Alien Communication: Sign Language and Worldly Encounters in Fiction

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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that any material that has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University has been acknowledged.

Abstract

This thesis explores the fictional representation of cross-cultural encounters that revolve around sign-language and gesture. Focusing on long and short-form fiction written in English, it draws on the fields of Disability and Deaf Studies as it tracks the representation of these modes of communication across different historical periods, from the rise of the novel to the present day. By deploying on Mary Louise Pratt's critical conceptualisation of the 'contact zone,' as 'a space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict,' the thesis opens up the way in which literary depictions of signed and gestural encounters can be seen to naturalize normative languages – and the exploitative, violent relations between different peoples as well as human and non-human animals that these languages encode. But while in this sense the thesis links literature with linguistic hegemony, so too it is concerned with the way in which these fictionalized contact zones can be understood as radical spaces, disrupting normative communicative modes and power relations, and realising new ways of being and acting in the world.

The first chapter addresses the usage of gestural contact language within imperial encounters staged by adventure fiction. Beginning with Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), but also turning to consider R.M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1857) and H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1887), the chapter engages with some of the earliest representations of gesture and sign language in enduringly popular English fiction. The second chapter looks at non-normative forms of communication as presented in two examples of *enfant-*

sauvage literature, Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Books* (1894-5) and Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan of the Apes* (1914) Both narratives are significant for the way they complicate the distinction between human and non-humans, with their depictions of gesture, sign, and verbal language disrupting ideas of human exceptionalism. The third chapter focuses on the depiction of sign-language and gesture in science fiction texts of the 1960s and 1970s. By looking at Frank Herbert's 'A Day To Remember' (1961), Lloyd Biggle Jr.'s *Silence is Deadly* (1977), and John Varley's 'The Persistence of Vision' (1978), the chapter explores the way in which sign-language is utilised by a number of authors to depict alien alterity, as well as how these non-normative forms of communication can subvert and undermine the idea that language is a uniquely human phenomenon and that spoken language is a precursor to civilized development. The fourth chapter looks at the short stories of Louise Stern, published in *Chattering: Stories* (2018). As a Deaf author, Stern's use of sign-language in her narratives actively subverts widely held audist preconceptions surrounding identity, culture, and language. Through critically engaging with these fictional encounters between hearing and Deaf individuals, this chapter examines the idea of a deaf ontology as radical and disruptive to phonocentric normativity. Taken together, these chapters create a thesis which actively challenges not only many audist preconceptions that surrounding the d/Deaf identity but also critically interrogates sign language and gesture as a meaningful communicative form. Through this, this thesis aims to critically engage with non-normative forms of communication as part of a linguistic diversity, whilst also creating a methodology for analysing and interrogating gestural and signatory encounters within fictional contact zones with the same narrative and ontological worth that is *de facto* afforded to spoken dialogue.

CONTENTS PAGE

Introduction

This thesis explores the way that gesture and sign language has been used in narrative encounters and offers an alternative way of interpreting these cross-cultural exchanges. Narrative representations of sign-language and improvised contact gesture have been often overlooked in terms of scholarly and academic engagement, with an emphasis on dialogue, description, and symbolism being the favoured tools of an analytical framework. This thesis will instead show how a novel approach to analysing these encounters – in which sign-language and gesture are afforded the same emphasis as dialogue – can present these points of encounter as radical spaces new ways of being and acting in the world can be realised and in doing so, disrupt normative communicative modes and power relations.

Through the four chapters of this thesis, I will explore the use of signed and gestural forms of communication across a range of fictional encounters from 1719-2010. By surveying a range of texts across different genres and time periods it becomes apparent that academic attention to gestural and signed encounters is imperative to fictional narratives in general. By drawing on disability studies and deaf studies, the thesis examines the long held and still pervasive belief that verbal and aural communication is the linguistic norm. It is worth clarifying here two of the main concepts that form the theoretical basis for both disability and deaf studies, and how these concepts feed into the larger concerns of this thesis. Disability studies has a long-standing relationship with the social model of disability, which is as Lennard Davis glosses: ‘impairment is the physical fact of lacking an arm or leg. Disability is the social process that turns an impairment into a negative by creating barriers to access’ (Davis, 2002:

12). This social approach to disability is further expanded on by Kumari Cambpell, who points out:

> Although there are many debates in disability studies and the disability services fields, most people would agree with the proposition that disabled people experience various degrees of subordinated and diminished lives through economic, social, legal, religious and cultural discrimination. (Cambell, 2009: 16)

Cambell goes on to explain that it is important to consider 'the nature of harm that disabled people experience' and to question: 'is it the impairment that causes the harm? If so, we should focus on reducing or indeed eliminating the impairment, which is a common perspective' (Cambell, 2009:16). This view, as Cambell points out interprets disability as harmful in and of itself – yet, in contrast:

> there is a view among some disabled people that whilst impairments at times cause inconvenience, tiredness, and even pain, the primary source of harm is external to the person, situated in the realm of belief. (Campbell, 2009: 16)

It is this understanding of disability that is crucial to this thesis. Disability is not an embodied, inherent characteristic, but rather a disabling effect of a society which upholds strictly regulated ideas and ideals of bodily and physical normativity through ableist discourses. It is also important here to turn to one of the core ideas of deaf studies, as argued by Bauman and Murray: 'being deaf has nothing to do with "loss" but is rather, a distinct way of being in the world, one that opens up perceptions, perspectives, and insights that are less common to the majority of hearing persons' (Bauman & Murray, 2014; xv). This idea of reframing deafness as a unique epistemological and ontological position is termed *deaf gain* by Bauman and Murray and is a core concern of this thesis. A

further significant issue is surrounding the overlap between disability and deafness. As pointed out by Bruggeman:

> however much some deaf people may want to resist being labeled "disabled," the fact remains that they are often labeled as such and that these labels—in all cases—are not always accurate, though they may be, as it were, with consequences. (Bruggeman, 2009: 12)

By leaning on these main theoretical positions from disability studies and deaf studies, the thesis demonstrates how depictions of gesture and sign-language within narrative encounters can be read as meaningful encounters, and in doing so reveals perceptions, perspectives and insights that have been often overlooked by able-bodied and hearing scholars, academics, and reader.

Chapter Overview

The first chapter looks at imperial encounters which use sign language and improvised gesture as a linguistic bridge across racial and cultural divides. The novels that this chapter focuses on are Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), R.M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1857) and H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1887). Looking primarily at a core section of texts which are rooted within the imperial ideologies of the British Empire, this chapter will explore how sign language is used as a tool of imperial expansion. Building on the work of Jason S. Farr, who argues that Columbus' own accounts of sign language in his journals points towards 'gesture as a means to fruitful ends for colonizing aggressors, marking the body as a fluid, symptomatic register of the power dynamics at work in these exchanges' (Farr, 2017: 539), this chapter will examine the ways that linguistic and bodily normativity are often inscribed within coloniser/colonised power dynamics, and the disabling aftermath this produces. Most of the analysis of *Robinson Crusoe* will focus on the encounter between Crusoe and Friday. By utilizing Mary Louise Pratt's

account of the contact zone, and through close textual analysis of the gestural forms used, this reading of *Robinson Crusoe* explores the way in which gestural forms of communication are employed to facilitate Crusoe's domination over Friday, a dominance which is held to effect Friday's civilized transformation. Turning to Ballantyne's *The Coral Island*, most of the close reading and textual analysis here focuses on how through a referential frame of Western phonocentrism there is a disconnect between the contact gestures used by the protagonists and the complexity of the signs used by the Natives they encounter. In doing so, this reading explores how literary representation of sign language can open up alternative modes of being in the world. The last section of this chapter will focus mainly on a close reading between the male protagonists of Rider Haggard's *She* and the deaf-mute serving girls of Ayesha, in a contact zone which entwines non-normative communicative forms with notions of gender, passivity, and agency.

The second chapter on encounters between humans and animals, and humans and bestial humans, primarily through two enduring examples of *enfant sauvage* – "wild child"- literature: Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Books* (1894-5), and Edgar Rice Burrough's *Tarzan of the Apes* (1914). Through analysing the trope of the "wild" and "primeval," one of the main concerns of this chapter will be how these texts handle the transformation of the "bestial" human: a transformative shift which is often underwritten by signed, gestural language as a precursor to the adoption of the dominant, audible form of communication. By extension, these texts suggest that speech is a determining factor in the social and cultural make-up of the human. Through a reading informed by disability studies and tool-use as prostheticization, this chapter will also explore the idea of the jungle as disabling to the main protagonists of these narratives. It is from

the referential frame of the human that both Mowgli and Tarzan are cast as inferior, often in language that stems from association to impairment. This chapter will therefore focus on the ways that non-normative forms of communication can disrupt notions of human exceptionalism and complicate the distinction between human and animal – and in doing so disrupt the idea of normalcy.

The third chapter examines depictions of gesture and sign language as seen in New Wave science fiction, a period loosely defined as science fiction that embodies and represents the cultural zeitgeist of post second-war counterculture. As Scott McCracken indicates, science fiction is 'the fantasy of the alien encounter […] the meeting of the self with other' (McCracken, 1998: 102). As this thesis is concerned with the ways in which the contact zone facilitates and conceptualises a temporal copresence of different identities, histories and cultures, this chapter's survey into science fiction of this period allows it to explore the ways in which dominant and prevailing cultures and languages can be subverted. Through analysing depictions of cross-cultural and cross-world encounters in Frank Herbert's 'A Day To Remember' (1961), Lloyd Biggle Jr.'s *Silence is Deadly* (1977), and John Varley's 'The Persistence of Vision' (1978), it becomes apparent that previous notions of deafness and sign language as associated with deficit become complicated and challenged. Science fiction, as a genre of writing, often concerns itself with topics and themes on the fringe of civilization. As we shall see in 'A Day To Remember', this concern with fringes of culture manifests itself through a physical entanglement between human and alien cultures in which sign-language is re-cast as a fundamental part of a forgotten human ontology. In Biggle's *Silence is Deadly*, we see a quite literal interpretation of deafness and sign language as

alien, but in doing so, Biggle's novel subverts any notion that a lack of a spoken language prevents access to a meaningful and authentic way of being. The last text this chapter concerns itself with is a piece of speculative fiction, 'The Persistence of Vision,' which takes place in an imagined timeline where a generation of American citizens are born deafblind. The narrator's foray into the world of the deafblind, and the subversion of speech as the dominant form of communication actively subverts many of the wide-held cultural beliefs that disability equals impairment.

The fourth chapter of this thesis will examine literary self-representation of deafness as shown in the collection of short stories by Louise Stern, *Chattering: Stories* (2018). There is a disparity between the deaf identity as perceived by members of the hearing, phonocentric majority of society, and the way in which the deaf subjectivity is conceived by members of Deaf culture. I will explore this disparity throughout this chapter, and the ways in which deaf literature writes against audist preconceptions as a discursive act. Whilst Deaf culture advocates the celebration of congenital, pre-lingual deafness as a linguistic difference (Bauman & Murray, 2014: xv; Wrigley, 1996: 3), the image of the deaf and hearing-impaired individual exists within able culture as a sign of deficit, weakness, difference, and lack (Wrigley, 1996: 17). This trope is propagated by literary, textual, and filmic depictions of the deaf individual, and produces a figure of the deaf individual which is often subject to a degree of othering. The deaf individual becomes, through its cultural formation, a site of bodily and linguistic difference. Disability and the identity of the disabled is produced through the hegemonic powers of an able society, and as such able and hearing culture produces disability through its labelling of anything which deviates from normalcy as Other, reducing those who are disabled to a site of

spectacle, resulting in exclusion from areas of society. However, this chapter will invert the approach I have utilised in the preceding chapters. The contact zones that we see within these narrative encounters are ones in which sign language and gesture feature as the linguistic norm for the characters and can in turn serve as an autoethnographic text in a phonocentric society – and the disabling aftermath that occurs in these encounters is often precluded by a lack of awareness or fluency of sign language.

The rationale for the selection of these texts is based upon the fact that these narratives serve as case studies as representative examples of attitudes towards sign language and gestural communication in their respective times and places. Current scholarship surrounding these texts has often overlooked this significance, instead focusing on interpretive approaches based on depictions of race, culture, and the socio-political. As argued by Mitchel and Snyder, 'the humanities component of disability studies offers scholars and students the ability to return to a history of representations to reassess our understanding of disability and thus of ourselves' (Mitchel & Snyder, 2000: 9). This thesis therefore offers a resituating of these texts through the lens of disability and deaf studies and in doing so highlights the anxieties surrounding deafness and disability that these texts encapsulate. However, as Mitchel and Snyder summarise, 'what we "see" in these texts is often dependent on our own orientation or demeanor toward disability' (Mitchel & Snyder, 2000: 163). Whilst there may be a presumption that fictional representations of deafness and disability are of less importance and significance than didactic, non-fictional and scientific accounts – it is in the very form of fiction that we find a rebuttal. 'Imaginative literature', write Mitchel & Snyder, 'takes up its narrative project as a counter to scientific or truth-telling discourses' (2000: 163). It is in the

imaginative nature of fiction and literature that we can explore histories of disability and deafness, as well as revealing contemporaneous audist assumptions about Deaf culture and identity. As the age of some of these texts can attest, these narratives are enduring, and more easily and readily consumed than non-fiction of their respective periods. These texts are by no means meant to be intended as a history of deafness, disability, and sign language, but rather a series of case studies to highlight the latent narrative potential to reveal traits and tensions within historical discourses of disability of which their authors may have been unaware.

Context & Methodology

In this thesis, the methodology taken to analyse gestural and signed encounters is a synthesis of two main concepts, on which this thesis leans. The first is the contact zone, the second one is classification of gestural types. The contact zone is an area which Mary Louise Pratt defines as:

> social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today". (Pratt, 1992: 4)

Whilst Pratt's understanding of the contact zone was initially informed by her own experiences as a professional in education (in 'Arts of the Profession', 1991), where the contact zone is largely an allegory for the pluralism of identities within shared spaces such as classrooms, the contact zone was later expanded on by Pratt herself to be any space in which there are a multitude of peoples, histories, and cultures intersecting (*Imperial Eyes*, 1992). Within Pratt's own conceptualisation of the contact zone, language such as 'clash' and

‘grapple’ is loaded with connotations of struggle and conflict. But these conflicts themselves are dynamic, transitory. It is exactly this transitory nature of the contact zone that allows this thesis to interrogate these literary encounters. The contact zone is, above all, ‘an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect’ (Pratt, 1992: 7). The contact zone, therefore, allows us to observe the fleeting copresence when two previously separate subjects collide

To fully analyse and interrogate the way that gesture and sign has been used in fictional narratives it is imperative to establish a way of categorising and qualifying the different types of gestures that are present. In her 2018 work, ‘Gesture and Sign: Cataclysmic Break or Dynamic Relations?’ Cornelia Müller puts forth a way of categorizing different gestural forms. Müller’s argument attempts to reinforce the position set out by Adam Kendon. While Kendon maintains gesture and sign are part of a dynamic linguistic structure, the work of theorists such as McNeil and Goldin-Meadow upholds a firm distinction between gesture and sign (Müller, 2018: 1). Gesture can occur amongst spoken communication, whereas sign language – which is to say the fully lexicalised and complex physical form of communication – is often figured without and separate to speech. The reason that I feel it necessary to include this in my introduction is to highlight the ways which this thesis will categorise gestures that are not fully lexicalised sign languages (which is to say being enacted by a D/deaf character) within the analysis of the contact zone. The full spectrum of co-speech gestures, as Müller summarises, is made up of three primary categories: singular, recurrent and emblematic. As defined by Marstaller and Burianová ‘co-speech gestures (CSGs) are hand movements that accompany

speech and allow the speaker to effectively communicate thoughts and ideas in two separate modalities' which is to say, 'linguistic content in the auditory domain and imagistic content in the visual domain' (2017:14). As we will see throughout the thesis the use of gesture and speech is often used interchangeably in encounters and often conflated – and is complicated by the very nature of a visual utterance existing in a linguistic form by virtue of the written word. By resituating the terms used for co-speech gestures to also label discrete gestural acts I have ended up with a far more streamlined, categorical approach to analysing the types of gestures utilised within the fictional encounter. As we are dealing with non-verbal forms of communication within literature it is crucial to a afford a meaningful lexicon to these gestural and signatory forms that have often been overlooked as simple descriptive acts of pantomime.

Singular

Singular gestures 'are created on the spot; although they are based on a culturally shared repertoire of gesture creation […] the specific realizations in a given context are rather free and spontaneous' (Müller, 2018: 2). Here we often will find gestures that often occur across linguistic divides where there is no shared linguistic repertoire between parties. For instance, pointing is an example of a singular gesture in that there is no set convention for the gesture "point". One could use any point of the body to point and yet the recipient would likely understand. These are the most simple and basic forms of gesture.

Recurrent

Recurrent gestures 'merge conventional and idiosyncratic elements and occupy a place between spontaneously created and emblems as fully conventionalised gestural expressions on a continuum of increasing conventionalisation' (Müller,

2017 quoted in Müller, 2018: 2). Gestures at this point of the spectrum between singular and emblematic are often rooted in acts of pantomime or mimicry, such as closed hand to mouth meaning “food” or “eat” or “hungry”.

Emblematic

Finally, emblems or emblematic gestures are ‘fully conventionalised gestural movements’ (Müller, 2018: 2). Emblems or emblematic gestures ‘mostly realise full-speech acts’, and ‘replace a spoken language utterance’ (Muller, 2018: 2). These gestures also often have a shared emotional component between the two parties. On one hand, an example of this is the pinched thumb and forefinger and digits up to signify “okay”, or at the other end – a clenched fist with the middle finger upwards facing the intended recipient. Emblematic gestures are also dependant on both parties of the gestural exchange knowing the intended meaning.

As Müller reminds us, ‘the three kinds of gestures operate as prototype categories, that is, they are not separated by sharp boundaries, their relations are dynamic’ (Müller, 2018: 2). What we will be dealing with primarily in these literary texts are examples of singular gestures *presented* as emblematic, although this is not always the case. It is at these moments of slippage within the encounter that improvised ad-hoc gestures, interpreted by one party to have fully lexicalised meanings that the cultural, social, or historical imbalance within the contact zone makes itself known.

Literature Review & Context

Before I move on to a survey of the research that situates and has informed this thesis, I wish to briefly refer to my own positionality within the field of disability and deaf studies. As a hard-of-hearing hearing-aid-user, I exist in what Bruggeman calls “betweenity”. The deaf subject ‘often feels caught

between potential and real audiences—deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing alike. And this too is a considerable source of anxiety, since it is hard to shape one's subject and self without some sense of one's audience' (Bruggeman, 2009: 3). As I find myself situated between both the hearing world and the deaf world, I exist in that hyphenated between space. There is no fixed, easily definable deaf identity. This is a point made clear by Krentz & Sanchez, who write:

> People who are deaf make up a diverse group, including those who were born deaf, who lost their hearing, who have substantial hearing still, those who live in different regions of the world, those who communicate through a signed language, another gestural system, or speak vocally. (Krentz & Sanchez, 2021: 127)

Deafness is a big space, and as Bruggeman says, there's 'a lot going on in those multiple hyphenated between spaces' (Bruggeman, 2000: 24). It is this duality and multiplicity of my own experiences and perspectives that has informed my approach to this project, and it is the value of being between worlds that has allowed me to re-read and resituate the fiction that this thesis explores.

Whilst there has been a substantial amount of scholarly and critical work surrounding deaf characters and depictions of sign language and gesture within deaf studies, this research has rarely, if at all expanded beyond representations of deaf-focused literature. In particular, *Angels and Outcasts*, an anthology of deaf characters compiled by Batson and Bergman (1997[1976]), is a foundational text exploring the way that deaf characters have been created both by hearing and deaf authors, particularly in the fact the representations of these characters are 'far from being isolated from life, they are in the thick of it', and that they are 'fully developed living characters' (ix). Batson and Bergman themselves summarise the importance of exploring representations of deafness

and deaf characters in the preface to the 3rd version of the anthology, as they say, 'this book, unique when it appeared in 1976, is still unique and therefore serves an important purpose for understanding deaf people and deaf culture' (vii). Throughout the thesis I do turn to snippets and phrases from Batson and Bergman's work as it is a crucial and important text to help foreground some of the nuances and subtleties of the way deaf authors self-represent themselves. However, there is a critical limitation to the text in that whilst it is highly informative and significant as an auto-ethnographic text, it is focused upon the deaf experience. I am not suggesting in any way that this is a short coming of the text, but rather the opposite: it has helped inform much of the literary criticism within this thesis and allowed me to expand representations and depictions of gesture and sign language within other linguistic minorities, such as the natives we shall encounter in the first chapter of this dissertation.

The thesis also draws upon what can be regarded as the sequel to *Angels and Outcasts*, Edna Edith Sayer's *Outcasts and Angels: The New Anthology of Deaf Characters in Literature* (2012). Like *Angels and Outcasts* before it, *Outcasts and Angels* is also published by Gallaudet University Press, the press of America's largest higher education provider for deaf and hard of hearing students. One of the preeminent points in her introduction to the collection is the fact that 'critics persistently fail either to notice that a deaf character is deaf – or to not notice him all' (3). As she further expands, there is a general shortcoming when recognising deaf characters, as 'when critics do notice that a character is deaf, there is a strong tendency to assign this character some symbolic value' (3). Whilst much of her project is to emphasise the deaf character within narratives – both through the publication of the anthology itself, and the introductory and concluding essays that bookend the

collection – it is the suggestion that deaf figures are often treated as a symbol that is particularly useful for my analysis in this thesis. It was this claim that in part informs my reading and analysis of the gestural encounters we see within the first chapter in the contact zones between coloniser and colonised. In the secondary readings I undertook surrounding *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Coral Island* and *She*, it became apparent that whilst the native characters are not deaf, it is their use of gesture and sign language that have been overlooked, essentially reducing the depictions of the natives' sign language as a symbolic short-hand for uncivilised, or at most, a romanticised pre-lapsarian ideal suggestive of a gestural origin of language, innocent and unspoiled.

One of the recurring concepts that I turn to throughout this thesis is the idea of normalcy. It is only through the regulation of there being a normal that there can be a deviant. In *Constructing Normalcy*, Lennard J. Davis breaks down several different ways that normalcy can be constructed and understood. Through taking the reader through a short history informed by cultural theory, scientific enquiry, and statistics, Davis guides the reader through various terms such as average, norm, ideal (Davis, 1995: 34-42). But what is most important for this thesis is how the idea of "normal" is created; as Davis attributes, this was due to Sir Francis Galton's interest in Darwinian theory and eugenics. It was through the production of what is now commonly referred to as the "bell curve", which we still see regularly in the day and age in any attempt to quantitate difference from a central norm. As Davis states, 'the application of the idea of a norm to the human body creates the idea of deviance or a 'deviant' body', so therefore 'the idea of a norm pushes the normal variation of the body through a stricter template guiding the way the body 'should' be' (Davis, 1995:

34). It is through revising this data into a ranked order that creates a new ideal, argues Davis, an ideal that is

> unlike the classical ideal […] powered by the imperative of the norm, and then is supplemented by the notion of progress, human perfectibility, and the elimination of deviance, to create a dominating, hegemonic vision of what the human body should be. (Davis, 1995: 35)

Whilst this preoccupation with the bell-curve model of variation was a firm and core eugenicist belief, it informed a hegemonic ideal and approach to regulating the body and the body politic that still informs contemporary ideas of what is normal and what is marked undesirable through difference. As Davis argues, 'normativity in narrative will by definition create the abnormal, the Other, the disabled, the native, the colonized subject, and so on' (Davis, 1995: 42). However, by turning to the work of Judith Butler, it is this idea of the norm that has the potential to be disruptive to these regulatory practices, as she states, 'the terms by which we are recognized as human are socially articulated and changeable' (Butler, 2004: 2). Therefore, bodies which exist outside of the categorisation of 'normal' function as potential sites of resistance because 'they appear only as developmental failures or logical impossibilities from within that domain' (Butler, 2006: 24). By their very existence, identities which seem unintelligible in comparison to the culturally propagated notion of normalcy contradict the logic and hegemonic practices of norm-making. Although Butler's project focuses extensively on discussions of gender, we can resituate her approach within the field of disability studies and deaf studies to explore the ideas of deafness, disability, and linguistic difference as a site of resistance.

In 2014, H-Dirksen L. Bauman and Joseph J. Murray coined the term Deaf Gain to counter the default framing of deafness as hearing "loss" by proposing deafness as site of 'biological, social, and cultural' differences and

gain (Bauman & Murray, 2014: xv). It is this shift from the idea of disability and deafness as deviance to diversity and resistance to the norm that the idea of Deaf Gain can be viewed as 'one instance of a larger paradigm shift in thought from an overarching framework of normalcy to one of diversity' (Bauman, 2014: xv). It is through this approach to deafness and sign language that this thesis borrows from the work of Bauman and Murray to explore the ways in which gesture and sign language can explore and often celebrate diversity in the narrative encounter – and also allow a critical analysis of these fictional displays of gesture and sign with the same impetus often only afforded to dialogue. In discussing the way that linguistic diversity is often restricted by an audist, hearing society, Bauman and Murray claim that 'the approach to normalizing deaf individuals has become so pervasive that the use of sign language, a naturally occurring human language, is often discouraged' (Bauman, 2014: xxvi-xvii). Through utilising Bauman and Murray's idea of Deaf Gain to explore the gestural and signed encounters in this thesis, often overlooked and neglected instances of linguistic, cultural, and social differences become a site of resistance and celebration against a restrictive hegemonic norm.

As this thesis progresses, it becomes clear that amongst the texts I have mentioned above there are a few others that I return to regularly. One of which is *The Politics of Deafness* by Owen Wrigley (1996). This work is particularly useful for its comprehensive study into histories of the Deaf, and as such is a text that I regularly turn to when situating the narrative encounters within a specific historical moment in relation to the cultural and socio-political notions of deafness at that time. It is also from this text that I borrow my definition of the words *Deaf* and *deaf*. As defined by Wrigley, the uppercase Deaf refers to the 'cultural category of self-identification', while lowercase deaf 'refers to the

simple act of audiology impairment' (Wrigley, 1996: 14). It is an important distinction to make, and one that is particularly pertinent in Chapter 4, where I analyse the writings of Louise Stern, a Deaf author – as opposed to instances of deafness as hearing impairment in the chapter which proceeds it.

As argued by Bauman, Deafness is not in and of itself a disability. Disability for the deaf individual only manifests and becomes apparent in conflict with audism. As argued by Bauman, 'it is only in the hearing/deaf contact zone where the site of disability emerges' (Bauman, 2005: 314). It is in conflict with ideas of audism and normalcy that deafness becomes a barrier to access. It is through maintaining the position of Deafhood that the Deaf individual can start to resist the hegemonic forces of hearing society. As defined by Ladd, who coined the term, 'Deafhood is not seen as a finite state but as a process by which Deaf individuals come to actualise their Deaf identity, positing that those individuals construct that identity around several differently ordered sets of priorities and principles, which are affected by various factors such as nation, era and class' (Ladd, 2003: xviii). Deafhood is an ongoing process of epistemology and ontology, in which the subject constantly negotiates hierarchies and imbalances around themselves in a society which privileges the hearing, normative subject:

> Deafhood is not, however, a 'static' medical condition like 'deafness'. Instead, it represents a process – the struggle by each Deaf child, Deaf family and Deaf adult to explain to themselves and each other their own existence in the world. In sharing their lives with each other as a community, and enacting those explanations rather than writing books about them, Deaf people are engaged in a daily praxis, a continuing internal and external dialogue. This dialogue not only acknowledges that existence as a Deaf person is actually a process of *becoming* and maintaining 'Deaf', but also reflects different interpretations of Deafhood, of what being a Deaf person in a Deaf community might mean. (Ladd, 2003: 3)

It is through Deafhood that this thesis will explore the ways in which Deaf individuals can write against audist practices, and how these Deaf narratives articulate sign language as a site of resistance against preconceived ideas of normalcy.

It is also worth noting that as this thesis will go on to explore, there is a complicated relationship between disability studies and deaf studies. Whilst the two are not interchangeable, 'the history of disability studies overlaps nicely with the history of deaf studies' (Padden, 2005: 508). Whilst this thesis borrows extensively from disability studies as well as deaf studies, it is worth highlighting that there is an anxiety felt by many deaf individuals as using disability as an all-encompassing phrase:

> Truth be told, deaf people see themselves as an odd fit in disability studies. We've been segregated for such a long time that we see our history as set apart from others, and it feels strange to have the company of other disabled people. (Padden, 2005: 508)

However as this thesis highlights, particularly in Chapter 4 in relation to autoethnographic representations of deafness, the deaf subject still experiences disability, mainly through imposed audist constructions. Much like the disabled individual has had their body marked as different and other by able-bodied society, the deaf individual has had their body inscribed by audist and normative constructions. As Padden explains, it is this reason that disability studies and deaf studies can be utilised to inform each other:

> Disability studies and deaf studies have divergent interests even as they have convergent issues. I believe that deaf people do not view their legacy of segregation in the United States in the same way that other disabled groups do theirs […] Yet together these fields of inquiry can be brough to bear on some of the most important issues of our time. Who better to discuss issues of body and society than we who have long suffered social projects inscribed on ourselves? (Padden, 2005: 513)

Through deaf studies, we can approach literary depictions of deafness and start to interrogate the ways in which audist anxieties have constructed and informed these imagined deaf subjects.

'Marginalised people have long been concerned with how they are depicted', write Krentz and Sanchez, and 'Deaf people are no exception' (Krentz & Sanchez, 2021: 125) However, as they note, 'representation of deafness brings with it an intriguing range of complications, from the wide diversity among deaf people to the centrality of questions around communication, which opens up topics of language and power' (Krentz & Sanchez, 2021: 125). This is particularly prevalent in Chapter 4 where Stern actively writes *against* audist constructions of deafness and the deaf subject, against the 'dominant representations [that] reinforce stereotypes that the hearing majority has about them' (Krentz & Sanchez, 2021: 125). It is not only representations of deafness that this thesis explores, but also representations of gestural and signed communicative forms outside of the auditory norm. Representations of these alternative communicative forms are often inscribed with audist prejudices as Krentz and Sanchez explain:

> We live in a world in which those who communicate non-normatively are frequently the victims of abuse or violence. Societies sometimes interpret not speaking in a standard way as a signal of a lower intelligence or of not being fully human (Krentz & Sanchez, 2021: 125)

This has very real and tangible effects in the real lived experiences of deaf people – not only through acts of abuse and violence, but also in the way that that 'deaf people can internalize dominant representations of their group and see themselves as inferior' (Krentz & Sanchez, 2021: 125). However, it is through reframing the encounters between the hearing world and the deaf world

that we can start to interrogate these forms of representation, and in doing so we can start to examine and explore ways to subvert and question audist prejudices and presumptions. As Krentz and Sanchez summarise:

> Because communicative diversity (and communication barriers) are so often central to deaf experience, consideration of deaf people and their languages is a particularly productive site from which to consider broader questions about the potential of representation and its limitations (Krentz & Sanchez, 2021: 129)

As I move through this thesis I will examine and explore the ways in which historical, cultural and social imbalances within the contact zone can be reread through notions of deaf gain, Deafhood, and normalcy. In doing so, I will critically engage with non-normative forms of communication as part of a rich tapestry of linguistic diversity with the same narrative and ontological worth that is by default afforded to spoken dialogue. It is through this approach that we can uncover a long history of gesture and sign language in fictional encounters that has been long unexplored.

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Chapter 1: *The Contact Zone: Gesture and Sign within the Colonial Encounters of* Robinson Crusoe*,* The Coral Island, *and* She

This chapter examines the use of contact gesture within fictional colonial encounters. It will first ground the notion of what is meant by contact gesture and discuss the terminology surrounding particular forms of gestural communication. The chapter introduces the theoretical paradigm of Mary Louise Pratt's contact zone and explores how this can be used as the main critical framework crucial to this reading of the gestural encounter. This chapter will then explore how within Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), R.M Ballantyne's *Coral Island* (1858), and H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1886), sign language and gesture is used as an imperialist tool, and offer an alternative interpretation and re-reading, inspired by the concerns of disability and deaf studies, as to how these signed, gestural exchanges can be understood to be a part of an imperial context.

Gesture and Sign in the Colonial Encounter

The encounter between coloniser and colonized is the cornerstone of the imperial narrative, a site of cultural and social conflict. It is a site where ideologies clash, and the subjectivity of identity becomes undone. Every boundary, social, cultural, racial, and linguistic, becomes apparent. When there is no mutual language shared by parties in the cross-cultural exchange, the intercourse quickly gives way to gestures and to signs. As stated by Gordon W. Hewes in his exploratory survey of sign- language at the site of colonial encounter, 'We are not [in most instances] dealing with encounters in which one of the parties happened to possess a well-developed sign language like that of historic North American Plains Indians' (Hewes, 1974:

3). In order for there to be some form of shared understanding within the colonial exchange, an improvised, rudimentary, and ad-hoc gestural sign language is often substituted in place of a complex linguistic communicative form.

Sign language is not, as many scholars have pointed out, a simple act of pantomime and whimsy, although, as Hewes argues, contact gesture is often framed as sign-language-as-pantomimein order to conceptualise it within a phonocentric and colonial understanding, particularly in the narratives we shall shortly turn to in this chapter:

> To make themselves understood to the peoples they encountered, and to decode the signsmade to them, they used whatever came "naturally" to them – including to be sure, whatever nonvocal or gesture or pantomime played a part in their home cultures. (Hewes, 1974: 3)

The importance of 'home culture,' as Hewes points out, is significant if taken in light of Müller's definition of a singular gesture, which 'are created on the spot; although they are based on a culturally shared repertoire of gesture creation' (Müller, 2018: 2). in the types of exchanges that Hewes references, these improvised, non- verbal gestures are often a result of a process of culture and history informing a shared cultural repertoire as much as it is of the specific context of the exchange. This idea of a natural and inherent understanding within ad hoc gesticulation will also inform part of my analysis later in this chapter when I discuss the level of compatibility and incompatibility between both sides of the gestural exchange across a cultural barrier.

Whilst narratives of sign-language-as-pantomime have been resilient in popular and public discourse from as early as the 1500s, it is important to

make and repeat the clarification that sign language (as separate to gesture) is as complex and as linguistically complete as spoken, verbal languages (Rosen, 2010: 238). The contact gesture that arises at these points of colonial encounter may – from the perspective of the coloniser – form some part of pantomime and performance, but this is not indicative of the qualities of sign language itself, but rather indicative of the acts of pantomime or iconic gesturing (such as pointing, mimicry) which are used in to facilitate singular gesture in order to cross a linguistic boundary. As such, when dealing with this particular form of cross-linguistic exchange, I will be using the phrase contact gesture to clarify that we are dealing with gesture and sign between coloniser and colonised, and in order to differentiate from fully formed sign languages so as not to diminish – by negative association – the stature of organised sign languages.

In this chapter I will discuss a form of encounter which is predicated on, as Hewes points out, a 'gestural communication [that] is the regular counterpart, for cross-linguistic, cross- cultural communication, of vocal language or speech which is our primary vehicle for communication within local communities' (Hewes, 1974: 1). We are dealing with a form of gestural exchange which is by its very nature iconic, and dependent on iconic meaning rather than a symbolic arbitrary and conventionalised meaning which is at odds to the majority of spoken, oral language. In these improvisational acts of gesture contact (at least from the perspective of the Western protagonists) we are dealing with acts of singular gesture which are supposed to be concrete in meaning: they are instructive, and they are represented as transparent and *seemingly* universal. They are presented as emblematic, when in fact they are not. They are gesticulation more than sign in the fact they are not used to

express abstract concepts; because to do so would require a larger, more fully formed linguistic structure of signs as opposed to the instructive, iconic, and often non-conventionalised gesture enacted by the narrative's white protagonists. A point of enquiry, and contributory analysis that this chapter will undertake is to explore how, and whether, the indigenous and native communities within *Robinson Crusoe, Coral Island,* and *She* seem to evidence a higher, more complex understanding of sign language outside of the Western audio-centric frame of knowledge, and in doing so, point towards an alternative ontological way of being in the world.

Sign language with a linguistic structure, ordered vocabulary, and codification for the symbolic and abstract, is often misunderstood by the uninitiated observer both as being legible in meaning (which is, to misinterpret it as something else), or to be ignored or misunderstood entirely (Rosen, 2010: 238). As Céline Carayon states of cross-cultural communication between Native Americans and European colonialists, 'the coded and often iconic nature of signs can also foster an illusion of legibility for naïve observers' (Carayon, 2016: 475). Whilst the Native American communities Carayon is discussing are different from the communities within the Caribbean in *Robinson Crusoe*, the Pacific Islands in *The Coral Island*, or the African sub-continent in *She*, due to their use of a fully formed, auxiliary sign language (often used simultaneously with speech and vocalisations), she raises a point applicable to the three, aforementioned narratives. As Carayon states, 'Colonials who encountered formal Indian sign languages, in other words, would have noticed them, and most likely have thought that they could understand them, but the signs would in fact not necessarily have guaranteed mutual understanding' (Carayon, 2016: 475). This is of particular

significance when – as I later discuss – the protagonists of the narratives are often faced with signs and gestures which make *no sense* to them, despite the repeated assumptions from the white protagonists that their own contact gestures are being understood. This is a crucial distinction that I wish to make as I explore these three texts: ad hoc visual action and contact gesture does not, in these narratives, possess any inherent meaning beyond its iconic, instructional value, when enacted by the white protagonists. The natives, however, seem to present a far larger and complex understanding of signs, particularly beyond the iconic, and can be interested as part of a larger world system.

The Contact Zone

The characters in the narrative encounters throughout this chapter are thrust into a specifically colonial construction of the contact zone, an area which Mary Louise Pratt defines as a space in which separate cultures meet, 'often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination' (Pratt, 1992:4) The encounter within the contact zone is far larger than just the meeting of the self with the Other, it is a conflict of different world-systems and histories. It is an encounter which, through the privileging of European expansion and imperialism, is highly asymmetrical.

It is important here to situate these asymmetrical relationships to the context of the time period. As Wheeler argues:

> When race has been considered a significant category of inquiry, often the nuances of its meanings in the early eighteenth century have neglected for a more contemporary paradigm of self and other

or white man and native. (Wheeler, 1995: 821)

Instead, it is ‘The savage and the Christian’, Wheeler writes, that ‘are the most important racialized categories between Europeans and other that help produce and maintain a sense of European superiority in North and West Africa, South America, and in the Caribbean’ (Wheeler, 1995: 828). Beyond the privileging of the European Christian, this difference is also based in terms of linguistic difference.

The contact zoneis, above all, ‘an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect’ (Pratt, 1992: 7). At the intersection of these trajectories the coloniser and colonised are - more often than not - dependent on a mode of ad hoc visual action, a mode of communication outside of the aural and oral realm, for spoken language is - in and of itself - a signifier of cultural and worldly difference. The visual non-language used within this gestural encounter however, is not one of a commonality, or mutual service for both parties. As pointed out by Hewes, the use of contact gesture is often fraught with misunderstanding and exaggeration (Hewes, 1974: 27-8). The most particular, and ideologically serving exaggeration are ‘claims that this or that newly-encountered group showed a profound appreciation on hearing about the Christian God, or a willingness to become the subject of some distant European monarch’ (Hewes: 1974: 28). Whilst these exaggerations are part of a particularly overt and apparent ideology of colonialism, the colonial encounter is highly politicised by its very nature. These accounts of gestural communication within travel writing – which undoubtedly inspired and informed its fictional counterpart: adventure fiction – were

often born out of necessity. As Hewes goes on to explain, 'The early voyagers and travellers […] did not report on use of sign- language in order to support some argument about the priority of gesture over speech, or for that matter to make any theoretical point at all. Mostly they were explaining how they communicated with people in distant, previously little-known parts of the world' (Hewes, 1974: 4). Whilst Hewes is right to highlight that these gestural exchanges were born out of necessity, it does not make them separate from their imperial and colonial imperative.

