The educative potential of film: Philosophical perspectives on the stories of young deaf people through accounting, translation, and voice

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Abstract

This thesis is a highly original, philosophical study in two parts. The first part is a film titled 'What's special about me?', made with two young deaf boys. The film was shot, on small hand-held devices by the author and the boys themselves. In the film, the boys talk about their lives and experiences. The film does not, however, make an empirical contribution to the thesis. It is there to enable a philosophical argument to be made about the educative potentialities of film.

The second part of the thesis is a written study. The opening chapter of the written part of the thesis draws upon the current literature on deafness to describe the young deaf experience, particularly in schools. The second chapter turns away from traditional narrative methodology. It takes an unusual turn to argue for a philosophical approach that is best suited to reaching a philosophical understanding of the three key concepts of accounting, translation, and voice, in relation to the stories of young deaf people on film. The third chapter provides an explanation of these three key philosophical concepts, drawing upon the works of the 19th century Transcendentalist philosopher, Henry David Thoreau, and the work of the 20th century ordinary language philosopher, Stanley Cavell. The fourth chapter argues that the disruptive nature of film is at the heart of what makes film educative, in a perfectionist way, as opposed to educational. The penultimate chapter provides a reading of the film, offering a richly philosophical and original reading of the film through dialogue. The final chapter begins by making new claims for the understanding of the philosophical notions of accounting, translation, and voice in relation to the film. It then goes on to make claims upon the communities involved with young deaf people, and the deaf community itself.

Key words: Film, deaf, Cavell, Thoreau, accounting, Translation, voice, claim.

Acknowledgments

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List of Acronyms

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BSL	British Sign Language
CBT	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
DAHIT	Deaf and Hearing-Impaired Team
D/HH	Deaf and Hard of Hearing
DSLR	Digital Single-lens camera
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
NDCS	National Deaf Children's Society
PESGB	Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain

A note to the reader

Part of this thesis is a short film (30 mins.) titled, 'What's special about me?'. As maker of the film, and writer of the thesis, I want the reader to watch the film after reading the 'Introduction to the thesis' section.

This is a link to the film; https://youtu.be/OKZYrVFN6Q4

Preface

It was a bright, warm evening in late May. Our philosophy film group had just finished watching Terrence Malick's *The Tree of Life.* The room was silent apart from the fan whirring noisily in the projector. Richard reached to switch it off before pulling back the blinds. Still silence. There were only five of us present that evening. Attendance was always lower towards the end of term. I didn't mind that though. It made watching the films more intimate somehow…the discussion easier.

Richard broke the silence, "So, what did you make of it?" he asked, looking around the room, "Who wants to start?" Not wanting to make eye contact, I turned my head towards the window, focussing on the last of the blossom falling from the tree outside. I couldn't speak. What was in my head was too personal, too unsettling. "Okay, let's start with the title…what did you make of it, Rachel?" I breathed an inward sigh of relief, as Rachel responded, at length, talking about the symbolism of the tree with its roots firmly spread underground and branches spreading outwards and upwards, reaching for the sky. She wasn't wrong, who could argue with that? Ruth agreed with her, adding that the tree could be seen as our connection to Mother Earth, that there was a spirituality going on in the film. "Isn't it also about the choices we make in leading our lives, like it says in the film, between the way of Nature and the way of Grace?", she added. I had nothing to say on this. It made no connection to what was going on in my head.

As he reached for another biscuit, crumbs falling down the front of his shirt, Dave started a conversation on the aesthetics of the film. He loved the fast-moving images, blurred colours as the film travelled from the city through to an imaginary world. Kirsty, contradicting him, argued that the film was too visually complex, and that it detracted from the story of the family. My attention was resting on this last word, 'family'. What was it in this film, this family, that I found so disturbing? I couldn't yet articulate it in my head, let alone say it out loud and share it with the group.

It was Claire who unlocked my thoughts, asking, 'Why do you think the mum and dad are only referred to as Mr and Mrs O'Brien?' I spoke for the first time

since the film had ended, "I'm not sure, maybe it's about them being distant…maybe it says something about their relationship to the rest of the family, especially to Jack", I suggested. Then it struck me. I knew why I said 'maybe' and why I was only suggesting. I hadn't been thinking about the film and Mr and Mrs O'Brien's disparate, and sometimes desperate, parenting…I had been thinking about my own parenting. My children were by now, grown up, and making their own way successfully in the world. Yet, something in the film had disturbed me, making me question my own parenting. You only get one chance at it; was I good enough? As Mrs O'Brien said of the infant Jack, "He'll be grown before this tree is tall". Aesthetics, narrative and symbolism had no place in my thinking, I was in a moment of philosophical crisis caused by the film. I made no further contribution to the discussion.

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In his major work on film, *The World Viewed* (1979), the 20th century philosopher, Stanley Cavell, acknowledges that even his friends tell him that he has again 'made a difficult book' (p. 162), but makes no excuses, and declares that he continues to 'believe in the book' (p. 162). In the same way, I declare to the reader of this thesis that they may meet with difficulty, but that I too believe in what I have written. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that I will have to defend it.

Introduction to the thesis

I have spent 34 years teaching in high schools in Leeds, including several positions at senior leadership level. Latterly, I worked in an 11-18 comprehensive school which housed a resourced provision for Deaf and Hearing Impaired (DAHIT) students. As Deputy Headteacher, I was the senior leadership link for that provision. As a result, for the last ten years of my career, I have worked closely with young deaf people and their teachers and have become what the deaf community calls 'Deaf Aware'. Consequently, I have been vociferous in making the case for meeting the needs of a significant minority of the school's population; this means a lot to me, both personally and professionally.

In 2015, I completed an MA in Education for which the dissertation focused on the experiences of deaf students in the school. This was an empirical piece of work using narrative methodology to elicit the stories of three young deaf students. Whilst the dissertation was successful on an academic level and for what it taught me about the deaf students' experience of being in the school, I became increasingly dissatisfied and began to question whether there are issues in using narrative methodology that are specific to deaf people. At the same time, I was experimenting with making film with the students, and found that the relationship between the students as film makers and the audience produced something richer than traditional narrative methods.

In turn, this raised philosophical questions about voice and the need to give account – to tell one's own story. Under the direction of my supervisor, I turned to the philosophical works of the 19th century Transcendentalist, essayist, Henry David Thoreau and the 20th century ordinary language philosopher, Stanley Cavell, to investigate notions of account, translation, and voice, in relation to the educative potentialities of film for storytelling. Moreover, I wanted to investigate the deaf experience in the context of film making and the experience of film viewing and making. Consequently, I carried out this original PhD research project, which is both practical (in the making of a film) and philosophical in its approach.

The link between education and film is well established. Indeed, there are many films about education, *Educating Rita* (Gilbert, 1983), and *Dead Poets' Society* (Weir, 1989) being two notable examples. These films serve to portray and illustrate the potentialities of education. However, I intend to do something different. Watching and discussing film philosophically through the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain (PESGB), I have experienced the potential for film to disrupt. In the preface, I presented an extended reflection on my viewing of Terrence Malick's *The Tree of Life* (2011), which made me reflect philosophically on parenting and my own values as a parent. It is this potential for film to be unsettling and disruptive that has, in part, driven my approach to this thesis.

Alexis Gibbs (2017b), in writing about film refers to the Wittgensteinian notion that to explain the meaning of film is to distance ourselves from the actual experience of the world. He argues that the tendency to use film in education merely for *illustrative* purposes is to miss out on the potentialities of film for *educative* purposes; film is educative in the experiencing of it. To use a film to explain an idea and to explain the film as an educative tool have their place, but such approaches can also stifle our experience of the film - our acceptance. Whilst not wanting to misrepresent the young deaf people's reality, film can provide an alternative reality, and this is what I intended in making a film with young deaf people. As Gibbs explains, 'this is where the challenge of acceptance begins; we have to accept the plausibility of the world we are watching before we can explain it' (p. 696). It is to this end that I do not intend to conduct any empirical analysis of the film I made, measuring its success against set criteria. Rather, I intend to reflect critically and philosophically about what it means to watch the film and to make the film. I will focus on how the boys are given voice through the making of the film, and how the viewer is put into translation[1]. Further, I will consider whether *deafness* itself (as a concept) is put into translation. A close reading of, and writing about, the texts of Cavell and Thoreau (and the making of the film) provides an alternative route to a new understanding of young deaf people.

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[1] The word 'translation' is used here in a philosophical way which is linked to notions of disruption and unsettlement. There is more discussion of this concept later in the thesis.

In disrupting the notions of voice, accounting, and translation through philosophy, I intended to make a film that unsettles concepts of deafness. The thesis itself is an act of translation. It is this approach that is at the heart of the originality of this thesis. At this point, whilst I accept that I cannot dictate when the reader of this thesis watches the film, I recommend that they do so before embarking on the first chapter. This will give context to what I write and place the boys' voices at the forefront of the thesis.

It is worth noting in this introduction, that the philosophical writings of neither Thoreau nor Cavell can be understood in a straightforward, linear way. Little in Thoreau's seminal work *Walden* (1854/2014) can be taken at face value. What at first reading may come across as a simple account of the time Thoreau spent by Walden pond in Concord, Massachusetts, soon becomes a multi-layered description of an experiment in living that is riddled with difficult metaphor. Add to this, Cavell's own declaration that in writing *The Senses of Walden* (1992), he intended to make *Walden* a difficult book (and he succeeds), and there is clear warning for the reader of this thesis unfamiliar to the works of Thoreau and Cavell, that what is to come may also be difficult in parts. Cavell pays little heed to the conventions of linear temporality and he repeatedly revisits philosophical concepts only to reach the most subtle difference in outcome. This is most clear in *Little Did I Know* (2010). The Cavellian scholar Mahon (2019, p. 749), writes, 'Cavell's writing is difficult…it is challenging, complex, intricate, intractable, obstinate, testing, and *tough* [author's italics]'.

In this next part of the introduction, I explore first, why I have written this thesis and made a film, and what the current discourses are in education that make it the right time to do this. Second, I also intend to give the reader a sense of where the project is heading from this point, without pre-empting the contents and claims of the thesis.

Earlier, I made reference to my long career in secondary education. Over those 34 years I have experienced a constant state of flux, with many policy

changes. One of the major discourses has been that of inclusion[2]. In this thesis, I refer specifically to the inclusion of young deaf people in schools. I do not understand inclusion to be solely about such policies as the closure of special schools for the deaf, to create specialist Deaf and Hearing Teams (DAHIT) in resourced provision in mainstream settings. Whilst these are important policies, what I am concerned with here is a richer notion of inclusion that focusses on the deaf experience of inclusion across all school settings; a notion of inclusion that encompasses social as well as academic inclusion. The opening chapter draws on the current literature around the inclusion of young deaf people, not in the traditional sense of a literature review, but in order to give the reader an understanding of what it is like to be a young deaf person in schools today. It is not my intention to analyse the impact of the global pandemic caused by COVID-19 in this thesis, this will hopefully be the concern of future research. However, in chapter 1, I will refer to the concerns I have for its potential impact on the experience of young deaf people in schools.

This is a philosophical thesis that is concerned with hearing[3] the stories of young deaf people through film. It acknowledges that to have voice, to be able to give account is important. In schools today, there is much talk of accountability, another of the discourses that has led to the making of this film, and the writing of this thesis. Teachers are accountable for their actions as well as the outcomes of students. Accountability is used as a measure. Even the notion of student voice has become, not a means for students to give account, but something that is embedded in the accountability of teachers and schools. The way that voice is understood in this context is light (Charteris and Smardon, 2019). This thesis problematises such notions of account and voice and philosophically disrupts them. Using the philosophical works of Thoreau and Cavell, the thesis looks at the philosophical notions of

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[2] It is not my intention to conduct a large-scale debate about the wider issues of inclusion, but to focus on those issues of inclusion that are specific to the deaf experience in schools.

[3] The word 'hearing' here and throughout the thesis, is to be understood, not on a superficial or tokenistic level, in that we are simply listening to stories on film. Rather, 'hearing' is used in a richer sense, in that what we are hearing puts a responsibility upon those who are listening, it demands a response.

accounting, translation, and voice in the context of a film made with two young deaf boys who give their account on film.

The second chapter describes the unusual philosophical approach I take in writing this thesis in place of theoretical frameworks or method. This develops in the third chapter into a philosophical discussion of the key concepts of accounting, translation, and voice, with reference to the works of Cavell and Thoreau. In chapter 4, I describe what I mean by 'educative' in the context of film and philosophy. As a philosophical study, the thesis does not go on to provide a critical analysis of the film, as might happen in a typical empirical project. Unusually, what is presented in chapter 5, is a philosophical reading of the film in the form of dialogue which may unsettle the reader. In chapter 6, the thesis concludes by making philosophical claims in relation to accounting, translation, and voice. These claims are made in the context of making and viewing the film that I made with the deaf boys. Consequently, I then return to the original socio-political context of the thesis and make demands upon the deaf community, the community of schools, and the wider community, in relation to the inclusion of young deaf people.

Chapter 1. What it means to be a young deaf person

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will revisit some of the literature that informed my work for my MA dissertation[4] (McCall, 2015), alongside more recent research, in order to create a picture of what it is like to be a young deaf person in society today. This includes literature that addresses these issues in the light of concerns about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is not a literature review in the traditional sense. Rather, it is a purposeful and selective reading of the current literature to demonstrate that accounting and voice are recurrent and crucial themes in relation to deafness in young people. To understand the context and some of the imperative for my research, it is important to consider here, the inclusion of the deaf learner in school, the effects of delayed language learning on the future outcomes for deaf students[5], the impact of adolescence, and the deaf learners' encounters with narrative (giving account, telling stories). It will become apparent to the reader of this chapter that little of the available current literature is based in the United Kingdom, which is a cause for concern for the deaf community here. Referring also to research carried out outside the United Kingdom, it is the purpose of this chapter to explore the literature relating to the young deaf experience in order to demonstrate the distance between the deaf and the hearing worlds, despite claims for inclusion. This remains a distance that sets young deaf people apart, and is unsettling in a way which echoes the philosophical approach that I will take to translation later in the thesis.

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[4] I refer to this literature not to create an argument that supports the use of narrative methodologies in researching with young deaf people, but to point to the concerns I have regarding the use of narrative in such contexts.

[5] In order to reflect the terminology used in the literature, the terms deaf learners, deaf pupils, deaf students, and young deaf people are used interchangeably in this chapter.

1.2 Identity and adolescence in young deaf people

> Far from being a singular concept, the category of 'Deaf' is highly complex and political; there are many ways to be deaf (Napier *et al.,* 2018, p. 101).

The use of 'deaf' (lower case) may, in the literature, refer to the physiological condition of a person with hearing loss, whereas 'Deaf' (upper case) relates to cultural identity where a person self-identifies as 'Deaf' – belonging to a community where BSL (British Sign Language)[6] is the common language. The concepts of 'identity', 'self-awareness', and a 'sense of self' are also problematic. They are terms often used interchangeably in different professional settings, for example by Terry *et al.* (2017), in the social sciences, Wareham *et al.* (2006) in the university sector, and Irish *et al.* (2006) in the context of sports psychology. From a sociological perspective, Lu *et al.* (2015) contend that young deaf people, like their hearing peers, develop their sense of self through meaningful interaction with a range of other people, including adults and children in the public environment. Even in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)[7] , Golos *et al.* found that children as young as three years old were beginning to develop a sense of self, 'a sense of self-worth' (2018, p. 40), and that the learning and development of young deaf children were being disrupted by the lack of cultural and linguistic role models in these settings.

Furthermore, Poe (2006) contends that young deaf people find it difficult to separate their 'deafness' from additional circumstances which might include age, gender, class, culture, and finances. Calderon and Greenberg (2003) point to the barriers of adolescence, communication, and environmental circumstances that young deaf people face in being able to make a useful contribution to the wider community. It is hard for young deaf people to place themselves in that community. Hardy (2010, p. 67) argues that young deaf people have to make a difficult choice between belonging to, 'one of three

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[6] BSL (British Sign Language): the principal manual sign language used to communicate with and between deaf people in the United Kingdom.

[7] The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) encompasses the learning and development of young children from birth to 5 years.

groups: deaf aligned, hearing aligned or the "bridge between two worlds group"'. Looking at the distance between these two worlds, Golos *et al.* (2018), highlight the lack of role models as a barrier to building a bridge between the two. The lack of role models was apparent on two levels. Firstly, there are few deaf teachers or educationalists to act as personal role models, and secondly, deaf people are underrepresented in the educational environment, for example, in textbooks and on classroom posters.

Even within the family, Terry *et al.* found that some deaf young people experienced 'devaluation and disrespect' (2017, p. 56), with family members talking about them as if they were not present or making decisions about them without consulting them. These experiences had life-long impact on self-esteem and sense of self. Nikolaraizi and Hadjikakou (2006) also stress the importance and the influence of environmental factors in the development of self-identity. They argue that those children who are brought up in a deaf environment will develop a sense of belonging to that deaf community and identify as being of that culture. On the other hand, young deaf people brought up in a hearing environment could develop what might be best described as a 'bicultural identity' (*ibid.,* p. 477). In addition, they go on to describe a final subgroup whose identity is in the margins, where they feel they belong to neither the deaf nor the hearing communities. It is important to reiterate that the word 'deaf' in relation to the words 'community', 'culture' and 'identity' is applied to a wide and diverse section of the population. The 'deaf community' is very much a heterogeneous group that cannot be identified by a set of fixed criteria. Khairuddin *et al.* (2018) are clear in their research that, in addition to the variation in environmental conditions in which deaf children are brought up, there is equal variation in the delays of language acquisition and loss of hearing, the consequence of which is varied participation in schools and community.

Exploring the issue of culture and communication in Polish schools, Kobosko finds that, 'Deaf adolescents using sign language and those using oral language have different deaf cultural identities' (2010, p. 321). Napier *et al.* (2018), go further than this, making distinctions in the sociolinguistic diversity in the deaf community and its impact on identity. This notion is echoed in the

work of Knight and Swanwick, where they recognise the importance of the link between language and culture, when they argue that, 'All languages exist within and are central to a cultural context' (2013, p. 9). It is evident so far then, that deaf identity and culture are complex issues that will undoubtedly have significant implications for schools in relation to meaningful inclusion (more on inclusion in section 1.4 of this chapter).

Calderon and Greenberg (2003) contend that young deaf people grow up having to learn how to live in both the deaf world and the hearing world, and that this stepping over the threshold from one world to the other represents an obstacle that the hearing do not have to encounter. They go on to argue that young deaf people feel compelled to live in both worlds in order to be deemed a successful individual, and that this has a profound impact on deaf identity. In the auto-ethnographical work of Irish *et al.* (2018, p. 179), one young deaf respondent declares, 'I am tired of being an alien'. And yet, as Esera (2008) argues, the ability of deaf students to communicate with teachers and peers is crucial to the educational experience. In another auto-ethnographical piece of work, Poe (2006, p. 1), as a young deaf person, contends that, 'developing a true sense of identity as a separate individual' is much more difficult for deaf teenagers than hearing teenagers. In China, Ye *et al.* (2016), found that even those deaf adolescents educated alongside their deaf peers in specialist schools experienced higher levels of loneliness compared with hearing adolescents attending mainstream schools. Lerner, in her writing, discusses the underlying themes of 'loneliness, alienation or outwardly imposed solitude' in the deaf world (2010, p.4). In their publication on the deaf experience in schools, Israelite *et al.* (2002) focus on the relationships between deaf students, their hearing peers, and adults in the school. They conclude that there are barriers to overcome, and that schools play a crucial role in building those relationships in order help young deaf people to develop their deaf identities. Ye *et al.* (2016, p. 1033), refer to this gap in relationships as 'the loneliness between deaf and hearing adolescents'. In their examination of the education of young deaf people in schools, Nunes *et al.* (2006) also point to this distance between deaf and hearing peers, concluding that the socialisation of young deaf people is of

equal value to their academic outcomes. Without friends, in a state of isolation, a young deaf person has nobody to whom they can voice their story.

The research is clear about the implications for schools with regard to deaf students finding a sense of self during adolescence. Ohana (2006) has investigated how a young deaf person's relationships with both deaf and hearing peers can impact upon the creation and development of a sense of self. Dammeyer *et al.* (2018) also highlight the importance of young deaf people feeling connected enough to take part in social activities and friendships in school. McMahon *et al.* (2016) add to the body of knowledge in this field, finding that relationships and communication with peers, are crucial to the development and education of young deaf people. Stinson and Foster (1999) argue that it is the responsibility of schools to provide opportunities for social interaction between deaf and hearing students so that they might develop friendships and feel part of a larger community.

There is also agreement in the research in the field, that raising deaf awareness in hearing students and staff is an additional imperative for schools, especially in those schools where deaf and hearing children are educated together (Hardy, 2010). Nunes *et al.* argue strongly that schools need to have, 'a proactive role in helping hearing pupils learn how to overcome communication barriers and develop more positive attitudes towards deaf pupils' (2006, p. 123). Wolters *et al.* (2014) also refer to the need for schools to be mindful of how adolescents' self-perception and their perception of their peers has implications for their status within the peer group. On the other hand, Nunes *et al.* (2006) find that it is not that deaf students come up against highly negative behaviour from their hearing classmates, but that it is the lack of a hearing pupil's ability to communicate with the deaf child that impacts negatively on the development of friendships. It is clear then, that schools have a duty of care to raise deaf awareness in both the deaf and hearing members of their communities in order to diminish the sense of isolation, or distance, encountered by young deaf people in schools.

1.3 The effects of delayed language learning on the future learning outcomes for deaf students

Research into deaf learners in schools paints a sombre picture of that experience. Looking at how young deaf people felt about themselves as learners, Hatamizadeh *et al.* (2008) found that, when questioned, less than 19% of deaf students regarded themselves as proficient learners – a significantly different reaction to that of their hearing peers, of whom 85% would describe themselves as proficient. Swanwick and Marschark (2010) reinforce this rather pessimistic position explaining that this is not just about self-awareness or self-assessment, but that young deaf learners really do learn less than hearing students. The two main threads through the available literature relate to the effects of delayed language learning on the future learning outcomes for deaf students (Caemmerer *et al.,* 2016) and the beliefs and the lack of understanding that persist in schools in relation to deafness (Marschark *et al.,* 2017), preventing young deaf students from accessing the whole curriculum and making sufficient academic progress in line with hearing students.

Brinkley (2011) states that the biggest problem faced by deaf learners is not that they are unable to hear, but that they acquire language in a different way to the majority. This, he argues, is true regardless of whether the child's first language is English or British Sign Language (BSL). That is to say, the pre-school experience of language acquisition in the home is influenced by such factors as the parents' signing abilities and the fact that young deaf children are not exposed to external sources such as television, radio, and music. In their work on semantic fluency in deaf children, Marshall *et al.* (2018) are clear in pointing to the negative impact that deafness has on spoken language acquisition. In their research, they focused particularly on vocabulary as an essential part of language acquisition which is closely related to narrative ability, finding that young deaf learners are significantly behind their hearing peers both on the learning and retention of new vocabulary. The overwhelming majority of deaf children are born to hearing parents who have no signing skills, and where the child's exposure to signing

is also limited, there are resultant significant language delays (*ibid.* 2018). Furthermore, to assume that all deaf children arrive at school with the same level of disadvantage would be to take too simplistic a view. Caemmerer *et al.* (2016) describe how scores on standardised reading tests on deaf children's arrival at school vary significantly in proportion to the level of signing and/or English to which the child was exposed in the pre-school home. Deaf students arriving in schools then, are required to learn in a language of which they have had relatively little (if varying) experience in comparison to their hearing peers – they are at some distance to the language. We can see here, that if young deaf people are at a distance to the language, they are at a distance to voicing their stories.

Once in school, young deaf learners face other barriers to learning. Dammeyer *et al.* (2018) describe how the extent of hearing loss and language varies, as well as the contexts in which these young people live. More importantly, they go on to explain that, for nearly half of the deaf population, deafness is not their only disability. In spite of this, McMahon *et al.* (2016, p. 657), describe 'a dearth of research on the inclusion of multiply marginalized populations'. This is of concern in the context of the work of Caemmerer *et al.* (2016), on the relationship between deafness and learning disabilities. This is particularly significant when their findings show that around half of deaf and hearing-impaired children have at least one co-occurring disability. They point to the failure of schools to identify additional learning difficulties in young deaf children. If these needs are not identified then they cannot be met, adding further impairment to the experiences of young deaf learners. Even amongst those deaf students who wore cochlear implants[8], standard testing for learning disability normally used with hearing students failed to identify additional learning needs. Consequently, deaf students are not accessing the full curriculum and are failing to participate fully in classroom activities and discussion (Stinton and Antia, 1999). As a result of this lack of participation, deaf students experience a feeling of isolation – being at a distance from the group, resulting in poor academic

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[8] Cochlear implants: Surgically implanted electrodes designed to provide a sense of sound which aims at reducing hearing loss.

achievement. These feelings of being separate were confirmed in research carried out by Foster *et al.,* which found that deaf students were concerned about the pace of instruction, and that they did not feel as much a member of the 'family' (1999, p. 225) as the hearing students.

Marschark *et al.* (2017) question the assumptions made in primary and secondary schools regarding the education of deaf learners and their experiences in schools. They investigate, for example, the assumption that deaf students, because of the visual nature of BSL (even though not all deaf people use it), are better visual learners than their hearing peers. The results of their research indicate that this assumption is clearly wrong. This research is a strong indicator as to what is the biggest barrier that the young deaf learner experiences; that is, teacher education or rather, the lack of teacher education in the field of deafness in mainstream settings. Bryant *et al.* (2017) describe young deaf people with disability as suffering from a 'disability perspective' (2017, p. 40), in that teachers can sometimes see these children as being somehow deficient or less capable than their peers, and that low teacher expectations have an adverse effect on the learning outcomes of these children. Brinkley makes a useful distinction in this regard between what he calls 'Deaf Awareness' (p. 64) and 'Deaf Understanding' (2011, p. 64). Deaf awareness, he argues, can be achieved in mainstream schools through Continuing Professional Development (CPD), teaching everybody in the school some basic sign language, and holding annual deaf awareness days. However, deaf understanding is only achieved when one works directly with deaf students, as opposed to simply being in the same building as them, and that understanding is embedded at every level be it in the classroom or at leadership level. It is only in overcoming this lack of understanding at all levels that links back strongly to the notions of the inclusion of deaf learners in schools.

The lack of understanding about deafness and the crucial factor of delayed language development clearly have implications for educational practice. But what of *deafness* itself? It is important to understand what it means to identify as deaf, and where that positions the individual in relation to an identifiable group (should that exist) in schools. Powers (2006, p. 1) writes that it is

'incumbent upon teachers to encourage young deaf learners to develop the personal qualities that are linked to success'. However, this is just one element pertinent to the successful inclusion of young deaf people in schools. The next section of this chapter moves on to explore and challenge notions of inclusion. It will look at the literature relating to inclusion, what it means to be deaf in school, and the impact that inclusion does, or does not, have on the young deaf person in schools.

1.4 The inclusion of young deaf learners

In recent years, there have been ideological and policy changes in many countries away from teaching children with disabilities[9] in specialist settings, towards inclusion into mainstream schools, enabling them to lead their lives in circumstances as near as can be, to the rest of the population. There is a growing body of work that has been carried out, some in the United Kingdom, but moreover internationally, on the inclusion of young deaf learners in schools. This is not to say however, that a level of inclusion has been achieved where young deaf people can be said to have a voice and to be *included* in the sense that their experiences of school are of no greater nor less a value than that of their hearing peers. It is for this reason that I consider that it is appropriate to my argument to look in some detail here about the current state of inclusion in schools, with particular regard to the experiences of young deaf students. Indeed, the picture that comes out of this literature is a complex one, not least because of the range of understandings of what is meant by 'inclusion', and because deafness, as an isolating condition (Olsson, *et al.,* 2018), works against notions of 'inclusion'. School inclusion, argue McMahon *et al.* (2016, p. 658), 'has been used to refer to a wide variety of practices, attitudes and institutional values,

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[9] The word 'disability' is used in this thesis as cited in the literature.   It is worth noting here, that there is a position taken by some in the deaf community, that 'the Deaf are not disabled, they are a language minority' (Brinkley, 2011, p. 13) with their own culture and means of communication. More recently, Terry *et al.* (2017) argue that it is important to understand that there is significant opposition to the use of the word in relation to deafness, with many Deaf people not seeing themselves as 'disabled', but as a group which is subject to stereotyping and prejudice.

reflecting the complexity of this construct'. It is useful here then to consider 'The debate on inclusion' (Powers, 2002, p. 242) in the context of young deaf people.

