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Deaf connections and global conversations: deafness and education in and beyond the British Empire, c. 1800-1900[1]

In the early 1850s George Tait, docked in Jamaica on the way to the US where he intended to seek his fortune.[i] Tait had recently left the Edinburgh Deaf and Dumb Institution and was eager to travel. Whilst discharging the ship's cargo, he made enquiries for 'a very young and handsome native' who he had known at school. But, to Tait's disappointment, he could 'not learn anything of him further than it was supposed he must have been taken as a slave'.[ii] In his memoir, in which this conversation was recounted, Tait does not name the 'handsome native', but given the dates Tait was at the Institution it is likely that he was Thomas Hislop, a Jamaican boy, born of an enslaved mother, who was sent to the institution by a Scottish missionary.

This conversation, like so many cross-colonial conversations, is disconnected and incomplete, raising more questions than it answers. The old school friend could not be found. The dock-worker's assumption that 'he must have been taken as a slave' points to the continued collocation of race and slavery after Abolition and represents Hislop's disappearance from the historical narrative. The attempted reunion of Edinburgh Institution alumni never happened. But it is nonetheless a conversation I have found useful in thinking about how the lives of deaf people were informed by and contributed to the 'networked' British Empire. The image of a working-class deaf Highlander looking for a friend made in Edinburgh in Jamaica raises several questions about imperial networks that I wish to explore. Firstly, in marked contrast to questions of race and gender, the power dynamics around the difference of disability have not yet been considered in colonial historiography. Recovering the lives of disabled people adds another subaltern group to a history of imperial mobility and networks which, despite recent work, has been dominated by elite lives.[iii] Further, thinking about ability and disability can alter the way in which we approach colonial identities and the embodied dynamics of Empire.[iv] Even at the most basic level, the conversation illuminates the assumptions we bring to understandings

of conversation or communication as, educated in the 'silent method', Tait did not speak, and his communication with the dock-workers would have been in writing (he carried a slate), signing, or gesture. Secondly, the conversation challenges the idea, popularly assumed in Foucauldian discussions of the nineteenth century as ushering in 'a great confinement' of the 'insane' and other disabled others, that deaf institutions were places of isolation, not of friendship and connection.[v] Whilst the 'History of Disability' has started to gain ground as a discrete historiographical field, most existing work is nationally bound thus inadvertently reinforcing associations between disability and stasis.[vi] But, as in the circulation of other forms of knowledge, disability was constructed across and between different global sites; ways of understanding, treating and representing disability were carried through transnational and transcolonial networks and disabled people themselves had mobile lives and global connections. Thirdly it draws our attention to how friendship and affiliation based on a shared experience of disability could form affective connections of Empire, which, like those of family, could cross racial difference and geographical distance.[vii] Ideas about 'Deaf Community' intersected with ethnicity and nationhood as ways of belonging forged through transnational and transcolonial networks.

In this article I argue that despite strong metaphorical ties between deafness and the *inability* to connect, nineteenth-century Deaf networks provide an excellent example of how, in David Lambert and Alan Lester's words, 'ideas, practices and identities developed trans-imperially as they moved from one site to another'.[viii] As I will demonstrate, educative institutions brought large numbers of deaf people together for the first time, facilitated the spread of signing, and formed hubs of Deaf identity and culture. Practices of deaf pedagogy were developed and contested across multiple sites; the meaning of deafness was debated transatlanticly; ideologies of ableism intersected with changing attitudes towards race; and embodied knowledges and practices of deafness circulated as deaf individuals increasingly moved around the globe and formed transnational communities. The story of deafness in the nineteenth century is one of the many connected histories of Empire, but it also stretches beyond the British Empire to intersect with developments in the US and continental Europe. Deaf webs and networks were 'colonial' in the sense that they were influenced by emotional and

psychological ties between metropole and colony and bled into networks of missionaries, education, migration and settlement. They were also 'transnational' in the sense that that French, German and American developments constantly intersected with the creation of colonial knowledge and Deaf Britons connected with other Deaf people in the US and in Europe with as great a sense of affiliation as those within the Empire. All these movements and connections shaped how deafness was understood, treated, represented and lived.

Following recent work noting the 'lumps', limitations and general unevenness of colonial networks, I am also mindful of how the contingencies of Deaf networks and points of mutual mis-communication were also formative.[ix] It is important to resist the ablest temptation to label these broken networks 'deaf connections'. But the metaphorical images around deafness and the projection of 'unreachability' onto deaf people is, perhaps, helpful in exploring how the deaf have been 'silenced' both historically and historiographically and how languages of difference of all sorts have fragmented networks as well as forging them. Networks are not always experienced as 'connection'; sometimes there are very strong feelings of disconnection, as well as actual barriers to connection, which persist.

I tackle these issues from three perspectives: the transnational circulation of ideas and practices facilitating the spread of deaf education; the mobility of pupils at deaf schools and the connections they forged through travel and migration; and the institutional and imaginative connections enjoining deaf institutions transatlantically. Whilst these connections can be mapped widely, for the purposes of this article, I take the Edinburgh Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, the institution where both Tait and Hislop studied, as focal point in my narrative.

