

Meena Alexander's Fault Lines: Reconstruction of Identity through a Critique of Difference

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Abstract

'Diaspora' means dispersal or spreading over which is caused by various factors. Wherever the migrants go, they carry with them a profound sense of nostalgia for their former place of residence. Accordingly, their selves are always found to be fragmented. In other words, they are neither 'there' nor 'here', and experience an acute sense of identity crisis. As a diasporic author Meena Alexander is also affected by the experience of dislocation that Heidegger terms "unheimlich" (unhousedness). For her, several migrations at various points of time to diverse places are always attended by an epistemic shock which she designates as the 'shock of arrival'; it is a huge shock that creates several fault lines between her body and being, thoughts and language, home and the world. Like the scattering of seeds, which the word 'diaspora' originally connotes, she finds all the constituents of identity, which held her together -- nation, race, sex, class -- are scattered and shattered into bits and pieces owing to multiple migrations, sexual trauma and loss of memory. In her autobiography *Fault Lines* she, despite being hounded by 'ferocious alphabets of flesh' attempts to stitch together the bits and pieces of all the foundations of her life and curves out a distinct transnational deterritorialized identity for herself. My thrust in this paper is to analyze the problematics of identity formation for a female diasporic writer, as reflected in her memoir and how far she is successful in re-achieving a sense of 'wholeness' - a perception of the self that she desires to achieve in a world that has been hopelessly disrupted by the forces of colonisation, globalization, experiences of violence, sexual trauma in personal life, and loss of memory. My paper will also analyse how the reconstruction of identity enables her to provide a critique of difference.

In Alexander's text such fragmentation of identity has a specific historical context. It is related to the condition of postcoloniality, a condition where pure spaces and essential identities have ceased to exist and where the post colonial subject, who is a potent figure of 'inbetweenness', contaminated by history and fragmented by space, challenges the hegemony of the Western Enlightenment discourse of a stable, unified identity. Foregrounding the constructibility of the fragmented self is itself an act of resistance. Commenting on the construction of human identities, Edward Said notes that identity does not necessarily imply ontologically given and eternally determined stability or uniqueness, or irreducible character, or a privileged status as

something total and complete in itself " (Culture 315). In *Fault Lines*, the very concept of identity as ontologically given and eternally determined" is continuously decentered. Even through her constant struggle in experimentation of colonial phallogentric language to express her "Indian self" (Spivak 57). Alexander critiques the continued institutionalization of language in contemporary India. I would also make an attempt to explore how she exercises her feminine agency in questioning and overturning the patriarchal established belief in marital system, religion, education—all the ideological apparatuses which have aimed at marginalizing a human body by repeatedly interpellating it as 'female' since its birth. A diasporic such as Meena Alexander can be described as a 'specular border intellectual' (97), to use the expression of Abdul Jan Mohammed, who turns her disadvantageous interstitial position into a position of advantage from where she can subject different cultures to critical scrutiny. Perhaps the words of Bhabha provide the best explanation -- the boundary that secures the cohesive limits of the western nation may imperceptibly turn into a contentious internal liminality providing a place from which to speak, both of and as, the minority, the exilic the marginal and the emergent (154)". Thus, Meena Alexander makes her autobiography *Fault Lines* act as a strategic political weapon to deconstruct the existing sexual politics in home country and in the host countries, and resist denigration as object, 'weaker vessel' and as racial 'other'. She herself admits explicitly her political objective---- "bringing out the memoir would allow me to claim a place in the United States and shed my marginal existence."

