

# A Companion to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

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Dislocation, Cultural Memory  
& Transcultural Identity in Select Stories  
from *The Thing Around Your Neck*

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From the very beginning of human civilization, from the day man had built the first shelter and a society to live in, the concept of 'location' became relevant to his existence on this planet. Religio-philosophical ideas like the 'great chain of being' or the 'ladder concept' in medieval and renaissance Europe also insisted on the very similar concept of location of the human being in the hierarchy of existence. The issue of location is relevant for everything which is derivative of spatiality, and also to some extent, of temporality. A kingdom, a country, the modern day nation – everything is subject to a boundary, and therefore, a location. In this context, it may not be a digression to remember the lines of King Lear spoken to Goneril during the division of his kingdom, just to insist on the relationship between location and the boundary that determines the spatiality of location: 'Of all these bounds, even from this line to this / With shadowy forests'(I.i, lines 70–71). One easily remembers that at that time Lear was still the King, demonstrating his division, holding a map of his kingdom. We use this reference just to point out that the concept of location is interlinked not only with kingdom, country, sovereignty or a map on a spatial level, but also with the issue of identity on a purely cognitive level. The politics of location and 'dislocation' has many more things to do with the boundary of a country, a cultural space and most obviously, with identity in this twenty-first century probably as never before.

In this paper our primary objective is to focus on the interplay of the politics of location and culture and the resultant formation of a transcultural identity with particular references to some dislocated

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individuals in three short stories of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in her collection entitled *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009) (Herself a 'dislocated' writer, Adichie ever remains sensitive to issues like dislocation, cultural assimilation and the shaping of a 'new' type of identity that is often close to transcultural. Whether Adichie likes it or not, her writings are usually branded by Western academia mostly as postcolonial African/ Nigerian literature. The politics of location plays a crucial role here, as it relates Adichie's country of origin to her writings. Even if her novel *Americanah* (2013) was published first in the United States by the publisher Alfred A. Knopf, it would conventionally not be seen as 'American' literature, but instead as an Anglophone novel published in America and written by a 'dislocated' Nigerian writer. The issues of dislocation of the writer, and also the use of English as the language of the literature she produces, relate each of her works within the context of postcolonialism.

Historically, colonization was the European form of imperial expansion that has left an indelible impact on the socio-economic and politico-cultural realms of existence in the erstwhile colonies both in Africa and Asia. Even the present political boundaries of many African and Asian nations, which were formerly European colonies, are the makings of the concerned colonial powers – 'borders may seem to operate in a converse manner ... as sites that enforce the colonial control over colonized people's lives' (Thieme 2003, 33). Undoubtedly, European colonization affected the economy of the colonies badly but at the same time (probably for their own gain) made the concerned European language the language of administration and power. Nigeria, being a British crown colony, adopted English as the language of administration and power from the colonial period and, quite amazingly, the tradition continues even after 1960. Alongside the mindless exploitation of British colonization, some readers have considered the introduction of a Western educational system as a mode of cultural exchange between the colonizers and the colonized Africans. However, it is more rational to see the introduction of Western knowledge systems and the English language to the colonized Africans, as a means of exercising more political and cultural control over them. 'Dislocated' British colonizers also felt the need for an apparent and partial cultural assimilation with the African people 'located' very much within their own cultural space. But simultaneously, the cultural identity of the Nigerians started changing as they came in contact with the European cultural space even though most of them did not cross the political boundary of the British-ruled Nigeria.

After the decolonization in 1960, Nigeria unfortunately witnessed violence as never before – in the form of a civil war that involved the major ethnic groups of the Igbo, Hausa-Fulani and the Yoruba. Due to the long-term aftermath of socio-political instability, many Nigerian upper and upper-middle-class families found it better to send their wards to a number of European countries and to the U.S. for education, jobs and a better life. It was a reverse flow of history that the English-educated young Nigerians chose to be ‘dislocated’ into a different English-speaking world than their own. It was fashionable for the Nigerian elites – the politicians, the bureaucrats and the businessmen, to buy houses and apartments in the United Kingdom and the U.S., fearing the volatile political situation in their country, and as for the scholars, the U.S. and Europe became favourite places for migration. Adichie herself won a scholarship at the age of 19 years, and left Nigeria for the U.S. to study communications at Drexel University in Philadelphia. Her own ‘dislocation’ and the memory of her own Nigerian cultural space have certainly contributed to her writings and her concern with the issue of identity, as she acknowledges in an interview with Carl Wilkinson (2005):

Before I went to live in the U.S. at the age of nineteen, I was not concerned with the topic of identity. Leaving Nigeria made me much more aware of being Nigerian and what that meant. It also made me aware of race as a concept because I didn’t think of myself as black until I left Nigeria ... In many ways travel becomes the process of finding ... I’m not sure I would have this strong sense of being Nigerian if I had not left Nigeria.

