

Revisiting Thomas Braidwood's (1715–1806) memory: a case study

Léna Pallier

There is a subject of philosophical curiosity to be found in Edinburgh, which no other city has to shew; a college for the deaf and dumb, who are taught to speak, to read, to write, and to practice arithmetick, by a gentleman, whose name is Braidwood. (Johnson 151)

Introduction

Thomas Braidwood's academy was one of Samuel Johnson's stops during his tour of Scotland with James Boswell in 1773, and it made a great impression on the writer. While there had been attempts at educating deaf people through articulation before in Britain and Europe in general, Braidwood was the first to formalise an institution in Britain for that purpose. Formerly a writing master, he founded the Braidwood Academy for the Deaf and Dumb in 1760, in Edinburgh. For eighteenth-century society, speech was associated with language, and language was what distinguished humans from animals, and a proof of one's ability to form abstract thoughts. Since they were unable to produce speech, deaf people were therefore seen "as 'mindless,' as less than human" (Branson and Miller 25). From a legal perspective, someone born deaf was thought unable to reason, and thus categorised as an "idiot," while one who had lost hearing gradually was a "lunatic" (Blackstone 293). People who were qualified as such were placed under guardianship, until they could provide proof of their ability to reason. It was therefore extraordinary at the time to see a child born deaf speak—admittedly more or less intelligibly—which explains the numerous authors who visited and praised Braidwood in their works at the time.¹

Braidwood's impact on the development of deaf education in the eighteenth and nineteenth century has been interpreted on many occasions by Deaf Studies researchers—more particularly, his methods of education. In the field, it has been commonly accepted that there had been two types of educational systems in the early stages of deaf education: oralism and

¹ Other than Samuel Johnson and James Boswell, there were mentions of Braidwood in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in 1771, in Thomas Pennant's *A Tour in Scotland* (1776), William Buchan's *Domestic Medicine* (1772), Lord Monboddo's *Of the Origin and Progress of Language* (1773), Hugo Arnot's *The History of Edinburgh* (1779), and Francis Green's *Vox Oculis Subjecta* (1783).

manualism. Oralism emphasised lipreading, articulation, later hearing aids, and tended to reject sign language and the employment of Deaf teachers (Ladd xviii).² On the other hand, manualism developed in France with Charles-Michel de l'Épée (1712–1789), who preferred to use sign language to teach deaf pupils, believing it was their natural language.

The historical opposition between manualism and oralism—manualism being the preferred method of the Deaf community—has been a fundamental narrative in Deaf studies, on which the field relies to explain the history of the community. However, research has shown that Braidwood actually used what could be called an “in-between” method, a combined method close to today’s “total communication”, that is, the use of any form of communication that was relevant for the pupil’s situation, oral or manual (Hay and Lee 2; Jackson 22). This knowledge thus questions the relevance of using the binary categories of “oralism” and “manualism” in research, which this article seeks to explore.

As the field of Deaf Studies originally developed in the United States in the 1960s, the American and French Deaf histories have been studied and interpreted on many occasions from the beginnings of the field to this day. In the standard narrative of Deaf history in the United States, Thomas Braidwood was a secretive oralist who had attempted to monopolize the field of deaf education in Britain. This narrative became an entrenched truth from the 1980s onward, starting with Harlan Lane’s seminal work *When the Mind Hears* (1984).

There is, however, contradictory scholarship on Thomas Braidwood outside of the United States, and even outside Deaf Studies, which is often absent from American Deaf history scholarship. Why is it important to revisit Thomas Braidwood’s memory? The persistent contradicting discourses about such a historical figure as Thomas Braidwood are symptomatic of some difficulties of the field in revisiting their past in a critical way—a trend which ultimately has tended to confine research in Deaf history to binary interpretations of the past. I argue that the way he has been misrepresented in American scholarship in Deaf History since the beginnings of the field reveals areas where research in Deaf Studies could still improve in terms of interdisciplinary approaches and more nuanced historical frameworks.

² “Deaf” is a term referring to individuals born within the Deaf community, who culturally identify to it, and who use sign languages. The term is however debated in the field, as is the definition of “Deaf community”, to learn more see Lennard Davis’s chapter “Postdeafness” in *Open Your Eyes* (2008), and Elena Ruiz-Williams et al.’s “My Deaf Is Not Your Deaf: Realizing Intersectional Realities at Gallaudet University” in *It’s a Small World: International Deaf Spaces and Encounters* (2015).

