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AMERICAN INDIAN VERSE
Characteristics of Style

BY

NELLIE BARNES

*Instructor in English
The University of Kansas*

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NELLE BARNES

PREFACE

The recent discussion of Indian verse opened by Mr. Louis Untermeyer in the *Dial* of March 8, 1919¹, 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 support². 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 interweaving of each mnemonic fragment with a narrative perhaps as old as the race presents a problem to the student at every step in his 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 style 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 in connection with this paper.

The verse here studied includes only forms preceding the influence of white men; at least forms showing no obvious influence of white men or of Christian teachings. No transla-

¹ *The Dial*, Mar. 8, 1919, pp. 240-241; May 31, 1919, pp. 569-570; 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.

tions 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 Tikaens⁴ with enthusiasm, the writer regretfully discarded it upon reading a full account of this hoax in a later volume by Dr. Brinton.⁵ Apparently Mrs. Austin has not come upon the *exposé* of this fraud, or she would not have included this verse in her brief study of Indian poetry⁶.

A problem greater than authenticity is that of finding 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 Area⁷. This analysis of seventeen 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.

The writer has been unable to make sharp distinctions between the verse of the American Indians of the far North and that of the Eskimo, as the two races seem to have largely parallel cultures, each centering in a cosmic belief.

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 Museum, the Peabody Museum, the University of California, the University of Pennsylvania, the American Folk-Lore Society, and the Amer-

⁴ Brinton, *Aboriginal American Authors*, pp. 48-49.

⁵ Brinton, *Essays of an Americanist*, pp. 452-468.

⁶ Austin, Introduction: *The Path on the Rainbow* (ed. by Cronyn), pp. xxviii-xxx.

⁷ 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.

ican Anthropological Association, have made valuable collections and translations. The Ayer Collection in the Newberry Library, Chicago, is particularly valuable. 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 workers 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 of the friendly counsel given her by Dr. Dunlap, Head of the English Department, and by Dr. Hopkins, Dr. Johnson, Dr. Whitcomb, and Dr. Burnham of the departmental committee on graduate work.

The University of Kansas,
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NELLIE BARNES.

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CONTENTS

PART ONE: *Shaping Forces*

I	Spirit	9
II	Observation	13
III	Imagination	14
IV	Symbolism	15
V	Sense of Beauty	18

PART TWO: *Characteristics of Style*

I	Monotony: Variety	22
II	Repetition	24
III	Conciseness	30
IV	Poetic Diction	38
V	Imagery	41
VI	Musical Quality in Verse	49
VII	Minor Characteristics: Vigor Onomatopoeia, Parallelism	52

SUMMARY	56
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BIBLIOGRAPHY:

A.	General References	57
B.	Critical Comment on Indian Verse	61

INDEX	62
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American Indian Verse

PART ONE: SHAPING FORCES

I SPIRIT⁸

The American Indians are the poets of the cosmos. To them, this faith is the great reality. Although their literature is related to their material culture, it is more intimately a part of their spiritual and artistic development. In this respect the shaping forces of Indian verse are much like those of all primitive verse, but their essential qualities are most significant in this particular verse. These elements, to be understood, must be studied in their relation to the cosmic motive.

From such a motive grew that fine poetic instinct for what is beautiful, that lifts and frees thought from time and circumstance. Other 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 that *spirit*, *observation*, *imagination*, *symbolism*, and *sense of beauty* are only tentative valuations of these forces.

The exalted feeling⁹—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 to the Cosmos*,¹⁰ and of the *Mountain Songs* of the Navahos¹¹. The following passage is quoted from the Omaha ritual:

INTRODUCTION OF THE CHILD TO THE COSMOS

Ho! Ye Sun, Moon, Stars, all ye that
move in the heavens,

I bid you hear me!

Into your midst has come a new life.

Consent ye, I implore!

Make its path smooth, that it may reach
the brow of the first hill!

⁸ Brinton, *Essays of An Americanist*, p. 304.

⁹ Brinton, *Aboriginal American Authors*, p. 49.

¹⁰ Fletcher, *The Omaha Tribe*, pp. 115-117.

¹¹ Curtis, *The Indians' Book*, pp. 350-356, 366-369.

Ho! Ye Winds, Clouds, Rain, Mist, all ye
 that move in the air,
 I bid you hear me!
 Into your midst has come a new life.
 Consent ye, I implore!
 Make its path smooth, that it may reach
 the brow of the second hill!

Ho! Ye Hills, Valleys, Rivers, Lakes,
 Trees, Grasses, all ye of the earth,
 I bid you hear me!
 Into your midst has come a new life.
 Consent ye, I implore!
 Make its path smooth, that it may reach
 the brow of the third hill!

Ho! Ye Birds, great and small, that fly
 in the air,
 Ho! Ye Animals, great and small, that
 dwell in the forest,
 Ho! Ye insects that creep among the
 grasses and burrow in the ground—
 I bid you hear me!
 Into your midst has come a new life.
 Consent ye, I implore!
 Make its path smooth, that it may reach
 the brow of the fourth hill!

Ho! All ye of the heavens, all ye of the
 air, all ye of the earth:
 I bid you all to hear me!
 Into your midst has come a new life.
 Consent ye, consent ye all, I implore!
 Make its path smooth—then shall it travel
 beyond the four hills!

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 preserved its nobility, must have been one of constant aspiration.

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 phil-

osophy 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*,¹² a lover's lament; in the *Wind Songs*,¹³ expressing concern for absent loved ones; and in the shorter songs of invocation. Eastman has recorded the lover's lament:

DEATH OF TALUTA

(Siouan)

Ah, spirit, thy flight is mysterious!
 While the clouds are stirred by our wailing,
 And our tears fall faster in sorrow—
 While the cold sweat of night benumbs us,
 Thou goest alone on thy journey—
 In the midst of the shining star people!
 Thou goest alone on thy journey—
 Thy memory shall be our portion;
 Until death we must watch for the spirit.

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

MOUNT KOONAK: A SONG OF ARSUT¹⁴

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.¹⁵ Perhaps this idealism so shapes the poetic instinct that it never loses itself in abstractions, but holds fast

¹² *Old Indian Days*, p. 32.

¹³ Curtis, *The Indians' Book*, pp. 102, 223-225, 463.

¹⁴ Rink, *Tales and Traditions of the Eskimo*, pp. 68-69. See also Brington, *Essays of an Americanist*, p. 290.

¹⁵ Mackenzie, *Evolution of Literature*, p. 165.

to objective beauty in its interpretive nature poems.¹⁶ *The Hako* gives some admirable interpretations of the life-giving power of the sun, the guidance of stars, and the motherhood of earth in these lines:

CHANT TO THE SUN¹⁷

I

Now behold; hither comes the ray of our father Sun; it cometh over all the land, passeth in the lodge, us to touch, and give us strength.

SONG TO THE PLEIADES¹⁸

Look as they rise, up rise
Over the line where sky meets the earth;
Pleiades!
Lo! They ascending, come to guide us,
Leading us safely, keeping us one;
Pleiades,
Us teach to be, like you, united.

SONG TO THE EARTH¹⁹

I

Behold! Our Mother Earth is lying here.
Behold! She giveth of her fruitfulness.
Truly, her power gives she us.
Give thanks to Mother Earth who lieth here.

III

Behold on Mother Earth the growing fields!
Behold the promise of her fruitfulness!
Truly, her power gives she us.
Give thanks to Mother Earth who lieth here.

V

Behold on Mother Earth the spreading trees!
Behold the promise of her fruitfulness!
Truly, her power gives she us.
Give thanks to Mother Earth who lieth here.

VII

Behold on Mother Earth the running streams!
Behold the promise of her fruitfulness!
Truly, her power gives she us.
Give thanks to Mother Earth who lieth here.

