Closure in Sign Language Poetry – some first thoughts

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When we think about opening and closure in a performance of a sign language poem, we can identify up to four possible "phases": the text of the poem, the presentation or framing devices surrounding the poem (which might include the title and closing gestures), any introduction to or background about the text, and the 'colloquial' stage, in which the signer has emerged from the role of a non-performer, so the behavior – linguistic or otherwise – is no longer literary or formal, but is still identified with the performance. Here we focus on elements within the poetic text, but we also consider the other temporally contingent parts of the poem's performance.

In our analysis, we used the following BSL poems (in alphabetical order by title) *Blue Suits* by Paul Scott, *Deaf* by Nigel Howard, *Deaf Studies* by Penny Gunn, *Duck and Dissertation* by Donna Williams, *Elephants Dancing* by Dorothy Miles, *Make-up Theatre* by Richard Carter, *Party* by Johanna Mesch, *Time* by John Wilson and *Trio* by Dorothy Miles. All are available on www.bristol.ac.uk/bslpoetryanthology. Many of our ideas presented here come from Barbara Herrnstein Smith's seminal *Poetic closure; a study of how poems end* (1968).

In seeking to appreciate the full impact of a poem may ask ourselves at what stage we see the 'cracking whip' (Yang Ye, 2004): the point in the poem where the audience says to itself "Ah ha!" In many cases that whip crack, the moment that gets our full attention, occurs at the moment of closure. It may occur at a natural stopping point in the poem or at a point of dramatic tone shift where the poet lays out their message to the audience. It frequently creates a strong final lingering image and aims at generating an elicited, affective response from the audience. As we explore different aspects of closure in a selection of signed poems, we will be aware of moments when 'the whip cracks'.

We should acknowledge that the opening of a poem also has significant markers to guide the audience's response to the poem. All the poets in this anthology gave the title for their piece before starting the poem. Many started with their hands folded in front of their bodies, gave 'air quotes', then the title, and then paused with their hands in their folded in front again before beginning the actual poem. This pacing gave the audience a clear cue as to when the poem was starting. Taking time to announce the piece places the poem within a certain frame.

It prepares the audience to receive something new and gives them time to reflect on the title and on the themes which will be discussed in the piece. Poets also sometimes include some explanation of their poems in the form of an introduction (in *Deaf*) or an introduction and closing remarks (in *Elephants Dancing*). In the poems we analyzed, this often occurred when the poets wanted to draw the audience's attention to a specific metaphor. However, although opening devices in signed poetry are of considerable interest, the focus here will be on the stages of closure. While the opening strategies remain relatively consistent across the poems we have analyzed here, closure appears to be a site for change and innovation. Indeed, the way that the author chooses to close the poem can leave the audience with a feeling of stability, as with the traditional denouement seen, for example in *Trio* or with a sense of shock, for example in the closing moments of *Make-up Theatre*. By either changing or maintaining the pace and magnitude of the rest of the poem, closure in sign language poetry sets the tone for the viewer's reflection on the piece as a whole.

Without the structural framework that characterizes several forms of written poetry, a narrative ending that features a natural stopping point, such as the death of the main character, serves as a useful visual cue that the performance has ended. Similarly, placing the whip crack moment at the conclusion of the signed poems in which the performers convey a specific message becomes another useful tool for distinguishing the end of a certain piece. The identification of a signed performance's conclusion has recently been affected by the introduction of video recording technology, which has a physical conclusion built into its structure via the "fade to black" transition. Whereas many poems conclude decisively with a whip crack moment as the video clip is edited to end at that point, live performances of a poem can include a coda moment in which the poet continues signing to the audience. This contrast leads us to wonder how the increasing prevalence of video recordings has affected the closing procedure of signed literature.

On occasion, the greatest impact of closure occurs at the 'colloquial' stage – the moment of transition of role from the signer as poet performer to signer as a person. This is seen in Penny Gunn's *Deaf Studies*, where, immediately after finishing her performance, she steps out of her role as performer and her facial expression becomes one that shows her personal feelings about the performance of her personal poem. She signaled the end of her performance and the transition from the poem text to her role as self, by an abrupt shift to a powerfully emotional facial expression. We also see this transition in *Blue Suits*, in which, after ending the poem with a hold of the final sign, Paul Scott turns and walks off stage. In both these examples their return to their role as themselves signals unequivocally that the poetic event is over and the abrupt shift adds to the poetic message that has come before. The transition from signer to sign performer and from sign performer back to signer is not always seen in recordings of poems, perhaps for simple editing reasons in an anthology. This phase may also be considered a meaningful part of a live performance (captured on film) that would not have a similar equivalent in a studio setting.

