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Crime Narrative as a Vehicle of Socio-political Critique: A Study of Vikas Swarup’s *Six Suspects*

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ABSTRACT

Crime fiction is not inherently a conservative genre but fluid in nature as evident from the constant revision it has gone through rereading and rewriting. Still, the popularity of the genre remains unhindered, like any other popular work of art, for this combination of familiarity and uniqueness. Umberto Eco agrees to this formula in *The Role of the Reader* saying that popular literature: “1... must achieve a dialectic between order and novelty—in other words between scheme and innovation; 2. This dialectic must be perceived by the consumer, who must not only grasp the contents of the message, but also the way in which the message transmits these contents” (173-4). Vikas Swarup’s *Six Suspects* is a murder mystery set in a capitalist society and while it does follow the narrative structure of traditional detective fiction, at the same time, however, it has overthrown not only the many conventions of the genre but also offers up a unique critique of the capitalistic society portrayed in the work. This paper would like to study how by tampering with the narrative structure Swarup has broadened the genre to a recognizable sub-category which relate to the social, political and historical formations of postliberal India.

KEYWORDS

Vikas Swarup, crime, narrative, socio-politics

Vinay Dharwadker in his essay “The Modernist Novel in India: Paradigms and Practices” observes that Indian modernist novel has borne the witnesses of four phases of modernism in India. The first

phase is of “realism and reformed” that stretches from 1882 to 1916 in the creation of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Rabindranath Tagore, Premchand, Muhammed Iqbal et al. 1922 to 1945 is the second phase and can be identified as “nationalism and experimentation” which has captured by writers like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao et al. The third phase of modernism is “freedom and nation-building” which runs from 1950 to 1975 and has been depicted by Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Nissim Ezekiel et al. Finally, the fourth phase, 1980 to the present, is characterized by “diaspora and cosmopolitanism”. Notable writers like Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Ray, Vikram Seth, Rohinton Mistry belong to the last phase where writers engage in “questioning of rationality and causality, a rebellion against legal, political, and cultural authority, a fresh rewriting of history and inherited pasts, and critique of religious fundamentalism, cultural nationalism, and failed nation-states”¹(107). Being a part of the fourth phase Vikas Swarup’s *Six Suspects* (2008) conforms to its subjects. However, he departs from majority of his contemporaries by employing crime narrative in his depiction and critique of post-independence India.

Crime fiction is not inherently a conservative genre but fluid in nature as evident from constant revision it has gone through rereading and rewriting. Still popularity of the genre remains unhindered, like any other popular work of art, for this combination of familiarity and uniqueness. Umberto Eco agrees to this formula in *The Role of the Reader* saying that popular literature: “1... must achieve a dialectic between order and novelty—in other words between scheme and innovation; 2. This dialectic must be perceived by the consumer, who must not only grasp the contents of the message, but also the way in which the message transmits these contents” (173-4). It is mostly through ‘the way’ the story is told that resulted in transformations of the genre and therefore birth of numerous subgenres. Stephen Knight in his *Crime Fiction: 1800-2000* traces the development of the genre as the variation of the form that centres on different objectives while recreating the genre structure: in nineteenth century, its first phase the detective figure was at the centre; twentieth century focused on death; and modern period is of diversity, that moves away from previous patterns.² In contemporary times, for example, the genre has been used in subversive ways by writers such as Dashiell Hammett, Horace McCoy, James Ellroy and others to use as a vehicle for socio-political criticism—to address issues of class, race and gender, to expose corruption, and so on.

Crime fictions from postcolonial world take part in this subversion of the genre in a prominent manner, primarily to comment on socio-political predicament of contemporary society. Ernst Kaemmel, an East German critic, has argued that “the detective novel is a child of capitalism” (57): it preserves the sanctity of private property and glorifies activities of isolated individuals, “it arose in

the most highly developed countries of premonopolistic capitalism, in England and United States in the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth” (57). In post-independence India of emerging injustice and inequality, as a result of capitalist world order, the genre seems to have found a suitable home. Vikas Swarup’s *Six Suspects* is a murder mystery set in a capitalist society and it does follow the narrative structure of traditional detective fiction. However, at the same time it has overthrown not only many conventions of the genre but also the capitalistic society portrayed in the work which otherwise is restored to order. This paper would like to study how by tempering with the narrative structure Swarup has broadened the genre to a recognizable sub-category which relate to the social, political and historical formations of postliberal³ India; how the crime novel follows “a recent spate of postcolonial novels that use the format of the mystery or detective story but tweak it or turn it inside out in what becomes a narrative of “social detection,” to borrow a phrase from Fredric Jameson, a “vehicle for judgments on society and revelations of its hidden nature” (Siddiqi 176).

