Chapter VI  Conclusion
Since contemporary global power relations structure living conditions all over the world today, the place where Black feminist power relations are in effect, is therefore equally ubiquitous. This place is neither outside social practices nor beyond the borders of western societies, but is rather reproduced within them as a social relationship of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion. Migrants and members of minorities specially black women appear in these texts primarily as speechless and powerless figures An image of helpless subalternity is thus generated, which characterizes not only the perception of migrants and the minoritized as a whole, but also all of their utterances. Even today, migration movements are hardly inspired by voluntary motivations, but move instead in the context of an increasingly globalized world market.

Here, the analysis of postcolonial, feminist, and anti-racist critique means paying attention to the geographical and political context, in which this critique is produced and through which it is formed. In this sense we must not only ask with Spivak’s words: Can the subaltern speak?, Instead the question must be: But even if she has been talking on for centuries - why didn’t anybody listen? If human subjectivity is inscribed like a palimpsest; written and re-written by ‘violently shuttling’ discourses of power and knowledge and from shifting positions, then it is impossible to retrieve subaltern agency from the colonial archives since one cannot assume that the colonised person has autonomy and that the archive presents a transparent record of her/his agency. The issue of
gender further complicates this task, as the colonial archive is usually dominated by the stories of men, as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow. The story of Buchi Emecheta and her protagonists in other novels reveals much about microlevel, "multipositional" African female negotiations with the contested narrative of imperialism, the tension between race and gender equality that it embodied in a particular moment and space in history. This account carries important lessons about the interplay of identity, power, and the everyday politics of engagement and resistance in black women communities. Emecheta’s novels offer a rich set of windows to study not only the positioning of her protagonists at the intersection of these different discourses of power but also to explore the fashion in which interactions among them moulded subaltern agency. Understanding power relations in this way illuminates the processes of negotiation in hierarchical societies that keep both hegemonic frameworks and subaltern identities in flux, confounding established notions of "otherness."

The question of home and the rewriting of home and nation in the diaspora, is a fundamental topic in black women's writings. Writing in the context of more than a century of imperial relations, patriarchal nationalism and circular migrancy between Africa and Britain, postcolonial Black feminist writers like Buchi Emecheta assert that women can never experience a genuine
sense of home anywhere, neither in the metropolitan Britain nor in Africa. Where is home, for starters? On the one hand, can the country that has colonized your native land and is still refusing to acknowledge your existence be called home? On the other, can the homeland that failed to perform its nurturing function still be called home? The author's displacement has resulted in an ambiguity and ambivalence towards the idea of home that she has expressed directly or indirectly in her interviews, essays and above all in her fiction. Buchi Emecheta shows that black diasporic women remain alienated and estranged not only from their foreign homes, as a result of colonization and racism, but also from their originary African homes, as a result of nationalist ideologies, patriarchal oppression, poverty and other personal traumatic experiences. While Black feminists like Buchi Emecheta are often relegated to an outside position in Britain as emblems of colonial hegemony, they find it equally urgent to subject the African home to an internal critique that allows for rewriting home in the experiences of black women. In her anomalous position as a feminist, colonized, and second-class citizen, Buchi Emecheta offers an alternative mode of reconnecting to and remembering home. These writers balance their lack of a genuine sense of home as women, colonials and second-class citizens in both native and foreign spaces with the search for new meanings of community that can reintegrate them within transnational and transethnic black female communities of struggle, rather than within the exclusive borders of African diaspora.
Buchi Emecheta deploys the trope of the condition of homelessness in native and foreign terrains alike. Her protagonists depict their exclusion from their families by virtue of their gender and class identities and from the imperialist nation by virtue of their racial Otherness and second-class citizenship. Her novels also offer a postcolonial critique of imperial domination of Africa, expressing strong concerns for the colonized community and its welfare. Emecheta thus unravels the destructive effects of colonialism on the native women and advocates self-determination for them. By disavowing the consolations of nostalgia to a mythic home, Buchi Emecheta constructs new topographies of agency and belonging for subaltern black women, committing herself to communities of struggle everywhere and fostering a transnational and transethnic politics of solidarity. Traditionally, the project of rewriting home in diasporic black women's writings has been confined to experiences of displacement and not belonging in the foreign, imperial home, where the black female subject feels excluded by long histories of colonization and racial Othering. The African home, in contrast, remains in these writings a mythical and overromanticized primordial site, where the black female subject is said to overcome the psychological scars of alienation in two related ways: by recuperating an originary ethnic identity (African roots) that reunites the subject with its authentic self, as posited in the influential philosophy of negritude and the Black Power movement in its different African incarnations; and by affirming their allegiance to a primordial homeland they can always return to.
For Buchi Emecheta, however, there is no genuine sense of home even in the homeland. This internal critique of African home is especially important for writers like Buchi Emecheta who are generally marginalized and devalued. Remapping the idea of home in the diasporic imaginary is central to the corpus of Emecheta's work. In her two fictionalized autobiographies, Emecheta decenters home at the intersection of gender, class and race, making it clear that, for underprivileged subaltern families like hers, home can never be a site of comfort and safety. The adverse circumstances of poverty, machismo and personal trauma in Africa as well as racism and discrimination in the United Kingdom deprive her of a real sense of home in both African and European spaces.

