

## Mapping Trauma: Nation, Memory, and the Politics of Identity in Kamila Shamsie's Kartography



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**Abstract:** *Trauma, memory and national identity are the core issues in postcolonial literature, especially in the countries which were affected by colonialism, partition and political violence. The themes of ethnic conflict, historical silences and divided identities are explored in a fascinating manner in Kamila Shamsie's Kartography (2002), which portrays Karachi as a city, beset by such problems. Theory of trauma studies and memory studies are explored in this article, mainly following Cathy Caruth's and Pierre Nora's theories of trauma and places of memory and Benedict Anderson's theory of imagined communities. The study uses qualitative textual analysis methods to make arguments against the official national narratives in the form of 'silenced' memories associated with the Bangladesh War in 1971, ethnic violence in Karachi and the emotional burdens passed on to the post-Partition generation. The novel illustrates the constant intermingling of personal memory and national history and how identities are constantly unstable, contested and shaped by political stories. In addition, this article argues that maps and cartography do not only serve as geographical instruments, but are also symbols of memory, belonging and historical reconstruction. In the end, Shamsie calls for the idea of a more inclusive view of a Pakistani identity, based on a historical understanding, and not on collective amnesia. The study helps to explain the mainstream research on Pakistani English literature by evoking an oppositional mode of remembering, reconciling and reflecting on the nation by the literary narratives.*

**Keywords:** self-esteem, academic performance, university students, PLS-SEM, Pakistan, Higher Education, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale.

### Introduction

The twentieth century witnessed deep changes in the political sphere which changed country borders, culture and collective memory all over the world. Of these historic events the partition of British India in 1947 and separation of East Pakistan in 1971 are two of the most traumatic events in the history of South Asia. The physical movement and violent confrontation caused by these events had

long-term psychological consequences which have affected individual identities and national consciousness. Literature has thus served as an important means of revisiting hidden histories, challenging official histories, and reclaiming memories that have been denied in state sponsored versions of history (Caruth, 1996).

The issues related to Partition have taken more central role in Pakistan than that of the events of 1971 when East Pakistan emerged

as the independent nation of Bangladesh. This event has been narrated in an official way that has often exacerbated, or even obfuscated, the reality of one of the most important political moments, so that historians and the general public are caught in what is termed "collective amnesia". The proliferation and growing attention of contemporary Pakistani writers to these silences creates a re-construction of forgotten histories, and a questioning of inter-generational imprints of political violence on the national identity of Pakistan. Of these authors, Kamila Shamsie is at the forefront in that she has consistently addressed issues of history, memory, belonging and identity.

*Kartography* is a novel published in 2002 which delves into the lives of two childhood friends named Raheen and Karim, amidst the ethnic violence of the city of Karachi and the aftertaste of the 1971 war. The novel makes it clear that cities have memory, too, and that the traces of political violence remain on cities' geo-tops long after the battles have been won. Karachi is no longer just a place, it is a living archive; a place of memories, identities and histories. Shamsie does not depict history as an unchanging string of events, but rather as an "unfinishable and unfinished" record that is always being constructed from the point of view of an individual.

Cartography plays a pivotal role in the novel and is a metaphor for it. Normally maps convey truths and facts, certainty, order and objective knowledge; but in this work, cartography is used as a metaphor for the emotional landscape, historical uncertainty and contested belonging. Often characters find themselves on the streets of Karachi, but also traversing the subterranean spaces of memory, guilt, silence, and identity. Thus, mapping becomes a form of memory as well as challenging the processes of nation building or the politics of mapping.

The following are some examples of narrative strategies which can be understood within the context of trauma theory. Caruth

(1996) maintains that traumatic events often cannot be put into words and are represented later on, in some disjointed manner, in silence or repeated accounts. Theories such as these are especially pertinent to *Kartography*, where some characters have never experienced the violence history of other characters who are still influenced by it. Trauma is then passed down through generations, creating a legacy of emotional burdens which make personal and national self-understanding difficult.

