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MOVING BEYOND WORDS IN SCOTLAND'S CORP-ORAL TRADITIONS

BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE STORYTELLING
MEETS THE 'DEAF PUBLIC VOICE'

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Abstract

Scotland's oral traditions have received scholarly attention since the 18th Century; however, collection and analysis has exclusively focused on those passed on 'by word of mouth,' and the traditional arts of Scotland's deaf communities have been overlooked. This thesis begins to address this oversight by examining storytelling practices passed on 'by sign of hand' in British Sign Language (BSL). Neither fully acculturated to majority society nor 'foreigners in their own country' (Murray 2008:102), signing-deaf people have distinct ways of 'doing' culture which involve negotiating a bilingual-bicultural continuum between the hearing and deaf worlds. The historical exclusion of signing-deaf culture from conceptualisations of Scotland's cultural heritage is increasingly being challenged, both overtly and tacitly, through an emergent 'deaf public voice' (Bechter 2008:72); in light of this, I consider three case-studies in which BSL storytelling practices have been placed in the public domain. Drawing on fieldwork, interviews and the in-depth analysis of BSL performance-texts, I examine the ways in which signing-deaf biculturality is expressed and performed, and consider the artistry involved in storytelling in a visual-spatial-kinetic language. In so doing, a working methodology is proposed for presenting signed material to non-signers, laying the groundwork for further collection and analysis. Applying Bauman and Murray's concept of 'Deaf Gain' (2009), I argue that the study of this new corpus of oral material has a radical contribution to make to the field of ethnology and folklore, not least in highlighting phonocentric assumptions embedded in the study of oral traditions. I emphasise the extent to which the transmission of culture is predicated on particular 'techniques of the body' (Mauss 1973), and argue that, in drawing on different modality-specific affordances, both spoken and signed storytelling should be understood as part of the totality of Scotland's 'corp-oral' traditions through which culture is transmitted 'by performance of body.'

Declaration

This is to certify that the work contained within has been composed by me and is entirely my own work. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

~~~~~

Ella Leith

Date: 26<sup>th</sup> February 2016

*For Dad*

Despite everything

Because of everything

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## Abbreviations

|            |                                                                                        |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ASL        | American Sign Language                                                                 |
| BDA        | British Deaf Association                                                               |
| BICS       | Basic Interactional Communication Skills                                               |
| BSL        | British Sign Language                                                                  |
| BSL:UPTAKE | British Sign Language: University Partnership Towards Accessible Knowledge Exchange    |
| CALP       | Cognitive Academic Linguistic Proficiency                                              |
| DHS        | Deaf History Scotland                                                                  |
| PDF        | Person/People from Deaf Families                                                       |
| SCoD       | The Scottish Council on Deafness                                                       |
| SSE        | Sign-Supported English, a manual code in English word-order                            |
| SSF        | The Scottish Storytelling Forum (based at the Scottish Storytelling Centre, Edinburgh) |
| SSSA       | The School of Scottish Studies Archives (University of Edinburgh)                      |

## Conventions

### Conventions used for sign languages

There is no widely-used written form for sign languages, therefore most quotations are translated into English prose. To refer to a specific sign or sign construction, the following conventions are used:

|                     |                                                                               |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CAPITAL LETTERS     | - an English gloss of a sign                                                  |
| TWO-WORDS           | - indicates that more than one gloss is needed for a single sign construction |
| TWO/WORDS           | - indicates that one sign has the resonance of two English glosses            |
| .D.O.T.S.           | - BSL fingerspelling (see Fig. i)                                             |
| -D-A-S-H-E-S-       | - ASL fingerspelling (see Fig. ii)                                            |
| <i>italics</i>      | - reported speech (in BSL)                                                    |
| “speech marks”      | - mouthed English reported speech                                             |
| { curly brackets }  | - asides                                                                      |
| { <i>italics</i> }  | - description through classifiers                                             |
| [ <i>italics</i> ]  | - placement of hands / kinesis                                                |
| [ square brackets ] | - my clarifications                                                           |
| < chevrons >        | - my additions or alterations                                                 |
| < <i>italics</i> >  | - my descriptions of signing style                                            |

## ASL Fingerspelling Alphabet



**Fig. i** – American Sign Language fingerspelling alphabet

Free ASL alphabet chart downloaded from

<http://www.fingerspellingalphabet.com/fingerspelling-chart-print-pdf-download/>

[16/01/2013]

## BSL Fingerspelling Alphabet



**Fig. ii** – British Sign Language fingerspelling alphabet

Free BSL alphabet downloaded from <http://www.british-sign.co.uk/british-sign-language-bsl/free-fingerspelling-chart/> (16/01/13)

## Conventions for transcribed spoken language

Speech is transcribed closely to verbatim, although some redundancies, filler words and repetitions have been omitted. The following conventions have been used:

|                     |                                            |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| ...                 | - indicates a pause                        |
| [...]               | - indicates the transcript has been edited |
| <i>italics</i>      | - reported speech                          |
| [ square brackets ] | - my additions and clarifications          |
| [ <i>italics</i> ]  | - action or gesture                        |
| -                   | - self-correction or shift into new clause |
| <u>underline</u>    | - emphasis, including within a word        |

## **Introduction: an autochthonous language and culture overlooked**

*Homo narrans ... tells many more stories than he realises. He also uses more communicative forms than folklore theory has ever recognised.*

Linda Dégh (1995:236)

### **A starting point: a gap in the study of Scotland's corp-oral traditions**

Scotland's rich oral traditions have received sustained scholarly attention since the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and the nation is 'recognised internationally as having one of the richest legacies of folklore and folksong anywhere within the Western world' (West 2013b:350). Yet despite wide-reaching collection and analysis of artforms passed on 'by word of mouth', the traditional arts of Scotland's deaf communities passed on 'by sign of hand' have been overlooked. As such, they have not been included in conceptualisations of oral traditions and intangible cultural heritage. This thesis begins to address this lack, and to introduce into the study of Scotland's traditional arts those created and performed in the forgotten autochthonous language of Great Britain, British Sign Language (BSL), and to introduce the people for whom this is their first or primary language and culture into the study of Scotland's communities.

I start from the premise that signing-deaf communities are linguistic and cultural minorities: that deafness is not solely an audiological impairment but, due to the existence of sign languages and the inseparability of language from culture, has a cultural dimension for those for whom a sign language is

their first or preferred language.<sup>1</sup> That BSL and signing-deaf<sup>2</sup> communities have been overlooked in the study of Scotland's traditional arts is unsurprising for two reasons. Firstly, signing-deaf communities are largely 'invisible' in the public eye. If signing-deaf communities are thought of at all, the common-sense position is that they are solely a disability group;<sup>3</sup> indeed, there is widespread ignorance about cultural deafness. As deafness is a medical condition, it is assumed that all deaf people are hearing people who 'lost all or some of their hearing' (Ladd 2003:xvii), and therefore that their primary cultural affiliation is determined by other identifiers (ethnicity, nationality, regional identity, *etc.*). While this is true for the majority of audilogically deaf people (who may prefer to describe themselves as 'hearing impaired' or 'hard of hearing', and for whom speech may be accessible *etc.*), for those who were born profoundly deaf or were deafened prior to the acquisition of spoken language, 'the issue of loss has no meaningful reality' (Ladd 2003:14):

Rather than defining their particular sensory orientation in relation to a norm of hearing, deaf individuals live within the plenitude of their particular sensory orientation and languaculture. (H. Bauman and Murray 2014:xv)

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<sup>1</sup> A nuanced examination of the various ways in which deafness can be modelled, and the ongoing tensions between them, is outwith the scope of this study; see H. Bauman and Murray (2014); Young and Temple (2014), Leigh (2009), Ladd (2003), Branson and Miller (2002), Rée (1999), L. Davis (1995) and Lane (1992).

<sup>2</sup> I use *signing-deaf* to refer to deaf people whose preferred language is a sign language and who are culturally affiliated to a signing community. Other scholars use different conventions, notably the initial capitalisation of *Deaf*. An explanation of terminology will be provided later in this chapter.

<sup>3</sup> There is antagonism between some deaf rights activists and the disability movement, due in part to conflicting goals (e.g. integrated mainstream education), and in part due to ableism (T. Robinson 2010; Baynton 2008). Ladd describes signing-deaf people as 'dual-category members' for whom some issues relate to non-hearing and others to language and culture, but claims that the latter are most meaningful (2003:16).

Signing-deaf communities are neither fully acculturated to majority society nor 'foreigners in their own country' (Murray 2008:102); they have a radical contribution to make to Scottish ethnology in highlighting that, when we talk generally about Scottish culture, we are talking about Scottish *speaking-hearing*<sup>4</sup> culture and not taking into consideration signing-deaf ways of being Scottish or doing Scottishness.

A second reason for the neglect of BSL artforms in the conceptualisation of oral traditions is the entrenched assumption about what oral traditions are – and, indeed, what language is. Because the vast majority of people inhabit a speaking-hearing world, the attributes of spoken and heard language are unquestioningly applied to the very concept of *language* (with its allusion to the tongue), even by linguists (Hockett 1963). It is common in the deaf studies literature to speak in terms of 'worlds': a world where the assumed language modalities are spoken and written, and a world with a 'different centre' predicated on visual language (Padden and Humphries 2010; Lane *et al.* 1996). I refer to the first as the speaking-hearing world, but the latter as the DEAFworld (where DEAF is capitalised to indicate an English gloss of a sign) to de-familiarise it, as I do for DEAFspace, to reflect that it is defined from within the totality of what it is to be signing-deaf.<sup>5</sup>

Research into sign languages began with American Sign Language (ASL), where Stokoe (1960) showed that speech was merely a sufficient precondition for language, not a necessary one. That sign languages are full,

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<sup>4</sup> I use *speaking-hearing* to balance my use of *signing-deaf*. Speaking-hearing culture is defined by the norm and expectation of being able to hear and use speech; most audilogically deaf people identify with this as the culture 'in which they were socialised' (Ladd 2003:xvii).

<sup>5</sup> DEAFspace is the physical and conceptual places that are carved out to be entirely geared to the signing-deaf habitus; Breivik sees it as being the *embodied* location of the community (2005). See Gulliver (2009) for an exploration.



complex, distinct languages has been ably proven.<sup>6</sup> Despite this, there remains the widely held common-sense belief that sign languages are not ‘real’ languages, or at least are less complex than speech. Similarly, because most oral traditions are passed on ‘by word of mouth’, word of mouth has become the unexamined but defining characteristic of an oral tradition. Amongst many examples, John Niles writes that ‘what [audiences] are immersed in is the physical stream of words, carried from the air breathed out from the lungs’ (1999:53-54) and, more recently, Gary West defines intangible cultural heritage as ‘shaped by mouths and ears rather than by hands’ (2013a:183).<sup>7</sup>

Yet the *oral* component of *oral tradition* more crucially refers to the interpersonal transmission of the material than to the modality through which it is transmitted.<sup>8</sup> It is necessary to broaden our understanding of the term to encompass what has been there all along: sign languages’ oral traditions.<sup>9</sup> This is especially the case given the extent of sign languages’ orality: there are no orthographies used to write them besides linguists’ elaborate transcription codes, so signed expressive art is un-writeable at a community level. I use the term *signed-oral* and contrast it with *spoken-oral* or *sung-oral* to make the point that, while signed- and spoken-oral traditions are fundamentally shaped by the affordances of the language modality through which they are produced

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<sup>6</sup> Stokoe (1960); Sutton-Spence and Woll (1999); Lucas (ed. 2001); Johnston and Schembri (2007).

<sup>7</sup> That Gary West was supervising this thesis at the time of writing this demonstrates how entrenched phonocentric assumptions about orality are.

<sup>8</sup> The term *oral* has itself been criticised and alternatives suggested: Bahan refers to ‘face-to-face traditions’ (2006), Masoni prefers ‘folk’ (2013:191).

<sup>9</sup> Here I paraphrase Humphrey-Dirksen Bauman’s comments about the phonocentric and graphocentric assumptions embedded in *language* and *literature* (2006:3). The argument that signing-deaf cultures are fundamentally oral cultures has been made by Frishberg (1988:149), Bahan (2006) and H. Bauman *et al.* (2006:11), amongst others.

and by the cultural world associated with it, they belong to the same conceptualisation of the traditional arts.

In so doing, I hope to highlight an ontological limitation with the study of oral traditions, whereby the (understandable) focus on speech has blinkered speaking-hearing culture to how much meaning is transmitted beyond sound. I do not deny the intrinsic value of speech, but its affordances can become fetishized at the expense of other modalities; consider Walter Ong:

Sight isolates, sound incorporates. Whereas sight situates the observer outside what he views ... sound pours into the hearer. ... I am at the centre of my auditory world, which envelopes me, establishing me at a kind of core of sensation and existence. (1982:71)<sup>10</sup>

Understanding oral as being ‘by word of mouth’ privileges *telling*, but, as Dégh acknowledges, ‘to fully understand the message, it is time for folklorists to concede that telling, even in folklore, need not always be identical with talking’ (1995:236). In line with the turn away from *text* in the study of folklore and traditional arts, Dégh and others emphasised *performance* and the inescapable reality that language ‘is grounded in the moment of its utterance in somatic communication’ (Niles 1999:54) – that it is, in essence, embodied. The phrase ‘by word of mouth’ not only privileges the words over the non-verbal aspects of embodied spoken-language production – intonation, paralinguistic facial cues, kinesics and gestures, which are, as David McNeill (2005) proves, central to the message rather than supplementary – but also unnecessarily privileges language itself. If the clapping games in the Opie Collection of Children’s Games and Songs<sup>11</sup> are oral traditions, are they not

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<sup>10</sup> Ong also claims that ‘thought itself relates ... to sound’ and that language ‘exists basically as spoken and heard’; his misunderstanding of sign languages leads him to assert palpable untruths about them (1982:7).

<sup>11</sup> Collected 1969-1983; held at the British Library. <http://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Opie-collection-of-children-s-games-and-songs-> [accessed 13/12/15]

passed on as much *by clap of hand* as by word of mouth? The same claim can be made of the transmission of Gaelic waulking songs, traditional dramas, dances, instrumental skills *etc.* (see Beech and MacDonald 2007). These are all traditional arts transmitted person-to-person primarily through action and imitation.

In a performance-centred critical landscape, this should be nothing new; however, just as West observes that ‘preoccupation with the written word has proved to be a stubborn habit to break’ (2013b:345), so too has the preoccupation with the spoken word. The oral traditions of signing-deaf communities force us to confront this habit, as it is less easy to overlook their fundamental embodiment: the signer’s body is a ‘palimpsest over which course the three-dimensional kinetic images of sign’ (H. Bauman *et al.* 2006:2), and it is extremely difficult – impossible even – to dis-entangle a signed *text* from the body upon which and through which it is performed. This informs my use of the contraction *performance-text*<sup>12</sup> to replace *text*; although *text* has a breadth of meaning (see Titon 1995), it carries graphocentric connotations that I am keen to avoid when discussing an ‘un-writeable’, movement-based language. *Performance-text* can also be used to apply to a spoken-language artform, as ‘the concept of the text does not apply to the moment of performance’ (Niles 1999:55). I suggest that the term *corp-oral* should be employed as the umbrella term for all oral practices, reflecting the fact that all traditional arts are expressed *by performance of body*. Signed-oral practices are a thoroughly overlooked part in the totality of Scotland’s corp-oral traditions.

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<sup>12</sup> Heidi Rose uses the term *text-performance* as an alternative for *text*, which acknowledges that ‘the literary power of ... [signed] literature is defined by, and coexistent with, its theatrical or performative power’ (2006:131). I prefer the inversion, as the former could imply the performance *of* a written text. The compound will be used throughout the rest of this dissertation as the generic term for the product of a ‘breakthrough into performance’ (R. Bauman 1977, 1986).

I position my study within the positive theoretical framework of Deaf Gain, a term coined by H. Dirksen Bauman and Joseph Murray (2014) in opposition to the idea of deafness as *hearing loss*. Deaf Gain posits that signing-deafness can be a source of benefit both to the individual themselves and to wider society, and that signing-deaf people, communities and epistemologies ‘contribut[e] to a more robust social and cultural ecology’ (2014:xxiii-xxxiii, xx). I contend that a greater diversity in our understanding of corp-oral traditional arts will be a source of Deaf Gain for Scottish ethnology.

### **Introducing the research questions**

Having identified a lacuna in the discipline of Scottish ethnology, the overarching question informing this thesis is:

How can the experiences, lore and artforms of signing-deaf people and communities be incorporated into the study of Scottish ethnology?

The scope of this question is too broad for a single doctoral study; it is, however, the guiding principle of my research. My realisation that to date Scottish ethnology has been the study only of *speaking-hearing* culture in Scotland, and that Scottish signing-deaf culture has been out there for centuries, fundamentally skewed the mental picture I had of Scotland’s intangible cultural heritage. Signing-deaf communities have different local and regional affiliations; their dialects do not correspond to spoken dialects; their place-names do not always relate to spoken/written place-names. They have different folklore, different historical milestones, and individuals have sign-names in addition to those written on their birth certificates. I knew what traditional arts were; suddenly, here were traditional arts that looked – literally looked – different. Yet this signing-deaf map of Scotland was still a

map of the Scotland I knew; it was that two-world, two-Scotlands-in-one dynamic that I wanted to explore.

My focus is on storytelling. Storytelling has been described as a 'primary act of mind' (Hardy 1977:13); it 'is and for a long time has been the chief basis of culture' (Niles 1999:2), expressing the lore and experiences of those who practise it. Furthermore, 'it is chiefly through storytelling that people possess a past' (Niles 1999:2). Given the invisibility of signing-deaf communities in conceptualisations of Scotland's linguistic and cultural heritage, and that Scotland's spoken-oral narrative traditions and prominent storytelling revival scene are internationally recognised, it seems fitting to focus on signed-oral storytelling traditions: to learn about the past and present of signing-deaf communities in Scotland, and to assert the legitimacy of signed-oral storytelling as part of Scotland's collective past and present. However, while my focus is on Scotland, I am not arguing that BSL storytelling in Scotland is categorically different to other signed-oral storytelling. Many of my conclusions may stand for BSL storytelling outwith Scotland, and some may be transnational in scope, in line with Murray's characterisation of signing-deaf communities as 'living in a visual community stretching across national boundaries' (2008:101-102).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The argument has been made since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century that signing-deaf culture should be understood as a global phenomenon, that a 'sense of commonality and connection' between signing-deaf people transcends differences and is intrinsic due to 'the significance of living in a different sensory world' (Baynton 2008:294-5); this is an additional resonance of the term *DEAFworld*. Murray argues that considering signing-deaf communities 'within the frameworks of single national communities ... not only unwittingly ties us to nation-specific narratives but also obscures just what it is that is most *Deaf* about being Deaf' (2008:101). The transnational (and trans-local) features of signing-deaf communities introduce a fascinating dimension to the study of Scottish ethnology, but is, regrettably, outwith the scope of this thesis.

My research speaks to questions of translation and interpretation: between languages, between language modalities, between distinctive yet overlaid cultures. In laying the groundwork for the inclusion of signed-oral material in Scottish ethnology, I am writing for a non-signing, culturally speaking-hearing audience. My first research question addresses this:

**Research Question 1:** What bridging techniques are required for translating the artistry of signed-oral storytelling, and the cultural experiences of signing-deaf people, to a speaking-hearing audience?

This question allows discussion of how signing-deaf storytellers themselves manage bridging as part of their artistry when addressing a mixed signing-deaf/speaking-hearing audience; however, it is primarily a question posed of my own methodology. I am interested in the intrinsic value of storytelling as an expressive artform: what could be called its *poetics* (i.e. ‘an endowment to any kind of natural discourse that is co-constructed by language, the body, and the environment,’ Kataoka 2012:101) or its *ethnopoetics*, which Paul Friedrich defines as resting at the interstice between ‘poetic language in the largest sense’, ‘a social group with its ethnicity and culture’, and ‘the individual making the connection between the first two through his language’ (2006:207). I am keenly aware that the intrinsic value of artforms does not always translate between cultural worlds and, even within the same language, there are different expectations about what a story should be like in different contexts (McCabe 1997). BSL storytelling takes place in a different language to the one in which I describe and discuss it, in a different language modality, and is framed by different embodied knowledge. There is not a tradition of ethnopoetic transcription that I can draw on, and the devaluation of signing-deaf communities throughout history means that the power dynamics embedded in ‘writing culture’ (see Clifford and Marcus 1986) are particularly

acute. Chapter Two provides an in-depth account of my methodology, both in undertaking the research and presenting signed-oral storytelling on the page.

In addition, the first research question demands engagement with the translation of *worldview*, defined as:

the sum total of subjective interpretations of perceived and experienced reality of individuals ... contain[ing] beliefs, opinions, philosophies, conducts, behavioural patterns, social relationships, and practices of humans ... [and] permeat[ing] all cultural performances ... Narratives, in particular, are loaded with worldview expressions. (Dégh 1995:132)

Worldview in narratives, Dégh continues, is 'an interpretative vehicle, inseparable from the content of the text and its context' and subject to the 'cultural-conceptual system of its audience' (1995:133). I write, however, from within a different cultural-conception system, and the signing-deaf worldview contradicts many common-sense assumptions from the speaking-hearing world. A problem for deaf studies is that it 'faces a discursive landscape that was not designed for it' (Bechter 2008:69). Signing-deaf culture belongs alongside other autochthonous language communities in the study of Scotland's folk culture, but if that tradition of study is fundamentally phonocentric (i.e. predicated on being able to hear speech), then it is necessary to carefully consider how to undertake its study.

The first question frames my research; the second, more practical question concerns signed-oral storytelling practices themselves, and takes as a starting point François Grosjean's concept of signing-deafness as a bilingual and bicultural state (1992).

**Research Question 2:** How do current storytelling practices and practitioners in British Sign Language express and/or perform the complex bicultural relationship between the signing-deaf community and speaking-hearing society in Scotland?

I look at the expression of the relationship between the signing-deaf community and mainstream society found within performance-texts, whether explicitly articulated, communicated through the use of allegory, or embedded in performance features. I also analyse the wider context of the chosen performance-texts, and discuss to what extent these practices perform inter-cultural relationships in a more sociological sense.

In my selection of a corpus of stories, I drew on Frank Bechter's idea of the 'deaf public voice', i.e. the expression of signing-deaf culture overtly presented to both worlds, which aims to 'discover, claim, and convey that which is intrinsic to deaf value schemes' (2006:72).<sup>14</sup> The idea of the deaf public voice fits the current political landscape in relation to signing-deaf communities. Over the last decade, politicians, community members and allies have worked towards the development of the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act (2015),<sup>15</sup> which eventually passed in September 2015. The two BSL Bills proposed to the Scottish Parliament during this period used discourse from the 'heritage' model of language legislation: the first spoke of 'promot[ing] the cultural aspects of BSL and the Deaf community as part of Scottish heritage' (Craigie 2010:1), and the second, ultimately successful Bill asserted that signing-deaf culture was 'an important element of our rich cultural heritage' (Griffin 2012:4). This introduces a public discourse different from the 'rights-based' model of language legislation. Over the course of the

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<sup>14</sup> This focus was a later addition, as will be explained in Chapter Two.

<sup>15</sup> Hereafter called *the BSL Act*. As my research was concurrent with the development of the Bills which ultimately became the Act, I call it *the BSL Bill* when referring to it in its stages of development. The full text of the Act can be found here: [http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4\\_Bills/British%20Sign%20Language%20\(Scotland\)%20Bill/SPBill55BS042015.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_Bills/British%20Sign%20Language%20(Scotland)%20Bill/SPBill55BS042015.pdf) [accessed 13/01/16]. See also De Meulder (2015).



Act's development signing-deaf people have been vocal about being publicly visible in both contexts.

In this context, and in response to the ethical concerns about undertaking collection inside signing-deaf communities (discussed in Chapter Two), I selected three case-studies of storytelling practices which are already in the public domain and which can therefore be seen to be contributing to a deaf public voice in Scotland. A research question took this into consideration:

**Research question 3:** What messages about signing-deaf culture are the chosen storytelling practices contributing to the 'deaf public voice' in Scotland?

I use the word *practices* to enable discussion of both the storytelling events themselves and the context, in the tradition of research into public storytelling as a tool for emancipation for marginalised groups. The three case-studies are introduced briefly at the end of this chapter.

I see these research questions as contributing to the wider issue of cultural translation, and to the question of embodiment in cultural transmission. That signing-deafness is a cultural state forces the recognition that speaking-hearingness is too: our sensory engagement with the world produces and shapes our cultural interaction with it. Our body shapes our *habitus*, to use Pierre Bourdieu's term; that is, 'our overall orientation to or way of being in the world' (Sweetman 2009) which is perennially open to change. If the speaking-hearing world is phonocentric, then what do members of a visually-orientated culture know about the world that we are oblivious to? How do these different ways-of-being interact? Furthermore, the study examines the functioning of culture and embodied language at the highest level, and considers the intersection (and indivisibility) of language and

performance, aiming to expand Scottish ethnology's sensory habitus to some extent.

The rest of this chapter provides an introduction to the key words of my research questions. I start with a brief introduction to signing-deaf culture, which enables an examination of Grosjean's idea of a bilingual-bicultural continuum and my understanding of signing-deaf biculturality. I then provide a historical overview of sign languages and signing-deaf communities, both in general and in Scotland in particular, highlighting the respective impact of deaf schools and linguistic recognition. This section also contains a brief introduction to sign linguistics, in recognition that this thesis is aimed at non-signers. I conclude with a discussion of the deaf public voice in relation to storytelling, and map out the remainder of the thesis.

### **Signing-deaf culture: what is it, and what to call it?**

Signing-deaf culture has been recognised as differing from speaking-hearing culture for centuries – by signing-deaf people at least:

For as long as Deaf people have formed communities, a Deaf way of life has been recognised by Deaf people themselves. These patterns of behaviour, attitudes, beliefs, and values have been referred to ... in English as the "Deaf world," the "Deaf community," or, more recently "Deaf culture." (Erting 1989:xxiii)

Much has been written about it,<sup>16</sup> but defining it and the boundaries of signing-deaf communities and the DEAFworld is highly complex, especially since 90-

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<sup>16</sup> Important texts include Padden and Humphries (1988, 2005), Erting *et al.* (1989), Ladd (2003) and Lane *et al.* (1996), with H. Bauman's edited *Open Your Eyes: Deaf Studies Talking* (2008) providing a more recent examination. As American signing-deaf culture has enjoyed scholarly attention for longer than have the communities of other countries, the research literature is skewed in favour of ASL, risking transnational claims being made for ASL phenomena; I have tried to be mindful of this in my reading. There is also an ethnocentric

95% of deaf children are born to speaking-hearing, non-signing parents and therefore rarely have early exposure to sign language or signing-deaf culture. Paddy Ladd has proposed the concept of *Deafhood* to define ‘the process by which Deaf individuals come to actualise their Deaf identity’ (2003:xviii), which is conceived of as an ‘open-ended concept with an essentialist core ... [i.e.] the belief that sign language learning and knowledge and deaf socialisation should be available – and pursued by – every deaf person’ (Kusters and De Meulder 2013: 428). The essentialist argument states that signing-deaf culture is deaf people’s ‘natural’ culture, but for many the idea that a child can have or acquire a different cultural identity to his or her biological parents is controversial (Baynton 2008; Allen 2015:37). However, the idea of signing-deafness as a cultural state is straightforward in terms of language’s relationship to identity and worldview (see Nic Craith 2012; Joseph 2004).

As the acquisition of language and enculturation cannot be guaranteed within the family, signing-deaf communities are strongly defined by *horizontal identities*, with only approximately 5% of deaf people (i.e. those from deaf families) having *vertical identities* that are reinforced at home (Solomon 2014:x). Because of this, and because most deaf people’s children are non-deaf in turn, the community has been described as ‘one generation thick’ (Hoffmeister 2008). This has implications for the concept of *tradition* – already a contested term – which will be discussed briefly at the end of this chapter, and then again in Chapter Three.

The central premise of signing-deaf culture is that the world is visually constructed. Audiological deafness contributes to sight being ‘the basis of

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bias in favour of Western signing-deaf culture, which is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss.

embodiment and epistemology’ (Tijsseling 2015:51), but it is not wholly necessary; after all, non-deaf people from deaf families may exhibit ‘culturally deaf’ behaviours and worldviews (Hoffmeister 2008; Napier 2008; Mather and Andrews 2009; Bishop 2010). The role that audiological deafness plays is contested. Both deaf and nondeaf people from deaf families (PDFs, to use Jemina Napier’s 2014 coinage)<sup>17</sup> acquire signing-deaf norms vertically as their first lingua-culture and thus may have signing-deaf ‘techniques of the body’, a term Marcel Mauss used for the ‘series of assembled actions’ which are ‘not simply a product of some purely individual, almost completely psychical ... mechanism’ but learnt behaviour: ‘a social idiosyncrasy’ (1973:72-76). These include distinctive norms of eye-contact, tactility and personal space, which many non-deaf PDFs share with signing-deaf people. Yet other norms are defined by the differently organised sensoria of deafness: see Bahan’s account of identifying a signing-deaf man in the street through his way of scanning his surroundings for sound cues,<sup>18</sup> which would be unlikely to be part of a non-deaf PDF’s techniques of the body (2008:83).

Claims of ‘belonging’ to signing-deaf culture can be complicated by the interplay of various factors: whether one was born a PDF or to a speaking-hearing family, whether one is audiotically deaf and to what extent (further complicated by technological aids and medical intervention), educational background, socialisation patterns, *etc.* Some of these will be explored in their historical context later in the chapter. An early attempt to map the criteria for

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<sup>17</sup> Napier uses *people from deaf families*, or PDFs, in preference to the more common *children of deaf adults*, or CODAs, due to some controversy over the latter’s resonances (Napier 2008, 2014). The term ‘includes *both* deaf and hearing people’ and has a broader application than merely parent-child relations. I will refer to *deaf PDFs* and *non-deaf PDFs* throughout this thesis.

<sup>18</sup> This phenomenon of recognising another signing-deaf person is sometimes playfully referred to as *Deafdar*, as in a recent article on the deaf news blog, *The Limping Chicken* (Swinbourne 2015).

belonging to the imagined signing-deaf community was undertaken by Charlotte Baker and Dennis Cokely (1980), who identified four different avenues to membership – audiological, political, social and linguistic – with insider or outsider status conferred by ‘attitude’ towards the community (Fig. 1). Although arguably overly simplistic, it does provide a useful visualisation of different intersecting considerations.

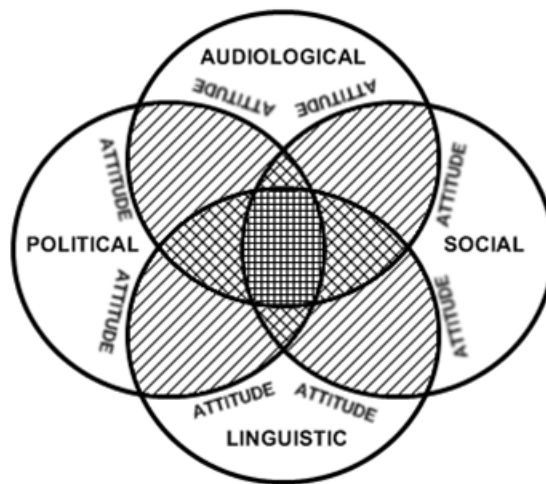


**Fig. 1** *Avenues to membership of the Deaf Community (Baker and Cokely 1980)*

### ***A note on terminology***

The term *deaf* applies to a much wider demographic than just the signing-deaf community, and the main convention in the deaf studies literature has been to differentiate between *deaf* with a lower-case d for the audiological condition of any hearing loss, and *Deaf* to indicate a cultural affiliation to a signing community. While this convention is still widely used, it has fallen from favour as being too essentialist a way ‘to decide who is “in” and who is “out”’ (Tijsseling 2015:49), masking the complexities of the community – indeed, scholar Kyra Pollitt says the distinction constitutes linguistic imperialism since the big-D/little-d distinction is only possible in

English (personal communication). Other conventions exist and are also contested.<sup>19</sup> The un-capitalised deaf is regaining ground, with Fenlon *et al.* applying it so as ‘not to make assumptions about individual deaf people’s identity’ (2015:169); a similar consideration informs my use of *signing-deaf*. Several of my interviewees alluded to an apparent trend away from *deaf* in all its forms, subsequently illustrated on social media in the ‘sign language pledge’ meme, where some signing-deaf people made the following public promise:

not to use gestures like 'I'm deaf' or 'my ears are not working' when hearing people try to talk to them. Instead, they will show that they are sign language users and guide hearing people to communicate with them visually. (Heidi Koivisto Robertson, Facebook, 20 December 2015)<sup>20</sup>

One of my interviewees, Bryan Marshall, stated:

It’s becoming far more commonplace to use the term BSL user instead of Deaf, the emphasis is on signing [...] Language is the issue now, not whether you’re Deaf or hearing, it’s all about language and I’m all for that. (BM:2012)<sup>21</sup>

Bryan’s point that ‘language is the issue now’ reflects the argument for signing-deafness to be primarily understood as pertaining to a linguistic minority rather than a disability group. Emphasis on language over physiology is politically expedient, for whereas deafness is seen as deficit, signing emphasises *difference*. Another interviewee, Mark MacQueen,

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<sup>19</sup> See Young and Temple (2014:11-28) for an excellent overview of the complexities. Other usage includes *DEAF* (an English gloss for the BSL or ASL sign used by e.g. Gulliver 2009), *D/deaf* (Valentine and Skelton 2007), and *Sign Language Peoples* (Batterbury, Ladd, and Gulliver 2007). See examples and further discussion in Allen (2015:38); O’Brien (2015); Napier (2002); Brueggemann (2010:9).

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/bslpledge> [01/02/16]

<sup>21</sup> Bryan’s translator used the big-D convention and he did not ask for it to be changed, but it should be noted that initial capitalisation is impossible in BSL and that Bryan simply signed the BSL sign glossed in English as DEAF.

described my research as being about ‘signing culture, not deaf culture’ (MM:2013).

However, *signing* is also somewhat insufficient. Solomon has observed that ‘true membership ... [has] a great deal to do with the actual shared experience of deafness’ (2014:ix), whether linked to its differently-organised sensoria or to shared experiences of phonocentric oppression (discussed later). Some aspects of the culture come from the language, some from deafness, some from attitudes towards deafness. In acknowledgement of the complexity of these interrelated issues in conceptualising an individual’s cultural affiliation, I use the term *signing-deaf* to reflect that the central experience is of audiological deafness as well as signing fluency.<sup>22</sup> *Signing community* may be used for the wider community including interpreters, learners like myself, and other nondeaf allies. Non-deaf PDFs may straddle this border, and I use the unmarked *deaf* for deaf children from speaking-hearing families who may not yet have discovered signing-deaf communities.

### ***A bilingual-bicultural continuum***

Signing-deaf communities are often characterised as tight-knit and ‘hard to reach’ communities (e.g. Jones and Newburn 2001). To some extent this is true: the majority culture’s spoken language is largely inaccessible, and the degree of English literacy cannot be assured since, as Kyle says, ‘despite decades of research, there is still no definitive answer to the question of *how* deaf children learn to read’ a language they cannot hear (2015:302).<sup>23</sup> Lack of access to education and work, and the disabling attitudes of many speaking-hearing people exacerbate this problem. Yet signing-deaf people are also – by

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<sup>22</sup> This contraction nods to signing-deaf writer Berthier’s use of *hearing-speaking people* (1868, quoted in Dimmock 1993:78).

<sup>23</sup> See Brueggemann (2004), Stewart and Clarke (2003) and Kuntze (2008) for more on deaf literacy.

necessity and by choice – in daily interaction with the speaking-hearing world, leading François Grosjean to argue that signing-deaf people should be recognised as fundamentally bilingual and bicultural (1992:308).

Bilingualism does not, in Grosjean's definition, necessarily imply 'native-like' fluency in all the domains of each language, but as 'using two or more languages (or dialects) in everyday life' within a 'situational continuum which induces different language modes' (1992:308).<sup>24</sup> This is consistent with Cummin's work on spoken-language bilingualism, where she differentiates between *Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills* (BICS) and *Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency* (CALP) (2008); many, perhaps most, signing-deaf people do not have English CALP. The idea of a continuum also fits with Kyle's observations about 'the huge heterogeneity in [signing-deaf people's] language skills, language backgrounds, and audiological factors' (2015:313). Heterogeneity of language skills is affected by 'population, environmental, regional, and ... educational factors' that affect language transmission, and the 'social characteristics that are of particular interest in the Deaf communities are language use at home, age of sign language acquisition, and type of education' (Hill 2015:195-196). The following factors have a crucial impact on BSL/English bilingualism:

- whether the individual was born deaf or was deafened after the acquisition of spoken language;
- whether they had signing-deaf parents and, if not, whether they acquired a first language in the optimal age of language acquisition;

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<sup>24</sup> See Metzger (2000) for more on signing-deaf bilingualism.



- whether the first language was BSL or English (including manually-coded varieties of English, such as Sign-Supported English (SSE), which uses BSL signs in English word-order);
- whether they attended a residential school and at what age, and the pedagogies and policies that the deaf or mainstream school employed;
- whether they have residual or technologically-enhanced hearing which makes speech decipherable;
- their language ideologies (e.g. privileging English over BSL or *vice versa*) etc.

The influence of these factors, as well as the degree of regional variation in BSL (sometimes surmounted by using fingerspelled English as a bilingual bridge - Sutton-Spence and Woll 1999:17) and the need to communicate with semi-fluent or non-signers, has contributed to signing-deaf communities tending to be tolerant of different signing styles and capabilities. Adam *et al.* observe that deaf people act as translators and language brokers within the community, both for each other and outsiders (2011), showing communicative flexibility and moving up and down the situational continuum as needed.

Grosjean defines bicultural in relation to 'a person who lives in two or more cultures, who adapts to each and who blends aspects of each' (1992:307). Whereas biculturalism can be defined as having 'a first culture which [is] temporarily give[n] up in exchange for a second ... [enabling the person] to move comfortably between two distinct cultures' (Bienvenu 1987:1), Grosjean argues that going into full monocultural mode is 'practically impossible' as 'biculturals cannot always deactivate certain traits of their other culture when in a monocultural environment', and that biculturalism is also subject to a 'situational continuum which requires different types of behaviour' (1992:315-

316). Most signing-deaf people, he claims 'are Deaf dominant biculturals in that they identify primarily with the Deaf community', but they 'also have ties with the hearing world [including family ties] and interact with it and hence, in a sense, are also members of it' (1992:318).

This sits well with Murray's criticism of 'the traditional binaries ... of Deaf worlds and hearing worlds, of Deaf lives "segregated from" or "assimilated into" hearing societies' (2008:102). He sees the categories 'not in opposition to one another, but as mutually formative' (2008:102), arguing that signing-deaf people 'live simultaneously in hearing spaces and in Deaf spaces ... acculturated to, but not assimilated in, larger society' while aiming 'for a state of coequality in which they participate in non-Deaf societies while simultaneously creating temporary, situational localities in which to express their Deafhood' (2008:104). The bicultural state of signing-deaf communities is partially constituted by the paradox of being both *of* and *apart from* the majority culture: *of* inasmuch as the boundaries between the host speaking-hearing culture and the signing-deaf micro-culture are porous (especially as, for most, the majority host culture is that of their parents), yet *apart from* in fundamental ways. They have limited access to it (*of*, but *excluded from*), but more importantly, they do things differently. To paraphrase Bechter, deaf culture does not look like hearing culture would look like if hearing people could not hear any more (2008:66).

Furthermore, Bechter characterises signing-deaf culture as fundamentally conversionary. 'Most signers are not born signers,' he observes, thus it is 'a community of "converts"' who have come *into* their culture (2008:61). This resonates with Ladd's idea of Deafhood as process (2003). Yet, 'movement from the hearing world to the Deaf World' is not a one-time affair, where all ties are cut,' and Bechter's description of the 'profound, albeit

conflicted, ties' to non-deaf families and society (2008:61) fits well with Brenda Jo Brueggeman's concept of 'betweenity' as the defining experience of (signing) deafness (2008) and Guy McIlroy's term *DeaF*, where the capitalised *F* emphasises a fluidity of identification that 'handles the interface/tension between both worlds' (in H. Bauman 2008:13; see also Corrie Tijsseling 2015 and Dai O'Brien 2015's useful summaries). Signing-deaf cultural consciousness does not exist autonomously, Bechter concludes, 'but is constituted in pervasive contact with nondeaf ways of understanding the world', with a conversionary worldview that is 'the stuff of deaf cultural life itself, and ... always in play' (2008:61). This informs my understanding of what I am calling signing-deaf *biculturality* (to make the distinction from other definitions of *bicultural*): the constant, sometimes painful, often playful negotiation of the messiness of being *of* but *apart from* the majority culture. It is examples of this that I will be seeking in the performance-texts and storytelling practices I analyse.

### **From *deaf and dumb* to linguistic and cultural minorities: signing-deaf communities in historical context**

In order to understand the current place of signing-deaf communities in Scotland, in Britain and internationally, and the complexity of the bilingual-bicultural continuum, it is necessary to look at the evolution of thought pertaining to deafness and sign languages. The perceived invalidity of sign languages has contributed to the invisibility of signing-deaf culture, and sign languages have been and continue to be seen primarily as 'a type of prosthetic, a compensation' (Bauman and Murray 2014:xvii). Throughout history, majority speaking-hearing societies have tended to be institutionally audist, i.e. believing in 'superior[ity]' based on one's ability to hear or behave in the

manner of one who hears' (Humphries 1975). Audism is apparent in the phrase *deaf and dumb*, ubiquitous until recently, which carries the dual meaning of mutism and stupidity. Deafness has been perceived, as Rée points out, as 'an appalling spiritual calamity' (1999:89) and signing-deaf people have variously been associated with 'savagery and animality, stupidity and disability' (Mitchell 2006:xix).<sup>25</sup> However, despite entrenched audism, 'deaf people did not constitute a category for social intervention by the state' before the 18<sup>th</sup> Century (Mirzoeff 1995:6). The form this intervention has taken in deaf education will be discussed shortly, after a consideration of the historical provenance of BSL.

### ***British Sign Language: the forgotten autochthonous language***

It is often mistakenly assumed that sign languages were recently invented by speaking-hearing educators of deaf children, and that they are manual encodings of the majority spoken language (so, for example, BSL is perceived as being 'English-on-the-hands'). Instead, sign languages have naturally emerged in deaf communities without taking the host spoken language(s) as a model – unsurprisingly, given that spoken language is largely or entirely inaccessible to most members of deaf communities. Moreover, sign languages have been in existence since at least the fifth century B.C., two thousand years before deaf education was established (see Plato's *Cratylus* 422e). Considering BSL's history, Princess Joanna of Scotland, 'the mute lady of Dalkeith', is known to have used sign language in Edinburgh in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century (Hay 2015:38), and there are accounts of signing taking place in Leicester and in Cornwall in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, and in London and possibly Kent in the 17<sup>th</sup> (Jackson 1990:xiii, 3-7). The extent to which the signs

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<sup>25</sup> See L. Davis (1995), Lane (1992), Baynton (1997), Rée (1999) and Branson and Miller (2002) for an overview of historical and philosophical attitudes towards deafness.

themselves and their syntax resembled modern BSL is impossible to determine; however, these accounts are evidence that autochthonous sign languages had been developing across mainland Britain for several centuries, both in cities with high population density and in rural areas where a high instance of hereditary deafness permitted a 'village sign language' to develop (see Groce 1985).

The language in its current form probably began to be codified following the industrial revolution, as increased urbanisation and the establishment of residential deaf schools brought about larger, geographically-concentrated communities. The first deaf school in Britain was Thomas Braidwood's Academy for the Deaf and Dumb in Edinburgh (established in 1760), and it is likely that Braidwood's jealously-guarded methods drew on the language of a pre-existing signing community in Edinburgh.<sup>26</sup> The significance of deaf schools will be described in a later section. BSL is certainly a young language; it is, however, indisputably an autochthonous language of Great Britain and, given a recognisably Scottish variant which itself contains multiple dialects, also of Scotland. The exact number of signing-deaf people in Scotland today is unknown: approximately 120 children are born each year with a hearing impairment, but this figure includes minimal hearing loss and those children with no access to BSL.<sup>27</sup> The Scottish Council on Deafness (SCoD) reports an estimate of 6,000 for whom BSL is their first or preferred language,<sup>28</sup> while the 2011 Scottish Census found that 12,533 respondents in

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<sup>26</sup> This was certainly the case in the Abbé de l'Épée's deaf school in Paris at the same time (Mirzoeff 1995:39-40).

<sup>27</sup> [http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S4/SB\\_15-05\\_British\\_Sign\\_Language\\_Scotland\\_Bill.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S4/SB_15-05_British_Sign_Language_Scotland_Bill.pdf) [Accessed 11/01/16]

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.scod.org.uk/faqs/statistics/> [Accessed 11/01/16]

Scotland reported using BSL at home.<sup>29</sup> This places BSL-users at 0.24% of the Scottish population, in comparison with 58,000 Gaelic-speakers (1.1%) and 1.5 million speakers of Scots (30%).

Despite certain points of overlap (specifically, suppression in education and devaluation compared to Standard English<sup>30</sup>), BSL is atypical of Scotland's minority languages due to the low numbers of deaf PDFs, the biological inaccessibility of spoken English, and the association with disability (Turner 2006; Reagan 2001). An important point is that, for the purposes of this thesis, other minority spoken language communities still constitute *the majority culture*, i.e. speaking-hearing, rather than signing-deaf. However, it is a given that English is the dominant language, and that the culture of Standard English has had the most impact on signing-deaf communities.

BSL is listed as one of 130 'Deaf sign languages' in *Ethnologue* (SIL International 2009); linguists have tentatively grouped these into five genetically-related sign language families whose relationships differ starkly from those of spoken language families (see Woll et al. 2001).<sup>31</sup> BSL is part of the BANZSL family,<sup>32</sup> whereas ASL and Irish Sign Language are in the French Sign Language family; the two families are to a large extent mutually

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/10/8378/7> [accessed 11/01/16] The emphasis on the home is problematic given the low numbers of deaf children with signing parents. Furthermore, the British Deaf Association (BDA) contests the findings of the census, estimating far greater numbers of BSL-users (<http://limpingchicken.com/2013/01/31/deaf-news-british-deaf-association-says-census-gives-misleading-picture-of-number-of-bsl-users/> [accessed 13/01.16]).

<sup>30</sup> For example, just as BSL is often dismissed as only being able to deal with 'concrete' ideas, Gaelic was for a long time considered to be '...incapable of expressing abstract or scientific concepts' (McCoy and Scott 2000:3), and Scots was also described as having 'linguistic incapacity' (Beveridge and Turnbull 1989:10).

<sup>31</sup> The genetic relationships between sign languages are, however, disputed (Branson and Miller 1998; Nyst 2013).

<sup>32</sup> British, Australian, and New Zealand Sign Language family.

unintelligible, and there is considerable variance within language families. This ably demonstrates not only that sign languages are distinct from one another, but that they are distinct from their country's 'host' spoken language(s): there is no 'Anglo' sign language and even the fingerspelling alphabets, used to transliterate loanwords from English, are markedly distinct.<sup>33</sup> Yet this should be unsurprising, as sign languages have developed in communities which have frequently been isolated from one another and subject to different influences. The core features they share will be elaborated on in a later section; first, we consider the generalities of how sign languages develop.

### ***How sign languages come into being***

In simplistic terms, the development of sign languages can be assumed to follow a trajectory from 'home signs' of minimal complexity, into 'village' or regionally-specific sign languages where there are sufficient deaf people to form a signing community. These can develop in complexity to the status of fully elaborated and/or 'national' sign languages, if sufficient conditions arise. Considering home signs first, although the vast majority of deaf children are born to non-signing parents, they have a fundamentally visual engagement with the world and will seek to communicate using the modality that comes naturally to them. Susan Goldin-Meadow shows that even deaf children with no sign language exposure use gestures that are 'part of a system' in a way that speaking-hearing children do not (2003:71). Non-signing families with deaf children typically develop a limited gestural code; however, these are not fully elaborated languages and have no application beyond their immediate

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<sup>33</sup> See Figs. i & ii at the start of this thesis.

context. An early autobiography of a British signing-deaf man, Alexander Atkinson, contains an eloquent description of the development of home signs:

[I] showed a great docility in acquiring a vocabulary of signs which I may divide into two classes: the first denoted ... objects of immediate personal use; the second, the habits of common animals, those of persons whom I daily saw ... Most of the signs of the former kind, were chiefly formed and repeated to me on daily occasions, by my affectionate family[;] ... those of the latter were subsequently my own. (1865:6)

He was exposed to an elaborated sign language on enrolling at the Edinburgh Deaf and Dumb Institution in 1815:

[I] observed two of the pupils converse with each other, in a way which I had never seen before ... [and] by means of their fingers, carry on conversations. (1865:11)

The role of schools for the deaf in the development of sign languages has been considerable. While sign languages have only inconsistently been employed in the classroom (and were for a long time banned in education), sign languages develop where there are communities to use them, to increase their complexity and to pass them on, and residential schools create the conditions for these communities to form. This is corroborated by the rapid emergence of Nicaraguan Sign Language, probably the world's youngest language, following the establishment of the first school for the deaf in 1980. The language of instruction was spoken/written Spanish, but the pupils developed a sign language that has increased in complexity with each new intake (Senghas, Kita and Özyürek 2004). This high rate of horizontal, peer-to-peer transmission is typical for signing-deaf communities owing to the small number of deaf PDFs who can acquire language and culture vertically in the home (Hill 2015:197). The significance of schools for signing-deaf communities requires some examination; first, a necessarily brief introduction to the



linguistics of sign languages may be useful for non-signers to consolidate the picture.

### ***An aside: how sign languages work***

Acknowledging that ‘to attempt to describe a language of signs by words ... [is] to attempt impossibilities’ (Burnet 1835:24), the following points are intended merely to ground the reader in the discourse; a deeper picture will emerge over the course of the thesis. As visual-spatial-kinetic languages, sign languages are structured differently from spoken languages. Whereas spoken words are created from combinations of phonemes, sign languages have five phonological<sup>34</sup> parameters used to create signs:

- handshape;
- location of the sign in relation to the signer’s body;
- palm orientation (i.e. the direction the palm faces);
- movement path of the sign;
- associated non-manual features (e.g. head or shoulder movement, facial expressions, lip-patterns).

Sign language vocabularies consist of both arbitrary signs and those which have a strong visual motivation (‘iconic’ signs, discussed below). Unlike spoken languages’ *linear* structure, the grammar of sign language is *spatially* organised: topics and referents are assigned a location in the signspace, and then referred back to and linked together. Thus, pronouns ‘are articulated by pointing to a location associated with the noun’ (Sutton-Spence and Woll 1999:42); both pointing and eye-gaze are syntactically significant, as is the direction in which a sign is performed. Simultaneous production (i.e. where

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<sup>34</sup> That the term *phonological* is used in relation to sign languages demonstrates the phonocentric bias in linguistics terminology. Although Stokoe coined the terms *cherology* and *chereme* to replace *phonology* and *phoneme* (1960), they are seldom used.

each hand acts as an independent articulator, producing linked but separate information) is possible in sign languages but not in spoken languages (Sutton-Spence and Woll 1999:203-5). However, sign languages do share some features with, for example, the 'active type' spoken languages of Micronesia: they use classifiers (described below), differentiate between inclusive and exclusive pronouns, and do not use the copula. The following subsections provide more explanation of three key features of sign language which are used in signed-oral storytelling.

### ***Role-shift***

Role-shift is used to report speech and interaction, including relative positioning; it builds on the way in which pronouns work. If the signer 'places' a character on their right-hand side, to talk about that character they point to that location. To report interaction with that character, they shift their eye-gaze, head, shoulders and/or whole torso towards that location to sign the interaction, e.g. giving something to that character, or asking a question. To report the character's response, they make the same shift in the other direction. If an adult signer is reporting interaction with a child, the child will be placed lower on the vertical axis to indicate their smaller stature, and the signer looks down to report their own speech or action, and up to report that of the child. Use of this device ranges from a slight repositioning of the shoulders or a change in eye-gaze, to a full re-enactment performing multiple 'parts' that are imbued with characterisation (Sutton-Spence and Woll 1999:272-273). Role-shift can therefore be compared to acting, and its efficacy for storytelling should be immediately apparent.

### ***Classifiers and the productive lexicon***

Classifiers in sign languages are handshapes used to indicate that a referent 'belong[s] to a particular meaning group', i.e. that they share real or

abstract characteristics (Sutton-Spence and Woll 1999:44, 47).<sup>35</sup> They can be ‘substituted for a more specific sign’ (Sutton-Spence and Woll 1999:48): for example, the index finger is the classifier used to depict a long, thin entity, and can be used instead of the BSL lexeme glossed as PERSON, TOOTHBRUSH, or a STICK up which a caterpillar crawls.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, the flat-palmed B handshape (according to the ASL handshape conventions<sup>37</sup> used by sign linguists) is the BSL classifier for VEHICLE which can be used to show how the specific vehicle (whether CAR, BUS or LORRY) moves through space. Napoli uses a description of a car crash using the VEHICLE classifier as an illustration:

if the front end of the car gets crushed, they can flex the interphalangeal joints of the ... finger[s] to show that. Indeed, if the crushing happened slowly, or if the signer wants to convey that sense of slow motion .... [associated with] a terrifying experience, the fingers can curl slowly. So, the very (form of) the hand becomes the car: internal parts of the hand distort to show the distortion of the car. (2014:234)

These are examples of *whole entity classifiers*, whereby the handshape depicts the whole thing. Other categories of classifiers include *handling classifiers* to ‘show how the hands move or position themselves in manipulating the relevant object’ (Napoli 2014:233), and *size and shape specifiers* can be used to depict the size, shape, texture, weight and other features of an item or substance without using a fixed lexeme.

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<sup>35</sup> A broad definition of classifiers suffices for this thesis, although for linguists this may ‘weaken the use of the specialist term’ (Sutton-Spence and Woll 1999:47; see pages 43-50 for more nuance).

<sup>36</sup> In keeping with the conventions of sign linguistics, capital letters denote English glosses of BSL signs, with hyphens indicating that more than one gloss is needed for a single sign. It should be remembered that glosses deceptively suggest that ‘the semantics of the spoken language word or phrase ... overlaps with the semantics of the sign’ (Crasborn 2015:76-77).

<sup>37</sup> See Fig. i at the start of the thesis.

The use of classifier handshapes in BSL enables a highly productive lexicon (Brennan 1992:46-52). Compared to English, BSL has a limited vocabulary of citation signs, leading to misconceptions about its expressive capacity. Consider the following description of BSL as a ‘general-purpose language’:

[It] poses limitations for users, making it impossible for them to easily express certain concepts and terms ... For a student who is being trained in joinery, there is no sign in BSL which means “dovetail joint.” (Compatangelo 2012)<sup>38</sup>

While it may be true that there is no citation sign for DOVETAIL-JOINT, it is not true that a fluent signer would not be able to produce or understand an *ad hoc* construction for DOVETAIL-JOINT using appropriate classifier handshapes; even I in my limited fluency could do so.<sup>39</sup> It is even possible to use classifiers to construct imagery that has never been seen before (Zwitserlood 2003); this high degree of visual creativity also has implications for signed-oral storytelling.

### ***Iconicity***

The articulatory form of classifiers is not arbitrary, but leverages one of sign languages’ most controversial features: iconicity. Iconicity, Channon tells us, is ‘connected with the physical reality of the world and with human culture’:

The mind renders iconically ... the shape of a tree, the type of dance performed by some cultures, the outward motion from the self that occurs in giving someone something, the fact that objects, when dropped, fall downwards, the cultural belief that heaven is above us ... (2015:124)

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<sup>38</sup> <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/news/4294/> [17/11/15]

<sup>39</sup> It seems to me that this should be seen more as a comment on deaf education: the hypothetical deaf student is not being taught joinery by a fluent signer.

In sign languages, iconicity manifests itself in the way in which a sign mimics the visual world. Calton observes that iconicity ‘may be one of the core reasons for many of the misconceptions held about [sign language]’ (2014:118), e.g. that it is ‘pantomimic’ and therefore ‘simpler’ than spoken language. Furthermore, Saussure’s arbitrariness principle has been a cornerstone of linguistics: because certain signs looked like their referents meant, linguists thought, that sign languages could not be legitimate languages. Today, their linguistic integrity has been sufficiently established in academia (if not yet in popular consciousness) to enable a broader scope of analysis, exemplified in the title of Calton’s chapter: ‘What we learned from sign languages when we stopped having to defend them’ (2014). Sign linguistics has led to recognition not only that ‘the relative scarceness of iconicity in spoken language is not a virtue’ (Taub 2001:3), but that spoken languages themselves use more iconic features than had previously been assumed.<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, a ‘feature of images is that they require a form of literacy’ (Nyst 2015:116),<sup>41</sup> and it is certainly the case that a degree of sign-literacy (what García and Cole call *signacy*, 2014:102-3) is required to accurately process the ‘optional and unpredictable’ iconic imagery in sign languages (Channon 2015:125). Far from being transparent, iconicity is translucent (Klima and Bellugi 1979): once one knows the image being depicted, it becomes obvious.<sup>42</sup> Sign languages’ iconic properties have been somewhat rehabilitated in the

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<sup>40</sup> See Calton (2014) for a literature review of iconicity in the syntax of spoken and signed languages.

<sup>41</sup> She describes this as ‘perhaps unexpected’; it is of no surprise to anyone interested in the work of John Berger, W. J. T. Mitchell and others.

<sup>42</sup> Again, Calton (2014) provides an excellent overview of the research.

discussion of signed artforms,<sup>43</sup> yet there remain ambivalences about how best to deal with the role of image; this will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

### ***The historical significance of schools***

We have seen that residential schools create the conditions for sign languages to develop. The biological inaccessibility of the spoken modality means that, for deaf children, learning the familial and societal spoken language(s) is not automatic, and it has been argued that many profoundly deaf children inhabit a 'linguistic vacuum' for the first years of their life (Morgan and Cormier 2012).<sup>44</sup> Most deaf children tend to be 'minorities within their own families' (Calderson and Greenberg 2003:180), so going to deaf school means meeting deaf peers and coming into contact with an accessible first language and everything it can do. This results in strong emotional connections between signing-deaf people and their schools, which have been considered incubators of signing-deaf culture (Ladd 2003:305-315).

However, the relationship between deaf residential schools and signing-deaf communities has been ambivalent, due to the international implementation of a strongly Oralist<sup>45</sup> (i.e. speech-centred) pedagogy after 1880, when the International Congress of Teachers of the Deaf passed the following resolution in Milan:

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<sup>43</sup> See Pollitt (2014) in particular, also H. Bauman (2006); Rose (2006); Sutton-Spence (2014).

<sup>44</sup> The years 0-6 are considered by psycholinguists to be critical in terms of language acquisition and cognitive development: 'lack of access to an effective language [i.e. where the language modality of the child matches the language modality of the environment] is the main developmental risk for most deaf students' (Tijsseling 2015:52). Tijsseling further observes that 'even when [speaking-hearing] parents opt for a bilingual upbringing, the language environment of the family will remain less natural and spontaneous', with developmental implications (2015:52). After the age of seven, a child with no first language is unlikely to acquire any language to full fluency.

<sup>45</sup> I capitalise *Oral* in relation to the pedagogy, to keep the distinction from *orality* in traditional arts.

The congress, considering the incontestable superiority of speech over signing in restoring the deaf mute to society, and giving him a more perfect knowledge of language, declares that the oral method ought to be preferred to that of signs. (Quoted in Denmark 1994:15)

Following this, signing-deaf people were barred from teaching and signing was banned in the classroom, with tuition prioritising speech therapy and speech-reading. This remained the dominant method in Britain until the second half of the 20th Century, with Oralists such as Sir Alexander and Lady Irene Ewing,<sup>46</sup> notorious in the British and Australian signing-deaf communities, unapologetically asserting their conviction ‘that the highest priority for deaf children is learning to talk’ (1964, in Denmark 1994:13-14). Oralism is predicated on the ‘a priori presumption that what constitutes normalcy for hearing individuals is the sole lens through which we should judge the attainments of deaf individuals’ (Allen 2015:22). Many signing-deaf people claim that they received no meaningful education due to Oralist practices (Dimmock 1993), and Oral education is frequently described in terms of abuse:

[Students] spent more than fifteen years [at residential schools], being so good and trying so hard to learn, as they watched uncomprehendingly lips that flapped and tried with aching heads to hear speech through noises as vicious as static on the radio, with their hands sometimes sellotaped behind their backs to stop them signing. (Kittel 1991:59)<sup>47</sup>

‘Shared ... identity was both created and shaped in these schools by two forces for solidarity’, Fjord concludes: the experiences of oppression and the continued, albeit often secretive, use of sign language and transmission of signed-oral culture in the playgrounds and dormitories (1996:64). The

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<sup>46</sup> See their influential publications on deaf education, including *Speech and the Deaf Child* (1954).

<sup>47</sup> See also Ladd (2003:297-304) and Dimmock (1993).

typicality of peer-to-peer language transmission has already been discussed; it is worth adding that, due to Oralists' banning of sign languages in the classroom, BSL has a high number of distinctive dialects due to horizontal language transmission taking place in geographically isolated and suppressed school communities. Quinn has termed this 'schoolisation' (2010): it is often possible to identify which particular deaf school a signer has attended – and even to infer their religion, due to the influence of Irish Sign Language on the signing in Catholic deaf schools (Sutton-Spence and Woll 1999:28). This compounds the sense of relationship between cultural identity and school experiences, despite the negative impact of Oralism.

While some deaf children can be educated using oral/auditory methods, this is not the case for most of those profoundly deaf from birth or deafened before acquiring spoken language (Denmark 1994:16-18). Many deaf children were given the stigmatised label of 'Oral failures' which has had complex social effects in signing-deaf communities; yet even success was limited: Conrad's 1979 study found that the majority of severely or profoundly deaf, Orally-educated school-leavers did not have intelligible speech, could not lipread well, and left school with an average reading age of eight. A crisis in deaf education across the UK<sup>48</sup> was acknowledged in the 1970s, resulting in some concessions to the visual modality in the classroom; although BSL was seen as 'non-linguistic' (McLoughlin 1987:31), manual codes such as SSE were incorporated into a 'total communication' approach. The most significant change has been the increasing norm of placing deaf children in mainstream schools. The aim of mainstreaming is greater inclusion, yet inconsistent

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<sup>48</sup> Although Scotland's education system is autonomous, legislation and policy developments have moved in similar ways to those in the rest of the UK in terms of deaf education (Grimes and Cameron 2005).



communication support means that academic attainment levels for deaf children remain low (O'Neill *et al.* 2014), and the experience of mainstreaming is often described as isolating because spoken English, the language of instruction and socialisation, is of limited accessibility even for deaf children who use hearing aids or cochlear implants.<sup>49</sup> Mainstreaming deaf children has been argued to lead to the ultimate disintegration of signing-deaf communities (Montgomery 1981).

### ***The significance of recognition***

The banning of sign languages in schools only began to be challenged once they were recognised as being full, complex languages in their own right, and recognition of this led to recognition that signing-deaf communities could be conceptualised as cultural minorities. Following Stokoe's research into ASL, the discipline of deaf studies developed in the US over the next few decades. A similar trajectory was followed in the United Kingdom: research into signing began in the 1970s at the Moray House College of Education in Edinburgh under Mary Brennan. Brennan recruited signing-deaf research assistants, eventually publishing her findings in the seminal paper 'Can deaf children acquire language?' (1975) in which she used the term *British Sign Language* for the first time. The disciplines of deaf studies and sign language studies began to develop in the UK thereafter (see Turner 2007 and Pollitt 2014:7-17).

Linguists' recognition that signing was language had a considerable impact on signing-deaf communities, as many people had internalised the devaluation of their language under Oralism. This is shown in the following

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<sup>49</sup> See Ladd (1991) and articles in the Deaf Ex-Mainstreamers Group's *Between a rock and a hard place* (2003). Even Oralist deaf schools which do not have a stake in the signing-deaf community are ambivalent about mainstreaming; see Chapter Five.

quotation from an interview with Jemina Napier, a non-deaf PDF. She describes trying to record her signing-deaf grandmother's language use:

If she doesn't know that you're videoing her, she uses BSL, but if she thinks you're filming her she goes into this weird like SSE thing ... Her English is not bad actually, but she grew up in the generation where you didn't sign in the street, you didn't sign publicly because it's embarrassing [...] – people would mock you. And my Mum says she remembers growing up in that transition period where initially she remembers my grandmother kind of going *don't sign, don't sign, or if you're going to sign, don't be too outlandish, try and keep it down low a little bit*. (JN:2013)

For many, BSL was perceived as suitable only for intra-community interaction; this excerpt from the recent documentary *The Battle for BSL* (2016) explains the impact of Brennan's research on the assistants involved in it:

Before, I knew BSL was mine, nice for chatting, the language of my social life, and so on, but I always felt it was inferior to English. But the research proved I was wrong - English and BSL were equal. So I felt wow, I should be proud of this! It was amazing. (Lilian Lawson)

Recognition led to a 'Deaf resurgence' in the 1980s and 1990s (Ladd 2003:135-195), as part of which signing-deaf communities lobbied for recognition as a linguistic and cultural minority.

BSL was recognised as a language by the UK government in 2003, but this had few real-world implications; furthermore, within recent years several academic departments have closed, and ongoing closures of deaf schools and deaf clubs is a source of pessimism. So too is the continued and increasing dominance of the medical model of deafness (see Bryan and Emery 2014). In Scotland, levels of education remain low amongst young deaf people (O'Neill *et al.* 2014), and there are barriers to employment and services due to the limited contexts in which a BSL-user can request the subsidised provision of an interpreter. Moreover, there is a marked shortage of BSL-English

interpreters in Scotland, with the Scottish Council on Deafness estimating that the ratio is 1 to every 200 BSL-users. However, there is optimism about the BSL Act (2015), the first legislation directly pertaining to BSL, which places a statutory obligation on public bodies to consider the language needs of signing-deaf people. There is the growing sense that signing-deaf culture may be about to break through into mainstream consciousness, as part of what Graham Turner calls a *BSL Enlightenment* (2015).<sup>50</sup>

### **Storytelling and the deaf public voice**

Recognition of signing-deaf culture contributes to and shapes what Frank Bechter calls the *deaf public voice* (2008), which is linked to *talking culture*: the attempt to shape signing-deaf communities' public image so that it is 'more like our private image of ourselves' (Humphries 2008:36). The deaf public voice is the reaction against the community's subordinated condition: using the imagery of an ASL performance-text, *The Pinball* (Paul Johnston), Bechter says that

the entire deaf community is one big pinball trapped within a game it didn't design. And how is this pinball to liberate itself? ... [I]t must grow arms and legs, wrench its way out of the machine, find an audience for itself on the public stage, and then speak and be heard. (2008:64)

It should be directed inwards to signing-deaf people (or else, he says, what would be the point) but also outwards to non-deaf audiences – and 'the larger the better' (Bechter 2008:675), reflecting Ladd's claim that there is a 'virtually unbroken line of thought within Deaf cultures that ... were lay [i.e. speaking-

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<sup>50</sup> Turner's coinage has become a hashtag on Twitter: first use of it was by @grahamhturner on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2015 [accessed 24/02/16].

hearing, unaffiliated] people to be properly informed' about signing-deaf experiences then most would 'become allies' (2003:13).

As part of his characterisation of signing-deaf culture as conversionary, Bechter emphasises the role of storytelling. He rejects the idea that the study of signed storytelling and poetry merely 'round[s] out the picture of the deaf signing community as "a cultural community"' and argues instead that 'deaf storytelling [i]s the first principle of deaf theory' and the means through which the conversionary worldview is created and transmitted (2008:61). It is also *culture talking*: it is what signing-deaf people *do*, not what 'what we *have* to do' to receive recognition (Humphries 2008:40). Performing and celebrating intra-community art strengthens cultural confidence and can engender artistic and cultural regeneration, yet these and cultural awareness forums are amongst what Ladd calls 'peacetime agendas': 'issues in need of urgent attention ... [which] would enable the development of positive, joyous and creative activities', but from which resources and energies are diverted to counter 'Scientific/Medical/Educational oppression' and everyday discrimination (Ladd 2003:164-6). As such, signed-oral arts may be dismissed as 'of interest to those with a special taste for the artistic side of deaf life, but secondary to more pressing issues of "deaf politics"' (Bechter 2008:61). Bechter argues instead that signed storytelling induces audiences to see deaf lives – and, moreover, that '*the world is made of deaf lives*' in that 'there is always a radically disenfranchised position' in any social system (Bechter 2008:62, original emphasis).

Signed artforms have been used in service of the deaf public voice in America since the 1960s; initially, they were studied by linguists as examples of natural language-use and to contradict the 'insidious scepticism ... that the language ... could not handle complex explanation, description, or instruction'

(Humphries 2008:10), but soon developed into what has been called the ASL literary movement or the 'video period of ASL literature' (H. Bauman *et al.* 2006:241-250); a similar trajectory has taken place in Britain since the 1980s, although on a smaller scale. Until then, in both America and Britain, signed-oral arts were almost exclusively intra-community, taking place in the DEAFspace of deaf schools, deaf clubs, and events held by national deaf organisations; the ASL literary movement was the beginning of outward-facing explorations of the poetic potential of signed languages, with first ASL and later BSL practitioners becoming 'self-conscious, internal, and deliberative, and open[ing] themselves up to critical study' (Padden 2006:236; Humphries 2008). That these movements were termed *literary* reflects the perceived need to 'validate the poetic potential of ASL in the minds of the academic literary establishment' (H. Bauman 2006:101); the impact of this on the study of signed performance-texts will be discussed in Chapter Three. Furthermore, the ASL and BSL literary movements produce a conflicting timeline for discussing signed-oral storytelling: H. Bauman *et al.* talk of 'the advent' and 'the emergence of sign literature' after Stokoe's linguistic research, yet these merely constitute the early years of *outward*-looking signed artistry, born out of the socio-political and academic context of the 60s but building on extant signed-oral storytelling traditions.

In Britain, it should be noted that, while the visibility of signed arts in the mainstream has increased to some extent,<sup>51</sup> they remain niche. Meanwhile, the storytelling sites of DEAFspace are increasingly under threat due to the

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<sup>51</sup> Recent examples include the original BSL material performed at the Scottish Storytelling Centre and the Scottish Poetry Library in Edinburgh; the 'Bristol poets' associated with a University of Bristol research project (2009-2011, led by Rachel Sutton-Spence) perform publicly; festivals such as Deaffest (est. 2006) and Signcircle (2007) include platform performances and competition. The politics of the most visible artform, bilingual theatre, is outwith the scope of this study.

closure of schools and deaf clubs, although online spaces such as Facebook and YouTube are increasingly providing virtual DEAFspace for intracommunity storytelling.<sup>52</sup> The transition from intra-community to public storytelling might prompt questions about whether deaf public voice storytelling counts as a signed-oral *tradition*; however, the spoken-oral storytelling and folk revivals have disrupted received wisdom about what constitutes tradition and have led to more inclusive definitions which permit and critique change and innovation (Glassie 1995a; West 2012). I contend that so-called signed literary movements should be considered as part of a continuous tradition of signed-oral arts; this position will be examined further in Chapter Three.

### ***Biculturalism and deaf public voice in three case-studies***

The three case-studies through which I examine issues of signing-deaf biculturalism and the deaf public voice will be introduced fully in Chapter Two; here, a brief introduction suffices. Each case-study was either deaf-led or involved signing-deaf people from the start, and they each fit Bechter's criteria for deaf public voice material in 'expressing what deaf signers value', 'consist[ing], in a very large part, of deaf people doing the talking' and reaching (or being available to) both signing-deaf and speaking-hearing audiences (2008:72).

The first case-study is a translation that took place as part of an inter-university knowledge exchange project led by Heriot-Watt University: a Scots folktale and piece of oral history were translated into BSL by a signing-deaf

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<sup>52</sup> The increasing online presence of signing-deaf individuals and communities is prompting an interesting re-conceptualisation of the constitution of DEAFspace. See Valentine and Skelton (2008) and Kožuh *et al.* (2015) for an exploration. It would be valuable to explore the impact on storytelling in terms of form, function and context; unfortunately, this is outwith the scope of the present study.

translator. This explores issues of access to Scottish speaking-hearing culture, and the inter- and intra-cultural nature of collaborative cultural projects with signing-deaf and speaking-hearing stakeholders. It examines the creative processes which emerge in translation across languages, language modalities, and culturally distinct storytelling traditions. The second case-study continues the history of incorporating personal experience narratives into ethnological and folkloristic study, in recognition that 'they contain information on the life, work, and world-view of individuals and the community' (Dégh 1995:72). I consider a corpus of signed-oral histories collected and published in DVD form by SCoD, permitting me to elaborate on key features and tropes found in the community's narrative art-forms, and to provide a deeper examination of many of the core cultural experiences of signing-deafness through illustrative examples. The third case study presents and analyses a sample of creative, platform performance-texts produced in BSL by two Edinburgh-based signing-deaf storytellers (performing as Visual Virus) in terms of their artistic, bi-cultural and activist features. In combination, the three case-studies provide a broad overview of diverse signed-oral storytelling practices extant in Scotland, as well as enabling a deep analysis of the artistry involved and the complex biculturality experienced by signing-deaf people.

The range of storytelling practices included in the case-studies shows that I take a broad interpretation of *storytelling*.<sup>53</sup> While it is tempting to accept Harvey Sacks' statement 'that it's a story, anyone knows' (quoted Thornborrow and Coates 2005:3), signed-oral performance-texts have 'narrative forms that function differently from those of most cultures with which we are familiar' (Bechter 2008:61). As such I am not concerned with

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<sup>53</sup> See Thornborrow and Coates (2005) for an excellent outline of the different definitions of *story* and *narrative*.

definitions based on form or structure; I follow Richard Bauman's definition of storytelling as the *breakthrough to performance*, where a discursive mode is in operation that is marked as distinctive from ordinary discourse: 'the enactment of the poetic function, the essence of spoken artistry' (1986:3, also 1975).<sup>54</sup> I make use of Michael Wilson's performance continuum (Fig. 2), developed as part of his work on the relationship between spoken-oral storytelling and theatre. This takes into consideration the 'level of intensity at which the performance mode is operating' at any breakthrough to performance (2006:10), whether as part of everyday conversational storytelling (far left) or where 'the performer is fully conscious of what they are doing, and manipulating their performance' to create a high intensity performance-text in which it is 'more likely the rules and conventions will be strictly applied' (Wilson 2006:10). The position of the case-studies on this continuum will be discussed in Chapter Three.

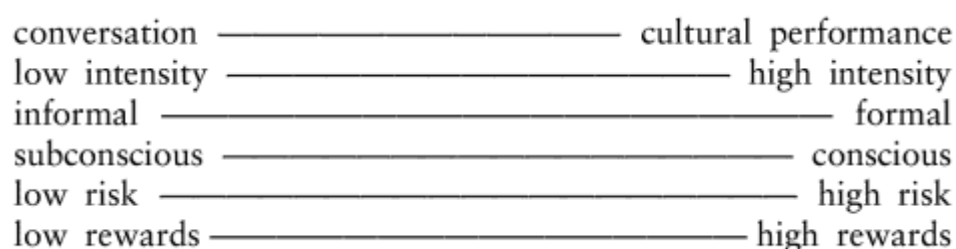


**Fig. 2** *Storytelling performance continuum (Wilson 2006:10)*

## Looking forward

This thesis builds on an acceptance of the following premises: that, as a naturally-occurring visual-spatial-kinetic language extant since at least the 18th Century, BSL is an autochthonous language of Great Britain; that

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<sup>54</sup> I tend to refer to *artistry* rather than poetics or ethnopoetics in this thesis, due to the latter terms' association with poetry and poetry's association with speech and writing.



language inevitably has a cultural element; and that signing-deaf culture, lore and artforms belong in the study of Scotland's traditional arts and heritage. In response to this, I take three examples of contemporary BSL storytelling practices in Scotland as case-studies through which to explore what I call the biculturality of signing-deaf experiences. This complex interplay of languages, language modalities, cultural worlds, sensory ways-of-being and attitudes towards them builds on Grosjean's conceptualisation of signing-deaf people as fundamentally bilingual and bicultural. To contextualise this biculturality, I examine the horizontal lines of transmission of language and culture within the community, and the constitution of signing-deaf communities as 'convert culture'. The impact of educational policies and audist attitudes towards deafness are also discussed, and the deaf public voice in contemporary Scotland set in its historical and political context.

I focus on the bicultural aspects of these storytelling practices because they illustrate the everyday tension that exists between the DEAFworld and speaking-hearing world, and to which the speaking-hearing world is largely oblivious; the deaf public voice seeks to address this obliviousness. A central aim is the development of a working methodology for presenting BSL 'performance-texts' on the page for a non-signing audience; it is hoped that this thesis makes the case for the inclusion of signlore in the wider study of folklore, and of the experiences and traditional arts of the signing-deaf community to be included in the wider discipline of ethnology.

The three case-studies will be introduced in Chapter Two, which provides an in-depth methodology taking into consideration the practical and political issues involved in researching signing-deaf communities, and the problems of presenting signed-oral storytelling to a non-signing audience. This includes questions of transcription and 'writing the body' onto the page.

The case-studies are further contextualised in relation to other signed-oral practices in Chapter Three, which includes an introductory review of scholarship on signed artforms. I provide an illustrative overview of some of the core features of signed-oral performance-texts, which I term *signartistry*, and introduce a model for conceptualising particular performance-texts in terms of performance and signartistry. This leads to an in-depth discussion of each case-study: Case-study 1, a BSL translation from spoken-oral Scots storytelling, is examined in Chapter Four; Case-study 2, a series of signed-oral history DVDs are discussed in Chapter Five; Case-study 3, platform storytelling, requires two chapters. Chapter Six presents three performance-texts in some depth to the non-signing reader to provide an illustrative exploration of signartistry and to facilitate discussion of the repertoire's biculturality in Chapter Seven. Chapter Eight draws together my conclusions and, using the framework of Deaf Gain, argues that signed-oral cultural expression belongs in the study of Scotland's traditional arts, not as an add-on but as a fundamental challenge to the assumptions embedded in our conceptualisation of performance traditions and the transmission of culture. The study of Scotland's intangible cultural heritage is enhanced considerably by the inclusion of signed-oral material alongside spoken-, sung-, danced-, and acted-oral performance-texts: all are part of the plenitude of our corp-oral traditional arts.

