A widespread misconception among hearing people is that Deaf people live in a world without sound. In *And Your Name Is Jonah* (1979), a network film about a young boy whose parents at first do not realize he is deaf, the boy’s perspective is represented in certain scenes by the complete absence of any soundtrack. In one such scene Jonah is taken to a party, and the abrupt shift to an eerie silence, without human voices, other noises, or even background music, conveys to the hearing audience a horrifying sense of isolation and disorientation. Instead of giving the boy’s perspective, the scene most likely terrifies the hearing audience into recognizing their own fear of any loss of sound.

That the metaphor of silence is a pervasive one can be seen in titles of books about Deaf people, such as *They Grow in Silence* (Mindel and Vernon 1971), *Dancing without Music* (Benderly 1980), *Growing Old in Silence* (Becker 1980), *The Other Side of Silence* (Neisser 1983). Even Deaf people are sufficiently impressed by the metaphor that they too use it, for example in the titles of their national publications, the *Silent Worker* and the only Deaf-owned newspaper now in circulation, the *Silent News*. Names of Deaf organizations also indicate that Deaf people find this image a useful form of self-reference: the Pacific Silent Club, the Silent Oriole Club, the Chicago Silent Dramatic Club, the Des Moines Silent Club.

To hearing people the metaphor of silence portrays what they believe to be the dark side of Deaf people, not only an inability to
use sound for human communication, but a failure to know the world directly. For hearing people, the world becomes known through sound. Sound is a comfortable and familiar means of orienting oneself to the world. And its loss disrupts the way the world can be known. These images communicate the belief that Deaf people cannot have access to the world because it is primarily conveyed by sound and especially by the spoken word. Instead they are locked “on the other side,” behind “sound barriers,” and are condemned to a life lacking the depth of meaning that sound makes available to hearing people.

There are two ways to think about sound. The most familiar is that sound is a change in the physical world that can be detected by the auditory system. This is the supposedly bare “acoustic” definition. But what is often overlooked is that sound is also an organization of meaning around a variation in the physical world. The classic example of how to distinguish between a wink and an involuntary reaction of the eye, a tic (Ryle 1949, Geertz 1973) can be applied to sound as well. A wink differs from an involuntary closing of the eye not by any difference in the physical process of closing the eye, but by the way it is organized with respect to other activities: a wink is an act of signification, a communication of social meaning to another person. Comparably, the sound of a cough may be a spontaneous by-product of the clearing of the windpipe, or it may be a way to indicate disapproval, or to give a signal.

The fact that different cultures organize sound in different ways shows that sound does not have an inherent meaning but can be given a myriad of interpretations and selections. For example, the phonemic clicks or ingressive stops in Bantu languages may seem like meaningless noise to speakers of English. The widely varying representations for sounds such as a dog’s bark (“bow-wow” in English but “oua-oua” in French) make it clear that languages code noises in different ways. There are cultural conventions for what kinds of sound patterns should be used for doorbells, fire alarms, and sirens. And with respect to music, what is spiritually fulfilling for one culture may be bizarre and dissonant to another. The new tradition of American avant-garde music is thrilling to some but confuses people in other cultures. In any discussion of Deaf people’s knowledge of sound, it is important to keep in mind that perception of sound is not automatic or straightforward, but is shaped through learned, culturally defined practices. It is as important to know the specific and special meaning of a given sound as it is to hear sound.

An elderly Deaf woman once told us that she had only recently learned that hearing people could hear their own voices. She knew they could hear each other and that they communicated by sound, but somehow, in her ideas about what they were able to do, it had never penetrated that they could actually hear their own voices. This reminded us of another occasion, when we had been helping a friend move her furniture into her parents’ house. Her hearing father, a physician, was also helping with the move. At one point, when Tom was wrestling with a difficult piece of furniture, the father tried several times to call out his name. It was not until his daughter reminded him that Tom would not be likely to hear him that he finally realized he could not simply call out by voice to get Tom’s attention. Our elderly friend knew that hearing people “hear,” and the physician knew that Deaf people “are deaf,” but each of them had incomplete theories about the other. Deaf people’s theories about sound and how hearing people hear may be imperfect, but no more imperfect than the theories of those who must guess about what it is like to not hear.

When hearing people identify Deaf people as silent, they are mistakenly assuming that Deaf people have no concept of sound, that sound plays no part in their world, or that if it does, their ideas about it are deeply distorted. The truth is that many Deaf people know a great deal about sound, and that sound itself—not just its absence—plays a central role in their lives.

