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ENGLISH WRITERS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY,
THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA, PH.D., 1977

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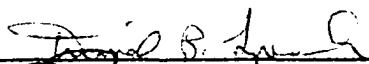
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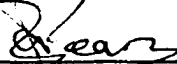
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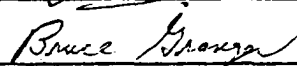
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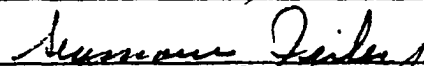
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DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

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Ron, Jeffrey, and Amy

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I first became interested in the literary exchanges between France and England as an undergraduate student in Modern Languages at The University of Oklahoma. I owe my thanks to several professors of English and of French who encouraged me to pursue this interest.

I am indebted in particular to Dr. Seymour Feiler, Professor of French, and to Dr. David P. French, Professor of English, whose inspiring courses in eighteenth-century literature prompted me to select the Age of Enlightenment as a focus for my study. Without their lectures and comments I would scarcely have had a sound basis in this area. I would also like to thank the staff connected with the University of Oklahoma Rare Book Collections. Their readiness to search for my materials, their interest in my project, and their friendship I have truly appreciated.

I owe my greatest thanks to Dr. David P. French for directing this study over the past two years. He has offered invaluable criticism and much needed advice. Many times his suggestions led me to discoveries of great importance to my topic. I can never repay the time and encouragement he so willingly gave me.

Finally, I would like to offer my sincerest gratitude to my mother-in-law, Marie Thornton. She has never hesitated to help me in any possible way in order to provide the necessary time to research and write this dissertation. Without her unselfish assistance, I might never have finished this study.

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THE INFLUENCE OF BERNARD DE FONTENELLE UPON
ENGLISH WRITERS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

INTRODUCTION

Like so many of the philosophes during the French Enlightenment, Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657-1757) became knowledgeable and productive in several areas: literary, scientific, religious, even psychological. He never felt compelled to limit his learning to a single field; rather he continued throughout his life to explore whatever new discoveries or subjects that might interest him. Fortunately for readers today, he found virtually everything to be of interest, from systems of the universe to superstitions of the Church. He was particularly attracted to those questions and problems which might enlighten the public, such as the possibility of inhabitants on other planets or the credibility of Christian miracles. It is true that other writers before him may have discussed the same questions, even arriving at similar conclusions, but they either published their ideas in Latin or wrote in such

scholarly prose that their ideas were little known and little read. Fontenelle, on the contrary, presented his ideas in French, which made them available to a wider reading public and he wrote in a witty, conversational way, entertaining the reader while teaching him. Because of the immediate appeal of his writing, Fontenelle therefore became popular and influential not only in France, but in England as well.

One might think that such a popular and productive writer would have long been the subject of critical attention. However, this is not the case. Until the last twenty-five or thirty years, Fontenelle was rarely mentioned except in anthologies or in selected passages of larger works. Johan Egilsrud briefly discussed Fontenelle's role in reviving the dialogue of the dead (1934);¹ Marjorie Nicolson, his role in popularizing the Copernican system of the universe (1948);² A. F. B. Clark, his role as a classical critic (1925);³ and J. E. Congleton, his role as a theorist in pastoral poetry (1952).⁴ None of these scholars, however, focused upon Fontenelle alone. One early work, that of Auguste Laborde-Milaa for the series Les Grands Ecrivains Francais (1905),⁵ is the exception to this trend. Apart from him, though, no one wrote a specialized study on Fontenelle until J.-R. Carré in 1932.⁶ His book, although still considered the most authoritative today, was followed by that of F. Grégoire (1947),⁷ Suzanne Delorme (1957),⁸ and J.-F. Counillon (1959).⁹ Scholars then began to concentrate

upon editing critical editions of Fontenelle's major works: Louis Maigron edited the Histoire des Oracles (1934);¹⁰ J.-R. Carré, the Origine des Fables (1932);¹¹ Robert Shackleton, the Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes and the Digression sur les Anciens et les Modernes (1955);¹² and Donald Schier, the Nouveaux Dialogues des Morts (1965).¹³ After critical editions became available, scholarly focus shifted once again to specialized studies. John Cosentini analyzed Fontenelle's art of dialogue in the dialogues of the dead (1952);¹⁴ Leonard Marsak, his contribution to eighteenth-century science (1959);¹⁵ and Frederick Keener, his influence upon English dialogues of the dead (1973).¹⁶

With the exception of a brief unpublished master's thesis by Ida E. Stewart (1941),¹⁷ no one has yet attempted to assess Fontenelle's influence upon English writers in the eighteenth century. This omission prompted me to consider and finally to attempt such a project. It seemed probable that Fontenelle's works had made an impact of some sort upon English writers and the public, especially considering the number of translations available. I therefore set about tracing his influence upon British literature. Yet while I could readily trace his presence, I soon found that the whole matter of proving influence is itself a touchy problem. How can one assert that any writer has influenced another? In many cases, no proof seems possible. In others, though, several approaches are available to help solve the

problem. One may at times show direct evidence of Fontenelle's influence in the works of an English writer by way of that author's own acknowledgments and references in his correspondence. Here, of course, there is no doubt that the Frenchman made an impact upon his reader. At other times, Fontenelle's ideas may seem to be reflected through the works of another writer, such as Bayle, whose works were also popular in England. Such cases, while more difficult to prove, in some ways suggest an even wider kind of influence. At still other times one may do no more than suggest the possibility of Fontenelle as one of several sources of influence. Such cases are more speculative, but they may contribute to our knowledge of an English writer's sources for a particular work. They may even provide insight into his reasons for composing a poem or an essay. In this study, all three of these varying degrees of influence appear, although I limited my selection of Fontenelle's works to those which displayed the most direct influence upon English writers.

Fontenelle's earliest work of importance was the Nouveaux Dialogues des Morts (1683), a series of thirty-six dialogues of the dead which prompted a revival of that Lucianic form both in France and in England. Although composed when Fontenelle was only twenty-five years old, this work expressed the same philosophical ideas which he would uphold more than a half-century later. Its witty and

thoughtful dialogues appealed to a wide range of English readers, several of whom were led to write similar dialogues of their own. William King wrote the first such series in 1699, utilizing the form to focus upon the current Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns. John Hughes followed in 1708 with two dialogues appended to his translation of Fontenelle's Dialogues. While Hughes' skill lay more in translation than in original composition, King's abilities were more impressive in his ten dialogues. Likewise the dialogues of Matthew Prior (1720-21) and of George, Lord Lyttelton (1760), exhibited a great degree of skill in their imitation of Fontenelle. Prior's four dialogues bore the closest resemblance to Fontenelle's with their witty manner and thoughtful style. Lyttelton, however, based his collection of twenty-nine dialogues equally upon the examples of Fontenelle and Fénelon. As a result, his dialogues, like Fénelon's, were longer and more didactic than Fontenelle's. An analysis of these four English writers demonstrates that Fontenelle's Nouveaux Dialogues des Morts helped to revive and popularize the form in England.

Five years after the appearance of his Dialogues Fontenelle published a collection of pastoral poetry, to which he appended an essay on the nature of such poetry. This Discours sur la nature de l'églogue (1688) was destined to make a great impact upon English literary circles. In fact, the pastoral theories which Fontenelle discussed in

his Discours strove in both England and France for supremacy with those of the French critic and poet, René Rapin. While Rapin stressed classical precedent and authority in outlining his rules, Fontenelle relied heavily upon "the Natural Light of Reason." Thus the school of thought favoring Rapin became known as "neoclassic" and that of Fontenelle as "rationalistic." In my study I discuss the theories of both Rapin and Fontenelle, along with the sentiments of English writers who reacted favorably and unfavorably to each. Those writers who were aware of the controversy and chose to respond favorably to Rapin's rules included Sir William Temple, Knightly Chetwood, and Alexander Pope. Those who defended Fontenelle included Joseph Addison, Ambrose Philips, Thomas Tickell, Thomas Purney, and Samuel Johnson. These latter writers carried the controversy into the mid-eighteenth century, during which time English writers in general became more inclined to favor sentiment and feeling over classical precedent. Therefore, in spite of the early sway which Rapin's theories exercised, Fontenelle's more subjective theories triumphed later on. His Discours, I suggest, was instrumental in stimulating this trend toward psychological literary criticism in England.

In 1686, before he concentrated upon the purely literary endeavors of pastoral poetry, Fontenelle published his most famous and frequently translated work, the Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes. In this witty yet

scientific exposition of the Copernican system of the universe, Fontenelle supported the idea of a plurality of worlds and discussed the possibility of inhabitants on other planets. Other than John Wilkins, the Bishop of Chester, Fontenelle was the earliest writer to treat such subjects seriously. Wilkins had proposed these ideas some fifty years earlier in 1638, but his work was far too learned to appeal to the general reading public. Not until Fontenelle published his Entretiens were these scientific ideas placed within the reach of a nonspecialized public. In England this work was widely read and immensely popular, as the many responses English writers made to it in their works and correspondence show. More specifically, I shall focus upon Matthew Prior and Alexander Pope in a special section in order to show how they incorporated ideas from the Entretiens into imaginative literature. Although this particular work did not inspire literary imitation or shape critical theory, it was more widely read and discussed than either of the previous two works which I have analyzed.

Fontenelle's controversial Histoire des Oracles, likewise published in 1686, created less scandal and received more sympathy in England than in France. Based upon the ponderous Latin treatise of the Dutchman Antonius Van Dale, his work attacked the Christian beliefs that oracles were conveyed by demons and that oracles ceased at the coming of Christ. As in the Entretiens Fontenelle directed his

discussion toward a wide reading public, especially readers unfamiliar with Latin. However, because of the nature of its content the Histoire attracted the attention of religious freethinkers in particular. Fontenelle's attack on oracles was actually a subtle questioning of the credibility of all Christian miracles, an implication which English writers sensed immediately and carried further in their own works. I suggest that several works of early deistic writers such as John Toland and Anthony Collins received their impetus from Fontenelle's Histoire. These writers came to emphasize the rational element in natural religion and to deny the mysterious element maintained by authoritative priests. Other writers later in the century who followed Fontenelle's historical approach include Lord Bolingbroke, Conyers Middleton, and David Hume. These mid-century writers focused almost exclusively upon a denial of Christian miracles, and their works essentially marked the end of this controversy as far as public interest was concerned. It is certain that many other diverse influences affected the development of the deistic system of thought in England. However, in relation to the issue of the credibility of miracles, Fontenelle's Histoire was significant in providing an example for English writers to follow.

After examining these four selected works, I have become convinced that Fontenelle's popularity and influence were as evident in England as in France. He inspired new

trends of thought in the areas of pastoral theory and religious criticism, stimulated a revival of the dialogue-of-the-dead form, and popularized the Copernican system of the universe. Even one of these achievements would be enough to justify Fontenelle's place in literary history; together they amount to an influence which has been too little recognized today. Fontenelle was far from a shallow précieux and pedant. He was a serious thinker in his own right, a man who more than many more renowned writers represented the spirit of the Enlightenment.

CHAPTER ONE

THE NOUVEAUX DIALOGUES DES MORTS AND ENGLISH DIALOGUES OF THE DEAD

The Nouveaux Dialogues des Morts was Fontenelle's first major work, appearing anonymously in January 1683 when he was not yet thirty. Until that time he had published little other than dramatic failures (Aspar in 1680 and La Comète in 1681) and a few more successful compositions such as L'amour noyé in 1677 and Psyché in 1679. During most of this time Fontenelle was living in Rouen, coming to Paris only briefly for the production of Aspar. Therefore, as Donald Schier notes in the critical edition of this work, the Dialogues was really the work of a young provincial.¹ Yet it was immediately successful, in contrast to his previous publications. Three editions appeared in that first year, and both English and Italian translations had come out by October of 1683.² The English translation of the Dialogues appealed to a wide reading public, including such writers as William King, Matthew Prior, and George, Lord Lyttelton. Each was so impressed with Fontenelle's use of

the dialogue form that he attempted to compose similar ones. In addition, John Hughes translated the Dialogues again in 1708, adding two dialogues of his own at the end of the new edition. While some of these writers were more skillful than others in imitating Fontenelle's dialogues, each of their works shows how extensive his influence was.

The first edition of Fontenelle's Dialogues contained eighteen dialogues: six among the Ancients, six among the Moderns, and six among both Ancients and Moderns. This number was doubled by the third edition and arranged in six groups of six. In 1684 Fontenelle added the Jugement de Pluton sur les Dialogues des Morts, also published anonymously. In it he allowed various characters to expose his techniques and even shortcomings, under the guise of defending himself against a manuscript criticism of the Dialogues. Unfortunately much of the Jugement is "mere foolery" in the opinions of modern scholars--and I heartily agree.³ If read after the dialogues themselves, it tends to detract from their moral purpose, for the speakers make light of issues treated seriously in the dialogues. In addition, it must have been confusing to readers contemporary with the author, such as John Hughes. He was not aware that Fontenelle had written the piece himself; consequently, in the preface to his English translation of the Dialogues he chastises the author severely for his audacity.⁴

One should not assume that because the Dialogues was an early work it was unpolished in form or simplistic in thought. Although composed when Fontenelle was only twenty-five, it expresses the same philosophical ideas which he would uphold more than a half-century later. As for form and style, even a hasty reading shows why Fontenelle came to be called "the French Lucian."⁵ Like Lucian he combines the philosophical dialogue with comedy and uses it to display his contempt for worldly concerns by showing how little they matter in the next world. He juxtaposes great men of different ages, who in viewing their own past lives comment at the same time upon the folly of the modern world. In the preface to the Dialogues Fontenelle acknowledges his debt to Lucian, to whom he dedicates the book. He affirms that he wrote in imitation of Lucian, as the following excerpt shows:

At least, I have attempted to imitate you in the end you have proposed. All of your dialogues include their moral, and I have made all my dead moralize; otherwise it would not have been worth the trouble to make them speak; the living would have sufficed to say useless things. Moreover, it is convenient to suppose that the dead are people of great reflection, as much because of their experience as their leisure; and for their honor one should believe that they think a little more than is usual in life. They reason better than we on things here above because they regard them with more indifference and tranquility, and they still wish to reason on them because they take some remaining interest in them. You have made most of their dialogues so short that it appears you did not believe them big talkers, and I have readily agreed with you. As the dead are very intelligent, they must soon see to the

bottom of all matters. I could even believe without difficulty that they might be enlightened enough to agree with each other, and consequently almost never converse; for it seems to me that it falls to us other ignorant ones to dispute, we who do not discover the truth, just as it falls to the blind ones, who do not see where they go, to collide in the road. But one should not be persuaded here that the dead have changed character to the point of no longer having opposing sentiments. Once an opinion of people has been formed in the world, how to abandon it is unknown. Thus I have applied myself to making the dead recognizable, at least those who are very well known.⁶

Thus Fontenelle set out to make his dialogues moral and reflective in tone, yet because of the dead's supposed insight into worldly affairs, he never intended their discussions to be lengthy. Even though the speakers were dead, Fontenelle wanted them to be recognizable to the reader, defending the same sentiments they were known to hold while alive.

The result of this approach is a series of dialogues presenting two sides of a question, even when they may be opposed and thus cancel each other out. In his analysis of Fontenelle's form in the Dialogues, John Cosentini refers to this technique as the "spirit of contradiction."⁷ He sees Fontenelle as a true philosophe, a thinker who possesses the quality of being indeterminate, of suspending judgment if reason is unable to come to definite conclusions. In fact, one of the main thrusts of the Dialogues seems to be revealing the limitations and pitfalls of reason. Reason may be the faculty which enables man to rise above brute nature, but it is impotent in many cases. On the other

hand, man's passions are the vital elements in his life. They compel him to act and to create, even though impulsively at times, and are therefore a necessary life force. This negative attitude toward reason connects Fontenelle with many of the eighteenth-century thinkers who followed him, such as Swift and Hume. In fact, one of the characteristics of the eighteenth century in general is usually seen to be a questioning of the efficacy of human reason. There were many skeptics.

In addition to lacking faith in reason, Fontenelle also maintains in the Dialogues that chance rules the world, bringing about actions both of merit and of demerit. Therefore neither heroes nor scoundrels can claim to be master of life's happenings. They must instead adopt a spirit of humility and admit that they owe their reputations to chance. Fontenelle applies this conclusion to nations and races as well as to individuals. The superiority of one nation or culture over another one can never be proved, because the merits and demerits of each are not absolute, but relative.

One idea presented in the Dialogues which Fontenelle was to document historically in the Histoire des Oracles and Origine des Fables is that mankind usually prefers "falsities to truth, mysteries to knowledge, and prejudices to reason."⁸ Moreover man may be right in doing so, for in cherishing illusions and deceptions he achieves happiness, fleeting though it is. In pursuing the impossible, man

often discovers many things he was not looking for. Thus the pursuit of the impossible can be beneficial at times in the field of knowledge. Prejudices and deceptions can be useful when the truth will ruin all.

Several of the dialogues, in fact as many as thirteen, deal in some way with the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns. However, only four of that number actually focus on the controversial issue; the nine remaining ones only allude to it.⁹ It is important to establish Fontenelle's position in this Quarrel and to determine its pervasiveness in the Dialogues, if for no other reason than the fact that critics such as Johan Egilsrud give the impression that Fontenelle is concerned primarily with that subject.¹⁰ Actually he is not. He was no enemy of the Ancients, only of those people who would make idols of the Ancients. He believed that people tended to magnify their accomplishments and abilities because of the distance of time and because they were dissatisfied with their own Age. In truth, Fontenelle felt that whatever progress could be claimed by the Moderns was in the area of science, resulting from the accumulation of knowledge and experience rather than from superior intellect. He saw no progress whatever in morality, for in his opinion human nature persists; it does not change.

One final idea which recurs frequently in the Dialogues is the image of love as insubstantial and deceitful. Fontenelle expressed doubt about man's ability to

fulfill high ideals in matters such as love. In this respect he illustrates the preciousness of the salons, in which people often held debates on the advantages and disadvantages of love and on man's prospects for fulfillment in love. There may be too much concern with conventional questions of love for the taste of readers today, but the subject was a popular one among the dialoguists, reflecting in turn its popularity among habitués of the salons.

Thus, Fontenelle discusses several significant ideas within the Dialogues, ideas which recur frequently enough to serve as indications of his basic thought. (1) Reason, the human faculty usually exalted above passion, is depicted more often than not as faulty and limited. (2) The world becomes a place in which change, not certainty, rules the outcome of all events. (3) If man is to achieve even a fleeting happiness, he must recognize the role which illusions and prejudices play in his life. Truth may be destructive as well as constructive. (4) Human progress is limited to the area of the natural sciences, the only area deriving benefit from the accumulation of experience and knowledge. (5) Man's idealism in love makes it virtually impossible for him to be fulfilled.

After this brief summary of the primary ideas in Fontenelle's Dialogues, it is interesting to speculate upon the attraction it held for English readers. It was immensely

popular in France, and as stated earlier it went through three editions in 1683 alone. It was likewise popular in England, where translations appeared immediately in single editions and later in editions of Fontenelle's complete works.¹¹ Perhaps it was the avowedly moral purpose of the work which most attracted the English. Ida Stewart suggests this possibility in her analysis of Fontenelle's influence in England, as well as mentioning that there was an intense revival of the Lucianic species of writing in England at the time (1683-1785).¹² Miriam Friedman, in her expansive study of Lucian in English literature, goes even further to state that the vogue for dialogues of the dead in England "received its impetus from the publication in 1683 of Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle's Nouveaux Dialogues des Morts."¹³ In addition, she feels that Fontenelle's view of the dialogue of the dead as a literary form, as expressed in his dedicatory epistle, "greatly influenced the English conception of it."¹⁴ Friedman does not deny, however, that Fénelon, another French writer of dialogues of the dead, influenced English reception of the genre as well. But Fénelon's dialogues were not all published until 1823, and he used Lucian's works "with a more serious purpose, perhaps, than that for which they were intended."¹⁵ It was Fontenelle's more dramatic and witty dialogues which would particularly attract the English.

These conclusions drawn by Stewart and Friedman regarding the impact of Fontenelle's Dialogues des Morts

upon English dialogues of the dead are supported by some modern critics and denied by others. In the opinions of Egilsrud and Cosentini, Fontenelle brought the Lucianic dialogue back to life after more than a century of Platonic and Ciceronian models.

Not until the closing decades of the seventeenth century did the genre come definitely back to life and bring forth a numerous progeny. The man who was responsible for this fortunate turn in the history of the form was Fontenelle. Thereafter the stream of influence flowed directly or indirectly from the successful example he had set.¹⁶

In his recent study of English dialogues of the dead, Frederick Keener is not inclined to be so receptive toward French influence. He does initially admit that Englishmen were not "inattentive to precedent" and that they knew the classics of the genre--Lucian, Fénelon and Fontenelle.¹⁷ But throughout the remainder of his critical history, he upholds English independence from the French models, maintaining that "the genre emerged in England without much help from either French master."¹⁸

After analyzing closely the dialogues both by Fontenelle and by several English dialoguists, I am inclined to disagree with Keener. The dialogues of the dead written by William King, John Hughes, Matthew Prior, and Lord Lyttelton all exhibit to some degree Fontenelle's influence, although each writer probably knew Lucian's and Fénelon's dialogues as well. The problem here is to ascertain whether or not Fontenelle's dialogues made a noticeable impact upon

these writers, enough so that their own dialogues reflect his characteristic ideas and techniques. If so, then one must agree with Stewart, Friedman, Egilsrud and Cosentini that Fontenelle did indeed "revive" the dialogue of the dead and prompt its growing popularity among English writers.

The following analysis of English dialogues of the dead will focus upon those by better known writers, such as King, Prior, and Lyttelton, and by a lesser known writer and translator, John Hughes. Since the former were most prolific in their "dialoguing" and the latter translated Fontenelle's Dialogues into English, they seem to offer the best opportunity to display Fontenelle's influence, if it is indeed present. Very minor dialoguists such as John Sheffield, Charles Gildon, Fleetwood Sheppard, Tom Brown, and Thomas Tyers are not included because their dialogues seem too insignificant to treat singly.

I

William King (1662-1712) is perhaps best known as a minor satirist and an associate of those who produced the Examiner before Swift became its regular author.¹⁹ According to K. N. Colvile, a modern editor of King's writings, little need be said of him. "He was typical of the minor wits of the period--facile, but responding only to external stimulus and incapable of sustained creative effort."²⁰

Born in 1662, he was educated at Westminster and at Christchurch, where he studied civil law and received his

doctor's degree. In 1702 he went to Ireland as a Judge of the High Court of Admiralty, but the honor of this post must not have impressed him. Samuel Johnson reports in his biographical sketch of King that he no sooner arrived in Ireland than he "found a friend as idle and thoughtless as himself."²¹ Thereafter he frequently retired to the friend's country manor, "delighting to neglect his interest, forget his cares, and desert his duty."²² He returned to London in 1708, a writer of pamphlets, skits and other occasional pieces, "few of which bear reading in an age that knows not the persons or books which occasioned them."²³ He seems to "have made little by his writings" and was "in great distress" during those years after returning from Ireland. In fact, Swift wrote of him in "commiserating terms," calling him a "poor starving wit."²⁴ With Swift's help he got the post of gazetteer and a salary of two hundred pounds a year in 1711, yet even this did not satisfy him. Dr. Johnson notes that he "again threw the benefit away," resigning after six months.²⁵

It seems that both Johnson and Colvile agree that William King was only a dissolute Wit, throwing away every chance he received for advancement. Colvile calls him "the type of all the Wits, save the very greatest (whose) extraordinary wide reading and acute understanding were of little profit, lacking industry and purpose."²⁶ Johnson concludes his assessment of King by saying that "his thoughts seldom

aspired to sublimity."²⁷ Thus, King appears to have been a trifler by both accounts.

It is curious that neither Johnson nor Colvile mentions King's Dialogues of the Dead (1699) as being particularly memorable, although it was the first series of such dialogues written by an Englishman. However, Johnson is probably alluding to this work when he writes that King "mingled in the controversy between Boyle and Bentley" in 1697; but King was "one of those who tried what Wit could perform in opposition to Learning, on a question which Learning only could decide."²⁸ If Johnson considered the Dialogues ineffective, Colvile must have thought them obscure two centuries later. Published under the lengthy title Dialogues of the Dead, Relating to the Present Controversy Concerning the Epistles of Phalaris, King's ten dialogues focus exclusively on the English phase of the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns. In fact, to be even more precise, King wrote his dialogues to strike a direct blow against Richard Bentley, the keeper of the Royal Library.²⁹ Bentley and his chief opponent Charles Boyle had been debating the authenticity of Phalaris' epistles for several years when King joined the Quarrel. Rather than being interested in the issue itself, King appears to have been looking for an occasion to attack Bentley, whom he considered to be a proud and insolent man.³⁰ Bentley had addressed King in his Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris (1699):

But let us hear the Dr.'s testimony;
 the air and spirit of it is so very
 extraordinary; the virulency and
 insolence so far above the common
 pitch; that it puts one in mind of
 Rupilius King, a great ancestor of
 the Dr.'s, commended to posterity by
 Horace under this honourable character,

"Proscripti Regis Rupili pus atque venenum"
 The filth and venom of R. King (I, xvii)³¹

Before the year was out, King had published his Dialogues, portraying Bentley just as abusively as he felt he had been portrayed in Bentley's Dissertation. Unfortunately this tone of revenge permeates all ten dialogues, from the moment in Dialogue I when Hades receives "the Works of the snarling Critick Benthivoglio."³² Charon is accused of having brought over Benthivoglio's works and thereby starting the controversy in the Underworld. However, Charon is scarcely interested in the whole affair and hurries away to tend to his business. The remaining nine dialogues present personages who shed light upon various facets of Benthivoglio's character. For example, Dialogue IV depicts Ricardo (R. Bentley in praise of himself) and Narcissus debating about whose self-love is greater, until Narcissus becomes disgusted and leaves Ricardo alone. Dialogue V, through the remarks of two lexicographers, ridicules Benthivoglio's pedantry and pride in reading a dictionary. When one of them praises Benthivoglio for vindicating "the worth and honour of all dictionaries," the other replies that Benthivoglio "must have a very small library and little to

do."³³ These are only two examples out of many, but they serve to illustrate the manner in which King attacked Bentley in the dialogues.

If King's purpose in his Dialogues is therefore so restricted, one may justifiably wonder what the work holds in common with Fontenelle's Dialogues, which was written as a general comment upon the folly of the world. Actually the two works are scarcely alike except in their use of the Lucianic form. In only a few instances does King allow himself to spare Bentley long enough to make more universal observations. Thus, the kinship between the two series lies more in King's choice of the dialogue of the dead as a satirical medium, rather than in his expression of numerous ideas parallel with Fontenelle's.

This is not to say that there are no similar ideas which may be traced from Fontenelle's Dialogues to King's. At least three instances may be cited to show that when King did "moralize" he stressed some of the same ideas as Fontenelle did. In Dialogue III between the Butcher and Hercules, which is titled "Modern Achievements," Bentivoglio seems to be only a minor issue. He is mentioned as the writer who popularized Hercules' exploits, which appear to the reader to be as trivial as those managed by the butcher. The butcher wonders why his own achievements have not been chronicled as Hercules' were, and he concludes in the following manner after Hercules leaves:

Well, since he is gone, I think I may say that the persons who have lived lately are only wanting to themselves, and that it is the negligence of our ballad-singers that makes us to be talked of less than others. . . . Our great scholars are so much taken up with such fellows as this Hercules, Hyllus the wrestler, Cleanthes the cuffer, Phalaris and Xerxes the man-eaters, that they never mind my actions, nor several other of their own country-men's.³⁴

Using much the same argument, the writer MacFlecknoe wonders to his friend Dekker in Dialogue X "why the world should think my poems or your works dull."³⁵ MacFlecknoe insists that his own epigrams are as witty as those Bentivoglio has retrieved from his "manuscript anthology."³⁶ Dekker agrees, and obliges MacFlecknoe with some excerpts from essays he has composed. Finally MacFlecknoe concludes, as did the Butcher in Dialogue III, that "if we were not of necessity to commend the wit of the ancients, especially when restored by learned hands, I could have admired one of your epigrams as much as this."³⁷

Both of these dialogues by King criticize the practice of praising ancient achievements at the expense of modern ones, although King surely intends the reader to notice at the same time that none of these exploits or writings bears mentioning except by "some librarykeeper among his dust."³⁸ In speculating upon the reasons which cause men to idolize the ancients, King sounds much like Fontenelle in his dialogue between Socrates and Montaigne. As Socrates explains,

Antiquity is an object of a peculiar kind: its distance magnifies it. . . . That which commonly possesses people so in favour of antiquity, is their being out of humour with their own times, and antiquity takes advantage of their spleen; they cry up the ancients in spite to their contemporaries.³⁹

Thus, as King said, those who unduly praise ancient achievements "are only wanting to themselves" and feel that they must commend the ancients "of necessity . . . especially when restored by learned hands."

In King's Dialogues one other Fontenellian idea surfaces which has nothing to do with the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns. In Dialogue VIII Heraclitus begins by lamenting to Democritus:

Alas! Alas! The world it seems continues still the same: lies, mistakes, cheats, forgeries and impostures are published and defended among the learned as much as ever.
Democritus replies: Cheer up your spirits, old spark, the world owes half its ease, content and happiness to deceit.⁴⁰

Although spoken in an offhand manner and not pursued in any depth, this idea definitely reminds one of the theme in Fontenelle's dialogue between Callirhea and Pauline. There the two women decide that people will deceive themselves as much as they have occasion for. In fact, Pauline says that ". . . if we did not favour our own deception, we should taste very little pleasure."⁴¹ The implication in both dialogues is that the truth would create discontent and unhappiness, whereas deception provides the happiness sought by the human heart.

These three examples of parallel ideas occur at those points in King's Dialogues when he generalizes about the Quarrel or about the world, instead of concentrating on Bentley. As a result, the passages are the most interesting to a modern reader, and they remind him more of the universal concerns of Fontenelle's Dialogues. However, since only three instances seem remarkable in this way, one must agree with Keener that "even if King did know Fontenelle's work, he had to write differently: King's virtuosi, his mock-heroic devices, his travesty of Bentley's scholarly apparatus--all these display unmistakable, familiar, Scriblerian loyalties and affinities."⁴²

Keener's impression of the origin of King's Dialogues, indeed of all English dialogues of the dead, is that "it was Lucian's dialogues, more than Fontenelle's, that attracted English imitation. But chiefly, the genre exercised its own magnetism. . . ."⁴³ Keener may be correct in his assumption, for Lucian had become a popular classical satirist in England.⁴⁴ However, he ignores the important fact that Fontenelle's Dialogues were based upon Lucian's, and King may have been inspired to try such an uncommon literary form because of Fontenelle's precedent. None of Fénelon's dialogues had been published when King's appeared, so that King must have been introduced to the genre through Fontenelle or Lucian. He was a prodigious reader and an impressive scholar. It is quite likely that he was familiar with both sources,

and had both in mind when he chose to write his own dialogues. However, Fontenelle's example probably affected his decision more, since the Frenchman devoted several dialogues to the subject of the Quarrel. King was to deal with that subject exclusively, although in a much more limited manner. Perhaps Fontenelle's Dialogues suggested a new satirical mode to King, one which he was to find well suited to display his contempt for Bentley.

II

John Hughes (1677-1720) was considered to be "a wit among the wits" during the last two decades of his life.⁴⁵ He gained a reputation from his poetry and his drama, as well as from his translations. Samuel Johnson reports in his biographical sketch of Hughes that early in life he "found time to acquaint himself with modern languages."⁴⁶ Thus, it is no surprise that in 1708 his translation of Fontenelle's Dialogues des Morts was published in London. Johnson devotes a few sentences to this translation:

He translated Fontenelle's Dialogues of the Dead; and his version was perhaps read at that time, but is now neglected; for by a book not necessary, and owing its reputation wholly to its turn of diction, little notice can be gained but from those who can enjoy the graces of the original. To the dialogues of Fontenelle he added two composed by himself.⁴⁷

Apparently he did not think much of the original or of Hughes' translation. He considered the Dialogues "a book not necessary" and "owing its reputation wholly to its turn of diction."

Certainly Hughes admired Fontenelle's style and wit, as he indicates in the Dedication and Preface to his translation, but he also thought much more highly of the moral value of the book than did Johnson. In addressing the Earl of Wharton in his Dedication, Hughes remarks:

I appeal to all the world who know my author's character, whether I could have made a more proper application. His wit, his learning, his knowledge of mankind, his exquisite taste in all that is polite, the fire of his imagination, the uncommon felicity of his eloquence, and the ready turn of his expression, are reasons which the publick will think very natural to direct me in this address to your lordship.⁴⁸

Hughes mentions Fontenelle's "learning" and "knowledge of mankind" along with his stylistic excellence. However, it seems that he was actually prompted to publish a new translation because of the poor quality of the only previous one. He considered that it was done by the "worst of copiers" who "insufferably degraded them, both in the sense and style, by false constructions and bad English."⁴⁹ This translation was made by an anonymous J. D. in 1683, 1684, and 1692. Whether English readers shared Hughes' opinion cannot be definitely ascertained, but his own translation was reprinted in London in 1730, and in Glasgow in 1754. These later re-issuings attest to the popularity of his translation during the first half of the century.

Hughes spent a great deal of time on his translation, allowing "above six years" for correction of faults.⁵⁰ He admitted that there was more difficulty in translating well

"pieces of Wit," unlike "writings of meer story or memoirs."⁵¹
 And in truth, Hughes' rendering of the dialogues seems to me very appropriate and close to the source.

To understand Hughes' reasons for devoting so much time to Fontenelle's dialogues and for imitating him in two additional dialogues of his own, one may refer to the Preface:

And this has led me into the character of M. Fontenelle, who is a wonderful master of the most distinguishing gallant manner of any writer that is known, not excepting a very polite man of the same nation, who lived among us. In all his Writings he chooses the style and air of conversation, and nowhere appears with the formality of an author; which makes him particularly entertaining, and is no small part of his excellence, since few are so reasonable as to content themselves with being instructed if they are not pleased. 'Tis a secret almost wholly his own, to say the most extraordinary things so carelessly, as if he were scarce sensible he had said anything uncommon. He has a wit which gives to every subject the most agreeable and surprising turns in the world. The edge of his satire is fine; he always preserves his good humour; his mirth has ever something solid, and his most judicious reflections are mixed with pleasantry.⁵²

Hughes was very much attracted to Fontenelle's conversational, informal style, not to mention his offhand manner of making the most extraordinary statements. Also of great consequence was Fontenelle's ability to please as well as to instruct. He was no boring moralist.

The most flattering view of Fontenelle was yet to come though. Hughes later said that Fontenelle "refin'd upon his Predecessor. Lucian laughs too loud, is often licentious, and sometimes coarse in his raillery: he has not thought it sufficient to make his dead reason, but they

scold too, and are ready to fight in the presence of Jupiter himself."⁵³ Hughes did not care for such lively demonstrations, and perhaps that is why he did not guess that Fontenelle was the author of the Jugement de Pluton, appended anonymously to the Dialogues des Morts. In that short work, all the previous speakers appear before Pluto to contest the way they were presented in the dialogues. There is much shouting and quarreling as each character claims that his reputation was shattered. Hughes, however, remarks in his Preface:

But this degrading the Heros of Antiquity is, it seems, a crime which runs through our author's whole Book, and where's the wonder? since the very end of writing it was to unmasque Characters, to disrobe counterfeit virtue, and attack common opinion and prepossessions.⁵⁴

Thus Hughes sees a very moral purpose behind the writing of Fontenelle's Dialogues, and one may assume that moral instruction would have been a primary reason for his translating the book.

Of his own two dialogues Hughes writes very humbly, saying:

I endeavor'd, several years ago, to write 'em in imitation of his manner; and tho' I have now suffer'd 'em to be printed, I can make no apology for 'em, but only, that the shortest Errors are the most likely to be pardon'd, and that is the reason why I added no more.⁵⁵

Hughes admittedly had no reason to applaud himself, for his two dialogues are short colorless exchanges. He had none of Fontenelle's wit, nor even any original themes. Both

dialogues--the first between Brutus and Augustus Caesar, the second between Empedocles and Lucilio Vanini--echo ideas constantly emphasized in Fontenelle's dialogues. This parallelism is readily apparent through a brief analysis.

The title which Hughes gave to his first dialogue, "That the Greatest Characters may be Criticized," might serve in the same capacity for a great many of Fontenelle's dialogues. Almost every dialogue in the Frenchman's series illustrates the idea with which Brutus concludes Hughes' dialogue: "Thus then everything has a doubtful interpretation, and the greatest deeds in the world may be constru'd to be the product of vanity and ambition."⁵⁶ Augustus had wondered about Brutus' pretense of madness to achieve his ends, while Brutus responded that Augustus' patriotism was mere dissimulation too. Both men defend their actions rather half-heartedly, and it is no surprise when they agree in the end that "the best of men are not disinterested; they have a great many By-ends and concealed designs."⁵⁷ Although Fontenelle's speakers never reach such easy agreement, they do express the same idea. Helen and Fulvia reveal the ridiculous motives behind the great events of the world,⁵⁸ and Lucretia reminds Barbara Plomberg, the mother of Don John of Austria, that glory is the sole motive for heroic actions, not duty.⁵⁹ Even more emphatically Montezuma points out to Cortez that greed instead of benevolence prompted the Spaniards to conquer the Aztecs.⁶⁰ The stripping away of

pious pretexts was one of Fontenelle's most common techniques in his Dialogues. It must have been very appealing to Hughes, for he too reveals that every great event or hero is subject to re-examination in a more critical light.

