

Hopi traditional literature. By DAVID LEEDOM SHAUL. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002. Pp. vii, 236.

Rarely have I come across a tome that is better read backwards than as it was originally intended, but *Hopi Traditional Literature* inspires exactly this sentiment. While the investigation itself is interesting, and provides enough explanation of the structural markings and cultural contexts discussed to facilitate a surface-level understanding, the book is so poorly organized that numerous pages are lost in reiteration and important material cannot be fully digested.

S states in the preface that while examining the structure of various genres of Hopi literature ‘reference must be made to Hopi grammar’ but that ‘no knowledge of linguistics or discourse analysis is assumed,’ (ix). There is, in fact, a ‘sketch of Hopi grammar’ in the appendices that provides a sufficient linguistic foundation for the direct address and oration sections (207). It does not, however, describe the linguistic function of features such as proximal references or subordinated clauses, which are discussed extensively throughout the first four chapters. S appears content to refer the reader, via bold type, to a technical glossary (216) that I found to be skeletal, at best. Because of this, a reader who lacks an extensive background in grammar would be forced to stumble through over a hundred pages with no more than a brief mention of ‘the opposition of nearness... as opposed to distance’ (7) to guide them. Worse still, is the absence of music theory, given the dependence of the seventh and eighth chapters upon a reader’s understanding of chromatic sixths (205), hemiolas (177), etc., and it is remarkable that a text which troubles itself to define ‘noun’ and ‘verb’ for the reader (207) fails to include even a cursory description of Western scale systems.

While the delineation of genre-markers like audience feedback and melodic phrasing is clear, the order in which S discusses each specific category seems contrary to that which would best acclimate the unacculturated reader. The first chapter begins with an examination of Hopi traditional narratives in which the reader must sift through piecemeal excerpts of stories at least 30 lines long (20), whereas chapter seven ends in an appraisal of a song-poem only nine lines in length (190). This cart-before-horse style of presentation persists within chapters as well. S consistently discusses distals, quotative particles, and other features of specific Hopi texts before presenting the text itself. The book suffers further from an array of printing and editing errors. References to vowels ‘in italic’ (1) appearing in plain font, inconsistent spellings of Hopi words (6), divergent translations of passages, and missing footnotes (179) pervade, creating an atmosphere anything but conducive to understanding.

These presentational flaws are frustrating, and often distracting, but because these concepts are further explained in the text, they do not ultimately hinder comprehension. The organizational flaws, however, and the absence of sufficient detail illustrating potentially unfamiliar concepts, are an entirely different story. Taken as a whole, I find that while S’s work may indeed be a ‘pioneering effort,’ (x), and contains material that holds interest for a wide spectrum of readers, a large portion of the text is muddled and confused. The rich, concise nature of many of the latter sections prove that S’s information is adequate, and his analysis is valuable, but their appearance as sparks of clarity in what is, overall, a rather murky study indicates that this work is ripe for a new, more polished, second edition.

RYAN C. JACKSON
California State University, Fullerton.]