

## ***Victorine: or, The German Evelina***

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*Victorine*: or, The German Evelina  
MASCHA HANSEN

“If it wants a few Stage Tricks, trust it with me, & I will put them in.”

Arthur Murphy<sup>1</sup>

Frances Burney’s theatrical talent was recognized immediately upon the publication of *Evelina*.<sup>2</sup> While Johnson, Burke, and Sheridan merely encouraged her to write a comedy, the “German Garrick,” Friedrich Ludwig Schröder, took a more direct road to come at one of her plays by dramatizing *Evelina* himself. The result was first produced in 1784 at the *Burgtheater* in Vienna under the title *Victorine, oder Wohlthun trägt Zinsen*, roughly translatable as *Victorine: or, Doing Good brings Dividends*, a comedy in four acts.<sup>3</sup> Schröder, a German actor, playwright, director, and translator, also played the male lead in what turned out to be quite a popular play in late eighteenth-century Germany. The adaptation is, admittedly, hardly recognizable as *Evelina*: while the play’s plot is roughly similar, the scenes and characters differ considerably from those of the novel. *Victorine* cannot be said to immediately reflect on Burney’s skill as a dramatist, but it does show which parts of *Evelina* were considered to work well on stage by a successful theatre director. My concern in this paper is not with the dramatic potential of *Evelina*, however, but with the changes to plot and characters implemented by the German playwright. Schröder’s revisions were intended to please a German-speaking audience, and some of them can best be explained by considering the expectations of German theatregoers at the time. Before introducing the play in more detail, therefore, a brief foray into the context of British literature in eighteenth-century Germany, the German stage at the time, and the playwright himself is necessary both to understand *Victorine* and to show that while Schröder’s revisions were meant to maintain the plausibility and the drama of the novel on stage, he also used the comedy to follow his own agenda: “de-frenchifying” the German stage.

### English Literature in Eighteenth-Century Germany

Eighteenth-century Germany saw an unprecedented period of Anglophilia: “An ever-growing number of Anglophiles vied with

the established Francophiles in their enthusiasm for the right kind of enlightenment and the right model of social grace" (Fabian 11).<sup>4</sup> The quality of English literature proved to be a decisive factor in the German interest in English publications (particularly since these were seen as anti-classical and, thus, anti-establishment by German literary reformers of the storm-and-stress period).<sup>5</sup> English literature sold well in eighteenth-century Germany, either in French translations or, more and more frequently, in German ones. Indeed, according to Mary and Lawrence Price, "an English novel was more likely to bring financial return than a German original" (11). Their diligent search for German translations of eighteenth-century English literature revealed that many novels claiming on the title page to have been translated from the English turned out to be German fakes, instead; apparently, it was sufficient to put "after an English novel" on the title page to ensure that the book sold well (Price 11). Genuine English novels were usually translated within one or two years of their publication, and even though a fair number of these have long been forgotten, those now considered masterpieces were rarely overlooked. The list compiled by the Prices shows that Burney's novels were translated within a year or two: a German *Evelina* appeared in 1779, *Cecilia* in 1783, and *Camilla* in 1798.<sup>6</sup>

It is impossible to say whether these translations were successful from the publishers' point of view or who their German readers might have been, apart from a few well-known men of letters (Fabian 26, 59). On meeting Frances Burney in Windsor, Sophie von La Roche commented that the novelist was known to "them" as the author of *Evelina* and *Cecilia*, presumably implying German readers in general rather than merely her daughters as the immediate addressees of her travel journal (La Roche 373). La Roche did speak some English but does not say whether she read the original English novels or preferred a translation. Friedrich Ludwig Schröder's biographer mentions the "popular novel by Burney's daughter, *Evelina*" (Meyer 1: 399). Indeed, in Germany, Dr. Burney was better known than his daughter due to his *Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Provinces* (1774), which was immediately translated into German by Karl Ebeling and Johann Joachim Christoph Bode. The latter, possibly the most famous German translator of eighteenth-century English literature, was a good friend of Schröder (Meyer 2: 115 and n.).

Few translations kept close to the original texts, however; many were embellished according to the translator's taste.<sup>7</sup> English names and

titles were changed on a regular basis, either into French ones because the French version was already familiar to the German public (such as *Spectateur* and *Guardien*) or into their German counterparts, as the audience would, for the most part, have been unable to pronounce the English names anyway. Accordingly, Pamela was called “Leonore Schmidt” in one version, and Clarissa “Albertine” (Price 10). Titles were often changed beyond recognition—possibly to place the translation out of competition with the original. The subtitle of *Cecilia*, for instance, *Memoirs of an Heiress*, was changed to *The Virtues of the Female Sex (Die Tugenden des weiblichen Geschlechts)* in one translation, and to *The History of a Rich Orphan (Die Geschichte einer reichen Waise)* in another. Burney’s *Cecilia* herself was renamed “Emilia Beverley” (Price 55). *Evelina*’s mutation into *Victorine; or Doing Good Brings Dividends* is thus no exception to the rule. The printed version acknowledges the debt to Burney’s *Evelina* in the foreword, perhaps as an added incentive to the public to purchase the play once printed: “Victorine has been altered from the English novel *Evelina* and has cost me the usual pains one has with the dramatization of a novel” (Schröder [2]).<sup>8</sup>

