Myth, Sign, and Propaganda:

Aspects of Language Theory

in the French Renaissance

John Christopher Bracher
Ph.D.
University of London
September 1991
Abstract

This study discusses the main areas of Renaissance linguistic thought, and shows how authors from a variety of professional backgrounds took a keen interest in the nature of words and were highly aware of the changing roles of the classical and vernacular tongues. Many sixteenth-century writers believed that the key to an understanding of a language lay in its origins, both in a historical sense, through speculation about the identity of the first language spoken by mankind, and also in terms of its development in individuals, through observation of the process of speech acquisition in the very young. These two categories are by no means distinct, as is demonstrated by the example of the Psammeticus legend, a commonplace of Renaissance linguistic theory, which, together with the biblical story of Adam's naming of the animals in the Garden of Eden, is the principal mythical source to which authors of the period refer. The special case of the Hebrew tongue is also considered, with reference to the mystical belief that this was the original divine language of creation, a 'natural' form of communication in which the words were essentially related to the objects or ideas which they denoted. Within the wide-ranging field of sign and gesture, particular attention is given to the Renaissance emblem, and to the domain of sixteenth-century medico-linguistic writing, in which the study of the deaf and dumb in particular helped both to throw light upon the workings of the human speech organs, and to put into perspective the relationships between verbal and non-verbal language. Finally, this study includes a brief survey of the propaganda written, notably in the fields of theology and education, both for and against the more widespread use of the European vernaculars.
# Table of Contents

**Chapter 1: Introduction** ............................................. 6

I. Some Modern Critical Studies ..................................... 6

II. Linguistic Theories from Antiquity to the Renaissance ...... 9
   A. Early Linguistic Controversies ............................... 9
      i. The Nature-Convention Controversy .................... 10
      ii. The Analogy-Anomaly Controversy ..................... 14
   B. Later Developments .......................................... 15

III. The Linguistic Theories of Rabelais and Montaigne .......... 22
   A. Rabelais's Theories of Language ............................ 22
   B. Montaigne's Theories of Language .......................... 25

IV. Nationalism and Propaganda .................................... 28

**Chapter 2: The Search for the Natural Language** ............. 32

I. The Classical Context ............................................ 32
   A. Vocal Communication in Animals and Children:
      Aristotle, Joubert, Montaigne ............................ 32
   B. The Myth of King Psammeticus ............................... 37

II. The Biblical and Cabballistic Contexts ....................... 51
   A. The Biblical Texts .......................................... 51
   B. The Original Language: the Case for Hebrew ............ 60
   C. Cabballistic Writings on Language ....................... 78

**Chapter 3: Signs and Other Non-Verbal Communication** ........ 88

I. St. Augustine's Theory of Signs .................................. 89

II. Signs in the Work of Rabelais .................................. 96
   A. The Sign Language Debate with Thaumaste ................. 96
   B. Nello de Gabriels and Nazdecabre:
      the Signs of the Deaf and Dumb ......................... 98
I. The Character and Status of the French Language in the Renaissance .............................. 154
   A. The Defence of the Vernacular ......................... 154
      i. French as a Vehicle for Science and Erudition 155
      ii. The Vernacular in French Education ............. 157
      iii. The Right to Use the Vernacular ............... 158
   B. The Increasing Use of the Vernacular ................ 161
      i. The Speed of Change ............................ 161
      ii. The Role of Latinate Forms ....................... 165
      iii. The Development of Monolingual Dictionaries ... 168

II. Proposals for Increasing the Status of the French Language 172
   A. *Imitatio* and Translation .............................. 172
      i. *Imitatio* ..................................... 172
      ii. Translation .................................... 176
   B. Propaganda in Praise of Authors Writing
      in the Vernacular ................................. 181
   C. Propaganda in Praise of the French Language ........ 184

Chapter 4: From Theory to Practice: Propaganda Promoting the Use of
the French Language .................................... 154
**Spelling and Accentuation:**

In this study, I have followed the practice adopted in the modern editions of Renaissance works, so reflecting minor inconsistencies in editorial practice. Where I have consulted the original Renaissance texts, I have used the spelling and accentuation adopted by the Renaissance printer. Ampersands have been resolved.

**Translation:**

All un-attributed translations in this study are my own.

**Abbreviations:**

The following abbreviations are used in this study:

- **BHR**  
  *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 1941-).

- **ER**  
  *Etudes Rabelaisiennes* (Geneva: Droz, 1956-).

- **L.C.L.**  

- **PL**  
  *Patrologiae Cursus Completus...Series Latina*, ed. by J. Migne (Paris: D'Amboise, 1844-64).

- **THR**  
  *Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz).
Chapter 1:

Introduction

I. Some Modern Critical Studies

Modern studies which are concerned with aspects of language in the French Renaissance vary considerably in their approach to the subject, and may be divided into two broad categories. The first category comprises those works which record the history of the French language during the sixteenth century; the second contains works concerned with Renaissance language theory.

Most works in the first category devote some space to a discussion of the philological changes which took place in the vernacular during the Renaissance, and of the prestige of French and the extent of its use in various domains of human knowledge.¹

Two well-known older works have long provided a valuable source of information for modern scholars in this field. Darmesteter and Hatzfeld's *Le Seizième Siècle en France: tableau de la littérature et de la langue* (1878) contains a series of summaries of the work of a wide range of sixteenth-century French authors.² This is followed by a brief survey of philological developments in the French language, and a selection of

¹ The views of French sixteenth-century writers about the character and status of the French language in the Renaissance will be discussed in chapter 4 of the present study (see below, pp. 154-167).

excerpts taken from the work of major writers of the period. In the second volume of his *Histoire de la langue française des origines à 1900* (1906), Ferdinand Brunot records the spread of the French language in its struggle against the dominance of Latin during the sixteenth century, discusses the attempts to unify and regulate it, and provides a detailed analysis of Renaissance developments in the areas of vocabulary, phonetics, morphology, and syntax.³

A more recent study which could be said to belong to the same tradition as Darmesteter and Hatzfeld’s earlier work is Peter Rickard’s *La Langue Française au XVIᵉ siècle* (1968).⁴ Rickard discusses the status of the French language in the sixteenth century and the effect of the various influences which acted upon it. This is followed by an anthology of some fifty extracts from the work of Renaissance writers. Some of the topics examined by Rickard, such as the linguistic unification of France and the orthographical controversies, fall outside the scope of this study and will not be examined here.⁵

In the second category, which concerns Renaissance theories of language, may be placed two works, both published recently, which adopt different approaches to the subject.

The traditional mythical explanations of the origin and nature of language which are examined in the second chapter of the present study, are also discussed by C.-G. Dubois in his *Mythe et langage au seizième siècle* (1970).⁶ In this work, Dubois shows how these myths were gradually replaced by a more empirical approach based upon medical observations.

---


especially of speech impediment in the deaf and dumb.\footnote{Renaissance medical interest in the deaf and dumb is discussed in chapter 3 of this study. See below, pp.146-153.}

In his \textit{Rabelais} (1979), M.A. Screech explains the important role played by classical and post-classical theories of language in the \textit{Chronicles}, and shows how Rabelais uses comedy in order to put forward his own theories concerning the nature of verbal and non-verbal signs.\footnote{M.A. Screech, \textit{Rabelais} (London: Duckworth, 1979). Much of the material on signs in chapter 3 of the present study has been derived from this work.}

It will be useful to mention three works of a more general character which contain valuable background material for the student of Renaissance theories of language. Firstly, in his \textit{A Short History of Linguistics} (1967) R.H. Robins examines the linguistic ideas of ancient Greece and of Rome, and traces their development during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.\footnote{R.H. Robins, \textit{A Short History of Linguistics} (London: Longmans, 1967; 3rd edn 1990). Page numbers cited refer to the 1990 edition.} Robins devotes a separate chapter to each period, and puts these advances into perspective by comparing them to linguistic work originating outside Europe. Roy Harris's \textit{The Language-Makers} (1980) is a critical examination of the philosophical and linguistic theories put forward by the major writers on language.\footnote{R. Harris, \textit{The Language-Makers} (London: Duckworth, 1980).} This work is the source of some of the terminology used in this study to classify the theories of language of both classical and Renaissance authors. \textit{The Mirror of Language} (1968) by Marcia L. Colish traces the development of a common theory of signs in the work of four medieval writers: Augustine, Anselm of Canterbury, Thomas Aquinas, and Dante, showing how each approached the question of how language influences man's perception of spiritual and material reality.\footnote{M.L. Colish, \textit{The Mirror of Language: A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge} (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1968; rev. edn 1983).}
II. **Linguistic Theories from Antiquity to the Renaissance**

A. **Early Linguistic Controversies**

The origins of Western language theory may be traced back to Greece in the fifth century BC. At this time, language was not recognised as a field of study in its own right, and it is for this reason that the opinions of an author on the subject often have to be gleaned from several works which deal with wider philosophical issues, so that any statements about language are likely to be set in different contexts.\(^\text{12}\)

In ancient times, discussion on the subject of language was framed in terms of two related controversies: that of nature versus convention, and that of analogy versus anomaly.\(^\text{13}\) The nature-convention controversy concerned the question of whether on the one hand there exists a 'natural' connection between the forms of words and the things or ideas that they refer to, or whether on the other hand words signify purely by convention, or agreement, having had their meanings arbitrarily imposed on them by man. The analogy-anomaly controversy concerned the extent to which language was dominated either by elements of order and of regularity (known as linguistic analogies), or by elements of irregularity (linguistic anomalies).


\(^{13}\) Robins, pp.21-26.
i. The Nature-Convention Controversy

The debate between supporters of the natural and of the conventional explanations of the nature of language forms one of the central themes of the *Cratylus*, the complex Socratic dialogue of Plato (428-348 BC). In this dialogue, two opposing views of the universe are discussed, one based upon the idea of change, the other upon permanence. There are three participants in the debate: Cratylus, Hermogenes, and Socrates. Hermogenes begins by explaining to Socrates the views held by Cratylus concerning the nature of names:

HER. Cratylus, whom you see here, Socrates, says that everything has a right name of its own, which comes by nature, and that a name is not whatever people call a thing by agreement, just a piece of their own voice applied to the thing, but that there is a kind of inherent correctness in names, which is the same for all men, both Greeks and barbarians.\(^{14}\)

Hermogenes, who is Cratylus's opponent in the debate, represents the school of 'non-natural nomenclaturism', according to which no standard of correctness of names exists other than that of convention:

HER. For my part, Socrates, I have often talked with Cratylus and many others, and cannot come to the conclusion that there is any correctness of names other than convention and agreement. For it seems to me that whatever name you give to a thing is its right name.\(^{15}\)

Cratylus, on the one hand, is a follower of Heraclitus, for whom

---

\(^{14}\) Plato, *Cratylus*, 383A, trans. by H.N. Fowler (L.C.L. [Loeb Classical Library], 1927), pp.6-7. Cratylus's view may be described as 'natural nomenclaturism'. See Harris, p.34.

\(^{15}\) Plato, *Cratylus*, 384D, pp.8-9. In the opening lines of his *Peri Technes (On the Art)*, Hippocrates (c.460-c.377 BC) makes the following statement in defence of medicine as a proper subject for study: 'I for my part think that the names also of the arts have been given them because of their real essences; for it is absurd - nay impossible - to hold that real essences spring from names. For names are conventions, but real essences are not conventions but the offspring of nature', Hippocrates, *Peri Technes*, trans. by W.H.S. Jones (L.C.L., 1923), vol. 2, 192-193.
everything is in a constant state of flux. Cratylus’s opinions about the nature of language are essential to his interpretation of the world because he believes that there is no means of gaining true knowledge about anything other than by understanding the 'correctness' of the relationships between words and things. Hermogenes, on the other hand, follows Parmenides, for whom everything is fixed, unchanging, and knowable of itself. During the discussion in the Cratylus, first Hermogenes, and then Cratylus explain their views and are questioned about them by Socrates, whose purpose in the work is to reconcile them.

There is a considerable amount of detailed discussion of the origin of names and of their etymologies in the Cratylus, much of which is ironic in tone. Despite the formal structure of the debate, no definite conclusions are drawn at the end of the work. However, although one can never be certain to what extent the voice of Socrates in the Dialogues may be identified with the views of Plato himself, the arguments put forward by Socrates in this piece do suggest that its author sees language as a set of raw sounds onto which meanings have been imposed by certain unidentified name-givers. It is only in cases in which these lexical creators happen to have been correctly inspired in their imposition of names that the true meanings of words may be traced through their etymologies. Such inspired names give man access to the permanent truth contained within the 'Platonic forms' or 'Ideas' which exist outside this world. Indeed, for Plato, the most important function of language was as a means of putting the speaker into contact with reality.\(^{16}\)

The importance of the Cratylus derives from its position at the beginning of the development of language theory in the West. The work has influenced a great number of linguists and philosophers over the centuries, and has been interpreted in many different ways. Another significant

\(^{16}\) Screech, Rabelais, p.416.
feature of the *Cratylus* is the appearance in the dialogue of two of the three major ways of thinking about language which have occupied the minds of linguists for the past two thousand years.

The concept that words stand for non-verbal objects or ideas may be termed 'surrogationalism', because the words can be seen as substitutes or surrogates for other non-verbal items.\(^\text{17}\) In Plato's dialogue, this approach to language is associated with the opinions of Cratylus, because although Cratylus does not specifically mention the notion that words may be considered as substitutes for real objects, it is clear that in his doctrine he places great importance upon the relationship between the two. Indeed, as we have seen, this relationship can in some cases be much more than one of surrogation: words may actually reflect the truth about things.

The opinions of Hermogenes represent the other side of the ancient debate about whether language is man-made or of natural origin. As a non-natural nomenclaturist, Hermogenes's only measure of correctness is one of convention, that is to say an agreement or social contract between speakers. Accordingly, this second approach to language, which represents another major strand in the development of western linguistic theory, has been described as 'conventionalism' or 'contractualism'.\(^\text{18}\)

The third major way of looking at language has been called 'instrumentalism'.\(^\text{19}\) According to this view, words are considered primarily as tools for human communication rather than as signs representing things or ideas.

One may think of Aristotle as being both a conventionalist and an instrumentalist. For him, language operates, as it were, at one remove. The Aristotelian concept of the relationship between language and reality

\(^{17}\) Harris, p.33.

\(^{18}\) Harris, p.102.

\(^{19}\) Harris, p.80.
contains three elements. Firstly, there is the external world of things, which is the same for all men. Secondly, there are the mental concepts, or likenesses of things - these too do not vary from person to person. It is the third element: the words - the code of symbols which represent these concepts - which are different throughout the world.

The *De Interpretatione* (or, to give it its Greek name, the *Peri Hermeneias*), is a short treatise by Aristotle (384–322 BC) which is concerned with the nature and the meaning of language. The *Cratylus* and *De Interpretatione* have long been regarded as the two texts of great authority in the field of linguistic theory, and have been studied and glossed for many centuries by those with an interest in words.\(^{20}\) Most of Aristotle's treatise is of a fairly technical nature, and is devoted to establishing definitions of the various parts of speech and to investigating the processes of affirmation and denial. In the *De Interpretatione* (unlike the *Cratylus*), the position taken by the author is clear from the beginning:

> Words spoken are symbols or signs of affections or impressions of the soul; written words are the signs of words spoken. As writing, so also is speech not the same for all races of men. But the mental affections themselves, of which these words are primarily signs, are the same for the whole of mankind, as are also the objects of which those affections are representations or likenesses, images, copies.\(^{21}\)

Aristotle adds a little later:

> We have already said that a noun signifies this or that by *convention*. No sound is by nature a noun: it becomes one, becoming a symbol. Inarticulate noises mean something - for instance, those made by brute beasts. But no noises of that kind are nouns.\(^{22}\)

---


\(^{22}\) Aristotle, *De Interpretatione*, 16A, p.117.
Aristotle believes that all words signify by arbitrary human convention. The exception to this is the *agrammatoi psophoi*, or 'unlettered sounds', a category which includes the noises made by animals, and the most basic, unlearnt human sounds, such as laughter. These sounds do have meanings, yet they cannot be classified as names. For one thing, they are different from other lettered vocal sounds in that they do not vary from one language to another.

ii. The Analogy-Anomaly Controversy

Aristotle also plays a major part in the other ancient controversy in this field: that of analogy and anomaly. In general terms, it can be said that while Aristotle supported the school of linguistic analogy, which took the view that the Greek language (and, by implication, all other languages) was governed by elements of order and regularity, the philosophers of the Stoic school (founded c.300 BC) favoured irregularity, or anomaly, as the dominant element.\(^2^3\) The analogists sought to discover regular patterns in the termination and accentuation of words of identical grammatical status, and attempted to show that words which were morphologically similar had related meanings.

This controversy represents an important early stage in the development of linguistic theory, the process of establishing analogies within language being the basis of all grammatical classification.\(^2^4\) However, one should bear in mind that, at least in earlier times, this controversy did not resemble a formal debate with the opposing arguments arranged clearly on each side, but rather represented two approaches to language, each

---

\(^2^3\) Robins, p.23.

\(^2^4\) Indeed, both of these controversies predate the development of formal dictionaries and grammars. See Robins, pp.23-24.
supported by different evidence.

The Stoics occupy an prominent place in the history of language theory because it was under their influence that linguistics first found a well-delineated position within the general scheme of philosophy. For the first time, entire works were devoted to aspects of language study, and questions were addressed in a more disciplined fashion. The results of this newer approach can be seen in the work of the Alexandrine Greek grammarian Dionysius Thrax (170-90[?] BC), whose *Techne Grammatike* represents an attempt to produce an exhaustive survey of the structure of the Greek language. Studied and translated for well over a thousand years after it was written, its methods of classification (dividing the field of 'grammar' into processes of reading, exposition, phraseology, etymology, analogy, and appreciation of literature) formed the basis of many such grammatical summaries, including the comprehensive *De Lingua Latina* of Varro (116-27 BC), and the *Institutiones Grammaticae* of Priscian (AD c.500), the most extensive work of any Latin grammarian.

B. Later Developments

In a review of major contributions to the development of linguistic theory, the name of Saint Augustine must feature prominently, because of the great influence of his ideas in later times. Augustine (AD 354-430) is well-known for his writings about his own childhood, and it is instructive to examine his explanations of the process by which children learn to talk, for these provide an insight into his conception of the relationship between words and things, and the function of language in general.

A short section of Augustine’s *De Quantitate Animae* is devoted to the
acquisition of speech in infancy.\textsuperscript{25} The author states that as children grow up, they learn to talk by copying the speech of the adults around them. This is why a child brought up in a place where he could never have heard any form of speech would not himself develop the ability to speak, but would express his thoughts by gesturing with his limbs.

In his \textit{Confessions}, Augustine explains this process in more detail, referring to the experiences of his own childhood (or rather, to what he assumes to have been his experiences)\textsuperscript{26} He points out that his ability to speak was not learnt from his elders as part of a formal teaching course, but through the necessity of communicating his desires, which, he had found, could not be conveyed by signs. By listening to the verbal behaviour of those around him, he slowly established in his mind the correct names for things:

When they [my elders] named some object, and accordingly moved towards something, I saw this and I grasped that the thing was called by the sound they uttered when they meant to point it out. Their intention was shown by their bodily movements, as it were the natural language of all peoples: the expression of the face, the play of the eyes, the movement of other parts of the body, and the tone of voice which expresses our state of mind in seeking, having, rejecting or avoiding something. Thus, as I heard words repeatedly used in their proper places in various sentences, I gradually learned to understand what objects they signified; and after I had trained my mouth to form these signs, I used them to express my own desires.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{25} Augustine, \textit{De Quantitate Animae}, 18, 31: 'Loquendi facultas, quam puer paulatim assequitur, non tribuenda incrementis animae', in PL, 32, cols. 1052-1054.

\textsuperscript{26} According to J.J. O'Meara, Augustine is aware of the fact that he is writing about the experiences of his own childhood from the viewpoint of an adult, and that the experiences he describes may not accurately represent what he actually experienced at the time. See J.J. O'Meara, \textit{The Young Augustine: an Introduction to the Confessions} (London: Longman, 1953), p.6.

\textsuperscript{27} Augustine, \textit{Confessions}, 1, 8: 'Unde puer loqui didicerit', in PL, 32, cols. 666-667 (translated in Harris, p.41). In this second passage Augustine could be said to be putting forward a form of nomenclaturist surrogationalism, a primitive concept of the function of language in which individual words refer to objects, and sentences are formed by arranging these names in various combinations. See Harris, pp.40-44. The concept of language advanced here by Augustine may also be described as reocentric surrogationalism, for, according to Augustine's account, the words which he learnt as a child had no meaning for him other than as names for objects in the external world. Harris suggests the term 'psychocentric surrogationalism' to denote the opposing idea (that the notions represented by words are located inside the mind of the language-user).
It is significant that Augustine chooses to investigate the nature of language with reference to the process of speech-acquisition in young children, because the very young constitute one of the groups in society which experience difficulty in speaking. In mentioning the fact that his own acquisition of the power of speech was born of a failure to communicate his desires through sign language, and in describing the gestures of his parents as being like 'the natural language of all peoples', Augustine is following Aristotle. Aristotle had gathered together his observations on speech-learning in the young, both human and animal, in the context of the difficulties experienced by those groups of people most normally associated with the use of sign language: the deaf and dumb. The importance of deficiencies in the physiology of speech production had also been realised by others, such as the third-century rhetorician Lactantius.

Another important contribution to the development of theories of language was made in the second half of the fifth century AD, shortly after Augustine's death, by the Alexandrine Greek philosopher and logician Ammonius Hermaeus (fl. AD 550). Ammonius wrote many commentaries upon the works of Aristotle, but in the field of language theory he is best known for his remarks on Aristotle's De Interpretatione, and for the way in which he reconciled the ideas he found there with those which had been put forward by Plato in the Cratylus.

Essentially, Ammonius held that words might share some of the qualities of the things to which they referred, but believed that this 'truth' (the Greek τὸ ἐτυμον, meaning the true sense of a word according to its origin, or etymology) was not a complete correspondence with the object, as Cratylus had argued in Plato's dialogue, but only a likeness.


29 Medical theories about surdo-mutism played an important part in Renaissance language theory. This subject will be discussed in chapter 3 of this study (see below, pp.146-153).
Ammonius supported this theory by proposing that it was the inspired lexical creators (an idea drawn from Socrates’s comments in the *Cratylus*) who *by a pure act of will* (a concept derived from Aristotle’s doctrine) had imposed meanings upon ‘raw’ sounds, and that the resultant ‘meaningful sounds’ had spread by convention (again from Aristotle). However, as Socrates had suggested in the *Cratylus*, these name-givers were often inspired in their choice of names, so that, in some cases, correspondences did in fact exist between things and their names.

As we have seen, Aristotle had divided vocal sounds into two groups: those which gained meaning by imposition and convention, and those which have a natural meaning (the *agrammatoi psophoi* produced by animals, for example). Ammonius’s contribution in this area was his proposal that Aristotle’s definition of such ‘unlettered sounds’ be widened to include some basic noises uttered by human beings. These could be moaning sounds, expressions of pain or happiness (such as laughter), or indeed the noises made by people who cannot talk at all: infants and mutes. Ammonius placed all such human vocalisations in the same category as the animal noises mentioned above. These, he said, were the only utterances which have natural meanings.\(^{30}\)

Ammonius’s harmonisation of the linguistic theories of Plato and Aristotle, theories which appear at first sight to be quite irreconcilable, gained wide currency in the Middle Ages, especially after its translation into Latin in the mid thirteenth century.\(^{31}\) Ammonius’s work became so


\(^{31}\) The idea that the linguistic theories of Plato and Aristotle could be harmonised was taken up by many Renaissance writers. The following passage, for example, is taken from the *Dialogus de Entelechia* of the sixteenth-century Italian philosopher and translator Spiritus Martinus Cuneas: ‘Equidem aveo audire vos de hac re conflictantes, quando quidem res est inter maximos viros controversa, pariaque videntur utriusque parti momenta. Interim assidemus, quae de nominibus fiunt, sernandae nequitiam sunt, cum rerum (ut inquit Arist.) officiis sint et notae, saepenumeroque de iis contentiones orientur maxima, cum alioqui de re ipsa inter se conveniant, quod ait Cicero Stoicis et Peripateticis usuvenisse: qui verbis dissentientibus, re ipsa congruentes: Platoque in Cratylo doceat miram quandam in nominibus vim esse, quam qui interdum aspernatur, turpiter in rebus ipsius hallucinantur. Atque is (ut puto) modus est excutiendi nominis, ut in medium re ipsa allata dispiciamus, an eiusmodi sit, cui possimus tale nomen tribuere, quemadmodum cum res volumus explicare, verba quasimimus apta maxime et propria.’
well-known and so closely identified with its subject matter, that it all but eclipsed the original texts of the two ancients, to which direct access had been almost lost through the virtual disappearance of the Greek language in the Dark Ages.

This state of affairs placed several medieval commentators, such as Thomas Aquinas, at a disadvantage. Aquinas (1224[?]–1274) wrote commentaries on many of Aristotle’s works, from which he developed his own conclusions, but as he did not have the original Greek texts, his interpretations came via the medium of Latin – at second hand, as it were. Such is the case with his commentary on the *De Interpretatione*, in which he attempts at one point to clarify Aristotle’s lettered / unlettered distinction by using the Latin words *soni* (which he uses as an equivalent for ‘sounds’) and *voces* (for ‘vocal sounds’). Aquinas considers it necessary to point this out because Aristotle’s term allows not only for those animals which can truly be said to make ‘vocal’ sounds (that is to say those which have a vocal apparatus), but also for those which do not, and consequently have to ‘signify proper passions’ by making noises with some other part of their body. Aquinas, however, seems to agree with Aristotle in much of what he says in the *De Interpretatione*; for example: ‘But none of these sounds of the brutes is a "name". We are given to understand from this that a "name" does not signify naturally.’

Gradually, over the large number of years covered by the term

[I have heard you arguing about this matter, which is indeed a controversial topic amongst the greatest of men, and in which the same weight may be attached to the arguments of either side. Meanwhile let us be seated, as the things that these men say about names are in no way to be despised, since (as Aristotle says) names are the symbols and signs of things, and very often the greatest quarrels arise from them, even when people are actually in agreement about the things themselves, as Cicero says happened to the Stoics and the Peripatetics: those who quarrel about words agree about the thing itself. In the *Cratylus*, Plato taught that there was a remarkable force in names - sometimes those who despise names go astray badly over the things themselves. I believe that this is a means of discarding the name, in order that we may see into the centre of the thing referred to, and attribute to it a name such that when we wish to explain things, we choose words which are the most apt and appropriate], S.M. Cuneas, *Dialogus de Entelechia* (Paris: C. Wechel, 1543), pp.16-17. See also Screech, *Rabelais*, p.386.

'Renaissance' (as applied to the individual nations of Europe), the Latin language ceased to perform the function it had served in medieval times as the lingua franca of intellectual discourse, and came instead to be seen as the key to the revival of the literature of the ancient world. Correspondingly, the birth of interest in the European vernacular languages as vehicles for important new ideas and scholarly publications stimulated a new awareness of the relationships between different languages, and of the function of language within society.

Dante (1265-1321) is often seen as the prophet of what was to come in the later phases of the Renaissance. In the field of linguistic theory, Dante was the first modern writer to put forward the notion that all languages are subject to constant change, and was the first to compose literary works in the vernacular.33 Interest in the European vernacular languages could be said to have been initiated by Dante's remarks in his *De Vulgari Eloquentia* (c.1305). In this work, Dante seeks the highest form of Italian vernacular, a language which could be used throughout the Italian peninsula as a vehicle for poetry and for the noblest prose. By comparing the dialects of his own day to the language of ancient Rome, and by stressing the gulf between the two, Dante encouraged the first diachronic linguistic study, and by championing the cause of a Roman vernacular against scholastic Latin, he anticipated the nationalism of Joachim Du Bellay's *La Deffence et illustration de la langue françoysse*, which would be published over two hundred years later.34 Dante's *De


34 The idea that language is based upon human convention is mentioned by Dante: 'Hoc equidem signum est ipsum subiectum nobile de quo loquimur: nam sensuale quid est in quantum sonus est; rationale vero in quantum aliquid significare videtur ad placitum' ['This sign, then, is the noble subject of this treatise; for it is sensible in that it is a sound, and rational in that it is seen to have meaning, as its user wishes'], Dante, *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, 1, 3, p.17. The subject is also addressed in his *Paradiso*:

'La lingua ch'io parlai fu tutta spenta
innanzi che all'ovra inconsummabile
fosse la gente di Nembròt attenta;
Ché nullo effetto mai razionabile
Vulgari Eloquentia has been described as the first piece of scientific literary criticism in the modern world, and the first serious treatment of the literary use of a vernacular.\textsuperscript{35} Indeed, with its universal history of the origins of the phenomenon of speech, its analysis of the division of speech, and its discussion of regional dialects, the De Vulgari Eloquentia treats several of the major topics of concern to later Renaissance authors who wrote about language.\textsuperscript{36}

\begin{verbatim}
per lo piacere uman che rinovella
seguendo il cielo, sempre fu durabile.
Opera naturale è ch'um favella,
ma così o così, natura lascia
poi fare a voi, secondo che v'abbella'
\end{verbatim}

[The tongue which I spoke was all extinct before the people of Nimrod attempted their unaccomplishable work; for never was any product of reason durable forever, because of human liking, which alters, following the heavens. That man should speak is nature's doing, but whether thus or thus, nature then leaves you to follow your own pleasure]. Dante, Paradiso, XXVI, 124-132, trans. by C.S. Singleton. The work of the people of Nimrod is a reference to the building of the Tower of Babel. See also R.A. Hall, 'Linguistic Theory in the Italian Renaissance', in Language (Baltimore: Waverley Press), 12 (1936), 96-107, (pp.98, 102-103).

\textsuperscript{35} Literature in the Vernacular [De Vulgari Eloquentia] (see above, n.33), p.7.

\textsuperscript{36} For a full discussion of Dante's linguistic theories, see I. Pagani, La teoria linguistica di Dante (Naples: Liguori, 1952), chapter 3: 'Lingua di poeti, lingua degli Italiani', pp.87-154.
III. The Linguistic Theories of Rabelais and Montaigne

Rabelais and Montaigne are widely acknowledged to be the most important prose writers of the French Renaissance. Just as the oeuvre of these authors reflects their universal fields of reference, so in the domain of language theory their writings straddle the four major branches of Renaissance learning: medicine, philosophy, theology and law. For this reason it is inevitable that the names of Rabelais and Montaigne will appear in more than one section of the present study.

A. Rabelais's Theories of Language

The linguistic theories advanced by Rabelais in his first three Chronicles may be described as broadly Aristotelian in character. In the Quart Livre, however, Rabelais gives more consideration to Platonic ideas, and at the end of this final Chronicle, reconciles the two great classical theories of language.

One of Rabelais's most important statements about language is to be found in the Tiers Livre. Here, Pantagruel rejects the implications of Herodotus's myth of King Psammeticus - the exemplum traditionally used to defend the Platonic notion that languages are of natural origin. In its place, he proposes the Aristotelian view that languages are based upon arbitrary impositions of meanings upon sounds, meanings which in time

37 This division of knowledge is reflected in the Tiers Livre, where Pantagruel proposes a fourfold symposium of representatives of each of these disciplines in order to extricate Panurge from his perplexity. Tiers Livre (Paris and Geneva: Droz, 1974), pp.204-207.

38 The myth of King Psammeticus is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2 of this study (see below, pp.37-50).
become accepted amongst men through convention. From this statement of Pantagruel's one may infer that Rabelais shares Aristotle's belief that words have no natural connections with the objects or ideas that they signify.

There are, however, two notable exceptions in the Chronicles to this neo-Aristotelian view of language put forward in the *Tiers Livre*, which show that although Rabelais excludes the possibility of a natural language, he nevertheless accepts that in many cases words can provide men with insights into permanent truth. The first of these is the case of proper names. Rabelais believed that proper names, especially those of gods, could have a natural connection with the person or place which they signified, and that in some cases it was possible to discover a person's true nature through a process of onomastic divination. The other exception concerns the Hebrew language. Rabelais appears prepared to give credence to the belief held by many others in the Renaissance that the Hebrew tongue was the original natural language of man which Adam had spoken in the Garden of Eden, and with which he had imposed names upon the animals. If Hebrew had survived the Babylonian Confusion intact, many words in the modern Hebrew language would have retained their original natural meanings, and would therefore continue to reflect the true essence of the objects or ideas to which they referred.

In his first three Chronicles, Rabelais often contrasts words with non-verbal signs. He treats words as unreliable, because they are open to abuse for the purpose of deliberate ambiguity or of deception. Non-verbal signs are seen as more dependable, and Rabelais treats them as an alternative means of conveying truth. Many of his non-verbal signs are gestures, but he also writes about actions, symbols, omens and colours. Almost all, however, are signs which have had their meanings imposed through convention, as is the case with such esoteric signs as the emblem and the cabbalistic gesture. Colours, on the other hand, are not part of this group. They have natural meanings, which are suggested by certain
biblical passages, or may be discovered via a process of reasoning. When signs with conventionally-imposed meanings are confused with signs which have natural meanings, the results are comic. Several examples of comedy arising from this sort of confusion are to be found in the sign-language debate between Panurge and Thaumaste in *Pantagruel*.

The ways in which Rabelais's characters use signs, both verbal and non-verbal, can indicate their state of mind. When a speaker divorces his words from their meanings, he is sometimes shown to be diabolically inspired, and sometimes made to appear ridiculous. The use of specific types of non-verbal sign in certain circumstances may also reveal that a person is divinely-inspired. A case in point is the character Triboulet from the *Tiers Livre*, whose gestures are interpreted by Pantagruel as an indication of his gift of divine prophetic folly.

Theories of language play a more important part in Rabelais's later Chronicles. In the *Quart Livre*, Rabelais moves from the neo-Aristotelian view which had been advanced by Pantagruel in the *Tiers Livre* to a more Platonic position. In the episode of the Frozen Words at the end of the final Chronicle, Rabelais makes use of a boldly independent reading of Plato's *Cratylus* (which he was able to consult in the original Greek) in order to reconcile the linguistic theories of Plato and Aristotle.\(^{39}\) Rabelais puts forward a Heraclitean theory similar to that advanced by Ammonius

---

\(^{39}\) Several Latin editions of Plato's dialogues were published in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The following is a list of those currently in the British Library:

**Latin:**
- [Opera] (Florence: Lorenzo de Alopa, 1485[?]).
- [Opera] (Venice: P. Pincius, 1517).
- *Omnia Opera* (Basle: H. Froben and N. Episcopius, 1551) [another edition of that printed at Basle in 1546].
- *Opera quae ad nos extant omnia*, trans. J. Cornarius (Basle: H. Froben and N. Episcopius, 1581).

**Greek and Latin:**
Heraeus. According to this theory, although everything in the sublunary world is in a state of flux, words can occasionally reveal permanent truth. This truth embodied in words drips down upon our changing world from the domain of the ideal Platonic Forms. To gain access to it, men must allow words to 'thaw out' by considering their etymologies.

B. Montaigne's Theories of Language

Although Montaigne's view of language is, like Rabelais's, essentially an Aristotelian one, it is also a view tempered by scepticism. Montaigne rejects the Platonic concept that the etymologies of certain names may give insights into the true essence of the things named; for him, words are mere signifying agents, completely separate from the substance of the objects or ideas to which they refer.40 He attaches little importance to the Platonic notion that the names of people can contain prophecies of special significance to their lives, or indications of their character. Similarly, he dismisses as crude some of the derivations of proper names to be found in Plato.41 Only in the case of the Bible is Montaigne prepared to accept the notion of inspiration in language. Because he believes that the words of Holy Scripture are divinely inspired, Montaigne argues that other religions, such as Judaism and Islam, by retaining their sacred writings in the language in which they were composed, run less risk of distorting the meaning than do the Reformers with their policy of translation into the vernacular.42

Throughout his writings, Montaigne displays a profound mistrust of

---

40 *Essais*, p.618, from 'De la gloire'.
41 *Essais*, p.276, from 'Des noms'.
42 *Essais*, p.321, from 'Des prières'.

words. He sees them, like everything else in the sublunary world, as unstable and subject to constant change.\textsuperscript{43} He stresses their transient, insubstantial qualities by repeatedly referring to them using images of air and wind, and by contrasting them with solid deeds.\textsuperscript{44} Words, he says, may only be defined in terms of other words. They form a closed system, and those who use them inhabit a closed world.\textsuperscript{45}

Montaigne believes that because language is made up of arbitrary labels imposed by human will, it is liable to be abused. This abuse may be either deliberate or accidental. He often speaks of obscurity, inconstancy and misrepresentation in connection with words: in his chapter 'De la vanité des paroles' he describes rhetoric as an 'art piperesse et mensongère'. Language may also be the cause of misunderstandings. To give an example, the many different interpretations which may be placed upon words mean that a failure to define exactly what is meant by the words of treaties drawn up between nations often gives rise to conflicts.\textsuperscript{46} However, despite his mistrust of words, Montaigne concedes that, in the right hands, language can also serve as an excellent medium for the accurate communication of ideas.\textsuperscript{47}

For Montaigne, language is primarily a tool for communication between men, and is intimately bound up with human thought-processes. He argues that since many other animals have some means of communicating vocally with other members of their own species, or even with members of different species, it is hard to believe that the power of speech is not natural to man. Montaigne defends this theory by referring both to the myth of King Psammeticus and to the difficulties in speaking encountered by those who

\textsuperscript{43} 	extit{Essais}, p.982, from 'De la vanité'.
\textsuperscript{44} 	extit{Essais}, p.379, from 'De l'exercitation'.
\textsuperscript{45} 	extit{Essais}, p.540, from the 'Apologie de Raimond Sebond'; p.1069, from 'De l'expérience'.
\textsuperscript{46} 	extit{Essais}, p.527, from the 'Apologie de Raimond Sebond'.
\textsuperscript{47} 	extit{Essais}, pp.363-364, from 'A demain les affaires'. 
have been deaf since birth. He argues that, in his view, a child raised in complete isolation from human society would develop some form of speech with which to express his thoughts. He refuses, however, to speculate about the identity of the language which such a child might speak.\footnote{Essais, pp.458-459, from the 'Apologie de Raimond Sebond'.}

According to Montaigne, the language which may most properly be described as natural to man is the language of gestures. Unlike verbal languages, which differ greatly from one another, gestures are understood by everybody, and do not have to be learnt. Also, various forms of non-verbal communication can be effective when words alone prove insufficient, as is demonstrated by the example of dumb people, some of whom are able to express themselves most eloquently using sign language.\footnote{Essais, pp.453-454, from the 'Apologie de Raimond Sebond'.}

Both Rabelais and Montaigne see verbal language as unreliable and open to abuse. Words are a volatile, ambiguous, and insubstantial medium based upon the acceptance of meanings which have been arbitrarily imposed upon sounds. Although Rabelais has more to say on the subject than Montaigne, both writers favour non-verbal signs (mostly gestures) as a more trustworthy alternative vehicle for truth. This is because, in many cases, these signs have more solid, natural meanings, or meanings which have been wisely imposed. It is in the \textit{Tiers Livre} and the \textit{Quart Livre} that Rabelais's theories of language depart most strikingly from those of Montaigne, for in these later Chronicles Rabelais shows himself far more ready than Montaigne to accept that, in certain rare cases, words may give men access to permanent truth through divine revelation.
IV. Nationalism and Propaganda

This section provides an introduction to questions which will be discussed more fully in chapter 4 of this study.\footnote{50 See below, pp.154-184.}

During the Renaissance attempts were made in France to describe and analyse the vernacular, to provide it with a set of rules, and to compare it with other languages.\footnote{51 See Rickard, History..., pp.86ff. See also the section entitled 'Le Français Rival du Latin' in Rickard, Langue..., pp.1-6; and F. Brunot, Histoire..., 2, Livre Deuxième: 'Tentatives pour Cultiver la Langue', 93-159. Isidore Silver discusses the regeneration of the French language in the light of sixteenth-century theories of poetry in The Intellectual Evolution of Ronsard (St. Louis, Missouri: Washington University Press, 1973), chapter 2, 29-37.} Projects such as these, undertaken in a new spirit of enquiry, played an important part in forging the identity of the French language and in promoting its use as a medium for works of literature and learning.

Comments by Renaissance writers about the character and status of the French language show that the vernacular was widely regarded as a volatile and ill-defined medium. Its many regional dialects and local variations gave rise to uncertainties in spelling and pronunciation, and some authors feared that in its state of indiscipline French was vulnerable to 'corruption' from the influence of the classical tongues and the other European vernaculars.

The prestige of Latin in early Renaissance France was greatly enhanced by the fact that it had long been the language of the Church and was also commonly used for instruction in the schools and universities. During the Renaissance, the works of the ancient authors began to be read in the original Latin and even Greek, rather than through the translations and interpretations of the scholastic theologians. As a result of this new endeavour, and of the newly elevated status of the European vernaculars, the Latin language gradually lost its role as the medieval lingua franca of
theological instruction and intellectual debate, and came to be perceived as the framework for a corpus of literature which was worthy of study for its own merits.52

Although Latin was admired for its rules and for the sense of permanence which these conferred, this permanence was in fact largely illusory, for the language had altered considerably since the Romans had spoken it. Erasmus and other humanists rejected the gallicised pronunciation of Latin which had developed during the Middle Ages in favour of that which was thought to have been used in classical times.53 One effect of this was to draw attention to the fact that an ancient language was in many respects unsuited to the needs of sixteenth-century France.

If French was to be introduced into areas which had previously been the preserve of Latin, the standing of the vernacular had to be improved. Several ways of achieving this were suggested, and writers differed in the emphasis which they placed upon each of the proposed solutions to this problem. Some favoured the writing of propaganda encouraging more widespread use of the French language, praising its virtues, and defending it against foreign accusations of barbarity. The most celebrated example of a propagandist work of this type is La Deffence et illustration de la langue françoys of Joachim Du Bellay (1522-1560). The Deffence..., published in 1549, brought together many of the principal arguments put forward separately by other authors. Du Bellay, for example, was among those who suggested that French thinkers in all domains ought to be encouraged to write in their native tongue. If French authors responded to this call, the vernacular would acquire prestige as a recognised vehicle for learned debate.

Commentators were divided on the question of whether those who

52 Robins, A Short History of Linguistics, p.122.
53 Robins, pp.122-123.
wished to write in French should adopt classical works as their models, or whether they should imitate works composed in the vernacular. Also, it was generally acknowledged that the translation into French of classical texts was of benefit both to the language itself and also to the majority of the French population, who did not have Greek or Latin.

Several Renaissance writers include in their work a plea for a set of rules to be drawn up in order to standardise the spelling, pronunciation, and grammar of French. Such measures were needed, they believed, in order to reassure authors who were thinking of writing in French that they would be committing their work to a stable and well-regulated medium.

The influence of Italian culture in France reached a peak during the middle years of the sixteenth century, when the country was playing host to a large number of Italian artists, writers, and musicians, and when many important posts in the French state, church, and universities were occupied by Italians. This situation, together with the favour shown at court for things Italian in general, gave rise to feelings of jealousy and resentment on the part of the French at the apparent cultural superiority of the Italians. As the two vernaculars vied with each other for recognition and prestige, it was the seemingly trivial matter of the affectation by Frenchmen of Italianate forms of speech which prompted the publication of a series of important French treatises, most notably by the humanist printer Henri Estienne, which made use of various 'subjective' criteria to establish that Italian was the inferior of the two languages.

As one might expect, much of the material written as propaganda in support of the French tongue expresses great faith in the future of the vernacular. Du Bellay, for example, compares the French language to a

---

44 Rickard, History..., pp.91-95; Langue..., pp.14-17; Brunot, Histoire..., vol. 2, 198-206.

45 H. Estienne, Traicté de la conformité du langage françois avec le grec (Paris: H. Estienne, 1565); Deux Dialogues du nouveau langage françois italianizé, et autrement desguizé, principalement entre les courtisans de ce temps (Geneva: H. Estienne, 1578); De la Précéllence du langage françois, (Paris: M. Patisson, 1579).
plant which has not yet produced flowers or fruit. Du Bellay is also among those who point out that the support of the monarch, in the form of royal patronage of French authors writing in their native tongue, will have an important bearing upon the future status and development of the language, as will the political fortunes of the French state.
Chapter 2:
The Search for the Natural Language

I. The Classical Context

A. Vocal Communication in Animals and Children: Aristotle, Joubert, Montaigne

In the *Historia Animalium*, Aristotle discusses whether the noises made by young animals are inherited from the parents or are learnt during early life. He begins by drawing a distinction between 'voice' (ἡ φωνή) and 'speech' (ἡ διάλεκτος) in animals:

The different viviparous quadrupeds utter different voices, but they have no power of speech; this power is peculiar to man. The possession of this power implies the possession of a voice, but the converse is not true. [...] Voices and modes of speech differ according to locality. Voice is distinguished chiefly by its pitch, high or low; it does not differ in kind in one and the same sort of animal. But articulated voice, which one might describe as a sort of 'speech', differs in different animals, and also within one and the same kind of animal according to locality: thus, some partridges cackle, others make a shrill noise.  

Using the analogous case of young birds, he goes on to make the following general point about the two types of sound made by human beings:

---

Among the small birds, some when singing utter a different voice from their parents, if they have been reared away from the nest and have never heard other birds singing. A hen nightingale has before now been observed teaching her chick to sing, which suggests that the 'song' does not come naturally in the same way as the voice, but is capable of being trained. Men have the same voice the world over, but different varieties of speech.47

Aristotle also refers to this question in the tenth book of his Problems:

Why does man show great variety of voice, but other animals have one, unless they are of different species? Or has man only one voice, though many varieties of speech?

Why does this speech take different forms, when it does not with other animals? Is it because man can utter a number of letters, but of the other animals some utter none and some only two or three consonants? These consonants combined with vowels make articulate speech. Now speech consists of conveying a meaning not by the voice, but by certain affections of it, and not only shows pain and pleasure. Now the letters are affections of the voice. Children and beasts show their meaning in the same way, for children cannot yet pronounce the letters.48

Aristotle's observations on animal noises were taken up by Renaissance writers who were interested in the central problem of whether or not there exists a natural language. Both Rabelais and Montaigne discuss this question at key points in their works: Rabelais in the Tiers Livre - the most 'intellectual' of his chronicles - and Montaigne in the 'Apologie de Raimond Sebond'.49

It is worth examining the contexts in which Rabelais and Montaigne make use of such material from the ancients. For example, a probable source for Montaigne's comments on natural language is a short treatise by the French doctor Laurent Joubert (1529-1583) entitled Quel langage parleroit un enfant qui n'auroit jamais ouy parler. Near the beginning of this treatise, which is presented as a 'question vulgaire' at the end of his

49 Rabelais's treatment of the question of natural language will be discussed in Chapter 3 of this study. See below, pp. 96-102 passim.
Erreurs Populaires (1578), Joubert draws a parallel between the sounds made by new-born animals and the cries of human infants.⁵⁰ Both of these, he says, make their noises as soon as they are born, and do so both without having been taught, or having had the opportunity to imitate their elders. Joubert compares this ability of both human and animal young to make sounds from the moment of birth to their instinctive searching for their mother’s teats. The reason why animals are able to make such noises at birth, explains Joubert, is that, unlike human beings, each species of animal has only one ‘language’ with which to cope.⁵¹ Also, the sounds made by other animals are simple and easy to produce, for they are created by minds incapable of reason. Joubert follows Ammonius Hermaeus’s commentary on Aristotle in the belief that, in the case of animals, the basic voice is similar to the noises made by the wind or the sea. Such sounds are described as ‘unlettered’, for they cannot be represented by either the written or the spoken word.⁵²

This comparison between human speech and the sounds made by other animals is also found in Montaigne, who takes a different view from Joubert. For Montaigne, the only element which is natural in any human speech is the actual voice itself (‘la simple voix’). It is not surprising that Montaigne should make such a comparison in the context of the rhetorical 'Apologie de Raimond Sebond', part of which is devoted to a comparison between the gifts of man and those of the animals. However, the fact that Montaigne finds it incredible 'que nature nous ait refusé ce moyen qu’elle

---


⁵¹ This theory was suggested by Aristotle: 'Why does the voice among men develop later than in any other creature which makes a sound? Is it because in the case of man the voice has the greatest number of differences and forms? The other animals pronounce no letters or very few. Now what is most variable and has the greatest number of different forms must develop in the longest time', Aristotle, Problems, XI, 57, 905A, trans. by W.S. Hett (L.C.L., 1936-37), vol. 1, 290-291.

⁵² Joubert, Erreurs Populaires, p.585.
a donné à plusieurs autres animaux' would imply that he believes that mankind does have a natural language.\textsuperscript{53} Indeed, he proceeds to justify his argument with a series of rhetorical questions, in which he maintains that man is forced to classify such animal noises under the heading of speech because animals use these noises for the same purposes as those for which man uses speech. Pursuing the point further, Montaigne asks whether it would not be reasonable to assume that animals are speaking to each other when they make these noises, since animals speak to man, and man speaks to the animals, inventing different names and languages depending on whether he is talking to dogs, birds, or other creatures.\textsuperscript{54}

Both Montaigne and Joubert follow Aristotle by mentioning that the sounds made by animals of the same species vary from place to place. Both allude to Aristotle's example of the calls of partridges differing according to where the bird is found. Joubert closely follows the \textit{Historia Animalium}:

\begin{quote}
La voix despliée, dit Aristote, qui est, comme si on disoit le parler des bestes, est differente entre les animaux, voire entre ceux de mesme espece, en divers lieux. Exemple: les perdrix en divers païs, ont le chant divers, car les unes cacraben, les autres strident.\textsuperscript{55}
\end{quote}

Montaigne gives a more condensed version in the 'Apologie':

\begin{quote}
Et la difference de langage qui se voit entre nous, selon la difference des contrées, elle se treuve aussi aux animaux de mesme espece. Aristote allegue a ce propos le chant divers des perdrix, selon la situation des lieux.\textsuperscript{56}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Essais}, p.458.

\textsuperscript{54} The heritage of myths which involve communication between human beings and animals is discussed by C.-G. Dubois, \textit{Mythe et langage...}, pp.58-62.

\textsuperscript{55} Joubert, \textit{Erreurs Populaires}, p.589. For the relevant passage of the \textit{Historia Animalium}, see above, p.32.

\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Essais}, pp.458-459. This passage is from the text of the 1580 / 1582 edition. In 1588, Montaigne added the following lines from Lucretius:

\begin{quote}
\textit{...variaeque volucres}
Longè alias allo jaciant in tempore voces,
\end{quote}
The fact that both Montaigne and Joubert choose the same example from Aristotle to illustrate their point makes it seem likely that Montaigne had read Joubert's treatise.57

Joubert comes to the same conclusion as Aristotle had done: that the power of speech and the natural voice are quite different. Joubert goes on to make the comparison between the effect of taking a young bird away from its nest, and that of taking a newborn child away from its parents. At this point, Joubert refers to the linguistic experiment reputedly performed by King Psammeticus I of Egypt, which is a commonplace of Renaissance writing on language.58

Immediately before and after the passage of the 'Apologie' to which I have just referred, Montaigne considers a question raised by several Renaissance authors who concerned themselves with the nature of language, namely: which language would be spoken by a child who had been brought up without ever having heard any form of human speech.59 This question, which forms the title of Joubert's treatise, and provides the basis for the legend of King Psammeticus, raises the issue of whether a language exists that is natural to mankind. On the subject of speech in general, Montaigne makes the following statement: 'Quant au parler, il est certain que, s'il n'est pas naturel, il n'est pas necessaire'.60 Although Montaigne does not explain why he makes this remark, it would seem to imply that it is natural

---

Et partim mutant cum tempestatibus una
Raucisonos cantus'

[Various birds have very different accents according to the weather conditions, and some change their song to a raucous sound with the variations in the atmosphere], Lucretius, De Rerum Natura, V, 1077, 1080, 1082, 1083.

57 For this reason among others, Villey (Sources..., p.169) thinks it highly probable that Montaigne owned a copy of either the 1578 edition of Joubert's Erreurs Populaires, or of the 1579 reprint.

58 Renaissance accounts of the legend of King Psammeticus will be discussed later in this chapter (see below, pp.37-50).

59 Essais, pp.458-459.

60 By this Montaigne means that if speech is not natural to mankind, then it is not one of the 'necessaria' for human life. See below, pp.137–138.
for man to have some form of speech in order to communicate, for if speech were not one of the *necessaria* , man would have developed more fully the other means at his disposal for communicating his thoughts.

Montaigne goes on to suggest that a child which had been brought up in total isolation would indeed have some form of words with which to express his thoughts. He adds, however, that to arrange an experiment in order to prove this theory would be difficult. On the basis of this evidence alone it would be wrong to conclude that Montaigne believes in the existence of a natural human language, for he says neither that the experiment would yield consistent results, nor that the sounds made by the child would resemble any existing language. He simply states that such a child could invent a language of its own.

Although what Montaigne says at this point is interesting in its own right, it should not be interpreted outside the context of the 'Apologie', which is in part an exercise in rhetoric advancing a series of proofs in support of an argument. In this particular case, where the argument concerns the vanity of man and his supposed superiority over the other animals, Montaigne discusses this question as it applies to several different fields ('Quant aux armes...', 'Quant à la force...', 'Quant à la fidelité...', etc.). According to Montaigne, the field of speech ('Quant au parler...') is the one area in which man *does* have a true superiority over the beasts. Nevertheless, one should not attach undue weight to the views expressed here by the author, for they are in part a series of rhetorical stances, and therefore do not necessarily represent his opinions when unconstrained by the imperative of a particular argument.

B. The Myth of King Psammeticus

Conspicuous by its absence from Montaigne's brief comments on...
natural language is a well-known exemplum which is found in a wide range of Renaissance authors, and to which I have already alluded briefly.\textsuperscript{61} This concerns the linguistic experiment reputedly conducted by King Psammeticus I of Egypt in order to determine the identity of the oldest language in the world. According to the myth, Psammeticus tried to establish this fact by isolating two new-born babies from all human communication for a long period, and then attempting to identify the language that they spoke.

The myth of King Psammeticus is told by Herodotus (484–425 BC) at the beginning of the second book of his Histories. Although Montaigne does not refer to it explicitly, reference is probably implied in his comment that to stage an experiment of this type would be a difficult undertaking.\textsuperscript{62} It is worth reproducing here in full the 'original' version of the Psammeticus myth told by Herodotus, so that the classical source may be compared with the various Renaissance accounts of the legend. These I shall then discuss individually, in order to draw attention to the wide range of authors who make use of this material.

Herodotus presents the myth of Psammeticus in the following way:

\begin{quote}
Now before Psammetichus became king of Egypt, the Egyptians deemed themselves to be the oldest nation on earth. But ever since he desired to learn, on becoming king, what nation was oldest, they have considered that, though they came before all other nations, the Phrygians are older still. Psammetichus, being nowise able to discover by inquiry what men had first come into being, devised a plan whereby he took two newborn children of common men and gave them to a shepherd to bring up amongst his flocks. He gave charge that none should speak any word in their hearing; they were to lie by themselves in a lonely hut, and in due season, the shepherd was to bring goats and give the children their milk and do all else needful. Psammetichus did this, and gave this charge, because he desired to hear what speech would first break from the children,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{61} See above, pp.22, 26, 36.