Key Words: Diaspora, Transnational, Marginal, Fragmented-self, Identity, Difference

Introduction

Reconstruction Of Identity Through A Critique Of Difference

In formulating the poetics of exile, Jasbir Jain has identified two trajectories of diasporic writings a process of self-recovery through history and memory or self preservation through an act of transformation. Writers like Raja Rao and Manohar Malgonkar have reacted to the suppression of the self and turned to history to identify their strengths while Bharati Mukherjee's emphasis in *Jasmine* was on transformation and metamorphosis. The raw energy of the first generation politics is substituted in the works of contemporary writers by a more complex response to the issues of race and unbelonging. Belonging to another trajectory the new writers like Meena Alexander, Chitra Divakaruni turn the location of diaspora into an empowered space and retort to their marginalisation, not by dissolving to the mainstream but by rendering their distinctive voices. Alexander represents the crop of writers, who are concerned with crossing over from one culture to another, without compromising either, negotiating new boundaries and remaking themselves. In her writings diaspora with its shifting boundaries and conflictual encounters between different cultures is an important locus where nationalism and literatures

need to redefine themselves and seek their own margins. The destabilisation of identities that occurs in the daily confrontation with the hegemonic discourses of the US, compels reconceptualisation of identities and their representation in the corpus of literary works. Yet we must not forget that, " all diasporas are differentiated, heterogenous contested spaces, even as they are implicated in the construction of common" we" (Avtar Brah 184). Unlike other diasporic writers, who believe that it is in host country that they find their selves fragmented, Meena Alexander, through her autobiography *Fault Lines* establishes that the sense of fragmentation and alienation ensues from one's home country. My paper will analyse how the process of fragmentation of her unified self begins from infancy in home country and culminates in adulthood while finally after arriving at the host country, America, and how since infancy Alexander has been exercising her feminine agency that finally manifests itself in the form of the autobiography *Fault Lines*.

Grappling with Differences

Mary Elizabeth Alexander was born in Allahabad, India on February 17, 1951. As she grew up she increasingly became aware of her sexual identity. The sufferings of Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* and Eve in the Bible, which she learnt from her parents trigger off her childhood fear and anxiety of "being born into a female body" (42). Quite early she was taught how the female sexual body enticed men and then was manipulated to serve the interest of male sexual gratification and how women had to bear the burden of all that sin. She frequently heard how women jumped into the well in order to do away with the shameful bodies to keep the reputation of the family intact. The feminine self within her empathises with *Shakuntala* who had borne the weight of memory and felt the terror of erasure. Her grandmother Mariamma often scolded her for running in the sun as she did in Tiruvella. She learnt running under the sun is a masculine trait. It is due to her female body that she had to live the life of a 'caged parrot '. She had been forced to accept the burden of flesh, 'the impossibility of leaping out of her own skin in the direction of desire ' (73). Instead of racing around in the sun she was taught embroidery and musical skills. Thus the native country curbed the 'natural' upbringing of a child, conditioned her body and constantly interpellating her as a woman taught her how to grow up as a woman. Foucault rightly observes, " the human body was entering a machinery of power that explodes it, breaks it down and rearranges it ... but discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies" (45). Sexually discriminating upbringing came to child Meena as a fault line that separated her paradise of pleasure and took her into an inferno of anxiety and paranoia. Besides the growing awareness of her female body she learnt about the discriminating system of casteism-"playing with a Woodcutter' s child, or a milkman's child as I did in Tiruvella , would never be permitted in the Kozencheri house"(43). The custom of casteism took her childhood friend away from her. Inevitably the germ of casteism is accompanied by the germ of class distinction. When a child who lived in the railway hut came to steal away the lately ripened cashew fruits in their garden, Meena prevented him and chased him until his foot slipped out under the barbed wire while crossing it in fear of punishment. She was torn by her own behaviour, she found that often Ilya, her grand father, held meetings on 'the

Needs of Our Children' but not on 'their children. She sensed a division in her soul and cried out "I was a divided child"(115). The barbed wire here symbolizes the border between different class and castes omnipresent in her home country. Once she was intensely traumatized when she found her father praying for being saved from a Communist attack. She learnt from her appa how the communist had murdered a tax collector and three landowners belonging to Congress party. As a child of four, for the first time, she was exposed to the language of Violence nurtured through indulgence in political differences. She believed that religion is such a social institution that does not let the human beings disintegrate. But the Reformation Movement in Tiruvel la proved something reverse. It tore apart the centuries old Syrian church of Malabar, dividing it into the older, orthodox Jacoba church and the reformed branch, the Mar Thama church. This sudden epistemic shock that resulted from the division of her religion into two subsections created another fragmentation within her soul-"she feels as if she is in a perpetual hangover" (37). Again, she became aware that religion which is supposed to hold' is the cause of fragmentation and disintegration.

