American Indian Verse.

A Study of Characteristics.

by

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PREFATORY NOTE.

The recent discussion of Indian verse opened by Mr.Louis Untermeyer in the Dial of April 8, 1919,[1] would have been interesting and diverting had it not become acrimonious. That Indian verse is the original vers libre is a debatable question, although Mrs. Austin gives the view her warm support.[2] Scholars agree that this verse is mnemonic. Perhaps the new school of poetry would make the same claim for vers libre. Whatever the form, the critic at least should understand the civilization shaping any literary product upon which he presumes to pass judgment. The large number of Indian languages forbids very wide knowledge of originals.[3] Acquaintance with customs and myths is possible, however, for one who is not a close student of Indian linguistics. The inter-weaving of each mnemonic fragment with a narrative perhaps as old as the race presents a problem to the student at every step in his

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1. The Dial. Apr.8,1919.pp. ;May 30,1919.pp. July 12,1919,p.30; Aug.23,1919,p.163

2. Austin. Introduction: The Path on the Rainbow.(Ed.by Cronyn.) p.XVI.

3. Boas. Handbook of American Indian Languages.p.62.

research. This problem should not wholly discourage the reader of Indian poetry, for no literature which represents the life of a race can ever be of indifferent interest. Neither can such poetry be entirely clear to the white reader. Mr. Untermeyer has confessed his ignorance of Indian lore. As a critic, might he not have encouraged others to search out the spirit of a passing race? It seems unfortunate that he has left the real issue untouched in his last communication to the Dial.

In the light of these facts, it may appear inconsistent for the writer to offer even this tentative sketch of the characteristics of Indian verse without a discussion of Indian life and character. Since both these discussions are parts of a larger work nearing completion, it seems unnecessary to present any part of the latter chapter in connection with this paper.

The verse studied includes forms preceding the influence of white men; at least forms showing no obvious influence of white men or Christian teachings. No translations into the Indian languages have, therefore, been considered. Wherever possible, the writer has made comparison of the free translations with literal translations and with glossaries. Errors may have found their way into this study in spite of this extreme care, but it is hoped

that they are few.

Authenticity of material is frequently an open question. After reading the marriage song of Tikaens[1] with enthusiasm, the writer regretfully discarded it upon reading a full account of this hoax in a later volume by Dr. Brinton.[2] Apparently Mrs. Austin has not come upon the expose of this fraud, or she would not have included this verse in her brief study of Indian poetry.[3]

A problem greater than authenticity is to find a sufficient range of material to assure general characteristics. Although the sources for this paper are by no means inclusive, they cover the songs and rituals of twenty ethnic families, which represent all but one of the nine great culture areas in North America, north of Mexico—all but the Southeastern Area.[4] This analysis of fifteen

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1. Brinton. Aboriginal American Authors, pp.48-49.
2. Brinton. Essays of an Americanist. pp.452-468.
3. Austin. Introduction: The Path on the Rainbow. (ed. by Cronyn.) pp.XXVIII-XXX.
4. Wissler. The American Indian. pp.206-226.
   See map in Indians of the Plains. p.11.
   Cf.Holmes. Areas of American Culture; Anthropology in America. pp.42-76.

thousand song lines is based on the poetic literature of fifty-six tribes, among them the greatest of the red race. So far as possible, the writer compared the studies of several translators of a given tribal literature before determining a characteristic.

Those who may wish to follow the study farther will find extensive translations in the ethnological publications of both our own and the Canadian government. The American Museum of Natural History, the Field Columbian Museum, the Peabody Museum, the University of California, the University of Pennsylvania, the American Folk-Lore Society, and the American Anthropological Association, have made valuable collections and translations. Dr. Daniel G. Brinton, Dr. Washington Matthews, Miss Alice C. Fletcher, Mrs. Natalie Curtis Burlin, Miss Frances Densmore, Mr. Frederick Burton, and Mr. Edward Curtis have done notable work in the field of Indian poetry and song. It is largely through the scholarship of such as these that this critical study has been made possible, although the investigation began independently some ten years ago when the writer spent a winter among the Chickasaw Indians.

It requires some courage to enter an untried field, especially when many have thought the venture a futile one. The writer is glad to express here her appreciation

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of the friendly counsel given her by Dr. Dunlap and by Dr. Hopkins, Dr. Johnson, Dr. Whitcomb, and Dr. Burnham of the graduate committee.

The present critic is indeed only a gleaner in the fields of the translator, who has gathered the harvest. Although the full ripening of Indian civilization has been blighted by an alien culture, the student will find some inviting fields yet uncut. The winter of the race is near. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the white race will not give over the enterprise until the last grain of a fruitful civilization has been harvested.

Nellie Barnes.

The University of Kansas,
Lawrence,
October first,1919.

INTRODUCTION

SHAPING FORCES.

Spirit

The genuine interest that comes with reading some early Indian verse leaves a feeling of wonder that love and war should break through time and culture and speak intelligibly to a modern world, co-existent, though they are, with the human race itself. Through these dramatic motives the great creative force in life endlessly directs and shapes human thought. Yet a greater motive shaped the thought of the American Indians. Their days in the open deepened and widened their religious feeling till all the universe was drawn into their scheme of life. This cosmic faith was their supreme reality. And so it is that the character of the Indian people is unique among the peoples of the earth. There is, to be sure, a basis for their literature in the material culture of the race as well as in their spiritual and artistic development. In this respect, the shaping forces of Indian verse have many points in common with those of all primitive verse, but in their essential qualities have some elements peculiar to the American verse. These are explained by the Indians' emphasis on cosmic beliefs.

From such beliefs grew that fine poetic instinct for what is beautiful, that lifts and frees thought from time and circumstance. The shaping forces of Indian poetry grew from that same source. To name them may set limits which this poetry never accepted. We should, therefore, consider the spirit, observation, imagination, symbolism, and aesthetics only as tentative analyses of these forces.

The exalted feeling[1] --the high spirit of Indian verse--is indeed the dominant tone of this literature, reflecting the Red Men's self-reverence, their consciousness of personal worth in the great scheme of life. This feeling saves the simplest poems from absurdity. There are majesty and power in the exalted spirit of the Omaha ritual, the Introduction of the Child into the Cosmos,[2] and of the Mountain Songs of the Navahos.[3]

There is less elevation in style, but a fine nobility and dignity of thought in the great body of Indian verse studied. It is a commentary on the sincerity of this verse that there is scant evidence of self-satisfaction or a holier-than-thou attitude. The spirit of a race that so maintained itself must have been one of constant aspiration.

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1. Brinton. Aboriginal American Authors. p.49.
2. Fletcher. The Omaha Tribe. pp.115-117;
3. Curtis. The Indians' Book. pp.350-356, 366-369.

Another mood, and one less common, is that of reflection. Though there is a considerable body of wisdom-lore among the Indians, it has a relatively small place in their poetry. The philosophy of life gathered up in their religion is largely the source of reflective poetry.

There are few fine examples of introspective poetry, and of these the subjective treatment is most striking in the Death of Taluta,[1] a lover's lament; in the Wind Songs,[2] expressing concern for absent loved ones; and in the shorter songs of invocation.

There is a hint of reflection on a nature theme in this Eskimaun poem:

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1. Eastman. Old Indian Days.p.32.
2. Curtis. The Indians' Book. pp.102,223-225,463.

Mount Koonak: A Song of Arsut.[1]

"I look toward the south, to great Mount Koonak,
To great Mount Koonak, there to the south;
I watch the clouds that gather round him;
I contemplate their shining brightness;
They spread abroad upon great Koonak;
They climb up his seaward flanks;
See how they shift and change;
Watch them there to the south;
How one makes beautiful the other;
How they mount his southern slopes,
Hiding him from the stormy sea,
Each lending beauty to the other."

It is this reflection on the beauty and majesty of the nature world that Mackenzie considers the source of idealism in primitive peoples.[2] Perhaps this idealism so shapes the poetic instinct that it never loses itself in abstractions, but holds fast to objective beauty in its interpretive nature poems.[3] The Hako gives some admirable interpretations in the life-giving power of the sun,[4] the guidance of stars,[5] and the motherhood of earth.[6]

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1. Brinton. Essays of an Americanist. p.290.
2. MacKenzie. Evolution of Literature. p.165.
3. Densmore. Teton-Sioux Music. p.60; Chippewa Music, I. p.110.
4. Fletcher. The Hako. pp.135-136.
5. Ibid. pp.151-152.
6. Ibid. pp.163-168.

A feeling of pathos and loneliness sometimes gives atmosphere to a poem. Grief is openly expressed--yet it is noteworthy that the melancholy mood does not temper the spirit of Indian song.

The predominance of affirmation[1] explains the absence of melancholy. Affirmation was the basis of achievement and of cure among many widely scattered tribes. The crier summoned the patient to healing with the words:"Come on the trail of song."[2] Through faith in the singing shaman's incantations, an ancient form of musico-therapy, the patient recovered his health and power.

There is naivete in this ancient faith, and the quality is free from pose. The very dignity and reserve of the Indian nature refine it.

