11. Think-Between: A Deaf Studies Commonplace Book

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> Perspective, as its inventor remarked, is a beautiful thing.
> —George Eliot [Mary Ann Evans], *Daniel Deronda*

For some time now I have been imagining a theory of "betweenity," especially as it exists in Deaf Culture, identity, and language. And because I teach a great deal in the larger umbrella of "Disability Studies" these days, I have also been thinking about the expansion of that deaf-betweenity to "disability" more largely. (Of course, I've also then been thinking about the way that deafness itself occupies an interesting "betweenity" in relationship to disability identity.) In any case—whether deaf, disabled, or between—I'm finding that I'm generally more interested in the hot dog rather than the bun, the creme filling in the oreo (which, if you've noticed, has been changing a lot lately) rather than just the twinned chocolate sandwich cookies on the outside. Give me a hyphen any day. To be sure, the words on either side of the hyphen are interesting, too; but what is happening in that hyphen—the moment of magic artistry there in that half-dash—is what really catches my eye.

Between "Deaf" and "deaf" (or, The Names We Call Ourselves)

In disability culture and studies, as well as in Deaf Culture and Studies, we often get back to—or maybe, yes, we also get forward to—discussions about what we do and don't want to be called. Deaf Culture, in particular, has been around the block with this discussion for a long, long time. I offer three exhibits for consideration:

Exhibit A:

From the University of Brighton, UK, http://staffcentral.brighton.ac.uk/clt/disability/Deaf.htm:

> Note on terminology:
>
> The term "Deaf" (with a capital D) is the preferred usage of some people who are either born profoundly deaf or who become deaf at a very early age and who regard themselves as belonging to the Deaf community. Like people in many communities, those within the Deaf community are bound together by a feeling of identifying with other Deaf people. People in the Deaf community share, amongst other things, a sense of Deaf pride, traditions, values, lifestyles, humour, folklore, art, theatre, as well as a rich common language.

EXHIBIT B:

From a copyedited essay (on interpreters) that I received back from the university press editors:

> I do not understand the distinctions between use of upper and lower-case D for deafness? Please clarify for my own knowledge and for the general scope of this book.

EXHIBIT C:

From Gina Oliva, author of *Alone in the Mainstream: A Deaf Woman Remembers Public Schools,* the first book in the new "Deaf Lives" series of autobiography, biography, and documentary at Gallaudet University Press that I edit.[1] This is a memo Gina sent to me after the copyeditors asked her to double-check and "clarify" her use of Deaf/deaf in the manuscript:

> Subject: deaf vs. Deaf
> To: brueggemann.1@osu.edu
> Hi Brenda . . . I took a look at Padden and Humphries and decided it made sense to use Deaf when referring to adults in the Deaf community. If they are oral deaf, I will call them deaf. As for children, I would stick with deaf and hard of hearing children (lower case). This means that the "big D" will appear much in my book, as I say "Deaf adults this" and "Deaf adults that" a lot. I also say "deaf and hard of hearing children" a lot.
> Then I looked at "Journey into the Deaf-World" (Lane, Hoffmeister, Bahan) and see that they advocate using Deaf for any child who is deaf and couldn't access info without assistance. Hmmmmm. . . . Do you have any opinion about this???? I checked some other books. . . . Wrigley uses Deaf predominantly. Preston does not. I have others I can check . . . but my guess is there is little consensus about this.

As these exhibits illustrate, where we draw the line in relationships between "deaf" and "Deaf" is a question of common placement.

In Deaf Studies we can explore, and perhaps even expand upon, the definitions of the terms of d/Deaf operations—subtracting, adding, dividing, and multiplying the possibilities—for the key naming terms like "deaf," "Deaf," "hard-of-hearing," "late deafened," "hearing-impaired," "has hearing loss," "think-hearing," and my mother's personal favorite for me, "has selective hearing." But we can also move further out in the concentric circles by studying, for example, the mapping and meaning of mental proficiency labels alongside audiometric ones and noting their in-common categorizations—"moderate," "severe," "profound." Interestingly enough, these IQ labels parallel those assigned to hearing loss by medical practitioners—and both sets of terms came onto the diagnostic screen in our culture at about the same time. Moreover, if you simply rotate the axes of the two bell curves created by either the IQ or audiometric charts as they plot out "normal," "moderate," "severe," and "profound" you would find them folding neatly right on top of each other. Is this parallel only circumstance or do the angles between these two medical charts make more meaning in their overlay and intersections?