To provide places for deaf students in mainstream schools may be a policy step change towards inclusion, but this would be to take an overly simplistic view of what inclusion means. Specialist school provision faces just as many challenges regarding inclusion as mainstream and the question then becomes, how well does either type of school achieve inclusion for young deaf learners? At the beginning of this century, much of the research, for example, Avramadis *et al.,* (2000), concentrated on the issues relating solely to inclusion into mainstream schools. Other research, however (Ainscow *et al.,* 2006), creates a more expansive definition of inclusion, and focuses on breaking down barriers whatever the educational setting. Powers (2002) too, sees beyond the issue of inclusion being about the provision of mainstream places and develops a set of criteria – 'indicators of inclusion for deaf students' (p. 237) – in order to define what a good learning environment for young deaf people should look like. This is in stark contrast to classroom-based research carried out by Foster *et al.* (1999), looking at the practical adaptations that teachers made for deaf students. Their outcomes showed that, in practice, only a few changes were made. Furthermore, participants were often of the view that the onus of responsibility for engagement in learning should lie with the student, with the help of support services. Whilst acknowledging that learners do indeed have a level of responsibility for their own learning, McMahon *et al.* (2016), observe that it is incumbent upon schools to adopt inclusive best practices (organisational, academic, assessment and planning, and social), if young deaf people are to achieve in line with their hearing peers. Wareham *et al.,* (2006) also recognise the responsibility of schools for young deaf people's learning. They observe that understanding how deaf students learn and communicate is key to inclusion. They go on to argue that there is no one single experience (I will turn to the lack of homogeneity in the deaf world later in this chapter). Their work also points out that not only pedagogical adaptations need to be made, but also that there are practical and physical modifications to be made, in order to

create a learning environment conducive to the success of deaf learners. McMahon *et al.* (2016) develop these ideas in their work on 'Organizational Inclusion' (p. 658), arguing for a common framework for inclusion in schools, encompassing school administration, leadership, and professional development best practices for inclusion. On a cautionary note however, arguing that research into the education of deaf learners should have practical implications for the experience of deaf learners, Swanwick and Marschark (2010) raise concerns that too much research remains in the sphere of academia, having too little impact on the inclusion of deaf learners in schools. McMahon *et al.* (2016) also conclude that teachers and researchers need to work together in order to maximise the impact of any improvements in inclusion best practices. In the Higher Education sector, Caica (2011) finds that even those deaf students who do make sufficient progress to gain places at university face further obstacles. This is because whilst universities purport to embrace notions of inclusion, diversity and difference, there is a lack of understanding of the need for flexibility and the use of appropriate teaching strategies that would have real impact on the deaf experience. This is disappointing when, as Wareham *et al.,* (2006) argue that deaf and hearing-impaired students can be helped to access a fulfilling and successful university experience with the application of a little common sense.

More recently, in their work in Sweden, Olsson *et al.* (2018) conclude that regardless of the kind of institution, what matters is that all children are well taught, and that a sense of community is created where integration[10] is promoted and discrimination can be challenged. This dual role of the school with regards to inclusion is made clear in the work of McMahon *et al.* (2016), in the United States, which makes a useful distinction between 'Academic Inclusion' (p. 658) and 'Social Inclusion' (p. 659). Academic inclusion refers to the child being able to fully participate in learning and to achieve their potential as an individual. Social inclusion concerns the child being able to take part in social activities and to make friends amongst their peers whether

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[10] The word *integration* is sometimes used interchangeably with *inclusion* in the literature, but in this thesis, I take *integration* to be an element of *inclusion* as a broader term.

they have a disability or not. Their work points to there being a strong correlation between success for students with disability (both academic and social) when these dual elements are addressed by the school. In the first study of its kind in Malaysia (based on research carried out at Manchester University in the UK), Khairuddin *et al.* (2018) expand on this notion and call for schools to recognise that there are a series of interrelated dimensions of inclusion that need to be in place for inclusion to be successful. These include the home experience as well as the curricular, organisational and social elements, but point to a level of inflexibility in schools which is hampering progress towards the inclusion of young deaf learners. These findings make Swanwick and Marschark's (2010) call to bridge the gap between deaf studies and practice even more urgent.

It is clear from the literature on inclusion, that whilst there may be disagreement by what we mean by inclusion there remain some important issues to be resolved, including defining priorities and applying research to practice. That the debate on inclusion in schools persists in broad terms and specifically in relation to young deaf learners, points to the conclusion that young deaf learners remain at some distance to their peers and the institutions in which they are learning – they are in the margins, and if they are in the margins, how are their voices to be heard? Having set the context for the inclusion of deaf learners, this chapter will now move on to look more closely at the relationship that young deaf people have with telling stories, and having their voices heard.

1.5 Young deaf learners: stories and voice

Whilst deafness is a central concept to this thesis, it is important to remember that another important concept is film and its potential for eliciting the stories of young deaf learners which reveal philosophical insights into accounting, translation, and voice. In her work on the narrative function of deafness in film, Lerner refers to deaf characters as a metaphor for the isolating effect of deafness, representing 'those without a voice' (2010, p. 1). Whilst the next chapter of this thesis (on methodology) looks in more depth at what we mean by *narrative,* it is worth noting here that Riessman advises her readers, 'not to expect a simple, clear definition of narrative' (2008, p. 3). From a philosophical perspective, the nineteenth century Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau points to the importance of giving his own account and encourages all writers to give a 'simple and sincere account of his own life' (1854/2014, p. 3). Yet, it is in this requirement to give account, very specifically, that young deaf learners are at a distance to the word. This section picks up on the notions of *narrative* and *voice* in the context of *deafness*, with particular reference to the receptive and productive issues that young deaf people face with narrative, resulting in young deaf people feeling unsettled. Whilst this section investigates some of the technical issues young deaf learners experience with narrative, it cannot ignore the importance of narrative to the culture of deaf children and how stories 'serve as a window into their cultural worlds' (Van Deusen-Phillips *et al.,* 2001, p. 311).

The range of approaches taken in research into deaf children and narrative is notable both methodologically, and in its focus, from the autoethnographic approach taken by Irish *et al.* (2018), through to the approach taken by Jones *et al.* (2016) in developing a quantitative method to measure the ability of young deaf people to retell stories. The divergence in approach in the literature in this area – a collection of research, investigating different aspects of young deaf people's communication skills using a variety of definitions of 'narrative' – belies the convergence in outcomes and conclusions. This variation is evidenced by research focussing on different

aspects of narrative skills. Akmese and Acarlar (2016) for example, focus on the specific ability of young deaf learners to use grammar, including tenses and pronouns in writing, whereas Crosson and Geers (2001) and Jones *et al.* (2016), are more interested in young deaf people's storytelling abilities through voice, as a reaction to the use of visual stimuli. Rathmann *et al.* (2007), and Bernaix (2013) do however, display some consensus in the focus of their research, in that they each explore spoken and written production of narrative in young deaf people, and both come to the conclusion that more research is required to support schools in developing successful approaches to narrative with deaf pupils. However, the current literature finds that the ability of young deaf people to understand and use narrative is, with variation (Tarwacka-Odolczk *et al.,* 2014), impaired by the inability to create more complex sentences due to word omission (Akmese and Acarlar, 2016), and by difficulties in structuring narrative due to struggles with tenses and other grammatical devices (Jones *et al.*, 2016). This conclusion is confirmed in Teruggi and Gutierrez-Caceres' (2015) research, which found that deaf children consistently produced significantly less complex sentences than their hearing peers. This leaves young deaf learners struggling to voice relevance and detail in their narrative, and this issue is critical to the thesis. The (in)ability to give account, to tell our stories is at the very heart of being. Human beings are story-telling beings as evidenced in the 44,000-year-old cave paintings found in Indonesia, right through to telling your story to a therapist as found in modern day Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

Acknowledging the power of narrative as a cultural tool for organising and interpreting life experiences, Jones *et al.* describe narrative as being 'the ability to communicate a story containing sequential information, usually about a past or future event', and emphasise the importance of narrative communication in developing social skills (2016, p. 269). Acquisition and development of language entails learning how to take part in the discursive process (Tarwacka-Odolczk *et al.,* 2014). This is a skill which usually begins with interaction with parents in the home. Given that deaf children can be born into a range linguistic circumstances – BSL, English, or mixed –

communicative competence of deaf children will vary. Furthermore, the age of sign language acquisition can also vary significantly. Some children learn at home, others only start to learn when they start school. This inconsistent and unusual pattern of language transmission (when compared with hearing children) does impact on the linguistic performance as the child grows (Smith and Cormier, 2014), both in the perception and in the production. Nevertheless, the research is clear (Akmese and Acarlar, 2016; McMahon *et al.,* 2016; Dammeyer *et al.*, 2018) that despite variation in the approaches to research in this area, there is nonetheless agreement that narrative is of great significance to young deaf people culturally, but it is also something which they have difficulty both processing and producing[11]. The notion that narrative (giving account) is also of philosophical importance to young deaf people is investigated later in the thesis.

1.6 Concerns about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on young deaf people

I stated in the introduction to the thesis that it is not within the scope of this project to provide a full analysis of the impact of the global pandemic on young deaf people. There is much work to be done in this area in the future, and indeed, prominent researchers in the field (Swanwick *et al.,* 2020) have already begun. It is however, appropriate to raise current concerns about what that impact might be.

In an open letter, published in The Guardian newspaper (2020), Wright *et al.,* leading figures in the world of deaf children's mental health, point to the high rates of mental health problems that deaf children faced before the pandemic, and argue that COVID-19 is creating additional challenges. This, they argue, is due to reduced communication and the further distancing from their deaf and hearing peers through the use of face masks and school closures. They call for extra consideration to be given to deaf children to have access to good communication through electronic means during

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[11] The word *producing*, in relation to voice, is used deliberately here as a link to the production of film and the production of a response to film later in the thesis.

periods of home schooling, and that see-through masks and shields be used in educational settings as students return to school.

The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) are providing regular updates, offering advice (2021) to families who have deaf children of school age. They too raise concerns over the mandatory wearing of face masks in school. They argue that the loss of ability to lip-read and to see facial expressions will lead to increased feelings of isolation, loneliness, and misunderstanding. This, they argue, has caused high levels of anxiety in the deaf community.

In their research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on deaf people and their families in Ghana, Swanwick *et al.* (2020, p. 141), found that 'the global crisis of COVID-19 exposes and deepens issues of societal exclusion for deaf adults, children, and their families'. They contest that the pandemic has caused difficulties that are specific to deaf children of school age. These relate to the temporary closure of schools during periods of lockdown which have impacted negatively and disproportionally on deaf children's social and language development. Of further concern is that while the effects of the pandemic have, to a certain extent, been a shared human experience, information about the pandemic has been available predominantly to the hearing population. This, they conclude, leaves the deaf population further marginalised and raises concerning questions about societal inclusion.

It is clear from this snapshot of current concerns about the effects of the global crisis on deaf people, that there is potential for the gaps between the hearing and deaf worlds I described earlier in the chapter to widen. It is also apparent that there is both scope and need for further research, and action to be taken in this area. There are evident signs that the social and academic disadvantages already experienced by young deaf people could be exacerbated.

1.7 Reflections on what it means to be a young deaf person

The fact that this chapter has relied upon research carried out throughout the world, demonstrates the lack of available literature in the United Kingdom, despite the high political profile of the inclusion of young deaf learners and other vulnerable groups in this country. The prevalence of political and ideological discussion does not necessarily relate to more academic research, nor does it seem to lead to greater levels of inclusion that can be verified through academic research. And, whilst there is a discernible, if limited selection of literature dedicated to the obstacles facing young deaf learners in relating their stories, there is even less dedicated to *hearing* those young deaf voices.

Whilst arguably laudable in its aims, the political and ideological drive towards the inclusion of young deaf learners into mainstream educational settings, has not been without its problems. As demonstrated in this chapter, the very definition of inclusion is unclear and subject to interpretation. The degree to which schools have been successful in addressing both social and academic inclusion for young deaf students remains inconsistent, and the common framework argued for in the academic literature is far from being in place. It is my claim then, that deaf students remain in the margins. Through hurdles of problematic language acquisition from birth and in early years, the majority of deaf children are placed at a severe disadvantage that has long term effects on their learning outcomes at school and beyond. This disadvantage is compounded by the lack of deaf awareness in families, schools, and society as a whole, and indeed of what it means to be deaf. It is further compounded by the negative impact the COVID-19 pandemic is having on young deaf people and their families. For around half of young deaf learners, multiple disability puts them at a double distance from their peers. It is also clear that coming to an understanding of one's identity, or sense of self, as a D/deaf young person in the years of adolescence is difficult. The D/deaf culture, and consequently D/deaf identity, is neither easily defined nor homogeneous, leading to a sense of isolation and loneliness not experienced to the same degree by their hearing peers. If we

accept the argument of Jones *et al.* (2016) that narrative is a powerful cultural tool, the difficulties that young deaf learners have both in understanding and producing narrative, takes them further away from a defined cultural identity. This leads to one of the key questions of this thesis: How are we to hear the voices and stories of young deaf people? In Thoreau's philosophical terms, how are young deaf people to give account of, and for, their lives?

The next chapter of this thesis will investigate why a philosophical approach has been adopted in the project, in preference to the narrative/social sciences methodologies more commonly used when carrying out research with those whose voices are seldom heard. It will present an account of the questions that are of interest and the affordances of exploring them from a philosophical perspective, juxtaposing this with the kinds of questions that are typically addressed through narrative/social sciences methodological approaches. This is not to imply that some methods, or approaches, are inherently 'better' or 'worse' than others, echoing Crotty's (1998) view that the researcher must choose the approach to suit the specific project, as each individual project goes in search of different knowledge. Indeed, I shall argue why a philosophical approach lends itself better and more appropriately to my investigation into the educative potential of film when looking into the stories of young deaf people through accounting, translation, and voice.

Chapter 2. Philosophical method: An inappropriate method

2.1 Introduction

> Remember that methods are created for particular research tasks, not simply lifted from a research methods manual and replicated (Clough and Nutbrown, 2007, p. 165).

The previous chapter of this thesis focused almost exclusively on the empirical work (much of it using narrative methodology) carried out with young deaf people. From this, one can learn a great deal about young deaf people and the barriers to communication they face, which in turn problematises, and brings to the light, their experiences with what I will come to discuss philosophically as accounting, translation, and voice[12]. In this section I will discuss the sorts of questions and hypotheses that empirical literature addresses, and how such studies tend to be characterised by a structure that includes a literature review (much as I have done), followed by the methods section, data collection, analysis, findings, and conclusion. I will also look at the sorts of questions the empirical literature addresses: hypotheses tested *et cetera.*

As I discussed in chapter 1, the themes emerging from the empirical research on young deaf learners focus on the impact of problematic language acquisition (Calderon and Greenberg, 2003; Brinkley, 2011), identity and adolescence in young D/deaf people (Napier *et al.*, 2018) and issues relating to young deaf learners: stories and voice (Van Deusen-Phillips *et al.*, 2001). The research questions asked focus on creating an inclusive experience for deaf learners in schools that can have measurable impact for the outcomes of those young deaf people (McMahon *et al.*, 2016). Where empirical research looks at questions of narrative and deafness, it endeavours to develop quantitative systems of measurement of deaf children's abilities to retell stories initially presented in non-verbal video

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[12] Accounting, translation, and voice: These terms are central to this thesis. Whilst they have straight forward meaning in everyday usage, they have a more nuanced reading in the philosophical literature. I return to these terms in future chapters.

format (Jones *et al.*, 2016). Throughout this body of literature, the research questions have been posed, the data collected and analysed, and conclusions reached. As I referred to in the previous chapter, the research in the field of deafness and young people is limited and merits further investigation and resource. However, this does not detract from the value of previous research to explain and analyse the young deaf experience. The research gives an account, from a particular perspective, of the deaf experience: from the lack of deaf awareness in families, and in schools (Terry *et al.*, 2017), to the exploration of the social capital of deaf adolescents in society (Wong *et al.*, 2018). There are, however, peculiarities in the use of narrative methodology that are specific to conducting research with young deaf people that have emerged from my own research (McCall, 2015). As such, in considering what the empirical literature does, I must consider also what it does not do.

Traditional empirical approaches to research with young deaf people formulate a research question and choose a methodological approach best suited to the task (Crotty, 1998) of addressing the question. Predominantly in this area of research, narrative methodology is adopted as a means of eliciting stories from those whose voices are seldom heard (Olsson *et al.*, 2018; Akmese and Acarlar, 2016; Terry *et al.,* 2017). There are many interpretations of what constitutes narrative methodology[13], but it is widely used in the context of storytelling in the social sciences. Bold (2012) asks her readers to be accepting of the breadth and diversity of narrative, persuading them, 'to develop and justify their own conceptual understanding of narrative in relation to their own research' (p. 17); my research seeks to create such an understanding to support my own work. However, narrative is not without its critics. The failings of narrative research have been addressed by, among others, Hodgson and Standish (2009). They point to the tendency for researchers in the social sciences to focus too heavily on the processes involved in carrying out narrative methodology to the detriment of their responses to the research questions posed.

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[13] Other related methodologies include life history, life course analysis and biography.

An aspect that is unique in my research, however, is that it is my contention that there are issues with narrative and questions of validity that are specific to research with young deaf people. Marschark and Hauser (2012) refer to young deaf learners as being 'long underserved' (p. 218). As such, deaf learners fit well into the category of 'marginalized groups' (p.14) for whom Riessman (2008) argues that narrative methodology is best suited. However, I see problems with using the narrative interview or 'grounded conversation' (Goodson and Sikes, 2001. p. 28) with young deaf learners. First, deaf people have difficulties both in understanding and producing narrative (Jones *et al.*, 2016)[14], and for a non-BSL (British Sign Language) user to reach a 'truth' in discussion with a deaf child, there is the need for an intermediary in the form of an interpreter. Second, there is an issue with language and interpretation. If we are using narrative to uncover some notion of 'truth' or 'trustworthiness' (Riessman, 2008. p. 184), then the lack of homogeneity in the deaf population and the numerous layers of interpretation involved when using a spoken English (and possibly other languages), alongside BSL, poses problems for translation and interpretation. I acknowledge that all social research is value-laden and is therefore an interpretation, but here we have further, particular distance. It is a double distance through an interpreter. Can one be accurately described as giving voice to reach a 'truth' if that voice then has to be re-interpreted? I acknowledge the use of a BSL interpreter in the making of the film, and that there may be some double distance still at play here. And yet, as I am not in search of some generalisable truth in my work, it remains my intention to enable young deaf learners to tell their stories through the medium of film: to give account.

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[14] The difficulty in producing narrative here is in relation to the ability to use grammatical devices that are dependent on finer linguistic and pragmatic skills.

2.2 Turning to philosophy

It is at this point, whilst conscious of the affordances of empirical methodology, I turn to philosophy and film, and film making, as 'method'[15] to address the questions of accounting, translation, and voice in such a way that empirical data collection and analysis cannot. In developing this idea, I will explore what taking a philosophical approach to research might mean, how it differs from empirical research in the social sciences, and why film as philosophical 'method' is best suited for the aims of this research, whilst acknowledging the potential difficulties that a philosophical 'method' presents.

It is important to make clear here that I write about 'research aims' in a philosophical sense as opposed to 'research questions' which are raised and addressed in typical empirical research. What I am attempting to do in this thesis is distinctive. What I am pursuing is not quantifiable: it cannot be measured. My aim is twofold. Firstly, I aim to reach a philosophical understanding of voice in the context of deafness. Secondly, I intend to do this through exposing the viewers of the film to deafness, and the film itself, through their experience of the film. I have drawn here, for the purposes of discussing method, a clear distinction between the practical and the philosophical. However, I do not wish to over-emphasise the dichotomy between the philosophical and the practical. In a more nuanced explanation, it is important to remember philosophy always has been, and always will be, deeply rooted in the practical. As Standish (2010) describes, the mode of enquiry of ancient philosophy is linked to the question of how one should live one's life, and is, in that sense, deeply practical. Philosophy then, is concerned not only with the abstract and subjective, as is argued in many of the research methods texts (Crotty, 1998; Clough and Nutbrown, 2002) but is linked to the practical. To illustrate, in her visual research on children diagnosed as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Nancy Vansieleghem (2015) describes her work as 'empirical philosophy' (p. 97). In

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[15] I am not choosing philosophy as method in the sense that it might be one of a range of methods available in a research handbook. Rather, I am engaging with the discipline of philosophy and adopting a philosophical approach to my research.

describing her work in this way, she refers to her research as having empirical elements whilst at the same time, having philosophical elements in the questions she raises, and in the reading and writing of her response. What is important for Vansieleghem is that 'there are other ways of thinking and seeing. And it makes possible a better understanding of what research can do' (p. 97). The approach she takes here disrupts the easy dichotomy that some suggest between the empirical and the philosophical.

To articulate the aims of my research I will draw upon the work of American philosopher Stanley Cavell, whose work is central to this thesis. This may, at first, appear to be an unusual move, especially as Cavell has not written explicitly about schooling or deafness, although it is interesting to note that he makes reference to his own ear problems in *A Pitch of Philosophy* (1994). Cavell's work in ordinary language philosophy, scepticism, and the knowledge of other minds, has more recently been taken up by philosophers of education (Fulford, 2017; O'Reilly, 2017; Standish, 2018; Saito, 2018; Skea, 2019). Cavell's philosophy, particularly that which deals with film as philosophy and doing philosophy through film, exemplifies both the philosophical 'method' I adopt, and adds weight to the aims of my research. I refer to several of his books throughout the thesis and in this chapter, I will focus particularly on *The World Viewed* (1979), a book in which he not only investigates cinema as art, but also film as philosophy, and examines our experiences of film. Here, Cavell invites us to consider the 'magic' of film. This is not in the senses of the physicality or mechanics of film production, which he boldly claims could be regarded as relatively trivial. Those involved in the production of film may take issue with this hyperbolic claim, but in making this point he is emphasising the other aspects of film that film producers do not want to emphasise. For Cavell, what is worthy of consideration is how 'movies reproduce the world magically' (Cavell, 1979. p. 40). Film, he argues, does not literally present us with the world but allows us to view it in a particular way – 'the screen overcomes our fixed distance' (*ibid.*), as shown in the title of the book: *The World Viewed*.

If, as part of this research, I were to produce a film merely to re-produce the deaf world which the young deaf people inhabit, my approach would be

empirical, using film in a way that is common in narrative methodology. This is not my intention. Cavell writes, 'It is an incontestable fact that in a motion picture no live human being is up there. But a human something is' (*ibid.,* p. 26). That is to say, as viewers we experience the presence of that human something without being in its presence. It is this experience of film making and film viewing, and the effect that film produces in the viewer, that is key to my interest in producing film with young deaf learners. In this sense, producing film with young deaf learners is not to document a re-production, as in 'to make a copy' of their lives on screen. The distinction I make here between film *reproducing* a life on screen and *experiencing* presence on screen is important to this research, and yet difficult to describe, but that is the point. I acknowledge that both viewpoints are valid, but I see reproduction affording a didactic representation, whereas the experience of film is more ethereal. It is less determinate, resisting teleology in that we do not know what people are going to get out of it. Alexis Gibbs is, perhaps, helpful here when he suggests that 'film must be seen as something that thinks as well as something that conveys the thoughts and ideas of, say, its director' (Gibbs, 2017a, p. 276).

Here, in my research, I am not concerned with using narrative, or any other empirical methodology to create measurable systems to analyse the extent to which young deaf learners can tell stories or give account. Rather, engaging with the empirical literature does points to an absence of questions (for me) of a more philosophical nature regarding the concepts of voice, accounting, and translation. To return to Standish's (2010) view that when discussing the philosophical and the practical, one is deeply invested in the other, a close reading of the practical soon gives rise to the philosophical. Therefore, I do not address practical notions of voice, as in the reductive notion of 'student voice' in education, as exemplified in the analysis of a series of questionnaires (Charteris and Smardon, 2019). Rather, I pose philosophical questions about what it means to have voice and to give account. What I am concerned with is not empirically researchable; the research will not be carried out in the same way. In his work on the concept of *practising* in schools, the philosopher of education, Joris Vlieghe (2016),

makes a case for a philosophical approach to phenomenology, in that he does not engage 'in a conversation with students, but with other theorists' (p. 63) to understand what is going on in *practising* in schools that he observes. Similarly, what concerns me, and this research, are questions emerging from the practical; questions of the meaning and value (Standish, 2010. p. 11) of notions of voice, accounting, and translation. The next section of this chapter explores this 'philosophical approach' to my research, which itself is not without complexities, and explains why it is the right approach to this piece of research.

2.3 Philosophical 'method': An inappropriate heading

> In doing philosophy we need to be aware of the awkwardness in thinking in terms of having a method, still more, any kind of methodology (Smith, 2009. p. 437).

Typically, in an empirical thesis, there would be a section here on methodology. However, this is not an empirical piece of work. Neither is it a typical 80,000-word philosophical thesis. Rather, it is a piece of research following a philosophical approach to which the making of film is integral. The film-making process and the viewing of the film, as acts of translation themselves, are crucial to the thesis (The word 'translation' here refers to the philosophical sense of unsettling or disruption. There is further discussion of this notion in chapter 3 of the thesis). Furthermore, to investigate film and film making, using the works of the ordinary language philosopher Stanley Cavell, and nineteenth century transcendentalist philosopher and essayist Henry David Thoreau, as a lens, are part of my philosophical process.

This non-empirical, philosophical approach[16] will involve a close reading of the philosophical works of Thoreau and Cavell. This section is not to be seen as the traditional 'method' section that would predictably appear at this stage of the thesis - there is no data to be collected nor any empirical analysis of the film to be made. Neither can it be presented as replacement for the

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[16] In *The Claim of Reason* (1999a), Cavell usefully describes an 'approach' as getting nearer to something, whilst acknowledging its distance. This is of pertinence here.

'method' section. This might be thought of as problematic for me as the researcher. There is no handbook to a philosophical method to be called upon. There is no agreement as to what constitutes a philosophical approach other than what can only be described, in this case, as one that requires careful attention to those writers and their texts, and the deaf learners involved.

Writing about the place of philosophy in educational research, Fulford and Hodgson (2016) point to the established status of empirical research in the university and the ubiquitous module on research methods in MA degrees. They do this, not to make facile distinctions about the differences between the two approaches, but to consider what educational philosophy offers that is distinctive. They argue that there is no 'right way' to engage in a philosophical approach – their book is not a manual. Rather, theirs is an argument for the possibilities of educational philosophy, making the case that philosophy 'through its practices of reading and writing, *is* research in itself' (*ibid.,* p.4). Whilst educational philosophers[17] can reach a level of agreement in how the 'method' differs from the empirical, they have more difficulty in articulating precisely what the 'method' is. Referring back to the quote at the beginning of this section, where he points to the dangers of trying to define the philosophical method, Richard Smith (2009) offers no easy solution on how to proceed. Indeed, Smith (2009) points to there being a contradiction in trying to establish a method. If philosophy 'goes where it goes' (p. 438), then tying it to a prescriptive method would stop it being philosophy. Claudia Ruitenberg (2009), in a special issue dedicated entirely to the problem of method and philosophy, acknowledges the challenges that philosophers themselves have in talking about philosophy as method and goes on to write that philosophers 'learn to read and write, well, by reading and writing

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[17] I make a distinction here between 'educational philosophy' and 'philosophy of education'. I do not take these terms to be interchangeable. Fulford and Hodgson (2016) describe educational philosophy as being educational in and of itself, through the reading, writing and engagement with sources. On the other hand, philosophy of education is more concerned with the search for an 'educational truth or principle' (*ibid,* p.28) which can then be applied in the context of education.

philosophy' (p. 316). In that sense then, the thesis too, becomes an act of translation.

I acknowledge here then that whilst my approach is to turn to a close reading of the works of Thoreau and Cavell, there are many other approaches that philosophers of education use. I have already referred to the two differing approaches taken by Vansieleghem (2015) and Vlieghe (2016) as examples, but in both instances, they are making the case for engagement with the sources. For some philosophers of education, it is about engagement with eighteenth-century books on education (Griffiths, 2016); for others it could be about engaging with digital technologies (Kouppanou, 2016), or art, poetry, or film. Standish (2010) is clear, when he writes about the significance of sources in a philosophical thesis, that there is likely to be drawn upon the work of a limited number of sources in order to maintain the focus of the thesis. It is important to draw a distinction between the research methods textbooks, as criticised by Fulford and Hodgson (2016), which approach method in a technical sense that could be described as mechanical or even pseudo-scientific. The methods referred to here are both proscribed and prescribed, whereas things are much more open in a philosophical approach than the empirical methods texts suggest.

