



**SPAIN, 1795: RECONSIDERING
LORENZO HERVÁS Y PANDURO
(1735-1809) AND THE VISUAL
LANGUAGE OF THE DEAF**

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Y porque toda seña no menos que todo acento vocal, es indiferente para significar lo que se quiera, las señas pueden servirnos no menos que las palabras para formar uno o muchos idiomas. (263)

El idioma vocal de los hombres es una de las innumerables señas sensibles, con que ellos se distinguen de las bestias: mas aunque los hombres tuvieran la mudez vocal de ellas, podrían hablar con todos sus sentidos de un modo racional de que no es capaz la bestia. (278)

Lorenzo Hervás y Panduro, *Escuela española de sordomudos* (1795)

In an eloquent if initially vexing essay, Lennard J. Davis (1997a) advances the proposition that all of Europe became deaf in the eighteenth century. To take his statement too literally is to miss his point. Initially his assertion seems to be, as he himself acknowledges, “somewhat preposterous” (110). Nevertheless, it is not at all that preposterous when it is considered in light of the dominant trope of the period: *visuality*.

As many Hispanist critics have pointed out, the 18th century is a time of an increased emphasis on the visual. Rebecca Haidt argues persuasively in *Embodying Enlightenment* (1998) that the *Ilustración* not only strives to cultivate doubt and reasoning—the dominion of the speculative mind— but also seeks to compose an inventory of corporeality and physical presence. As she writes succinctly, “the body is at the center of a cluster of practices and ideas engaging Enlightenment” (5). It is a time, moreover, of a burgeoning modern textuality—focused not only upon documents, essays and manuscripts as the manifestation of knowledge but also upon the “reading” of bodies and places. Urban places themselves are in transition toward becoming objects of visual contemplation, and although the city of the eighteenth-century is perhaps not yet subjected to the full force of the large-scale specialized city-planning that will come to dominate the nineteenth century (Baron Georges Haussmann in Paris, Ildefons Cerdà in Barcelona...), Bourbon rulers of the period take steps in this direction. The

"public" is granted progressive if limited access to what is now Madrid's Retiro Park under Felipe V, Fernando VI and Carlos III, perhaps anticipating the impending visual domination of culture over nature that will come to define the bourgeois mentality of the 19th century (see Fraser "Publically-Private" and Frost). It is thus not surprising to see Davis argue that the deaf become visible as a group during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century (110-11), as the *ilustrados* almost obsessively ponder what it means to be human. An important focal point of this investigation into humanity, widespread across Europe, was language, which is taken by many to be one of the defining characteristics of the human being, if not the most significant. Scholars of the time take to discussing deafness extensively, as the nature of visual communication is read against the traditions of spoken and written language. Visuality thus becomes a key trope in the struggle by hearing scholars, monks and educators who come to envision the deaf as a philosophical problem posed to humanity more broadly considered. In the process, as Davis writes, the deaf person is thus both "universalized and marginalized" ("Universalizing" 118).

Not unexpectedly, accepting the priority of visuality during the Enlightenment only makes understanding the situation of the deaf people living in Spain at the time more problematic. Deaf people have long used a visual language to communicate where they have been in contact with one another, and contemporary studies by deaf and hearing researchers alike continue to suggest that even more work needs to be done regarding the possible gestural origins of language itself (Armstrong; Armstrong and Wilcox; Armstrong, Stokoe and Wilcox). Nevertheless, in the majority of cases, deaf people have been born into societies where hearing has been the norm. Today, it is common for scholars working in the discipline of Deaf Studies, broadly conceived, to cite the statistic that only ten percent of deaf children are born into deaf families (e.g. Padden and Humphries, *Deaf 5*; also Padden, Padden and Humphries *Inside*). The deaf have thus long been subjected to a forced assimilation to hearing standards and ways of living, a pattern that Harlan Lane has attributed to a colonizing paradigm he calls the *Mask of Benevolence*. This paradigm has systematically alienated deaf children from their own natural language. As many researchers continue to assert, early and sustained access to this language that takes place in the visual modality is absolutely fundamental to the deaf child's development (Sacks; Singleton, Supalla, Litchfield and Schley). In fact, as these researchers and others argue, sign language must be the first language learned by the deaf child, and its development will in fact make possible and facilitate his or her learning of additional languages.

