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Title

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Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7gb8n722>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 30(1)

ISSN

0161-6463

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Publication Date

2006

DOI

10.17953

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Intimate Geographies: Reclaiming Citizenship and Community in *The Autobiography of Delfina Cuero and Bonita Nuñez's Diaries*

STEPHANIE FITZGERALD

In their volume *American Indian Women: Telling Their Lives*, Gretchen M. Bataille and Kathleen Mullen Sands assert that “American Indian women’s autobiography defies definition while simultaneously demanding it; the complexity and variety challenge the boundaries of literary categories yet call attention to it as a separate entity in the history of literary expression. It is a problematical form that may best be addressed and analyzed in terms of the process of its creation rather than as an established genre.”¹ They are referring, of course, to a specific type of life narrative, the collaborative or as-told-to autobiography. What is problematic about American Indian women’s autobiography is not its form, but the scholarly emphasis on the process of creation and the lack of critical attention paid to it as an established genre. While the processes of creation, collaboration, and inscription of American Indian women’s autobiographies play important roles in our reading and reception of these texts, an overemphasis on these processes can obscure the Native voice, shifting the focus away from lived experience of the Native subject to that of the non-Native editor. Further, Native women have often been viewed by non-Native scholars and critics as playing minimal roles in the political and ceremonial lives of their tribal communities, with the result that their self-life narratives have been subordinated to those of Native men. Yet American Indian women’s autobiographies recount a specific type of life experience that has often been overlooked, one

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that is equally important to our understanding of the genre. The challenge, then, is to develop ways of reading these texts that balance the recovery and recognition of the Native voice and agency contained within them with the processes of creation and the contexts of production that shape them.

In this essay, I consider collaborative autobiographies by two American Indian women, those of Delfina Cuero, a Kumeyaay² woman born in 1900 in an “Indian house under an old grove of trees” in Jamacha, near San Diego, California, and of Bonita Nuñez, a Poyomkowish or Luiseño of the Rincon band, born twelve years earlier and some forty-eight miles to the north. The received canon of American Indian women’s autobiography does not include Cuero’s and Nuñez’s narratives. They are rarely taught in college classrooms and have received little critical attention. Nuñez’s narrative, posthumously published in an edited edition by Stan Steiner under the title *Spirit Woman: The Diaries and Paintings of Bonita Wa Wa Calac Chaw Nuñez*, is often dismissed as an inauthentic American Indian text, much in the same way the “Indian” authenticity of her paintings has been questioned.³ Cuero’s collaborative text is more often regarded as ethnography and, in the latest edition, a resource for Native ethnobotany than as an example of American Indian autobiography. In a scholastic sense, their narratives seem to reside in what Dakota scholar and critic Elizabeth Cook-Lynn describes as “the margins of Indian history.”⁴ But it is precisely these margins that I wish to investigate here. Why are these texts passed over by teachers and critics in favor of other autobiographical texts? I am thinking here of collaborative works such as Maria Chona and Ruth Underhill’s *Papago Woman*, Truman Michelson’s *The Autobiography of a Fox Woman*, or Frank B. Linderman’s *Pretty-Shield, Medicine Woman of the Crows*, texts that have received a great deal of critical attention and are employed frequently in the classroom. As texts rooted in the unique nature of California Indian history and culture and shaped by the contexts of their production, they fail to conform to the prevailing mold of American Indian autobiography that privileges Plains and Southwest cultures. Coming from often overlooked tribal groups, Cuero and Nuñez’s texts probe the complex relationship of law and American Indian identity in the twentieth century. As a nonreservation Kumeyaay woman displaced from her traditional lands in the San Diego area to Baja California, Mexico, Cuero was unable to prove her US origin to the satisfaction of immigration officials. Nuñez was adopted at birth from what was to become the Rincon Reservation by a wealthy white woman, and was forever separated from her birth family and tribal community. Through historical and political circumstances beyond their control, both women become relegated to the margins of not only history, but also Indian community and Indian identity. By foregrounding Native agency in the process of collaboration, I contend that Cuero and Nuñez use life-writing as a tool to interrogate and secure their legal and social identity as Indian women during an era of tremendous social change. Placing these two very different pieces of life-writing side by side focuses our attention on the stories of these women who have been silenced and obscured.

TOPOGRAPHIES OF LAND AND LAW:
THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF DELFINA CUERO

The frontispiece of the first two editions of *The Autobiography of Delfina Cuero, a Diegueño Indian as Told to Florence C. Shipek* consists of a photograph of Cuero, then in her sixties, with her “mark,” a handwritten “X,” below it. It is perhaps unintentional yet significant that Cuero’s own mark is positioned at the very beginning of this collaborative, or as-told-to, autobiography, for, similar to many Native collaborators on such texts, Cuero failed to receive authorial credit for her work on her own life story.⁵ Instead, sole authorship was attributed to Florence C. Shipek, an anthropologist who took down Cuero’s narrative through an interpreter. Despite being denied authorship of her own life story, Cuero was not without agency in the production of the resultant text, carefully meting out her cooperation in one of Shipek’s research projects in exchange for assistance in resolving her immigration status.

The *Autobiography* is a difficult text for many Western readers, resisting attempts to be classified as autobiography, biography, or oral history.⁶ As an oral history or “recited” autobiography, Cuero’s text falls into the category of what Greg Sarris calls a “narrated autobiography”⁷ and what Arnold Krupat calls an “Indian autobiography,”⁸ as opposed to autobiographies composed by and written by Indians. Because of Shipek’s involvement as editor and as “author” of the text, the *Autobiography* is also an example of a “bicultural composite composition.”⁹ As Sarris notes, an “autobiography, whether narrated or written, is not the life but an account of the story of the life.”¹⁰ And in this *Autobiography*, it is also the account Cuero wishes to provide at any given time.

Moreover, the context of production in conjunction with Cuero’s agency forms a vital part of the *Autobiography*.¹¹ Cuero’s narrative together with Shipek’s introductory and concluding material serve as a system of exchange of one form of knowledge for another; knowledge becomes a commodity, and hierarchies of knowledge become equalized. Cuero barter her extensive knowledge of the San Diego terrain and its ecosystems for Shipek’s research skills and knowledge of US bureaucratic systems. Material for the *Autobiography* was derived from two sources: research conducted by Shipek for the *Mission Indian Land Claims* case, in which Cuero was an informant,¹² and later, a series of interviews between Shipek and Cuero conducted to collect information for documentary proof of US origin to support Cuero’s quest for recognition of her citizenship rights. Constructed out of a series of interviews taken over the course of several years spanning the early to mid-1960s, Cuero’s narrative recitations originally served two purposes. The narrative is a series of pushes and pulls, of silences and ruptures, and of give and take between editor and subject, where the introduction and conclusion serve as a frame for the text, in effect closing Cuero off from her audience.

