The Material and Metaphoric in Adams' Three Roads to Magdelena: Coming of Age in a Southwest Borderland, 1890-1990

An Embodied Review Essay

Lucy E. Bailey
Oklahoma State University

Abstract

This essay engages with educational historian David Wallace Adams' award-winning oral history, *Three Roads to Magdalena: Coming of Age in a Southwest Borderland, 1890-1990,* to produce a series of layered readings focused on the borderlands and border crossings as methodological practice. Adams' remarkable text offers insights into the rich history of three intersecting groups living around a 'frontier' town in New Mexico and the diverse educational sites and practices through which children of the region learned and developed across one hundred years. In Adams' rendering, Magdalena emerges as a contested, textured, and utterly material site, a dusty village nestled in the mountains of Socorro county in which people have wrested a living, learned, and loved, and yet also a mythic site of possibility that animated people's hopes and dreams in the place-based ethnic and community histories of the U.S. West.

Introduction

This essay engages with educational historian David Wallace Adams' award-winning oral history, *Three Roads to Magdalena: Coming of Age in a Southwest Borderland, 1890-1990*, to produce a series of layered readings focused on the concepts of borderlands and border crossings as educational and methodological practice. I use Adams' text as an avenue to explore the educational "entanglements" (Coole

Magdalena, New Mexico (photo by Bailey) July, 2018

& Frost, 2010) of texts, authors, histories, readers, embodiment and place that surfaced from my reading. I begin by providing an overview of Adams' remarkable oral history, weaving in layers of theory to explore the metaphorical and material components of his text. I then shift to describing my sensory encounter with the physical place of Magdalena, where Adams carried out his study, as another form of border-crossing the text enabled for me. Adams' text offers insights into the rich history of three intersecting groups living around a 'frontier' town in New Mexico and the diverse educational sites and practices through which children of the region learned and developed across one hundred years. In Adams' artful rendering, Magdalena emerges as a contested and textured material site, a dusty village nestled in the mountains of Socorro county in which people have wrested a living, learned, and loved, and yet also a mythic site of possibility that animated people's hopes and dreams in the place-based ethnic and community histories of the U.S. West.

Circling around Magdalena as both idea and place, Adams presents what he calls a "borderland history" of the intersecting lives of diverse Alamo Navajo, Hispano, and Anglo peoples in the region through 160 oral histories he collected over decades. The text centers through oral tradition the histories of everyday people and conceptualizes education both within and beyond the borders of schools. Adams began asking questions about the region and the lives of the local people when he travelled there in the early 1980s to teach on the Alamo Navajo reservation south of Albuquerque, New Mexico. He became interested in the area as a site of ethnocultural borderlands, and began interviewing local people, review-

ing secondary sources, and collecting primary documents to explore its historical dynamics. As the years passed, his archive of materials slowly grew. One of the women Adams interviewed, Candaleria Garcia, remarked that he would "someday get all of the stories" of Magdalena's history; When Adams completed the study, he acknowledged that he was unable to accomplish this vision, but he indeed "got a lot of them" (p. xiii).

The 400-page text spans a century of history, beginning with an overview of dynamics as Spanish and Anglo colonizers moved into the expansive, arid region where indigenous peoples had long lived, then detailing the hard-scrabble existence families carved out in farming, ranching, and mining during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and ending with a glimpse of the multicultural dynamics in the Magdalena high school in the 1980s. Adams divides the text into three sections. Early chapters focus on religion, work and play, and social activities as central sites of learning. The second section focuses on "points of contact" in formal schooling (p. 145). The final section traces persisting barriers as well as changes in intra-group dynamics, ending with a story about a hopeful note that an Alamo Navajo girl wrote to an Anglo boy to capture the enduring power of youth to reach across borders of many kinds. For some readers, Adams' potent descriptions of cultural tensions and the gritty life will hit too close to home. In one review, historian Adrea Lawrence (2017) follows her praise of the text's 'nuanced' portrait of childhood in New Mexico with her comment that the reading process was sometimes difficult because it stimulated sensory memories from her upbringing in a rural area. The text is indeed suffused with sensory writing inviting the reader to experience sights and sounds that people, residents, and researchers alike, encountered in their daily lives: choking dust, stomping hooves, bawling animals, palpable tensions among diverse people.