Historically, however –and this is particularly the case in Spain– the deaf have largely been instructed through oralist methods. These oralist methods have demanded that the deaf child learn to speak, more often than not, by eschewing language in the visual modality altogether. Perhaps the

first book to document such teaching practices is the *Reducción de las letras y arte para enseñar a ablar los mudos*, published in 1620 by Juan Pablo Bonet. Bonet's text is certainly an ambitious work—not just on account of its detailed description of the practice itself, but also in a more problematic sense, given that the results of this practice are too broadly applied if not in themselves questionable. As contemporary scholars argue within the discipline of Deaf Studies, few deaf people will benefit from such teaching. Moreover, the *Reducción* was not entirely original. Although the notable playwright Lope de Vega praised Bonet's originality in a number of places,¹ the enlightenment thinker and Benedictine monk Benito Jerónimo de Feijóo y Montenegro would later step forward to question properly this judgment in his *Cartas eruditas y curiosas* (1751). In his "Sobre la invención del arte que enseña a hablar los mudos" Feijóo writes that: "es indiscutible que el inventor del arte de enseñar a hablar a los mudos no fue Juan Pablo Bonet, sino el monje Fray Pedro Ponce" (143). Pedro Ponce de León (1520-1584) is certainly a more plausible source for the origins of modern deaf education—he was a Benedictine monk who was working with deaf children related to the Constable of Castille in the monastery of San Salvador at Oña near Burgos north of Madrid. We know of his work today from a legal treatise penned by a Madrileñan jurist who visited the monastery to observe Ponce de León's teachings, after which he argued that those deaf people who could be taught to speak should be legally allowed to inherit entailed estates (*Tratado legal sobre los mudos* [1550]1919). Based on an earlier written tradition authored by hearing or postlingually-deaf writers who framed deafness as an infirmity to be corrected,² during the 16th century, educating the deaf became synonymous with teaching the deaf to speak. Such are the details related over a number of intriguing volumes on the subject, from Susan Plann's wonderful *A Silent Minority: Deaf Education in Spain from 1550-1835*, to Mariyln Daniels' *Benedictine Roots in the Development of Deaf Education*, and in Spanish, Antonio Gascón Ricao and José Gabriel

¹ Lope de Vega praises Juan Pablo Bonet's work in a dedication to Bonet's book itself (1620), in a letter titled "A Juan Pablo Bonet, Secretario a Su Majestad" (*Collección de Obras Sueltas*. Madrid, 1620) and in a dedication preceding his play *Jorge Toledano* (1623?).

² Teresa de Cartagena, for instance, was a postlingually deaf woman who considered her own deafness in terms of isolation and illness in her work *Arboleda de los enfermos* (1455-60). Cartagena was directly influenced by the biblical treatment of deafness in a work by the antipope Pedro de Luna, *Consolaciones de la vida humana*, which at once envisioned deafness as an infirmity and also placed the deaf on a pedestal as somehow closer to God and able to hear with the ears of the soul.

Storch de Gracia y Asensio's *Historia de la educación de los sordos en España* and *Fray Pedro Ponce de León, el mito mediático*.³

The definitive oralist focus of the time can prove shocking to many contemporary readers familiar with what goes by the name "Deaf culture." Today, after decades of linguistic studies that have validated sign languages as having grammatical structures of their own (dating from William C. Stokoe's early papers of the 1950s; see also Maher, after the "Deaf President Now" student movement that animated Gallaudet University in 1988 (and the more recent protests of 2006),⁴ after countless universities and colleges have established programs in American Sign Language, even counting ASL among those that meet the second language requirement of doctoral programs, after remarkable international conferences and the sustained effort of publishing houses in many countries focused on deaf issues, many deaf people rightly demand to be seen as a linguistic minority and not as a disabled group. This is the case even in contemporary Spain, whose critical landscape has been refashioned by an influx of distinctly Americanized ideas of deafness. Works such as *Lenguaje de signos* (Rodríguez González), "La lengua de signos española LSE una verdadera lengua" (Pinedo Peydró), and *Rasgos sociológicos y culturales de las personas sordas* (Minguet Soto) are directly indebted to (and are often explicitly in dialogue with) works and ideas of the research communities writing in English from a perspective supportive of Deaf people as a linguistic and cultural minority. Importantly, after a lengthy campaign supporting the languages of the deaf, the Spanish Senate has recently formally voted in 2007 to recognize Spanish Sign Language (LSE) and Catalán Sign Language (LSC).

It is perhaps necessary to point out that the contemporary researcher with an interest in deafness during the eighteenth century has no choice but to see the past through this more contemporary lens of Deaf culture. As it has been put by the hardcore band Rage Against the Machine, by George Orwell in *Animal Farm* before them, and arguably by the historian Arnold Toynbee before them both: "Who controls the past controls the future.