Humor is the most uncommon aspect of the spirit of Indian poetry. Though it is a comparatively modern spirit in all literature, with some notable exceptions, there is a slight strain of it in Indian song.[3] The taunting songs

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1. Wissler. Ceremonial Bundles of the Blackfoot Indians. p.207.
   Fletcher. Indian Story and Song from North America. pp.81-85.
   Matthews. The Night Chant. pp.69,88,146.
2. Matthews. The Night Chant. p.69.
3. Fletcher. A Study of Omaha Indian Music. pp.51-52.

of the benedicts and bachelors are found in the southwest.[1] But the most extensive evidence of this quality is seen in the Eskimaun songs, especially in the nith songs.[2]

Even in summarizing these eight factors here presented, it is difficult to measure the spirit of Indian poetry as a shaping force. Its essence, through all its varied moods, is aspiration. This feeling gives direction, if not limitation, to the poetic instinct.

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1. Lummis. The Land of Poco Tiempo. p.112.
2. Brinton. Essays of an Americanist.pp.287-288.

Observation.

We may further interpret the spirit of Indian poetry through a second shaping force, observation. Here was range enough on a rock-ribbed continent, with its cool pine forests and lake waters, its broad sweep of prairies with their rivers and buffaloes on a thousand hills, its sun-beaten cactus reaches of the southwest—with vast spaces between tribes, giving the sense of isolation that closes in with night. In his environment, as in all other relationships, the Indian saw real values. His observation was true to nature objectively,[1] true to his own essential relationship to the nature world, and true to primal human experiences. This power of observation was the eternal search for truth epitomized in a child-faith.

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1. See the description of the growth of the squash vine in the Night Chant, by Matthews, p.278: "In one night it ripens, it grows." The source of a stream is described as "water in a chain of pools." The Night Chant. p.292.
The Pawnees and other tribes recognized the duality in nature.

See Curtis. The Indians' Book. pp.97-98.

Imagination.[1]

Observation and imagination are accepted as determining influences of all poetry. In Indian verse, imagination takes on a spiritual quality. It aspires to a star as the symbol of a dream, and sees in the purple of the mist and of the smoke-wreath the presence of the soul. It has enriched the Indian's experience by comprehending beauty at every point at which he touches life. In his fancy, the Red Man sweeps the blue with eagle wings or swiftly journeys to the holy mountain on the path of the rainbow. In the Navaho Night Chant,[2] the Slayer of the Alien Gods strides from summit to summit among the mountains as he approaches. Creation songs, especially, show an imaginative power of a high order. Then there are poems which rest the mind from following after gods and heroes of old times. These poems express a delicacy of imagination. This is, of course, a lesser phase; for this imaginative force directs the poet to the essential meaning of life, as in the recognition of a purposive Spirit in the universe. It "ranges beyond the immediate, deals with the vast in space or power." The most characteristic trend of this third shaping force of Indian poetry is toward symbolism.

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1. See the section on Imagery for illustrations of observation and imagination.
2. Matthews. The Night Chant. p.279. See also pp.110,143-145.

Symbolism

The study of symbols of Indian diction, of bundles, and of like records, is of no importance unless it should open the doors of our understanding and experience. To a white reader such study is imperative, although to the Indian little of his symbolism is esoteric.

We may trace this tendency of Indian thought to the universal experiences of men, chiefly to the religious impulse, as it has been suggested in the beginning. So extensive is its influence on Indian poetry that nothing which eye can see, or imagination picture, fails to render its full measure of service. In old verse, the idea is frequently lost in the symbol. In its extreme type, there is the symbol of the song that is never sung.[1]

The fundamental types of Indian symbolism in song include not less than fifteen to twenty forms. The bird,[2] as the eagle,[3] which typifies supreme control and other admirable qualities, the raven, and the hawk,—is common to all tribes. The serpent[4] is the symbol of the lightning and of waters. Among some of the northern tribes the bear is

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1. Densmore. Chippewa Music, II. pp.247-248.
2. Brinton. Myths of the New World. pp.120,125-129.
3. Brinton. Myths of the New World. p.127.
4. Ibid. pp.120,135.

used; and among the Eskimos the fish is the motive of an entire ceremony. Wherever the animal or fish is employed, we discover the native's observation of habits added to a supernatural element in the song or ceremony.

The tree[1] as a symbol of life and unity presents an inspiring image in Omaha song. Water is the emblem of purification among all peoples. This invocation is found in an Omaha Sweat Lodge Ritual:[2]

> "Thou Water,
> Oh! Along the bends of the stream where the waters strike, and where the waters eddy, among the water-mosses, let all the impurities that gall be drifted."

The sun,[3] moon, and star[4] symbols belong to all primitive tribes, and are so related to religious belief that many rituals center in them.

The cross[5] is a universal symbol, which may have

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1. Fletcher. The Omaha Tribe. p.578. See also pp.217, 251-261, 457.
   Brinton. Myths of the New World. pp.117-118.
2. Fletcher. The Omaha Tribe. p.578. See also The Hako pp.302-303.
3. Densmore. Teton-Sioux Music. p.86. (Bibliography on this subject.)
   Troyer. Hymn to the Sun; The Festive Sun Dance of the Zuñis; Invocation to the Sun-God.
4. Curtis. The Indians' Book. pp.90,163-165.
5. Wissler. The American Indian. p.201.

taken rise from the worship of the points of the compass, or perhaps from a star symbol. It is presumably a derived, not a direct concept. The cardinal points have varied interpretations. Dorsey explains that the east represents life and its source.[1] Quite naturally, all rituals relating to sun-worship emphasize the songs to the dawn and to the sunset.[2] Mooney suggests, through interpretations of corresponding color symbols, these ideas: east (red) a symbol of power; south (white), peace or happiness; west (black), death; north (blue), failure.[3] The tribes of the southwest have chosen different colors to represent the cardinal points. The Navahos, for instance, represent the east as the white dawn, the south as turquoise, the west as yellow, and the north as black.[4] These colors represent totally different conceptions of these points. However varied in meaning, the cardinal points appear significant

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1. Brinton. Myths of the New World. p.109.

2. Troyer. Traditional Songs of the Zuni, especially
   Awakening at Dawn.
   The Sunrise Call, or Echo Song.
   The Sunset Song. (See p.43.)

3. Mackenzie. Evolution of Literature. p.240.
   (Quoting Mooney. Sacred Formulas of the Cherokee.)

4. Curtis. The Indians' Book. p.351.
   See also Densmore. Chippewa Music, I p.54; II. p.261.
   Matthews. The Night Chant. p.5.

to all the tribes studied.

The winds personify divine power[1], whether the four winds, or the Running Whirlwind.

Hills and mountains are favorite symbols the world round. The Omahas have presented life through four hills, "marking the stages of infancy, youth, manhood, and old age"[2] This passage is as near to abstract reasoning as the Indian usually approaches, and is to be noted, because it is unusual.

The important uses of color symbolism relate to significant elements in nature. The simplest form is an interpretation of night and day in terms of black and white.[3] The interpretation of the cardinal points is less elementary, as has been shown. The Zuñi represent the lightning as red, and the eyes of the gods as yellow.[4] The Navahos used a most extensive scheme of color symbolism in their Night Chant, and in all costumes and ritual accompaniments of this great ceremony.[5] The extent to which this type of symbolism prevails places it second to that primary group of sacred numbers.

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1. Fletcher. The Omaha Tribe. pp.120-121; the Hako, pp.29, 30, 59.
   Curtis. The Indians' Book. p.202.

2. Fletcher. The Omaha Tribe. p.116.
3. Curtis. The Indians' Book. p.165.
4. Mackenzie. Evolution of Literature. pp.234-236.
5. Matthews. The Night Chant. pp.5,6,9-29,35, 53, 58, 68-97, etc. See also Navaho Myths, Prayers and Songs.

The most complex symbolism is found in the group of mystic numbers associated with the sacred teachings and forms of repetition used by every tribe. Four is the most common number.[1] This may signify the four cardinal points. To some it meant the four worlds: above, below, middle, our own.[2] The multiple of four, sixteen, is the Pawnee symbol for completeness.[3] Other symbolical numbers are two, three, five, six, seven, ten, and forty-eight.[4]

Boas assigns an aesthetic origin from rhythmic repetition, rather than a religious origin, for the use of these numbers.[5] In a longer paper, it would be important to consider the question of origin. Here, we can only observe the general association between these numbers and religious

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1. Wissler. The American Indian. p.201; Fletcher. The Hako pp.64, 94-97.
2. Curtis. The Indians' Book. p.351.
3. Fletcher. The Hako. pp.201,298.
4. Brinton. Myths of the New World.pp.85,88.
   Curtis. The Indians' Book.pp.100-101,352,363.
   Mackenzie. Evolution of Literature. p.232.
   Russell. The Pima Indians. pp.272-339.
   Wissler. The Ceremonial Bundles of the Blackfoot Indians.pp.176-177, 192, 247-271.
5. Boas. Mythology and Folk-Tales of the North American American Indians: Anthropology in North America. p.348.
   Brinton. Myths of the New World.pp.84, 88, 89, 91, 94, 95, 111,112.

ceremonials, as well as the other use in set patterns of repetitions.[1] The second use is frequently bound up in the first, and has, therefore, a distinctly religious significance.