Thomas Braidwood and the Debate about Articulation and Sign Language

Despite Braidwood's significance to Deaf history, and to the field of special education in Britain, no one had engaged in any profound research about him before Raymond Lee, a Deaf author who has published works about British Deaf history. To write *Braidwood etc* (2015), Lee spent over twenty years unearthing any archival evidence he could find about Braidwood, his family, his pupils and his schools. Another element which differentiated Lee's account from the ones of previous researchers and historians was his use of Deaflore. He defines Deaflore as a set of elements featuring Deaf folklore, that is, "signed narratives, signed histories, deaf cultural traditions, deaf humour, signed histories, signed poems and suchlike" (xix). Lee thus relied upon additional information from signed history passed on from one generation to the next within the Deaf community, which supported his archival research and allowed him to draw a richer portrait of Braidwood than anyone had done before. Claiming that Braidwood was not a secretive oralist, Lee went against the established narrative of Deaf history which described him as "the most successful of them all" (Lane 108).

While oralism as an educational system existed long before Thomas Braidwood and his contemporaries, oralism as an ideology stemmed from nineteenth century advancements of science, new theories on evolution, and from the development of statistics. Signed languages became increasingly seen as primitive, and the concept of normality along with definitions of what constituted a normal body, gained prominence (Branson and Miller 148–154). It impacted the Deaf community directly, as people increasingly frowned upon Deaf marriages, fearing for the "normal majority" (152), and began to reject the use of sign language in schools. During the nineteenth century, educators in Europe and in the United States debated on whether sign language was detrimental to Deaf learners. Finally, in 1880, it was voted at the International Congress of Teachers of the Deaf in Milan that the oral method should be employed in schools for the deaf, and sign language removed from the curricula (154). This decision was taken by hearing people, whose majority were in favour of articulation. While signed languages never disappeared entirely, the consequences of the oral method on the Deaf community proved to be devastating: the use of sign language decreased, bereaving Deaf people of their language and culture, the quality of education dropped, and Deaf teachers lost their position. For most Deaf people, oralist education was traumatic, as they were forced to articulate, enduring physical and psychological violence. According to Paddy Ladd, by the 1970s, the average profoundly deaf school-leaver had the level of literacy of an eight-year-old, and their speech could hardly be understood by their families (28). These results were the direct consequences of decades of oralist oppression, a system Deaf communities have battled against since its implementation, favouring a manual method of education relying on signs, and respecting their culture.

Regarding Braidwood's methods and what could be classified as oralist in them, the definition of "oralism" remains somewhat vague. While the *Gallaudet Encyclopedia of Deaf People and Deafness* (1987) provided a more nuanced definition of the term by claiming that some oralists could tolerate sign language to a certain extent (Stoker 289), the more recent *The SAGE Deaf Studies Encyclopedia* (2016) defines it as follows:

The oral method, in its purest form, rejected any use of gestures, fingerspelling, or sign language in favor of teaching deaf students speech and lipreading. The intention then was to prevent any manual communication either between teachers and students, and perhaps more importantly between students themselves. (Murgel 721)

Oralism not only dismissed sign language, but also sought to tear apart the Deaf community. Following this definition, for the case of Braidwood, several elements suggest that he did not fall into that category.

As shown, oralism has never been a successful method of instruction: it delays language acquisition, and because it emphasises speech over general education, the pupil's literacy is consequently lessened (McCullough and Duchesneau 723–727). Braidwood's pupils however were not in that case, and Braidwood provided them with far more than articulation courses. For instance, he took the pupils on outings to the theatre: a poem entitled *On Seeing Garrick Act*, published in several newspapers in 1768, had long been attributed to his pupil Charles Shirreff. Shirreff had become quite fond of David Garrick's interpretations of Shakespearian characters, and a friend of his, Caleb Whitefoord, wrote the poem for him as a means to be introduced to Garrick (Lee 276–278). Braidwood thus proposed a wide range of activities and different courses to complete his pupils' education: arithmetic, geography, drawing and painting, French, and Latin (Green 154). Many moreover succeeded in society: for instance some like Shirreff became painters, John Goodricke became an astronomer, and Francis Humberstone Mackenzie, 6th Lord of Seaforth, later sat in Parliament. Braidwood's contemporaries praised the level of education the pupils attained, pointing out at Braidwood's efficiency outside of articulation training (Arnot 425; Buchan 593; Green 135–167; Johnson 151–152).