As Said explains, 'For the British writer, "abroad" was felt vaguely and ineptly to be out there, or exotic and strange, or in some way 'ours' to control' (Said, 1994[1993]: 88). Further expanding on this point, Said acknowledges the role fiction played in the imperial imagination: 'the novel contributed significantly to these feelings, attitudes and references and became a main element in the consolidated vision, or departmental cultural view, of the globe' (Said, 1994[1993]: 88). Said is careful however, to note that the novel did not create imperialism, nor imperialism create the novel, rather that '…imperialism and the novel fortified each other to such a degree that it is impossible […] to read one without in some way dealing with the other' (Said, 1994[1993]: 84). It is through this that the construction of the contact zone in the adventure narrative is informed by the imperial imagination. Within the usage of the "contact zone", the word 'contact', Pratt clarifies, has been borrowed 'from its use in linguistics, where the term contact language refers to improvised languages that develop among speakers of difference native languages who need to communicate with each other consistently, usually in context of trade' (Pratt, 1992: 6). The use of a contact language is a linguistic exchange

rooted heavily in asymmetrical power relations, as Pratt's argument suggests, owing to the imbalance often established in colonial/colonised trade encounters.

Therefore, contact gesture is the non-verbal counterpart to contact language. The application of contact gesture as a tool of colonisation and imperialism is well known as an asymmetrical mode ofcommunication, for as Jason S. Farr argues: 'One of the ways that Western European colonizers justified their exploitation of Indigenous peoples was through gesture, as they interpreted to their own advantage the meaning of the signs of the peoples they encountered' (Farr, 2017: 539). Contact gesture should not, and cannot be rendered as ahistorical nor apolitical, due to the role it plays in the manifestation of the highly politicised and asymmetrical relations of power across the fictional contact zone. When one thinks of the weapons of imperialism and colonialism, the images of the sword, the gun, and the bible are the most common triptych. However, the most insidious technique, the weapon of imperialism most overlooked, is how the hands of the imperialist and the coloniser crossed the linguistic barrier, and through a combination of gesture and ad hoc visual actions, underscored and reinforced the asymmetrical power relations of Christian and savage. Contact gesture is, as the texts below will show, a weapon of imperialism.

Robinson Crusoe

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* occupies a very particular and significant area within the studies of humanities. As pointed out by Kevin L. Cope, *Robinson Crusoe* is a novel of unparalleled longevity, and a fictional text which has created more alternative readings and interpretations than

perhaps any other (Cope, 1998: 152). It should come as no surprise then, that in the introduction to *Culture and Imperialism* Said turns first, almost by default, to *Robinson Crusoe* (Said, 1994[1993]: xiii). As Said argues, 'The prototypical modern realistic novel is *Robinson Crusoe*, and certainly not accidentally it is about a European who creates a fiefdom for himself on a distant, non-European island' (Said, 1994[1993]: xii-xiii). It is also certainly not accidental that Said – in his exhaustive study and analysis of imperialism – turns first to the narrative of Crusoe, as the foundational, proto-narrative of cultural imperialism, for it underscored the later literary mythologies of colonialism and imperialism. It is through Said and his peers that *Robinson Crusoe* has been understood in terms of its postcolonial re-readings, and the role in which the novel itself it played in embellishing the Western desire for colonialism and imperialism has been. However, another way in which the expansionist ideology is encoded in novels such as *Robinson Crusoe* is through the use of contact gesture.

As Jason S. Farr, who I referenced earlier, posits, 'It is surprising, though, that scholars have almost entirely neglected to account for the ways in which Robinson Crusoe deploys gesture during critical moments of Crusoe's voyage to West Africa and the West Indies, even if publishers and readers have long recognized its significance to the plot' (Farr, 2017: 540). This neglect surrounding gesture and sign should not come as a surprise. The presumption that gesture and sign are linguistic forms of a lower order is a preconception existing as an ideological hangover from the belief that deafness and sign language was inversely correlated with intelligence, and that structured vocal speech - the dominant linguistic form - is the mode of communication used solely by intelligent, civilised people. As Armstrong and

Karchmer point out, it was still a widely held belief in the 1950's that 'sign language is equated with the despised non-alphabetic writing system of a non-Western people' (Armstrong & Karchmer, 2009: 390) From this assumption it is easy to see how those who use sign language, namely those who are deaf or hard of hearing, have often been marred and labelled as a lower, backwards strata of human society within Western culture, which is why it is my opinion that this is why literary scholars have ignored these gestural moments. This preconception of sign language has also been adopted for an exceedingly long time within academia. Even after William Stokoe's ground-breakingwork in 1960 which first made the case that American Sign Language (A.S.L.) is a structured language, the study of sign language was often relegated to the fringes of academia, and something seen of minimal worth in terms of research output (Calton, 2015: 114). Indeed, it was only in 1984 that sign-language was formally recognised as a structured, "authentic" language by UNESCO (Wrigley, 1996: xiii). This may, in some part, account for the academic reluctance to explore the use of gesture and sign within *Robinson Crusoe*. However, given the rise in visibility of the d/Deaf community and culture as well as an increased awareness and understanding of imperialism and colonialism, I believe it is of academic significance to read these colonial encounters and how the use of gesture underscores the imperial exchange.

As Paddy Ladd, in *Understanding Deaf Culture* argues, there is a marked similarity in the waythat the non-white other and deaf individual were constructed through their lack of European, spoken language:

> The fact that both Deaf and Native peoples used sign and gesture, and that neither could speak European languages, was used to construct essentialist similarities between them –

> both were described as ‘savages’ in a belief system which constructed a ‘civilised Man’ surrounded by savages and animals. (Ladd, 2003: 114)

Whilst I am in this case reading ‘Indigenous’ for ‘Native’ (and indeed, one only has to look at any example of colonial discourse to see how ‘savage’, ‘barbarian’ or any other derogatory term of imposed identity could be easily read within the confines of this statement), Ladd is not the only academic to point out the parallels between the treatment of non-white and disabled or deaf individuals. Stemming from the Enlightenment’s preoccupation with portraying language as the conduit for civilisation, Murray K. Simpson argues that ‘there is a direct link between the discourse of colonialism abroad and internal regulation of deviants’ back home (Simpson, 2007: 571). Further to this, it has been argued that there is a symbiotic relationship between cultural and racial oppression and the oppression of people with disabilities (Kliewer and Fitzgerald, 2001). As these arguments show, there has been a historical preconception of conflating spoken, Western language to intelligence as a mark of civility and civilisation, and as a mark of differentiation from the “savage”: a process which occurs not only in imperial discourse, but also within the gesticulated, fictional encounter.

By exploring the importance of imperialism and colonialism on acts of signing and gestural language within *Robinson Crusoe* at the point of encounter, we can explore how gesture and sign has been utilised as a tool of colonial expansion, whilst propagating stereotypes of the savage and deafness simultaneously. As Farr points out, the resultant effect of Crusoe’s isolation is that we are presented with a character who is aligned with the cultural remit of the deaf, and whilst no physiological symptoms persist, suffers from an illusory auditory dysphoria. His island is a place largely devoid

of meaningful sound, particularly language, and therefore devoid of communication (Farr, 2017: 543). That being said, with Crusoe's island being reduced to a merely physical, visual space through his auditory dysphoria, Crusoe's function of sight becomes the dominant mode of understanding and the medium through which his experience becomes manifest. As argued by Emily Fekete, 'since [sign language] is a visual and spatial language, it is inherently geographical' (Fekete, 2017: 139). As Fekete goes on to explain, 'communication through movement in space leads people to see the world around them through visuals instead of auditory sound' (Fekete, 2017: 139). Since the ad hoc visual action which constitutes the communication enacted by Crusoe towards Friday is one of geographical importance, the encounter becomes as deeply entrenched in notions of spatiality as the environment in which it becomes enacted, as well as physical and geographical relationality. As such, the contact gesture used by Crusoe to Friday is not only indicative of the differences between coloniser and colonised (in that it is instructional, from an instructor to a recipient), but also evidence that we are dealing to a narrative which is positioned geographically in an island-system in which only meaning becomes manifest through sight-based identification, rather than the expected, dominant, auditory channels.

The island on which Crusoe awakes, shipwrecked, is the primary contact zone within the narrative. It is the location of the encounter between Crusoe and Friday, and is the site where their two historical trajectories intersect. However the island-as-contact-zone is one far from impartiality, for as Homi K. Bhabha states, 'The colonial space is the *terra incognita* or the *terra nulla*, the empty or wasted land whose history has to be begun, whose archives must be filled out; whose future progress must be filled out…'

(Bhabha, 2004[1994]: 352). The island – which functions as the geographical blank slate for the colonial and imperial mission is a contact zone in that typical imperialist and colonial fictional space – the space 'beyond the veil of the known into the unknown' (Campbell in Phillips, 1997: 29). Despite the fact that Defoe's narrative is generally seen as the prototype of the adventure fiction genre, as Philips argues, '*Robinson Crusoe* illustrates the general outlines of the geography of modern adventure, the dialectical geography of home and away, in which adventures are set away from home, in unknown space that is disconnected, simplified, liminal and broadly realistic.' (Philips, 1997: 29). A prime example of the over-simplification of the desert island narrative is that Crusoe manages to salvage a great amount from his wrecked ship, and as Philips goes on to explain, 'Crusoe is not washed up naked, and he clings to his cold, wet clothes, the trappings and symbols of his civilisation' (Philips: 1997: 31b). The fact that Crusoe is able to salvage any arms and ammunition is remarkable, and one of the many narrative concessions which Defoe marks as divine acts of "Providence": as if materialist advances are not enough to set the white man apart from his non-white counterparts, it seems God, too, is on his side. As if this idea was understated by any means in the novel, Defoe goes to great lengths to make it apparent. After all, Crusoe managed to salvage not only tools, building materials, rations, weapons and ammunition– but of all things, a bible. Defoe's reasoning to include these specific objects is to facilitate the establishing of Crusoe as superior even prior to his encounter with Friday. As pointed out by Michael Adas, Crusoe's double-edged sword of technology and religion is one that mirrored the cultural and social attitudes of the time, as technological superiority was still understated 'in an age when religion was

still the chief source of western Europeans' sense of superiority' (Adas, 1989: 3). The phallic symbolisms of the sword, the gun, and alongside with the apparent descriptions of European technological advancement, become a visual signifier of a cultural and social difference. Therefore this exposition of Crusoe is essential in foregrounding the imbalance of power that exists in the later, visual and sight-based communicatory exchanges between Crusoe and Friday.

Through his reduction to a non-verbal, audiological state, the sight-based identifications that structure Crusoe's imperial myth and self-proclaimed sovereignty are based on the liminality of his position within the geography of the world, with his island being on the threshold of what is known. *Robinson Crusoe*, and adventure fiction in general, transports not only its characters, but also its readers, to the hinterland between civilisation and savagery. Through virtue of his isolation, Crusoe defaults on the dominant logic of the time, that Christian Europeans are de facto superior as he is the self-proclaimed sovereign of his island. As argued by Richard Philips, *Robinson Crusoe* is 'a survival story and spiritual biography […] canonised as the archetypal modern adventure story, and as a foundational myth of modern, enlightened, imperial Europe.' (Philips, 1997: 25) Paving the way for further colonial and imperialist expansion, Defoe planted a cultural seed of acceptance and support towards the colonial project within his reading audience, as Philips argues, for 'in the nineteenth century it became a myth, promoting popular colonialism, representing and legitimating the British Empire to the British people.' (Philips, 1997: 34). Further to this, *Robinson Crusoe* paved the way for not only the imperialist expansion but gave birth to a whole raft and direction of fiction. As Philips concludes, 'in addition to its

relatively direct mapping of Britain and empire, *Robinson Crusoe* charted cultural space in which writers and readers were able to move, as they mapped and remapped particular world views and colonies' (Philips, 1997: 35) This imaginary cultural remapping meant there was an element of disconnection between the real lived experiences, and those shared through cultural, fictional means, a driving force in the view of legitimization of imperialism by the British people. By enacting the default Christian Western logic as the dominant and "correct" form within *Robinson Crusoe* and other imperial adventure fictions, we see through the eyes of the fictional Imperialist the ways in which a sense of European superiority is maintained and regulated. Race, in *Robinson Crusoe*, Wheeler argues is 'an emergent, rather than rigid concept in the early eighteenth century', with the labels of Christian and Savage being the regulated means of imbalance (Wheeler, 1995: 821). As such it is through religious means that the tool of contact gesture becomes utilised, serving as a conduit to Friday's language acquisition and therefore his religious conversion. It is through Crusoe's performances of civility, intelligence, and Christian morality imposed upon Friday, that he is converted from "savagery". It is through the regulation of Western norms acquired through conforming to expectations of colonial belief and through the gesture of the contact zone that Friday becomes a colonial subject.

Before the encounter with Friday, Defoe is heavy handed and deliberate in his positioning of Crusoe above the figure of the native/savage even before that particular encounter takes place. Whilst I have mapped out some of the ways in which Defoe sets up the island to be fruitful for Crusoe's imperial mission, there is an earlier episode the novel which is crucial in illustrating Crusoe's behaviour to towards the natives and to underscore

Crusoe's violent and aggressive proclivities. Prior to the encounter with Friday, Crusoe encounters a group of natives on an inhabited island whilst he has Xury under his charge. This encounter, which revolves around his killing a 'curious leopard' and intimidating the natives with his gun, is fundamental in the exposition of Crusoe as an agent of imperialism and colonialism (Defoe: 2008[1719]: 24). The use of his gun – a physical manifestation of colonial power – is essential in Defoe's positioning of Crusoe above the natives: 'It is impossible to express the astonishment of these poor creatures at the noise and the fire of my gun; some of them were even ready to dye for fear, and fell down as dead as if with the very terror' (Defoe, 2008[1719]: 24). What is significant here, is Defoe's positioning of this incident within the confines of the encounter. At this point, the encounter is already underway, for Crusoe has already at this point 'talk'd with them by signs' and 'particularly made signs for something to eat' (Defoe, 2008[1719]: 23). This first instance of contact gesture within the text is significant in that we are exposed to an ad hoc, improvised, singular gesture, yet it is framed as being inherently meaningful, conventionalised, and emblematic in that it is readily understood. Defoe is deliberate in his exposition of Crusoe's contact gesture: we are presented with a character who has the ability, it seems, to transgress linguistic boundaries and barriers in order to effectively communicate through a visual medium. This therefore undergirds Crusoe's ability to use gesture as an effective tool of imperialism and serves to establish him as superior to his native counterparts, for he not only possesses Western knowledge and language, but also has the ability to communicate to them, prior to reinforcing his superiority through violence.

Upon the receipt of this food, for which Crusoe 'made signs of thanks to

them', Crusoe resolves to kill 'two mighty creatures' to 'make them amends …[and to]… oblige them' and complete the transaction of trade (Defoe, 2008[1719]: 24). This act of violence, in which Crusoe recounts: 'I lay ready from him […and] as soon as he came fairly within my reach, I fir'd, and shot him directly in the head' before the other flees is deliberately ambiguous in its intention (Defoe, 2008[1719]: 24). The "creature" which is only revealed to be a leopard after the act of killing is notable in terms of its physical description. Nestled amongst descriptions of the "savages", the quasi-anthropomorphism ofthe "creatures" blurs the lines between human and animal; the ambiguity abounds, with only the occasional - and often conflicting - signpost in this encounter to reinforce the delineation between savage and animal (Defoe, 2008[1719]: 24). The situation is further confused by Defoe's insistence on calling both the leopards and the savages 'creatures' in separate instances – and referring to both a savage as 'man', and the leopard as 'he' (Defoe, 2008[1719]: 24). It seems apparent that Defoe – inhis exposition of this narrative scene – is quite openly unconcerned at the target of imperial and colonial violence, be it native, or beast. Defoe seems to be suggesting, there exists a very faint – if any – demarcation between them. It is through encounters such as this – for *Robinson Crusoe* is hardly unique in topic – that the stereotype of the savage is both produced and further reciprocated under the mythology of Empire. We are also treated to another example of blurring the boundaries between savage and animal as Crusoe proclaims: '…my only way to go about an attempt for an escape was, if possible, to get a savage in my possession' (Defoe, 2008[1719]: 167). This comment is a good four pages before Crusoe actually engages with Friday, and yet we are already – as readers – signposted to the imperial themes underwriting the entire narrative

and through this we are made aware (or indeed, reminded) that we are not dealing with an impartial narrative in which cultures have the potentiality to be examined and explored in equal terms. Instead, we are dealing with a text which explicitly privileges the cultural and social system of the white Christian European man over his native, savage counterpart – and in doing so, the production of the contact zone is rendered in terms of asymmetric power. Crusoe, it seems, does not only colonise the contact zone, but also rewrites the native, savage body as an ethnographic text upon which colonial and imperial practices have been inscribed.

Crusoe, by instigating contact with Friday, has already located himself in a position of superiority by wounding, and eventually killing Friday's captors (Defoe, 2008[1719]: 171). Crusoe recalls of the first exchange that 'I hollow'd again to him and made signs to come forward, which he easily understood…' (Defoe, 2008[1719]: 171). What we are seeing here is a contact gesture which –through the use of vocal sounds (rather than structured speech) and various seemingly recurrent and emblematic gestures – establishes Crusoe's contact gesture as one which has a degree of conventionalisation, in as much that it is effective at crossing the cultural, racial and linguistic divide between himself and Friday. We see another example of this as he recounts: 'I beckon'd him again to come to me, and gave him all the signs of encouragement that I could think of, and he came nearer and nearer…' (Defoe, 2008 [1719]: 171). Once again we are aware of Crusoe's use of a contact gesture sitting somewhere between the categories of recurrent and emblematic in the sense that it is portrayed as being lexically coherent, and mutually intelligible, even across the linguistic divide of the contact zone. This exchange reaches its most emblematic when Friday, in an

act of submission ‘kneel’d down again, kiss’d the ground, and laid his head upon the ground, and taking me by the foot, set my foot upon his head; this it seems was in token of swearing to be my slave for ever; I took him up, and made much of him, and encourag’d him all I could’ (Defoe, 2008[1719]: 171). What we are dealing with here, in terms of a visual action, is a gesture that is portrayed as explicit in meaning: the subservience and the submission through kneeling and foot-placing is as close to being a lexicalised, conventional gesture as we see within the text. It is of course, an interpretation of Friday’s actions, as Crusoe claims ‘this it *seems* was in token of swearing to be my slave forever’ (Defoe, 2008[1719]: 171, emphasis added). Here, we start to see the dissonance between Crusoe’s interpretation of gesture and Friday’s interpretation of gesture. Whilst we are presented this gestural exchange as being one that is emblematic and conventionalised, there is nothing *inherent* to the visual actions made by Friday to denote the passing of time. We can say with some degree of confidence that the whole submissive pantomime which Friday enacts does visually denote his submission, for the text requires Crusoe to capture a savage - but it is through the colonial and imperial reinterpretation of this action that Crusoe transforms Friday’s gesture into one that is binding in perpetuity, and it is through Crusoe’s reinscribing of this gestural exchange that his colonial and imperial dream becomes realised.

Once Crusoe has dispatched of Friday’s pursuers, Defoe’s narrative reinforces the hierarchy by making Friday’s use of sign unintelligible in response. As the second signed exchange shows, Friday’s attempt to communicate in ‘an abundance of gestures which I did not understand’ shows the contradiction of Crusoe’s use of contact gesture as universal and readily

understood (Defoe, 2008 [1719]: 171). This is perhaps the most significant part of the encounter with Friday. This misunderstanding of Friday's gestures and signs is one which entrenches the mythology of sign language as a signifier of unintelligence. However, I believe we can re-read this kinesic action as a lexicalised, emblematic gesture, which in doing so, implies that Friday has a knowledge ofsigned and gestural language that goes beyond the Western, phonocentric understanding of Defoe's protagonist.

The single most self-serving imperial aspect with Crusoe regarding Friday's gestures as unintelligible is that it reduces his gestural, signed exchange to an issue of race and civility. By subscribing to the notion that language is the foundation of knowledge, Crusoe's dismissal of Friday's signs fosters the idea that his gestures are a form of savage behaviour, a form of ritual outside of Western understanding, and therefore irrelevant, unneeded, and non-Christian. It also introduces the possibility of there being a larger, wider linguistic structure that exists within Friday's home culture, a slippage within the text that contradicts its own message of Christian European superiority. It is this resonance in the text that we can start to see how many popular and enduring works of fiction such as *Robinson Crusoe* can be re-read and resituated within a interpretation that celebrates linguistic differences. However, to relegate Friday to the fringes of civilisation, also negates his cultural, social, and linguistic history explicitly and precisely, an act which when often enacted in reality, had disastrous consequences for actual colonial subjects. Although her research focused on transatlantic colonialism and commerce, Carayon makes a valuable point which can be re- interpreted here:

> Early travel accounts by the English, French, Dutch, Portuguese, and Spanish, albeit without any systematic attempts at taxonomy, contain many specific examples of communicative signs such as hand, arm, and finger gestures associated with specific meanings and used to express ideas in the larger context of a formal sign language vocabulary, as well as many examples of rituals and signs and gestural behaviours predominantly used by Indians in ceremonial and rhetorical contexts. (Carayon, 2016: 486)

Whilst Carayon's work is focused on the auxiliary signs of Native American peoples, it is a crucial observation that there can - and does - exist a wider gestural and signatory vocabulary than within a Western frame of understanding. I believe we can read Friday's "abundance of gestures" as the implication that Friday possesses a vocabulary of fully lexicalised and conventionalised signs within his home culture; and his attempt to communicate with Crusoe (who has already presented himself as able to fluently understand various contact gestures throughout the encounter) is done under the assumption of Crusoe being able to understand the conventionalised signs of Friday's own language and culture. Friday's signs, under the unflinching Western gaze, are re-cast as singular gestures, so un-conventionalized, that they are reduced to a flurry of movements which contain no linguistic property. It is at this level of the sign that Crusoe's imperialism starts to become entrenched, and it is at this point, that Friday starts to become untethered not only from his home culture but also from his history and his prior linguistic framework and shifts further towards the inevitable end of colonial subjugation and servitude.

This dissonance between Crusoe's gestures and Friday's gestures is further highlighted when Defoe illustrates a signed exchange which is – almost certainly – far more complex than any other signed exchange within the novel, shortly after the "abundance of gestures" exchange: 'Upon this he

sign'd to me that he should bury them with sand, that they might not be seen by the rest if they follow'd and so I made signs again for him to do so…' (Defoe, 2008[1719]: 172). Despite in the previous exchange, where Defoe portrayed Friday's gestures as unintelligible to Crusoe, it is immediately proceeded by an exchange, which as we are shown, is comprised of three separate instances of ad hoc visual action being employed in succession. The sudden shift to mutually intelligible contact gesture can be read in two separate ways if subscribing to the argument that contact gesture in the fictional encounter is a tool of imperialism: either these gestures are predicated on a mutually shared gestural understanding (which is to say both cultures possess the same historically-located pantomimic roots for these actions), or that Friday has shifted from his own framework of conventionalised signs and is now communicating at the same gestural level of Crusoe; which is to say Defoe has repositioned Friday within the confines of Crusoe's symbolic, signatory, and gestural realm. It is this repositioning of Friday within Crusoe's language-system that the imperialism of the sign becomes truly apparent. It is through the stripping of Friday's home culture, linguistic system, and history that he becomes colonised – and as such exists no longer under his own identity and of his own agency, but becomes instead an extension to Crusoe's colonial mission, a subject and servant, bound with Crusoe his master, and bound to exist within a Western frame of logic as a colonial subject.

It is through Crusoe's manipulation of the contact zone to establish dominance over Friday that the narrative repeats and reiterates the imagined European Christian superiority. The fact that the relationship is formed prior to Friday being able to communicate in the spoken modality, and only through

gestural actions which are often re-interpreted to Crusoe's own ends enforces the novel's hierarchy of power. It is through the putative transparency of gestural communication that contact gesture has been inscribed to serve imperial ends. One of the ways Defoe establishes Crusoe as dominant is to frame him as a paternal figure. Crusoe's first acts of communication with Friday "post-submission" are a series of instructional gestural acts which are perceived as recurrent or emblematic, in as far as they establish Crusoe within the role of provider, protector, and care-giver. As Crusoe recalls, 'I gave him bread, and a bunch of raisins to eat, and a draught of water, which I found he was indeed in great distress for, by his running, and having refresh'd him, I made signs for him to go lie down and sleep…' (Defoe, 2008[1719]: 172-3). Not only do we see another example of Crusoe employing contact gesture in a way which is presented as emblematic and lexically coherent in order to transcend linguistic difference, but we are also witness to evidence of Crusoe's paternalism over Friday. As such, the empire of dominion that Crusoe has established on his island is manifest through the production of seemingly coherent, but ad hoc visual actions: it is at the level of the sign that his paternalism, and his domination over Friday becomes manifest.

The infantilisation and subjugation of Friday is finalised, when in proof of his gratitude and servitude, Crusoe recalls Friday 'came running to me, laying himself down again upon the ground, with all the possible signs of a humble thankful disposition, making a many antick gestures to show it' (Defoe, 2008[1719]: 173). Whilst the narrative of Friday's acceptance to servitude may have stopped here, Defoe goes to great lengths to set up and maintain an infallible, and indisputable hierarchical difference throughout the narrative. Once again we are exposed to a signed encounter of servitude, a

bookend to the start of the encounter, and a mirror of the previous pantomime: '[he] made all the signs to me of subjection, servitude, and submission imaginable, to let me know how hewould serve me as long as he liv'd' (Defoe, 2008[1719]: 173). As a conclusion to the encounter, we witness Friday's full transformation to colonial subject. The first encounter, in which Crusoe is apparent in interpreting Friday's servitude as in perpetuity is this time reframed by Friday seemingly making gestures to denote time. It is between these two exchanges that we see a transition in the types of contact gesture employed; they are established first as ad hoc visual actions from Crusoe which become more emblematic as the encounter progresses, in that they become more complex, but still presented as coherent and lexicalised. Meanwhile, Friday's contact gestures go through a state of starting off as coherent, but ad hoc gestures, then to fully emblematic (but devoid of coherent lexical meaning under the Western gaze of Crusoe) before returning to a state of coherent gestures which Crusoe can understand. It is through this transition in which Friday becomes stripped of his own cultural and linguistic history and instead reconstituted as an integral part of Crusoe's imperial mission through his subjugation and conformity to a shared, Western-ordered linguistic framework. As such Friday's pantomimes of submission serve to bookend the transition undertaken, and act as a narrative frame to the utilisation of contact gesture as a tool of colonial and imperial expansion.

It is through Crusoe's self-serving interpretation of the contact gesture that we see that he dominated the contact zone. Gesture and sign *cannot* be neutral in this encounter: Defoe has already set up Crusoe as the embodiment of the imperial and colonial drive. As such the ad hoc visual

actions that constitute much of the encounter are modified, bent, and twisted to fit Crusoe's own ends. It is through Crusoe's *interpretation* of the signs, that we see the aim of Defoe's exposition of the imbalanced narrative encounter. Gesture is not communication: it is a weapon. At the hands of Defoe and Crusoe we see the insidious nature of cross-cultural contact gesture; a form of communication which, like the technology and weaponry of Western Europe, is employed to reinforce the hegemonic and ideological practices of European conquest.

Another interesting area worth looking at in relation to the use of contact gesture is how the transition to spoken language on Crusoe's island undergirds and underwrites linguistic imperialism. As pointed out by Phillipson, the most significant aftermath of colonial expansion has been the entrenchment of English as the dominant, global linguistic form. 'The British Empire', he argues, 'has given way to the empire of English' (Phillipson, 1992: 1). What we see on Crusoe's island is the practice of establishing English as a dominant linguistic form, and one that legitimises the hegemonic order of Western dominance at the same time. As Phillipson claims: 'Anglocentricity takes the forms and function of English, and the promise of what English represents or can lead to, as the norm by which all language activity or use should be measured. It simultaneously devalues other languages, either explicitly or implicitly' (Phillipson, 1992: 48). By establishing an island in which English is the dominant language, and that this process is established in longevity by its "occupation" by British mutineers at the end of Crusoe's reign on the island (Defoe, 2008[1719]: 234), the generational succession of the island legitimised the propagation of English as the colonial, dominant language.

Whilst English may be established on the island as the dominant language, it is not the only language spoken; indeed, Crusoe speaks first Portuguese and then Spanish to the shipwrecked Spaniards who find his island, and indeed one of the Spanish sailors can talk to Friday's father in the 'language of the savages', and Friday and his own father are also able to communicate in their own language (Defoe, 2008[1719]: 203-4). However, what this passage reveals is that Defoe has presented to us a conscious hierarchy of language and linguistic form, something which permeates through the whole novel, at times implicit, but made apparent at this particular encounter. We are presented with a hierarchy which quite clearly sets English at the top of the power structure, with it being the dominant linguistic form on the island, and beneath it, Spanish, and then Portuguese. This triad of dominant languages, all of which come from their own individual histories and mythologies of colonial and imperial expansion are set apart from the language of Friday and his father, and further removed from this structure is gestural communication. As such, the contact gesture previously enacted by Crusoe and Friday serve as a way in which the man that Crusoe comes to call Friday is forced to begin anew, in accordance with Crusoe's linguistic – verbal and non verbal – order.

The language of Friday and his father are consciously and deliberately set apart from the triad of "imperial" languages, being un-named beyond being the "language of the savage", on the periphery of the imperial core-languages spoken by the white and de-facto dominant peoples of the island. As Phillipson argues:

> Two of the most central labels in colonialist cultural mythology are *tribe* and *dialect*. They both express the way the dominant group differentiates itself from and stigmatizes the dominated group. They therefore form part of an essentially racist ideology. The rule is that *we* are a nation with a language whereas *they* are tribes with dialects. (Phillipson, 1992: 38).

We can see this ideology permeating throughout Defoe's text: Crusoe, who sailed from England, speaks English; the Spaniard speaks Spanish: but the savage, the cannibal, a phantasm of colonial anxiety, is geographically displaced and the resulting language is one without any cohesive identity afforded within the text. Whilst Friday refers to his homeland as 'my nation', Defoe's narrative still actively chooses to neglect the notion of geographical and national identity as it remains unknown and ambiguous throughout the text (Defoe, 2008[1719]: 180). Without the language being afforded the same agency and power as the dominant, core triad within the text, the language of Friday is pushed to the periphery, neglected, obscured, and erased from the textual cartography of the novel, much in the same way his lexicalised signs have been read as linguistically empty gestures. But the most interesting thing, I would argue, is that the gestural communication enacted by Crusoe and Friday seems adjunct to the core-periphery model of the imperial/colonised languages. Rather than functioning as its own discrete language, as per English, Spanish, Portuguese or even the language of the savage – the gestural, signed discourse is enacted as a tool at the hands of Crusoe. It is in this way it functions less like a language and more of a means of dominating the contact zone; it is a gestural utility, a display and function of power. As Farr argues, 'Crusoe's military might invokes terror, but use and interpretation of gesture enable him to engage in the communicative transactions that ultimately allow him to secure material

good and, finally, to assert his sovereign authority over Friday' (Farr, 2017: 553). As such, the use of the contact gesture, and the self-serving interpretation of it is crucial in establish and asserting authority over not only Friday, but also the other subjects on his island. As Farr recounts, Peter Hulme proposes that 'Crusoe's subjects regard him as a paternal figure owing to his role in saving their lives' (Hulme, paraphrased in Farr, 2017: 533). Indeed, Hulme's claim, which Farr repeats is significant for it adds legitimacy to the idea of English as the dominant language on the island and legitimises Crusoe's displays of gestural contact as authoritarian rule. However, it is the use of Crusoe's contact gesture which – enacted as a tool of colonisation, domination, and subjugation – allows Crusoe to enact, at the level of the sign, the cultural imperialism of the contact zone. As Farr points out, 'gesture bridges the linguistic divide separating the two men and allows Crusoe to be the ideal escort for Friday as he flees for his life' (Farr, 2017: 555). Farr elaborates on this, by concluding that 'Robinson Crusoe internalizes the idea that gesture no only stands in for the incoherence of vocal exchange in colonial encounters, but that it could also be subject to multiple interpretations, and that ultimately, the best reading of a given set of signs is the one that is self-serving' (Farr, 2017: 560). Therefore, it is Crusoe's use of contact gesture in a manner that is self-serving that he establishes the transition from isolated, sonically barren island, to one which is inhabited, and of which he rules.

Part of the civilising mission, and its subsequent hierarchical power structure, Phillipson points out, 'was, needless to say, language' (Phillipson, 1992: 45). We see an example of this in the passages that follow Crusoe's liberation of Friday, and how Crusoe enacts a colonising structure of

language, which simultaneously sets him up above Friday; but also reinforces the Anglocentric mission of the imperial dream.

> I made him known his name should be Friday, which was the day I sav'd his life; I call'd him so for the memory of the time; I likewise taught him to say Master and then let him know, that was to be my name; I likewise taught him to say yes and no, and to know the meaning of them… (Defoe, 2008[1719]: 173)

Crusoe's relationship to Friday is one that is underwritten on the imperialist notions of civility versus savagery: the fact that Crusoe teaches Friday to speak English and to read the Bible points to the Anglocentrism employed by the imperial mission. The transformation of Friday is entirely and explicitly interlinked within language as the following passage reveals: 'But to return to my new companion: I was greatly delighted with him, and made it my business to teach him every thing that was proper to make him useful, hand, and helpful; but especially to make him speak, and understand me when I spake, and he was the aptest scholar that ever was…' (Defoe, 2008[1719]: 177). Once he can converse with Friday, Farr argues, 'Crusoe finally enters a comfortable soundscape that resonates with his complete spiritual rebirth and rise to power' (Farr, 2017: 549). Although Crusoe was limited to the cultural remit of the aphasic (rather than deaf) through his isolation and lack of hearing language, it is the transition from auditory dissonance to auditory comfort – through the subjugation and civilising of Friday that Crusoe's ascendance to power becomes enacted. As Farr points out, 'Crusoe's ascendance to power is marked by the comfort of coherent sound, and that his colonizing gestures play a prominent role in providing him with sovereignty over Friday and the other subjects who come to inhabit the island.' (Farr, 2017: 540). It is through the transformation of Crusoe's island

from one devoid of language and full of incoherent, dissonant noises to one of communicable speech and language that Crusoe's power becomes realised: it is only once coherent, verbal structured speech can be enacted within the contact zone that the master/subordinate can be enacted as a vocal, sonically binding utterance. As the encounter between Crusoe and Friday reveals, and the later encounter with the Portuguese sailors and Friday's father, the power on the island, and within the contact zone, is entirely predicated and underwritten by language, and he who possesses the dominant language possess the dominant power. As Phillipson discusses of hegemonic practices within linguistic imperialism, 'hegemony does not imply a conspiracy theory, but a competing and complementary set of values and practices, with those in power better able to legitimate themselves and to convert their ideas into material power' (Phillipson, 1992: 74). As such Crusoe sets up his ascension through the ideological practices of imperialism. Therefore, it is apparent how important gesture is for the colonising mission, and how *Robinson Crusoe*, as the cornerstone of adventure fiction in general has legitimised the fictional practice of utilising gesture as a form of control; a move that came to echo and underwrite the real-life encounters of the imperial and colonial mission. Through enacting gesture as a tool of imperialism, Crusoe not only facilitates his own ascension over Friday, but also actualises and underwrites the imperialism of Defoe's novel. Gesture, for Defoe, is not utilised to make a comment on different linguistic frameworks or cultural modes of communication. Instead, it is used as a site of exploitation, a method to colonise and inscribe the culturally, historically and linguistically different as Other. Gesture, within this contact zone, re-cast and re-read to self-serving ends, becomes the conduit by which Robinson Crusoe can reinforce his

powers as coloniser and imperialist.

Coral Island

R.M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1858), similarly to *Robinson Crusoe*, is an adventure narrative that focuses on a series of cross-cultural encounters between the protagonists and the island natives. Despite its obvious debt to *Robinson Crusoe*, Ballantyne's island narrative diverges in a couple of significant ways. Whilst we are still presented with the island as the contact zone, the fact that the narrative revolves around a cast of characters (rather than the singular outcast of Crusoe) means that we are not presented with a lack of communication and dialogue, and by virtue of this, our characters are not positioned in a state of aphasia.

Whilst there are several encounters within *The Coral Island*, I will be focusing solely on the first, and most significant encounter within the narrative due to it being across a linguistic divide and dependent on contact gesture in a range of different gestural types. All three gestural forms: singular, recurrent, and emblematic are utilised in this exchange and are used in varying, different ways. However, whilst a wide range of gestural forms are utilised by parties on both sides of the contact zone, Ballantyne's reliance on tropes and stereotype demarcates the contact zone firmly within a colonial and imperialist framework.

As pointed out by Martine Dutheil, Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* emerges at a different point in colonial history to *Robinson Crusoe*: from the times of Defoe, exploration had shifted to other parts of the globe, and in doing so, the fictional tropes used had shifted with accordance to these new,

unknown, savage lands: ‘The exploration of the South Pacific in the eighteenth century, which led to the Māori war against the British between 1864 and 1872 and culminated in the incorporation of the Fiji islands into the British Empire in 1874, generated a renewed interest in cannibalism’ (Dutheil, 2001: 106). The result of this, Dutheil argues, is that ‘during this period, the Maoris of New Zealand and the Fijians were to replace Columbus’s and Defoe’s Caribs as emblematic cannibals’ (Dutheil, 2001: 106). The progression of geographical shift typical of the adventure narrative does not only assume a shift in perspective and awareness of the ongoing colonial mission, but also thematic awareness and understanding of the adventure texts that have proceeded it. In following the development of the Robinsonade from *Robinson Crusoe* onwards, there is a clear and apparent progression, according to Joseph Bristow: ‘The island adventure shifts in scope and direction from a didactic tract rooted in eighteenth-century children’s literature, designed to provide moral substance to the young reader, into a story that unremittingly assumes all the knowledge the earlier novels felt obliged to teach’ (Bristow, 1991: 94). Therefore, part of *The Coral Island*’s cultural heritage, which many critics have pointed out, follows the colonial and imperial tradition to masquerade fiction as fact (McCulloch, 2000: 137). As Said claims, ‘the authority of the observer, and of European geographical centrality, is buttressed by a cultural discourse relegating and confining the non-European to a secondary racial, cultural, and ontological status’ (Said, 1994[1993]: 70). This cultural discourse extends to fiction, and particularly colonial fiction such as this, and indeed *Robinson Crusoe* before it. In *The Coral Island*, we are provided with a narrative that attempts to legitimize itself through association to the texts that influenced it. As Fiona

McCulloch states:

> The boys look at objects and provide practical details at an attempt to reduce the relational gap between sign and unknown material referent, the gaze focusing directly upon its linguistic vignette. This reflects the influences of the Robinsonade (a genre instigated by Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* [1719]) and Rousseau's recommendation of a direct language for children in *Emile* (1762) while categorically occluding the fact that language itself is inherently contradictory and problematic. (McCulloch, 2000: 138)

As McCulloch goes on to explain: 'However, out of this alleged purity [of children and children's literature in the 1850s] arises linguistic ruptures that render fixed meaning problematically unstable' (McCulloch, 2000: 138). The most significant of these linguistic ruptures, I would argue, is the use of gesture within the narrative. What is used as a tool of imperialism and domination when enacted by our protagonists is in direct contrast to the usage of fully conventionalised signs by the natives. However, as McCulloch argues, 'the island itself becomes a laboratory space where knowledge and power are exercised over the primitive native' (McCulloch, 2000: 139). Indeed, it becomes a laboratory space in which Ballantyne can exercise and articulate essential differences between his white Christian protagonists and the non-christian natives, but in the experimental setting of the contact zone, the savage's use of a conventionalised, gestural linguistic form suggests a knowledge exceeding the referential frame of Western imperialism and colonialism. It is through the use of this alternative signatory form of communication that the encounter points towards another ontological way of being in the world which is erased and diminished through the imperial setting.

