

Chair Report on Panel E *Evelina* and *Cecilia* by Dr Lucy-Anne Katgely

The two papers given in panel E revolved around *Evelina* and *Cecilia*. Unfortunately, **Avantika Pokhriyal's** stimulating article "**Of a Young Lady's Walking Out Without me?" Spatial Enunciations in *Evelina* and *Cecilia***" had to be read out as she could not attend the conference in person. Pokhriyal studied the relationship between space and gender in Burney's novels. She argues that the misconception that women in the eighteenth century were largely domestic beings has influenced the study of women's spatial experiences in literary representations, thus following the line of recent feminist scholarship which shows that the picture of female mobility is more layered than appears at first glance. Using Michel de Certeau's idea of 'pedestrian enunciations', Pokhriyal detailed how *Evelina* and *Cecilia* understand and negotiate the space around them. She asserted that although critical discussions of the text have picked on certain spatial elements, there is little work on the spatial politics in the novel. Because the space of urban London is a central part of the narrative in both texts, it is worth noting that in this period, London was often represented in feminine terms whilst streets were regarded as masculine spaces of commerce and trade which needed to be safeguarded from disruptive elements, such as women. Pokhriyal contended that by imagining space as feminine, it is rendered both powerless and boundless. As young women debuting in city life, both *Evelina* and *Cecilia* have to be attuned to these possibilities of city life. This paper also made the thought-provoking point that Burney's novels raise concerns about women's experiences in cities which still hold true today, including anxieties about female mobility, questions of female independence, and the sexualisation of spaces. Whereas these works are indubitably part of a historical moment, they hold surprising relevance to our modern world.

We then heard from **Ariella Kharash** who discussed "**Jews as the Other in Burney's *Cecilia*, or *Memoirs of an Heiress***" in one of the two brilliant papers that won the President's Prize for a postgraduate paper. Kharasch explained that in *Cecilia, or Memoirs of an Heiress*, Frances Burney showcases the caricature of the Jew as a conspirator through the character of Mr Zackery whose peripheral presence throughout the novel threatens the protagonist's reputation. Although Mr Zackery lacks description, agency, and dialogue, his involvement with *Cecilia* through usury puts her fortune at risk. Burney's perpetuation of similar stereotypes – such as that of the wandering Jew – recurs in her later novel, *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties*. The publication of Burney's *Cecilia, or Memoirs of an Heiress* in 1782, however, reflects the pervasiveness of antisemitism in British society following the Naturalisation Bill of 1753, or the 'Jew Bill.' Karasch's paper placed *Cecilia* in conversation with Felsenstein's *Paradigm of Otherness* in order to understand the cultural significance of Burney's depiction of Mr Zackery within the context of the Naturalisation Bill as a resurgence of anti-Semitism in late-eighteenth century England. She maintained that Burney uses the stereotype embodied by Mr

Zackary to drive the novel's plot, establishing that Burney is writing within an English tradition that perceives Jews as the Other. While Mr Monckton, Cecilia, and Mr Delvile share the widely accepted worldview of society in the mid-eighteenth century that Jews were broken into two groups—foreign settlers and those born in England—but always constituted as the Other, Mr Harrel seems to divide Jews into the two categories “good” and “bad,” rather than acting upon an instinctual repulsiveness displayed by Cecilia and Mr. Monckton at the mention of Jews. A comparison of such moments in *Cecilia* with historical records in response to the Naturalisation Bill, like the print “A Prospect of the New Jerusalem,” exemplify the deeply rooted nature of antisemitic paranoia at the time. Kharasch concluded on another sentiment echoed by Burney, the application of the term “the Jew” as an epithet used for reprobation. By often using “Jew” as a replacement for “Mr Zackery,” the novelist strips the only recurring Jewish figure in her text of a name, thus signifying his low status.