Hand placement and gaze can frame the poem, where they are separate from the text itself and signify the end of the poem before the transition to the signer's own role. In *Time*, *Make-*

Up Theatre, and *Deaf*, for example, the poets conclude by lowering and crossing their hands. While *Time* and *Make-Up Theatre* ended with hands crossed in front, *Deaf* ended with the hands behind, perhaps as a powerful way for the signer to physically prevent himself from saying more. This abrupt closure seems fitting for a poem with such a pointed and political message. Nigel Howard emerges from the poem and moves into a neutral stance (signifying the end of the poem) immediately after completing the sign, as if performing a swift punch, rather than holding the sign. This final image of the doctor and the child lingers in the mind's eye of the audience long after the end of the poem. At the end of *Make-up Theater,* Richard Carter pauses after the diva's death and slowly raises himself up from his final position and folds his hands, a solemn expression on his face. Although he is leaving the character, he still expresses the mood of the final stanza - if he had been smiling, it would have broken the somber ambiance that he had built. His gaze also changes, as first he looks downwards as closure of the text (providing a visual representation of the dead protagonist), and then he looks up at the audience as the performing poet in a closing device for the performance. This closing gaze at the audience is also repeated in *Time*.

Much of sign language poetry has been analyzed in relation to cinematic techniques. Sign language literature necessarily has a performer whose body "becomes a palimpsest over which course the three-dimensional kinetic images," as movies do (Bauman et al., 2006, p. 2). As movie directors often insert short clips during or after the ending credit rolls, which often complement the main plot or even reveal the shocking twist that has been hidden the whole time (A famous Korean film *The Mask* reveals only through its frustrating bonus clips that the murderer was not the one suggested by the main plot), sign language performers can deliberately and creatively play with the ending as well. As an example, since the performance exists in the context of a larger poetic event, the performer can play with the discrepancy between when the real performance ends, and when the poetic event ends. This may also be seen in closure in signed poems performed with simultaneous presentation of spoken translations of the poem.

Dorothy Miles often created "extended endings" in her performances of sign-language poetry, providing something that was not in the written form of the poems. In *Trio*, her final signs DEAF BLIND ME, made with closed eyes, are accompanied by the words 'Deaf blinds me', and this is where the written/spoken poem ends. But in her signed version, her eyes open again and she signs taking a step forward, indicating that she has not given up hope. The two points of closure in the two languages thus create two very different impressions. Examples such as this show how, contrary to the idea of *phonocentrism,* ("the unquestioned orientation that speech and hearing are the only fully human modalities of language" - Bauman et al., 2006, p. 1), the visual elements of sign language add a powerful and beautiful dimension to closure that can barely be articulated directly in spoken languages. The closure in the BSL version of the poem does not feel like a firmly closed or bolted door as one would expect with death. It is more like a gentle closure with a crack left open, as displayed with her final sign of extending her arms in front of her and giving a few forceful blinks. Whereas the English translation leaves no doubt that the story is over, the sign language version makes it clear that there is still hope.

John Wilson also shows the powerful impact of an apparent 'coda' made by a small non-manual gesture that occurs after the final manual sign. When the boy finally finds the satisfactory answer to his question 'What is time?' the annoying cuckoo clock on the wall breaks down. The poem ends with the boy's curt nod and a small smile, looking at the clock. The contrast with the dumb expression on the cuckoo bird's face and its ghastly broken form signed as part of the final manual sign reinforces the message of the poem – that this, that contrary to the notion of phonocentrism or oralism, sign language can represent concrete and abstract concepts in versatile way. This can present an "open portal, a lens through which to peer deeper into a new visual landscape of language," an effect that hearing poets and writers groped for without ever considering the potential of sign language (Nelson et al., 2006, p. 1, 5).