It was Ilya "who had given her the world to travel in and the eyes to see them with". He led her from sound to sound, from sight to sight. She could not conceive of life without Ilya. Ilya infused into her the nationalist sentiments by exposing her to the history of India and helped her construct a national identity in her childhood. But owing to appa's transferable job she was uprooted from Tiruvella and transplanted to Pune. The parting moment from Ilya fractured her being. While depicting the parting moment she admits the gravest secret of her life – the sexual liaison between them- " I felt for an instant as if I had metamorphosed, become another thing...I feel as if in that instant my life split, then doubled itself, in a terrible concupiscence"(63). Sexual abuse is also the cause of deep pain and loss of memory. In Tiruvella, in the profuse garden edged by mango and bamboo and the clusters of golmahor tress she enjoyed the spirit of liberty running as fast as she could, eyes closed head thudding, while in Pune she could not race out into the busy thorough-fare of Deccan Gymkhana. She could feel in Tiruvella the oneness with nature that made her realize the umbilical cord of nature left another crevice upon her soul.

In 1956, Meena Alexander's father, who worked for the Indian government, had been sent abroad to work in the newly independent Republic of Sudan. Meena and her brother followed him in February of the same year. She considered the crossing of borders as a "figuration of death"(65) and crossing into "another life"(65). Bhaba conceives of border as "a location where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion". Consequently, she felt ' she had no name, no nature'(65). She learnt gradually the art of withdrawal and fell a prey to an illusory existence. As one is deluded by a mirage in the desert, she frequently confronted with Meenamol of Tiruvella and recognised that Meenapol of Tiruvella was severed from Meena of Sudan. Landscapes of both countries were superimposed on each other. She nostalgically felt the

absence of the beauties and bounties of Kerala since the green field of Kerala was absorbed by the brutal heat of Sudanese desert. In order to battle with the barrenness of her soul symbolized by the Sudanese desert, she took recourse to memory, reverie and dream.

Although memory came in fragments, it provided basis to the desert of her fragmented being. Her childhood was torn between Khartoum and Kerala. Each summer she had to return to Kerala. She constantly compared herself with pupa' which did not know that one day it would become a butterfly. Meena pondered whether the pupa and the butterfly were the same entity. This points to her state of constant metamorphosis, a predicament to which a diasporic being is subjected to for good. No wonder she equated herself with a stone-eating girl and picked up a pebble and swallowed it- an act which is a means of consolidation and empowerment of her female self with a view to confronting the painful experiences of constant metamorphosis. But the stone-eating girl in her failed to encounter the excruciating reality of the demise of Ilya, who was a part of her being. His death created another fault line within her. She gave vent to her anguish of fragmentation in 'katha'- "so I learnt early that the earth we are embedded in, where everything is fractured. plural. multiple"(36).

In order to cope up with this profound shock Alexander embarked on writing. But words came in bits and pieces, without connectives; she composed a Dictionary of Desire:

Girl book stone tree

Penne pusthakam kalu maram

Bint kitab hajar sajara

fille livre Pierre arbre (299)

In Sudan, cultural hybridity curved out another chasm in Meena. She developed friendship with Sarra and Shamma, met boys and even danced with them. She wore sleeveless blouses. Her father violently scolded her and declared that she can't travel in Kozencheri in such sartorial appearance. She had to wear different dresses in diverse places. Dress is indeed a crucial constituent of human identity. Meena's exposure to cultural differences fractured her sense of identity in such a way that she longed for 'a singular dress' that could work for all times and all places.