With a non-English-speaking subject and mediation of an editor and interpreter, the *Autobiography* at first glance has more in common with nineteenth-century American Indian autobiographies than those of the twentieth century in which it belongs. However, the context of its production and

Cuero's uncanny ability to manipulate the direction of the text set it apart from those earlier narratives.

Cuero's text narrates the history of the migration and eventual disintegration of her small, autonomous band of Kumeyaay Indians from the San Diego area into Baja California beginning at the turn of the twentieth century. Originally from Mission Valley, Cuero's parents left "when a lot of Chinese and Americans came . . . and told them that they had to leave."¹³ They eventually found refuge in a series of Kumeyaay villages in Mission Gorge, El Cajon, Jamacha, Jamul, and Cottonwood, hunting and gathering traditional foods and working for white ranchers where possible. This lifestyle in eastern San Diego county did not last long, and Cuero's band found themselves on the opposite side of the US-Mexican border, where they were welcomed into a Kumeyaay-speaking village at Ha-a, Baja California. Struggling to raise her children in Ha-a after the death of her husband, Cuero found she was unable to recross the border as a citizen of the United States because she lacked official documentation. A chance meeting with Florence Shippek led to their collaboration not only in Shippek's research, but also in finding a way to document Cuero's US origin as well.

Florence C. Shippek, Cuero's editor and amanuensis, was also an anthropologist who began her involvement with the Southern California Indian tribes in 1954, working on projects as diverse as water rights and the tribal rolls of the San Pasqual Band of Mission Indians.¹⁴ She first came into contact with Cuero while working as a researcher on the *Mission Indian Land Claims* case from 1959 to 1964, assigned to determine the identity of the Kamia Indians and their relationship to the Diegueño.¹⁵ Her search for "any surviving Diegueño Indians who had formerly lived along the San Diego coast"¹⁶ led Shippek to the Kumeyaay villages in Baja California, Mexico where Cuero was living at the time. "In contacting the elderly Indians," Shippek writes in her introduction, "my purpose was to obtain accurate information about Indian life in the San Diego coastal section."¹⁷ Cuero was one of a number of Kumeyaay informants who participated in Shippek's research on the *Mission Indian Land Claims* case.

Shippek's relationship with Cuero deepened over the years, and their joint research grew on the *Mission Indian Land Claims* case expanded to include personal interviews to document Cuero's citizenship status. As Cuero spoke only Kumeyaay, the interviews were conducted through the assistance of Rosalie Pinto Robertson, an enrolled member of the Campo Reservation and a relation of Cuero's deceased husband, who was fluent in both Kumeyaay and English. Shippek shares scant information as to the methods used in Cuero's interviews, making no mention of either the transcription process or her method of eliciting responses from Cuero. According to Shippek's introductory notes, both she and Rosalie Robertson "attempted to make the words and ideas [in the final text] adhere as closely as possible to Delfina's original expressions."¹⁸

The introduction and the narrative act together in conversation, at times mirroring each other, and at other times contradicting each other. In her introduction, Shippek appears to deny Cuero any sense of agency, stating in general terms of the Baja California Kumeyaay:

The Indians had no formal education, knew nothing of non-Indian law or that they had any rights whatsoever. They knew merely that in the past they had moved freely throughout Kumeyaay territory attending funerals, ceremonies, and going to major foodgathering grounds in the proper seasons. They knew nothing of an international border which cut their territory through the middle.¹⁹

It is not clear whether Shipek includes Cuero in her discussion of the “unwilling refugees”²⁰ from San Diego Kumeyaay territory. Shipek’s assumption of lack of agency on the part of Cuero or even of the Kumeyaay people in general is not borne out by the ethnographic record or by a careful reading of the narrative. Cuero may have had no formal education, but she certainly could not be counted among the group of Kumeyaay, if any existed, who “knew nothing of non-Indian law” or that they even “had any rights.” Through her strategic interactions with Shipek, it is clear she was aware of non-Indian legal texts and contexts. For Kumeyaay in Baja California, brushes with Mexican authorities were not uncommon.²¹ Indeed, reports from anthropologists working in Kumeyaay communities in Baja California prior to Shipek show that the people were well aware of the policing of the US-Mexico border.²² Later in the text, Shipek contradicts herself in the details of her account of Cuero’s reasons for cooperating with the research project:

Delfina was willing to cooperate completely in my research because she hoped if I knew the details of her life I might be able to find some document which would prove she came from the San Diego area, enabling her to return to the United States permanently with her children and grandchildren. She wanted a search made for any written record that might have been made by someone for whom her father worked. She also knew that some old Indians had baptismal records and wondered if such a record might have been made for her when she was born.²³

Thus, Cuero was not completely unaware of her rights as an individual and as a citizen of the United States. This passage reflects Cuero’s understanding of the complexities of the paper trails involved in US bureaucratic systems, from labor records to baptismal records of the Catholic Church, and their relationship to proving US origin. This is even more astonishing when one considers the statement that Cuero had “just heard about priests; [she] never saw one.”²⁴ Aware of the connection between employment and the legal right to be (or remain) in the United States, Cuero enlists Shipek’s assistance in searching for any record that might connect her to the land:

There was one old timer, a pretty old man who lived in Barrett that we worked for longer than most. I remember his name was Maxfield. He might still remember us if he is living, but I doubt it. He was pretty old then. I was very young but the whole family was working for him, my father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, and I.²⁵

For Cuero, every resource depends upon and is derived from the land: food, medicine, shelter, and employment are all derived from land-based resources. Her narrative reconstructs a specifically Kumeyaay landscape, one where international borders vanish. It is her intimate knowledge of the San Diego geography that will ultimately bring her home.

Shipek's search for written records pertaining to Cuero and her family's life in San Diego County was without success. As Shipek notes, "no church records exist for the Diegueño Indians between 1900 and 1919, the time during which she [Cuero] might have been baptized. The Catholic Church in El Cajon, which had charge of the Indians from 1900 on, was destroyed by fire in 1917 and the records burned."²⁶ The purpose of the narrative in its final form was to prove Cuero's US origin in lieu of the usual documentation such as a birth certificate or other form of government-issued identification. For Cuero, the collaborative narrative was not just a means of constructing subjectivity, but a deliberate, rhetorical act of proving her very existence.