³ See also my article "Deaf Cultural Production in Twentieth-Century Madrid."

⁴ On the Deaf President Now! movement of 1988, those interested may should consult the webpage pr.gallaudet.edu/dpn, which includes separate links for pertinent "issues," "viewpoints," "activities," "profiles" and "impact." Also of interest is the book *Deaf President Now! The 1988 Revolution at Gallaudet University* (1995) by John B. Christiansen and Sharon N. Barnartt. A brief introduction to the more recent protests of 2006 can be found online as the associated press article published by the New York Times, "University for Deaf Appoints an Interim President" (see: www.nytimes.com/2006/12/11/education/11gallaudet.html). The interim president mentioned in the article, Robert R. Davila, is now president of Gallaudet.

Who controls the present, controls the past.”⁵ Our interest in the past is always motivated by present concerns —whether this motivation is consciously acknowledged or not. To become aware of this motivated character of our present inquiries into the past is at once to see such research as that carried out in the present essay in terms of an expressly political project. I see this political project in terms similar to the way that Lennard J. Davis has characterized disability studies, as at once “an academic field of inquiry and an area of political inquiry” (1). Davis, it needs be pointed out, is a scholar self-consciously working across both deaf studies and disability studies (see also his *Enforcing Normalcy*), a move that in itself is somewhat controversial. To explain: those who consider themselves culturally Deaf may object to being characterized as disabled, and with good reason, given that this is one of the colonizing discourses that continue to prove problematic to their acceptance as a linguistic minority (see Lane). And yet, the culturally Deaf have also benefitted from developments in disability legislation that have worked to improve their access to information and employment, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.⁶ Conceiving deaf studies as a political project, however, means that research into the lives, culture, education and circumstances of deaf people must place the issue of power first and foremost. I believe that there is perhaps room for dialogue with disability studies, particularly as the latter field becomes more and more broadly conceived.⁷ Yet this political project must specifically gauge the distance between a deaf identity as it is conceived by a hearing majority with greater historical control over both resources and their accessibility and as it is conceived by deaf people who work to bridge their own lives with that larger society.

Embracing this political project —agreeing with Owen Wrigley that Deaf culture is a matter of political significance (5)— means dispensing with what I will call the pseudo-scientific reasoning that has been used to advance the untenable position that all deaf people can and should be

⁵ In *The Underground History of American Education*, former New York State and New York City Teacher of the Year John Taylor Gatto asserts that Orwell’s familiar line (*Nineteen Eight Four* 32) is a reformulation of Arnold Toynbee’s *A Study of History* (1934-61): “Whoever controls the image and information of the past determines what and how future generations will think; whoever controls the information and images of the present determines how those same people will view the past,” (quoted in Gatto, 3). Rage Against the Machine invokes the phrase in the first track “Testify” off their album *The Battle of Los Angeles* (1999, Epic Records).

⁶ In Spain see essays by José Gabriel Storch de Gracia y Asensio in *Signos Gráficos* that make the legal case for improving the rights of deaf people.

⁷ Along these lines, see Davis’s *Enforcing Normalcy*, McRuer’s *Crip Theory*, Sedgwick’s *Touching Feeling* and Carlson’s article in *Hypatia*.

taught to speak. It is unfortunate that many in both America and Spain still believe that the "answer" to deafness lies in technological advances that will supposedly eradicate the tough social, cultural and political issues with which the deaf experience is articulated. Take, for example, Manuel López Torrijo, the author of a recent work on the Spanish oralist tradition (*La educación de las personas con sordera: La escuela oralista española*). He alludes to a black-and-white struggle between "las propias personas con sordera y las familias de niños con sordera" (9), the former arguing for a culturally deaf identity rooted in sign language and the latter for a normalized and oral communication. He subsequently notes that:

Este debate y confrontación, que ha durado tres siglos sin alcanzar acuerdo científico, está a punto de resolverse justamente gracias a las últimas aportaciones de diversos ramos de la ciencia que confluyen en su esfuerzo y que permiten augurar en un breve espacio de tiempo el acceso a una audición casi o totalmente normalizada. (10)

The technological answer to the social problem of deafness, he argues, lies in "La identificación de los genes trasmisores, el diagnóstico precoz de la sordera, los implantes cocleares, la logopedia cognitiva, los constantes avances de la informática y tecnología (audífonos digitales,...) y la más lejana aplicación de células madre" (10). His tone in the introduction might be described as triumphant and self-congratulatory, as when he writes that "Taz vez es el momento para reconocer el mérito de los que hicieron posible este duro camino. Y no es otro el objetivo de este breve trabajo" (10). As do many members of the deaf communities and deaf and hearing researchers in both America and Spain, I fail to see deafness as a problem whose "answer" lies in technological advances (see especially Spencer and Marschark).