Circuits of information: Civilising the Deaf Mute

During the eighteenth century, deaf people became subject to increasing medico-pedagogic expertise and public concern across much of Western Europe.[x] As Murray Simpson has argued, in 'constructing a framework for the participation and inclusion in political life of subjects, the Enlightenment also produced a series of systematic exclusions for those who did not qualify: including "idiots" and

"primitive races"'.[xi] Within Europe, the 'deaf and dumb'[2] were a particularly worrying group; from Herder to Kant it was claimed that speech was the source of civilisation and the deaf must therefore be bestial.[xii] Others argued that speech enabled human thought and was thus integral to the human condition, also placing deaf people outside humanity.[xiii] From a different perspective, others argued that 'unable' to hear 'the Word of God' deaf people were 'unChristian'.[xiv] From the mid-eighteenth century, the newly reconfigured social category of the 'deaf mute' operated as a powerful of signifier of difference. Deaf people were thought to be incapable of religious belief; rational thought; paid work; moral action; or good parenthood.[xv] Although deafness is an invisible disability, its difference was read onto the body: one hearing man reflected on the 'faces of deaf-mutes' he had encountered in the Margate Deaf Asylum remarking that he could 'imagine nothing more pathetic than the anxious look of a deaf-and-dumb child, the utter lost expression of it, the sense of being cut off from you, of being outside your world, a creature of an inferior order'.[xvi] Deaf people were depicted as suffering beings whose bodies and minds demanded rescue. The deaf child was claimed to labour under 'a rude language of gesture', 'ignorant of the author of his existence', lacking 'all the great truths of natural and revealed religion', harbouring a 'propensity to evil' and being 'a burdensome', 'troublesome' and 'mischievous member of society'.[xvii] In Britain, these discourses of otherness intersected with those of colonial difference. The longstanding claim that deaf people were 'heathen', started to resonate with images of the 'heathen' others of Empire brought back to metropolitan Britain by missionaries and travellers.[xviii] Sensational constructions of uneducated and unsocialised deaf people raised fears about 'primitive Europeans' at a time when 'savagery' was being increasingly located overseas.[xix] This thinking developed in intersection with changing ideas about 'race', drawing on shared languages of phrenology, 'primitivism', and evolution.[xx]As such, deaf people attracted the attention of doctors, educationalists, and Christian missionaries, all concerned, in different ways, with 'civilising' their bodies and minds.

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[2] Due to its offensive contemporary connotations, I have generally avoided using the term 'deaf and dumb'. In this instance, however, as in several others, the phrase is necessary to indicate the social group under construction which was defined as much through 'muteness' as through deafness.

Education was central to the project of 'reclaiming' those pushed to the margins of 'civilisation' including colonial and disabled others. Deaf education became a testing ground for the experimental and 'scientific' model of education and the development of the medico-pedeological expert. As with the spread of other 'scientific' knowledge, such developments were carried through all kinds of networks both colonial and transnational.[xxi] The French Abbé de L'Epée (1712-1789), combined his observations of the sign-language of deaf-Parisians with the manual alphabet recorded by the Spanish priest, Juan Pablo Bonet, to develop the first wholly 'manual' (signed) form of deaf education.[xxii] In Germany meanwhile Samuel Heinicke (1727-90) developed an 'oral' system (based on insisting deaf people articulate and lip-read the vernacular); over the next two hundred years a bitter rivalry developed between 'oralists' and 'manualists'. Their teachers, former students and apprentices took their teaching methods across continental Europe, Britain and America. Both systems demonstrated the 'educability' of deaf people, previously believed impossible, but increasingly constructed disability as something to be 'tamed'.[xxiii] The first British deaf institution was opened in 1760 by Thomas Braidwood: its results were said to be impressive. Samuel Johnson visited the school on his famous journey to the 'Western Islands of Scotland' and was pleased to 'see one of the most desperate of human calamities capable of so much help'. The prospect gave him hope, 'after having seen the deaf taught arithmetic,' he mused, 'who would be afraid to cultivate the Hebridies?' The body marked as 'disabled' and the body marked as ethnically different were thus connected in Johnston's thinking both, it now seemed, capable of 'civilisation'..[xxiv]

It was Braidwood's grandson, John Braidwood, who established the Edinburgh Institution for the Deaf and Dumb (heron, Edinburgh Institution) in 1810 (the original Braidwood Academy having relocated to London some years earlier). Its object, reiterated yearly in its annual reports, was 'to remedy one of the most calamitous and affecting imperfections, to which human nature is liable'. In a typical mixture of the religious and secular aims of deaf education, it aimed 'to withdraw that evil' by which the minds of deaf people had been 'rendered inaccessible to the lights of truth and reason, and to the blessed light of religion'.[xxv] From its very beginning the school and its staff were shaped by transnational connections. Soon after it opened, John Braidwood left the institution and emigrated to

America where he hoped to profit from connections between the Braidwoods and the US established through wealthy American students educated in first Braidwood Academy. He founded deaf schools in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Virginia (all of which folded due to his irresponsible and troubled ways). Meanwhile, the London Braidwood Academy trained Robert Kinniburgh, who returned to the Edinburgh Institution as its new principal.

Under Kinniburgh's leadership the Edinburgh Institution flourished and inspired the foundation of similar institutions in Aberdeen, Glasgow, and Dundee.[xxvi] It was a public institution that aimed to bring deaf education to the poor and, whilst there were always private pupils, the vast majority of the students were supported by a complex web of benevolent organisations including the Ladies Auxiliary, specific bequests, and individual parish funds both in Britain and abroad. Like other philanthropic organisations it was also supported by regular donations from its governors, some of whom had their own imperial connections: John Pringle, the East India Company Agent to the Cape of Good Hope, was, for example, a regular contributor.[xxvii] For a long time instruction was primarily delivered by the 'silent method' consisting of signing, finger-spelling and written English. In line with the International Conference of Milan where most European states and the US agreed to abandon sign-language in favour of oral deaf education, there was, however, a switch to oralism in the 1880s.[xxviii]

Pupils from many places: mobility and migration

During the nineteenth century the number of pupils at the school fluctuated between about fifty and about seventy before rising to unprecedented levels at the end of the century as legislation made primary education compulsory (though deaf children were not explicitly incorporated into such measures until 1893). All pupils were deaf (with most being unable to sense load noises). Their deafness resulted, among other things, from illness, congenital deafness, and accidents; diagnoses reflected shifting global understandings of the causes of deafness. The geographical origins of the pupils reveal some of the complex webs of empire and global connection within which the school was located. The largest numbers of students came from Edinburgh and nearby Leith, but others came

from all over Scotland including: Fife, Dumfries, Skye, Aberdeen, Inverness, Stirling and Argyle. A substantial minority of pupils came from England and Ireland and a number also came from overseas including from various parts of India; Cape Colony; the Orange Free State; Sydney; Melbourne; Hudson's Bay; the US and Jamaica.[xxix]