The infant fear of possessing a female body was further reinforced in Sudan. The burning horror of clitoridectomy crept into Alexander's mind. She pondered over the image of what women might suffer -whether through mutilation or shame caused only for being born as a Woman. In Khartoum, as a child of five, cut from the 'fluidities' of her Indian world, she had to learn English all over again. She was hurt by the English language. Her Indian English was replaced by the British English. She cried out "English alienated me from what I was born to(116). In Clergy House School, officially known as the Diocesan school for British children she was the first non-white girl to receive admission. Everybody refrained from talking to her due to her dark skin. She was again pushed to the border existence. She held her body responsible-"My body made me: female, Indian, Other" (114). She perceived the difference between the First World body and the Third World body. Emotional succour came to her in the form of a Sudanese friend who made her aware of her innate poetic sensibilities. To her utter desperation, one day he was forced to leave Sudan. Once again she felt fractured and longed to be lifted out of her body and to follow him across multiple borders. He left within her a cauldron of unquenched desire which had no outlet. Indian and Sudanese society considered it natural for a girl not to express her sexual desire. Hence, she was forced to condemn the very fact of being born in a female body-"there was a crack in the earth, nothing could heal, a fault in the very nature of things, treachery in creation (102). Meena Alexander could identify the crack in the earth with the 'sudden discontinuity of flesh" in her body and the resultant fragmentation in the mind created by her estrangement both from Ilya and her male friend.

Now she resolved to write poetry as a strategy of self-preservation that enabled her to give voice to the body. Quite painfully, what she found as a subject matter of poetry-"milk. spittle, blood, feces. stumps of bone, torn flesh" (73)-evokes the image of a female self fallen apart. As a strategy of self-configuration, at the age of fifteen, she 'stripped herself free (75) from the colonial burden by changing her name Mary Elizabeth, the name she was baptized in. Top Meena Alexander. This was an assertion of feminine agency. The fifteen-year-old Meena realized how religion nurtures sexual differences. To her, religion is "an elaborate hierarchical machine that sets women apart"(120). Inevitably she challenged all the social institutions-religion, education, family-that act as ideological state apparatuses inculcating differential orientation into a child-"if you (her mother) want me to live as a woman, why educate me God, why teach me to write? (102)."Moreover, whenever she attempted to inscribe her identity, history of violence stood in her way as impediment. In India she learnt in infancy how Vasco Da Gama and his crew set fire to an entire ship, all men on board, as a sign to the Indian princess not to oppose them; how the British in order to consolidate their rule over India, shot hundreds of unarmed men, woman and children who had congregated for a meeting in Jaliwanwalabagh. In Sudan she herself became a prey to violence. While she was studying in Khartoum university, a genocidal war was being raged in the southern part of Sudan by the government forces in the north. As a sign of protest she with her all the friends of university had gone to the street

demonstration. Two of her friends-Babiker and Bedri were shot dead by army. She realised how the state tried to gain control through repressive state apparatuses represented by the army. The knowledge that violence recorded in history is an aftermath of 'difference', of power-nexus, added to her sense of fragmentation.

Alexander applied for Ph.D in Madras University that refused to accept a degree from Khartoum university. She longed desperately to study in her own country. She articulates her wonder at the unacceptance of her mother country-"London University would accept the Khartoum degree, but not Madras"(135). Consequently, she was uprooted from Sudanese land and had to enter another border, another life; another phase of fragmentation. There she faced difficulties in assimilating English culture. After the completion of Ph.D, when she came to Hyderabad she developed a love relationship with David Lelyveld and travelled to America in order to get married. When she became pregnant, she felt the anxiety of 'giving birth in another country'(64). While walking with her child in the university campus, she had been abused as black bitch by a motorbike rider. She realised that she is doubly marginalized- first as a woman and secondly as a third world subject. Furthermore. the violent abusive language from the Caucasian man added to her sense of fragmentation. Ngugi Thiong' o expresses the anguish of a colonized subject appropriately: "in my view language was the most important vehicle through which that power fascinated and held the soul of the prisoner. The bullet was the means of physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjection" (Thiong'o 437).