\textsuperscript{62} Essais, p.458. The supposition that Montaigne is referring implicitly to the Psammeticus tale in this passage is lent weight by the fact that he does mention, albeit in a different connection, a King Psammenitus of Egypt (Essais, pp.11-12, from 'De la tristesse'). Like King Psammeticus, King Psammenitus is also mentioned in Herodotus, Histories, III, 14 (L.C.L., 1920), vol. 1, 17-21.
when they were past the age of indistinct babbling. And he had his wish; for when the shepherd had done as he was bidden for two years, one day as he opened the door and entered, both the children ran to him stretching out their hands and calling 'Bekos'. When he first heard this he said nothing of it; but coming often and taking careful note, he was ever hearing the same word, till at last he told the matter to his master, and on command brought the children into the king's presence. Psammetichus heard them himself, and enquired to what language this word Bekos might belong; he found it to be a Phrygian word signifying bread. Reasoning from this fact the Egyptians confessed that the Phrygians were older than they. This is the story which I heard from the priests of Hephaestus's temple at Memphis; the Greeks relate (among many foolish tales) that Psamm­ etichus made the children to be reared by women whose tongues he had cut out.63

The standard elements of Herodotus's story are present in the version related by the Italian historian Polydore Vergil (1470[?]-1555[?]) in his compendium De Rerum Inventoribus (1499). Polydore Vergil tells the tale of the Egyptian king in a chapter about the birth of the human race and the origin of the diversity of languages.64

The French visionary Guillaume Postel (1510-1581) gives a version of the Psammeticus tale in his Linguarum Duodecim Characteribus Differentium Alphabetum Introductio... (1538), where the myth forms part of a chapter about the origins of and similarities between languages in general, and in

---

63 Herodotus, Histories, II, 2-3 (L.C.L., 1920), vol. 1, 275-277. The ultimate origin of this story is uncertain, but there are reasons for believing that Herodotus derived it from the writings of Hecataeus of Miletus. These arguments, which are mostly technical in character (depending, for example, upon Herodotus's lack of knowledge of Egyptian geography as displayed elsewhere in this chapter of the Histories) are discussed in W.A. Heidel's article 'Hecataeus and the Egyptian Priests in Herodotus, Book II', in Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, (Boston, Mass.) 18 (1935), part 2, 57-63. See also A.B. Lloyd, 'Herodotus. Book II. Introduction', in Etudes préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'empire romain (Leiden: E.J. Brill) 43 (1975), 8-11.

64 'Verum Psammeticho regnum adepto cum incessisset cupiditas dignoscendi qui revera primi hominum exitissent, ex eo tempore didicerunt, Phrygas primos fuisse, se verò secundos. Psammetichus enim, veluti libro secundo testatur Herodotus, cum haud alter reprehendere posset, duos pueros recens natos inter pecora educandos pastori tradidit, iubens neminem coram eiusmod edere, ne aliquis sermonem perdiscerent, ut qualis esset prima vox, quae erumperet, intelligeretur. Fueri itaque binnio post passa januà, (intus enim a captis nutriebantur) ab eo porrectis pastori manibus, id est, Becus, clamitarunt, quo quidem verbo Phrygas constat panem appellare. Tali igitur modo, Phrygas primos omnium natos compertum est' [But when Psammeticus acceded to the throne, he was assailed by the desire to establish who among all men had first come into existence. From that time onwards, men said that the Phrygians were first, and that they themselves had to take second place. For, as Herodotus testifies in his second book, Psammeticus, being unable to find out by any other means, placed two new-born boys into the care of a shepherd, so that he could raise them. Psammeticus gave orders that no-one should utter a sound in their presence, lest the children should learn anyone's speech, so that the nature of the first noise they made might be understood. And so, after two years had passed (for they were raised among the goats), with both hands outstretched towards the shepherd, they cried 'becus' - the word the Phrygians use for bread. Therefore in this way it was established that the Phrygians originated first of all men], Polydore Vergil, De Rerum Inventoribus... (Venice: De Pensis, 1499), fol. Biili'.
particular about the antiquity of the Hebrew tongue. Postel’s version of the story is quite brief (it does not even mention the name of King Psammeticus), but is unusual in that it has a dumb nurse in the role of the children’s guardian, instead of the more usual shepherd. Postel appears to treat the whole story with some contempt, pointing out, for example, that the tale could not be as old as was commonly supposed, for the processes by which bread is made had not been invented at the time when the experiment was supposed to have taken place. He also suggests that the children might have been making barking noises in protest at their pangs of hunger. Postel goes on to state his belief that the first language to appear on earth was not in fact Phrygian, as the experiment implied, but either Chaldean or Hebrew. This view, he says, is shared by authors both sacred and profane.

The Spanish writer Pedro di Mexia (1495[?]–1552[?]), relates a detailed version of the Psammeticus myth in his Silva de Varia Lecion (1542). Many editions and reprints of this work were published in several

65 'Aitunt olim experientiae gratia commissos fuisses nutrici mutae iuvenes, ut illos extra hominum commercium educaret, tandemque apparat, si quiquam requierent, aut proferrent, quidnam et quorum populorum lingua esset...

[They say that once, for the sake of an experiment, young boys were committed to the care of a dumb nurse, so that she could raise them outside the commerce of men, and that at length it should be clear, if the boys asked for anything, or uttered a sound, what this sound was, and to which peoples the language belonged], C. Postel, Linguarum Duodecim Characteribus Differentium Alphabetum Introductio... (Paris: D. Lescuier, 1538), fol. Aiiiv.

66 'Heras autem fabulam esse, et ambitiose tantum confictam Phrygicam historiam, constat, eo quod sub quo princeps, aut quo tempore fuerit, nullo scribat: quod illud tam antiquum fuerit, ut nondum molendi aut pinendi nec fortasse ferendi usus esset, unde illi iuvenes non panem, cuius nullus erat adhuc usus, pesterent, sed quaecumque latranti alio sufficerent hac voce poscebant [....] Sed de primis literis et linguis, quae omnium consensu primae mortalibus innoduerunt, nobis est sermo, non an arte vel natura sint. Primam fuisses Chaldeam seu Hebraeam (nas, ut dixi, genus antiquissim Chaldaeorum agnoscit esse Moses ipse quas Hebraeorum) constat et authoribus prophanis et sacris, ut ethnicis fiat fides deo electis christianis amplificetur.'

It is agreed that this is a pure fiction, and that Phrygian history is so much shaped with a desire to please, that under which ruler, or at what time it happened, is not recorded by anybody, because this time was so ancient that neither grinding nor crushing were yet in use, and perhaps not carrying, so that those boys were not asking for bread, which was not yet used, but with this sound were demanding something to satisfy their clamouring bellies [...]. But concerning the first letters and languages, which, by common agreement, first became known to men, we have speech, not by art or nature. It is agreed by authors both sacred and profane, that the first language was either Chaldean or Hebrew (for, as I have said, Moses himself recognises that the Chaldean race is more ancient than that of the Hebrews), so that it might come about that faith in God would be extended to the chosen Christian races], G. Postel, Linguarum..., ff. Aiiiv–Aivr.

67 P. di Mexia, Silva de Varia Lecion (Seville: J. Cromberger, 1542) [Spanish edition consulted: Antwerp: H. Nuyts, 1544]. Mexia's name was naturalised into French as Pierre Messie. This work was translated into French under the title Les Diverses Leçons.
languages in the latter half of the sixteenth century, and this probably helped the Psammeticus myth to gain wide currency throughout Europe.⁸

Mexia's version of the story contains most of the elements from the classical source (except, notably, the name of the king himself), and bolsters the account with his own opinions and comments on the matter. There are, however, important differences: Mexia gives the crucial word spoken by the two children as 'Ber' (not 'bek' or 'bekos' as is usual); the place in which they were kept as a desert rather than a forest; and the duration of the confinement as four years instead of two. The tale is set in the context of a general discussion of the identity of the first language on earth:

But Herodotus saithe, that on a time experience in this case was made, by meane of a contention, or emulation then growen betwixte the Aegyptians, and Frigians: eche nation pretendinge by antiquitie of their Language, pre-eminency above the other. For determination of which different in fine they concluded, that two Children shoulde be nourished in manner above rehearsed, in sutch sorte that they shoulde never heare any worde spoken at all, and that Language, that these children firste began to profite in, shoulde be reputed the firste, and most Auncient, and they that spake that by consequent of most antiquitie. He addeth againe afterward, that a certaine kinge of Egypt, caused to be fostered two children in a deserte, to which no man ever spake in any sorte in the worlde, which when they were full foure yeeres olde, he caused them without more to be brought into his presence, where they oftentimes uttered this onely worde Ber, whiche dothe in the Frigian tongue signifie

---

⁸ For example, listed below are the editions of Mexia's *Silva de Varia Lecion* which were published in the latter half of the sixteenth century and which are now in the British Library:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antwerp</td>
<td>1544</td>
<td>(Spanish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>1547</td>
<td>(Italian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antwerp</td>
<td>1550(?)</td>
<td>(Spanish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valladolid</td>
<td>1550/1551</td>
<td>(Spanish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>1552</td>
<td>(French)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>1556</td>
<td>(French)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>1556</td>
<td>(Italian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>1557</td>
<td>(French)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seville</td>
<td>1563</td>
<td>(Spanish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyons</td>
<td>1563</td>
<td>(French)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antwerp</td>
<td>1564</td>
<td>(Spanish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>1564</td>
<td>(Italian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>1569</td>
<td>(French)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seville</td>
<td>1570</td>
<td>(Spanish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strasbourg</td>
<td>1570</td>
<td>(German)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>1571</td>
<td>(English)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>1576</td>
<td>(English)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>1583</td>
<td>(French)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seville</td>
<td>1587</td>
<td>(Spanish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antwerp</td>
<td>1588</td>
<td>(Dutch)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyons</td>
<td>1592</td>
<td>(French)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It has been suggested that this work exerted a considerable if indirect influence upon Montaigne's early *Essais*. This view is put forward by L. Clément, 'Antoine de Guevara, ses Lecteurs et ses Imitateurs Français au XVIe Siècle', in *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* (Paris: Société d'Histoire Littéraire de la France), 9 (1901), 214-233. However, Villey (*Sources...*, pp.196-198) casts doubt on some of Clément's arguments, and is wary of his conclusions. Villey advances several different reasons of his own which might be used to argue a case for direct influence, and says that it is very probable that Montaigne had read Mexia, if only because of the enormous success of the *Silva de Varia Lecion*. 

---

⁸ For example, listed below are the editions of Mexia's *Silva de Varia Lecion* which were published in the latter half of the sixteenth century and which are now in the British Library:
Breade: for whiche cause the Frigians were of all men reputed as moste ancient. This writeth Herodotus, whom many herein approve, and allege for authoritie.69

Mexia goes on to declare his scepticism about the result of the king’s experiment, upon which he places his own interpretation.70

Rabelais refers briefly to the story of King Psammeticus in the episode of the Tiers Livre (1546), in which Pantagruel recommends to Panurge the advice given by the dumb.71 Although Rabelais’s reference to the story is brief, and is placed in the mouth of Panurge, its position within the Chronicle is of interest because Rabelais brings out the close associations between this myth and other important areas of Renaissance linguistic theory.

The argument which leads to Rabelais’s mention of the Psammeticus myth arises from Pantagruel’s remark that it is logical to assume that a person who has been deaf from birth should also be dumb, ‘Car il n’est mut plus naif que celluy qui oncques ne ouyt.’72 Panurge twists this statement so that it refers not to those who have been deaf from birth, but to anyone who, for whatever reason, happens never to have heard human speech. Calling Pantagruel’s proposition ‘abhorrente et paradoxe’, he mentions the legend of Psammeticus in order to back up his contention:

Vous donques ne croyez ce qu’escript Herodote des deux enfans gardez dedans une case par le vouloir de Psammetic roy des Egypiens et nourriz en perpetuelle silence, lesquelz aprés certain temps prononcerent ceste parolle: Becus, laquelle en langue Phrygienne signifie pain.73

69 The passage cited is from the English translation by T. Fortescue entitled The Foreste (London: W. Jones, 1571), ff.22v-23r. The equivalent passage in the Spanish edition (Antwerp: M. Nuyts, 1544) is ff.56v-57r.

70 See below, p.63.

71 TL, p.140.

72 The importance of theories concerning the deaf and dumb in Renaissance language theory will be discussed more fully in Chapter 3 of this study (see below, pp.88-153).

73 TL, p.140.
Pantagruel replies that he does not believe in the theory that there is a 'natural' human language, and proceeds to give the Aristotelian view that all languages are created by arbitrary convention, and that sounds have no so-called 'natural' meaning, but rather mean whatever people who use them want them to mean:

Rien moins, respondit Pantagruel. C'est abus dire que ayons langue naturel. Les langues sont par institutions arbitraires et convenances des peuples; les voix (comme disent les Dialecticiens) ne signifient naturellement, mais à plaisir.74

In this short dialogue, then, Rabelais introduces several questions: the relationship between deafness and dumbness; the identity of the original language; the possibility of a language being 'natural' to man; and the question of whether words may have any 'true meaning' contained in their etymologies.

The Swiss orientalist and theologian Theodorus Bibliander (1507-1564) gives a version of the Psammeticus story in his De Ratione Communi Omnium Linguarum et Literarum (1548). Like Postel, Bibliander does not mention Psammeticus by name. He does, however, cite Herodotus as his source. Bibliander's account is very brief and rather dismissive in tone: he passes quickly on to a lengthy discussion, based mainly on biblical evidence, about the antiquity of the Hebrew tongue, which, he concludes, was the original language of man.75 It would seem that Bibliander does not give much

74 TL, p.140.
75 *Verum enimvero ardua fuit olim contentio de antiquitate linguarum et gentium, inter Adamus et Phryges, cuius meminit Herodotus in Euterpe, quae una voce infantilis vagitus composita et finita est, quia scilicet bek sonat panem quam vocem infantes subinde ingem-inando naturaliter sine ulla institutione ac magisterio humano, satis certum fecerunt Phrygas vetustissimos esse homines, in quorum idiomate bek significat panem, quem vagientes pueri flagitarunt*
credence to the Psammeticus tale and its implications, yet he does consider it worthy of mention, if only as a commonplace of early writing on linguistics.

Bibliander's views are at odds with those of the humanist lawyer and grammarian Louis Le Roy (1510-1577). In his *De la Vicissitude ou varieté des choses en l'univers* (1576), Le Roy relies solely upon the exemplum of the Psammeticus myth in order to defend his belief in the miraculous origins of language. He mentions the myth in the context of a discussion on how the first names were imposed on things, and what, if anything, those names 'meant':

Or combien que la parolle soit naturelle aux hommes, si ne parlent ils point qu'artificiellement, ne l'apprenant qu'en oyant parler les autres, premierement les meres et nourrices, puis le commun vulgaire. Parquoy il fallut que les premiers qui imposerent noms aux choses, n'ayans autres desquels les puissent apprendre, ils les apprisent miraculeusement en langue où la nature et verité des choses accordast a leurs origines et etymologies: lesquelles on s'efforce chercher jusques à present en toutes langues és significations des vocables. Les Hebreux donnent cest honneur à leur langue, qu'ils estiment la premiere et plus ancienne du monde.

Le Roy supports the Platonic view that the first name-givers were in some way inspired, and that by some miracle they imposed the correct names on things, names whose etymologies would have special significance, if only they could be traced in the languages spoken in the sixteenth century. Le Roy's telling of the tale of the Psammeticus experiment is a fairly condensed yet faithful version of that found in Herodotus, whom he acknowledges as his source:

---

76 Le Roy was also a translator of Plato, and professor of Greek at the Collège Royal.


78 L. Le Roy, *De la Vicissitude ou varieté des choses en l'univers* (Paris: P. l'Huilier, 1576), livre second, fol. 16. See also Screech, *Rabelais*, p.415, n.26. The theory that the Hebrew tongue is the oldest language in the world is to be found in the work of many Renaissance authors. See A. Borst, *Der Turmbau von Babel* (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1957-63), vol. 1, 114-133. The treatment by Renaissance authors of the stories of Adam's naming of the animals and of the Tower of Babel will be discussed later in this chapter (see below, pp.51-60).
Herodote raconte que Psammetique Roy d'Egypte voulant savoir qui estoit la premiere langue, bailla deux enfans nouveauix, yssus de personnes basses, à un berger pour les nourrir, defendant ne dire aucune parolle en leur presence. Mais qu'on les tint à part, et qu'à certaines heures on leur presentast chevres pour les allaicter. Ce qu'il faisoit pour le desir qu'il avoit d'ouyr quelle parolle ces enfans prononceroient la premiere aprez leur vagissemens. Et advint que deux ans revolus, comme le berger ouvrat l'huys pour entrer vers les enfans, ils tomberent tous deux à ses pieds, et tendans les mains prononcerent bec qui vaut autant à dire que pain en langue Phrygienne. Et ainsi fut trouvé que les Phrygiens estoient plus anciens que les Egyptiens, et leur langue premiere.\(^7\)\(^9\)

Rabelais's treatment of the Psammeticus legend may be compared with the comments of Laurent Joubert in the treatise *Quel langage parleroit un enfant qui n'auroit iamais ouy parler*, which appears in his *Erreurs Populaires* (1578). Joubert, as one might expect in a treatise devoted in large measure to this specific question, explores the matter in greater detail than Rabelais. He opens with a short but important account of popular belief on the subject, which leads directly into his own version of the story of Psammeticus:

Herodote en son second livre recite, que Psammetic Roy des Egyptiens en voulut quelquefois faire la preuve, afin de juger par là, quel estoit le plus ancien et naturel langage de tous ceux qu'on parle au monde. Il fist nourrir deux enfans par des femmes muettes en une forest, où ils ne pouvoyent ouyr aucune voix humaine. Passe deux ans estans amenez audit Roy, ils prononcerent quelquefois ce mot Bec, qui en langage Phrygien signifie du Pain. Dequoy on colligea, que le Phrygien estoit le premier langage de l'homme.\(^8\)\(^0\)

Joubert's account differs from that of Herodotus (and that of Rabelais) in that he has the two children being raised by dumb women in a forest.\(^8\)\(^1\) (Herodotus specifically discounts as a 'foolish tale' the idea

---

\(^7\)\(^9\) De la Vicissitude..., fol. 16\(^r\). Le Roy omits the description of how the king summoned the shepherd and the children in order to hear the word himself, and in so doing ties up the story quickly once the point has been made. However, all the other essential details are present.

\(^8\)\(^0\) Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires*, p.212.

\(^8\)\(^1\) Postel's version of the myth has a dumb nurse in the role of the children's guardian instead of a shepherd.
that women were involved in the infants' upbringing).

Renaissance authors who make use of the story of King Psammeticus come to different conclusions over the central question of belief in a natural language. The following passage is taken from Joubert's treatise:

Mais à la vérité, nostre ame ne sçait, ne tient de soy, aucun langage, et n'est affectée ou adonnée à aucun en particulier, ains encline également et est indifférente à toutes langues, si bien que l'une n'empêche l'autre, comme ferait paravanture la naturelle, si aucune en avoit. [...] Donques l'ame raisonnable n'ayant aucun langage de soy, est fort propre et apte à comprendre et bien exprimer par ses instrumens sains et entiers, toute diversité de langues.82

In the seventeenth century, the Psammeticus legend continued to occupy an important place in studies on language. The German Jesuit mathematician Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680) and the Protestant theologian and orientalist Etienne Morin (1625-1700) are among those who refer to the myth. Kircher's *Turris Babel* (1679) contains a fairly standard abbreviated version, but Morin relates the story in detail in his *Exercitationes De Lingua Primaeva...* (1694) as part of a chapter which deals with the question of whether any language can be said to be 'natural' to mankind.83 Morin includes in his account an explanation of the reasons why Psammeticus might have performed his experiment, and follows Herodotus in referring to the variant of the story which has the two babies brought up by women whose tongues had been cut out. Another variation mentioned by Morin is that some people believe that the sound 'bek' belongs not to the Phrygian language, but to that of the Paphlagonians.84 Morin main-

---


84 This argument, says Morin, is derived from Aristophanes's *The Clouds*, which contains the word *βαρσοκόλαγε* (1.398), meaning 'old-fashioned', 'simple', or 'stupid'. See Aristophanes, *The Clouds*, trans. by B. Bradley Rogers (1950), pp.302-303. K.J. Dover explains in his edition of the play (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), p.152, note on 1.398, that some manuscripts of Herodotus's *Histories* give different names to the ruler normally known as Psammeticus (he is referred to as Sesochosis or Amasis), and also describe a different
tains that Psammeticus's experiment has no basis in truth, because the two children probably copied the sound 'bek' from the bleating of the sheep and goats with which they had been living.\textsuperscript{85} To support this theory, he cites Ausonius's epigram no. 76, which concerns a man whose voice sounded like the bleating of a sheep.\textsuperscript{86}

Morin states that no trace of the original language can be detected in the forms of speech of his own day. However, although the parent language might have been lost, there has always been at least one type of universal language in use amongst men:

\begin{quote}
Nihilominus existimo extraordinariis Dei donis annumerandum Adami linguam, neque naturaliter eam ab ejus industria fluxisse. Licet enim in multis misere corrupta fuerit ejus indoles peccati malignitate, conservavit tamen proprietates mere naturales, et nulla est cuius aliquid non supersit vestigium: nullum autem pristinae linguae in ullo homine cernitur vestigium. Naturaliter quidem omnes homines risu gaudium, fletu dolorem, exclamationibus varii interjectionibusque diversos affectus iisdem fere particulis efferre comperiuntur.\textsuperscript{87}
\end{quote}

The idea that exclamations, such as those of surprise, or bursts of laughter, are to be considered as 'unlettered sounds' with universal meaning is derived, of course, from Aristotle. Morin explains in physiological terms how such sounds are produced and why it is that they are understood by everybody:

\begin{quote}
Ratio autem convenientiae illius in his affectuum inter omnes
\end{quote}
Yet even in the case of 'unformed sounds', continues Morin, there may be slight variations which reflect the different constitutions of different races of men. It is only in the field of signs and gestures that true universality exists, especially when the signs are made under conditions of urgent necessity.  

★

★ ★

In his version of the Psammeticus tale, Herodotus states that the king's motive for imprisoning the babies was to find out which was the oldest nation on earth. Renaissance authors who used the story in their works must have realised, however, that the tale had implications beyond those of simple linguistic seniority and national pride. In isolating the two children from all human speech, Psammeticus was trying to gain access to an ancient 'state of linguistic innocence' in which language was 'natural' (in the sense that words had not yet become mere arbitrary signs imposed by human convention, but rather had an intrinsic relationship with the objects or ideas which they denoted). The reasoning which may be thought to lie behind Psammeticus's experiment is reconstituted with considerable

---

88 'But the reason that all peoples agree about these expressions of the emotions may be sought in the fact that they are aroused in the same manner in the human heart, for sorrow and grief always contract it; joy, on the other hand, expands it, and it is by this expansion or contraction, which suddenly spread through the fibres and the nerves to the speech, that these unformed sounds are produced, sounds which break out of the mouths of all men in a similar way', Exercitationes..., p.27.

89 This remark of Morin's may be compared to Joubert's explanation of how laughter is produced as an unformed sound. Herodotus's tale of such a case of urgent necessity concerning one of the sons of King Croesus is cited by Joubert (Traité du ris (Paris: N. Chesneau, 1579), p.150; see below, p.152), and by Pedro di Mexia. Montaigne also refers to it briefly (Essais, p.98; see below, n.281), and alludes elsewhere to the fact that gestures may sometimes be made under conditions of urgent necessity (Essais, p.454; see below, p.139).
plausibility by Dubois:

Par une curieuse assimilation de l'individu et du corps collectif, de la vie humaine et de l'histoire de l'humanité, il s'établît un parallèle entre l'enfance de l'homme et l'enfance du monde. Si l'on évitait d'imposer à l'enfant le langage social issu de la corruption babélienne, la nature réapparaîtrait sous l'artifice, et l'on pourrait voir renaitre sur les lèvres d'un enfant le langage de l'humanité dans son enfance.\(^90\)

Clearly, the notion of a single natural and universal language which was spoken before some kind of 'linguistic Fall' is one which is most attractive to both the Christian and Jewish faiths, since it corresponds to their explanations of the origins of human communication given in the book of Genesis.\(^91\) From a purely practical point of view, access to this language would give man knowledge of the true essence of all things for which there was a name, and would enable all the peoples of the world to communicate without any misunderstanding. It is therefore not surprising that the idea of a 'natural' language commanded such attention amongst those with an interest in the nature of words, and that the story of King Psammeticus, who represents the first empirical seeker after such a language, should have gained such wide currency.

The Renaissance witnessed the first detailed exploration of the nature of language by empirical scientific means as well as by explanations based on myths such as those found in Herodotus and the Book of Genesis. Such myth-based theories of language gradually gave way to other ideas derived, for example, from medical observations, particularly of the deaf and dumb. The Psammeticus story, which occupies an important position in the gamut of Renaissance writing on language – partly because it seemed

---

\(^90\) Mythe et langage..., p.57. Details the lives of real feral children have been cited as evidence in support of theories about pre-cultural man. See below, p.192.

\(^91\) The theological arguments surrounding the existence of a 'natural' language will be discussed in the context of debate about the Hebrew tongue later in this chapter (see below, pp.60-77).
to be related to many other aspects of linguistic theory - had as its direct successor the observations made on the acquisition of speech in so-called 'feral children' - those who, either by accident or design, were deprived of contact with other humans for long periods of their childhood.  

92 Such cases, including the famous reports by Jean Itard on Victor ('the Wild Boy of Aveyron'), will be discussed in Appendix A of this study (see below, pp.190-197).
II. The Biblical and Cabbalistic Contexts

In this section I shall discuss sixteenth-century theories of language which were based upon biblical texts and cabbalistic writings. This is an area of Renaissance linguistic thought in which Platonic theories of language also have considerable influence.

A. The Biblical Texts

The main biblical texts upon which these explanations were based are the following:

1. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light (Genesis 1. 3).

2. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof (Genesis 2. 19).

3. And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.
   And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.
   Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.
   So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.
   Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth (Genesis 11. 1 and 6-9).

4. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent (Zephaniah 3. 9).
5. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 
The same was in the beginning with God. 
All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made (John 1. 1-3).

6. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 
And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 
And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 
And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2. 1-4).

This series of biblical texts reveals a theory of cyclical linguistic development. The original language which had been spoken by God and Adam in the Garden of Eden had spread over the whole world by the time of the Confusion at Babel. The Babylonian Confusion marked the beginning of a second phase in which a large number of mutually unintelligible languages are spoken. This phase still continues today. The cycle will be completed on the Day of Judgement, when the whole world will once again speak a single 'pure' language - this being the third phase which was in some respects prefigured by the Apostles speaking in tongues at Pentecost.93

93 An example of the development of a cyclical theory of language of this type may be found in the writings of Charles de Bovelles (see below, p.68 and n.122). 
Hans Aarsleff adopts a slightly different approach to this subject in his Language, Man and Knowledge in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, in which he discusses the role played by theories of language in the work of sixteenth-century reformers. He identifies five principal aspects to this 'Sprachtheologie':

'1. Intense interest in the act Adam performed when he named the animals, and in the implications of this event.
2. An equal interest in the Babylonian Confusion, the dispersal of mankind, and the diversity of tongues, and also in the implications of this event, including what we might call the philological consequences.
3. The remedy for the curse of the confusion that was offered by the descent of the Holy Spirit and the gift of tongues among the Apostles at Pentecost.
4. The sanctification of the vernacular languages. They were put on the same footing as the traditionally admitted sacred languages, Hebrew and Greek, to which Latin had been added because inscriptions in all three appeared on the cross. This doctrine is used to justify the translation of scriptures.
5. The religious necessity of making a close and continued study of Hebrew and Greek, and to make both - as well as Latin - the foundation of Christian education in the grammar schools. This educational program was in its practical aspects largely the work of Melanchthon.'

Many Renaissance authors and biblical commentators discuss the role played by language in the process of the Creation. The complex concept of 'the Word' in St. John’s Gospel is of central importance to this question, because it unites the domains of language and theology.

In his Lectures on Genesis, Luther (1483-1546) states that the phrase 'And God said, Let there be light: and there was light' 'is indeed remarkable and unknown to the writers of all other languages, that through His speaking God makes something out of nothing.' He adds: 'here for the first time Moses mentions the means and the instrument God used in doing his work, namely, the Word.' Luther goes on to remind his reader that for the word 'said' in the above phrase, the original Hebrew text employs the verb יָדַע, 'which simply and strictly denotes the uttered word, so that the word is something distinct from him who is speaking and there is a distinction between him who speaks and that which is spoken.' For this reason, Luther accuses of wicked and foolish distortion those who claim 'that the word denotes something created and that in this way Christ also is said to be the Word.'

Luther then compares this notion of God as the Speaker who creates through language with the ideas expressed in the prologue to John's Gospel:

Now compare with this the Gospel of John (1:1): 'In the beginning was the Word.' He is in proper agreement with Moses. He says: 'Before the creation of the world there was not a single one of the creatures, but God nevertheless had the Word.' What is this Word, or what did He do? Listen to Moses. The light, he says, was not yet in existence; but out of its state of being nothing the darkness was turned into that most outstanding creature, light. Through what? Through the Word. Therefore in the beginning and before every creature there is the Word, and it is such a powerful Word that it makes all things out of nothing. From this follows without possibility of contradiction what John expressly adds: 'This Word is God and yet is a Person distinct from God the Father, just

---

94 Luther, Works, ed. by J. Pelikan (St. Louis, Miss.: Concordia, 1960), 1, Lectures on Genesis, 16.
as a word and he who utters a word are separate entities'.

A little later he adds:

This Word is God; it is the omnipotent Word, uttered in the divine essence. No one heard it spoken except God himself, that is, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And when it was spoken, light was brought into existence, not out of the matter of the Word or from the nature of Him who spoke but out of the darkness itself. Thus the Father spoke inwardly, and outwardly light was made and came into existence immediately. In this manner other creatures, too, were made later. This, I say, is sufficient knowledge for us concerning the manner of the creation.

In this way, Luther demonstrates the strong associations between the idea of language as a tool for creation as found in Genesis, and the Johannine concept of the Logos, or 'Word made flesh'.

---

95 Lectures on Genesis, pp.16-17.

96 Lectures on Genesis, p.19. These passages may be compared with the following extract from Luther's Sermons on the Gospel of St. John, Chapters 1-4: 'It is as if St. John were to say: 'I wish to preach of a Word who became flesh but who was with God and beside God from the beginning. He could not be elsewhere than with God, since no creature existed as yet. It is true, I make mention of two, namely, God and the Word, i.e. the Father and Son. But this Word was with God, yet not as a separate, distinct God; no, He was the true, eternal God, of one essence with the father, equal in might and glory. The distinction is that the Father is one Person, and the Son is another Person. Although the latter is a different Person, He is nevertheless the same God as the Father. Although there are two of Them, yet the Son remains the one true God with the Father. The two Persons are distinguished thus: It is the Father who speaks; the other Person, the Son, is spoken"', Lectures on Genesis, XXII, 15-16.

97 The two texts are of course compared by many other commentators:


[Or that which is understood in the sound of the voice, when the words 'let there be light' are spoken. But is not that corporeal sound well accepted as the voice of God? And whether this extends to the nature of His Word, about which it is said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"?], De Genesi ad Literam, II, 6, in PL, 34, col. 248.


'(Then God saide,) Now Moses bringeth in God here to be the first speaker, as though he had created the masse of Heaven and earth without the word. But John testifeth that none of those things, which were made, were made without it. And it is certeine, that by the same efficacie of the word, the world was begunne, by whiche it was perfected: but God did not reveal his worde but in the beginning of light: bycause in distinction his wisedome begunneth to be seene', J. Calvin, A Commentarie of John Calvine, upon the First booke of Moses called Genesis...., trans. by T. Tymme (London: I. Harrison and J. Bishop, 1578), 28.

Renaissance allegorical explanations of the nature and role of the Word of God were probably influenced by the thought of Philo of Alexandria (see Dubois, p.20, n.1). A Greek
The *Postillae* of the mediaeval French Franciscan exegete Nicolaus de Lyra (1270-1349) was the first printed commentary on the Bible, and influenced many Renaissance authors in their interpretation of Holy Scripture. In his gloss on Genesis 2. 19-20, Nicolaus states that Adam spoke a natural language because he possessed a special insight into the nature of creation. According to Nicolaus, God had created Adam with a perfect body and mind, and this first man therefore had a complete knowledge of the natural properties of all living things. This meant that when Adam came to impose names on God's creatures, the names he chose reflected the characteristics of the animals to which they referred.98

According to Renaissance commentators, a further implication of Adam's act of imposing names on the animals was that in naming them,
Adam gained power over them. For Adam, knowledge quite literally was power.\textsuperscript{99} Luther's commentary on Genesis 2. 19 makes this point, and is worth reproducing in full:

And so God brought all the animals to Adam; and when he had assigned to each of them its name, he found none that was like himself. Here again we are reminded of the superior knowledge and wisdom of Adam, who was created in innocence and righteousness. Without any new enlightenment, solely because of the excellence of his nature, he views all the animals and thus arrives at such a knowledge of their nature that he can give each one a suitable name that harmonizes with its nature. From this enlightenment there also followed, of course, the rule over all the animals, something which is also pointed out here, since they were named in accordance with Adam's will. Therefore by one single word he was able to compel lions, bears, boars, tigers, and whatever else there is among the more outstanding animals to carry out whatever suited their nature. This ability, too, we have lost through sin.\textsuperscript{100}

In his *Commentary on Genesis*, Calvin (1509–1564) follows Luther in emphasising that Adam did not impose names on the animals in a random fashion, but gave names which were based on his special knowledge of each animal. Calvin, like Luther, associates Adam's imposition of names upon the animals with his domination of them: the animals willingly offered themselves to man so that he could inspect each one and give it a name which was in accordance with its nature. Both Luther and Calvin mention that the knowledge of these names and the intuition which lay behind them have now been lost.\textsuperscript{101}

\textsuperscript{99} The belief that the imposition of a name upon an object conferred power over it was one of the reasons why the cabbalists thought it blasphemous to pronounce the Tetragrammaton, or name of God. See below, p.79.

\textsuperscript{100} *Lectures on Genesis*, pp.119–120.

\textsuperscript{101} 'Formaverat autem Deus. [...] Dicit enim, nullum ex animalibus cunctis, quem facta esset dispositio, repertum esse quod Adae conferri posset atque aptari: neque ea natura erat affinitas, ut Adam ex una aliqua specie sibi eligere vitae sociam posset. Neque id contigit ignorantia, proderant enim singulae species in Adae conspectum: et ipse nomina non temere, sed ex notitia imposuerat: nulla tamen erat aequabilis proportio. [...] Porro istud Adducere Dei, nihil aliud significat quam quod effectum subiectionis indidit animantibus, ut se homini ullo offerrent: ut familiariter inspecta propriis nominibus, et natureae cuiusque congruentibus distinguere. Durasset autem in feris quoque bestiis haec erga homines man-suetudo, nisi Adam quod acceperat imperium, sua a Deo defectione perdisisset. [...] Quantum ad nomina quae imposuit Adam, non dubito quin singulis optima ratio subisset: sed eorum usus una cum plurimis aliis bonis obsolevit', Calvin, *Commentarius in Genesis*, I, 3, p.48.

["(So the Lord God formed...) [...] For he saith that none of all these creatures which God had made, when a muster or viewe of them was taken, was found to be a meete mate]
The concept of the divinely-inspired name-giver which is often present in Renaissance commentaries on Genesis 2. 19–20 is linked, of course, with Platonic language theory. In most commentaries this connection is not discussed; a few interpreters do, however, mention Plato explicitly:

Hinc quidem elucet eximia hominis ante lapsum ingeniositas et sapientia. Fulgebat in eius mente illustris divinorum rerum notitia, coniuncta cum perfecta totius naturae scientia: quoniam animalibus ad se adductis, nec ante visis, omnibus et singulis nomina singulorum naturae convenientissima, nullo docente, absque errore et mora imposuit: quae sane citra penitissimam singularum naturarum intelligi
tiam facere haud potuit: fuitque ea res plus quam humanae sapientiae. Nam et Plato affirmat, non esse triviale quid, rectam nomenim impositionem, sed doctissimorum et praestantissimorum viorum, nonnullaque rerum nomina divama virtute posita esse.102

and yokefellow for Adam: neither was there that affinitie of nature, that Adam might choose him a mate and companion of his life from out of any one kind. Neither happened this through ignorance. For creatures of every kinde came forth before the presence of Adam: and he named them not at a venture, but of knowledge he gave to every one his owne and proper name: yet not withstanding there was no equall proportion betwenee him and them. [...] Also these words (And brought them to the man,) signifie nothing else, but that he gave unto all creatures the affection of subjection, that they might willingly offer themselves unto man: that they beeing familiarly viewed and considered, he might put a difference betwenee them, by giving unto them proper names, and agreeing to their several natures. And this gentileness had also remained in wilde beastes towards men, if so be Adam by his falling from God, had not lost his superioritie and rule whiche God had given unto him. [...] As touching the names whiche Adam gave unto them also, I doubt not but that everie of them received their proper name with verie good reason. But the use of them with many other benefits also is worn away', J. Calvin, A Commentarie..., trans. by T. Tymme, 74–75.

102 ‘Here the exceptional ability and wisdom of man before the Fall is clearly seen. A vivid conception of the divine things was burning in his mind, together with a perfect knowledge of all nature: for when the animals were brought to him, without having seen them before, or being shown how, and without error or delay he imposed names on every single one, and the name of each was most appropriate to its nature. He could not have done these things well with a less than intimate understanding of the nature of each animal. This was a feat of superhuman wisdom. For Plato also confirms that correctly imposed names are rare, but that it is the work of very learned and distinguished men, and that several names of things have been imposed by a sort of divine power', D. Pareus, In Genesin Mosis Commentarius... (Frankfurt: J. Rhodius, 1609), p.454, col. B. The reference is to Plato's Cratylus:

'SOC. How can we assert that they gave names or were lawgivers with knowledge, before any name whatsoever had been given, and before they knew any names, if things cannot be learned except through their names?

CRA. I think the truest theory of the matter, Socrates, is that the power which gave the first names to things is more than human, and therefore the names must necessarily be correct' Cratylus, 438c, pp.182–183, trans. by N. Fowler.

In his The Language-Makers, Roy Harris compares the different views of the 'correctness' of names that are presented in Genesis and in the Cratylus. After discussing Cratylus's 'natural nomenclaturist' position, according to which both things and people may be seen as having been incorrectly named, Harris continues as follows: 'No such problem is raised in the biblical account. There is no question as to whether Adam named the animals 'correctly'. On the contrary, what the Bible says seems at first sight to imply precisely the opposite of Cratylus's contention: that is, that far from every thing having, by nature, a right name of its own, it had no name at all until Adam, at God's instigation, gave it one. According to the writer of Genesis, God never refused to accept what Adam called any of the animals, or rebuked him for mismaming them, or considered some of Adam's efforts better than others. This was not a test which God devised to see whether Adam could get the names right. Far from it: 'whathsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.' Thus it might appear that the Bible implicitly supports the position maintained by Hermogenes, Cratylus's opponent, who holds the view that 'whatever name you give to a thing is its right name'.
Speculation about the imposition of names by Adam was not, however, limited to biblical commentaries. Examples of different contexts in which this theme appears include works by Bibliander, the Belgian medical writer Goropius Becanus (Jan Flamand van Gorp), and the French royal counsellor and philologist Jacques Bourgoing.

In his *De Ratione Communi Omnium Linguarum et Literarum Commentarius* (1548), Bibliander states that names should be 'appropriate' to the objects to which they refer, so that ideas may be communicated more effectively through language.\(^{103}\) Bibliander believed that such aptness of word to subject-matter was an important rhetorical device which made it easier for an audience to remember what had been said.\(^{104}\) For him, the perfect language would be one in which the words precisely described the natural properties of the things which they signified. He speculates that the language spoken by Adam might have been of this type, and quotes a passage from the Psalms which speaks of the limitless power and wisdom associated with God in his role as the giver of names. Bibliander remarks that it is with this idea that Plato is concerned in the *Cratylus*, but that

---

\(^{103}\) 'Doctrina est in apta proprietate appellandarum rerum. Facundia in verborum et formularum varietate ac copia. Quae omnia efficerent, ut libenter ea loquerentur homines, et aptissime possent explicare, quae sentient, multitumque per eam accresceret iudicii. Talis videtur mihi Latina lingua ex iis certe, quas homines usurpant, quaque nobis sunt cognitae' [There is knowledge in the property of giving correct names to things. There is eloquence in the multitude and variety of words and phrases. Men did all these so that they could speak freely about, and explain most appropriately, those things which they felt, and that through it judgment would increase. Such certainly seems to me the Latin language out of those which men use and which are known to us], Bibliander, *De Ratione*..., p.31.

\(^{104}\) 'Convenientia rerum et vocum Quae lex a praestantissimis oratoribus praescribitur observanda in eloquentia tota, ut oratio communit rebus, facileque primatum obtinet inter omnes canones, siquidem rebus notandis et imprimendis in animos aliorum verba instituta sunt, in singulis vocibus, et particularis vocum retinenda est, ut congruant voces et verba' [Harmony between Things and Speech It is ordained by the most outstanding orators that this rule should be observed in all eloquence, so that the speech should be suited to the things, and this is easily the most important amongst all rules, if indeed by noting and imprinting things into the minds of others, words are established, and that it should be retained in single sounds and by clauses of sounds, so that the sounds and the words correspond], *De Ratione*..., p.130.
Aristotle distorts it in the *De Interpretatione*.

Nam illa perfectissima esset omnium [linguarum], cuius verba rerum naturas explanarent. Qualem credibile est fuisse illam, qua Adam singulis rebus nomina imposuit. Hae enim verae sunt rerum appellatioes, de quibus in sacro carmine legitur: Qui numerat multitudinem stellarum, et omnibus illis nomina vocat, magnus dominus, et magna virtus eius, et sapientiae eius non est finis. Ad hanc sententiam pertinent Cratylus Platonis, quem Aristotle tamen detorquet in libro *De Interpretatione*.105

Goropius Becanus (1518-1572) believed that the first man was endowed with a clear, unimpeded mind, and that this allowed him to speak a language in which the words were perfect imitations of the images in the mind of the speaker. Indeed, according to Goropius, the words of this language were so well suited to the objects to which they referred that it seemed as if the two had come into being together, rather than that the words had been imposed later.106

Jacques Bourgoing (b.1543) emphasizes the relationship between man’s ability to reason and his ability to speak. Bourgoing states that God bestowed the power of speech upon man so that man could express his own thoughts, and that God’s original intention was that all things should be called by their ‘true’ names, that is to say by the names which describe the properties of the things which they signify:

Ayant Dieu le createur cree toutes choses, et assubieti a l’homme, voulut estre par luy nommees de leur nom: luy octroyant apres la raison, la parolle interprete de la raison: et la lettre et

105 For that was the most perfect of all [languages], of which the words explained the natures of things. It is quite believable that the language with which Adam imposed names on individual things was of this type. For these are the true names of things, about which it is written in holy verse: "He telleth the number of stars; he calleth them all by their names. Great is our LORD, and of great power: his understanding is infinite." Plato’s Cratylus is relevant to this judgement; Aristotle, however, distorts it in his *De Interpretatione*, Bibliander, *De Ratione...*, p.31. The passage quoted by Bibliander is Psalm 147, vv.4-5.

106 Goropius, *Origines Antwerpianae* (Antwerp: C. Plantini, 1569), p.538. In this work, Goropius uses a series of fanciful etymologies in order to justify his claim that the Flemish tongue was spoken by the priests of ancient Egypt (see Harris, p.5), and that it was directly descended from Hebrew. For Goropius’s views on the identity of the first language, see below, pp.65-66.
l'escriture, gardiennes d'icelles: Estans les deux, la raison et la parolle, l'image et participation divine. Nom, dis-je, propre et reel, en soy contenant et demontrant la chose, ses vertus et proprietez.\textsuperscript{107}

The notion that there was once a time when man could understand the language of the animals is a feature of the myth of the Golden Age which is common to the literature and folklore of many cultures.\textsuperscript{108} The biblical version of this particular aspect of the paradise myth is Eve’s conversation with the serpent, described in Genesis 3. 1-5. This episode was seen by commentators as further evidence that before the Fall man spoke a universal language. Aristotle's observation that within each species, animals apparently speak only one 'language' gave rise to the belief that the animal world might have escaped the confusion of Babel.\textsuperscript{109}

B. The Original Language: the Case for Hebrew

The identity of the language (or languages) spoken by the descendants of Adam is not revealed in the Book of Genesis. Many Renaissance commentators appear to have assumed that the natural tongue spoken by Adam himself was passed down through the generations, that it was still being spoken in Noah's day, and that forms of this same language had spread all over the world by the time of the Babylonian Confusion: 'And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech' (Genesis 11, 1). Biblical statements such as this (and the earlier verses which describe Adam's naming of the animals) seem to have exerted a strong influence upon Renaissance commentators, as I have been unable to find any

\textsuperscript{107} J. Bourgoing, De Origine, Usu et Ratione Vulgarium Vocabulorum Linguae Gallicae, Italicae & Hispanicae (Paris: S. Prevosteu, 1583), fol. Aii', from the 'Epistre au Roy'.

\textsuperscript{108} Dubois, Mythe et langage..., p.58, n.12.

\textsuperscript{109} Problems, X, 38, 895A, p.227. See above, p.33.
sixteenth-century author who challenges it by suggesting that there might have been several 'first languages'.

The belief that the original language had been Hebrew was widespread in the Renaissance. Those who held this view may be divided into three groups, according to their interpretation of the aforementioned verses in Genesis. The first group of writers thought that the original Adamic form of Hebrew had survived the Babylonian Confusion intact, and was exactly the same as the Hebrew tongue spoken in the sixteenth century. (In the same way, all the new languages which had grown up after Babel had also survived unchanged into Renaissance times). A second group believed almost the same as the first, except that, for them, the language spoken by Adam had not been identical to modern Hebrew, but rather a primitive form of it. The third view was that a nebulous mixing took place after the Babylonian Confusion, with the result that elements of the original Adamic Hebrew were to be found dispersed amongst many sixteenth-century languages. Some adherents of this last theory held that by studying the etymologies of modern words, it might be possible to trace them back to their original forms in the Adamic tongue, forms which would reveal the true natures of the things described. Of the three interpretations given above, the third is the most common.

The survival of Hebrew through the Babylonian Confusion was often explained in terms of what may be called the 'Heber myth'. According to this myth, the tribe of Heber was the only one to escape the effects of the

---

110 The lack of support in the sixteenth century for a truly polygenetic theory of language is noted by Dubois, who points out that the polygenetic theories of ancient writers such as the fourth-century Saint Philastrius are mentioned by Renaissance authors only so that they may be refuted (Mythe et langage..., p.33, n.3; pp.37, 75). A distinction should be drawn between this question and the arguments about what happened after the Confusion at Babel. Here, sixteenth-century authors do indeed offer differing explanations, one (admittedly rare) theory being that this confusion was total, that the original Adamic tongue did not survive in any form, and that a large number of completely new and unrelated languages subsequently developed.

111 Karl A. Kottmann discusses the different ways in which the nature of the Hebrew language was perceived by several prominent Spanish Renaissance catholic thinkers in 'Pray Luis de Léon and the Universality of Hebrew: An Aspect of 16th- and 17th-Century Language Theory', in Journal of the History of Philosophy (Claremont, California), 13 (1975), 297-310.
Confusion at Babel, and the original language was therefore preserved only amongst the members of this single tribe, from which the Hebrew tongue eventually took its name. The following version of the Heber myth is told by St. Augustine:

Quam ob rem sicut lingua una cum esset omnium, non ideo filii pestilentiae defuerunt; nam et ante diluvium una erat lingua, et tamen omnes praeter unam Noe justi domum deleri diluvio meruerunt: ita quando merito elatiosis impietatis gentes linguarum diversitate punitae atque divisae sunt, et civitas impiorum confusionis nomen accepit, hoc est, appellata est Babylon, non defuit domus Heber, ubi ea quae antea fuit omnium lingua remaneret. [...] Quia ergo in eius familia remansit haec lingua prius humano generi non immerito creditur fuisse communis, ideo deinceps Hebraea est nuncupata.\(^\text{112}\)

Augustine's account forms the basis of that related by Pedro di Mexia in his *Silva de Varia Lecion* (1542). Mexia states that, in his opinion, Hebrew is indeed a more likely candidate than the Chaldean tongue for the honour of being the first language:

S. Augustine discoursinge in many, upon this matter conclud-eth, that it was the Hebrew, the very same that the Jewes speake yet at this daie which, as farre as it maye be gathered, by any meane possible out of the Scriptures, and as S. Augustine also deemeth, was conserved in Heber, of whom descended Abraham, and the Hebrewes: for that neither he, nor any of his kindred, would healpe at all any thinge in erectinge this Tower. By means whereof, him selfe, and his family, whiche woulde not condescende to this sinfull, and prowde attempte, felte not thereof the due deserved paine. Wherefore wee maye presume that in Heber, and his family, the auncient, and firste Tongue remained perfect, and entire, without any corruption or confusion on the same, in that Linage onely pure, and nowhere els in the Worlde: whence it came to passe, that of Heber it had his denomination Hebrewe. Sundry Hebrewes his Successours affirme, that this Language was that same, that was firste spoken by Adam, as also of all the others, of that Auncient and firste Age,

\(^{112}\) Hence just as when all men spoke one language, the sons of pestilence were not lacking on that account - for there was only one language before the flood, and yet all men except the single family of the righteous Noah were justly destroyed by the flood - so also when the peoples were deservedly punished for their presumptuous wickedness by diversity of languages, and the city of the wicked received its name 'Confusion', that is, when it was named Babylon, one house was still found, that of Heber, in which the language formerly spoken by all men might persist. [...] Since, then, this language remained in use among his family when the other tribes were divided by various tongues, the language that, not without good reason, is believed to have served previously as the common speech of all mankind was thereafter called Hebrew on this account, *De Civitate Dei*, XVI, xi, trans. by E.M. Sanford and W.M. Green (L.C.L., 1965), vol. 5, 60-63; also in PL, 41, col. 490.
conserved in Heber, and those that followed him, Abraham and Jacob. In this same also wrote Moyses his Lawes. This then is the opinion of S. Augustine, and Isidorus, to whome wee should geve more assured creditte, then to those that affirme, the Chaldean Tongue the first, which not withstanding may be of parte excused, for that these two Languages have a marveilous vicinitie, their Characters almooste uniforme and lyke, as also well agreeynge in other thinges many.  

Commenting on the conclusions traditionally drawn from the account of King Psammeticus's experiment in Herodotus, Mexia goes on to state that, in his opinion, babies that are raised in complete social isolation will either speak Hebrew (the first language of man), or else will invent some entirely new tongue of their own. Mexia is generally sceptical about Herodotus's tale, and thinks it possible that the two children in the original experiment had learnt to make sounds by imitating animals in the fields:

Notwithstandinge were it (as he reporteth it) a truth, yet might it be that these children by happe, somewhere shoulde learne it, as by somme Beaste, Birde, or Sheepe in the Fielde, which might frame the same, or some sutch like voyce, they doing their paine to frame the same after them. But as for my part, I reste of this minde, that two children in this sorte fostered, would speake none other than the firste language, Hebrewe, although I also durst in manner semblable to affirme, that to them selves they would shape some newe, and strange Tongue, gevinge to all things their names unknown and unheard, as we see, that Children of them selves naturally: geve names lesse known, to things of them desired, so that of parte assuredly it appeareth, that nature would learne them a Language all newe, before they should be perfect in any their Fathers.

The story of the preservation of the Hebrew tongue amongst the tribe of Heber seems to be recorded mainly by writers of the middle and late sixteenth century. Earlier, the tale is less common. For example, the

---

113 P. di Mexia, *Silva de Varia Lecion* (1542); English translation: *The Foreste* (see above, n.69), fol. 22r-v.

114 Mexia, *The Foreste [Silva de Varia Lecion]*, fol. 23r. Other writers who refer to the Psammeticus myth also raise the objection that the children could have learnt to make noises by imitating the goats and the other animals amongst which they had been raised. This point is also made, for example, by the biblical commentator Pareus (see below, p.72), and by Etienne Morin (see above, p.47).
scholar and printer Geofroy Tory (1480-1533) does not mention the Heber myth in his *Champfleury* (1529).\footnote{Guillaume Postel, also writing relatively early in the century, likewise omits the Heber story from his explanation that the first language was either Chaldean or Hebrew. See G. Postel, *De Originibus seu de Hebraicae et Gentis Antiquitate, deque Variarum Linguarum Affinitate Liber [...]* (Paris: D. Lescuier, 1538), fol. Aiv\textsuperscript{7}.

\footnote{G. Tory, *Champfleury*, fol. LXVII\textsuperscript{r}.

\footnote{\textquoteleft Caeterum non obscuris argumentis liquet sermonem Ebraeum esse parentem ac principem linguarum omnium, qui naturae omnium rerum divinarum simul et humanarum aptum nomen veluti publicam notam imprimit, et frugalit sine omne luxu, nec sordidus et parcus. Cuius vestigia non obscura cernuntur in linguis omnibus. Cuius sunt vocabula peculiaria turn propria turn communia, quae testimonio historiae vetustissimae ab initio mundi fuerunt imposita. Nam Ebraice linguae etymologiae prae se ferunt patriarcharum vetustissima nomina, Adam, Eva, Cain, Abel, Seth, Noa, Sem, Japheth, Nimrod, Eber, Paleg. Sed fuerit satius id confirmare testimoniis aliquot idoneis. Ebraeorum sententia, quod lingua ipsorum primigenia et patriarcha linguarum sit, tum alibi, tum in commentarii Esaiae 19. cap. expressa est. Quo loco Nicolaus Lyranus idem afferit. [...]. Quemadmodum enim ante linguarum divisionem in turri Babel factam universa terra unius erat labii: ita in resurrectione generali omnes homines una loquentur lingua, Hebraica scilicet, qua primi parentes in paradiso locutae sunt, si ipsi primi parentes in gratia dei stetissent'}

However, in a prefatory remark to a section of this work in which he illustrates the Hebrew, Greek and Latin alphabets, Tory says that he will begin with the Hebrew alphabet 'pource quelle est la plus Ancienne se dit on: et que les Premiers hommes, comme tesmoignent les Historiens, l'ont inventee.'\footnote{But by clear arguments it is evident that the Hebrew tongue is the first ancestor of all languages, that it imprints a name appropriate to the nature of all things both divine and human, as it were a public mark, and that it is thrifty without all extravagance, yet not mean and niggardly. Clear traces of it are seen in all languages. Both its proper nouns and common nouns are special, and, according to the most ancient history, were imposed at the...}
In his *Origines Antwerpianae* (1569), Goropius observes that there would have been some people who did not take part in the construction of the Tower of Babel. Since everybody who was on the earth at that time spoke the same language, argues Goropius, those who were not at Babel and who therefore escaped God's punishment would have gone on speaking that same original language even after the Confusion. The original language would have been preserved amongst those inhabitants of the region known as Margiana, who, according to Goropius, would have remained behind to take care of their homeland when the builders of the tower began their journey 'from the east' to the site of the construction on the Plain of Shinar.¹¹⁸

Goropius goes on to anticipate objections which might be raised by adherents of the traditional view that Hebrew was the oldest language, arguing on their behalf that the proper names which pertained to people and places from the time before the Flood (and until a short time after it)

beginning of the world. For the oldest names of the patriarchs: Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, Seth, Noah, Shem, Nimrod, Japheth, Heber, Paleg, plainly bear the etymology of the Hebrew tongue. But it would be preferable to confirm this with some suitable evidence. The opinion of the Hebrews, that their original ancestor of languages, is expressed both in the commentaries on Isaiah 19 and elsewhere. Here Nicolaus De Lyra is of the same opinion. [...] For just as before the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel the whole earth spoke one language, so in the general resurrection all men will speak with one language (Hebrew of course), which our first ancestors spoke in paradise, and which all the elect would have spoken in their state of innocence, if these first ancestors had remained within the grace of God], T. Bibliander, *De Ratione Commun...* pp.37-38. (This passage follows Bibliander's brief version of the Psammeticus story; see above, n.75).

The verse of Isaiah to which Bibliander is referring is probably Isaiah 19. 18: 'In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the LORD of hosts; one shall be called, The city of destruction'. Commenting on this verse, Nicolaus de Lyra writes: 'Sit autem hic mentio magis in speciali de lingua hebraica quam de aliis, quod illa est lingua prima et fuit omnibus communis usque ad edificationes turris babel'.

[But this mention applies more particularly to the Hebrew tongue than to the others, because that is the first language, and was common to all until the builders of the Tower of Babel], N. de Lyra, *Postilla super Totam Bibliam* (1492), vol. 2, fol. DDvi", col. 2.