One such person was Thomas Hislop who arrived at the school in 1836.[xxx] Born enslaved in Jamaica, Hislop had been sent to the school by Reverend Hope Masterton Waddell of the Scottish Missionary Society who worked in Jamaica before going on to pursue missionary work in West Africa.[xxxi] 'Without a shilling to his name', Hislop's welfare was first provided for by the Ladies Auxiliary, an organisation thoroughly integrated into Edinburgh's philanthropic networks.[xxxii] Marked by his colour, other pupils often wrote of this 'black negro boy' in their own compositions. Fellow student 'TB' demonstrated both affection for Hislop ('we all love him') and patronising admiration ('Hislop is doing remarkably well, and learns his lesson as well as any in his class').[xxxiii] Hislop was frequently used as a spring board for students to consider wider issues of Empire as in 'TB''s movement from a comment that Hislop's 'father is dead, and he was a slave' to his following explanation that '[a] slave is a person who belongs to his master…a slave works very hard. Slaves will all be free: I am glad of it'.[xxxiv] Hislop maintained connected to Reverend Waddell while at the institution. When Waddell read one of his letters from his pulpit in Jamaica, his congregation raised the substantial collection of £8, 16s, 6d to send to Edinburgh for Hislop's clothing, a substantial amount for a congregation that largely consisted of newly emancipated 'apprentices'.[xxxv]

Hislop's regular letters to his mother helped him to maintained affective connections to Jamaica. As historians of empire have demonstrated, letters operated as 'spaces of connection' that helped to bridge the geographical distances of empire, particularly those affective ties between families.[xxxvi] Such is certainly true of Hislop's letters (reproduced in the Institution's Annual Reports in the broken English typical of students who had learned English late and maintained by directors as 'evidence' of their authenticity). 'I am highly delighted to call my mind strongly to remember that my mother is living at Cornwall Station', Hislop wrote in 1843 after having been at the school 7 years, 'I am wearying to go back to the West Indies for I have never seen you for long. The distance from you is

very great. I will be in joy to live in my own native country when I go home'.[xxxvii] Such sentiments conform closely to the ways in which Laura Ishiguro has argued letters were used by those separated by empire 'struggling against the constant threat of diverging lives and affections' as they sought to 'articulate intimacy and relationships' by 'reimagining space and difference' and by 'evoking different times (past and future)'.[xxxviii] Charles Mackenchney also wrote to Jamaica from the Edinburgh Institution to thank his brother for some money and to send him a 'miniature' he had drawn of himself in the looking-glass.[xxxix] Such letters and the material gifts that accompanied them helped family members to live in the minds of relatives at great geographical distance and to forge and maintain relationships across Empire.

But Hislop's letters to his mother also reveal the lines of discontinuity and disconnection that could haunt these relationships. His repeated questions to his mother reveal his uncertainty about pretty basic dynamics of the family he pines. 'How old am I?' he asked in 1841, 'you will tell me how many brothers and sisters have I, and what are their names?' or, in a later letter, 'I have much pleasure in thinking about you. I send my best respects to you and my stepfather, named Richard Forbes. Whether is he a black man or a white man?'[xl] The questions (arising here from the dislocating effects of enslavement as well as geographical distance) strikingly illustrate Hislop's sense of dislocation and attempt to situate himself in Jamaica whilst located in Edinburgh. From the correspondence available it does not seem Hislop's search for information was met with answers. There are other affecting examples of similar disconnects between pupils and their families: of emigrating siblings they had failed to wave off, and parents who failed to attend their annual displays.[xli]

Hyslop soon became a star performer at the public exhibitions which formed a crucial part of the Edinburgh Institution's fundraising and recruitment strategy. 'The lion of the day was a little Negro boy of 9 years' the *Dundee Advertiser* reported of the 1839 tour with the *Berwick Advertiser* impressed by the way in which this 'black boy', having been finger-spelled the words 'cold', 'hot' and 'angry', gave each word 'expression by pantomimic gesture'. [xlii] Such exhibitions projected the 'civilising' value of deaf education onto the pupils who provided specimens of deaf people who had been 'tamed' and 'humanised'. Embodying 'racial' difference as well as the difference of disability,

Hislop's performances carried with them further 'civilising' connotations, bringing to mind indigenous converts to Christianity missionaries brought to Britain to demonstrate the 'civilising' effects of British education and recalling the presence of Empire in metropolitan Britain.

The touring exhibitions might also be seen as attempts to build intra-national networks to operate alongside transnational and colonial webs of information. As with transnational networks localised flows of information were also subject to silence and disjuncture. Indeed, information about deaf education initially moved quicker between Paris, Edinburgh, London and New York than it diffused beyond metropolitan cities. George Tait's parents (from Caithnesshire), were 'delighted' when, having moved to Wick, a Minister of the Church first told them about deaf education. Before then, Tait claimed, they 'they had never heard of such an institution before, but and had always looked at me with a sort of despair'.[xliii] Whilst compared with Hislop, Tait was a 'local' student, the Edinburgh Institution was not only two hundred miles from his home, but a considerable cultural gulf from it both in terms of its location in the Scottish metropole and his introduction to sign language and Deaf culture. Pupils felt strong bonds of connection forged by their common experience of deafness. Tait described his 'delight' on entering the institution when he saw for the first time 'a number of boys and girls' whom 'like myself none of them could either hear or speak'.[xliv] Alexander Atkinson, an older pupil by the time Tait and Hislop joined the institution, also commend on being 'sensibly affected when I saw that I became the glanced of fifty young eyes, hailing enough to say, "Oh! Come to us, for we are all deaf and dumb, like you'.[xlv] Both Tait and Atkinson were also immediately struck by the way in which their fellow pupils communicated 'on their fingers'. Sign language, which new students quickly embraced, was a cornerstone of Deaf identity and spread rapidly in deaf institutions as children from Deaf families shared their languages with those from hearing families and improvised their own.