## ***Writing the body: a reflexive methodology***

*Cultural inheritance is not seen as a seamless path, but rather as a path fashioned by power and politics, and, in one way or another, marked by choices of whom to listen to.*

Frank Bechter (2008:65-66)

We take as a starting point the premise that signing-deaf culture belongs in the study of the cultural inheritance of a country and that the intrinsic value of signed-oral traditions is not in question. What is recognised as constituting Scotland's cultural inheritance has not traditionally included BSL and signing-deaf culture and, although academic institutions such as the School of Scottish Studies and cultural institutions like the Scottish Storytelling Centre have been concerned with the power and politics of cultural inheritance and the voices of 'those whose stories were seldom told' (West 2013b:346), signing-deaf communities have almost entirely been unheard and invisible. Amongst its 30,000 audio recordings and 320 film recordings of 'song and verse, instrumental music, custom and belief, traditional knowledge, material culture and contemporary ethnology in Scots, Gaelic and English' (Ranft and Richmond 2012:6), the School of Scottish Studies Archives (SSSA) contains no BSL material in its collections; this was an early prompt for my research. So, how to begin listening? How to enable the inclusion of signed-oral artforms into Scotland's cultural inheritance, and to facilitate their further study, given that this culture is not yet part of the discourse? This chapter begins to address these questions, starting with a few principles of ethnological practice.

A central methodological principle of European ethnology is expressed in the Swedish motto *dig where you stand* (Fenton and Mackay 2013:60): the researcher's 'personal roots ... become part of the research apparatus' (Fenton, in Mackay 2013:xiii,) as they are invited to turn their interpretative lens towards the cultural practices of their own or neighbouring communities. The strength of this approach is eloquently outlined by West, who is convinced that 'there is nothing parochial or small-minded in studying one's own culture' but encourages looking 'outwards, linking with the traditional arts of other people and nations, seeking common links' (2012:20). However, *dig where you stand* can induce a cycle of self-selection. The small numbers of both Scottish ethnologists and of signing-deaf people limit the chances of overlap, especially given that fieldwork often starts in a traditional arts scene that privileges spoken-oral and musical practices, in which signing-deaf individuals are unlikely to participate. Recognising that Scottish ethnology does not have a history of incorporating signed traditional arts into its collections and interpretative frameworks is not to apportion blame, but is a reflection of culturally-induced ignorance about signing-deaf culture.

Following Ladd's description of those who are 'neither directly employed within Deaf-related domains, nor within adjacent professional domains' (2003:12) as 'lay people', Scottish ethnology could be termed a lay discipline: it is guilty of obliviousness, but does not have a history of active participation in the (negative) construction of the 'meaning' of deafness. Just as lay people are a crucial target audience for challenging received wisdom about signing-deaf people, there is a recognised need to pull sign language and deaf studies from its 'niche' (Young 2014), and ethnology, with its prioritising of everyday experience, could become a valuable ally subject. Ethnological and folkloristic scholars have been dealing for years with issues

of ‘voice’ (both literal and political) in the expression of culture; they have necessarily grappled with the implications of attempting to represent the cultural world of others, with the ‘fundamentally imbalanced’ relationships between researcher and research participants (Ugolini 2013:83), and the problem of who has the right to collect, interpret and ‘own’ cultural material. Signing-deaf people have been making the case that ‘it’s our world too!’ (Bahan 1989) for decades – in some cases, centuries – and I take the position that it is the responsibility of the academy to pay attention when minorities identify themselves as having been overlooked, and then to redress this as far as possible.

The study of signed-oral material should include and ideally be led by signing-deaf researchers.<sup>55</sup> I am not signing-deaf, I do not have family connections to the community, and when I began this research I had only rudimentary BSL; throughout, I have been acutely aware of the limitations of attempting this research myself and of my hearing privilege in being permitted – and funded – to do so when access to higher education is restricted for signing-deaf people (O’Neill *et al.* 2014). Yet, speaking-hearing academic allies are accepted as necessary (Ladd 2003:294) and in order to recruit signing-deaf fieldworkers into a ‘discursive landscape that was not designed for [them]’ (and, given the privileging of spoken voice in the study of orality, has almost been ‘designed specifically to exclude deaf signers’) (Bechter 2008:69), it is necessary to lay the groundwork that would make future ethnological research into this area possible and desirable. My overarching question is how to fit the study of signing-deaf culture into Scottish ethnology without having

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<sup>55</sup> This is an accepted principle throughout sign language and deaf studies; see Fischer (2009:5); Ladd (2003:284); Temple and Young (2004:9); Singleton *et al.* (2015:10). The accepted problems with undertaking insider research do also apply, of course: see Ladd (2003:294) and Emery (2011:71-72).

a model to draw on, and the way to work out the answer is by doing it – and being open about doing it badly due to my own culturally-induced ignorance.

This chapter is, therefore, reflexive throughout and somewhat narrative in tone. I consider where I started from and where I ended up, touching on the ‘messiness’ of fieldwork. I also provide an overview of multidisciplinary literature about conducting qualitative research with signing-deaf communities, and explain my rationale for choosing BSL storytelling practices that are in the public domain rather than collecting signlore myself. I outline the three case-studies that provide my corpus of performance-texts and introduce the people I interviewed, raising ethical and practical issues along the way. Finally, I deal in some depth with the crucial problem of how to write about visual-spatial-kinetic storytelling, and provide an explanation of the methods used to represent performance-texts on the page in the ensuing chapters.

### **On where I stood: the beginning of the story**

I began my involvement in this research area as a lay person: my introduction to the concept of signing-deaf culture was through casual conversations with a non-deaf learner of BSL as an undergraduate. My academic and personal interests were in spoken-oral storytelling and folksong, and my understanding of oral traditions was exclusively in terms of ‘by word of mouth.’ Undertaking fieldwork with speaking-hearing storytellers and singers, I had always been able to take for granted that we shared the same sensory knowledge and common-sense positions: oral traditions were spoken or sung, and the affordances of *sound* were part of oral traditions’ intrinsic value. The very existence of signing-deaf culture posed a disconcerting

challenge to this. Here were oral traditions where sound was irrelevant, and a community of people whose language modality produced different ways of seeing, moving and being in the world than my own. Suddenly the legitimacy of my 'embodied knowledge' – formed from 'the relatively unconscious, ordinary "ways of doing things" that constitute the shared habitus' (Dant 2004:43) – was called into question: signing-deaf people occupied another, equally legitimate habitus.

Just as I had been oblivious to the "cultural construction of Deaf people as 'disabled'", to borrow from the title of Branson and Miller's 2002 book, so too had I been unaware that there was a well-established 'discourse on the meanings of being hearing' within the DEAFworld (H. Bauman 2008:viii). My 'hearingness', a previously unexamined yet central facet of my identity, could be as 'strange' to signing-deaf people as deafness can seem to non-deaf people (see Padden and Humphries 1990:7). The revelatory nature of this experience is eloquently framed by H. Bauman:

Growing up, the thought that I was a hearing person had never crossed my mind; hearing was so normal it went un-noticed. It was just the way things were. I became *hearing* at the age of twenty-one[.] ... Suddenly, my world changed: it was no longer *my* world. (2008:viii-ix; original emphasis)

The discovery of hearingness affords a 'critical perspective through which ... [to interrogate] the phonocentric ideologies in the world in which I was raised,' he concludes (2008:viii-ix); I extend this to those of my discipline. How, then, to undertake research with signing-deaf communities as a speaking-hearing person?

### ***Considering my approach: lessons from sign language studies and deaf studies***

To begin to address my research questions, three considerations were foremost. I needed to:

- Improve my basic BSL to a fluency level that would permit analysis of a storytelling corpus;<sup>56</sup>
- Develop connections with my local signing-deaf community beyond BSL classes in order to gain first-hand insights into the relationship between it and the surrounding 'host culture';
- Identify a corpus of storytelling practices.

Designing my methodology was complicated by the lack of models to draw on, both from within my own discipline and, more surprisingly, from those relating to sign languages and deaf demographics: the first social research textbook for researching signing-deaf communities was published after my fieldwork was complete (Young and Temple 2014; see also Singleton *et al.*'s recommendations for good practice in community-engaged research, 2015:10-12). Bechter argues that all research into sign languages should, at the very least, require that the researcher 'interact[s] with deaf people' (Bechter 2008:75); it is troubling that this has not always been the case. As Adam observes, the focused investigation of 'cultural aspects of being a member of this language community ... has not been highly prioritised' compared to research into the linguistics of sign languages and the neurology of signers (2015:43). Sign language data has been more prominent than social and cultural data, although the latter has often been generated incidentally to the former.<sup>57</sup> I took as my inspiration accounts of non-deaf participation in signing

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<sup>56</sup> That the performance-texts are not in my first language remains, of course, a limitation.

<sup>57</sup> For examples, see Emmorey *et al.* (2008), Fenlon *et al.* (2015), and Wilcox (2000).



communities, both in the US and also in the UK (Sacks 1990; S. Hall 1991; Lane 1992; Harris 1995).<sup>58</sup> Setting aside the unresolved question of who has the 'right' to observe and interpret the cultural experiences of others, participating in and asking questions about the community in as 'open and sincere' a manner as possible (Dégh 1995:13) appeared to be the only approach. This study is therefore informed by participant observation in the Ingoldian vein, seeing it as an apprenticeship (Ingold 2000; Downey *et al.* 2014) in which I sought to be responsive to 'broad patterns, themes, images, and qualitative characterisations' observed in a 'context of discovery' (McAdams 2012:16).

As the majority of researchers into signing-deaf communities are not themselves deaf, there is a legacy of problematic and imbalanced research relationships between speaking-hearing researchers and signing-deaf research participants. These relationships may be 'fraught with problems, prejudice, mistrust, misunderstanding, unmet expectations, identity crises and pervasive mythologies' (Baker-Shenk and Kyle 1990:65), and I drew on an extensive body of research literature pertaining to the dynamics of speaking-hearing/signing-deaf research relationships.<sup>59</sup> Young describes herself, as a non-deaf researcher, as 'a hearing person with an occasional travel permit into deaf worlds' (Young and Temple 2014:3), and it is crucial to be aware, not only of the 'observer's paradox' whereby the impact of the researcher on the encounter is central *to* the encounter (Labov 1972), but also that the 'small print' of the travel permit may be subject to change depending on context. There can be ambivalence about non-deaf people, including interpreters and learners, entering DEAFspace, partly attributable to the history of audist

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<sup>58</sup> Emic researchers also provided crucial insights, e.g. Ladd (2003), Emery (2011), Padden and Humphries (1988, 2005), D. O'Brien (2013).

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Young *et al.* 1998; Abbou 2002; Ladd 2003; Scully 2011; Young and Temple 2014.

hostility towards endogamous socialisation and marriage within signing-deaf communities (Humphries 2008:36). It is also due to the scarcity of signing-deaf dominated environments, and signing-deaf people may be disinclined to use their leisure time to accommodate those who lack the shared insider experiences and cultural and linguistic fluency. Fieldworkers have negotiated the boundaries set by signing-deaf people with varying degrees of sensitivity: in response to her sign language tutor characterising the local deaf club as 'strictly for deaf people', sociologist Jennifer Harris wrote in her participant observation notes that 'I can appreciate it, but I'm still going to try to get in' and posited using herself 'as a guinea pig – jump in and see what happens' (1995:125). I felt uncomfortable with this approach, and considered the boundaries of DEAFspace to be more important than my research agenda. It was crucial both to recognise the significance of 'feelings of powerlessness and apathy in relation to the [research] programmes and activities of hearing people' (Baker-Shenk and Kyle 1990:66), and also to anticipate some ambivalence towards me as a learner whose motivations were not yet established. The above considerations informed my initial participation in the community.

### ***Critiquing the spade: the problem of interviews***

It is recognised that 'the personal interview is the basis of modern ethnographic enquiry' (Martin 2013:298; see also Ugolini 2013). Interview as method raises countless practical and ethical considerations, and even more so when undertaken with signing-deaf communities. There are numerous practical considerations: video cameras are more intrusive than audio recorders (Martin 2013:296), and sufficient space, good lighting, accurate placement and excellent focus are required to capture the nuances of signing. To record the fieldworker's questions requires either two cameras, or for both

interviewer and interviewee to be correctly positioned so that their signing – including facial expressions – is intelligible and remains so throughout; difficult to achieve in naturalistic conversation. It is difficult for the fieldworker to surreptitiously scan their questions and notes when they need their eyes for ‘listening’; noting down points to follow up on is hard when the hands are needed to maintain the conversation. Filming interviews with members of small, close-knit communities may exacerbate issues of confidentiality and cause a potential ‘social backlash to which ... [the interviewee] (and not the researcher) would be subject’ (Pollitt 2014:152-153; see also Hill 2015:194; Nyst 2015:113), and establishing informed consent cannot be taken for granted, given the variability of literacy levels.<sup>60</sup>

The fieldworker’s own fluency is a concern; an (expensive) option is to employ simultaneous BSL/English interpreters, but the rapport between researcher and participant can be damaged with a third party present (Singleton *et al.* 2015:11-12) and the quality of the interpretation is compromised by the immediacy of production (Napier *et al.* 2010). Indeed, writing up the interview is not only a question of transcribing another person’s words, already invested with power dynamics (see Clifford and Marcus 1986), but of translating their signs, and who should undertake the translation and how, has ethical ramifications. Whereas a speaking-hearing interviewee can ascertain the relative verbatim accuracy of a transcript of their words by reading or having it read back to them, a signing-deaf interviewee being able to do the same requires them to have considerable bilingual literacy. Creating

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<sup>60</sup> Best practice is for consent forms to be translated from academic English into BSL (Singleton *et al.* 2012, 2014); Pollitt included a DVD with a BSL translation, and illustrated release forms (2014:427-434).

an accurate English rendition of BSL material is complicated, and will be discussed in more depth at the end of this chapter.

### **Why not ethnography? On the process of digging**

The collection of oral material by the fieldworker is a cornerstone of the discipline of ethnology (West 2013b:365); when I entered my local signing community as an observing, participating apprentice I anticipated writing an ethnographic account of my experiences and interviewing signing-deaf individuals, from whom I would collect signed-oral folkloric material (as have Stephanie Hall 2005, Rutherford 1983). In the event I turned away from this methodology and towards the idea of the deaf public voice, analysing three case-studies containing ‘frozen’ performance-texts (i.e. on film) and using interpretative approaches which are perhaps more typical of literature than ethnology. The reasons for doing so require some reflexive examination; this section seeks to do this. As my interpretations of the performance-texts developed through my engagement with my local signing community, it is necessary to provide a brief account of my position in relation to it, and the initial stages of participant observation.

### ***On beginning to dig***

My engagement with signing-deaf communities in and near Edinburgh took place in three domains: I continued formal BSL tuition up to NVQ Level 6, volunteered as a literacy tutor for a deaf ESOL<sup>61</sup> group, and attended public deaf events run by SCoD, the British Deaf Association (BDA), Deaf History Scotland (DHS), *etc.* In contrast to the ambivalence, criticism, and even

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<sup>61</sup> English as a Second or Other Language. Whereas the vast majority of hearing attendees of ESOL classes are recent immigrants, half of those in attendance at the deaf ESOL class had been brought up and educated in Scotland.

hostility that I had expected as a learner and researcher, I felt warmly received. Anxious to respect the boundaries of DEAFspace, I avoided the local deaf club for a long time; yet in enthusiastically attending public events I began to be invited elsewhere and was eventually nominated to DHS's committee as secretary. Reciprocity is recognised as an important part of research with signing-deaf communities (Fischer 2009; Adam 2015), and my contribution to and enjoyment of both DHS and the ESOL group was met with warmth. Furthermore, my research fitted the context of the developing BSL Bill and hopes for a BSL Enlightenment. Singleton *et al.* encourage overt engagement with the question of how a research project benefits the population under study (2015:17), and the premise that BSL's cultural expression ought to be studied alongside those of Gaelic, Scots and English met immediate approval: after all, as one woman responded, we're Scottish too.

The bodily experience of learning and using BSL was revelatory. Returning to Mauss' idea of passively acquired techniques of the body, I had to attempt to actively unlearn my phonocentrism, as learning to sign as a mono-modal student is as much about becoming bi-modal as about language acquisition (Wilcox and Wilcox 1997). I developed new techniques of the body which initially felt counter-intuitive (e.g. organising discourse spatially rather than linearly), inappropriate ('aggressive' facial expressions, uninterrupted eye contact), exhausting (eye-strain from intent 'listening') and even painful (producing unfamiliar handshapes). BSL-only events were strange and intimidating at first; the soundscape is different, with large groups eerily quiet in the absence of speech but 'outlandishly' noisy in their vocalisations.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> See Bahan (2014) for an excellent description of the cultural implications of different sensory knowledge, and Fjord (1996) for the cultural referentiality of particular sounds in speaking-hearing culture that do not apply in DEAFspace.

Attaining conversational fluency meant that new techniques began to be unconsciously incorporated into my 'embodied pattern of action and reaction' (McFadyen 2012:175), yet the non-deaf BSL learner is not learning how to be or behave like a signing-*deaf* person; we learn how to be and behave like a signing-*hearing* person, to incorporate aspects of a signing-deaf habitus into speaking-hearing predispositions, and developing hybridised techniques of the body (Emmorey 2014). Bienvenu (1987) and Sherwood (1987) conceptualised a 'third culture' of linguistically and culturally sign-literate speaking-hearing people: although not guaranteed, a learner has the capacity to develop third culture attributes. My engagement with signing-deaf communities remains bounded by my status as a learner; however, my involvement with DHS has afforded me some inroads into 'deeper' areas of the community, and in this context I have developed some small degree of third culture membership.

### ***On being converted: a political awakening***

Bechter's argument that signing-deaf culture is fundamentally conversionary asserts that 'deaf culture is good for hearing people' (2008:66); it has been good for me, and I must acknowledge a conversion and an agenda. I am politically aligned with signing-deaf communities and I consider the line between academia, advocacy and activism to be a fine one (Reason and Bradbury 2008). The ESOL literacy group was particularly impactful in this respect. Bi-weekly interaction with adult learners dealing with the legacy of negative and often traumatic educational experiences showed first-hand the impact of audism; my subsequent response is in keeping with Ladd's claim that 'were lay people to be properly informed of what takes place behind the mask of professional benevolence, their subsequent anger or revulsion would lead them to become allies' (2003:13). According to Standpoint Theory

(Harding 2004), 'those who have experienced life as part of a disadvantaged group have a wider view of reality than those with more power in society' (Power and Power 2010:7), and I agree that signing-deaf standpoints have something "of a ... fundamental nature to teach 'Us' ... that might be used to radically transform Western societies" (Ladd 2003:22). Witnessing the positive role of signing-deaf communities' intra-community relationships and collectivist outlook (Ladd 2003:245), and being invited to benefit from it, was a revelation; this is not to project a utopian vision of signing-deaf communities – which, as close-knit and 'wounded' communities are not immune to hierarchies and horizontal violence (Ladd 2003:300) – but the value placed on 'more just social practices' (Hartsock 1997:373) and the shared expectation to 'pitch in, exchange favours, and contribute to the group's achievement of goals' (Napier, McKee and Goswell 2010:53) contributed to the development of strong friendships within the community. While this may have implications for conducting rigorous research (see Singleton *et al.* 2015:14; Zukas 1993), it was unavoidable.<sup>63</sup>

### ***On being human***

My interpretations of the performance-texts are informed by my participation in the community; yet my participant observation was imperfectly conducted. I was unable to maintain the requirement to keep detailed and accurate fieldnotes to outline each stage of the process (Lareau and Shultz 1996:2) when I took a year-long break from research due to my father's suicide. The 'fieldwork' itself continued: I kept learning BSL, volunteering and attending community events, but it was not conceived of as fieldwork at the time and my experience was of *not thinking, only doing*.

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<sup>63</sup> Others consider developing friendships with research participants to be 'natural and positive' (Fischer 2009:6) and even a necessary part of fieldwork (Glassie 1995b:11; Dégh 1995:15; Lindahl 2013).

Consequently, I have no record of the year in which I became conversationally fluent, acquired new techniques of the body, and adjusted to the particular signing habitus of those developing a third culture affiliation with signing-deaf communities. 'Returning' as a researcher to the field I had never left, it felt dishonest to attempt an ethnography predicated on experiences I did not sufficiently recall, and impossible to start anew – in part because I was forced to confront my emotional limitations. Coffey observes that emotional work frames the research experience (1999:2-3), and the concerns raised about oral history fieldworkers lacking sufficient training to support interviewees through sensitive or traumatic subjects (Anderson and Jack 1991:13) should be extended to the fieldworker's own emotional resilience (Bondi 2013). I had developed friendships and connections with signing-deaf individuals with traumatic personal experience stories about their family life, their deaf school and the lack of access to society (including to sufficient mental health provision<sup>64</sup>); some of these individuals might have permitted me to 'collect' these stories as recorded fieldwork, but managing my own and my informants-as-friends' emotions would have been overwhelming, even without the highly charged issues of informed consent, confidentiality and translation.

In recognising 'the right of the scholar to be human' (Pentikäinen 1978: preface), it has also been necessary to recognise that my engagement with the research questions went from being theoretical to highly emotional. My personal and academic engagement with storytelling is attributable to my father; following his death, signed storytelling became powerfully emotionally resonant to me as a comfortingly familiar – and, equally comforting, entirely unfamiliar – artform. In grief, I sought out BSL stories not as objects of study but as emotional and affective experiences, benefiting from what Pollitt (2014)

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<sup>64</sup> See Fellingner *et al.* (2012).



describes as the haptic and kinaesthetic transfer between signers. In becoming an ‘informed viewer’ of signed-oral material, I accept that I have become ‘seduced by the cultural conventions ... [I] seek to study’ (Atkinson 1997:341): I examine stories and storytelling ‘for the sake of stories and storytelling’, which is reportedly ‘not what research should be about’ (Holstein and Gubrium 2012:10). It is, however, what *storytelling* is about. Even whilst ‘relying on tingling scalps and indefinable experiences’ may be an ‘[un]welcome theoretical concept’ beset with methodological pitfalls, it must be accepted that it is the ‘aesthetic, sensual, corporeal, ineffable dimension that endows cultural forms most powerfully with affective potential’ and gives them ‘meaning, value and purpose’ (McFadyen 2012:2, 9-10). These considerations inevitably shape my analysis.

### ***Against raiding DEAFspace for data***

Being politically, personally and emotionally bound to the community, I made the decision to step away from the idea of using DEAFspace as a site for my own collection of signed-oral material. This was partly due to the question of emotional resilience outlined above, and partly in recognition that DEAFspace storytelling is intra-cultural, i.e. targeted primarily and often solely at ‘insiders.’ Even where an etic researcher is permitted to witness intra-cultural storytelling, they are not necessarily entitled to collect and represent these stories to outsider audiences.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, three case-studies in the public domain were chosen as a central data-set.

In so doing, I respond to Günther List’s assertion that the responsibility to bring signing-deaf history, culture and issues to the mainstream consciousness is a shared one (2002:116), and undertake my analysis as

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<sup>65</sup> See Shuman (1986) for discussion about issues of entitlement and tellability in the context of adolescent narratives.

‘advocacy research’ (Cameron *et al.* 1992:16-17), in which I advocate from a non-deaf position, but on terms laid out by insiders, i.e. using a corpus of material which has been tacitly ‘approved’ for speaking-hearing consumption by being placed in the public domain.<sup>66</sup> The corpus has not necessarily found a speaking-hearing audience, however, and is unlikely to be intelligible to one; from my position at the interface between lay and informed, I attempt to provide the bridge.

### **The Case-studies: an overview of methods**

Each of the three case-studies illustrates a different form of contemporary public BSL storytelling: translations undertaken as part of a knowledge exchange project; a signed-oral history DVD series; and public performances at the Scottish Storytelling Centre, footage from which is hosted online. Each case-study addresses mixed audiences, although it can be assumed that the majority of the non-deaf audience would consist of BSL learners rather than a lay speaking-hearing public. Each case-study was either ‘deaf-led’ (i.e. originating within the signing-deaf community) or a collaborative partnership. As a corpus, they may be used as the starting point for surveying the range of BSL storytelling available in contemporary Scotland, although, due to the nature of their creation and public dissemination, they are to some extent atypical of DEAFspace storytelling events. However, they are illustrative of the overt and tacit messages transmitted as part of a deaf public voice.

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<sup>66</sup> Humphries provides a useful appraisal of difficulty of ‘identifying what it is in our private world that we want to be consumed in the public world’, an ongoing process of negotiation (2008:37).

The particulars of each case-study dictated the methods employed, and specific methodological issues will be raised in the relevant chapters. I predominantly undertook close analysis of particular performance-texts, whether live public performances, DVDs or video footage hosted online. Two of the three case-studies were intended solely for a remote audience through online or DVD dissemination, unusual for a folkloristic study. It is acknowledged that many of the core attributes of oral performance are lost when it is 'fixed' by recording, not least the aspects that are 'interpersonally dynamic, [and] produced in social interaction' as 'the joint product of narrator and listener' (Holstein and Gubrium 2012:7), and it is preferable to analyse performance-texts as live and context-specific events. However, there are few opportunities for live BSL performances in the public domain. I make the claim that all three case-studies contain corp-oral performance-texts based on Dégh's reassuringly broad definition of folk material as having been 'told orally, or read aloud, in face-to-face proximity ... at a certain stage of its life' (1995:269): the translation in Case-study 1 and the interviews in Case-study 2 were performed corp-orally for the immediate, recording audience, even if intended for a remote one. I witnessed the performance-texts in Case-study 3 as live performances and do make some reference to them as such, but, also somewhat unusually for an ethnological study, I have focused more on my interpretations of the *whats* and the *hows* of the 'storied content' (i.e. the thematic content and how it is performed – Holstein and Gubrium 2012:7) than on either the performers' own accounts of their artistry and intent, audience responses, or the holistic performance context, although these do feature to some extent. This approach is more typically associated with the study of literature than with ethnology (R. Bauman 2986:3).

The decision to take the approach was partly due to my emphasis on bridging the sign-literacy gap for a non-signing audience, which necessitates close engagement with ways in which content and artistry is performed, and partly for reasons of scope: while it would have been extremely fruitful to undertake interviews with other audience members and solicit their interpretations, a crucial question would be *which* audience, as the case-studies address both signing-deaf and speaking-hearing people. An uncomfortable truth was that, although I wanted signing-deaf people to be foregrounded in my study, it would be significantly easier to interview a speaking-hearing audience. Consequently, to keep the study manageable, I undertake ‘close readings’ of frozen performance-texts, having developed interpretations through grounded theory practices, namely ‘keep[ing] a running tally of tentative inferences’ pertaining to my research questions and developing a ‘set of integrative themes’ which ‘capture[d] something interesting or important’ about each case-study (McAdams 2012:18). The interpretations were informed by my participation in the signing community and my developing third-culture awareness, and by nine semi-structured interviews (the majority of which have been accessioned at the School of Scottish Studies Archives – see Appendix 4), and follow-up discussions with those involved. Yet the interpretations are my own and I take full responsibility for any errors or misjudgements.

Of the nine interviews, six were with signing-deaf people; these were not as in-depth as I would have liked (nor as in-depth as the three interviews conducted in spoken English) and the time and financial implications of commissioning translations precluded undertaking follow-ups. Five of the signing-deaf interviewees and one of the speaking-hearing ones had been key players in each case-study and are introduced in the following sub-sections; here I introduce three associated individuals with whom I conducted

grounding interviews. The first, Bryan Marshall (interview shorthand BM:2013),<sup>67</sup> was my BSL tutor for Levels 1 and 3 and my earliest contact in the signing-deaf community; his non-deaf family is from Bute and he attended deaf school in Yorkshire. The other two interviewees are Jemina Napier (JN:2013) and Andy Carmichael (AN:2013),<sup>68</sup> both non-deaf PDFs and both BSL, Auslan,<sup>69</sup> International Sign and English interpreters. Andy Carmichael practises internationally, notably for the United Nations, and has considerable experience of platform arts interpreting. Jemina Napier is Professor of Intercultural Communication at Heriot-Watt University and has published widely in the fields of translation and interpreting studies and applied linguistics. Jemina was born in London and Andy in Glasgow; they have lived across the UK and spent fifteen years in Australia before moving to Edinburgh in 2013. As interpreters and PDFs, they are not only bilingual with strong bicultural identities, but mediating between their languages and cultures is a central part of their personal and professional lives. As such, their first-hand experiences of growing up within the signing-deaf community were invaluable, and they also provided a sounding-board against which to test some of my observations in my first language.

Of the six interviewees associated with each case-study, five were signing-deaf. The issues pertaining to signed interviews were minimal in these cases as each individual was named in the public domain as being connected with the case-study and had a 'public life' to some extent, reducing the risk of sensitive self-disclosure. Some are identifiable as 'community leaders'; this

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<sup>67</sup> School of Scottish Studies Archives VA2013.005. Filmed interview conducted in BSL at the School of Scottish Studies Archives, Edinburgh. English translation by Mary Dunlop.

<sup>68</sup> School of Scottish Studies Archives (awaiting accession). Interview conducted in spoken English at their home in Edinburgh, recorded both in audio and on film.

<sup>69</sup> Australian Sign Language

raises its own issues, as over-reliance on a small pool of ‘big names’ from within minority communities does raise questions about ‘who speaks on behalf of a community and why’ (Ugolini 2013:78), and about whether an ‘over-researched group’ (as Pollitt describes her cohort of signing-deaf poets from Bristol), in their over-familiarity with researchers’ expectations, may revert ‘to a sort of default script ... with the ease of considerable practice’ (Pollitt 2014:152).<sup>70</sup> However, as the deaf public voice is a central part of my research question, I am not concerned about whether an account has become a “polished or ‘fixed’ public performance” (Ugolini 2013:78) before being shared with me: each interviewee had taken on the role of sharing something about signing-deaf culture, and if this was polished that was his or her prerogative. In terms of release forms and informed consent, all the interviewees were sufficiently confident in English and familiar with the format. We discussed in BSL the nature of SSSA, the application of the interviews, and their right to place restrictions on the footage; one restriction all agreed to was that the English translation of their respective interview should be undertaken by a qualified BSL-English translator.<sup>71</sup> Each nominated a trusted translator; two self-translated their interviews. All interviewees were given the opportunity to approve the written English translation of their interview, and to discuss it with me in BSL.

The following sub-sections introduce each case-study and its affiliated interviewees. This will include a brief summary of how each interviewee self-

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<sup>70</sup> A further impact of researchers’ agendas on ‘professional informants’ is alluded to in one of her interviewee’s designation of ‘the Bristol poets’ as ‘ventriloquists’: “like a ventriloquist’s dummy, you know? The University tells them what to do, they do it, and the University puts it in their research” (Pollitt 2014:152-153).

<sup>71</sup> Funding these translations was made possible by the generosity of the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland, which awarded a Small Research Grant towards the costs incurred.

identified in terms of a signing-deaf identity, although, as identity is complex and dynamic, these should not be considered fixed but recognised as specific to the context of the interview (and to me as interviewer). Each case-study will be further contextualised in relation to BSL storytelling practices in Chapter Three, and the finer points of the methodology employed for each will be included in Chapters Four to Six.

### ***Case-study 1: an inter-cultural and inter-modal translation***

The first case-study, presented and analysed in Chapter Four, considers a BSL translation of two audio recordings of Scots storytelling, held at SSSA. This was undertaken through a ‘knowledge exchange’ project entitled BSL:UPTAKE, run by Heriot-Watt University in collaboration with stakeholders at the University of Edinburgh (through SSSA) and the Scottish Storytelling Centre. I was involved in BSL:UPTAKE as an assistant to the project officer, Bob Duncan, which afforded me privileged access to a collaboration between signing-deaf and non-deaf individuals and institutions. This enacted organically many of the bicultural issues towards which my research was directed.

The source text discussed in Case-study 1 is spoken-oral, not signed-oral, in origin; however, translations and adaptations are a recognised and inherently bicultural genre in signing-deaf communities (see Chapter Three). In response to my first research question, Case-study 1 provides a bridge into signed storytelling by building on the familiar, i.e. Scots spoken-oral storytelling. Analysis of how spoken-oral material changes in translation between both languages and modalities sets up the subsequent case-studies’ discussion of BSL-originating storytelling practices, and demonstrates several of the features of signed-oral storytelling outlined in Chapter Three. The three people interviewed were:

***BSL:UPTAKE Translator: Frankie McLean (shorthand: FM:2012)***<sup>72</sup>

Frankie McLean is 'third-generation Deaf, my grandparents were profoundly Deaf and had a strong sense of that'. His first and home language was BSL. He was born in Aberdeenshire, but grew up and attended mainstream school in Kilmarnock; he now lives in Glasgow. He is the Social Care Manager at Deaf Action, a service provider based at 49 Albany Street, Edinburgh, and an occasional BSL/English translator.

***BSL:UPTAKE Project Officer: Robert (Bob) Duncan (BD:2014)***<sup>73</sup>

Bob Duncan is a non-deaf freelance television writer and producer. He was born in Fife, grew up in Glasgow and now lives in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. His home language was Scots, and his interest in BSL is incidental: as a producer and later managing editor at Tyne Tees Television (1978-2003), he 'inherited a programme from somebody else about deaf people.' He subsequently created BSL programmes with signing-deaf colleagues, establishing the first specialist BSL translation and interpreting unit using signing-deaf on-screen interpreters. 'The political liberation aspect' of BSL particularly interests him, as do similarities between signing and Scots-speaking communities. He is married to Tessa Padden (below).

***BSL:UPTAKE Knowledge Exchange Associate: Tessa Padden (TP:2014)***<sup>74</sup>

Tessa Padden is a deaf PDF brought up in London and Ireland. Her first and home language is Irish Sign Language, with the early addition of

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<sup>72</sup> School of Scottish Studies Archives VA2012.001. Filmed interview conducted in BSL at Deaf Action, Edinburgh. English translation by Frankie McLean.

<sup>73</sup> School of Scottish Studies Archives (awaiting accession). Audio-recorded interview (transcribed by me) conducted in spoken English, at his home in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

<sup>74</sup> School of Scottish Studies Archives (awaiting accession). Filmed interview conducted remotely (written English questions sent by email; responses in BSL). English translation by Tessa Padden and Bob Duncan. N.B. Recurrent schedule conflicts necessitated conducting this interview remotely. To conduct it, I sent a list of questions in written English, for which Tessa Padden provided BSL responses on film. The drawback to this method was that I could not be responsive to her answers. I avoided overly detailed, leading questions, but could not clarify my meaning where they were misunderstood.



BSL, and she attended the prestigious Mary Hare Grammar School for the Deaf in Berkshire. She has worked as a BSL/English translator, television presenter, research fellow (Heriot-Watt University), BSL teacher and in deaf children's mental health services.

### ***Case-study 2: a DVD series of signed-oral history narratives***

Chapter Five analyses a series of BSL oral history DVDs produced by SCoD between 2012 and 2015. It provides a corpus of solicited personal experience narratives which, unlike Case-study 1, is BSL-originating material. However, unlike both Case-studies 1 and 3, the narratives presented are seldom self-consciously produced as storytelling events, but in response to interview questions. These are 'narratives' in the sense of defining 'almost any oral, written, or visual text as narrative ... because narrative is figured into all manner of communication', although they do find ways of expressing the narrator's emotions, attitudes, beliefs, and interpretations (Holstein and Gubrium 2012:1,6). As I had no personal involvement in the project, my approach is comparable to working on archived material rather than fieldwork encounters; this places limitations on my analysis. For example, the DVDs present a series of edited, thematically arranged clips, which decontextualises the footage from each interview, making it impossible to determine how each narrative was 'organise[d] ... according to the subject's order of priorities' (Passerini 1987:8).

Although the use of 'purchased commercial videos for purposes other than those intended' is a recognised 'grey area' in sign language research (Fischer 2009: 4), an intended application of the (non-commercial) DVDs was research, and informed consent had been received from the participants.<sup>75</sup> The interviewees were aware that they were signing to a remote audience, and as

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<sup>75</sup> SCoD holds the release forms and copyright.

such are likely to have adjusted their narratives accordingly. However, despite the solicited, relatively high-stakes nature of their production and dissemination (i.e. structured interviews filmed for a DVD series), the narratives are typical of the personal experience narratives I have witnessed in DEAFspace. They provide first-hand accounts which are illustrative of the lives and biculturality of signing-deaf people in Scotland and are thus of ethnological value (especially given my decision not to conduct interviews ‘in the field’), and which contain themes, tropes and language and performance features that are drawn on and conventionalised in other types of BSL storytelling (e.g. in platform performance-texts, examined in Case-study 3). I obtained the DVDs on publication through DHS, and analysis of the content forms the bulk of my data for Case-study 2. This is supplemented by one interview, the details of which are described below.

**Project manager: Lilian Lawson (LL:2013)<sup>76</sup>**

Lilian Lawson was born to hearing parents, brought up in Fife and currently living there. She attended deaf schools, including Mary Hare Grammar School, and worked first in pharmacology, then BSL research, including under Mary Brennan in the 1980s. She is seen as a strong community leader, having served as the Director of SCoD from 2002 until her retirement in 2014, and serves as treasurer for DHS. She described herself as ‘bicultural’ (‘my first identity is Deaf and a close second is my Scottish identity’), citing her literacy and non-deaf friends as a counterpoint to her being ‘very much part of the Deaf community.’<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> School of Scottish Studies Archives VA2013.007. Filmed interview conducted in BSL at Scottish Council on Deafness offices, Glasgow. English translation by Andrew Dewey.

<sup>77</sup> Lilian Lawson has subsequently publicly described herself as a Scottish person who happens to be deaf, in the context of a BSL panel discussion, ‘Scottish independence, Deaf people and identity,’ at Heriot-Watt University, chaired by Jemina Napier (20/11/13). I suggest that, when being interviewed by me in her capacity as the director of SCoD on the subject of the DVD project, her signing-deaf identity was paramount; when discussing issues of national identity, her Scottishness became central. This reflects the fact that identity designations are unfixed and highly context-dependent (Bechhofer and McCrone 2009). See

### ***Case-study 3: a platform storytelling group's repertoire***

The final case-study, presented in Chapter Six and analysed in Chapter Seven, focuses on BSL platform storytelling performed in 2012 and 2014 at the Scottish Storytelling Centre, Edinburgh, by a group called Visual Virus. In contrast to the conversational storytelling events in Case-study 2, Case-study 3 contains self-conscious 'art' performance-texts by individuals self-identifying as 'storytellers'. The Scottish Storytelling Centre routinely hosts platform performances by Scottish and international storytellers; the inclusion of BSL performances is a new addition, although the director, Donald Smith, has been receptive to and encouraging of the idea since the late 1990s, when the charity Stories in the Air (1997-2011) undertook some bilingual storytelling projects. This early attempt to use BSL as part of Scotland's revival storytelling scene was primarily hearing-led, and focused on translating Scots folktales into BSL and creating educational resources, although it latterly developed a signed-oral history project (E. Leith 2010). The Scottish Storytelling Centre was indirectly involved in the establishment of Visual Virus through ring-fencing the 2010 Hamish and Nancy Turner Bursary for a BSL storyteller, and Visual Virus appears to be the first BSL performance group to capitalise on the framework of the Scottish storytelling revival and the Centre as a legitimised forum for Scotland's narrative traditions. The group has to date produced two storytelling shows: 'Through New Eyes' (17<sup>th</sup> March 2012, repeated 25<sup>th</sup> May 2012) and 'Through New Eyes 2' (15<sup>th</sup> March 2014); these form the basis of Case-study 3. As an entirely deaf-led group producing BSL-originating narratives, Visual Virus makes an overt contribution to the deaf public voice and an interesting contribution to the revival storytelling scene. Chapter Six

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Calton (2014) and Baynton (1997) for interesting discussions of signing-deafness' intersections with national identity.

presents three performance-texts from 'Through New Eyes' which are illustrative of the range of signed-oral performance styles. They also contain particularly bicultural themes, which will be discussed in Chapter Seven with reference to others in the repertoire.

My engagement with Visual Virus's material has taken place in different stages. I attended 'Through New Eyes' not as a researcher but as a paying audience member with two motivations: entertainment and improving my BSL receptive skills. I did not intellectually examine my response to the material at the time, although the live experience has no doubt influenced my interpretation of the performances. After returning to study, my initial analysis of Visual Virus's material was based on recall, i.e. writing up my impressions from (relatively distant) memory, and on close readings of filmed footage which were gradually uploaded to the Visual Virus Facebook page between June 2013 and March 2014.<sup>78</sup> I attended *Through New Eyes 2*,<sup>79</sup> at which I made field-notes (both live and retrospective) about the performances and my interaction with other audience members. The two founding members and core performers were interviewed:

***Visual Virus founder and performer: Gary Quinn (GQ:2013)***<sup>80</sup>

Gary Quinn was born deaf to hearing parents in England; he is a PDF under Napier's definition (2014) as his younger brother is also deaf. He now lives in the Scottish Borders. He attended a residential deaf school where he acquired BSL through peer-to-peer transmission. He works in the field of BSL linguistics (see Quinn 2010 and the ongoing BSL Glossary Project<sup>81</sup>), and he is currently the course organiser of the

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<sup>78</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Visual-Virus/349211848446543?fref=ts>; See Appendix 3.6 for the full programme of both *Through New Eyes* and *Through New Eyes 2*.

<sup>79</sup> Visual Virus cannot upload filmed performances from *Through New Eyes 2* to their Facebook page due to technical issues when filming.

<sup>80</sup> School of Scottish Studies Archives VA2013.008. Filmed interview conducted in BSL at Heriot-Watt University. English translation by Ailsa Laidler.

<sup>81</sup> <http://www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk/BSL/about.html> [accessed 01/02/16]

undergraduate BSL interpreting degree at Heriot-Watt University. He is undertaking doctoral research into the prosody features of BSL. He began storytelling in 2003, having been asked to participate in a platform event marking the UK government's recognition of BSL.

***Visual Virus founder and performer: Mark MacQueen***  
**(MM:2013)<sup>82</sup>**

Mark MacQueen is a deaf PDF from Edinburgh who attended a deaf school as a day pupil. His first and home language was BSL, although to some extent a contact form ('it wasn't strictly speaking only BSL [...] [but] some SSE and fingerspelling'). He prefers to describe himself as a sign language user than as deaf: 'I need things visually because I don't hear [...] If a person were to ask me *Can you hear?* I would respond *No, I'm deaf*, but that's the only time I would refer to myself as being deaf.' He is a BSL tutor (currently a language assistant at Heriot-Watt University), and taught my Level 6 language development course. His involvement in platform storytelling came about through winning the Hamish and Nancy Turner Bursary at the Scottish Storytelling Centre, 2010-2011.

***Building bridges into the performance-texts***

The overarching aim of this thesis is to develop a workable methodology for the future inclusion and analysis of signed-oral performance-texts in the study of traditional arts. As part of this, Case-study 3 is presented in two parts: Chapter Seven provides a close reading of the bicultural themes in the repertoire, whereas Chapter Six is solely focused on responding to my methodological question about bridging techniques and aims to aid non-signing readers to access three performance-texts in their original form. As will be explained in the following section, an English prose translation was not possible or desirable, so the form that this 'bridge' took on the page was a central concern; an equally important question was the extent to which the

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<sup>82</sup> School of Scottish Studies Archives VA2013.006. Filmed interview conducted in BSL at Bespoke Sign Language offices, Edinburgh. English translation by Debbie McDonnell.

performance-texts even required 'bridging.' As Chapter Three will elaborate, the artistry of signed-oral storytelling frequently overlaps with what might be termed acting or mime, and performers often use signs that are strongly iconic. As such, certain features may be transparent or translucent to non-signers. However, this is easily over-estimated by first-language signers and learners alike. This is illustrated in a blog by BSL poet Donna Williams about her surprise at a non-signing audience member's interpretation of one of her ostensibly 'more visual' poems, *My Cat*:

[She said:] "It turned into a devil with horns and it had feathers, and then it died, but she [DW] seemed happy about it dying?"<sup>83</sup>

In her brief analysis of this event, sign linguist Rachel Sutton-Spence observes that, having 'settled upon the idea that the devil was under discussion ... the nonsigner did her best to use what contingency chain she could' (2014:466-7); once the crucial image has been lost, the viewer can project plausible alternative contingency chains onto the signing. Visual Virus also tends to assume a high degree of transparency in their performances: while asserting that one of the group's aims is 'to promote the use of a very high standard of signing', Mark MacQueen also claims that 'the aim is for anybody to come along and be able to understand what they see' (MM:2013). Moreover, the unexamined nature of my own acquisition of sign-literacy means that I too tend to assume that the meaning of certain aspects of BSL are obvious to a non-signer, even though the same things were initially impenetrable to me.

In response to this concern, I undertook a further interview with Andy Carmichael (interview shorthand: AC:2014) in his capacity as an experienced

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<sup>83</sup> Donna Williams, 'Performing at Signing Across the Water', *The Limping Chicken*, April 3, 2012. <http://limpingchicken.com/2012/04/03/donna-williams-performing-at-signing-hands-across-the-water/> [accessed 15/05/13]. 'My Cat' can be viewed on the Metaphor in Creative Sign website, University of Bristol: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/education/research/sites/micsl/poem-repository/>

interpreter in the arts scene.<sup>84</sup> During this we viewed the four Visual Virus performance-texts in Appendix 3.1 and he provided commentaries on the strategies he would employ in a commissioned translation. As Andy's profession necessitates retaining a critical awareness of both the signing-deaf and speaking-hearing worlds in order to successfully negotiate the 'area of cross-cultural mediation' (Sherwood 1987:19), he was excellently placed to provide insights into bridging strategies. He made the point that, as an arts interpreter,

a lot of the time it would be better that you say nothing and let hearing people glean something from it [...] You [the non-signer] have to see it with your eyes. It's the only way to take it in. [...] *Focus* on it, *look* at it. (AC:2014)

Yet non-signers cannot be left to watch a performance-text without some mediation and then be expected to follow an analysis of it; it is necessary to find a balance between saying too much and not saying enough. As we watched the performance-texts, he repeatedly pointed out particular constructions that 'hearing people wouldn't get' (AC:2014); this was illuminating, as his comment frequently coincided with visual imagery that I assumed was transparent. On his suggestion, I recruited nine speaking-hearing participants with no prior knowledge of any sign language to view the four performance-texts and comment on what they thought they were seeing, helping me to establish what degree of detail was needed to make the performance-texts comprehensible.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> On Andy Carmichael's request, this interview has not been accessioned by SSSA as its application was solely for devising this methodology.

<sup>85</sup> The cohort was one staff member from the University of Edinburgh and eight undergraduate students studying a first year Scottish Studies course (of which two were Scottish and six were international students from Europe, North America or Australia). These interviews were conducted on the understanding of anonymity and deletion after transcripts had been made.

## **On writing and translating the body**

The presentation of fieldwork and performance material on the page is a central theoretical and practical concern in ethnology and related disciplines. It has long been considered necessary to transcribe spoken interviews in a manner reflecting the natural rhythms and idiosyncrasies of speech, and the importance of respecting rather than 'correcting' dialect and other non-standard features. Furthermore, the turn from text to performance has emphasised the importance of accessing them in their original form, *as* performance: accepting that the vocal artistry of the ballad singer, for example, is key to the power of the ballad (McFadyen 2012). Yet the transcription of sound into text is standard and necessary practice to facilitate analysis.

When committing spoken or sung performance-texts or interview material to paper, it is argued that 'verbatim accuracy is crucial' to reflect the form and meaning of the original (Dégh 1995:35), yet equally crucial is recognising that full verbatim accuracy is unachievable. Halpert and Widdowson demonstrate different approaches to recording spoken language on the page (ranging from transcription using the International Phonetic Alphabet, to dialect-responsive transcripts, to a rendition conforming to the standards of written literature), and in so doing they illustrate that there is always a remainder, that 'only a fraction of speech is captured in the unidimensional medium of print' (1996:lv). If the spoken-oral becomes the written in a partial and unidimensional way, then this poses a further challenge to the researcher's (already disputed) claim to be able to decode a real meaning and accurately represent it to others (Asad 1986:155). 'Speaking for others, in any language, is always a political issue,' Temple and Young observe, and the issues are thrown into even sharper relief when working with signing-deaf



communities, where the “metaphorical debate about rendering languages ‘visible’ becomes quite literally incarnated” (2004:162).

If written English cannot fully represent the qualities of spoken English, then how much more is remaindered in using written English to represent the polysyntactic, spatial, iconic, dialectal and idiosyncratic qualities of BSL? Translation adds a further step of remove between the original material and the final text, and, in addition to ‘potential semantic loss or the well-rehearsed difficulties in translating the cultural meanings embedded in linguistic expression’, it ‘reinforces the invisibility of the source language’ (Temple and Young 2004:166) – a highly political issue given that BSL was only officially recognised in 2003 and has a minimal role in public consciousness. While it is accepted that ‘English is clearly crucial for any deaf discourse in the public sphere’ (Bechter 2008:72), I equally felt that the structure of this thesis ‘require[s] ... in and of itself, that nondeaf audiences encounter sign language in ... [some] way’ (Bechter 2008:75). This consideration was most important for the storytelling performance-texts themselves; however, a few comments must first be made on the written translations of the BSL interviews.

### ***The interviews***

Far from being merely a conduit of information from source to target, a translator of research data must be recognised as ‘engaged in the production of knowledge’ and therefore ‘part of the research process’ (Emery 2006:146). As mentioned, each signing-deaf interviewee nominated a translator or undertook the translation themselves; in the latter case, they had total control of their own voice-in-translation.<sup>86</sup> In the former case, as the translators were

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<sup>86</sup> On a related note, reading back the English translation of my own BSL questions was disconcerting: while the content was accurate, the translated turns of phrase did not correspond to how I use English in speech.

different, so too were the style and level of detail in the translations. Each was approved by the interviewee, and I chose to keep the texts as produced;<sup>87</sup> however, this raises several issues. The first is that there is a marked difference between the representation of my speaking-hearing and signing-deaf interviewees 'on the page.' In keeping with ethnological and folkloric conventions, my transcriptions of spoken interviews attempt to follow the cadences of speech, whereas the BSL interviews were predominantly translated into Standard English. As Friedrich (2006:212) warns, 'the more generally accessible and acceptable the translation, the further it tends to be from the linguacultural reality of the original,' and the standard register of a writing system based, to some extent, on the sound of words is probably the furthest orthography from the linguacultural reality of signing. In attempting to render the source language more visible, some advocate 'producing inexact or clumsy translations so as to foreground the fact that the two languages are of different modes' (Emery 2006:149); however, Ladd describes the use of 'semi-English' as risky when 'deal[ing] with an oppressed group' whose language has typically been perceived as illegitimate or simplistic (2006:292), and it is therefore best avoided.<sup>88</sup>

The second issue with the written translations is that they employ a discursive format which cannot accommodate the visual-spatial-kinetic nature of signed expression (Bechter 2008:69). Each translation contained evidence of

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<sup>87</sup> However, it should be noted that the written translations are variable in style and degree of detail, having been undertaken by different translators with different professional backgrounds and different working relationships with the interviewees. Although the conventions employed in the translations are also inconsistent (e.g. the initial capitalisation of 'Deaf'), they are reproduced as received because these transcripts had been approved by interviewees.

<sup>88</sup> An interesting inversion of this is that the translators were highly forgiving in their translations of my non-fluent BSL: perhaps my contributions ought to have been written in 'broken English' to reflect my level of fluency.

some struggle with this. In one example, Mark MacQueen describes the difference between BSL grammar and that of SSE; the written translation could not show the distinction so the translator directed the reader to the source material, i.e. “‘I went to the shop’ should be (see footage 33:50)”. My solution to this was to make some additions to the transcripts, inserting glosses or explanatory notes. I occasionally used illustrative screenshots of the signer, sometimes with text from the translated interview overlaid. However, the use of static pictures to illustrate signing calls to mind Brenda Farnell’s comment on one of Evans-Pritchard’s 1956 photographs entitled ‘Movement in a wedding dance’: ‘*where is the movement?*’ she asks (Farnell 1994:930). This problem was particularly marked in the interview with Gary Quinn. He described a scene in a performance-text in which spatial organisation and movement trajectories are crucial,<sup>89</sup> so I positioned the written translation onto the screenshot in such a way as to allude to these features and make visually explicit the insufficiency of written English. I term these *concrete transcriptions* after the concrete poetry movement,<sup>90</sup> which has been among the inspirations of ethnopoeticists such as Friedrich (2006).<sup>91</sup>

### ***The performance-texts***

The concrete transcription method is reminiscent of earlier attempts to show the movement pathways of creative ASL on the page (Klima and Bellugi 1976), and of more recent multi-media approaches, notably Pollitt *et al.*’s ‘moving poem film’ where ‘kinetic titling’ allows the translated words of a BSL performance-text to move across and around the performer’s body (2014). A

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<sup>89</sup> This performance-text, *Achievement*, can be found in Appendix 3.1b, and Gary Quinn’s description of the scene features in Chapter Six.

<sup>90</sup> Pollitt’s translation of a signed performance-text, *Ocean* by Johanna Mesch, made use of concrete poetry conventions and won the InsideArts / Faber and Faber poetry translation prize (see Pollitt and Mesch 2011).

<sup>91</sup> Kataoka (2012) has begun to explore the multi-modal potential for ethnopoetic transcription.

similar style was recently used for signed poetry on BBC2's *See Hear* programme, and it is when dealing with performance-texts that the issue of translating and writing sign language is most acute, as the artistry is so bound to the performer's body – a point that I expand on in Chapter Three.

The first and most important consideration is to ensure that the reader can – and does – access the performance-texts in their original form: to this end, I include DVDs in Appendices 1 and 3.<sup>92</sup> That the performance-texts are relegated to an appendix is itself problematic: it is all too easy to read *Signing the Body Poetic* (H. Bauman *et al.* 2006) without viewing the clips on the accompanying DVD, despite the first sentence of the introduction inviting the reader to do so. As technology advances, so too do the possibilities for embedding signed material into English texts through QR codes, and, in online publications, through video clips (Crasborn 2015:80), but without the requisite experience and time to experiment, my approach was necessarily *lo-fi*. Moreover, it is not enough simply to watch them. I am writing for a lay discipline where sign-literacy cannot be assumed, and therefore I am responsible for providing a bridge when 'transpos[ing] something from one cultural world to another' (Friedrich 2005:21): a bridge which makes the original performance-texts somewhat intelligible to a non-signer, but which foregrounds what is missing from the page.

Case-study 1 is the most accessible to a non-signing reader: the folktale appears in its original spoken Scots as well as in BSL on the DVD (Appendix

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<sup>92</sup> Appendix 3.1 contains only the three core performance-texts from the Visual Virus repertoire, presented in Chapter Six. The rest of their repertoire, some of which is discussed in Chapter Seven, is either available to view on their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Visual-Virus-349211848446543/> [accessed 13/02/16], or has no recording available. Due to the large number of DVDs in Case-study 2, it was impossible to include them in an appendix; they can be accessed at SSSA or by applying to SCoD.

1.1), and my use of glosses shows the reader the differences between English and BSL grammatical structure. Case-study 2, too, has an English translation available from the subtitles on the DVDs, which I make use of (and adjust with comments and glosses when necessary) to quote from them. For both of these case-studies, screenshots are used where illustration is necessary (avoiding, however, attempting to retell a performance-text in a series of images, as in Bouchauveau 1994), and, although I avoid esoteric notation systems from sign linguistics, I do occasionally reference handshapes using the ASL handshape conventions (see Fig. i).<sup>93</sup>

The extant translations provide the basis, yet there is no translation available or possible for Case-study 3. The Visual Virus repertoire is intentionally performed without English interpretation:

I want the audience to focus. If an interpreter is there, the hearing audience can sit back and take it in aurally. But I want them to explore and consider what is there and actively make links with what they are seeing. [...] I want the audience to have an authentic experience of sign language. (GQ:2013)<sup>94</sup>

Both Mark MacQueen and Gary Quinn asked that their performance-texts 'speak for themselves' in this thesis as visually-constructed storytelling events.<sup>95</sup> Not only did I agree with their rationale, but commercial rates for high quality arts translation are prohibitively high and, as an unqualified translator, my own would have been insufficient. Andy Carmichael supported

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<sup>93</sup> The prominence of ASL as the *de facto* sign language of sign linguistics is problematic, as Crasborn observes: 'A letter such as "A" does not refer to the same handshape across sign languages' (2015:79).

<sup>94</sup> This was confirmed by AC: 'When you start speaking to people [...], hearing people stop watching, they do, they stop watching.' (AC:2014)

<sup>95</sup> In contrast, ASL storyteller Peter Cook translates his own performance-texts into written English and presents them using a system of parallel tiers, including an ASL gloss, character changes, repeated or significant handshapes, kinesics *etc.* (2011).

their decision, arguing that the performance-texts were simply ‘not translatable in a full sense’:

Best translator, a hundred hours, makes no difference. You cannot get it, yeah? (AC:2014)

Yet, Visual Virus accepts that it is necessary to provide bridging techniques when writing about them, in order to *let them* speak for themselves to a non-signing audience, without ‘sacrific[ing] any connection with the primary data source’ and its artistry (Fenlon *et al.* 2015:159) or becoming ‘dense and ... complicated’ (Masoni 2013:203).<sup>96</sup> We agreed that I devise a simple descriptive form that would guide the lay reader through watching the original performance-text. The wording should be sparse, as description is itself a form of translation, and there is an inadequate lexicon available to discuss movement and the body without becoming highly specialised – difficult enough when describing simple gesture and movement, let alone a fully elaborated language.<sup>97</sup>

I present three of the Visual Virus performance-texts in tabular form, with time-codes to facilitate moving between the page and the video footage (Box 1). The division of each performance-text into parts and episodes is based on my interpretation of natural breaks or shifts between narrative stages. The written descriptions of each episode follow the order in which the images of the narrative are formed in BSL, e.g. ‘he sees a rock with a person hiding

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<sup>96</sup> See for example visual anthropologists’ use of dance and movement notation systems in ethnographic writing (Farnell 1994 and Page 1996).

<sup>97</sup> H. Bauman advocates using the language of film, arguing that this ‘enriches our understanding of grammar manifested in a visual modality’ (2006:110), yet in practice this appears to involve imprecise phrases such as ‘grammatically-laden facial expressions’ and ‘emotional description of landscape’ (2006:112-113), which are affectively accurate but not particularly useful.

behind it', rather than 'he sees a person hiding behind a rock.' This provides the reader/viewer with an anticipatory scaffold.

| TIME                            | EPISODE                                                                         | EPISODIC BREAK-DOWN                                           |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Time-codes</b><br>[duration] | <b>PART</b><br><i>[Information pertaining to the transition between parts.]</i> |                                                               |
| <b>Time-codes</b><br>[duration] | <b>Description of the episode</b>                                               | <b>Time-codes:</b> Descriptions of each stage of the episode. |

**Box 1** – *Performance-text guidance table*

The full guidance tables are in Appendix 3; in Chapter Six, the performance-texts are introduced and the tables interspersed with additional descriptions and explanatory notes pertaining to characters, key motifs and discourse/performance styles. These additions include excerpts from interviews and commentaries, including occasional unrehearsed voice-overs by Andy Carmichael. The incorporation of a multiplicity of 'voices' reduces the risk of producing a text which could resemble a 'definitive' English version, and thus avoids unexamined translation. It is hoped that sufficient detail is given to illustrate the complexity of the artistry employed and to familiarise the reader with the three core performance-texts which are central to the discussion of biculturality in Chapter Seven. The guidance grids will also accompany the corpus of performance-texts into SSSA, representing the preliminary inclusion of BSL material – and a bridge for non-signing viewers

– in a repository of Scottish intangible cultural heritage.

### **Looking back and looking forward**

A central aim of this thesis is to develop a methodology for examining the complex relationships between language, language modality, performance, and culturally-bound knowledge in signed-oral performance-texts, so to facilitate their further study by ethnologists and folklorists. This chapter has outlined my engagement with the practical and ethical issues of undertaking, recording and writing fieldwork with signing-deaf communities, and provided an explanation of my case-study approach. Reflexivity is crucial in any fieldwork, and my outsider status as a non-deaf learner, as well as the impact that my development of personal and political ties with the community had on my fieldwork, required some examination. Choosing a corpus of storytelling events in the public domain, I was able to side-step issues associated with negotiating access to DEAFspace and ethically representing data obtained within it; in addition, this avoided the problem of recording and translating storytelling events with limited funding and resources, and responded to the ‘messiness’ of the fieldwork experience.

The three case-studies provide insights into different aspects of signed-oral storytelling. Case-study 1’s translation demonstrates the different affordances of spoken-oral and signed-oral storytelling, and highlights crucial aspects in the process of mediating between different cultural worlds. Case-study 2 shows signing-deaf people speaking for themselves about their biculturality. Many of the core features of signing-deaf communities raised in Chapter One will be more thoroughly explored in Case-study 2, which will familiarise the reader with several of the tropes and culturally-bound references that appear in Case-study 3’s platform performance-texts.



Examination of the case-studies begins in Chapter Four; Chapter Three contextualises them within signed-oral storytelling traditions.

The limitations of the case-studies must be acknowledged. I almost exclusively interviewed those involved in the case-studies, so the voices being privileged are professionals with a 'public face'. Moreover, they are all white, predominantly male, and based in or around Scotland's two main cities; a more representative sample was impossible within the bounds of this study. It must be acknowledged that, even as this thesis attempts to raise questions about 'whose heritage is being celebrated and whose is being ignored' (West 2013a:176), through the content of the case-studies I myself ignore the heritage of signing-deaf ethnic minorities and other groups like the deafblind community; this is a marked limitation.<sup>98</sup>

Much of this chapter was concerned with issues of representation of signed-oral material on the page to facilitate discussion and analysis. The difficulties inherent in the two-dimensional representation of a three-dimensional movement-based language, coupled with my own unexamined development of sign-literacy, caused me to seek guidance from an experienced BSL interpreter with experience in the arts and to solicit feedback from non-signing participants so as to develop innovative strategies. I use an assemblage of representational devices, including written translations when available, BSL glosses, descriptions, screen-shots (often with overlaid text), descriptive tabular guides and excerpts from interviews, with which I attempt to bridge the gap between signed-oral artistry and non-signers. The following chapter provides an introduction to features of this artistry.

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<sup>98</sup> Compare to Bell's question, 'is disability studies actually white disability studies?' (2010)

## CHAPTER THREE

### ***Conceptualising and contextualising signed-oral storytelling***

*The distinctions between word and image, telling and showing, reading and seeing, writing and speaking, listening and watching, all seem to shimmer and vibrate in the presence of sign language. We don't quite know how to talk about talking anymore when the hand takes over from the tongue; we don't quite know how to look at images when the eye quickened by gestural literacy stands in for the ear.*

W. J. T. Mitchell, (2006:xvii)

The central role that storytelling plays in signing-deaf communities is frequently mentioned in the research literature; it is often highlighted as a core tenet of deaf culture.<sup>99</sup> The aim of this chapter is to contextualise the three case-studies in the following chapters, each of which examines a different area of contemporary signed storytelling in Scotland. Drawing on academic sources and material from my personal interviews, the chapter reviews the scholarship pertaining to signed-oral artforms and provides a general, if necessarily incomplete, overview of some of the important bicultural aspects. Again, the scholarship is predominantly American; there is a strongly transnational element in signing-deaf culture, certainly in the West at least, but just as Ceil Lucas warns against applying 'labels from spoken language situations ... too hastily to sign language situations' (2001:5), applying observations unquestioningly from the American context to Scotland may overlook

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<sup>99</sup> Examples are numerous: consider Padden and Humphries (1988, 2005), Ladd (2003), Mindess (2006), Bahan (2006), Bechter (2008) as a starting point.

distinctive, localised practices.<sup>100</sup> Yet the scarcity of sources necessitates looking beyond the United Kingdom, selecting those examples and interpretations which have resonance with the situation in Scotland.

A crucial starting point is recognising that the qualities associated with spoken-oral traditional storytelling may not apply to the signed-oral context. Part of the intrinsic value of spoken-oral storytelling is frequently attributed to the quality of the spoken voice and the experience of hearing it, reminiscent of Ong's argument for the 'unique relationship of sound to interiority' (2002 [1982]:70-71). Potent and enduring images include dim, fire-lit rooms where the storyteller is half-obsured, or where children slowly fall asleep listening at bedtime. Spoken-language storytellers often elevate voice over other performance aspects: Wilson quotes Claire Mulholland expressing a preference for a vocal delivery without 'a lot of animation' to 'allow the listener space to create the character in their own head and make pictures a wee bit' (2006:178) and Daniel Morden's claim that, while 'storytelling involves the skills of the performer', he is 'not, and never will be an actor' as, 'unlike the actor, a storyteller has to conceive imagery, convert that imagery into language, and communicate his/her vision' (2006:44).<sup>101</sup>

In the case of sign languages, however, visual imagery is converted into a language which is itself visually processed, and this ekphrastic quality (in the sense of 'painting ... pictures with language,' Cohn 1999:50) provides both performer and audience with different spaces to 'make pictures'. Signed-oral performance contexts require light, visibility and wakefulness, with the

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<sup>100</sup> See Mathur and Napoli (2011) and Parasnis (1998).

<sup>101</sup> Wilson argues that storytellers' rejection of the idea of 'acting' stems from a misunderstanding about the variability of theatre, and draws parallels between storytellers' performances and Brecht's 'epic actors', who were "not to *be* their characters but to 'show', 'present' or 'demonstrate' them" (2006:5,48-55).

storyteller balancing the requirement of '*variable* visual stimuli' with being 'hard on the eyes' (Peters 2006:88-89, original emphasis). It is emphasised throughout this chapter that, to co-opt Bechter's phrase (2008:66), signed-oral traditions are not what spoken-oral traditions would look like if hearing people were deaf, but are predicated on the totality of signing-deaf experience, including the very constitution of the community and the modality-specific affordances of sign languages.

The chapter begins by tackling the malleability of genre in signed-oral practices. I consider Pollitt's convincing thesis that signed-oral performance-texts should not be examined as poetry, and discuss the meaning of and my application of her term *Signart*. This leads to a discussion of some of the features of creative signing that will appear in the three case-studies; cinematics and the use of the body in performance receive particular attention. From here, I consider the idea of a continuum of everyday signartistry and suggest a model for conceptualising particular signed-oral practices and specific performance-texts, based on the intersecting axes of my own signartistry continuum and Wilson's performance continuum (2006), mentioned in Chapter One (see Fig. 2). Illustrative examples are drawn throughout, enabling readers with no working knowledge of BSL to build up a picture of its affordances, in preparation for the ensuing chapters. The final section examines intra-community translations, personal experience narratives and platform Signart to contextualise the three case-studies. The reader will then be able to confidently situate the material in Chapters Four to Seven into the bigger picture of signed-oral practices, enabling a deeper understanding of the biculturality of signing-deaf culture as expressed and performed through signed-oral traditions.

### ***That it's a story anyone knows...? The look of the performance-text***<sup>102</sup>

This section frames the examination of signed-oral storytelling by delving into some of the extant scholarship pertaining to signed performance-texts and grappling with some of the key terminology. First, a few words on the orality of signing-deaf culture are necessary. As Chapters One and Two have explained, sign languages do not have grapholects, and it is impossible to compose a BSL text on the page or to do the equivalent of reading one aloud. Even were film to be accepted as the equivalent of the printing press in its impact, as Christopher Krentz discusses (2006), the comparison is insufficient; it is the equivalent of audio recording technology, not of script. Nor is it even the exact equivalent of audio technology, which records only the performer's voice and not the whole corp-oral performance: whereas the spoken word 'achieves (semi)permanence of form by becoming disembodied' onto the page or into the microphone, a film of sign language necessitates 'preserving the image of the author signing' in his or her entirety (Rose 2006:130).

This being the case, most scholars of signed performance-texts are quick to recognise their embodied and oral production, and to welcome parallels with spoken-oral folk culture. Nancy Frishberg (1988) is an early example, drawing parallels with the Homeric and Balkan epics. More recently, Cynthia Peters (2000, 2001, 2006) draws comparisons between 'indigenous Deaf theatre' and Medieval and folk drama, arguing that both promote the socio-political, communal, and real over the aesthetic, the individual, and the ideal, and that both are inherently Carnavalesque in contesting hegemonic truths. Orality as a feature of signing-deaf culture is frequently mentioned in H. Bauman *et al.*'s seminal collection, *Signing the Body Poetic* (2006): the editors place signed performance-texts at the intersection between 'ancient literary

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<sup>102</sup> This quotation is from H. Sacks, in Thornborrow and Coates (2005:3).

forms' and 'the current literary practices of oral, performance poetry' (2006:5) and, in addition to Peters, above, Krentz proposes that the video camera has impacted on signed-oral forms much as the printing press did on spoken/sung-oral traditions, Kristen Harmon examines a particular ASL performance-text, Gilbert Eastmann's *Epic: Gallaudet Protest* (1988), in light of Foley's oral-formulaic scholarship, and Ben Bahan (himself a storyteller) provides a comprehensive overview of ASL 'face-to-face' traditions and the changing influences on them. Another scholar-practitioner, Peter Cook, has elsewhere analysed motifs and the devices used in one of his own performances (2011). In the context of BSL, Sutton-Spence has demonstrated the role of storytellers as folk role models in transmitting culture knowledge (2010) and Pollitt argues that sign language poets fulfil a shamanistic or bardic function for the community (2004:338-344; 2015a). However, literary criticism has been the norm, and print biases are so 'built into literary criticism that it is difficult to think fairly of literature in any other medium' (Eidsvik 1974:18); this has had an impact on the study of signed-oral performance-texts.

I use the term *performance-text* to emphasise storytelling as a breakthrough into performance, where the content, form and the performer's artistic intention all intersect. I also use it as a convenient umbrella term which side-steps the problem of genre. We tend to differentiate expressive artforms from one another: a story is accepted as being distinct in essence from a poem which is itself distinct from a song. Yet this is an oversimplification: the ballad 'straddles the realms of both song and story, partaking of both genres while remaining distinct' (McFadyen 2012:5), and assumptions about what constitutes one particular artform can obscure crossover with others, as Wilson's examination of storytelling and theatre demonstrates (2006). Niles recommends the use of Foley's term *wordpower* as

a convenient abbreviated way of referring to the sententious, rhythmically charged language that is uttered in a heightened register ... [encompassing] both song and speech, both poetry and prose, both oral and literary modes of expression, both narrative and nonnarrative genres, both “fiction” and “fact”. (1999:29)

*Signpower*, then, may provide a useful equivalent, as the above differentiations are even more open to contestation in relation to signed-oral artforms. Just as the stories of non-Anglophonic spoken languages have suffered from ethnocentric assumptions about what constitutes a ‘good story’ (McCabe 1997), the form of a signed story may not resemble (and may therefore be perceived as less valid than) the form of a spoken story. Signed narrative may be ‘arranged more like edited film than like written narration’ (Stokoe quoted in Sacks 1990:90, see also Rayman 2011); it has been described as “an ‘apex’ shape, like a pyramid with a starting point, and going from that point on with additional details” (Wayne Betts Jr., quoted in Grinder Witteborg 2014:480), and as being ‘structured by visual images and scenes rather than thematically’ (Peters 2006:83-4).<sup>103</sup> The idea of the narrative arc may not apply: in *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* by Mark MacQueen,<sup>104</sup> three cowboys take turns to shoot a bottle, drink a shot of liquor in a saloon, fight American Indians, and tame a horse; while the action is framed as a competition, the characters rarely interact and there is no climactic scene in which one of them wins. Yet it is satisfying to watch and has its own visual integrity and so can be accepted as ‘a unitary whole’ (J. Davis 2002:13). Peters observes that some signed forms have ‘no counterpart in any other literature and thus no label’ (2006:83). As there is a much shorter tradition of research to draw on concerning signed-oral

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<sup>103</sup> See Christie *et al.* (1999) for the impact of this on signing-deaf people’s written discourse.

<sup>104</sup> See Appendices 3.1d and 3.5. This performance-text is discussed further in Chapter Seven.

performance-texts, how confidently can this dissertation claim to examine BSL *storytelling*, rather than, say, BSL theatre or BSL poetry?<sup>105</sup>

This question is particularly pertinent given that the majority of research into signed artforms concerns ‘sign language poetry’, i.e. platform pieces which are characteristic of the ASL literary movement. While *poetry* has also been applied to spoken-oral forms (e.g. by Niles 1999, although he prefers *geiss*), the term carries ‘inappropriate aesthetic associations ... [and] conceal a bias toward the cultures of script and print’ (Niles 1999:16), and there is a paradox in studying oral forms as literature (Ong 1982, Niles 1999). While H. Bauman *et al.* mention oral performance poetry in relation to ASL, Pollitt notes that comparisons are rarely drawn with slam, spoken-word and even rap in terms of craft and aesthetics (2014:52). Instead, comparisons to written poetry are most commonly made, both along formalist lines (e.g. Valli 1990; Sutton-Spence 2005; Kaneko 2008) and using the more avant-garde paradigms of Beat (Cohn 1999) and concrete poetry, Dadaism, *etc.* (H. Bauman *et al.* 2006:7). Finding apparent equivalents in sign languages to the tropes of written/spoken poetry has, according to H. Bauman, proven indispensable in establishing a standardised lexicon for ASL poetics’ (2003:35), and it has also bestowed a degree of prestige-by-association with established literary discourse.

Despite this, H. Bauman *et al.* caution against the conclusion that ‘poetry and prose/narrative are clearly distinguished in sign literature’

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<sup>105</sup> I focus on the comparison to poetry as to date most scholarship has been weighted this way. However, it is increasingly evident that comparisons with various forms of folk, community and alternative theatre may be more useful; interesting work on this is coming out of Michael Richardson’s doctoral research at Heriot-Watt University.



(2006:12; also Padden 2006:237).<sup>106</sup> While ‘certain ... artists clearly identify themselves as poets and storytellers,’ H. Bauman *et al.* observe, ‘the distinctions derive unnaturally from comparisons with the hearing literary world’ (2006:12). Many performance-texts could legitimately be analysed as stories, poems, skits or even songs.<sup>107</sup> Many performance-texts in the corpus of BSL poems collected and analysed by Sutton-Spence *et al.*, for example, have a strong narrative structure and could comfortably be described as stories. Frishberg notes that genre distinctions, including her own categories of *folklore*, *oratory*, and *performance art*, are drawn more for the purposes of analysis or disciplinary loyalty than due to a fixed difference between artistic forms (1988:156). An illustration of this is that similar performance-texts may be categorised by some scholars as *signlore games* and by others as a genre of storytelling, e.g. ASL’s ‘ABC’ performance-texts.<sup>108</sup> During his first exposure to signing-deaf expressive culture in a school cafeteria, H. Bauman observed that:

what the [deaf] students were doing seemed akin to drama in that it was a type of performance, akin to poetry in that it involved creative use of language, and akin to folklore in that it had no written form. (2003:34)

This hybrid, neither-nor quality is observed throughout the research literature (e.g. Frishberg 1988; Peters 2006:83; Pollitt 2014:71-72), and may feature in

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<sup>106</sup> This is also the case in spoken-oral culture: Dégh describes ‘the fragility of genre-boundaries’ (1995:71) and Niles describes the ‘taxonomic troubles’ besetting genre differentiation (1999:36, 207 n12 and 213 n8).

<sup>107</sup> See Loeffler (2014), Bahan (2006:33-36) and Pollitt (2014:299-327) for explanation of this and more on deaf musicality.

<sup>108</sup> In ‘ABC’ performance-texts, the handshapes of the one-handed fingerspelling alphabet are used in strict sequential order as classifiers. Bahan (quoted in Bechter 2008:64) succinctly summarises how this works with his phrase ‘B is for door’: the ‘B’ handshape (i.e. the flat palm held away from the signer, see Fig. i) becomes the classifier depicting a door. These are described in the context of signlore games by Hall (1993) and storytelling genres by Bahan (2006) and Bechter (2008).

informal, conversational storytelling as well as in conscious cultural performances. Teasing apart the distinctions between artforms and genres does not seem particularly useful: for my purposes, these are all comparable as examples of signpower, and genre-specific terms (poet versus storyteller, storytelling versus theatre, *etc.*) should be read as largely interchangeable.

### ***Re-wording the gap: the significance of ‘Signart’***

Having argued that the distinction between a signed story and signed poem is arbitrary, a useful alternative is found in recent scholarship ‘against sign language poetry’. Pollitt, highly critical of what she terms the ‘tyranny of logocentric studies’ (2014:3), describes fitting signed artforms to the dimensions of written/spoken literary genres as akin to cutting off one’s toes to fit Cinderella’s slipper, and in so doing overlooking some of the ‘essential properties of the slipper,’ as well as of the foot (2014:14; 2015b).<sup>109</sup> The logocentric tyranny Pollitt describes is further complicated by the ‘deeply engrained notions of what constituted literary standards’ held by the early ASL poets of the video age, who were guided by ‘a compass whose magnetic north pointed to the standards of phonetic language’ (H. Bauman *et al.* 2006:9). This is seen, for example, in ASL scholar-practitioner Clayton Valli’s focus on defining the poetic ‘line’ in ASL performance-texts (1990). H. Bauman designates Valli’s analysis as ‘*linguistically* precise ... [but] *perceptually* murky’: ‘when one is watching the poem, the poetic lines do not distinguish themselves as such’ (2006:95-96). It appears increasingly necessary to get away from the ‘disciplinary boundaries that maintain a separation between the visual, spatial, performance, and literary arts’ (H. Bauman 2006:100, 98).

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<sup>109</sup> This visual metaphor was particularly eloquent when expressed in BSL (2015a).

Pollitt's work grapples with the issue of image in 'sign language poetry', and the legacy of research downplaying iconicity in sign languages.<sup>110</sup> H. Bauman reminds us that 'the first critics to embark on the study of creative works in ASL were linguists seeking to validate ASL's linguistic and aesthetic properties' (2003:35); they were 'fighting ideological resistance ... both inside and outside of linguistics' (Calton 2014:116). The Saussurean arbitrariness principle was the legitimating benchmark against which languages were measured: iconicity 'invite[d] comparisons with ... artificial type means of expression rather than with spoken languages', leading sign linguists to portray it as 'a strictly latent quality in [sign languages'] structural patterning' which was 'never actualised in signing' (Thoutenhoofd 1999:171). This leads to a marked disconnect between the academic discourse and that of signing-deaf people:

While linguists value sign arbitrariness ... deaf signers valorise the "naturalness" and "clarity" of masterful signing, citing facial expressions and classifier forms in particular – i.e., signing modes which specifically exploit degrees of transparency. (Bechter 2008:74)

Pollitt argues that the 'earnest discourses of the academic public stage are serving to suppress and denigrate the accounts offered by native practitioners in the field' (2015b). She contrasts academic W. J. T. Mitchell's assertion that signing is 'not ... "drawing pictures in the air"' (2006:xvi) with ASL performer Robert Panara's observation that "for deaf people, signing poetry *is* like 'painting pictures in the air'" (cited in Cohn 1999:28; my emphasis), and critiques sign linguist Perlmutter's assertion that the poet only '*seems* to be painting a picture in the air' (2002:207, my emphasis; Pollitt 2014:15). Perceptively, Bouchauveau states that 'our humour or poetry is always

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<sup>110</sup> See Chapter One.