A sudden change in tone in midst of a poem or near the end of a poem may indicate closure. For example, the signer purposely creates a light-hearted mood/tone which dramatically shifts to a harsh and cruel mood revealing the reality previously hidden. The message of *Deaf* is revealed just in this manner. A newborn baby is sweetly rocked in a father's arms. When the family realizes the baby is deaf, the signer changes perspective and becomes the doctor who dispassionately thrusts cochlear implants into the baby's head, demonstrated by clawed fingers. In these last signs, the full meaning of the poem is revealed; the doctor "fixes" and medicalizes deafness, a condition that does not need to be fixed but embraced. Thus, *Deaf* ends on the emphatic and powerful sign of jamming cochlear implants into the baby's head. The final sign stands in contrast to the earlier signs in the performance. For the majority of the poem, Nigel Howard shows a loving, or at least gentle, face with positive, open-palm signs; the end jumps out at the audience with his 'clinically-detached-at-best' face and the claw-like handshape of the cochlear implant sign.

The end of this poem could also be viewed as a natural stopping point: once the cochlear implant is implanted one could say "the deed is done," and the possibility of being an entire deaf person has been stripped away. Poetic closure often occurs when the poem reaches a stage that the audience understands to be a natural stopping point and will not expect more after this event has occurred. This is a conventional way for poems to close in English, too. It is notable that many of the poems analyzed here concern themselves with a period of time that has a 'natural' stopping point, although other markers of performance or use of language work with this natural stopping point to reinforce the moment of closure.

In each one we see a distinct "journey" over time, in which the protagonist or focal character goes from a state of "life" to one of "death." John Wilson's *Time* and Dorothy Miles' *Trio* are defined by the hours in the day, and Nigel Howard's *Deaf* is marked by a literal birth. And all of them end in a "death", either symbolic or literal. In *Deaf* the death occurs metaphorically as we are led to believe that, with the addition of cochlear implants, the baby's identity as a 'whole' deaf person has 'died' and it will no longer be a part of the Deaf community; *Trio* ends at night-time, a more traditional metaphor for 'death' (although the closure is perhaps less tight, as death is followed by the possibility of rebirth); *Time* refers to death explicitly

when defining the concept of time as being the path between the cradle and the grave, and it also ends with the death of the irritating cuckoo from the cuckoo clock; and *Makeup Theatre* ends with a literal death, and there is nowhere else for the poem to go because the protagonist has died. The tempo of this poem also increases as it nears closure. The signs which start out calm and rehearsed as the artist gives her performance become quicker and, by the end of the poem, the speed is showing the psychological distress of the diva before her suicide.

Natural stopping places can be other than death and simply be at a point that the audience understands will have events unfolding in a satisfactory and expected way. *Duck and Dissertation* (Donna Williams) ends on a hopeful, uplifting note. When the character sees the duckling and feels camaraderie with it, Williams visually signals the end of the poem by putting her hand to her heart and holding it there as an optimistic punctuation mark. Thus the audience is left with the sense that everything will turn out fine; she will finish her dissertation and the duck will beat the current. The closure here is created with a visual and linguistic release of tension that has built up earlier in the poem by the use of similar signs for the struggling writer and duck to create a strong connection between the two characters. Using one sign to refer to them both in the final sign (translated as 'comrades' but strongly implying they are linked together) releases that tension.

Other poems do not have such natural stopping points in their content, for example *Blue Suits* and *Elephants Dancing.* The closure of poems is different if there is a linear narrative to conclude or if the poem explores a single idea. Where poems use extended metaphor throughout the entire poem – such as the elephants and the suits, for example – they may present concrete images followed by a more abstract comment and the poets also change their role and who they address at the end. These two poems conclude more by "telling" rather than "showing", offering a declaration of opinion, and using established lexical signs in the role of a poetic narrator, rather than presenting visual images through direct character representation. For example, Dorothy Miles shifts from addressing the elephants to addressing the audience with a general comment and Paul Scott leaves his poetry world where he tells what happened to the two women and then steps into the 'real' (or is it real?) world to tell the women in his audience 'don't!'

Elephants Dancing begins with the apparently fun image of elephants dancing, but the 'whip cracks' when we realize that the elephants "dance" because they are attempting to break free from chains. The full meaning of the poem is not contained in the description of the dancing elephants but in the final reflection, "I hope someday to see elephants dancing free." Immediately before this final statement Miles' shakes her head (perhaps out of sadness or disapproval), but then her face transforms into an expression of power, her signs become larger and sharper. In the final sign FREE, her hands are forcefully thrown above her head and held wide. The size and strength, and upward movement of that final sign signal powerful and passionate closure. Paul Scott's *Blue Suit* also ends with a single very emphatic sign. Throughout the poem, the poet repeatedly says to his audience (women specifically), "If you're thinking of wearing a blue suit, don't do it!" The final time, at the end of the performance, is the most emphatic: he throws his sign DON'T! out wide and forcefully, with

his face showing similar intensity, and holds it longer than the signs in the rest of the performance.

