

## The Afterlife in Transition: Reincarnation in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

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### ABSTRACT

This paper investigated the nature of reincarnation to ascertain the relationship across cultural borders and regions. Since art speaks in different voices and different people have various belief systems, one would expect similarities as well as differences in values, beliefs, ritual, superstition, and history. Moreover, texts represent the cultural identity of the region in which they were formed, so, it cannot be properly understood and appreciated as an isolated expression; rather, it must be reviewed in the light of comparison. The concept of reincarnation is rooted in myths and writers like Achebe delve into this great storehouse of unrecorded traditions of a people to re-create history. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is characterized by the historical account of the physical and psychological effects of slavery and segregation. The paper contends that comparative analysis gives value to the myth of reincarnation in order to concretise the phenomenon that has different interpretations in different regions. Reincarnation goes beyond being a national theme; hence, it gains influence across the globe.

Keywords: Afterlife, Transition, Reincarnation and Things Fall Apart.

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### INTRODUCTION

Many critics have offered various definitions of Comparative Literature or comparative studies which originated in nineteenth century Europe. The divergent views on the dialectics of comparative literary studies, as pundits have argued, have been on whether such studies should focus on similarities or differences or both. Comparative Literature in effect is the comparison between two literatures and it aims at looking at points of convergence and divergence. In a wider and general scope, comparative literature aims at solving a universal problem by presenting new models of analysis after a proper investigation into the cross cultural variations. It is a comprehensive term which encompasses the totality of human experiences as regards the cultural, religious, economic, social and historical factors of different peoples and regions. In order to understand the term 'comparative literature', one must understand the implications. In

etymology, comparative literature denotes any literary work(s) that is compared to another work(s).

Cuddon and Habib posit that:

The main focus of comparative literature is the study of foreign literatures and the universality of the human experience, the relationship between linguistics and literature, and an examination of myths and epics in order to trace the perceived origins of a national literature as well as the examination and analysis of the relationships and similarities of the literatures of different peoples and nations (145). In this regard, one will analyse literary texts based on a proper analysis of the intricate relationships perceived; this totally excludes the differences in the comparison as only the similarities will prescribe the human experience that comparative literature searches for.

Chukwuma, Enudi and Okagbare are of the view that: Comparative literature

means reading literary texts against the other(s) as many can fall within the realm of comparison not only to discover differences and similarities as is commonly thought but in considering their differences and similarities, the comparators would also derive some sort of scientific model that would help in further interpreting literatures from varied traditions and ages (19). In this regard, it is pertinent to say that a thorough comparative analysis would not only pay close attention to the similarities and differences but will also suggest models and methods for future analysis, creating room for more research. Lucia Boldrini argues that since comparative literature touches on origins and identity claims, it would be necessary to examine the object whose differences it seeks to connect and in whose obvious similarities it seeks differences. Her definition of comparative literature entails:

A way of conceiving of the role of the critic and of literary criticism/interpretation: in this sense, comparative literature

#### **Reincarnation: Definition and Theories**

The concept of reincarnation has existed in various religions for at least 3,000 years. Rebirth or renaissance in mythology is the firm belief that humans have a cycle of rebirth in which the soul of the dead takes up another body. This return from the dead as a living being to live among the living has created divergent views among scholars. The question that arises is: whether the soul has a rebirth in another life or whether life ends after death; this is because there is no verifiable evidence that the soul incarnates another body after it has left the old one at death. The Hindu/Buddhist doctrine states that a person may be reborn successively into one of five classes of living beings (god, human, animal, ghost or resident of hell) depending on the person's own actions. Many belief systems, apart from Hinduism and Buddhism, which embrace reincarnation include: Shiite Muslims, Ancient Greece and West Africa. Tony Walter, in "Reincarnation, Modernity and Identity" states, 'Hinduism tends to

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would be a way of reading texts that requires that boundaries be identified, emphasised, studied, undone, that puts under pressure such boundaries - boundaries, chosen by the critic, that are of a linguistic, or historical, or national or ethnic, or more broadly cultural nature; that emerge through the comparison of how each work (author, period) configures the relationships between use of language, theme, sense of identity, and artistic expression (21).