What then, can philosophy offer a thesis like this? First of all, for the purposes of this thesis, I have already argued against the appropriateness of an empirical approach to working with young deaf people. Second, in wanting to give young deaf people a voice and the opportunity to give account, a close reading of philosophical works on voice and account are highly appropriate here. Likewise, in making a film that disrupts the viewer's notion of *deafness,* I turn to philosophical writings on notions of translation understood philosophically (translation here is not simply the act of changing words from one language into another. It refers to the act of disrupting or unsettling ideas that a person holds – putting the reader or viewer into a state of translation). Approaching this thesis from an empirical perspective might provide an informed view on the nature of deafness and issues relating to giving voice which would be of value. However, the approach here is an unusual one, as it involves integrating philosophy and film making together,

again disrupting the notion of the dichotomy between the practical and the philosophical. I particularly look at the philosophical impact – the film's effect on the viewer and the way in which it affords a richer understanding.

2.4 Film does philosophy

> Film is made for philosophy; it shifts or puts different light on whatever philosophy has said about appearance and reality, about actors and characters, about scepticism and dogmatism, about presence and absence (Cavell, 1999a, p. 25).

The original approach taken in this thesis, of integrating philosophy and film, and film making is not accidental. The link between film and philosophy has long been established, but this relationship is not a straightforward one. Jerry Goodenough makes some useful distinctions to clarify this relationship. He describes the link between film and philosophy on three levels. Firstly, he refers to 'Film as illustrating philosophy' (2005, p. 3). Here he uses Paul Verhoeven's 1990 film *Total Recall* to describe how a film, whilst not making a claim for philosophy, can raise philosophical issues such as the nature of experience, personal identity over time, and questions of external-world scepticism. Secondly, he refers to 'Film about philosophy' (2005, p. 6). In this case he cites Dick and Kofman's 2002 film, *Derrida,* as an unusual film that is about a philosopher and his life. Goodenough's third and final distinction is 'Film *as* Philosophy' (2005, p. 10). Here, he argues that it is possible to watch a film as a means of engaging in philosophy. He draws upon two films, Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) and Alain Renais' 1961 film, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad.* Films in this category, he argues, 'illustrate significant philosophical issues' (2005, p. 10). The film *Blade Runner* raises questions about what it is to be a 'person', and we, the audience, in watching the film are invited to consider what we consider the conditions for personhood to be. Goodenough describes this experience of film 'as a kind of philosophical mirror, making us look to see how we see ourselves' (2005, p. 14). In writing about *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad,* Goodenough reiterates this 'mirroring of the self' (2005, p. 14) in a different philosophical context. Here, the

narrative of the film is so disrupted in time[18] that is without linearity and rationale, forcing the viewer to make their own decisions about truths and falsehoods. Film therefore, can do philosophy, and the viewer, according to Goodenough, is consequently engaged in a philosophical act. Goodenough's theory about the relationship between film and philosophy then, makes a compelling claim not only for film *being* philosophical, but also that it can *do* philosophy. In his theory however, there is an implicit dichotomy between those films that fall into being philosophical (in a way that fits into one of the three categories he describes), and those which do not: the rest. For Cavell though, whose claim is that 'Film is made for philosophy' (1999a, p. 25), film is philosophising in a different way. In the next paragraph, I shall look at Cavell's approach to film and philosophy in *The World Viewed*.

Cavell's approach to film and philosophy does not present a theory nor does it present a list of criteria by which to judge the philosophical potential of any given film, 'rather, it is to draw attention to distinctive possibilities of film, as a form of art, to exhibit the world' (Hodgson and Ramaekers, 2019, p. 36). Film can make things both present and absent to us, the viewer. In writing about photography, Cavell describes photographs as showing something which is not actually present, even if we recognise what the photograph is showing us. Of photographs, he writes, 'what is manufactured is an image of the world' (Cavell,1979, p. 20). However, whilst acknowledging the 'automatism' (*ibid.,* p. 101) that photography and film have in common, the projection and screening of moving pictures, he argues, produces a different experience. We, the audience, are allowed to be 'mechanically absent' (*ibid.* p.25), but cinema has 'discovered the possibility of *calling* attention to persons and parts of persons and objects; but it is equally a possibility of the medium not to call attention to them; rather to let the world happen' (*ibid.,* p. 25). In the calling of attention to people, aspects of people and things, film establishes our connection with the world and how we view it: film does philosophy. Cavell is not concerned with a particular set of movies that could be described as intellectual or have a particular audience in mind. Indeed, his

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[18] The potential for film to disrupt, and the impact of broken narrative are notions that I return to later in this thesis.

claim is that we 'all care about movies' (*ibid.,* p. 5), and some of the films he uses to illustrate the philosophical nature of film, for example *Stella Dallas* and *Gaslight,* are examples of what might be called the 'Hollywood melodramas' or as Cavell himself describes them, 'the melodramas of the unknown woman'[19] (Cavell, 1996, p. 3); films of the 1930s and 1940s that could be best described as 'tear-jerkers'. In this sense then, film, and therefore philosophy, are for everybody.

2.5 On a broader conception of the ethical

In section 2.4 of this chapter, I pointed to a false dichotomy between the philosophical and the practical, and how such an understanding presents too simplistic a picture of the relationship between the two. In fact, I would argue that the relationship is much more nuanced. In a similar vein, I now turn my attention to the question of ethics in my research. Whilst I acknowledge that there are critical, practical ethical considerations which I must detail, there are broader conceptions of the ethical in research at play here. Writing about ethics in educational research, Paul Standish argues:

> There is a background problem that the very assiduousness of these endeavours can mask. This concerns the way in which the ethical has been conceived in the modern world. The ethical comes in, as it were, at points of conflict – where there is a question over confidentiality, where the research is sensitive in some way… What is left out [here] is that broader conception in which it is recognised that values permeate our lives…and hence [are] inevitably there at the start in research in education (Standish, 2002, pp. 211-212).

It is not my intention here, to engage (as I might in an empirical piece of work) in a 'tick-box' exercise where I address, systematically, the subheadings of practical ethical considerations such as confidentiality, the hierarchical power relationship, and issues of child protection. Rather, as Standish suggests, I look to the starting point of my research and consider

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[19]The 'melodramas of the unknown woman' include such films as: *Stella Dallas* (Vidor, 1937), *Now, voyager,* (Rapper, 1942), *Gaslight* (Cukor, 1944) and *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (Ophuls, 1948).

what I am trying to do, from a broader ethical perspective, in working with a highly vulnerable group of young people.

In making film with young deaf people, I have duly taken into consideration the ethical guidelines as stipulated by the British Educational Research Association (BERA[20]) for carrying out research with children in schools. I declare this not as a 'platitudinous statement that extra care needs to be taken when researching with those with a reduced capacity' (Cuskelly, 2005, p. 99), but as a sincere and serious approach to be conscious of the lack of homogeneity in the D/deaf population as described by Swanwick and Marschark (2010). Moreover, I take into account the fact that a large number of the D/deaf population present with multiple disabilities.

Here, as I did in my MA research (McCall, 2015), I call to account my ethical position in carrying out research with this particular group of people. Several scholars (Farrell, 2005; Cuskelly, 2005) question the ethical position of those researching with children and young people who might be deemed to be vulnerable. Young and Hunt (2011), whose work specifically considers issues relating to researching with the D/deaf community, pose questions that are of particular pertinence to my research. Adding moral weighting to the lived experience, they challenge the very idea that there is ethical validity in hearing researchers, like myself, carrying out research with the D/deaf community at all. Whilst acknowledging this position, I take the viewpoint that empathy with participants is critical (Mukherji and Albon, 2010), but that to limit research with the D/deaf to deaf researchers is too restrictive. Also, I take into account Swanwick and Marschark's (2010) view that given the heterogeneity of the D/deaf community, a deaf researcher may have life experiences that are just as detached from the deaf participant as a non-deaf researcher. In making film with young deaf people, it is my contention that I am not speaking *for* them, but *alongside* them.

The film I made with the deaf boys does not make an empirical contribution to this thesis, rather it is central to my philosophical argument. As my work is

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[20] Of particular significance to this study are the paragraphs under the heading, 'Children, Vulnerable Young People and Vulnerable Adults' (2018, pp. 6-7).

philosophical, I take into account the broader concept of ethics and recognise the values that permeate the lives of the young deaf people with whom I am working. The thrust of my research, in giving voice to the deaf boys, is not to *hear* their life stories, and not to *collect* them in the more traditional empirical narrative sense. Rather, the whole rationale for my research is concerned with acknowledging their right to have voice and the right to express what is important to them. My research shines a philosophical light on the lives that the deaf boys live; it moves beyond a narrow understanding of ethical, and is more related to social justice.

2.6 Some practical considerations

It is at this point that I turn to the making of the film. The philosophical importance of the film being made for the small screen, on handheld digital equipment, becomes clearer later in the thesis. However here, I focus on the practical. I undertook the filming, together with the two boys involved, Hashim and Tyrone, on three different kinds of camera: A Digital Single-lens camera (DSLR)[21], small handheld devices[22], and a mobile phone. The outside shots of Hashim playing football were filmed by me, on a DSLR camera. The shots of the boys that feature dates and times at the bottom of the screen, were filmed by the boys, on small handheld devices that I had given them. I shot the rest of the film on a mobile phone. What is key here is that for the purposes of this thesis, it is not my intention (nor my skill set) to contribute to the creative or technological advancement in the area of film making, but rather to use the film making process as a means to an end, in order to elicit stories from young deaf people.

My initial decision was to use a DSLR for the entire shooting of the film. However, for the following reasons, small handheld devices were preferred. Whilst the introduction of the DSLR has undoubtedly made filming more

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[21] Digital Single-Lens camera (DSLR) – A video camera which uses a digital imaging sensor as opposed to photographic film.

[22] I gave the boys inexpensive smartphone sized digital cameras so that they did not have to use their own phones or worry should they be lost or broken.

compact and portable, and perhaps less invasive than its predecessors, there remain concerns for its use in my particular context. I am not a scholar of film; I am making film to express a particular philosophical viewpoint. The DSLR, for my purposes is an overcomplicated machine. It is simply too sophisticated, and to do it justice would have required a level of training and investment of time which I really needed to invest in the main philosophical work of my thesis. Furthermore, when I have used the DSLR I have noted two issues. First, young deaf learners are a highly vulnerable group and to conduct filmed interviews using a DSLR mounted on a tripod pointing at them can feel intimidating for them. This is of particular importance for the ethics of my research. Second, using a highly visible camera in a school setting, surrounded by curious children, attracts attention that both distracts and detracts. It is for these reasons that I turned to the use of a smartphone for filming. It must be acknowledged here that using smartphones for filming presents its own difficulties: relatively low dynamic range, image quality and battery life *et cetera.* However, there are now technical solutions to some of these issues, and the use of accessories such as stabilisers and apps like Filmic Pro[23] allows for a greater specification of film to be made.

In addition to these practical advantages for my research, there are perhaps more important factors in the use of smartphones which are specific to researching with young deaf people. The young deaf community in any city is not confined to one geographical location, these young people are spread out, and isolated from their deaf peers. As a result, out of school time these children communicate through online video streaming through their smartphones. They are accustomed to filming themselves and each other so that they can communicate from home using British Sign Language (BSL) and text in English. In her work with young Muslim women in Copenhagen, Waltrop (2018) found a similar social networking effect in a minority and socially isolated group. I have already discussed how the participants in my research contributed to the making of the film. In her research on mobile phone film making as a participatory medium, Rabova (2014) makes the

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[23] Filmic Pro – A smartphone application which enables the user to alter things like frame rate and shutter speed, that the standard smartphone camera does not allow.

case for placing the use of mobile phones for making films within the discourse of film making history, concluding that the accessibility of the technology does increase levels of participation and engagement. Covill (2018) argues that filming on smartphones opens up the possibilities of film creation. In the case of my research, I conclude that for technological, practical, and ethical reasons, filming with smartphones with young deaf people provides a unique solution for reasons specific to the context. It was simply the right tool for the job.

2.7 Reflections on philosophy and film as 'method'

In this concluding section of this chapter on philosophy and film as 'method', I return to my earlier discussion on the problem of philosophers and method. I referred earlier to Claudia Ruitenberg (2009), in a special issue of *The Journal of Philosophy of Education,* dedicated entirely to the problem of method and philosophy. In it, she acknowledges the challenges that philosophers themselves have in talking about philosophy. What she wrote about philosophers learning 'to read and write, well, by reading and writing philosophy' (p. 316), as I quoted earlier, has become my challenge and my goal in producing this thesis.

I now consider the etymology of the word 'method' to reiterate what 'method' is for this research, and the claims I make for the approach I take in the thesis.

method (n.)

early 15c., "regular, systematic treatment of disease," from Latin *methodus* "way of teaching or going," from Greek *methodos*" scientific inquiry, method of inquiry, investigation," originally "pursuit, a following after," from *meta* "in pursuit or quest of" (see **meta-**) + *hodos* "a method, system; a way or manner" (of doing, saying, etc.), also "a traveling, journey," literally "a path, track, road," a word of uncertain origin (see **Exodus**).

Meaning "any way of doing anything, orderly regulation of conduct with a view to the attainment of an end" is from 1580s; that of "orderliness, regularity" is from 1610s. Meaning "a system or complete set of rules for attaining an end" is from 1680s. In reference to a

theory of acting associated with Russian director Konstantin
Stanislavski (1863-1938), it is attested from 1923.[24]

The word 'method' then is etymologically rooted in the Greek words '*meta'*
and '*hodos': 'meta'* meaning in pursuit or in search of, and '*hodos'* meaning a
way out or path/ a journey. Etymologically then, it refers to a prescribed,
systematic approach to inquiry, but also a way out of that prescribed way of
thinking about 'method' – an exodus. The word 'method' then incorporates
both these meanings, but traditional approaches to 'method' privileges one
over the other. My claim here, is that I am looking to the way out.

As I have discussed, empirical methods are selected, applied, and reflected
upon in the conclusion. My claim is more radical. I do not select and integrate
philosophy and film as method and apply them. My '*hodos'*, or *way*, is to
generate and experience my 'method'. Together with my participants, and
the viewers of the film, we experience and create the 'method' together. It is
not something that is done to them in the sense of traditional narrative
methodology. Rather, it is the other way around.

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[24] *Etymology Dictionary*. [Online]. [Accessed 25 June 2019]. Available from
https://www.etymonline.com/word/method

Chapter 3. Key concepts; voice, account, and translation

3.1 Introduction

This central chapter of the thesis forms a discussion of the key concepts of accounting, translation, and voice. I present them in one extended chapter, in three sections, as opposed to three separate chapters because, as I hope will become clear to the reader, they are concepts that continually overlap and so cannot easily be seen in distinction from each other. In the first of these sections I will look closely at Cavell's own life experiences as they are reflected in his writing on voice. I will provide a close reading of what Cavell has written on voice, perfectionism, and passionate utterance in relation to film. This will have a bearing on my subsequent philosophical reading of my own film. The second section moves from voice to account, providing an explanation of how 'account' is to be understood in *Walden* (Thoreau, 1854/2014) and consequently, in *The Senses of Walden* (1992). The third section of this chapter turns to philosophy as translation, with the aim of explaining what is meant by a philosophical translation, and how this relates to the disruptive nature of film as introduced in the preface to the thesis.

Having established my philosophical approach to this thesis in place of a traditional 'methodology' in the previous chapter, in this chapter I turn my attention to introducing the key concepts with which the thesis will engage. I will consider and explain the way in which I am thinking about my film in a philosophical context, and why I draw so heavily upon the philosophical works of Cavell. In this thesis, I look beyond traditionally accepted frameworks, as described in the previous chapter, and instead, I ask the question, as posed by Lederman and Lederman (2015, p. 593): 'Why is your approach…feasible'? Thus, I turn to Cavell to synthesise my thinking on accounting, translation, and voice that has emerged from my work with young deaf people. That is to say, Cavell's philosophy, or rather specific aspects of his philosophical writing on these concepts, provides a lens through which I am looking at my film.

Cavell has written extensively on film, and his publications on film and philosophy have been described as significant events in the history of film studies (Rothman and Keane, 1997). I introduce my key concepts and produce a reading of my own film against Cavell's ideas, mirroring the way in which he reads philosophy against film in *Cities of Words* (Cavell, 2005a), and in *Contesting Tears* (Cavell, 1996). In his writing on film, Cavell, as an 'ordinary language philosopher' (to which I return later), as Rothman and Keane (1997) explain, seeks to use common everyday words and language to allow a clear understanding to be reached. By appealing to 'what we ordinarily say and mean' (*ibid.,* p.5), he draws our attention to differences in language of which we had not been previously aware and makes them understandable. He does something similar in *The World Viewed* (Cavell, 1979), where he outlines the differences between photography and film from a philosophical perspective.

This turn to Cavell may seem unusual in a thesis that sets its context in deafness, for he has little to say on deafness itself apart from (as I have already mentioned) his own hearing problems sustained as a result of a road traffic accident in childhood, and a brief reference to Beethoven's deafness in a discussion on 'What is it to hear music?' (Cavell, 1994, p. 116). However, Cavell has written at length on the concepts of accounting, translation, and voice, through his reading of the Transcendentalist philosophers Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. These are concepts that are of direct relevance to the claims I shall make in this thesis. In the next three major sections of this chapter, I shall take each of these notions in turn. This will provide a close reading of Cavell's work on these issues, which will afford a greater clarity and understanding to the reading of my own film in chapter five of this thesis.

3.2 Cavell's life experiences reflected in his writing on 'voice'

The concepts of 'voice' and film are central to this project. The first chapter of this thesis has already alluded to the challenging issues relating to young deaf people and 'voice'. In this section, I turn to 'voice' not in these empirical terms where voice is understood thinly as expressing opinion, but to try and reach an understanding of 'voice' in philosophical terms. This is a richer conception of voice that Cavell's philosophy affords.

The rich breadth of Cavell's understanding of voice cannot be overstated. His concept of voice is complex and not to be understood as one solitary idea. This is especially so when one comes to understanding the origins of his interest in voice, and how that is evidenced in what he goes on to write. In his authoritative study, *Hearing Things,* which addresses voice and method in Cavell's writing, Timothy Gould (1998, p. xv) describes Cavell's notion of voice as 'epitomizing an entire region of questions about the means by which human beings express themselves and the depth of our need for such expression'. As such, Cavell explores voice not only in film, but in areas such as opera, poetry, Shakespeare, and the Transcendentalist movement. Gould goes on to identify three pathways by which voice comes in Cavell's writing:

1. The voice is a condition of human expression and meaning to be recovered from its philosophical neglect.
2. The voice is a way of conceiving the medium and the goal of the philosophical method of appealing to ordinary language.
3. The sound of Cavell's voice as a writer is an inescapable feature of his presence in his work (Gould, 1998, p. xv).

In this study, there is not the space to analyse these three routes in detail, indeed that could become a thesis in its own right. Instead, I use them to illustrate the importance of voice to Cavell, as an individual, and to his philosophy. I will, nonetheless, refer to each of these routes in applying Cavell's philosophy to my work on young deaf people and film. In this section, I will draw upon Cavell's writing about voice and film in order to move the understanding of 'voice', particularly in the context of young deaf

people, beyond that of circle time, student councils, and student surveys (Standish, 2004).

For Cavell, 'voice' was important, and he acknowledged the repression of his *own* voice at a time when analytical philosophy was dominant. In doing philosophy through autobiography, Cavell felt shunned by a discipline (particularly his analytic contemporaries) who did not accept his approach and indeed, did not recognise his work as philosophy. In reaction to this, Cavell makes the claim that there are elements in philosophy that serve to suppress voice. Philosophy, he argues, makes claim to speak for all of humanity, which he describes as 'its systematic arrogation of voice; its arrogant assumption of the right to speak for others' (Cavell, 1994, pp. vii-viii). In his writing about Cavell's understanding of voice, expression, and experience, Ramaekers (2010, p. 59) concludes that 'owning a voice, is 'having an expressed existence'. Cavell's own life experiences are indeed key to his philosophy, and are reflected in what he wrote about voice and the importance of voice. He wrote of philosophy in relation to the voice, about 'the tone of voice and about my (*his*) right to take that tone.' (Cavell, 1994, p. 3).

I also draw on Cavell's engagement with Hollywood film and his writing (which reflects his own life experiences), to further explore this discussion of voice, which I will later develop in relation to young deaf people. In particular, I am concerned with Cavell's reading of two of the four films he calls 'The Melodramas of the Unknown Woman' (Cavell, 1996, p. 3)[25]: *Gaslight* (1944) and *Stella Dallas* (1937). What he writes about these films reflects the repression and recovery (or reclaiming) of voice he experienced in his own life. Cavell explores the arrogation of 'voice' (that we are authorised to speak), the repression and the recovery of 'voice' through writing about film. Cavell describes 'the ecstasy in finding and presenting a voice' (p. 16), which I argue is of direct relevance to the reading of my own film, and the experiences of the young deaf people in the making of that film. In what

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[25] The four films identified by Cavell as the genre of the unknown woman include: *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (Dir. Max Ophul, 1948), *Gaslight* (Dir. George Cukor, 1944), *Now, Voyager* (Dir. Irving Rapper, 1942) and *Stella Dallas* (Dir. King Vidor, 1937).

follows, I look in detail at these notions of voice being lost and subsequently recovered.

In *Contesting Tears: The Hollywood Melodrama of the Unknown Woman* (1996), Cavell looks to film through the Hollywood melodramas of the 1930s and 1940s, to explore ideas of finding the self through the finding of one's voice. In these films, Cavell identified a number of unifying 'features' (p. 4). The first of these features is that the films highlight two distinct periods of the female lead's life. As Cavell writes, we see them in 'a state of innocence, and a state of experience, years apart' (Cavell, 2005a, p. 234). This common feature involves a woman's search for a kind of education, which Cavell refers to as 'her demand for an education' (p. 13), not a formal one but an education into culture, that she achieves in finding herself through her own voice. The institution of marriage is central in the melodramas. The leading women are in search of a voice (and/or education) through marriage. The leading men, on the other hand, take on the role of life-coach to their wives, seeming to enrich their lives, guiding them towards something better that might be described in terms of a conversion. What transpires however, is the suppression of the wives' voices through various means, followed by a transformation akin to the recovery of the women's voices. In both these films, there is a kind of 'vampirism; one life the sapping of another's' (Cavell, 1996, p. 69) enacted by the husbands, leading to a sort of 'decreation' Fulford, 2009. p. 229) and inexpressiveness in the wives.[26] Fulford goes on to refer to this action of taking away voice as 'ventriloquism' (*ibid.,* p.229). In the recovery of voice however, the husbands are eventually rejected, and the marriage ends. Fulford (2009) describes the women in these films as being characterised by their 'isolation and unknownness to the man [her husband]' (p. 229), which leads to what Cavell describes as 'the negation of marriage itself' (Cavell, 1996, p. 6). This negation stems from 'the negation of conversation' (*ibid.,* p.6) within the marriage and the denial of the women to have their voice heard, both beyond and within the marital relationship. For

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[26] I do not infer here that there is a 'vampirism' that is happening to young deaf people in schools. Rather, I am using what Cavell has written about voice in film to illustrate the importance of voice in relation to young deaf people.

Cavell, the negation of marriage in the melodramas serves as, 'a route to creation, to a new or original integrity' (p. 6) which marks the recovery of voice. I use examples from two films from this genre to illustrate my arguments – *Gaslight*, and *Stella Dallas*. I will give an in-depth reading of *Gaslight* and *Stella Dallas*, moving between the two films to elicit common themes in relation to Cavell's conception of 'voice'.

3.2.1 Reading Gaslight and Stella Dallas

Gaslight (directed by George Cukor,1944, starring Ingrid Bergman and Charles Boyer) is emphatically concerned with the repression of voice (Fulford, 2009). In the opening scene of the film, we see a young woman, Paula, being led out of her dead aunt's house in London. The events then move on ten years to several scenes that take place in Italy and it is in the first of these scenes that we see the importance of voice to this film. It starts with Paula using her voice. Paula is in the middle of a rather unsatisfactory singing lesson, accompanied on the piano by her husband to be (although at this point, they are not yet engaged), Gregory Anton. This man, we later learn, is in fact called Sergis Bauer and is her late aunt's murderer. Guardi, the singing teacher is adversely comparing Paula's voice to that of her aunt's (Alice Alquist), a famous opera singer. Despairingly, and perhaps prophetically, Paula declares "I haven't the voice, have I?". The stage is set. Paula recognises that she has neither her aunt's remarkable operatic voice, nor a satisfactory one of her own. She must set out in search of her voice. This, following the conventions of plot that Cavell identifies in the melodramas, occurs through marriage. Just two weeks after this scene, following a whirlwind romance, she marries Gregory Anton.

In *Stella Dallas,* (directed by King Vidor, 1937, with Barbara Stanwyck and John Boles) we are immediately presented with Stella, the lead, as a young woman with a yearning for an education. This yearning for self-improvement sets her aside from her family. Even her brother (Charlie) says of her, "Taking a business course to improve herself. None of us are good enough for her anymore". There is no presentiment here that Stella is heading for the

coercive controlling relationship endured by Paula. Indeed, she stands up to her bully of a father, and as Standish (2004) puts it, 'gives as good as she gets' (p. 96). The denial, or repression, of her voice though, will come later through her isolation; her 'unknownness' as Cavell (1996, p. 197) describes it. At first, we see that Stella is driven to better herself and the route she takes is through marriage. She becomes aware of Stephen Dallas, the eligible bachelor and owner of the factory where her brother works through reading a newspaper article. Setting her sights on him, she conspires to meet him at the factory by pretending to bring to the factory a packed lunch for her brother. Stella and Stephen end up sharing the lunch, and so begins a brief romance which results very soon in their marriage, causing much consternation to her family stuck in the dreary mill-town. Throughout these early stages of the relationship, Stella is constantly using language that heightens the importance of education and voice, "I wanna be like all the people you've been around. Educated, you know and speaking nice". She longs to be accepted amongst high society, a group she refers to as 'The Swells', "I could learn to talk like you and act like you", she says in acknowledgement of Stephen's natural ease in this group. And so, Stella's scene is set. Through education (not a formal education, but one more akin to a kind of induction into a culture), Stella sets out to find a voice that will be heard in a society (or community) that she little understands yet yearns to be a part of. Having established the importance of voice, or the lack thereof in both films, I turn now to the suppression of Stella and Paula's voices before their eventual recovery that is characteristic of Cavell's reading of the melodramas.

In *Gaslight,* from the arrival of Gregory and Paula at Paula's aunt's house in London, where the married couple settle despite Paula's unease, the repression of Paula's voice builds with dramatic tension. At their arrival, Paula finds a letter from Sergis Bauer, addressed to her aunt, just two days before her murder. Gregory snatches the letter from her. From then on, Gregory seeks to destroy Paula's confidence in her memory. Paula must not be allowed to make the connection between Sergis Bauer and Gregory

Anton. 'In this melodrama the woman is meant to be decreated[27], tortured out of her mind altogether', writes Cavell (1996, p. 49). First of all, Gregory suggests that all her aunt's furnishings and belongings, those things that hold memories of her aunt, are locked away in the attic, giving Gregory (who is actually Alice Alquist's murderer) the chance to search for Alice's jewels he craves. "No, no, Paula. Don't look back. You've got to forget everything that happened here", commands Gregory to reinforce the decreation of Paula's past and present. Then on a trip together to the Tower of London, Gregory seeks further to destabilise Paula by pretending to put a cameo brooch into Paula's bag. At one point, Paula realises that the brooch is not in her bag but assumes that the fault is hers. Earlier, Gregory has already suggested to her, "You have been forgetful recently". Later, he asks her for the brooch, knowing full well that she has never had it and she replies, "Suddenly, I am beginning not to trust my memory at all".

