as to the Cherokee diaspora, many of whom are speakers of Cherokee, and regard traditional syllabary documents with reverence and pride.

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So They Understand: Cultural Issues in Oral History. By William Schneider. Logan: Utah State University Press. 2002. 206 pages. $22.95 paper.

In an *Oral History Review* special feature some years ago, labor historian Staughton Lynd summarized principles for conducting oral history interviews, concluding with the necessary appreciation of "doing history from below." Although his phrase might bring to mind the somewhat disagreeable term *subaltern* used in postcolonial theory, his explanation provides a salient précis for what William Schneider attempts to do in *So They Understand: Cultural Issues in Oral History*. "Oral history from below requires the historian to enter into the lives of poor and working people who are the protagonists of that history. Of necessity it exposes the historian's own class and cultural limitations to the light of day. This is painful because it requires personal, not just intellectual, risktaking" (*Oral History Review* Spring 1993, p. 8). Becoming a part of the lives and communities of one's narrators is one of the subtle expectations such communities and narrators prefer. Going into a community to "collect" oral histories and then virtually abandoning it has been standard practice for many social scientists in the past. Housing the interview notations, electronic and transcribed formats in museum-like environments, and the possibilities that portions, if not all, of this documentation might be published by presumptive scholars are circumstances to which Schneider is sensitive. Curator of oral history and an anthropologist at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Schneider values his three decades of friendships with the region's indigenous peoples. Since 1997, he has journeyed to South Africa's University of the North (UNIN) "with the hope that the experience would help me gain a fuller understanding of Alaska and the role of storytelling" (p. 13). Of the two regions, South Africa has more extensive oral history archives that reflect the country 's intense political conflict and have only recently been open to public access.

Schneider's book is a discourse of self-discovery, "a personal journey with stories" as he reiterates throughout; stories are "the way we must think if we are to understand how people communicate. . . . [And the book] is a way to illustrate how understanding is an ongoing endeavor" (p. 15). Counterposing the notion of "voiceless" subjects, he fully realizes how increasingly savvy narrators are today about expropriation of taped and transcribed oral history documents, sometimes pointedly expressing their concerns about who has rights to listen to a tape and who can read its text, and debating to what degree their oral histories ought to be available to others. Schneider periodically interjects his thoughts about these issues of cultural rights and administrative jurisdiction. The issue is not altogether reconcilable for a community; the academic or coordinating community that generates an oral history

usually retains exclusive rights to the administration of a document and oversees its care. This means that oral history's collected documents—verbal texts of memories and anecdotes—are in fact enmeshed in opposing dispositions: communities who see the value of having interviews conducted with their members often find they have little or no control over the material created. Responding to UNIN's request to help formulate a *raison d'etre* for an oral history archive, Schneider relied upon his Alaskan experience, finding that the South African interactions strengthened his convictions about the need to preserve meaning in an oral history experience. He freely admits that there are no ultimate conclusions about the spectrum of concerns, cultural, practical, legal, and otherwise, for this genre. Some readers might find Schneider's discursive style disconcerting because it seems not to produce clearly defined parameters and absolute conclusions. In doing so, they'll miss the immediacy of his recall and thinking as a narrative art itself. Yet one aspect where criticism of his text might have a point is that the impact of the South African oral history environment upon his Alaskan Inuit and Athabascan work might have been applied in greater detail. Discussions of his Alaskan projects predominate; but at times he embeds the value of his South African experiences a bit too deeply in his own stories.

Schneider's twelve chapters fall evenly into three sections. In the first section, "How Stories Work," he opens his introduction with a story recited by Nelson Mandela about a black bull and a white bull in a kraal. It underscores the powerful impact of stories on us, he states, especially stories of rich depth whose meanings are yet inconclusive and open-ended. This story, and its obvious political setting, which even Mandela professed being unable to analyze, is another of Schneider's motivating issues. Deploying a deductive approach, his chapters lead us through his experiences, observations, memories, and what he has learned. He provides a leisurely focus on oral history as story, verbal markers and physical objects as guides to memory, distinctions between oral tradition and oral history, the crafting of personal narrative, the nexus of oral history genre and curatorship, whole chapters devoted to "Issues of Representation" and intellectual property, among others. He reminds us of contextual deployments of interview material. The Alaskan narratives are overwhelmingly for the benefit of the community, while the political history of South Africa compels those who administer the oral history project at UNIN to make their documents accessible for public usage.

Despite his experiences, Schneider does not kid himself about being a cultural "outsider"; this is the distinguishing characteristic of academic-propelled oral-history gathering, although persons from within communities interested in cultural preservation are a growing cadre of interviewers and archivists. His intimate journey and account of discoveries makes the book's broad outline similar to Ruth Behar's *Translated Woman* (1993). However, his narrative is not as self-conscious—perhaps because he was not subject to the unexpected weight of familial responsibility that Esperanza placed on Behar (who was not gathering an oral history). Schneider's "career full of stories" is self-archival in his search for meaning. On a cursory level, perhaps Alex Haley's essay, "Black History, Oral History, and Genealogy" (1973), among

those compiled by David K. Dunaway and Willa K. Baum's *Oral History* anthology (second ed., 1996), and some of Greg Sarris's essays in *Keeping Slug Woman Alive* (1993) are fitting précis to *So They Understand.*

Schneider refers periodically to ethnopoetics practitioners Dell Hymes, Dennis Tedlock, and Barre Toelken (who are also problematizing its conventions); he relies on few of life/oral history's major theoreticians, briefly citing Dunaway and Arnold Krupat. The appendix contains three documents: a copy of the University of Alaska Fairbanks Oral History Gift and Release Agreement, which can be compared with Baum's form layouts in her chapter on the librarian's expanded role in oral history (see Dunaway and Baum); a list of restrictions governing use of the interview, specifying that the narrator is central to the request and permission process, and that certain interest groups may be restricted from using the document at all; and a statement about Internet use (for the UAF project, this would mean the Project Jukebox Programs). Cyberspace acquisition presents its own set of issues, especially for indigenous people and others who might be concerned about appropriation of personal narrative material under conventional circumstances. Technology is catapulting us all too rapidly onto ther information highway; at the book's printing there were more than 400 hours of electronic material in computer format. Although scholarly integrity demands honoring the terms of agreement, uncertainty and suspicion are not easily disabused.

The book contains twenty-three illustrations. One minor error involves the confused citation intending to identify John Neihardt in reference to Black Elk, not Donald Jackson, who edited Black Hawk's autobiography (pp. 118 and 185). Otherwise, William Schneider has produced an important contribution to the field of oral history, one deserving close and appreciative readings by anyone interested in tribal, cultural, and public histories

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Woman Walking Ahead: In Search of Catherine Weldon and Sitting Bull. By Eileen Pollack. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002. 362 pages. $29.95 cloth.

In searching for Catherine Weldon, Eileen Pollack leads us on a meandering walk through historiographic methods, personal reminiscences, and speculations. Pollack guides us along her search for a woman that history has obscured. Weldon—one-time traveling companion and confidante to Sitting Bull, iconoclastic activist for Indian rights, widow, and mother—left so little trace of herself that her absence itself casts a powerful shadow over the author's own journey of discovery.

Pollack struggles with fully fleshing out her subject, partly due to an admitted lack of personal correspondences and historical records. Despite elaborate speculations about Weldon's inner thoughts, feelings, and motives,