This paper concentrates on three stories of Adichie as case studies from her story collection entitled *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009) and attempts to focus on the issues of dislocation, cultural memory, mimicry, identity crisis, hybridity and the formation of a transcultural identity for better cultural assimilation. The stories selected for discussion are ‘Imitation’, ‘The Arrangers of Marriage’ and ‘The Thing Around Your Neck’. As Adichie divides her time mainly between the U.S. and Nigeria, it is natural for her to depict the first-hand experience of the dislocated individuals striving hard for cultural assimilation in the host country in a credible manner. In fact, most of the fictional characters in her short stories are diasporic: either coming from Nigeria to America, or getting back to Nigeria from America. What is more interesting about her stories is that most of the well-depicted dislocated fictional characters are women, as she explains to Guy Raz in an interview (2009): ‘gender affects the way we experience immigration ... I think immigration in itself is a difficult thing ... And I find

that women ... deal with immigration differently, and I'm interested in it.' This makes it clear how Nigerian women have benefited from the Western education introduced by the British colonizers during the colonial period. It seems that Adichie takes a particular care in telling some personal and painful stories of dislocated Nigerian women who have relocated to America through marriage, and may be seeking better education and jobs – or have some obscure dreams to fulfil.

Each dislocated woman in Adichie's fictional world has her own story, where she takes up the challenge to balance her life through several acts of interpreting her present situation in 'dislocation', of memorizing the past, learning new lessons to adapt in the host country and thereby facing the challenge of the unpredictable future in her own unique way. The initial culture shock after dislocation opens up the process of disillusionment, which gradually affects both their energy and psyche, and they start suffering from loneliness, despair, disappointment, psychological trauma and identity crisis. Sometimes this even makes them regret leaving their homeland, and consequently the characters start missing the softness, the delicacies, and the warmth of the cultural space of their place of origin. Eventually these fictional women in Adichie's short stories start walking down 'memory lane' to excavate the ruins of the past along with living in the present and learning the lessons of assimilation in an alien cultural space. Here lies Adichie's mastery in weaving the collage of two cultures and the urgent human struggle to reconcile them. The issue of the weaker sex adds to the struggle a unique dimension of desperation alongside the common issue of colour. But the fictional women believe not in giving up, but rather in adjusting to the situation and shaping an identity which is more transcultural in nature: 'It is true indeed that the world is shrinking. But to live meaningfully in a globalised world does not mean giving up what we are, it means adding to what we are' (Adichie 2014, 8).

'Imitation', the second story in *The Thing Around Your Neck*, depicts the plight of Nkem, who is married to a rich Nigerian named Obiora and then arrives at the 'lovely suburb near Philadelphia' in America with him. She leaves her country behind for America when 'She was pregnant' (2009, 24). Nkem belongs to those sets of women who value the marital bond above everything under the sun and follow their husbands without any question or doubt. For this reason, she strives to fit in the new cultural space, keeping in mind her husband's demands from family life. At the same time, she feels proud of becoming the wife of a man who belongs to the 'Rich Nigerian Men Who Sent Their Wives to America to Have Their Babies league' (ibid., 26) and is one of the 'Rich Nigerian Men Who Owned houses in America League' (ibid.).

Even when Obiora finds an elementary school for Adanna, their first child, she feels mesmerized by the magic of the dream country. Apparently she seems to be happy, as her dislocation is purposeful and meant only for the realization of her dream space. She even feels grateful to Obiora in his attempts to reduce her initial culture shock by creating a microcosmic Nigerian space inside their house in the Philadelphian suburb by decorating the domestic space with African artefacts and by keeping a Nigerian maid to assist Nkem in her housekeeping. But, quite ironically, the dream space is shattered as Obiora goes back to Nigeria and starts visiting Nkem and the children 'only in the summer. For two months' (ibid., 27).

