CHAPTER FOUR
STRUGGLE OF ETHNIC CULTURES FOR SURVIVAL

“Men need history; it helps them to
have an idea of who they are”

(Naipaul 318)

The two chapters, which preceded this chapter, focus on the ethnic cultures and the influence of the colonial culture on them with regard to Africa and Canada, as depicted in the novels of Achebe and Wiebe respectively. In the present chapter, an attempt is made to study Achebe and Wiebe as historiographers of their respective societies. The novels of these two writers are studied as records of the native histories of Africa and Canada, as a contrast to the colonialist histories in which the whites were always at the centre of the narrative. Such white centred histories are contested by these two writers. The argument of this chapter is that this record is positional. It promotes the native cultural identity as the narration is focused on the advantages of the pre-colonial culture and the motive of the colonial benevolence.
In the postcolonial discourse, history is not considered simply as a record of past events or happenings but is viewed as a discursive medium through which the dominant ideologies of power are constructed. During the colonial period, history has been “produced” and “distributed” by the European historians as ‘authentic’. In this connection, in a different context, Said in an interview to the Biblio, makes a pertinent remark:

Their [colonialist] history was based on power and authority and was constructed with a view to subjugate the Orients. Their construction was based on the presumed inferiority of the East and their understanding based on assumed superiority of their position. (14)

The colonialists not only consciously “silenced” the authentic histories of their colonies, but also attempted narrations of misrepresentation. The myths of power, race classification and the images of subordination are clear evidences of misrepresentation (Boehmer 3).

Dipesh Chakrabarty in his essay “Postcoloniaity and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for ‘Indian’ Pasts?” discusses how colonial history applied its dominant representative mode to all its political subjects to perpetuate subjugation. To quote him, would be fitting in the context:
Thus, he opines that histories are about the ideology of “positioning” and being “positioned”. Europe always positioned itself as the ‘centre’ and it placed its colonies on the ‘peripheral’, subaltern position in the narration of their histories.

With changes in the power relations, the postcolonial writers took their place forcibly as historical subjects. These new writers celebrate their cultural autonomy by reconstructing their histories, and also by rejecting what was given to them as ‘history’ by the colonialists. Keith Jenkins in his book entitled Re-Thinking History views history in terms of ideology:

The fact that history per se is an ideological construct means that it is constantly being re-worked and re-ordered by all those who are variously affected by power
relationships; because the dominated as well as the dominant also have their versions of the past to legitimate [sic] their practices, versions which have to be excluded as improper from any place on agenda of the dominant discourse. (17-18)

Thus, history is no longer a divine will or a fight of right against wrong. History is always being constructed and deconstructed by those who handle it through power play. Sumit Sarkar in his book Writing Social History discusses this aspect:

The centrality of history today, as well as its markedly multi-level features, are not universal or natural phenomena. They are evidently related to the ways in which history came to be taught, written and exceptionally valourised under colonial and then postcolonial conditions. (3)

In other words, history is shaped by power politics. The narratives of history alter with the change in the dominating power. Rewriting history becomes an essential political strategy for the postcolonial writers to counter the power of Eurocentric histories.

Rewriting ‘history’ as different from the Eurocentric view is a difficult task, says Said. History could be rewritten in order to repudiate
the western narration but a totally new construction of history is impossible. Said expresses his sense of doubt to Nikhil Padgaonkar:

There have been, in a certain sense, the story of the kind of work I have done – to understand colonial authority – and to understand, most of all, that authority can be undermined and dismantled. If they construct it, I can un-construct it. I can tear it apart and look at it the way they look at it. And the important thing is what you replace it with. You can’t replace it with a completely clean state; you don’t start from the beginning because history is too complicated; there are too many relationships. (13)

The role of historians is too complicated, since as observed by Said, it is a matter of choice to construct and un-construct. It would be relevant to quote the words of one of Wiebe’s protagonists, Professor James Dyck, who says that history is “always a matter of choices” (Wiebe My Lovely Enemy 56) and further,

To be an historian is to be a time-traveller [. . .]. Accumulating, sorting, matching and cross-referencing such data, and clues and hints of data as your diligent, imaginative research can uncover, you can watch people as intensely as the records and your trained ingenuity permit;
they cannot object. Indeed, they can’t be disturbed in any way or have any idea this is happening because of course you didn’t exist when they were alive. You can read every scrap of their most intimate correspondence; they’re exposed to you, alone, in serene unconsciousness, actually the record of their factuality (that is, all the things they have physically done) is already complete; they will never ‘do’ anything again and so the data of their life is now completed, ended and available for study. (2-3)

Wiebe further adds that “each historian inevitably makes a personal selection of the facts he chooses to consider” (6). History is a matter of choice and personal selection based on the ideology of the individual.

Any critical reading is influenced by the self. The self is nothing but a product of power, says Claire Colebrook, in his book New Literary Histories. He argues that power is but a network of forces through which individuals, institutions and discourse are formulated. Power is an ideology, an idea or representation through which individuals construct their selves. Hence, a literary impression is an act of power. Taking up Nietzsche’s view, Colebrook argues that power is an inevitable part of any writing. To him novel as a discursive medium “does not reflect history, it is history” (38). The writing of history is always
conditioned and delimited by his or her own historical position which would not in itself permit of ultimate explication. History could increase understanding of one’s culture by revealing its difference or specificity; but in so far as history was the final court of appeal, the first and last word of human life, it could no longer be used to lead to some ‘higher’ enlightened truth. (22)

In other words, history is not a reliable or enlightened truth and is always ambiguous, as facts are hard to be established and capable of being given many meanings (Rushdie 25).

History has implicit political value in postcolonial discourse. History transcends its boundaries, as an expression of past events, to represent the intensified will to play as subjects away from the colonial objects. With the changing political-literary scenario, the postcolonial writers seek to express their deep sense of attachment to their lost ‘roots’; and are voluntarily involved in recreating their histories which had been ‘silenced’ or ‘misrepresented’ in the European history. The postcolonial writers investigate and rewrite their past to present a new cultural identity for themselves and their countries. These writers either recreate or invent stories about their political heroes and struggles that would promote their cause. They also narrate experiences related to
colonization, migration, struggle for survival and alienation in contrast to their pre-colonial life that is advantageous in promoting their cause of establishing a definite cultural identity.

In the Eurocentric histories, Africa is regarded as the “Dark Continent” consisting of indigenous people who are depicted as demonic savages engaged in mysterious and popular rites (Walder 26-27). James Snead rightly observes in his essay “European Pedigrees/African Contagions: nationality, narrative and communality in Tutuolo, Achebe and Reed”, that the European literary critics and historians “for the most part have been reluctant to deal with Africa in all its dazzling racial, tribal and regional multiplicity”(237). Achebe attempts to represent these ‘silenced’ spaces in the Europe centred history. Further, he analyses that colonialist writings projected the image of Africa as the “other world”, the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization (“An Image of Africa”, 2). In an interview to Chinweizu, Achebe contemplates: “I think they were books [history] that had to be written. I see myself in historical terms as coming into being at a time when these books just had to be written [. . .]. It was a historical need. We were fulfilling our role in history” (28-29), and “[. . .] every literature must seek the things that belong unto its peace, must, in other words, speak of a particular place, evolve out of the necessities of its
history, past and current, and the aspirations and destiny of its people” ("Colonialist Criticism", 50). His narratives keenly focus upon deconstructing the negative images attributed to Africa.

Canada is often viewed as a “young” country where people, especially the native Canadians, lack representation and historical existence. But Canada has always had its natives, namely the Indians and the Inuits. J.M. Robinson examines that Canada has been ignored “of the dignity and mystery of its native people, the Indians, who have a history of their own” (Introduction, 3), and in Margaret Atwood’s view, “The Indians and Eskimos have been rarely been considered in and for themselves; they are usually made in projections of something in the white Canadian psyche, a fear or a wish” (90). Canadians suffer from a sense of minimal history and Wiebe undertakes to recreate the past in his novels that recover an adequate sense of self-perception by discovering the indigenous Canadian ‘roots’. Wiebe’s fiction attempts to represent the natives and rewrite the Canadian history to recover the cultural and mythic past to assert a definite cultural identity. Wiebe too, like Achebe, is conscious of the importance of history and his words are quoted below as it becomes relevant to the context:

All People have history. The stories we tell of our past are by no means merely words. They are meaning and life to
us as people, as particular people; the stories are there, and
if we do not know them we are simply like animals,
memory ignorant and less we are people. (qtd. in Salat 102)

In the process of etching an identity, Wiebe, apart from the native Canadian culture, represents the Mennonite minority culture. He, thereby, takes the postcolonial political stance to voice the identity of the marginalized communities and position them within the Canadian cultural mosaic.

In the process of recounting history from various indigenous point of view, Wiebe has been accused of cultural appropriation. Critics like Penny Van Toorn argue in favour of writers like Wiebe. According to Toorn, the non-natives of any particular culture will be sincere and committed like the natives. They fit well in the process of voicing the indigenous rights as well as the native writers themselves. She observes that,

[. . .] although indigenous people are telling the past, the means of reproducing their enunciations, disseminating them, and ascribing historical authority to them – all the processes necessary to making social memory public and politically effective – these processes remain largely in the hands of non-Indigenous individuals and institutions. (43)
Conflicting views arise regarding appropriation of voices. Lenore Keeshig-Tobias, an eminent story-teller, suggests that a non-Native writer should have respect for the native issues and by “respect” the story-teller means “research and talking to the people” (qtd. in Williams, “Cultural Appropriation and Aboriginal Literature” par. 5). When Wiebe intends to write indigenous history, he collects the data from “court, police, government, school, and newspaper records both in Canada and the United States” (Egan 21) and produces them closer to “truth”.