For one way to further explore this curious commonplace, we might consider that in the Nazi's national socialist regime during the early 1940s, people with disabilities in psychiatric institutions throughout the German Reich became subject to "euthanasia" at the hands of their own doctors and nurses. In what became known as the T-4 program during 1941–42, at least 270,273 patients from these institutions were transported to seven designated institutions and here, at these seven killing centers—usually immediately upon transport arrival—they were killed in gas chambers that became the experimental locations of "the Final Solution" targeted at Jewish people a few years later. Before the T-4 program, in the 1930s, many of these patients/people were also sterilized. After the T-4 program officially ended in 1942 an estimated additional one hundred thousand "patients" in these institutions may have died as victims of what is now called the "wild euthanasia" period when patients were administered drug overdoses or starved to death "unofficially." My point in telling these troubling facts is that at this time, as well as other times both past and present, people who were deaf in Germany (*taubstumme*—deaf and dumb) were often as not collapsed in diagnoses of other mental disabilities as well. I have looked at remaining records from one of these killing centers (which is still, eerily enough, a fully functioning psychiatric institution even today) as well as some records from the T-4 program housed in the German federal archives *(Bundesarchiv)* and I have, for myself, seen this conflation written on the records of several patients.

My point is that in the commonplace book of "deafness" things are not always clearly or singularly defined, designated, determined as "just," or "pure," or "only" deafness. And however much some deaf people may want to resist being labeled as "disabled," the fact remains that they *are* often labeled as such and that these labels—in all cases—are not always accurate though they may be, as it were, with consequences. Certainly deaf people should want to resist the easy conflation of their "condition" with others that coexist in degrees of "moderate," "severe," and "profound"—realizing the violence that can be (and has been) done with such an overlay. Yet also, just as certainly, I would suggest that to resist and distance one's self-identity and group identity from those whose condition has been deemed (for better or worse, for right or wrong) affiliated with hearing loss, would also be, in essence, to do further violence to those others with whom "authorities" have placed us (deaf people) in categorical similarity. Who—or what—are deaf people so afraid of when they resist placement in the commonplace of "disability"?

This unnamed fear also has us (and them) working (hard, very hard) to *contrast* "deaf" and "Deaf." The originary location of the Deaf/deaf divide dates around 1972, purportedly from coined usage in a seminal Deaf Studies essay by James Woodward, *How You Gonna Get to Heaven If You Can't Talk to Jesus? On Depathologizing Deafness.*[2] Thus, the definitional divide has been around for over thirty years. Yet aside from its usage in presses and publications long familiar with the commonplaces of "deafness," it must commonly still be footnoted in an academic text in order to explain, yet once again, what the distinctions between Big D "Deafness" and little d "deafness" are. Even when the distinctions are used, they are most often used, interestingly enough, in direct relation to each other; one is just as likely to see "d/Deaf" or "D/deaf" written as one is

to see just "Deaf" or even "deaf" standing alone in a text that has set up this distinction. Thus, the divisional/definitional terms of "Deaf" and (or versus) "deaf" more often than not come in tandem as d/Deaf. As such, they are twinned—doppelgangers. *Mirror mirror on the wall . . .* they whisper and sign back and forth to each other.