Detective genre follows a basic pattern in detective, detection process and solution. Following conventional detective novel, ‘whodunit’ to be specific, *Six Suspect* is well structured, separated in six parts: murder, suspects, motives, evidence, solution and confession. Tzvetan Todorov in his essay “The Typology of Detective Fiction” observes that a ‘whodunit’ novel contains two stories: ‘the story of the crime and the story of the investigation’ (44). The crime narrative is built through investigation narrative. This dual narrative starts right when the crime is committed. Therefore, he comments that the crime story is absent yet real, whereas the investigation is present but insignificant (46). *Six Suspects* in a typical ‘whodunit’ fashion opens with the murder of Vicky Rai, ‘the thirty-two-year-old owner of the Rai Group of Industries and son of the Home Minister of Uttar Pradesh. From running over pavement dwellers with his BMW to killing poached endangered blackbuck antelope had been among his activities. Latest in this list was shooting of Ruby Gill, a Gandhian scholar and bartender, dead for refusing to serve him drink. He was celebrating his being acquitted for Ruby Gill murder in his farmhouse when he was shot dead by “an unknown assailant”:

“according to the forensic report, he died of a single lacerating wound to his heart made by a bullet fired at point-blank range. The bullet pierced his chest, passed cleanly through his heart, exited from his back and became lodged in the wooden bar. Death is believed to have been instantaneous” (Swarup 14). The crime was committed. Six people were arrested from the party because of possessing guns: Mohan Kumar, a corrupt former bureaucrat who claims to have become Mohandas Gandhi, with his Walther PPK .32; Larry Page, a dim-witted American who thinks he is about to marry his pen-friend in India, with an Austrian Glock; Shabnam Saxena, a famous actress, with an

Italian Beretta; Eketi, an Onge tribesman from Andaman who tries to recover a stolen relic, with a locally made revolver known as *kata*; Munna, a thief who steals mobile phones, with a Chinese Black Star; and Vicky Rai's father Jagannath Rai himself, a mafia don and a corrupt politician, with British Webley and Scott. Now the question is who the murderer with the gun is- the classical concern of 'whodunnit'. From here supposed to begin the dual narrative of crime and investigation. But the investigation story kept creating with it a story of social realism that revealed the crack holes of the society, and the investigation story becomes turnabout from the question 'who is the murderer' to the interrogation of justice, law, order and social discrimination.

Swarup has employed polyphonic narrative to investigative purpose, therefore, liberating the work from moral authority of the author. Multiple levels of discourses also refuse author's dominance on characters; he never retains the final words about the characters. Narrative, according to Peter Brooks, is a perspective on a story, rather than record of every single event (105). Therefore the "right" from the "wrong" are never being separated rather six different perspectives, all leading to a larger narrative, are presented before the reader. The story of the American, mobile thief Munna, and the actress are in first person narrative; the story of the tribal and ex-bureaucrat are in third person narrative; while the politician's story is a narrative in transcript.

According to Bakhtin textual polyphony is the result of "carnivalization" of literature:

Carnival is not contemplated and, strictly speaking, not even performed, its participants *live* in it, they live by its laws as long as those laws are in effect; that is, they live a *carnivalistic life*. Because carnivalistic life is a life drawn out of its *usual* rut, it is to some extent "life turned inside out," "the reverse side of the world" (*monde a l'envers*). (341-342)

The six suspects belong to a topsy-turvy world-a society where money and power can change life upside-down. The messiness of the situation is reflected in the narration of identity- the fluidity of the characters' identities resembles the dissolving differentiation of bourgeoisie and 'low' class people in a carnivalistic life.