The tension surrounding identity of second generation diaspora emerges in a scene where Alexander's son A dam, encounters a man who asks him: "What are you?"(172) Adam, of mixed heritage, chooses to identify himself as neither American nor Indian, but, rather, a Jedi knight (172).Anxious Alexander asks herself: "What did my first-born wish for himself? Some nothingness, some transitory zone where dreams roamed, a border country without passport or language?" (172).In case of the second generation diasporan "their sense of identity borne from living in a diaspora community will be influenced by the past migration history of their parents or grandparents" (John McLeod 207).She often met Gauri, Roshni with whom she developed a friendship and shared her experiences of dislocation. It provided her a sense of co-ethnicity, of community and a sense of belonging to one nation. Rightly argues John McLeod "central to the idea of the nation are notions of collectivity and belonging, a mutual sense of community that a group of individuals imagines it shares"(45). But the sense of community could hardly provide her spiritual solace. She felt tormented by the 'body crossed by several fault lines. Again Meena took recourse to poetry. Language is inevitably a significant constituent or One's identity. She was at her wit's end regarding the choice of language since she dwelled in many languages and was subjected to linguistic in-betweenness -Malayalam, Arabic, Hindi , French. She opted for English as a vehicle of self-expression. Yet she finds her heart illiterate and that she is unable to express her inmost thoughts. She was familiar with British English, no with American English.

She cried out "There is a violence in the very language, Amete English" (199). It damages her literary sensibilities and imagination. No one expresses the trauma of linguistic subjection and loss of identity better than Fanon-"to speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization" (17-18). As a post-colonial subject finding herself unable to express she felt the necessity of linguistic appropriation so that her language can 'evoke a chaos, a power co-equal to the injustices that surround her. She creates a language of astonishing beauty, and elegance of thought to body forth her excruciating experiences of multi-migration, sexual trauma and violence inflicted on her at home and in the world. She versed out in her poem "Night-Scene, the Garden"-

"Come, ferocious alphabets of flesh

Splinter and rage my page

That out of the dumb

and bleeding part of me

I may claim

my heritage." (131)

Such intensity of emotion compels Thiong'o to comment Beauty in Meena Alexander becomes a revolutionary ethic, an ally of unity over division, love over hatred, life Over death, hope over despair" (Preface, xii). Meena Alexander could express herself as long as memory assists her language. So diversely fractured, the "dark mirror" of memory can no longer reflect childhood days. So she frowns upon memory-"memory knits us together then tears us apart. It is the first blessing and last curse (252). While recollecting the fragmented past memory, adult Meena Alexander now realizes how she had been sexually exploited by Ilya She cries out "Appa, Ilya hurt me sexually when I was a child" (241. She fell a prey to sexual differences in her own country, In her own family. Now she interrogates the process of 'hysterisation of women'" by the social myth of marriage . In childhood she heard a song

Glistening silk

the colour of milk

decking the bride!

Wholl bind up the shroud?

Amma, Amma P'll come
 For the ride!" (23)

Meena was conditioned to accept that in a social marriage an unknown man comes to take away the bride. Now she conceives of marriage as an institution manipulated by patriarchy in order to fragment woman's life by dissociating her from her parents. She militates against this feminine destiny-"for a woman, marriage makes a gush. It tears you from your original home(23). She even goes further to accuse patriarchy of exploiting women as a reproductive machine was born out of my mother, and out of her mother before her, and her mother, and hers. Womb blood and womb tissue flowing, gleaming, no stopping" (21). Thus through an interrogation of the naturalness and the innocence of the language of the song and through the insurrection of subjugated knowledge, she explodes this societal myth of marriage, which is actually "a type of speech, open to appropriation by society" (Barthes 109). Memory plunders, instead of providing Alexander, the solace she pursues. She resorts to imagination to give expression to her intense anger against societal discriminations and to assert her agency. The stone-eating girl of infancy manifests herself before her but with a surrealistic appearance. She has grown large wings dressed in a blood red sari, and at times she tears apart the sari, the blouse and strips herself to her skin to show the heart beating underneath. She is no other than the symbolic projection of Meena Alexander who has been torn into pieces by multiple fault lines.