Cavell (*ibid.* p. 51) refers to this manipulation of Paula's memory as a 'process of controlled amentia' that is intended 'to render the woman of *Gaslight* stupid'. Indeed, Paula increasingly fails to understand what we the audience experience as obvious, that he is trying to persuade her of her own insanity (*ibid.,* p. 51). Gregory regularly leaves the house in the evening, only to secretly re-enter the house through another route to gain access to the attic where he can continue his search for Paula's aunt's jewels. In doing so, he turns on the gaslight which reduces the gas pressure throughout the house, making it dim and flicker in Paula's bedroom. How can Paula fail to make the connection between her husband's leaving the house and the dimming of the gaslight and the sounds of footsteps in the attic above? Yet, we do not dismiss this as 'self-stupefying [or] ordinary stupidity' (ibid., p. 51). We understand that she has been driven by Gregory to a point of knowing and not knowing that renders her voice without meaning.

Significantly, Paula is repeatedly shown standing alone in her bedroom under the fluctuating glow of the gaslight. There is also a metaphor here, the dimming of the gaslight is connected to the German word *Geist*, meaning

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[27] I do not imply here, that there is any sense of 'decreation' of young deaf people in schools.

spirit or mind, and so Paula's spirit is dimmed. These scenes emphasise her increasing isolation; an isolation that is controlled by Gregory both in and out of the home.

In the home, Gregory has a relationship with the flirtatious maid, Nancy. This relationship undermines Paula's standing as mistress of the house to the point where when Paula gives instruction to Nancy to light the fire, Nancy replies impudently, "He already told me that!", rendering Paula's voice ineffective; she has no voice in the household community. Paula is also denied access to the outside community as Gregory repeatedly contrives to thwart visitors from seeing Paula, whilst at the same time convincing Paula that it was actually her decision not to see them. Even when the couple venture out into society, Gregory ensures that the venture fails, and that the responsibility is Paula's. One evening Paula and Gregory are invited to a concert at the home of Lord and Lady Dalroy, friends of the late Alice Alquist. At the opening of this scene, we see Paula at her brightest and strongest. As Cavell writes, the scene 'gives a vivid picture of Paula in command of her faculties' (*ibid.* p. 54). Recalling childhood memories with Lady Dalroy, she confidently shows that her memory is, in fact, intact. It is at this point, where Paula is behaving like the woman she might have been, that Gregory strikes a critical blow. Pulling out an empty watch chain from his pocket, he declares that his watch has gone. Paula suddenly looks anxious as Gregory looks at her accusingly and takes her bag, where he 'finds' the missing watch. In a public fall from grace, Paula breaks down, despite shouting, "I swear I didn't put it there!", and they leave the party. This scene is one of a sequence in which Paula is increasingly deemed to be insane and her voice goes unheard, or is at best considered unreliable.

In *Stella Dallas,* having established earlier that Stella sets out to find her voice in a society she little understands, the film presents us with scene after scene of Stella's disastrous attempts, and ultimate failure, to find her place in that community. Indeed, in his reading of the film, Cavell refers to *Stella Dallas* as 'the most harrowing' (Cavell*,* 1996, p. 200) of the melodramas and describes 'the distress of witnessing over and over the events depicted in this film' (*ibid.,* p. 200). From the very beginning, Stella defies expectations.

Immediately after the birth of Stella and Stephen's daughter, Laurel, Stella refuses to take rest at home and instead, despite Stephen's reticence, heads out into society to a dinner at the River Club. Here, Stephen's disapproval of Stella's behaviour and her lack of society manners are evident as she contrives to befriend Ed Munn, a vulgar, loud-speaking man with a penchant for racehorses and the company of women. Ed Munn stands in stark contrast to the impeccably dressed and well-mannered Stephen 'whose rigorous self-pity or disappointment, snatches at nourishment for itself' (*ibid.,* p. 201). Cracks in the marriage appear as Stella repeatedly fails to act and talk like the community of which she seeks to be part, despite Stephen's guiding role. This is the beginning of her isolation (her unknownness).

In one possible reading of *Stella Dallas*, Cavell goes on to describe how Stella is repeatedly confronted with 'ironic misinterpretations…by the march of respectable figures through her life' (Cavell, 1996, p. 201), including her husband. She appears to have a total lack of self-awareness and seems oblivious to the regards of others (I will argue that this is not so, but rather constitutes an expression of her authentic voice). The schoolteachers on the train show disdain for Stella, declaring that, "women like that shouldn't be allowed to have children": as she misbehaves and laughs loudly, oblivious to the reactions of those around her. The residents and their teenage children at the fashionable resort hotel treat her with scorn and derision for the way she dresses and portrays herself in public, seemingly unaware of the "Christmas tree" look she has adopted. The cracks in the marriage grow wider and she loses Stephen to the sophisticated and wealthy Mrs Morrison. The marriage ends in divorce and Stella is seen to make the ultimate sacrifice when she gives up the most precious thing in her life, her daughter Laurel, to Stephen and Mrs Morrison. She turns and walks away from that part of society that has rejected and isolated her, just as Laurel marries into the establishment.

Whilst these distressing events indisputably happen in the film, Cavell offers a more nuanced reading of the film which belies 'Stella's self-oblivion…her "pathetic inadequacy"' (*ibid.,* p. 206). Take, for example, the attention to fashion and clothing in the film. As Standish (2004, p. 98) argues, 'the plot in

part turns on Stella's reading of the codes that operate here'. The unquestioning reaction to Stella dressing like a "Christmas tree" would be to argue that she has no fashion sense or any notion of how to dress appropriately. However, this goes against the careful attention she pays to clothes throughout the film. Even Mrs Morrison, whose taste is beyond question, acknowledges Stella's advanced tailoring skills and taste as she unpacks Laurel's suitcase. Stella herself acknowledges that whilst Stephen may correct the way she speaks, she will not listen to him when it comes matters of dress. That Stella chooses to dress the way she does, argues Cavell, confirms that 'Stella is capable of, and gifted for, theater' (1996, p. 204). Her performance, he argues, is a strategy; part of a plan, not for herself, but for Laurel. It is a plan that comes to fruition at the end of the film. Indeed we, the audience, are called to acknowledge her accomplishment and to listen to Stella's voice (Standish, 2004). As Mrs Morrison reads Stella's letter confirming that Laurel is to stay with her and Stephen, she asks "Laurel is here, who has accomplished this?" and "couldn't you read between those pitiful lines?". Stella's voice is recovered in a way which is profoundly ontological; it is related to her 'self' (*ibid., 2004*).

In the final scene of *Stella Dallas,* we see Stella looking through a window, witnessing Laurel's wedding. The window is rectangular and bright, surrounded by darkness, looking very much, writes Cavell (1996), like a cinema screen. It is as if, he argues, Stella has placed Laurel into the fantasy film world like the films she watched with Stephen earlier in the film, before their own marriage. Initially, we the audience watch this film within a film over Stella's shoulder and then 'as Stella walks towards us, her gaze, transforming itself, looms towards us' (Cavell, 1996, p. 216); we witness Stella's transformation. This is the moment of the recovery of her expressiveness, her voice. She is neither sad nor dejected by what she has seen, rather she turns and smiles, walking towards the (unknown?) future. 'Cavell sees this state of mind, so transformed from early infatuation, as the

completion of her education' (Standish, 2004, p. 100).[28] Cavell concludes that Stella 'learns that the world of the screen, whose education in the world of refinement had at the beginning made her cry with longing, is not for her' (Cavell, 1996, p. 211). Whilst 'not for her' may raise an ambiguity here, Cavell explains away the perception that Stella has lost out in this ending by arguing that Stella has accepted her own barring from the world (her isolation, unknownness, and unheard voice), but at the same time belongs to it through gifting it to her daughter. She begins by seeking a voice, demanding an education, to be seen in a film-like world with the 'swells' and walks out of the film to an undefined future.

In his reading of the melodramas, Cavell maintains a focus on the repression of voice through to its eventual recovery. This is true of his reading of Paula's experience in *Gaslight*. Having reached a stage where she has, according to Cavell, lost 'the capacity to count, to make a difference' (*ibid.* p. 58), Paula begins a journey of recovery of voice, supported by the detective, Mr Cameron. In *Cities of Words* (Cavell, 2005a, p.27), Cameron's role here is described as that of 'friend' or 'voice coach'. Cameron's suspicions about Gregory's behaviour towards Paula are aroused when he witnesses one of Gregory's 'disappearing watch' tricks. Cameron begins surveillance of Gregory and sees him leaving the house, only to regain entry via the attic from the house next door. Cameron then goes on to build his relationship, as voice coach, with Paula as he shows her the glove that was given to him by Paula's aunt; it matches the single glove in the glass cabinet and completes the pair. From this, Paula sees Gregory for what he really is, and in a 'voice lesson from the young detective' (Cavell, 1996, p. 59) she is encouraged to use her own words to describe the horrors that have happened to her. Encouraged by Cameron, Paula hesitantly uses her voice, describing in her own words what Gregory has done. Having been 'deprived of words, of her right to words, her own voice' (*ibid.,* p. 57), Paula is almost startled as she hears the beginnings of the recovery of her own voice. Cameron is

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[28] That is not to say that her education is complete in a teleological sense, but that this part of her education is complete (more on this later, when I turn to the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson).

'reintroducing her to language…returns her to her voice' (*ibid.,* p. 58), not in the controlling way that Gregory behaves, but in a therapeutic way that enables her to reclaim her own voice. Like Stella she experiences a transformation, but her education is still not complete. Rather Paula and Stella are 'on their own individual journey towards recovering their 'voice', sense of self' (Skea, 2019, p. 92). Paula, most strikingly, goes on to use this voice in her 'aria of revenge' (Cavell, 1996, p. 59) against her husband Gregory. In the final scenes in *Gaslight*, Gregory has been captured by Cameron and tied to a chair in the attic. Looking directly at her husband, Paula declares "I want to *speak* to my husband, I want to *speak* to him alone". Reclaiming her voice here, her right to speak, Paula is reclaiming herself. The recovery of voice, for Paula, is physical and related to her capacity for reason. In a scene reminiscent of *Macbeth*, Paula holds a knife before her husband toying with the notion of madness. She mockingly takes on the role of the mad woman he has been projecting on to her for so long, as she asks the questions (providing her own answers):

> Are you suggesting that this is a knife? I do not see any knife. You must have dreamed you put it there…Are you mad, my husband? Or is it I who am mad? Yes, I am mad…If I were not mad, I could have helped you…but because I am mad, I hate you, and because I am mad, I betrayed you … and because I am mad, I am rejoicing in my heart without a shred of pity, with glory in my heart.

The tables have turned; it is her *cogito ergo sum* (*ibid.,* p. 60), the reclaiming of her reason. Her '*cogito'* (*ibid.,* p. 60), her existence through the awareness of herself, through the speech act, is established. It is established, but not complete, for like Stella, this represents a transformation to the next stage. In the scene on the balcony, there is a conversation about the fog (which has been an ever-present feature of the film) which is beginning to clear. As Paula herself acknowledges, "this will be a long night", meaning that there is still some way to go. In this sense then, the Cavellian understanding of the denial and recovery of voice is perfectionist rather than perfectible[29], leading to some level of self-reliance. The next section of this chapter picks up on these notions of perfectionism and self-reliance being inextricably tied to the

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[29] 'Perfectionist' here referring to a never-ending process to which I refer later.

notion of one's sense of self, drawing on Cavell's interpretation of the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson in relation to these two melodramas.

3.2.2 Emersonian moral perfectionism and self-reliance

In this section, I investigate Cavell's interpretation of Ralph Waldo Emerson's moral perfectionism and self-reliance in order to cast light on how the young deaf boys might come to see their own *selves* through the making of the film, and the dialogue that this creates with the viewer of the film.

Born in Boston (USA), in 1803, Emerson was a founding member of the Transcendentalist movement; a movement which advocated a way of thinking about Nature and self-culture. The son of a Unitarian minister, he too was ordained and became a pastor but over a period of time, he began to struggle to uphold some of the tenets of Unitarianism, particularly that of the sacrament of the Last Supper (Tanner, 1995). In 1832, Emerson resigned from his position as a minister in the Unitarian church, instead focussing on and writing about Transcendentalism and its belief that people are at their best when they are truly self-reliant. Self-reliance, argues Standish (2004, p. 101), 'depends upon a subtle reading of the tensions between the independence implied in [Emerson's] "Insist on yourself: never imitate (Emerson, 1982, p. 199)"', and the question of how and through what we must *find* ourselves. In Cavell's reading of the melodramas, this finding of the self is seen as a form of resistance to conformity or compliance, enacted through a perfectionist education with 'Self-reliance as its aversion' (Emerson, 1995, p. 26). In *Cities of Words* (2005a), Cavell focusses on Emerson's essay 'Self-Reliance' (Emerson, 1995, p. 23), and in particular on the notions of 'conformity' and 'aversion' in relation to society. Fulford (2009) argues that Cavell sees Emerson's essay as a rejection of conformity in favour of self-reliance. Cavell (2005a) suggests that aversion is turning away from a society which calls for conformity and argues that when society calls for us to conform, we must decide whether to obey or instead find the self-reliance to turn way. In other words, it falls upon the self to make that most fundamental philosophical decision about how we choose to lead our lives.

However, this reliance on the self is not to be misinterpreted as individualism, rather it is the position of the individual in relation to society, to the 'other'. Returning then to the melodramas, both Stella and Paula are forced into positions where they must decide whether to conform or to find the self-reliance to turn away; Paula turns away from Gregory's controlling demands, and Stella turns away from the demands of high society. In both these instances, self-reliance is presented as an example of the activation of one's voice. In my film too, there are moments where the boys demonstrate self-reliance and show an understanding of self-reliance. This is clear when Hashim says, "Okay, what's different about me, is that I've got quite a strong personality, and I aren't afraid, I aren't of just telling people what I think" (13.40 mins). As viewers, we hear Hashim's voice very clearly here. We understand his standpoint and begin to reach an understanding of him. A dialogue is established.

In *Cities of Words* (2005a), Cavell argues against the received wisdom that Stella's story is one of self-sacrifice, and that, in walking away at the end of the film, Stella is in fact walking towards self-reliance. Stella, he argues, has discovered that the society she sought to be part of is 'not to her own taste' (p. 278). He describes an Emersonian perfectionist image of Stella not in mourning for all that she appears to have lost (belonging, her marriage, her daughter *et cetera*), but in ecstasy for a new beginning. Stella, writes Cavell in *Contesting Tears* (1996), 'has the right not to share their tastes, that she is free to leave' (p. 217). That this transformation is perfectionist is important to Cavell. There is an imperfectability that is reminiscent of Emerson's essay, 'Circles' (Emerson, 1995, p. 146). In this essay, Emerson describes the life of a man as a 'self-evolving circle, which, from a ring…rushes on all sides outwards towards new and larger circles, and that without end' (*ibid.,* p. 147). There is no final reading and no virtue which is final. Perfectionism here refers to a non-finite process whereby we seek to continually perfect ourselves rather than reach a state which is perfect. As Cavell, (1990, p. 9) writes in *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome,* one is 'on a path to one's unattained self. I will call it the next self…' There are ends but no final end.

The philosopher too is positioned as an endless seeker of truth, virtue and understanding.

For Cavell, 'the constant factor between the genres is that the women of the melodramas are also to be understood in terms of moral perfectionism' (Cavell, 2005, p. 108) in that the female lead 'seeks her unattained but attainable self otherwise than in marriage' (*ibid.,* p. 108). Having sought marriage at the beginning of the film *Gaslight*, losing and reclaiming her voice (indeed her *self*), Paula concludes: "Then there was from the beginning nothing". There is a realisation that it is not through marriage that she exists, as she declares to Gregory in the final scenes, "Now I exist because now I speak for myself", and she is free to move on to the next part of her life. There is a realisation of other possible *selves.* In the film made with the young deaf boys, there are also moments where the two boys show an understanding of other possible *selves*. This is particularly evident when they talk about their past, their present, and their possible futures.

The making of the film with the boys (from a marginalised group) has allowed them to show themselves to the viewer, to have their voices heard, and to establish a dialogue with the viewer. Voice on film is powerful, and the boys have had the opportunity to talk about their possible *selves,* and to demonstrate self-reliance. In Cavellian philosophical terms then, the link between the recovery of voice and the finding of the self is clear and firmly established in the context of his writing on film. I return to his writing on film later in the thesis. Before this, however, I wish to take up Cavell's invitation in *Cities of Words* (2005a), to visit 'a still further philosophical location…' (p. 114). That is to say, I wish to turn from voice in philosophical terms to the speech act itself through Cavell's philosophical reinterpretation of John Austin's work on language. I wrote earlier that Paula recovers her voice in the speech act that constitutes her 'aria' (Cavell, 1996, p. 60) of revenge. Here, she deliberately chooses what to assert and the language she uses, in order to be taken seriously. If this is the case, then in giving the deaf boys a voice (through the expression of language) in film, I must pay attention to language and the speech act itself, and in doing so turn once again to Cavell and his work on language which is central to his philosophy.

3.2.3 Distinguishing between performative and passionate utterances

> A performative utterance is an offer of participation in the order of law…A passionate utterance is an invitation to improvisation in the disorders of desire (Cavell, 2005b, p. 19).

In this part of the thesis I will look at the importance and power of the act of speech as expressed by Cavell, as an ordinary language philosopher, in his re-evaluation of Austin's work on the 'performative utterance'. In this re-evaluation, Cavell takes Austin's notion of 'performative utterance' and develops his own ideas of 'passionate utterance'. In what follows, I will explore these philosophical studies of language and I will argue that there is an element of Cavell's 'passionate utterance' that is of particular pertinence to my research. In doing so, I am especially concerned with the implications this has for the young deaf boys in making the film.

It is not my intention in this section to provide an in-depth study of Austin's theory of 'performative utterance', taken from *How to Do Things with Words* (1976) and Cavell's chapter on 'performative and passionate utterance', as it appears in chapter seven of *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow* (2005b). This has been done by distinguished scholars such as Munday (2009) and Standish (2004). Rather what I wish to argue, is that Cavell's critique (or extension) of Austin's writing is twofold. Firstly, Cavell argues that Austin gives insufficient attention to the emotional aspects of language. Secondly, that it does not sufficiently consider what words *do* and that it is 'skittish' (Cavell, 2005b, p. 156) in its treatment of passion, is significant to the words used by the boys in the film, and to which I will pay attention in my philosophical reading of the film.

It is important to note here that what follows in this section may read like an exercise in linguistic analysis; it is not Cavell's intention. Cavell is an ordinary language philosopher, wanting to reclaim ordinary (everyday) language for philosophy, and considering how that impacts on our understanding of the world. In *The Claim of Reason,* Cavell (1999a) refers to Wittgenstein's notion of bringing back words from their metaphysical to their ordinary uses.

Rothman and Keane (1997) describe Cavell's writing as 'the language of the self' (p. 15). That is to say, Cavell turns to himself and his own experience, and calls upon the reader to turn to themselves. The language of the self is (paradoxically) how we voice our ideas; it is not private but shared. As a common language, 'the language of the self *is the* language of others' (*ibid., p. 15*), and so is key to how we are in the world and how we relate to others. In *Must We Mean What We Say?* (2015), Cavell writes that he is less concerned with the linguistics/mechanics of 'how we know what we say and mean' (p. xviii), and more concerned with what our words say about 'our relation to the world, and others, and myself' (*ibid.,* p. xviii). What he suggests is 'understanding the philosophical appeal to the ordinary…uncovering the necessary conditions of the shared world' (*ibid.,* p. xix). In engaging with Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* (1976)*,* Cavell pays close attention to the philosophical language Austin uses, and acknowledges that he is in profit from it. However, as Munday (2009, p. 57) points out, Cavell sees the passionate utterance 'as a missed opportunity or failing in Austin's theory'.

Cavell starts with Austin's binary distinction in the speech act between constative and performative utterances. Put simply, constative utterances are statements of fact that are verifiable, and fail if they are untrue, unverifiable, or unclear. Performative utterances, on the other hand, are concerned with the notion that to *say* something is to *do* something or that in *saying* something one is actually *doing* something. An example of the performative utterance includes, 'I do…' in the marriage ceremony. Performative utterances are neither true nor false; they are not nonsense, but there are accepted circumstances for the performance of the utterance to work. For example, at the marriage ceremony there must be two people to be married (and they must act in accordance with the utterances made following the event), there must also be a celebrant, witnesses, *et cetera*. For Austin, these are the conditions in which the performative utterance can be said to be 'happy' or 'unhappy', or in felicitous or infelicitous conditions. Having laid out the binary distinction, Cavell develops his argument. It is at this juncture, in the proposition of the ternary distinction that Cavell first takes issue with

Austin's theory and writes that 'what I called a crisis was the breakdown of the performative/constative distinction' (Cavell, 2005b, p. 172). This 'crisis' points to a flaw in his argument that Austin himself recognises. As Munday (2009) explains, Austin takes as one example what appears to be a straightforward constative, the phrase 'the cat is on the mat'. However, 'the cat is on the mat' implies that the speaker believes this to be the case whether the cat is or is not, in fact, on the mat. His binary distinction becomes blurred.

Austin then introduces a threefold explanation to further describe the binary distinction between constative and performative statements. He introduces the *locutionary act* (the physical act of saying something meaningful), the *illocutionary force* (the speaker's intent in producing an utterance. For example, promising or advising), and the *perlocutionary effect* (the effect of, or what is done by, the words spoken). It is here that Cavell then points to, 'what I [Cavell] think of as catastrophe in his [Austin's] theory (Cavell, 2005b, p. 172). Austin claims that all performative utterances are both locutionary and illocutionary. That is to say, somebody has physically said something and there was intent in saying it. What Cavell accuses Austin of doing here is ruling out the perlocutionary effect of the performative utterance as 'irrelevant' (p. 172). As Munday (2009, p. 65) puts it, 'due to their "unconventional nature", perlocutions fail to fit in neatly with his conception of a performative/illocutionary utterance'. It is from this interest in the unconventional nature of the performative utterance that Cavell proposes 'to extend Austin's theory of performative utterances to take account of what I [he] shall call passionate utterances' (Cavell, 2005b, p. 179).

In 'extending' Austin's performative utterances, Cavell is not rejecting them. As he writes in the discussion of his own passionate utterances, 'so my idea of a passionate utterance turns out to be a concern with performance after all' (*ibid.,* p. 187). Cavell, however, does not provide a clear and neat definition of 'passionate utterance'. Rather, he discusses the concept in terms that indicate that passionate utterances are a form of perlocution, but not the only form. He then goes on to give examples of passionate utterances. As Standish (2004, p. 94) explains, 'Cavell mitigates any tendency towards the

'subliming' of rules by throwing emphasis on the location of rule-following practices in the hurly-burly of the form of life'. The examples he gives are not examples of what somebody might say in the 'throes of passion' or in a moment of heightened tension (although they might be). The first example he gives is, 'I'm bored' (Cavell, 2005b, p. 177). Passionate utterances then, can be everyday expressions in the context of 'ordinary exchanges', and it is in these exchanges that there is an 'awareness of the individual, both as self and other' (Munday, 2009, p. 60). The pertinence of Cavell's passionate utterance lies here in relation to my argument. There is a demand for a response that is at the heart of Cavell's passionate utterance. 'I am not invoking a procedure', writes Cavell, referring to the performative utterance as defined by Austin, but rather 'I am inviting exchange' (Cavell, 2005, p. 181). And, this invitation to exchange might be denied. As Fulford and Skea (2019, p. 75) argue, 'in passionate utterance, one is moved to put one's relationship with the other, at risk', and as Cavell writes, himself, 'each instance of [the passionate utterance] directs, and risks, if not costs, blood' Cavell, 2005, p. 187).

It is this element of risk that makes a connection here between passionate utterance and the articulation of one's own voice. In telling their stories through film, the young deaf boys are risking their relationship with the viewer and *vice-versa*. The film, and what the boys say (or sign) about their lives and deafness, demands a response from the viewer; this is where the *passion* is to be found. The language used by the boys in the film may not be complex, indeed it is common, everyday, ordinary language. However, the sentiments and passions embedded in what they express leave them exposed, and yet a response is demanded at the same time. The response here is one that is demanded of the viewer of the film. The risks are high, this is no invitation to orderliness but an invitation to possible disorder. It is even possible that 'you may contest my invitation…deny that I have standing with you' (Cavell, 2005, p. 182).

3.2.4 Reflections on voice

Thus far in this chapter, I have focused on the rich conception of 'voice' as lived by Cavell, and as demonstrated in his writing, particularly in his philosophical writing on film. The repression and recovery of voice, the right to have a voice, are nuanced notions that will come to bear on my understanding of my film. So too are the notions relating to finding oneself through voice and the speech act itself. I wrote earlier in this chapter that I am not concerned with voice in terms of 'the student voice', as used with students at all tiers of the educational system. Rather I am concerned with the voice of young deaf people, in terms of them having the right to express their voice, to give account, and claim that they have the right to be heard. In the next chapter, I focus on the complexities of the Cavellian conception of 'account' and its implications for my research.

3.3 From 'voice' to 'account'

3.3.1 Introduction

In this section, what I shall argue for my film is that it disrupts an easy understanding of what it means for a young deaf person to tell their story. Thus far, I have made my case for using Cavell's philosophy in order to illustrate how his writing on repression and recovery of voice – the finding of the self through voice, and the power and demands of the speech act itself – are of relevance to my research with young deaf people. As I described in chapter 1 of this thesis, the ability to tell one's story and, to give account is key to the understanding of self-identity and culture in the D/deaf world. As a development of this, I now turn my attention to the notion of 'account' and bring philosophical thinking and writing to bear on this issue. That is to say, I will develop the notion of the importance of giving voice, in order to be able to account for richer philosophical notions of accounting: giving account, being called to account, and the disruption of account.

3.3.2 Foreground

Of particular relevance to my argument is Cavell's reading of the work of a second (the first being Emerson) nineteenth century Transcendentalist philosopher and writer, Henry David Thoreau. In considering 'account', I draw upon the work of Thoreau, and Cavell's thoughts on his seminal work, *Walden* (Thoreau, 1854/2014). I have to acknowledge here that what I am doing may seem strange. The approach I take may appear to be quite radical in terms of bringing together the work of a nineteenth century Transcendentalist philosopher, Cavell's reading of his work, and the stories of deaf children. However, it is precisely what these philosophers have experienced, in giving account and telling their own stories through their philosophical writing, that illustrates the reading of my film as a disruption to that easy understanding of what it is for a young deaf person to tell their story.

Not only must I draw attention to the original approach I take in making reference to Cavell's *The Senses of Walden* (1992), a book about Thoreau's *Walden*, and applying these concepts to my own writing, but I will provide an explanation of the complexities of layering that this entails for the reader. There is good reason to be cautious in writing like this (Standish, 2016), for as Cavell poses the question himself in the opening line of the preface of *The Senses of Walden*, 'What hope is there in a book about a book?' (Cavell, 1992). As Standish (2006, p. 145) points out, many texts about another text often amount to nothing more than 'eulogies to pet thinkers'. However, there is something else at play here. In considering *Walden*, Cavell is also thinking about his book about *Walden*, and this is where the difficulty lies. We are forced to consider layers of things. One can take *Walden*, simply as an account, Thoreau's (rather long and boring in Cavell's words) story of two years spent in the woods; except it is not only that. It is about his story, his account, but it is also about him calling himself to account, calling his American readers to account. Then, in another layer, there is Cavell writing about Thoreau on accounting, linked with his own project of finding his voice and telling his own story. That is to say, in reading and writing about *Walden*,

Cavell is called to account in terms of his own positioning in philosophy, and also in terms of what language can do.

As I focused on the experiences of young deaf people in the first chapter, it is appropriate here to focus on the life experiences of both Cavell and Thoreau, and to draw upon parallels between the life experiences of both writers that are of significance to their thinking in giving their own accounts. It is important to begin with Thoreau, not only in order to comprehend the context within which he was writing, but why his writing became of such importance to Cavell. Furthermore, it will point to parallels in the life experiences of young deaf people in terms of the barriers they face in telling their own stories. To tell a story, however, is not to be taken at a simplistic level here. It is not just a matter of recounting a narrative of one's life, as often happens in narrative research, but a giving of an account in such a way that one is accounting for oneself and what matters. This does more than a straightforward autobiography.

I have already made reference to Thoreau's prominence in the 'circle of radical intellectuals called the "Transcendentalists," for their belief in the higher ideas that "transcended" daily life' (Walls, 2017, p. xiv). Of significance here is the social activism and the defence of (N)nature[30] that was fundamental to the behaviour of the group that put it at odds with contemporary society. In the conflict that characterised his relationship with society, 'Thoreau often found his voice silenced and censored…In short, Thoreau struggled…to find a voice that could be heard despite the din of cynicism and the babble of convention' (*ibid.,* p. xxi). Like Cavell, all of Thoreau's writings are, in some measure, autobiographical, and as such his work too represents his thinking in the context of his life-experiences. The echoes of Cavell's own experiences can be heard all too clearly here.