The twinning of d/Deaf is perhaps safer that way since often, when pressed, it will be hard to determine at any one moment in a text whether the Big D "cultural/linguistic" arena is where we are or if we are just in the small d "audiological/medical" space. And what if we are in both places at the same time? The long-standing and footnoting practice of establishing some kind of border patrol between these terms tries to define and differentiate—apples here, oranges there—but more often than not the aliens still wind up looking very much like the natives. And perhaps it is really an avocado that is wanted, anyway? In most cases, for example, deaf students can't enroll in a state residential institution—long deemed the center of American Deaf Culture and the sanctuary for American Sign Language (ASL), and thus, a common place for Big D cultural/linguistic Deafness—without offering an audiogram and first being able to claim their little d deafness. Until just 2002 and the establishment of Gallaudet University's new HUG program (Hearing UnderGraduates), you could not get into the world's only liberal arts college for deaf and hard-of-hearing students without proof of (flawed) audiogram: you had to be *deaf* in order to go there and engage in the particular Gallaudet cultural practices that might also then mark you as *Deaf*.

Yet when the question is often posed about the differences between "deaf" and "Deaf"—as it was by a recent editor I worked with (see Exhibit B above) and, really, by almost every editor I've ever had in twenty years of writing about, in, from, around deafness[3]—most often the answer given is either "language—the use of ASL" or even more simple (yet complex), "attitude." And suddenly, there you are again, in another dark and thick forest without a working compass: "What kind of attitude?" you have to wonder. And what levels and types and uses of signed communication?

And what does it mean, anyway, to locate the choice position within the capital D? Is this not also an assault and an oppression—a dominance of one way of thinking (epistemology) and being (ontology) over another? This think-between space between "deaf" and "Deaf" is a rock and a hard place for Deaf Studies. I wonder what happens if we squeeze (more) in there? What if we don't "draw the line" on, around, through, or under where someone is (and isn't) "culturally deaf" or not? What if we stop footnoting and explaining (and educating "them" again and again and again, as we have for almost thirty years now) what we've learned to chant from almost rote memorization when we endeavor, once again, to explain the "difference" between little d and Big D deafness? But "they" never seem to hear a word of any of this, and so we go on footnoting and explaining and educating about the distinctions between "Deaf" and "deaf." If a (deaf) tree falls in the (hearing) forest, does anyone then really "hear" it?

Can we create a new geometry, a new space for "deaf" (and thus "Deaf" as well) to be in and for those trees to fall in? To answer such questions might be to enter more into questions of perspective. How, for example, might we follow both the dynamic flow and static stance of terms like "deaf," while along the way working also to understand our culture's long-standing cure-based obsessions with definitive causes and effects where

deafness matters? What were—and are—the circumstances that create "deaf" or "Deaf" to begin with (and in continuance)? Whose testimony counts—and when and where and why and how—when it comes to authorizing d/Deaf identity or the "condition" of "deafness"?

What I am suggesting with these questions is that we might begin in Deaf Studies to push beyond the mere recitation of the "d/Deaf" pledge in our footnotes and to explore, instead, all the rhetorical situations that arise from the d/D distinctions, that bring the distinctions to bear, and that, most importantly, keep shifting them like an identity kaleidoscope in our own hands.

The (Deaf) Cyborg Space

Within the deaf kaleidoscope is the fragmented but also contained—and beautiful—image of the ever-shifting deaf cyborg. The seamed and seeming boundaries between "cure" and "control" in constructing the deaf cyborg body is a potent commonplace, especially for late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century Deaf Studies. Obviously, this seamed space might be illustrated in the controversy over cochlear implants and the deaf cyborg who, borrowing on cultural critic Donna Haraway's terms, becomes the "hybrid of machine and organism," the creation of "a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" that has already "change[d] what counts as [deaf people's] experience in the late twentieth century."[4]

What Haraway's cyborg myth foretells is that deaf people and the Deaf world won't likely disappear, implanted as alien others. This is instead likely to be a tale of "transgressed boundaries, potent fusions," as Haraway's cyborg myth suggests: the boundaries might change, but the fusion will likely remain potent. At Gallaudet University, for example, they have begun counting the numbers of their students who arrive now with cochlear implants, and for each of the past four years that they have been counting, the number virtually doubles itself each year. In effect, the cochlear implant seems to be squaring itself as the technology advances and the next generation of young deaf and hard-of-hearing people comes of counting age. Even at Kendall School, the demonstration elementary school on the Gallaudet campus, education about the implant (for those who have them as well as for those who don't) takes the form of several children's books and a Barbie-like doll, "C.I. Joe" (who also happens to be African American). Even at hearing-dominated state universities like my own (Ohio State University), the cochlear implant makes headlines as one of the major Friday feature stories in the campus newspaper—and this at a university that records only two students with cochlear implants (among the fifty-four thousand enrolled here).