¹¹⁸ 'Cum igitur Sibylla quosdam duntaxat turrim aedificasse dicat, et Moses illos, qui ex Oriente ad Occidentem profecti erant, id fecisse testetur; satis liquet eos, qui ad Margianam coelendum relicti fuerant, turris aedificationi non interfuisse. Quocirca quia non solis illis, qui in Campo Senaar erant, eadem fuit lingua, sed omnibus hominibus necessario fatendum erit, Margianis priscam linguam remansisse; eam nimirum, quae prius fuerat communis universorum'

[Therefore since the Sibyl merely says that certain people built a tower, while Moses tells us that this was done by those who had travelled westward from the east, it is quite clear that those who had been left behind to take care of Margiana did not take part in the building of the tower. For this reason, since not only did those who inhabited the Plain of Shinar speak the same language, but all men would of necessity speak it, so the ancient language remained with the inhabitants of Margiana. This was undoubtedly the language which had earlier been common to all], Goropius, *Origines Antwerpianae*, pp.533-534. This argument, which is based on Genesis 11. 2, seems not to take into account Genesis 11. 9: 'Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth...' [my italics].
belong to the Hebrew tongue, and that Hebrew was therefore the language spoken by Adam. Against such objections, Goropius maintains that although Hebrew words might indeed possess special descriptive power (as did the words of the divinely-inspired Adamic language), and although Moses might indeed have discerned prophecies in some Hebrew proper names (prophecies which were to be fulfilled many centuries after the imposition of these names), it does not necessarily follow that the original language was Hebrew. A knowledge of the reasons for which names had been imposed in the first language would have been retained by Noah and his family before being passed down to Moses, who, prompted by divine intervention, applied those reasons and prophecies to the words of his own language, Hebrew.\(^{119}\) Goropius concludes that many remnants of the original language survived the Babylonian Confusion, and were present not only in Hebrew but also in other modern languages. He proceeds to analyse some proper names which are found in the first few chapters of Genesis in an attempt to establish why they were chosen as names by the speakers of the first language.\(^{120}\)

\(^{119}\) _Origines Antwerpianae_, pp.534-535.

\(^{120}\) 'Verum, quo diviniora omnia et occultiora appareant, sacrae historiae arcana breviter addam, qui factum putem, ut nomina eadem hominum propria, et in prima lingua et Hebraea inveniantur. Animadverto enim non solum, ut modo dixi, per interpretationem vel novam impositionem a primit Hebraeis factam, nomina posita fuisset, quibus vaticinia continerentur; sed spiritum Dei tam admirando in illis modo operatum esse, ut non solum in prima lingua rationes suas veras haberent, sed in illo etiam sermones oracula continerent, quo Hebraei erant usuri: quod quamvis Moses a maioribus non accepisset; poterat tamen instintu divino conmoneire. Certe multa in nominum rationibus oracula dedit, quae multis post ipsum saeculis eventum suum sunt sortita. Deinde non nego, multas quoque praeae linguae religiis, et in Hebraico et alius sermonibus relictas fuisset, quas confusion Babylonica perturbavit quidem, sed non penitus delevit. Esperiamus igitur, an in illis nominibus, in quibus Moses oracula inventit, rationes etiam aliqua prii sermonis appareant'.

[Truly, in order that all more divine and more secret things should become clear, I shall briefly add the hidden things of sacred history, and I believe that when this is done, the same personal names of men will be found both in the first language and in Hebrew. For not only do I notice, as I have already said, that either through interpretation or through new imposition carried out by the first Hebrews, names were imposed which contained prophecies, but also the spirit of God worked in a marvellous way in these matters, so that not only did they have their true reasons in the first language, but they also had prophecies in that language which the Hebrews would use. Because although Moses did not receive it from the elders, he was able to be reminded by divine instigation. He certainly gave many prophecies in the reasons for names, prophecies which were fulfilled many centuries after his own lifetime. I do not deny, then, that many remnants of the first language have also been left both in Hebrew and in other languages, which the Babylonian Confusion surely threw into disorder, but did not completely destroy. Let us therefore see whether any reasons also appear of the first language in those names in which Moses found prophecies], _Origines Antwerpianae_, p.539. There follows a series of proper names taken from Genesis, together with their interpretations. For example, Goropius takes the name 'Adam' to mean 'led away from the red earth'.}
Two French Renaissance writers who held more unusual views about the identity of the first language were the mathematician and theologian Charles de Bovelles (1470[?]-1553[?]) and the philologist Joachim Péron (1490[?]-1561).

In his Liber de Differentia Vulgarium Linguarum (1533), Bovelles stresses the importance of change in the process of linguistic development. He believes that a natural language is impossible, and that in all languages the imposition of names is governed by arbitrary human convention:

> In experimentis dico, quia positiones vocum, et nominum, ex quibus texturae fiunt sermonum et orationum, haud aliud habuere initium, quam spontaneum et varium hominum arbitrium. In his enim nullus rationis tenio, nulla ibi fixa et certa mentis aurigatio. [...] Adde quod quotidie humanorum labiorum vitia fecant, variant, adulterant incompta vulgi idiomata: adeo ut permodica loci distantia protinus invertat cuiuslibet popularis linguae stilum, et versuram faciat in labiis imperitorum hominum.

For Bovelles, however, the confusion at Babel was total: once it had

---

121 'I say that, in practice, the positions of sounds and of words, from which the textures of speech and discourse are created, had no other origin than the varied and spontaneous choice of men. For in these, I find nothing of reason, no fixed and certain driving force of the mind. [...] Add to this that each day, the faults in articulation which fall from human lips change and adulterate the countless idioms of common speech, to such an extent that a small departure immediately alters the character of any vulgar tongue, and produces a change in the pronunciation of ignorant men', C. de Bovelles, Liber de Differentia Vulgarium Linguarum, et Gallici Sermonis Varietate (Paris: R. Stephanus [R. Estienne], 1533), p.3.

Bovelles's interpretation of Genesis 2. 19 stresses the role of the gift of free will in the imposition of names: 'Scriptum est enim quoniam in initio adduxit deus cuncta terrae animantia ad Adam, ut videret quid vocaret ea: et omne quod vocavit est nomen eius. Nam et hic, uxorem etiam suam, quia ex ossibus, et carne viri sumpta esset, viraginem coram deo appellavit. Id quidem duplex nobis mysterium tegit. Primum, quod doceat stetisse in primo parente, et munere dei, primae totius mundi linguae voluntarie institutionis arbitrium, ut qui sua singulis animantibus, iubente deo, nomina posuerit. Secundum, quod testetur donatum a deo hominem esse libero arbitrio, impensumque illi hunc honorem, ut singulas mundi substantias, propter hominem factas arbitraris nominibus imbueret. Sic enim ab arbitrio dei, libera et spontanea substantialiarum omnium origo pependit, ita nimirum voluit sanxitque deus, omnium nominum, vocum, et appellationum originem ab hominis (nempe a primi parentis) arbitratu proficisci debere.'

[For it is written that in the beginning God led all the animals of the earth to Adam, so that he might see what Adam would call them, and that whatever Adam called each animal, that was its name. In the presence of God he also called his wife a female warrior, because she had been taken from the bones and the flesh of a man. Indeed, this conceals a double mystery from us. Firstly, because it teaches us that the choice of a voluntary arrangement for the first language in the whole world was placed in the first ancestor by the favour of God, so that, at God’s command, he would impose his own names upon individual animals. Secondly, because it shows that man was endowed with free will by God - a high honour for him - in order that he would imbue the individual names of the world, which were made through man, with names of his own deciding. For just as a free and spontaneous origin of all names depended upon the decision of God, so God without doubt wished and confirmed that the origin of all names, sounds, and words should arise from the decision of man (that is to say of the first ancestor), De Differentia Vulgarium Linguarum..., p.46.]
taken place, the first language could never be rediscovered. After Babel, other languages appeared which were completely unrelated to the original tongue. With the passage of time, these languages changed and gradually moved further away from their archetype. The speech of Adam, which had been irredeemably lost at Babel, would not return until the Day of Judgement, as predicted in Zephaniah 3:9:

Hic denique est sermo quem post resurrectionem CHRISTI lapsus e caelo spiritus sanctus, in similitudine ignearum linguarum, apostolis refudit: et in cuius uniformitate hi postea per mundum dei voluntate dispersi, coram omni mundi natione, magnalia dei loqui in proprio cuiusque gentis labio visi sunt. Quem enim sermonem prius uniformem et ubique parem secuerat in turri Babel deus in plura, rursum per spiritum sanctum suum hunc eundem in electis et innovatis apostolorum labiis recollegit, revocavitque in suum unum. Scriptum etenim est in prophetis, In illis diebus reddam terris labium electum, et lingua balborum velociter loquetur, et plane. Quid sibi quaesum hoc vult, nisi quia docet in fine castigandam divinitus fore omnium linguam, defecanda item, imo potius tollenda labiorum vita, per quae, dum millae non linguae sensim et tempore et loco ab suae Idae apice, et ideali amussi descivere, variarum tanden linguarum et idiomatum initia peperere? 122

Bovelles's insistence upon the mutability of languages and their corruption through time is demonstrated by the importance he attaches to the nature of the Babylonian Confusion. Because he believes that the original language was lost at Babel, there can be no place in his theory for

---

122 This, finally, is the language which the Holy Spirit, descending from Heaven after the resurrection of Christ under the appearance of tongues of fire, invested in the apostles. In the uniformity of this tongue, the apostles, having later dispersed all over the world, according to the will of God, were seen to speak before all nations about the miraculous works of the Lord, in the language particular to each people. This was the language, previously uniform and the same everywhere, which God had split into many tongues at the Tower of Babel. Again through His Holy Spirit, He brought together this same language in the chosen ones, on the renewed lips of the apostles, and called it back into its oneness. For it is also written in the prophets: For then will I return to the earth a chosen language, and the tongue of those who stammer will speak quickly and clearly. What does this mean, I ask, if not that in the end, the language of all will be amended by divine agency, and, similarly, defects in pronunciation will be cleansed, or rather removed. It is through these defects that men have produced the foundations of different languages and idioms, whereas these languages, which are not of the original tongue, have under the effect of time and distance, gradually deviated from the summit, from the ideal line of their archetype', C. de Bovelles, De Differentia Vulgarium Linguarum, p.47. The full texts of the biblical verses cited in part by Bovelles are as follows: 'For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent' (Zephaniah 3, 9); 'The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly' (Isiah 32. 4).

See the introduction by M. Huchon, part I: 'Rabelais et les Théories Linguistiques de son Temps', in ER, 16 (1980), 3; also J. Céard, 'De Babel à la Pentecôte: la transformation du mythe de la confusion des langues au 16e siècle', in BHR, 42 (1980), 577-594, (pp.577, 593-594).
the myth of Heber. It is therefore probable that Bovelles, like Goropius, did not think that this first language was Hebrew. These ideas are unusual for an author writing as early as 1533.

In his *De Linguae Gallicae Origine* (1555), Joachim Périon draws similar conclusions to those of Bovelles. Périon's work takes the form of a dialogue, several pages of which are devoted to a discussion on the antiquity of the Hebrew tongue and to the nature and consequences of the Babylonian Confusion.\(^{123}\) Both speakers in this dialogue eventually accept the following statements as true: the confusion at Babel was total; in this confusion the original language was lost and has since remained untraceable; this original language was not Hebrew; and other 'modern' languages (including French) are descended not from Hebrew but from various new tongues which sprang up simultaneously after the Babylonian Confusion, and which were not related to the speech of Adam. The following exchange takes place near the end of the dialogue:

Conclusum est a te, primum sermonem non fuisse eum, qui Hebraicus nominetur. Ex quo etiam illud vis effici, caeteras linguas ex ea ortas non esse: quo posito, atque concluso, illud sequi video, Gallicum nostrum ab eo non habuisse originem [...]. Nostram, inquam, ex Hebraico sermone fluxisse tum nego, quod cum docuerim linguam illam non fuisse primam omnium, ex eo efficiatur necessario, eam nostro sermoni ullaum tum principium dare minime potuisse.\(^{124}\)

Writers such as Bovelles and Périon, who hold that the Confusion at Babel was total, are rare exceptions; Jacques Bourgoing, on the other hand, is an example of one who adopts the majority view:

---

\(^{123}\) *Ioachimi Perionii Benedictini Cormoetiaceni Dialogorum de Linguae Gallicae Origine, Eiusque cum Graeca Cognatione...* (Paris: S. Nivelle, 1555), ff.6v-9v.

\(^{124}\) [You conclude that the first language was not Hebrew. From this it should be construed that the other languages did not grow out of it. Once this conclusion has been reached, it seems to follow that our French language did not originate from it. [...] I say that our language did not derive from the Hebrew tongue, because as I shall demonstrate, that language was not the first, from which it may be deduced that it could not have given rise to our tongue], J. Périon, *De Linguae Gallicae Origine...*, fol. 9v. Part of this passage is cited by Dubois, *Mythe et langage...*, p.68.
Donc le premier homme Adam, et autres ses proches descendants, enseignez de Dieu, ont nommé les choses par leur nom (comme est dit par Moïse) c'est a dire proprement et réellement: Et encore que par la meme permission divine, l'orgueil eust engendré confusion en Babilone, et diversité de langues, et que la pureté de la premiere ayt esté alterée: toutes fois est a bon droit appelée la langue divine et mere, par laquelle Dieu a parlé et escrit, continuée es Hebreux et Iuifs iusqu'a ce temps.125

Biblical commentaries from the Renaissance support the claim of Hebrew to be the oldest language. The sixteenth-century Spanish writer Antonius Honcala, for example, has no doubt that Hebrew is the language referred to in Genesis 11.1. To support his assertion that the Hebrew tongue contains elements of special significance, Honcala cites Eusebius's explanation of the differences between the Hebrew and Greek languages:

Quaeres quaecumque fuerit haec una lingua? Hebraea quippe: siquidem Hebraea sunt nomina, quae Adam animalibus imposuit, et filiis et filiis suis ac posteris suis indita, quae per sacros libros referentur. [...] immo et Hebraeos omnium mortalium primos literas invenisse auctor est Eusebius Caesariensis in libro decimo De praeparatione Evangelica. Argumento, inquit, maximo est, ab Hebraeis repertas esse literas, ipsarum literarum apud Graecos appellatio: quibus nihil signifiant, at singula apud Hebraeas elementa appellatio significativa vocantur: quod apud Graecos nullo modo potest [...] Enimvero sub utrisque characteribus lingua Sacra invariata permansit, id quod aperte indicat haec nomina, Adam, Eve, Cain, Seth, Noe: quorum interpretationem scriptura continenter inferens linguam eorum immutatam permansisse manifestissime demonstrat.126

Hebrew ranks as the oldest language in the world for the commenta-

125 J. Bourgoing, De Origine..., fol. Aii v.

126 [You ask which was this one language. Hebrew, of course: since indeed the names which Adam imposed upon the animals, and which his son gave to his descendants, and which are set down in the books of Holy Scripture, are Hebrew ones. [...] Indeed, Eusebius Caesariensis states in the tenth book of his De Praeparatione Evangelica that the Hebrews were the first among all mortals to invent letters. He says that there is a good reason for believing that the Hebrews invented letters: these letters were given a name by the Greeks, for whom they had no meaning; whereas in the case of the Hebrews, individual elements were called by a name. The Greeks are in no way able to do this. [...] It is certain that the sacred language stayed the same beneath each of these characters, and this is borne out by the following names: Adam, Eve, Cain, Seth, Noah. An unbroken succession of writing carrying their meaning clearly shows that the language from which they came remained unchanged], A. Honcala, Commentaria in Genesim..., fol. 79 v, col. 3. The passage from Eusebius to which Honcala refers is in his De Praeparatione Evangelica, X, chapter V. Here, after explaining the meanings of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, Eusebius claims that the similarity between the names for the letters in Hebrew and Greek demonstrates that the latter language was derived from the former.
tor Ioannis Mercerus (Jean Mercier, d.1570). Mercerus's principal argument is that the etymologies of words in Hebrew correspond closely to the things which they describe, a quality which, he says, is not found in other tongues.\textsuperscript{127} Several other commentators on Genesis 11. 1, such as Ferus, van Eitzen, and Musculus, merely stress the antiquity of Hebrew without mentioning the special significance of its names. Ferus states that Hebrew was the language used by the Prophets, by Christ, and by God himself.\textsuperscript{128}

From a linguistic point of view, one of the fullest and most revealing biblical commentaries, especially where the Confusion at Babel is concerned, is that of the German religious theorist Davidus Pareus (David Waengler, 1548-1622). Unlike most other commentators, Pareus uses the context of the Babylonian Confusion to introduce several of the general problems most frequently addressed by linguistic theorists of the period. In order to defend his belief in the primacy of Hebrew, he points out what he considers to be the obvious flaw in the story of Psammeticus, the myth which represents the rival claims of the Phrygian tongue. According to Pareus, this flaw is that the syllable 'bek' which was uttered by the two

\textsuperscript{127} Verum cum est, ut sequitur, hominem, et primos parentes allocutus, id sane putarem lingua factum Hebraica, et eos eadem vicissim respondisse. [...] Etymologia nominum Hebraeorum quibus Moses utitur, quae aliis aliarum linguarum non possint accomodari, satis huius linguae vetustatem ostendunt, et eam priam esse. Nam eti vix quoque ab humo, ut OIK ab *bek* sit dictus, tamen non in caeteris id ita constanter reperias nominum et etymologicarum allusionem, ut YHVH, item *Eve* quod esset mater viventium, in qua queso id lingua locum habet? Sic in caeteris, quae sequuntur nominibus, quae origine non possunt nisi Hebraica esse. Ac animantium et rerum nomina quae ad naturam earum proxime in hac lingua accedunt inter omnes linguas, satis hoc ideam arguunt. Quod si non omnium nominum rationes intelligimus, id ex linguae inscientia, qua etiam Iudaei hodie nimium laborant, factum esse credendum est.'

(Since it follows that it is true that [God] addressed man, and also the first ancestors, I really believe that he did this in the Hebrew tongue, and that they in turn answered in the same. [...] The etymology of the Hebrew names used by Moses, names which cannot be adapted to others in other languages, demonstrates sufficiently the great age of this language, and also that it was the first. For although 'homo' [man] also came from the 'humo' [earth], as OIK [man] is said to derive from *bek* [earth], yet you will not find in other tongues such constant reference to names and etymologies, such as YHVH [sinner], and similarly *Eve*, because she was the mother of all living beings, I ask, in which language does this have a place? So in the others, which follow with names which must be Hebrew in origin. And the names both of living things and of inanimate objects which closely resemble their natures in this language are similar in all languages, make this point quite clearly. Because if we do not understand the reasons for all names, it is to be believed that this came about because of inexperience with the language which the Jews of today also labour hard to acquire], I. Mercerus, In Genesim [...] Commentarius, p.62, col. B.

\textsuperscript{128} J. Ferus, In Totam Genesim [...] Enarrationes [...] p.237.
children in the story could equally well be used to justify the theory that
German was the first language, since the sound has several meanings in
that tongue. Pareus therefore considers that it was merely an inarticulate
noise which the children had learnt to make by imitating the goats amongst
which they had been raised.\textsuperscript{129}

Pareus also argues that although the power of speech is peculiar to
man, speech is not of itself natural. For this reason, a man is still able to
receive information by other means when he either cannot hear or does not
understand what another man is saying. Pareus emphasises the importance
of hearing and imitation in the process of speech acquisition: it is only by
listening to and copying articulated sounds that men are able to learn to
talk. This is why those who are born deaf also remain dumb all their lives.
For Pareus, therefore, all speech is based upon human convention. The only
exception to this is the speech of Adam and Eve, who spoke a natural
language which was given to them by God. This language was passed down
through generations of Adam’s descendants until the Babylonian Confusion,
when it was preserved only in the family of Peleg (the son of Heber).\textsuperscript{130}

\textsuperscript{129} This objection had been raised by Pedro di Mexia (see above, p.63), and would later
be raised by Etienne Morin (see above p.47).

\textsuperscript{130} 'Porro primum illud labium fuisse Hebraeum, quod ante diluvium ex Paradiso ab Adam ad
Noach usque fuerat servatum, et post diluvium ex familia Noach ad omenes ei nepotes et
posteros propagatum, doctissimi Hebraei tum alis documentis tum eo etiam probant, quod
nomina propria personarum pleraque Hebraeas originem sapient. Idipsum probat Augustinus de
C.D. lib. 16 cap. 11. Nec digna est quae refellatur fabula Heroditi de Psammetistho duos
alente pueros inter pecora ad cognoscendum, si qua vox prima eis erumperet: qui bimatu exacto
exclamare coeperint Beccus, quod cum rex lingua Phrygia panem significare comperisset, inde
Phrygum idiom primum et naturale homini esse iudicavit. Atqui Beck etiam Germanis sonat
pistorem, pelvim, maxilam. Fuit ergo is puerorum sonus inarticulatus, quem a capris
nutricibus hauserant. Est quidem potentia loquendi hominis propria: loquela vero et sermo sui
naturalis non est, ut absque sonorum et verborum auditu et intelligentia in actum deduci
queat. Audientes enim sonos articulos articulate loqui discimus, inde
Phrygum idiom primum et naturale homini esse iudicavit. Atqui Beck etiam Germanis sonat
pistorem, pelvim, maxilam. Fuit ergo is puerorum sonus inarticulatus, quem a capris
nutricibus hauserant. Est quidem potentia loquendi hominis propria: loquela vero et sermo sui
naturalis non est, ut absque sonorum et verborum auditu et intelligentia in actum deduci
queat. Audientes enim sonos articulos articulate loqui discimus. Ideo surdi nati loqui
nesciunt, sed muti manent, quia sonos quos imitentur non audient. Solus Adam et Heva
loquebantur natura, quia Deus cum ipsa vita etiam sermonis usum adultis indiderat. Eaque
lingua hominum fuit prima, qua omenes ante diluvium et Noach cum suis in arca, et deinceps
usque ad confusionem usi fuerunt quaque post confusionem factam, in sola familia Peleg
permanit.'
In the seventeenth century, the tradition of Renaissance biblical exegesis continued to exert an important influence upon linguistic theorists. In his *Turris Babel* (1679), Athanasius Kircher explains the origin of language in terms of the Heber myth: that after the Babylonian Confusion the Adamic language of primitive Hebrew was preserved in its original pure state amongst the tribe of Heber. Other seventeenth-century writers, however, disagreed with this explanation. Brian Walton, bishop of Chester and editor of the English section of the *Biblia Sacra Polyglotta* (1657), pointed out that the righteousness traditionally attributed to the members of the tribe of Heber could equally well be applied to the other descendants of Noah. If this were the case, then *any* of the twelve tribes (not only that of Heber) might have been exempted from the Confusion, and their descendants might still be speaking the original language somewhere in the world. However, in the first Prolegomenon to the Polyglott Bible, Walton also mentions an alternative theory of the origin of language put forward by Diodorus Siculus and by Vitruvius:

Scribunt enim Diodorus Siculus in historia sua, et Vitruvius de Architect. l.2 c.1, homines primo more bestiarum in sylvis et cavernis vixisse, vocesque inarticulatas et confusas habuisse, donec per timorem congregati suam inter se formam cognoverit, et paulatim up from the goats with which they had suckled. Indeed, the power of speech is peculiar to man. Speech and conversation are not natural to him, so that without hearing or understanding sounds and words, he can be misled by the delivery. For through hearing articulate sounds, we learn to speak articulately. It is for this reason that those who have been born deaf are unable to speak, but instead remain dumb, since they cannot hear the sounds which they produce. Only Adam and Eve spoke according to nature, since God, together with life itself, also introduced the use of speech to the adults. And that language was the first of men, which everyone used before the Flood, and which Noah used with his family in the ark, and which was used by successive generations until the Confusion, and after the Confusion remained only in the family of Peleg], D. Pareus, *In Genesin Mosis Commentarius...*, p.955, col. A.

---

131 *Turris Babel*, p.194.

132 *Biblia Sacra Polyglotta*, ed. by B. Walton (London: T. Roycroft, 1657), p.18. Walton also states elsewhere the likelihood that the tribe of Heber was not alone in escaping the Confusion: "Probabile est Phalegi majores, Arphaxad, Sale, et Heber, non consiprasse cum reliquis in turris exstructione (maxime Heber, in cuius familia plerique linguam primum cum vera religione manisses credunt:) unde nec poenae de linguae mutatione obnoxii erant' [It is probable that Peleg's ancestors, Arphaxad, Salah, and Heber, did not conspire with the others in the building of the tower (most of all Heber, in whose family many believe the first language remained, together with the true religion), on which account they were spared the punishment of linguistic change], p.4. See also P. Cornelius, Languages in Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century Imaginary Voyages (Geneva: Droz, 1985), p.10, n.33.
verba flectando, et de rebus singulis mutua inter se signa fingendo, notam sibi fecerunt omnium interpretationem, et eiusmodi conventiculis sparsim per orbem factis: inde esse quod non omnes eandem linguam habuerint, cum singuli fortuito nomina fingerent. [...] 

Nec minus certum est, nullam linguam homini naturalem esse, sed ex instituto divino vel humano [...] tum primum in Creatione, tum reliquias in linguarum divisione post Diluvium ortas fuisse.133

Walton's sceptical treatment of the myth of Heber, and his willingness to consider alternative theories for the origins of human speech, characterised an empirical, proto-scientific approach which had been typical of a growing trend in the late sixteenth century.134

---

133 'For Diodorus Siculus writes in his history and Vitruvius in his De Architectura, II, that at first men lived like the animals in woods and caves, and that their voices were inarticulate and indistinct, until, after they had come together out of fear, it took shape among them, and little by little, by forming words and by making signs to each other about individual objects, they became familiar with the meaning of all of them, and this took place in scattered assemblies of men all over the world. This is why all communities do not have the same language, since each one thought up its names at random. [...]'

What is no less certain is that no language is natural to man; they arise either by divine or human institution, [...] firstly at the time of the Creation, then the remainder were born in the division of languages after the Flood', Biblia Sacra Polyglotta, pp.1-2.

The relevant passages in Diodorus Siculus and Vitruvius are as follows: 'And though the sounds which they made were at first unintelligible and indistinct, yet gradually they came to give articulation to their speech, and by agreeing with one another upon symbols for each thing which presented itself to them, made known among themselves the significance which was to be attached to each term. But since groups of this kind arose over every part of the inhabited world, not all men had the same language, insomuch as every group organised the elements of speech by mere chance. This is the explanation of the present existence of every conceivable kind of language, and, furthermore, out of these first groups to be formed came all the original languages of the world', Diodorus Siculus, Bibliotheca Historica, I, 8, 3-4, trans. by C.H. Oldfather and others (L.C.L., 1933), vol. 1, 28-31.

'Men, in the old way, were born like animals in forests and caves and woods, and passed their life feeding on the food of the fields. Meanwhile, once upon a time, in a certain place, trees, thickly crowded, tossed by storms and winds and rubbing their branches together, kindled a fire. Terrified by the raging flame, those who were about that place were put to flight. Afterwards when the thing was quieted down, approaching nearer they perceived that the advantage was great for their bodies from the heat of the fire. They added fuel, and thus keeping it up, they brought others; and pointing it out by signs they showed what advantages they had from it. In this concourse of mankind, when sounds were variously uttered by the breath, by daily custom they fixed words as they had chanced to come. Then, indicating things more frequently and by habit, they came by chance to speak according to the event, and so generated conversation with one another', Vitruvius, De Architectura, II, 1, trans. by F. Granger (L.C.L., 1931), vol. 1, 76-79.

Epicurus suggests that language developed from natural sounds caused by feelings and impressions. This proto-language was later cultivated deliberately: 'And so names too were not at first deliberately given to things, but men's natures according to their different nationalities had their own peculiar feelings and received their peculiar impressions, and so each in their own way emitted air formed into shape by each of these feelings and impressions, according to the differences made in the different nations by the places of their abode as well. And then later on by common consent in each nationality special names were deliberately given in order to make their meanings less ambiguous to one another and more briefly demonstrated. And sometimes those who were acquainted with them brought in things hitherto unknown and introduced sounds for them, on some occasions being naturally constrained to utter them, and on others choosing them by reasoning in accordance with the prevailing mode of formation, and thus making their meaning clear', Epicurus, Letter to Herodotus, 75-76, in Epicurus: The Extant Remains, trans. and ed. by C. Bailey (Oxford: Clarendon, 1926), pp.46-49.

These three theories of the origin of language may be compared to that of Lucretius (see below, n.278).

134 Various aspects of this 'démythification du langage' are discussed by Dubois in Mythe et Langage..., [chapter 2]: 'Quelques Bases d'une Science du Langage', pp.95-137.
The case for Hebrew as the original language of mankind is perhaps to be found most fully expounded in the writings of Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont (1614-1698), a seventeenth-century author whose linguistic theories owed much to Renaissance thinking. In common with many writers of the previous century, Helmont believed that Hebrew was the divine language spoken by God at the time of the Creation, and that the words of the Hebrew tongue therefore displayed an intimate correspondence with the objects or ideas which they denoted.\textsuperscript{135}

According to Helmont, this original form of Hebrew had been corrupted by the passage of time and the ignorance of men, with the result that this special power had been lost.\textsuperscript{136} Helmont claimed to have rediscovered this 'natural alphabet', and thought that his discovery would give access to the original meanings of Hebrew words, and consequently to a clearer understanding of reality itself:

\begin{quote}
Caeterum, si quis profunde meditaretur sonum et vim litterarum Hebraicarum, inveniret notitias non parvi momenti. Nam in Alphabetae naturae Hebraico explicatum est, figurae litterarum et soni indicant naturam rerum.\textsuperscript{137}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{135} Allison Coudert discusses Helmont's theories of language in the first section of her article 'Some Theories of a Natural Language from the Renaissance to the Seventeenth Century' in \textit{Studia Leibnitiana, Sonderheft 7, Magia Naturalis und die Entstehung der Modernen Naturwissenschaften, Symposium der Leibniz-Gesellschaft, Hannover, 14 und 15 November 1975} (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag Gmbh, [1978]), 56-118. This article is the main source for the material in this study on Helmont and his influences.

From the point of view of the linguistic theorist, the most relevant work of Helmont's is his \textit{Alphabeti vere naturalis Hebraici brevissima Delineatio quae simul methodum suppeditat, juxta quam qui surdi nati sunt sic informari possunt, ut non alios saltem loquentes intelligent, sed et ipsi ad sermones perveniant [...] } (Sulzbach: A. Lichtenthaler, 1657 [actually 1667]). Also of interest is his commentary on the first four chapters of Genesis, entitled \textit{Quaedam praemeditatae et consideratae Cogitationes super Quatuor priora Capita Libri Primi Moysis Genesis nominati} (Amsterdam: H. Westein, 1697). This latter work has been shown to have been written not by Helmont, but by Leibniz for Helmont (see Coudert, 58, n.6, and 106, n.207). In this study I shall refer to these two works as the Alphabet of Nature and Genesis respectively, following the practice adopted by Coudert.

\textsuperscript{136} \textit{Alphabet of Nature}, p.7.

\textsuperscript{137} 'Yet if anyone should contemplate profoundly the sound and the force of the Hebrew letters, he will meet with ideas of considerable importance. For as it is explained in the Hebrew Alphabet of Nature, the figures of the letters and their sounds indicate the nature of things', Helmont, \textit{Genesis}, p.2. Helmont also thought that once the 'true' meanings of Old Testament texts were rediscovered through studying the etymologies of words as they would appear in a natural alphabet, there would be less disagreement and division between Jews, Catholics, and Protestants (see Coudert, 58).
Helmont also applied these strongly Platonic theories of language to the individual characters of the Hebrew alphabet. These he considered to be hieroglyphs whose meanings might be deduced from their shapes and sounds. In his *Alphabet of Nature*, Helmont describes each Hebrew letter in turn, showing how its form is related to its signification, and how each character is in effect a picture representing the various movements of the tongue which must be made in order to pronounce it.\(^{138}\)

It will be seen from the full title of the *Alphabet of Nature*\(^ {139}\) that Helmont believed he would be able to use his 'natural alphabet' to help the deaf, not only by enabling them to understand the speech of others, but also by actually teaching them to speak. The importance of this practical aim within the context of the *Alphabet of Nature* is shown by two illustrations that are included in the 1667 edition of the work. The frontispiece depicts the author engaged in measuring the movements of his own mouth with the aid of a mirror and a pair of calipers; at the end of the work is a series of diagrams showing the positions of the vocal organs during the pronunciation of various sounds. Helmont thought that by studying and then imitating the mouth movements of a person speaking his 'natural alphabet', a deaf mute might himself gradually learn how to speak, even if he had been dumb since birth. Indeed, Helmont cites the example of a young deaf man who, by using this method, had learnt to combine letters and read within three weeks.\(^ {140}\)

The commentary by Helmont (or, more properly, by Leibniz) on those

---

\(^{138}\) ‘H. Ergone sanctissima Hebraeorum *Scriptura aliquam habet cum linguae humanae motibus similitudines*?
M. Illa ipsa in se nihil est aliud, quam variorum humanae linguae motuum artificiosa repraesentatio; [...] hoc ipso proprio loquendo illius natura consistit, nec in alio quoquam consistere potest’, *Alphabet of Nature*, p.6.

\(^{139}\) See above, n.135.

\(^{140}\) *Alphabet of Nature*, p.5. In the preface to his *Genesis*, Helmont states that his commentary is based upon a series of questions which had been put to him by a young nobleman who had been deaf and dumb from birth but who had managed to learn to speak by various 'natural methods', the first of which was by using Helmont's 'natural alphabet'. Other seventeenth-century developments in the theory of the education of the deaf and dumb are discussed in Appendix B of this study (see below, pp.198-197, 203).
verses of Genesis which are concerned with Adam’s naming of the animals in the Garden of Eden may help to explain Helmont’s conviction that it was possible to recreate such a natural language. The commentary shows that ‘Helmont’ believed in the concept of the word as a creative force: that is to say, that to impose a name upon a thing is to define its nature, to bring it into being. Before Adam gave names to the animals, those animals did not exist except as thoughts inside Adam’s head and in the mind of God:

Haec adducta sunt ad Adamum; nam omnia intra ipsum constituia sunt. Et quia nomina imponere est naturam dare, [...] indicantur cogitatione, qua Jehova Elohim in Adamo Adamum fecit, animalia omnia esse formata, quae conflavere corpus Adami, et proprius adhuc corpus Evae. 141

Helmont’s belief in an original, natural, and universal divinely-inspired language is based on the opening verses of St. John’s Gospel which identify language as being one with the Divinity before the universe existed. Helmont seems to have attached great importance to a literal interpretation of the Greek Logos, in addition to the more usual interpretation of it as a reference to Christ. For Helmont, creation was a process which began with ideas in the mind of God and ended when these ideas were articulated. This view is supported by Coudert’s observation that Helmont translates the first sentence of the book of Genesis as ‘In the Head, Elohim created the Heavens and the Earth’, instead of the normal reading ‘In the beginning’. 142

141 ‘These were brought to Adam; for all things were placed within him. And since to impose names on things is to give them their nature, [...] they are indicated by thought, by which Jehova Elohim made Adam in Adam, and caused all the animals to be formed, and these came together in Adam’s body, and more especially in the body of Eve’, Helmont, Genesis, p.77. See Coudert, 58-59: ‘Because Hebrew was the language of creation it was a natural language in which words indicated the essential natures of the things they both produced and represented. To substantiate this Helmont, like many other authors, referred to Adam’s naming the animals. Helmont interpreted this metaphorically. He did not believe that the animals existed apart from Adam until he named them; before that time they were simply ideas in Adam’s mind: “for all Things were placed within him.” The act of giving names to these ideas brought the animals into physical existence, “because to call Things by their Names, is to give them their Nature”’.

142 Helmont, Genesis, p.1. See also Coudert, 58-59 and n.6.
C. Cabbalistic Writings on Language

Although Helmont was writing in an age in which many attempts were made to formulate universal languages in which the sounds intimately reflected reality, the ideas which he puts forward in his *Alphabet of Nature* also form part of a tradition rooted in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Neoplatonic, Hermetic, and cabbalistic writings on language and symbolism.\(^{143}\) Hans Aarsleff testifies to the role played by cabbalistic ideas in theories concerning the origins of language:

The formulation that remained dominant far into the seventeenth century was based on the Old Testament, with a strong admixture of Jewish mysticism as found in the cabbalistic doctrines that became known in the west after the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, a year which for that reason marks a watershed in linguistic philosophy and speculation.\(^{144}\)

Helmont devoted the latter part of his life to the study of Hebrew and the Cabbala, and was the joint editor of the *Kabbala Denudata*, the most comprehensive collection of cabbalistic treatises in Latin to have been published until that time.\(^{145}\) Helmont's linguistic ideas were influenced by the writings of the Lurianic cabbalists, the followers of the radical Jewish scholar and philosopher Isaac Luria (1534–1572).\(^{146}\) These cabbalists, firm believers in the natural origin of names, held that every word of the Torah

---

143 Coudert, 57.


145 *Kabbala Denudata, seu Doctrina Hebraeorum Transcendentalis et metaphysica atque theologica Opus Antiquissimae Philosophiae Barbaricae Variis Specimini bus Refertissimum...* The Kabbala Denudata was published in two parts, each having two volumes. The titles of these parts are as follows: *Apparatus in Librum Sohar* (Sulzbach: A. Lichtenhals, 1677), and *Sohar Restitutus* (Frankfurt: J.D. Zunnerus, 1684).

contained some small particle of information about the nature of God. Moreover, they thought that the various Hebrew names for God mysteriously embodied the form of the deity. For this reason, and under the probable influence of the magical belief that to impose a name on a thing is to gain power over it, the cabbalists considered it blasphemous even to try to pronounce the Tetragrammaton (יהוה), because if this name were spoken, the true essence of God would be revealed.\footnote{Coudert, 68-69.}

Many of the theories of language put forward by the cabbalists originated from the Sefer Jesira (or Book of Creation), a name given to two esoteric treatises composed by an unidentified author in Palestine between the third and sixth centuries AD.\footnote{Coudert, 69.} In this work, which exhibits close links with Babylonian, Egyptian, and Hellenic mysticism, the letters of the Hebrew alphabet are considered as the basic elements from which God created the universe. The author explains that the twenty-two Hebrew letters may be divided into three groups according to their pronunciation, and that each letter may be made to represent a particular object or concept.\footnote{The first group comprised the three 'mother' letters, aleph, mem, and sin. These letters, which were thought to refer in a cabbalistic manner to the vowels in an older spelling of the Tetragrammaton, and thus to the 'soul' or 'spirit' of the word (the consonants were believed to denote the 'body' of a word), stood for the three elements, air, water, and fire. They might also represent the three principles of moderation, cold, and heat. The second group contained the twelve 'simple' letters, so-called because they may be pronounced in only one way. These letters, he, waw, zayin, het, tet, yod, lamed, nun, samek, ayin, sade, and qopp, stood for a wide variety of senses, actions, and emotions: vision, hearing, smell, speech, taste, intercourse, work, walking, anger, laughter, thought, and sleep. However, it was believed that by manipulating these twelve letters, God created the twelve signs of the Zodiac, the twelve months of the year, and twelve principal parts of the human body. The third group comprised the seven 'double' letters, so-called because they may be pronounced with either a hard or a soft sound. These letters, bet, gimel, dalet, kap, pe, res, and tau, stood for the principles of life: peace, knowledge, wealth, grace, fecundity, and power. These, being 'double', might also represent their opposites: death, war, ignorance, poverty, abomination, sterility, and servitude. God was thought to have used this group of letters to create the stars, the days of the year (or of the week), and the seven...}

Many of the theories of language put forward by the cabbalists originated from the Sefer Jesira (or Book of Creation), a name given to two esoteric treatises composed by an unidentified author in Palestine between the third and sixth centuries AD.\footnote{Coudert, 69.} In this work, which exhibits close links with Babylonian, Egyptian, and Hellenic mysticism, the letters of the Hebrew alphabet are considered as the basic elements from which God created the universe. The author explains that the twenty-two Hebrew letters may be divided into three groups according to their pronunciation, and that each letter may be made to represent a particular object or concept.\footnote{The first group comprised the three 'mother' letters, aleph, mem, and sin. These letters, which were thought to refer in a cabbalistic manner to the vowels in an older spelling of the Tetragrammaton, and thus to the 'soul' or 'spirit' of the word (the consonants were believed to denote the 'body' of a word), stood for the three elements, air, water, and fire. They might also represent the three principles of moderation, cold, and heat. The second group contained the twelve 'simple' letters, so-called because they may be pronounced in only one way. These letters, he, waw, zayin, het, tet, yod, lamed, nun, samek, ayin, sade, and qopp, stood for a wide variety of senses, actions, and emotions: vision, hearing, smell, speech, taste, intercourse, work, walking, anger, laughter, thought, and sleep. However, it was believed that by manipulating these twelve letters, God created the twelve signs of the Zodiac, the twelve months of the year, and twelve principal parts of the human body. The third group comprised the seven 'double' letters, so-called because they may be pronounced with either a hard or a soft sound. These letters, bet, gimel, dalet, kap, pe, res, and tau, stood for the principles of life: peace, knowledge, wealth, grace, fecundity, and power. These, being 'double', might also represent their opposites: death, war, ignorance, poverty, abomination, sterility, and servitude. God was thought to have used this group of letters to create the stars, the days of the year (or of the week), and the seven...}
universe into being by combining and arranging these letters in speech. Another explanation offered is that God mounted all the Hebrew letters on a revolving sphere, which he then rotated, obtaining some 231 combinations of paired characters (known as 'gates'). From these 'gates' God formed everything in the universe.150

One of the ways in which Helmont would have come into contact with the ideas contained in the Sefer Jesira was through a treatise entitled The Valley of Kings, which featured prominently in the Kabbala Denudata.151 The author of this treatise, the Lurianic cabbalist Napthali ben Jacob Bacharach, follows the Sefer Jesira by referring to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet as the 'building blocks' of the universe. He also emphasises other magical elements within the Sefer Jesira. For example, he describes how a three-year-old heifer may be created by combining one Hebrew letter with the others and with the Tetragrammaton.152 Coudert points out that a legend in the Talmud and the Midrash tells of two Rabbis who used to create a three-year-old calf using the Sefer Jesira, and proceeded to eat it on the Sabbath.153

'doors' of the human face.
The division of the Hebrew letters into groups in the Sefer Jesira is also described in J. Pistorius, De Arte Cabalisticae (Basel: S. Henricpetri, 1587), pp.669-672. See also Coudert, 69-70.

150 Coudert (76-77) points out the similarity between this sort of cabbalistic letter mysticism which uses revolving spheres and the Art invented by the Catalan mystic Raymond Lull (1235-1316). In its most common form, Lull's Art, which served both as a memory system and an investigative method, involved the combination of words and symbols placed on revolving concentric circles. Coudert also cites F.A. Yates's suggestion that this similarity was first noticed by the Italian scholar and Platonist philosopher Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494).

151 'Introductio pro meliori intellectu Libri Sohar e Scripta R. Naphthali Hirtz F. Jaacob Elchanan, quod vocat Vallem Regiam', Sohar Restitutus, vol. 1, 152-346. Although the author's name is given in the Sohar Restitutus as R. Naphthali Hirtz, F. Jaacob Elchanan, Gershom Scholem has identified the same author as Bacharach. See Scholem, Major Elements in Jewish Mysticism, p.259.

152 Sohar Restitutus, vol. 1, 220-221.

153 'R. Hanina and R. Oshaia spent every Sabbath eve in studying the "Book of Creation", by means of which they created a third-grown calf and ate it', The Babylonian Talmud, ed. by I. Epstein, [this section] trans. by H. Freedman (London: Soncino Press, 1935), Sanhedrin, I, 65B, p.446. See also pp.446-447, n.9: 'Rashi there states that the creation was performed by means of mystic combinations of the Divine Name, which does not come under the ban of witchcraft. Its basic idea was that the Creation was accomplished by means of the power inherent in these letters (cf. Rab's saying: 'Bezalel knew how to combine the letters by which heaven and earth were created', Berakoth 55a), and that this power could be utilised in further creation'. Coudert (71, n.60) also gives this reference. The reference for the
Such accounts of animals being created by means of the manipulation of Hebrew letters would seem to be closely related to the Jewish myth of the *golem*, or magical homunculus, which developed among communities of German Jews during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. According to the myth, the *golem*, the clay or wooden figure of a human being, could be mysteriously brought to life with the aid of the *Sefer Jesira*. Hebrew letters were combined to form a *Shem* (any one of the names of God), and this combination was written on a piece of paper and inserted either in the mouth or in the forehead of the *golem*, thus bringing it to life.\(^{154}\)

In another passage, Bacharach attributes special significance to the shapes of the Hebrew letters. He gives the example of the letter *pe* (פ), and says that since the shape of this character resembles a penitent man bowing his head and reaching out with his hands, it signifies the mystery of conversion.\(^{155}\) Bacharach also explains that man, the microcosm of the universe, was created from the Hebrew letters. In support of this assertion, he states that when the four characters of the Tetragrammaton (יוד, ה', ו, ב') were combined, it brought the universe into being.\(^{155}\) The place occupied by the legend of the *golem* within the Hasidic tradition of Judaism in medieval Germany is discussed by G. Scholem in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 99. According to Scholem, the oldest extant recipes for creating the *golem* comprise a mixture of letter magic and practices obviously intended to produce ecstatic states of consciousness. It seems that in its original form, the *golem* came to life only while the ecstatic experience of its creator lasted. The creation of the *golem* may be seen as a manifestation of the sublime experiences felt by the mystic while absorbed in the process of combining letters according to the instructions in the *Sefer Jesira*. Scholem adds that it was only in later centuries that popular legends attributed to the *golem* an existence outside the state of ecstatic consciousness. Scholem goes on to say that Chayim Bloch's *The Golem: Legends of the Ghetto of Prague*, trans. by H. Schneiderman (Vienna: 1925), which purports to be translated from a manuscript edited 'about 300 years ago', is in fact a modern fictional work composed by one Y. Rosenberg. See also Coudert, 78, n.91.

\(^{154}\) *The Jewish Encyclopaedia*, ed. by I. Singer (New York and London, Funk and Wagnalls, 1901, 1916, 1925), vol. 6, 36-37 (an article on the history of the *golem* legend in medieval times by J.D. Eisenstein). Eisenstein's article describes several examples of the creation of *golems*, including the best-known of all, that created by Rabbi Judah Lowe of Prague at the end of the sixteenth century.

\(^{155}\) In littera *Pe* latet mysterium conversionis. Sicut enim poenitentem oportet incurvare caput suum et pudefieri, atque extendere manus suas; ita punctum *Pe*, quum primum protrit, voluit ascenderc ultra locum suum, cumque non posset, iterum descendit incurvato capite deorsum intra se hoc modo 3', *Sohar Restitutus*, vol. 1, Cap. XLV, §1, 213. Coudert cites Pico della Mirandola, who in one of his sets of cabalistic conclusions states that the shapes of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet have veiled mystical meanings: 'Nullae sunt litterae in tota lege, quae in formis, conjuctionibus, separationibus, tortuositate, directione, defectu, superabundantia, minoritate, maioritate, coronatione, clausura, apertura,... secretas non manifestent', Pico della Mirandola, *Opera Omnia* (reprint Georg Olms Verlags-buchhandlung, 1969), p.82.
waw, he) are arranged vertically, they form the stick-figure of a man.\textsuperscript{156}

The notion that tangible objects could be created through the manipulation of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet is therefore present not only in treatises written by Jewish cabalists.\textsuperscript{157} Moreover, many Christian Neoplatonists and Hermetic writers of the Renaissance were also exposed to the ideas about Hebrew that were to be found in the Cabbala. These theories were taken up by a variety of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century writers, including Ficino (1433-1499), Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), Johannes Reuchlin (1455-1522), Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535), and Guillaume Postel (1510-1581).\textsuperscript{158}

The French mystic Guillaume Postel had translated the \textit{Sefer Jesira} into Latin and had written a commentary upon it even before the work had first been printed in Hebrew.\textsuperscript{159} According to Postel, Hebrew words so closely reflected reality that the name and the real nature of the object were inextricably linked.\textsuperscript{160} In common with Helmont over a hundred

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{156} 'Veniri non potest ad intellectum creationis hominis nisi per mysterium literarum [...] Stantque in figura similitudinis humanae, cum omni membrorum perfectione, ut mas et fœmina, quamvis ibi nihil corporei, quod absit!', \textit{Sohar Restitutus}, vol. I, Cap. LIII, §§1-2, 217. Coudert (71) gives the following illustration, showing that this is indeed the case:

\begin{verbatim}
\end{verbatim}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{157} Coudert (71-73) cites two further occurrences of this mystical idea in works by other Lurianic cabalists which were included in the \textit{Kabbala Denudata}. In his \textit{De Revolutionibus Animarum (Concerning the Revolution of Souls)} Hayim Vital (1543-1620) explains how honest and devout men can create angels and spirits through prayer. H. Vital, '...de Revolutionibus Animarum... ex operibus R. Jitzchak Lorjensis Germani', in \textit{Sohar Restitutus}, vol. 2, 458-459. In his treatise \textit{The Gate of the Heavens}, Abraham Cohen Herrera (d.1635) states that the universe was formed through combinations of Hebrew letters. Herrera establishes a connection between the letters and the creation and characteristics of the first man, the microcosm, and those aspects of God which He revealed through creation. \textit{Apparatus in Librum Sohar}, vol. 2, 118.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{158} See Coudert, 74-91.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{159} G. Postel, \textit{Abrahami Patriarchae Liber Jezirah, sive Formationis Mundi...} (Paris: G. Postel, 1552). The first Hebrew edition of the \textit{Sefer Jesira} was published by Jaacob ben Naphtali in Mantua in 1562.

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{160} "Sic loquens fecit omnes creaturam et omne verbum nomen unum. Ideo nec nomen a creatura, nec creatura a nomine potest separari, sed ab altero alterum movetur. In nomine res exponitur, ut ad finem et proprietates. In re autem movetur, ut in suum propriatum locum. Nam imposito per verbum Dei nomine rebus praecognitis res in se esse cooperunt", G. Postel, \textit{Liber Jezirah...}, section 19, fol. Eii'. Coudert also cites a passage of this same work in which Postel describes having had a vision in which he saw all the
years later, Postel thought that, because of its special characteristics, the Hebrew language could hold the key to universal religious unity, for if all men were to learn to speak it, they would obtain true insights into the nature of God and of all creation, and the cause of all argument would then disappear.

Theories concerning the mystical power of language formed a central theme of the wider Renaissance debate about the legitimacy of natural magic. Neoplatonic and Hermetic thinkers who advocated the use of 'good' natural magic contended that words contained forces which could be harnessed in order to achieve desirable magical effects. Those who opposed this form of magic did so mainly on the grounds that such activities were diabolically inspired and constituted a threat to their religious beliefs.¹⁶¹ The argument over the efficacy of the magical power of language turned upon the traditional controversy over the natural or conventional origin of names: opponents of natural magic took the view that words could not contain mystical powers. This belief was based upon the theory that language was a system based upon arbitrary human imposition and convention.¹⁶²

A typical Renaissance magical theory of language is expounded by Cornelius Agrippa in a chapter of his *De Occulta Philosophia* (1533) entitled 'On the Virtue of Proper Names'.¹⁶³ According to Agrippa, almost all men

---


¹⁶² Coudert, 74.

¹⁶³ H.C. Agrippa, *De Occulta Philosophia* (Cologne: J. Soter[?], 1533), I, chapter LXX ('De Virtute Propriorum Nominum'), pp.90-91. See also Walker, *The Ancient Theology*, p.101, n.1. In his *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, Walker warns the reader that one cannot be certain of Agrippa's views on magic, because he appears to retract the ideas expressed in the *De Occulta Philosophia*. Agrippa did not publish the *De Occulta Philosophia*, which he completed in 1510, until 1533. Three years before this, in his *De Vanitate Scientiarum* (1530), Agrippa had issued a retraction of the *De Occulta Philosophia*, together with a reformed discussion of various kinds of magic. However, Walker states that one should be wary of attaching undue weight to this retraction, not only because Agrippa proceeded to publish a work which he had publicly renounced, but also because the *De Vanitate* takes the form of a rhetorical set-piece, and that much of the destructive scepticism contained in it is intended to be understood as part of a rhetorical argument. In addition, the formal retraction of the
testify that the proper names of things are necessary for the practice of magic, for such names contain some of the 'natural power' of the things to which they refer. Agrippa attributes to 'the Platonists' the view that this power is a type of 'life-force' that is brought forth when the names are spoken, a force which also lies latent within the written word.\textsuperscript{164} He also explains that everything in the universe gives off vapours or spirits which influence their surroundings, and that when words are impressed upon this spirit it is transformed into a rational and independent being which is able to produce transitive effects upon other objects.\textsuperscript{165} According to the magicians, names are a form of all-pervading emanation which embodies the properties of the thing signified. Agrippa cites Scriptural authorities in order to justify his theories:


\textsuperscript{164} Coudert observes (82) that at this point Agrippa quotes almost verbatim from Ficino: 'Dicunt iccirco Platonici in hac ipsa voce, sive verbo, sive nomine ipsa suis articulis formato ipsam vis rei sub significationis forma quasi vitam aliquam lateret: primo ab ipsa mente quasi per femina rerum conceptam, porro per voces sive verba quasi partum aeditam, postremo etiam scriptis servatum.'

\textsuperscript{165} 'Now the instrument of the inchanters is a most pure harmonical spirit, warm breathing, bringing with it motion, affection and signification, composed of its parts, endued with sense, and conceived by reason. By the quality therefore of this spirit, and by the celestial similitude thereof, besides those things which have already been spoken of, verses also from the opportunity of time, receive from above most excellent vertues, and indeed more sublime, and efficacious than spirits, and vapors exhaling out of the vegetable life, out of herbs, roots, gums, aromaticall things, and fumes, and such like. And therefore Magicians inchanting things, are wont to blow, and breath upon them the words of the vers, or to breath in the vertue with the spirit, that so the whole vertue of the soul be directed to the thing inchantted, being disposed for the receiving the said vertue...', Agrippa, \textit{De Occulta Philosophia}, trans. by John French as \textit{Three Books of Occult Philosophy}, (see above, n.164), p.156. This passage is cited by Coudert, 83.
Hence Magicians say, that proper names of things are certain rays of things, every where present at all times, keeping the power of things, as the essence of the thing signified, rules, and is discerned in them, and know things by them, as by proper, and living Images. For as the great operator doth produce divers species, and particular things by the influences of the Heavens, and by the Elements, together with the vertues of Planets; so according to the properties of the influences proper names result to things, and are put upon them by him who numbers the multitude of the Stars, calling them all by their names, of which names Christ in another place speaks, saying, Your names are Written in Heaven. Adam therefore that gave the first names to things, knowing the influences of the Heavens, and properties of all things, gave them all names according to their natures, as it is written in Genesis, where God brought all things that he had created before Adam, that he should name them, and as he named any thing, so the name of it was, which names indeed contain in them wonderful powers of the things signified. Every voice therefore that is significative, first of all signifies by the influence of the Celestiall harmony; Secondly, by the imposition of man, although oftentimes otherwise by this, then by that. But when both significations meet in any voice or name, which are put upon them by the said harmony or men, then that name is with a double vertue, viz. naturall, and arbitrary, made most efficacious to act, as oft as it shall be uttered in due place, and time, and seriously with an intention exercised upon the matter rightly disposed, and that can naturally be acted upon by it.166

Agrippa's views are an overtly magical expression of the belief that a language, in both its written and spoken forms, could indicate reality. Such beliefs, as applied to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, had long been a standard element of Neoplatonic and cabbalistic thinking.167

---

166 Hinc dicunt Magi propria rerum nomina esse quosdam rerum radios ubique semper praesentes, rerumque vis servantes, quatenus essentia rei signatae in ipsis dominat et discernit, atque res per illa tamque per proprias et vivas imagines agnoscantur. Sicut enim ex coelorum influxibus et elementis cum virtutibus planetarum summus opifex producit diversas species et res particulares: sic secundum earundem influxuum et influentium proprietates propria rebus nomina resultant et imposita sunt ab eo, qui numerat multitudines stellarum omnibus eis nomina vocans, de quibus nominibus alibi dicit Christus: nomina vestra scripta sunt in coelis. Hos itaque coelestium influens rerumque singularum proprietates cognoscens protoplastes, nomina rebus secundum eorum quiditates impositis sic scriptum est in Genesi: quia adduxit deus cuncta quae creaverat coram Adam ut nominaret illa: et sicut ipse vocavit rem, hoc est nomen illius, quem quidem nomina profecto admirandos in se rerum significatorum continent vires. Omnis itaque vox significativa primo significat per influxum harmoniam coelestis, secundario per impositiones hominis, licet frequentius aliter et aliter per hanc atque per illam: quando aut in aliqua voce sive nomine concurrent utresque significations, quae ab harmonia, et quae ab hominibus impositate sunt, tunc geminata virtute, naturali videlicet et voluntaria, nomen illud ad agendum redditur efficacissimum quoties debitis locis et temporibus et solemnitate cum intentione exacta in materias dispositam, et a natura sua ab illo patibilibus fuerit colocatum. Agrippa, De Occulta Philosophia, I, 70, translated by John French as Three Books of Occult Philosophy (see above, n.164), pp.153-154.