inspired by an image – the potential, or the redundancy of an image – by a visual logic’ (1994:27), and Pollitt found that many BSL performers ‘had actively chosen to depict through image’ by eschewing the ‘less transparent, conventional Signs [sic]’ in favour of illumination techniques (i.e. drawing in the air) and classifier forms (Pollitt 2014:29-20). Her in-depth readings of four performance-texts show that the artform is best understood as ‘the compositional assemblage of language, illumination, gesture-dance, cinematics and social sculpture,’ evoking ‘ocular, haptic, musical and kinaesthetic response’ (2014:72).<sup>111</sup>

Extending H. Bauman’s argument that signed artforms blend language art, visual art, and cinematic art (2006), Pollitt designates the term *sign language poetry* insufficient, claiming that it privileges ‘genteel’ performance-texts which are ‘language-dominant, more readily comparable with the poetry of English language ... [and] more highly regarded’, at the expense of ‘hitherto less prestigious, image-dominant genre[s]’ (Pollitt 2014:23, 27). Pollitt’s proposed alternative is *Signart*: the ‘importance of language within the form’ is recognised through giving *Sign* prominence in the compound, yet the term ‘afford[s] recognition to the visual artistry and spectacle of performance’, and considers both genteel and vernacular traditions equally valid (2014:2-3).<sup>112</sup> This term is not used (and has no need to be used) within signing-deaf

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<sup>111</sup> In Pollitt’s terms, illumination is ‘embodied drawing’ (2015b), gesture-dance incorporates the ‘representational gestures of deafhood’ (2014:231), and social sculpture draws on Joseph Beuys’ idea of extending the concept of sculpting ‘to the invisible materials used by everyone: [...] how we mould and shape the world in which we live’ (Tisdall 1979 in Pollitt 2014:327). Pollitt’s thesis that ‘sign language poetry’ should be understood as *Gesamtkunstwerk* (i.e. a ‘total artwork’) is compelling, but sadly beyond the scope of this thesis to outline.

<sup>112</sup> This is an inversion of Klima and Bellugi’s term *art-sign* for ‘pure poetic function’ (1976:51); Pollitt’s term is more developed.

communities themselves, but the concept was alluded to during my interview with Mark MacQueen:

EL: So is that a story or a poem or both?

MM: Yes it could be described as a story, but it is probably nearer to a poem, it is art. (MM:2013)

Signart fills the gaps in the logocentric terminology, permits signed artforms to be discussed in a multidisciplinary way, and does justice to the assemblage of components that do not have ready equivalents in spoken/written artforms. I use it for the remainder of this thesis to refer to bounded performance-texts at the conscious, cultural performance end of Wilson's continuum, with the *poet, storyteller, author* or *performer* instead designated the *Signartist*.

### ***What is traditional in signed-oral tradition?***

Pollitt's term Signart was developed '*against* sign language poetry' (2014:1, my emphasis), repositioning within the paradigm of art theory a corpus of performance-texts that had previously been designated *poetry* both by Signartists and academics. These performance-texts are explicitly authored – Rose considers the individual author-performer's 'literal ownership of his or her literature' unquestionable because 'the text naturally and necessarily lives in the artist's body' (2006:132). Nor had these performance-texts, as far as I am aware, been performed by anyone except the author-performer.<sup>113</sup> This is unproblematic for the domains of literature and art, where a single author/artist is assumed, but may be more problematic in the study of a

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<sup>113</sup> This may be specific to the British context: 'Paul Scott does Paul Scott Signart, Richard Carter does Richard Carter Signart, but Paul Scott doesn't do Richard Carter Signart.' (Pollitt 2015, personal communication). Contrast this to ASL performers Ella Mae Lentz, Debbie Rennie and Clayton Valli's work with (and, in Valli's case, publication of videos showing) different signers performing their original work (see Krentz 2006:60 and Rose 2006:137-142). Krentz makes the point that video technology (and, by extension, the commercial 'scene' of platform performances) has 'provided a new sense of private ownership of specific ... works' (2006:60).

country's *traditional* arts, where it is usually accepted that a performance-text will have 'no single author' (Masoni 2013:192) and be transmitted to be reproduced by others.

I do not have space here to rehearse the complex interplay of factors including perceived authenticity (and its impact on a storyteller's *mega-identity*, Ryan 2006), variation and change, individual creativity, diachronic transmission and even face-to-face performance contexts that contribute to the 'thorny issue of tradition' (Wilson 2006:23);<sup>114</sup> for my purposes, I take a broad definition. I accept Wilson's description of tradition as 'an ever-changing entity, an emancipatory force rather than an oppressive one[,] ... a process that circumvents and subverts official channels of transmission and culture' (2006:28), and West's characterisation of it as 'a story, learned from the past, told in the present, looking to the future' (2012:49), which implies "a strong diachronic element, a 'passing on' of cultural forms between generations" (2013a:175).

Both of these definitions apply to signed-oral traditions, although the diachronic element has, I suggest, a different resonance due to the conversionary nature of the community. An impression I have formed is that in signing-deaf culture, a performance-text or a storytelling context is considered *traditional* if it is felt to resonate with the *personal*. Remembering that the vast majority of community members were not born into signing-deaf families and have had to discover their primary cultural affiliation, this is not surprising: a traditional story is one that says something authentic about the experience of being signing-deaf. The term *authentic* is as problematic as *traditional*, but I use it in the sense of deriving from 'an authority which is

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<sup>114</sup> See Glassie 1995a; Zipes 2001; D. Leith 2003; Wilson 2006; West 2012.

inherent in, part of, what a person does and is' (D. Leith 2002:27) – fitting with Ladd's idea of deafhood being the *de jure* heritage of all deaf children. Although there has been a signing-deaf community in Edinburgh continuously since at least the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the majority of each generation of the community will have come into it 'from the side', with individuals attaching themselves to the vertical core; as such, the personal experience is also the communal experience and carries cultural currency. It is this that is 'passed on' between generations, horizontally and vertically; the community "shares 'cultural clay' with the 'I' of the personal narrative" (Masoni 2013:195, after Sahl 1989). Notably, when I asked signing-deaf community members about 'traditional' signing-deaf stories, the answers tended to emphasise personal, inter-relational and experiential anecdotes, rather than, say, folktales.<sup>115</sup> Tessa Padden's remarks were typical of my conversations in the community:

I feel traditional stories are like those about things that happened at school or at work, mostly incidents or funny stories involving hearing people – hearing teachers, or things that happen in families – I feel that's our traditional stories. (TP:2014)

Unlike speaking-hearing minority language groups, signing-deaf communities cannot take the domestic vertical transmission of either language or culture for granted, leading to autobiographical performance-texts being a core means of passing on cultural knowledge.

Are Signart performance-texts traditional, given that they tend to be original compositions? Gilbert Eastmann, for example, was 'not working

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<sup>115</sup> 'Deaf folktales' have been mentioned in relation to ASL communities - see Bahan (2006:31-32) and Rutherford (1993). However, comparable collection has not yet been undertaken in relation to BSL, and my own impressions and interviews tentatively suggest that folktales do not play a central role in signing-deaf storytelling in Britain; further research in this area from signing-deaf researchers would be welcome.

within an established ASL genre tradition' when he composed his performance-text, *Epic: Gallaudet Protest*, in response to the 1988 Deaf President Now campaign at America's deaf college; it was instead a creative 'personal response to oppression' (Harmon 2006:170). Yet Harmon sees *Epic* as traditional in that it responded to the needs of the community in the moment and touched on shared and recognisable experiences and stylistic tropes; it quickly became a 'community-sanctioned aesthetic response' akin to spoken/sung-oral epics (2006:170). Signart often draws on and codifies experiences that most signing-deaf people can be assumed to share, and almost always 'reference[s] the politics of deaf communities' (Pollitt 2014:75-76). Indeed, Signart is so driven by a 'sense of social purpose,' Pollitt claims, that 'it almost annuls the authorship of the Signartist' (2014:75-76); she and others have referred to Signartists as playing a bard-like role in signing-deaf communities (Pollitt 2015b; Bauman *et al.* 2006:8; Harmon 2006:184). Bahan contends that, 'even if a [signed] story is original' (and he includes 'original fiction' in his taxonomy of face-to-face traditions) 'the question of ownership is unclear [and] ... the notion that the "community" owns the story remains in some sense' (2006:42). I see their individual creativity in the light of West's description of the songwriters and composers who have been 'filed under folk', who use their individual creativity to 'voice the tradition in their own terms' (2012:17).

Indeed, I would posit that the very *originality* of signed-oral performance-texts is itself a feature of signed-oral tradition. The affordances of sign languages permit immense creativity, as will be described throughout this chapter, and mastery of these affordances is a celebrated skill. Indeed, fluency itself is highly prized given the high numbers who are not brought up



with BSL as their first and home language.<sup>116</sup> Peter Cook suggests that ‘Deaf culture *defines itself* by language’ more than by the themes tackled in Signart (in Wolter 2006:160; my emphasis), and live audiences value the opportunity to see performers ‘demonstrate their ability to construct and perform stories on the spot, showcasing their ability to think quickly on their feet’ (Bahan 2006:46).<sup>117</sup> Demonstrating creativity in and individual mastery of sign language can therefore be seen as a traditional feature of signed-oral storytelling.

### **Everyday storytelling in signing-deaf communities**

Ed Chevy claims on the ASL documentary *Through Deaf Eyes* (2007) that ‘deaf people [...] [are] famous for being story tellers.’ This is not to suggest that all signing-deaf people are good storytellers, or that the characteristics of good signed-oral storytelling are necessarily those of good spoken-oral storytelling;<sup>118</sup> it does, however, allude to the centrality of storytelling in the community. Storytelling plays an important role in the everyday life of signing-deaf communities in ways which are consistent with other oral cultures: the manner in which much signed expression is framed corresponds to several of Ong’s ‘characteristics of oral based thought and expression’

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<sup>116</sup> Unsurprisingly, individuals who are generally considered to be storytelling leaders or *smooth signers* tend to have been exposed to fluent sign language from a very young age and thus employ a high level of linguistic and performative artistry at all levels of discourse (Bahan 2006:24-26). See Bahan for an account of the smooth signer’s ‘apprenticeship’ into becoming a recognised storyteller within the community (2006:25-28).

<sup>117</sup> I have witnessed the ‘off-the-cuff’ production of original (and frequently extremely detailed and clever) performance-texts both informally and on stage, which Mark MacQueen alludes to briefly in interview (MM: 2013).

<sup>118</sup> Ladd observes that BSL’s ‘lengthy poetical responses’ are ‘to the native-researcher ... extremely beautiful’, but that they are ‘not necessarily seen in this way by outsiders’ (2003:290-291), and the cultural specificity of signed humour has been acknowledged in the research literature (Rutherford 1983; Bienvenu 1994; Bouchauveau 1994; Napoli and Sutton-Spence 2011).

(1982:36-49), and Ladd observes that storytelling is ‘a major way of making points’ in signed discourse (2003:290-291). On signed videos posted on social media, discussions about the politics of the DEAFworld are framed allegorically or as visual metaphors which are then narratively extended. An example of the former is Lee Robertson’s vlog on *The Limping Chicken* about the education of deaf children, produced as a performance-text about another planet where the inhabitants have differently shaped oesophagi (2015).<sup>119</sup> Mindess has observed that signing-deaf people often respond with long, seemingly irrelevant narratives to a yes/no question (2006:4), and researchers from the University College London’s BSL corpus project noted marked confidence in everyday storytelling amongst their signing-deaf participants: narratives were requested ‘primarily ... as a warm-up activity’ to put them at ease (Fenlon et al. 2015:164), yet, unlike similar exercises conducted with speaking-hearing participants, this warm-up activity yielded some of the best linguistic data (Schembri 2014; see also Nyst 2015:116). I suggest that there is an entrenched expectation that signers will overtly incorporate storytelling performance into their daily discourse.

Moreover, the value of signed-oral storytelling as entertainment is highly prized. Games predicated on narrative creation and signplay are mentioned by Pollitt who describes collaborative storytelling or ‘verse-in-the-round’ parlour games, where ‘each individual contribut[es] a Sign to create meaningful, visually interesting and often structurally playful narrative’ (Pollitt 2014:24, also Bahan 2006:27n8). Tessa Padden mentions storytelling as

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<sup>119</sup> I have witnessed similar allegories produced in impromptu conversation, or as a summing up of a discussion; for example, Gary Quinn summarised a debate on the acquisition of signing-deaf culture by BSL interpreters by narratively extending a visual metaphor of a tree to describe the various roots of the community and the diverse applications of cultural knowledge (*Can interpreters ever acquire deaf culture?* at Heriot-Watt University, 3 March 2014).

evening entertainment, describing having been ‘bored with nothing to do’ at her residential school:

We begged one Deaf<sup>120</sup> person to tell us stories. We were beckoned to her dormitory and she would tell us ghost stories, with lots of details! Then when she got us hooked she would stop the story and tell us she would continue the next evening! Damn! (TP:2014)

Jemina Napier, born into a large, intergenerational family of signers, described storytelling as a central part of her childhood: ‘the family would sit around and tell stories and talk about stuff, so that was really very much the tradition I grew up with’ (JN:2013). These accounts have parallels with Scottish Traveller culture: Stanley Robertson and others have described serialised storytelling in their own families and communities (Robertson 1971, Braid 1999), and bemoaned the advent of television in undermining this tradition. Yet, whereas the negative impact of radio and television on spoken-oral traditions is frequently claimed (MacDonald 1999), television does not compete with signed storytelling in the same way as, in common with the majority of mainstream popular culture, it is phonocentrically dialogue-driven. While Jemina’s description of intra-familial storytelling dates from ‘back when [...] they didn’t have captioning on television’ (JN:2013), the increase in subtitled programmes has not made television fully accessible: subtitles are not always provided, their quality is variable and they require sufficient bilingual literacy. Therefore, interpersonal entertainment retains its significance.

### ***Storytelling between two worlds: setting the bicultural scene***

As we have seen, signing-deaf biculturality is shaped by the complex process of enculturation into signing culture. Even for PDFs, the culture of the

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<sup>120</sup> Tessa reiterated afterwards that this ‘wonderful storyteller’ was a PDF.

surrounding speaking-hearing world is dominant in almost every domain outwith the home. 'Existential hybridity' (Ladd 2008:50) can be seen as an integral part of the signing-deaf worldview – and, as such, 'permeates all cultural performances' (Dégh 1995:132). Most signed-oral performance-texts 'have embedded ... messages for ways of behaving and strategies for surviving as a member of a minority culture in a world surrounded by others with different cultural values and world knowledge' (Bahan 2006:26): for example, Bahan describes the 'scores of stories and testimonies' about negotiating the 'culturally established boundaries' of sound in the speaking-hearing world (2014:250-251). Dégh theorises that the 'generic goal' of all narratives is to 'reveal inherited communal and personal views of human conduct' (1995:132). Both conversational and Signart performance-texts contain guidelines for signing-deaf conduct to enable fitting into (or, alternatively, subverting) the speaking-hearing world, but also contain critiques of the conduct of speaking-hearing people. In a direct parallel with spoken-oral tradition, Fjord (1996) compares Basso's description of Apache 'portraits of the Whiteman' ('models of Whitemen and for dealing with Whitemen, created by Apaches for Apaches,' 1979:16) to the comparable 'portraits of the hearing' in ASL performance-texts, in which the dominant other is caricatured and reinterpreted (see Peters 2006:77-8, Bahan 2006:44-45).

Despite in-group/out-group distinctions, a crucial element of signing-deaf biculturality is that the two worlds are not binary opposites: signing-deaf communities are *of* the majority culture as well as apart from it, and speaking-hearing culture bleeds into it or is actively raided and assimilated in a different form. This bicultural interaction is, however, affected by the modality difference: spoken culture is largely inaccessible, and access to written culture (including subtitles on television) depends on bilingual literacy. The

acquisition of the same passive repertoire of cultural referents as speaking-hearing peers cannot be taken for granted. After the early 'golden age' of silent cinema (C. Robinson 2006:198), the development of 'talkies' in 1929 effectively excluded the deaf audience and the lack of subtitles on television continued this exclusion. Yet the acquisition of a passive repertoire through cinema and television is frequently reported, as described by Lilian Lawson in interview:

I remember from my school days there were one or two natural storytellers. They would go to the cinema and then come back and relay what they had watched. We would be enthralled by what they said. [...] We relied on the pupils that went home at weekends, to come back and tell us what they had watched at the cinema. (LL:2013)

The tropes, characters and narrative structures of cinema and television may be incorporated into the storytelling traditions and imaginative lives of all children; however, for deaf children the inaccessibility of the dialogue prompted 'creatively filling in the gaps where necessary' (Krentz 2006:63). Furthermore, unlike spoken languages, sign languages have the capacity to replicate cinematic techniques; this will be described in more detail later in this chapter. Bienvenu describes the impact of cartoon humour on the development of signed jokes (1994:18), and Signartist Mark MacQueen claims television directly influenced his language and storytelling skill-set, describing his repertoire as developing 'really just by watching films':

Choosing the parts I liked and then piecing them together. [...] [My brother and I] used to watch Tom and Jerry together and it was so creative! [...] We would mimic that when we were talking to each other. Then we started doing the same when we watched other films. We would take what we had seen visually and use it as part of our signed language. (MM:2013)

The incorporation – and creative re-imagination – of phonocentric majority culture can be described as a highly bicultural phenomenon in signed-oral tradition.

### **Painting pictures in four dimensions: the storytelling affordances of BSL**

We have seen that storytelling is highly valued in signing-deaf culture; so too is linguistic creativity. That everyday signed discourse contains high levels of linguistic play is attested to in the research literature, with early linguists recognising that, ‘in spontaneous ASL communication, linguistic play is ... rich and varied’ (Klima and Bellugi 1976:51) and influential Signartist Dot Miles suggesting that ‘every fluent user of BSL is a potential poet’ (quoted in Sutton-Spence 2005:16). Rose has observed that a signer’s ‘gift with language is already a gift of bodily expression and dynamic stage presence’ (2006:131), and it has been claimed that the aspects of language most suitable for storytelling are ‘so entrenched’ in sign languages that signers are often unconscious of them and do not ‘separate them from everyday life or designate them as art’ (Ladd in Sutton-Spence 2005:232). These entrenched affordances place multiple possibilities for expression literally at one’s fingertips, as this extract from my interview with Jemina Napier and Andy Carmichael illustrates. Jemina describes herself as a balanced bilingual for whom BSL and spoken English are joint first languages; however, she claimed to be ‘a better storyteller in BSL’ and attempted the following explanation:

JN: [I] wonder because of the visual nature of sign languages that... you just have this kind of stuff on a plate for you to play with. [...] I think that’s why I enjoy storytelling in BSL so much, I feel like I can be more expressive because I just have –

AC: Well I think you can be more *creative*.

JN: More creative, yeah, you know, that you've got... I know if you've got like a good vocabulary you can be creative in storytelling in English, but with BSL there's the facility to... y'know... *extend* the things that you can do with sign language because you've got all of these different planes you can use [...] A visual-spatial sketchpad if you like. (JN/AC:2013)

This capacity for creativity, expressiveness and linguistic extension is woven into the very syntactic fabric of BSL – even, perhaps, into the visual-spatial modality.<sup>121</sup> Sign languages' spatial grammar can be manipulated: the placement of discourse topics enables the deployment of spatial or movement-based metaphors ('up', for example, being transculturally associated with growth, positivity and status – Lakoff and Johnsen 2003:16), and the movement of referents between those designated spaces can be playful or figurative as well as reflecting literal movement. Handshape, too, can be infused with symbolism; for example, the pinkie finger has negative connotations in BSL, and this can be exploited in the construction of a clause or the development of a pun.<sup>122</sup> Role-shift, used in everyday discourse to report speech, invites the performance of different characters, and is not limited to humans: the signer can equally embody an animal or an object – even an abstract concept. A high degree of anthropomorphism is consequently available to signers, which Sutton-Spence and Napoli have examined in depth (2010); Bechter, too, describes the genre of personification stories told from the perspective of an object-as-protagonist (2008:62-3,77). Using classifier handshapes' productive lexicon, 'new lexical items and metaphors [can be

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<sup>121</sup> Signartist John Wilson rejects the perspective that poetic signing 'belongs exclusively to BSL users,' claiming that 'it's found in the wider community too – SSE users, those that can barely sign' (quoted in Pollitt 2014:399).

<sup>122</sup> Conversely, it has connotations of smallness in ASL, and so the sign UNDERSTAND, which uses the index finger, jokingly becomes UNDERSTAND-LITTLE when signed with the pinkie (Klima and Bellugi 1979:324).

created] on the spot, many of them extremely “clever”, which may or may not be used again in the future’ (Ladd 2003:290-291). Image-producing features that Pollitt identifies in Signart also feature in everyday signing, including *dense images* (‘physical motifs [that] are constituted of the body-as-a-whole’, 2014:243), *hybrid images* (‘acts of line-drawing or tracing’, 2004:189), and playfulness with negative space (2014:253). Generated images can then be spontaneously manipulated, enabling, as Channon observes, ‘substantive and geometric transformations (scaling, skewing, rotating), additions, and deletions’ – ‘what,’ Channon demands rhetorically, ‘are the limits?’ (2015:125)

Even linguistic ‘limits’ can be breached. Different sign languages have a different repertoire of hand-shapes: the E-handshape in ASL,<sup>123</sup> for example, does not feature in BSL except for in loan-signs (e.g. EUROPE). Yet ‘illegal’ handshapes can be permissible in the coinage of a clever neologism or creation of an image (Sutton-Spence 2014:463). Signing-space is understood to extend no further down than the navel, leading to some prescriptivism: Wolter observes that, in her ASL literature class, students employ full-body ‘acting’ rather than the classifier use they demonstrate when ‘sitting in the cafeteria with their friends’ (2006:152-153). While she terms the latter ‘their natural signing behaviour’, I contend that adapting to the space available *is* natural signing behaviour, particularly when attempting to generate signpower. Bienvenu describes full-body impersonation as part of storytelling (i.e. ‘no one was safe from our stories ... every identifying characteristic of the person would be imitated, right down to the way he or she walked’, 1994:18), and I have witnessed signers using the full space available both in informal performance-texts (a friend ‘holding court’ with a slapstick anecdote) and in

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<sup>123</sup> See Fig. i at the start of this thesis.



relatively formal oratory: in a presentation to DHS, Bryan Marshall performed a rhetorical flourish involving his feet.<sup>124</sup> Signers have a ‘transparent three-dimensional canvas of space’ (Pollitt 2014:189) through which to perform ‘language in four dimensions’<sup>125</sup> (Stokoe 1976:505); this permits a ‘compositional assemblage’ (Pollitt 2014:72) of both language and other performance or aesthetic features.

Given the versatility of signing in and as performance, I suggest that it would be useful to think about a continuum of *signartistry*, i.e. the ethnopoetic artistry of signpower.<sup>126</sup> Wilson’s performance continuum permits us to consider the variable intensity found in different storytelling contexts, but the same language-and-performance tools may be deployed at any point on this continuum. As one of Pollitt’s interviewed Signartists put it,

I feel I see poetry every day. In every deaf gathering. [...] I went out with a group of my old school friends for the evening. And it was there. People just started to sign poetically. (John Wilson in Pollitt 2014:402)

Signing ‘poetically’ is not producing Signart, a high intensity cultural performance at the far right of the performance continuum; it is, however, using the same stock-in-trade, i.e. the collection of features which lift a piece of unmarked discourse into performance. Klima and Bellugi use the term *art-sign* for ‘language for language’s sake’ (1976:51); I use *signartistry* for artistry for artistry’s sake, which has the capacity to ‘breach the boundaries between linguistic and non-linguistic possibilities of visual and embodied communication’ (Pollitt 2014:120). Some of these possibilities are explored in

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<sup>124</sup> Deaf History Scotland Spring Gathering, Kirkcaldy May 10<sup>th</sup> 2014.

<sup>125</sup> i.e. ‘the three spatial dimensions accessible to a signer’s body, as well as the dimension of time.’

<sup>126</sup> As mentioned in Chapter One, I prefer the term *artistry* to (ethno)poetics due the traditional emphasis on words and their vocal delivery in the discussion of the latter.

the following sub-sections, which examine some near-ubiquitous facets of signartistry in anticipation of their appearance in the case-studies. In particular, I look at the construction of cinematographic performance-texts, the 'theatrical' enactment of character through role-shift (Ladd 2003:290-291), and the idea of a 'visual vernacular', and ask what these reveal about signing-deaf biculturality in storytelling performance-texts.

***"A good poem is like a good movie": cinematographic signartistry***

The title quotation for this section (Cook and Lerner 2002:215) articulates a key variance between signed and spoken/written artforms: the degree to which cinematographic constructions can be employed. The parallels between signing and cinema were first drawn by Stokoe, and H. Bauman has developed cinematics or cine-poetics as a method to analyse signed performance-texts, arguing that the shared 'grammatical and aesthetic similarities' means that 'the lexicon of film techniques ... [should be] a standard part of ASL poetics' (2003:36). While H. Bauman describes the creation of cinematographic Signart as requiring a polymathic skill-set on the part of the Signartist – screenwriter, cameraperson, editor, actor and director all at once (2003:37) – this may over-complicate what is really a skilled extension of everyday sign language use. The effective execution of role-shift and the sophisticated manipulation of classifiers both require a high degree of skill, yet these are largely passively acquired and produced spontaneously. Bahan observes that 'almost all storytellers incorporate cinematographic techniques' (2006:29-31); I would extend this to assert that almost all *signers* do so, in line with Stokoe's observation that the very 'essence of sign language is to cut from a normal view to a close-up to a distant shot to a close-up again' (in Sacks 1990:90).

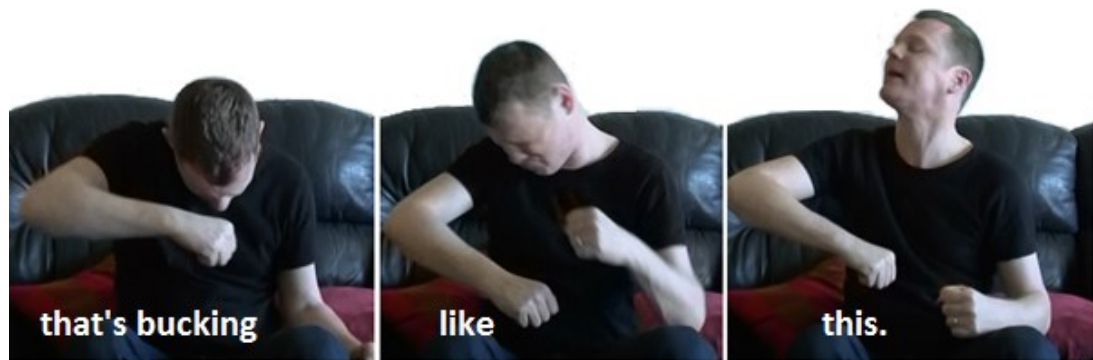
Indeed, while the influence of cinema on signed performance-texts has certainly been pronounced (Krentz 2006:63, Peters 2006:80), cinematographic signartistry is not directly attributable to it:

Cinema is but one medium through which we can produce moving images; sign is another such medium—perhaps even the ur-medium. (H. Bauman 2003:46)

Referring to his time at the Edinburgh Institute for the Deaf and Dumb in 1815, Alexander Atkinson recalls that a pupil ‘rehearsed to us all the stirring incidents of the escape of Napoleon from Elba, with all the graphic accuracy of moving panorama’ (1865:19), a compelling argument for the cinematographic nature of signed-oral performance-texts long before the invention of film. H. Bauman calls it a reasonable assumption that the signing-deaf community mentioned by Plato ‘conversed through a series of visual images that they were constantly framing, cutting, and editing throughout the course of a narrative’ (2003:46).

To illustrate cinematographic signartistry further, recall that classifier handshapes construct visual imagery for the viewer: one does not need to know the dictionary sign ARTICULATED-LORRY to ‘read’ its dimensions and visual and textural attributes. In switching between classifiers, the original image of the lorry is retained in the mind of the viewer, so the shifts in scale function like a cut between cinematic shots. The whole hand as the moving VEHICLE in mid-shot can be reduced to a ‘long-shot’ where the tip of the index finger represents the lorry in the far distance, or a ‘cut’ to a close-up where the index finger represents the lorry’s windscreen wipers, indicator stalk, or speedometer dial, depending on location, movement, non-manual features and context.

[In BSL] you can report action by being a horse



You can't do that in spoken languages, it just doesn't exist. [...] I mean, how do you voice-over a horse? I mean what – [*whinnies*] *neigh*, I mean, what're you going to do? You've got nothing at your disposal. [...]

He's being the bullet, right, I mean he role-shifts into being a bullet – well, you say to a [translator] ... *right, in the next stanza you're going to write from the point of view of the bullet, and they go what? From the point of view of the fucking bullet?* You go:



[...] I've never come across anything like that before in spoken or written language, have you?

**Box 2 – Concrete transcription: describing role-shift (AC:2014)**

Similarly, role-shift permits reported dialogue to appear like jump cuts between close-ups of characters, animals or objects. Examples of this can be seen in *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (Appendix 3.1d); the above transcription (Box 2) comes from my interview with Andy Carmichael, in which he mimics

Mark MacQueen's performance to illustrate the impossibility of voicing cinematographic performance-texts in English.

The visual imagery in cinematographic performance-texts can be composed with verisimilitude or can use an 'animation style' (eyes popping out of a character's head, a human squeezing beneath a door), and it is possible to recreate a film almost shot-for-shot (Bahan 2006:29-31). The genre has borrowed a lot of tropes from cinema, but is not as 'purely representational' as cinema: 'if it were, nonsigners would be able to comprehend ASL without training, just as they understand mime; yet, they cannot' (H. Bauman 2003:36). The success of a cinematographic performance-text relies equally on the skill of the performer and the sign-literacy of the audience, who is required to respond literately – and often very quickly – to the creative vision, accurately interpreting classifier handshapes (often in unfamiliar configurations), shifts in scale, and determining whether to 'read' the hands-as-articulators or the negative space between the hands. They must also be literate in the limitations of the body: for example, the hands' articulatory constraints may obscure the depiction of an image (Channon 2015:124), and, as the signer is perpetually 'in shot,' the viewer must read whether the body is literally present within the imagery of the scene (e.g. as a character).

However, the referential codes contained in cinematographic performance-texts do appear to be inter-culturally legible. The non-signing participants immediately recognised *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly's* reproduction of "Cowboys and Indians" stereotypes and they began to use the tropes of the Western as a scaffold through which to interpret (and self-correct their misinterpretations of) what they saw:

Participant 5: I'm trying to visualise a saloon, just to think about what that [sign] could be.

Participant 3: [He is swilling] mouthwash – the up and swirling around.  
Oh maybe it's alcohol actually!

Participant 5: Opening curtains, or... saloon doors, obviously, it's a Western!

Once the participants had expectations of the images they would see, they were capable of seeing them, supporting the argument for the translucent nature of iconic imagery. It also indicates a shared inter-cultural literacy in some of the ways in which visual imagery can be expressed on and through the body.

***Acting, gesturology and the visual vernacular: an inter-cultural bridge?***

Speaking a sign language invites – even necessitates – the replication of observed human (and non-human) characteristics. In role-shift, the impersonation of another character's attributes is difficult to avoid; it is also present in the use of handling classifiers (i.e. depicting an object through demonstrating how one would handle it) and the need to perform verbs (e.g. to change the performance of EAT according to what is being eaten). It is unsurprising that signing-deaf people have been described as skilled actors or mimes – to the extent that they have overtly influenced the development of the practices of Marcel Marceau, Jacques Lecoq and Charlie Chaplin (Pollitt 2014, C. Robinson 2006). The influence of signing-deaf actor Granville Redmond on Chaplin chimes with Deleuze's belief in 'the universal language' of silent film (1989:225); while I accept that 'the powerful idea of universal communication ... is impossible' (C. Robinson 2006:205), the concept of an inter-cultural language of gesture (to which I extend all the affordances of acting, including posture) may be a useful one.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> The group that would most obviously be excluded from this definition are blind people; yet, as MacNeill shows, even blind people who have never had any sight use co-speech gestures (2005), and deafblind people who use tactile (or 'hands-on') BSL can haptically

In recent film studies, Brannigan describes a ‘gesturology of cinema’ (2012), where ‘quotidian movement’ is observed and ‘subtly altered and re-mastered to render a form of movement practice that is neither purely mimetic nor as highly extracted as dance’ (Pollitt 2014:250). Pollitt applies this idea to Signart, arguing that “the gesturology of cinema resonates within contemporary Signart through ... a continuing intertextuality of cultural movement-images” (2014:250). This includes the construction of dense (full-body) images which ‘arise most readily from keen imitation of ... gestures and physical attitudes’ (2014:243). These aspects of signing tend to be most transparent to non-signers, indicating a shared knowledge of the social meanings attached to some movements. Gesture, says Signartist Peter Cook, is a ‘communication bridge’ (in Wolter 2006:152-153).

### ***Visual vernacular: an inter- and intra-cultural performance idiom?***

A useful term here is *visual vernacular*, often abbreviated to VV and signed -V-V- using the ASL alphabet.<sup>128</sup> The term was popularised by the American signing-deaf actor, Bernard Bragg, and, having enjoyed much popularity in Signart performances the United States and France, it has become increasingly popular in the UK recent years. It is ‘a defining creative feature’ of signed performance-texts (Wolter 2006:151); however, it can also be used in more everyday, inter-cultural contexts. Pollitt describes visual vernacular as ‘the relationship of the dense images of Signart to everyday physicalities, movements and gesture (drawn from both hearing and deaf cultures)’ (2014:244). At a workshop run by a BSL training centre, Signamic,<sup>129</sup> it was

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‘read’ a person’s physical demeanour as well as their signing. Napoli cites research on touch as the earliest form of communication between infant and parent (2014), and it does not seem a leap to include tactile gestures in the definition.

<sup>128</sup> There is no independent BSL sign for visual vernacular to date, nor is it signed .V.V. using the BSL alphabet.

<sup>129</sup> ‘The Visual Vernacular: making your BSL more visual.’ London. 8-10<sup>th</sup> August 2014.

described as a continuum at the far end of which lexical BSL begins. Some aspects of visual vernacular are specific to signing-deaf culture (e.g. the sophisticated use of classifiers), but some are shared between signing-deaf and speaking-hearing culture(s) (see Rotman 2002 for more on gesturologies). Fig. 3 shows my working understanding of these features.

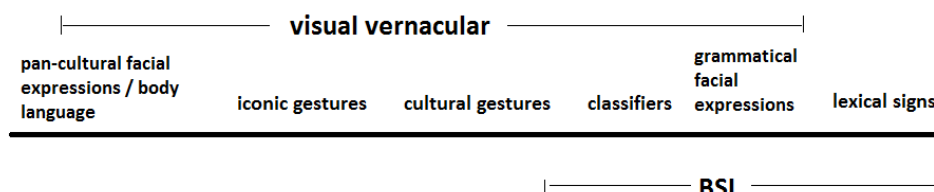


**Fig. 3** - A visual vernacular/BSL continuum (based on Signamic workshop)

By pan-cultural facial expressions and body language I mean those that could be described as universals or near-universals: attitudes of happiness, anger, *etc.* Iconic gestures could be described as mimes (e.g. miming yawning to show tiredness); cultural gestures are more culturally referential (tapping a watch to indicate time is running out).<sup>130</sup> Both iconic and cultural gestures may bleed into certain types of sign language classifiers: Dan Slobin *et al.* observe that classifier handshapes are often 'literal gestures of an activity, and it is only the factor of conventionalization ... that distinguishes sign from gesture' (2003:280), and Nyst's research shows that the different ways in which different sign languages are mapped onto the body appears to correspond to the way in which gesture is used in the host speaking-hearing culture, suggesting that sign languages extend and codify existing gesturologies (2013).

<sup>130</sup> Even iconic gestures are culturally referential: as Mauss points out, there is no natural way of using the body that is not culturally contingent (1973). Consider Italian regional hand gestures, discussed by Magar (2014).



In terms of signing-deaf biculturality, Andy Carmichael made the following observations about the role of visual vernacular performance-texts for those born to non-signing families:

Basically [...] you do something whereby people who don't know sign language can access the content. So it's deaf performances that are for everybody, right, rather than just for a deaf audience. Which is really important, because deaf people tend to come from hearing families ... and it's really nice if they can go along to something with their hearing family members and the hearing family members aren't completely left out. (AC:2014)

However, other facets of visual vernacular (more complex use of classifiers, grammatically-laden facial expressions, *etc.*) require sign-literacy: it is not, as Sutton-Spence points out, 'truly universal mime, because ... even some native signers feel challenged' by it (2014:459). Yet the sign-literacy involved is a transnational one, as classifiers and role-shift are features shared across sign languages; indeed, it is a feature of International Sign which Andy Carmichael described as:

an ever evolving, changing, instantaneous creole pidgin that's created by people who share a lot of common experiences and a lot of traditions and cultural artefacts, and whose language is highly visual and iconic, thereby allowing that communication to occur. [The] languages all share very similar grammar – there are differences in the grammar on a microscopic level, but on a macro level they essentially work the same way, you've just got different vocabulary items. So International Sign is that linguistic meeting place. (AC:2014)<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> International Sign is often used as a codified auxiliary language for international occasions; what Andy is describing is the more informal contact forms that emerge between signers of different sign languages. One of my most memorable experiences is coming across signing-deaf people in Iceland who were from Dubai, Amsterdam and Oslo respectively; we had no common sign language, but by maximising the shared iconic features we were able to converse to a level of complexity that would have been impossible between spoken languages.

He called visual vernacular ‘a performance version of International Sign’ and highlighted its utility in the transnational DEAFworld:

[VV] exploits and leverages that visibility of sign languages ... to make deaf theatre performances [...] [at] international gatherings accessible to all deaf people, deaf people from all countries can sit and all watch the same theatre show. They can go quite deep linguistically and everybody can stay on track, pretty much, if it's well done. (AC:2014)

The popularity of visual vernacular may be indicative of an impulse to communicate across borders, whether across intra-DEAFworld borders (strengthening transnational signing-deaf identity) or across the bicultural hearing/deaf border.

### ***Beyond language in performance***

Andy Carmichael's point about the linguistic depth available in visual vernacular contradicts one of the reasons that gesture has, like the related issue of iconicity, been downplayed in sign linguistics. The speaking-hearing world has a ‘history of the denigration of gesture’ (Mitchell 2006:xviii) which has impacted on the study of it in spoken languages; by extension, it has problematic connotations in relation to sign languages, already suffering from the legacy of being perceived as less complex than speech. The full-body expression of language complicates the question of what ‘counts’ as a sign and what ‘counts’ as a gesture and, in the study of performance-texts, the (perhaps arbitrary) boundaries between language and the performance of language are particularly unstable. The personation of character through posture and full-body behaviour, for example, can either be claimed as *sign* (e.g. by Kaneko and Sutton-Spence 2012), which overlooks the cross-over with gesturology and shared visual vernacular, or differentiated – and tacitly devalued – as *acting* (e.g. by Wolter 2006). Krentz's questions about Signartist Peter Cook's performance-texts articulate some of this discomfort:

We might even pose the thorny question of whether what Cook does is ASL poetry. In his publicity materials, Cook usually calls himself a performance artist rather than an ASL poet, noting that, in addition to ASL, his work includes visual vernacular, acting, and so forth. [...] Where, exactly, do we draw the line between what is and is not ASL? (Krentz 2001:320)

The question of which aspects of signing ‘count’ as sign language is perhaps a crucial one for linguists,<sup>132</sup> the borders between ‘language and “not-language”’ are fluid (Sutton-Spence 2014:458). Bienvenu describes impersonating others in storytelling as ‘delighting in the precision of our *language* to convey these characteristics accurately’ (1994:18, my emphasis), and the distinction seems particularly irrelevant in the study of signing as a corp-oral performance art. Krentz asserts that ‘clearly, a mime performance is not ASL’ (2001:320) – and, indeed, mime may not in and of itself be sign language, but Signartists and other performers ‘occupy sites of particular discursual freedom where all their resources [...] are exploited most fully’ (Pollitt 2014:120).

### **Positioning performance-texts: a signartistry continuum**

I suggest that the features of signed-oral performance-texts should be conceptualised along a continuum of signartistry (Fig. 4) so as to help describe and analyse them as corp-oral events. Loosely speaking, a performance-text which contains the more everyday aspects of creativity and performance – personation and characterisation in role-shift, the skilled use of classifiers – would sit at one end, and those with a higher instance of rarer, more complex and innovative elements sit at the other. The elements on the far left of the

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<sup>132</sup> It is worth noting that the two categories may be differentiated yet remain integrated: in Beal-Alvarez and Scheetz’s study using narrative retell to assess ASL fluency (2015:320-221), four of thirteen language components were defined as ‘acting out’ but were still designated as ‘fluent characteristics’ of ASL.

model would be more likely to apply to conversational storytelling: the addressor might slip in and out of character (low continuity); the visual imagery would be relatively simple to construct; the signer is more likely to use familiar metaphors or imagery. A highly poetic piece of Signart with multiple or hidden meanings, complex and rare construction and a consistent form would be placed on the far right of the continuum, but so too could a particularly clever but more informal performance-text devised as a 'game'.<sup>133</sup> It should be apparent that much of this relates to language register (Biber and Conrad 2009); however, I use signartistry because I see it as the enmeshed interaction of language, performance and register in a fully-embodied performance-text.

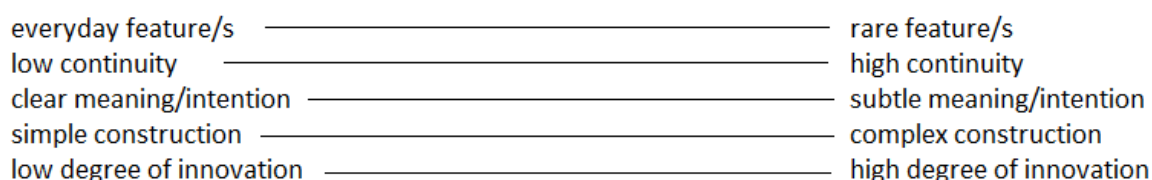


**Fig. 4 - Signartistry continuum**

For clarity, I have bundled some of the features of signartistry into thirds according to my impression of their divergence from everyday, unmarked discourse (Fig. 5); these bundles are not supported by evidence from performance or discourse analysis, and the continuum is not intended to actively quantify the extent of the signartistry used or to 'rank' particular performance-texts. It can, however, be a useful means to visualise the different affordances of signpower.

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<sup>133</sup> An example of this will be given later.

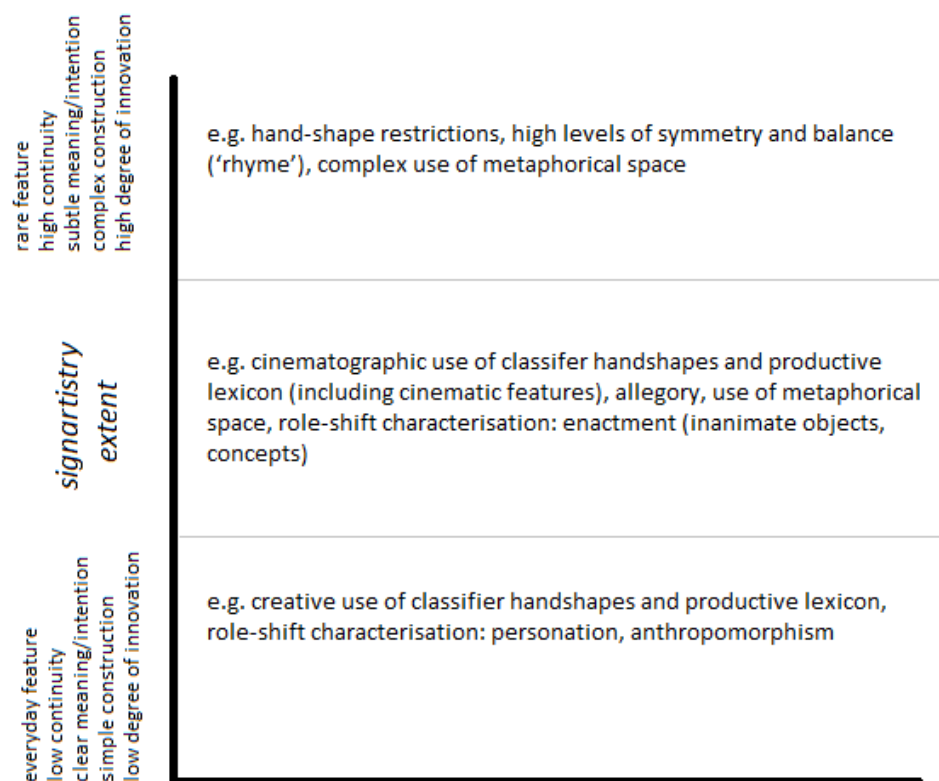


**Fig. 5 - Mapping features onto the signartistry continuum**

### **Modelling signpower**

Placing the signartistry continuum at right-angles to Wilson's performance continuum provides a model on which to position different styles and types of performance-text (Fig. 6), which enables us to conceptualise what signpower might mean in context of signed-oral traditional arts. Wilson's performance continuum is recast as an axis showing the intention and performance context of the performance-text. Again, it is possible to divide this axis into loose thirds: just as the horizontal bars in Fig. 5 are intended for generalised, non-specific grouping of common and less common features of signartistry, the vertical bars in Fig. 6 loosely differentiate between performance-texts which are:

- wholly conversational (left);

- somewhat consciously performative, e.g. impromptu but with a sense of occasion, or rehearsed but not conceived of as a cultural performance *per se* (centre);
- conceived of, rehearsed as, and consciously deployed as a cultural performance (right).

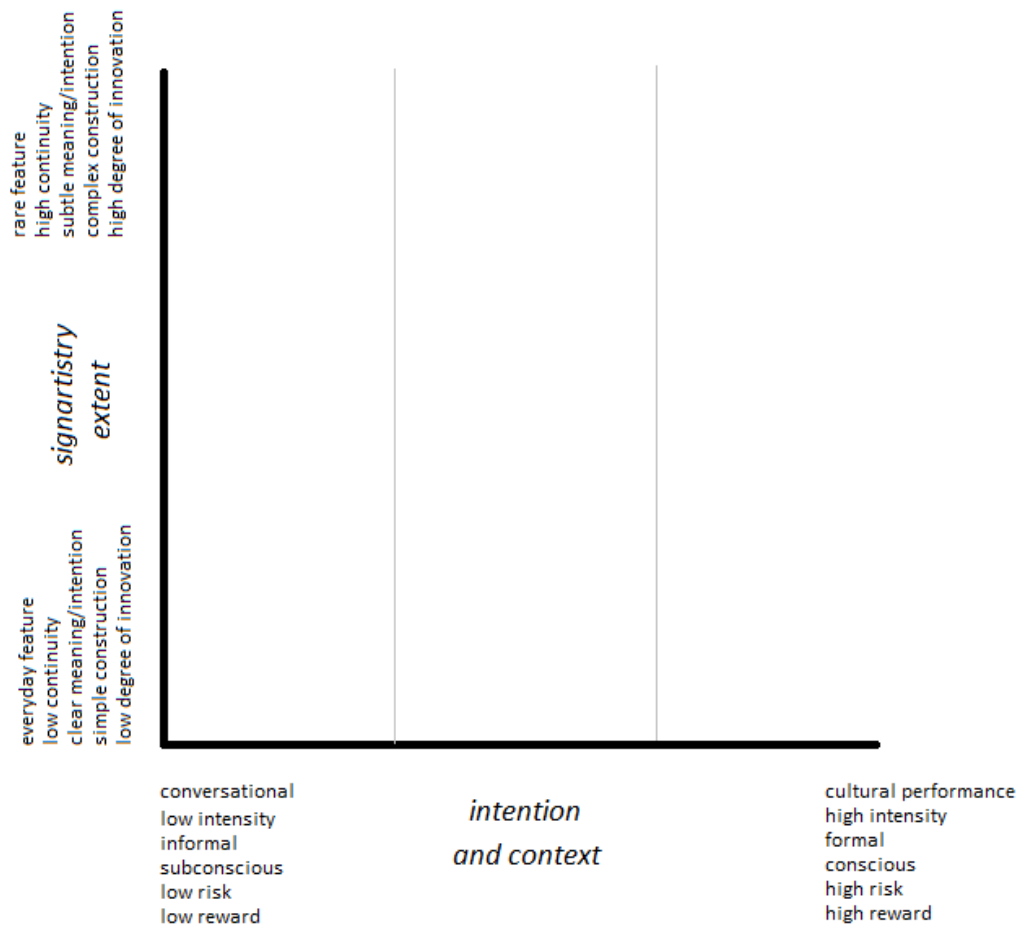


**Fig. 6** - Signpower model, with divisions on the intent/context axis

On the model, the base-line of each axis is the point at which the breakthrough into performance occurs: the point at which ordinary discourse becomes a storytelling event or performance-text. All performance-texts, whether a piece of Signart or a conversational anecdote, involve signartistry by degrees, and the more frequently and consistently that these features are

deployed (i.e. the further removed from everyday, un-marked discourse<sup>134</sup>), the 'higher' they rate for signartistry. A high or low extent of signartistry may appear at all points along the intention/context axis, but we would generally expect the highest signartistry ratings in formal, high intensity contexts. This model will be applied in the remainder of the chapter to help to contextualise the three case-studies.

### **Telling and performing biculturality: contextualising the case-studies**

Using this signpower model, this section is intended to help visualise the storytelling practices described in the following chapters: translations (Case-Study 1, Chapter Four), personal experience stories (Case-Study 2, Chapter Five), and Signart (Case-Study 3, Chapters Six and Seven). Each case-study is somewhat atypical of practices in DEAFspace, yet stands as an example of a traditional practice that has been framed for public consumption as part of a deaf public voice. Each case-study will be contextualised within its tradition by drawing comparisons to specific examples in the research literature and given by two of my interviewees, Andy Carmichael and Gary Quinn respectively. Key attributes demonstrating the bicultural, albeit asymmetrical, interplay between signing-deaf and speaking-hearing culture will be highlighted. To contextualise Case-study 1, I will discuss the interplay between languages and worlds when translating and adapting English-originating texts into BSL performance-texts. Following this is an examination of personal experience narratives which fulfil a community-building function,

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<sup>134</sup> There are examples of particular individuals employing a 'self-conscious style' of BSL even in conversational discourse: Schembri *et al.* have noted this phenomenon in their fieldwork, and associate it with 'attitudes related to linguistic purism and prescriptivism' (2013:147).

contextualising Case-study 2. Finally, to contextualise Case-study 3, platform Signart and its changing context will be discussed in more detail.

### ***Handling English in translation: contextualising Case-study 1***

Earlier in this chapter, we saw how both children and adults may absorb and assimilate the visual components of mainstream phonocentric culture into their creative signing. This section deals with an extension of this: translation from the majority spoken/written language (predominantly accessed through writing) undertaken for creative, artistic or rhetorical ends by signing-deaf people for a signing-deaf audience. Common examples of intra-community translations have been described in the American context by Bahan (2006:32-33) and the generalities can be also applied to Britain. Bahan does not make a firm distinction between translations and adaptations, suggesting that in an effective intra-community translation 'deaf cultural behaviour, values, or norms find their way into the work' (2006:32): new versions of a source text may be created which draw on the experiences, social reality and signartistry of the community. He cites fairy-tales from speaking-hearing culture as a core example, describing how the translator/storyteller may perform certain characters (i.e. heroes) as signing-deaf and others (i.e. villains) as speaking-hearing, 'to set up a dichotomy that reflects conflicts in the culture' (Bahan 2006:33, see also Sutton-Spence and Napoli 2010 and Chapters Six and Seven for Gary Quinn's version of 'The Three Little Pigs'). This sort of adaptation of a folk- or fairy-tale is part of a longstanding practice; however, the signed versions of the tales do not appear themselves to be considered 'traditional', reinforcing the point made earlier that a traditional story is one that resonates with personal experience. In interview, both Andy Carmichael and Jemina Napier suggested that, if a story is recognisably from speaking-hearing culture, it has less of an impact irrespective of how many cultural references



are made to the DEAFworld (JN/AC:2013): the scaffold is ‘not from deaf culture, it’s not from the deaf experience, and it’s not from within’ (AC:2014).

In addition to ambivalence about their speaking-hearing origins, the practice of translating carries complications due to the asymmetrical power relations between spoken/written languages and sign languages, and the reliance on the translator’s bilingual literacy and bicultural knowledge of the source culture. In both British and American signing-deaf communities, the language of majority culture, English, is particularly high prestige; consequently, having the bilingual capacity to understand and translate from English source-texts is a high prestige skill. Moreover, as Pollitt summarises, ‘since written English was taught primarily through the medium of speech, to prove oneself capable of poetry was to trumpet one’s bimodalism’ – although, by extension, to trumpet ‘one’s subaltern position in relation to the dominant hearing-speaking culture’ (2014:23).

A telling illustration of the dominance of English, culturally and linguistically, on signed-oral artforms is the BSL lexeme typically glossed as POETRY. POETRY is a cognate with TRANSLATE, indicative of the fact that the concept of *poetry* was inextricably tied, even in the minds of signing-deaf people, to signed translations of written English verse. Pollitt describes the BDA’s ‘beautiful signing’ poetry competitions, which assessed entrants based not on their original compositions but on their literal renderings of English texts into SSE – which, being closer to English, was a higher prestige discourse style conferring ‘inflated social status’ (2014:23).<sup>135</sup> Poetry-as-translation can be

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<sup>135</sup> The celebration of signing with a strong English/SSE influence is in direct contrast to the situation today, following the recognition of BSL as a language.

seen as elevating speaking-hearing culture to the detriment of signing-deaf culture.

In contrast to this, some intra-community translations aim to be as ‘un-English’ as possible. An interesting counterpoint to the dominance of Oralism in deaf schools (and an ironic one, given the close ties between the two) is the traditional tolerance for signing in churches, historically one of the few domains in which information (i.e. the gospel) was made visually accessible. Many church-based translations will have tended towards SSE; however, some translators will have prioritised reaching the ‘grassroots’ audience (i.e. those at the BICS end of the bilingualism continuum). In a moving description of this, Andy Carmichael recounts one of his ‘most abiding memories’: peeking around his parents’ bedroom door and watching his father, an elder and lay preacher in the Church of Scotland, practising translating sermons in the dressing table mirror. Andy’s father is strongly CALP in his bilingualism, and Andy described him as ‘not really the strongest BSL user [...] he signed but he was thinking in English’, yet, when using translation to spiritually connect with his congregation, his discourse style would change:

He’d be moving back up – right back up to main narrative level, so he would go *well I can’t translate that at this level, I can’t translate it at this level* [...] – so he’d read the whole story, right, and then go *right* [...] [When finished] it would be a story that was coherent and cohesive in British Sign Language [...] And when he delivered it in the church, I mean it was easily the most – [...] the most BSL that I’ve seen my Dad, [...] the most fluent, fluid, grammatically correct form of BSL that I would see him use, he certainly wouldn’t be like that in conversation. (AC:2013)

Andy describes the breakthrough to performance where his father’s signartistry lifts the target performance-text out of ordinary discourse. He also highlights the power that translated performance-texts could have within the

community: the memory filled him with pride, he said, because 'it demonstrates his civic responsibility and community responsibility very well, and how seriously he took it' (AC:2013).

The above examples are intra-community translations, yet translations also have a history in the service of the deaf public voice: they have been used to demonstrate the linguistic capacity of sign languages. A frequently cited example of this is the rapturous response of American Beat poets to ASL translations of their work. In Cohn's account of a workshop held in 1984 with Alan Ginsberg, Patrick Graybill is described as volunteering an ASL translation of a poem 'as if the whole of deaf culture depended on it' (1999:39). Ginsberg's enthusiastic response ("That's it! That's what I meant!") prompted Graybill to abandon 'his practice of working from English to ASL ... to compose poetry entirely in his native language' (Krentz 2001:317). The act of translation redressed the asymmetry of the two languages and modalities and engendered a cultural confidence – which, in turn, contributed to a movement *away* from translation.

Placing these examples on the signpower model (Fig. 7), a translation is unlikely to be placed in the left-most third of the intent/context axis, as it will have required preparation. Few would fit into the top third of the signartistry continuum unless the intention was to showcase the most innovative and modality-specific affordances of sign language. The BDA's 'beautiful signing' competitions would be likely to be placed lower on the signartistry axis, due to the tendency towards literal fidelity to the English source-text. They would, however, be placed on the far right of the intent/content axis, being platformed competition performances. Andy Carmichael's father's sermon could be placed in the third below Graybill's translation: on the intent/context axis, it was a platform performance but not a performance of signing-deaf culture *per*

se, and it is likely to fit in the middle third of the signartistry axis due to the allegorical nature of the source-text and due to the levels of continuity required for the performance-text to be effective. I tentatively place Case-study 1 in the bottom right of the model as a conscious and relatively formal inter-cultural performance. The signartistry features have high continuity due to the high risks and rewards, but otherwise are an exemplar of high-quality signartistry that does not deviate far from everyday language use; in so doing, it illustrates what BSL can bring to enhance a written source-text in performance.

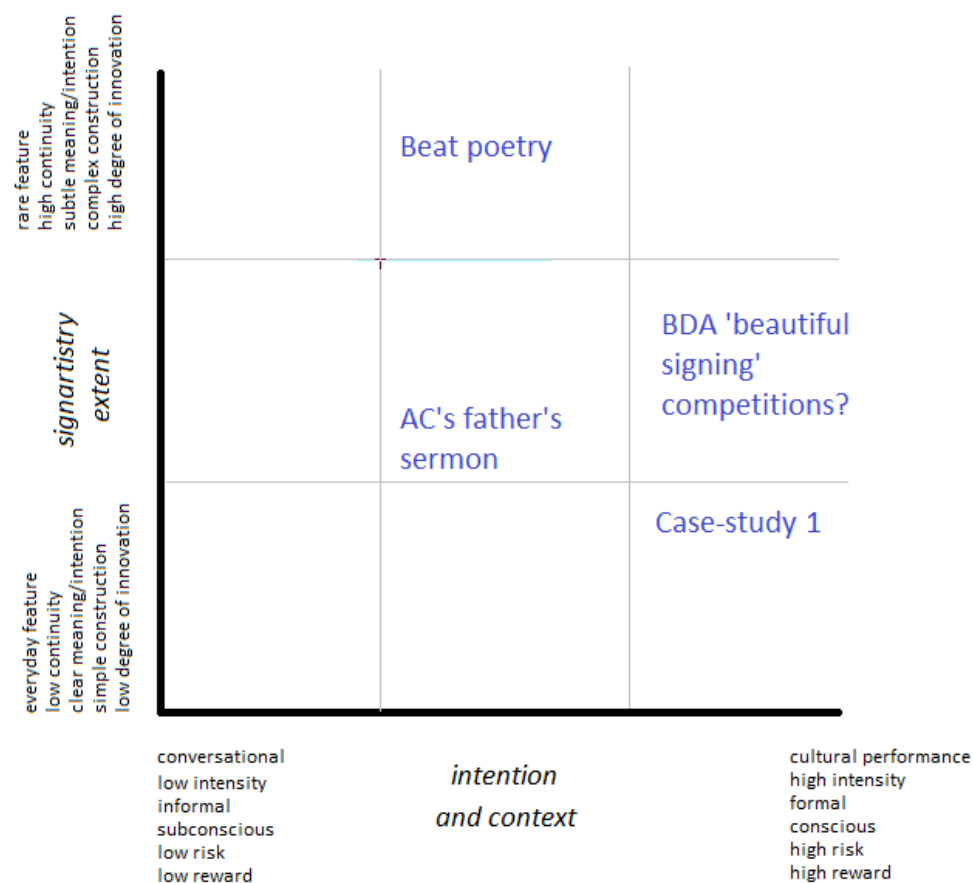


Fig. 7 - Situating translations on the signpower model

### ***Building the community through personal experience narratives: contextualising Case-study 2***

It has been argued that personal experience narratives may be considered more traditional a genre in signing-deaf culture than, for example, fairy-tales.<sup>136</sup> Certain experiences can be expected to be shared throughout the community, and it is as a means of community-building that signed personal experience narratives are best understood. A universal function of storytelling is to narrate the community to itself and thus into being (Niles 1999:77-79), and this has a particular resonance in minorities with horizontal bonds of cultural affiliation where the adage *the personal is political* acutely applies. In line with the conversionary nature of the community (Bechter 2008), an essential part of these narratives includes 'when and how [the individual] first learned sign language and met other deaf people' (Fjord 1996:64) and 'the awakening of the realisation that their deafness separates them from some of their human companions and brings them closer to others' (Frishberg 1988:158). Harmon (2008:54) observes that the sharing of life stories functions as a form of 'inter- and intracommunity networking' which draws on a 'relational matrix' of mutually recognisable experiences and known people and places. Jemina Napier couches this in terms of an exchange: '*you're like me, you tell me your story and ... I have a story like that to share, y'know, to have that affinity*' (JN:2013), and narrative networking is also enacted with hearing people in the wider signing community, whether PDFs like Jemina, or learners like myself:

It's about identity. [...] They wanna know your story, they wanna go [...] *how have you learnt to sign, what brought you to sign language?* [...]

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<sup>136</sup> It should be noted that the emphasis on particular story traditions in the study of spoken-oral traditions may be down to the prevalence of excellent examples of such tales in countries like Scotland, told by individuals who are 'recognised as being among the most masterful tradition-bearers of the late twentieth century' (Niles 1999:6), rather than there being something *more* traditional about them compared to other storytelling practices – including personal experience narratives. Dégh uses the personal experience narratives of immigrants as an example that is both highly individuated and highly traditional (1995).

People want to know your story and I think that it helps people to situate you. So they go *OK now I know how you fit*. (JN:2013)

For the majority of deaf children, the first encounter of sign language – and, by extension, *any* language – would historically take place at residential deaf schools. Deaf schools are thus ‘the source of tales of ... the joys of community’ which ‘contrast the isolation of a deaf child before discovering other deaf people and a shared language and the excitement about communication she or he experiences afterward’ (Fjord 1996:64). Equally, however, they are the source of tales of oppression and mistreatment, and ‘stories abound which encapsulate the deaf community’s view of the [hearing] [w]orld as hostile or mysterious’ (Frishberg 1988:158). Personal experience narratives may contain cautionary tales and strategies for dealing with the other world surrounding the ‘familiar and knowable ... signing and the Deaf domain’ (Frishberg 1988:158; Bahan 2006:26).<sup>137</sup> This other world can even include the deaf person’s own non-deaf family, with whom there may be no shared language and few shared life experiences. Cohn describes as ‘heartbreaking’ the many stories told at signing-deaf parties about hearing parents ‘who had no idea of their deaf children’s talents or their lives or their dreams’ (1999:42). Thus, while personal experience narratives are highly individuated, they have wide-reaching and culturally resonant applicability, as ‘many personal experiences and personal histories overlap ... and extend beyond the personal to become stories of the life of an entire culture’ (Bahan 2006:29).

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<sup>137</sup> That personal experience stories contain ‘messages for ways of behaving and strategies for surviving’ (Bahan 2006:26) is not unique to signing-deaf culture: Niles observes that ‘each personal experience narrative has a lesson at its core’ (1999:65). However, he goes on to state that ‘only rarely does this message announce itself’; I posit that the signed-oral personal experience narratives are overtly didactic.

That the personal can extend into the life of the entire culture can also be applied to unique experiences that are seen as allegorically representative of signing-deaf experience. An example is the manner in which the personal achievement of Gerry Hughes, the first signing-deaf solo yachtsman to circumnavigate the globe,<sup>138</sup> was adopted by the local and international signing-deaf community. Hughes, a stalwart of the Glaswegian signing-deaf community, was already considered a community leader due to his involvement in Mary Brennan's BSL research and his role as a deaf education campaigner; his solo circumnavigation was avidly followed by domestic and international signing-deaf communities through websites and social media.<sup>139</sup> Signed videos and written comments were posted on Facebook, expressing emotional investment in his journey, emphasising the idea of DEAF CAN .D.O. – a mantra in support of signing-deaf people's capabilities. The community participation reiterated bonds of language, experience and aspiration, and illustrates community 'ownership' of individual achievements. Hughes' fulfilment of a personal ambition found cultural resonance as a metaphor for the struggles encountered by signing-deaf people when attempting to achieve their potential, and for signing-deaf redemption through perseverance, courage and self-belief.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-22448872> *Gerry Hughes becomes first deaf person to sail round the world* 8<sup>th</sup> May 2013 [accessed 13/07/13]

<sup>139</sup> Facebook page: Gerry Hughes – Quest III - <https://www.facebook.com/GerryHughesQuestIII?fref=ts> (4,037 Likes on 29/09/14); Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/GerryHughesQuestIII/> (2,966 members on 29/09/14); fundraising website: [www.gogogogerry.com](http://www.gogogogerry.com) [last accessed 13/07/13; now offline].

<sup>140</sup> The fan websites emphasised the typicality of Hughes' early school experiences, including his struggles with acquiring literacy, entreating readers from deaf schools to 'please tell the children about a deaf boy who struggled with learning to read and write until he was 15 years old. But, he didn't give up. ... Tell them that they too can achieve their dreams.' <http://www.gogogogerry.com/gerry/> [accessed 13/07/13; now offline].

Andy Carmichael gave a vivid description of Hughes' impromptu narration of his voyage to two hundred signing-deaf people in a pub, two hours after making landfall. This provides a useful point of comparison to the more typical personal experience narratives in terms of intent/context, but exemplifies the point that the most personal narratives may also be described as to some extent traditional. Hughes' performance-text was entirely new and presumably unrehearsed, but he was enacting the storytelling tradition of a 'smooth signer' taking the floor to recount personal experience or signlore material (Bahan 2006). This style could be designated as quasi-conversational, yet successfully holding the floor shifts the performance context rightwards on the continuum. The personal and communal significance of Hughes' safe return will have made the event a conscious cultural performance to some extent – the everyman hero had achieved the extraordinary. Andy described the intense energy and atmosphere of the performance context: 'the whole place was completely locked onto him and he is such an amazing exponent of sign narrative [...] just a beautiful narrative signer' (AC:2013).<sup>141</sup> Hughes appears to have deployed cinematographic signartistry to great effect:

when you watched him sign the contours of the waves and the boat, you – I mean, you're quite literally transported into the experiences [...] [I] was watching it and thinking – [...] *fuck I don't know how I'd interpret that, I don't know how I'd even try to put English words to that.* [...] He was magnificent, it was a real privilege to watch him do that. (AC:2013)

Despite the one-off and highly context-specific nature of the event, this could be considered a highly traditional storytelling mode within signing-deaf communities.

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<sup>141</sup> Gerry Hughes' capabilities as a storyteller are well-known: his involvement in the BSL Project was predicated on his BSL storytelling skills, and his storytelling capabilities are frequently remarked upon anecdotally and were mentioned on the online fan pages – <http://www.gogogogerry.com/gerry/> [accessed 13/07/13; now offline].



Personal experience performance-texts could feature almost anywhere on the signpower model (Fig. 8). Autobiographical Signart (e.g. *Achievement* by Gary Quinn, discussed in Case-study 3) is likely to involve complex signartistry so as to mark it as different to informal conversational storytelling. Gerry Hughes' narration would appear to sit in the centre of the model. The bulk of personal experience narratives tend to cluster in the bottom left third of the signpower model: they tend to be informal, of low risk, reward and intensity, and to use signartistry closest to ordinary discourse which can be inconsistently deployed (character may be broken, for example). Those in Case-study 2 would probably be plotted in the centre bottom of the signartistry model: they are quasi-conversational, although delivered to camera as part of a conscious contribution to the public deaf voice. They tend to deploy everyday signartistry, with variable consistency in terms of characterisation. As such, they are to some extent typical of signed-oral storytelling in DEAFspace.

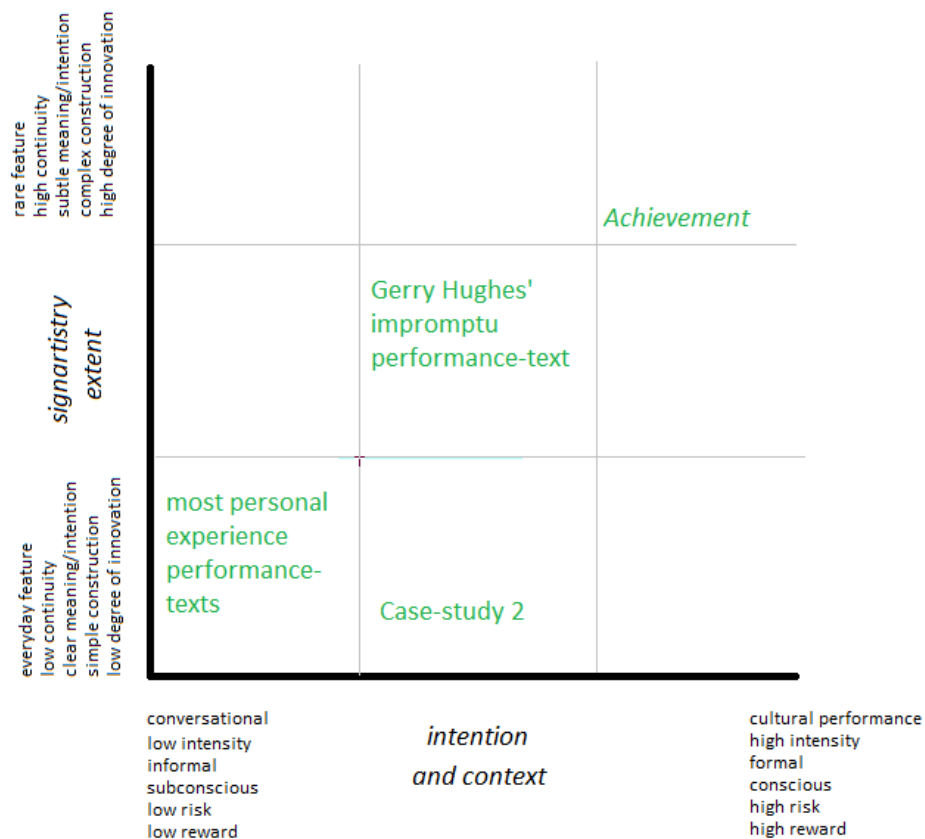


Fig. 8 - Situating personal experience narratives on the signpower model

### Signart on and off stage: contextualising Case-study 3

The most common genre of performance-text, the personal experience narrative, is typically (although not exclusively) an informal, conversational and low intensity storytelling tradition deploying everyday signartistry; at the other end of Wilson's performance continuum is platform storytelling, to which I am applying Pollitt's term Signart. Signart is the conscious, active deployment of signartistry to produce a bounded, culturally resonant performance-text, whether for an intra-cultural audience or an inter-cultural one (i.e. a mixed or speaking-hearing audience). It has no set form, but ranges from tightly structured 'sonatas' (Pollitt 2014:311-313) to 'decentred and eccentric' collaborative and interactive performance-texts (Peters 2006:79). A Signart performance-text is, in my interpretation, defined by *intent*, not by

quality: it is as possible to have badly crafted and performed Signart as it is to have a culturally resonant conversational anecdote delivered with a high degree of linguistic, artistic and performative skill. Nor is Signart defined by the extent of signartistry involved, as this may run the whole gamut of the signartistry continuum from everyday anthropomorphism (the continuity of which is likely to be very high) to the inclusion of complex and innovative features. Fig. 9 suggests that most Signart would cluster at the top end of the signartistry continuum, diagonally opposite the most likely position for personal experience narratives. There would certainly, however, be Signart performance-texts in the bottom third, using less rarified signartistry but with a high degree of continuity; we would expect high signartistry in formal or culturally significant settings (i.e. platform performance-texts).

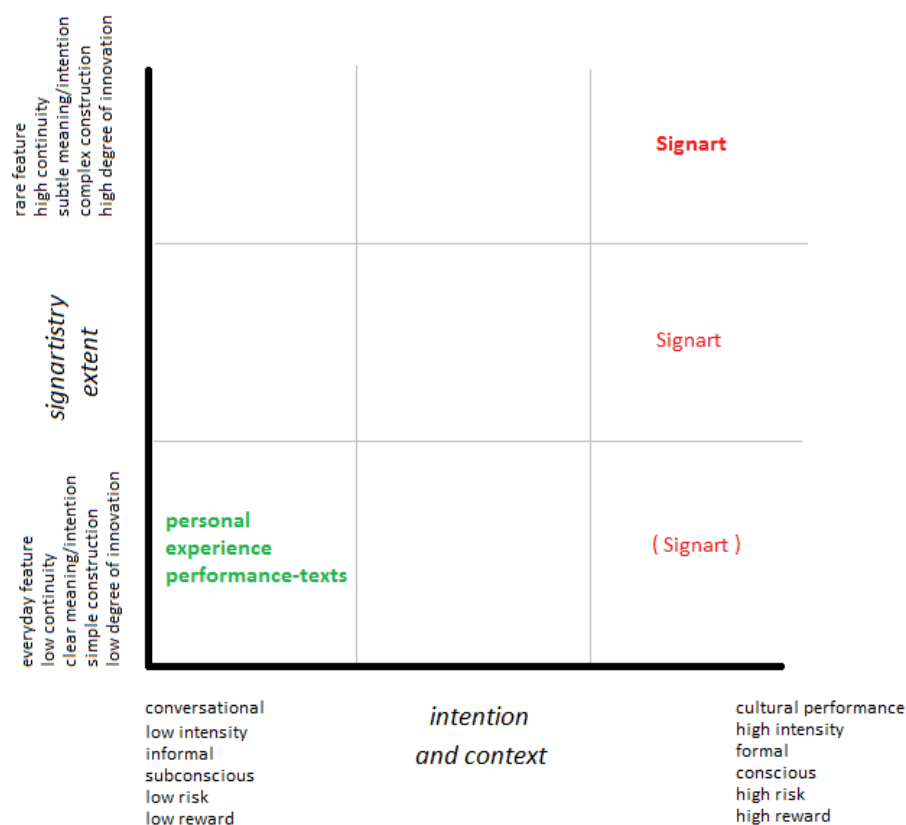


**Fig. 9**  
*Personal experience narratives and Signart clusters on the signpower model*

The style and extent of signartistry varies according to a particular performance-text's aim, function, context and audience. Autobiographical Signart, for example, would need to be markedly different from everyday signartistry to be conceived of and received as Signart, given the ubiquity of personal experience narratives in signing-deaf communities. Returning to the earlier point about the instability of genre distinctions, ABC stories in ASL (in which the handshapes of the one-handed fingerspelling alphabet are used in strict sequential order as classifiers) are variously described as signlore or as story traditions; a potential equivalent in BSL is the existence of performance-texts based on a single-letter of the BSL alphabet. I have witnessed a 'G' story<sup>142</sup> in the context of a BSL workshop, where – although it had clearly been rehearsed and required a lot of skill to successfully execute – the performance-text was described as a game and was used as an exercise to teach classifiers. I suggest that the same performance-text would be accepted as Signart if it had been conceived of and performed as such. Conversely, it seems likely that Paul Scott's Signart performance-texts *Acronym* and *Home*,<sup>143</sup> in which the handshape of each fingerspelled letter of the words .C.A.T., .D.E.A.F. and .H.O.M.E. are signs or classifiers which create code-blending bilingual acrostics, would be accepted as highly skilled but informal games in a different context. Fig. 10 attempts to indicate this.

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<sup>142</sup> i.e. using only the fist (the handshape of the BSL letter G; see Fig. ii at the start of the thesis) to create a narrative. Signs and classifiers involved include BEAR, BROTHER, BLACK, MOTORBIKE, ENGINE, OPEN-GARAGE-DOOR, HEAD-NOD *etc.*

<sup>143</sup> These can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/signmetaphor> [accessed 14/01/15]

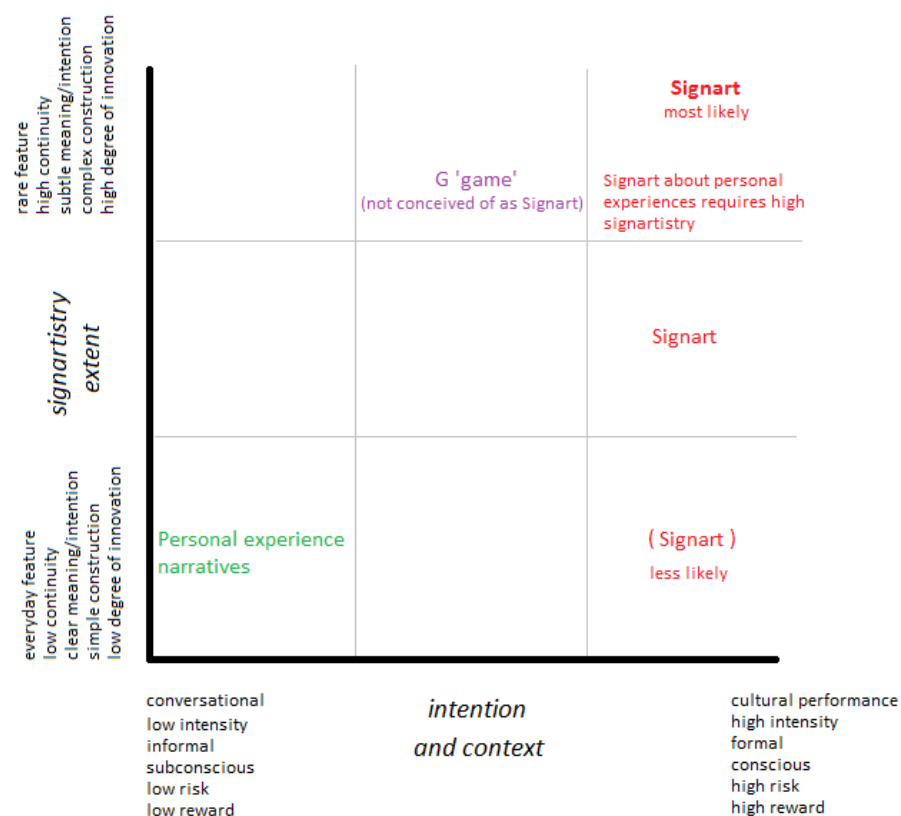


**Fig. 10** - *Situating Signart and other examples on the signpower model*

To further contextualise Case-study 3, it is necessary to reiterate a point alluded to in Chapter One: that contemporary Signart in Britain is undergoing a something of a shift in context, style and reception. The ASL literary movement brought about particular expectations about the form that performance-texts would take; this was itself influenced by the preoccupations of sign language linguists, as has been pointed out by Cohn (1999) and Pollitt (2014). In Britain, the beginnings of inter-community platform Signart in the style of the ASL movement can be attributed to Dorothy (Dot) Miles (1931-1993), a highly influential and strongly bilingual practitioner. Originally producing signed versions of her English-composed poetry, Miles developed an idiosyncratic style in which she created and performed in ASL, BSL and bilingually; her oeuvre has been analysed in depth by Sutton-Spence (2005).