Symbolism, through these types and through penetration of thought, directly shapes the quality of conciseness and lends strength and beauty to Indian poetry.

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1. Matthews. The Night Chant. pp.277, 283.
   Fletcher. The Hako. pp.57, 94-97.

Aesthetics

The Indian, believing that "Tirawa is in all things,"[1] set real values on the nature world. With appreciation of value grew appreciation of beauty; for what men value must always set their standards of beauty. As the Flemish artist painted his pots and pans and stools in a homely kitchen, precisely because they were homelike, because they were essential to his way of life through long winters, so the Indian poet set to the measure of his song all simple things that gave him happiness, with those grand impressions and aspirations that shaped his idealism. It is to this fifth great shaping force, the recognition of beauty, that we must look for direction of the poetic impulse not only toward beauty of thought and image, but toward grace of phrase and symmetry of structure.

Geographical differences turn aesthetic observation to the stately in the north, and to lighter and more graceful forms in the south.[2] The Eskimo sings of his cloud-breasted mountain;[3] the Omaha, of winding streams where

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1. Fletcher. The Hako. pp.73, 302.
2. Curtis. The Indians' Book. pp.230-233, 350-359, 372-373.
3. Brinton. Essays of an Americanist. p.290.

weeping willows dip their branches;[1] the Navaho, of flaming butterflies among the corn.[2]

Sensuous beauty is at its highest point in the songs of the southwest. The Hopi Katzina Songs[3] express a sense of pleasure in the graceful movement of butterfly maidens as they frolic in the corn-fields. Quieter in movement is the song of swaying cactus blossoms "far on the desert ridges", and the Painte song of the wind in the grasses and willows.[4]

Vivid coloring is a daily experience of the tribes in that region, as they scan canyon walls and desert places. The chiaroscuro of dawn and evening plays through their song-

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1. Fletcher. The Omaha Tribe. p.578.
2. Curtis. Songs of Ancient America. (Entire)
3. Curtis. The Indians' Book. pp.483-486.
   See also Imagery.
4. Curtis. The Indians' Book. p.317.
   Cronyn. The Path on the Rainbow. p.65, Song I.

pictures relieving the intensity of the high coloring.[1] Black clouds look down on green valleys and white alkali flats. Other bright pigments in their word-paintings are blue, red, and yellow. Although the appreciation of color seems comparatively well developed among the southwestern tribes, it is, to a degree, a general quality of the aesthetic force operating in Indian poetry.

Beauty of sound entered much less frequently into the Red Man's artistic feeling than might be expected; for in his aboriginal life, his ear was quick to note the stir of life about him. The bird song found him responsive as it did the Hebrew lyrist who sang of spring, "the time of the singing of birds is come". These lines from the Daylight Song of the Navahos are in honor of the bluebird:

> "Just at dawn Sialia calls.
> The bluebird has a voice...melodious,
> His voice beautiful, that flows in
> gladness."[2]

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1. Cronyn. The Path on the Rainbow. pp.73-76.
   Curtis. The Indians' Book. pp.200, 363, 373, 484-485, 487.
   Matthews. The Night Chant. pp.66-68, 143-144, 153, 245, 273-274, 276-278, 281, 283-284, 286, 288-289, 291-292, 301.
   Navaho Myths, Prayers, and Songs, pp.38-42, 45.
   Russell. The Pima Indians. pp.229, 245-246, 292-293, 299, 304, 308.
   Voth. The Oráibi Oáqöl Ceremony. pp.26-29, 39, 43-44.

2. Matthews. The Night Chant. p.294.

On the plains, the wind that blew around the tipi sang to the Indian huddled beside his fire.[1] In other regions, the mountain echoed sound for him,[2] and the voice of the thunder gave cheerful promise of rain.[3]

From these illustrations and from the discussion of imagery, it will be observed that the aesthetic principle expressed itself concretely. Form and movement, light and shadow, color, sound, and that other notable detail of rhythmic repetition,[4] are only the outward signs of a sympathetic attitude toward beauty. This concept of beauty is further related to the concept of happiness. Indeed, the terms seem interchangeable in Navaho rituals. From this relationship of terms we may see how vital an influence aesthetics exerted over Indian thought.

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1. Cronyn. The Path on the Rainbow. p.68.
2. Ibid. p.66.
3. Ibid. pp.83-84.
4. See repetition.

And now some one asks why there is no great Indian poetry, as we speak of great poetry, meaning Homer, or Dante, or Shakespeare—or even that host of lesser names still sure of lasting honor. The Indian poet had great themes. His work was dignified in treatment, and poetic in style. Beauty was round about him, and his imagination took hold upon it. Tremendous emotional forces, held in restraint, fired the poet's intensity. Certain canons of form were everywhere accepted. The singer was not without honor, for all men had their own songs. What, then, was lacking to great poetry?

There are two possible answers. The first is that the genius of the Red race found unique expression in social freedom. Their individualism was the fulfillment of a great social principle which recognized the unity of the tribe, as it recognized the unity of nature, but which gave to the Indian a freedom from political restraint known in no other civilization. The lack of great Indian poetry, may, therefore, be said to be occasioned by the social order in Indian civilization, by a type of undiscipline in individual life. This situation was complicated by the general lack of fixed centers of residence. The literatures studied are evidence that tribes, such as the Pueblos, occupying established areas, produced the greatest poetry.

We leave the problematical conclusion of race psychology for a more apparent hindrance. The second condition, and the greater one, operating against the full achievement of the Indian poet was the lack of a written language flexible in form and meaning. Memory is limited even in the most exact keeper of songs and rituals. It is inconceivable that great poetry, as we know it, could ever be produced under these two conditions.

Rising above all obstacles here implied, however, the great body of Indian poetry achieved much beauty, and power, and truth. The following study of characteristics of style seeks to present the qualities of this literature which make some claim to poetic art.

MONOTONY: VARIETY

Those unacquainted with Indian verse frequently object to its monotony of expression. For this reason, the casual reader cannot be reminded too often that back of every song line there is a story which must be read into the song by one outside the group of singers. Nor is this element unique in Indian literature, if we accept the statement of Mr. Moulton that the nucleus of creative literature is story.[1]

The sharp edge of experience cuts through the commonplace[3] of monotony in many of the one line songs which mean the least on first reading.[2] Here the student goes searching for the story. Such songs are always to be enriched with a little study of the singer's history.

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1. Moulton. The Modern Study of Literature. p.335.

2. A fuller discussion of this point may be found under Mnemonic Summary (Page 17) and Suggestion (Page 17).

3. Fletcher. Story and Song from North America, entire. Note especially the Song of the Laugh, pp.8-14. Miss Fletcher records, "Every song of the Society has its story which is the record of some deed or achievement of its members." p.13.
The Omaha Tribe. p.481,
See also Densmore. Chippewa Music. Both parts, also Teton-Sioux Music, entire.
Burton. American Primitive Music. pp.163-164.
Russell. The Pima Indians. pp.245-246.
Matthews. The Night Chant.p.270,
Curtis. The Indians' Book. p.360-363. etc.

Monotony growing out of repetition of theme and phrase frequently has an artistic purpose. In nearly all Indian verse, repetition implies movement as well as story. As it has been suggested under symbolism, the number of repetitions may signify the steps in ceremonial procedure.[1] Again, movement may be accompanying action, as in the Corn Grinding Songs of the Southwest.[2] The rhythm here is the rhythm of the worker over her metate, and the sense of monotony gives way to the appreciation of the spirit of one who images beauty to give lightness to her task. Yet so far as the principle of variety is concerned, the Indian vocational song bears favorable comparison with the English chanty.

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1. See p. xiv for Symbolism.

2. Curtis, Natalie. The Indians' Book. pp. 461-463, 430-432.
Corn Grinding Song. p. 431

Amitola tsina-u-u-ne
Elu, elu toma wahane
Kiawulokia pena wulokia.
Kesi liwamani
Hliton iyane!
Kesi liwamani
Hlapi hanan iyane!
Letekwan atowa
Awuwakia litla.
Hi yai-elu!

Translation:
Yonder, yonder see the fair rainbow,
See the rainbow brightly decked and painted!
Now the swallow bringeth glad news to your corn,
Singing, "Hitherward, hitherward, hitherward, rain,
Hither come!"
Singing, "Hitherward, hitherward, hitherward, white cloud,
Hither come!"
Now we hear the corn-plants murmur,
"We are growing everywhere!"
Hi, yai, the world, how fair!

Emphasis is another motive of monotony. The idea of the song is the center of the Indian singer's interest.[1] He employs repetition, not variation, therefore, as a necessary part of his technique in making his theme effective.[2]

To be sure, the monotony is more apparent to the hearer and reader than to the singer. Repetition when sung is never so wearying as when heard or read. That it gives pleasure is evidenced by the current folk-songs of the white race. In all study of Indian verse, let it be remembered that every line of this verse is chanted or sung and should have qualities and form suited to chant and song.