In the remainder of this chapter on names, Agrippa cites Philostratus's account of a Roman woman who had died on the day she was married, and who was brought back to life when Apollonius enquired her name, and recited a magical formula. Agrippa also mentions that it was the custom in the Roman army that before laying siege to an enemy town, they would first ascertain the true name of that town, so that they could call on its gods to abandon it, and could curse the town in their name, thus ensuring an easier victory.

167 Coudert, 114.
Seventeenth-century writers such as Comenius, John Wilkins and Leibniz who sought to create a universal language were also influenced by the tradition of occult ideas about symbols and sounds, but their schemes for a 'real character' no longer expressed openly the mystical beliefs which had coloured the linguistic theories of the previous century.\textsuperscript{168} Helmont is an exception, for in his \textit{Alphabet of Nature} (1667) he takes for granted concepts which by this time had become controversial. Helmont's mystical theories of language were founded upon the notion that beneath the transient world of appearances there existed a divinely-ordered reality, a view which had already been challenged by nominalist philosophers such as Hobbes (and later Locke), who asserted that all human knowledge is derived from sense impressions and from the signs which men arbitrarily assign to them.\textsuperscript{169} By the end of the seventeenth century, Helmont's \textit{Alphabet of Nature} seemed a curious, out-dated work, and his ideas about the shapes and sounds of Hebrew letters were being attacked both by biblical scholars and by theorists who believed that language was based upon convention.\textsuperscript{170}

\* \* \*

The questions of whether language is natural to mankind, and of whether any specific language may be identified as the natural human tongue were discussed by Renaissance authors in varied contexts. Aristotle, seeking to establish whether the noises made by the young of animals were inherited or learnt during early life, had observed that the song of young birds which had been reared away from their nests was different from that


\textsuperscript{169} Coudert, 91-92.

\textsuperscript{170} Coudert, 113-114.
of their parents. The myth of King Psammeticus, widely cited by sixteenth-century authors, tells of a linguistic experiment involving the isolation of human infants. The Psammeticus myth describes an attempt to gain access to what was seen as man’s original and natural linguistic state. It relies on the assumption that similarities exist between the first stages of language acquisition in individuals and the early development of language in mankind.

Renaissance commentaries on the principal biblical texts which relate to language display a strong Platonic influence. The function of the Word of God in the process of creation is emphasised, and great interest is shown both in Adam’s role as the divinely-inspired imposer of names, and in the precise nature and implications of the Babylonian Confusion. Many sixteenth-century writers and biblical commentators believed that the original language of man had been Hebrew, and several theories were put forward to explain how this original tongue had survived, and how it was related to the Hebrew spoken in the sixteenth century. Platonic influence is also evident in the linguistic writings of the cabbalists, many of whom believed that by manipulating the letters of the Hebrew alphabet it was possible to use the mystical forces latent within the language to create real, physical objects.
Signs and Other Non-Verbal Communication

Signs had considerable importance in many different branches of Renaissance culture. The Renaissance emblem, for example, is derived from both the literary and the art-historical traditions; there are strong links between sixteenth-century interest in the education of the deaf and dumb, in their sign language, and Renaissance medicine; gestures had long been thought to provide an indication of a person’s state of mind. Signs, which in most contexts were conceived as being essentially similar to words, were subject to the same classifications as words, that is to say they were thought to signify either naturally or through human imposition and convention. Yet unlike words, which, under the influence of an Erasmian adage were thought of as 'the lightest of things' (levissima res), signs were generally believed to act as solid and reliable vehicles of truth.

Before coming to a consideration of signs in the work of Renaissance authors, it will be useful to give a brief analysis of the sign theory put forward by St Augustine. Throughout the Middle Ages, Augustine was regarded as the most profound and authoritative of the patristic writers.

---

By adapting the techniques of classical rhetoric to the demands of Christian theology, he produced a theory of verbal signification which occupies a position of fundamental importance within his own writing, and which influenced western thinking in this domain for almost a thousand years.\footnote{Colish, \textit{The Mirror of Language}, p.7.}

\section{St Augustine's Theory of Signs}

Augustine believed that signs acted as an intermediary in the cognitive process through which man acquires an understanding of God. He was the first writer to develop a theory which was chiefly concerned with verbal signs: he discusses other types of sign only in order to illustrate his doctrine of verbal signification.\footnote{Colish, p.45. Colish emphasises (pp.16-19) that Augustine's theory of cognition through speech has a bearing on every facet of his theology. Augustine's sign theory forms the structural basis of his \textit{Confessions}, a work in which the author establishes a close connection between his self-awareness and understanding of his surroundings and his ability to communicate and to express himself. In this work, Augustine interprets the moral and intellectual shortcomings of his early manhood in terms of the misuse of his linguistic skills. In the spiritual domain, Augustine speaks of the crisis which led to his own conversion to Christianity in terms of a rejection of a sterile, ill-founded rhetoric in favour of an ability to use language in the service of God and mankind.}

In his \textit{De Doctrina Christiana}, Augustine defines a sign as 'a thing which causes us to think of something beyond the impression made upon the senses by the thing itself'.\footnote{\textit{Signum est enim res, praeter quam ingerit sensibus, aliud aliquid ex se faciens in cognitionem venire'}, \textit{De Doctrina Christiana}, II, 1, 1; in \textit{PL}, 34, col. 35.} Augustine gives the following examples of signs: the tracks left by an animal, which indicate that a certain type of animal has passed by; smoke, which often denotes the presence of a fire; the voice of a man or animal, which conveys the emotions of the being who is speaking or making the noise; and the sound of the bugle, which tells soldiers in battle whether they should advance, retreat, or perform some...
other manoeuvre.\textsuperscript{176}

Augustine divides signs into two categories: natural (\textit{signa naturalia}) and conventional (\textit{signa data}).\textsuperscript{177} Natural signs, he says, are those which are not intended to make known anything beyond the fact of their own existence, but which do signify because men have learnt through experience to associate the sign with a particular object or idea. Augustine states that, of the examples given above, smoke and animal tracks are signs of this type. Conventional signs are those which all animate beings exchange with one another in order to communicate their thoughts and feelings, or their intellectual activity.\textsuperscript{178}

Augustine states that signs are not used for any other purpose than that of communication, of transferring thoughts from the mind of the sign-giver to that of the sign-receiver. Even the signs which are described in the Bible as having been given to man by God (\textit{signa divinitus data}) are communicated to us through the minds of the men who wrote the Holy Scriptures.\textsuperscript{179} Augustine adds that animals also use signs to communicate

\textsuperscript{176} \textit{...sicut vestigio viso transisse animal, cuius vestigium est, cogitamus, et fumo viso ignem subesse cognoscimus, et voce animantis audita affectionem animi eius advertimus, et tuba sonante milites vel progradi se vel regredi et si quid aliud pugna postulat oportere noverunt,' De Doctrina Christiana, II, 1; in PL, 34, col. 35.}


\textsuperscript{178} \textit{Signorum igitur alia sunt naturalia, alia data. Naturalia sunt, quae sine voluntate atque ullo appetitu significandi, praeter se aliquld aliud ex se cognoscisi faciunt, sicuti est fumus significans ignem. Non enim volens significare id facit, sed rerum expertarum animadversione et notatone cognoscitur ignem subsese etiam si fumus solus appareat. Sed et vestigium transitunt in animantis ad hoc genus pertinet [...] Data vero signa sunt quae sibi quaeque viventia invicem dant ad demonstrandos, quantum possunt, motus animi sui vel sensa aut intellecta quaelibet,' De Doctrina Christiana, II, 1-2; in PL, 34, cols. 36-37.

\textsuperscript{179} 'Nec uilla causa est nobis significandie, id est signi dandi, nisi ad deproemendum et trajiciendum in alterius animum id quod animo gerit is qui signum dat. Horum igitur signorum genus, quantum ad homines attinet, considerare atque tractare statuius; quia et signa divinitus data, quae in Scripturis sanctis continentur, per homines nobis indicata sunt, qui ea conscripsisset.' [Nor is there any reason for us to give a sign except to take out and convey into someone else's mind what he who gives the sign has in his own mind. We determine, then, to consider and discuss this type of signs in as far as men are concerned with it, since even the signs which have been given by God, and which are contained in the Scriptures, were made known to us through the men who wrote them], De Doctrina Christiana, 11, 2-3; in PL, 34, cols. 36-37.

J.A. Mazzeo believes that in this last remark, Augustine is referring to the belief that God alone may confer significance upon things. Mazzeo repeats Augustine's example of a stone, which 'is a sign only if Jacob sleeps on it in the particular circumstances in which
with one another and to make known their desires. He gives the example of the cockerel, which, on finding some seed, will give a call (signum vocis) so that the hen bird may come and share its food.\textsuperscript{180}

In the same work, Augustine discusses the relationship between things and signs within the context of biblical exegesis. All teaching, he says, is concerned with either things or signs, but all knowledge of things is gained through signs. In the strict sense, a thing is never used as a sign to denote another thing. However, this rule does not apply to allegorical passages found in the Scriptures. Augustine demonstrates this exception with the support of three examples taken from the Old Testament, which show things being used to signify other things. One of these examples is that of the log which Moses cast into the bitter water of Marah so that the Israelites could drink.\textsuperscript{181} Although this log was, of course, a thing, it was also a sign of God's power as the healer of suffering. Words are also things, says Augustine, and they too are always used as signs of other things. Therefore, although all signs are also things, not all things are also signs.\textsuperscript{182}

Augustine makes further distinctions between signs, according to their mode of signification. He explains that a sign may signify in two ways: as a sign 'properly so called' (signum proprium), or as a sign 'with transferred sense' (signum translation), depending on the extent to which

\begin{quote}
God made him sleep on it in order to make the event a sign', J.A. Mazzoe, 'St Augustine's Rhetoric of Silence...', 6.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{180} 'Habent etiam bestiae quaedam inter se signa quibus produnt appetitum animi sui. Nam et gallus gallinaceus reperto cibo dat signum vovis gallinae, ut accurrat', De Doctrina Christiana, II, 2; in PL, 34, col. 36.

\textsuperscript{181} Exodus 15. 23-26.

\textsuperscript{182} 'Quid res, quid signa.
Omnis doctrina vel rerum est vel signorum, sed res per signa discuntur. Proprie autem nunc res appellavi, quae non ad significandum aliquid adhibentur, sicuti est lignum, lapis, pecus, atque huiusmodi caetera. Sed non illud lignum quod in aquas amaras Moysen misisse legimus, ut amaritudine carerent (Exod. XV, 25). [...] Hae nunc autem alia signa sunt rerum. Sunt autem alia signa quorum omnis usus in significando est, sicuti sunt verba. Nemo enim utitur verbis, nisi aliquid significandi gratia. Ex quo intellegitur quid appellem signa; res eas videlicet quae ad significandum aliquid adhibentur. Quamobrem omne signum etiam res aliqua est; quod enim nulla res est, omnino nihil est; non autem omnis res etiam signa est', De Doctrina Christiana, I, 2, 2; in PL, 34, cols. 19-20.
the sign retains its original character as a thing when it assumes the additional role of a sign. These two classifications therefore embody the distinction between literal and figurative signs.

Augustine includes words in the category of *signa propria*, because their original character may be considered as a part of their significative function. In theory, the category of *signa translata* includes various non-verbal signs which are conceived in verbal terms because they are treated as metaphors having transferred meaning. In practice, however, things which signify in this way do retain much of their original character while performing the role of a sign, with the result that the reader is aware that they are also things. An example of this type of sign in Scripture may be found in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, where Paul refers to a commandment given by Moses: 'For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?' Here, Paul is using the word 'ox', which already has a significance of its own, to refer to the preacher of the Gospel.

In the second book of the *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine states that while many of the signs which man uses to communicate are related

---

183 An example of this is the word 'ox', when it is used simply in order to signify the animal in question: 'Sunt autem signa vel propria, vel translata. Propria dicuntur, cum his rebus significandis adhibentur, propter quas sunt instituta; sicut dicimus bovem, cum intelligimus pecus, quod omnes nobiscum latinae linguae homines hoc nomine vocant', *De Doctrina Christiana*, II, 10; in PL, 34, col. 42.

Augustine comments upon the versatility of words as signs in the dialogue *De Magistro*: 'Videtur ergo mihi loquendo nos aut verba ipsa signare verbis, aut alia signa, velut gestum cum dicimus bovem, aut litterarum; nam his duobus verbis quae significantur, nihilominus signa sunt: aut aliquid quod signum non sit, velut cum dicimus, Lapis; hoc enim verbum signum est, nam significat aliquid, sed id quod eo significatur, non continuo signum est.' [Now it appears to me that when we speak we use words to signify either words themselves or other signs, as, for instance, when we say 'gesture' or 'letter' (because the things which are signified by the words 'gesture' and 'letter' are also signs), or we signify something else which is not a sign, as is the case when we say 'stone', for this word is a sign, for it signifies something, but in this case that which is signified is not in turn a sign], *De Magistro*, VII, 7; in PL, 32, col. 1199.

184 I Corinthians 9. 9.

185 'Translata sunt, cum et ipsa res quas propriis verbis significamus, ad aliud aliquid significandum usurpantur: sicut dicimus bovem, et per has duas syllabas intelligimus pecus quod isto nomine appellari solet; sed rursus per illud pecus intelligimus evangelistam, quem significavit Scriptura, interpretante Apostolo, dicens, Bovem triturantes non infrenabit (I Cor. IX, 9)', *De Doctrina Christiana*, II, 10; in PL, 34, col. 42.
to the sense of hearing, and some to the sense of sight, very few are related to the other three senses. He applies the term *verba visibilia* to those signs which are received through the sense of sight, of which he provides the following examples: gestures of the hands; the movements of the limbs of actors (who by this means give signs to those who know how to interpret them, and who seem to converse using only their eyes); and military standards, which communicate the will of the leaders of an army in battle.\(^{186}\) There are also auditory signs, such as the notes of a military bugle or pipes, but there are very few of this type of sign compared to the large number of words in existence.

Augustine goes on to give three instances, all taken from episodes in the life of Christ, which illustrate the use of signs that are received through the other three senses. These are: firstly, the smell of the ointment which Mary rubbed on Jesus's feet at Bethany (John 12. 3 and 7); secondly, the taste of the bread and wine consumed in the sacrament of the Eucharist (Luke 22. 19-20); and thirdly, the woman who was cured of haemorrhages when she touched Jesus's cloak (Matthew 9. 21). Here again, however, Augustine emphasizes that the number of words which men use to communicate is far greater than the number of signs of this type in existence, and that while such signs could easily be expressed in words, the reverse would not be possible.\(^{187}\)

---

\(^{186}\) This passage, in which Augustine refers to gestures of the hands, limbs, and eyes, may have influenced Montaigne's more detailed lists of the various meanings which may be communicated using movements of the eyes, hands, and head (*Essais*, p.454). See below, p.138 and n.280.

\(^{187}\) 'Inter signa principatum obtinent verba.
Signorum igitur quibus inter se homines sua sensa communicant, quaedam pertinens ad oculorum sensum, pleraque ad aurium, paucissima ad caeteros sensus. [...] Et quidam motu manum pleraque significant: et histriones omnium membrorum motibus dan signa quaedam scientibus, et cum oculis eorum quasi fabulantur; et vexilla draconesque militares per oculos insinuant voluntatem ducum: et sunt haec omnia quasi quaedam verba visibilia. Ad aures autem quae pertinent, ut dixi, plura sunt, in verbis maxime. Nam et tuba, et tibia, et cithara, dant plerumque non solum suavem, sed etiam significantem sonum. Sed haec omnia signa verbis comparata paucissima sunt. [...] Nam et odore unguenti Dominus, quo perfusi sunt pedes eius, signum aliquot dedit (Joan. XII, 3 et 7); et Sacramento corporis et sanguinis sui praegusto, significavit quod voluit (Luc. XXII, 19, 20); et cum mulier tangendo fimbriam vestimenti eius, salva facta est, nonnihil significat (Matth. IX, 21): sed innumerabilis multitude signorum, quibus suas cogitationes homines exercunt, in verbis constituta est. Nam illa signa omnia quorum genera breviter attigi, potui verbis annuntiare; verba vero illis signis nullo modo possent', *De Doctrina Christiana*, II, 3, 4; in PL, 34, cols. 37-35.

In his *Summa Theologica*, St. Thomas Aquinas comments upon Augustine's theories about
In the third book of the *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine applies the distinctions which he has drawn between things and signs to the interpretation of the Sacrament. He makes the observation that any man who uses or worships any signifying object without knowing what it signifies is in bondage to that sign. The free and spiritual man, on the other hand, venerates a sign because he understands its signifying power and is aware of the things or ideas to which that sign refers. The prophets and patriarchs of the Old Testament were such people, for although they could not have known the significance to the life of Christ of the signs which they witnessed, they were nevertheless able to understand that these events did point to something beyond themselves, and to treat them accordingly. Nowadays, continues Augustine, the meanings of Old Testament signs of this sort are clear to us, and have been replaced by a set of signs established by Christ himself - signs such as baptism and the Eucharist, which, though most sacred, are easy to perform, and can also be venerated by the intellect. At this point, Augustine again warns that those who make use of such signs must be aware of their power of signification, because to mistake such signs for the things that they signify is to fall into bondage to them, and to misinterpret them is to be led into error. In this respect it is better to remain ignorant of the meanings of useful, efficacious signs such as the Sacrament than not to realise that they do have higher, allegorical meanings.\^188

\^188 *Quis signorum servitute presitutur, quis non. Baptismus. Eucharistia. Sub signo enim servit qui operatur aut veneratur aliquem rem significantem, nesciens quid significet: qui vero aut operatur, aut veneratur utile signum divinitus institutum, cuius vim significacionisque intellegit, non hoc veneratur quod videtur et transit, sed illud potius quo talla cuncta referenda sunt. Talis autem homo spiritualis et liber est, etiam tempore servitutis, quo carnalibus animis nondum oportet signa illa revelari quorum judo...
Augustine's theories of signification were based upon a verbalistic concept of allegory. These theories, which were of fundamental importance to Augustine's analogical approach to biblical exegesis, were disseminated in his writings, exerting a profound influence upon the literature and art of the medieval period.¹⁸⁹
II. Signs in the Work of Rabelais

Non-verbal signs of many different types play an important role in several major episodes in Rabelais's Chronicles. When Rabelais speaks about signs, he is often referring to gestures: indeed, he is concerned that his readers should remember that gestures are a type of sign, for this allows him to tap into a rich vein of references and multiple meanings which apply to the much wider field of meaning covered by the word 'sign'.

A. The Sign Language Debate with Thaumaste

One of the first episodes in Rabelais's Chronicles in which signs play an important part is the debate between Panurge and Thaumaste in *Pantagruel*. Before the debate, Thaumaste discusses with Pantagruel how it will be conducted. Thaumaste says that he wishes to argue by means of signs alone, 'car les materies sont tant ardues, que les parolles humaines ne seroient suffisantes à les explicquer à mon plaisir.' Pantagruel himself later declares that he too favours this method of debate:

Et loue grandement la manière d'arguer que as proposée, c'est assavoir par signes, sans parler: car ce faisant, toy et moy nous entendrons, et serons hors de ces frappemens de mains, que font ces sophistes quand on argue, alors qu'on est au bon de l'argument.

Pantagruel, having spent the night consulting his books on the subject of

---

190 Screech, *Rabelais*, p.413. The material in this section is drawn from this work.

191 *Pantagruel*, p.104.

192 *Pantagruel*, p.105.
signs, codes and magic, agrees to leave to Panurge the task of debating with the Englishman. The sign language debate between Panurge and Thaumaste is primarily a comic episode, in which the humour is derived mainly from the confusion of two types of sign. Panurge's rude and obscene gestures are signs whose natural meanings are evident to the reader, just as they would be evident to someone watching the debate. Thaumaste, however, is intent on searching for secret wisdom, and interprets these signs as if they were cabbalistic symbols with esoteric, conventionally-imposed meanings. The laughter at the expense of Thaumaste is sympathetic, yet it also makes a moral point. Rabelais seems to have created Thaumaste as a gullible character in order to show how the search for arcane revelation, whether through the cabbala or by other means, can hold dangers for the unwary, and should be approached with caution.

The debate between Thaumaste and Panurge ends with an indication of the wide field of meaning covered by the word 'sign'. Thaumaste admits that he must bow to Panurge's superior knowledge, and, taking his hat off to the assembled crowd, announces, 'Seigneurs, à ceste heure, puis-je bien dire le mot évangélique: Et ecce plusquam Solomon hic.

The Latin phrase, which is taken from the gospels of Matthew and Luke, is that used by Christ to refer to himself, in his answer to the scribes and Pharisees who had asked him for a sign:

---

193 Screech, *Rabelais*, p.87. Thaumaste's name is appropriate to his naive quest for revelation through the language of gestures. It is a gallicised form of the Greek Ἰαμαστός (thaumastos), a magician or worker of wonders. This word is derived from τὸ θαύμα (thauma), which could mean a wonder, a miracle, or amazement - often that state of amazement which was regarded as the first stage in the acquisition of knowledge. Thaumaste's name also contains the word 'thau' - the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet which traditionally has strong associations with cabbalistic magic. In the *Tiers Livre*, at the beginning of his sign language debate with the deaf mute Nazdecabre, Panurge makes a gesture to signify the letter Tau (*TL*, p.145). See below, p.102.


195 *Pantagruel*, p.113.
Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.

But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:

[...]

The queen of the south shall rise up in judgement with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.\textsuperscript{196}

B. Nello de Gabriellis and Nazdecabre: The Signs of the Deaf and Dumb

Another episode in Rabelais's Chronicles in which signs figure prominently is the consultation of deaf mutes in the \textit{Tiers Livre}. Chapter XIX begins with a short speech by Pantagruel about the role played by signs in oracular prediction in ancient times:

L'esprit maling vous seduyt, mais escoutez. J'ay leu qu'on temps passé les plus veritables et secrs oracles n' estoient ceulx que par escript on baillot, ou par parolle on proferoit. Maintes fois y ont fait erreur ceulx voire qui estoient estimez fins et ingenieux, tant a cause des amphibologies, equivocues et obscurites des mots, que de la briefveté des sentences. Pourtant feut Apollo, dieu de vaticination, surnommé Doëfico. Ceulx que l'on exposit [par gestes et] par signes estoient les plus veritables et certains estimez. [...] Usons de ceste maniere, et par signes, sans parler, conseil prenez de quelque mut.

- J'en suys d'advis (respondit Panurge).
- Mais (dist Pantagruel) il conviendroit que le mut feust sourd de sa naissance et par consequent mut. Car il n'est mut plus naif

\textsuperscript{196}Matthew 12. 38-39, 42; similarly in Luke 11. 29-31 (although Luke is alone in referring explicitly to the Son of Man as being 'a sign [... to this generation', v.30). Christ's words are themselves a reference to the meeting between King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, described in I Kings 10. 1-13 and also in Chronicles 9. 1-12. The Authorised Version renders the end of the first verse of I Kings 10 (which describes the purpose of the Queen's visit) as '[she] came to prove him with hard questions'. The Greek Septuagint has 'κατ' έλεγχον ναγνίναν αετην και αληθησειν'. 'τó αληθή' may be translated as a 'riddle', 'dark saying', or 'obscure (or 'dim') image'. The Vulgate follows the Greek more closely, with 'venit temptare eum in enigmatibus', suggesting that some form of secret wisdom was exchanged at the meeting. This interpretation was sometimes favoured in the Renaissance. Screech (\textit{Rabelais}, p.95) says that most of the Renaissance paintings he has seen representing the Queen's visit to Solomon show the two monarchs making signs to each other with their hands. If, as this evidence suggests, the meeting was usually interpreted in Renaissance times as being a debate in sign language, then Thaumaste's remark seems all the more pertinent. The words 'Et ecce plusquam Solomon hic' would then constitute an implicit play on the idea of a sign. In the context of the Thaumaste episode (and, indeed, in most of the work of Rabelais) the word 'signe' has the meaning of 'gesture', but 'sign' is used in the Gospels in the sense of 'miracle' - an extraordinary and astonishing event attributed to the presence of a divine power. Rabelais takes advantage of the ambiguity of this word in order to produce a comic effect in keeping with the tone and subject-matter of the rest of this chapter.
que celluy qui oncques ne ouyt.\textsuperscript{197}

In \textit{Pantagruel}, Thaumaste had declared that he wished to conduct the debate by means of signs alone because human speech could not convey some of the difficult matters which he wanted to discuss. Here, Pantagruel cites ancient authority for the belief that signs were superior to words as a means of communication. When the sense was all-important, as in the case of oracular predictions, those seeking advice could be sure of the meaning of an answer given by means of signs.

The words 'par gestes et' (cited above in parentheses) were not present in the 1546 edition of the \textit{Tiers Livre}, but were added later in the revision of 1552 (which is considered the definitive edition). Rabelais probably inserted these words because he felt the need to specify which types of oracular signs he would be referring to in these chapters, and by so doing, he also prepares the reader for the detailed discussion which follows concerning the legal implications of the gestures which form the sign language of the deaf and dumb.

These opening remarks about signs and their role in oracular prediction are lent extra emphasis by the fact that they preface the discussion about whether language is natural or based upon human convention. Panurge begins by referring to the story of King Psammeticus in support of his belief that someone who had never in his life heard human speech (for example one who had been deaf from birth) would speak a form of natural language. Pantagruel firmly refutes this suggestion, stating the Aristotelian view: 'Les languaiges sont par institutions arbitraires et convenences des peuples; les voix (comme disent les Dialecticiens) ne signifient naturellement, mais à plaisir'.\textsuperscript{198} This is

\textsuperscript{197} \textit{Tl}, pp.139-140.

\textsuperscript{198} \textit{Tl}, p.140.
certainly the most overt expression of Rabelais's own linguistic theories in the Chronicles, and it leads into the legal debate on whether deaf mutes who communicate by sign language have the right to give evidence in a court of law.

In order to support his argument that language is based upon convention, Rabelais has Pantagruel cite the example of Nello de Gabrielis, a real-life Italian deaf mute who was able to lip-read. As Pantagruel says, Nello de Gabrielis is mentioned by Bartolo of Sassoferrato in a gloss on Book 45 of the *Digest* of Roman law. The full title of this work is *De Verborum Obligationibus*, and the first law it contains states that 'a deaf mute who understands from the movement of the lips, is not allowed to stipulate.' In this gloss, Bartolo declares that this is as it should be, because, for the purposes of the law, information must be understood through the sense of hearing and the sound of the voice and not by the movement of the lips or by other gestures. This law was a source of argument among Renaissance jurisconsults - it was defended by some and criticised by others. What is important is that Bartolo's gloss does not specifically mention that Nello de Gabrielis could interpret gestures in addition to the movements of a speaker's lips. This detail is added by Rabelais, and when taken together with the insertion of the words 'par gestes et' earlier in the chapter, it shows that Rabelais wishes his reader to classify gestures with other types of sign, such as lip_movements.199

This mention of Nello de Gabrielis is followed in Pantagruel's speech by another tale which illustrates the superiority of signs over words. It concerns a king of Armenia, who, having been fêted on a visit to Rome, was told by the Emperor that he could choose for himself the thing that had pleased him most in the city. The king replied that the only thing he wanted was a certain player of farces whom he had seen performing at the

199 Screech, *Rabelais*, pp.411-413.
theatre. Although the king knew no Latin, he had understood this man’s performance because the actor had expressed himself very clearly by means of gestures. The king went on to say that the reason he had chosen this man as his gift was that his subjects in Armenia spoke a variety of languages, and that it was difficult to make oneself understood to all of them. However, if he could use this player of farces as his spokesman, he would need no other interpreter, since all his subjects would be able to understand the man’s gestures. This story told by Pantagruel supports the argument that gestures can be superior to words because it demonstrates that gestures may be used as a universal language.

This argument is later taken up by Panurge, who says that he would be unwilling to seek advice from a female deaf mute. Panurge gives two reasons for his reluctance to do this. Firstly, he thinks that a female deaf mute would interpret the signs made by him and Pantagruel as having sexual connotations. He backs up this contention with the story of a Roman lady, deaf and dumb from birth, who, in the mistaken belief that a certain young man was making suggestive signs at her, consequently seduced him by means of some gestures of her own. Panurge comments that, in matters of love, signs are more attractive, effective, and valid than words.

The second reason given by Panurge for not consulting a female deaf mute is that she would either make no reply at all to their signs, or, if she did give an answer, he and Pantagruel would themselves interpret her gestures in a sexual sense. Panurge supports this contention with another humorous story. A nun named Seur Fessue has been made pregnant by a monk, who, she claimed, had forced himself upon her against her will. She was asked by the abbess at her nunnery to explain why, if she had indeed been unwilling, she had not cried out, or, given that her vow of silence in

---

200 *TL*, p.141.

201 *TL*, p.142.
the dormitory might have prevented her from shouting, why she had not at least made signs to the other sisters to come to her aid. Fessue’s explanation that her heaving bottom was intended as a gesture to summon help is unconvincing because her words are contradicted by the powerful ‘natural meaning’ of her ‘gestures’ during the sexual act, which indicate that the reason she did not protest was because she was enjoying the love-making. Fessue’s actions speak louder than her words, reinforcing Panurge’s statement that, in matters of love, signs are superior to words. The story of Seur Fessue is also interesting in that it draws attention to the fact that the members of a large number of monastic orders (notably certain types of Cistercians who observe a strict vow of silence) form another group which, like the deaf and dumb, regularly communicates using sign language.

The second of the two chapters of the *Tiers Livre* which deal with deaf mutes is devoted to a sign language debate between Panurge and the deaf mute Nazdecabre, in which several types of sign are described. Panurge opens this debate with a gesture which denotes the Greek (and Hebrew) letter Tau, the most important mystic sign of all for the cabbalists. The debate is conducted in a similar manner to that which took place between Panurge and Thaumaste, except that Panurge, despite his own obscene gestures, appears to take Nazdecabre’s signs more seriously than he did those of Thaumaste. This is perhaps why he becomes agitated and angry at Nazdecabre when Pantagruel explains that the deaf mute’s signs do not bode well for his marriage. Nazdecabre’s gestures include two Pythagorean signs denoting the number thirty and the number five, both of which have a special meaning in the context of marriage. When

---

202 Gérard van Rijnberk’s *Le Langage par signes chez les moines* (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Company, 1953) contains an informative introduction on the use of sign language amongst the monastic orders. This introduction is followed by an extensive list of monastic signs, compiled by van Rijnberk, in which each sign is classified according to its Latin name, and is accompanied by instructions on how to make it. The work also contains a brief bibliography of literature on the subject.
Nazdecabre sneezes, turning his body to the left, Pantagruel interprets this as a manifestation of the daemon of Socrates, signifying an unhappy outcome. The last two gestures made by Nazdecabre leave Panurge so infuriated that he all but strikes the deaf mute, who has predicted that Panurge would be 'marié, coqu, battu et desrobbé'.

Panurge says that he accepts only that he will marry - the other three predictions he does not believe will come true. He therefore remains unenlightened as a result of his own stubbornness.

The most significant aspect of these two chapters is that Rabelais should have Pantagruel reject the conclusions of King Psammeticus's linguistic experiment; and, still more importantly, that Rabelais should use his character to advance a firmly Aristotelian theory of language - all in the context of a discussion about deaf mutes. This testifies to the importance of the deaf and dumb within the field of Renaissance language theory, and to the fact that such people must have been of interest to Rabelais from both a linguistic and a medical point of view.

C. Triboulet: Signs of Divine Prophetic Folly

Chapter XXXVII of the *Tiers Livre* begins as follows: 'Pantagruel, soy retirant, aperceut par la guallerie Panurge en maintien de un resveur, ravassant et dodelinant de la teste.' Pantagruel interprets Panurge's gesture of nodding or shaking his head as an indication of his friend's melancholic and disturbed state of mind. He compares Panurge to a mouse ensnared in pitch, which, in trying to extricate itself, only succeeds in becoming more firmly trapped. The only solution to Panurge's state of

---

203 TL, p.150.

204 TL, p.256.
perplexity, says Pantagruel, is for him to consult a prophetic fool. In an amplification of the notion of divine folly mentioned by St Paul in I Corinthians, 3, 19, Pantagruel then describes how, in order to become possessed by a divine prophetic spirit, one must expel from one's mind all worldly thoughts, and, allowing one's soul to leave one's body, attain a state of ecstasy. This state of ecstasy has the appearance of madness:

...ainsi faut il, pour davant [...] [les Intelligences célestes] saige estre, je diz sage et præsage par aspiration divine, et apte à recepvoir benefice de divination, se oublier soymesmes, issir hors de soymesmes, vuider ses sens de toute terrienne affection, purger son esprit de toute humaine sollicitude et mettre tout en non chaloir, ce que vulgairement est imputé à folie.205

When Panurge finally meets Triboullet and asks him for his advice, Triboullet makes a similar gesture to that of Panurge earlier, shaking his head violently while giving his reply: 'Par Dieu, Dieu, fol enraigé, guare moine, cornemuse de Buzançay'.206 Although Triboullet's head-movements are similar to those of Panurge, and although both do indicate a form of madness, Panurge's madness is very different from that of Triboullet.

Panurge's madness is of diabolical origin, and is derived from his philautia, or self-love. Panurge is, as Triboullet says, a 'fol enraigé' - a raging lunatic. His philautia blinds him to the truth, and prevents him from understanding the real nature of Triboullet's madness. Panurge's misunderstanding of Triboullet's madness may be seen by the sort of adjectives which he applies to the fool during his contreblason - adjectives such as 'terrien', and the phrase 'à sonnettes'.207 These show that, in Panurge's opinion, Triboullet is a simple jester with no supernatural powers. Panurge's mistaken attitude towards the fool is also demonstrated by the

205 TL, pp.257-258.
206 TL, p.304.
207 TL, p.262.
fact that he addresses the simple-minded Triboullet in a wholly inappropriate fashion, using 'paroles rhetoriques et eleguantes'.\textsuperscript{208}

Triboullet, on the other hand, is a divinely-inspired fool of the type which Pantagruel had described earlier. After Triboullet has given his reply, Pantagruel draws Panurge's attention to the way in which the fool jerked his head while speaking. Pantagruel explains that this rapid movement of the head is due to the 'overloading' of an individual's brain by the prophetic spirit as it rushes in to occupy him:

\begin{quote}
Avez-vous considéré comment sa teste s'est, avant qu'il ouvrist la bouche pour parler, croussée et esbranlée? Par la doctrine des antiques Philosophes, par les ceremonies des Mages et observations des Jurisconsultes, povez juger que ce mouvement estoit suscité à la venue et inspiration de l'esprit fatidique, lequel, brusquement entrant en debille et petite substance (comme vous sçavez que en petite teste ne peut estre grande cervelle contenue), l'a en telle maniere esbranlée que disent les Medecins tremblement advenir es membres du corps humain, sçavoir est, part pour la pesanteur et violente impetuosité du fays porté, part pour l'imbecilité de la vertus et organe portant.\textsuperscript{209}
\end{quote}

Pantagruel's explanation is derived from a gloss by Guillaume Budé in his \textit{Annotationes in Pandectas} on the \textit{Digest} of Roman law. The first law of the twenty-first book of the \textit{Pandects} states that for a person to be considered a divinely-inspired prophet, that person had to be seen to jerk his head, as this movement was the outward sign of his inspiration. This law gives the example of a certain slave who said that he was insane, and who associated with other \textit{fanatici} - the divinely-inspired fools who lived in the temple (the \textit{fanum}). A Roman jurisconsult decided that the slave was sane, on the grounds that he did not jerk his head.\textsuperscript{210}

The significance of head-jerking as an actual proof of inspiration in

\textsuperscript{208} \textit{TL}, p.304.
\textsuperscript{209} \textit{TL}, p.305.
\textsuperscript{210} Screech, \textit{Rabelais}, pp.278-279.
Roman law accounts for the importance which Pantagruel attaches to Triboulet's gesture. The words spoken by Triboulet are, of course, revealing in themselves (especially telling is the fact that he twice mentions God in his reply), yet these words would be of little value for the purposes of prophecy if no assurance could be given that the speaker was indeed a divinely-inspired fool. Triboulet's head-movements are regarded as proof by Pantagruel, who says later that the prognostication given by Triboulet was the most complete of all.

In order to support his arguments about the significance of head-jerking, Pantagruel cites among other authorities 'les ceremonies des Mages'. The visit of the Magi to the infant Christ was thought by many in Renaissance times to sanction the study of the type of good magic enshrined in the *prisca theologia*. This allusion to the instigation of the study of good magic may be compared to the sympathetic references to the *prisca theologia* and more particularly the references to Hermes Trismegistus which occur during the visit of Thaumaste in *Pantagruel*, an episode in which the interpretation of gestures is of central importance.

D. The Frozen Words: a Platonic Theory of Language

From the point of view of the linguistic theorist, the episode of the frozen words in the *Quart Livre* is among the most important in the Chronicles. The theories which Rabelais puts forward both in these chapters and in the episode of Messere Gaster are a direct development of the neo-Aristotelian position expressed by Pantagruel in the *Tiers Livre*,

---

211 The religious sects known as the Quakers and the Shakers owe their names to the fact that in the seventeenth century their members considered the jerking of the body to be an important sign of inspiration.

212 *TL*, p.309.

and represent Rabelais's final statement of his views about language.\textsuperscript{214}

The concept of the frozen words was not Rabelais's own invention. In his \textit{De Profectibus in Virtute}, Plutarch relates that Antiphanes likened the teachings of Plato to frozen words which slowly thaw out, on the grounds that it was only after Plato's pupils had become old men that they fully understood the things that he had taught them in their youth.\textsuperscript{215} Renaissance authors had also used the theme: a Russian traveller's tale concerning frozen words appears in \textit{The Book of the Courtier} \textit{[il Libro del Cortegiano]} by the Italian diplomat Balthazar Castiglione (1478-1529). The myth is also to be found in the work of the prominent humanist and fabulist Celian Calcagnini (1479-1541), to whom Rabelais is heavily indebted for several episodes in the \textit{Quart Livre}, most notably that concerning Messere Gaster.\textsuperscript{216}

In these chapters, Rabelais confronts the question of whether words can give mortal man access to permanent truth. Before considering the episode in detail, it is worth pausing to look at the various terms which Rabelais uses to refer to these 'frozen words'. Although the titles of chapters LV and LVI both refer to 'parolles', the sounds heard by Pantagruel and his companions in the arctic summer air are not in fact words at all, but sounds. The fact that on several occasions Rabelais refers to these sounds as 'voix' and 'sons' indicates that he is observing the

\textsuperscript{214} In compiling this section, I have made extensive use of Screech, \textit{Rabelais}, pp.410-439.

\textsuperscript{215} 'Quite in place here is Antiphanes' story, which somebody has recounted and applied to Plato's close acquaintances. Antiphanes said humorously that in a certain city words congealed with the cold the moment they were spoken, and later, as they thawed out, people heard in the summer what they had said to one another in the winter; it was the same way, he asserted, with what was said by Plato to men still in their youth; not until long afterwards, if ever, did most of them come to perceive the meaning, when they had become old men', Plutarch, \textit{Moralia}, 79A (\textit{De Profectibus in Virtute}, VII), trans. by F.C. Babbitt (L.C.L., 1927), vol. 1, 420-421. This reference is given in Screech, \textit{Rabelais}, p.411.

distinction between verbal utterances with meaning (voces) and brute noises (soni), which was first made by Aristotle, and was later accepted and extended by Ammonius Hermaeus. The term 'parolles' is usually reserved by Rabelais for inspired words, such as those of Plato and Homer.

Pantagruel offers a series of possible explanations for the strange disembodied sounds. The first and most complex of these is contained in a philosophical myth adapted from Plutarch's De Oraculorum Defectu (On the Obsolescence of Oracles). In Plutarch's account, the author's friend Cleombrotus describes the view of the universe posited by a little-known Greek philosopher named Petron:

He [Petron] said that the worlds are not infinite in number, nor one, nor five, but one hundred and eighty-three, arranged in the form of a triangle, each side of the triangle having sixty worlds; of the three left over each is placed at an angle, and those that are next to one another are in contact and revolve gently as in a dance. The inner area of the triangle is the common hearth of all, and is called the Plain of Truth [μεθόν διενθεσίας], in which the accounts [των λόγων], the forms [τὰ εἰδή], and the patterns [τὰ παραδείγματα] of all things that have come to pass and of all that shall come to pass rest undisturbed; and round about them lies Eternity, whence Time, like an ever-flowing stream, is conveyed to the worlds. Opportunity to see and contemplate these things is vouchsafed to human souls once in ten thousand years if they have lived goodly lives; and the best of the initiatory rites here are but a dream of that highest rite and initiation; and the words of our philosophic enquiry are framed to recall these fair sights there - else our labour is in vain.218

Rabelais's version of the myth runs as follows:

J'ay leu qu'un philosophe, nommé Petron, estoit en ceste opinion que feussent plusieurs mondes soy touchans les uns les autres en figure triangulaire aequilaterale, en la pate et centre des quelz disoit estre le manoir de Verite, et le habiter les Parolles, les Idees, les Exemplaires et protraictz de toutes choses passees et futures: autour d'icelles estre le Siecle. Et en certaines annees, par longs intervalles, part d'icelles tomber sus les humains comme catarrhes, et comme tomba la rousée sus la toizon de Gedeon; part là

---

217 See Screech, Rabelais, p.419. For a summary of the linguistic theories of Ammonius Hermaeus, see above, p.18.

Rabelais makes several important changes and additions to Plutarch's myth. These alterations merit close examination, because they throw light upon the development of Rabelais's linguistic ideas at this point in the *Quart Livre*.

Firstly, Rabelais changes one of the three entities which dwell within the Plain of Truth. By rendering Plutarch's 'λόγος' as 'Parolles' (a surprising translation for this very broad Greek term, given that the context is one of cosmology), Rabelais gives words a place alongside forms and patterns inside Petron's celestial triangle. In this way, he makes his version of Plutarch's myth reflect the view implicitly expressed in the closing lines of Plato's *Cratylus*: that one possible means by which man may gain access to permanent truth is through the careful study of words and their etymologies. It is only by virtue of his unexpected translation of this Greek term that Rabelais is able to draw upon Plutarch's myth, because no connection would otherwise exist between Petron's philosophy and the various aspects of words with which Rabelais is concerned in these chapters.

---


220 In Plutarch's account, this region is called the Plain of Truth, a name which would remind the reader of a well-known passage in the *Phaedrus* in which Plato speaks of the human soul searching out the Plain of Truth in order to liberate itself from the tyranny of opinion: 'The other souls follow after, all yearning for the upper region but unable to reach it, and are carried round beneath, trampling upon and colliding with one another, each striving to pass its neighbour', Plato, *Phaedrus*, 248B, trans. by H.N. Fowler (L.C.L., 1977), pp.476-479. Screech states (Rabelais, p.421) that part of the reason why Rabelais changed this name to 'manoir de Verité' was in order to establish a connection with the 'manoir des Heroes' described by the Macrobe in the chapters leading up to the episode of the death of Pan, but that, more importantly, this alternative name serves to link Petron's doctrine with the 'manoir de Arete' (c'est vertus). For the 'manoir des Heroes', see *QL*, pp.133-138.; for the 'manoir de Arete', see *QL*, p.230.

221 Screech (Rabelais, p.422) suggests 'reasons' or 'causes' as the probable meaning of 'τοῦ ὁλῶσθ' in Plutarch's original account of Petron's doctrine. In his article 'Le Mythe des Parolles Gelées', in *Romanic Review*, 31 (1940), 3-15, J. Guiton comments that F.C. Babitt's 'accounts' is ambiguous.

222 It is also worth noting that the term 'parolles' is used again here in preference to 'mots', since the words in question are in contact with divine truth, the source of the 'parolles' spoken by certain inspired mortals.
A second change made by Rabelais relates to the mechanism which brings the three entities which inhabit the Plain of Truth into contact with the worlds. According to Plutarch, these entities lie motionless, surrounded by eternity, and play no active part in the process; the movement derives from time, which flows out of the eternity into the worlds. For Rabelais, on the other hand, it is not time, but rather a part of the words, forms, and patterns themselves which impinges upon the world of men. The concept of downward motion, or dripping, expressed in the phrase 'part d'icelles tomber sus les humains' is another of Rabelais's additions.

Furthermore, in Rabelais's version, the three entities are encompassed not by eternity, but by 'le Siecle'. This translation is especially significant because it is evidence that Rabelais has adapted Plutarch's myth so that its meaning is transferred to a context of Christian eschatology. In the bible, the term 'Siècle' is the traditional French equivalent for the Latin 'saeculum', which signifies the period lasting until the end of time. (This is usually rendered in English as the 'age'). Further proof that Rabelais intends his adaptation of Plutarch's myth to be understood with reference to the events following the end of the Christian epoch is provided in the next sentence. Here, Rabelais states that the part of the words, forms, and ideas which does not come into contact with the worlds will remain within the Plain of Truth, not for the duration of Plutarch's classical eternity, but only 'jusques à la consommation du Siecle'. This last expression, taken from the end of Saint Matthew's Gospel (Matthew 28. 20), is a direct gallicising of the Latin 'usque ad consummationem saeculi' with which the Vulgate

---

223 This aspect of the comparison is further complicated by the knowledge that important differences exist between the Greek text of Plutarch which Rabelais would have consulted and that which is normally used by modern readers. In particular, probably as the result of confusion on the part of a scribe between the Greek words χρόνος (time) and κόσμος (world), the passage at 422C which the Loeb translates as 'whence time, like an ever-flowing stream, is conveyed to the worlds' is rendered into Latin by Xylander as 'feratur ad ea quae sunt in tempore' ['...is conveyed into things which are in time']. That is to say the reading is 'ἐκ τοῦ χρόνους' instead of 'ἐκ τοῦ κόσμους'. Rabelais follows the 'χρόνους' reading: in his Christianised version of the myth, the dripping motion will not go on for ever, but will stop at the end of time. See Screech, Rabelais, p.424, n.27; see also the Loeb edition (for details, see n.218 above), p.416, n.1.
renders Matthew's original Greek 'ζως της συντελειας του αιωνος'. (The Authorised Version has 'even unto the end of the world'). Matthew's phrase is normally taken to mean the destruction of the world as we know it, which is to be followed by the establishment of Christ's kingdom. Once again, the expression which Rabelais uses to restrict the timescale of Plutarch's myth is quite unexpected in this classical context.\textsuperscript{224}

The fourth and last major change to Plutarch's account of Petron's teachings concerns the phrase 'comme catarrhes', with which Rabelais describes the downward motion of that part of the words, forms, and patterns which drip down upon mankind. This image of catarrh is not, of course, found in Plutarch's myth. It is a reference to the end of Plato's \textit{Cratylus}. In his penultimate speech in this dialogue, Socrates remains ill at ease with Heraclitus's theory that everything in the world is subject to continual change, for, he says, if all things are in a state of flux, then knowledge itself becomes impossible. He challenges Heraclitus's doctrine by suggesting that if verities such as beauty and goodness do exist as immutable celestial forms, ideas, and patterns, knowledge may still lie within the reach of mankind. Socrates, unable to decide which of the two theories is true, continues as follows:

\begin{quote}
...but surely no man of sense can put himself and his soul under the control of names, and trust in names and their makers to the point of affirming that he knows anything; nor will he condemn himself and all things and say that there is no health in them, but that all things are flowing like leaky pots, or believe that all things are just like people afflicted with catarrh, flowing and running all the time.\textsuperscript{225}
\end{quote}

This Heraclitean view of the universe which troubles Socrates so much is similar to that put forward by Rabelais in his Christianised version

\textsuperscript{224} Screech, \textit{Rabelais}, p.423.

of Plutarch’s philosophical myth. Rabelais, like Heraclitus, makes *everything* in the universe subject to flux. This even includes the words, forms, and patterns which will remain within the Seat of Truth, because the rain of catarrh which they produce will not continue for ever, but will cease at the ‘consommation du Siecle’.

Yet Rabelais does not go as far as Heraclitus on the subject of the relationship between language and truth. The fact that Rabelais reserves a place for words within the Seat of Truth should not be interpreted to mean that he considered the study of words and their etymologies to be the only source of knowledge available to man. For Rabelais, words represent only one of several means by which man may gain access to permanent truth in this transitory world. Indeed, in his rewriting of Plutarch’s myth, Rabelais follows Plutarch by stating that the rain of catarrh which brings some of these celestial words into contact with man is a very rare event. This reflects Rabelais’s view that by no means all words are capable of acting as vehicles for revealed truth – this function is restricted to the ‘parolles’, or inspired words. It is only by meditating upon these rare examples of verbalised truth that man may avoid being ensnared by the arguments of those who use words to deceive, devilishly-inspired people who, through their use of rhetoric, are capable of turning black into white.

The juxtaposition of the two similes ‘comme catarrhes, et comme tomba la rousee sus la toizon de Gedeon’ is a further example of Rabelais’s syncretism. The story of the dew which God caused to fall upon Gideon’s fleece while leaving the surrounding ground dry (Judges 6. 36-38) was widely interpreted in the Renaissance as having an allegorical meaning, in which the fleece symbolises the elect, and the dew represents the word of God which is disseminated by the prophets and the apostles, and by Christ
In its original form, Plutarch’s myth describes a classical view of the universe in which time provides the connection between the world of men, which is dominated by opinion, and the celestial region inhabited by three unchanging entities: reasons, ideas and patterns, which are the source of truth for mankind. Rabelais’s changes transform this myth into a Christian allegory concerning the God-given grace which constitutes the only sure knowledge available to men in this transitory life. This grace, and the revealed truth it represents, could occasionally be derived from a careful consideration of certain inspired words and of their etymologies.

In order to establish his meaning in this chapter with greater precision, Rabelais has Pantagruel offer three further possible explanations for the phenomenon of the frozen words. Like the account of Petron’s doctrine, all three contain classical allusions.

Firstly, Pantagruel remembers having heard that Aristotle had said that the words of Homer were ‘fluttering, flying and moving, and therefore in possession of a soul’. In fact, of these four qualities applied to Homer’s words, only the last two may legitimately be attributed to Aristotle. Rabelais himself, perhaps under the influence of the Erasmian adage ‘Levissima res oratio’, adds the epithets ‘voltigeantes’ and ‘volantes’. By endowing Homer’s words with the ability to fly, Rabelais may also be suggesting the phrase ‘winged words’, which occurs many

---

226 Screech, Rabelais, p.427.


228 Here, Rabelais conflates two passages from Plutarch’s treatise De Pythiae Oraculis (On the Oracles of the Pythian Goddess). The first of these is at 395A: ‘Aristotle used to say that Homer is the only poet who wrote words possessing movement because of their vigour’. In the second passage, at 404F, Plutarch describes an animate object (that is to say, one which has a soul) as being ‘endowed with power to move of itself’. Plutarch, Moralia, trans. by F.C. Babbitt and others (L.C.L., 1963), vol. 5, 278-279 and 316-317. See Screech, Rabelais, p.428.

229 For the reference to this Erasmian adage, see above, n.172.
times in Homer's own writings. Pantagruel then proceeds to tell his companions of Antiphanes, who, according to Plutarch's account, compared Plato's doctrine to frozen words on the grounds that men who had been taught by Plato in their youth were able to understand his teachings only after they had become wise in their old age. This allusion is reminiscent of the end of Plato's *Cratylus*, where Socrates instructs the young Cratylus to think carefully before accepting anything as true. Socrates requests that if, after investigation, Cratylus should find the truth, he should share this knowledge with him.

Pantagruel's account of the death of Orpheus is given a prominent position at the end of this chapter. The story of Orpheus's severed head, giving out a mournful song as it is carried down the River Hebrus, accompanied by the strings of his lyre stirring in the wind, is found in both Virgil and Ovid. Orpheus was also a figure of great importance to platonising Christians of the Renaissance. They believed that this inspired musician, who, according to Greek myth, was able to charm men, wild beasts, and inanimate objects with his voice, was a divinely-inspired poetic

---

230 Scruch (Rabelais, p.428) interprets this reference to Homer's words in conjunction with the preceding account of Petron's doctrine. He takes it to mean that the words of certain inspired men such as Homer, who have come into contact with the distillations falling from the Seat of Truth, are able, being endowed with souls, to fly up towards heaven. This upward flight may be compared to Plato's concept of human souls seeking the Plain of Truth (see above, n.220). According to this interpretation, the falling rain of catarrh, representing divine revelation, is connected in a cyclical motion with the upward flight of Homer's winged words, which symbolise the upward yearnings of mankind.

231 * tum quoque marmorea caput a cervice revulusum
 gurgite cum medio portans Oeagrius Hebrus
 volveret, Eurydican vox ipsa et frigida lingua
 a miseram Eurydican! anima fugiente vocabat,
 Eurydican toto referebant flumine ripae.*

[Even then, while Oeagrian Hebrus swept and rolled in mid-current that head, plucked from its marble neck, the bare voice and death-cold tongue, with fleeting breath, called Eurydice - ah, hapless Eurydice! "Eurydice!", the banks re-echoed, all a-down the stream],


*membra iacent diversa locis, caput, Hebre, lyramque
 excipis: et (mirum!) medio dum labitur amne,
 flebile nescio quid queritur lyra, flebile lingua
 murmurat examinis, respondent flebile ripae.*

[The poet's limbs lay scattered all around; but his head and lyre, 0 Hebrus, thou didst receive, and (a marvel!) while they floated in mid-stream the lyre gave forth some mournful notes, mournfully the lifeless tongue murmured, mournfully the banks replied],

teacher, and the founder of an esoteric religion. Renaissance platonists such as Ficino and his followers believed that the Orphic hymns contained revealed religious truths, the most important of which concerned the belief in the one true God and in the Holy Trinity. By having Pantagruel allude to this myth, Rabelais puts the case for music and song to be included with inspired wisdom as a medium of divine revelation.

The tale of the death of Orpheus forms the conclusion to a chapter dominated by a complex web of myth, in which only the fitful exclamations of terror emitted by the cowardly Panurge disturb the serious mood of philosophical contemplation. Chapter LVI, by contrast, is much lighter in tone. Here, Rabelais not only gives more space to dialogue and to description of the action, but also introduces an element of comedy through his use of word-play and onomatopoeia.

Chapter LVI opens with a short speech by the ship's pilot, who reassures the company by explaining that the mysterious noises are the sounds of fighting from a fierce battle which had taken place in the vicinity the winter before. These sounds froze in the air immediately they were produced, and only now, in the warmth of the arctic summer, are they beginning to thaw out. This, says the pilot, accounts for the great variety of confused sounds which are to be heard: human words and shouts are mingled with the clash of arms, the whinnying of horses, and other noises of combat.