Mohan Kumar had been in government for thirty-seven years- "manipulating politicians, managing colleagues and making deals... [commanding] the entire machinery of the state with just one phone call" (Swarup 24). Retired from his service, the absence of influential power is like a physical absence for him. Now his life is about his extra-marital affair with Rita, a divorcee, and attending meetings of half a dozen profit motive private companies he is board member of. His world turned inside out as he started identifying himself as Mahatma Gandhi. From a corrupt bureaucrat living in

“an imposing two-storey neo-colonial villa”, symbolizing his capitalist bourgeoisie existence, he turns into virtuous Gandhi Baba who imparts wisdom: “The *Gita* says, give up attachment and dedicate yourself to the service of God and your fellow men” (Swarup 164). Mobile thief Munna becomes Vijay Singh once he finds money in a dustbin. He had scoffed at a filmmaker who wanted to make a film on slum life: ‘To experience slum life, you have to be born one’ (Swarup 182). A life lived in deprivation can only be expressed in a first-person narration:

The slum has been my playground since the age of three. I have many insights into slum living-how a family of six manages to squeeze itself into an eight- by-eight-foot space. How a girl protects her modesty while bathing underneath a municipal tap in full view of hundreds of people....How the poor breed like mosquitoes and live like dogs, while the dogs of the rich sleep on Dunlopillo mattresses in mosquito-free mansions. (Swarup 182-183)

However, once in possession of huge amount of money he had to question his consciousness: “Is it possible that because I now have wealth, I am unable to think like a slum-dweller?” (Swarup 183). In the same vein, Ram Dulari, a village belle and a look alike of Shabnam Saxena, metamorphoses into Shabnam. Watching Ram Dulari posing as herself Shabnam confides, “I had to remind myself that I was Shabnam Saxena and she was just an impostor. I was the real deal, she was a fake” (Swarup 440).

When the existent ‘law’ and ‘order’ are questionable, only misrule prevails. “Misrule” is the rule in carnival and it is presented in abundance here. This carnivalesque is not short-lived one but a lasting condition. Here ‘what is a crime’ and ‘who is a criminal’ depends on money and power. Therefore, Vicky Rai can get away with defrauding, bribing, cheating on corporate tax, and killing homeless vagrants by rash driving, or with a murder committed in a full public view. Whereas Lallan was fated to die for stealing mobile. Justice is not universal but a construction influenced by a particular societal structure serving its own purpose. Bakhtin opines that from “carnivalized literature” polyphonic novel originated as it gives scope to represent multiple voices. Therefore, there is mixing of high and low, serious and comic. The middle-class dim-witted American Larry Page is like the ‘fool’ figure, a representatives of carnival spirit. Duped by an anonymous person that Shabnam Saxena wants to marry him, he chases her all through the novel never realizing the truth. However, with surprising turn of events he becomes a millionaire with a new identity of Hollywood movie producer, like “mock crowning” of a fool. Eketi, the tribal from Andaman had to become Jiba Korwa from Jharkhand. However unlike other characters his being Jiba Korwa did not change his position in the society-rather he remained the outsider that he always was, now misidentified as a notorious

Naxalite leader. “Independent India inherited an underdeveloped economy, extraordinary cultural (linguistic, religious and ethnic) divisiveness, social authoritarianism and injustice rather than a healthy interacting ‘melting pot’ of different races and communities” (Kaushik 121). Liberalisation has resulted in economic development, however, consequently “generated spectacular new forms of inequality between social groups, regions, and sectors” (Gupta and Sivaramakrishnan 3).

This huge disparity bears crimes- crimes that are committed not only by an individual but also the state, as the number of possible motives behind the offense stems from unequal distribution of wealth, opportunity and justice. Mohan Kumar-turn-Gandhi Baba vowed to kill Vicky Rai when he was acquitted for the murder of Ruby Gill: “Civil disobedience becomes a sacred duty when the State becomes lawless or corrupt” (Swarup 170). Vicky became Munna’s enemy when he hurts his own sister Ritu, Munna’s love interest with whom he was planning to elope. Later he discovers Vicky is the person who mowed down his father on pavement, Munna saw his affair with Ritu as a “God’s way of exacting revenge” (Swarup 222). But when the owner of the briefcase he had found appears at his house, beats him up badly, hurts his mother and attempted rape on his sister before snatching away the money, Munna perceives the grim reality:

There is no place for the poor in our metropolises. Doesn’t matter how honestly you earn a living; you can still get accused of thieving and thrown into a cell simply because you are poor and powerless. As long as I had the briefcase full of money I had power...With the briefcase gone, so have my grand dreams. Life suddenly seems brittle and pointless...My rage is directed...at Vicky Rai. The man who dared to hurt Ritu. The man who took my father’s life. Love can make you blind, but despair can make you reckless. I decide to buy a gun. (Swarup 229-230)

Eketi was victim of Ashok Rajput’s motive. Ashok’s brother Kishore Rajput was the forest ranger working in the Rajasthan who was eliminated because he would have acknowledged Vicky Rai as the killer of the two black bucks in the court. Justice being unserved, killing his brother’s killer was only way to avenge his death. Jagannath Rai was more concerned with political gain-Vicky had become his biggest liability on his way to higher political aspiration. Public agitation for Vicky’s acquittal was damaging his political career Therefore ‘sacrificing’ his own son was the only option left to him. Thus, it is evident that the source of the motives is socio-political scenario and not just personal. Conventionally it is desirable and largely followed by writers of detective fiction from the beginning, not to pick any one from the lower class as criminal as it would be a quite obvious revelation without any surprising element. Swarup developing on the same tradition has marked Munna, relatively

innocent than the characters of “elite” class. Here I would agree with Banerjee who criticises Swarup for using underdeveloped characters for their mere functionality: “Emotional engagement is created by constructing the characters on the binary of oppressor/oppressed...Being binary functions, the characters have only as much cultural specificity as is needed to make them vehicles of the globally popular dream of reversal, that the low shall be high and the oppressor receive his just rewards, so that, paradoxically, it is their very ‘thinness’ that gives them their marketplace ‘universality’” (53). As can be seen in the end of the novel Munna’s redemption from his fate; he was offered the role of hero in a renowned director’s film.

To cover up their insufficiency to solve the high-profile murder case, police made up Eketi as the criminal and claimed to have solved the mystery. A criminal is rejected from the society- if a suspect is proven guilty he becomes an outcast. But Eketi becomes the criminal in the hand of society’s law keepers and shot dead because he was already an outsider. While discussing about French crime writing tradition- *neo-polar*⁴ or new-detective novel, similar to the present subverted genre we discussing- Jean-Pierre Deloux explains, cast characters that had not previously been associated with the genre: “broke, marginalized, unemployed, rejected by society, outraged etc., everything designates them as serving the role of scapegoat and propitiatory victim of very society that excludes them” (Herbeck 66). “In a way we all are responsible for Eketi’s death,” the investigator writes as he confirms Eketi as a scapegoat figure, “complicit in the act through our conspiracy of silence and our tolerance of injustice. There is an epidemic in our country which will result in the deaths of many more Eketis, unless we do something to restore the moral fabric of our society” (Swarup 534-535). Thus, as Banerjee claims, working on reader’s universal feeling of sympathy for the helpless. In his critic of Vikas Swarup he has further accused his work to be “more serious service to the dominant ideology than the containment of social criticism through the merchandising of fantasy” which according to him can be seen, for example, in the portrayal of Eketi:

...the onslaught of modernization in collaboration with national and multinational corporation against the aboriginal people (*adivasis*)...[is an area] of profound conflict in which the oppressed have taken up arms against the state. They deserve a risk-taking criticism. Swarup, however, chooses to conform to the official and popular views by ridiculing the resistance. He uses the loss of tribal identity to generate sympathy for the exoticized Onge as the victim of bureaucratic exploitation but ignores the struggle for forestland and livelihood that defines the *adivasis* of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Lalgarh and contiguous areas on the Indian mainland.” (38)

While I agree to his view of lack of depth in characters, at the same time, it is undeniable that conventionally detective fiction leaves little space for character development where mystery becomes the main character of the narrative. As, at present, we are reading the work as a crime fiction that criticizes its socio-political environment rather than a fiction of realism, I believe his portrayal of victim's character is justified.