Furthermore, most of those accounts described early forms of sign language or fingerspelling. Hugo Arnot explains in *History of Edinburgh* (1779) that students "could converse by the help of the artificial alphabet they learned, by putting the fingers into certain positions" (426), and Green observed his son conversing with his schoolmates "by the tacit finger-language" (Green 152). Samuel Johnson also shared his surprise at seeing a girl do mathematics by "quivering her fingers in a manner which I thought very pretty, but of which I know not whether it was art or play" (Johnson 151–152). Unaware that they were witnessing an early form of British Sign Language (BSL), those comments convey the general ignorance of people of the time regarding

the linguistic nature of sign language, although it is evidence of its use in everyday life, and in instruction. Regarding articulation, Braidwood used an instrument to position the pupil's tongue to show them how to produce the right sounds (Green 147), and progressively shifted to the pronunciation of words and sentences.

Prior to the development of Deaf Studies, researchers had already set forth that Thomas Braidwood could not be considered an oralist. For instance, in *Education in Edinburgh in the Eighteenth Century* (1965), Alexander Law argued that Braidwood taught his pupils sign language (188). In *Psychology and Communication of Deaf Children* (1981), Robert Douglass Savage, J. Fiona Savage and Lionel Evans (two researchers in psychology and the third headmaster at a school for Deaf people) have advanced that the Braidwoods' presumed total oralism was "something of a myth" (14), based on Joseph Watson's publication of the method in 1809. Joseph Watson, Braidwood's nephew,³ learnt the method with him between 1784 and 1792 (Watson xxiii) before leaving to be part of the foundation of Britain's first public institution for deaf children, the London Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb. He published their method after Braidwood's death, in *Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb* (1809), where he explains that he learnt the signs from his pupils directly, and used natural sign language as a means of instruction. While he did not believe sign language was a language in its own right—only a useful tool of instruction—it is interesting to remark that he described the pupils' development of "name signs" between themselves, a cultural feature of the Deaf community still present to this day (78–79). Thus, Thomas Braidwood's method was undoubtedly more nuanced than simply being purely oral or manual—which questions the relevance of such rigid categories.

Reassessments of traditionally praised historical figures like De l'Epée and Thomas Gallaudet challenged the value of those categories as well. No eighteenth and nineteenth century educator seems to correspond to today's expectations regarding the place and importance of sign language in schools. De l'Epée's method was not without flaw: while he supported the use of sign language, he "methodized" French Sign Language (LSF) so it would be closer to oral French—that is, he added tenses, grammatical words, changed its syntax and so on (Lane 61–62). To H-Dirksen L. Bauman, it was an attempt at transforming "sign language into a manual version of spoken language," (Bauman 17)—an attempt which has been reproduced since with Manually Coded English (MCE),⁴ to facilitate communication with hearing people. De l'Epée

³ Braidwood taught his immediate family in the skill—daughter, nephews, and grandchildren—who founded their own institutions later on. Announcements in *The Scots Magazine* and *The London Magazine* were published by a certain John Hepburn in 1769 to arouse interest (Lee 31), and Braidwood himself sent a petition to the Commissioners of Annexed Estates in 1779 to receive support to attract apprentices (57), but nothing had worked.

⁴ An artificial signed system using oral English word order and vocabulary (Bauman 32), generally frowned upon by Deaf communities (17).

might have overtly supported sign language at the time, but he did not value it as a language in its natural state.

As for Thomas Gallaudet, American pioneer of deaf education in the United States inspired by De l'Epée's method, he himself initially focused mostly on imparting English and religious instruction to his pupils (Sayers 129) and used the methodical signs of De l'Epée (130). Religion was a driving factor for both Gallaudet and De l'Epée, who thought it was their duty to open the eyes of deaf pupils to religion. It was Gallaudet's "primary mission" (134), and sign language was the most efficient way to do so (135). Moreover, despite the initially charitable intents of the American Asylum for the Deaf, the school continually deferred giving any help to poor deaf children, while lowering the fees for families who could already afford to pay (143). This contradiction in the school's aim underlines the fact that educators were motivated by far different reasons than just a respect for an emerging Deaf community and its language. The "manual" versus "oral" debate has tended to place historical figures in fixed positive or negative categories, which has delayed the development of more nuanced research regarding those figures—which seems to be an ongoing problem in Deaf Studies.

