“The World is Shot Through With Crime”: Crime Fiction in the Postcolonial World

The Molly Slavin’s text that I’m going to analyse starts with Joseph Conrad’s Charles Marlow sight of enslaved Africans at the first colonial station in his Belgian Congo’s experience. They were forced to labour because considerate criminals and dangerous to the colonizers. Marlow is against this point of view and says “the language of crime has been used to solidify the imperial project and European domination”.

In 1961, Frantz Fanon has reversed centuries of colonial logic saying that the colonized are not the real criminals but the colonizers are because once their withdrawn, the capitalists have behaved like real war’s ones, and he says that they have to recognize it.

In Vikram Chandra’s detective novel Sacred Games (2007), the dying Indian intelligence officer Yadav thinks about crime after Indian and Pakistani independence, when colonialism was condemned. He said that generals of ISI get rich by the trade of heroin (that the Pakistanis and the Afghans run), and buying weapons and mujahedeen warriors. The criminals provide logistical support, moving men, money and weapons across the borders and to the politicians while they provide them protection. He understand that after the formal fall of the British Empire, the installation of strongmen leaders friendly to the West and the ensuing unstable nature of postcolonial states, corruption and crime quickly develop.
He adds that the nineteenth-century Opium Wars ended but the postcolonial permutation isn’t terribly far off.

From the days of high imperialism (1899) to the postcolonial reality (2007) have changed narratives about how colonialism is linked to criminality. Marlow, who thought that the colonial state utilizes rhetoric of crime to serve its own ends, Fanon with his black-and-white narrative and Yadav who understand postcolonial state structure and corruption, are examples of writers who stay within the colonial/postcolonial framework to understand how crime shapes their contemporary world.

To Slavin is imperative how we have to understand narratives and fictions about crime during the imperialism and post colonialism and reported some names with their authors:
Jon Thompson’s *Fiction, Crime, and Empire: Clues to Modernity and Postmodernism* (2003) that discuss linkages between crime fictions and experiences of empire, Caroline Reitz’s *Detecting the Nation: Fictions of Detection and the Imperial Venture* (2004) that argues that the genre of detective fiction played a key role in the public acceptance of the British Empire. *Crime and Empire: The Colony in 19th Century Fictions of Crime* (2003), in which Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee makes the case that rhetoric of crime helped the imperial project solidify and cohere amidst the turmoil of the nineteenth century, Christine Matzke and Susanne Muehleisen’s edited volume *Postcolonial Postmortems: Crime Fiction from a Transcultural Perspective* (2006) and Vivien Miller and Helen Oakley’s (eds) *Cross-Cultural Connections in Crime Fictions* (2012).

Mohsin Hamid’s Exit West is indeed an example of novel that may seem unrelated to these themes. Actually in this specific case the story relies on mainstream Western assumptions about crime: that refugees might be prone to commit crime, that migrating without papers constitutes criminal action, that somehow encroaching on arbitrary, imperially-defined national borders.
To completely understand Exit West as many other novel, Slavin think that we have to read them through a lens which twines together the related concepts of crime, imperialism, and postcoloniality.