We have heard many reminiscences about the ways Deaf children learn about sound and try to discover its connections to the world. One friend told us about the kinds of activities he and his
schoolmates engaged in during his early years at a school for the deaf. The boys' favorite after-school activity was watching a popular film serial of the time called *Blackhawk*, which came with a sound track conveniently concentrated in the bass range. (For many deaf people, the lower frequencies are the most easily detectable, creating not only loud sounds they can hear but vibrations on the floor and furniture.) After each episode, the boys would gather in small groups with their favorite leaders, who would recreate each scene again in the finest detail. By reenacting the episode, the boys could remake the material into their own, taking ownership of what belonged to others. As our friend told us:

There were some popular ways of doing the stories. We'd start with the beginning of the film. We'd put our hands together, then slowly draw them apart, each hand representing the fabric as the curtains were drawn apart, all the while doing our vocal roars in imitation of the overture. Then we'd do the rolling up of the titles and credits. One boy was my favorite, and everyone else's too. He could transform each episode into a wonderful story with the kind of detail we liked. His aviator scenes were the best, complete with scenes of the pilot barking commands into his radio, his body moving to the side as the airplane banked into a deep dive. Then he'd begin the love scenes with the aviator and his current love interest, mouthing the dialogue just as it was in the film. First the pilot, looking down, would begin to talk in a gruff manner to the woman, then the woman would mouth in response. There were never any real words, simply because he had no idea what was being said between them. But of course, we didn't either.

I remember how he'd do the planes taking off from the runway. He would recreate the sound of the roar during takeoff by putting one arm under his chin, and with the hand cupped around the ear, he would take his other hand, form the sign for airplane-type objects, place it on his arm. Then he would move his hand down his arm (as if down a runway) and up into the space beyond his arm (takeoff into the air) while roaring his imitation of the sounds of planes. With his hand cupped around his ear, he could hear his own roaring. He was the best.

Other friends told about acting out airplane battles in the hallways, using their hands to represent the airplanes and the walls as runways. Sometimes they would play alone, other times with friends using their airplane-like signs as enemy aircraft. Hallways were favorite places because the reverberation of the children's roars against the narrow halls would make them sound even more like airplanes.

This kind of game as played by Deaf children was showcased in a segment of *My Third Eye*. Like boys who used their hands for airplanes in aerial combat, the actors created a story about a storm at sea, a shipwreck, and a rescue by helicopter. One actor combines handshapes to show a helicopter flying above choppy waves, lowering a rescue chair on the end of a line, and the shipwrecked person gratefully boarding the chair and being lifted into the helicopter, which then flies off to a safe haven. The story unfolds solely through signs, their movements and handshapes, as the ensemble of actors moves in rhythmic unity. The actors, however, in deference to their hearing audiences, refrain from including the roaring soundtrack that real children would be very likely to include.

Another friend told us how he and his young playmates, six to eight years of age at the time, would go into the playroom in the boys' dormitory and invent games that used sound at as loud a volume as they could manage. One game involved a contest to see who could make the loudest sound. "Loud," to them, meant sounds that favored the lower frequencies. The boys learned somewhere, our friend could not remember when or where, that they could make sound louder by projecting it into a corner rather than into the center of the room. They could use the walls as a resonating chamber. And to better direct the sound and
increase its volume, they would cup their hands together and direct the voice through the narrow channel of their hands into the corner. Usually the largest boy turned out to be the best at this game. In the confines of their playroom and with their limitless imaginations, the boys began to learn much about the properties of sound.

On other days, these boys would tire of whooping into the corners of the playroom and instead would sit on small chairs and in unison sing-song a particular word—one was "to-mor-row"—over and over again, learning the different ways to make spoken sounds. In another fortuitous discovery, they found that rapping on the windowpanes created deliciously loud noises. They tried as many different variations of these raucous experiments as they could, until at last the hearing counselors could no longer tolerate the whoops, shrieks, blood-curdling yells, pounding of walls, and rattling of windows, and would storm into the room, yelling "You're all nothing but animals!"

These activities were not unique to this one school; other friends recalled having played similar games: whooping into walls, pounding on floors and windowpanes, and using the hallways for launching loud aircraft. All this seemed to be part of the tradition passed down from one generation of schoolchildren to the next, across schools many miles apart.

