CHAPTER VI

Conclusion

This study has explored certain key myths and ceremonies that appear at crucial junctures of the four outstanding American Indian narratives. The novelists have used them for artistic purposes. But I have a shrewd suspicion that it has a cathartic effect on the writers themselves. Living in a multiethnic society, the novelists, all of whom are mixedbloods find themselves without a definite world view, a philosophy, and a theology to hold them together. They feel a compelling urge to create a secondary world, a fictional world of their own which, they believe, would give "a shape and a significance" and impose an order to their anarchic existence. Myths and ceremonies provide them with the clues for their survival in to-day's America. Thus, their fiction is a product of their acute need for psychic renewal.

These four mixedblood novelists are at great pains to evolve a strategy for survival. They feel that their conversion to different faith and their acculturation to a different lifestyle notwithstanding, the Native Americans can still seek spiritual succour from the remnants of their native lore. Myths and ceremonies, thus, offer a therapeutic function particularly for such
individuals as Abel, the narrator-protagonist of *Winter in the Blood*, Tayo and Pauline.

Reading these narratives is a revelation. These texts, in the years to come, will be looked upon as the source of sacred illuminations. One has the feeling that works of such magnitude can be produced only when the artist is profoundly inspired by a messianic zeal. Their fiction, thus, demonstrates a rare combination of narrative voice and prophetic vision.

In today’s America, one finds innumerable Abels and Tayos. If only there were more of Betonies and Franciscos! In the absence of reliable medicine men to guide them along the spiritual lines, the Native Americans find life so hard and the burden of redemption so heavy. But all is not lost: they still have with them their redemptive gifts—myths and ceremonies.

Momaday, Welch, Silko, and Erdrich, in these novels, are not mere “interpreters of maladies”—they are the literary shamans who offer the prescription for survival. The mythic and ceremonial cycles presented in these narratives emphasize the need for re-alignment with the arcane practices of the yore. They also reflect the American Indian reality and point towards their unique identity in the American mosaic. This certainly does not mean that these artists promote insularity. On the contrary, they negotiate the tension between the old and the new cultural positions and argue for amity
through intercultural communication, fiction being the medium. They envision an environment which facilitates harmonious living of the native and the white.