In Deaf Studies we might begin to rethink the potent fusions in the boundaries created by cochlear implants—between then (the past) and now (the present), as well as between now (the present) and then (the future). Tough, opportunistic, interesting, and sometimes even beautiful things grow in the cracks of structures seemingly well established and impenetrable; the cochlear implant cyborg might just be such a crack-dweller. It will take far more than an implant to make deaf identity (whatever it might be) go away. Like dandelions on the hearing lawn, deaf people greet the cultivated green

with sunny color and tenacious bearing season after season, generation upon generation. Hearing aids have never pulled the rug entirely out from under deafness; eugenicists couldn't either (although they are tugging very hard again); and oral-focused educators mostly just continue to sweep things under the rug so the house looks very tidy on the surface.

This is not to suggest that we should not worry. We should. We need only glance over our shoulders at the specter of those doctors during the Nazi era who had themselves (and important others) convinced that living a life with a disability was a life simply not worth living. Under such a conviction, these doctors killed over 270,000 of those lives deemed "unworthy" in gas chambers (as well as through nurse-administered drug overdoses or even through "simple" starvation) in a program they termed "Euthanasia." Deaf people were one of the eight categories of people targeted for these "mercy deaths" in the T-4 program of 1941–42, as well as being common victims of the sterilizations that occurred for a decade before the T-4 "Euthanasia" program. Those Nazi doctors also thought they were "improving" the lives of their patients and they developed chilling technologies (the gas chambers) to efficiently carry out those "improvements." The smoke rising in thick acrimonious billows day and night from the psychiatric institute set up on the hill over the sleepy little village of Hadamar, Germany, during 1941–42 (as but one example captured with disturbing clarity in several photos of the time) makes at least one thing very clear: where there is smoke, there is fire.

Still, while we look for the fire, we should also be critically careful not to let cochlear implants create a smoke screen that hides other strong magic at work. Even the technology in hearing aids, FM systems, real-time captioning, video conferencing, instant messaging, the Internet, and e-mail matters in the cyborg mix here. If you have been to Gallaudet University lately you would likely notice how electronic pagers (instant e-mail) have radically changed "the Deaf gaze." These days when you walk across the campus of the world's only liberal arts university for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, you are just as likely—perhaps even more likely—to see an individual deaf student with head bent and thumbs flying at her pager as she walks from place to place as you are to see the older scene of two students signing with hands high above their head, "shouting" at each other from across Kendall Green, the oval grassy area at the center of Gallaudet's campus.

Do these pagers and other devices of instant communication really connect—or disconnect—deaf people? What distortions and/or enhancements are aided by "the electronic eye" extension of the Deaf gaze in these instances? What might be the form of the SEE sign for extended pager gazing? And why are such devices, when used to aid the deafened ear, commonly referred to as "assistive" or "adaptive" technologies when, after all, technology/ies are—by the very nature of the definition of the term—assistive and adaptive to begin with? Why is it, for example, that a Blackberry in the hands of a hearing person suddenly sheds its adaptive or assistive skin and becomes instead just another device to fill up one's airport or driving time or to conduct one's business incessantly?

With questions like these—as well as attempts and critical discussions about them—Deaf Studies would be attending to the rhetorical relationships between our

technologies and our identity. In essence, we would be investigating the shape and substance of purpose, intention, motivation, and communication that such small but strong technology has in refiguring "the Deaf gaze," in changing deaf people's status as "people of the eyes." We would be considering the dynamic or static perspectives that these technologies—as "adaptive technologies" or "assistive technologies"—play in not just our (deaf) lives but in hearing lives too, as well as the relationships and lives between those spaces. Deaf Studies would do well to gaze here.