Variety, though not a universal quality, is certainly to be recognized as an important element in the verse of the Pawnees, the Omahas, the Navahos, the Pueblos, and the Cherokees. Distinctive aspects of this element are theme and imagery. One of the most striking examples of these phases of variety is The Hako[3], though the songs of the Zuñi and the Navahos admit no rivalry. A literature which sweeps the uttermost limits of human experience has in its subject matter, alone, enough inherent variety to offset

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1. Densmore. Chippewa Music, I.p.2.
2. Boas. Handbook of American Indian Languages. p.895: "Reduplication in Dakota consists essentially in the doubling of the principal theme of the word."
3. Fletcher. The Hako, a Pawnee ceremony.

any degree of monotony in form. Even a superficial reader will concede this point to the verse of the American Indian. This discussion here impinges upon the whole question of form or matter as a basis of art. Further conclusion must therefore wait upon a more complete analysis of the form, a problem which extends beyond the bounds of this study.

REPETITION.[1]

The most obvious characteristic of Indian poetry is that of repetition--of syllable, word, phrase, line, and even stanza and song. It must not be thought, however, that it is used wholly without artistry. It has, in fact, the most elaborate technique of any element in the style of Indian poetry. Doctor Brinton reduced it to two fundamentals, that of entire repetition and or repetition with refrain.[2] But these are only the beginnings of the Indians' art.

As in the old European ballad, incremental repetition may carry forward the action of the narrative.[3] In many instances, this form of repetition advances step by step a description or an idea of the singer. In the Song of the Hogans this device develops, through stanza after stanza, pictures of sacred houses in the mythical dawn and sunset worlds.[4] The Song of the Horse, alluding to the

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1. This discussion centers upon the types of repetition. Other phases of the subject, such as its symbolism and interpretation, are discussed under Symbolism and Monotony.

2. Brinton. Essays of an Americanist. pp.285-286.

3. Fletcher. The Omaha Tribe.pp.262-269; The Hako.pp43, 291; 50-51, 293-294; 74-75, 303-304; 82-85,305-306; 118-134,319-320.
Brinton. Essays of an Americanist. pp.294-295.
Curtis. The Indians' Book.pp.353-356, 370.

4. Curtis. The Indians' Book. pp.356-358.

horse of the Sun-God, also illustrates the ability of the poet to sustain the interest of his hearer while he builds stanza upon stanza of picturesque detail interphrased with verses resung.[1] Equally fine are the Song of the Rain-Chant and the War Song describing the Flint Youth.[2]

In the Pawnee Ritual of the Dawn, in the song of the Morning-Star and the New-Born Dawn, there is an unusual use of incremental repetition.[3] This song shows a graceful interlacing pattern in the first and third, and in the second and fourth stanzas. This is one of the most artistic uses of this type that the writer has yet found.

In another use, with some variations, incremental repetition suggests the movement of the story or action connected with the song. The labor songs are the most natural expression of this form.

In all four adaptations of this type of repetition, there is clearly the consciousness of the poet seeking to realize beautiful forms of song.

The interlacing verse patterns, aside from their use in incremental repetition, are usually simple. Alter-

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1. Curtis. The Indians' Book. pp.361-362. See also the section on imagery, which quotes from this song.
2. Curtis. The Indians' Book. pp.363-366.
3. Fletcher. The Hako. pp.123, 128, 322-323.

nation of lines is the pattern in the Song of the World.[1]

Less symmetrical and less pleasing is a more involved system of repetition found among the Pima Indians and some other tribes. Phrases and words are repeated at intervals with interchange of other repetitions, the whole effect more intricate than a system of ballade rhymes.[2] The Crow Dance Song of the Arapahoes falls into the following system: aababcda (i.e,part of a) aabcd.[3] It is quite improbable that such elaborate schemes were accidental, since there are so many illustrations of their use.

The simpler forms of repetition are, of course, universal. Iteration links thought fragments; hence it becomes a conscious literary device for unity.

A double repetition, that is,repetition of the story-phrase and of the burden, occurs in the Song of the Wren.[4] The two parts are sung together several times. This is,to be sure, a one verse song, and one verse songs invariably call for repetition. The distinction here is that repetitdondoes not emphasize the burden, or refrain.

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1. Curtis. The Indians' Book. p.316.
2. Russell. The Pima Indians. pp
3. Curtis. The Indians' Book. p.201.
4. Fletcher. The Hako. p.171.

Reduplication is another simple form of repetition that seems to be used extensively.[1] It consists in repeating the syllable: the stem, for emphasis; sometimes the last syllable, when the purpose is to complete the measure.[2]

As it has been observed in the discussion of symbolism, the number of repetitions has a distinct significance to the Indian mind, however accidental it may appear to the casual reader. One ritual or ceremonial may call for four repetitions, as in the Hako and some songs of the southwest. Five, six, seven, and eight repetitions are common.[3]

These are the general types of repetition in Indian song. After a fashion, they approximate rhyme in verse where that element is lacking. In addition to Doctor Brinton's fundamentals, there are the four forms of incremental repetition, alternating repetition, the involved rhyme-system,[4] and reduplication.

Since refrain has so important a place, it has been reserved for a more extended discussion here. It may be used by the chorus, by the lone singer, or by ensemble,

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1. See also diction.

2. Fletcher. Indian Story and Song from North America. p.95; The Hako, p.39, l.73.

3. Fletcher. Indian Story and Song from North America. pp.6-7, 36-37, 54-55; The Hako. pp.64-66.
Wissler. Ceremonial Bundles of the Blackfoot Indians. p.271.

4. This term is an arbitrary name for the system of repetition which approximates the intricacy of old French lyric rhymes.

yet so universal a form of repetition is it that the refrain is an integral part of most Indian songs. With it is occasionally a burden,[1] as in some of the Navaho songs.[2] With corresponding effects, some songs repeat the prelude at the opening of each stanza.[3] The form and purpose of the refrain and burden are varied. For emphasis one song may repeat a simple theme-refrain continuously until the close of the song or ceremony of which it is a part.[4] Usually this is a repetition of the opening line of the song. Another may use the last word of a line as the burden for all the following verses; hence this burden becomes the characteristic reiteration of the song.[5] In a song-sequence, a definite word-refrain is sometimes characteristic of the whole group.[6] The prelude and refrain may employ identical

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1. Although the terms refrain and burden are used interchangeably in criticism, it will be found convenient to distinguish the repetition which follows the stanza and that which reiterates a verse ending, as the verbal element which stands as a distinct part of the line structure. When both these forms occur in the same song, the first type will be called the refrain, and the second, the burden.

2. Matthews. The Night Chant.pp.271,274,275,276,296; Navaho Myths, Prayers,and Songs. pp.37-47,51-54.

3. Matthews. The Night Chant.pp.275,277.

4. Cringan. Pagan Dance Songs of the Iroquois.p.170. Curtis. The Indians' Book.pp.255,352, 370.

5. Fletcher. The Omaha Tribe.pp.442-446. Brinton. Essays of an Americanist. p.289, Matthews. Navaho Myths, Prayers, and Songs.pp.45-46.

6. Fletcher. The Omaha Tribe.pp.379-380.

phrasing; and, infrequently, the burden may correspond to them.[1] Contrasted with this purpose which emphasizes a special theme or word is that which seeks appropriate or pleasing effects, only, in the purely interjectional refrain.[2]

Emphasis may join with beauty in refrain, as in this Zuni song, The Coyote and the Locust.[3]

"Tchumali, tchumali, shohkoya,
Tchumali, tchumali, shohkoya!
Yaamii heeshoo taatani tchupatchiute
Shohkoya,
Shohkoya! "

The Mountain Song of the Navahos loses nothing of its exalted feeling with its alternating refrain.[4]

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1. Matthews. The Night Chant. pp.273, 279, 283.

2. Wissler. Ceremonial Bundles of the Blackfoot Indians. p.264.

3. Cushing. Zuñi Folk Tales. p.255.

Translation:

Locust, locust, playing a flute,
Locust, locust, playing a flute!
Away up above on the pine-tree bough,
Closely clinging,
Playing a flute,
Playing a flute!

4. Curtis. The Indians' Book. p. 352.

"Thither go I!
Chief of all mountains,
Thither go I,
Living forever,
Thither go I,
Blessings bestowing.
Thither go I,
Calling me 'Son, my son'.
Thither go I."

Through all these varied forms of refrain we see the aesthetic principle of repetition working toward artistic recurrence of sound and accentuation of rhythm.

VIGOR OF EXPRESSION.

As in any other literature, vigorous expression in Indian verse is a product of the vivid emotional experience of the singer. This life and warm coloring of personal feeling has not, however, been dissipated by artificialities of style; hence it has found its outlet in direct thinking and forceful epithet.[1] This characteristic is found largely in the shorter songs, though it finds its way through the longer songs in conciseness, in diction, and in imagery.

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1. Song of Sitting Bull:

"Earthwide is my fame!
They are shouting my name!
Sing ho! the eagle soul,
Who follows Sitting Bull."

