

**“Writing in Search of a Homeland”:
Re-creating Home in Meena Alexander’s
*Fault Lines: A Memoir***

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Abstract

In this article I investigate Indian-American author Meena Alexander’s autobiographical memoir, *Fault Lines* (2003). Multiply fragmented by relocations and remembrances, flights and motions, Alexander’s memoir is relentlessly marked by her ceaseless quest for stability – at home and in exile. As she repeatedly emphasises her irresistible impulse to write since her childhood and particularly to write her *self*, I will attempt in this article to explore the importance of self-writing in diaspora. Consequently, I will argue that diasporic self-writing not only induces a therapeutic wholeness amidst disjunction and displacement, but also effectively de-creates and re-creates shifting and changing paradigms of the diasporic homes.

Keywords

Memoir, diaspora, home, self-writing, de-creation, re-creation

In this article I investigate Indian-American author Meena Alexander’s autobiographical memoir, *Fault Lines*, which was first published in 1993. A revised second edition, along with a substantial new coda, was published ten years later, in 2003. Alexander, a renowned poet, novelist and scholar, was born in India in 1951 and has moved through North Africa and England to the United States. Multiply fragmented by relocations and remembrances, flights and motions, Alexander’s memoir is relentlessly marked by her ceaseless quest for stability – at home and in exile. As she repeatedly emphasises her irresistible impulse

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to write since her childhood and particularly to write her *self*, I will attempt in this article to explore the importance of self-writing in diaspora. I will argue that diasporic self-writing not only induces a therapeutic wholeness amidst disjunction and displacement, but also effectively de-creates and re-creates shifting and changing paradigms of the diasporic homes.

The word "Diaspora" which was "first used by Jewish scholars during the third century BCE in a Greek translation of The Bible" (Helly 3) has undergone many significant transformations in its meaning, concept and application. The shift from the formal and definitive meaning with a religious connotation to a broad, general and often secular identification of a population living outside its homeland has initiated an extensive discourse on diaspora studies within the wide spectrum of humanities and social sciences. Following the first formalised definition of diaspora offered by John Armstrong in his article "Mobilized and Proletarian Diasporas" (1976), the discussion has gained added momentum since the 1990s when crossing national boundaries and maintaining ties with homelands have become easier, with the globalisation of communications, politics and the economy. However, diaspora studies remain inevitably concerned with the problematics of home. Home is a recurring emblem of the dialectic of belonging and non-belonging for the diasporics. Nevertheless, "home" is also a term that remains a contested concept in various academic disciplines.

Diasporic experiences are inextricably connected with the common characteristic of dispersion from homeland and grappling with the dual spatial practices of being home and away. Susan Stanford Friedman wonders: "Is home a place? A memory? An ideal? An imagined space? The black hole of desire? Born of displacement, diasporas spawn the creation of an imaginary homeland, a place of fixed location and identity" (195). Home, as perceived by individuals in general and diasporics in particular, is more than a house; while house or household may consist of components of home, they do not necessarily construct a home. In other words, "while homes may be located, it is not the location that is 'home'" (Easthope 135). The realisation of home is also seen to be responsive to phenomena such as globalisation and the technological and digital communications revolution. The late 1990s and early 2000s witnessed a rapid advance in communications technology, where electronic media and modern communication facilities bring the home culture, if not the home

area, within easy reach of the host culture. Therefore, the perception of home in diaspora which was once marked by exilic miseries and homesickness has mainly transformed into an emancipated realisation of straddling multiple locations, homes and identities. However, I argue that the diasporic perception of home, which is often unsettled by its uncertainty and transience, thrives in a continuous process of reconstructions and recreations in a variety of ways rather than identifying with any isolated motif or icon.

Home, in the diaspora psyche, can be constructed in its physical, social, personal, psychological, imaginary and symbolic dimensions and even in its absence. According to Markowitz, the idea of home offers a “healing response” (24) to people displaced or unable to feel at home in their present predicament and provides “a reprieve to all phases of in-betweenness – travel and adventure, newness and strangeness, alienation and confusion, and unpredictability” (24). This approach to home can perhaps be recognised in the common saying, “there is no place like home.”