There are many problems with reaching the conclusion that López does—a conclusion that is unfortunately all too common. First, the contemporary struggles of the deaf are a social struggle unfolding over a differentiated political terrain. It is shortsighted at best to think that these social struggles will disappear. Second, there is the issue of the difficulty wrought of a deaf pedagogy rooted in and destined for an oral modality to which the deaf have little or no access. For those few deaf persons who do benefit from oralist methods, the positive results initially produced wane over time. Third, the struggle is not merely between deaf people and their hearing families, as López seems to imply, but rather betwixt and between deaf people, who are often lumped together as a group with little or no regard for the great variety in hearing loss that differentiates the hard of hearing from the profoundly deaf, and the many intermediary levels in between from each other. And fourth, López is not able to see the connection between visual languages and the persecution of the so-called

regional languages of Spain (Basque, Catalán, Gallician, etc.), which in recent times dates back to the policies of the Bourbon dynasty. Replacing the Hapsburgs, the Bourbons ascended to the throne in 1700 and outlawed minority languages in their drive toward a centralist state (e.g. teaching in Catalán was outlawed under Carlos III in 1768) that placed Castile at the center of a newly imagined national identity.

Connecting visual language with other struggles over language-use not only does justice to the 50-some odd years of scientific research into the validity and grammatical uniqueness of signed languages that starts with William C. Stokoe's investigations into American Sign Language (and at least two decades of similar research in Spain), it also reminds us of the dangers of becoming too instrumentalist in our approach. López Torrijo makes clear that he wants to "conocer y entender el pasado para mejor entender nuestro presente" (12). Feigning no such objectivity, I would rather use the scientific research of the present to help illuminate the past. This essay is more restricted in its scope than previous book-length studies of the deaf in Spain (as above). Yet at the same time, I approach the topic more broadly, in that I hope to have articulated the importance of this history of the deaf with larger developments in the fields of Hispanic Studies, Linguistics and Disability studies. My main purpose is to challenge the view of Lorenzo Hervás y Panduro as a simple oralist –a view that López Torrijo's text does little to question– by revisiting Hervás's work *Escuela española de sordomudos* (1795). At the same time, I want to read this text through the lens of a contemporary understanding of Deaf culture, language and identity on the way to reassessing how Hervás at once accepted and challenged the reigning logic of his day. I hope that this dual reading may provide a new interpretation of an important 18th-century text.

Lorenzo Hervás y Panduro (1735-1809) Reconsidered

Hervás was a Jesuit priest who authored his *Escuela española de sordomudos* while in exile in Italy around 1793. He was born in Horcajo de Santiago in the province of Cuenca on May 10th, 1735, and died in Rome on the 24th of August, 1809. He notably appears in Francisco Aguilar Piñal's encyclopedic *Biografía de autores españoles del siglo XVIII* (vol. IV, 1986: 454-61; also 1976: 166-69).⁸ As Antonio Gascón Ricao and José Gabriel Storch de Gracia y Asensio note, he participated in the founding of the Escuela Municipal de Sordomudos de Barcelona in 1800 (242). Like many enlightenment thinkers he was obsessed with the idea of language as a uniquely human phenomenon, yet he went to perhaps greater lengths than many to research it. López Torrijo does well in highlighting his "dedicación a la filología":

⁸ Robust accounts of Hervás's life and work appear in both Plann (84-97) and Gascón and Storch (235-56).

Su recopilación de más de 300 lenguas y dialectos de todo el mundo, la elaboración de 40 gramáticas, el estudio de la relación entre griego y sánscrito, la delimitación de las familias del malayo-polinesio y fino-ugrio, la demostración de la teoría ibérica del vasco, y, sobre todo, el estudio comparado que realiza de las lenguas, no en base al análisis de sus vocabularios –como era usual en su tiempo–, sino al estudio de las gramáticas ejercieron una clara influencia y reconocimiento en Humboldt, J. Jespersen, F. Bopp, Max Müller y los neo-idealistas alemanes. (82)