Situated as a "history of childhood," Adams' text focuses throughout on stories as cultural vehicles underscoring the multidimensional sites in which learning takes place. Formal schooling is only one of those sites. Adams sought narrators from three primary ethnocultural groups in the region to speak to the area's history even as he recognized his inclusive approach animated some group tensions. He also encountered puzzled responses from many potential narrators who did not see their childhood memories and lives as remarkable enough to merit scholarly treatment. A common response was, "why do you want to talk to *me*? [Emphasis added] I'm a nobody" (p.xii). Yet the methodology of oral history offers a vital resource for preserving and conveying the textured daily events and lessons that constitute lived experience and cumulatively offer insights into historical processes writ large. Adams describes, "borderland history" is—and should be— multicultural and "multivocal" (xi), which

in his work relies on rich, competing perspectives of the past. Adams deploys a series of metaphors of "borders" as the groups created, crossed, and dismantled ethnocultural boundaries in and beyond childhood, and within and across informal and formal educational places. In so doing, his work also invites readings that cross boundaries as well.

I draw from several theories that emerged organically in my layered readings of *Three Roads to Magdalena*, all rooted in the materiality of place and history. Our textual engagements rely on our eclectic reading practices, context, and theoretical investments. In that sense, my readings say as much about me as a reader engaging with the stories, lives, and landscapes of Magdalena as they do about Adams' historical quest, one of thousands of people reading *Three Roads*, pausing to consider one phrase or another in detail, imagining scenes as they played out for the people of the region, while puzzling over and transcending the text, linking our readings to other questions and interests. Diverse textual encounters are generative: engagements with the scholarship invite us to cross borders and follow lines of flight beyond the authors' intent. My readings of this text are contextual; Although I began reading Adams' work in an armchair in the Spring of 2018 to prepare for a conference panel (Bailey, 2018), excited to learn more about informal educational practices outside of schools that I believe are essential to understanding educational history, my readings shifted during the Summer of 2018 to become saturated with visual, material, and sensory data when I decided to drive to Magdalena, New Mexico to see it for myself. The materiality of Magdalena as place fuels my readings now.

The first body of theory from which I draw highlights the embodied aspects of academic endeavors (Ellingson, 2017). In thinking about academic work as embodied, those who read, write and teach for a living know about the time and physical and intellectual labor involved in crafting texts, in collecting scraps from archives, in listening deeply to people who share their stories. These acts involve many ocular, aural, oral, kinesthetic, and emotional processes. Yet, even though we know intellectually that these processes occur, they rarely enter researchers' consciousness as we carry them out, a state of being to which Leder (1990) refers as the "absent body." As feminist scholars (e.g., Bailey, 2018; Ellingson, 2017; Reid & Mitchell, 2015; Tompkins, 1996) have long noted, academics often discuss teaching and research as only intellectual activities somehow detached from the labored orchestrations of the body, those innumerable minute affective movements that constitute and produce our thoughts, writing, and reading. Some scholarship has thus turned to intentionally highlighting the particular affective, sensory, and embodied dimensions of research and teaching. In this view, texts

are more than sources of information—they are sites of "encounter" as Sara Ahmed (2017, p. 17) writes, produced through affect and labor, even vehicles for "affective knowledge" that can "move[…] people to feel and to act," as Stoler (2009, p. 18) says of archives. As I read Adams' work, I began to feel moved to act. I wanted to experience the sites and sounds of Magdalena. In turn, I also began to wonder how Adams experienced the borderland histories he narrated. What was it like for him to travel to New Mexico from northeast Ohio decades ago, to drive along those roads, to engage in these gritty, sensory, stories of loss and of trouble, to see the 3,000 pages of oral histories slowly collect over the years? How did he feel when he was wrestling with the archive he amassed, shaping, extracting, rearranging bits of people's histories into a cohesive narrative? And what is it like for varied readers to engage with this book, its visceral descriptions, its educational messages about a place that many of us have never encountered?