Lingering in the (Un)Common Space of Language

Deaf people and their uses of signed (or even/additionally/predominately oral) languages offer a rich commonplace site for the study of how language inherently oppresses, standardizes, and yet also resists—all at the same time—whatever it comes in contact with and even, too, whatever it makes for and of itself. Language duplicates, replicates, reinforces itself (so that, as George Bernard Shaw wrote in "Maxims for Revolutionists," "no man fully capable of his own language ever masters another"),[5] yet language also resists its own pure replication and dominance. This is not to signify that deaf people have no respect for their sign language (or their multiple other forms of language), but only to suggest that language is always refiguring its own space just as it makes that space operate much like a kaleidoscope—where elements and perspectives may often shift but the whole and its contents really remain the same. Thus, to aim for some sort of standardization of (a/the) language is only, in effect, to assure that it is awfully (and awesomely) darn slippery to begin with; sooner or later something or someone comes along and bumps the kaleidoscope—a little or a lot—and a new image (still with the same basic contents) appears. Perspectives shift.

Such shifting also happens to represent the slippery business of rhetoric where the communication triangle and its emphasized angles are always in changing relationships to each other. Aristotle's entire second book of the *Rhetoric* emphasizes this contextually dependent shifting as he attempts to categorize and consider all the kinds of audience a rhetor might be dealing with and how those audiences might react to given kinds of subjects presented in certain kinds of ways.[6] "Discovering all the available means of persuasion," which was how Aristotle defined the art of rhetoric, becomes much like the number of combinations one can view in the elements contained in a kaleidoscope.

In this space of ever-unfolding possibilities, Deaf Studies (which is, often as not, associated with the study and teaching of sign languages) could consider the way that sign languages are themselves reaching for, lurching toward, grasping at, and pushing against standardization. And this is not uncommon. Language is only a tool—and an often inadequate one—for ever trying to get at or toward or even around "the truth." Dictionaries and attempts to "capture" or standardize any language also operate under such perspective-oriented prevailing paradigms. Yet dictionaries are definitely needed—if for no other reason than to record the revolutionary and rhetorical shifts that language can make. "Hold still, we're going to do your portrait," writes French feminist theorist Hélène Cixous about the rhetorical act of representation, "so that you can begin looking like it right away."[7] In Deaf Studies we should be focusing on the portrait-doing involved

in developing and publishing any kind of sign language. No scholar has yet, for example, to undertake a serious study of even the earliest representations of hand alphabets or sign systems published. To be sure, these early printed representations can often be found in history/ies written about deaf people and their use of sign languages. But they are more often than not simply gestured toward and not ever (yet) analyzed in terms of what their shifting representations might mean and say "at large" for language systems or even in comparison with each other as commonplace sign systems.

We might also then look backwards (yet still forwards) to the commonplaces of a sign language's (near) disappearance or considerable reconfiguration. For an example of its reconfiguration, there are sites such as seventeenth-century English educator and rhetorician John Bulwer's adaptation of signs, gestures, body configurations, and facial expressions in his classical and seminal rhetorical-elocutionary treatises, *Chirologia* and *Chironomia*.[8] Bulwer is credited for founding the "elocutionary movement" in the history of rhetoric with his elaborately detailed descriptions (and prescriptions) of what the hands, body, and face could do in the act and art of persuasion in his two treatises on "the art of the hand." We now also know that he was one of the earliest English deaf educators and even more significantly, we now also know that he had a deaf daughter whose name happened to be *Chirolea*. Yet Bulwer himself never credits any "language of gestures" he might have acquired from these two deaf sites in his life that would, most likely, have had a significant influence on his ability to create these two rhetorical treatises to begin with.