It is the desire of every comparator to examine models of reference that will thoroughly ascertain the roots of concepts, ideologies and cultural beliefs with their concurrent trends and differences so as trace common beliefs, identity models and historical differences. Susan Bassnett defines comparative literature as 'the exploration of the vicissitudes, alteration, developments and reciprocal differences of themes and literary ideas across literatures' (2).

assume that a soul driven by the law of karma manifests itself in successive incarnations' (22). In many tribal societies, notably in Africa and North America, belief in reincarnation is tied to a group, family, kinsman, or tribe such that Walter states, 'any baby born is believed to be a reincarnation of some maternal relative who has died and each individual nearing death is consoled by the prospect of a future incarnation, while the relatives anticipate his return again as a baby' (23).

The Christian religion rejects reincarnation and the whole thrust of the Bible opposes it because man is distinct and unique. The Bible teaches that at death man's body, which is mortal, decays and returns to dust, his soul and spirit proceed to judgement and if found worthy or guilty will access and remain in heaven or hell for eternity. At the same time, it would be stated that Jesus himself taught the resurrection and when He rose from the dead He showed himself to His disciples in Luke 24: 39, 'Behold My

hands and My feet, that it is I Myself!' However, Jesus made a reference in Mark 9:13 when He explained to His disciples that John the Baptist was an incarnate of Elijah. He said, 'But I say to you that Elijah has also come, and they did to him whatever they wished, as it is written of him.' Furthermore, Jesus trying to connect Elijah and John the Baptist tells His inner array of disciples, those on whom He entrusted the secrets of the Kingdom of God: 'But I say to you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognise him.... Then the disciples understood that He spoke to them of John the Baptist' (Matt 17: 12-13).

The grounds for these statements possibly originate from the fact that Elijah neither died nor was he buried and because he was taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire (2 kings 2:11). It might be

#### **Myth and Magic Realism**

The relationship between myth and society has been a long recognised discourse as every society has its own belief system, ideology, culture and religion which form the foundation of their socio-cultural and religious values. Ezugu defines myth as:

An extremely complex, cultural reality, a story of symbolized value, encapsulating, as it were, the philosophy of a people, their beliefs, concepts, ideals, and culture; it underlines a people's way of life and serves as an instrument of their identification with their past, their present, and their future (2).

Jung's concept of myths is in relationship to the 'collective unconscious' and this can be studied in relation to the myths of a particular region and the link to a particular individual, 'the archetype derives from the often repeated observation that myths and universal literature stories contain well-defined themes which appear every time and everywhere' (Jung.net). The myths expressed by a people unconsciously will definitely affect the narratives generated by those people and this will be seen in the conscious behaviour of the individual who would become a channel through

understood that he was kept in a place, awaiting his next life as the fore-runner of Jesus, definitely because of his fiery and extraordinary trail of miracles. He incarnated as John the Baptist living in the wilderness feeding on locusts and wild honey (Matt 3:4). In another encounter with the authorities, John denies being Elijah or a prophet at all because that would have led the Jewish people away from the Christ which he came to establish (John 1:20-22). So, this should not be regarded as reincarnation, especially in the face of Walter's proposition of three concepts of personal identity as reincarnation: an individual self or soul progressing through successive incarnations; the self as an illusion; identity rooted in kin relationships and in one's descendants (24).

which these myths unfold. Magic realism takes its spring from the mythological approach, drawing critical analysis from magical realism. According to Mbanefo Ogene, 'mythological and archetypal approach to literature not only touches on the use of symbols in literature but equally extends to the images, characters and motif in literature' (35). Different cultures have different mythic origins as a people's mythology invariably shapes their religion. Since myths have a remarkable influence on ordinary life, it is not surprising that writers often return to it to properly analyse its concerns through imagery, comparison and identity. These abundant resources create for the writer and critic an absolute source of creativity as they study the various human conditions. The primary concern of this study will be to analyse how myths enable us to understand the corresponding place that a literary work has in the context of literature as a whole. This will help 'to discover how myths are brought into the work of literature and their effects (on the other characters) as well as on the readers' (Ogene, 35). The aim of this research therefore is not to create dissensions but to discuss the concept as obtainable in comparative analysis. Magical realism is a