Nkem takes this loneliness for granted, keeping in mind only the education and future of her children, but cannot resist herself from being traumatized when, through her friend Ijemamaka, she comes to know about Obiora's girlfriend. This incident leaves her utterly spent, lonely, and more confined than ever, and she feels the fragility of their marital bond to such an extent that 'the flatness on one side of the bed' (ibid., 29) does not escape her sight. She truly realizes that her dislocation has taken a toll on her own life. Despite acts of mimicry of the kind that regularly occur in the American cultural space, she feels herself drawn back to her past and seeks happiness only in the memories of her homeland. Her new discovery of a meaningless married life makes her think that 'she does miss home' (ibid., 37), her own cultural space in Nigeria, a place where she does not need to compromise fibrous potatoes for yams, and basmati for the 'jollof' rice; a place where the 'Lagos sun glares down even when it rains' (ibid.). The issue of marital infidelity on the part of Obiora becomes more complex as Nkem reflects over her teenage years, the days of her misfortune, when 'she dated married men' (ibid., 31) and in return those men used to buy new sofas for her household, paid her father's hospital expenses or fixed their roof. As she recollects more and more, the reader becomes anxious about the materialistic nature of life – as in America, so in Nigeria – a life where the border between morality and corruption is always blurred, where life is measured in terms of materialistic gains and loss. In her helpless surrender to the material market of life, everything was so strategic. This was what she could do as an *ada*, the first daughter of her parents.

In spite of all these memories Nkem finds that 'America has grown on her, snaked its roots under her skin' (ibid., 37), and she has also learnt to cope with the culture of America like her husband Obiora. To an extent she enjoys her partial assimilation in the new American cultural space and she finds it rather safer than her past life in Nigeria: she feels herself safe in America when driving back home late night;

she finds that there are no fears of robbers here. Even the 'restaurants served one person enough food for three' (ibid.). Moreover, America has taught her 'egalitarianism' (ibid., 29) for which she is able to share her household problems with Amaechi, the house maid. She has learnt to make cookies, goes to Pilates class. Do all these acts of mimicking make her fully American? Although confident enough, is Nkem able to assimilate fully in the new cultural space? Rather she is in an identity crisis, as memories cannot be effaced from the mindscape. As a result she cuts her hair and texturizes it, because she has come to know that Obiora's girlfriend in Lagos has 'hair (that is) short and curly' (ibid., 22). Being a diasporic Nigerian woman, Nkem wants to identify herself with that Nigerian girl instead of with American women. Towards the end of the story she utters the very words 'she had not planned to say' (ibid., 41), which 'seems right' and 'what she has always wanted to say' (ibid.). She expresses to Obiora that she wants to move back to Lagos with her children despite all the amenities America provides her. Nkem defeats her identity crisis by valuing her cultural space of origin more than any other place on earth.

The second story in this discussion is 'The Arrangers of Marriage', which tells the tale of Chinaza Okafor, an orphan fostered by her Uncle Ike and Auntie Ada in Nigeria. They think that they 'have won a lottery' as they become successful to arrange the marriage of their girl with 'an *ezigbo di!* A doctor in America' (2009, 170). To 'avoid being called ungrateful' (ibid.) Chinaza yields to their wishes and, keeping aside her dreams to take the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board entrance exam to secure a place in the university, she accepts the 'lottery' prize by marrying that Nigerian doctor already settled in America and starts off for America with some 'ground *egusi* and dried *onugbu* leaves and *uziza* seeds' (ibid., 168) in her bag. She feels severely distressed from the very beginning of her diasporic life in America as her preconceived fancies for a 'house like those of the white newlyweds' (ibid., 167) shown in the typical American films, are replaced rather by a 'furniture-challenged' (ibid., 168) flat which 'lacked a sense of space' (ibid., 167). Chinaza has to pass through various cultural shocks, Ofodile being her guide in the new cultural space, continuously correcting her language problems. She learns what the Americans do and what they do not, and she becomes gradually habituated in adopting some typically American word usage: for example, 'busy' for 'engaged', 'Hi' for 'You're welcome', 'cookies' for 'biscuit', or 'elevator' for 'lift'. Ofodile actively nags to remind her that 'this is not like Nigeria' (ibid., 173) and also explains to her: 'If you want to get anywhere you have to be as mainstream as possible. If not, you will be left by the roadside' (ibid., 172). This comment by Ofodile

emphasizes the necessity of cultural assimilation in the host country and obliquely highlights the importance of mimicry as a strategic tool for cultural assimilation. She is highly shocked to discover that her husband Ofodile has sworn an affidavit to change his name, and is now known as Mr Dave Bell in America. This could be interpreted as Ofodile's strategic attempt to get assimilated in the cultural space of America and a well-thought-out plan to secure the Green Card there. Chinaza also painfully notices that her husband has become such a cultural hybrid that he does not even allow any cultural trace of the language of his homeland as he reminds her to 'speak English at home too' (ibid., 178). She loses herself the very moment that Ofodile confesses to her his first marriage with an American girl to secure the residential permit in America – the Green Card.