This factual, down-to-earth explanation contrasts with the more

---

232 Screech, Rabelais, p.429.

233 In the first chapter of his The Ancient Theology, D.P. Walker explains the different interpretations which were placed upon the Orphic hymns in the Renaissance. For example, in their desire to discredit the belief in the gods of ancient Greece, the Fathers of the Greek Church cited the work known as the Palinode (which is now thought to be a Jewish forgery) as if it were the recantation by Orpheus of his polytheistic beliefs, written after he had read Moses's writings in Egypt. Ficino, on the other hand, was among those who saw a need to retain Orpheus's many deities, but made these more palatable to Christians by explaining them as different aspects of the single god Jove. In the years following the convening of the Council of Trent, the sympathy which had been shown towards the polytheism of the ancients by platonists of the earlier Renaissance such as Ficino was replaced by a less tolerant attitude towards ancient Greek theology. See D.P. Walker, The Ancient Theology, chapter 1: 'Orpheus the Theologian', pp.22-41.
profound mythical accounts of the preceding chapter. The pilot's version is a simple traveller's tale, similar in style to the travellers' tales of frozen words found in the work of Calcagnini and Castiglione.\textsuperscript{234} The transition to this less elevated genre probably reflects the fact that whereas in the last chapter Rabelais was concerned with inspired 'parolles', here he is about to explore the comic potential of two other, baser categories of sound: the voces and the soni which were first classified by Aristotle.\textsuperscript{235}

Panurge wonders if it might be possible to see the frozen sounds. He remembers having read that, when Moses received the law of the Jews, the people waiting below 'voyoit les voix sensiblement'.\textsuperscript{236} This remark of Panurge's is an oblique reference by Rabelais to legal arguments concerning the admissibility of certain forms of evidence. It is an example of the close links that exist between these chapters of the \textit{Quart Livre}, in which many different categories of sounds are described, and those of the \textit{Tiers Livre} which deal with the consultation of deaf mutes.\textsuperscript{237} The importance of such a close connection between the two episodes is clear from the fact that it is at this point in the \textit{Tiers Livre} that Pantagruel, having dismissed the implications of the legend of King Psammeticus, denies the existence of a natural language. In support of his contention, Pantagruel cites the example of the deaf mute Nello de Gabriellis, who is mentioned by Bartolus of Sassoferato in his commentary on the \textit{Digest} of Roman law.\textsuperscript{238}

\textsuperscript{234} See above, n.216.

\textsuperscript{235} See above, p.108.

\textsuperscript{236} \textit{QL}, p.226. Screech, \textit{Rabelais}, pp.433-435. The biblical passage in question is Exodus 20. 18: 'And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off'. Rabelais does not intend this remark about 'seeing voices' to be understood as a profound comment on the nature of synaesthesias in scripture. Not only would such a point seem out of place amid the light, comic tones of Chapter LVI, but also, because it is placed in the mouth of Panurge, who has grossly misused biblical references on previous occasions in the Chronicles, we know that it is not to be taken seriously.

\textsuperscript{237} \textit{TL}, pp.140-141.

\textsuperscript{238} See above, p.100.
The legal disagreements to which Rabelais referred in the *Tiers Livre* were over the question of whether or not a court should accept evidence from a deaf man who understands what other people are saying solely from the movement of their lips. Here in the *Quart Livre*, Rabelais is humorously alluding to another prolonged legal controversy. This concerned the closely related problem of whether or not testimony was permitted from a witness who said that he had heard a thing in a situation where someone else might say that he had seen it. By alluding to these legal controversies concerning synaesthesias, Rabelais prepares his reader for the extended wordplay which will dominate the remainder of this chapter, and with which he will introduce the notion of words which can not only be heard, but also seen and felt.

Rabelais uses a series of adjectives denoting heraldic colours to describe the appearance of the frozen words which Pantagruel scoops up by the handful onto the deck of the ship. These repeated references to coloured words are an extension of the theme of words as things which may be seen, a theme which is continued in the references to 'parolles sanglantes [...] et auftres assez mal plaisantes à veoir'. For Renaissance readers with a knowledge of the law, these references would have brought to mind specific instances of confusion among legal authorities on the question of whether or not it is acceptable to speak in terms of words

---

239 Legal glossists of the Renaissance, when explaining these contentious points, often referred their readers to that same section of the *Digest* which Rabelais quotes in the *Tiers Livre*. In addition to the passage from Exodus 20. 18 to which Panurge refers, legal glossists also cited Revelations 1. 12: 'And I turned to see the voice that spake with me...' ("Et conversus sum ut viderem vocem...") as evidence of the presence of synaesthesias in scripture. See Screech, *Rabelais*, pp.433-434 and n.30.

240 Two of the heraldic colours take on a second meaning when combined in a phrase with the word 'motz'. 'Des motz de gueule' can be taken as 'words of the mouth' (that is to say, words which have to do with eating), or as 'red words', in the sense of the heraldic colour gules. 'Des motz dorez' is an allusion to the 'golden words' of Cato. See Screech, *Rabelais*, p.435.

241 *QL*, p.226.
The frozen sounds described in this chapter fall into the two categories which were first drawn up by Aristotle and were later expanded by Ammonius Hermæus. In the first group are verbal utterances which have had their meanings imposed, meanings that have later been accepted by convention. The second group comprises the *agrammatoi psophoi*, or 'unlettered sounds', a broad term used to designate a wide variety of sounds, including the noises made by animals (both those which have a vocal apparatus and those which make sound by other means), direct expressions of emotion, the cries of children, and noises produced by inanimate objects, such as the retort from a gun. As an example of a sound from the first category, one might take the words which Pantagruel and his companions were unable to understand because they were in a strange language. These words are included as verbal utterances with conventional meanings, even though in this case the meanings form part of a convention from which the hearers are excluded. The noise 'bou, bou, bou, bou, bou, bou, bou' belongs to the second category, for it is a natural and universally meaningful expression of emotion: everyone recognises it as the sound of crying.

The fact that Rabelais chooses a battle as the source of the sounds heard by the companions provides an important clue to his meaning in these chapters. The terrifying confusion of combat can be taken to

---

242 Screech (*Rabelais*, p.435) explains one such instance of confusion, which turned upon the misinterpretation of a passage from Aristotle. In the *Topics* (I, XV, 106A), Aristotle speaks metaphorically of some verbal utterances being white and others black, a remark which has usually been understood to signify that the meanings of some words are clear while others are obscure. However, the thirteenth-century jurisconsult Guillaume Durand ('Speculator') took Aristotle's remark as a literal reference to the colours of words. Durand is cited under the entry 'vox' in Albericus's legal *Lexicon* as the authority for the statement that 'a vox, or word, cannot be seen but heard, despite the fact that Aristotle says that some verbal utterances are white and others black'. When, in his *Speculum Juris*, Durand discusses the acceptability of the testimony offered by a deaf or a blind man, he erroneously points out that, on the question of whether words can be said to be visible, Aristotle holds the opposite view to his own. Durand's misreading of Aristotle was often corrected by Renaissance editors of the *Speculum Juris*. See Aristotle, *Topica*, trans. by E.S. Forster (L.C.L., 1966), pp.310-311; Albericus (de Rosate), *Lexicon Sive Dictionarium Utriusque Juris...*, ed. by J.B. Castelioneus (Papie: M. and B. de Garaldis, 1498), fol. §§27 (under 'verbum') and A61 (under 'vox'); G. Durand, *[Speculum Juris]*, ed. by F. Moneliensis (Nuremberg: A. Koberger, 1466), lib. I, part 4, §7.
represent the cacophony of verbiage with conventionally-imposed meaning (the 'amphibologies, equivocques et obscuritez des mots' as Pantagruel described it in the *Tiers Livre*) from which men must distinguish the rare inspired 'parolles' of the great thinkers who are touched by the catarrhal dew of divine revelation. Apart from these 'parolles', the only other category of sound which has universal meaning is the 'unlettered sounds'.

After the din made by the thawing sounds of battle has ceased, and after the companions have exhausted the possibilities of wordplay, it is particularly appropriate that, towards the end of this episode, Panurge should deal with Frère Jean's mockery not by using words, but with a gesture. By repeatedly flicking his lower lip with his finger, Panurge makes a sign whose meaning is understood by all. Panurge's gesture prepares the reader for the episode of Messere Gaster, in which Rabelais will explore another means, other than that of verbalised revelation, by which mankind may obtain guidance.

E. The Unmistakable Signs of Messere Gaster

In the chapters of the *Quart Livre* devoted to Messere Gaster and his followers, Rabelais shows how the very survival of men can depend upon the interpretation of signs. Probably under the influence of an Erasmian adage, Rabelais created the character of Messere Gaster ('Sir Belly') without ears. Gaster can neither hear nor speak: he too is a deaf mute. Like other deaf mutes, he communicates only by signs, but he differs from other

---

243 *TL*, p.139.

244 The adage in question is 'Venter auribus caret', Erasmus, *Adagia*, II, 8, 84. See Screech, *Rabelais*, 450. This adage is also mentioned by Laurent Joubert as one of his 'erreurs populaires': 'Que veut dire, le ventre n'a point d'oreilles?', *Erreurs Populaires*, p.136.
members of this group in that, being simply a belly, he cannot use a sign-language composed of gestures. Indeed, Gaster's signs, unlike those normally used by the deaf and dumb, are not part of any system based upon mere human convention. They are the belly's pangs of hunger, which are signs with unambiguous, natural meanings. This makes them most effective as a way of communicating his orders, since everyone must obey them immediately:

Il ne oyt point. Et comme les Egyptiens disoient Harpocras, Dieu de silence, en grec nommé Sigalion, estre astomé, c'est à dire sans bouche, ainsi Gaster sans aureilles feut crée; comme en Candie le simulachre de Juppiter estoit sans aureilles. Il ne parle que par signes. Mais à ses signes tout le monde obeist plus soubdain que aux edictz des Praeteurs, et mandemens des Roys. En ses sommations, delay aulcun et demeure aulcune il ne admet.245

In this episode, Rabelais intends his reader to contrast the effective and solid nature of signs with the ambiguous and insubstantial nature of words. Gaster's direct and unmistakable signs are meant to be set against the frozen words of the previous two chapters, words which were presented as ephemeral, incorporeal sounds, discernible by the listener only after a great effort of concentration. Signs and gestures are not, however, the only things to be contrasted with words in the Quart Livre: after the companions have left the land inhabited by Gaster, Pantagruel offers to satisfy his friends by answering their questions. In a passage very similar to that quoted immediately above (and which repeats the same Erasmian adage), he declares that he will not give his answer using long and tortuous speeches, but by means of signs, gestures and actions:

Amis, respondit Pantagruel, à tous les doubtes et quaestions par vous propoussées compete une seule solution, et à tous telz symptomates et accidentes une seule medecine. La response vous sera promptement expoussée, non par longs ambages et discours de

245 QL, pp.230-231.
parolles: l'estomach affamé n'a point d'aureilles, il n'oyt goutte. Par signes, gestes et effectz serez satisfaitz et aurez resolution à vostre contentement.246

In the *Tiers Livre*, Panurge had been foolish to try to explain his dilemma to the prophetic fool Triboulet 'en parolles rhetoricques et eleguantes',247 when the use of signs would have been more appropriate; Pantagruel will not make that mistake. By adding these 'actions' or 'deeds' to his list of reliable means of communication, Rabelais has assembled a wide-ranging group of concepts. However, as Screech explains, not only do actions speak louder than words, they also speak with more certainty: the pangs of hunger produced by the belly are an example of such an 'effect' whose meaning is unmistakable.248 Chapter LXIII of the *Quart Livre* ends with the famous exemplum of Tarquin the Proud, the last king of Rome, who was asked by his son how to subjugate the inhabitants of a certain town. Because Tarquin distrusted the messenger who had been sent with the question, he did not give a verbal answer, but instead led the messenger into a secret garden and proceeded to cut off the tops of some poppies which grew there. The messenger returned to the king's son without a verbal reply, but he told him what he had seen Tarquin do. From this sign, Tarquin's son knew that his father's advice was to kill the nobles of the town in question, so that his power could not be threatened and the people would obey him.249 Rabelais lends a humorous touch to this exemplum by having Pantagruel, who is telling this story, touch the rope attached to the dinner-bell. On hearing the sound of this bell, Frère Jean immediately rushes down to the galley. Frère Jean is here responding to two types of sign: firstly, to the sound of the bell, which is a sign with the imposed

---

246 *QL*, p.253.
247 *TL*, p.304.
249 See below, p.200.
meaning 'dinner is ready'; secondly, and more importantly, to the pangs in his own belly, which are a powerful natural sign of hunger.

In the *Tiers Livre*, Rabelais had used Pantagruel to express his view that language is not natural: all languages are institutions based upon human convention. According to an Erasmian adage, words are 'the lightest of things'. Since the Confusion of Tongues at Babel, words have been an ambiguous and transient medium, and diabolically-inspired people such as Panurge can twist them to mean almost anything. Signs are like words in that they may have meanings which are natural or meanings based upon human convention, yet signs are superior to words because they are less open to misinterpretation.

---

250 For the reference to this adage, see above, n.172.
Many Renaissance humanists believed that the emblem, in its noblest form, was related to both the Egyptian hieroglyph and the cabbalistic gesture in that all three were examples of non-verbal signs upon which meanings had been wisely imposed. The humanists, almost without exception, thought that this noble type of emblem was directly related to the hieroglyphs of ancient Egypt, a belief which had important implications for their conception of the nature of emblems. In the case of both emblems and hieroglyphs, it was believed that the relationship between the symbols and the things they symbolised was not an arbitrary one: each symbol reflected the true nature of the thing which it symbolised. Since only the initiate could have access to this knowledge of the real properties of things, he alone could invent and decipher hermetic signs such as emblems and hieroglyphs.

The Renaissance emblem, in its commonest form, is composed of an illustration accompanied by a moral saying or verse passage. It is difficult to give a precise definition, partly because the authors of Renaissance emblem books wrote very little about their conception of the genre.

---

251 Screech, 'Emblems and Colours', 71.

252 Screech (Rabelais, p.140) comments on the variety of forms to which the term 'emblème' was applied: 'Emblems frequently consisted of a picture with a moral saying or poem attached. They can also be pictures without words, or even the words without the pictures, though this latter meaning is both early and rare.' In ancient Greek, 'emblema' was used to refer to 'any mounted or inserted part, mingling from an insole in a shoe to a cultivated branch grafted onto a wild tree.' See Hessel Medema, 'The Term Emblema in Alciati', in Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes (London), 31 (1968), 234-250 (p.239). The word is also found in classical Latin as a technical term denoting ornamental inlaid work, and was most often used to describe gold and silver decorations attached to tableware. The Renaissance emblematists were highly conscious of the etymology of the word, which was largely ignored by the theorists of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who were more concerned with the philosophy of the symbol and its implications within the emblematic genre. See Allison Saunders, The Sixteenth-Century French Emblem Book, THR (Geneva: Droz, 1988), pp.13-16. A more detailed explanation of the origin and meaning of the word 'embleme' can be found in Daniel Russell, 'The Term 'Emblème' in Sixteenth-Century France', in Neophilologus (Grüningen), 59 (1975), 337-351; and also in Russell's The Emblem and Device in France (Lexington, Kentucky: French Forum, 1985), p.76-89.
Although many theoretical works and commentaries exist in this field, these tend to concentrate on the device rather than the emblem, and the great majority were written several decades after the original collections of emblems were published. Therefore most Renaissance emblematists could not have been influenced by the rules and definitions of the theorists.

Emblems had many different uses in the Renaissance. It became a courtly fashion for noblemen to display their motto or philosophy of life by wearing emblematic designs incorporated into metal badges in their caps. The nobility used them to decorate the walls of their castles and palaces. Books of emblems were used by many types of Renaissance craftsmen as sources for their designs. Emblems were embroidered into tapestries, upholstery and clothing, carved in wood, worked in precious metals, used as printers' devices, painted on items of pottery, and made into commemorative medallions.

253 The distinction between the emblem and the device is an especially fine one, since both forms normally consist of the same two elements: illustration plus text. The terms 'emblème' and 'devise' overlap considerably in their meanings, and attempts by the various emblematic theorists to define either form or to differentiate between the two have created a great deal of confusion (see Saunders, pp.7-10). Saunders offers the following observation which might form the basis of a distinction: the textual element of the emblem normally consists of a verse passage, whereas in the device the illustration is accompanied by a simple motto. However, other attempts to distinguish between emblems and device have concentrated on the relationship between illustration and text. For Stegmann, this relationship is 'le point essentiel des bons théoriciens'. See A. Stegmann, 'Les Théories de l’Emblème et de la Devise en France et en Italie (1520-1620)', Société Française des Seiziémistes, L’Emblème à la Renaissance: actes de la Journée d’Études du 10 mai 1980 (Paris: Y. Giraud, with the collaboration of C. Balavoine and others, Société d’Éditions d’Enseignement Supérieur, 1982), 61-67 (p.61).

254 Saunders, pp.2-3, 13. For Saunders, the years 1530-1550 represent the golden age of the French emblem book. After 1550, emblem books continued to be published in France until the early 1580s, but in examples from this later period the emblems tend to be of a more specialised nature, concentrating, for example, on Christian themes. Saunders gives the publication dates of some of the more important theorising treatises on emblems and devices, explaining that although a small number of these (such as Claude Paradin’s Devises heroïques, and Paulo Giovio’s Dialogo dell’Imprese militari et amorose) were published as early as the 1550s, most date from the seventeenth century.

255 Saunders, pp.263-292; Screech, Rabelais, pp.141-42. The importance of the use of emblem books by Renaissance craftsmen as a source of patterns is emphasised by Saunders.
A. The Origins of the Emblem

i. Text and Image

The origins of the emblem lie in both the literary and art-historical traditions, since the form is related to the hieroglyph, the epigram, the heraldic blason, and the device. The first of the many collections of emblems published in the sixteenth century was that of the Italian jurisconsult Andreas Alciati (1492-1550), who held an instrumentalist view of language akin to that of Aristotle. In his treatise De Verborum Significatione (1530), Alciati summarises the relationship between words and things: 'Words signify, things are signified'. He qualifies this statement by adding that words are not the only possible signifying agents, for occasionally this function may be performed by things. In this connection, Alciati refers to his own Emblemata, the work which was to serve as a model for the emblem books of many later authors:

\[
\text{Verba significant, res significantur. Tametsi et res quandoque etiam significant, ut hieroglyphica apud Horum et Chaeremonem, cuius argumenti et nos carmine libellum compositusimus, cui titulus est Emblemata.}^{256}
\]

The earliest known edition of Alciati's emblems is the Emblemata liber, which was printed in 1531 by Henri Steyner of Augsburg, Germany. Steyner's edition comprises 104 Latin epigrams, each of which is accompanied by a title and a crude woodcut illustration depicting the essential image conveyed by the verse. The origin of the illustrations is uncertain,

\[256\] [Words signify; things are signified. Sometimes, however, things too may signify, as in the case of the hieroglyphs of Horus and Chaeremon, on the subject of which we have written a small book in verse, under the title Emblemata], A. Alciati, De Verborum Significatione (Lyons: S. Gryphe, 1530), p.97. The association of emblems with hieroglyphs, made here by Alciati, is of course common to many other Renaissance commentators.
and is the subject of some debate amongst modern scholars. Hessel Miedema is among those who believe that the illustration did not form part of Alciati's original conception of the emblem. Miedema argues that, for Alciati, the figurative element was already contained within the words of the epigram, and that he would not therefore have seen a need for an illustration. According to this view, the woodcuts of the 1531 edition are entirely the invention of the German printer Steyner. If this is the case, Steyner is at least partly responsible for the creation of the emblematic genre, since this union of epigram and illustration was used not only by the later printers of Alciati's work, but also by printers of emblem books by other authors.\(^{257}\)

ii. The Influence of the Greek Anthology

The textual element of about thirty of this original collection of Alciati's emblems was derived directly from the Greek Anthology. This was a Greek text of the Planudean Anthology, a compilation of epigrams on a wide range of subjects by several Greek poets, which was first published in Florence in 1494 by Franciscus de Alopa.\(^{258}\) In the 1520s a number of smaller, more convenient selections from this anthology were produced, in which the original Greek epigrams were accompanied by a Latin translation. One such selection was Janus Cornarius's *Selecta epigrammata Graeca Latine*

---

\(^{257}\) Saunders, pp.97-98. To give one example of the views of an early theorist on the subject, Pierre l'Angloys emphasises the importance of the graphic element of the emblem. He holds that if words are added, they should be considered as mere ornaments, because the reader should be able to understand the whole meaning of the emblem by looking only at the picture: "Or est-il que la grace de l'Embleme consiste en la peinture, qui doit estre si ingenieusement inventee, qu'elle nous semble parler. [...] on y voit á jour, et á travers le corps ainsi industrieusement imagé par le subtil et ingenieux ouvrier, qui nous represente par sa peinture quasi la chose qu'il nous veut dire, garny puis apres de devises et epigrammes, comme de beaux ornemens, et enrichissemens attachez á tel ouvrage. Et quelque fois il n'y a que la seule peinture, sans autre escrit, si bien significative neantmoins, qu'on peut reconnoistre ce que l'homme ingenieux avoit voulu dire par telle marque symbolique", P. l'Angloys, *Discours des hieroglyphes aegyptiens, emblemes, devises et armoiries* (Paris: A. l'Angelier, 1584), fol. 5\(^v\).

\(^{258}\) Saunders, p.85.
versa, ex septem Epigrammatum Graecorum libris (1529), for which Alciati supplied the Latin versions of about thirty of the epigrams. Alciati later incorporated these Latin translations into a larger collection of epigrams, to which he gave the name 'emblems', for the amusement of his friend Conrad Peutinger. It was this collection which was published as the Emblematum liber of 1531.

iii. The Influence of the Egyptian Hieroglyph

Almost all Renaissance humanists thought that the most dignified sorts of emblem resembled the sacred writing of the ancient Egyptians in that both were thought capable of communicating hidden moral or philosophical truths to the initiated, truths which could otherwise only be known by a process of reasoning.\(^{259}\) The fact that the theorists assumed a close connection between the emblem and the hieroglyph probably reveals

\(^{259}\) For Platonists, intuition, or understanding through the instant recollection of innate ideas, constituted the highest form of knowledge. This accounts for the fact that Platonists held symbols in high regard. The third-century neoplatonist Plotinus was among those who believed that Egyptian hieroglyphs were a form of communication based upon intuition: 'The wise men of Egypt, I think, also understood this, either by scientific or innate knowledge, and when they wished to signify something wisely, did not use the forms of letters which follow the order of words and propositions and imitate sounds and the enunciations of philosophical statements, but by drawing images and inscribing in their temples one particular image of each particular thing, they manifested the non-discursiveness of the intelligible world, that is, that every image is a kind of knowledge and wisdom and is a subject of statements, all together in one, and not discourse or deliberation', Plotinus, Enneads, V, 8, 6, trans. by A.H. Armstrong (L.C.L., 1984), vol. V, 256-57. See also Coudert, 67-68.

Both Guillaume de La Perriere and Gilles Corrozet emphasise the link between the emblem and the hieroglyphs of ancient Egypt: 'Au surplus (Madame) ce n'est pas seulement de nostre temps que les Emblemes sont en bruit, prys et singuliere veneration, ains cest de toute ancienneté et presque des le commencement du Monde: Car les Egyptiens qui se reputent estre les premiers homines du Monde, avant l'usage des lettres, escripvoient par figures et images tant d'hommes, bestes et oiseaux, poissons, que serpens, par icelles exprimans leurs intentions, comme recitent tresanciens Authorz Chaeremon, Grus Apollo, et leurs semblables, qui ont diligemment et curieusement travaillé à exposer et donner l'intelligence desdites figures Hieroglyphiques', G. de La Perriere, Le Theatre des bons engins, auquel sont contenus cent emblemes (Paris: D. Janot, [1540]), fol. Aiv\(^{\prime}\), from the dedicatory épître to Marguerite de Navarre.

'Chascune hystoire est d'ymage illustrée
Affin que soit plus clairement montrée
L'invention, et la rendre autentique
Qu'on peut nommer lettre hierogliphique
Comme jadis faisoient les anciens
Et entre tous les vieulx Egyptiens
Qui donotoient vice ou vertu honneste
Par ung oyseau, ung poisson, une beste'
G. Corrozet, Hecatographie (Paris: D. Janot, 1540), fol. Aiii\(^{\prime}\), from the preface entitled 'aux bons espritz et amateurs de lettres'. 
something of the sixteenth century's view of the emblem, given that since ancient times the western world's conception of the Egyptian hieroglyph had been based upon a fundamental misunderstanding.\textsuperscript{260} Although it was by no means the first culture to do so, the Renaissance tended to elevate the hieroglyph to the status of a hermetic form, perceiving it as a symbolic ideogram representing a single object or idea. Modern scholarship has shown that in the early stages of their evolution, hieroglyphs were indeed used ideographically in order to denote objects, but that as the language developed, the representation of the sound of the object began to take on more importance.

Interest in the Egyptian hieroglyph had increased in the first half of the sixteenth century, following the publication of the \textit{Hieroglyphica} of Horapollo and of Francesco Colonna's \textit{Hypnerotomachia Poliphili}.\textsuperscript{261} Horapollo's \textit{Hieroglyphica} is thought to date from about the fourth century A.D., and is the only surviving example of a genuine hieroglyphic treatise from classical antiquity.\textsuperscript{262} A manuscript of the work was discovered on the Greek island of Andros in 1419, and is known to have arrived in Florence

\textsuperscript{260} Saunders, pp.6, 71-72. The theorist Pierre l'Angloys makes the following observations on the relationship between the Pythagorean symbol, the device, and the Egyptian hieroglyph: 'Pythagore, qui avoit prattiqué ces Aegyptiens, et qui rapporta sa maniere sacrée de parler, et l'obscurité cachée de son langage, ne communiqua point autrement les secrets de la Philosophie, que sous paroles couvertes, et enigmatiques. Comme s'il eust voulu dire, Ne frequente point avec hommes diiffamer pour leur mecheante vie, il eust dit: Ne goute point de ceux qui ont la queued noire. [There follows a series of similar examples] Sont-ce pas, je vous pry, telles façons de parler, mesmes traits que Hieroglyphes Egyptiens? [...] c'est la grace de la devise, que le mot soit couvert, et quasi ambigui, tenant un poix et gravité de sentence qui ne traine point, n'ayant rien de commun, ou de trivial, mais qui ressent ce doctrine premiere, et subtilité Hieroglyphique des Egyptiens, et sentences symboliques d'un Pythagore', P. l'Angloys, \textit{Discours des hieroglyphes aegyptiens...}, ff.5\textsuperscript{v}-5\textsuperscript{r}.

In distinguishing between the emblem and the hieroglyph, the seventeenth-century Jesuit theorist Claude-François Ménestrier emphasizes different characteristics of the emblem: 'Je dis que l'Embleme, est une representation symbolique dont l'application ingenieuse expliquée par une sentence ou par quelques vers exprime quelque enseignement moral, ou savant [...] Le Hieroglyphe ne convient qu'aux choses sacrées comme son nom le démontre, au lieu, que l'Embleme convient aux choses morales c'est à dire, qu'il sert à représenter les vertus, les vices, les passions, et les maximes du gouvernement politique, et de la conduite Economique', C.-F. Ménestrier, \textit{L'Art des emblemes} (Lyons: B. Coral, 1662), pp.16, 19. See Russell, \textit{The Emblem and Device in France}, p.99.

Erik Iversen examines the development of the western view of the Egyptian hieroglyph in his \textit{The Myth of Egypt and its Hieroglyphs} (Copenhagen: GEC GAD, 1961).


\textsuperscript{262} Iversen, pp.47-49. See also C.-F. Brunon, 'Signe, Figure, Langage: Les Hieroglyphica d'Horapollon', in \textit{L'Embleme à la Renaissance}, pp.29-47.
by 1422. The opening lines of this manuscript state that it was originally composed in Egyptian (actually Coptic) by Horapollo of Nilopolis, and that it was later translated into Greek. The Hieroglyphica was edited in Greek and Latin by Johannes Angelus in 1521, and, during the course of the sixteenth century, was published in several languages.

In his treatise, Horapollo discusses each hieroglyph in turn, displaying an accurate knowledge of both late and classical orthography which indicates that his sources must have been connected with a time when hieroglyphs were still in widespread use. However, Horapollo explains the relationship between each sign and its meaning in purely allegorical terms, and omits to mention the phonetic values of the hieroglyphs. For example, he states that the reason why the picture of a goose is used in hieroglyphic writing to represent the idea 'son' is that the goose is especially devoted to its offspring. Horapollo never combines individual hieroglyphs to form phrases, and includes in his work descriptions of a number of simple religious illustrations which are not hieroglyphs at all.

The Hieroglyphica was one of the first secular works to be published after the invention of printing, and came to be revered as the only genuine authority on the language of Ancient Egypt. However, Horapollo’s strongly allegorical interpretations encouraged the spread of a distorted conception of the nature of the hieroglyph which was to remain influential for several centuries.

Colonna’s Hypnerotomachia Poliphili, which was probably written in the mid fifteenth century, is a dream-like allegory in which the hero Poliphile tells of his courting of his lady Polia in terms of a journey in search of the spring of Venus. Poliphile’s account, heavily descriptive and almost entirely lacking in plot, is set in a sylvan landscape adorned with ancient monuments and ruins containing inscriptions composed of symbols loosely based upon the hieroglyphs of Ancient Egypt. For each monument visited, Colonna illustrates the symbols seen by Poliphile, lists them in
Italian, and provides a translation in either Latin or Greek.

Although most of Colonna's contemporaries believed that the symbols described in the Hypnerotomachia were genuine hieroglyphs of Egyptian origin, this is not in fact the case. Several are based upon the signs to be found on the remnants of a Roman temple frieze from the church of San Lorenzo in Rome (in the sixteenth century these signs were also wrongly thought to be Egyptian); the remainder are of the author's own invention.263

The manner in which Colonna displays and interprets these symbols shows that he follows the strong sixteenth-century tradition of the symbolic and allegorical nature of the Egyptian hieroglyph. Colonna uses a single word of Latin or Greek to translate each of his 'hieroglyphs', and in several cases arranges his symbols in rows, as if they are to be read in order from left to right like words of text.264

B. Emblems and Enigmas

In his gloss on Alciati's Emblemata, the commentator Claudius Minos (Claude Mignault) states that although the emblem may occasionally resemble the enigma, the two are not the same. Because the emblem is composed of symbols, its meaning should be obvious and accessible; the enigma, being dependent on words, ought to be ambiguous and obscure. However, Minos adds that, in his opinion, the meaning of the emblem should remain somewhat veiled: the level of difficulty should be such that it deters the

---

263 Iversen, pp.66-68.

264 For an analysis of Colonna's symbols, see G. Pozzi, 'Les Hieroglyphes de l'Hypnerotomachia Poliphilli', in L'Emblème à la Renaissance, pp.15-27.
ignorant while offering a challenge to the learned mind.\textsuperscript{265} This distinction (articulated relatively late in the sixteenth century) represents the majority view.\textsuperscript{266}

i. \textbf{Emblems in Gargantua}

Given Rabelais' s interest in forms of communication other than the purely verbal, it is not surprising to find in his work the influence of both emblem and enigma. In the chapters of Gargantua which describe the young giant's attire, Rabelais sets out his theories on two closely-related topics: the meanings of colours in heraldry and the nature of emblems.\textsuperscript{267}

Both of these subjects commanded considerable interest amongst the nobility in sixteenth-century France.

The first passage in these chapters which merits scrutiny is the description of Gargantua's own emblem, which, one assumes, the giant wore on a badge in his hat in accordance with the courtly fashion of the time.

Pour son imaige avoit, en une plataine d'or pesant soixante et huyct marcs, une figure d'esmail competent, en laquelle estoit portraict un corps humain ayant deux testes, l'une virée vers l'aultre, quatre bras, quatre piedz et deux culz, tel que dict Platon, in \textit{Symposio}, avoir esté l'humaine nature à son commencement mystic, et autour estoit escript en lettres Ioniques:

\footnotesize

\textsuperscript{265} 'Non est aenigma, quamquam interdum aenigmati simile, ratio enim quaedam est apertior in Emblemata propter notas quae aperte debent esse et perspicuae: aenigma vero ambiguitatem quandam habet in vocabulis quam vel doctissimi aliquando explicare, vel summa diligentia, non possunt, at symbolorum ratio apertior esse debet, ut quemadmodum ab ea imperiti arcentur, sic docti aliquid habeant in quo ingenium exercent. Sunt enim παπληρημή sive εἰκόνες et αὐγήμαta reconditae cuiusdam eruditionis specimina, quae cognitionem requirant, quaeque cum novitate quam prae se ferunt utilitate vel voluptate conditam non mina habeant', A. Alciati, \textit{Emblemata}, adjectis commentariis et scholiis per Claudium Minoem (Antwerp: C. Plantini, 1573), p.32.

\textsuperscript{266} See Saunders (pp.17-21) for a discussion of Minos's views on the emblem, compared to those of other glossists. See also Screech, 'Emblems and Colours', 70, and n.11. Ménestrier agrees with Minos's distinction between emblem and enigma, and cites Minos’s gloss in his \textit{L'Art des emblemes}: 'L’Enigme est obscure, et l’Embleme doit avoir un sens facile et aisé à trouver [...] Ils ont neantmoins quelque chose de commun, comme l’a fort bien remarqué Minos en sa Preface sur Alciat...’, Ménestrier, \textit{L'Art des emblemes}, p.20.

\textsuperscript{267} Gargantua, pp.56, 60, and 64-78.
Gargantua's emblem depicts the figure of an androgyne, an idea taken from Plato's *Symposium*; the inscription ('charity seeketh not her own') is to be found in I Corinthians 13. 5. By referring explicitly to the *Symposium* during his description of the emblem, Rabelais gives added emphasis to this passage, and reminds his reader of the Prologue to *Gargantua* (with its explicit debt to the *Symposium*).

It is appropriate that the young giant, who will later be transformed by a humanist education, should wear a syncretistic image of mystical religious significance. The syncretistic emblem described by Rabelais would certainly have been considered as one of the new type of hieroglyphical emblems which were favoured by the humanists, and which became fashionable among the most powerful people in France, and popular

---

268 Gargantua, p. 60. Screech notes (Rabelais, p. 140) that Rabelais does not use the word 'embleme'. He prefers to use the term 'imaige' when referring to this type of hat-badge, and 'devise' or 'divise' when the sense is more general. J. Schwartz argues that Gargantua's 'imaige' should be referred to as a device and not an emblem. He summarises the distinction between the two forms in the following terms: 'One may say that, in general, the device was an aristocratic, individualistic means of expressing, often covertly and ambiguously, but always with a point or conceit, a personal philosophy or endeavor. Emblems tended to be bourgeois, didactic, sententious commonplaces characterized not by obscurity or paradox, but by their often resounding obviousness'. The fact that Rabelais describes the faces of the androgyne as facing one another (in Plato's *Symposium* they face in opposite directions), and that he juxtaposes the grossly physical description of the androgyne with the idealistic quotation from St. Paul introduces an element of ambiguity to the 'imaige'. According to Schwartz, this element of ambiguity, which is present in other erudite and subtle devices which had existed since the beginning of the sixteenth century, is the reason why he classes Gargantua's 'imaige' as a device. See J. Schwartz, 'Scatology and Eschatology in Gargantua's Androgyne Device', in *ER*, 14 (1977), 265-275.

269 This emblem seems to have been invented by Rabelais himself (see Screech, 'Emblems and Colours. The Controversy over Gargantua's Colours and Devices', in Mélanges d'Histoire du XVIe siècle offerts à Henri Meylan, THR (Geneva: Droz), 110 (1970), 65-80 (p.68)). Gargantua's 'imaige' is one of the most overt expressions of Rabelais's neo-platonism in his Chronicles.

In Plato's *Symposium*, the myth of the androgyne is related by the character Aristophanes, who uses it to explain the origin and nature of true love. According to the myth, the first human beings were of three kinds. In addition to the two sexes which exist today, there was also a third kind called the androgyne, which was composed of both male and female parts in equal proportion. The androgynes were physically very strong and highly intelligent, and began to challenge the authority of the gods. In order to punish them for their arrogance, Zeus decreed that all androgynes should be sliced in two, so that each half was either completely male or completely female. Since that time, individual human beings which were originally one half of an androgyne have sought to reunite themselves with their corresponding half of the opposite sex. This desire for reunion is the most perfect form of love, being superior to physical attraction between men and women.

In support of this myth, several Platonising theorists cited Genesis 1. 27: 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them'. This verse precedes that describing the creation of Eve.

270 Screech, Rabelais, p. 143.
in courtly circles across Europe, in the years following the publication of the first editions of Alciati's *Emblemata*.271

Rabelais fiercely attacks those who, through ignorance of the true dignity of the emblem and of its associations with other forms of secret writing, invent trivial *rébus* which rely on visual puns, and even try to pass them off as emblems. There is, however, an important difference between these superficial puzzles and the noble, hieroglyphical emblems. The choice of symbols in the *rébus* is determined not by any insight into the essence of the things symbolised, but by the arbitrary conventions of language. In the following passage, Rabelais contrasts the true, noble emblems with the frivolous *rébus*:

En pareilles tenebres sont compris ces glorieux de court lesquelz, voulens en leurs divises signifier espoir, font protraitre une sphere, des pennes d'oiseaux pour penes, de l'anchoile pour melancholie, la lune bicorne pour vivre en croissant, un bancq rompu pour bancque roupte, non et un alcret pour non durhabit, que sont homonymies tant ineptes, tant fades, tant rustiques et barbares, que l'on doivroit atacher une queue de renard au collet et faire un masque d'une bouze de vache à un chacun d'iceulx qui en vouloit dorenavant user en France. [...] Bien aultrement faisoient en temps jadys les saiges de Egypte, quant ilz escripvoient par lettres qu'ilz appeloyent hieroglyphiques, lesquelles nul n'entendoyt qui n'entendist et un chacun entendoyt qui entendist la vertus, propriete et nature des choses par ycelles figurées. Desquelles Orus Apollon a en Grec composé deux livres, et Poliphile on Songe d'Amours en a dadventage expose. En France vous en avez quelque transon en la devise de Monsieur l'Admiral laquelle premier porta Octavien Auguste.272

271 That is to say, Steyner's crude edition of 1531, and the more elegant French edition published by Christien Wechel in 1534. *Gargantua* was probably published in 1535.

272 *Gargantua*, pp.66-68. Although it may seem strange, given the powerful influence of the *Emblemata* in the early 1530s, that Rabelais does not mention Alciati by name in these chapters, the reference to 'Monsieur l'Admiral' in the passage cited above does establish a connection between Rabelais and the founder of the emblematic genre. 'Monsieur l'Admiral' can be identified with certainty as Philippe Chabot, Admiral of France, a powerful courtier and close friend of Francis I. At the time that Rabelais was writing *Gargantua*, Chabot was sponsoring the first French translation of the *Emblemata* (Christien Wechel's edition of 1534). See Screech, 'Emblems and Colours', 67. For his official device, Chabot had adopted the dolphin and anchor. This device, which was associated with the Erasmian adage 'Festina lente', had been used by Augustus Caesar, Vespasian, and the Venetian printer Aldus, and was one of the best-known in antiquity. In the passage cited above, Rabelais emphasises the nobility of Chabot's dolphin-and-anchor device by associating it with Egyptian hieroglyphs. This association had been made some years before by Geofroy Tory, who confirmed the high status of the dolphin and anchor by describing it as Aldus's 'marque hieroglyphique'. See *Champfleury*, fol. xlii. By mentioning the device of 'Monsieur l'Admiral' in this context, Rabelais is not only flattering an intimate friend of the King, but is also displaying his support for the new cult of dignified hieroglyphical emblems favoured by Chabot.
ii. **Enigmas in Gargantua**

The prologue to *Gargantua* begins with a reference to Plato's *Symposium*, in which Alcibiades praises his teacher Socrates by comparing him to the Sileni. The Sileni were small statuettes which were elaborately decorated with grotesque carvings. Concealed inside each was the figure of a god, which was revealed when the statue was opened up. Plato has Alcibiades compare Socrates to a Silenus on the grounds that although in his outward appearance Socrates was an ugly and awkward man who seemed to be always talking about lowly things of little consequence, in reality his speeches concerned matters of great importance, his outer awkwardness concealing the divinely-inspired wisdom in his soul.\(^{273}\) In this way, Socrates becomes a kind of living enigma.

In his prologue, Rabelais adapts his explanation of the term 'silenus' to take account of his readers' limited classical knowledge: he refers not to the little statuettes of ancient Greece, but to the grotesquely-painted boxes in which Renaissance apothecaries kept their costly remedies. Just as in the case of the original Sileni, the vulgar and unattractive exterior of these drug-boxes contrasted with the beauty within. Rabelais explains that his latest chronicle *Gargantua* may also be compared to a Silenus: the title on the cover might lead his readers to expect a work dealing with relatively trivial matters in the same vein as the *Grandes et inestimables Croniques*, which he had deliberately sought to imitate in his own earlier *Pantagruel*. However, Rabelais is at pains to stress that, on closer inspection, *Gargantua* will prove to be a wider-ranging and more profound

---

\(^{273}\) 'The way I shall take, gentlemen, in my praise of Socrates, is by similitudes. Probably he will think I do this for derision; but I choose my similitude for the sake of truth, not of ridicule. For I say he is likest to the Silenus-figures that sit in the statuaries’ shops; those, I mean, which our craftsmen make with pipes or flutes in their hands: when their two halves are pulled open, they are found to contain images of gods’, Plato, *Symposium*, 221D-E, trans. by W.R.H. Lamb (L.C.L., 1932), pp.218-19. See also Screech, *Rabelais*, pp.128-129.
work than might be suggested by its title. Indeed, by using the opening words of the prologue to place his chronicle under the aegis of Plato's 'Silenus', Rabelais gives an indication of the nature of the work which is to follow.

_Gargantua_, which was written under the aegis of the enigmatic Silenus, also has enigmatic poems near its beginning and at its end. The first of these, the 'Fanfreluches antidotées, trovées en un monument antique', forms the second chapter of _Gargantua_, and remains largely unelucidated; the last chapter of the Chronicle contains the 'Enigme trouvé es fondemens de l'abbaye des Thelemites'.

★

★ ★

In spite of its widespread use by several sections of sixteenth-century French society, the emblematic genre has long eluded precise definition, partly because of the existence of a variety of similar forms such as the device and the _blason_, and partly because few theoretical works on the emblem were published during the sixteenth century. However, Renaissance attitudes towards the genre can perhaps be more easily understood in the light of the history of the emblem's two elements

274 'C'est pourquoi faut ouvrir le livre et soigneusement peser ce que y est deduict. Lors congoistrez que la drogue dedans contenue est bien d'autre valeur que ne promettoit la boitte; c'est à dire que les matieres icy traictees ne sont tant folastres comme le tiltre au dessus pretendoit', _Gargantua_, p.12, from the 'Prologue de l'Auteur'.

275 Apart from its first two lines and its last ten, which are by Rabelais, this final enigma is the work of the French poet Mellin de Saint-Gelais (1491-1558). (See _Gargantua_, p.306, n.5; Screech, _Rabelais_, pp.195-199). Mellin de Saint-Gelais's original poem followed a fashion of the time by using high and dignified language in order to allude to a trivial subject (in this case the author uses apocalyptic language to describe a game of real tennis). Rabelais's additions, when taken together with Gargantua's interpretation, give the enigma a noble and tragic higher meaning, a meaning which really is concerned with events which will precede the end of this world. The twelve lines added by Rabelais take the form of a plea to the Christian elect to resist persecution, and not to lose their faith, if necessary going to their deaths for their beliefs. Rabelais backs up his call for Christians to remain steadfast through suffering by including several references to biblical texts traditionally used to encourage and sustain the faithful in the face of adversity by describing the rewards which await those who remain steadfast in their faith. By having Frère Jean offer the original interpretation of a veiled allusion to a tennis match, Rabelais retains these two meanings as equally acceptable.
of text and image. Renaissance humanists, aware of the emblem’s strong platonist associations, and of the noble and dignified traditions from which the emblem was descended, argued for purity of form within the genre. They believed that in the case of the emblem, communication could take place via the platonist process of intuition, or the instant recollection of innate ideas. Rabelais’s choice of a syncretistic image for the emblem of the young Gargantua reinforces this platonist aspect of the emblem.
IV. Montaigne: Gestural Communication in Animals and Man

In a brief passage in the 'Apologie de Raimond Sebond', Montaigne discusses the ways in which animals communicate with each other, and raises several points of interest concerning the nature of words and signs.\(^{276}\) He begins by saying that animals clearly have well-developed means of making themselves understood to each other, and that this is true not only of animals of the same species, but also of animals of different species. In the case of those animals which have no voice, he says, it is not difficult to imagine, when we see how they interact with each other within their communities, that they communicate by some other means, such as gestures.

Here, in order to support his assumption that animals without voice intercommunicate through the use of gestures, Montaigne introduces the example of the dumb, who, also being without voice, can become so adept at using sign language that they are able to make themselves understood perfectly. Montaigne goes on to say that the fact that the meanings of gestures do not have to be learnt and are understood by everyone sets the language of gestures apart from other, verbal languages, and constitutes a strong argument for believing that sign language is natural to human beings. The contrast between gestures, which Montaigne believes have natural meanings, and speech, in which the meanings have been arbitrarily imposed, is reinforced when this last remark is read in conjunction with his statement a few paragraphs later: 'Quant au parler,

\(^{276}\) Essais, pp.458-59.
il est certain que, s'il n'est pas naturel, il n'est pas nécessaire'.

Au demeurant, nous découvrons bien évidemment que entre elles il y a une pleine et entière communication et qu'elles s'entendent, non seulement celles de même espèce, mais aussi d'espèces diverses. [...] Aux bestes mêmes qui n'ont pas de voix, par la société d'offices que nous voyons entre elles, nous argumentons aisément quelque autre moyen de communication: leurs mouvements discourent et traitent:

\[ \text{Non alia longè ratione atque ipsa videtur} \]
\[ \text{Protrahere ad gestum pueros infantia linguae.} \]

Pourquoi non, tout aussi bien que nos muets disputent, argumentent et content des histoires par signes? J'en ay vu de si souples et formez à cela, qu'à la vérité il ne leur manquoit rien à la perfection de se scâvoir faire entendre; les amoureux se courroussent, se reconcilient, se prient, se remercient, s'assignent et disent enfin toutes choses des yeux:

\[ \text{E'l silentio ancor suole} \]
\[ \text{Haver prieghi e parole.} \]

Quoy des mains? nous requerons, nous promettons, appellons, congédions, menaçons, prions, supplions, nions, refusons, interrogeons, admirons, nomбrons, confessons, repentons, craignons, vergoignons, douteons, instruisons, commandons, incitons, encourageons, jurons, tesmoignons, accusons, condamnons, absolven, injuриons, mesprisons, deffions, despitons, flattons, appellединons, bénissons, humilions, moquons, reconcilions, recommandons, exaltons, festoyons, resjouissons, complaignons, attristons, desconfortons, desesperons, estoison, taisons; et quoy non? d'une

---

277 Essais, p.458. See above, p.36.

278 The quotation is from Lucretius (fl. 1st century BC), De Rerum Natura, V, 1030-1031, where it forms part of a passage in which the author puts forward the theory that language was not only invented through the arbitrary imposition of meanings upon sounds, but developed as well from sounds such as those used by animals to express their emotions:

\[ \text{At varios linguae sonitus natura subegit} \]
\[ \text{mittere et utilitas expressit nomina rerum} \]
\[ \text{non alia longe ratione atque ipsa videtur} \]
\[ \text{protrahere ad gestum pueros infantia linguae} \]
\[ \text{cum facit ut digitо quae sint praesentia monstrent'} \]

[But the various sounds of the tongue nature drove them to utter, and convenience moulded the names for things, not for otherwise than very speechlessness is seen to drive children to the use of gesture, when it makes them point with the finger at things that are before them], Lucretius, De Rerum Natura, V, 1028-1032, trans. by W.H.D. Rouse (L.C.L., 1924; rev. third edn 1975), pp.458-459. See below, n.283.

The Greek philosopher Epicurus (341-270 BC) had also put forward a similar theory to account for the origin and diversity of language. Among the similar theories dating from the first century BC were those of the Greek historian Diodorus Siculus and of the Roman architect and engineer Vitruvius (see above, n.133).

The use of gestures by children as a substitute for speech is also mentioned by Augustine: 'Constitue ergo quempiam ibi natum atque altum ubi homines non loquerentur, sed nutibus sembrorumque motu cogitationes suas sibimet expromendas signarent nonne censes eum talia esse facturum, neque locuturum, qui loquentem neminem audierit?', De Quantitate Animae, XVIII, 31; in PL, 32, col. 1052.

279 Torquato Tasso, Aminte, act II, chorus 34 (1582 addition).
variation et multiplication à l'envy de la langue. De la teste: nous convions, nous renvoyons, avouons, desavouons, desmentons, bienveignons, honorons, venerate, desaignons, demandons, esconduisons, égayeons, lamentons, caressons, tansons, soubmettons, bravons, enhorts, menaçons, asseurons, enquerons. Quoy des sourcils? quoy des espaules? Il n'est mouvement qui ne parle et un langage intelligible sans discipline et un langage publique: qui faict, voyant la variete et usage distingue des autres, que c'estuy cy doibt plus tost estre jugé le propre de l'humaine nature.280

Montaigne goes on to specify that he makes certain exceptions from his statement that gestures form a natural language. He excludes from this statement certain spontaneous gestures which people make when necessity dictates that they give some sort of sign.281 He also makes an exception for alphabets that are represented upon the fingers; grammars composed of gestures; gestures used in certain fields of knowledge where they form the only recognised means of conveying ideas; and gestures employed by certain nations which, according to Pliny, have no other language.282

280 *Essais*, pp.453-454. Montaigne's extended list of the variety of different meanings that can be communicated through movements of the eyes, hands, and head may have been influenced by a similar, though much less detailed, passage in St. Augustine: 'Signorum igitur quibus inter se homines sua sensa communicant, quaedam pertinent ad oculorum sensum, pleraque ad aurium, paucissima ad caeteros sensus. [...] Et quidam motu manuum pleraque significant: et histriones omnium membrorum motibus dant signa quaedam scientibus, et cum oculis eorum quasi fabulantur; et vexilla draconesque militares per oculos insinuant voluntatem ducum: et sunt haec omnia quasi quaedam verba visibilia', Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, II, 3, 4; in PL, 34, cols. 37-38. See above, p.93 and n.136.

281 Montaigne's reference to the fact that gestures may sometimes be produced under conditions of urgent necessity is reminiscent of Herodotus's tale about one of the sons of King Croesus, which Montaigne mentions briefly in his chapter 'De la force de l'imagination': 'La passion donna au fils de Croesus la voix que nature lui avoit refusde' (*Essais*, p.98). It seems that Montaigne regarded this tale as so well-known that he did not need to explain it or give its source. Herodotus's story (*Histories*, I, 85-86 (L.C.L., 1920), vol. 1, 109) concerns the sudden recovery of speech in dumb people in similar circumstances, and is also used by Joubert in his *Erreurs Populaires* (p.610) and in his *Traité du ris* (p.150), and by Mexia in his *Diverses Leçons* (p.192). See below, pp.151-152; also above, p.48. Villey's note to the reference in Montaigne (p.1233, n. on p.98, 1.31) mentions a number of other classical and Renaissance authors who make use of this tale.

282 'Je laisse à part ce que particulierlement la nécessité en apprend soudain à ceux qui en ont besoin et les alphabets des doigts et grammaries en gestes, et les sciences qui ne s'exercen et exprimen que par ixe, et les nations que Pline dit n'avoir point d'autre langue', *Essais*, p.454. The fact that Montaigne specifically excludes 'les alphabets des doigts' from his statement that gestures form a natural language brings to mind the passage in Rabelais's *Gargantua*, in which the young Gargantua, after studying the work *De modis significandi* under the supervision of the ignorant scholastic theologian Thubal Holoferne, uses his fingers to prove to his mother that 'de modis significandi non erat scientia', Rabelais, *Gargantua*, pp.96-97. See below, p.141 and n.286. In the passage of Pliny to which Montaigne refers, the author describes the characteristics of certain tribes of Ethiopia: '... quibusdam pro sermone nutus motusque membrorum est' [Some of the tribes communicate by means of nods and gestures instead of speech], Pliny, *Historia Naturalium*, VI, 35, 198, trans. by H. Rackham (L.C.L., 1938), vol. 2, 478-479.
V. Surdo-Mutism, Sign and Gesture

A. Early Interest in Communication Among the Deaf and Dumb

The signs used by the deaf and dumb occupy an important place in Renaissance language theory. Indeed, the history of the education of the deaf could be said to have begun in the sixteenth century, since before that time it was widely believed that the deaf were incapable of reason, and that therefore there was very little that could be done to help them.\(^{283}\)

Records of manual alphabets of various kinds exist from the earliest times (for example, those used by members of certain religious orders who live under vows of silence), but these were usually considered by their inventors simply as an alternative means by which men might communicate their thoughts, and were not normally intended for use by deaf mutes.\(^{284}\)

It was not until the eighteenth century that Charles-Michel, abbé de l'Epée (1712-1789) developed the 'natural' signs of the deaf into a systematic and

\(^{283}\) Pre-Renaissance attitudes towards the deaf seem to have been largely derived from the writings of the ancients. Such views are summarised in the following verses from Lucretius:

\[
\text{cogere item pluris unus victoque domare}
\non poterat, rerum ut perdiscere nomina vellent;
nec ratione docere ulla suadereque surdis,
quid sit opus facto, facilest; neque enim paterentur
nec ratione ulla sibi ferrent amplius auris
vocs inauditos sonitus obtundere frustra' 
\]

[Compel them again he could not, one against many, nor could he master and conquer them, that they should wish to learn the names of things; nor is it easy to teach in any way or to persuade what is necessary to be done, when men are deaf; for they could not have suffered nor endured in any way that he should go on dinning into their ears sounds of the voice which they had never heard, all to no purpose], Lucretius, De Rerum Natura, V, 1050-1055, trans. by W.H.D. Rouse (L.C.L., 1924; rev. third edn 1975), pp.414-415. See above, n.278.

\(^{284}\) G. van Rijnberk discusses the extent to which sign language was used amongst the monastic communities in the introduction to his Le Langage par signes chez les moines (see above, n.202). See also J.P. Bonet, Reducción de las Letras y Arte de Enseñar á Hablar á los Mudos (Madrid: F. Abarea de Angulo, 1620). English translation by H.N. Dixon: Simplification of the Letters of the Alphabet and Method of Teaching Deaf-Mutes to Speak (Harrogate: A. Farrar, 1890), pp.3-17. A. Farrar's historical introduction to this translation of Bonet's work is the source for much of the general material on the education of deaf mutes in this section.
conventional language which could be used as a medium for instruction. An early example of a type of 'manual speech' is to be found in a treatise written by the Venerable Bede, entitled De Temporum Ratione (AD 725), a work primarily concerned with reckoning the date of the festival of Easter. In the first chapter of this treatise, entitled 'De Computo vel Loquela Digitorum', Bede first explains how to create a system of numeration using the fingers, and from this a manual alphabet, by allocating a letter to each number in order (i.e. A = 1, B = 2, etc.). However, in his brief description of this crude manual speech, Bede gives no specific indication that he intended it to be used by the deaf.

The thirteenth-century author Bartholomaeus Anglicus (fl. 1230-1250) includes a chapter on deafness in his De Proprietatibus Rerum, an encyclopaedic work first printed in about 1492 which summarises medieval knowledge on a wide variety of subjects, and is especially strong in the fields of natural history and medicine. After discussing a long series of possible causes of deafness, Bartholomaeus states that deafness is incurable if it is congenital, or if it is left untreated for three years or more. There is, however, no mention of rectifying the loss of the benefits of hearing through a process of education. This may be explained by the author's assertion that 'deyffenes is privation and let of hearing, that is the gate of the inwit'.