The novel begins with the search of one criminal-Vicky Rai's murderer. But the investigation process reveals there are criminals in every nook and corner of the society. As the investigator put it in his own words:

There was a time when solving murders was easy. They fell into predictable patterns of cause and effect; were slotted into neat categories of motive like *jar*, *joru* or *jameen*. Money, woman or land. Nowadays you have serial killers, sex maniacs, junkies and psychopaths stalking our streets.... A violent crime is committed in India every three minutes, a murder every sixteen. Worse, of the ninety murder cases recorded every day, the vast majority never get solved.
(Swarup 515)

Though none of the cases from "the vast majority" is primary concern of the narrative. In crime fictions murder is presented as a disruption of society. But in a society where a poor, powerless person's death is everyday news, their death is not enough to shake the entire society unlike Vicky Rai's murder. Because "not all deaths are equal. There's a caste system even in murder" and "because the rich and famous rarely get murdered" (Swarup 13). The 'Solution' section of the novel brings forth number of perpetrators except the one who is actually responsible for the murder. Therefore, more than solution it highlights the unattainability of any concrete solution. The audio tapes sent to Arun by Jagannath Rai's political rival, the Chief Minister of the State, who wanted Jagannath out of his way brings his past crimes to light causing his downfall. Though a criminal he also became a victim of power play. His situation discloses the fact that different laws apply to different individuals depending on their relation to the State power.

A narrator detached from the crime is in the danger of supplying with moral norms and values-like an objective investigator and his narrative seem to be "emblematic of the Right, the True, and the ultimate Good" (Isaac 1991: 98). At the beginning detective Arun Advani appears to be such a towering figure like classical detectives who has carried out many exposes, "from corruption in high places to pesticide in cola bottles. [His] revelations have brought down governments and closed down

multinationals” (Swarup 13). However, his objectivity as an investigator is doubtful, though he states otherwise:

I am going to track down Vicky Rai’s murderer. A true investigative journalist cannot be swayed by his personal prejudices. He must follow cold logic of reason till the very end, no matter where and who it leads to. He must remain an impartial professional seeking only the bare truth. (Swarup 19)

But a society that is set in disorder even before the concerned murder, logical deduction method seems to be ineffectual. As Arun confesses that “in this expose there has been some divine providence at work”. His tools for unravelling mystery are “the support and cooperation of members of the public”: “They are the ones whose observant eyes and alert ears often result in the seizure of a suspect. It is the vigilante and diligence of a concerned citizen which has helped me blow the lid on India’s most high-profile murder case” (Swarup 516). In a carnivalesque world without social control, justice too is reinvented in the form of vigilante justice.⁵

Though the structure leads predictably to the solution of the mystery, the reader’s expectation is disconcerted by the revelation. Police fails to provide the actual solution to the murder mystery and the investigator himself turns out to be the murderer who confesses in the end⁶. That he was an unreliable narrator is explicitly present in the part ‘confession’. The detective figure in a way appeals to the mass imagination of a ‘messiah’ figure that can frequently be found in popular Indian culture. Crime fiction often uses confession narrative to investigate “the meaning and role of crime, punishment, and justice in society, often through the tricks, diversions, and digressions of the confessing subject, someone who typically offers an aberrant or sociopathic perspective...with the frank portrayal of crime as a delightful or philosophically meaningful activity, albeit in a framework of investigation very different from the dictates of law and order or the conventions and norms of the given society” (Knepper 35). In a conventional way, the novel can be seen as psychological crime novel given how the confessor justifies the murder on philosophical ground:

‘Thou shalt not kill’ is a biblical injunction...But there are occasions when murder is not only justified, it is necessary. And I am not referring here to legality sanctioned murder: the State executing a terrorist or an enemy soldier killed in war. I am talking about murder as a ritual righteousness. In the Mahabharata, Arjuna had a duty as a Kshatriya warrior to fight the evil Kauravas on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. I am also a warrior, fighting a righteous war against the forces of evil in society. In killing Vicky Rai I simply did my duty, upheld my *dharma*. (Swarup 2009: 556)

I suppose I can take some pride in carrying out the perfect murder. No one has any inkling about what I have done-neither my wife, nor my colleagues at the newspaper. I still go to the office at the usual time and stay late. I share a meal with the other reporters during the lunch hour, laugh at their corny jokes, join in their silly discussions on politics and promotions. Their petty gossiping and shallow concerns nauseate me. Their smugness and complacency amaze me. Am I the only one with a sense of what it means to be a committed investigative journalist? Am I the only man with a mission? I know I plough a lonely furrow. But I shall soldier on. Because there is still lot of filth out there. I am still listening to phone conversations which make my blood boil and start a buzzing in my brain. And even murder can become addictive. (Swarup 2009: 557-558)