The novel also draws on memory studies to highlight the novel's development of the concept of national identity. Official historical accounts and places of memory that "hold" experiences that are not remembered in official institutional history are the two kinds of memory sites that Pierre Nora describes (1989). Likewise, Jan Assmann suggests that 'cultural memory' helps societies to deal with the relationship between past and present by passing on experiences in the past to the next generations (Assmann, 2011). These viewpoints help to understand how *Kartography* is able to defy the mainstream views and bring to the fore the memory of events that have not been part of the official narratives of the history of Pakistan.

This analysis is supplemented by Benedict Anderson's term "imagined communities. Anderson (1983) suggests that states are not the result of biological or geographical factors, but instead are socially constructed through common narratives, historical memories and cultural symbols. *Kartography* challenges these constructions by mapping out the experience of national identity, which can be defined as a selective remembering and strategic forgetting. The novel is a witness to the fragility of identity identities claimed on the basis of history silences rather than a critical approach to history.

While various scholars have turned their attention to *Kartography* from various angles, such as trauma, postcolonialism and urban studies and literary cartography, far

fewer studies have combined all three in one analytical lens. Memory continues to be an important theme in Shamsie's fiction, as can be seen in recent studies of the novel's use of collective amnesia over 1971 and of the mapping and identity. This article, however, is specifically claiming that trauma, memory and identity are all inter-connected processes in the novel that recreate the Pakistan's national narrative.

Therefore, it is important to answer the following research questions in this study:

In what ways is historical trauma conveyed in the individual and collective memory in the case of Kartography?

How does the novel criticise the official nationalist narratives about the history of Pakistan?

What are the connections that can be made between memory and trauma with the formation of personal and national identities?

How can cartography be used to symbolically navigate a sense of belonging, history and reconciliation?

This article utilizes a qualitative analysis of text using trauma theory and memory studies to suggest that Kartography can be a place to remember, question and ethically reimagine suppressed histories. Shamsie uncovers historical silences instead of perpetuating them, and challenges readers to rethink the basis for the national identity.

## Literature Review

Trauma and memory, and how these relate to national identity is one of the most influential areas of study in postcolonial literary studies. In recent years, it has been increasingly suggested that literary texts have a key role in recovering historical narratives that have been marginalized from the mainstream of the nation's history. Literature, in societies that are formed by colonialism, partition, civil wars and political violence can take the form of an alternative archive, in which silenced memories are kept alive and contested. The

Kartography of Kamila Shamsie places itself prominently in this tradition of scholarship, in its exploration of violence in the past and its effect on emotions, as well as in its challenge of established narratives of national identity in Pakistan.

Trauma theory as such developed as an interdisciplinary field in the late 1980s and 90s, with the work of Cathy Caruth, Dominick LaCapra and Shoshana Felman. Trauma can be experienced in a delayed fashion as a repeated event or through incomprehension or silence, argues Caruth (1996). Literature is thus an important medium in which to convey experiences which are not easily conveyed by conventional historical discourse. Literary stories do not explain in detail the reasons behind political violence, but show the psychological and emotional impact of violence on generations.

Dominick LaCapra (2001) also makes a distinction between the historical event and its psychological residue by noting that in his experience a society's ability to "work through" traumatic events is often hindered by the fact that collective identities become "hooked" on certain historical narratives. In Pakistan, the sensibility is especially relevant because issues relating to Partition and the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War and ethnic conflicts are still alive today and in the political arena. Kartography is a literary work that illustrates how an unprocessed national trauma can yield divided identities, which continue to be influenced by collective memory, without the direct experience of the trauma.

Memory studies is a companion to trauma theory that addresses the remembering, forgetting and reconstruction of the past in society. In order to understand the symbolic landscape of memory in contemporary societies, it is necessary to grasp Pierre Nora's idea of *lieux de mémoire* ("places of memory") which proposes that the memory is more and more recorded in symbolic places, monuments, stories and practices, as the living memory is fading (Nora, 1989). In

the context of Kartography, the city of Karachi itself is a such a place of memory. Streets, neighbourhoods and cities become archives of personal memory and ethnic conflict, of political violence; geography becomes an archive of historical experience.