¹⁶ Densmore, *Teton-Sioux Music*, p. 60; *Chippewa Music*, I, p. 110.

¹⁷ Fletcher, *The Hako*, pp. 135-136, 326.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 151-152, 330.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 163-168, 335.

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 affirmation²⁰ 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."²¹ Through faith in the singing shaman's incantations, an ancient form of musico-therapy, the patient recovered his health and power.

There is *naïveté* in this ancient faith, and this 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.²² The taunting songs of the benedicts and bachelors are found in the southwest.²³ But the most extensive evidence of this quality is seen in the Eskimaun songs, especially in the *nith* songs.²⁴

Even in summarizing these eight factors just 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.

II OBSERVATION

We may further interpret the spirit of Indian poetry through the study of a second shaping force, observation. Here was range enough, on a rock-ribbed continent, with its cool

²⁰ 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.

²¹ Matthews, *op. cit.* p. 69.

²² Fletcher, *A Study of Omaha Indian Music*, pp. 51-52.

²³ Lummis, *The Land of Poco Tiempo*, p. 112.

²⁴ Rink, *Tales and Traditions of the Eskimo*, pp. 66-67. See also
Brinton, *Essays of an Americanist*, pp. 287-288.

pine forests and lake waters, its broad sweep of prairies with their rivers and buffaloes on a thousand hills, its sunbeaten 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,²⁵ true to his own essential relationship to the nature world, and true to primal human experiences. Observe this description of the growth of the squash vine quoted by Matthews: “In one night it ripens, it grows.” The source of a stream is described as “water in a chain of pools.” The Pawnees and other tribes recognized the duality in nature. This power of observation was the eternal search for truth epitomized in a child faith.

III IMAGINATION²⁶

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 the comprehension of 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*,²⁷ the Slayer of the Alien Gods strides from summit to summit among the mountains. 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 usually directs the poet to the essential meaning of life, as in the recognition of a purposive Spirit in

²⁵ *The Night Chant*, pp. 278, 292.

Curtis, *The Indians' Book*, pp. 97-98.

²⁶ See IMAGERY, below, p. 41, for illustrations of observation and imagination.

²⁷ Matthews, *The Night Chant*, p. 279. See also pp. 110, 143-145.

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. One authority states: "Animism, or identifying imagination, by means of which the primitive man . . . transfers his own life into the unorganic or organic world, is one of the oldest and surest indications of poetic faculty, and as far as we can see, it is antecedent to the use of verbal images or symbols."²⁸

IV SYMBOLISM

The study of symbolism in Indian diction, in bundles, and in similar records, is of no importance unless it opens 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 has been suggested at the beginning of our study. 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.²⁹

The fundamental types of Indian symbolism in song include not less than fifteen to twenty forms. The bird³⁰—as the eagle,³¹ which typifies supreme control and other admirable qualities, the raven, and the hawk—is common to all tribes. The serpent³² is the symbol of the lightning and of waters. Among some of the northern tribes the bear is used; and among the Eskimos, the fish is the motive of an entire ceremony. Wherever the fish or other animal is employed, we discover the native's observation of habits added to a supernatural element in the song or ceremony.

²⁸ Bliss Perry, *A Study of Poetry*, p. 71.

²⁹ Densmore, *Chippewa Music*, II, pp. 247-248.

³⁰ Brinton, *Myths of the New World*, pp. 120, 125-129.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 120, 135.

Tree and water symbols are often found together. The tree³³ 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*:³⁴

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,³⁵ moon, and star³⁶ symbols belong to all primitive tribes, and are so related to religious belief that many rituals center in them.

The cross³⁷ is a universal symbol, which may have originated from the worship of the points of the compass, or perhaps from a star symbol. The cardinal points have varied interpretations. Dorsey explains that the *east* represents life and its source.³⁸ Quite naturally, all rituals relating to sun-worship emphasize the songs to the dawn and to the sunset.³⁹ Mooney suggests, through interpretations of corresponding color symbols, these ideas among the Cherokees: *east* (red), a symbol of power; *south* (white), peace or happiness; *west* (black), death; *north* (blue), failure.⁴⁰ The tribes of the southwest have chosen different colors to represent these points. The Navahos, for instance, represent the *east* as the white dawn, the *south* as turquoise, the *west* as yellow, and the

³³ Fletcher, *The Omaha Tribe*, p. 578. See also pp. 217, 251-261, 457.

Brinton, *Myths of the New World*, pp. 117-118.

³⁴ Fletcher, *op. cit.*, p. 578. See also her work, *The Hako*, pp. 302-303.

³⁵ 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*.

³⁶ Curtis, *The Indians' Book*, pp. 90, 163-165.

³⁷ Wissler, *The American Indian*, p. 201.

³⁸ Brinton, *Myths of the New World*, p. 109.

³⁹ Troyer, *Traditional Songs of the Zuñi*; especially *Awakening at Dawn, The Sunrise Call or Echo Song, The Sunset Song*. (See p. 43.)

⁴⁰ Mooney, *Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees*, p. 342.

north as black.⁴¹ These colors represent totally different tribal conceptions of the cardinal points. However varied in meaning, the cardinal points appear significant to all the tribes studied.

The winds personify divine power,⁴² whether the four winds, or the Running Whirlwind.

Hills and mountains are favorite symbols the world around. The Omahas have presented life through four hills, "marking the stages of infancy, youth, manhood, and old age."⁴³ This passage is about as near to abstract reasoning as the Indian ever 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.⁴⁴ 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.⁴⁵ 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.⁴⁶ The extent to which this type of symbolism prevails ranks it next to the primary type of sacred numbers.

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.⁴⁷ This may signify the four cardinal points. To some it meant the four worlds: above, below, middle, our own.⁴⁸ The multiple of four, sixteen, is the Pawnee symbol for complete-

⁴¹ Curtis, *The Indians' Book*, p. 351.

See also Densmore, *Chippewa Music*, I, p. 54; II, p. 261.

Matthews, *The Night Chant*, p. 5.

⁴² Fletcher, *The Omaha Tribe*, pp. 120-121; *The Hako*, pp. 29,30, 59.

Curtis, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

⁴³ Fletcher, *op. cit.*, p. 116. See also SPIRIT, above, p. 9.

⁴⁴ Curtis, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

⁴⁵ Mackenzie, *Evolution of Literature*, pp. 234-236.

⁴⁶ Matthews, *The Night Chant*, pp. 5, 6, 9-29, 35, 53, 58, 67-97. See also his *Navaho Myths, Prayers and Songs*.

⁴⁷ Wissler, *The American Indian*, p. 201; Fletcher, *The Hako*, pp. 64, 94-97.

⁴⁸ Curtis, *op. cit.*, p. 351.

ness.⁴⁹ Other symbolical numbers are two, three, five, six, seven, ten, and forty-eight.⁵⁰

Boas proposes an aesthetic origin from rhythmic repetition, rather than a religious origin, for the use of these numbers.⁵¹ While this question of origin is important, we can only observe here the general association between these numbers and religious ceremonials, as well as the use in set patterns of repetition.⁵² This second use is frequently bound up in the first, and has, in such instances, a distinctly religious significance.

These types of symbolism, revealing penetration of thought, directly shape the quality of conciseness and lend strength and beauty to Indian poetry.

V SENSE OF BEAUTY

The Indian, believing that "Tirawa is in all things,"⁵³ 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

⁴⁹ Fletcher, *The Hako*, pp. 201, 298.

⁵⁰ 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.

⁵¹ Boas, *Mythology and Folk-Tales of the North American Indians: Anthropology in North America*, p. 348.

Brinton, *Myths of the New World*, pp. 84, 88, 89, 91, 94, 95, 111, 112.

⁵² Matthews, *The Night Chant*, pp. 277, 283.

Fletcher, *The Hako*, pp. 57, 94-97.