Having trained in tailoring at the Edinburgh Institution, Thomas Hislop was apprenticed to a Mr Simpson in Edinburgh in 1843. In letters sent as a schoolboy Hislop had repeatedly said that having become proficient in a trade, he would return to Jamaica and support his mother there, but, not only did Tait fail to find Hislop there, I too have been unable to trace his life beyond the institution.[xlvi]

George Tait, meanwhile, left school aged sixteen eager to travel. His home in Caithnessshire felt 'desolate' since his mother's death and his mind was 'full of what I had heard of countries far across the sea'.[xlvii] His enthusiasm to travel was further increased by his visit to the 1851 Great Exhibition where he 'met with people of almost every tongue and nation' and, like so many other visitors, used the exhibition as a prism through which to locate himself in a global and imperial context.[xlviii] From London, Tait travelled to France, then on to Liverpool before deciding to travel to America, a place he saw as 'a bright vision of silver and gold' and where he imagined he would make his 'fortune'.[xlix]

Movement within and beyond the British Empire forged global connections as people took with them experiences from different global locations. But as in the fractures and discontinuities rupturing other kinds of connection, these networks were also characterised by constraints and prohibitions that limited certain people from living global lives and moving as easily as others. Disability was not only imaginatively linked with immobility and stasis, it could also be used to prohibit movement.[l] Like many people labelled 'disabled', Tait came up against structural restraints trying to leave Britain. When finding a ship to sail the Atlantic, Tait's deafness nearly prevented him from fulfilling his dream having been told by the captain that 'he was not allowed under a heavy penalty to take a person infirmed in any way out of England without first having proper authority to do so.'[li] The health of passengers on transatlantic ships was a perennial concern for the captains and ship owners as ships themselves were thought to be dangerous places for the spread of disease.[lii] Burgeoning colonial societies also expressed concern that their territories were being used as 'dumping grounds' for the 'undesirable' of the metropole – paupers and invalids.[liii] Later it was claims of racial 'impurity' that were most marked: there were many confluences between the languages of ethnicity and the languages of disability as categories of exclusion.[liv] This particular captain, however, took pity on Tait, and 'dressed him in a blue suit and blackened my face with soot to make me look more like the other grimy sailors' in which outfit, to his great relief, the customs officers took no notice of him at all.[lv]

As for many colonial settlers, Tait's course of migration and settlement was determined by connections of family and friendship. Upon leaving Jamaica, Tait struck up friendship with an Englishman and fellow 'fortune hunter' of about his own age and together, they travelled to New York, Boston and Maine where Tait worked in a shipyard intending to then travel to California. But, having learned from one of his work-mates that an uncle of his had settled in Nova Scotia, he wrote to the uncle and went there instead. On arriving in Halifax, Tait recalled he 'could not help laughing at his [uncle's] surprise when he saw that I was deaf and dumb for he had not known it before'.[lvi] Deafness, like the difference of colour, was something that could be effectively hidden in written correspondence.

But despite hiding his deafness when securing travel, a home and job, mobility and migration also allowed Tait to extend his engagement with deaf networks. He visited the Paris Deaf and Dumb Asylum, seen as the heart of western deaf education in this period and, of course, enquired after Hislop in Jamaica. Tait continued to build Deaf connections in Nova Scotia where, shortly after his arrival in Halifax, he was approached by a man who asked him to teach his 12-year-old deaf daughter. The girl mobilised her own networks to gather up other deaf children in the vicinity and Tait began larger classes. One day, when walking along the street, Tait noticed a man and woman signing.[lvii] On approaching them he discovered that the man, William Grey, had also been educated at the Edinburgh Institution, and, again like Tait, had intended to immigrate to the US (where he had a brother) but had ended up in Canada by chance. Grey's wife, Isabella, was also deaf and Scottish. Together, Tait and Grey, set up an institution themselves, the Institution of the Deaf and Dumb in Halifax (hereon Halifax Institution).[lviii]

Between Nova-Scotia and 'Auld Scotland': from institutional networks to imaginative connections

Founded in 1856, the Halifax Institution was the first deaf school in Nova Scotia and, like the Edinburgh Institution, attracted pupils from a wide-geographical area.[lix] Before it opened deaf Nova Scotians had been educated in the US and Britain (including at the Braidwood Academy and the

Edinburgh Institution).[lx] The school was soon noted by Reverend James Cuppaidge Cochran, a hearing Anglican clergyman who had been interested in deafness since a serendipitous shipboard meeting with Laurent Clerc, a famous Deaf Frenchman who emigrated to the US where he went on to become known as 'the Apostle of the Deaf in America'.[lxi] With Cochran's help, the school tapped into local philanthropic and religious networks and successfully petitioned the Nova Scotia government to fund the institution.[lxii] Doing so from 1857, Nova Scotia was innovative in recognising through funding, that educating deaf children was a civic duty.[lxiii] The importance of this legislation was recognised in the transnational Deaf press (about which more below), which in the 1860s noted that 'so far as state provision for the deaf and dumb is concerned, Nova Scotia has set an example which might or ought to be imitated by the mother country itself'.[lxiv] As with other networks of empire, flows of information, practice and expectations around deafness could flow from colony to metropole as well as vice versa.