We could also contemplate, for example, the changing shape of sign language in places like rural Nebraska now that the state residential institution for deaf students has been closed. How does the lack of such an important site for developing and sharing language among deaf and hard-of-hearing children who are more often than not isolated and singular in their deafness change the face of American Sign Language overall? Or too, we might explore more about how deaf people negotiated sign language in Germany during the Nazi regime when they were not only targets of forced sterilization but also the potential victims of the T-4 "Euthanasia" program of 1941–42. How did deaf people sign when their lives likely depended on not marking themselves as deaf in any way? And after World War II, what happened to deaf ways—their schools, clubs, workplaces, and shared language—between East and West Germany? Further, how have (or haven't) German signs "reunified" since the wall fell in 1989? We would also want to look forward to the development of "new" sign languages in developing or "third world" countries or in places like reunified Germany or, even, say across the city of Berlin where not so long ago four nations occupied the city limits. What can we learn about standardization and the values of language—any language—from these developments?

And finally, we would also do well to look across the plains of the present, to squint our eyes in the startling sunlight of American Sign Language's immense popularity on high school and college campuses where it is now taught (usually as a "foreign" language requirement). While the Deaf world frets over the loss of Deaf Culture and identity at the hands of geneticists, cochlear implant surgeons, and hearing parents (to name but a few of the largest threats), the truth of another matter is that on campuses where it is offered, no language except Spanish enrolls better than ASL right now. In Summer

2003, the Modern Language Association's new report on college foreign language offerings marked ASL courses in higher education as up a remarkable 432 percent in the past five years.[9] (The next closest increase figure was Arabic at 94 percent.) This put ASL officially in the fifth-place seat for "most commonly taught language in college." Yet, if we were also to factor in that the other four languages ahead of ASL in this survey are likely taught at each and every college where foreign language is offered—and that ASL is still very much a lesser-taught language that is, in fact, still rarely taught at most colleges—the popularity of ASL probably outstrips the four languages that place ahead of it. In fact, demand almost never matches supply in the case of ASL instruction since qualified ASL instructors at the high school and university certification level are as rare, say, as oceanfront property in Kansas.

How is this massively popular instruction changing the face—and shape—of ASL?[10] And what should be the "perspective" of Deaf Studies on these issues when, ironically, more and more deaf/hard-of-hearing children are "mainstreamed" and implanted and often kept away from sign language while their hearing peers flock to ASL classes? What interesting rhetoric is at work on the two sides of this single language-learning coin? Who profits from such a great increase in ASL instruction? The wise owl of Deaf Studies should be forming this "who?" on its own lips and hands.

Writing (and) Deafness

The wise owl should also ponder writing. As a form of expression typically (and too often) considered oppositional for modern deaf people, what in fact might writing (typically an English-ed act) have in common with signing? How might writing extend signing—and how too, might signing extend writing? Jacques Derrida has raised this question "at hand":

> When we say that writing *extends* the field and the powers of locutionary or gestural communication, are we not presupposing a kind of *homogeneous* space of communication? The range of the voice or of gesture appears to encounter a factual limit here, an empirical boundary of space and of time; and writing, within the same time, within the same space, manages to loosen the limits, to open the *same field* to a much greater range.[11]

In Deaf Studies I think we have some remarkable and rich work still left to do, philosophically and practically, in the space between writing and signing. Not only can we perhaps de-Derrida Derrida himself in expanding the philosophical space between writing and signing, but we can, just as importantly, work to find better ways to translate and transliterate what happens in the space between English and ASL. This multiperspective orientation would be especially important for both deaf and hearing students who are struggling to enter that between space.

It will be most fruitful to do this practical and philosophical "perspectival" work not from the center of English studies (where it has already been tried and yet never true) but rather from the center (and margins) of Deaf Studies. When Deaf Studies starts thinking about how to translate, transliterate, and teach in the space between English

and ASL, for example, we are likely to become all the more able "to loosen the limits, to open the *same field* to a much greater range," as Derrida has suggested. Why leave it up to English departments and deaf education and (socio)linguistics? These three sites, in particular, have long skewed the center and arranged themselves as the triangle of matters associated with "deaf language and literacy instruction."[12] Why keep the location of locution always already there? Certainly, English Studies and Deaf Education and scientific linguistic study have things to offer the study of signed languages—and they should continue to do so. But how much longer must we continue to look for the keys to the uses and power of signed languages for deaf people under the brighter lamps of these more dominant (and better funded) areas of the academy just because the light is there when, in fact, we know the keys are in a less well-lighted place a few steps back or around the next corner?