Miles is often designated the 'originator' of BSL poetry,<sup>144</sup> but this should be understood as relating to Signart in the style of the ASL literary movement and popularised through television appearances, and building on a longer tradition of signed-oral Signart practices. Pollitt describes this as follows:

[Signart] would be practised, often spontaneously, at deaf community gatherings ... including occasional impromptu performances in the bars and salons of local deaf clubs. Signartists would usually be members of that community and those with a wider reputation for proficiency might be expected to exhibit their skills on request when visiting other deaf clubs or communities (both nationally and internationally). In this respect Signart was regularly practised by only a few, although an open invitation to membership of their ranks was always understood as extended and many would try this means of expression when they felt they had something to contribute. (2014:344)

She draws a useful differentiation between genteel and vernacular Signart traditions; the genteel tradition (to which the BSL lexeme POETRY, the cognate of TRANSLATE, applies) is, she says, the 'more highly regarded, language-dominant' type which is 'more readily comparable with the poetry of English language' (2014:23) and which has received the most scholarly attention. Conversely, vernacular Signart is defined as "an alternative, but marginalised and historically derided tradition ... which is at least as long as the more genteel 'poetry' tradition, and perhaps even predates it" (Pollitt 2015b).<sup>145</sup> She describes it as

a form of creative sign language use – crafted and considered – ... [that] has no recourse to any written language at any point in its ideation,

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<sup>144</sup> Ladd in Pollitt (2014:24); Donna Williams called her the 'inventor of BSL poetry' on the BBC programme *See Hear*, Series 34: Episode 25, 4<sup>th</sup> February 2015.

<sup>145</sup> Pollitt recalls watching filmed footage of deaf individuals recalling such practices as far back as the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century from the late Dr. Mary Brennan's personal archive (2015b), but again the absence of records is a barrier to research; there were no equivalents of 'beautiful signing' competitions to celebrate less genteel performance-texts.

creation, performance or reception and does not yield gently to translation. (2015b)

Part of the reason for its resistance to translation is that it leverages the more image-dominant affordances of sign languages that were outlined earlier in this chapter, including the visual vernacular.<sup>146</sup> Not being ‘poetry’ in the genteel sense, it received little recognition *as art* within British signing-deaf communities due to the entrenched devaluation of both BSL and signing-deaf culture, although it might instead find voice through what Pollitt calls parlour games (Pollitt 2014:24) or as part of vaudeville-style intra-community theatre.

The genteel and vernacular Signart traditions should not be seen as a dichotomy, however, as individual Signartists may produce performance-texts in either style, or ‘code-switch’ between them in a single performance-text (Pollitt 2015b; also H. Bauman *et al.* 2006:11). Common themes include ‘resistance, oppression, and deeply felt occupation by others’ (Padden 2006:237; see also Sutton-Spence 2005, 2010). Bechter argues that a central concern is the oblique depiction of ‘deaf lives’, and the pull between being subject to constraints and and ‘penetrat[ing] and master[ing]’ them (2008:63). The ‘emotive, heartfelt, deafhood’ characteristics of Signart (Pollitt 2015b) is discernible in the loan sign from ASL that appears gradually to be replacing the BSL sign POETRY(/TRANSLATE): an upwardly opening hand is placed at the heart, which has been glossed variously as ‘EXPRESSION-FROM-THE-HEART’ (Pollitt 2014:27) or ‘BLOSSOMING-FROM-THE-HEART’ (Pollitt 2015b).<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> See Pollitt (2014) for in-depth analysis of these features.

<sup>147</sup> The ASL sign is based on the lexeme EXPRESSION and was itself a response to the older, phonocentric sign for POETRY, which was based on the sign MUSIC/SONG (H. Bauman *et al.* 2006:4). Pollitt considers this lexeme to be most applicable to the vernacular Signart tradition, although she cautions that, just as POETRY/TRANSLATE does not capture the embodied and visual affordances of the artform, EXPRESSION-FROM-THE-HEART

The traditional DEAFspace performance contexts of Signart (i.e. schools, deaf clubs) are being supplemented – arguably replaced – with online DEAFspace; H. Bauman *et al.* also describe Signart performances as a ‘type of postmodern bardic phenomenon’ in their use of digital platforms (2006:8). The capacity of the Internet to disseminate signed-oral artistry to a wider audience (both signing-deaf and speaking-hearing) extends the comparison that Krentz (2006) has drawn between the video camera and the printing press. Filmed performance-texts, those on the Internet and the burgeoning platform performance scene all contribute to the deaf public voice in enabling overt and conscious cultural performances to reach a non-deaf audience. However, as ‘speaking-hearing consumers vastly outnumber Deaf ones and have more buying power’, their preferences and feedback may then influence the content, form and function of the performance-texts (Krentz 2006:58; see Bahan 2006:34-46 for an excellent overview of these issues).

Although the BSL platform scene is less developed than in the USA, DVD collections and public performances of BSL-originating material are gradually increasing and reaching wider audiences. This can be interpreted as making a positive contribution to the deaf public voice in showing the language’s aesthetic as well as practical capabilities. Yet the public consumption of signed artforms has also prompted the ambivalence in Britain that Bahan records in the US. There is some concern about cultural appropriation by those outwith the community; one example is the dissatisfaction frequently expressed on social media that signed songs that are translated, produced and uploaded to the Internet by non-fluent signers may

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‘obviates [the] craft and careful structuring ... After all, anyone can gush from the heart’ (2015b).



receive adulation from non-fluent or non-signing audiences,<sup>148</sup> whereas fluent signing by deaf people is derided.<sup>149</sup> Moreover, the increase in Signart in the public domain has an impact on the style of the performance-texts on offer. Platform performance contexts privilege performers who are comfortable performing on public stages to mixed audiences; the majority appear to be young and predominantly white men. Pollitt records Signartist John Wilson's disappointment that performance contexts appear to be shifting Signart away from being a 'community-anchored open artform' towards 'staged, individualised artistic performance' (Pollitt 2014:76). He says:

The performance is taking over. [...] It's an attitude of satisfying demand on-the-spot. But poems aren't ready-made like that. (Quoted in translation by Pollitt 2014:399)<sup>150</sup>

John Wilson's comment on the 'performance' taking over chimes with a criticism made by Tessa Padden about the apparent dominance of performance-texts which are closest to a transcultural visual vernacular and are often more transparent to non-signers. Tessa described visual vernacular as a 'hyper' performance style and dismissed it as 'a fad', attributing its popularity to the ego of individual performers and the reception of speaking-hearing audiences:

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<sup>148</sup> Bahan notes that 'interpreted songs do not seem to be particularly popular with Deaf audiences' (2006:47 n13).

<sup>149</sup> These concerns seem justified given the power imbalance between the signing-deaf and speaking-hearing worlds: at the same time that the parents of deaf children are 'discouraged from teaching their children how to sign' (Hauser and Kartheiser 2014), speaking-hearing parents are encouraged to teach their non-deaf infants 'babysign' due to spurious claims made about the impact on cognitive development (see Johnston, Durieux-Smith & Bloom 2005 and Kirk, Howlett, Pine and Fletcher 2013. I am grateful to Dr Emily Nordmann for discussions on this subject).

<sup>150</sup> I interpret Wilson's definition of 'performance' as being about public spectacle ('I've seen a lot of private recitations from far better poets, but they won't perform,' he goes on to say), not in the sense of performance being 'the pivotal force that drives the [signed-oral] text' (Rose 2006:145).

I feel VV is something like taking on a fashion and getting carried away with it, being silly. [...] Most hearing people think it's wonderful. [...] When I watch all the hearing people around us raving about it and thinking it's great [...] I feel it's embarrassing and OTT ... (TP:2014)<sup>151</sup>

Part of this criticism seems to be directed at the performance contexts and the sense that the Signartists are pandering to a non-deaf audience. The issues of intra-cultural or inter-cultural audiences, the sites of production and medium of dissemination, and the perceived ownership and authenticity of BSL material are not easily resolved and are likely to become increasingly complex in the digital age.

The subject of Case-study 3, a Signart group called Visual Virus, is typical of many of platform performances in the public domain, although it appears to be the only example in Scotland currently. All of Visual Virus's performance-texts would be placed in the Signart column of the signartistry model (i.e. far right, being on stage to a paying audience), and most run the full continuum of signartistry, so it seems unnecessary to plot each performance-text individually on the model. However, it is useful here to provide a preliminary illustration of some of the signartistry features typically employed in Signart, to provide a grounding understanding ahead of Chapters Six and Seven; the following example also demonstrates the difference between Signart and the impromptu (but signartistry-rich) performance by Gerry Hughes in the pub. Following Hughes' return, Gary Quinn was asked to create a performance-text in his honour for the Quest III Ball (Glasgow, 25<sup>th</sup> May 2013), and produced *Gerry Hughes*.<sup>152</sup> The following

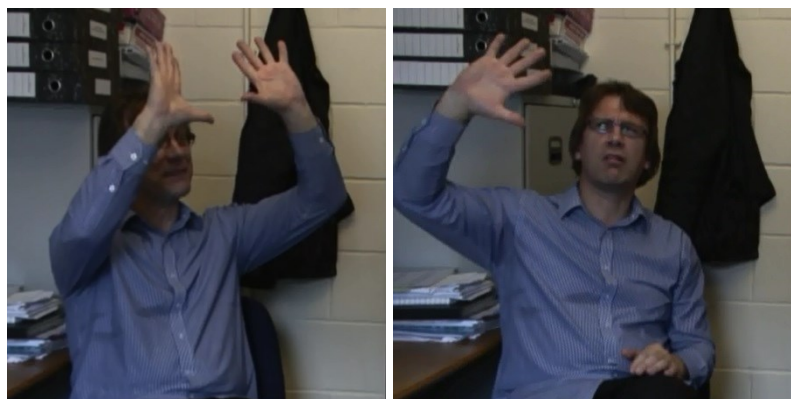
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<sup>151</sup> However, Tessa Padden did go on to cite among her preferred Signartists several whose style has been described as strongly visual vernacular (e.g. Guy Bouchaveau and Peter Cook).

<sup>152</sup> *Gerry Hughes* has subsequently been performed on a number of occasions, including Visual Virus's performance *Through New Eyes 2* (Scottish Storytelling Centre, Edinburgh, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2014), but is not currently available in the public domain in its full form. A three

material is taken from my interview with Gary Quinn (GQ:2013) in which he described some of the signartistry he used.

The full performance-text is fifteen minutes long and follows Hughes' biography: he is depicted as a child with a dream, which is placed above and in front of him (Fig. 11a). Later, as he begins his voyage, a cloud encroaches on the space tagged earlier as the dream (Fig. 11b).



**Figs. 11a & b**

*Gerry Hughes' dream and the dark cloud encroaching (Gary Quinn)*

The handshape depicting the cloud (open palm with splayed fingers) then shifts to represent the Five Capes which must be passed in order to qualify for a full circumnavigation. This is never explicitly expressed, but relies on the context-specific knowledge of the intra-community audience. Gary's index finger traces the path of the boat past the five capes (Fig. 12), then 'slices off' the hand which has represented both the five capes and the dark cloud obscuring his dream of completion (Figs. 13a & b): the two meanings are embedded in the one handshape.

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minute excerpt has been the subject of a work of translation art undertaken during Pollitt's residency at the Scottish Poetry Library 2014; see Pollit *et al.* 2014 and <http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/connect/blog/signed> [13/12/14].



**Fig. 12** - *Passing the Great Capes* (Gary Quinn)



**Figs 13a & b** - *Slicing off the hand* (Gary Quinn)

The depiction of Hughes' boat is a simple illustration of the discursive shift into a signartistry register. Instead of using the classifier for VEHICLE to show the manoeuvring of the boat in space, Gary retains the iconic lexeme (Fig. 14) and treats the literal image of the boat figuratively and quasi-anthropomorphically. We see the boat squeezing around a point of land (Figs. 15a & b), becoming skinny when it runs out of fuel (Fig. 16a), then fat once it is filled up (Fig. 16b).<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> In the boat's fat incarnation, the handshape could be interpreted as carrying the additional connotation of cradling, appropriate for the dangerous voyage being described.



**Fig. 14** – *The boat (Gary Quinn)*



**Fig. 15a & b** – *Squeezing round the cape (Gary Quinn)*

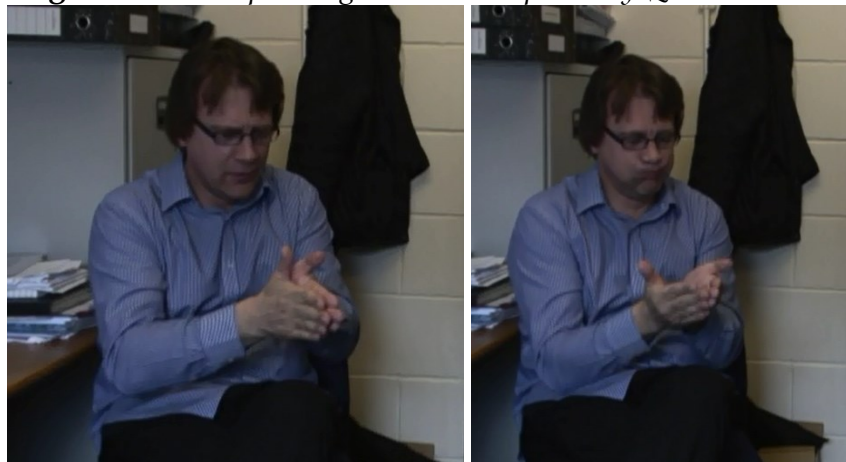


**Fig. 16a & b** – *Fattening up the boat (Gary Quinn)*

Gary 'breaks' the image of the boat by moving his hands apart, yet because the hands metonymically stand for the boat, the boat is invested with all the hands' capabilities. When the boat capsizes, Gary shakes invisible droplets from his fingers (Fig. 17a) and wipes his palms (Fig. 17b) before reuniting them

into the boat shape. The anchoring of the boat to Gary's body heightens the human resonance of the story and reflects the emotional investment of the community in Gerry Hughes the man and Gerry Hughes the hero. The man is also the boat is also the journey.



**Figs. 17a & b** – *After capsizing* (Gary Quinn)

### **Looking back and looking forward**

The aim of this chapter was three-fold: to familiarise the reader with the role and typical attributes of storytelling in signing-deaf communities; to provide an overview of the scholarship about how signed-oral performance-texts have been conceptualised; and to contextualise the three case-studies in relation to extant practices within the community. Sign languages have particular affordances that are well-suited to creative storytelling (role-shift necessitates impersonation and classifier handshapes enable dense descriptions without the storyteller needing to know the 'right word') and the significance of storytelling – for entertainment, for community building, for transmitting worldview knowledge – has been attested to in the research literature.

Writing within a discipline concerned with traditional arts, it has been necessary to highlight that the distinctive construction of signing-deaf communities – its horizontal lines of transmission, the impact of institutional audism – may produce traditional arts that do not ‘look like’ traditional arts from speaking-hearing culture. Indeed, the problematic term *traditional* has a different weighting: arguably due to the conversionary nature of the community, the personal is felt to be the traditional, as each person is dealing individually with the same legacy of being signing-deaf in an audist world. Furthermore, in form signed-oral performance-texts more closely resemble cinematography, drama or even performance art than spoken-oral folktales. To prepare the reader for the case-studies, I have explored some of these key features of signed-oral storytelling performance that least resemble spoken or written norms, especially cinematographic constructions and the visual vernacular. In this way, this chapter is intended as a ‘bridge’ into some aspects of signed-oral expression.

Scholarship pertaining to signed-oral performance-texts has typically favoured literary analysis into which ‘phonocentric ideology ... [is] inextricably woven’ (H. Bauman 2006:98); similarly, it has been influenced by early sign linguists’ emphasis on arbitrariness over iconicity as a feature of sign languages. The ramifications of this have been explored, with *Signart* accepted as an alternative to genre-specific terms. I argue in support of scholars who see differentiating between ‘language’ and ‘not-language’ in signed-oral expression as unnecessarily undervaluing the performance aspects of the artistry. The performer uses the tools available to them to produce an effective performance-text: mime is not sign language, but

sometimes sign language can be mime.<sup>154</sup> This blurring of distinctions ‘reveal[s] some of the international or universal communicative possibilities for humans’ ability to use their bodies to show concepts’ (Sutton-Spence 2014:459); ultimately, language-in-performance is always more than the sum of its parts.

The question of international communicative possibilities raises fascinating questions about the fluid interface between the DEAFworld and the speaking-hearing habitus. I accept the interpretation of the performance style *visual vernacular* as a communicative continuum spanning both signing-deaf and speaking-hearing gesturologies: some aspects are shared, but are conventionalised in signed expression to the extent that the non-signer requires sign-literacy – or, perhaps more accurately, body-literacy. Signing-deaf people’s state of being *of* but *apart from* the majority culture necessitates engagement with inter-cultural visual vernacular on a daily basis; they could be described as body-literate *par excellence*. Other bicultural interplay occurs in the borrowing of visual imagery from speaking-hearing popular culture, especially film, and in the tension between high-prestige English and low-prestige BSL, found in the shifting interpretation of what constitutes ‘beautiful signing’.

This chapter sets the scene for the case-studies, each of which is an outward-facing version of an existing practice. To help the non-signing reader conceptualise these case-studies in context, I devised a signpower model based on an axis of intent and context, and an axis of signartistry – my term for the enmeshed combination of language, performance and register that lifts discourse into a performance-text. I differentiate features – but do not

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<sup>154</sup> Consider the descriptions of Lee Robertson’s gesturological performances in *Solar System* and *Who Sorry!* in Chapter Seven.



hierarchise them – based on the degree to which they feature in everyday discourse; role-shift is an everyday feature, for example, whereas a handshape restriction is not, yet both can occur at any point on the intent/context axis. Through mapping a series of described performance-texts onto the model, it is hoped that the reader has a sense of where each case-study fits in relation to other signed-oral practices.

Furthermore, each case-study's practice is infused with expressions of biculturality. Personal experience narratives are, as in all cultures, the most ubiquitous narrative form, but have particularly high cultural currency in signing-deaf communities due to their minority status and conversionary make-up. Individuated but shared experiences about being signing-deaf in a speaking-hearing world seem to some extent to be communally owned. They are a crucial means through which worldview and signing-deaf cultural knowledge gets transmitted, and will be explored in Chapter Five. The recognised tropes of personal experiences are often brought to the fore in Signart performances, with Signartists potentially playing a bardic role in distilling shared ideas about what it is to be signing-deaf into cultural performance-texts; Signart will be examined in Chapters Six and Seven. First, however, we consider translations – a form self-evidently reliant on bilingualism, but also highly bicultural in that translators frequently incorporate signing-deaf worldview and signed-oral storytelling norms into the target performance-text. This will be examined in the following chapter, where the translator in Case-study 1 performs stories from spoken Scots tradition using the signartistry of a signed-oral storyteller. He uses his signartistry (which is an extension of everyday signing, in that role-shift characterisation is central) to show what signed-oral storytelling can bring to a spoken-oral folktale, two sides of the same corp-oral practice.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ***Let them dig where we stand: translated stories from Scottish spoken-oral tradition***

*The whole man is narrating, not only with the modulation of his voice but with the variable compass of his glance, his expression, his movements and his behaviour.*

István Sándor (1967:308)

Sándor's words about spoken-oral storytelling reiterate my point that oral traditions should be understood as fundamentally corp-oral and that, for speaking-hearing people, 'speech is nothing more than the leading art' (1967:208). This chapter concerns a storyteller-translator whose 'leading art' is whole body signartistry, and seeks to show how a signed performance-text differs from a spoken one even when the source is the same. The source is material from Scots spoken-oral tradition, collected by and are held in SSSA; as such the translation is both inter-cultural (i.e. speaking-hearing/signing-deaf) and intra-cultural (i.e., in this case, *Scottish* speaking-hearing/*Scottish* signing-deaf). Two spoken Scots audio recordings, a folktale and a personal experience narrative by the Scottish Traveller storyteller, Stanley Robertson (1940-2009), were placed – quite literally – in the hands of a signing-deaf translator, Frankie McLean (FM:2012), and later published as a DVD (Appendix 1.1). If signing-deaf biculturality concerns the porous border between the two ways of being in the world, an overt transition across this border is an effective first step for exploring it.

The subject of Case-study 1, then, is a series of translations undertaken as part of a collaborative knowledge exchange project run by Heriot-Watt University entitled BSL:UPTAKE.<sup>155</sup> Its remit was to ‘improve dialogue and knowledge exchange between the world of politics, public policy and the Deaf community’ (quoted in Power and Power 2010:16). Involving both signing-deaf and non-deaf participants, BSL:UPTAKE performs a bicultural blending of perspectives from both the majority and minority cultures. The project was in and of itself a bridging technique to bring signing-deaf experiences and artistry to the attention to speaking-hearing people, and explored the mutual benefits of cross-fertilisation between the two life-worlds; the DVD in Appendix 1.1 contains both Scots and BSL performance-texts and so also provides a bridge.

As Chapter Three explained, translations and adaptations are recognised types of storytelling events within signing-deaf communities, and are fundamentally bicultural. Signing-deaf communities are constantly exposed to the cultural forms of the majority and may absorb and/or re-work them. As such, translations and adaptations are a particularly useful genre through which to explore bicultural issues. Yet it should be clear that the BSL:UPTAKE translations are not typical of the translations described in Chapter Three. They were overtly produced for the deaf public voice and were – although aimed at a mixed audience – primarily outward facing, aiming to showcase BSL’s capabilities. The source material was chosen by an external agent and not by the translator, and the translations were commissioned and paid for by a university project, produced to camera, and published on the Internet and DVD. The translator closely followed the source material in written form via autocue rather than reproducing internalised versions of the

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<sup>155</sup> BSL: University Partnership Towards Accessible Knowledge Exchange.

original; in this, they are pushing the boundaries of definitions of oral production (Masoni 2013:191). Yet the BSL:UPTAKE translations are as much storytelling events as they are translations, performed live to the recording audience although intended for a remote one, and creatively translated as a storytelling event using everyday signartistry.

Research question 3 concerns the messages transmitted about signing-deaf culture, and is addressed in the first two sections of this chapter. I contextualise both BSL:UPTAKE and the translation project in terms of the deaf public voice, and describe the collaboration that developed organically with sympathetic institutions. Research question 2, concerning the expression and performance of biculturality, comes into focus in the latter half of the chapter. The third section, *From source to target*, describes the pragmatics of the translation project: it introduces the translator, the source material, and the ideological and practical considerations that were taken into account in the selection of both. It goes on to address two central concerns in presenting Scots spoken-oral material to signing-deaf audiences: the problem of translating not only across languages but also modalities, and the importance of adjusting to the different world-knowledge of signing-deaf communities. The source material for the BSL:UPTAKE translations comes from the Scots spoken-oral tradition, the modality and language of which are particularly inaccessible to many Scottish signing-deaf people; as we have seen, half of the paradox of biculturality is being *of* the majority culture but *excluded from* it. The translations can be seen to respond, within the small scope of the project, to the problem of signing-deaf people's lack of access to Scotland's speaking-hearing intangible cultural heritage, which is their own heritage too.

The final section, *The devil's in the detail*, considers how the translations demonstrate signing-deaf culture as *apart from* speaking-hearing culture. BSL's

entrenched storytelling practices produce a (re)interpretation of the spoken-oral source material through the prism of signed-oral storytelling traditions. Speaking-hearing and signing-deaf presentations of performance-texts differ from each other, and I seek to illuminate which aspects of the one are creatively transformed in the process of being translated into the other.

This chapter asks how translation into BSL alters the performance features of a spoken-oral Scots story and what bicultural issues are at play, in the signing-deaf community's engagement with and access to the speaking-hearing world. It also provides a deeper illustration of BSL's signartistry than has hitherto been possible. Introducing both these aspects in relation to a spoken-oral source is a particularly useful starting point for bringing BSL and signed-oral traditions to the attention of Scottish ethnologists, because it allows parallels to be drawn and divergences identified with familiar storytelling material. This first case-study invites a signing-deaf translator to dig where we, as Scottish Ethnologists, stand – and unearth something new.

### **Case-study 1: BSL:UPTAKE and the deaf public voice**

The translations were undertaken as part of the wider BSL:UPTAKE project; the following section provides a contextualising introduction to the project. BSL:UPTAKE ran from 2009-2011, although satellite projects extended into 2012. Funded by the Scottish Funding Council, the project was led by Heriot-Watt University's School of Management and Languages, with the remit of providing opportunities for fully accessible, equal discourse between academics, policy makers and members of the community on subjects relating to the position of BSL and signing-deaf communities in Scotland. BSL:UPTAKE was, therefore, fundamentally concerned with bridging the gap

between the DEAFworld and the speaking-hearing world, and exploiting the fruitful bicultural area between the two.

A central aim of the BSL:UPTAKE project was to implement an interactive bilingual website ([www.bsluptake.org.uk](http://www.bsluptake.org.uk); now defunct due to funding limitations), for which Bob Duncan, as Project Officer, was responsible for sourcing material.<sup>156</sup> This contained BSL translations of relevant policy and research documents, and responses from Tessa Padden, the Knowledge Exchange Associate, in both written blog and signed vlog format. Additionally, BSL:UPTAKE organised two 'knowledge exchange cafés', informal, drop-in networking events for stakeholders and the signing-deaf community, which were open to the public. The first, in 2010, concerned electoral engagement ahead of the 2010 General Election; the second was organised for November 5th 2011: 'Deaf in the Story: Visual Stories of an Invisible People', with the central theme of storytelling. This was made possible through a £2000 prize awarded by the Edinburgh Beltane Engagement Network to extend the life of the project.

The selection of the theme of storytelling constituted a conscious departure for BSL:UPTAKE from the overtly political material it had hitherto promoted:

One of the underlying thoughts [for 'Deaf in the Story'] was [...] to show that knowledge exchange [...] wasn't just boring political things [...], but it was about the wider life of the community ... including humour, storytelling and all the rest of it. (BD:2014)

For Bob Duncan, this was an opportunity to explore the crossovers between BSL and other autochthonous languages of Scotland, particularly Scots. The

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<sup>156</sup> Bob Duncan was introduced in Chapter Two.

context was fortuitous: the increasing calls for a BSL Act had heightened awareness of BSL as an unrecognised autochthonous language of Scotland:

Even before I started with BSL:UPTAKE, there were conversations going on with BSL being promoted as a language of Scotland along with Gaelic and Scots. And that really interested me, because I think it should be, it is. (BD:2014)

Bob Duncan saw the proposed BSL Bill as a potentially useful argument for building new collaborative partnerships with institutions interested in Scotland's intangible cultural heritage. The two additional stakeholders in 'Deaf in the Story' were the School of Scottish Studies Archives (SSSA) and the Scottish Storytelling Forum (SSF).<sup>157</sup>

The confluence of the three main stakeholders came about organically through the shared interests and sympathies of particular individuals. Bob Duncan had previously used SSSA for research, and, once he joined BSL:UPTAKE, immediately saw that SSSA might recognise a stake in BSL and the community's signlore:

[We wanted to] develop some kind of relationship with the School of Scottish Studies, which is a school for studying all things Scots and to do with the languages of Scotland, and if they hadn't already started looking at BSL, well, it would be useful for them to do so. (BD:2014)

Similarly, Donald Smith, director of SSF, was sympathetic to signed-oral arts, having briefly served on the board of Stories in the Air, an Edinburgh-based charity (1997-2013) calling itself 'the forum for storytelling in sign language for

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<sup>157</sup> Based at the Scottish Storytelling Centre, Edinburgh, SSF was founded 1992 to promote 'the study, practice and knowledge of storytelling in Scotland through the preservation and perpetuation of traditional storytelling and the development of storytelling as a contemporary art' - <http://www.tracscotland.org/tracs/storytelling/scottish-storytelling-forum> [accessed 01/02/16].

deaf people' (see E. Leith 2010 for an account of its work). The following aspiration was expressed by him in interview:

I think we [SSF] should do it by having a sort of training bursary possibility that allows ... a couple of people to begin with to really explore and develop and practice their skills in this area [i.e. BSL storytelling]. (Quoted in E. Leith 2010:72)

This was pushed forward when the Hamish and Nancy Bursary, awarded annually to support an aspiring storyteller to extend their practice, was reserved for a BSL-user in 2010-2011; Mark MacQueen successfully applied. Under BSL:UPTAKE's coordination, the three stakeholders developed 'Deaf in the Story' as an event to showcase BSL 'as a language of storytelling' (BD:2014). The definition of *storytelling* was vague, to facilitate a broad interpretation which could lead to a variety of inter- and intra-cultural exchanges between signing-deaf and speaking-hearing attendees. I identified two main strands:

- showcasing the creative capabilities of BSL through the participation of, for example, Mark MacQueen;
- taking 'the story' to mean the metanarrative of Scottish cultural heritage and society; what Stuart Hall might call its 'mirror' (2005).

A key aim of the BSL:UPTAKE project in general and 'Deaf in the Story' in particular was to take a step towards having signing-deaf culture in Scotland both recognised as being, and (crucially) integrated into discourse on, Scottish cultural heritage. This motive was made explicit by Tessa Padden in one of the vlogs on the BSL:UPTAKE website:

Deaf people are also part of the wider history and culture of Scotland, just as British Sign Language – BSL – is one of the many languages of



Scotland. The more we know about and respect each other's languages, the better we'll understand each other's stories – and the different kinds of lives we all lead. (BSL:UPTAKE website 2011)<sup>158</sup>

'Deaf in the Story' was, therefore, fundamentally conversionary, aiming to highlight different experiences and narrations of being-in-the-world – the same world – and to present these on an equal footing. Whereas the first knowledge exchange café, being concerned with issues of access, was targeted directly at those with a stake in the signing-deaf community and/or in politics, 'Deaf in the Story' was more obviously open and inviting to the lay public and, being held at the Scottish Storytelling Centre, benefited from the footfall of passing locals (particularly families) and domestic and foreign tourists.

The Scottish Storytelling Centre is known to celebrate spoken-oral traditional arts, and 'Deaf in the Story' placed BSL both conceptually and, in the choice of location, physically in a cultural space where phonocentric assumptions about oral traditions are dominant. For the duration of 'Deaf in the Story', the Centre became a signing-deaf dominant space. 200-300 people attended over the course of the afternoon, including BBC2's See Hear programme, on which it subsequently featured (Series 31, Episode 24 2011). On-hand English/BSL interpreters (both non-deaf and deaf) facilitated informal conversations between speaking-hearing and signing-deaf people and interpreted the Centre's English-language displays into BSL. The majority of those in attendance were signers, and a large proportion were signing-deaf, which was attributed to the centrality of known individuals in organising the event; it was 'projected and sold to deaf people as very much a deaf event, that just happens to be being held in a mainstream venue' (BD:2014). BSL's creative capacities and, crucially, its cultural relevance were highlighted through

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<sup>158</sup> <http://www.bsluptake.org.uk/2011/deaf-in-the-story-%E2%80%93-visual-stories-of-an-invisible-people-2/> [accessed 01/11/12; website now obsolete]

storytelling workshops targeted at learners and at fluent signers, and through platform performances by Mark MacQueen. Stalls represented relevant stakeholders, including SCoD (raising awareness of the oral history DVDs discussed in Case-study 2) and SSSA, which displayed examples from its photographic archive of Scottish customs and traditional crafts to stimulate discussion about forms of Scottish heritage. The SSSA stall also showcased the two BSL translations which will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter. The aim of 'Deaf in the Story', Bob Duncan explained, was

[for] BSL to get some of the reflected prestige from the prestige of the Scottish Storytelling Centre, because it is the minority, you know, less privileged language and it needs that kind of boost. So if people like the Storytelling Centre takes BSL seriously, that will show the world, the wider world that it is something to be taken seriously. (BD:2014)

The message being transmitted about signing-deaf culture was that it belonged on the same platform as speaking-hearing culture, and could here be seen as such.

### **The BSL:UPTAKE translations: the politics of the thing**

The BSL:UPTAKE translations of narrative audio material from SSSA were intended to contribute to the re-conceptualisation of BSL as part of Scotland's cultural heritage and as an equal language to the spoken languages already accepted as such. They were conceived of as a way of demonstrating BSL's capacities 'as a language of storytelling' (BD:2014), with the twin aims of making speaking-hearing intangible cultural heritage available to a signing-deaf audience, and drawing the attention of speaking-hearing people to the different affordances of BSL and the richness that a visual-spatial-kinetic language can bring to storytelling performances.

The two audio recordings were collected from Stanley Robertson, a renowned Scottish Traveller storyteller and ballad singer; they comprise a folktale, *The old woman who sold her soul to the devil* (hereafter *Woman and Devil*) and a personal experience narrative describing the role of spoken-oral storytelling within Stanley's family and community, *Storytelling as a family activity* (hereafter *Family activity*).<sup>159</sup> BSL:UPTAKE commissioned Frankie McLean to produce two BSL translations of each of the two Scots performance-texts, one delivered at the same pace as the original spoken delivery and one delivered at his own pace. Filmed at Heriot-Watt University's media studio on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2011, the latter two translations were shown on a loop on SSSA's stall at 'Deaf in the Story', and subsequently uploaded onto the BSL:UPTAKE website and made into fifty DVDs containing all four translations (Appendix 1.1).

Several of the DVDs were accessioned by SSSA; for it, the translations represent a first step towards addressing the inaccessibility of audio-only footage of Scotland's corp-oral traditions to the signing-deaf community. This was highlighted as a salient point by the signing-deaf participants in the translation project. Frankie McLean contrasted it with his typical translation work of formal "'have-to" translations', arguing that more should be done to make similar material – 'the fun stuff' – accessible in BSL:

Deaf people have so few opportunities to watch something like this. [...] Stanley Robertson's life story was interesting, about his experiences – Deaf people should access that. There has to be an understanding between the two cultures. (FM:2012)

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<sup>159</sup> SSSA SA1979.013.A1 & SA1979.29.B3; available to stream on the online open-access digitised platform, Tobar an Dualchas / Kist o Riches <http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/> [accessed 14/11/13].

The inaccessibility of the modality-specific aspects of everyday speaking-hearing culture to signing-deaf people can result in a deficit of incidental knowledge (Dai O'Brien 2015:232-234), which is often described in terms of hunger and frustration. This was expressed by Tessa Padden:

I was always hungry for information about what was going on in the world and wanted to expand my knowledge. [...] I went to Mary Hare Grammar School, supposedly the best [Deaf] school in the UK [...] But they never ever explained to us about hearing culture. (TP:2014)

The translations were an attempt to allow signing-deaf audiences a degree of mutual ownership of and participation in the spoken-oral cultural heritage of Scotland.

Just as 'Deaf in the Story' benefited from the reflected prestige of the Scottish Storytelling Centre, similar issues were taken into consideration when developing the translations. Bob Duncan recognised as beneficial that the source material had been collected from a celebrated Scottish tradition-bearer and accessioned by an archive of 'national and international significance' (Ranft and Richmond 2012:22). He emphasised that the parallels between BSL and Scots, and between the signing-deaf and Traveller communities as historically stigmatised minority groups, mutually reinforced the significance of the translation project:

I think minorities like that should sort of feed off each other's strength, prestige... so if BSL can [...] bask slightly in the reflected glory of someone like Stanley, against the name of someone people don't know, [...] – someone that people don't know is equally valid but it won't get the same kind of attention or [...] put out the same messages to people. [...] I realised *oh*, he was a very high profile storyteller, therefore it would be a good idea to use that name, you know, sort of attach that name to what we were doing because that would give it that kind of reflected prestige [...] That's the politics of the thing, yeah. (BD:2014)

Both the 'Deaf in the Story' event and the two translations were transmitting a message about the cultural validity of signing-deaf communities and parity with other minority cultures, and performing this in an overtly bicultural, bilingual context. By placing spoken-oral and signed-oral storytelling side by side, both in a venue recognised as celebrating traditional arts and in the public domain as a DVD and on the Internet, signed-oral performance is seen to fit into the paradigm of oral traditional arts, and strengthens my argument that they are all Scotland's corp-oral traditional arts. Having set up this wider context, we now examine the specifics of the translations, the biculturality expressed and performed through them, and the signartistry of their production. We begin, however, with the pragmatics of selecting the translator and the source material for the project.

### **From source to target: mediating across modalities and communities**

The aim of the translations was to celebrate BSL as a language of storytelling; Frankie McLean described his commission in the following terms:

[BSL:UPTAKE] wanted stories translated that'd be suitable for Deaf people and their culture. (FM:2012)

This section examines the question of 'suitability' and the problem of translating not only across languages but also modalities, and across the different world-knowledge of signing-deaf communities. These considerations provide insight into signing-deaf biculturality.

At this point it is necessary to clarify that a signed translation cannot be edited after it has been performed; it can be extensively prepared ahead of time and the translator may use as many takes as time, money and inclination allow, but ultimately the signed target performance-text must be produced in

as close to a single take as is possible, to avoid ‘jump-cuts all over the video, and it just looks [bad], it’s not worth it’ (BD:2014). This informs my designation of the translations as signed-oral, despite the autocue: the translator has to perform in real time, and, far from ‘reading aloud’, has to process the translation as part of a dynamic performance. Spoken/written to signed translation is, therefore, equally a skill of performance as of linguistic competency; this facet is explored in this section and throughout the remainder of the chapter.

### ***Selecting the translator: Frankie McLean***

The translation source was a spoken-oral performance-text; the choice of a signing-deaf translator may appear counter-intuitive due to the modality mismatch, and I (somewhat provocatively) asked Bob Duncan why BSL:UPTAKE did not commission a non-deaf translator who could hear the original material:

EL: But why not just use a hearing interpreter?

BD: Oh I see, I see what you’re getting at. Ha. Well, we stopped as far as we could using hearing interpreters twenty years ago. (BD:2014)

By ‘we’, Bob is referring to his background in television and alluding to the common misconception that persists to this day that the BSL translators seen on screen are always speaking-hearing people.<sup>160</sup> This is based on television’s apparent ‘orality’, i.e. predicated on speech; yet its orality is secondary (Ong 1982:2) and the majority of it is scripted. The norm of translation is to translate into one’s first language; therefore signing-deaf on-screen translators work

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<sup>160</sup> Until the 1990s this was the case; Bob Duncan and Tessa Padden were amongst the pioneers who challenged this during their time at Tyne Tees Television. Bob was at pains to ‘mention with great honour’ key non-deaf BSL/English interpreters such as Kyra Pollitt who had encouraged the use of signing-deaf interpreters despite the resultant loss of work for themselves (BD:2014).

from the same script or autocue as the actors or presenters. The autocue can be operated at the same speed as the presenter's speech to keep the spoken and signed material largely in synch, although, unsurprisingly, translating from written English into BSL at the pace of spoken English is a challenging task; this will be discussed later in the chapter.

Frankie McLean was chosen as translator based on Bob Duncan and Tessa Padden's recognition of his skills when delivering a BSL/English translation training programme a few years earlier:

Frankie stood out. [...] Some of them [signing-deaf trainee translators] will have much better English than others, some of them will have better BSL than others, Frankie was tip top in both English and BSL, and also in understanding the process of translation. [...] In terms of making a real BSL storytelling experience, somebody like Frankie, a deaf person with his skills, is going to come up with the best kind of product in the end, I think. (BD:2014)

The skills Bob refers to are both translation skills and storytelling skills. Frankie is a confident bilingual; unlike many deaf children, he attained fluent English literacy with little difficulty at mainstream school, having received sufficient communication support (FM:2012). He also comes from what is called a STRONG DEAF family,<sup>161</sup> with two older generations of strong linguistic and cultural role models. This exposure from birth to fluent BSL places him firmly in the category of BSL's 'linguistic elite', the minority of signing-deaf PDFs (Sutton-Spence and Woll, 1999:24). Furthermore, Frankie fits Bahan's profile of the 'smooth signer' whose use of sign language is particularly admired in the community and who is typically thought of as good storyteller (2006:24) or "gravitate[d] to[wards] ... because ... their

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<sup>161</sup> STRONG in this context is linked to an identity judgement and could be glossed as STAUNCH or STRONGLY-IDENTIFIABLE-AS. With thanks to Jemina Napier for her insights into this term.

conversation [is] more ‘interesting’” (Ladd in Sutton-Spence 2005:232). In his own words:

I know I'm very expressive, even in normal conversation - eyebrows furrowing, my face expressions! Always. That's normal for me, even as we talk, I'm being expressive, it's natural for me! I grew up around Deaf people with that. (FM:2012)

Frankie's attribution of his expressive signing style to his upbringing is informative given the significance he placed on storytelling in his childhood. Just as Stanley Robertson's upbringing in the Traveller community brought him into early contact with spoken-oral storytellers (Robertson 1971; McDermitt and Bruford 1986), Frankie McLean grew up surrounded by signed stories – from his mother, his grandparents (who relayed their experiences of the Second World War), and the local Deaf club he attended from a young age (FM:2012). In addition, his family were receptive to his own storytelling as a child. As the aim of the translations was to give a ‘real BSL storytelling experience’, Frankie was able to use all the expressive skills in his repertoire. As Tessa put it, ‘when we were thinking about doing a Scottish story – it was automatic that we would pick Frankie!’ (TP:2014).

### ***Selecting the stories***

The two stories selected as source material for BSL:UPTAKE were chosen by Bob Duncan. His criteria were determined by the budget: short, narratively straightforward stories would keep the translation costs low. Source material that made use of particularly archaic language, rhyming or repeated formulas would have been considerably more complicated to effectively translate as a ‘real’ BSL storytelling experience, due to the different artistry invoked in signpower compared to in wordpower. While it would be interesting to see how an English-BSL translator would creatively render features of spoken-oral artistry such as formulas and runs, this was beyond



the remit of the project. For Bob Duncan, Stanley's two performance-texts stood out as not too 'esoteric or abstruse' (BD:2014).

The narratives selected were both collected from Stanley Robertson in 1979 by Barbara McDermitt and Virginia Blankenhorn. The first, *Woman and Devil*, lasts for 03:44 minutes.<sup>162</sup> In it, an unlikeable old woman sells her soul to the Devil in exchange for three wishes: that she become young and beautiful; that she live in a perfect castle away from the rest of the world; that her cat, Tom, be transformed into a handsome young man. The wishes come true but, once a romantic evening with Tom is about to be sexually consummated, he reminds the old woman that she had previously had him neutered. Bob Duncan described it as 'fairly straightforward but very funny, and I could imagine that [it] would translate quite well' (BD:2014), particularly as the humour did not rest on puns that are culturally and linguistically contingent.

*Family Activity* lasts 02:34 minutes. Bob Duncan described it as 'not really a story' (BD:2014), yet it is certainly storytelling in terms of discursive mode and fits with the personal experience narratives in Case-study 2. In it, Stanley Robertson describes the role of storytelling in both his family and the wider Traveller community: growing up with his parents, older sister and grandfather telling stories to the children in the house, and then listening to other Travellers around the campfire in the summer. He references storytellers such as 'Burn Bonnet's Maggie' and 'Old Bill',<sup>163</sup> and recalls his earliest

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<sup>162</sup> The audio of both *Woman and Devil* and *Family Activity* can be found on the DVD in Appendix 1.1; Scots and English transcripts are in Appendices 1.2 and 1.3.

<sup>163</sup> It is highly context-dependent references such as these which, unsurprisingly, caused difficulty in translation. As an interesting illustration of Frankie Mclean's familiarity with speaking-hearing culture, he initially translated the reference to 'Old Bill' (i.e. '[Maggie's] material's very old – cos they were Old Bill stories') as LONDON POLICE STORIES, drawing on his awareness of the English slang name for the Metropolitan Police ('the Old Bill'). This is emphatically speaking-hearing culture; there does not seem to be an equivalent sign to this slang name in BSL.

memory of repeating material from the spoken-oral tradition to his aunt, the ballad singer Jeannie Robertson. *Family Activity* is an account of spoken-oral tradition in practice, and provides the performance context for folktales such as *Woman and Devil*. Part of Bob's rationale for selecting it was the perceived similarity between Traveller and signing-deaf communities' valuing of corp-oral storytelling, claiming that the signing-deaf audience 'would relate to that storytelling experience' (BD:2014). *Family Activity* was seen as giving signing-deaf culture a broader bicultural context: separate from, yet a part of and, in some ways, parallel to speaking-hearing culture.

### ***Issues of biculturality in crossing three modalities and languages***

Both the source and target languages of the BSL:UPTAKE translation project were fundamentally corp-oral: spoken Scots and signed BSL. However, the spoken-oral source had to be mediated through a third modality, i.e. a written autocue, in order to be accessible to the signing-deaf translator. Inevitably, the vocal nuance of Stanley Robertson's performance is lost in transcription; as Bob Duncan put it,

in terms of... taking Stanley and performing Stanley in BSL, there are limitations of that, obviously. (BD:2014)

Instead of 'performing Stanley' as heard, Frankie McLean was applying his signartistry to a twice-disembodied text: the written transcript of the audio.

The autocue scripts were based on transcriptions of Stanley Robertson's stories that had been published in SSSA's journal *Tocher*. These transcriptions reflect Stanley Robertson's use of Scots:

There was this old spinster an she was aafa crabbit an she bade by hersel. And she never hed nae friends and the only thing she hed wis this big black cat. Oh, an this big black cat wis aa wey wi her, ye ken.

And the folk in the toon aa thocht she wis a witch because she was that uncivil to the folk, and, och, she wisnae worth nothin really.<sup>164</sup>

Having been recorded for SSSA by two non-Scots speaking fieldworkers, it is probable that Stanley Robertson adjusted his use of Scots ‘for a kind of public consumption that’s different from him telling it to his ain folk’ (BD:2014); it is unlikely that a native English speaker would have much difficulty understanding the written transcription above. In the context of translation into BSL by a signing-deaf translator, on the other hand, it was necessary to

do a bit of homework to find out how well he [Frankie] understood written Scots, because he... grew up in a deaf family, he wouldn’t hear spoken Scots round about him, he would be taught English at school, not Scots. (BD:2014)

This was born out by Frankie:

The Scottish words were surprising and I wasn't confident around these. English's fine, but Scots... (FM:2012)

The Scots transcription was therefore translated by Bob into English:

There was this old spinster and she was very ill-tempered and she lived by herself. And she never had any friends and the only thing she had was this big black cat. Oh, and this big black cat was always with her, you know. And the people in the town all thought she was a witch, because she was that uncivil to the people, and, oh, she wasn’t worth a thing really.<sup>165</sup>

Although the spellings and certain dialect words had been adjusted, the transcript was not in Standard English but followed the phrasing of Stanley Robertson’s speech including false starts, asides and unfinished sentences, but these Frankie McLean felt confident with, characterising it as ‘part of the flow’ (FM:2012). He was given the English transcript to prepare and rehearse before

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<sup>164</sup> See Appendix 1.2a.

<sup>165</sup> See Appendix 1.2b.

the filming took place, but worked from autocue on the day as a prompt. The following section looks in more detail at the translated performance-text.

### **The devil's in the detail: the translation processes in performance**

Having set the scene, this section focuses on the aspects of Frankie McLean's translations which make them storytelling performance-texts, the 'real BSL storytelling experience' that Bob Duncan required. In this Frankie appears to have been successful: at 'Deaf in the Story', one signing-deaf woman stated that she would not have guessed that *Woman and Devil* was a 'hearing story' due to the quality of the BSL and the nature of the performance style.<sup>166</sup> Certainly the performance aspects of BSL were forefront in Frankie McLean's mind: he described his own aims for the translation in terms of providing entertainment to the remote audience –

I want people to watch and laugh, be enthralled, like going to the cinema – for pleasure. (FM:2012)

He emphasised the creativity of the translation process, arguing that if certain elements were 'not directly translatable' then it is necessary to adjust so as not to 'lose that richness BSL has'. His own affection for the language ('BSL is beautiful to see', FM:2012) and his enjoyment of using it in a storytelling register were readily apparent, and the following subsections consider three elements of the translations which are revealing of the signartistry involved in signed-oral storytelling: the impact of the pace of translation of the performance-text; characterisation and performance through role-shift; and

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<sup>166</sup> It should be noted that this was a single person's appraisal and not one that I heard repeated. Interestingly, there is one detail in *Woman and Devil* which indicates that it could not have originated in signing-deaf culture: at the denouement, the character Tom turns off the lights, yet he and the woman appear able to converse using BSL in the dark.

the differences in the manner in which humour and ‘punchlines’ may be expressed in spoken and signed performances.

### ***Considering pace: translation, trans...formation***

Bob Duncan had originally envisaged a finished product that was simultaneously accessible to a mixed signing-deaf and speaking-hearing audience, to bridge the gap and place both languages side by side. To achieve this, the audio recordings were to be played during filming, with Bob operating the autocue to match the pace of Stanley Robertson’s delivery and Frankie McLean producing the translation at the same pace. Yet the pace of the discourse would be ‘primarily geared to the auditory modality’ (Bahan 2006:47), causing the respective paces of the languages to be misaligned, to the detriment of the target language but leaving the source language unscathed. For BSL:UPTAKE, Bob Duncan decided, this was an unnecessary compromise, given that one of the aims of the translation project was to demonstrate BSL’s capacities as a language of storytelling:

It just occurred to me as I was going through it a bit, *well, oh there’s no reason not to get Frankie just to translate it as he would a piece of written [text] [...] It’s interesting what Frankie would bring to it if he was just allowed to take a story, digest it, discuss it with Tessa, sort of trans...form it into something that worked for him and would work for a BSL audience.* (BD:2014)

The decision was made to record both paces of translation: the first at Frankie McLean’s own pace, and the second at Stanley Robertson’s. The four translations can be compared (see DVD in Appendix 1.1), demonstrating that BSL comes into its own when it is geared to its own modality. A number of proper nouns in *Family Activity* require fingerspelling into BSL, including unfamiliar and long placenames and the Gaelic song title ‘*Bheir mi ho robhan o’*. Watching *Family Activity* matched to Stanley Robertson’s delivery, it is easily discernible that the fingerspelling is rushed in order to catch up with the

speech, causing omissions (e.g. the word *Traveller*) and a somewhat disjointed final product. This section has been glossed below (Box 3); the transcribed audio and glossed BSL take place during the same interval on the DVD, demonstrating the time-lag and Frankie's haste to realign himself with the scene.

|             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| SR (Scots): | [01:02] But the best stories wis when you were in the country: ye were maybe bidin in an aald road, like the Waa Steedins or the Aald Road o Lumphanan, where aa the traivellers used to sit in a circle -they wis jist like Indians. <b>And the children</b> just sat very quietly, and you listened - every word - you just sort of luxuriated in every word, you know, that was said. [01:26] |
| FM (BSL):   | [01:02] BUT BEST STORY {ah!} ALL GO-OVER STAY {maybe} OLD ROAD LIKE .W.A.A. .S.T.E.E.D.I.N.S. OR .O.L.D. .R.O.A.D. .O.F. .L.U.M.P.H.A.N.A.N. {anyway} STAY-THERE ALL SIT-IN-CIRCLE LIKE INDIANS SITTING-IN-CIRCLE. CHILDREN [01:26]                                                                                                                                                              |

### Box 3

*Comparison of Stanley Robertson (Scots) and Frankie McLean (BSL) in Family Activity* (Bold typeface indicates FM's final position in relation to SR's speech.)

The translations produced at Frankie McLean's pace were twice as long as those delivered at Stanley Robertson's pace. In addition to taking his time over the fingerspelling to ensure that it was clear, Frankie made minor additions to clarify particular aspects of the stories. This links to the question of incidental knowledge, which Frankie summarised like this:

Hearing people hear and pick up things, develop incidental knowledge. Deaf people miss out on that, so their knowledge and understanding is different. (FM:2012)

This is partly an audiological issue: in a phonocentric society, deaf people will have less access to the conversations, announcements and media-driven

dialogue that surround them; it is also a literacy issue, one of access to education, and reflects the limited opportunities to be in DEAFspace and acquiring incidental knowledge from others. In Frankie's perspective, translating into BSL necessitates taking these factors into consideration and not presuming incidental knowledge; in this, he is supported by Mindess (2006) who argues that a good translation into a sign language requires the supplementary provision of information and context to address the different cultural and educational backgrounds. Frankie therefore provided a few semantic extensions in the target performance-text; in this he performs his biculturality. In *Family Activity*, he deviated from Stanley Robertson's words to provide an explanation of nursery rhymes (predominantly a spoken-oral form, which may not have resonance with a signing-deaf audience due to the role of spoken rhyme and sometimes tune and nonsense words) and to provide a visual description of Humpty Dumpty as an egg, drawing on popular children's illustrations (Box 4).

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Autocue:</i>  | "Go on, sing one of your wee songs, laddie, sing a wee nursery rhyme song." And she thought I was going to sing "Baa baa black sheep" or "Humpty-Dumpty" ...                                                                                                                                               |
| <i>BSL gloss</i> | MUST SING SHORT-SONG OR NURSERY .R.H.Y.M.E.<br><b>CHILDREN-LAUGHING-WORDS</b><br>SHE-TELL-GET-UP TO-ME<br>SHE-THOUGHT SHE-EXPECT ME RESPOND-OH! .B.A.A.<br>.B.A.A. BLACK SHEEP OR .H.U.M.P.T.Y. .D.U.M.P.T.Y.,<br><b>YOU-KNOW, .E.G.G. {shape/size of egg} SITTING-ON-WALL FALL-OFF-WALL MISS {anyway}</b> |

**Box 4** – *Semantic extensions in Family Activity* (Bold typeface indicates additions.)

Frankie McLean delivers these asides naturalistically, informally addressing the audience as one insider to another (YOU-KNOW) and supplying contextualising information without 'breaking character', blending the semantic extension with the translation of Stanley Robertson's words. He is performing not 'as' Stanley Robertson but as a signing-deaf equivalent, adjusting to his (projected) audience.

The translations made at Frankie McLean's own pace demonstrate not just that BSL is capable of translating a story, but that BSL storytelling practices bring something different to the source material. The spoken-oral performance is rendered through a language that is invested with its own signed-oral performance traditions, and Frankie was explicit about the fact that producing the translations at his own pace enabled him to exercise his own signartistry, which increased his sense of connection to the remote signing-deaf audience:

I could add on things - facial expressions, signs, more humour - that's what Deaf people like, watching and laughing at the expressions, the additions. [...] [Following the audio] was just relaying the words and wasn't the same; no richness, it was all rote. My own pace, that was richer and more engaging. (FM:2012)

BSL's storytelling affordances are particularly evident in the use of role-shift to depict characters; as Ladd observes, signed discourse thrives on characterisation and dialogue (2005:231). Frankie McLean exploits this throughout, taking the spoken-oral source performance-text and 'trans...form[ing] it into something that worked for him' (BD:2014) in a signed-oral idiom. This is discussed below.



### **Just a pure Marilyn Monroe: *performing character in BSL***

In crossing three modalities (spoken, written and signed) and three languages (Scots, English and BSL), the manner and degree of characterisation is altered. The techniques employed by Stanley Robertson and Frankie McLean differ considerably, a difference that stems from the properties of their respective language modality. I have argued that speech should be understood as being embodied beyond words; I align with linguists such as McNeill (2005), who recognise gesture as part of spoken language's holistic expression. Spoken-oral storytellers use gesture and kinesis to varying degrees, and, as no video record was made of Stanley Robertson's performance-texts, it is impossible to determine whether additional characterisation was expressed through facial expression and gesture. However, 'the central performance dynamic is ... the vocal' (Wilson 2006:9), and Stanley presented characterisation through his pace, tone and volume of speech, aspects that are fundamentally inaccessible to Frankie McLean. Instead, Frankie relied solely on the English transcription rather than the original spoken-oral delivery; this is already a further step removed from the original in terms of modality (written, not oral) and language (English, not Scots). It is also inevitably limited. Yet relying solely on the English transcript arguably gave Frankie more freedom to personate each character according to his own taste without influence from Stanley.

In terms of characterisation, I focus particularly on *Woman and Devil* because, as a folktale, it requires consistent characterisation. However, role-shift characterisation does also feature in *Family Activity*, both in the reported interactions and dialogue, e.g. the interaction between the characters of the children and the character of the storyteller (Figs. 18 and 19), and in the tacit performance by Frankie McLean of the narrator (i.e. the Stanley Robertson

character). Jemina Napier described the latter in particularly appreciative terms:

It looks like authentic BSL storytelling because it – you kind of go, *that's an old Scottish deaf person telling that story*, even though it's a younger person doing a translation, but he does capture the essence of it. (JN:2013)

This goes beyond the pragmatics and paralinguistics of the performance to produce a convergence of affect: the affect of the narrator performed by the translator.



**Fig. 18** – *Children watching the storytelling (Frankie McLean)*



**Fig. 19** - *The storyteller (Frankie McLean)*

In *Woman and Devil*, the following extracts show how the (Anglicised) wording of Stanley Robertson's description of the old woman and rendering of her dialogue provided Frankie McLean with both explicit and implicit characterisation, through the description of her and in the words she uses in her speech:

There was this old spinster and she was very ill-tempered and she lived by herself. And she never had any friends

[...] And the people in the town all thought she was a witch, because she was that uncivil to the people, and, oh, she wasn't worth a thing really.

[...] She says, "I know," she says, "but people have made me like this. It's just the way I am," she says. "I don't have a husband, I don't have good looks, and nobody likes me, and," she says, "it's just the way I am," she says. "I've nothing to be happy about."

[...] She says, "I don't want friends. I've never liked friends. I don't want to make friends with anybody."

Frankie personates the old woman as a pursed-lipped, uptight character (Fig. 20); based solely on the textual characterisation, it would have been equally possible to perform her as a grotesque to reiterate the comparison to a witch, highlighting the degree of creative interpretation possible in personation.



**Fig. 20** – *The old woman (Frankie McLean)*

Later, the old woman is transformed into a young and beautiful woman; Frankie takes Stanley Robertson's comparison to 'Marilyn Monroe' as a literal starting point, providing a brief semantic extension to clarify who Marilyn Monroe is to the signing-deaf audience, combined with what could be termed a performance extension, in which he maps her hour-glass figure and curled hair onto his own body and performs her in character (Box 5; Fig. 21).

|                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Autocue:</i> | So she gets made into this lovely creature. She looks in the mirror and oh, she's just a pure Marilyn Monroe, you know, really beautiful. Oh, you couldn't have gotten a bonnier woman. ...                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <i>GLOSS:</i>   | CHANGE/BECOME OLD-WOMAN GRUMPY-FACE<br>CHANGE/BECOME FACE REALLY-BEAUTIFUL<br>WOMAN-LOOKS OVAL-MIRROR LOOKS-AT-SELF<br>[hands at face]<br><b>YOU-KNOW PAST .M.A.R.I.L.Y.N. .M.O.N.R.O.E.</b><br><b>BLONDE-CURLY-HAIR WOMAN SINGS DRESS-</b><br><b>FLOATS-OUT-OVER-HIPS LIPSTICK</b> [moves like<br><i>Marilyn</i> [see Fig. 21]] {yeah?}<br>SAME. BEAUTIFUL-FACE REALLY. {wow} OTHERS<br>BEAT-HER? CAN'T. SHE'S-THE-TOP. |

**Box 5** – *Performing Marilyn Monroe in Woman and Devil*  
(Bold typeface indicates additions.)



**Fig. 21** – Marilyn Monroe (Frankie McLean)

Stanley Robertson's description and performance of the old woman, both before and after her transformation, contain a degree of characterisation which is discernible in the autocue; conversely, the character of the Devil is not described and very little can be gleaned from the dialogue:

But the Devil came to her one day and says, "You know," he says, "you're wasting your time here," he says. "You'd be better coming with me and let me give you some wishes," he says, "because your life's so dull, you've done nothing."

[...] So the Devil says to her, "Well," he says, "if you sell your soul to me, I'll give you three wishes. [...]"

Stanley Robertson's characterisation of the Devil draws on a popular tradition which 'deviat[es] from the purely theological interpretation' but is typical of the 'concrete representations of the supernatural' where it 'might equally well be terrifying or appear ridiculous or impotent' (Muchembled 2003:14). In this folk idiom, the Devil is 'hardly a figure to inspire unspeakable terror ... [and] has neither tail nor cloven hooves, nor is he distinguished by a dreadful stench, abnormally brilliant eyes [...] or truly superhuman capacities' (Muchembled 2003:14). His appearance on the scene in *Woman and Devil* is unremarkable, the old woman is not afraid of him, and his tone of voice, as performed by Stanley Robertson, is reasonable. The manner in which the Devil is characterised in

(speaking-hearing) folktales and folklore is unlikely to be ready knowledge in the signing-deaf community; as Bob Duncan described it:

When Stanley says 'the Devil' there's all sorts of stuff going on there that he knows and we know that he knows, we sort of know from our background. Frankie wouldn't get a lot of that, but he would put other things into his Devil, which is interesting. (BD:2014)

The 'other things' are more likely to be drawn from visual rather than spoken-oral or literate forms of popular culture, reflecting the bicultural engagement of signing-deaf people with the speaking-hearing world primarily through the visual modality. Frankie McLean's Devil character can be seen to draw on a particular seductive image of the Devil popularised in advertising and popular culture of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Muchembled 2003:272), which he personates as an uxorious, ingratiating and sinister presence (Fig. 22). In contrast to Stanley Robertson's delivery, Frankie makes the Devil's appearance on the scene somewhat dramatic, marked by raised eyebrows and a head-tilt backwards as though taken aback. He continues to use the smarmy and sinister personation throughout the Devil's delivery of dialogue, whereas Stanley's delivery and word-choice is matter-of-fact (e.g. 'And the Devil says, "Well, that's your three wishes."'). Frankie's personation of the Devil makes it clear throughout that there must be a trick involved in his bargain with the old woman, which in Stanley's version is the tacit understanding of the audience but which is never made explicit.



**Fig. 22** – *The Devil* (Frankie McLean)

The performance of character reiterates the point made in Chapter Three that the distinction between language and acting in signed-oral performance-texts is largely artificial: performing a story such as this in BSL *without* investing it with characterisation would be extremely difficult. Part of this is that, in telling what a character does, the signer must almost inevitably show the manner in which the character does it. Whereas the autocue text of the story merely states the action (i.e. *And it was the handsomest fella that ever walked the earth came in. And she says, "Oh, this is really good"*), BSL personation depicts the manner in which the action is undertaken, and role-shifts enable the reaction of other characters to be shown (Figs. 23 and 24).



**Fig. 23** – *How he walks in (Frankie McLean)*



**Fig. 24** – *The woman's response (Frankie McLean)*

This allows the BSL interlocutor, storyteller, Signartist or translator a great deal of creative license to act the parts and send up the comedic aspects, a recurring feature in signed-oral performance-texts.

Characterisation and performing actions and reactions take what might be considered in a spoken-oral performance-text to be a disproportionate amount of time. In Stanley Robertson's telling of *Woman and Devil*, the humour of the woman and Tom's night together is conveyed in the details that are left unsaid and the suppressed laughter in his voice; the description (below) is sparse and delivered in 33 seconds:



So ... her and this handsome man, they dine and wine, and they dance and they listen to beautiful music. And it comes to the night. And they come to make love, you know, in their bed. So she dresses in her most beautiful gown, puts on her expensive perfumes and she lets her hair long. And she looks in the mirror and she says, "I'm so gorgeous." And she looks at the lad. And the lad puts out the light. And she says, "Oh, he's so gorgeous. I've got everything and nothing could be happier!" So she goes into the bed with the fella and . . . She starts to cuddle and kiss him.

This passage lends itself to extension for visual comic effect in BSL. Frankie McLean's performance of it at Stanley Robertson's speed seems rushed and lacks the well-paced comedy of his own rendition. At his own pace, he draws it out to twice the length, giving himself enough time to perform the characters' actions and responses and so produces a more visually holistic scene. This is particularly the case in his personation of the woman, which he clearly relishes; he extends the scene, letting the two characters' eyes linger on each other and the woman's long eyelashes flutter (Fig. 25) and he draws out the actions in the run-up to the lovemaking scene (Figs. 26 and 27).



**Fig. 25** – *Woman gazing (Frankie McLean)*



**Fig. 26** – ‘*And she lets her hair long*’ (Frankie McLean)



**Fig. 27** – ‘*And she looks in the mirror*’ (Frankie McLean)

Frankie McLean’s characterisations make *Woman and Devil* an extremely typical signed-oral performance-text; they also make it a very idiosyncratic one. It is impossible to disconnect the character from the physical person of the storyteller: Rose argues that ‘analysis must involve ... the author’s specific facial expressions – including every nuance of movement of the mouth, eyes, eyebrows – and tilts of the head, tension in the shoulders’ (2006:136).<sup>167</sup> Frankie was given words, but his own language induced him to move beyond them. Spoken-oral and signed-oral storytelling uses different

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<sup>167</sup> Pollitt even contends that the shape of Signartist Paul Scott’s lips are an integral part of the affect of his personation of Queen Elizabeth I in one of his performance-texts (2014:192; 2015a).

methods for conveying character, action and humour: the former may use sparser description to evoke an image in the mind of the listener, whereas in BSL the skill is in the transmission of the performer's own internal image to the audience. As a translator of a story, Frankie McLean is also a storyteller; it would be very difficult to translate *Woman and Devil* in BSL without making it a performance-text.

### ***Telling it to his ain folk? The punchline of Woman and Devil***

A further creative decision which highlights that the BSL:UPTAKE project was as much an act of storytelling as of translation was Frankie McLean's decision to end the *Woman and Devil* with a visual punchline that makes the implications of Stanley Robertson's ending fully explicit. The autocue reads:

And he says, "There's only one thing I would like to say to you."

And she says, "What's that, darling?" she says.

"Remember the time you took me to the vet, many years ago?"

This was '[some]thing I struggled with', Frankie McLean told me; the ending, he felt, lacked something from a signing-deaf perspective (FM:2012). His concern stemmed in part from the fact that there is no standardised sign for VET in most dialects of BSL, meaning that it would typically be fingerspelled; a fingerspelled loanword from English lacks the visual impact of a sign. More significantly, both Frankie and Tessa Padden felt that the humour was too obviously from speaking-hearing culture:

I remember Frankie and I spent a good while discussing this. [...] It is hearing humour not Deaf - they are different, and that is why we felt we had to add something. (TP:2014)

The humour in Stanley Robertson's version rests on what is not said: the unspoken fact that Tom the cat has been castrated. To reverse the title of Susan Rutherford's article about the cultural specificity of signed humour 'Funny in Deaf, Not in Hearing' (1983), a literal translation of Stanley's punchline is funny in hearing, not in deaf. Signing-deaf humour 'has a strong visual base' (Bienvenu 1994:17), which Frankie alluded to in his explanation:

It's all direct, visual... the meaning must be explicit. Visualising things, the castration, they can get that quickly and laugh. It's got to be visual. Punchlines that rely on tailing off, they won't work for Deaf people. (FM:2012)<sup>168</sup>

Drawing on the visuality of signing-deaf humour, Frankie concludes *Woman and Devil* with an addition: a snipping gesture to make explicit the neutering of the cat (Figs. 28a & 28b).



**Figs. 28a & 28b** – *The visual punchline*

Frankie acknowledged that 'this wasn't in the [original] story, nothing verbally referred to genitalia', yet he argued that it was an issue of access to incidental knowledge: 'I felt if I conveyed exactly what was said originally, some wouldn't get it' (FM:2012). It should be noted that, while the response to Frankie's version of *Woman and Devil* has tended to be enthusiastic, one

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<sup>168</sup> In addition to Rutherford (1983), see Bienvenu (1994), Bouchevou (1994), Ladd (2003:364-366) and Napoli and Sutton-Spence (2011) for more on signed humour.

signing-deaf person told me that they felt that the addition of the snipping gesture was patronising, reinforcing the misconception of signing-deaf people as less intelligent. Yet Frankie reasoned that BSL:UPTAKE was designed for a mixed speaking-hearing and signing-deaf audience, and that the brief lag whilst some members of the signing-deaf audience processed the implications of the fingerpelled word .V.E.T. privileged the speaking-hearing audience members unduly:

I wanted to do something that both hearing and Deaf people would laugh at the end, together. I've seen so many times that when hearing people laugh, Deaf people don't and there's a delayed reaction while they think about it, analyse... then laugh. That delay... My aim was that both groups, hearing and Deaf, laugh at the same time, straightaway. [...] If Deaf people prefer visual information then they should get it [...] – that's access. (FM:2012)

At 'Deaf in the Story' and subsequently, the timing of this response has been consistent with Frankie's aims; indeed, students from Celtic and Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh have informally suggested to me that they preferred the visual punchline over Stanley Robertson's spoken original. If the aim for BSL:UPTAKE was for the translation to 'make the same sort of impact in BSL as Stanley makes in Scots' (BD:2014), then this has been achieved through taking the original material and adding to it, and in doing so draws a speaking-hearing audience into the possibilities of signed storytelling.

### **Looking back and looking forward**

The argument has been made in this chapter that, by translating a spoken-oral performance-text into BSL, the translator must also perform as a storyteller. The BSL:UPTAKE translations commissioned for the 'Deaf in the Story' event have been used as an effective initial case-study for exploring a

contribution of storytelling (in this case, translation-as-storytelling-event) to the deaf public voice, and the ways in which the bicultural relationship between the signing-deaf micro-culture and the speaking-hearing majority culture are expressed and worked through by the translator-storyteller. Translating stories across the languages, modalities, and cultures of two of Scotland's autochthonous communities is an inherently bicultural act, which both highlights commonalities and distinctions between the source and the target performance-texts. BSL:UPTAKE placed signed-oral performances alongside spoken-oral traditional arts, the value of which had already been established; it did so in a public venue known to support the idea of traditional arts as part of Scotland's national heritage. In so doing, the key message about signing-deaf culture that is being transmitted is that signed-oral traditions and the people who participate in them have intrinsic value as part of Scotland's heritage.

If we understand signing-deaf biculturality as entailing the complex negotiation between being *of* the majority culture, but to some extent excluded from it, and being *apart from* it, then we can see this negotiation taking place in the content of the translations, and the context – both of the storytelling events themselves, and the broader context of Deaf in the Story. In terms of the content, both *Family Activity* and *Woman and Devil* came emphatically from a spoken-oral tradition, yet this source material was chosen because of the perceived similarities between signed-oral and spoken-oral storytelling contexts. *Family Activity* in particular describes storytelling events that echo the informal and familial BSL storytelling events described in Chapter Three. The BSL:UPTAKE translations can be seen as emphasising the shared cultural context in which all of Scotland's corp-oral traditions operate, similar and yet distinct from one another. In crossing between two corp-oral traditions, the

source – spoken Scots – had to be rendered through written English; yet the target draws on the signed-oral tradition to produce a performance-text in parallel with (i.e. similar to but distinct from) the spoken-oral original.

One of the ways in which Frankie McLean performed his biculturality was by semantically extending the source text to match the projected signing-deaf audience. This he did without ‘breaking character’ and drawing attention to the extra-textual nature of these additions; they were delivered as though they were part of the original, as one insider to another. This showed an ideological commitment to the idea of equal access: access not only to the source material, but to incidental knowledge and entertainment value. This ideology also underpinned the context of the translations. All those involved in BSL:UPTAKE took for granted that spoken-oral Scots material *should* be made accessible to signing-deaf people. The translations can be seen as the performance of a particular conceptualisation of biculturality, in which signing-deaf people have a stake in the culture of the speaking-hearing majority, and a contribution to make to it.

The chapter showed how Frankie McLean performed distinctive features of BSL signartistry in the process of translation. The signartistry employed was an extension of that used in everyday BSL, e.g. characterisation through role-shift, consistently and deeply realised. Visual details were given more time and weighting than in Stanley Robertson’s versions, resulting in performance-texts of twice the length. He made creative decisions about the characterisation – necessarily, due to the ubiquity of role-shift. Frankie appears to have been successful in producing the ‘real BSL storytelling experience’ required of him by Bob Duncan: a signing-deaf attendee at Deaf in the Story believed it to have originated in her own community, while Jemina Napier

described it as ‘look[ing] like authentic BSL storytelling’ (JN:2013). Tessa Padden expressed her response to FM’s storytelling style in emotional terms:

[It] moved me nearly to tears. There was something there – it’s hard to explain - so smooth and fluent... (TP:2014)

Similarly, Frankie McLean performed the *difference* of BSL by altering the ending of *Woman and Devil* to fit his and Tessa Padden’s sense of culturally appropriate humour, delivering the final punchline of the folktale with a visualisation of Tom’s earlier castration. In Bob Duncan’s words, FM ‘told it in his own way and in a lovely way’ (BD:2014) – and in a way which subtly brought his own signed-oral culture to the fore while drawing on the visual referents that are shared with the speaking-hearing world, such as the characterisation of the Devil.

This latter point reinforces my argument that the BSL:UPTAKE translations should be considered as storytelling events. However, it must be acknowledged that the source material is from speaking-hearing culture, and thus the translations only demonstrate that BSL is a language capable of telling a story from spoken-oral tradition – and of telling it well. They do not demonstrate that signed-oral performance-texts may be structurally, thematically and/or poetically ‘other’ than spoken-oral ones, or the extent to which cultural referents about signing-deaf experiences may be embedded in the signartistry. As Andy Carmichael remarked about Frankie McLean’s translations:

He’s very talented [...] [but] it’s still a translation [...] What interests me is what drives deaf narrative, what drives deaf people to tell narratives, not how they translate. (AC:2013)

The next chapter turns to narratives conceived of and produced in BSL, taking as a case-study a series of signed-oral history DVDs, entitled *Presenting the*



*Past: My Firsts*; through this some of the recurrent themes of signing-deaf experience will come to the fore, which inform the storytelling and Signart of the community.

## ***Seeing voices: bicultural themes, performances and (counter-) narratives in signed-oral history interviews***

The previous chapter examined stories from spoken-oral tradition in Scotland being translated into a signed-oral storytelling performance idiom; this chapter moves away from the idea of translation *into* BSL and instead begins to examine narratives originally conceived of and produced in BSL. It presents as a second case-study material from personal experience narratives collected and published as a series of DVDs by SCoD. The ubiquity of personal experience narratives in both speaking-hearing and signing-deaf communities has been highlighted in Chapter Three. Case-study 2 concerns informal, conversational and at times unconscious storytelling events, whereas Case-study 1 and Case-study 3 both concern conscious cultural performances, the former from a spoken-oral source and the latter from signed-oral tradition. Although the narratives that comprise Case-study 2 rarely seem to be prepared as storytelling events (reflecting their solicited and *ad hoc* nature) and lack the structure and overt artistry of Signart, they are frequently artful in their performance and contain recurrent themes and particular, codified sign constructions that will appear in the Signart in Case-study 3. Consequently, this chapter should be seen as a bridge between the discussion of BSL as a language of storytelling (Case-study 1) and Signart as the conscious storying of the shared experiences of signing-deaf people into a performance artform (Case-study 3).

In this chapter, I present examples from the corpus of DVDs which are illustrative of the experiences of being a signing-deaf person in Scotland from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, experiences which may then be incorporated into

Signart. The formative years of the people interviewed, all of whom were over 50, was prior to the recognition of BSL as a language, and when attendance at a residential deaf school was typical. It should be remembered that signing was stigmatised until the late 1980s, and English was the high prestige language.

In terms of the deaf public voice, the DVDs were targeted at both signing-deaf and speaking-hearing people, but for different reasons. As with Case-study 1, the first sections of this chapter will introduce and contextualise the project and its content in relation to the deaf public voice, which will be returned to in the conclusion. Case-study 2 is most useful, however, in terms of the second central research question, which asks how the personal experience narratives on the DVDs express and/or perform the complex bicultural relationship between the signing-deaf community and mainstream speaking-hearing society. Bicultural themes appear in the content of the narratives, and are also performed (both overtly and implicitly) through the signartistry, which is almost exclusively positioned close to the everyday. The exploration of biculturality will be presented in three parts. First, I highlight certain elements which render the narratives storytelling events, and builds on the discussion of role-shift and personation in Chapter Four to examine how the narrators creatively personate signing-deaf and speaking-hearing characters. This section most closely concerns signartistry.

The second and third parts focus more on content than performance, because the interviews have been presented as de-contextualised clips rather than in their totality. As I did not undertake interviews 'in the field' (as explained in Chapter Two), I use the interviews as I would archive material to provide tangible examples of key issues of biculturality that have hitherto been described in the abstract. I base my quotations on the DVDs' subtitles,

including my own additions where they were insufficient. I distinguish between 'of, but excluded from' and 'apart from' biculturality. The former considers access to and interactions with majority culture, and the impact of institutional audism on signing-deaf cultural identification within wider society, including the significance of deaf education. However, deaf schools, arguably the most formative experience for many signing-deaf people, do not receive attention; this omission will be explained in the next section. Through these themes, I examine how the interviewees negotiate the tension between the majority Scottish culture, of which they are part, and their own subordinated culture and habitus. I then consider the other pole of biculturality: the signing-deaf habitus itself, and the paths through which the interviewees came into the community and their deafhood. In addition to 'signing-deafness' as the positive identifier, I consider the deaf club and other, mobile forms of DEAFspace as arenas for engagement with deafhood.

Personal experience narratives collected on DVD cannot be considered typical of storytelling within DEAFspace; however, in terms of material contributing to the deaf public voice, this case-study does come closest to storytelling events as they appear within the community. Just as *Family Activity* provided the context to *Woman and Devil* in spoken-oral tradition, so do these personal experience narratives contextualise the production of Signart, and thus this chapter lays essential groundwork for Case-study 3. Furthermore, as a collection in the public domain, Case-study 2 contributes to the meta-narrative described in Case-study 1 in terms of placing 'deaf in the story', i.e. demanding that the experiences of signing-deaf people be acknowledged alongside those of the other (speaking-hearing) communities in Scotland, recognised as both *of* the majority culture and *apart from* it.