Throughout the nineteenth century the Halifax and the Edinburgh Institutions maintained strong institutional connections. Halifax's first principal, James Scott Hutton, was recommended by the Directors of the Edinburgh Institution where he had worked as an assistant teacher for ten years previously. He took with him $200 worth of books and equipment from 'kindred institutions in the mother country' to get the new school of the ground.[lxv] Three years later, Hutton was joined by his parents and sister; his father, George Hutton, who had worked himself as a teacher of the deaf in Scotland for forty years, became a full-time volunteer teacher at Halifax.[lxvi] Teachers of the deaf moved through tight networks yet wide-ranging networks and in many ways embody the 'spatially extensive webs of communication' described by Alan Lester and David Lambert as characterising the geographies of colonial philanthropy.[lxvii] When Hutton resigned from the Halifax School in 1878 he was replaced by Albert Frederick Woodbridge from Glasgow Mission to the Deaf and Dumb, a mission with close institutional links to Edinburgh.[lxviii] After a brief period as vice-principal at the Ulster Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in Belfast, Ireland, Hutton returned to Halifax in 1882 where he resumed the position of principal (Woodbridge went on to found the Fredericton Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in New Brunswick).[lxix] These connections continued. James Fearon, who succeeded

Hutton's second stint at Halifax in 1891 was originally from Portadown, Ireland, trained in deaf education under Hutton at Belfast, and then taught at the Margate and Birmingham Institutions before moving to Nova Scotia to replace his old teacher.[lxx] *His* successor, George Batman, was born in England, taught at deaf schools at Margate and Dublin and then immigrated to Nova Scotia in 1918.[lxxi] As Elizabeth Harvey has demonstrated in regards to philanthropic networks, such connections were cemented by marriage and family, as well as other forms of patronage.[lxxii] With founders, principals and teaching assistants all connected to the British institutions, it is unsurprising that practices of education, and indeed that sign-language itself, was carried between colonial locations.[lxxiii]

Mobility facilitated the dissemination of shifting techniques in deaf pedagogy. When Hutton had first arrived in Halifax, he had taught using manualism (as was then practiced in Edinburgh) and was so strongly against oralism that the National Deaf-Mute College in Washington awarded him an honorary master's degree for his commitment to signed approaches.[lxxiv] But, when in Ireland, Hutton became immersed in the oral method and after his return to Halifax he placed further stress on articulation and lip-reading, and the Halifax Institution switched to oralism. In addition, Hutton produced a number of textbooks for deaf pupils, which were used in Canada, the US and in Britain.[lxxv] He also contributed to the *American Annals of the Deaf and Dumb* published in Washington D.C. which was an important Deaf publication, founded in 1847 and read across the Anglo-Deaf World.[lxxvi]

It was not only the textual output of (hearing) teachers that circulated through transnational networks in this period, it was also one which saw the burgeoning of Deaf identities fuelled by increased mobility. Scholars of deafness have argued that the nineteenth century saw Deaf communities and identities germinate and flourish within individual national contexts.[lxxvii] The scholar of deafness Joseph Murrey has taken this further, arguing that Deaf Americans and Deaf Britons felt more likeness with each other than they did with their co-nationals. Murrey argues that a sense of transatlantic Deaf 'kinship' was created through bonds forged by using (albeit different) signed languages, exclusion from their respective nations, a shared visual culture, and a common rejection of socio-medical ideologies around disability.[lxxviii] Deaf periodicals, such as the *American Annals of the*

Deaf were part of this. As John Van Celve and Barry Crouch argue, Deaf periodicals 'served as the cultural connections that established and maintained group cohesion' within the American Deaf community.[lxxix]Again, this unifying function also operated across national boundaries, not least because the *American Annals* regularly reported on the changes of staff and notable events of both the Edinburgh and the Halifax Institutions and was read by some of its staff and students. Pupils were also encouraged to form Deaf connections across remote geographical locations on a smaller scale. In 1816, for example, Helen Hall, a student at the Edinburgh Institution, wrote to Alice Cogswell, a deaf American girl. 'Having learned from Mr Gallaudet that you are in the same situation with myself, I take this opportunity of wiring you a few lines by him', Hall wrote (Gallaudet was a leading French deaf educationalist, who, together with the aforementioned Laurent Clerc, founded deaf education in the US).[lxxx] She told Alice all about her education, how she had only spoken 'in signs' but was now reading and writing in English, and how Gallaudet had told her there were 'a great many deaf and dumb persons in America' whom she was 'feeling sorrow for'.[lxxxi] In such exercises one might perceive the origins of a Deaf imaginary.

As Deaf identities circulated, they intersected with, rather than simply replaced, national and imperial identities. George Tait's memoir is, in some ways, very much in the tradition of Deaf internationalism. The book's front-piece and back-piece are illustrations of the manual alphabet in both its two-handed British version and one handed Franco-American version respectively. And he concludes with the following words: 'Now dear reader my story is ended up to the present (1878) and If I have succeeded in eliciting your sympathy in favor [sic] of the "Children of Silence" it will not be, altogether, a failure.'[lxxxii] But he also took the reader on a journey back to Britain… 'I shall invite my reader to travel in imagination far across the broad Atlantic to the heathery hills of "Auld Scotland," he wrote, "where the kilted lads are born" to visit the haunts of my early childhood.'[lxxxiii] Scotland and Nova Scotia remained very much bound together in Tait's thinking as different, distant and yet connected spaces across which he could map his identity. But he also identified with a Deaf community that was not confined to national boundaries, or even an Anglophonic world. The transnational nature of the Deaf networks of which Tait was a part are redolent, not least in the fact

that his autobiography was published bound with a lengthy extract from an American report about the history of deaf education in Britain, Germany, US, Spain, Ireland, Italy, Canada, Austria, Portugal, Belgium, Holland and Russia.

Conclusion: connections, networks and identities

Whilst deafness is often used metaphorically to indicate a lack of connection, in this article I have explored some of the connections and networks through which understandings, practices, lived experiences and representations of deafness circulated in the nineteenth century. Using the Edinburgh Institution as a highly connected hub, I looked at how its pupils, teachers, textbooks and ideas circulated translocally, transnationally and transcolonially carrying with them ways of being Deaf and treating deaf people.