Even within the movement itself, Thoreau struggled to find his own writing style (his voice). Of pre-eminence in the early days of this group of intellectuals was Emerson, to whom Thoreau was a devoted friend, or as

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[30] '*Nature* when it names a divine or holy essence…*nature* when the word is used…in a secular way' (Wall, L. D., 2017, p. xxii).

Walls (2017, p. 82) puts it, 'A Transcendental Apprentice'. Thoreau even spent a long period of time living with Emerson and his family, and it was in these circumstances, 'under Emerson's roof, that Thoreau consolidated himself as above all a writer' (*ibid.*, p. 122). This life-long relationship with Emerson, however, did not always run smoothly. So close was the relationship, that there were accusations from within the group that Thoreau's writing could hardly be distinguished from Emerson's own. Another member of the group, Ellery Channing, even went so far as to declare that, 'Henry will never be a writer' (*ibid.,* p. 166). The accusation was that Thoreau had no original ideas, and that he did not have a voice of his own. This view that he was a mere parrot of Emerson led to him not being invited to lecture, in a form of censorship of his work. This censorship of Thoreau's work was broader than this. In abandoning the Unitarian Church, the established church of the day, Thoreau was thought to be blasphemous, especially when writing and lecturing, with great sympathy, about the Hindu scripture, the *Bhagavad Gita,* which he held to be just as valid as any of the teachings of the Unitarian church. Such accusations however, left Thoreau undeterred. As Walls (2017, p. 302) writes, 'the more Thoreau knew his own mind and spoke it aloud, the more the era's outraged guardians of public morality sought to cut off his tongue'. It was then, precisely this criticism and censorship that led Thoreau from being a quiet, introspective thinker, to becoming an independent writer with the confidence to claim in *Walden* (Thoreau, 1854/2014, p. 6), 'I have lived some thirty years on this planet, and I have yet to hear the first syllable of valuable advice from my peers'. In writing *Walden* then, Thoreau finds his voice, as did Cavell through philosophical autobiography. In a thought expressed by Thoreau that could equally be applied to Cavell, he writes, 'if a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer, (*ibid.,* p. 175). In stepping to the tune he hears, as Walls (2017, p. 243) explains, 'the one project Thoreau completed at Walden Pond was, in effect, an essay on how to write'.

For Cavell, the notions of finding one's voice and giving account come out not only in *The Senses of Walden* (1992), but also in his book, *A Pitch of*

Philosophy (1994). In the latter, Cavell is giving account of the kind of philosophy he wants to do. It is a theoretical account of why autobiography is a proper way of doing philosophy. Autobiography is essentially the story of oneself, and if, as Cavell argues in *Little Did I Know* (Cavell, 2010), autobiography is philosophy, then the two cannot be separated. Arguing that the two things are interrelated, *A Pitch of Philosophy* becomes both an actual autobiography (telling his story), and an account of his own philosophical project. The context may be different, but the same can be said of Thoreau's project. The telling of his story of the time spent at Walden cannot be separated from his Transcendentalist philosophy.

It is clear that the repression of voice and the need to give account are common to the philosophy of Cavell and Thoreau. As such, there are implications in applying their philosophy to the deaf boys having their voices heard, as they give account through film. I return to this in my reading of the film. The vein in which I am writing is a rich and complex one. In order to unpick the concept of accounting, which is multi-layered, I shall separate out the concept into three notions that will make clear what Thoreau and Cavell can bring to bear in my thinking about my film. Firstly, I will focus on 'giving account', the story of what is going on in the two books. Secondly, I will turn to 'being called to account'; the gauntlet thrown down by Thoreau, and Cavell's response to this challenge. Thirdly, I will look at the 'disruption of account'; the challenge from both writers. To achieve this, I turn now to a close reading of *Walden* and *The Senses of Walden*.

3.3.3 Giving account

At face value, Thoreau's book *Walden* (1854/2014) can be read as the account, written in the mid-nineteenth century, of one man's sojourn over two years (condensed into one) in a cabin in the woods that he built himself, by Walden Pond. We read in great detail, of his day-to-day experiences as the seasons pass, and as he leads the simple life, close to nature. We read about the crops he planted, the animals he encountered, and the environment in which he had deliberately chosen to live. He sets out his intentions in the chapter of *Walden* titled, 'Where I Lived and What I Lived For':

> I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived (Thoreau, 1854/2014, p.51).

And yet, it is much more than this. Here, I focus on Cavell's consideration of Thoreau's work which adds another dimension to our understanding of Thoreau's account of his time spent in the woods. Despite declaring that 'Walden sometimes seems an enormously long and boring book' (Cavell, 1992, p. 20), his own close reading of the text has indeed reached a great understanding of the book, in Thoreau's own terms, which bears further discussion. Cavell understands that Thoreau's work is not about the mastery of accounts, but that he is accounting for himself, his life, and for what America had become.

In places, Thoreau presents the reader with excerpts from his financial accounts. Thoreau gives these detailed lists (down to the half cent), of his accounts for the building of his hut, 'Two second-hand windows with glass, $2.42…Mantle-tree iron, $0.15' (p. 28). He even closely itemises expenses on food for a period of eight months, 'rice, $1,73-1/2…One watermelon, $0.02' (Thoreau, 1854/2014, p. 33). Cavell understands that this is not a set of accounts for the economics of life, but an account of the economy of the self. In presenting the reader with these columns of accounts, Thoreau is

inviting the reader to be 'the auditor, not only of this balance sheet but of his account as a whole' (Standish, 2006, p. 147).

From the very first page, Thoreau emphasises the importance of not only giving his own account, making no excuses for writing his own account in the first person, but also encouraging all writers to give a 'simple and sincere account of his own life.' (Thoreau, 1854/2014, p. 3). However, the language Thoreau is deliberately choosing to use here is not as straightforward as we think. It is unsettling. Thoreau is wrong-footing us, his readers. Throughout the first chapter of *Walden*, entitled 'Economy', it becomes clear that Thoreau is giving an account (noun) and accounting (verb) for his financial affairs on two levels, through the use of 'puns and paradoxes' (Cavell*,* 1992, p. 16). He is both writing an account, that is writing the story of his time spent in the woods, and giving account, meaning that he is accounting for the life he has led. In this chapter, the language that is used is that of economics, business, and accounting. Yet, he is not referring merely to the cost of building his cabin when he writes:

> My accounts, which I can swear to have kept faithfully, I have, indeed, never got audited, still less accepted, still less paid, and settled (Thoreau, 1854/2014, p. 11).

In giving his own account, his own story of his experiment in living in the woods, Thoreau is holding his life to the light for others to inspect (audit) and judge, just as he wants others to do (an idea that I will develop when I discuss 'calling to account'). Furthermore, as Standish (2006) argues, in writing *Walden*, Thoreau produces not just an account of the time he spent there, but similarly an account of himself, showing us at the same time what counts for him. For the deaf boys in my film, the process is not just telling their story or giving their account, for they too will lay bare what counts for them. In the film, they are very open and frank when talking about difficulties they have experienced in the past, what they think of their lives in the present, and what their hopes are for the future.

3.3.4 Calling to account

Thoreau's *Walden* (1854/2014) may be an account of his time spent at Walden Pond, but it is also a calling to account. It may appear to be a book about an individual, and it is indeed a very individualistic reading. It would be a mistake, however, to overemphasise 'Thoreau's hermit-like individualism' (Standish, 2006, p. 147), for Thoreau is but a mile away from the town and receives regular visitors. He wants the townsfolk to bear witness to his experiment, so that it may serve as an example. *Walden* (1854/2014) can be read simply as an account of his experiment in living. However, to accept it on this level would be to miss the point. It is his story and an account of his financial affairs, whilst at the same time he is writing about the political context of his time. He is holding America and Americans themselves to account for their beliefs and values[31]. For as he wrote as an epigraph to the first edition of *Walden*, 'I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as the chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake the neighbours up'. When he writes, 'if only to' what he is really saying is, 'in order to'; his act is deliberate here. Thoreau presents us with his experiment of living for us to consider, and he calls on others, at an individual and political level, to do the same. In a similar way, the boys in my film give an account of D/deafness that demands a response from the viewer in the manner of a passionate utterance.

In his chapter on 'Sounds' in *Walden*, Thoreau gives us a rich description of the noises he can hear from his cabin, from the 'rumbling of wagons over bridges' (Thoreau, 1854/2014, p. 70) to the 'braying of dogs' (*ibid.,* p.70), but in his reference to the sound of the chanticleer, the cock crowing, there is an unsettling meaning. As Cavell writes, 'the purity of the Chanticleer's prophecy is that he can speak only to waken and to warn' (Cavell, 1992, p. 39). Like the chanticleer, Thoreau is calling for America to awaken from its slumbers, and warning them of the problems presented by their politics. He is awakening America to the lack of their own cultural heritage, and is critical

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[31] It is interesting to draw the parallel here, that Cavell was writing *The Senses of Walden* in 1971, just as the Vietnam war was coming to an end, an era of political upheaval and national shame for America.

of the increasing industrialisation, epitomised in his disdain of the railroads and the felling of the New England Forests. Thoreau was witness to great change, and he was alerting the world, in particular America, to the demise of the old and the birth of the new. In this sense, *Walden* is a longer version of calling society to account as he presents it in 'On the Duty of Civil Disobedience' (Thoreau, 1854/2014), and his account of the night he spent in jail. He is not unlike the chanticleer himself, in crowing for the liberation he feels in exercising his powers through giving his account. As Thoreau is writing *Walden*, in 1854, the railway lines already pass directly by Walden Pond, and it is as if by building his cabin there, Thoreau wants 'to confront the railroad as part of his reality' (Walls, 2017, p. xvi). What he writes, and the language he uses too, is confrontational. There is something in the language Thoreau uses that is unusual. Each reckoning, writes Cavell, is a 'mark of honesty' (Cavell, 1992, p. 30). The accounts are full, detailed, and nothing is left out. Cavell is deeply aware that this is not just a story; there is something else going on here, with the parodies acting as a device, and the language disrupting what we think of as 'accounting'.[32] The process of reading *Walden* (1854/2014) is then, a calling to account in itself, and what I shall argue for later in this thesis is what that might mean in relation to watching the film.

3.3.5 Disruption of account

In the second chapter of *Walden*, titled 'Reading', Thoreau introduces the concepts of what he calls the 'mother tongue' and the 'father tongue' (Thoreau, 1854/2014, p. 57). They are concepts mentioned only in one place, but Cavell focusses on them (particularly the father tongue) intently. What Thoreau is writing about here is reading and how we read things that are very familiar to us in a way that pays little attention to the language. However, in reading there are moments when we question what a word actually means or how we should take it as a reader. The experience stops

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[32] I will return to this theme when I look at notions of translation in philosophical terms in the next section of this chapter.

us in our tracks and profoundly unsettles our familiar relationship to our words. This is illustrative of what Thoreau means by the 'father tongue'. The 'mother tongue' is that familiarity of language (that we learn at our mother's knee), but the 'father tongue', argues Cavell (1992) without any sense of hierarchy or patriarchy, is precisely that moment when we have to decide what words mean. There is an interesting link here in terms of language acquisition. I wrote earlier about the difficulties young deaf learners experience in acquiring language as a development or progression through identifiable stages. What Cavell does here is to destabilise this notion that we simply progress from an easy use of language, to a more complex and articulate one. Rather, we experience the one language in two different ways. The two 'tongues' represent a duality in our relationship with language which Cavell expresses through the 'mother' and 'father' tongue. It might be that in my film, the language (signing) that the boys use may be more readily associated with the 'mother tongue'. However, what I am arguing here is that whilst the 'father tongue' might normally be associated with reading the written word, it could equally be associated with the signed (BSL) word. The viewing of my film is a being called to account. There is a possibility of a father tongue experience.

In *Walden,* Thoreau comments that, 'books must be read as deliberately and as reservedly as they were written' (Thoreau, 1854/2014, p. 15). In *The Senses of Walden,* Cavell considers the position of the reader of *Walden* and encourages us to read the book in a 'high sense' (Cavell, 1992, p. 5) which would require us to be open to the father tongue. To read the book in a 'high sense' is to be sensitive to it as a scripture, and to experience the 'father tongue'. It demands of us that we read it in a certain way, or that we are sensitive to the transformatory possibilities of language, and it has the potential to disrupt our familiar (motherly) relationship to our words. Cavell explores the idea of reading and writing as presencing, 'it is the ground upon which they *[the reader and writer]* will meet' (*ibid.,* p. 62). In one sense, the reader's position is that of a stranger to the words. In another sense we are not, we know the words, yet we are outside their meaning. The reader is at 'bent arm's length, and alone with the book' (*ibid.,* p. 62), alone with the

language in a state of translation. I go further here, in suggesting that a father tongue relationship with our words also entails being in a state of translation in relation to them, and the life they suggest for us. It is through this presencing that we are destabilised and forced into translation. In the experience of the father tongue, we are forced back onto our own words. We are obliged to decide for ourselves what Thoreau means in the language he uses in his account. Take for example, Thoreau's account of hoeing, which he uses, as Cavell explains, as a metaphor for writing. Thoreau writes, 'it will bear some iteration in the account, for there was no little iteration in the labor' (Thoreau, 1854/2014, p. 89). Here, in talking of the repetitive nature of his work hoeing in the fields, he is also making reference to the repetitive nature of his revisiting what he has written. He then takes this metaphor a step further when he describes, 'making invidious divisions with my hoe' (Thoreau, 1854/2014, p. 89). Here, the use of the father tongue points to Cavell's deduction that, 'the writer's power of definition of dividing, will be death to some, to others birth' (Cavell, 1992, p. 22). Or, as Fulford (2016, p. 526) further develops, 'just as the hoe cuts into the soil, so writing is a kind of cutting; of ideas onto the page'. By turning the soil, Thoreau is exposing new earth to the air in the same way he exposes words to the reader in his writing.

In a close reading (reading in a high sense) of *Walden* (1854/2014), the sensitive reader experiences the 'father tongue'. The father tongue, 'the noblest thoughts of man' (*ibid.,* p. 56) is, according to Thoreau, understood by very few scholars. Accounts written in the 'father tongue' must be read deliberately for a deeper understanding. By implication, he is pointing here to the need for his account to be read closely in order for it to be properly understood, highlighting that it might not be understood by all. This is exactly what Cavell does in *Senses of Walden*. And for Cavell, his experience of the 'father tongue', an encounter with words, is likened to a scimitar with the sun shining on both its surfaces, 'its sweet edge dividing you through the heart' (Cavell, 1992, p. 17). The language Cavell is using here may appear as hyperbolic, but what he is trying to convey is that, sometimes, we have to decide what a word means to us and how we might be affected by it. For

Cavell, these are life-changing, visceral experiences. In the same way, I consider that in watching the film, we may have a father tongue experience that could be life-changing and visceral.

The 'father tongue' disrupts our common understanding of words, it is not a new language which we are literally to translate, but one which we need to revisit and re-understand: acquiring the 'father tongue' necessitates discursive translation. Thoreau's words are deliberate. Cavell comments that 'the "father tongue" is not a new lexicon or syntax at our disposal, but precisely a rededication' (Cavell, 1992, p. 16). This is illustrated in Thoreau's account of borrowing an axe from a neighbour. This is not simply about borrowing an axe for the building of his hut, that he returned 'sharper than I received it' (Thoreau, 1854/2014, p. 23), but about borrowing words. We can only use words that we borrow from our inheritance and return them sharper: this is what it means to be open to the father tongue. In the same way, it is my intention to return the word 'deaf' sharper to the community after watching the film. This relationship with the word is not fixed in time. It is in continuous translation, and 'once in it, there seems no end; as soon as you have one word to cling to, it fractions or expands into others' (Cavell, 1992, p. 13). As Thoreau's words are deliberate, so are Cavell's, and as Cavell himself implies, 'a purpose of writing *The Senses of Walden* was to make *Walden* more difficult' (Saito, 2007, p. 264).

3.3.6 Reflections on understanding of account

This Thoreauvian iteration of 'account', and Cavell's reading of it, are of clear significance to the deaf boys in my film. In making the film, they too are giving account, calling the viewer to account, and disrupting our easy understanding of D/deafness. In reflecting on what I have written about 'account' in relation to my film, I have a final consideration. In line with what Cavell has written about Emerson's moral perfectionism as discussed earlier in this chapter, Thoreau's account is also not to be seen as a final account. As he prepares to leave Walden Pond, Thoreau writes about the migrating buffalo, seeking pastures new in a different latitude. The giving of one

account prepares the ground for new accounts to come. On reflection on his time in Walden, he writes, 'I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live' (Thoreau, 1854/2014, p. 175). In this sense, his notion of accounting is a series of beginnings. As I referred to earlier in this chapter, Cavell (1990, p. 9) writes in *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome,* that one is 'on a path to one's unattained self. I will call it the next self…' There are ends but no final end. I wrote earlier about the risk involved both for the deaf boys in articulating their voice in film, and for the viewer in watching the film. I argue here that there is an equal, but slightly different risk, in giving one's account in Thoreauvian terms. In giving account, the boys are exposed by what they express and the language they use. In the same way that the passionate utterance demands a response, their accounts hold others to account, putting the relationship between the boys and the viewer at even greater risk. It is perhaps possible that the viewer may see the film as a final account and not one 'in a series of turning-points in the middle and midst of life' (Standish, 2018, p. 431).

So far in this chapter, I have made my case for using Cavell's philosophy in order to illustrate how his writing on the repression and recovery of voice, and the importance of accounting and giving account, have great bearing on my film making research with young deaf people. This is particularly so in the context that a good deal of his philosophy is embedded in film. My attention will return to these elements in reading my film. In the next section, however, I will focus my attention on 'translation'. This is not in the empirical sense, as I discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, but in the philosophical sense of unsettlement or disruption. Again, I shall use Cavellian philosophy as a lens through which to look at *translation* in its philosophical sense, as a development of what I have said about the power of words to put us into a state of translation, in order to explain elements of the reading of the film later in the thesis. Of continued relevance to my argument is Cavell's autobiographical philosophy, but also the work of the Japanese Cavellian scholar, Naoko Saito.

3.4 Philosophy as translation

3.4.1 Introduction

In the first chapter of this thesis, I reached initial conclusions that point to concerns I have with narrative methodology in some empirical research. These are, I argued, specific to researching with young deaf people. One of these conclusions was that there are difficulties in translation, in a literal and empirical sense, which may affect one's ability to reach any 'truth' (if that can indeed be claimed to be the aim) in the research, if what the respondents are saying has to be firstly translated by a BSL interpreter, and then reinterpreted by the researcher. There is a double distance that does not necessarily occur when researching with other groups. In Cavellian terms, the respondents are very much at 'bent arm's length' to the research. In this part of the thesis, however, I turn from a conventional understanding of translation (as in translating from one language to another), to the idea of 'translation as a philosophical and educational theme' (Standish and Saito, 2017, p. 1) that is especially pertinent to Cavell's philosophy. In this section, I develop what I have written about the power of words (through Thoreau and Cavell) to put us into a state of translation that is disruptive and unsettling. I then turn to the potential of film to both philosophically disrupt, and to educate, in a way that is central to my aims in making a film with young deaf people.

3.4.2 What is meant by 'translation'?

It is important to take some time here to consider what is meant by the word *'translation'* in this section. It is not used, as I have stated, in the ordinary sense of simply translating from one language into another, though even this is not always easily settled. Take, for instance, the French word '*flâner'*, for which there is no direct English translation. It refers to the act of wandering around a city for no specific destination or purpose, but simply for the pleasure of it, and experiencing the atmosphere. Rather, what is meant by *'translation'* here in this chapter, is the state we experience in relation to

language, as Thoreau demonstrates when he uses the word, 'account', as I described in the previous section. Indeed, there is a strong link between the 'father tongue' and the concept of 'translation' as I use it in this section. Being 'put into translation' can be expressed as a metaphor for experiencing the 'father tongue'. What I am introducing here is not an entirely new concept but a progression of the same idea. We are thrown by meaning in language in a way that disrupts us. There is an unsettledness in the state of 'translation', and unsettledness is imbued in this concept. As Naoko Saito (2016) writes, by re-reading Henry David Thoreau's *Walden,* Cavell shows us that:

> Translation is not simply a matter involving two different language systems but rather that it permeates our lives as a matter of human *transformation* - a path from loss to rebirth (Saito, 2016. p. 436).

The concept of translation, however, is of little interest to philosophy if it is simply a metaphor. Building upon this notion of 'human transformation' in the quote above, Standish and Saito (2017, p. 2) point out that there is a danger of translation becoming 'a somewhat vague metaphor for transformation or change of one kind or another'. However, there is something much more important going on, and whilst acknowledging the relationship of the 'father tongue to 'translation', I will also point to how they differ. The 'father tongue' is, I have explained, related to language. 'Translation', on the other hand is more ontological. Translation should be regarded here, as a 'metonym of our lives' (*ibid.,* p. 2). That is to say, if language is an integral part of how a life is lived, then any change in meaning becomes a change in our lives. It is, as Standish and Saito argue, part of our education, and any 'conception of education that was insensitive to this would…be significantly deficient' (2017, p. 2). It is in this connection between translation and its potential to be educative that I wish to situate my film. Where there is the possibility of dynamic transformation, then philosophy as translation cannot be separated from education. Later in this section, I look at examples of film and its latent ability to educate through disruption and transformation. This will also come out in the reading of my film and make clear my intentions in making it.

3.4.3 Disruptive temporality in Cavell's autobiography

With regards to Cavell's work too, this richer notion of translation as metonym can be applied. In referring to Thoreau writing about the volatility of words, in *The Senses of Walden* (1992, p. 27), Cavell picks up on the idea that 'their truth is instantly translated'. Cavell is not simply 'talking about interlingual translation as conventionally understood' (Standish and Saito, 2017, p. 3), for if that were so, the accusation of translation as metaphor, as I discussed earlier, could be equally argued. What Cavell achieves in writing about *Walden* is an acknowledgement of 'the change from one form of one life to another' (*ibid.,* p. 3*).* In this sense then, this focus on the power of 'translation' to affect how we live our lives describes an unsettledness and fluidity. If we accept that translation is metonymic of our lives, and is therefore more ontological, then it is important here to draw out something else that is distinctive about this conception that comes out in the work of both Thoreau and Cavell; translation is linked to the idea of change. For Thoreau, it is a sense of journeying without a final destination in mind. Even as he reflects upon his departure from Walden Pond, he remarks that 'I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live' (Thoreau, 1854/2014, p. 174). Here, Thoreau points to a way of living life that sees its expression in Emersonian moral perfectionism, in that there is never a final *telos* in our lives; we reach one destination but there is always another place to go. For Cavell too, there is a constant sense of departure (not at homeness) in his autobiography that he presents in a manner which unsettles the reader.

To consider here Cavell's autobiography, his account of how he lived his life, I turn now to Cavell's autobiographical book*, Little Did I Know* (2010). It is worthy of note that whilst I acknowledge that I may appear to be moving to and fro between Cavell's books rather haphazardly, it is deliberate and intentional. Cavell's works are not linear. They do not focus on one or two concepts with a sense of ending at the concluding chapter, and then picking up on a new concept in the next book. Rather, he revisits concepts, refers to previous writing, and questions his life and the way he has lived it, in a way

that is disturbing to the reader. In *Little did I Know*, Cavell presents us with reflections on his own education in thinking about disruption. It is a form of translation through recollection. Like Thoreau's *Walden*, it destabilises the reader by not simply giving a straightforward account of his life. Rather, he takes an unusual approach to autobiography as philosophy, for he claims that philosophy is an abstraction of autobiography. For Cavell, philosophy is reflected and intertwined with autobiography, and he asserts his right to write in this manner. In 'Part 1', echoing Thoreau's use of metaphor, he refers back to *Walden,* comparing his understanding of autobiography as philosophy to Thoreau's reusing the timber of an old shed to build his own cabin. In writing about another of his own books, *A Pitch of Philosophy* (Cavell, 1994, p. 2), he writes, 'I have sought explicitly to consider why philosophy, of a certain ambition, tends perpetually to intersect the philosophical'. Here, as in Thoreau's work, the language is deliberate and explicit. Cavell is fully aware of criticisms of the language he uses in his writing, that he, 'cultivated too much complexity' (*ibid.,* p. 14), but he makes no apology for it. Rather, it is his intention to challenge and to disrupt the reader.

In a 'traditional' autobiography, the writer might start at the beginning (birth), and in a chronological order, bring the reader up to a point nearer the present (that has already passed). In Cavell's autobiography, he further disrupts the reader by having two timelines running through the book in order to 'keep separate the two necessary temporal registers in a narrative' (*ibid.,* p. 60), that is to say, the time the events happened, and the time he is writing about them. In Cavell's autobiography, the chronology is disrupted; things that ought to come at the beginning do not. He annotates and dates the times of writing in his autobiography, yet within each section the reader is not presented with a sequential account of his life, but one which jumps, without explanation, back and forth in time and place. On pages 10 and 11 for example, under the heading 'July 6, 2003', he begins by telling the story of meeting a toothless man in his father's shop in Sacramento, jumps forward to his return from Berkeley to Harvard to defend his PhD, and then back to the Jewish diaspora of the 1940s. It is as if 'the present self and the past self,

childhood and adulthood, call upon each other' (Saito, 2017, p. 163). This makes for a deliberately uncertain reading of the text, and one which is not fixed in time. This is not an easy account to read, as Cavell takes what he describes as 'Freud's detours on the path to death' (Cavell, 2010, p. 60).

It is my intention that the unsettling effect of this deviation from the chronological can be experienced in watching my film, in which temporality is not linear. This is deliberate both in the editing, and in the way in which the boys give their accounts. In the next section I will apply the philosophical understanding of translation I have described, and further develop the notion of disruption as education in order to address the educative potential of film.

3.4.4 An education of disruption and translation through film

In beginning to think about film as disruption and as education, I look to the esteemed Japanese Cavellian scholar, Naoko Saito, who has written extensively on philosophy as translation in the context of film. Saito (2016) writes that, 'film… will serve as a medium to rethink the intersection of culture, language and human transformation' (p. 436). In this section of the thesis, I explore the possibilities for disruption and translation (in terms used by Cavell and Thoreau), which are made available through viewing film, in the process of film making, and considering the implications for my own film.

In her treatment of Terrence Malick's film *The Tree of Life*[33], Saito (2017) draws upon Cavell's *Little Did I Know* to investigate the process of unsettling that Cavell refers to, and that appears also in the film. It should be noted here that Malick was one of Cavell's students, and that is not without significance in terms of the experience of watching his films. *The Tree of Life* is a narrative film about a middle-aged character, Jack O'Brien. Jack looks back over his life, focussing in particular on the impact of the untimely death of one of his younger brothers in childhood. The account of his life is given in a series of flashbacks. The narrative, however, is not presented in a linear

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[33] *The Tree of Life* (2011, directed by Terrence Malick) is an American experimental drama film, starring Brad Pitt and Sean Penn.

fashion, with the story jumping back and forth in time. This, as Saito writes, creates a story where 'the identity of this narrator is disrupted, discontinuous and unstable' (*ibid*., p. 165), placing the viewer into a state of translation. We are challenged in our understanding of time. The film, like Cavell's autobiography as philosophy, challenges us to look at our present self through our past self in a way that is unsettling and unfinished. For Cavell, writes Saito, 'philosophy in part involves a recovery and reappraisal of the past, not to make some kind of final statement' (*ibid*., p. 161). Nor is there any final statement in the film: instead, we see the adult Jack pass through an archway into some unspecified time (the future?). The potential for film to be disruptive and unsettling is clear here: it disturbs not only our sense of narrative, in terms of how the story is told to a viewer, but it also unsettles our own human relation to our 'selves'. It brings into question what it means to give account of our 'selves', and our lives.