These stories, just as they vividly paint the inventiveness of childhood, also tell us something about how much young Deaf children must have learned about activities involving sound. From the boys' many experiments, they acquired a great deal of common knowledge about how sound works, how volume and resonance interact in the carrying of sound waves across distances.

Inevitably, at some point in the development of their knowledge about sound, Deaf children begin to understand that one important thing to learn about sound is how hearing people think about it. When our friend told us about the experiments in the playroom, the whooping and shrieking into the walls, he could not remember it without mentioning the hearing counselors' reaction: "You're all nothing but animals!"

A reminiscence by Bernard Bragg in *Deaf Heritage* is a good example of how Deaf children discover very quickly that sound can be a very serious matter:

Spontaneous outbursts of laughter in the classroom were often stilled by scornful reprimands from our fifth-grade teacher not so much because they were impolite or erupted at inappropriate times as because he said they sounded disgustingly unpleasant or irritating—even animalistic. Young and uncomprehending as we were, we were given long lectures on the importance of being consistently aware of what our laughter sounded like to those who could hear. From that time on, we were forced to undergo various exercises like breathing through the nose only—breathing through the mouth only—either with sound or without—doing these repeatedly with our hands on our stomachs or heads. Compliments were often lavished upon those who came up with forced but perfectly controlled laughter—and glares were given to those who failed to laugh "properly" or didn't sound like a "normal" person... Some of us have since then forgotten how to laugh the way we had been taught. And there are two or three from our group, who have chosen to laugh silently for the rest of their lives. (Gannon 1981:355)

Knowing about sound involves not only discovering its acoustic properties but also, and more important, learning the complicated conditions attached to it. Once at a party that had continued late into the night, a small group of us began telling stories about growing up. In the safe intimacy of the group, each new story was more personal than the last. Seizing this rare opportunity, a friend announced that he had a tremendous debt to his older brother. We looked at him, waiting. His brother, he slowly began, had taught him a most valuable lesson: how to urinate in a toilet properly!
The group broke out in laughter, and our friend knew he could continue. His brother had explained to him that, as a deaf child, he should be extremely careful about how he urinated. The sound generated by a certain placement of the stream was very disturbing. He should always aim for the porcelain, not into what he had thought to be the logical receptacle, the water. If he neglected this responsibility, people would become very angry with him and think terrible thoughts about him. He reenacted for us his innocent, wide-eyed reaction. He had had no idea that such sounds could be offensive and was horrified at the thought that by the simple act of relieving himself he could incur such disapproval.

We laughed until we were weak. We all knew the little wide-eyed boy he portrayed. He was each one of us. All of us, in our own painful ways, had made similar discoveries, when what we thought was reasonable turned out to have potentially disastrous repercussions.

A woman reflected that it wasn’t that we didn’t know these things made sounds, but that we didn’t know how the sounds would be interpreted. We all nodded enthusiastically. And then she told her story. After four years in a school for the deaf, she had transferred to a public school where she was the only Deaf child. On one fateful day, during a quiet class discussion, she had a terrible bout of flatulence. She silently debated with herself, uncertain about whether releasing gas was like coughing or sneezing. If the urge was equally pressing and involved some bodily function, she reasoned, then it must be equivalent. It would make a noise, she knew, but she didn’t think the others would mind. She made her decision. Moments later she discovered to her horror that she had guessed wrong: flatulence is not the same as coughing or sneezing.

Others had stories about digestive noises, which are notoriously troublesome to evaluate. A college student discovered one day in a cafeteria line that an unrestrained belch led the hearing people around him to draw conclusions about his socioeconomic class. And we agreed we were unclear about which kinds of stomach rumblings were detectable. Some noises were more likely to attract glances, but we couldn’t seem to predict which ones. And of course, reactions are not always reliable measures. Some stomach rumblings seemed to us to be loud enough to attract attention, while some others did not, perhaps because such noises are so common that people agree not to notice. Or were we being silently condemned? What reactions could we trust? We all had stories about how in restaurants we had to restrain the urge to sip too efficiently from straws, chew as thoroughly as we wanted to, or clear our windpipes after a drink. Many times what we thought were innocent or reasonable sounds turned out to have different significance from what we had thought.

The trick for Deaf people living among hearing people is to figure out the complicated meanings attached to various sounds. Sometimes Deaf people develop good theories about these sounds, but at other times the meanings of sound are much more elusive.