contradictory term that often generates conflict. In this literary genre, it is possible that anything can happen which may include apparitions, indescribable phenomena and fantastical things which are not only possible but realistic, presenting real evidence and verifiable truth in the verisimilitude of literature. In such novels, we find elements of the magical which crawl or creep into an otherwise realistic world. A Colombian author who has explored this genre is Gabriel Garcia Marquez in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* with the original title *Cien años de Soledad*, a story which spans six generations of the Buendia family. We witness miracles happening and fantastical things, including a woman being visited by death. In the village of Macondo, there is rapture as a woman is being sucked into heaven in rapture. There are strange prophecies that manifest immediately they are given. The novel delves into the universal themes of life and death, myths and mysteries. Other works in this genre include Italo Calvino's *The Baron in the Trees* and Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* in which Catherine's ghost haunts Heathcliff in a passionate love story. Emory defines 'magical realism as a literary mode rather than a distinguishable genre and is characterized by two conflicting perspectives, one based on a so-called rational view of reality and the other on the acceptance of the supernatural as prosaic reality.' Magic realism differs from pure fantasy primarily because it is set in a normal, modern world with authentic descriptions of humans and society.' Magical realism, according to M. H. Abrams, has been used at various times by different critics who sought for an original term to convey their narrative inventions. Robert Scholes came up with 'metafiction' or 'surfiction' and also brought up the popular term 'fabulation' but in all these, the aim is to present the written work which 'writers weave in an ever shifting pattern, a sharply etched realism in representing ordinary events and details together with fantastic and

Amaka and John dreamlike elements, as well as with materials derived from myth and fairy tales' (255). Cuddon and Habib state that magic realism was coined by Franz Roh and it originated from 'objects depicted in a surrealistic manner, their themes and subjects were often imaginary, somewhat outlandish and fantastic with a certain dream-like quality' (416). In *The Famished Road*, there is a communion between the human and spirit worlds centring on Azaro, a spirit child or Abiku whose ties to the human world is very slim. In the novel, the author takes a look at the life, religious view, decisions and travails of the spirit child. The chain of unfulfilled longings/desires and the cyclical pattern of birth and rebirth gives the novel the sense of the fantastical as it explores the myth of reincarnation, of the "Abiku" or "Ogbanje". In 'Abiku' by Wole Soyinka, the persona mocks the efforts to keep him in the human world.

In vain your bangles cast  
Charmed circles at my feet  
I am abiku, calling for the first  
and repeated time.

While the persona in Wole Soyinka's 'Abiku' is the spirit child who makes a jest of all efforts to stop the torments, in this boastful claim Abiku presides over his own fate, being in control of all that happens and still more with a threat,

Night, and Abiku sucks the oil  
From lamps, mother! I'll be the  
suppliant snake coiled on the  
doorstep Yours the killing cry.

In J.P Clarks "Abiku", the spirit child is implored to desist from repeated births and stay with the mother.

No longer then bestride  
the threshold But step  
in and stay for good.

The persona goes on to narrate the plight of the Abiku that is branded and scarred. Despite that Abiku is recognized from all these 'relics', the sorrow of the mother is exploited to appease the spirit child.

For her body is tired  
Tired, her milk going  
Sour. Where many more  
mouths gladden the heart.

### Reincarnation in Igbo Mythology

According to Ike and Edozie, 'The three levels of unitary existence are made manifest for the Igbo: the dead ancestor, the present generation and the yet unborn children on whom the future depends' (24). This cultural belief and practice among the Igbos is hinged on the African Traditional Religion which serves as a medium for the interconnectedness between the three levels of existence. According to Ogbukagu, 'the Igbos generally believe in the efficiency of dead relations to be born again within their own kindred group here on earth through *ino-uwa* or reincarnation' (318). The dead ancestor reincarnates his personality, traits, behaviour and skills on a new born without making the baby lose his/her own powers/skills. The child rather perfects what he/she has. An ancestor will likely choose a child who shares the same likes or qualities with him/her. So, in reincarnation, an ancestor attains perfection through a child who is a member of the deceased family or kindred. In Igbo cosmology, certain aspects of culture, religion and tradition are interwoven and as Obiora Ike posits, 'a breakdown in one area affects the others and the consequent disharmony is potentially catastrophic' (10). It is the aim of the comparator to discover universal principles in the concept of reincarnation. Ogbukagu, in *Traditional Igbo Beliefs and Practices*, believes that reincarnation is possible when the deceased has lived long enough to attain ancestor-hood, thereby making it impossible for a child to be a