As McCulloch argues, 'In Ballantyne's novel the native's voice is erased, and when focused upon at all, is only uttered through western

mimicry, an English echo chamber of authorized language' (McChulloch, 2000: 138). Indeed, this is true, in so far as the peaceful encounter which follows the conflict between the boys and a group of savages is dependent on acts of gestural mimicry to establish a mutually intelligible form of communication, and in doing so strips the nativesof their previous attribute of threat and resistance: 'However, by way of putting an end to it, Jack took the chief (who had recovered from the effects of his wound) by the hand and shook it warmly. No sooner did the blacks see that this was meant to express good-will than they shook the hands with us all round' (Ballantyne, 1990[1858]: 180). What we see here is an example of a gestural act which, under a Western gaze, is highly emblematic, ritualised, and conventional. What must have seemed to the natives as an ad hoc visual action and a contact gesture quickly establishes conventionalisation, by moving from singular to fully conventionalised in the space of a sentence within the narrative. As such the island, both contact zone, and laboratory, seems to serve as a site of cultural intersection from both sides of the encounter, rather than a contact zone of self-serving interpretation as we saw within *Robinson Crusoe*. It is Ballantyne's framing of the encounter however, in which language is actualised as an echo chamber of the English, imperial tongue. A further example of this is when, after a night of rest and food, a rudimentary exchange of communication is enacted:

> By this time the natives outside were all astir, and breakfast [was] in an advanced state of preparation. During the course of it we made sundry attempts to converse with the natives by signs, but without effect. At last we hit upon a plan of discovering their names. Jack pointed to his breast and said “Jack” very distinctly; then he pointed to Peterkin and to me, repeating our names at the same time. Then he pointed to himself again and said “Jack,” and laying his finger on the breast of the chief, looked inquiringly into his face. The chief instantly understood him, and said “Tararo” twice distinctly. (Ballantyne, 1990[1858]: 182)

This gestural encounter is one that is both significant to the text, and also complex in its role in establishing communication through pointing. When it comes to pointing, argues Adam Kendon, ‘the form of pointing adopted by a speaker is systematically related to the way the object being referred to is presented in the speaker’s discourse’ (Kendon, 2004: 201). As Kendon goes on to explain, ‘if the speaker points to an object because it is to be an example of something, or because it illustrates a concept, then the form of pointing adopted will be different from the form adopted when the speaker points to an object because it is being identified as something distinct from other objects’ (Kendon, 2004: 201). In the above extract, we see that the pointing is utilised as a co-speech gesture (used simultaneously with vocal language) to identify the boys as their own discrete individuals. Jack, as actor in this exchange, points to four different referential objects: which is to say himself, Peterkin, Ralph, and Tararo. By accenting each individual gesture as its own discrete action through accompanying verbal sound (name), we are aware of this gestural exchange happening in a way which is both conventionalised, and emblematic: it is an exchange in which the referent object is both addressed in physical space, and rendered sonically. However, there is a dissonance between Jack’s display of co-speech gestures, in that each of the boys names are stated once, meanwhile Tararo repeats his twice. This, combined with Ballantyne’s comment of ‘the chief instantly understood’

shows a disparity between how Ballantyne is portraying the natives: both able to comprehend (what we consider) simple Western gestures, and to reciprocate the gestural form, but with the speech component of the exchange at odds with that of his white protagonists, since it is modified. It is a subtle difference, but one in which highlights a distinction between the two linguistic frameworks, and sets up a barricade between the two cultural, social and linguistic histories of the two intersecting sides of the contact zone.

The other, more pronounced way Ballantyne sets up a difference between his protagonists and the natives is through a series of misunderstood gestural actions. When Jack enquires to what Avatea's name is by pointing at her, he receives not only her name, vocalized (this time) once by Tararo, but also a highly specific and therefore conventionalised kinesic action:

> Then turning towards the youngest of the women, who was seated at the door of the bower, he pointed to her; whereupon the chief said "Avatea" and pointing towards the sun, raised his finger slowly towards the zenith, where it remained for a minute or two. (Ballantyne, 1990[1858]: 182)

We are not, however, talking about a gesture which is conventionalised within a Western frame of understanding. The gesture is therefore presented as a highly irregular, almost pantomimic action, which has – under the Western gaze of our protagonists – no explicit linguistic meaning. As mentioned previously in this chapter, it is common for complex signs to be perceived as a simple, 'picture-like' language to the uninitiated observer (Rosen, 2010: 348). Peterkin, suggesting that it could be understood that she is an angel come down to earth provokes indignation in the boys through an unsatisfactory explanation, to which they enquire further: 'Jack went up to her

and said “Avatea”. The woman smiled sadly and nodded her head, at the same time pointing to her breast and then to the sun in the same manner as the chief had done’ (Ballantyne, 1990[1858]: 182). The fact that we are being presented here with a whole range of encoded kinesic action implies that there exists not only a conventionalised gestural framework outside of the Western understanding of our protagonists, but that there exists a fully formed history of culture, society and language belonging to the natives: for signs, to be fully emblematic and lexicalised, require a historical process of conventionalisation. The repetition of the gesture fails to offer any understanding to the boys, as Ralph concludes ‘we were much puzzled to know what this could signify; but as there was no way of solving our difficulty, we were obliged to rest content’ (Ballantyne, 1990[1858]: 182). Here we see evidence of what McCulloch claimed previously as the echo chamber of English voices. Not only are the natives restricted verbally to an act of mimicry; but any fully lexicalised meaning their gestures have is overlooked, downplayed as pantomime, and occluded in an encounter in which the contact zone is dominated through linguistic imperialism.

Pratt herself goes as far to argue that the contact zone – and the contact language within it - is characterized in part by a willingness to understand forms of communication outside of a dominant, primary language:

> With respects to language, for instance, a linguistics of contact would set aside the homology of one person/one language/one community and take up the fact that many, probably most, people in the world are native speakers of more than one language; the factthat nobody’s world is linguistically or socially homogenous; the fact that dominant and nondominant knowledges and lifeways are copresent in the communal (or national) social spaces; and the fact that everybody can understand many more varieties of language than they can produce. (Pratt, 1993: 89)

Whilst it is possible to read the encounter between the boys and Avatea as mutually intelligible displays of contact gesture, there is still an underlying element of gestural dissonance across the racial, social, and linguistic divide. A further example of the dissonance surrounding gestures – that is, the white protagonist's gestures are presented as fully emblematic, coded, and easy to understand across the linguistic divide whilst the natives gestures are not - is evidenced as Ralph recalls, Jack 'began to dig a hole in the sand, and after working a few seconds, he pointed to it and the dead bodies that lay exposed on the beach. The natives immediately perceived what he wanted, and running for their paddles, dug a hole in the course of half-an hour that was quite large enough to contain all the bodies of the slain' (Ballantyne, 1990[1858]: 183). The similarity of this passage to the one in *Robinson Crusoe*, in which Crusoe instructs Friday to bury the bodies of his captors is no accident. This highlights not only the intertextual assumptions made by later Robinsonades on the texts before it, but also evidences a conscious act to cement this narrative well and truly within colonial discourse. It is, at its most reductive, a narrative construction to portray the complicity of the native to the dominant, white man – even if that man is scarcely but a child, and in doing so, cements the island as a representation of the colonised, imbalanced contact zone.

As a counterpoint to the previous exchange, in which the boys' gestures are stood without fault, there is a further example of gestural dissonance which I believe is worth exploring. There is disparity between the apparent ease by which gestures and signs communicated by the boys are readily understood by the natives, as opposed to the way that the boys are

unable to understand the gestures of the natives returned to them:

> When the canoe was ready, we assisted the natives to carry the prisoners into it, and helped them to load it with provisions and fruit. […] On that day Tararo made a great many energetic signes to us, which, after much consideration, we came to understand were proposals that we should go away within him to his island; but having no desire to do so we shook our heads very decidedly. (Ballantyne, 1990[1858]: 185)

By casting the visual actions of the boys as emblematic and readily understood (much like the way in which Friday is able to understand Crusoe's gestures) we can read how Ballantyne's narrative can give shape to a discourse that serves the interest of the colonizer at the expense of the colonized. Indeed, the gestures and acts of violence enacted by Jack, Ralph and Peterkin in the prior conflict borrow heavily from tropes of savagery attributed to the figure of the native (Ballantyne, 1990[1858]: 177). It is through gesture, however, that Ballantyne can separate the boys from the natives through intellect and articulation to reinforce – what Ballantyne portrays as – an essentialist difference between white man and savage.

At the end of this encounter, we are presented with a gestural exchange which bookends the hand-shake exchange at the start of the encounter, which was referenced above. Whereas the handshake gesture is one which is presented as fully emblematic for the protagonists and recurrent/emblematic for the natives (since they almost immediately perceived it as an act of goodwill), this parting encounter once again highlights the dissonance between gestural action enacted by the two opposing sides of the contact zone. As Ralph recounts:

> In a few minutes more we were all assembled on the beach. Being unable to speak to the savages, we went through the ceremony of shaking hands, and expected they would depart; but before doing so,

> Tararo went up to Jack and rubbed noses with him, after which he did the same to Peterkin and me! Seeing that this was their mode of salutation we determined to conform to their custom so we rubbed noses heartily with the whole party, women and all! (Ballantyne, 1990[1858]: 186)

By this point, the handshake can be regarded as fully emblematic owing to the fact that the natives, once exposed to it, are reusing it fluently. The phrase 'ceremony' here is significant here as unlike the other gestural encounters in the text, it portrays it as fully understood, ritualised, and incorporated into both parties linguistic and gestural framework. As Pratt says of the contact zone and the collision within it: 'while subjugated peoples cannot readily control what emanates from the dominant culture, they do determine to varying extents what they absorb into their own, and what they use it for' (Pratt, 1992: 6). As such, we see an example here of the way in which a subjugated culture can determine what can be absorbed, through the repeated use of the handshake gesture. Given the context of the exchange, we can see how Ballantyne is attempting to portray the custom of nose-rubbing as one of curious difference.

The implication here is that the gesture – which is also evidence of a larger, fully formed framework of linguistic and signatory forms existing outside of the Western gaze of Ballantyne's protagonists – is by association "improper", for the collapse of personal space is at odds with the didactic, moralistic form of Ballantyne's novel. The previous extract also exudes an air of erotic fascination: "women and all!" complete with its gaudy exclamation mark implies a closeness of encounter which would be otherwise forbidden. McCulloch was right when she claimed that the island was a "laboratory space"; but it seems, that despite Ballantyne's intentions to create a divide of racial, linguistic and cultural histories (which he later manages to do in the

text), the gestural encounter and the contact zone has instead served its purpose as a space in which contact gesture has been recast as a tool of imperialism. As Pratt states: 'It depends on what workings of language you want to see, or want to see first, on what you choose to define as normative' (Pratt, 1991: 38). It seems that from the Western perspective, the kinesic signs and gestures of the natives are occluded with *The Coral Island*: they are seen by our protagonists, but they are not normative, and they are not understood. But just because a language is not labelled as readily understood or normative within colonial and imperial discourse – fictional or factual - does not mean that there isn't a larger, wider lexical, cultural and linguistic framework just past the periphery edge of the Western, phonocentric gaze. However, whilst the signs in *The Coral Island* can be read to reinforce the imperial hegemony we have seen in *Robinson Crusoe*, they foreground the fact that the profusion of "native" signing signals difference, resistance, and an alternative ontological way of being in the world.

She

I mentioned earlier, in the introduction, that there has been a history of conflating deafness with ideas of savagery. As Cindee Calton summarizes, 'The association of gesturing with "savage" people and the assumption that if gestures preceded spoken words, they must somehow be inferior to spoken words, feed the negative image of gestures' (Calton, 2015: 121). Indeed, Calton goes as far as to paraphrase Douglas Banton, who claimed that 'historically, gesticulation has been erroneously equated with "savage" peoples (Banton in Calton, 2015: 121). What these arguments show is not only the historical privileging of auditory based linguistic modes, but that there

has been an unfair correlation established between intelligence and linguistic form. *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Coral Island* both subscribe to this historical notion that sign language is the modality of the "savage", and that one must communicate in this visual, pre-oral modality within an encounter: an act which is a discursive and political tool of imperialism and colonialism. Where this overlap of stereotypes (backwards, savage, deaf, unintelligent) becomes most intriguing however, is in H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1886). Therefore, the contribution of this section will lie in my analysis of the deaf-mute serving girls of Ayesha, and how the gestural encounter is one of a different kind. Instead of the island as contact zone, this time the encounter is located in the contact zone between the world of the hearing and the world of the deaf.

Whilst this is an adventure narrative in the sense that we see white male protagonists inserted into a far and "exotic" land, the mission is not one of colonisation as per *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Coral Island*. As argued by Bruce Mazlish, Haggard himself, along with other late 19th century thinkers, such as Freud and Bulwer-Lytton:

> were men who were concerned with civilization, which they saw being threatened by irrational and mysterious powers. They all drew upon culture of their time in order to master that threat. The themes they treated heterogeneous and hopelessly mixed. One can identify their feelings about sex, death, depths, and domination as psychological; but they are linked ideas about race, gender, and imperialism (Mazlish, 1993: 727)

One of the significant features about *She*, as Mazlish goes on to explain, is that 'the novel is presented as an authentic history, a tried convention, of course, going back to the early years of the genre' (Mazlish, 1993: 732). What is significant however, is for all its heritage in the tradition of adventure fiction, *She's* deaf-mute serving girls present a radically different imagining of

adventure fiction's native and savage. The portrayal of the deaf-mutes is one that is interesting, being that whilstit is intrinsically woven into a dialogue of gender, desire, and sexuality, it has been notably overlooked in previous studies of *She*, and therefore a significant point of enquiry.

The first deaf-mute encountered is a man, as Holly recalls: 'On entering the cave itself we were, however, met by a man robed in white, who bowed humbly, but said nothing, which as it afterwards appeared that he was a deaf mute, was not very wonderful' (Haggard, 2001[1886]: 136). This is the first encounter with one of the deaf-mute characters within the text and it is of note, that for all the signifiers of difference, he is portrayed as aware of bowing as a gestural action that can cross a linguistic divide. Despite adhering to social convention through the act of bowing, Haggard still manages to mark this character as other through the phrase "not very wonderful" refers to the fact that silence is unsurprising as he is mute and therefore outside of the frame of Western, audiocentric normativity. As Oliver Sacks states, 'the languageless deaf may indeed be as if imbecilic – and in a particularly cruel way, in that intelligence, though present and perhaps abundant, is locked up so long as the lack of language lasts' (Sacks, 2011: 17). Holly's comment on the male servant seems to subscribe to this notion – that a lack of spoken, auditory language is an inherently negative quality. However, Ayesha's servants, although deaf-mute, still possess a larger framework of language thanthat which appears across the ocular, referential frame of our Western protagonists.

We are first signaled to a visual change in the deaf-mutes a couple of pages on, both in terms of their physical appearance, and to the gesture employed. By this point, the gesture enacted appears in a more complex

form, instead of a simple action of civility, and this character possesses a seemingly lexical structure to her gestural actions. However, the gestural action – which is clearly conventionalised in that it is readily understood across the linguistic divide – is portrayed as not much more than an erotically charged pantomime: '…another mute, a young girl this time, announced to me by signs that I could not misunderstand – that is, by opening her mouth and pointing down to it – that there was something ready to eat.' (Haggard, 2001[1886]: 139). Despite the efficacy of this gestural exchange, in which the intended message is transgressed across the deaf/hearing divide, the action itself becomes waylaid by the sexualization of the serving girl. This sexualization is then expounded upon by a further statement, in which Holly recounts '…I found Job, who had also, to his great embarrassment, been conducted thither by a fair mute.' (Haggard, 2001[1886]: 139). Note here that we are aware of a shift in language: Haggard's deaf-mutes are now"fair", and this leads on to a more significant point. As Holly explains, 'Job had never got over the advances the former lady had made towards him, and suspected every girl who came near to him of similar designs', to which Job explains: 'These young parties have a way of looking at one, sir,' he would say apologetically, 'which I don't find respectable." (Haggard, 2001[1886]: 139). At the sign- post of male sexual competition between Holly and Job, the description of the serving girls gets more and more lavish, and their numbers increase:

> A few paces more and we came to another doorway facing us, and not to our left like the others, which seemed to mark the termination of the passage. Here two more white-, or rather yellowed robed guards were standing, and they too bowed, saluted, and let us pass through heavy curtains into a great antechamber, quite forty feet long by as many wide, inwhich some eight or ten women, most them young and handsome, with yellowish hair, saton cushions working

> with ivory needles at what the appearance of being embroidery-frames. These women were also deaf and dumb. (Haggard, 2001[1886]: 143)

The guards, by way of comparison at this point, seem to be neglected in Haggard's description, passed over with not much more than perfunctory glance; their actions reduced to a simple gesture of civility and respect, as the male-gaze of Haggard's protagonist intensifies. It culminates in a climax of male symbolic desire, the serving girls the embodiment of the sexual potency of the Other: 'At the farther end of the great lamp-lit apartment […] stood two particularly handsome girl mutes, their heads bowed upon their bosoms and their hands crossed in an attitude of the humblest submission' (Haggard, 2001[1886]: 143). We are at this point aware of a duality of desires arising out of Haggard's text, the desire of the exotic, foreign Other, and the simultaneous desires of male dominance and female subjugation. Ayesha's serving girls are figured as the object of male fantasy: the dumb, silenced, deaf woman who is subservient and submissive. Freud points out that there is an air of sexual desire around the serving girl as a profession:

> The practicing psycho-analytic physician knows how frequently, or how invariably, a girl who enters a household as a servant, companion or governess, will consciously or unconsciously weave a day-dream, which derives from the Oedipus complex, of the mistress of the house disappearing and the master taking the newcomer as his wife in her place. (Freud, 2001[1957]: 330)

What we are dealing with Freud's analysis I would argue, is more directly concerned with the male fantasy of the serving girl than the desires of the serving girl themselves, given Freud's proclivity to objectify women in his own analysis. Freud's statement is a double-bind, in which the statement itself evidences the older male's desire *towards* the serving girl rather than evidencing the opposite. What is interesting however is that in the

fetishization of the deaf-mute serving girls, Haggard opensup a desire which not only highlights class and culture differences, but also unashamedly objectifies and problematizes deafness, whilst fetishizing female passivity.

Haggard is explicit as representing deafness as a signifier of un-natural being. As Ayesha explains of her servants, they are created through design:

> …They are mutes thou knowest, deaf they are and dumb, and therefore the safest of servants, save to those who can read their faces and signs. I bred them so – it hath taken many centuries and much trouble; but at last I have triumphed. Once I succeeded before, but the race was too ugly, so I let it die away; but now as thou seest, they are otherwise. Once too, I reared a race of giants but after a while Nature would no more of it, and it diedaway… (Haggard, 2001[1886]: 157)

But it is perhaps by a cruel irony, that through a manipulation of the stereotypes of the deaf and mute that Haggard also creates characters which are both simultaneously the object of desire but also unobtainable – the serving girls themselves are never communicated to, and at the most, invoke fear and trepidation in one of Haggard's male protagonists.

As Holterhoff points out, Haggard was inspired by Darwinism and on the theories of evolution and natural selection (Holterhoff, 2017: 314). However, what we see in the creation of the deaf-mutes and the other failed experiments, is a re-imagining of evolution and eugenicist thought. The aim of eugenics, Garland-Thomson writes, 'was to scientifically "improve" or purify the race' (1997: 156n21). Eugenics is merely the theory of Darwinian evolution applied to biology, in which 'Darwin's ideas serve to place disabled people along the wayside as evolutionary defectives to be surpassed by natural selection' (Davis, 1995: 31). In *She*, the deaf-mute serving girls are an embodiment of the fear of eugenics presented as deeply unnatural and abject

– simultaneously both perfect but also flawed in the eyes of our protagonists.

It is worth noting that Pratt acknowledges that language is often manifested in a normative way, which is to say, 'the prototypical manifestation of language is generally taken to be the speech of individual adult native speakers face-to-face (as in Saussure's famous diagram) in monolingual, even monodialectical situations – in short, the most homogenous case linguistically and socially' (Pratt, 1991: 38). However, the deaf-mutes of Ayesha upset this manifestation, in that their language exists not only outside of an audible frame of reference, but also as a fully codified, lexicalised, sign-based structureto which Holly, Job, and Leo are excluded. But the deaf-mutes are not created entirely as non- linguistic shells of the female body, purely for male consumption: Ayesha goes as far to explain that they can be communicated with, by those who can "read their faces and signs". It seems strange that Holly, despite his polyglot characterization cannot, and does not seek to, communicate with theservants of Ayesha, despite being able to communicate with her-- as well as the Amahagger.

Whilst the serving-girls and male guards are presented through the gaze of Haggard's protagonists as without-language, this is not the case. As Evelyn J. Hinz argues, the serving girls' function within the text is to constitute part of the punishment evoked by Ayesha. In her quest to change the natural law she finds herself trapped in Kor, in a monolithic contact zone which is also devoid of meaningful communication:

> Ayesha's punishment too is an appropriately Western and temporal one. In attempting to destroy death, she destroys life; in trying to escape natural change she has cast herself intostasis. A virgin goddess, attended only by deaf-mutes, who lives unchanging with the embalmed body of her lover in the tombs of Kor, Ayesha is […] the perfect example of the punishment consequent to attempts to alter the eternal law of repetitious change. (Hinz: 1972: 422)

What we can read from Hinz's analysis is that by equating the deaf-mutes who attend her to part ofher punishment, the servants are thus stripped of any agency that may be afforded to them by virtue of the fact that their linguistic framework exists outside of the normative, referential mode of communication. They become, by virtue of their physical and linguistic differences, reduced to an othered, non-linguistic identity. As Lennard Davis argues, 'even a person who is missing a limb, or is physically 'different' still has to put on, assume, the disabled body and identify with it' (Davis, 1995: 140). As such, the identity afforded to the deaf-mutes by the narrative is one which equates deafness with submission, subjugation and passivity. However, I would argue that we can re-read the deaf-mutes. The very inclusion of their gestural, signed exchanges within the text argues for a prototypical culture of the deaf: and it argues for their own history, one which is inscribed and enacted by the movement of their hands to communicate through a conventionalised, coherent system of sign.

What is of particular interest is how the narrative depicts instances of gestural communication as normative following Ayesha's death. Once Leo and Holly make it out of the caves and to the encampment, they are greeted by Billali and the deaf-mutes, the deaf-mutes being 'motioned […] to carry us to the camp, which they did' and being 'bade [to] wash the blood and grime' from our protagonists (Haggard, 2001[1886]: 307). This particular exchange is notable for the fact that the Amahagger are also fluent in the conventionalised sign language of the deaf-mutes. Therefore, we can read this as the Amahagger, although characterized in the mode of the "savage", also possess a larger understanding of linguisticmodes than our white

protagonists. The end result being that sign language, portrayed as the linguistic medium of the deaf-mutes and the Amahagger is positioned within an audist hierarchy which privileges the spoken, English language.

Many languages – themselves thought dead, yet spoken by the tongue of Ayesha – are erased as she steps into the pillar of fire. The languages that survive however, are the dialect of the Amahagger, and the gestural and signatory sign language, enacted by the Amahagger and deaf-mute servants respectively, who have survived the destruction of Ayesha. As the hearing/deaf contact zone can never be crossed over and colonised by our protagonists, the linguistic culture and history of the deaf-mute servants becomes untouched by imperial and colonial ambition, surviving as a language and linguistic form on the fringes of civilisation, deep within the African sub-continent, an ontological form that resists the normative and audist practices of privileging speech over sign.

Concluding Thoughts

This chapter has explored how the theory of the contact zone can be used to interrogate imperial encounters in *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Coral Island,* and *She*. As well as exploring these texts relationship to Pratt's work on the contact zone, it has attempted to situate an understanding of these gestural and signed encounters both in discourses of colonialism and discourses surrounding gesture and sign. It has shown that through an understanding of the often-assumed putative nature of gestural and signatory forms of communication a form of linguistic imperialism re-entrenches audist preconceptions. In addition to this, by exploring the use of various gestural forms across the contact zone, this chapter come to show how an

understanding of the contact gesture and emblematic gestures used within these narrative encounters both underscores and legitimises an imperial and colonial construction of difference and domination forging highly asymmetrical powerrelations. The following chapters seek to take this argument forward, to explore how this conceptualisation of the contact zone and can problematize and re-interrogate gestural and signed encounters within human/animal narratives, science fiction, and finally, within deaf literature itself. In doing so, this thesis moving forwards seeks to read these encounters in ways which can signal a difference in ontological and epistemological ways of being in the world.

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Chapter 2: The *Enfant Sauvage*: Gesture, Language, and the Human/Animal Divide in *The Jungle Books* and *Tarzan of the Apes*

This chapter will explore two key embodiments of wild child, or *enfant sauvage* literature: Mowgli, from Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Books* (1894-5), and Tarzan from Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan of The Apes* (1912). Both texts are enduring within popular culture and are particularly notable in the scope of this thesis for the ways they facilitate and explore cross-cultural communication, most notably the divide between human and non-human animals but also between putatively different races of peoples. Whilst the encounters here are notably different to those I have discussed in the previous chapter, I am once again concerned with the ways that language and communication are often predicated on ideas of normalcy, and how the contact zone can be used to re-read these encounters as disruptive. Whilst these texts exhibit a commonly held preconception that speech and language is a determining factor in the social and cultural make-up of the human, it is through the methodology adopted in the first chapter that I can re-read non-normative communicative forms as part of an ontological diversity. Much in the way that analysis of gesture and sign in the first chapter started to highlight the complexities of equating non-verbal communication as a trope of the savage, this chapter will also start to expose the complexities of equating meaningful communication (in both visual and auditory mediums) as a uniquely human, anthropocentric phenomenon.

Whilst both *The Jungle Books* and *Tarzan* do share a number of literary similarities, namely concerning overall themes, settings, and narrative concerns, there are a number of thematic and didactic differences to consider. *The Jungle Books* is a collection of two sets of short stories originally penned for the young male reader of imperialist Britain. Kipling, himself a Bombay-born child of two

ex-pat British colonists, is well positioned within the imperial concerns of Victorian Britain. A close friendship to Baden-Powell, who founded the scout movement and used themes from *The Jungle Books* in scouting since 1916 borrowing the history and universe of the stories as a motivational theme for his junior scout members (Brogan, 1987). In comparison, Burroughs' *Tarzan of The Apes* was widely regarded as "pulp fiction"; a genre of novels and novellas dependent on sensationalism, which has been in no small part responsible for its transition into tele-visual media from the 1918 film adaption, to most recently 2016's *The Legend Of Tarzan*. Whilst both of these texts seem to be advocating an almost-Rousseauean return to nature, it is apparent that there are didactic differences to consider. It is almost ironic to consider then, that both of these narratives – one framed as a collection of *bildungsroman* stories, the other framed as a sensationalist adventure novel – have both in their lifetimes in the popular imagination been commodified and re-codified as family entertainment by Disney in the forms of animated movies. Whilst it is important to consider the ways in which these narratives have enjoyed a long and prolific period of existing in the public imagination it is important to separate these texts from their representations in other media – namely for the differences between the texts themselves and the ways in which they appear within popular culture.

The main similarity between these two texts is, of course, the "wild" state of our literary protagonists, and the redemptive narrative arc as they both "become human". As we will see throughout these narratives, the majority of communication enacted by both Tarzan and Mowgli occur prior to their acquisition of human language and these gestural and non-normative forms of communication are therefore figured as pre-human, and pre-civilized. However, this thesis takes the position that sign language, gesture, and other non-

normative forms of communication can be viewed as ontologically meaningful as part of an ongoing disruption to normative discourse which favours spoken and verbal language. Through a number of encounters, we will see contact zones constructed across this divide: civilised and spoken language on one side of the encounter, wild and non-normative communicative forms on the other. These contact zones will allow us to re-read and question the presumption that a meaningful ontological existence is not only predicated on access to a formalised, spoken, verbal language, but also a uniquely human phenomenon.

The Contact Zone

Although we have seen the contact zone in the previous chapter, it will do no harm here to reiterate the way in which it is defined by Mary Louise Pratt. The contact zone is an intermediary locus where separate cultures meet and are often at conflict with each other owing to asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination 'like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today' (Pratt, 1992: 4). Whilst the contact zone functions as a space which highlights asymmetrical relations and imbalances of power, the contact zone is, above all, 'an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect' (Pratt, 1992: 7). This disjuncture, to borrow Pratt's term, will also be extended to cover not only the geographical and historical as we have seen in the previous chapter, but also to include differences in species and differences in ontological worlds, particularly those between human and non-human animals. It is also useful here to turn to Donna Haraway, and particularly her specific definition of the contact zone, as it appears in her 2008 work, *When Species Meet.* In discussion of her relationship with her dog Cayenne, Haraway extends the

definition of the contact zone to companion species as a site of 'mortal world-making entanglements' (Harraway, 2008: 4). This is further expanded upon when she clarifies that the contact zone is 'where the action is, and current interactions change interactions to follow. Probabilities alter; topologies morph; development is canalized by the fruits of reciprocal induction' (Harraway, 2008: 219). These world-making entanglements which constitute the contact zone are, for Haraway, an example of what has been termed natureculture: the idea that nature and culture are so intrinsically interwoven that they cannot be figured as discrete elements. As Haraway recalls of a time she met a friend's dog, the world making entanglement is apparent:

> visually fingering Jim's dog involves touching all the important ecological and political histories and struggles of ordinary small cities that have asked, Who should eat whom, and who should cohabit? The rich naturalcultural contact zones multiply with each tactile look. (Harraway, 2008: 6-7)

As I will highlight later in this chapter, these questions raised by Haraway are returned to again and again, particularly during human/animal encounters, in which there is often a cultural and inter-relational hierarchy assumed within the fictional jungle. It is also important here to comment that these contact zones are heavily reliant on touching: the tactile look, to borrow Haraway's phrase. As Haraway argues, 'The animals, humans, and machines are all enmeshed in hermeneutic labor (and play) by the material–semiotic requirements of getting on together in specific lifeworlds. They touch; therefore they are. It's about the action in contact zones.' (Harraway, 2008: 262-3). It is these tactile, kinesic interactions which are particularly interesting to the focus of this thesis. Borrowing from studies in animal cognition, we can also classify 'Touch' as a form of gestural communication (Bard et.al). Much in the way of other gestural and signed forms of communication, Touch is also dependent on a shared

understanding and mutuality between different parties. If we exclude other gestural clues (facial expression, body language, etc.) there is a difference between an affectionate tap or an irritated poke on one's shoulder. It is this mutuality between intention and response and the shared understanding that results of this which means we can classify Touch as meaningful, and part of a shared gestural repertoire. As we will see shortly, Touch is an important form of communication within these fictional contact zones, particularly in the contact zone between human and non-human animals.

Wild Child & Language

Before I delve into the encounters themselves, I believe it is important to take a short diversion here to look at the trope of the Wild Child as it is underscores both narratives. As well as being the main similarity between *The Jungle Books* and *Tarzan of the Apes*, the trope of the Wild Child, or *enfant sauvage* is also part of a rich and storied cultural mythos.

We can see throughout Western history that there are repeated references to the trope of the wild child, perhaps most notably in the narrative of Romulus and Remus. The founding mythology of Rome is predicated on the fact that despite their upbringing with wolves in the wilderness, Romulus still possessed a divine right to rule owing to the fact his father was Mars, the Roman god of war. One of the recurring aspects we see in narratives such as that of Romulus and Remus is that there is still a degree of determinism at play - an idea of civilization and culture that is innate, despite the upbringing in wilderness, by animals (Newton, 2002: 3). This idea that an infant who has been raised by animals can still prosper and develop into an "ideal" human is a recurrent element not only in many of the wild child myths, but also something we see in both *The Jungle Books* and *Tarzan of the Apes*. This is something

that I will return to later in this chapter when I start to explore in detail the encounters between humans and non-human animals.

It is also important here to foreground this chapter by addressing the fact that there is a long legacy of equating civilization to formalised, meaningful language. There have also been, throughout history, various attempts to find the origin of language, or the idea of a “divine” and “natural” language. This leads to two different disjunctures of thought, both of which are relevant to this chapter. The first disjuncture is that there have been, according to Roger Shattuck, various experiments conducted throughout history to find a natural or divine language or form of communication. These experiments involved isolating infants from the normal use of spoken or signed language to discover the fundamental character of human nature or the origin of language. According to Roger Shattuck, this type of experiment, referred to as the ‘Forbidden Experiment’ hypothesises that separating ‘an infant very early from its mother’ and letting the infant ‘develop in nature, with no human contact, no education, no help’ would reveal some fundamental truth of the human condition and language: quite simply if language is innate (Shattuck, 1980: 43). These experiments were inconclusive, or at the very least subject to wilful interpretation to garner any results and often were deliberately and wilfully misinterpreted to serve political-religious agendas.

The other disjuncture is the idea that gesture may point to an origin of language - one that is from a natural evolutionary process of communication instead of a divine origin. As pointed out by Gesture Studies academic Adam Kendon, this suggestion arose in the eighteenth century, as thinkers began to hypothesise that in gesture, ‘it might be possible to see how a form of symbolic communication might have begun and how the transition scold have been made

from ‘natural’ signs to the share or ‘instituted’ signs that make up a language’ (Kendon, 2004: 35). This then led to the idea that gesture ‘being natural, might offer a form of expression not yet distorted by the conventions of language,’ and in turn it ‘could form the basis for a universal form of language’ (Kendon, 2004: 35). As Kendon goes on to explain, the idea that gesture might serve as a precursor to much of western language carried on into the 19th century, as the American ethnologist Garrick Mallery (1831-1894) ‘is inclined to think expression in gesture reveals mental processes that are characteristic of an earlier stage of human mental evolution’, which is a point echoed by psychologist Wilhelm Wundt (1832 - 1920) who ‘saw gesture as a step along the way from elementary physiological reactions to fully evolved language’ (Kendon, 2004: 61). The fact that as Kendon points out there was a ‘turn against sign language’ and ideas of gesture as the origins of language ‘fell into disrepute’ meant that by the end of the nineteenth century there was sharp decline of academic interest in gestures and sign language which lasted until the late decades of the twentieth century (Kendon, 2004: 61). It will serve us well then contextually to bear these thoughts in mind as I move into analysing these texts themselves: at the time of these narratives being written and published, gesture is often regarded as a primitive form of communication, and ideas surrounding the origins of language are untethered from any real and empirical understanding.

Another point worth bearing out here is that the encounters between Mowgli and Tarzan and other non-human animals are predicated on a preoccupation with the divide between human and animal. The depictions of Mowgli and Tarzan constantly return to the focus of the idea of human-as-animal and the gradual transition made by these protagonists to a more human-

as-human state of being, and indeed the redemptive narrative arc that this creates. A useful way for conceptualising this in terms of these contact zones is though the Heideggerian term of *dasein*. Whilst there are many explanations and ways in which *dasein* has been utilised, this chapter will primarily use two main points put forth by Heidegger. Firstly, that *dasein* is a uniquely human phenomenon of being human: 'man is not merely a part of the world but is also master and servant of the world in the sense of "having" world. Man has world' (Heidegger, 1995[1983]: 177). The second point is that as Heidegger famously proclaimed: 'the animal is poor in world' (Heidegger, 1995[1983]: 177). Taken together Heidegger's argument is inherently and explicitly bound to discovering, or at least attesting to, the distinction between human and animal. One of the most significant distinctions, and the one that this chapter is most interested in, is rooted in Heidegger's observation that 'The animal can neither perhaps observe itself, nor communicate any such observations to us. And even if the animal expresses itself and announces itself, as it seems to us, in a variety of expressive sounds and movement, it is we who must first interpret and analyse such forms of expression' (Heidegger, 1995[1983]: 179). It is the lack of meaningful communication, which constitutes part of the distinction between animal and human, bound up in the lack, or deprivation innate to the animal experience. 'What is poor here', Heidegger claims, 'by no means represents merely what is 'less' or 'lesser' with respect to what is 'more' or 'greater'. Being poor does not simply mean possessing noting, or little, or less than another. Rather being poor means being deprived' (Heidegger, 1995[1983]: 195). This poverty, or deprivation of world is crucial to setting up this distinction between animal and human, because 'if poverty implies deprivation then the thesis that 'the animal is poor in the world' means something like 'the animal is deprived of

world'' (Heidegger, 1995[1983]: 196). This is a crucial distinction as Heidegger goes on to explain that it means, by the inverse, that 'man does have a world' (Heidegger, 1995[1983]: 196). Quite simply, man exists as unique and of the highest order *because* there exists a lower order of existence. The most crucial observation however, is that Heidegger eventually concludes that 'It is only from the human perspective that the animal is poor with respect to the world, yet animal being itself is not a deprivation of world' (Heidegger, 1995[1983]: 270-1). Therefore the human exceptionalism that leads to the lack or deprivation of animals is based in language, and this lack of meaningful language is what produces the boundary between human and animal. Animals as poor in world through a deprivation, or lack, of *meaningful* language.

However it is apparent that Heidegger's portrayal of the relationship and distinction between human and animal is never straightforward or simple. As Stuart Elden explains in his 2006 article, 'Heidegger's Animals': 'Animals are not distinct from humans in any straightforward way in Heidegger's analysis, but only through a comparison to the particular mode of existence of humans' (Elden, 2006: 276). Whilst there are ways in which animals can share certain components of the *dasein's* way of being, 'the point, for Heidegger though', as Elden claims, 'is that unless animals share of all of Dasein's way of being, the animal is not Dasein' (Elden, 2006: 277). As Elden goes on to explain, 'Animals thus differ from humans in the very mode of their existence, as well as in the secondary question of world' (Elden, 2006: 277). However, whilst much of Heidegger's assessment and analysis in the separation between human and animal is rooted in the metaphysical discussion of what constitutes world, my focus here is how the literary depictions of language, and meaningful communication between humans and animal can complicate the assumed

anthropocentrism that runs not only central to Heidegger's work but is also entrenched within much of Western cultural and societal beliefs.