My reading evoked for me another layer integral to the broader cultural dynamics of the borderland history Adams narrates, and that is the second body of theory informing my reading: the new materialisms (Coole & Frost, 2010). Relevant to my encounter with Adams' work is what scholars in this tradition describe as "intra-acting" material entities, such as aspects of the land, animals, water, and people that constitute Magdalena as a historical site. This text recounts not only a remarkable history of people, lived through the tensions of cultural/gender/linguistic borderlands and the group encounters and dependencies in this particular Southwestern space across one hundred years, but more subtly, it is also a history of the land, the weather, the water, the animals, as agents, bearing ontologies of their own, dictating and unsettling the histories of humans as narrated through the archive of oral histories that is the foundation of the text. The new materialisms (see Coole & Frost, 2010) represents a diverse body of ideas that turn away from humanism as the center of research and toward a focus on materiality. In this body of ideas, scholars (e.g., Coole and Frost, 2010) focus on the ontological "entanglements" of varied material entities and living beings, human and non-human alike. In this view, various forms of matter—whether texts, dust, places, oral narrators, animals, researchers—come together, entangle, fragment, and entangle anew to create constantly changing configurations and entities. My emotional reaction to the scenes Adams paints on the page speak directly to the power of Adams' language in teaching Magdalena as a living place that, for me, beckoned materialist readings, and moved me to extend my reading of the text with travel to the village in situ as well.

Consider the sensorium evoked in Adams' historical renderings that

he created from his archival and oral resources: "in time, the sights, smells, and rituals of the branding pen were second nature, bawling calves being thrown down in succession, application of the scorching branding iron, smell of burning hide, quick surgical removal of a bull calf's testicles" (p. 81). Or a memory of the stockyards, "the hills changed colors depending on the livestock coming in. One day the hills might be a deep bronze, or even maroon as the sun shone on the backs of grazing cattle; on another day the landscape was woolen-white with sheep" (p. 286). Or of a lightning storm, "that triggered a stampede in the dead of night," in which cattle drivers were "galloping at full speed in pursuit of wild-eyed steers in the thundering blackness," with "the tips of the stampeding cattle's horns ablaze with balls of fire" and an "entire heard of crazed, electrified cattle lighting up the blackness" (p. 91). Read through the materialist concept of 'entanglements,' the land, animals, weather, and people seem to swirl together into a sensory landscape of pulsing color and movement, dissolving clear boundaries among species, air, sound, and hillside, and also those among text, reader, and writer as well. As Adams writes, "West-central New Mexico, is a *storied land*" [Emphasis added] (2016, p. 338).

Subjugated Histories within Subjugated Histories: Interconnections Among Animals, Place, Water, and Land

A foundation in downtown Magdalena (photo taken by Bailey, July, 2018)

The interconnections among species and land as educational sites permeate Adams' narrated history of Magdalena. The visibility of animals and land ebbed and flowed as the text unfolded. My reading often

focused on Magdalena's dependence on animals, the sometimes-brutal treatment to which they were subjected, and their role as teachers in children's coming of age. My attention to this aspect of the text emerged in part from a gentle empathy in the author's wording related to human domination of animals for food, education, and economic vitality, and at times, as a site for humans to enact their rage. One of the most challenging, visceral layers of reading for me was Adams' steadfast attention to the ways animals' bodies bore the weight of the residents' corporeal and economic needs for survival, the painful machinations of nature's erratic forces on animal bodies in an arid climate, and the fluctuating protective, affective, and punitive impulses of the humans who dictated their fate. Although humanism is often the theoretical grounding of historical work—exploring material and sensory elements of history in terms of what they reveal about human actions, activities, wants and needs—Adams' oral history opens a subjugated history as well, and that is the history, fate, and function of varied animal species in this geographic terrain. Animals often take center stage in the oral histories. The connected forces that emerge in Magdalena's history—species' mutual interdependence for survival, animals' "willful" (Ahmed, 2017) resistance to their colonization, the land as agent, as shifting enemy and benefactor—compel one layer of my reading.

Animals were not only vehicles for people's mobility, for performing necessary work, and for producing fuel for their bodies, they, like the land, functioned as key educational sites in young children's becoming as cultural beings. A variety of willful species—horses, cows, sheep, goats—teach educational lessons that socialize children into their communities and behavioral norms. It was common to "put a kid on a horse" (Adams, 2016, p. 63) at an early age to help her or him develop a habituated set of corporeal skills that would enable them to contribute to the way of life the geography demanded. Spirited horses, burros, and cattle posed serious risks of injury to children, and children needed to develop skills in handling them. The border between work and play, as Adams emphasized, was entirely fluid, as children's engagements with animals—fearing, coveting, playing with, caring for, searching for, observing, beating, pestering, riding, and sometimes slaughtering them (p. 63)—were an amalgam of educational interactions that fostered essential knowledge about each species' place in their world. Human-animal interdependencies enabled and taught taboos, norms, and obligations, the type of daily "moments," Adams suggests, that build "culture" (p. 41). Even the intricate markings on branded cows functioned as a form of early literacy for youth, as children learned to read the bodies of these animals as a type of text, discerning the signs of ownership on their

flanks and learning the epistemological contours of the borderlands in which they lived—concepts of ownership, of theirs vs. ours, of agents vs captives, of the normalization of hierarchies among species. Many such lessons were public, such as children "flanking" cows (throwing them down) and "breaking" wild horses, the site of others' entertainment as children grappled with their lively "curriculum."