In September 11, 2001 the whole world witnessed the extreme form of violence-the destruction of World Trade Centre. Alexander was too traumatized to speak when her friend was describing the falling of the two towers. But more traumatized she became when she learnt how immigrants had to pay the price for it. Two of her South Asian students in salwar kameez had encountered trouble with men yelling at them. Her daughter recounted to her how a cousin of an Irani friend of hers, a young woman with long black hair, had endured a man in the subway who brandished scissors and cut off some of her hair, Immigrants were being Swept up and put in detention with no charges against them. Once again the difference between the first world and the third world is magnified before her when she witnessed the utter annihilation of Afghanistan as an answer to the destruction of Twin Towers. The trauma finds its outlet in a surrealistic way. The fragmented Alexander can identify herself with Susukhali and Sarama, figures from the fictive tale framed by Ilya. Allegorically, Susukhali and Sarama represent her two doppelgänger -one is the vulnerable and submissive while the other is violent and subversive. Upanishad confirms that every human being is endowed with two selves-' Daiba Satwa' (angelic sel) and Daitya Satwa (demonie sel). When she says...she was me. I was she, Susukhali...(52) ,She imagines herself to be Susukhali chased by a priest of great faith. It is symbolic of her present predicament where she is being hounded by the aggression of Caucasian patriarchy that interpellates her as 'black witch'. Then she too parallels herself with Sarama-"But I was also the rakshasi .I loved the fierce glitter of that mad woman" (32). Being marginalized for having a dark body she surrealistically

achieves a fierce glittering body by gazing at which the discriminating eyes of the onlooker could get blinded. And loss of eyes would lead him to the revelation of the meaninglessness of the difference between white and black. No wonder, the childhood story of the battle between the man of God and Sarama, assumes the form of surrealism in adulthood. The man of God, as recited in the Katha, banged his iron nail into Sarama's smooth brow which was made of turtle shell. So nothing happened to Sarama. This event is depicted by Meena as-"Down, down went the nail. Deeper deeper. As if the Vindya mountains were in her skull and the Indian Ocean to the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea..... A rakshasi (she-demon) with the nail going down, down into her skull...(32-33)". This surrealistic projection of Meena is not a coincident but a symbolic reinforcement. It conjures up the image of Meena Alexander embodying the universe. This image closely corresponds to the image of Lord Vishnu manifesting the entire universe before Arjuna. As Vishnu did this to provide Arjuna a revelation of a grave philosophy, Meena Alexander by presenting herself as the embodiment of the universe attempts to provide the readers a philosophy that a diasporic female who has migrated from India to Sudan, to Britain, to America and is subjected to violence and trauma everywhere represents the modern discriminating world. She has engulfed all the differences and militates against all the discriminating institutions of the world, metonymically represented by the religious institution (the man of God). The depth of the fault line within her is unfathomable; the worldly institutions can no longer affect her, however, hard they try. The human body is the most basic and accepted signifier of identity. By identifying herself with Sarama, the rakshasi, she problematizes her identity. According to Bakhtin, "metamorphosis serves the basis for a method of portraying the whole of an individual's life in its important moments of crisis" (Dialogic Imagination 115). Such magic realism expresses "genuinely the Third World consciousness"(Imaginary Homeland 301) in particular and in general. The consciousness of an individual who perceives the complexity in inscribing a stable identity in the modern world predicated upon the principle of differences.