Although Burney may never have heard of Schröder’s adaptation of her novel, the actor was not unknown to the British Royal family; he played before the exiled Queen Caroline Matilda of Denmark (sister to George III) at Celle in 1773 and amused the “Bishop of Osnabrück” (Frederick, Duke of York) in Vienna in August 1784 (see Meyer 1: 240, 396). This was shortly before *Victorine* was first produced, less than two years before Burney’s appointment as Keeper of the Robes, so that there is a slight possibility that she did come to hear of *Victorine*. The Queen was fond of reading German plays and regularly tried to order the newest publications (for instance, *LHAS Briefsammlung* 875, 4 August 1786). Intriguingly, the Queen mentions having read Schröder’s comedies in September 1786: “jai lu a la derobé les Comedie de Schröder qui me plaisent beaucoup” (*LHAS Briefsammlung* 875, 23 September 1786). This collection of comedies may well have been the *Beytrag zur deutschen Schaubühne* (published in 1786), which included *Victorine*. A week later, Burney recorded in her diary that the Queen translated the story of a German play for her but does not comment at all on its contents (Barrett 3: 164). Given the Queen’s fondness for teasing, she may have been summarizing *Victorine* to Burney, but she is unlikely not to have revealed the connection at some point—and even if Burney did not care for the German adaptation, would she not have mentioned the fact as a matter of curiosity?

When the play was first produced on 20 November 1784, Schröder, only briefly engaged at the *Burgtheater*, was already quite famous throughout Germany. The successful director of Ackermann's theatre company in Hamburg, he was known as a brilliant actor besides, excelling in both comic and tragic parts.<sup>9</sup> He seems to have been something of a German Garrick: "As soon as Schröder appeared on stage, one felt that one was inside a work of art, and forgot the actor," according to a famous contemporary (Ludwig Tieck, qtd. in Hauffen 94). In 1906, a critic still called him "Germany's greatest actor" and considered him to have played a most important role in the history of the German theatre (Hauffen 87). Both as actor and director, Schröder introduced a simple, natural style of acting to the German stage, initiating the German school of acting which was strongly opposed to the traditional French style, then declared to be "stiff and puppet-like" by the up-and-coming German *literati*.<sup>10</sup> Schröder's innovations were consciously introduced to sever the German theatre from the French theatre, and his nationalism chimed in with the German literary movement of the time, the *Sturm und Drang* ("Storm and Stress"). Not only did he produce Goethe, Iffland, and Kotzebue (the latter familiar to readers of *Mansfield Park* due to Inchbald's rendering of his *The Child of Love into Lover's Vows*), but he also staged a vast number of English plays (Hauffen 92). Indeed, he is said to have adapted a staggering 150 English plays and novels for the stage, apart from producing 70 ballets, for some of which he even composed the music, and to have studied more than 500 parts himself.<sup>11</sup> Today, however, Schröder is mostly remembered for his daring attempts to stage Shakespeare's plays. Even if they initially startled their audience, Schröder's productions, in which he usually also played the male lead, were particularly successful and did much to establish Shakespeare on the German stage (cf. Maurer-Schmoock 102-03). His adaptations admittedly sound dreadful to a modern ear: he changed Shakespeare's plays to suit the taste of his audience, reducing the poetic verse parts to a minimum and substituting the typical endings of a bourgeois tragedy for that of *King Lear*, *Othello*, and *Hamlet*, so as to keep most of the protagonists alive (cf. Hauffen 96 and Rehder 39-50).<sup>12</sup> Successful or not, all the changes Schröder effected to adapt Shakespeare are also prominent features of his revised version of *Evelina*: he changed most of the high-flown language to the vernacular, introduced German concerns and German characters, and played to the taste of an audience that favored the sentimental.

## The Play

As the play differs considerably from the novel and is available only in German, a detailed introduction to plot and characters may not come amiss here, to be followed by a discussion of the most prominent changes introduced by Schröder.

## The Setting

The play is set in the town of Pymont, which was famous for the healing powers of its springs by the sixteenth century. Situated reasonably close to Hanover, Pymont was a highly fashionable place at the time, comparable to but less luxurious than Bath.<sup>13</sup> The play does not elaborate on the scenery, nor do any of the famous promenades appear in the background; the stage directions merely indicate that the action takes place “in the house of Colonel Maybaum,” without any further specifications. As in *Evelina’s* Bristol, however, the setting allows for the seemingly accidental arrival of various important characters.

## The Characters

Schröder understandably decided to cut down the novel’s cast of characters to a moderate eleven roles, but in the process, he took the liberty to either condense or displace most of Burney’s favorites. (See chart, page 33.) Most strikingly, *Evelina’s* beloved Mr. Villars has been amalgamated with Captain Mirvan into the figure of Colonel Maybaum. The Colonel is a jovial, benevolent man but given to inexplicable bouts of temper and prone to play tricks on people for their own moral improvement. His character is quickly revealed as proverbial; beneath that rough exterior beats a heart of gold. He may use mild oaths such as “the deuce take him” when talking about Victorine’s father, but he does it out of concern for his foster-daughter. Schröder played this role himself and may thus have preferred to add certain characteristics to suit his acting style (Meyer 1: 399). The Colonel’s wife, Mrs. Maybaum (called “Oberstin” in the play: in eighteenth-century German, she took the title of her husband modified by a feminine suffix), may have been modelled on Mrs. Mirvan, but her motivation for bringing Victorine to the attention of the girl’s father is a mercenary one. Colonel Maybaum is apt to give away all he has for the love of hopeless causes, and she is thus obliged to find the means to ensure