Beyond their branded flanks, animals' suffering was central to the lessons, when, for example, children learned to whip and spur their horses to demonstrate their capacity to control them. The children, too, could be whipped if they did not show these creatures "who was boss" (p. 98). They learned through both the threat and actuality of physical pain that controlling animals was central to survival, as Adams articulated, and "that [children] must never cringe before a whole way of life" (p. 98). When horses threw or injured children, adults sometimes shot them in a determined, punitive response, an act that repaid the animal for its willfulness against humans while also modeling more broadly the necessity of controlling animal behavior for human life. Lurking in unpredictable terrain and animal actions lay the constant threat of danger and injury. Some species were always threatening, whether symbolically or literally: eagles, ants, mountain lions, grizzlies, and wolves (p. 41), while others emerge as threatening only in the animals' enduring capacity for resistance to humans—as agents with ontologies and wishes of their own. To "break" wild horses and burros was to divert their agency to a life of human service. Whether fiction or memory, stories of using, pestering, and even terrorizing animals were normalized in Magdalena's history. While "flanking" cows in public was a rite of passage, other acts were sources of entertainment. Some encouraged bulls to fight (p. 71), some children tied a rope around a bull's testicles to stir up trouble (p. 73), one group chained to a bear to a bar to drink beer until it passed out (p.110), and one game people played involved burying chickens in the sand up to their necks for galloping riders to pull up as they passed (p.123).

The interconnections among animals, humans, land, and water also functioned to erect and break down borders between ethnic groups in the early decades of Magdalena history. Tensions over grazing land played out between the "sheep" vs the "cattle" ranchers, an occupation divided primarily by ethnicity (p.151). Those that herded sheep were more frequently Hispanos, people of Spanish-American descent who entered the region during the 17th century. Those with cattle were more often Anglo. The bodies of animals facilitated what Adams' suggests were intra-ethnic border crossings, becoming signifiers of generosity and well-being when neighbors "shared plates" across class and ethnic

lines after butchering an animal (p. 41), and at other times, sites of border tension, such as the "burro wars" in the 1930s, when youth from varied ethnic groups competed to capture a variety of wild burros that roamed freely. The youth apparently attended school peacefully during the week and fought to maintain control of burros on the weekend. As different groups caught the burros, they paraded them around town as testament to their success.

The hierarchy of animals operating in this epistemological field—horses, cattle, sheep, goats, and burros—reflected different layers of value as instruments in the economy or in the culture of rodeo. Some drew from these hierarchies to use animal referents as ethnic insults, such as "dirty sheepherders," or "families [with] no more use than loading donkeys" (p. 207). Others used animals as metaphors for ignorance, as one parent warned a child to "learn all you can…otherwise, you can be a burro like me" (p. 184). Animals could deliver children to school, distract them from attending (p. 182), or become rewards for good deeds. Wild creatures were always a threat in Magdalena's early history even as they held symbolic power in cultural traditions. Narrators recalled battling rats in drafty dwellings and concerns about coyotes and grizzlies at night. The stories center non-human beings in diverse forms, whether material or metaphoric.

Adams described how masculine mythology and culture in the West shaped some of the human-animal interactions narrated in the oral histories. Drawing from [Elizabeth Atwood] Lawrence's writings on rodeo, Adams writes:

> [R]odeo at its deepest level is a ritualized performance of the culture/nature, man/beast, and tame/wild dichotomies at the heart of the ranching economy. What was the western ranching story about if not conquering the land, eliminating species (wolves, grizzlies, coyotes) posing a threat to the pastoral economy, and finally, dominating and managing livestock? What was the West without the violence of breaking horses and roping cows for branding? (p. 318)

In reflecting on the hunger for rodeo culture and its constitutive practices of "goat tying" and "steer wrestling," Adams ties it to an epistemological hierarchy of power and value that governs the Western mythos: that "rodeo is inextricably rooted in the domination and exploitation of animals, and this is something youth participants take for granted. The myth demands it. It comes with the territory" (p. 319). These animal-human intra-actions were educational vehicles for teaching hierarchies among species. Narrators folded them seamlessly into the history of childhood and children's development. In the early years of Adams' history, all lives across ethnocultural groups—men, women, children alike— circulated

around the land, water, and animals, milking, herding, raising, and butchering them (p. 37) in a harsh climate.