Friedman skilfully plays with this simple phrase “there is no place like home” which is to her, “doubly cryptic” (192). On the one hand, the phrase implies that the home is the best and the ideal place and no other place can bring the same amount of happiness or satisfaction as home. On the other hand, the meaning can be turned into its opposite. “There is no place like home” also means that there can never be any place which is like home. Home is a myth, an ideal, an imaginary space longed for, a land of dreams and desire – “always already lost in the very formation of the idea of home” (Friedman 192). So for the diasporics, home remains the greatest enigma of all, a trope for the unattainable. Therefore, the diasporics are not only engaged with the idea of home through their everyday experiences, but also relentlessly endeavour to reinscribe and recreate the more nuanced explorations of the dialectic of place and displacement.

The etymology of the word “diaspora,” which is derived from the Greek verb *speiro* (to sow) and the preposition *dia* (over), itself contains the germ of such recreations. The image of the scattering of seeds, which implies dispersal, is significant, as the words “seeds” and “sperm” indicate reproduction and creation. Following Salman Rushdie, who in *Imaginary Homelands* (1991) asserts that the ambiguous in-between ground, arising from displacement, can be “creatively energising” (15), I indicate

that the diasporic predicament can be interpreted as a fertile ground of creativity. In agreement with Azade Seyhan I also suggest that this fertile ground finds its effective expression in the field of literary creation. In *Writing Outside the Nation* (2001), Seyhan states: "Literary expressions of contemporary socio-political formations offer critical insights into the manifold meanings of history and take us to galaxies of experience where no theory has gone before" (5). While Seyhan perceives that diasporic literature in general represents "both a celebration and an incisive critique of the difficult cultural spaces they inhabit" (14), Rushdie, speaking in the context of American literature, appropriately observes: "America, a nation of immigrants, has created great literature out of the phenomenon of cultural transplantation, out of examining the ways in which people cope with a new world..." (20). Emphasising the importance of roots and origins in cases of displacement, Stuart Hall similarly indicates that people recount stories of their roots "in order to come into contact, creatively, with it" (348). These stories germinate a new kind of ethnicity, which "has a relationship to the past... partly through memory, partly through narrative, one that has to be recovered" (Hall 348). He terms this mode of recollection as "cultural recovery" (348), which plays a significant role in recreating home in the diasporic consciousness. Consequently, I suggest that the idea of "cultural recovery" can more appropriately be articulated in the diasporic literary creation of autobiographical memoirs.

Memoir and/or autobiography writing have traditionally been perceived as a record of one's own life experiences against a particular historical, social and cultural context. Nevertheless, I suggest that this specific practice of literary writing acquires a remarkable relevance for the narrators whose own geographical, temporal and cultural boundaries have become blurred, who are multiply fractured by the contesting demands of filiations and affiliations and whose identities and roots are not a refuge but a site of contending conflicts. Even though remembering involves a reinterpretation of the past in the present, memories are in no way passive or literal recordings of reality. I agree with Daniel L. Schacter, who rightly states: "... we do not store judgment-free snapshots of our past experiences but rather hold on to the meaning, sense, and emotions these experiences provided us... memories are records of how we have experienced events, not replicas of the events themselves" (5-6). Therefore, as I read

Alexander's memoir, I will attempt to explore why she has to revisit and revise her past for a decade-long period of time and also how she fabricates the inter-permeability of the present and the past, of the personal and the private, in quest of home.

Meena Alexander, who was baptised as Mary Elizabeth Alexander, was born in a Syrian Christian family in India in 1951. Right from her birth she has experienced the instability and multiplicity of locations which she has to call home. She was born in Allahabad, where her father was employed at that time; however, she quickly points out: "Though I was born there, Allahabad is not my home" (*Fault Lines* 22). As a child she was taught that one is "bound up always with a particular ancestral site" (*Fault Lines* 23) and she has learnt to call Tiruvella, where her mother is from, and Kozencheri, where her father is from, both in the southern Indian state of Kerala, her home. However, she has never had any opportunity to stay in her Kerala home for an extended period of time. In 1955, when she was four, her father was transferred to Pune, a city in western India, and in 1956 her father, who worked for the Indian government, was appointed to work in the newly independent Republic of the Sudan. Alexander turned five on the Indian Ocean as she and her mother travelled on their way to Port Sudan to join her father. She recalls: "I turned five on the Arabian Sea, my first ocean crossing" (*Fault Lines* 6). From age five to eighteen she regularly crossed between Sudan and India, between Khartoum and Tiruvella, as she and her mother visited Tiruvella annually during the summer months in order to avoid the desert heat.