*Dramatis Personae*

<i>German dramatis personae</i>	<i>English translation of Names and titles</i>	<i>Counterparts in Evelina</i>
Der Oberste von Maybaum	<i>Colonel Maybaum</i> (“Maypole”)	<i>Mr. Villars &amp; Captain Mirvan</i>
Die Oberstin, dessen Gemahlin	<i>Mrs. Maybaum, his wife</i>	<i>more prominent than Mrs. Mirvan</i>
Franciska, ihre Tochter	<i>Franciska, their daughter</i>	<i>unlike the gentle Maria Mirvan</i>
Victorine, ihre Pfllegetochter	<i>Victorine, their ward</i>	<i>Evelina</i>
Frau von Duval, Victorinens	<i>Mme. de Duval</i>	<i>Mme. Duval</i>
Großmutter	<i>Victorine’s Grandmother</i>	<i>no counterpart in Evelina</i>
Graf Millburg	<i>Count Millburg</i>	<i>Lord Orville</i>
Baron Rennthal	<i>Baron Rennthal</i>	<i>Sir Clement Willoughby</i>
Baron Sommer	<i>Baron Summer</i>	<i>Sir John Belmont</i>
Msr. Du Bois, Reisegefährte der Frau von Duval	<i>M. du Bois, travel companion to Mme de Duval</i>	<i>M. Dubois</i>
Franz, des Obersten Bedienter	<i>Franz, servant to the Colonel</i>	<i>no counterpart in Evelina</i>

*Handlung in Pymont, im Hause des Obersten von Maybaum — Setting: Pymont, the house of Colonel Maybaum*

the family's financial survival. Their daughter Franciska is Schröder's own invention (cf. Bülow 3: x) and may even be intended as a curious compliment to the author: "Frances" was usually rendered as "Francisca" in eighteenth-century German. She resembles neither the meek Miss Mirvan nor the languid Lady Louisa, let alone Evelina's relatives, but is a frank and open young woman, clearly devoted to her father and unwilling to bow to custom. In the latter part of the play, she is given some speeches similar to those of Mrs. Selwyn in the novel, but her youth and liveliness set her apart from that lady, too.<sup>14</sup> Colonel Maybaum happily complains that she has been meant for the son he does not have. The other characters, with the exception of the servant Franz, resemble Burney's original cast: Victorine is not unlike Evelina (this role was played by Schröder's wife, Anne Christine Hart, who turned twenty-nine in 1784, when Schröder was only just forty), Count Millburg more or less corresponds to Lord Orville, Baron Rennthal to the villain Sir Willoughby, and Baron Summer to Sir John Belmont. While all the English characters have thus been transformed into German ones, the French, or frenchified, characters of the novel, Monsieur du Bois and Mme. (de) Duval were allowed to remain more or less as they are (Meyer 3: 166; Bülow 3: x).

## ACT 1

The play opens with a scene between Victorine and Mrs. Maybaum in which the latter explains to both her ward and the audience the unhappy story of Victorine's mother (1.4),<sup>15</sup> clearly based on that of Caroline Evelyn (called Louise in the play). There are, however, some important differences: Colonel Maybaum was unacquainted with either Louise's father or mother and adopted the girl—nothing is said about when or how—without knowing anything at all about her family. This is a typical instance of his generosity as he assists those in trouble on a regular basis without, to the annoyance of Mrs. Maybaum, ever considering his own family's claims on his scanty fortunes. Mrs. Maybaum concludes with the startling information that Victorine's father, Baron Summer, has finally been found and is to be made accountable for his daughter's upkeep. Unlike Evelina, Victorine pleads hard with her foster mother not to give her away to a man who has so far neglected his paternal duties. She does not want to leave the Maybaums and is willing to stay on as a servant rather than stay with an unknown father, "that man," as she calls the Baron. "You will not cast me off?" she cries in a scene verging on the

melodramatic, but at that important junction her foster sister Franciska enters and straightaway diverts everyone's attention by beginning to joke about Victorine's fondness for Count Millburg. Victorine mildly rebukes her, using the formal German "Sie," thus emphasizing her fear that she is no longer an accepted and valued member of the family. Mrs. Maybaum, ignoring her daughters' battle of wits, goes on to reveal that Victorine's grandmother has also been found and that she has begun to correspond with her. The Colonel now enters and wonders at the sad faces he sees. Put into the picture, he declares: "If your father is an ass and does not want to recognize you, you'll stay with us and enough said of that!" (3.11).

The scene ends with his confession that he has spent all his ready money once more so that the audience begins to think there might be something in Mrs. Maybaum's fears for their future after all. "What will become of us," she wails, to which lament the Colonel dryly answers: "Not Capitalists, at any rate" (4.15). He next produces a letter he has had in his pockets for a week or so but has been unable to read since he does not know French. The letter turns out to be an important missive from Mme. de Duval, who accuses them of being afraid to lose her grandchild's board: why else would they refuse to send Victorine to her? (5.17). In this scene, a new twist is added to the story. The Colonel is now understandably annoyed with Mme. de Duval, but he is so not only because of her base(less) accusation but also because he is a German patriot: "[She must be] mad, certainly; else this fool, who is a German, would not write to Germans in French!" (5.17) (Among the German aristocracy, German was still considered "low"; Queen Charlotte, for instance, wrote to her brothers in idiosyncratic French rather than German.) His wife exhorts him to be friends with Victorine's grandmother for the sake of her fortune, but he will have none of that. Another letter arrives. Victorine's father has also written (in German); the content of his epistle is almost identical to that written by Evelina's father in answer to Lady Howard's enquiry (cf. *Evelina*, 130).