Yet, even as the oral histories reflected a pragmatic philosophy that people must take the "ranch country *as it is* and not as it *ought* [emphasis added] to be" (p. 10), the oral histories included palpable grief as people watched their cattle shuffled into railroad cars en masse, erasing the individual personalities of the animals they often knew well. As one rancher recalled, his father had once been raising close to 500 cattle and knew the personalities of "'every damn cow'" (p. 79). Narrators expressed their empathy for animals in varied ways. One early advocate of animal rights uttered a sharp condemnation to a child who shot the tail off a rabbit. After that incident, the man "never shot a living thing" again. I had to skip over a painful passage during the drought of the 1930s, learning just enough to understand that animals were shot outright to prevent dying from starvation. I found myself deeply affected by these teachings, taking breaks from the text to consider animals *as teachers*, and the coalescing of learning and life in these western borderlands. Animals functioned as metaphors for lessons (pp. 34-35), transmitting values, and marking key rites of passage. Consider the power of these lessons in this woman's reflection:

> We had a cow that was going to have a calf…[my father] had the cow on a slab on the ground. The cow died and my grandfather [had to] cut her open. He wanted us to see…And we were crying for the cow. But he showed how the magic of where the calf was. And he took [the calf] out and handed it to grandma and…she cleaned the little calf and she fed it…The cow died. Death, love care—[that's] the way it was taught to us. The way it was taught to us was just the way we lived. It wasn't a lesson: it was living. We were crying because the cow died, but grandpa told us: death was living. The cow gave us milk. We brought her in: we loved her. She's gone, but look what's here—the calf. This is how we learned. And that's what he meant—think, think, think. That's how we learned. (pp. 181-182)

Material and species connections abound to provide cultural lessons of survival beyond the boundaries of formal schooling. One story emerged of an exhausted woman attempting to coax a goat to nurse her infant (p. 28); while her attempt was apparently unsuccessful, the story speaks to the multidimensional labor facing women as they bore children and wrestled with the demands of maintaining their homes. In another story, a man related his persistent coaxing of a horse after a brutal fall in the uneven landscape, so it would carry him to safety, conveying simultaneously the human dependence on animals as well as their persistent threat to human well-being. Speckled throughout

the oral histories were glimpses of the arid terrain that hammered the bodies of the people and the cattle as they trekked along barren and sometimes over-grazed trails, with the absence of water a constant pressure and educational force. These pedagogies emerge through and with place, land, and animals.

Crossing Historical Borderlands: Encountering Magdalena Today

In July, 2018, I felt moved (Stoler, 2009) to drive to Magdalena to expand my "encounter" (Ahmed, 2017) with Adams' text, an act that enabled new interactions with the text-in-place as a vehicle for my own educational becoming. This term, becoming, common in new materialist thought, is intended to convey a continual and dynamic set of reconfigurations in contrast to concepts, such as development, which connote a linear process of stages. In the heat of a dry summer, I traveled across the indigenous lands most refer to as Oklahoma and Texas and eventually turned south on Interstate 25, the highway running south of Albuquerque, through and past the Alamo Navajo reservation of 63,000 acres. Today, the Alamo Navajo rely on a powerful school board that fosters varied educational and developmental projects to serve their community. Its sovereignty contrasts with the painful history of boarding school education for many Native children in the Southwest, as Adams detailed for the Alamo Navajo in *Three Roads to Magdalena*, and more broadly in his well-known book on governmental boarding schools, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875–1928* (1995). As the miles of rolling hills dotted with sagebrush passed, I thought of Adams' stories in *Three Roads* of Alamo Navajo children who fled on foot from boarding schools in Santa Fe and Albuquerque, as well as from the Magdalena schools, in desperate efforts to return to their families.

