)

This inability to see dreams allows the army to be cool and calculating, constantly exerting a calculated moral code, whether it is in their attempts to extract Hardman or their operation to regain territorial control from Strangman. Kerans begins to feel alienated, existing between these two planes: that of the normative world and the dream-state. Yet, he still tries to maintain some control and order in his life. This focus on the tension between rationality, empiricism, and other systems is also important in Raymond Chandler's works and the traditional noir novel: "Here the older logic of cause and effect (or deduction) will evidently be replaced by some new criterion for dealing out a handful of episodes…" ("Synoptic Chandler" 35). Part of the overarching alienation within the noir then is a move away from an Enlightenment code of deduction. In all of the novels previously considered, including *The Drowned World*, any deduction or rational solution to a problem underscores the individual's own mortality in a (de)colonial setting. This then is the quest or problem of intrigue the novel purports throughout: how to maintain control over the mind and body in an ever-changing landscape.

The Drowned World is then occupied with the constant states of human physicality and corporeal decay. In a landscape that tortures the human body through the impossible extremes of temperature and the Earth's return to a Mesozoic-like state, each character's behavior and actions

depend on their conscious recognition of an ever-likely death. Unlike the other novels, *The Drowned World* demonstrates an already rapid decay of bodies through the descriptions of various characters physical appearance. Kerans is described in the opening scenes as decaying: "A chronic lack of appetite, and the new malarias, had shrunk the dry leathery skin under his cheekbones, emphasizing the ascetic cast of his face" (*Drowned* 11). Unlike the empirical detective like Sherlock Holmes, the noir figure purports a level of decay and disgust. [19] However, this constant focus on the body, its decay, and psychological and physical alienation all then play into the overarching anxiety within the narrative. Kerans attempts to assert some semblance of control as he manages Beatrice's body: "Kerans scrutinized her closely, smiling to himself in a mixture of affection and despair. 'I'll see if I can repair the motor. This bedroom smells as if you've had an entire penal battalion billeted with you. Take a shower, Bea, and try to pull yourself together" (50). Kerans, as the scientist-explorer, exerts the rational and empirical in these early moments. Bathing is a mechanism of bodily control in a landscape constantly trying to erase bodies; but it also reinforces what Stoler sees as the enacting of "colonial gendered forms" in order to defend society and secure the future of the population (97) by demanding that Beatrice regulate her body through the social mechanisms once deemed "appropriate". This echoes the lasting cultural elements that have carried over, robbed of context, like the poolside patio and "dressing for dinner" in a jungle (*Drowned* 42) as a way to maintain a "normal" and "rational" colonial society.

Yet, Kerans' attempts to maintain some kind of order quickly become overtaken by dreams, showcasing the rapid loss of "rationality" and mental order in this drowning world.

[19] "Typical" detectives and spies are similar to the noir detective as they are all "deconstructing the mystery…as a logical sequence of causes and effects" (Sweeney 4) and perpetuate a tension between organized crime solvers (the police) and their own investigation; what makes the noir detective decidedly different though is that in the process of gathering knowledge to solve the crime, he or she fails to be "all-knowing" like Sherlock Homes or other the other classic detectives Sweeney describes (1). The process of gathering knowledge only alienates him or her further.

However, it is not his attempts to maintain a certain order that assert his mortality; it is his inability to maintain any kind of system, whether it is the old colonial, militaristic hierarchy or the anarchy of Strangman. In attempting to resist both, Kerans ensures his death, just like Hardman does; at the end of the novel, he finds Hardman who "was no more than a resurrected corpse" (*Drowned* 171), having gone blind and losing any kind of rationality, his "real personality [being] now submerged deep within his mind" (173). It has only been a few months since Hardman's disappearance, and yet Kerans falsely believes that he has more of a chance in surviving the brutal jungle. Hardman's reappearance only seems to echo how that anyone who tries to become autonomous, a rogue survivalist or simply, the figure pushed into the margins, ensures that their own decay and death is imminent.

The Drowned World is similar to *Diamonds Are Forever* in how it works through the layers of intrigue and the individual. The plot of *The Drowned World* issues a sense of imminent danger and fear: "Narratives of intrigue play up and play on the fears of individuals who are at a loss about their place in the social order" (Hepburn 23). The initial question of the physical landscape presents Kerans with a sense of fear, but he quickly overcomes that anxiety; however, the arrival of Strangman issues a new fear and new problem:

> The white-suited man was standing in the open hatchway, hands on his hips, gazing exultantly at this reptilian brood…As his Negro lieutenants restarted their engines and drifted off towards the band, he surveyed the buildings with a critical eye, his strong face raised almost jauntily to one side. The alligators congregated like hounds around their master, the wheeling cries of the dense cloud of sentinel birds overhead, Nile plover and stone curlew, piercing the morning air. More and more of the alligators joined the pack,

> cruising should to should in a clock-wise spiral, until at least two thousand were present, a massive group of incarnation of reptilian evil. (86-87).