Now Count Millburg and Baron Rennthal are announced and proceed to tell the astonished family that the Colonel has recently saved an unhappy young man's life. This young man, desolately out of luck and desperately in love with an unknown beauty, was about to drown himself when the Colonel passed by, pulled him out of the water, and administered a thorough thrashing for good measure. By way of response, the young man pleaded to be taken into the Colonel's house, willing to stay in the least little corner, but Colonel Maybaum denies his request: "No, a man who

does not love himself cannot love others, either, and those who would be around me must needs love me. Here is my purse” (10.25). Count Millburg has in the meantime discovered that the unfortunate young man is, in fact, his nephew, the son of a hard-hearted sister. The Count is much obliged to the Colonel and offers a substantial reward, which is of course declined. As an old-fashioned military man, Maybaum now takes it for granted that since the suicidal wretch has turned out to be a gentleman, he will have to give satisfaction, but nobody else takes his rather excited assumption seriously (12.30).

## ACT 2

Franciska, alone on stage and unusually thoughtful for once, declares that “at bottom, drowning just means swimming out of the world,” a euphemism with which even Goethe’s *Werther* need not have quarrelled. She is startled out of her reflective reverie by a French coach driving by at breakneck speed. The coach ends up in a ditch, and a lady is heard to complain loudly in French. Franciska answers her in that language, inviting her to come into their parlor to recover. The Colonel thunders: “If people want to travel through Germany, let them learn German, just as we have to speak French when in France” (3.39). The hapless traveller has escaped with no worse consequences than a little fright, but her bad French quickly reveals her to be a native German. Mme. de Duval—of course, it is no other—soon realizes that her “caisse” with all her “coiffures, bonnets, dentelles” has been left behind at Cassel and forces her companion, M. du Bois, to ride back and retrieve them.<sup>16</sup> Before he leaves, though, the hilarious scene from *Evelina* (99–100) is inserted, in which Captain Mirvan (now Maybaum) and M. Dubois insult each other in their own languages only to assume that the other has begged pardon without understanding a word of what has been said (5.42).

Once Mme. de Duval’s identity is discovered, she declares that she intends to take Victorine to Paris with her, but since she insults the memory of her own late daughter, “a godforsaken creature,” and denounces Victorine’s father as a “bad man” (7.48), Victorine begins to plead once more with her foster parents not to leave her at the mercy of such a grandmother. Nothing is decided yet, however; instead, a rather weak scene (10.51–54) follows in which Baron Rennthal is alone with Victorine and seizes that opportunity to make love to her. The text itself does not specify whether he is actually asking for her hand or not, but Victorine immediately

accuses him of intending to seduce her. He was, moreover, supposed to be in love with her sister but declares that Franciska's hoydenishness and sharp tongue would put anyone off. Millburg then joins them, Victorine exits, and the two men discuss Rennthal's intentions just as Orville and Willoughby do in their final encounter (*Evelina* 285–87). Franciska enters and ends their parley by asking Rennthal to assist her father in devising a scheme to annoy Mme. de Duval. Rennthal leaves and Franciska now quizzes Millburg about his own intentions in a beautifully written comic scene. Of course, Millburg soon reveals his love to Victorine (14.65), and Franciska, left alone on stage, discovers that she, too, would like to fall in love but that the young men she knows are not to her taste.

### ACT 3

Act 3 opens with the Colonel justifying his intended frolic to Franciska, saying that he could have pardoned all Mme. de Duval's vulgarities but that she simply has to be punished for looking down on her fatherland. Rennthal then acquaints Mme. de Duval with the unwelcome news that M. du Bois has been arrested en route to Cassel. At first, Mme. de Duval does not believe a word of that story, but a letter duly arrives for her stating that her companion is in danger of being hanged for theft.<sup>17</sup> Before she can set off, though, Rennthal corners her and admits to being part of a plot against her. Even though she resents his taking part in such a villainous conspiracy, she tells him of her daughter's elopement and claims that her late husband had never told her of the birth of a granddaughter. If Rennthal had hoped to solicit her assistance with regard to Victorine, he is mistaken; she tells him to get lost in no uncertain terms, and in the next scene he is unceremoniously thrown out by the Colonel never to be heard of again (13.94).

Franciska now discovers to her father that Millburg is in love with Victorine, and the Colonel decides that they should get married at once. He calls for Millburg while Franciska sends in Victorine to look for a book. The lovers are left alone, and the following scene (18.98–102) is again very similar to the proposal scene in *Evelina*. However, before anything is settled, Franciska bursts in on them and echoes Mrs. Selwyn's nosy enquiries: "Have you found the book? Have you read in it? Which chapter have you reached?" (19.102). She announces that Baron Summer, Victorine's father, has arrived, and Millburg unexpectedly reveals that he was meant to marry the Baron's daughter whom he has never met.

## ACT 4

Act 4 starts with yet another letter, this time delivered to Franciska. It is by the unknown young man who had tried to drown himself, revealing that he is in fact a Count of Dornheim (“Thornhome”) and that he had intended to kill himself because he despaired of ever making her love him. “Well,” Franciska comments, “he calls me ‘madam’ (*“gnädiges Fräulein”*)—for a man who wants to swim out of the world for my sake that is rather cold. Why not ‘enchanted, English, heavenly, adorable madam!’” (2.107–08) She calls her father and tells him that she intends to get married. He is mightily tickled: “So I’ve had to fish myself a son-in-law out of the water like a winged wild duck?” Schröder may have realized how far he had departed from the original here, and has Franciska add: “I feel as if I had been dreaming, or as if I had been reading quite a colourful novel” (4.113).