A friend once told us she couldn’t figure out what was permissible when she used a public toilet. She reasoned that at least some sounds must be permitted, since it would be impossible to carry out one’s functions in complete silence. The problem was, one couldn’t simply ask in a bathroom, or even ask a good friend, “Excuse me, but I wonder . . . when you sit down on a toilet, do you . . .” Her humorous portrait of a well-intentioned scholarly type making inquiries into the ways of the natives captured perfectly her bewilderment. One just had to make a reasonable guess and hope to get away with it. She became so worried over this uncertainty that she chose what she decided was the safest route: perform nothing that could result in a sound. But of course this solution did not work. She had become so obsessed with being silent that she could no longer use a public bathroom. Then, one day, she came to her senses and decided she would no longer worry about this. She’d simply do whatever she wanted (within reason, of course), noise be damned! We cheered.

In the comfortable context of a group of friends, we could
laugh at how strangely hearing people think about sound and at our own desperate antics in trying to figure out their system. In fact, we laughed as hard as we did because we knew that elsewhere, as Bragg’s story made clear, the subject of sound is not a laughing matter.

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Deaf people, along with learning about properties of sound and the meanings attached to it, encounter another sobering lesson: the realm of sound very often involves issues of control. It is not surprising that what others use as a central definition of their own lives, sound, should become a powerful tool of control. One of the most interesting stories we found illustrating this was in a colleague’s videotape collection. The story is a recollection of the storyteller’s first encounter with a dormitory counselor at her residential school. The story begins when the girl hears that she will have a new counselor at school—a woman who has transferred to the job from a women’s prison. At this point we smile in anticipation; stories about former prison guards employed as counselors at Deaf schools are legion.

The new counselor turns out to be a huge, humorless woman who maintains her prison-warden mentality, complete with the drab uniform of a warden, a thick leather belt, and a heavy key ring with a whistle, which she will find useless in this new setting. Her treatment of the girls is unduly rough. Each morning, instead of gently waking them, she flashes the ceiling lights of their bedrooms, tears the covers off them, and, for those who linger a bit too long, pulls pillows from under their heads. Worse, she carries her prison-warden role into the shower, where she insists on watching their every move.

After conveying this strong image of malevolence and relentless control, the storyteller proceeds to the point of the story:

Now there was this one girl this counselor picked on mercilessly. She was one of those types that unconsciously used her voice when she signed. You know, she’d do little squeals and grunts and other kinds of noises. This counselor couldn’t stand her, thought she was mad. She would yell at her to stop, but of course the poor girl couldn’t. It was just the way she talked (lots of Deaf people do this, you know the type) . . . Anyway, the counselor made life miserable for her to the point where all she wanted was to run away. We told her she oughtn’t, that we’d find a way. Well, we did, we decided we’d get back at her, and we began making plans . . .

We came up with this plan. We’d set out bait. We’d put this poor girl in the bathroom, get her started on her squealing and stuff, and once we got the counselor after her, into the bathroom, we could trap her and put our plan in action . . . We were in the bathroom and we got her to start squealing and making all kinds of noises . . . and exactly according to plan, the counselor came running down the hall after her. We could even feel her coming, the floors shook at every heavy step . . . She came into the room and didn’t even bother to look at us, but looked directly at the poor girl, who then panicked and escaped from the bathroom behind us into the sleeping quarters where she’d be protected. The next part of the plan was to force the counselor to go through us to catch the girl . . . She began chasing after her into the large sleeping room, where a group of us were lined up on either side. She came running down, only one thing on her mind—to catch the poor girl . . . Then one of us extended a leg, and the counselor flew through the air and landed on the floor with a heavy thud.

The retaliation is complete, they have tricked the counselor into humiliation. But then the story takes an unexpected turn.

At long last, we had made up for what she had done to us. We cheered and cheered until . . . we realized she wasn’t moving. We very carefully approached her. Maybe she had fainted? We came closer. Then she lifted her head and tried
talking to us. (What a useless thing to do! Now, this woman never bothered to learn to sign. Here she was trying to talk to us and we couldn’t understand her.) She kept mouthing something to us, and we sensed desperation. Finally, she lifted her arm and her hand hung limply on the floor, dangling from her arm. “She broke her arm!” we screamed.

The girls run to get another adult, and the counselor is taken away. Three weeks later she returns to the dormitory, her arm in a cast, and they anxiously wait to see what will happen next.