One of the key aspects of human exceptionalism therefore is that there exists an ontological distinction between humans and animals: and that ontology is predicated on meaningful language. It is through the narratives of Mowgli and Tarzan however that these distinctions become more complicated. It is through the world-making power of language that complicates not only ideas of human exceptionalism, but also of linguistic superiority. As pointed out by Desmond Morris in the introduction to *Peoplewatching*, 'the human species is an extraordinary animal; but all other species are also extraordinary animals, each in their own way' (2002[1977]: xvii) These narratives are presented as a variation of the age-old question – what would happen to a child left to nature, outside of human civilisation and culture? But we can instead read them not as a Rousseauean return to nature as is often wont to do, but instead we can re-interoperate those narratives as symbolic and representative of the struggle of as minority within a majority culture, and there we can draw our parallels and inform our reading through deaf and disability studies. The jungle as a contact zone is disabling for the protagonists of Mowgli and Tarzan. Despite being raised by animals and therefore assimilated into the dominant culture of the jungle they are still a minority identity hybridised into a majority culture, yet appearing within linguistically symbolic narratives with a potentiality for disruption.

We see throughout the texts several examples of the protagonists constructed in terms of inferiority and alterity to the animal inhabitants of the jungle. Mowgli is referred to as 'little frog' in remark to his furless body, and Father Wolf remarks 'I could kill him with a touch of my foot' (Kipling,

1998[1894]: 6). Even though he eventually assimilated into the wolf pack and life in the jungle, it is language such as this that means Mowgli's body is cast as a corporeal signifier of his otherness and alterity. In much of *The Jungle Book* stories, Mowgli is presented as being aware that he is a man, and reminded as such by Bagheera on several occasions (Kipling, 1998[1894]: 22). His identity is never quite brought into contention in ways similar to that of Tarzan, as Mowgli is aware of his alterity to the animal inhabitants of the jungle. As Bagheera tells Mowgli, 'the others hate thee because their eyes cannot meet thine; because thou art wise […] thou art a man' (Kipling, 1998[1894]: 23). Despite the assimilation into the jungle and the wolf pack, it is through the fact that he is "a man" that is ultimately empowering in the contact zone of the jungle. In *Tarzan of the Apes* the idea of bodily otherness is explicated further when Tarzan has a moment of mis/recognition whilst staring at his own reflection in a pool of water. As Burroughs states, 'In the higher land which his tribe frequented was a little lake, and it was here that Tarzan first saw his face in the clear, still waters of its bosom.' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 49). Here, Burroughs utilises the duplicity of referential frame: we have the narrative voice, in which Tarzan is known and portrayed to the reader as human, contrasted with Tarzan's own internal voice, in which his sense of self is configured in accordance with the apes which are his adopted family. As Burroughs tells us, from the narrative voice:

> It was on a sultry day of the dry season that he and one of his cousins had gone down to the bank to drink. As they leaned over, both little faces were mirrored on the placid pool; the fierce and terrible features of the ape beside those of the aristocratic scion of an old English house. (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 50)

However, if we compare this to the internal voice and referential frame of Tarzan, we become aware of a contradictory display of qualities and traits, as Burroughs states 'Tarzan was appalled. It had been bad enough to be hairless,

but to own such a countenance! He wondered that the other apes could look at him at all.' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 50). Burroughs develops Tarzan's own referential frame as he expands on Tarzan's self-assumed bodily deviancy: 'That tiny slit of a mouth and those puny white teeth! How they looked beside the mighty lips and powerful fangs of his more fortunate brothers!' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 50). Again, Burroughs utilises Tarzan's interior voice as he contrasts his facial features compared to the apes: 'And the little pinched nose of him; so thin that it looked half starved. He turned red as he compared it with the beautiful broad nostrils of his companion. Such a generous nose! Why it spread half across his face! It must certainly be fine to be so handsome, thought poor little Tarzan.' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 50). The final comparison that Burroughs makes within Tarzan's own narrative voice is the realisation that Tarzan's eyes, dull in comparison, seemed lifeless and terrible: 'But when he saw his own eyes; ah that was the final blow – a brown spot, a gray circle and then blank whiteness! Frightful! Not even the snakes had such hideous eyes as he.' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 50). It is this Lacanian moment that Tarzan experiences what is termed the Mirror Stage, in which an external image of the body (reflected in a mirror, or represented to the infant through the mother or primary caregiver) produces a psychic response that gives rise to the mental representation of an "I" (Lacan, 1973: 77). However, there is a disconnect at this moment when Tarzan's own image of his self is at odds with his imagined body, and his own idea of self, which according to Elizabeth Grosz, is based on both individual and collective ideals of the visible body (Grosz, 1994: 40). It is at the contact between his imagined self and his corporeal self that Tarzan's human identity encounters his animalistic identity. This moment of recognition is laden

with phrases that highlight an assumed inferiority in juxtaposition with his simian counterparts, and language that evokes impairment and disability.

This mis/recognition is only corrected later in the narrative when Tarzan finds a child's picture book in the abandoned cabin on his parents. As he flicks through the pictures of the book, his mis-identity as ape becomes brought into contention:

> The pictures interested him greatly. There were many apes with faces similar to his own, and further over in the book he found, under 'M', some little monkeys such as he saw daily flitting through the trees of his primeval forest. But nowhere was pictured any of his own people; in all the book was none that resembled Kerchak, or Tublat, or Kala. (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 59-60)

This burgeoning moment of self-recognition is further expanded upon when he views the illustration for "BOY" in the alphabet book:

> In his hands was a primer opened at a picture of a little ape similar to himself, but covered, except for hands and face, with strange, colored fur, for which he thought the jacket and trousers to be. Beneath the picture were three little bugs – BOY. (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 68).

The bugs that are referred to are Tarzan's own identification for letters – for initially they are without meaning to him. However, upon slowly and laboriously teaching himself to read, there becomes a point, Burroughs tells us, at the age of seventeen, 'he had learned to read the simple, child's primer and had fully realized the true and wonderful purpose of the little bugs' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 70). The result of this, Burroughs tells us, is that Tarzan manages to correct his own mis/recognition and through the act of reading goes through a supplementary mirror stage in which his psychic and mental representation of himself is now equated to his physical corporeal body. 'No longer did he feel shame for his hairless body or his human features, for now his reason told him that was of a different race from his wild and hairy companions. He was M-A-N,

they were A-P-E-S' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 70-71). However, despite this corrected recognition of self, it is still entirely based around visual signifiers of identity, something which becomes apparent when Tarzan encounters some black natives.

In a chance encounter which echoes the footprint in the sand in *Robinson Crusoe*, Tarzan 'found footprints such as he alone in all the jungle he had ever made […] could it be that he was trailing a MAN – one of his own race?' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 96). It is when Tarzan finally encounters the native that we become aware of a contact zone in which racial discourse and the imperial gaze proliferates. The imperial gaze, as Anne Kaplan argues, 'reflects the assumption that the white western subject is central much as the male gaze assumes the centrality of the male subject' (Kaplan, 2009). We see that the contact zone here is constructed in such a way to recentre the white male subject of Tarzan: 'Tarzan looked with wonder upon the strange creature beneath him – so like him in form and yet so different in face and colour […] hideous thing of ebony, pulsing with life' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 96). It is this dependence on visual signifiers of identity and the imperial gaze that the contact zone is constructed in a way that Tarzan's own whiteness is *de facto* norm. For instance, when the landing party of seamen travelling with Jane, Clayton and Porter first land on the beach Tarzan's reaction is of complete inversion to that of the black native: 'most wonderful of all, a number of white men like himself were moving about the beach and his cabin' and that his 'first impulse' was to 'rush forward and greet these white men as brothers' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 140). This moment of recognition is significant in the narrative as it is not only crucial in facilitating Tarzan eventual construction as

human, but also leads to a series of encounters within the contact zone which are instrumental in Tarzan transcending the disabling affect of the jungle.

One of the other most crucial narrative points shared by both of these texts is that the facilitation to becoming "human" for both Mowgli and Tarzan is predicated on tool-use. To borrow from DS terminology, their bodies require prostheticization to overcome the disabling nature of the jungle. The line between biology and tool is an inherently human phenomenon, as 'our best tools and technologies literally become us [...] a constantly negotiable collection of resources easily able to straddle and criss-cross the boundaries between biology and artefact' (Clark, 2013: 124). In *The Jungle Books*, this happens in 'Mowgli's Brothers', where Mowgli's use of fire sets himself apart from the rest of the animal inhabitants of the jungle. Stealing a firepot from a nearby village hut – Mowgli tends to the fire over several days planning to use it to protect Akela from Shere Khan and the dissenting wolves. We become aware of the disconnect between Mowgli and the animal inhabitants of the jungle as Kipling tells us 'by Red Flower Bagheera meant fire, only no creature in the jungle will call fire by its proper name. Every beast lives in fear of it' (Kipling, 1998[1894]: 13). Brandishing fire to the dissenting wolf pack who are attempting to kill Akela, Mowgli proclaims 'Ye have told me so often to-night that I am a man […] so I do not call ye my brothers any more, but *sag* [dogs, as a man should […] I, the man, have brought hear a little of the Red Flower which ye, dogs, fear' (Kipling, 1998[1894]: 17). Brandishing a blazing branch as a torch, Mowgli is able to save Akela's life, and it is through this tool use and prostheticization that Mowgli has a revelatory moment that he is not of the jungle, but of man as he proclaims 'I see that ye are dogs. I go from you to my own people – if they be my own people' (Kipling, 1998[1894]: 18). It is through the ability afforded to him by his

temporary prostheticization that allows Mowgli to defend himself to a previously unobtainable ability that allows him transcend the disabling nature of the jungle; it is through this tool-use that not only facilitates his becoming human, to allow him to leave the jungle the nest morning 'to meet those mysterious things that are called men' (Kipling, 1998[1894]: 19). As Andy Clark argues '...our best tools and technologies literally become us [...] a constantly negotiable collection of resources easily able to straddle and criss-cross the boundaries between biology and artefact' (Clark, 2013: 124). It is through prosthesis-use that Mowgli's access to a human way of being in the world is presented to him. It is through tool as prosthesis that Mowgli disrupts the disabling notion of the jungle that hinders his transition to a human ontology.

Likewise in *Tarzan of The Apes*, there is a revelatory moment where Tarzan is able to prostheticise himself using a blade found in his parents hut to defend himself against Tublat, a bull gorilla. As Burroughs tells us, Tarzan was in a position of inferiority of the tribe, that 'the older males either ignored him entirely or else hated his so vindictively that but for his wondrous agility and speed and the fierce protection of the huge Kala he would have been dispatched at an early age' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 72). Tublat, attempting to attack Kala, is pounded upon by Tarzan, who with the blade he has salvaged from his parents' hut, 'plunged a keen hunting knife a dozen times into the broad breast' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 80). After felling his foe, Tarzan addresses the other apes: 'I am Tarzan […] I am a great killer. Let all respect Tarzan of the Apes and Kala, his mother. There be none among you as mighty as Tarzan' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 80). There is another instance as well, slightly later in the narrative where Tarzan is challenged by Kerchak, a large bull ape who was the leader of the tribe. Similarly to the conflict with Tublat, Kerchak

is quickly dispatched as Tarzan was able to drive 'his knife to the hilt in Kerchak's body, below the heart' before choking a wounded Kerchak, 'to close forever the windpipe beneath his strong grasp' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 121-122). It was through this killing of Kerchak, that Burroughs tells us 'thus came the young Lord Greystoke into the kingship of the Apes' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 122). Through the tool-use and prostheticization of the blade, Tarzan effectively reaches a level of physical ability possessed only by the larger of the apes. It is through this tool-use and prostheticization of the otherwise jungle-disabled body that the two protagonists are able to reach and surpass the physical ability of their adoptive animal families. In doing so, we not only see the conflict at the heart of the contact zone in terms of physical entanglement between the world of the jungle and the world of the human, but we also see the event that underwrites both the protagonists transition towards integration into human culture.

If we turn now to explore the ways gesture and sign language are used in the narratives, we see future instances of the way in which the jungle is disabling to both Mowgli and Tarzan from a human referential frame. The use of gesture and sign in the Mowgli narrative is sparce however, so the majority of the following analysis will focus on *Tarzan of The Apes*. However there are several examples in *The Jungle Books* I will first examine. In the third Mowgli narrative with *The Jungle Book*, 'Tiger! Tiger!' we are chronologically repositioned into the preceding moments and days after Mowgli's expulsion from the jungle. Mowgli leaves the jungle and goes to the nearest village, walking down a valley. The village both symbolically and geographically functions as an entirely new site of encounter for Mowgli, as he is constructed, for the first time, entirely within the trope of the *enfant sauvage* from a human

perspective. ‘All over the plain, cattle and buffaloes were grazing, and when the little boys in charge of the herds saw Mowgli they shouted and ran away, and the yellow pariah dogs that hang about every Indian village barked’ (Kipling, 1998[1894]: 48) he fact that Mowgli is presented as some kind of outsider to the village is indicative the later narrative construction of him as the figure of the wild-child. However, in an attempt to communicate with contact gesture to the villagers, we are aware of the only explicit display of ad-hoc gestural interaction in the collection of Mowgli stories:

> He sat down by the gate, and when a man came out he stood up, opened his mouth, and pointed down it to show that he wanted food. The man stared, and ran back up the one street of the village shouting for the priest, who was a big, fat man dressed in white, with a red and yellow mark on his forehead. The priest came to the gate, and with him at least a hundred people who stared and talked and shouted and pointed at Mowgli. (Kipling, 1998[1894]: 48-9)

We see here, as we have seen in the chapter previously, gesture and ad-hoc kinesic action being utilised to cross a divide between self and Other. What is particularly interesting in this encounter however, is that Mowgli is cast as a site of spectacle and curiosity when he is biologically the same as the villager he is trying to communicate with. This type of gestural action, according to Desmond Morris is best described as Vacuum Mimicry, ‘because the action takes place in the absence of the object to which it is related. If I am hungry, for example, I can go through the motions of putting imaginary food into my mouth’ (Morris, 2002[1997]: 29). As Morris argues, the important feature of Vacuum Mimicry is that ‘they strive for reality. Even though they are doomed to failure, they make an attempt. This means that they can be understood internationally’ (Morris, 2002[1997]: 29). This is particularly significant as the contact zone of the hinterland between jungle and village is transgressed by the animalistic Mowgli

through use of a human gestural form of communication. Not only do the boundaries between animal and human become blurred, but also reveal a potentiality for disruption surrounding human exceptionalism as the *de facto* norm.

Here, the lack of language and culture/environment becomes the dividing line between the imbalance of the contact zone, figured between human-in-jungle and human-in-civilisation, rather than the use of gesture in and of itself. However, for Mowgli's lack of human tongue, which by default marks him as other, Kipling instead regards the villagers through Mowgli's referential frame: "They have no manners, these Men Folk,' said Mowgli to himself. 'Only the grey ape would behave as they do.' So he threw back his long hair and frowned at the crowd' (Kipling, 1998[1894]: 49). Whilst it can be said that frowning is potentially a learned trait from his exposure to animals and growing up in the jungle (such as bared teeth to show aggression, etc), the action of frowning can be understood as an innate human action. As Morris argues, it would be apparent that frowning (and smiling) are 'apparently inborn', as 'children blind and deaf […] show smiling and frowning in their daily lives' (Morris, 2002[1997]: 5). What becomes apparent by these two contradictory readings of Mowgli's use of expression is that there is a significant overlap between the two: it is merely the frame by which we choose to read and interpret this action which determines whether Mowgli's act of defiance is an animal instinct or human trait. Either way, the intention of Mowgli frowning would not have been lost on the villagers. This is perhaps the most interesting aspect of the trope of the wild child to which Mowgli is now characterised: being that they are stuck, or rather cast, between animal and human allows for a certain amount of flexibility and fluctuation, and in doing so, unravels the de-facto human exceptionalism which

is often demanded by and predicated on language and communicative forms. Mowgli is explicitly rendered as a wild child in the next remark, made by the priest. The priest, observing Mowgli, proclaims to the gathered crowd: 'Look at the marks on his arms and legs. They are the bites of wolves. He is but a wolf-child run away from the jungle (Kipling, 1998[1894]: 49). This portrayal of Mowgli's body as animalistic is a recurrent trope of not only the wild-child, but also indicative of how Mowgli's body is marked between human and animal, and how through the referential frame of the human, the jungle is disabling. His body is cast anew as a corporeal signifier of alterity, and his muteness an aural signifier of otherness.

What follows is the first encounter with Mowgli and his mother. As the narrator states, 'the crowd parted as the woman beckoned Mowgli to her hut' (Kipling, 1998[1894]: 49). Whilst Mowgli was affronted by the other inhabitants of the village, he is complicit in going with his mother, Messua. Similarly to the gestural display of the frown at the initial encounter with the villagers, Mowgli's behaviour here can be read as either animal instinct or as human behaviour. If we read it as animal instinct, it becomes apparent that Mowgli is more likely to be complicit in the fact that she is non-threatening and non-affronting as opposed to the other villagers. The other way we can read this is through the referential frame of human behaviour: he is consenting to this display of beckoning as it is presented by a maternal figure who occupies the role of care-giver and nurturer.

Once Mowgli's (human) birth mother has been able to beckon him into her abode, she tries to communicate with him. Upon crying Mowgli's human-given birth-name, 'Nathoo, O Nathoo!', 'Mowgli did not show that he knew the name' (Kipling, 1998[1894]: 50). This lack of recognition of Mowgli towards his

previous name further entrenches Mowgli into the role of wild child, with his culture and identity fully existing within the environment of the Jungle. Mowgli however shows an awareness that linguistic ability is crucial to his becoming human. As Mowgli tells us, linguistic ability is a defining aspect of the human, and it is through language that he is rooted to his culture and his society:

> "What is the good of a man,' he said to himself at last, 'if he does not understand man's talk? Now I am as silly and dumb as a man would be with us in the jungle. I must learn their talk". (Kipling, 1998[1894]: 50)

In a further exposition of this, the narrative harks back to Mowgli's previous fluidity of linguistic identity in the jungle, but this time re-framing it as a crucial and necessary step for Mowgli to assimilate within human culture and assume a human identity:

> It was not for fun that he had learned while he was with the wolves to imitate the challenge of bucks in the jungle and the grunt of the little wild pig. So as soon as Messua pronounced a word Mowgli would imitate it almost perfectly, and before dark he had learned the names of many things in the hut. (Kipling, 1998[1894]: 50)

However, it is not only language that is a defining aspect of identity within the narrative's imaginary India. Language, for Kipling at least, is a component part of culture, and it is through Mowgli's acquisition of human language that he can access and start to assimilate within the culture of the human:

> For three months after that night Mowgli hardly ever left the village gate, he was so busy learning the ways and customs of men. First he had to wear a cloth around him, which annoyed him horribly; and then he had to learn about money which he did not in the least understand, and about ploughing of which he did not see the use. Then the little children in the village made him very angry. Luckily, the Law of the Jungle had taught him to keep his temper, for in the jungle life and food depend on keeping your temper; but when they made fun of him because he would not play games or fly kites, or because he mispronounced some word, only the knowledge that it was unsportsmanlike to kill little naked cubs kept him from picking them up and breaking them in two. (Kipling, 1998[1894]: 51)

However, we can see from the above extract that Mowgli's assimilation into human culture is far from easy. He faces linguistic challenges, for his mispronounces words, and the actions of farming, agriculture and cultivating seem at odds to the customs and law of the Jungle. However, the fact that Mowgli, brought up in a wild environment as an animal is now a fully linguistic being complicates the Heideggerian notion that *logos* is an exclusively human trait as Mowgli himself is not exclusively human, but rather he is always becoming-human.

There are also several instances in the narratives of *The Jungle Books* where we are presented with gestural forms of communication used by Mowgli with Bagheera and Baloo, with a particular focus on the humanity in Mowgli's expressions. By the time we reach Mowgli in 'The Spring Running', it is two years after the death of Akela, he is nearly seventeen years old, and has 'strength and growth far beyond his age' (Kipling, 1998[1894]: 303). However, despite his ability to successfully execute all manner of feats of strength, of which the inhabitants of the jungle feared him for, 'the look in his eyes was always gentle' (Kipling, 1998[1894]: 303). In a direct comparison to Bagheera, Kipling sets up a divide between Bagheera's innate animality, and Mowgli's biological origin: 'Even when he fought, his eyes never blazed as Bagheera's did. They only grew more and more interested and excited; and that was one of the things that Bagheera himself did not understand' (Kipling, 1998[1894]: 303). Kipling even goes to the extremes of making Bagheera – often framed with Baloo as Mowgli's mentors – subordinate to Mowgli. As Kipling remarks, 'Mowgli looked at him lazily under his long eyelashes, and, as usual, the panther's head dropped. Bagheera knew his master' (Kipling, 1998[1894]: 303).

This is the first time within these stories that we are explicitly told that another animal knows Mowgli as his master. It is the first time that we are aware that Mowgli has the ability to exercise some explicit control over the animals in the jungle in a way that maps on to a wider understanding of human/animal relationships as predicated onto human exceptionalism. There is a similar encounter with Baloo, who is now old, blind and weak in his old age. Baloo cries to Mowgli – 'There is no more. Go now; but first come to me. O wise Little Frog, come to me!' (Kipling, 1998[1894]: 323) In a final exchange in which Mowgli 'sobbed and sobbed, with his head on the blind bear's side and his arms round his neck, while Baloo tried feebly to lick his feet' (Kipling, 1998[1894]: 323). The language used by Kipling here implies submission and domesticity rather than mutuality, and as such the contact zone of the jungle has shifted from being disabling to Mowgli, but rather the contact zone of the jungle is now under his dominion as man is often to do with nature. So whilst the jungle may have been disabling to Mowgli from a human referential frame, it is through these gestural and physical acts that the world making entanglements of the jungle can be read as constituting different ontological worlds of equal worth. In doing so, it complicates the idea of human exceptionalism and the notion that spoken, human language is necessary for a meaningful state of being.

Turning now to *Tarzan of The Apes*, I can re-centre the focus more tightly to representations of sign language and gesture as a contact language, much in the way we see between Crusoe and Friday in Chapter 1 of this thesis. In Tarzan's first encounter with Clayton, we see the contact zone established in an unusual way. Whilst the explorer/savage dichotomy is one which is usually structured so the white explorer has *de facto* superiority, here it is reversed. From this point, there are a series of encounters in which Tarzan communicates

with Clayton first (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 158), and then Dr Porter and Mr Philander (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 182) through gesture and signs. This is one of the most significant pairs of encounters owing to the fact that Burroughs is explicit in stating that gesture is used as a communicative form. What is particularly interesting is that Tarzan's gestures are understood with ease, and met with a certain degree of complicity, even if there is initial resistance. Tarzan is thus figured as the dominant force in the encounter, and the contact zone is imbalanced as he occupies the dominant role of protector within the island-as-contact zone.

After Clayton wanders into the jungle in an attempt to find the lost Dr Porter and Mr Philander, Tarzan follows, eventually finding Clayton being hunted by a lion. Tarzan proceeds to rescue Clayton by killing the lion which was about to attack him, and to express thanks, 'Clayton spoke to the stranger in English, thanking him for his brave rescue […] but the only answer was a steady stare and a faint shrug of the shoulders which might betoken […] ignorance of Clayton's language' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 158). What is interesting here is that the act of shrugging is able to transcend the linguistic barrier between the two men – and that the dismissive and ignorant nature of the shrug is understood. As Morris states the shoulders shrug is 'nearly always an expression of ignorance […] and the helplessness of the gesturer is demonstrated by a momentary defensiveness' (Morris, 1994: 200). Tarzan then, after carving meat from the lions carcass 'proceeded to eat, first motioning Clayton to join him.' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 158). However, concluding that it was Tarzan before him, Clayton was assured that 'if so, he must speak English', so again, Burroughs tells us, 'Clayton essayes speech with the ape-man; but the replies, now vocal were in a strange tongue, which resembled the chattering

of monkeys' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 158). Here we are made aware of one of the distinctive features of Tarzan as a linguistic being: whilst he can write and read in English, his vocal language is entirely that of the apes and of the culture and surroundings he was brought up in. Whilst Tarzan here displays a fairly conventionalised contact gesture in that it is effective at crossing the linguistic divide, the fact that he is unable to speak the language he can write effectively forces the use of gesture and sign between Tarzan and the other white humans on the island. Another point that is worth mentioning here is that there are also other humans in his jungle, which take the form of a black native tribe that live in a village. Whilst Tarzan has encounters with the villagers, which often take the form of violence and aggression due to one of them killing Kala (which leads to him avenging her death), there is no attempt from Tarzan to communicate with them. I would argue is due to the weight and emphasis Burroughs affords Tarzan's own self-realisation and self-reference: there are no attempts by Burroughs to portray the villagers on equal terms as Tarzan as their black skin is a visual signifier of their otherness and difference to Tarzan, whilst the explorers (Porter, Clayton, etc.) have white skin and therefore align with Tarzan's own perception of his selfhood, whilst simultaneously entrenching the colonial and imperialist attitudes of Burrough's novel.

After Tarzan eats the lion meat he carved from the carcass, he communicates with Clayton by pointing as an indicator that he will be heading in a specific direction towards the lost Dr Porter (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 159). However, Clayton is 'bewildered and confused' by this action of pointing, and 'hesitated to follow him, for he thought he was but being led more deeply into the mazes of the forest; but the ape-man, seeing him disinclined to follow, returned, and, grasping him by the coat, dragged him along until he was

convinced that Clayton understood what was required of him. Then he left him to follow voluntarily.' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 159). What we see here is a disconnect between Clayton's self-assumed knowledge of what direction he needs to travel in, and Tarzan's. Pointing, which is almost as close to a universal gestural action as you can get – is initially met with confusion and misunderstanding. As Morris explains, 'Although we take for granted the action of giving hand-signal directions to companions, this is a uniquely human activity. A few other animals are able to indicate direction in various ways, (bees dance in their hive and wolves point with their whole bodies, for example) but only humans perform accurate finger-pointing' (Morris 1994: 85). However, unlike the misunderstanding and confusion surrounding gesture that we saw in the first chapter of this thesis, this misunderstanding is based on a survival instinct: namely that Tarzan would wish Clayton harm. Despite this, Burroughs tells us that Clayton eventually resigned himself to the fact he was a 'prisoner' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 159). The fact that Clayton needs dragging along as an incentive to follow him is to some extent, a heavy handed gesture, and one that once more strengthens the imbalance of the contact zone in Tarzan's favour. Despite this, it is an ad-hoc gesture which is portraying as seemingly conventionalised in meaning, and upon this basis, a highly effective use of a non-normative communicative form, despite Clayton's belief that he is now held captive.

After gunshots are heard in the distance as Jane and Esmeralda are under attack from Sabor the lioness, Tarzan resolves to travel to the site of conflict, and in doing so 'motioned [to Clayton] to grasp him about the neck, and with the white man upon his back, Tarzan took to the trees (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 166). Once again we are presented with an ad-hoc gestural action

which is effective and Clayton, in his complicity owing to the imbalance of the contact zone, is able to understand and follow. Once they arrive at the hut, which the lioness is entering in order to attack Jane and Esmerelda, Tarzan resolves to fight Sabor. As Burroughs tells us, 'for a naked man to drag a shrieking, clawing man-eater forth from a window by the tail to save a strange white girl, was indeed the last word in heroism' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 168). Take note here, however, that saving Esmerelda (the black servant of the explorers) is deliberately absent from Burroughs construction of heroism, in another display of Burrough's racially discriminative attitude. In his attempt to drag the lioness out of the hut, 'Clayton was quick to lend a hand, but the ape man jabbered to him in a commanding and peremptory tone […] which Clayton knew to be orders, though he could not understand them' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 168). Once again, after Tarzan manages to get a hold of Sabor, and pull the lioness out of the hut, 'Tarzan was still issuing orders which Clayton could not understand.' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 169) Once again we are aware of a linguistic disconnect between Tarzan and Clayton. Tarzan's frustration that Clayton cannot understand reaches its peak when, instructing Clayton to 'plunge his poisoned arrows into Sabor's back and sides' cannot be understood by Clayton, and as such is admonished by Tarzan as a 'stupid white man' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 169). Eventually Tarzan is able to get the lioness out of the hut and in a 'full-nelson' hold, eventually crush the vertebrae of the lioness and wrestle her to death with his bare hands (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 169-170). However, after saving Jane and Esmerelda, Tarzan vanishes, leaving them with Clayton, to discuss who their mysterious saviour might be, only for Clayton to conclude: 'At first I thought he might be Tarzan of the Apes; but he neither speaks nor understands English, so that theory is untenable' (Burroughs,

2008[1912]: 171). Through these heroic actions, Burroughs presents Tarzan as mysterious saviour and watcher of the Jungle, and at least in the minds of his saviours, presents him as a mythologised, mysterious and unknowable being – whilst at the same time elevating him to the role of hero, and further strengthening the imbalance of the contact zone in Tarzan's favour.

After saving the rather inept and naïve Dr Porter and Mr Philander from being attacked by Numa, the lion (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 179), Tarzan eventually makes his presence known to them after they have stopped bickering:

> "Good evening, sir!' said the professor, lifting his hat.
> For reply the giant motioned them to follow him, and set off up the beach in the direction from which they had recently come.
> 'I think it is in the part of discretion to follow him,' said Mr Philander.
> (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 182)

Once again we see another gesture used by Tarzan which is met with complicity and understood. However, once more we are aware that we are dealing with a contact zone in which Tarzan – as protector, saviour and hero – is positioned as the dominant force. Through Tarzan's physical strength and agility, and his imposing presence, he manages to enforce complicity from his subjects. What follows however, is a digression in this assumed hierarchy, when Porter and Philander, who are bickering and arguing over some pseudo-intellectual debate are forced, by Tarzan to comply with his instruction.

> Further argument was interrupted by Tarzan, who, seeing that these strange men were not following him, had returned to their side. Again he beckoned to them; but still they stood in argument.
> Presently the ape-man lost patience with their stupid ignorance. He grasped the frightened Mr Philander by the shoulder, and before the worthy gentlemen knew whether he was being killed or merely maimed for life, Tarzan had tied on end of his rope securely around Mr Philander's neck. […] But scarcely were the words out of his mouth ere he, too, had been seized and securely bound by the neck with the same

> rope. Then Tarzan set off toward the north, leading the now thoroughly frightened professor and his secretary. (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 183)

Whilst we are aware that on a gestural and physical level Tarzan is the dominant force within the contact zone between himself and the explorers, on a linguistic and cultural level, however, he is marked as lacking in civility, and therefore a dual figure of both heroism and also of bestial Otherness. After he led Porter and Philander safely back to the hut on the beach, much discussion takes place surrounding Tarzan and who this mysterious jungle-dwelling figure is. Esmeralda's suggestion of Tarzan being an 'angel of the lord' was rebutted by Clayton recalling him eating the 'raw meat of a lion', whilst Jane's comment that his cry, referred to as an 'awful roar' has 'nothing heavenly about it', and Porter remarks on his lack of dignity and respect when he 'tied two highly respectable and erudite scholars neck-to-neck and dragged them through the jungle (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 184-5). Therefore, we are aware of a disconnect in the way in which the contact zone is figured. Whilst Tarzan is the dominant force within the jungle and is presented as a hyper-masculine saviour, his pre-linguistic status is ultimately disabling in the production of a human identity. Ultimately, despite the fact he is figured as a hero, he cannot fulfil the role of hero without a linguistic ability that is figured within the realms of phonocentric normalcy in one of the ways that the jungle as contact zone is ultimately disabling for Tarzan from a human referential frame.

One of the most enduring encounters in *Tarzan of The Apes* is the encounter between Tarzan and Jane. Although it has a foothold in the popular imagination, the actual encounter is far removed from the romanticised ("me Tarzan, you Jane") version depicted in film and other media. Once again, this is another encounter in which Burroughs explicitly states that gesture and signs

were used. As a prelude to the encounter, when the party of explorers finally bury the skeletons of Tarzan's parents, and Kala's offspring (which were found decomposed in the hut), Tarzan watches Jane from afar. As Burroughs tells us: 'in his savage, untutored breast, new emotions were stirring' and despite him thinking the men 'stupid and ridiculous and cowardly', 'but the girl, ah – that was a different matter' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 188). Similarly to Mowgli, Tarzan's understanding of mood and emotion is underdeveloped and a site of not only confusion for the protagonist, but also of unresolved tension within the text, sexual and otherwise. Despite the emotion Tarzan experiences, we are reminded again and again that there is a conflict within his own identity: 'Tarzan of the Apes had a man's figure and a man's brain, but he was an ape by training and environment' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 198). As such we see an example of this when Tarzan, approaching the hut at night, with the lamps illuminated, 'he had often wondered at the exact purpose of the lamps […] he had no idea of how they could be made to produce the wondrous sunlight' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 197). Tarzan, using the night as cover, was able to approach the now illuminated cabin to spy on its inhabitants. Whilst he had little interest in the activities of the men or Esmerelda he was struck by Jane's appearance, figured here for the first time in increasingly conventional notions of beauty. Under the gaze of his biological and genetic attraction, Tarzan wondered at the sight: 'There was the girl! How beautiful her features! How delicate her snowy skin!' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 197). Tarzan's gaze was unflinching: 'for an hour Tarzan feasted his eyes upon her whilst she wrote. How he longed to speak to her, but he dared not attempt it, for he was convinced, like the young men, she would not understand him, and he feared too, that he might frighten her away' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 198). Here we are made aware of Tarzan's ever-

increasing being-human, manifest through an innate, albeit understood, sexual attraction to a female figure of his repressed and unexpressed emotions and drives.

The prevailing notion of language and civilisation as being a precursor for an authentic "human" experience starts to become more complicated, when Tarzan, killing Terkoz, elicits a regressive, primordial response of lust from Jane. As Burroughs tells us, 'Jane Porter – the lithe, young form, flattened against the trunk of a great tree, her hands pressed against her rising and falling bosom, and her eyes wide with mingled horror, fascination, fear, and admiration – watched the primordial ape battle with the primeval man for possession of a woman – for her' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 218). Burroughs, in the traditionally masculine vein of adventure fiction continues with conflating violence with sexual energy as an outward, fetishistic description as he goes on to state 'As the great muscles of the man's back and shoulders knotted beneath the tension of his efforts, and the huge biceps and forearm held at bay those mighty tusks the veil of centuries of civilisation and culture was swept from the blurred vision of the Baltimore girl' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 218). Burroughs continues, this time capitalising on the latent phallic symbolism of Tarzan's weapon, and the well-established motif of equating death with sex as he described Tarzan's fatal dispatch of Terkoz: 'When the long knife drank deep a dozen times of Terkoz' heart's blood, and the great carcass rolled lifeless upon the ground, it was a primeval woman who sprang forward with outstretched arms towards the primeval man who had fought for her and won her. And Tarzan? He did what no red-blooded man needs lessons in doing' (Burroughs 218-9). Whilst the hyper-masculinity of Tarzan is used here as a touchstone of male fantasy and an opportunity to play with the historically entrenched fetish of

the subservient woman, Jane is not entirely stripped of her own agency at this point, despite her response to Tarzan's display of protection and violence. As Burroughs tells us, 'as suddenly as the veil had been withdrawn it dropped again, and an outraged conscious suffused her face with its scarlet mantle, and mortified woman thrust Tarzan of the Apes from her' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 219). This, as Burroughs tells us, was met with confusion on the part of Tarzan, who 'could not understand it' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 219). However, as Burroughs goes on to explain – her 'hot, sweet breath against his cheek and mouth had fanned a new flame to life within his breast, and perfect lips had clung to his in burning kisses that seared a deep brand into his soul – a brand which marked a new Tarzan' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 219-20). Here, it becomes apparent that the development of Tarzan's sexuality is the turning point by which his body is now rendered as ever more becoming-human. It is through this encounter with his sexuality that we are presented with a 'new Tarzan', who, now, able to express his repressed and unexpressed feelings of emotion, mood, and sexuality can capitalise on his desires. This section of the narrative is marked by Tarzan fully acting upon the desires and drives within him, which although mark him as human rather than animal, lack the ethical and moral imperative afforded to an individual who is complicit to the parameters and expectations of living within a civilised culture. This disjuncture between civilisation and freedom is one of the key fantasies of *Tarzan of the Apes.* It is as this contact zone between these two states of being that the fantasy of living outside of civilisation is a more "pure" way of being, as well as celebrating masculine ideals of heroism. Yet it is the fact that Tazan exists in a pre-linguistic and wordless world that enables and accompanies these fantasies, and enable his becoming-human to be traditionally masculine. As such, we see Tarzan

enact entirely on his desires and drives as ‘Tarzan of the Apes did just what his first ancestor would have done. He took his woman in his arms and carried her off into the jungle’ (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 220). Of course, moral and ethical ambiguity arise from the fact that Jane was clearly displaying signs of displeasure and repulsion towards Tarzan, and yet, he felt the ability to supersede these messages and gestural displays and act instead upon his own desire (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 219). As Burroughs tells us, these gestures were understood by Tarzan in terms of their communicative aspect: he was aware that they were a gestural display of rejection, yet he couldn’t understand these gestures on a figurative and contextual level – he simply did not have the moral and ethical development to frame these gestures in any meaningful form. It is this tension between Tazan’s wild nature and his becoming-human that complicated the relationship between innate behaviour and civilization.

This level of misunderstanding does by no means justify Tarzan’s actions – but it does however complicate the way in which he is positioned to language and communication. Whilst he may be able to communicate through rudimentary gestural forms and through written language, the lack of a superstructure of ethics and morals ultimately make the binding utterances of communicative forms untenable – and through this, ultimately make his use and understanding of language unintelligible at any level beyond a simple pictorial and instructive level.

As Tarzan is carrying Jane of into the jungle, we are made aware that for the first time, he is coming to terms with his biological and genetic differences to the apes of the jungle: ‘Here was a problem the like of which he had never encountered, and he felt rather reasoned that he must meet it as a man and not as an ape’ (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 229). To expand on this, Burroughs tells us

that Tarzan ‘knew why the ape had not killed her, and he commenced to compare his intentions with those of Terkoz. True, it was by the order of the jungle for the male to take his mate by force; but could Tarzan be guided by the laws of the beasts? Was Tarzan not a man?’ (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 229). Burroughs eventually legitimises the romantic nature of the relationship between Tarzan and Jane in a display typical of the male fantasies of adventure fiction present Jane not only as a recasting of the damsel in distress, but also a reciprocal object of desire as she falls in love with Tarzan (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 231). Then, Jane, ‘pointing to the fruit upon the ground’ displays to Tarzan a gestural display of her hunger which ‘was asserting itself’ (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 232). As a kinesic? action, Tarzan understands what she is requesting and proceeds to ‘gather up the fruit’ and ‘with his knife opened and prepared the various viands for her meal’ (232). Here, we start to see the relationship between them develop in linguistic terms. At one point, Jane turns to Tarzan and says ‘I wish you spoke English’ to which Tarzan’s only response is to shake his head with ‘an expression of wistful and pathetic longing’ (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 232). However, undeterred, Jane attempts to break the linguistic deadlock that exists between the two, first by attempting to speak ‘in French, and then in German’, to no avail (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 232). It is at this point Burroughs makes it explicit that Tarzan is attempting to succeed from his animalistic upbringing, telling us ‘he had had time to recollect all he had read of the ways of men and women in the books at the cabin. He would act as he imagined the men in the books would have acted were they in his place’ (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 232). Here, we start to see Tarzan align himself with human culture as he starts to implement his own moral and ethical code, borrowed from the books and literature he had read. Therefore, acting upon his

newly created and founded moral code, ‘he arose and went into the trees, but first he tried to explain by means of signs that he would return shortly, and he did so well that Jane Porter understood and was not afraid when he had gone’ (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 232). This is a significant gestural encounter here as it not only marks the first time that Tarzan has effectively used gestures in a seemingly conventionalised and emblematic form, but also that the communication was met with complicity by the intended parties (as opposed to the varying levels of resistance he received from Clayton, Dr Porter, and Philander)

Then, upon Tarzan’s return, ‘They sat down together again upon the edge of the drum and tried to talk by signs.’ (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 233). In the first gestural action, Jane ‘pointed’ to the locket that ‘hung around Tarzan’s neck’ and he removed it and handed it to her (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 233). Upon opening it, and finding a picture of Tarzan’s parent’s, Jane noticed a marked similarity between Tarzan and his father – this along with the fact it opened resulted in ‘an expression of amazement’ from Tarzan’ (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 233). After Tarzan shows Jane a photograph of his parents that he also took from the cabin, and kept hidden in his arrow quiver, the likeness between Tarzan and his father became more apparent, and Tarzan’s confusion obviously increased to the point that ‘he seemed to be framing a question with his lips’ (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 234). Upon reading Tarzan’s desire to communicate, ‘the girl pointed to the photograph and then to the miniature [in the locket] and then to him, as though to indicate that she thought the likenesses were of him, but he only shook his head’ and shrugged (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 235). Upon giving the locket to Jane as a gift, she ‘raised the locket to her lips, and, rising, dropped him a little courtesy’ (Burroughs, 2008[1912]:

236). Tarzan, in a move that evidences mutual understanding attempted a reciprocal gesture: ‘Tarzan did not know exactly what she meant, but he guessed correctly that it was her way of acknowledging the gift, and he rose too, and taking the locket in his hand, stooped gravely like some courtier of old, and pressed his lips upon it where hers had rested’ (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 236).