Hughes' second dialogue is titled "Of the Multitudes that have been Martyrs to Folly," and it too parallels a common theme in Fontenelle's Dialogues. Vanini, a philosopher who preferred to destroy truths rather than build them, told Empedocles that they were related through folly. Empedocles had jumped into a volcano in hopes that people would take him for a god and immortalize his name. Vanini intended to make a name for himself "out of the ruins of religion and morality."⁶¹ Both men supposedly failed in their foolish attempts at immortality, and instead became martyrs to folly. The dialogue ends with Empedocles' work:

Alas! thro' what strange Glasses have we look'd upon the World! We thought to have made ourselves admir'd, by Actions, for which our names are become a laughter and a detestation. Who that reads our story, will believe mankind is viciously fond of Life, when he finds they can part with it, upon the worst and most unnecessary occasions.

Vanini replies: Yes, thus it fares with thousands who sacrifice themselves to a false fame; who pay the price, yet lose the purchase.⁶²

In Fontenelle's Dialogues, Athenais and Icasia discuss the uncertainty of Fate which often gives our lives a direction contrary to what was intended.⁶³ Likewise the Egyptian Queen Berenice explains to Cosmo II of the Medici that immortality of name means nothing, since all memorials are transitory.⁶⁴

Lucretia directly links great actions to folly in her conversation with Barbara Plomberg.⁶⁵ Other examples could be cited illustrating parallels with the theme of folly used by Hughes, but perhaps these are sufficient to show that it appeared often in Fontenelle's dialogues.

Since Hughes translated Fontenelle's Dialogues and readily admitted that he wrote his own dialogues in imitation of him, it is an easy matter to establish Fontenelle's influence upon him. However, Hughes' own dialogues are not nearly so important as his translation. The two dialogues are mediocre imitations, like many of those published in periodicals and pamphlets at the time. But Hughes' translation doubtless increased the circulation of Fontenelle's book and reputation. With such a readable translation available, many English readers unacquainted with French were introduced to Fontenelle. As a result, both the form and the work itself were to become more familiar to Englishmen.

III

Matthew Prior (1664-1721) affords perhaps the best possibility among these authors of direct influence from Fontenelle, because he was acquainted with the author as well as with his writings. During a stay in Paris as secretary to the Embassy from 1697-1699, Prior had an opportunity to meet Fontenelle socially. He wrote to the Earl of Jersey in a letter dated June 17, 1699, that he was preparing "to dine with Boileau, Fontenelle, l'abbé Regnier, and Monsr.

D'acier at the Baron's fine house at Charonne."⁶⁶ This is the only reference Prior makes to Fontenelle in his extant correspondence, but one may guess that he would probably have had further occasions to meet him in his capacity as diplomat. In addition, Prior's library contained a copy of Fontenelle's Nouveaux Dialogues des Morts⁶⁷ and two copies of his Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes.⁶⁸ Thus, Prior was undoubtedly aware of Fontenelle's precedent when he wrote his own Dialogues of the Dead.

Prior evidently wrote his four dialogues during the last two or three years of his life, for entries in his commonplace book during the years 1720-21 indicate that he had not finished work on them at the time of his death.⁶⁹ The dialogues are not mentioned in his correspondence, nor do they seem to have been known among very many of his friends. However, Pope saw them at some time after Prior's death, probably in 1723, and later commented that they were "very good."⁷⁰ Since Samuel Johnson does not mention them in his biographical sketch of Prior, he was very likely unacquainted with their existence. It was not until 1907 that A. R. Waller published the dialogues for the series of Cambridge English classics,⁷¹ yet Pope's commendation indicates that they must have circulated in manuscript for some time after they were written.

Prior knew the dialogues of the dead written by Lucian and Fénelon (1712), as well as those by Fontenelle.

The first English version of Lucian's Works appeared as early as 1684-85,⁷² containing eleven of the dialogues of the dead. Moreover, Erasmus' Latin version of thirteen of Lucian's dialogues of the dead circulated widely.⁷³ Prior could have known either or both of these translations, or perhaps even the original Greek version. We do know that he cared enough for Lucian to acquire editions in Greek, Latin, French and English;⁷⁴ he was well acquainted with the dialogues of the dead in several languages. It is certain that he knew Fénelon's dialogues, for he made use of one of them in a short passage in Charles and Clénard (ll.492-95), the first of his own dialogues.⁷⁵ Fénelon wrote seventy-nine dialogues in all, though twelve have at least one "living" speaker. He composed them between 1689 and 1699, while directing the education of the young Duke of Burgundy. Intended as a teaching aid and not for publication, they were not all published until 1823.⁷⁶ However, an edition of forty-five appeared in 1712, and it may have been this collection which Prior knew.

In spite of these indications which suggest that Prior knew the dialogues of the dead by Fénelon, Fontenelle, and Lucian, Prior's modern editors, Wright and Spears, assert that "Prior's dialogues have no specific indebtedness to these predecessors" apart from the one instance of borrowing from Fénelon.⁷⁷ Yet it seems to me that they have a great deal in common with Fontenelle's dialogues.

Keener seems to suggest a more definite kinship in his recent study of the English dialogue of the dead when he remarks that "the skeptical Englishman must have found Fontenelle particularly invigorating."⁷⁸ Yet he concluded, like Wright and Spears, that while there are signs that Prior profited from the work of the French, "the signs are few and Prior's dialogues ample."⁷⁹ He points out several differences between Prior's and Fontenelle's dialogues, such as Prior's being much longer in general, and his favoring Montaigne rather than the philosopher in his dialogue between Montaigne and Locke.⁸⁰ The similarities which Keener sees, like the differences, are structural rather than ideological. Both Fontenelle and Prior pair Charles the Emperor with a renowned scholar, and Montaigne with a famous philosopher.⁸¹ Keener mentions only briefly a kinship in ideas late in his discussion, when he likens Prior's dialogues between the Vicar of Bray and Sir Thomas More with Fontenelle's dialogues in general--"exposing the bottomlessness of human reasoning."⁸² Thus, the impression one gets from Keener is that Prior is like Fontenelle in his skepticism of the classical trust in reason, and that his dialogues reflect certain structural similarities with Fontenelle's, although on the whole Fontenelle did not exert any estimable influence on Prior.

It may be true that Prior was as familiar with Lucian's dialogues of the dead as with either Fontenelle's

or Fénelon's; however, when one compares certain aspects of Prior's dialogues of the dead with Fontenelle's, he cannot call Fontenelle's influence negligible. Perhaps the first notable parallel is Prior's use of the "satire of the Great Man," a technique which Cosentini discusses at length in his study of Fontenelle's dialogues.⁸³ Opposing a prominent statesman or conqueror to a relatively unknown personality, and allowing the lesser known person to gain the advantage in the debate of ideas, directly satirizes the heroic ideals of such people and of the world in general. Prior makes use of this technique in three of his four dialogues: those between Charles the Emperor and Clenard the Grammarian, between Sir Thomas More and the Vicar of Bray, and between Oliver Cromwell and his porter. In each, the Great Man is put on the defensive. Charles is forced to explain why he considers himself, as a conqueror and warrior, superior to Clenard, a mere grammarian. By the time he has catalogued all of his princely conquests and honors, and Clenard has reduced them to nothing, the reader is definitely reminded of Fontenelle's dialogue between Alexander the Great and Phyrne the courtesan. Charles not only takes the same defensive stance as Alexander, but he also echoes the same arguments in support of his superiority: i.e., that the whole world is subordinate to his power, and that his fame will be immortal. Clenard, like Phyrne, points out that there is very little difference between these Great Men and

people like themselves. In fact, each claims that he has more cause for pride than any so-called ruler. Phyrne has managed her numerous conquests alone, without the aid of an army, while Clenard claims that Charles' army was only useful after being instructed by him or another of his grammarian colleagues. According to Clenard all heroes "overshoot the mark," being dazzled by ambition instead of directed by reason.⁸⁴ Phyrne notices this same lack of moderation and reason in her harangue, but she goes further to conclude that "whenever a person wants to create a stir, it is not the most reasonable people who are best suited to it."⁸⁵ She at least realizes that her own reputation was due to equally extravagant behavior. Clenard never admits excessive action; he was "never constrained to fall too low" nor "to climb too high,"⁸⁶ in his own opinion. Thus, he remains a rather presumptuous figure to the reader, while Phyrne's insight elevates her in the reader's eyes.

The dialogue between Sir Thomas More and the Vicar of Bray also illustrates the "satire of the Great Man" technique. Instead of defending conquests and victories, however, More is forced to defend his ideal that "every man is obliged to suffer for what is right as to oppose what is unjust."⁸⁷ The Vicar maintains that nothing is worth losing his life over; he believes that self-preservation is just as much a principle of Nature as allowing Truth to direct one's actions. He manages to make the reader weigh the two

alternatives and reconsider More's "heroic" death by beheading. However, neither man convinces the other, nor is the reader swayed entirely to any particular side. Prior allows More to denounce the Vicar so eloquently as belonging to the "wretches, who having done nothing have done ill,"⁸⁸ that one cannot help sympathizing with him as well as with the cocky, practical Vicar. Thus, the reader is faced with the same mixture of emotions that he feels after reading the dialogue between Charles and Clenard.

As mentioned earlier, the dialogue between Oliver Cromwell and his porter is clearly a "satire of the Great Man." The porter convinces us that his own position in life as a self-proclaimed prophet in a madhouse cell was more enviable than Cromwell's anxiety-ridden position as ruler. Cromwell admits that he was always apprehensive and fearful, but he insists that "my power was real, your authority was only imaginary."⁸⁹ When the porter replies that "to act or to think one acts is just the same"⁹⁰ and later that "every man is mad but in a different manner, and upon some particular objects,"⁹¹ the reader cannot help recalling Fontenelle's dialogue between William of Cabestan and Albert-Frederick of Brandenburg. Albert-Frederick thinks that everyone but insane people must have reason, else what would distinguish between the two groups. William the troubadour replies, much like Cromwell's porter, that "madmen are only fools of another species. The follies of all men being of the same

nature, they are very easily linked together so as to make the strongest ties of human society."⁹² Thus, both dialogues imply that madness to some degree is common to all humanity. Cromwell's "deranged" porter makes the same observation as William of Cabestan. It seems more than coincidental that Prior would write a dialogue on madness so similar to Fontenelle's. Neither Fénelon nor Lucian composed dialogues treating this theme, although Prior could have known it from another source perhaps. At any rate, he may well have been attracted to the theme as it appears in Fontenelle's dialogue.

In addition to the pattern of the "satire of the Great Man" and the theme of madness, Prior also echoes several other ideas prominent in Fontenelle's Dialogues, although these appear in Fénelon and Lucian as well. In the dialogue between Charles and Clénard appears the idea that happiness is attainable by every man, no matter what his station in life, since it comes from within. Mary Stuart voices this same idea in Fontenelle's dialogue between Mary Stuart and David Riccio when she says "Happiness is like health; it must be within men without their placing it there."⁹³ The idea of man's foolish desire for immortality and fame is evident in Clénard's remark: "the Funeral pomp is soon diminished worn out and forgotten: Age and accident deface the tomb, and, it is only one of us scholars that must take an account of your true worth and transmit it safe to

succeeding generations."⁹⁴ Berenice tells Cosmo II of Medici the same thing in Fontenelle's dialogue between those two, that all memorials are transitory. Man cannot depend upon anything to survive forever and keep his name alive, except perhaps the words of poets and scholars.

Another idea in Prior's dialogue between Charles and Clenard which seems particularly Fontenellian is that great actions only appear to be great; the motivations behind them are usually trivial and mundane. Clenard arrives at this conclusion after listening to Charles brag about his willingness to abdicate his dominions and retire to a monastery. This abdication might seem totally selfless to the world in general, but Clenard points out that Charles was actually forced to retire because of a threat by Henry II and his own ill health. Fulvia, in Fontenelle's dialogue between Fulvia and Helen of Troy, also points out that the true motives behind great events are often unknown or misrepresented to the public. "One sees great happenings, but the motives are usually rather ridiculous. It is important that the causes remain hidden in order to assure the honor of the most noteworthy events."⁹⁵ Unlike Clenard, however, Fulvia recognizes why the true motives must be hidden; it is important to nourish the heroic illusions of the public and to protect their ideals from being tarnished by petty realities. One may argue that Prior could have been exposed to this idea in several places, such as in Section IX of Swift's A Tale of a

Tub (1710). Such a possibility exists, of course, for by no means was it uncommon. However, it is such a pervasive idea in Fontenelle's Dialogues that its appearance in Prior's Dialogues seems significant.

In Prior's dialogue between More and the Vicar of Bray, More wonders why people so love to speculate upon the future. "How is it that scarce enjoying the present we turn our thought forward into a Futurity, which the will of Heaven in equal wisdom and Pitty conceals from us a futurity which may never be ours."⁹⁶ The astrologer Anselm is perplexed about the same thing in Fontenelle's dialogue between him and the Queen of Naples, Joan I. After spending his life forecasting the future of Joan, Anselm admits that he thinks everyone should live in the present and stop wasting time prying into the future. Otherwise the condition of man is only a jest: man "is born to wish to everything and to enjoy nothing, forever to go forward and never to arrive anywhere."⁹⁷ Thus, both Prior and Fontenelle condemn man's propensity to live in the future, not in the present.

One final idea which may possibly have passed to Prior from a reading of Fontenelle's dialogues concerns the tendency of many scholars to idolize the Ancients. Fontenelle discusses this problem in greater detail in his Digression sur les anciens et les modernes (1688), but he also concentrates the entire dialogue between Socrates and Montaigne on it. Prior mentions it only in passing, when Montaigne chides

Locke for quoting the Ancients since he disclaims their authority. He goes on to add that Plato and Aristotle have a great deal to say actually, if "the prejudice we have in favor of Antiquity were removed."⁹⁸ While Prior was certainly aware of the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns, and could have formed his opinion independently of Fontenelle, perhaps Fontenelle's dialogue was a contributing factor. In it Fontenelle has Socrates describe the "prejudice" which Montaigne mentions in Prior's dialogue. "Antiquity is a peculiar kind of object: its distance enlarges it. . . . The Ancients are placed so high in order to demean one's contemporaries."⁹⁹ Prior does not go into such detail in his dialogue, but he is aware of limitations which excessive reliance on or exclusion of the Ancients can impose on a writer.

From this brief analysis of several parallel ideas in the dialogues of Fontenelle and Prior, one can see that both writers deal with similar themes. On the surface the two men seem very different, for Fontenelle usually explores a single theme in depth in a very short dialogue, whereas Prior skips rapidly from one theme to another in his lengthy ones. The effect upon the reader is quite different. Fontenelle's dialogues are brief and intense, with an effect like that of a parable or even a maxim. Prior's dialogues, in contrast, rely upon an accumulation of ideas presented more superficially, and lack the intensity of Fontenelle's.

However, it is important to note their similar ideas in spite of differing methods of presentation. Each uses the "satire of the Great Man" to ridicule heroic ideals, while also revealing the trivial motivations behind so-called "great" actions and events. In addition, each writer points out that madness is common to all humanity; that man's desire for immortality and fame is foolish; and that every man is capable of attaining happiness, despite his station in life. Both Prior and Fontenelle wonder why man wastes so much time speculating upon the future when he could be enjoying the present. Finally, both writers recognize the problem in relying excessively upon the authority of the Ancients.

IV

The earliest readers of George, Lord Lyttelton (1709-1773) might have found it hard to believe that he would someday need introduction. A prominent Whig politician, he sat in Parliament from 1735 on and proved an ardent "patriot" in opposition to Walpole.¹⁰⁰ Never overwhelmingly successful as a statesman, though, he gained more fame for his moral integrity than for his debating abilities. In fact, he was in many respects "the pattern of an eighteenth-century gentleman."¹⁰¹ He excelled in scholarship at Eton and Oxford, toured France and Italy after his studies, and later became known for his enlightened patronage of such authors as Pope, Thomson and Fielding (who dedicated Tom Jones to him).¹⁰²

His own writings were esteemed as well, in all their diversity. Ranging from poetry and satire in the "Persian Letters" tradition, to a history of Henry II and a treatise on St. Paul, his works gained for him a reputation as "a man of literature and judgment."¹⁰³

Lyttelton's biographer, Rose Mary Davis, considers that his Dialogues of the Dead are "generally recognized as constituting his chief claim to literary distinction."¹⁰⁴ Published in April, 1760, his collection went through three editions in the same year and a fourth with four additional dialogues in 1765.¹⁰⁵ The dialogues were well received, both in England and abroad. It was reported that "the whole of the first impression was sold off in two hours,"¹⁰⁶ and a French translation was announced as underway in London. This was probably the version by Jean Deschamps, published in London in October or November, 1760, under Lyttelton's supervision. Another French translation by Joncourt appeared at The Hague in the same year.¹⁰⁷ In 1765 after Lyttelton's fourth edition had been revised and augmented, another French translation came out in Amsterdam, also said to be by Joncourt. When the Duc de Nivernois came to London as ambassador in 1762, Horace Walpole wrote to Mann that he had translated Lyttelton's Dialogues of the Dead.¹⁰⁸ Possibly he had helped with the Deschamps translation, but no particular edition solely attributed to Nivernois has been found.

Reviews of the Dialogues of the Dead were on the whole favorable. Smollett, Lyttelton's old enemy (Smollett had ridiculed Lyttelton as Sir Gosling Scragg in Peregrine Pickle nearly ten years before), wrote in the Critical Review (IX, 1760) that

the hand of a master is too visible in every page to escape the most undiscerning. A distinguishing judgment, delicacy of sentiment, propriety of thought, and purity of diction, recommend this little performance at the first glance. Yet, to speak our opinion freely, we think the dialogues too abruptly introduced and the personae characterized rather by the writer than by their own conversation. . . . Upon the whole, we have not lately seen a work of more entertainment and real instruction, where sound sense, and a lively imagination, are more happily united, or where the erudition of the scholar is more agreeably tempered with the feeling, the taste, and the sentiments of a gentleman.¹⁰⁹

Likewise, Owen Ruffhead's assessment in the Monthly Review (XXII, 1760) concludes approvingly that

There are few truths which men of sense and discernment are not convinced of; . . . is it no satisfaction to such, to find their opinion confirmed by an able, elegant, and judicious Writer, to see their sentiments illustrated by a pleasing variety of apt [sic] and striking remarks; and to converse with the Worthies of Antiquity in that genuine cast of character, which they have always supposed them to bear when alive?¹¹⁰

In addition to the good reviews, periodicals reprinted a number of the dialogues and anthologies appropriated even more. Lyttelton's success familiarized the English reader with the "dialogue of the dead" as no previous writer had done. During the next forty years there was a steady stream of such publications in England, in books, pamphlets, magazines, and newspapers.¹¹¹

Unfortunately for Lyttelton, not all readers were so receptive to his Dialogues of the Dead. Horace Walpole referred to the "Dead Dialogues" and called the style a "mixture of bombast, poetry, and vulgarisms."¹¹² Gray inquired of Mason what he thought of Lyttelton and Mrs. Montagu "with their secondhand Dialogues of the Dead."¹¹³ Samuel Johnson, in his biographical sketch of Lyttelton, made the following criticism:

About this time Lyttelton published his Dialogues of the Dead, which were very eagerly read, though the production rather, as it seems, of leisure than of study, rather effusions than compositions. The names of his persons too often enable the reader to anticipate their conversation; and when they have met, they too often part without any conclusion. He has copied Fénelon more than Fontenelle.¹¹⁴

Of course, one may remark that Johnson was not a sympathetic reader of Lyttelton, but then neither was Smollett. Politically and personally, Johnson had never seen eye to eye with Lyttelton. Moreover, one may guess that Johnson could little appreciate a genre that purported to reveal conditions in the afterlife, so awfully did he regard it.¹¹⁵ However one views his bias, though, his criticism of the Dialogues seems to me valid. Most of the twenty-nine dialogues seem stale and conventional, with a few exceptions, and the conclusions are generally irresolute. In presentation Lyttelton must have preferred the overt moral didacticism of Fénelon to the dramatic witty exchanges of Fontenelle. Supporting this hypothesis is the third dialogue in Lyttelton's series

between Plato and Fénelon. Plato welcomes Fénelon to Elysium and praises his writings:

Your Dialogues breathe the pure spirit of Virtue, of unaffected Good Sense, of just Criticism, of fine Taste. They are in general as superior to your countryman Fontenelle's, as reason is to False Wit, or Truth to Affectation. The greatest Fault of them is that some are too short.¹¹⁶

When Plato asks Fénelon why his fellow countrymen are not so sensible of the beauty of his style, Fénelon responds that the French have an "immoderate love of wit, of paradox, of refinement."¹¹⁷

The works of their writers like the faces of their women, must be painted and adorned with artificial embellishments to attract their regards. And thus the natural Beauty is lost.¹¹⁸

Within this comment is an implied criticism of Fontenelle's style, for he was extremely popular in France for the very reasons listed by Fénelon in this dialogue: his wit, paradox, and refinement. Lyttelton, as Johnson noted, "copied Fénelon more than Fontenelle." He too was primarily concerned with the instruction of the young, and his preface concludes with the hope that his book "may induce our young gentry (for whose service it is more particularly intended) to meditate on the subjects treated of in this work."¹¹⁹

Thus, on the surface Lyttelton seems to prefer Fénelon's style to Fontenelle's, and to express a purpose in writing the dialogues similar to Fénelon's. As Rose Mary Davis notes, "

Lyttelton was, however, probably as familiar with the work of Fontenelle as with that of Fénelon, and while it is not easy to point to specific illustrations of

the influence of the latter, it is likely that to him may be due Lyttelton's occasional departures from the obvious and platitudinous into more than his usual subtlety.¹²⁰

Lyttelton certainly mentions Fontenelle in his preface, along with Fénelon and Lucian, as having written Dialogues of the Dead "with applause."¹²¹ He is familiar with the conventions of the genre as stated in Fontenelle's preface, such as the assumption that the Dead are supposed to know what has passed in subsequent times and in various places. In addition, it seems that several of Lyttelton's dialogues express themes identical to those in some of Fontenelle's, occasionally using the same characters to do so. All of these points suggest that Lyttelton knew Fontenelle's Dialogues and was influenced by them thematically, if not so much stylistically. Perhaps a closer look at those dialogues by Lyttelton which treat themes parallel with Fontenelle's will demonstrate this conclusion.

The first dialogues in the series of both writers illustrate the theme of moderation, or "nothing in excess." Lyttelton's dialogue, between the "rebel" Mr. Hampden and the "supporter of Tyranny" Lord Falkland, is political in focus, as are fifteen of the twenty-nine dialogues. The two speakers agree that they both sinned by excess, one advocating the use of royal prerogative, and the other, democracy. If he had it to do again, Falkland tells Hampden, his reflections

would teach me great moderation and Candour in my judgments of men who might differ from me in difficult scenes of public action: They would entirely

cure me of the spirit of party: and they would make me think, that, as in the Church, so also in the State, no evil is more to be feared than an enthusiastic and rancorous Zeal.¹²²

Of course, both men represent Lyttelton's aversions in matters of government, but the "moral" of the dialogue is that excessive actions and states of mind lead to chaos, which occurred in England's civil war.

While Fontenelle's dialogue between Alexander the Great and Phryne the famous Greek courtesan is not political in any sense, it does focus upon the theme of moderation. The speakers accuse each other of extreme actions done for the sake of reputation, and naturally each tries to justify his immoderation. The ideal actions would be more sober and restrained, the dialogue suggests. However, Fontenelle's dialogue takes a strange turn here, one which Lyttelton's does not. Phryne concludes by remarking that if one desires a reputation only, then excessive actions alone will succeed. Reputations are not built upon "reasonable" actions. Thus, both Lyttelton and Fontenelle treat the same theme in their first dialogues, but Fontenelle gives an unusual twist to his ending, displaying his wit and love of paradox. Lyttelton, on the other hand, does only the predictable, displaying his taste for platitudes and moralizing.

Another of Lyttelton's dialogues which deals with moderate and reasonable actions is the seventh between Pliny the Elder and Pliny the Younger. The father accuses his son of "absurd Affectation" in pretending to be insensible to

personal danger during an eruption of Vesuvius.¹²³ He himself boarded a ship and tried to carry people to safety, a more natural reaction to the catastrophe. Meanwhile his son stayed near the volcano and died while reading a book. Pliny the Elder tells him:¹²⁴

There was more of Vanity in it than Magnanimity.
Nothing is Great that is unnatural and affected.

The young man dismisses his father's complaint without comment, preferring to describe the dreadful change to the countryside caused by the volcano. He never defends his choice of death.

In the dialogue between Emperor Hadrian and Margaret of Austria, to the contrary, each speaker tries to defend his death as most extraordinary. Hadrian had just been arguing with Cato on this subject when he met Margaret. After hearing of Cato's suicide by sword and Hadrian's composition of a deathbed poem, Margaret claims that her own death was "more reasonable."¹²⁵ She composed her epitaph during a near-death by shipwreck, refusing to become hysterical but not jesting either. Thus, her encounter with death was more commendable because it was a natural reaction. Hadrian finally agrees that "Virtue is then greatest, when it does not exceed the bounds of nature."¹²⁶

As can be seen, both Lyttelton and Fontenelle use the subject of "extraordinary deaths" to illustrate the virtue of natural actions and responses. Of the two dialogues, Fontenelle's is once again the more dynamic and the

less predictable. In Lyttelton's dialogue, Pliny the Younger virtually ignores his father's complaint, giving Pliny the Elder's argument the obvious advantage. Lyttelton tends to be very biased in his presentation of speakers and issues. His "mouthpiece" receives the best lines whereas the opposing speaker responds only superficially, if at all. This technique results in one-sided, spiritless encounters, doomed to fall flat.

Lyttelton occasionally rises above such stale presentations, most notably in dialogue VI between an English duellist and a North-American savage, and in dialogue VIII between Cortez and William Penn. In the former dialogue the duellist, Tom Pushwell, is contrasted to the "savage" Bloody Bear. Pushwell is aghast that Bloody Bear would cut the throats of women and children. He himself killed men "in fair fighting, in honorable single combat."¹²⁷ Bloody Bear responds simply with "Sir, that is our way of making War. Every nation has its own customs."¹²⁸ He accuses Pushwell of killing friends over mere trifles; at least he killed only his enemies in time of war. The dialogue then becomes very interesting, because Bloody Bear refuses to ride in the same boat across the River Styx with Pushwell. Charon has to intervene and inform Bloody Bear that it is against the laws of Pluto's Empire to swim across the river. At this point the "savage" indignantly responds:

Don't tell me of Laws: I am a Savage: I value no laws. Talk of laws to the Englishman: there are

laws in his country, and yet you see he did not regard them.¹²⁹

It is clear to the reader that in this contrast of "barbarism" with "civilization," the disadvantage lies with the Englishman Pushwell. He cannot justify his killing in any way. In fact, when asked what he did with his life, he could name only such activities as gaming, eating, dancing and singing--nothing worthwhile. Thus, it is no surprise when the dialogue ends with Bloody Bear giving Pushwell a "kick in the Breech."¹³⁰

Dialogue VIII between Cortez and William Penn involves a similar contrast between civilized and barbaric practices, although in a more indirect manner. Instead of allowing Montezuma to speak for himself, Lyttelton defends him through the character of Penn. Penn asks Cortez "What right hadst thou, or the King of Spain himself, to the Mexican Empire?" Cortez can only reply that "the Pope gave it to my master." This remark is countered by "What if the High Priest of Mexico had given Spain to Montezuma?" Cortez, unable to formulate a justifiable response, becomes very defensive and says, "These are questions of casuistry, which it is not the business of a soldier to decide."¹³¹ He, like Pushwell in Dialogue VI, is unable to defend his actions. The "savage" Montezuma appears to be far more civilized. Instead of ending the dialogue in a dramatic display of kicks on the breech, however, Lyttelton makes Cortez suffer a sudden pang of remorse. When Penn blames Cortez for all the murders

and tortures committed in Mexico, Cortez unexpectedly says:

I feel the force of thy words. They pierce me like Daggers. I can never, never be happy, while I remember the illls I have caused.¹³²

Such an inconsistent turnabout leaves the reader skeptical and unimpressed, but it allows Lyttelton to end the dialogue on a moralizing note. Penn concludes by asking Cortez whether ambition was not his real motive instead of zeal.

Both of these dialogues by Lyttelton bear a strong resemblance to Fontenelle's last dialogue in his series between Cortez and Montezuma. In this dialogue Cortez claims that European civilization is far superior to the barbaric state of the Aztecs. He cites the Aztecs' gullibility, lack of science and learning, and general incivility as reasons for his claim. Montezuma gives a strong defense, nonetheless, and he replies that many so-called "civilized" people have been deceived into thinking that mortals are gods, such as the Greeks and Romans. Likewise, it is to the Aztecs' credit that they were able to record their history without the art of writing, and to build bridges and buildings without machines and formal knowledge. As for Cortez's charge of incivility, Montezuma replies that

All the Justices which should be in your designs is found only in your pretexts. . . . 'Tis not reason governs among you, but she enters her protest at least that things should go otherwise than they do. . . . Your formalities serve for nothing but to notify that she has a right, which you do not think fit to let her execute. And instead of doing what

is reasonable, you only represent what you ought to do.¹³³

Thus, the more "advanced" nation is unlawful, unreasonable and deceptive, while the "barbarous" one possesses the real claim to the title of civilization.

Fontenelle's skillful contrast of the two societies more than likely inspired Lyttelton to attempt such a parallel, particularly since Fénelon wrote no such dialogue. The moral thrust is the same in all three dialogues, and although techniques differ, the themes remain very much alike. Lyttelton's dialogues always seem more overtly didactic than Fontenelle's, and his attempts to moralize often hinder any chance of success in character development and consistency. Fénelon managed to avoid the flatness of Lyttelton's dialogues and still convey his moral message, but Lyttelton apparently lacks his skill. As Samuel Johnson notes, the dialogues seem the productions of leisure rather than of study. In spite of their popularity and influence upon other dialoguists, they appear to me to be very much flawed.

V

In summary, it seems that Fontenelle's influence upon the English dialogue of the dead was diverse but uneven. Matthew Prior, whose four dialogues are far superior to those of the other writers, was most capable of imitating Fontenelle's manner and ideas. His dialogues are witty and thoughtful, and they display the same universal concerns as

Fontenelle's. They are longer on the whole and include a variety of ideas within a single dialogue, yet they bear the closest resemblance to Fontenelle's of any of these writers.

John Hughes also closely imitated Fontenelle's style and ideas in his two dialogues, but his skill lay more in translation than original composition. His own dialogues openly copy Fontenelle's, yet they are mediocre and uninspiring. However, Hughes' translation of Fontenelle's Dialogues was skillfully done, and its appearance in 1708 helped popularize the genre and the work itself.

Lyttelton and King reveal a knowledge of Fontenelle's precedent, but less tendency to follow his example other than in basic form. King could scarcely imitate Fontenelle too closely, since his purpose was limited to satire of Bentley. His ten dialogues appear limited and topical in interest, and are only slightly above Hughes' in mediocrity. Lyttelton was definitely aware of Fontenelle's style and even paralleled several of his ideas, yet he preferred to follow Fénelon's more didactic example. His series of twenty-nine dialogues was certainly longer than any other. However, in quality his dialogues still could not approach Prior's or Fontenelle's.

From an analysis of these English dialogues of the dead, it seems apparent that Fontenelle exerted some degree of influence in the works of all four writers. Prior and Hughes demonstrate the closest parallels, while Lyttelton

and King use the genre for more limited purposes. Whatever the extent of influence, though, one should be aware that Fontenelle's Dialogues revived and popularized the Lucianic form. Without the publication of Fontenelle's appealing collection of dialogues, it is doubtful whether English writers would have ever been tempted to imitate the form. His example therefore served as a needed stimulus to the development of the genre in England.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DISCOURS SUR LA NATURE DE L'ÉGLOGUE AND ENGLISH THEORIES OF PASTORAL POETRY

In 1688, five years after the appearance of his popular Nouveaux Dialogues des Morts, Bernard de Fontenelle settled in Paris and resumed his literary activities. During that year he published Poésies pastorales de M.D.F., avec un traité sur la nature de l'églogue et une digression sur les anciens et les modernes. While both essays included with this volume of poetry made quite an impact in English literary circles, only the former significantly affected critical theory. I shall therefore limit my discussion to the Discours sur la nature de l'églogue, and to the works of those English writers which most reflect the influence of Fontenelle's pastoral theory. The number of writers reacting to the Discours was great: Sir William Temple, Knightly Chetwood, Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift and John Gay opposed Fontenelle's ideas, while Joseph Addison, Ambrose Philips, Thomas Tickell, Thomas Purney and Samuel Johnson responded

favorably to them. An analysis of the positions which these writers took not only shows the controversy over the nature of pastoral poetry, but also illustrates the impact which Fontenelle's Discours had in defining the issues of the controversy.

Peter Anthony Motteux translated Fontenelle's treatise upon the nature of the pastoral into English in 1695 under the title of Pastorals, englished by Mr. Motteux, and published it with Le Bossu's Treatise of the Epick Poem¹ and Dacier's Essay on Satire.² A second English edition appeared in 1719, but thereafter English editors reprinted only Le Bossu's essay, which was usually included with translations of Homer.³ In spite of the scarcity of English editions, though, Fontenelle's essay on pastorals gained quite a reputation in England. In fact, J. E. Congleton in his study of pastoral theory in England from 1684 to 1798 considers Fontenelle's influence second only to Rapin's.⁴ René Rapin first published the Dissertatione de Carmine Pastoralis with his Eclogue Sacrae in 1659. It was translated into English as A Treatise of Carmine Pastoralis in 1684.⁵ Because English writers so often adopted Rapin's position if they rejected Fontenelle's, it might be enlightening to first discuss Rapin's Treatise and to note the difference between the two Frenchmen's ideas.

I

René Rapin began his literary career by writing pastorals, just as did Alexander Pope. It is the preface to these first poems which Thomas Creech translated into English in 1684 and printed with his translation of Theocritus' Idylliums.⁶ Creech's translation of Rapin's Treatise soon gained the attention of English writers, and supporters and opponents alike widely spread his ideas. Because Rapin very methodically organized his essay into four parts, listing eleven pastoral themes, English readers could easily grasp and disseminate his ideas.

In the first part of the Treatise Rapin discusses the "dignity," "antiquity," and "original" of pastoral poetry.⁷ He believes that shepherds should not be portrayed in a base and sordid way, since many great men were shepherds and since the worthy Roman nation itself sprang from shepherds. Furthermore, pastorals, being the most ancient kind of poetry, should reflect the Golden Age, "that blessed time, when Sincerity and Innocence, Peace, Ease, and Plenty inhabited the Plains."⁸ While establishing the dignity and antiquity of the pastoral, Rapin reveals his conception of its purpose. Apparently his interest in pastoral poetry is based upon love for the country:

And to speak from the very bottome of my heart . . . methinks he is much more happy in a Wood, that at ease contemplates this universe, as his own, and in it, the Sun and Stars, the pleasing Meadows, shady Groves, green Banks, stately Trees, flowing Springs,

and the wanton windings of a River, fit objects for quiet innocence, than he that with Fire and Sword disturbs the World, and measures his possessions by the wast that lys about him.⁹

Whether Rapin's love for the country is real or imagined is debatable, but nonetheless he claims that the shepherd's state is dignified and far preferable to that of a city dweller, who spends his time waging war and destroying the countryside.

In the second part Rapin inquires into the "nature" and "excellencies" of the pastoral.¹⁰ It is in this part that he displays the basic criterion for his principles throughout the Treatise, the poems of Theocritus and Virgil and the criticism of Aristotle and Horace. Scarcely a point is made that Rapin does not refer to the Ancients for verification. In fact, he sees no reason for dispute about the nature of the pastoral, since Virgil and Theocritus are "such great and judicious Authors" that their "very doing . . . is Authority enough."¹¹ He echoes Aristotle as closely as possible in his definition of pastoral as "the imitation of the action of a shepherd, or of one taken under that character."¹²

Plot, or fable, is the very soul of pastoral poetry according to Rapin, and as such it should not be too complex, extravagant, or full of conceits. Rather it must be plain and simple, as should the expression. On the matter of expression Rapin contradicts himself by his efforts to approve both Theocritus and Virgil at once. Critics usually raise this issue, since Rapin says that expression should be

"the purest which the language will afford" and at the same time be in a dialect "peculiar to the Country."¹³ It is difficult to imagine how Rapin could advocate "pure" diction and a rustic dialect simultaneously, yet he does.

Rapin then lists three "Graces" which constitute the "Character" of the pastoral--simplicity, brevity and neatness.¹⁴ Because he feels that the pastoral belongs to the Golden Age, he demands "the most innocent simplicity imaginable," especially in thought and expression. The episodes ought to be short and full of sense and spirit; otherwise one risks being like the Italians, whose pastorals are too babbling and extravagant to endure.¹⁵ Finally a pastoral should possess "the delicacy of a most elegant ravishing and unaffected neatness."¹⁶ In other words, it ought to delight and charm the reader by "a studied carelessness, a design'd negligence."

To conclude the second part of the Treatise, Rapin appeals to Horace's dictum to explain "the end of Pastorals."¹⁷ He declares that the pastoral "will shew the most innocent manners of the most ancient Simplicity, how plain and honest, and how free from all varnish, and deceit, to more degenerate, and worse times." In addition to instruction Rapin states that a pastoral ought to provide delight and pleasure. Thus, he makes yet another appeal to the authority of the Ancients.