The thematic order of the *Autobiography* is not chronological, but presented in the manner necessary to satisfy the requirements of US government bureaucracy. In keeping with its original purpose and context, the narrative begins in the form of sworn testimony: "My name is Delfina Cuero. I was born in [Jamacha] about sixty-five years ago [about 1900]."²⁷ Next begins the recitation of Cuero's genealogy: the names of her parents, and maternal and paternal grandparents. These beginning paragraphs anticipate questions of origin for Cuero's entire lineage: her parents and grandparents "were all born in Mission Valley" but "not raised in the Mission San Diego."²⁸ Her maternal grandmother is "buried somewhere in Mission Valley, but [she doesn't] know where."²⁹ Cuero then recites the series of "removals" her family has made. While making their way east, Cuero's father and at times the entire family worked for white ranchers, cutting trees, clearing brush, and doing general ranch work. While the men worked, the women and children continued their traditions of gathering wild food. As camp and food-gathering spots grew scarce due to the increasing number of settlers in the East Valley, Cuero's family group split up, only to be reunited south of the US-Mexico border:

My grandparents crossed the line first. In those days we didn't know it was a line, only that nobody chased them away from [Ha-a, the willows]. Ha-a people gave my grandfather and grandmother a place to stay. Later we went down there, my mother, father, and I. I was big, but not a woman yet when we went down there.³⁰

In this passage, it is clear that around 1910 when Cuero's family removed to Ha-a, their border crossing was not deliberate or conscious, nor a renunciation of US citizenship, but an attempt to look for a place "where nobody chased [them] away."³¹ Shipek then arranges the text in such a way as to anticipate the question of why the family did not seek refuge on one of the thirteen Kumeyaay reservations in San Diego County. Cuero responds:

We knew there were people up there living on what you call reservations. But nobody ever said we could go to a place like that. In those days when you were with one group, you stick with that group. You can't go in with another. Most of the people we knew went down there [Baja California] hunting for different food and they found a place where no one told them to move on, so they just stayed there. Some Indians were already at Ha-a who spoke the same Kumeyaay language, just as we did.³²

As Shipek notes in her introduction, Cuero's group did not feel free to move onto a reservation as "they were not related, nor invited. They also spoke a slightly different dialect."³³ With these anticipated questions concerning US birth, lineage, and foreign residence answered, detailed descriptions of the San Diego landscape and its ecosystems follow. At Ocean Beach, Cuero remembers hunting for abalone and other shellfish and sea vegetables. At Point Loma, or "Black Earth" in the Kumeyaay translation, the family gathered rock lettuce and prickly pear, and hunted rabbits. Pine nuts were harvested near present-day La Jolla or "land of holes." Traditional Kumeyaay territory stretches from the coast to the mountains, and Cuero recalls walking from the coast to the Cuyamacas and Laguna for acorns.

Interspersed with the descriptions of food gathering and preparation are Cuero's recollections of traditional ceremonies and practices, such as the mourning ceremony, the image dance, and the girls' puberty ceremony. Many of these ceremonies and dances were no longer being practiced in the Kumeyaay reservation communities in the United States, and were becoming less frequent in the Baja communities. Thus, Cuero was one of the last generations to live under the guidance of these remaining ceremonies and rituals; others, such as the puberty ceremony, she was only told of. For coastal people such as Cuero's group, practices such as the tattooing of the face and piercing of the nose stopped with her grandparents' generation. In contrast, Cuero's husband, who came from a mountain community, was tattooed on his forehead. According to Cuero, her husband's tattoo "was real pretty, blue green and real round, like the moon and about the size of a half dollar."³⁴ Rather than marking clan affiliations, as in many tribal groups, the Kumeyaay tattoos help one "go on the straight road" after death (40). Without the tattoo or nose piercing, a person "might turn into a stink bug with its end up in the air" and not be able to get near the straight road.³⁵ Cuero still follows these beliefs; as she states, "Now that I am getting old, I wonder if I should have a few lines tattooed so I won't have that happen to me when I die."³⁶

Cuero's husband, Sebastian Osun, came to Ha-a from Old Campo in San Diego when asked to take on the role of *kwaypay* or captain. As Cuero points out, "When there was trouble in the village, he acted as judge. . . . He called the villagers together for ceremonies, deaths, and other things. . . . He had to talk to the people during ceremonies and explain how things had always been done."³⁷ This ease of movement between Old Campo and Ha-a demonstrates the continuity and persistence of Kumeyaay culture despite the physical dissection of the land.

“I AM NOT A STORYTELLER”

Cuero saw her role as clearly defined in this system of exchange. In a section of the narrative where she discusses the harvesting of shellfish, Cuero alludes to a story “about the olivella shell,” relating that “when the dipper in the sky [the Big Dipper] gets too full, it is dumped out.” “Then these small shells fall all around near the ocean.”³⁸ But Cuero stops the story abruptly, stating, “There was more to it but I am not a storyteller and that is all I can remember.”³⁹ After briefly mentioning there are stories for the stars as well as stories explaining why the Dipper lies “differently in summer and winter,”⁴⁰ Cuero turns to a discussion of preparing fish.

Cuero’s abrupt silence creates a rupture in both the surface and depth of the text, as if she is resisting her editor’s attempts to mold her into a role other than what is rightfully hers. Cuero sees her role in this project as providing a certain type of information to Shipek. In traditional Kumeyaay society, her role was never that of storyteller, but of wife, mother, and traditional plant healer. And as the wife of a deceased *kwaypay* or ceremonial leader, it was even more incumbent upon her to observe the codes of Kumeyaay society. Her seeming unwillingness to “tell a story” is not mere evasiveness, but a refusal to step out of the boundaries of her traditional societal role.

This rupture of the narrative perhaps embodies Cuero’s ambivalence toward the project that, while designed to restore her citizenship rights, entails the violation of taboos such as the naming of deceased friends and relatives, and the disclosure of aspects of Kumeyaay ceremonial activities to outsiders. Cuero’s ambivalence can also be detected in the sole story Cuero eventually does tell in her narrative, that of the two crow girls and the coyote, which was originally told to her by her grandmother. Cuero prefaces this story by explaining that “the stories used to tell how people are and what to expect from other people in the way of behavior.” Her version of this traditional story begins in the time when animals spoke and interacted with humans. A coyote pursues the two crow girls into the sky, one of whom falls in love with him. Her sister convinces her that the coyote is “too different” and will hurt them, and cuts coyote’s rope, causing him to plunge to the ground.⁴¹ Cuero explains the meaning of this story as: “how we have to watch men—there are some good and some bad men.”⁴² She continues as if to admonish her listener: “The old people did not have to tell us what the story explained at the end of the story, but I am saying what it meant to us.”⁴³ The translated meaning of the word *men* in the narrative is unclear; it may mean male humans or simply human beings. Thus, Cuero’s story can be read on two levels. When read as *male humans*, then the story warns young girls against predatory men. If the meaning is read as *human beings*, it can be read as a cautionary tale against outsiders, such as Shipek, a non-Kumeyaay. As she indicates prior to telling this particular story to Shipek, stories were used as an instructional device to explain human behavior. Cuero explains there are “some good” non-Kumeyaay and “some bad.” Not only is Coyote (a non-Kumeyaay) a “bad man,” but “he’s too different” from the two crow girls, and will only “hurt” them. This story, then, also tells the Kumeyaay listeners, for whom it is primarily

meant, what type of behavior to be on guard for from non-Kumeyaay.⁴⁴ These anecdotes allude to a certain protocol that governs the telling of stories, one that carries implications from the turn of the twentieth century to the time of Cuero's extensive interviews in the mid-1960s. For Cuero, traditional stories are told within a specific tribal cultural context, and not as commodities to be bartered or sold. Similarly, the role of a storyteller is proscribed by the group, and not taken upon oneself.