In Anderson’s view, appropriation of voice could be accepted if it displays honesty:

Writers appropriate voices all the time. You’re creating a number of voices in fiction, you’re filling someone’s shoes and if you want to create a character unlike you, whether that person is black, white, Native or Asian, I don’t see the problem. It’s fiction. That’s what fiction is to me, appropriation of a voice other than their own. I think if a writer can write honestly I don’t see that as appropriation of voice. The writer either succeeds at it or doesn’t. They should be evaluated on how they do it. (qtd. in Williams, “Cultural Appropriation and Aboriginal Literature” par. 11)
Wiebe’s honesty in echoing the First People’s personal dilemma of receiving ‘voice’, resonates with political overtones of recentring in the

The Temptations of Big Bear:

What we say will not reach the whites of the world because there is no one among us to speak to them for us. We tell the agents a part of our thoughts, what they understand of that, but we know that will not speak to the world for us. They will only tell certain things [...] (196)

Wiebe undertakes to appropriate the native voice through his historical narratives which has attracted accusations of cultural appropriation. Wiebe appropriates the voices of the Indians Big Bear and Keskarrah, and the Metis bard Falcon, in his novels.

Wiebe creates the multiple indigenous histories while Achebe retrieves the cultural history of the Igbos. The final paragraph of Things Fall Apart, the District Commissioner meditates upon the book he plans to write about Africa:

The story of this man who had killed a messenger and hanged himself would make interesting reading. One would almost write a whole chapter on him. Perhaps not a whole chapter, but a reasonable paragraph, at any rate. There was so much else to include, and one must be firm in cutting out
details. He had already chosen the title of the book, after much thought: *The Pacification of the tribes of the Lower Niger.* (209)

This colonialist history book would reduce the history of a great wrestler to one paragraph. Such “official records tell only one side of the story – they are invariably white records compiled for white purposes and intended for white readers” (Keith 67). The postcolonial historiographers represent these submerged narratives and see that the indigenous heroes are applauded and recognized in their master narratives.

Achebe and Wiebe attempt to historicize the past and present of their respective nations so as to define an identity. Without its past, nations would be blind about its present and future and hence revisiting the past history becomes an essential in creating a wholesome identity.

Achebe’s novels *Things Fall apart, Arrow of God, No longer at Ease,* and *A Man of the People* explicate the three phases in Nigerian history – pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial. *Things Fall Apart* deals with pre-colonial history; *Arrow of God* and *No Longer at Ease* and *Anthills of the Savannah* narrate the colonial and post-colonial experiences in Nigeria. Among Wiebe’s novels taken for the study, *Peace Shall Destroy Many* and *The Blue Mountains of China* reread the Mennonite history; *First and Vital Candle, The Temptations of Big Bear*
and *A Discovery of Strangers* deal with the history of the Crees, Ojibwans and Tetsot’ines; *The Scorched-Wood People* records the history and struggle of the Metis. In *The Temptations of Big Bear*, *The Scorched-Wood People* and *A Discovery of Strangers* the narrative shifts to the ‘other’ perspective, – the perspective of the Indian. Achebe's historical narratives are reserved exclusively for the Igbos, and Wiebe’s narratives consolidate multiple histories encompassing Canada’s whole multicultural experience.

Colonial history of the natives is constructed by a “judicial selection of negative misinformation, savagery, wars, famine drought, the jungle and the tribe” (“Caliban Complex 1”, 521) They are often represented as less human, uncivilized, barbaric, wildmen, animals and cannibals; and the theory of Darwinism also accelerated the perpetuation of such images. Rénee Hulan states in her book *Northern Experience and the Myths of Canadian Culture* that in the records of the sixteenth century the Europeans strongly accorded the Inuits as cannibals (62). Wiebe in *A Discovery of Strangers* subverts the colonial myth of cannibalism associated with the Other race. Wiebe’s Abe says that cannibalism happens “only under [. . .] necessity – war,– torture, starvation–” (Wiebe *First and Vital Candle* 210). In the novel *A Discovery of Strangers* the white Expedition members in their extreme hunger and starvation eat one
another to survive during their search into the North. In the Northern Arctic animals become scarce and their need for survival forces them to eat human flesh, which is the only available food. John Hepburn, an English seaman, confesses his cannibalistic act in a letter thus: “I ate a lot of him” (291). Hepburn has eaten Michel, a Canadian voyager during their expedition in the North. He explains his act thus:

“[...] me starting with slices off his good muscle, arm or thigh, the way the Doctor told me it would work, slow, slow, a little broth first, then boiled, then roasted, otherwise you vomit an’ destroy yourself worse.” (291)

Wiebe implies that only starvation and survival instinct drives a man to feed upon his fellow being. The civilized whites too, like the natives, survive on human flesh to save their lives when pushed into an extreme situation, as has been discussed above. Therefore, cannibalism, Wiebe implies, cannot be associated with any particular race or colour as its trait. In the above context, it is the whites who are strategically positioned as cannibals.

Colonialist history has propagated that the native inhabitants are uncivilized and therefore, the whites had to take up the moral responsibility for their cultural transformation. Achebe’s *Arrow of God* identifies one such “official historical record” of George Allan’s *The
Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger propagating the idea of leading “the backward races into line”. It refers to the Africans as “old savage tyrants” (36) and having “filthy animal skins” (36). These words of denigration, as Wiebe puts it: “would be the words that would destroy us” (My Lovely Enemy 59).

In A Discovery of Strangers Wiebe subverts the colonialist history. Wiebe’s narrative of the Tetsot’ine Indians inscribes the pre-colonial cultural and historical richness to be passed on to their young generation. Tetsot’ines have their own myths about the Beginning. When Richardson relates the story of creation from the Bible to be authentic, Keskarrah predicts that this white narrative will submerge their native myth of creation:

This rib story could drag us tighter together with Whitemud than the endless killing of animals, which we agreed to do without proper council [. . .] a story can tangle you up so badly you start to think different. I think these strange Whitemud stories could be strong enough to tie us down [. . .]. (126–27)

Keskarrah, the Indian intellect, totally rejects the white stories, as they carry images of hegemony. Birdeye’s story of the “Melting Mountains” lies paradoxical to the Biblical story of the “Tower of
Babel" (Genises, Chapter 11:1-9). The story relates the origin of different languages. According to the Biblical story, it was God who made people speak different languages to bring in chaos and obstruct them from building the tower to reach God. Birdeye’s narration is that one bleak day a mountain erupted casting the people away in four directions to “escape the ground boiling under their feet, or rocks falling from the sky” (17), and after the splitting “every one spoke different languages” (17).

Indians appear as secondary characters in Wiebe’s Mennonite novels which is indicative of his conscious empathy towards the marginalized. First and Vital Candle precipitates Wiebe’s concern for the Indians as Abe insists that the Indians should “get enough pride back to get up a community feeling” (208) and their past should enlighten them towards, “An understanding of themselves as physical human beings, with mental powers for rational thought” (209). Wiebe’s historical novels are evidences of it and in Thom’s words the novels are histories “of people that had lived and acted as nobly as they knew and died without fear” (Peace Shall Destroy Many 111). Thom’s narrative serves as Wiebe’s inner conscience, as he vociferates the absence of the native history:
There are stacks of European history books to read, yet the Indians – a people living in nearly half the world – lived here for thousands of years, and we don’t know a single thing that happened to them except some old legend muddled in the memory of an old crone. A whole world lost. Not one remembered word of how generations upon generations lived and died. (83)

Wiebe’s preoccupation with the unearthing the buried forgotten past (Atwood 112) is reflected in his historical novels. Myths inscribe history and history in turn gives knowledge of one’s own “origins” as “the past [is] irreversible only in the past, if he could now speak the beginning he could utter the future” (My Lovely Enemy 261). The Temptations of Big Bear is a historical metafiction written by Wiebe and it “repeatedly tells of historical movement” (New 257) that happened in Canadian west, a period when the Dominion government enclosed the indigenous population on reserves. The novel is the story of a Cree Indian, Big Bear and his people and their struggle to save the land from the whites. The colonials see him as an impediment to their political endeavours and tactfully eliminate him with feign charges of treason and rebellion. Throughout the novel, as a contrast to this image, Wiebe projects the character of Big Bear as a typical Indian warrior
embodying the characteristics of the very land he inhabits. Wiebe “wrote this novel, the other side of the story regarding the conquest of the Canadian West – the Native side – which remained largely untold. The Indian voice was only a whisper in the wilderness, not yet recognized by the dominant White society. Wiebe’s story helped to change this” (Knuckleby Par.3). Big Bear pleads: “I ask the court to print my words and scatter them among White People. That is my defence” (409).

The novel begins with the proposal of signing a treaty at Fort Pitt, near the province of Saskatchewan in 1876. The novel covers a period from September 1876 when Sweetgrass signs the treaty to Big Bear’s trial and imprisonment and concludes with his subsequent release and death in January 1888. The Indian leaders such as Blackfeet and Sioux are compelled to sign the treaty of the white man. According to the treaty, the Indians are expected to choose a piece of the land to live on. The chosen lands would be reserved for the Indian, which in effect means the denial of the freedom to move outside the chosen land. They should confine themselves, live and hunt, within their reservations. The only Indian leader who refuses to sign the treaty is Big Bear.