⁵³ Fletcher, *op. cit.*, pp. 73, 302.

stately in the north, and to lighter and more graceful forms in the south.⁵⁴ The Eskimo sings of his cloud-breasted mountain;⁵⁵ the Omaha, of winding streams where weeping willows dip their branches;⁵⁶ the Navaho, of flaming butterflies among the corn.⁵⁷

Sensuous beauty is at its highest point in the songs of the southwest. The Hopi *Katzina Songs*⁵⁸ 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 Paiute song of the wind in the grasses and willows.⁵⁹

Vivid coloring is a daily experience of the tribes in that region as they scan canyon walls and desert reaches. The chiaroscuro of dawn and evening plays through their song-pictures, relieving the intensity of the high coloring.⁶⁰ Black clouds look down on green valleys and white alkali flats, while red and blue and yellow make their word paintings rich and gorgeous. 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 days 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

⁵⁴ Curtis, *The Indians' Book*, pp. 230-233, 350-359, 372-373.

⁵⁵ Brinton, *Essays of an Americanist*, p. 290.

⁵⁶ Fletcher, *The Omaha Tribe*, p. 578.

⁵⁷ Curtis, *Songs of Ancient America*. (Entire.)

⁵⁸ Curtis, *The Indians' Book*, pp. 483-486.

See also IMAGERY, below, p. 41.

⁵⁹ Cronyn, *The Path on the Rainbow*, p. 65, Song I.
Curtis, *op. cit.*, p. 317.

⁶⁰ Cronyn, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-76.

Curtis, *op. cit.*, 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 Oraibi Oáquöl Ceremony*, pp. 26-29, 30, 43-44.

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.⁶¹

On the plains, the wind that blew around the tipi sang to the Indian huddled beside his fire.⁶² In other regions, the mountain echoed sound for him,⁶³ and the voice of the thunder gave cheerful promise of rain.⁶⁴

From these illustrations and from the discussion of IMAGERY,⁶⁵ it will be observed that the aesthetic principle expressed itself concretely. Emphasis on form and movement, light and shadow, color, sound, and that other notable detail of rhythmic repetition,⁶⁶ are only the outward signs of a responsive attitude toward beauty. This conception 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 the aesthetic sense exerted over Indian thought.

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 much honored; indeed 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 prin-

⁶¹ Matthews, *The Night Chant*, p. 294.

⁶² Cronyn, *The Path on the Rainbow*, p. 68.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

⁶⁵ See below, p. 41.

⁶⁶ See REPETITION, below, p. 24.

ciple 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 possibly in no other civilization. The lack of great Indian poetry, may, therefore, have been occasioned by the social order in Indian civilization, by a lack of discipline in individual life. This situation was complicated by the general lack of fixed centers of residence. The literatures studied give evidence that tribes, such as the Pueblos, occupying established areas, produced the greatest poetry.

We leave the unsettled problem of race psychology for a more obvious 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, should ever be produced under these two conditions.

Rising above all obstacles here suggested, 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.

PART TWO: CHARACTERISTICS OF STYLE

I MONOTONY: VARIETY

Those unfamiliar 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 it by one outside the group of singers. Nor is this narrative element unique in Indian literature, if we accept the statement of Moulton that the nucleus of all creative literature is story.⁶⁷

The sharp edge of the singer's experience cuts through the commonplaces of monotony in many of the one line songs which mean the least on first reading.⁶⁸ Here the student goes searching for the story.⁶⁹ Miss Fletcher records of the He-dhu'-shka Society, "Every song of the Society has its story which is the record of some deed or achievement of its members."⁷⁰

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 suggested under SYMBOLISM, the number of repetitions may signify the steps in ceremonial procedure.⁷¹ Again, movement may be an accompaniment, as in the *Corn Grinding Songs* of the Southwest.⁷²

⁶⁷ R. G. Moulton, *The Modern Study of Literature*, p. 335.

⁶⁸ A fuller discussion of this point may be found under mnemonic summary, below, p. 32, and suggestion, below, p. 32.

⁶⁹ Fletcher, *Story and Song from North America*, entire. Note especially the *Song of the Laugh*, pp. 8-14; *The Omaha Tribe*, p. 481.

See also:

Burton, *American Primitive Music*, pp. 163-164.

Curtis, *The Indians' Book*, p. 360-363.

Densmore, *Chippewa Music*, both parts; also her *Teton-Sioux Music*, entire.

Matthews, *The Night Chant*, p. 270.

Russell, *The Pima Indians*, pp. 245-246.

⁷⁰ *Story and Song from North America*, p. 13.

⁷¹ See above, p. 15, for SYMBOLISM.

⁷² Curtis, *The Indians' Book*, pp. 461-463, 430-432; *Corn Grinding Song*, p. 431.

CORN GRINDING SONG

Amitola tsina-u-u-ne
 Elu, elu toma wahane
 Kiawulokia pena wulokia.
 Kesi liwamani
 Hliton iyane!
 Kesi liwamani
 Hlapi hanan iyane!
 Letewkan 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!

The rhythm here is the rhythm of the worker over her metate, and the reader's sense of monotony gives way to 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 chantey.

Emphasis is another motive of monotony. The idea of the song is the center of the Indian singer's interest.⁷³ He employs repetition, not variation, therefore, as a necessary part of his technique in making his theme effective. "Reduplication in Dakota consists essentially in the doubling of the principal theme of the word."⁷⁴

To be sure, the monotony is more apparent to the hearer

⁷³ Densmore, *Chippewa Music*, I, p. 2.

⁷⁴ Boas, *Handbook of American Indian Languages*, p. 895.

and to the 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 or 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 found in *theme* and in *imagery*. One of the most striking examples of these phases of variety is *The Hako*,⁷⁵ 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 any degree of monotony in form. Even a superficial reader will concede this point to the verse of the American Indian.

II REPETITION⁷⁶

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 without artistry. It has, in fact, the most elaborate technique of any element in the style of Indian poetry. Dr. Brinton reduced it to two fundamentals, that of entire repetition and of partial repetition with refrain.⁷⁷ 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.⁷⁸ In many instances, this form of repetition advances step by step a de-

⁷⁵ Fletcher, *The Hako* (a Pawnee ceremony).

⁷⁶ This discussion centers upon the types of repetition. Other phases of the subject, such as symbolism and interpretation are discussed under SYMBOLISM (see above, p. 15,) and MONOTONY (see above, p. 22.)

⁷⁷ Brinton, *Essays of an Americanist*, pp. 285-286.

⁷⁸ Fletcher, *The Omaha Tribe*, pp. 262-269; *The Hako*, pp. 43, 291; 50-51, 293-294; 74-75, 303-304; 82-85, 305-306; 118-134, 319-320. Brinton, *op. cit.*, pp. 294-295. Curtis, *The Indians' Book*, pp. 353-356, 370.

scription 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.⁷⁹ *The Song of the Horse*, alluding to the 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:⁸⁰

SONG OF THE HORSE

How joyous his neigh!
 Lo, the Turquoise Horse of Hohano-ai,
 How joyous his neigh,
 There on precious hides outspread standeth he;
 How joyous his neigh,
 There on tips of fair fresh flowers feedeth he;
 How joyous his neigh,
 There of mingled waters holy drinketh he;
 How joyous his neigh,
 There he spurneth dust of glittering grains;
 How joyous his neigh,
 There in mist of sacred pollen hidden, all hidden he;
 How joyous his neigh,
 There his offspring may grow and thrive for ever-
 more:
 How joyous his neigh!

Equally fine are the *Song of the Rain-Chant* and the *War Song* describing the Flint Youth.⁸¹ The first is given here entire:

SONG OF THE RAIN-CHANT

Far as man can see,
 Comes the rain,
 Comes the rain with me.
 From the Rain-Mount,
 Rain-Mount far away,
 Comes the rain,
 Comes the rain with me.
 O'er the corn,
 O'er the corn, tall corn,
 Comes the rain,
 Comes the rain with me.