Adichie cleverly portrays how the Nigerians' belief 'that any fate, any prospects awaiting any Nigerian in America are as a matter of course better than when having to stay at home' (Mami 2014, 7) are smashed when the diasporic Nigerian individual really starts facing the cultural space of the host country. This is the case with Chinaza. But memory plays an important role in weaving the present with the past and she is seen to recollect the situations of her homely cultural space, where she did not have to drink 'bland tea' (Adichie 2009, 171) or eat pizza which she thought was never cooked properly. At home she could bargain while shopping, and is able to examine the food-stuffs by touching them, which is hardly possible in America. She finds the concept of a 'food court' (ibid., 176) – quite popular in America – 'something lacking in dignity' (ibid.) Ofodile's serious and strategic attempts to be perfectly assimilated in the American cultural space puzzles her. She suffers from an acute identity crisis and feels restless. That her identity is at stake becomes clear when Ofodile fills an application form with the name 'Agatha Bell' (ibid., 173) in the space allotted for her. Whatever the situation, Chinaza discovers a comfort zone for herself only in the kitchen where she feels a little respite as she cooks Nigerian food and speaks Igbo to herself during cooking. When Ofodile buys her a Good Housekeeping All-American Cookbook and forbids her to speak Igbo, she again finds a way out in teaching Nia, an African American to say certain phrases in Igbo. But as the knowledge of Ofodile's earlier marriage constantly irritates and bewilders her, she leaves his place and finds herself in a no man's land. When Nia suggests that she talk to her uncle and aunt in Nigeria, Chinaza refuses and explains that there is 'nobody to talk to at home' (ibid., 184) as she no longer wants to show her gratitude to the arrangers of her marriage. The two-fold disappointments – 'the insecurity, the callous



and sadistic machinations of the arrangers of marriage and the entire deceptive appearance and allusion of America' (Asoo 2012, 17–18) make her very much unwilling to return to her husband because he is no longer the man that she used to know. So when Nia asks Chinaza, if she did not call her husband by name for cultural reasons, she painfully replies: 'I wanted to say that it was because I didn't know his name, because I didn't know him' (Adichie 2009, 185). This in-between state of her identity makes her realize that she 'could not leave yet' – she needs to 'get a job and find a place and support ... and start afresh' (ibid., 186) to possess an identity for herself and something that would belong only to her.

Apart from Nkem's and Chinaza's identity crisis, the nature of Akunna's as depicted in 'The Thing Around Your Neck' is a little different. Here Adichie begins the story again with a lot of dreamy assumptions about America – 'You thought everybody in America had a car and a gun; your uncles and aunts and cousins thought so, too' (Adichie 2009, 115). Akunna, who is the lucky one among the other family members to win the 'American visa lottery' (ibid.), belongs to a poverty stricken family in Nigeria. To describe her dismal condition in the domestic cultural space in Nigeria, Adichie brings forth some of Akunna's childhood memories, like the incident of her father's hitting a big car and begging the big man's pardon making him 'just like the pigs' (ibid., 122); or her mother's inability to bribe the teachers of the local secondary school by giving a 'brown envelope' (ibid., 116) so that they provide an 'A' grade to Akunna's brother. In this context, the American visa becomes a 'phantasmal relief from the daily humiliation' (Mami 2014, 8) in the domestic cultural space. Before setting a foot in America, Akunna, alongside her own dreams, also carries the burden of the expectations of her cousins and relatives for foreign gifts like 'handbags and shoes and perfumes and clothes' (Adichie 2009, 115).