CONCISENESS.[1]

Conciseness is a primary characteristic growing out of the Indian's concentration of thought. The quantity of facts to be condensed seems never to embarrass the Indian composer. Give him the creation of the world, its cosmology, a race of culture heroes, the traditional history of his people, and their religious philosophy, and he will set down the whole of it—from the dawn of time to the coming of the white men—in some two hundred lines, with poetic bits of description for good measure.[2] Take, for instance some of the passages in the Walam Olum, which is approximately of this length:[3]

"At first, forever, lost in space, everywhere,
the great Manito was.
He made the extended land and the sky.
He made the sun, the moon, the stars.
He made them all to move evenly.
Then the wind blew violently, and it cleared,
and the water flowed off far and strong.
And groups of islands grew newly, and there
remained.
Anew spoke the great Manito, a manito to manitos,
To beings, mortals, souls and all,
And ever after he was a manito to men and
their grandfather."[4]

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1. Burton. American Primitive Music.p.146:"The most striking feature of Ojibway verse is its extraordinary compactness."
   See also Brinton. Essays of an Americanist.p.341.

2. Brinton. The Walam Olum:The Lenape and their Legends. pp.169-218. (Prose translations.)
3. Brinton. The Walam Olum. Canto I,ll.3-12.
4. Curtis. The Indians' Book.p.10:"Grandfather is a title of respect or reverence for any old man."

So much for creation! But we may see how fair those days were at the dawn of the world in this one-line sketch of the Indian's Eden:

"All had cheerful knowledge, all had leisure, all thought in gladness".[1]

Almost as brief as the story of creation is that of the great flood and the scattering abroad of the tribes. Then follows a catalog of chiefs, with their deeds of fame. But here and there are landscapes inviting our view:[2]

"....the great Spruce Pine land was toward the shore."
"At the place of caves,. .they at least had food on a pleasant plain."

"A great land and a wide land was the east land,
A land without snakes, a rich land, a pleasant land."

These two lines involve a history of civilization and the stories of great migrations:

"They separated at Fish river; the lazy ones remained there."[3]

"All the cabin fires of that land were disquieted, and all said to their priest,"Let us go.'"[4]

Here we have the broad sweep of tribal movement,

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1. Brinton. The Walam Olum. Canto I. l.20.
2. Ibid. Canto IV, ll.13,29; Canto V.ll.21,22.
3. The Walam Olum. Canto IV, 1.49.(The italics are the writer's).
4. Ibid. Canto III, 1.8.

and the understanding of group consciousness and activity. Such compactness gives power to our classic poetry, for it combines the inclusiveness and significance of great poetry.

Although the Walam Olum is the best illustration of conciseness the writer has yet found among the longer poems, even the longest bear distinct evidence of this quality.

Conciseness is, of course, as essentially a quality of lyric verse as it is of the epic and dramatic types. It is in the warp and woof of every Indian song fabric.

In rituals, it is usually a conscious development, since the keepers tend to keep the meaning hidden from the uninitiated. This is the old story of rituals, but here the motive seems in part a worthy one--"To guard the full meaning from the careless," as Miss Fletcher suggests.[1]

The poet achieves his effect by means of several devices: bare narrative as is found, on the whole, in The Walam Olum; or allusion--the use of suggestion and association, involving the whole range of tribal custom and belief. Minor devices include elision, suppression of verbs, and the use of exclamatory forms.

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1. Fletcher. The Hako. pp.170-172, 366. See also the discussion in Story and Song from North America. p.30.

Allusion serves not only as a means of weaving story into song, but as a means of ornamenting it with a rich and gorgeous pattern of embroidery. Allusions to other arts, as hand-print decoration on a garment, are incidental in use.[1] The rich background is of nature allusion,[2] to mountain, forest, and stream, to clouds, night skies, pleasant corn lands colored with blossoms and wild life--a background which throws into relief the tapestried stories of mythical heroes[3] and men of ancient fame.[4]

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1. Curtis. The Indians' Book. p.357: "Built of broidered robes..standeth his hogan." See also pp.368, 432.
   Matthews. Navaho Myths,Prayers,and Songs.pp.27,41.
   Russell. The Pima Indians. p.281.

2. Brinton. Essays of an Americanist. pp.289-290;
   The Lenape and their Legends. pp.187,189,191,197.
   Curtis. The Indians' Book.pp.115-116, 302,341, 361-362, 365, 370,430-431.
   Cushing. Zuñi Folk Tales. pp.237, 426.
   Fletcher. The Hako. pp.73-74, 82, 84, 128, 151.

3. Allusions to deities and mythical heroes are general.
   Barbeau. Wyandot and Huron Mythology.pp.318-320.
   Brinton. The Lenape and their Legends. pp.173,177.
   Fletcher. The Hako. pp.77-78,128; Indian Story and Song from North America. pp.28-29, 66-67, 110-111, 112-113.
   Matthews. Navaho Myths, Prayers, and Songs. p.58.
   Russell. The Pima Indians. p.328.

4. Densmore. Chippewa Music II. p.294.

   Hale. The Iroquois Book of Rites. pp.129-139.

   Russell. The Pima Indians. p.285.

Suggestion through association is a common form of allusion. By such means is traditional history kept before the people. This suggestive power of words "to carry the memory of the act which the song commemorates"[1] is known as mnemonic summary. It is second only to repetition as an essential characteristic of Indian verse. It is the hidden force that gives direction to the song. The line, "My door is warm in winter", means little to a white reader, but to an Indian wandering far from his tepee through winter snows in search of game, the words meant welcome and food and cheer by a stranger's fire.[2]

Some lines in the Hako will show how difficult is the task of the translator in undertaking to give the full idea of an Indian ritual to a reader of an alien race. Even to approximate the meaning of the mnemonic phrasing requires extensive additions to the lines.[3]

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1. Fletcher. The Omaha Tribe.p.470: "Frequently a single word referred to a known tribal ceremony or recalled a tribal teaching or precept, so that to the Omaha the word was replete with meaning or significance."
   See also p.479; The Hako. p.365
   Densmore. Chippewa Music I. p.15
   Matthews. The Night Chant.p.270: "Another difficulty with Navaho songs is that, without explaining, they often allude to matters which the hearers are supposed to understand. They are not like our ballads-they tell no tales. He who would comprehend them must know the myths and ritual customs on which they are based."

2. Burton. American Primitive Music. p.221.

3. Fletcher. The Hako. pp.272-273(text),274-276 (literal translation), 364-368 (free translation).

Line 1361.

"Hiri! Riru tziraru; rasa ruxsa pakara ra witz
pari; hiri! tiruta; hiri! ti rakuse tararawa hut,
tiri."

Line 1364.

"Hiri! Rirutziraru; sira waku rarisut: hiri!
tiruta; hiri! Tirawa, ha! tiri."

Line 1365.

"Hiri! Riru tziraru; Rararitu, kata witixsutta,
Rakiris takata wi tixsutta.
Rakiris tarukux pa, raru tura tuka wi.ut tari."

Translation:

1361: "Hearken! And whence, think ye, was borne
Unto these men courage to dare,
Strength to endure hardship and war?
Mark well my words, as I reveal
How the gods help man's feebleness,
The Leader of these warriors was a man
Given to prayer. Oft he went forth
Seeking a place no one could find,
There would he stand, and lift his voice
Fraught with desire, that he might be
Invincible, a bulwark 'gainst all foes
Threatening his tribe, causing them fear.
Nighttime and day this cry sped on,
Traveling far, seeking to reach--
Hearken! Those places far above--
Hearken! Within the circle vast
Where sit the gods, watching o'er men.

1364: "Hearken! And thus it was the prayer
Sent by this man won the consent
Of all the gods. For each god in his place
Speaks out his thought, grants or rejects
Man's suppliant cry, asking for help;
But none can act until the Council grand
Comes to accord, thinks as one mind,
Has but one will, all must obey.
Hearken! The council gave consent--
Hearken! And great Tirawa, mightier than all.

1365. "Hearken! To make their purpose known,
Succor and aid freely to give,
Heralds were called, called by the Winds;
Then in the west uprose the Clouds
Heavy and black, laden with storm.
Slowly they climbed, dark'ning the skies;
While close on every side the Thunders marched
On their dread way, till all were come
To where the gods in stately Council sat
Waiting for them. Then, bade them go
Back to the earth, carrying aid
To him whose prayer had reached their circle vast.
This mandate given, the Thunders turned toward earth
Taking their course slantwise the sky."

Implication is a more subtle form of suggestion than association. Take, for instance, the widely known Omaha Tribal Prayer:[1]

"Wakonda dhe-dhu wapa dhin a-ton-he!
Wakonda dhe-dhu wapa dhin a-ton-he!"
Translation:
Father, a needy one stands before thee.
That one is I.

No interminable list of needs dulls the clear cry of the suppliant. The prayer is an expression not only of faith in Wakonda's power to help, but also of an equal faith in his power to understand human needs.

More direct in its implication is the Cheyenne song of victory, sung as the warriors retire from the field, leaving the enemy slain:

"Wolves
In the dawnlight
Are eating![2]

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1. Fletcher. The Omaha Tribe. pp.128-132; Indian Story and Song from North America. pp.26-30.

2. Curtis. Mr. Roosevelt and Indian Music. Outlook. v.121.p.400.

Implication is least subtle in some of the satirical or humorous verse. Two one-line songs from the Ojibways tell their own stories even to a different civilization, for it here appears that white and red men meet on the ground of common experience.