Big Bear’s mind does not comprehend the British policies particularly the reservation of land. Policies such as reservation of land,
imposition of rights and laws upon the natives, allowances offered by the white Queen for taking a reserve are all beyond acceptance for him. He tells Sitting Bull, the Sioux chief:

I have always been the friend of the white man but I was never a Company chief, or a Missionary chief. I am chief of the River, the First People. [ . . . ] I no longer understand and feel as I once understood when I did not see so many white men before me who spoke for so much that none of us ever needed to feel or see before. The White Queen is our Mother. Good. I am not a disobedient child. She will feed us when we are hungry. [ . . . ] but I say, I am fed by the Mother Earth. (Wiebe The Temptation of Big Bear 15-16)

He further adds that, “No one can choose for only himself a piece of Mother Earth” because “she is for all that live, alike” (21). The native conception of the land as consecrated, is opposite to that of the whites’ view of the land that always beckons them to adventure and conquest. Wiebe contrasts the Indian spiritualistic view of the land as with that of the whites’ view that is materialistic.

As a mark of resistance, Big Bear attempts to unite the chiefs of the Assiniboines, Siksikas and Blood Sioux and Crowfeet. Big Bear urges the First People to forget their superficial difference and unite as a
religious community. He says: “we must be all together, with one voice. We must change the treaties”(101). He knows that everything comes from ‘The Only One’ and they need to speak with one voice to enter into equal dialogue with the whiteman. He speaks for his Cree people in one voice:

I come from where my people hunt the buffalo and I am told that the treaty is such and such. I and my people have not heard what the treaty says and already nothing of it can be changed. It is already done, though we never heard of it. I told you what I wish, That there be no hanging. (emphasis added, 24)

Governor Morris has already successfully negotiated three treaties that “gave his country more lands than any one negotiator in history” (18-19) but he finds Big Bear a hard nut to crack. He persuades Big Bear to sign the treaty in the following manner:

The good Indian needed to fear no Indian law; the good Indian now [. . .]. He will be safer than he ever has been for the redcoats are here to protect Indians and whites. Look at the Blackfoot Confederation. The American traders were taking their fur and giving them nothing – only whisky which, when they drank, they didn’t know what they were
Two years ago the Queen’s redcoats came and punished those traders and sent them back where they belonged. Last summer the Blackfeet were able to buy two thousand horses with their robes, robes that before would have gone to the Americans for whisky. (19)

Governor Morris’ speech reveals that both the American soldiers and British representatives compete to crush the natives. The British representatives have offered protection to the Blackfeet and bribed them with food, whisky and horses, for which they were expected to give their land. Commissioner James McKay’s explanation regarding the land is spun with irony:

The Willow People wanted to lend us the land for four years, but we aren’t here to trade for land. We aren’t buying land! We aren’t here to make peace because we have never been at war! All we want is to protect you and your lands from the white settlers that are coming, who’ll build houses in places you want to live yourselves. So we say, choose the places where you wish to live. They will be reserved to you forever. Otherwise, when the Queen’s white children come no one will be happy. (21)
James McKay’s speech throws light on the fact that the natives are expected to clear the land and leave way for the settlers. McKay, under the guise of offering protection, persuades the natives to take a reserve in their own land. Big Bear understands that this policy would affect their life as the natives scatter themselves almost all over their land to hunt buffaloes and animals for their living. Big Bear questions McKay about the reserve:

The Governor says we will live as we have always lived. I have always lived on the Earth with my people, I have always moved as far as I wished to see. We take what the Earth gives us when we need anything, and we leave the rest for those who follow us. What can it mean, that I and my family will have a ‘reserve of one square mile’? What is that? (21)

Earlier, McKay says that the Queen’s soldiers will protect the natives and provide them with food but the native chief is conscious that it will cost their dignity, freedom and property. McKay formulates a strategy that benefits the whites. McKay finds the “stubborn chief” is hard to convince and tempts Big Bear with a larger share in the land: “Since you are a chief and have a large family, you will receive land in proportion. All your band can receive land in one place”(22). When he
tries to bribe Big Bear with more land, he retorts thus: “Who can receive land? From whom would he receive it”? (22).

Edger Dewdney working in the Department of Indian Affairs, in his letter to his superior officer Sir John, writes about the charisma of Big Bear in *The Temptations of Big Bear*:

He is Big Bear, the Plains Cree chief who now alone of all their ancient chiefs has not signed treaty. [..] he is guided in war by the most powerful spirit helper known to the Cree, and that this bundle made him until recently the absolute terror of all the Blackfeet. He looks innocuous enough, sporting no scalps or any kind of decoration [..] I believe that now it is his voice, and his perception, which draws more and more people to him. His voice would be unbelievable in Parliament. The deep rich timbre of it alone, forget all sense (so rarely needed anyway) would devastate any opposition, including Blake. (109)

Dewdney’s appreciation runs on. He says that Big Bear “has obviously no personal fear of anything” (109) and explains Big Bear’s disposition thus: “His concept of life is of course pagan and simplistic in the extreme, but oddly enough in argument the mind of this stubby native
seems as logical, almost civilized as any Oxford debater” (110). He goes on in the same vein little later:

He is a complete untouched pagan. To sit on the ground there in his lodge is to face a man who seemingly contains so complete an assurance of and confidence in his own self-ness – that is not a good word but you understand I’m struggling – that he cannot be moved by any, mere, white words. All chiefs of no matter what tribe must, he implies, understand his wisdom in not signing. (113-14)

Dewdney struggles to ‘fix’ Big Bear with all his knowledge but Big Bear defies easy definition. Dewdney’s struggle for words may be contrasted with the position of the Indian, Keskarrah who has “words for anything” (Wiebe A Discovery of Strangers 123). Herein lies the dichotomy of the entirely two different cultures, the native and the other.

Big Bear voices the natives’ right over the land and refuses to take a reserve in Fort Pitt:

All I see is the little piece of land I must choose and then never leave unless some Farm instructor says I can go. What is that, when I must have the mark of such a thing on paper to walk on the land they have borrowed? I feel as if I choked. [...] The proper way to live with the Earth is to give
each one the right The First One gave every man. Let every man walk where his feet can walk. (199)

The whites find Big Bear unbending and decide to eliminate him. They seek political advantage in the Frog Lake rebellion. In Frog Lake, some young unruly Cree men slaughter nine white men. The whites seize this opportunity to capture the Cree chief, Big Bear. The white court files four acts of treason against Big Bear. Big Bear is charged with the massacre of Frog Lake. He is charged for the destruction caused in Fort Pitt. The third charge is against taking the white as captives and the final charge is for creating an outrage against the government. Though Big Bear confesses to his captive Simpson that “it is not my doing, this thing of my young men”(268) referring to the murder, he is charged of treason-felony. The captives of Big Bear pronounce witness against Big Bear and he is definitely the instigator according to it. John Pitchard, James Simpson, Stanley Simpson, Robertson, McLean and Halpin are some of the witnesses. As James Simpson foretells Big Bear: “You will carry it all on your own back” (268) and he carries the cross for his soldiers’ unruly act. The white man’s court ‘voices’ Big Bear as “the degraded and undisciplined savage” who “disregarded the common courtesies of war”(320). Throughout the trial scene, Wiebe strategically silences the character of
Big Bear. His research on Big Bear revealed that the judiciary has omitted Big Bear’s last words. Wiebe says, “the sessional papers do not record Big Bear’s defence before his sentence and …[he] could find no trace of his defence in either the Archives or the Department of Justice” (qtd. in Salat, “A Search for Roots: Rudy Wiebe” 106). However Wiebe chooses to imaginatively reconstruct Big Bear’s defence scene with utmost empathy and “speaks” to the world for [his people].

Wiebe positions Big Bear as a hero, a “real wild power of Plains Cree”, in the history of Canada. While undoing the negative image of Big Bear, Wiebe says that by “making historical Cree Chief the main character in a novel and seeing him differently” was something never done before in Canadian literature (qtd. in Morash, par.25). Wiebe exalts the character of Big Bear by attributing certain positive qualities – a simple, courageous, straightforward, selfless and benevolent chief and the “head and soul” (109) of the Cree community who till his death “declined to be Christened”(409). Wiebe presents him as a confident, charismatic figure, a great orator and a rationalist being. Above all, Wiebe’s strategy was to subvert the received history about Big Bear and the First Peoples and relocate them as the ancestors of Canada.

If The Temptations of Big Bear speaks of the Indians as ancestors The Scorched-Wood People historicizes the life of the Metis hero, Louis
Riel whom the whites wished “safely dead” (348). Colonialist history represents Riel to be a rebel. The Anglophone literature often portrays Riel as a rebel and despot; but the Francophones see him as a victim of Anglo-Saxon bigotry. Wiebe portrays Riel as a Canadian icon – a religious martyr and a Metis hero. Riel is “most valuable to the churches as her simple sometimes lapsed son, and as Quebec’s mad wronged martyr; these are both acceptable perspectives for Ottawa” (Holland 82). In the novel, Wiebe strategically recounts the multiple views generated in different Newspapers on Riel thus, so that reappropriation of the views by him would be more effective by contrast:

*The London Times* declared: “Riel, not only raised the standard of revolt against the Queen, and when defeated and pardoned raised it again; he is a murderer and the instigator of murder, foul, wholesale, and pitiless;” the *Paris Telegraph*: “Riel is not as pure a martyr as John Brown, but he is a mystic in daily converse with angels whose strategic advice is unequal to that of Joan of Arc’s voices, possibly because he has no Dunois to interpret them;” the *New York Times*: “By converting Riel from a lunatic into a martyr they have retarded, perhaps forever,
the reconciliation of races and the fusion of the Canadians into one harmonious people;” [↩] (342)

These descriptions of Riel as a murderer, mystic, and lunatic and as well as martyr submerge the image of Riel into abstraction or into contradictions.