This gestural display, according to Burroughs, ‘was the hall-mark of his aristocratic birth, the natural outcropping of many generation of fine breeding, an hereditary instinct of graciousness which a lifetime of uncouth and savage training and environment could not eradicate’ (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 236). Gesture and meaningful communication, it would seem, are significant contributions to Tarzan’s eventual becoming-human. As Burroughs tells us, ‘contact with this girl for half a day had left a very different Tarzan from the one on whom the morning’s sun had risen. Now in every fiber of his being heredity spoke louder than training’ (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 236). As Burroughs tells us, ‘he had not in one swift transition become a polished gentleman from a savage ape-man, but at last the instincts of the former predominated, and all over all was the desire to please the woman he loved, and to appear well in her eyes’ (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 237). The next exchange is loaded with blatant sexual imagery, but if we deconstruct it to the level of the gestural and ad-hoc kinesic action, we can see a series of exchanges in which – at the level of the improvised sign – Tarzan is effectively communicating across the linguistic divide in order to offer security and safety to Jane:

> So Tarzan of the Apes did the only thing he knew to assure Jane Porter of her safety. He removed his hunting knife from its sheath and handed it to her hilt first, again motioning her into the bower.
> The girl understood, and taking the long knife she entered and lay down upon the soft grasses while Tarzan of the Apes stretched himself upon

the ground across the entrance. (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 237)

The next morning, after Tarzan reappeared from a foray into the jungle to bring Jane food, he stood 'motioning her to follow […] and taking her in one strong arm swung to the branches above', resolving to return her to her party at the cabin (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 239). Once more we see another gestural action which is met with complicity, and one that is effective crossing the linguistic gap between them. Upon delivering Jane back to the beach, he 'pointed out the little cabin to her' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 239). Jane then 'took him by the hand to lead him to it, that she might tell her father that this man had saved her from death and worse than death', yet 'the timidity of the wild thing in the face of human habitation swept of Tarzan of the Apes. He drew back, shaking his head' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 239). After Jane once more verbally confesses her love for Tarzan, the 'faint sound of many guns' from 'far in the distance' – and draws their attention to the direction of the sound, but from where they were stood 'they could not see the two vessels lying at anchor in the harbor' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 240). As Burroughs tells us, 'Tarzan pointed towards the sounds, touched his breast and pointed again. She understood. He was going, and something told him her? that it was because he thought her people were in danger' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 240). Once again we have an example of a fully conventionalised gesture occurring between Tarzan and Jane in that it has been mutually intelligibly understood.

The gunshots that Jane and Tarzan heard were from the platoon of French troops on the island, who landed some time ago, and had undertaken the mission, at the behest of Dr Porter, to rescue his daughter. The platoon of troops had been ambushed by a cohort of the black villagers, which led to a

‘savage and bloody’ conflict, but ‘natives fled into the jungle, leaving the Frenchmen to count their losses’ (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 245). D’Arnot, a French soldier, was captured by the natives – which, in a move that deliberately echoes the contact zone between white coloniser and native, Burroughs describes the situation now facing the young French soldier: ‘And then began for the young French officer the most terrifying experience which man can encounter upon earth – the reception of a white prisoner into a village of African cannibals’ (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 246). Burroughs is unflinching in entrenching the binary divide between white man and black man, and much of the following pages go into gratuitous detail about the torture and violence D’Arnot faced at the hand of the natives – whilst it makes for sensationalist reading, it is unnecessary to include here, for it readily becomes apparent that within Burrough’s island contact zone, the natives are used as a receptacle for imperialist fantasies of violence and denigration. Tarzan, speeding to the sound of the commotion, arrives in time to rescue D’Arnot from the natives. As Burroughs tells us, Tarzan’s intervention is explicitly predicated on notions of racial difference: ‘Tarzan had looked with complacency upon their former orgies, only occasionally interfering for the pleasure of baiting the blacks; but heretofore their victims had been men of their own colour. Tonight it was different – white men, men of Tarzan’s own race – might be even now suffering the agonies of torture in that grim, jungle fortress’ (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 248). Tarzan, upon reaching the village let loose ‘the awful challenge of the ape-man’ before using his rope to capture and drag one of the villagers into the jungle where he dispatched of them before dropping them to the ground and terrifying the other villagers who looked on in shook before fleeing (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 249-50). As argued by anthropologist Gordon Hewes, ‘Most

primate calls do not appear to be signals directed towards others, but are broadcast like human screams, shrieks, or groans, whether others are present or not.' (Hewes, 1973: 67). However what we can see here is Tarzan utilising the *phono* of the ape's cry in a way that is targeted and directed to an individual, which is therefore a transmutation of the cry into *logos*, in that it is a verbalised message of intent and threat. In doing so, Tarzan complicates the relationship between *logos* and *phono*, and with it, the demarcation between human and animal it implies. Tarzan then steals to the ground, rescues D'Arnot, and then disappears back into the jungle. Eventually, the French soldiers go to the village, and attempt to find and rescue D'Arnot – which turned into a 'grim massacre' where they 'spared the children and those of the women they were not forced to kill in self-defence' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 259). As Burroughs tells us, the French soldiers then 'questioned the prisoners by signs, and finally one of the sailors who had served in the French Congo found that he could make them understand the bastard tongue that passes for language between the whites and the more degraded tribes of the coast, but even then they could learn nothing definite regarding the fate of D'Arnot' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 259). In a move which mirrors many of the gestural exchanges between coloniser and colonised, we see a reference to the gestures of the natives being rendered as incommunicable, despite the fact that we have seen numerous effective gestures utilised throughout this narrative. To add to this, Burroughs go as far as to state 'Only excited gestures and expressions of fear could they obtain in response to their inquiries concerning their fellow; and at last they became convinced that these were but evidences of the guilt of these demons who had slaughtered and eaten their comrade two nights before' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 260). Once again we see another hallmark of not only adventure

fiction, but also something that often occurred in their real life counterpart: gesture and sign being deliberately mis-recognised in an attempt to legitimise and underwrite the atrocities committed by the dominant, colonising force.

Once D'Arnot awakes and finds himself in safety, he notices Tarzan as his saviour and attempts to converse with him. Although there are further encounters following Tarzan's acclimatisation into human culture once he leaves the island, this is the last instance of a non-verbal communicative form, this time, through writing. Once more, in an exchange that mirrors Jane's attempt to communicate with Tarzan, D'Arnot 'spoke to him in French, but the man only shook his head […] Then D'Arnot tried English, but still the man shook his head. Italian Spanish and German brought similar discouragement' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 267). Undeterred, D'Arnot also attempts to communicate with him with 'a few words of Norwegian, Russian, Greek, and also […] a smattering of the language of one of the West Coast negro tribes – the man denied them all' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 267). Since Tarzan exists in a pre-verbal state of existence it comes as no surprise to the reader that D'Arnot cannot converse with Tarzan. However, Burroughs, in an attempt to progress the narrative in a succinct and effective manner has Tarzan return to D'Arnot with 'several pieces of bark and – wonder of wonders – a lead pencil' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 268). One cannot help but interpret Burroughs 'wonder of wonders' as an admission of self-aware authorial irony – the sudden advent of a pencil introduces several plot-holes into the text, but it is finally, through Tarzan's use of writing that he can facilitate his eventual assimilation into civilisation. 'Squatting beside D'Arnot he wrote for a minute on the smooth inner surface of the bark […] D'Arnot was astonished to see, in plain print-like characters a message in English: I am Tarzan of the Apes. Who are you? Can

you read this language?' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 268) Once more we see a disconnect between Tarzan's ability to read and write and to communicate in a spoken modality. However, D'Arnot is quick to respond:

> 'D'Arnot seized the pencil and then he stopped. This strange man wrote English – evidently he was an Englishman. 'Yes,' said D'Arnot, 'I read English. I speak it also. Now we may talk. First let me thank you for all that you have done for me.'
> The man only shook his head and pointed to the pencil and the bark.
> 'Mon Dieu!' cried D'Arnot. 'If you are English why it then that you cannot speak English?'
> And then in a flash it came to him – the man was a mute, possibly a deaf mute.'
> (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 269, original emphasis)

What is interesting here is casual insertion of audist and phonocentric presumptions. It is also of note that it is the first time deafness is brought up in the narrative despite the many repeated gestural exchanges, and once again marks Tarzan as outside of a normative identity.

Eventually, after D'Arnot accepts Tarzan's unusual method of communication, he introduces himself and enquires how Tarzan is able to write, but not speak a language. As Burroughs tells us, 'Tarzan's reply filled D'Arnot with still greater wonder':

> 'I speak only the language of my tribe – the great apes who were Kerchak's; and a little of the languages of Tantor, the elephant, and Numa, the lion, and of the other folks of the jungle I understand. With a human being I have never spoken, except once with Jane Porter, by signs. This is the first time I have spoken with another of my kind through written words.' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 269)

Whilst they end up conversing through writing for the rest of the evening about what happened to Jane Porter, and how Tarzan rescued her, the most significant exchange occurs a couple of days later after D'Arnot has recovered from his injuries: 'D'Arnot wrote the first message: 'What can I do to repay you

for all that you have done for me?' And Tarzan, in reply: 'Teach me to speak the language of men' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 270). So in a move which seems to be a direct allusion and reference to Messua's first encounter with Mowgli in her hut where she teaches him the language of her villagers, D'Arnot attempts something similar, 'pointing out familiar objects and repeating their names in French, for he thought it would be easier to teach this man his own language, since he understood it himself best of all […] It meant nothing to Tarzan, of course, for he could not tell one language from another, so when he pointed to the word man which he had printed upon a piece of bark he learned from D'Arnot that it was pronounced homme, and in the same way he was taught to pronounce ape, singe, and tree, arbre.' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 272). Eventually, once D'Arnot has recovered, Tarzan, carrying D'Arnot, traversed through the jungle until they reached the cabin, which as they feared, 'was deserted' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 273). Upon realising this, Tarzan flees, leaving D'Arnot alone at the cabin, until Tarzan once more is confronted with the morality and ethics of choosing his human identity over his simian, wild past: 'Tarzan paused in his flight. 'What are you, Tarzan?' he asked aloud. 'An ape or a man? If you are an ape you will do as the apes would do – leave one of your kind to die in the jungle if it suited your whim to go elsewhere. If you are a man you will return to protect your kind' (Burroughs, 2008[1912]: 276). As such Tarzan decides to return to D'Arnot, and in doing so, his identity once more becomes more deeply aligned with that of the human.

Once it has been made clear to our protagonists that they are now stranded on the island with the party and the soldiers never to return, the narrative takes a turn towards the stylistic and formalistic similarities to the vein of the Robinsonade. From what started off as an enfant sauvage narrative,

progressing through colonial and imperialist narrative (with the arrival of Jane et. al., the arrival of the French soldiers and the massacre of the villagers) to what is now a desert island narrative, we are aware that Tarzan's linguistic and communicative properties have developed and altered at each stage of the narrative. Initially, we were aware of his communication with his adopted ape family (who are now notably absent from the text as his referential frame becomes more human than animal), through to gestural encounter in a move that mirrors the linguistic divide often present in colonial narratives, and finally, a desert island narrative which, similarly to Robinson Crusoe utilises the teaching of a dominant language for both narrative ease as we move towards more dialogue, but also as a precursor to leaving the island. Similarly to the way in which Crusoe teaches Friday English as he needs a native in order to escape the island, here too, we see Tarzan requesting he learns language so that he can escape the confines of his animality, and therefore facilitate his assimilation into human culture.

Concluding Thoughts

One of the most famous real world accounts of a wild child entering civilisation is that of Victor of Aveyron in 1800. Whilst there are numerous accounts of wild children from the same period, Victor's experiences are of particular interest to this chapter due to his proximity to deaf education and sign language, and accurate recording of his use of unconventional and improvisational ad-hoc gestures to communicate. Whilst other accounts of wild children portray them as a site of spectacle (for instance, accounts of Peter the Wild Boy, who was paraded around the royal courts in 18th C. London), Victor's account is slightly different. After initial attempts to communicate to Victor were unsuccessful, he was taken under the charge of Jean Marc Gaspard Itard, a

renowned physician who worked at the National Institute for Deaf-Mutes in Paris. Victor's life under Itard's charge was one marked by experimentation, both on the part of Itard, and Victor, who was able to eventually create a limited, yet actionable and functional improvised gestural form of communication, despite his wild upbringing. From accounts of wild children, of which there are several well recorded and documented, the main concern that arises is surrounding language acquisition and speech development. There has always been a fascination, which is borne out through the pervasive and entrenched mythology of wild children, of whether or not a child, free of education, civilisation and speech would possess any innate language, and if this 'noble savage' could reveal any fundamental truth of humanity. What is particularly interesting however, is that Victor, seemingly falling short of the highly inflated expectations of the Parisian intellectual circles, was unable to, as Shattuck tells us, 'resolve the debate about man and nature' (Shattuck, 1980: 46). A well regarded Parisian academic, Virey, penned this description of the boy a few weeks after he was initially found:

> He seeks no harm, for he doesn't know what that means… He just sits there like the true innocent… Therefore it is not possible to affirm that our Boy from Aveyron is either good or bad; he is just mild… and has no relation to us at all. (Virey, qtd. In Shattuck, 1980: 46)

What is of particular interest here, is the phrase 'has no relation to us at all'. This is a phrase which is crucial to not only understanding the cultural significance of the wild child, but also crucial to the characterisations of Mowgli and Tarzan we have seen throughout this chapter. Victor, although regarded as without language possessed a very limited vocabulary of what Shattuck refers to as 'action language', a form of rudimental gestural communication (Shattuck, 1980: 98). Victor is, as is Mowgli and Tarzan, an embodiment of the disabling

contact zone of the jungle when seen through the referential frame of the human. However, as we have seen throughout this chapter, Mowgli and Tarzan were able to overcome this disabling affect of the jungle, and in doing so, can be reinterpreted as read as central figures in literary representations of non-normative forms of communication through their alternative, yet meaningful modes of being in the world.

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Chapter 3: Alien Encounters: Deafness, Gesture and the Contact Zone

This aim of this chapter is to explore how deafness, gesture, and non-normative communication feature within three science fiction texts of the New Wave era. New Wave science fiction, as defined by John W. Taylor 'refers to a style of SF which appeared and flourished circa 1963 to 1975, revealing literary and linguistic innovations within SF and creating a strong affective response, both positive and negative, on the part of readers' (Taylor, 2014: 612). Whilst the start and end points of Taylor's definition of New Wave SF are rather limiting, much like any other artistic movement, they are open to interpretation. If we expand the timeline slightly, we can categorise all three of the following texts as part of the credo of New Wave by their shared interest in experimentation both narratively and literary. This chapter will focus on Frank Herbert's short story 'Try to Remember' (1961), Lloyd Biggle Jr's novel *Silence is Deadly* (1977), and John Varley's short story 'The Persistence of Vision' (1978). Whilst all three of these texts' approaches to language and deafness are rooted in phonocentric norms, they all feature a process of cultural assimilation which disrupt the notions that deafness, sign language, and non-verbal communication are a sub-par or inferior language. Through Mary Louise Pratt's work on the "contact zone" and using Cornelia Muller's spectrum of gestural action which we have seen in the previous chapters, I will aim to show these texts present a view of deafness and sign-language that is not based in a model of deficit and impairment, but rather a viable, fully formed mode of being in the world, and meaningful form of communication. Further to this, I will attempt to situate these texts within a wider discussion surrounding deafness and sign-language and present how these texts have played a role in shifting wider perceptions of deafness from the body suffering from hearing loss to the

body experiencing what Bauman and Murray have described ‘deaf gain’ (Bauman and Murray, 2014: xv). Deaf gain, as Bauman and Murray describe, is a term designed to counter the phonocentric view that deafness is ‘defined by the loss of hearing’ and is the ‘loss of an auditory sense’, and instead a way of framing deafness as ‘the unique cognitive, creative and cultural gains manifested through deaf ways of being in the world’ (Bauman and Murray, 2014: xv). Deaf gain then, as this chapter will explore – is the idea of to refer to deafness and sign language as part of a multiplicity of meaningful forms of being in and communicating within the world.

The Alien Body in Science Fiction Encounters

One of the main aims of science fiction as a literary genre is to present the reader with a future which whilst seeming tantalisingly similar to lived reality, instead presents a world in which slippages between the normal and the other can be explored. SF, particularly New Wave SF, is a literary and narrative space where disruptions can be brought to the forefront, and can create conflict between the real and the speculative. Science fiction has an ability to project distinctions of us/them onto a here/later. As Joseph F. Patrouch, Jr. argues, SF ‘lets us live other lives, not mere duplicates of our own but as completely different as the human imagination can make them’ (Patrouch, 1976: 24). Patrouch expands on this point as he states ‘science fiction does not predict the future […] but what it does do is get us used to the idea that the future, in our own lifetimes, is going to be different to the present’ and in doing so, science fiction ‘constructs for us imaginary alternative worlds in which we can live while we read’ (Patrouch, 1976: 24). As further echoed by Darko Suvin, science fiction can be described as:

> a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework of the authors' empirical environment (Suvin, 1979: 7-8)

It is through this subversion and modification of the author's lived environment that it becomes apparent that we are dealing with – more often than not – a reduction of the human self and alien other to binaristic, essentialist differences. As argued by Adam Roberts, 'the key symbolic function of the SF [science fiction] novum is precisely the representation of the encounter with difference, Otherness, alterity' (Roberts, 2000: 25). However, this meeting of the self and Other need not be in and of destructive. If we take the claim made by Scott McCracken, that it is 'the fantasy of the alien encounter . . . the meeting of self with other' which defines much of science fiction, these differences need not be inherently negative (McCracken, 1998: 102). The key word here, and one which is crucial to much of the chapter is 'fantasy'. It is through this cognitive freedom, experimentation, and play that science fiction has come to question and challenge taboo topics, and it is through this freedom that I will argue that deafness and sign language in SF can be read as an example of Deaf Gain. As Kathryn Allen points out, 'the need to address the issues of disability and the disabled body as depicted in these stories about the possible futures of humanity is pressing for those of us who desire to move forward as an inclusive human community' (Allen, 2013: 1-2). Whilst there is a need to explore depictions of deafness and disability in science fiction, these imagined fictions are still rooted in the audist and ableist prejudices and presumptions of society as a whole. As Allen points out:

> While the settings and temporal framework of SF may differ dramatically from our own current reality, the way in which disability and people with

> disabilities are represented - as well as the technology that is used to contain or cure them - often directly reflects present- day biases and stereotypes' (Allen, 2013: 3)

Much like the adventure fiction explored in the first chapter, SF is a fantasy space featuring 'others' which are conditioned by history and social reality, and therefore bear the traces of its past.

The tension of the human/alien encounter is often rooted in the need to communicate across not only a linguistic divide, but also across species differentiation. With this context, it is particularly significant that we bear in mind as this chapter progresses that these texts are particularly concerned with language, language priority, and non-normative linguistic forms, which mirror anxieties of alterity when confronted with the Other. However through re-reading these texts from a Disability Studies and Deaf Studies perspective, these texts ultimately question and disrupt the taboo of deafness and otherness. The alterity that these texts present us with are also a potential site for transformation and change in how we conceptualise the self. As Darko Suvin argues:

> Whether island or valley, whether in space or (from the industrial and bourgeois revolutions on) in time, the new framework is correlative to the new inhabitants. The alien—utopians, monsters, or simply differing strangers—are a mirror to man just as the differing country is a mirror for his world. But the mirror is not only a reflecting one, it is also a transforming one, virgin womb and alchemical dynamo: the mirror is our crucible. (Suvin, 1979: 5)

Such as the way that Suvin privileges the visual through his paradigm of the crucible; this chapter will argue that these texts are reverb chambers which function in the same way as Suvin's mirror (note here I am making the distinction from current use of the phrase 'echo chamber'). Such as Suvin's

mirror is a reflecting and transforming one, these texts are also a cavernous reverb chamber in which anxieties surrounding language and communication are shouted. These noises reverberate and return to us transformed; expansive, deeper and wider than before.

It is through the speculative nature of SF that the contact zone becomes a locum where the anxieties surrounding deafness and sign language are transformed and reflected and expanded. Contact zones as we have seen throughout this thesis are social spaces in which different cultures intersect often in asymmetrical conflicts of power and domination (Pratt, 1992:4). Whilst we are not explicitly dealing with colonial and imperial issues, or indeed their aftermath as we have seen in the previous chapters, it is worth noting acknowledging that these anxieties are often prevalent – at least on the allegorical level – within science fiction, not only for its apparent debt to adventure fiction, but also within the socio-political climate of which these texts were written. The most significant aspect of contact zone, and one which is of utmost importance to this chapter is that it is an attempt to 'invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect' (Pratt, 1992: 7). In the first chapter, these trajectories were between coloniser and colonised, in the second chapter, between human and animal, and here, we see the contact zone as a manifestation of the copresence between human and alien: or more simply, the normative and the non-normative.

Once more, we return to the work of Cornelia Müller, and her definitions of the spectrum of co-speech gestures. The full spectrum of co-speech gestures, as Müller summarises, is made up of three primary categories: singular, recurrent and emblematic. As Müller reminds us, 'the three kinds of

gestures operate as prototype categories, that is, they are not separated by sharp boundaries, their relations are dynamic' (Müller, 2018: 2). What is particularly interesting is that as deafness features quite significantly within this chapter, we will of course be dealing with gestures which are fully emblematic and lexicalised. A point of divergence from how we have previously seen ad-hoc kinesic gestures is that the protagonist (i.e.: white human) is the cultural outsider, and are instead attempting through improvised singular and ad-hoc gesticulation to cross the linguistic barrier as opposed to the savage or animal other. Previously, we have been aware of the protagonist taking the de facto superior linguistic position; this however is entirely reversed in this chapter as we shall discuss later, and explore how, in relation to each text this subverts the often presumed white, able superiority and phonocentricity of the contact zone.

'Try to Remember'

A short story written by the author of the *Dune* sequence, 'Try to Remember' is a narrative based around the premise of an alien race visiting Earth, and giving humans the ultimatum: communicate with us, or we will destroy your planet (Herbert, 1961[1988]): 119). Whilst the ultimatum is transmitted to humans across the planet in their local language and dialect, the alien's own communicative form in which they want to be communicated with eludes the planet's greatest linguists and anthropologists. Since the aliens are being observed and recorded as aurally communicating to each other in a meaningful way, a global project is undertaken to translate the alien language in order to facilitate effective communication across the human/alien linguistic dived. However, the turning point of the narrative, and the significant part of the narrative for this thesis, is that it becomes observed that the aliens, as well as speaking, seem to be displaying a form of auxiliary gestural or signatory

language. What follows is an attempt to codify and to understand these gestural forms, which seem to be mimicking various ancient and traditional dances from different, disparate human cultures. The climax of the narrative is that it is eventually revealed that the aliens have 'reunited body and intellect in their communication. A gestalten thing that requires the being's participation' (Herbert, 1961[1988]): 155). Gestalten here is to describe a complete structure of a whole that cannot be described reductively as a sum of its parts. It is through this merging of body and intellect that the aliens have created a form of communication which is entirely truthful and cannot be deceitful, as to the alien form, 'they cannot lie because that would be to lie to themselves – and this would inhibit speech' (Herbert, 1961[1988]): 155). By interacting with the humans in an auxiliary sign language (which is to say it is used simultaneously with vocalisation) comprised of gestural and signatory forms used from ancient cultures, something particularly significant thus occurs within the narrative. The narrative becomes less about the fact that these aliens are communicating in some other, alternative language, but rather the narrative turns inwards, towards the self rather than alien, and towards the history and cultures of human life. A particular remark by one of the researchers summarises this shift: when pointed out that the researchers attempting to decipher the language aren't using all of the planet's languages and dialects, and variations, the researcher proclaims: 'We have all the significant ones' (Herbert, 1961[1988]): 123). Whilst the core analysis of this text will focus on the actual depictions of the alien/human exchange, and the various gestural forms which have been utilised within the text, another line of enquiry will address the fact that this text seems to be actively challenging and questioning the hierarchical relationship between major and minor forms of communication.

Herbert's exposition of the alien invaders on Earth is significant in establishing a clear demarcation between human and alien. Only three paragraphs in, Herbert sets the scene of the invasion, in language that through its invocation of the exotic and ancient casts the alien invasion as almost Lovecraftian. Through invoking the mythological, the exotic, and the resort to scientific language, it is through this dissonance in vocabularies that we become aware of the inherently human linguistic limitation to describe the unknown and the alien. 'The ship had *flapped* out of a gun-metal sky over Oregon, its shape that of a hideously magnified paramecium with edges that rippled like a mythological flying carpet' (Herbert, 1961[1988]): 119). The alien alterity in this description is further highlighted by the use of the word "*flapped*", in italics, which simultaneously implies avian or aquatic movement, whilst at the same time disrupting the technological and mechanical processes suggested by naming such a craft as a "ship": further highlighted by the quasi-organic nature of the alien craft set against a 'gun-metal sky'. Already we are aware that the organic/biological and the mechanical/industrial are becoming disrupted, and simultaneously separated and yet entwined: a narrative exposition that firmly cements the invaders as existing outside of entrenched, pre-existing human expectations of binaristic difference and Otherness.

As the inhabitants of the craft appear, we are immediately made aware of their biological and anatomical differences:

> Its five green-skinned froglike occupants had delivered the ultimatum, one copy printed on velvety paper to each major government, each copy couched flawlessly in the appropriate native tongue. (Herbert, 1961[1988]): 119)

Once again, we are made aware of an implied binaristic contradiction within the

alien species. Referring to the aliens as ‘froglike’ implies that they are of a lower order to humans, an immediate invocation of human exceptionalism in response to an animal, reptilian Other, much in the way that Mowgli’s alterity was framed in *The Jungle Book* narratives as explored in the last chapter. However the alien-as-animal becomes immediately disrupted by not only the fact that they have the technology and intelligence for intergalactic flight, but also the fact that they were able to deliver the ultimatum in a way that has correct linguistic and grammatical usage. It is the fact the aliens (referred to as “Galactics”) in the text are able to communicate in perfect human language yet demand a response in their own language that causes the majority of the conflict within the text, and it is through this contradiction of languages known versus language expected that constructs an entirely linguistic contact zone in which through effective communication with the humans, the Galactics take on an uncanny presence of alterity.

The main problem faced by the scientists and linguists approaching the problem posed by the aliens is that they have resorted to phonocentrism and presume that through an inflated belief in human exceptionalism, that the communication is entirely verbal. Also, because the ultimatum was delivered in different languages, this creates a rift of tension between the global group of scientists working together:

> Ohasi leaned forwards. His eyes appeared to swell behind the thick lenses. “Do you often wonder at their insistence that *we* communicate with *them?* I mean, rather than the other way around?”
>
> “Of course I do. So does everyone else.”’
>
> He sat back. “What do you think of the Islamic team’s approach?”
>
> “You know what I think, Hiko. It’s a waste of time to compare all the Galactics’ speech sounds to passages from the Koran.” She

> shrugged. “But for all we know actually they could be closer to a solution than anyone else is…”’ (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 122)

Despite the tension arising from national and cultural separatism, Ohasi and Miller’s choice to work more collaboratively than the other linguists highlights not only the universalism requested by the aliens, but also lays the foundation for a shared cultural repertoire of communication and mutual history which is paramount in deciphering the language of the Galactics.

One of the most significant descriptions of the human/alien encounter happens once the alien is perceived as a whole, rather than relying entirely on its vocalisations:

> It stands there like a bow-legged professor in that black leotard. Those sounds spew out of it as though they’d never stop. It wriggles at us. It waves. It sways. Its face contorts, if you can call it a face. We recorded and filmed it all, naturally, but it sounded like the usual mish-mash. (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 124)

The above passage is significant for the fact that the alien – once regarded as “frog like” starts to be conceptualised in more humanoid terms. The shift towards referring to the alien as a “professor” and of having a “face” indicates that the attitude towards the aliens start to become acknowledging of an intelligence outside of human perception, even if the tone is somewhat disparaging and referring to the language as “mish-mash”. This becomes more significant when Ohasi suggests to the group of linguists and scientists that ‘there’s something in the gestures’ (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 124). At this point we become aware that what has been perceived as ad-hoc kinesic actions, such as the wriggling, waving, swaying may actually have a conventionalisation and lexicalised meaning. As Ohasi laments ‘if we only had more competent

pasimologists', the irony becomes apparent on two levels (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 124). The fact that the team of scientists is missing a linguist competent in pasimology, the study of gesture as a means of a communication is indicative of the long-held preconception that sign-language and non-normative gestural forms have often been overlooked as a meaningful, lexicalised, and complex language or means of communication. It is at this point that we are made aware that the focus on the alien language is moving away from the linguistic and the uttered, to the non-verbal, the gestural, and the enacted.

One of the most significant parts of the short story is that when ruminating over the language used in the ultimatum, the discussion turns to what is meant by human languages being "limited". As Gore, the French linguist asks Francine: 'What do you suppose is the *real* meaning of their statement that human languages are *'limited'* communication? Perhaps they are telepathic?' (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 125, original emphasis). Whilst the short story is reductive in the fact that it omits sign languages from the category of "human languages" (which can be seen in itself as a plot mechanism), this is an example of the reverb chamber of the narrative transforming anxieties surrounding language into an instance of Deaf Gain. Not only from the dialogue, and for the narrative itself, but from the fact that the text in itself starts to inadvertently highlight the limitations of an entirely verbal, vocal language, as shown by Francine's response: 'I'm banking on something else: By the very fact they posed this question they have indicated that we *can* answer it with our present faculties' (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 125). The narrative then turns further towards Deaf Gain as the scientists start to discuss the physical similarities between the Galactics and humans, a point raised as Ohasi claims 'I once knew a Hawaiian distance swimmer once who looked much like these Galactics' (Herbert, 1961[1988]:

126). It is here that the narrative as the communicative divide in the contact zone between human and alien suddenly shifts into physical and kinetic movement and interaction, rather than linguistic and phonological. As such, the communicative divide of the contact zone becomes reconceptualised in a different manner, one which starts to demote speech from the primary, *a priori* means of communication. As such the narrative therefore forms phono-linguistic exceptionalism as a uniquely human limitation.

As the narrative focus shifts towards conceptualising the aliens as gestural and kinesic beings rather than phono-linguistic, the descriptions of these seemingly ad-hoc gestural actions become more lavish and specific. What was previously regarded in general bodily terms start to be described in a more gestalt manner: 'chopping movements of hands', 'swaying body', 'undulations', 'facial contortions' all start to conceptualise the aliens as using their entire body to communicate (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 128). The "hand chop" gesture can be categorised as one of three categories. In one instance 'used unconsciously during a heated debate' which is prevalent worldwide, and in the two other instances the "hand chop" gesture is indicative of threat (Morris, 1994: 103-4). This conceptual shift away from communication being a purely vocal and phonological phenomena forces a paradigmatic reconstruction of the contact zone: gestural communication becomes rendered as a bodily act, and an act of the body. In turn speech becomes conceptualised as a seemingly disconnected, discrete action, emanating from within, but actualised outside of the body. Whilst it is well documented that auxiliary and co-speech sign languages can function in their own discrete, conventionalised manner amongst other societies and communities (Hewes: 1974), Herbert however likens this gestalten communicative form to dance, as Francine retorts: 'It's almost like a

bizarre dance' (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 128). Whilst likening communication to a seemingly rudimental art-form is potentially reductive, Herbert also ends up, through virtue of this comparison, elevating communication *as* art; which can be seen as a seemingly necessary cultural and aesthetic pursuit. Through this it seems that Herbert is making the claim that communication – in all its forms – has its own artistic, aesthetic, and cultural beauty and merit. Further to this, the fact that the communication from the aliens is likened to an art form implies that not only that there exists a cultural and historical realm of understanding belonging to these alien creatures, but also that there is a degree of conventionalisation. This in turn implies a lexicalisation and conventionalisation to the communicative form which portrays it as emblematic and meaningful, to borrow the terms from Müller (2018), as opposed to the ad-hoc singular gestural form it is assumed to be by our human protagonists.

The idea that there is a meaningful gestural element to the communications is dismissed by Francine's military superiors: 'These are *aliens*… from another world. You've no right to assume that their language development would follow the same patterns as ours' (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 134). Francine's response to this is that owing to the fact that the aliens are humanoid, humans and aliens might nonetheless maintain potential for a shared language origin, despite the species difference: 'Don't you believe language started as the unconscious shaping of the *speech* organs to imitate *bodily* gestures?' (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 134). This is particularly significant to the project of this thesis as the comparison here between the human and alien bodies creates a contact zone in which there exists a mutuality: that language and the body are intrinsically connected. Therefore, at this point, we become aware that human linguistic forms are not – as the narrative makes out – wholly

exceptional, and therefore speech as the dominant and primary linguistic form becomes slightly unsettled in our conception of the normative body. This becomes further apparent when Francine starts applying linguistic theory and structure to the alien language, and in doing so, establishes the Galactics as fully autonomous linguistic beings: 'I believe that this language is a *flexional* language with the flexional endings and root changes contained entirely within the bodily movements' (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 134). It becomes apparent through the text that the alien possesses highly developed civilization, with a history and a culture that evades the referential frame of the human.

This becomes clear when Francine draws the parallels between civilisation, intelligence, and complexity of linguistic development: 'We can assume that this is a highly standardized language […] Basing the assumption on their high standard of civilization. The two usually go hand in hand' (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 134) Seeing that the aliens' communicative forms exist outside the human-centric frame of reference, Francine makes the argument that current phonocentric human understanding of language may in fact be a barrier to creating effective communication: 'I'm certain that we're stepping out into a region here where we'll have to build up a whole new approach to language' (Herbert, 1961[1988]:135). It is through this that Herbert makes apparent that not only is spoken human language at times ineffective, but also that there exist other communicative forms which are at least as, if not more, developed, lexicalised, conventionalised and complex than *a priori* spoken human languages. As the video recordings of the Galactics is studied, the attention suddenly shifts away from a phonocentric approach to understanding the communication of the aliens, and instead, the focus is shifted onto the gestural and signatory bodily movements: 'The Galactic swayed. His face moved like a

ripple of water. He said: “Ahon’atu’uklah’shoginai’ eástruru.” The green arms moved up and down, undulating. The webbed hands came out, palms facing and almost touching, began chopping from the wrists, up, down, up, down, up, down…” (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 136) As the video continues, the body of the alien carries on moving, the body ‘undulated like the movements of the swimming creatures. The green hands touched his thighs, slipped upwards until elbows were level with his shoulders’ (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 137). As Francine and Hiko studied ritual dances in line with the recordings of the aliens, we are presented with a breakthrough as they suddenly realise that there is a parallel between not only the highly ritualised movements of the aliens, but also of the highly ritualised nature of ancient human dance.

The narrative breakthrough occurs when Francine recognises a shared repertoire of gesture between the alien and ‘the maiden in the Oriental dance’, to which Hiko suggests that ‘it’s like a distorted version of the ritual dances we’ve been watching’ (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 137). What is significant about this comparison is that it makes the claim that there exists a mutuality between the human and the Alien Other based on the development in communicative techniques based on the physical body. As we are now aware of the aliens communicating through emblematic gestures with a consistent level of conventionalisation and lexicalisation, Herbert points to the possibility of there existing a shared origin of language between species based on bodily and anatomical similarities.

What starts to become apparent is that the Galactic’s use of communication works on an entirely different set of preconceptions and understanding towards language than a Western, phonocentric culture would expect. As Francine says in a particular exchange with Langsmith and Spiedel,

‘I think the Galactics’ gestures may be their adjectives and adverbs – the whole emotional content of their language’ (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 143). As the language of the Galactics is at this point fully established as conventionalised and lexicalised, with the aliens using co-speech and auxiliary gestures, it starts to become increasingly apparent that Herbert’s narrative is more and more concerned not only with different, non-normative forms of communication, but also the ways in which culture and language are interwoven. This starts to become apparent when Francine announces that this communicative form is something entirely different and unusual:

> ‘We’re dealing with something completely outside of our previous experience. We have to discard old ideas. We know that the habits of a native tongue set up a person’s speaking responses. In fact you can define language as the system of habits you reveal when you speak.’ (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 143)

However, from a Deaf studies and Disability studies perspective it remains the case that the text is still incredibly reliant on preconceived notions of language-as-speech. Yet through instances of Deaf Gain which have exposed a lack of ‘biocultural diversity’ which has led to a monoculture of speech which is ‘increasingly fragile and vulnerable to widespread degradation’ (Bauman and Murray, 2014: xvii-xviii), we can see the narrative starts to transform anxieties surrounding communicative diversity into a point of discussion and reflection. As the linguists work towards understanding and deciphering the communication of the Galactics, we see a series of referrals and returns to claims of speech being the main, primary and default communication, and that the gestural component of the Galactics communication is what makes them – in Herbert’s text – the symbolic and literal alien.

As gesture starts to become equated with emotion, the text in forceful in its portrayal of gesture and signatory language as out-dated, or primitive: ‘Every spoken language on earth has migrated away from emotion’ (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 143). Further to this, Francine goes on to illustrate an example of linguistic development in which speech is slowly overtaking gestural and bodily acts of emotion. Instead of the body-as-signifier, Herbert seems to be suggesting that speech is actively overtaking such emotive, physical utterances through a secondary level of verbal signification: ‘Take Japanese, for example. Instead of saying ‘Thank you’ they say ‘Katajikenai’ – ‘I am insulted.’ Or they say, ‘Kino doku’ which means ‘This poisonous feeling!’ (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 144). Francine then holds up her hands and explains: ‘This is ritual exclusion of showing emotion. Our Indo-European languages – especially Anglo-Saxon tongues – are moving the same way’ (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 144). As Herbert makes the claim that language seems to be developing further away from the actual, bodily sensation that it signifies, we can read this alongside the invasion of Earth as a preoccupation with imperialism, both in the linguistic sense, but also as a commentary on actual imperial and colonial practices in which we see cultures and histories erased.