One of his own earlier projects (referenced by Hervás in his two-tome study on deaf education) is in fact constituted by a multi-volume study of the Italian language. From the contemporary perspective today's shifting critical landscape it has been important for scholars of the long eighteenth century to revisit the life and work of notable authors, delving further into their life and work as María del Rosario Leal Bonmati has done with her recent essay "José de Cañizares (1676-1750): Una revisión biográfica (1676-1724)." Yet my intent is not to make an historical argument, but rather to reassess the meaning of the work of Hervás from within a contemporary understanding of deafness. There will certainly be those who would prefer a more "objective" approach. Yet the eighteenth century is of great importance not merely to the comparatist working across space, as Nathalie Bittoun-Debruyne rightly suggests in a superb article published in these very pages, but also to the comparatist working along a temporal axis. Ultimately, reading *Escuela española de sordomudos* in the context of his own life and scholarly pursuits, I do not think it is going too far to suggest that Hervás approached deafness more from the perspective of a linguist and less from the medical paradigm that has long envisioned the deaf as infirm (e.g. T. de Cartagena), thus coinciding with contemporary Deaf Studies on a number of important points.

This is not to say that there is little in his work that remains problematic from today's perspective. Quite the opposite, in fact. One finds in his treatise the same desire to correct deafness and restore the deaf person to hearing society that has unfortunately been over-applied today, which in Spain is the product of the enduring legacy of an oralist tradition. Hervás writes:

No puede menos de acudir a derribar aquel muro de división que la naturaleza puso entre ellos y nosotros, impidiendo que se incorporen en nuestra amigable sociedad. No puede menos de procurar sacarlos de los silenciosos calabozos en que los encerró su mudez para trasladarlos a las espaciosas y deliciosas anchuras, en que la sociedad humana vive alegre con la mutua comunicación de todos sus miembros. (5-6)

Perhaps Hervás wanted to "cure" deafness (Gascón and Storch 245). He certainly wanted to assimilate the deaf fully into hearing society. Hervás

also gives detailed descriptions of vocal articulation techniques similar to those described in Bonet's book, even if he prefers descriptive laminate representations to direct manipulation of the mouth and tongue by the teacher of the deaf person. Yet it can be argued that the pointedly simplistic understanding of the deaf person that obtains throughout his work no doubt also reflects the position of the deaf in society at the time and the paucity of written accounts of deafness by deaf people themselves. At the same time, this simple understanding of the deaf person is also a barometer of the widespread problem that deaf people during the eighteenth century lacked access to a first natural language itself to a degree that is unthinkable in light of the past 20-50 years of scientific research into sign languages — as we today know, those deaf people with little or no access to spoken language desperately need to approach learning oral and written language from a grounding in an already internalized grammatical system such as the one offered by sign language (see Sacks; Singleton et. al.).

It should be underscored that I do not intend this as an apologist's rendering of Hervás. Instead, I want to argue that coexisting with these negative aspects of his work, there is a part of his thought which is wholly supportive of visual language and the nature of visual communication. This part is at odds with, if not the oralism of his day, then most *certainly* with the oralism of our contemporary time, which itself dates back to a decision to whole-heartedly embrace oralism and eschew manualism at a notorious 1880 conference of deaf educators in Milán.⁹ Furthermore, that there is something worth celebrating in Hervás is reflected in the non-profit center in Madrid that bears his name, the Centro Hervás y Panduro (Her-Pan), which promotes discussion of issues pertinent to deaf people and also offers courses in LSE in coordination with the Universidad Complutense de Madrid.¹⁰ I believe that this "something" can be articulated along three basic lines: 1) a broad approach to the deaf person that underscores his/her humanity, 2) a support for visual language and a concomitant

⁹ Educators of the deaf from a number of countries met at the 1880 conference in Milán, Italy in order to decide the future of deaf education. These educators, who were hearing people, voted to discontinue the manual method of deaf education and institute the oralist method. For many, if not all, members of the Deaf communities in the US and Europe, this conference is of crucial importance when approaching deaf history. Repercussions of the 1880 institutionalization of the oralist method have affected the lives of deaf people in one way or another throughout the twentieth-century and continue to do so today. Harlan Lane, for one, provides a well-contextualized look at the Milán conference in his *Mask of Benevolence* in a section titled "The Oppression of American Sign Language" (103-20, esp. 113-15).

¹⁰ See the center's website at www.ucm.es/info/civil/herpan/centro.htm.

acknowledgement of the dual nature of both "natural" and "artificial" visual languages, and 3) the importance of print as a primary source of non-visual (spoken) language systems. These are the aspects of his work that, from today's perspective, make problematic his simplistic labeling as a pedagogue firmly rooted in the oralist tradition.

