

Berkeley's Gland Tour into Speculative Fiction Part 1: Homer, Descartes and Pope

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Abstract

Berkeley is best known for his immaterialism and the texts that extol it—the *Principles of Human Knowledge* and *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*. He made his case by treatise, then by dialogue, and this tendency towards stylistic experimentation did not end there; this paper explores an early speculative fiction project that pursued his theological and philosophical agendas. Berkeley used satire to challenge his “freethinking” philosophical opponents in “The Pineal Gland” story published in *The Guardian* in 1713. Echoing the grand tours Berkeley undertook in subsequent years, Part 1 offers a “gland tour” of some literary motivations, influences and legacies of these essays. Berkeley pursues heroic themes from Homer and Alexander Pope, while lampooning the philosophies of both Descartes and the freethinkers. Armed with the device of a magic snuff that transports him to the pineal glands of his adversaries, Berkeley's protagonist uses it “to distinguish the real from the professed sentiments of all persons of eminence in court, city, town, and country”. (*Guardian*, p. 187) Part 1 examines ‘The Pineal Gland’ in the context of Berkeley's broader philosophical legacy and the text's significant engagement with the literature of Homer and Pope, concluding that “The Pineal Gland” is an important but overlooked source in the history of early speculative fiction. Part 2 continues this analysis by exploring Berkeley's relationship with an expansive London literary

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circle, interrogating a line of influence beginning with the writing of Margaret Cavendish. In doing so, Part 2 also examines Berkeley's complex attitudes towards women.

1 | INTRODUCTION

'Berkeley's Gland Tour into Speculative Fiction' is a work in two parts. The aim of these papers is to give a literary and philosophical introduction to a rich and underexplored text in the Berkeley canon—a piece of speculative fiction Berkeley published in the *Guardian* magazine in 1713.¹ In Part 1, we focus on the philosophical background of Berkeley's text, including his animus towards new "freethinking" approaches to religion and Cartesian accounts of the mind. We explore important related texts, focusing on Homer's *Odyssey*, Gabriel Daniel's *Voyage to the World of Cartesius* and the concurrent literary work of Alexander Pope. In Part 2, we assess a possible line of influence beginning with Margaret Cavendish and extending through Gabriel Daniel. This assessment involves an interrogation of Berkeley's relationship to a cosmopolitan literary circle in his early years in London and his attitudes towards women and gender in his writing.

2 | BACKGROUND

Berkeley is philosophically renowned for his metaphysical writings—particularly for his promotion of immaterialism (the view that no mind-independent material substances exist) and idealism (the view that only ideas and minds exist). These can seem like esoteric ontological issues, but for Berkeley they serve a deeply practical purpose. His versions of immaterialism and idealism are theologically grounded, and in addition to being his preferred explanation of the phenomena, they are tools of theological anti-scepticism. In a phase of natural philosophy which saw theorists increasingly reaching to mechanism and calculation to explain the world, Berkeley saw an intellectual culture moving away from theological teleology and spiritual explanation. Thus, even Berkeley's best-known, ostensibly theoretical writings pursue religious ends in a way that is not immediately obvious.

Beyond this theocentric metaphysical framework, Berkeley advocated for his faith more explicitly. In his principal work of apologetics *Alciphron, or, The Minute Philosopher* Berkeley offers a defence of his preferred philosophical theology against various contemporary "freethinking" arguments. The seven dialogues of *Alciphron* deliver reasons to reject freethinking that are often grounded in pragmatic considerations and Berkeley's belief that Christian devotion benefits broader societies as much as individual believers. He even suggests that if Christianity were false, it would benefit everyone to proceed as if this were not so.² Berkeley's attempt to found a college in Bermuda can be understood as yet another part of a complex strategy for dealing with what he regarded as increasingly dim prospects for religion "at home"—one that made the case against freethinking as broadly as possible in print and extended beyond words into an institutional missionary agenda.³

3 | BERKELEY: LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE

Alciphron often echoes anti-freethinking rhetoric first deployed in Berkeley's essays for Richard Steele's *Guardian* in 1713 (for which he "received from Steele a guinea and a supper for each paper he wrote") (Luce, 1943, p. 247). Most of Berkeley's *Guardian* contributions challenge freethinking and its promotion. Notably, two essays titled "The Pineal Gland" (Numbers 35 and 38) use literary techniques to present his arguments. While scholars have referred to these as 'essays',⁴ they do not conform to the generic structure of essay-writing.⁵ Hence, throughout this article we will

describe them together as a 'story'. These unusual literary efforts are rarely discussed in scholarship on Berkeley's apologetic writings; this article argues that they merit serious literary and philosophical attention.

Although the centrality of linguistic concerns to Berkeley's program and his importance to the development of philosophy of language are now better understood,⁶ scholarship to date has not examined "The Pineal Gland" story as an example of Berkeley's use of literary techniques in his philosophical and linguistic legacy.⁷ Tom Jones has explored Berkeley's close relationship with Alexander Pope, demonstrating his ongoing interest in Pope's literary endeavours.⁸ In addition, while investigating the prose rhythm of *Siris*, Chris Townsend contends that Berkeley is a 'skilled literary writer' and calls 'to reignite conversations about the status of his texts as literary pieces' (Townsend, 2019, p. 336 and p. 339). Indeed, Berkeley used a wide array of established literary genres including poetry, fictional correspondences, prose fiction, homilies, commonplace books, dialogues, essays, treatises and recipes as well as a text comprising nothing but pointed questions, *The Querist* (1735).⁹ He was also an author of what we would now consider travel writing, keeping detailed journals of his Grand Tours of Italy. His journals and correspondence from the tours are considerable and contain effusive descriptions of the Bay of Naples, great concern over the Neapolitans' "ill habit of murdering one another on slight offences" (Berkeley, 2012, p. 154) and a dramatic account of a scuffle with a wolf in northern Italy.¹⁰