⁷⁹ Curtis, *The Indians' Book*, pp. 356-358.

⁸⁰ Curtis, *op. cit.*, pp. 361-362. See also the section on IMAGERY, below, p. 41, which quotes from this song.

⁸¹ Curtis, *op. cit.*, pp. 363-366.

'Mid the lightnings,
 'Mid the lightning zigzag,
 'Mid the lightning flashing,
 Comes the rain,
 Comes the rain with me.

'Mid the swallows,
 'Mid the swallows blue
 Chirping glad together,
 Comes the rain,
 Comes the rain with me.

Through the pollen,
 Through the pollen blest,
 All in pollen hidden
 Comes the rain,
 Comes the rain with me.

Far as man can see,
 Comes the rain,
 Comes the rain with me.

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:⁸²

THE MORNING STAR AND THE NEW-BORN DAWN

I

Ho-o-o-o!
 H'Opirit rira risha;
 H'Opirit rira risha;
 H'Opirit rira risha;
 H'Opirit rira risha.

II

Ho-o-o-o!
 H'Opirit ta ahrisha;
 H'Opirit ta ahrisha;
 H'Opirit ta ahrisha;
 H'Opirit ta ahrisha.

III

Ho-o-o-o!
 Reshuru rira risha;
 Reshuru rira risha;
 Reshuru rira risha;
 Reshuru rira risha.

⁸² Fletcher, *The Hako*, pp. 128, 322-323. Cf. p. 123.

IV

Ho-o-o-o!
 Reshuru ta ahrisha;
 Reshuru ta ahrisha;
 Reshuru ta ahrisha;
 Reshuru ta ahrisha.

This song shows a graceful interlacing pattern in the relations between the first and third, and 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, the consciousness of the poet is clearly seeking to realize beautiful forms of song.

The interlacing verse patterns, aside from their use in incremental repetition, are usually simple. Alternation of lines is the pattern in the *Song of the World*.⁸³

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, interwoven with other repetitions, the whole effect more intricate than a system of ballade rhymes. The *Crow Dance Song* of the Arapahos falls into the following system: aababedaaabcd.⁸⁴

Hesunani' ho-hu,
 Hesunani' ho-hu,
 Bähinahnit-ti,
 Hesunani' ho-hu,
 Bähinahnit-ti,
 Hesunani' no!
 A e-yo he-ye he-ye yo!
 Ho-hu,
 Hesunani' ho-hu,
 Hesunani' ho-hu,
 Bähinahnit-ti,
 Hesunani' no!
 A e-yo he-ye he-ye yo!

⁸³ Curtis, *The Indians' Book*, p. 316.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 209-210.

It certainly seems impossible 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,⁸⁵ occurs in the *Song of the Wren*.⁸⁶ 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 repetition does not emphasize the burden, or refrain. Reduplication is another simple form of repetition that seems to be used extensively.⁸⁷ It consists in repeating the syllable: the stem, for emphasis; sometimes the last syllable, when the purpose is to complete the measure.⁸⁸

As 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.⁸⁹

These are the general types of repetition in Indian song. After a fashion, they approximate rhyme in verse in which that element is lacking. In addition to Brinton's fundamentals, there are, then, the four forms of incremental repetition, alternating repetition, the repetition-complex,⁹⁰ 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 soloist, or by *ensemble*. So universal a form of

⁸⁵ See definition of *burden*, below, p. 29, footnote 91.

⁸⁶ Fletcher, *The Hako*, p. 171.

⁸⁷ See also POETIC DICTION, below, p. 38.

⁸⁸ Fletcher, *Indian Story and Song from North America*, p. 95; *The Hako*, p. 39, l. 73.

⁸⁹ Fletcher, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7, 36-37, 54-55; *The Hako*, pp. 64-66. 54-55; *The Hako*, pp. 64-66.

Wissler, *Ceremonial Bundles of the Blackfoot Indians*, p. 271.

⁹⁰ This term is an arbitrary name chosen by the writer for the system of repetition which approximates the intricacy of the rhyme system in many forms of Old French verse.

repetition is the refrain that it is an integral part of most Indian songs. With it is occasionally a burden,⁹¹ as in some of the Navaho songs.⁹² With corresponding effects, some songs repeat the prelude at the opening of each stanza.⁹³ 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.⁹⁴ 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.⁹⁵ In a song-sequence, a definite word-refrain is sometimes characteristic of the whole group.⁹⁶ The prelude and refrain may employ identical phrasing; and, infrequently, the burden may correspond to them.⁹⁷ 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.⁹⁸

Emphasis may join with beauty in refrain, as in this Zuñi song, *The Coyote and the Locust*.⁹⁹

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

⁹¹ 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*.

⁹² Matthews, *The Night Chant*, pp. 271, 274, 275, 276, 296; *Navaho Myths, Prayers, and Songs*, pp. 37-47, 51-54.

⁹³ Matthews, *The Night Chant*, pp. 275, 277.

⁹⁴ Cringan, *Pagan Dance Songs of the Iroquois*, p. 170.
Curtis, *The Indians' Book*, pp. 255, 352, 370.

⁹⁵ Fletcher, *The Omaha Tribe*, pp. 442-446.

Brinton, *Essays of an Americanist*, p. 289.

Matthews, *Navaho Myths, Prayers, and Songs*, pp. 45-56.

⁹⁶ Fletcher, *op. cit.*, pp. 379-380.

⁹⁷ Matthews, *The Night Chant*, pp. 273, 279, 283.

⁹⁸ Wissler, *Ceremonial Bundles of the Blackfoot Indians*, p. 264.

⁹⁹ 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!

The *Mountain Song* of the Navahos loses nothing of its exalted feeling in its alternating refrain:¹⁰⁰

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, the aesthetic principle of repetition works toward artistic recurrence of sound and accentuation of rhythm.

III CONCISENESS

Conciseness is a primary characteristic growing out of the Indian's concentration of thought. Burton observes: "The most striking feature of Ojibway verse is its extraordinary compactness."¹⁰¹ 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.¹⁰² Take, for instance, some of the passages in the *Walam Olum*, which is approximately of this length:¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Curtis, *The Indians' Book*, p. 352.

¹⁰¹ Burton, *American Primitive Music*, p. 146.

See also Brinton, *Essays of an Americanist*, p. 341.

¹⁰² Brinton, *The Walam Olum: The Lenâpé and their Legends*, pp. 169-218. (Prose translation.)

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, Canto I, ll. 3-12.

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.¹⁰⁴

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.¹⁰⁵

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. Here and there are
 landscapes inviting our view:¹⁰⁶

... the great Spruce Pine land was toward the shore.
 At the place of caves, . . . they at last 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.*¹⁰⁷

* * * * *

All the cabin fires of that land were disquieted, and all
 said to their priest, "Let us go."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Curtis, *The Indians' Book*, p. 10: "Grandfather is a title of respect
 or reverence for any old man."

¹⁰⁵ Brinton, *The Walam Olum*, Canto I, l. 20.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, Canto IV, ll. 13, 29; Canto V, ll. 21, 22.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, Canto IV, l. 49. (The italics are the writer's.)

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, Canto III, l. 8.

Here we have the broad sweep of tribal movement, and the understanding of group consciousness and activity. Such compactness gives power to the classic poetry of any race, for it combines breadth and depth.

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 are inclined 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.¹⁰⁹

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 by association or implication, involving the whole range of tribal custom and belief. Minor devices include elision, suppression of verbs, and the use of exclamatory forms.