---


286 Bede, De Temporum Ratione, I: 'De Computo vel Loquela Digitorum', in PL, 90, cols. 295-298. This chapter of the De Temporum Ratione is mentioned by Rabelais, who includes it (as a separate work with the title De Numeris et Signis) in the list of works consulted by Pantagruel on the night before he is to take part in the sign language debate with Thaumaste (Pantagruel, p.106). In another work, Bede tells how St John of Beverley, bishop of York (d.721), cured a young man of dumbness by first teaching him to pronounce individual sounds, then syllables, then words, and finally whole sentences. See Bede, Historia Ecclesiastica, in PL, 95, cols. 230-231.

References in Renaissance literature to cases of deaf and dumb people who were able to communicate using signs (or by lip-reading) are often accompanied by a sense of wonder and mystery at the accomplishment. Until the advances which took place in this field in the Renaissance, to try to teach deaf mutes to talk at all was generally believed to be a hopeless task. The idea that speech was a natural instinct in man, rather than an artificial system based upon human convention, fostered the notion that those who were incapable of speech were also incapable of reason. It was not thought that there might be other avenues of communication which remained open to the deaf mute.

A major breakthrough in the education of the deaf occurred during the fifteenth century, when the renowned Dutch humanist Rodolphus Agricola (Roelof Huysman, 1443-1485) suggested that the deaf might be capable of learning both to speak and to write. The sixteenth-century Italian physician and mathematician Jerome Cardan (Girolamo Cardano, 1501-1576) also put forward the idea that it was possible to teach the deaf to hear by reading, to speak by writing.

For example, the Italian deaf mute Nellus Gabrieli de Eugebio, who was able to lip-read (see Rabelais, TL, pp.140-141; Screech, Rabelais, pp.411-413 and n.24; and chapter 3 II B of this study. See above, pp.98-103). Another example of a famous sixteenth-century deaf mute was Juan Fernandez Navarette (‘El Mudo’), painter to Philip II of Spain, who was said to be able to express himself very distinctly by signs.

---

288 For example, the Italian deaf mute Nellus Gabrieli de Eugebio, who was able to lip-read (see Rabelais, TL, pp.140-141; Screech, Rabelais, pp.411-413 and n.24; and chapter 3 II B of this study. See above, pp.98-103). Another example of a famous sixteenth-century deaf mute was Juan Fernandez Navarette (‘El Mudo’), painter to Philip II of Spain, who was said to be able to express himself very distinctly by signs.

289 ‘Qua in re ut miracula transeam, quae vidi, surdum a primis vitae annis, et (quod consequens est) mutum, didicisse tamen, ut quaecunque scriberet aliquis, intelligeret, et ipse quoque tanquam loqui sciret, omnia mentis suae cogitata perscribere posset’.

290 ‘Sunt enim surdorum tria genera: quoddam a nativitate originem ducens, at de hoc nunc ager, et propositum non est, sunt enim hi etiam omnes muti, cum enim discamus audiendo loqui, qui audire non possunt, nec loqui etiam. Alii postquam orti sunt, surdi fiunt, sed antequam loqui discant, atque hi pari conditione muti evadunt, ut non sint a prioribus dissimiles: quamobrem et sub uno genere atque tractatione continentur. Duorum reliquorum unum loqui prius didicit, alterum etiam scribere: atque de his sermonem nunc habere instituimus. Qui igitur iam scribere didicerunt, etiam conversari cum hominibus possunt. In his ergo magna utilitas et voluptas, parvus dolor et minor iactura, legendo enim omnium praeteritorum mentem assequi, tum prudentiam atque scientiam licet, quam si potentiam minorem esse existimam, non parum falleres. Nec cogeris tot audire importune dicta, inaniter, inepte, superfluque. [...] Quid modo faciendus? scribere ac legere ut discat oportet, id enim licet velut et caeco, quod alias ut liceret facere docuesus. Ardua est res, sed tamen quam etiam natus surdus efficere possit.’

There are three types of deaf people. In one type, the deafness begins at birth; but I do not propose to discuss this group, because all of them are dumb as well, for since we learn to speak by hearing, those who cannot hear are also unable to speak. Others become deaf
The first successful attempts to teach the deaf to communicate seem to have taken place in Spain in the second half of the sixteenth century. This work was pioneered by three men. The founder of this 'Spanish school' was Pedro Ponce de Léon (1520[?]-1584), a Benedictine monk who became very famous in his own lifetime for having succeeded in teaching a number of aristocratic deaf pupils to speak, read, and write.291 Juan Pablo Bonet (1560-1620[?]) and Manuel Ramirez de Carrion (1584-1650), who was himself dumb, followed Ponce de Léon's methods and wrote on the subject. Bonet's *Reducción de las Letras* explains the use of the analytic phonetic method, which links speech with the written word.292 Bonet also invented a one-handed manual alphabet for use in instructing the deaf.293 In the preface to his *Maravillas de Naturaleza* (1629), Ramirez de Carrion gives an account of the deaf-mutes whom he had taught, and later in the same work discusses several Renaissance theories concerning the nature of deafness and dumbness, and the links between the two:

A person who has been deaf from birth will necessarily be dumb. By the same token, a person who has become deaf during childhood will also fall dumb, even though he might have learnt to speak.

In the first case, this is because words are imposed by the will of men, and derive from their nature no more meaning than that

---

291 Ponce de Leon's account of his own work does not survive, but a record of his life may be found in F. Vallés, *Philosophia Sacra* (Lyons: H. a Porta, 1592).

292 See above, n.284.

293 The pioneering eighteenth-century teacher of the deaf Charles-Michel, abbé de l'Épée, notes that in his time a one-handed alphabet is used in Spain, whereas in France a two-handed version is employed. C.-M. de l'Épée, *Institution des sourds et muets...*, p.27.
bestowed upon them by the consent of their first inventors, so that someone who has never been able to hear can have little idea what name is given to a hat, nor of who gave it that name. He might call it a 'taratala', but the meaning would be the same as if I were to have placed before me different types of plants and animals which I had never seen before. If people asked me their names, I would not know them, because I would never have heard them, and although they might say these names to me, if I were to block my ears so that I could not perceive them, the names would be as far from coming to my perception, and I from being able to repeat them, as if they had not said them to me. From this it can be understood that everything which is to be pronounced by the tongue must first have entered through the ear.

The same applies to a person who has become deaf during his childhood, that not being able to retain the notions of words, because he has remained so silent in his brain, and because of the little use which he has made of them, he forgets them easily. To which one might add that he is not able to confirm his memory by his own pronunciation, which sounds odd to our ears, which we use to judge the voices of others, and which tell us when we pronounce something well or badly. Because he is completely deaf, not only can he not hear what he himself is saying, but not even his pronunciation is the same. This proves that the impediment of the dumb arises from a defect in the hearing, and not in the tongue: in dumb people, the tongue is free and able to produce speech, if the memory gives them the words, and if they can breathe the form of their articulation. This theory is proved by the example of those dumb people who have been taught to speak by an art, for they move their tongues, and articulate without impediment. And if someone tells me that they do not do so with the same perfection as those who can hear, I say to them that this is not surprising, since they do not perceive what they speak through the instrument destined by nature for its apprehension, that is to say the ear, and as they are deprived of this, they must use extraordinary means in order to use their tongues.²⁹

²⁹ 'Sordo de nacimiento, sera necesariamente sordo; y assimismo el que ensordicio en los años de la niñez, aunque aya llegado á saber hablar. La razón de lo primero es, que como los vocablos sean impuestos por voluntad de los hombres, y no tengan de su naturaleza más significacion de la que les dió el beneplacito de sus primeros inventores, mal puede saber el que nunca oyó, que nombre le puso al sombrero, el que como le llamó, assi, le pudiera llamar taratala, y significara lo mismo como me sucediera a mi si pusieran delante diferencias de plantas, y animales no conocidos, que si me preguntasen sus nombres, respondería, que los ignorava, porque no los avia oido; y aunque me los dixessen, si yo entonces me atapasse los oidos, de manera que no pudiesse percibirlos, tan lexos estarian de llegar á mi noticia, y yo de poder los repetir, como si no me los huviesten dicho: de donde queda entendido, que es necesario que entre primo por el oido la que ha de pronunciar la lengua. Lo mismo passa en el que ensordicio en la niñez, que no pudiendo conservar los especies de los vocablos, por tener tan tierno el celebro, y por el poco uso que tuvo de ellos, con facilidad los olvida. A que se allega el no poder confirmar la memoria con el ejercicio de la pronunciacion suya, ni agena saltandole el oido, jues de las vozes, y el que nos dize quando pronunciamos bien, ó mal; porque elque totalmente es sordo, no solo no oye lo que le hablan; pero ni aun lo mismo que el pronunciatura; de donde queda probado tambien, que el impedimento de los mudos noce de la falta del oido, y no de la lengua: que esta la tienen libre y dispuesta para a poder hablar, si la memoria les ministrasse palabras, y ellos suspiessen la forma de su articulacion; cuya doctrina se prueba con el exemplo de los mudos enseñados á hablar por arte, los cuales mueven la lengua, y articulan sin impedimento. Y si me dixere alguno que no lo hazen con la perfeccion que los que oyen, respondereles, que no es mucho, no aviendo percibido lo que hablan por el instrumento destinado de la naturaleza para su apprehencion, que es el oido; por estar el, y no necessitar el arte de valerse de medios extraordinarios para informar la lengua', M. Ramirez de Carrion, Maravillas de Naturaleza (Cordova: F. Garcia, 1629), ff.109r-110r, English trans. by R.A. Bradbury.
Ramirez de Carrion goes on to discuss the question of which language would be spoken by children deprived of all human contact in their first years. He states that many people think this language would be Hebrew, because that was the original natural language spoken by Adam. Ramirez de Carrion says that this would be true if languages were natural in origin, but in reality, they are based upon human convention.\textsuperscript{295}

The earliest known work devoted entirely to the deaf is a treatise written by Lasso the Licentiate in about 1550.\textsuperscript{296} Lasso's treatise is scholastic in style, and displays a markedly medieval attitude towards the deaf.\textsuperscript{297} The author writes of his admiration for Ponce de Léon's achievement in teaching the dumb to speak: this, he says, is a feat which even the ancient sages had not accomplished. Yet unlike Bonet, Lasso is concerned not with the education of deaf mutes, but with their position in law, and tackles such questions as whether a mute may be accorded the 'mayorazzo', or whether he may celebrate mass. In the following passage, for example, Lasso discusses the acceptability of evidence given in a court of law by means of gestures:

He can testify, if he has the sense and understanding to do so, concerning what he could see and comprehend. The oath being pro forma, like the marriage ceremony, he may swear and give evidence, it being left to the discretion of the judge to decide as to any presumption of deceit on his part. The attorney may accept the signs of one dumb as evidence if he himself understands them, but

\textsuperscript{295} Maravillas de Naturaleza, ff.110r-111v.

\textsuperscript{296} Lasso the Licentiate, Tratado Legal sobre los Mudos, 1550 (Madrid: 1919). Lasso wrote this treatise in the monastery at Oña, where Ponce de Léon also lived for most of his life.

\textsuperscript{297} A. Farrar, discussing Lasso's treatise, makes the following observation: 'One plain fact that this treatise reveals is that down to the middle of the sixteenth century, the notions entertained regarding deaf mutes, and, of necessity, their position, remained practically unchanged from the time when Roman law first defined their legal status. The broad distinction between congenital and semi-mutes - called by Lasso dumb ex natura and dumb ex accidente respectively - was still maintained to be that the former were born not merely speechless, but absolutely deprived of the very faculty of speech', A. Farrar, 'A Sixteenth-Century Treatise', in American Annals of the Deaf (Faribault, Minn.: Convention of American Instructors of the Deaf and Dumb), 37 (June 1892), 198-205, p.199.
if not, then he may use the intermediary of the relatives and neighbours.298

B. Surdo-Mutism in French Renaissance Medicine

The study of the theoretical aspects of language in the Renaissance was closely allied to an interest in its practical application, particularly in connection with the exploration of the physical mechanisms used to produce speech.299 Several sixteenth-century doctors and surgeons (including Rabelais and Laurent Joubert) were among those who put forward theories about the nature and origin of language in the light of their own knowledge of the physiology of sound production.

Aristotle's observations on communication amongst the deaf and dumb were of concern to many Renaissance writers on language. In the Problems, and also in the later Historia Animalium and Parva Naturalia (in the book known as 'De Sensu'), Aristotle establishes a connection between hearing and speech disabilities and the process of speech-acquisition, presumably hoping thereby to discover underlying truths about the nature of language. Joubert cites Aristotle as the authority for this connection between deafness and dumbness: 'au livre des sens, et de leurs organes, où il fait comparaison des aveugles et des sourds nez, il dit sourds et

298 American Annals of the Deaf, vol. 37, 204. This passage may be compared to Rabelais's reference to the deaf mute Nello de Gabrielis (TL, pp.140-141; see also Screech, Rabelais, pp.411-413; and above, p.100).

299 Dubois emphasises the importance of the adoption of theories of speech acquisition based upon investigation of the audio-phonatory system: 'Il nous semble que la substitution d'une théorie de l'acquisition à une explication par une nature divinement instituée, est absolument fondamentale et conditionne tous les processus de démythification du langage entrepris par le XVIe siècle', Mythe et langage..., p.97.
Both Joubert and Montaigne discuss the case of people who have been deaf since birth. Joubert believes that although man may have within him certain abilities which are inherent and untaught, the ability to speak is not one of these. He rejects the Platonic theory of reminiscence in favour of the Aristotelian conception of the mind at birth as a *tabula rasa*. Joubert argues that speech, which he describes as 'une voix significative, exprimant les conceptions de l'âme raisonnable', is acquired wholly by listening to other people talk, and that this is the reason why people who have been deaf since birth are not able to speak, even though their speech organs may be perfectly formed and well-coordinated.

During the Middle Ages, a lack of exact experimental knowledge had given rise to the view that speech and hearing were inseparable, and that

300 Joubert, *Erreurs Populaires*, p.587. The passage in question is from Aristotle's *Parva Naturalia*, I: 'On Sense and Sensible Things' ('De Sensu'): 'Accidentally, then, hearing makes the largest contribution to wisdom. For the spoken word, which is responsible for all instruction, is heard; but this does not belong to hearing in itself but only accidentally, because speech is composed of words, and each word is a symbol. Consequently, of those who have been deprived of one sense or the other from birth, the blind are more intelligent than the deaf and the dumb', *Parva Naturalia*, I, I, trans. by W.S. Hett (L.C.L., 1935), vol. 1, 212-13.

This passage may be compared to the following from the *Historia Animalium*: 'The different viviparous quadrupeds utter different voices, but they have no power of speech; this power is peculiar to man. The possession of this power implies the possession of a voice, but the converse is not true. All persons who are deaf from birth are dumb as well: though they can utter a sort of voice, they cannot talk', *Historia Animalium*, IV, 9, 5368, trans. by A.L. Peck (L.C.L., 1970), vol. 2, 80-81.

Aristotle also mentions this supposed connection between deafness and dumbness in his *Problems*: 'Why do those who suffer from birth from any defective sense mostly have bad hearing? Is it because both hearing and the voice seem to arise from the same source? [...] Why do the deaf always speak through their nose? Is it because deafness and dumbness are closely allied?', *Problems*, XI ('Problems Connected with the Voice'), trans. by W.S. Hett (L.C.L., 1936), vol. 1, 252-253.

'Why does sneezing stop hiccough, but not eructation? [...] Now the parts about the brain are connected with the lung, as they are with the ears. This is obvious; for men become deaf and dumb at the same time; and diseases of the ear change into diseases of the lung', *Problems*, XXXIII ('Problems Connected with the Nostrils'), 961B, trans. by W.S. Hett (L.C.L., 1937), vol. 2, 210-211.

Aristotle's views on the acquisition of language in animals and children are discussed earlier in this study (see above, pp.32-37).

The connection between deafness and dumbness is also mentioned by Pliny: 'Auditus cui hominum primo negatus est, huic et sermonis usus ablatus nec sunt naturaliter surdi, ut non idem sint et muti'

[Among men, when one is first of all denied hearing, he also is robbed of the power of talking, and there are no persons deaf from birth who are not also dumb], Pliny, *Historia Naturalium*, X, chapter 88 (section 192), trans. by H. Rackham (L.C.L., 1940), vol. 3, 414-415.

301 'Nostre Ame ignore toutes choses, et est comme un tableau neuf, bien liz et poly, auquel il n'y a rien ancore de peint ou grave, lors qu'elle est infusé au corps humain, envoyé du Ciel, ainsi que nous croyons. Elle n'a rien que simplicité, sincerité, pureté, facilité et aisance, inclination et aptitude a tout art et science, a toute connoissance', *Erreurs Populaires*, p.577.

302 *Erreurs Populaires*, p.579.
if one of these two faculties was impaired, it followed that the other would be also. Both Joubert and Montaigne discuss the idea, found in several Renaissance medical writers, that intimate nerve connections might exist between the ears and the tongue, and that this might account for the sense of hearing being closely linked to the power of speech. Joubert says that he does not subscribe to this view, which he attributes (albeit in slightly different forms) both to the second-century peripatetic philosopher Alexander Aphrodiseus and to the thirteenth-century Italian doctor and philosopher Petrus de Abano:

Alexandre Aphrodisien [...] n'a bon fondement, quand il pose qu'il y a un paer de nerfs qui vient du cerveau, duquel une portion va à la langue, et l'autre aux oreilles. Et que parce, les affections de la langue et des oreilles se communiquent aisément. Et d'autant que l'une desdites portions peut estré offeceee et corrompu sans l'autre, il advient aussi qu'on peut devenir sourd par quelque maladie, sans devenir muet et au contraire. Mais sa supposition n'a aucun lieu en ceci, non plus que la raison d'aucuns modernes, suivans Pierre de Albano, dit Conciliateur: que le sixieme pareil des nerfs du cerveau qui meut la langue, est fermement allié au cinquième pareil, lequel sert à l'oue.

Unlike Joubert, Montaigne believes that such nerve-connections do
exist between the ears and the mouth. In his view, the existence of such links accounts in large part for the fact that those who are born deaf are not able to speak. According to Montaigne, the fact that such people have never been able to hear other people speak also contributes to their dumbness, but is a less important factor. Because our ears and mouths are joined by nerves, when we speak we have to make our voices sound through our heads to our ears. We do this in order to hear the sound of our own voices, before sending out what we have to say to other people.304

Joubert also dismisses the theory that because a person who has been deaf from birth is also dumb as a result of this, it should follow that one who has been dumb from birth will consequently also be deaf. Joubert attributes this theory to the fourth-century orator and Christian apologist Lactantius Firmianus:

Reste à savoir, puisque le sourd naturel est muet par consequent, si pareillement le muet de nature (à raison de quelque défaut en sa langue, ou és autres parties requises au parler) est consequemment sourd. Lactance Firmian en son livre de l'ouvrage de Dieu, le veut ainsi: mais estant grossier anatomiste (comme l'on comprend aisément par ses raisons) il ne doit en cela estre creu.305

---

304 'Si on m'allege [...] que les sourds naturels ne parlent point, je respon que ce n'est pas seulement pour n'avoir peu recevoir l'instruction de la parole par les oreilles, mais plutost pource que le sens de l'ouye, duquel ils sont privez, se rapporte à celuy du parler, et se tiennent ensemble d'une cousture naturelle: en façon que ce que nous parlons, il faut que nous le parions premiérement à nous et que nous le facions sonner au dedans à nos oreilles, avant que de l'envoyer aux estrangeres', Essais, p.459. The views expressed by Montaigne in the 'Apologie de Raimond Sebond* concerning communication amongst animals are discussed earlier in this study (see above, pp.137-139).

305 Erreurs Populaires, p.592. The passage referred to is the following: 'Non enim, (ut vulgo creditur) [muti] vinctam gerunt lingua: sed il voceam illum spiritum per nares quasi mugientes profundunt, quod voci transitus ad os aut nullus omnino est, aut non sic patens ut plenam vocem possit emitere. Quod plerunque natura sit, aliquando etiam casu accidit, ut morbo aliqo hic aditus obseptus vocem non transmittat ad linguam, faciatque de loquentibus mutos. Quod cum acciderit, auditum quoque obstrui ncesse est: ut quia vocem emittere non potest, ne admittere quides possit. Loquendi ergo causa patefactus est hic meatus. Illud quoque praestat, ut in lavacris celebrandis, quia nares calorem ferre non possunt, aër fervens ore ducatur. Item si forte spiramenta narium frigoris pituita percluserit, per os aurum trahere possimus, ne obstructa meandi facultate, spiritus strangulatur'. [For the dumb do not exhibit a tongue which is restrained, as is commonly believed. Rather, they pour out that voice-bearing breath through their nostrils as if bellowing, either because the passage for the voice to the mouth is completely non-existent, or else it is not opening widely enough to send out the full voice. This normally happens by nature, but also it sometimes happens by chance that when this entrance has been closed up by some sickness, it does not send the voice to the tongue, and so makes dumb those who could speak. When this occurs, it is inevitable that the hearing also becomes blocked, so that since it
Joubert proceeds to discuss several strange medical phenomena in the field of surdo-mutism and language acquisition. For example, he refers to reliable reports of children who, having begun to learn to speak normally, 'deviennent muets par surdité'. In this connection, Joubert cites the case of the offspring of one Anthoine Butin, an apothecary from Toulouse. Although all this man's daughters developed normally, his sons became profoundly deaf at the age of about four years, and following this onset of deafness, also gradually lost the ability to speak, and finally became completely dumb.\textsuperscript{306}

Joubert also refers to cases in which people have lost the power of speech after receiving wounds to the head:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Gens graves et dignes de foi, tesmoignent avoir veu quelques uns blecez a la teste, d'une part et d'autre, et mesmes dans l'oeil (dequoy M. Rondelet racompte une histoire en sa pratique en l'appendice du chap. 21) qui oublierent jusques a leurs noms propres; et leur fallut enseigner toutes choses, comme a des enfans. Ainsi reviennent ils tous a la premiere condition d'un enfant de naissance: sauf du parler vulgaire, que quelques uns retiennent encore, mais les autres impressions des langues estrangeres, des arts et sciences apprines, de ce qu'ils ont veu et cogneu aupar-avant, toutes sont effacees de leur ame, par l'inondation et ravine du mal.}\textsuperscript{307}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{306} 'Ils parlent tous iusques environ les quatre ans: puis ils deviennent tellement sourds, qu'ils n'entendent aucun bruict, et petit à petit ils cessent de parler. C'est d'autant, que ne continuans plus d'oyur, ils oublient aisément ce peu de langage qu'ils avoyent appris éc premiers ans; comme l'enfant est fort oubieux, à cause de sa grande humidité, et ceux dudit Butin particulierement, qui sont fort rheumatics. Ainsi n'ayans plus le moyen de continuer d'apprendre à parler en oyant, ils deviennent muets', \textit{Erreurs Populaires}, p.602. See also Dubois, \textit{Mythe et langage...}, pp.100-101.

\textsuperscript{307} \textit{Erreurs Populaires}, p.604. The reference is to an appendix entitled 'De memoria immunita ob vulnera aut febres' in Rondelet's \textit{Methodus Curandorum Omnium Morborum}: 'Memoria minitur ob vulnera capitis non solum partis posterioris, sed etiam anteriors partis cerebri; ut observavimus in quodam, ex comitatu Vice-comitis Uticensis, valde erudite, et Graecis Latinisque litteris satis instructo, cui cum ensis oculum alté immisisquis fuisset, ob illud vulnera memoriwm omnino amisit, ut omnium litterarum obitus fuerit, coactusque post aliquot annos Lutetiam repeterit, ut ab elementis litteras disceret. Ego tamen existimo partem posteriores cerebri laesam fuisse. Nam cavitas oculorum alté descendit, et ad mediam usque regionem, vel ultra, penetrat, a qua regione initium spinalis medullae oritur, quae laesio est ventriculi posterioris, in quo sitam memoriam omni antiqui crediderunt'.

[The memory is impaired after wounds to the head, and not only after those to the rear
The doctor and natural historian Guillaume Rondelet (1507–1566) was a friend of Rabelais from the time of his first stay in Montpellier, and was the probable source of Rabelais’s character Doctor Rondibilis in the *Tiers Livre*.\(^\text{308}\) During the very episode which features Rondibilis, we are given an account of how a group of friends in Montpellier, including one François Rabelais, once acted in a farce about a man who had married a dumb woman. In this play, a doctor and a surgeon had cured the woman of her dumbness by cutting through an obstruction beneath her tongue.\(^\text{309}\)

Near the end of his treatise, Joubert considers the question of whether people who have been dumb since birth may suddenly become able to talk if they find themselves in a situation where it is imperative that they communicate vocally with others. Under these circumstances, says Joubert, a mute would make himself understood by inventing words on the spur of the moment. Even though these words might not form part of any known language, another person who heard them would be able to understand what the speaker meant simply because of the extreme urgency of the situation. At this point, Joubert seems to pre-empt the reader’s question by adding that if a dumb person who had also been deaf since birth (or who had never heard human speech) were to find himself in such a situation, he would not acquire the power of speech in this manner,

\(^{308}\) Portions of "Je ne vous avois onques puys veu que jouastez à Monspellier, aveques nos antiques amys Ant. Saporta, Guy Bouguier, Balthasar Noyer, Tollet, Jan Quentin, François Robinet, Jan Perdrier et François Rabelais, la morale comédie de celluy qui avoit espousé une femme mute. - Je y estois (dist Epistemon). Le bon mary voulut qu'elle parlast. Elle parla, par l'art du Medecin et du chirurgien qui luy coupperent un encyliglotte qu'elle avoit soubs la langue", *TL*, p.239.
because he would not even know that it was necessary for him to speak. Joubert gives a reference in the margin to his own *Traité du Ris* (1579), in which he mentions Herodotus's tale of the case of one of the sons of King Croesus. According to Herodotus, the king's son, who was a mute, shouted out to warn his father of an assassination attempt, and from that day forward was able to speak normally:

Herodote écrit et plusieurs après lui, que le fils de Croesus, étant muet d'un ampechement naturel, voyant son paire an dangier de mort, soudain vint à parler, et cria, *Homme, ne tue pas le Roy:* et que la reste de sa vie il parla bien distinctement. C'est que à la tres-grand frayeur survenant un tres-grand désir de parler, il put produire si grand effet.  

Pedro Mexia also reports the story of this son of King Croesus, adding to it an example of what might be considered a reversal of the phenomenon, in which another of the same king's sons was said to have spoken fluently when he was less than one day old:

*...* set semestris locutus est Croesi filius et in crepundias prodigio, quo tamen id concidit regnum* [... but Croesus had a son who spoke at six months and while still at the rattle stage, a portent that brought the whole of that realm to downfall], Pliny, *Historia Naturalium*, XI, chapter 112 (section 270), trans. by H. Rackham (L.C.L., 1940), vol. 3, 602-603.
Joubert also accepts that, in certain cases, children who are well below the normal age for talking may utter a few words, and then fall silent once again, before going on to acquire speech in the usual way: 'Semblablement il peut advenir qu'un enfant dira quelque chose, et puis la langue retournant en son état ordinaire, deviendra muette, jusques au dernier temps de sa perfection et force.'

★
★ ★

Ideas relating to the deaf and dumb occupy a position of central importance within the field of sixteenth-century linguistic theory. In the writings of many Renaissance authors, questions concerning the deaf and dumb are presented as having close links with the legend of King Psammeticus and with the study of the acquisition of speech in the very young. Many sixteenth-century authors discuss the nature and origin of the sign language used by this group, some following the ancients by examining the topic with reference to gestural communication in the animal world. The deaf and dumb were also of interest to writers with a knowledge of anatomy, who put forward theories based upon a combination of empirical medical evidence and myth in order to account for the existence of various types of surdo-mutism.

313 Erreurs Populaires, p.601. See also Dubois, Mythe et langage..., pp.133-136.
Chapter 4:

From Theory to Practice:

Propaganda Promoting the Use of the French Language

I. The Character and Status of the French Language in the Renaissance

A. The Defence of the Vernacular

In the Deffence et illustration de la langue françoyse, Joachim Du Bellay argues that the French language is in poor condition. He lays the blame for this on earlier generations of Frenchmen, whom he regards as the past guardians of the linguistic heritage of the nation.\textsuperscript{314} Because they attached relatively little importance to their native tongue, declares Du Bellay, users of French had to resort to using words and expressions

\textsuperscript{314} In this chapter, I shall use Du Bellay's Deffence et illustration de la langue françoyse as my point of reference, since it illustrates a number of general themes which will be discussed. The edition I have used is that edited by H. Chamard (Paris: Société des Textes Français Modernes, 1970).
which have been borrowed from other languages.\textsuperscript{315} Du Bellay seems especially irritated by the fact that even some native French-speakers had expressed a low opinion of their mother tongue, which did not help to ward off foreign accusations that French was an uncivilised language.\textsuperscript{316} Indeed, there appears to have been a widespread belief amongst sixteenth-century authors that the French tongue was limited by its restricted depth of vocabulary and expression, and that it lacked the dignity required for the discussion of weighty matters.

\textbf{i. French as a Vehicle for Science and Erudition}

Authors campaigning for a wider use of French felt obliged to defend their mother tongue against these charges. Du Bellay devotes part of a chapter of the \textit{Deffence} to the idea that 'la Langue Françoise n’est

\footnotesize

\textsuperscript{315} 'Et si nostre langue n’est si copieuse et riche que la Greque ou Latine, cela ne doit estre imputé au defaut d’icelle, comme si d’elle mesme elle ne pouvoit jamais estre si non pauvre et sterile: mais bien on le doit attribuer à l’ignorance de notz majeurs, qui ayans (comme dict quelqu’un, parlant des anciens Romains) en plus grande recommandation le bien faire que le bien dire, et mieux aymans laisser à leur posterité les exemples de vertu que les preceptes, se sont privez de la gloire de leurs bien faitz et nous du fruict de l’imitation d’icieux: et par mesme moyen nous ont laissé nostre langue si pauvre et nue, qu’elle a besoin des ornementz et (s’il faut ainsi parler) des plumes d’autruy'. \textit{Deffence}, pp.22-23. As Chamard observes (\textit{Deffence}... p.23, n.4), the same image of borrowed feathers is employed by Antoine Fouquelin in his \textit{La Rhetorique Françoise} to illustrate a similar point: 'Mais en ce (MADAME) il plaira A votre grandeur, ex-cuser la pauvreté de notre langue, qui n’estant ещеs encores k grand peine sortie hors d’enfance, est si mal garnie de tout ce qu’il luy faut, qu’elle est contrainte d’emprunter les vestemens et (s’il faut ainsi parler) les plumes d’autruy pour ce farder et acoutrer', A. Fouquelin, \textit{La Rhetorique Françoise} (Paris: A. Wechel, 1557), p.4, from the preface.

In view of the important role played by the \textit{Deffence} in encouraging French linguistic nationalism, there is a certain irony in the fact that Du Bellay derived much of the material for this work from the Italian author Sperone Speroni, whose \textit{Dialogo delle Lingue} (Venice: Aldus, 1542) had advocated that the Tuscan dialect should be used throughout Italy (see Rickard, \textit{History}..., p.90). However, as Rickard points out (\textit{Langue}..., p.4), there was an important difference between the Italian questione della lingue (of which Speroni’s work formed part) and the debate which took place in France concerning the use of the vulgar tongue. In both countries the question was, of course, whether or not the vulgar tongue ought to be used in place of Latin. In Italy, however, if a decision were to be made in favour of the more widespread use of the vernacular, a further problem would have to be addressed: which of the rival dialects of the vernacular should be chosen to succeed Latin? In France this problem did not arise because the \textit{francien} dialect had long been dominant.

\textsuperscript{316} 'Ces raysons me semblent suffisantes de faire entendre à tout equitable estimateur des choses, que nostre Langue (pour avoir été nommés barbares [sic] ou de noz ennemys ou de ceux qui n’avoyt loy de nous bailler ce nom) ne doit pourtant estre deprisée, mesmes de ceux aux quelz elle est propre et naturelle, et qui en rien ne sont moindres que les Grecz ou Romains', \textit{Deffence}..., p.21. Later in the same work, Du Bellay offers an explanation for this sort of behaviour by suggesting that some French authors might hold their mother tongue in low esteem because they mastered it in their childhood with much less difficulty than one masters either Greek or Latin (\textit{Deffence}..., p.82).
incapable de la Philosophie'. 317 Ambroise Paré, the renowned royal surgeon, mentions in a preface that he has been criticised for writing his medical works in the vulgar tongue on the grounds that by so doing he had placed the standing of his profession at risk. Paré, however, remains unconvinced by such criticisms: 'Pourquoy [...] ne me sera-il permis d'escrire en ma langue Françoise, laquelle est autant noble que nulle autre estrangere?' He maintains that, if anything, his decision to write in French would make the science of medicine accessible to more people, and would thereby bring to it a greater respect and prestige.318

The question of the relative weight and authority of French and Latin is also mentioned by Montaigne in his chapter 'De la praesumption'. Montaigne confesses in passing that he, like children and the common people, feels seduced by the dignity of Latin, and is therefore apt to give it more respect than it perhaps deserves.319 This statement would seem to be borne out by his comments at the beginning of the 'Apologie de Raimond Sebond'. Here, during a discussion about the problems raised by the process of translation, Montaigne argues that, when dealing with a classical author who has contributed much to the grace and elegance of his language, it is dangerous to attempt to translate his work, especially if the translation is to be done into what Montaigne calls 'un idiome plus faible'. This expression is clearly a reference to the French language, since it occurs in the context of Montaigne's reasons for making his own translation

317 Deffence..., p.58.

318 'Or disent-ils que je ne devoy escrire en François, et que par ce moyen la Medecine en seroit tenue à mespris: ce que me semble le contraire: car ce que j'en ay faict, est plusost pour la magnifier et honorer [...] Et faut entendre que les sciences, tant plus elles sont connues de plusieurs, tant plus elles sont louees: veu que science et vertu n'ont plus grand ennemy qu'ignorance. D'avantage, je demanderoy volontiers, si la philosophie d'Aristote, la Medecine du divin Hippocrates et de Galien, ont esté obscuries et amoindries, pour avoir esté traduites de Grec, en Latin', A. Paré, Oeuvres (Paris: G. Buon, 1575), fol. C11, from the preface.

319 'Les polices, les moeurs loingtaines me flattent, et les langues; et m'appercroy que le Latin me pippe à sa faveur par sa dignité, au dela de ce qui luy appartient, comme aux enfants et au vulgaire', Essais, p.634. Montaigne states that Latin was the only language he heard until he was six years old, and that he probably acquired it relatively easily (pp.173-174).
ii. The Vernacular in French Education

Several Renaissance authors write of their concern that, as a result of widely-held prejudices about the relative merits of French and Latin, the education system in France was devoting too much time and effort to teaching the classical tongues and too little to instruction in the vernacular. For example, in the dedicatory letter which precedes his translation of the *Ars Poetica*, the French poet and mathematician Jacques Peletier du Mans (1517–1582) states that the French language is held in contempt by his fellow countrymen, who, he says, spend much of their time keeping up their Greek and Latin. Because of this, many learned and intelligent men are unaccustomed to using their native tongue, and commit serious errors when they speak and write in it. Peletier cites this as the main reason why the writers of his day cannot compete with the Ancients on stylistic grounds, and follows a number of other writers in referring to the example of the Romans, who, despite their admiration for the Greek culture, gave priority to the promotion of their own language.\(^{321}\)

Montaigne is another who is concerned at the relatively large amount of time which was being devoted to the teaching of the classics. For him, the most important thing is to have a grasp of the language which one uses to conduct one's everyday business:

\(^{320}\) 'Or quelques jours avant sa mort, mon père, ayant de fortune rencontré ce livre sous un tas d'autres papiers abandonnez, me commanda de le lui mettre en François. Il faict bon traduire les auteurs comme celui-là, où il n'y a guère que la matière à représenter; mais en ceux qui ont donné beaucoup à la grace et à l'elegance du langage, ils sont dangereux à entreprendre: nommément pour les rapporter à un idiome plus faible', *Essais*, pp.439-440. It is also worth bearing in mind that Montaigne's intention in writing the 'Apologie de Raimond Sebond' was probably partly polemical: his aim was to give wider currency to his own ideas and those of Sebond through an exercise in disputation and rhetoric couched in the vulgar tongue. In this sense, his motives may be compared to those of less subtle propagandists who tried to reach the widest possible readership in the important question of faith.

\(^{321}\) *Art Poétique*, ff.3⁰-6⁰.
Du Bellay also attacks this tendency among his fellow-countrymen to reject their mother-tongue in favour of Greek and Latin, arguing that it is foolish and illogical to harbour unfounded prejudices about the merit and potential of the French language.323

iii. The Right to Use the Vernacular

Earlier in the century, a note of proud defiance had been sounded by the scholar and printer Geofroy Tory. Comparing his own situation to that of the Roman author Vitruvius, Tory maintained that nothing would prevent him from writing in his native French if that was what he wished to do:

Contre les mal disans useray d'une belle devise ancienne, et diray Αἴσθωσι τὸ θέλων, λέγετωσαν οὐ μελέτη μοι. [...] C' est à dire: Ils disent ce qu'ils veulent, et bien, Je ne m'en soucie [...] Pour chose qu'ils puissent dire je ne lairray a escrire en François, les avertissant que Vitruve fut jadis reprins et mocqué, pource que luy n'estant Grec de nativité, escrivoit en vocables Graecz.324

A similar plea for the freedom to be able to speak one's native tongue is

322 Essais, p.173, from 'De l'institution des enfans'.

323 'A ce propos, je ne puis assez blamer la sotte arrogance at temerité d'aucuns de notre nation, qui n'étans riens moins que Grecz ou Latins, deprisent et rejetent d'un sourcil plus que stoïque toutes choses ecrites en Francois: et ne me puys assez esmerveiller de l'étrange opinion d'aucuns sçavans, qui pensent que nostre vulgaire soit incapable de toutes bonnes lettres et erudition: comme si une invention pour le Languaige seulement devoit estre jugée bonne ou mauvaise', Deffence..., pp.13-14. Despite this criticism, Du Bellay later tells his reader not to be surprised if he experiences such prejudices against French, because the reputation of the language is being tarnished by a large number of new and ignorant authors, whose efforts only lend weight to the view that French is incapable of greater things (Deffence..., p.175).

324 Tory, Champfleury (1529), p.3.
made by the French grammarian and orthographical reformer Louis Meigret (1510[?]–after 1560) in the following passage from his *Defenses*, in which the author displays a highly utilitarian and non-platonic approach to the question of the origins of language:

Le' voes dont nou' compozons le' parolles sont naturelles a l'home: e le' lettres e leur assemblenment, sont inventées pour etre notes, et images d'elles, et de' vocables, qe selon la diversité de' contrées qi caoze divers langajes opulens, ou pouvres, les peuples ont inventé, par un commun consentement en leur signification: a celle fin qe par une comun' intelligence d'eus, il' pusset vivre, trafiger, e converser ensemble. Ao demourant ou a' tu trouve loe, ne ordonnance de Dieu, ne de nature par laquelle, le Françoës soet tenuz de parler Grec, Latin, Hespañol, ne Italien.\(^{325}\)

A similarly anti-Platonic attitude is displayed by Du Bellay at the beginning of the *Deffence*:

Si la Nature (dont quelque personnaige de grand' renomee non sans rayson a douté si on la devoit appeller mere ou maratre) eust donné aux hommes un commun vouloir et consentement, outre les innumerables commoditez qui en feussent procedées, l'inconstance humaine n'eust eu besoing de se forger tant de manières de parler. Laquelle diversité et confusion se peut à bon droit appeller la Tour de Babel. Donques les Langues ne sont nées d'elles mesmes en façon d'herbes, racines et arbres: les unes infirmes et debiles en leurs espèces: les autres saines et robustes, et plus aptes à porter le faiz des conceptions humaines: mais toute leur vertu est née au monde du vouloir et arbitre des mortelz. Cela (ce me semble) est une grande rayson pourquoi on ne doit ainsi louer une Langue et blamer l'autre: veu qu'elles viennent toutes d'une mesme source et origine: c'est la fantaisie des hommes: et ont été formées d'un mesme jugement à une mesme fin: c'est pour signifier entre nous les conceptions et intelligences de l'esprit.\(^{326}\)

A stronger and more overtly propagandist approach is taken by Estienne Pasquier (1529–1615) in a letter to Adrianus Turnebus, professor

---

\(^{325}\) *Defenses de Louis Meigret touchant son Orthographie Frangoeze contre les censures e calônies de Glaumalis du Vezelet, e de ses adherans* (Paris: C. Wechel, 1550), fol. Biii\(^e\).

\(^{326}\) *Deffence...*, pp. 11–13.
of Greek at the Sorbonne.\textsuperscript{327} Pasquier's tone is one of frustration:

Et bien, vous estes donc d'opinion, que c'est perte de temps et de papier de rediger nos conceptions en nostre vulgaire, pour en faire part au public, estant d'avis que nostre langage est trop bas pour recevoir de nobles inventions, ains seulement destine pour le commerce de noz affaires domestiques: mais que si nous couvons rien de beau dans noz poictrines, il le faut exprimer en latin. Quant à moy, je seray toujours pour le party de ceux qui favorisent leur vulgaire [...]. Quoy? nous porterons donc le nom de Francoys, c'est à dire francs et libres et neanmoins nous assortirons nos esprits sous une parolle aulbaine?\textsuperscript{328}

Amongst the authors who took part in the debate about the merits of the vernacular and the classical tongue, the humanist scholar and printer Etienne Dolet (1509–1546) is a somewhat unusual case, for during the years 1538–1540 he appears to have undergone a 'conversion' from commentator on the Latin language to propagandist for the vernacular. The speed of this change is puzzling, and has been explained by Dolet's desire to publicise his own name within France, instead of restricting himself to writing for the intellectual Latin-speaking elite.\textsuperscript{329} Yet Dolet did not wholly abandon his interest in Latin during these years of transformation. Rather, he appears to have continued to research the final volume of his \textit{Commentarii Linguae Latinae}, while also working on the \textit{Orateur François} – a radically comprehensive attempt to describe the many aspects of the

\textsuperscript{327} The humanist scholar Turnebus is mentioned on several occasions by Montaigne, who pays tribute to the depth of his erudition and the clarity of his judgement, describing him as the greatest literary figure of the age: 'Qui regardera de bien pres à ce genre de gens, qui s'estand bien loing, il trouvera, comme moy, que le plus souvent ils ne s'entendent, ny autruy, et qu'ils ont la souvenance assez pleine, mais le jugement entierement creux, sinon que leur nature d'elle mesme le leur ait autrement façonné: comme j'ay veu Adrianus Turnebus, qui, n'ayant fait autre profession que de lettres, en laquelle e' estoit, à mon opinion, le plus grand homme qui fut il y a mil' ans, n'avoit toutesfois rien de pedantesque que le port de sa robe, et quelque façon externe, qui pouvoit n'estre pas civilisée à la courtisane, qui sont choses de neant. Et hai nos gens qui supportent plus malaysement une robe qu'une ame de travers, et regardent à sa reverence, à son maintien et à ses bottes, quel homme il est. Car au dedans c'estoit l'amé la plus polie du monde. Je l'ay souvent à mon esciant jetté en propos eslongez de son usage; il y voyoit si cier, d'une apprehension si prompte, d'un jugement si sain, qu'il semboit qu'il n'eut jamais faict autre mestier que la guerre et affaires d'Estat', \textit{Essais}, p.139, from 'Du pedantisme'.


vernacular. In 1540, in a letter to Guillaume Du Bellay which prefaces his
La Manière de bien traduire d'une langue en aultr (1540), Dolet pre-empts
his readers' surprise by giving the reasons for his 'conversion' to the
campaign for the wider use of French:

Je n'ignore pas (Seigneur par gloire immortel) que plusieurs
ne s'esbahissent grandement de voir sortir de moy ce present
Oeuvre, attendu que par le passé j'ai fait, et fais encore maintenant
profession totale de la langue Latine. Mais à cecy je donne deux
raisons. L'une, que mon affection est telle envers l'honneur de mon
pays que je veulx trouver tout moyen de l'illustrer. Et ne le puis
myeulx faire que de celebrer sa langue, comme ont fait les Grecs et
Romains la leur. L'autre raison est que non sans exemple de
plusieurs je m'addonne à ceste exercitation. Quant aux Antiques, tant
Grecs que Latins, ilz n'ont prins aultre instrument de leur eloquence
que la langue maternelle.330

B. The Increasing Use of the Vernacular

i. The Speed of Change

The reputation enjoyed by Latin for being an unchanging language
was rather misleading, as the Renaissance humanists showed when they
compared the Latin of the scholastics to that written in Cicero's time.
Influenced by the European vernaculars, and (as the humanists saw it)
riddled with jargon, it had developed into a distorted version of the
classical tongue.331 The volatility of the French language, on the other
hand, was widely acknowledged. In his chapter 'De la vanité', Montaigne

330 E. Dolet, La Manière de bien traduire d'une langue en aultr (Lyon: E. Dolet, 1540), ff.a2-a3.

331 However, the changes which had taken place in the Latin language should not be seen
as negative in character. Change had also been necessary to the survival of Latin (Rickard,
Langue..., pp.1-2).
remarks that changes in the vernacular had taken place with such speed in recent years that if an author chose to write in French, he could be fairly certain that in fifty years' time, his work would not be understood. Montaigne also emphasizes that any fixity apparent in the vernacular is quite illusory:

J'escris mon livre à peu d'hommes et à peu d'années. Si ç'eust esté une matièvre de durée, il l'eust fallu commettre à un langage plus ferme. Selon la variation continuelle qui a suivi le nostre jusques à cette heure, qui peut esperer que sa forme presente soit en usage, d'icy à cinquante ans? Il escoule tous les jours de nos mains et depuis que je vis s'est alteré de moitie. Nous disons qu'il est à cette heure parfaict. Autant en dict du sien chaque siecle. Je n'ay garde de l'en tenir là tant qu'il fuira et se difformera comme il fait. C'est aux bons et utiles escrits de le clouer à eux, et ira son credit selon la fortune de nostre estat.332

The last sentence of this passage expresses Montaigne's belief that changes in the political fortunes of a nation are reflected by corresponding changes in the reputation of its language. Such a belief represents a rare appeal to an objective criterion (as opposed to the numerous subjective schools of thought which argue, for example, that the French language would be in some way either 'better' or 'worse' if new forms were added, or if the language were to be standardised).333

Geofroy Tory was one of the earliest yet most ardent supporters of the idea that the French language should be more widely recognised as a vehicle for literature and learning. He stresses in his Champfleury (1529) the need to discourage the 'corruption' of French, not only from Italian and Spanish sources, but also from the activities of various 'Escumeurs de Latin, Plaisanteurs, et Iargonneurs'.334 The way to avoid such deteriora-

332 Essais, p.382, from 'De la vanité'. In the sentence 'Nous disons qu'il est à cette heure parfaict', Montaigne may be alluding to the high praises of the vernacular written by authors such as Du Bellay (see below, n.360).

333 Rickard, Langue..., 1-2. See below, pp.155ff.

334 Champfleury, fol. Aviiife, from the preface.
tion, according to Tory, was for someone to establish a set of rules which could be used to describe and define the language:

Please a Dieu que quelque Noble cueur sempleyast a mettre et ordonner par Reigle nostre Langage Francois. Ce seroit moyen que maints Milliers d'hommes se everturoient a souvent user de belles et bonnes parolles. Si ny est mys et ordonne on trouvera que de Cinquante Ans en Cinquante Ans la [...] Langue Francoise, pour la plus grande part, sera changee et pervertie. Le langage d'aujourd'hui est change en mille façons du Langage qui estoit il y a Cinquante Ans ou environ.335

Tory's wish that the language should remain unchanged over long periods of time demonstrates his extreme conservatism. His position contrasts with the more liberal approach of authors such as Du Bellay, who saw the process of linguistic evolution as necessary for the improvement of the vernacular.

Among the reasons Tory puts forward for writing his Champfleury in the vernacular is that he wished his work to be read not only by the classically-educated minority, but also by the French-speaking masses:

J'en eusse traite et escript en latin, comme je pourrois bien faire, ce croy-je, et comme on peut cognostre aux petitz œuvres latins que j'ay fait imprimer et mis devant les yeulx des bons estudians, tant en metre qu'en prose. Mais voulant quelque peu decorer nostre langue Frangoise, et afin qu'avec gens de bonnes lettres le peuple en puisse user, j'en veulx escrire en François.336

Such populist sentiments, together with a sense that having only one language as the medium for learned debate tended to constrain the expression of the various fields of human knowledge, also lay behind the decision of some authors to write in French. The royal surgeon Ambroise

---

335 Champfleury, fol. Aviii. These remarks of Tory's are strikingly similar to Montaigne's comments about the changing French language. The fact that these two authors, writing almost exactly fifty years apart, use similar French tends to disprove their own arguments, although, of course, it also illustrates the great progress which was made in the flexibility of the vernacular during this half-century.

336 Champfleury, p.2.
Paré (1510–1590) gives the following reasons for choosing the vernacular:

Je n'ay voulu aussi l'escrire en autre langage que le vulgaire de nostre nation, ne voulant estre de ces curieux, et par trop superstitieux, qui veulent cabaliser les arts, et les serrer sous les loix de quelque langue particuliere, entant que j'ay apprins que les sciences sont composees de choses, non de paroles, et que les sciences sont de l'essence: les paroles, pour exprimer et signifier.\(^337\)

Estienne Pasquier is another whose work shows an awareness of linguistic change, and of the way in which such change could be influenced by the political fortunes of nations. Pasquier illustrates this process of change using the conventional image of a river which, although it always looks the same at any point on its course, is really changing all the time as its waters are continually replaced.\(^338\) Pasquier seems to accept that languages need to adapt, and is not averse to the practice of 'borrowing' from other languages, provided that the words or expressions appropriated are of sufficient quality. Indeed, he encourages his readers to create new metaphors taken from all walks of life so that the French vernacular may be made more perfect and polished. In his quest for unity and purity in French, Pasquier also asks that these readers 'se donnent loy de fureter par toutes les autres langues de nostre France, et rapportent à nostre vulgaire tout ce qu'ils trouveront digne d'y estre approprié'.\(^339\)

A plea for the standardisation of the French language is made by

\(^337\) A. Paré, Oeuvres, fol. e111. These last remarks of Paré's reveal an essentially instrumentalist view of language which is shared by several propagandists for the French vernacular. They might be compared, for example, to the opening sentence of Montaigne's 'De la gloire': 'Il y a le nom et la chose: le nom, c'est une voix qui remarque et signifie la chose; le nom, ce n'est pas une partie de la chose ny de la substance, c'est une piece estrangere joincte à la chose, et hors d'elle', Essais, p.618.


\(^339\) Lettre à Monsieur de Querquifinen, Seigneur d'Ardivilliers, in Les Lettres d'Estienne Pasquier (Paris: A. l'Angelier, 1586), ff.51v–54v. This letter (Livre 11, lettre 12) is reproduced in Estienne Pasquier: Choix de lettres..., pp.88–94; also in Rickard, Langue..., 240–244. The poet and translator Claude de Kerquifinen was a member of a Breton family which had lived in Paris since the beginning of the sixteenth century (see Choix de lettres..., 94 and n.4, p.95). Pasquier may therefore be referring partly to the Breton dialect.
Peletier du Mans in the preface to his translation of Horace's *Ars Poetica*, although Peletier is more concerned with the issue of spelling reform than with either vocabulary or grammar. Peletier asks that a single spelling, one which is 'aucunement diverse de celle qui est vulgairement pratiquée', should be adopted for each word:

pour éviter superfluïté, laquelle sans ce qu'en toutes choses est reprenable, tient nostre langue Francoise en subjection, si bien qu'elle la garde de passer aux nations étrangées [...] [et] pour commencer a regler et mettre au net notre langage, et faire a tout povoir que prononciation pareille n'ait orthographe diverse qui est le plus expeditif moien qui puisse aquerir honneur et maiesté à une langue, comme on voit de la Greque et de la Latine, desquelles l'orthographe est la prononciation mesme sinon qu'elle est mue.340

This is another example of the theme of resistance to linguistic change which runs through the work of several writers of the period, and which may be seen as a precursor of the search by the Académie Française for the perfect form of the language which, once developed, could be preserved.

ii. The Role of Latinate Forms

A number of Renaissance writers expressed their dislike of the practice of imposing Latin forms upon the French language, and of inventing 'Latin-sounding' words in French. Some of these writers, as may be seen from their work as a whole, had a great admiration for Latin, and were certainly not advocating that French should replace it completely. Rather, their complaints were directed against affectation and pomposity, and in general it was their wish to promote a vocabulary based upon normal French usage.

340 *Art Poétique*, 'Au Lecteur', ff.Aii*-Aiii*.
Rabelais was among those who attacked this type of artificial Latinate French. An example of this is the Ecolier Limousin episode in Pantagruel, in which the hero and his companions greet the scholar, but are unable to understand a single word of his reply. Pantagruel wonders, 'Quel diable de langaige est cecy? Par Dieu, tu es quelque hereticque.'\textsuperscript{341} There follows another long outburst from the écolier, which ends in typical fashion:

Bien est vériforme que, à cause que Mammone ne supergurgite point en mes locules, je suis quelque peu rare et lend à superéroger les éleemosymes à ces égènes quérilans leur stipe hostiatement.

Pantagruel answers:

-Ét bren, bren! [...] qu’est ce que veult dire ce fol? Je croy qu’il nous forge icy quelque langaige diabolicque, et qu’il nous cherme comme enchanteur." A quoy dist ung de ses gens: "Seigneur, sans nulle doubté, ce galant veult contrefaire la langue des Parisiens; mais il ne faict que escorcher le latin, et cuyde ainsi pindariser, et luy semble bien qu’il est quelque grand orateur en frangois, parce qu’il dédaigne l’usance commun de parler."\textsuperscript{342}

On one level, this is a comic episode, in which the absurd pretentiousness of the scholar is exposed to ridicule. Indeed, the reader is invited to laugh when the écolier, faced with threats of a beating from Pantagruel, becomes so frightened that he messes his trousers and lapses into his native limousin patois. However, the fact that Rabelais places in Pantagruel's mouth such expressions as 'diable' and 'enchanteur' shows his concern at the possibility that words which have been emptied of their meaning may be used to confuse or deceive. This passage also brings to mind Pantagruel's criticism of Panurge in the Tiers Livre ('l'esprit maling vous seduyt'), when Panurge is accused of having fallen under the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{341} Pantagruel, pp.32-33.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{342} Pantagruel, p.33.}
influence of the Devil because he repeatedly misuses words in order to twist arguments around. Of course, Panurge and the écolier limousin differ greatly in the ways in which they misuse language, but the speeches of both characters share this element of deceit. In the Ecolier Limousin episode, Rabelais implies that French should not be distorted by the imposition of Latin forms, and that the best course is to allow the language to evolve naturally by adopting normal usage.

Some of the writers who were campaigning for greater priority to be given to the French language in educated circles felt that the dignity and authority of Latin were being exploited by certain ostentatious individuals. Montaigne, for example, criticises pretentious and wordy speakers of Latin on more than one occasion; while in his Oraison au Roy, the poet Jacques Tahureau (1527-1555) expresses his annoyance at those who use Latin in an attempt to disguise their ignorance, when they have not even learnt the basic rules of their mother-tongue.

On the question of whether French should 'borrow' words from other languages in order to enrich its own vocabulary, Estienne Pasquier suggests that each expression ought to be judged upon its own merits, and that a decision should then be reached about whether it is suitable for...