Because I have used the life of George Tait as a way into these networks, I have particularly focussed on the connections between Edinburgh and Halifax. But Deaf networks can also be traced in other directions. In Australia, the earliest known non-Aborigine signing person was also an Edinburgh Institution alumnus, John Carmichael, who immigrated to Sydney to work as an engraver in 1825.[lxxxiv] The first the Deaf and Dumb Institution in Sydney was founded in 1860 by Thomas Pattison, another former pupil and former monitor at the Edinburgh Institution, whilst the first school in Melbourne was opened by Frederick Rose, an alumnus of the Old Kent Road School, London.[lxxxv] In New Zealand, practices of deaf education were introduced by hearing teachers rather than deaf migrants. British Sign Language was first introduced by a Dorcas Mitchell who had emigrated from England with a family with four deaf children. Mitchell lost out on the position of principal to the first Deaf School in New Zealand (opened in 1880) to Gerrit Van Asch, a Dutch man who had emigrated to Manchester to teach the children of a Jewish merchant before setting up an oral school in London and then migrating to New Zealand to take up the position.[lxxxvi] Beyond the settler Empire, missionaries spread European practices of deaf education, some indigenous people came to Britain to train in deaf pedagogies, and towards the end of the nineteenth century legislative measures followed in the wake of these more informal developments. Other connections are illuminated if we trace the infrastructure supporting

such institutions. Philanthropy was a highly networked enterprise and one where we see a high proportion of female participants. Ann Alison Goodlet (née Panton), born Edinburgh in 1824, is one such example. Having immigrated to Australia from Scotland she served as a member of the board to the New South Wales Institution for the Deaf Dumb and Blind as well as investing in local philanthropic endeavours (such as the Sydney Female Refuge Society) and imperial enterprises (such as the New Hebrides Mission and the Church of Scotland's Zenana Mission in Madras).[lxxxvii] Family and kinship also structured Deaf networks. Alexander Graham Bell (inventor of the telephone as well as deaf educationalist and eugenicist) was so terrified by the high rates of 'inter-deaf marriage' which he believed were facilitated by deaf institutions (such as Edinburgh and Halifax, both of which he visited) that he feared the creation of a 'deaf variety of the human race'.[lxxxviii] Yet Bell (who was born in Scotland, immigrated to Canada and taught in the US) himself owed his interest in deafness to his deaf mother, his father's work in Scotland as a deaf teacher and his own marriage to a deaf woman.

Besides illuminating lives and experiences usually omitted from the historiography of empire, Deaf connections also offer a new set of relationships through which to think about colonial networks more generally. The origins of pupils at the Edinburgh Institution were shaped by their parents' participation in colonial projects and subsequent location in Calcutta, Bombay, Hudson's Bay and Cape Town. The British Empire was crucial to what children at both the Edinburgh and the Halifax institution were taught about history, geography and belonging not least in James Hutton's geography textbooks, where his students in Halifax were taught 'We are all children of Old England... We must love and honour Britain as our Mother Country'.[lxxxix] Children of colour, such as Thomas Hislop, raised questions about empire, slavery and identity back in Scotland that were reflected on by their peers. At the same time, these connections stretched well beyond the British Empire. William Grey and George Tait had both planned to migrate to the US, despite ending up in Canada and Grey went onto settle there. *The American Annals of the Deaf* were widely read in Britain, Canada and Australia. Continental Europe was central to the development of deaf pedagogues as it was to their contestation. The 1880 Conference of Milan which decreed manualism should be universally abandoned in favour of the oral method, contained representatives from at least seven different countries and had global

implications. The shipboard meeting between Laurent Clerc and Rev. Cochran, so important in generating funding for the Halifax Institution, demonstrates the contestant interaction of these different networks. The networks were multi-layered as well as multi-directional and intersectional. Connections could be affective, institutional, ideological or hierarchical; they could take the form of both sporadic and serendipitous meetings and well-worn carefully planned patterns of exchange. Pupils, teachers, textbooks, money and ideas circulated in different directions and at different speeds. Looking at deaf networks also allows us to think more about the embodied dynamics of movement. Disability could be something that could generate movement and travel, as in Hislop's journey to Scotland, or limit it, as in the constraints Tait faced when trying to leave Britain. The barriers he encountered, and the disconnections that remain, remind us of the way in which all networks are also prone to fracture, fragmentation and silence.

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[i] In line with common practice in the Deaf community I capitalise 'D' when discussing a 'Deaf identity' and do not capitalise 'd' when using 'deaf' adjectivally. Determining when someone is 'Deaf' is difficult in the nineteenth century before this distinction was made; where I am unsure I simply discuss someone as 'deaf'. 'Deaf connections' and 'Deaf networks' are my own terms I have capitalised the D to indicate that these are networks about deafness that may include people who are hearing yet associated with the Deaf community.

[ii] George Tait, *Autobiography of George Tait, A Deaf Mute* (Halifax, 1878), 10.

[iii] Clare Anderson, *Subaltern Lives: Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, 1790-1920* (Cambridge: CUP, 2012), 12-13.

[iv] I have explored some of the theoretical implications of considering 'race' alongside 'disability' in my forthcoming article 'Orientalising Deafness: race and disability in imperial Britain', *Social Identities*, forthcoming 2015.

[v] Henri-Jacques Stiker, *A History of Disability*, trans. William Sayers (Michigan: University of Michigan, 1999), 66.

[vi] See for example, Douglas Baynton, *Forbidden Signs: American Culture and the Campaign Against Sign Language* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) and Susan Burch, *Signs of Resistance: American Deaf Cultural History, 1900 to World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 2002).

[vii] See for example Esme Cleall, Laura Ishiguro and Emily Manktelow, 'Imperial Relations: Family in the British Empire', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, Spring 2013, and essays in this special collection.