What unnerves Kerans is not the arrival of other humans, but the uncanny pack of alligators that Strangman holds power over. These "incarnation(s) of reptilian evil" heighten the unnaturalness of Strangman and his already "disturbing" physical appearance, in which "the skin of his face and hands was uncannily white, devoid altogether of any pigmentation…the effect emphasized by the white suit he had chosen" (92). Of course, as the anarchist bent on finding treasures and ransacking whatever cities he can find, Strangman also creates a level of chaos that Kerans, who is used to the normal boundaries of rationalism and empiricism, cannot address. According to Kerans, Strangman is the force that should not be allowed in the normative world because of the havoc he wrecks "with violence and cruelty… [being] half-buccaneer, half-devil"; yet, as Riggs notes, there is no punitive measures enacted against Strangman, because he knows how to manipulate the laws to his benefit:

> …there's absolutely nothing I can hold him on. Legally, as he full well knows, he was absolutely entitled to defend himself against Bodkin…Don't you remember the Reclaimed Lands Act and the Dykes Maintenance Regulations? They still are very much in force. I know Strangman's a nasty piece of work—with that white skin and his alligators—but strictly speaking he deserves a medal for pumping out the lagoon (157).

Despite Strangman emptying the lagoon in order to raid the old museums and shops, he technically is still within the law, and that horrifies Kerans. Yet Kerans himself neither identifies with Riggs nor Strangman, socially or legally, furthering his sense of alienation. He does not

have the power to utilize the laws to his favor as Strangman does, nor can he choose how to enforce them like Riggs.

Strangman is not just a fear-inducing character because of his ability to manipulate law but his very presence as the "other" exerts a level of fear. The novel echoes a colonial discourse similar to that of *The Crystal World*, in which only those who exist in the shadows will survive the changing world. It is clear that any attempt someone like Hardman (or Kerans for that matter) makes to eke it out in the oppressive landscape will lead to death. The military's mechanism for survival is to continuously withdraw from the uninhabitable locales, shuttling their people to still inhabitable places. It is as if those who enacted colonial rule are retreating, while the figures who counter that system, or the "colonials" like Strangman, are slowly retaking their places. While there is no doubt of Strangman's sinister motives and behavior, especially in regards to his attempts to lure Beatrice, he is also seen by Kerans as being "inhuman" and devil-like. Partially, this is due to his uncanny ability to control animals, which Kerans reads as being devious and somehow inhuman: "He had seen a large number of albino snakes and lizards since Strangman's arrival, appearing from the jungle as if attracted by his presence" (*Drowned* 99). Although Strangman is a physically bizarre character with his monochromatic style of dress and posse of albino reptiles, what ultimately makes him "devilish" is his pure disregard for rationality and the systems in place; he drains the streets of London to reveal the old city (Beatrice refers to the uncovered city as "some imaginary city of Hell" (123)). However, Kerans cannot escape Strangman's magnetic hold, despite knowing he is "insane and dangerous" (130); Kerans' quest then moves being subsistence in the drowning world to uncovering the motivation of Strangman, the ultimate Other. His physical attributes do not allow him to burn in the climate, despite everyone else's constant sunburns; his henchmen are black men, who Strangman clearly aligns

with culturally, and reptiles. He dances to the crew's drumming, "inciting the drummers to ever faster rhythms" (131-132) and treats Beatrice as a "if she were a tribal totem, a deity whose power was responsible for their continued good fortune" (131), further emphasizing the difference between Kerans' imperial culture and setting and Strangman as a "jungleman". When Kerans' finally learns of why Strangman has amassed so much power and fear ("'Because they think I'm dead'" he states with laughter (132)), it is under the "spell" of the exotic Mr. Bones ritual, in which Big Caesar, one of the henchmen dons a dried alligator head as a costume and sings the minstrel, *The Ballad of Mistah Bones*. Clearly playing into the racial fear surrounding African culture in the colonies as seen in *The Crystal World*, these mechanisms elicit fear for Kerans; Strangman purposely employs his henchmen to terrorize and control those who are left in the new London and uses his own manipulated ritual of the bone chair to almost kill Kerans. This scene reveals the answer Kerans was looking for: Strangman is an other-worldly character and the ruler of an underworld. In solving the intrigue, Kerans also demonstrates the anxiety around the fear of the Other. For Kerans, this then reinforces the necessity of order and rationality and when he is rescued by Riggs, he can only hope for some alleviation from anxiety, however brief that is.