Louis Riel, the Metis protagonist of The Scorched-Wood People, is educated in Montreal and is widely read. For the whites, the Metis are “just Catholic savages, something to spit on” (80) but, Wiebe’s narrative strongly denies that: “he’s no savage” (13). Louis Schmidt, the Secretary of the Metis National Committee, observes that “Riel’s a doer too, a real one because he knows Canada and law” and “knew exactly what to say to freeze those surveyors [whites] in their tracks and –” (13). Riel’s vision was to create a New Nation for his Metis people.

Wiebe’s Riel counters the perception that the Canadian west was almost empty: “The North-West is our mother. Here we were born, here our ancestors are buried, and here we will die. We will never be sold! (28-29). Wiebe depicts the general contempt with which the Metis were regarded and viewed as a product of “commerce”: “They simply found it convenient to sell us. Like Cattle! And the Government of Canada was more than willing to buy us. One and a half million dollars. We are people!” (28-29). Wiebe appropriates Riel’s voice in his address to the
council: “Our people were voiceless, unheard of until we took for them the right to elect representatives, conventions, delegates” (106).

There comes a time in which the Metis have to protect the rights to their land under the leadership of Riel and Gabriel Dumont. Riel as the President formulates a declaration. First, he refuses to accept the authority of Canadian government over the Metis. Secondly, he proclaims to hold elections in every parish in Red River and send two representatives to form a council which will analyze the political state of the country and suggest solutions to the Metis community. Finally, he declares the Metis National Committee to be the Provisional Government of the North-West for the maintenance of law and order and the protection of the Metis. The white Canadians occupy the Metis land illegally and Riel claims their right to the land: “We have hunted, farmed, freighted, traded as we wished; and we have been so free because for fifty years the Bois-brûlés have been wardens of the plains and their guns have repelled all those who approached our colonies with evil intent” (28), and thereby challenges any misappropriation of the land.

Riel attends the First Private Round Discussion with Donald Smith, the head of the Hudson Bay Company, in Canada at Fort Square. In the discussion, Riel places his case that the Metis should be offered a
separate province: “We the people must control all the hands of the North-West, and we can do that best as a province” (63). But he understands that the government would not give the Metis a separate Province and predicts their intention. He says: “Once we sign away control of our land, we will certainly never get it back!” (63). Riel voices the sufferings of the Metis’ exploitation for nearly two centuries:

[... ] it has worked us to the raw bones at others, and it has always, let me remind you, for two hundred years made an immense profit on our labour to send to its lords living over the sea in a luxury none of us can imagine. To serve their ends, these lordly unknowns have tried to subvert ours by a quick sale of rights they have never controlled, not by any known charter signed by any drunken sot of a king. I therefore propose that we stop referring to them as ‘The Honourable Company’; I find ‘The Shameful Company’ much more suitable. (61)

Riel speaks for the rights of his people through the formulation of the Manitoba Act: “Our people were voiceless, unheard of until we took for them the right to elect representatives, conventions, delegates [ ... ]” (106) He was elected four times to the parliament but thrown out of the House of Commons for no obvious reasons. Riel revolts against the
Hudson Bay Company’s misappropriation of the Metis right to the land. On the Saskatchewan, the Company sells an entire parish, church land, school land and all the property of thirty-five families belonging to the Metis. But Ottawa Government remains silent to the Metis’ suffering.

In the election of 1874, Riel was elected as the Member of Parliament. Earlier, he was elected thrice to the Parliament. Each time he was elected, he was soon expelled from the House of Commons. After one such expulsion, Riel suffers in exile. He is denied physical and political existence as well. Gabriel meditates on the changes in Riel’s life in exile thus:

He was still trying to understand what had happened to this man, this Master of Red River who had known what he was about and had run Macdonald to bay in Manitoba and bean elected four times – oh, they had never let him near Parliament but he had powerful friends; he had scared the greatest in the land [. . .] This man who should still be boss of Red River with land, cattle, a rich family . . . but there seemed nothing left of that. (186)

Riel decides to rebel against injustice. Riel’s response to the silence of the government results in war. He is not for war as he himself confesses. But he is forced to think of it to protect their right to the land.
against the English manipulators. The court convicts Riel “guilty of high treason” (322). The Magistrate Richardson orders Riel to be taken to the police guardroom at Regina where he would be “hanged by the neck”. The white court convicts Riel’s act as a “treasonous behaviour” and hangs him.

Wiebe portrays Riel as a pious Catholic, a prophet of the Metis nation: “We are the nation now, and Riel is our prophet” (282). Wiebe points out that the Battle of Batoche is not only a political battle, but also a religious one: “[. . .] Riel had shown them they could change their thinking, they had to change their thinking not only about politics but also about their religious faith” (284), if they wanted justice.

In prison, Riel is seen speaking with his own-self which his captors hold as insanity. Riel moves on to a spiritual plain and is often seen conversing with God and is always found with a prayer book:

I am torn by fiends, I am cut off by those who say they love me . . . I feel in my soul I must fly to the aid of my Metis people, that this is your call for me, and yet for that vision I am chained here, imprisoned. O my God where have I sinned? Where has my zeal been too small, my humiliation too – (160).
The white literary representations assess Riel’s prison life as a period of ‘insane delusion’. However, Wiebe gives a totally different interpretation of Riel’s state in the prison. Jukes, the Senior Surgeon of the North-West Mounted Police refers to Riel’s state as in “direct communication with the Holy Ghost”. At the Batoche battle Gabriel obeys Riel’s decision even though it was wrong and a little later he justifies his action: “I yielded to Riel’s judgement although I was convinced that from a humane standpoint, mine was the better plan. But I had confidence in his faith, and his prayers, that God would listen to him (256). Gabriel’s absolute confidence in Riel stands as a proof for Riel’s sanity.

Throughout the novel, Riel is at different times referred to as the thinker, rock, priest, saint and prophet and these mythical analogue serves to position him as different form the Anglophone and Francophone presentation. Riel is not only portrayed as a “fine politician” but also as a religious saint. Sara, Riel’s sister, finds in him an “incomprehensible beauty of holiness”(97). Gabriel too remarks that “without benefit of ordination he lived a harder, holier, life than any priest” (202). Gabriel acknowledges that Riel is a prophet. Gabriel deconstructs the negative image of Riel with that of the victor: “There’s no white country can hold a man with a vision like Riel, [. . .]. Canada couldn’t handle that, not
Ontario, and not Quebec, they’re just using him against the English. They all think he was cracked, mad”. But, it wasn’t, and he wasn’t mad after hearing the judgment, Like Jesus Christ, Riel felt that he “should bless the judge, [ . . . ] who appointed my last day” (331).

Riel, though has failed personally in his fight, successfully kindles awareness in his people. In relation to this, J.M. Bridgeman comments: “To the Metis people, he is a talented educated leader with foresight and vision who was the Father of Manitoba” (“Re-visions” par.2), and in Gabriel’s verdict, “Louis Riel was a giant. If God had willed it, he could have ruled the world” (36). Wiebe creates a convincing, positive portrait of the saint-martyr-political leader. Patrick Holland in his essay “If he Were Ever presentable” acknowledges that “Rudy Wiebe’s Riel is certainly the most complete, most sympathetic, and richest now available to us” (80). Wiebe strategically subverts the fixed perceptions of Riel and relocates him with a differential perspective.

Wiebe has personal commitments as a Mennonite. Wiebe while speaking at the Conference held in June 14-16 at the Guelph Bible Conference Centre, he pronounces his obligation that he was the one who could write a good novel about Mennonites” (“Greetings from Ontario” no pgn.) and obviously declined to work on an assignment on Shakespeare. The Mennonite group is relatively small and unknown and
Wiebe represents the Mennonite socio-cultural history in *Peace Shall Destroy Many* and *The Blue Mountains of China*. The Russian Mennonites, a Protestant religio-cultural group is named after Menno Simons. The first Mennonite group arrived in Canada, in 1786. By 1870, there were two Mennonite reserves in Saskatchewan, Ontario and Manitoba. Conscription in the United States in 1917 brought more Mennonites to the Canadian prairies. The largest immigration occurred in the 1920s when twenty thousand Mennonites seized the opportunity to escape the effects of Bolshevik Revolution.

History of migration had invariably resulted in displacement in the history of Canada. The settlers have mixed experiences of belonging and non-belonging to the ‘new’ space. Nostalgic experiences of travel and settlement haunt the psyche of the settlers that often find expression in their writings forming valuable social and cultural documents. Wiebe recalls the travails and perils of the Mennonites, one of the major subcultures of Canada. He historicizes the Mennonites’ travel from Russia through the hard mountains before setting their foot on the Canadian soil. Wiebe records the painful race of the Mennonite immigrants in search of a ‘homeland’ in *The Blue Mountains of China*. During the Russian Revolution in 1917, the Mennonites were forced to find an alternative place to settle down. Simultaneously, Canada’s
Migration Policy encouraged the emigrants from various parts of the globe. Canada invited settlers to its western prairies, which was left enormously uncultivated. This policy was of interest to the Mennonites who were desperately looking for a homeland. The possibility of cheap farmland, along with the promise of religious freedom and exemption from military service attracted the Russian Mennonites to immigrate to Canada. In *The Blue Mountains of China* Wiebe historicises the Mennonites' turmoil in a series of tales which reveal their quest for a Promised Land of peace and religious tolerance.