## Case-study 2: Presenting the Past: My Firsts and Deaf Sporting Memories

The data set of this case-study is six signed-oral history DVDs produced by SCoD between 2009-2015. Operating under the slogan ‘the voice of deaf people in Scotland’, SCoD is an umbrella organisation which represents professional bodies, local authorities, and local and national deaf organisations.<sup>169</sup> SCoD’s remit incorporates the full spectrum of audiological deafness and associated conditions, e.g. deafened, deafblind and hard-of-hearing people; however, while Action on Hearing Loss (formerly the Royal National Institute for Deaf People, RNID) is often treated with suspicion (see Alker 2000), SCoD tends to be perceived as supporting the claim of signing-deaf communities to linguistic and cultural minority status. This is largely due to the long directorship of Lilian Lawson, who is seen as a champion of BSL.<sup>170</sup> The signed-oral history project could be described as Lilian’s pet project; she was instrumental in establishing DHS in 2009 and is concerned with the preservation of Scotland’s signing-deaf heritage:

The great worry of many people is that as deaf clubs and other organisations close, what happens to their artefacts and records? Likewise with deaf schools that have closed, their records have just been thrown away or given to hearing museums and archives. As a result Deaf people do not have ready access to their history. (LL:2013)

The SCoD management committee obtained funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund to undertake an oral history collection project in 2010; DHS was represented on the project’s steering committee, and was responsible for providing workshops in schools relating to some of the footage. The original aim was to produce a single DVD; this was extended to five individual DVDs and a further three-disc boxset. The series is called *Presenting the Past: My Firsts*

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<sup>169</sup> <http://www.scod.org.uk/about/who-we-are/> [accessed 06/01/14]

<sup>170</sup> Lilian Lawson retired in 2014; the current director of SCoD is Janis MacDonald.

(abbreviated to *My Firsts*); the boxset, *Back to School*, was delayed in production and was released in May 2015, thus its content does not form part of this case-study. The significance placed on attending residential deaf schools was outlined in Chapter One, and schooldays are a core subject of personal experience narratives, dealing both with the oppression of Oralist pedagogies and institutionalisation, and with the positivity of finding a peer group and acquiring BSL. While it is unfortunate that the most common theme in BSL personal experience storytelling cannot be discussed, education in other forms (particularly further education) does appear in the DVDs; furthermore, this unintentional omission gives more weight to personal experience topics which are less frequently analysed.<sup>171</sup> I focus on the five individual *My Firsts* DVDs, entitled *Deaf People at Work*, *Deaf People at War*, *Deaf People on the Road*, *Deaf People at Home*, and *Deaf People at Rest* (abbreviated as *Work*, *War*, *Road*, *Home* and *Rest* respectively), and an additional DVD entitled *Deaf Sporting Memories* (*Sport*). *Sport* has been included as part of this case-study due to its similarity to *My Firsts*, having been produced by the same organisation during the same period and for similar reasons; moreover, Lilian Lawson acknowledged that part of the rationale for producing it was the omission of questions on this topic in the *My Firsts* series, an oversight given the significance of deaf sports teams in signing-deaf communities.<sup>172</sup> Collectively, this corpus will be referred to as *the DVDs*.

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<sup>171</sup> Other collections of signed-oral history DVDs which contain stories from deaf schools include *Signs of Our Lives* (Stories in the Air, 2009), collected in the west of Scotland. Stories about schooldays are found across the deaf studies literature; for the British Isles, see Ladd (2003).

<sup>172</sup> This was reflected in the theme of the 9<sup>th</sup> Deaf History International conference in 2015. Two papers by Jordan Eickman, 'The Role Of Deaf Sport In Developing Deaf Identity' and 'Tracing Deafhood: Exploring The Origins And Spread Of Deaf Cultural Identity — Deaf Sport Clubs' was particularly informative. The production of *Sport* was part of DHS's successful bid with the British Deaf History Society to host the conference in Edinburgh, and

A limitation is the heavily curated nature of the DVDs. The full interviews have been edited into clips arranged in thematic sections which disrupts the 'flow' of the narratives.<sup>173</sup> This also makes it difficult or impossible to establish the specifics of each interviewee's life history, including details about whether they are PDFs, which deaf school they attended, and other factors which may impact on where they place themselves on the bilingual and bicultural continuum. Furthermore, the narratives solicited were unprepared as the interviewees did not have prior access to the questions, thus storytelling performance elements may be slower to come to the fore given the somewhat formal, filmed nature of the interviews.

### ***The interviews***

The DVDs were compiled from footage from 57 interviews collected by ten volunteers who were trained by the Scottish Oral History Centre. The steering committee compiled a list of standardised questions, most of which were based on the chosen theme of 'firsts' (e.g. first job, first car, first house). Where possible, the interviews were filmed in deaf clubs local to the interviewees, although where deaf clubs had closed or were unsuitable, alternative premises were sought including museums and galleries such as Riverside Museum, Glasgow, arguably placing signing-deaf history on the shared platform of Scottish national history.

The interviewees were recruited through seven open meetings held across Scotland, with two selection criteria: that they were brought up in

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was also inspired by London's hosting of the 2012 Olympics and Glasgow's of the 2014 Commonwealth Games.

<sup>173</sup> See Appendix 2.1 for the tracklists. The DVDs are held at SSSA or can be ordered from SCoD.

Scotland or had lived there for most of their life, and that they were aged over 50 years old.<sup>174</sup> The rationale for the age restriction was threefold:

- the experiences of this demographic were more acutely at risk of being lost than those of younger generations;
- narratives produced in older forms of BSL provide useful corpus material for recording language change;
- signing-deaf people in this age group could be expected to have attended a deaf school rather than having been through mainstream education.<sup>175</sup>

Run through SCoD and led by a respected community leader, the project avoided the well-documented issues of recruiting signing-deaf participants for research projects (Fenlon *et al.* 2015:162). The fieldworkers were all signing-deaf people and Lilian Lawson herself did the filming and much of the transcribing: 'there were no hearing people involved' (LL:2013). Given the small number of BSL-users in Scotland, we can assume that many of the fieldworkers would be known to the interviewees, whether personally or through mutual contacts, and could be expected to share some of the experiences being described. As such, it is likely that the interviewees described experiences candidly; it may also have impacted on the register of BSL through which the narratives are expressed, as signing-deaf fieldworkers mitigate the tendency of signers to 'produce contact varieties of sign language

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<sup>174</sup> *Sport* did not include this age limit. In the *My Firsts* series, four of the interviewees also had learning difficulties; their narratives were only included in the *Back to School* DVDs, so are not discussed in this case-study. Lilian Lawson flagged up that the DVDs contain no footage of deafblind people, which she described as 'unfortunate as it would have been an interesting group' (LL:2013). Moreover, it was noted in Chapter Two that all three case-studies did not involve any black, minority or ethnic participants.

<sup>175</sup> To Lilian Lawson's surprise, several of those interviewed had, in fact, been mainstreamed (LL:2013).



(i.e., varieties reflecting relatively more English influence, or perhaps with greater code-switching between English and BSL) when in the presence of hearing signers' (Schembri *et al.* 2013:143). The DVDs contain diverse language and communication styles, including regional BSL, fingerspelling, and English contact forms (both Sign-Supported English and the use of mouth-pattern). The incorporation of English into the interviewees' BSL is particularly indicative of the subordinated position of BSL in relation the majority language (especially in their youth, before BSL was recognised), and of the extent of everyday bilingualism.

### ***Multiple audiences and the deaf public voice***

The DVDs are an active contribution to the deaf public voice in Scotland: they were freely distributed to schools and libraries, accessioned in SSSA, and made available to members of DHS and at events like 'Deaf in the Story'. In line with Bechter's definition, they were explicitly aimed at two distinct audiences: signing-deaf people –

We wanted to preserve and share older people's experiences with younger Deaf people, so that they could see their Deaf history and culture. (LL:2013)

- and speaking-hearing people:

The DVDs allow hearing people to research and learn more about the culture and language of Deaf people and how the Deaf community has evolved over the years. (LL:2013)

The manner in which the material is curated is responsive both to the expectations of those familiar with signing-deaf culture (i.e. having a DVD focused on school experiences; the centrality of the deaf club in *Rest*; sections in *Home* about specific technical aids such as flashing doorbells, which Rutherford 1983:314 describes as a cultural identifier) and those who are not: *Road* tacitly responds to the surprise speaking-hearing people often express at

the fact that deaf people can drive.<sup>176</sup> Lilian Lawson solicited feedback when editing the DVDs:

[I asked] two hearing members of staff to read the transcript and view the clips, so that we got some different perspectives. [...] They were better placed to identify which clips hearing people would find most interesting. (LL:2013)

The DVDs' educational application was apparent in their distribution to schools and the school workshops delivered by DHS in April and May 2015. The inclusion of *War* as a topic could be seen as responsive to the centrality of the Second World War to the curriculum, which has been a consideration for other signed-oral history DVDs:

If you're producing materials in BSL, they're much more likely to find some mainstream application at a mainstream school if they fit into the mainstream curriculum. (Robert Clyde, *Stories in the Air*; quoted in E. Leith 2010:60)

For the speaking-hearing audience, the aim of the DVDs is to show signing-deaf communities as both *like* and *unlike* speaking-hearing communities in Scotland, and the contribution to the deaf public voice is the normalisation of signing-deaf people's everyday lives for those who have not hitherto been obliged to consider 'normality' in another habitus. Given the ubiquity of spoken English in Britain, a signing-deaf person's experience of not being able to take communication for granted in everyday interactions is fundamentally strange to many speaking-hearing people; for most, the closest comparison would be their own experiences on foreign holidays. The assumption of foreignness is also described in the DVDs:

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<sup>176</sup> "Do you drive?" is cited in Meriah Nichols' article on *Limping Chicken*, '10 dumb things hearing people commonly say to deaf people – featuring Captain Picard', November 2014: <http://limpingchicken.com/2014/11/30/meriah-nichols-10-dumb-things-hearing-people-commonly-say-to-deaf-people-featuring-captain-picard-2/> [accessed 11/12/14]

The large interview panel thought I was a foreigner, not Deaf; something I didn't realise until afterwards. (Hamish Rosie, *Work*)

Yet 'deaf people are not foreigners in their own country' (Murray 2008:102), and the DVDs thus invite a speaking-hearing audience to question their own assumptions of normal everyday life in Scotland. The subtitles project 'Scottishness': the interviewees' (regionally distinctive) BSL is predominantly translated into Standard English, but with the inclusion of certain Scots words, e.g. *crabbit* and *clyped*. This was a conscious decision: Lilian Lawson stated that 'this is a Scottish project and therefore we wanted to use Scottish words where appropriate' (LL:2013). It can be interpreted as actively placing signing-deaf heritage into the Scottish 'mirror' of National Heritage (Stuart Hall 2005).

A remote speaking-hearing audience was always intended; however, the DVDs include many indications that the interviewees were more closely directing their narratives at the insider audience – i.e. the immediate audience of signing-deaf fieldworkers (and occasionally co-interviewees) and the remote signing-deaf audience. The narratives are replete with insider knowledge, specific to Scottish signing-deaf communities: Edinburgh's deaf club is referred to as 'number 49' (i.e. 49 Albany Street), esoteric sign-names for places and schools are used without explanation, assumptions are made that the pedagogical traditions of particular deaf schools will be known to the audience, and particular individuals are named without their significance made explicit. This latter is a recognised feature of signing-deaf communities, where interpersonal relationships are highly prized; it has been satirised on *The Limping Chicken*, a deaf magazine-style blog:

There's no doubt that the deaf world is small, but it is still remarkable just how often we act as though other deaf people we know are minor

celebrities [...] This is why I know the life history of a number of deaf people who I have never met. (Swinbourne 2013)<sup>177</sup>

It would seem that, despite the equally outward-looking remit, the DVDs were fundamentally conceived of by interviewees and project leaders alike as a cultural and historical archive aimed at signing-deaf people – a necessary part of the deaf public voice.

### **Performing persons: signed-oral history narratives as storytelling events**

Even as unprepared responses to interview questions, the narratives on the DVD frequently employ everyday signartistry to become clear performance-texts. Inevitably, but unfortunately, much of this is not discernible in the subtitles: the degree of detail given in describing the manner in which waves form on the swimming pool in a description of an earthquake, for example, or the details of a waitresses' frilly caps and aprons, are lost. Continuing the discussion of role-shift and characterisation in Chapter Four, I consider it valuable to include screenshots of some interviewees, as many make use of these features particularly for comic effect. A prime example is Mary Whittaker's description, humorously delivered with suspense carefully built up, of finding herself alone in an eerily empty Heathrow terminal, unaware of the tannoy announcement of an IRA bomb scare. In the performance-text, she expertly role-shifts between herself and the armed policemen who came to investigate her (*Rest*, Figs. 29-32).

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<sup>177</sup> Charlie Swinbourne, 'The 10 annoying habits of deaf people' <http://limpingchicken.com/2013/07/10/annoying-habits-of-deaf-people/> July 10 2013 [accessed 14/08/14]



**Fig. 29**

*'I checked my pass for the gate number, destination and flight number – all correct.'*  
(Mary Whittaker)



**Fig. 30** – *'Suddenly I felt a hand grabbing my shoulder.'* (Mary Whittaker)

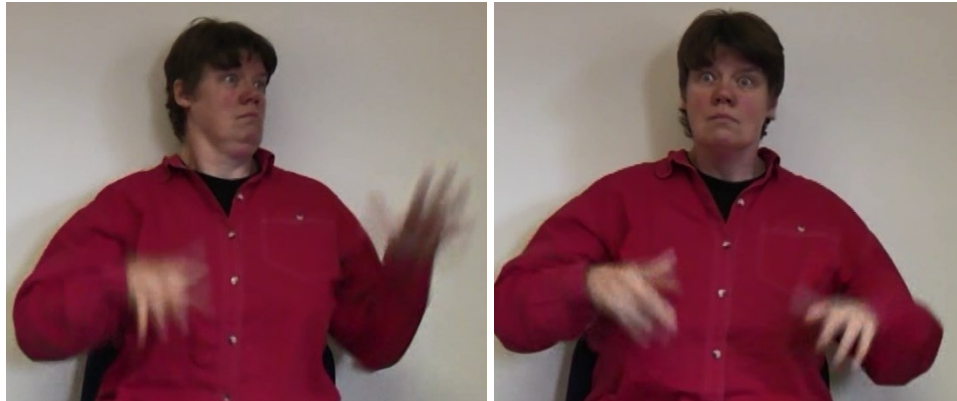


**Fig. 31a & 31b** – *'I got such a fright and looked round.'* (Mary Whittaker)

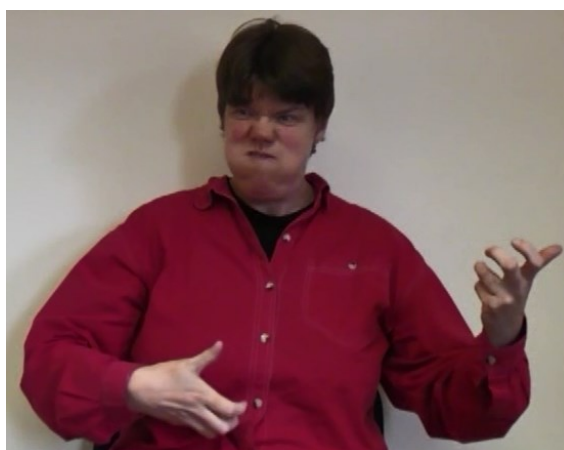


**Fig. 32a & 32b** – *'There were two policemen with guns.'* (Mary Whittaker)

In addition to this observational comedy, the linguistic diversity of signing-deaf communities is frequently embedded into the manner in which characters and their reported speech are performed. This can be a seamless code-switch into a different signing style to reflect the character being described, for example the use of fingerspelling:

My boss told me I should go to .C.O.L.L.E.G.E. – he always used fingerspelling. (Erelend Tulloch, *Work*)

Other interviewees also code-switch to perform speech by silently mouthing it, typically to perform speaking-hearing parents ('But my mother and father were furious – they said "Tom is too old for you"' – Jean Bruce, *Rest*). The communicative style of the character can be fully incorporated into their personation. A particularly eloquent example is Robina Drewry's personation of her future husband, George, who is described as refined and polite (*Rest*). Robina personates him with a head-tilt to the side and an elegantly raised hand (Fig. 33).



**Fig. 33** – George (*Robina Drewry*)

Into this personation, she also renders his particular language choices. Having been educated at Mary Hare, the prestigious and Oralist deaf grammar school, George used speech, not BSL. When personating George, Robina code-

switches: she mouths English clearly and slowly, thus embedding his educational background and degree of bilingualism into the performance along with the manner in which he speaks and moves:

He asked me “where are you going?” I said *Off for a cup of tea*. I should have gone to the evening class but instead I lied. He said “May I join you?” He was more refined than other men I had met and very polite. (Robina Drewry, *Rest*)<sup>178</sup>

Robina’s personation of George is inherently bicultural: not only is it born out of her own bilingualism (i.e. her knowledge of spoken English), but she assumes a similar bilingualism in her audience (i.e. that they will be able to read her lips as she personates George) and their cultural awareness of what his speech signifies in terms of his background. The spoken modality expressed without sound is a recurring feature in BSL storytelling,<sup>179</sup> and the use of role-shift as a means of performing their own and others’ biculturality indicates a creative consciousness of performance on the part of the narrators even in impromptu and to some extent conversational storytelling.

### ***Performing and responding to hearing bodies***

The speech of speaking-hearing characters is also performed, typically in terms of the strangeness of the spoken modality to signing-deaf eyes and the different nature of a speaking-hearing habitus; as Cohn puts it, ‘When seen from a culture based on whole body language, English offered nothing but a labyrinth of mechanically moving lips’ (1999:37). The strangeness of the speech modality to signing-deaf eyes is a recurring image throughout the

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<sup>178</sup> Silently mouthed dialogue is placed in quotation marks whereas signed dialogue is italicised; see conventions list at the beginning of the thesis.

<sup>179</sup> It is also used in conversation: at times, when I and other non-deaf learners have been using our voices at a signing event, a signing-deaf acquaintance has approached us and “spoken” to us, often producing an audible babble to match the visual one – the equivalent to saying *blah blah blah*. This is typically a mocking reminder to us that we are using our hearing privilege and should be signing in DEAFspace.



narratives. Speaking-hearing people are sometimes depicted with silently babbling mouths (e.g. by Audrey Carmeron, *Sport*), or with techniques of the body which could be described as leaky as well as frightening, as in Lilian Lawson's description of her driving instructor's temper (*Road*, Fig. 34).

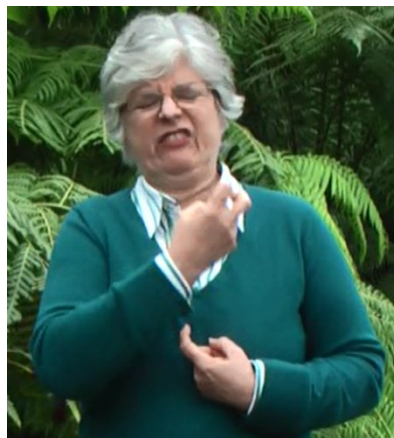


**Fig. 34** – ‘Oh he had such a temper and he used to spit when telling me off.’  
(Lilian Lawson)

The strangeness of speech can extend to non-signing deaf people. This is apparent in Robina Drewry's account of attending a dinner-dance at Mary Hare, an oral-deaf habitus to which she was unaccustomed:

There was someone speaking <*silently babbling mouth*>. I couldn't understand him and asked Ann Marie if the speaker was deaf. She said he was. (Robina Drewry, *Rest*)

Although Robina is accepting of her future husband's use of speech, she remarks on the physical effort it took to adjust to his communication style, incorporating cradling her jaw into her signing (Fig. 35).



**Fig. 35**

*'It was hard work and soon my jaws were sore as I was not used to it. [...] It was surprising that they were so sore after talking.'* (Robina Drewry)

Signing-deafness, then, is experienced as sensually *apart from* the majority's unfamiliar techniques of the body. The following section examines narratives on the DVD which deal with being *of but excluded from* this society which is not tailored to signing-deaf norms (Murray 2008:102).

### ***Of, but excluded from: living in a world tailored to hearing norms***

It should be noted that many of the experiences of being *of but excluded from* the majority culture are not exclusively culturally contingent. Many aspects of living in a phonocentric society are shared with non-signing deaf people, i.e. those who are culturally affiliated with the majority, speaking-hearing habitus, and yet excluded from aspects of the sole culture with which they identify. Signing-deaf communities occupy the interstice where physiology (i.e. audiological deafness), language and culture collide, and it would be misleading to characterise experiences pertaining to audiological deafness as being less representative of biculturality than those relating to language.

Although the DVDs contain narratives about active discrimination, many more stem from obliviousness about the implications of audiological

deafness; this obliviousness can be institutional (e.g. Mary Whittaker's narrative about the IRA bomb-scare), personal (e.g. Lilian Lawson's 'funny story but it could have been serious' about colleagues failing to alert her to a fire alarm, in *Work*), and even familial (e.g. Alexa McLean's account in *War* of her four-year-old self paddling in the sea, unaware of the air-raid sirens and her mother's shouted summons). These and many other narratives on the DVDs are told in a manner which minimises their impact, i.e. using humour or underplaying the effects, which is poignant given the potentially tragic ramifications: 'bombs were dropping in the bay and the planes were approaching the harbour' by the time Alexa McLean's mother 'realised she had forgotten me being deaf', and Mary Whittaker's panicked response to the armed police ('They spoke fast. I said *I am deaf I am deaf* <panicky>') seems appropriate given recent news stories about deaf people being shot by police in error.<sup>180</sup> These experiences are a fundamental part of signing-deaf biculturality, constituted around the expectation that society is not tailored to signing-deaf norms (Murray 2008:102).

***Being part of the story: absorbing, adapting and accessing 'knowledge of the hearing world'***

Following on from Case-study 1, it is interesting that the only explicit mentions of storytelling on the DVDs are in the context of translations and adaptations from English. They come from two sources: religious (i.e. church elders, ministers, Sunday School teachers), which is unsurprising given the

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<sup>180</sup> See for example 'Dad shot dead by cops for failing to obey orders was DEAF' by Christopher Bucktin, *Mirror*, 23 September 2014 (<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/edward-miller-shot-dead-cops-4311746> [accessed 14/10/14]; in *The Limping Chicken*, Andrew Hearn has written about being stopped repeatedly by airport police due to the apparently suspicious manner in which he scanned his surroundings; his response, 'I do my "I-am-deaf!" many times per second', is similar to that of Mary Whittaker ('Escaping the airport police', 13 March 2012, <http://limpingchicken.com/2012/03/13/andrew-hearn-escaping-the-airport-police/> 15/03/15) [accessed 17/03/15].

traditionally strong relationship between signing-deaf communities and churches (critiqued through a post-colonial lens by Ladd 2003); and television, which echoes the centrality of cinematographic storytelling styles.

In translated or adapted Biblical stories or sermons, the fact that the stories were transmitted in BSL appears to be as much part of the enjoyment as the stories themselves (Fig. 36).



**Fig. 36** – ‘*The Reverend signed to us. We watched enthralled.*’ (Hamish Rosie)

Conversely, the discussion of television and film by the interviewees tends to be related in terms of its impact on their imaginative and creative play, mentioned in Chapter Three. John Hay recalls that, rather than being a barrier to enjoyment, the lack of subtitles could function as a stimulus:

I had the television to myself, and I watched it Monday to Sunday: cowboys, adventures, Robin Hood, William Tell, .S.I.R. .L.A.N.C.E.L.O.T.<sup>181</sup> [...] There were no subtitles so I had to use my imagination. [...] Lots of deaf people loved watching Coronation Street for many years before subtitles, using their imagination and making up storylines. (John Hay, *Home*)

The warm terms in which the shared enjoyment of making up storylines is described should not be construed as a statement of preference for no subtitles, but as an appreciation of the creative faculties of signing-deaf individuals

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<sup>181</sup> All the other characters have sign-names: Robin Hood’s echoes a bow and arrow; William Tell’s an arrow at the head. For more on sign-names, see Day and Sutton-Spence (2010).

‘trapped within a game [they] didn’t design’ (Bechter 2008:64). John Hay’s positive description is tinged with ambivalence, discernible when he describes the development of subtitles:

[After subtitles] my wife used to watch [Coronation Street] and then talk to a deaf girl at work. She asked her what she thought the programme was about. Then she told her she had got the story wrong. So her friend had to buy a teletext TV. (John Hay, *Home*)

However enjoyable creatively interpreting inaccessible material could be, *getting the story right* mattered: buying a new television is expressed as an imperative.<sup>182</sup> Despite the warmth with which he recounted the programming of his childhood, John Hay appears to have conceptualised television as primarily educative rather than entertaining, and as fundamentally belonging to the majority culture, stating that ‘we can gain more knowledge of *the hearing world* through TV’ (John Hay, *Home*; my emphasis).

The desire to gain knowledge of the world was described as a ‘hunger’ in the previous chapter (TP:2014). The mainstream media can be a means of connecting to the shared macro-culture, i.e. watching the same programmes and acquiring the same passive repertoire of visual cues, but can also be indicative of being disconnected from it, i.e. being obliged to make sense of these cues without accompanying linguistic information. While the stakes may not be considered high for entertainment programmes, being unable to access educative and informative aspects of broadcasting, such as breaking news, is a stark illustration of the bicultural state of being *of but excluded from*

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<sup>182</sup> The enjoyment of subtitles only applies to those sufficiently bilingually literate to follow them at speed while adjusting for their errors and without re-reading. This point is referenced in a response to the invention of the Minicom, a text-phone. This positively impacted on many deaf people’s lives, but presumed a reading speed which even confident bilinguals may not have (and some first language English-speakers): ‘I would sit and watch the text speed by on the screen with no idea what it said because I can’t read that fast’ (Gerry Malley, *Home*).

mainstream culture. This frustration was articulated in reference to being unable to follow the news coverage of the attempted kidnap of Princess Anne and Mark Phillips in 1974:

I just had to know what it was all about! I went next door and knocked – it was 11pm. A man answered and I asked him about the news story. He was really crabbit because I had knocked on his door at 11pm but I had to know. He said “What?! I don’t know!” and slammed the door in my face. My husband said I should not have done that but I wanted to know. I couldn’t wait. (Marjorie Hunter, *Home*)

The urgency with which Marjorie Hunter wanted to access and participate in unfolding news events reflects the sense of disenfranchisement that can result from being denied an equal stake in the shared culture, leading her to defy social norms (‘My husband said I should not have done that’) in order to find out what she needed to know. The fact that communication and access to media and information in their own language and modality can be taken for granted by the vast majority of speaking-hearing people in Scotland contributes to the oppositional faultline constructed between the two communities, arguably the crucial divide against which signing-deaf biculturality is conceptualised. This appears in many of the DVDs’ narratives, and is explored below.

### ***‘He did all the talking’: mediation and DEAF CAN’T***

Given the language and modality difference between signed and spoken/written languages and the rarity of non-deaf people who use BSL, BSL/English interpretation and brokering is an everyday occurrence, whether through professional channels such as interpreters or through non-professional informal channels (Napier 2008). The signing-deaf person’s interaction with the majority society is almost inevitably conducted in translation, potentially creating or highlighting power disparities or

undermining the signing-deaf person's autonomy.<sup>183</sup> While ambivalent feelings are frequently directed towards interpreters due to their perceived power in relation to the community (Mindess 2006), the professionalisation of interpreting services has only taken place in the last thirty years, before which it was expected that speaking-hearing friends, relatives and professionals connected with deaf organisations and churches would fulfil this role without formal training, ethical guidance or complaints procedures (Mindess 2006:13-15; Napier *et al.* 2010).

Due to the age of the interviewees, the narratives on the DVDs predate the interpreting profession, and frequently refer to reliance on friends, relatives, social workers, church missionaries, and even strangers, to broker interactions. The majority frame this as a neutral fact of life, but there are some indications of the negative impact these interactions could have:

I thought the doctor might think I was a bad person because I was with a social worker but it was just for communication. It made me feel small.  
(Gerry Malley, *Home*)

The narratives contain anxieties about deciding when and from whom to solicit mediation ('When my son was ill again, I had to decide which neighbour to ask [...] to phone the doctor' – Robina Drewry, *Home*) and concerns about reciprocity ('My family or workmates would help me out, using up their time' – David Thompson, *Sport*), and the advent of text-based communication technology is described in glowing terms (the fax machine 'was fantastic. I felt independent' - Valerie Helliwell, *Home*). The question of independence is particularly important, as brokering interactions could quickly become mediation on the behalf of, but not necessarily with input

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<sup>183</sup> Jemina Napier is the principal investigator in a current AHRC-funded study led by Heriot-Watt University entitled 'Translating the Deaf Self', which is beginning to analyse the nature and implications of this for the individual psyche.

from, the signing-deaf person; in the following description of job-seeking, the agency of the job-seeker is removed:

Reverend Rodger did all the talking, then I was told to start work on the following Monday. (Mary Rutherford, *Work*)

It has been noted by Ladd that paternalistic attitudes could quickly develop in relation to signing-deaf people by those in a welfare or mediation role, which could contribute to a learnt dependence or helplessness amongst some signing-deaf people, and enable a culture of low expectations (2003:332). Negative assumptions could be made about what signing-deaf people are themselves capable of, augmented by misconceptions about the validity of BSL as a complex language, or the erroneous association of deafness with intellectual slowness. The impact of these (often internalised) negative attitudes, and attempts to counter them, feature in many of the narratives, and have become codified into two shorthand sign constructions, DEAF CAN'T and DEAF CAN .D.O.<sup>184</sup>

### ***DEAF CAN'T vs. DEAF CAN .D.O.***

Although the DVDs date from the middle and second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a cycle of low expectations about signing-deaf people continues; see C. O'Brien and P. Placier's 2015 interviews with non-deaf teachers of the deaf about their perception of their pupils' capabilities – which, although conducted in America, stands in the UK as well (see D. O'Brien 2015; also Gregory *et al.* 1995; Valentine and Skelton 2007). O'Brien and Placier report a 'consistent pattern' across their interviews: 'repetition of the words "they" and "can't"' (2015:330),<sup>185</sup> observing that:

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<sup>184</sup> DEAF and HEARING are substantives in BSL: there is no need to add PEOPLE or PERSON.

<sup>185</sup> The researchers found it striking that hearing staff unselfconsciously expressed the view that their students would inevitably be low academic achievers due to 'their physical



hearing teachers did not seem to expect students to be “actively involved,” relying too much on paper and pencil lessons. When students could not perform to their expectations, hearing teachers gave up on them. (2015:332)

Attitudes which limit the capabilities of signing-deaf people can be distilled into one sign construction: DEAF CAN'T<sup>186</sup> – and, as the majority of role-models and almost all authority figures tend to come from speaking-hearing world, DEAF CAN'T attitudes may be internalised. Attitudes that inform the idea of DEAF CAN'T are apparent throughout the DVDs:

I always wanted to be a hairdresser but my mother wouldn't let me because I was Deaf - I had to accept that. (Irene Francis, *Work*)

The internalisation of DEAF CAN'T is seen by many in signing-deaf communities as particularly damaging to the development of deafhood. As a result, attempts to counter DEAF CAN'T (as an attitude both from outside and inside the community) is a recurring theme in BSL storytelling and is often the position taken in Signart, as will be shown in Chapter Seven. Personal experience narratives also frequently contain micro examples of countering DEAF CAN'T: 1001 small victories (Ladd 2003:315). A useful organising principle is Bechter's idea of the 'two extremes of deaf life' (2008:63), i.e. being at the mercy of constraints imposed from outside, and attaining mastery of these constraints. The former can open the door to DEAF CAN'T, but the latter

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defects' to 'a Deaf researcher with many years of advanced education' (O'Brien and Placier 2015:332).

<sup>186</sup> The sign CAN'T carries particularly negative connotations when used in relation to signing-deaf people; Bryan Marshall was quick to correct my clumsy use of CAN'T in relation to the barriers to cultural and educative institutions which signing-deaf people face, saying 'That's harsh when you use 'Deaf' and 'can't' together, there are many Deaf people out there and a lot of Deaf people 'can' (BM:2013). A similar negative connotation is attached to the sign HELP: whereas in speaking-hearing culture the word 'help' is not generally negatively loaded, it carries a patronising resonance in signing-deaf communities (O'Brien and Placier 2015:335; Lane 1992).

is its rejection. Many of the DVDs' narratives concern the mastery of constraints:

*Constraint:* doorbells are designed by and for non-deaf people

*Mastery:* installing flashing doorbells or constructing home-made solutions:

I lodged with a deaf woman. She had a tennis ball hanging up on a string. When the doorbell rang, the ball fell down and swung in my face. (Robina Drewry, *Home*)

*Constraint:* prior to text messaging, a car breakdown on the motorway required using the emergency telephone

*Mastery:* I wondered what to do; then I saw the police emergency phone box. I dialled 999, left the receiver hanging off the hook and waited. The police arrived and [...] they phoned for me. (Tommy Robertson, *Road*)

Again, the mastery of these constraints are not necessarily culturally contingent; non-signing deaf people will also find strategies to negotiate telephones and doorbells. However, narratives of this nature have a privileged place in the signing-deaf cultural repertoire as concrete 'strategies for survival' (Bahan 2006:26). Transcending DEAF CAN'T could be seen as a touchstone narrative, in which the constraint of low expectations is mastered through confidence in one's own abilities, and the abilities of others like oneself.

The rejection of DEAF CAN'T can be expressed using a counter-construction – DEAF CAN or DEAF CAN .D.O. – which is frequently used in the community as shorthand to articulate the active rejection of the terms on which constraints are based. O'Brien and Placier report DEAF CAN in their observations about signing-deaf teachers of the deaf, who:

wanted students to be “more independent,” communicated “high expectations,” and used visual and body language to explain concepts clearly. ... [An interviewee said] “a Deaf teacher says you can do it yourself, you CAN do it.” (2015:332)

It is invested with the sense of confidence in signing-deaf people having a contribution to make on their own terms, an everyday assertion of Deaf Gain or, at least, of neutrality towards deafness. All ‘mastery of constraints’ narratives could be designated as DEAF CAN narratives, and some explicitly use the DEAF CAN .D.O. construction:

I was really proud to have shown to hearing people that Deaf people can do it <DEAF CAN .D.O.> (Kathleen Cameron, *Sport*)

I won, but the man was not happy because I was deaf. But I was proud myself. Deaf people can do it. <DEAF CAN .D.O.> <and show everyone> (Dorothy Hendry, *Sport*)

It is telling that both of these examples involve beating speaking-hearing people in competition; DEAF CAN is predicated on the expectation of audism. The implied follow-up to DEAF CAN .D.O. is *as well as hearing people can*, and, sometimes, *better* – the ultimate positive message about deafhood. Moreover, Dorothy Hendry’s (unsubtitled) addition of ‘and show everyone’ is revealing of the conversionary nature of signing-deaf culture. Success must be seen, both by outsiders so as to challenge their disabling attitudes and equally by insiders, as a counter-narrative to the negative messages about deafness absorbed since childhood.

### **DEAF CAN .D.O. communication**

The DEAF CAN motif is an interesting lens through which to return to the topic of communication between speaking-hearing and signing-deaf people. As described above, interpersonal interactions can be defined as the most problematic faultline between the two habitus. The majority position is that deaf people have trouble communicating; the issue is framed as the deaf

person's communication problem, for example in the World Health Organisation's factsheet on deafness:

One of the main impacts of hearing loss is on *the individual's ability to communicate* with others. (n.d.; my emphasis)<sup>187</sup>

This is a common-sense perspective from those who can take speaking and hearing for granted: when one's everyday experience is that everyone one meets can be assumed to use the same communicative mode as oneself, then the individual who does not is the outlier who has a communication problem (i.e. DEAF CAN'T communicate).<sup>188</sup> Conversely, on the DVDs, communication breakdown was commonly described in terms of the *speaking-hearing person's* perceived inability to communicate:

I could not be bothered with the instructor not being able to communicate. (Lorraine Wighton, *Road*)

Following professionals is difficult because they can't communicate. (David Wilson, *Sport*)

This is an interesting inversion of the majority position, reminiscent of Padden and Humphries' description of speaking-hearing and signing-deaf people operating from 'different centres' where the same terminology has different definitions and resonances (2010). For speaking-hearing people, I suggest that 'being able to communicate' means 'being able to communicate well *in the*

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<sup>187</sup> <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs300/en/> [accessed 31/06/15]

<sup>188</sup> This attitude extends even to signing families. The wording of the obituary of the actor Richard Griffiths, for example, instrumentalised the actor's knowledge of BSL: both his parents 'were deaf and, at an early age, he *had to* learn sign language to communicate with them' (Michael Billington, *The Guardian*, 29/03/13; my emphasis). This is technically true inasmuch as all first languages are learnt in order to communicate with parents and family; yet spoken languages tend not to be represented in terms of a child *having to* learn the language of their parents. The tacit implication is that Griffiths' first language would automatically be spoken-English rather than that used in his home, and that his parents had a communication problem which their son *had to* work around. (<http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2013/mar/29/richard-griffiths>) [accessed 31/03/13].

*manner of the majority*’; for signing-deaf people, it means ‘being *willing* to communicate *by any means necessary*’. The majority perspective whereby a signing-deaf person is unable to communicate does not take into consideration the fact that strategising around communication is likely to be part of their everyday life, and that they may have multiple communicative tools at their disposal: visual vernacular, gesture, writing, fingerspelling, speech-reading, *etc.* The DVDs contain multiple narratives concerning communication constraints being mastered and, given the speed with which signing-deaf people will develop a contact dialect of International Sign with each other,<sup>189</sup> it seems fair to assert that DEAF CAN .D.O. communication.<sup>190</sup>

Communicative flexibility, then, is a central part of signing-deaf biculturality; communication breakdown occurs when the speaking-hearing interlocutor cannot, does not, or will not *also* be flexible. Unsurprisingly, the DVDs contain many stories about speaking-hearing people making poor and even dangerous communication choices; the following example describes the narrator’s driving test:

The examiner was a policeman. He was quite old. We got in the car. He passed me a note *Can you hear me?* I said <N.O.> *No*. Then he passed me another note *Can you lipread me?* I said <N.O.> *No*, thinking how can I lipread you when I’m driving and you’re sitting beside me? So he gestured to say *just go*. I looked at him... *What, just drive?* I thought – how will I know when to turn left or right... *Just drive*, he told me. So I drove off, wondering how he was going to communicate with me. Out of the corner of my eye I could see him writing something, but I just drove on. Then all of sudden he stuck this note right in front of my face!

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<sup>189</sup> Witnessed personally at the 9<sup>th</sup> Deaf History International conference in Edinburgh.

<sup>190</sup> This is the argument made by Bruno Kahne (2008), a business trainer whose specialism is in training speaking-hearing employees to communicate like signing-deaf people.

I couldn't believe it! <POLICEMAN! *in amazement*> I had to read the note while still trying to drive. (Mary Whittaker, *Road*)<sup>191</sup>

Signing-deaf/speaking-hearing communication tends to be described either as painfully difficult and even impossible, or as the extreme opposite: as easy and effortless. The latter appears to be applied when the attitude of the speaking-hearing interlocutor is receptive.

### ***Exclusion and (dis)integration: the legacy of deaf education***

The theme of inter-cultural (mis)communication segues smoothly into educational experiences. By now the significance of education as a theme in BSL storytelling (and indeed, in the personal experience narratives and written literature of non-signing deaf people – see the Deaf Ex-Mainstreamers Group publication 2003) should be apparent. The central experience of residential deaf schooling cannot be examined in this case-study; however, the DVDs do contain some incidental references to Oral education, the central pedagogy of deaf education throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. A description of this pedagogy can be discerned in the performance of John Hay's account of his Sunday School teacher, Miss Ewing, a fluent signer and fingerspeller. The teacher was the sister of Sir Alexander Ewing, the notoriety of whom and his wife, Irene, was discussed in Chapter One. John alludes to this by naming Sir Alexander as .T.H.E. Professor Ewing, code-blending with English (BSL does not use definite articles) for emphasis and appealing to the shared cultural knowledge he can assume of the audience. While the subtitles read '[he] was a superb oralist<sup>192</sup> and supported oral teaching', John also throws his hands up and puts

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<sup>191</sup> It should be noted that signing-deaf people are capable of conducting full conversations whilst driving using a one-handed version of BSL, making use of their highly sensitive peripheral vision, the car mirrors and strict place-holding conventions to control the discourse. To a speaking-hearing passenger (and certainly to me) it can be an alarming experience.

<sup>192</sup> Jemina Napier suggests <staunch Oralist> as a more accurate translation (personal communication).

them behind his back by way of illustration, emphasising the exclusivity of the speech modality and also echoing the practice of restricting deaf children's hands to prevent them from or punish them for manual communication (see McDonnell and Saunders's chapter 'Sit on Your Hands: Strategies to Prevent Signing', 1993:255-260; also Fjord 1996:64).

In the absence of *Back to School*, most of the narratives concerning education refer to further education in a mainstream educational setting. The lack of communication support the deaf students received is striking, especially given that several signing-deaf students made active requests for it:

I explained that I couldn't write, but my boss said it didn't matter. [...] I approached my lecturer about not being able to write notes, and he told me to hang on. He knew that I was Deaf, and that I was dumped into the class. I had to stay in class from 9am to 4pm, doing nothing. (Erelend Tulloch, *Work*)<sup>193</sup>

Erelend Tulloch's narrative continues along DEAF CAN lines, whereby the narrator draws on his own skills and resilience:

Whilst the lecturer delivered sessions in class, I went off and worked on the machines, making wood joints. When I finished, I showed my work to the lecturer, and explained that it was the same as what he had demonstrated in class. My class applauded. (Erelend Tulloch, *Work*)

Yet despite his DEAF CAN approach, the experiences of exclusion from education appear to have contributed to the sense of an inevitable fault-line between the signing-deaf and speaking-hearing worlds; mainstream education did not integrate him with his hearing peers but demonstrated to him that he was apart from them.

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<sup>193</sup> Comparable situations are still anecdotally reported.

Both Oral deaf schools and mainstream settings deliver education primarily in a modality which deaf children struggle to access; yet the former provides a community for deaf pupils, and the main reason for anti-mainstream sentiment is the isolation of deaf children amongst others who occupy a different sensory habitus. The current Principal of Mary Hare School acknowledges that mainstream environments are problematic even for deaf children with bilateral cochlear implants or powerful hearing aids, as they still ‘cannot hear well enough in their mainstream school and ... long to be with other young people just like them.’<sup>194</sup> Oralist deaf schools such as Mary Hare recognised the benefits of educating deaf children together and in a different manner than speaking-hearing children; yet, as is apparent in the DVDs, the pupils of Mary Hare and some other, typically prestigious oral schools were encouraged not to think of themselves as deaf, in keeping with Alexander Graham Bell’s imprecation that ‘we [hearing people] should try ourselves to forget they are deaf. We should teach *them* to forget they are deaf’ (quoted in Lane 1984:340; original emphasis). The following testimony reflects this:

I went to an oral school. I lived in the hearing world [...] It never really occurred to me to mix with deaf people. Maybe we were a bit snobbish, I don’t know. We didn’t want to mix with deaf people. (Michael Davis, *Rest*)

In the middle decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, ‘Oral successes’ (those who were to some extent successful under this pedagogy) were pitted against so-called ‘Oral failures’ (those who did not benefit from speech therapy and audiology),<sup>195</sup> and actively discouraged from seeking out a community of deaf people after leaving school:

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<sup>194</sup> <http://www.maryhareschool.org.uk/> [04/03/15]

<sup>195</sup> The term *Oral failures* has, thankfully, dropped out of use, although it remains the case that deaf speech is tacitly accepted as being ‘better’ than signing (O’Brien 2015:231; Petitto



The headmaster Mr .A.S.K.E.W. gave a talk to school leavers. One of the things he said was *You must go out and mix with hearing people. You must not mix with deaf people who sign.* (Irene Hall, *Rest*)

The advice given by Raymond Askew, Headmaster of Mary Hare, was an institutionally sanctioned attempt to prepare his pupils 'socially and psychologically for life in a normal hearing society so that when their school days are over they may become happy and useful citizens well able to earn their own livings' (1960:14:1).<sup>196</sup> Yet Irene Hall's life in 'normal hearing society' did not help her to become a happy citizen:

It was very isolated. It was very quiet, with not much of a social life. I missed my school friends [...] So my mother and father encouraged me to join a local young farmers club. [...] I dreaded it. I could not follow what was going on – lots of talking. They had speech making. I dreaded going. (Irene Hall, *Rest*)

As she recounts this to the camera, Irene Hall smiles wanly; her husband, sitting next to her, leans back, with bared, clenched teeth, looking both pained and sympathetic. This sense of isolation after leaving school appears familiar to him, and is echoed in other narratives on the DVDs ('I was lonely. I didn't meet any deaf people for nine years. That was terrible!' – Helena Hay, *Rest*). Many of the interviewees appear to have experienced considerable distress concerning their subordinated position in relation to the speaking-hearing

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2014:65). Mary Hare School's website euphemistically states that 'Mary Hare does not use sign language but ... because Mary Hare is a very specialist setting it is an *exceptional* deaf child who cannot make this change [...] [and] who needs more than we have to offer' (<http://www.maryhareschool.org.uk/parents/parents-qa> [accessed 05/03/15]; my emphasis).

<sup>196</sup> The pervasiveness of the ideology whereby signing-deaf people were discouraged from socialising, and certainly from marrying, could also be internalised to some extent within signing-deaf communities. This is apparent in Robina Drewry's description in *War* of her signing-deaf mother's rejection of the STRONG (i.e. staunch, linked to identity) claim of another deaf person, John McGilp, that they were related to each other. The McGilps were and are a prominent intergenerational signing-deaf family, but Robina's mother disagreed that she was John McGilp's second cousin. Robina interpreted this as: '<I think at that time she secretly did not like the idea of having too many deaf people.>' [Omitted from the subtitles.]

habitus. Coming into the signing-deaf community is expressed as a transformative experience.

### ***Apart from: DEAF-YOU? DEAF-ME! and the conversion to community***

Thus far we have examined how the DVDs show speaking-hearingness as the oppositional identifier against which a signing-deaf person may define themselves and their community; this section deals with the positive identifier, signing-deafness, as the central axis upon which positive self-identification hinges. Another person's deafness is seldom mentioned neutrally on the DVDs; indeed, it is frequently mentioned in a particularly positive manner regarding romantic partners ('My aunt told me his parents were deaf. I was interested' – Fiona McGilp, *Rest*), consistent with Padden and Humphries' observation of the high levels of endogamous marriage in signing-deaf communities (1988).

The DVDs contain narratives which illustrate moments of recognition of other signing-deaf people (see Bahan 2008:83). John McLean describes seeing a man walking by a building site who did not respond to shouting:

I thought he must be deaf. So the next time I saw him walking past I waved my arms. He looked up and asked if I was deaf. I said yes. *<enthusiastically>* (Michael Tocher, *Rest*)

The moment of recognition can have a particular emotional resonance (unsurprisingly, given the small size of the community, and experiences of loneliness outlined in the previous section), as it is the acknowledgement of meeting someone whose habitus and life experiences can be assumed to be familiar. The construction DEAF-YOU? is often used, which entails DEAF performed on one hand, with the other index finger pointing at the interlocutor, the inquisitor's eyebrows raised as an interrogative and, equally,

to show eagerness (see Fig. 37a & 37b). DEAF-YOU? can be followed by DEAF-ME! in which the pointing index finger turns back on the interrogator with matching eagerness; a neutral response would seem peculiar.

I saw a group of deaf people signing. [...] I introduced myself saying I was deaf <DEAF-ME!>. They said they were deaf too. <DEAF-YOU? DEAF-ME! *excitable*> (Erelend Tulloch, *Rest*)



**Fig. 37a & 37b** – DEAF-YOU? (Erelend Tulloch)

Social networks may quickly develop: Erelend Tulloch was taken to Glasgow's Catholic deaf club by the group he met, despite coming from the Protestant community:

They said *Come in and have a look*. I asked *Am I allowed?* They said *Yes of course!* [...] Having someone with me would make it okay. (Erelend Tulloch, *Rest*)

There is a widely-held belief that 'deafness trumps all', although it is increasingly being challenged by some intra-community minorities (Barpaga 2014; Bienvenu 2008); this belief was also contradicted by the sectarian divisions that were, until recently, readily observable in some Scottish signing-deaf communities, particularly those in Glasgow (see E. Leith 2010:61-62). The DVDs contain some examples of religious tension:

I was reluctant to go because the Edinburgh deaf club didn't like Catholics. [...] I stayed there for a short while but didn't go there very often. I didn't feel comfortable.' (Rita McMillan, *Rest*)

However, Rita McMillan goes on to add that ‘There is no bigotry now’, and in Erelend Tulloch’s narrative the recognition of mutual deafhood diffuses any tensions. The following section examines the significance of the deaf club in providing a DEAFspace where deafhood is the norm, and its implications of bicultural self-identification.

### ***Coming into DEAFspace: the deaf club***

Although now declining in membership and popularity, the traditional significance of deaf clubs as physical realisations of the signing-deaf habitus cannot be overstated. As a conceptual DEAFspace as well as a series of localised physical DEAFspaces, the deaf club was a domain where visual language was the default, where the vast majority of attendees could be assumed to be signing-deaf or from signing-deaf families (or, at least, very committed to learning BSL), where social networks converged, and where knowledge could be shared and developed. Throughout the DVDs, the orality – i.e. face-to-face nature – of signing-deaf culture is alluded to: the local deaf club is the default meeting point for making arrangements and the strength of interpersonal networks is referred to as ‘the deaf grapevine <DEAF [begins to sign SPREAD-OUT] LIKE .G.R.A.P.E.V.I.N.E. SPREAD-OUT>’ by David Wilson (*Home*). Key individuals are named as mentors and tutors and the idea of a communitarian sharing of resources (Napier *et al.* 2010:53) – particularly, of pooling knowledge – is a powerful counter-action to redress exclusion from education. The implication is that signing-deaf people are privileged to participate in and draw on the community:

When we started, there were only us, deaf. *We learned from the heart and worked together.* (Kay Hughes, *Sport*; my emphasis)

A travelling signing-deaf person could and often did seek out the local deaf club in the places they visited (the ‘first thing’ Robina Drewry did on

moving to London was to 'look for the nearest Deaf Club' - *Rest*), and the so-called DEAF PASSPORT of transnational signing-deaf identity is also reflected in the DVDS in relation to the Deaf Olympics (Irene Wilson, *Rest*). These narratives carry the expectation that a signing-deaf person would, with few exceptions (e.g. due to sectarianism), be welcome at any deaf club, and that being a recognised insider – DEAF-YOU? – provides the DEAF PASSPORT.

Given its traditional significance in the life of the community, it is poignant that some interviewees related not knowing about their local deaf club when they left school:

I was surprised there was a deaf club here [in Edinburgh] as I thought Glasgow had the only one. [...] I was surprised because it was in the area where I lived. [...] I was surprised I didn't know anything about it. (Irene Francis, *Rest*)

This is indicative that deaf education was typically separated from signing-deaf communities, a throwback to the Congress of Milan's edict against deaf teachers of the deaf. Pervasive attitudes about the inappropriateness of deaf people socialising may have actively prevented teachers of the deaf from telling pupils about the deaf club, and the paucity of signing-deaf adults employed at deaf schools created a deficit of role-models from whom to learn about the DEAFspaces available to them. Community members might actively seek out deaf school-leavers who did not know where to go: Irene Hall, who was discouraged from socialising with signing-deaf people by Askew and whose loneliness was quoted in the previous section, articulates what it can mean to 'come into' one's deafhood, which is facilitated by meeting others like themselves and, equally importantly, having a space which is their own. Two years after leaving school, she was visited unexpectedly by a welfare officer from Dumfries Deaf Club:

She came to my parents' front door. It was my first time meeting her. [...] She had no car and came all the way from Dumfries on the bus and then walked to our place. She asked me how I was getting on and why I didn't go to the deaf club in Dumfries. She told me where it was, which day it was open and the times of opening. So the next Saturday I made a beeline to Dumfries right away! I felt like I belonged there - like putting on an old pair of slippers and feeling immediately comfortable and relaxed. That changed my life. (Irene Hall, *Rest*)

Oralists would have described Irene Hall 'laps[ing] back into silence and sign language' (Livingstone 1960:3); yet in so doing she became a happier citizen than she had been in the 'normal hearing society' Askew so desired his expupils to inhabit (1960:14:1).

### ***DEAFspace as signing space***

The deaf club is the most frequent depiction of DEAFspace in the DVDs and sign language is almost always mentioned in relation to it. At root, DEAFspace is signing space; the depiction of signing in the DVDs is instructive and cannot be conveyed through the subtitles:

There were children – deaf and hearing children with deaf parents. They all signed <*expansively*>. (Helen Lynch, *Rest*)

Everyone inside was signing away. <*puffed cheeks*> (Robina Drewry, *Rest*)

In these quotations, the performance and inflection of the lexeme SIGN(ING) is inherently celebratory; more than merely depicting conversation in an accessible modality, it shows the signers' pleasure, even profound delight and relief, at the opportunity to use their first and/or preferred language with others who have shared experiences and backgrounds. The facial expressions associated with this construction can be adjusted to add intensity, and the sign itself can be sped up (or performed in slow motion to imply even greater speed) and moved in a circling motion in front of the signer's body, implying a group of signers all participating. In addition to saying that signing took

place, the narrators are *performing* their relish in the nature and deeper meaning of that signing to the community. This construction is a shorthand means of expressing what it means to be a signing-deaf person in DEAFspace and is a motif which often features in Signart, as will be shown in Case-study 3.

While the deaf club is a conceptual and physical realisation of DEAFspace, a striking feature of DEAFspace-as-signing-space is its mobility. As Gulliver has described, DEAFspace may be carved out by signing people within an otherwise speaking-hearing space (2009). Mobile DEAFspace can be impromptu, as in the description of Gerry Hughes' homecoming in Chapter Three, or it can also be regularly constituted, pre-arranged but fleeting; David Wilson describes the Albany Bar, Edinburgh, being 'taken over' by signing-deaf people (*Rest*).<sup>197</sup> Mobile DEAFspace comes into being both conceptually, i.e. through the space being chosen and used by signing-deaf people, but also to some extent literally through the active (albeit often unconscious) manoeuvring of bodies and furniture to create a circle with clear sightlines for communal conversation. David Wilson describes this physical carving out of DEAFspace in the Albany Bar: the subtitles read that 'the bar was crowded and had a great atmosphere', to which he adds <PEOPLE-IN-A-CIRCLE>: however crowded the bar is, the circle has been formed in its midst, and the signers have constituted their own space and atmosphere. Impromptu DEAFspace tends to be formed in environments which are physically suitable for conversing in a visual language: today, in chain pubs with relatively bright lighting, and historically under lamp-posts in a defiantly visible act given the

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<sup>197</sup> Now, The Standing Order, a J. D. Wetherspoon's branch on George Street, Edinburgh, becomes 'Edinburgh Deaf Party' every other month.  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/306383672713407/?ref=ts&fref=ts> [accessed 13/11/14].

disparaging attitudes towards signing that most had in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries (Ladd 2003:319 and Hay 2015:9). Dan Ogilvy's Deaf Club closed at 10pm; he describes moving on to the station – which can be assumed to have had a lantern – 'to carry on talking until the policeman told us to leave. It happened again and again!' (*Rest*) DEAFspace is conceptually distinct from the speaking-hearing habitus, and also, through the selection and manipulation of the environment, physically distinct; a bicultural space that is most *apart from* the host majority culture.

### **Looking back and looking forward**

This chapter has presented selections from a signed-oral history collection placed in the public domain with the intention of increasing the visibility of signing-deaf lives, both for speaking-hearing people in general, but also for deaf children who may lack the diachronic transmission of their history and culture. It functions as a digital archive, providing a validating inward look at the shared experiences that carry cultural resonance. In the outward-looking sense of the deaf public voice, the primary messages about signing-deaf culture that are being transmitted to speaking-hearing people are: that signing-deaf people have had oppressive experiences in 'normal' society; that they are capable of overcoming constraints; that they are, in many ways, *like you*; that they are, in many other ways, *not* like you.

Examples have been chosen for analysis which illustrate the storying of bicultural experiences, whether the interviewees' own or those of others, performed informally and semi-unconsciously by signing-deaf narrators. It has included narratives which, to paraphrase Murray, encompass the difficulty of full participation in a society not tailored to signing-deaf norms



(and the ways in which the constraints placed on signing-deaf people can be mastered) as well as 'the articulation of a separate space of being Deaf, a space that, at times, transcends national boundaries' (2008:102). The nuances and tensions of the central differentiation between the signing-deaf minority and the speaking-hearing majority have been explored, as well as the impact on how one's own identity can be conceptualised, both positively and negatively. The constraints experienced by many signing-deaf people due to the subordinated nature of their habitus were explored in relation to accessing shared popular culture, in communication with speaking-hearing people, in education, and due to the negative attitudes frequently directed towards sign language which translates into low expectations of signing-deaf people's capabilities. Yet limiting metanarratives were also contested through the DEAF CAN .D.O. formula. This is defined against speaking-hearing expectations, but can also be infused with collaborative desire, as seen in the different meaning attached to the term *can't communicate*.

The examination of this rich corpus of personal narratives is necessarily incomplete; one notable omission is the occurrence of narratives about intra-community divisions. Sectarianism was touched upon, but other differentiating lines were drawn, mostly in relation to an individual's educational background or language preferences. These would have revealed the complexities of biculturality *within* the community; instead, I have focused on examples of biculturality referring to the experience of being *of, but excluded from* majority society, and of being *apart from* it. The former is expressed through discussions of the creative engagement with, but frustrating lack of access to, popular culture and the media, of learnt and imposed reliance on speaking-hearing others to gain access, and of the impact of society's audism on the signing-deaf individual's discovery of community and their own self-

worth. Signing-deaf communities as *apart from* the majority culture carries a geographical resonance in the narratives: the community constitutes space differently and celebrates a signing habitus, quickly building relationships with each other through shared experiences of being audiologically deaf in a phonocentric world, oppressed by overt and tacit audism, and having a visual language that, despite carrying stigma, is deeply valued.

As informal and conversational storytelling events, many of the narratives made use of the richness of everyday signartistry; bridges have been provided through including screenshots and annotating the quoted subtitles. The specific features of signartistry that have been explored include role-shift characterisation (including portraits of the hearing, with their different techniques of the body), code-blending to make character-based or rhetorical points, and the use of shorthand constructions to express culturally bound concepts and recurring motifs, such as DEAF-YOU and the inflection on SIGN/ING when in DEAFspace. Many of these, as well as the experiences and themes raised in the narratives, become codified in form within Signart, and will be returned to in the following chapters. These deal with the third case-study, a corpus of Signart from an Edinburgh-based performance group, Visual Virus.

## ***Taking the floor: three performance-texts from the Visual Virus repertoire***

*Any success ... [in] transposing something from one cultural world to another ... remains a matter of degrees.*

Paul Friedrich (2006:21)

The recurring bicultural themes and motifs identified in the informal personal experience narratives of the preceding chapter find expression in the Signart of ‘platform storytellers’. This chapter will present a sample of three performance-texts by two Edinburgh-based Signartists, performing as Visual Virus, which were selected for two reasons. Firstly, their respective content provides insights into the biculturality of signing-deaf experiences, which will be discussed in the subsequent chapter with reference to others in the Visual Virus oeuvre. Secondly, they provide an indicative sample of the diversity of genres (if we accept that term) found in contemporary BSL Signart, ranging from those that have direct parallels in spoken traditions, to performance-texts that are fundamentally tied to the visual-spatial modality and manual production of sign language.

Following an introduction to Visual Virus and its remit and performance values in relation to the deaf public voice, I introduce the reader/viewer to the performance-texts. The aim of the chapter is to enable the non-signing reader to engage with each performance-text in its original form

(i.e. to view the films of the live performance – Appendix 3.1),<sup>198</sup> partly in preparation for the subsequent analysis of their overlapping bicultural themes and performance elements, and partly in response to the methodological research question –

What bridging techniques are required for translating the artistry of signed-oral storytelling, and the cultural experiences of signing-deaf people, to a speaking-hearing audience?

I seek to draw out for the lay reader/viewer the particular affordances of signed performance-texts as part of what I have termed Scotland's corp-oral tradition. It is therefore emphasised that this chapter should be considered an accompaniment to viewing the three performance-texts and an exercise in elaborated critical description – not translation.

The performance-texts will be presented in the progressive order from *like* spoken-oral stories to *unlike*, and thus mirrors the trajectory of this thesis thus far. Case-study 1 explores the translation and adaptation of spoken-oral stories; echoing this, the first of Visual Virus's repertoire to be analysed will be a 'deaf version' of 'The Three Little Pigs', a folktale which originated in speaking-hearing culture. This is followed by *Achievement*, which echoes Case-study 2 in examining how (shared) personal experience narratives can be adapted into autobiographical Signart, using allegory and figurative imagery to 'extend beyond the personal to become stories of the life of an entire culture' (Bahan 2006:29). The discussion will then turn to the visuality of the Signart idiom: I will examine *Virus*, the form of which is restricted by a fixed hand-shape, a performance-text that demonstrates the capacity for Signartists to

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<sup>198</sup> The performance-texts are also available on Facebook:  
<https://www.facebook.com/Visual-Virus/349211848446543?fref=ts>

exploit the 'different range of structural possibilities from those available to spoken languages' (Woll and Sutton-Spence 2007:136).

Each performance-text will be introduced here, including a brief overview of the characters involved. The reader is then asked to move as prompted between this chapter's elaborated commentaries and the original footage and guidance tables in Appendix 3. Chapter Seven will then provide close readings of the biculturality expressed and performed within them and others in the Visual Virus repertoire, and the messages being transmitted as part of the deaf public voice.

### **Case-study 3: Visual Virus's 'Through New Eyes'**

Established in 2011, Visual Virus was co-founded by Gary Quinn and Mark MacQueen. This came about indirectly through Mark MacQueen's successful application to the SSF's Hamish and Nancy Turner Bursary 2010-2011, mentioned as part of Case-study 1. Mark described his involvement:

Someone approached me and commented on how my ability to use description was really clear and I didn't rely on a 'sign for word' approach [i.e. SSE]. I was asked if I had ever considered doing any storytelling, which I hadn't, I wasn't really that interested. But then the Storytelling Centre granted a bursary to focus on signed stories and I was asked to apply for the position. [...] I was sweet talked into it, being told that they train you up and give you what you need so you are prepared for it. So I applied and was chosen as the storyteller. (MM:2013)

Between 2010 and 2011, Mark worked with SSF on a brief series of outreach and performance events, including a solo performance event and participation in 'Deaf in the Story'. During this period, he and Gary Quinn discussed establishing a BSL performance company in Edinburgh, the latter having been involved in deaf theatre whilst living in England:

Finally I felt that I had met someone who was creative as a signer. They are hard to find. I finally thought I might be able to establish the company. I could not do it on my own, especially as a ‘foreigner’.<sup>199</sup> But Mark was from Edinburgh and was keen so he was ideal. (GQ:2013)

Visual Virus should be understood as fundamentally conversionary, aiming both to assert a cultural voice and to recruit allies. This conversionary aim is reflected in the name *Visual Virus*. Mark MacQueen and Gary Quinn sought a name that reflected their motivation in founding a Signart group: to spread the visual culture of BSL. This is eloquently expressed in their original BSL sign-name, a fluid transition between signs I gloss as ABSORB-THROUGH-EYES and DISSEMINATE.<sup>200</sup> From this root, which I translate as *in through the eyes and out through the hands*, they selected their English name, ‘*visual* being something that everyone can see’ and ‘*virus* being something that is passed on’ (MM:2013). From this English translation, they selected a different sign-name using only one handshape (Fig. 38) which is performed by moving both hands right and left together in front of the signer; the static handshape became a clear logo that could be used on publicity material.

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<sup>199</sup> Gary Quinn is originally from the north of England. Given the transnational identities claimed in signing-deaf culture, this comment would be interesting to unpack; unfortunately, my interview with Gary was too short to follow up on this.

<sup>200</sup> The first is similar to entry 1532 (LEARN) in David O’Brien’s dictionary (1992:741), although it is located at eye-level rather than at the forehead. The second sign is in entry 1044 (SPREAD) (1992:573); a synonym is EPIDEMIC.

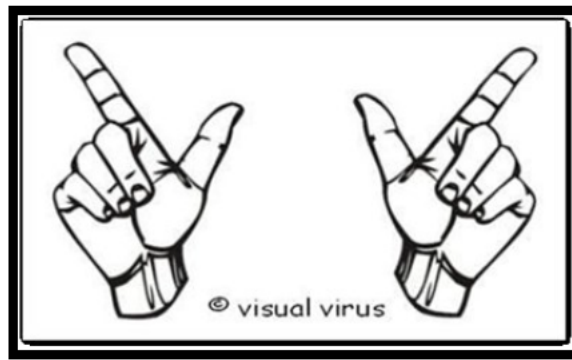


**Fig. 38 - Visual Virus logo**

© Visual Virus

Although the handshape used is the ASL –L–, the look of this logo echoes the two Vs of Visual Virus’s name; in so doing, it also subtly alludes to their interest in the visual vernacular, signed –V-V-. It also has a ready similarity to the BSL sign EYES-OPENING-UP: the index fingertips and thumbs of each hand are pressed together near the face and then opened out to the handshape and position of Fig. 38. The Visual Virus sign-name visually puns on signs linked to visual alertness and wakefulness;<sup>201</sup> this is further extended in both the title of their recurring Signart show, ‘Through New Eyes’, and its accompanying publicity image (Fig. 39). Thus the awareness-raising, conversionary remit of Visual Virus is made explicit.

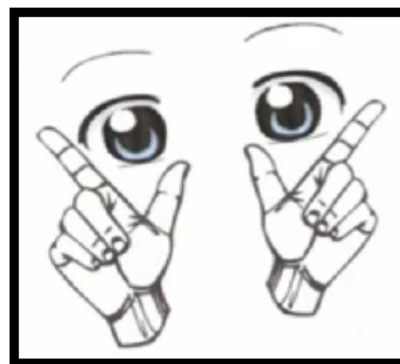


**Fig. 39 – ‘Through New Eyes’ publicity logo**

© Visual Virus

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<sup>201</sup> E.g. OPEN-EYES, WAKE-UP, AWARE(NESS).

The first 'Through New Eyes' show was performed on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2012; it was followed up two years later with 'Through New Eyes 2' (15<sup>th</sup> March 2014). The list of performance-texts performed at each can be found in Appendix 3.6. In addition to featuring performance-texts by Gary Quinn and Mark MacQueen, other Signartists performed with them, both live on stage and through pre-recorded video: Lee Robertson, Rinkoo Barpaga and Ramas Rentalis. Both performances took place in the Scottish Storytelling Centre's Netherbow Theatre, a formal 99-seat auditorium, which affected the production values. The paying audience were ushered in at a set time, the house lights went down before the performers reached the stage, and the lighting ensured that the performers and audience were separated. While this is typical of inter-cultural performances of deaf and bilingual theatre aimed at a mixed audience ('our first performance was about half hearing and half deaf' – GQ:2013) it follows speaking-hearing theatre norms; signed-oral performance contexts tend to be less formal in setting and more participatory in format (Peters 2001:142), although Visual Virus did include a drama skit involving audience members in 'Through New Eyes'.

In anticipating – even courting – speaking-hearing audience-members with no prior knowledge of BSL, the majority of inter-cultural deaf theatre and platform performances integrate English through voice-over interpretation, surtitles, or bilingual productions including speaking-hearing actors; an alternative, increasingly seen, is the use of a visual vernacular, mime-led performance style without dialogue, which a mixed audience can follow with ease.<sup>202</sup> Although Visual Virus aims its shows at 'anyone who is interested in

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<sup>202</sup> A notable example of the former is Deafinitely Theatre's two plays staged at the Globe Theatre (*Love's Labour's Lost* 2012 and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 2014); notable examples of



sign' (GQ:2013) and is nominally open to a general paying audience, it takes a different approach: the performance-texts are presented in BSL with no interpretation or English text beyond a projected Powerpoint slide giving the title of each piece. The decision not to accommodate non-signing members of the audience through spoken interpretation is described by Natalie Lazaroo as 'a political act' that 'subvert[s] the traditional dichotomies of margin and centre' by intentionally isolating members of the majority (2014:250). As such, the 'Through New Eyes' series performs signing-deaf culture as being *of* the mainstream (traditional) arts scene, placing it on a stage associated with the celebration of Scottish performance culture, but equally as *apart from*: the shows are uncompromisingly visual, and assert intrinsic value as such. The messages about biculturality and the deaf public voice that Visual Virus's repertoire transmits will be examined in Chapter Seven.

### **An adaptation: *Three Pigs* – Gary Quinn**

Gary Quinn's *Three Pigs* is a 'deaf version' of the well-known fable, classified by Aarne, Thompson and Uther as International Tale Type 124: 'Blowing the House In'. Versions of ATU 124 have been collected in Britain since the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century; its most well-known form in the Anglophonic world is 'The Three Little Pigs'.<sup>203</sup> The narrative details vary, yet the basic form of the story could be described as part of the general passive repertoire of Anglophonic cultures: three little pigs leave home and build respectively houses of straw, wood and bricks, the former two of which are blown down by a big bad wolf. While it should not be assumed that a signing-deaf person

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the latter include *Light* by Theatre Ad Infinitum (2014) and *Smokies* by Glasgow-based Solar Bear (2014).

<sup>203</sup> To avoid confusion, I will refer to the well-known tale as 'Blowing the House In: Three Little Pigs', and to GQ's story by its title *Three Pigs*.

will necessarily have the same passive repertoire as a speaking-hearing person, the imagery of 'Blowing the House In: Three Little Pigs' is relatively ubiquitous in picture books and televised cartoons, so it is likely that most will have come into contact with it in some form. When I asked GQ how he first came into contact with the original story, he was taken aback; he assumed it was through a picture book, but it was part of his early passive repertoire.<sup>204</sup>

*Three Pigs* treads the line between a traditional tale and an original story. Gary Quinn defined it as his 'own creation, definitely', saying that he would be happy for others to reproduce it 'as long as they explain where it is from' (GQ:2013). In *Three Pigs* he makes a specific analogy whereby the house of bricks represents sign language, which does appear to be his own detail and draws on his professional background as a sign linguist and language tutor. Yet other (signing-)deaf storytellers and writers have presented their own adaptations of 'Blowing the House In: Three Little Pigs' which share features with *Three Pigs* (see Sutton-Spence and Napoli 2010 and Kathleen Evan's English poem in The Deaf Ex-Mainstreamers Group 2003). 'Blowing the House In: Three Little Pigs' is unarguably a traditional tale type within the signed-oral corpus, blending two scaffolds: the speaking-hearing scaffold from popular culture, which contains the narrative structure and the base characters; and signing-deaf culturally-contingent features and 'set pieces' (Rutherford 1983). In Chapter Three I argued that idiosyncratic and creative language-use is highly valued in signing-deaf communities, and that characterisation is a typical feature of signed-oral storytelling; it seems to be

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<sup>204</sup> This cannot, however, be taken for granted. Bryan Marshall, for example, reported recognising the imagery of Cinderella in a drama exercise about fairy-tales (selected on the assumption that all participants would have a passive knowledge of them), but was uncertain about other imagery (e.g. Snow White) as he had not come into contact with fairy-tales at his deaf school or in his family. This links to the similar point about nursery rhymes made in Chapter Four.

that in the space between these two scaffolds an ‘original’ performance-text emerges which creatively reworks known tropes and produces characterisation contingent on the physicality of the signer. As Bahan argues, ‘the teller may own only his or her style and perhaps the process of rebuilding the story after acquiring a “story-skeleton” from the culture’ (2006:43). While Gary Quinn’s version is unique in drawing on his background as a linguist to create a language allegory (‘It is my own creation, definitely’), it also draws on signed-oral traditions in both its use of recognisable set-pieces (e.g. at one point, hammering on the door before noticing the flashing doorbell) and its subversion of a well-known speaking-hearing story to make it relate to a signing-deaf worldview.

In Chapter Three we saw that signed adaptations of speaking-hearing cultural material are part of a demonstrably bicultural genre of Signart. *Three Pigs* has an overtly signing-deaf message which is reflected in the narrative arc; however, for the most part it closely follows one of the available schemas for ‘Blowing the House In: Three Little Pigs’. Unsurprisingly, of the three performance-texts shown to my cohort of non-signers, *Three Pigs* was the easiest for them to follow: they mapped what they saw onto their own memories of the tale. Over-reliance on a scaffold did result in misinterpretations, however, as the controls made active leaps to fit what they were seeing onto what they expected to see; one participant was convinced that she had seen a chimney in Gary Quinn’s signing, telling me ‘it must be a chimney [because] [...]the wolf ends up going in the chimney and being

trapped in a big pot or something.’<sup>205</sup> Equally unsurprisingly, they all missed the culturally-resonant themes and referents in the performance-text.

As a strongly bicultural genre, adaptations are markedly easier to interpret than other types of Signart, and the voice-overs themselves can strongly reflect the spoken-oral origin of the signed performance-text. Andy Carmichael offered the fullest impromptu voice-over for *Three Pigs* during our interview, due to his familiarity with the scaffold. His language choices reflected this: whereas Gary Quinn did not explicitly reference the size of the pigs or the wolf, Andy used the typical descriptors (*three little pigs* and *big bad wolf*), and the formula ‘*I’ll huff and puff and blow your house in*’ when the wolf attacked the houses. He often used language typical of spoken-oral storytelling, and would self-correct or make an aside in order to maintain it (emphasised here in italics):

they pack up their stuff into their *little kit bags*, sling their ah... possessions, *all their worldly possessions* over their shoulders [...]

[...] So it’s left to the last little pig to keep on wandering (*down the lane, down whatever*) ... to find – *to see what he can find*, I guess I should say.

[...] the little pig dashes as fast as he can *up hill and down dale*. (AC:2014)

The hearing-culture origin of the story may therefore influence its interpretation and reception, and has arguably influenced the performance as well: Gary uses a high degree of English lip-pattern,<sup>206</sup> which AC attributed to the fact that ‘it’s not an original story from him’ but strongly based on a story

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<sup>205</sup> Interestingly, the participant who made reference to a pre-assumed scaffold the least (e.g. referring to all the characters as ‘persons’ rather than animals) provided the commentary with the highest degree of accuracy.

<sup>206</sup> There is some indication that the English lip-pattern that accompanies certain signs is simultaneous bilingual processing rather than an integrated part of the sign (Vigliocco 2012).

accessed in translation. The following sections provide introductory explanations of key features, in advance of viewing the performance-text.

### ***Preliminary notes on characterisation and role-shift***

The three pigs are not performed with high degrees of characterisation. There is little to differentiate them, apart from the calmer and more confident demeanour of the third pig. An approach popular with Signartists is to perform animal characters' dialogue in keeping with the animal's physical appearance: examples include a bird signing using only a flat handshape (B in ASL) to reflect the wing and a goldfish signing with the signer's thumbs in contact with their torso in the position of its fins.<sup>207</sup> Conversely, Gary Quinn anthropomorphically performs the pigs as humans rather than as inherently 'piggy': their dialogue is depicted through standard BSL without using a handshape reminiscent of a trotter. Only the performance-text's title and the initial introduction of the characters explicitly label them as pigs.

Due to the similarities in characterisation between the pigs, the non-signers found it difficult to follow which character was speaking at certain points. This is compounded by the fact that role-shift can function as an unspecified plural; when the three pigs are reassuring their mother about leaving home, this could be interpreted either as *one* of the pigs doing so or as synecdoche, where the personation of one pig represents the group. Due to this ambiguity, I have used the following conventions:

*Pig1, Pig2, Pig3*            (differentiated characters)

*Pig/s*                        (character unspecified, often represents all three)

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<sup>207</sup> See the following examples by Richard Carter:

*Owl*: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/education/research/sites/micsl/poem-repository/poems/>

*Goldfish*: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/education/research/sites/micsl/poem-repository/poems/>  
[14/01/13].

*Pig/s 1+2* (character unspecified, could represent plural, e.g. Pig1 and/or Pig2)

*Role-shift interaction* (a conversation between different characters)

Unlike the pigs, the wolf receives a high degree of characterisation. In addition to transparently aggressive facial expressions (squinting eyes, rigid and snarling lips), Gary Quinn represents the wolf through holding his hands below the chin to depict the wolf's jaws, his fingers signifying the size of the wolf's teeth (Fig. 40). Unlike the pigs, the wolf does not sign; his dialogue is expressed solely through lip-pattern, non-manual features and the occasional gesture. When the wolf blows down the houses, his deep inhalation is shown through Gary's hands pulling apart.



**Fig. 40** – *Wolf (Gary Quinn)*

© Visual Virus

In addition to dialogue, role-shift is also used to depict the attacks on the houses. Gary shifts from personating the wolf huffing and puffing to depicting the house, his forearms held up rigidly at shoulder height to represent the walls. The walls of the first two houses then dissolve in a flurry of fingers.