Akunna receives the first lesson about America from one Nigerian uncle, who allowed her to stay at his place with his family in Maine in the U.S., and also enrolled her in a community college nearby: 'America was give-and-take. You gave up a lot and you gained a lot, too' (ibid., 116). In that college she faces some awkward situations as the American girls asked her about her hair style, her English and her home, and all these queries make her feel inferior; she perceives these questions as points of difference and recoils from them more and more. She only feels homely now at her uncle's place where she shares *garri* (a typical Nigerian food) for lunch and is able to speak in her mother tongue. But this security of the homely cultural space in America comes to an end when her uncle attempts to molest her, and she is harshly reminded of

the first lesson she got from this person. Adichie cleverly pushes her protagonist into a tough situation where Akunna has to take decisions for herself, where the comfort zone of reliance on familiar persons is crushed.

Akunna now starts working in a Connecticut restaurant as a waitress and tries to fulfil her urge to study by visiting a public library. Her struggles and pain in a foreign land remind her of the domestic cultural space in Nigeria, with all its poverty and hopelessness. She recollects the pangs of poverty there, thinking of her aunts 'who hawked dried fish and plantains', and uncles who showed their excellence in maintaining 'families and lives into single rooms' (Adichie 2009, 117). She thus torments herself peculiarly with all these personal cultural memories, but still she does not write to her family. Indeed she realizes that her distress and suffering in this new country is not so big an issue and there is 'nothing to write about' (ibid., 118) though, quite amazingly, she wants to speak more and more about America. At night when she thinks of her inability to buy gifts and presents for her relatives in Nigeria, it seems that 'the thing' around her neck starts to tighten. Several times in the narrative Adichie uses the expression 'you wanted to write' probably to express the difficulty of speaking. In this traumatic situation, she finds an American boyfriend who has already visited 'Ghana and Uganda and Tanzania, loved the poetry of Okot p'Bitek and the novels of Amos Tutuola' (ibid., 120). Her crisis starts reducing when she finds that also her boyfriend's 'parents were different' (ibid., 125) and they are even interested in Nigerian food and literature of 'Nawal el Saadawi'. She is astonished when they do not judge her as 'an exotic trophy, an ivory tusk' (ibid., 126) and naturally she feels relieved that 'the thing that wrapped itself around' her neck 'starts to loosen, to let go' (ibid., 125).

In this story 'The Thing Around Your Neck', there are multiple references to Akunna's act of memorizing the domestic cultural space of Nigeria, and in her desperate attempts to establish an identity for herself by working as a waitress, in her initial homelessness and joblessness, one would certainly notice the diasporic Nigerian woman's identity crisis. But what about the issue of mimicry, with which Adichie deals so powerfully in the earlier stories? It is not always true that every dislocated individual needs to mimic for acculturation or assimilation. If critically considered, it becomes clear that the women in the previously cited stories (Nkem and Chinaza) are married women and, in most cases, their mimicry is inspired by their compulsion to compromise. In the case of Akunna, her first privilege is that she is a single woman who may enjoy her freedom without any compromise. Second, she has found, quite luckily, an Amer-

ican boyfriend (unlike the Nigerian husbands of Nkem and Chinaza), who facilitates her acculturation in the American cultural space with more care and love. Her boyfriend does not allow any situation to arise that may make her conscious about her 'difference'.

Now Akunna has something to write about and she writes her first letter to her home in Nigeria. But in return she receives a letter from her mother that carries the news of the death of her father five months earlier. She feels paralysed again, and this time the shock comes from her home. Her desire to achieve a new identity that she has nurtured throughout these five months after her dislocation in America simply breaks into pieces. The news of her father's death reminds her of the crisis in her country and she finds no escape from the stiff realities around her. She decides to return to Nigeria, not as someone defeated by circumstances, but as someone who has made herself strong enough in facing new challenges. Adichie never mentions whether there is any possibility that Akunna would return but, towards the end of the story, the arrival of her boyfriend at the airport and the reference to her Green Card could be taken as the 'thing' that hangs around her neck like a reminder to get back to America within one year: 'He asked if you would come back and you reminded him that you had a green card and you would lose it if you did not come back in one year' (2009, 127). This Green Card is obviously a token of her transcultural identity that she has successfully achieved, to her credit.