Overall, Berkeley's oeuvre reveals an abiding interest in literary technique and a linguistic versatility that suggests that literature and language are of central importance to his philosophical thinking. In particular, his story for the *Guardian* demonstrates a willingness to dive into the often-tempestuous contemporary pamphlet culture in pursuit of a broader audience for his anti-freethinking rhetoric. Indeed, we find Berkeley in 1715 lamenting that literature is disappearing under the weight of the fraught politics of the time:

I reckon it none of the least misfortunes of these troublesome times that books and literature seem to be forgotten, conversation being entirely turned from them to more disagreeable and less innocent topics.

(Berkeley, 2012, p. 136)

In addition, Berkeley continually signalled the centrality of language to his metaphysics. In the *Principles* (1710), for example, Berkeley introduces his philosophical system, but not before ruminating on language at length, arguing that abstract general ideas were a key confusion in the pre-existing philosophical landscape. In his *New Theory of Vision* (1709, "NTV"), he argues that the conventional use of the word "square" to refer to both a seen square and a touched square prejudices language users towards regarding them as the same object, whereas Berkeley endorses a "heterogeneity thesis"¹¹ according to which the proper objects of sight and touch are categorically different.

Berkeley's views challenge "Adamic" understandings of language. Jones explains that the "Adamic view of the relationship between words and their meaning" is that "language is divine and gives the right names to the right things – as Adam did in the garden" (Jones, 2005, p. 10). In contrast, Berkeley contends that "language is suited to the RECEIVED opinions, which are not always the truest. Hence it is impossible, even in the most rigid, philosophic reasonings, so far to alter the bent and genius of the tongue we speak, as never to give a handle for cavillers to pretend difficulties and inconsistencies" (*Principles*, p. 63).

At a metaphysical level, Berkeley believed that visual perception constituted a divine language through which God communicated with his subjects, arguing that "the proper objects of vision constitute an universal language of the Author of nature". (NTV, p. 231). Berkeley acknowledges that language is powerful to an individual's sense of reality and, like the divine language, serves an action-guiding purpose. He provides the example of Aristotle insofar as his name can be invoked "to dispose me to embrace his opinion with the deference and submission which custom has annexed to that name". (*Principles*, p. 38) For Berkeley, "Aristotle hath said it" shows the inadequacy of the dominant linguistic account (where sentential meaning is a complex of the ideas represented by the words in it), since it ignores the subtleties motivating everyday speech. In scholastic learning "Aristotle hath said it" means "you should believe it", and if the reader just combines the ideas of the historical Aristotle, a past tense possessive verb and an object

pronoun, they will completely miss this meaning. Thus, for Berkeley, language is partially “emotive”; “words have uses other than that of informing or of standing for ideas”, which include “the evoking of (1) emotions, (2) dispositions, and (3) actions” (Berman, 1981, p. 223).

4 | HOMER, ALEXANDER POPE AND LITERARY FORM

Berkeley's views on ‘deference’ to known words and names shed light on his prose fiction, which also challenge readers' preconceived notions by evoking classic literature. Indeed, the medium of literature here serves as a useful tool to demonstrate his philosophical views on language. For example, in “The Pineal Gland” story, the protagonist is named “Ulysses Cosmopolita”. Ulysses is the Roman name for Odysseus, a character in Homer's *Iliad* and the protagonist of the *Odyssey*, known for his intelligence and vast travels. As a friend and admirer of Pope (who published his translation of the *Iliad* between 1715–20 and later translated the *Odyssey*), it is noteworthy that Berkeley's stories were written while his friend was in the midst of preparing his *Iliad* translation.¹² Berkeley wrote twice from his Grand Tour travels in Naples to praise Pope's Homeric translation. He praises it in contrast with that of Thomas Tickle, another friend of Joseph Addison¹³:

Some days ago three or four gentlemen and myself, exerting that right which all the readers pretend to over authors, sat in judgment upon the two new translations of the first *Iliad*. (...) I assure you they all gave preference where it was due; being unanimously of opinion that yours was equally just to the sense with Mr. ___'s and without comparison, more easy, more poetical, and more sublime. But I will say no more on such a threadbare subject as your late performance at this time.

(Berkeley, 2012, p. 121)

Berkeley also makes a point of mentioning a friend's visit to the philologist, Salvini, and describes the latter's response to the translation:

[A]t Florence, he found him reading your Homer; he liked the notes extremely, and could find no other fault with the version, but that he thought it approached too near a paraphrase; which shows him not to be sufficiently acquainted with our language.

(Berkeley, 2012, p. 154)

In fact, Pope's forthcoming translation of the *Iliad* is advertised in the publisher's prologue to the reader in the publication of Volume 1 of the *Guardian* in 1714. Following a list of essays that “have Mr. Pope for their Author”, we are told: “Now I mention this Gentleman, I take this Opportunity, out of the Affection I have for his Person, and Respect to his Merit, to let the World know, that he is now Translating Homer's *Iliad* by subscription” (Steele, 1714, 1:5–6).