343 TL, p.139. See also Screech, Rabelais, pp.244-245.
344 Du Bellay's notion of what constitutes the best form of 'illustration' is exemplified by the 'Briefve Declaration' at the end of Rabelais's Quart Livre. In this short glossary, which is now thought not to be by Rabelais himself (see QL, note on p.267; also R. Arveiller, 'La Briefve Declaration est-elle de Rabelais?', in ER, 5 (1964), 9-10), the meanings are explained of words and phrases which were not in normal usage, including many proper names and some of Rabelais's invented terms.
345 For example: 'Qu'il oste son chapperon, sa robbe et son latin; qu'il ne batte pas nos aureilles d'Aristote tout pur et tout cru, vous le prendrez pour l'un d'entre nous, ou pis. Il me semble, de cette implication et entrelasseure de langage, par oïl ils nous pressent, qu'il en va comme des joueurs de passe-passe: leur soupplesse combat et force nos sens, mais elle n'esbranle aucunement nostre creance; hors ce bastelage, ils ne font rien qui ne soit commun et vile. Pour estre plus sçavans, ils n'en sont pas moins ineptes', Essais, pp.926-927, from 'De l'art de conferer'.
346 'Je ne me sqauroy tenir de dire icy un mot a je ne sçay quelz affectez latineurs lesquelz apres avoyr tant soyt peu vaqué en la langue Latine pensent à tous les mots qu'ils jargonnet parler tousjours par l'esprit de Ciceron, comme s'il étot vray-s semblable qu'ils peussent bien dire en une langue estrangere et laquelle ilz ne scavent encore à grand peine qu'à credit, vee qu'en celle qui leur est naturelle, celle qu'ilz ont du apprendre dès le laict de la nourrice, et ou ilz ont esté entretenuz toute leur vie à peine sçauoyent ilz dire troys motz sans s'y montrer apprentiz', J. Tahureau, Oraison au Roy (Paris: M. de la Porte, 1555), p.6. This passage immediately precedes that cited below, n.379.
inclusion in the language. After mentioning the example of Petrarch, who was said to have appropriated for the Italian language several words of Provençal during the time he spent in Avignon, Pasquier urges his readers to adopt those words which they themselves consider to be the most deserving cases:

Le semblable devons nous faire chacun de nous en nostre endroict pour l'ornement de nostre langue, et nous aider mesmes du Grec et du Latin, non pour les escorcher ineptement, comme feit sur nostre jeune aage Helisaine, dont nostre gentil Rabelais s'est mocqué fort à propos en la personne de l'escolier Limousin, qu'il introduit parlant à Pantagruel en un escorche-latin. Mais avec telle sobriété, que comme le bon estomac qui ne se charge point mal à propos de viandes ne les rend morceau par morceau, ains les digère et transforme en un sang pur, qui s'estend et distribue par toutes les veines, jettant le marc és lieux les plus vils: aussi nous digerions et transformions doucement en nostre langue ce que trouverons pouvoir faire du Grec et Latin, et ce qui sera insolent, que les rejettions liberalement, faisants ce perpetuel jugement en nous, qu'il y a plusieurs choses bien-seantes en chaque langue, qui seroient de mauvaise grace en la nostre.347

iii. The Development of Monolingual Dictionaries

An important contribution to the changes in attitude towards the European vernaculars which took place during the sixteenth century was made by the development of printed monolingual dictionaries.348

The first extant word-list dates from the seventh century BC, and several lexicons were compiled in Greek, notably in the second century AD. However, from the time of Varro's work on etymology, it was the Latin dictionaries which had the greatest influence, and which later became the

---

347 Lettre à Monsieur Querquifinen (in Les Lettres d'Estienne Pasquier, ff.52v-53r). Pasquier implies that the decision on whether or not a particular word is suitable for inclusion in the French language should be taken by each individual speaker of French, rather than by a collective will. This makes his position very different from that of the 'conservationists'. Thickett points out that Pasquier's reference to Hélisene de Crenne is to the Angoisses d'Amour (Paris: A. l'Angelier, 1543), which contains a large number of words of Latin root. See Estienne Pasquier: Choix de lettres, p.96, n.11.

348 This section has been compiled from material in Harris, pp.127-135.
models for the lexicographers of the Middle Ages. From the seventh century AD, the practice grew up of writing interlinear glosses at places in the text where difficult words needed to be explained. When such glosses were collected together in a separate manuscript, the first bilingual dictionaries came into being.

With the invention of printing, dictionaries became more common, and took on a new authority. The first bilingual glossary to be printed was Caxton's French–English vocabulary for travellers, which appeared in about 1480.349 By the mid-sixteenth century, several vocabularies in French and Latin, English and Latin, and English and French, had been produced, together with the first monolingual dictionaries in the vernacular tongues of Europe.

The need for monolingual dictionaries in the European languages arose out of the new pride of the European nations in their political and cultural independence. As more and more material began to be written in the languages of the common people, it became important to have a standard repository of words in use, with explanations of their meanings. But the monolingual dictionary, which had been intended as a simple aid to understanding, had a profound effect upon its users, initiating basic changes in attitudes towards language.350

Most basic of all was the layout of the dictionary, which divided each entry into two components: form and meaning (the Saussurean signifiant and signifié). By explaining words in terms of other words of the same language, dictionaries flew in the face of surrogationalist thought, by eliminating the need for non-verbal meanings. Indeed, the arrival of monolingual dictionaries formed part of a movement which could be seen as being inspired by instrumentalist theory, according to which language is

---

349 Caxton's word-list was adapted from the Livre des Mestiers, a fourteenth-century list of words and dialogues in French and Flemish.

350 For an explanation of this process, see Harris, pp.129-131.
first and foremost a tool for communication. By extension, the new dictionaries presumably encouraged any change which made that process easier by catering for the linguistic needs of the community.

Another division brought about by the coming of the dictionary was in the presentation of the lexical and grammatical elements of language. Early grammarians such as Dionysius Thrax had classified word-groups according to considerations of syntax, morphology, and meaning, with the result that words had little individual status of their own. However, during the Renaissance the situation moved closer to that which exists today, when morphology and syntax are to be found in the grammar-book, while form and meaning remain the preserve of the dictionary.

In addition to these changes, the dictionaries that began to appear in the Renaissance exercised what might be called a 'limiting effect' on vocabulary. Whereas in practice a particular word might be common, uncommon, rare, or almost unheard of, in the dictionary it is either there or it is not. The desire to create a standard repository of words led to a tendency to favour literary and written usage to the exclusion of colloquialisms, and created a finite list - a 'closed system' as Harris puts it - of expressions deemed to be acceptable by the lexicographer. This naturally encouraged the idea that some usages were superior to others, and, more importantly, that anything which was not in the dictionary was either wrong, or simply did not exist. Dictionaries have always had a conservative effect by establishing what is seen as a fixed 'correct' usage, but are less conservative than the habit of looking back at how words had been used by authors of previous centuries, which had been the usual practice from classical times until dictionaries came into general circulation.

The invention of monolingual dictionaries had a strong effect on the way people thought about their national language. From being a mere tool with which to understand words, a language also became the very symbol of the linguistic identity of a nation. It was realised that a language could
be self-contained, that it did not need to fall back on non-verbal substitutes for words, and that for it to be workable, the only condition to be fulfilled was that it should serve the needs of the people who spoke it.
II. Proposals for Increasing the Status of the French Language

A. *Imitatio* and Translation

Renaissance authors who chose to write their works in French were faced with the problem of how to express themselves in an elegant and distinctive style which would attract recognition for the vernacular, and would establish its identity as a medium for the publication of great literary works. Those who analysed this problem believed that the solution lay in the two processes of *imitatio* and translation.\(^{351}\)

i. *Imitatio*

In an age which had opened up access to the original Greek and Latin texts from classical times, the most obvious literary figures to emulate were the ancients. If a French author wishing to compose in the vernacular were to adopt one or more classical writers as his model, he would not only derive benefit by producing work of a higher quality, but would also be doing a great service to the French language.

Du Bellay believed that if the stature of the vernacular was to be increased so that the language could be in a position to compete with its more prestigious rivals, it was necessary for authors writing in French to apply the principles of *imitatio*. According to these principles (which Du Bellay saw as superior to those of simple, slavish, word-for-word

---

\(^{351}\) In compiling this section, I have made extensive use of Grahame Castor's *Fléiaide Poetics* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1984), chapter 6: 'Imitation of Model Authors', pp.63-76.
a writer should select what he judges to be the best attributes of his model author, and should then incorporate these into his own compositions by a process of subconscious assimilation and reminiscence. Drawing a parallel with the roles played by Virgil and Cicero in the field of Latin literature, Du Bellay discourages authors who wish to write in the vernacular from using past generations of French writers as their models, a practice which he dismisses as incestuous and of little benefit to French, compared to the rich pickings which could be gleaned from the ancients. According to Du Bellay, although *imitatio* is a difficult skill to master, it is one of the most important for an author who wishes his work to contribute to the renown of the French language:

Car il n'y a point de doute que la plus grand' part de l'artifice ne soit contenue en l'imitation, et tout ainsi que ce feut le plus louable aux Anciens de bien inventer, aussi est ce le plus utile de bien immiter, mesmes à ceux dont la Langue n'est encor'bienn copieuse et riche. Mais entende celuy qui voudra immiter, que ce n'est chose facile de bien syvvre les vertuz d'un bon aucteur, et quasi comme se transformer en luy, veu que la Nature mesmes aux choses qui paroissent tressembleables, n'a sceu tant faire, que par

---

352 *Deffence...*, p.90. See also Castor, *Pleiade Poetics*, pp.68-69. Terence Cave stresses that it is important to reassess Du Bellay's optimism concerning the principles of *imitatio* in the context of the opening lines of the *Deffence*, where he formulates a more general theory of language. Here, using the image of the Tower of Babel to describe the present state of linguistic diversity and confusion, Du Bellay proceeds to argue that languages are not of natural origin, but arise from human convention. No language is more valid than another, and the illustration of a particular language is entirely dependent on human will. See *Deffence*, pp.11-13; and above, p.159.

Cave comments that Nature, represented as a continuous and universal presence, is here contrasted with human languages, the diversity of which is a product of the *vouloir* or *fantaisie* of men, and all of which are equal in worth. He points out that this theme, which is the first occurrence in the *Deffence* of the distinction between nature and art (things and words), furnishes Du Bellay with an argument against translation. The ideal of producing a translation which mirrors exactly the meaning, style, and vividness of the original text, proposed by Thomas Sebillet, is impossible to attain because of the irreversible divorce between nature and languages based upon convention. See T. Sébillet, *Art Poétique François* (1548), ed. by F. Gaiffe (Paris: Société des Textes Français Modernes, 1910), pp.189-190. Cave points out (pp.56-57) that Du Bellay's use of the Tower of Babel image to symbolise this divorce would not seem to warrant his optimistic view of the benefits of *imitatio*. See T. Cave, *The Cornucopian Text* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1979), pp.67-68.

353 'Je t'admonest duques (ô toy, qui desires l'accroissement de ta Langue, et veux excelire en icelle) de non immiter à pié levé [...] les plus fameuses aucteurs d'icelle, ainsi que font ordinairement la plus part de notz poëtes Francoys, chose certes autant vicieuse, comme de nul profit à nostre vulgaire: veu que ce n'est autre chose (ô grande liberalité!) si non luy donner ce qui estoit à luy. Je voudroy' bien que nostre Langue feust si riche d'exemples domestiques, que n'ussions besoyn d'avoir recours aux étrangers. Mais si Virgile et Ciceron se feussent contentez d'imiter ceux de leur Langue, qu'auront les Latins autre Ennie ou Lucrece, outre Crasse et Antoyné?', *Deffence...*, pp.47-48.
quelque notte et difference elles ne puissent estre discernées.  

The distinction drawn by Du Bellay between *imitatio* and translation is a fine one. Du Bellay perhaps best explains his conception of *imitatio* with his famous *innutrition* metaphor, in which the action of an author imitating another is described in terms of a person eating and digesting his food. He finds a precedent for the process of *imitatio* in the way in which Roman authors imitated the work of the Greeks, and in doing so, contributed to the enrichment of the Latin language:

Si les Romains (dira quelqu'un) n'ont vacqué à ce labeur de traduction, par quelz moyens donques ont ilz peu ainsi enrichir leur Langue, voyre jusques à l'égaluer quasi à la Greque? Immitant les meilleurs aucteurs Grecz, se transformant en eux, les devorant, et apres les avoir bien digerez, les convertissant en sang et nourriture, se proposant, chacun selon son naturel et l'argument qu'il vouloit elire, le meilleur auteur, dont ilz observoint diligemment toutes les plus rares et exquises vertuz, et icelles comme grephes, [...] entoing et apliquoint à leur Langue.

---

354 *Deffence...*, pp.45-46. In the phrase 'quasi comme se transformer en lui', the qualifying adverbs 'quasi' and 'comme' reflect Du Bellay's view of the imprecise nature of the process of imitation: the author of the imitation will not be able to reproduce exactly the qualities of the work of his model writer. See V. Worth, *Practising Translation in Renaissance France: The Example of Etienne Dolet* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), p.4. Du Bellay also emphasises his point about the difficulty of mastering the technique of *imitatio* by reminding the reader that even Nature herself has been unable to produce two things which are exactly alike. This illustration is a commonplace, used, for example, by Montaigne: 'La dissimilitude s'ingere d'elle mesme en nos ouvrages; nul art peut arriver à la similitude. Ny Perrozet ny autre ne peut si soigneusement polir et blanchir l'envers de ses cartes qu'aucuns joueurs ne les distinguent, a les voyr seulement couler par les mains d'un autre. La ressemblance ne faict pas tant un comme la difference faict autre. Nature s'est obligée à ne rien faire autre, qui ne fust dissemblable', *Essais*, p.1065, from 'De l'expérience'.

In the poetic domain (where, in Du Bellay's opinion, the technique of *imitatio* assumed a greater importance even than the elements of inspiration and invention), small elements of the model poem might well be retained in the original language, and appropriated for use in the vernacular without alteration: '...ce n'est point chose vicieuse, mais grandement louable, emprunter d'une Langue estrangere les sentences et les motz, et les approprier à la sienne', *Deffence...*, pp.46-47. See also Castor, pp.67-68.

355 *Deffence...*, pp.42-43. The metaphor of eating and digestion was commonly applied to the process of *imitatio*. In his chapter 'De l'institution des enfans', Montaigne uses the image of indigestion and vomiting to represent the undesirable slavish reproduction of the work of other writers: 'C'est teasmaignon de crudité et indigestion que de regorger la viande comme on l'a avalée. L'estomac n'a pas fait son operation, s'il n'a fait changer la façon et la forme à ce qu'on luy avoit donné à cuire', *Essais*, p.151. Montaigne goes on to describe what he sees as the best form of *imitatio* using the image of bees making honey from nectar: 'Les abeilles pillotent deqk dela les fleurs, mais elles en font aprèz le miel, qui est tout leur; ce n'est plus thin ny marjolaine: ainsi les pieces empruntées d'autrui, il les transformerà et confondera, pour en faire un ouvrage tout sien: à sçavoir son jugement. Son institution, son travail et estude ne vise qu'à le former', *Essais*, p.152.

These two metaphors for the process of *imitatio* are taken from Seneca's *Epistles*: 'Apes, ut aitum, debemus imitari, quae vagantur et flores ad mel faciendum idoneos carpunt, deinde quicquid attulere, disponunt ac per favos digerunt et, ut Vergilius noster ait, liquentia mella.'
Du Bellay is at pains to stress that his 'deffence' of the French tongue should not be interpreted as the result of a wish to discourage people from learning the classical languages. On the contrary, he recognises that it is impossible to speak or write correctly in the vernacular without a knowledge of Latin and Greek, or at the very least a knowledge of Latin.\textsuperscript{356}

We should follow, men say, the example of the bees, who flit about and cull the flowers that are suitable for producing honey, and then arrange and assort in their cells all that they have brought in; these bees, as our Vergil says,

\begin{quote}
pack close the flowing honey,
And swell their cells with nectar sweet.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{[...]} We also, I say, ought to copy these bees, and sift whatever we have gathered from a varied course of reading, for such things are better preserved if they are kept separate; then, by applying the supervising care with which our nature has endowed us, - in other words, our natural gifts, - we should so blend those several flavours into one delicious compound that, even though it betrays its origin, yet it nevertheless is clearly a different thing from that whence it came. This is what we see nature doing in our own bodies without any labour on our part; the food we have eaten, as long as it retains its original quality and floats in our stomachs as an undiluted mass, is a burden; but it passes into tissue and blood only when it has been changed from its original form. So it is with the food which nourishes our higher nature, - we should see to it that whatever we have absorbed should not be allowed to remain unchanged, or it will be no part of us. We must digest it; otherwise it will merely pass into the memory and not into our very being. Let us loyally welcome such foods and make them our own, so that something that is one may be formed out of many elements, just as one number is formed of several elements whenever, by our reckoning, lesser sums, each different from the others, are brought together. This is what our mind should do: it should hide away all the materials by which it has been aided, and bring to light only what it has made of them], Seneca, \textit{Epistulae Morales}, LXXXIV, L.C.L., trans. R.M. Gummere, vol. 2 (1920), 276-281.

Cave describes Du Bellay's metaphor of digestion in the following terms: 'The dual act of reading and writing is here represented as a reciprocal process of incorporation or consubstantialization: the reader is transformed into what he reads (which Du Bellay refers to as the author rather than the text); at the same time, he converts it into his own substance (author again being equated with text). This image of corporal exchange, which implies both destruction and reconstitution, renders as immediate perception what is then explained in the ensuing literal exposition', Cave, pp.64-65.
ii. Translation

The desire to make universally available the literary and intellectual heritage of other civilisations was an important factor which lay behind the publication in the sixteenth century of a large number of French translations of literary works and philosophical and scientific treatises.\(^{357}\) Such translations served to demonstrate that the French language was capable of communicating the most complex and refined ideas. This in turn acted as an encouragement to authors to write in the vernacular. However, the greatest benefit of the large number of French translations produced during the Renaissance was the increase in the vocabulary of the vulgar tongue. When translators were faced with the problem of rendering new ideas into French, or of finding suitable equivalents for foreign expressions, they were forced to borrow terms from other languages, or to use existing French words in new senses.\(^{358}\)

Two important contributions to the theory of translation were made in the 1540s. Etienne Dolet was the first to establish a set of principles to be followed by translators. In his rhetorical manifesto *La Maniere de bien traduire d'une langue en autrte* (1540), Dolet lays down the following five rules: the translator should understand perfectly the material he intends to translate; he should have a thorough knowledge of both languages; he should avoid slavish, word-for-word translation; he should refrain from using words which are too similar to those of the original; and he should observe oratorical principals, so that his phrases are harmonious and

\(^{357}\) One might expect to find that the number of French translations to be published increased steadily from the time of the invention of printing until the mid sixteenth century, and that this increase was mirrored by a correspondingly gradual decline in the number of works published in Latin. This was not in fact the case. Indeed, during the years 1480-1530, the number of books published in French actually fell compared to the number of books published in Latin. In the first five years of the sixteenth century, six times as many books were printed in Latin as in French; twenty years later, French books were outnumbered by eight to one. See P.H. Larwill, *La Théorie de la traduction au début de la Renaissance: d'après les traductions imprimées entre 1477 et 1527* (Munich: 1935), p.5.

In the *Deffence et illustration...*, Du Bellay readily acknowledges that the process of translating works into French (which he refers to as 'ce tant louable labeur') is a valuable means of acquiring prestige for the vernacular. His main concern, however, is to stress that translation alone is not sufficient to make French the equal of the classical languages: this goal can only be achieved by the composition of original works in the vulgar tongue. For Du Bellay, the practice of simply translating classical texts into French is almost worse than useless, and should therefore be avoided. This applies above all to poets, who will find it impossible to reproduce in French verse the subtle qualities of the Latin and Greek originals:

 Celuy donques qui voudra faire oeuvre digne de prix en son vulgaire, laisse ce labeur de traduyre, principalement les poètes, à ceux qui de chose laborieuse et peu profitable, j'ose dire encor' inutile, voyre pernicieuse à l'accroissement de leur Langue, emportent à bon droit plus de molestie que de gloyre.

Du Bellay emphasises the difficulties involved in producing translations, and distinguishes between *invention* and *eloquution* in the text to be

---

359 E. Dolet, *Maniere de bien traduire...*, pp.11-16. The passage in question is reproduced in Rickard, *Langue...*, pp.104-107. For a more detailed analysis of the importance of Dolet's *Maniere de Bien Traduire*, see Worth, pp.50-60. For an examination of the literal and paraphrastic approaches to translation in the context of Dolet's own work, see Worth, pp.219-221.

360 *Deffence...*, pp.41-42. See also p.32: 'Toutesfois ce tant louable labeur de traduire ne me semble moyen unique et suffisant, pour elever nostre vulgaire à l'égal et parangon des autres plus fameuses Langues.' Later, having mentioned the names of several classical authors, Du Bellay continues: 'Je vous demande donq', vous autres, qui ne vous employez qu'aux translations, si ces tant fameux aucteurs se feussent amusez à traduyre, eussent ilz élevé leur Langue à l'excellence et hauteur ou nous la voyons maintenant? Ne pensez donques, que quelque diligence et industrie que vous puissiez mettre en cest endroict, faire tant que nostre Langue, encore rampante à terre, puisse hauser la teste et s'elever sur piedz' (pp.44-45). Du Bellay’s comments here may be compared both to Montaigne’s remark about the perfection of the French language: ‘Nous disons qu’il est à cette heure parfaict’, *Essais*, 982, from ‘De la vanité’ (see above, p.162), and to the following passage from Claude Fauchet: ‘Toutesfois j’estime, que si les hommes doctes continuent à escrire leurs conceptions en nostre langue vulgaire, que cela pourra nous rendre l’honneur perdu: l’enrichissant tous les jours, par tant de fideles translations de livres Grecs et Latins: mais plus (à mon advis) par tant de sçavans personnages, qui employent les forces de leur vif esprit, à l’augmentation de la poesie Françoisse’, C. Fauchet, *Receuil de l’origine de la langue et poésie françaises* (Paris: M. Patisson, 1581), p.48.
translated. Although a good translator might well be able to communicate the invention of the original (that is to say the ideas and opinions expressed), the eloquution, or style, is untranslatable. This is because each language has its own unique qualities. If a translator tries to convey these qualities in a different language without going beyond the limits imposed by the author, his rendering will feel strained, frigid and inelegant. As Rickard observes, for Du Bellay, a truly literal translation is impossible; for Dolet, such a result is not even desirable, and should be avoided by adhering to the last two of his five rules.

Montaigne recognises the importance of translating secular works into French, and is ready to give enthusiastic praise in cases where this task has been carried out to his taste, and where the work to be translated has been wisely chosen. This principle can be seen in practice at the beginning of the chapter 'A demain les affaires', in which he praises Jacques Amyot for his translation of the works of Plutarch, describing him as the best French writer, and as a man without whose work the language would have remained considerably the poorer. It is worth noting the reasons which Montaigne gives to support this judgement:

Je donne avec raison, ce me semble, la palme à Jaques Amiot sur tous nos escriptains François, non seulement pour la naïveté et pureté du langage, en quoy il surpasse tous autres, ny pour la constance d'un si long travail, ny pour la profondeur de son sçavoir, ayant peu développer si heureusement un auteur si espineux et ferré [...]; mais sur tout je luy sçay bon gré d'avoir sçeu trier et choisir un livre si digne et si à propos, pour en faire present à son pays. Nous autres ignorans estions perdus, si ce livre ne nous eust

361 ’Mais quand à l'eloquence, partie certes la plus difficile, et sans la quelle toutes autres choses restent comme inutiles et semblables à un glayve encore couvert de sa gayne: eloquution (dy je) par la quelle principalement un orateur est jugé plus excellent, et un genre de dire meilleur que l'autre: comme celle dont est apellée la mème eloquence: et dont la vertu gist aux motz propres, usitez, et non aliénés du commun usaige de parler, aux metaphores, allegories, comparaisons, similitudes, energies, et tant d'autres figures et ornemens, sans les quelz tout oraison et poême sont nudz, manques et debiles: je ne croyray jamais qu'on puisse bien apprendre tout cela des traducteurs, pour ce qu'il est impossible de le rendre avecques la mème grace dont l'auteur en a usé: d'autant que chacune Langue a je ne scay quoy propre seulement à elle, dont si vous efforcez exprimer le naif en une autre Langue, observant la loy de traduyre, qui est n'espacier point hors des limites de l'aucteur, votre diction sera contrainte, froide, et de mauvaise grace’, Deffence..., pp.34-36.

362 Rickard, Langue..., p.9.
relevez du bourbier: sa mercy, nous osons à cett'heure et parler et
escrire; les dames en regentent les maistres d'escole; c'est nostre
breviaire.\textsuperscript{363}

However, the question of translating the Bible was, for Montaigne, a
very different matter. Several important sixteenth-century French
translations of the Bible were published in the face of fierce and prolonged
resistance from the Sorbonne, which was utterly opposed to the dissemina-
tion of Holy Scripture in the vulgar tongue. Montaigne expresses strong
opposition to the idea of translating the Bible into the vernacular in his
chapter 'Des prières'. Far from making the mysteries of the Christian
religion accessible to the masses, he says, such translations fall into the
trap of creating in the mind of the reader the dangerous impression that
he has understood the subject-matter, when in fact his comprehension
remains on a superficial, verbal level. It would be better, continues
Montaigne, to keep the Bible in Latin, and thereby restrict theological
study to those who have received the calling from God, and have authority
from the Church. He goes on to mention the fact that other great world
religions such as the Jewish and Islamic faiths prohibit the translation of
their sacred writings from the language in which they were originally
recorded:

\textit{Ce n'est pas l'estude de tout le monde, c'est l'estude des
personnes qui y sont vouées, que Dieu y appelle. Les mechans, les
ignorans s'y empièrent. Ce n'est pas une histoire à compter, c'est une
histoire à reverer, craindre, et adorer. Plaisantes gens, qui pensent
l'avoir rendue maniable au peuple, pour l'avoir mise en langage
populaire! Ne tient-il qu'aux mots qu'ils n'entendent tout ce qu'ils
trouvent par escrit? Diray-je plus? Pour l'en approcher de ce peu,
ils l'en reculent. L'ignorance pure et remise toute en autruy estoit
bien plus salutaire et plus sçavante que n'est cette science verbale
et vaine, nourrice de presomption et de temerité.

Je croi aussi, que la libertë à chacun de dissiper une parole
si religieuse et importante à tant de sortes d'idioines, a beaucoup
plus de danger que d'utilité. Les Juifs, les Mahometans, et quasi tous
autres, ont espousé et reverent le langage auquel originellement

\textsuperscript{363} \textit{Essais}, pp.363-364.
leurs mystères avoyent esté conceuz; et en est defendue l’alteration et changement: non sans apparence. Savons nous bien qu’en Basque et en Bretaigne, il y ayt Juges assez pour establir cette traduction faite en leur langue? L’Eglise universelle n’a point de Jugement plus ardu à faire, et plus solenne. En preschant et parlant, l’interprétation est vague, libre, mutable, et d’une parcelle; ainsi ce n’est pas de mesme.364

A view similar to Montaigne’s is expressed in a prefatory letter to the Louvain Bible of 1550, in which the author protests against the unimpeded diffusion of Holy Writ in the vulgar tongue:

Car on voit maintenant par experience (o pudeur) que gens mechaniques, comme foullons, tisserans, massons, charpentiers, marchans, et autres qui d’aventure ne saient lire ne escripre, veulent iuger de la tressainte et tresparfonde Theologie, et sur icelle donner leur opinion, en pervertissant souventesfois la vraie intelligence du texte, et l’entendans selon l’affection charnelle, dont plusieurs heresies, opinions, dissensions, et mouvementz sourdent en la foy catholicque. Vraiment tels sont occasion, que l’on ne peult publier les textes des saintes escriptures: pour la crainte des erreurs que ces gens indoctes sement, fondants raison vulgaire sur leur languaige maternel.365

By contrast, in the preface to his Greek New Testament of 1516, Erasmus had called for the wider diffusion of Holy Writ:

Vehementer enim ab istis dissentio, qui nolint ab idiotis, legi divinas literas, in vulgi linguam transfusas, sive quasi Christus tam involuta docuerit, ut vix a pauculis theologis possint intellegi, sive quasi religionis Christianae praesidium in hoc situm sit, si nesciatur. Regum mysteria coelare fortasse satius est, at Christi mysterium, quem maxime cupid evulgari. Optarim ut omnes mulierculae legant evangelium, legant Paulinus epistolas. Atque utinam haec in omnes omnium linguas essent transfusa, ut non solum a Scothis et Hybernis, sed a Turcis quoque et Saracenis legi cognoscique possint.366


366 ‘For I disagree strongly with those who do not wish the Holy Scriptures, transferred into the language of the masses, to be read by uneducated people, as if Christ would have taught things so complex that they could scarcely be understood by a few theologians, or as if the protection of the Christian religion were dependent upon this, if it should not become known. Perhaps it is better to conceal the secrets of kings, but not the mystery of Christ, which he desired should be made public. I wish that all the little women would read the Gospel, and the epistles of Paul. If only these things had been transferred into all
B. Propaganda in Praise of Authors Writing in the Vernacular

It was Du Bellay’s opinion that if just one French writer of outstanding ability were to appear, this person would act as the catalyst for a great expansion of the literary arts in France.

Vray est pour avoir les Ars et Sciences tousjours été en la puissance des Grecz et Romains, plus studieux de ce qui peut rendre les hommes immortelz que les autres, nous croyons que par eux seulement elles puysissent et doyvent estre traictées. Mais le tens viendra paravanture (et je suplye au Dieu tresbon et tresgrand que ce soit de nostre aage) que quelque bonne personne, non moins hardie qu’ingenieuse et scavante, non ambicieuse, non craignant l’envie ou haine d’aucun, nous otera cete faulse persuasion, donnant à notre Langue la fleur et le fruict des bonnes Lettres.  

Geofroy Tory, who had held the same belief, declares himself willing to be the one responsible for setting some great mind on the task of establishing a set of rules for the vernacular:

Je sembleray cy par avanture estre nouvel homme, pource qu’on n’a point encorez veu enseigner par escript en langage François la façon et qualité des lettres, mais desirant enluminer aucunement nostre langue, je suis content estre le premier petit indice a exciter quelque noble esprit qui se evertura d’avantage (comme firent les Graecz jadis et les Romains) mettre et ordonner la langue Françoise à certaine reigle de prononcer et bien parler.  

The importance in terms of linguistic propaganda of paying tribute to the achievements of contemporary French authors has already been mentioned, and several examples of such eulogies may be found. Both

languages of all people, so that they could be read and known not only by the Scots and the Irish, but also by the Turks and the Saracens', Novum Instrumentum Omne, diligent er ab Erasmo Roterodamo recognitum et emendatum... (Basle: J. Froben, 1516), fol. aab 4v, from the preface. See I. Maclean, 'The Interpretation of Natural Signs: Cardano’s De Subtilitate versus Scaliger’s Exercitationes', in Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance, ed. by B. Vickers (Cambridge, C.U.P., 1984), chapter 6, pp.231-252 (p.235).

367 Deffence..., pp.72-73.

368 Champfleury, fol. riv.
Peletier du Mans and Du Bellay stress that it is futile to try to compete with the ancients in the classical languages, and both authors offer encouragement to writers who use the vernacular:

Mais je seroy' bien d'avis qu'apres les avoir apprises (i.e. les langues anciennes), on ne deprisast la sienne et que celuy qui par une inclination naturelle [...] se sentiroit plus propre à écrire en sa Langue qu'en Grec ou en Latin, s'etudiaist plus tot à se rendre immortel entre les siens, ecrivant bien en son vulgaire, que mal ecrivant en ces deux autres Langues.\textsuperscript{369}

Du Bellay takes up these ideas at the end of the main body of the Deffence:

Il me semble (Lecteur amy des Muses Francoyses) qu'apres ceux que j'ay nommez, tu ne doys avoir honte d'ecrire en ta Langue: mais encore doibs-tu, si tu es amy de la France, voyre de toy-mesmes, t'y donner du tout.\textsuperscript{370}

Some, however, go further in their praise of contemporary French authors writing in the vernacular. For example, Claude Fauchet (1530-1602), proclaims that as a result of the work of these authors, the French language is being elevated to such new heights of excellence with each passing day,

qu'il y a esperance, puis que ja ils ont passé ceux qui depuis le temps d'Auguste, ont escrit en vers (je n'excepte les Italiens, et encore moins les Espagnols) que nostre langue sera recherchée par les autres nations, autant qu'elle fut jamais.\textsuperscript{371}

Jacques Tahureau, writing in similar vein, goes further still, declaring that

\textsuperscript{369} Deffence..., pp.75-76.
\textsuperscript{370} Deffence..., p.193.
\textsuperscript{371} C. Fauchet, Receuil..., p.48. The continuation of this passage is cited above, n.360.
God has allowed the French nation and its language to reach their current pre-eminent position,

de sorte que les mieux disans Grecz et Latins ne l'emporteroient pas sus tant d'heureuses langues, sus tant de douces et sçavantes pleumes qui font aujourd'hui profession ou de bien parler, ou de bien écrire en leur naturel Françoys.\textsuperscript{372}

Montaigne, although aware of the ways in which languages are invigorated and enriched when they are used as tools by great authors, is not so universally optimistic about the state of the literary arts in France:

Le maniement et emploie des beaux espris donne pris à la langue, non pas l'innovant comme la remplissant de plus vigoreux et divers services, l'estirant et ployant. Ils n'y aportent point des mots, mais ils enrichissent les leurs, appesantissent et enforcent leur signification et leur usage, luy aprenent des mouvemens accoustumés, mais prudemment et ingenieusement. Et combien peu cela soit donné à tous, il se voit par tant d'escrivains françois de ce siecle.\textsuperscript{373}

However, Montaigne does seem to be encouraged by Francis I's patronage of French literature, for in the opening lines of the 'Apologie de Raimond Sebond', he speaks of 'cette ardeur nouvelle dequoy le Roy François premier embrassa les lettres et les mit en credit'.\textsuperscript{374}

\textsuperscript{372} J. Tahureau, \textit{Oraison au Roy}, p.6. This passage immediately precedes that cited above, n.346.

\textsuperscript{373} \textit{Essais}, p.673, from 'Sur des vers de Virgile'. Montaigne's admiration for Ronsard and Du Bellay contrasts with his disdain for other writers of little talent: 'Quant aux François, je pense qu'ils l'ont montée (la Poésie) au plus haut degré où elle sera jamais; et, aux parties en quoy Ronsart et Du Bellay excellent, je ne les treuve guieres esloignez de la perfection ancienne', \textit{Essais}, p.661, from 'De la praesumption'. 'Depuis que Ronsard et du Bellay ont donné credit à nostre poésie Françoise, je ne vois si petit apprentis qui n'enfile des mots, qui ne renge les cadences à peu près comme eux. "Plus sonat quam valet". Pour le vulgaire, il ne fut jamais tant de poètes', \textit{Essais}, p.171, from 'De l'institution des enfans'.

\textsuperscript{374} \textit{Essais}, p.438. See below, n.351.
C. Propaganda in Praise of the French Language

In addition to the propaganda written in support of French literature, much praise was devoted to the language itself. Yet before any claim could be made that French was superior to the other European vernaculars, the accusations that it was a corrupt tongue had to be refuted. In a letter to Guillaume Du Bellay dated 1540, Estienne Dolet defends the French language against such charges. Dolet expresses his hope that French will undergo such radical change as a result of the writings of learned men, that it will eventually be transformed into what he describes as 'une langue reduicte en art'.

In the preface to his edition of La Borderie's *L'Amie de Court* (1542), Dolet declares that when other nations understand that the French are capable of great eloquence, the language will no longer be termed clumsy or barbarous. In his preface to Héroét's *La Parfaicte Amie* (also 1542), which is addressed 'Au Lecteur Françoys', Dolet gives the impression that this state of affairs has already come about, and even goes so far as to say that, in terms of eloquence, French is now on an equal footing with Greek and Latin, and may soon surpass them:

Or commence doncq'à entendre que nostre langue est en telz termes que desja on ne la peult appeler barbare, mais plus tost esgale aux antiques, quant à louange d'éloquence. Et si Dieu pernct et veult par sa grace qu'elle vienne en tel accroissement que le commencement en est, je puis dire que jamais la Grecque ny la Latine

---

375 One of the most famous accusations of barbarism came from Charles de Bovelles. In his *De Differentia Vulgarium Linguarum* (Paris: R. Stephanus [R.Estienne] 1533), Bovelles argues that the French language is merely a debased form of Latin which is impeded by a multitude of dialectical variants. See also Rickard, *History...*, p.90.

376 Dolet uses the expressions 'reduicte en art' and 'non reduicte encore en art' to describe the classical languages and the European vernaculars respectively, the essential difference between these being that a set of grammatical and orthographical conventions had not yet been established for the vernaculars, whereas Latin and Greek were governed by rules which were more or less fixed. See *Maniere de bien traduire...*, ff.a2'-a6', from the *Epitre dedicatoire à Guillaume du Bellay*, and p.16. The passage from the *Epitre dedicatoire* is reproduced in E. Dolet, *Préfaces Françaises*, pp.85-89.

377 *Préfaces Françaises*, p.125.
ne furent en telle perfection que lon voyrra en brief estre la Françoys...[378]

Geofroy Tory, writing several years earlier, had expressed views similar to Dolet's. Tory takes issue with those who are unwilling to write in French because they believe that the language is not sufficiently elegant. On the contrary, he says, French is one of the most beautiful and agreeable of all languages.379 Early in this same work, Tory follows a passage from Lucian's *De Hercule Gallico* with these words:

Nous voyons donques [...] que nostre langage est si gracieux, que sil est prononce d'un homme discret, sage, et aage, Il a si grande efficace, qu'il persuade plustost et mieux que le Latin, ne que le Graec.380

Du Bellay is one of several writers who establish a connection between the French language and the fortunes of the French state. Du Bellay's optimistic vision for the future of the vernacular ('qu'elle [...] puisse un jour parvenir au point d'excellence et de perfection') is linked to an equally prestigious destiny for France:

Le tens viendra (peut estre), et je l'espere moyennant la bonne destinée Françoyse, que ce noble et puyssant Royaume obtiendra a son tour les resnes de la monarchie, et que nostre Langue (si avecques Francoys n'est du tout ensevelie la Langue Francoyse) qui commence encor' a jeter ses racines, sortira de terre, et s'elevera en telle hauteur et grosseur, qu'elle se poura egaler aux mesmes Grecz et Romains381

---

378 *Préfaces Françaises*, pp.129-130.

379 Champfleury, p.49. Jacques Tahureau makes a similar point: 'D'avoyr la conoissance des langues c'est une chose fort louable, mais d'autant plus vicieuse à ceux qui s'en sont si profoundz admirateurs qu'ils en déprisent la leur, et principalement quand ilz ont chez eusmesmes une langue autant recommandable que peuvent être celles des étrangers, ainsi que nous avons la nôtre, l'une des plus belles langues qui se parla jamais', *Oraison au Roy*, p.6. This passage immediately follows that cited above, n.346.

380 Champfleury, p.6.

381 *Defence...*, pp.27-28. In the following chapter, Du Bellay praises the contribution made by Francis I towards the current high reputation and widespread use of French: 'Mais à qui, apres Dieu, rendrons nous graces d'un tel benefice, si non à nostre feu bon roy et pere Francoys, premier de ce nom et de toutes vertuz? Je dy premier, d'autant qu'il a en son noble
Claude Fauchet also discusses this theory in his *Receuil de l'origine de la langue et poésie française* (1581). Fauchet contrasts the political fortunes of such nations as the Goths, Vandals, and Franks with those of the Saracens of Arabia, and concludes that 'les langues se renforcent, à mesure que les princes qui en usent s'agrandissent'. In Fauchet's view, the constant warring between the Goths, Vandals, and Franks, together with the fact that they were divided into small groups, meant that they became weak, and that their languages died with them. The Saracens, on the other hand, were able to maintain a settled, peaceful empire extending from Egypt through Africa to Spain, and were therefore able to devote their time to learned pursuits, which in turn encouraged the spread of their language.382

Finally, mention must be made in this chapter of the role of Henri Estienne (1528-1598), one of the most important writers of propaganda for the French language in the Renaissance, particularly concerning the rivalry between the French and Italian tongues. For the purposes of this study, the most relevant of Estienne's works is perhaps the treatise *De la Précéllence du langage français* (1579), in which he presents his case for

---

382 Fauchet, *Receuil...*, pp.42-43. These remarks are analogous to Montaigne's point: 'C'est aux bons et utiles escrits de le clouer à eux, et ira son credit selon la fortune de nostre estat', *Essais*, p.982, from 'De la vanité'. See above, p.162. It is interesting that this political dimension to linguistic evolution is raised by two contemporary authors after almost a century of 'non-political' theorizing.
the superiority of French over all the other European vernaculars. In this work, Estienne renews the virulent attacks upon the Italian language, and upon what he saw as its corrupting influence on French, which he had voiced the previous year in his *Deux Dialogues du nouveau langage français, italianisé, et autrement desguizé*.

In his preface to *De la Precellence...,* Estienne states that, while all peoples have the right to claim that their own language is superior to all others, it is only by close examination that the truth may be discovered. Estienne goes on to censure the Italians for having too high an opinion of their mother tongue, and in particular for having dared to place it above Greek and Latin in order of merit. In the main body of this treatise, he proceeds to list the many reasons why he believes that French can be said to be superior to Italian. In his opinion, for example, French is more robust and richer in its vocabulary; it contains more metaphors and proverbs, more new words fashioned from old ones, and more words of Latin origin than does Italian. Estienne also believes that in French it is easier to express oneself concisely. He talks of the 'bonne grace' of the French language, and contends that more words are borrowed by the Italians from the French than pass in the opposite direction. Upon the basis of these and many other arguments, Estienne comes to the following conclusion:

...que nostre langue Françoise surmonte toutes les vulgaires, et pourtant merite le titre de precellence, il s'ensuivra aussi que nostre nation ha plus grand preparatif à l'eloquence qu'aucune des autres.  

This conclusion is reinforced at the end of the treatise, where Estienne

---


384 *De la Precellence...,* pp. 41, 58. Estienne had also used the phrase 'bonne grace' to describe the quality of the French language in his earlier *Traicté de la conformité du langage français avec le grec* (Paris: H. Estienne, 1565), from the Epitre Dédicatoire.

385 From the preface entitled 'Au Lecteur'.
suggests a way of ending the linguistic rivalry between France and Italy. The proposal is delivered in the style of a document of surrender:

La composition donc sera, que leur langage avouera la superiorité et precellence du nostre, sans jamais contrevenir à cest aveu, par voye directe ne oblique. Moyennant lequel aussi, le nostre le declarera digne du second lieu: et au cas que l'Espagnol le voulust quereler, le nostre prendra l'Italien en son protection, pour le maintenir en ce droict.  

★
★ ★

Several sixteenth-century authors, concerned that the French language was held in low esteem, wrote to defend their native tongue against the accusation that, because it was subject to rapid change, and lacked the dignity and authority of Latin, it was an unsuitable medium for learned debate. This defence of the French language took a variety of forms. Many writers sought to encourage the more widespread use of the vernacular in areas of French life which had long been the exclusive preserve of Latin. Several wrote in praise of the French language itself, some claiming that it was capable of equalling or even surpassing the classical tongues in renown, some that it was superior to rival European vernaculars.

Authors discussed the volatile nature of French, reacting in different ways to change within the language. Some welcomed it, advocating, for example, that words from foreign languages should be adopted for use in French where this was appropriate. More conservative writers called for the vernacular to be standardised with grammatical and orthographical rules, arguing that this would provide French with a measure of stability and dignity, and would help to avoid what they saw as the 'corruption' of

386 De la Precellence..., p.295.
the language by foreign influences. Several authors showed qualified acceptance of change, rejecting, for example, the ostentatious use in French of terms of Latin origin, and attacking the practice of imposing Latinate forms upon French words.

Some authors defended their right to compose their own scientific or literary works in French, and encouraged other Frenchmen to write in their native tongue. Du Bellay was among those who advocated that those wishing to compose in the vernacular should adopt classical writers as their models, and should learn to subtly incorporate the best features of these model writers into their own work by mastering the technique of *imitatio*. The debate about the extent of use of the French language took place at a time when a large number of literary and scientific works were being translated into French. The result of the dissemination of such works was to enlarge the vocabulary of the vernacular while demonstrating that the language could act as a medium for complex and refined ideas.

At a time when French was beginning to resemble the more standardised vernacular of the seventeenth century, the linguistic theories put forward by Renaissance authors reflected the passing of an era which had favoured retrospective, 'intellectual' approaches to language, some of which were based on myth, and the beginning of an age in which more pragmatic and empirical explanations were adopted. The great interest shown in the older type of mythically-based theories during the Renaissance is demonstrated by the fact that they were used in many different contexts by authors from a wide variety of backgrounds.
Appendix A:

The Acquisition of Language in Feral Children

In the light of the revival of interest in the Psammeticus exemplum during the Renaissance, I decided to investigate whether a more empirical and systematic approach to the question of language acquisition in feral children could also be distinguished in the sixteenth century.\(^{387}\) The evidence was in fact negative, but my findings were nonetheless interesting, revealing the change in methodology which followed the Renaissance period. In this field, which throughout the centuries has remained a target of both popular and scholarly speculation, there are documented cases from the seventeenth century onwards, whereas the Renaissance had continued to rely heavily upon the Psammeticus legend.

One of the best-known modern studies on this subject is Lucien Malson's *Les Enfants Sauvages*. In this work, the author defines three main categories of feral children: the child who has been kept in confinement; the child who has lived amongst animals; and the child who has existed in complete isolation in the wild.\(^{388}\) Malson claims that his list of 52 reported cases, beginning with the Wolf-Child of Hesse (1344), contains all of the

\(^{387}\) The term 'feral' is used in this context to describe children who have lived in isolation from human society for long periods of time.

known examples of feral children, although he acknowledges that most of these cases are not genuine. This, he says, can be seen from the epidemic nature of their occurrence, not to mention the fantastical elements contained in many of the accounts. Malson discusses three cases in detail: Victor the Wild Boy of Aveyron (1799); Kaspar (Gaspard) Hauser of Nuremberg (1828); and Kamala of Midnapore (1920), each of which represents one of Malson's three types of 'wildness', and all of which demonstrate that a child who has been isolated from human society at an early age retains the capacity to make considerable intellectual progress. Malson appends to the end of his work the two reports about Victor of Aveyron (dated 1801 and 1806) which were compiled by Jean Itard, the doctor who devoted himself to the boy's education.

It is worth noting the theories which Malson sets out to prove and the angle from which he approaches the evidence on feral children, because some of the sociological and anthropological arguments involved have parallels in the linguistic field. In his introduction, Malson puts forward the view that whereas the behaviour of animals is to some extent based upon inherited instincts - a 'nature' peculiar to each species - human behaviour depends less upon the predeterminates of heredity, and more upon outside influences which act upon each individual from the start of the period of gestation and throughout his education. Malson says that this is particularly true where the cultural elements (as opposed to the physical elements) of man's heritage are concerned. Malson uses this argument against those who believe that the study of feral children holds the key to the 'natural state' of the human race, and that such cases are modern-

---

389 Malson, pp.76-77. Zingg's earlier work contained a list of 31 cases of feral children (which Malson used as the basis for his own list, pp.72-75). Zingg's list had included some examples of children who had been kept in confinement, which he classes as not being strictly feral. Malson illustrates (p.76) the epidemic nature of the reports of Homo Ferus by pointing out that two instances of the phenomenon of isolation were alleged to have occurred in Germany in 1344, two in Hungary in 1767, and that between 1843 and 1895, there were no less than fourteen accounts of 'wolf-children' being discovered in India and the surrounding regions.

390 Malson, pp.7-8.
day instances of pre-cultural man. Indeed, rather than being examples of man in some rudimentary state of nature, children who are deprived of all social contact for long periods do in fact develop in a most unnatural fashion, because it is normal for human beings to experience the society of others while they mature. Again, whereas a domesticated animal may regain its inherited instincts when returned to a life in the wild, a human who has been removed from civilisation at an early age cannot regress to become an example of some earlier stage in the development of the species, but instead turns into a freak, as his behaviour degenerates towards the bestial.\textsuperscript{391}

The view that 'wild children' represent pre-cultural man is present from the earliest times in writings on the subject of feral children, but this type of argument is typified by Rousseau, who uses five examples of 'wild children' to support his argument that it is natural for man to walk upright, and that children who begin life by walking on all fours have to overcome their anatomical nature in order to do so.\textsuperscript{392}

The notion that one could gain an insight into the state of mankind before the onset of civilisation by observing present-day children who have been deprived of their cultural inheritance probably accounts for at least some of the early interest in cases of feral man. This line of thought, in which, according to Dubois,

\begin{quote}
La coïncidence instantanée de deux temps disparates est perçue comme parfaitement naturelle, comme si un certain état d'"aculture" était susceptible de ramener au jour un ancien état de "nature",
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{391} Malson, p.40. Malson is at pains to stress that the backwardness exhibited by many 'wild children' is due to their lack of a cultural education and social environment, and not to any form of innate defect, such as the congenital idiocy which was diagnosed in the case of Victor of Aveyron by the famous Parisian doctor Pinel (pp.63-71).

\textsuperscript{392} J.J. Rousseau, \textit{Discours sur l'origine et les fondemens de l'inégalité parmi les hommes}, 1754, in \textit{Oeuvres Complètes} (Dijon: Gallimard Pléiade, 1964), III, 196, n.III. Zingg is another who dismisses Rousseau's use of the case of the wolf-child of Hesse and others as romantic and unscientific. Zingg says that Rousseau 'prejudiced the case of feral man' for the sake of an example which suited his 'simplistic philosophy of environmental determinism' ('Feral Man and Extreme Cases of Isolation', 488).
lies behind the story of Psammeticus.\(^{393}\) However, in Malson's list of fifty-two cases of feral children, there is no example of a *deliberately-staged* linguistic experiment of the type reputedly conducted by King Psammeticus. Amongst the few recorded instances of 'wild children' who have been confined, it is always the case that the child was imprisoned by a cruel or insane guardian; as far as it can be ascertained, this was never done with a specific scientific goal in mind. Indeed, the records of the lives of feral children contain surprisingly little information about their acquisition of speech, even where observations on general behaviour are quite detailed. This is so for the simple reason that most of the children never managed to learn to speak, despite repeated efforts on the part of their teachers.\(^{394}\) It would seem that Linnaeus, one of the first scientific classifiers of the natural world, was correct when he attributed the quality of dumbness to Homo Ferus.\(^{395}\)

In his *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* (1746), Condillac makes use of the example of an individual feral child (this was in fact the infant who later became known as the second Lithuanian bear-child) in order to prove his theory about the workings of the human

\[\text{Reference: Dubois, *Mythe et langage*..., p.22.}\]

\[\text{Reference: Malson, p.53. See below, p.195 and n.399.}\]

\[\text{Reference: Linnaeus (Carl von Linné), *Systema Naturae* (Holmia [Stockholm]: L. Salvius, 10th edn: 1758), I, p.20. (The classification of feral man is present only from the 10th edition onwards). The three adjectives with which Linnaeus defines the essential qualities of feral man are 'tetrapus' (which seems to be true in most cases); 'mutus' (which, again, seems by and large correct); and 'hirsutus' (which, on the whole, seems to be incorrect, for, as Zingg points out, few of the feral children recorded were in fact hairy). Zingg does concede, however, that Linnaeus did well to isolate even these three characteristics, given the small number of cases with which he could have been acquainted (Zingg, 'Feral Man and Extreme Cases of Isolation', 504). Linnaeus classifies man in the following manner:}\]

```
(Regnum animale
Classis I: Mammalia
I Primates)
I Homo nosce te ipsum
Sapiens. 1. H diurnus; varians cultura, loco.
Ferus, tetrapus, mutus, hirsutus.
```
The chapter in question opens with a description of another exceptional case: a young man from Chartres who, having been dumb since birth, suddenly began to speak at the age of 23 or 24. Condillac believes that this man, while still in his initial mute state, must have displayed only the faintest traces of the operations of a human soul, because without the ability to link his sensations to the arbitrary signs of speech, he could not have converted these sensations into ideas. A hypothetical bear-child would be handicapped in the same way through his lack of speech, because he would have grown up outside the commerce of human beings. Condillac thinks that although such a child might be expected to possess an imagination far more vivid than that of a normal man, he could not be expected to show any signs of being able to reason, because his life would be dominated by fleeting sense-impressions received from his surroundings. Condillac continues as follows:

Je n'avance pas de simples conjectures. Dans les Forêts qui confinent la Lithuanie et la Russie, on prit en 1694 un jeune homme d'environ dix ans, qui vivait parmi les ours: il ne donnait aucune marque de raison, marchoit sur ses pieds et sur ses mains, n'avait aucun langage, et formoit des sons qui ne ressemblaient en rien à ceux d'un homme. Il fut longtemps avant de proférer quelques paroles, encore le fit-il d'une manière bien barbare. Aussitôt qu'il put parler, on l'interrogea sur son premier état, mais il ne s'en souvint non plus que nous nous souvenons de ce qui nous est arrivé au berceau.397

Condillac cites this case as proof that the minds of such people who lack the power of speech are capable of dealing only with immediate needs.

Later, Condillac elaborates upon his theory of speech acquisition:

J'ai distingué trois sortes de signes: les signes accidentels, les signes naturels et les signes d'institution. Un enfant élevé parmi les

396 Condillac, Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines (Amsterdam: P. Mortier, 1746), I, 4, II, 190-205.

This comment is particularly interesting in the light of the Psammaticus myth, especially because Condillac attempts to explain the process of speech-learning in terms of a theory of signs.

Condillac and Rousseau, and, to a lesser extent, Linnaeus, are perhaps the most revealing of the earlier sources in that they do not simply tell the story of the life of one or more feral children (as do Camerarius and Pistorius, for example), but instead try to incorporate the phenomenon of the wild child into their systems of thought, thereby helping the modern reader to understand why so great an interest has always been shown in this subject.

To conclude, it is worth setting out the few exceptional cases in which feral children have learnt to speak. Of the thirty-one cases collated by Zingg, only six are described as having made any progress at all in this area, and often the evidence for this depends upon two or three words in an eighteenth-century case history. Firstly, there is the second Lithuanian bear-child of 1694, who, according to Condillac, was able to talk, albeit in a very barbarous fashion. There is also the story (largely fantastical in Malson's view) of the Sogny girl (1731), who was reputedly taught to speak by a bishop, and who later became a nun. A great deal

398 Condillac, *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, vol. 1, section 4, chap. II, p.205. This process is again reflected by Condillac’s theory of the origin of language in man as a species, which involves the gradual abandonment of a language of action in favour of a language of articulate sounds.

399 This information is seen to best advantage in the four pages of tables compiled by Zingg, where it is displayed in the context of the many other achievements of those feral children who have been returned to human society. See 'Feral Man and Extreme Cases of Isolation', 499-503. Malson later modifies the list drawn up by Zingg (Malson, p.53).

400 See above, p.194.
more information is available in the case of Victor the wild boy of Aveyron, through the two reports compiled by Itard. Itard states, for example, that one of his objectives in 'educating' Victor was to 'le conduire à l'usage de la parole en déterminant l'exercice de l'imitation par la loi impérieuse de la nécessité'.\textsuperscript{401} This, however, was to prove a singular disappointment for Itard, for although Victor did learn, for example, to say the word 'lait', he used it merely as an expression of delight to be uttered when milk had been given to him - as a sign of his possession of the milk - and not as a sign with which he could ask for a drink (a striking contrast with the Psammeticus legend). The only language that Victor knew how to use was what Itard describes in Condillac's terms as a 'langage d'action'.\textsuperscript{402} An example of this was that the boy would go repeatedly and stand by the door of his room if he was impatient to go for a walk outside, or would present someone with his wooden bowl in order to ask for milk. By the time that Itard wrote his second report on Victor in 1806, the boy could 'read and write' a series of simple words which were fairly similar in appearance. He did not, however, pronounce these words while reading them, nor did he know their meanings. For Victor, the word-games invented by Itard were merely a visual exercise, and it transpired that in spite of all his efforts, Itard had done more to develop the boy's sense of sight than his ability to speak. Eventually, therefore, he gave up these experiments with speech.\textsuperscript{403}

The case of Kaspar Hauser of Nuremberg is rather more encouraging. When he was discovered wandering in the town in 1828, he could speak only a few words of patois and utter other confused sounds. His education began almost immediately, and although his progress in speaking was slow

\textsuperscript{401} Malson, p.140.

\textsuperscript{402} Malson, p.169, n.1.