Jan Assmann (2011) also states that cultural memory helps cultures to keep their continuity between past and present by passing on a common historical narrative from one generation to the next. But Assmann is also aware that memory is selective, as states and institutions often devalue and overlook events while highlighting others. This selective memory is of particular significance given the official distortion of the memory of the separation of East Pakistan in 1971 in Pakistan. Kartography directly challenges this selective memory, by foregrounding histories that have traditionally been marginalised in the nationalist discourses.

Building on this discussion, Homi K. Bhabha (1994) argues that the national identity is "ambivalent" and "unfinished. Nations are constantly negotiating their identities by means of competing stories and not definitive history, Bhabha said. These attitudes are especially useful when analyzing Kartography, dealing with the coexistence of official and individual narratives, which often diverge.

Recent scholarship engaging various aspects of the novel's relationship to history, memory and urban identity has explored the novel. In this context, Mufti (2011) suggests that Shamsie's portrayal of the city of Karachi was a challenging one to the existing notions of urban space, and it made the city a site that is not only political, but also personal, in terms of memory. Karachi is no longer a place, but a player in the process of identity making in its multi-layered experiences.

Likewise, the concepts of literary cartography have focused on the fact that maps included in the novel do not only depict a geographical location. The map is a

metaphor of memory, forgetting, belonging and historical truth/negotiation. There is a constant shift in characters' understanding of physical and emotional environments, and the characters' identities are always in flux. The study has also been followed up by a number of more recent works that have investigated collective memory of 1971. Kartography is a text that reveals official forgetfulness of East Pakistan and invites readers to think nationally in different ways in the light of history and its memory. These studies show how the memory can play a political role which can contest the dominant narrative and resort to the recall of marginalized voices.

Another major field of study is on the connection between memory and history, and how these concepts are related at the national level. Shamsie makes "family history" and "political change" seem indistinguishable and calls attention to the nature of the overlap, suggesting that family histories are often connected to political change. Individual connections are tied up with larger historical processes and are inextricable from social and political consciousness which is constructed across myriad personal stories, not collective political ideas.

While existing scholarship has begun to contribute to the understanding of Kartography there are still some areas that lack adequate scholarship. Numerous studies highlight the nationalism, urban space or memory individually. Fewer studies combine trauma theory, trauma research into memory and identity politics all into one. Similarly, little focus has been paid to the impact of trauma on the personal, familial, urban and national levels throughout the novel.

This article fills this void of research by proposing that trauma, memory and identity are not separate themes or processes, but are connected processes. In this integrated approach, the article shows how the study can subvert official historical discourses, and suggest another vision of Pakistan that

is based on historical recognition instead of collective forgetting.

## **Discussion and Analysis**

### **The memories of 1971 and Historical Trauma**

Kamila Shamsie's *Kartography* not only portrays trauma as a psychological issue, but also as a social and political phenomenon, which is continuing to define Pakistan's social and political consciousness. The novel revisits the unspoken heritage of separation of East Pakistan and creation of Bangladesh through the threads of the lives of Raheen, Karim and their families. Instead of telling the story of the conflict itself, Shamsie brings the trauma to us through the power of silence, memories that are broken, secrets that are kept, and emotional absences. The narrative forms here are similar to Cathy Caruth's idea that trauma is not easily represented, and instead is present in the delayed recognition, repetition and memory (Caruth, 1996).

One of the most important strengths of the novel is that it isn't historiographic, dealing with the events of 1971 as a closed chapter in history. Rather, the divide between East Pakistan continues to be an emotional reality, playing a role in relationships, identities and politics decades later. The post-1971 generation of characters have inherited something they can't recall, which means that trauma can be passed down through the generations in the stories, omissions, and trauma from the family. Historical violence, then, is not something that stops once politics stops (LaCapra, 2001) and the novel suggests that violence of the past, even if it is not a factor in political struggles, can help to define the identities of those who were born long after.

There is, too, a politics of historical silence to which the novel questions, both thematically and existentially. National accounts often focus on the positive and emphasize a sense of unity, nationalism and advancement, obscuring what might be seen as negative aspects. The 1971 war is a war

that has a very peculiar place in the national memory of Pakistan as it holds the key to challenging questions regarding state violence, political accountability and national identity. Through these silences Shamsie challenges the contemporary realities of lives affected by past silences and shows how they are not only continuing but perhaps even intensifying in the present moment. In this way, the novel can serve as another historical record and hold on to the memory that has been left out from the institutional memory (Nora, 1989).