As the narrative climax is reached, humanity has been unable to effectively communicate, and as panic and action escalates, the United States decides to take military action against the landed alien craft. The military intervention is futile, and in doing so provokes wrath and fury from the otherwise seemingly platonic Galactics: ‘”EARTH PEOPLE!” The voice roared from the spaceship, cutting across all thought, stilling all emotion into a waiting fear. “WE HAD HOPED YOU COULD LEARN TO COMMUNICATE!” roared the voice.

“YOU HAVE FAILED!”’ (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 151). In a moment of revelation Francine finally understands what is meant by the Galactic’s ultimatum:

> Thoughts that had been struggling for recognition began surging to the surface of Francine’s mind. She felt herself caught in the throes of a mental earthquake, her soul brought to a crisis as sharp as that of giving birth. The crashing words had broken through a last barrier in her mind. “*COMMUNICATE*!” At last she understood the meaning of the ultimatum. (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 151)

Upon approaching the Galactic ship and screaming ‘here’s one who didn’t fail! I know what you meant!’, the Galactics decide to enter into a dialogue with Francine (ibid., 151). The Galactics eventually leave the ship, and encounter Francine. The Galactics ‘looked defeated, radiating sadness’ (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 152). They then deliver to Francine a soliloquy:

> ”Those five [Galactics] are among the eight hundred survivors of a race that once numbered six billion,” said the voice […] The voice from the ship rolled on: “This once great race did not realize the importance of unmistakable communication. They entered space in that sick condition – hating, fearing, fighting. There was appalling bloodshed on their side and – ours – before we could subdue them […] the eight hundred survivors – to atone for the errors of their race and to earn the right of further survival – developed a new language,” said the voice from the ship. “It is, perhaps, the ultimate language. They have made themselves the masters of all languages to serve as our interpreters.” There was a long pause, then: “Think very carefully, Mrs. Millar. Do you know why they are our interpreters?”
>
> […]
>
> “Because they cannot lie,” she husked. (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 152-3)

As Francine turns to Hiko, she explains what was meant by the Galactic’s request to communicate: ‘We were asked to communicate. We were supposed to remember our own language – the language we knew in childhood, and what was slowly lost to us through the elevation of reason’ (Herbert, 1961[1988]: 154). For Herbert, speech, in the uniquely human sense of the word, is in fact

not a mark of human exceptionalism, but instead a limitation and reduction of the whole bodily potential for communication. As such, the new found “speech” therefore modifies the body; the voice of the self is no longer limited to a direct relationship between neurological pathways and vocal cords. It instead requires the body in its entirety, and in doing so modifies the conception of the self. It is through this newly configured ‘self that one […] cannot lie to the self. When body and intellect say the same thing… that is truth. When words and wordlessness agree… that is truth’ (Herbert, 1961[1988]:155). So in ‘Try to Remember’, Herbert not only advocates for an examination of our shared linguistic origins, but also presents a hypothetical alternative to the phono-centric self; a fully formed ontological mode of being in which gesture and sign language are part of an authenticated way of being in the world. It is at the narrative climax that we are aware that Herbert’s narrative is a cautionary tale of elevating phonocentrism, and elevating phono over logos – and with it, how language has evolved beyond the original intention of communication: that from communicating ideas, thoughts, emotions, language became self-absorbed. Spoken language, Herbert seems to suggest, is not required for a meaningful way of being in the world. It is from this then, that we can see how Herbert has constructed and presented us with a fully formed alternative ontology: one in which gesture and sign language are given the gravitas of other, verbal languages. And this becomes most apparent when we consider that within this world exist many fully formed primary and auxiliary sign languages. Yet in Herbert’s narrative reality these sign languages and gestural forms were brushed away, overlooked, and discarded – and it was through the constant dismissal of these other non-normative, non-verbal languages that almost resulted in the downfall and destruction of humanity.

Silence is Deadly

Silence is Deadly is a S.F. novel by Lloyd Biggle, Jr., first published in 1977. A novel that is rooted squarely within the tradition and tropes of space opera, *Silence is Deadly* is a galaxy spanning adventure. Space opera as a subgenre of SF is characterised by futuristic technologies, space travel, alien planets, and is a play on the phrase “soap opera” as they were often serialised (Pringle, 2000: 36). Continuing the serialisation characterisation of space opera, *Silence is Deadly* is one of a series of books in which Jan Darzek features as the protagonist that used to be a private detective in New York, but owing to matter transfer and intergalactic teleportation is now – through various events – First Councillor of the Intergalactic Council of the Supreme. This novel sees the protagonist sent off to explore the planet Kamm, known as the silent planet (for all its inhabitants are deaf), to find out if its inhabitants are in possession of a prohibited death ray device, known as a *pazul*. The inhabitants of the planet Kamm are entirely deaf, and communicate primarily through gesture and sign language, with perfume and scent acting as an auxiliary communicative form. Almost all of the dialogue within the narrative is signed, as Darzek, disguised as a native, ends up infiltrating the planet and establishing a cover identity as a native perfumer. However, what is interesting about this narrative are the ways in which Biggle uses deafness not as a trope of deficit, but rather as a signifier of alien otherness, and in doing so, we can start to see an element of Deaf Gain throughout the narrative which advocates against human exceptionalism and monoculturalism. The planet Kamm, which is regarded as primitive in terms of technology, operates on a level which seems to emulate a medieval feudal system, and weapons are limited to whips and swords. Deafness is often used as a symbol of deficit, and it is this preconception that Biggle capitalises on the

cultural currency of to mark the technology of the planet of Kamm as backwards and primitive. The narrative also capitalises on this preconception when handling Darzek's Kammian disguise to establish an entirely "alien" and "deaf" way of being. Darzek undergoes extensive bodily modifications in order for him to infiltrate the planet of Kamm as a native, a process which required his ears being removed and extra fingers added (Biggle, 1977[1981]): 27).

Biggle's attempt to portray deaf, signing aliens through biological difference is somewhat reductive as reduces deafness and sign language use to a series of physical, biological, and evolutionary differences, and in doing so, produces deafness as a site of alien otherness entirely predicated on biology rather than culture. However, Biggle is extensive in his attempt to create an entirely alternative way of being for the inhabitants of Kamm, as 'it was hideously noisy; in direct compensation, as though the deaf Kammians had deliberately set about their remaining senses, it was vividly, dramatically, extraordinarily colourful' (Biggle, 1977[1981]): 32). There are many extensive discussions about how the inhabitants of Kamm utilise other senses in terms of linguistic and interpersonal exchange, and this, I believe is also something worth interrogating and investigating. For all of Biggles' descriptions and Darzek being a belligerent protagonist, there is a redeeming undercurrent that runs through the text that doesn't necessarily celebrate cultural and linguistic differences, but rather suggests that tolerance of difference and exposure to "alien" concepts and ideas is beneficial in diversifying human culture.

Whilst Biggle's novel comprises 21 chapters, it is the first 6 with which I am primarily concerned with for several reasons. The first chapters are significant in that they set up and establish not only the narrator, Darzek, but also the planet Kamm. Once the narrator becomes efficient in his role as an

undercover Kammian, signed communication functions in the text in place of dialogue: effectively recasting the signed communication as a normative communicative form, which therefore allays most of, if not all, the tension inherent within the imbalances of the earlier encounters this chapter and thesis in general has examined. As such, *Silence is Deadly* reads very much like a narrative of two parts. In the first part of the narrative, Biggle is directly concerned with establishing the planet of Kamm, and how it exists outside of a phonocentric frame of reference. The second part of the narrative abandons the attention to deafness afforded to the first part, and instead reads very much like a typical gung-ho space opera narrative. It is with the first section, therefore, that I directly engage with throughout this section.

The novel opens with a non-linear chapter, which within the chronology of the narrative, takes place within chapter 9. More than just a stylistic choice on Biggle's part, the non-linear narrative exposition is significant in that it forces the reader to make assumptions based on the limited textual context provided, and in doing so, the forced ambiguity serves to heighten the disarming effect of Biggle conflating deafness with alienness. 'Above the rhythmic clumping of the hurrying draft nabrula and the screaming racket pronounced continuously by their cart's ungreased axles, Darzek's impaired hearing caught a faintly muddled overlay of hoofbeats' (Biggle, 1977[1981]): 1). In this narrative exposition, we become aware of the layering of sound which creates a sonic soundscape within which our narrator is inexplicably "hearing impaired". This, paired with the unexplained "draft nabrula," creates a narrative exposition which is notably alien (the nabrula, we learn later, are the planet's analogue of a horse). It is worth clarifying here that *Silence is Deadly* is the 4th novel by Lloyd Biggle, Jr. to feature the protagonist Jan Darzek. Darzek, to fans of Biggle

would already be pre-established, and the hearing impairment would therefore, for the initiated reader, be more prominently unusual and markedly unfamiliar. The first exchange within the narrative is one that is ambiguous: ‘He touched Riklo on the shoulder and pointed at the knights. She glanced backward, shrugged, and returned her attention to their own three rushing nabrula’ (Biggle, 1977[1981]): 1). Whilst we are made aware of the cacophony of noise made the cart and the nabrula, the gestures used between Darzek and Riklo occupy an ambiguous middle ground between hearing and deaf – Biggle does not stipulate whether the gestures used are necessary due to overwhelming noise, or because the characters themselves are hearing impaired. Despite the fact that the characters are established in ways that their bodies are marked as alien, it is their use of gesture that familiarity occurs in this otherworldly contact zone. As Desmond Morris points out in *Peoplewatching*, the gestural act of the point is ‘such a simple thing to do that we tend to take […] for granted’, when as he goes on to explain ‘pointing is, in fact, a specialty of our species’ (Morris, 2002[1977]: 88). For all the alien exposition of the opening page of this novel, the act of pointing is a uniquely human way to communicate non-verbally.

The ambiguity between noise and deafness is shortly resolved though, as Biggle, without context, Darzek is revealed not only proficient in sign-language, but also that he is still able to hear: ‘He turned to Riklo and spoke with his fingers. The caterwauling of the cart wheels made vocal conversation difficult; also, Darzek needed the practice’ (Biggle, 1977[1981]): 2). This duality between hearing and deaf is significant. Not only does it imply the fact that there is a potential linguistic superiority to sign-language, but it also complicates the relationship between sound and speech: the novel’s exposition is one that is rich in soundscapes and sonic textures – and yet the soft introduction of several

deaf themes, such as hearing impairment and sign language unsettles any assumed phonocentrism.

As the exchange progresses, we have the first instance of explicit sign language use within the novel. '*Why would black knights be waylaying innocent travellers in the Duke Merzkion's province?* he asked, trying not to lisp with his awkward sixth finger' (Biggle, 1977[1981]): 2). The fact that Biggle has taken the decision to transcribe sign language through standard typography is particularly interesting. Throughout the novel, all signed dialogue is presented as the above, in italics, and still bound to the rules and structure of conventional grammar. Whilst this can be seen as a plot mechanism – in that ascribing sign-language as spoken dialogue is way of fulfilling the expectation of dialogue within a novel – it also points out the limitation inherent within prose and speech to effectively convey and depict fully conventionalised sign language within a two-dimensional medium. The response from Riklo is one of very few within the novel in which Biggle attempts to display and describe gesture-as-communication, rather than defaulting to transcriptions: 'Her hands were busy with the reins. She dropped a shoulder negatively – she was as mystified as he' (Biggle, 1977[1981]: 2). The shoulder drop which can be considered a variation of a shoulder shrug is a widely used gestural form of communication that expresses ignorance, such as 'I have no idea' (Morris, 1994: 200). The reason that this included in the opening scene of the novel is that it helps to convey the Kammian sign language as one which is, as we have seen throughout this chapter across other texts, increasingly gestalten and of-the-body rather than just of the hands. It also becomes apparent that Biggle himself tends to regard sign language from a phonocentric perspective – the idea of Darzek lisping with an "awkward sixth finger" not only re-inscribes communication as explicitly

verbal and vocal, but also alienates the deviant, non-normative body. We see another example of the slippage between Biggle's own phonocentrism and the sign language within his narrative as he describes the encounter between Darzek and Riklo and the Knights: 'Watching him, Darzek pondered this strange Kammian ability to absorb multiple conversations. The notion that some Kammians could "listen" to as many as four pair of hands speaking at once confounded him, but he had seen it done' (Biggle, 1977[1981]: 3). Here, we not only see a literary artefact of Biggle's own phonocentrism within the narrative but also become aware of our narrators own opinion – that even despite seeing a group conversation – sign language and deafness are things that are inherently alien.

There is however a certain amount of self-reflexive irony and humour in that Darzek perceives the Kammian aliens as inherently Other, despite the fact that he has had extensive surgery to look like a native Kammian. Riklo, his associate, is also an agent of the Galactic Synthesis, and also sporting a disguise. It is through this opening chapter that we become aware of the construction of Darzek-as-alien, rather than the presumed Darzek-as-human. 'Darzek fretfully rubbed his head where an ear should have been. It was at times like this, when he faced a limited number of highly undesirable alternatives, that he missed his ears the most' (Biggle, 1977[1981]: 4). In response to this action, Riklo, who is now communicating verbally, 'turned and scrutinized him. "Did you speak truly when you said that your features are your own, and that you had hearing flaps which the surgeons removed to make you look like a Kammian?"'(Biggle, 1977[1981]: 5). It is through dialogue such as this that we become aware of a contact zone which repeatedly destabilises notions of human exceptionalism. Take for instance, this comment, in which

Riklo completely undermines the biological exceptionalism of human evolution: ‘She tittered. “I don’t believe it. Where would the hearing flaps go? No natural process would produce a life form looking that absurd”’ (Biggle, 1977[1981]: 6). We are now aware that Riklo is not human, and that we are dealing with a significantly diverse set of characters: larger than just a divide between hearing and non-hearing, we have a whole raft of different species, yet they all share a similar bodily construction owing to the need to disguise themselves on the planet Kamm. Unlike Darzek, who underwent cosmetic surgery, Riklo’s disguise was far more complex and elaborate: ‘What perplexed Darzek was the fact that her appearance was synthetic. She wore an ingeniously contrived artificial body that perfectly represented the appearance of a Kammian native, and within it was concealed the utterly alien life form that was an agent of the Galactic Synthesis’ (Biggle, 1977[1981]: 6). As later explained, the method of disguise depends on how similar the agent is to the intended species: the fact that Riklo had a synthetic appearance meant that the “utterly alien life form” was one far removed from a humanoid appearance. Through the constant stacking of identity onto identity, the word alien starts to become, through virtue of repetition, an almost meaningless phrase. Many things, to our protagonist, are alien, and as more things start to be classified as alien, we start to become aware that the human field of perception is increasingly shrinking, and with it, *Silence is Deadly* interrogates what we presumed to be a uniquely and exceptionally human existence.

The Kammians, as constructed by Biggle, serve as the almost perfect example of the reverb chamber (which I posited earlier in the introduction to this chapter, borrowing from Suvin’s “SF-mirror-as-crucible”), in which to interrogate and the human preconception with phonocentrism, and to see how those

anxieties are transformed by the contact zone of the encounter. ‘The Kammians were startlingly human in appearance, but they had no ears, and they did have six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot. They also had genital organs entirely different in appearance, function and position from those of humans, but Darzek insisted on his inalienable right to draw the line somewhere’ (Biggle, 1977[1981]: 27). If science fiction has the potential to hold up a mirror for us to examine our own anxieties – the Kammian native is carnival mirror incarnate, a reflection of the human in which potential sites of anxiety are exaggerated, distorted, or seemingly absent (See Suvin, 1979: 5 for discussion on the SF mirror). As Biggle describes the radical surgery undergone by Darzek to effectively pass as a native Kammian, we are reminded of the intersection between body and sensory perception:

> His ears were removed and placed in deep freeze to await his return. Flesh was drawn smoothly over the aural openings, but his inner ears were not tampered with. He retained enough hearing ability to have the advantage of an extra sense on a world where the natives were deaf; but not so much that he would give himself away by reacting to sounds a native would ignore’ (Biggle, 1977[1981]: 27)

As we become aware of the intersection between biological difference and the ways in which senses are constituted through the interaction of body and external stimulus, it becomes apparent that Biggle subscribes to the notion that communication is determined by sensory facilities. In Biggle’s fictional planet of Kamm, the natives communicate through sign-language as this is conditioned by a biological and evolutionary necessity, because they are deaf. Darzek, as protagonist, is in many ways an exaggeration of the “everyman” trope – and his ignorance surrounding sign-language in many ways mirrors popular and prevailing misconceptions surrounding deafness, albeit exaggerated:

> Darzek knew that Kamm was called the Silent Planet, but he had not contemplated the implications of life on a world where no life form could hear. He was completely unprepared when Kom Rmmon showed him projections of Kammian natives fluttering their twelve fingers with unbelievable rapidity. When finally he had been convinced that the finger movements actually constituted speech, he considered calling the whole project off. (Biggle, 1977[1981]:27)

It is important to remember that Darzek's character is essentially an exaggeration of the wise-cracking, morally-ambiguous detective, which adds an element of stylistic bravado to the narrative. However this character-type also affords Biggle a certain amount of immunity in which he can therefore address deafness and sign language to the reader through Darzek's own ignorance. As Edith Edna Sayers argues in 'Reading Deaf Characters', 'many portrayals of deaf characters, created *ex nihilio*, are excellent cultural artifacts of the uninformed notions held by the societies in which they and their intended readers lived' (Sayers, 2012: 304). Essentially, Darzek's character mirrors the potential ignorance of the reader and, as such, Biggle takes the pro-active stance of affording Kammian natives agency, and culture. An example of this is when Darzek rather obtusely remarks: 'Any sensible life form would have learned to read lips' (Biggle, 1977[1981]: 27). This, of course, is an almost certain biological impossibility, since there is no evolutionary advantage or benefit for a species to communicate through a sensory modality which they don't possess. It's also worth noting as well that there exists a documented collective sense of humour surrounding lipreading – as Sayers points out 'supernatural lipreading skill is a favourite old joke of many deaf people today' (Sayers, 2012: 305). As such, Darzek's comment has an (almost certainly) unintended comic response from a deaf perspective. Rmmon, Darzek's superior ultimately chastises him for his comment: 'Kom Rmmon pointed out that reading

the lips of an alien life form speaking an utterly alien language was likely to be as difficult as learning to read a finger language, and Darzek sat back resignedly and watched the projection. His crash educational program was just beginning' (Biggle, 1977[1981]: 27). What is significant here in that the "alien language" is speech – and that a "finger language" is given exemption from the classifier "alien". In doing so, Biggle has inadvertently established an intergalactic hierarchy of language, in which, through its complexity, sign-language can be viewed as authentic and conventionalised as any other language.

What is particularly significant in relation to Deafhood and a deaf ontology is that deafness is not presented within the novel as deficit, or lack and loss. Deafness, for the world of Kamm, is presented as nothing but a divergent path of evolution and development in a way that follows the ideas of Deaf Gain as 'having dislodged the four-letter word *deaf* from its essentialist roots based in hearing loss' (Bauman and Murray: 2014). From a deaf studies and disability studies then, this novel is particularly significant in that it opens up alternative ways of living and being in the world that exist outside of phonocentric normalcy.

As was made apparent by the non-linear opening, Kamm in often portrayed in terms of soundscapes and audio texture. This juxtaposition between deafness and sound only serves to highlight phonocentric presumption that sound is inherently and exclusively meaningful. As Darzek ventures out in public for the first time, he becomes aware that Kamm, the silent planet, is far from silent: 'He had also grasped the fact that deafness is synonymous with silence only for the deaf' (Biggle, 1977[1981]: 30). As Oliver Sacks tells us in *Seeing Voices*, deafness and silence are not mutually exclusive: 'Although the

deaf are sometimes supposed to *be* silent, as well as to inhabit the world of silence, this may not be the case […] they may have unconscious and often very energetic vocalizations of various sorts – accidental or inadvertent movements of the vocal apparatus, neither intended, nor monitored' (Sacks, 1989: 132n142). As such, the soundscape of Kamm, of which Darzek is party to owing to his residual hearing, becomes a locus of audiological voyeurism and spectacle. 'This world of Kamm, this infamous Silent Planet, was in fact the most revoltingly noisy place he had ever experienced. No New York City traffic jam, even in the days when New York City had traffic, could rival a convoy of Kammian carts on the way to market' (Biggle, 1977[1981]: 30). The description of Darzek's first impressions of Kamm builds and layers sound on top of sound, and as the intensity and amplitude of sound increases around Darzek, we become aware that Biggle's prose gets increasingly verbose.

This in turn exposes the linguistic limitations of effectively transducing sound to prose, from *phonos* to *logos*:

> The Kammian squeaking wheel never got the grease, because no one hear the squeaking and the incredibly tough, ridiculously named sponge wood seemed to last forever without lubrication. Every cart and wagon on the entire world of Kamm continuously uttered the pathetic shrieks of a wracked body being dragged to perpetual damnation. The world's ugly beasts of burden, the nabrula, snorted and hissed and moaned and bleated, splendidly oblivious to the fact that neither they, nor their fellow nabrula, nor any other creature, native to the planet, could hear them. (Biggle, 1977[1981]: 30)

Beyond the fact that it becomes apparent that there exists a lexical difficulty in effectively portraying the cacophony of sound that exists on Kamm, Biggle returns occasionally to ableist and phonocentric preconceptions to explain deafness. Particularly when Biggle likens the Kammians to the nabrula in a

problematic move which suggests deafness is of a lower state of being. I think it worth considering however, that there is latent humour within this description, and Biggle inadvertently makes a pertinent comment about the relationship between society and sound:

> The Kammians themselves, for all their disconcertingly human appearance, did the same [as the nabrula]. They hummed and hacked and bellowed and wheezed constantly. Their very digestive noises provided a running counterpoint to every Kammian encounter. There could be no social constraint about noises – any kind of noises – when no one was able to hear them (Biggle, 1977[1981]: 30)

Whilst it is tempting to regard the above excerpt as reductive of a deaf culture and identity, the crass nature of it, I would argue, is significant in highlighting the extent to which we are dealing with an entirely "alien" culture and identity. Though the extreme return to low comedy may initially come across as an example of punch-down humour in which Biggle is constructing deafness as a point of comic resolve, it is through this comedic element in which we become aware of two things. Firstly, Darzek, and the reader, are self-reflexively positioned in the role of intrusive voyeur – any humour inherent in the perceived cultural and societal differences between human and alien becomes in itself an act of perversion. Secondly, the fact that Biggle approaches the humour from an entirely biological perspective highlights not only the humanoid similarities between humans and the Kammians, but also emphasises the way in which societal mores and etiquette function within culture as part of larger, constructed framework of social expectation.

This is not to say that Kamm is without its own cultural rules and societal conventions. One of the main plot points within the start of narrative is that Darzek's disguise on Kamm is in the profession of a perfumer. As Darzek

becomes increasingly aware from strange looks from passer-by's, he becomes aware that despite his best intentions to disguise himself, 'he stood out like an alien thumb' (Biggle, 1977[1981]: 35). What is interesting here is that the contact zone – the site of intersection between Darzek and the Kammians – is established as such that Darzek is himself recast in the role of alien, and outsider. As the narrative explains, Darzek was himself marked as Other through his olfactory presence – 'scent dominated Kammian psychology even more than colour and touch […] to meet a Kammian without a personal perfume was unheard of, and Darzek wore no perfume' (Biggle, 1977[1981]: 36). Perfume, and scent functions to the Kammian with a privilege of communication often afforded to either speech, or sign language. The scents 'were a subtle blending of fragrances that suggested something of the body rather than a concoction applied to it' (Biggle, 1977[1981]: 36). It is through this privileging of the olfactory senses that we become aware that Kamm, both as planet and contact zone, establishes a communicatory hierarchy in which scent is as much of the body when it comes to communication as sign language is. 'So acute was the Kammian sense of smell, so subtly attuned to the delicacies of scent, that it instantly detected a passerby without perfume' (Biggle, 1977[1981]: 37). It as a later part in the narrative in which Darzek is captured that this point is expanded upon once more – 'It hadn't been the lack of a perfume that had shocked the Kammians. It was a whiff of his revolting humanity that turned stares in his direction' (Biggle, 1977[1981]: 120). Scent is a particularly interesting sensory carrier of information. It is indexical rather than iconic or symbolic, and can only be accurately described in metaphoric language, which is more often than not visual, and signifying of its own origins. Despite this, as Hoffman argues, scent is an incredibly important form of sensory communication, which can affect and

influence behaviours, shape social meanings, and also carry social meanings (Hoffman, 2013). The fact that the Kammians' sense of smell is so highly developed and attuned is significant in how Biggle has constructed the fictional race of aliens. It is through this privileging of sensory information which not only casts Darzek within an imbalanced contact zone due to his biological and sensory limitations – but deafness is not within itself constructed as a lack or loss of sense. Deafness is instead presented as a bodily variation, and not something which is precluding access to a fully formed ontological way of being which is vibrant and rich. Whilst hearing may be a sense that the Kammians do not possess, their world is no less authentic, meaningful, or complex. They have a history, culture, legal systems, and despite the fact they may be a technologically primitive, Biggle's Kammians present a challenge to not only phonocentrism as the dominant form of communication, but also challenge the preconception that the world of the deaf is silent, empty, and lonely.

The Persistence of Vision

John Varley's 'The Persistence of Vision' is a Nebula Award winning novella first published in 1978. It is the story of an unnamed drifter, serving as the narrator, who travels across the United States from commune to commune in a divergent future in which a large proportion of infants were born afflicted with rubella, and subsequently became deaf and blind. Much like other science fiction tales of the 1970s, 'The Persistence of Vision' is concerned with ideas of utopianism and counterculture. As pointed out by Mancus, one of the driving forces of the New Wave SF movement was 'a transnational counterculture emerged that fundamentally challenged the politics, culture, and ideology of the generation which came before it', which led to a rise of 'countercultural figures and fellow travellers' which included 'New Wave SF writers' (Mancus, 2018:

338). Riding off the tail-end of such significant countercultural events such as Leary's experimentations with LSD, and the Black Power Movement, 'authority of all types was under question, and not only new narratives, but new styles and forms were needed to capture the shifting intellectual zeitgeist (Mancus, 2018: 339). One of the ways this cultural zeitgeist was explored was through New Wave SF narratives, such as this short story, and the previous texts in this chapter.

However, it is with its portrayals of deafness and blindness that this section of the chapter is immediately concerned with. As well as presenting these characters as legally autonomous and independent, the narrative is also concerned with how the contact zone between hearing and non-hearing encounters can be configured, as the communication between our narrator and the deaf/blind characters and amongst the deaf/blind themselves is predicated on a highly eroticised, sensual, iteration of tactile signing. Tactile signing in-itself is a variation of the other sign languages and gestural communicative forms we have already encountered within this thesis. "Tactile signing" as used here will refer to the real world practice, namely a mode of communication that uses touch. Whilst Varley's modes of communication are clearly directly inspired and influenced by tactile signing, I will instead explicitly refer to them as the terms used within the narrative: mouthtalk, handtalk, bodytalk, and Touch, in order to differentiate between the actual, lived communicative mode, and Varley's fictionalised extrapolation.

As the narrative opens, we become aware that we are dealing with a narrative set in a divergent history from our own: 'It was the year of the fourth non-depression […] the world's economy had been writhing like a snake on a hot griddle for the last twenty years, since the early seventies' (Varley,

1978[1988]: 241). The use of phrases such as ‘the Big One back in ‘29’ (Varley, 1978[1988]: 242) to refer to the Great Depression paint the picture of society constantly hit by economic fluctuation, and the risks of ‘strangers – who might be tainted with “radiation disease”’ (Varley, 1978[1988]: 243) inform us that we are in a fictional world which at the very least, has normalised the use of radioactive and atomic weapons. The most significant and stark difference in our divergent narrative timeline is the 1964 ‘epidemic of German measles’ in which ‘many pregnant women caught rubella and went to term’ resulting in the fact that ‘five thousand deaf-blind children were born in one year’ (Varley, 1978[1988]: 244-245). The resulting generation of an unprecedented deafblind population was of course, in Varley’s timeline, a strain on educational and medical resources, as ‘in 1970, these five thousand potential Helen Kellers were all six years old. It was quickly seen that there was a shortage of Anne Sullivans. Previously, deaf-blind children could be sent to a small number of special institutions’ (Varley, 1978[1988]: 245). In a move that criticises societies aversion to those who are differently bodied and non-normative, Varley condemns the societal preoccupation of silencing and marginalising those deemed un-desirable by an able-centric society:

> Many of the five thousand were badly retarded and virtually impossible to reach, even if anyone had been trying. These ended up, for the most part, warehoused in the hundreds of anonymous nursing homes and institutes for “special” children. They were put into beds, cleaned up once a day by a few overworked nurses, and generally allowed the full blessings of liberty: they were allowed to rot freely in their own dark, quiet, private universes. Who can say it was bad for them? None of them were heard to complain. (Varley, 1978[1988]: 245)

The dehumanization and ableist rhetoric employed here by Varley can and should be read with a certain amount of nuance. Whilst we are on one hand

dealing with a literary artefact of the 1970s in which ableist language is now seen as reductive and offensive, the dehumanising language employed by Varley highlights the separatist autonomy and freedom afforded to the deafblind characters within the fictional commune. The autonomy of the deafblind is entirely and completely predicated on education and language acquisition: 'To protest', as Varley tells us, 'one must have be aware of the possibility of something better. It helps to have language too' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 245). The treatment of the deafblind generation in Varley's narrative mirrors all too well the lived experiences of many disabled individuals:

> Many children with undamaged brains were shuffled in among the retarded because they were unable to tell anyone that they were in there behind the sightless eyes. They failed the batteries of tactile tests, unaware that their fates hung in the balance when they were asked to fit round pegs into round holes to the ticking of a clock they could not see or hear. (Varley, 1978[1988]: 245)

This medicalisation of the disabled body as a site of deviance and norm-divergency not only highlights the pervasive (and still on-going) cultural preoccupation with inscribing the disabled body as docile and complicit - it also serves as a critique of the methods used to entrench and re-inscribe the idea of the normal body as prescribed by normative ideals.

However, as Varley tells us in the narrative, amongst those who were of low cognitive function, there were 'several hundred of the children [who] were found to have IQs within the normal range' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 245). The solution, in Varley's fictional America, was to focus on these children, train sufficient teachers, so that 'the educational expenditures would go on for a specific period of time, until the children were grown, then things would go back to normal and everyone would congratulate themselves on having dealt

successfully with a tough problem' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 245). Through educating disabled individuals "as a cure" to the problem of disability is symbolic and representative of the ableist preconception of fixing those it regards as deviant. As Varley tells us, 'All the graduates of the special schools left knowing how to speak with their hands. Some could talk. A few could write. Not everyone, but most of the graduates, were as happy with their lot as could be reasonable expected' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 246). However, in a move that celebrates the population diversity that disability can bring, Varley's fictional deafblind children were a microcosm of society as a whole. Whilst 'some achieved the almost saintly peace of their role model, Helen Keller', there were 'among the group, as in any group, were some misfits' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 246). The significant thing here, however, is that "misfit" is not a disparaging or derogatory term: but instead a symbol of freedom, agency, pride: 'With a group of five thousand, there were certain to be a few geniuses, a few artists, a few dreamers, hell-raisers, individualists, movers and shapers: a few glorious maniacs' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 246). The most significant of these dreamers, Janet Reilly, was the woman who founded the commune of Keller, a utopian paradise for the deafblind: 'She was a dreamer, a creative force, an innovated. It was she who dreamed of having freedom. But she was not a builder of fairy castles. Having dreamed it, she had to make it come true' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 245).

In a move that not only celebrates student and grass-roots activism as well as anti-establishment thinking, but also the autonomy and agency of the disabled and deafblind, Varley gives a detailed account of how a group of seventy deafblind students, with nowhere to go after graduating from the special schools managed to establish a commune in the New Mexico desert (Varley,

1978[1988]: 250-251). As Varley tells us, ‘Their parents were either dead or not interested in living with them […] The authorities had plans, but the students beat them to it (Varley, 1978[1988]: 250). The amount of effort Varley goes into to explain how the students managed to establish the commune is impressive: from hiring lawyers, to negotiating with government agencies for water pipelines, to re-enriching arid land, to plans of social planning, construction, legal battles: all of this points towards a celebration of the diversity and authenticity of lives that can be led by those with disabilities, yet beyond brief acknowledgement this is outside of the scope of this thesis (Varley, 1978[1988]: 251-3). The commune ultimately was established in 1986, and as Varley tells us: ‘there were fifty-five of them, with nine children aged three months to six years’ (Varley, 1978[1988]: 252). It is at this commune in which our narrator finds himself: a space which is separatist, where deafblindness is the norm, an Edenic paradise in the New Mexico desert in which phonocentric expectations and norms do not exist.

The first significant encounter within the narrative in when our narrator, approaching Keller, is met by a Navaho on horseback. As our narrator reaches the wall on the outside of the compound, he meets a ‘dark man with thick features’, whom he assumes to be ‘Navaho, maybe’ (Varley, 1978[1988]: 247). What is particularly of interest about this encounter is that the un-named Navaho communicates using auxiliary signs: simultaneous speech and gestural acts. As our narrator tells, us, the man ‘shrugged’ (Varley, 1978[1988]: 247), but later in the conversation ‘shrugged again, and it was a whole different gesture’ (Varley, 1978[1988]: 248). After he tells our narrator that everyone in the commune, ‘they all deaf and blind’, he turns to leave and as our narrator tells us, ‘made a clicking sound and galloped away’ (Varley, 1978[1988]: 248). Whilst

these additional communicatory components may by themselves seem insignificant, the fact that we are made aware of a level of disconnect between the two linguist cultures of the narrator and this un-named Navaho is significant, particularly given this short story's preoccupation with different forms of communication. As we see later in the text our narrator is completely enthralled and enchanted by the forms that language and communication take within the commune, but here, outside of the specific contact-zone of the commune, the seemingly ad-hoc kinesic components of the Navaho's communication does little to interest our narrator, despite being fully lexicalised and conventionalised gestural acts.

Once our narrator enters Keller, we are made instantly aware of the fact that he is within an environment outside of phonocentric norms and in a contact zone which privileges non-normative forms of communication. The first encounter our narrator experiences within the commune is with a sheepdog, and we are already made aware of the differences inside the walls of Keller, and life outside: 'she raised her ears and followed me with her eyes as I passed, but did not come when I whistled' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 248). Despite a seemingly insignificant, encounter, the fact that our narrator resorts to phono-centric behaviour in whistling for the dog (and seeming somewhat dejected and surprised at her refusal to) starts to give us an indicator of how entwined not only society and language are, but how learned behaviour for animals and acts of habit for humans are dependent on our relationship and positioning to sound, language, vision, and speech.

The second encounter experienced by our narrator is one which is much more chaotic, tumultuous, and dependent on sound. As our narrator walks along the tracks, he becomes aware of approaching vehicle: 'It was a sort of

converted mining engine […] and it had gotten quite close before I heard it. A small man was driving it. He was pulling a car behind him and singing as loud as he could with absolutely no sense of pitch' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 249). It's significant to acknowledge here that Varley's deafblind engine driver is singing: an act which is normally dependent on aesthetic values of music, yet here presented as an act of joy, and pleasure for the self: a uniquely private act of enjoyment in a deafblind commune, of which our narrator is now placed in the position of voyeur. The fact that the deafblind character was singing should not be a surprise, after all as Sayers points out, 'the notion that that deaf people live in silence is current only among the uninformed hearing' (Sayers, 2012: 243). Varley's narrative thus writes against such audist preconceptions.

Singing, in Keller, is therefore presented as a potentially universal act, one that transcends and ignores the structure imposed by musical pitch, the limitations of the 12-tone chromatic scale, the expectations enforced by phono-centric society, and instead becomes a personal, private act in which vibration and sensation rule over pitch and volume. As our sonic voyeur gets carried away staring at singing deafblind engine driver he becomes aware of his sudden predicament:

> He got closer and closer, moving about five miles per hour, one had held out as if he was signalling a left turn. Suddenly I realized what was happening, as he was bearing down on me. He wasn't going to stop. He was counting fenceposts with his hand. I scrambled up the fence just in time. There wasn't more than six inches of clearance between the train and the fence on either side. His palm touched my leg as I squeezed close to the fence, and he stopped abruptly (Varley, 1978[1988]: 249)

However, as the driver leaps from the engine to check if our narrator is unharmed, we become aware of the narrator's dissonance between the hearing and deafblind world:

> He leaped from the car and grabbed me and I thought I was in trouble. But he looked concerned, not angry, and felt me all over, trying to discover if I was hurt. I was embarrassed. Not from the examination; because I had been foolish. The Indian had said they were all deaf and blind but I guess I hadn't quite believed him. (Varley, 1978[1988]: 249)

What follows is the first entirely gestural and signatory encounter within the narrative. What is particularly interesting here is the way in which the narrator is able to communicate with the deafblind man and vice versa:

> He was flooded with relief when I managed to convey to him that I was all right. With eloquent gestures he made me understand that I was not to stay on the road. He indicated that I should climb over the fence and continue through the fields. He repeated himself several times to be sure I understood, then held onto me as I climbed over to assure himself I was out of the way. He reached over the fence and held my shoulders, smiling at me. He pointed to the road and shook his head, then pointed to the building and nodded. He touched my head and smiled when I nodded. He climbed back onto the engine and started up, all the time nodding and pointing where he wanted me to go. Then he was off again. (Varley, 1978[1988]: 249)

Whilst we can't assume that our narrator is fluent in formalised sign language, what is particularly interesting is the way in which Varley describes the gestures as "eloquent", and able to cross a linguistic barrier. In comparison, our narrator is reduced to a non-verbal state as his only communicative acts are nodding – a kinesic action which is almost universally conventionalised. As argued by Morris, the head nod means an enthusiastic yes, and that it 'has been suggested that this action originates from the downward movement of the baby's head when it is accepting the breast. Others see it as an abbreviated form of submissive body-lowering - in other words, as a miniature bow', the usage for which Morris claims, is 'worldwide' (Morris, 1994: 142). However, here, the head nod is re-cast as a primitive, basic, barely efficient form of communication in comparison to the Kellerite's eloquent gestures. It is from this

point on that we become aware that Keller, as a contact-zone, priorities gestural and signatory acts, however basic and rudimentary they may seem, over verbal, phonetic speech: as an visual/oral/aural being, our narrator is re-cast in the role of Other.

Keller, as a commune, is entirely structured around the needs of its deafblind citizens: pathways made with different patterns inscribed and impressed in them to form 'some sort of traffic pattern read with the feet' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 253). It is through this, for instance, that we become aware that deafblindness is not merely an affliction of the eyes and ears, but rather, for the Kellerite citizens, an entirely authentic, gestalten mode of being. It is from this that we learn, as does the narrator, that there exist four different modes of communication in Keller: mouthtalk, handtalk, bodytalk, Touch and a fifth experience, referred to as "touching without touching". To gloss these terms as they appear in the narrative, mouthtalk is speech, handtalk is signed gestures, bodytalk is communication through physical and/or sexual contact, and "touching without touching" is a metaphysical form of communication bordering on the spiritual. These forms of communication are significant in that whilst they may have close analogues in the world outside of Keller, they are a unique ontological product of this fictional deafblind community. One of the most interesting things about this ascending order of communication - is that mouthtalk, their term for speech (for second generation Kellerites are born able, with sight and hearing), is of the lowest order in an hierarchy in which other, more tactile forms of communication serve as the dominant communicative form. These are all specific modes and ways of interacting, and I will now take us through examples of each, exploring how these different communicative

forms both challenge, and celebrate, the relationship between bodies, language, and communication.