Wiebe politicizes the struggle and suffering of the Mennonites and 'establishes' them as part of Canada in *The Blue of Mountains of China*. Frieda Friesen's narratives appear under the heading "My Life: That's As It Was" and has four episodes among the thirteen chapters in the novel. Friesen's narrative weaves a woeful story of her family moving from place to place for survival. Their endurance, penance, sacrifice and perseverance throughout their journey to Canada, as Frieda Friesen says, "comes from God, strength and sickness, want and plenty". Her reminiscence traces her family's movement from Russia to Manitoba. Survival is difficult in Swift Current as frequent rains flooded their crops. Frieda Friesen after her marriage moves from Oswick to Swift Current. Friesen recalls that she moved to Paraguay leaving her
parents and dear ones: “we never met again on this earth; nor my father” (61). The immigrants, as Frieda Friesen records, had to leave their near and dear ones behind in search of better pastures. She moves to Pueto Casado with her family in 1927, to work in a company mill. During this period many died of typhus and Frieda Friesen lost her children to the deadly disease in Pueto Casado. They returned to Schoenbach in 1928 where they constructed a house with a place to cultivate.

Approximately twenty two thousand Russian Mennonites immigrated to Canada between 1923 and 1929. Frieda Friesen narrates the history of the second wave of migrants as follows:

In 1930 some Mennonites still left in Russia ran from the communists and made a colony west of ours. There were about 1500 Russlander, mostly different from us but some we heard were even perhaps distant relatives; they spoke Lowgerman and it was better that there were more people in the Chaco. Theirs they called Fernland Colony and Mennonites in North America helped them very much; they had nothing, some not even clothes. (Wiebe The Blue Mountains of China 113)

Her narrative records the sufferings of the Russian immigrants due to poverty and sickness and their desperate need for a place. The
Russlanders settled in Chaco, Paraguay, “to get away from war”(169). Survival is difficult in Paraguay due to war: “[...] they hardly had mud houses built among the bitter-grass, and there were patrols and searches on every road and planning for flight and their Zentrale, just a few houses but some good wells, was being bombed”(169). The war between Paraguay and Bolivia threatened the Mennonites’ longing for a peaceful life. The settlers faced the atrocities of war. Wiebe portrays the painful period in the history of the Russian Mennonites in this novel.

In the fourth chapter, entitled “Blue Vulture”, old man Frantz forms the narrative. His narrative reveals how his family waited desperately in Moscow in 1925 for permission from a foreign country and escapes the communist persecution. David Epp II leads his village in secret across the Amur Rivers District in far eastern Russia, North of China. They leave their farms, as they were, hardly trying to sell anything. They take with them whatever possible things they could and “sneaked away”. To leave Russia is not an ordinary task and at the same time, returning to Germany was quite impossible. The political and religious persecution in Germany, which is well known, put the Mennonites’ life at stake. Therefore, their only hope and salvation was Canada. The Mennonite dissident, Balzer, is one among those men who
is “just sitting there on faith waiting for a miracle to float them to Canada” (Wiebe The Blue Mountains of China 75).

Frieda Friesen’s narrative throws light on the fact that the Mennonites, though they initially struggled to settle down in Canada, later become successful farmers and citizens. When Frieda Friesen visits her daughter who lives in Winnipeg, she finds her leading a prosperous and comfortable life in Canada. In all pride she remarks: “Marie had a nice house, big and new with everything electric [. . .] and her man worked eight hours a day by a garage” (178). They become successful as other immigrants. Wiebe views the prosperity of his own community through the eyes of his character, Frieda Friesen:

Our people came here with nothing and built up this land and worked for recognition through two wars and we made it, we’ve got responsible men everywhere now, teachers, doctors, professors, engineers, civil servants, members of parliament, even provincial cabinet ministers – (245)

The Mennonites gained recognition as teachers, politicians and successful businessmen. It is important to note that the traditional community avoided politics and business. Nevertheless, as time passes they interact with the outside world. It would suffice to quote Johann Friesen here: “Two sons ordained preacher, all children married and
happy and grand children and great-grandchildren, here and in Canada, [. . .]” (177). It would be fitting to add Allan Dueck’s comments here:

The critical exploration of Russian Mennonite history in Blue Mountains takes an important step towards defining who the Mennonites are today. Before a people can know who it is today, it must know who it was in the past [. . .], for any culture seeking its identity, a knowledge of its origins is essential. (186)

Wiebe makes his people to see where they have come from and thereby know who they are, which assures them with a sense of history. The multiple narrative voices of Frieda Friesen, the Epps and the Reimers collaborated within the space of Wiebe’s text helps to articulate Mennonite identity and the “knowledge of our origins” (Grant, 67).

Wiebe’s attempts to create the indigenous histories of the regional and the national, and the Mennonite community history, and Achebe reconstructs the cultural histories of the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Nigeria. Achebe’s novels situate the readers within a community governed by a rich tribal culture, and its collective will and continuity subsequently challenged by the intrusion of a non-native religion and technologies. The white men cause a deep rupture in the harmonious communal life of the Umuofians. They enter Umuofia as
missionaries, as portrayed in Things Fall Apart. First they construct a Church and convert the outcastes to Christianity, and then gradually interfere in their political matters. Finally, the whites began to impose their laws and regulations upon the natives:

But apart from the church, the white men had also brought a government. They had built a court where the District Commissioner judged cases in ignorance. He had court messengers who brought men to him for trial. [...] They guarded the prison, which was full of men who had offended against the white man’s law. Some of these prisoners had thrown away their twins and some had molested the Christians. They were beaten in the prison by the Kotma and made to work every morning clearing the government compound and fetching wood for the white Commissioner and the court messengers. Some of these prisoners were men of title who should be above such mean occupation. (174-75)

The above quotation substantiates the complete shift of political power from the Igbos to the whites.

Towards the end of Things Fall Apart, the Umuofians succumb to the whites’ subterfuge. Okonkwo, the son of the soil, attempts a protest
against the white as his clansmen have gone too far from the tribal ways. Attempts to unite his clansmen against the white government fail. Okonkwo cannot concede to the cultural and social changes and he commits suicide. His death symbolizes the collapse of a great tradition. Colonialism totally disintegrates the whole Umuofia clan.

Colonialism extends its destructive grip to another clan, Umuaro. Achebe’s narrative shifts between the natives and the colonials signifying the dichotomy of co-existing systems in Umuaro. Achebe presents Arrow of God as an authentic record of colonial history in a Nigerian village. In the end, the power shifts from the native to the colonials. The British men – Captain Winterbottom and Tony Clarke – are already involved in constructing new roads between Okeperi and Umuaro as per the colonial scheme. Hundreds of pounds are spent in building native courts all over the divisions following the Colonial Policy of the Headquarters.

Colonial Administration took to “indirect rule”, a destructive strategy of the British Empire. Their prime policy was to educate the ‘uncivilized race’. The letter written by Lieutenant Governor to Captain Winterbottom in Arrow of God may be taken for illustration:

To many colonial nations native administration means government by white men. You are all aware that H.M.G.
considers this policy as mistaken. In place of the alternative of governing directly through Administrative officers there is the other method of trying while we endeavour to purge the native system of its abuses to build a higher civilization upon the soundly rooted native stock that had its foundation in the hearts and minds and thoughts of the people and therefore on which we can more easily build, moulding it and establishing it into lines consonant with modern ideas and higher standards, and yet all the time enlisting the real force of the spirit of the people, instead of killing all that out and trying to start afresh. We must not destroy the African atmosphere, the African mind, the whole foundation of his race . . . (56-57)

Colonials allowed a “dozen mushroom kings grow where there was none before” (56) as a part of their colonial policy. Channa writes that, to establish colonial rule the rulers had to establish their own hegemony for which the “ideological apparatus were often the local intellectuals and chiefs” (111). The white administrator proposes Ezeulu to be the warrant chief of Umuaro since he is the chief priest of Umuaro and the guardian deity Ulu. Ezeulu has his own religious obligations and order of priorities shaped by a great tradition. The whites find Ezeulu a
viable mediator with power. Ezeulu is expected to play the warrant chief by Captain Winterbottom and when Ezeulu refuses to play this expected role, he is forced to take the role of an intermediary through imprisonment. Ezuelu as the chief priest of Ulu is supposed to consume the holy yam on every new moon. As he is imprisoned, the yams remain uneaten by Ezuelu. Onenyi Nwanyelugo, one of the men of titles explains the need for Ezuelu’s declaration of the New Yam Festival:

We all know the custom and no one can say that Ezeulu has offended against it. But the harvest is ripe in the soil and must be gathered now or it will be eaten by the sun and the weevils. At the same time Ezuelu has just told us that he still has three sacred yams to eat from last year. What then do we do? How do you carry a man with a broken waist? We know why the scared yams are still not finished; it was the work of the white man. But he is not here now to breathe with us the air he has fouled. We cannot go to Okperi and ask him to come and eat the yams that now stand between us and the harvest. Shall we then sit down and watch our harvest ruined and our children and wives die of hunger? No! Although I am not the priest of Ulu I can say that the deity does not want Umuaro to perish. We
call him the saver. Therefore you must find a way out, Ezuelu. If I could I would go now and eat the remaining yams. But I am not the priest of Ulu. It is for you, Ezuelu, to save our harvest. (207-08)

Onenyi Nwanyelugo’s request bears no fruit. Ezuelu’s refusal to declare the harvest festival is a revenge on the six villages that allowed the white men to take him away. His deliberate delaying of the consumption of the yams, initiates the discard of the age-old religious practice. Towards the end, there is a large-scale conversion to Christianity in Umuaro.

Achebe records the political changes in post-independent Nigeria in A Man of the People and Anthills of the Savannah that are crucial in the political history. The two novels examine the state of Nigerian politics after the colonial impact. A Man of the People is primarily about the decline of the democratic government and the nation’s call for a military coup. The post-independent Nigerian state is thoroughly corrupt. It became common after independence that “it didn’t matter what you knew but who you knew” (17) to get things done.

