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MEDIATING JOHANN GEORG ZIMMERMANN'S *VON DER ERFAHRUNG* IN FRANCE AND BRITAIN

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Introduction

The Swiss physician Johann Georg Zimmermann earned his M.D. degree at the University of Göttingen under the guidance of his renowned countryman Albrecht von Haller. After graduating in 1752 with his *Dissertatio physiologica de irritabilitate* [Physiological Dissertation on Irritability][1] (1751), Zimmermann continued to rely on his mentor, but unlike Haller, he gave up using Latin as a lingua franca in his publications (Zenker 2007: 27–31; Boschung 1998: 32). The rationale behind this was that Zimmermann did not become an academic, but the physician or '*Stadtphysikus*' of his hometown Brugg, later rising to the position of first physician or '*Leibmedicus*' to the prince elector George III in Hanover. Nevertheless, Zimmermann had ambitions in the world of learning. In the preface to his second major medical publication, *Von der Erfahrung in der Arzneykunst* [On Experience in Medicine] (1763/1764), he declared that the work was written for the *Jünglinge* [young men] at Göttingen – for the students he might have taught in person, had he accepted the university's recent offer of a professorial position (Zimmermann 1763: iv). As such, *Von der Erfahrung* appears to have stemmed from the pen of a scholar who found himself confined to a small town and, instead of pursuing an academic career, made himself useful to the local community (see Zenker 2007: 40).

This literary gesture proved successful, as Zimmermann soon not only gained a more prestigious position in Hanover but also caught the attention of colleagues abroad. One of them was Charles Rivington Hopson, M.D., who translated *Von der Ruhr* [On Dysentery] (1767), Zimmermann's description of a dysentery epidemic that had recently raged in the canton of Bern.

DOI: 10.4324/9781003592822-13

Dedicating his translation to Professor William Cullen of the University of Edinburgh, Hopson noted that Cullen had already recommended the original work to his disciples (Zimmermann 1771: 'Dedication', n.p.). Moreover, a review of the translation in *The London Magazine* (Anon 1771b: 164) affirmed that 'Dr Zimmermann' was such 'a name of eminence in the medical world' that 'any work of his' had to 'excite the curiosity of the physical reader'. According to Hopson, Zimmermann's '*Experience in Medicine*' was 'universally admired', although it had not yet been translated (Zimmermann 1771: 'Preface', n.p.).

Evidently, the circles of academic medicine were small, and it was precisely this educated elite whose attention Zimmermann courted by furnishing the title page of *Von der Erfahrung* with the motto 'Non ex vulgi opinione, sed ex sano judicio. Bacon' [Not based on popular opinion, but on sound judgement. Bacon]. Invoking Francis Bacon's *De dignitate et augmentis scientiarum* [On the Dignity and Advancement of Learning], this motto reflects Zimmermann's wish to appear a Baconian scholar and underlines that he was not writing for the 'vulgar' but for those who aspired to be physicians of 'true learning'. This points to a hierarchical view of society, in which universal access to knowledge was neither the norm nor the ultimate aim (Venuti 2018/1995: 35–7; Peltonen 2013: 25–6, 222–6). Indeed, Zimmermann wrote about 'der Pöbel (le vulgaire)' [the mob] as people incapable of grasping 'das grosse [sic] und das wahre [sic]' [the great and the true] (Zimmermann 1763: 10). Accordingly, it seems apposite that the French and British translators of *Von der Erfahrung* were, like Hopson, physicians with an academic background.

The first of them, Jean-Baptiste Lefebvre de Villebrune, translated *Von der Erfahrung* into French as *Traité de l'expérience* (1774). Recently characterized as a 'médecin philologue' (Bret and Moerman 2014: 660), Villebrune also translated Zimmermann's *Von der Ruhr* as *Traité de la dyssenterie* (1775), as well as other medical and non-medical works from English, Spanish, Italian, Swedish, Latin, and Greek. *Traité de l'expérience* was subsequently translated into English as *A Treatise on Experience in Physic* (1778). This translation was anonymous, but, as revealed by *The Critical Review* (Anon 1782a: 42), it was the work of Samuel Foart Simmons, M.D., a member of the French *Société Royale de Médecine* [Royal Society of Medicine] and later president of the Medical Society of London (Brock 2004: n.p.).