Historical trauma is one of the main means of transmission, being the family history. The dynamics between parents and children are an example of interdisciplinary transmission of emotional stresses even if an explicit explanation is not given. The anxieties, allegiances and un-resolved conflicts that characters have are passed on without a thorough understanding of their historical roots. This shows how trauma can be passed down generations beyond first-hand experience to be a part of family relationships. This phenomenon is very similar to the notion of cultural memory which Jan Assmann (2011) proposes: societies pass on experiences of history through narratives, rituals and interpersonal communication – not just written history.

One of the significant features of Shamsie's story is that it does not make dichotomous divides between victims and perpetrators. The novel isn't a didactic or moralistic recap of the political, but rather a depiction of the human and historical struggles of the characters. This moral limbo invites the reader to be aware of the human price of nationalism, political violence and historical denial. Trauma emerges as a mutual experience among people of different political, ethnic and generation's views and experience, and thus makes national identity more complex.

Shamsie also proves to be a reminder of the remembrance of one's self as a political act. People who challenge official narratives contest current legitimizing institutions of

power because historical memory affects current conceptions of citizenship, belonging and legitimacy. The novel recovers the marginalised histories and challenges collective amnesia and critical thinking about the national identity. This is the point of view that would correspond to Nora's contention that memory often goes against the grain of institutional history, holding on to experiences that it tries to expel (Nora, 1989).

This is the significance of mapping, which further reinforces the trauma / historical reconstruction relationship. Traditional maps offer maps with geographical limits which are fixed and objective. But Kartography constantly challenges that sense of certainty by showing that there are no emotional affinities, historical memories or cultural linkages that can be extirpated by political boundaries. Maps can change, but they can not cure the psychological effects of the displacement, violence or loss. Thus, cartography becomes a metaphor for the conflicting images of the nation and the real lives of the people.

One of the other things that is noteworthy about the novel is the absence of political leaders and military events, and a focus on ordinary lives instead. Historical trauma is depicted in a non-traditional way like friendships, families and interactions instead of written history. This storytelling option is a departure from the institutional history to the lived experience, with the idea that national crisis and emergency are events experienced by the common people, whose emotional lives tend not to feature in official narratives.

The novel is also a criticism of selective nationalism, in that it brings to light the risks of forgetting history. Nations tend to invent national identity by downplaying some history and celebrating other history that helps to reinforce the national unity. But, Shamsie suggests, a sustainable national identity is based on acceptance, not denial. Rather, true reconciliation involves: commemoration of the painful past, not

obliteration. The novel's emotional presence of 1971 clearly shows that trauma doesn't just go away and comes to haunt us until it is dealt with.

Kartography is a way of making memories in these representations ethical responsibilities. Memories are not only used to be able to tell the truth or tell accurate stories but also to avoid repetition of violence. Emotional understanding is achieved by characters who face the past, but it is not for those who abide in silence. Those who face the past move forward towards emotional understanding; those who remain silent continue to feel alienated and uncertain. Remembrance, then, is a precondition to personal healing and national reconciliation, the novel suggests.

Trauma is also treated in a way that questions the homogenizing discourse of Pakistani identity from a postcolonial angle, as seen in Shamsie's writing. In Shamsie's writing, the treatment of trauma also calls into question the homogenizing discourse of a Pakistani identity, as view from a postcolonial angle. Instead of portraying the nation as being ethnically homogeneous, the novel is sensitive to ethnic, language and regional diversity and to conflicts between them in the past. The acknowledgment of national identity does not undermine national identity, it enriches it with a more broadening perspective than to simply read national identity through the ideological filters. This view is much more in line with the Benedict Anderson's theory of the nation as an imagined community, and the constant re-imagining of such a community (Anderson, 1983).