After gaining political independence, Nigeria with its experienced politicians, an efficient civil service and the benefit of a strong economy was expected to play the lead role in economic and political progress in
the Continent. Regional ambition and power race among the Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba led to a struggle for a position of strength in constitutional negotiations with the British. Achebe mixes his fiction with such facts about Nigeria’s neocolonialism and imperialism in A Man of the People. Max informs Odili about the foreign funds flowing into Nigerian parties to win the election, a sign of the influence of colonialism: “British Amalgamated has paid out four hundred thousand pounds to P. O.P. to fight this election? Yes, and we all know that the Americans have been even more generous [. . .].” (127-28). However, a federal constitution was set up in independent Nigeria. Regional government handled local affairs, and the federal government took over national interests. The politicians were engaged in reckless scramble for power and wealth and one such politician is Achebe’s Nanga. Nigeria’s leaders constructed sturdy empires of wealth and patronage. To retain their position, the supporters were offered jobs, contracts, loans, scholarships and even post as ministers. The scramble continued for six years after independence leaving the citizens impoverished and demeaned. Though the electorate was disgusted, there was no way of voting the politicians out of office.

On the fifteenth of January 1966, a group of young army majors launched an attempt to overthrow the regime by force. The federal
prime minister was executed which resulted in series of killings. Major-
General Ironsi with the loyal troops managed to gain control over the
rebels. Military regime gained power under Ironsi’s leadership. Soon he
too was seized and executed together with other officers. Political
manoeuverings in the aftermath of the coup led to the establishment of
the Northern and Eastern Region to form a federal government leaving
the East alienated. In the process, thousands of Easterners were killed or
maimed, and many fled from the north and from other parts of Nigeria
and took refuge in the East.

In 1967, Nigerian civil war broke out and “within six years of
independence” Nigeria “was a cesspool of corruption and misrule”
(Lindfors 82). Biafra surrendered in January 1970, and the result was
peaceful and unexpected. It was a scene of reconciliation. During this
continuing military rule thirty small states was formed that lessened the
threat of tribal conflict on a national scale. Yet Nigerian politics
remained as corrupted and self-serving as before. The violent influence
of colonialism continues to exist in the political affairs of the Nigerian
State in the guise of politicians like Chief Nanga and President Sam.
The civil wars and revolutions, and the added political thuggery of the
leaders often lead to political upheaval. A Man of the People is
contemporaneous of the political history of Nigeria in the 1966.
Achebe’s fictional creation of political parties like People’s Organisation Party, the Progressive Alliance Party and the Common People’s Convention (founded by Max and his associates carry similar features of the Socialist Worker’s and Farmer’s Party that emerged in 1963) resembles the complicated pre-independence party system in Nigeria. The 1964 election has inspired Achebe to base his fiction on the election to expose the fickleness of Nigerian politics.

Nigerian politics is of prime concern in Achebe’s *A Man of the People* and it exposes such corrupted politicians in the democratic government of Nigeria. There arises a financial crisis over the international coffee market and the Finance Minister pronounced a complete plan to meet out the situation. The prime minister is not prepared to risk by cutting down the price paid to the planters, as he fears losing the election and dismisses the minister and two-thirds of the Cabinet Ministers for supporting the plan. The Prime Minister condemns the dismissed ministers as “conspirators and traitors who had teamed up with the foreign saboteurs to destroy the new nation” (4). Such dismissed ministers are university people and highly educated professionals, who are stamped as miscreants by the ruling party. The *Daily Chronicle*, an official organ of the P.O.P (People Organization
Party) writes that educated men bring about the ruin of their nation and The Chronicle reads:

Let us now and for all time extract from our body-politic as a dentist extracts a stinking tooth all those decadent stooges versed in text-book economics and aping the white man’s mannerisms and way of speaking. We are proud to be Africans. Our true leaders are not those intoxicated with their Oxford, Cambridge or Harvard degrees but those who speak the language of the people. Away with the damnable and expensive university education which only alienates an African from his rich and ancient culture and puts him above his people. . . . (4)

The ironic implication is that the country does not need intellectuals but needs only ‘loyal’ ministers:“[. . .] a man need not be an economist to be Chancellor of the Exchequer or a doctor to be Minister of Health” (4-5).

Achebe portrays Chief Nanga as a typical colonial product in A Man of the People. He introduces him to the reader in the opening lines of the novel: “No one can deny that Chief the Honourable M.A. Nanga, M.P., was the most approachable politician in the country. Whether you asked in the city or in his home village, Anata, they would tell you he was a man of the people” (1). However, as the novel proceeds, the
reader understands that the very introduction of Chief Nanga is ironic. He is a confounded opportunist, a fraudulent politician and seldom a man of the people. In his interview to Jussawalla, Achebe speaks about the character of Chief Nanga as a symbol of the colonial.

[. . .] he’s a very important character; and he is proficient. He knows what he wants to do, and he’s prepared to do it and has the training, the historical preparation for it. This is in part, perhaps, the tragedy of our situation. Here indeed he’s this proficient, and yet he’s applying it all to destroy the society. [. . .] He’s applying it in a very narrow, selfish way. This may be the worst consequence of colonization – that one is utterly alienated from his community. (171-72)

If Chief Nanga chooses politics for maneuvering power, Odili uses it to squander money. When he claims Edna, he plans to pay the bride-price by using the party funds without any moral conscience: “I had already decided privately to borrow from CPC funds still in my hands. They were not likely to be needed soon” (148). They both use politics to meet their personal needs. Politics, as with the white colonials, is being manipulated to meet mean ends. The novel ends with a military coup that is followed by the uprising of the common people. The elections cause a great confusion and unrest that the military rule
has to be established. Politicians are responsible for the political instability in the country. Achebe exposes this political corruption as one of the legacies of colonialism.

A Man of the People demonstrates the end of the democratic “eat-and-let-eat regime” (145), and a military coup is established with a hopeful note. In Anthills of the Savannah it is established that military rule also fails to serve the interest of the nation. The inefficient political strategies together with the indifference of the common people to respond to such political upheavals are the main reason for such political instability. Odili voices his views in A Man of the People thus: “The people themselves [. . .] had become even more cynical than their leaders” (145). Achebe is careful to point out that the fall of the government has nothing to do with the collective will of the people:

What happened was simply that unruly mob and private armies having tasted blood and power during the election has got out of hand and ruined their master and employers. And they had no public reason whatsoever for doing it. Let’s make no mistake about it. (145)

Ngugi wa Thiong’o assesses Achebe to be a “true man of the people” who in A Man of the People “no longer stands apart to contemplate. He
has moved with a whip among the pupils, flagellating himself as well as them” (“Homecoming”, 54)

In the opening lines of *The Anthills of the Savannah* President Sam refuses to visit the people of Abazon, in the North-western region which is under severe drought for the last two years. The inhabitants gather before the President’s office to voice their sufferings. But he neglects his duty to the people. He is annoyed with the Abazonians because they did not support the referendum for life President and acts rather insensitively and feigns to be busy with the President of the United States over the telephone.

President Sam received his education in London. It was his training in Sandhurst and his stay in England which influenced his personality. According to Ikem Osodi, editor of the *National Gazette*, Sam has no sense of moral commitment. He is totally insensitive to the needs of the poor and the deprived classes. As Robin Ikegami observes, the “President [. . .] is extremely insecure about both his claim to the office and his ability to keep the position”(67). Unlike in the pre-colonial Nigerian society, the leaders of post-independent Nigeria are power mongers as in the western world.

The postcolonial Nigerian political state is thoroughly corrupted by politicians turned colonials. *A Man of the People* and *Anthills of the*
Savannah prove that the borrowed political strategies are a disastrous failure in contemporary Nigeria. In Anthills of the Savannah the failure of the military rule in Kangan, as Ikem states, is due to the following reason:

It can’t be the massive corruption though its scale and pervasiveness are truly intolerable; it isn’t the subservience to foreign manipulation, degrading as it is; it isn’t even this second-class, hand-me-down capitalism, ludicrous and doomed; nor is it the damnable shooting of striking railway-workers and demonstrating students and the destruction and banning thereafter of independent unions and cooperatives.

It is the failure of our rulers to re-establish vital inner links with the poor and dispossessed of this country, with the bruised heart that throbs painfully at the core of the nation’s being. (emphasis added, 130-31)

Corrupted leaders like Chief Nanga and President Sam betray the nation by neglecting the needs of the poor and the dispossessed. The political leaders take oaths to safeguard their nation. For instance, the Prime Minister in A Man of the People in his address, talks exuberantly:

From today we must watch and guard our hard-won freedom jealously. Never again must we entrust our destiny and the destiny of Africa to the hybrid class of Western-educated
and snobbish intellectuals who will not hesitate to sell their mothers for a mess of pottage . . . (6)

Ironically these leaders are the traitors who push their nation towards a series of military coups and re-elections. The tragic political situation of the post-independent Nigeria is such: “[. . .] the philosophy of power (i.e., values of welfare state, democracy or socialism) gets bogged down into the politics of power. A sense of insecurity and instability for the ruler(s) degenerate into a psychology of survival at any cost” (Reddy 126). In post-independent Nigeria “half-baked professors” are appointed as ministers who are unaware of the activities of the government. This is obvious when the Prime Minister appoints Chief Koko’s widow as the Minister for Women’s Affairs, “intending to quiet the powerful guild of Bori market women who have become restive” (Achebe, A Man of the People 144).