In 1969 her parents returned from Khartoum to Pune, India and Alexander, as an eighteen-year old, a graduate of Khartoum University, chose to relocate to Nottingham in Britain in order to pursue her doctoral studies. She earned her doctoral degree from Nottingham University in 1973, returned to India, and started working in Indian universities, first in Delhi and then in Hyderabad. She met her husband, David Lelyveld in Hyderabad and in 1979, as a married woman, she followed her husband to New York City and has lived there ever since. Besides being an acclaimed poet, novelist and memoirist, she is currently a professor at Hunter College and the Graduate Centre of the City University of New York, and still takes trips back to India on a regular basis. Even though she was educated in English, as that was the sole option for an expatriate Indian child in Khartoum,

she has learnt to speak her mother tongue, Malayalam, and Hindi in India, and Arabic and French in Sudan.

Alexander's literary career began quite early, at the tender age of ten, when she started writing poems in Sudan. These poems were translated into Arabic by her friends and published in local newspapers: "My first publications were these poems printed in the Arabic newspapers in Khartoum" (*Fault Lines* 119). Her writing, in her later years, is predominantly marked by her sense of constant movement between disparate spaces, locations and homes in search of connections and anchorages, as well as her confusion with the different linguistic demands to express herself and her struggle to forge an identity, independent of her surroundings and the stereotypical societal labels. Her memoir *Fault Lines*, which significantly was written and re-written over ten years, is a faultless reflection of her internal confusions and struggles and an indication of how writing out one's own shattered and fragmented self eventually augurs a therapeutic wholeness.

I perceive that Alexander's use of the image of "fault" to articulate her disconnected and non-linear life-narrative is quite significant. In geological terms "fault" implies a planar fracture or discontinuity in large volumes of rocks where significant displacement has transpired as a result of the earth's movement due to the action of plate tectonic forces. Fault lines or fault zones can appear along the intersection between the fault plane and the earth's surface indicating the complex dislocation occurring on the earth's crust. In order to represent herself in her memoir, Alexander draws the figure of "a woman cracked by multiple migrations. Uprooted so many times she can connect nothing with nothing. Her words are all askew" (*Fault Lines* 3). In an interview with Laura Jackson, Alexander reveals: "I had visited San. Andreas Fault and I was fascinated by this idea of a fault. And, you know, the geological plates that crash together and continents that come together and then split apart" (Jackson). Therefore, I read *Fault Lines* not only to discover the story of her tectonic shifts of migrancy but also to understand how she questions the invisible lines and boundaries, marks and demarcations, that the diasporics encounter on a daily basis, and writes her self in a way to negotiate these cracks and fissures.

Talking to Lopamudra Basu, Meena Alexander divulges her primary motivation to write:

In a way there is a poetics of dislocation that I am trying to figure out, to lay bare, if you wish. What does it mean to be deeply attached to place? Or to be torn away from a place, to feel at the edge, not quite at home? So where is home for us here, now in the twenty-first century? Can language work to make a home, a shelter? These are questions that will never leave me. (Basu 37)

As Alexander seeks refuge in writing, she also repeatedly struggles with the multiple linguistic pulls in her life in order to find a language which she can inhabit: “And what of all languages compacted in my brain: Malayalam, my mother tongue, the language of first speech; Hindi, which I learnt as a child; Arabic from my years in the Sudan – odd shards survive; French; English? How would I map all this in a book of days?” (*Fault Lines* 1). Her memoir also questions the prejudices existing in the world that strives to define, label and classify people according to some pre-conceived categories. She enters a retrospective mood as she searches for a term to define herself:

... I am a poet writing in America. But American poet? What sort? Surely not of the Robert Frost or Wallace Stevens variety? An Asian-American poet then? Clearly that sounds better. Poet *tout court*? Will that fit? No, not at all. There is very little I can be *tout court* in America except perhaps woman, mother. But even there, I wonder. Everything that comes to me is hyphenated. A woman poet, a woman poet of colour, a South Indian woman poet who makes up lines in English, a postcolonial language.... (*Fault Lines* 193)

Her memoir attempts to dissipate that ever-present hyphen in the life of the diasporics, either in terms of homes, languages or identities. Can the process of writing one’s self allow for a smooth fusion of crackling heterogeneities that our lives in contemporary times are unable to deny? Can this means of narrative self-fashioning evince a “new kind of ethnicity” (Hall 348) that the diasporic predicament necessitates?