### **Three Pigs: the performance-text (Appendix 3.1a & 3.2)**

| TIME                            | EPISODE                                                                                                                                                                      | EPISODIC BREAK-DOWN                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>00:10 – 06:08</b><br>[5m 58] | <b>PART I</b>                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>00:10 – 01:20</b><br>[1m 10] | <b>Episode 1</b><br><b>The three pigs leave their home.</b>                                                                                                                  | <p><b>00:10 – 00:17:</b> Pigs1+2+3 and their mother are placed in relation to each other.</p> <p><b>00:17 – 00:28:</b> Pigs1+2+3 discuss between themselves; they announce to their mother that they want to leave home.</p> <p><b>00:28 – 00:47:</b> <i>[Role-shift conversation]</i> Mother tells them not to; she explains that the wolf is dangerous; they reassure her; she anxiously agrees.</p> <p><b>00:47 – 00:56:</b> Pigs1+2+3 pack up their belongings.</p> <p><b>00:57 – 01:20:</b> Pigs1+2+3 say goodbye to their crying mother, leave, look back and wave.</p>                      |
| <b>01:20 – 02:28</b><br>[1m 08] | <b>Episode 2</b><br><b>The three pigs meet a man with enough straw for one house; the first pig builds it.</b>                                                               | <p><b>01:20 – 01:29:</b> Pigs1+2+3 walk a long way.</p> <p><b>01:29 – 01:44:</b> They approach a person with a quantity of straw and ask him to give them some.</p> <p><b>01:44 – 01:54:</b> <i>[Role-shift conversation]</i> The person explains that there is only enough straw for one house.</p> <p><b>01:54 – 01:59:</b> Pigs1+2+3 discuss and agree that Pig1 will build a straw house.</p> <p><b>01:59 – 02:13:</b> Pig1 builds straw house [piles straw directly on the ground]; he is proud.</p> <p><b>02:14 – 02:28:</b> Pigs2+3 say goodbye and leave, waving back to Pig1.</p>         |
| <b>02:28 – 03:22</b><br>[0m 54] | <b>Episode 3</b><br><b>The two pigs meet a man with enough wood for one house; the second pig builds it.</b>                                                                 | <p><b>02:28 – 02:32:</b> Pigs2+3 walk on a way.</p> <p><b>02:33 – 02:41:</b> They come across not straw, but wood.</p> <p><b>02:42 – 02:46:</b> They consider, then ask for the wood.</p> <p><b>02:47 – 02:55:</b> <i>[Role-shift conversation]</i> The person explains that there is only enough wood for one house.</p> <p><b>02:56 – 02:59:</b> Pigs2+3 discuss and agree that Pig2 will build a wooden house.</p> <p><b>02:59 – 03:12:</b> Pig2 builds house [pushes stakes into the ground]; he is proud.</p> <p><b>03:13 – 03:22:</b> Pig3 says goodbye and leaves, waving back to Pig2.</p> |
| <b>03:22 – 06:08</b><br>[2m 46] | <b>Episode 4</b><br><b>The third pig meets a man with bricks, from which he builds a house methodically from the foundations up, drawing comparisons with sign language.</b> | <p><b>03:22 – 03:28:</b> Pig3 walks on a way.</p> <p><b>03:28 – 03:41:</b> Pig3 comes across not wood, not straw, but bricks.</p> <p><b>03:41 – 03:54:</b> <i>[Role-shift conversation]</i> Pig3 asks for bricks to build a house; receives them.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

|  |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  | <p><b>03:54 – 04:20:</b> Pig3 considers how to build a house [alludes to car and wheels] and what should come first; he compares building a house to sign language; he realises what should come first.</p> <p><b>04:20 – 04:31:</b> Pig3 digs foundations and lays out the building site.</p> <p><b>04:31 – 04:48:</b> Pig3 takes a brick and considers the building process.</p> <p><b>04:48 – 05:05:</b> Pig3 lays bricks methodically in a row to build up the strength of the wall; he doesn't build straight up as the wall would be unsteady.</p> <p><b>05:05 – 05:26:</b> Pig3 puts in a big window to let light in so he can see his visual language.</p> <p><b>05:26 – 05:43:</b> Pig3 lays out the rooms of his house and labels them (kitchen, bathroom, bedroom).</p> <p><b>05:43 – 05:55:</b> Pig3 explicitly compares his house to sign language.</p> <p><b>05:55 – 06:05:</b> Pig3 takes a framed picture/sign and nails it to the wall; he is pleased.</p> <p><b>06:06 – 06:08:</b> Pig3 sits down to read a newspaper.</p> |
|--|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The relationship between the house of bricks and sign language is a central image in *Three Pigs*. The third pig makes explicit and repeated reference to the process of building the house as being *like sign language*, and bases all his decisions on this comparison. The metaphor is not explicitly defined, and Andy Carmichael found this sequence particularly challenging to voice over, expressing concern that, without specific details, the analogy would 'come across as really corny' (AC:2014).<sup>208</sup> In a follow-up conversation, Gary Quinn explained that the *foundations* of the house reflected BSL's topic-comment, aggregative structure; the *bricks* represented correct sign-order; the *window* represented iconicity; and the *labelling of the different rooms* reflected the need

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<sup>208</sup> He quipped that the interpreter would have to '*lay the foundations* of the metaphor [...] [and] seed the fact that [the first pigs] hadn't built a foundation' (AC:2014).



to label referents to make the spatial grammar work. The house of bricks as representative of sign language will be explored further in Chapter Seven.

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>06:08 – 10:35</b><br>[4m 27] | <b>PART II</b>                                                                                                                                                   | <b>06:08 – 06:09: Action returns to Pig1</b><br>[indicated by pointing]                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>06:09 – 07:11</b><br>[1m 02] | <b>Episode 1</b><br><b>The wolf arrives at the straw house and frightens the first pig; he blows down the house, and the first pig runs to the wooden house.</b> | <b>06:09 – 06:16:</b> Pig1 is in his straw house; it shakes (implied knocking on the door).<br><b>06:16 – 06:29:</b> Pig1 is frightened (his mother was right, the wolf is angry); he tries to contain his fear.<br><b>06:29 – 06:31:</b> Pig1 timidly opens door<br><b>06:31 – 06:48:</b> [Role-shift conversation]<br>Wolf says something aggressively to Pig1; Pig1 tries to respond verbally.<br>Communication breaks down; Pig1 becomes frightened, slams the door and cowers.<br><b>06:48 – 06:54:</b> Wolf is angry and rants.<br><b>06:54 – 07:01:</b> Wolf breathes in and blows the house down.<br><b>07:02 – 07:11:</b> Pig1 runs away; wolf watches him go. |

The intent of the wolf requires some additional comment. In Andy Carmichael’s unrehearsed voice-over, his familiarity with the scaffolding of ‘Blowing the House In: Three Little Pigs’ led him to assume the intentions of the wolf matched those of the wolf from the well-known story:

So the first little pig opened the door, and the big bad wolf is standing there going *I’m going to get you and eat you.* (AC:2014)

However, the wolf does not explicitly state his intentions; his lip-pattern is distorted by his snarling mouth, but reads more accurately as ‘what you doing here?’ Reflecting back, Andy remarked that he had instinctively prioritised maintaining the storytelling norms of the target language (English) over strict fidelity to the source message. In the source performance-text, rather than wanting to eat the pig, the wolf appears to want to interrogate him. The distortion to the wolf’s lip-pattern is intentional: neither the first pig nor the

wolf can understand each other. The pig mouths something inarticulate in response, to which the wolf demands ‘what?’ in such an aggressive manner that the pig slams the door and cowers in the straw house.

|                                         |                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>07:11 – 08:33</b><br/>[1m 22]</p> | <p><b>Episode 2</b><br/><b>The wolf arrives at the wooden house and frightens the second pig; he blows down the house, and the two pigs run to the brick house.</b></p> | <p><b>07:11 – 07:17:</b> Pig1 runs until he arrives at wooden house and knocks on the door.<br/> <b>07:17 – 07:20:</b> The house shakes; Pig2 lets Pig1 in.<br/> <b>07:20 – 07:37:</b> <i>[Role-shift conversation]</i> Pig1 pants and explains to Pig2 that the wolf is angry and he doesn’t know why. Pig1 tells Pig2 the wolf is coming; Pig2 tells Pig1 to be calm.<br/> <b>07:38 – 07:44:</b> Wooden house shakes (implied knocking); Pig1 is frightened; Pig2 prepares himself.<br/> <b>07:44 – 07:47:</b> Pig2 opens the door.<br/> <b>07:47 – 07:54:</b> <i>[Role-shift conversation]</i> Wolf says something aggressively to Pig2; Pig2 tries to respond verbally with a gesture.<br/> <b>07:54 – 07:56:</b> <b>Role-shift:</b> <i>gesture from wolf’s perspective.</i><br/> <b>07:56 – 07:59:</b> Pig2 becomes frightened, slams the door and cowers.<br/> <b>07:59 – 08:07:</b> Wolf breathes in and blows; the house shakes but does not fall.<br/> <b>08:07 – 08:13:</b> Pig2 says that wood is strong; Pig1 says to watch.<br/> <b>08:13 – 08:24:</b> Wolf breathes in and blows the house down.<br/> <b>08:24 – 08:28:</b> Pigs1+2 run away.<br/> <b>08:29 – 08:33:</b> Wolf repeats Pig2’s gesture and appears frustrated and angry.</p> |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Here again, the wolf’s initial utterance appears to be ‘what you doing here?’; the second pig’s response is to mouth something with accompanying gestures, pointing to his ears and rotating both index fingers forward. Gary Quinn then role-shifts to show the same gesture from the perspective of the wolf, which is apparently interpreted as nonsensical and potentially aggressive.

|                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>08:33 – 10:35</b><br/>[2m 02]</p> | <p><b>Episode 3</b><br/><b>The wolf arrives at the brick house but does not frighten the third pig. The third pig hands the wolf a piece of paper, which the wolf discards and attempts to blow down the house. He fails.</b></p> | <p><b>08:33 – 08:47:</b> Pigs1+2 arrive at brick house, beat on the door (express pain), find and use a flashing doorbell.<br/> <b>08:47 – 08:51:</b> Pig3 sees doorbell, lets the pigs in.<br/> <b>08:51 – 09:10:</b> [Role-shift conversation] Pigs1/2 pant and explain that their houses have gone and the wolf will come; Pig3 tells them to be calm.<br/> <b>09:10 – 09:19:</b> Pigs1+2 admire brick house and picture/sign on wall.<br/> <b>09:20 – 09:22:</b> Doorbell flashes (implied wolf at door).<br/> <b>09:22 – 09:30:</b> Pigs1+2 are frightened; Pig3 opens the door.<br/> <b>09:30 – 09:35:</b> [Role-shift conversation] Wolf says something to Pig3; Pig3 raises palm.<br/> <b>09:35 – 09:36:</b> Role-shift: <i>palm from wolf's perspective.</i><br/> <b>09:36 – 09:52:</b> Pig3 closes the door, copies something onto piece of paper.<br/> <b>09:52 – 09:54:</b> Pig3 opens door, gives paper to wolf.<br/> <b>09:54 – 10:03:</b> Wolf reads and discards paper, looks aggressive.<br/> <b>10:03 – 10:10:</b> Pig3 holds up palm and closes door. Pigs1+2 are anxious; Pig3 is relaxed.<br/> <b>10:10 – 10:17:</b> Wolf breathes in and blows; the house is immobile<br/> <b>10:18 – 10:23:</b> Pig1/2 remarks that the house is strong.<br/> <b>10:23 – 10:35:</b> Wolf breathes in and blows until he exhausts himself.</p> |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

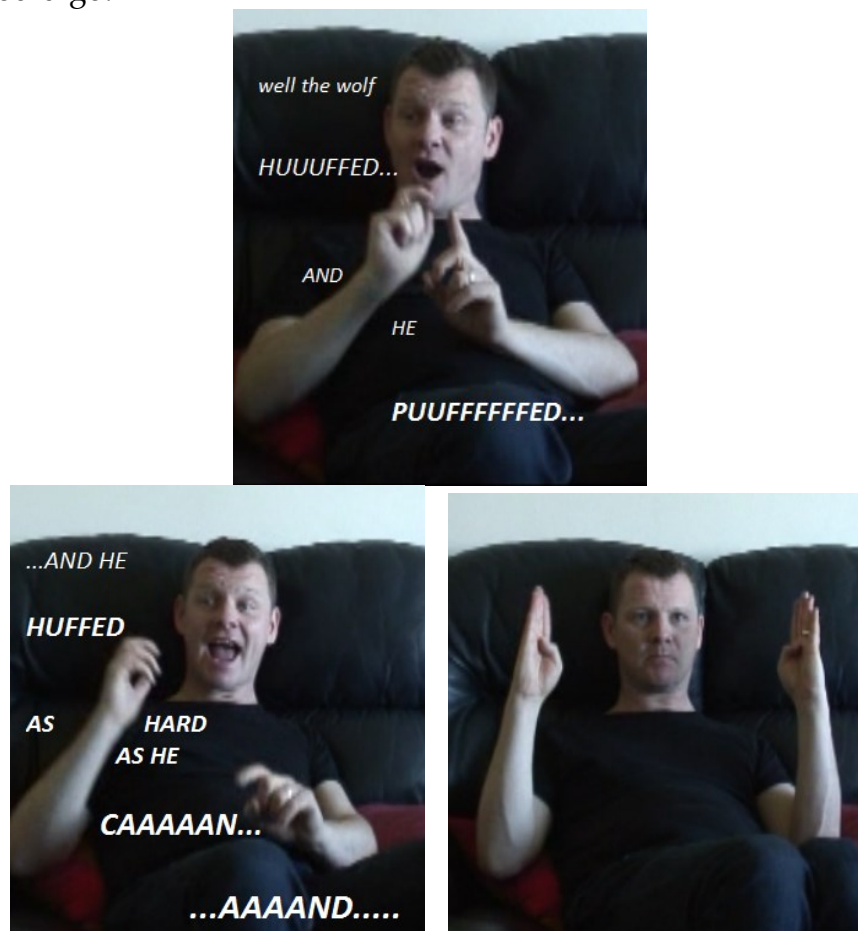
The key comedic moment in *Three Pigs* is the wolf's failure to blow down the house of bricks, a visual punchline which would 'not have the same wit when spoken' (Bienvenu 1994:17). Andy Carmichael highlighted this as challenging to voice-over effectively:

It's the swap transition into the absolute stillness that's hilarious in sign language. [...] What do you do in English? – I mean I guess you'd go *and the house didn't budge an inch*, you know, or something like that, but it's not that the house didn't budge an inch, in sign language you just become so still [...] and that's the comedy, the comedy's in the

execution, right, not in the meaning. And therefore when you just give the meaning, you're losing. (AC:2014)

Andy suggested an 'eloquent and deaf way of keeping the hearing audience engaged' with the signed performance-text: timing the English voice-over painstakingly with Gary's role-shift between the wolf and the house, with the voice-over cutting out at the moment of transition (Box 6).

You'd go:



... and then you can just hold it because they'd look [...] and they would get it. But your timing would have to be absolutely perfect because that only exists for about two seconds.

**Box 6** – Concrete transcription: huffing and puffing (AC:2014)

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>10:35 – 11:23</b><br>[0m 48] | <b>CODA</b>                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>10:35 – 11:23</b><br>[0m 48] | <b>The wolf leaves; the third pig explains that the paper contained contact details for an interpreter. The three pigs admire the brick house.</b> | <b>10:35 – 10:42:</b> Pig3 remarks that the house is strong and compares it to sign language.<br><b>10:42 – 10:49:</b> Pig1/2 observes that wolf has gone and asks Pig3 what was on the paper.<br><b>10:49 – 10:54:</b> Pig3 says it contained contact details for an interpreter.<br><b>10:54 – 11:07:</b> Pig1/2 admires house, compares it to sign language and points out picture/sign on wall.<br><b>11:07 – 11:16:</b> Sign shown to the audience, glossed as SIGN LANGUAGE + REAL/TRUE/DEFINITE + BEAUTIFUL. Repeated three times.<br><b>11:16 – 11:23:</b> Pig1/2/3 agrees with the picture/sign. |

*Three Pigs* ends with two revelations. The first is that the third pig had handed the wolf the means to acquire an interpreter. This places the performance-text firmly within Bahan's 'conscious translation' category, where a dichotomy is set up that reflects conflicts between the speaking-hearing world and the DEAFworld (2006:33). The second revelation is the form of the picture or sign which the third pig had hung on his wall: it reads *SIGNING REAL/TRUE/DEFINITE BEAUTIFUL*, which is repeated three times. The exact translation of this is ambiguous; Andy suggested multiple translations would provide a strong conclusion in spoken English that would mirror the effect of the repetition in BSL:

*Real sign language is beautiful.*

*Sign language is real and beautiful.*

*Sign language is truly beautiful.*

The placement of this statement on a wall-hung sign is an apparent allusion to samplers reading *home sweet home*. Sign language, then, represents *home*. Both of these revelations will be explored further in the Chapter Seven.

### **(Auto)biography as Signart: *Achievement* – Gary Quinn**

The importance of personal experience narratives in signing-deaf communities has been explored in Chapters Three and Five; they most typically take place in informal contexts using everyday signartistry. Gary Quinn's *Achievement* stands as a point of contrast to this. It uses features at the other end of the signartistry continuum such as the balanced repetition of key sequences in the opposite area of signspace. This is used in interactions between the protagonist and the other characters: if the first interaction is stage right, then the second is stage left, and the third is either central or stage right once again. Repetitions are typically conducted in threes, in keeping with the norms of oral narrative (Olrík 1965); see Sutton-Spence (2005) and Pollitt (2014) for discussions of symmetry and balance in Signart. These features will be indicated in the guidance tables in square brackets, using the abbreviations [Stage R] (stage right, i.e. the performer's right hand, on the left-hand side of the screen), [Stage L] (stage left), and [C] (centre stage). If the eye-gaze up or down is significant, this will also be added.

I designate *Achievement* as a figurative (auto)biography which moves from the literal to the allegorical. The extent to which *Achievement* is autobiographical is open to interpretation: Gary Quinn establishes himself as the protagonist in the first second of the performance-text, but it is unclear whether he is doing so as the *addresser* (composer and/or performer) or as the *dramatised narrator* (i.e. in character mode). This is an area in which the 'story world' of signed-oral and spoken-oral traditions appears to differ: whereas stories in the latter tend to be told in the third person,<sup>209</sup> this distinction is

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<sup>209</sup> In the UK at least; long autobiographical performance-texts are common in platform storytelling in America (Wilson 2006:8).

harder to make in relation to signed-oral performance-texts where there is a single protagonist. *Three Pigs* could with confidence be rendered in the third person, but in *Achievement* the action could equally be glossed as I or as HE – or even SHE, because, as characters are either mapped onto the signer’s own body or indicated through their spatial placement, there is no need for gendered pronouns in BSL. While the assumption tends to be made that the protagonist of a performance-text and the signer are the same sex (Rose 2006), this can be disabused in the course of the performance; when attempting an impromptu voice-over for *Achievement*, Andy Carmichael used the gender-neutral pronoun *they* for a full two minutes, interrupting himself to remark:

I don’t even know if it’s a he or a she – he hasn’t really established that [...] In sign language it’s OK, you assume it’s a boy because he’s a man ... but the interpreter, you have to make this choice [*clicks fingers*], you have to make it right at the beginning, and I didn’t because I was wondering.  
(AC:2014)

The protagonist *is* (almost certainly) Gary Quinn, yet could also *not* be Gary Quinn – and, furthermore, could be both Gary Quinn and not-Gary Quinn at the same time: by placing (or implying) characters in space, and by taking on their characteristics through role-shift, it is possible to avoid explicitly naming even central characters in a signed narrative; there is no equivalent of a ‘Jack tale’, for example. This de-individuation makes it possible to designate the protagonist of some performance-texts as a signing-deaf archetype or everyman hero, remembering that in BSL the sign DEAF is a substantive.<sup>210</sup> In *Achievement* and, especially, in *Virus*, below, the protagonist could be interpreted as the ‘collective as hero’, whereby the ‘whole community is the protagonist and a blurry collective (mainstream society) is the antagonist’

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<sup>210</sup> *I met a deaf person*, for example, would be glossed DEAF BEEN MEET.

(Peters 2006:86).<sup>211</sup> Throughout the summary of *Achievement* I use the designation Protagonist [P] for the (not-)Gary Quinn character, but use the male pronoun to reflect the assumed identification with the Signartist.

### ***Preliminary notes on characterisation and role-shift***

Although *Achievement* contains many more characters than *Three Pigs*, the means of depicting them is entirely different. Throughout, Gary Quinn remains almost entirely in the character of the Protagonist, using very limited role-shift and instead interacting with implied rather than explicitly introduced characters. Rather than role-shifting to depict the acts or speech of each character, the Protagonist is *done unto* and his reaction to the other characters is the focus of each scene, leaving the audience to infer the nature of the interactions. This could be designated as the equivalent of the passive voice in a spoken-language context, and maintains the (auto)biographical framing of *Achievement*.

Although the use of role-shift is limited in *Achievement*, the transitions appear to be have been even less obvious to the non-signing participants than those in *Three Pigs*. Therefore the following convention has been used in the guidance table: when the narrator role-shifts into the character of the Protagonist, this will be indicated in **bold** typeface (i.e. **P**), and the subsequent action that occurs is in character. Role-shifts into secondary characters will be indicated in ***bold italics***, with subsequent actions performed by these characters indicated in *italics*.<sup>212</sup>

Finally, other characters are sometimes indicated using the index finger classifier to indicate an individual person, or multiple fingers to show multiple

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<sup>211</sup> This pattern is typical in other minority works (Karrer and Lutz 1990).

<sup>212</sup> These convention are also used for subsequent performance-texts.



people. Where necessary, these will be indicated in the guidance table.

***Achievement: the performance-text (Appendix 3.1b & 3.3)***

| TIME                     | EPISODE                                                                                                                                              | EPISODIC BREAK-DOWN                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 00:09 – 01:28<br>[1m 19] | PART I                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 00:09 – 00:58<br>[0m 49] | <b>Episode 1</b><br><b>The protagonist is born deaf. As a young child he is taken to deaf school by his parents and grandparents and left there.</b> | <b>00:09 – 00:11:</b> Protagonist (P) is born<br><b>00:11 – 00:19:</b> <i><b>Mother and father</b> look at baby P in concern. It is observed that P cannot hear.</i><br><b>00:19 – 00:22:</b> P and another [un-defined] child grow to small children. [??] P is picked up and placed centrally.<br><b>00:22 – 00:28:</b> Mother and father are placed stage right [R hand: 2 fingers]; grandmother and grandfather are placed stage left [L hand: 2 fingers]. They are brought centre stage [R hand: 4 fingers]. P joins them [L hand: 1 finger].<br><b>00:28 – 00:32:</b> 4adults+P go to a school.<br><b>00:33 – 00:40:</b> P looks around and sees deaf children signing to each other.<br><b>00:40 – 00:44:</b> <i><b>1adult</b> ushers P forward, P is pleased, goes to children, gestures to them.</i><br><b>00:44 – 00:51:</b> P looks round, sees 4adults walking away. <i><b>They</b> wave back to P. P waves uncertainly to them.</i><br><b>00:51 – 00:58:</b> 4adults retreat into the distance. P looks down uncertainly, then shrugs. |

The ambivalence of the parents' response towards their child was picked up by more than one of the control group participants: while many assumed that the object being held was a baby, they began second-guessing that assumption due to the manner in which Gary Quinn performed the parents looking at the infant:

Participant 3: It's like he's done something but he's not completely happy with it.

Participant 5: I thought of that as a baby, but the way he was looking at the baby meant that it was not a baby.

EL: It was a baby.

Participant 5: Oh gosh! Well he doesn't seem to care that much about it, if it's a baby!

The child Protagonist's experience of being taken to a residential deaf school is also portrayed ambivalently, reflecting the complexity of the feelings many deaf people hold towards their schools. Although his family appear kind, there is a sense of abandonment implied. When the Protagonist joins the other pupils he can merely gesture whereas they are portrayed as signing, a subtle reflection of the fact that he comes from a non-signing family and has not yet developed a full language.<sup>213</sup> Yet his expression is one of eagerness, and, during the following episode, gesturing becomes signing as the Protagonist picks up complex language from his peers. These depictions, immediately recognisable for an audience as reflections of a typical shared experience, will be discussed in terms of 'homecoming' in Chapter Seven.

|                                 |                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>00:58 – 01:28</b><br>[0m 30] | <b>Episode 2</b><br><b>The protagonist grows up at deaf school.</b> | <b>00:58 – 01:01:</b> P continues gesturing with the children; as he grows up [ <i>Timeline</i> : R hand rises], this becomes signing.<br><b>01:01 – 01:14:</b> P receives speech therapy: <i>Adult[teacher] pointing to chin; P's face being manipulated</i> . This continues as P grows up [R hand].<br><b>01:14 – 01:19:</b> P puts on headphones and receives audiological input. Speech therapy continues as he grows up [R hand].<br><b>01:20 – 01:28:</b> At age 16, P discards headphones, rubs face, and leaves. P is relieved. |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

This episode of *Achievement* makes use of a key motif, *Oralist education*, distilled into a set of stock constructions that reflect its impact on the deaf child's bodily autonomy. The Protagonist's face is prodded and distorted: while Gary Quinn's face performs the Protagonist's face, his hands are the

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<sup>213</sup> Bryan Marshall described his experience of arriving at deaf school: 'I didn't know about communication, I had no idea, I was completely in the dark' (BM:2012).

hands of teachers and speech therapists (or his own under their instruction) using speech therapy practices, and the invasiveness of audiology programmes is referenced through the signing of headphones blasting into the protagonist's ears (Fig. 41). The constructions that Gary uses – prodding the face, touching the neck, the image of the headphones – are among those frequently seen in personal experience stories about school experiences; others include holding two fingers up in front of the lips to represent a piece of paper and blowing (typically accompanied by an expression of disconsolate boredom), to reflect the practice of teaching deaf children to articulate hard consonants such as P (Fig. 42), described by one of Lazaroo's research participants 'the dreaded P-P-P exercise' (2014:247).



**Fig. 41 – Audiology**

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**Fig. 42** – *Speech therapy, 1957*

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These fixed expressions, which I designate *Oralist therapies*, function as an immediately recognisable short-hand for the experience of schooldays where the deaf children's 'facial muscles were exercised, but not their brains' (in Andy Carmichael's words): this is eloquently illustrated in Bryan Marshall's tongue-in-cheek response to a Facebook comment made on a photograph taken of him at school (Fig. 43) asking why it had been taken: 'Dunno I forget to ask her as I was busy try to say a fish, probably tried 100 times!'<sup>214</sup>



**Fig. 43** – *Saying 'fish' (Bryan Marshall, c.1966)*  
(Reproduced with permission)

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<sup>214</sup> Facebook 24/01/16. Reproduced as written with permission.

All the non-signing participants responded strongly to the expression of discomfort on the Protagonist's face, which they attempted to explain in terms of medical procedures such as liposuction or reconstructive surgery, or the surreal idea of 'building people out of plasticine'. One participant accurately extrapolated the wider context by suggesting that the sequence alluded to being 'deaf and being pushed around a bit'; the evident relief with which the sixteen-year-old Protagonist discards the audiology headphones and massages his face indicate that this is how the therapy was experienced.

|                                 |                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>01:28 – 02:24</b><br>[0m 56] | <b>PART II</b>                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>01:28 – 02:24</b><br>[0m 56] | <b>The protagonist leaves school but cannot communicate with hearing people.</b> | <p><b>01:29 – 01:38:</b> P sets off [R index], depressed/downhearted [L hand].</p> <p><b>01:39 – 01:48:</b> P approaches Person1 [stage R], indicates that he is deaf. P's hair is blown back [implied shouting].</p> <p><b>01:48 – 01:54:</b> P moves on, people pass [R index; L index]</p> <p><b>01:54 – 02:04:</b> P approaches Person2 [stage L], indicates that he is deaf. <i>Person2 speaks and spit flies out of their mouth.</i> The spit lands on P's face. P wipes it off.</p> <p><b>02:04 – 02:10:</b> P moves on [R index], Person2 passes [L index], P moves on.</p> <p><b>02:10 – 02:17:</b> P sees Person3 [L index]. P approaches Person3 [stageL], indicates that he is deaf. <i>Person3 shouts;</i> P's hair is blown back. Person3 passes [L index].</p> <p><b>02:17 – 02:24:</b> P moves on. It gets darker.</p> |

When the Protagonist leaves school, the implication is that he is ill-equipped to deal with hearing/non-signing people and the wider society, and experiences the loneliness described in the narratives in Case-study 2. Andy Carmichael alluded to this in his voice-over of this sequence, describing the Protagonist as not 'really know[ing] how to relate to people', so 'lost, [...] caught between two worlds' (AC:2014). On a bilingual and bicultural continuum between the DEAFworld and the speaking-hearing world, this is the point at which the line becomes distorted by the inescapable power

mismatch between the two states of being, depicted in *Achievement* through another motif: *speaking-hearing miscommunication*, i.e. hearing people being unable to accommodate signing-deaf people due to phonocentric assumptions about what communication entails, as outlined in Case-study 2. This is specifically manifested through representations of shouting, ‘because they think that’s what you do with a deaf person’ (AC:2014).<sup>215</sup> As with the motif of *Oralist education*, this experience and the fixed expressions associated with it are so ubiquitous that Gary Quinn does not need to explicitly state either that the people the Protagonist interacts with are speaking-hearing, nor that they are shouting. He uses formulaic signs with exaggerated imagery to represent being ‘bowled over by [hearing] people’s inability to communicate’ (AC:2014). The strength of the shouting is hurricane-like (I term this formula *hurricane shouting*), strong enough to blow back the Protagonist’s hair, and the accompanying spit drenches him (*spit drenching*; see Fig. 34 in Chapter Five). The interpretation of these images by several non-signing participants was affectively consistent with their meaning, with one describing *hurricane shouting* as ‘scary’ and reminiscent of electrotherapy, and another picking up on the animation style of the formula as being ‘like a cartoon, when they yell at someone so hard they lean back’.

|                                 |                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>02:24 – 04:02</b><br>[1m 38] | <b>PART III</b>                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>02:24 – 03:03</b><br>[0m 39] | <b>Episode 1</b><br><b>The protagonist meets a deaf person who leads him</b> | <b>02:24 – 02:31: P</b> approaches a deaf person [Deaf1]. P is happy. P + Deaf1 sign together.<br><b>02:31 – 02:35: P</b> asks where other deaf people are. <b>Deaf1</b> indicates that P should follow. <b>P</b> is confused. |

<sup>215</sup> That speaking-hearing people frequently resort to shouting when they meet a deaf person (whether signing-deaf or otherwise) is recognised and satirised within the community. It featured in articles on *The Limping Chicken*, with Swinbourne (2013) writing ‘Whatever you do, don’t start SHOUTING at me. Please. It’s embarrassing. It doesn’t help me to understand you. And it makes me feel a bit scared’ and Nichols (2014) asserting that ‘it’s true that many deaf people can hear in various degrees, but *shouting* is almost always simply an exercise in rudeness and condescension, not to mention futility’.

|  |                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <p><b>into a forest to meet the deaf community.</b></p> | <p><b>02:35 – 02:51:</b> Deaf1 leads P into a dark forest. P follows Deaf1 towards a flickering light [fire]. The light grows brighter as Deaf1 + P approach.</p> <p><b>02:51 – 03:03:</b> P is delighted to see deaf people signing. P signs with them enthusiastically [centre stage].</p> |
|--|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Thus far, *Achievement* has followed a literal (auto)biographical trajectory; here, the narrative becomes more figurative as the Protagonist is led into the signing-deaf community. It begins with the moment of recognition of another signing-deaf person – a DEAF-YOU? DEAF-ME! moment, as described in Chapter Five. DEAFspace has traditionally been invisible to and carefully guarded from the speaking-hearing world; Gary Quinn uses the imagery of the forest to reflect this seclusion. The DEAFspace around the fire is hidden and secret, which Gary depicts with hunched shoulders and squinting eyes (Fig. 44a, a screenshot from our interview); it is also a space where the community flourishes through expressing their shared experiences and relishing their language, depicted with wide eyes and open body language (Fig. 44b).



**Fig. 44a & 44b** – *Concrete transcription: into the forest* (GQ:2013)

The depiction of the community signing (Fig. 44b) is a key motif which was introduced in the previous chapter: more than merely signing together, signing-deaf people are *delighting* in signing together. Gary Quinn builds up to signing at speed (in slow motion) and circling in front of his torso to the



implied community: I term any variation on this *insiders signing*,<sup>216</sup> an expression of what it means to be a signing-deaf person sharing DEAFspace with others who have the same language, culture and experiences of the unsympathetic outside world, and, along with the DEAF-YOU? DEAF-ME! construction, could be seen as part of the motif of *coming home to DEAFspace*. It reflects signing *as* community, as a means to perform culture and to demonstrate collectivity.

|                                         |                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>03:03 – 03:51</b><br/>[0m 58]</p> | <p><b>Episode 2</b><br/><b>Trees fall in the forest. The protagonist sees hearing people learning to sign. He signs to them, but they gradually grow taller than him.</b></p> | <p><b>03:03 – 03:11:</b> A tree is sawn down [R arm, stage R].<br/> <b>03:11 – 03:17:</b> P sees light entering the forest [stage R, up]; P turns to see people next to him [stage L] and starts to sign to them.<br/> <b>03:17 – 03:23:</b> P is told that they are hearing non-signers come to learn. P signs slowly and encouragingly to them, then returns to sign enthusiastically to the deaf people [centre stage].<br/> <b>03:23 – 03:28:</b> A tree is sawn down [L arm, stage L].<br/> <b>03:28 – 03:31:</b> P sees light entering the forest [stage L, up]; P turns to see people next to him [stage R] and turns to sign to them.<br/> <b>03:31 – 03:34:</b> P is told that they too are hearing. P signs slowly and encouragingly to them, then returns to sign enthusiastically to the deaf people [centre stage].<br/> <b>03:34 – 03:44:</b> P alternates between signing enthusiastically to the deaf people in the centre [C], and encouragingly to the hearing people on stage L and stage R. When signing to the hearing people either side, P gradually signs faster, then increasingly in an upwards motion [implication that hearing people are growing].<br/> [centre / left / centre / right / centre / left / centre / right / centre / left (up) / centre / right (up)]<br/> <b>03:44 – 03:46:</b> The hearing people [stage R, up] are speaking. P tries unsuccessfully to sign to them.<br/> <b>03:47 – 03:48:</b> P turns to the other hearing people [stage L, up] and tries to sign to them. They too are speaking.<br/> <b>03:48 – 03:51:</b> P tries to sign to each group of hearing people again [stage R, up / stage L, up]. P is angry.</p> |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

<sup>216</sup> An alternative to *insiders signing*, suggested by Andy Carmichael, is *shit-hot signing*. This reflects the intensity and implied fluency of the sign language itself but, as he acknowledged, does not emphasise the interpersonal element, i.e. that the interlocutors are part of a collective with shared experiences as well as a shared language.

In this portion of *Achievement*, the constitution of the DEAFspace changes as trees fall (representing ‘the barriers between deaf people and hearing people coming down’ – AC:2014) and non-deaf learners of BSL join the group on either side. The action is framed in three spaces: the learners (/a learner; the number is not specified) to the Protagonist’s left and right, the core deaf community in front of him. To the latter, he uses the formula *insiders signing*, with increasingly rigid features including bared teeth and squinting eyes; to the hearing learners, he signs more slowly, with a softer expression. The contrast between the two discourse styles is marked, and the non-signing participants without exception misattributed the nature of the two conversations. They described the Protagonist’s interaction with those on stage right and stage left as ‘making him happy’, in direct contrast to ‘fighting with’ and ‘being made angry by’ the people directly in front of him. Not understanding the linguistic content or the culturally-bound context, the non-signers made the association between rigid facial expressions and aggression; in fact, they are the encapsulation of rapturous and uninhibited conversation. On the other hand, the relationship between the learners and the Protagonist is somewhat ambivalent: he accepts their presence courteously and encourages them by signing slowing and nodding, but they are not treated with enthusiasm. Fully fluent, culturally-invested signing is performed in the red hot centre of the community; language is used politely in the community’s cool extremities.

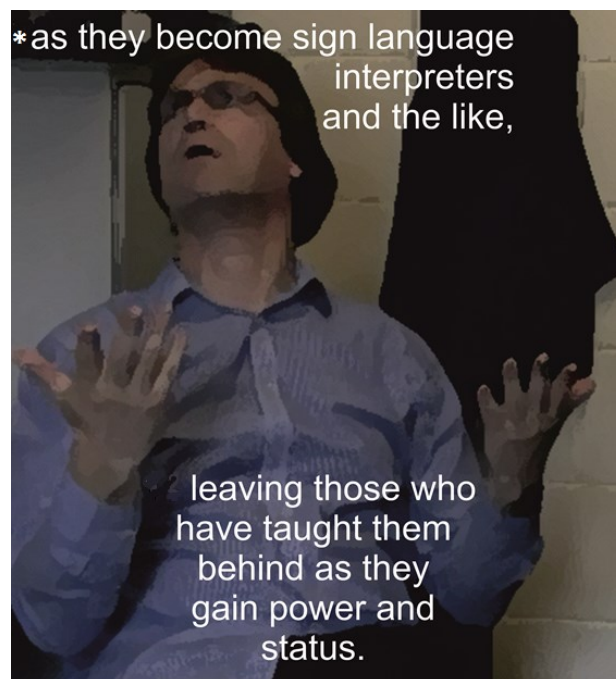
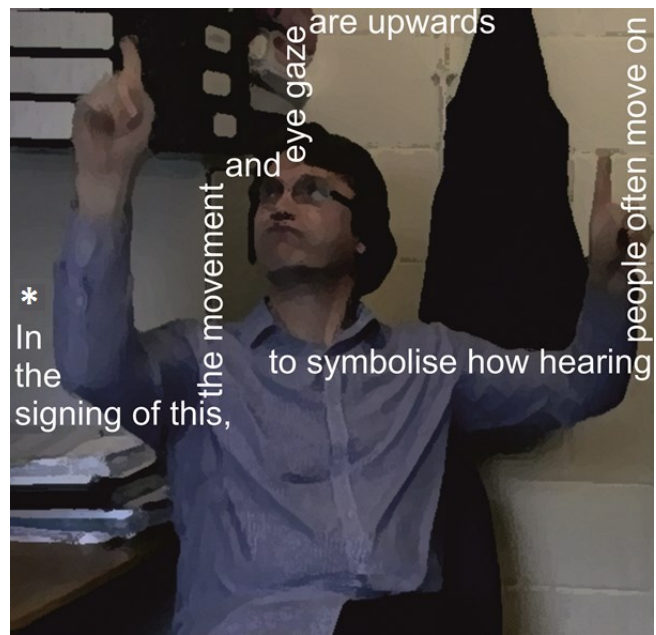
The fluency of the learners does improve, depicted through the gradual increase in the speed in which Gary Quinn signs towards them, but they are never fully amalgamated into the central group. These dynamics are further explored through the use of a spatial metaphor. In the organisation of

discursive space, signing upwards reflects a shift in status: in its most literal sense, it can be used to role-shift into the character of a seated or small person interacting with someone standing over them. In *Achievement*, this is employed in a figurative sense. Gary described this in our interview, from which I quote below using concrete transcription (Figs. 45a, 45b, 45c).<sup>217</sup> The use of a spatial metaphor subtly alludes to the power imbalance between speaking-hearing and signing-deaf people in an audist world: the injustice that speaking-hearing learners of BSL gain professional opportunities which typically far outstrip those of their signing-deaf teachers. This will be explored further in Chapter Seven.



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<sup>217</sup> The asterisks indicate the starting point of each picture.



**Figs. 45a & 45b & 45c** - *Concrete transcription: hearing people in the forest* (GQ:2013)

|                             |                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 03:51 –<br>03:55<br>[0m 04] | <b>Episode 3</b><br><b>The protagonist grows to the same height as the hearing people.</b> | <b>03:51 – 03:55:</b> P forces himself to grow to the same height as the hearing people.<br><b>03:55 – 03:58:</b> P signs forcefully to stage R, then to stage L. P signs EQUAL to both.<br><b>03:59 – 04:02:</b> More trees fall [R arm / L arm / R arm / L arm / R+L arms] |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Uncomfortable and angry with this power imbalance, the Protagonist exerts great effort to grow (tree-like) to the same height as the speaking-hearing people (Fig. 46a & 46b).

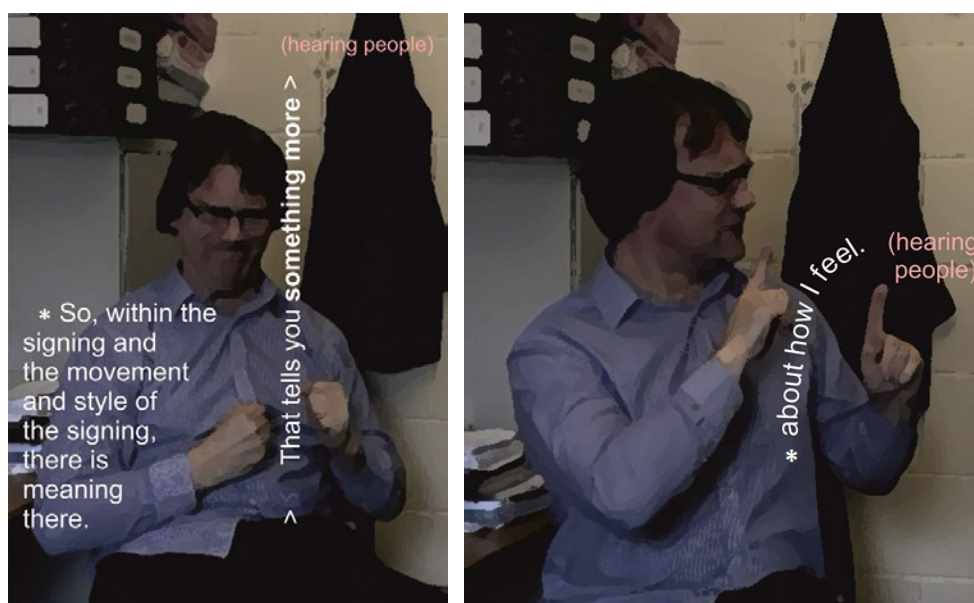


**Fig. 46a & 46b** – *Concrete transcription: regaining status (GQ:2013)<sup>218</sup>*

The section in the forest was described by Andy Carmichael as '[a] big allegory about deaf people's emancipation', so by using a spatial metaphor, Gary avoids taking a preachy tone: 'the meaning is there', he explained, 'I don't have to make it explicit' (GQ:2013). The movement upwards is an assertion of the Protagonist's – and therefore the community's – equal worth, but also of the struggle to be accepted on those terms and the required investment of energy

<sup>218</sup> The chevron depicts the implied movement of Gary Quinn's torso; the text in parentheses tags the speaking-hearing learners' relative position to the Protagonist. The insufficiency of the English translation should be immediately evident and is emphasised in **bold**.

to ensure that speaking-hearing people ‘don’t talk above their heads about the issues that affect them’ (AC:2014). Once the Protagonist has regained equal footing with the learners, he signs EQUAL with forceful eye-gaze to left and right: there can no doubt that the community is now politicised.

|                                 |                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>04:02 – 05:16</b><br>[1m 14] | <b>PART IV</b>                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>04:02 – 04:29</b><br>[0m 27] | <b>Episode 1</b><br><b>The protagonist and the group reach a river and want to cross but are too afraid.</b> | <b>04:02 – 04:03:</b> P links arms with his companions.<br><b>04:03 – 04:09:</b> P is part of a crowd. They march forward together until they reach a roaring river.<br><b>04:09 – 04:17:</b> P looks at and across the river. P sees fireworks in the distance.<br><b>04:17 – 04:20:</b> P asks his companions what it is [stage L / stage R].<br><b>04:20 – 04:26:</b> <i>Companion [stage R] discourages P, indicating that it is too great an obstacle.</i> P looks longingly into the distance.<br><b>04:27 – 04:29:</b> The river continues to rush by. |
|                                 | <b>Episode 2</b><br><b>The protagonist’s companions cross the river.</b>                                     | <b>04:29 – 04:32:</b> P asks companion [stage R] if they are going to cross, as P is not sure.<br><b>04:32 – 04:39:</b> Companion’s boat [stage R] sets off over the roaring river and vanishes into the distance. P loses sight of it.<br><b>04:39 – 04:41:</b> P asks companion [stage L] if they are going to cross.<br><b>04:41 – 04:46:</b> Companion’s boat [stage L] sets off over the roaring river and vanishes into the distance.<br><b>04:46 – 04:50:</b> The river continues to rush by [less furiously].                                         |
|                                 | <b>Episode 3</b><br><b>The protagonist crosses the river and attains his goal: a degree.</b>                 | <b>04:51 – 04:53:</b> P decides to try to cross the river. P’s boat sets off.<br><b>04:53 – 04:59:</b> As P’s boat is tossed by the waves, <b>three</b> years pass [ <i>Timeline: rotating around L index</i> ].<br><b>04:59 – 05:11:</b> There is a great explosion [implied firework]. The sparks fall down onto P’s head in the shape of a mortar board, tassel, and scroll [degree].                                                                                                                                                                      |

Standing shoulder to shoulder at the same height, the next sequence of *Achievement* begins with an assertion of togetherness, as the Protagonist links arms with those on either side of him and they move forward together. Although the hearing characters were until now positioned at either side, at this point I interpret the whole space as representing ‘the community’ as a

whole – non-deaf allies incorporated, but still predominantly signing-deaf. At the point when the Protagonist is discouraged from risking the river crossing by his companions, these companions could be interpreted as being speaking-hearing people propagating the DEAF CAN'T metanarrative or signing-deaf people who have internalised it. But some do cross the river: perhaps another example of non-deaf learners going on to 'gain power and status' (GQ:2013), but, in my reading, more likely to be fellow signing-deaf people trail-blazing for the community; the river in spate appears to flow slightly less aggressively when it comes time for the Protagonist to cross.<sup>219</sup>

Despite the apparent reduction in the strength of the river's current, the Protagonist's crossing is tempestuous. Throughout this sequence, Gary Quinn's whole body is performing: his hands represent the tossing boat and the waves themselves, and his trunk and head rise, fall and sway as though he were himself the river, the boat, and standing *on* the boat. His body continues to move in this way while hands morph from BOAT-ON-THE-WAVES to produce a calendrical timeline, where the non-dominant index finger is held horizontally, around which the dominant hand's fingers rotate forwards to show the number of years passing. The movement of the boat is pulled into the depiction of time passing, investing the latter with the qualities of the first: four tempestuous years.

This capacity to merge signs and movements into one another and to blend figurative and literal imagery is also used at the finale of the *Achievement*, where the river explodes into an enormous firework, the sparks of which flicker down to form the shape of a mortar board on his head and a

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<sup>219</sup> I am particularly grateful to Andy Carmichael for our discussion of the nuances of this sequence, and to Gary Quinn for refusing to give me a straight answer when I asked him to clarify his intentions.

degree scroll in his hands. The difficult, turbulent three-year journey is revealed to be the experience of studying for and attaining a degree; the Protagonist's final position is reminiscent of a graduation photo. It is here that the individuation of the narrative is strongest; this is Gary's personal achievement. Yet, as we saw in Chapter Three, the success of the individual can be perceived as the success of the community; Gary's autobiography is also a signing-deaf biography of achievement against the odds.

### **A lesson in restricted form: *Virus* – Mark MacQueen**

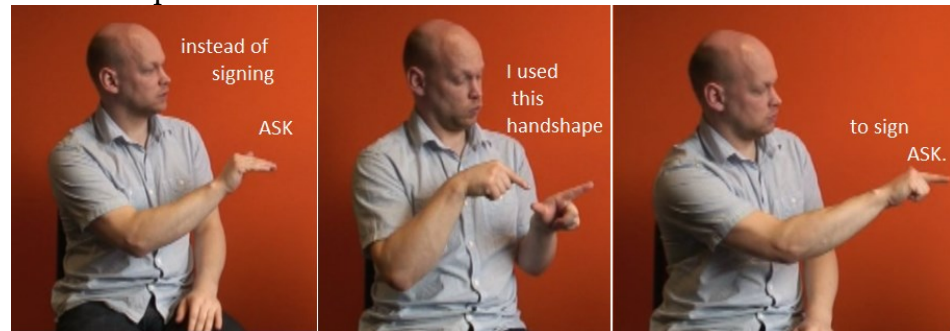
The final selection from the Visual Virus repertoire is one that emphasises the distinct affordances of sign languages by placing a modality-specific restriction on the performance-text.<sup>220</sup> In *Virus*, Mark MacQueen produces a complex five-minute performance-text using a hyper-extended fixed phoneme: a single handshape, that of the Visual Virus logo (recall Fig. 38). Deviation from this handshape must 'remain within acceptable boundaries' (Bahan 2006:42), and Mark only permits himself to 'close' the handshape so that the fingers touch. Therefore, the signs and classifiers used in *Virus* are of two types: those that already use an open and/or closed version of the handshape, and those that remain intelligible if the handshape is used to produce them. Mark explained this in our interview (Box 7).

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<sup>220</sup> A variety of possibilities for Signart with 'constraints' is explored by Bahan (2006:37-42); see also Bechter (2008).



So for example



**Box 7** – *Concrete transcription: restricted form* (MM:2013)

The handshape is changed, but the rest of the sign's phonological parameters are consistent, exploiting the flexibility in sign languages' phonology: whereas the substitution of a phoneme in a spoken language drastically alters the meaning, one or more aspects of a sign can be altered and the meaning remains clear.

Signart of this nature could be compared to the use of a strict metre in poetry, and is fundamentally 'untranslatable in its pure form':

It's exploiting an aspect of the language, handshape, that doesn't exist in spoken language, and using this as a kind of ongoing visual pun. (AC:2014)

The restricted form of the BSL was so fundamental to the performance-text's eloquence, Andy Carmichael observed, that an interpreter would need either to limit their voiceover to a basic summary of the narrative arc, or else rehearse a script that attempted to mirror the concept in spoken English. The following extract from our interview illustrates the complexity of developing such a script, starting from the suggestion that alliteration is a loose equivalent:

AC: You would pretty much go through every letter in the alphabet wouldn't you, plus all the *chs* and *shs* and *ths*. [...] I would probably go short stanzas and do *th-th-th-th-th* for those two or

three lines, *the third throwaway thought that* you know, you just have to keep going [...] and then *sh-sh-sh-sh* for the next one and then *ch-ch-ch* and then [...] do the same – that would be my artistic choice, yeah. [...] At least it's a starting point. [...] *Pfff* god you'd be really stretched creatively, you know, and even then, that's not going to convey – it's really not going to convey the visuality of it, erm, there's going to be a lot of meaning lost –

EL: And also just the simplicity of it.

AC: Well, I mean that's the other thing – you raise a very interesting point, actually, and that is you don't want to over-egg the sauce. [...] You've got to be careful as an interpreter, you don't want to make it too complex because you're right, your *original* artform is quite simple, like almost childlike, it has naivety, yeah, and how do you express that in alliteration, in heavily stanza-ed alliteration ... that's not really a strong equivalent. (AC:2014)

The skill is in maintaining this balance of complexity and simplicity. The narrative arc itself, discussed below, relates the history of deaf education and concludes with a utopian vision of the future: it is not an easy story to tell using a single handshape, and the challenge is to select signs which can obey the phonological constraint and remain comprehensible. Mark MacQueen starts the performance-text using signs that require only a slight adjustment (e.g. a single finger, as in SPEAK), then gradually build in complexity until, by the end of the performance-text, he can use signs that would almost certainly not have been comprehensible in their restricted form at the beginning. Building from the simple to the complex allows the audience to acclimatise to the form and follow as the complexity builds, establishing contingency chains and enabling the viewer to draw meaning from even unfamiliar constructions (Sutton-Spence 2014:464). This is enhanced by Mark's careful use of spatial grammar, and his non-manual features 'amped up to the max' (AC:2014) to keep the narrative coherent, to the extent that, towards the end of the live performance-text, I understood the *meaning* but not necessarily the lexemes.

The composition of a restricted-form performance-text requires a great deal of skill in linguistic composition; however, its effectiveness is equally, or arguably more, a skill of performance. The visual integrity of the performance relies on the Signartist's ability to inhibit the BSL lexicon, to lock the hands and suppress the instinct to produce the correct phoneme,<sup>221</sup> whilst under the pressure of live performance. This requires a high level of discipline, and Andy Carmichael, with his experience in both the DEAFworld and the arts sector, was quick to commend Mark MacQueen for making *Virus* look easy (Box 8). When well-executed, the signartistry of a restricted-form performance-text is readily apparent even if its linguistic meaning is not; several of the non-signing participants remarked on the effect, of which the following comment is typical:

Participant 6:            Oh my god this is on another level! It's just the aesthetic of it.

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<sup>221</sup> Bilingual speakers tend to have greater inhibitory skills because they are constantly suppressing a language (Bialystok 1999), although there is evidence that bimodal bilinguals do not necessarily show the same inhibitory advantage (Luk *et al.* 2008).

It's actually incredibly hard to do to a performance standard. When you don't do it right it looks dreadful [...]



I just did it then, you'll probably see it on the camera if you go back, you'll see that my thumb went like that.

**Box 8** – *Concrete transcription: restricted form (AC:2014)*

The plot of *Virus*, on the other hand, was almost entirely incomprehensible to the non-signing participants. While they accurately interpreted some of the emotional import, they found it 'practically impossible' to see 'how anyone could get anything [narrative] from this at all'. The narrative arc traces the history of deaf education and attitudes towards sign language, starting with the organic building of signing communities, the

denigration and eventual suppression of sign language, the gradual reassertion of the validity of the language and the community, and a manifesto for the future. While the scope is evidently very broad, Mark MacQueen is able to allude to particular moments in deaf history without needing to specify: the systematic oppression of deaf people can be described as a 'world-historical narrative' (Yates and Hunter 2002), readily familiar to most in the DEAFworld, which also maps onto most, if not all, signing-deaf people's lived experience of negative attitudes towards their language.

In addition, towards the end of the performance-text, it is evident that *Virus* is also a 'social movement narrative' (Benford 2002), a rallying cry for the deaf public voice. More so than the relationship between the Protagonist in *Achievement* and Gary Quinn, *Virus*'s protagonist appears to be an overt personification of the community, disconnected from Mark MacQueen's *personal* identity but indisputably sharing some of his experiences, emotional responses and ideologies.<sup>222</sup> Furthermore, he seems to function as a diachronic personification of the community through time. A complex overview of historical and contemporary experiences of being a signing-deaf person in a speech-dominant world is distilled into a restricted-form allegory.

### ***Preliminary notes on characterisation and role-shift***

As with *Achievement*, the protagonist of *Virus* is designated Protagonist or P in the guidance table. In terms of characterisation, there is little to distinguish him from the other (also unnamed) characters, supporting my interpretation of him as an 'archetypal' personification of the signing community. Moreover, as was observed earlier, role-shift can be used to represent unspecified plurals, groups or even concepts; designating characters

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<sup>222</sup> Again, I am using the male pronoun for the protagonist because Mark MacQueen is male.

in a performance-text is to some extent misleading. Personified referents in *Virus* appear to include *others in the signing community, learners, deaf children, parents of deaf children*, and even power structures such as *the educational establishment*. These differentiations are inferred by the audience through the context rather than made explicit by the Signartist. In keeping with this, I have chosen not to over-interpret which characters represent which subgroups in the guidance tables; a discussion of the characters will take place in Chapter Seven.

*Virus* is an exploration of the tension between the two language modalities of speech and sign, and the two most frequently employed signs in the performance-text are the restricted-form versions of SIGN(ING) and SPEECH/SPEAKING. This is the central dichotomy in *Virus*, rather than the more ubiquitous DEAF and HEARING distinction. It should be noted that the signs DEAF and HEARING do not appear at any point in *Virus*: the characters can be grouped into one of two categories, i.e. *those who sign* and *those who speak*, but their audiological status is not made explicit. SPEECH/SPEAKING in this context could be glossed as meaning USE-YOUR-VOICE(-NOT-YOUR-HANDS); although the link with Oralist education is not made explicit, it is made subtly clear that the power lies with those who use and advocate SPEECH.<sup>223</sup>

***Virus: the performance-text (Appendix 3.1c & 3.4)***

| TIME                        | EPISODE                         | EPISODIC BREAK-DOWN                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 00:16 –<br>00:44<br>[0m 28] | PART I: Orientation             |                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 00:16 –<br>00:44<br>[0m 28] | The signing community develops. | 00:16 – 00:30: Protagonist (P) and people begin signing to each other [role-shift].<br>00:31 – 00:44: All move into the same space and sign more enthusiastically. |

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<sup>223</sup> I am particularly grateful to Yvonne Waddell for her insights into the nuances of this term.

The first 44 seconds of *Virus* provides orientation, and takes a very simple form. Mark MacQueen sets up the interaction between the characters first with non-manual features (facial expressions and head tilts) and building up to using the restricted handshape. He repeats the same sequences in a balanced/symmetrical manner, role-shifting between the characters to ensure that the spatial organisation is clearly defined. As well as setting up the scene (i.e. the establishment of a community of signers) in anticipation of the complicating action, the gradual build up and repetition allows the audience to acclimatise to the restricted form.

|                                 |                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>00:44 – 02:15</b><br>[1m 31] | <b>PART II</b>                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>00:44 – 01:48</b><br>[1m 04] | <b>Episode 1</b><br><b>A newcomer insists on speaking rather than signing and the signing community deteriorates.</b> | <b>00:44 – 00:51:</b> Newcomer1 (unknown) approaches the group [stage R].<br><b>00:52 – 01:21: Role-shift interaction: Newcomer1</b> tells all to speak. <b>P</b> signs. <b>Newcomer1</b> tells <b>P</b> not to sign, but to speak. <b>P</b> reiterates that he does not speak, but that he and the community sign. <b>Newcomer1</b> tells <b>P</b> that speaking is a key to new opportunities whereas signing is limited.<br><b>01:21 - 01:27: P and the community</b> ponder this and begin to try to speak.<br><b>01:27 – 01:31: P</b> fervently reiterates that signing is valid and beautiful.<br><b>01:31 – 01:48:</b> More and more members of the community speak, leaving <b>P</b> ignored. |
| <b>01:48 – 02:15</b><br>[0m 27] | <b>Episode 2</b><br><b>Signing is looked down on. Children are discouraged from signing.</b>                          | <b>01:48 – 01:53:</b> <b>P</b> approaches <b>Person1</b> [stage L]. <b>Person1</b> rebuffs <b>P</b> and tells him to use his mouth.<br><b>01:53 – 02:03 P</b> approaches <b>Child1</b> [stage R, down]. <b>Role-shift interaction: P</b> and <b>Child1</b> interact and sign. <b>P</b> notices <b>Person2</b> [stage R, up]. <b>Person2</b> tells <b>Child1</b> to stop signing and to speak.<br><b>02:04 – 02:15: P</b> looks at his hands. He reflects on how the community has changed from fluent signing to increasing speech. He reflects on the Child. He is downcast.                                                                                                                         |

The complicating action is the newcomer's insistence that the community should attempt to speak rather than sign. The newcomer's manner is

patronising and belittling, and consequently evokes the historically negative attitudes towards sign language. The response of the signing community appears to mirror the internalised shame which has been remarked upon by Ladd (2003:324-5). It should be noted that Person 2 (presumably Child 1's parent or teacher) is not explicitly labelled as a speaking-hearing person, merely as representative of internalised audism.

|                                 |                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
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| <b>02:16 - 02:52</b><br>[0m 36] | <b>PART III</b>                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>02:16 – 02:36</b><br>[0m 20] | <b>Episode 1</b><br><b>A smaller signing community emerges from disparate places, ignoring the rest.</b> | <b>02:16 – 02:25:</b> P notices Person3 [stage L] and asks if s/he signs. <i><b>Person3</b> says s/he signs but no one else does.</i> P eagerly beckons Person3 over and they sign.<br><b>02:25 – 02:30:</b> P notices Person4 [stage R] and eagerly beckons her/him over. They all sign together.<br><b>02:30 – 02:36:</b> P tells them to ignore everyone else. They sign together.                                         |
| <b>02:36 – 02:52</b><br>[0m 16] | <b>Episode 2</b><br><b>Children who don't speak are taught to sign and join the community.</b>           | <b>02:36 – 02:42:</b> P notices Child2 [centre, down] who does not speak. P focuses on signing to Child2 [gradually standing up and more relaxed].<br><b>02:42 – 02:52:</b> P is pleased [looks towards Person3 / stage L]. P beckons more children and signs to them [gradually standing up and more relaxed, sweeping stage L (down) to R to L to centre]. [This is repeated, sweeping stage R (down) to L to R to centre.] |

Two points in the above guidance tables deserve elaboration. The first is the reconstitution of the community along exclusive lines, i.e. ignoring the non-signing world. This reflects the perceived insularity of deaf communities, born of the distrust felt towards mainstream phonocentric society, and alludes to the issue of safeguarding DEAFspace. The second is a question of temporal shift: the Protagonist begins signing to the children (i.e. below him) in a concentrated manner, implying intergenerational teaching (albeit informally) – something which most frequently happens within the signing-deaf community rather than in deaf children's own homes. He gradually



straightens up to resume signing in a conversational manner on the horizontal plane, i.e. to adults; the children have joined the community as adults.

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| 02:52 – 03:16<br>[0m 24] | PART IV            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 02:52 – 03:16<br>[0m 24] | Signing is banned. | 02:52 – 03:05: Role-shift interaction: P notices Newcomer2 [stage R]. <b>Newcomer2</b> reprimands P for signing to the children. Newcomer2 says that signing is limiting [downwards] whereas speech is elevating [upwards]. P queries Newcomer2. <b>Newcomer2</b> bans signing [behind back]. P is shocked [behind back].<br>03:05 – 03:16: Role-shift interaction: P “speaks” to Child3 [centre down]. <b>Child3</b> doesn’t understand. P shrugs and keeps “speaking”. [Repeats.] |

Part IV is a turning point in *Virus*, where the negative attitudes held towards sign language reach a peak and sign language is banned. The banning of sign language situates this portion of the performance-text at the 1880 Congress of Milan, the impact of which was described in Chapter One. The removal of deaf teachers from schools is expressed in a simple form through two metaphors. For the first, spatial metaphor, the discourse of Newcomer 2 makes use of the association already explored in *Achievement* between *motion upwards, positivity and prestige*, and *motion downwards, negativity and debasement*: SIGN/ING is signed downwards, whereas SPEECH/SPEAKING follows an upwards trajectory. Another metaphor is used when SIGN/ING is banned outright: the Protagonist’s hands are held behind his back, effectively silencing the community’s voice. He can no longer teach the children to sign but can use only lip pattern with Child 3. Child 3’s uncomprehending expression is a non-verbal shortcut to the shared experience of being schooled in a fundamentally inaccessible medium. This sequence in *Virus* is ‘heavily weighted through the prism of deaf experience’ (AC:2014).

|                                 |                                                                                      |                                                                                                                        |
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| <b>03:16 – 04:27</b><br>[1m 11] | <b>PART V</b>                                                                        |                                                                                                                        |
| <b>03:16 – 03:31</b><br>[0m 15] | <b>Episode 1</b><br><b>The signing community secretly manages to rebuild itself.</b> | <b>03:16 – 03:31:</b> P starts signing discretely [low] [stage L, R, L, R] and builds to signing confidently [to all]. |

The gradual resurgence of the signing community is also depicted through the use of space: when the Protagonist begins to sign again he positions his hands just below waist level, which a few of the non-signing participants accurately interpreted as the Protagonist ‘signing discretely’. This can be interpreted as reflecting the heyday of Oralism (e.g. between 1880 and the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century), when sign language was typically relegated to domestic or intra-community domains (e.g. deaf clubs). Yet gradually the Protagonist’s signing climbs to standard signspace: he moves from the surreptitious to the confident, reflecting the gradual ‘Deaf resurgence’ of the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

|                                 |                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
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| <b>03:31 – 03:55</b><br>[0m 24] | <b>Episode 2</b><br><b>Speaking people are taught to sign and join the community.</b>                    | <b>03:31 – 03:39:</b> P notices and welcomes Newcomer3 [stage R]. Newcomer3 can speak and sign. P welcomes Newcomer3.<br><b>03:39 – 03:50:</b> P alternates between signing to community and responding to Newcomer3. P corrects Newcomer3. P draws Newcomer3 in, teaches her/him to sign. Newcomer3 is placed [as a signer] [R index].<br><b>03:51 – 03:53:</b> P teaches [stage L] to sign, then places [L index].<br><b>03:53 – 03:55:</b> P teaches [centre stage] to sign, then places [R index]. |
| <b>03:55 – 04:09</b><br>[0m 14] | <b>Episode 3</b><br><b>More people are taught to sign, but it is not enough.</b>                         | <b>03:55 – 04:02:</b> P considers and counts the placements [L to R]. Further away there are lots of people; near there are very few. P is disappointed.<br><b>04:02 – 04:09:</b> P counts himself and those near. P indicates the many further away who are clueless about signing. P is disappointed.                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>04:09 – 04:27</b><br>[0m 18] | <b>Episode 4</b><br><b>The people who are taught to sign teach others to sign, but it is not enough.</b> | <b>04:09 – 04:21:</b> P thinks and has an idea. He gathers [stage L], teaches near [two hands] and then spreads the teaching further away [one hand each]. [Repeats for centre and Stage R.]                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

|  |  |                                                                                                                                    |
|--|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  | <b>04:21 – 04:27:</b> P surveys the scene. Speaking is going on everywhere and the community is small. P contemplates [downwards]. |
|--|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

At this point, the constitution of the community is reconfigured again, but in contrast to the exclusivity depicted in Part III, here it is inclusive. Newcomers who can speak *and* sign are welcomed into the community by the Protagonist, who becomes their teacher. Ambivalences towards speaking-hearing learners are not alluded to in *Virus*, the implication being that the time for gate-keeping is over. This is reminiscent of Mark MacQueen’s ideological position that the community should be defined primarily through language, mentioned in Chapters One and Two. The Protagonist teaches the newcomers in order to swell the ranks of the community, and teaches them to go on to teach even more people, depicted through signing restricted-form TEACH with two hands close together in his near sign-space (i.e. to someone close to him), followed by the same sign but with hands further apart at a remove from his body. The splitting apart of the hands is reminiscent of cell division, and the increasing distance of these from the body gives the impression of exponential growth and dissemination: the first allusion to the eponymous ‘virus’, but with positive connotations. The Protagonist is trying to create a larger community through conversion.

|                                 |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
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| <b>04:27 – 04:57</b><br>[0m 30] | <b>PART VI</b>                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>04:27 – 04:57</b><br>[0m 30] | <b>Visual language spreads like a virus and causes world to wake up to the equal value of signing and speech.</b> | <p><b>04:27 – 04:42:</b> Moment of epiphany: spreading signing like a virus to bring to the non-signing world [EYES-OPEN, AWAKE]. P slowly looks at signing hands. P is content.</p> <p><b>04:42 – 04:48:</b> The future vision: P draws a circle [the world], and a larger circle enveloping it [signing].</p> <p><b>04:48 – 04:57:</b> Speaking and signing on a par, moving forward.</p> |

The conversionary remit of *Virus* is made explicit in the final part of the performance-text, in which the Protagonist posits a utopian future. Sign language spreads through the world like a conversionary virus, leading non-signers to 'wake up' to it; interestingly, two of the non-signing participants, for whom the content of *Virus* had been entirely obscure, interpreted something of this meaning, describing the final sequence as 'like the rapture', and suggesting that it meant 'seeing everything afresh'. Once the world's eyes are open, SPEECH/SPEAKING and SIGN(ING) co-existing in co-equality. This sequence is a 'call to arms' to members of the signing community, and the choice of handshape comes into its own: it is not merely a play on the Visual Virus logo, but on the EYES-OPENING-UP meaning implied therein. *Virus* is a performance-text which builds towards an overtly didactic message: it is the responsibility of those who sign to build awareness of their language. In using the Visual Virus handshape, Mark MacQueen has subtly primed the BSL-using audience for this message.

### **Looking back and looking forward**

This chapter has used a variety of different approaches to present three BSL performance-texts in their original form, responding creatively to the methodological question,

what bridging techniques are required for translating the artistry of signed-oral storytelling, and the cultural experiences of signing-deaf people, to a speaking-hearing audience?

Guidance tables outlined each stage of the narrative, and analytical commentary was provided to furnish the reader with context and insights into the signartistry and cultural referents being deployed. The commentary contained a multiplicity of voices, including those of the Signartists, an arts

interpreter, and a cohort of non-signers; these coalesce to provide a dynamic description, but avoid translation. The three performance-texts demonstrate the range of signartistry available, and also provide an introduction to the variety of Signart styles being performed in Scotland. They provide an illustration of signartistry as outlined in Chapter Three: *Three Pigs* uses the everyday signartistry of role-shift characterisation and visual humour; *Achievement* builds on this, incorporating formulaic constructions used to distil culturally-bound experiences of living in an audist world, and drawing on spatial metaphors and allegorical representations; *Virus* demonstrates the entirely different affordances of signed-oral production, using a restricted form that exploits sign languages' visual phonology and which contains a visual pun reflecting the thematic content of the performance-text.

The questions of authorship discussed in earlier chapters were alluded to again: although each of the performance-texts were original compositions, they made use of community-anchored content, arguably distilling collective experience into a creative form. *Achievement* and *Virus*, moreover, further complicate the question of author-performer and protagonist: Gary Quinn's autobiography can be seen as an everyman biography of signing-deaf experiences, and the protagonist in *Virus* appears to represent both the community through time, the experiences of individual signing-deaf people, and Mark MacQueen's own conversionary position in relation to securing the future of the community.

Visual Virus's English name and sign-name both carry an awareness-raising, conversionary message; this is among the messages about signing-deaf culture that is transmitted through the performances. The act of performing Signart as platform storytelling for a mixed audience and in a mainstream venue, especially one recognised as a national institution like the

Scottish Storytelling Centre, is itself a statement of co-equality: the assertion of the right to be seen in the 'mirror' of national heritage (Stuart Hall 2005), to be seen as *of* Scottish corp-oral performance traditions. In refusing to provide English translations, it is also asserting the right to be *apart from* and recognised for its own intrinsic value in its original form. Other 'public voice' messages are contained within the performance-texts themselves; many of these may already be apparent, but they will be discussed in Chapter Seven as part of an examination of thematic and signartistry features pertaining to biculturality found in these performance-texts and others in the Visual Virus repertoire. This chapter should therefore be seen primarily as a bridge between the source material of Case-study 3 and the analysis of it, and as an ethnopoetically sensitive response to the problem of engaging with signed-oral performance-texts using a language of words on the page.

## Biculturalism in the Visual Virus repertoire

By this point, it should be apparent that BSL Signart can take various forms. Chapter Six presented in considerable depth a sample of three performance-texts from Visual Virus's repertoire, highlighting the signartistry and thematic tropes that can appear in adaptations (*Three Pigs*), (auto)biographical Signart (*Achievement*), and performance-texts with a highly restricted form (*Virus*). The repertoire of Visual Virus contains many examples of explicit and implicit explorations of signing-deaf biculturalism, and many conversionary messages about signing-deaf culture that, by performing to a mixed audience (or, at least, on a public stage), contribute to the deaf public voice in Scotland and online. This chapter provides a close reading of some of these messages of biculturalism and co-equality, looking at the intersection of thematic content, signartistry and the conversionary worldview of the performers. Many of these the tropes and motifs will be familiar from the earlier case-studies. I focus particularly on the core performance-texts with which the reader is now familiar; these will be supplemented, where relevant, with discussions of other examples from the 'Through New Eyes' series.<sup>224</sup>

As outlined in Chapter Two, these close readings are my own interpretations, based primarily on my participation in Edinburgh's signing-deaf community and engagement with the research literature. In addition, I

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<sup>224</sup> All performance-texts from 'Through New Eyes' are available on Visual Virus's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Visual-Virus/349211848446543?fref=ts> [accessed 3/11/15]. Those from 'Through New Eyes 2' are unfortunately not available but will be described.

include any interpretations offered in my interviews, including those of the Signartists themselves. However, both Gary Quinn and Mark MacQueen were reluctant to offer many specific comments on the 'meanings' of their performance-texts, preferring to speak in generalities or about the signartistry used to produce them. In part, this seems attributable to a desire to encourage multiple interpretations of the performance-texts as art, as 'culture talking' (Humphries 2008:40). Gary Quinn couched it in the following terms:

I am often playing with people to encourage them to identify what is said/signed and what it meant. We have this richness in BSL but no-one has been discussing it, especially if you compare it to English. In storytelling, you can tell stories in a direct form, you can make up details, you can have hidden meaning. [...] Deaf people would come up and ask me, 'So, did you mean x?' or 'Did that mean y?' And I would always respond, 'Well, it is up to you. It is what you think.' But often a deaf audience would assume it was fact; that there was a right or a wrong answer. [...] But it is about your own perceptions and understandings and your own enjoyment. (GQ:2013)

My interpretations below are not intended to present 'a right answer', but to suggest some answers; hopefully, these can be supplemented with other interpretations in the future.

I have centred my analysis around found recurring themes that I consider particularly insightful vehicles for understanding signing-deaf biculturality. The first theme is *sign language* itself. Representations of signing in Signart are, it seems, exclusively positive, in keeping with Cook's observation that signing-deaf culture 'defines itself by language' (in Wolter 2006:160). Padden and Humphries include placing value on sign language as one of the core tenets of cultural affiliation (1988, 2005). The esteem in which sign language is held, and the public assertion of that esteem, is a counter-hegemonic statement of co-equal biculturality that rejects internalised stigma. The celebration of sign language can be made explicit within the content of a



performance-text; it can also be obliquely performed through the deployment of signartistry, so that the medium is the message even where there is no explicit mention of sign language or even of signing-deaf experiences.

The second theme concerns the representation of *speaking-hearingness* in the performance-texts. I say *speaking-hearingness* rather than *speaking-hearing characters*; the latter do often feature, and are represented through the recreation of observed techniques of the body and the deployment of “speech” (described in Chapter Five). Yet these ‘portraits of the Hearing’ (Fjord 1996) go beyond the individual, to include general attitudes towards signing-deafhood held by the majority culture, and the disproportionate degree of power that individual speaking-hearing people and phonocentric and audist institutions may wield over signing-deaf lives. The speaking-hearing/signing-deaf border is a key site – arguably *the* key site – of bicultural interplay, where identities, worldviews and behaviours are contested, but also a key site of inter-cultural conversion.

Drawing these first two themes together, I then look briefly at representations of *language ideology in deaf education*. This links the first two themes together, as the realm of education is arguably the site in which hearing people and audist ideologies have the greatest impact on signing-deaf lives.<sup>225</sup> Deaf education is almost exclusively conceptualised, implemented and controlled by non-deaf people, and is infused with attitudes towards both deafness and sign languages which are not always in line with those of signing-deaf communities. The deaf person’s experience of deaf education – the pedagogical methods employed, the language ideologies projected – can

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<sup>225</sup> The other is the medical domain, which has undergone a resurgence since the development of cochlear implants and the human genome project. I have not considered the increasingly medicalised discourse on deafness in this thesis due to issues of scope.

have a major impact on that person's educational attainment, enculturation, self-confidence and conceptualisation of their deafness, and thus directly influences where that person's signing-deaf identity is situated on the bicultural continuum. Although representations of Oralism are present in the repertoire, this was sufficiently dealt with in Chapter Six during the elaborated commentary on *Achievement*; I focus instead on *Three Pigs* as a more generalised pedagogical commentary.

Finally, I look at representations of DEAFspace, as the cultural home of signing-deaf communities. It has been highlighted throughout this thesis that the majority of signing-deaf people have come into their community and culture rather than having been born into it; the discovery of DEAFspace can be revelatory, where audiological deafness and visual engagement with the world is the norm. DEAFspace sets signing-deaf communities *apart from* the dominant speaking-hearing habitus, and tensions over its borders find voice in some of the performance-texts.

### **SIGNING REAL/TRUE/DEFINITE BEAUTIFUL: representations of sign language**

That BSL and signing are represented positively in the Visual Virus repertoire is unsurprising given the group's avowed aim to 'promote the use of a very high standard of signing' (MM:2013). In recruiting other Signartists, Mark MacQueen observed that it could be 'very difficult to find people with the right skill set [...] [because] lots of people still sign in English order' (MM:2013). The quality of the BSL was, he said, the only consideration for involvement in Visual Virus's shows:

It could be a hearing person or a deaf person, but what is important is their style and signing ability. (MM:2013)

The 'Through New Eyes' series of platform performance-texts uses a variety of creative styles, and so challenge the negative language attitudes directed at BSL (Pettito 2014). Mark referred to a 'taboo' surrounding BSL, and argued that this could be broken through 'demonstrat[ing] that signing has many levels, far exceeding what people think' (MM:2013). In refusing to include any English interpretation at all, the uncompromising BSL of the series itself counters the phonocentric assumption that BSL is not as complex, artistic or innovative as English, and performs platform storytelling as an 'emancipatory force ... that subverts official channels of transmission' (Wilson 2006:28). The message that Visual Virus seeks to project both inwards and outwards is the same as that of the wall-hung sign in *Three Pigs*: SIGNING REAL/TRUE/DEFINITE BEAUTIFUL, or, to revisit Andy Carmichael's translation:

*Real sign language is beautiful.*

*Sign language is real and beautiful.*

*Sign language is truly beautiful.*

Real sign language – that is, grammatically complex, visually motivated, and with little influence from spoken or written languages – is presented as having intrinsic worth, as being its own defence against audist attack, and as being the heart of the community; these themes are explored in the following subsections.

### ***The medium is the message: implicit representations of signing***

The intrinsic value of BSL is expressed in Visual Virus's performance-texts through their signartistry. The Signartists demonstrate the range of registers and styles available and draw attention to their poetic attributes, and

so perform their positive language attitude. This can be seen in the formal composition of *Virus*. A complex narrative about the oppression of sign language by the dominant users of spoken language is produced in a form that emphasises that sign languages have creative affordances that spoken languages do not possess, i.e. the capacity to restrict linguistic production to a single, hyper-extended phoneme. In terms of content, *Virus* has the explicitly conversionary 'moral' that signing must be spread and the hearing world must 'wake up' to its validity. A related, supplementary 'moral' is communicated through the form: signing *deserves* to be spread, not only because of the importance of accessible education or because communities should be encouraged to use their preferred languages, but also because it has intrinsic artistic value. Seeing complexity expressed in a simple yet highly skilled form, the signing audience is encouraged to (actively or subconsciously) engage with the artistic, affective and figurative capacities that sign languages possess and that they themselves could draw on.

Even performance-texts without any explicit mention of BSL or of signing-deaf politics may provide a commentary on BSL's suitability as a language of storytelling and performance. Mark MacQueen's *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* ('Through New Eyes'), is one such example. Some of the features were discussed in Chapter Three; it can be viewed in Appendix 3.1 with the accompanying guidance grid in Appendix 3.5. Neither BSL nor deafness feature thematically in the story world of the performance-text, and nor does the content reflect Sergio Leone's 1966 Spaghetti Western. The performance-text consists of four discrete parts comprising three self-contained episodes, in which three cowboys in turn attempt to complete a task: in Part I, each cowboy shoots a bottle; in Part II, each drinks a shot of liquor in a saloon; in Part III, each fights American Indians; in Part IV, each tames a horse. The action is

framed as a competition between the cowboys, yet the characters rarely interact except to acknowledge or mock each other at the beginning or end of each episode, and the tasks are not necessarily competitive: drinking in the saloon is a zero-sum scenario, and all three cowboys are on the same side against the Indians. Nor is there a climactic stand-off between the characters at the end: the action simply halts after the final episode of the fourth part. Yet the performance-text is informed by ‘a “moral,” a “point,” a “theme” that provides its rationale as a unitary whole’ (J. Davis 2002:13): the Western setting is a vehicle for exploring different storytelling performance styles in BSL, and to supply a tacit commentary on their effectiveness.

The action is framed as a competition, but the nature of the competition is extra-diagetic: the cowboys are not competing with each other as characters, but competing as existents. The competition is between three distinct undramatised narrators, all performed by Mark MacQueen and each using a different style of BSL. Using the terminology of literature, where *telling* is differentiated from *showing*, the narration of the first cowboy’s actions is closer to the *telling* end of the spectrum: he uses lexical BSL which incorporates some English lip-pattern. The second cowboy is narrated more cinematographically, and the third uses a strongly cinematographic performance style that makes use of the visual vernacular. It is impossible to fully differentiate the characters from the language through which they are depicted: they are semic representations of three points on a continuum of styles of BSL.<sup>226</sup> The title of Leone’s classic film implies two interwoven questions: which of the characters, and which of the signing styles, should be designated the *good*, the *bad* and the

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<sup>226</sup> I am not referring here to the signartistry continuum described in Chapter Three, but to a continuum of contact forms between BSL, SSE and English – similar to the continuum between Scots, Scottish English and English (Johnston 2007), although without the direct genetic link that these languages have.