The third part of Rapin's Treatise is entitled "Rules for Writing Pastorals," in which Rapin attempts to lay down a systematic set of rules drawn from the poetry of Theocritus and Virgil.¹⁸ He formulates rules concerning Matter (or content), Fable (or plot), Expression, Numbers (or verse form), Manners, and Sentences. According to Congleton, no critic of pastoral had ever before assumed that it would be possible to devise a set of rules for composing pastorals.¹⁹ It is characteristic of Rapin's method that he bases his rules upon the example of the "Fathers of Pastoral," Theocritus and Virgil. Briefly, he states that the content of pastorals should be limited to the action of shepherds and not fishermen, ploughmen, reapers, hunters and the like, for the latter men do not have leisure enough for contemplation and song; the plot should be simple and unified; expression must be unsophisticated and pure; the heroic measure is most appropriate for choice of meter; manners must imitate those of the shepherds who lived in the Golden Age; and sentences should not be too weighty and philosophical, for only proverbs and old sayings are suitable in the mouths of country men.

Part Four contains little significant criticism about the pastoral, since Rapin digresses upon the question of tragicomedy for at least two-thirds of this part. Thomas Creech seems to have exercised good judgment in omitting it from his translation of the Treatise. Rapin contributes nothing further to his pastoral theory after Part Three.

We may draw several conclusions from the foregoing discussion which will aid in distinguishing Rapin's school of criticism from Fontenelle's. First of all, Rapin depends absolutely upon the authority of the Ancients. Besides Aristotle, Horace, Virgil, and Theocritus, Rapin consults sixty-five other critics, poets, philosophers and scholars.²⁰ Second, Rapin's Treatise exhibits a full codification of rules, revealing the author's complete faith in the efficacy of such rules. And finally, Rapin repeatedly reminds his reader that pastoral poetry should be an imitation of the Golden Age. Thus, he prefers Virgil's poetry to Theocritus', because Virgil best portrays the innocence and simplicity of former times.

II

In 1688, almost thirty years after Rapin's Dissertatione de Carmine Pastorali, Fontenelle published the Discours sur la nature de l'épique along with his own pastoral poems. Like Rapin's essay, Fontenelle's Discours was soon translated into English and became the main source for the ideas of a school of pastoral theorists in England.²¹ Because the Discours directly challenges many of the points in Rapin's Treatise, one might logically assume that Fontenelle had Rapin specifically in mind as he wrote. There are no indications, textual or otherwise, however, to substantiate this assumption. Instead Fontenelle seems to have been preoccupied with the quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns.

His famous Digression sur les anciens et les modernes is appended to the volume of pastorals along with the Discours. Furthermore Fontenelle makes frequent references in the Discours to the poetry of the "ancients" and "moderns," pointing out the errors and excellencies of each group. He does not hesitate in criticizing Theocritus as well as Virgil, although Theocritus seems to be the main target of his adverse criticism of the Ancients.

As might be expected, then, one of the main lines of thought in Fontenelle's Discours is that the Ancients are not the final authority. Whereas Rapin looks for his criterion in the objective authority of the Ancients, Fontenelle seeks enlightenment from "the Natural Light of Reason."²² His method is subjective and psychological, in other words, and he wishes to demonstrate that literary standards may be derived from rationalistic processes. Fontenelle's main points in the Discours illustrate how he put this method into effect.

Early in the essay Fontenelle states his basic assumptions:

For all men would be happy, and that too at an easy rate. A quiet pleasure is the common object of all their passions, and we are all controlled by a certain laziness. . . .

However, I do not say that men can relish a state of absolute laziness and idleness; no, they must have some motion, some agitation; but it must be such a motion and agitation as may be reconciled, if possible, to the kind of laziness that possesses them; and this is most happily to be found in love, provided it be taken in a certain manner. . . .

It is most certain that love is the most general and agreeable of all the passions. So in the state of life which we have now described there is a concurrence of the two strongest passions, laziness and love, which thus are both satisfied at once. . . .

This is properly what we conceive of a pastoral life.

Therefore, pastoral poetry, if it is to make men happy, must appeal to the two strongest passions of laziness and love. Fontenelle explains that it is not an interest in "rural Matters" that is appealing in pastorals, but "the quietness and leisure" of a shepherd's life.²⁴ Readers of pastoral poetry do not care about such indelicate matters as goats rutting in a field; they care only about the pleasing idea of tranquillity. "The idea is all in all," as Fontenelle says.

In order to condemn realism in pastoral poetry and to give psychological support to his major premise, Fontenelle goes on to declare that

Our imagination is not to be pleased without truth, but it is not very hard to please it, for often it is satisfied with a kind of half-truth. Let it see only the half of a thing, but let that half be shown in a lively manner, then it will hardly bethink itself that you hide from it the other half; and you may thus deceive it as long as you please, since all the while it imagines that this single moiety, with the thoughts of which it is taken up, is the whole thing. The illusion and at the same time the pleasingness of pastorals therefore consists in exposing to the eye only the tranquility of a shepherd's life, and in dissembling or concealing its meanness, as also in showing only its innocence and hiding its miseries.²⁵

In following this theory of selective presentation it is not surprising that Fontenelle mentions subject matter and scene

only incidentally. He assumes that love is the only appropriate content for pastorals, and that the scene itself is secondary to the idea of a quiet life. While it seems more reasonable to set the action in the country rather than in the city, he does not find a rural scene absolutely essential.

Could the scene of this quiet life, with no other business but love, be placed anywhere but in the country, so that no goats nor sheep should be brought in, I fancy it would be never the worse, for the goats and sheep add nothing to its felicity; but as the scene must lie either in the country or in towns, it seems more reasonable to choose the first.²⁶

After reading the passages, one cannot help feeling that Fontenelle would like to remove all traces of real life from pastoral poems and reduce them to pure abstraction.

As for rules, Fontenelle discredits their effectiveness just as he does the authority of the Ancients. He admits that he wrote his own eclogues before reflecting upon the nature of pastorals in general; as a result he suspects that critics could readily condemn him for not following his own theories.²⁷ However, one can sense from the tone of these remarks that Fontenelle would consider any such criticism invalid, since rules are not necessary for composing pastorals.

While Fontenelle disregards the Aristotelian critical divisions that Rapin uses to organize his essay, he still manages to include in the Discours several of the conventional themes of pastoral criticism. Besides Subject Matter

and Scene, which have already been mentioned, Fontenelle discusses Character, Expression, Action, Description and Comparison. In arriving at any conclusions concerning these elements, he never appeals to the authority of the Ancients. His only criterion is psychological.

Fontenelle sees no reason why the characters of pastoral poetry should resemble either primitive shepherds of the Golden Age or modern shepherds. To him neither age possesses the necessary requirements to please the reader: shepherds should be "free . . . from pressing want; and their minds ought to be refin'd through a long use of Civil Society."²⁸ Obviously primitive shepherds "had not yet had leisure to grow polite," and modern shepherds are "too poor and dejected" or too "clownish." Therefore, a poet ought to present only such characters as will harmonize with the idea of tranquillity and innocence. Shepherds who are too refined or too coarse must be avoided. In agreement with Rapin, Fontenelle rules out ploughmen, vinedressers, reapers, hunters and fishermen, because their lives are "hard and toilsome."²⁹

In relation to Expression, or Style, Fontenelle advocates "a certain Medium" between "too much and too little wit."³⁰ The purpose of a pastoral has not been fulfilled if the shepherds speak "clownishly"; nor is the reader pleased if the shepherds use "bold and exaggerated figures" which are "full of conceits." Instead the poet should strive for simple and unaffected expression. As Fontenelle explains:

We take no less pleasure in finding a sentiment expressed simply than in a more thoughtlike and elaborate manner, provided it be always equally fine. Nay, the simple way of expressing it ought to please more, because it occasions a kind of gentle surprise and a final admiration. We are amazed to find something that is fine and delicate in common and unaffected terms; and on that account the more the thing is fine without ceasing to be natural, and the expression common without being low, the deeper we ought to be struck.³¹

Action is more suitable as subject matter for pastoral poetry than reflection, Fontenelle continues.³² Shepherds with "a middling Share of Wit" are incapable of conversing in generalities and abstractions. Instead they "discourse only of those particular things of which they have had a sense; . . . it happens that what they have seen hath led them to what they have not seen."³³ Therefore actions should give rise to reflections in order to best suit the pastoral.

Fontenelle mentions Description and Comparison only briefly, suggesting that descriptions are acceptable if they are not too long and elaborate, and that comparisons are preferable to trite proverbs. He cautions against using similitudes that are "old and worn threadbare" though, such as those most often copied from Virgil's pastorals.³⁴ In addition, he feels that similitudes are not very proper for passion. Shepherds should use them only when it is difficult to express themselves otherwise.

In general, then, one may say that Fontenelle's theory of the pastoral is "rationalistic" and completely

independent of any authority, whether ancient or modern. Rapin's, it will be remembered, is "neoclassic" and relies heavily upon the authority of the Ancients. Fontenelle's only criterion is psychological, and he never quotes poets, critics or scholars to support his principles. As Congleton has aptly said, "Rapin tests his ideas by the works of the Ancients; Fontenelle tests the Ancients (as well as the Moderns) by his ideas."³⁵ Fontenelle obviously does not believe in the efficacy of rules, for he makes no attempt to follow any in his own poetry. Nor does he propose the Golden Age as the ideal of pastoral poetry. Primitive shepherds are no more suitable than modern ones to fulfill the demands of this genre.

One should note at this point that Rapin's and Fontenelle's theories differ less than their methods of composition. Rapin's theory focuses on the idea of the Golden Age as seen in Virgil's eclogues, while Fontenelle's rests on the supremacy of the "Idea" of pastoral tranquillity and innocence. Pastorals written according to either theory would be far from realistic. In fact, perhaps readers ought to be thankful that Fontenelle did not write pastoral poetry with his theories in mind. His eclogues are not masterpieces as they are, but if inhibited by rules Fontenelle might have done even worse.

In order to trace the influence of Fontenelle's Discours upon English pastoral theory, one must discuss both those writers who reacted in opposition to his ideas (and

therefore in line with Rapin's), and those who responded favorably to them. As I stated earlier, the former group includes Sir William Temple, Knightly Chetwood, and Alexander Pope, along with Jonathan Swift and John Gay. Temple, Chetwood and Pope were involved in the controversy over pastoral theory during the last decade of the seventeenth century and the early decades of the eighteenth century, with Swift and Gay defending Pope's position a little later. The main proponents of Fontenelle's pastoral theories include Joseph Addison, Ambrose Philips, Thomas Tickell, Thomas Purney and Samuel Johnson. These writers carried the controversy into the mid-eighteenth century, during which time one can see a decline in popularity of the "neoclassic" school of thought and a rise in popularity of the "rationalistic" or "psychological" school. Thus, in spite of the early sway which Rapin's theories exercised through the influential Pope, Fontenelle's more subjective theories triumphed later on as writers became more inclined to favor sentiment and feeling over classical precedent. The remainder of this chapter will focus on those works of the above-named authors which display the development of Fontenelle's pastoral theories in England.

III

Sir William Temple's Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning (1690) is among readers today the best known

and most discussed of all his essays, perhaps because it precipitated the famous controversy out of which came Swift's The Battle of the Books and A Tale of a Tub.³⁶ Whatever the reason for its popularity today though, it is also important as the earliest indication of the Rapin-Fontenelle controversy in England.³⁷ While Temple's remarks on the pastoral are brief and indirect, it is clear that his ideas on this issue are in line with Rapin's, not Fontenelle's.

According to Temple's own statement early in the Essay, he had recently read a work "in French upon the Plurality of Worlds" which had so pleased him that he inquired of other works by the same author.³⁸ This French work must have been Fontenelle's Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes (1686), and the work by Fontenelle which next fell into Temple's hands was "a small piece concerning poesy," the Discours sur la nature de l'épique (1688).³⁹ Temple's admiration for Fontenelle was tempered substantially after reading the Discours, for he says that it "falls so grossly into the censure of the old poetry, and preference of the new, that I could not read [it] without some indignation."⁴⁰ In fact, Temple was so indignant that he was led to write his own Essay, in which he discusses two ideas of prime concern to Fontenelle--the theory of progress and the constancy of Nature. Fontenelle had argued that modern man benefits from improved methods and accumulated knowledge; he is like a dwarf standing on a giant's shoulders. Temple

disagreed with this analogy, however, believing that great accomplishment is due to natural endowment rather than to much learning. In supporting the second idea, Fontenelle had declared that the order of Nature is constant; every age has the same potential to produce men of genius. Temple does not question the constancy of nature itself, but he does maintain that great individuals do not appear equally in every age.

But what are the sciences wherein we pretend to excel? I know of no new philosophers that have made entries upon that noble stage for fifteen hundred years past, unless Des Cartes and Hobbes should pretend to it; of whom I shall make no critique here, but only say, that, by what appears of learned men's opinions in this age, they have by no means eclipsed the lustre of Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, or others of the ancients. For grammar or rhetoric, no man ever disputed it with them; nor for poetry, that ever I heard of, besides the new French author I have mentioned, and against whose opinion there could, I think, never have been given stronger evidence than by his own poems, printed together with that treatise.⁴¹

Thus, Temple takes direct issue with "the new French author" Fontenelle concerning language and literature. It is clear that the authority and precedent of the Ancients are still paramount in his opinion, just as in Rapin's. Temple does not discuss the issue of pastoral poetry directly, but he does not have to. The reader can sense his distaste for Modern "rationalism" in poetry.

IV

It was not until 1697 that the direct conflict between Rapin's and Fontenelle's theories of the pastoral arose in

England.⁴² In that year Knightly Chetwood's Preface to the Pastorals, with a Short Defense of Virgil, against some of the Reflections of Monsieur Fontenelle was published as a part of the preface to Dryden's translation of Virgil. Chetwood seems fully aware of both Rapin's Treatise and Fontenelle's Discours. He aims his refutations directly at Fontenelle, and he quotes abundantly from Rapin's Treatise, particularly when defending Virgil.

Chetwood's purpose in writing his Preface is virtually identical with Rapin's in his Treatise: "to clear this sort of writing from vulgar prejudices; to vindicate our author from some unjust imputations; to look into some of the rules of this sort of poetry and inquire what sort of versification is most proper for it."⁴³ Thus, Chetwood desires to dignify pastoral poetry, to defend Virgil, and to formulate some rules relating to pastorals.

Fontenelle in his Discours had criticized Virgil's fourth and sixth eclogues for their pompous descriptions, saying that Virgil's subjects require a plain style.

Virgil makes Phoebus say to him at the beginning of his Sixth Eclogue that a shepherd ought not to sing Kings nor Wars, but to stick to his flocks, and such subjects as only require a plain style. Without doubt Phoebus's counsel was very good, but I cannot imagine how Virgil could forget it so much as to fall asinging, immediately after, the original of the world and the framing of the universe according to Epicurus' system, which was a great deal worse than to sing kings and wars. I must needs own that I cannot in the least tell what to make of this piece; I do not understand what is the design, nor what coherence there is between the several parts of it.⁴⁴

Chetwood takes exception to these remarks and declares that Fontenelle is incapable of understanding the "figurative expression" of Virgil's fourth eclogue and the Epicureanism of the sixth.⁴⁵ He goes on to contend that other authors (Vossius, Donatus, Servius, Huetius and Dacier) have shown why such matter is appropriate for pastorals, and that Fontenelle's lack of learning has caused him to differ.

Like Rapin, Chetwood believes that shepherds of the Golden Age, not modern ones, are the proper characters of pastoral poetry. Pastorals ought to be "formed upon the model of the first innocence and simplicity, which the moderns . . . have wisely thought fit to treat as fabulous and impracticable."⁴⁶ In addition, Chetwood also believes in the efficacy of rules. He formulates seven rules by liberally paraphrasing from Rapin's Treatise; then he proceeds to test Virgil's poems and Fontenelle's criticism by these. In his opinion, Virgil is always "exact" whereas Fontenelle is "a little defective."⁴⁷ After all, Fontenelle "to the disgrace of reason, as he himself ingenuously owns, first built his house, and then studied architecture . . . first composed his Eclogues and then studied the rules."⁴⁸

Consequently the first English critic fully aware of the Rapin-Fontenelle controversy sides vehemently with Rapin in his essay. Chetwood obviously thinks Fontenelle is impudent in criticizing Virgil and ignorant in ignoring his own rules. The issue remains at this impasse until Pope takes it up several years later.

V

Alexander Pope's A Discourse on Pastoral Poetry was written (he maintains) in 1704, although it was not published until his Works appeared in 1717.⁴⁹ If we may believe the date of composition assigned by Pope, he would have been only sixteen years old when he wrote the essay. One immediately wonders why he did not publish the essay along with his Pastorals, which appeared in Tonson's poetical miscellany in 1709, if he had indeed already composed it.⁵⁰ Perhaps it would have been inappropriate to include it in a volume of verse; or perhaps friends persuaded him to wait until a more auspicious time to publish it. Whatever may have happened, it is significant that Pope's Discourse, the "most balanced and polished expression" of the neoclassic theory of pastoral poetry, did not actually appear until some twenty years after Chetwood's Preface.⁵¹ It seems to be the culminating statement of that theory of pastoral first expressed in Rapin's Treatise.

Like Rapin, Pope looks for an absolute standard in the works of Theocritus and Virgil. He states that

. . . since the instructions given for any art are to be deliver'd as that art is in perfection, they must of necessity be deriv'd from those in whom it is acknowledg'd so to be. 'Tis therefore from the practice of Theocritus and Virgil (the only undisputed authors of Pastoral) that the Criticks have drawn the foregoing notions concerning it.⁵²

Later he asserts those modern poets to be best who "have most endeavor'd to make these ancients their pattern."⁵³ We

may assume that Pope himself faithfully followed their precedent.

In addition to subscribing to the authority of the Ancients, Pope echoes the definition and rules of pastoral poetry formulated by Rapin. He too calls a pastoral "an imitation of the action of a shepherd, or one considered under that character."⁵⁴ Even more specifically, "pastoral is an image of what they call the Golden Age."⁵⁵ As such, its "character" consists of "simplicity, brevity, and delicacy." Pope goes on to base his theory upon these three distinguishing qualities: the form may be "dramatic, narrative, or mix'd;" the fable "simple;" the manners "plain;" the expression "humble . . . neat . . . easy"--"in short. . . full of the greatest simplicity in nature."⁵⁶ Thus, Pope fundamentally agrees with the main tenets of Rapin's theory.

While it is obvious that Pope owes "a significant debt" to Rapin,⁵⁷ one might also maintain that he is indebted to Fontenelle. In the first paragraph of his Discourse Pope mentions that it is his design to "reconcile" some of the points upon which the critics seem to differ.⁵⁸ At first glance his essay doesn't seem to offer much reconciliation; however, I believe that a closer look yields more substance behind Pope's remark.

Pope agrees with both Rapin and Fontenelle that the pastoral is the most ancient kind of poetry and that it must have emerged from the leisure and tranquillity of the lives

of the shepherds. Yet unlike Rapin, Pope speculates that "what is inviting in this sort of poetry proceeds not so much from the Idea of that business [i.e. rural affairs], as of the tranquillity of a country life."⁵⁹ This speculation is directly in accordance with Fontenelle's statement:

"What is pleasing is the idea of quietness, which is inseparable from a pastoral life."⁶⁰ Moreover Pope agrees with Fontenelle that some "illusion" must be represented to ensure the reader's delight, and that "this consists in exposing the best side only of a shepherd's life, and in concealing its miseries."⁶¹ Fontenelle discussed this illusion in terms of the reader's imagination, which Pope does not do, but the similarity of expression is still unmistakable.

In addition to sharing these "psychological" principles with Fontenelle, Pope also made at least two of the same critical assessments as Fontenelle. He criticized Theocritus for introducing reapers and fishermen as well as shepherds, for being too long in his descriptions, and for sometimes depicting his characters as "abusive and immodest."⁶² Fontenelle also disliked these "unbecoming" tendencies in Theocritus' poetry, calling them "gross clownishness."⁶³ As for modern pastoral poets, Pope and Fontenelle both felt that Tasso's Amynta was the most excellent pastoral produced in Italy.⁶⁴

As can be seen from these textual comparisons, Pope's Discourse is a unique synthesis of the ideas on

pastoral poetry already expressed in Rapin's Treatise and Fontenelle's Discourse. At least one modern critic, Émile Audra, would attribute the similarity in ideas to Pope's timidity in advancing alone at such an early point in his career.⁶⁵ Other critics, notably Congleton, feel that Pope differs from his predecessors in presenting "a more compressed and systematic theory," besides reconciling those who look to the Ancients for final authority and those who depend upon reason.⁶⁶ It seems to me that both Audra and Congleton could be right. Pope was undeniably young when he wrote the Discourse and may have felt more secure in relying upon accepted critical theories. Yet he did not ineptly plagiarize the essays of either Rapin or Fontenelle. He took what he considered to be the most appropriate principles from each writer and "reconciled" them, in Congleton's words, into a more compact treatment of the genre. Although Pope's more "neoclassic" theory was destined to be superseded by the "rationalistic" theory and by Romantic tendencies, his Discourse remains "the most flexible, balanced, and polished statement" of that theory.⁶⁷

VI

Helping Pope in his efforts to defend the neoclassical pastoral and to attack the rationalistic were Jonathan Swift and John Gay, fellow members of the Scriblerus Club. Although Swift makes no direct critical remarks on the pastoral in The Battle of the Books (1710), when he has a

convenient opportunity, several years later in 1716 he suggests to Pope "a set of quaker pastorals, . . . if our friend Gay could fancy it" and "a Newgate pastoral, among the whores and thieves there."⁶⁸ By 1728 when he published "A Pastoral Dialogue" between Dermot and Sheelah, Swift's attitude toward a modern, anglicized pastoral is clear. In this poem he presented modern shepherds of the coarsest kind to show the absurdity of the rationalistic theory. Dermot and Sheelah sing "soft Endearments" to each other while weeding their master's courtyard. A sampling of the dialogue which passes between them will indicate Swift's disdain of modern shepherds and their pursuits:

Dermot: No more that Bry'r they tender Leg
 shall rake:
 (I spare the Thistle for Sir Arthur's sake.)
(11. 17-20) Sharp are the Stones, take Thou this rushy
 Matt;
 The hardest Bum will bruise with sitting
 squat.

Sheelah: Thy Breeches torn behind, stand gaping
 wide;
 This Petticoat shall save they dear Backside;
(11. 21-24) Nor need I blush, although you feel it wet;
 Dermot, I vow, 'tis nothing else but Sweat.⁶⁹

As if this passage weren't coarse enough, Swift goes on to portray Dermot accusing Sheelah of favoring Tady with her attentions by lousing him as he played long-bullets:

(11.35-6) How could you, Sheelah, listen to his Tales,
 or crack such Lice as his betwixt your Nails?⁷⁰

Sheelah responds by accusing him of kissing the "dirty Bitch" Oonah behind the hedge.⁷¹ After fervent denials of any real wrongdoings, however, both the Nymph and her Swain rise to

"rest" their "weary Bums."⁷² Thus Swift concludes his burlesque of the modern pastoral.

John Gay does even more than Swift to burlesque the creed of the rationalists. His "Proeme to the Courteous Reader," prefaced to The Shepherd's Week. In Six Pastorals (1714), clearly reveals the issues between the two groups of pastoral writers. In the "Proeme" Gay remarks, tongue in cheek, that he is not ignorant "what a Rout and Rabblement of Critical Gallimawfry hath been made of late Days by certain young Men of insipid Delicacy, concerning, I wist not what, Golden Age, and other outrageous Conceits, to which they would confine Pastoral."⁷³ He professes to set before his reader "a Picture, or rather lively landscape of thy own Country, just as thou mightest see it, didest thou take a Walk in the Fields at the proper Season," including (as did Theocritus in his fifth Idyll) "Louts (who) give foul Language and behold their Goats at Rut in all Simplicity."⁷⁴ Furthermore he intends to have the language of his shepherds "such as is neither spoken by the country Maiden nor the courtly Dame; nay, not only such as in the present Times is not uttered, but was never uttered in Times past; and if I judge aright, will never be uttered in Times future."⁷⁵ Gay then proceeds to pattern his pastorals after those of Spenser in The Shepheardes Calendar, arranging them to illustrate each day of the week. A sampling of his "rustical" poems reveals his efforts to burlesque Theocritus, Spenser, and the newcomer Ambrose Philips.

Gay first depicts in Monday's poem two shepherds, Lobbin Clout and Cuddy, in a "squabble" over the relative merits of their sweethearts. While Lobbin Clout maintains that Blouzelinda's breath is "sweeter than the ripen'd Hay," Cuddy insists that the breath of fair Buxoma far excels that of the "breathing Cows."⁷⁶ Each swain goes on to surpass the outrageous claims of the other, until finally the judge Cloddipole halts the contest, confessing that he and the herds alike are weary of their songs.⁷⁷ Also typical of Gay's burlesque is Wednesday's poem, entitled "The Dumps" since it chronicles the mournful "wailings" of the maiden Sparabella after losing her lover Bumkinet. All nature is silent as Sparabella sings her madrigal, even the oxen and the asses. Bumkinet has abandoned her for Clumsilis, whose beauties and abilities are far less:

Shall heavy Clumsilis with me compare?
View this, ye Lovers, and like me despair.
Her bludder'd Lip by smutty Pipes is worn.
And in her Breath Tobacco Whiffs are born;
And cleanly Cheese-press she could never turn,
(ll. 36-46) Her awkward Fist did ne'er employ the Churn;
If e'er she brew'd, the Drink wou'd strait
grow sour,
Before it ever felt the Thuner's Pow'r;
No Huswifry the dowdy Creature knew;
To sum up all, her Tongue confess'd the
Shrew.⁷⁸

There is nothing left for Sparabella to do after being spurned except kill herself. However, she cannot decide upon the appropriate method of suicide before night falls, and must therefore "defer her Fate" until the next day.⁷⁹ In his depiction of such shepherds and shepherdesses as

Lobbin Clout, Cuddy, and Sparabella, Gay succeeds in ridiculing those pastoral poets who did not confine their characters and settings to the Golden Age.

Thus, Swift and Gay seem to be working hand in hand with Pope, supplementing his criticism with burlesque and satire. However, even their combined attempts to discredit the new pastoral poetry and theory are futile in the face of the popularity of Ambrose Philips' pastorals and the critical acclaim given them in periodicals. It is quite interesting to examine some of these periodical essays written to defend the new school of pastoral poetry, for in them the shift to Fontenelle's pastoral theories becomes apparent.

VII

It is Joseph Addison who first calls critical attention to the "new life and more natural beauty" in pastoral poetry. In Spectator #523 (Oct. 30, 1712), he commends the pastorals of Ambrose Philips for their new approach:

If any are of opinion, that there is a necessity of admitting these classical legends into our serious compositions, in order to give them a more poetical turn; I would recommend to their consideration the pastorals of Mr. Philips. One would have thought it impossible for this kind of poetry to have subsisted without fawns and satyrs, wood-nymphs and water-nymphs, with all the tribe of rural deities. But we see he had given a new life, and a more natural beauty to this way of writing by substituting, in the place of these antiquated fables, the superstitious mythology which prevails among the shepherds of our own country.⁸⁰

One may notice in this passage that Addison praises Philips just as much for what he doesn't do in his pastorals as for

what he does. Addison is pleased that "rural deities" and "antiquated fables" are not part of Philips' poetry; he seems equally pleased that Philips has substituted English "superstitious mythology" in their place. In addition, he suggests that other English pastoral poets should follow Philips' example in using native materials.

As early as 1704 Addison had written to Philips and complimented him on his "little Essay of Pastoral," declaring that Philips is "very Just in the theory as well as in the practical part."⁸¹ Later in 1710 he again writes Philips to tell him that he has read his pastoral "with abundance of pleasure."⁸² It is the above Spectator paper of October 30, 1712, however, in which Addison first writes any significant criticism on the pastoral. There he praises Spenser and Philips, prefers Theocritus to Virgil, and objects to such neoclassicism as that found in Pope's Pastorals.

In voicing all of these opinions Addison clearly takes his stand with the followers of Fontenelle's pastoral theory. Although Addison never mentions having read Fontenelle's Discours, we can justifiably assume that he either had read it or was familiar with Fontenelle's position from the ongoing Rapin-Fontenelle controversy in English pastoral poetry. It is quite likely that he had read the Discours, because he makes several references to Fontenelle's other major works (the Dialogues des Morts, the Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes, the Histoire des Oracles) in various

Spectator papers.⁸³ He even owned a copy of the 1707 edition of Fontenelle's Entretiens.⁸⁴ Thus, Addison is the first English critic to defend articulately the type of pastoral poetry advocated by Fontenelle in his Discours. Pope had agreed with a few of Fontenelle's ideas, as shown above, but on the whole he was influenced more by Rapin's neoclassical theories.

VIII

If Addison was the first English critic to promote Fontenelle's rationalistic theories of pastoral poetry, then Ambrose Philips was the first poet to put those theories into practice. He published only six pastorals, appearing in Tonson's miscellany in 1709, but they served to intensify the breach between the two schools of pastoral theory because of their radical divergence from such classically inspired pastorals as Pope's.⁸⁵

A brief look at the first of Philips' pastorals reveals that in this poem, as in the succeeding five, he followed Fontenelle's advice in emphasizing the passions of laziness and love.⁸⁶ The shepherd Lobbin reclines in the evening dusk to sing a plaintive song of his unrequited love for Lucy:

(ll. 14-
20) And now the Moon begins in Clouds to rise;
The twinkling Stars are lighted in the Skies;
The winds are hush'd; the Dews distil; and Sleep
With soft Embrace has seiz'd my weary Sheep.
I only, with the prouling Wolf, constrain'd
All Night to wake. With Hunger is he pain'd,
And I wish Love.⁸⁷

The setting is obviously not that of Virgil's Golden Age, for Lobbin shares the night with a prowling wolf. Nor are there any classical deities sporting around the hills. Instead the scene belongs to rural England, and the overall effect is one of quietness and leisure:

Oh would my Gifts but win her wanton Heart!
 Oh could I half the Warmth I feel impart!
 How would I wander ev'ry Day to find
 (71-76) The ruddy Wildings! Were but Lucy kind,
 For glossy Plumbs I'd climb the Knotty tree,
 And of fresh Honey rob the thrifty Bee.⁸⁸

Lobbin seems to have an abundance of time for such pursuits as picking plums and seeking honey. At least, if his daily life includes any coarse chores, Philips is careful not to mention them. In addition, Lobbin seems to be a "middling Wit," neither too rough nor too refined. He expresses himself simply and naturally, as the above passage illustrates, while reflecting upon the woes of loving disdainful Lucy. All in all, Philips' "First Pastoral" illustrates several of Fontenelle's precepts, making one feel that he had read the Discours.

However, we unfortunately have no proof other than textual similarities that Philips was familiar with Fontenelle's ideas. Philips expresses his own ideas very meagerly in the Preface to the first edition of his Pastorals (1708). There he makes only two significant points. He implies that the poet should keep his eye on the scene before him as he writes, in order to be faithful to it:

For, as in Painting, so I believe, in Poetry,
the Country affords the most entertaining Scenes,
and most delightful Prospects.⁸⁹

Second, he indicates that English poets may find a worthy pastoral model at home in Spenser, for he seems to have "hit upon the true Nature of Pastoral Poems."⁹⁰

Thus, Ambrose Philips carries out in his poetry the very ideas suggested by Fontenelle in his Discours. He may have carried pastoral realism a bit farther than Fontenelle, for the Frenchman advised "illusion" or "half Truth" over too faithful a description of rural scenes. Yet it is undeniable that Philips' pastorals occupy a place in the rationalistic school of pastoral theory equivalent to Pope's in the neoclassic school.

IX

Perhaps the most significant echo of Fontenelle's ideas on the pastoral occurs in the five Guardian essays written by Thomas Tickell in April of 1713 (#22, 23, 28, 30 and 32).⁹¹ Tickell's debt to Fontenelle is "extensive and direct" in the first two papers, according to Congleton, but less evident in the final three.⁹² An examination of these essays reveals that Congleton's conclusion is correct. Tickell repeats several of Fontenelle's theories precisely as they appear in the Discours in nos. 23 and 23, but from then on he builds a rationalistic theory independent of Fontenelle.

To illustrate just how closely Tickell followed Fontenelle's text, one may compare this passage from Guardian 22 with Fontenelle's passage, as it is quoted earlier:

It is, indeed, commonly affirmed, that the truth well painted will certainly please the imagination; but it is sometimes convenient not to discover the whole truth, but that part which only is delightful. We must sometimes show only half an image to the fancy; which, if we display in a lively manner, the mind is so dexterously deluded, that it doth not readily perceive that the other half is conceded. Thus in writing pastorals, let the tranquillity of that life appear full and plain, but hide the meanness of it; represent its simplicity as clear as you please, but cover its misery.⁹³

Tickell advocates the same "illusion" or "half Truth" that Fontenelle does, assuming that the pleasure of a pastoral lies in its picture of tranquillity and simplicity. Because the similarities in wording between the two texts are striking, Tickell may very likely have had a copy of Fontenelle's Discours open before him as he wrote.

In addition to stating that the imagination may be pleased with half truth, Tickell continues to echo Fontenelle with his ideas that neither primitive nor modern shepherds are suitable subjects of pastoral poetry, that the reader's innate laziness draws him to pastorals, and that concrete expressions are more appropriate than abstract generalizations in a shepherd's mouth.⁹⁴ All of these ideas are borrowed directly from Fontenelle's Discours. However, even in these first two essays (#22 and 23) Tickell begins to supplement Fontenelle's theories with those of his own. For example, he postulates two other reasons besides man's

innate laziness for the pastoral's source of delight: "our secret approbation of . . . goodness in others"⁹⁵ and "our love of the country (with its) pleasing objects (and) lovely images."⁹⁶ Tickell thus associates the idea of natural goodness with pastoral characters, and he reinforces the idea of Ambrose Philips that natural scenery realistically presented is a primary source of appeal in pastorals. In the second essay when discussing appropriate expression, Tickell adds that "a swain" is superstitious and commends Philips for using "tales of goblins and fairies."⁹⁷ Addison praised Philips for this same reason, we may recall.

It is in the last three papers (#28, 30 and 32) that I feel that Tickell differs most from Fontenelle. In Guardian #28 Tickell objects to the artificiality of Italian and French pastoral, but he strongly defends Theocritus, who fared badly at the hands of Fontenelle. Tickell's admiration for Theocritus is a point which distinguishes his theory from Fontenelle's. In fact, in Guardian #32, the last paper in the series on the pastoral, he devises an allegory in which Ambrose Philips is shown to be the direct descendant of Theocritus. This is for Philips the ultimate compliment.

In the fourth essay, Guardian #30, Tickell shows why the pastoral should rely upon actual experience of English rural life:

The reason why such changes from the ancients should be introduced, is very obvious; namely, that poetry being imitation, and that imitation being the best

which deceives most easily, it follows we must take up the customs which are most familiar or universally known, since no man can be deceived or delighted with the imitation of what he is ignorant of.⁹⁸

English poets should therefore imitate the manners and customs indigenous to their own country, because they are most familiar with them. It is this attention to realistic detail which most distinguishes Tickell's theory from Fontenelle's. Tickell discusses such elements as climate, soil, fruits and flowers, theology, dress, customs and sports, whereas Fontenelle paid no attention to such concrete rural details.

On the whole, Tickell's five Guardian essays constitute the most direct borrowing from Fontenelle's Discours, in spite of the fact that Tickell uses the ideas as a foundation for a more anglicized pastoral. It is nonetheless evident that Fontenelle's theory was gaining popularity among English critics and poets. Soon the neoclassical pastorals of Pope would be laid aside for those of Ambrose Philips, at whom he had earlier scoffed.

X

Four years after Thomas Tickell's Guardian essays, Thomas Purney published four pieces of pastoral criticism: "Advertisement Concerning the Language," prefixed to Pastorals. After the Simple Manner of Theocritus; "Advertisement" and "Preface" prefixed to Pastorals; and A Full Enquiry into the True Nature of Pastoral. These three volumes were published separately in 1717, the same year in which Pope's

Discourse upon Pastoral Poetry appeared in his Works.⁹⁹

Although Purney apparently attracted little but contempt, these essays show that he sensed the literary issues of his day.

Just like Fontenelle, Purney places no faith in the efficacy of rules, and he ridicules those critics who dare "not stir a step without Leading-strings."¹⁰⁰ He criticizes Rapin in particular for relying so much upon the Ancients. Purney calls him a "Facetious Head" and says that he uses "his Eyes instead of his Understanding."¹⁰¹ By "understanding" Purney is obviously referring to the same process as Fontenelle's "Natural Light of Reason." He too believes that intelligent criticism derives from rationalistic processes, and he ventures to show in his Enquiry (surely the longest essay ever published on the pastoral) that any poet might conceive pastorals which are "extremely delightful" if he "would dare to write himself, and not be lead [sic] so much by Theocritus and Virgil."¹⁰²

Again like Fontenelle, Purney begins with a basic premise about the "nature of the Human Mind" and logically constructs his Enquiry upon it. It is his assumption that pastoral poetry must describe a "State, or Life (which we would) willingly exchange our present State for."¹⁰³ Since there are but two states of life attractive to the mind of man--"the busy, great, or pompous; and the retir'd, soft, or easy"--the first should be the realm of epic and tragedy,

the second of pastoral.¹⁰⁴ Keeping this conclusion in mind, Purney proceeds to set forth his theory, which, in spite of his declaration that "every single thought will be the free Sentiment of my own Mind," is considerably indebted to Fontenelle and Tickell.¹⁰⁵

The Enquiry is divided into four parts, modified from the conventional Aristotelian divisions: Fable, Characters, Sentiments and Language. In each, Purney analyzes his topic minutely, reminding the reader that no one man will ever bring any kind of poetry to its "greatest Compleatness."¹⁰⁶ According to his criteria, the fable should develop a moral, portray characters, and engage the passions. The characters should be endowed with appropriate "passions" and a proper "degree of knowledge" and surrounded by "pleasant and delightful images."¹⁰⁷ In other words, the shepherds should be moderately refined and passionate, and the scene should be reminiscent of neither the Golden Age nor the present countryside. Like Fontenelle, Purney is willing to take considerable liberty with actual country life in order to produce the desired effect. Tickell advocated a more faithful portrayal of English rural life, so that pastorals written by his standards would be more realistic than those written according to Fontenelle's or Tickell's criteria. As for Sentiments and Language, Purney declares that thoughts should be selected to harmonize with the "State of Life" being presented, and language ought to make ample use of

archaisms and rustic dialects.¹⁰⁸ He does not seem to prefer action over meditation in his pastoral scheme, as does Fontenelle. Moreover, he recommends that a poet alter words in order to make them appear archaic, if necessary, which goes beyond the "simplicity" of dialogue envisioned by Fontenelle.