In his essay, “Confessions and Autobiography” (1962), Stephen Spender suggests that writing one’s own life involves a confrontation of a double life or a double vision. One is the self that others see – the social and the historical self; and the other is the self experienced only by that person – the self felt from the inside which itself boasts of an alternative history. Spender proposes: “It is the history of himself observing the observer,

not the history of himself observed by others" (116). Hence, he prioritises the importance of transforming the subjective experiences into objective ones so that, as the writer shares his/her own realisations with the world in general, the personal experiences cease to remain singular and unique but assume the potential to address the generally shared experiences. Spender asserts:

In literature the autobiographical is transformed. It is no longer the writer's own experience: it becomes everyone's. He is no longer writing about himself: he is writing about life. He creates it, not as an object that is already familiar and observed, as he is observed by others, but as a new and revealing object, growing out of and beyond observation. (117)

In a similar vein, Alexander also highlights the necessity of constructing and transforming one's memories during the process of life writing. She claims: "In order to make memoir, you have to make things up as well. Even memories are made up at some level. You remember things but you don't often have the words, so as soon as you start putting the words in place, you're constructing it in the framework of the present" (Maxey). Thus, drawing from Seyhan's thoughts on the importance of literary expressions as referred to earlier, I propose that a commendable memoir is capable of synthesising histories and experiences, theories and practices.

In addition to the idea of construction and recreation, Susanna Egan's concept of "mirror talk" (1999) displays the interplay between the necessity of the dialogic exchange between the life narrators and the readers. However, I consider that such dialogic exchanges are more significant for the diasporic life writers as they constantly need to produce and reproduce themselves anew in confrontation with the shifting and changing sites of uncertainty and indeterminacy. Therefore, I regard that Egan's symbolic use of the word mirror to interpret memoirs also signals the need for construction and creation rather than a sole reflection of the self. Alexander has also employed the image of a mirror in her memoir to accentuate the dialogic exchanges with her self.

Fault Lines is divided into two parts (the latter part was written for the 2003 edition) and significantly the first section of

each part is titled “Dark Mirror.” The use of the same vision twice in two different parts of the memoir signifies that the need to confront and probe one’s own self is an incomplete process. Alexander stresses that particular “sense of incompleteness” (“Voice Passes” 6) which prompts the writers to revise, rewrite, reconstruct and recreate their being in the world in order to be at home in the context of changing times and places.

The “Dark Mirror” section in the first part of *Fault Lines* predominantly resounds with Hall’s concept of “cultural recovery” as Alexander recounts the necessity to remember her fragmented life and to write it out in order to find a sanctuary: “What I have forgotten is what I have written: a rag of words wrapped around a shard of recollection. A book with torn ends visible. Writing in search of a homeland” (*Fault Lines* 3). Primarily known as a lyric poet, Alexander presumes that she is more adept at drawing images rather than weaving continuous complex plots even in her prose compositions:

I obviously write a certain kind of prose that is, in its texture, closer to the sorts of little knots that an embroiderer uses. The way it works is through an image rather than emplotment.... I work much more with the image in an instant of time and the resonance that it opens up for the next thing, work of art, or piece of thought.
(Maxey)

Expectedly, in *Fault Lines*, she has drawn many an effective image, even including the title itself, in order to voice her complex negotiation with her trope of loss and others.

Alexander maintains that her memory of her first ocean crossing at the age of five remains ever powerful: “... I think of my fifth birthday on the Indian Ocean as this amazing moment for me, which is a little scary and exciting. And things that I write, you know, poems and bits of prose all stem from this desire to make sense of a fluid existence” (Jackson). Therefore, she argues that her home is not “just emplacement, it [is] also being cast loose on the waters... you didn’t just have one place, you had several places – and then perhaps you had no place, or you had many places again” (Joseph). This image of a floating home or home in suspension which you can carry around, can lose and/or anchor anywhere at will, is Alexander’s way of mapping out her space that allows for the whole world to signify her habitation as she dwells in it. Alexander’s idea no doubt

evokes Rey Chow's assertion that "home is here, in my migranhood" (142); however, I suggest that what Alexander is also striving to do is to write out her myriad impressions of the motifs of home where place can be manifold, luminous, shattered, and shattering (Joseph). Yet they can survive – again to use a geological term – in strata or in layers. She observes: "In all my work place is layered on place to make a palimpsest of sense. That is the kind of art I make" (Basu 32), and thus she establishes a connection where none has seemed to exist before.