Thus, there is a real sense in which Pope's *Iliad* becomes a pretext for Berkeley's story. Like Berkeley, Pope's translation uses the Roman name Ulysses rather than Odysseus to describe the man who spends ten years traveling after the Trojan War to reach his home. In Pope's preface to his *Iliad* translation, he claims that “Homer [...] is universally allowed to have had the greatest Invention of any writer whatever [...] his Invention remains yet unrivalled” (Pope, 1865, p. i). While scholars today argue that Homer was likely an illiterate bard and may have been a man, woman, or bardic tradition,¹⁴ Pope was certain that Homer was a male writer. It is also noteworthy that Pope explains to his readers in his preface to the *Iliad* that “the main characters of Ulysses and Nestor consist in wisdom; and they are distinct in this, that the wisdom of one is artificial and various, of the other natural, open, and regular” (Pope, 1865, p. vi). Hence, for Pope, Ulysses and Nestor are to be understood as voices of wisdom. Although “The Pineal Gland” is a short epistolary story, Berkeley draws from Homer's epic to use names such as Homer, Ulysses and Nestor to evoke or ‘dispose’ a reader to deference to what Ulysses says to his ‘wise’ correspondent.¹⁵

Pope's translation particularly stresses the wisdom of Nestor and Ulysses. He often uses phrases like "sage" and "wise" to describe these characters.¹⁶ Similar to Pope's *Iliad*, Ulysses in "The Pineal Gland" refers to Nestor as "sage Nestor". So, Berkeley's story is framed between the correspondence and perspective of two very wise, heroic men. Yet, Odysseus as a character is also a persuasive liar and story-teller (or 'artificial' in Pope's words). Indeed, in the *Odyssey* he is described as "the great teller of tales" and "the crafty one" as he regularly lies and deceives people.¹⁷ Therefore, Berkeley is using language and literary form here in a complex way. On one hand, the form of letter writing gives the appearance of truth, particularly since fictional epistolary stories were not yet common in English. Two exceptions are Margaret Cavendish and Aphra Behn who experimented with this form's sense of realism as they discussed real life people and events in their fictional correspondences.¹⁸ Berkeley's interest in fictional letters could also relate to the genre of secret histories, which manifest in the form of "letters, incomplete manuscripts; [and] anecdotes" (Bullard, 2017, p. 6).¹⁹ Yet, the realism of the form is undercut by evoking Ulysses, a character who may be intelligent, but is known for craftiness and lying; he is not a reliable narrator. The reader cannot entirely believe what Ulysses states is truth. Perhaps this is why the epistolary correspondence is one-sided since Nestor is not a known liar or dissembler and we would trust him more if we could read his letters.²⁰ Hence, Berkeley's complex use of literary form evokes both realism through the form of letter writing and an unreliable narrator since the protagonist has taken the name of a famous liar. In using such literary techniques, Berkeley confronts the philosophical problems related to language and mind-independent reality. In the *Principles*, Berkeley argues that his view of language "doth presuppose an entire deliverance from the deception of words, which I dare hardly promise myself; so difficult a thing it is to dissolve an union so early begun, and confirmed by so long a habit as that betwixt words and ideas". (*Principles*, p. 39) The use of unreliable narrator is a medium for Berkeley to highlight the 'deception of words' and break habits of thought that link words with certain ideas.²¹

Notably, the end of "The Pineal Gland" shifts out of an epistolary correspondence to the narrator writing his ideas in prose about "the proper cure of a Free-thinker" (the choice of the word "cure" signalling Berkeley's pathological understanding of freethinking).²² The tone changes as the fictional letter writing abruptly ends after he has left the imagination of the free thinker and Berkeley speaks in first person rather than through an unreliable narrator to discuss ways to cure this ailment.

5 | LITERARY FORM AND THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PUBLICATION MARKET

In his use of the epistolary form, Berkeley is engaging with and reshaping an epistolary habit that is already at play in his publishing circle. As Greg Polly explains, letter writing was an integral part of the structure and content of Addison and Steele's *The Spectator*, which also frequently made use of allegory "not least by fusing the abstract significance of the figure with particularly vivid or lurid images of the body" (Polly, 2005, p. 105). For example, in no. 3, 3 March 1711, of *The Spectator*, Addison famously provides an extended allegorical personification of a bank, who contains, a "beautiful Virgin" who "in the twinkling of an Eye [...] would fall away from the most florid Complexion and the most healthful State of Body, and wither into a Skeleton" (Addison, 1721, pp. 416–417). Like *The Spectator*, Berkeley employs a fictional narrator, Ulysses Cosmopolita, who discusses through letters an extended bodily allegory.

Berkeley's use of newer publishing media is complex. On the one hand, it is clear he understood his participation in the *Guardian* in similar terms to Joseph Addison's assessment of the periodical scene: "It was said of Socrates, that he brought Philosophy down from Heaven, to inhabit among Men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought Philosophy out of Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges, to dwell in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-Tables and in Coffee Houses."²³ In his study of "the influential English periodicals of the early eighteenth century—the *Tatler*, *Spectator* and *Guardian*", Copley emphasises the moral and social dimension of those periodicals: "Polite conversation is promoted in the periodicals in the face of the essayists' continuing regard for classical eloquence and oratory, as the most consequential forms of public and, by residual expectation, masculine address." (Copley, 1995, pp. 63, 68)²⁴ And yet, Berkeley's rhetoric (in the *Guardian* and elsewhere) often falls

short of these polite ambitions. In the *Guardian*, an exchange with Boureau-Deslandes ends with Berkeley “longing to see (Boureau-Deslandes’) posthumous works”. In other words, Berkeley not so politely implies that he wishes Boureau-Deslandes was dead. Beyond the *Guardian*, his invective in the mathematical debates following the publication of *The Analyst* is of particular note for its bad faith and irascibility.²⁵