Yet, as these translations demonstrate, a doctorate in medicine did not necessarily entail faithfulness in the role of translator. In a 1794 letter to Dr John Coakley Lettsom, Zimmermann complained that Villebrune, instead of giving in French what *Von der Erfahrung* conveyed in German, had frequently inserted his own ideas into the text and offered them to the public as if they had been those of Zimmermann (Pettigrew 1817: 153–4). Thus, Zimmermann called Villebrune 'un fourbe' [a crook] while deeming

Hopson's translation of *Von der Ruhr* 'réüssi' [sic] [successful] (Pettigrew 1817: 152–3). He also regretted that a 'respectable' English physician (i. e. Simmons) had made the mistake of translating Villebrune's *Traité de l'expérience* into English, albeit with very good additional notes (Pettigrew 1817: 154).

Zimmermann's strong reaction is understandable: *Traité de l'expérience* does indeed often diverge from its source text, as shown below. Interestingly, however, contemporary reviewers display a more relaxed attitude to the matter. Both the *Journal des sçavans* [Journal of the Learned] (Anon 1774b: 729) and *L'Année littéraire* [The Literary Year] (Anon 1774a: 64) uncritically repeated Villebrune's statement that the translation incorporated some 'necessary' changes. The *Journal de médecine, chirurgie, pharmacie, &c* [Journal of Medicine, Surgery, Pharmacy, etc.] (Anon 1774c: 503) even noted that the translation appeared to have been done 'avec soin' [with care]. Such views probably had to do with Villebrune's affirmation that the changes did not pertain to 'l'art' [the art] of medicine (Zimmermann 1774: I.viii); many of Villebrune's French critics were in any case unable to read the German source text.

Most British readers of Simmons's indirect English translation would have been unaware of Villebrune's interventions, though *The Critical Review* directed attention to the multiple voices in the text:

> If this volume has a fault, it is sometimes a little inconsistent in its different parts [...] for, though in the whole passage he speaks in the language of a materialist, vide p. 98 to 107, yet, in other parts of his work, he often speaks of the efforts of the soul independent of the body.
>
> *(Anon 1782a: 45–6)*

This reader was clearly an expert who may have been familiar with Zimmermann's original German text, as it seems that he noticed the substantial rewriting occurring in the fifth chapter of Book II. Here, Zimmermann originally declared that the experience of former times and peoples was the physician's best instructor [Lehrmeisterin] (Zimmermann 1763: 130). However, Villebrune adjusted the message, cautioning against overconfidence in erudition and adding a long section relating to the debate on the relationship between body and soul (Zimmermann 1763: 130–6; Zimmermann 1774: I.138–66; Thomson 2008: 178, 184). Despite noticing that the translation contained different voices, the reviewer nevertheless refrained from calling out Villebrune's translation and its covert additions as Simmons's unacknowledged source text.

Notwithstanding Zimmermann's own good opinion, Hopson's translation of *Von der Ruhr* was likewise heavily adapted by way of omissions. Still, Hopson's agency was first ignored both in *The Critical Review* (Anon

1771a: 177; Anon 1782a: 41) and *The Monthly Review* (Dawson, 1772: 21; Nangle 1934: 13–14, 226) and misunderstood in *The London Magazine* (Anon 1772: 542), although Hopson himself admitted that he had removed a part of the work and 'occasionally' abridged it (Zimmermann 1771: 'Preface', n.p.). Only the *Göttingische Anzeigen* [Göttingen Advertiser] (Anon 1773: 369) paid due attention to the translation process, noting that Hopson had omitted everything regarding 'die Ausrottung medicinischer Vorurtheile' [the eradication of medical prejudices].