PUBLICATION HISTORY

In 1968 Dawson's Book Shop of Los Angeles, California first published *The Autobiography of Delfina Cuero, a Diegueño Indian, as Told to Florence C. Shipek* as volume 12 of their Baja California Travels Series in a hardcover edition of six hundred copies that quickly sold out. In 1970 the book was reprinted in paperback by the Malki Museum Press in an arrangement with Dawson's Book Shop, retaining the original frontispiece photograph of Cuero and adding a preface by anthropologist Lowell Bean.⁴⁵ With the Malki edition out of print, the title was unavailable until Ballena Press brought out a new edition in 1991 that is now in its eighth printing.

With the expanded Ballena Press edition, the title of the narrative changed to the rather unwieldy *Delfina Cuero: Her Autobiography, An Account of Her Last Years and Her Ethnobotanic Contributions* to reflect the additional new material. The credited author remains Shipek, while the frontispiece photograph of Cuero with her mark below it is replaced by one of Cuero with her interpreter, Rosalie Robertson, and two of her Kumeyaay relatives, Isabel Thing and Matilda Osuna. The cover carries a new photograph of Cuero sitting on a grinding rock, with a grinding stone in her hand, the Kumeyaay landscape at her back.

Where Cuero's mark once symbolized her illiterate state within Western society, her photograph now fixes her firmly within traditional Kumeyaay land as an individual with a history and a story. While Shipek may have the first and last words of the *Autobiography*, Cuero's distinct voice leaves her indelible impression on the text.

NARRATING CITIZENSHIP, NARRATING COMMUNITY: BONITA NUÑEZ'S *DIARIES*

Art historian Kathleen Ash-Milby aptly describes Bonita Nuñez as "both blessed and cursed by the circumstances of her birth."⁴⁶ While her adoption by a wealthy white woman saved her from an early life of extreme poverty and deprivation, it also deprived her of the Indian family and community she was to seek so desperately in her later life. Without a tribal context or structure from which to operate, Nuñez wavered between two disparate personas: that of an "Indian princess" and that of Indian activist and social reformer. From the records she has left behind, she was never able to resolve the two.

Nuñez's *Diaries* defies easy classification and analysis as an American Indian narrative. It is not my intention to cast doubt on Nuñez's authenticity as a Native

writer; her story is merely one of the many “lost birds”⁴⁷ of Indian communities across generations and across the continent, and it deserves to be told. Her narrative, and those of countless others like her, attests to the complexity and diversity of contemporary American Indian experience. In the case of Nuñez, an Indian woman adopted out of her Native community and writing in a nontraditional form during the early to mid-twentieth century, the available critical models simply do not fit. This speaks volumes as to the limitations of both current Native critical theory and the imaginations of both Native and non-Native scholars. Even the tribal-centered or tribal-centric approach stumbles over Nuñez’s narrative, rendering it inaccessible by putting up barriers and boundaries rather than breaking them down to allow greater understanding. Lacking a tribal historical or cultural context through no fault of her own, the tribal-centered critic is unable to examine Nuñez’s text “for elements taken from orature or ceremony and for indices of Indianness as defined by the dominant culture.”⁴⁸ As Cherokee scholar Jace Weaver has noted, it is “only when we relate Native literatures to, and situate them in, Native history and the changes in Native cultures can we begin to understand them.”⁴⁹ This section, then, is my attempt to situate Nuñez’s life and writings in the context of a lost bird, a Native woman removed at birth from her community and culture, left to live out her life in the margins of history.

Other than her date of death, little can be confirmed about Bonita Nuñez. No official record of her birth exists, and as the Rincon Band of Luiseño Indians had no formal tribal roll until 1923, there is no record of her as an “official Indian.” Likewise, information on her adoptive mother, Mary Duggan, and her brother, Dr. Cornelius Duggan, is scarce. According to Nuñez’s account, the Duggans were wealthy people, living in Manhattan on Riverside Drive where Dr. Duggan was an early cancer researcher and Mary Duggan was a suffragette, spiritualist, and early “friend of the Indian.” They treated Nuñez as an “Indian Princess,” referring to her as “Princess Wa Wa,” dressing her in “buckskins and beads,”⁵⁰ and educating her at home with a series of private tutors. Perhaps as a result of this treatment, Nuñez was intensely aware of her difference, both as a Native person and as an adoptee, from an early age. Married in the 1920s to Miguel Carmonia-Nuñez, a Puerto Rican cigar manufacturer, she gave birth to at least one child that died in early childhood. According to her editor, Stan Steiner, neither the marriage nor the birth or death of her child, Tee Tee, can be confirmed from public records.⁵¹ After the death of her adoptive parents and the dissolution of her marriage, Nuñez engaged in a number of different occupations to earn her living, ranging from peddling an herbal liniment on the streets of New York, to performing and lecturing on the Chataqua Circuit, to selling her paintings in art shows in Greenwich Village. Nuñez passed away in 1972 at the age of eighty-four, after first having “sent twenty of her favorite paintings to the Museum of the American Indian.”⁵²

Similarly, little information exists on Nuñez’s relationship with Steiner other than what can be found in his introduction to the *Diaries*. From the published record, the two seem to have first met while Steiner was interviewing American Indians for his book *The New Indians*, published in 1968.⁵³ In a chapter on

the federal relocation program and urban Indians, Steiner devotes a page to Nuñez, calling her “one of the earliest of the city Indians in New York” and “one of the oldest.”⁵⁴ Modestly, however, Nuñez refuses to reveal her age, only admitting that a white family adopted her at birth “before the earthquake in San Francisco.”⁵⁵ He identifies her as “Princess Wa Wa Chaw—Mrs. Bonita Nuñez,” and notes that her housing project apartment is cluttered with souvenirs, news stories, books, and mementos of her days on the vaudeville stage, of her time dancing with Isadora Duncan, and “books on the mysteries of the occult.”⁵⁶ Oddly enough, the posthumous diaries corroborate none of these details.