[viii] David Lambert and Alan Lester, 'Introduction', in Lambert and Lester, eds, *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth- Century* (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), 2. See also, Zoë Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections 1815-45: patronage, the information revolution and colonial government* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks: creating identities in nineteenth-century South Africa and Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001).

[ix] See for example Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkely and London: University of California Press, 2005), 91; Simon J. Potter, 'Empire, Cultures and Identities in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Britain', *History Compass*, 5:1 (2007), 58.

[xx] Lennard Davies, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness and the Body* (London: Verso, 1995), 50-73.

[xi] Murray Simpson, 'From Savage to Citizen: Education, Colonialism, and Idiocy', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 28:5 (2007), 561-74.

[xii] Jonathon Rée, *I See A Voice: Language, Deafness & the Senses. A Philosophical History* (Hammersmith: HarperCollins, 1999), 93.

[xiii] Joanna Bourke, *What it Means to be Human: reflections from 1791 to the present* (London: Virago, 2013), 29-61.

[xiv] Author, 'Deaf to the Word: deafness and Protestantism in nineteenth-century Britain and Ireland', *Gender and History* (2013).

[xv] See for example: Martin Atherton, 'Deserving of Charity or Deserving of Better? The Continuing Legacy of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act for Britain's Deaf Population', *Review of Disability Studies: An International Journal*, 7 (2011), 25; Mary Wilson Carpenter, *Health, Medicine and Society in Victorian England* (California: Praeger, 2009), 108-120.

[xvi] Joseph Hatton, *Deaf-and-Dumb Land* (London: Waterlow Brothers & Leyton, 1896), 9.

[xvii] Mr Gorton, *Art of Instructing the Deaf and Dumb with Remarks on Existing Institutions for their Relief* (Dublin: O'Flanagan, 1831), iv.

[xviii] *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent* (1862), 6.

[xix] Simpson, 'From Savage to Citizen'.

[xx] Author, 'Orientalising Deafness'.

[xxi] See for example, Joseph Morgan Hodge and Brett M. Bennett (eds), *Science and Empire: Knowledge and Networks of Science in the British Empire, 1800-1970* (New York: Palgrave, 2011); Gary McCulloch and Roy Lowe, 'Introduction: Centre and Periphery: networks, space and geography in the history of education', *History of Education*, 32: 2 (2003), 457-9.

[xxii] Rée, *I See a Voice*; Nicholas Mirzoeff, *Silent Poetry: Deafness, Sign, and Visual Culture in Modern France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

[xxiii] Pieter Verstraete, 'The Taming of Disability: phrenology and bio-power on the road to the destruction of otherness in France (1800-60), *History of Education*, 34:2 (2005), 119-134.

[xxiv] Rée, *I See A Voice*, 140.

[xxv] *Report of the Institution for the Education of Deaf and Dumb Children for 1814* (Edinburgh 1815), 3.

[xxvi] Iain Hutchison, 'Early Institutional Provision in Scotland for Disabled Children', *Scottish Journal of Residential Child Care*, 3:1 (2004), 31-43.

[xxvii] *Report…for 1814*.

[xxviii] *Report... for 1889*, 8-9.

[xxix] Applications for Admission, 1810-1969, Library of Scotland, Acc. 11896 Donaldson's Hospital, 272, 1861-1874. See also Annual Reports.

[xxx] For a brief history of Hislop's life see: Anthony Boyce, 'Thomas Hislop', *Deaf History Journal*, 10:2 (2006), 24.

[xxxi] Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: metropole and colony in the English imagination, 1830-1867* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 150-1.

[xxxii] Robert Kinniburgh, 'The Origin and the Art of Teaching the Deaf and Dumb', *The Scottish Christian Herald*, (27 June 1840), 403.

[xxxiii] *Report...for* 1838, 26.

[xxxiv] *Ibid*. A few decades later James Paul, a student at the Glasgow Institution, wrote similarly of a deaf black boy from Cape Palmas, brought over for education at the Glasgow Institution by a missionary. Boyce, 'Thomas Hislop', 24.

[xxxv] *Report...for 1840*, 6. See also, Hope Masterton Waddell, *Twenty-Nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa: A Review of Missionary Work and Adventure, 1829-1858* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010).

[xxxvi] James S. How, *Epistolary Spaces: English letter-writing from the foundation of the Post Office to Richardson's Clarissa* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 4; Eve Tavor Bannet, *Empire of Letters: letter manuals and*

transatlantic correspondence, 1688-1820 (Cambridge: CUP, 2005); Laura Ishiguro, 'Relative Distances: Family and Empire between Britain, British Columbia and India, 1858-1901' (PhD Dissertation, UCL, 2011), 68-98.

xxxvii Hislop, 4 August 1843 in *Report...for 1843*.

xxxviii Ishiguro, 'Relative Distances', 70.

xxxix Charles Mackenchney, 'A Letter to his Brother in Jamaica, 16 Nov 1816', *Report...for 1817*, 57.

xl Hislop 15 August 1841; Hislop, 4 August 1843.

xli Helen Hall, 'A Letter to Her Brother in America, 13 March 1816', in *Report... for 1815*; Anon, '8 April 1822', *Report... for 1821*, 43.

xlii *Dundee Advertiser*, August 16 1839; *Berwick Advertiser*, August 31 1839.

xliii Tait, *Memoir*, 5.

xliv Tait, *Memoir*, 6.

xlv Alexander Atkinson, *Memoirs of My* Youth, first published1865 (Reprinted by British Deaf History Society, Middlesex, 2001), 11.

xlvi Hislop, 'Letter by the Negro Boy to his Mother in Jamaica, 15 July 1841', *Report...for 1841*, 17. For useful reflections on the archival challenges and possibilities of tracing subaltern lives see Anderson, *Subaltern Lives*.

xlvii Tait, *Memoirs*, 8.