However, Sore Greg explains the foundation of the belief in reincarnation:

As one that stems from an inner part of man which is unconscious as most of us, if not all of us have had many strange experiences that only the theory of reincarnation can answer. Dreams of forgotten scenes, flashes of buried memories come at times like voices form a dim and curtained past (8).

These natural tendencies that one possesses may be either overstated or repressed by new experiences or by the

#### Areas of Similitude in comparative Analysis

The type of reincarnation introduced in *Things Fall Apart* is the spirit child or *ogbanje*. Achebe describes the 'big and ancient silk cotton tree which was sacred, spirits of good children lived in that tree

reincarnation. Among the traditional Igbos, the concept of reincarnation or *Ino uwa* is an acceptable phenomenon as parents happily welcome dead relations who have returned as new babies. Ogbukagu quoting Ekwunife describes it as, *Ino Uwa* is the process by which certain categories of the deceased in the African spiritual world of the dead are believed to be mysteriously, but in a real way, capable of incarnating their personality traits on a new born physical body of a child, without either destroying the new unique personality of the child or substitution for it. (319). This view is countered by Edmund Ilogu in *Christianity and Igbo Culture* as it excludes the *Ogbanje* or the *changeling*. This is another type of reincarnation found among the Igbo. Some children are believed to be capable of reincarnating into various 'life journeys' (42). This group of children according to Chinwe Achebe are called "*Ogbange*", or "*Abiku*" by J.P Clark and Soyinka. The theory of reincarnation, as propounded by Sore Greg in *Henry M. Tichenor's: The Theory of Reincarnation Explained*, seeks to 'offer scientific evidence of the concept of reincarnation with the belief found in most religions including Jewish, Buddhism Hinduism and also believed and accepted by Goethe, Kant, Lessing, Hume, Schopenhauer' (6). This notwithstanding, the belief in reincarnation is still refuted by Christianity, Islam and mainstream Judaism.

exercises of reflection, and also by constantly following or rejecting the warnings of morality and ethics.

waiting to be born, on ordinary days young women who desired children came to sit under its shade' (33). In effect women do not sit under it on special days as the opposite would be received. This



becomes challenging for the woman who does not know the 'perfect' days one is allowed to sit under them. These spirit children have been known to torment their mothers because of a cult to which they belong. According to Ogbukagu, 'demised children are not transformed into spirits yet, rather they (*Ogbanje*) are born again until such inter-transitions are halted by some traditional ritual means' (356). Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* presents the case of Ezinma, Okonkwo's daughter, an *ogbanje* who plagues the mother Ekwefi with a series of births. She returns in a cyclical pattern of birth and death. But when confronted and accused of torturing her mother she divulges the secret of her powers (81). In Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, the character Beloved tells Denver where she comes from and it is through the baby ghost that Denver recovers her temporarily lost sense of

There are some children called *Ogbanje*, these children torment the family they come in contact with. They continue to come and go every time they are delivered as a baby. Before the *Ogbanje* people came to this world, they took an oath which prescribes what they will do and when to die (24).