Deaf Culture and the Deaf Community: the Origins of Deaf Studies

As the field developed in the United States, the first generation of Deaf studies researchers had a particular outlook on Deaf History, rooted in their own (Deaf) culture, history of deaf education, and oppression. Their history was similar to Britain's Deaf History in many ways, but the differences explained their specific treatment of Thomas Braidwood.

Deaf Studies developed in the 1960s in the United States within the emancipating context of the civil rights movement. According to Deaf Studies professor at Gallaudet University, H-Dirksen L. Bauman, Deaf Studies encourage research about the Deaf community from "sociological, cultural, and linguistic perspectives" (Bauman 7), as opposed to formerly traditional medical perceptions of deafness. It stemmed directly from William Stokoe's "discovery" of the linguistic nature of American Sign Language (ASL). Stokoe used tools of descriptive linguistics to legitimate sign language as a language in its own right, arguing that it had the same "potential for human communication" as spoken languages (Armstrong and Karchmer 390).⁵ From the field of linguistics, Deaf Studies moved on to history, culture, sociology, geography, anthropology, and so on. Deaf History was one of the first disciplines to develop within the field, mostly in the United States at first, with authors and researchers such

⁵ Armstrong and Karchmer specify that Deaf people had been aware of the linguistic nature of ASL long before Stokoe's discovery, but they acknowledged his input in making this finding mainstream and allowing a better recognition of the Deaf community (392).

as Jack Gannon, Harlan Lane, and John Vickrey Van Cleve and Barry Crouch, or Carol Padden and Tom Humphries on the subject of Deaf culture. In Britain, the discipline unfolded with authors such as Jim Kyle and Bencie Woll, and Peter Jackson. Works in Deaf Studies have allowed the Deaf community to access their past through a cultural lens, and to “see themselves as belonging to the fold of human cultures” (2), with a *Deaf* culture of their own.

As the field developed in the United States,⁶ it was inherently influenced by its early history of deaf education—that is, by De l’Epée’s manualism,⁷ brought to the United States by Thomas Gallaudet and Laurent Clerc. Gallaudet was sent to Europe in 1815 to compare and learn different methods of education of deaf people, so he could bring them back to the United States and open a school there. After refusing Joseph Watson’s offer of assistantship, he met De l’Epée’s successor, the Abbé Roch-Ambroise Sicard and visited his institution. He encountered Laurent Clerc, a Deaf teacher at the school, and impressed by his skills, invited him to come to the United States. They founded the American Asylum for the Deaf, which opened its doors in Hartford, Connecticut in 1817. It was the country’s first school for deaf people, which method was based upon manualism and methodical signs (Edwards 23). These encounters shaped the United States’ Deaf history and community: it explains ASL’s closeness to LSF, and the American Deaf community’s attachment to manualism—which only grew during the rest of the century as oralism gained prominence in schools and in societies in general. Thus, the opposition between manualism and oralism became a founding narrative of the field. However, as implied previously, this interpretation is limited.

Revisiting misconceptions about Thomas Braidwood

Thomas Braidwood has been, and still is, mainly presented as an oralist in accounts of Deaf History, particularly in the United States. Harlan Lane’s *When The Mind Hears* (1984), in which Braidwood is labelled “the most successful oralist of them all” (108), has been the authoritative work on Deaf History since its publication. This label has stuck in American scholarship ever since, thus shaping his memory (Lindgren 96; Leigh et al. 72; Mirzoeff 22;

⁶ Gallaudet University (Washington, DC) has occupied an important place within the development of the field: the institution is internationally known for its prolific research in Deaf studies, and it welcomes a majority of deaf and hard of hearing students in its institution. To many Deaf people, Gallaudet University is also the embodiment of an ideal Deaf place, where Deaf people from all around the world make pilgrimage to (Kusters and Friedner xi).

⁷ The manual method came in opposition to the oral method of Samuel Heinicke who founded Germany’s first public institution in 1778 in Leipzig. He insisted on the teaching of speech over sign language, which he believed was the only way for a deaf person to develop abstract thoughts (Lane 101–102). Heinicke and De l’Epée famously debated about which method was more efficient in a heated exchange of letters, which de l’Epée published in *La véritable manière d’instruire les sourds et muets* in 1784 (219–285).