Though Purney does not review the pastoral tradition as the other critics do, he does express opinions of representative figures. He prefers Theocritus to Virgil, and praises him along with Ovid, Spenser, and Otway as being "capable of giving the World a perfect Sett of Pastorals."¹⁰⁹ The Enquiry is full of references to Ambrose Philips and his poetry, but there is no mention of Pope's Pastorals or his Discourse. This complete neglect of Pope's poems and essay leads Congleton to suspect that Purney was aware of the Pope-Philips quarrel and purposefully ignored any mention of Pope.¹¹⁰ Whether he did or not, though, there was a critical controversy over the nature of the newly revived pastoral in 1717. One group recommended literary imitation of the Ancients, provided it was done creatively, while the other group proposed theories derived by a process of reason. One might conclude, as does Congleton, that "Fontenelle's English disciples temper his Cartesian rationalism."¹¹¹ Yet it is clear that they use his ideas on the pastoral as a foundation upon which to build their own theories. Without the alternative critical theory set forth in Fontenelle's

Discours, it is unlikely that the authority of the Ancients would have been undermined so quickly.

XI

In order to further trace Fontenelle's influence upon later pastoral theory, we must examine the two Rambler essays (#36 and #37) of July, 1750, written by Samuel Johnson.¹¹² Dr. Johnson occupies a singular role in this discussion of the Rapin-Fontenelle controversy, according to Congleton, because in his writings "one can see the close proximity, if not the actual convergence, of the two lines of pastoral theory which have been traced from Rapin and Fontenelle."¹¹³ Dr. Johnson's essays were not prompted by any controversy, nor was he a member of any group favoring either Pope's or Philips' brand of pastorals. Instead he seeks his own standards through common observation and the study of Virgil. Much like Fontenelle, he relies upon "common sense" or "Reason" to determine the nature of the pastoral. He then consults Virgil's pastorals to indicate more precisely what he means by his own ideas. Thus it may be said that Dr. Johnson blends Fontenelle's subjectivity and reliance upon reason with Rapin's objectivity and reliance upon the Ancients. However, a look at the two Rambler essays will reveal that his pastoral theory belongs more to the rationalistic school than to the neoclassical.

The key to Johnson's theory lies in his definition of pastoral poetry as "a poem in which any action or passion

is represented by its effects on a country life."¹¹⁴ That is, anything that commonly happens in the country is a suitable subject for pastoral poetry. The poet should simply rely upon what he sees around him, not depending upon visions of the Golden Age. Dr. Johnson cannot comprehend why modern poets have felt it necessary to set their poems in ancient times:

I cannot, indeed, easily discover why it is thought necessary to refer descriptions of a rural state to remote times, nor can I perceive that any writer has consistently preserved the Arcadian manners and sentiments. The only reason, that I have read, on which this rule has been founded is, that, according to the customs of modern life, it is improbable that shepherds should be capable of harmonious numbers, or delicate sentiments; and, therefore, the reader must exalt his ideas of the pastoral character, by carrying his thoughts back to the age in which the care of herds and flocks was the employment of the wisest and greatest men.¹¹⁵

In addition, Dr. Johnson agrees with Fontenelle that shepherds should be endowed with "learning among their other qualifications," and that their language should not be "degraded" by "obsolete terms and rustic words."¹¹⁶ He would certainly disagree with Thomas Purney's recommendation that words should look more archaic for pastoral language.

Dr. Johnson's main complaint about the pastoral poetry of the neoclassicists focuses on their "utter disregard both of life and nature." They have "filled their productions with mythological allusions, with incredible fictions, and with sentiments which neither passion nor reason could have dictated. . ."¹¹⁷ Common sense informs Dr.

Johnson that such elements are not consistent with country life, just as elevated allegories are not. Thus, he agrees with Fontenelle and the other rationalists on this issue.

In his speculations upon the appeal of pastorals, Dr. Johnson emphasizes the allure of the familiar scene:

It is generally pleasing, because it entertains the mind with representations of scenes familiar to almost every imagination, and of which all can equally judge whether they are well described.¹¹⁸

He adds that our association of peace, leisure, and innocence with pastoral life is also one of the chief delights of this type of poetry. It will be recalled that Fontenelle believed that readers were particularly attracted to the tranquillity and simplicity of rural life, as opposed to the turmoil of city life.

While all these remarks derive from psychological observations, Dr. Johnson does devote some time to a consideration of more objective standards. At the beginning of Rambler #37 he states that

In writing or judging of pastoral poetry, neither the authors nor critics of latter times seem to have paid sufficient regard to the originals left us by antiquity. . . . It is, therefore, necessary to inquire after some more distinct and exact idea of this kind of writing. This may, I think be easily found in the pastorals of Virgil . . .¹¹⁹

Dr. Johnson has a thorough respect for the Ancients, as does Fontenelle, but he probably conceives of poetry as more absolute and constant than does Fontenelle. In the conclusion of Rambler #36 we find this admission:

I am afraid it will not be found easy to improve the pastorals of antiquity, by any great additions or diversifications. Our descriptions may, indeed, differ from those of Virgil, as an English from an Italian summer, and, in some respects, as modern from ancient life; but as nature is in both countries nearly the same, and as poetry has to do rather with the passions of men, which are uniform, than their customs, which are changeable, the varieties, which time or place can furnish, will be inconsiderable; and I shall endeavor to show, in the next paper, how little the latter ages have contributed to the improvement of the rustic muse.¹²⁰

Like Fontenelle, Johnson does not feel that poetry may "improve" from one century to the next. However, both men anticipate the appearance of men of equal genius in succeeding ages, who will be capable of the same creative efforts.

As these two Rambler essays show, the neoclassical regard for classical authority is still very much alive in Samuel Johnson, although he illustrates even more a dependence upon his own rational faculties. I feel that the psychological effect which a poem produced upon his mind swayed him more than its adherence to classical standards. His reflections upon the pastoral might therefore indicate the long-range adaptability of Fontenelle's criteria as compared with the short-termed success of Rapin's.

XII

It is quite evident from this discussion that Fontenelle's Discours sur la nature de l'églogue played an important role in the development of eighteenth-century English pastoral theory. It may even be said that his reliance upon the "Natural Light of Reason" provided English

critics with an important precedent in psychological criticism. A. F. B. Clark suggests this possibility in his study of Boileau and other French critics in England:

Fontenelle's influence is exerted, evidently, merely on a few points of detail, and shows signs of strengthening only when the point of view of criticism shifts from the court-martialing methods of the neoclassics to the attempt to determine the psychological bases on which the pleasure procurable from literature rests. This shift came about in England about 1750; and the interest in Fontenelle as a pioneer in that kind of criticism at once increases.¹²¹

Clark implies that Fontenelle's method of criticism was much more significant than the "few points of detail" with which English writers may have concurred. However, my analysis has shown that English writers agreed with many of Fontenelle's points about pastoral poetry. His Discours permeated the entire debate in England. Surely one cannot consider this influence insignificant, even when placed next to his impact upon the method of criticism. Fontenelle was equally important both in pastoral theory and critical method. His Discours suggested new ideas about the nature and composition of pastoral poetry, and it likewise stimulated a trend toward reliance upon self-evident reason in criticism. It is no surprise that Fontenelle is known today as a pioneer in psychological literary criticism.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ENTRETIENS SUR LA PLURALITÉ DES MONDES AND THE POPULARIZATION OF ASTRONOMY IN ENGLAND

In 1686, a few years after the publication of his Nouveaux Dialogues des Morts (1683) yet before the appearance of the Poésies Pastorales and discourse upon eclogues (1688), Fontenelle wrote his most famous, and most frequently published and translated work, Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes. Although he published it anonymously at first, Parisian journalists nevertheless soon recognized and hailed it as a new work by "l'auteur des Dialogues des morts."¹ From that time on, the Entretiens became increasingly popular both in France and in England. There were three English translations before 1700, and before Fontenelle's death in 1757 there had appeared at least ten editions of four different English translations. Including the Italian and Russian translations, and the several French editions, at least twenty-eight editions were published during Fontenelle's lifetime alone.² These numerous editions

and translations easily show with what enthusiasm the English, and the reading public in general, received the Entretiens. English writers who discussed Fontenelle's work either in correspondence or periodicals include men from the entire century. Thomas Gray, Joseph Addison, the Earl of Chesterfield, Samuel Johnson, David Hume, Horace Walpole--the list is long. Each of these writers responded to the Entretiens in some way. Other writers, in particular Matthew Prior and Alexander Pope, incorporated ideas from the Entretiens in their poetry. Thus, the most popular of all Fontenelle's writing stimulated a variety of reactions in England.

After noting the immediate and yet enduring popularity of Fontenelle's book, one may well wonder about the nature of its appeal. What did Fontenelle say that hadn't been said before, and how did he say it? Actually it seems that the content of the Entretiens, primarily a smoothly flowing argument for the Copernican system of the universe, would not have been astounding or new to scholars or even to the elite reading public. However, science was still isolated and dominated by prejudices in spite of the great works of Copernicus and Galileo. Although more than two hundred years had passed, there was still no effective popularization of the theory of Copernicus. It is true that John Wilkins, the Bishop of Chester, had published a book in 1638 entitled The Discovery of a New World (the moon), which he

followed by a supplement in 1640 called A Discourse that the Earth may be a Planet. Both of these works were translated into French in 1655, and by 1684 five editions of each had appeared in English.³ Thus, some fifty years earlier than Fontenelle, Wilkins supported the idea of a plurality of worlds and discussed the question of habitability on other planets. It is likely that Fontenelle borrowed some of his ideas from Wilkins, a possibility which I will discuss later in this section. Yet the important point is that Fontenelle, like Wilkins, treated the subject of plurality seriously, and apart from Gassendi, whose work was hidden from the public, he was the first in France to do so.⁴ In addition, since the Entretiens came at the time it did, just one year before the publication of Newton's Principia was to assure the success of the Copernican system, Fontenelle could write a work of popularization, whereas Bishop Wilkins had to make his a learned apology.

The idea that the earth was a fixed center surrounded by planets attached to revolving skies was generally current until the end of the seventeenth century, at least among members of the general reading public. Even among the intellectuals, such as Pascal, Descartes, and Gassendi, there was a hesitation to embrace openly the Copernican theories, for fear of ecclesiastical opposition. Descartes suppressed his Traité du Monde for fear of religious repercussions, and even Gassendi did not dare turn his back

entirely on the theory of Ptolemy. Pascal simply rejected the Copernican theory outright, although he indicated at times that he believed in the infinity of worlds if not their habitability.⁵ Writers such as Cyrano de Bergerac, whose Voyage dans la lune appeared in 1649, avoided religious complications by treating the idea of habitability on other planets comically. Fontenelle, on the other hand, neither avoided the issue nor passed it off comically; he openly espoused the new system with full approval. Instead, the central purpose of the Entretiens is to dislodge the earth as center of the universe and to reduce to absurdity man's vain illusion that all cosmic things were done for his benefit. Perhaps a closer analysis of Fontenelle's ideas as well as his structure and style will indicate the distinctiveness of his work--the reasons why the Entretiens exercised such a wide influence upon the ideas of his time.

I

In his preface to the Pluralité des Mondes, Fontenelle draws a parallel with Cicero, who "undertook to write of Philosophical matters in the Latin tongue, there being, then, no Books upon that subject, but what were in Greek."⁶ Likewise, he proposes to write of philosophy, but not directly in a philosophical manner. He intends "to raise it to such a pitch, that it shall not be too dry and insipid a subject to please gentlemen; nor too mean and trifling to entertain scholars."⁷ In addition, Fontenelle carefully

chooses that part of philosophy which is most likely to excite curiosity--speculation about the universe. As he says,

I think nothing concerns us more, than to enquire how this world, which we inhabit, is made; and whether there be any other worlds like it, which are also inhabited as this is.⁸

He assures the reader that he has harbored no subversive thoughts, for there are those who will be displeased at the idea of men in the moon. Such readers (like Pascal) may suspect that their religion will be endangered by the existence of human beings of which the Bible makes no mention. However, Fontenelle does not mean to offend anybody whose opinions differ from his own. He declares to the righteous that whatever creatures there are on the moon would not be men, because God, having created with such diversity on earth, would certainly have created other creatures for other worlds. This idea is basic to his argument for a plurality of worlds, and like Bishop Wilkins in The Discovery of a New World, it allows him to escape the theological problem of men in the moon.

Fontenelle sets the scene for his six conversations with an unnamed marquise by addressing a letter to Monsieur L--. In it he speaks of the marquise's character and disposition for learning, establishing her identity for his contemporaries as the Marquise de la Mesangère, whose chateau near Rouen Fontenelle often visited.⁹ After informing the reader of the occasion for their conversations,

Fontenelle proceeds to the dialogues themselves, set up by "evenings" rather than by "chapters" or other standard divisions. Each evening's conversation takes place outside during promenades in the garden; thus the enchantment of a summer evening and the immensity of the universe can impress the marquise and reader alike.

The first evening is devoted to a discussion of the earth's rotation and revolution about the sun, in which Fontenelle has a chance to explain the Copernican system. He declares to the marquise that "every star is a world,"¹⁰ although we are not able to verify this speculation with our limited eyesight. In fact,

Nature very much resembles an opera; where you stand, you do not see the stage as it really is, but as it is placed with advantage, and all the wheels and movements hid, to make the representation the more agreeable. . . . This engineer [in the pit] is like a philosopher. . . . To see Nature then, as she really is, one must stand behind the scenes at the opera.¹¹

Thus, Nature is simply a machine, like the workings of an opera or a watch on a large scale, whose springs are concealed, and the philosopher has become a mechanic who searches for them. Does this conception lessen the importance of nature or of the philosopher? Not at all, in Fontenelle's opinion. He finds joy in the comprehension of nature rather than in the mystification. However, he points out that he and the marquise are among the minority in that respect, for

People generally admire what they do not comprehend; they have a veneration for obscurity, and look upon nature, as a kind of magic, while they do not understand her; and despise her below legerdemain, when once they are acquainted with her.¹²

Fontenelle, on the contrary, loves nature more as he becomes more familiar with it.

After identifying the sun, moon and other five planets (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn), Fontenelle explains three systems of the universe for the remainder of the first evening's conversation, those of Ptolemy, Copernicus and Tycho Brahé. By contrasting the reasonableness of the Copernican system with the illogic and improbability of the other two, Fontenelle is able to digress upon man's tendency to design theories which flatter his ego. Just like the Athenian idiot,

We believe all things in nature designed for our use. . . . Upon this principle they [philosophers] imagined the earth rested in the center of the universe, while all the celestial bodies [which were made for it] took the pains to turn round to give light to it.¹³

As the history of science demonstrates, man is very reluctant to give up such a flattering view of the universe. Tycho Brahé's system varies little from the Ptolemaic system, for he makes the sun revolve around the earth while other planets revolve around the sun. Thus, the earth's position as center of the universe could remain unchallenged. Fontenelle and the marquise decide that both the above systems are affected and improbable, and by the end of the conversation the marquise is convinced that the Copernican

system is most logical. Her readiness to see the "reason" in the latter system, in which the sun is center with planets revolving around it, is due largely to Fontenelle's adeptness in using analogies to explain the scientific principles. He describes the earth's revolution around the sun and its rotation around itself through a "bowl (ball) on the green" analogy, and the earth's movement in spite of our sense of stability through a "boat on the river" analogy. Just as a ball proceeds toward its goal yet turns around itself at the same time, so does the earth revolve around the sun, its goal, yet rotate on its axis at the same time. Likewise one may spend the night on a boat and awaken in the same place on the boat, but the boat itself has travelled down the river and therefore changed locations. Thus we are not conscious of the earth's movement in relation to the other planets, although it is moving nonetheless. I have already mentioned his analogy of nature and the hidden mechanics of an opera or a watch, so that one can easily see to what a large extent he relies upon this explanatory device in the first conversation alone.

The second evening's conversation describes the appearance and behavior of the moon, and considers the possibility of inhabitants on that body. Fontenelle declares that "the moon is an earth too, and a habitable world."¹⁴ When the marquise expresses disbelief that the moon is like the earth in any way, Fontenelle shows her the errors in

her romantic beliefs. She thinks that the moon enlightens the earth, instead of reflecting light which it receives from the sun. Fontenelle must explain the composition of light, the phases of the moon, and the cause of eclipses before she is satisfied. Of particular interest is his explanation of the latter phenomenon, with its digression upon the myths people have devised to understand it. He describes how the sun, moon, and earth cast shadows when placed in a right line, obscuring for us at times the moon and at times the sun. When the marquise exclaims at the simplicity of this theory, Fontenelle tells her how the Indians, Americans, Greeks, and ancient people have tried to explain eclipses. While these myths may seem foolish to us, as they do to the marquise, Fontenelle declares that "I know of nothing in the world which is not a monument of the Folly of man."¹⁵ Moon inhabitants are just as foolish if they worship the earth, as they may well do. Fontenelle asks, "Do you think we are the only fools of the universe? Is it not common for ignorance to spread itself everywhere?"¹⁶

After this rather distressing observation, Fontenelle tells the marquise about the topography of the moon's surface as seen through the telescope. When she wonders what astronomers say about the inside of the moon, he refers her to Ariosto's Orlando Furioso, in which the knight errant Astolfo journeys to the moon in a fiery chariot along with St. John. He then proceeds with the lengthiest digression

in the book, a relation of the whole tale. However, there is a purpose behind telling this story, for it leads directly to the question of whether men may exist on the moon. Fontenelle's response to this touchy question follows the same line of reasoning which Wilkins used fifty years earlier, namely that the diversity and fecundity of God's creations on earth assure us that He must have been as bountiful elsewhere in the universe. But moon "inhabitants" do not mean "men" as on earth. The different physical surroundings on the moon as well as the distance between the earth and moon would certainly produce creatures that are different from men. Fontenelle explains,

For my part, I don't believe there are men in the moon; but do observe how much the face of nature is changed between this and China; other visages, shapes, manners; nay, almost other principles of reason; and therefore between us and the moon the alteration must be much more considerable. In the lands that have been lately discovered, we can scarce call the inhabitants men, they are rather animals in human shape, and that too sometimes very imperfect, almost without human reason; he therefore who will travel to the moon, must not expect to find men there.¹⁷

By showing the marquise the vast differences even among men on earth, he is able to impress her with how different moon inhabitants must be.

Once again like Wilkins, Fontenelle ends his discussion of the moon by predicting that one day men will fly there. Both writers expect disbelief and derision on the part of "vulgar wits," but nonetheless they persist in their scientific optimism. Fontenelle tells the marquise,

The art of flying is but newly invented; it will improve by degrees, and in time grow perfect; then we may fly as far as the moon. We do not yet pretend to have discovered all things, or that what we have discovered can receive no addition; and therefore, pray let us agree, there are yet many things to be done in the ages to come. . . . The world will unfold itself more to us hereafter . . . but all things must be done in order, the whole earth must be discovered; and till we are perfectly acquainted with our own habitation, we shall never know that of our neighbors.¹⁸

Thus, Fontenelle expresses here, as he does in numerous places throughout his writings, an enormous faith in scientific progress.

In the third evening's conversation, Fontenelle continues his discussion of the world in the moon and what life may be like there, and he then speculates upon the habitability of the planets. The marquise is upset when Fontenelle begins by suggesting, contrary to their previous night's conversation, that the moon may not be inhabited because of the quality of its air. Unlike the earth, it has no clouds, vapours or exhalations around it. Therefore there must be no water to evaporate, and hence no life. Yet he offers another possibility besides this one, in speculating that the vapours around the moon may simply be different from ours, resulting in dew rather than in rain. This theory could support inhabitants, although probably not us. He tells the marquise of the earth's "natural barricades"--the atmosphere--which defend the passage out of our world as well as the entrance into the moon. In addition he supposes that there are no rainbows on the moon, no twilight or dawn, and no thunder or lightning.

The prospect of continually sunny days and clear nights pleases the marquise, but Fontenelle reminds her that at least clouds moderate the heat. Moon inhabitants may have to build their cities underground, in the great cavities visible to us from earth, to escape from the heat.

Next they consider Venus, which Fontenelle describes as being much like the moon. In fact, he says

we find that all of the planets are of the same nature, all obscure bodies, which receive no light but from the sun, and then send it to one another; their motions are the same, so that hitherto they are alike.¹⁹

If the planets are basically like the moon, then why should they not be habitable as well? Fontenelle would find it strange to imagine the earth so well stocked and other planets vacant. If not inhabited, "I think they were made but to little purpose; why should nature be so partial, as to except only the earth?"²⁰ Even all the inhabitants of the earth have not been discovered, such as "the little fishes or serpents" visible in certain liquids with magnifying glasses, or the many "tiny worms" which inhabit a leaf and fill up vacuums in stones.

In short everything is animated. . . . Why then should Nature, which is so fruitful to an excess here, be so very sterile in the rest of the planets, as to produce no living things in them?²¹

The marquise is forced to agree, although Nature's diversity astounds her.

As can be seen, Fontenelle's arguments for life on other planets are essentially religious, even aesthetic. He

justifies planetary habitability on the grounds of God's infinite plan of creation and of Nature's plenitude. These two areas of experience were familiar to him when he turned to science, and it should not be surprising that he relied upon them in making scientific facts comprehensible to his readers. Consider the four arguments he uses to make a case for life on the planets. First, he believed that if planets are like the earth in apparent things, it is quite likely that they are similar in other particulars. His second argument also depends upon analogy: if nature is fruitful here on earth, producing a diversity of things, there is no reason to suppose that she is not fruitful elsewhere. The findings of the seventeenth-century microscopists strengthened this assumption about God's goodness and fecundity.²² The third argument assumes that if the planets were uninhabited, then nature would be guilty of wanton wastefulness, practically a heretical idea in Fontenelle's time. Finally, the fourth argument follows logically from the preceding one: any conception of God which supposes His creations to be infinite and diverse must also suppose that He has created for use (not necessarily man's use though). Thus, God would not have been either sterile or wanton in his creation of other planets.

It did not occur to Fontenelle, as Leonard Marsak observes in his study of science in the French Enlightenment, that a mechanism of evolution producing varying forms

of life could have been present, or absent altogether, in other worlds.²³ His arguments for life are based upon religious and aesthetic analogies such as the ones listed above. Fontenelle does hint at an element of chance in the operation of the universe, but I believe that he meant it in a moralistic sense only. For example, in discussing the number of moons possessed by Jupiter and the earth, he says that if the earth had come into Jupiter's vortex, "we had then been no more than a Moon in his Family . . . thus it is true that chance often decides our entire fortune."²⁴ This element of chance is actually much more evident in Fontenelle's earlier Dialogues des Morts than in the Entretiens. In the latter work the design of the universe is distinguished by order and simplicity. Fontenelle tells us that nature's design is magnificent, but that economy is her principle of execution:

Nature is a great housewife, she always makes use of what costs least, let the difference be ever so inconsiderable; and yet this frugality is accompanied with an extraordinary magnificence, which shines through all her works; that is, she is magnificent in the design, but frugal in the execution, and what can be more praiseworthy, than a great design accomplished with a little expence.²⁵

There is no contradiction between magnificence and economy, for both reflect nature in terms of deity, and Fontenelle believes God to have been both infinite and simple in His creation.

To return to our analysis of the conversations themselves, on the fourth evening Fontenelle and the marquise

enlarge their discussion to include the entire solar system and the particulars of each planet. They systematically discuss Venus, Mercury, the sun, Jupiter, and Saturn, speculating upon the inhabitants (if any) of each body. Only Mars is excluded from consideration, rather inexplicably in my opinion. Fontenelle shrugs it off with the statement that it "affords nothing curious that I know of."²⁶ However, his descriptions of the other planets are both interesting and entertaining. He tells the marquise that the moon appears to be the same size from Venus, as Venus appears from the earth. She consequently concludes that the moon must "pre-side over the amours of those inhabitants of Venus, who must be such masters of gallantry." Venetians surely resemble the Moors of Granada--"witty, full of fire, very amorous."²⁷ Fortunately Fontenelle ridicules her idea, just as we are inclined to do. As for Mercury, Fontenelle describes it as the "bedlam of the universe" because it is so near the sun.²⁸ Its year lasts only three months and its climate must be excessively hot. The marquise pities its inhabitants because of the heat, but Fontenelle responds with his characteristic faith in nature's "reason":

If it is a certain truth, that nature never gives life to any creature, but where that creature may live; then through custom, and ignorance of a better life, those people may live happily.²⁹

Continuing on their imaginative voyage, Fontenelle next discusses the sun, the only uninhabitable body of all. He describes its composition as perhaps "liquid matter, some

think of melted gold, which seems to boil over continually" or perhaps "full of mountains, which vomit fire continually."³⁰ Whatever the case, it is too bad that the sun is uninhabitable, because there one could view things from the center of the universe.

Jupiter's four moons give Fontenelle an occasion to discuss Descartes' theory of vortices, or "whirlpools." He explains to the marquise that each vortex is filled with "celestial matter" and presses outward with centrifugal force, held in place itself by the pressure of an infinite number of other vortices on its periphery. Thus, these whirlpools involve whatever they meet with; the great vortex of the sun involves all planets, while the individual planets imitate its motion with lesser bodies. When the marquise becomes uneasy lest some larger planet bring the earth into its whirlpool, Fontenelle explains that regulation of the system through an analogy of oil, water and other liquids:

. . . the celestial matter which fills this great vortex, has several resting places. . . . The planets too are of a different weight, and consequently every planet settles in that place which has a just strength to sustain and keep it equilibrate. . . .³¹

This mechanical principle is extended to explain comets as planets which have escaped other vortices, and the disappearance of stars as the result of crusting over.

Fontenelle upheld Cartesian vortices again as late as 1752,³² in spite of the fact that it represented a thoroughly outmoded theory to most intellectuals after Newton's

discoveries. Many scholars have attributed this to the stubbornness of his age. However, as Suzanne Delorme points out in her biographical article on Fontenelle, he wishes to understand by going back to causes.³³ Fontenelle agreed with Newton and the Newtonians to the degree that they did not attempt to give a meaning to "attraction" and contented themselves with calculations. Newton's method yielded results that corresponded with the facts, but he explained nothing through general truths, as Fontenelle preferred. Fontenelle felt that Newtonians who tried to endow "attraction" with content were returning to Scholastic notions and "occult forces."³⁴ Instead he remained convinced of the value of a mechanical explanation in Descartes' sense. Moreover, the work he analyzed at the Academy of Sciences supported this conviction.³⁵ Therefore, perhaps more lies behind Fontenelle's fidelity to Descartes than supposed senility.

To conclude the fourth evening's conversation Fontenelle discusses with the marquise the nature of Saturn, with its five moons and great circle of light surrounding it. He explains that Saturn must be very cold, for "the sun seems to them but a little pale star."³⁶ The marquise then decides that the Saturnians must be very wise, since Fontenelle had described the Mercurians as "all fools." By the same token she believes that the earth includes both extremes of temperature and character because "it is placed

in the middle of other worlds."³⁷ Here Fontenelle must caution her, as he does throughout the week's conversations, not to leap to conclusions, especially those which flatter man and the earth. To suggest that the universe was designed solely with the human being in mind merely expresses human egotism. One must consider all evidence before arriving at a conclusion, and even then be sure that it is done so tentatively. Fontenelle is quite clear about the need to escape authority and closed systems, and to maintain open-ended truths.

In the fifth evening's conversation, the final one in the 1686 edition of the Entretiens, Fontenelle describes the fixed stars and the system of planets that he was sure they carried with them. He says that the stars "are luminous bodies in themselves, and so many suns."³⁸ The marquise thus supposes that each star may enlighten planets within its own vortex, an hypothesis which Fontenelle doesn't contradict. However, while she is awed and confused by the possibility of such a vast space containing so many worlds, the prospect pleases Fontenelle. He exclaims "I begin to breathe with more freedom, and think the universe to be incomparably more magnificent than it was before."³⁹ In fact, he tells her that there are actually more fixed stars than those we see, visible through telescopes. Then she is truly confounded, especially by the infinity of stars in the Milky Way.

Of particular interest in this conversation is Fontenelle's explanation of comets. There had been much speculation about them in France since the appearance in 1680 of Halley's comet. Fontenelle very lyrically calls them "ambassadors from one vortex to another."⁴⁰ He says that they should not be frightening because they are "nothing but planets which belong to a neighboring vortex." Neither their "beards" nor "tails" are real; these are "mere appearances" caused by illumination. In fact, instead of man's being frightened by the sight of comets, he should realize that the occurrence is a greater shock to the comet. A violent jostling surely occurs when it moves from one vortex to another.

To conclude the fifth conversation Fontenelle moralizes upon the changes, and lack of change, that we observe in the universe. The marquise is frightened at the possibility of the sun's crusting over with sunspots during her lifetime. However, Fontenelle assures her that a great deal of time would be required for this to happen. Even so, we must not think that changes won't happen simply because we don't see them in our lifetimes. To do so would be like roses in a garden thinking that the gardener died when they did, since he had never changed in the space of their memories. The ancients likewise thought the celestial bodies to be unchanging, since they observed no changes during their lifetimes. Fontenelle then concludes that "no species can

totally perish" anyway,⁴¹ referring to the disappearance of suns and stars. Nature will always produce more, filling the void. Thus, Fontenelle impresses the marquise with the aspect of time as well as of space in the universe.

In the 1687 edition of the Entretiens Fontenelle added a sixth evening's conversation in order to relate some new discoveries to the marquise. In addition, Fontenelle continued to make revisions in his text to accommodate scientific advances until 1742, when he was 85 years old. He realized that he was not an astronomer, and he corrected errors to agree with the scientific data provided him by the members of the Academy of Science.

In the sixth conversation Fontenelle gives the marquise additional information about the planetary revolutions around the sun. He now says that these revolutions are unequal, according to each planet's distance from the sun and its unequal motion upon its own center.

Such is the order of nature in general, that whatever is common to many things, is found at the same time to vary in some different particulars.⁴²

Thus, there is no "grand equality" except in our imaginations. Even the earth's rotations on its axis are not always done in a precise 24 hours. There are subtle variations caused by the earth's occasionally drawing nearer to or farther away from the sun.

The marquise naturally wonders whether or not any changes in the universe visibly affect the earth, to which

Fontenelle replies yes. He mentions the formation of the Mediterranean Sea as an example. Old fables attributed its formation to Hercules' splitting asunder two mountains.

Now this is not only fabulous, but a history of those remote times, which has been disguised, either from the ignorance of the people, or thro the love they had for the marvellous, the two most ancient frailties of mankind.⁴³

Actually the ocean probably forced down those mountains. Earthquakes and volcanoes can certainly alter the surface of the earth, he says.

After relating some new conjectures about Jupiter's trail of light and about the causes for twilight on earth, Fontenelle concludes his Entretiens by once more cautioning the marquise against rash reasoning. He stresses that man cannot assume too much, for Nature conceals herself from us.

We should not be too importunate in our reasonings, tho' we are always fond enough to do it; and your true philosophers are like elephants, who as they go, never put their second foot to the ground, till their first be well fixed.⁴⁴

Thus Fontenelle would have us be open-minded, yet cautious about leaping to conclusions.

I mentioned earlier that the work of Bishop Wilkins may have served as a model for Fontenelle, specifically in reference to Wilkins' attempt to solve theological problems arising out of belief in men on the moon or on the planets. In his Discovery of a New World (1638) and A Discourse that that Earth may be a Planet (1640) Wilkins is aware that such men would have had to be saved by Christ if the meaning of

His sacrifice was to be retained. However, it is hard to see how this could have been effected. Wilkins therefore dodges the issue by insisting that the creatures elsewhere were not men, and were consequently absolved of sin. Fontenelle follows this same line of reasoning, as I have shown in the above analysis of the Entretiens. Moreover, Fontenelle treats the idea of a plurality of worlds seriously, as does Wilkins, at a time when scarcely anyone else dared to express such a belief openly. There are really two ideas involved in the seventeenth-century belief in a plurality of worlds: an infinite universe, that derived from Copernicus' work, and the habitability of worlds, which was a further implication of it.⁴⁵ Some thinkers accepted the first proposition but denied the second, which was the more dangerous one. Wilkins and Fontenelle accepted both, and the Frenchman's openness in particular helped change the climate of opinion about plurality. Thereafter scientists became bolder in their desire to pursue scientific inquiry without theological controversy.

In addition to these points of similarity between Fontenelle's and Wilkins' works, I also stated earlier that both men ended their sections on the moon by predicting that one day men would fly there. This belief by itself would not necessarily indicate a borrowing on Fontenelle's part, but when added to the above argument for planetary habitation, the likelihood for influence becomes stronger. We have no direct evidence that Fontenelle read the earlier works, but

statements made by his biographer, the Abbé Trublet, suggest that he did. After Fontenelle's death in 1757, Trublet wrote a series of articles for the Mercure de France commemorating Fontenelle, which were later collected in two volumes and added to Fontenelle's Oeuvres.⁴⁶ In one article Trublet writes:

If any work could have given M. de Fontenelle his idea for the Plurality of Worlds, it is the one called "The World in the Moon, divided in two books, the first proving that the moon may be a world; the second, that the earth may be a planet . . . published at Rouen, 1656." The author . . . is Dr. John Wilkins. He published it in English in 1638. . . . But if sometimes one finds the same thoughts in the two books, it is only because they are on the same subject.⁴⁷

In spite of Trublet's last statement, it seems likely that Fontenelle did borrow some of his ideas from Wilkins, for Wilkins was his only predecessor to treat the idea of plurality seriously. Whether Fontenelle borrowed any material or not, however, the impact of his Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes upon the reading public is not diminished. Wilkins' works were read in England and in France, as I indicated earlier, but Fontenelle's Entretiens enjoyed a much more astounding success. It has been called the first example in French of a learned work placed within the reach of an educated but nonspecialized public.⁴⁸ This aspect of the book of course appealed to the English as well as to the French, and when added to Fontenelle's light, playful style, it is no wonder that the Entretiens was so popular.

In the remainder of this chapter I intend to indicate the number of English writers who read Fontenelle's Entretiens, and to note their response to this work. Then I shall focus upon Matthew Prior and Alexander Pope in a special section in order to show how they incorporated ideas from the Entretiens into imaginative literature. It should then be apparent to what degree Fontenelle's best-known work was read and absorbed in England.

II

Perhaps the best place to begin in remarking upon the English writers familiar with Fontenelle's Entretiens is with the number and quality of translations available in England.⁴⁹ In February, 1688, John Glanvil's translation appeared in London, only shortly after Fontenelle's original publications appeared in Paris (1686-87). Translated under the title A Plurality of Worlds, it went through four editions (1688, 1695, 1702, 1719), a number which testified to its popularity. Equally popular was the translation of Mrs. Aphra Behn, which appeared about the same time and went through four editions as well (1688, 1690, 1700, 1718). She entitled her translation The Theory or System of Several New Inhabited Worlds lately Discovered, and later simply A Discovery of New Worlds. Only one other translation appeared earlier than Glanvil's or Behn's, that published in Dublin in 1687 under the title A Discourse on the Plurality of Worlds. The translator's name is unknown except as Sir William D.

Easily the most popular translation of the Entretiens in the eighteenth century was that of William Gardiner, possibly because it best captured the wittiness of the French original. Gardiner first published his translation as Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds in 1715, which title he changed to A Week's Conversation on the plurality of Worlds in 1728. Subsequent editions appeared in 1737, 1749, 1753, 1757 and 1769. Other translations which were not so popular but still noteworthy are a 1767 edition by a "Gentleman of the Inner Temple" and a Dublin edition of 1761. Both were entitled Conversations on a Plurality of Worlds, and both translators lengthily defended the need for a new translation. The Dublin editor called the style in London editions "mean and spiritless,"⁵⁰ while the "gentleman" editor went so far as to list deficiencies (i.e. omissions and mistranslations) that he had noticed in previous translations.⁵¹ It is curious, and perhaps flattering to Fontenelle, to note that writers were still interested in improving English renditions of his Entretiens as long as 75 years after the original French publication.

John Hughes, whose translation of Fontenelle's Dialogues des Morts and Digression sur les anciens et les modernes (1708, 1719) became popular in England, did not translate the Entretiens. However, he discusses the work and the reasons why he admires it in the Preface to his 1708 edition of the Dialogues des Morts:

Tis this free and pleasant genius that in his Plurality of Worlds taught him to deliver in a gentle conversation with a lady the most exalted notions of the modern philosophy, a masterpiece of wit and particularly admired by Sir William Temple.⁵²

Hughes obviously admires Fontenelle's combination of "gentle" conversation with "exalted" notions. Voltaire undoubtedly feels the same way when he commends Fontenelle for being "the first who introduced elegance into the sciences."⁵³ Until Fontenelle's Entretiens no one had made any effort to popularize scientific discoveries among the general reading public. Bishop Wilkins' work came closer than anyone else's to Fontenelle's, yet he was making an apology for the theories he expressed rather than popularizing them.