In the meantime, Mme. de Duval and Baron Summer meet at the Maybaums’ (6.115–21). She gleefully notices how old he now looks, fully convinced of her superiority in matters moral as well as physical. He, in turn, upbraids her with having neglected her maternal duties and moralizes on the holy duty of parents to look after their children, even if they should have to give up their own pleasures in order to do so. In a striking departure from Burney’s novel, he reveals that he has *not* been married to Victorine’s mother, Louise, but that after her demise he has obtained some documents declaring Louise to have been his wife, thus presumably legitimizing his daughter. Just like Sir John Belmont, however, he claims that his daughter is now with him and that he has long ago taken her under his wing. Now Mme. de Duval is convinced that the Maybaums have tried to fob her off with a “changeling.” Not even the appearance of Victorine herself solves that riddle, as her father fails to see the spitting image of the late Caroline/Louise before him. However, Victorine has a last trump card literally up her sleeve: she reveals the letter written by her mother on her deathbed (8.125). Readers of *Evelina* will be astonished to hear that her father has received that letter years ago together with his daughter. Fortunately, though, he does recognize this letter to be the original one, and the nurse’s trick is once more discovered (13.137). Now Millburg bursts in and declares that he wants to be Baron Summer’s son after all, to the confusion of everyone present, and when that matter, too, is cleared up—of course he meant Victorine—the heroine reveals her love in such high-flown language that Franciska has to translate her words to make them intelligible to the others in a brilliantly farcical scene (10.130–

31).

Finally, M. du Bois rejoins them and Mme. de Duval is pestered by all to give her blessing to Victorine's marriage. She assents, and the Colonel jovially declares that she is not so very stupid after all. Baron Summer asks Victorine's pardon, Count Millburg distributes his wealth among all those present, and Mme. de Duval declares that she will adopt the false Victorine and bring her up as her second daughter. Cheered on by her new-found and newly created relatives, she promises that she will spend no more than a month a year at Paris and stay with them in Germany for the rest of the time (13.139–40). (*Finis*)

### An Interpretation

*Victorine* is first mentioned in a letter by Schröder, dated 29 August 1784, in which he assures his correspondent that his long silence has been due to a "writing frenzy" ("*schriftstellerische Raserei*") that produced not only *Victorine* but also *The Cousin of Lisbon* and an adaptation of Boursault's *Mercur* (Meyer 1: 396). According to Meyer, Schröder was disappointed with the few roles he was allowed to act at the *Burgtheater* and, therefore, started to create leading roles for himself and his wife by composing and adapting plays. In another letter, dated 13 October 1784, Schröder announced that the play would be produced at the *Burgtheater* in four weeks' time and that he was certain of its success (Meyer 1: 399).<sup>18</sup> Meyer comments that Schröder was right, since this "very pleasant comedy has found favour [even] with strict judges" (Meyer 1: 399). *Victorine* is mentioned in Schröder's letters one last time: he complains on 8 December 1784 that he has been duped over the payment he received for the third performance (Meyer 1: 396). *Victorine* was next performed in Hannover on 13 January 1786 and was so successful that Schröder and his wife were called out again to be applauded once more, a new practice of which Schröder did not approve. The play was also staged in Altona, Lübeck, and, finally, Hamburg, where Schröder resumed his directorship in 1786 (Meyer 3: 64). It must have belonged to the theatre's staple productions; when Schröder retired as a director in 1798, his successors tried to convince him to stay on as an actor as several plays depended (at least in the eyes of the audience) on his acting the leading roles, and among those plays, *Victorine* is listed. The Weimarer Hoftheater, however, had produced *Victorine* already in 1788 with another leading actor, who seems to have been quite successful in the role of Oberst Maybaum.<sup>19</sup> Another argument

in favour of the play's being at least moderately successful is the fact that Schröder published it in 1786, declaring in the preface that he hoped thus to forestall pirated editions.

Unfortunately, no first-hand account of a performance seems to have survived, and I have not come across a single modern interpretation of the play. The few extant critical evaluations are rather too short to be satisfactory. A collected edition of Schröder's works, edited by Eduard von Bülow in 1831, mentions only that the play is based on "Evelyne" by Miss Burney (3: x). Bülow briefly explains that "the English characters are Germanized [and] the minor characters left out," but he assumes that these changes were necessary and that Schröder competently managed the difficult task of transforming a "good novel" into a good play. He mentions the addition of Franciska but is more interested in Mrs. Maybaum, who is "not self-standing, as it were, but is only considered in the light of her relation to the Colonel; she is his real, truly German other half [*Ehehälfte*]." All he deplores is that Mrs. Selwyn was of no use to the dramatist. This edition also contains a general introduction by Ludwig Tieck, who says more about the German theatre at the time than about Schröder's plays but briefly recollects *Victorine*. He, too, mentions "Eveline" but declares that Schröder did not quite manage to dramatize Burney's "good story": "The play is finished rather long before it ends." He, too, considers Franciska to be a happy addition and concedes: "Well-played, the comedy, if somewhat abbreviated, should still have an effect" (1: xlv).