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" is known as *mnemonic summary*. It is second only to repetition as an essential characteristic of style in Indian verse. It is the hidden force that gives direction to the song. "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."¹¹⁰ Matthews points out: "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—

¹⁰⁹ Fletcher, *The Hako*, pp. 170-172, 366. See also the discussion in her *Story and Song from North America*, p. 30.

¹¹⁰ Fletcher, *The Omaha Tribe*, p. 470. See also p. 479; *The Hako*, p. 365. Densmore, *Chippewa Music*, I, p. 15.

they tell no tales. He who would comprehend them must know the myths and ritual customs on which they are based."¹¹¹ The line, "My door is warm in winter," means little to a white reader, but heard by the Ojibway wandering far from his tepee through winter snows in search of game, the words meant a customary invitation to food and cheer by a stranger's fire.¹¹²

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.¹¹³

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 wiut tari.

Literal translation:

Line 1361

hiri!, harken!

riru tziraru, by reason of, by means of, because of. The word has a wide significance and force throughout the ritual.

rasa, the man stood.

ruxsa, he said or did.

pakara ra, a loud call or chant, sending the voice to a great distance.

witz, from tawitz'sa, to reach or arrive.

pari, traveling. These five words tell of a religious rite performed by the leader. The first two refer to his going to a

¹¹¹ Matthews, *The Night Chant*, p. 270.

¹¹² Burton, *American Primitive Music*, p. 221.

¹¹³ Fletcher, *The Hako*, pp. 272-273 (text), 274-276 (literal translation), 364-368 (free translation).

solitary place to fast and pray, seeking help and favor from the powers above; the last three describe his voice, bearing his petition, traveling on and on, striving to reach the abode of Tiráwa.

hiri! harken! a call for reverent attention.

ti ruta, special or assigned places, referring to the places where the lesser powers dwell, these having been assigned by Tira wa atius, the father of all.

hiri!, harken! a call for reverent attention.

ti rakūse, sitting; present tense, plural number.

tararawá kut, the sky or heavens. It implies a circle, a great distance, and the dwelling place of the lesser powers, those which can come near to man and be seen or heard or felt by him.

tiri, above, up there, as if the locality were designated by pointing upward.

Free translation:

Line 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.

Line 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.

Line 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*:¹¹⁴

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!¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Fletcher, *The Omaha Tribe*, pp. 128-132; *Indian Story and Song from North America*, pp. 26-30.

¹¹⁵ Curtis, *Mr. Roosevelt and Indian Music, The Outlook*, vol. 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 men 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.¹¹⁶ We may easily deduce the cause of cynicism from this song by a chieftain's daughter: "You can't believe what the men say!"¹¹⁷

Before leaving the discussion of allusion, we may consider, by way of digression, some secondary values of this element in the verse. 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 than poetry, such as hand-print decoration on a garment, are incidental.¹¹⁸ The rich background is of nature allusion¹¹⁹—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 heroes¹²⁰ and men of ancient fame.¹²¹

The suppression of verbs is another device for conciseness

¹¹⁶ Burton, *American Primitive Music*, p. 271.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 274.

¹¹⁸ 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.

¹¹⁹ Brinton, *Essays of an Americanist*, pp. 289-290; *The Lenâpé and their Legends*, pp. 187, 189, 191, 197.

Curtis, *op. cit.*, 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.

¹²⁰ Allusions to deities and mythical heroes are general.

Barbeau, *Wyandot and Huron Mythology*, pp. 318-320.

Brinton, *The Lenâpé 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, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

¹²¹ Densmore, *Chippewa Music*, II, p. 294.

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

Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

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.¹²²
 In old age wandering.¹²³
 Now Day Bearer's beam of blue.¹²⁴
 Dark fog door posts.¹²⁵

As a sustained example of this method, the *Waking Song* of the Navahos is exceptional.¹²⁶ 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.¹²⁷

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.¹²⁸ In the line "*Ki rura-a, ki rura-a hi,*" for instance, *hi* is a part of the word *arushahi*.

More effective than the two methods of conciseness just considered are the exclamatory forms, shot through as they are with varied feelings, as in the song of Ukiabi:¹²⁹

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

¹²² Matthews, *Navaho Myths, Prayers, and Songs*, pp. 29, 38.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 44.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 58, 60.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

¹²⁶ Matthews, *The Night Chant*, pp. 283-286.

¹²⁷ Elson, *History of American Music*, p. 132.

¹²⁸ Fletcher, *The Hako*, pp. 146, 365.

¹²⁹ Dorsey, *The Cegiha Language*, p. 611.

IV POETIC DICTION

The poet of any land must be the master of his own tongue. 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 conscious 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 such expressions as *evening-red*, *land-edge*, and *shield-house*.¹³⁰ This device has been discussed more at length under IMAGERY and will be found considered 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 purely poetic diction.¹³¹ Words of the daily speech often discarded their usual meanings and expressed thoughts unique in the song diction. Here one must follow interpretations of men who 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 a hidden 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 meaning richer than in prose are those which have no place at all in Indian prose—words which the poet claims for use in his art alone.¹³² Mr. Sapir touches on some special points in song diction in his discussion

¹³⁰ Russell, *The Pima Indians*, pp. 302, 303, 336.

Brinton, *The Lenapé and their Legends*, pp. 193-217.

¹³¹ Fletcher, *The Hako*, p. 365.

Riggs, *Dakota Songs and Music: Táh-koó Wah-kán*, p. 453.

Sapir, *Abnormal Types of Speech in Nootka*, pp. 11-12.

¹³² Riggs, *op. cit.*, p. 474.

of consonantal 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 (Paiute *l*, Nootka *l* and *n*) are, at least so it would seem, pronounced by Indians with difficulty under ordinary circumstances."¹³³

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. Long after they have been discarded from common speech, he will find them in Indian poetry.¹³⁴ There the old words linger on, though the learned men of the tribe have forgotten their use.¹³⁵ They fill out a measure of some treasured song, and so remain, like the Cumaean sibyl, a voice without a body.

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.¹³⁶ 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 one of the less developed tribes.¹³⁷ 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

¹³³ Sapir, *Abnormal Types of Speech in Nootka*, pp. 11-12.

¹³⁴ Mackenzie, *Evolution of Literature*, pp. 90, 234.

¹³⁵ Burton, *American Primitive Music*, p. 165.

Elson, *History of American Music*, p. 125.

Matthews, *The Night Chant*, pp. 152, 269.

Mooney, *Sacred Formulas of the Cherokees*, pp. 343-344.

¹³⁶ Fletcher, *The Hako*, p. 65, ll. 180-193; p. 71, ll. 225-229, 231-235; p. 81, l. 293; p. 83, l. 312.

¹³⁷ Fletcher, *The Omaha Tribe*, pp. 593-594.

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 of specialized song diction.

At this point 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 topic for an investigation. The outstanding characteristic of word-building in many Indian languages, polysynthesis or incorporation of holophrastic compounds, has been discussed at length by many noted students of linguistics.¹³⁸ 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.¹³⁹ Alluring as is the philosophy of language, this study of composite words must end, on the art side, with the study of conciseness.

There should be, however, 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.

¹³⁸ Boas, *Handbook of American Indian Languages*, I, p. 75.

Brinton, *Essays of an Americanist*, pp. 320-323, 340-342, 344, 349-339.
(The *Essays* review studies by Humboldt and Duponceau.)

Cf. Jane Ellen Harrison, *Aspects, Aorists, and the Classical Tripos*.
Cambridge Univ. Press. 1920. Quoted in *Modern Languages*, vol. I,
no. 6, pp. 182-186.

Hanns Oertel, *Lectures on the Study of Language*. Scribner's, 1902.
See p. 239.

T. G. Tucker, *Introduction to the Natural History of Language*,
Blackie, 1908. See pp. 78, 87, 152-156.

W. D. Whitney, *Language and the Study of Language*. Scribner's,
1898. See pp. 348-349.

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.