Let Deaf Studies take up the questions often left to the long legacy of Western philosophy—from Plato to Derrida and back again: What difference does writing make? Do feminist theories about "writing the body" (Cixous, for example) apply to and invigorate, or further erase, deaf people and their way of performing literacy? If writing is a performance (as the latest theoretical rage proclaims)—and sign language is also performative—do these two have even more in common than we have yet begun to explore? Is deafness the hiccup—the errant locution in the location—of the all-too-standardized connections between reading and writing that are chanted in our educational history? Deaf Studies might attend to asking and exploring a question that one professor of philosophy at my own university recently titled his own campus lecture with (even though he did not have sign languages in mind)—"how can language change your hearing?"

Let us begin, now even more than ever, to answer that question from within Deaf Studies. Not only should we begin, for example, to critically engage the construction of "deaf lives" from these other fields, but we should also (and this is very important) be encouraging the creation, production, and reception of deaf lives through such channels as biography, autobiography, and documentary. As I revised an earlier version of this essay from a café in Berlin, Germany, I was reminded, you see, that I am deaf in any and all languages and cultures; the German language does not, in essence, seem to change my hearing.

"How can language change your hearing?" Indeed, that is no small question. It is also not an unfamiliar question since "deaf education" has been around the block with it at least several times over. What if we also began to ask more about how it is that "deaf ways" can actually be used as a method and means of changing even dominant Western classroom and pedagogical practices? And what if we just stopped rehearsing the already well-articulated history of deaf education in the United States? What if instead we asked, for example, what this history (of "deaf education") shows us about *all* of Western education? As Margret Winzer has challenged us in her excellent history of special education, we might think more of how deaf education ripples in the larger pond:

> The way that children are trained and schooled is a crucial demonstration of the way that they are perceived and treated in a given society. . . . Discovering who was taught, and when

> and how, is related far more to the social, political, legislative, economic, and religious forces at work in a society than it is to the unique social and educational needs of disabled persons. At the same time, this history mirrors our progress toward appreciating the basic humanity of all people.[13]

Deaf education did not—and does not—occur in a socioeconomic-historical vacuum. We can get so hung up on A. G. Bell and his legacy, for example, that we forget to answer the other incoming calls about the interplay of speech, education, and "normalcy" as this tangled braid brought us into the twentieth century.

Think-Eye

Where I fit in and can answer the calls I've proposed myself for Deaf Studies is also about all the calls I probably cannot answer but still yearn to engage in or make. Some days I am so energized by all the possibilities of Deaf Studies that I am exploding. Other days, I am so daunted by all the possibilities that I am imploding.

I come to Deaf Studies as a "hard-of-hearing" (the only term my family could use) girl from the extremely rural region of western Kansas; there are still less than twenty-five people per square mile in Greeley County, Kansas. I come as someone who didn't even know what sign language or, say, Gallaudet University was (let alone a single sign or the idea of "deaf education") until the age of twenty-nine. I come as the granddaughter of a deaf woman (although she was called hard-of-hearing too) and the inheritor and carrier and engenderer of a complicated string of hearing loss and kidney "abnormalities" in my family. I come with two children (one has the kidney abnormalities) who perhaps understand my "deafness" in ways that my own parents didn't and in ways, too, that I myself still don't. (They are perhaps more "deaf" than me, I've written elsewhere.)[14]

I come always wanting to fit in. Yet I also come always wanting to ask questions and not fit in. I arrive doubly hyphenated (hard-of-hearing), with a lot going on in those multiple hyphenated between spaces. I come, I suppose, thinking between—thinking in another kind of between space between think-deaf and think-hearing: think-eye. For the deaf space is a visual space, an "eye" space—and also too, an I-space. We still have a lot to learn from each "I" and from each "eye." Perspective (the "eye") really matters; the personal (the "I") experience really matters as well. This little between space can be, in fact, rather expansive. It is a space of potent possibilities, contained and yet kaleidoscopic in its perspectives. As late nineteenth-century English novelist George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans) knew, as she was writing a novel named for a male protagonist and using a male pseudonym herself, perspective is a beautiful thing.