Berkeley’s debate with Boureau-Deslandes is evoked in the concluding section of “The Pineal Gland”. Here he changes tone and style again and quotes from an advertisement in a recent edition of the *Post-boy*. The advertisement criticised Berkeley’s recent commentary on a “Monsieur D---” who “was very much out of humour, in a late fit of sickness”. (*Guardian*, p. 184) Berkeley had remarked on French freethinker André-François Boureau-Deslandes’ conduct in illness in an attempt to refute the messaging of Boureau-Deslandes’ recently translated treatise, which suggested that one advantage of freethinking was the promise of a relaxed death, free of the burdens of death-bed confessionals and fretting over divine judgement.²⁶ In “The Future State” (*Guardian*, pp. 181–185) Berkeley tried to leverage ancient wisdom in support of belief in the afterlife, citing Socrates’ discussion of the reign of Saturn in Plato’s *Gorgias*. Both Boureau-Deslandes’ and Berkeley’s efforts appeal to the ancients in bolstering confidence in opposing perspectives. Berkeley deploys Socrates and Saturn and Boureau-Deslandes makes use of a broad bibliography from Democritus and Diogenes to Petronius and Catullus. Thus, both in the epistolary section, the reflective section, and the advertisement we find the invocation of ancient voices to lend gravitas and lineage to ideas.

Advertisements as well as Grub street pamphlets frequently pursued political agenda over truth. Like the unreliable and often-manipulative Odysseus, these periodicals often pursued a political agenda over pure illumination. While Odysseus was a celebrated warrior, he was primarily a great hero capable of surviving impossible situations because of his intelligence and crafty ability to deceive people. The positioning of an advertisement alongside the mini-epic travels of a correspondent named Ulysses contribute to a tapestry in which the unreliability of language is ever-present. He refers to the author in the *Post-boy* as “the advertiser” and describes him as trying to “confute” his own advertisement (which he refuses to retract before someone provides him with a copy of Boureau-Deslandes’ poetic verses). The language creates a lively sense of a fraught marketplace of opinion.

6 | SATIRE AND THE CRITIQUE OF CARTESIANISM

Besides language, “The Pineal Gland” also uses literary techniques, including satire, to critique its targets. His short story begins with Ulysses describing himself as “a man who ha[s] spent great part of that time in rambling through foreign countries” but “could not make proportionable advances in the way of science and speculation”. (*Guardian*, p. 185) Like Odysseus, he is lost and trapped in his extensive travels and cannot find home to a philosophical truth. Miran Božovič explains that Berkeley’s story can be understood as a thought experiment, claiming that “the strategy of thought experiment, which transfers the philosopher (and his reader) to another world, i.e., in either the past or future state of this planet or even to a different celestial body altogether. It is there, in the purity of a new, contrived, sometimes entirely fictional setting, that the authentic scene of truth can finally be thoroughly and unconditionally enacted” (Božovič, 2020, p. 1). In Berkeley’s speculative fictional thought experiment, his protagonist, Ulysses, encounters a manifestation of a similar literary experiment; he claims he met with the nephew of the French Jesuit historian Gabriel Daniel who in 1690 published *Voiege du Monde de Descartes* (which was translated into English in 1692 as *A Voyage to the World of Cartesius*). In this poem, Descartes takes snuff that allows his soul to travel extensively without his body; “such was the success the Soul found/in her Rambles when separate from the Body,/ that she could when she pleas’d in a Minute travel/three or four thousand Leagues”. (Daniel, 1692, p. 20) The poem becomes more absurd when we learn that Descartes eventually settles permanently into outer space or “the third Heaven”, which is located “above the Starry Heaven, and is/void of Bounds” (Daniel, 1692, p. 30).

The reference to Daniel’s satirical poem reminds us that while the clear ideological targets of Berkeley’s story are hedonists and freethinkers, the setting and concept betray a subtler target: Descartes’ metaphysics and philosophy of mind. An important pretext for Berkeley’s prose fiction here is that the pineal gland, and the philosophical role

attributed to it in Descartes' theories of mind, is itself a vehicle for lampoonery. Though the pineal gland is a real part of the brain, Berkeley's use of it for this story highlights his sense of the pineal gland as a theoretically fantastical setting—one epitomising the fanciful impossibilities he took his dualist philosophical opponents to be committed to in proposing a physical gland as the “principal seat of the soul”.²⁷ Thus, Berkeley employs literary techniques and language not only to challenge freethinkers, but also Descartes's notion of the pineal gland. By addressing both in his fiction, his satirical critique is twofold, suggesting that both concepts are more suitable in the realm of imaginative writings than in philosophical treatises.²⁸

Descartes and the freethinkers may strike the reader as unusual critical bedfellows. For example, the freethinkers tended to uphold John Locke as a heroic forerunner, and Descartes' contributions to theologically grounded philosophy would be difficult to deny. However, while Berkeley reviles both the freethinking philosophy and its proponents, Descartes is not a personal target of Berkeley's; it is Cartesianism and metaphysical dualism. Berkeley's distaste for Cartesianism long predates his writings for the *Guardian*. His *NTV* aims to steer the study of vision back onto a more empirically respectable course following the contemporary popularity of the work of a group he refers to as “the geometric theorists”. He tells us who he means in the footnotes: “See what Descartes and others have written on this Subject”. (*NTV* p. 172) On Descartes's *Meditations*, Berkeley was similarly unconvinced in an early letter to Samuel Molyneux:

I am of your opinion that Descartes flounders often in his *Meditations* and is not always consistent with himself. [...] But it would take up too much time to observe to you all the like blunders that appeared to me when I formerly read that treatise.