¹³⁹ Brinton, *Essays of an Americanist*, p. 340.

V 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 statements 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."¹⁴⁰ 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.¹⁴¹

The second statement on the monotony of figure is equally beside the mark.¹⁴² Miss Curtis's collection of songs in the *Indians' Book* must answer any such observations with 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.

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.

¹⁴⁰ Burton, *American Primitive Music*, p. 153.

¹⁴¹ Densmore, *Chippewa Music*, Parts I and II.

¹⁴² Elson, *The History of American Music*, p. 126.

This characteristic is, indeed, an inheritance from the beginnings of all poetry; for primitive man had seeing eyes and hearing ears. Perhaps the earliest survival of those far-off myth-making times is the figure of personification. We may identify it as the earliest trace of the poetic faculty, for it animated the nature world with form, soul, and feeling. Canticles to the sun, with their use of this figure, are among the first songs of those remote years. A wider use of comparison in metaphor 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. 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.¹⁴³ They can be multiplied, line upon line, even in that short epic. Concreteness will be noted by the reader as a distinctive quality of sense imagery.

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 TAWI¹⁴⁴

I

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

II

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

¹⁴³ See CONCISENESS, above, p. 30.

¹⁴⁴ Curtis, *The Indians' Book*, pp. 484-485.

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*:¹⁴⁵

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

The San Carlos Apache *Songs of the Deer Ceremony*¹⁴⁶ hint of delectable taste and odors:

At the south
 Where the white shell ridges of the earth lie,
 Where all kinds of fruit are ripe,
 We two will meet.

From there where the coral ridges of the earth lie,
 We two will meet.
 Where the ripe fruits are fragrant,
 We two will meet.

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

FESTAL SONG¹⁴⁷

The bright dawn appears in the heavens;
 The bright dawn appears in the heavens;
 The paling Pleiades grow dim.
 The moon is lost in the rising sun.

¹⁴⁵ Curtis, *The Indians' Book*, p. 485.

¹⁴⁶ Goddard, *Myths and Tales from the San Carlos Apache*, p. 62.

¹⁴⁷ Russell, *The Pima Indians*, p. 284.

(Bright dawn—literally, the shining morning.)

SWALLOW SONG¹⁴⁸

(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 SONG¹⁴⁹

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

CURE SONG¹⁵⁰

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.

BADGER SONG¹⁵¹

The shadow of Crooked Mountain,
 The curved and pointed shadow.

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

BADGER SONG¹⁵²

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.¹⁵³ 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.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁸ Russell, *The Pima Indians*, p. 292.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 300.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 322.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 322.

¹⁵³ Densmore, *Chippewa Music*, I, pp. 68, 69.

¹⁵⁴ Russell, *op. cit.*, pp. 227, 280.

(Literal translation: The land trembles with our dancing and singing.)

WIND SONG¹⁵⁵

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

SWALLOW SONG¹⁵⁶

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

* * * * *

Thence I run, the darkness rattling,
Wearing cactus flowers in my hair.
Thence I run as the darkness gathers,
In fluttering¹⁵⁷ darkness to the singing place.

BADGER SONG¹⁵⁸

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

The *Mouse Song* suggests sound without presenting it:

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

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.¹⁶⁰

Imaginative, too, are these descriptions of the sacred hogans¹⁶¹ of the Sun God—a series of beautiful pictures set in refrains:

¹⁵⁵ Russell, *The Pima Indians*, p. 324.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 294.

¹⁵⁷ *Fluttering* may be more literally translated as *rattling*.

¹⁵⁸ Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 321.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

¹⁶⁰ Curtis, *The Indians' Book*, p. 362. See also REPETITION, above, p. 24.

¹⁶¹ *Hogan* is a Navaho word for dwelling.

I

- (2) There beneath the sunrise
Standeth his 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 the 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.¹⁶²

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 brilliant 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 . . . mussel-bearing sea.¹⁶³

¹⁶² Curtis, *The Indians' Book*, pp. 357- 358.

¹⁶³ Brinton, *The Lenâpé and their Legends*, p. 185.

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.¹⁶⁴

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;¹⁶⁵ Miss Fletcher adds the Pleiades and the Dawn in the Pawnee ritual of *The Hako*.¹⁶⁶ To be included with these are *The Rainbow Youth*¹⁶⁷ and *Rain-that-Stands*.¹⁶⁸

Personification of visions¹⁶⁹ and of diseases,¹⁷⁰ differing as they do in poetic imagination, are nevertheless results of the same tendency of thought. So also are the *Corn-Grinding Songs*, in which the corn-ear speaks, and the swallow sings of the coming rain.¹⁷¹

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 the dreams of a childlike race.

Comparison goes beyond that primitive stage of personification in this Cheyenne song: "Nay, I fear the aching tooth of age!"¹⁷² What poet of the white race would not covet such a figure?

¹⁶⁴ Brinton, *The Lenâpé and Their Legends*, pp. 187-217.

¹⁶⁵ Wissler, *Ceremonial Bundles of the Blackfoot Indians*, pp. 179, 186-189.

¹⁶⁶ Fletcher, *The Hako*, pp. 123-128, 151-152. See also SPIRIT, above, p. 9.

¹⁶⁷ Curtis, *The Indians' Book*, pp. 431-432.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 479.

¹⁶⁹ Fletcher, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-123.

¹⁷⁰ Gatschet, *The Klamath Indians*, p. 159.

¹⁷¹ Curtis, *op. cit.*, pp. 430-431.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 153.

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

WIND SONG¹⁷³

Over the windy mountains,
Came the myriad legged wind.

BEAVER SONG¹⁷⁴

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

Comparison, too, is at the heart of this Zuñi song:

SONG OF THE BLUE CORN DANCE¹⁷⁵

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!

For an artistic use of sustained figure, the *Iroquois Book of Rites* is remarkable in carrying through the ceremony 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,
These two guarded the doorway.¹⁷⁶

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

As my eyes search the prairie,
I feel the summer in the spring.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ Russell, *The Pima Indians*, p. 324. (Comparing the wind with a centipede.)

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 320. See also pp. 228, 282.

¹⁷⁵ Curtis, *The Indians' Book*, p. 432.

¹⁷⁶ Hale, *The Iroquois Book of Rites*, pp. 131, 139.

¹⁷⁷ Densmore, *Chippewa Music, II*, p. 254.

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 the mouth of a stream.¹⁷⁸ Perhaps this type of imagery requires of the poet a closer analysis than the other. It cannot be thought so happy a gift as that philosophy which notes the affinities and harmonies of life rather than its antitheses.

NOTE: For those who are interested in giving further study to this debated subject, the following list of readings is appended:

Brinton, *Essays of an Americanist*, p. 290. *The Lenâpé 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.

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

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

Riggs, *Dakota Songs and Music: Táh-koo Wah-kán*, p. 474.

Russell, *The Pima Indians*.

Wissler, *The Ceremonial Bundles of the Blackfoot Indians*.

VI MUSICAL QUALITY IN VERSE

Quite apart from the structural 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, 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 singer 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 conson-

¹⁷⁸ Matthews, *The Night Chant*, pp. 153, 245, 289.

ants *i, m, w, v*. A number of open vowel sounds recur in such a series as the following:¹⁷⁹

u, u, u, a, ai, u, u, u, a, â, ui, ia, u, â, a, a, i, o, o, i
i, a, a, û, a, â, ia, u, â, ui, a, a, i, o, o.¹⁸⁰

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

Himovali, movali moko, himovali, movali moko.¹⁸¹

The poet finds that words with musical quality are not always common in his language, but he may supplement such words with those which he has altered, with true poetic license, to secure a desired effect. These changes are obtained by elisions, by affixes, or by substitution of sounds.¹⁸² 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."¹⁸³

In its fulfillment of lyric art, the music of the word must join with the music of voice and instrument. And of this art, the Zuñi are among the masters. Of all their verse, none is lovelier than the *Sunset Song*,¹⁸⁴ sung from their housetops by the people of the village as the sun sinks down the sky:

¹⁷⁹ Consonants are here omitted for the sake of clearness.