Like *The Crystal World*, the individual as the noir detective exists outside of the evolving landscape found with the drowning world. It is clear that with Riggs's dismissal and refusal to prosecute Strangman that a new order may be arising; Strangman, despite his albinism, thrives in the brutal landscape and reinscribes new codes of law that move beyond the cultural remnants of a colonial order. However, in the end of the novel, Kerans refuses to allow the city of London to remain drained by bombing the retaining walls. This allows two different readings: that Kerans does not believe in a new order by those subjugated or in the "underworld", or conversely, that

there needs to be a complete rewriting of the world, with no remnants of any culture, colonial or postcolonial. Yet, neither of these matter in terms of the individual and the question of intrigue. The process of attempting to find an answer for intrigue makes Kerans' fate is clear. As the noir detective, his individualism and inability to reconcile with either system leads to his already encroaching sense of mortality. Although he may disappear into the jungle alive, his death is imminent. *The Crystal World* and *The Heart of the Matter* both suggest the ever-encroaching death for the male colonist, but allow for the possibility of the survival of those who perpetuated the colonial hierarchy. *The Drowned World* offers a much bleaker conclusion: regardless of changing systems or order, rational, anarchic, or other, the world will cover itself over, erasing everything and everyone with it. The only question is how fast individuals will succumb to their death.

Conclusion

In the four novels considered here, it is clear that noir aesthetics reveal a decaying or changing landscape, imaginary or historical in the moment of (de)colonizing. However, as a genre, noir works in terms of defining a logic surrounding the individual and questions of intrigue. *The Crystal World* and *The Heart of the Matter* draw directly upon the visual and narrative elements of typical noir, whereas *Diamonds Are Forever* and *The Drowned World* use a broader range of stylistic elements to detail the unfolding of "detection" and intrigue. Most importantly, the novels purport a noir ethos in which intrigue demonstrates the anxiety of individuals within a modernist landscape. In these novels, the landscape centers around the (de)colonial and reveals a detective figure caught between the two worlds, that of the colonial and the postcolonial. Each novel thinks through this division in different ways, trying to understand how the underworld re-inscribes itself upon society in order to issue a new dynamic. In *The Crystal World* and *The Drowned World,* the underworlds are that of the subjugated cultures of Africa and diasporic peoples, attempting to rewrite control and power. The underworld in *The Heart of the Matter* proves to be the commercialization of colonial resources and goods, the native peoples clearly moving outside the British hierarchies, often unbeknownst to the colonial law givers. *Diamonds Are Forever* sees the underworld as also being one of criminals stealing British owned goods and resources, disrupting imperial systems. These disruptions of normative society then bring forth a certain problem or question of intrigue within the novel. The detective then must attempt to solve these problems and get to the truth of the situation.

However, the intrigue then pushes each man to try to navigate both the normative and underworld in order to find an answer and thus become the knowledgeable detective. Each

"solution" reveals another level of intrigue or a new anxiety related to modernity, which then eats away at the detective, mentally or physically. Ultimately, the novels suggest the process of detection in modernity leads to death, rather than a newfound empirical rationalism as the 19th century detective suggests. Dr. Sanders, Major Scobie, and Kerans die within the pages of the novel or demonstrate that their death is imminent. In *Diamonds Are Forever*, James Bond does not have any of the same individual sense of mortality, but the characters around him demonstrate the anxiety in a changing world; the novel takes a more conservative position suggesting that those who reassert imperialism can avoid death, at least temporarily. However, there are still those in the novel who are unable to reconcile with society. Even when James Bond is victorious, the question of intrigue brings forth a narrative anxiety. People like Frank Leiter and Ernie Cureo are constantly reminded of their inability to reconcile with society, and as individuals, they demonstrate how modernity fragments and marginalizes anyone caught between the two worlds. Eventually, even James Bond will face this same marginalization.

As a more broadly defined, noir showcases how intrigue underscores the alienation and fragmentation of modernity for an individual. While not all the novels are completely hopeless, especially for the *femmes fatales* and those who are attempting to rewrite society, noir demonstrates that the knowledgeable detective who always arrives at closure is a fallacy. Within the modern landscape, especially the colonial world, this position is archaic and perhaps even mythological. Figures like Sherlock Holmes are remnants of an imperial Britain that has all but disappeared. Instead, death eventually finds the individual seeking an answer to the anxieties of modernity and a changing landscape.

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