Of further relevance to my argument here is Saito's (2016) paper on Sofia Coppola's film *Lost in Translation*[34]. This is a film about coming face to face with a different culture that mirrors my intentions to give an account of deaf culture through film. This film, set in Tokyo, is based on the premise of two Americans on a visit to Japan, Bob and Charlotte (accompanied by her husband, John), and their sense of alienation in a foreign culture. In her paper, Saito provides us with several ways of viewing the film. On one level, we see the protagonists literally *Lost in Translation,* as the services of an inadequate translator provides scenes of comic miscommunication, representing, 'a Western caricature of Japanese culture and people' (*ibid.,* p. 437). As Bob and Charlotte develop a relationship throughout the film, it could also be viewed as a love story, for which the setting is irrelevant, 'if they do not learn from Japanese culture, what is the point of setting the scene in Tokyo?' (*ibid.,* p. 438).

On another level, there is a much richer reading of the film, and Saito refers us back to Cavell and Thoreau's emphasis on the responsibility of the reader to find meaning in the words and to situate that meaning within ourselves.

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[34] *Lost in Translation* (2003, directed by Sofia Coppola) is an American romantic comedy-drama film.

Bob and Charlotte are indeed lost in the language and culture of Japan; they have a sense of loss which is destabilising. But, for transformation to occur, it is imperative that we lose ourselves. For, as Saito points out, 'self-possession requires dispossession' (*ibid.,* p. 440). In watching this play out, we the viewers, are forced into a position where we have to experience what is happening in the film, and so we too are destabilised and placed into translation. Then, as the film progresses and the relationship between Charlotte and Bob develops, there is a transformation: one that is experienced by the characters and the viewer. The characters come to accept themselves and each other, in an acknowledgement of their unfamiliar surroundings. We see this, for example when Bob announces that he is trying to organise a 'prison-break', and he and Charlotte go on a voyage of discovery that takes them beyond the confines of the hotel bar. In their conversation too, we hear transformation. Charlotte starts from not being sure what she is doing there, but is encouraged by Bob to know herself if she is not to be upset by the unknown. In the final scene, we see Bob and Charlotte kissing and separating. This is not to be read as a final transformation but is akin to Cavell's interpretation of Stella Dallas having completed her education. As Saito writes, Bob and Charlotte have been in a state of 'perfecting one's own culture in encountering the other – to keep moving on (*ibid.,* p. 442), and this has been the experience of the viewer. The educative and transformational possibilities of film to expose viewers to foreign culture, in my case deaf culture, are very powerful here, inviting the viewer to 'the experiment of translation' (*ibid.,* p. 443).

3.4.5 Reflections on philosophy as translation

In this part of the chapter, I have considered a philosophical understanding of translation, in which, as Munday (2017, p. 89) explains, 'English is translated into English'. I have described and made claim for its ability to disrupt and unsettle and pointed to how this might form part of our education. I have done this in the context of Cavell's writing on language (as an ordinary language philosopher) in his autobiographical work, and in the context of

film. I have also begun to explore how this might be of significance to my reading of my own film. Cavell has never written explicitly about education, and certainly not about education as a notion of schooling. He has though, referenced his own education in detail, and has been 'struck by the recurrence of education as a preoccupation in his writings' (Standish and Saito, 2017, p. 3). In the next chapter of the thesis, I will look more intently at the claims Cavell makes for film, and then consider what significance this has for my own claim regarding the educative potential of film.

Chapter 4. The educative potentialities of film

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will argue that for Cavell, what is 'educative' is perfectionist. In chapter 3 of this thesis, I introduced the concept of Emersonian moral perfectionism in relation to the recovery of voice in Cavell's reading of the films he calls the 'Melodramas of the Unknown Woman'. In this part of the thesis, the argument builds upon the concept of perfectionism to explain Cavell's 'education for grownups', and argues that a Cavellian conception of education is one that is transformational. It is not my intention to focus on defining concepts of 'education', just as Cavell (1990) does not seek to define perfectionism or propose it as a theory of the moral life. Rather, I seek to demonstrate the ways in which Cavell exemplifies a perfectionist education that can be found in film. I will also refer to Cavell's reading of another genre of Hollywood film that he calls the 'Comedies of Remarriage' (Cavell, 1996, p. 5), and the Cavellian notion of the 'education of grownups', to argue that the 'educative' in perfectionism demands change in our lives.

Central to Cavell's perfectionist education, developed from Thoreau's idea of 'uncommon schooling' (Thoreau, 1854/2014, p. 61), is the experience of 'crises'[35] in our lives. These are experiences that demand a reappraisal of the self, through which we may gain self-knowledge. In this chapter, I will argue that there are unique qualities to film which can be presented as 'crises', and which can be transformative in ways that we cannot anticipate. I will argue that film is more than 'educational', it is 'educative'[36]. I will also contend that film makes a claim on us as part of that crisis. The chapter concludes that these philosophical educative potentialities of film can be applied to my film. The film is educative because the deaf boys have

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[35] This is a use of the word 'crises' that is peculiar to Thoreau and Cavell that I will explain later in the chapter.

[36] I use the word 'educative' here, in terms of an education of the self.

confronted their own lives through signing (BSL) their experiences, and because the film has the power to transform the lives of the viewers.

As Standish and Saito (2017) note, Cavell does not write extensively about formal educational institutions, or indeed formal education or schooling. Rather, his accounts are of his personal experiences at Harvard and Berkeley universities, and include several disparaging descriptions of incidents that happened to him at school (Cavell, 2010). However, Standish and Saito (2017) also point to the fact that Cavell has often remarked that he, himself, has been struck by education as a recurring preoccupation in his writings, and especially so in his writings about film. Cavell does not write as an educational theorist who wants to influence what happens in classrooms; as Saito (2012, p. 185) puts it, 'the education that concerns Cavell cannot be translated immediately into classroom instruction – neither is this his intention'. 'He is not concerned with 'educational theory, yet all his work is concerned with a kind of education' (Standish and Saito, 2012, p. 1).

4.2 From 'uncommon schools' to the 'education of grownups'

In this section of the chapter, I return to Cavell's reading of *Walden* and focus specifically on the way in which Cavell picks up on Thoreau's brief, almost passing, reference to something he calls 'uncommon schools'. Not equating 'education' with 'schooling', Cavell takes Thoreau's idea and develops it and presents a much broader concept of education that is not (necessarily) linked to institutions at all. In *Walden,* Thoreau writes:

> We have a comparatively decent system of common schools for infants only; But…no schools for ourselves…it is time we had uncommon schools, that we did not leave off our education when we begin to be men and women. It is time that the villages were universities, with leisure…to pursue liberal studies the rest of their lives. Shall the world be confined to one Paris or Oxford for ever? (Thoreau, 1854/2014, p. 61).

This sole reference to 'uncommon schooling' in *Walden* (1854/2014, p. 61) is taken up by Cavell in *The Senses of Walden* (1992), where he sees a connection between uncommon schooling and Emersonian perfectionism. It

is not a relationship that is seen in Thoreau's work, but one that is strong in Cavell's writing. What Cavell argues for is not some reductive form of life-long learning, attending one course after another. What he argues for, is learning beyond institutions. Rather, as Standish (2006, p. 148) argues, 'Thoreau's experiment enacts a possibility of living that is tantamount to a kind of lifelong learning'. It is the experiment of living, and not any form of educational institution or educational course, that is important here. Indeed, Cavell takes a stance that is almost in opposition to formal schooling. In *Little Did I Know* (2010), his disappointment with his own education is, at times, stark. He relates one example from school when, at the age of eleven, he is so immersed in reading Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* in the playground, that he fails to hear the bell that signals the end of lunchtime and is late in returning to class. As a result, he is admonished by the teacher, and when this happens a second time, he is told to leave his book at home. Later in *Little Did I Know* (2010), Cavell exemplifies his understanding of teaching and learning, in contrast to formal learning, through relating stories of learning 'the poetry of pawnbroking' (p.120) whilst working alongside his father in his pawnbroker's shop, at the age of 14 or 15.

So for Cavell, what is educative is not necessarily, and sometimes definitely not, related to notions of schooling. What he develops from Thoreau's idea of uncommon schooling is a transformative idea of what is educative, and this he refers to as the 'education of grownups' (Cavell, 1999a, p.125). It is important not to be misled by Cavell's use of the word 'grownups' here, for as Saito (2012) reflects: 'Cavell's thinking is not restricted to the education of adults – education for those who have already mastered the education of childhood in "common schools." "Education is sadly neglected", already in childhood, still in adulthood' (p. 185). It is also important to note here however, that Cavell's use of the word 'grownup' is deliberate. Standish and Saito (2012), in asking themselves what Cavell means by 'grownup', conclude that he specifically chooses the childish word 'grownups' to deflate any pomposity in the notion that because we have reached a certain age or size, our education is complete. In order to further explore and explain the idea of the 'education of grownups', in the following sections of this chapter, I

will break down the idea into two strands that will develop an understanding of what is educative, that I will then go on to apply to my film. The first of these strands is that the 'education of grownups' is a perfectionist idea of transformation of the self. The second strand is that the 'education of grownups' is a form of self-culture that Cavell achieves through autobiography.

4.3 The 'education of grownups' as a perfectionist idea of transformation

In *The Claim of Reason* (1999a) Cavell writes:

> At an early point in a life the normal body reaches its full strength and height. Why do we take it that because we must then put away childish things, we must put away the prospect of growth and the memory of childhood? The anxiety in teaching, in serious communication, is that I myself require education. And for grownups this is not a natural growth but *change* [author's italics]. Conversion is a turning of our natural reactions; so it is symbolised as rebirth (1999a, p. 125).

The words 'conversion' and 'rebirth'[37] that Cavell uses here, are key to understanding this strand of the 'education of grownups' as a perfectionist idea of the transformation of the self.[38] As he writes in *The Senses of* Walden (1992, p. 60), 'for the child to grow he requires family and familiarity, but for a grownup to grow he requires strangeness and transformation, i.e., birth?' Cavell's conceptualisation of the educative is not linear. Rather, 'educative' is perceived as a series of rebirths or conversions, but not in an otherworldly sense that transcends our everyday lives, and nor does it have an end goal. Saito (2012) talks of the education of grownups as a journey towards a state

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[37] The religious connotations of the words 'conversion' and 'rebirth' are important for both Cavell and Thoreau. Indeed, at the end of the preface to *The Senses of Walden* (1992), Cavell quotes Martin Luther on baptism. In 'conversion', etymologically, there is a sense of turning (version - *vertere*) together (*con*) that suggests new beginnings. In 'rebirth', there is a relation to Christian baptism. Thoreau describes how he washes daily in the waters of Walden pond, which is akin to a baptism. Cavell (1992) takes up this idea and contrasts Christian baptism, as a once and for all act, with being baptised daily in words, 'This is immersion not in the water but in the book of Walden (Cavell, 1992, p. 17).

[38] I use the word 'idea' purposefully here, for what Cavell proposes is not, for example, a Piagetian developmental 'model'. The ends within perfectionism are not ends or a set of criteria that can be ticked off once they have been achieved.

of being different; embracing otherness. In *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome,* Cavell himself writes that a perfectionist idea of transformation is not about perfectibility or reaching some perfect self. Instead it should be seen as 'a process of moving, to and from, nexts' (1990, p. 12).

Having established that, for Cavell, what is educative is transformational and can be experienced beyond school, I turn now to consider what experiences may trigger, or serve as catalysts for, these 'rebirths' or 'conversions'. Here, Cavell returns to *Walden* (1854/2014), where Thoreau describes the notion of 'crises' in our lives that mark the possibilities for a transformation of the self. The word 'crisis' is not being used here as we would normally understand it today. It is not necessarily linked to any catastrophic or negative experience in our lives. The word 'crisis' is used by Thoreau, and subsequently Cavell, in a positive sense. They are experiences which make us re-evaluate ourselves, and ourselves in relation to others. Cavell observes that in *Walden*, birds often have prophesy in them. I have already made reference to the importance of the chanticleer. Here, Thoreau uses the metaphor of the moulting fowls to explain the notion of 'crisis'. Thoreau writes, 'Our moulting season, like that of the fowls, must be a crisis in our lives, also the snake casts its slough…' (p. 14).[39] This serves as a metaphor for the start of the perfectionist journey; one with no final destination. We each come across these crises in our lives, and in fact they are a necessity. They are not something that will happen only once in our lives. The crises are a moment when we have a choice, a moral dilemma as it were, as to whether we continue on the perfectionist journey or not. To experience crises may be unsettling, but it is precisely these crises that can lead to 'rebirth' or 'conversion'. These crises are transformative.

In the next section of this chapter, to further explain Cavell's understanding of what is meant by educative, I will describe and explain the second strand of the 'education of grownups' that refers to 'self-culture'. This will then be connected to Cavell's broader philosophical project in order to argue that film

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[39] Whilst there is no notion of the catastrophic in the use of the word 'crisis', there is an element of vulnerability here in the use of this metaphor. As the snake is vulnerable to predators at the moment of shedding its skin, so are we exposed at the moment of crisis.

is transformational and educative, and that my own film has the potential to educate and transform.

4.4 The 'education of grownups' as a form of 'self-culture'

In the quote from *The Claim of Reason* (1999a) that starts section 4.3 of this chapter, Cavell acknowledges, as an adult, that he himself requires an education. In this section, I argue that, for Cavell, his own (grownup) education is achieved as a form of self-culture that he attains through autobiography. I will, later, extend this understanding of telling one's story as being educative, to the experience of the boys in my film.

In the previous chapter, I explained that Cavell argues that autobiography is a proper way of doing philosophy, and that the two are interrelated. To some, this may appear to be an absurd claim, but for Cavell, the two cannot be separated. Whilst there are two things at play here, autobiography and philosophy, I argue that I also need to introduce a third element in terms of what is 'educative'. That is to say, in undertaking his philosophical project, which Cavell does autobiographically, there is the potential for transformation and self-culture. It has, therefore, the potential to be educative.

This relationship that Cavell builds around autobiography, philosophy, and what is transformational is a complex one. In his reading of Cavell's autobiographical works, Vincent Colapietro (2012, p. 124) argues that for Cavell, 'philosophy is education for adults, in part, because it is a recollection, and a re-enactment of childhood'. Similarly, Espen Hammer (2002, p. 178), comments that 'philosophy is best understood as an advanced [grownup] form of self-reflection'. Whilst I accept that both these appraisals of what is at stake in Cavell's writing are reasonable, I think there is even more at stake here. To take part in self-reflection and recollection alone is not necessarily transformative or educative. In order for autobiographical philosophy to be potentially educative, there needs to be consideration of our experience of the human condition, and what we learn, in order to go beyond self-reflection into self-culture.

Cavell establishes philosophy (through autobiography) as education. In his writing, he considers the ordinary, the everyday, but in doing so he asks questions about teaching and learning. Again, this is not in the traditional context of schools and other educational institutions. For Cavell, learning never to accept an engagement ring as a deposit in his father's pawn shop (Cavell, 2010) is perhaps of greater importance than that which can be taught in schools. As Standish and Saito (2012, p. 2) argue, 'he is also preoccupied with what it is to teach and learn – with the kinds of transformation that these might imply and with the inseparability of these from what human life is'. What Cavell achieves here, is a disruption of what we understand philosophy to be, and this goes beyond what might simply appear to be a personal narrative. The three elements then, philosophy, autobiography, and transformation, constitute Cavell's own perfectionist education. Later, I come to claim that if the education of grownups through the telling of one's own story, through autobiography, is one iteration of self-transformation, then the deaf boys' telling of their stories on film is another.

Whilst I have so far identified some markers of what a perfectionist education might be, such as notions of rebirth, conversion, self-culture, and reflections on society through philosophical autobiography and notions of transformation, Cavell provides no clear definition of perfectionism himself. In *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome* (1990, p. 4) he writes, 'a definition of what I mean by perfectionism, Emersonian or otherwise, is not in view in what follows. Not only have I no complete list of necessary and sufficient conditions for using the term, but I have no theory in which a definition of perfectionism would play a useful role'[40]. For Cavell, there is no closed list of features to perfectionism, but he does provide a long list of films, plays, books, *et cetera* which serve to exemplify what he understands perfectionism to be. In the next section of this chapter, I refer back to some of the films that Cavell claims exemplify his version of a perfectionist education, in order to develop an understanding of the distinction between the 'educative', rather than the 'educational', potentialities of film.

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[40]This, perhaps, is an example of what Mahon (2009, p. 748) refers to as the testing difficulty in Cavell's writing that makes it resistant to 'easy or uncontested paraphrase'.

4.5 Film as 'educative' rather than 'educational'

That film can demonstrate and exemplify the qualities of a perfectionist education is important to my argument concerning the educative potentialities of film, and particularly in relation to my own film. In this section, I consider again Cavell's reading of some of the films from the 1930s and 1940s, in order to preface the educative potential that I argue exists when we are confronted with film, and I will then consider this with specific reference to my own film. The importance of film to Cavell's philosophy cannot be denied. Re-claiming his belief in education beyond schooling in relation to film, in *A Pitch of Philosophy* (1994, p. 131), he writes, 'when a few years ago I was asked how as a philosopher I became interested in film' he replies that his education 'had been more formed by going to the movies than by reading books'. I wrote in chapter 2 of the thesis about the importance of film *to* philosophy and about film *doing* philosophy. Cavell echoes this when he writes about the importance of philosophy to film and American culture. In *Contesting Tears,* Cavell writes that 'film has the space, and the cultural pressure, to satisfy the craving for thought, the ambition of a talented culture to examine itself publicly' (1996, p. 72). It is also important to note here, the potential for presenting reality that Cavell believes is within the power of film to expose. In *The World Viewed* (1979), he writes that in viewing a film, we are not merely *seeing* a projection, but we are experiencing what we *see* as a reality. After all, he writes, you cannot 'tell me that I do not see myself in the mirror but merely see a mirror image of myself' (p. 213). The potentialities for film are, for Cavell, not to be underestimated. It is with this in mind that I return to Cavell's philosophical reading of films to explore the educative (the transformational) in film. The crisis and unsettlement in experiencing film is, I argue, educative. I do not mean 'educational'[41] here, in

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[41] Whilst I have stated that I do not intend to define what we mean by 'education' in this chapter, the roots of the word might help my argument here, as this unsettling experience of the educative in film is close to the etymological origins of 'educate' from the Latin, *educare*, meaning to lead out or to experience a bringing forth. Educate (v.) mid-15c., *educaten*, "bring up (children), to train, "from Latin *educatus*, past participle of *educare* "bring up rear educate2 (source of Italian *educare*, Spanish *educar*, French *éduquer*), which is a frequentative of or otherwise related to *educere* "bring out, lead forth, from ex- "out" (see ex-) + *ducere* "to lead," from PIE root ***deuk**- to "lead." (Online Etymology Dictionary). Skea (2019, p.124) describes this unsettling experience as 'being led out of conformity and bringing forth a different way of accounting for oneself'.

the sense that the viewer of my film is gaining knowledge about deafness (although this may be an unintended outcome), but I use the term 'educative', in the richer philosophical sense of unsettlement and the transformation of the self.

In chapter 3, I wrote in detail about the female leads, Stella and Paula, pressing the question of a woman's interest in knowledge and being led out of conformity, as in Cavell's reading of *Stella Dallas* and *Gaslight*. This was done in order to explore Cavell's ideas on the loss and recovery of voice that prevail in the 'Melodramas of the Unknown Woman'. I argue that this also relates to the lack of voice experienced by the deaf boys in my film. Here, I do not intend to go into detail about any one film in particular, but I will refer to the films that Cavell defines as the 'Comedies of Remarriage'[42]. This is another group of films, from the 1930s and 1940s, that make no claim to be philosophical, but for which Cavell makes philosophical claims. Cavell sees these films as having a common set of characteristics, but these features are different from those of the 'melodramas'.

The 'Comedies of Remarriage' commonly begin or climax with the threatened end of a marriage and the threat of an impending divorce. The thrust of the narrative is to reunite the pair through reconciliation – a form of *re*marriage. Whereas in the 'melodramas', Cavell sees incidents of a woman's perfectionist education, for example, we see Stella at the end of *Stella Dallas* walking away from her old life to begin anew, the reading of the 'remarriages' is different. Gibbs (2019, p. 85) argues that 'the concept of remarriage, as a concept of moral philosophy, might usefully find a translation in the field of education, as *re*-education'. Neither group of films have philosophy or education as their theme; rather, they have in common the education of a woman brought on by a series of incidents (crises?) in her life. As Cavell writes, 'the philosophical impulse in adults is characteristically

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[42] The 'comedies of remarriage' include, *It happened one night* (Dir. Capra, F. 1934), *The awful Truth* (Dir. McCarey, L. 1937), *Bringing up Baby* (Dir. Hawks, H. 1938), *His Girl Friday* (Dir. Hawks, H. 1940), *The Philadelphia Story* (Dir. Cukor, G. 1940), *The Lady Eve* (Dir. Sturges, P. 1941), and *Adam's Rib* (Dir. Cukor, G. 1949).

brought on by a crisis in one's life' (Cavell, 2008, p. 59). For Cavell then, film is both philosophical and educative.

In *Contesting Tears* (1996), Cavell points to a contradiction between the education and creation sought in remarriage comedy, and the destructive *de*creation of Paula in the melodrama *Gaslight*. This is indeed a sharp contrast to what Gibbs (2019, p. 87) describes as 'the ongoing dialogue between the marital pair' that is essential to the comedies of remarriage. One might also point out the apparent contradiction of the negation of marriage in the melodramas, and the recreation of marriages in the remarriage comedies. However, the contradiction that Cavell points to in education is only in the context in which that education takes place. Inherent in both genres is the woman's demand for an education, and this is imbued with Emersonian moral perfectionism.

I have established that a perfectionist education can be seen in film, and I have written in chapter 3 about the power of film to unsettle, that is, to put the viewer into a state of translation. It would seem valid then, to argue the case that film can be part of the education of the viewer. The watching of the film might be described as a 'crisis', an experience that forces the viewer to re-evaluate their understanding of, and relationship to deafness. Our encounters with film, as Munday (2017, p. 95) writes, 'provide exemplary instances of cases of where this kind of translation or configuration may take place'. Indeed, I make this claim based my own experience of watching Terrence Malick's film, *The Tree of Life* (2011), as I described in the preface to the thesis. Watching the film, I was jolted by the troubled relationship between Jack and his mother and father; this made me reconsider my own attitudes towards parenting. As Cavell writes in *The World Viewed* (1979, p. 7), he establishes 'a significant fact about movies: that there is always something to find, often enough to justify a hundred minutes of speculative solitude'. This was my experience of 'crisis' or unsettlement in watching the film. It was also a moment of translation; a father tongue moment. I was jolted by what I saw, this sent me into 'speculative solitude', and thus my ideas on parenting changed. The experience was, indeed, transformational.

There is also something else at stake here that relates to Cavell and Thoreau's philosophy. In *The Senses of Walden* (1992), Cavell writes in considerable detail about Thoreau's notions of the mother tongue and father tongue. The 'mother tongue', as I described in an earlier chapter, is the tongue that we learn at our mother's knee. 'This', writes Standish (2006), 'is our common schooling, our schooling into community' (p. 150). However, as we become adults, we need to acquire the father tongue 'we must be born again in order to speak' (*ibid.,* p. 150). Cavell argues that the father tongue has the potential to stop us in our tracks in relation to language. What I would argue for here, is that, in watching a film, one may experience a crisis that could be described as a father tongue experience in relation to both the visual stimulus, and what is being said (or signed) on screen. I am aware, however, that I need to exercise caution here, and remind myself that I am arguing for the educative 'potentialities' of film, and not educative 'certainties'. There was no intention in the making of my film to shock, or provoke a reaction from, the audience (although this might be yet another unintended outcome). Equally, there may be those viewers who have no reaction to the film at all, in which case, I return to the notion of the father tongue. Of the father tongue, Cavell writes, 'let it speak for itself; and in a way that holds out its experience to us, allows us to experience it, and allows us to tell us all it knows' (1992, p. 16). The experience of the father tongue then, is only probable to us, but in order to experience it, we must be open to it. Standish (2006) describes this experience as allowing yourself '*to be struck* [author's italics] by something new' (p. 152). Or, as Cavell explains, 'Like the writer of *Walden* [I am] not counting on being believed' (*ibid.,* p.19), the viewer may not be *struck* at all by my film. Perhaps, Vlieghe (2017, p.83) helps to summarise this element of my argument when he writes, 'only beings that can begin anew at any time and that can be transformed profoundly without being fully determined by a fixed destiny are educable beings'.

I turn now to Gibbs (2017b) to make a final distinction between what I see as the 'educative' in film rather than the 'educational'. He argues that film in educational settings is used in two ways. Either it is used to exemplify other

ideas, or it is the focus of empirical and theoretical studies. That is to say, he sees the common function of film here, to be 'educational' in that it is pedagogically instructive. What is not seen often enough, he argues, is a consideration of how film can be used to be 'educative'; that is to say, how film can teach its audience. He is not trying to say that the illustrative function of film as an 'educational' tool is without value. Rather, what he is arguing for is that where film is seen as 'educative', we may be able to 'see meaning anew as it presents itself to our immediate experience' (Gibbs, 2017b. p. 688) of film. It is this emphasis on the idea of the educative potential of the experience of film that, I feel, supports my claim. Whilst seeing value in the 'educational' in film, he draws upon Wittgenstein's argument that by explaining the meaning of a film, we in fact set ourselves at a distance from the experience of film, and of the world. Our experience is stifled. What Gibbs (2017b) is arguing for is acceptance. We have to accept the reality of the world as presented in film before we go on to explain it. In this way, film is 'educative' in an experiential sense rather than an empirical one.

It is at this point that I now turn to a 'reading' of the film that I made as part of this philosophical enquiry. I do not intend to write an empirical analysis or explanation of the film. I have not produced empirical data to support the viewer's reaction, or otherwise, to the film. This is my philosophical project. To that end, I will write a philosophical discussion, supported by the works of Thoreau and Cavell, in order to come to a philosophical understanding of what it means to make and watch the film.

4.6 Reflections on the educative potentialities of film

In writing this chapter, I set out to argue that for Cavell, what is educative *is* perfectionist, and that a Cavellian conception of education is one that is transformational. In doing so, I make a claim for the educative potentialities, not certainties, of film, whilst accepting the reality of film as described by Cavell. I have also argued that a 'receptiveness or openness' (Standish, 2006, p. 152) is required if we are to engage with that which is educative. In

watching film, we are educable in the sense of a Cavellian perfectionist education that is transformational. We experience crises in our lives that can lead to that transformation. I have argued that the experience of film has the potential to be an experience of crisis in our lives, which can similarly lead to transformation. I have also argued that there is something of philosophical importance, to the viewer, in the experience of film. A consideration of this experience will form the basis for the philosophical discussion of the film, that is central to this project, and which I will explore in the next chapter.

Chapter 5. A 'philosophical reading' of the film, 'What's special about me?'

5.1 Introduction

Throughout this thesis, I have made reference to a 'philosophical reading' of the film that is core to this project. In this chapter, I further reflect upon how we 'do' philosophy and come to the point where I explain what I mean by a 'philosophical reading' in the specific context of this study, and I present it to the reader. As I intend to take a rather unusual (perhaps even challenging, to both reader and writer) approach to this exercise, in the first section of this chapter I present a rationale for the route I take. The second part of the chapter focuses on the 'philosophical reading' of the film, which takes the form of an imagined dialogue between Henry David Thoreau and Stanley Cavell after having watched the film. I end the chapter with my own reflections on the film that serve as a form of coda to the dialogue. Before proceeding, I wish to refer back to, and expand on, a quote from Richard Smith that I used in chapter 3, and ask of the reader to keep an open mind, for I am aware of no set 'method' for presenting a 'philosophical reading':

> In doing philosophy we need to be aware of the awkwardness of thinking in terms of having a 'methodology'. Instead we might consider the different ways in which philosophy has been conceived in terms of contrasts: for example between the written and the spoken word (Smith, 2009, p. 437).

5.2 A rationale

Before embarking on an argument for the approach I take in this chapter, I need to make it clear why I am not taking the more traditional, empirical path that might be expected. At this stage in a typical empirical thesis, this chapter might have the heading 'data analysis' and present a detailed examination of the film. Such a methodological approach (presenting a thematic analysis) as I have described is not without value, and it might usefully provide insights into the lives of the boys, as participants, involved in the making of the film.

However, as I argued in chapter 2, I perceive that there are a number of challenges in using narrative methodology that are specific to carrying out research with young deaf people. More than this, I have questions that such an approach would not be appropriate, or even sufficient, to answer. Furthermore, in chapter 2, I established why a philosophical approach lends itself better and more appropriately to my investigation into the educative potential of film when looking at accounting, translation, and voice in the stories of young deaf people. And so, I turn once again to philosophy, in particular the philosophy of Thoreau and Cavell in order to 'read' the film.