Nomeland and Nomeland 17–18; Van Cleve and Crouch 27). The most recent works where Braidwood is presented as an oralist are from Melvia and Ronald Nomeland's *The Deaf Community in America: History in the Making* (2012), Kristin Lindgren's 2020 contribution to *A Cultural History of Disability* (96), and in the second edition of *Deaf Culture: Exploring Deaf Communities in the United States* (2022) by Irene W. Leigh et al. (72).

Thus, as the field of Deaf Studies keeps on flourishing in the United States, misconceptions regarding Thomas Braidwood's legacy persist—even though more nuanced works providing a revisionist portrait of the Braidwoods were published outside of the United States. In *Sign Language: The Study of Deaf People and Their Language* (1985), Jim Kyle and Bencie Woll claimed that the Braidwoods used a combined method of speech and signs (38), which was confirmed in Peter Jackson's *Britain's Deaf Heritage* (1990) (22), and in an article by John Hay and Raymond Lee in 1993 (2). Finally, Jan Branson and Don Miller explicitly refuted the idea that Britain had adopted a "German method" (that is, Heinicke's oralism) because of the Braidwoods' inclination to oralism (123). The authors attempted to challenge a traditional and simplistic binary perception of Deaf History, torn between oralism and manualism (160), which they argue tended to leave the British story "caricatured because of scant research" (123). They suggested that it was more relevant to examine attitudes towards sign language, rather than debate whether a school was "oralist" or "manualist." For instance, De l'Épée's legacy regarding LSF—and, indirectly, ASL—can be seen in the consequent changes he has made to the language because he deemed it inadequate as it was. The two authors denounced it as "linguistic imperialism" (160) and claimed that it participated in the social construction of deafness as a disability.

Revisiting Thomas Braidwood's memory thus appears crucial. The point is not to praise his efforts in the same way historians have traditionally done with Thomas Gallaudet and the Abbé de l'Épée, in the tradition of the "Grand Narrative" where a hearing instructor is celebrated for his involvement in the making of the Deaf community (Ladd 88). Rather, researching Braidwoods' legacy and past has enabled Raymond Lee to unearth a wide range of new information regarding Britain's Deaf History and culture. This information could not have been brought to light by reciting a pre-established historical narrative, and it matters because it presents Deaf individuals as actors in the history of deaf education.

Lee has been able to uncover additional names of pupils who attended the family's academies, combining his archival findings with his discussions with Jim Mackenzie, a former pupil of Northern Counties Schools for the Deaf in the early twentieth century (Lee xx). Mackenzie had provided Lee with many details regarding Braidwood's former pupils, as well as anecdotes passed from one generation to the next, through what Paddy Ladd calls a "Deaf chain" of signed

histories (Ladd 319). Raymond Lee stressed that the “value of Deaflore must never be underestimated” (Lee xxi). Among the names of pupils he uncovered, was John Creasy’s. Creasy had been a pupil at Thomas Braidwood’s Academy in the 1780s in Edinburgh, and then in Hackney, before being employed as a teacher for Braidwood’s private pupils (252). From 1802 onwards, he was employed by Joseph Watson at the London Asylum, to train deaf pupils to become teachers (252). His history is significant, for it involves Deaf individuals as active participants in the development of deaf education, which is an integral part of Braidwood’s legacy. According to Branson and Miller, Deaf teachers were “important role models for their pupils and the leaders of an emerging community” (139). It thus responds to Van Cleve’s call to examine “Deaf agency more closely in particular historical contexts, delineating its extent, its structural limitations, and its changing nature” (20). Researchers’ repetition of preconceived narratives of Deaf History has tended to limit interpretations and discoveries concerning Deaf students like Creasy and details about the academy.

Similarly, regarding everyday communication at the academy, Raymond Lee has found exciting pieces of information about early forms of BSL in use at the Academy. In the *Collected Works of Dugald Stewart* (1854) edited by William Hamilton, Lee has come across a mention of Braidwoodian pupils communicating between themselves:

I remember to have heard Mr. Braidwood remark, that his dumb pupils, from whatever part of the country they came, agreed, in most instances, in expressing assent by holding up the thumb, and dissent by holding up the little finger. [...] these gestures are abbreviations of those signs by which assent and dissent are generally expressed in the language of nature. (qtd. in Lee 63)

The signs Stewart was describing are signs still in use today, which according to Raymond Lee can mean both good and bad, as well as express assent and dissent. Stewart’s observation that the pupils themselves abbreviated natural signs to facilitate their communication is also telling of the development of a flourishing Deaf community at the time, fostered by an evolving form of BSL. Taken together, Raymond Lee’s findings therefore demonstrate that revisiting historical figures, as controversial they may be, is a crucial step to enrich historians’ understanding of the past. They also show that binary readings tend to obscure certain aspects of Deaf History. For the field of Deaf Studies, it might mean going beyond preconceived interpretations of history to seek new perspectives.

