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*It's a Small World: International Deaf Spaces and Encounters.* Michele Friedner and Annelies Kusters, eds. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2015, 336 pp. \$70.00, cloth. ISBN 978-1-56368-653-5.

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This book peers into the encounters between diverse deaf people around the world. It is structured around five categories, although some authors admit to overlapping

themes: Gatherings, Language, Projects, Networks, and Visions. The 23 chapters present encounters among deaf people from Australia, Belgium, Cambodia, Chile, Costa Rica, Egypt, England, Eritrea, Fiji, France, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Nepal, Nigeria, Norway, Poland, Reunion Island, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Tanzania, Turkey, Vietnam, the United States, Uruguay, and countless other places. The presiding theme is “deaf spaces” and how they can be carved out of, and be maintained in, the vast “hearing world.” Deaf people emphasize an assumed feeling of *deaf similitude* (p. x) that comes from not only the prevalent use of various national signed languages, but also the shared experiences of oppression.

The DEAF-SAME phrase used throughout the book is thought to be a widespread phenomenon practiced by deaf people around the world. Indeed, Gulliver, a researcher of deaf history in France and the United Kingdom, notes that as far back as the 1770s a deaf man named Pierre Desloges wrote, “a Deaf man from Peking, as well as a Deaf man from France would understand the object that I’m describing” (p. 6). At the time of the 1900 Paris World Fair, more than 400 deaf and hearing people, from countries as far away as Japan, Ecuador, the United States, Russia and Mexico, gathered together to revel in the “universality of sign language” (p. 3). Those who were familiar with a local national signed language were able to rapidly begin negotiating in a type of international communication of signs.

In the 1950s through the 1980s, a deaf man named Andrew Foster, known as the “father” of deaf education in Africa, established churches and mission schools for the deaf in thirteen African countries. Admiring respondents stated that Foster cultivated relationships with deaf children and adults that were clearly based on DEAF-SAME, which is defined as “an affinity or kinship arising from shared deafness” (p. 132).

On one hand, various signed languages unite deaf people and enable them to understand one another and create a mutual “deaf space.” On the other hand, signed languages are usually distinct and linguistically different from each other, preventing explicit negotiations and exact communication. One strategy developed to further understanding of deaf peoples around the globe is International Sign (IS), a rather conventionalized set of lexical items, pragmatic strategies, and syntactic patterns (p. 71). IS has become a communicative staple at the World Federation of the Deaf’s (WFD) quadrennial World Congresses. However, spotted among the audiences at the WFD meetings may be seen many participants practicing what is known as *informal interpretation*, using their own national signed language to offer corrections, re-signing, and helping others who are not familiar with IS to understand the message (p. 78).

One chapter deals with Fronrunner, a program in Denmark. The Fronrunner program accepts deaf youth from all over the world and is taught using IS. A typical deaf space experience goes this way: “They see and experience DEAF-SAME. . . . They are relieved to see that even though there are so many differences among us, there’s something that’s the same. . . . They feel how much they have in common. Then with time,

they get a little fed up. . . . They could see that there were some things DEAF-SAME, and some things that were very different. Culture, views of the world, experiences of the world. Values, philosophies” (pp. 251–52).

One of the strongest disagreements was in Chile, but the situation there is representative of many places. Chile signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008. Yet suspicious rivalry has been intensified by “a sense of ownership of the advocacy process” (p. 177). Jealousy has led some leaders to refuse to participate in deaf advocacy efforts that are not initiated by themselves. Cambodia is different in that the tension has been between native deaf Cambodians and deaf tourists. Since the fall of the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia has become a site on the “global tour circuit.” Deaf Cambodian tour guides are aware of the economic opportunities that deaf foreign visitors present; they also feel a sense of *sameness* since they can communicate in sign languages. The tension comes about from taking money for guiding deaf tourists to tourist sites and “deaf spaces” in Cambodia.

This volume is a fascinating expansion of research dealing with encounters of deaf people worldwide. Anthropologists, ethnographers, psychologists, sociologists, and other researchers—all are deaf and hearing authors in this enlightening and informative book.

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