However, Swarup's different approach demonstrates the inadequacy of labelling it as such by placing Arun Advani's thoughts and action in a larger context- in the social and moral context. The setting is nothing like a genteel English country where crime is an exception. Therefore, the detective does not have the almost full control unlike the classical detective fiction. Nevertheless, Arun thrives to be one. The investigator-cum-perpetrator figure questions what a crime is in a judiciary system controlled by postcolonial bourgeoisie; individual criminals deserve a different perspective to look at from when the structure of society is the primary source of evil and viciousness. Conventional crime fiction tends to treat the crime and the search for the criminal sufficient engagement, the moral aspect of it rarely got attention. But here the narrative raises questions and calls for readers' assessment of ethical implication: Should Vicky Rai really be called a victim or Arun Advani a perpetrator? Cawelti observes the victim, criminal, investigator, and "those threatened by the crime but incapable of solving it" are the four main role players. These figures have traditionally defined roles. Though the roles of the suspect and the perpetrator may subject to interchange, the role of investigator is kept very well separate from the others. In a postcolonial context, the distinct roles seem to invade each other: "one person is both a victim and a perpetrator simultaneously, making it difficult to make a moral judgement about 'right' and 'wrong' actions or even the 'nature of justice' itself. When one brings a postcolonial perspective to a repressive regime or a colonial order, the very act of upholding the law may become suspect and even 'criminal'"(Knepper 42). In the end detective fiction provides the reader satisfaction; the satisfaction of results from capturing of the criminal and punishment for wrongdoing. Here the end however does not end the story but rather begets questions and doubts in

the mind of the reader. Is the murderer of a criminal a crime? Does transgressing law in name of justice, is justice?

The development in postcolonial crime narrative is in tune with Jonathan Culler's argument that narratives may well serve as "the model by which society conceives of itself, the discourse in and through which it articulates the world" (189). According to Culler a problem builds the structure around it: "making the reader organise the text in relation to it and read sequences in the light of the question which he is attempting to answer". The structure of the novel at the beginning was built around the question of conventional crime fiction's concern: 'who did it?' However, as the narrative progressed the concern became 'whydunit' from 'whodunit' - more than just focusing on the investigator or the investigation the narrative allows the suspects' and criminals' situation to be presented to sympathise and to understand the root of the crime because "murder may be messy, but truth is messier" (Swarup 19). Therefore, unlike conventional detective fiction the focus is not on the identity of the murderer but the story of the suspects which is clearly indicated through the title of the book "Six Suspects"; stories that lead to the murder but concern far broader issues. The novel in the end fulfils its function as a popular literature by providing "important clues to the anxieties and frustrations, aspirations and constraints, experienced by the mass audience that accounts for their best-stellar status" (Porter 1).

Endnotes

¹ Diaspora and transnational cultures is the other dominant theme of the fourth phase.

² The genre basically began with gothic works like Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764), William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794) where the crime rather than solution takes the centre stage. In the nineteenth century crime fiction finds itself immensely popular with its detective-centred narrative. Therefore, the gothic was abandoned from the crime narrative until the post-Second World War crime writing where the psychology of the transgressor and the traumatized body of the victim has been coming into focus again.

³ Post-liberalization is result of "reformation" of India as initiated by then Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao in 1991.

⁴ The investigation story that has been subverted by Swarup into an interrogation of contemporary Indian society can be marked in the tradition of *neo-polar* novel as created by the French crime writer Jean-Patrick Manchette. Manchette revolutionized French crime writing scene from the formulaic French cops-and-robbers novels of the 1950s and 1960s to crime fiction as an instrument of social criticism.

⁵ Invented in Jacobean revenge tragedy, vigilante justice was popularised by the American sub-genre hard-boiled crime fiction. For example, Dashiell Hammett's detective Continental Op, 'arranged a killing or two in their time' (Scaggs 63).

⁶ Detective as the murderer is a significant deviance in contemporary crime fictions. Though the phenomenon can be observed in a classical 'whodunnit' of Agatha Christie- *Murder of Roger Ackyord* (1926). Here the murderer is the narrator and also one of the investigators as he is assistant to the famous detective Hercule Poirot. What sets apart the phenomenon in postcolonial context from the classical one is the motive: whereas the detective-cum-murderer in Christie's work accepts himself to be the criminal, in a postcolonial context the murder is being seen as justice served that is denied by an unjust society.

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