Conclusion

Despite belonging to several places-"Allahabad, Tiruvella, Kozenceri, Pune, Khartoum, Cairo, Beirut, Jerusalem, Dubai, London, New York, Minneapolis, Saint Paul, New Delhi, Trivandrum (50)"; several languages-"Malayalam, Hindi, Tamil, Arabic, English, French(50) she transfigures all disparate experiences from infancy to adulthood in the form of autobiography. To use her own expression, she "could lift all the scraps of space and stitch[her] days into a patchwork of garment fit to wear (30)". And finally she confronts this 'other dressed in her bits-and-pieces clothing'. In creating a motley kind of dress to signify her multi-layered identity, she treasures a plural view of the world since as a multi-migrated diasporic, she realizes that all the systems of knowledge, all views of the world are never totalizing, whole or pure, but incomplete, muddled and hybrid. These systems of knowledge are constructed to create differences among human beings. Thus she is the disembodied stone-eating girl freeing herself from her bodily sexual identity. She is Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, a creature made of bits and pieces of flesh. Significantly, the lines or borders which are created throughout the universe in order to fragment

it into several parts, actually fragment human beings ontologically and psychologically. Again, from cartographical point of view, she seems to be the embodiment of the modern universe, fractured by drawing several lines upon her. Throughout her life Meena Alexander nurtures a nympholeptic desire of achieving her once-unified self and symbolically the one-life or the one-soul of the universe. The discourses from the First World are forged out to divide the universe by drawing borders through the creation of several binaries as male/female west/east, centre/periphery, colonizer/colonized, oppressor/oppressed and self/other. From a panoptical viewpoint, *Fault Lines* critiques each and every discourse structured upon differences such as sexism, racism, nationalism, etc. at home and abroad. These discourses do not take into consideration those lines drawn between nations to create several fault lines within a human being, making the self alien to itself. This splinters the self as it does in the case of Alexander. Consequently Meena puts forth the rhetorical question -- Where did I come from? How become what I am? (2). By stitching together her fragmented experiences in *Fault Lines* achieves a motleyed transnational post-modern identity. Autobiography affords her a space unite people against acts of discrimination. Autobiography offers a space no doubt for expressing agency, self-recreation and the new figure in motley is also a new creation. This brings us to JanMohammed who sees the interstitial space between borders as a space of specular advantage and of empowerment. Rightly observes Julia Swindells "autobiography now has the potential to be the text of the oppressed and the culturally displaced, forging a right to speak both for and beyond the individual. People in a position of powerlessness-women, black people, working class people -have more than begun to insert themselves into the culture via the assertion of a personal voice, which speak beyond itself" (Linda Anderson 71).

End Notes

1. The text am using is Meena Alexander's *Fault Lines*. 1993.(New York: Feminist Press, 2003.)
2. As is the relation between the narrator and Tridib in *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh, So the relation between Meena Alexander and her grand father, Ilya.
3. In the chapter 'Khartoum Journal', Meena Alexander reflects upon her anxiety regarding her unrestrainable yet burning sexual desire. One day she felt so tortured by the passionate longing for a young Gujarati man that she walked out at night into a garden where she laid down on the grass and took the blades of grass into her mouth. Then she herself describes, "I put out both my hands and ran then across the ground till reached a slight crack in the soil...treachery in creation(103). This passage could be seen as a metaphor for a woman's discovery of the cause of female concupiscence. The soil here is an allegory for her female body. Running the hands across the ground would imply running the hands across her body. She can feel the continuity of her flesh but suddenly reaching at one point her hands could feel the sudden 'discontinuity of flesh', the fault line in a female physique. It is, to her, 'a treachery in creation'. God proved to be

treacherous to her by not giving the flesh to her. On the other hand, the conservative Sudanese society had not allowed her any means to wedge that gap. As a consequence, she made her poetry the substitute for the male sexual organ. That's why she asserts, ""My sexual desire-which were budding at the time. though they had hardly been satisfied in the flesh-were essential to my poetry (102).

4. one of the four factors that relate power and knowledge to sex is, according to Foucault, hysteresis of women's bodies which has led us to think of the female body first as highly sexual and second as an object of medical knowledge. He argues that the female body, as a centre for reproduction, has also come to be considered a matter of public control.

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