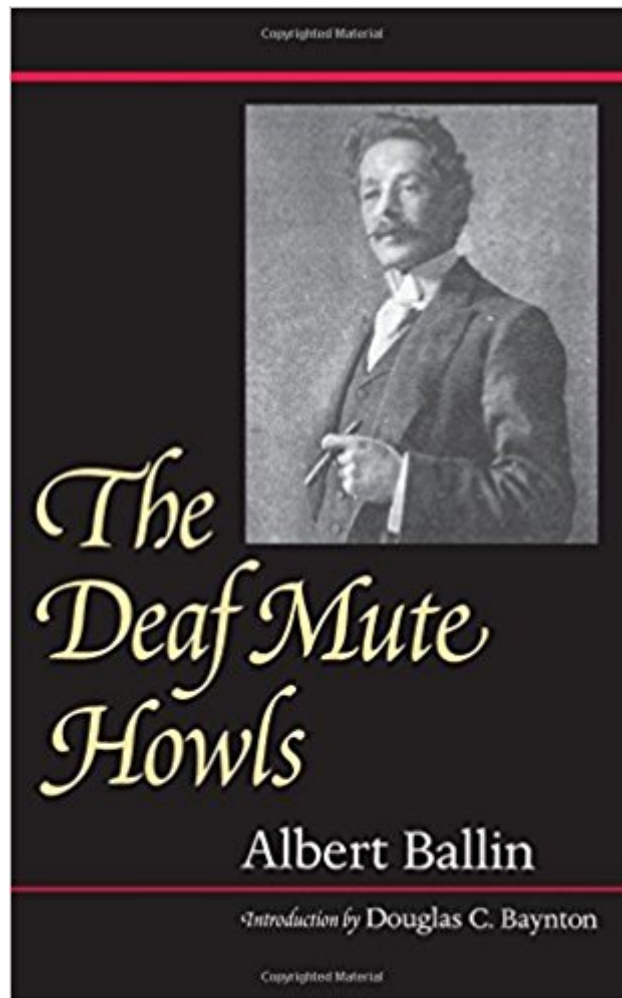




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The Deaf Mute Howls (Gallaudet Classics In Deaf Studies Series, Vol. 1)



Synopsis

Originally published in 1930, *The Deaf Mute Howls* challenged the prevailing practice of teaching deaf children to speak and read lips while prohibiting the use of sign language. Albert Ballin's sharp observations in this remarkable book detail his experiences (and those of others) at a late 19th-century residential school for deaf students and his frustrations as an adult seeking acceptance in the majority hearing society. *The Deaf Mute Howls* charts the ambiguous attitudes of deaf people toward themselves at this time. Ballin himself makes matter-of-fact use of terms now considered disparaging, such as "deaf-mute," and he frequently rues the "atrophying" of the parts of his brain necessary for language acquisition. At the same time, he rails against the loss of opportunity for deaf people, and he commandingly shifts the burden of blame to hearing people unwilling to learn the "Universal Sign Language," his solution to the communication problems of society. From his lively encounters with Alexander Graham Bell (whose desire to close residential schools he surprisingly supports), to his enthrallment with the film industry, Ballin's highly readable book offers an appealing look at the deaf world during his richly colored lifetime.

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Customer Reviews

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In this book, Ballin offers his suggestion for a utopian society where the Deaf and hearing communities both thrive, where every individual is fluent in sign language. Ballin wrote from the perspective of what he considers to be the typical deaf experience, including fictional stories that were not his true life experience, but what he felt were common experiences of deaf children. My biggest issue with this book is that Ballin constantly contradicts himself. He says one thing, then turns around and provides arguments against it. On one hand, he is supporting and fighting for sign language to be accepted for the deaf community. He provides hypothetical situations where a person could better communicate through sign language than spoken language. Ballin wrote this book with the idea to showcase the value of sign language and ways to elevate the status of deaf individuals in society. However...He uses common "oralist tactics", supports mainstreaming, devalues sign language and the deaf community all together. He refers to the deaf community as being unnatural, helpless, stubborn, vicious by nature, useless, etc. He describes the hearing community as being more fortunate, having ordinary intelligence, having an infinite number of subjects to discuss. He presents these ideas so much that I'd say this book, in the end, is pro-oralism. Because the inherent discrimination in society, it would be incredibly hard for anyone to be truly and completely bias-free. Ballin's book provides examples of how the Deaf were socialized to view the deaf experience and to automatically, and subconsciously, dehumanize themselves. I'm glad that Gallaudet decided to publish this book and it provides an interesting perspective of the Deaf experience in which to consider and study.

Interesting even for a textbook. Very well written and even though it was written in the 1920's.

A read this book as a free read book for a Sign Language class. It was hard to get threw. A few

meaty bits in the middle but, you might as well be reading from a text book about the deaf in the early 1900's.

Great book for my semester at CUNY

My son enjoyed this book.

Awesome book.

Albert Ballin's *The Deaf Mute Howls* has been rightly rescued from obscurity by Gallaudet University Press. Ballin offers us valuable insight into the Deaf community of the 1930s. As a utopian thinker, Ballin argued that all people, deaf and hearing, should learn sign language, in order to end the isolation of deaf people in a hearing world. This was a powerful "howl" indeed in the '30s, a time when oral education had succeeded in banishing sign language from schools for the deaf completely. Ballin reveals the discontent bubbling in the Deaf community in this difficult period, and his book remains an important one today for anyone interested in Deaf history. Doug Baynton's introduction to this new edition is also quite useful.

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