Closure in performances can use many different techniques to create powerful lasting impressions. *Time* by John Wilson and *Elephants Dancing* by Dorothy Miles both end with gestures of victory, but the poets use other devices as well to give the story and poem happy endings, or at least hopeful endings, and leave the viewer inspired. In *Time*, John draws to a conclusion the repeated motif of the cuckoo clock by having the clock break at the end. After this clock has bothered the boy for several hours, he is able to defeat it by learning the meaning of time. This moment marks the end of his philosophical journey as well. John Wilson uses transfer of person to demonstrate the boy's immediate reaction to the clock's demise, which is a sharp nod of vindication. It is translated into English with "Ha!", which captures the monosyllabic feel of the ending if not its brilliant cheekiness. After this quick sign, John folds his hands in the fashion of haiku poets and turns to face the audience, his gaze, smile and posture indicating that he has emerged from his poetic persona.

Dorothy Miles takes the concept of a monosyllabic, victorious ending even further in *Elephants Dancing*. The poem has a lumbering feel that echoes the steps of an elephant, right up until the last few seconds, during which her signs speed up and become filled with a new energy. In Dorothy's own English translation, this last thought is expressed in an almost-iambic couplet, bringing the poem to a bright, satisfying conclusion. In sign language performance, the last few signs are set to a similar rhythm. The very last sign is a victorious spreading out of her arms, including the positively-associated open hand-shape. Much of the movement of the signs in *Elephants Dancing* is downward or downward focused, creating a 'bad is down' feel, until that final sign shoots upwards. Additionally, Dorothy uses a rhythmic speeding-up followed by the prolonged hold to bring her poem to a powerful climax that truly expresses the freedom she desires for the elephants, and thus for Deaf people.

In *Make-up Theater*, Richard Carter also leaves the audience with a lasting image, though achieved in slightly different manner. The turning point for *Make-up Theater* occurs sometime before the final sign. While there may be some debate over exactly where this occurs (the appearance of the photograph of the errant lover, when the diva starts crying, when she pulls out the bottle, when she pulls out the knife), there can be no arguing that the audience probably foresaw the death before the diva actually died. The audience has time to process and accept this probable outcome. The many foreshadowing elements throughout the piece makes it difficult for the viewer to predict exactly when her death will be. The visuals of the diva applying the ridiculously large lipstick and the mascara resemble the movements of a person loading a rifle, thus possibly desensitizing the viewer to her upcoming death. Although her final actions have the potential of being mistaken at first for another application of makeup, her gestures eventually reveal the identity of the object. So, in contrast to a poem such as *Deaf*, this ending is possibly less surprising or shocking. We saw earlier that Nigel Howard delivers the final sign in *Deaf* as a swift punch, but at the end of *Make-up Theatre*, Richard holds the final pose of the dead diva slumped over her dressing table for a beat longer than expected before returning to the neutral stance. By holding this

pose for an almost uncomfortably long time, this final image leaves a longer lasting impression on the audience. So, while there are many memorable signs in the poem, the sign that lingers foremost in the audience's mind is that final one.

In contrast to the more abrupt, large endings of the previous pieces, both *Trio* by Dot Miles and *Duck and Dissertation* by Donna Williams end with more subtle, though no less powerful, images. As in *Elephants Dancing*, Miles ends *Trio* by holding her final pose for a few seconds to signal the end of the narrative and to let her message sink in. How she gets to this final pose, however, differs significantly in the two poems, giving the ends, and the messages they convey, completely different feelings. In *Trio*, the final image is of the protagonist taking two steps forward, somehow both carefully but hopefully, and then blinking twice. Coming at the close of the day, or metaphorically, the life, depicted in the poem, this simple image conveys so much about the protagonist's acceptance of all of life's sufferings and her willingness to continue forward to – and beyond - the unknown end. She may not be able to see clearly where she is going, but she will continue to creep forward none the less. While the poem ends at a natural stopping point - the end of a day - and with a held pose, the forward momentum of the final signs seems to linger, indicating the protagonist's resolved state of mind. Finally, the parallelism between the two steps and the two blinks provides a very satisfying end for the viewer, as if all is ordered and right in the universe and it is safe to walk forward without knowing where you might end up.