Alexander also endeavours to resolve the complexities of her existing linguistic multiplicities through her life and her writing. Although she writes only in English, she contends: "I have multiple languages working for me" (Maxey). She further explains: "It probably works at the level of rhythm as much as anything and perhaps also at the level of image.... Some of my poems have been translated into Malayalam and people have sometimes remarked on how certain kinds of rhythms in a poem are from Malayalam" (Maxey). However, I prefer to focus on two significant events in Alexander's life, as she has narrated them in *Fault Lines*, which I consider to explicate more effectively how she lives through and draws strength from multiple languages.

At the age of fifteen, Alexander officially changed her name from "Mary" to "Meena." Although she has been called Meena since birth, the official change of her name not only indicates her liberation from a colonial burden but also her attempt to incorporate and fuse different languages that inhabit her self. She recollects: "I felt I had changed my name to what I already was, some truer self, stripped free of the colonial burden. The name means fish in Sanskrit, enamel work or jewelery in Urdu, port in Arabic.... It is the name which I wished to appear" (*Fault Lines* 74). Her explanation of the different meanings of her chosen name in different languages assures her of a kind of stability that she has been searching for throughout her life.

In another section, significantly titled "Dictionary of Desire," Alexander recollects a day when she was twelve years old and her grandfather had died four days earlier. Picking up a pen she settled to write something, as she wandered alone in her recently-deceased grandfather's library, in her notebook that her mother had gifted her. Alexander remembers that she wrote a string of commonly used words in English such as "Girl," "Book," "Stone," "Tree" with spaces between each word.

However, Alexander also remembers that other words soon rushed in and what she wrote is the following:

Girl	Book	Stone	Tree
Penne	Pusthakam	Kalu	Maram
Bint	Kitab	Hajar	Shajara
Fille	Livre	Pierre	Arbre (<i>Fault Lines</i> 299)

She has unwittingly translated these simple English words into Malayalam, Arabic and French, the languages she dwells in, without any connectives and with free spaces between them. That free space, which is indicative of an inclusive and creative space of desire, is significant as Alexander acknowledges: “The writing freed me.... In bits and pieces, without connectives, relying on the blank spaces between the words to set up an ethereal terrain, I composed a dictionary of desire” (*Fault Lines* 299). Later in her life when she attempts to unearth her impulse to translate those simple words into different languages, she suggests:

... it was an attempt to build up a world freed from taxonomies, or should I say rather, freed from hierarchies. A world stretched out... as much of the world as you’ve experienced could come into the poem, so there are multiple languages in the poem and whatever you’re writing is a dictionary. (Joseph)

The desire to stretch her world or the fabrication of her idea of home signals the indispensable need to return to her fragmented past continually, to negotiate with similarities and differences and to confront the Other, which is often within one’s own self. This is what exactly Alexander admits:

And desire of course is what makes you turn to the world and renew yourself in the world, as opposed to apart from the world, right? In that sense desire is always for the Other, and the Other is always in the world. Insofar as the Other is in oneself then you turn to that part of yourself and try to face it, so there’s also this section called Dark Mirror. (Joseph)

“Dark Mirror,” the initial section of the second part of the memoir, was, significantly, composed after the monstrous 9/11 devastation in the United States and the horrific ethnic violence that ravaged the state of Gujrat in India in 2002. The entire

second part of *Fault Lines*, entitled "Book of Childhood," reiterates the importance of ongoing excavation and the need to revisit and renegotiate one's own memories. The traumatic events in the public sphere unsettle some of Alexander's traumatic personal memories – long-buried and scarcely visited. She acknowledges:

I would often walk down to ground zero as a very personal kind of pilgrimage because I think of it as a site where thousands have lost their lives, and going through that whole experience in some strange way cast me back onto other borders of difficulty and violence that I'd experienced in my life in India in my childhood. (Jackson)

The flaming, falling buildings, the edginess of the times, elicit Alexander's disturbing memory of sexual abuse she had experienced as a child from her maternal grandfather whom she called Ilya and was greatly attached to. In the first part of her memoir she repeatedly states: "I could not conceive a life without Ilya. I drew nourishment from him" (*Fault Lines* 36). Therefore, Alexander's quest for the safety and security of the idea of home is splintered not solely by the fact of her multiple migrations but also by the breach of trust by those with whom she was expected to be the safest.