Thomas Gray pays a compliment to Fontenelle's style in the Entretiens in a letter of November 1763 addressed to William Taylor Howe.⁵⁴ Gray calls him "a writer not easy to imitate" because other writers can "never adapt themselves easily to the elegant badinage and légèreté of conversation, that sets so well on the French." Thus, Gray commends the same aspects of Fontenelle's style that impressed Hughes and Voltaire--his witty exchanges in conversation with the marquise and his elegance in introducing scientific theories.

In addition to Gray, we can be quite positive in establishing that Joseph Addison was familiar with the Entretiens. In the previous two chapters I have already indicated that Addison knew Fontenelle's ideas in the Dialogues des Morts and the Discours sur la nature de l'éplogue.

He utilized both of these works at various times in his own Spectator papers, and did the same with the Entretiens.

Donald F. Bond, in the Oxford edition of the Spectator, states that Addison's library contained a 1707 edition of this work,⁵⁵ and at least two of the Spectator papers, nos. 420 and 519, illustrate Addison's use of it.

In Spectator 420 (Wed., July 2, 1712) Addison discusses the impact upon the imagination of such "theories of the Earth or Heavens" as are related in Fontenelle's Entretiens. Like Fontenelle he is gratified by the contemplation of the universe:

There is something very engaging to the Fancy, as well as to our Reason, in the Treatises of Metals, Minerals, Plants and Meteors. But when we survey the whole Earth at once, and the several Planets that lie within its Neighbourhood, we are filled with a pleasing Astonishment, to see so many Worlds hanging one above another, and sliding round their Axles in such an amazing Pomp and Solmmnity. If, after this, we contemplate those wide Fields of Ether, that reach in height as far as from Saturn to the fixed Stars, and run abroad almost to an Infinitude, our Imagination finds its Capacity filled with so immense a Prospect, and puts itself upon the Stretch to comprehend it. But if we yet rise higher, and consider the fixt Stars as so many Vast oceans of Flame, different Sett of Planets, and still discover new Firmaments and new Lights, that are sunk farther in those unfathomable Depths of Ether, so as not to be seen by the strongest of our Telescopes, we are lost in such a Labyrinth of Suns and Worlds, and confounded with the Immensity and Magnificence of Nature.⁵⁶

Therefore, our imagination can be stretched only so far and still adjust to the measure, Addison says. When we try to comprehend the infinity of fixed stars, each with its attendant planets, we become confounded instead of astonished.

Our Reason can pursue a Particle of Matter through an infinite variety of Divisions, but the Fancy soon loses sight of it, and feels in itself a kind of chasm, that wants to be filled with Matter of a more sensible Bulk.⁵⁷

Addison explains what must have happened to the marquise in her contemplation of the stars and the infinity of worlds beyond sight of them. While Fontenelle says that his mind is "enlarged" by such a vision, the marquise becomes confounded. Her imagination cannot comprehend the magnitude of the universe in its totality.⁵⁸

In Spectator 519 (Saturday, October 25, 1712), Addison observes the infinity of inhabitants which stock the material world, down to the swarming life that a microscope reveals upon a green leaf. He finds Nature teeming with life wherever he looks, and like Fontenelle he believes that it is quite probable that life exists on planets he cannot see too.

We find every Mountain and Marsh, Wilderness and Wood, plentifully stocked with Birds and Beasts, and every Part of Matter affording proper Necessities and Conveniences for the Livelihood of Multitudes that inhabit it.

The author of the Plurality of Worlds draws a very good argument from this Consideration, for the peopling of every Planet, as indeed it seems very probable from the Analogy of Reason, that if no part of Matter, which we are acquainted with, lies waste and useless, those great Bodies which are at such a Distance from us should not be desert and unpeopled, but rather that they should be furnished with Beings adapted to their respective Situations.⁵⁹

Addison finds Fontenelle's argument for life on other planets convincing, and he helps popularize the theory by relating it to readers of the Spectator.

While the Earl of Chesterfield gives no public indication of having read Fontenelle's Entretiens, as does Addison, he clearly admires the book and recommends it twice to his son in private correspondence. In a letter of December 6, 1748, Chesterfield tells his son that the study of astronomy deserves much attention.

The vast and immense planetary system, the astonishing order and regularity of those innumerable worlds, will open a scene to you, which not only deserves your attention as a matter of curiosity, or rather astonishment; but still more, as it will give you greater and consequently juster ideas of that eternal and omnipotent Being, who contrived, made, and still preserves that universe, than all the contemplation of this, comparatively, very little orb, which we at present inhabit, could possibly give you. Upon this subject, Monsieur Fontenelle's Pluralité des Mondes, which you may read in two hours' time, will both inform and please you.⁶⁰

He repeats this advice a few years later in a letter dated April 7, 1751.

I only desire that you should have a clear notion of the present planetary system, and the history of all the former systems: Fontenelle's Pluralité des Mondes will almost teach you all you need know upon that subject.⁶¹

Thus, more than sixty years after the publication of Fontenelle's Entretiens, Chesterfield still considers it to be the most current and readable source of knowledge about the universe for his son. Fontenelle's persistence in updating his book as new discoveries were made surely contributed to the longevity of its usefulness and popularity.

Samuel Johnson refers to Fontenelle's Entretiens in one of his Adventurer papers, although he does not discuss

his ideas in detail as Addison does in the Spectator. In Adventurer 39 (Tuesday, March 20, 1753) Johnson discusses the gratitude which we owe to Night and accompanying Sleep. He says of Night:

The astronomers indeed expect her with impatience, and felicitate themselves upon her arrival: Fontenelle has not failed to celebrate her praises; and to chide the sun for hiding from his view, the worlds which he imagines to appear in every constellation.⁶²

This passage refers to the first evening's conversation in the Entretiens, in which Fontenelle very lyrically praises the beauty of the night before revealing all of its mysteries to the marquise. It seems probable from this reference that Johnson had read the book in its entirety, especially when we consider that he admired Fontenelle's Éloges of the academicians and even translated one of them into English.⁶³ In addition, Boswell reports in his biography of Johnson that on Tuesday, April 17, 1778, Johnson "was for a considerable time occupied in reading Mémoires de Fontenelle leaning and swinging upon the low gate into the court, without his hat."⁶⁴ Thus, Johnson must have been interested enough in Fontenelle's life and writings to read Trublet's memoirs of him.

David Hume, in his essay "Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion" (1757) used one of Fontenelle's analogies from the Entretiens to illustrate his point that a few select companions are preferable to a great many acquaintances.

But to make use of the allusion of a celebrated French author, the judgment may be compared to a clock or watch, where the most ordinary machine is sufficient to tell the hours; but the most elaborate alone can point out the minutes and seconds, and distinguish the smallest differences of time. One that has well digested his knowledge both of books and men, has little enjoyment but in the company of a few select companions.⁶⁵

Hume had been discussing the advantages of delicacy of taste in an individual, because it makes him indifferent to the company of the masses in general. Fontenelle discusses much the same thing with the marquise in the beginning of the Sixth evening's conversation. She is despondent because two gentlemen visitors have just ridiculed her notion of the planets being inhabited, but Fontenelle, using the above analogy, shows that such people are among "the vulgar" who are "better at raillery than reason."⁶⁶

In still another essay, that called "The Sceptic" (1757), Hume finds fault with one of Fontenelle's philosophical reflections from the Entretiens. Fontenelle maintains throughout this work that contemplating the vastness of the universe ought to remind man what a small part in it he occupies. As Hume quotes it:

"Nothing can be more destructive," says Fontenelle, "to ambition, and the passion for conquest, than the true system of astronomy. What a poor thing is even the whole globe in comparison of the infinite extent of nature!" This consideration is evidently too distant ever to have any effect; or, if it had any, would it not destroy patriotism as well as ambition? the same gallant author adds, with some reason, that the bright eyes of the ladies are the only objects which lose nothing of their lustre or value from the most extensive views of astronomy, but stand proof

against every system. Would philosophers advise us to limit our affection to them.⁶⁷

Hume considers Fontenelle's reflection to be detrimental because it "cannot diminish or extinguish our vicious passions, without diminishing or extinguishing such as are virtuous."⁶⁸ In other words, if the study of astronomy destroys ambition and the passion for conquest, might it not also destroy patriotism for one's country? Hume's thoughts on Fontenelle's philosophy are interesting, not merely because they indicate his having read the Entretiens, but also because they represent one of the very few uncomplimentary assessments of his work by English authors. Usually such authors direct their criticism at Fontenelle's style, which is too witty and affected for some readers. However, Hume is here pointing out a logical fallacy in Fontenelle's work, instead of a stylistic problem.

So far I have indicated that English authors from the beginning and the middle of the century were familiar with Fontenelle's Entretiens, although their comments ranged from brief mentions in letters to lengthier discussions in periodicals. To conclude this section I would like to point out one author from the end of the century who had apparently read this popular book. Horace Walpole, in a letter to the Rev. William Mason in 1782, says that he has been reading a French translation of the elder Pliny which suggests to him some entertaining ideas. He has become weary of the "common

jargon of poetry," such as the sun, moon, stars, etc.⁶⁹ In fact, he suggests that a poem set in Saturn or Jupiter, with several moons and crystal heavens, might be in order. In advising Mason, Walpole adds:

The subject is new; and you, who have so much imagination, will shoot far beyond me. Fontenelle would have made something of the idea, even in prose . . .⁷⁰

Walpole may not have realized that his ideas had been acted upon much earlier in the century, but in truth, both Matthew Prior and Alexander Pope used aspects of contemporary astronomy in their poetry. Admittedly Walpole may have envisioned a more entertaining and less didactic use of astronomy than either Pope or Prior illustrates, but at any rate the "subject" was not so new as Walpole thought.

As shown by the many translations of this work, and the numerous references in the writings of English authors, the English public received Fontenelle's Pluralité des mondes with a great deal of enthusiasm. However, this work did not lend itself to the same sort of literary imitation as did Fontenelle's Dialogues des Morts, nor did it exercise any influence upon critical theory as did the Discours sur la nature de l'épique. While as widely read as the Dialogues, its influence is less apparent in imaginative literature. In order to demonstrate the impact the Entretiens did have, I shall focus upon several poems by Prior and Pope in the next section.

III

In discussing the dialogues of the dead in an earlier chapter, I indicated that Matthew Prior used Fontenelle's Dialogues des Morts as a model for his own. His library contained a copy of Fontenelle's Dialogues⁷¹ and two copies of the Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes.⁷² In addition, he was acquainted with Fontenelle during his first stay in Paris from 1697-99. Therefore, it is not surprising to note that Prior incorporates several of Fontenelle's speculations upon the nature of the universe and the plurality of worlds into his long poem Solomon.

According to his latest editors, internal evidence indicates that Prior wrote Solomon around 1708 or possibly later, although it remained unpublished until the 1718 edition of his Works.⁷³ In it he intended to give a "synthesis of traditional wisdom"⁷⁴ through Solomon's search for knowledge, pleasure, and power. It is in the first Book concerning Knowledge that Prior refers to several of Fontenelle's speculations from the Entretiens. Solomon "proceeds to examine the system of the visible heaven" and wonders "if there may not be a Plurality of Worlds," as the Argument to Book I states.⁷⁵ Lines 453-562 contain his theories about the sun, moon, earth, stars and planets, an analysis of which reveals an astonishing number of parallels with Fontenelle's theories.

The most prominent instance of Fontenelle's influence on this passage occurs when Solomon states in lines 533-35:

And in that Space, which we call air and Sky
Myriads of Earths, and Moons, and Suns may lye
Unmeasur'd, and unknown by human eye.⁷⁶

Fontenelle discusses in the fifth evening's conversation the possibility of numerous unseen planets existing within the vortices of fixed stars. The prospect of an infinity of worlds pleases Fontenelle, but it awes and confuses the marquise. She is overwhelmed "to see the earth so minutely small."⁷⁷ The reaction of Solomon in Prior's poem is closer to that of Fontenelle than to that of the marquise, for he seems pleased that man cannot calculate the boundaries of the universe (ll.536-39):

In vain we measure this amazing Sphere
And find and fix it's centre here or there
Whilst it's Circumference, scorning to be brought
Ev'n into fancy'd Space, illudes our vanquish'd
Thought⁷⁸

Solomon also views the infinite number of worlds as a humbling agent to man's pride. After all, the universe does not exist to serve man's purpose (ll.549-52):

But do these Worlds display their Beams, or guide
Their orbs, to serve thy Use, to please thy Pride?
Thy self but Dust, thy stature but a Span
A moment thy duration; foolish Man!⁷⁹

Fontenelle alludes to man's foolish pride and his short span on earth several times in the Entretiens, most notably in the first and fifth conversations. In the first conversation Fontenelle explains the hesitancy of mankind to accept

the Copernican system of the universe on the grounds that the earth would no longer occupy the central position. Although the marquise finds it difficult to believe that the vanity of man could extend that far, Fontenelle assures her that it is so:

We believe all Things in nature designed for our use. . . . Upon this principle they [philosophers] imagined the earth rested in the center of the universe, while all the celestial bodies took the pains to turn round to give light to it.⁸⁰

Man is reluctant to admit that he might not occupy the controlling position in the universal scheme. Likewise, as Fontenelle's famous analogy of the roses illustrates at the end of the fifth conversation, man's lifetime is but a minute compared with the infinite existence of the planets. We tend to think, quite erroneously, that the celestial bodies must be unchanging because we observe no changes during our lifetimes. Both Prior and Fontenelle point out the foolishness of such ideas, and they believe that the plurality of worlds and their infinite duration should inspire humility in man.

In addition to the above theories, Prior also has Solomon expound the Copernican system of the universe in general and the harmony each planet achieves in following its designated path (11.481-91): ". . . the lusty Sun . . . in one great round does run" while "each planet . . . does with just speed his radiant voyage steer."⁸¹ As we have seen earlier in this chapter, the explanation of the Copernican system is one of Fontenelle's chief purposes in the

Entretiens. He spends much of the first conversation convincing the marquise of its believability over other systems. Like Solomon, he explains how the planets revolve around the sun, and how the moon revolves around the earth. Likewise he praises the magnificent design in Nature's system, which she accomplishes with so little "expence."

Solomon makes several speculations about the stars during this passage which remind one of Fontenelle's theories in the Entretiens, such as that of every star being a world or perhaps a sun in itself (ll.516-21):

And of those stars, which our imperfect Eye
Has doom'd, and fix'd to one eternal Sky
Each by a native stock of honor great
May dart strong influence, and diffuse kind heat
Itself a sun; and with transmissive light
Enliven worlds deny's to human sight.⁸²

Fontenelle postulates early in the fifth conversation that "all the fixed stars are luminous bodies in themselves, and so many suns."⁸³ He goes on to suppose, as does Solomon, that every fixed star may enlighten planets within its own vortex. Such a prospect is awesome, as is the possibility that each star may be a world in itself. Solomon confesses in ll.546-48:

. . . these fair stars, these objects of delight
And terror, to our searching dazzl'd sight
Are worlds immense, unnumber'd, infinite.⁸⁴

This idea is practically the first one which Fontenelle advances to the marquise during their first conversation. Although he calls it only a "fancy," she soon sees that he is perfectly serious. Both Fontenelle and Prior admit that

the stars could play more than one role in the universal scheme, depending upon their proximity to or distance from other stars and planets.

One final idea in Prior's Solomon which seems particularly Fontenellian is the proposition that while planets may seem to be "innately" luminous, actually they are simply reflecting the sun's rays. Solomon asks (ll.497-501):

Now shine these planets with substantial Rays?
Does innate Lustre gild their measur'd Days?
Or do they (as your Schemes, I think, have shown)
Dart furtive beams, and Glory not their own,
All servants to that Source of light, the Sun?⁸⁵

Fontenelle in the third evening's conversation tells the marquise "we find that all of the planets are of the same nature, all obscure bodies, which receive no light but from the sun, and then send it to one another."⁸⁶ Thus the sun is the source of all light, although at times certain planets might appear to generate their own light.

From these textual parallels between Prior's Solomon and Fontenelle's Entretiens, we can assume that Prior drew more from Fontenelle's work than merely the concept of a plurality of worlds. While that idea is most readily traced to Fontenelle, it would not be presuming too much to propose that Prior was exposed to other ideas about the universe there as well. As stated earlier in this chapter, Bishop Wilkins' Discovery of a New World was the only predecessor to Fontenelle's Entretiens, and it concentrated more upon the concepts of plurality and habitability of planets than

upon the Copernican system itself. Fontenelle was the first to widely popularize this system along with various discoveries about the stars and planets. Prior apparently thought these discoveries sufficiently important to include in Solomon's discussion of the heavens.

Matthew Prior was not the only English writer to find in Fontenelle's Entretiens a source of cosmic inspiration. The correspondence of Alexander Pope indicates that he too had read this work and found it interesting. In a letter to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu on Nov. 10, 1716, Pope writes:

I shall at least be able to meet you in the next world, if there be any truth in our new doctrine of the day of judgment. Since your Body is so full of fire, and capable of such Solar motions as your letter describes, your soul can never be long going to the Fixed Stars (where I intend to settle) or else you may find me in the Milky Way, because Fontenelle assures us, the Stars are so crowded there that a man may stand upon one, and talk to his friend on another. From thence, with a good telescope, what do you think one should take such a place as this world for? I fancy for the Devil's Rookery, where the Inhabitants are ready to deafen and destroy one another with eternal noise and hunger.⁸⁷

Even earlier than this letter to Lady Mary, Pope suggests a little cosmic voyage to Henry Cromwell in a letter of Nov. 25, 1710. He tells Cromwell that "if once you get so near the Moon, Sapho will want your presence in the Clouds & inferior Regions; not to mention the great Loss Drury Lane will sustain when Mr. Cromwell is in the Milky-Way."⁸⁸ Both of these passages, although written jestingly, indicate that Pope was

familiar with Fontenelle's Pluralité des Mondes. Although the Montagu letter makes the only reference to Fontenelle's name in any of Pope's writings, Marjorie Nicolson, in her study of Pope and astronomy, points out that the Cromwell letter proves Pope's knowledge of Fontenelle's work as early as 1710.⁸⁹

The fact that the Entretiens illustrates a possible source for parts of The Rape of the Lock (1712) supports Nicolson's claim for Pope's early introduction to Fontenelle. At least two passages in The Rape of the Lock suggest Fontenelle's influence; that in Canto V (ll.113-32) in which the poet speculates upon the celestial destination of Belinda's lock of hair, and that in Canto II (ll.77-86) in which he describes the cosmic conditions of the sylphs. In the latter passage Pope writes of the sylphs:

Some in the Fields of purest Aether play,
And bask and whiten in the Blaze of Day.
Some guide the Course of wandering Orbs on high,
Or roll the Planets thro' the boundless Sky.
Some less refin'd, beneath the Moon's pale Light,
Pursue the Stars that shoot athwart the Night,
Or suck the Mists in grosser Air below,
Or dip their Pinions in the painted Bow,
Or brew fierce Tempests on the wintry Main,
Or o'er the Glebe distill the kindly Rain.⁹⁰

He seems to be scientifically interested in their celestial duties, and as Geoffrey Tillotson suggests in his study of The Rape of the Lock, "his fancy builds scrupulously on contemporary science as it is brilliantly presented in Fontenelle's Pluralité des Mondes."⁹¹ Tillotson quotes from the fifth evening's conversation between Fontenelle and the

marquise, in which the philosopher describes the atmosphere as "a kind of Down" and the "celestial matter" beyond it as "incomparably more pure and subtile."⁹² Fontenelle also discusses the nature of comets and vortices in this conversation, which might explain Pope's use of shooting stars and different layers of air.

In the passage from Canto V (ll.113-22) Fontenelle's influence is less defined. Pope writes of Belinda's "raped" lock:

Some thought it mounted to the Lunar Sphere,
Since all things lost on Earth, are treasur'd there.
There Heroes' Wits are kept in Pondrous Vases
And Beaus' in Snuff-boxes and Tweezer-Cases.
There broken Vows, and Death-bed Alms are found,
and Lovers' Hearts with Ends of Riband bound;
The Courtier's Promises, and Sick Man's Pray'rs,
The Smiles of Harlots, and the Tears of Heirs,
Cages for Gnats, and Chains to Yoak a Flea;
Dry'd Butterflies, and Tomes of Casuistry.⁹³

The direct source for this passage is Ariosto's Orlando Furioso, details from which Pope modernizes and makes more concrete. However, a more recent narration of Astolfo's journey was available to Pope in Fontenelle's digression to the marquise in the second evening's conversation. In this lengthy digression Fontenelle relates the entire tale, along with details of what Astolfo finds on the moon. It may not be presuming too much to suppose that Pope had Fontenelle's narration in mind here as well as Ariosto's original, particularly when we detect Fontenelle's influence elsewhere in the poem.

Not long after the publication of The Rape of the Lock, a letter now attributed to Pope appeared in Guardian 169 (Thursday, Sept. 24, 1713).⁹⁴ In this letter Pope seems particularly aware of a plurality or infinity of worlds and of the vastness of the universe:

How many Foxhunters and Rural Squires are to be found in Great Britain, who are ignorant that they have all this while lived on a Planet, that the Sun is several thousand times bigger than the Earth; and that there are other Worlds without our View, greater and more Glorious than our own.⁹⁵

He had just said:

When I consider things in this Light, methinks it is a sort of Impiety to have no attention to the Course of Nature, and the Revolution of the Heavenly Bodies. To be regardless of those Phaenomena that are placed within our View, on purpose to entertain our Faculties, and display the Wisdom and Power of their Creator, is an affront to Providence of the same kind, (I hope it is not impious to make such a simile) as it would be to a good Poet, to sit out his Play without minding the Plot or Beauties of it.⁹⁶

Pope goes on from here to reflect upon the contrast between the grandeur of the universe and supposed "Human Grandeur":

Within this ample Circumference of the World, the glorious Lights that are hung on high, the Meteors in the Middle Region, and various Livery of the Earth, and the Profusion of good Things that distinguish the Seasons, Yield a Prospect which annihilates all Human Grandeur.⁹⁷

Like Fontenelle, Pope believes that man's pride and egotism ought to be greatly diminished by regarding the vastness of the universe. It is interesting to note here that Hume's criticism of Fontenelle's philosophy in this idea, which I discussed in the previous section, seems invalid. Hume

states that a comparison between human grandeur and universal grandeur is "too distant ever to have any effect" upon man's ambition and pride. Yet Pope obviously feels that the prospect of the universe "annihilates all Human Grandeur." This idea is one which he later stresses in An Essay on Man (1733-34).

In Epistle I (ll.23-28) of An Essay on Man, Pope once more speculates upon the immensity of the universe and man's small place in it:

He, who thro' vast immensity can pierce,
See worlds on worlds compose one universe,
Observe how system into system runs,
What other planets circle other suns,
What vary'd being peoples ev'ry star,
May tell why Heav'n has made us as we are.⁹⁸

In addition, he seems aware of the plurality of worlds and the possibility of life on other planets, as popularized by Fontenelle in the Entretiens. Because of the popularity of Fontenelle's work and the indications that Pope had read it some twenty years earlier, we may regard the Pluralité des Mondes as a probable source for Pope's passage.

One final poem, the last Pope was to write, displays further evidence of Fontenelle's influence. In the revised Dunciad (1743) the idea of vortices is important in an extended passage of Book IV (ll.73-102). Pope describes the attraction of Dulness for her sons in terms of the attraction satellite planets feel for the dominant planet within their vortex:

The young, the old, who feel her inward sway,
 One instinct seizes, and transports away.
 None need a guide, by sure attraction led,
 And strong impulsive gravity of Head:
 None want a place, for all their Centre found,
 Hung to the Goddess, and coher'd around,
 Not closer, orb in orb, conglob'd are seen
 The buzzing Bees, about their dusky Queen.
 The gathering number, as it moves along,
 Involves a vast involuntary throng,
 Who gently drawn, and struggling less and less,
 Roll in her Vortex, and her pow'r confess.⁹⁹

To make his intention even clearer Pope writes in the Argument to this Book that "in this new world of Dulness each of these three classes hath its appointed station, as best suits its nature, and concurs to the harmony of the System."¹⁰⁰ Thus, he imagines "spheres of attraction" corresponding to the three classes of people attending the Goddess, just as Fontenelle described attendant planets in the Entretiens when explaining Descartes' theory of vortices to the marquise. In the fourth evening's conversation Fontenelle even refers to a tripartite structure within the universal Vortex, and it is possible that Pope uses this structure as a basis for the three classes of dullards, as Marjorie Nicolson proposes.¹⁰¹

As can be seen from Pope's correspondence and several passages in his major works, he not only read Fontenelle's Pluralité des Mondes but also gleaned imaginative ideas from it to use in his poetry. Fontenelle's concept of a plurality of worlds, of planetary habitation, his popularization of cartesian vortices, his purpose of reducing man's self-esteem through knowledge of the universe--all of these aspects appealed to Pope enough to use them in his own writings.

In addition, as Nicolson points out in her study of Pope and astronomy, Pope was particularly receptive to new ideas in the field of astronomy from the summer of 1713, when he attended coffee-house lectures by the well-known Cambridge professor, Mr. Whiston.¹⁰² Thus, astronomy became for Pope a source of new literary ideas, and Fontenelle's Entretiens provided a popular explanation of the current theories in that science.

IV

From the many translations and editions of Fontenelle's Entretiens in England, it should be apparent that the book enjoyed a wide and lasting popularity with the public. The numerous references to Fontenelle in the correspondence and works of prominent writers further uphold this observation. Fontenelle's work was popular among learned and unlearned readers alike. Marjorie Nicolson states that

In all the literature of the cosmic voyage there was no book more popular than Fontenelle's Conversations upon the Plurality of Worlds. Translated again and again, it seemed to the British peculiarly their own book, read for at least a century both by men and by those "ladies" of whom we have many a description, one of whom would read it aloud to others who were busily engaged in making strawberry jam. This was a book, indeed, that warranted a subtitle I once discovered in an eighteenth-century Popularization of astronomy: "Science made clear to the Meanest Capacities, even those of Women and Children."¹⁰³

Thus, one wonders whether Fontenelle's book and his intelligent conversation with the marquise did not encourage

scientific interests among the ladies in his reading audience.

Nicolson would unhesitatingly say it did:

The immediate ancestress of the virtuosa in England was the Marchioness in Fontenelle's Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds. Published in 1686, and translated several times into English, this volume marks the real emergence of the "philosophress," who no longer felt it necessary to subordinate herself to her lord in her interest in the new science.¹⁰⁴

Nicolson describes the marquise as a "woman of breeding, culture, intelligence and beauty, admired and respected by the Philosopher who strolled with her between hedges of clipped roses."¹⁰⁵ Because of Fontenelle's portrayal of the marquise, and because of his telescopic pictures of the universe as well as his microscopic pictures of the world in a leaf, he "turned the ladies of England as of France to an eager if superficial interest in the discoveries of the new instruments."¹⁰⁶

To pursue a more serious side of Fontenelle's influence consider Leonard Marsak's assessment.

There is no doubt that Fontenelle's Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes exercised a wide and important influence upon the ideas of his time in extending the ideas of scientific law by which the Copernican universe was governed. By the end of the (17th) century the educated Frenchman, and woman, had seen the walls of the universe scattered, and the fixed stars scattered to vast distances, creating either a wonderful or frightening picture of astronomical infinity. He was assured that throughout infinity one law prevailed, and that that law was simplicity itself. Unless his mind took a Pascalian turn, he could say with Fontenelle that the discovery of these facts was a source of joy to him¹⁰⁷

In addition to Fontenelle's popularizing the Copernican system of the universe, Marsak feels that he was instrumental in suggesting planetary habitation on the basis of plenitude and sufficient reason. If other worlds are no more perfect than ours, then we have a right to suppose them inhabited. After all, nature has revealed her capacity to produce a staggering variety of creatures.

A. O. Lovejoy suggests this type of influence from the Entretiens even earlier than Marsak does. In his chapter on plenitude and the new cosmography in The Great Chain of Being, he says:

In the last quarter of the seventeenth century the triumph of the new cosmographical ideas was rapid; and by the first or second decade of the eighteenth century not only the Copernican theory of the solar system but also the belief in other inhabited planets and in the plurality of worlds seems to have been commonly accepted even in highly orthodox circles. The Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes (1686) of Fontenelle no doubt did more than any other single writing to diffuse these ideas among the educated classes generally. . . . Its vogue in England was scarcely less than in France.¹⁰⁸

Like Marsak, Lovejoy believes that Fontenelle's influence through the Entretiens was as great in England as in France.

There can be no doubt, as these twentieth-century critical assessments show, that the Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes enjoyed an immense popularity and exercised a great influence in eighteenth-century England. Although this particular work of Fontenelle's did not inspire literary imitation, as did his Nouveaux Dialogues des Morts,

or shape critical theory, as did his Discours sur la Nature de l'églogue, it nonetheless was more widely read and discussed than either of the other two.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE HISTOIRE DES ORACLES AND

THE DEISTIC CONTROVERSY

The year 1686 was a very active one for Fontenelle, for in addition to the Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes he also wrote the rather dangerous Histoire des Oracles. As he had the Entretiens, he published the Histoire under the veil of anonymity, identifying himself only as the "author of the Dialogues des Morts." Yet the Histoire by the nature of its content stirred up much more controversy than the Entretiens, because it was dangerous to attack superstitions. Such attacks led to casting doubt on miracles--fundamental ideas of Christianity that contradict scientific truths discovered through reasoning and experiment. Thus the Jesuits, in particular Jean-Francois Baltus, later attacked Fontenelle in 1707 and 1708, following the fifth edition of the Histoire des Oracles.¹ Fontenelle chose not to respond to this attack, perhaps because of his temperamental dislike of dispute or because of the advice of friends. However, it was much more difficult to ignore the persecution instigated by Le Tellier, the confessor

of Louis XIV, soon after the publication of the Histoire. Le Tellier unfortunately remembered a thinly disguised allegory about Rome and Geneva written by Fontenelle, and he authorized a warrant of arrest against him after the appearance of the Histoire. Luckily for Fontenelle, the well-known Garde des Sceaux d'Argenson was then lieutenant of police, and he intervened to save the writer from Le Tellier's fury.² As Voltaire added in relating this incident many years later,

This anecdote is more important than all the literary bagatelles with which Trublet has filled a large volume about Fontenelle. It teaches how dangerous philosophy is when a fanatic, or a rogue, or a monk who is both, unfortunately has the prince's ear.³

Indeed, Fontenelle narrowly escaped imprisonment in the Bastille, and it is perhaps because of this narrow escape that he chose not to defend himself in 1707 against Père Baltus' attack. It was much more expedient to keep silent.

While the ecclesiastics hotly disputed the Histoire, the popular reading public accepted it enthusiastically. The first two editions appeared anonymously in Paris in 1686 and 1687, with other editions following in 1698, 1701, 1707, 1713, 1728 and 1742. Editions were also printed in Amsterdam in 1698 and 1707.⁴ Within two years of the publication of the Histoire in Paris, Aphra Behn translated it into English. Her version, under the title of The History of Oracles and the Cheats of the Pagan Priests, appeared in

London in 1688, with subsequent editions in 1707, 1714 and 1716.⁵ Another English rendering by S. Whatley appeared as late as 1750, published simply as The History of Oracles.⁶ If further editions are an accurate indication, however, Whatley's translation never attained the popularity of Behn's.

As we can see from these numerous editions, Fontenelle's Histoire des Oracles did not fall far short of the immense popularity attained by his Entretiens earlier the same year. The Entretiens, one may recall, was translated into English three times before the end of the seventeenth century alone, and it appeared in twenty-eight editions during Fontenelle's lifetime.⁷ What had Fontenelle written that so incensed the clerics at the same time that it intrigued the general public? Was he the first writer to advance these controversial ideas? What impact did the Histoire have upon similar historical approaches to Christianity in eighteenth-century England? These are questions which I intend to answer in the remainder of this chapter, in terms of the writings of several English deists who are similar both in approach and in ideas to Fontenelle's Histoire. At the same time, in other words, I shall also hope to show the work's influence upon English letters.

In the preface to the Histoire des Oracles Fontenelle acknowledges that he is translating a work published by the Dutchman Antonius Van Dale, De oraculis ethnicorum

dissertationes duae, in 1683.⁸ He was impressed by the force with which Van Dale destroyed the beliefs that oracles were conveyed by demons and that oracles ceased at the coming of Christ. However, Van Dale wrote in a ponderous manner directed at scholars, with frequent digressions and reflections. Fontenelle, as might be expected from the purpose defined in the Entretiens, desires to acquaint a wider public with these ideas, especially readers unfamiliar with Latin and women readers. Thus he doesn't translate Van Dale's work literally, nor does he include all of the Dutchman's arguments and digressions. He chooses to write in a very conversational style, far from the sublime but not base either. In the course of making these changes, Fontenelle actually rewrote Van Dale's work entirely in his own manner. As Voltaire says of the Histoire in the Dictionnaire Philosophique, "the rough diamond of Van Dale sparkled brilliantly when polished by Fontenelle."⁹

Although Fontenelle transforms Van Dale's weighty style, he retains the essential points made by the Dutchman: that oracles were not delivered by demons and that they did not cease with the coming of Jesus Christ. In order to argue these points he relates the history of oracles, their origins and progress, the different ways in which they operated, and finally their decadence. So far Fontenelle's task may seem easy, for where is the difficulty in discovering whether or not oracles were the artifice of pagan

priests? As he asks in the introduction to the Histoire, can't we tell when other men are imposters and dupes? May not we refer to books, which are full of oracular accounts, to discover when oracles ceased their activities?¹⁰

Certainly we can do all of these things, but the problem is not quite so simple because of the interference of our prejudices. It is here that Fontenelle reveals his reasons for translating Van Dale's work. Oracles should by their nature be only an affair of pagan religions, but Christianity has adopted them without necessity, obscuring its clear truths. Whenever man meddles, prejudices become confused with truths until they are all equally respected.

Then we dare not attack suspected prejudices for fear of attacking something sacred at the same time. Yet error mingled with truth is nothing to respect, and Fontenelle hopes to restore confidence in Christianity by rejecting the false advantages offered by belief in oracles. He feels that his own century in particular has been guilty of using false proofs, even though built upon true foundations. Thus, he intends to demonstrate that oracles had their origins in perfectly natural situations, and that they disappeared gradually just like other social phenomena undergoing transformation.

As I mentioned above, Fontenelle retains the two essential points of Van Dale's work, which he treats separately in the two different parts of the Histoire. In the

first "dissertation" he offers proof that demons (or any supernatural beings) did not deliver oracles by showing their origin and progress through the manipulation of priests. He then, in the second "dissertation," speculates upon the decline of belief in oracles and its coincidences with the decline of paganism, neither of which events occurred simultaneously with the arrival of Jesus Christ. It is very enlightening to trace Fontenelle's arguments throughout these two "dissertations," for in doing so we can clearly see the reasons why the Histoire des Oracles has been called "one of the earliest direct attacks upon entrenched theology in the name of free thought."¹¹

In the first of his arguments Fontenelle notes that scripture nowhere says that demons delivered oracles.¹² Since religion has taught us that demons and evil spirits exist, it is true that they could animate statues and deliver prophecies if God permitted. However, since God does not discuss this matter in the scripture, we must assume that He was willing to allow us to dispute about it. Whether or not oracles are supernatural, therefore, is a question for reason to decide.

Fontenelle goes on to cite three reasons why ancient Christians believed in the supernatural quality of oracles: the astonishing stories which they heard, the agreement of the theory of demons with the system of Christianity, and the agreement of their opinion with Plato's philosophy.¹³

To begin with, the people heard surprising tales which seemed to prove that demons delivered oracular messages, and that they were silenced or stripped of their powers when Jesus Christ was born. As an example Fontenelle relates the story from Plutarch about Thamus, who while becalmed on his ship, heard a voice telling him when he reached a certain place to shout that mighty Pan was dead. He did so, and was met by sounds of moans and wails from the whole countryside, supposedly made by dying demons and spirits who were destroyed by Pan's death and Christ's birth.¹⁴ Such stories were very convincing to the early Christians, especially those tales which showed how oracles were silenced by Christ's coming.

In addition to the appeal of these stories, the authority of which became accepted from one generation to the next, the use of oracles and demons agreed well with the system of Christianity. Because demons had already been established by Christianity, it was natural to use them as much as possible to reinforce the Christian doctrine. For example, one could dispense with lengthy discussions about inexplicable happenings by simply confirming the existence of demons. As for the cessation of oracles occurring at the time of Christ's birth, nothing was easier for the Christians to explain. God had chosen his people from the Jews and abandoned the rest of the empire to the demons until the arrival of His son. Then He deprived the demons of their power because He wanted everyone to submit to Jesus

Christ and to furnish no obstacles to His kingdom. Fontenelle adds that it is not surprising how much reasoning became firm, because it was so flattering and pleasing to the Christians.

The third reason which reinforced the theory of demons among the Christians was its accordance with Plato's philosophy. Plato was esteemed highly during the first centuries of Christianity and even regarded as a sort of prophet. That part of his philosophy which was favorable to Christianity was full of demons who occupied a median position between God and man. In their honor all sorts of sacrifices and ceremonies were established. The Christians not only embraced all of these beliefs, but they even added that demons (or aerial spirits) revealed a knowledge of the future in the writings of the prophets, and then honored this knowledge in oracles. The Christian advantage gained was in allowing the pagans to continue believing in the supernatural quality of the oracles. The Christians simply changed the author of these miracles, a procedure which was shorter and easier than trying to dispute them by long reasonings. Thus, the Christians acquired a means of explaining the seemingly inexplicable, of reinforcing the omnipotence of God, and of converting the pagans more easily.