Finally, Kartography is an on-going conversation of past and present trauma. Violence is a part of history, and the memory of violence is lodged in families, cities, relationships and culture, which continue to impact current identities. In personalizing the national history, Shamsie makes the point that no personal identity can be divorced from the collective history. The

novel, then, calls for readers to rethink the ways that nations remember, who they remember, and what the repercussions are of intentionally forgetting their painful past.

### **Karachi as a Cartography of Memory**

Kartography is one of the more unique aspects of Kamila Shamsie's physical map and symbolic archive of memory of the city of Karachi. Karachi is not just a place, it is a text throughout the novel, the stories of people, local and national struggles, ethnic divisions and aspirations intersect and it is a place that keeps evolving. Each neighborhood, street and landmark is emotionally significant; a reminder to the reader that urban spaces hold memories of historical violence, long after politics and political events have ended. In this context, Karachi is a good example of 'lieux de mémoire' in which places are the repository of collective memory because history's direct experience is starting to fade away (Nora, 1989).

The project name Kartography emphasizes the relevance of the map and a spatial representation. Traditionally, maps represent knowledge, objectivity and politics in terms of objectification and delimitation of territories and territory identities. Shamsie, however, challenges this conventional view of maps by offering maps that are fluid and partial. In this case, though, Shamsie turns the conventional view of maps upside down, offering maps that are fluid and partial. Emotional geographies are repeatedly revealed in her characters, where neither the permeability nor the impenetrability of geographic divides can be fully captured. Her characters consistently reveal emotional geographies, spaces where the permeability or impenetrability of geography can't be fully conveyed. Rather, the city is remediated through memory, as it is shaped by the experience of love, fear, violence and belonging. The novel thus implies that each person has their own map of Karachi, one which is formed by their own experience of the city, and not official maps.

The symbolic use of mapping is a reflection of the general postcolonial concerns over the process of the construction of national space. The use of maps for the classification of territories, population control and political control has been a practice of colonial administrations throughout history. These cartographic practices have been passed on to postcolonial nations and were striving to redefine the concept of the nation. Geographical boundaries do not necessarily engender true sense of belonging, asks Shamsie. Anderson (1983) states that states are held together, not only by territory, but also by memory, history and moral obligation to history.

Lifestyle in the city is a theme of the novel, with the movement between places recurring throughout numerous times. Characters move around neighborhoods, experience various social settings, and see the familiar areas that are different due to time. These physical trips are parallels to their intellectual journeys about to the understanding of history. Every walk through Karachi is like remembering, a geography in its memory. The city seems to have a memory of things that it's trying to forget, of political violence in its communities and streets.

The other aspect of Karachi's symbolism is with respect to displacement. The city's social makeup is constantly changing due to rapid urbanisation, migration and political changes. The residents of the area feel attached and alienated, perhaps as a result of national belonging issues more generally. The city is a metaphor for fluid identities as they are not fixed. As Karachi is always in the process of transformation, so should be the concept of national identity, which should not be limited by any ideology.

The conventional urban stories are challenged as Shamsie portrays Karachi as a player in the history, not its context. The city reacts to politics, it affects people's relationship and it moulds emotion. This

representation fits into a recent trend in literary geography theorizing that cities are active participants in literary texts, rather than a backdrop. Karachi thus becomes a narrative actor, shaping the narrative, not only in terms of its form, but even its meaning.

#### Political issues of identity and national belonging

Identity is one of the focus points of Kartography and consistently Shamsie portrays identity as a process and contestation, rather than a set characteristic. Throughout the story, a person's identity and ethnic group and national identity continually overlap, where each person is subject to multiple loyalties. Such negotiations take on special importance in Pakistan's rich and diverse political and cultural context, where past conflicts have had a significant impact on citizenship and notions of the nation.

The notion of 'imagined communities' that is Benedict Anderson's (1983) serves as an important background to the understanding of these representations. National identity is not necessarily a geographical or a biological fact, but one that is formed through shared stories, memories and cultural representations, Anderson said. These histories are challenged by Kartography - because it shows how many communities can have as many different views as possible of the same historical events. This means that nationalism is fought instead and in the process, collective memory is divided.