Branson and Miller were not the only ones who brought forth issues of binary interpretations of history within the field. In 2016, John Vickrey Van Cleve cast a retrospective glance at his work with Barry Crouch in *A Place of Their Own* (1989). He argued that while the binary narrative of Deaf History as a struggle against medicalization of deafness and oralism might have been useful at first to counter popular opinions, it was now time to move beyond these

perspectives in order to obtain “more nuanced understandings” of Deaf History (22). To a certain extent, Braidwood’s portrait in American Deaf History scholarship is evidence that the field has not yet completely moved beyond these perspectives.

The medical perception of deafness has traditionally been dismissed by the Deaf community. Yet, in the article “La vision des ‘vaincus’ : écrire l’histoire des sourds hier et aujourd’hui” (2013) Yann Cantin and Florence Encrevé argue that the field would benefit from reconciling the perception of deafness as a disability with Deaf History. To them, it would be relevant for scholars to understand interactions between the two viewpoints, for they have had a significant influence on the development of the Deaf community (39). They conceive that “A complete rejection of the medical view of deafness in Deaf historical research is the result of militant activism and prevents a proper understanding of these interactions.”⁸ (Cantin and Encrevé 40), which might explain the lack of reconsideration of Thomas Braidwood within American scholarship. Such an approach could open the way for other aspects of Braidwood’s legacy to be tackled: for instance, his work on the correction of his hearing pupils’ speech impairments has been largely overlooked by Deaf Studies researchers to this day.

Finally, some Deaf Studies researchers have called for the field to enhance interdisciplinary work (Fernandes and Myers 28; Kusters 11). In a 2018 conference for the *Deaf Studies Digital Journal*, Annelies Kusters observed that the field has historically been only multidisciplinary, and that researchers in Deaf Studies have tended to be “self-referential” (11). What she meant is that they often cited other Deaf Studies researchers, and rarely ventured outside field. This has been the case with American research mentioning Thomas Braidwood, as shown by the lack of reference to works by non-Deaf Studies scholars, such as *Psychology and Communication* by Robert Douglass Savage, Lionel Evans and J. Fiona Savage, and *Education in Edinburgh* by Alexander Law. As Fernandes and Myers put it, Deaf Studies need to “engage rigorously with all disciplines that allow us to study how deaf people live in the world.” (28)

Conclusion

As recent works continue to portray Thomas Braidwood as an oralist, it can be suggested that there is still work to do in the field of Deaf Studies within Deaf History. The categories “manualism” and “oralism” remain the primary theoretical framework through which research in Deaf History is conducted today. Yet, the existence of Thomas Braidwood’s combined

⁸ Our translation. In the original French: “le rejet total de la vision médicale de la surdité dans la recherche historique sourde est le fait d’une réaction militante et empêche de comprendre ces interactions.”

method, and the reassessment of the legacies of traditionally praised figures like Charles-Michel de L'Épée and Thomas Gallaudet show that this approach might be too narrow.

The field should revisit what has long been considered negative history, and draw from different disciplines, from different countries' research, and from Deaf oral history when possible. Raymond Lee's recent portrayal of Braidwood is a perfect example of this broader perspective. Through his work, he has enlarged the field's knowledge of British Deaf History, long delayed by the lack of significant research about Braidwood.

The purpose is not to overstate the importance of hearing figures such as Thomas Braidwood in Deaf oral history, but to critically reassess their deep-rooted memory in the field. A step in that direction would allow researchers to enhance and nuance their understanding of Deaf History, as some researchers such as Yann Cantin and Florence Encrevé, or John Vickrey Van Cleve have pressed for. Revisiting Thomas Braidwood's memory and the scholarly discourses surrounding him thus highlights the importance of re-examining established historical narratives, which is essential to the field's future research.

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