Achebe points out the reason for the failure as the enforcement of an alien political structure and the unsuitability of the political formulae, which are borrowed from its colonizers. The superimposed political strategy misfits the Nigerian need. Realization dawns upon Christopher Oriko, the Minister for Information, when he meditates upon his uncle’s words: “My semi-literate uncle was right all the way when he said that we asked the white man to pack and go but did not think he would take
with him all the utensils he brought when he came” (Anthills of the Savannah 19). In other words the whites introduced their systems in the alien context to their own advantage without providing the Nigerians with any means of shaping these systems to adapt them to their needs.

The colonial political policies suit only the colonials and Kangan has experienced severe trouble since the whites left because “those who make plans make plans for themselves only and their families” (212) and, “The white man put all that back in his box when he took his leave” (19). The plans have been an advantage to the Europeans but not to the Nigerians. Only the upper class and the educated elite like Chief Nanga, President Sam and Obi Okonkwo could enjoy the national good in the postcolonial Nigerian society.

Wiebe’s A Discovery of Strangers recaptures an important phase in Canadian history namely the colonial contact with the native world as Achebe does in Arrow of God. If the latter undergoes a radical political and religious change, in the case of the former it is the beginning of the establishment of white political systems. The narrative is woven with the mixing of two different cultures, which is crucial to Canadian history. It is a historical fact that John Franklin and his expedition members consisting of British officers and Canadian voyagers, penetrate the Northern Arctic in search of a route. Their principal aim is to draw
the map of the Northern Canada in view of expanding their colony. In their enterprise they need the native Indians to show the way through the wilderness and thus they seek the help of the Tetsot’ines whom they name as the Yellowknife Indian. The Tetsot’ines guide the members through the tough landscape and also provide the expedition members with animals. Keskarrah’s band bears the brunt of colonial policies. The English voyagers consider themselves as superior and expect the Indians to ‘serve’ them. George Back, one of the white expedition members, demands that, “the natives must obey us if we are to succeed. They must be able to find and kill enough deer to feed us and all our labouring men [. . .]” (Wiebe A Discovery of Strangers 47). Herein Wiebe points out the colonial arrogance and the evolution of the myth of white racial superiority over the native people.

Both Achebe and Wiebe in the narration of histories point out the natives’ struggle for survival against the white cruelty. Again, both Achebe and Wiebe strategically narrate the history of the civilizing project of the whites. As nomads, the Indians are non-materialistic. Richardson, one of Franklin’s men, suggests: “We will never control any Indians, not in this wild country, until we teach them the absolute, practical necessity of money” (59) and he adds further, “I believe that is the fundamental problem in the economic development of primitives. If
they understood money, they would work harder to get more of it, in order to buy what they want” (59). Richardson hopes that teaching the natives the practical necessity of money would enable them to control the Indians on economic lines. It is yet another strategy of the colonials to exploit the native people. Richardson insists that: “They must want more than they need. That is civilization”(59). The colonials plan to introduce the white economic structures in the native societies in order to impose the master/slave relationship between themselves and the natives.

The colonials intruded the native land as civilizing agents and saviours and colonialist history boasts of native transformation, but the narratives of Achebe and Wiebe prove that colonials entered the land primarily for economic gains, gradually introduced its religious ideologies and finally settled as owners of the land. As George Ryga writes in his play:

Long ago the whiteman came with Bibles to talk to my people, who had the land, they talked for hundred years[. . .] then we had all the Bibles an’ the whiteman had all our land [. . .]” (The Ecstasy of Rita Joe 44)

The colonials’ appropriation of the land is clearly delineated by Wiebe in The Temptations of Big Bear. When Big Bear claims his right
over the land the jury disapproves his right to the land. The crucial
dialogue between Big Bear and the Jury is quoted below:

This land belongs to me. When I had it I never needed your
flour and pork. Sometimes I was stiff with Indian agents
who looked at me as if I was a child and knew less than a
child. Before many of you were born I ran buffalo over this
place where you have put this building, and white men ate
the meat I gave them. I gave them my hand as a brother; I
was free and the smallest Person in my band was as free as I
because the Master of Life had given us our place on the
earth and that was enough for us. But you have taken our
inheritance, and our strength. The land is torn up, black with
fires, and empty. You have done this. (emphases added, 405)

The jury pronounces his powerful “words” that positions the
colonials and the natives in possession/dispossession of the land
respectively:

This land never belonged to you. This land was and is the
Queen’s. She has allowed you to use it. When she wanted
to make other use of it, she called you together through her
officers and let you decide which of the choicest part of the
country you wanted, to reserve them for yourself. Your people can live there because the Queen has graciously given it to them. *This land belonged to the Queen.* (emphases added, 406)

Such words of power and authority are reiterated to construct the colonial image as the centre of the history, and as Wiebe says: “people believe words they hear too often. That’s the way words are; power” (142). In *A Discovery of Strangers* the white expedition group forces the Tesot’ines to accept British Nation and the Great King as theirs. George Back, a midshipman, reads the following proposal to the natives:

This, our great flag, is the sign of the King of England’s power, who is your king also! The king of England is your Great Father! We are not traders, we are the King’s warriors, as you can see by our uniforms. We are not come to trade, but to establish good relations between us and yourselves, and to discover the resources of your country. We already know one great river to the north, but if you show us the way of other great river to the Northern Ocean, *and* if you hunt for us as we follow it, the King will be very thankful. He will send ships bigger than a hundred voyageur canoes combined to trade with you. Then your
enemies will fade away with envy at your wealth and power, and you will be richer than all your ancestors together. (42)

The above quoted proclamation reveals the proclaimed self-right of the colonial to determine what the other should be. It conveys the fact that the natives could be moulded into whatever best served the economic and political purposes of the colonies. The Tetsot’ines are made to believe that the “British king” is “their King” who will control them under single leadership.

Wiebe attempts a criticism of the proclamation and thereby a subverted narrative is constructed through Keskarrah who expresses his disbelief about the possibilities of a single head or a king. He expresses his view thus:

It’s not the way of People to have one big boss who gives orders and everyone obeys them. That’s useful during the temporary necessities of defence or war – one man telling everyman what to do and everyone running around to do it [. . .]. It’s not the way of the land. (306)

The colonials have entered the native land unscrupulously to exploit the resources of the Canadian prairies. They not only intrude into
the cultural life of the natives but also destroy their natural and animal resources:

[. . .] Whiteskins started ‘just looking’ at rocks, tapping them with iron hammers and drilling long thin poles out of them: suddenly white madmen poured in like sand and ripped and hacked and rooted the land until everything was dead, not even a worm cold live there afterwards. (Wiebe The Temptations of Big Bear 85)

The scene of settlers “ripping up the land and knocking down trees and wolfers dashing about scattering poison and killing wolves and buffalo”(97) vouch the colonial destruction.

Human resources were maimed. The Indians were wooed in to drinking. The consumption of liquor “thrust the Indian more deeply into morass than his own tribal ways could have hammered him” (Wiebe First and Vital Candle 263).

Religion was the cardinal means of colonization. Missionaries claimed, throughout the white history, that they were the redeemers of the ‘primitive groups’. In Things Fall Apart the white religion shatters the whole of Umuaro and brings about the erosion in the native culture. Achebe exposes the erosion through one of his characters, John Goodcountry, the new teacher of Okperi in Arrow of God:
If we are Christians, we must be ready to die for the faith [. . .]. You must be ready to kill the python as the people of the rivers killed the iguana. You address the python as Father. It is nothing but a snake, the snake that deceived our first mother, Eve. If you are afraid to kill it do not count yourself a Christian. (47)

In Umuaro python is regarded as sacred to Idemili. Killing a python would be equal to killing one's own kinsman. But John Goodcountry (a convert himself) insists that a python should be killed, as it deceived their "first mother". The native religious belief is being subverted. Christian belief claims the centre.

Native missionary, Mr. Goodcountry perceives the crisis over the New Yam Festival as an opportunity for "fruitful intervention". He has strategies to convert the natives:

He had planned his church's harvest service for the second Sunday in November the proceeds from which would go into the fund for building a place of worship more worthy of God and of Umuaro. His plan was quite simple. The New Yam Festival was the attempt of the misguided heathen to show gratitude to God, the giver of all good things. This was God's hour to save them from their error
which was now threatening to ruin them. They must be told that if they made their thank-offering to God [Christ] they could harvest their crops without fear of Ulu. (Achebe Arrow of God 215)

The Umuaro people adapt to the new faith in order to protect their crops. The novel ends with a note of change in the fundamental social structures of Umuaro. The inhabitants of Umuaro overlook their guardian deity Ulu, which was once fervently worshipped by them, and “Thereafter any yam harvested in his fields was harvested in the name of the son” (Achebe Arrow of God 230). The missionaries instigate internal conflict in Umuaro, as a result of which the native religious beliefs, on which the entire community was built, disintegrates.