xlviii Jeffrey A. Auerbach and Peter Hoffenberg, eds, *Britain, the Empire and the World at the Great Exhibition of 1851* (Aldershopt, Ashgate, 2008), xi

xlix Tait, *Memoirs*, 8.

l Continuities of this under immigration legislation see for example: K. Soldatic and L. Fiske, 'Bodies Locked Up: Intersections of Disability and Race in Australian Immigration', *Disability and Society*, 24 (2009), 290-301

li Tait, *Memoirs*, 9.

lii Katherine Foxhall, *Health, Medicine and the Sea: Australian Voyages, 1815-1860* (Manchester: MUP, 2012).

liii Penny L. Richards, 'Disability and the Historical Geography of Immigration', *Disability Quarterly*, 24:3 (2004), http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/505/682. J. Cavell, 'The Imperial Race and the Immigration Sieve: the Canadian debate on assisted British migration and empire settlement, 1900-30', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 34: 3 (2006), 35-67.

liv Douglas Baynton, '"The Undesirability of Admitting Deaf Mutes": U.S. Immigration Policy and Deaf Immigrants, 1882-1924.' *Sign Language Studies,* 6:4 (2006), 391-415.

lv Tait, *Memoir*, 10.

[lvi] *Ibid.*, 11.

[lvii] *Ibid.*, 11-12.

[lviii] Chares James Howe, *Deaf Mutes Canada: a history of their education with an account of the deaf institutions in the dominion* (Toronto: Howe, 1888). There is ongoing controversy as to whether Grey or Tait is best considered the original 'founder' of the school. See extensive correspondence in Deaf Cultural Centre Toronto Box 8/42, DHCC, E1, 9, George Tait, 1906-1989.

[lix] See *Annual Reports of the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Halifax, Nova Scotia* Toronto Deaf Cultural Centre, Box 8, DHCC, E1-2.

[lx] *Ibid.*, 55-7.

[lxi] <mark>Reference needed</mark> – try Van Cleve
[lxii] James Fearon, *The Halifax Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, 1857-1893* (Halifax, 1893), 5-6.

[lxiii] *Ibid.*

[lxiv] 'Notices of Institutions for the Deaf and Dumb (Halifax, N.S.)', *American Annals of the Deaf and Dumb*, 12 (July 1860), 185-6.

[lxv] Fearon, *The Halifax Institution*, 5.

[lxvi] Janet Guildford, 'Hutton, James Scott', in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*. vol. 12, (University of Toronto, 2003), http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/hutton_james_scott_12E.html.

[lxvii] David Lambert and Alan Lester, 'Geographies of Colonial Philanthropy', *Progress in Human Geography*, 28 (2004), 321.

[lxviii] Robert Smith, *The City Silent: A History of Deaf Connections* (Gloucestershire: Douglas McLean, 2001), 1-9. See also Obituaries of Albert F. Woodbridge (1921), Toronto Deaf Cultural Centre, Box 3, DHCC-C2.5.

[lxix] See ephemera and notes in 'Fredericton Institution for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb, 1885- 1898', Toronto Deaf Cultural Centre, Box 3, DHCC – C2.3.

[lxx] Fearon, *The Halifax Institution*, 7.

[lxxi] Clifton F. Carbin (ed. Dorothy Smith), *Deaf Heritage in Canada: a distinctive, diverse and enduring culture* (Ontario: McGraw-Hill, 1995), 117-122.

[lxxii] Elizabeth Harvey, 'Philanthropy in Birmingham and Sydney, 1860-1914: class, gender and race' (PhD Dissertation: UCL, 2011), 278.

[lxxiii] Pietsch notes a similar phenomenon in regards to Higher Education. Tamson Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars: universities, networks and the British academic world 1850-1939* (Manchester: MUP, 2013).

[lxxiv] Guildford, 'Hutton'.

[lxxv] E.g. James Scott Hutton, *Language Lessons for the Deaf and Dumb* (Halifax, 1878).

[lxxvi] Donald F. Moores, '150 Years of the *American Annals of the Deaf: Retrospectus*', *American Annals of the Deaf*, 142:3 (1997), xiv-xv. An example of Hutton's work: 'Mr J. Scot Hutton, 'Statistics of the Deaf and Dumb in the Lower Provinces of British North America', in *American Annals of the Deaf and Dumb* . vo. Xiv, No 1, January 1869, pp. 1-20.

[lxxvii] Paddy Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture: in Search of Deafhood?* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2003); Baynton, *Forbidden Signs*.

[lxxviii] Joseph Murray, '"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin": the transnational lives of Deaf Americans, 1870-1924' (PhD Dissertation, University of Iowa, 2007).

[lxxix] John Vickrey Van Cleve, *A Place of their Own: Creating the Deaf Community in America* (Washington: Gallaudet University Press, 1989), 98.

[lxxx] Helen Hall, 'Letter to a Deaf and Dumb Girl in America, 22 January 1816', *Report... for 1815*, 51..

[lxxxi] *Ibid*.

[lxxxii] Tait, *Memoir*, 15.

[lxxxiii] *Ibid*., 3.

[lxxxiv] Trever Johnston and Adam Schembri, *Australian Sign Language (AUSLAN): an introduction to sign language linguistics* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), 54.

[lxxxv] *Ibid*.

[lxxxvi] A. B. Allen, *They Hear with the Eye: a centennial history of the Sumner School for Deaf Children, Christchurch, New Zealand, 1880-1980* (Wellington: Department of Education, 1980).

[lxxxvii] Joan Mansfield, 'Goodlet, Elizabeth Mary', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/goodlet-elizabeth-mary-13269.

[lxxxviii] Alexander Graham Bell, *Memoir Upon the Formation of a Deaf Variety of the Human Race* (New Haven: 1883).

[lxxxix] James Scott Hutton, *Geography of Nova Scotia, with a Brief Introduction to General Geography* (Halifax, 1869), 37.