

## **Panel 10**

### **Identities and Representations**

**“But Karachi is always dual”:**

**Cartography, Placemaking and Identity in Kamila Shamsie’s *Kartography***

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This paper examines Kamila Shamsie’s *Kartography* and its use of mapping as a tool to navigate Karachi’s intricate socio-political and cultural landscape, exploring the role of place in the (re)formation of identity. Drawing on Robert Tally’s “placemindedness,” Yi-Fu Tuan’s and Doreen Massey’s theories of place, and Denis Cosgrove and Nigel Thrift’s insights on mapping, this paper analyzes how Karim and Raheen, of Bengali and Muhajir heritage, negotiate their identities within Karachi’s ethnic tensions, cultural divides, and existential challenges. *Kartography* conceptualizes place as an active and dynamic force through the negotiation of dual mapping strategies: one rooted in personal narrative and affective engagement, the other in an interconnected view of Karachi’s ethnic, class, and cultural diversity. The duality of Karachi culminates in an alternative cartographic model—a hypertextual digital map—that integrates the personal and collective modes of relating to Karachi. The novel’s cartographic metaphor thus underscores the city’s layered identity, mediating between individual and collective memory, and experiences of belonging and alienation. By reimagining cartography as a tool for understanding the interplay between identity and urban complexity, Shamsie contributes an original perspective to discussions of postcolonial and post-partitioned place and placemaking.

### **Biography**

Xiaoling Yao is Associate Professor in the Department of English at East China Normal University, Shanghai. Her research focuses on the intersection of space, narrative, and identity. She is the author of *Conrad, Autobiographical Remembering, and the Making of Narrative Identity*, and her articles have been published in *The Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, *English Studies*, *The Conradian*, and other journals.