While *Trio* ends somewhat ambiguously, leaving audiences to interpret it for themselves, Donna Williams makes the meaning of her poem very explicit with the heartfelt expression of her camaraderie with the duck paddling furiously upstream. She ends by signing "comrade" while looking with empathy at the duck, and then placing her hand upon her heart and looking at the audience. While she could easily have ended the poem without this explanation - the parallelism between the furious typing and the furious paddling is very understandable, explicitly expressing her feeling for the duck emphasizes the impact the chance encounter has had on her. By shifting her gaze to the audience while putting her hand on her chest, she seems to be trying to explain to those watching what she has felt. The change of role here is important. She emerges from the poetic world to address the audience directly. This is an example perhaps of the different closure devices using either the visual images or the 'summaries' and 'authoritarian truths'. Had she concluded with the image of the duck paddling hard, the closure would have been more similar to the Chinese tradition that leaves a poem open with a strong final visual image. In giving that final comment, Donna creates a poem that is more in keeping with the Western style of closure described by Herrnstein-Smith.

With respect to use of the colloquial phase of a poem's performance, after finishing the poem, Williams quickly puts her hands down, then together, and walks off stage. Similar to the feeling of forward momentum at the end of *Trio*, this choice gives the impression that life is continuing on - she has seen this duck and experienced this emotion and now it is time to keep walking and go back to writing her dissertation.

This is a narrative arc in some of these poems, with a denouement, wherein the beginning and ending are on the same narrative level. In this thematic denouement, the climax is resolved and the actions become less dramatic, tapering off into calmness. This seems to be mirrored by the physical appearance of the signs given in some of the poems with this structure. As the story reaches its close, the signs get more and more understated.

Many of the poems and stories that we examined use this conventional structure in which they end in a denouement. *Trio* mimics the structure of an ode, with three sections - corresponding to morning, afternoon and evening - showing an emotional progression and resolution. In this three-part structure, the diminishing volume and the pause before disengaging from the poem are built in to each section or stanza. However, the "whip-crack moment" of the entire poem thematically comes with the bat of night blinding the signer; this strong action then tapers off with the groping hands. The hands stepping out and holding are a powerful movement, but are still slightly "quieter" (if we consider 'loud' signs being big and 'quiet' signs being small) than the ones that came before. The eye blinking that truly ends the piece is a very subtle movement which helps the piece "fade out" even as it maintains its resonance.

John Wilson's *Time* tapers from adventure to reflection as well. The protagonist's adventure, signed with showy gestures, gives way thematically and physically to the real world with its familiar signs (like the cuckoo clock that appears frequently) and low-volume signs (like the final "so *there*" nod that the protagonist gives the cuckoo, translated as 'Ha!'). Finally, the highly handshape-oriented poem *Duck and Dissertation* concludes with the sign COMRADES, with the hands curled and fingers linked together. After a sequence of large, rapid movements with a large, wide open "5" handshape showing both the frenzied typing of the dissertation writer and the frantic paddling of the duck, the curled handshape and the soft movements in the end create a quiet and intimate moment after the emotional climax. The signer closes with her hand to her heart, a self-contained and still sign.

Blue Suit and *Make-up Theatre* do not end with the traditional denouement. *Blue Suit* tapers off thematically, while still ending with the physically loud sign DON'T. The repetition of the sign DON'T throughout the poem, which signals the poem's separation into three distinct parts, creates a pattern that makes the sign perhaps more familiar, but certainly no less 'loud'. Therefore, its final impact is maintained. However, *Make-up Theatre* is somewhat more unconventional. While the poem ends with the diva's death, which is a thematically severe and grand event, the physical volume and size of Carter's portrayal of the death grow smaller as the character collapses.

In many of the poems, as we have seen above, the diverse devices for closure draw emotional responses from the audience. The emotions may vary from person to person, but in the end, the audience is left with the emotions elicited by the performance. In Johanna Mesch's poem *Party*, the ending is much more ambiguous than the endings found in the other poems analyzed here. There is no final loss of innocence or of life, but instead there is a sudden twist. After an apparent suicide of the protagonist, in the final huge sign of celebration there