In the quote above, Smith (2009) draws a distinction between the written and the spoken word as conceptualisations of philosophy. He does so, not to create a division or to favour one approach to philosophy over the other, but rather to point to the potential of philosophy beyond 'method'. He acknowledges a 'systematic and edifying' value in writing philosophy in 'producing a philosophical corpus or record of philosophical achievement' (Smith, 2009, p.438), but also points to the possibilities of philosophy as dialogue. 'Being dialogue', he writes, 'it has no discernible "method": it goes where it goes' (*ibid.,* p.438); furthermore, I have already established my argument against philosophy being described as a 'method' in chapter 2. The dialogical approach that I am taking is not new and can be traced back through the history of philosophy to Socrates and Plato[43]. As such, I have chosen, in this chapter, to create a dialogue between Thoreau and Cavell, as philosophers, in reaction[44] to watching my film.[45] There are echoes here, of Cavell's account of Plato's *The Republic*, in which he talks of philosophy as response. In *Cities of Words*, Cavell writes, 'philosophy's first virtue, as it

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[43] I refer here to the *elenctic* dialogues which portray the Socratic approach to questioning in dialogue to promote critical thinking (Apology, Gorgias, Hippias Minor, Ion, Laches, *et cetera*).

[44] I use the phrase 'in reaction to', carefully here. Throughout the thesis, my focus has been on the viewer's experience of watching the film. It is not about what I think about the film, but the potential for unsettlement or disruption that give film its potential to be educative in the way that I have described in chapter 4.

[45] I acknowledge here, that this could never have happened in reality. It does, however, perform an important function in this thesis.

matters most to me, is responsiveness' (Cavell, 2005a, p. 324). The philosophy here, will be the response to the dialogue.

In writing this imagined dialogue, I am not using creativity for creativity's sake. Rather, I am taking the philosophical rationale I have outlined above as an authentic way to bring life to the three key themes of the thesis, namely; accounting, translation, and voice. Nor do I intend to create some glib mimicry, putting words into the mouths of Thoreau and Cavell. Through a careful reading of their texts, I intend to be faithful to their philosophy and their words 'as deliberately and reservedly as they were written' (Cavell, 1992, p. 15). This is, I feel, a process which is true to the Cavellian approach I take in this thesis. In what might be regarded as being a bold move, I am asking the reader to imagine that Thoreau and Cavell are in a world that, to all intents and purposes, is similar to the one in which this thesis is being read. I am asking the reader to imagine that Thoreau and Cavell, as philosophers, are alive now and have experienced, and are accepting many of the features of our world. The purpose is to imagine how Thoreau and Cavell would experience the film as a series of crises which demand a response. That is to say, in watching the film, there are experiences in the boys' lives which they share, and to which they can respond philosophically. This imagined dialogue, in which Thoreau and Cavell are exposed to the film, is unique and authentic to the values that underpin my thesis, in turn enabling this 'event' to take place.

In presenting a 'philosophical reading' of the film through this dialogue, I have the opportunity to speak to the key themes of the thesis in three ways. First, I am able to give a philosophical appraisal of the boys giving accounts of their own lives on film, and holding their accounts to the light. Indeed, the film itself will be held to account through the responses of Cavell and Thoreau. Furthermore, through philosophical dialogue, I am able to have Thoreau and Cavell call each other to account. Second, presenting the reading of the film in an unusual way makes demands upon, and challenges, the reader. Reading this dialogue is a 'father tongue' experience, in that 'it [the dialogue] holds out its experience to us, allows us to experience it' (Cavell, 1992, p.16), and in doing so disrupts the reader into a possible state

of translation. Third, there is voice in dialogue. The film gives voice to the boys, and subsequently, Thoreau and Cavell are similarly given voice through the dialogue.

When he writes about readings of film in *The World Viewed,* Cavell (1979b, p. 9) acknowledges that 'there is a problem about the idea of "reading a movie"', in that he feels there is a lack of rigour compared with, for example, readings of poetry or books. In writing about his own reading of films, he proffers a seemingly contradictory conclusion which will shape some of the dialogue I write. Cavell explains, 'I for the most part read only in fragments' (*ibid.,* p. xiv), but then concludes that what he goes on to write is actually 'a fragmented reading of a whole film' (*ibid.,* p. xiv). This relates to the way in which, as viewers, we are struck by particular aspects of a film in different ways, and how they resonate with (different aspects of) our interests. This in part, leads to a fragmentary reading, but it also points to the ways in which film may be educative, given that it is unsettling and disruptive in the ways I described in the previous chapter. All of this suggests to me that any Cavellian reading of a film, like his autobiography, would not conform to any norms of temporality or linearity, and that this needs to be reflected in the structure of the dialogue.

In the dialogue, I focus on Cavell and Thoreau's philosophical voices rather than the way they speak. However, I attempt to present their patterns of speech in such a way that this does not detract from the philosophical content of the discussion. In terms of linguistic fidelity to the speakers, I draw on Thoreau's writings as a reflection of his speech traits and style, particularly from *Walden* (1854/2014) and *The Journal* (2009). For Cavell, however, I am fortunate to have access to video recordings of him; one in an interview at Duke University, USA (2017), and another in discussion at the University of California (Berkeley), USA (2002). In addition, I have access to the transcript of *Stanley Cavell in Conversation with Paul Standish* (2012). It is in the conversation at Berkeley, however, that Cavell revealed to me as the writer of this thesis, the reason why the dialogue was the only way I could approach this philosophical reading of my own film. In conversation (2002), Cavell reminds us that his philosophical writing about film is specific to the

experience of the big screen in a specific time period. He does not know whether what he has written is readily transferrable to new technologies of both film making (anyone can make film now on a digital device) and of film viewing (more likely to be in a domestic setting, and perhaps alone, rather than the collective experience of the cinema). What this dialogue allows me to do, is to give Cavell the opportunity to look at the film I have made with the boys using modern technologies. It also gives him the chance to look at the film through his own philosophical lens while further testing his reading of Thoreau. Then, both Cavell and Thoreau are given the chance to explore whether their philosophical writing is transferrable to a technology which neither have experienced in their lives.

In the following dialogue, Thoreau and Cavell have watched the film, 'What is special about me?' that forms part of this thesis. During the conversation, the two philosophers will make reference to specific parts of the film, which I will illustrate with subtitles from what the boys have said in the film. I feel that it is important that the voices of the boys are present in this way. The boys each speak for themselves, and they each transmit a different voice. I am not attempting to present a unified voice here, but it is clear in the film that there are shared experiences within the deaf community. The film and the dialogue both expose how the boys' individual stories relate not only to their immediate circle of family and friends, but also to the deaf community and society at large. For both Cavell and Thoreau, one's own story or account (one's own voice even) can never be purely individualistic. It is always tied to community (I will say more on this in the next chapter), and so it is always a political voice. The boys' voices are political in that they are tied to the communities to which they belong. At the end of the dialogue, I will provide some of my own reflections. Although I do not appear to take any part in the discussion, I feel it is important to note here, that my own voice is present in the arrangement and writing of the dialogue[46]. I do not wish to deny my own

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[46] Regarding the guiding factors in the way I have presented the dialogue, I have selected points in the boys' stories where there is both experiential (in terms of the boys' lives), and philosophical convergence (in terms of Cavell and Thoreau); that is to say, where philosophy can speak to the boys', Cavell's, and Thoreau's life experiences.

voice, but the focus of the dialogue is about the experience of the viewing of the film, rather than what I have done.

5.3 The Dialogue

(*Cavell and Thoreau have just finished watching the film. There follows a contemplative silence which is broken by Thoreau*).

Thoreau: (*Not taking his eyes off the* screen) It feels to me Stanley, that in watching this film, I have observed something that matters. What I have witnessed here, in the midst of all these images, are accounts from these boys which speak to my imagination. There is mystery here for us to unravel, and truths which are not obvious. This experience has been incredible. What are we to make of this film, Stanley?

Cavell: What you gotta understand about film, Henry is…er… I'm talking about the particular experience of a thing. Look at *Walden*…It was a surprise to me, to find that in *Walden*, every word mattered. When I yelped and got up from the desk from reading *Walden*, I felt like taking the pages from your book Henry, and going out onto the street, out onto the sidewalk and stopping strangers and saying 'You realize how good this is?...This is some fantastic piece of work!...Who knew?' It absolutely wiped me out… I thought it was the greatest thing. In the same way, everything matters in a film…I've never had any problem with thinking that everything matters in a film…it's mother's milk to me.

Thoreau: (*Leaning towards Cavell*). It pleases me, Stanley, that my account did good service to you…and your own accounts… despite your remark that it sometimes seems an enormously long and boring book. When I wrote those pages, I was living alone in the woods. I did not set out to impose my business upon you as a reader, Stanley, I simply gave an account of my life as these young men have done in this film… And, there are many portions of their lives that apply to me…There are indeed many things that matter here. I require you, as a professor of philosophy, to tell me more of film, Stanley.

Cavell: This an experience that's kinda new to us both Henry. When I write about film, I'm talking about a big, big screen…the gigantism of the image…looking at this film…one can see smaller images now and still have experience of film…but there are so many intricacies involved that somebody's gonna have to rewrite what I have written for each of these technologies. I don't think that there's anything *a priori* about how they

transfer to one another…but, but, here's our chance to take a look, Henry! That I have thought about film is true. I don't have an untarnished tale to tell about the relationship between film and philosophy…I'm…I'm very much still in the middle of being interested in that. In linking film as both trangent and permanent, is something that I find myself aware of a lot. The relation of blatancy and mystery in film, of presence and absence in film, of trangence and permanence in film…trangence of the images and eternal return of the images because of the nature of film strike me as, each of those, as characterizing philosophy. Some sense that film is a speculation has been on my mind for a long time… Another feature about… between philosophy and film, is that either of them can inspire endless talk or shut you up!

Thoreau: (*Leaning back*) So then, Professor, let us talk…for as I wrote in *Walden*…it is admirable to profess!

Cavell: (*Coughing into a handkerchief*) Apologies for the sniffles, Henry. Yeah, that's a great idea, it's a great thought, so let's take our time. Let's start with what you just said about giving account, there…I think that is the place to begin, let's elaborate on that. What really struck me, watching this film, was the way these young guys were so determined to tell their stories; what their lives have been like, where they're at right now, and what the future holds. I mean…and they're deaf! We have both taken that path in our lives, have we not, in struggling to give account? Yours in the very greatest of masterpieces, *Walden*, that perfectly complete account…and me through my philosophical autobiography. Let's go back to that moment in the film where Hashim talks about barriers…

(*Cavell leans forward and presses the button. He stops at the point* (11.45 mins.) *where Hashim says…**Frightened? No, I wouldn't say frightened. I know I'm deaf and I know that there's barriers that I'll come up against, and I'm just trying to break through those barriers. And, people know that I'm deaf**). Cavell continues…

What about that guy? I'm actually moved. I am deeply interested in the right of address. This guy understands himself…er…er …he understands that addressing another is an imposition and he's comfortable with that…it's alright by him. He gives good account of himself.

Thoreau: I understand his account…it is simple and sincere. What he says in this account, is not what he has learned of other men's lives, but what he knows of his own life as a young deaf man. The scenes I see in the film are incredible and astonishing. In watching the film, I am watching through Hashim and Tyrone's eyes! It is a privilege to be able to see through the eyes of another! I am minded of what I wrote of the labors of Hercules…The

twelve labors of Hercules are trifling in comparison with what Hashim and Tyrone have undergone in their lives; for those labors were only twelve in number. When I was at Concord, others were curious to know if I was afraid, was not lonesome in the woods. Yet here, Hashim declares that he is not frightened, that he is prepared to break down the barriers that stand in his way. He will give his account.

Cavell: And look at Tyrone's story…that kid was distanced from the world from the start. He doesn't get the chance to…to tell his story until he gets to the United Kingdom. This kid was lost in the world…distant even from those closest to him. His account shocks me to the core. Look at how is life was back in Zimbabwe…Let's watch that part of the film again…

(*Cavell reaches for the fast-forward button, stopping at the part of the film where Tyrone is describing his early childhood* (14.55 mins.) **I was born in Zimbabwe. My mum and dad and my brother, they were all there, we were a group there. My mum used to cook for me…erm…my brother was a little bit naughty (***laughs***). I was a little bit naughty too, but it was funny, yeah…yeah it was funny. There wasn't a lot of water, sometimes we had to go a long way. And, there was nobody deaf like me. I missed quite a lot of stuff and I just used to sit around. I didn't really have a lot of things…I didn't remember a lot 'cos I didn't hear a lot of stuff. My friends, they weren't really sort of deaf aware…So, I was on my own (***scowls***). Hearing people would come to me…I had friends. Maybe a little teasing and pranking, it was fine. Things went on a little bit more, a little bit more teasing. I wasn't really sure what was going on. I did have some friends, it was alright, it was alright…And then, things would happen. We'd have stuff, and things were taken. I didn't really know about that. I didn't always feel safe.**

Thoreau: (*Looking upwards*) This experience of film causes me to think about my own account. When I took up my home in the woods, it was of my choosing; it was my experiment. I was not lonesome; I was not afraid. Did I not start my experiment on Independence Day, the fourth of July, a day of importance? Giving account here of his early life, Tyrone is doing what I want from everyone; that the account is simple and sincere. He is giving an account from Zimbabwe...a very distant land…and yet we understand him well enough.

Cavell: Yeah…and you say that it started accidently on Independence Day. Tyrone's isolation here is different. Your book is riddled with the doings of society. Yours was a choice to be distanced from society, calling to account their beliefs and values. You challenged the way society practised those beliefs and values. This kid was so isolated, he didn't have a clue what was

going on around him even when he was with his family and so-called pals. He doesn't have the words. You know, like me Henry, that every word has meaning. How do you give account if you just don't have the words? If every word bears its meaning from every other word in the language, where are you? —

Thoreau: (*Speaking over the end of Cavell's sentence*) …and yet, look at us Stanley, we who have the luxury of seeking the meaning of each word and line we read, looking for a larger sense than the common use permits, are watching here, in this film, a boy being denied even the mother tongue, the language we learn of our mothers. You are right Stanley, when that boy was young…without words…denied the ability to tell his story, he was denied himself. This experience of film is shocking to me.

Cavell: I love it that you pick out this strain…I, too, have thought of the mother tongue as just part of the human condition. We have both learned something in watching this film, Henry. Emerson invented the phrase, 'Hitch your wagon to a star'…hitching these wagons of words that carry us along, not randomly, to what is beyond the words. This kid had no words to hitch and no wagon to hitch them to. Only later in childhood, does he get the chance to give account for his life. It's like a rebirth through the acquisition of the mother tongue. And yet, not only do these guys overcome these barriers, giving their accounts in the film, but they encourage other deaf kids to do the same! Let me show you this next bit of film…

(*Cavell, this time, presses the rewind button and stops at the place* (13.40 mins.) *where Hashim says…***Okay, what's different about me, is that, I've got quite a strong personality, and I aren't, I aren't afraid of just telling people what I think. And, I don't, I don't want to be left out. And I try to encourage other people that they can do it. You are deaf, you only can't hear, (***smiling directly to the camera***) but you've got abilities inside of yourself to do whatever you want!**). Cavell picks up again…

This guy doesn't pull his punches! He questions and challenges other deaf kids to do what he does. He asks a question…asking a question, you are asking for a part of somebody's life, somebody's attention. You are drawing someone's blood. It can be an assault…it doesn't have to be a bad assault, it could be an assault of beauty, perhaps, an assault of real interest, or of surprise. He makes no excuses for himself and encourages other deaf kids to do the same. He gets it…he just gets it. What if other deaf kids got to see this film?

Thoreau: (*Interjecting*) I know what you are saying…it is important to hear the accounts of others…Other deaf children will observe that the ability to tell

one's own story is of pertinence to understanding the identity of the self, but it is not only the hard of hearing who can learn from this experience, Stanley…anyone can see from this, that giving account is not simply recounting the story of one's life. Tyrone and Hashim are giving accounts of themselves as young deaf men…and as I did in Concord; they call upon others to account for themselves.

Cavell: You're quite right there, Henry. Like you and me…they mean to be demanding…they've exposed themselves here in this film…and a response is required. Making this film…these guys…they are telling us exactly what they think. I think it's honest as well as wonderful. There are a lot of issues there, aren't there? This is the thing from where I proceed…and where I continuously return…It's about voice… and both these guys know this! Look at these sections…

(*Cavell once more presses fast-forward, stopping at the place* (16.50 mins.) *where Tyrone says…* **No, there was no signing, I had nothing, nothing, nothing…I used to use a little bit of gesture. I was quite sad about that.** *And then rewinds to the point where Hashim says…***So like, when I'm left out at school, or at training? Really, you know when I can see them all talking away, I just try to look at them, but I'm quite used to it and I just try and take my time and try to lip-read and I'll say 'What you actually talking about?' It's my right to know these things, so I'm not bothered. I'll just tackle them and say, 'Tell me what you're talking about'. Some people have a long discussion and then they'll just tell me something briefly and I'll say, 'That's not what you said!'**). Cavell adds…

If these guys don't even have a voice in their own families how do they even connect to the wider community? …Watch…

(*Cavell rewinds to the part* (1.04 mins.) *where Tyrone is saying…***In my family, they are all hearing. I'm the only deaf one. With people who don't sign, I just gesture.** *He then presses fast-forward to (2.11 mins.) where Hashim is saying…***Only I'm deaf in the family, the rest of them are hearing. BSL is my first language…I love BSL.**)

Thoreau: (*Visually disturbed, shakes his head*) To observe this is troubling…there is desperation in not having their voices heard. How lonely they must feel. My own spirit required sweet solitude in a place where my ears might distinguish the sounds that gave voice to my story, but I still had the Fitchburg Railroad as my physical link to society…These young men must struggle to be heard.

Cavell: I see what you're getting at Henry…Liberalism means a state where each has an equal voice…What we think of as ordinary…to have and to give

voice…what I perceive to be democracy, is the search for one's own voice and the right to speak...the right to be heard. These boys are demanding that right and their place in society. And, and…for me…it's not just that *I* have the right to speak and *you* have a right to speak...it's that no one is left out…denied the right to approach any other. This is political! I am still dazzled by the fact of human interchange, and regard that as the most remarkable thing that philosophy can attend to. That's where I come from…as a philosopher, I have had my battles to have my own voice heard…just as I am seeing in this film. Voice is center-stage in this.

Thoreau: And yet, do I not observe transformation here? …Just as I wrote about the moulting season of the loon? At the beginning, these young men tell us how their voices are denied…There may be desperation in their early lives, but it is not confirmed desperation…not resignation…and certainly not lives of quiet desperation.

Cavell: Indeed not, for they both have dreams for the future and their part in society…What was it they said? Let's have a look again…

(*Cavell presses fast-forward to where Hashim says…* (9.14 mins.) **I think for me now…I would still try and aim to be a footballer. That's what I want to be…so I've got a Plan B just in case it doesn't happen…so I become a football coach, or a sports coach or varying things. The plan is to be a footballer. But for Plan B, I've got quite a few things, but anyway that's linked to sport really 'cos obviously, I've got a great passion for that. I'm thinking there's a possibility that I could go to university, or to get an apprenticeship, I'm not sure yet.** *He presses fast-forward again to* (22.12 mins.) where *Tyrone is saying…***Yeah, I'm happy, I'm enjoying that. It's good…Yeah, oh, yeah. I'm going really up a level now. I'm feeling confident in that, for me. I'm learning and getting really good at it. So, me, for example, if I don't like it and I don't learn things very well...but I'm really enjoying that. I get better at things.**). He continues…

Now, what you said about it not being resignation…that makes sense…From the get go, they struggle to give account, they struggle to have a voice even within their own families, even though they clearly love them dearly…but in making this film they have given their accounts, we have heard their voices…together…This film has disrupted the denial of their voices —

Thoreau: (*Interjecting*) Would we not agree, Stanley, that it is indeed a crisis in their lives?

Cavell: And that is at the heart of the matter when it comes to film, Henry…surprisingly, even this little film…on a small screen! From my experience of film, I have the absolute knowledge that everything that goes on in film matters…why each word is said, not just as it was, but where it was, by whom it was said…in that light. You may ask me if I'm a philosopher or a complete fool, Henry, but I write about film for what struck me as philosophical reasons. You need to be exposed to these things…like this film…one way or another and respond to them in a way that speaks to philosophy. Yeah, sure… making a film about themselves has been what you call a crisis in their lives…but…but (*blowing his nose into his handkerchief*), isn't it more than that? Isn't it an education? This is an old Emersonian moment of mine. Emerson has a crack…that when I read it, I thought, yeah, that's something I want from writing about film and philosophy. Remember Henry, he says that you always need to look for the gleam of light, the little spark…

Thoreau: Does he not call it instinct?

Cavell: Not instinct, sometimes he calls it…but the main thing is intuition…and the reason he says intuition, is that he wants to go on to provide the tuition…so providing the tuition for intuition. I could say that's what I would like film and philosophy to be about…That's what thinking about this film does for me.

Thoreau: Let me be clear…What you are saying is, in this experience, the young men have experienced a crisis that is part of their education…that comes from beyond the realms of common schooling…that their lives have been transformed. This is the gleam of light that we have observed. If it is a purpose of philosophy to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically…then, I think you not a fool, Stanley. Further Stanley, have we two not been unsettled by what we have observed? Did I not say earlier that there are portions of the young men's lives that apply to me? I find myself unsettled in observing these young men and to think again about account and voice…And you Stanley, are you not also unsettled?

Cavell: Right you are…yeah…sure… No doubt, this film makes claims upon us Henry. There are many parallels with my own experiences…I was raised in an immigrant household…I too have fought for my voice to be heard…I have written about this… and the experience of seeing that on film has been unsettling…one might say it is a state of translation —

Thoreau: (*Interrupting*)…A state of translation…Yes, that is it…a state of translation…as it is for the young men…There is resonance here with what I intended in writing *Walden*…I intended to unsettle! I intended to awaken my neighbors!

Cavell: …but it is beyond simple parallels with our own experiences. Look at me…my hearing isn't what it used to be…I thought I knew what it meant to be deaf…but this film has shaken me…It has disrupted my easy understanding of what it means to be deaf. The impact is just a plain down and dirty impact…There are many things I shall take away from this experience, Henry. Those guys are just incredible! (*There is a moment of silence*) … Just reflecting on our conversation, Henry…I think we can say that say that what you wrote in giving your account in *Walden*…what I experienced in reading it…what I found in watching film and writing about it…it's true of experiencing this film…I think that that's remarkable!

Thoreau: Incredible, indeed! It has been wonderful and thought-provoking to have shared this experience with you, Stanley.

Cavell: (*Reaching for Thoreau's hand*) Yeah, I suppose our time is up…It's been great Henry, being this audience of two. Conversation and friendship have long been important in my life and in my work…I enjoyed it very much…it's been a pleasure…and I apologise for the sniffles!

5.4 Reflections on film and the dialogue; going beyond Cavell and Thoreau to make claims for accounting, translation, and voice

5.4.1 Introduction

In the rationale for writing the dialogue, I asked myself not only why I wanted to present my philosophical reading of the film (my analysis as it were) through dialogue, but also why I could not present my reading in any other way that would be right for this thesis. I described the dialogue as an imaginary event that would illustrate how Thoreau and Cavell might experience the film as a series of crises which would demand a response. The conversation represents a philosophical response to the experiences in the boys' lives which they recognise as being of relevance to their own. This

imagined discussion, in which Cavell and Thoreau are exposed to the film, is highly original and, as I wrote in the introduction to the dialogue, authentic to the values that underpin my thesis.

In reflecting on the film and dialogue, I think that there is a further level of understanding to be reached. This goes beyond the initial purpose of the dialogue, and is itself tied to the argument I make for my film being original. As described above, it relates to the experience of making a film on hand-held devices, presenting it on a small screen (as I described in the introduction to the thesis) and having it viewed, as Cavell says in the dialogue, by an "audience of two". Whilst it is important for me in this section, to examine the reactions of Cavell and Thoreau to the film in order to situate it philosophically, I must also point to my own, original, claims for the film and the thesis that make a contribution to our knowledge of film. This section of the chapter does two things. First, I reflect on what this dialogue tells the reader in terms of Cavell and Thoreau's reaction to the experience of watching the film. Second, I will develop Cavell and Thoreau's philosophical discussion of the film, going beyond this to present my own claims for what is unique in the film and dialogue, in preparation for reasoning those claims in the next, and final chapter of the thesis.

In writing my reflections, I will speak to the philosophical themes; accounting, voice, and translation, in the order in which they are acknowledged in the dialogue. It is my intention to create a synergy between what comes out in the dialogue and the claims that I make here in my reflections. It is not my intention in this section to analyse the dialogue, nor to justify the references to Cavell and Thoreau's writings that I have made, or indeed not made. The dialogue *is* my *philosophical* reading of the film. I stress to the reader, however, that the reading of these reflections may not be a simple linear journey, for there are layers of meaning and complexities in the reactions of Cavell and Thoreau to the film, and in my own contributions to the field, which demand a response.

5.4.2 A claim for accounting

Agog at his first encounter with film, Thoreau opens the discussion on account by declaring that the boys' accounts resonate with him, allowing Cavell to then refer to Thoreau's own account in *Walden,* and his response to it. That 'account' is part of the imagined conversation is established here. As the dialogue about the film develops, the two philosophers are able to reflect on their own, and each other's accounts, in relation to the accounts given by the boys on film. There is acknowledgement that all four here have struggled to give account, and that it is worth overcoming barriers to do so. The conversation links accounting to the political realm through its potential to challenge the beliefs and values of society. Re-watching parts of the film, Cavell and Thoreau become aware that Hashim and Tyrone call others to account (as indeed, they also did), challenging not only others from the deaf community, but also friends, family, and wider society. The philosophical reflection I make here, reiterating my reading of Cavell's work on accounting in chapter three, is that in exposing Cavell and Thoreau to film and giving them the opportunity to discuss it, accounting, giving one's account, and calling others to account are philosophically acknowledged in the boys' lives. Both Cavell and Thoreau highlight that the accounts given by the boys make demands on others.

The claim I make to originality here is not in relation to exposing Cavell and Thoreau to the film, but it is in the exposure of the boys to the community (the viewers) by giving their accounts on film. In his writing on film Cavell talks about the Hollywood blockbuster, with high production values with a corresponding budget, projected onto a huge screen that is viewed by a large audience in a vast auditorium. Here, we have a 'small' film, made on a budget, on hand-held devices, shown to a small audience, in a small room. In the 'small' film that I and the boys have created, there is an intimacy that is not experienced in other films. There is something relational in this 'small' film of young deaf people (who I know well) that is unique. There are many films which give account and tell a story, but in reflecting upon my claims for this film I move towards an idea of exposure; this is an exposure of the boys

and their accounts, an exposure of myself as the maker of the film, and the community who watches this film.

5.4.3 A claim for voice

Notions of voice in the film are developed through the dialogue, and come out of the discussion on account and accounting. It is Cavell who is the first to raise the issue of voice in the film, pointing to the struggle the boys have in finding their voices, both at home and in wider society. What Cavell and Thoreau see in the film is a shared experience in the suppression (or even denial) of voice, with Cavell demanding the right to speak and the right of others to speak, on equal terms, which he links to democracy. In both Cavell and Thoreau's philosophical writing, 'voice' as I have described in chapter 3, implies a hugely complex set of ideas. The particular reflection I wish to make here about voice and philosophy (through the dialogue) is that voice is not simply an individualistic concept, but it is tied to community and liberalism. Voices speak to others in a way that can be described as political[47]. That is to say, political, not in the sense of a 'particular agenda or a programme for good governance, but defining what constitutes membership of a polis' (Rudrum, 2013, p.137).

That voices speak to others, to the community, is key to the claim I make for my film here. There is something happening in the intimacy of voice on the small screen as opposed to what happens on the big screen. The film is not merely an enactment of a story as one might experience at the cinema. On a small screen, we are physically close as the boys' voices speak to us directly. There is something in the notion of the passionate utterance that is at play here. I reference here Cavell's most intimate example of the passionate utterance in *Philosophy The Day After Tomorrow* (2006), where Cavell describes Carmen's rejection of Don José's declaration of love in the opera, *Don Giovanni*. As the voices on the small screen talk directly to us,

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[47] The use of the word 'political' here refers to Cavell's concept of voice being linked to political in the sense that we are members of a community; this is a concept which I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter.

we can consider relational moments on the small screen as moments of passionate utterance, demanding a response from the viewer (the community), to whom they are speaking.