Raheen and Karim are a generation that are inheritors of contradictory narratives in its history, but have not directly experienced many of these events. They gain knowledge about Pakistan from discussions, family stories, learning in schools and in the city, and not as a result of political engagement. The generational perspective provides a sense of the continual construction of national identity, not its simple inheritance.

Youth should interpret the memories handed down from previous generations, and respond to social realities in the here and now.

Ethnicity & nationalism are also explored in the novel. The city of Karachi's multicultural population also represents the ethnic diversity of Pakistan, which often is a political area of conflict instead of a unifying force. Shamsie does not uncritically celebrate differences nor does the presence of ethnic differences necessarily divide. Rather, she shows how political institutions attempt to create exclusionary identities by attempting to control history. There is no discussion of the problem of ethnicity as such, but instead the politicisation of identity gives rise to social fragmentation.

Other examples of how identity is formed are found in the family. Often parents try to pass on specific historical, loyalty and belonging experiences to their children. Yet they are not just passed on inherited stories by younger generations. Rather they question, reinterpret and reject them. The process is an expression of Homi Bhabha's argument that there is an unfinishedness of national identity for each generation, which re-negotiates meanings of history and citizenship (Bhabha, 1994).

The second important theme of identity in the novel has to do with the dichotomy of remembering and forgetting. Selective remembrance is also promoted through official nationalist discourse, in which the focus is on heroic stories and reduced and minimized to the historical failures. But Shamsie is not so sure. When the concept of "national belonging" is a question of facing uncomfortable histories, he argues, as opposed to forgetting them, this is not an approach that is suitable for everyone. A character who thinks critically about history has greater understandings of him/herself and the society in which he lives than does a character who lives in the official history.

The novel also provides a critique of essentialist conceptions of identity which see people as being one of a number of discrete categories including ethnicity, religion, or nationality. Rather, their characters have several aspects that change depending on the situation of history, personal relationships and political environment. The complexity of this can be attributed to the theories of the present time which have shifted to the ideals of hybridity, multiplicity and negotiating cultural beliefs and backgrounds instead of fixed notions of belonging.

Importantly, the national identity is not presented as a legal nor a political status but rather as an ethical obligation. Being a member of a country means accepting its past for all its good and bad, violence and injustice, and exclusions. It is not loyalty, though, which is blind to patriotism but loyalty that is critical and reflective. This viewpoint sets the novel apart from nationalistic discourses which consider criticism as disloyalty.

Finally Shamsie presents an alternative inclusive notion of Pakistani identity based on dialogue, historical consciousness and mutual recognition. Such identification is not a rejection of the difference and conflict of cultures or of the nation's different historic experiences, rather it is an attempt to incorporate them into a larger perspective of the nation's history. In the process the novel questions the exclusivity of nationalism, but also leaves open the possibility for collective identity.

Forgetting, remembering and reconciliation

One of the most salient arguments of *Kartography* is that remembrance is the moral duty and not only an intellectual task. In Kamila Shamsie's hands, societies that refuse to come to terms with their horrific pasts are trapped in a vicious cycle of violence, mistrust, and disintegration of identity. Memory and forgetting are not merely psychological phenomena, but political events throughout the novel, and a means of constructing the nation's

conception of itself. Shamsie questions the notion of memory and reconciliation, calling into question the silence of collective memory around the Bangladesh War, and the ethnic conflict in Karachi in 1971.

The novel is full of examples of official history that tends to emphasize parts rather than all of a story. Narratives in political institutions tend to focus on narratives of national unity, and downplay moments of revealing political failure and responsibility. This selective memory is what scholars call collective amnesia, the purpose of which is to ignore the traumatic experiences and keep the dominant national myths alive. In this way, *Kartography* explicitly argues for the recovery of narratives that are missing from official and non-official historical narratives, and that the silencing of history does not eliminate trauma, but rather deferred, rather, furthered the trauma.

Trauma is precisely because it is not fully recognised or understood, Cathy Caruth states (1996). This theoretical understanding is echoed in *Kartography*, which is full of unhealed past trauma – in conversations with family members, in emotional exchanges and in confused memoirs. Initially characters try to keep from pointing out what's wrong, thinking they'll preserve relationships by keeping their mouths shut. Rather, the suppressed memories tend to creep up over time and cause an increasing amount of emotional distance and uncertainty. Shamsie thus theorises that denial can only give short-term relief, and will not allow for real psychological healing.