Chinwe Achebe states that 'a pact is made between an individual and her *chi* to the effect that the individual will not deviate from the terms of the contract without consulting his *chi*. This signed pact is known as *iyi-uwa*, the oath of life' (19). In *Things Fall Apart*, Ezinma's cyclical births tormented the family and, despite all pleas, seven cycles were completed. In Morrison's *Beloved*, Beloved haunts House 124, first as a baby-ghost whose tantrums affect the whole community. She reincarnates later as an eighteen-year old to live with her mother and sister. Ezinma 'comes and goes' as a baby to torment the mother until she finally decides to remain in the world of the living of her own volition, leading the priest Okagbue to the hidden location of her *iyi uwa* which immediately destroyed severed her relationship with other spirit beings. The *ogbanje* child is often believed to be wicked as the child torments the mother despite pleas and cries to restrain the cycle of pain. Beloved justifies the sorrow and torment inflicted on Sethe her mother

hearing. Tony Walter states that, 'the spirit is deemed to be reincarnated if a baby is born shortly after a death in the community, so the evidence is not physical similarity but immediacy' (23). Beloved is not fully stated as an *ogbanje* because the term does not exist in the western world of Cincinnati in which the novel is set or even in the realistic world of Afro-Americans. Toni Morrison rather uses words like 'evil-ghost, evil-girl and devil-child.' All of which describe the *ogbanje* in colonial Umuofia or in the larger cosmos of the Igbos of Eastern Nigeria. Susan Bassnett believes that, 'the way in which comparative literature is used in places like China, Brazil, India or many African countries is constructive in that it is employed to explore both indigenous traditions and imported (or imposed) traditions' (8). Jude Achu states that:

as karma or retributive justice, the motive and justification by Sethe for the infanticide notwithstanding. In *Things Fall Apart*, there is no apparent reason why Ekwefi is plagued by an *ogbanje* except for the fact that her dowry was not paid as she runs off from her husband Anene two years after marriage to become Okonkwo's concubine (102). It is important to note that in Igbo culture, marriage is sacred and is consummated with the blessings of both families. So, it will not be wrong to cite the non-payment of Ekwefi's bride price as the root cause of her affliction and punishment for leaving her husband for a more prosperous man. For Sethe in *Beloved* who sought to protect Beloved from the slave catchers: School teacher and his nephews, who had resurfaced to claim their fugitives, the only way to protect her 'best thing' is to keep them somewhere safe. Ironically, the safe place is not safe at all as Beloved explains in her monologue as she speaks of dead people who crouched on her face, a dead man

who was on her face, the hotness and uncomfortable situation, and of her pain Sore Greg believes that,

In the succession of births, and by virtue of metempsychosis or polygenesis, the persons who now stand in close connection or contact with us will also be born again with us at the next birth and will have the same or analogous relations and sentiments towards us as now, whether these are of a friendly or hostile description (12).

With the hunger and need to shed the tears that one cannot make, and the anguish of not being taken away from the bridge with the others, Beloved becomes a driving force in the novel that unearths and recovers her identity through her mother Sethe, and sister Denver. In *Things Fall Apart* Ezinma is a reincarnation for seven times. In *Beloved*, Beloved walks out from the water, which becomes a symbol of her transition into the human world as Chinwe Achebe states, 'the Journey to earth is negotiated across a river. Each set of creatures is ferried into the world of the living in the same boat... life does not end with death' (17). Ezinma has successfully completed her seven years

A fully dressed woman walked out of the water,  
she barely gained the dry bank of the stream before  
she sat down and learned against a mulberry tree (60).

Prior to this, she had come as a ghost throwing things and screaming, but the baby ghost is sent away by Paul D, a member of 'Sweet Home.' Paul D in *Beloved* and Dibia Okagbue in *Things Fall Apart* represent a human force that refuses to be manipulated by the supernatural; they are men whose sole aim is to dominate the physical as well as the spiritual. Okagbue's dogmatic search for Ezinma's *iyi uwa* sets her free from the pact while Paul D helps restore life back into 124 and puts an end to the hauntings of the baby ghost. Beloved and Ezinma share a bond with their mothers which strengthen their love and dependence, they refer to their mothers by their first names. Beloved calls her mother Sethe and Ezinma calls her mother Ekwefi. Sethe believes that Beloved is her reincarnated daughter and is willing to live with her to atone for her infanticide. Susan Bassnett states that 'all cultural differences disappear when readers take up great works, art is seen as an instrument of universal harmony' (4).

and torture as she searches for Halle and Sethe.