As a brief afterthought to these reasons, Fontenelle adds that the element of the "marvelous" was a great attraction to early believers in oracles. He remarks, "if we

consider the Humour of Mankind a little, we shall find how much we are taken with anything that is miraculous."¹⁵ The supernatural exercises a great force upon man's intellect, according to Fontenelle.

Having set up the various reasons why ancient Christians believed in oracles, Fontenelle proceeds to show the inadequacy of these reasons.¹⁶ It is impossible to believe tales of the immediate cessation of oracles, because books offer direct evidence of their persistence. And these stories are perfectly ridiculous and illogical anyway, Fontenelle declares. In the story of Thamus, why couldn't the spirits acquaint themselves with Pan's death without using a mortal? Why reveal their misfortunes to mankind? And how did news of Pan's death discredit paganism? The pagans merely said that the Pan being referred to was the son of Mercury and Penelope, not the "god of all." In Fontenelle's opinion, all of the early stories seeking to establish the presence of demons behind oracles can easily be discredited.

In digressing upon these "marvelous" tales, Fontenelle makes one of his most important observations, that we should make certain of the facts before troubling ourselves with the causes.¹⁷ This method is too slow for most people, who prefer to advance to causes and pass by the truth of facts. However, in the end we may avoid the ridicule of finding the cause of a fact which doesn't exist. To

illustrate this observation Fontenelle tells the story of the golden tooth, one of the most memorable passages from the

Histoire des Oracles:

In the year 1593, there was a Report, that the teeth of a child of Silesia of seven years old, dropp'd out, and that one of Gold came in the place of one of his great Teeth. Horstius, a physician in the University of Helmstad, wrote, in the year 1595, the History of this tooth, and pretends that it was partly natural, and partly miraculous, and that it was sent from God to this Infant, to comfort the Christians who were then afflicted by the Turks. Now fancy to yourself what a consolation this was, and what this tooth could signify, either to the Christians or the Turks. In the same year (that this Tooth might not want for Historians) one Rolandus wrote a Book of it; Two years after Ingolstreterus, another learned man, wrote against the opinion of Rolandus concerning this Golden Tooth; and Rolandus presently makes a learned Reply. Another great man, named Libavius, collected all that hath been said of this Tooth, to which he added his own opinion. In fine, their [sic] wanted nothing to so many famous Works, but only the Truth of its being a Golden Tooth. For when a Goldsmith had examined it, he found, that it was only a thin plate of Gold fix'd to the Tooth with a great deal of art. Thus they first went about to compile Books, and afterwards they consulted the Goldsmith.¹⁸

Fontenelle therefore maintains that it is very easy for people to be deceived, even great churchmen, because they do not examine the facts closely enough before proceeding to causes. Churchmen and historians are especially susceptible to this sort of error, for it is difficult not to give false advantages to the true religion. Yet shouldn't one verify the facts behind oracles, for example, before seeking to incorporate them into Christianity? Fontenelle believes that it is imprudent religious zeal which persuades several

great churchmen of the truth of advantageous oracles, when they should reject what seems suspect.

After attributing the belief in oracles to the credulousness of the people, Fontenelle demonstrates how the theory of demons does not agree very well with what is thought about Christianity.¹⁹ He maintains that the silence of the Scripture about these evil spirits who are supposed to preside over the oracles not only leaves us the liberty to believe nothing, but also leads us to believe just the contrary. Would the Scripture have neglected something which we are incapable of determining by our own reason, and which is extremely important to know in order not to be disturbed by what we see in other religions? Scarcely. Fontenelle assumes that God speaks to man to supplement the weakness of his knowledge, or that He omits telling man things which he is capable of learning on his own or doesn't need to know. Thus, if the oracles had been delivered by evil spirits, God would have told us in order to prevent our believing them sent by Himself, or our believing that there was anything divine in false religions. He is obliged by the law of His goodness to aid in such cases.

In addition, to credit the oracles with supernatural powers would unburden paganism of a good part of the abomination which the Holy Fathers have always found there. Men have no way to guard against errors caused by other men. Therefore the heathen may be blamed for ignoring the deceits

of the priests, but they may scarcely be held responsible for not recognizing demonic deceptions. If we choose to believe that demons inspired the oracles, then we must allow paganism to be only an involuntary and excusable error. Obviously such an admission would not be compatible with the Christian view of the heathen.

Finally Fontenelle undermines the idea that Platonism establishes the theory of demons.²⁰ He traces the origins of Plato's spirits to the poems of Homer and Hesiod, from which they passed into Plato's philosophy. He believes that the Greeks had always conceived the highest idea of God, imagining that some kind of intermediate beings had to communicate for us in our behalf. This idea in itself may be accurate, Fontenelle declares, but it cannot be proved by human reasoning. If we consult our own reason, there is no need for spirits, either for communication from God to man or for representation of a being between human and divine. Perhaps Plato himself was less sure of the existence of spirits than Platonists believe. After all, he often mingled gallantry with philosophy and included fables in his system. It is therefore quite likely that spirits were more fanciful than real to Plato.

Fontenelle now proceeds to show that philosophy in general was divided on the issue of oracles, even in the midst of that same Greece where all resounded of oracles.²¹ If someone had declared that oracles were only impostures,

no one would have been surprised at the boldness of the statement, nor would the speaker have had to be careful to remain anonymous. Whole philosophical sects, such as the Cynics, Peripatetics and Epicureans, regularly attacked the artifice of the oracles and their priests, but no one paid any attention. This apathy raises an interesting question to Fontenelle, for he wonders whether pagan religion may not simply be reduced to this problem: Do the gods watch over the affairs of men, or don't they?²² This question is essential, because one must know whether to worship the gods and consult oracles, or to ignore them and go one's own way. The people decided to consult oracles in spite of the artifice revealed by philosophers. They were indifferent to religious speculations, because to them religion was a series of practices which required observance but not belief. As long as one observed the ceremonies, then the gods would be appeased. Fontenelle discusses this quality of pagan religion in the following passage:

. . . we may see that all the Pagan Religion was meer Ceremony, in which the Mind bore no part. The Gods are angry, their Thunder is ready to be discharg'd, how shall they be appeas'd? Must we repent us of the Crimes we have committed? Must we re-enter into the Paths of that natural Justice which ought to be among all Men? Not at all; we need only take a Calf of such a Colour, calv'd at such a time, and cut the Throat of it with such a Knife, and this will disarm the Wrath of all the Gods: Nay farther, it is permitted you to laugh at the Sacrifice, if you have a mind to it; 'twill go never the worse with you.

Probably 'twas so also with the Oracles; Every one believ'd that wou'd; however, they ceas'd

not to consult 'em. So great a force Custom has over the Minds of Men, that there is no need of Reason to joyn with it.²³

In passages like this one, I wonder whether Fontenelle did not mean to submit a criticism and a recommendation for his own contemporaries, who may have seemed to observe the Church ceremonies while experiencing no real heartfelt sentiment. Such an inference seems probable, and I shall discuss it further after examining the entirety of the Histoire.

There are other indications than inattention to ridicule which demonstrate the apathy of the people toward oracles.²⁴ Stories are full of oracles who are scorned by those who receive them or modified according to whim. Suppose a king consulted an oracle in order to determine whether or not he should wage war, and the oracle foretold disaster for his troops should he do so. Actually the king had probably gone to the priest with his decision made. If the message were not in agreement with his decision, he would simply alter it to suit his needs or disregard it. He would certainly wage war if social conditions warranted it. Thus, the people consulted oracles only to deliver themselves of the misgivings they had when they didn't. At bottom, there didn't seem to be much faith.

Even among early Christians, Fontenelle does not detect any great attachment to the belief in oracles.²⁵ Although Christian scholars generally embraced the system of oracles, they did so not because of the truth in it, but

because of the ease it gave them in attacking paganism. By the assumption of demons, the Christians could render worthless to the pagans all the miracles they might claim. However, in Fontenelle's opinion it might have been worth more to exclude demons and supernatural spirits absolutely, rather than to endow Christianity with a false advantage.

Up to this point in the first "dissertation" Fontenelle has been as much defensive as offensive in his arguments against oracles. However, in the remainder of this section he attacks more forcefully, exposing the corruptions of the oracles, their advantageous locations, their so-called mysteries in sealed letters and dreams, and their ambiguities and tricks. On the whole, it is this half of the section which provides Aphra Behn with the title for her translation, "the Cheats of the Pagan Priests."

In exposing the many ways in which oracles were corrupted, Fontenelle relies heavily upon examples drawn from books. He tells stories showing how certain oracles always conformed to a ruler's best interests, or how priests were bribed to dispense a certain message. The opportunities for corruption were apparently limitless, yet the people closed their eyes to these obvious deceits. Why did they subscribe to such a religion? Fontenelle speculates upon these questions himself in his reconstruction of the origin of the Delphic oracle:

There was on the top of Parnassus a Hole, out of which an Exhalation came, which was of such a Nature, that it made Goats dance and caper, by fuming into their Heads; and perhaps some Body, whose Head was filled with this Exhalation, became an Enthusiast, fell a talking without knowing what he said, and by chance spoke Truth. Immediately, there was something Divine fancied to be in this Exhalation, and that it contained the Knowledge of Futurity; then they begun to approach this Hole with Veneration, and Ceremonies were by little and little introduced. Thus in all probability, the Oracle of Delphos was at first erected. And as it owed its Original to an Exhalation, which infected the Head, there was a Necessity that the Pythian Priestess should be in a Fury, when she was to Prophesia; but in the greatest part of the other Oracles, Fury was not practiced. Let but one Oracle be set up, and you need not doubt but a Thousand will follow the Example; for if the Gods can speak in one, why should they not do as well in others? The People struck with the Wonder of the Thing, and finding of what use it would be, and covetous of the Profit, which they expected from it, desired nothing more than to see Oracles set up in every Place; and in time, all these Oracles got the Advantage of Antiquity, which stood them in great stead. And it could not be expected, that the new Ones should have such Success since they were established by Princes, whereas the People are most willing to believe, what they make themselves.

Add to all this, that at the time of the first Institution both of Gods and Oracles, Ignorance was much greater than it was afterwards. Philosophy was not then known to the World, and the most extravagant Superstitions had met with no Contradiction from thence.²⁶

Fontenelle distinguishes two kinds of gods: Those which were supposed to be essentially divine, and those which were formerly public heroes before being elevated to divinity by princes. Of these two, the former were announced with a great deal of mystery, and mystery excited interest. The latter stemmed from the love of the people, a force almost as powerful as mystery. But these two motivations do not

explain the popularity of the oracles. For this we must turn to the hallowing process of time, the human addiction to the "marvelous," and the passion for certainty or foreknowledge. All of these elements contributed to the establishment of oracles, such as the Delphic oracle. In addition, Fontenelle includes the primitive state of philosophy as a factor which encouraged the origin of oracles. The people were simply ignorant and did not have the "light of Reason" to guide them as in the seventeenth century.

One of the most interesting sections in the Histoire des Oracles deals with the locations in which oracles flourished.²⁷ Fontenelle states that mountainous countries full of caverns and caves were most abundant with oracles. Such was Boetia, which Plutarch tells us had a great quantity of oracles. Fontenelle adds to this that the Boetians had the reputation of being the stupidest people in the world, thereby fulfilling the two principal criteria for the existence of oracles: caverns and stupid people.²⁸

We may wonder why caverns were so essential for the performance of oracles, but Fontenelle reveals the advantages of such a location. Caverns with subterranean passages were required for the commodity of priests and for the majesty of oracles. Priests hid all of their contrivances in secret passages, as well as coming and going secretly in these same passages. The Holy Scripture reveals how Daniel discovered the imposture of the priests of Belus, who knew how to

enter the temple secretly to take the meat offerings. This story alone furnishes proof against the authenticity of oracles in Fontenelle's opinion, for it destroys one of the most universally held beliefs of paganism--that the gods take the trouble to come and eat these sacrifices themselves.²⁹ If the priests eat well in place of the gods, there is even more reason to believe they would also speak in their place.

In relation to caverns enhancing the majesty of oracles, Fontenelle points out that the vaults of the sanctuaries increased the volume of oracular announcements, causing a reverberation which inspired terror and awe. Perhaps trumpets even multiplied the sound further. Moreover, in the hidden recesses of caverns the priests could create pleasant vapors to fill the sanctuary where the devotees were. These vapours added an aura of mystery to the temple, and at times even represented the presence of God.

The priests did not forget any sort of precaution to protect their impostures, and Fontenelle soundly enjoys exposing the hidden mechanics of accepted practices.³⁰ For example, the priests mark certain days when it was not permitted to consult the oracle, so that they might make their preparations or send people away if they had reasons for not responding. Sacrifices were another way to gain time when the priests felt indecisive. They simply claimed

that the entrails were unfavorable and the gods in no humour to respond. We may think that the revelations of oracles through sealed letters and dreams were more difficult to master for the priests, but Fontenelle manages to illustrate that they were no more miraculous than any other tricks.³¹ The priests opened the letters privately whenever they had the liberty, or they relied upon informants to glean the information from the devotee. With informants they could respond without even needing to receive letters.

The practice of delivering oracles through dreams had more of the marvelous than any other method, but it was actually not that difficult to achieve. Fontenelle describes the oracle of Trophonius in Boetia as an example.³² This oracle was located deep in a hole on top of a mountain, so that it was mysterious and frightening to everyone except the priests. There the devotee spent the night in an atmosphere heavy with perfume, while the priests created such illusions as gods entering and leaving. By morning the devotee felt giddy and senseless, and quite receptive to an interpretation of his "dream." Dreams were even easier to manipulate when the priests themselves had them. With this method a priest could construct a dream appropriate to the particular problem, then interpret it accordingly.

One of the easiest ways to verify the implication of humans in the affairs of oracles is to notice the ambiguity of responses.³³ The priests had to be particularly artful

to formulate a message that would apply to all conceivable circumstances. In fact, the best response was one so general that it couldn't help being true in any instance. Fortunately the priests could also rely upon the zeal of the devotee to adapt the oracle to fit the outcome of the event. The "deceiver" could trust the "deceived" to save his honor by justifying the oracle.

Fontenelle closes the first "dissertation" of the Histoire by announcing that the cunning tricks of the priests in manipulating oracles should now be clear.³⁴ If still not convinced, the reader may refer to accounts of the triumph of Christianity over paganism under the Christian emperors. At this time the bishops revealed clearly the tricks of the priests in order to convert the people. In Fontenelle's opinion there can be no better testimony against the theory of demons than the pagan priests. After their deposing, the issue seems closed.

Now that Fontenelle has very thoroughly proved that demons could not have had any part in oracles, he considers that he has overcome his greatest difficulty. Once the issue of their supernatural quality has been determined to be moot, oracles become irrelevant to the Christian religion. It no longer matters whether or not they ceased precisely at the coming of Jesus Christ.³⁵ However, Fontenelle devotes one-third of the Histoire des Oracles, the entire

second "dissertation," to arguments proving that oracles underwent a gradual decline, coinciding with the decline of paganism rather than with the arrival of Jesus Christ.

What has made people believe that oracles ceased at the coming of Christ? Several things, in Fontenelle's estimation. First of all, the oracles themselves supposedly pronounced their "silence" because of Christ's superior power. In addition, pagan accounts often reported the cessation of oracles around the time of Jesus. The Christians believed these testimonies because of either overzealousness or credulousness. Because it was very flattering to imagine that all pagan practices were rendered inoperable at the precise moment of Christ's birth, Christians did not hesitate to accept this idea without verification. If this theory had been true, however, then Christ would not have allowed even a single oracle to continue prophesying. Yet in fact, oracles lasted as long as four hundred years after Christ, with no difference noted between the oracles which preceded His coming and those which followed.³⁶ In other words, the supposed effect of Christ's birth upon pagan oracles never really occurred.

In consulting the writings of ancient authors, Fontenelle discovers many contradictions about the cessation of oracles.³⁷ Some authors say that the Delphic oracle no longer speaks, for example, while others say that it does. How can we account for these inconsistencies?

Fontenelle reminds us that oracles were sometimes in vogue and other times abandoned. More than once the temple at Delphes was pillaged, the sacred utensils were lost, and the priests were massacred or dispersed. Much time and care were necessary to restore the temple. Thus it could be that during a single lifetime, such as Cicero's, a man could witness the success and decline of an oracle.

In general, Fontenelle maintains that oracles ceased only with paganism, which did not cease at the coming of Jesus Christ.³⁸ It was largely up to the Christian emperors to discourage pagan practices, yet no single emperor was able to achieve this goal completely. Paganism was an accepted social institution which had to decline gradually. Its ceremonies and practices lasted in Christianity for some time, as the custom of human sacrifice testifies. These barbaric sacrifices were practiced in all nations, and according to Fontenelle they survived as long as the oracles.

He devotes the remainder of the second "dissertation" to the reasons causing the decline of oracles.³⁹ While he affirms that Christianity did contribute to their decline, through disillusioning the people and uncovering pagan deceits, he goes on to state that the oracles would have fallen from other causes independently of Christianity. He points to several factors which illustrate the gradual degeneration of oracles: their messages being delivered in prose rather than verse; their consultations becoming more

frequent on mundane matters rather than on state issues; the arrival of peace under Roman rule, furnishing little need to consult the oracles; and the Roman lack of esteem for oracles, which caused their destiny to fall along with Greece's.

In addition to these factors which generally occurred after the Roman conquest, there were several events which weakened oracles before that time.⁴⁰ Great sects of philosophers formed in Greece who ridiculed the oracles, such as the Cynics and Epicureans. The Epicureans especially joked about the miserable verse which came from Delphes, supposedly issued directly from Apollo, the god of poetry. Also, the deceits of the oracles were too great to remain hidden forever. Disillusionment had to come as the priests became bolder and more careless in their false ministry. They sometimes joked through their "divine" messages, and even enticed women into the temples at night under the pretext that the gods had chosen them to grant their favors. Thus the crimes and insolence of the priests, the obscurity and falseness of their responses, and the various events which exposed their tricks would have discredited oracles entirely even if paganism had not ended. It is upon this note of conviction that Fontenelle concludes the Histoire des Oracles.

After a discussion of the ideas and arguments which he used to refute the theory of demons, it is now important to ask why Fontenelle should have felt compelled to refute a belief that had failed to excite interest or adherence for a long time. Why did he choose to rewrite a scholarly work in such a way as to make it into a document for his own time? The implication from an analysis of his ideas in this work is that Fontenelle intended the Histoire to be an attack on contemporary Christian superstition.⁴¹ In fact, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, in his study of modern philosophy in France, has suggested that if the word "miracles" is substituted for "oracles," then the meaning of the Histoire is clarified.⁴² It is clear from everything else he said on the subject that Fontenelle considered the Church's toleration of superstition and its insistence on dogmatic theology to be a hindrance to the pursuit of truth. He expected science to challenge superstition and theology for its own good and for the good of religion. The kind of response which the Histoire provoked among ecclesiastical circles is evidence of Fontenelle's success. Consider the following remarks made by Père Baltus in his attack upon the Histoire:

Tell the truth, Monsieur, have you not felt some repugnance . . . in proving that oracles did not cease at the coming of the Savior of the World? It is rude of a Christian to feel himself obliged to lessen the glory of the one he recognizes as his God, and to deny, contrary to his feeling, that it is to Him that he owes the happiness of being delivered from the shadows of paganism and the tyranny of the demon. You will perhaps tell me that you

believed you had to sacrifice all these repugnances to the truth, which ought to override all other considerations. This pretext is for appearances only. . . .⁴³

Nothing could illustrate more clearly the differences between Fontenelle's attitude and that of the clerics. For Baltus and other Jesuits, empirically demonstrated truth was not important, yet for Fontenelle and other free-thinkers it was all important. Fontenelle certainly did intend to "sacrifice [his] repugnances to the truth," as Baltus surmised.

One may now claim that Fontenelle was surely not the first writer to attack the dogma of the Church, anonymously or otherwise. This is true, for there was a long line of libertins in France whose existence has been documented.⁴⁴ Montaigne and Gassendi applied the scientific method to religion in their works, and clerics such as Père Buffier likewise valued the relatedness of science and religion. In particular, Pierre Bayle became a bitter critic of the Church. However, Fontenelle was not a doctrinaire anti-clerical after the fashion of Bayle. He was the last person to have wanted a fight with the Church, as his restraint after Baltus' attack shows. In fact, the fragmentary work Sur l'Existence de Dieu (1724), written to substantiate the existence of God, illustrates Fontenelle's sincere religious convictions. We know that he believed in God, but it seems that he almost worshipped Nature, and not God. He was

constantly amazed by the complexity and exactitude of Nature, by its balance, and by the harmony of its parts. He believed that religion and science were not inconsistent, and that theology could keep up with civilization if the clerics did not balk at so happy an accommodation. A more enlightened age should rid religion of superstition, intolerance, dogmatism, and prejudice. If it was composed of faith and emotion, as it should be, religion itself would not suffer from their absence. Therefore, Fontenelle attacked the mindlessness which he found in the Church. Ideas falsely held and propagated were the only "devil's disciples" that he recognized. Moreover, no institution--even the Church--offered hope to man if it did not allow him the free exercise of his mind.

It was with these ideas in mind that Fontenelle directed his attack against miracle workers as well as against those zealous Christians who searched in paganism for anything to support their own faith. More generally he criticized the human mind, always blind, always deaf to the voice of reason. Fontenelle's arguments had their effect in preparing the way for thought of the new century, for they helped to establish the idea that every reasonable person is capable of arriving at the truth. Under his guidance the Christian ideal, based upon revelation and tradition, disintegrated.⁴⁵

In England at the turn of the eighteenth century, this historical approach to Christianity assumed a more militant form, particularly in the works of John Toland and Anthony Collins. In his History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, Sir Leslie Stephen singled out these two writers as the most prominent representatives of Deism in England.⁴⁶ In addition, in her study of Fontenelle's impact upon English thought, Ida Stewart briefly discussed them as recipients of his influence.⁴⁷ The attention which Stephen and Stewart gave to Toland and Collins prompted me to focus upon their works in my own study, and to exclude other deistic writers such as Woolston, Dodwell, Leslie, Whiston, and Paine. While Fontenelle's Histoire may have influenced these other writers, it is likely that any such influence would have been channeled through Toland and Collins. Therefore, I have limited my analysis of early deistic writers to their primary works.

Toland and Collins, like Fontenelle, believed that a certain body of religious knowledge is available to every person through the use of reason, as opposed to revelation or tradition. In Toland there is great emphasis upon the rational element in natural religion. He violently denies all mystery in religion, whether Christian, Judaic, or pagan, and exposes the various machinations of priests. Collins is more moderate, but he too denounces the conspiracy of priests who intentionally deceive men with a "rout of ceremonials"

in order to maintain power over them. Other writers later in the century who follow the approach taken by Fontenelle include Lord Bolingbroke, Conyers Middleton, and David Hume. These mid-century writers focus almost exclusively upon a denial of the miraculous element in Christianity, and their works bring the whole deistic controversy over this issue to a close, at least so far as public interest is concerned.

In the remainder of this chapter I shall examine selected essays and books of these English writers more closely, in order to show that Fontenelle's Histoire des Oracles had a discernible influence upon either their ideas or their approach, and to indicate that it had an impact upon the issue of the credibility of miracles.

I

John Toland's Christianity Not Mysterious (1696) and Letters to Serena (1704) were among the first English works to reflect the controversy over the "rational" and the "mysterious" elements in Christianity. Although it is unlikely that Toland knew Fontenelle personally, he clearly was familiar with ideas advanced in the Histoire des Oracles. In fact, Paul Hazard, in his analysis of Toland's Christianity Not Mysterious, states that Toland was scarcely original in any of his ideas. "When we read Toland, we hear the echo of Fontenelle and Bayle, of Bekker and Van Dale, of Hobbes and Spinoza; and if we doubt these influences, the exact quotations that he makes from these authors should

prove to us that it is not a matter of chance resemblance, but of certain borrowing."⁴⁸ A reading of Christianity Not Mysterious shows the accuracy of Hazard's statement, for throughout Toland's work we do indeed hear the echo of Fontenelle's Histoire des Oracles. Moreover, in the Letters to Serena Toland refers directly to Fontenelle's Pluralité des Mondes, indicating that he is familiar with that work as well. Before documenting the parallels between Fontenelle's and Toland's work, however, it may be enlightening to trace briefly the background of this man who set out so intently to destroy the mysteries of Christianity.

From his earliest days Toland was a "mere waif and stray, hanging loose upon society, retiring at intervals into the profoundest recesses of Grub Street, emerging again by fits to scandalise the whole respectable world, and then once more sinking back into tenfold obscurity."⁴⁹ Leslie Stephen's description of the early pattern of Toland's life is reinforced by accounts of his later life as well. During his last twenty-five years he stayed nowhere long, generally moving back and forth between England and the Continent. Rumored to be the illegitimate son of an Irish priest, he became a convert to Protestantism at sixteen, and was supported by dissenters at Glasgow, Leyden and Oxford. He "repaid their generosity by acquiring a considerable amount of learning and then by suddenly firing Christianity Not Mysterious in their faces."⁵⁰ Unfortunately the appearance

of this book had a damaging effect upon Toland's livelihood. The Grand Jury of Middlesex considered it a "nuisance" and forced him to flee to Dublin. There he was foolish enough to air his opinions at coffee houses and taverns until it became quite dangerous to speak to him. Finally the Irish parliament "to their immortal honour, sent him packing, and without the help of a faggot, soon made the kingdom too hot to hold him."⁵¹ After going "underground" Toland published numerous pamphlets which Stephen calls "mere scraps and tatters and unfinished fragments."⁵² These pamphlets are of small interest in my study of Toland, except perhaps to show that his mind was occupied with the question of the historical origin of beliefs. More important is his first book, Christianity Not Mysterious (1696), and a later publication, Letters to Serena (1704). In each of these Toland attacks the role of all authority except that of ordinary reason, and he maintains that Christianity can be proved like the truth of any historical theory, by an examination of evidence.

Toland's argument begins with the usual complaint about the conflicting authorities of popes, fathers, councils and churches. How can anyone determine which authority to follow, he asks.

How many voluminous Systems, infinitely more difficult than the Scripture, must be read with great attention by him that would be Master of the present Theology? What a prodigious Number of barbarous Words, (mysterious no doubt) what tedious and

unmethodical Directions, what ridiculous and discrepant Interpretations must you patiently learn and observe, before you can begin to understand a Professor of that Faculty?⁵³

Rather than follow any theologian, we should submit to reason alone as the foundation for certitude. Moreover, our assent to any belief should follow "tangible, visible and accessible" demonstration only.⁵⁴ When such demonstration is not available, we must suspend judgment.

How does this theory affect our theological beliefs? Toland maintains that it is impossible to believe anything that is "contrary to reason," or anything that involves a contradiction. Therefore, we are entitled to demand strict proof of the historical statements of the Scriptures. He cites the precedent of the Virgin Mary, who, "though of that sex which is least proof against flattery and superstition, did not implicitly believe that she should bear a son . . . until the angel gave a satisfactory answer to the strongest objection that could be raised."⁵⁵ It would be mere superstition to accept scriptural statements without proof of "divine wisdom and sound reason."⁵⁶ Yet this is exactly what multitudes of Christians do when they blindly follow the beliefs of the priests. Toland gives the following example:

Nor can a more favorable opinion be harbour'd of those who instead of submission to the dictates of scripture and reason, straight have recourse to such persons as they specially follow or admire and are ready to receive or refuse an opinion as they shall please direct him. "Pray, doctor," says one of his

parishioners, "what think you of such a book?"
 The Doctor . . . "It is a very bad book . . ."
 "Say you so, Doctor, then I'm resolved to read no
 more of it, for I heard you often preach against
 human reason. . . . I'll take care that none of my
 family set their eyes upon it."⁵⁷

He then goes on to quote Fontenelle on the same subject:

And what those honest men, says a very ingenious
 person [i.e. Fontenelle], could not make good them-
 selves by sufficient Reason, is now prov'd by their
 sole authority. If the fathers foresaw this, they
 were not to be blamed for sparing themselves the
 labour of reasoning more exactly than I find they
 commonly did. That truth should be determined by a
 majority of voices or a certain period of time,
 seems to be the most ridiculous of all follies.⁵⁸

One can easily verify Toland's borrowing by returning to the
 original passage in the Histoire de Oracles:

For since it was believ'd in the first Ages of
 Christianity, that Oracles were deliver'd by Daemons,
 this seems a sufficient Cause for us to believe it
 now; for whatever was the Opinion of the Ancients,
 good or bad, it was always favourably received; and
 what they themselves cou'd not prove by sufficient
 Reasons, is in our Days prov'd by their Authority
 alone.⁵⁹

We might expect that Toland would proceed to argue
 that Christianity cannot satisfy our demands for demonstrable
 proof. However, he asserts just the opposite when he says
 that there is nothing "above reason" in the Gospel.⁶⁰ There
 is nothing inconceivable as well as nothing contradictory.
 He argues learnedly and at considerable length in the third
 chapter that the word "mystery" does not signify an incon-
 ceivable proposition, but simply a proposition known to us
 by revelation alone. Once unveiled it may be as simple as
 any other truth. A mysterious doctrine is simply one which

has been concealed from certain classes of mankind.⁶¹ For example, the existence of America would be a "mystery" until Columbus discovered it. Likewise, the essence of God and of the soul is a "mystery," yet we know the attributes of both as well as the properties of our own bodies. It therefore appears that religious doctrines are not mysterious at all if subjected to the scrutiny of reason and common experience.

This conclusion seems to be the same one which Fontenelle makes at the close of the Histoire des Oracles when he says that "at last Men were forced to yield to their own Experiences, and suffer themselves to be disabused."⁶² After examining the belief in oracles and in their cessation at the coming of Jesus Christ, he concludes that there is nothing supernatural or "mysterious" about oracles at all. Once the deceits of the priests have been unveiled, any reasonable person can understand the natural origin, progress, and decline of oracles. Of course, Fontenelle was dealing with the exposure of a particular religious belief, whereas Toland discussed theological "mysteries" in general. However, Toland's application of the rational approach to religious doctrines may very well have been suggested by Fontenelle's Histoire. It is certain that Fontenelle implies that the scrutiny of reason be directed at Christian miracles and "mysteries." In addition, Toland attacks the "tyranny of authority" in religion just as Fontenelle does, and we can see from Toland's quotation of Fontenelle on this issue that he knew the French writer's position.

Of the Letters to Serena, intended for the Queen of Prussia, Toland writes in the preface that they were addressed to a "fair lady, who was pleas'd to ask my Opinion concerning the Subjects of the three first Dissertations."⁶³ He characterizes Serena as the "Mistriss of a vast Compass of Knowledge, having read all that's worth the pains in the Modern Tongues, To speak nothing of the best Translations from the Antient Originals."⁶⁴ He insists that she's a real person, although some "still believe Serena a Romantic Name, like the Marchioness of Monsieur de Fontenelles in his Plurality of Worlds."⁶⁵ Toland apparently patterns Serena after the learned and witty Marchioness, and he even divides his book into "letters" not unlike the division of "evenings" Fontenelle uses in the Entretiens. In the lengthy preface to the Letters Toland takes pains to establish the occasions for his writing each letter, as Fontenelle very carefully sets the scene for his week of conversations with the Marchioness on her estate.

Of the six letters included in Toland's book, only the first three are of interest in my study: the Origin and Force of Prejudices; the History of the Soul's Immortality among the Heathens; and the Origin of Idolatry and Reasons of Heathenism. In these three Toland tries his hand as vulgarisateur in religion, a purpose similar to Fontenelle's in the Histoire des Oracles. Fontenelle states in his preface that he intends to make his work appeal to a wide reading public:

Mr. Van Dale wrote only for the Learned, and had reason to neglect those Ornaments and Softnesses which they do not esteem. . . . The Ladies, and the major part of the Men of this Country, are indeed more pleased with the Graces and Turns of Expression and Thought than with the most exact Enquiries and profoundest Arguments. . . . I have not only added all the Ornaments I could think of, but many things which prove or clear up what is in question upon the same subject.⁶⁶

Toland plans to use a "plain style" to simplify his argument and to attract more readers:

. . . nor will I excuse my writing of the Mysterys of Philosophy in so plain a Stile, being sorry I had not time enough to render those things much more common and intelligible, it being a great deal easier to deliver 'em in the ordinary Terms of Art; but then fewer are left Judges of the Controversy, and the Subject made less useful or entertaining.⁶⁷

While he fails to achieve the easy conversational style of Fontenelle, Toland nevertheless expresses his most vivid thoughts on the origin of prejudices and superstitions in the Letters to Serena. There can be little doubt of Fontenelle's influence after an examination of the first three letters.

In discussing the occasion which prompted his writing the first letter to Serena, Toland mentions that she was curious about the sway of prejudice in her own life. Therefore, he wrote to her "showing the successive Growth and Increase of Prejudices thro every step of our Lives, and proving that all the Men in the World are join'd in the same Conspiracy to deprave the Reason of every individual Person."⁶⁸ Beginning with the nursery when we are put into the

hands of nurses and idle servants, our corruption continues into university life, where our masters "treat of very ordinary Matters in very extraordinary Terms."⁶⁹ From there our prejudices are reinforced by priests and other professionals, such as lawyers, physicians and philosophers. Of these the clergy are particularly guilty of keeping people in darkness:

The strange Things and amazing stories we have read or heard . . . are daily confirm'd to us by the Preacher from the Pulpit, where all he says is taken for Truth by the greatest part of the Auditory, nobody having the liberty to contradict him, and he giving out his own Conceits for the very Oracles of God. Tho every Sect will deny this of its peculiar Doctrines . . . yet the rest affirm it with undeniable Arguments of one another; for it is impossible they should be all or above one of 'em in the right, which is a Demonstration that the rest, being the bulk of Mankind, are retain'd in their Mistakes by their Priests. And nevertheless the very Doubts about the Joys of Heaven and the Torments of Hell, are enough to procure Authority for their infinite Contradictions: so strong are the Impressions of Hope and Fear, which yet are ever founded in Ignorance!⁷⁰

Thus, the authority of priests, added to the tradition of stories handed down in our childhood, helps to fortify and imbed superstition in our lives. This process is the same as that which Fontenelle outlines in the origin and progress of oracles: we first believe the truth of stories passed down from one generation to the next, and then the priests prolong these beliefs through our ignorance and credulousness. As Fontenelle says, "So great a force Custom has over the Minds of Men, that there is no need of Reason

to joyn with it."⁷¹ Capturing his thought exactly, Toland asserts that "Custom . . . passes ordinarily for current Truth."⁷² We scarcely think to examine the truth of any belief or doctrine because of its universal acceptance or because of fear in contradicting those in authority.

In the second letter to Serena, Toland examines our belief in the soul's immortality in much the same way that Fontenelle examines the belief in oracles. He claims in the preface to show "this Notion among the Heathens to have bin first taken up by the Mob, popular Traditions often becoming the Doctrines of Philosophers, who strive to support by good Reasons what the others begun with none or very bad ones."⁷³ Fontenelle discusses the role of popular traditions in the establishment of oracles early in the Histoire:

As for the oracles, their first Establishment is not difficult to unfold; For find me but half a dozen Persons, whom I can persuade that it is not the Sun that makes the Day, and I will not despair of prevailing with a whole Nation to embrace the same Opinion: For however ridiculous anything seems at first, if you can but maintain it for some time, so that it gains the Authority of Antiquity, it is then sufficiently proved.

Toland argues in the beginning of the letter that we have the "clearest Demonstration . . . even the Revelation of God himself" to support our belief in immortality, but the inference from his argument is to place the belief among those prejudices which merely suggest proof.⁷⁵ Like Fontenelle he proceeds to examine a pagan belief which the Christians later adopted on the basis of divine revelation.

Toland methodically traces the theory of the soul's immortality to Egyptian funeral rites, after first establishing that the Egyptians rather than the Chaldeans or the Indians were the authors of the belief. From there he shows how the belief spread among the Grecians to their colonies in Asia and Europe, and from them to the Romans, Scythians, Germans, Gauls and Britains.⁷⁶ Most interesting are Toland's speculations about the reasons for such widespread acceptance of the belief:

. . . 'Tis no wonder that this Doctrine was gladly and universally receiv'd since it flatter'd Men with the Hopes of what they wish above all things whatsoever, namely, to continue their Existence beyond the Grave; there being but few that can bear the very Thoughts of ever ceasing to live somewhere, and most People commonly chusing to be miserable, rather than not to be at all.⁷⁷

Fontenelle states in the Histoire des Oracles that "I am not surpriz'd that this same Zeal has convinced 'em [the Christians] of the truth of I know not how many Oracles, advantageous to their Religion."⁷⁸ While Christian zeal may have prolonged the belief in oracles, it was man's curiosity about the future and his desire for certitude which created the belief in the first place, he conjectures. Thus, both writers trace religious doctrines back to natural rather than supernatural causes. In addition, both men feel compelled to protect themselves from charges of blasphemy by supposedly referring only to heathen or pagan religions. However, their pretense is very thin, and they mean a great deal more than they venture to say.

In the third letter to Serena, Toland discusses the origin of idolatry and the reasons for heathenism, including "the first Causes of the Heathen Temples, Priests, and Altars, their Feasts, and Sacrifices . . . Images, Statues, and Tutelary Powers . . . Ghosts, Specters, Oracles, Magick, and Judiciary Astrology."⁷⁹ This letter is perhaps most like Fontenelle's Histoire because Toland speculates about the reasons for heathen belief in such things as oracles. In the preface he briefly alludes to the Histoire when he says "Mr. Van Dale's History of Heathen Oracles you have already perus'd with great Satisfaction,"⁸⁰ assuming his reader to be familiar with that work. Whether Toland's reference is to Van Dale's Latin work or to Fontenelle's translation and revision is unclear, for in England Fontenelle's book generally carried Van Dale's name as part of the title. It seems likely that the reference is to Aphra Behn's English translation of Fontenelle's Histoire. Relatively few English readers would have read Van Dale's massive Latin treatise.