I turned right on route 12, past Socorro, traveling on what I learned later was part of the Magdalena Trail, the passage for driving livestock in the area that began in the late 19th century and that Adams describes in *Three Roads*. The route was used until the 1970s. As I drove into the mountains where the small town still resides, I felt the rise in elevation on the two-lane highway before I could see it. I slowed to look at the grasslands dotted with properties at the base of the mountains, passing only a few cars during this part of my journey. The population of Magdalena in 2000 was 936, about half of its population of 1,960 at its heyday in 1920, and Adams estimated the current number as closer to 500 (Bailey personal communication, 2018). The village no longer

represented the bustling crossroads of the livestock highway that it did in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It is marked by an array of cozy dwellings, a few quaint shops, some crumbling structures, and primarily quiet streets at the base of the beautiful Magdalena mountain range.

Yet it was easy for me to imagine how it once was based on the narratives of the people who lived here. I took pictures of the terrain, while I thought of the galloping horses and the community fiestas Adams painted on the pages of his book. I visited the churches, remembering residents' stories of confession and first communion, and the religious lessons fostered in the households beyond church walls. I walked down the dusty main street, poked my nose into abandoned buildings, and looked for signs of the "general stores," "livery stables," "banks," "hotels" "saloons," and "brothels" that existed there in the late 19th century (p. 114). At one point, I stopped to watch a small rabbit panting from the blistering heat in a concave burrow she had carved out in the shade under a shrub. Conscious of the choking dust, I left some carrots, and wondered how much this fleeting encounter spoke to the struggles of the diverse creatures Adams described in his text. Even in this act, I thought of childhood stories of Magdalena, when a child questioned the credibility of a local teacher who assigned a book with a carrot-eating rabbit. His remark suggested the striking contrast between his learning from lived experience and school teaching, "none of the rabbits he had ever seen ate carrots" (p. 276). Whether the offering provided any solace, I will never know.

I visited with some trepidation and reverence the skeletal remains of the stockyards I had read about—where thousands of cattle and sheep, after 1884, came to be herded en masse into cars on the Santa Fe rail-

Magdalena Stockyards (picture taken by Bailey) July, 2018

road for their certain fate in unknown parts of the country. I touched the ragged slats that framed the narrow wooden chutes for the animals, walked gingerly on the creaky platforms, and looked for marks of animal and human presence from decades ago. The historic sign marking the front of the stockyards read, "Do Not Enter," so I chose not to walk down into the trenches where the animals had no choice but to tread a century prior.

I thought of the lifeline the railroad provided to the area when I visited the box car museum, a sweet space that was exactly that—a box car—its walls decorated with photographs and artifacts from diverse ranching and mining efforts in the region across decades. The faces of miners represented a period in which Magdalena was a profitable place for mining and a central site for shipping mineral ore, cattle, sheep, and wool (p. 17). I tucked a few dollars into the donations box, happy to benefit from the archivists' labor that had cultivated this small space marking the crossroads of men, land, and animals. I visited the local library adjacent to the museum, a well-stocked, welcoming place that I left reluctantly when it was time to go: there were so many books left to peruse, and I could not locate a copy of Adams' text on the shelves.

In a local mercantile, a different type of museum, I meandered through the remnants of an implosion of historical periods, among shelves and cabinets which held assorted VHS tapes, antique dishes, hand-crafted turquoise jewelry, sewing patterns for Singer sewing machines, as well as rows of saddles and ornate hulking furniture. A century of diverse cultural objects was represented. I wondered which of Adams' narrators had created, handled, or used the items assembled in this space. When I chose to purchase only one pack of paper napkins, the proprietor who wrote out the receipt—by hand—expressed disappointment that I was not leaving with more in tow, a comment that speaks to Magdalena's continued economic dependence on its own history. I drove down some streets, walked down others, talked to a few people who believed Magdalena was showing signs of modest revitalization, visible in a new shop or two.

I watched several school-aged children, walking on the dusty roads, and wondered where they went and what they did during the summer in this tiny mountain town, with the backdrop of Adams' text in my mind: the site of the Magdalena schools as a space of cultural teaching and intercultural boundary crossing among Hispano, Anglo, and Alamo Navajo children; the end of mining in the region; the rodeos, fiestas, school dances, and patterns of intercultural marriage (p. 336); the often "troubled history of group relations" (p. 335) that included tensions between Anglo and Hispano students and the marginalization of Alamo Navajo people across a century. Late in his text, Adams noted the chang-

View from the Magdalena Cemetery (photo taken by Bailey) July, 2018

ing demographics in the school system today; in the 1990s, the school system became truly "tricultural," with Navajo people constituting a third of the students (p. 334).