\textsuperscript{403} Malson, p.230. Malson does mention (p.48) the discovery in a town called Zips in Hungary in 1767 of a feral child named Tomko, who, he says, made 'considerable intellectual progress' and learned to speak Slovakian.
at first, he later became quite fluent in German, and learned a little Latin.\footnote{However, as has already been mentioned, the cases of Kaspar Hauser and others like him who have merely been confined for long periods, are not accepted by Zingg as examples of true feral children.}

The case of Kamala of Midnapore in India is one of the best-documented of all. Kamala was a true feral child - she was seen by at least five people in 1920 living with her sister Amala amongst a pack of wolves. At the time of her capture, she was completely dumb, yet over the next nine years she slowly amassed a vocabulary of about fifty words, so that towards the end of her life (she died in 1929), she could carry on conversations with her guardians.\footnote{Malson, pp. 83-88. A detailed and scholarly account of the lives of Amala and Kamala, the 'wolf-children' of Midnapore, is to be found in the first half of Zingg's \textit{Wolf Children and Feral Man}, which he co-wrote with the Reverend J.A.L. Singh, who had discovered the two children and had educated them at his orphanage.}

This completes the list of cases in which feral children have been known to speak. It will be seen that, in the absence of any deliberately-staged linguistic experiment involving feral children, the evidence in this field is largely negative. This negative evidence is nevertheless important, because it sheds light upon the nature of Renaissance interest in the subject of language acquisition in general. Whereas the eighteenth century saw the development of both real empirical \textit{and} theoretical studies of feral children and their mastery of language (for example, Condillac's use of actual cases of wild children to back up his psychological theories of speech-acquisition: 'Je n'avance pas de simples conjectures'), Renaissance thinking in the field was almost entirely based upon a classical legend of dubious authenticity.
Appendix B:

The Continuing Tradition:

Sign and Gesture

in the Seventeenth Century

I. Surdo-Mutism, Sign and Gesture

Interest in the education of the deaf during the Renaissance seems to have been strongest in Spain. In the seventeenth century, however, the subject appears to have aroused particular interest in England and Holland.406 A particularly important contribution to the understanding of sign language was made in England at this time by the members of the so-called 'Oxford Group'.407 The work of this group of thinkers in the field of communication with the deaf shows how ideas which had been explored in many parts of Western Europe during the sixteenth century were developed in the immediate post-Renaissance period, completing a tradition of thought which was to remain relevant long afterwards.408

406 For the early Renaissance 'Spanish school' of deaf education, see above, p.143. In the seventeenth century, the Dutch writer F.M. van Helmont invented a 'natural alphabet', which was intended to help people who had been born deaf to understand the speech of others, and even to learn to speak themselves (see above, pp.75-78).


A work of particular importance for the purposes of this study is John Wilkins's *Mercury, or the Secret and Swift Messenger* (1641), which is concerned with the rapid transmission of secret information over long distances.\(^{409}\) One chapter of *Mercury* is devoted to the art of communicating by signs and gestures. These Wilkins divides into three categories: those which signify 'ex congruo, when there is some naturall resemblance and affinity, betwixt the action done, and the thing to be exprest', and those which signify 'ex placito, when these signs have their signification from use and mutuall compact'.\(^{410}\) Under the heading 'ex congruo', Wilkins places 'all those outward gestures, whereby not only dumb creatures; but men also doe expresse their inward passions, whether of joy, anger, feare, etc. For *Saepe tacens vocem verbaque vultus habet*.\(^{411}\) Also


John Wilkins was Bishop of Chester, and was also an accomplished scientist and mathematician. His writings cover a wide range of topics, including mechanics, the power of prayer, and the possibility of travelling to the moon. See Barbara Shapiro, *John Wilkins 1614–1672 - An Intellectual Biography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969). Wilkins’s *Mercury* was published in the year before the outbreak of the Civil War. In the climate of suspicion which preceded hostilities, the military applications of a work dealing with codes, signals, and other secret signs are obvious. Indeed, John Wallis, a personal friend of Wilkins and himself a member of the Oxford Group, was an adept cryptographer and was employed by the Parliamentarians during the war.

In chapter 16 of his *Mercury*, Wilkins discusses how homing pigeons may be used to send information secretly and rapidly over long distances. The author relates a series of examples from history illustrating how homing pigeons have been used to convey news of military victories, or to enable the inhabitants of a besieged town to communicate with the outside world. He also explains how Roman magistrates, when detained on urgent business, would use a pigeon to send word of this to their waiting families. Rabelais was another who took an interest in the subject of rapid communication over long distances. Screech has shown this (*Rabelais*, 318-320) by comparing two episodes from his later works. In the opening lines of his *Sciomachie* of 1549, Rabelais marvels at the fact that the news of the birth of a French prince (actually Louis of Orleans) had been conveyed to bankers in Rome within the space of a single day. In chapter 3 of the Quart Livre ("Comment Pantagruel repceut lettres de son pere Gargantua, et de l'estrange maniere de sapvoir nouvelles bien soudain des pays estrangiers et loingtains"), he tells how Pantagruel replies to a letter from his father by releasing one of Gargantua’s homing pigeons, having attached a white ring to the bird’s foot to indicate that he has met with good fortune on his voyage. See Wilkins, *Mercury*, chapter 16: ("Concerning the swiftnesse of conveyance by bodies, whether inanimate, as Arrows, Bullets; or animate, as Men, Beasts, Birds"), pp.123-125; Rabelais, *La Sciomachie et festins faits à Rome* (Lyons: S. Gryphe, 1549), pp.3-4; Rabelais, *QL*, pp.57-60.


\(^{410}\) Wilkins, *Mercury*, pp.111-113. The categories which Wilkins uses to classify signs and gestures are of course the same as the Aristotelian categories traditionally applied to words and sounds (those which signify by nature and those which signify by convention).

\(^{411}\) *Mercury*, p.111. This classification of the gestures of animals might be compared to Montaigne’s observations on the same subject: ‘Aux bestes mesmes qui n'ont pas de voix, par la societe d'offices que nous voyons entre elles, nous argumentons aisément quelque autre moyen de communication: leurs mouvements discourent et traictent', *Essais*, p.453, from the ‘Apologie de Raimond Sebond’.
'ex congruo' are 'many religious actions', both Christian and heathen, 'for by such bodily gestures and signes, we may as well speak unto God, as unto men', together with 'those actions of forme, that are required [...] in many civil affaires, and public solemnities; which are usually such, as in themselves are apt to signifie the thing for which they are meant'.

Wilkins's final example of a gesture which signifies *ex congruo* is appropriate to the subject-matter of *Mercury*: it is the story of Thrasybulus, who chopped off the highest stalks in a field of corn to signify the way of forestalling a revolt by the nobility.\(^{412}\) Wilkins describes this fable as an example of 'a Parabolicall way of speaking by Gestures'.\(^{413}\)

Of these gestures and signs which signify *ex placito*, Wilkins observes that 'by the help of this it is common for men of severall Nations, who understand not one anothers Languages, to entertain a mutuall commerce and traffique'. Under this heading, Wilkins also discusses the signs used by the deaf and dumb:

And 'tis a strange thing to behold, what Dialogues of gestures there will passe betwixt such as are born both deafe and dumb; who are able by this means alone, to answer and reply unto one another as directly, as if they had the benefit of speech [...] It were a miserable thing, for a rationall soule, to be impris­oned in such a body, as had no way at all to expresse its cogitat­ions: which would be so, in all that are born deafe, if that which nature denied them, were not in this respect supplied, by a second nature, custome and use.\(^{414}\)

John Bulwer, another member of the group, also had a considerable

---

\(^{412}\) Rabelais has Pantagruel relate a similar version of this well-known exemplum at the end of the *Quart Livre*. In Rabelais's version, the king is Tarquin the Proud, and the plants which he decapitates are poppies (*QL*, pp.253-254). See above, p.121.

\(^{413}\) *Mercury*, p.113.

\(^{414}\) *Mercury*, pp.113-114. These comments combine the air of mystery which normally accompanies Renaissance references to communication amongst deaf mutes with a new sense of compassion for the suffering endured by the deaf - a characteristic rarely found in earlier accounts.
understanding of the difficulties encountered by the deaf.415 He shared the view that human gestures form a natural and universal language:

Nor doth the Hand in one speech or kinde of language serve to intimate and expresse our mind: It speakes all languages, and as an universall character of Reason, is generally understood and knowne by all Nations, among the formall differences of their Tongue. And being the onely speech that is naturall to Man, it may well be called the Tongue and Generall language of Humane Nature, which, without teaching, men in all regions of the habitable world doe at the first sight most easily understand.416

For Bulwer, gestures were greatly superior to speech as a means of communication, because they were quicker and more striking. They formed a primitive language which was used by the animals, and had been used by Adam in the Garden of Eden:

This naturall Language of the Hand, as it had the happinesse to escape the curse at the confusion of Babel: so it hath since been sanctified and made a holy language by the expressions of our Saviour's Hands, whose gestures have given a sacred allowance to the naturall significations of ours.417

However, early teachers of the deaf do not seem to have been concerned with the potential of gestures as a universal tongue for mankind. For John Wallis (1616-1703), the first known successful teacher of the deaf in England, the language of signs was simply a convenient means of bridging the gulf between himself and his pupils. Wallis believed that the teacher should acquaint himself with these gestures only so that

---

415 Bulwer planned to establish an institution where the deaf could be taught. However, he failed to realise this project, being unable to raise enough interest amongst his colleagues. See A. Farrar, 'The Deaf in Medieval Times', in Volta Review, 28 (August 1926), 389-391, (p.391).

416 J. Bulwer, Chirologia: or the Naturall Language of the Hand (London: T. Harper, 1644), p.3. Again, this might be compared with Montaigne's observations on gesture. See Essais, p.454, from the 'Apologie de Raimond Sebond'; and above, pp.137-139. In the preface to his Philocophus: or, the Deaf and Dumb Man's Friend (London: H. Moseley, 1648), Bulwer praises the sign language of the deaf as a powerful and effective system from which the rest of the community would do well to borrow certain gestures when they wished to express themselves more forcefully.

417 Chirologia, p.7.
he could at a later stage instruct his charges in the normal forms of speech and writing.\textsuperscript{418}

Also worthy of mention is George Sibscota's \textit{The Deaf and Dumb Man's Discourse} (1670), a work chiefly concerned with the ways in which deaf mutes communicate and comprehend information. The following comments by Sibscota show that the sign language of the deaf and dumb was nevertheless seen by some as being essentially similar to other verbal languages in that all were institutions based upon human convention:

But those very significations of things, which Mutes make use of, proceed not from nature, but from their own institution no more, than our speech; Therefore they attain unto them by Study and exercise. [...] And as the Mutes do by their gestures exactly and distinctly understand one another, and those Persons also that use such a kind of analogous Speech among them; so they conceive many things by the gestures, motion of the Lips, and such like things in those that really do speak, and sometimes understand a great part of their conceptions by such outward things.\textsuperscript{419}

In the last years of the seventeenth century, the Swiss pedagogue Jan Coenrad Amman (1669-1730) carried out important research on the physiology of articulation, which he applied to the teaching of his deaf pupils at the school of deaf-mutes in Amsterdam and Haarlem. In his \textit{Surdus Loquens} (1692), Amman tried to establish a psychological basis for

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{418} J. Wallis, 'A Letter of Dr John Wallis [...] to Mr Thomas Beverly; Concerning his Method for Instructing Persons Deaf and Dumb', in \textit{Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society} (London), 20 (1698), 353-360. See also J. Knowlson, \textit{Universal Language Schemes in England and France 1600-1800} (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1975), appendix A: 'Gestures as a Form of Universal Language'. In his \textit{Didascalocophus, or the Deaf and Dumb Man's Tutor} (Oxford: 1680), George Dalgarno includes a description of a dactylogical 'alphabet upon the fingers', which was intended primarily for use in instructing the deaf to write and to finger-spell. He did not, however, believe that the deaf were capable either of speech, or of lip-reading. Dalgarno anticipates that in the future his system of 'cheirology' will not be restricted to those involved in teaching the deaf, but will be used by all mankind (pp.90-91). William Holder, who was also a member of the Oxford Group, had also described a means of constructing such an alphabet in his \textit{Elements of Speech} (London: F. Martyn, 1669), pp.151-154, but his findings contradicted those of Wallis, and the two men disputed before the Royal Society about the practical possibilities of conflicting didactic methods.
\item \textsuperscript{419} G. Sibscota, \textit{The Deaf and Dumb Man's Discourse} (London: H. Bruges, 1670; facsimile edition: Menston: Scolar Press, 1987), pp.43-44 This is not in fact an original work, but a free translation (with some interpolated material) of an essay entitled 'Dissertatio de Surdis', which formed part of a collection of dissertations by Anthony Deusingen, entitled \textit{Fasciculus Dissertationum Selectarum} (Gröningen: J. Collenius, 1660), pp.147-230.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
the instruction of the deaf.\textsuperscript{420}

The work of these seventeenth-century authors shows evidence of the beginnings of a modern, more scientifically-based approach to the instruction of the deaf and dumb. However, their work also retains some of the traditional pre-scientific exempla and assumptions which were characteristic of the Renaissance.

II. \textbf{Theories of Expression in Seventeenth-Century France}

This section is concerned with the 'signs' which may be read in the face and body, and with their implications for the fields of French painting and theatre in the seventeenth century.

In the first section of his treatise \textit{Les Passions de l'âme} (1649), Descartes (1596-1650) puts forward an explanation of the interaction between the ethereal human soul and the physical body.\textsuperscript{421} This explanation is based upon the physiological theory of the passions, which are states of agitation of the soul, occurring as a result of either the voluntary actions of the soul itself or of spirits emanating from the body.

Descartes believed that the soul was present throughout the body, but that it was particularly active within a small gland situated at the base of the brain.\textsuperscript{422} According to Descartes, when this gland becomes agitated under the influence of a passion, varying pressures are exerted upon the

\textsuperscript{420} J.C. Amman, \textit{Surdus Loquens, seu Methodus, quâ qui Surdus Natus est Loqui Discere Possit} (Amsterdam: H. Westein, 1692). Within ten years, this work had been translated into English, Dutch, German, and French. The English edition is \textit{The Talking Deaf Man; Or, a Method Proposed Whereby he who is Born Deaf, May Learn to Speak}, trans. by D. Foot (London: T. Howkins, 1694). In the preface to his \textit{Surdus Loquens}, Amman praises F.M. van Helmont's \textit{Alphabet of Nature} (1667 - see above, n.135), a work which he says has the same objectives as his own.


\textsuperscript{422} This is in fact the pineal gland. See Articles 30-31, pp.976-977 and n.2, p.977.
brain, and this in turn sends messages demanding a response to the various parts of the body. In the second part of his treatise, Descartes discusses some forty passions of the soul, analysing their causes and effects.

Descartes's ideas in this field were closely followed by the influential French court painter and designer Charles Lebrun (1619-1690) in his *Conférence sur l'expression* (1698). In the introduction to this work, Lebrun defines what is meant by a passion:

Premièrement, la passion est une mouvement de l'Amé, qui reside en la partie sensitive, lequel se fait pour suivre ce que l'Amé pense lui être bon, ou pour fuir ce qu'elle pense lui être mauvais; et d'ordinaire tout ce qui cause à l'Amé de la passion, fait faire au corps quelque action.

Lebrun's account of the process by which the passions cause physical changes in the human body differs from that offered by Descartes. Subtle spirits in the blood, heated by the heart, ascend into the cavities of the brain, where they activate the nerves, with the result that the nerve-endings cause the muscles to move in the various parts of the

---

423 '[[...]] ajoutons ici que la petite glande qui est le principal siège de l'âme est tellement suspendue entre les cavités qui contiennent ces esprits, qu'elle peut être mue par eux en autant de diverses façons qu'il y a de diversités sensibles dans les objets; mais qu'elle peut aussi être diversement mue par l'âme, laquelle est de telle nature qu'elle reçoit autant de diverses impressions en elle, c'est-à-dire qu'elle a autant de diverses perceptions qu'il arrive de divers mouvements en cette glande. Comme aussi réciproquement la machine du corps est tellement composée que, de cela seul que cette glande est diversement mue par l'âme ou par telle autre cause que ce puisse être, elle pousse les esprits qui l'environnent vers les pores du cerveau, qui les conduisent par les nerfs dans les muscles, au moyen de quoi elle leur fait mouvoir les membres', art. 34, p.980 and n.l. See also Powell, pp.94-112, especially p.97.

424 Descartes discusses the passions in order, beginning with those which he considers to be the most fundamental (those called 'simple' or 'primitive'). The ancient rhetoricians believed that there were five 'simple' passions, so-called because from these five all the other passions could be derived. To these five (love, hatred, desire, joy, and sadness), Descartes added the passion of admiration, which he considered the most basic of all. See article 53, pp.998-99 and articles 69-70, pp.1005-06.

425 *Conférence [...] sur l'expression générale et particulière...* (Amsterdam: J.L. de Lorne; Paris: E. Picart, 1698). This work was adapted from a lecture given by the author at the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture in 1668.

426 *Conférence...,* p.4.
Using a series of illustrations, Lebrun depicts the appearance of the face of a person under the influence of each of the passions. Each illustration is accompanied by a brief description of the physical effects of the passion in question.

Lebrun's *Conférence sur l'expression* is a valuable record of seventeenth-century theories of expression, and is of interest not least because of its unique perspective. Written by a painter, it was intended to serve as a practical guide for young artists, to teach them the meanings of different hand and body positions, and how, for example, to express hope, fear, or love in the faces they painted. Lebrun himself incorporated in his own larger paintings many of the facial expressions and postures which he had described and depicted in the *Conférence*.

Several seventeenth-century French authors based their writings upon the principle that a person's character is determined by the choices that he makes in his actions. Authors writing in this tradition believed that a man's character could be judged from his actions, for such actions are an outward expression of character. The zenith of this tradition, in which authors attempted to establish a connection between an individual's observed behaviour and his moral stance, is marked by the *Caractères...* (1688) of the satirical moralist Jean de La Bruyère (1645-1696). In this work, La Bruyère stresses the revelatory nature of gestural language. For example, according to La Bruyère, a fool performs even the simplest actions in a way that marks him out from the intelligent man:

---

427 *Conférence...*, introductory section, p.5 [The copy of the *Conférence...* in the British Library has separate systems of pagination for the introductory section (pp.1-28) and for the main text (see Powell, p.112, n.10)].

428 Powell, p.98.

429 Powell, p.95.

The theories of the passions which were advanced by Descartes and Lebrun, and which influenced the writings of such as La Bruyère, were of great importance in French seventeenth-century theatre. Powell suggests that, by applying a knowledge of these theories to the performance of his own plays, Molière increased the effectiveness of his comedy. It is well known that, on stage, Molière made striking use of facial expression, posture and movement; Powell maintains that Molière used such 'grimaces' in order to express externally the moral standpoints adopted by the characters in his plays, and to communicate the passions within their souls.

Whereas Renaissance writers had tended to consider gesture as a reliable index of truth, often in contrast to ambiguous verbal language, Descartes's theories of the passions of the soul provided seventeenth-century authors with an alternative means of expression with which to communicate the unspoken feelings of their characters. The propagation of these ideas may be cited as evidence that the influence of signs and gestures upon French literature, which had been so powerful during the

---

431 Les Caractères..., article 37 (1), p.108, from 'Du Mérite Personnel'. La Bruyère compares the fool to a machine, because the fool never learns from his mistakes, but instead continually repeats the same patterns of behaviour: 'Le sot est automate, il est machine, il est ressort; le poids l'emporte, le fait mouvoir, le fait tourner, et toujours, et dans le même sens, et avec la même égalité; il est uniforme, il ne se dément point: qui l'a vu une fois, l'a vu dans tous les instants et dans toutes les périodes de sa vie; c'est tout au plus le bœuf qui meugle, ou le merle qui siffle: il est fixé et déterminé par sa nature, et j'ose dire par son espèce. Ce qui paraît le moins en lui, c'est son âme; elle n'agit point, elle ne s'exerce point, elle se repose', article 142 (V), p.343, from 'De l'Homme'.

432 Powell, pp.99-111.

433 Powell, p.94. Powell refers to several of Molière's comedies in support of his argument, identifying places in the texts at which, when these plays were performed, the seventeenth-century actors would have used their faces and postures to portray the passion which their characters were feeling. Powell illustrates how these gestures would have appeared by quoting from Lebrun's descriptions of the facial expressions which were associated with the passions in question.
Renaissance, was continued into the seventeenth century.
Bibliography


Agricola, Rodolphus (Roelof Huysman), *De Inventione Dialectica* (Argentine: J. Knobloch, 1521).

Agrippa, H.C., *De Occulta Philosophia* (Cologne: J. Soter[?], 1533).


Aristotle, περὶ ἐρμηνείας, hoc est *De Interpretatione*, ed. by W.A. Niphus (Venice: O. Scotum, 1555)
- *De Interpretatione*, trans. by H.P. Cooke (L.C.L., 1938).


- *De Genesi ad Litteram*, in PL, 34, cols. 219-485.
- *De Magistro*, in PL, 32, cols. 1193-1220.
- *De Quantitate Animae*, in PL, 32, cols. 1035-1079.


Bede, the Venerable, *De Temporum Ratione*, I: 'De Computo vel loquela digitorum', in PL, 90, cols. 295-298.


Bibliander, T., *De Ratione Communi Omnium Linguarum et Litterarum* (Zurich: C. Froschauer, 1548).


- *Philocophus: or, the Deaf and Dumb Man's Friend* (London: H. Moseley, 1648).

Calcagnini, C., *Opera Aliquot*, ed. by A.M. Brasavola (Basle: H. Froben and N. Episcopius, 1544).


Camerarius, P., Operae horarum subcisvarum, sive meditaciones historicae, auctiores quam antea editae... (Frankfurt: J. Saurius, P. Kopffius, 1602).

Cardano, G. (Jerome Cardan), Hieronymi Cardani...De Utilitate ex Adversis Capienda Libri III (Basle: H. Petrum, 1561).


Cardano, G. (Jerome Cardan), Hieronymi Cardani...De Utilitate ex Adversis Capienda Libri III (Basle: H. Petrum, 1561).


Cardano, G. (Jerome Cardan), Hieronymi Cardani...De Utilitate ex Adversis Capienda Libri III (Basle: H. Petrum, 1561).


Colonna, F., Hypnerotomachia Poliphili (Venice: Aldus, 1499).


Condillac, E. Bonnot de, Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines (Amsterdam: P. Mortier, 1746).

Cornarius, J., Selecta epigrammata Graeca Latine versa, ex septem Epigrammata Graecorum libris (Basle: J. Bebel, 1529)


- *Didascalocophus, or the Deaf and Dumb Man’s Tutor* (Oxford: 1680).


Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, trans. by C.H. Oldfather and others,

Dolet, E., *La Maniere de bien traduire d'une langue en aultre* (Lyons: E. Dolet, 1540).


Durand, Guillaume ('Speculator'), *[Speculum Judicale]*, ed. by F. Moneliensis (Nuremburg: A. Koberger, 1486).


Goropius, (Johannes), Becanus [Flamand van Gorp], *Origines Antwerpianae* (Antwerp: C. Plantini, 1569).


Heidel, W.A., 'Hecataeus and the Egyptian Priests in Herodotus', in *Memoirs of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, (Boston, Mass.), 18
Helmont, F.M. van, *Alphabeti vere naturalis Hebraici brevissima Delineatio quae simul methodum suppeditat, juxta quam qui surdi nati sunt sic informari possunt, ut non alios saltem loquentes intelligant, sed et ipsi ad sermonem perveniant*... (Sulzbach: A. Lichtenthalerus, 1657 [actually 1667]).

- *Quaedam praemeditatae et consideratae cogitationes super quatuor priora capita [...] Genesis*... (Amsterdam: H. Westein, 1697).

- (ed., with C. Knorr von Rosenroth) *Kabbala Denudata, seu Doctrina Hebraeorum Transcendentalis et Metaphysica atque Theologica Opus Antiquissimae Philosophiae Barbaricae Variis Speciminiibis Refertissimum*... (The *Kabbala Denudata* was published in two parts, under the titles *Apparatus in Librum Sohar* (Sulzbach: A. Lichtenthalerus, 1677), and *Sohar Restitutus* (Frankfurt: J.D. Zunnerus, 1684)).


Honcala, A., *Commentaria in Genesim*... (Compluti [Acalá de Henares]: J. de Brocar, 1555).


La Luce, B. de, *Nouvelle Deffence pour les francoys* (Paris: D. Janot, 1537[?]).

Lactantius, (Lucius Coelius Firmianus), *Opera* (Antwerp: J. Gymnich, 1555).


Lasso (The Licentiate), *Tratado Legal sobre los Mudos, 1550* (Madrid: 1919).


[Lodwick (Lodowyck), F.], *A Common Writing...* (London: for the Author, 1647).


Maclean, I., 'The Interpretation of Natural Signs: Cardano's *De Subtilitate* versus Scaliger's *Eercitationes*, in *Occult and Scientific Mentalities*

Macrobius, A.T., In Somnium Scipionis libri II... (Lyons: S. Gryphius, 1548).


Ménestrier, C.-F., L'Art des emblemes (Lyons: B. Coral, 1662).

Mercerus, I. (J. Mercier), In Genesim [...] Commentarius, ed. by T. de Bèze ([Geneva]: M. Berion, 1598).


Morin, E., Exercitationes de Lingua Primaeva... (Utrecht: G. Broedelet, 1694).


Musculus, W., In Genesim Mosis Commentarii Plenissimi (Basle: S. Henricpetri, 1600[?]).

Nicolaus (de Lyra), Postilla Super Totam Bibliam (Strasburg: J. Mentelin, 1472); also in a reprint of the Strasburg edition of 1492 (Frankfurt: Minerva, Frankfurt / Main Unveränderter Nachdruck, 1971).


Pererius, (Benedictus Valentinus) [Pereira, Benito], *...Commentariorum et Disputationum in Genesim* (Ingolstadt: 1590).


Philastrius, Saint (Bishop of Brescia), *De Omnibus ab Exordio Creaturarum Haerisibus*, (Basle: H. Petrum, 1539), also in *PL*, 12, cols. 1049–1302.


- *Germanicorum Scriptorum, qui Rerum a Germanis... Gestarum Historias... Reliquerunt...* (Frankfurt: A. Wechel, 1584, 1613).

Plato, *[Opera]* (Florence: Lorenzo de Alopa, 1485[?]).

- *[Opera]* (Venice: B. de Choris de Cremona and S. de Luere, 1491).

- *[Opera]* (Venice: P. Pincius, 1517).

Froben and N. Episcopius, 1546).
- *Omnia Opera* (Basle: H. Froben and N. Episcopius, 1551) [another edition of that printed at Basle in 1546].
- *Opera quae ad nos extant omnia*, trans. J. Cornarius (Basle: H. Froben and N. Episcopius, 1561).


- (ed.), *Abrahami Patriarchae Liber Iezirah, sive Formationis Mundi...* (Paris: G. Postel, 1552). [See also Sepher Yetzirah].


- *De Verbo Mirifico* (Basle: J. Amerbach, 1494).


Rondeletius, G. (Guillaume Rondelet), *Methodus Curandi Omnium Morborum...* (Lyons: G. Rouillé, 1586).


- 'The Term "Emblème" in Sixteenth-Century France', in *Neophilologus* (Gröningen), 59 (1975), 337-351.


- 'The Sense of the Enigme en Prophetie (Gargantua LVIII)', in BHR, 18 (1956), 392-404.


Sepher Yetzirah, trans. by W.W. Westcott (Bath: R.H. Fryar, 1887). See also Postel, G.

- Sepher Yesirah (Mantua: Jaacob ben Naphtali, 1562).


Tyard, Pontus de, *De Recta Nominum Impositione* (Lyons: J. Roussin, 1603).

- *Deux discours de la nature du monde et de ses parties* (Paris: M. Patisson, 1578)

- *Solitaire premier, ou dialogue de la fureur poetique* (Paris: G. du Pré, [1575]).


Vergil, Polydore, *De Rerum Inventoribus...* (Venice: De Pensis, 1499).


Wallis, J., 'A Letter of Dr John Wallis [...] to Mr Thomas Beverly; Concerning his Method for Instructing Persons Deaf and Dumb', in *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* (London), 20 (1698), 353-360.


Index

Aarsleff, Hans 52, 78, 208
Adagia (Erasmus) 88, 113, 119, 122, 133, 218
Adam 1, 23, 43, 44, 47, 51, 52, 55-62, 64-70, 72, 73, 77, 79, 85, 87, 145, 201, 214
The Advancement of Learning and New Atlantis (F. Bacon) 209
agrammatoi psophoi - see 'unlettered sounds'
Agricola, Rodolphus 142, 208
Agrippa, Henricus Cornelius 82-85, 208
Albericus (de Rosate) 118, 208
Alciati, Andrea 123, 125-127, 130, 131, 133, 208
Alexander, Aphrodisaeus 148, 208
Allen, D.C. 208
'The Alphabet of Nature' (F.M. van Helmont) 75, 76, 78, 85, 86, 198, 203, 210
Amman, Jan Conrad 202, 203, 208
Ammonius Hermaeus 17, 18, 24, 34, 108, 118
animals 1-3, 14, 17, 18, 19, 23, 26, 32-35, 37, 44, 52, 55-57, 60, 63, 67, 70, 74, 77, 79, 81, 86, 89, 90, 92, 118, 137, 138, 144, 147, 149, 153, 190-192, 199, 201
Annius, Johannes (Viterbensis) 208
Antiphanes 107, 114
Antonioli, R. 208
'Apologie de Raimond Sebond' (M. de Montaigne) 26, 27, 33-37, 137, 149, 156, 157, 183, 186, 199, 201
arbitrary imposition of names 14, 22, 26, 43, 48, 67, 83, 85, 123, 133, 138, 194
Arens, H. 13, 208
Aristophanes 46, 132, 209
Ars Poetica (Horace) 157, 165
L'Art Poétique d’Horace (J. Peletier du Mans) 165, 218
Artis Cabalisticae (J. Pistorius) 218
Augustine, Saint 2, 8, 15-17, 54, 62, 63, 72, 88-95, 138, 139, 209, 217, 218

Babel 21, 23, 44, 46, 51, 52, 60-62, 64, 65-69, 71-73, 79, 80, 87, 122, 159, 173, 201, 210, 211, 213, 215, 222
Bacon, Francis 209
Bartholomaeus (Anglicus) 141, 209
Bartolo, of Sassoferrato 100
Bede, the Venerable 141, 209
Berger, R. 45, 209
Bernheimer, R. 209
Bible 1, 2, 24, 25, 43, 47, 55, 57, 58, 60, 63, 68, 70, 71, 73, 79, 86, 87, 90, 91, 95, 110, 116, 135, 179, 180, 210, 222
Biblia Sacra Polyglotta (ed. B Walton) 73, 74, 223
Bibliander, Theodorus 43, 44, 58, 59, 64, 65, 210
cabbalistic theories of language 2, 23, 51, 78-82, 85, 87, 97, 102, 123
Calcagnini, Celio 107, 116, 210
Calvin, John 54, 56, 57, 210
Camerarius, Philippus 195, 211
Les Caractères... (J. de la Bruyère) 205, 206, 216
Cardano, Girolamo 142, 143, 181, 211, 216
Castiglione, Balthasar 107, 116, 211
Castor, G. 107, 172-174, 211
Cave, T. 107, 173, 175, 211
Champfleury (G. Tory) 64, 133, 158, 162, 163, 181, 185, 222
Characterie (T. Bright) 210
children 2, 4, 15-17, 27, 32, 33, 36, 38-41, 43, 45, 47-50, 63, 72, 118,
138, 145, 147, 149, 152, 156, 190-197, 195, 197, 212, 222
Chirologia (J. Bulwer) 201, 210
Christ 53, 68, 71, 77, 85, 93, 94, 97, 98, 106, 111, 112, 180
Church 28, 30, 115, 130, 179
Chydenius 90, 211
Citton, Y. 7, 211
Colish, M.L. 8, 89, 211
Colonna, Francesco 128-130, 211
Compagnon, A. 211
Condillac, Etienne Bonnot de 193-197, 211
Conférence [...] sur l’expression générale et particulière..., (C. Lebrun)
204, 205, 216
Confessions, The (St Augustine) 16, 89
contractualism 12
conventional origin of language 2, 9, 10, 12-14, 18, 20, 23, 43, 48,
67, 72, 83, 86, 88, 94, 99, 100, 118, 120, 122, 142, 145,
173, 199, 202, 213
Cornarius 24, 126, 211, 219
Cornelius, P. 73, 82, 83, 211
Corrozet, Gilles 127, 212
Costalius, Petrus 212
Coudert, A. 75, 77-86, 127, 212
Courtier, The (Il libro del cortegiano) (B. Castiglione) 107, 133, 211
Cratylus, The (Plato) 10-13, 17-19, 24, 57-59, 109, 111, 114, 219
Crenne, Hélisenne de 168
Crinesius, Christophorus 212
Croesus, King 48, 139, 151, 152
Cuneas, Spiritus Martinus 18, 19, 212
Curtiss, S. 212
Dagens, J. 212
Dalgarno, John 198, 202, 212
Dante Alighieri 8, 20, 21, 20, 21, 212, 214, 218
Darmesteter, Arsène 6, 7, 212
David, M.V. 71, 212
De Arte Cabalistica (J. Reuchlin) 220
De Civitate Dei (St Augustine) 62, 209
De Differentia Vulgarium Linguarum (C. de Bovelles) 67, 68, 184, 210
De Doctrina Christiana (St Augustine) 72, 89-95, 139
De Genesi ad Litteram (St Augustine) 54, 209
De Interpretatione (Aristotle) 13, 17, 19, 59, 209, 222
De Inventione Dialectica (R. Agricola) 142, 208
'De l'art de conferer' (M. de Montaigne) 167
'De l'experience' (M. de Montaigne) 26, 174
'De l'institution des enfans' (M. de Montaigne) 158, 174, 183
'De la force de l'imagination' (M. de Montaigne) 139
'De la gloire' (M. de Montaigne) 25, 155, 164
'De la praesumption' (M. de Montaigne) 156, 183
De la Precellence du langage francais (H. Estienne) 30, 186-188, 213
'De la tristesse' (M. de Montaigne) 38
'De la vantage' (M. de Montaigne) 26
De la vicissitude ou varieté des choses en l'univers (L. Le Roy) 44, 45, 216
De Magistro (St Augustine) 92, 209
De Occulta Philosophia (H.C. Agrippa) 83-85, 208
De Omnibus ab Exordio Creaturarum Haerisibus (St Philastrius) 218
De Oraculorum Defectu (Plutarque) 108, 219
De Origine, Usu et Ratione Vulgarium Vocum (J. Bourgoing) 60, 70, 210
De Originibus seu de Hebraicae et Gentis Antiquitate (G. Postel) 64, 219
De Philologia (G. Budé) 210
De Praeparatione Evangelica (Eusebius Caesariensis) 70
De Proprietatibus Rerum (Bartholomaeus Anglicus) 141, 209
De Quantitate Animae (St Augustine) 15, 16, 138, 209
De Recta Nominum Impositione (Pontus de Tyard) 222
De Rerum Inventoribus (Polydore Vergil) 36, 39, 138, 140, 216, 223
De Sensu (Aristotle) 146
De Temporum Ratione (Bede) 141, 209
De Verbo Mirifico (J. Reuchlin) 220, 224
De Verborum Significatione (A. Alciati) 125, 208
De Vulgari Eloquencia (Dante) 20, 21, 212
Deafness 1-3, 8, 17, 27, 42, 49, 72, 73, 76, 88, 97-103, 116-120, 140--
142, 143-151, 153, 198, 200-203, 208, 210, 212, 213, 216,
221, 223
Deffence et illustration de la langue françoys, La (J. Du Bellay) 20,
29, 154-156, 158, 159, 173-175, 177, 178, 181, 182, 185,
213, 216
De l'Epée (Charles Michel, abbé de l'Epée) 140, 141, 212
'De l'exercitation' (M. de Montaigne) 26
DeMott, B. 199, 212
'A Demain les affaires' (M. de Montaigne) 26, 178, 179
De Rerum Natura (Lucretius) 38, 138, 140, 216
'Des prières' (M. de Montaigne) 25, 179, 180
Descartes, René 203, 204, 206, 212
Deux dialogues du nouveau langage français... (H. Estienne) 30, 187,
213
devices 123-125, 128, 132, 133, 135, 220, 221
Didascalocophus (G. Dalgarno) 202, 212
Diodorus Siculus 73, 74, 138, 212
Dionysius Thrax 15, 170
Discours des hieroglyphes aegyptiens, emblemes, devises et armoiries
(P. l'Angloys) 79, 120, 126, 128, 192, 211, 216, 220, 222
Discursus de Confusione Linguarum (C. Crinesius) 212
Diverses leçons, Les (P. Messie [P. di Mexia]) 40, 138, 139, 152, 204, 217
doctors 33, 148, 150, 151, 191, 192
Dolet, Etienne 160, 161, 174, 176-178, 184, 185, 213, 223
Du Bellay, Joachim 20, 29-31, 154, 155, 158, 159, 161-163, 167,
172-175, 177, 178, 181-185, 189, 213
'Du pedantisme' (M. de Montaigne) 160
Dubois, C.-G. 7, 35, 49, 54, 60, 61, 69, 74, 146, 150, 152, 192, 193, 213
Dumb Man's Discourse, The (J. Bulwer) 202, 221
dumbness 1-3, 8, 17, 27, 40, 42, 45, 49, 72, 73, 76, 88, 97-99, 101--103, 116, 119, 120, 137, 139-153, 194, 197-203, 210, 212,
213, 221, 223
Durand, Guillaume ('Speculator') 118, 213

L'Ecole des femmes (Molière) 203
l'écolier limousin 166-168
Eitzen, Paulo ab 55, 71, 213
emblems 1, 3, 23, 88, 123-128, 130-133, 135, 136, 220, 221
Emblemum Libellus (A. Alciati) 208
Emblemum Liber (A. Alciati) 125, 127, 208, 210
Les Enfants sauvages (L. Malson) 190, 217
enigmas 130, 131, 134, 135
Enneads, The (Plotinus) 127, 219
Epicurus 74, 138, 213
Epistulae Morales (Seneca) 175, 221
Epstein, I. 80, 213
Erasmus, Desiderius 29, 88, 113, 119, 122, 133, 180, 210, 213, 217
Erreurs populaires au fait de la medecine et regime de santé (L. Joubert) 34-36, 45, 46, 119, 139, 146-152, 215
Essai sur l'origine de la connaissance humaine (E. Bonnot de Condillac) 193-195, 211
Essais (M. de Montaigne) 25-27, 34-36, 38, 41, 48, 93, 137-139, 149,
152, 156-158, 160, 162, 164, 167, 174, 177, 179, 180, 183,
186, 199, 201, 217, 223
Estienne, Henri 24, 30, 159, 164, 167, 168, 184, 186, 187, 213, 219, 222
etymologies 11, 17, 25, 43, 44, 59, 61, 65, 71, 75, 109, 112, 113, 123,
168
Eusebius Caesariensis 70
Excercitationes in Lingua Primaeva (E. Morin) 46-48, 181, 217

Farrar, Abraham 140, 141, 145, 198, 201, 210, 213
Fauchet, Claude 177, 182, 186, 214
feral children 4, 49, 50, 190-193, 195-197, 222, 224
Fergusson, F. 20, 214
Ferus, Ioannes (Johann Wild) 55, 71, 191, 193, 214
Fessue, Seur 101, 102
Ficino, Marsiglio 24, 82, 84, 115, 214, 218, 219, 223
folly 3, 24, 103, 104-106, 121, 205, 206
Foucault, Michel 214
Fouquelin, Antoine 155, 214
Francis I, King of France 133, 183, 185, 186
Fraser, R. 214
frozen words 3, 24, 106, 107, 113, 114, 116, 117, 120
Fumaroli, M. 214

Gargantua (F. Rabelais) 3, 128, 131-136, 139, 220, 221
Gargantua 131, 199
Gaster 3, 106, 107, 109, 119, 120
Genesis (F.M. van Helmont) 75-77, 215
Georgics (Vergil) 114, 223
Gesner, Conrad 214
gestures 1, 3, 4, 23, 92, 97, 98, 102-104, 106, 119, 123, 138, 140, 198, 200, 201, 206
Gilbert the Englishman (Legeleus Anglicus) 214
golden age, myth of the 60, 124, 216
golem 81, 210
Gombrich, E.H. 214
Goropius (Johannes), Becanus [Flamand van Gorp] 58, 59, 65, 66, 69, 214
Guiton, J. 109, 214

Hall, R.A. 21, 214, 224
Harris, Roy 8, 10, 12, 16, 57-59, 168-170, 214
head, the 77, 81, 93, 103-106, 114, 139, 150
Heath, M. 109, 220
Heber, myth of 61-65, 69, 72-74
Hebrew 1, 2, 23, 39, 40, 43, 44, 49, 52, 53, 59-66, 69-73, 75-83, 85-87, 97, 102, 145, 215
Hebrew alphabet 64, 70, 75, 76, 79-83, 85, 87, 97
Hecataeus of Miletus 39, 214
Hecatographie (G. Corrozet) 127, 212
Heidel, W.A. 39, 214
Helmont, Franciscus Mercurius van 75-78, 80, 82, 86, 198, 203, 215
Heraclitus 10, 111, 112
heraldry 131
Hermes Trismegistus 106
hermeticism 78, 82, 83, 123, 128, 223
Herodotus 22, 38, 39, 41, 43-46, 48, 49, 63, 72, 74, 139, 151, 214-216
hieroglyphs 3, 123, 125, 127-130
Historia Animalium (Aristotle) 17, 32, 33, 35, 73, 139, 141, 146, 147, 152, 209, 219
Historia Ecclesiastica (Bede) 141, 209
A History of the French Language (P. Rickard) 6, 8, 9, 13, 15, 21, 28-30, 40, 61, 64, 66, 74, 81, 135, 140, 141, 155, 184, 195, 199, 208, 215, 216, 220
Holder, William 198, 202
Homer 108, 113, 114
homing pigeons 199
Honcala, Antonius 55, 70, 215
Horace 165, 186, 218
Horapollo 128, 129, 215
Hypnerotomachia Poliphili (F. Colonna) 128-130, 211

imitatio 3, 172-174, 189
imposition of names 11, 18, 56, 58, 66, 67, 83, 85, 88, 138, 167
instrumentalism 12
Isidore, Saint 28, 215
Italian 18, 20, 21, 30, 39, 41, 80, 100, 107, 125, 130, 142, 148, 155, 162, 168, 186, 187, 214
Itard, Jean 50, 191, 196

John, Saint 52-54, 77, 84-86, 93, 141, 198-202, 208-210, 212, 216, 221, 223
Joubert, Laurent 2, 32-36, 45, 46, 48, 119, 139, 146-152, 215

Kabbala Denudata (eds. F.M. van Helmont, C. Knorr von Rosenroth) 78, 80, 82, 215
Kaspar Hauser 196, 197
Kircher, Athanasius 46, 73, 215
Knowlson, J. 202, 215
Kottman, Karl A. 215

L’Angloys, Pierre de 126, 128, 216
La Borderie, J. Le Fèvre de 184
La Bruyère, Jean de 205, 206
La Luce, Bertrand de 216
Lactantius Firmianus 17, 149, 216
Larwill, P.H. 176, 216
Lasso the Licentiate 145, 216
Latin 7, 15, 18-20, 24, 28-30, 52, 58, 64, 78, 82, 97, 101, 102, 107, 110, 123, 125-127, 129, 130, 150, 155-163, 165-169, 172, 173, 174-177, 179, 182, 184, 185, 187, 188, 197, 210, 211
law 22, 92, 100, 105, 106, 116, 117, 145, 217
Le Roy, Louis 44, 45, 152, 183, 186, 216
Lebrun, Charles 204-206, 216
Lectionum Antiquarum (L.C. Richerius) 220
Leigh, C.W.E. 216
Levin, H. 216
Lexicon Iuris (Albericus de Rosate) 118, 208
Linnaeus, Carolus (Carl von Linné) 193, 195, 216
Lloyd, A.B. 39, 216
Lodowyck, Francis 216
Logos 54, 77
Lovejoy, A.O. 216
Lucian 185
Lucretius 35, 36, 74, 138, 140, 216
Luke, Saint 93, 97, 98
Lull, Ramón 80
Luria, Isaac 78
Luther, Martin 53, 54, 56, 216

Maclean, I. 181, 216
Macrobius, A.T. 217
madness 104
magic 81, 83, 84, 97, 106, 223, 224
magical 79-81, 83-85
Malson, L. 190-193, 195-197, 217
Manière de bien traduire d'une langue en autr (E. Dolet) 98, 105, 128, 176, 177, 184, 194, 199, 213
Mann Phillips, M. 217
Maravillas de Naturaleza (M. Ramirez de Carrion) 143-145, 220
Marcial, R. 220
Matthew, Saint 93, 97, 98, 110, 111
Mazzeo, J.A. 90, 95, 217
medicine 3, 7, 8, 10, 17, 22, 49, 58, 88, 103, 141, 146, 147, 149, 153, 156
Meigret, Louis 159
Melanchthon, Philip 52, 217
Ménestrier, C.-F. 128, 217
Mercerus, Ioannes 55, 71, 217
Mercier, J. 71, 217
Mercury, or the Swift and Secret Messenger (J. Wilkins) 199, 200, 223
Mexia, Pedro (Pierre Messie) 40-42, 47, 48, 62, 63, 72, 139, 152, 217
Minos, Claudia 130
Mithridates 214
Molière 203, 206, 216
monasteries 145
monks 101, 102, 140, 143
Montaigne, Michel de 2, 3, 22, 25-27, 32-38, 41, 48, 93, 137, 139,
147-149, 152, 156, 157, 160-164, 167, 174, 177-180, 183,
186, 199, 201, 211, 217, 220, 221, 223
Moralia (Plutarch) 107, 108, 113, 219
Morin, Etienne 46-48, 63, 72, 217
Morris, D. 217
Mounin, C. 217
Musculus, Wolfgangus 55, 71, 217
myth 1, 2, 7, 22, 26, 37-42, 44-46, 49, 60-64, 69, 71, 73, 74, 81, 87,

names 10, 11, 13-16, 18, 19, 22, 23, 25, 35, 40, 43, 44, 46, 49, 51,
55-59, 63-68, 70-72, 74, 77-85, 87, 97, 102, 106, 109, 111,
133, 138, 140, 144, 160, 167, 177
natural language 2, 16, 17, 23, 32, 33, 35, 38, 46, 55, 67, 72, 75, 77,
99, 116, 139, 145, 212
Nazdecrabre 2, 97, 98, 102, 103
Nello di Gabrielis 2, 98, 100, 116, 142, 145
Neoplatonism 78, 83, 85
nerves 48, 147, 148, 204
Nicolaus, De Lyra 55, 64, 65, 217
Norton, G.P. 217

O'Meara, J.J. 16, 218
occult 84-86, 181, 208, 216, 223
Oraison au Roy (J. Tahureau) 167, 183, 185, 222
original language, the 1, 2, 5, 19, 23, 24, 28, 38, 43, 47, 52, 53,
59-63, 65, 66, 68, 69, 73-75, 77, 81, 87, 92, 109, 111, 113,
124, 126, 134, 135, 145, 172-178, 202
Origines Antwerpianae (J. Goropius) 7, 44, 59, 65, 66, 210, 214, 217
oracular prediction 102-106
Ovid 114, 218
Oxford Group, The 198, 199, 202

Pagani, I. 21, 218
Pagden, A.R. 218
Pantagruel (F. Rabelais) 96, 97, 99, 134, 141, 165, 166, 219
Pantagruel 22, 24, 42, 43, 96, 98-108, 113-122, 141, 165, 166, 168, 199, 200
Panurge 22, 24, 42, 96-99, 101-105, 115-117, 119, 121, 122, 166, 167
Paphlagonians 46
Paradin, Claude 124, 218
Paré, Ambroise 163-164, 218
Pareus, Davidus 47, 57, 63, 71-73, 218
Parva Naturalia (Aristotle) 146, 209
Pasquier, Etienne 159, 160, 164, 167, 168, 218, 222
\textit{Les Passions de l'âme} (R. Descartes) 203
Paul, Saint 86, 90, 92, 104, 132, 180, 198, 217, 219, 223
\textit{Pegma} (P. Costalius) 212
Peletier du Mans, Jacques 157, 165, 175, 182, 186, 218
Pentecost 52
Pererius, Benedictus Valentinus 218
Perionius (J. Périon) 67, 69, 218
Petrarch 168
\textit{Phaedrus} (Plato) 109, 219
Philastrius, Saint 61, 218
philautia 104
Philo (Judaeus) of Alexandria 54, 55, 218
\textit{Philocophus} (J. Bulwer) 201, 210
Phrygian 39, 40, 46, 71, 72
Pico della Mirandola 80-82, 218
Pistorius, Johann (of Nidda) 79, 195, 218
Pliny (Plinius Secundus, Caius) 139, 147, 152, 219
Plotinus 127, 219
Plutarch 107-114, 178, 219
Poliphile 128, 129, 133, 211
political fortunes of nations, and status of vernaculars 31, 162, 164, 186
Polydore Vergil 39, 223
Pompeo della Barba 209
Ponce de Léon, Pedro 143, 145
Postel, Guillaume 39, 40, 43, 45, 64, 82, 83, 219, 221
\textit{Postilla Super Totam Bibliam} (N. de Lyra) 55, 65, 217
Powell, J. 203-206
\textit{Prisca theologia} 106
Priscian 15
\textit{Problemata} (Alexander Aphrodisaeus) 148, 208
\textit{Problems} (Aristotle) 17, 33, 34, 40, 146-148, 209
propaganda 1-3, 28-30, 154, 181, 184, 186
proper names 23, 25, 57, 64-66, 72, 83-85, 167
prophecies 3, 24, 25, 66, 103-106, 121
Psammitenius, King of Egypt 38
Psammaticus I, King of Egypt 1, 2, 22, 26, 36-49, 63, 65, 71, 72, 87, 99, 103, 116, 153, 190, 193, 195, 196
Purver, M. 198, 219
Pythagoras 102, 128

\textit{Quart Livre} (F. Rabelais) 22, 24, 27, 106, 107, 109, 113, 116, 117, 119-121, 167, 199, 200, 220

Ramirez de Carrion, Manuel 143-145, 220
rébus 18, 58, 59, 74, 82, 85, 92, 95
Receuil de l'origine de la langue et poesie francoise (C. Fauchet)
177, 182, 186
Remarques sur la langue et poesie francoise (C. Favre de Vaugelas)
223

Reuchlin, Johann 82, 220, 224
Richerius 220
Rickard, P. 7, 28, 30, 155, 161, 162, 164, 176-178, 184, 220
Rigolot, F. 220
Robins, R.H. 8, 9, 14, 29, 220
Rollins, Y.B. 220
Rondelet, Guillaume (Rondeletius) 150, 220
Ronsard 28, 183, 222
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 192, 195, 220
Royal Society, The 198, 202, 219, 223
Russell, D. 123, 220

Saulnier, V.L. 219
Saunders, A. 123, 124, 126, 128, 131, 212, 214, 220
Scaliger, Julius Caesar 181, 216
Schmitt, P.J. 221
Scholem, G. 78, 80, 81, 221
Schwartz, J. 132, 221
Schwarz, W. 221
Screech, M.A. 8, 11, 18, 19, 44, 88, 96-98, 100, 105-111, 113-119, 121, 123, 124, 131-135, 142, 145, 167, 199, 220, 221
Sebillet, Thomas 173
Sebond (Sebundus), Raimond 26, 27, 33, 34, 137, 149, 156, 157, 183, 186, 199, 201
Secret, F. 66, 97, 98, 121, 133, 199, 221, 223
Sefer Jesira (Sepher Yetzirah) 79-82, 219, 221
Seneca 174, 175, 221
Shapiro, B.J. 199, 221
Sheba, Queen of 98
Shumaker, W. 221
Sibscota, George 202, 221
signs 1-4, 17, 20, 24, 27, 88-94, 96-100, 102, 105, 106, 119-122, 129, 137, 139-141, 153, 196, 198, 201, 202
Silenus 134, 135
Silva de Varia Lecion (P. di Mexia [P. Messie]) 40, 41, 62, 63, 217
Silver, Isidore 28, 123, 222
Singh, J.A.L. 190, 197, 222
Smalley, B. 222
Smith, W.F. 222
Socrates 10, 11, 18, 57, 103, 111, 114, 134
Solitaire premier (Pontus de Tyard) 222
Solomon, King 97, 98
Sorbonne 160, 179
Spain 40-42, 61, 70, 78, 142, 143, 162, 186, 198
speaking in tongues 17, 20, 24, 27, 35, 52, 53, 65, 73, 76, 78, 89, 105, 149, 160, 163, 196, 200
Speroni, Sperone 155, 222
Stam, J.H. 222
Steiner, G. 75, 212, 222
stipulation 100
'Sur des vers de Virgile' (M. de Montaigne) 183
surdo-mutism 3, 4, 17, 140, 146, 149, 153, 198
Surdus Loquens (J.C. Amman) 202, 203, 208
surrogationalism 12, 16
symbols 13, 123, 128, 146, 170
Symposium (Plato) 22, 132, 134, 219
Systema Naturae (C. Linnaeus [C. von Linné]) 193, 216

Tahureau, Jacques 167, 182, 183, 185, 222
Tarquin the Proud 121, 200
tau 79, 97, 102
Tetragrammaton 56, 79-81
Thaumaste 2, 24, 96-99, 102, 106, 141, 221
Le Theatre des bons engins (G. de la Perrière) 127, 214
Theologia Naturalis (R. Sebond) 157
Thickett, D. 160, 164, 168, 218, 222
Thomas Aquinas, Saint 8, 19, 93, 94, 223
Travaux d’Humanisme et Renaissance (THR) 5, 123, 132, 217
Topica (Aristotle) 118, 209
Torritore, T. 222
Tory, Geofroy 64, 133, 158, 162, 163, 181, 185, 222
translation 3, 5, 18, 25, 30, 42, 52, 55, 63, 107, 109, 110, 126, 130, 133, 140, 156, 157, 165, 172-179, 202, 208, 210, 217, 222, 223
Tratado Legal Sobre los Mudos (Lasso the Licentiate) 145, 216
Triboulet 3, 24, 103-106, 121
truth 11, 12, 17, 23, 25, 27, 47, 55, 63, 88, 90, 104, 107-110, 112-114, 134, 187, 206, 217
Turnebus, Adrianus (André Turnèbe) 159, 160, 219
Tyard, Pontus de 79, 222

universal language 21, 22, 47, 49, 60, 77, 78, 83, 86, 101, 119, 173, 199, 201, 202, 215
unlettered sounds (agrammatoi psophoi) 14, 18, 47, 118, 119

van Rijnberk, G. 102, 140, 223
Varro 15, 168
Vaugelas, Claude Favre, Baron de 223
verbal communication 1, 2, 8, 12, 16, 23, 24, 27, 88, 89, 92, 96, 108, 118, 121, 123, 131, 137, 169, 171, 179, 202, 206
vernacular language 1, 3, 6, 20, 21, 25, 28-30, 52, 107, 154, 155, 157, 158, 160, 161, 162-164, 169, 172-177, 179, 181, 182, 185, 188, 189, 211, 212
Victor 'the Wild Boy of Aveyron' 50, 191, 192, 196
Villey, P. 34, 36, 41, 139, 217, 223
Virgil 114, 173, 223
Vitruvius 73, 74, 138, 158, 223
vulgar tongue 67, 155-157, 176, 177, 179, 180

Walker, D.P. 83, 84, 115, 223
Wallis, John 198, 199, 201, 202, 223
Walton, Brian 73, 74, 223
Waters, W.G. 143, 164, 223
Wilkins, John 86, 198-200, 212, 221, 223
Worth, V. 33, 38, 56, 107, 109, 157, 173, 174, 177, 178, 191, 195, 223
Wyss, A. 7, 211

Yates, F.A. 80, 86, 223

Zika, C. 224
Zingg, R.M. 190-193, 195, 197, 222, 224