Early in the third letter, Toland speculates upon the reasons for man's belief in superstition and like Fontenelle, he cites hope and fear as the two chief causes:

The fluctuating of mens Minds between Hope and Fear, is one of the chief causes of Superstition: for being no way able to foresee the Event of what greatly concerns them, they now hope the best, and the next minute fear the worst, which easily leads them not only to take any thing for a good or bad Omen, which happen'd to them in any former good

luck or misfortune; but also to lay hold of any Advice, to consult Divines and Astrologers.⁸⁴

Men are by nature curious about the outcome of significant events in their lives, and this curiosity coupled with apprehension leads them to consult the oracles. As for the role of the priests in perpetuating devotion to the oracles, Toland remarks that

This immediate Direction they have thought to have on the Things now mention'd, as well as over the Diseases of the Body and the Passions of the Mind, gave a Reputation and Authority to their pretended Miracles, Apparitions, Divinations, Oracles, and all other Arts of the Cunning, to drain the Pockets of the Credulous.⁸²

While Toland does not elaborate the various deceits of the priests, he certainly acknowledges the existence of their "arts." He believes that all of their "burdensome" ceremonies were established in order to preoccupy the people:

But these things were afterwards manag'd by the Priests so as to make their imagin'd Intimacy with Heaven more Valu'd, and to get Revenues settled on themselves, proportionable to the Laboriousness and Importance of the Service in which they were engag'd. Nor did the Multitude of the Rites serve a little to amuse and distract the Vulgar from reflecting on matters with more consideration, their whole Time being almost employ'd about them: besides that they must needs entertain a high Opinion of them who cou'd affix sanctity to Times, Places, and Persons, and to such things as were either indifferent in their own Natures, or seemed the farthest imaginable from being religious.⁸³

As Fontenelle states in the Histoire, paganism was composed of ceremonies which the priests devised to keep the people from reflecting too deeply. There was never any heartfelt emotion involved in their observance of these rituals.

In concluding his letter, Toland expresses the same purpose in composition as does Fontenelle in the introduction to the Histoire. Fontenelle is concerned because Christianity has adopted pagan beliefs and practices as its own:

Christianity has been always able to stand of itself without false proofs. . . . And we ought to be fill'd with so just Confidence of our Religion, as to reject all false Advantages, tho' they may be useful to a weaker Party.⁸⁴

Toland is likewise distressed that "almost every Point of those superstitious and idolatrous Religions are in these or grosser Circumstances reviv'd by many Christians in our Western parts of the World."⁸⁵ To him all superstitious opinions and practices constitute "Antichristianism" and they should therefore be exposed. As a final generalization Toland remarks:

And indeed this whole Dissertation, Madam, is a memorable Proof and Instance to what an astonishing degree of Extravagance human Nature is capable of arriving; and that in all times Superstition is the same, however the Names of it may vary, or that it may have different Objects, or be greater or less in degrees, as any Country has more or less Liberty of Conscience and free Speech.⁸⁶

Nothing could sound more like Fontenelle, who was astonished throughout his life at the excesses to which human blindness of reason could lead. In particular, he credited the progress of religious superstition to the ignorance and credulousness of the people, a factor which unfortunately remained constant in spite of efforts like his own.

As we can see from an analysis of Christianity Not Mysterious and Letters to Serena, Toland's mind was occupied with many of the same issues as was Fontenelle's in the Histoire des Oracles. He too felt that reason should be the guiding authority in religion, not blind adherence to the dictates of priests or scripture. Likewise he relies upon an historical approach to religious "mystery" or superstition to expose the corruption which he saw in Christianity. Because of the numerous textual parallels with Fontenelle's Histoire and the direct quotations which indicate that Toland was familiar with his work, I feel that Fontenelle influenced the development of Toland's thought in these areas. Of course, as I mentioned earlier, Toland very likely relied upon ideas suggested by many different writers, such as Bayle, Hobbes, and Spinoza. Yet while Fontenelle is only one of a number of influences upon Toland, his Histoire des Oracles must nonetheless still be regarded as significant in shaping Toland's thought. Without Fontenelle's example, Toland might not have been nearly so outspoken in challenging religious authority.

II

The next important stage in the controversy over reason and revelation was initiated by Anthony Collins' A Discourse of Free Thinking (1713). Collins was a cultivated country gentleman, intelligent and widely read, but his social standing was apparently better than his scholarship.⁸⁷

He was "a man of amiable character and high integrity in private life," even by the confession of hostile writers.⁸⁸ Yet his Discourse caused much controversy and "brought down upon him the sledge-hammer of Bentley's criticism," the shock of which is said to have "pulverised" him.⁸⁹ In addition to Bentley's attack, Collins exposed himself to the keen satire of Swift, who wrote a tract called Mr. Collins' Discourse of Freethinking, put into plain English by way of abstract, for the Use of the Poor.⁹⁰ According to Sir Leslie Stephen, Swift's tract may be read as a convenient substitute for Collins' own, "which was always slipshod in style and argument, and is now tedious in spite of its shortness."⁹¹ It is true that Collins' Discourse becomes tedious and repetitious, and that Swift's satire is well-aimed and effective. However, Collins wrote his tract to establish two propositions, both of which remind one of Fontenelle's ideas in the Histoire des Oracles. It is therefore important to examine the Discourse in order to determine what impact Fontenelle may have had upon it.

The first proposition which Collins announces sounds amazingly like Toland in Christianity Not Mysterious, namely that all sound belief must be based upon free inquiry:

If the Knowledge of some Truths be requir'd of us by God; if the Knowledge of others be useful to Society; if the Knowledge of no Truth be forbidden us by God, or hurtful to us; then we have a right to know, or may lawfully know, any Truth whatsoever. And if we have a right to know any Truth whatsoever, we have a right to think freely, or (according to my

Definition) to use our Understandings, in endeavoring to find out the Meaning of any Proposition whatsoever, in considering the nature of the Evidence for or against it, and in judging of it according to the seeming Force or Weakness of the Evidence: because there is no other way to discover the Truth.⁹²

Like Toland and Fontenelle before him, Collins maintains that reason should be the sole authority in religious matters. People may have acknowledged the authority of priests in primitive times, but that is no reason to continue the custom during an enlightened age.

Thus before the Restoration of Learning, when Men were subject to the Impositions of Priests, a prodigious Ignorance prevail'd. And when they began to think their first Notions were rude and imperfect, and Time and Pains were necessary to bring them to that degree of Justness they are at present.⁹³

Collins hopes, as does Fontenelle, that rationalism will expose and eliminate superstition from Christianity. He is even more direct than Fontenelle in accusing Christianity of adopting pagan practices:

What absurd Notions in Religion, contrary to the most obvious Notions of Sense and Reason, overspread the whole Christian Church for many Ages? Infallibility in a single Person or in a Council, the Power of the Priest to damn and save, the Worship of Images, Pictures, Saints, and Relicks, and a thousand other absurditys as gross as ever prevail'd in any Pagan Nation, were opinions almost universally receiv'd and believ'd by Christians . . .⁹⁴

This passage brings us to Collins' second proposition, that the adoption of rationalistic principles would involve abandoning belief in miracles. Fontenelle expresses this purpose in the introduction to the Historie des Oracles, just as Toland does in the conclusion to Christianity Not

Mysterious. All three men have faith that "free thinking" can unveil many of the so-called mysteries of Christianity, whether oracles or other equally absurd practices.

In regard to oracles in particular, Collins devotes an entire section to their exposure, all of which appears closely parallel with Fontenelle's conclusions in the Histoire.⁹⁵ This section illustrates Collins' familiarity with Fontenelle's book, even though he does not name Fontenelle directly, as Toland does. Consider the following passage from Collins' section on oracles:

To begin first with the Pagans: the whole Affair of Oracles among them was nothing else but the Artifice of Priests to impose on the Senses of the People. The oracular Temples or Churches were built in mountainous Countries, where of course there were abundance of Caverns and Holes, and where Ecchoes, Noises, and dismal Prospects struck those who visited them with a superstitious Awe. The Temples themselves were contriv'd to produce the same effect. They were full of subterraneous Caverns and Machines, like a Playhouse for the Priests to act their Parts in them. The Pagans likewise had Speaking Oaks, Nodding, Sweating, Weeping, Bleeding, and Speaking Statues. . . . To preserve a right Belief in all these Matters among the People, the Priests kept all Unbelievers as much as possible from coming within any distance of them when they began their Show. All Epicureans were declar'd incapable of being initiated into any of the Pagan mysterys of Religion; and both Epicureans and Christians were religiously chas'd away, before ever the Priests would pronounce any Oracles, or begin any of their Tricks. . . . [even] the Pagan Believers were allowed to see no further than their Faith qualify'd them to do with Safety. They were not suffer'd to examine the Insides of Temples or Statues, nor the Evidence the Priests gave of the Gods coming down from Heaven to eat upon the Earth. No, about all these matters the People were to have a Faith, which Free-Seeing would have destroy'd. . . .⁹⁶

Fontenelle specifically discusses all of these ideas about the oracles and the deceits of the priests necessary to maintain the artifice. He includes in the Histoire sections upon the best locations for oracles and upon the means which priests used to achieve mystery, such as producing majestic echoes, making secret entrances, and causing the gods to speak. He is especially noted for his speculations about the location of oracles, which Collins includes in the above passage. Since I know of no previous author who has discussed these details so exactly, including Van Dale, it therefore seems probable that Collins knew and made good use of Fontenelle's Histoire des Oracles in his Discourse of Free Thinking.

III

Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, early became acquainted with the French language.⁹⁷ He spent many years travelling in France during his exile from England (1715-1725), at which time he was introduced to the social and intellectual life of Paris. There he mixed with aristocrats and scholars interested in a wide range of studies, such as the Matignons, the Torcys, Lévesque de Pouilly, and Voltaire.⁹⁸ Since he particularly frequented the group of Mme. de Tencin, of which Fontenelle was a member, it can scarcely be doubted that he knew the French philosopher. While Bolingbroke does not mention Fontenelle in his correspondence, an analysis of several essays in his Philosophical Works convinces me that

he knew his writings, if not the man himself. In particular, Section 3 of Essay II, "On the Propagation of Error and Superstition," and Section 1 of Essay IV, "Concerning Authority in Matters of Religion," may reflect the influence of Fontenelle's Histoire des Oracles.

Because Bolingbroke's reputation today rests chiefly on his political activities, it may be surprising to discover that he wrote a large volume of philosophical essays. These essays, which concentrate on problems of religion and morality, remained unpublished by his strict instructions until 1754, three years after his death. At that time their publication caused a flood of hostile pamphlets which focused upon Bolingbroke's religious opinions. Many prominent writers, including Dr. Johnson, were infuriated to read his criticism of organized religion. Johnson himself did not hesitate to condemn Bolingbroke for his views:

"Sir, he was a scoundrel, and a coward: a scoundrel for charging a blunderbuss against religion and Morality; a coward, because he had not resolution to fire it off himself, but left half a crown to a beggarly Scotchman [David Mallett], to draw the trigger after his death!"⁹⁹

Other readers, such as William Pitt, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, William Warburton and Edmund Burke, were equally critical.¹⁰⁰ They accused Bolingbroke of being repetitious, inconsistent, and superficial, not to mention boring and long-winded. In addition, these critics argued that the destruction of revealed religion would lead to the end of civil society. They disagreed emphatically with Bolingbroke's

reasoning, which, as I will show, had much in common with Toland's and Collins' earlier in the century. Although Bolingbroke had less influence in the deistic controversy than might be expected from this account of hostile critical response, he is still important because of the intellectual questions he tackled. His essays provide a link from the earlier deistic expressions (Toland and Collins) to the later ones in the mid-century (Middleton and Hume). Bolingbroke composed the majority of them during the decade after his return from France (1725-1735), so that is it not surprising to note a definite dependence upon the ideas of French philosophers.¹⁰¹ Besides Fontenelle, Bolingbroke owes debts to Bayle and Malebranche. However, I will focus upon the influence of Fontenelle's Histoire des Oracles upon the two essays mentioned above.

In Section 3 of Essay II, entitled "On the Propagation of Error and Superstition," Bolingbroke attributes the corruption of natural religion first to a long tradition of pagan tales and poems, then to priestcraft. This is the same sequence of events which Fontenelle, Toland and Collins observed. Bolingbroke writes,

The poems of Homer, and the whole pagan theology, like embroidered or painted curtains, coarsely wrought by superstition first, and afterwards enriched and heightened in their coloring by the imaginations of poets, hid the true scene, wherein the principles of natural theology are to be found, from vulgar sight, which they amused with gaudy and grotesque figures, out of the proportions and forms of nature, divine or human, instead of shewing this

scene in that simplicity, which it will appear to every sober eye.¹⁰²

He then equates the authority of poets with that of priests later on:

. . . the great principle that maintained all the corruptions of natural religion, was that of priestcraft. Philosophers and priests were the same persons long, as I imagine that bards and philosophers had been before: and when they assumed their distinct characters the priests were too powerful, and the people too bigotted, to hope for any reformation. . . . Nothing was too absurd for stupid credulity to receive; nor for artifice, emboldened by success, to impose. Sham miracles were shewn . . . and those errors, which had contracted the rust of antiquity, became, for that reason alone, venerable. In short, the whole scheme of religion was applied then, as it is in many countries, Christian and others, still, to the advantage of those who had the conduct of it.¹⁰³

Unlike Fontenelle, Bolingbroke does not enumerate the various tricks of the priests, yet he does draw parallels between the function of oracles and that of Christian allegories:

Allegory, in the true intention of it, is designed to make clearer as well as stronger impressions on the mind: and, therefore, as they who pretend to foretel future events should be suspected of imposture when they deliver their predictions, like those who governed the oracles of the heathen world, in obscure and equivocal terms, that may be applied afterwards, as they often were, to different and even contrary events; so they, who pretend to teach divine truths in allegoical, symbolical, or any mysterious language, deserve to be suspected of imposture likewise.¹⁰⁴

In the Histoire Fontenelle merely hints that such a correlation between oracles and allegories exists; however, Bolingbroke could afford to be more explicit, since he did not plan on publishing his essays during his lifetime.

Another Fontenellian idea which Bolingbroke expresses in his section on superstition deals with the human love for the "marvelous" and its role in perpetuating religious mystery. He claims that the fables, parables and "fraud of oracles" served only to "amuse the vulgar," for "in divine matters, the marvellous, the improbable, nay the impossible and the unintelligible, make the strongest impressions on vulgar minds."¹⁰⁵ Fontenelle had likewise asserted that the "marvellous" held a strong attraction for masses of pagan worshippers. The secrecy surrounding the oracles intrigued them, and they were not inclined to question even obvious impostures. It is this very element of mystery which passed into Christianity, according to the deists, and defiled its purity. Consequently, in order to restore to Christianity its natural simplicity, the people must recognize and eliminate man-made mysteries. Otherwise "human imposture may pass for divine revelation, and the word of man for the word of God."¹⁰⁵

As a final link in the chain of corruption, Bolingbroke, again like Fontenelle, names the "force of habit."

The whole system of mythology and pagan theology was so absurd, that it could not have been introduced into common belief, . . . if, after that error and knowledge growing up together, the former had not outgrown the other, and maintained itself against the improvements of human reason and of knowledge, by the force of habit.¹⁰⁹

Superstitious beliefs could scarcely retain their power without the aid of custom or habit. It reinforces even the most absurd practices and lends to them an air of ancient authority.

Bolingbroke continues his discussion of authority versus reason in Section 1 of Essay IV, entitled "Concerning Authority in Matters of Religion." There he sounds very much like Toland in his Letters to Serena, naming "nurses, parents, pedagogues . . . and custom" as forces which shape our opinions.¹⁰⁸ He believes that our "prejudices are established by education, and habits by custom," teaching us to think what others think instead of relying upon our own reason.¹⁰⁹

Wrong notions, and false principles, begot in this manner by authority, may be called properly enough the bastards of the mind: and yet they are nursed and preserved by it as if they were the legitimate issue. . . . The mind grows fond of them accordingly: and this mistaken application of self-love makes men zealous to defend and propagate them by the same kind of authority, and by every other sort of imposition. Thus they are perpetuated: and as long as they contract the rust of antiquity they grow to be more respected.¹¹⁰

Fontenelle even earlier than Toland had condemned the false authority which prejudice imposes upon our minds. Then he directly accused the priests of using their authority to perpetuate that prejudice. Bolingbroke makes this same accusation:

Resignation to authority will appear the more absurd if we consider, that by it we run two risks instead of one. We may deceive ourselves no doubt: but is the divine, is the philosopher, infallible? We shall not mean to deceive ourselves most certainly; but the divine, or the philosopher, may intend to deceive us: he may find his account in it, and deceit may be his trade.¹¹¹

The priests imagine that they have found an advantage in our easy submission to authority, which they have. They

carry this advantage even further by "adding art to nature, falsehood to truth, and their own inventions for divine communications."¹¹² As a result, religion grows "voluminous and mysterious" until it is no longer recognizable as God's dispensation.¹¹³

We can see from this examination of Bolingbroke's two essays that he, like Fontenelle, Toland, and Collins before him, felt there was a real need to return to the clarity and purity of natural religion. Priests and theologians had made the simple both obscure and artificial. They had adopted superstitious practices and beliefs from pagan religions and used them to promote error and their own authority. Fontenelle admittedly was narrower in his attack, for he appeared to direct his main criticism only toward the pagan practice of oracles. Yet much lies beneath the surface in the Histoire des Oracles to suggest a broader attack upon superstition, miracles, and false authority in Christianity as a whole. Toland and Collins took up the issue shortly afterwards and became more explicit in their call for religious reform. By the time that Bolingbroke wrote his essays the controversy was by no means resolved. He did not even dare to publish his thoughts during his lifetime. Yet the fact that he wrote them at all confirms his link with Fontenelle and the English deists Toland and Collins. They all felt that orthodox Christianity was inconsistent with reason, and that man should be guided, as

far as possible, by his reason. Therefore each of these writers was compelled to expose corrupt practices and beliefs in an effort to enlighten the people.

IV

Conyers Middleton, whose attack on the orthodox doctrines of Christianity was, according to Leslie Stephen, "incomparably the most effective of the whole deist controversy," was one of the first deists to apply the historical method to Biblical criticism.¹¹⁴ In A Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers of the Christian Church (1748) he subjects the Christian miracles to the same scrutiny which Fontenelle applies to the pagan oracles in his Histoire des Oracles. In fact, because of his approach in examining both specific miracles and the characters and opinions of the witnesses, he reminds me very much of Lévy-Bruhl's suggestion about substituting the word "miracles" in place of "oracles" in Fontenelle's title.¹¹⁵ If Fontenelle had dared, he would perhaps have called his book a "history of miracles," a title which Lévy-Bruhl considers to be more descriptive of his purpose. Middleton's Free Inquiry is like a more explicit version of the Histoire, in which the English writer carries out the implications of the earlier French work. While Fontenelle did not dare to question openly the authenticity of the Christian miracles, Middleton does this and more. He concludes that if either the facts alleged concerning a miracle or the witnesses of a miracle be

"incredible," then that miracle must be denied. Consequently, after a thorough examination of the miracles of the Fathers, he concludes that miracles in general must be denied.

As a prominent Churchman, Middleton must have occupied an ambiguous position in the controversy. He saw that the Christian apologists placed themselves in a vulnerable position when they tried to defend the historical accuracy of every statement in the Bible. Yet whenever he examined the Scriptures in the context of secular history and human experience, he could see no intermediate position. One must either blindly accept the Bible's word, or he must reject it. Because Middleton chose the latter position he forfeited his chances for preferment within the Church and left himself open to the sarcastic remarks of opponents.¹⁶ He was ridiculed when he did not disavow his ministerial orders, and probably he felt himself to be in a false position. As a result, Stephen says that he has the tone of a disappointed man, one who was ambitious to be regarded as a man of the world, yet found himself instead doomed to academic retirement.¹¹⁹

In spite of the stifling results which A Free Inquiry had upon his career, Middleton still showed a better understanding of the true conditions of the controversy than any previous writer, including Toland and Collins. He was the first to see that besides the old hypotheses of supernatural interference and human imposture, a third alternative to the

question of miracles existed in a scientific method of enquiry.¹¹⁸ By applying the same methods of enquiry to all periods and all nations, he intended to show the continuity of history. The early Christians were no different from the Jews and Gentiles in their exploitation of the miraculous. They were guilty of deliberate fraud and imposture in order to further the claims of Christianity.

As I stated earlier, Middleton's approach to the problem of the credibility of miracles is practically identical with that of Fontenelle in regard to oracles. It is quite possible that Middleton had Fontenelle's Histoire des Oracles in mind when he composed A Free Inquiry, for he mentions it by name on the last page of the book:

Mons. de Fontenelle, a writer justly celebrated for his admirable parts and learning, speaking of the origin and progress of these popular superstitions, says, "Give me but half a dozen persons, whom I can persuade, that it is not the sun, which makes our day light, and I should not despair of drawing whole nations to embrace the same belief. For how ridiculous soever the opinion be, let it be supported only for a certain time, and the business is done: for when it once becomes ancient, it is sufficiently proved."

-----Histoire des Oracles, c.xl.¹¹⁹

This comment, along with the many parallel ideas and the similar approach, leads me to believe that Fontenelle was a significant source for Middleton's study of miracles. In order to prove this claim, however, we must examine A Free Inquiry more closely.

In the preface to his book Middleton expresses the same confidence in the scientific discovery of truth that Fontenelle does:

The light of truth indeed is sure to expose the vanity of all those popular systems and prejudices, which are to be found in every country; derived originally from error, fraud, or superstition; and craftily imposed upon the many, to serve the interests of a few.¹²⁰

He too feels that falsehoods, even though imposed upon a true system of belief, can do nothing but detract from that truth. Such falsehoods must be exposed to the light of reason before they become so intertwined with the truth as to be indistinguishable. Also like Fontenelle, Middleton laments that the mark of a true Christian seems to be his "facility of believing."

(There are those) who, from a blind deference to authority, think the credibility of a witness sufficient, to evince the certainty of all facts indifferently, whether natural or supernatural, probably or improbably; and knowing no distinction between faith and credulity, take a facility of believing, to be the surest mark of a sound Christian.¹²¹

Instead of blindly following authority and tradition, Middleton proposes to use "plain reasoning grounded on plain facts . . . to free the minds of men from an inveterate imposture, which, through a long succession of ages, has disgraced the religion of the Gospel."¹²² It is this same purpose which Fontenelle expresses in a more veiled manner in the preface to the Histoire.

Middleton outlines his argument early in A Free Inquiry, much as Fontenelle states the two basic arguments behind his "dissertations." From his outline the similar approach both writers take is readily apparent. Middleton intends first to relate all the "principal testimonies"

concerning miracles from the writings of the Fathers, and then to examine "the condition" or believability of the alleged miracle-workers. After this he will "illustrate the particular characters and opinions of the Fathers," in order to determine their credibility as well. Finally he intends to review the nature of the miracles themselves, and to refute objections which pious Christians may have to his conclusions.¹²³ Fontenelle is not so explicit in naming the order of his argument, yet we may deduce one from the work itself. He first describes all the testimonies of oracles from ancient writings, then reflects upon the devotees and the priests. Next he discusses the ancient writers whose works are seen as proof of the existence of oracles. Last he exposes the nature of the oracles and the machinations of the priests, with a brief defense of his conclusions for those readers who may disagree with him. Thus, both Fontenelle and Middleton adopt a similar plan of attack, the only difference being that between "oracles" and "miracles." Middleton assumes that miracles have ceased, and he attempts to discover when and where they ceased. Likewise Fontenelle is certain that oracles ceased long ago, and he sets out to determine when and where from historical evidence.

At one point in his study Middleton speculates upon the system of pagan idolatry, including oracles, and concludes like Fontenelle that such a system of belief "lays a man the most open to the delusive arts of Impostors."

For a mind, so totally possessed by superstitious fancies, and disturbed by vain terrors, could not have either the judgement to discern, or the inclination to examine, or the courage even to suspect the pretensions of those vagrant Jugglers, who, in those primitive ages, were so numerous, and so industriously employed in the affair of deluding their fellow creatures.¹²⁴

He would like to believe that Christians were exempt from such a "pitch of credulity," but history proves otherwise:

When pious Christians are arrived to this pitch of credulity, as to believe, that evil spirits or evil men can work real miracles, in defiance and opposition to the authority of the Gospel, their very piety will oblige them, to admit as miraculous, whatever is pretended to be wrought in the defence of it, and so make them of course the implicit dupes of their own wonder-workers.¹²⁵

In fact, as Middleton states later on, "the greatest zealots in religion . . . have seldom scrupled to make use of a commodious lie, for the advancement of what they call the truth."¹²⁵ Therefore, both a credulous people and overly zealous priests were responsible for the corruption of Christianity. These factors were part of the general intellectual condition of the age, and as such were the true source of miracles.

In conclusion to his lengthy examination of the history of miracles, Middleton suggests that it would be "prudent" to "suspend our assent to reports of a miraculous kind." He feels that he has shown how "opinions, wholly absurd and contrary to nature, may gain credit and establishment through ages and nations . . . til being checked from time to time by the gradual improvements of science, and the

successive efforts of reason . . . they have failed at last into such utter contempt, as to make us wonder, how it was possible for them, ever to have obtained any credit."¹²⁷

Belief in oracles and in many of the Christian miracles had reached such a state of disrepute in the eighteenth century that many men were led by the whole argument into scepticism. They could no longer believe in the miraculous facts in the Bible upon the evidence alone. However, despite their scepticism, authors such as Fontenelle and Middleton felt that they had at least learned one thing from the "uncertainty of ancient History":

. . . human nature has always been the same; agitated by the same appetites and passions, and liable to the same excesses and abuses of them, in all ages and countries of the world; so that our experience of what passes in the present age, will be the best comment, on what is delivered to us concerning the past.¹²⁸

It is upon this Fontenellian note that Middleton ends his Free Inquiry. Like his French predecessor he hopes "by a right use of our reason and judgment, to raise our minds above the low prejudices, and childish superstitions of the credulous vulgar."¹²⁹

V

The year 1748 was further distinguished by another noteworthy contribution to the discussion on miracles--David Hume's section X, "Of Miracles" (commonly entitled the Essay on Miracles), from An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding. Hume had been interested in the credibility of miracles from

the time of his first visit to France in 1734.¹³⁰ While there he spent over two years at the Jesuit College of La Flèche, giving him ample opportunity to discuss the subject of miracles with "a Jesuit of some parts and learning."¹³¹ We may guess from the current controversy over miracles that one topic of their conversation probably focused upon the Abbé Paris and the alleged miracles at his tomb. An additional topic of interest may well have been Fontenelle's Histoire des Oracles. Fontenelle's book had been hotly disputed among the Jesuits from the moment of its publication, and Père Baltus' attack on it in 1707-8 indicates that the dispute was still raging then. For a discussion of miracles with the Jesuits one can scarcely imagine that the priests would have overlooked an opportunity to attack the Histoire.

While we cannot be sure exactly when Hume was introduced to Fontenelle's book, there is no doubt from references in his writings that he had read a significant number of them. He alludes to or quotes from the Pluralité des Mondes, the Discours sur la Nature de l'Églogue, the Reflexions sur la Poétique and the Histoire des Oracles.¹³² Concerning the Histoire Hume takes issue with one of Fontenelle's observations about Plutarch's dialogue on oracles:

And here I cannot but observe, that Mons. Fontenelle, a writer eminent for candor, seems to have departed a little from his usual character, when he endeavors to throw a ridicule upon Plutarch on account of passages to be met with in this dialogue concerning oracles. The absurdities here put into the mouths of the several personages are not to be ascribed to

Plutarch. He makes them refute each other; and, in general, he seems to intend the ridiculing of those very opinions, which Fontenelle would ridicule him for maintaining. See Histoire des Oracles.¹³³

Hume has just commented upon the "odd texture" of Plutarch's dialogue, for "the personages he introduces advance very wild, absurd, and contradictory opinions."¹³⁴ Yet he feels that Plutarch was being satirical rather than sincere in advancing these opinions, whereas Fontenelle understood Plutarch to be serious. Whatever the correct interpretation, however, this passage offers evidence that Hume had read Fontenelle's Histoire des Oracles in some detail. At least two other works by Hume illustrate Fontenelle's influence through this work, the Essay on Miracles (1748) which I mentioned earlier, and The Natural History of Religion (1757). These essays continued the trend toward a denial of Christian miracles which Fontenelle had begun, and they created an atmosphere of scepticism. With their publication came the decline of public interest in theological controversy. After Middleton and Hume the dispute seems to have ended, until Paine's Age of Reason at the end of the century.

Hume's statement of purpose in his Essay on Miracles sounds very much like that of Fontenelle and Middleton in their works: to present "an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion."¹³⁵ However, Fontenelle and the English deists whom I have discussed attempt to define the nature of religion in purely rationalistic terms, while

Hume insists that human reason is limited. He maintains that we are in no position to assume anything concerning eternal truth; rather experience and observation should be our guides in determining the credibility of events.¹³⁶ In his challenge of reason, therefore, Hume differs from these previous writers. Yet several of his conclusions sound remarkably like those of Fontenelle in the Histoire. For instance, in speculating upon the element of the "marvelous" in miracles Hume says:

. . . when anything is affirmed utterly absurd and miraculous, it rather the more readily admits of such a fact, upon account of that very circumstance, which ought to destroy all its authority. The passion of surprise and wonder, arising from miracles, being an agreeable emotion, gives a sensible tendency towards the belief of those events, from which it is derived.¹³⁷

Fontenelle had stated much earlier that man's love for the marvelous inclined him toward a belief in oracles and other religious miracles. Instead of an event's casting doubt, the more absurd and miraculous it is, the more people believe it and repeat it as truth from one generation to the next.

As Hume says,

Suppose, for instance, that the fact, which the testimony endeavors to establish, partakes of the extraordinary and the marvellous; in that case, the evidence, resulting from the testimony, admits of a diminution, greater or less, in proportion as the fact is more or less unusual.¹³⁸

The elements of wonder and surprise seem to act as added proof in favor of miracles, no matter how extraordinary the event.

Hume also discusses the deceits of priests and theologians in furthering superstitious beliefs and practices, although he does so in more abstract terms than Fontenelle:

But if the spirit of religion join itself to the love of wonder, there is an end of common sense; and human testimony, in these circumstances, loses all pretensions to authority. A religionist may be an enthusiast, and imagine he sees no reality: he may know his narrative to be false, and yet persevere in it with the best intentions in the world, for the sake of promoting so holy a cause. . . . His auditors may not have, and commonly have not, sufficient judgement to canvass his evidence; what judgement they have, they renounce by principle, in these sublime and mysterious subjects: or if they were ever so willing to employ it, passion and a heated imagination disturb the regulatiry of its operations. Their credulity increases his impudence; and his impudence overpowers their credulity.¹³⁹

Hume acknowledges, like Fontenelle, that religious zeal combined with a love of wonder leads priests to exploit the credulousness of the masses. In addition, vanity and self-interest are powerful factors in corrupting religious leaders.

One final observation which Hume makes in his Essay on Miracles is very reminiscent of Fontenelle. He cites the ignorance of the people as a chief cause in the flourishing of miracles:

It forms a strong presumption against all supernatural and miraculous relations, that they are observed chiefly to abound among ignorant and barbarous nations; or if a civilized people has ever given admission to any of them, that people will be found to have received them from ignorant and barbarous ancestors, who transmitted them with that inviolable sanction and authority, which always attend received opinions.¹⁴⁰

Fontenelle had somewhat humorously noted two factors necessary for the existence of oracles: ignorant people and an

abundance of caverns. Both authors realized that the credulousness of the people and their passive submission to authority contributed immeasurably to the belief in miraculous events. If the people had been more enlightened and civilized, perhaps superstition would not have exercised such a sway. However, Hume concludes, like Fontenelle and Middleton, that man's inclination toward the marvelous "can never be thoroughly extirpated from human nature."¹⁴¹

As a consequence of his analysis of miracles, Hume decides that "no testimony for any kind of miracle has ever amounted to a probability, much less to a proof"¹⁴² and therefore "no human testimony can have such force as to prove a miracle, and make it a just foundation for any such system of religion."¹⁴³ It is this bold assertion which created such a scandal and gained for Hume the reputation of an anti-clerical zealot.

In his next essay on religion, The Natural History of Religion (1749-51, p. 1757), Hume turns from the abstract reasoning of the Essay on Miracles to historical methods more like those of Fontenelle. He intends to explore two principal questions about religion: "its foundation in reason" and "its origin in human nature,"¹⁴⁴ both of which Fontenelle explored in the Histoire des Oracles. In speculating about the origin of religion Hume surmises that "the first ideas of religion arose not from a contemplation of the works of nature, but from a concern with regard to the

events of life, and from the incessant hopes and fears, which actuate the human mind."¹⁴⁵ Fontenelle had made a similar conjecture in discussing oracles when he attributed their origin and progress to man's hopes and fears. People consulted oracles out of a desire to know the outcome of certain undertakings in their lives; they were hopeful and curious, yet at the same time fearful and apprehensive lest they be punished for not consulting the oracles. This theory is basically the same one which Hume applies to the origin of religion in general: namely, that man's approach to religion was not philosophical or scientific, but natural; it was due to his hopes and fears regarding birth, death, health, sickness and other "events of life." The foundations of religion did not lie in reason.

In regard to priests Hume allows that their artifice is responsible for perpetuating the "depraved ideas of mankind," but that man's "natural infirmities and follies" beget the ideas:

Even priests, instead of correcting these depraved ideas of mankind, have often been found ready to foster and encourage them. The more tremendous the divinity is represented, the more tame and submissive do men become to his ministers: And the more unaccountable the measures of acceptance required by him, the more necessary does it become to abandon our ghostly guidance and direction. And thus it may be allowed, that the artifices of men aggravate our natural infirmities and follies of this kind, but never originally beget them. Their root strikes deeper into the mind, and springs from the essential and universal properties of human nature.¹⁴⁶

Likewise Fontenelle had maintained that priests exploited the natural human frailties, but the frailties themselves constituted the foundation for belief.

As evidence that Hume may have had Fontenelle's Histoire in mind when composing his essay, we may cite his discussion of the comedies of Aristophanes, in which he refers to Fontenelle's ideas on the subject from the Histoire, even crediting Fontenelle in his footnote to the passage:

Some writers have been surprised, that the impieties of Aristophanes, should have been tolerated, nay publicly acted and applauded, by the Athenians; a people so superstitious and so jealous of the public religion, that, at that very time, they put Socrates to death for his imagined incredulity. But these writers consider not, that the ludicrous, familiar images, under which the gods are represented by that comic poet, instead of appearing impious, were the genuine lights, in which the ancients conceived their divinities.¹⁴⁷

Fontenelle had said in the Histoire that the gods were never treated with less respect than in the comedies of Aristophanes, a fact which to him proved that the people were fickle in paying respect to their religion.

And it is sure the Gods were never treated with less respect, than in the Comedies of Aristophanes. . . . The Birds of Aristophanes are also very bold. All the Comedy turns upon this, that a certain City of Birds, which was designed to be built in the Air, would interrupt the trade and correspondence that was carried on between the Gods and Men; and by rendering the Birds Masters of all, would reduce the Gods to the utmost Misery. I leave you to judge, if this be not mighty devout. Yet this was the same Aristophanes, who endeavored to excite the Rabble against the pretended Impiety of Socrates.¹⁴⁸

The people attended the theatre and enjoyed these comedies, yet they also condemned Socrates for alleged atheism. Hume sees no contradiction in attitude here, since Aristophanes' plays do not appear impious to him. Instead he believes these comic representations reflect the pagans' concept of their gods. Thus, Hume's opinion differs from Fontenelle's, yet Hume's reference to it shows once more that he was quite familiar with the Histoire des Oracles.

From the above examples of Hume's familiarity with the Histoire, and with Fontenelle's works in general, I believe that we may consider it as a noteworthy influence upon Hume's religious essay. As I stated earlier, Hume's beliefs culminated in a denial of miracles, and it is this conclusion which Fontenelle implies in the Histoire. Fontenelle was not free even to question Christian miracles openly, yet he obviously implies that all the so-called mysteries should be scrutinized carefully in the light of reason. Like Middleton, Hume carries out Fontenelle's implications in his two essays, although he does not discuss a series of specific miracles as Middleton does. Rather he generalizes about the nature of religion and its origin in human nature, concluding like Fontenelle that people still build their religion upon "irrational and superstitious opinions" and not upon any "process of argument."¹⁴⁹

VI

As we can see from all of these historical accounts of Christian miracles, the controversy over reason and revelation was primarily concerned with man--with human nature and human conduct. Fontenelle and the English deists who followed his example seemed basically optimistic about man's nature. If error and even corruption were widespread in religion, they were not due to a defect in man's constitution. Rather human error could be explained by bad example, by custom and authority, by the prevalence of superstition, and above all by the sinister influence of priestcraft. The key to religious reform therefore lay in exposing the deceits of the priests and in combatting the tyranny of superstition and false authority with reason. It is true that man's natural predisposition toward the marvelous and mysterious made him particularly credulous, and this predisposition might never be totally eradicated.