There are so many ways to bump and see the same pieces again, but now all arranged differently. In keeping our eyes out for deaf commonplaces while also admiring the ever-shifting capabilities of perspectives (in both our "eyes" and our "I's") and attending to the value of being *between* worlds, words, languages, cultures even as we can be contained in either one, the sites and sights of Deaf Studies promise us ever enchanted explorations.

Notes

I owe a great debt to several colleagues for their roles in making this essay happen. First, and most significantly, Dirksen Bauman not only helped instigate—and inspire—the ideas here when he invited me to be a part of the Summer 2002 Deaf Studies Think Tank, but he gently harassed me into writing an introductory "personal statement" for the Think Tank that became, in essence, the genesis of this essay's content. Later, as we continued to hold vibrant electronic and face-to-face conversations about my ideas and examples under development, he further influenced not only the content but also the form of this essay. In a sense, I think of this piece as a collaboration with Dirksen. Colleagues Cathy Kudlick (California State–Davis) and Jim Ferris (University of Wisconsin) also came to play a part in the production of this piece as the three of us shared a kind of trialogue performance in a session called simply (but profoundly) "Between" at the 2004 Society for Disability Studies meeting in St. Louis. When they helped me further expand the signing and body space to create a six-armed insect, I knew then that after nearly two years of tinkering with this essay I had finally reached the (between) place where I not only felt comfortable but now actually *wanted* to put the ideas in print.

1. Gina Oliva, *Alone in the Mainstream: A Deaf Woman Remembers Public Schools* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 2004).
2. James Woodward, *How You Gonna Get to Heaven If You Can't Talk to Jesus: On Depathologizing Deafness* (Silver Spring, Md.: T.J. Publishers, 1982).
3. Here you can now imagine a Big D if you want, but for now, I'm going to just let one term stand and use "deaf" or "deafness" (little d) to represent both the "deaf" and "Deaf" positions since, as I have been arguing, no one really seems to completely understand the differences and distinctions between the two terms to begin with.
4. Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 149 (brackets mine).
5. George Bernard Shaw, "Maxims for Revolutionists," in *Man and Superman: A Comedy and Philosophy* (New York: Penguin, 2000), 254.
6. Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse,* trans. George A. Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).
7. Hélène Cixous, "From *The Laugh of the Medusa,*" in *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present,* ed. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg (Boston: Bedford, 1990), 1244.
8. John Bulwer, *Chirologia; or, The naturall language of the hand* . . . (1652; repr., New York: AMS Press, 1975).
9. Elizabeth B. Welles, "Foreign Language Enrollments in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Fall 2002," *ADFL Bulletin* 35, nos. 2–3 (2004): 7–26 (http://www.adfl.org/resources/enrollments.pdf).
10. These issues over American Sign Language in the academy and its relationship to "foreign language" instruction were the subject of a three-session "Presidential Forum" at the 2004 Modern Language Association Annual Convention in Philadelphia, Penn.
11. Jacques Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context," in *Margins of Philosophy,* trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 311.
12. For more discussion on the consequences of the lack of contextually and culturally based approaches to scholarship in "deaf language and literacy," see the introduction to Brenda Jo Brueggemann, ed., *Literacy and Deaf People: Cultural and Contextual Perspectives* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 2004).
13. Margret Winzer, *The History of Special Education: From Isolation to Integration* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 1993), xi.
14. Brenda Brueggemann, "Are You Deaf or Hearing?" in *Lend Me Your Ear: Rhetorical Constructions of Deafness* (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 1999), 237–60.