We waited for her old self, but it was gone. Instead, this was one of the most loving people, she was sweet, affectionate. And the most surprising of all: she loved that girl, the one she had hated so much before. Loved her more than anything. We couldn’t figure it out.

The story has just the right ending. The malevolent character has received a suitable punishment, if perhaps a bit too harsh, and the punishment leads to redemption.

Another counselor said this woman told her she had been under the mistaken impression that Deaf children were like prisoners: bad, insane, and mean. Instead she found we were all good people . . . better organized and more intelligent than those prisoners she worked with. After this she respected us and loved us. And I guess we loved her too . . . She threw away her leather belt, her heavy key ring and whistle. She became what she should have been, a mother to us.  

Although the counselor exerts oppressive control over the girls, it is not until she mistreats one of them on the grounds of unacceptable noises that they decide to strike back. This supposedly informal story is a powerful one, for it shows how Deaf people can imagine regaining, however briefly, ownership of sound.

Deaf people know that sound belongs to hearing people except in the few situations when they are allowed to use it. As Bragg’s story and the reminiscences of our friends tell us, they are very often required to be silent if they cannot master the sound well enough. An example of the tensions that rise from this competition for control of sound can be found in what is known popularly as “the motel joke,” a classic in the community. Here is one version:

A Deaf couple check into a motel. They retire early. In the middle of the night, the wife wakes her husband complaining of a headache and asks him to go to the car and get some aspirin from the glove compartment. Groggy with sleep, he struggles to get up, puts on his robe, and goes out of the room to his car. He finds the aspirin, and with the bottle in hand he turns toward the motel. But he cannot remember which room is his. After thinking a moment, he returns to the car, places his hand on the horn, holds it down, and waits. Very quickly the motel rooms light up, all but one. It’s his wife’s room, of course. He locks up his car and heads toward the room without a light.

The joke is not on the Deaf man who has inconveniently forgotten which room is his, but on hearing people, who conveniently help him to find his room. The joke’s hero knows he can count on hearing people to be extraordinarily attentive to sound—to his gain and their detriment. Their predictable behavior, to respond to sound even in the middle of the night, is what makes the joke wickedly funny. The audacity of the hero,  

1. Translated by Carol Padden and Tom Humphries.

2. For additional discussion of jokes in the Deaf community, see Rutherford (1983).

3. Translated by Carol Padden and Tom Humphries.
having the nerve to prey upon the automatic instincts of hearing people, is for a moment, thrilling.

Because hearing people's ownership of sound goes almost unchallenged, the joke and the stories create relief of an important kind. The joke turns the tables on hearing people and creates a world where sound can be used to Deaf people's advantage. In a good story, a Deaf storyteller can expertly arrange a sequence of events that allow Deaf people a glimpse of a world where others can be made to repent for their unreasonable ideas.

There is yet another way in which the metaphor of silence is inadequate. Various cultures of hearing people organize sound in layers of meaning that represent concepts they call "harmony," "variation," "resonance," and "dissonance." As signified by the many film and television portrayals of Deaf people longing to hear the sound of a guitar or piano, many hearing people assume that because Deaf people cannot hear music they cannot appreciate such concepts. Thinking of Deaf people as silent makes it impossible to recognize that, in certain aspects of their lives, they find ways to represent such concepts.

To illustrate this point, we draw from a collection of poems that manipulate the movement of signs not only to convey grammatical content but to impart a subtle impression of rhythmic quality. Clayton Valli's simple ASL poem "Windy, Bright Morning" is one such example. When we first saw it performed in Boston in 1980 we were struck by the power of its rhythmic images, which are created not by the individual signs but by the clever organization of movement within and between signs.

The poem describes the edge of wakefulness and sleep and begins with a window and an external force:

Through the open window
with its shade swinging, sunshine, playful,
taps my sleepy eyes.

The hand, used to represent the shade, moves in a slightly irregular but not unpleasant rhythm.

Breezes dance in my room,
around me, not shy, but gentle,
letting me know that it's time
to get up! Slowly I wake,
my eyes stung by sunlight
flashing past the swinging shade
that seems to know I'm deaf.

The presence of the light is unmistakable; the movement revolves around the center of the light.

I stand up, tired, ignoring the light,
chilled in the dancing air
that meets me by the window
I closely shut it. And with the shade still,
my room darkens.