Buchi Emecheta imagines Africa as a fatherland where the black women finds sisters who are confronted by similar colonialist and sexist oppression. Although, the image of Africa as the dark continent is largely the creation of white male imperialists, this image is often reinforced by Western intellectuals, black or white, who often miscomprehend the real experiences of African women. Buchi Emecheta recognizes that it is a mistake to imagine that one can interrogate constructions of diasporic selfhood without critiquing the sites that record identity and through which ideas are transmitted. In articulating a reimagined selfhood, she recognizes a need to celebrate and foreground literacy/literary practices outside the Western tradition. Given the intensely patriarchal nature of traditional African cultures. Black feminism cannot be
considered radical. For white European and American women, feminism has predicated itself on ending gender discrimination and demanding equal job opportunities, voting and property rights. For African and diasporic black women, feminist ideology reflects specificities of race, class and culture. It is for this reason that the former has failed to make any lasting appeal to Africa and its diaspora. Because black women do not wish to alienate men, because black women do not wish to alienate the bulk of their tradition-based sisters, and because many traditional African customs and mores are worth preserving, most African feminists espouse womanism, which Alice Walker defines as a philosophy that celebrates black roots, the ideals of black life, while giving a balanced presentation of black womanhood. Its aim is the dynamism of wholeness and self-healing. All of Emecheta’s novels illustrate the black woman’s problems of self-contextualisation, of being located and dislocated in terms of history and identity. Reading Emecheta’s fictional autobiography, we are primarily asked to bear witness to the great "balancing" act: how to be both a black and a woman; both a mother and a professional; and finally, how to traverse all these routes and end up in the position of a librarian in Britain. Because the axes of the subject's identifications and speaking positions are so multiple what we receive in this text is a braided voice, a voice that is both intricately textured and threatening to unravel at any minute. It is an "I" which is crossed and recrossed by categories of race, gender and class; identities which have, historically and ideologically been held to be incompatible in the context
of the Africa in which she lived. Emecheta's voice issues out of the intersections between, and within, these subject positions. Emecheta suggests that "freedom" is not something that is easily reached - at least not on "one walk" for the black woman. The process of arriving at emancipation is here conceived of as a much more splinted and fragmented one: the boundaries are plural and need to be crossed in all directions. Emecheta embraces a black feminist framework, which celebrates rather than denigrates the transgressive crossing of social boundaries and the shattering of binaries which have become her hallmark. Subverting Manichean thought, her narrative moves closer and closer towards a privileging of intermediary spaces. A consciousness which enables her to keep all the strands in the intricately textured tapestry of her identity alive at one time. Emecheta aims to articulate a universal condition of black female suffering, transgressing "fixed" notions of race, class and gender in both African and European discourses.

Working within this specifically Black feminist framework, she is not only one of the most prolific African diasporic writers of our time, but also one of the most controversial. As a result of her constantly evolving style and the complexity of her female characters, Emecheta is an author who consistently upsets fixed literary and authorial categorizations. Emecheta's novels are representative of a multiplicity of black female voices from different generations; individual constituents brought together to comprise a universal mosaic. If identity is directly related to the choices one is able to make, or the
agency one maintains in his or her daily existence, then factors which curtail this autonomy could lead to a loss of self.