A Broad Approach to Deafness

First, from the outset Hervás points out that his work on deaf education is not merely an instrumentalist pedagogical guide. He writes that:

Si yo me hubiera reducido a escribir solamente en este tratado lo que pide la preciosa instrucción que el maestro debe dar a los Sordomudos, mi obra solamente se leería por las poquísimas personas que tuvieran la vocación y el encargo de instruirlos: y todas las demás quedarían casi en la misma ignorancia que hasta ahora ha reinado sobre la importancia despreciada, y obligación desconocida de instruir a los Sordomudos, y sobre su fácil instrucción.¹¹ (1-2)

The first part of his work consists of “discursos [sobre los Sordomudos] útiles y curiosos al político, al físico, al filósofo y al teólogo”; the second is a “historia del arte de enseñar la escritura y el habla a los Sordomudos”; the third, el método práctico de enseñarles el idioma español por escrito”; the fourth, “el método práctico de enseñarles a hablar la lengua castellana [...y...] los idiomas portugués e italiano”; and in the fifth Hervás delivers “un ensayo de enseñar a los Sordomudos las ideas metafísicas, y la doctrina civil y moral; y después del ensayo se pone un catecismo de doctrina christiana para la instrucción de ellos” (3).

Support for Visual Language

Second, Hervás's work highlights the importance of rendering the grammar of spoken language in a visible form through signs. This latter point must be understood in terms of one of the forms taken by the debates between oralism and manualism that became more visible near the close of the eighteenth century. One of the historical figures of deaf education who has received much positive contemporary attention is the Abbé de l'Épée in Paris. L'Épée advocated a manual form of spoken language that enabled the deaf to visualize the grammar of spoken French and to use this as a bridge to learning to write and speak the language. It is this version of deaf education that was eventually carried to the United States by way of Laurent Clerc, a Frenchman brought over by Thomas

¹¹ I have modernized the spelling and punctuation of Hervás's original text of 1795 in the citations used throughout this essay.

Hopkins Gallaudet, himself a key figure in the establishment of arguably the first school for the deaf in America in Hartford, Connecticut in 1817.

It must be noted that such a visible form of spoken language is questionable from the perspective of members of the Deaf community today, who rightly prefer that the visual language used in educating the deaf be ASL, one that has been naturally shaped through its use by a native-born linguistic community and that does not reflect the grammar and syntax of a language borne outside of the visual modality.¹² Nevertheless, read against the backdrop of more concerted oralist methods that emphasized oral articulation/vocalization as the first step of the education process (e.g. Bonet), L'Épée's form of visual language was itself a novel idea. This was true at a very basic level that some commonly take for granted even today—in the sense that his system, as did that advocated by Hervás in his own work, acknowledged the primacy of visual information for the deaf learner. The legacy of a more traditional oralism, one that Hervás's work begins to break away from, can unfortunately be seen even today in critical scholarship that must still fight against the same misunderstandings of the learning process of deaf children. Recent volumes such as *Language Acquisition by Eye* (eds. Chamberlain, Morford and Mayberry) still strive to have theories of language acquisition account for sign languages and recognize the significant issue of modality (visual vs. aural/oral). The contemporary reader may certainly be struck by the fact that—as López Torrijo himself acknowledges—Hervás went further than others of his time in arguing that the educator must make a point of knowing the “señas” used by his students in order to better teach them (112). It is this very student-centered approach that was definitively outlawed by the oralist verdict of the Milán conference of 1880.

Moreover, along with these key attributes of Hervás's method—attributes that were certainly not a part of orthodox oralist practices—the eighteenth-century Spanish linguist waxes poetic about both “natural” and “artificial” visual languages. In *Forbidden Signs*, Douglas C. Baynton does well in reminding contemporary readers that the earlier use of the term “natural” meant something quite different indeed. Whereas today, “natural” is a term used to connote a language that develops organically through its use by a community—including both signed and spoken languages—such a language at the time was denoted as “artificial,” meaning that it was a direct product of man's ingenuity instead of a language that was seen as universal. Regarding the latter category, Hervás wrote eloquently of such “natural”

¹² Modern-day versions of this type of visually-encoded spoken language in the US include Manually Coded English (MCE), Signed Exact English (SEE) 1 and 2, cued speech and others, all of which are seen as poor alternatives to American Sign Language.

signs in a subsection titled "Idioma de señas naturales o idioma natural" (267-82):