And as any historically-minded researcher might, I visited the local cemetery, which bordered the local reservoir that was completely dry in the heat of July, and wandered among the gravesites that were bursting with color—celebrating life in death—packed with eclectic, kitschy, or spiritual objects, colorful lights and inviting benches. They were often bordered with ornate fences and gates that even in this diverse multicultural community space of commemoration perpetuated borders among people in death that had sometimes existed in life. I searched for familiar names on the gravestones, wondering which graves bore the real names and remains of the people Adams interviewed over the years. Many of his narrators shielded their names from publication to protect their identities as they described group tensions and events perhaps familiar to other locals. Adams' necessary honoring of these requests also resulted in inevitable losses of historical knowledge. Where was Ada Morley buried, the college-educated woman who arrived in 1886, with 3 children in tow, and a heart for women's rights and advocacy against animal cruelty? What happened to Candelaria Garcia who hoped Adams would 'get all of the stories,' and who, as a child, violated the norms of showing respect for elders in quickly thrusting a spittoon at a tobacco-chewing visitor to save her mother's freshly-washed floors? And what other borders did Brenda Apache choose to cross after, as a 14-year-old Alamo girl, she invited an Anglo boy to a homecoming dance? The wording of this hopeful note is

the message with which Adams concluded the text, pointing to the power of youth for crossing borders into the future.

The Educational and Methodological Practice of Thinking Beyond Borders

This compelling text has much to teach about "accommodation, adaption, and border crossing" in varied forms (p. 156). It reveals shifting interdependencies among land, groups, weather, and species that involved variously erecting and dismantling boundaries. Early in the text, Adams discussed the methodological quandary of how to represent his work as he wrestled with intra-group ethnic tensions, the complexity of memory and narrative in oral history, diverse archival resources and inevitable gaps, and a century of time. One significant decision he faced was "when to keep groups apart, and when to pull them together" (xii). Like historians Adelman and Aron (1999), Adams valued the distinction between the concepts of "frontier" and "borders." Adelman and Aron (1999) have preserved both terms by rejecting the Anglo narrative of triumph suggested in early historical uses of "frontier" in scholarship and reconceptualizing the frontier as "a meeting place of peoples" within geographically-ambiguous spaces. The term, "borderlands," refers to the "contested boundaries between colonial domains" (pp. 815-816). Similarly, to Adams, the borderlands of this Southwest region remained ambiguous and contested in the wake of colonialism as groups with differing access to power and resources moved together and apart, in constantly shifting configurations, whether through economic necessity, chosen relationships, shared grazing land, competitions to capture burros, or attending and fleeing schools.

Adams' metaphoric mobilization of borderlands evokes shifting material occupations of geographic terrain as well as practices of territoriality, conceptions of commonality and difference, and physical interactions and separation. These shifts are shaped by time, religion, gender, language, class, sexuality, and race. His text highlights when and where people erected, crossed, or dismantled borders because of cultural groupings, and the forces that mattered in that travel. Young men could cross boundaries between adulthood and childhood at the brothel's doorstep (p. 114), while some girls resisted gender norms through participating in local dances. Adams emphasized some persisting ethnocultural boundaries based on sexuality as Alamo Navajo people could not marry within some kinship groups and local Anglo and Hispanic groups worked to prevent their youth from romantic interactions. Yet, even those contested borders dissolved at times as some men and women

crossed ethnocultural boundaries to marry members of another cultural group. At times, perceived borders surfaced between women and men's gender roles, such as house and yard work, and collapsed again in a region where everyone needed to work. As other scholars have noted as well, Adams mentioned that "the West helped redefine inherited conceptions of women's domain" (p. 43). The contingent borders fluctuated in salience, drawn and redrawn, as economic support in times of trouble necessitated working across socio-economic class divisions.

Adams also conveyed how schools fostered and maintained ethnocultural borders, an important dynamic in educational history. In the early 20th century, Alamo Navajo children were "rounded up" (p. 224) to attend boarding schools to learn Anglo ways, including comportment, language and "clock time" (p. 231). Officials often assigned the children new Anglo names in the process. As a response to the erasure of indigenous children's sovereignty in governmental boarding schools and pressing educational needs, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) established educational programs and policies for educating indigenous people close to town. During the 1950s, the BIA established a dormitory at the border of Magdalena to house Alamo Navajo children so they could attend the local schools. Adams wrote, the "entry of Indians into an [Anglo-Hispanic] social space was a watershed development" (p. 266). Later in the century the public schools became a site for fluidity in group proxemics. A particularly cherished memory community members shared was the 1968 basketball season that imploded the long-held divisions among ethnocultural groups, when all "pulled together" to play (p. 281).