Even general assessments of Schröder's many adaptations are hard to find. According to the early twentieth-century critic Hauffen, Schröder's prose tended to sink into the trivial and "homespun" ("hausbacken") whereas he excelled in the dramatization of his material: the scenes interlock and merge into each other, the action moves along rapidly, and the characters are clearly defined. However, Hauffen also affirms that Schröder's plays were immediately popular but went out of fashion just as quickly and would not succeed on a "modern" stage—in 1906, that is (Hauffen 103). These general criticisms are on the whole applicable also to *Victorine*. It is difficult to judge the merits of a play available only in print since so much depends on its being acted. The style is indeed plain rather than poetic, but the ending is surprisingly sentimental. The action, however, moves forward in one continuous motion, except for the unnecessary introduction of Rennthal/Willoughby, whose pursuit of Victorine seems entirely spurious. The characters are only very roughly based on those provided by Burney, but they do seem well-developed. Millburg is an exception;

Orville is not a shining example of a hero, but he is more active than Millburg whose role seems to be one of passive approval. The unlikely distribution of his wealth among his new relatives makes the ending of the play seem somewhat communist. The characters intend to stay together and, henceforth, share their worldly belongings. The addition of the lively Franciska does not come amiss in a play, and the Colonel is the centre of attention, a feat that neither Captain Mirvan nor Mr. Villars, nor indeed Orville would have been likely to have achieved had Schröder tried to focus on one of them instead. Villars and Orville are, like Evelina, too good to force themselves into the limelight, and Captain Mirvan is far too coarse to be the protagonist of what was after all meant to be a sentimental comedy.

Compared to what a modern film director might make of *Evelina*, the changes introduced by Schröder's comedy must be called moderate. Some of them are to be explained by dramatic necessity. To keep up the pace of the play, Schröder could not render Evelina's letters in lengthy monologues on Victorine's doubts, fears, and feelings—unlike Evelina, she has to plead openly with her foster parents to reveal her mind. The few remaining characters have to be more prominent onstage, which is why Mrs. Maybaum has more presence, or a more strongly defined character, than Mrs. Mirvan. Rennthal/Willoughby's quick punishment, too, is more dramatic than mere disappointment. Other changes may seem to reflect badly on the characters but are perhaps more immediately plausible to a theatre audience. For instance, even if Mrs. Maybaum seems mercenary, her financial worries necessitate a more urgent approach than Mrs. Mirvan's doubts concerning Evelina's marital prospects. Understandably, too, her efforts to trace Victorine's father must seem to the heroine as if her foster parents were inclined to dispose of her. Victorine's unwillingness to meet a father who seemingly never cared enough for his daughter to enquire after her welfare is in accordance with modern notions of psychology. She reveals the insecurities of a girl growing up with foster parents, hoping to pass herself off as more detached and self-assured than she is by means of a particularly genteel language and deportment. Moreover, she has at least one brief moment of self-assertion when she confronts Rennthal, who seems villainous because one knows him to be Willoughby rather than because of any obvious misdeeds. Unlike Evelina, Victorine is never in danger of being overpowered by a man she openly despises. Yet even such comparatively slight changes to the actions and motivations of Burney's characters lead to major upheavals in the characterization; for the most part, the audience pities Victorine rather than sympathizing with her.

Franciska, by contrast, seems to foreshadow the advent of the spirited, self-assured heroine. Considering that the only one to disapprove of her within the play is Rennthal, the Willoughby-villain, it seems highly unlikely that Schröder intended his creation to serve as a negative foil to the blameless heroine (a problem which Burney herself would face when creating *The Woman Hater's* lively Joyce). Franciska is genuinely attractive, however little she may comply with eighteenth-century notions of propriety. Not even the suicidal nature of her suitor quenches her enthusiastic acceptance of life in all its facets.<sup>20</sup> The reason for Franciska's addition to the original cast of characters might be the playwright's assumption that Victorine/Evelina is too static, too sentimental for the play to succeed without a contrasting comical part. However, she also highlights a topic originally important to *Evelina*: the father-daughter relationship. Due to the uncomplicated, loving relations between Franciska and her parents, this central aspect of the novel seems completely refashioned in *Victorine*. The happy bantering of Maybaum and Franciska provides a stark contrast to Victorine's insecure clinging to her foster parents and her understandable aversion to meeting her unknown biological father. Maybaum tries to banter with her too, but she is too insecure to accept his blustering displays of love as genuine appreciation of herself. Franciska, confident in her father's love for her, can easily dispense with the trammels of custom; Victorine cannot. All in all I know of no play or novel, either in German or in English, which shows such a light-hearted and at the same time emotionally secure relationship between father and daughter—or father and son, for that matter.

However, the aspect of Burney's early novel—absent from the later ones—which presumably most appealed to Schröder is her John Bull attitude towards the French. The novel's rejection of "frenchified" manners must have appealed to a German audience on two accounts: first, because of its new-found patriotic stance and, second, because of the current rejection of French modes of acting.<sup>21</sup> The Colonel's goodness of heart makes his patriotism seem the more commendable (or vice versa), and the German setting ensures that his ignorance of foreign languages is not unduly exposed. Mme. de Duval is just as ridiculous in Germany as she is in England, and with the exception of the Colonel, the main characters cannot be neatly sorted into particular nationalities—perhaps another reason for Schröder to add these two to the original cast. The German navy was practically non-existent at that time, so a Captain would not have been a recognizable German character-type, and a Colonel has some