Adichie in these three short stories skilfully portrays the lives of three dislocated Nigerian women – Nkem, Chinaza and Akunna – who struggle hard to find a place in the new cultural space in America in their own unique ways. Out of these three, two are dislocated by marriage; Akunna, who comes to establish herself and to support her family, is the exception. But surprisingly, the tiny and highly fragile dream space of each woman is wounded by the lashes of the American reality. In each story, all their preconceived notions about America, the country of their destination, prove to be terrible in course of time. That the 'American dream is therefore an illusion, and a dream deferred' (Wirngo Siver 2012, 25), becomes very difficult for them to accept. They might have adjusted calmly to their new cultural spaces, but when they receive the shocks from their husbands and uncle, coping with their situations becomes more critical. They were so traumatized that they seemed to lose their voice and also their individual identities. Adichie nicely depicts this matter in 'Imitation' where Nkem, in spite of knowing Obiora's infidelity, never questions him directly, and cuts her hair as a modest gesture of protest. Through Ofodile's nagging nature in 'The Arrangers of Marriage', the language of the host country itself

squeezes the voice of Chinaza's private space in the kitchen. Akunna in 'The Thing Around Your Neck', sometimes 'felt invisible' (Adichie 2009, 119) and is in limbo, unable to write letters to her home, although she has so much to say.

Individuals at the time of their dislocation from the home country carry with them to the host country their 'belief, tradition, customs, behaviours and values' (McLeod 2000, 211). All these possessions and belongings are sheltered in their memory, which is again essentially cultural. This memory 'is firmly situated in the present' (Hirsch and Smith 2002, 2) and becomes a back-up system for the dislocated individuals to return to their homes. After facing the shocks one after another in the new cultural space, each of Adichie's women characters shelters herself in memories that help to recollect home either as a 'haven filled with nostalgia, longing and desire ... or as a site and space of vulnerability, danger and violent trauma' (Agnew 2008, 10). The cultural memories of their homeland become a panacea to the strife of their present situations. But these memories are sometimes so shocking that when they look back to their Nigerian past they only find corruption, poverty, joblessness and lack of education. Still they try to access and relate their memories to the life left behind; as Bhabha suggests, dislocated beings should 'reinscribe the past, reactivate it, relocate it, *resignify it*' in order to interpret it as 'an ethics of "survival" that allows [them] to *work through the present*' (original emphasis, 2010, 59).

These dislocated women often 'acknowledge an earlier existence elsewhere and have a critical relationship with the cultural politics of their present home' (Hua 2008, 195). In each of these three stories, the protagonists' attempts to connect their past with their present have nicely depicted the disparities between the two cultures. For the dislocated beings, negotiation is an important factor because it can only help them to accommodate themselves in the newer cultural space. In order to negotiate with the new place, they witness a clash of two cultures as they are unable to erase the cultural memory of their home country. In these selected stories also, we explore how 'Nigeria's corruption and its emphasis on family relations are contrasted with American ease and forced closeness' (Nayar 2009). Adichie's protagonists try their best to negotiate between the cultures of their home country and the host country: Nkem loves 'the abundance of unreasonable hope' (Adichie 2009, 26) in the Americans; Chinaza unites all her mental strength and hopes to make a place of her own; and Akunna, in spite of setting foot in her home, doesn't forget her Green Card, the only pass to return. At the point where two different cultures meet, a third space is generated

and it creates in them a conscious urge to develop a new identity for better social adaptability. This consciousness also 'fosters an inclusive, rather than exclusive, understanding of culture as characterised by differences' (Nordin et al. 2013, x). The dislocated fictional characters of Adichie's short stories realize that it is beyond their ability to erase the differences between the cultures of their country of origin and their country of residence, but they can at least mould themselves to such a level of flexibility that it becomes easier for them to acculturate in any sort of cultural space.

At the end of all these stories Adichie's 'dislocated' women – Nkem and Chinaza – feel that they need to shape a new type of identity that would be tolerant of any kind of cultural practice in any new cultural space. The inclusivity of newer cultural practices promotes transcultural awareness and a consciousness of cultural diversity in them. Though Akunna decides to return to Nigeria after getting the news of her father's death in the letter from her mother, she keeps open every possibility to return to the U.S. again within one year, the maximum period her Green Card would allow her. Her return to Nigeria could be seen as the victory of cultural memory over the struggle and busy schedule of dislocation. All the women in Adichie's three stories establish that, unless they shape an identity flexible to the challenges of their diasporic realities, the 'new' world is not going to be a happy space for them. Just as not all memories related to their cultural past are happy, so it is in their dislocated present. But, the newly achieved transcultural identity empowers them to enrich their lives by adding things that are full of hope and promise for the days to come in any location on the planet.

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