life span and has 'agreed to stay' with this decision, her *iyi uwa* has to be unearthed, Chinwe Achebe states that this is necessary in Igbo cosmology, 'an individual, in Igbo cosmology is expected to complete seven life cycles. He can return after death to start another cycle provided that he completed the previous cycle naturally' (17). 'Naturally', in this sense, implies birth and death. Morrison tells us about Beloved's rebirth from the water and immediately Sethe set her eyes on her, she is pressed to answer nature's call and it seems to her like when her water broke before she gave birth to Denver. Beloved's transition into the world is remarkable,

Ekwefi knows that Ezinma is an *Ogbanje* but is happy that Ezinma chose the mother against her friends in the spiritual world, so Ekwefi would do everything possible to keep her only child even if it is necessary to spend the night in the forest before the Oracle of the Hills and Caves, Ekwefi had suffered a good deal in her life, she had borne ten children and nine of them had died in infancy (TFA 54). After the death of Onwumbiko and the mutilation on his body, the medicine man uses a razor to destroy the body; this could be the 'saw' Sethe uses to slash the throat of her baby in *Beloved*. Beloved later appears with this mark of death on her neck. In *Things Fall Apart* Okagbue the medicine man believes that, After such treatment (mutilation) it would think twice before coming again, unless it was one of those stubborn ones who returned, carrying the stamp of their mutilation - a missing finger or perhaps a dark line where the medicine man's razor had cut them (55). Sethe believes that Beloved is a reincarnation of her dead daughter who

returned as a baby ghost previously, angry and smashing things, and was run off by Paul D. Now that Beloved has

returned in the flesh, she would protect her and love her.

I'm here I lasted. And my girl come home? (237)  
In the love shown to Beloved by Sethe there is selflessness and sacrifice. Paul D says the love is 'too thick' Sethe believes

that because Beloved is her 'best thing' it is her duty to love her children with all her heart.

We'll smell them together, Beloved.

Beloved. Because you are mine and I have to show you these things and teach you what a mother should (237)

This same love is exhibited by Ekwefi who would go against Okonkwo's orders and

feed her daughter in the secrecy of her room:

Ezinma was an only child and the centre of her mother's world.

Very often it was Ezinma who had decided what food her mother should prepare. Ekwefi even gave her such delicacies as eggs which children were rarely allowed to eat because such food tempted them to steal.

#### Areas of Divergence.

*Things Fall Apart*, being a West African novel, delves into the myths of the Africans to give an exposition into the concept of reincarnation. This is a popular belief among these people whose traditions are not mere fantasies but surreal, extraordinary events which have become a part of their normal lives. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* draws on the historical narrative of slavery and with it introduces the illusive character of the baby ghost who would later metamorphose into the teenager Beloved. This predilection to resurrect a murdered child is typically African. Morrison relies heavily on her African roots to weave this kind of reincarnation into a western novel. While Ezinne is repeatedly birthed, Beloved manifests out of the water. Had Sethe given birth to another child with all the features and characteristics of the murdered one, it would have been reincarnation but the passage out of the marine world not only makes Beloved surreal but also puts her in the realm of the "ogbanje mmiri" (one reincarnated

from water) whose pact is contracted even before her first life, according to Chinwe Achebe (28). Susan Bassnett also refers to 'the spirit of a nation or people and suggests that it is possible to trace how that spirit may have influenced another writer in another culture. This she calls 'an idealistic picture of international literary harmony' (13). In *Things Fall Apart*, the members of Okonkwo's family and his neighbours were not surprised when Okagbue came to unearth Ezinma's *iyi-uwa*. Ekwefi enjoys the sympathy of the community and their support. In *Beloved*, the envy of the black folk takes them away from Baby Suggs house and they did not warn nor alert Sethe and her mother-in-law when the slave catchers came. After the arrival of the baby ghost, the whole community excommunicates the inhabitants of 124. Okonkwo and Paul D share a similar characteristic: impatience. When Ezinma's *iyi uwa* is being dug up, Okonkwo becomes irritable with the whole process.

If you bring us all this way for nothing, I

shall beat sense into you,' Okonkwo threatened (58).