obvious claims to being considered a true patriot. Besides the possibilities for ridiculing “frenchified” manners presented by Mme. de Duval, Burney’s novel may also have appealed to Schröder because of its use of the vernacular in the language of Captain Mirvan and the Branghtons. He seems to have disapproved of Evelina’s attempts at (verbal) gentility: Victorine is several times reproached for her high-flown style.<sup>22</sup> In the play, the use of language is obviously as important as it is in the novel, but the changes in style create an entirely different effect. Victorine’s refinement seems forced next to the frankness of Franciska, who combines the voluble liveliness of the Misses Branghton with the equally verbose sagacity of Mrs. Selwyn. Even if some of the alterations in style may be due to difficulties in translating what linguists call the register—how good was Schröder’s English or French for that matter, or did he use the German translation? It seems to me that colloquial language is deliberately employed as a means to convey “natural,” or authentic-seeming characters on stage. *Victorine* is a celebration of the down-to-earth, with regard to both patriotism and language, and it offers a no-nonsense approach to relationships: unnecessary misunderstandings are to be avoided.

Schröder did not underestimate the force of his revisions. Untrammelled by concern for the original, he opted for psychological plausibility rather than an accurate adaptation of Burney’s novel. He wanted a fast-paced comedy, and his concessions to his German audience’s taste and horizon seem to have been effective, considering the play’s success. That this was not due to the popularity of Burney’s novel is, I think, evident from the few surviving playbills: none of them mentions Burney or *Evelina*.<sup>23</sup> Presumably, the already happy ending of the novel, changed to one of perfect bliss all around (if only after a heavy dose of moralizing), was meant to appeal to the audience too. I cannot account for the play’s revelation that Louise, Victorine’s mother, was not married to Baron Summer, however. Perhaps this is meant to make the heroine’s ultimate success seem yet more fortunate—or else to prove another moral point: that illegitimate children should not be made to suffer for their parents’ faults. In any case, the play’s almost farcically sentimental last scenes are in stark contrast to *Evelina*’s realism and refreshing lack of pathos. All in all, the play is a strange mixture of *Evelina* and something entirely different. This unknown factor may be Schröder himself, or perhaps it is simply a culture shock: the transformation of *Evelina* into a German girl. In any case, *Evelina*’s voyage to Germany was evidently a success, and the play must be considered as such, whatever its particular

flaws in the eyes of *Evelina's* fans. Travelling is known to have changed individuals beyond recognition, and even if old friends may deplore such alterations, these are the risks a traveller has to run.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *The Diaries and Letters of Mme D'Arblay, 1778–1840*, ed. Charlotte Barrett, 6 vols. (London, 1842), 1: 297.

<sup>2</sup> For critics arguing that the novels should be read with attention to their theatricality, see Francesca Saggini, “Miss Ellis and the Actress: For a Theatrical Reading of *The Wanderer*,” *A Celebration of Frances Burney*, ed. Lorna J. Clark (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2007), 141–55; and Anja Müller, “Re-Visiting (Anti-)Theatricality in Frances Burney’s *Evelina*,” *Anglistentag 2004 Aachen: Proceedings*, ed. Lilo Moessner and Christa M. Schmidt (Trier: WVT, 2005), 399–410.

<sup>3</sup> The play is available via Google Books in both Schröder’s 1786 publication, which mentions *Evelina* only in the foreword (no pagination given), and the nineteenth-century edition of Schröder’s works by Eduard von Bülow, which says “Nach der Miß Burney Roman: Eveline” on the title page of the play (353).

<sup>4</sup> I am most grateful to Marie-Luise Spieckermann for her advice concerning criticism on the German reception of English literature, as well as to the unknown reviewers who suggested some general improvements.

<sup>5</sup> It should not be overlooked, however, that this interest may also have been due to the rise of the House of Hanover to the English throne in 1714 as well as to commercial relations between these countries (cf. Blassneck 124–25, 132–33).

<sup>6</sup> Price 18, 55–56. There does not seem to have been any German translation of *The Wanderer*. Conversely, a novel called *Georgina; or, The Memoirs of the Bellmour family, by a young lady*, was erroneously attributed to “Miss Burney,” apparently by two different German translators whose names have not been recorded. Burney’s main translators seem to have been C. F. Weiße and W. H. Brömel. Weiße’s translation of *Evelina*, the only one

known to me, is an unabridged and straightforward rendering of the novel. The few mistakes I noticed seem to have been due to haste rather than language problems (*Evelina oder eines jungen Frauenzimmers Eintritt in die Welt*, trans. Christian Felix Weiße [Leipzig: im Schwickertschen Verlage, 1779]). None of Burney's novels are currently available in German.

<sup>7</sup> There were as yet no treaties between any of the German states and England protecting literary property so that English authors would not have been able to defend their works from being (mis-)translated or simply reprinted in Germany (Fabian 28). English novels were not always translated directly from the original; these were difficult to get hold of, not the least because they were often published by subscription, so that few spare copies found their way to other countries. Most German translators used French or Dutch translations instead of the original English texts (cf. Blassneck 9, 45, 82) as these were often to be had before the English originals appeared on the German market (Fabian 13; 30–31). Eighteenth-century German knowledge of English publications was the more remarkable considering that the German book trade had few, if any, international contacts at the time (Fabian 34). Whereas French bookshops had already opened at the turn of the century, the first advertisement for an English library in Hamburg appeared on 1 January 1788 (Fabian 36). Very few Germans spoke or understood English—not even the translators always did, and personal knowledge of the country was by no means a necessary qualification for translators at the time. The Prices claim that none of the English-German translators now known by name ever visited England (12).