The irregular movement abruptly ceases, and the room becomes silent. As Valli moves back to the familiar bed, movement is slow and comforting.

Happy
back under the covers,
I'm drowsy, purring, warm . . .

The audience, lulled by Valli's slow delivery, is unprepared for the next verse:

But suddenly, how strange!
The shade flaps wildly,
bright, dark, bright, dark, bright
Fierce wind flung open the window . . .
so bitter cold, so cold, the wind, the shade,
the storm!

The movement is wild and unpredictable. Valli as experiencer widens his eyes and moves his body with a sense of urgency.
The Meaning of Sound

Slowly I rise, and try to make them calm down.

As he moves toward the window, the movement, formerly dissonant, changes again, beginning to come together in one organized and focused form:

The wind, the shade, dancing gracefully, happy.
One bright ray gently pulls me
to raise up the shade
like unwrapping a gift.
Warm sunlight tickles me,
morning breeze laughs with me . . .
Joyful, I welcome the day.

Valli's variations take the form of varying movement within the sign, first sunshine that taps then stings, then the more forceful flapping and startling contrasts of brightness and darkness. We watch Valli arrange signs so they flow one into the next, a soft repeating rhythm, and then the irregular staccato of the flapping. He brings the shades together, then sharply pulls them apart. The closing verse has yet another kind of rhythm, an expansive softness, glowing and enveloping, "like unwrapping a gift." The lingering feeling one has long after watching the poem performed is the arrangement of sensation: the harmony and softness in the lines, the chaotic, dissonant elements, and their contrast with the harmonious conclusion.

"Eye Music," by Ella Lentz, recreates a familiar experience for many deaf people, watching the rhythm of the everyday world. In this poem the central image is watching telephone wires from inside a moving vehicle. Lentz introduces the title by first using the fingers to represent telephone wires, then repositioning them to represent lines on a music sheet, then turning them back into telephone wires that move up and down. This is what she calls "eye music."

The eye music of the telephone wires
with the music sheets
with the lines that rise and quiver,
sway and lower
along with the passing of space and time . . .

Interspersed with the wires that move up and down horizontally are staccato poles arranged vertically. A telephone pole passing by followed by two in rapid succession has the same effect as a drum with a one, one-two beat (see figure 6.1).

Eyes are the ears
and the piano and flute are the wires
and the occasional pole is the drum!

Figure 6.1  "and the occasional pole is the drum"

A-POLE-GOES-BY  TWO-POLES-GO-BY-QUICKLY

DRUM-BEAT  TWO-QUICK-DRUMBEATS

Then the rhythm of the telephone lines is preserved while Lentz changes the handshape to indicate the number of horizontal lines in the rhythm, from one to five:

Here is one bold wandering wire and
Now! here are five dancing . . .
   high and low in turns
   with the rhythm of the poles.
Five disappearing into one again
And then a crowd,
   overlapping . . . quickly and then slowly . . .
So beautiful to the eye and heart,
   one wonders what happens inside . . .

Like Valli, Lentz plays with variations in the rhythm, soft and flowing, fast and rapid, jerking up and down, large and steady. Both poems involve some outside source—sunlight and wind, telephone wires speeding past—that disrupts some ongoing rhythm in a distinctive way. And the poets as experiencers react either in synchrony with or in opposition to the movement of the hands.

In these poems, the organization of movement in signs and the organization of the body in relation to the hands seem to be, to use the language of others, noisy rather than silent. The contrast and coordination of the different components of movement, such as the movement of the hands with that of other parts of the body, create, again using the language of others, a form of counterpoint.

These poems show how movement, as well as sound, can express notions like harmony, dissonance, resonance. We are not suggesting that these movements are replacements for sound or even analogous to sound, for as we have demonstrated, sound itself is not absent from Deaf people's lives but is an integral part of the way they organize experience. Instead, these poems show how Deaf people's own resources, notably movement and the potential of their language, can be mined to create rich layers of meaning beyond the simply denotative to the realm hearing people assign to music.

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Deaf people construct their world around the resources of movement, form, and sound. The metaphor of silence has explanatory power for hearing people, emphasizing as it does what they believe to be the central fact about Deaf people. However, it is clumsy and inadequate as a way of explaining what Deaf people know and do. The lives of Deaf people are far from silent but very loudly click, buzz, swish, pop, roar, and whir.

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5. Translated by Ella Lentz.