Steiner’s involvement as editor complicates Nuñez’s text. His introduction magnifies the “spiritualist” undertones of her diary entries, casting her in the role of a psychic and “Spirit Woman.”⁵⁷ She may have placed Steiner’s name on her hospital admission records in 1982. At one point he calls her his “grandmother,” and notes that Nuñez referred to him as her “grandson” to her neighbors. In the introduction to the *Diaries*, he reports that a social worker called him to advise of her death. Steiner has Nuñez deciding to die “one spring day,” checking herself into the hospital, and telling the nurses, “I have come to die.” Despite the lack of any apparent medical condition, Nuñez reportedly died that same day. She was cremated according to her wishes, and although he was said to be her adopted grandson, Steiner writes, “I do not know what happened to her ashes.”⁵⁸

THE *DIARIES* AS DOCUMENT

Stan Steiner discovered what are referred to as Bonita Nuñez’s diaries in an old trunk in Nuñez’s apartment in Spanish Harlem after her death.⁵⁹ While Phillippe LeJeune’s work has shown “the extreme diversity of diary forms and functions,”⁶⁰ Nuñez’s so-called diaries have more in common with memoir than the diary form. Handwritten in pencil on thirty-eight “five-and-dime store”⁶¹ drawing pads, most appear to be written at the end of her life rather than contemporaneous with actual events and, with a few exceptions, are undated. Among the drawing pads were “thousands of odd pieces of paper covered with scribbled messages and poetry. She had written on anything she could find: envelopes from welfare checks, leaflets, advertising folders, a broadside announcing a ‘Minstrel Show’ of the Harlem Elks’ Club in 1924.”⁶² Also found in the trunk were photographs and drawings in pencil and pen-and-ink.

From these notebooks and other ephemera, Steiner created the published *Diaries*, keeping intact Nuñez’s original (mis)spelling, irregular capitalization, and fragmented sentences, and representing in italic font the words she underlined for emphasis. Ordered into twenty-two thematic chapters, the entries cover Nuñez’s early childhood, her training under Dr. Duggan as a medical illustrator, her memories of her adoptive parents, her marriage, and her early work as an activist for Indian citizenship. Perhaps even more telling is what is not discussed: the deaths of her adoptive parents, the dissolution of her marriage, and the decades of work that are virtually ignored.

The diary entries are fragmentary and often inconclusive impressions of events or themes in Nuñez’s life. In writing on feminist autobiography,

Leigh Gilmore notes that “the autobiographical subject is a representation and its representation is its construction. The autobiographical subject is produced not by experience but by autobiography.”⁶³ In this particular case, the construction of the autobiographical subject is a collaborative venture, made up of the entries of Nuñez, her included drawings and paintings, and Steiner’s imaginative orderings. It is a difficult, if not impossible, task to separate one from the other, to differentiate the actual Nuñez from the constructed Nuñez.

As a text, the *Diaries* cross genres in much the same way as Nuñez crossed social and racial borders. Supplementing the entries are drawings, color plates of paintings, and two photographs of Nuñez. One in particular, a penciled self-portrait at the age of ten, works as a visual construction of Nuñez’s autobiographical act. She depicts herself as a child with distinctly adult features, dressed in a pan-Indian outfit: a geometrical patterned, fringed dress, a choker around her neck, wearing leggings and moccasins. The figure holds an open book in her hands with a bookstand behind her. To the bottom right of the figure the title of the sketch is given as “Reading of the Dictionary.” At the middle left appears the notation “Rincon tribe—Tule River. Born Wa-Wa Calac Chaw California Valley Centre.” To the middle right three lines of vaguely Native-like symbols possibly represent, for Nuñez, an attempt at “writing Indian,” reminiscent of those she would later incorporate into the signature used on her paintings.

Additional text appears to have been added to the sketch at a later date based on a visual examination of the darkness of the pencil lead. At the top of the figure is handwritten “Wa-Wa-Chaw—a sketch of Myself at the age of ten. Mother Mary Duggan taught me the secret of tolerance.”⁶⁴ The text then wraps itself around the head of the figure down the left side, continuing in the words of Mary Duggan:

Wa-Wa in Life you will see hear and know that many truths are not true. A friend may not read nor write. His or Her can possess a fine clean character. Tolerance can help you to take the time to understand the other person. Reasoning of why they think the way they do. And acted.⁶⁵

Wrapping itself around the right side of the figure, the Native-like symbols, and down the side of the dictionary stands an additional sentence that reads: “I never had any childhood friends from the time I can remember. . . . I have been surrounded by adults.”⁶⁶ Here, the figure of the child Wa-Wa is literally surrounded on one side by the voice and words of her adoptive mother, Mary Duggan; on the other, the absence of any childhood friends save the dictionary. The final result is an unbalanced composition, with the right or childhood side of the sketch suspended in open space. Lacking any sense of reassurance or maternal tenderness, the words of “Mother Duggan” do not counterbalance the loss of a normal childhood. The sketch and Duggan’s words are vaguely unsettling, lending credence to Nuñez’s statement that “I have never been a little child.”⁶⁷

In Nuñez's retelling of her life story, her adoptive parents seem to have treated her as more of a trophy or prized possession than an actual living child. As an infant, she was "dressed and undressed,"⁶⁸ and entered in a beauty contest where she won fifty dollars. She accompanied Mary Duggan on her rounds of women's club meetings and, appropriately dressed from head to toe in black, even to a series of séances presided over by the visiting Sir Oliver Lodge at the home of May Peper Vanderbilt. For this occasion, Nuñez writes, "I was prettied up . . . I [was] kissed, kissed, loved and hugged, and caressed."⁶⁹ She was showered with books to develop and improve her mind and indulged when she asked for pets such as a parrot, and the two rabbits on which Dr. Duggan spent nearly two thousand dollars in 1898 funds before the animals died. She was educated by a series of private teachers, with no friends her own age, surrounded by adults.

Noting "My youth was spent under the Observation lens of the Human Eye,"⁷⁰ Nuñez was handled as a specimen, an example of what the Indian could achieve if given the proper circumstances. Constant attention was paid to her "impressionable and susceptible" mind, alternately cautioning her to rest and to work. Taught to play chess at the age of five, she was required to engage in a match with Dr. Duggan every evening for fifteen minutes in a system designed to train her mind to think analytically. She was also trained at an early age as a medical illustrator, drawing cancerous organs and tissues for Duggan and his medical colleagues. As Nuñez explains, "I was told that the need of an unmolested subconsciousness Mind would help them in their research work."⁷¹ In this way, she was objectified as a type of specimen: the primitive Indian.

The ruptured form of many of the entries recalls Nuñez's feelings at being removed from her birth mother. The text begins with the chapter heading "The Child Victim of Being Born," reflecting Nuñez's thoughts on the circumstances of her birth. She writes, "I was born of the curse of being poor, My real Mother having to part with a new born child. My Indian Mother, although ignorant, must have suffered when she parted with Me."⁷² This entry reflects a feeling of ambivalence toward her birth mother, who is both ignorant and suffering. In the same entry, her adoptive father is described as "a Great Man and a fine gentleman," and mother as an "educated woman," having "culture imprinted on every line in her make-up or personality."⁷³ In other entries, she describes the circumstances of her birth and subsequent adoption in terms of being "robbed" and "stolen." If it were not for "the curse of being poor," a socioeconomic factor she was later to attribute to the Department of Indian Affairs and its successors, she seems to say, her birth mother would not have had to give her up.

