This story will go its way simply, for I leave it to the doctors to discuss it. The day before yesterday I saw a child that two men and a nurse, who said they were the father, uncle, and aunt, were leading about to get a penny or so from showing him, because of his strangeness. In all other respects he was of ordinary shape; he could stand on his feet, walk, and prattle, about like others of the same age. He had not yet been willing to take any other nourishment than from his nurse's breast; and what they tried to put in his mouth in my presence he chewed on a little and spat it out without swallowing. There seemed indeed to be something peculiar about his cries. He was just fourteen months old.

Below the breast he was fastened and stuck to another child, without a head, and with his spinal canal stopped up, the rest of his body being entire. For indeed one arm was shorter, but it had been broken by accident at their birth. They were joined face to face, and as if a smaller child were trying to embrace a bigger one around the neck. The juncture and the space where they held together was only four fingers' breadth or thereabouts, so that if you turned the imperfect child over and up, you saw the other's navel below; thus the connection was in between the nipples and the navel. The navel of the imperfect child could not be seen, but all the rest of his belly could. In this way all of this imperfect child that was not attached, as the arms, buttocks, thighs, and legs, remained hanging and dangling on the other and might reach halfway down his legs. The nurse
also told us that he urinated from both places. Moreover the limbs of this other were nourished and living and in the same condition as his own, except that they were smaller and thinner.

This double body and these several limbs, connected with a single head, might well furnish a favorable prognostic to the king that he will maintain under the union of his laws these various parts and factions of our state. But for fear the event should belie it, it is better to let it go its way, for there is nothing like divining about things past. So that, when things have happened, by some interpretation they are found to have been prophesied [Cicero]. As they said of Epimenides that he prophesied backward.

I have just seen a shepherd in Médoc, thirty years old or thereabouts, who has no sign of genital parts. He has three holes by which he continually makes water. He is bearded, has desire, and likes to touch women.

What we call monsters are not so to God, who sees in the immensity of his work the infinity of forms that he has comprised in it; and it is for us to believe that this figure that astonishes us is related and linked to some other figure of the same kind unknown to man. From his infinite wisdom there proceeds nothing but that is good and ordinary and regular; but we do not see its arrangement and relationship. What he sees often, he does not wonder at, even if he does not know why it is. If something happens which he has not seen before, he thinks it is a prodigy [Cicero].

We call contrary to nature what happens contrary to custom; nothing is anything but according to nature, whatever it may be. Let this universal and natural reason drive out of us the error and astonishment that novelty brings us.

Questions
1. What do you suppose got Montaigne to start writing this essay?
2. What is it about, in the end?
3. What does the essay tell you about Montaigne, himself?