Under the colonial influence and the spread of non-indigenous religion and scientific advancements, Inuit tradition too receives its setback, as portrayed in First and Vital Candle. Most of the Indians convert to Christianity abandoning their native religion. Churches are constructed. They become “profoundly devotional” and attend church service regularly. Oolulik belongs to the Angakok group who are great shaman, but becomes a Christian under the white influence. When Oolulik was a child she “showed some great powers”. The Angakok had the power of Satanasi, the spirit that is believed to fulfil the favours of the
tribes. With the coming of the missionaries, the clan abandoned their worship of the spirits. Oolulik and her husband too “have given themselves to Christ”(81). But Christianity fails to sustain them. There are many incidents of deaths due to sicknesses and starvation. Oolulik is deprived of her husband and children as they die of sickness. She finds the new religion indifferent to their needs and sufferings whereas their belief in supernatural power had given them the animals they needed for survival. She tells Abe:

When the white man came to the people with guns and oil for heating, it was almost as if we no longer needed shamans or taboo for we could hunt the deer wherever we wished, from far. Then the missionary came and told us of Jesus and we listened and soon our old beliefs seemed of little use for us to live. We have lived this way most of my life, and every year the deer have been less. And our prayers to God do not bring them back. In the old days the shaman did. (82)

Oolulik compares the old belief and the new religious belief, a strategy of the narrator. The new religion has erased the old belief in the shaman and his magic prowess which Oolulik finds more powerful, as they brought adequate animals to feed on. She expresses her disgust with the new religion and the whites’ attitude towards their own religion thus:
And they no longer keep the taboo of not killing more than can be eaten. The missionaries tell us that we must believe other things, and the white men do not even believe what the white missionary says. We have seen them in Barker Lake; many never go to church, and yet they are fat and warm and never hungry. We believed and prayed, and see – (82)

The white man’s callousness illustrates that the ‘new’ religion is only a means of colonizing for they seldom follow their own religious convictions. Oolulik observes that with the introduction of the white religion, “There is nothing left to believe. The deer and the people are gone” (82). Religion brings about the erosion in the Inuits who are forced to abandon their nomadic hunting pursuits and beliefs associated with it.

The Inuit way of life is affected by the colonials who do not follow the “taboo of not killing more than can be eaten” (82). People of Tarukuk, Vukarsee, Nakown and Lootevek camp die of hunger. Keluah, the Inuit makes the following observation about the pathetic condition of their survival:

Some deer came last fall, but not much. We hunted, [. . .] here and there a small herd. But there were not enough for caches, we always ate everything we killed. A little after the twilight came Ikpuck found a good herd at Dubawnt Lake.
We killed them all, and we could again lick the blood from our hands and our bellies were full. But the others had found nothing for many days, and they camped at Dubawnt one by one when they had no food. We fished. But we have no meat since the middle of the darkness. (68-69)

Each Inuit camp consists of fifteen to twenty persons. They stay in places where food is adequate for all the members. But as Keluah tells, in every camp the catch is inadequate and the bands constantly shift from place to place in search of food. Survival is difficult for them in the face of colonization, as the whites are involved in killing animals in exceeding number and this is in challenge to the promise of comfort and plenty that the whites offered.

Like Religion, western Education was a very influential tool of colonization and the impact of it is found in both Nigeria and Canada as evidenced by Achebe and Wiebe in their novels. Wiebe denotes that colonialism has forced the natives to desert their primitive religion and belief in shaman and conjuring. The promise of allowances and education allures the Indians to adopt new beliefs. The native inhabitants are just at the receiving end. The whites have successfully enslaved them and corroded their indigenous way of life.
Achebe shows that the white man and his system of education disintegrates the individual and his dependency and collective interaction with the community. *No Longer at Ease* is about Obi who returns from his studies in England to become a civil servant in Nigeria a few years before the country gained independence. 1957 was a period in which the Nigerian elite were beginning to hold most civil service and professional positions. Obi among the university-trained African elite is expected to assume the responsibility of decimating control on behalf of the colonizers.

The Umuofia Progressive Union sponsored Obi to undertake his higher studies in England with great expectations that Obi would be of benefit to Umuofia. This reflects the shift in the attitudes of modern African society. About education the President of Umuofia Progressive Union says,

> In times past, [...] Umuofia would have required of you to fight in her wars and bring home human heads. But those were days of darkness from which we have been delivered by the blood of the Lamb of God. Today we send you to bring knowledge. (Achebe *No Longer at Ease* 12)

As evident from the words quoted above, Umuofia once known for its wars and bloodshed is now completely transformed by the white
ideological system, and formal education is given much importance in
the colonized society. Odogwu’s reflects this ideological change in the
Umuofians: “Today greatness has changed its tune. Titles are no longer
great, neither are barns or large numbers of wife or children. Greatness
is now the things of the white man. And so we too have changed our
tune” (62).

Umuofia expects Obi to bring home western knowledge and serve
the country. No Longer at Ease documents the paradoxical situation of
the community’s view on education as a “new privilege”, which in
reality ends up as an alienating force. It is ironical when Mr. Green, a
white officer, comments upon the futility of education in Nigeria:

I cannot begin to understand the mentality of the so-called educated Nigerians. [. . .] I think Government is making a terrible mistake in making it so easy for people like that to have so-called university education. Education for what? To get as much as they can for themselves and their family. Not the least bit interested in the millions of their countrymen who die every day from hunger and disease.

(132)

The novel deals with Obi’s inadequacy to fit in to the traditional system,
and the consequences of him becoming an “alienated” self. The
replacement of traditional rule with the colonial authority weakens the power of the community to control an individual going astray. In the pre-colonial Igbo community, elders exercised considerable power and control over the young generation. But in the present situation this bond is dissipated. When the Umuofia Union suspects that Obi is “moving around with a girl of doubtful ancestry” (94), and checks him for wasting the money due the union, Obi retorts thus: “I am not going to listen to you anymore” (95) and challenges to pay his debts immediately. Only a little earlier Obi in his address to the Union speaks: “Our fathers [. . .] have a saying about the danger of living apart. They say it is the curse of a snake. If all snakes lived together in one place, who would approach them” (92). They could not control Obi and he goes his own way to his own disaster. Om P. Juneja equates Obi’s condition with that of the state: “Like the state, he is divided in his loyalties between tribalism and modern nationalism. Again, like a Nigerian state which fails to fulfil its political ideals, his dream of becoming a detribalized modern Nigerian remains unfulfilled” (67).

Besides deluding his community, Obi gives himself to corruption and bribery. Obi’s extravagance pushes him to economic insufficiency. He borrows money to pay his insurance as he finds his salary insufficient. However, he fails to clear his debts to the Umuofia
Progressive Union. In the opening of the novel Obi is convicted of accepting a bribe of twenty pounds and as Mr. Green says, “The African is corrupt through and through” (3). Though he is a “prodigal son who had shown great disrespect”(5) towards his community, the Umuofia Union appoints a lawyer to defend Obi’s case.

Western education alters Obi’s moral values too. Obi yields to bribery and neglects his social commitments. Sexual immorality and corruption are unknown in the pre-colonial Igbo society. Yet, Obi has sexual relationship with his girlfriend Clara, leading to his moral degeneration. Through Obi, Achebe underscores the negative impact of western system of education. It leads Obi away from his community and tradition. “Tradition is opposed not to modernity but to alienation”(Rabinow 1). Obi’s move away from tradition and community which leads to his alienation.

Achebe’s vision of an organic society could be witnessed in the behaviour of Chris, Ikem Emmanuel and Beatrice in The Anthills of the Savannah. Ikem by marrying Elewa, a true daughter of the people, bridges the gap between the elite and the common people. The naming ceremony of Elewa’s child, crystallizes Achebe’s vision of a new Nigeria as the baby is given the name “may-the path-never-close” signifying social harmony. Beatrice suggests, that Elewa the mother
should name the child, instead of the father. Beatrice challenges the traditional practice: "[...] I think our tradition is faulty there. It is really safest to ask the mother what her child is or means or should be called" (206). Beatrice deconstructs the role of traditional women. In the beginning, like Sam and Obi, Beatrice too seems to be in a state of cultural limbo. She at first is blind about her traditional past as it had "little part in her upbringing" (96) as she is born "into a world apart" from others. Beatrice's relationship with Agatha, the maid, in the beginning reflects certain hegemony but she soon breaks the pattern of master/slave and learns to behave better with Agatha which is extended to Elewa a little later. In the final chapter of *The Anthills of the Savannah* Agatha, Emmanuel, Adamma, Elewa, Aina and Beatrice are seen as a family. This family becomes a metonymy of harmony bridging all the boundaries of social and religious creeds. Aina, a Muslim joins the dance with Agatha and Abdul too joins the kolanut ritual. He joins the prayer and "beyond the accustomed limits of Choral support right into exuberant hand-clapping",(212) breaking the ritual boundaries. Beatrice is portrayed as "captain whose leadership was sharpened more and more by sensitivity to the peculiar needs of her company" (213).

Wiebe's vision of a harmonic society is achieved in the character of Maskepetoon, who after becoming a Christian in spirit imbibes both
the Indian and the alien in to a single identity. Wiebe envisions a future through James as he says, “Like Maskepetoon I want to have both rather than either. I want to encompass the entire duality spreading itself before me” (My Lovely Enemy 167).

The colonialist history has ever interpreted the natives as barbarians, cannibals, primitives and savages devoid of culture and civilization. By rewriting the native history, Wiebe creates an indigenous identity that is prominently visible. Achebe recounts the colonial and the postcolonial Nigerian history to analyze the root cause for the failure of the political systems of governance.

Achebe and Wiebe revisit the colonial histories to reconstruct the post-colonial histories of their respective nations. Wiebe’s narrative centres upon creating an indigenous history with a view of positioning the First Nations People’s as the true ancestors of Canada. Achebe’s narrative of the historical incidents are often reflections, a call to his fellow Nigerians to examine their past errors and weaknesses in the socio-political arena. Achebe and Wiebe deconstruct the negative images and perceptions circulated in the name of authentic official records which are intentional infliction on the native race. Wiebe creates a Canadian mythico-cultural heritage in his narratives of Big Bear and Louis Riel. Achebe and Wiebe expose the natives’ suffering at the
hands of the colonials. Wiebe narrates the history of Mennonite migration, thereby politicizing their visibility and as a part of the Canadian multicultural mosaic. Achebe and Wiebe deconstruct the “misrepresented” identities in the colonialist narratives of their respective nations.

The next chapter is a summing up of the findings arrived at in the earlier chapters.