CREATING COMMUNITY

Nuñez seems to have been drawn to other Indians at the same time as she was repelled by them. Lacking any tribal context, her sense of Indianness was pan-tribal, erasing any sense of tribal historical and cultural difference. Further, her notion of being Indian was unduly influenced by her adoptive mother's

dabbling in the New Thought movement and spiritualism. She recalls walking down 23rd Street in New York City and being stopped by another Indian woman who asks her, as all Indians ask each other, where she came from. Nuñez later visits Mrs. Red Eagle in her slum apartment alone, hiding this journey from her mother, and finds the Red Eagles and their visitors intoxicated, something that disturbs her greatly. Comparing them to visitors in her mother's home, she concludes, "I did not understand drunken Indians."⁷⁴

Her contacts with other Indians are modeled after those of Mary Duggan. As Nuñez describes her, she "was a humanitarian. Always she was doing things for the forsaken Indian."⁷⁵ She seems unaware of the irony implicit in this statement, and the number of ways this statement can be interpreted. From the viewpoint of her friends and acquaintances, the most extreme example of Duggan's humanitarianism was her adoption of Nuñez, who can also be seen as the "forsaken Indian." While Nuñez and Duggan both strove to find jobs for those Indians that made their way to New York City, Duggan was especially dismayed when they wanted to return home. Nuñez recalls her exclaiming, "I will discover the secret of why they desire to return to their mud huts."⁷⁶ There appears to be an element of patronage involved in Duggan's humanitarian work—she assisted only those who fit her image of Indianness. The Right Reverend Dr. Red Wing, a Christian minister and guest at the Duggan table, did not fare as well as other more "traditional" Indians, and was given a return ticket home shortly afterward. There was no place for his talk of "what God *can* do" in a home that was essentially agnostic.⁷⁷ There is no critique of Duggan's "humanitarianism" in Nuñez's writings, only reportage. Her encounter with Dr. Red Wing left her feeling as if she were "shocked . . . into a state of Mental illness."⁷⁸ Of course, any mention of God at the Duggans's dinner table may have elicited such a physical and emotional response, but the fact that Dr. Red Wing was Indian made for a double blow. Nuñez's abrupt departure from her tribal community left her unable to "read" and understand contemporary Indians of her era effectively. Hampered by her adoptive mother's narrow view of Indianness and Indian history, and bereft of community, her only tools for reflection and understanding were her writing and her art.

Nuñez was brought up as a showcase Indian, one that Mary Duggan presented to the Department of Indian Affairs officials as an example of "what the Indian can do." Duggan was in constant communication with the Department of the Interior over matters of federal Indian policy. One summer, she and Nuñez embarked upon a tour of the western reservations, which also included a stop at the Carlisle Indian School to visit "General Pratt."⁷⁹ At Carlisle, Nuñez was introduced to Pratt, and asked him if he had "ever killed an Indian."⁸⁰

This trip seems to have signaled a shift in Nuñez's consciousness. No longer was she the pampered child of a wealthy New York socialite and her bachelor brother. While Duggan had made many trips to the west, including the trip on which she "adopted" Nuñez, Nuñez had never seen an Indian community. She writes,

And [I] had no Knowledge what a Reservation was, having been legally adopted by Mother Duggan, surrounded with everything a child should desire, and with all the love and care. I was to learn that in this World there were people belonging to my Race living in misery.⁸¹

In contrast to the activism Nuñez was to take on after this trip, her earlier efforts at speaking on behalf of Indian rights seem rote. Her sense of Indian identity appears to have undergone a transition as well, from thinking of herself as an individual to a member of a larger Indian community. She writes of the time immediately following the trip, "The fall of the year would find us home in an apartment far from the Mud Huts and wooden shacks. I could never forget I was born in one of them."⁸² And further complicating the relationship with her adoptive mother, and the relationship between the Indian "ward" and the Department of Indian Affairs, she reflects:

Mother had Created a little *ward* unconsciously, and they saw to it that I *would* not get the chance of the necessary political *development* required by the Indian Department of the Government. My family showered Me with so much affection. I was unable to see the real World I was Living in with all the inhumanity Created by mankind. Mother was fighting not for Me, but for the *Indian Race* of the U.S.A.⁸³

Simultaneously a ward of her adoptive parents and a ward of the federal government, Nuñez slowly became politicized on her own terms. Although she first spoke in public for Indian rights at the age of ten at the urging of Mary Duggan and Carrie Chapman Catt, she seems to have been more of a prop or mouthpiece than an activist on her own terms. She found her political calling as a young woman during World War I, when she took an Indian friend to the US Army recruiting station at Columbia University, only to be told, "You people are not American citizens."⁸⁴ This incident mobilized her, putting her in contact with Indian activist Carlos Montezuma, who was already her mother's friend. Reflecting on this period of time in a diary entry she writes, "I Knew that someday American Citizenship would be given to My People. What we wanted was full Citizenship Rights."⁸⁵

Nuñez devotes a number of entries to Montezuma, calling him a "Lone Wolf" in the fight for Indian rights. Adopted as a young boy by white parents, he and Nuñez had much in common, and he seems to have been a great inspiration to her. She writes,

I was interested in the Idea of crossing the U.S.A. I wanted to go to Riverside, California. And I feared Mother had made plans for Europe . . . I began to ask *Questions*. I wanted to Know more about Myself. Dr. Montezuma Was put into My way to help Me *overcome* this feeling, which became more Photographic on My Consciousness.⁸⁶

Nuñez's friendship with Montezuma seems to have sparked an interest in her birth origins. Because of the nonlinear and fragmented nature of the *Diaries*, as well as the fact they are for the most part not dated, it is often difficult to determine in what order events took place. A careful reading of the entries reveals that Nuñez and Marry Duggan came to know Montezuma in the years leading up to his death in 1923. However, Nuñez makes at least one earlier reference to an attempt at contact by her birth mother. In the section entitled "The Voice of Death: I Have Tried to Locate My Own Mother," she relates,

[One year] *Mother visited* the Indian school, [the] *Sherman Institute*. I was not surprised *because* I was receiving mail from an *unknown* writer.