Through their efforts at enlightenment, however, these writers hoped to curb the power of all of these factors. Thus they first challenged, then finally denied, the existence and value of oracles, prophecies, demons and miracles. All unseen powers were vulnerable to historical and rational criticism.

While Fontenelle was certainly not the first writer to challenge the dogmatic authority of the Church or to discredit superstitious religious practices (his translation

of Van Dale proves this), his Histoire des Oracles was nonetheless "one of the earliest direct attacks upon entrenched theology in the name of free thought."¹⁵⁰ Because of its easy conversational style and its insights, it became popular almost immediately in both France and England. English writers such as the ones discussed above sensed the importance of Fontenelle's attack, and they promptly carried his implications further in their own works. Toland insisted upon the rational element in Christianity as well as exposed the origins of our prejudices and superstitions. Collins also emphasized the right to "free inquiry" in religious matters, and he was even more direct than Fontenelle or Toland in accusing Christians of having adopted pagan practices. Lord Bolingbroke really contributed nothing new to the controversy, since he too focused upon the imposture of priests, the human love of mystery, and the force of custom. Yet Bolingbroke's essays reveal the continuing concern with the corruptions of Christianity. It was with Middleton and Hume that the controversy progressed further. These two writers examined the evidence in favor of Christian miracles, and then emphatically declared that it was all invalid. Belief in miracles relied upon ignorance, deceit, and superstition to survive, and therefore this belief was contrary to the demands for rational proof.

The essays of Middleton and Hume carry Fontenelle's theological attack to its farthest point. After the

publication of Hume's The Natural History of Religion in 1757, it becomes difficult to trace the French writer's influence on this issue any longer. Because almost seventy-five years had passed since the publication of the Histoire by that time, however, it is amazing to note the duration of Fontenelle's influence in this area. He anticipated one of the most significant controversies of the eighteenth century, and his Histoire des Oracles reflected the concerns of rationalists in France and England alike.

CONCLUSION

Le génie de Fontenelle a dominé toute la période de transition entre le XVII^e et le XVIII^e siècles. Très tôt, sa pensée a été fixée . . . et jusqu'à sa mort il a défendu les mêmes idées. Sans doute, n'a-t-il rien inventé, n'a-t-il rien découvert; mais sa gloire réside surtout dans le fait qu'il a donné force et cohérence aux notions et aux thèses essentielles qui, développées, feront le 'siècle des lumières.'

---J. F. Counillon¹

If this work has made its point, it will have helped to correct the usual characterization of Fontenelle as a mere popularizer of the ideas of others. He was far from the mediocre Secretary of the Academy of Saturn which Voltaire satirically portrayed him as in Micromégas: a man who never invented a thing, but who gave a very good account of the inventions of others.² Scientifically speaking, Fontenelle did not invent anything, nor did he make any astounding new discoveries. However, as J. F. Counillon's assessment of Fontenelle indicates above, he gave force and coherence to the ideas which, once developed, became the foundation for the Age of Enlightenment.

I have discussed several of these ideas in the course of my study, primarily those which show the transformation

of thought leading from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century, from an age of faith, authority, and tradition to one of skepticism, independence, and free examination. Fontenelle stressed the perils of reliance upon dogmatic authority in the areas of science and religion as well as in that of literature. He saw man's use of his own reason as the basis for progress in a civilized age. Man himself might not be capable of moral progress, or even of political and social progress, but he could achieve scientific and intellectual progress through a recognition of his own rational powers. Thus, although Fontenelle's works may appear diverse, they are actually unified in their contribution to the idea of progress.

One way in which Fontenelle particularly influenced English writers was in the development of a "new" literary genre, the dialogue of the dead. His Nouveaux Dialogues des Morts inspired imitation by such writers as William King, John Hughes, Matthew Prior, and George, Lord Lyttelton. While the extent of his influence varied from one of these writers to the next, one should nonetheless recognize that Fontenelle's Dialogues revived and popularized the Lucianic genre. Without his example, English writers might never have attempted dialogues of the dead.

Fontenelle likewise played an important role in the development of English pastoral theory. The ideas in his Discours sur la Nature de l'Églogue offered a rationalistic

alternative to those of René Rapin, already popular in England, and began a critical controversy over the nature of pastoral poetry. This dispute lingered for several decades, involving writers from Sir William Temple and Alexander Pope to Ambrose Philips and Samuel Johnson. Besides suggesting new ideas about the nature and composition of pastoral poetry, Fontenelle's Discours stimulated a trend toward reliance upon reason and away from classical precedent. The criticism of Joseph Addison illustrates the beginning of this trend.

In the areas of science and religion Fontenelle was no less effective. His Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes treated the concepts of a plurality of worlds and the habitability of planets seriously, besides popularizing the Copernican system of the universe. The most popular of his books in England, it was read for at least a century by the general public and well-known authors alike. Some of the English writers who commented upon Fontenelle's Entretiens include Thomas Gray, Joseph Addison, the Earl of Chesterfield, Samuel Johnson, David Hume, and Horace Walpole. In addition, Matthew Prior and Alexander Pope incorporated several of Fontenelle's cosmic speculations into their poetry.

Although Fontenelle's Histoire des Oracles was less widely read in England than the Entretiens, it was still quite influential among deistic writers. His arguments against the blind acceptance of traditionally held religious

ideas prompted early writers such as John Toland and Anthony Collins to challenge Christian miracles. Bolingbroke, Conyers Middleton, and David Hume carried the controversy over reason and revelation further in their works. These later writers rationally examined Christian miracles, and then concluded, like Fontenelle, that they relied upon ignorance, deceit, and superstition to survive.

Fontenelle's major works thus left a definite mark on the works and ideas of many English writers. It would be an over-reaction to claim that his influence was equal to that of Bayle, Montesquieu, or Voltaire. Yet the impact of his works in England was certainly far from negligible. Because of the cosmopolitanism of thought which characterized his writings, he contributed greatly to the intellectual exchange between France and England.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER ONE

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²Fontenelle, p. 13.

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⁴John Hughes, trans., Fontenelle's Dialogues of the Dead in three parts (London, 1708), pp. ix-xxxix.

⁵Miriam Friedman, "Lucian in English Literature," Diss. Cornell University 1938, p. 273.

⁶Fontenelle, p. 28. This and all following translations are taken from Hughes' 1708 edition of the Dialogues.

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⁸Fontenelle, p. 16.

⁹Cosentini, p. 155.

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¹¹Ida E. Stewart, "Fontenelle's Influence on English Thought in the Eighteenth Century," Thesis Columbia University 1941, p. 5.

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²⁷Johnson, I, 370.

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²⁹Keener, p. 38.

³⁰Keener, p. 39.

³¹Keener, p. 39.

³²Colvile, p. 33.

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³⁴Colvile, p. 46.

³⁵Colvile, p. 81.

³⁶Colvile, p. 81.

³⁷Colvile, p. 84.

³⁸Colvile, p. 84.

³⁹Fontenelle, p. 65.

⁴⁰Colvile, p. 63.

⁴¹Fontenelle, p. 114.

⁴²Keener, pp. 46-47.

⁴³Keener, p. 38.

⁴⁴Friedman, "Lucian in English Literature," passim.

- ⁴⁵Johnson, I, 451.
- ⁴⁶Johnson, I, 450.
- ⁴⁷Johnson, I, 451.
- ⁴⁸Hughes, p. iii.
- ⁴⁹Hughes, p. ix.
- ⁵⁰Hughes, p. x.
- ⁵¹Hughes, p. xi.
- ⁵²Hughes, p. xii.
- ⁵³Hughes, pp. xiii-xiv.
- ⁵⁴Hughes, p. xxi.
- ⁵⁵Hughes, p. xxxix.
- ⁵⁶Hughes, p. 251.
- ⁵⁷Hughes, p. 251.
- ⁵⁸Fontenelle, pp. 121-23.
- ⁵⁹Fontenelle, pp. 157-60.
- ⁶⁰Fontenelle, pp. 183-86.
- ⁶¹Hughes, p. 254.
- ⁶²Hughes, p. 256.
- ⁶³Fontenelle, pp. 50-52.
- ⁶⁴Fontenelle, pp. 78-80.
- ⁶⁵Fontenelle, pp. 157-60.

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⁶⁸Prior, II, 916.

- ⁶⁹Prior, II, 1011.
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- ⁷¹Friedman, p. 125.
- ⁷²Keener, p. 27.
- ⁷³Keener, p. 28.
- ⁷⁴Prior, II, 1012.
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- ⁷⁶Keener, p. 22.
- ⁷⁷Prior, II, 1012.
- ⁷⁸Keener, p. 55.
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- ⁸¹Keener, p. 56.
- ⁸²Keener, p. 68.
- ⁸³Cosentini, p. 78.
- ⁸⁴Prior, I, 603.
- ⁸⁵Fontenelle, p. 33.
- ⁸⁶Prior, I, 613.
- ⁸⁷Prior, I, 652.
- ⁸⁸Prior, I, 655.
- ⁸⁹Prior, I, 658.
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- ⁹²Fontenelle, p. 96.
- ⁹³Fontenelle, p. 173.
- ⁹⁴Prior, I, 608.

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- ⁹⁶Prior, I, 637.
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- ¹⁰⁰Keener, p. 78.
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- ¹⁰³Johnson, II, 471.
- ¹⁰⁴Rose Mary Davis, The Good Lord Lyttelton: A Study in 18th-century Politics and Culture (Bethlehem, Penn.: Times Publishing Co., 1939), p. 310.
- ¹⁰⁵Davis, p. 310.
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- ¹¹⁰Keener, p. 76.
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- ¹¹²Davis, p. 322.
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- ¹¹⁵Keener, p. 89.
- ¹¹⁶George, Lord Lyttelton, Dialogues of the Dead, 2nd. ed. (London, 1760), p. 18.
- ¹¹⁷Lyttelton, p. 20.
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- 125 Fontenelle, p. 70.
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- 127 Lyttelton, p. 41.
- 128 Lyttelton, p. 42.
- 129 Lyttelton, p. 43.
- 130 Lyttelton, p. 49.
- 131 Lyttelton, pp. 59-60.
- 132 Lyttelton, p. 65.
- 133 Fontenelle, pp. 185-86.

CHAPTER II

¹J. E. Congleton, Theories of Pastoral Poetry in England, 1684-1798 (Gainesville: Univ. of Florida Press, 1952), pp. 321, n62.

²A. F. B. Clark, Boileau and the French Classical Critics in England, 1660-1830 (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Edouard Champion, 1925), p. 243.

³Clark, p. 243. Mr. Clark goes on to state that "this translation (i.e. Le Bossu's Traité du Poème épique) was reprinted in abbreviated form no less than thirteen times after 1725 with translations of Homer." He is establishing the authority and popularity of Le Bossu, and does not indicate that Fontenelle's and Dacier's essays also appeared with the translations of Homer. It is important to clarify this point because Ida E. Stewart ("Fontenelle's Influence on English Thought in the Eighteenth Century," Thesis Columbia University 1941) maintains that Fontenelle's essay "was reprinted no less than twenty-five times after 1725 together with translations of Homer" (p. 39). Since Mr. Clark is her only acknowledged source, and since her information is not supported by any current list of translations of Fontenelle, one must assume that Stewart misinterpreted Clark's reference and did not go to any other source for verification. Note also that Stewart cites twenty-five further editions whereas Clark mentions only thirteen. The source of Stewart's information is unclear, if it exists.

⁴Congleton, p. 65.

⁵Congleton, pp. 36 and 53.

⁶Congleton, p. 53.

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²³Fontenelle, pp. 343-44.

²⁴Fontenelle, p. 343.

²⁵Fontenelle, pp. 346-47.

²⁶Fontenelle, p. 345.

²⁷Congleton, p. 67.

²⁸Fontenelle, p. 339.

²⁹Fontenelle, pp. 345-46.

³⁰Fontenelle, p. 352.

³¹Fontenelle, pp. 352-53.

³²Fontenelle, p. 353.

³³Fontenelle, p. 353.

³⁴Fontenelle, p. 355.

³⁵Congleton, p. 70.

³⁶William Temple, Five Miscellaneous Essays, ed. Samuel Holt Monk (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1963), p. xxiv.

³⁷Congleton, p. 76.

³⁸Temple, p. 37.

³⁹Temple, p. 37.

⁴⁰Temple, pp. 37-38.

⁴¹Temple, p. 56.

⁴²Congleton, p. 77.

⁴³Knightly Chetwood, "Preface to the Pastorals," in The Works of John Dryden, Scott-saintsbury edition (Edinburgh, 1887), XVIII, 329.

⁴⁴Fontenelle, pp. 348-49.

⁴⁵Chetwood, p. 330.

⁴⁶Chetwood, p. 328.

⁴⁷Chetwood, p. 332.

⁴⁸Chetwood, p. 332.

⁴⁹Alexander Pope, Pastoral Poetry and An Essay On Criticism, eds. Émile Audra and Aubrey Williams (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1961), p. 13. Hereafter cited as "Pope."

⁵⁰Pope, p. 14.

⁵¹Pope, p. 19.

⁵²Pope, p. 29.

⁵³Pope, p. 30.

⁵⁴Pope, p. 24.

⁵⁵Pope, p. 25.

⁵⁶Pope, pp. 24-25.

⁵⁷Congleton, p. 81.

⁵⁸Pope, p. 23.

⁵⁹Pope, p. 27.

⁶⁰Fontenelle, p. 343.

- ⁶¹Pope, p. 27.
- ⁶²Pope, p. 29.
- ⁶³Fontenelle, p. 340.
- ⁶⁴Fontenelle, p. 351; Pope, p. 31.
- ⁶⁵Emile Audra, L'Influence française dans l'oeuvre de Pope (Paris: Champion, 1931), p. 169.
- ⁶⁶Congleton, p. 84.
- ⁶⁷Pope, p. 20.
- ⁶⁸Congleton, p. 84.
- ⁶⁹Jonathan Swift, The Poems of Jonathan Swift, ed. Harold Williams (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), III, 881.
- ⁷⁰Swift, III, 882.
- ⁷¹Swift, III, 882.
- ⁷²Swift, III, 882.
- ⁷³John Gay, Poetry and Prose, ed. Vinton A. Dearing (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), I, 90.
- ⁷⁴Gay, I, 91.
- ⁷⁵Gay, I, 92.
- ⁷⁶Gay, I, 99.
- ⁷⁷Gay, I, 101.
- ⁷⁸Gay, I, 106.
- ⁷⁹Gay, I, 108.
- ⁸⁰Joseph Addison, The Spectator, ed. Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), p. 49.
- ⁸¹Joseph Addison, The Letters, ed. Walter Graham (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), p. 49.
- ⁸²Addison, The Letters, pp. 229-30.
- ⁸³Addison, The Spectator: see #420 (July 2, 1712), III, 576; #505 (October 9, 1712), IV, 294; #576 (August 4, 1714), IV, 571; #519 (October 25, 1712), IV, 346.

⁸⁴Addison, The Spectator, III, 576, n2.

⁸⁵Ambrose Philips, The Poems of Ambrose Philips, ed. M. G. Segar (New York: Russell and Russell, 1969), p. xxi.

⁸⁶Philips, pp. 5-9.

⁸⁷Philips, p. 6.

⁸⁸Philips, p. 3.

⁸⁹Philips, p. 3.

⁹⁰Philips, p. 3.

⁹¹The Guardian papers nos. 22, 23, 28, 30 and 32 are generally ascribed to Tickell, but absolute proof of his authorship has not been shown. See J. E. Butt, "Notes for a Bibliography of Thomas Tickell," Bodleian Quarterly Record, V, 302.

⁹²Congleton, p. 87.

⁹³Thomas Tickell, The Guardian #22, in The British Classics (London, 1804), p.

⁹⁴Tickell, Guardian #22 and #23, pp. 108-16 passim.

⁹⁵Tickell, Guardian #22, p. 111.

⁹⁶Tickell, Guardian #22, p. 111.

⁹⁷Tickell, Guardian #23, p. 115.

⁹⁸Tickell, Guardian #30, p. 150.

⁹⁹Congleton, p. 324 and p. 51n.

¹⁰⁰Thomas Purney, "Advertisement Concerning the Language," in The Works of Thomas Purney, ed. H. O. White (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1933), p. 5.

¹⁰¹Purney, "Preface," pp. 51-52.

¹⁰²Thomas Purney, A Full Enquiry into the True Nature of Pastoral, ed. Earl Wasserman (1717; facsimile rpt. The Augustan Reprint Society, 1948. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press), Series two, no. 4, p. 24.

¹⁰³Purney, A Full Enquiry, p. 15.

- ¹⁰⁴Purney, A Full Enquiry, pp. 25-26.
- ¹⁰⁵Purney, A Full Enquiry, p. 4.
- ¹⁰⁶Purney, A Full Enquiry, p. 58.
- ¹⁰⁷Purney, A Full Enquiry, p. 27.
- ¹⁰⁸Purney, A Full Enquiry, p. 60.
- ¹⁰⁹Purney, "Preface," pp. 39-40.
- ¹¹⁰Congleton, p. 94.
- ¹¹¹Congleton, p. 95.
- ¹¹²Samuel Johnson, The Rambler, in The Yale Edition of The Works of Samuel Johnson, eds. W. J. Bate and A. B. Strauss (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1969), III, 195-205.
- ¹¹³Congleton, p. 97.
- ¹¹⁴Johnson, Rambler #37, III, 201.
- ¹¹⁵Johnson, Rambler #37, III, 201.
- ¹¹⁶Johnson, Rambler #37, III, 202.
- ¹¹⁷Johnson, Rambler #37, III, 205.
- ¹¹⁸Johnson, Rambler #36, III, 195.
- ¹¹⁹Johnson, Rambler #37, III, 200.
- ¹²⁰Johnson, Rambler #36, III, 199-200.
- ¹²¹Clark, Boileau and the French Classical Critics in England, p. 296.

CHAPTER THREE

¹Suzanne Delorme, "Fontenelle: l'homme et son temps," Journées Fontenelle (Paris: Centre International de Synthèse, 1957), p. 16.

²Bernard de Fontenelle, Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes, ed. Robert Shackleton (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 11.

For a complete list of these twenty-eight editions, including the English, Italian and Russian translations, consult Shackleton's list on pp. 40-47 of his critical edition of the Entretiens; and Delorme's bibliography in Journées Fontenelle, which is augmented in "Contribution à la Bibliographie de Fontenelle," Révue d'histoire des sciences, 10, No. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1957), 300-309.

In my work I have used Shackleton's critical edition based upon Fontenelle's 1742 edition, which includes the final revisions made when Fontenelle was 85; the 1825 Paris edition from volume II of the Oeuvres de Fontenelle (Paris: Salmon, Peytieux, 1825), 129-252; and Alexandre Calambe's critical edition of the Entretiens (Paris: M. Didier, 1966).

In addition, I have consulted four eighteenth-century translations and one nineteenth-century translation of the Entretiens:

- (1) A Theory of the System of Several New Inhabited Worlds, trans. Aphra Behn, in The Novels and Translations of Aphra Behn, 6th ed. (London, 1718), 1-114.
- (2) A Week's Conversation on the Plurality of Worlds, trans. William Gardiner, 4th ed. (London, 1757).
- (3) Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds, no translator listed (Dublin, 1761).
- (4) Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds, trans. A. Gentleman of the Inner Temple (London, 1767).
- (5) A Week's Conversation on the Plurality of Worlds, no translator listed, 9th ed. (Edinburgh, 1809).

³Leonard Marsak, "Bernard de Fontenelle: The Idea of Science in the French Enlightenment," Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, NS 49, part 7 (Dec. 1959), p. 18.

⁴Marsak, p. 18.

⁵Marsak, p. 17.

⁶Bernard de Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation on the Plurality of Worlds, trans. William Gardiner, 4th ed. (London, 1757), p. i.

All the English quotations from the Entretiens which I have used in this chapter come from Gardiner's translation. I found it to be the most lucid of those I examined.

⁷Fontenelle, Entretiens, p. ii.

⁸Fontenelle, Entretiens, p. iii.

⁹Delorme, p. 15.

¹⁰Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 4.

¹¹Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 6.

¹²Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 9.

¹³Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 12-13.

¹⁴Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 35.

¹⁵Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 47.

¹⁶Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 48.

¹⁷Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, pp. 57-58.

¹⁸Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, pp. 65, 68.

¹⁹Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 92.

²⁰Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 92.

²¹Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 95.

²²Marsak, p. 14.

²³Marsak, p. 14.

²⁴Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, pp. 114-15.

²⁵Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 16.

²⁶Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 111.

²⁷Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 102.

²⁸Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 103.

- ²⁹Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 106.
- ³⁰Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 109.
- ³¹Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 116.
- ³²See Fontenelle's Théorie des tourbillons cartésiens avec des réflexions sur l'attraction (1752).
- ³³Suzanne Delorme, "Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle," in The Dictionary of Scientific Biography, V (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), p. 62.
- ³⁴Delorme, Dictionary, p. 62.
- ³⁵See in particular the work of Privat de Molières, who defended, with some modifications, the theory of vortices.
- ³⁶Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 129.
- ³⁷Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 130.
- ³⁸Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 134.
- ³⁹Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 135.
- ⁴⁰Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 150.
- ⁴¹Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 161.
- ⁴²Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 176.
- ⁴³Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 182.
- ⁴⁴Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, pp. 189-90.
- ⁴⁵Marsak, p. 16.
- ⁴⁶Delorme, Dictionary, p. 62.
- ⁴⁷l'Abbé Trublet, Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la vie et les oeuvres de M. de Fontenelle (Amsterdam, 1757), p. 249. The translation is my own.
- ⁴⁸Delorme, Dictionary, p. 59.
- ⁴⁹George Watson, ed., The New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature, II (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1971), 1512 s.v. Fontenelle.

Shackleton and Delorme greatly supplement this list of translations in the bibliographies to their studies on

Fontenelle. (See above entries for titles) My list is selective and compiled from all three sources.

⁵⁰Bernard de Fontenelle, Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds, no translator listed (Dublin, 1761), p. 1.

⁵¹Bernard de Fontenelle, Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds, trans. A Gentleman of the Inner Temple (London, 1767), pp. xvix-xxvii.

⁵²Bernard de Fontenelle, The Dialogues of the Dead, in three parts, trans. John Hughes (London, 1708), p. i.

⁵³M. de Voltaire, "Memoir of the Life and Writings of the late M. de Fontenelle," in A Week's Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds, 9th ed. (Edinburgh, 1809), p. 8.

⁵⁴Thomas Gray, Works, ed. Edmund Gosse (London, 1884), III, 166.

⁵⁵Donald F. Bond, ed., The Spectator (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1965), III, 576.

⁵⁶The Spectator, No. 420 (July 2, 1712), III, 575.

⁵⁷The Spectator, No. 420 (July 2, 1712), III, 576.

⁵⁸See the Fifth Evening's Conversation.

⁵⁹The Spectator, No. 519 (October 25, 1712), IV, 346.

⁶⁰Charles Strachey, ed., The Letters of the Earl of Chesterfield to his Son (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1901), I, 297.

⁶¹Letters, III, 136-39.

⁶²Samuel Johnson, The Adventurer, No. 39 (March 20, 1753) in The Idler and The Adventurer, eds. W. J. Bate et al. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1963), p. 345.

⁶³James Boswell, Boswell's Life of Johnson, ed. G. B. Hill, rev. L. F. Powell (1934; rpt. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971), I, 17. The editor reports that Johnson translated Fontenelle's Panegyrick on Dr. Morin, which appeared in the Gentleman's Magazine in 1741. Johnson apparently never acknowledged it, but Boswell fully believed it to be his from internal evidence.

⁶⁴Boswell, III, 247.

⁶⁵David Hume, The Philosophical Works, eds. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (1886; rpt. Germany: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1964), III, 94.

⁶⁶Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 167.

⁶⁷Hume, III, 226-27.

⁶⁸Hume, III, 225.

⁶⁹W. S. Lewis, ed., A Selection of the Letters of Horace Walpole (New York: Harper and Bros., 1926), II, 357.

⁷⁰Letters, II, 357.

⁷¹Matthew Prior, The Literary Works, ed. H. Bunker Wright and Monroe K. Spears (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1971), II, 1012.

⁷²Prior, II, 916.

⁷³Prior, II, 913.

⁷⁴Prior, II, 914.

⁷⁵Prior, I, 310.

⁷⁶Prior, I, 325.

⁷⁷Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 137.

⁷⁸Prior, I, 326.

⁷⁹Prior, I, 326.

⁸⁰Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 12.

⁸¹Prior, I, 324.

⁸²Prior, I, 325.

⁸³Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 134.

⁸⁴Prior, I, 326.

⁸⁵Prior, I, 325.

⁸⁶Fontenelle, A Week's Conversation, p. 92.

⁸⁷George Sherburn, ed., The Correspondence of Alexander Pope (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1956), I, 369.

⁸⁸Correspondence, I, 106.

⁸⁹Marjorie Hope Nicolson and G. S. Rousseau, "This Long Disease, My Life": Alexander Pope and the Sciences (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), pp. 134-35n.

⁹⁰Alexander Pope, The Rape of the Lock and Other Poems, ed. Geoffrey Tillotson (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1942), II, 162-63.

⁹¹Pope, II, 359-60.

⁹²Pope, II, 359. Tillotson's quotation is from Glanvil's translation of Fontenelle's Entretiens, 2nd ed., 1695.

⁹³Pope, II, 203-4.

⁹⁴Alexander Pope, The Prose Works of Alexander Pope, ed. Norman Ault (Oxford: Shapesspeare Head Press, 1936), I, 127-40. In attributing the letter to Pope, Ault stresses "the presence of ideas which he is known to have entertained from time to time" (lxviii-lxx). Marjorie Nicolson agrees with Ault's attribution. See pp. 149-50 of "This long disease, my life": Alexander Pope and the Sciences.

⁹⁵Pope, Prose Works, pp. 137-40.

⁹⁶Pope, Prose Works, pp. 137-40.

⁹⁷Pope, Prose Works, pp. 137-40.

⁹⁸Alexander Pope, The Poems of Alexander Pope, ed. Maynard Mack (London: Methuen, 1950), III, i, 15-16.

⁹⁹Alexander Pope, The Dunciad, ed. James Sutherland (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1943), V, 348-49.

¹⁰⁰Pope, The Dunciad, p. 349n.

¹⁰¹Nicolson, Alexander Pope and the Sciences, pp. 201-6.

¹⁰²Nicolson, "Pope and Astronomy," in Alexander Pope and the Sciences.

¹⁰³Marjorie Nicolson, Voyages to the Moon (New York: Macmillan, 1948), pp. 5809.

¹⁰⁴Marjorie Nicolson, "The Microscope and English Imagination," in Science and Imagination (New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1956), p. 184.

¹⁰⁵Nicolson, Science and Imagination, p. 184.

¹⁰⁶Nicolson, Science and Imagination, p. 185.

¹⁰⁷Marsak, p. 18.

¹⁰⁸Arthur O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being
(Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1936), p. 130.

CHAPTER FOUR

¹Suzanne Delorme, "Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle," Dictionary of Scientific Biography (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), V, 60.

For a discussion of Père Baltus' objections to the Histoire des Oracles, see his "Réponse à l'histoire des oracles" as quoted by Louis Maigron in the critical edition of Fontenelle's Histoire des Oracles, 2nd ed. (Paris: librairie E. Droz, 1934).

²Suzanne Delorme, "Fontenelle: l'homme et son temps," Journées Fontenelle (Paris: Centre Internationale de Synthèse, 1957), p. 16.

³Delorme, "Fontenelle: l'homme et son temps," quoted from Voltaire's Lettres à son Altesse Mgr. le prince de Brunswick sur Rabelais et sur d'autres auteurs accusés d'avoir mal parlé de la religion chrétienne, Lettre Vii, "Sur les Français" (1767).

⁴Bernard de Fontenelle, Histoire des Oracles, ed. Louis Maigron (Paris: Librairie E. Droz, 1934), p. x.

⁵Fontenelle, Histoire des Oracles, p. x.

⁶Fontenelle, Histoire des Oracles, p. x.

⁷Bernard de Fontenelle, Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes, ed. Robert Shackleton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 11.

⁸Bernard de Fontenelle, The History of Oracles and the Cheats of the Pagan Priests, trans. Aphra Behn in The Novels and Translations of Aphra Behn (London, 1718), II, 139.

⁹Francois Marie Arouet de Voltaire, "Oracles," Dictionnaire philosophique, ed. Raymond Naves (Paris: Garnier, 1967).

¹⁰Fontenelle, The History of Oracles, II, 148. Hereafter cited as "Fontenelle." All English quotations are from Behn's translation.

¹¹Leonard Marsak, "Bernard de Fontenelle: The Idea of Science in the French Enlightenment," Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, NS 49, part 7 (Dec. 1959), p. 54.

¹²Fontenelle, II, 150.

¹³Fontenelle, II, 151. Fontenelle devotes a chapter to each of these reasons.

¹⁴Fontenelle, II, 153.

¹⁵Fontenelle, II, 160.

¹⁶Fontenelle, II, 161. Fontenelle devotes a chapter to the inadequacies of each of the three reasons.

¹⁷Fontenelle, II, 161.

¹⁸Fontenelle, II, 161-62.

¹⁹Fontenelle, II, 172.

²⁰Fontenelle, II, 177.

²¹Fontenelle, II, 182.

²²Fontenelle, II, 185.

²³Fontenelle, II, 188-89.

²⁴Fontenelle, II, 189.

²⁵Fontenelle, II, 197.

²⁶Fontenelle, II, 210-11.

²⁷Fontenelle, II, 212.

²⁸Fontenelle, II, 212.

²⁹Fontenelle, II, 216.

³⁰Fontenelle, II, 218.

³¹Fontenelle, II, 223.

³²Fontenelle, II, 228.

³³Fontenelle, II, 233.

³⁴Fontenelle, II, 237.

³⁵Fontenelle, II, 244.

³⁶Fontenelle, II, 247.

³⁷Fontenelle, II, 252.

³⁸Fontenelle, II, 263.

³⁹Fontenelle, II, 278.

⁴⁰Fontenelle, II, 287.

⁴¹Modern critics such as Paul Hazard, Gustave Lanson, Leonard Marsak and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl agree that Fontenelle intended an attack upon Christian superstition in the Histoire des Oracles.

⁴²Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, The History of Modern Philosophy in France (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co., 1899), p. 131.

⁴³Père Baltus, "Réponse à l'histoire des oracles" as quoted by Louis Maigron in the critical edition of Fontenelle's Histoire des Oracles, 2nd ed. (Paris: librairie E. Droz, 1934), p. 248.

⁴⁴F. T. Perrens, Les Libertins en France au XVII^e siècle (Paris, 1896).

⁴⁵Auguste Laborde-Milaa, Fontenelle (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1905), pp. 77-8. Laborde-Milaa discusses Fontenelle's role as a transitional figure between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

⁴⁶Sir Leslie Stephen, The History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, 3rd ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902), I, 201. Hereafter cited as "Stephen."

⁴⁷Ida E. Stewart, "Fontenelle's Influence on English Thought in the Eighteenth Century," Thesis Columbia University 1941, pp. 21-25.

⁴⁸Paul Hazard, La Crise de la Conscience Européenne, 1680-1715 (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1961), p. 136.

⁴⁹Stephen, I, 102.

⁵⁰Stephen, I, 102.

⁵¹Stephen, I, 102.

⁵²Stephen, I, 103.

⁵³John Toland, Christianity Not Mysterious (London, 1696), p. 6.

- ⁵⁴Toland, Christianity, p. 22.
- ⁵⁵Toland, Christianity, p. 4.
- ⁵⁶Toland, Christianity, p. 42.
- ⁵⁷Toland, Christianity, p. 112.
- ⁵⁸Toland, Christianity, pp. 111-112. Toland specifically refers to Fontenelle in his footnote.
- ⁵⁹Fontenelle, II, 151.
- ⁶⁰Toland, Christianity, p. 108.
- ⁶¹Toland, Christianity, p. 127.
- ⁶²Fontenelle, II, 289.
- ⁶³John Toland, Letters to Serena (London, 1704), p. vii.
- ⁶⁴Toland, Serena, p. xx.
- ⁶⁵Toland, Serena, p. xxi.
- ⁶⁶Fontenelle, II, 140-41.
- ⁶⁷Toland, Serena, p. xxxviii.
- ⁶⁸Toland, Serena, p. xxiv.
- ⁶⁹Toland, Serena, p. 7.
- ⁷⁰Toland, Serena, pp. 8-9.
- ⁷¹Fontenelle, II, 189.
- ⁷²Toland, Serena, p. 13.
- ⁷³Toland, Serena, pp. 10-11.
- ⁷⁴Fontenelle, II, 209-210.
- ⁷⁵Toland, Serena, p. 19.
- ⁷⁶Toland, Serena, p. 53.
- ⁷⁷Toland, Serena, p. 53.
- ⁷⁸Fontenelle, II, 165.

- ⁷⁹Toland, Serena, pp. 11-12.
- ⁸⁰Toland, Serena, p. xxi.
- ⁸¹Toland, Serena, p. 78.
- ⁸²Toland, Serena, p. 103.
- ⁸³Toland, Serena, p. 104.
- ⁸⁴Fontenelle, II, 149.
- ⁸⁵Toland, Serena, p. 127.
- ⁸⁶Toland, Serena, p. 129.
- ⁸⁷Gerald R. Cragg, Reason and Authority in the Eighteenth Century (Cambridge: University Press, 1964), p. 67.
- ⁸⁸Stephen, I, 204.
- ⁸⁹Stephen, I, 204.
- ⁹⁰Stephen, I, 209.
- ⁹¹Stephen, I, 209.
- ⁹²Anthony Collins, A Discourse of Free Thinking (London, 1713), p. 6.
- ⁹³Collins, p. 8.
- ⁹⁴Collins, p. 13.
- ⁹⁵Collins, pp. 19-21.
- ⁹⁶Collins, pp. 19-20.
- ⁹⁷H. T. Dickinson, Bolingbroke (London: Constable and Co., 1970), pp. 3-4.
- ⁹⁸Dickinson, p. 156.
- ⁹⁹James Boswell, The Life of Samuel Johnson, ed. George Birkbeck Hill, rev. and enl. ed. L. F. Powell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934-50), I, 268.
- ¹⁰⁰Dickinson, pp. 298-99.
- ¹⁰¹Dickinson, p. 162.

¹⁰²Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, The Philosophical Works, ed. David Mallett (London, 1754), I, 334. Hereafter cited as "Bolingbroke."

¹⁰³Bolingbroke, I, 336-37.

¹⁰⁴Bolingbroke, I, 341-42.

¹⁰⁵Bolingbroke, I, 340.

¹⁰⁶Bolingbroke, I, 346.

¹⁰⁷Bolingbroke, I, 339.

¹⁰⁸Bolingbroke, II, 241.

¹⁰⁹Bolingbroke, II, 241.

¹¹⁰Bolingbroke, II, 242.

¹¹¹Bolingbroke, II, 247.

¹¹²Bolingbroke, II, 257.

¹¹³Bolingbroke, II, 257.

¹¹⁴Stephen, I, 270.

¹¹⁵Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, The History of Modern Philosophy in France, p. 131.

¹¹⁶Stephen, I, 254.

¹¹⁷Stephen, I, 254.

¹¹⁸Stephen, I, 270.

¹¹⁹Conyers Middleton, A Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers which are supposed to have subsisted in the Christian Church from British Philosophers and Theologians of the 17th and 18th Centuries (New York: Garland, 1976), p. 232.

¹²⁰Middleton, p. viii.

¹²¹Middleton, p. v.

¹²²Middleton, p. xxxi.

¹²³Middleton, pp. 1-2.

¹²⁴Middleton, p. 71.

- ¹²⁵Middleton, p. 71.
- ¹²⁶Middleton, p. 83.
- ¹²⁷Middleton, p. 229.
- ¹²⁸Middleton, p. 230.
- ¹²⁹Middleton, p. 231.
- ¹³⁰John Laird, Hume's Philosophy of Human Nature, 2nd ed. (New York: Archon Books, 1967), p. 6.
- ¹³¹Laird, p. 6.
- ¹³²See Hume's Essay I: Of the delicacy of taste and passion; Essay XVIII: The Sceptic; Essay XX: Of Simplicity and Refinement in Writing; Essay XXII: Of Tragedy; and Essay XI: Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations.
- ¹³³David Hume, The Philosophical Works, eds. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (Germany: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1964), III, 442. See Essay XI: Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations.
- ¹³⁴Hume, III, 442.
- ¹³⁵David Hume, An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding and Selections from a Treatise of Human Nature (La Salle, Ill.: The Open Court Publ. Co., 1963), p. 121. See Section X: Of Miracles.
- ¹³⁶Hume, An Enquiry, p. 123.
- ¹³⁷Hume, An Enquiry, p. 129.
- ¹³⁸Hume, An Enquiry, p. 124.
- ¹³⁹Hume, An Enquiry, p. 130.
- ¹⁴⁰Hume, An Enquiry, p. 131.
- ¹⁴¹Hume, An Enquiry, p. 132.
- ¹⁴²Hume, An Enquiry, p. 140.
- ¹⁴³Hume, An Enquiry, p. 141.
- ¹⁴⁴David Hume, The Natural History of Religion, ed. A. Wayne Colver (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 25.

- 145 Hume, Natural History, p. 31.
- 146 Hume, Natural History, p. 92.
- 147 Hume, Natural History, pp. 40-41.
- 148 Fontenelle, II, 192.
- 149 Hume, Natural History, p. 51.
- 150 Marsak, "Bernard de Fontenelle: The Idea of Science in the French Enlightenment," p. 54.

CONCLUSION

¹J. F. Counillon, Fontenelle: écrivain, savant, philosophe (Paris: L. Durand et fils. 1959), p. 30.

²Francois Marie Arouet de Voltaire, Micromégas, ed. I. O. Wade (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1950).

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