Shamsie also stresses, that there is a huge difference between reconciliation and forgetting. Only historical acknowledgment, not historical erasure is required for genuine reconciliation. It is not until the characters have to deal with truths about their families and about the nation's history, that they start developing emotional growth. The novel's message is thus an anti-forgiveness message that refuses easy stories of forgiving the past or the present structural injustice. Rather, the process of reconciliation is realised in

conversation, compassion and openness to the common vulnerability.

This moral aspect sets apart *Kartography* from traditional historical novels. The novel is not only a reconstruction of the past but a call to consider the impact of history on current politics. The truth about history becomes a civic duty, as it is in democratic societies that they rely on the honest treatment of past. National identity based on denial is weak as compared to a national identity based on critical thinking and reflection.

This interpretation is also now gaining traction on the basis of recent scholarship that sees *Kartography* as resisting the nationalist narratives by way of what has been termed “lyric maps” of memory that bring to the fore the unspoken history of 1971 and offer avenues for reconciliation. Similarly, in the novel collective amnesia is examined and it can be inferred that Shamsie employs the process of literary narration to question the national denial and to prompt the ethical introspection on Pakistan's history.

Finally, *Kartography* suggests that “memories are not acts of revenge or of nostalgia.” Rather, to remember is to create new nationalities that are more inclusive and can include the complexity of history. This vision is how Shamsie seeks to make literature a place to grapple with trauma, to reimagine identity, and to imagine reconciliation.

## Conclusion

Themes of trauma, memory and postcolonialism were combined to analyze Kamila Shamsie's *Kartography* to show how the novel constructs the Pakistani national identity in the politics of memory. The analysis shows that *Kartography* is not just the story of Karachi or the interaction between the centre of the story; it is a deep examination of the process of national memory, forgetting and reconstruction in the aftermath of historical violence.

The discussion uncovers the nature and reality of trauma as an individual and collective experience. Bangladesh War's legacy and the frequent ethnic violence in Karachi continue to affect identities even after the events of the war. Traumatic histories are passed on through family stories, unspoken memories, disjointed recollections and emotional omissions, as Shamsie demonstrates, and the trauma “re-returns” when it has not yet been absorbed, as Cathy Caruth says. The novel does not tell the story of history, but allows the history to intrude on the politics and personal lives of the present.

The analysis also shows that the memory plays a pivotal role in the process of developing national identity. The symbolization of Karachi and the metaphor of “cartography” serves as a tool for Shamsie in his work to contest “official” historical narratives, which prioritize politically homogenous and comfortable memories, while marginalizing politically inconvenient ones. The city is a living archive: here, personal memories meet with collective history, a reflection of Pierre Nora's ideas on the memory sites and Jan Assmann's theory of cultural memory. Geography thus serves as more than just a physical environment, it's a place where history and emotion come together.

This study has significant contributions to make, namely in the analysis of the politics of identity in *Kartography*. The novel challenges essentialist notions of Pakistani identity with a focus on plurality, historical multilayeredness and cultural negotiations. National belonging is not given as allegiance, but as an ethic towards historical truth. In this regard, Shamsie is at the same time in line with Benedict Anderson's concept of ‘the nation as an ‘imagined community’’, and at odds with the exclusionary nationalist narratives which are built upon collective amnesia.

The present article makes a contribution to the scholarship of Pakistani English

literature by taking an integrated approach of trauma theory, memory studies and postcolonial nationalism in a single perspective. Although there have been a number of different studies on Kartography, from the literary geographical point of view, the study of collective memory and urban studies, this study has shown that trauma, memory and identity work together as a reinforcing process that affects the subjectivity of the individual and national consciousness.

At the end of the day, Kartography believes that no country can develop inclusive futures without grappling with challenging history. The novel's complex depiction of memory, trauma, and identity, continually challenges the reader to think of new ways to tell history and who is left out of the story. History, truth and ethics in remembrance and recognition of a diverse Pakistan experience is the basis for true national reconciliation.

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