It seemed that My *real Mother's Name was Calac* Chaw. And a friend, Mrs. McNulty, had contacted someone at the Indian *school* who knew Mother Duggan and had some Knowledge of My Indian Mother and other *children*.⁸⁷

Nuñez makes no further comment regarding the letters from the unknown writer, or what became of Mary Duggan's visit to the Sherman Institute. Immediately following this passage, after a section break, Nuñez writes of a visit to California to locate her birth mother accompanied by two unnamed friends, a visit that probably occurred after the deaths of Mary and Cornelius Duggan. The description of the visit is ambiguous, perhaps deliberately so. While staying with an Indian family some seventy-five miles from Valley Center, California, the place of her birth, Nuñez becomes witness to the silence of the white community surrounding an act of violence resulting in injury and death to two Indian boys. While intervening on behalf of the families at the hospital, she is warned by a white doctor that her "Life would not be worth two *cents*. You are only *Indian*."⁸⁸ After the funeral ceremony for the deceased boy, Nuñez leaves, having come from so far to be so close to the place of her birth. This unnamed California Indian community is as close as she will come to the traditions and customs of the people she was born for. She notes of the women in the group, "they all stood with their *heads* lifted high. They all walked back from the little Box without *turning* their backs for almost a half *mile*. So I did what they did. And followed their Idea of mourning."⁸⁹ From being a perpetual outsider, for once, she becomes an insider, participating in this group's funerary traditions.

After this trip, Nuñez seems to have made no further attempts at locating her birth mother and reconnecting with her community. Looking back in time, she appears to have been tantalizingly close to locating her family: Calac is and was a common Luiseño name as is Chawa.⁹⁰ In fact, with her adoptive family's connections to the Carlisle Indian School, it is inconceivable that Nuñez would not have heard of Pete Calac, Carlisle's star football player, also a Luiseño from the Rincon Reservation, and a possible relative. And in an entry believed by Steiner to have been written shortly after World War I, Nuñez writes of having six other Indians then living in New York City meeting

at her apartment to discuss “the problem of what the Indian could do given the proper amount of schooling,” including a student from the Sherman Institute in Riverside, California named Lewis Calac.⁹¹ Also, in August of 1922, Nuñez published a poem entitled “The Indian Game” in *The Indian*, the magazine of the Mission Indian Federation, under the name Wa-Wa Chaw. It is clear she had the resources and means at her disposal to locate her birth family, if she so chose to go through with the search.

Whatever her reasons, Nuñez seems to have chosen to create a life for herself as an urban Indian in New York City, rather than continue her attempts to reconnect with the Rincon community. Still, the absence of her birth mother as well as the loss of her own daughter affected her deeply. This sense of loss and ambivalence toward motherhood is reflected in many of her paintings and drawings, which feature maternal figures and images painted with broad brush strokes and strong colors, the antithesis of “Indian art” of the period.⁹² In *Birth of a Baby*, which captures the exact moment of birth, the mother’s face is outside the boundary of the painting; the focus is on the infant as it emerges from the mother’s body. Kathleen Ash-Milby suggests that *Birth of a Baby* should be read as a self-portrait, with the mother in the painting remaining “anonymous to the viewer, just as the artist’s biological mother remained a stranger to her.”⁹³ Interestingly, the *Diaries* include a pencil sketch of another maternal scene: that of the young Nuñez with “Mother” Mary Duggan, whose face bears a gentle smile. Here, Duggan has her arms wrapped around the young girl, who rests her head on Duggan’s chest.

Jace Weaver argues that “by writing out of and into Native community, for and to Native peoples, [Native] writers engage in a continuing search for community.”⁹⁴ For Nuñez, writing, art, and activism were ways of crafting an Indian identity for herself as well as a continuing search for an Indian community in which she could belong.

CANONICITY AND NATIVE AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN THE MARGINS OF HISTORY

The personal narratives of Delfina Cuero and Bonita Nuñez are but two examples from a genre that is as diverse and as complex as Indian America. At the same time, these narratives disrupt the expectations that readers and critics have come to assume for American Indian autobiography. Their life experiences depart from the “traditional” story line, and the setting is not the Great Plains or Southwest, but southern California and Mexico. Cuero is a nonreservation Indian in twentieth-century America, yet possibly more “traditional” than her reservation counterparts. Nuñez, in contrast, was removed from her family and community at birth, and spent her life attempting to reintegrate herself into a larger, pan-Indian community. In a 1993 speech prepared for the Great Plains Writers Conference, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn posed the question, “Who gets to tell the stories?” She then answers this question, “Those who get to tell the stories are the people America wants to listen to.”⁹⁵ If Cook-Lynn’s answer is applied to the reception and critical history of such noncanonical texts as those of Cuero and Nuñez, then perhaps they are not the stories America wants to

listen to. There are no tales here of counting coups, horseback riding on the plains, or the creation of intricate baskets. Their stories are of daily subsistence and survival in the margins of both Indian and US history. At the same time, their life stories force us to confront crucial issues of Indian legal and cultural identity, and their effect on individual lives. It is through noncanonical, marginal texts such as these that we can begin to understand the myriad forms of American Indian women's experiences throughout the twentieth century.

NOTES

The author would like to thank Christine Danelski and Michelle Raheja for their insightful readings of earlier drafts of this essay, and for the suggestions and comments made by the three anonymous readers.

1. Gretchen M. Bataille and Kathleen Mullen Sands, *American Indian Women: Telling Their Lives* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 3.

2. The Kumeyaay people were formerly known as Diegueño or Mission Indians due to their proximity to and relationship with the San Diego de Alcalá Mission. Kumeyaay is the people's name for themselves.

3. For a discussion of the early reception of Nuñez's art, see Kathleen Ash-Milby, "Indian Identity and Evaluating the Past: Bonita Wa Wa Calachaw Nuñez, an Indian Princess Painter," in *Painters, Patrons and Identity*, ed. Joyce M. Szabo (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001). Nuñez's status as an American Indian artist and the value of her work seem to be undergoing a reappraisal. One of Nuñez's paintings from the early 1940s appears in a prominent full-color gallery advertisement in the Autumn 2005 issue of *American Indian Art*. Reviews of *Spirit Woman* were generally negative, taking issue with Nuñez's depiction as a writer and "mystic." Helen Jaskoski terms the book as "editorially... a mess," and "lack[ing] the engaging directness of transcriptions or oral life histories, like *Mountain Wolf Woman* or *Me and Mine*." Helen Jaskoski, review of *Spirit Woman: The Diaries and Paintings of Bonita Wa Wa Calachaw Nuñez*, by Bonita Wa Wa Calachaw Nuñez, ed. Stan Steiner, *International Journal of Women's Studies* 4 (1981): 546–49. Kay Sands calls it a "Gothic horror story," reserving most of her criticism for the heavy-handed editing by Stan Steiner. Kay Sands, review of *Spirit Woman: The Diaries and Paintings of Bonita Wa Wa Calachaw Nuñez*, by Bonita Wa Wa Calachaw Nuñez, ed. Stan Steiner, *Studies in American Indian Literature* 1, no. 4 (1980): 58–59. Linda Hogan takes a more generous view, referring to it as a "book of conflicts" and "the tragic memoirs of a woman who spent her life trying to mend broken connections." Linda Hogan, review of *Spirit Woman: The Diaries and Paintings of Bonita Wa Wa Calachaw Nuñez*, by Bonita Wa Wa Calachaw Nuñez, ed. Stan Steiner, *Frontiers* 6 (1982): 126–27.

4. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, "Life and Death in the Mainstream of American Indian Biography," *Wicazo Sa Review* 11 (1995): 92.

5. According to Kathleen Mullen Sands, "a brief scanning of bibliographies of Native American autobiographies demonstrates that most Native narratives published before the 1960s (and many recently published) bear the name of the collector, not the narrator, as sole author." Kathleen Mullen Sands, "Collaboration or Colonialism: Text and Process in Native American Women's Autobiographies," *MELUS* 22 (1997): 39–59.

6. Although the Ballena Press edition (1991) of the *Autobiography* remains in print and the text is considered a classic of California Indian writing, it has received little critical attention to date. The sole published articles on the *Autobiography* are Phillip H. Round's "There Was More to It, but That Is All I Can Remember": The Persistence of History and *The Autobiography of Delfina Cuero*," *The American Indian Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (1997): 121–93, and "Delfina Cuero: A Native Woman's Life in the Borderlands," in *Sifters: Native American Women's Lives*, ed. Theda Purdue (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 187–203. Round analyzes Cuero's life and text from the standpoint of "borderlands theory and the discourse of immigration" (1997, 172).

7. Greg Sarris, *Keeping Slug Woman Alive: A Holistic Approach to American Indian Texts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 83.

8. Arnold Krupat, *For Those Who Come After: A Study of Native American Autobiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 31.

9. Krupat, 31.

10. Sarris, 85.

11. Here, I employ the term *context of production* rather than Sands's "process of creation" to place greater emphasis on the purpose of the narrative: to assist in proving Cuero's claim to US origin.

12. This is Shipek's term.

13. Florence Shipek, *Delfina Cuero: Her Autobiography, An Account of Her Last Years and Her Ethnobotanic Contributions* (Menlo Park, CA: Ballena Press, 1991), 23.

14. Florence Shipek, *Pushed into the Rocks: Southern California Indian Land Tenure, 1769–1986* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), xiii.

15. *Ibid.*, xiv.

16. Shipek, *Delfina Cuero*, 7.

17. *Ibid.*, 11.

18. *Ibid.*, 17.

19. *Ibid.*, 10–11.

20. *Ibid.*, 12.

21. William J. Hohenthal Jr. *Tipai Ethnographic Notes: A Baja California Indian Community at Mid-Century* (Novato: Ballena Press, 2001), 241.

22. Hohenthal Jr., 76. Two of Hohenthal's Kumeyaay collaborators, Ricardo Calles and Pedro Aldama, related they were unable to cross the border at Mexicali, Tecate, or Campo; Calles was able to cross easily at Yuma in 1942. There seems to be a consensus that the border "tightened up in 1931–1932."

23. Shipek, *Delfina Cuero*, 15–16.

24. *Ibid.*, 53.

25. *Ibid.*, 24.

26. *Ibid.*, 16.

27. *Ibid.*, 23.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid.*, 26.

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.*, 10.

34. *Ibid.*, 39.

35. Ibid., 40.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., 54–55.
38. Ibid., 29.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., 41.
42. Ibid., 42.
43. Ibid.

44. Cuero was not the only Kumeyaay person unwilling to tell certain stories to outsiders. While doing ethnographic fieldwork in Baja Kumeyaay communities in 1949, William Hohenthal Jr. was told that no one knew legends or myths although he was informed that “legends and traditions are called *cukwanao kena:p*” from *kena:p* or “talking.” Writing in 1905, Constance Goddard DuBois presents the following account of obtaining legends or myths from the Kumeyaay: “My friend, the old chief of the Diegueños, Cinon Duro . . . has told me some of these sacredly guarded myths; but his wrath fell upon his brother Antonio because he, without permission, had related to me the story of *Cuy-a-ho-marr*, which I published in the *Journal of American Folklore* under the title ‘The Story of Chaup.’”

45. The Malki Museum Press, located on the Morongo reservation, specializes in titles on California Indians.

46. Ash-Milby, 119–40.

47. The term *lost bird* refers to Indian children removed from their homes and adopted into non-Indian families. The phrase has its origins in the story of Zintkala Nuni, the lost bird of Wounded Knee, who was adopted by General Leonard Colby following the Wounded Knee Massacre on 29 December 1890. Nuñez’s case has a number of striking similarities with that of Zintkala Nuni, although her removal from Rincon precedes the Wounded Knee Massacre by two years.

48. Jace Weaver, *That the People Might Live: Native American Literatures and Native American Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 164.

49. Ibid., 165.

50. Steiner, *Spirit Woman*, xiii.

51. Ibid., xiv.

52. Ibid., xi.

53. Stan Steiner, *The New Indians*, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1968).

54. Ibid., 183–84.

55. Ibid., 183.

56. Ibid.

57. Steiner, *Spirit Woman*, xviii.

58. Ibid., xii.

59. Ibid., xvi–xvii.

60. Phillippe LeJeune, “How Do Diaries End?” *Biography* 24 (2001): 105

61. Steiner, *Spirit Woman*, xvii.

62. Ibid.

63. Leigh Gilmore, *Autobiographics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 25.

64. Steiner, *Spirit Woman*, 21.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.
67. Ibid, 7.
68. Ibid, 78.
69. Ibid., 28.
70. Ibid., 10.
71. Ibid.
72. Ibid., 3.
73. Ibid., 2–3.
74. Ibid., 211.
75. Ibid., 2.
76. Ibid., 195.
77. Ibid., 182.
78. Ibid., 183.
79. Richard Pratt was actually a Captain. Nuñez recalls him erroneously as a general.
80. Steiner, *Spirit Woman*, 100.
81. Ibid., 101.
82. Ibid., 102.
83. Ibid., 102–3.
84. Ibid., 189.
85. Ibid., 59.
86. Ibid., 218.
87. Ibid., 110.
88. Ibid., 112.
89. Ibid., 111.
90. Both these surnames appear in the records of the Pala Indian Agency, Calac with greater frequency. James R. Young, Dennis Moristo, and G. David Tenenbaum, eds. *An Inventory of the Pala Indian Agency Records* (Los Angeles: UCLA American Indian Studies Center, 1976) 30, 33.
91. Steiner, *Spirit Woman*, 205.
92. For example, the art of the Kiowa 5, or the Dorothy Dunn School of painting from Santa Fe.
93. Ash-Milby, 123.
94. Jace Weaver, *That the People Might Live*., 164.
95. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, “Who Gets to Tell the Stories?” *Wicazo Sa Review* 9 (1993): 60–61.