is delight at discovery of the value of life. In the poem, the signer experiences a break-up with her partner, and, in a fit of emotion, "stabs" herself. However, the viewer soon realizes, when the fingers of her hand start moving, that the ex-lover did not actually stab herself, but fooled the viewer into thinking so, as the blade of her knife was facing away from her body. Rather than being left with an image of death, as the audience is briefly led to believe will be the ending, the signer ends the piece with an image of life, throwing her arms high into the air and flashing a brief smile as she stops herself from throwing up. Emotionally, the audience is left perplexed and confused, wondering why exactly the two lovers broke up --something that is never clarified in the piece -- and why the woman feigns suicide. However, at the same time, the audience is left with no doubt that the emotional rollercoaster is over. Through raising her arms skyward in a triumphant manner, the woman is seen as free from her heartbreak and able to move forward. Even when the preceding events are ambiguous, the piece still contains a degree of emotional closure through its final image. Thus, the audience can find closure when some aspect of the poem has reached stability. Maybe the poem does not provide all the answers to the questions raised in the poem but one piece is brought to a situation where the protagonist has undergone a transformation.

For the poems analyzed here, the whip cracking can be seen to takes the form of a message directed at the audience, a move that essentially constitutes the "moral" of each story. Such morals conform to the Western tendency for performers to end their pieces with "ultimate assertions" (e.g. "elephants should be free to dance" or "cochlear implants constitute dangerous and unnecessary infringements on the Deaf community). Some explicitly tell us this – for example, *Elephants Dancing* – and some tell it by showing it – for example *Deaf* - some leaving the audience to work it out.

While some performances, such as *Time*, *Deaf*, *Blue Suits*, and *Elephants Dancing*, convey their concluding messages with significant force, others, like *Duck and Dissertation* and *Trio*, crack the whip in a relatively subtle (if nominally ironic) fashion. In the former category, the performers use emphatic signs to stress the messages that they want their viewers to receive. For example, *Deaf* ends with the sign for cochlear implant, an invasive procedure contested by members of the Deaf community, which Nigel Howard accordingly communicates with an appropriately violent gesture, manifested by size, speed, sharpness of movement, handshape and facial expression. This violence becomes especially contrasted with the gentle manner in which he handles the baby prior to this final sign. Likewise, *Blue Suits* ends with Paul Scott's dramatic sign DON'T!, which effectively summarizes his advice for women who might choose to wear a blue suit, wrongly thinking it will make that powerful and popular – and the dangers of being so. The sharp negative not only highlights Paul's obvious passion for this topic, but it also crystallizes the moment of the whip crack at the conclusion of the poem.

In contrast to the forcefulness with which some performers convey their ultimate messages, others take a more restrained approach to their closing moments, featuring whip cracks that deliver the desired moral in a noticeably less dramatic tone. In the last few seconds of *Trio*, Dorothy Miles makes the sign for the bat-like darkness that consumes an individual at the end of her life, essentially rendering her blind and truly deaf by depriving her of the ability to

recognize others' signs. The performance briefly continues, however, when she stretches her arms outward and then blinks. This coda transforms a bleak conclusion into one that hints at the remaining possibility of progress. Using a rather subtle gesture, Dorothy manages to revise her own ending and leave her viewers with an ultimate message of hope.

Instead of a moralizing conclusion, *Make-up Theatre* ends with the suicide of the main character. Furthermore, the point at which the story turns occurs earlier in the performance, a moment that we would contend happens when the diva reveals her knife or sword to the audience. These differences, however, emphasize the importance of genre in determining when the whip crack occurs. It remains generically speaking appropriate for the turn to occur earlier in a narrative performance so that the viewers can witness the character's denouement, specifically the prolonged death of the diva.

We should remember that sign language literature has been more about an "'oral' culture, a culture based on face-to-face signed interaction … encapsulating traditional values, and passed down from generation to generation," as in Ben Bahan's quotation of James Paul Gee's words (Bahan, 2006, p. 21), rather than 4 minutes video clip that is subjected to literary analyses. Many instances of Deaf folklore and language art or entertainment are simply told because they are fun and end perhaps because the punch line has been told, it is time to leave, or another person should have the opportunity to speak. We have to keep in mind that these closure analyses are just artificial subsets among the rich canon of Deaf literature. But it is certainly interesting to see how the poets use certain closing techniques and elements that, seen in the context of "a minority culture situated within a majority culture" (Bahan, 2006, p. 22), deliver powerful message, "connect[ing] Deaf people across time and space, allowing them to unite more strongly as a minority group," and gives the community "an increased sense of *legitimacy*" (Krentz, 2006, p. 67).

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