The contemporary literary field reveals a plurality of ways within the narrative form that diaspora writers like Emecheta can explore to reflect their experiences as well as represent their disrupted dwelling spaces and identities. Hence, literature of black women is by no means monolithic: instead of uniformity there is multiplicity; rather than fixity there is flux; and instead of stabilization there are continually new understandings and foci.

Constructing the voices of black women often requires reading against the grain of a number of intersecting discourses. The shadow of colonialism provides the background to most of Emecheta’s novels. Gender becomes a crucial lens through which colonial societies viewed their populations. Patriarchy worked in these societies in pragmatic and discursive forms, normalising certain cultural practices, social customs and ways of being as ‘true’ or ‘natural’. Women were twice colonised in their simultaneous experience of patriarchy and colonialism, doubly relegated to the obscure margins by patriarchal and imperial discourses and narratives that celebrated male-oriented values, such as bonding between men and reticent heroism, outdoor activities like battles, exploration and missionary activities. Trinh T. Minh-ha² considers that the popularity of the ‘third world woman’ is due to the exoticising of the native woman into a fixed ineluctable alterity: ‘It is as if everywhere we go, we become Someone’s private zoo’. The sites of being for
migrant women are the spaces, both public and private, of their new landscapes where they perform and practice forms of social, economic and political action. The place of belonging for black women can no longer be purely geographic (a notion of place) or historical (a sense of connection) because it is 'cross-cut by a variety of global forces'. If identities are fluid, unfixed and changing, it is perhaps appropriate that black women can function across various arenas, appropriating the accoutrements of difference as they need them.

Gender identities cannot be split off from cultural, racial and class particularities. Therefore, theoretical considerations of gender in relation to colonial and postcolonial discourses cover an enormous range of distinctive issues and perspectives. Postcolonial black feminist work has indeed looked at the differences between gender experiences according to the race and class of the women involved, emphasising the need to contextualise, taking into account the particular cultural context involved in each case. Thus, for instance, Chandra Mohanty has explored the ways in which Western feminism has constructed a monolithic "third-world woman" as its object of knowledge, due to a lack of awareness of the persistence of colonial modes of representation while the African-American critic bell hooks has argued that feminism had its roots in a world-outlook coloured by racial imperialism, referring exclusively to the experience of white women, so different, for instance, from that of black women. For Mohanty the central problem occurs when western feminists employ "women' as a category of analysis" based on the notion of a shared
oppression. This is problematic because it assumes that women are a 'coherent' group or 'category' prior to their entry into the social, cultural and family structure. According to Mohanty, any analysis of women needs to be based on "particular local contexts." At the same time meanings and explanations need to be given "according to the socio-historical context." For Mohanty then, any feminist analysis needs to take account of local cultural practices, class and kinship patterns and social-historical circumstances. Consequently Mohanty highlights the ethnocentricism that occurs in the writings of feminist texts, especially when some Western feminists make assumptions about women from other cultures without taking account of local, often complex, social structures. In this sense, in her well-known essay of 1988, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," Gayatri Spivak postulates that the subaltern female subject is not allowed to voice herself, due to colonial and also pre-colonial patriarchal paradigms. Spivak's point is that the combined workings of colonialism and patriarchy make it extremely difficult for the subaltern, doubly disempowered and secondary, to articulate her viewpoint or represent herself, being absent as subject of agency. Certainly, many black women are situated at the juncture of three oppressions that of race, class and gender. Needless to say, while the issue of gender is the main reason African women see the need to create their own theory, Kohrs-Amissah^5 cautions that because "African women writers vocalize their simultaneous experience of multiple oppressions as...gender is (only) one issue out of many. Consequently, an African feminist theory cannot only deal
with the 'male-female'-problem because abolishing one of the oppressions will not solve the problems facing African women. Achieving equality between African men and women will still leave the problems of neo-colonialism, racism and imperialism”. From this viewpoint, what we discover in Emecheta’s novels, to a large extent, is the multiple literary representations of black women. The Empire writes back, and its women need to do so posing specific issues that concern their multiple oppression.