(Berkeley, 2012, pp. 29–30)

Berkeley was not the first to tackle Cartesian themes in lighter work. Indeed, as previously-mentioned, Berkeley's narrator, Ulysses Cosmopolita, describes the snuff that makes his incredible journey possible as being acquired from the nephew of Gabriel Daniel, who was the author of the *Voyage du Monde de Descartes*. In this text, Daniel (describing himself as the “most mischievous Adversary Cartesius ever met”) tells us in the preface²⁹:

I explain with as little/ difficulty and as pleasantly as the Subject will bear,/ the most principal Points of *Cartesius* his Philosophy./ I examine many of them in the way, and refute/ the greatest part of them.

(Daniel, 1692, no pagination)

Similarly, in introducing the concept of the pineal gland in Berkeley's piece, the nephew explains:

that Descartes was the first who discovered a certain part of the brain, called by anatomists the Pineal Gland, to be the immediate receptacle of the soul, where she is affected with all sorts of perceptions, and exerts all her operations by the intercourse of the animal spirits which run thro' the nerves that are thence extended to all parts of the body.

(*Guardian*, pp. 185–186)

Descartes was not the first to discuss the possibility that the pineal gland played a special role in connecting soul and brain. However, he had proposed the pineal gland as a solution to the problem of mental intentions causing action in physical bodies. The lampooned version of the response is that the pineal gland is rather a location than a solution, since, presumably, the problem it seeks to solve still requires explanation (even if the pineal gland was *where* psycho-physical interaction took place, the problem was *how* it took place). Thus, there is a double sense in which these stories take place at a silly location.

7 | ENGAGEMENT WITH HOMER'S ODYSSEY

Nonetheless, Berkeley's use of the technique of letter writing gives a deceptive sense of realism to absurd claims. Ulysses explains in his letter that the fictional nephew of the real-life author Daniel, had provided this fictional character with snuff that allowed him to "pass [his] time in the Pineal Glands of philosophers, poets, beaux, mathematicians, ladies, and statesmen". (*Guardian*, p. 186) Ulysses' last name, "Cosmopolita" resembles the term cosmopolite, which was a commonly used word in the seventeenth century. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a 'cosmopolite' was a "citizen of the world; one who regards or treats the whole world as his country; one who has no national attachments or prejudices."³⁰ Hence, Ulysses Cosmopolita not only travels extensively like Odysseus, but he seems to travel openly without prejudice as he explores the pineal glands of a wide range of diverse people. When Ulysses enters the pineal gland of a "man of pleasure", he discovers the "perfect inaction of the higher powers prevented appetite in prompting him to sensual gratifications; and the outrunning natural appetite produced a loathing instead of a pleasure". (*Guardian*, p. 187) Like Homer's Odysseus, who was trapped for years in physical pleasure on an island by the goddess Calypso and then by the witch Cersei, the 'man of pleasure' is trapped in sensuality that ironically provides him with little pleasure.³¹ Although Calypso's island is described as sensual, lush and beautiful to the extent that "even a deathless god/who came upon that place would gaze in wonder,/heart entranced with pleasure" (Homer, 1996, p. 5.81–83), Odysseus was found by Hermes "weeping there as always,/wrenching his heart with sobs and groans and anguish,/gazing out over the barren sea through blinding tears" (Homer, 1996, p. 5.93–95). Similarly, once Berkeley's 'man of pleasure' is satiated with bewitching "sensual gratifications", like Odysseus, he experiences "loathing instead of a pleasure". The narrator notes that the intellectual faculties of the man of pleasure were "grown unserviceable by too little use". (*Guardian*, p. 187) Later, in *Alciphron*, Berkeley's mouthpiece Euphranor invokes the ancients again in responding to Lysicles' pursuit of pleasure above all: "But Socrates, who was no country parson, suspected your men of pleasure were such through ignorance" (*Alciphron*, p. 93).

In the second letter to Nestor, Ulysses describes how he met "an eminent freethinker" in the setting of a "Grecian coffee-house", thereby raising the theme of the ancient world again and singling out a famed meeting place of London freethinkers and libertines. Berkeley then evokes Homer's depiction of the afterlife. In Book 11 of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus travels to the land of the dead. The entrance to the underworld is a place with "an endless, deadly night". Odysseus here "dug a trench" to conjure and consult the ghost of the prophet, Teiresias, who "tell[s] him" all the truth", but he also speaks with numerous other ghosts, learning about contemporary events and the afterlife (Homer, 1996, p. 11.21, 11.28 and 11.107). Berkeley's Ulysses also travels to a type of conjured underworld to obtain knowledge from various people as he "descend[s]" from the "seat of the Understanding" of a freethinker and enters "a story lower, into the Imagination", which was "cold and comfortless" and filled with "phantomes". (*Guardian*, pp. 188–189) This prefigures the treatment of freethinking in *Alciphron*. Although freethinkers present their movement as cultured and expansive (given their independent approach to philosophy and culture), they are actually narrow and bigoted in understanding because they have expressly deprived themselves of certain kinds of belief. Hence, Berkeley uses a short story that evokes long ancient epics to satirically highlight how the free-thinkers' "seat of the Understanding" was "narrower than ordinary". (*Guardian*, p. 188) In contrast to a lengthy epic composed in complex dactylic hexameter, only a short prose story is necessary to frame the mind of the freethinker.