¹⁸⁰ Russell, *The Pima Indians*, p. 272.

See also:

Cushing, *Zuñi Folk Tales*, p. 39;

Fewkes, *The Snake Ceremonials at Walpi*, pp. 100-101;

Voth, *The Oraibi Oâqöl Ceremony*, pp. 13, 17-18, 20, 25, 27-29, 38-39.
(A Hopi ceremony.)

¹⁸¹ Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

¹⁸² 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.)

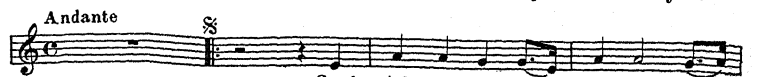
¹⁸³ Matthews, *The Night Chant*, p. 269.

¹⁸⁴ Arranged by Carlos Troyer in his series, *Traditional Songs of the Zuñi Indians*.


SUNSET SONG

Recorded by Carlos Troyer.


Andante



Good night to thee, Fair God - dess, We
E - lui - la Ma - ya Zu - la, Ku - a

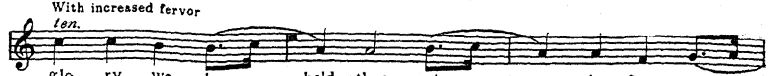


thank thee for thy bles - sing, Good night to thee Fair
wey - la yan - a vis - vi, E - lui - la Ma - ya



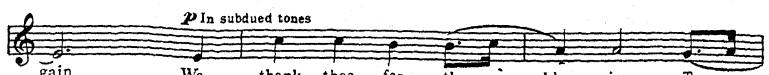
God - dess We thank thee for this day. In
Zu - la Ku - a wey - la yan - a lo. di.

With increased fervor
ten.

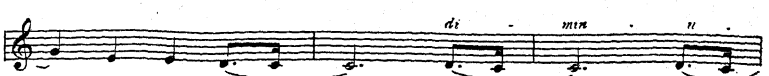


glo - ry we be - hold thee, at ear - ly dawn a -
lu - ra wuu - ga no - ka al' ha - mi tan - da
ten.

P *In subdued tones*




gain. We thank thee for thy bles - sing, To
lo. Kua wey - la ya - an vis - vi, Te




be with us this day. This day, We
na - di yan - a lo. Yan - a lo, Kua

on do



thank thee for this day. *lunga*
wey - la yan - a lo.

Finale-
 § The Sun-worshippers prostrate themselves before the Sun.



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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.

Tonality is a further aspect of conscious technique in the poetry of the Indian. Although it occurs in simple forms, these unmistakable tonal patterns are to be found: (1) recurrence of open vowel sounds, already mentioned above 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 last two patterns in combination where the verse suggests recessional movement, as when forceful utterance is followed by milder syllables.¹⁸⁵ In tone-color, as in euphony, the poet employs vocables and alterations when the usual words are insufficient for his purpose. Miss Fletcher has gone so far as to determine the initial consonants of Omaha vocables which express different moods.¹⁸⁶

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

VII MINOR CHARACTERISTICS

VIGOR

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

¹⁸⁵ Fletcher, *Indian Story and Song from North America*, p. 107; *A Study of Omaha Indian Music*, pp. 12, 57-61.

¹⁸⁶ Fletcher, *A Study of Omaha Indian Music*, p. 12.

not, however, been dissipated by artificialities of style; hence it has found its outlet in direct thinking and forceful epithet. One of the most widely known illustrations is the *Song of Sitting Bull*:¹⁸⁷

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

This characteristic is found largely in the shorter songs, though it finds its way, as has been shown earlier in this study, through the longer songs in conciseness, in diction, and in imagery.

ONOMATOPOEIA

Another element blended with the poetic feeling in word-tonality is the desire to reproduce the beauty of sound in the nature world—the clear call of a bird, or the sound of rushing waters. Observe how closely these vocables imitate the song of the wren: “Whe ke re re we chi.”¹⁸⁸ There are obvious onomatopoeitic phrases in this song of the Cherokees:

TRAVELER'S SONG¹⁸⁹

Tsûñ' wa' 'ya-ya'
Tsûñ' wa' 'ya-ya'
Tsûñ' wa' 'ya-ya'
Tsûñ' wa' 'ya-ya'

Wa + a! (Imitating wolf howl.)

Tsûñ 'ka' wi-ye'
Tsûñ 'ka' wi-ye'
Tsûñ 'ka' wi-ye'
Tsûñ 'ka' wi-ye'

Sauh! sauh! sauh! sauh! (Imitating call of the deer.)

Tsûñ'-tsu' 'la-ya'
Tsûñ'-tsu' 'la-ya'
Tsûñ'-tsu' 'la-ya'
Tsûñ'-tsu' 'la-ya'

Gaih! gaih! gaih! gaih! (Imitating barking of fox.)

¹⁸⁷ E. S. Curtis, *The North American Indian*, vol. III, p. 149.

¹⁸⁸ Fletcher, *The Hako*, pp. 170-171; *Indian Story and Song from North America*, pp. 53-55.

¹⁸⁹ Mooney, *Myths of the Cherokee*, p. 266. (The words are archaic: “I become—wolf,” etc.)

Tsûñ'-si' kwa-ya'

Tsûñ'-si' kwa-ya'

Tsûñ'-si' kwa-ya'

Tsûñ'-si' kwa-ya'

Ki+ (Imitating the cry which the opossum gives when cornered.)

In the *Song of the Locust*¹⁹⁰ the Hopi trills, "Chi ri ri ri ri, chi ri ri ri ri," both as he begins and ends his five line song. Matthews calls attention to a call as an imitation of the dove, which the student may consider a further illustration of onomatopoeia.¹⁹¹ This element appears to be rather infrequent, but no point eludes the analysis of a foreign reader more than this one.

PARALLELISM

Parallelism occurs less frequently than one might expect, should all forms of exact verbal 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. There is an aesthetic element in this feeling for the symmetry of balanced structure. Many instances point to the conclusion that thought- and structure-parallels occur together. Occasionally, the motive is contrast.

This Onondaga hymn,¹⁹² hundreds of years old, is one of the best illustrations of this phase of style:

Haihhaih!

Jiyathontek!

Niyonkha!

Haihhaih!

Tejoskawayenton.

Woe! Woe!

Harken ye!

We are diminished!

Woe! Woe!

The cleared land has become a thicket.

Haihhaih!

Skahentahenyon.

Woe! Woe!

The clear places are deserted.

Hai!

Shatyherarta—

Woe!

They are in their graves—

¹⁹⁰ Voth, *Traditions of the Hopi*, p. 181.

¹⁹¹ *Navaho Gambling Songs*, *Amer. Anthr.*, vol. II, (Jan. 1889), p. 19.

¹⁹² Hale, *The Iroquois Book of Rites*, pp. 153-154.

Hotyiwisahongwe—	They who established it—
Hai!	Woe!
Kayaneengoha	The great League.
Netikenen honen	Yet they declared
Nene Kenyoiwatatye—	It should endure—
Kayaneengowane—	The great League.
Hai!	Woe!
Wakaiwakayonneha.	Their work has grown old.
Hai!	Woe!
Netho watyongwen-	Thus we are become miserable.
tenthe.	

Unfortunately the interpreter gives the Wyandot song, "The Stars Dehn-dek and Mah-oh-rah"¹⁹³ 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 forever there.
 And their journey shall never cease!