As Alexander hastens to compose short, sharp lyrics to negotiate the external violence and scrambles to impart words to her hitherto unspoken personal trauma, her memoir effectively bridges the chasm between the past and the present, the private and the public. Alexander also reminds us that writing out, and not just remembering the past, its violence and fear, is necessary as then only one can attempt a framework which eventually leads to a reconstruction. She emphasises:

Writing memoir prose is like getting into the rough material. But it isn't just digging something out, it's also laying it down.... It isn't just that when you extract the material you are closer to the crudeness and rawness of your life. It's that when you make the structure, you're putting it back in place and saying, "This is my life." That's very important. ("Voice Passes" 6)

Reverberating with Spender's proposition that a memoir should not just reflect the familiar and the observed but should manifest

something new and revealing which is beyond simple observation, Alexander rightly indicates that the task of a memoir is to articulate the silence and uncover the suppressed in order to construct an alternative space of dwelling for the future.

When Alexander decided to write her memoir at the age of forty, her mother considered the idea absurd. Alexander remembers her saying: “This is ridiculous. You can’t write a memoir. You either have to be very famous or very old, and you are neither” (“Voice Passes” 5). However, as we have already seen, Alexander writes, not just to record significant events and experiences, but to reconcile her life with “some piece of [her] life [which] is not in place” (Alexander, “Voice Passes” 5). In her own words: “the act of writing is intrinsic to the act of living” (Maxey). And she not only reflects on her relentless disjunctions and dislocations, the faults and cracks that are visible on her, but she is also aware that in order to survive she has “to sort of leap over these cracks and make a whole life as it were” (Jackson).

Her attempts to achieve that wholeness amidst diverging multiplicities direct her to search for those absent connections in her life which eventually drive her to the shadowy intersection “between what one is driven to say and yet cannot say in the shadow of where words fall” (Alexander, “Voice Passes” 3). Self-writing to Alexander is similar to entering into “a dream state, blending these multiple zones together so that the work of memory and the work of cultural transformation become part and parcel of setting up a new imaginary (Alexander, “Voice Passes” 4). Such an act of life writing necessitates what Spender has already specified – the need to transform one’s subjective experiences into objective ones. Alexander’s practice of self-writing appropriately utilises the notion of “de-creation” which she suggests, is requisite for “re-creation.”

Alexander borrows the phrase “de-creation” from Simone Weil. However she interprets it not in the context of religious metaphysics, as Weil does, but within the perimeter of self-writing. She employs the prefix “de-” in its usual negative sense, as she suggests that any kind of re-creation should be preceded by the act of de-creation in order to realise an unalloyed and pristine wholeness. Alexander explains:

It involves an emptying out and a waiting upon so that the question of process is clarified, if only very briefly. There is a way in which one has to lose in order to compose, and it

has to do with the way in which we make sense – in other words, an ability to lose what is taken for granted and considered solid and central, already there and readily given into the hold of words. (“Voice Passes” 7)

Thereby, even though her self-writing dwells on loss and dislocation, the process of writing out her self eventually establishes the significance of the diasporic lack and fault, which possesses the propensity to uncover a free space to inscribe and articulate the shifting and changing paradigms of the diasporic homes.

In my opinion, through writing and rewriting her self in *Fault Lines*, Alexander is unfalteringly struggling to project a map on the unstable diasporic surface where the growing absence of a definitive map to trace one's origin and past within narrow cartographic, temporal, cultural or linguistic boundaries has become a norm rather than an exception. I trace Alexander's journey through her writing as charting her space of dwelling in terms of liquid cartographies. Her writing provides not just a way to join the fragments of her life but her fluid existence in disjunction proceeds to dissolve the national and linguistic borders even though briefly. In conclusion, I attempt to evoke the image of “fault” once more. I argue that Alexander's search for an idea of home in diasporic multiplicities induces the impression of superimposition and not substitution. The image of palimpsest and superimposition is extremely significant in Alexander's understanding of her existence – shaken and fractured in constant motion and flight. However, instead of creating crashing and gaping fault lines, she is eventually striving to fabricate a palimpsest of sense, of homes, through unveiling the intricate crusts of her life, where all multiplicities essentially exist simultaneously in layers and nothing has to be eradicated in order to prioritise the other.

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