In "Minute Philosophers" (another of Berkeley's offerings for the *Guardian*), these stark contrasts of scale appear again. He uses them to convey his sense of the freethinkers as navel-gazers. Freethinking critiques of church doctrine are likened to a fly bumping against the ornate walls of St Paul's Cathedral, since: "[t]he thoughts of a Free-thinker are employed on certain minute particularities of religion, the difficulty of a single text, or the unaccountableness of some step of Providence or point of doctrine to his narrow faculties, without comprehending the scope and design of Christianity, the perfection to which it raiseth human nature, the light it hath shed abroad in the world, and the close connection it hath as well with the good of public societies as with that of particular persons". (*Guardian*, pp. 206–207) Hence, in "The Pineal Gland", the freethinker's "seat of the Understanding" is unusually narrow since he is focused on "minute particularities" without considering the larger picture of Christianity and (Berkeley's claims for) its role in society. This echoes Berkeley's first *Guardian* essay where he claims that freethinking "proceeds from a poverty of imagination and narrowness of soul in those that use it" (*Guardian*, p. 183).

In order to emphasise what he took to be the nefarious elements of freethinking, Berkeley draws from Homer's account of Odysseus' journey into the underworld. Rather than spirits of the dead who provide Odysseus with valuable information, Ulysses Cosmopolita finds "dreadful phantomes" trafficking in misinformation. Instead of ghosts of the deceased, Berkeley's 'phantoms' are derived from "Prejudice in the figure of a woman [...] many words in a confused order, but spoken with great emphasis, issued from her mouth. These being condensed by the coldness of the place, formed a sort of mist". (*Guardian*, pp. 189 and 188) The atmosphere created is otherwise like the dismal underworld of Homer's *Odyssey*. Similar to the man of pleasure, the freethinker is also trapped like Odysseus, though in more unpleasant circumstances; he is stuck in a "great castle with a fortification cast round it". (*Guardian*, p. 188) From Berkeley's perspective, the world of the freethinkers is like the pagan Homeric underworld—cold, dark and filled with trapped ghosts without a sense of meaning, purpose, cosmic justice or growth.³² The freethinkers represent their approach as liberated and sophisticated but in "The Pineal Gland" they are comparable to Homeric ghosts as they are confined and trapped in an existence without meaning. Thus, for Berkeley, in the narrow imagination of the freethinker dwells a woman covering her eyes and ears and babbling nonsensically. (*Guardian*, p. 188) Her perception that priests and churches are torturous, castle-guarding monsters has caused the emotions of the freethinker to gather around "Vanity", and swell into an army to be led by her against the 'dreadful phantomes' (*Guardian*, p. 189) of the freethinker's imaginative representation of the church.

8 | THE RELATION TO POPE'S *THE RAPE OF THE LOCK*

Although Berkeley evokes Homer's epics as well as Daniel's *A Voyage to the World of Cartesius*, it is significant that in 1712, Pope had written his mock epic, *The Rape of the Lock*, a text greatly admired by Berkeley.³³ In 1714, one year after "The Pineal Gland" was published, Pope revised and expanded his mock epic, including an episode that was likely influenced by Berkeley's short story. Rather than a pineal gland, a gnome descends into another type of underworld, "Down to the central earth, [...] to search the gloomy Cave of Spleen" in the body of the protagonist, Belinda (Pope, 2006, p. 91, lines 15–16).³⁴ Unlike "The Pineal Gland", which allows Ulysses to travel into other people's minds, here the gnome travels to the spleen to observe Belinda's emotions. As Patricia Meyer Spacks notes, by "the early eighteenth century, 'the spleen' referred especially to melancholia and gloom, but also to a range of feelings lacking, from the point of view of observers, adequate cause" (Spacks, 2009, p. 23). Like Berkeley, Pope evokes Homer not only through his use of mock heroic verse, but also as the gnome in his underworld journey discovers "*Homer's Tripod*" and claims that the pointedly female goddess or "Queen" of the spleen gave the gnome "A wondrous Bag with both her Hands she binds,/Like that where once Ulysses held the winds" in the *Odyssey* (Pope, 2006, p. 92, line 57 and p. 93, lines 81–82). This bag is a collection of "the force of female lungs,/Sighs, sobs, and passions, and the war of tongues./A vial next she fills with fainting fears,/Soft sorrows, melting griefs, and flowing tears" (Pope, 2006, p. 93, lines 84–87). Rather than ghosts of the dead, the gnome finds in this underworld "Strange phantoms rising as the mists arise; /Dreadful, as hermit's dreams in haunted shades" (Pope, 2006, p. 92, lines 40–41). Hence, Pope uses the epic hero's descent into the underworld to indicate that women's emotions are 'Strange', 'Dreadful' and nonsensical.

While Berkeley uses a Homeric descent into an underworld as a way to satirise freethinkers, Pope's phantoms in Belinda's spleen absurdly appear like walking kitchen pots and talking "goose-pie[s]"; here Pope uses this literary evocation of Odysseus' serious and heroic journey to the dead as a method to mock women's interiority, indicating that they lack rationality and sense (Pope, 2006, p. 92, line 52). Indeed, Pope specifically associates the cave with hysterical women of reproductive age; the goddess "rule[s] the sex to fifty from fifteen", generating "female wit,/Who give th' hysteric [...] fit" (Pope, 2006, p. 92, lines 58–60). Hence, the cave is filled with unruly, sexual desire whereby bodies are transformed as "Men prove with child" and "maids turned bottles, call aloud for corks" (Pope, 2006, p. 92, lines 53–54). As men are rendered pregnant rather than women, and women metamorphose into phallic objects that cry for penetration, this 'hysteric' and feminized cave is ruled by irrational appetite and desire, rather than reason and order.