Used primarily between our narrator and Pink, a second generation Kellerite who was born able, mouthtalk is the term used for speech within the commune. Whilst it is tempting to read the inclusion of speech within Keller solely as a plot mechanism, it can also be read as a commentary on the way in which the sign language and speech has historically existed amongst many communities, cohabiting the same cultural space and time. In many ways, the way in which sign language and speech exist within Keller is a subverted and inverted way to the way which sign language and speech can, and has, co-existed within specific communities, the most famous of which was the "shared signing" community of Martha's Vineyard. In many ways 'The Persistence of Vision' reads like a sensationalised re-telling of this island's history. As Oliver Sacks explains, 'through a mutation, a recessive gene brought out by inbreeding, a form of hereditary deafness existed for 250 years on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, following the arrival of the first deaf settlers in 1690', a parallel to the medicalisation of the rubella children at the start of our narrative (Sacks, 1989: 32). As Annelies Kusters explains of Martha's Vineyard, 'the community featured a dense social and kin network, and this close contact between deaf and hearing people resulted in the evolution of a sign language that was widely used by both deaf and hearing people in a number of villages on the island in a daily basis, down the generations' (Kusters, 2014: 286). The point that is significant here is that places such as Martha's Vineyard are often presented as an Edenic paradise, and as Kusters warns us, 'it might be tempting to imagine shared signing communities as deaf utopias' (Kusters, 2014: 286). However, in 'The Persistence of Vision', John Varley has created a

fictional deafblind utopia – and through the separatism of the commune, created an environment in which our hearing-seeing narrator is *the* linguistic and cultural minority.

After clumsily attempting to communicate with Pink through rudimentary, ad hoc gestures, Pink quips to our narrator: 'I guess you need the practice […] but if it's all the same to you, could we mouthtalk for now?' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 255). As Pink explains, it is 'just the parents [who are deafblind]. I'm one of the children. We can all hear and see quite well' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 255). As the narrator recounts, speech was far from widespread use amongst the Kellerites, as he recounts 'when the children called me it was "Hey, you!" They weren't big on spoken words' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 256). There are several instances throughout the narrative when Varley points to the limitation of spoken languages, in a move that destabilises both speech and writing as complete and effective methods of communication. When the narrator asked Pink her name, for instance, her 'hand worked reflexively in mine' before she stopped herself to explain: 'Oh, I don't know. I *have* one; several, in fact. But they're in bodytalk. I'm … Pink. It translates as Pink, I guess' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 256). With this then, we are aware that in Keller, language has evolved in its own direction, and one that takes is basis from a haptic, tactile origin, rather than one predicated on speech and on sound. Another prime example in which the narrator is confronted with the limitation of speech is when as an aside he refers to Keller, clarifying, 'that's my name for it, in speech, though their bodytalk name was something very like that' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 257). It is through the other stages of communication, however, that we become completely aware of how redundant speech becomes: not only for our narrator, but for Varley, too. As Varley constructs a world which moves further and further away from

phonocentric and linguistic norms, as phrases become inexpressible and convoluted translations and glosses which impose themselves amongst conventional typography.

In Keller, handtalk, as it is referred to, is the first form of communication our narrator starts to learn to transgress the hearing-seeing/deafblind boundary. One of the first instances of handtalk is at the narrator's first "Together"; which functions as unifying act of feeding and erotic interaction (which will be discussed in more detail later in this section) – in which our narrator was able to learn a 'pidgin phrase in handtalk, saying I was full to the brim' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 258). It is at this point that we become aware that our narrator is truly an outsider: the reference to improvised handtalk gestures as "pidgin" points to the temporal copresence of those with different dominant languages – and it is our narrator here, who is firmly cast in the role of outsider. As we have seen previously in the first chapter, "pidgin" signs equate to a contact language, a temporary, marginal language used to cross linguistic divides, and a product of the contact zone itself. Another encounter worth explicating here is that following an altercation in which the narrator left a bucket near a water faucet which led to a Kellerite tripping and falling, he is summoned to face their version of a court trial (Varley, 1978[1988]: 268). The woman who had tripped and fell was referred to by our narrator only as Scar 'for the prominent mark on her upper arm', which is a further example of how Keller and its inhabitants repeatedly elude concise, erudite rendering within English – further resisting speech as a wholly effective medium of communication. As the trial is underway, the communication is delivered to our narrator in handtalk – first consolation, as they 'petted and stroked', and later translated to our narrator via Pink (Varley, 1978[1988]: 269). The act of being petted and stroked is

significant for its often-latent sexual content which foreshadows the later forms of communication in Keller. As observed by Morris in *Peoplewatching*, 'gentle rubbing, squeezing of the partner's body with the hand […] is nearly always sexual and can easily lead to physiological arousal' (Morris: 141). What becomes apparent here, as well, is that handtalk is far from a perfect medium for communication, not only for the diminutive gestural actions it is being used to convey, but especially on the fact that Pink struggles translating specific phrases to our narrator, which is explicitly rendered in the text as '(---)', a 'set of signals in shorthand' that eluded our narrator and was translated, uncertainly by Pink as 'brought before us', or 'standing trial' which points to handtalk itself being a rudimentary and ineffective form of communication (Varley, 1978[1988]: 269). It concludes, as our narrator got more immersed in the Kellerite culture, that handtalk was itself 'baby talk' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 272). And handtalk, our narrator clarifies, was the 'International Manual Alphabet', a language without 'syntax, conjunctions, parts of speech, nouns, verbs, tense, agreement, and the subjunctive mood' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 272). In Keller, handtalk 'was a way for blind-deaf people to talk to *outsiders*', and it was through this language that the narrator found himself, although fluent, marked by his linguistic and communicatory differences Varley, 1978[1988]: 272).

Bodytalk, as our narrator discovered on his first night in Keller at the "Together", is a highly conventionalised (in that it carries lexicalised meaning) form of communication which is akin to, as our narrator puts it: 'an orgy' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 259). Once again we become aware of a linguistic limitation as our narrator struggles to account for what he witnesses: 'I have to say that I use the noun "orgy" only to get across a general idea of many people in close contact. I don't like the word, it is too ripe with connotations' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 259).

Our narrator becomes increasingly confused when engaging with the practice: 'What with all the touching, I quickly got an erection which embarrassed me quite a bit. I was berating myself for being able to keep sexual responses out of it […] when I realized with some shock that the couple next to me was making love' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 259). His confusion heightens at the realisation that 'it had seemed such a natural part of what was happening that I had known it and not known it at the same time' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 259). Engaged in bodytalk, the act of normative sex that our narrator is witnessing is far from a simple performative act between two people, but rather, a single expression on a spectrum of different communicative ways:

> They *were* making love, in the sense that he was penetrating her. They were also deeply involved with each other. Their hands fluttered like butterflies all over each other, filled with meanings I couldn't see or feel. But they were being touched by and were touching many other people around them. They were talking to all these people, even if the message was simple as a pat on the forehead or arm. (Varley,1978[1988]: 260)

This is a prime example of the way in which Varley has set up his narrator in line with dominant preconceptions of communication. As the majority of the population, those who are fully able-bodied exist in a society which favours the visual and the aural as effective means of communication, either through the written word, or speech, yet from a purely biological viewpoint, it is in fact skin which is the largest sensory organ of the body (Napoli, 2014: 214). Bodytalk then, for Varley, is a simple and effective, if under-appreciated, way of utilising another sensory perception of the human body. It is also interesting to consider that for all the ways that Keller functions as an alternative contact zone in that it subverts expectations of language and normalcy the act of sex is still constructed in line with patriarchal norms so that the woman is penetrated, rather than a different way of conceptualising and articulating sex.

We see yet another slippage in this encounter which starts to highlight the ineffectiveness of speech and prose. Pink, acting as interpreter for the narrator explains: 'that's (--) and (--)', with 'the parentheses indicating a series of hand motions against my palm' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 260). And later again in the encounter, Pink once more communicates with the narrator, forcing Varley reference back to non-standard typography: '(--) would like to talk to you later […] right after she's through talking to (--)…' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 260). As the narrator tells us, 'I never learned a sound word as a name for any of them […] and I can't reproduce the bodytalk names they had.' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 260). As Lennard J. Davis explains, this particular encounter means that '[Varley's] narrator has to conceptualize a world in which the priority of speech and prose is made irrelevant' (Davis, 1995: 21). Indeed, as Davis tells us, 'Varley has to face the dilemma of how to represent signing in a medium that authorizes the scriptable' (Varley, 1995:21). It is through the reduction of speech and prose that Keller creates a contact zone that forces our narrator to the periphery as the alienable Other, and through Varley's constant dilemma with syntax and language that the human becomes seemingly alien. Take for instance our narrator's gaze as the encounter continues: 'Pink reached over, grabbed the woman with her foot, and did some complicated business with her toes. The woman smiled and grabbed Pink's foot, her fingers moving' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 260). We are made aware of a communication breakdown between the narrator and the exchange he is viewing – the communicatory exchange is rendered in simple anatomical terms from the view of our narrator, reduced to a "complicated business with her toes" and "fingers moving", and whilst it is apparent from the reciprocal and symmetrical nature of the exchange that there is clearly a conventionalised, communicative element, this, being outside of the

world-view of our narrator is portrayed to us as seemingly meaningless mesh of bodily interaction.

Through the narrator's realisation that '[Pink's] word for talk and mine were miles apart', we become increasingly aware of the cultural and linguistic differences between the characters (Varley, 1978[1988]: 261). 'Talk', the narrator tells us, 'meant a complex interchange involving all parts of the body', and through this we become aware of a contact zone in which linguistic priority is structured based on bodily interaction, and with it, Varley actively subverts the notion that speech – as a by-product of education – can be utilised as a signifier of societal, racial, intellectual, and class difference. Bodytalk, for Varley, can be regarded a potentially egalitarian form of communication, and with this understanding there is a significant cultural disconnect arising how the secondary signifiers of communication are absent within Keller and that of the outside world. Inside Keller, communication is something done with the 'whole being' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 261). A gestalten development from sign language, Kellerite bodytalk isn't 'all hands' as the narrator thought, but rather, 'any part of the body in contact with any other was communication' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 261). Similarly to the way in which the alien communication is a gestalten action in Herbet's 'Try To Remember', Varley posits that an entirely physical, haptic mode of communication in 'The Perception of Vision' in which you can 'read words or emotions in every twitch of […] muscles, like a lie detector' is a truly authentic, honest, and truthful form of language (Varley, 1978[1988]: 261). Similarly to what we see in Chapter 2, with ideas of natural language, there has been a long and storied fantasy of there being an original or divine language. However Varley's idea of there being a language in which you cannot lie is fantasy. As explained by Morris, there is a phenomenon known as non-verbal

leakage, in which various subconscious bodily acts give away the act of lying (Morris, 2002[1977]: 150-153). It's worth pointing out as well that a language in which lying is impossible would have obvious practical limitations. However, bodytalk as a fantastical form of communication is an interesting point of discussion surrounding non-normative forms of communication within a literary contact zone. It is through the gaze of our narrator that bodytalk becomes a seemingly alien and incomprehensible action – yet it is through this alienation that Varley actualises the deafblind body as site of optimistic communicative potentiality.

We reach a point in the narrative later on when the narrator was 'having a lesson in bodytalk from Pink' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 273). As Pink asks the narrator 'You haven't told me much about yourself […] What did you do on the outside?' we become aware of the text itself slipping away from Varley and his narrator: 'I don't want to give the impression that this speech was in sentences as I have presented it' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 273). Once again we become aware of the limitations of speech and prose as a supposedly perfect communicative form. As the narrator tells us, the communication was of their complete bodies: 'We were bodytalking, sweating and smelling each other. The message came through from hands, feet, mouth' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 273). This is perhaps the most explicit rendering of what is referred to as bodytalk throughout the narrative, not only for the gratuitous sexual content which bookends much of the encounter, but also for the disparity between the description of bodytalk and its gloss/translation. Whilst, as Napoli claims: 'A haptic event between people, then, entails an exchange, an interaction in which each participant experiences something', bodytalk for Varley seems to be something far larger than just an experiential interaction (Napoli, 2014: 213). The fact that bodytalk keeps eluding

reasonable analysis insofar as keeping within the realms of biological and anatomical plausibility is significant: Varley has created a communicative form that is not only a gestalten utterance of the body, but one that is universal and public in that its meanings and actions exclusively exist outside of the phonocentric and logocentric realm.

Although it appears relatively late into Varley's short story, Touch, as the Kellerites refer to it, is the complete utilisation of the body to communicate. It is, within the confines of the deafblind commune, their language absolute, a complex, self-reflexive, fully formed system for total communication. Once again, the narrator's reliance on English language complicates the explication of the mode of communication: 'Then I became aware of Touch. That's the best I can describe it in a single, unforced English noun. What *they* called the fourth-stage language varied from day to day' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 279). In explaining how Touch functioned as a linguistic system, the narrator explains how the names used by each of the Kellerite's were uniquely structured, 'that told of themselves, their lives, and their relationships to others' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 280). As the narrator explains, we become aware of this communicatory system being increasingly organic, spiralling outwards in variable possibilities: 'If Pink spoke to me of Baldy, for instance, she would use her Touch name for him, modified by the fact that she was speaking to me and not Short-chubby-man' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 280). This constant modification of meaning meant that as the narrator estimates, there were 'no less than thirteen thousand names in use', and that 'the names evolved from day to day' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 280). Touch, as Napoli tells us:

> is a multimodal sense in itself. It covers tactile information via the skin as well as temperature, proprioception (knowledge of one's body position),

> kinesthesia (knowledge of one's body movement and behaviour), and nociception (pain). (Napoli, 2014: 211)

It is this multimodal sense that Varley has utilised for his sprawling, rhizomatic linguistic system. Much like the body, in which touch is 'the entire somatosensory system, a complex system that processes information via muscles, bones, organs, blood vessels, the skin, and the epithelia', the Kellerite's Touch is a moving, changing thing, a phantasm of life itself (Napoli, 2014: 211). As the narrator tells us:

> It was a language of inventing languages. Everyone spoke their own dialect because everyone spoke with a different instrument: a different body and set of life experiences. It was modified by everything. *It would not stand still.* (Varley, 1978[1988]: 281)

As Lennard Davis points out: 'The language Touch is itself a metalanguage, a language beyond language' (Davis, 1995: 21). Whilst "Touch" within the context of Varley's novella has metaphysical connotations, it is worth noting that the role of touch is significant in interpersonal relationships, particularly amongst those who are deaf, blind, or deaf-blind. As Napoli states, 'The role of touch is ever more extensive and binding among deaf-blind people' (Napoli, 2014: 223). Whilst this is very clearly taken to a position of fictional extremes within 'The Perception of Vision', the role of touch and haptic feedback in communication is presented by Varley as a significant challenge to the de facto superiority and normativity assumed by practitioners of oral/aural linguistic systems.

For Varley's narrator and the Kellerites it is through touch that meaning is formed, and it is in the contact zone of Keller itself that the act of touching is inscribed within the body-dynamic, and as such renders speaking and listening as acts of sensory and bodily passivity. It is through this, and Varley's

consistently moving and evasive communicative system of Touch that the disabled body has been re-inscribed. The symbolic disabled body, rendered silent and docile and passive through lack and loss is instead recast as dynamic, active, and empowered.

Upon noticing that the main compound of the commune is unusually empty, the narrator asks Pink to explain the apparent disappearance of most of the adults. Her reply, 'they are all out ***' is the first instance in the narrative of what is later to be explained as "touching without touching", a transcendent/metaphysical form of communication and meditation practiced by the Kellerites (Varley, 1978[1988]: 274). The act of ***, as our narrator tells us, can be glossed as 'three sharp slaps on the chest with the fingers spread. Along with the finger configuration for "verb form, gerund," it means that they were all out ***ing' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 274). Once more we are aware of a disconnect between the narrator and Pink, as he is unable to – at this point in the narrative – entirely comprehend the fully conventionalised and lexicalised aspects of the Kellerite's language. This also further enforces Davis's point that the Kellerites are using a language beyond language that is always changing. There is also, I would argue, an implied level of humour here, in that by forcing censorship of the word the phrase is easily parsed on reading to potentially resemble "fucking". Yet, in censoring the phrase, whatever it may be, also preserves the phrase as undiluted, it is both erotic and mystical. It also becomes apparent once again that Varley is wrestling with the limitation of prose: without an effective way of transcribing a purely gestural, yet fully conventionalised action, he once more turns to unconventional typography and an ambiguous description, concluding with the resigned 'Needless to say, it didn't tell me much' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 274). Using redaction, Varley's narrative suggests

that there is a potential for forms of communication to exist not only outside what is perceived as normative, but also beyond the limitations inherent in the reductive approach of classifying linguistic modes as visual or aural.

Upon witnessing the act of ***, Varley's narrator expresses a mixture of confusion an interest at the performative ritual:

> They were touching, but their hands were not moving. The silence of seeing all those permanently moving people standing that still was deafening to me. I watched them for at least an hour […] It gradually dawned on me that the group was moving. It was very slow, just a step here and another there, over many minutes. It was expanding in such a way that the distance between any of the individuals was the same. Like the expanding universe, where all galaxies move away from all others. Their arms were extended now; they were touching only with fingertips in a lattice arrangement. Finally they were not touching at all. I saw their fingers straining to cover distances that were too far to bridge. And still they expanded equilaterally […] Some quality of the night changed. The people in the group were about a foot away from each other now, and suddenly the pattern broke. They all swayed for a moment, then laughed in that eerie, unselfconscious noise deaf people use for laughter. They fell in the grass and held their bellies, rolled over and roared […] And that was ***ing (Varley, 1978[1988]: 275-6)

Later in the narrative, the narrator learns from Pink that the act of ***ing is best understood as 'the mode of touching without touching' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 281). Once again, the narrator struggles with the gloss/translation, as his definition is 'not one that I can easily translate into English, and even that attempt will only convey my hazy concept of what it was' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 281). Whilst the description given is incredibly ambiguous as the narrator warned, the act of touching without touching seems to have parallels to a form of communal meditation, but one that is unique to those in Keller, for 'vision and hearing preclude or obscure it' (Varley, 1978[1988]: 282). Through this, and the fact that Keller, as we have seen, is a fully functioning microcosm of society, Varley seems to be suggesting that deafblindness is not necessarily equivalent

with a loss or lack of hearing, seeing, or being. This implication reaches its most explicit when the narrator realises that his aural/oral/visual mode of being precludes his complete integration into the society of Keller: ‘Unless I was willing to put out my eyes and ears, I would always be on the outside. I would be the blind and deaf one. I would be the freak’ (Varley, 1978[1988]: 285). As Lennard Davis tells us, it was this impetus that ultimately leads to the narrator leaving ‘only to return later to receive the gift of blindness and deafness in some real and metaphorical way at the same time’ (Davis, 1995: 22). It as this return that the narrator is finally able to touch without touching, since his vision and hearing precluded the metaphysical experience, and it is through this that our narrator ultimately finds contentment: ‘We live in the lovely quiet and dark’ (Varley, 1978[1988]: 288). As Napoli tells us: ‘not only does absence of a sense lead to a strengthening of the existent senses, but is can also lead to compensatory behaviour on other parts of the brain so that work ordinarily done by one sense can be handed (at least by some extent) by another’ (Napoli, 2014: 220). It is through the contact zone of Keller that Varley seems to be suggesting that the trinity of hearing, seeing, and touching are all required for a meaningful state of being in the world.

Whilst it may be tempting to read “touching without touching” as a ritualistic display of extra-sensory perception, or as something on the fringes of the fantastic and supernatural, I believe it is worth reading it instead as something, much like Touch, that eludes not only the narrator’s awareness, but also another example of something which stretches the limitations of Varley’s reliance on conventionalised, phono-centric and logo-centric perceptions of normativity through prose. Through the recurrence of the “ritual” throughout the narrative, Varley has subsequently mythologised the deafblind culture of Keller,

and in doing so, has given weight to his fictional culture. We can read, through this mythologizing of “touching without touching”, that there exists patterns of behaviour, cultural norms, and history, that consistently evades the able, normative gaze of Western culture. It is ultimately through this confusion, ambiguity, and uncertainty, that Varley cements his deafblind characters as deeply rooted within their own culture and history, and in doing so, celebrates the otherwise alienated, disabled body.

Cultural Significance of deafness in S.F.

An article titled ‘Deaf Characters and Deafness in Science Fiction’, by Harry Lang and Robert Panara, was published in a 1989 issue of *The Deaf American*. Whilst this article has lapsed into academic obscurity, it is of great significance not only as a cultural artefact, but for its explicit focus on deafness within Science Fiction. As Lang and Panara set out in their abstract, that whilst ‘many individual reports have been published which review the treatment of deafness and deaf characters in literary works’, science fiction literature is a genre and style which has been markedly overlooked (Lang and Panara, 1989: 1). For one reason or another, this is still largely the case today. As such, this article has proved invaluable in not only introducing me to several science fiction texts that concern deafness, of which this chapter has explored, but also that in their exploratory survey of the field they raise several points, many of which are still as pertinent and relevant today as they were in 1989. One of the significant and contributory areas of analysis that this chapter has been striving towards is that as Lang and Panara tell us, in science fiction ‘deafness may very well present […] an alternate reality’ (Lang and Panara, 1989: 1). As Lang and Panara argue, an alternative reality is, quite often, a lived reality bound up in the d/Deaf experience:

> We as deaf writers, however, may go so far as to argue that for many people in the deaf community such a framework of existence is not fiction at all. We are, in one sense or another, nested Chinese-box fashion in subcultures, in the larger society of hearing people, or even when we are decided amongst ourselves by virtue of our communicative preferences. (Lang and Panara, 1989: 1)

The allusion that Lang and Panara make towards the "Chinese-box" understanding of the multi-verse theory is deliberate, and precise. By alluding that there exists reality within reality which is often oblivious to the larger structures outside of it, and indeed the smaller structures inside of, Lang and Panara have established a claim towards a larger system and hierarchy of power which is based on identity, bodily existence, and linguistic deviation. Another "Chinese-box" claim which I will make here – and one which my analysis throughout this chapter has strived to reach - is that even the smallest cultural acts contribute to a larger cultural sphere of influence, and through this process, alternative world-views, lived histories, non-normative bodies and non-normative forms of communication impact the surrounding framework of which they exist.

The New Wave of Science Fiction is generally and widely regarded as the science fiction output of the 1960s and 1970s. It was at this time, Helen Merrick argues, that science fiction 'began to infiltrate the academy' (Merrick, 2009: 103). It was during this time, Merrick tells us, that works by Suvin, Delaney, and Aldiss – now regarded as cornerstones of S.F. criticism – were published for the first time, following the successful debut of academic science fiction journals in 1972 and 1973 (Merrick, 2009: 103). From this, we can safely assume that there was a significant upswing in the attention paid to S.F. as a genre within academic circles, as the lines between pulp-commercialism and aesthetic value started to blur. As Rob Latham states, 'the New Wave is

generally seen as the moment when sf decisively shed its pulp heritage and began to adopt the aesthetic modalities of “mainstream” literature’ (Latham, 2009: 83). Let us assume that Merrick’s argument about New Wave infiltrating the academy is true. In doing so, we start to see a particularly intriguing Chinese-box situation appear.

The three texts discussed above, ‘Try to Remember’, *Silence is Deadly*, and ‘Perception of Vision’ have been preoccupied with non-normative language, and twisting and altering what we perceive to be normative sensory interactions. In ‘Try to Remember’, Herbert’s Galactics are fluent in a whole body, gestalten movement as a form of communication. In Biggle’s *Silence is Deadly*, the deaf Kammians, although fluent in sign-language, possess a heightened olfactory sense which functions on a communicatory, inter-personal level. In Varley’s ‘Perception of Vision’, the Kellerites, although deafblind, possess and incredibly complex and conventionalised form of haptic communication called “Touch”. These texts form a triptych: a triad of fully conventionalised, meaningful ways of communication which unbalance and undermine phonocentrism, and in doing so explore other alternative ways of being in the world.

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Chapter 4: Sign Language and the Contact Zone: Literary Encounters between the Hearing and the Deaf

This chapter will explore a narrative approach in which deafness is not portrayed as an impairment, but instead as a meaningful way of being-in-the world. As succinctly argued by Bauman and Murray, 'being deaf has nothing to do with "loss" but is rather, a distinct way of being in the world, one that opens up perceptions, perspectives, and insights that are less common to the majority of hearing persons' (Bauman & Murray, 2014; xv). By taking this stance of "Deaf Gain", as termed by Bauman and Murray, this chapter will show how can deaf literature and deaf characters can disrupt historical, cultural, and political notions of deafness as absence, lack, and deficit. As we have seen in previous chapters, gesture and sign language has been utilised in many different contact zones, and for many different means. In the first chapter, we have seen how improvised gesture was used for imperialist and colonial ends, and how lexicalised sign language and gesture was a mark of the "savage". In the second chapter, we saw how gesture was fictionalised as a missing linguistic link between states of wilderness and civilization, figured as an intermediary language between being-animal and being-human. In the third chapter, we saw ways in which science fiction capitalised on gesture and sign language as an "alien" linguistic form, both figuratively and literally. Therefore, in this chapter, I will be exploring the ways sign language and gesture figures within the contact zone between hearing and deaf characters from a position of "Deaf Gain", rather than "hearing-loss".

This chapter will focus on a particular collection of short stories by Louise Stern, *Chattering: Stories,* who herself is a Deaf author. Published by Granta in 2010, the main narrative focus is the way in which deaf characters and subjects

navigate and orientate themselves within a hearing-centric society, in which hearing is the widely regarded cultural norm. Whilst there are other texts by Deaf authors which could have been the focus of this chapter, Stern's narratives are particularly significant in that they have crossed a hearing/deaf divide in being published by a mainstream publication house, and in doing so has introduced the world and epistemology of Deaf culture to hearing readers. Like the epistemologies of many other marginalised or oppressed groups, Deaf epistemology is based in opposition, resistance and seeming to rectify oppression.

As a branch of philosophy, epistemology entails the study of knowledge. In short, a deaf epistemology is what is termed a 'situated knowledge: knowledge that reflects the particular perspectives of the knower' (Anderson, 2020: online). As Friedner points out, 'Deaf studies' dual focus on deaf people's epistemologies and ontologies is connected to deaf peoples' desire to make sense of the world and to be and be seen as sensible beings by other deaf people and the wider hearing world' (Friedner, 2016: 187). Therefore, as Hauser et al. suggest, a 'Deaf epistemology constitutes the nature and extent of the knowledge that deaf individuals acquire growing up in a society that relies primarily on audition to navigate life' (Hauser et al., 2010: 486). There is a constant striving towards understanding – a shared and collective understanding that not only represents the Deaf subject, but one that can also co-exist with a hearing-centric society. Deaf people attempt to know the world through their own lens of understanding – which is based on their own relationship between the (non)auditory and the visual. It is this lens of understanding that is crucial to the Deaf experience.

One of the ways understanding can be shared is through testimonies of experience. As Holcomb tells us: ‘Testimonies are a critical component of the epistemologies of disenfranchised groups. Clearly, Deaf epistemology relies heavily on personal testimonies and personal experiences, which amount to the justified beliefs of the Deaf community’ (Holcomb, 2010: 476). Therefore, Deaf epistemologies are less concerned with empiricism, and more concerned with a mutual frame of experiential reference. It is through these testimonies that we start to become aware that deafness constitutes a different epistemology. In 2001, Bernard Bragg published *Deaf World: A Historical Reader and Primary Sourcebook*, a collection of essays written by deaf individuals since 1852 – the type of book, Holcomb argues, that not only ‘demonstrates the importance of the Deaf voice’ but is also ‘not unlike the epistemological work of various minority and disenfranchised groups’ (Holcomb, 2010: 472). It is through this lens that we can therefore start to justify analysis of deaf literature from an epistemological framework. It is also worth noting here that a deaf epistemology is not the only alternative position taken up by disability and deaf studies scholars. Outside the predominant audist able-centric ways of being in the world is what Johnson and McRuer (2014) call *cripistemologies*, lived knowledge from the critical, social, sensory, political, and personal position of disability. Not only do deaf people occupy a world that is not intended for them, but as do all other disabled, non-normative bodies. Such in the way that cripistemology reframes what is perceived by the able to be incorrect as a way of subverting normativity, deaf epistemology reframes gesture and sign language as powerful and performative acts.

Literature surrounding deafness can, as this chapter will show, be crucial in understanding a form of Deaf epistemology, but can also give form and

drama to specific instances of epistemic injustice. In doing so, these deaf narratives, both literary and testimonial, can help bridge the gap of understanding between deaf and hearing cultures. The main body of text that this chapter concerns itself with is Louise Stern's 2010 collection of short stories, *Chattering*. As third and fourth generation Deaf (on her mother and father's side, respectively), Stern is well immersed socially, culturally and historically within Deaf culture for her characterisations of deafness to be regarded as testimonial, and to be a fair - albeit fictionalised - representation of the d/Deaf experience.

It is through this difference we can start to conceptualise deaf literature as a form of counternarrative, and as a form of testimonial epistemology. As Kusters and Meulder point out, 'Deafhood is thus a very broad concept, entailing ontology as well as a liberating, empowering philosophy and a counternarrative in response to hegemonic oralist and colonizing discourses' (Kusters and Meulder, 2013: 431). Through the concept of Deafhood as a state of "being-deaf", we can start to build an understanding of the way in which Deaf literature not only explores the contact zone between hearing and Deaf identities, but also exists within a contact zone itself, as a textual-cultural artifact of a marginalized and otherwise oppressed minority identity.

Another way the contact zone will be explored within this chapter is how we see it depicted within Stern's narratives themselves. As pointed out by Bauman, Deaf people often and inevitably find themselves in a deaf/hearing contact zone, by virtue of their minority status: 'as a visual minority in a phonocentric world, Deaf persons are surrounded by contact zones—at work, school, stores, and playgrounds' (Bauman, 2005: 314). These contact zones are exactly the ones we see present within Stern's narratives – examples of the

Deaf subject trying to navigate and orient themselves in a world which privileges speech and hearing over sign language. As with all contact zones, they are inherently imbalanced. As we have seen in previous chapters the contact zone is a space in which conflict occurs, be it cultural, social, or racial. The deaf/hearing contact zone is no different, as Bauman argues, 'it is here', in the contact zone, 'that hearing people enjoy systems of advantage and deaf persons systems of disadvantage' (Bauman, 2005: 314). The way that this advantage is often capitalized is through audism. 'Audism', as Hauser et al. tell us, 'begins with a specific theory of humanness. For example, bodies that hear normally are the prototypical human bodies' (Hauser et al., 2010: 490). The impact of audism cannot be understated. As we have seen above, the idea of Deafhood is significant in that it constructs a way of framing deafness as a cultural and linguistic identity – something which is an act of resistance against audism itself. However, audism creates a biopolitical struggle in which Deaf identity is brought into question:

> Yet perhaps the most salient impact of audism today is that identities have been brought into question among deaf people. The struggle of deaf people to maintain a sense of identity in the face of others' definition of them has created uncertainty among deaf people about their own linguistic, cultural, and social identities. (Hauser et al., 2010: 490)

As has been pointed out by Ladd and many others, Deafness is not in and of itself a disability. Disability for the deaf individual only manifests and becomes apparent in conflict with audism. As argued by Bauman, 'it is only in the hearing/deaf contact zone where the site of disability emerges' (Bauman, 2005: 314). Whilst I acknowledge that this is a bold claim to make, this is not to say that there is a culture war between the hearing and the deaf. Indeed, there are many instances of deaf and hearing people cohabiting the same social space

without conflict, where co-existence does not manifest itself in terms of audism, and therefore the conditions of disability are not present.

However, in order to explore the ways Stern's narratives explore and function as part of a deaf epistemology, it is crucial to understand the ways in which audism can manifest within the contact zone. As Hauser et al. point out, 'Deaf epistemology cannot be comprehended without the recognition of the pervasiveness of audism and the impact it has on deaf individuals' (Hauser et al., 2010: 490). If we view Stern's narratives as autoethnographic this is a particularly significant point. As her narratives are actively writing against the ways in which hearing society has often depicted Deafhood and deafness, they give literary form to audism and the ways in which it can manifest itself within deaf/hearing encounters, and the disabling aftermath that can occur as a result of this conflict.

Deafness, Deaf Culture, and Deafhood

By virtue of using sign-language as their dominant mode of communication in a hearing-centric society, the deaf subject is a site of otherness, and epistemological difference. 'Deafness', as Owen Wrigley tells us, 'is less about audiology than it is about epistemology' (Wrigley, 1996: 1). As Holcomb explains, 'Epistemology has been defined in many different ways. All the definitions basically boil down to three aspects of knowledge—belief, truth, and justification' and that 'in a nutshell, epistemology addresses the question, *How do we know what we know?*' (Holcomb, 2010: 471). In relation to deafness, as Hauser et al. posit, it is 'by virtue of their biology, [that] deaf individuals live their lives in a visual reality, which leads to the acquisition of a knowledge base that is different from that of hearing individuals' (Hauser et al.,

2010: 487). It is these differences in how deaf people navigate the world which has raised the question whether deafness constitutes not only an epistemological difference, but also an ontological difference. This is encapsulated most succinctly within the concept of Deafhood, a 'comprehensive philosophy encompassing ontology, epistemology, empowerment, and resistance' (Kusters and Meulder, 2013: 436). Deafhood is the quality of being-Deaf, which presents 'a certain ontological experience that relates to being biologically deaf' (Kusters and Meulder, 2013: 432). However as it has also been commented previously, 'the simple notion of not being able to hear does not completely define the deaf individual nor explain Deafhood. Deafness begets unique additional experiences for deaf individuals that go beyond auditory sensory input' (Hauser et al., 2010: 486–487). As defined by Ladd, who coined the term, 'Deafhood is not seen as a finite state but as a process by which Deaf individuals come to actualise their Deaf identity, positing that those individuals construct that identity around several differently ordered sets of priorities and principles, which are affected by various factors such as nation, era and class' (Ladd, 2003: xviii). As we will see throughout this chapter the idea of Deafhood is particularly crucial in understanding the ways in which Deaf characters navigate hierarchies and contact zones in both hearing and deaf designated spaces. As Paddy Ladd explains:

> Deafhood is not, however, a 'static' medical condition like 'deafness'. Instead, it represents a process – the struggle by each Deaf child, Deaf family and Deaf adult to explain to themselves and each other their own existence in the world. In sharing their lives with each other as a community, and enacting those explanations rather than writing books about them, Deaf people are engaged in a daily praxis, a continuing internal and external dialogue. This dialogue not only acknowledges that existence as a Deaf person is actually a process of *becoming* and maintaining 'Deaf', but also reflects different interpretations of Deafhood, of what being a Deaf person in a Deaf community might mean. (Ladd, 2003: 3)

Deafhood, therefore, is a particularly crucial way of analysing and understanding the idea of being Deaf as not a medical or biologically determined identity, but also as a cultural and linguistic identity. As we see in Stern's narratives, there are many instances of deaf characters as an individual and as a community actively utilizing their Deafhood to codify spaces as deaf-designated, allowing them to affirm their identity.

The first short story in Stern's collection that centres around a deaf-designated space is 'The Black and White Dog', a story focusing on a deaf teenager, Beth, and her family. In this narrative we become aware of how the contact zone in deaf-designated spaces functions differently to that of hearing-designated spaces, and we become aware that how deaf-designated spaces are constructed differs both physically and symbolically from those spaces that are hearing-designated.

One of the most significant examples of this is how Beth's family convert their newly bought house into a space which facilitates deaf communication:

> When he had thrown out all the carpets and sanded and varnished the wooden floors underneath, they would bang on the floor in one room and whoever was in the next room would feel the vibrations. It was reassuring, because sometimes you would be in a room by yourself and have no idea if anyone else was home and where they might be. (Stern, 2010: 44)

As claimed by Hansel Bauman, 'the desire to take possession of space is deeply embedded in Deaf culture' (Bauman, 2014: 375). Therefore the way in which Beth's parents have altered their family home is not only representative of this desire in a profound sense in that it represents the 'potential for architecture as a means of cultural expression', but also that it reaffirms the visual and

kinetic modality of deaf communication (Bauman, 2014: 376). As such, deaf space as a contact zone is characterised not only by a hierarchy of relations in which sign language is the norm, but also by a series of specific physical and geographical inter-relations in which the physical space itself can also constitute and facilitate kinesic communicative forms.

Deaf-designated spaces should in theory be exempt from the disabling acts of audism that happen within the majority of hearing-designated spaces. As argued by Bauman, 'Most Deaf people would grant that there is little disability in an all-signing environment. It is only once there is no access to communication that the conditions of disability become evident' (Bauman, 2005: 314). However, deaf-designated spaces are not exempt from audism, nor are they free from subjection to the inherent privileging of hearing society once hearing subjects are in those spaces. As Ladd argues,

> Over the last 100 years, 'medical' and 'social' models of deafness have viewed Deaf people as disabled and situated them accordingly within its practices. However, the very recent 'culturo-linguistic model' has produced a contemporary Deaf discourse which refuses this categorisation and denies that degree of hearing impairment has relevance for cultural membership (Ladd, 2003: 35).

Deafhood, as part of this cultural and linguistic model allows for an analytic framework in which we can examine literary representations of Deaf characters as an example of a minority culture, rather than framing them entirely within a discourse of disability and biological difference. An example of this is in Stern's story 'The Deaf School', in which deaf school functions as a deaf-designated space and as a locum of deaf culture and deaf community. 'The school was where the sporting events with other deaf schools or deaf clubs were held, and where the graduates who hadn't found jobs and were living off government handouts would gather in the parking lot by the gymnasium, to deal drugs, flirt,

gossip or tell stories' (Stern, 2010: 152). As a cultural hub of deafness, the deaf school is instrumental in creating a shared geographical place in which the many intersections of deaf identity can intersect and co-exist:

> The deaf children often had birthday parties in the student activity centre, and their weddings, wedding-anniversary parties, and baby showers would be too. It was one of the only places for miles around where they could be sure of communication with the people around them. (Stern, 2010: 152)

There is also a reliance for Deafhood on deaf-spaces and deaf-designated places which this narrative echoes. As Stern tells us, the relocation of the deaf school meant that there was an ultimately diasporic movement of deaf people which followed it: 'Many deaf adults moved to the town, too. As children they'd gone to the old school in the mountains, and they went where the school went. They worked at the school, mostly in the dormitories as house parents, and their children went to classes there' (Stern, 2010: 152-3). The deaf school – as a cultural locus – is instrumental in maintaining a deaf identity and community, and one of the ways in which Deafhood can be actualised.