"Better stand off or you will crush my feathers" is, of course, the song of a vain man who resents the crowding to look at his finery.[1] We may easily deduce the cause of cynicism from this song by a chieftain's daughter: "You can't believe what the men say!"[2]

The suppression of verbs is another means of suggestion to which the Indian poet occasionally resorts. The resulting sentence fragments in Navaho songs form a series of hastily sketched pictures:

"In the house of evening light."[3]
"In old age wandering."[4]
"Now Day Bearer's beam of blue."[5]
"Dark fog door posts."[6]

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1. Burton. American Primitive Music. p.271
2. Burton. American Primitive Music. p.274
3. Matthews. Navaho Myths, Prayers, and Songs. pp.29,38.
4. Ibid. pp.33, 44.
5. Ibid. pp.58,60.
6. Ibid. p.58.

As a sustained example of this method, the Waking Song of the Navahos is exceptional.[1] There is no verb indicated in the entire song, which is forty lines in length, except in the prelude and burden. On close grammatical analysis the burden appears to carry the body of the sentence, but in the verse analysis the first part of the line falls into a distinct section. The whole effect is to leave the first part of the line without sentence structure, hence the vivid sequence of word pictures.

Among the shorter songs, Elson records a noteworthy example of verb-suppression:

"Friends--rocks--always firm--forward."[2]

Elision is a simple device, and would be of little note, were it not for the common use of compound words in Indian languages. Here the practice of omitting many syllables in forming the compound becomes a decided factor in securing concise form.[3]

More effective than the two preceding elements of conciseness are the exclamatory forms, shot through as they are with varied feelings, as in the song of Ukiabi:[4]

"I am walking to and fro!
I can find nothing which can heal my sorrow."

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1. Matthews. The Night Chant. pp.283-286.
2. Elson. History of American Music. p.132.
3. Fletcher. The Hako. pp.146, 365.
4. Dorsey. The Çegiha Language. p.611.

DICTION

The poet of any land must be the master of his own tongue. He must know its beauty and its weaknesses, its power to lift the soul to prayer or to shape the heart to anger. Diction is his instrument in a far more subtle way than any other element of style. While the Indian of a northern night rocks himself to sleep with the sensuous beauty of song, the poet may steal in upon his thoughts with whatever motive he will--such is the power and beauty of the poet's word.

Among those Indian words which stir the imagination are, first of all, epithets, which recall old Saxon verse in evening-red, land-edge, and shield-house.[1] This device has been discussed more at length under imagery and will be found in any study of the composite words which characterize Indian languages. It is enough for our purpose here to note that Indian poetry made wide use of these most effective word-phrases.

Indicative of a more highly developed stage of art than that which coined epithets is the use of poetic diction.[2] Here one must follow interpretations of men who

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1. Russell. The Pima Indians. pp.302, 303, 336.

2. Fletcher. The Hako. p.365
Riggs. Dakota Songs and Music: Tah-koo Wah-kan.p.453.
Sapir. Abnormal Types of Speech in Nootka. pp.11-12.

have given lifelong study to Indian thought and custom. It is difficult for one of the white race to dissociate a word from meanings common to his own tongue. But one's feeling about the whole body of Dakota poetry is completely changed when it is understood, for instance, that buffalo holds poetic feeling for the song-maker. To call a Dakota a buffalo man was to compliment him in the highest degree; for the buffalo meant food and shelter and raiment--life,itself--to the Indian of the plains.

Exclusive of such words with rich content are those which have no place in Indian speech---words which the poet claims for use in his art alone.[1] Mr. Sapir touches on some special points in song diction in his discussion of consonant and vocalic play: "Song texts often represent a 'mutilated' form of the language, but study of the peculiarities of song forms generally shows that the normal forms of speech are modified according to definite stylistic conventions, which may vary for different types of songs. Sometimes sounds are found in songs which do not otherwise occur in the language..Of particular interest in this connection is the fact that such special song-sounds (Dainte l, Nootka l and ɳ) are, at least so it would seem,

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1. Riggs. Tah-koo Wah-kan.p.474.

pronounced by Indians with difficulty under ordinary circumstances."[1]

If the student has an historical point of view, a third phase of diction, the old forgotten words that cling to living language, will interest him. He will find them in Indian poetry long after they have been discarded from common speech.[2] And there the old words linger on, though the learned men of the tribe have forgotten their use.[3] They fill out a measure of some treasured song, and so remain, like the Cumaean sibyl, a voice without body of meaning.

The preservation of archaic diction is more readily accounted for when a comparative study reveals the wide use of vocables for no other reason than to fill out the measure.[4] A singer must sing the vocable--an Elizabethan, his hey nonny nonny; an American Indian, his a he o or wi hi na when words do not step to the rhythm. This characteristic of diction is common to all the Indian song collections which the writer has studied. Often an entire song is composed of vocables, especially a song belonging to

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1. Sapir. Abnormal Types of Speech in Nootka. pp.11-12.
2. Mackenzie. Evolution of Literature. pp.90,234.
3. Burton. American Primitive Music. p.165.
   Elson. History of American Music. p.125.
   Matthews. The Night Chant. pp.152,269.
4. Fletcher. The Hako. p.65,ll.180-193; p.71,ll.225-229, 231-235; p.81,l.293, p.83,l.312.

one of the less developed tribes.[1] In discussing this question with the writer, Mr. Arthur Nevin stated his theory that all genuine Indian songs were made up in this fashion, as many of the Blackfoot songs are today. There is another point of view possible--that these syllables which complete rhythm, or give beauty and tone color to a poem, may, after all, be fragments of archaic speech or song diction.

The linguist draws one aside with his study of word-structure. The ingenuity of compounding subject with verb and object, with sometimes an adjective or an adverb syllable interpolated, is an interesting question for an investigation. Two outstanding characteristics of word-building in many Indian languages, the polysynthesis and incorporation of holophrastic compounds, have been discussed at length by many noted students of linguistics.[2]

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1. Fletcher. The Omaha Tribe. pp.593-594.

2. Boas. Handbook of American Indian Languages, I. p.75.

Brinton. Essays of an Americanist. pp.320-323,340-342, 344, 349-389; The Lenape and their Legends. pp.90-91. (The Essays include reviews of Humboldt's and of Duponceau's studies.)

Illustrations:
Fletcher. The Hako. p.179.
Hale. The Iroquois Book of Rites. pp.149-150.
Russell. The Pima Indians. pp.37, 272-273, 284, 289, 293, 294, 300.

Although nearly a century has passed since Humboldt explained the origin of incorporation as the exaltation of the imaginative over the intellectual elements of mind, his philosophy is still of interest.[1]

Alluring as is the philosophy of language, the study of composite words must end, on the art side, with the study of conciseness.

There should be passing consideration of one unique feature of Indian word-structure in verse, the reduplication of syllables. The poet employs this scheme both for rhythm and for emphasis. Grammatical reduplications, as those for plurals or diminutives, have less interest for the student of style, who cannot stay long in the field of linguistics.

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1. Brinton. Essays of an Americanist. p.340.

IMAGERY

It is inconceivable, to one who has known an Indian tribe well, that any people with such quick observation, imagination ,and such certain appreciation of beauty should fail to express these qualities in their literature in rich variety. So distinct, indeed, is the characteristic of imagery in Indian song that the fact far exceeds the expectation of the student. The statement of two well known critics of Indian music are, therefore, open to protest.

The first is that "Indian verse...is....unembellished by metaphor or any other trick of the imagination with which civilized poets enhance their expressions."[1] The Chippewa tribe, of all the tribes studied by the writer, has possibly the least picturesque song-literature. Yet many lines from their songs show a quickly responsive sense-consciousness, with sometimes a studied art.[2]

The second comment on the monotony of figure is equally beside the mark.[3] Miss Curtis's collection of songs in the Indians' Book must answer any such observations with

1. Burton. American Primitive Music. p.153.
2. Densmore. Chippewa Music. Parts I and II.
3. Elson. The History of American Music. p.126.

finality, should the following discussion leave the reader unconvinced. For the subject should be considered in a broad way before we turn to extended illustrations.

Let us look into the sources of imagery. This quality in Indian song is the product of an age-old cosmic feeling. The Indian's observation, aesthetic sense, and vigor of thought shape the image to his need--a direct picture, a comparison, or a contrast. There is rarely the depth of introspection, but rather a reflection of the external factors of circumstance and experience. There is beauty, without the excess of luxury. This artistic restraint gives songs the stamp of good poetry.

The influences of geography, especially of topography, give distinct coloring. So, also, do the mode of life and the tribal occupations and enterprises. So true is the imagery to its sources that one might venture a history of a tribe, from its migrations to its rituals, upon a study of its verse imagery alone.

This characteristic is, indeed, an inheritance from the beginnings of all poetry; for primitive man had seeing eyes and hearing ears. The earliest survival of those far off myth-making times is the figure of personification. Perhaps we may identify it as the earliest trace of the poetic faculty, for it animated the nature world with

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form, soul, and feeling. Canticles to the sun, with their use of this figure, are among the first songs of those remote years. Close upon personification, is a wider use of comparison, in metaphor, which finds its largest application in epithet and name. Direct contrast is less common, although it is frequently implied. Sense imagery, comparison, contrast--these are the general types of imagery in Indian verse. It is not the particular purpose of this discussion to draw finer distinctions.