<sup>8</sup> All translations of German texts into English are by me.

<sup>9</sup> Hauffen 93 and Maurer-Schmoock 167. Schröder had started to act under his stepfather, Konrad E. Ackermann, who built the first standing theatre in Hamburg (*Theater am Gänsemarkt*) in 1765. After Ackermann's death in 1771, Schröder first directed Ackermann's group conjointly with his mother, née Sophie Charlotte Biereichel, before moving on to Vienna in 1781. However, while his first biographer maintains that he simply tired of his directorship, it should be kept in mind that there was very little money to be made in German theatres. Even as a director, Schröder's weekly income was low, and the *Burgtheater* seems to have offered comparatively high wages to himself as well as to his wife, the actress Anne Christine Hart

Schröder (cf. Maurer-Schmoock 115). According to a German traveller, Friedrich Nicolai, though, it was the *Burgtheater* that profited most from the arrangement (qtd. in Haider-Pregler 202). Schröder returned to Hamburg as director of his old troupe in 1785 (cf. Hauffen 100, 103).

<sup>10</sup> Maurer-Schmoock 155. According to Maurer-Schmoock, there were two German schools of acting: Schröder's in Hamburg, where a realistic, lively style was practised that stressed the importance of facial expression, and Goethe's in Weimar, where the emphasis was more on poetic language (155–56; cf. Hauffen 87).

<sup>11</sup> Hauffen 93, 94, 103. The Prices list 38 translations under Schröder's name (283–84).

<sup>12</sup> Rehder argues that Schröder tried the original Shakespeare first (*Othello* in 1776) but that his Hamburg audience was so shocked by Shakespeare's "relentless art" that Schröder was obliged to tone it down (40–41). Hauffen, writing in 1906, approvingly noted that Schröder had managed to adjust English plays to the German mind, whereas today's consensus seems to be that Schröder rather exceeded his poetic licence (Hauffen 41). One has to keep in mind, though, that the German "domestic" theatre (*bürgerliches Nationaltheater*), open to everyone but self-supporting, had only very recently been established: until the mid-eighteenth century, theatres were mostly attached to a court (*Hoftheater*), which meant that they were fully subsidized but tickets were given out only to a chosen few (Maurer-Schmoock 141–42).

<sup>13</sup> A brief summary of the history of Bad Pyrmont and its illustrious guest list is to be found on the city's website: <http://www.badpyrmont.de/rathaus/geschichte-bevoelkerung/> (accessed on 1 April 2012). A more comprehensive account is given in the collection of essays edited by Dieter Alfter. Besides attracting members of the royal household (George I had been there; the Prussian Kings visited on a regular basis; and Queen Charlotte's brother, Charles, enjoyed frequent sojourns at that lively resort), Pyrmont was not altogether unknown to eighteenth-century England; Pyrmont water, exported on a fairly large scale, was highly prized—and presumably highly priced—in England (Alfter 25).

<sup>14</sup> Within the cast of Burney's own characters, she most resembles

Miss Wilmot in *The Woman Hater*.

<sup>15</sup> The citations are to scene and line number.

<sup>16</sup> He is said to travel along the post route, leading from Cassel to Pymont via Rinteln and Minden. For a short account of Pymont's postal connections, see Siebers 7–11. Pymont was very well connected to the nearest cities; during the summer months, extra post coaches carried passengers twice weekly from Hannover, Hameln, and Cassel to Pymont.

<sup>17</sup> Du Bois is arrested in Höxter, about 33 km from Pymont. As I grew up there, I was delighted to find my home town connected to Burney's novel, however deviously!

<sup>18</sup> Over the phone, the *Burgtheater* confirmed that the play had had a first run of about 30 performances. No documents have survived concerning the first night, or indeed any performance at the *Burgtheater*.

<sup>19</sup> See [http://archive.thulb.uni-jena.de/ThHStAW/receive/ThHStAW\\_performance\\_00021022;jsessionid=CE9D661C3697740A710663105B3F8864](http://archive.thulb.uni-jena.de/ThHStAW/receive/ThHStAW_performance_00021022;jsessionid=CE9D661C3697740A710663105B3F8864), accessed on 25 June 2013.

<sup>20</sup> This role may of course have been written for a particular actress, but if so, Meyer does not mention it.

<sup>21</sup> In Hamburg, even previously popular leading actresses who could not get used to the new, simple style of acting popularized by Ekhof, Ackermann, and Schröder, were hissed off the stage (Maurer-Schmooch 155). While the original disapproval of the French theatre may have been due to chauvinism rather than a change in taste, the new German style seems to have been considered a genuine improvement by the time *Victorine* was produced.

<sup>22</sup> Schröder's reaction may not have been all that unusual: Burney's struggles to refine *Evelina's* language have been outlined by Joyce Hemlow (75–85; reprinted in Cooke 372–80), and by the time *The Wanderer* appeared in 1814, critics thought the novelist's refined language deplorable (see Harman 328–29).

<sup>23</sup> A google search revealed playbills from the Hoftheater Weimar where the play was performed in 1788, 1789, 1796, and 1799; see [http://archive.thulb.uni-jena.de/ThHStAW/receive/ThHStAW\\_opus\\_00004501](http://archive.thulb.uni-jena.de/ThHStAW/receive/ThHStAW_opus_00004501), accessed on 25 June 2013.

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