Hearing Spaces / Deaf Spaces

One of the key aspects of the Deaf identity and Deafhood, is that, according to Emily Fekete, 'since ASL [and sign language in general] is a visual and spatial language, it is inherently geographical' (Fekete, 2017: 133). Therefore the deaf/hearing contact zone is inherently about space and place. Introducing a term coined by Marion Heap, we can argue that deaf contact zones constitute a Signing space:

> A Signing space, identifiable on the basis of Sign-based communication, is a set of networks that extends from the deaf individual to include deaf and hearing people. On analysis it comprises a Sign-hear and a Sign-deaf space. In Sign-hear networks, hearing people predominate. Relationships are domestic and near neighbourhood. In Sign-deaf

> networks, deaf people predominate. Relationships are sociable and marked by familiarity. (Heap, 2003: iii-iv)

Whilst the majority of Heap's project focussed on sign-hear spaces in which deaf and hearing subjects can communicate easily due to vocal and gestural bilingualism, this chapter is particularly interested by the notion of the sign-deaf network, and how, in Stern's narrative, it creates a deaf space within a hearing-centric society. Morgan and Kaneko have undertaken work to explore instances of the sign-deaf space in creative SASL (South African Sign Language) texts – 'where deaf people interact with each other using SASL and co-create an empowering space' (Morgan and Kaneko, 2019: 10). As they go on to clarify, 'Deaf sign language artists use SASL literature to create deaf signing spaces of empowerment in order to construct their deaf narrative identities' (Morgan and Kaneko, 2019:10). Drawing on the work of De Certeau, Morgan and Kaneko explain the difference between place and space: 'The term "places" refers to hegemonic, fixed, and static sites of control. This is in contrast to fluid, changing, and unstable "spaces" in which ordinary people conduct their lives, resisting the dominant discourse' (Morgan and Kaneko, 2019: 10). As such, we can see how Stern's deaf contact zones produce a constantly fluid deaf space which is often at odds with the hearing-centric and phonetically dominant places the characters find themselves in. The contact zone, therefore becomes a site of not only linguistic imbalance, but also a site of contrasting and different epistemologies. As we shall see, these contact zones occur in a range of different contexts: within hearing-designated spaces, within deaf-designated spaces, within written exchanges, and within the context of sexuality. As we work through these various contexts we will see that narratives do not often

feature just one form of encounter; but rather that each narrative is an assimilation of various different types of contact zone.

Epistemic Violence and Audism

One of the ways that Stern's narratives attempt to challenge audist pre-conceptions surrounding deafness as impairment are through highlighting instances of epistemic injustice and epistemic violence that occur in the contact zone between hearing and deaf characters. Termed by Spivak, 'Epistemic violence […] is enacted in a failed linguistic exchange where a speakers fails to communicatively reciprocate owing to pernicious ignorance' (Dotson: 239). Epistemic violence, states Enrique Galván-Álvarez, is 'violence exerted against or through knowledge, [and] is probably one of the key elements in any process of domination' (12). It is through this ignorance that the knowledge and experiences of a marginalised group are oppressed, silenced, or erased.

It is through the testimonial nature of Stern's narratives that these discursive points surrounding silence that it becomes apparent that Deafhood is at odds to the audist imagination of deafness as deficit. It is through moments such as these that Stern's narrative shares a deaf epistemology, the auto-ethnography of the text actively challenging epistemic violence.

However, deaf space and sign space is a fragile system. Whilst it is self-sustaining amongst a deaf community, it is not impervious to penetration from hearing individuals. For instance, there is an encounter in 'The Black and White Dog' where at a party thrown by her parents, Beth witnesses a guest say to another 'You see the yard? So messy, they could do a lot better with it. The house ain't too bad, but . . . They're strange. But that's them, you know, that's how they are' (Stern, 2010: 48). It is through the penetration of the deaf space

by audist preconceptions that reveals the fragility of the deaf space as contact zone, and the disabling conditions of deafness can make themselves present. As Bauman argues:

> In a family in which both children and parents are Deaf, the auditory/visual contact zone does not run throughout the house. It may be right outside the door, and it may find its way in from time to time, but it does run through the dinner table (Bauman, 2005: 314)

It is through this comparison of deaf space to hearing designated spaces that marks deafness as otherness, and in doing so penetrate the safety of the familial deaf space. As Stern tells us: 'She felt shocked and disturbed, almost humiliated. She wondered if he knew that she was in the room, and looked down at the food, not wanting him to see that she had seen what he had said, right there in their living room' (Stern, 2010: 48). As such the house as deaf space becomes a physical signifier of deafness and otherness, and in turn disrupts the hierarchy inherent within the contact zone as deaf sign space. It is a symbolic colonization of deaf space that occurs at this point – in which histories of linguistic and cultural normativities proliferate. It is this ongoing struggle to maintain designated deaf spaces which characterises yet another struggle of the Deaf as a cultural and linguistic minority in a society which favours and demands speech and hearing as the de facto norm.

We see further instances of epistemic violence in 'The Deaf School', where Deafhood conflicts with hearing-centric society. As the narrative explains, many of the teachers at the school are hearing and lacking adequate signing capacity for effective communication: 'The teachers were mostly hearing, and some of them signed even worse than Ally's bright-pink-lipped mother, sloppily and choppily. They were difficult to watch or follow and the children would get

very tired from seeing them sign' (Stern, 2010: 157). Whilst the school may function as deaf space in terms of an intersecting locus for many deaf individuals, it is still policed by the normative expectations of a hearing-centric society:

> The speech teacher would tell Sophie how it was very sad that she wasn't good at speech, because it meant she wouldn't be able to communicate with hearing people who didn't understand sign language, or get a job with hearing people in the future. She would have to work at the deaf school like her parents. (Stern, 2010: 158-9)

These audist and oralist practices ultimately end up complicating the deaf identity, as Sophie 'really did wish she could be good at speech' (Stern, 2010: 159). This is an example of the way that normative expectations of hearing-centric society (oralism, in this instance) have been able to infiltrate what should be a deaf-designated space through epistemic violence. Instead, the pervasiveness of hearing-culture as the de-facto norm ultimately leads to a conflict of culture between the school as a deaf-designated space, and the normative linguistic expectations of hearing society at large. The deaf school, through its re-entrenchment of hearing norms ultimately configures the contact zone in a way which dismisses the culturo-linguistic construction of deafness, and instead articulates deafness as a model of deficit and impairment – and in doing so the disabling conditions of deafness become present.

This story therefore suggests how fragile deaf spaces are. Whilst they should be spaces that exist outside of a visual/audio contact zone, Stern narratives highlight the ways the hearing/deaf contact zone can encroach upon these deaf spaces, and it is the constant fragile proximity to ideologies of linguistic normativity that this story encapsulates. Whilst schools for the Deaf

may be Deaf-designated spaces that is not to say that they are Deaf-centred. As Ladd tells us:

> Significant advances can only be made when the schools themselves become 'Deaf-centred'; that is, acknowledging that Deaf children and adults have their own epistemologies, their own ways of thinking about and constructing the world. (Ladd, 2003: 403)

As the opening of the narrative shows, deaf spaces, whilst they may function as a locus of deaf communication and culture are often still policed by hegemonies in which hearing and speech are considered not only normative, but superior:

> The deaf school had originally been in beautiful old buildings up in the mountains with dark green tiles lining the marbled archways and courtyards, and fountains in the centre of each of the three squares. But the hearing students at the nearby university need more buildings, more room, more of everything. The beautiful old school tempted them, so they found a way to take it over for themselves. (Stern, 2010: 151)

Deaf spaces themselves are not entirely autonomous, and instead they are often part of a larger network and system which favours the normative. As Padden tells us, 'There are very few "places" Deaf people can call their own. For most of their history in the United States, they have occupied spaces built by others and largely controlled by others' (Padden, 2008: 169). As Padden goes on to explain:

> Schools for deaf children are a prime example: from the time the first schools for the deaf were built in the early part of the nineteenth century, spaces were designed and organised exclusively for deaf children and their teachers and benefactors, but rarely if ever by Deaf people themselves. (Padden, 2008: 169).

As Stern's narrative shows, these practices are still ongoing. Deaf identity and Deafhood is in a constant conflict to maintain and control spaces which are seemingly deaf-designated. It is through the audist privileging of the hearing

that deaf-designated spaces can still function as spaces in which hearing privilege exists, even when deaf culture and community are present.

We see a further instance of audism as epistemic violence in 'Roadrunner', a short story about navigating the transitory world of hitchhiking as a Deaf individual amongst hearing peers. The asymmetrical relations between hearing and deaf become apparent in an encounter between the deaf protagonist and a character known as "the Cat". ''No comprendo,' she saw him say to his friends […] He brought a circled hand up to his mouth, asking if she wanted a drink, showing off the one thing he could say to her, the thing that she had thought insignificant next to everything else' (Stern, 2010: 26). Here we become aware that gestural communication has been utilised as a pointed mark of otherness. What is a rudimentary and basic sign has now been recast as audist – and in doing so re-affirms the hearing-centrism of a contact zone in which the deaf individual is portrayed as other, different, not "normal". Once again, the narrator turns to sign-language in an attempt to communicate to the Cat: '—Don't you know I don't understand anything you say either? she signed to him, the tears almost visible now. Don't you know you are as ridiculous to me as I am to you?' (Stern, 2010: 26). It is at this point that the asymmetrical power relations and audism of the deaf/hearing contact zone are at their most pronounced. It is here, in the disabling aftermath of the audist encounter that the narrator actively chooses to leave: 'She turned around and went to the truck […] and got her backpack from the dusty floor of the cab. Jumping back down on to the soft tar of the parking lot, […] She went and stood on the highway, thumb up' (Stern, 2010: 26). Here, the contact zone collapses. Stern seems to be suggesting that there is a fragility of the contact zone in deaf-hearing encounters, of a hidden, audist potentiality inherent in the asymmetrical

relations between deaf and hearing. It is through a return to audism, and through reinforcing phonocentric and hearing-centric ideals that the asymmetry of these relations are actualised. In doing so, the imbalance of the contact zone causes a disabling moment – not of bodily otherness, but of epistemological and ontological difference.

There is another instance of a deaf/hearing contact zone within a hearing-designated space in Stern's 'Window Washer'. This narrative focuses on a deaf man, Christian, who is a window-washer, and his encounters with the hearing occupants of the houses he is cleaning. The majority of this narrative takes place around one particular encounter, in the house of a hearing woman in Notting Hill. He is preoccupied with cleaning the windows when 'the owner of the house tapped him on the shoulder and motioned 'Drink?' [which] startled him and he gave a little jump' (Stern, 2010: 139). In response to the owner's improvised gesture he replies: '—Yes, tea, please, thank you. He acted if he were milking a cow's teat with his hand to tell her 'milk' and held up one finger to tell her he wanted sugar' (Stern, 2010: 140). Whilst this improvised gestural exchange manages to transcend the linguistic difference between Christian and the homeowner, we become aware of an inherent privileging within the contact zone:

> Christian was surprised when the owner stayed in the room with a cup of tea of her own. It did happen sometimes in the smaller flats, but never before in this kind of house. He noticed that his tea was in a mug with the phone numbers of an insurance company on the side and hers was in a white porcelain cup (Stern, 2010: 140)

We see another example of the homeowner attempting to cross the linguistic divide when 'she pointed to the sculptures in their case and then to her pink lips. He saw on them 'Can you read my lips?'' (Stern, 2010: 140). Once Christian

has cleaned the windows, the encounter between himself and the homeowner is one which is indicative of another long-held prejudice towards deaf individuals. Through the audist practice of infantilizing deafness, we become aware of an explicit attempt to capitalise on the inherent privilege of being hearing in a deaf/hearing encounter:

> When she was finally ready to pay, she haggled over the money, searching around in her white leather handbag and then holding out a ten-pound note and [break] a few pound coins. Christian shook a finger at her. Twenty pounds was what they had agreed, and that was that. She shook her head and patted his shoulder a few times. The veins in her throat stood out, green and purple. Finally she pulled out a twenty-pound note and gave it to him. The strained smile on her face was one that Christian saw often adult's faces when they smiled at children. He didn't like it. (Stern, 2010: 142)

It is through audist practices of infantilisation such as Christian experienced that we are once again aware of the conditions of disability being constructed and regulated within the hearing/deaf contact zone, and how inherent notions of privilege can have very real and physical benefit for those who the contact zone favours. Stern's narrative also once more highlights one of the many ways deaf individuals must navigate audist practices within hearing/deaf encounters, and in doing so, this is one of the ways that the autoethnography of the text writes against audist preconceptions towards deaf individuals, and highlights the epistemic injustice and violence many deaf people experience.

As we have seen in this section, encounters within hearing designated spaces, at least in Stern's narratives, always privilege the hearing individual. It is within these contact zones that hearing people benefit at the expense of the deaf individuals disadvantage, and it is through audist regulation of these spaces that construct a binary system of able and disabled. It is through these constructions of deafness as disability that undermine and destabilise ideas of

Deafhood and deaf identity, and in doing so are problematic for the deaf body politic. Through the confrontation of these problematic practices however, the autoethnography of Stern's narratives become apparent: that Deafhood produces a unique epistemological and ontological position.

Deaf/Hearing Encounters Through Writing

One of the ways Stern's characters actively challenge instances of epistemic violence is to find alternative ways to communicate across the hearing/deaf linguistic divide. Whilst there are numerous examples of audism as epistemic violence as we have seen above, Stern's characters are also constantly re-affirming their deaf identity in relation to a hearing-centric world, and to hearing characters. Deafhood, or "deaf-being", is a way of being in the world that is, by definition, prohibited to those who are hearing. It is through the testimonial nature of Stern's narratives that deaf epistemology is shared, and in doing so, attempts to reject audist pre-conceptions of what it means to be deaf. Whilst the instances of writing across the hearing/deaf divide are often subject to the inherent privileging of hearing as normative, the use of effective communication ultimately challenges the way that deafness is often constructed in the hearing, audist imagination.

This also occurs grammatically within the text, the most notable and obvious difference being the use of alternative punctuation to denote sign-language within the narratives. Instead of using speech marks, the use of an em dash is used to denote signed exchanges. Nine lines into the first story of the collection, 'Rio', the reader is made instantly aware of this structural difference: '—Give me back, she gestured' (Stern, 2010: 3). Whilst the use of the em dash to denote dialogue has been used notably by authors such as James Joyce and

Cormac McCarthy, it is against convention for English language publication, instead more commonly found in non-English language texts. Whilst it is a subtle difference, it immediately codifies the signed communication as different, foreign, and other, and in doing so thrusts the reader into conflict with the text itself. It is further of interest to note that conventional speech marks do appear throughout Stern's narratives, either to denote communication between hearing characters, but also to denote written exchanges between deaf and hearing characters. In the first story in the collection, we are introduced to this type of linguistic exchange: 'he had brought a yellow pad to scribble to us on. 'Men always want silent women,' he said' (Stern, 2010:10). Through the linguistic substitution of "said", rather than "wrote" (which occurs many times throughout collection), these exchanges are normalised, diminishing the difference between hearing and Deaf, and disrupting the hierarchical relationship between sound and word. This notion undermines one of the foundational tenets of linguistic theory, as Ferdinand de Saussure posits: 'The linguistic object is not defined by the combination of the written word and the spoken word: the spoken form alone constitutes the object' (Saussure 23-24). Language has, according to Saussure, 'an oral tradition that is independent of writing' (Saussure 24). Therefore we can see through Stern's disruption of the relationship between sound and word that Deafhood suggests not only a different way of being in the world, but of a different world itself.

The use of writing as a communicative method is not only an example of a communicative exchange that crosses the hearing/deaf dichotomy that the contact zone, but also an instance of reaffirming Deafhood and challenging epistemic violence. According to Maxwell, for deaf individuals, 'the uses of literacy are largely conversational, personal, and instrumental (Maxwell, 1985:

205). As she goes on to explain, ‘The range of behavior with regard to using writing with hearing strangers is wide; nevertheless, it is an option that many deaf adults do use’ (Maxwell, 1985: 213). Whilst it may not be regarded in the same ways that speech or sign language are, writing is often used as an intermediary form of communication particularly when used to cross the linguistic divide of the hearing/deaf contact zone. As Maxwell hypothesizes: ‘is writing a secondary mode to be resorted to when speech and/or Sign fail?’ (Maxwell, 1985: 206). In ‘Rio’, our deaf characters realise that they are being watched by a man in a restaurant, who attempts to communicate with them:

> But then later, when I went across the street to have a piss in the restaurant loo, there he was at a table, watching Eva through binoculars. He was delighted that I had seen him at it. On the paper covering the table he started scribbling, telling me who he was, where he had been, who he had been with, trying to show me the pieces of glass in his box […] He didn’t really ask about us, just wanted to tell me who he was. (Stern, 2010: 5)

As we can see within this encounter, the contact zone is constructed in a way which privileges the hearing individual. The fact that the encounter is a one-sided diatribe is an ultimately disabling experience for the deaf characters – their agency is reduced as they are not invited into the conversation but are instead constructed as an outlet for the hearing man’s own thoughts and emotions. This is expanded on later in the narrative as the true intentions of the man’s attention is explicated:

> ‘He had brought a yellow lined pad to scribble to us on.
> ‘Men always want silent women,’ he said. ‘You two are the perfect women. You are beautiful and no words come out of you to ruin the

> fantasy, and you can never hear the filth that is said around you. Completely untouched, untouchable. Men would pay anything you wanted, to be with you. I will introduce you to some.'
> —What you got to offer us? I said with a tough cheekiness that surprised me. We do it without you.
> Eva laughed nervously and met my eyes, but of course neither of us wanted to do it without the safety of the rodent man.' (Stern, 2010: 10)

The action of the rodent man is akin to grooming, and it is through this reduction of deaf identity to passivity that we become aware of insidious nature of the imbalance of the contact zone. It is this perception of passivity that is ultimately disabling for our deaf characters – and whilst they may humour the idea of him functioning as their pimp, there is an implicit hierarchy established as the 'safety of the rodent man' suggests a paternal/child relationship, in which deafness is reduced to a state of infantilisation, and the characters are cast in a state of child-like naivete through the perspective of a hearing reader.

It is through this encounter that Stern highlights the ways in which deaf individuals are often infantilised – and how through this passivity, the identity of the deaf self becomes questioning. In the face of a dominant and oppressive hearing culture, Deafhood is often fragile and in flux, and the identity of the deaf self is to easily brought into contention against the pre-figured hearing construction of deafness. However, through literacy as a meaningful and viable form of communication, we can see Deafhood as flourishing in a third, intermediary space between speech and sign.

Another example of writing being used within the deaf/hearing contact zone is in the story 'Boat'. The narrator, who is lodging with the owner of a house boat found herself often at the end of his drunken, written ramblings:

> Around six or seven in the evening the red wine would come out. After half a bottle the paper would come out, and he would start writing and writing to her. He wrote page after page without stopping, in small wriggly

> writing, telling her all kinds of things. 'We're all bottom feeders, like the skate and the ray,' he scribbled. He would sit with his head in his hands, swaying, then look at her, his eyes unfocused, then get up and start dancing as if he were alone in the room, jumping and waving his hands. 'Damn you Americans,' he would write. She didn't know what exactly to say back to him. (Stern, 2010: 33)

The fact that these encounters only happen when the owner is drunk suggests that attempting to communicate across the linguistic divide is a taboo act, codifying deafness as grotesque. As Sayer argues, writing as a method of communication between deaf and hearing people 'does not appear often in literature' (Sayers, 2012: 317). The reason for this, Sayers claims, is that 'a deaf character who does not speak is presumed to be illiterate'. (Sayers, 2012: 317). It is this cultural preconception that informs the drunk-writing-as-taboo; particularly as Stern tells us that our narrator "didn't know what exactly to say back to him", thus creating a self-fulfilling prejudice of illiteracy whilst also highlighting this form of epistemic injustice. As Stern tells us in the narrative, there was a certain element of remorse and regret towards these actions as 'In the morning, sober, they didn't look at each other' (Stern, 2010: 33). What is alluded here is that there is a certain amount of shame implied in communicating across the linguistic divide, as if it is a shameful or illicit action. Through this act of writing across the deaf/hearing divide, the owner of the boat becomes rendered non-linguistic and non-verbal, as if he temporary exists in a state of hearing-imagined deafness. It is through this conflict of audist preconceptions of deafness as non-communicative and the reality of effective communication that Stern actively challenges the idea of deafness as lack and deficit. It is through this temporary intersection of the contact zone that Stern highlights the way that writing as an effective communicative mode creates a temporary mutual ground that exists between hearing and deaf.

We see another instance of writing being used to disrupt the relationship between sound and communication in the story 'Window Washer'. As the homeowner attempts to communicate to Christian, a deaf window washer, Stern highlights not only the struggle many deaf people have surrounding lip-reading, but also how these situations are navigated: 'He could understand these words, but he often couldn't follow longer conversations, so he shook his head and motioned for a pen and paper' (Stern, 2010: 140-1). The audist preconception that all deaf individuals can easily understand through lip-reading is well documented (Sayers, 2012: 305-9) – and here we see an example of one of the many ways a deaf individual needs to navigate these presumptions, particularly within a contact zone figured inside a hearing-designated space. This is even further explicated when the homeowner returns and hands Christian a note:

> When she brought these back from the kitchen, he saw that she had written in thick, smooth black ink, 'These sculptures are about the voice and silence. What do you think about that?' She pointed to the case as Christian read (Stern, 2010: 141)

Here, we see an example of the imbalance of the contact zone actualised: deafness, to the homeowner is reduced to a site of spectacle and commodification. This act of commodification is one which confuses our protagonist: 'What did he think about that? He had no idea. The sculptures looked like wormy lumps of clay to him' (Stern, 2010: 141). Ultimately it is through the imbalance of the contact zone that Christian concludes: 'He didn't know this woman. She had given him tea in a different sort of cup to hers' (Stern, 2010: 141). Eventually, Christian attempts to close down the attempt at conversation: 'Christian thought for a time about what to say to her. Finally, he shrugged and took the pen from her to write, 'I not think anything about it. Thanks for the tea.'' (Stern, 2010: 141). We are reminded that Christian finds

himself isolated within a hearing-designated space, the request for his opinion on the sculptures equivalent to asking if he accepts a hearing-dominant society appropriating and commodifying his cultural identity. As Wrigley points out, 'the history of deafness is one of appropriation by the hearing' (Wrigley, 1996: 71). Whilst the exchange may seem innocent enough, it is the confrontation between Christian, his own identity, culture, and ideas of Deafhood that complicates the encounter. As art has long been seen as a site of privilege, there is a disconnect here between the artistic representations of hearing and silence and Christian's own lived reality. It is this disconnect which leads to the encounter being ultimately disabling: confronted with an audist representation of his own identity, constructing a binaristic opposition between hearing and silence, Christian's own deafness is marked as other. Within the hearing-designated space of the homeowner's property, the contact zone entrenches the binaristic ideas of hearing as normative, and deafness as deviant. Through this narrative Stern seems to be suggesting that whilst writing in the deaf/hearing contact zone is a possible way to enable cross-cultural communication, in this encounter it is lacking in its meaningfulness. Writing across the hearing/deaf divide is therefore a form of disembodied communication. It exists outside of the three-dimensional space of sign language and is removed from the relationship between sound and speech. Therefore, whilst it is an effective mode of cross-cultural communication, it is only intermediary and temporary, a fleeting space in which Deafhood affirms itself as a distinctly different (yet meaningful) ontological world than to that of the hearing.

Femininity and Deafness

Constructions of what is normative go beyond just language and modes of communication that much of this thesis has been concerned with. In Stern's

narratives, we also see the contact zone at the intersections of deafness and femininity, and the patriarchal ideas of normativity that are implicit in these relationships. These are particularly one-sided encounters, as there is often a conflation of deafness, passivity, and femininity, where the deaf body becomes a site of titillation or fetish for the hearing, male interlocuter. It is through this audist casting of the deaf body as a site of passive fetishisation that the conditions of disability become present.

It is particularly interesting in some of these encounters to analyse them through the concept of devoteeism, which is the sexual attraction to specific disabilities (Campbell, 2009). Whilst there is a copious amount of research on devoteeism regarding physical disabilities, as Cheslik and Wright point out, 'there is no research to indicate that Deaf people are part of this phenomena (2021: 11). In an essay by Kristen Harmon, 'Hearing Aid Lovers, Pretenders, and Deaf Wannabees', Harmon argues that there are small, niche groups on the internet who actively engage in fetishistic and devotee behaviour with attractions towards deaf individuals, particularly those who wear hearing aids (Harmon, 2012). Whilst there is obviously a gap here in research surrounding fetishization and devoteeism towards deaf individuals, I believe that given Harmon's evidence that there are numerous examples online of people discussing this exact topic (in both deaf and devotee spaces) we can use the critical paradigm of devoteeism to explore the ways in which the contact zone is often constructed and imbalanced within Stern's narratives in relation to deafness and sexuality.

Our deaf characters are constructed within these particular contact zones as a site of fetishized impairment and otherness; it is this process of objectification that is ultimately disabling. As Campbell points out, 'like other

forms of different bodies considered impaired, the life of Deaf people (because of deafness) has been considered one that is *inherently* negative – silent and pitiful' (Campbell, 2009: 91). It is through this ableist construction of the Deaf body as impaired that these encounters within a heteronormative contact zone cast the Deaf body as one that is disabled, passive, and exploited through an inherently masculine fetishisation of power differences. As argued by Begum, 'sometimes men might be attracted to disabled women because they perceive disabled women as passive and more likely to respond to their sexual advances.' (Begum, 1992: 79). This is further evidenced by Cheslik and Wright who point out the objectification of norm-deviant bodies is inherently about power imbalances:

> Some posit that fetishes for disability stem from the feeling of needing to be needed as a power dynamic, control, and also the glorification of one being the savior to a disabled person in a sexual manner. (Cheslik and Wright, 2021: 11–12)

An example of the fetishisation of the deaf occurs when, as we've already seen earlier in the chapter, the two girls are approached by the "rodent man" in 'Rio', who claims: ''Men always want silent women,' he said. 'You two are the perfect women. You are beautiful and no words come out of you to ruin the fantasy, and you can never hear the filth that is said around you. Completely untouched, untouchable.' (Stern, 2010: 10) It is through their deafness-as-passivity that the contact zone is constructed in a way which their Deafhood is reduced to a singular point of fetishisation, and the autonomous body is recast as reductive spectacle of erotic potential. As Jeffrey argues; 'Disability provides another hierarchy for eroticisation. Women with disabilities offer the double delights of gender inequality and disability as sources of sexual satisfaction to dominant male sexuality' (Jeffreys, 2008: 328). Stern's characters are therefore, within

these contact zones, reduced to sexual objects. However, Stern's characters are not purely passive in her narratives.

We see another example of deafness and sexuality being conflated as a duality of patriarchal expectation in 'Roadrunner'. Here however, the narrator becomes aware of her inherent sexuality, her deafness both a site of intrigue for the male onlooker, but also disabling as a barrier to communication:

> When she became a teen, hearing people paid attention to her. The hearing boys came to the house, but she always felt intimidated by all the things she could never say to them and all the things she imagined they had to say urgently to her that they would not be able to' (Stern: 19-20)

Here, sexuality and deafness is not entirely entwined in a negative, or fatalistic way. Whilst there is still a recognition of her own sexual desirability (which may or may not be related to her deafness), our narrator is aware of her own Deafhood being a linguistic and cultural difference between her and the hearing boys. The focus on Deafhood here is significant, as within these narratives there is a constant navigation between "being-deaf", and the ways in which deafness has been constructed by ableist and patriarchal expectations within Western society.

In her discussion of deaf sexuality in 'Reading Deaf Characters', Sayers points out that often, 'it seems that deaf characters either remain single or they enter into marriages that are sterile or produced badly damaged children', and that 'these narratives paint a gloomy picture of deaf adult's sexuality' (Sayers: 333). As well as the examples above, we see another example of deaf characters sexuality being overlooked in 'The Velvet Rope' when in a night club, a 'guy none of them had met before came up to them and started whispering in Jade's ear' (Stern, 2010: 61). In response, 'Jade wagged a finger at him and pointed at her ears', 'Me no hear….', before 'she gestured a cup moving to her

lips.' (Stern, 2010: 61). Whilst this encounter seems innocent enough, it becomes apparent that there is an imbalance in the contact zone as the instigator of the conversation is immediately brought to a halt on discovery of her deafness as 'the guy had spotted someone else he wanted to talk to' and wandered off (Stern, 2010: 61). It is in instances like this where we are made aware of the double-edged sword of deaf femininity: what may be a site of spectacle and eroticisation of deafness as passivity can also be a barrier to romantic intimacy.

This is most explicit as we turn back to 'Rio', when the "rodent man" constructs the girls as a site of male fantasy, their whole identities overlooked, discarded, re-imaged entirely for sexual titillation: 'We would be Marina and Kristina. He had a special affection for these schoolgirl names. We needed the appropriate costumes, he said.' (Stern, 2010: 10). Here, we become aware of the deaf characters being cast entirely within the expectations of the male-gaze, as a site of erotic fixation. Another example of deaf women being cast as a site of erotic fixation, occurs in 'Velvet Rope', where at the afterparty, they realise there is a conflation between sexuality and silence: 'A naked woman with perfectly round breasts walked out of one of the rooms whose doors had been shut and they saw an unmade white bed behind her. She had been in there all along. More silent women' (Stern, 2010: 66). As these examples show, Stern highlights the ways in which deaf women have to navigate not only the patriarchal expectation of the male gaze, but also the ways in which their deafness becomes a site of erotic fixation.

The male gaze affects not only depictions of women in art and literature, but through its dissemination through various feminist movements, it has come

to represent the patriarchal expectation of femininity as a whole. As such, women who deviate from that expectation are deemed undesirable under the male gaze (Eaton, 2008; Mulvey, 2009). However, it is through the recasting of deafness as a desirable trait in women – and casting deaf women as sites of passivity and vulnerability – that devoteeism becomes an expression of patriarchal oppression, and in doing so deafness becomes disabling. According to Sayers, there is an explicit codification of the deaf female body which turns deafness into a site of sexual potential for the male onlooker, 'where a deaf woman's natural alertness is sometimes mistaken for and reduced to a signal of sexual availability' (Sayers, 2012: 318). It is through these explorations of sexually gendered contact zones that Stern gives a narrative voice to not only the ways in which patriarchal expectations towards sex are prevalent towards deaf women, but that through devoteeism and fetishization of deafness, notions of Deafhood and deaf identity are undermined, appropriated, and exploited by ableist practices, and the disabling notion of deafness becomes apparent, and deaf femininity becomes constructed as a site of epistemic violence.

Concluding Thoughts

Whilst the contact zone is an encounter in highly asymmetrical relations, the contact zone is, above all, 'an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect' (Pratt, 1992: 7). As we have seen throughout this chapter, there are two ways in which the contact zone functions within Stern's narratives. Firstly, we can frame deaf literature as existing within a contact zone itself, as a cultural artifact of a deaf ontology writing against a hearing-centric society. This approach to deaf literature is perhaps best understood through what Pratt explains is an example of 'an

autoethnographic text, by which I mean a text in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them' (Pratt, 1991: p. 35). As Pratt explains, 'autoethnographic texts are representations that the so defined others construct in response to or in dialogue with those [dominant] texts' (Pratt, 1991: 35). As an autoethnographic text, we can frame Stern's narratives as part of on an ongoing praxis in which the deaf subject attempts to navigate and maintain a coherent deaf ontology and identity within a hearing-centric society which inherently privileges speech and hearing over sign-language and deafness. Therefore the narratives presented by Stern do not just bear the traditionally assumed hallmarks of fiction – but also bear traces of Deafhood. As Holcomb points out, 'testimonies are a critical component of the epistemologies of disenfranchised groups. Clearly, Deaf epistemology relies heavily on personal testimonies and personal experiences, which amount to the justified beliefs of the Deaf community' (Holcomb, 2010: 476). However, it is also important to note that as with all autoethnographic texts, Stern's narratives are not written in an echo chamber. Being written *within* the contact zone means there are traces of hearing culture present within the text.

As Lindgren points out, there is an almost constant navigation of deafness in relation to hearing: Deaf culture does not exist in isolation, but rather as part of a societal hierarchy. As such, 'most d/Deaf people interact daily with hearing culture, and many have dual, sometimes conflicting cultural affiliations. Writing in the contact zone enables authors to negotiate these dual affiliations; their narratives bear the traces of both Deaf and hearing worlds' (Kristin A. Lindgren, 2012: 344). These cultural traces can be understood as an example of what Pratt calls transculturism, a term used to 'describe how

subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture' (Pratt, 2008: 7). As a phenomenon of the contact zone, transculturation is evidence that societal and cultural groups do not exist as independent articles, but as part of a larger network of relationships. However, transculturation is also what enables Deaf literature – as part of a Deaf epistemology and Deaf ontology – to exist within hearing centric society. As Pratt points out, transculturation can also be a catalyst for resistance against a dominant cultural or societal power: 'While subjugated peoples cannot readily control what the dominant culture visits upon them, they do determine to varying extents what they absorb into their own, how they use it, and what they make it mean' (Pratt, 2008: 7). Stern's narratives, as we have seen are a prime example of this. By framing the Deaf experience textually, Stern's narratives are an example of transculturation being used to write against hearing-centric society. As Pratt explains, autoethnography 'refers to instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that *engage with* the colonizer's terms' (Pratt, 2008: 9). Therefore, Louise Stern's *Chattering: Stories*, as an autoethnographic text written within the contact zone actively attempts to engage with the ways in which Deafhood and Deaf identity has been misconstrued, misrepresented, and marginalized by hearing-centric society.

It is no surprise then that Stern's narratives are largely preoccupied with the encounter between hearing and deaf, a temporary site in which hearing and deaf worlds and their ontologies and epistemologies come into contact: the auditory and the visual. As such the contact zone is a crucial way of framing the ways that deaf identity and Deafhood is constructed, and it is through this navigation of contact zone in its various forms, that a discourse of Deafhood

can start to emerge from Stern's narrative. As Ladd explains, it is by working through, and writing through Deafhood which is crucial in establishing and maintaining and analysing a Deaf ontology and epistemology:

> But, just as Deaf history is framed and penetrated from without by discourses on deafness, so the internal frame of Deafhood, looking outwards, can render visible those unwritten Deaf discourses, and thus both encompass and for the first time, go beyond those framings. In so doing, one is essentially in search of a *Deaf epistemology,* that is, Deaf ways of being in the world, of conceiving that world and their own place within it (both in actuality and in potentiality). It will emerge that a crucial aspect of that epistemology is that it is not simply oppositional, but that it examines and presents the nature and significance of Deaf people's relationships to each other. (Ladd, 2003: 81).

The contact zone within Stern's narrative is one that is crucial in understanding the politics of deafness. Not only do her narratives write against a hearing-centric society, but also through fictionalisation, give drama and context to what may previously been overlooked or simply ignored from a hearing perspective. Stern's narratives, I argue, grounds the concepts of audism, Deafhood, and the contact zone in a way which through their autoethnography, frames these concepts as testimonial epistemology. Whilst these encounters often feature examples of audism and are representative of a hierarchy between hearing and deaf peoples, Stern's *Chattering* gives voice, articulation, and expression to ideas of Deafhood, and the ways in which the deaf individual can navigate these encounters. It is through framing Stern's narratives as autoethnography and testimonial epistemology where these narratives are at their most powerful. Stern's narratives disrupt notions of deaf people as inferior, passive, infantile, and instead attempt to portray deaf identities, cultures, and histories as vibrant, meaningful, and developed as those of hearing-centric society. Through Stern's narratives the deaf identity is not one of biological loss, lack, or deficit, but rather a form of cultural and linguistic diversity. Whilst this chapter has

analyzed but one example of deaf literature, it is hope that through the ideas of Deafhood and the contact zone, more texts will be explored, analysed and examined. Deaf experience, epistemology and ontology should no longer be seen as a fringe concern for academia, but an avenue through which constructions of language, selfhood, and identity can be explored, questioned, and most of all, expanded.

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Conclusion

As we have seen throughout this thesis, there have been several distinct ways deafness, sign-language and gesture have been represented throughout literary works. Ranging from the early days of the novel as seen in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), up to the more contemporary collection of short stories by Louise Stern, *Chattering: Stories* (2018), the representations of deafness and sign-language have ranged from symbolic stand-ins for ideas of difference, otherness and savagery, to being re-codified and actualised as meaningful and linguistically complete ontological worlds. The underlying aim of this thesis has been to offer an exploratory survey of the ways in which we can read encounters in the contact zone in a way which can challenge ideas of audism. As Hauser, O'Hearn and McKee remind us: 'audism begins with a specific theory of humanness. For example, bodies that hear normally are the prototypical human bodies' (Hauser, O'Hearn & McKee, 2010: 490). Sign language and gesture are predominantly physical and visual modes of interacting with the world: 'Although body movements are necessary components in speech languages as forms of nonverbal communication, they are fundamental to how sign languages convey meaning' (Fekete, 2017: 132). In order to examine the ways in which gesture and signed has functioned within this narrative, it has been imperative therefore, to establish a framework through which these often-overlooked narratives can be examined from the position of deaf studies and disability studies scholar.

By utilising the contact zone as a viable tool of literary analysis, this thesis has been able to read encounters in which one (or more) party has used sign language, gesture, and other non-normative forms of communication. Through a reading informed by the work of Bauman and Murray on the idea of

“deaf gain” as well as other deaf studies scholars, this thesis has taken the position that deafness, sign language, and gesture are not putative nor diminutive forms of communication (Bauman & Murray, 2014: xv; Wrigley, 1996: 3, Rosen, 2010: 238). One of the most significant things this thesis has also sought to strive towards is promoting the idea of ‘Deafhood’ within this literary approach. A term coined by Paddy Ladd, Deafhood is the concept of deafness as an ontological state of being in the world: ‘a process by which Deaf individuals come to actualise their Deaf identity’ (Ladd, 2003: xviii). It is through deafhood that we can start to see gesture and sign language as part of a larger network and framework of ontological relationships. Whilst there are a multitude of ontological modes of being in the world, it is through the idea of deafhood that we can start to examine and refute audist claims and read gesture and sign language with the authority and agency that is has rarely been afforded within scholarly and academic circles. Through approaching encounters with this methodology, this thesis has sought to conceptualise these exchanges in a way which offers equal ontological worth to speech as it does to sign language and other non-standard forms of gestural and physical communication, and in doing critically examines gesture and sign language as a meaningful - if often ignored - form of communication.

Through the work of gestural studies scholars such as Cornelia Muller and Adam Kendon, this thesis has also when at times necessary, sought to clarify the various forms of gestural exchange we have seen in these encounters, which as part of a working methodology for future analysis of signed or gestural encounters can provide a useful tool for contextualising these forms of gesture in relation to the imbalance of the contact zone. As we have seen throughout this thesis, much of the subordination and domination of the

contact zone is done through deliberately misconstruing ad-hoc or singular gestures as lexicalised or meaningful. It is through identifying these types of gestures that we can start to see the ways in which narrative encounters can entrench and propagate audist preconceptions of normativity.

As this thesis has set out to explore, it is through an exploratory survey of different literary representations of gesture and sign language that we can start to see that there has been a long-held fascination and preoccupation with alternative and non-normative forms of communication within fiction. Whilst many of the depictions have been framed in a contact zone in which one party has dominated due to a cultural or social hegemony, we have also seen instances in which there have been moments of resistance which challenge prevailing ideas of audism and auditory normalism. A Friedner summarises, 'Deaf studies' dual focus on deaf people's epistemologies and ontologies is connected to deaf peoples' desire to make sense of the world and to be and be seen as sensible beings by other deaf people and the wider hearing world' (Friender, 2016: 187). It is through the methodology used in this thesis that these fictional contact zones can be seen as radical spaces which can disrupt ideas of normalcy whilst realising new and meaning ways of being and acting in the world and in doing so, frame sign language and gesture as a concern for literary criticism beyond just the fields of disability and deaf studies.

As this thesis has shown, literature can give form to a range of different encounters that intersect different histories, cultures, linguistic structures, and worlds. Literary encounters not only map out these contact zones, but through the very form of writing exist in a medium that itself can cross the tangible aftermaths of the way these imbalances and divides are lived out. It is through the literature this thesis has examined that we have seen representation and

self-representation illustrated in ways that write against normative beliefs, and reframe linguistic, physical, and cultural diversity not as a lack, or something missing, but something to be celebrated, valued, and meaningful.

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