Sense imagery is the readiest adornment of poetry. Perhaps the songs of the Southwest are richest in this quality, though eastern songs are by no means without it. Some picturesque touches in the Walam Olum have already been quoted.[1] They can be multiplied, line upon line, even in that short epic.

This Katzina song of the Hopi Indians catches all the light, and color, and sound of life in a sunny land that thirsts for rain.

Korosta Katzina Tawi[2]

I.

"Yellow butterflies
Over the blossoming virgin corn,
With pollen-painted faces
Chase one another in brilliant
throng.

---

1. See Conciseness.

2. Curtis. The Indians' Book. pp.484-485.

II.

"Blue butterflies
Over the blossoming virgin beans,
With pollen-painted faces
Chase one another in brilliant
streams.

III.

"Over the blossoming corn,
Over the virgin corn
Wild bees hum:
Over the blossoming corn
Over the virgin beans
Wild bees hum.

IV.

"Over your field of growing corn
All day shall hang the thunder-cloud;
Over your field of growing corn
All day shall come the rushing rain."

Much like the open-air pictures of the preceding song are some lines from the He-hea Katzina Song.[1]

"Corn-blossom maidens
Here in the fields....
Fields all abloom,
Water shining after rain,
Blue clouds looming above."

These lines from the Pima songs show a type of imagery without the lightness and grace of that in the Hopi songs:

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1. Curtis. The Indians' Book. p.485.

Festal Song.[1]

"The bright dawn appears in the heavens;
(lit.the shining morning)
The bright dawn appears in the heavens;
The paling Pleiades grow dim.
The moon is lost in the rising sun."

Swallow Song.[2]

(A song for fiestas)

"Now the Swallow begins his singing.....
..The Swallows met in the standing cliffs..
And the rainbows arched above me,
There the blue rainbow arches met."

Game Song.[3]

"The drunken butterflies sit
With opening and shutting wings."

"Bluebird drifted at the edge of the world,
Drifted along upon the blue wind.
White wind went down from his dwelling
And raised dust upon the earth."[4]

"The shadow of Crooked Mountain,
The curved and pointed shadow."[5]

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1. Russell, The Pima Indians. p.284.
2. Ibid. p.292.
3. Russell. The Pima Indians. p.300.
4. Ibid. p.303.
5. Ibid. p.322.

Badger Song[1]

The translator's adaptation of this song loses much of the beauty implied in the literal translation. For this reason, the literal phrasing is given, disconnected as it is.

"Quails small-evening glow arrives-
slowly fly--
Darkness stripped crown throws on."

Sound imagery is infrequent, but even more interesting than some picture adornments of Indian verse.[2] The Pima songs are full of movement and sound. The Emergence songs which follow the Flood legend in Pima mythology suggest Hebrew imagery:

"We all rejoice! We all rejoice!
Singing, dancing, the mountains rumbling![3]

(i.e. The land trembles with our dancing
and singing.)

Wind Song.[4]

"Wind's house is now thundering.
I go roaring over the land,
The land covered with thunder."

"In the West the Dragonfly wanders,
Skimming the surfaces of the pools,
Touching only with his tail. He skims
With flapping and rustling wings.

---

1. Russell. The Pima Indians. p.322
2. Densmore. Chippewa Music. I. pp.68, 69.
3. Russell. The Pima Indians, pp.227, 280.
4. Ibid, p.324.

"Thence I run, the darkness rattling
Wearing cactus flowers in my hair.
Thence I run as the darkness gathers,
In fluttering darkness to the singing
(lit.rattling) place."[1]

The Mouse Song[2] suggests sound:

"Wings of birds invisible
Are now fluttering above you.
You stand with face uplifted
And quietly listen there."

Badger Song.[3]

"There came a Gray Owl at sunset
Hooting softly around me...
The land lay quietly sleeping."

In the Navaho Song of the Horse, imaginative power heightens the sensuous beauty. The song pictures the Sun-God's courser in the pastures of another world.

"Lo, the Turquoise Horse of Johano-ai,...
On precious hides outspread standeth he..
There on tips of fresh flowers feedeth he;..
There he spurneth dust of glittering
grains."[4]

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1. Russell. The Pima Indians. p.294.
2. Ibid. p.314.
3. Russell. The Pima Indians. p.321.
4. Curtis. The Indians' Book. p.362.

Imaginative, too, are these descriptions of the sacred hogans[1] of the Sun God--a series of beautiful pictures set in refrains:

I

(2) "There beneath the sunrise
Standeth the hogan,
The hogan blessed.

(4) "Built of dawn's first light
Standeth his hogan,
The hogan blessed.

(5) "Built of fair white corn
Standeth his hogan,
The hogan blessed.

(6) "Built of broidered robes and hides
Standeth his hogan,
The hogan blessed.

II.

(11)"There beneath the sunset
Standeth the hogan,
The hogan blessed.

(13)"Built of afterglow
Standeth his hogan,
The hogan blessed.

(15)"Built of gems and shining shells
Standeth his hogan,
The hogan blessed.

(16)"Built of Little-Waters
Standeth his hogan,
The hogan blessed."[2]

---

1. Hogan is a Navaho word for dwelling.

2. Curtis. The Indians' Book. pp.357-358.

Intimately allied to observation and the consequent appeal of sensuous beauty to the imagination is the direct or implied comparison that runs through all Indian poetry, frequently in silver threads of epithet, or again in the more vivid hues of verbals. For these, we turn again to that admirable old epic of the Delawares:

"On the stone-hard water all went,
On the...muscle-bearing sea."[1]

This is the description of a tribal movement over the ice-bound rivers of the north. In the same poem, the roll call of Delaware chiefs is an alluring study in names: Shiverer-with-Cold, Wolf-wise-in-Counsel, Opossum-Like, the Fire-Builder, and so on at some length in a list which incidentally tells of more than imagery- of a knowledge of character and a sense of humor that our first Americans enjoyed.[2]

Direct comparison in personification, metaphor, or simile, is universal. Naturally enough, personification of heavenly bodies, especially of the sun, Moon, and Morning star, exists among all tribes. Wissler records it in the songs of the Blackfoot Indians;[3] Miss Fletcher

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1. Brinton. The Lenape and their Legends. p.185.
2. Ibid.
3. Wissler. Ceremonial Bundles of the Blackfoot Indians. pp.179,186-189.

adds the Pleiades and the Dawn in the Pawnee ritual of the Hako.[1] To be included with these are the Rainbow Youth[2] and Rain-that-Stands.[3]

Personification of visions[4] and diseases,[5] differing as they do in poetic imagination, are nevertheless results of the same tendency of thought. In the Corn-Grinding Songs, the corn-ear speaks, and the swallow sings of the coming rain.[6] These conceptions arise from that fundamental belief of the Indian that all creation lived, moved, and had being, even as he did. If the reader's imagination has been colored in any way by the modern pantheism of Walt Whitman or his disciples, perhaps he can look upon these images as something more than

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1. Fletcher. The Hako. pp.123-128, 151.
2. Curtis. The Indians' Book. pp.431-432.
3. Curtis. The Indians' Book. p.479.
4. Fletcher. The Hako. pp.117-123.
5. Gatschet. The Klamath Indians. p.159.
6. Curtis. The Indians' Book. pp.430-431.

the dreams of a child race.

Comparison goes beyond that primitive stage of personification in this Cheyenne song:

"Nay, I fear the aching tooth of age!"[1]

What poet of the white race would not covet such a figure?

Other figures from the Pima songs show varying turns of thought:

Wind Song[2]

"Over the windy mountains,
Came the myriad legged wind."
(Comparing the wind with a
centipede.)

Beaver Song[3]

"Strong as the Sun among the
trees,
You leave your mark upon them."

Comparison, too is at the heartof this Zuñi song:

Song of the Blue Corn
Dance [4]

"Beautiful, lo, the summer clouds,
Beautiful, lo, the summer clouds,
Blossoming clouds in the sky,
Like unto shimmering flowers,
Blossoming clouds in the sky,
Onward, lo, they come,
Hither,hither,bound!"

---

1. Curtis. The Indians' Book. pp.153.

2. Russell. The Pima Indians. p.324.

3. Russell. The Pima Indians. p.320.
See also pp.228, 282.

4. Curtis. The Indians' Book. p.432.

For an artistic use of sustained figure, the Iroquois Book of Rites is remarkable in carrying through the ceremony, in both the prose passages and in the chant, the conception of the League as a house builded by early chieftains:

"Ye two founded the House...
Then, in later times,
They made additions
To the great mansion.
These were at the doorway,... [1]
These two guarded the doorway."