El hombre expresa sus ideas, y habla con la frente espaciosa, arrugada, serena y de color vario: con las cejas arqueadas, extendidas, altas, bajas, movedizas, e inmóviles; con los párpados fijos movedizos y trémulos: con la nariz ancha, afilada y encrespada: con las mejillas rojas, pálidas y de color permanente o continuamente variable: El hombre habla con los ojos, levantándolos, bajándolos, abriéndolos, cerrándolos, guiñándolos, volviéndolos al cielo, a la tierra, a aquel con quien habla o con quien no quiere hablar: el hombre habla con su mirar atento, gracioso y curioso, halagüeño, airado, feroz: con miras de traidor: con mostrar ojos tiernos, compasivos, tristes y llorosos: con mostrarlos risueños, alegres y honestamente afectuosos: con mostrarlos duros, traidores, vengativos, soberbios y lascivos: con mostrarlos inmóviles, desatentos y estúpidos. [...] El filósofo en las señas naturales que el hombre hace muchas veces en lugar de la voz y que comúnmente las hace hablando, ve, oye o siente el idioma de la naturaleza. (275-76, 278)

The reader familiar with contemporary sign languages will note in this description not only the gestural basis for expressive storytelling but also that Hervás's "natural" signs also constitute an important part of the complex grammatical systems of sign languages—so-called "non-manual signals" (see Rodríguez González for a linguistic discussion of their counterparts in LSE).

Moreover, the author of the *Escuela española de sordomudos* also suggests that both natural and arbitrary signs may be used to constitute language.

Seña es no solamente cualquier movimiento natural o arbitrario hecho con cualquier parte del cuerpo, sino también toda señal exterior que se haga por cualquiera de los cinco sentidos. Todo lo que a estos es sensible, es seña, la cual cuando se hace con alguna parte del rostro se llama gesto. Todo lo que nos es sensible puede servir de seña para significar alguna cosa: a las señas naturales la naturaleza da su significación, que todos los hombres entienden por sí mismas, ni por dirección de la naturaleza nada significan, los hombres dan o pueden dar significación según su voluntad o capricho: por los que ellos haciéndose saber la significación que por convención voluntaria dan a las señas arbitrarias, se pueden valer de estas como de idiomas, y entenderse mutuamente con ellas. Las señas arbitrarias pueden ser idiomas inventados por los hombres, y las señas naturales son idioma de la naturaleza: de unas y de otras discurriré brevemente.¹³ (262-63)

¹³ Also "Idioma humano es, y debe llamarse toda clase o especie de señales externas con que el hombre puede declarar exteriormente sus actos mentales: por lo que los idiomas pueden ser tantos en número y tan diversos, cuanto puede ser numerosa y

Hervás was relatively far from embracing a simplistic/reductive understanding of visual signs as monovocal signifiers. They too, as indicated in the above citation, could be subjected to the same process of applying social convention that lead to the very "artificial" languages created by humankind across different times and space that Hervás investigated throughout his numerous published linguistic studies. He emphasized that there was a common quality shared by both visual and spoken communication: "Y porque toda seña no menos que todo acento vocal, es indiferente para significar lo que se quiera, las señas pueden servirnos no menos que las palabras para formar uno o muchos idiomas" (263). Also, he did not define humankind through spoken language alone, but suggested that there was a language faculty that would allow full communication to take place among men even in the absolute absence of speech: "El idioma vocal de los hombres es una de la innumerables señas sensibles, con que ellos se distinguen de las bestias: mas aunque los hombre tuvieran la mudez vocal de ellas, podrían hablar con todos sus sentidos de un modo racional de que no es capaz la bestia" (278). In the estimation of Gascón Ricao and Storch, Hervás reached "la conclusión final de que los sordos poseían una "mente" idéntica a la de los oyentes, faltándoles únicamente el hablar (*Historia* 248).

Yet Hervás's most resounding endorsement of visual (manual) language is perhaps evidenced through a long intercalated narration of a visit to a classroom of deaf students that appears in his text.

No es creíble si no se ve, la facilidad con que los sordomudos se hablan y se entienden: lo he visto muchas veces con reflexión, pues estando en la escuela de ellos, he fingido entretenerme con su maestro, suplicando a éste que los dejara en toda su libertad par poder observar su continuo hablar: y siempre he observado que los más niños están en continuas cuestiones entre sí, como sucede en las escuelas de leer. Me he entretenido también tal vez en averiguar sus cuestiones, y no sin maravilla he hallado que en media hora los Sordomudos se dicen tantas y tan diversas cosas, cuantas se pueden decir en el mismo tiempo los que hablan. (282)

This anecdote perhaps reveals more about its narrator than it does about the children described. Hervás is clearly impressed by the expressive possibilities of manual language in a way that was unfortunately all too uncommon among both hearing scholars of his time and among hearing people today.

varia la combinación de las señas diversas y proporcionadas para declarar los actos mentales" (1795, 128).