Although Berkeley is less misogynistic than Pope, the interiority of the freethinker is also feminized as the imagination of the freethinker is inhabited by an irrational and obstinate woman. (*Guardian*, p. 188) Like Pope's female

spleen—a monstrous and irrational underworld—the freethinker's imagination is analogous to a woman who refuses to listen to others. While the complexity of Berkeley's attitudes towards women is explored in detail in Part 2, this aspect of Berkeley's story indicates a belief that Cartesians and free-thinkers have situated themselves in a feminized position that is not dictated by reason or experience.³⁵

Berkeley's reliance upon thought experiment and his interest in literature and literary techniques to explore philosophical and scientific enquiries render his prose fiction as a form of early science fiction, something Berkeley is not given credit for in scholarship. In fact, bridging disciplinary gaps and looking closely at Berkeley's prose fiction reveals a richer understanding of the development of early science fiction as well as the literary tradition. For example, Berkeley's close friendship with Pope along with the timing and nature of Pope's revisions that build upon Berkeley's stories, indicate that though Berkeley is known as a philosopher, he left a significant imprint on the English literary canon. Indeed, this essay has shown how "The Pineal Gland" is an important but overlooked source for scholars to consider when analysing *The Rape of the Lock*.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ References to Berkeley's works are to *The Works of George Berkeley*, (ed. A. A. Luce and T. E. Jessop, 1948-1957). In-text citations give short title and page number in the relevant volume. "The Pineal Gland" is in the collection of papers from the Guardian in Volume VII, pp. 186–192.
- ² See Euphranor's response to freethinker Alciphron's conjecture that truth (his avowed "divinity") must be pursued whatever the consequences: "What! Would you undeceive a child that was taking physic? Would you officiously set an enemy right that was making a wrong attack? Would you help an enraged man to his sword? (...) Common sense, it seems then, must be consulted whether a truth be salutary or hurtful, fit to be declared or concealed" (*Alciphron*, p. 140).
- ³ See Breuninger (2010, pp. 95–117) for this reading.
- ⁴ See Luce (1943).
- ⁵ Essays are generally a short form of nonfiction prose that often provides an author's opinion on a particular subject. In contrast, "The Pineal Gland" is an imaginary prose fiction narrative, mostly in epistolary form, that explores fictional characters and events.
- ⁶ See Pearce (2017) for a compelling recent account of the role of language in Berkeley's metaphysics. For critical engagement with Pearce's view, and expansion of the recent debate on Berkeley's theory of language, see Fields (2021a), (2021b), DeRose (2021), (2022), and Fasko (2019). See also a forthcoming edited collection on 'Berkeley's Doctrine of Signs' which includes numerous essays on the role of language in Berkeley's philosophy (West and Fasko, forthcoming).
- ⁷ Even the preeminent text on Berkeley's philosophical rhetoric only mentions the story once in a footnote (Walmsley, 1990, p. 146, n7). Similarly, while Herbert Rauter discusses the significance of the form of philosophical dialogue for Berkeley's theory of language, he does not discuss Berkeley's speculative fiction (Rauter, 1961, pp. 378–404).
- ⁸ See Jones (2005, p. 1–9) and letters 65, 69, 90 and 97 in Berkeley (2012).
- ⁹ Berkeley also appended a set of pointed philosophical queries to his mathematical criticism in *The Analyst*. The trend for philosophical queries is traceable to the Royal Society's recommendations surrounding documentation of biological specimens. See Anstey (2011, p. 61). Berkeley's use of the style in questioning controversial economic and political policies in Ireland is an innovation of the form.
- ¹⁰ In a similar vein, he sent an on-site report of the aftermath of the 1717 eruption of Vesuvius to the Royal Society.
- ¹¹ See Atherton (1990, p. 89–108).