5.4.4 A claim for translation

It is Thoreau who is first to recognise that there is transformation in the film. From difficult beginnings and finding their voices, Tyrone and Hashim begin to transform their lives, and see that there is a place for them in society in the future. There is an acknowledgement from Cavell that the making of the film has been, for the boys, a crisis in their lives, a moment of reassessment, and part of their education.

As the conversation develops, it becomes clear to Cavell and Thoreau that this transformation (this state of translation) is not only confined to the boys' experience in film making. They too have been unsettled, put into a state of translation. The film and the discussion are their crisis too. The film has demanded a philosophical response in the form of the dialogue. It has made them reflect on their own experiences, some of which converge with the boys' lives, but it also goes beyond this. Through watching and discussing the film, they become aware that their understanding of deafness has been disrupted. In *Walden* (1854/2014), Thoreau makes reference to the old deaf fisherman humming his tune, and to the elderly deaf lady with her horn. In *Little Did I Know* (2010), Cavell makes reference to his own minor hearing problems. In watching the film, however, they are confronted by deafness and are able to learn more about it, in a way that is perhaps secondary to the confrontation and the demand for a response. The demand for a response is, nonetheless, present.

Watching the film is a father tongue experience to which, as I have already explained, we might or might not be sensitive. Furthermore, as I alluded to earlier, the film can be said to be acting in the same way as a Cavellian passionate utterance which demands a response. The response might be physical, visceral, or even refused, but here in the dialogue it is

philosophical. Thus, the philosophical reflections I make about translation in the film and the dialogue are that they are a kind of enactment, that is, a working out of the sense of unsettlement and translation. In the dialogue, Cavell and Thoreau act out this moment of disruption when they realise that there are parallels between the boys' life experiences and their own. This causes them to reflect on their own lives; Cavell talks about his own experience of growing up in an immigrant household, and Thoreau reflects on his intentions to unsettle in writing *Walden.*

The claim I make for my film is that unsettlement and translation lead to the film being educative in a way that is cognisant of the Emersonian perfectionist model described in chapter 3. That is to say, the viewers are not gaining propositional knowledge here. The crisis and unsettlement they have in experiencing the film is, I argue educative. I do not mean 'educational' in the sense that the viewer is gaining knowledge about deafness (although this may be an unintended outcome), but 'educative', in the richer philosophical sense of unsettlement and the transformation of the self. I acknowledge that it could be argued that many films can unsettle; who could not react to the death of Bambi's[48] mother, or to the abject terror we witness in *Schindler's List*?[49] In my film, the viewer is not watching the film as a form of entertainment. The watching of the film is an educative moment that is more existentially important than in watching just any other film. I argue that there should be a convening of the dominant discourses about deafness, while our response to the film (and what we see of the boys in the film) could enable a direct confrontation with our own cultural criteria. When we confront our own experiences with something else (in this case, the film), a moment is created that is both philosophical and educative. This is what is at stake when Cavell writes:

> What I require is a convening of my culture's criteria, in order to confront them with my words and life as I pursue them and as I may imagine them; and at the same time to confront my words and life as I pursue them with the life my culture's words may imagine for me: to

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[48] *Bambi* (1942) is a children's animation film directed by Walt Disney.

[49] *Schindler's List* (1993) is an historical drama film directed by Steven Spielberg.

confront the culture with itself along the lines in which it meets in me…
This seems to me a task that warrants the name of philosophy. It is
also the description of something we might call education (Cavell,
1999a, p. 125).

5.4.5 A final reflection

In presenting my rationale at the start of the chapter, it was my intention to
do two things. First, I reflected on what the dialogue tells the reader in terms
of Cavell and Thoreau's reaction to the experience of watching the film.
Second, I developed Cavell and Thoreau's philosophical discussion of the
film, going beyond this to present my claims for what is unique in the film and
dialogue. In the next, and final chapter of the thesis I develop the notion of
claims and make 'My claims to, and of, community'.

In the *Conversations with History* (2002) at Berkeley University, Cavell
explains that he does not know whether his philosophical writing on film
could transfer to modern film technologies, both in the making and in the
viewing experience. He goes on to say that this is for others to interrogate. It
is my reflection, and now my claim, that this is exactly what I have done in
making the film and creating the dialogue. The film, made with new
technologies, has elicited a philosophical response. My film is different in
significant ways to the experience of the big screen in the smallness of it,
however it is not just the smallness, but also the relational aspects which are
extremely important in this experience. I am looking at something different
than has been looked at previously. To have made my film and presented
the philosophical reading of the film in any other way, would not have created
this opportunity.

In the next chapter, I revisit the assertions I have made throughout this
thesis, and consider 'claim(s)' as a philosophical concept with reference to
Cavell's *The Claim of Reason* (1999a) and *Must We Mean What We Say?*
(2002). I do this not in isolation, but with reference to those communities for
which these claims have implications: the viewers of film, the deaf
community, and the community of the school.

Chapter 6. My claims to, and of, community

6.1 Introduction

This thesis came about as a result of many years of experience working with young deaf people in schools. As such, the communities I refer to in the title of this chapter are the deaf community, the school community, and the wider community through government. In the first chapter of the thesis, I focused on the socio-political discourse around inclusion and concluded that despite claims for greater inclusion of young deaf people in both mainstream and specialist provision, young deaf people remain marginalised. Throughout the thesis, I have presented a close reading of the texts of Cavell and Thoreau, and the making of film, in order to provide an alternative route to a different kind of understanding of young deaf people. In investigating the philosophical notions of voice, accounting, and translation, I have made a film that unsettles concepts of deafness. The thesis itself is, philosophically, an act of translation. It is this approach that is at the heart of the originality of this thesis. However, whilst I have justified the philosophical approach I have taken in my research, to leave the research 'hanging philosophically' would be insufficient, and would fail to impact positively on the lives of young deaf people. As I argued in the second chapter, to present the philosophical and the practical as being diametrically opposed is a false dichotomy. I conclude in this chapter then, that there are real, everyday practical implications for my research that are embedded in the philosophy upon which I have drawn.

In this final chapter of the thesis, I present my claims for my research, and make claims upon others for whom my claims have implications. I begin with a reading of what Cavell has written about notions of 'claim' in *The Claim of Reason* (1999a) and *Must We Mean What We Say?* (2017). Cavell has written at length on the concept of 'claim' and 'claiming', and given that these two volumes total more than 800 pages, my reading will be necessarily focused. Of particular relevance to my research are what Cavell refers to as 'claims to community' (Cavell, 2015, p.20). The first section of this chapter

will, therefore, focus on my understanding of notions of claim, supported by Cavell's philosophical notion of 'claim'. The middle section of this chapter will be a statement of the claims that this thesis makes in relation to accounting, translation, and voice, in the context of the film made with the two deaf boys. The third, and final, section will look to the future and the potential consequences for education that are imbued in my conclusions. In this part of the chapter, I will discuss the implications of my research, and will lay out the claims I make on the communities that surround these young people. I do not argue, in my concluding remarks, that if all the claims I make of people and institutions are implemented, then any disadvantage or barriers encountered by young deaf people will therefore be eradicated. Rather, what I argue for is that if the voices of young deaf people are heard, their accounts given, then there is the potential for unsettlement that may cause people and institutions to reassess the deaf experience in a way that might lead to an improved level of inclusion.

6.2 How my claims are to be understood

Cavell's writing on claiming in *The Claim of Reason* (1999a) is hugely rich and complex. His response to Wittgensteinian criteria in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (2001), and his own considerations of what criteria mean to him, are ground-breaking. However, to discuss these elements of Cavell's ideas on 'claiming', connected as this is to scepticism and epistemology, would be a distraction from my aim in this part of the thesis. In this section of the chapter, I will outline what *I* mean by claiming; my understanding of this is philosophically supported by certain threads of argument from Cavell's writing, and this gives clarity to my thinking. In *The Claim of Reason* (1999a, p.20), Cavell writes about his 'wish and search for community'. In this chapter, I too seek to make my claims to community. The claims I make in this chapter are of little value if I cannot situate them in, and to a certain extent have them accepted by, the deaf and school communities, and those associated with them.

A definition of the word 'claim' could readily be picked from a dictionary to give an easy explanation of the word along the lines of; Claim: to *say* something, for example, 'I claim something to be *so*' or to *demand* something, as in 'I claim my rights'. However, the idea of claim is a complex one. With a simple change of preposition, 'claims' can become many things; claims to, claims for, claims by, claims of, claims about, claims upon *et cetera*. We can even alter our understanding of claim through the use of adjectives, for example, empirical claims or scientific claims, in a way that might alter our feelings about the veracity of such a claim. However, in making my own claims here, it is important to note that this is not done with the intention of searching for an undeniable 'truth', but rather these claims speak to something I *believe* to be the case, and about which, I *care* passionately. In this thesis I have made claims for, and about, film and deafness, as well as for, and about, accounting, translation, and voice. In concluding the thesis, I will make claims upon the school community and those involved in that community. However, before proceeding to make these claims, I need to make clear what Cavell means by 'claim' and what I take from my understanding of Cavell's work on claim.

Claim is a hugely rich and nuanced concept in Cavell's work. He understands claim in a variety of different ways throughout his *œuvre* that could be the subject of a whole thesis. What I intend to do, however, is to focus on Cavell's work on 'claim' as an ordinary language philosopher. When writing about claims, Cavell is doing so in the context of language, and these notions of claims come out in three particular ways. First, there is the claim that language puts upon us that is related to Thoreau's father tongue. That is to say, having claims made upon us could be said to be a 'father tongue' experience, in that 'it [the claim] holds out its experience to us, allows us to experience it' (Cavell, 1992, p.16), and in doing so, the claim disrupts those upon whom the claim is made. Second, there is the demand for a response that is claimed in the passionate utterance. In *Must We Mean What We Say?* (2017, p. 234), Cavell likens this demand for a response to the experience of pain. If a person claims they are suffering pain, he writes, 'Your suffering makes a claim upon me…I must acknowledge it', and we do this by

responding to a claim upon our sympathy or actions. Finally, there is the claim to community that I will develop further in the rest of this section, in relation to the claims I make for this thesis.

It is important to understand that I do not make my claims in isolation. For them to have meaning, they are made, not only *of,* but *within* that community. There is something relational at play here. David Rudrum describes this relationship between claim and community when he writes:

> To stake a claim is metaphorically to stick one's neck on the block…to make a statement in the public domain…whose provisionality awaits ratification in and from the public domain to which it was addressed (2013, p. 16).

To stick one's neck out implies an element of risk that I might take in making my claims. They may be rejected by the very community to whom they are addressed. Rudrum (2013, p.23) describes them as 'fragile, open and provisional'. If this is the case, then in making my claims I am expecting, or even demanding, a response (the passionate utterance). But what if my claims are rejected; is that still acknowledgement, or am I even at risk of rejection of membership from the community?

Community, contends Standish (2012), is at the heart of ordinary language philosophy. He points to the fact that in ordinary language philosophy, sentences often start with phrases such as 'when we say…we mean…' (p. 83), and that this use of the first-person plural is a verb form 'which binds the speaker to the community' (*ibid.,* p. 83). For Cavell, this notion of membership of the community is of the upmost importance, and is akin to membership of a political community, a *polis.* He argues that by accepting that we are members of this community, we are consenting in criteria. That is to say, consenting to or accepting, the rights and responsibilities of membership of the community (the *polis*) and how things are done. Rudrum (2013, p.145) writes that Cavell describes this as a form of contract, and the implications of this contract are that. '1. I recognise the principle of consent and recognise that others have consented with me. 2. I recognise the society as mine; therefore, I am answerable for it and to it'. In this sense, it is a

political participation, and we have a political voice. As such we are accepting of the notion that in such a *polis,* we have the right to speak for the community, and also the community has the right to speak for us. Here, I return to the idea of risk. When we speak (claim even), we run the risk of being misunderstood or disagreed with. However, this is not to be equated to rejection from the community. For Cavell, dissent is not entirely negative, 'dissent is not the undoing of consent but a dispute about its content' (1999a, p. 27). In holding each other to account, there is still acknowledgement of, and consent to, the community. As I wrote in Chapter 3, choosing between conformity or non-conformity is the position of the individual in relation to society, to the 'other', or community.

In *Must We Mean What We Say?* Cavell writes:

> The way you must rely upon yourself as a source of what is said when, demands that you grant full title to others as sources of that data – not out of politeness, but because the nature of the claim you make for yourself is repudiated without that acknowledgement: It is a claim that no-one knows better than you whether and when a thing is said, and if this is not to be taken as a claim to expertise (a way of taking it which repudiates it) then it must be understood to mean that you know better than others what you claim to know (Cavell, 2017, p. 221).

In this vein then, in the next section as I proceed to make the claims for the thesis, I rely upon myself and my research to say what I have to say. I do so now, in the context of a policy of inclusion that leaves young deaf people at a distance from the communities to which they belong. I make these claims, holding them up as a father tongue experience to be encountered by others (whilst acknowledging that there is no guarantee that this will happen, unless we are open to the experience in Thoreauvian terms). I make them as a passionate utterance, demanding a response. These are claims about which I care deeply; I await an acknowledgement, or a response, from the communities to whom they are addressed.

6.3 The claims this thesis makes for accounting, translation, and voice, as contributions to knowledge

Throughout this thesis, in the sections headed 'reflections on…', I have made assertations that are the building blocks which construct the final three claims I make for accounting, translation, and voice. Whilst they may be read as claims in their own right, I also want them to be understood as developmental stages in the thesis which substantiate the final claims I make, both for the thesis and of the community. Starting in chapter one, I asserted that young deaf people remain marginalised in schools and in the community, and that there are issues relating to accounting, translation, and voice that merit further investigation. In the second chapter, I made the assertion that film and philosophy are the appropriate approaches to take in this study. In the third chapter, I gave a close reading of the works of Cavell and Thoreau to reach a philosophical understanding of accounting, translation, and voice which informed my assertion of the power of film to disrupt. The fourth chapter built upon this notion of the ability of film to unsettle, and there I asserted the educative potentialities of film. In the fifth chapter, I used philosophical dialogue to provide a response to the film I made with the boys, which culminated in the final claims I make for this thesis.

Before restating these final claims, I need to make clear that they are not just linked to the contribution I make to knowledge in the thesis, but that they are also the mechanism by which I am making this contribution. These claims contribute to knowledge on two levels. First, I have taken notions of accounting, translation and voice as thinly understood terms, as used perhaps in the context of student voice, and produced a much richer, extended, philosophical understanding of the terms. Similarly, whilst a lot has been written about film and the educative potential of film (Gibbs, 2019; Saito, 2017), in making my own film and writing a philosophical dialogue about the film, I have developed a richer understanding of what is educative about film. Second, I have referred to the works of scholars such as Saito, Standish, Fulford, and Mahon throughout the thesis, all of whom have written

on the terms accounting, translation, and voice. In this thesis, I have taken these Thoreauvian and Cavellian terms and applied them in a new context. That is to say, I have extended the concepts by applying them to the context of understanding young deaf people. 'Projecting a word' as Cavell (1999a, p. 180) puts it, is to project a word into new contexts, making 'appropriate projections into further contexts'. In this thesis, I have shown that we can come to understand the words accounting, translation, and voice, differently. The following three claims I make are rich, and as I will describe later in this chapter, are of importance to the educational community.

- **Accounting**

  I claim that in giving account through the making of the film, I move towards an idea of exposure, which is an exposure of the young deaf boys and their accounts, the exposure of myself as a film maker, and the exposure of the community who watch the film.

- **Translation**

  I claim that philosophical translation leads to the film being educative in the Emersonian perfectionist sense, and that this also relates to a rich concept of unsettlement and the transformation of the Self.

- **Voice**

  I claim that voices speak to others, and to the community. There are relational moments on the small screen that can be seen as moments of passionate utterance, that demand a response from the viewer (the community), to whom the voices are speaking.

In conclusion, as I ask the reader to consider these claims, I also ask the reader to recognise the claims that the film and the dialogue, make upon us. As David Rudrum writes:

> They are awaiting acknowledgement, uptake, and agreement from us, not simply in regard to their content, or to their merit *qua* texts, but, more fundamentally, in regard to the cues or invitations they give us to reflect on the claims we use in order to justify our own lives (Rudrum, 2013, p. 30).

In the next section of this chapter I move from the claims I make *for* the thesis, to make claims *upon* others. Claims, as Rudrum describes above,

await acknowledgment from those to whom they are addressed, and in turn that will call on others to reflect upon how they justify and lead their own lives in relation to young deaf people.

6.4 The claims I make upon community

Thus far, in this chapter, I have written about Cavell's philosophical claim to community and stated the claims I make for the thesis, and the film as part of the thesis. I come now to the implications of these claims. Out of the claims I make for accounting, translation, and voice, come further claims that I make upon others (the community). Typically, in an empirical thesis, one might expect to be presented with a list of recommendations at this stage. These recommendations would be driven by the data, rooted in the evidence provided by the analysis of that data. Here, I wish to make a distinction between such recommendations and the claims I make upon others. There is much more at stake here than simply recommending a plan of action for inclusion. I am describing these claims as moments of passionate utterance. I am calling out, proclaiming, and demanding a response that goes beyond the notion of recommendation.

I am addressing, not just a broad sense of the word 'community', but specific communities. I am making claims upon the wider community through government, the school community through local government and academy trusts, individual school communities, and the deaf community. My research may be richly philosophical, but the outcomes have the potential to be highly practical in these communities in the future. I do not make these claims upon community as some sort of panacea that will, once and for all, put right all that is wrong with the young deaf experience. Rather, I am addressing the issues that have arisen from the research, and that demand a response.

- **I make a claim upon government to review the effectiveness of national policy on the inclusion of young deaf people in schools.**

This claim comes from my own experience in schools and from the evidence in the academic literature, for example, Olsson *et al.,* (2018) on the application of inclusion policy and the young deaf experience. Young deaf people do not achieve academically in line with their peers, nor do they have the same social and cultural experiences throughout their time in school. As I explained in chapter 1, this disparity in both social and academic progress has been further widened by the experience of the current pandemic. The review might take the form of a select committee review, headed by a leader from the world of deaf education, taking evidence from experts in the field. As a result of this review, changes to policy and practice could be implemented that impact positively on the deaf educational experience, and further guidance offered to those responsible for its implementation.

The terms of reference for the review are described below. They lay out the key themes and questions that need to be considered, and how the review will respond to the long-term needs of young deaf people, especially in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. These terms of reference will consider means of securing accountability for those with responsibility for the outcomes of young deaf people They will also investigate the means by which to provide the support which will empower families, and focus on helping young deaf people to thrive in a range of contexts.

The review will consider the following key themes and questions:

1. A broad support remit: Identify the support that is necessary to meet the needs of young deaf people, in order to improve outcomes, and to make a lasting significant difference to deaf individuals and to society.
2. Empowering the families of young deaf people: Identify what can be done to ensure that young deaf people thrive and develop in the family unit. To grant agencies the powers to support and intervene where appropriate, balancing the needs of the deaf child with the right to a family life.

3. Educational provision: Identify the key agencies who will implement the review and raise standards for young deaf people. Decide who will provide the leadership, build a strong and resilient workforce, and create the partnerships in school settings that will lead to improved social and academic outcomes for young deaf people.

4. A long-term view: Identify the most sustainable and financially efficient means of delivering services to young deaf people and their families, including those services that require a high level of investment. Decide who is best placed to deliver them, and how can this be future proofed in a post-pandemic context.

5. Accountability: Identify the accountability measures needed to ensure that there is oversight of consistently high standards of provision for young deaf people in all localities.

Making a claim upon government is also deeply rooted in Thoreauvian philosophy. In writing "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience" in *Walden* (Thoreau, 1854/2014, p. 180), Thoreau makes a claim 'on every man to make known what kind of government would command his respect, and that will be one step toward obtaining it' (*ibid.*, p. 181). He describes government as the mode by which 'the people have chosen to execute their will' (*ibid.,* p. 180), arguing that if government is to be expedient it must listen to the will of the people so they can act through it. He also points to the potential for government to be open to the abuse of a few vociferous individuals, citing his objections to slavery, and the war in Mexico (*ibid.,* 1854/2014*).* So strong were his abolitionist beliefs, and objections to the war in Mexico, that he refused to pay his poll taxes, resulting in him spending a night in jail. He went on to deliver lectures about the duties and rights of the individual to make claims upon government, as I do here.

- **I make a claim upon local authorities and academy trusts to use films like mine in the continuing professional development of (CPD) school and academy staff in relation to deaf awareness.**

Brinkley (2011, p.64) calls for 'deaf awareness…and deaf understanding' to be achieved through the CPD of all school staff. In the film, Tyrone

remembers his time as a new arrival in the UK and his first encounters with sign language at school, "I was practising and practising with sign language…Time went on, and I was encouraged" (17.32 Mins.). Brinkley argues that if all staff were deaf aware and had some basic signing ability, then young people like Tyrone would come to feel encouraged much sooner. This, he writes, might be achieved through deaf awareness days or the teaching of some basic British Sign Language. I would go further, to argue that films such as the one I have made with the deaf boys could be highly effective in teaching an understanding of deafness and the needs of deaf learners. If these films are made with the young deaf students from those specific authorities and trusts (as communities), with the support of their families, then such films have the potential to be highly effective indeed.

- **I make a claim upon school leaders to be aware of the marginalisation of young deaf people in their schools, and the implications this has for both socialisation and academic outcomes. Subsequently, I make claim upon them to take action.**

Olsson *et al.* (2018), in their research, are clear that young deaf people are at a double disadvantage, in that they are at risk of both academic and social exclusion. There may be policy issues specific to individual schools that may impact on that marginalisation. Take, for example, policy on students' use of mobile phones in schools. It is worth noting here, that Gavin Williamson, the Secretary of State for Education, is currently proposing to ban the use of mobile phones in schools (Criddle, 2021). However, in a school where there are deaf children, such as the one in which I worked, I have witnessed texting as a common means of communication, especially with hearing, non-signing peers. School leaders do have the ability to improve the experience of young deaf people, and to reduce that element of marginalisation in their schools. In chapter 3, I described how Cavell felt marginalised from an academic community that was predominantly analytic in its approach to philosophy. He felt that there were those in that community that would suppress his voice and his right to speak, not only for himself, but for others. It is the marginalisation of young deaf people through the suppression of voice that brings me to my next claim.

- **I make a claim upon schools to give voice to young deaf people, to hear their accounts in a meaningful way that goes beyond current iterations of 'student voice'.**

Stefan Ramaekers (2010, p. 59) proclaims that 'owning a voice, is 'having an expressed existence'. I wrote in chapter 3 that I am concerned with the voice of young deaf people in terms of them having the right to express themselves, to give account, and claim that they have the right to be heard[50]. It follows then, that it is incumbent upon schools to provide opportunities for those deaf voices to be heard, and for their existence to be experienced. School leaders, I argue, have a duty to be aware of the experience that all young people live in their schools, and especially of the experiences of those who are vulnerable or marginalised. Whilst I have experienced some outstanding work in schools with regards to this, too often listening to children is done at quite a superficial level (Morris, 2019). I am not advocating giving voice to students in some reductive form of 'student voice' as a tick box exercise. Rather, I mean that the challenge to school leaders is to hear the accounts of young deaf people in their schools and respond accordingly. This might take the form of making and watching film with young deaf people.

- **I make a claim upon the whole school community to learn, at least some, British Sign Language (BSL) that will enable them to make some contact with young deaf people within that community.**

In the film, when Hashim is talking about trying to make friends with his hearing peers, he quotes the other children, "…and like, oh, you're deaf. You can't hear us, but they didn't really know anything about deafness" (3.35 mins.). The inability of the other children to understand deafness, and to be able to communicate with him, is something he clearly remembers from his

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[50] I remind the reader here of what I wrote about the use of the verb 'to hear', in the introduction to the thesis. The verb 'to hear' here and throughout the thesis, is to be understood, not on a superficial or tokenistic level, in that we are simply listening to stories on film. Rather, 'hearing' is used in a richer sense, in that what we are hearing puts a responsibility upon those who are listening, it demands a response.

early childhood. Tyrone too is acutely aware of the importance of communication, "No, there was no signing. I had nothing, nothing, nothing…" (16.50 mins.). It is incumbent then, on all the members of the school community (including the children) to have at least some basic means of communication with the deaf members of the school community, preferably through BSL. There is an occasion in the section titled "The Ponds", in *Walden* (2014), when Thoreau describes an encounter with an elderly deaf fisherman. It is a moving description that emphasises a shared humanity rather than a shared language, but which defines nonetheless, a moment of harmonious community. Thoreau writes:

> Once in a while we sat together on the pond, he at one end of the boat, and I at the other; but not many words passed between us, for he had grown deaf in his later years, but he occasionally hummed a psalm, which harmonized well with my philosophy. Our intercourse was thus altogether one of unbroken harmony (Thoreau, 2014, p. 96).

If Hashim and Tyrone were able to sit with hearing peers and exchange but a few words of BSL, their experience might similarly be a little more harmonious and less isolating.

- **I make a claim upon the deaf community to encourage and to support their young people in engaging with the wider community.**

It is important to remember that when we refer to the 'deaf community', we are not talking about a homogenous group of people living side by side in a shared environment. Rather, we are talking about a disparate set of individuals or families spread out amongst any given town or city. The deaf experience is one of isolation. If the deaf child is not at school, they might not meet with another child for long periods of time. In the film, Hashim describes how this feeling of isolation increased as he was growing up. He starts by describing his early experiences "So, around Year 5, I had some friends that were neighbours, around the same age. They were hearing and I was deaf, but the communication was really difficult. But there were lots of activities. We played through activities, and that's how we made the connection" (3.35 mins.). However, when he comes to his late teens, he says, "I rarely meet

these people though now, because they are all at work and they're busy…and I'm busy catching up with my work" (3.35 mins.). It is clear from the film, however, that Hashim's passion for football, and Tyrone's love of boxing and rugby, give them both the opportunity to engage with other people in a positive and meaningful way. Both speak of their practising sport with others with animation. The challenge for the deaf community, and parents of the deaf, is to break that isolation and to encourage deaf children to engage with others beyond the school gates.

- **I make a claim upon the parents and siblings to learn and use some British Sign Language.**

There are two specific points in the film that I find poignant, and even perhaps, shocking. The first is when Tyrone says, "In my family, they're all hearing. I'm the only deaf one. With people who don't sign, I just gesture" (1.04 mins.). The second moment is when Hashim echoes, "Only I'm deaf in the family, the rest of them are hearing. BSL is my first language, I love BSL. Mostly my family speak English, but sometimes they use gesturing, like 'Mum' or 'Dad'" (2.11 mins.). That both boys live in families where they are the sole users of BSL (which they each regard as their first language) points to an isolation from family life that is hard to conceive. Unfortunately, this is more common than we might imagine, as I pointed to in chapter one. Terry *et al.* (2017, p. 56), in their research, found that there was often 'devaluation and disrespect' of the deaf child in a hearing family, including sometimes treating them as if they were not present, or making decisions about them without consulting them. Acknowledging that this might not be a simple task, the challenge for families of deaf children is to learn and use, at least, some basic BSL.

- **I make a claim upon young deaf people to shout out and challenge the community!**

In the film, Hashim makes just this claim, when he movingly says, "I aren't afraid of just telling people what I think…You are deaf, you only can't hear, but you've got abilities inside of yourself to do whatever you want" (13.40 mins.). This rallying call can be likened to that of Thoreau's chanticleer,

waking the neighbours and calling them to account. Hashim is loudly giving his own account, and is calling on others to give a good account for themselves.

6.5 Final reflections on my claims

The writing of this final chapter and making my claims for the thesis, and upon the communities it relates to, has been full of emotion. It stems from the very reasons I embarked upon this journey. I felt I was taken back to and reliving injustices I have been fighting against in schools for many years, on behalf of a group of young people who have been very special to me. It relates to my hope for the future, and my desire to end the marginalisation of young deaf people, particularly in the school community. The emotion also relates to the philosophical journey I have made in my reading of Thoreau and Cavell, which has been a long, and often challenging journey. The making of the film too, was an emotional experience, working with two young people with whom I have worked since they were five years of age. However, the claims I have made do not belong to me, or between the cover of this thesis. They belong to the communities I have served and to whom they are addressed. I end with one final quote from Cavell:

> If I have successfully established my claim, I have said enough (Cavell, 1999a, p. 49).

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