*ugly*? The sequential ordering of the cowboys implies that the first is *good*, yet his characterisation is gormless and over-eager compared to the swagger of the second and third cowboys. Conversely, the third cowboy is unshaven, leering and *ugly*; yet the degree of visual detail and the number and complexity of cinematographic 'shots' used in his sequences encourage the audience to consider his episodes to be the most entertaining and complete and, by extension, the *good*. The performance-text is a series of variations on a theme: how to use BSL for storytelling.

The extra-diagetic competition between the three undramatised narrators allows Mark MacQueen to make his position unequivocal: the signing associated with the *ugly* third cowboy is *good*. The entirety of *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* is an implicit depiction of positive attitudes towards BSL, as it provides a meta-commentary on the aspects of signartistry that can be exploited to make a performance-text visually stimulating and to produce signpower. Moreover, the *good-bad-ugly* continuum could be interpreted as an implicit political message. The over-eager gormlessness of the first cowboy could be seen to imply that he is *good* in the sense of obedient and obliging, rather than in the sense of having the best qualities and skills. The BSL with which his actions are narrated is closest to contact forms of BSL; the third cowboy's is the most visually motivated and 'un-English', and could be interpreted as representing the need for the signing-deaf community to assert its co-equal difference to the hearing-speaking world, whatever discomfort this might cause. His ugliness could carry the connotation of the saying *old enough and ugly enough*, with the implication of roughness but independence. This interpretation is limited since it relies on different meanings of the English word *ugly* rather than on BSL; however, the BSL lexical signs GOOD, BAD and UGLY do not appear in the performance-text at all and so their English

definitions may not provide an exact fit. In representing the language attitudes of the three cowboys / undramatised narrators, I suggest that a more accurate, BSL-based continuum would be the image of 'dog ears' which is colloquially used in BSL to express either obsequiousness or self-assertiveness. The *good* cowboy signs in the more socially acceptable manner; his metaphorical ears are submissive. The *ugly* cowboy signs in an uncompromisingly visual idiom; his ears are up, and he is issuing a challenge to the hearing-speaking world to accept a visual language on its own, very different, terms.

### ***BSL as withstanding attack***

The need for signers to have their ears up in the manner of the *ugly* cowboy is a recurring theme in Visual Virus's performance-texts. Several of performance-texts in Visual Virus's repertoire depict the signing-deaf community as embattled or helpless for a time, as when *Virus's* Protagonist has his hands behind his back or when the wolf attacks the *Three Pigs*. In *Sleeping Beauty* ('Through New Eyes 2'), Gary Quinn adapts the scaffold of International Tale-Type ATU 410 to explore the impact of Oralism: the signing-deaf community is sent into a cursed sleep of stigma and invisibility. In another, *BSL vs Oral* ('Through New Eyes 2'), Signartist Ramas Rentalis depicts Oralism as a terrifying rampaging monster. Yet crucially, all of these performance-texts conclude with sign language overcoming its attackers: the monster is vanquished; a prince with 'beautiful sign language' successfully breaks the spell; the brick house stands firm; the Protagonist spreads signing throughout the world.

In *Three Pigs*, the intrinsic strength and irrepressibility of BSL is represented in the image of the brick house. Gary Quinn pays disproportionate attention to the sequence in which it is built: a full two minutes of the eleven minute performance-text is spent describing the process,

arranging its layout, and reiterating how *like* sign language it is. Gary's explanation for each stage of the metaphor was given in Chapter Six; on first viewing, the details were not immediately apparent, yet the members of the audience of 'Through New Eyes' with whom I discussed the piece afterwards accepted the comparison on its own terms within the logic of the story. One stated that the house was constructed 'like the building blocks of language' but could not clarify what they were specifically (Sutton-Spence uses the same phrase 2014:461). The overall impression was that the house of bricks is solid, well-structured, and fit for purpose. It – and, by extension, BSL – has strength and validity; about this, Gary was explicit about his intentions:

My intention was to tell people that BSL is really a strong language. It is a strong and powerful language when you know how to use it. It is not a language that can be destroyed, unlike the houses of straw or wood. (GQ:2013)

The message of Visual Virus's repertoire is one of resistance to the dominant ideologies that restrict signing-deaf people's access to education, and to assert the need for and value of language in the visual modality.

### ***BSL as community***

Attempts to differentiate between representations of sign language and representations of the signing-deaf community in the Visual Virus repertoire are to some extent artificial; language only exists where it is used, and BSL both constitutes and is constituted by its community of users. Echoing the natural development of sign languages and signing-deaf communities, the opening sequence of *Virus* seems to show the language coming into being from a series of small interactions and the development of the community itself: individuals become a collective through language, and the collective refuses to let the language die. In *Achievement*, the significance of signing is depicted through the *insiders signing* formula in the scene in the forest, which reflects



the totality of language and all with which it is invested (Joseph 2004, Nic Craith 2012). The deaf people signing around the fire in *Achievement* are revelling in their fluency and their community, both of which may be hard-won in a community of converts. We come back to the idea of language and community at the end of this chapter.

The *Finale* of 'Through New Eyes 2' provides an interesting performative insight into the idea of signing as community. This performance-text has no narrative or even linguistic content; it could perhaps be called a dance of the hands. Three Signartists performed the same gestured sequence, first individually in turn and then together; the sequence was simple, rhythmically repetitive and spatially balanced. Its repetitiveness enabled the audience to grasp it quickly and, ultimately, we were invited to rise to our feet and join in; parallels can be drawn with the 'percussive signing' or 'ASL (spirit) songs', which are 'used to incite a crowd to good cheer and a sense of unity' in America (Padden and Humphries 1988:78).<sup>227</sup> A theatre-full of people stood and performed the same graceful movements in unison, which smoothly segued into a standing ovation using the signing-deaf form of applause: raised hands with splayed fingers, waving and shaking. The applause was directed at the Visual Virus performers, but equally it felt directed at each other and oneself – a united celebration of the beauty of the performing hands blending into an appreciation of all those that use them.

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<sup>227</sup> See also Loeffler (2014), Peters (2000) and Bahan (2006).

### ***Did I say the wolf was hearing?: representations of ‘speaking-hearingness’***

From an appreciation of those who sign, we move to representations of those who do not. The following sections concern ‘portraits of the Hearing’ (Fjord 1996), which respond to the dominance on signing-deaf lives of speaking-hearing individuals and audist systems of oppression. These portraits feature frequently in the Signart of Visual Virus, whether implied or explicit; the signs DEAF and HEARING rarely appear (and, in the case of *Virus*, do not appear at all), but a character’s hearing status can be made evident in performance.

In *Achievement*, the (explicitly) deaf Protagonist engages with his family, teachers at an Oralist school, passers-by, and learners of BSL – all of whom can be assumed to be speaking-hearing characters.<sup>228</sup> The interactions are characterised by ambivalence and a degree of distance from the internal life of the Protagonist; the non-signing participants picked up on this in the expressions of the Protagonist’s parents when they realise that their son is deaf (and thus mark themselves as non-deaf), and the family melts away from the story at the point that they leave him; he is left with a somewhat wistful expression. The decision to take the Protagonist to a deaf school is not framed as a negative or ‘wrong’ decision (it is, after all, the context in which he gains language), but the relationship between the Protagonist and his hearing family is ruptured, something that is often described in personal experience narratives. Another signed-oral history DVD project, *Signs of our Lives* (2009) contained the following illustrative exchange:

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<sup>228</sup> It would also be possible to interpret the river metaphor in part as a representation of speaking-hearingness inasmuch as it represents the challenges faced by the deaf individual in attempting to navigate the phonocentric world of higher education. However, this image will be discussed in a subsequent section.

Speaker 1: I felt like I wasn't part of the family anymore. [...] I felt less attached to them... I felt like they'd just dumped me, just left me in the school.

S2: It felt like they'd turned their back on you, like you had been abandoned. It was as if they could be mother and father to their other children but not the deaf one.

The Protagonist's disconnection from the speaking-hearing people he encounters after leaving school is evident; the miscommunications preclude any intimacy, and, although he is both gracious and accommodating towards the learners in the forest, they are at a remove from the emotional core of the community, illustrated by their exclusion from the *insiders signing* formula.

The physical otherness of speaking-hearing people according to the norms of deaf cultural behaviours has been described by Bahan (2008, 2014) amongst others. As we have seen, the physical difference of *Achievement's* speaking-hearing characters is depicted through the *hurricane shouting* and *spit drenching* formulas, which function as shortcuts to the motif of *speaking-hearing miscommunication*. The pathos of the sequence is readily discernible, despite the exaggerated imagery of the 'cartoon-like' formulas. The imagery of the formulas lend themselves to humour or (melo)drama: in *Three Pigs*, the blowing down of the houses could be interpreted as a variation on *hurricane shouting*, exaggerating its imagery even further for dramatic and comical ends. The manner in which the wolf 'huffs and puffs' is reminiscent of a colloquial sign used to depict shouting: both hands forming C handshapes (see Fig. ii at the start of the thesis) are placed shaking near the mouth, which is wide open with teeth bared; this handshape is the sign WORDS and the image is of many words bursting aggressively and loudly from the mouth. It is, therefore, easy to interpret the wolf as a caricature of a speaking-hearing person in contrast to the (presumably) deaf pigs. This was certainly my immediate assumption on

seeing *Three Pigs* live, and, while amused by the depiction, I felt uncomfortably aware of the physicality of my own speech. The wolf's long teeth (Gary Quinn's fingers, see Fig. 40 in Chapter Six) are central to his physical characterisation, and through his aggressive demeanour he appears frightening and grotesque, glaring and spluttering incomprehensibly; this raised the question of whether this was how I was seen by those whose manual speech is free from the 'leakiness' of the mouth, depicted by Lilian Lawson in Case-study Two (see Fig. 34 in Chapter Five).

My interpretation of the wolf as a 'portrait of the hearing' felt uncomplicated, both as an audience member and in my subsequent analysis of the performance-text. However, when interviewing Gary Quinn, the following exchange took place:

EL: The wolf is hearing. Why is that?

GQ: Did I say the wolf was hearing? Oh. Erm....

EL: Well the wolf can't sign, he barks...

GQ: Oh yes, and he finds the card for the interpreter and calls the interpreter. Mmmm... [...] I suppose that is what happens. I sign it and you, as the audience, assume he is hearing. He could be hearing or it could be that he cannot sign. (GQ:2013)

It is true that at no point in *Three Pigs* is the wolf's auditory status made explicit, so it is conceivable that he 'represents' a deaf person who cannot sign. The central conflict is miscommunication, and at root this stems from the fact that the wolf does not sign and is not open to visual communication. Yet despite Gary's equivocation, I argue that the character can be interpreted as audilogically hearing due to the physical aspects outlined above (and his use of lip-pattern, examined below), due to his obliviousness to how the pigs communicate, and due to the destructive power he has in their lives,

intentionally or otherwise. Furthermore, as was mentioned in Chapter Three, signed adaptations of fairy-tales frequently feature signing-deaf heroes and speaking-hearing villains, to the extent that it has been identified as typical: Bahan describes ‘making ... the Wolf hearing’ in adaptations of ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ (2006:33) and Sutton-Spence and Napoli (2010) specifically cite ‘The Three Little Pigs’ as a recurrent example.<sup>229</sup> I interpret Gary’s refusal to directly confirm the wolf’s ‘hearingness’ on the light of his comments about ‘playing with people’ to encourage them to interpret for themselves; furthermore, I anticipate that he would be reluctant to confirm an interpretation that rests on a simplistic dichotomy between nuanced and volatile identity markers.

### ***Reading lips: “speaking” in Signart***

A compelling argument for the wolf’s hearing status is the contrast between the wolf’s and the pigs’ respective communicative channels. The entrance of the wolf disrupts the storytelling style: the language of the performance-text is BSL and the characters of the pigs sign to each other, but the wolf does not sign at all. Instead, he “speaks”: Gary Quinn mouths silently, as did Robina Drewry in her characterisation of her husband George in Case-study 2.<sup>230</sup> When using this device, the storyteller or Signartist may use an unspecific, babbling lip-pattern, or choose to match the lip-pattern to English words (as did Robina). The audience may or may not pick out the latter depending on their familiarity with lip-reading English; in *Three Pigs*, I interpret the wolf as mouthing “what you doing here?” in his first interaction with each pig.

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<sup>229</sup> An interesting point of comparison is another Gary Quinn performance-text, *Sleeping Beauty*, described later in this section.

<sup>230</sup> I will use the terms “speaking” and “shouting” to describe this feature hereafter.

“Speaking”, along with the sending up of other speaking-hearing techniques of the body is present in other performance-texts from the wider Visual Virus repertoire. It is typically employed for comedic effect, as a form of observational comedy which pokes fun at the familiar but culturally ‘other’ characteristics of the majority. Sometimes entertainment is the sole aim, with no speaking-hearing/signing-deaf interaction being depicted. In *Italian Football* (‘Through New Eyes’), for example, Rinkoo Barpaga depicts a football match cinematographically, which for a non-deaf audience member is like watching television with the sound off. Players “shout” at the referee and each other whilst gesticulating wildly and chewing gum leakily, and the excited commentator “speaks” a rapid babble into the microphone. These depictions, performed in an inter-culturally transparent visual vernacular style and comparable to slapstick comedy, are equally amusing to deaf and non-deaf audiences because of the shared cultural referents; for the latter, it also defamiliarises our ‘tacit, unexamined, and seemingly completely natural’ ways of behaving (McFadyen 2012:175).

More typically, “speaking” is employed in performance-texts which deal with the motif of *speaking-hearing miscommunication*. In *Solar System* (‘Through New Eyes’), a performance-text framed as an astronomy lecture, the Signartist Lee Robertson addresses the audience for the first 22 seconds in “speech” and then feigns surprise that he is not understood. This scenario of inaccessibly delivered information is familiar to the deaf audience members (whether signers or not), and the comedy stems from both the hyper-real delivery of an everyday frustration, and the fact that it is performed by an ‘insider’ who has experienced the same thing. Yet the insider/outsider dynamics embedded in *Solar System* are unstable, as silent “speech” gives non-deaf members of the audience insight into the experience of being on the

receiving end of an inaccessible modality. Using inter-culturally transparent visual vernacular, Lee mimes that the audience has ‘broken ears’: he points at his ears and mimes breaking something over his knee. An irony is that about half of Visual Virus’s audience at ‘Through New Eyes’ were not audilogically deaf. Yet, through being excluded from the “speech” of the astronomy lecture, Lee effectively *deafens* them, making temporary insiders of the whole audience.

### ***Hearing obliviousness as passive violence***

*Solar System* uses observational comedy and “speech” to highlight ignorant attitudes and behaviours towards signing-deaf people. *Who Sorry!* (‘Through New Eyes 2’) is a collaborative ‘skit’ consisting of a series of interactions between a signing-deaf person (performed by Mark MacQueen) and various speaking-hearing characters (performed by Lee Robertson) – all of whom assume, on discovering the former’s deafness, that they know the appropriate way to respond. The behaviours of the speaking-hearing characters are excellently observed, both in their instigation of conversation with what they assume to be a fellow hearing person (e.g. a man watching football in the pub leaning across to “speak” out of the corner of his mouth to the person standing nearby), and in their subsequent attempts to communicate once they realise the person is deaf. Lee Robertson leans closer, “shouts” louder (i.e. more exaggeratedly, although not with the ‘cartoon-like’ quality depicted in *Achievement*), and enunciates to the extent that the lip-pattern is entirely distorted.<sup>231</sup> Like the wolf in *Three Pigs*, none of the speaking-hearing characters can make themselves understood, but unlike the wolf they lose interest in pursuing the interaction rather than becoming destructive. The original overtures are friendly but, by giving up on the interaction, the

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<sup>231</sup> This is eloquently depicted in the American documentary, *Through Deaf Eyes* (2007).

speaking-hearing characters appear to be communicating that the deaf person is not considered to be important enough, or their potential contribution valuable enough, to justify expending any effort.<sup>232</sup> Being excluded from the conversation is an everyday irritation and symptomatic of being isolated in a phonocentric society; moreover, it deprives the speaking-hearing person of the chance to make a contribution and demonstrate that DEAF CAN .D.O.

The speaking-hearing characters in *Who Sorry!* are not depicted unsympathetically, but their ignorance has a negative impact on the signing-deaf character's sense of self-worth. Similarly, the passers-by depicted in *Achievement* are physically dominant and have a disproportionate bodily impact on the Protagonist, but there is no indication that they are malign. Their *hurricane shouting* is not intentionally threatening, merely a force of nature; the Protagonist wipes spit from his face, but he has not been *spat at* – the passers-by cannot control the spit that accompanies their speech. The Protagonist is the victim of the passive violence of audism, both on a micro level (i.e. the obliviousness of the speaking-hearing individual to the physical impact they can have on deaf people) and a macro level (i.e. the audism of wider society, which has the power to dramatically and negatively affect deaf lives).

This macro level is readily apparent in Part III of *Achievement*, where the learners 'outgrow' the community they have learned from. They do not appear to be 'anti-deaf': they are learning to sign, and, at the beginning of Part IV, the spatial implication is that they form part of the unified group marching forward shoulder-to-shoulder with the Protagonist, indicating that they are

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<sup>232</sup> The final entry on 'Ten things you should never say to a deaf person', compiled by Charlie Swinbourne for *The Limping Chicken*, begins: '[Never say] "It doesn't matter." Probably the worst thing you could ever say to us. Because it makes us feel like, maybe, *we* don't matter too much either.' *The Limping Chicken* 25/09/12 <http://limpingchicken.com/2012/09/25/charlie-swinbourne-ten-things-you-should-never-say-to-a-deaf-person/> [accessed 14/12/14]



allies. It is possible, therefore, to attribute their 'growth' not to malign intent but to their privilege as hearing people in audist society. It is, after all, more prestigious to be a non-deaf learner of BSL than a deaf person for whom it is the first, preferred or only language.<sup>233</sup> The learners could be interpreted as oblivious to the fact that they benefit from the community without contributing to challenging the systems that oppress the community, and so unwittingly collude with the passive violence. This and its potential ramifications can be seen in the escalation of the wolf's response to the pigs in *Three Pigs*: ignorance about how to communicate leads to frustration which then leads to aggression. The character has the power to dramatically affect the pigs' safety and security, just as we saw that the speaking newcomers in *Virus* have the power to dramatically alter the community – to even ban signing outright. Visual Virus's performance-texts provide a commentary on the potential for speaking-hearing people to exercise undue and destructive influence on deaf people's access to information, to education, to work, to institutions, and to equal status in society, even without being aware of it.

### ***Communication breakdown as a site of conversion***

In *Three Pigs*, the wolf's demeanour is aggressive from the start, but it is unclear whether this is intentional or merely incidental to his gnashing teeth and discourse style. He does not appear to want to eat the pigs, nor initially to destroy their houses; he wants to interrogate them, and only once

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<sup>233</sup> This can be seen in the proliferation of non-deaf teachers of babysign and the fact that most service-providers for deaf people are run by speaking-hearing people (the same is true of deaf and sign language studies departments). Knowing BSL is an asset to a speaking-hearing person's CV, whereas signing-deaf people face sustained barriers to employment and promotion. I am very conscious of this privilege in my own life, both professionally and personally. As an aside, non-signers frequently compliment me on the fact that I have learned BSL, but it is often couched in a congratulatory, 'good for you' tone which is reminiscent of the *helping* mentality mentioned in Chapter Five. Materially, it *has* been good for me, but other gains (personal and apparently cognitive) have been more significant (Hauser and Kartheiser 2014).

communication breaks down does he become dangerous. Having depicted the destruction of the wooden house, Gary Quinn role-shifts back to the wolf and indignantly repeats the gesture that the second pig used towards him and which he appears to have interpreted as aggressive. This is not the *I'm going to get you and eat you* of the spoken-oral scaffold; instead, the wolf appears to consider himself hard done by. This implies that his rage stems from frustration about being misunderstood (and perhaps even mocked) by the two pigs; the wolf's phonocentrism means that he is unable to understand that he shares the responsibility for making the interaction work. Communication breakdown, not 'good versus bad', is the narrative lynchpin of *Three Pigs*, and the danger stems from unchecked ignorance leading to hostility.

Ignorance, then, *must* be checked; the health of the community depends on minimising the negative impact of being surrounded by a phonocentric and audist majority culture. The position taken by Visual Virus seems to be common to other minority cultures: to minimise the negative impact of the majority, signing-deaf people must engage in public discourse and achieve political visibility. In other words, acts of conversion must be transmitted through a deaf public voice; attempts to keep the community safe by keeping it secret are doomed to failure. In Part III of *Virus*, the closing off of the community is not presented as a solution: ignoring those using speech does not afford protection from external influences. As the community grows and (crucially, given that deaf education is an ideological battleground) recruits children, it receives negative attention once more. The crucial question is not *whether* to engage with the speaking-hearing world (if such a choice were possible), but *how* to engage with it.

This becomes a question of attitude. In *Three Pigs*, the terrified responses of the first two pigs are as unhelpful as the wolf's aggressive manner: their fear

contributes to the communication breakdown and so exacerbates the situation. They describe the wolf as being 'angry' with them – which, as Andy Carmichael explained, is 'a weird construct' in spoken English but 'makes sense in sign language' (AC:2014). Ladd has written about 'The Fear' instilled in the classroom of Oralist deaf schools (2003:323) and, if the wolf represents the speaking-hearing world demanding that the pigs communicate according to its linguistic and modal norms, then he can indeed be interpreted as being 'angry' with them for not doing so. The infantilisation implied in the term is reminiscent of the learnt helplessness discussed in Chapter Five, which arises from and feeds into the DEAF CAN'T metanarrative. The wolf is perhaps not inherently destructive, but he has the *power* to be destructive, and this is enabled by the panicky attitude of the two pigs. By being frightened and unassertive, they accept the discourse on his terms and set themselves up for being attacked; it is only at the house of bricks that the assertive confidence of the third pig succeeds in resolving the conflict on the pigs' terms.

The resolution comes about because the third pig insists on an interpreter; the wolf is brought to an understanding of what is needed and, when he leaves, the burden of responsibility for renewing the conversation is on his shoulders. Similarly, *Who Sorry!* carries the subtext that the signing-deaf protagonist reinforces the attitudes directed towards him by continually taking responsibility for the communication breakdown. He apologetically indicates his ear, and so he permits his deafness to be perceived as the only barrier to communication. Only in the final interaction does he reframe the discourse to focus on visual communication: instead of pointing at his ear, he encouragingly points at his hand – a precursor to the recent 'signing pledge' meme mentioned in Chapter One. This causes the speaking-hearing character

to recognise his own limitations – “sorry, I can’t sign” – and thus the discourse is reframed.

### **DEAF CAN .D.O. conversion**

The didactic message of each of these performance-texts is that signing-deaf people must recognise the value of their own language and its modality, and reject the premise that frames them as deficient rather than merely different. Moreover, the performance-texts appear to indicate that the community is obliged to take responsibility for enlightening speaking-hearing people. This is a pragmatic rather than an ideological responsibility: as Ladd puts it, the burden of responsibility is always unjustly placed on the minority to justify its existence (2003:21). The signing-deaf individual should not *have to* play a conversionary role with speaking-hearing people, but their lives are made easier in the long run if they do, and ultimately the community as a whole benefits from it. In this way, *conversion* could be seen as one of the strategies for survival mentioned by Bahan (2006) as a central theme of signlore. Even the everyday act of reframing the terms of the conversation can be conversionary: in *Three Pigs*, the wolf must be taught how to interact with those who cannot understand him – he does not solve the problem himself, but must be directed to the interpreter by the third pig. In *Achievement*, the Protagonist is successful in teaching the learners to recognise an imbalance of power, and they are included as allies in the march forward together. In *Who Sorry!*, the emphasis is placed on what the signing-deaf character *can* do: he can communicate visually and, equally important, he is not fazed by cross-modal communication with a character for whom this is unfamiliar. He uses inter-cultural visual vernacular to answer the speaking-hearing character’s question, and the final speaking-hearing character parts with an enriched

understanding of visual communication – ‘converted’, even to a minor extent, to the idea that DEAF CAN .D.O.

The concept of DEAF CAN .D.O. was discussed in Chapter Five as a response to the low expectations placed on deaf children and adults, and to the audist metanarrative of DEAF CAN’T. Visual Virus explicitly aims to challenge DEAF CAN’T: Gary Quinn recognised the impact of the physical condition of deafness (‘obviously, it is true that we, as signers, cannot hear. That is a fact’ – GQ:2013) but asserted that ‘we want to focus on the positive’ (GQ:2013). The message of DEAF CAN .D.O. therefore infuses much of Visual Virus’s repertoire: in *Three Pigs*, the (deaf) pigs withstand a potentially hostile audist world; in *Achievement*, the signing-deaf forest-dwellers reach equal footing with speaking-hearing people and are able to achieve University degrees; in *Virus*, the signing community successfully implements positive inter-cultural relations. The concept of DEAF CAN .D.O. is also explored allegorically in Gary Quinn’s *Shelly* (‘Through New Eyes’), a fable in which a young tortoise is repeatedly told by other animals that he *can’t*, for example, run, but eventually proves he *can*, for example, slide on his shell faster than running. As Mark MacQueen commented:

MM:       The tortoise story is a way to show how hearing people constantly tell us ‘You can’t, you can’t.’

EL:       By turning onto his back he could!

MM:       Exactly! So this was intended as a way to say ‘Stop saying *you can’t*. There are other ways to achieve this.’ (MM:2013)

Part of signing-deaf biculturality is to disrupt assumptions that lead to speaking-hearing people getting it wrong about signing-deaf people’s capabilities, and to assert deafness as a state of completeness that provides a different language, culture and skill-set.

### ***Allies and attitude: rejecting the hearing/deaf dichotomy***

It would be possible to create a simplistic dichotomy in Visual Virus's performance-texts along *hearing* and *deaf* lines, whereby the former is always perceived as a threat or a problem for the latter. However, this was the very dichotomy that Gary Quinn was apparently reluctant to accept: *Three Pigs* is about conflicting attitudes towards difference and assumptions about whose responsibility it is to adjust, and it ends with reconciliation between the wolf and pigs presented as a possibility. *Achievement* does not call for the non-deaf learners to be banished from the forest, but to be reminded of their responsibilities to the community. *Virus* argues that closing off the community makes it more vulnerable to attack: only when non-signers are converted is the community presented as being in a strong position. The signs DEAF and HEARING are never used in *Virus*; the learners' audiological status is irrelevant as long as they are allies.

In refusing to incorporate the signs HEARING and DEAF into *Virus*, Mark MacQueen frames the performance-text entirely around language. While it is true that the audiological status of some characters in *Virus* can be inferred, refusal to explicitly designate them as such leaves room to question the deaf/hearing dichotomy. Are those restricting signing necessarily hearing people, or deaf people who have internalised audism? Are those learning to sign necessarily hearing people, or deaf people who have not previously had access to signing? Is the original signing community necessarily entirely comprised of deaf people? Even the protagonist of *Virus* is not unambiguously deaf. This reflects the ideological position held by Mark MacQueen that sign language use is the crucial organising principle of the community.

In Visual Virus's repertoire, speaking-hearingness is examined as having physical, cultural and political implications, but these are not

simplistically represented as bad or dangerous to the signing community. The physical otherness of speaking-hearing techniques of the body are represented, sometimes as humorous and sometimes as menacing; the phonocentric assumptions of hearing privilege are examined; yet the crucial identifier *attitude* is considerably more prominent (recall Baker-Shenk and Cokely's 1980 model, Fig. 1). Speaking-hearing allies may even be explicitly exalted. In *Sleeping Beauty*, the character of the good fairy is named as Mary Brennan, the sign linguist whose research 'challenged the assumptions that underpinned the exclusive use of spoken languages in deaf education' (Turner 2006:1). Speaking-hearing people can, therefore, be the solution: *converting* them is repeatedly presented as a positive outcome – for both communities. Speaking-hearingness is not in itself dangerous to signing-deaf communities, but its dominance has the power to cause harm – to blow down houses – if unchallenged. This is particularly the case in deaf education; the following section deals with this theme in the Visual Virus repertoire.

### **Digging foundations: representations of language in education**

The potentially destructive power exercised by the speaking-hearing world is most frequently and emotively discussed in relation to education, and education is the realm in which the consideration of the physiological condition of deafness becomes most necessary. In the previous section, we saw examples of Signart that explicitly or implicitly support the argument that the community should be conceptualised as the *signing* community rather than the *deaf* community; this is a politically expedient position through which comparisons can be drawn with other minority languages. In the Scottish context, Gaelic and Scots are readily available points of comparison: the BSL Act takes the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act (2005) as its template in requiring

public bodies to provide language plans, and the establishment of Gaelic-medium education is held up as a model for deaf education by Mark MacQueen:

I think we have to have dedicated sign language schools - much in the same way as we have Gaelic schools [...] The same should apply if hearing parents wanted to put their children to a BSL school. (MM:2013)

By educating deaf and hearing children together through the medium of BSL, the third culture of non-deaf signers would grow; audiological 'deafness' could come to be conceived of as incidental rather than central to the use of sign language, as in Martha's Vineyard where, until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, 'everyone ... spoke sign language' (Groce 1985). Focusing on language reframes the discourse in more equal terms than is permitted by the medical model of deafness.

However, provision of BSL-medium education is as much an issue of access as it is one of language rights. This is illustrated in Lilian Lawson's description of her experience at university. Although she is emphatically at the CALP end of the bilingual continuum, the phonocentrism of the lecture theatre posed barriers:

It was a hard four years at university. During that time I really had no friends and there were no interpreters. I would have to rely on asking students sitting next to me in lectures if it would be okay for me to copy their notes. So I was copying notes whilst trying to watch what the lecturer was writing on the board, my eyes were scanning all over the place (trying to look in two places at the same time). (LL:2013)

This is echoed in *Achievement's* depiction of tertiary education as a raging river that the Protagonist must cross alone. Ultimately, the modality of sign language is fundamentally suited to the physiological reality of deafness in a way that spoken languages fundamentally are not. Non-deaf people can and



do sign, some as their first or preferred language; non-deaf PDFs may suffer psychologically or lose cultural confidence when negative language attitudes are directed towards their language and culture, as may be the case for all minority language users (Bougie *et al.* 2003). Yet setting aside the (entirely valid) principle of the right to use without censure and be educated in one's first and preferred language, if sign languages are banned in schools then it is not the non-deaf members of the signing community that are denied access to information; they can 'participate fully in the hearing world' (Napier, McKee and Goswell 2010: 52) even if they do not want to. In *Virus*, ostensibly about the *signing* and not the *deaf* community, at the point at which SIGN(ING) is banned and the Protagonist's hands are behind his back it is unequivocally about *audiological* deafness. The child looks up uncomprehendingly at the Protagonist's moving lips; the character is deaf. The issue is not simply the right to use sign language, but the need to – the right to have access to information at all. At its core, *Virus* is predicated on the experiences of deaf people in an unrelentingly speech-dominant world.

### ***A plague on two houses: Three Pigs as pedagogical commentary***

*Three Pigs* can be interpreted as a didactic exploration of different communication techniques. Starting with the explicit link made between the house of bricks and BSL, the implication is that the houses of straw and wood represent other forms of communication. I posit that *Three Pigs* is, by extension, an exploration of different pedagogical approaches to deaf education: Oralism, Total Communication where speech is privileged but supported by manual codes like SSE, and BSL-medium education.

This interpretation is supported by the details contained in the building sequence for each house, and in the interactions between the wolf and the first and second pigs. The first pig attempts to communicate with the wolf solely

through “speaking”, therefore it can be extrapolated that the pedagogy referenced here is pure Oralism. If the house of straw represents an Oralist approach, the message is that its effectiveness in facilitating communication is illusory (Conrad 1979): the house was built directly upon the ground without foundations, and is destroyed in a single puff. The second pig attempts to communicate with the wolf using a combination of “speech” and gesture; it is plausible that this represents the combination of modalities sometimes used in education. This approach appears to be more effective than Oralism: care was taken by the second pig to embed the walls of the house of wood into the ground, and it survives the first attempt to blow it down, leading the second pig to announce that wood is strong. However, the eventual destruction of the house shows that its efficacy is limited. Oralism and English-led teaching each fail in turn, and the pigs are frightened and overwhelmed. Pure sign language, on the other hand, allows equality and confidence to emerge: the third pig refuses to be frightened by the wolf’s teeth and apparent aggression, and insists on communicating through an interpreter, respecting the integrity of both languages. *Three Pigs* appears to be a critique of the tendency to prioritise the speech modality and the English language in deaf education, and is an argument in favour of giving children access to full BSL and the cultural confidence that goes with it. As Mark MacQueen observed, *Three Pigs* was

about giving children the right opportunities to allow them to go on and lead fruitful lives, but without those opportunities, that outcome is taken away from them. (MM:2013)

Ultimately, the pigs are able to find protection in the brick house, the representation of sign language: sign language provides the solution.

## The long journey home: representations of DEAFspace

Audist attitudes towards signing-deaf people can impact on the confidence of deaf signers to use their own language and so fully embrace their deafhood; yet we have also seen language represented as a potent expression of community and the tool with which to challenge audism. DEAFspace is the space in which BSL and signing-deaf culture is the norm and where, as Lilian Lawson put it, the community ‘could be together [...] and not feel different’ and ‘share the same language and experiences - Deaf people, being with other Deaf people’ (LL:2013). DEAFspace provides a safe and secure route into deafhood: a *home* for the community, and recurring motif in Signart.<sup>234</sup>

The house of bricks in *Three Pigs* is a key example of DEAFspace, even though it is never explicitly named as such. It emerges as a bastion of cultural confidence against outside attacks, the enabler of community cohesion, of linguistic and cultural self-confidence, and of co-equality between the signing and non-signing world. The fact that it is conceptually tied to sign language makes the link between the idea of signing and a ‘safe haven’, and the wall-hung sign reading SIGN REAL/TRUE SIGN appears to allude to the use of the expression *home sweet home* on cross-stitch samplers. The association between language and the idea of ‘home’ appears to be pancultural: the motif of the house and home as metaphor for language, culture and even nationality is well-established in folksong and literature,<sup>235</sup> and has been evoked in relation

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<sup>234</sup> Six BSL performance-texts were created for National Poetry Day 2010 by Bristol-based Signartists using the word ‘home’ as a prompt; they can be found at: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/education/research/sites/micsl/poem-repository/poems/> [accessed 14/05/13]. See also Mirzoeff (1995) for representations of deafness and homecoming in French visual culture.

<sup>235</sup> See, for example, Di Frances (2013); Pittock (1994); McGuirk (2006); Meek (2003); West (2012:76-103).

to minority languages, as in the following quotation from Mi'kmaw elder in the documentary *Singing against the Silence* (2012):

It's almost like a structure, it's almost like a structure of a home. You have the basement which is the structure that holds up your home. And language is in the same category; if you lose your language then your structure falls apart and you, you lose something that is very important and valuable in your community and to your people. (Mary Lafford)

The nature of 'home' is, however, culturally specific; it is instructive that the non-signing participants misinterpreted the facial expressions associated with the *insiders signing* formula in *Achievement* as aggressive or unhappy. DEAFspace is frequently strange and even intimidating for hearing non-signers, as the 'normal' (speaking-hearing) rules do not apply. DEAFspace is also frequently a differently constituted physical environment to nonDEAFspace, and *Three Pig's* brick house incorporates 'typically deaf' elements that often feature in signlore, such as a flashing doorbell (Rutherford 1983:314) and big windows to let in the light. The first two pigs spend a full eight seconds admiring the deaf-friendly house once they arrive; it has been designed to match the requirements of the language-users (H. Bauman and Murray 2013:250). DEAFspace, then, is a combination of both physical and conceptual differences to the hearing 'norm', and is itself both a literal and metaphorical space.

### ***Who goes down to the woods today? Coming home to sign language***

The brick house presents three concepts as intertwined: sign language, DEAFspace, and home. This association is a reoccurring trope found in personal experience narratives, particularly those relating to the arrival at deaf school; Alexander Atkinson's 1865 memoir contains an account showing the longevity of this shared experience:

A lively burr ran through them, from desk to desk, as we passed to the head of the room. I was sensibly affected when I saw that I became the glanced [*sic*] of fifty young eyes, hailing enough to say, "Oh! come to us, for we are all deaf and dumb, like you." (1865:11)

This is echoed in Lilian Lawson's observations; she described a 'common bond' and remarked that:

School life is one of the most important first experiences, because it was the one time when Deaf people were physically together as a community [...] [We] could be together as a community and not feel different. (LL:2013)

We see a hint of this in *Achievement* in the hopeful expression of the Protagonist when he arrives at deaf school; however his true homecoming takes place later. He is led into the forest towards the campfire around which the signing community has gathered; one non-signing participant aptly interpreted this as 'a light at the end of the tunnel', and it is reminiscent of Irene Hall's description of the deaf club as 'like putting on an old pair of slippers and feeling immediately comfortable and relaxed' in Chapter Five. That the community is depicted as being in the depths of a forest carries a different resonance than the *deep dark forest* of spoken-oral folklore and fairytales: while the speaking-hearing forest contains potentially threatening 'others', *Achievement's* forest protects the 'othered'.

The trees do fall down, however, and non-deaf learners enter the forest; this passage in *Achievement* alludes to the recurrent tension between signing-deaf people wanting to encourage non-deaf learners in their language acquisition, but also wanting a space in which their shared *experiences* are foregrounded. The learners are welcomed by the Protagonist, but with some restraint: they are different. Moreover, they are powerful and 'outgrow' those they learnt from. Yet the experience of signing with his peers has given the Protagonist the confidence to challenge the learners when they 'outgrow' the

community; Gary Quinn described the sequence in which the Protagonist allegorically grows to the same height as the learners as an act of ‘reclaiming our language for ourselves’ (GQ:2013). The questions of the ownership of BSL and the control of DEAFspace are potent and unresolved issues in the community, but, like the brick house, the woods of DEAFspace have provided the safe haven needed to develop cultural confidence.

### **Looking back and looking forward**

This chapter has aimed to illustrate the layers of meaning embedded in Visual Virus’s Signart performance-texts. Although original compositions, they distil common experiences of signing-deaf biculturality. Furthermore, they project an ideological position predicated on that biculturality: that BSL is a complex and intrinsically valuable language, and the celebratory use of it is the key to combatting audist attitudes.

Although some of the performance-texts cited in this chapter use scaffolds from speaking-hearing culture (*Three Pigs*, *Sleeping Beauty*) and would work in English as well as in BSL (e.g. the fable of *Shelly*), Signart is a particularly potent articulation of signing-deaf culture as *apart from* speaking-hearing culture. Formally, many performance-texts make use of affordances that are impossible in spoken or written languages, and are structured in a way that would resist wording. The cinematographic continuum of *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* performs different language capabilities and language attitudes: the content is subsidiary to the form. The hyper-extension of a single handshape in *Virus* permits the ‘moral’ of the performance-text to be seeded from the initial opening, and *Finale*’s communal celebration of the hands performs the idea of signing *as community*. In all these cases, the form of the

performance-text is its meaning. The core message is that sign language is something to be proud of: in its role in community-building, in the development of deafhood, and in its inherent performative affordances and signartistry.

The repertoire contains many expressions and performances of being *of* mainstream society but *excluded* from it by virtue of speaking-hearing phonocentrism. *Who Sorry!* is the most explicit re-working of the audist metanarrative, overtly asserting Bahan's claim that 'it's our world too!' (1989), and balancing the perception of signing-deaf people as hearing impaired with the evidence that the speaking-hearing character – and, by extension, majority society – is signing impaired. The passive violence of phonocentric privilege and the destructiveness of audism are performed through representations of speaking-hearing characters. Many contain the "speech" motif that was introduced in Case-study 2, sending up the everyday experiences of being surrounded by inaccessible information; this can be allegorically extended, as in the character of the wolf in *Three Pigs*, who has undue power for destruction in the lives of the (signing-deaf) pigs.

Bahan claims that all signed-oral performance-texts contain strategies for survival in the speaking-hearing world. Applying this to the Visual Virus repertoire, a single strategy appears to be put forward: be assertive, unapologetic and proud of being signing-deaf. Do not accept that speaking-hearing people will automatically set the terms for communication, but assert the right to be met half-way (*Who Sorry!*). Unlearn helplessness and fear (*Three Pigs*). Be proud of the 'un-English' aspects of BSL (*The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*). Challenge speaking-hearing people who benefit from the community without being allies (*Achievement*). Convert speaking-hearing people to visual language, one by one (*Virus*). These are all assertions of being *apart from*

majority society but co-equal to it, and they are all conversionary in remit. The next and final chapter will draw together some of these themes in relation to the other case-studies and to the deaf public voice, and make the case that signed-oral storytelling – and, indeed, signing-deaf culture – is a source of Deaf Gain for Scottish ethnology.



## Conclusion: Deaf Gain for Scotland's corp-oral traditions

*The time seems right for extending ... along a Deaf axis, not simply to add a new constituency ... but to re-think the entire edifice ... from the ground up.*

Michael Davidson 2002 (in Bauman *et al.* 2006:3-4)

### Looking back

This thesis began with the identification of a lack: that, despite centuries of research into the storytelling and other oral traditions of Scotland's communities, there has hitherto been no inclusion of signed-oral traditional arts in conceptualisations of Scottish culture. The privileging of the term *oral* has blinded the discipline to a language which is not transmitted through the voice, and the phonocentric assumptions of institutionally audist societies have rendered signing-deaf communities doubly 'voiceless'. It has been assumed that all deaf people's primary cultural affiliation would align automatically with those of non-deaf members of the same society; yet this is disrupted by remembering that, not only is culture transmitted through language, but also that it is in many ways *constituted* through language and through our embodied state of being-in-the-world. Sign languages are not spoken languages made visible on the hands; signing culture is not speaking culture translated into a visual form. Instead, the separate lingua-cultural reality of signing-deaf communities should be part of the conceptualisation of the heritage of a nation. Having recognised that signed-oral traditional arts exist, that they have existed in signing-deaf communities in Scotland since at least the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, and that they deserve to be studied alongside their spoken-oral equivalents, it becomes imperative to move towards better recognition; my work represents the first in what I hope will be many steps

towards integrating BSL into the discourse of ethnology and folklore in Scotland.

It is little wonder that there has not been a tradition of placing BSL and signing-deaf communities in the same conceptual space as other autochthonous lingua-cultures. BSL is so closely associated with the idea of disability that it is seldom seen as a cultural artefact in its own right: even if its linguistic integrity is recognised, it still tends to be seen as a prosthetic, something that signing-deaf people use because they have to, rather than as having intrinsic value and an associated cultural world in its own right (Pettito 2014). That 10 million people in the UK have a hearing loss to some extent complicates the issue: the vast majority of deaf people do not use BSL and share the cultural affiliations of the majority culture, so the specific cultural experiences of those that do are obscured. Signing-deaf communities do not look like cultural groups from the outside: they look like communities of necessity, or of a shared interest, and any cultural dimension may be reduced to the 'feeling of community specific to having a difference of relatively low population frequency' (Solomon 2014:x) rather than being linguistically constituted. The typical identifiers of minority language communities do not appear to apply: there is no signing-deaf heartland equivalent to the Gaeltacht, or homeland equivalent to those of allochthonous language communities. Thus, whereas Scottish ethnologists and folklorists can be assumed, whatever their specialism, to have some working knowledge of the communities that use the different *spoken* languages of Scotland, even basic knowledge of signing-deaf culture and BSL communities cannot be taken for granted. Over the course of this doctoral study, my research has often been met with interest but some surprise from others in my field, and my focus on *BSL storytelling traditions in Scottish deaf communities* has often been assumed to mean

translations *into* BSL (as in Case-study 1), not BSL-originating material. On learning that I am more interested in the latter, surprise has been expressed that BSL storytelling is not simply 'our' (spoken/written) stories re-told on the hands. The central aim of this thesis, then, has been to make the case for the *difference* of signed-oral storytelling, whilst also making the case for their inclusion in the study of Scotland's traditional arts.

This ties in with the current political situation in Scotland. Signing-deaf communities have for a long time been making the argument that, not only are they not only *part of* wider society and should be afforded access to it, but also *apart from* it, with their own arts, lore and worldview predicated on a different sensory orientation to the world and different identity markers. They have been claiming that the DEAF WAY should be considered as valid as that of the speaking-hearing majority, but only recently has this begun to be actualised. The BSL Act (2015) will, over the coming years, require public bodies to publish language plans outlining how they will address the needs of signing-deaf members of the public, for whom both speech and written English may be largely inaccessible. While access is a crucial consideration, it is frequently perceived as an add-on, and does little to combat the medicalised and disabling discourse that focuses solely on the perceived impairment of hearing loss. Yet the BSL Act also demands that the Scottish Government *promote* BSL and so make the existence of cultural deafness more visible in the public domain; as such, it is likely that cultural institutions will begin incorporating BSL material into their remits. My preliminary examination of three examples of BSL storytelling in the public domain is a timely first step towards addressing this lacuna; it is hoped that it can provide a partial blueprint for the rehabilitation of BSL into the wider discussion of Scotland's intangible cultural heritage.

This final chapter reviews the contributions made by this study towards my overarching question: how to incorporate the experiences, lore and artforms of signing-deaf communities into the study of Scottish ethnology. Some of these contributions were intentional; others emerged organically. I frame this conclusion around the concept of Deaf Gain: by examining signed-oral storytelling and signing-deaf experiences, and by engaging with the engrained issues of translation, transcription and representation, a radical shift has emerged in my understanding of many of the core tenets and methodologies of Scottish ethnology. These will be highlighted throughout this chapter. First, I revisit my first research question, and summarise the problem of attempting to build bridges between speaking and signing worlds. I then outline the central contribution made by this study, namely, the accessioning of a new corpus of material into SSSA. I follow this with a review of the content of each chapter in turn, with reference to my second research question concerning the expression and performance of biculturality in signed-oral performance-texts, which leads into some more general observations. I re-visit the case-studies and summarise the messages that they transmit as part of the deaf public voice, then address the unexpected contributions a study of this nature makes to the discipline of ethnology, drawing together the idea of Deaf Gain and that of corp-oral traditions. Finally, I explore some potential avenues for future research, arguing that signing-deaf fieldworkers should be made central to the future incorporation of signed-oral material into the corpus.

### **On building bridges**

My central research question raised the issue of bridging techniques; this involved negotiating several bridges at once. One was across language:

BSL into written English. Another was across language modalities: a visual-spatial-kinetic language written about in the grapholect of a spoken language. Then there was a bridge across worldviews: signing-deaf world knowledge is different from speaking-hearing world knowledge. Another, more political bridge, concerns the future of research in this area: it is not enough to simply provide my own interpretations of the performance-texts, or to tell the reader what the signers are saying: I have also been concerned with *showing them* the footage in its original form. This responds to Bechter's argument that any study of signing-deaf culture requires the visibility of signers (2008:75). For each case-study, I have aimed to provide contextualisation, explanation and analysis of the performance-texts and their deaf public voice contexts, but also to highlight the insufficiencies inherent in using a written medium to do so. BSL is a language of unmitigated embodiment; reducing it to translated words removes much of its intrinsic value and, given the history of the denigration of sign languages, the intrinsic value needs to be brought to the fore. My aim has been to pique interest in the artistry, and so make a compelling argument for continuing work in the area of signed-oral practices. I have used a variety of tools, including the use of English glosses for BSL signs, annotating extant translations, providing illustrative screenshots, and overlaying these with 'concrete transcriptions' to bind the translated words closer to their embodied expression. This device was developed in response to the insufficiencies of some of the written translations: it can be seen most clearly in Figs. 46a and 46b in Chapter Six, in which Gary Quinn's use of metaphorical space and movement to express a complex political and personal point was not captured in the English.

For Case-study 3, although the Signartists welcomed the presentation and interpretation of their work to non-signing audiences, the onus to provide

a bridge was entirely on me as they rejected any English prose translation of their performance-texts. That the signer's body is a 'palimpsest over which course ... three-dimensional kinetic images' (H. Bauman *et al.* 2006:2) suggests that the individual's bodily expression is a fundamental part of the aesthetics of the performance-text, and I have used an assemblage of bridging techniques to attempt to reflect this. To guide the reader/viewer through the performance-texts in Appendix 3.1, I devised a tabular guide which describes the imagery as it is produced. These have been presented in Chapter Six alongside elaborated commentaries, comprising my own explanations of particular signartistry features and cultural referents, but also drawing on the insights of a BSL interpreter who works in the arts, a cohort of non-signers and the Signartists themselves. I have quoted from the translated interviews with the Signartists, but have supplemented this with some illustrative screenshots to bring the written English translations closer to their embodied production. This multiplicity of voices is intended to coalesce around the performance-texts, so that the non-signing reader/viewer is scaffolded into an understanding of the resonances of the performance-texts, if not the actual signs. The aim was to make viewing the footage necessary, and to make it sufficiently *informed* viewing.

This latter point is crucially important. All corp-oral expression involves somatic communication, but this is highly culturally contingent. In signed-oral performance-texts, linguistic and somatic communication are unremittingly enmeshed, and the sign-literate audience responds bodily to both, prompting neurological echoes in the audience's bodies (Pfeiffer 2011, McConachie 2007). This is an aspect of signpower that I have been unable to address within the scope of this thesis: the kinaesthetic transfer that arises between performer and sign-literate audience, during which, in Signartist

Richard Carter's terms, 'the whole audience moves to meet them' (quoted in Pollitt 2014:381). This is fundamental to the experience of watching a signed performance-text, but can be difficult to describe to a non-signer, whose linguistic and somatic codes (Niles 1999:54) are predicated on the bodily expression of *spoken* rather than signed language.

An illustrative anecdote relates to the kinetic poetry film *The stars are the map* (Pollitt *et al.* 2014), which involves a performance by Gary Quinn of part of *Gerry Hughes*, features of which were presented as an illustration of Signart in Chapter Three. The poet Christine de Luca produced two translations of Gary's performance-text, one in English and one in Shetlandic; in doing so, she worked closely with Pollitt, a highly skilled BSL interpreter and Signart specialist, during the latter's residency at the Scottish Poetry Library in 2014. Moving text from the translations and imagery were then overlaid onto Quinn's signing. Several non-signers described this to me as a BSL translation of a Shetlandic-originating poem, and expressed surprise that the reverse was true. My hearing, non-signing colleague, whose research concerns embodied poetic communication, admitted that she found it impossible to 'see the poetry in the signing' because, as far as she was concerned, Gary Quinn 'was just being the boat.' Not only was the BSL impenetrable to her, so too was the somatic communication embedded therein. I could only clumsily explain its affect: in being the boat, Gary Quinn was *being* the poetry; to paraphrase Richard Carter, I was moving to meet him. This ineffable quality of signpower can only be appreciated when a degree of sign-literacy has been established; I have been grappling throughout my research with the problem of leading a non-signer to see signpower, and how to bring ethnologists and folklorists into a sufficient extent of basic sign-literacy (of the artistry, if not the linguistics) that would enable future research

in this area. This is necessarily a work in progress; any success is, in Friedrich's words, a matter of degrees (2006:21).

### **The central contribution: signed-oral material in the archive**

The first and arguably the most important contribution made towards bringing signed-oral traditional arts into the remit of Scotland's intangible cultural heritage is in bringing a new corpus into SSSA: both the case-studies' performance-texts and my interviews with key participants. The accessioned material from the three case-studies – the translation of Case-study 1, the signed-oral history DVDs of Case-study 2, and four performance-texts from Case-study 3 – provide the core dataset, and this thesis should, in part, be considered a manual for the study of this newly available ethnological corpus, and a springboard for perfecting the task.

The six interviews conducted in BSL with signing-deaf participants have been or are in the process of being accessioned into SSSA, representing the first inclusions in this language and modality.<sup>236</sup> Although these interviews primarily concern my case-studies and are therefore narrow in remit, they also contain valuable accounts of the interviewees' lived experiences as signing-deaf people in institutionally audist Scotland, and are therefore a useful first addition to the voices contained in SSSA. In recognition that the majority of scholars do not use BSL, the English translations made by each interviewee's chosen translator have also been accessioned alongside them, setting a standard for good practice for fieldwork of this nature.

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<sup>236</sup> Additionally, one interview in speech and SSE was accessioned as part of my Masters research.



The three interviews I undertook with non-deaf participants will also be accessioned and also contribute to the study of Scottish signing-deaf culture. This is particularly the case for the interview with Jemina Napier and Andy Carmichael, whose own bilingual and bicultural experiences as non-deaf PDFs are a fascinating addition to SSSA's collection and deserve in-depth analysis in their own right. This interview was filmed as well as recorded in audio, and the extent to which Andy and Jemina code-blend demonstrates the insufficiency of relying solely on audio technology when conducting fieldwork of this nature; this point will be picked up again later in this chapter. Furthermore, recalling that my primary research question asked what bridging techniques are required for translating signing-deaf cultural experiences to a lay audience, these spoken-language interviews are themselves a bridge between the speaking-hearing world and the DEAFworld, describing the cultural mores of signing-deaf culture in the language of the majority and demonstrating its intrinsic value as part of the individuals' lives.

### **Reviewing the chapters**

This section provides a brief review of the development of the study on a chapter by chapter basis. To get to grips with the worldview of signed-oral storytelling, I have been using Grosjean's idea of a bilingual-bicultural continuum as a framework for analysis. A 'two world' perspective is admittedly highly simplistic: a multiplicity of factors go into cultural identification, and dichotomies do 'not do justice to the complex world we live in' (Mindess 2006:3). However, Grosjean's model is a useful starting point for understanding the distinctiveness of signing-deaf being-in-the-world as it permits fluidity between different poles of language, culture, sensory orientation and worldview; I have conceived of it as multi-layered, involving

a complex interplay of being *of (but excluded from)* and, equally, *apart from* the majority society.

The central research question concerned devising a blueprint for the study of signed-oral material within a discipline with no history of dealing with it, and no tacit knowledge about it on which to draw. Chapters One and Two confronted this position head on. Chapter One provides the necessary grounding introduction to signing-deaf communities as part of an autochthonous lingua-culture of Scotland, arguing that the word *oral* has masked the role of the whole body in the production and transmission of culture and worldview through the traditional arts, and contributed to signed-oral traditional arts having been overlooked. Signing-deaf communities were placed in their historical context and, recognising that the thesis is aimed at a lay discipline, I provided a cursory introduction to the linguistics of sign languages, seeding the linguistic knowledge that later chapters would draw on. Signing-deaf culture, an immense and complex concept, was discussed using the admittedly simplistic bilingual-bicultural continuum framework, in anticipation that a deeper understanding of the complex biculturality of signing-deafhood would emerge over the course of the thesis. The central idea of *conversion* was also raised, which Bechter argues is directed both inwards into the community (into which only a minority are born) and outwards to the speaking-hearing majority, through a deaf public voice, with storytelling playing a central role.

Returning to the idea of bridging techniques, this thesis and the research process that went into it should be understood as building a bridge by trial and error. As such, a detailed methodology was provided in Chapter Two, which outlined the messiness of undertaking research in another language and modality with a historically disenfranchised community. My relationship with

the community was reflexively explored, as was the emotional and political impact of this engagement. This engagement led me to the conviction that the public domain was a more appropriate site for the collection of data for an outsider researcher than undertaking a more conventional folklore collection project within DEAFspace. Having introduced the three case-studies, the interviewees and steps taken to address issues of power and voice with signing-deaf interviewees, I then concerned myself with the problem of writing about an artform that resists wording. Translating a visual-spatial-kinetic language into the grapholect of a spoken language is inherently insufficient; this chapter introduced the bridging techniques described above, which aim to provide a bridge to enable non-signers to access them in their original form with some degree of sign-literacy.

In being placed in the public domain, the case-studies are partially orientated outwards into the speaking-hearing world, and therefore may be atypical of signed-oral practices within DEAFspace. Each does, however, fit into a storytelling tradition within signing-deaf communities; Chapter Three sought to contextualise this. Initially, the difference of signed-oral performance-texts needed to be addressed: I provided a review of the extant research into signed-oral artforms, which has typically been undertaken in the disciplines of linguistics and literature. The question of genre was deemed artificial, and, for 'cultural performances' (Wilson 2006:10) I have used Pollitt's term *Signart* as a generic term for a performance-text which may, according to the lens through which it is viewed, to some extent be *like* a Beat poem, a folktale, a film, a poem, a painting, a dance, a skit, yet intrinsically separate from them – its own thing, with its own features and properties, and yet conceived of as being the same artform. I contended with the problematic term *traditional* (discussed further below) and the related issue of authorship: the

unremittingly embodied nature of sign languages and their creative affordances encourage the production of original compositions, yet these fulfil a communal and arguably bardic function. From here, I introduced the reader to the central role of storytelling in signing-deaf communities, which, in common with other strongly oral cultures, is the primary means of transmission of worldview, culture-knowledge and – specifically in this context – the ‘strategies for survival’ in audist societies (Bahan 2006).

Some of the crucial affordances of signed-oral storytelling were then introduced in some depth, again to prepare the reader for their appearance in the ensuing case-studies. The fundamental role of iconicity in signed-oral production, including cinematographic structures and the performance of character through role-shift, was framed in the context of a continuum of visual vernacular between the DEAFworld and the speaking-hearing world; the overlaps will be discussed later. To assist the non-signer to understand the levels of complexity available in sign language, and also the fundamental nature of performance to the language, I devised a signartistry continuum, with the term *signartistry* being used to cover the full gamut of features available in an embodied language of performance, which may be used in Signart or in everyday storytelling, although to variable degrees. I created a model of signpower to show the relationship between signartistry and performance context and intent; this was useful when contextualising each case-study in relation to the storytelling tradition it drew on. Examples from the traditions of translation, personal experience narrations, and Signart were provided.

Chapter Four examined Case-study 1’s translation of two spoken-oral traditional tales. This was not BSL-originating material, but alluded to the tradition of translation within the community and permitted BSL’s storytelling

affordances to be brought into focus using the familiar narrative scaffold of a folktale. As such, it was intended to form an initial grounding in how BSL works in practice, rather than in theory. I provided in-depth comparisons of the two translations using English glosses of BSL signs; this both permitted the reader to get an idea of the different grammatical constructions of BSL, and to see on the page (and therefore, I hope, on the DVD) the misalignment of pace in the translation that matched Stanley Robertson's spoken delivery. Furthermore, this highlighted key issues of signing-deaf biculturality: the relationship with English through the fingerspelling alphabet, and a different passive repertoire of cultural referents (nursery rhymes, for example, required semantic extension). Furthermore, the very act of crossing from spoken-oral tradition into signed-oral performance was a bicultural act of asserting membership to the same corp-oral traditional landscape.

Although the content of the performance-texts did not pertain to signing-deaf culture, the performance of the translations demonstrated the distinctive affordances of signed-oral storytelling, and the transformative potential of crossing into a visual modality. Key signartistry features included the centrality of role-shift characterisation and the inclusion of visual details such as the 'snipping' punchline; these indicate that Frankie McLean was not merely the translator but performing as a storyteller as well. Producing two different translations at different paces reiterated this point: signed-oral storytelling and spoken-oral storytelling draw on different performance tools. The source performance-text, a product of signed-oral tradition, necessarily crossed into another corp-oral tradition via mediation through written English. The project resulted in a new, hybrid version of a traditional spoken-oral folktale in a signed-oral style – an intra-cultural collaboration which placed Scottish manual storytelling tradition on the same stage as a celebrated

example of spoken storytelling tradition. Some aspects of the original spoken narrative were inevitably lost in translation; yet the translation stands for itself and remains faithful to the original in its commitment to *telling the story well* in the target modality.

From here, Chapter Five presented personal experience narratives: everyday storytelling collected for a signed-oral history project. Unlike Case-study 1, Case-study 2 was entirely BSL-originating; it should be understood as a bridge between Case-study 1's 'beginner's guide' to signed-oral storytelling performance, and Case-study 3's Signart material. The latter draws on the passive repertoire of shared experiences of signing-deaf people in Scotland, but does so using complex signartistry; as the performance-texts in Case-study 2 were not creative storytelling, an in-depth examination of signing-deaf experiences of biculturality could be provided without dealing with this additional formal complexity. The *of (but excluded from)* bicultural experiences outlined in Chapter Five pertain to access to and shared ownership of mainstream culture, complicated by the lack of subtitles on television and the denigration of BSL in society; the isolating impact of internalising Oralist discourse was explored, as was the tension between the DEAF CAN'T metanarrative imposed by audist society and the DEAF CAN .D.O. response from within the community. *Apart from* biculturality was expressed in terms of the importance of DEAFspace in the development of a positive sense of deafhood, in celebration of signing and recognition of shared experiences; these motifs are part of the community's passive repertoire and are often expressed in culturally resonant short-hands, such as DEAF-YOU? DEAF-ME!, and the performance of unbridled joy when describing signing in DEAFspace. In terms of signartistry, I built on the discussion of characterisation in Case-study 1 to show that this is a central feature of signed-

oral storytelling, and that quite complex cultural resonances can be embedded in the performance of another character through role-shift.

Chapters Six and Seven dealt with the Signart repertoire of Visual Virus. Chapter Six was set aside to deal with the various forms of signartistry that bring the performance-texts into being, and to provide an overt bridge to enable the non-signing reader to view the original footage using the elaborated commentary and guidance tables. Three core performance-texts were presented, two of which echoed Case-studies 1 and 2 respectively. The first, *Three Pigs*, was an adaptation of the spoken-oral fable 'Blowing the House In: Three Little Pigs'; like Case-study 1, it has a familiar scaffold to a lay audience, but, unlike Case-study 1, it integrates strongly culturally-resonant content, especially the association of the house of bricks with BSL. The second performance-text, *Achievement*, echoed Case-study 2 in presenting a personal experience narrative; this drew on several of the experiences highlighted in Chapter Five, in particular the isolation experienced after school and the subsequent discovery of the signing-deaf community. The motifs highlighted in Chapter Five found performance in formulaic constructions. *Achievement* also moved from a literal (auto)biography to a highly figurative one, making use of the imagery of the forest to represent DEAFspace and using spatial and movement metaphors to lift the performance-text beyond a personal experience narrative to become collective, tacitly producing a DEAF CAN .D.O. narrative of overcoming the odds. This shift in signartistry prepares the reader/viewer for the final performance-text, *Virus*, in which the form of its production (a single handshape reminiscent of eyes opening) mirrors the awareness-raising, conversionary remit of a narrative about the oppression of sign language by the speaking-hearing world. This final performance-text is entirely unlike anything that could be performed in speaking-hearing culture;

all the preceding performance-texts build to this apex depicting what signartistry is capable of.

All three of Case-study 3's performance-texts are commentaries on signing-deaf biculturality, and Chapter Seven provides my own close readings of these and other performance-texts in the Visual Virus repertoire. I draw out key bicultural themes that have emerged throughout the thesis, grouped into *representations of signing*, *representations of speaking-hearingness* (including of individual speaking-hearing characters and as representative of systems of oppression), *representations of language ideologies in education*, and *representations of DEAFspace* and the process of conversion and identity actualisation. The conversionary remit of Visual Virus was apparent in the reoccurring assertions that signing has intrinsic value and should be unapologetically employed: *Who Sorry!* demands a co-equal attitude towards communication between speaking-hearing and signing-deaf people; *Three Pigs* argues that BSL gives the community strength against outside attack; and *Virus* lambasts the dominance of spoken language and the historically entrenched power imbalances between the communities, and ends with a conversionary call to arms in the pursuit of spreading awareness and visual language. The physical differences between signing-deaf and speaking-hearing techniques of the body were explored in *Achievement*, *Who Sorry!* and arguably *Three Pigs*; each of these can be seen to contain 'portraits of the hearing' (Fjord 1996) and solutions for dealing with this oppositional other. *Three Pigs* and *Achievement* explore the importance of DEAFspace, with the latter also touching on the ambivalent role non-deaf signers can play in altering the constitution of the community. Formally, many of the performance-texts incorporate tropes from speaking-hearing culture: the title *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*, and the scaffolds of *Three Pigs* and *Sleeping*



*Beauty*. These are then manipulated into a signed-oral idiom. Taken together, this corpus provides a valuable illustration of the complex relationships between signing-deaf people and a society predicated on an entirely different sensory way of being, but of which they are part.

### **Some observations about biculturality in signed-oral storytelling**

It should be apparent that characterisation is a central feature of signed-oral storytelling: through role-shift, the storyteller must take on the speech and performance of another. The nuanced relationship between BSL and English (spoken and written) are frequently performed through this characterisation, both in everyday storytelling (Case-study 2) and in Signart (Case-study 3). Signing storytellers use a variety of language styles to perform a character or to make a rhetorical point: “speech” can indicate a person’s hearing status or educational background, or poke fun at or defamiliarise speaking-hearing techniques of the body. The use of “speech”, especially the nonsensical babbling lip pattern, reflects everyday signing-deaf experience in a phonocentric world.

Cinematographic features are used throughout storytelling. Although cinematographic storytelling clearly pre-dates cinema, film and television have evidently influenced the form that signed performance-texts take, and an overt link was made both by John Hay and Lilian Lawson in Case-study 2, and by Mark MacQueen in Case-study 3, between these media (the dialogue of which was inaccessible before subtitles) and the development of individual creativity and storytelling skills. Jenkins has made the argument in relation to speaking-hearing children that, while ‘many adults worry that ... kids are “copying” pre-existing media content rather than creating their own original

works ... instead, one should think about their appropriations as a kind of apprenticeship' (2006:190). A similar argument could be applied to the cinematographic replication of television and film by deaf children: this is a self-directed apprenticeship in which the visual world becomes the tutor, especially important given that it cannot be guaranteed that deaf children will meet adults who use BSL on whom to model their own signing. This idea of self-apprenticeship is interesting in light of Goldin-Meadow's research into the 'gesture creation' of deaf children with no exposure to sign language (2003), whose systematic signing 'demonstrates the language-making skills available to children even in the absence of a language to learn' (Calton 2014:123).

Returning to the points made about genre in Chapter Three, Case-study 3 has demonstrated that many signed-oral performance-texts are not structured according to spoken-oral norms. Much of Visual Virus's repertoire is image-driven and performance-driven rather than plot-driven; those with strong plots tend to have been adapted directly from speaking-hearing culture, such as Gary Quinn's adaptations of fables and fairy-tales. For those with clear narrative arcs (*Achievement*, *Virus*), the performance is still central: *Achievement's* (auto)biography relies on the merging of literal and figurative imagery in spatial metaphor and through the simultaneous production of, say, his tempestuous boat-ride and the calendrical time-line; the signpower of *Virus* is in the execution of such a complex narrative using a single handshape, which itself seeds the meaning. Others have no narrative arc *per se*: *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* is an extradiegetic exploration of language styles embedded in an image- and action-based story-world, but with no denouement: the audience is merely left with the message of the whole. *Italian Football* relies on observational comedy; *Solar System* requires "speech" as a

device to make insiders of the whole audience; *Finale* is the communal performance of shared values. The signpower of these performance-texts – and, I argue, all signed-oral storytelling – is in their whole-body performance, that which resists translation.

The whole-body narration of a story, furthermore, blurs lines that can be drawn in spoken-oral storytelling between the narrator and the characters. Whereas spoken-oral storytelling makes this explicit in the use of pronouns, this is avoided in signed-oral performance-texts: the narrator may also be the Protagonist, and also performs as every character (whether literal or figurative) through role-shift. This was particularly clear in *Achievement*, which I termed a signing-deaf (auto)biography: the Protagonist is Gary Quinn, but also an everyman, because Gary Quinn's personal experiences (Oralist school, subsequent isolation, discovery of community, negotiation of power imbalances) are collective experiences. The Protagonist and his experiences can be either individuated or generalised – and often both at the same time. Similarly, in *Virus*, the narrator is a personification of the signing-deaf community throughout history, and the events depicted are vague and not made explicit; however, they are also reminiscent of events that almost every signing-deaf person in the audience will have personal experience of: being told not to sign, being told to speak, having information withheld. Just as the personal is collective, the collective is personal. As Andy Carmichael put it, *Virus* is

heavily weighted through the prism of deaf experience, so deaf people connect and understand with this culturally bound information, this is information which is to do with the experience of being a deaf person and having your language oppressed. (AC:2014)

The personal resonances of a performance-text are, I contend, one of the most traditional features of signed-oral storytelling – these shared experiences

can be assumed to be loosely comparable across generations. In Chapter Three, I quoted Tessa Padden defining stories about deaf schools and hearing people as ‘our traditional stories’; similarly, Andy Carmichael observed that a first-hand experience story is worth more than a second- or third-hand one, even if it shares the same content, remarking ‘they’re not passing on Beowulf from generation to generation to generation’ (AC:2013). Instead, he emphasised the authenticity of experience being expressed through the artform: ‘He *did* go to school, he *was* left like that, so he’s speaking from the heart and from the truth’ (AC:2014). Ubiquitous or common experiences can be distilled into formulaic signing constructions which represent the motifs of signing-deaf experience: “speech”, *hurricane shouting*, and *spit drenching* are representations of *speaking-hearing miscommunication*; *Oralist education* can be depicted using various constructions representing speech therapy and audiology; *insiders signing* and *DEAF-YOU? DEAF-ME!* represent *coming home to DEAFspace*. All of these are highly culturally bound.

### ***What next for this thesis?***

A limitation of this thesis is that it constitutes yet another description of signing-deaf culture from the outside; soliciting feedback from the inside is, therefore, imperative. My research is presented in written academic English, a language, modality and register that tend to be ‘a problem for deaf people’ (Baker-Shenk and Kyle 1990:72); indeed, academic discourse could almost have been ‘designed specifically to exclude deaf signers’ (Bechter 2008:69). The barriers to education mean that signing-deaf people are excluded from the sites of the construction of knowledge and from engaging with (and contesting) the conclusions of researchers. As such, the next step must be to consider how to disseminate my thoughts back into the community, including to those I interviewed or who appeared in the case-studies, and to provide

opportunities for signing-deaf people to critique and improve upon my interpretations from an insider position, so as to inform future work (see Ladd 2003:20-21, 430). Adam (2015) argues that the question of appropriate dissemination should be a consideration at all stages of the research process; it was not in this case – an oversight that must be addressed. There are increasing calls for relevant research to be published bilingually or even primarily in sign language, as online publication becomes the norm (Singleton *et al.* 2015:11; Young and Temple 2014:174-176).<sup>237</sup> Steve Emery's PhD thesis was, to my knowledge, the first to be translated into BSL and published with a DVD attached (2011). However, Young (2014) argues that merely rendering the information passively into BSL is insufficient as it does not 'exploit the visual and cognitive advantages of BSL-users. Research should be presented in 'discursive formats which ... accommodate deaf expression' (Bechter 2008:69); the next step is establishing how to do this with my interpretations.

### **The deaf public voice in the corpus**

Storytelling raises awareness of signing-deaf lives and experiences, and signed-oral performance-texts demonstrate the distinctiveness of signing-deaf culture through the different affordances of BSL itself. The three case-studies under examination were selected in response to the increasing placement of BSL cultural material in the public domain; this section draws together my conclusions about the messages being transmitted about signing-deaf culture through this use of a deaf public voice. Each case-study contains multiple messages about signing-deaf culture and biculturality, examined in the previous section; all of these have been tacitly 'cleared' for consumption by a

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<sup>237</sup> To date, only the *Digital Journal of Deaf Studies* publishes in sign language (specifically ASL).

lay audience. However, the extent to which the case-studies are outwards-facing to a lay audience is debatable. My conclusion is that the *placement* of the material in the public domain constitutes the primary message: that signed-oral material *deserves* to be seen, and that signing-deaf voices deserve to be heard. As such, all three case-studies can be seen as fundamentally conversionary – both towards the speaking-hearing world ('it's our world too!' Bahan 1989) and back into the DEAFworld, making an assertion of co-equality on a public stage.

Case-study 1 is the most overtly outwards-facing in terms of the deaf public voice. Considering the wider context of 'Deaf in the Story', storytelling was the hook with which to draw signing-deaf and speaking-hearing people together in a shared space and into conversation, both literally (via interpreters) and conceptually. Indeed, the event could be described as a showcase of biculturality, from both intra- and inter-cultural perspectives. Signing-deaf people were taking the opportunity to access what Bob Duncan described as 'some of the riches of the Storytelling Centre' (BD:2014); equally crucially, speaking-hearing people were invited to witness a mainstream space being taken over by a majority of signing-deaf people (with associated techniques of the body), and *seeing* signing-deaf culture. The storytelling on display at the event was both literal (Mark MacQueen's performances; the BSL:UPTAKE translations; the invitation to share personal narratives) and meta: signing-deaf culture was being told as part of the 'story' of Scotland's intangible cultural heritage, and benefiting from the prestige of the institutions involved.

The translations themselves were ostensibly intended for a mixed audience; however, they are unlikely to have had much application within the signing-deaf community beyond 'Deaf in the Story'. Instead, they are known

to have been used in BSL tuition and in interpreter training: both outward facing. The core remit of the translations was to showcase BSL *as a language of storytelling* – something that few signing-deaf people would be surprised by. Aiming at a lay audience, the BSL:UPTAKE translations conceptually linked BSL with Scotland's other autochthonous languages by drawing on Scots spoken-oral tradition; by extension, they aligned signing-deaf culture with other cultures celebrated by the folk and storytelling revivals – and with the institutions that support them. Bob Duncan was explicit that the relationship with SSSA and SSF, and the name of Stanley Robertson, conferred prestige on BSL that the project was keen to capitalise on (BD:2014). Witnessing Frankie McLean in storytelling mode is a challenge to some of the engrained assumptions about BSL's perceived limitations, both linguistic, performative, and in terms of the domain in which it is considered to be appropriate.

The signed-oral history DVDs in Case-study 2 seems to have been aimed at two distinct audiences, for different reasons. In terms of production values – the thematic curation, the incorporation of Scots words into the subtitles (a bicultural assertion) – the DVDs seemed to be particularly aimed at a speaking-hearing audience, providing accessible material for learning more about the everyday experiences of a subordinated micro-culture about which they are unlikely to be aware. Yet the subtitles were necessarily incomplete, and some of the more culturally contingent aspects were omitted, including the ideological ramifications of the prefix STRONG and the insider knowledge that the interviewees drew on relating to particular deaf schools, their pedagogies and the cultural resonances attached to them. Therefore, the speaking-hearing audience gets a sanitised, less political, and somewhat remote insight into signing-deaf communities through the DVDs; a viewer

with knowledge of BSL gets a privileged insight, while a signing-deaf person can access the whole.

Given that BSL oral history is a niche area of study in the speaking-hearing world, there is no guarantee that the DVDs have found mainstream application beyond some classrooms. However, it is enough of a contribution to the deaf public voice to make and distribute the DVDs; whether speaking-hearing people view them or not, they can be cited as publically available examples of signing-deaf lives in Scotland. Much more significant is the signing-deaf audience. The DVDs are a publically available archive of individual personal experience stories in which other signing-deaf people will recognise their own experiences and storytelling practices. This is the same idea as BSL:UPTAKE's aim to put 'deaf in the story', described in Chapter Four, or of re-angling Stuart Hall's 'mirror' of national heritage (2005). The importance of sharing stories in order to recognise systemic oppression and to draw on the 'strategies for survival' (Bahan 2006) of others is well-recognised within DEAFspace; having these narratives made publically available is a powerful statement of the importance of bringing these stories to public attention and having the cultural confidence to assert membership of – yet distinction from – the majority habitus.

Moving on to Case-study 3, the performance-texts were, like Case-study 1, performed on a public stage – the same stage, in fact – as an assertion of co-equality with spoken-oral platform storytelling, and to benefit from the associated prestige. Yet while Case-study 1 emphasised building bridges between spoken-oral and signed-oral forms to show the rich potential of cross-overs, the Case-study 3 performance-texts were presented uncompromisingly in BSL and a signed-oral idiom. No English interpretation was available, and the themes and formal features of the performance-texts were highly specific



to an audience of informed viewers. The performance-texts almost all drew on recognisably signing-deaf experiences, or else conveyed tacit messages about the politics of the community (as in *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*). Many details presumed insider knowledge: the named characters in *Sleeping Beauty*, the stock motifs about Oralism, the five capes that had to be sailed passed on the voyage in *Gerry Hughes* (described in Chapter Three). The form of many of the performance-texts required a high extent of sign-literacy: both *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* and *Virus*, for example, were delivered extremely rapidly. Of the latter, Andy Carmichael remarked that Mark MacQueen's intended audience could not be speaking-hearing non-signers:

He would do it a lot slower, the role shifts would be a lot slower, and he'd trim it, simplify the concept a bit, he wouldn't make it as dense as it was. [...] His clear audience in this is his peeps, his own kind, yeah. No doubt. (AC:2014)

The audience was approximately half non-deaf people, but these all appeared to be people connected with the wider signing community who could be assumed to have the requisite passive knowledge; those that did not, or who were insufficiently fluent, were left to have an 'authentic experience of sign language' (GQ:2013) without guidance. The message for the deaf public voice was the act of placing un-interpreted Signart on a public stage: asserting belonging but refusing to adjust to speaking-hearing norms.

## **Contributions to ethnology**

### ***On questioning some core terms***

The quotation that heads this chapter was written in relation to the literary criticism of signed performance-texts; the same sentiment can be

applied to folklore and ethnology. Bechter compares deaf studies to critical gender studies, arguing that the theories of the latter have

[not] been “added on” to time-honoured disciplines such as anthropology – patted on the head and given a chair in the corner. Rather, it has changed these disciplines’ basic terms of discourse. (2008:70)

My argument is that the study of signed-oral traditional arts shifts the discourse of our discipline in a radical direction, touching on all the familiar issues but raising entirely new – and fundamental – questions. These can be practical, and include the question of writing up and disseminating research findings, discussed earlier in the chapter. They can also be theoretical. This section deals with the contribution that the study of signed-oral culture makes to our disciplines in terms of extending some of our thinking along a signing-deaf axis – as the quotation heading this chapter states, ‘not simply to add a new constituency ... but to re-think the entire edifice ... from the ground up’ (Davidson 2002 in Bauman *et al.* 2006:3-4).

I have already alluded to the problem that signing-deaf culture poses to the very concept of *culture*, and especially lingua-culture. PDFs are unproblematic: whether deaf or non-deaf, their acquisition of sign language and signing-deaf culture in the home fits the pattern we associate with language communities. Yet the essentialist case for deafhood claims that a deaf child’s *de jure* culture is signing-deaf culture. Not only is the idea that a deaf child might have a different primary cultural affiliation to his or her non-deaf parents controversial to some, but strange too is the idea that, rather than being a fact of socialisation, culture is also predicated to some extent on a sensory engagement with the world (Baynton 2008). Yet many deaf people report a sense homecoming to sign language and deafhood, even without having experienced this in their home-life; furthermore, signing-deaf people may

have particular techniques of the body that non-deaf PDFs do not share but which are seen as markers of belonging (Baynton 2008). The question of the relationship between culture, language, senses and socialisation is both fascinating and challenging, and worthy of considerable examination.