Despite necessary and persistent points of contact and interaction, questions circulated throughout the book about how much the groups adapted to one another over time. Adams retains attention to the contested nature of the ethnocultural interactions and coexistence, a history that unfolded from and within the shadow of colonialism, often at the expense of Alamo Navajo people who accommodated and resisted in complex ways (p. 248). Adams' deft application of borderlands as metaphor and material designation to the Magdalena area echoes Adelman & Aron's (1999) effort to preserve the conflicts and tensions that "shaped the peculiar and contingent character of frontier relations" (p. 816). Adams refused a seamless narrative about triumphant Western conquests and homogenous intercultural interchanges to suggest, like Adelman & Aron, the enduring tensions and negotiations involved in occupying the borderlands. His work in this text focused on uncovering subjugated histories of everyday people in a contested and culturally-rich region that has attracted little historical or empirical research, particularly in the realm of educational history. As Magdalena's youth

came of age, they absorbed informal educational lessons through ethnocultural boundary crossing and the intra-acting agents of land, water, and animals that constituted Magdalena's both physical and mythic history. It is a powerful and impressive study.

And as Stoler (2009) and Ahmed (2017) suggest is possible for all of us in textual encounters, reading Adams' work moved me to cross geographic borders of my own, not only through the intra-acting agents of Magdalena as text and as history, but as *lived* place, and now part of my embodied educational becoming. As Jones and Evans (2012) in their research on emotion and place, the experience of place is affective, "fundamentally embodied," and a potentially "intensely personal and visceral phenomenon" (p. 2320). This essay highlights the value of conceptualizing a research text as a site of embodied and affective encounter (Ahmed, 2017) and border-crossing as a generative educational practice. Adams' incisive use of borderlands to capture both the physical place of Magdalena and the fluid group relations he studied invited me to follow new pathways of meaning making. The theoretical concepts of embodiment and entanglement enabled layered readings of his account, beyond his intent, surfacing human and material relationships that mark Magdalena history. Further, traveling to Magdalena, the focus of his oral histories, demanded physical, sensory, engagement with the contours and sites of the town that intensified my experiential learning and awareness of interconnections. Borderlands and border-crossings are thus generative concepts and practices for imagining new configurations and connections among past/present, land/text, author/reader, human/animal, informal/formal education, and metaphor/physicality in textual encounters. Reading Adams' text might move others to engage in practices of border-crossing as well.

References

Adams, D. W. (2016). *Three roads to Magdalena: Coming of age in a Southwest borderland, 1890-1990*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.

Adams, D. W. (1995). *Education for extinction: Native Americans and boarding school life*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.

Adelman, J. & Aron, S. (1999). From borderlands to borders: Empires, nation-states, and the peoples in between in North American history. *American Historical Review*, 814-841.

Ahmed, S. (2017). *Living a feminist life*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Bailey, L. (2018, April). *Resisting the erasure of embodied faculty labor* [Conference presentation]. American Educational Research Association, New York, NY.

Bailey, L. (2018, November). *Adams' coming of age in a southwest borderland*

[Conference panel and presentation]. History of Education Society, Albuquerque, NM,

Coole, D., & Frost, S. (Eds). (2010). *New materialisms: ontology, agency, and politics*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Ellingson, L.L (2017). *Embodiment in qualitative research*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Jones, P., & Evans, J. (n..d.). Rescue geography: Place making, affect and regeneration. *Urban Studies, 49*(11), 2315-2330.

Lawrence, A. (2017). Review of the book *Three Roads to Magdalena*, by David W. Adams. *History of Education Quarterly, 57*(4): 626-628.

Leder, D. (1990). *The absent body*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Reid, J., & Mitchell, D. M. (2015). Inhabiting a teaching body: Portraits of teaching. In B. Green & N. Hopwood (Eds), *The body in professional practice, learning, and education* (pp. 89-104). Switzerland: Springer Press.

Stoler, A. L. (2009). *Along the archival grain: Epistemic anxieties and colonial common sense*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Tompkins, J. (1996). *Life in school: What the teacher learned*. New York, NY: Basic Books.