Paul D chases away the baby ghost and resents Beloved, the aftermath becomes his exit from 124. In *Beloved's* monologue, she gives an explanation for this myth of reincarnation, she states why the soul reincarnates, what happens when one dies and gives answers to frequently asked questions about the soul after

death. We are all trying to leave our bodies behind, the man on my face has done it. It is hard to make yourself die forever, you sleep short and then return in the beginning, we could vomit now, we do not (249). *Things Fall Apart* presents a situation in which Ekwefi begs her children to stay imploring them at



different times with names like *Ozoemena*: may death never strike again, *Onwumbiko*: may death be compassionate. But heedless to her pleas, the death cycle continued. However, Ezinma reincarnates from the dead in a cycle. In *Beloved*, Beloved was murdered by her mother who sought to protect her from the slave catchers in the words of Stamp Paid. She ain't crazy. She love those children she was trying to out-hurt the hurter (276).

Denver picked at her fingernails. 'If it's still there waiting, that must mean that nothing ever dies.' Sethe looked right in Denver's face. 'Nothing ever dies,' she said (44).

Beloved's revenge for her murder becomes the torment for her mother. Sore Greg believes that the reincarnated being

He has come down from some former generation bringing with him what may be either a help or a hindrance namely, the character and tendencies which he there formed and nurtured. These inborn tendencies may be either exaggerated or subdued by the lessons of a new experience by the exercises of reflection, and by habitually heeding or reflection, and by habitually heeding or neglecting the monitions of conscience (33-4).

Ezinma's revenge on her mother was to die as a baby and reincarnate. But eventually, it is Ezinma's love for her mother that demands that she stay and expose her *iyi uwa*. In *Beloved*, Denver thought she understood the connection between her mother and Beloved. 'Sethe was trying to make up for the hand saw; Beloved was making her pay for it' (295).

Sethe's motive for the infanticide was the need to protect her children which she calls 'her best thing,' her beautiful

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As Sethe and Denver come to the realization that Beloved is the daughter Sethe had murdered, they try to appease her anger and make her stay with them. This 'realistic' belief in the supernatural is the key focus of magical realism, the acceptance of the mysterious and fantastical. They try to include her in everything. In the conversation with Beloved, we discover that it is Sethe's conscience that actually brings Beloved to her first as the baby ghost; then later, as a young girl.

will never be the same as we find in Beloved:

magical best thing, 'the part of her that was clean' (296). It is Denver who seeks the help of the women in the neighbourhood. As the women come to 124 to help Baby Suggs descendants, Sethe attacks Mr Bodwin who has just employed Denver. In the battle that ensues, Beloved disappears. Ezinma in *Things Fall Apart* grows up to be a village *belle* chosen as successor to Chielo, the priestess of *Agballah*.

### CONCLUSION

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* has been praised for its fictional representation of the cultural and religious beliefs of the Igbos of West Africa. The concept of reincarnation has been treated with a certain doggedness that gives an insight into the sub-conscious of the *ogbanje* or the *changeling*. The repeated deaths of Ezinma may be likened to the struggle of the Igbos to retain their culture and survive as a people in the face of colonialism. To exist as a people, the Igbos must be willing to let go of many life-threatening customs like destroying the *iyi-uwa* which represents the final strange tie to the afterlife/ancestors.

Beloved who is the reincarnated version of the malevolent baby ghost that Paul D sends out of the house comes back to narrate her sojourn through the 'middle passage'. The psychological effects of slavery are unearthed through the 'visible ghost' and Toni Morrison uses *Beloved* to discuss the relationship between the real and the supernatural which is often referred to as 'not a story to pass on.' In creating a fantastical story, Morrison recreates a history in which the suffering of the African-Americans and the untold history of the 'middle passage' revolve around the myth of reincarnation adapted from West African culture. The

reincarnation of Beloved may easily be the regeneration of the trauma that sixty million blacks suffered as they were brought into slavery. Meanwhile, there is a greater emphasis on the need for a place following her displacement in nature, with the consuming need for a permanent

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identity after being caged in nothingness. It is sufficient to say that both Achebe and Morrison use the myth of reincarnation of children to discuss the passage, conflict and struggle for freedom from colonialism and slavery.

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