I have also alluded to the fact that signing-deaf minority language communities do not share features with other minority language communities: with the exception of small number of PDFs who acquire language vertically in the home, BSL is primarily transmitted horizontally, and there is no homeland or geographical heartland. Yet, almost paradoxically given the diversity of almost mutually unintelligible dialects within BSL (the result of schoolisation, Quinn 2010), the shared spatial grammar and use of classifiers common to most sign languages permit international contact pidgins to emerge spontaneously, leading to transnational identifications. These could be compared to those of immigrant communities, except that the latter have the vertical lines of language transmission, familial relations and, typically, a sense of homeland; signing-deaf transnationality is predicated on distinct autochthonous sign languages that have developed through a particular sensory engagement with the world (Baynton 2008). Again, this problematises the questions of language and community with which ethnologists and folklorists have traditionally engaged.

In considering *oral traditions*, signed-oral culture poses some problems. That signing-deaf culture is strongly 'oral' is evident through the absence of a BSL grapholect, and face-to-face interaction in DEAFspace has until recently been central to the transmission of culture and world knowledge, given that access to mainstream media is limited by its phonocentrism and the varying levels of bilingual literacy. The comparison of film to print is inexact: a filmed performance-text is frozen, but it is still necessarily produced and (crucially)

viewed in its fully embodied and real-time performance. More recently, online DEAFspace permits signed-oral expression through video platforms: face-to-camera rather than face-to-face, and with even less similarity to offline text than the electronic written words of the Internet (Foley 2012:82-83). Certainly signed-oral performance-texts are oral; the question is more one of *tradition*.

There is a diachronic element to signing-deaf culture which ties in with the transnational one: that is, that there is something fundamentally *shared* in all signing-deaf people's engagement with the world, and that, in each generation, the majority of the community will come into it from the outside. Even STRONG DEAF families are likely to have a disrupted vertical link to signing-deaf culture: a family is defined as STRONG DEAF within only three generations. Furthermore, the non-deaf children of non-deaf PDFs tend to drift away from signing-deaf culture due to its reduced significance in their own lives, further disrupting the vertical, diachronic transmission of culture (Hoffmeister 2008:191-192); the core is constantly shifting as new STRONG DEAF families emerge. Therefore, I argue that what constitutes *traditional material* is more predicated on the authentic (the authoritative and inherent – D. Leith 2002:27) expression of something essentially shared – but highly personal – about the state of being signing-deaf. The equivalent of a folktale schema is a *deaf experience* scaffold, onto which individuals can hook their own life stories and take for granted that key details will have been shared, both by their peers and by their signing-deaf antecedents, to whom they were not blood related but *sensibly* related. Traditional material is produced through *gathering in* rather than a passing down.

### ***Deaf Gain and Scotland's corp-oral traditions: making the point***

I have already alluded to some of the contributions made by this study to the field of Scottish ethnology: the introduction of a whole new corpus of

storytelling traditions from an overlooked autochthonous language of Scotland into our field of study; and the fundamental challenges that signing-deaf communities pose to received wisdom about some of the key terms in our discourse. A further contribution is that, by even considering signed-oral traditions, one must readily engage with the embodied nature of all language production. Despite acknowledgement of its insufficiency (Martin 2013:296-297; Farnell 2006), fieldwork interviews still tend to be conducted using audio rather than audio-visual recording; we *know* that communication happens beyond words, but the assumption remains that sound is sufficient. There remains a tendency to separate the words from the other, unspoken elements; this distinction simply cannot be made in sign languages. I argue that it also should not be made in spoken languages: consider MacNeill's observations that spoken utterances 'possess two sides, only one of which is speech; the other is imagery, actional and visuo-spatial. To exclude the gestural side ... is tantamount to ignoring half of the message out of the brain' (2000:139). For my purposes, I'd add that it's tantamount to ignoring half of the *performance*, and agree with Jennifer Nelson that this perpetuates a speech bias that 'negates the possible benefits that the interplay of a variety of mediums can provide' (2006:120). Oral expression, whether signed or spoken, is necessarily corp-oral, and through engaging with signed interviews, I have become convinced of the fundamental insufficiency of recording any fieldwork solely in audio.<sup>238</sup>

This is particularly crucial in the study of traditional arts. Recalling Case-study 1, Stanley Robertson used vocal delivery in *Woman and Devil* to achieve characterisation beyond the words he used; the audio recording has

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<sup>238</sup> This is humorously illustrated in the audio transcription of my interview with Jemina Napier and Andy Carmichael, which was ostensibly conducted in spoken English. In it, they discuss code-blending and code-switching with their sign languages; Jemina says : '[Our daughter] actually did that the other day, she went *Mummy, I think that's* \_\_\_\_.' (JN:2013).

preserved this, and ethnopoetic transcription can attempt to write it. Yet the sole record of that performance is in audio format, leaving no trace of any paralinguistic and kinetic content which might have communicated other aspects of the story. We know that spoken-oral storytellers move beyond their words in performance; Stanley's father, William Robertson, was reportedly an 'entertainer, a very dramatic storyteller, sometimes even acting out the parts as he told his story' (McDermitt and Bruford 1986:175); and many contemporary storytellers acknowledge their use of physical tropes to enhance their performance:

As a storyteller, I can be an actor and I can be everything. I can be all the parts and all the props. I can be the king, the old man and the hen wife. (Billy Teare, in Wilson 2006:3)

I wouldn't mime, but I probably would use my body [...] I would use my body to either create an atmosphere or illustrate an action using my own natural gestures. I think I use my whole body instinctively. I do like big gestures and movements sometimes. (Nuala Hayes, in Wilson 2006:157)

An early attempt to bring the visual element of spoken storytelling to the fore can be found in Istvan Sándor's article 'Dramaturgy of Tale-Telling', which takes as its focus the impromptu performance in 1956 of a folktale entitled 'The Devil and the Shoemaker' by Hungarian storyteller Margit Gari Takács.<sup>239</sup> Sándor observed that at times, the gestures of the storyteller replaced the words, writing that:

the elements of narration outside the text are not accessory and complementary embellishments of the text, but specific means of expression, special ways of interpreting the substance, presenting and

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<sup>239</sup> The article is somewhat dated in its attitude towards the 'folk' mentality; it also contains a topical footnote making reference to the 'mimical conversation' between the students of the Deaf-mute Institute of Vác and another deaf community, which he appears to conceive of as a universal language rather than as a contact pidgin emerging in context (Sándor 1967:327).

visualizing the tale in all its subtleties and details, as it lives in the fantasy of the narrator. (1967:326)

A preliminary piece of fieldwork with speaking-hearing Scots storyteller Ruth Kirkpatrick (Figs. 47) suggests that concrete transcriptions might provide a useful addition to the development of multi-modal ethno-poetics, in binding the performance of a spoken-oral performance-text to the image of the storyteller.

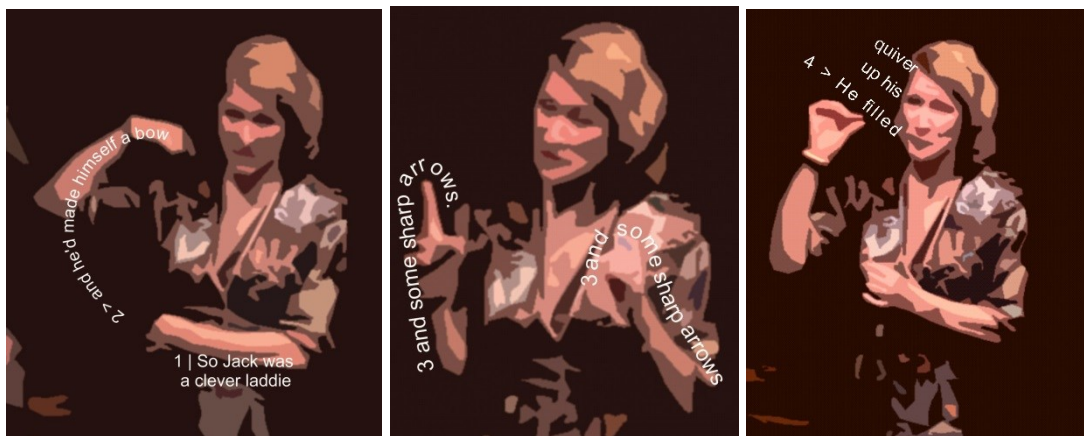


**Fig. 47a & 47b & 47c** – Ruth Kirkpatrick, concrete transcriptions

This leads into another area in which the study of signed-oral storytelling is a source of Deaf Gain for Scottish ethnology: the idea of shared gesturology and inter-cultural visual vernacular. The co-speech gestures that Ruth Kirkpatrick used illustrate an overlapping iconic gesturology of performance shared across corp-oral traditions even in different language modalities. This is not to return to the misconception that sign languages are less complex than spoken ones because they have iconic elements; no one who has viewed Case-study 3 will consider BSL a transparent and pantomimic language. Instead, I agree with linguists such as Taub (2001) and Liddell (2002) that iconicity is present in all languages, and a desirable feature – *especially* in storytelling performance. BSL provides a lexicon of performance to describe what speaking-hearing storytellers do (what, for example, is Margit Gari

Takács doing in Figs. 48a & 48b if not role-shifting between characters?);<sup>240</sup> signed-oral storytellers, with a continuum of visual-spatial-kinetic signartistry at their disposal, have access to a deeper well-spring of corp-oral artistry (i.e. both signed-oral *and* inter-culturally shared visual vernacular) invested with all the complexity of their language as well as all the artistry of their performance traditions.



**Figs. 48a & 48b**

*Role-shift in competition between Shoemaker (left) and the Devil (right)*

(Sándor 1967:322, 326)

It would be possible to conceptualise yet another continuum of shared corp-oral communication methods, with two different sensory lingua-cultures

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<sup>240</sup> This is in marked opposition to Peter Cook's claim that role-shift is 'unique to a visual gestural language' (2011:52); it is certainly unique in its grammatical deployment, consistency and complexity, but it is a feature of everyday gesturology.



and ways of being at either end: the speaking-hearing world and the DEAFworld. Signing-deaf people are more attuned to moving along the continuum: the readiness with which signers adjust to the linguistic heterogeneity within their communities is testament to this, as is the speed with which international sign pidgins can develop. Signing-deaf communicative flexibility enables transnational and intercultural communication at a greater depth than is possible for speakers of diverse spoken languages; like Kahne (2008), I believe that speaking-hearing people can gain from this, and spoken-oral storytelling can only be enhanced by the recognition of the embodiment of its production. Ultimately, I argue alongside Bechter that 'there is something *better* ... or particularly worthwhile' about studying signing-deaf culture (2008:66).

### **Looking forward: avenues for future research**

Having made this claim, it is unsurprising that a number of avenues for future research in the area of signed-oral traditions present themselves. Looking back to the corpus drawn on in this thesis, the material contained in each case-study remains in the public domain, held in several places including SSSA or, in the case of Visual Virus's 'Through New Eyes', on the Internet.<sup>241</sup> This extends their life as a valuable corpus for further examination along similar or different lines to mine, and as instigator to potentially new projects. An acknowledged limitation in my approach was in focusing almost exclusively on my own interpretation of the performance-texts; I justified this by observing that the case-studies are all at least in part outward-facing, and, as a learner of BSL who has developed some third culture affiliation, I am part

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<sup>241</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Visual-Virus/349211848446543?fref=ts> [accessed 3/11/15]

of the target (or accepted) audience. However, a more well-rounded approach would involve soliciting the responses and interpretations of other audiences, especially signing-deaf audiences. The practical considerations of undertaking copious interviews in BSL, not to mention negotiating the translation process, within the time-frame of this study precluded this research; however, it is an obvious next step to balance my outsider observations with those of insiders.

In particular, the Signartists in Case-study 3 should be interviewed in considerably more depth than I was able to do about the development of their repertoire and their aims in performance, and these interviews contrasted with the many extant interviews with spoken-oral storytellers about their craft. Additionally, it would be fruitful to film additional performances of the same performance-texts to analyse variation and adjustment, providing a valuable contribution to studies of variation in spoken-oral performance. A similar contribution could be made in relation to Case-study 1: how would Frankie McLean retell *Woman and Devil* from memory rather than from autocue? Would the same signartistry be deployed, and would he make any additions or variations? It would also be interesting to invite speaking-hearing participants who have seen his translation (but who have not listened to or read the transcript of the original) to retell the story, so as to examine the extent to which his characterisation is referenced or reproduced in the spoken modality, adding a new dimension to Donald Archie MacDonald's proposal that spoken-oral storytellers process their narratives visually in a series of images rather than in word formations (1978).

As Case-study 2 was unable to incorporate the *Back to School* boxset due to its delayed publication, analysis of this additional corpus along the same lines would be a valuable extension to this study. It would bring forward the deaf school experiences that are so central to core signed-oral motifs and

experience scaffolds. *Back to School* also contains interview footage with signing-deaf people with learning disabilities, whose stories are doubly invisible; in widening the remit of Scottish ethnology, marginalised voices within marginalised communities should also receive attention. Lilian Lawson expressed disappointment that the *My Firsts* series did not incorporate stories from deaf-blind people (LL:2013); furthermore, the individuals on the DVDs are all white and over 50. It would be valuable for ethnologists to work in collaboration with partners such as DHS and SCoD to secure funding for follow-up DVD projects with a more diverse remit. It is also crucial to include the experiences of younger deaf people, and, given the current ubiquity of mainstreaming, address Frishberg's question about whether the 'received wisdom' of signing-deaf communities is changing as 'the conditions of deafness-as-isolation change from isolation of the group (residential school) to isolation of the individual (mainstreamed school)' (1988:158). The experiences of mainstreamed deaf young people have been collected and analysed by Dai O'Brien in the South-West of England (2013), and a comparable project could take place in Scotland; to my mind, this could provide a valuable corpus for analysing how conversational signartistry differs across the generations – and might itself illuminate whether and how the 'received wisdom' is changing.

There is, I contend, a strong case to be made for a large-scale collection of signed-oral material found in both physical and virtual DEAFspace that should be counted alongside and enrich the extant collections of corp-oral material in SSSA and elsewhere. It should be collected and preserved – signing-deaf culture is, after all, *of* Scotland – but it should be collected and analysed primarily by signing-deaf people. This raises a political issue. There is a keen interest in deaf heritage in signing-deaf communities, but the denigration of sign languages and devaluation of signing-deaf experiences

meant that, until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, 'deaf history did not exist' (List 1993:113). Furthermore, unequal access to education means that there are very few signing-deaf fieldworkers who could undertake this collection and analysis. Indeed, signing-deaf people 'have only recently begun to be accepted within academic life as producers rather than subjects of research' (Young and Temple 2014:6-7); non-academic projects receive little institutional support or prestige; written English is the language of the academy. What is needed is the deaf-led collection and analysis of signed-oral material, through the medium of BSL, presented in deaf-friendly discursive formats where the two languages and cultures are co-equal.

Ethnology has positioned itself, in West's view, as a 'left-leaning' discipline concerned with history and culture 'from below' (2013b:346); it has been claimed that its hallmark is community engagement, and that it is 'a subject that relates to each and every one of us and there is no one who cannot be a practitioner' (Fenton, in Mackay 2013:xiii). In light of this, the time seems ripe for the lay discipline of ethnology to become an allied discipline to deaf studies, and to assist the signing-deaf community to 'produce the institutions necessary for its own reproduction' (Bechter 2008:70). If interested signing-deaf people could be recruited and trained in fieldwork methodologies, and given the institutional support to collect and securely archive signed-oral lore, then this would contribute significantly to the peacetime agenda of the community (i.e. cultural and artistic regeneration and increasing cultural awareness, Ladd 2003:165), and would strengthen the deaf public voice by incorporating signed-oral culture into the conceptualisation of Scotland's intangible cultural heritage. Preliminary talks with the European Ethnological Research Centre, for example, suggest that a place for such an initiative might be found within its Regional Ethnology of Scotland Project, which includes

training local non-academics to collect material from their locality as part of its remit, and emphasises community ownership of the material generated. The recruitment of signing-deaf fieldworkers to collaborate with this project could provide a mutually beneficial platform for the further – deaf-led – study of signed-oral material, which would radically contribute to our understanding of the *totality* of Scotland's corp-oral traditions: spoken- sung-danced- or signed-oral, all are passed on through performance of body.

### **Final remarks**

I started my explorations from the premise that oral traditions as we have studied them have actually been spoken-oral traditions, and that Scottish ethnology is essentially a speaking-hearing ethnology. It is equally clear that there are signed-oral traditions and signing-deaf ways of being Scottish, which are fighting to be recognised as belonging in the mirror of national heritage. The deaf public voice (which this thesis has explored through analysis of conversionary storytelling) is a part of that long campaign; it amply makes the case for signed-oral traditions deserving – in truth requiring – to be incorporated into a wider view of Scottish national culture.

This thesis is a preliminary methodology for incorporating signed-oral traditions into our understanding of Scottish ethnology. I have provided a grounding in many of the key features of sign language storytelling and analysed a corpus of signed-oral performance-texts. I have demonstrated their inherent signartistry and their reflection of signing-deaf biculturality, showing that they are simultaneously *of* majority society (an autochonomous language community) and also *apart from* it (having a completely different engagement

with the world, predicated on a visual-spatial-kinetic language). Furthermore, I make the argument that any study of storytelling which does not take into account the *body* of the performer is fundamentally limited: my term *corp-oral traditions* takes into consideration the non-oral elements of traditional storytelling practices, seeing them all as performance of body.

Unavoidably, given that it is opening up new areas of research, my thesis is both limited in scope and problematic in execution, primarily because signing-deaf people should be involved in the collection and analysis of data which is presented in their language and representative of their culture. Herein lies the challenge for the future: signing-deaf culture enriches and complicates much of our taken-for-granted knowledge, and Deaf Gain theory adequately demonstrates that what is popularly understood as *hearing loss* is less an impairment and more an opportunity to see majority culture and tradition through, if not a new lens, at least a lens that is more sharply in focus. Future work building on my research should serve to inform the majority speaking-hearing society of the signed-oral traditions long in existence within Scotland, and in return use that awareness to better understand and define the corp-orality of the traditional arts.

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## APPENDIX ONE: Case-study 1

### Appendix 1.1 DVD

*Storytelling as a family activity / The old woman who sold her soul to the devil.* (BSL:UPTAKE: 2012)

**Attached to cover binding: back.**

### Appendix 1.2 Transcripts:

*The old woman who sold her soul to the devil*

(SSSA: SA 1979/13 / Tocher 40)

#### 1.2a In Scots (transcribed by Barbara McDermitt)

There was this old spinster an she was aafa crabbit an she bade by hersel. And she never hed nae friends and the only thing she hed wis this big black cat. Oh, an this big black cat wis aa wey wi her, ye ken. And the folk in the toon aa thocht she wis a witch because she was that uncivil to the folk, and, och, she wisnae worth nothin really.

But the Devil came til her one day . . . an says, "Ye know," he says, "you're wastin your time here," he says. "You'd be better comin with me an let me give ye some wishes," he says, "because your life's so dull, you've did nothin."

She says, "I know," she says, "but people's made me like this. It's just the way I am," she says. "I don't have a husband, I don't have good looks, and nobody likes me, an," she says, it's s just the way I am," she says. "I've naething to be happy about."

So the Devil says til her, "Well," he says, "if ye sell yir soul tae me, A'll give ye three wishes. Three wishes and ye could have plenty of friends to -"

She says, "I don't want friends. I've never liked friends. I don't want to make friends with anybody," she says, "but A'll take the three wishes an A'll make the bargain wi ye."

So she maks this bargain wi the Devil. Fan her time comes she'll go to Hell wi him ... but she would have a long, long life in Earth. An she says, "'Tsd"-she wouldnae be disturbed by naebody, ye ken, she'd hev peace an quietness.

So he says, "I'm goin to give ye yir three wishes." He says, "Now what are they?"

She says, "Well, firstly," she says, "I want to be young an beautiful. I want to be the beautifullest creature 'sat walked the face of the Earth."

So she gets made intil this lovely creature. She looks in the mirror an oh, she's jist a pure Marilyn Monroe, ye ken, really beautiful. Oh, ye couldna have gotten a bonnier woman.

And she says, "I want to live in a beautiful castle on a hill, everything that I need, my food, my clothes ... But don't put no friends or 'at(?)," she says. "If A got servants I dinna see them." She jist wants to do it hersel. And she said, "I don't go to see anybody because I don't like people. An I want just tae be on-ken, without anybody 'at I don't like," . . . she says.

The Devil says, "But A thought you'd have liked a man."

She says, "Oh, yes," she says, "I want a man. Yes, I do want a man, she says, "but I want ma big Tom. I've aye loved my big Tom, but I want ye tae make him this handsomest young dark-haired curly-locked man."

An 'e Devil grants her her wish. An it was 'se handsomest fella 'at ever walked the earth came in.

An she says, "Oh, this is really good," she says, 'cause the wish was (?)-but she wants no interruptions fae outside . . .

An the Devil says, "Well, that's your three wishes." So ... her an this handsome laddie they dine and wine, and they dance an they listen to beautiful music. An it comes fir night. An they come to make love, ye ken, in their bed. So she dresses in her most beautiful gown, she's her expensive perfumes an she lets

her hair long. An she looks in the mirror an she says, "A'm so gorgeous." An she looks at the lad. An the lad puts oot the light. An she says, "Oh, he's so gorgeous. A'sve got everything an nothing could be happier!"

So she gings into the bed wi the fella and . . . She starts to cuddle an kiss him. An he says, "There's only one thing A would like to say tae ye."

An she says, "What's that, darling?" she says.

"Remember the time ye took me to the vet, many years ago?"

### **1.2a**                      **In English** (translated by Bob Duncan)

There was this old spinster and she was very ill-tempered and she lived by herself. And she never had any friends and the only thing she had was this big black cat. Oh, and this big black cat was always with her, you know. And the people in the town all thought she was a witch, because she was that uncivil to the people, and, oh, she wasn't worth a thing really.

But the Devil came to her one day and says, "You know," he says, "you're wasting your time here," he says. "You'd be better coming with me and let me give you some wishes," he says, "because your life's so dull, you've done nothing."

She says, "I know," she says, "but people have made me like this. It's just the way I am," she says. "I don't have a husband, I don't have good looks, and nobody likes me, and," she says, "it's just the way I am," she says. "I've nothing to be happy about."

So the Devil says to her, "Well," he says, "if you sell your soul to me, I'll give you three wishes. Three wishes and you could have plenty of friends to -"  
She says, "I don't want friends. I've never liked friends. I don't want to make friends with anybody," she says, "but I'll take the three wishes and I'll make the bargain with you."

So she makes this bargain with the Devil. When her time comes she'll go to Hell with him... but she would have a long, long life on Earth. And she says, "I'd" - she didn't want to be disturbed by anybody, you know, she'd have peace and quietness.

So he says, "I'm going to give you your three wishes." He says, "Now what are they?"

She says, "Well, firstly," she says, "I want to be young and beautiful. I want to be the beautifullest creature that's walked the face of the Earth."

So she gets made into this lovely creature. She looks in the mirror and oh, she's just a pure Marilyn Monroe, you know, really beautiful. Oh, ye couldn't have gotten a bonnier woman.

And she says, "I want to live in a beautiful castle on a hill, everything that I need, my food, my clothes ... But I don't want no friends or that," she says. "If I've got servants I don't want to see them." She just wants to be with herself. And she said, "I don't want to see anybody because I don't like people. And I want just to be on... you know, without anybody that I don't like," . . . she says.

The Devil says, "But I thought you'd have liked a man."

She says, "Oh, yes," she says, "I want a man. Yes, I do want a man, she says, "but my man - I want my big Tom (my cat). I've always loved my big Tom, but I want you to make him this handsomest young dark-haired curly-locked man."

And the Devil grants her her wish. And it was the handsomest fella that ever walked the earth came in.

And she says, "Oh, this is really good," she says, 'cause the wish was... but she wants no interruptions from outside!

And the Devil says, "Well, that's your three wishes." So ... her and this handsome laddie they dine and wine, and they dance an they listen to



beautiful music. And it comes to the night. And they come to make love, you know, in their bed. So she dresses in her most beautiful gown, puts on her expensive perfumes and she lets her hair long. And she looks in the mirror and she says, "I'm so gorgeous." And she looks at the lad. And the lad puts out the light. And she says, "Oh, he's so gorgeous. I've got everything and nothing could be happier!"

So she goes into the bed with the fella and . . . She starts to cuddle and kiss him. And he says, "There's only one thing I would like to say to you."

And she says, "What's that, darling?" she says.

"Remember the time ye took me to the vet, many years ago?"

### **Appendix 1.3        Transcripts:**

#### *Storytelling as a family activity*

(SA 1979/29 A3-B1 / Tocher 31)

#### **1.3a                    In Scots (transcribed by Barbara McDermitt)**

[Stanley Robertson] ..... When I was a child we lived in very poor circumstances. We didn't have no wireless. There was no television in that days. We sometimes got to the pictures if we wis lucky. But normally what would happen is ma mither - ma father wis usually drunk, but where he wisnae drunk he would aye come an tell ye stories - but ma mither used to sit an tell us stories every night. An ma granda bade wi us and he wis an old, old man, an he sut an told us stories aa the time, ye ken? We aa used to sit an jist tell each ither stories 'at we knew an heard an kent. An it wis jist a case whar yir repertoire built up aa the time - same as ma wee bairns can sit an tell ye hundreds of stories, oot o the blue, ye ken, an it used to be fun. But the best stories wis when you were in the country: ye were maybe bidin in an aald road, like the Waa Steedins or the Aald Road o Lumphanan, where aa the

traivellers used to sit in a circle -they wis jist like Indians. And the bairns jist sut very quietly, and ye listened, every word -ye jist sort o luxuriated in every word, ye ken, at wis said. An ye got some super stories ..... They didn't only tell creepy stories, though ye likit them the best, but they used to tell ye their adventures an queer happenins .....

**[Virginia Blankenhorn]:** You'd be sittin around a fire or something tellin the stories ..... ?

**SR:** Aye ..... it wis aye a huge fire wi maybe a pot o soup on it an at. It used to be good, it wis ..... really a good way o life, it's a shame that, ye know ..... [tape runs off]

**[Barbara McDermitt]:** I was wondering if you could remember how old you were when you first started to tell stories.

**SR:** Fan I first ? It's so long ago I can't remember. It has always been. Because I remember once when I wis a wee laddie an I wisna at school, we wis aa campit oot at the Waa Steedins in Dess, an they were haein a sort o a ceilidh thing an ma Auntie Jeannie says to me - I wis jist gaan to school - an she says to me "Go on, sing one o yir wee songies, laddie, sing a wee nursery rhyme song."

An she thought I wis gaan tae sing "Baa baa black sheep" or "Humpty-Dumpty", and I started tae sing "Bheir mi ho robhan o". And she says, "Mygoodness," she says, "how did a bairn ken a song like that?" So we wis accustomed to hearin aal-fashioned things when we wis - ye ken, we never ..... went through the wee baa baa stage, we aye seemed to be the grown-up stage, ye ken, as children. But my sister Charlotte, she telt us a story which she composed: it was cried - I couldnae tell ye because it would take - she would've won, ye ken the Arabian Nights when Sheherazade telt the story an it lasted for ever an ever an ever, ma sister Charlotte could've won it. She started tellin us a story an it was on the go all my - since ever I could remember. It was cried The Kelly Dog. It wis aa this story aboot a dog lookin for a bone, a sugary (?) bone. An it used to include aa this different adventures, but she used to mak it up every night in her bed. It lasted for fourteen years, that I ken o! An it wis a bonny story, it wis like a continuin story: every night that story went on! She used to sing songs, went through the actions, and she never - ye ken, she made

it up, but it was spontaneous, an it never stopped ..... It was tremendous. 'Ken, television killed that art. But in that days, because ye were so engrossed with each ither, whit they had - an we used to read - Same when we wrote poetry, 'ken. Aa my brithers an sisters could aa write poetry, though we jist used to write on bits o wallpaper an that. But we all hed 'is creative spark within us, an every one o them could dae it.

**VB:** And you'd tell stories to one another, the other brothers and sisters in the family. Would you tell stories to your parents or other grown-up people as well?

**SR:** Oh aye, aabody dis it, everybody took a turn in tellin. I mean to say, if my bairns tell me a story, I'll jist sit an listen, same wey as my parents would've listened to me if I was tellin a story. Or sometimes my father, if he wisnae drunk, he would come hame an he'd maybe start tellin us some o his stories - he had some good stories. Ma father's tradition is so different from ma mither's, and [my great-aunt] Maggie's again is so different aald, aald stories.

But it is an old tradition, an I have preserved it. It's aye been wi us an seeminly it'll be wi ma family. I could take ony o my family again an they could tell ye a story, ye ken, fae the aaldest tae the youngest.

### 1.3b

#### In English (translated by Bob Duncan)

**SR:** When we were children... when I was a child we lived in very poor circumstances. We didn't have the wireless (radio). There was no television in those days. We sometimes got to the pictures if we were lucky. But normally what would happen is my mother - my father was usually drunk, but when he wasn't drunk he would always come and tell us stories - but my mother used to sit and tell us stories every night. And my grandad lived with us and he was an old, old man, and he sat and told us stories all the time, you know?

We all used to sit and just tell each other stories that we knew and heard and knew. And it was just a case of your repertoire building up all the time - same as my wee children can sit and tell you hundreds of stories, out of the blue, you know - and it used to be fun. But the best stories were when you were in the country - we were maybe staying in an old road, like the Waa Steedins or

the Old Road of Lumphanan, where all the travellers used to sit in a circle - they were just like Indians. And the children just sat very quietly, and you listened - every word - you just sort of luxuriated in every word, you know, that was said. An you got some super stories .....I remember once a man told - there was one man, really funny - this is just a smattering of a story - and he started telling this story. He says he was walking along this road. Dirty, dirty, cold night. The moon was high, but it was cold and sharp with frost. And he walked along this lonely road. And he sort of paused from speaking. And - "Ah", we'd say, "but - but what happened?" He says, "Oh nothing happened - just it wis awful dark and cold!"

(Laughter)

... And even the wee smattering of a story - can you remember them?! And they used to - They didn't only tell creepy stories, though we liked them the best, but they used to tell you their adventures and queer happenings - things that happened... all this stuff...

**WOMAN:** Well, um, this was when you were camping out? Did you do most of your camping out in summertime?

**SR:** Aye, it was mostly - from spring up till about autumn.

**WOMAN:** You'd be sitting around a fire or something telling the stories, would that be it?

**SR:** Aye - we always had a huge fire with maybe a pot of soup on it. It used to be good, it was really a good way of life, it's a shame that, you know it...

**WOMAN:** I was wondering if you could remember how old you were when you first started to tell stories. Did you start when you were young?

**SR:** When I first? It's so long ago I can't remember. It has always been. Because I remember once when I was a wee laddie and I wasn't at school. We were all camped out at the Waa Steedins in Dess, and they were having a sort of a ceilidh thing and my Auntie Jeannie says to me - I wis just (started) going to school - and she says to me "Go on, sing one of your wee songs, laddie, sing a wee nursery rhyme song."

And she thought I was going to sing "Baa baa black sheep" or "Humpty-Dumpty", and I started to sing (the Gaelic song) "Bheir mi ho robhan o". And she says, "My goodness," she says, "how did a child know a song like that?" So we were accustomed to hearing old-fashioned things when we were – you know, we never ... we never went through the wee "Baa baa" stage, we always seemed to be at the grown-up stage, you know, as children. But my sister Charlotte, she told us a story which she composed. It was called - I couldn't tell you it, because it would take - she would've won, you know the Arabian Nights when Scheherazade told the story and it lasted for ever an ever an ever? My sister Charlotte could've won it! She started telling us a story and it was on the go all my - since ever I could remember. It was called The Kelly Dog. It was all, this story about a dog looking for a bone, a sugary bone. And it used to include all these different adventures, but she used to make it up every night in her bed. It lasted for fourteen years that I know of! And it was a bonny story, it was like a continuing story: every night this story went on! She used to sing songs, went through the actions, and she never – you know, she made it up, but it was spontaneous, and it never stopped ... It was tremendous. You know, television killed that art. But in those days, because we were so engrossed with each other, what they had - and we used to read - Same when we wrote poetry, you know. All my brothers and sisters could all write poetry, though we just used to write on bits of wallpaper and that. But we all had this creative spark within us, and every one of them could do it.

**WOMAN:** And you'd tell stories to one another, the other brothers and sisters in the family?

**SR:** Oh aye - aye!

**WOMAN:** What about the grown-ups? Would you tell stories to your own parents or other grown-up people as well?

**SR:** Oh aye, everybody does it, everybody took a turn in telling. I mean to say, if my children tell me a story, I'll just sit and listen, the same way as my parents would've listened to me if I was telling a story. Or sometimes my father... if he wasn't drunk, he would come home and he'd maybe start telling us some of his stories - he had some good stories.

My father's tradition is so different from my mother's, and Burn Bonnet's Maggie's again is so different. I haven't even even touched her material yet... Her material's very old - cos they were Old Bill stories. And I have got about twenty tapes of Maggie in there... I'm the only person who can decipher what she says, cos she speaks in old Romany style, you know. Lots of times I'll tell stories an I'll just speak a lot of - a good lot of it in Romany. I'm speaking... to youse I'll just speak in my sort of Doric tongue. If I'm telling the children, I tell them it in cant! (Laughs) So - they're good...

But it is an old tradition, and I have preserved it. It's always been with us and the same it'll be wi ma family. I could take ony o my family in there and they could tell you a story, you know, from the oldest to the youngest. And eh... Of course the Church encourages this. The Church encourages any kind of family thing to carry on – you know, to carry on family traditions and all that, because you should preserve cultures.

## APPENDIX TWO: Case-study 2

### Appendix 2.1 *My Firsts and Deaf Sporting Memories* tracklists

(Scottish Council on Deafness 2011-2015)

|             |                                |                       |
|-------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>2011</b> | <b>Deaf People at Work</b>     | Job history           |
|             |                                | Job seeking           |
|             |                                | Training              |
|             |                                | Communicating at work |
|             |                                | Travelling to work    |
|             |                                | Union                 |
|             |                                | Stories               |
| <b>2011</b> | <b>Deaf People at War</b>      | Air raids             |
|             |                                | Evacuation            |
|             |                                | Rationing             |
|             |                                | Blackout              |
|             |                                | Stories               |
| <b>2011</b> | <b>Deaf People on the Road</b> | First car             |
|             |                                | Driving lessons       |
|             |                                | Driving test          |
|             |                                | Car insurance         |
|             |                                | Breakdown             |
| <b>2014</b> | <b>Deaf People at Home</b>     | First home            |
|             |                                | Doorbells             |
|             |                                | Baby alarms           |
|             |                                | Before telecoms       |
|             |                                | Telecoms              |
|             |                                | Television            |
| <b>2015</b> | <b>Deaf People at Rest</b>     | First deaf club       |
|             |                                | Activities            |
|             |                                | Family holidays       |
|             |                                | Future partners       |
|             |                                | Holidays abroad       |

|             |                               |                 |
|-------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>2012</b> | <b>Deaf Sporting Memories</b> | Starting out    |
|             |                               | Why this sport  |
|             |                               | Communicating   |
|             |                               | Coaching        |
|             |                               | Organising      |
|             |                               | Proudest moment |
|             |                               | Best memory     |



## APPENDIX THREE: Case-study 3

### Appendix 3.1 DVD

Four Visual Virus performance-texts

'Through New Eyes', Scottish Storytelling Centre,  
Edinburgh

17<sup>th</sup> March 2012

**Attached to cover binding: back.**

### Appendix 3.2 Guidance table: *Three Pigs* (Gary Quinn)

| TIME                            | EPISODE                                                                        | EPISODIC BREAK-DOWN                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>00:10 – 06:08</b><br>[5m 58] | <b>PART I</b>                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>00:10 - 01:20</b><br>[1m 10] | <b>Episode 1</b><br><b>The three pigs leave their home.</b>                    | <b>00:10 – 00:17:</b> Pigs1+2+3 and their mother are placed in relation to each other.<br><b>00:17 – 00:28:</b> Pigs1+2+3 discuss between themselves; they announce to their mother that they want to leave home.<br><b>00:28 – 00:47:</b> [ <i>Role-shift conversation</i> ] Mother tells them not to; she explains that the wolf is dangerous; they reassure her; she anxiously agrees.<br><b>00:47 – 00:56:</b> Pigs1+2+3 pack up their belongings.<br><b>00:57 – 01:20:</b> Pigs1+2+3 say goodbye to their crying mother, leave, look back and wave. |
| <b>01:20 – 02:28</b><br>[1m 08] | <b>Episode 2</b><br><b>The three pigs meet a man with enough straw for one</b> | <b>01:20 – 01:29:</b> Pigs1+2+3 walk a long way.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                 | house; the first pig builds it.                                                                                                                                              | <p><b>01:29 – 01:44:</b> They approach a person with a quantity of straw and ask him to give them some.</p> <p><b>01:44 – 01:54:</b> [<i>Role-shift conversation</i>]The person explains that there is only enough straw for one house.</p> <p><b>01:54 – 01:59:</b> Pigs1+2+3 discuss and agree that Pig1 will build a straw house.</p> <p><b>01:59 – 02:13:</b> Pig1 builds straw house [piles straw directly on the ground]; he is proud.</p> <p><b>02:14 – 02:28:</b> Pigs2+3 say goodbye and leave, waving back to Pig1.</p>                                                                  |
| <b>02:28 – 03:22</b><br>[0m 54] | <b>Episode 3</b><br><b>The two pigs meet a man with enough wood for one house; the second pig builds it.</b>                                                                 | <p><b>02:28 – 02:32:</b> Pigs2+3 walk on a way.</p> <p><b>02:33 – 02:41:</b> They come across not straw, but wood.</p> <p><b>02:42 – 02:46:</b> They consider, then ask for the wood.</p> <p><b>02:47 – 02:55:</b> [<i>Role-shift conversation</i>] The person explains that there is only enough wood for one house.</p> <p><b>02:56 – 02:59:</b> Pigs2+3 discuss and agree that Pig2 will build a wooden house.</p> <p><b>02:59 – 03:12:</b> Pig2 builds house [pushes stakes into the ground]; he is proud.</p> <p><b>03:13 – 03:22:</b> Pig3 says goodbye and leaves, waving back to Pig2.</p> |
| <b>03:22 – 06:08</b><br>[2m 46] | <b>Episode 4</b><br><b>The third pig meets a man with bricks, from which he builds a house methodically from the foundations up, drawing comparisons with sign language.</b> | <p><b>03:22 – 03:28:</b> Pig3 walks on a way.</p> <p><b>03:28 – 03:41:</b> Pig3 comes across not wood, not straw, but bricks.</p> <p><b>03:41 – 03:54:</b> [<i>Role-shift conversation</i>] Pig3 asks for bricks to build a house; receives them.</p> <p><b>03:54 – 04:20:</b> Pig3 considers how to build a house [alludes to car and wheels] and what should come first; he compares building a house to sign</p>                                                                                                                                                                                |

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|                                 |                                                                                                                                                                  | <p>language; he realises what should come first.</p> <p><b>04:20 – 04:31:</b> Pig3 digs foundations and lays out the building site.</p> <p><b>04:31 – 04:48:</b> Pig3 takes a brick and considers the building process.</p> <p><b>04:48 – 05:05:</b> Pig3 lays bricks methodically in a row to build up the strength of the wall; he does build straight up as the wall would be unsteady.</p> <p><b>05:05 – 05:26:</b> Pig3 puts in a big window to let light in so he can see his visual language.</p> <p><b>05:26 – 05:43:</b> Pig3 lays out the rooms of his house and labels them (kitchen, bathroom, bedroom).</p> <p><b>05:43 – 05:55:</b> Pig3 explicitly compares his house to sign language.</p> <p><b>05:55 – 06:05:</b> Pig3 takes a framed picture/sign and nails it to the wall; he is pleased.</p> <p><b>06:06 – 06:08:</b> Pig3 sits down to read a newspaper.</p> |
| <b>06:08 – 10:35</b><br>[4m 27] | <b>PART II</b>                                                                                                                                                   | <b>06:08 – 06:09: Action returns to Pig1</b><br>[indicated by pointing]                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>06:09 – 07:11</b><br>[1m 02] | <b>Episode 1</b><br><b>The wolf arrives at the straw house and frightens the first pig; he blows down the house, and the first pig runs to the wooden house.</b> | <p><b>06:09 – 06:16:</b> Pig1 is in his straw house; it shakes (implied knocking on the door).</p> <p><b>06:16 – 06:29:</b> Pig1 is frightened (his mother was right, the wolf is angry); he tries to contain his fear.</p> <p><b>06:29 – 06:31:</b> Pig1 timidly opens door</p> <p><b>06:31 – 06:48:</b> [<i>Role-shift conversation</i>] Wolf says something aggressively to Pig1; Pig1 tries to respond verbally. Communication breaks down; Pig1</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

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|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                         |                                                                                                                                                                         | <p>becomes frightened, slams the door and cowers.</p> <p><b>06:48 – 06:54:</b> Wolf is angry and rants.</p> <p><b>06:54 – 07:01:</b> Wolf breathes in and blows the house down.</p> <p><b>07:02 – 07:11:</b> Pig1 runs away; wolf watches him go.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <p><b>07:11 – 08:33</b><br/>[1m 22]</p> | <p><b>Episode 2</b><br/><b>The wolf arrives at the wooden house and frightens the second pig; he blows down the house, and the two pigs run to the brick house.</b></p> | <p><b>07:11 – 07:17:</b> Pig1 runs until he arrives at wooden house and knocks on the door.</p> <p><b>07:17 – 07:20:</b> The house shakes; Pig2 lets Pig1 in.</p> <p><b>07:20 – 07:37:</b> <i>[Role-shift conversation]</i> Pig1 pants and explains to Pig2 that the wolf is angry and he doesn't know why. Pig1 tells Pig2 the wolf is coming; Pig2 tells Pig1 to be calm.</p> <p><b>07:38 – 07:44:</b> Wooden house shakes (implied knocking); Pig1 is frightened; Pig2 prepares himself.</p> <p><b>07:44 – 07:47:</b> Pig2 opens the door.</p> <p><b>07:47 – 07:54:</b> <i>[Role-shift conversation]</i> Wolf says something aggressively to Pig2; Pig2 tries to respond verbally with a gesture.</p> <p><b>07:54 – 07:56:</b> <i><b>Role-shift:</b> gesture from wolf's perspective.</i></p> <p><b>07:56 – 07:59:</b> Pig2 becomes frightened, slams the door and cowers.</p> <p><b>07:59 – 08:07:</b> Wolf breathes in and blows; the house shakes but does not fall.</p> <p><b>08:07 – 08:13:</b> Pig2 says that wood is strong; Pig1 says to watch.</p> <p><b>08:13 – 08:24:</b> Wolf breathes in and blows the house down.</p> <p><b>08:24 – 08:28:</b> Pigs1+2 run away.</p> |

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|                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 08:29 – 08:33: Wolf repeats Pig2's gesture and appears frustrated and angry.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 08:33 – 10:35<br>[2m 02] | Episode 3<br>The wolf arrives at the brick house but does not frighten the third pig. The third pig hands the wolf a piece of paper, which the wolf discards and attempts to blow down the house. He fails. | <p>08:33 – 08:47: Pigs1+2 arrive at brick house, beat on the door (express pain), find and use a flashing doorbell.</p> <p>08:47 – 08:51: Pig3 sees doorbell, lets the pigs in.</p> <p>08:51 – 09:10: [Role-shift conversation] Pigs1/2 pant and explain that their houses have gone and the wolf will come; Pig3 tells them to be calm.</p> <p>09:10 – 09:19: Pigs1+2 admire brick house and picture/sign on wall.</p> <p>09:20 – 09:22: Doorbell flashes (implied wolf at door).</p> <p>09:22 – 09:30: Pigs1+2 are frightened; Pig3 opens the door.</p> <p>09:30 – 09:35: [Role-shift conversation] Wolf says something to Pig3; Pig3 raises palm.</p> <p>09:35 – 09:36: <b>Role-shift:</b> <i>palm from wolf's perspective.</i></p> <p>09:36 – 09:52: Pig3 closes the door, copies something onto piece of paper.</p> <p>09:52 – 09:54: Pig3 opens door, gives paper to wolf.</p> <p>09:54 – 10:03: Wolf reads and discards paper, looks aggressive.</p> <p>10:03 – 10:10: Pig3 holds up palm and closes door. Pigs1+2 are anxious; Pig3 is relaxed.</p> <p>10:10 – 10:17: Wolf breathes in and blows; the house is immobile</p> <p>10:18 – 10:23: Pig1/2 remarks that the house is strong.</p> <p>10:23 – 10:35: Wolf breathes in and blows until he exhausts himself.</p> |

|                          |                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
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| 10:35 – 11:23<br>[0m 48] | CODA                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 10:35 – 11:23<br>[0m 48] | <b>The wolf leaves; the third pig explains that the paper contained contact details for an interpreter. The three pigs admire the brick house.</b> | <p><b>10:35 – 10:42:</b> Pig3 remarks that the house is strong and compares it to sign language.</p> <p><b>10:42 – 10:49:</b> Pig1/2 observes that wolf has gone and asks Pig3 what was on the paper.</p> <p><b>10:49 – 10:54:</b> Pig3 says it contained contact details for an interpreter.</p> <p><b>10:54 – 11:07:</b> Pig1/2 admires house, compares it to sign language and points out picture/sign on wall.</p> <p><b>11:07 – 11:16:</b> Sign shown to the audience, glossed as SIGN LANGUAGE + REAL/TRUE/DEFINITE + BEAUTIFUL. Repeated three times.</p> <p><b>11:16 – 11:23:</b> Pig1/2/3 agrees with the picture/sign.</p> |

### Appendix 3.3 Guidance table: *Achievement* (Gary Quinn)

| TIME                     | EPISODE                                                                                                                          | EPISODIC BREAK-DOWN                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 00:09 – 01:28<br>[1m 19] | PART I                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 00:09 – 00:58<br>[0m 49] | <b>The protagonist is born deaf. As a young child he is taken to deaf school by his parents and grandparents and left there.</b> | <p><b>00:09 – 00:11:</b> Protagonist (P) is born</p> <p><b>00:11 – 00:19:</b> <i>Mother and father look at baby P in concern. It is observed that P cannot hear.</i></p> <p><b>00:19 – 00:22:</b> P and another [un-defined] child grow to small children. [??] P is picked up and placed centrally.</p> <p><b>00:22 – 00:28:</b> Mother and father are placed stage right [R hand: 2 fingers]; grandmother and grandfather are placed stage left [L hand: 2 fingers]. They are</p> |

|                                         |                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
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|                                         |                                                                                         | <p>brought centre stage [R hand: 4 fingers]. P joins them [L hand: 1 finger].</p> <p><b>00:28 – 00:32:</b> 4adults+P go to a school.</p> <p><b>00:33 – 00:40:</b> P looks around and sees deaf children signing to each other.</p> <p><b>00:40 – 00:44:</b> <i>1adult ushers P forward, P is pleased, goes to children, gestures to them.</i></p> <p><b>00:44 – 00:51:</b> P looks round, sees 4adults walking away. <i>They wave back to P. P waves uncertainly to them.</i></p> <p><b>00:51 – 00:58:</b> 4adults retreat into the distance. P looks down uncertainly, then shrugs.</p> |
| <p><b>00:58 – 01:28</b><br/>[0m 30]</p> | <p><b>The protagonist grows up at deaf school.</b></p>                                  | <p><b>00:58 – 01:01:</b> P continues gesturing with the children; as he grows up [R hand rises], this becomes signing.</p> <p><b>01:01 – 01:14:</b> P receives speech therapy: <i>Adult[teacher] pointing to chin; P's face being manipulated</i>. This continues as P grows up [<i>Timeline: R hand rises</i>].</p> <p><b>01:14 – 01:19:</b> P puts on headphones and receives audiological <b>input? Training?</b> Speech therapy continues as he grows up [R hand].</p> <p><b>01:20 – 01:28:</b> At age 16, P discards headphones, rubs face, and leaves. P is relieved.</p>          |
| <p><b>01:28 – 02:24</b><br/>[0m 56]</p> | <p><b>PART II</b></p>                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <p><b>01:28 – 02:24</b><br/>[0m 56]</p> | <p><b>The protagonist leaves school but cannot communicate with hearing people.</b></p> | <p><b>01:29 – 01:38:</b> P sets off [R index], depressed/downhearted [L hand].</p> <p><b>01:39 – 01:48:</b> P approaches Person1 [stage R], indicates that he is deaf. P's hair is blown back [implied shouting].</p> <p><b>01:48 – 01:54:</b> P moves on, people pass [R index; L index]</p> <p><b>01:54 – 02:04:</b> P approaches Person2 [stage L], indicates that he is deaf. <i>Person2 speaks</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                              |

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|                                 |                                                                                                                                                   | <p><i>and spit flies out of their mouth.</i> The spit lands on <b>P</b>'s face. P wipes it off.</p> <p><b>02:04 – 02:10:</b> P moves on [R index], Person2 passes [L index], P moves on.</p> <p><b>02:10 – 02:17:</b> P sees Person3 [L index]. P approaches Person3 [stageL], indicates that he is deaf. <i><b>Person3</b> shouts;</i> <b>P</b>'s hair is blown back. Person3 passes [L index].</p> <p><b>02:17 – 02:24:</b> P moves on. It gets darker.</p>                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>02:24 – 04:02</b><br>[1m 38] | <b>PART III</b>                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>02:24 – 03:03</b><br>[0m 39] | <b>The protagonist meets a deaf person who leads him into a forest to meet the deaf community.</b>                                                | <p><b>02:24 – 02:31:</b> P approaches a deaf person [Deaf1]. P is happy. P + Deaf1 sign together.</p> <p><b>02:31 – 02:35:</b> P asks where other deaf people are. <i><b>Deaf1</b> indicates that P should follow.</i> <b>P</b> is confused.</p> <p><b>02:35 – 02:51:</b> Deaf1 leads P into a dark forest. P follows Deaf1 towards a flickering light [fire]. The light grows brighter as Deaf1 + P approach.</p> <p><b>02:51 – 03:03:</b> P is delighted to see deaf people signing. P signs with them enthusiastically [centre stage].</p>                                                                   |
| <b>03:03 – 03:51</b><br>[0m 58] | <b>Trees fall in the forest. The protagonist sees hearing people learning to sign. He signs to them, but they gradually grow taller than him.</b> | <p><b>03:03 – 03:11:</b> A tree is sawn down [R arm, stage R].</p> <p><b>03:11 - 03:17:</b> <b>P</b> sees light entering the forest [stage R, up]; P turns to see people next to him [stage L] and starts to sign to them.</p> <p><b>03:17 – 03:23:</b> P is told that they are hearing non-signers come to learn. P signs slowly and encouragingly to them, then returns to sign enthusiastically to the deaf people [centre stage].</p> <p><b>03:23 – 03:28:</b> A tree is sawn down [L arm, stage L].</p> <p><b>03:28 – 03:31:</b> P sees light entering the forest [stage L, up]; P turns to see people</p> |



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|                                 |                                                                        | <p>next to him [stage R] and turns to sign to them.</p> <p><b>03:31 – 03:34:</b> P is told that they too are hearing. P signs slowly and encouragingly to them, then returns to sign enthusiastically to the deaf people [centre stage].</p> <p><b>03:34 – 03:44:</b> P alternates between signing enthusiastically to the deaf people in the centre [C], and encouragingly to the hearing people on stage L and stage R. When signing to the hearing people either side, P gradually signs faster, then increasingly in an upwards motion [implication that hearing people are growing].</p> <p>[centre / left / centre / right / centre / left / centre / right / centre / left (up) / centre / right (up)]</p> <p><b>03:44 – 03:46:</b> The hearing people [stage R, up] are speaking. P tries unsuccessfully to sign to them.</p> <p><b>03:47 – 03:48:</b> P turns to the other hearing people [stage L, up] and tries to sign to them. They too are speaking.</p> <p><b>03:48 – 03:51:</b> P tries to sign to each group of hearing people again [stage R, up / stage L, up]. P is angry.</p> |
| <b>03:51 – 03:55</b><br>[0m 04] | <b>The protagonist grows to the same height as the hearing people.</b> | <p><b>03:51 – 03:55:</b> P forces himself to grow to the same height as the hearing people.</p> <p><b>03:55 – 03:58:</b> P signs forcefully to stage R, then to stage L. P signs EQUAL to both.</p> <p><b>03:59 – 04:02:</b> More trees fall [R arm / L arm / R arm / L arm / R+L arms]</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>04:02 – 05:16</b><br>[1m 14] | <b>PART IV</b>                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>04:02 – 04:29</b><br>[0m 27] | <b>The protagonist and the group reach a river and want to</b>         | <b>04:02 – 04:03:</b> P links arms with his companions.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

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|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | cross but are too afraid.                                         | <p><b>04:03 – 04:09:</b> P is part of a crowd. They march forward together until they reach a roaring river.</p> <p><b>04:09 – 04:17:</b> P looks at and across the river. P sees fireworks in the distance.</p> <p><b>04:17 – 04:20:</b> P asks his companions what it is [stage L / stage R].</p> <p><b>04:20 – 04:26:</b> <i>Companion</i> [stage R] discourages P, indicating that it is too great an obstacle. P looks longingly into the distance.</p> <p><b>04:27 – 04:29:</b> The river continues to rush by.</p>                    |
|  | The protagonist's companions cross the river.                     | <p><b>04:29 – 04:32:</b> P asks companion [stage R] if they are going to cross, as P is not sure.</p> <p><b>04:32 – 04:39:</b> Companion's boat [stage R] sets off over the roaring river and vanishes into the distance. P loses sight of it.</p> <p><b>04:39 – 04:41:</b> P asks companion [stage L] if they are going to cross.</p> <p><b>04:41 – 04:46:</b> Companion's boat [stage L] sets off over the roaring river and vanishes into the distance.</p> <p><b>04:46 – 04:50:</b> The river continues to rush by [less furiously].</p> |
|  | The protagonist crosses the river and attains his goal: a degree. | <p><b>04:51 – 04:53:</b> P decides to try to cross the river. P's boat sets off.</p> <p><b>04:53 – 04:59:</b> As P's boat is tossed by the waves, <b>three</b> years pass [<i>Timeline</i>: rotating around L index].</p> <p><b>04:59 – 05:11:</b> There is a great explosion [implied firework]. The sparks fall down onto P's head in the shape of a mortar board, tassel, and scroll [degree].</p>                                                                                                                                        |

#### Appendix 3.4 Guidance table: *Virus* (Mark MacQueen)

| TIME          | EPISODE             | EPISODIC BREAK-DOWN |
|---------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 00:16 – 00:44 | PART I: Orientation |                     |

|                          |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| [0m 28]                  |                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 00:16 – 00:44<br>[0m 28] | <b>The signing community develops.</b>                                                            | 00:16 – 00:30: <b>Protagonist (P)</b> and people begin signing to each other.<br>00:31 – 00:44: All move into the same space and sign more enthusiastically.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 00:44 – 02:15<br>[1m 31] | <b>PART II</b>                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 00:44 – 01:48<br>[1m 04] | <b>A newcomer insists on speaking rather than signing and the signing community deteriorates.</b> | 00:44 – 00:51: Newcomer1 (unknown) approaches the group [stage R].<br>00:52 – 01:21: <b>Role-shift interaction:</b> <i>Newcomer1</i> tells all to speak. <b>P</b> signs. <i>Newcomer1</i> tells <i>P</i> not to sign, but to speak. <b>P</b> reiterates that he does not speak, but that he and the community sign. <i>Newcomer1</i> tells <i>P</i> that speaking is a key to new opportunities whereas signing is limited.<br>01:21 - 01:27: <b>P and the community</b> ponder this and begin to try to speak.<br>01:27 – 01:31: <b>P</b> fervently reiterates that signing is valid and beautiful.<br>01:31 – 01:48: More and more members of the community speak, leaving <b>P</b> ignored. |
| 01:48 – 02:15<br>[0m 27] | <b>Signing is looked down on. Children are discouraged from signing.</b>                          | 01:48 – 01:53: <b>P</b> approaches <b>Person1</b> [stage L]. <b>Person1</b> rebuffs <b>P</b> and tells him to use his mouth.<br>01:53 – 02:03 <b>P</b> approaches <b>Child1</b> [stage R, down].<br><b>Role-shift interaction:</b> <b>P</b> and <b>Child1</b> interact and sign. <b>P</b> notices <b>Person2</b> [stage R, up]. <b>Person2</b> tells <b>Child1</b> to stop signing and to speak.<br>02:04 – 02:15: <b>P</b> looks at his hands. He reflects on how the community has changed from fluent signing to increasing speech. He reflects on the <b>Child</b> . He is downcast.                                                                                                       |
| 02:16 - 02:52            | <b>PART III</b>                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

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| [0m 36]                  |                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 02:16 – 02:36<br>[0m 20] | <b>A smaller signing community emerges from disparate places, ignoring the rest.</b> | <p><b>02:16 – 02:25:</b> P notices Person3 [stage L] and asks if s/he signs. <i>Person3 says s/he signs but no one else does.</i> P eagerly beckons Person3 over and they sign.</p> <p><b>02:25 – 02:30:</b> P notices Person4 [stage R] and eagerly beckons her/him over. They all sign together.</p> <p><b>02:30 – 02:36:</b> P tells them to ignore everyone else. They sign together.</p>                                                                                                            |
| 02:36 – 02:52<br>[0m 16] | <b>Children who don't speak are taught to sign and join the community.</b>           | <p><b>02:36 – 02:42:</b> P notices Child2 [centre, down] who does not speak. P focuses on signing to Child2 [gradually standing up and more relaxed].</p> <p><b>02:42 – 02:52:</b> P is pleased [looks towards Person3 / stage L]. P beckons more children and signs to them [gradually standing up and more relaxed, sweeping stage L (down) to R to L to centre].</p> <p>[This is repeated, sweeping stage R (down) to L to R to centre.]</p>                                                          |
| 02:52 – 03:16<br>[0m 24] | <b>PART IV</b>                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 02:52 – 03:16<br>[0m 24] | <b>Signing is banned.</b>                                                            | <p><b>02:52 – 03:05: Role-shift interaction:</b> P notices Newcomer2 [stage R]. <i>Newcomer2 reprimands P for signing to the children. Newcomer2 says that signing is limiting [downwards] whereas speech is elevating [upwards].</i> P queries Newcomer2. <i>Newcomer2 bans signing [behind back].</i> P is shocked [behind back].</p> <p><b>03:05 – 03:16: Role-shift interaction:</b> P speaks to Child3 [centre down]. <i>Child3 doesn't understand.</i> P shrugs and keeps speaking. [Repeats.]</p> |
| 03:16 – 04:27<br>[1m 11] | <b>PART V</b>                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

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| 03:16 – 03:31<br>[0m 15] | <b>The signing community secretly manages to rebuild itself.</b>                     | 03:16 – 03:31: P starts signing discretely [low] [stage L, R, L, R] and builds to signing confidently [to all].                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 03:31 – 03:55<br>[0m 24] | <b>Speaking people are taught to sign and join the community.</b>                    | 03:31 – 03:39: P notices and welcomes Newcomer3 [stage R]. Newcomer3 can speak and sign. P welcomes Newcomer3.<br>03:39 – 03:50: P alternates between signing to community and responding to Newcomer3. P corrects Newcomer3. P draws Newcomer3 in, teaches her/him to sign. Newcomer3 is placed [as a signer] [R index].<br>03:51 – 03:53: P teaches [stage L] to sign, then places [L index].<br>03:53 – 03:55: P teaches [centre stage] to sign, then places [R index]. |
| 03:55 – 04:09<br>[0m 14] | <b>More people are taught to sign, but it is not enough.</b>                         | 03:55 – 04:02: P considers and counts the placements [L to R]. Further away there are lots of people; near there are very few. P is disappointed.<br>04:02 – 04:09: P counts himself and those near. P indicates the many further away who are clueless about signing. P is disappointed.                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 04:09 – 04:27<br>[0m 18] | <b>The people who are taught to sign teach others to sign, but it is not enough.</b> | 04:09 – 04:21: P thinks and has an idea. He gathers [stage L], teaches near [two hands] and then spreads the teaching further away [one hand each]. [Repeats for centre and Stage R.]<br>04:21 – 04:27: P surveys the scene. Speaking is going on everywhere and the community is small. P contemplates [downwards].                                                                                                                                                       |
| 04:27 – 04:57            | <b>PART IV</b>                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 04:27 – 04:57<br>[0m 30] | <b>Visual language spreads like a virus and causes world to</b>                      | 04:27 – 04:42: Moment of epiphany: spreading signing like a virus to bring to the non-signing world [EYES-OPEN,                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

|  |                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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|  | <b>wake up to the equal value of signing to speech.</b> | AWAKE]. P slowly looks at signing hands. P is content.<br><b>04:42 – 04:48:</b> The future vision: P draws a circle [the world], and a larger circle enveloping it [signing].<br><b>04:48 – 04:57:</b> Speaking and signing on a par, moving forward. |
|--|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**Appendix 3.5**      **Guidance table:** *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (Mark MacQueen)

Lexical signs have been indicated in the guidance table by following the convention of capitalising English glosses of BSL signs.

*The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*: the performance-text

| TIME                            | EPISODE                                      | EPISODIC BREAK-DOWN                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>00:09 – 00:27</b><br>[0m 18] | <b>EXISTENTS</b>                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>00:09 – 00:27</b><br>[0m 18] | <b>Three cowboys are introduced.</b>         | <b>00:09 – 00:13:</b> <b>Cowboy1</b> smiles, smooths his shirt and puts one gun in a holster.<br><b>00:14 – 00:17:</b> <b>Cowboy2</b> leers and puts two guns in his holsters.<br><b>00:17 – 00:27:</b> <b>Cowboy 3</b> is unshaven and smoking. His two guns swing in their holsters. Cowboy 3 has a kerchief around neck with knot hanging down and a big hat. He leers and looks around. |
| <b>00:28 – 01:21</b><br>[0m 57] | <b>PART I: BOTTLE SHOOTING COMPETITION</b>   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>00:28 – 00:41</b><br>[0m 13] | <b>The first cowboy shoots a bottle.</b>     | <b>00:28 – 00:41:</b> <b>Cowboy 1</b> places a BOTTLE and indicates that his companions should watch him. Cowboy1 pulls out his GUN and shoots. The BOTTLE SMASHes. Cowboy1 turns to his companions.                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>00:42 – 00:52</b>            | <b>The second cowboy shoots a bottle and</b> | <b>00:42 – 00:52:</b> <b>Cowboy2</b> mocks Cowboy1. Cowboy2 places a bottle, and shoots and                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

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| [0m 10]                         | <b>impresses the first cowboy.</b>                                            | smashes in one fluid movement. He shows off to Cowboy1.<br><b>00:52-00:53: Cowboy1</b> looks impressed and despondent.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>00:53 – 01:21</b><br>[0m 28] | <b>The third cowboy shoots a bottle and impresses both the other cowboys.</b> | <b>00:53 – 01:08: Cowboy3</b> interjects. Cowboy3 swigs from the bottle and swills. Cowboy3 places the bottle.<br><b>01:09 – 01:13: Cowboy3</b> shoots the bottle. Smoke emits from the gun. The bullet races above the ground. The bottle smashes.<br><b>01:13 – 01:16: Cowboy3</b> rotates gun and returns it to holster. Cowboy turns back to companions.<br><b>01:17-01:21: Cowboy1/2</b> looks impressed and nervous. |
| <b>01:22 – 02:40</b><br>[1m 28] | <b>PART II: THE SALOON</b>                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>01:22 – 01:36</b><br>[0m 14] | <b>The first cowboy drinks in a saloon.</b>                                   | <b>01:22 – 01:36: Cowboy1</b> sees a sign [saloon]. Cowboy1 opens saloon doors and WALKS in jauntily. The bar is full of TABLES. Cowboy1 is happy. He goes to the BAR and orders WHISKY.<br><b>01:36 – 01:39: Bartender</b> unscrews the bottle, pours a shot and hands it over.<br><b>01:39 – 01:43: Cowboy1</b> drinks the shot and slams the glass upside-down on the bar.                                              |
| <b>01:44 – 01:59</b><br>[0m 15] | <b>The second cowboy drinks in the saloon.</b>                                | <b>01:44 – 01:52: Cowboy2</b> pushes through the saloon doors. The bar is full of tables. Cowboy2 indicates that he wants a shot.<br><b>01:52 – 01:55: Bartender</b> pours a shot and hands it over.<br><b>01:55 – 01:59: Cowboy2</b> drinks the shot and slams the glass upside-down on the bar.                                                                                                                          |
| <b>00:53 – 01:21</b><br>[0m 28] | <b>The third cowboy shoots a bottle and impresses both the other cowboys.</b> | <b>00:53 – 01:08: Cowboy3</b> interjects. Cowboy3 swigs from the bottle and swills. Cowboy3 places the bottle.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

|                                         |                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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|                                         |                                                       | <p><b>01:09 – 01:13:</b> Cowboy3 shoots the bottle. Smoke emits from the gun. The bullet races above the ground. The bottle smashes.</p> <p><b>01:13 – 01:16:</b> Cowboy3 rotates gun and returns it to holster. Cowboy turns back to companions.</p> <p><b>01:17-01:21:</b> <i>Cowboy1/2 looks impressed and nervous.</i></p>                                                                                     |
| <p><b>01:22 – 02:40</b><br/>[1m 28]</p> | <p><b>PART II: THE SALOON</b></p>                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <p><b>01:22 – 01:36</b><br/>[0m 14]</p> | <p><b>The first cowboy drinks in a saloon.</b></p>    | <p><b>01:22 – 01:36:</b> Cowboy1 sees a sign [saloon]. Cowboy1 opens saloon doors and WALKS in jauntily. The bar is full of TABLES. Cowboy1 is happy. He goes to the BAR and orders WHISKY.</p> <p><b>01:36 – 01:39:</b> <i>Bartender unscrews the bottle, pours a shot and hands it over.</i></p> <p><b>01:39 – 01:43:</b> Cowboy1 drinks the shot and slams the glass upside-down on the bar.</p>                |
| <p><b>01:44 – 01:59</b><br/>[0m 15]</p> | <p><b>The second cowboy drinks in the saloon.</b></p> | <p><b>01:44 – 01:52:</b> Cowboy2 pushes through the saloon doors. The bar is full of tables. Cowboy2 indicates that he wants a shot.</p> <p><b>01:52 – 01:55:</b> <i>Bartender pours a shot and hands it over.</i></p> <p><b>01:55 – 01:59:</b> Cowboy2 drinks the shot and slams the glass upside-down on the bar.</p>                                                                                            |
| <p><b>01:59 – 02:40</b><br/>[0m 41]</p> | <p><b>The third cowboy drinks in the saloon.</b></p>  | <p><b>01:59 – 02:15:</b> Cowboy3 looks at the saloon doors and makes one of the doors swing. Cowboy3 shoves the doors open and steps into the saloon. <i>All eyes turn to him in awe.</i></p> <p><b>02:15 – 02:21:</b> Cowboy3 sees that the bar is full of round tables with spindly legs on a central stem. People are sitting at them.</p> <p><b>02:22 – 02:23:</b> Cowboy3 indicates that he wants a shot.</p> |



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|                                 |                                                                                          | <p><b>02:23 – 02:26:</b> <i>Bartender is frightened, quickly pours a shot and slides it down the bar.</i></p> <p><b>02:26 – 02:29:</b> <b>Cowboy3</b> catches the shot. Some liquid spills over rim onto the bar.</p> <p><b>02:19 – 02:37:</b> Cowboy3 drinks the shot and puts the glass upside down on the bar. He indicates a sensation down throat. Cowboy3 looks over insolently at companions and acknowledges them.</p> <p><b>02:37 – 02:40:</b> <i>Cowboy1/2 nervously acknowledges Cowboy3.</i></p> |
| <b>02:41 – 03:59</b><br>[1m 18] | <b>PART III: COWBOYS AND INDIANS</b>                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>02:41 – 02:55</b><br>[0m 14] | <b>The first cowboy shoots at a hidden Indian brave and halves a head-dress feather.</b> | <p><b>02:41-02:55:</b> <b>Cowboy1</b> sees a rock with someone hiding behind it. He sees, sticking up from behind the rock, a FEATHER. Cowboy1 pulls out his gun. Cowboy1 aims gun, shoots. The bullet races above the ground. The feather is shot cut in HALF. Cowboy1 celebrates.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>02:55 – 03:08</b><br>[0m 13] | <b>The second cowboy shoots all the feathers off an Indian brave's headdress.</b>        | <p><b>02:55 – 03:01:</b> <b>Cowboy2</b> is derisive to Cowboy1, indicates that Cowboy1 should watch. Cowboy2 points out an Indian with a big headdress.</p> <p><b>03:01 – 03:03:</b> <i>The <b>Indian</b> is ready to fight</i></p> <p><b>03:03 – 03:08:</b> <b>Cowboy2</b> shoots all the feathers off the headdress. He smirks.</p>                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>03:08 – 03:59</b><br>[0m 51] | <b>The third cowboy is shot at by an Indian brave, and shoots him.</b>                   | <p><b>03:08 – 03:12:</b> <b>Cowboy3</b> is unimpressed. He looks up in shock at an Indian warrior.</p> <p><b>03:12 – 03:20:</b> <i>Indian warrior loads bow and arrow, draws bow.</i> Outline of the arrow is traced.</p> <p><b>03:20 – 03:24:</b> <b>Rapid role-shift sequence:</b> <i>Indian warrior pulling back bow;</i> <b>Cowboy3's</b> reaction. <i>Indian warrior lets the arrow fly.</i> The arrow races above the ground.</p>                                                                      |

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|                                 |                                                                            | <p><b>03:24 – 03:29: Cowboy3</b> leaps aside. Arrow hits the wall behind. Outline of the arrow is traced. Cowboy3 is impressed.</p> <p>[ <b>DISTORTION – missing footage:</b> Cowboy3 draws out rifle. ]</p> <p><b>03:30 – 03:38: Role-shift sequence:</b> Cowboy3 lines up the rifle sights with the Indian warrior's forehead; <i>Indian warrior's reaction</i>; Indian warrior's facial features.</p> <p><b>03:39 – 03:47: Cowboy3</b> fires; the bullet blasts from the gun; the bullet races above the ground; <i>the bullet flies through the air</i>; the bullet races above the ground. <i>The Indian warrior's eyes are wide</i>; the bullet races above the ground.</p> <p><b>03:47 – 03:52:</b> [Slow motion] <i>The Indian warrior is shot</i>: the bullet passes through his head. The Indian warrior falls backwards to the ground.</p> <p><b>03:52 – 03:59: Cowboy3</b> lowers rifle. He pulls the bolt action back and ejects the spent cartridge, which flies out [stage R]. Cowboy3 places the rifle back in his belt.</p> |
| <b>03:59 – 06:18</b><br>[2m 19] | <b>PART IV: TAMING A HORSE</b>                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>03:59 – 04:34</b><br>[0m 35] | <b>The first cowboy chooses a horse in a corral, catches and tames it.</b> | <p><b>03:59 – 04:07: Cowboy1</b> sees a corral with horses in it. He sees one that he wants.</p> <p><b>04:07 – 04:09:</b> Cowboy1 runs to corral and jumps over the fence.</p> <p><b>04:10 – 04:14:</b> Cowboy1 takes some ROPE, and ties it into a lasso.</p> <p><b>04:14 – 04:18:</b> Cowboy1 throws the lasso over the HORSE'S HEAD. [Horse1]</p> <p><b>04:18 – 04:21:</b> Cowboy1 pulls on the rope [implied bucking].</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

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|                                         |                                                                                    | <p><b>04:21 – 04:25:</b> Cowboy1 pulls on the rope and tries to CALM the Horse1.</p> <p><b>04:25 – 04:32:</b> Cowboy1 approaches Horse1. Horse1 is aggressive and BAD. Cowboy1 calms it.</p> <p><b>04:33 - 04:34:</b> Cowboy1 succeeds in taming the horse. [SAME]</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <p><b>04:35 – 04:58</b><br/>[0m 23]</p> | <p><b>The second cowboy chooses a horse in a corral, catches and tames it.</b></p> | <p><b>04:35 – 04:41: Cowboy2</b> picks out leaping HORSE2; he WANTS it.</p> <p><b>04:41 – 04:51:</b> Cowboy2 throws the lasso <i>over Horse2's head</i>. <b>Cowboy2</b> pulls it tight [implied bucking], calms the horse.</p> <p><b>04:51 – 04:54:</b> Cowboy2 mounts the horse.</p> <p><b>04:54 – 04:58:</b> Cowboy2 rides the bucking horse, calms it.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <p><b>04:49 – 06:16</b><br/>[0m 27]</p> | <p><b>The third cowboy chooses a horse in a corral, catches and tames it.</b></p>  | <p><b>04:59 – 05:03: Cowboy3</b> sees the corral. One of the bars on the fence has fallen down.</p> <p><b>05:03 – 05:20:</b> Cowboy3 sees Horse3 leaping. <i>Horse3's hooves beat the ground as it runs</i>. Horse3 runs around the corral. It is sleek. It runs around the corral. <i>Its tail swishes</i>. <b>Cowboy3</b> watches it run. <i>Horse3's mane ripples behind it</i>. <b>Cowboy3</b> watches it run, admires it, wants it.</p> <p><b>05:20 – 05:26:</b> Cowboy3 runs towards the corral. His feet pound the ground.</p> <p><b>05:26 – 05:40:</b> Cowboy3 vaults the corral and hangs onto the fence. Cowboy3 pulls down a coil of rope, ties a lasso and spins it.</p> <p><b>05:40 – 05:50:</b> Horse3 leaps past. <i>Horse3's hooves beat the ground as it runs</i>. Horse3 runs around the corral. Horse3 circles <b>Cowboy3</b> and his lasso. Cowboy3 throws the lasso.</p> <p><b>05:50 – 06:16: Rapid role-shift sequence: Horse3 is lassoed. Cowboy3</b></p> |

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|  |  | <p>pulls on the rope [implied bucking]. <i>Horse3 strains at the rope and rears.</i></p> <p><b>Cowboy3</b> pulls on the rope and tries to calm the horse. Cowboy3 mounts the horse [05:55]. <i>Horse3 bucks and rears.</i></p> <p><b>Cowboy3</b> rides the bucking horse. <i>Horse3 gradually calms.</i> <b>Cowboy3</b> calms the horse. <i>Horse3 rears</i> [slow motion]. Cowboy3 is firmly seated. <i>Horse3's hooves hit the ground.</i> Cowboy3 and the horse are bonded.</p> |
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### Appendix 3.6 'Through New Eyes' programmes

#### 3.6a 'Through New Eyes' - 17<sup>th</sup> March 2012

Video footage of the live performances performance-texts is available on the Visual Virus Facebook page:

Four performance-texts (highlighted with an asterisk) can be viewed in Appendix 3.1.

| TITLE             | PERFORMER                                      | GENRE/STYLE                               |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Shelly            | Gary Quinn                                     | Adaptation (fable)                        |
| Trees             | Ramas Rentelis                                 | Pre-recorded film                         |
| Journey to Africa | Rinkoo Barpaga                                 |                                           |
| *Virus            | Mark MacQueen                                  | Restricted handshape                      |
| Solar System      | Lee Robertson                                  | Skit                                      |
| Hollywood         | Gary Quinn, Mark MacQueen and audience members | Participatory skit                        |
| *Three Pigs       | Gary Quinn                                     | Adaptation                                |
| Cars              | Mark MacQueen                                  | <i>Pre-recorded film, cinematographic</i> |
| Italian Football  | Rinkoo Barpaga                                 | Visual vernacular (VV)                    |
| Hospital          | Ramas Rentelis                                 | <i>Pre-recorded film</i>                  |

|                                                 |               |                            |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------|
| *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly (Good Bad Ugly) | Mark MacQueen | VV / cinematographic       |
| *Achievement                                    | Gary Quinn    | Figurative (auto)biography |

### 3.6b

'Through New Eyes 2' – 15<sup>th</sup> March 2014

Video footage is not available.

| TITLE           | PERFORMER                                   | GENRE/STYLE                                       |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Ski or Board?   | Mark MacQueen and Lee Robertson             | Ensemble 'competition' (VV)                       |
| 3 Billy Goats   | Gary Quinn                                  | Translation                                       |
| Curious George  | Mark MacQueen                               | (VV?)                                             |
| Gerry Hughes    | Gary Quinn                                  | Biographical 'epic'                               |
| Who Sorry!      | Mark MacQueen and Lee Robertson             | Ensemble skit                                     |
| BSL / Oral      | Ramas Rentelis                              | <i>Pre-recorded film, VV</i>                      |
| Old vs(?) Young | Mark MacQueen                               | Restricted hand-shape                             |
| Sleeping Beauty | Gary Quinn                                  | Adaptation                                        |
| Sailing         | Lee Robertson                               |                                                   |
| Sleepy          | Gary Quinn                                  |                                                   |
| Come On         | Ramas Rentelis                              | Verse-chorus-verse                                |
| Finale          | Gary Quinn, Mark MacQueen and Lee Robertson | Ensemble audience participation hand-appreciation |

## APPENDIX FOUR: Interview details

Held at the School of Scottish Studies Archives, University of Edinburgh

SA – Sound Archive / VA – Video Archive

|            |                                |                                                                                      |
|------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| FM:2012    | VA2012.001                     | Frankie McLean – 27.6.2012 – BSL                                                     |
| BM:2013    | VA2013.005                     | Bryan Marshall – 11.3.2013 – BSL                                                     |
| MM:2013    | VA2013.006                     | Mark MacQueen – 8.4.2013 – BSL                                                       |
| LL:2013    | VA2013.007                     | Lilian Lawson – 31.5.2013 – BSL                                                      |
| GQ:2013    | VA2013.008                     | Gary Quinn – 5.6.2013 – BSL                                                          |
| JN/AC:2013 | SA & VA<br>(to be accessioned) | Jemina Napier and Andy<br>Carmichael – 12.11.13 – English                            |
| AC:2014    | Private                        | Andy Carmichael – 2.5.14 –<br>English                                                |
| TP:2014    | VA (to be<br>accessioned)      | Tessa Padden – July 2014 – BSL<br>(remote interview; date of<br>recording not known) |
| BD:2014    | SA (to be<br>accessioned)      | Bob Duncan – 17.11.14 English                                                        |