This figure in a Chippewa song bears a fair comparison, in its suggestive power, with the poetic figures of modern poetry:

"As my eyes search the prairie,
I feel the summer in the spring." [2]

With so great a wealth in the imagery of comparison, it seems strange that the Indian singer made so little use of contrast. Where he did use it, his results were no less effective. One good example quoted by Dr. Matthews in the Night Chant is the contrast of landscapes at the source and mouth of a stream. [3]

Perhaps this type of imagery requires of the

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1. Hale. The Iroquois Book of Rites. pp.131,139.
2. Densmore. Chippewa Music, II. p.254.
3. Matthews. The Night Chant. pp.153, 245, 289.

poet a closer analysis than the other. It cannot be thought so happy a gift as that philosophy which saw the affinities and harmonies of life rather than its antitheses.

Suggested Readings.

Brinton. Essays of an Americanist. p.290.
The Lenape and their Legends.pp.169-218.

Curtis. The Indians' Book.

Fletcher. The Hako.
The Omaha Tribe. pp.115-116, 120-121, 124-128, 394, 570, 578.

Gatschet. The Klamath Indians. pp.157-158.

Matthews. Navaho Myths, Prayers, and Songs.
The Night Chant.

Riggs. Dakota Songs and Music: Tah-koo Wah-kan. p.474.

Russell. The Pima Indians.

Wissler. The Ceremonial Bundles of the Blackfoot Indians.

Hale. The Iroquois Book of Rites.pp.138-139, 153, 163.

MUSICAL QUALITIES OF INDIAN VERSE.

Euphony,

Quite apart from the forms of song-diction is its sound-quality, with power to please the ear or to give tone-color to a poem. Where consciousness of word-beauty enters, poetic art has established itself. It may begin with a refrain of vocables or a repetition of word-groups that enchant the ear, but the beauty of sound is there. We may call it euphony, but the word can never interpret for us the joy that the Indian singers feels as he repeats, hour after hour, some song-phrase that haunts his memory.

The melody of sounds that carries through the Pima songs, for instance, is largely assonantal, combined with the consonants i, m, w, v. A number of open vowel sounds recurs in such a series as the following:[1]

u, u, u, a, ai, u, u, u, a, â, ia, u, â,
ui, a, a, i, ö, o, ï
i, a, a, û, a, â, ia, u, â, ui, a, a, i, o, o.[2]

If a line seems happily evolved, the singer repeats, as in

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1. Consonants are dropped for the sake of clearness.

2. Russell. The Pima Indians. p.272. See also Cushing. Zuñi Folk Tales. p.39; Fewkes. The Snake Ceremonials at Walpi, pp.100-101.
See also. Voth. The Oráibi Oáqöl Ceremony. pp.13, 17-18, 20, 25, 27-29, 38-39. (A Hopi ceremony.)

this instance:

"Himovali, movali moko, himovali, movali moko."[1]

The poet finds that words with musical quality do not always come readily at his choosing, but he may supplement such words with those which he has altered, with true poetic license, to secure some desired effect. These changes are obtained by elisions, by affixes, or by substitution of sounds.[2] The Indian's liberty to alter words apparently exceeds any license known to the poets of the white race. Dr. Matthews writes: "A word is often distorted in Navaho song so as to become homophonous with a totally different word in prose and thus the student may be led far astray."[3]

In its final fulfillment of lyric art, the music of the word must wed with the music of voice and instrument. And of this art, perhaps the Zuñi are among the masters. Of all their verse, none is lovelier than the Sunset Song, sung from their housetops by the people of the village as the sun sinks down the sky:[4]

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1. Russell. The Pima Indians. p.278.

2. Fletcher. The Hako. pp.38-40, 64, 70, 88-89, 101. (Hu for ha, in H'Atira hu weta ariso to avoid too many a's in the line. p.61, ll.172-177.)

3. Matthews. The Night Chant. p.269.

4. Arranged by Carlos Troyer in his series, Traditional Songs of the Zuni Indians.


E- lui-la Ma- ya Zu- la, Ku- a
wey-la yan- a vie-vi, E- lui- la Ma- ya
Zu- la Ku- a whey-la yan- a lo. Al-
lu-ra wun- ga no- ka al- ha- mi tan- da
lo. Kua whey- la ya- an vie- vi, Te-
na- di yan- a lo. Yan-a lo, Kua
whey-la yan- a lo.

Sunset Song.

(Troyer translation)

"Goodnight to thee, Fair Goddess,
We thank thee for thy blessing.
Goodnight to thee, Fair Goddess,
We thank thee for this day.
In glory we behold thee
At early dawn again.
We thank thee for thy blessing,
To be with us this day.
This day,
We thank thee for this day."

Tone-Color.

Tonality is a further aspect of conscious technique in the poetry of the Indian. Although it occurs in simple forms, there are unmistakable tonal patterns to be found: (1) recurrence of open vowel sounds, already mentioned under euphony; (2) explosive articulation which suggests action, as in the war songs; (3) liquid, flowing syllables for the quieter feelings and moods; (4) and these two patterns in combination where the verse suggests recessional movement, as when forceful utterance is followed by milder syllables.[1] In tone-color, as in euphony, the poet employed vocables and poetic license when words, alone, were insufficient for his purpose.

Miss Fletcher has gone so far as to determine the initial consonants of Omaha vocables which express different moods.[2]

Assonantal tone color seems more obvious in Indian poetry than in English, excluding rhyme, which occurs infrequently. It serves a double purpose in that it supplies rhythm as well as beauty, in combination with patterns of repetition.

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1. Fletcher. Indian Story and Song from North America. p.107; A Study of Omaha Indian Music. pp.12, 57-61.

2. Fletcher. A Study of Omaha Indian Music. p.12.

Onomatopoeia

Another element blended with the poetic feeling in word-tonality is the desire to reproduce beauty of sound in the nature world--the clear call of a bird, or the sound of rushing waters.[1] This element appears to be rather infrequent, but no point eludes the analysis of a foreign reader more than this one.

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1. Fletcher. The Hako.pp.170-171;
Indian Story and Song from North America.pp.53-55:
Vocables imitating the song of the wren-

"Whe ke re re we chi."

PARALLELISM.

Parallelism occurs less frequently than one might expect, should all forms of repetition be excluded from the discussion. Since it does appear in the songs of widely separated tribes, it has a place among the general characteristics of Indian poetry. Many instances point to the conclusion that thought and structure-parallels occur together. Occasionally, the motive is contrast.

This Onondaga hymn,[1] hundreds of years old, is one of the best illustrations of this phase of style:

Haihhaih!	Woe! Woe!
Jiyathontek!	Hearken ye!
Niyonkha!	We are diminished!
Haihhaih!	Woe! Woe!
Tejoskawayenton.	The cleared land has become a thicket.
Haihhaih!	Woe! Woe!
Skahentahenyon.	The clear places are deserted.
Hai!	Woe!
Shatyherarta-	They are in their graves-
Hotyiwisahongwe-	They who established it-
Hai!	Woe!
Kayaneengoha	The great League.
Netikenen honen	Yet they declared
Nene kenyoiwatatye-	It should endure-
Kayaneengowene	The great League
Hai!	Hai!

---

1. Hale. The Iroquois Book of Rites. pp.153-154.

Wakaiwakayonneha.	Their work has grown old.
Hai!	Woe.
Netho watyongwen-tenthe.	Thus we are become miserable.

Unfortunately the interpreter gives the Wyandot song, "The Stars Dehn-dek and Mah-oh-rah"[1] in English only. It is not possible, therefore, to compare the parallelism in the following stanza with that in the original:

"They go into the sky!
From that land are we cast down forever!
And another land is made for us.
Let them be made stars.
Now shall they be stars to shine for-ever there.
And their journey shall never cease!"

The songs of the Pima make some use of this principle. In the Rain Song II,[2] an alternation of two-line pictures gives contrast in parallel form through the eight lines of the song.

With rhythm so highly developed in Indian verse, it is difficult to understand why parallels did not become more universally the vehicles of this quality, marking, as they distinctly do, the forward and recessional movements of poetic feeling. It is possible that the varied patterns of repetition served the poet's end.

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1. Barbeau, C.M. Huron and Wyandot Mythology. pp.318-321, quoting W.E.Connelley from the Ontario Archaeological Report. 1905. pp.68-70.

2. Russell. The Pima Indians. pp.332-333.

CONCLUSION.

As the student becomes more and more familiar with the whole field of Indian poetry, he will entertain a growing conviction that these New World artists understood their language medium and used it with conscious and devoted efforts to obtain predetermined ends. But he will understand this greater truth about their art, that rooted in religious beliefs, as all their arts and customs were, poetry exerted a profound influence over the entire existence of the race. With them, poetry was for all people and for all times.

Form and matter are, after all, only relative terms to student or scholar; for where form is simplest, often the most exalted feeling breaks through. Such varied qualities of style as have been presented herein are gathered up in the great sincerity, in the seriousness of a race that placed life on a higher level than that of the ledger-balance of profit and loss.

The critic who would undertake to measure Indian songs with those of a different race must, first of all, take to his task an idealism great as that of the Red men themselves, and a mind free from literary conventions.

None can approach the century-old spiritual and social records of this vanishing race without being lifted for a time out of his smugness of craftsmanship and satisfaction with the Aryan civilization, glorious as some of its history is. For here on an unknown continent, through slow centuries, a people lived to know freedom without subjection. They perceived some of the great realities of life, and bowed before its greatest mysteries. And the soul of this people is at the heart of their song.

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