- ¹² Berkeley wrote to Percival about meeting Pope in March 1713 (Berkeley, 2012, p. 83). Townsend argues that Berkeley's poems 'owe more than a small debt to Berkeley's friend Alexander Pope' and his *Essay on Man* (Townsend, 2019, p. 340).
- ¹³ For a light-hearted consideration of the relationship between Homer (and Aristotle) and their commentators and translators, see Jonathan Swift's presentation in the Glubbdubdrib visit in *Gulliver's Travels*: "I proposed that *Homer and Aristotle* might appear at the Head of all their Commentators; but they were so numerous that hundreds were forced to attend in the Court and outward Rooms of the Palace. (...) I soon discovered that both of them were perfect Strangers to the rest of the Company, and had never seen or heard of them before. And I had a Whisper from a Ghost, who shall be nameless, that these Commentators always kept in the most distant Quarters from their Principals in the lower World, through a Consciousness of Shame and Guilt, because they had so horribly misrepresented the Meaning of those Authors to Posterity" (Swift, 2012, pp. 294–295).
- ¹⁴ See, for example, Porter (2006).
- ¹⁵ Berkeley mentions Homer frequently in his work; for example, his writings from Italy are rich with Homer references, and he cites a principle of Homeric education in *The Querist* (p. 122).
- ¹⁶ Hereafter this article will mostly draw from a modern translation of the *Odyssey* because Pope's translation glosses over some important descriptions of locations and Odysseus' emotional states, which are relevant to our analysis of Berkeley's story. Though Pope's translation is important for Berkeley, it would not have been the version from which he learned Homer, so it is unsurprising to see him draw from a broader base of Homeric learning in his satire.
- ¹⁷ Odysseus, for example, lies to the Cyclops, telling him his name is "Nobody", so that when attacked, the Cyclops screams to his neighbours "Nobody's killing me now by fraud" (Homer, 1996, p. 9.455).
- ¹⁸ See Cavendish's *Sociable Letters* and Behn's *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*. James Fitzmaurice argues that in Cavendish's *Sociable Letters* "some but by no means all of the characters [in the text] were actual people, hidden behind initials and anagrams" (Fitzmaurice, 2004, p. 12). Earlier, Thomas More also provides a sense of realism in *Utopia* (1516) by beginning with a letter to a real-life person and writing in this letter as if the Utopian commonwealth and a fictional character in the story are real (while additionally providing a detailed map and inserting both real-life people and imaginary characters into the narrative).
- ¹⁹ As Rebecca Bullard explains, "Secret history's central motif of revelation makes it impossible to determine whether or not its claims should be regarded as fact or fiction" (Bullard, 2009, p. 14), especially since they purport "to reveal secrets – hidden facts, concealed motives, and the mysterious operations of government" (Bullard, 2017, p. 6). As Nicola Parsons points out, in "the early eighteenth century, the secret history's distinctive blend of fiction, politics and gossip migrated from stand-alone publications to London's periodicals" (Parsons, 2017, p. 147).
- ²⁰ It is worth noting that Odysseus shares similar qualities to another character in the genre of epic literature who is famous for lying, Satan from John Milton's epic *Paradise Lost*. Not only do both demonstrate great courage in the aftermath of war, but they are also crafty and persuasive liars. To emphasise this connection between Satan and ancient epic heroes such as Odysseus, the 1688 edition of *Paradise Lost* provides an engraving of Satan dressed in ancient attire and armour (Milton, 1688, 1). Pope also encourages readers to consider both epics together when his translation describes Calypso as restraining Odysseus with "sweet, reluctant, amorous delay", which is a direct quotation of Milton's description of Eve in Book 4 of *Paradise Lost* (See Pope, 1725/1726, 1.22 and Milton, 1688, p. 95).
- ²¹ Berkeley is interestingly inconsistent on linguistic authority and deception. Though he is militant in his description of the need to throw off the shackles of inherited conventional meanings and prejudices (particularly in language describing sensation in the *New Theory of Vision* and traditional philosophical language in the *Principles*), at other times, his program depends heavily on defending the legitimacy of meanings where understanding is governed by paternal and clerical social philosophy (as in religious language in *Alciphron* and in parental authority in the *Manuscript Introduction*). We are grateful to a reviewer for emphasising this tension.
- ²² See also Berkeley (2012, p. 322–23).
- ²³ Quoted in Copley (1995, p. 63).
- ²⁴ See Chapter 6 of Jones (2021) for an account of Berkeley's relationship with the *Guardian*.
- ²⁵ See Moriarty (2021) for an account of the relation between Berkeley's mathematical rhetoric and contemporary pamphlet culture.
- ²⁶ Boureau-Deslandes (1713).
- ²⁷ "My view is that this gland is the principal seat of the soul, and the place in which all our thoughts are formed" (Descartes, 1991, p. 143).
- ²⁸ See also, the fate of Descartes at the hands of Aristotle in *Gulliver's Travels* and in the *Battle of the Books*, where he is "shot in the eye and killed by Aristotle" (Swift, 2012, pp. 295–296 n8).

- ²⁹ Daniel's preface is titled "A General View Of the whole WORK."
- ³⁰ "cosmopolite, n. and adj." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, September 2022, www.oed.com/view/Entry/42264. Accessed 22 November 2022.
- ³¹ As Berkeley claims in his *Guardian* essay "Pleasures", "excesses of any kind are hardly to be esteemed pleasures, much less natural pleasures" (*Guardian* p. 194).
- ³² The dead in Book 11 simply remain "deep in sorrow", regardless of their deeds, virtues, or behaviour during life (Homer, 1996, p. 11.618). Tityus, Tantalus and Sisyphus are exceptions insofar as they are three individuals who are tortured for egregiously offending the gods. (It is worth noting that Elysium is briefly mentioned once in Book 4 though it seems only people who are related or married to the gods can enter it) (Homer, 1996, p. 4.632–41). Radcliffe G. Edmonds, III argues that "the somber picture of mindless shades in the gloom that the Homeric epics present" contrasts with notions of a "lively life after death, full of tortures and rewards based on ethical criteria" (Edmonds, 2004, p. 14). The ghost of Achilles asserts that the afterlife is so dreadful that he would "rather slave on earth for another man [...] than rule down here over all the breathless dead" (Homer, 1996, p. 11.556–558).
- ³³ Berkeley praised it effusively in a 1714 letter to Pope "I have accidentally met with your *Rape of the Lock* here [...] Style, painting, judgment, spirit, I had already admired in your other writings; but in this I am charmed with the magic of your invention, with all those images, allusions, and inexplicable beauties which you raise so surprisingly, and at the same time so naturally out of a trifle" (Berkeley, 2012, p. 116).
- ³⁴ See Pope (2006, lines 15–16).
- ³⁵ Notably, a few years earlier Jonathan Swift in *A Tale of Tub* (1704), also satirized Cartesianism by suggesting that Descartes' ideas are caused by an irrational imagination or by "vapours, ascending from the lower faculties to overshadow the brain, and there distilling into conceptions for which the narrowness of our mother-tongue has not yet assigned any other name beside that of madness or frenzy" (Swift, 1999, pp. 80–1). Berkeley's relation with Swift will be discussed in more detail in Part 2.

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