The Importance of Print

The aspect of Hervás's work that I believe most resonates with the critical landscape of contemporary Deaf Studies involves the importance he assigns to writing. It is visibility itself that, for the author of the *Escuela española de sordomudos*, provides the link between writing and sign language: "El [sentido] de la vista, por ejemplo, suministra los idiomas visibles, y estos pueden ser de escritura o de acción; pues a la vista se habla con caracteres escritos y con señas" (258). This importance of writing manages to displace the central hegemony of the spoken word that characterizes the strong oralist tradition of deaf education: "El idioma de escritura, por lo que entiendo todo lo que escribe, diseña o pinta, es el más útil y necesario a los Sordomudos para que sean instruidos, y puedan comunicar sus ideas a otros" (259). Scholars of deaf education today are still working to emphasize writing over speech for the deaf student—and in doing so, they now have to wade against the current of an oralism dating back to at least 1880 Milán. As Sam Supalla and Jody Cripps emphasize in a recent publication, acquisition of speech should follow rather than precede the acquisition of writing:

Some of the changes in deaf education include no longer treating speech as central to the reading process or even in place of a sign language (as found with oralism). Speech can be more effectively taught to a deaf child (i.e. for the purpose of talking) based on the English language knowledge achieved through reading instruction. This would serve as another justification for the reform of deaf education. (187)

Two-hundred years earlier in Spain, Hervás was saying precisely the same thing. Nevertheless, as critics have mentioned, his advice has not been heeded.

In effect, contemporary researchers have been taking up and extending Hervás's emphasis on the appropriate contribution of writing to the education of deaf pupils. Taking up this call, Sam Supalla and others have emphasized the importance of print English for deaf learners (see Supalla, Wix, and McKee). The contemporary extension of Hervás's idea involves calling not only for giving priority to written forms of spoken language over speech itself in the instruction of the deaf child, but also of seeking a way of rendering sign language in print. Sherman Wilcox noted concisely that "We need an accepted ASL writing system, and we need to explore its use in Deaf education" (184). Supalla and others have also more recently explored such a writing system, specifically in order to provide a bridge to print English for the young deaf learner —although this system is perhaps only meant to be used transitionally. Needless to say that there is much debate surrounding this and other forms of a written system for a language in the visual modality in both the Deaf and research communities.

Nevertheless, there is significantly less debate regarding the idea that deaf learners need to master written English. To prioritize writing is to step

away from the traditional oralist school of deaf education, and to recognize the distance between two different models of integration. The traditional oralist school places speech first and foremost, and requires the deaf person to assimilate to a hearing-centered paradigm of social inclusion with little regard for the simple fact that the deaf cannot hear. A more reasonable model of inclusion balances teaching the skills that deaf children need to succeed in a majority hearing society with those that are achievable and maintainable—writing, not speech. It is writing that holds the key to doing away with what Hervás called the "muro de división" (1-2) separating the deaf from the hearing. Gascón and Storch even see in Hervás's mention of such a "muro de división" (1-2) the precedent for doing away with the "barreras de comunicación" that still exist today (see also Storch "Derecho fundamental" and "El derecho"). As scholars working in Deaf Studies today are aware, reading and writing skills are accessible and maintainable by the deaf child—they are an option for all deaf children in a way that speech simply is not. We thus need to see Hervás's work in this sense as not merely deeply relevant to his own time, but also to our own.

Conclusion

The year 2009—the bicentennial of Lorenzo Hervás y Panduro's death—provides an unusual opportunity to revisit the work of one of the most important enlightenment linguists. As other scholars have argued (Plann, Gascón and Storch), Hervás was ahead of his time in numerous ways—and yet it is still common to see some refer to him as a simple oralist (López Torrijo). This unfortunate perspective reveals more about the power of the oralist tradition itself than it does about Hervás. As I have hoped to show, the lessons contained in his *Escuela española de sordomudos*—lessons emphasizing a broad view of the deaf person, the importance and even the nuance of visual communication, and most of all the importance of writing for the deaf learner—are all too seldom embraced by the larger hearing society in which we all live. If, as critics have suggested toward different ends, the Enlightenment was a time of increased visuality and visibility, we find ourselves today still living in the midst of that long eighteenth-century tradition.

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Lorenzo Hervás y Panduro war ein spanischer Jesuit, der als Sprachgenie galt, das einen großen Einfluss auf die Entwicklung der Sprachwissenschaft ausübte. Er soll annähernd 40 Sprachen gesprochen haben. Er gilt als einer der Begründer der Historischen Linguistik.[1] For faster navigation, this Iframe is preloading the Wikiwand page for Lorenzo Hervás y Panduro. Home. News.