The songs of the Pima make some use of this structural form. In the *Rain Song II*,¹⁹⁴ 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 instruments of this quality, marking, as they distinctly do, the forward and recessional movements of poetic feeling. It may be that the varied patterns of repetition served the poet's end.

¹⁹³ C. M. Barbeau, *Huron and Wyandot Mythology*, pp. 318-321, quoting W. E. Connelley from the *Ontario Archaeological Report*, 1905, pp. 68-70.

¹⁹⁴ Russell, *The Pima Indians*, pp. 332-333.

SUMMARY

1. On the formal side, three factors are outstanding in Indian verse:
 - a. Brilliant execution of other repetitional forms instead of a general use of rhyme as an aid to rhythm.
 - b. Extensive use of sense imagery and the imagery of comparison.
 - c. Extreme economy of expression.
2. Minor qualities of Indian verse are humor, pathos, satire. The predominantly intellectual quality is largely lacking.
3. The characteristic qualities are imaginative, aesthetic, and emotional in type. Their aspects are concreteness, rhythm, beauty, compactness, sincerity. The last aspect is a notable expression of the great religious motive which is dominant in all forms of Indian verse.

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INDEX

- Aesthetics, as a shaping force, 18-20; effect of geographical differences, 18-19; happiness and beauty, 20; sensuous beauty, 19; sound, 19; vivid coloring, 19
 Affirmation, predominance of, 13
 Allusion, 32-37
 Apache, San Carlos, *Songs of the Deer Ceremony*, 43
 Arapahos, 27
Badger Song, 44, 45
 Beauty, *see* Aesthetics
Beaver Song, 48
Book of Rites, Iroquois, quoted, 48
 Burden, 28, 29, 37
Chant to the Sun, 12
 Cherokees, symbols of, 16; *Traveler's Song*, 53
 Cheyenne, *Song of Victory*, quoted, 35
 Chippewa, songs referred to, 36; quoted, 33, 36, 48
 Color, aesthetic use of, 19; symbolism of, 14, 16-17
 Conciseness, in allusion, 32; as a characteristic of Indian verse, 30-33; in elision, 32, 37; in exclamatory forms, 32, 37; in lyric poetry, 32; in *The Walam Olum*, 30-32; in suggestion, association, and implication, 32-36; in suppression of verbs, 32, 36-37
Corn Grinding Song, quoted, 23
 Cosmic faith, importance of, 9, 41
Coyote and the Locust, The, 29-30
Crow Dance Song, 27
Cure Song, 44
Daylight Song, The, 20
Death of Taluta, The, 11
 Delaware, *The Walam Olum*, conciseness in, 30-32; quoted, 31, 46
 Diction, as a characteristic of Indian verse, 38-41; archaic, 39; characteristics of word-building, 40; epithets, 38; poetic, 38-41; vocables, 39-40
 Earth, motherhood of, 12
 Elision, 37
Emergence Songs, 44-45
 Eskimo, *Mount Koonak: A Song of Arsut*, 11; nith songs, 13
 Euphony, 49-52
Festal Song, 43
Game Song, 44
Hako, The, interpretations of nature, 12; quotations from, 33-35; repetition in, 28; variety in, 24
 Holophrasis, 40
 Hopi, *Katzina Songs*, 19, 42, 43; *Song of the Locust*, 54
 Humor, 13
 Imagery, as a characteristic of Indian verse, 41-49; in imaginative descriptions, 45-46; of comparison, 46-48; of contrast, 49; origin of, 41; sense, 42-45
 Incorporation, 40
Introduction of the Child into the Cosmos, 9-10, 17
Iroquois Book of Rites, quoted, 48; Onondago hymn, 54-55
Katzina Songs, 42, 43
 Metaphor, 47-48
 Mnemonic summary, 32, 33
 Monotony, as a characteristic of Indian verse, 22-24; emphasis in, 23; of repetition, 22
Morning Star and the New-Born Dawn, The, 26-27
Mount Koonak: A Song of Arsut, 11
Mountain Song, of the Eskimo, 11; of the Navahos, 30
Mouse Song, 45
 Musical qualities, as a characteristic of Indian verse, 49-52; assonantal melody, 50; euphony, 49-52; harmony of word and music, 51
 Navaho, color symbolism, 16; *Daylight Song*, 20; *Mountain Songs*, 9; *Myths, Prayers, and Songs*, 37; *The Night Chant*, 14; *Song of the Hogans*, 45-46; *Song of the Horse*, 25, 45; *Waking Song*, 37
Night Chant, The, 14, 49
 Nith songs, 13
 Observation, as a shaping force, 9, 13-14
 Ojibwa, *see* Chippewa
 Omaha, *Introduction of the Child into the Cosmos*, 9-10, 17;

- Sweat Lodge Ritual*, 16; Symbols of the Hills, 9-10, 17; *Tribal Prayer*, 35
- Onomatopoeia, as characteristic of Indian verse, 53-54
- Onondaga, hymn, 54-55
- Paiute, sensuous beauty in song, 19
- Parallelism, as a characteristic of Indian verse, 54-55
- Pathos, 13
- Pawnee, *Ritual of the Dawn*, 26; *The Hako*, 24, 28, 33-35
- Personification, as a survival of myth-making times, 42; of heavenly bodies, 9-10, 12, 47
- Pima, assonantal quality in songs, 50; *Badger Song*, 44, 45; *Beaver Song*, 48; *Emergence Songs*, 44-45; *Festal Song*, 43; *Game Song*, 44; *Mouse Song*, 45; *Rain Song II*, 55; *Swallow Song*, 44-45; 55; *Wind Song*, 45
- Poetic license, 50
- Polysynthesis, 40
- Rain Song II*, 55
- Reduplication, 23, 40
- Reflective mood, 10-11
- Repetition, as a characteristic of Indian verse, 22, 24-30; as an aesthetic origin of numbers, 18; double, 28; incremental, 24-27; interlacing patterns of, 27; reduplication as, 28; refrain, burden, as, 28-30; set patterns of, 27-28
- Refrain, 28-30
- Simile, 47, 48
- Song of the Blue Corn Dance*, 48
- Songs of the Deer Ceremony*, 43
- Song to the Earth*, 12
- Song of the Hogans*, 45-46
- Song of the Horse*, 25, 45
- Song of the Locust*, 54
- Song to the Pleiades*, 12
- Song of the Rain Chant*, 25-26
- Song of Sitting Bull*, 53
- Sound, aesthetic use of, 19-20
- Star, guidance of, 12; symbolism of, 14
- Stars Dehn-dek and Mah-oh-rah, The*, 55
- Suggestion, 32-35.
- Sun, life giving power of, 12; symbolism of, 16
- Sunset Song*, 50-52
- Swallow Song*, 44-45
- Symbolism, bear, 15; bird, 15; cardinal points, 16, 17; color, 14, 16-17; cross, 16; earth, 12; fish, 15; hills, 9-10, 17; moon, 16; numbers, 17-18; in repetitions, 28; serpent, 15; star, 12, 16; sun, 12, 16; tree, 16; water, 16; winds, 17
- Tone color, as a characteristic of Indian verse, 52; in explosive articulation, 52; in liquid syllables, 52; in recurrence of open vowel sounds, 50
- Traveler's Song*, 53
- Tribal Prayer*. The Omaha, 35
- Ukiabi, Song of, 37
- Variety, of theme and imagery, 23-24
- Vigor of expression, as a characteristic of Indian verse, 52-53
- Walam Olum*, conciseness in, 30-32, 42
- Wind Song*, 48
- Wind Songs*, 11
- Wyandot, *The Stars Dehn-dek and Mah-oh-rah*, 55
- Zuñi, color symbolism, 17; *The Coyote and the Locust*, 29-30; *Song of the Blue Corn Dance*, 48; *Sunset Song*, 50-52

END OF VOLUME TWO

UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS HUMANISTIC STUDIES