These observations raise the question of how the three translating physicians acted as judicious interpreters in reshaping the ethos of Zimmermann's work for their own target readers. As will be shown, they all acknowledged the obligation to transfer Zimmermann's medical experience in a transparent manner. However, their translations also display the various liberties they took when judging how the essence of Zimmermann's work and his authorial persona should be presented to readers who were neither Swiss citizens nor students at the University of Göttingen.

Judicious Physicians as 'Philosophical Doctors'

As a member of the Helvetic Society, Zimmermann depicted himself as a patriot and aspired to prove himself useful to his country. This was reflected in his manner of writing, which sought to engage the reader with skilful rhetoric. Consequently, Hopson affirmed that Zimmermann's works displayed 'a purity and elegance of stile [sic], which have contributed to place him in the first class of German writers' (Zimmermann 1771: 'Dedication', n.p.). Yet, considering that Zimmermann perceived himself as Swiss, it is important to read him as a physician who aimed to heal the particular society in which he lived and worked, and who therefore sought to bring about reforms in the canton of Bern. If such 'philosophische Ärzte' [philosophical doctors] are considered a recognizable scientific persona in the Enlightenment period, Zimmermann's manner of writing can be connected with his medical practice (Zenker 2007: 1–14; Langenbacher 1998: 15; Daston and Sibum 2003: 3). Indeed, like popular philosophers of the time, Zimmermann made use of the public sphere not only to encourage critical thinking, but also to address specific societal problems. This, in turn, raises the question of how his socially situated persona was communicated by translators based in different contexts.

Like Zimmermann himself, his translators had to consider the impression they would make on their audience. Simply 'copying' the source text without bringing their own expertise to bear would have meant acting like hack translators, ignorant of and indifferent to the project of advancing medical knowledge. For educated readers of the time, it was clear that poetry translators had to be poets themselves and that the limits to their own creativity

were flexible (Venuti 2018/1995: 37–54; Steiner 1975: 53–6). As noted by Felicity Henderson, a similar challenge faced translators of science: 'philosophical translators' who shared the expertise of the author 'took on some of the responsibility for the spirit of the text', although in their case this meant speaking with authority instead of displaying poetic genius (Henderson 2013: 117). Indeed, the translation of knowledge was 'not just an exercise in linguistics' but a process in which the ideas and methods proposed by the source text could be tested in a new context (Bycroft 2017: 88–9).

Besides the conventional idea of enriching the target language, the choices of translating physicians were guided by their professional role in a community composed of colleagues, patients, and the rest of the polity in which they were situated. This inevitably necessitated some interference with the source text, which means that a close reading of the translations reveals what kind of accommodative choices were acceptable for physicians. Since Zimmermann's translators resorted to diverse strategies, they do not seem to have shared any clear-cut norms. However, if they are all considered as 'philosophical' translators translating the persona of a 'philosophical doctor', interesting patterns emerge. Indeed, when this persona is perceived as a way of 'being in the world' recognized at the time, the divergent accommodative choices of the physician-translators can be appreciated as expressions of the kind of judiciousness and dedication to public welfare promoted by Zimmermann (Daston and Sibum 2003: 6). At the same time, it makes sense to ask how translatable Zimmermann's persona really was in these circumstances. In short, why should learned physicians have 'copied' the image of a colleague who was addressing a foreign audience when they could make the translation speak more directly to their own readers?

Hopson's Omission of the Public-Spirited Orator

The idea of 'translating as an orator' and paying attention to the translation's impact on the intended audience was put forward by Cicero, whose works attracted increasing interest in the eighteenth century (Stecconi 2018: 95–6; Smith 2020: 294–6). The related idea of the translation as a 'rival' surpassing, rather than copying, the original text was also influential in the period (Chesterman 2016: 22). In addition, early-modern European authors with a liberal education adhered to a classical distinction between the styles of poets, orators, and historians, and each 'orator' could have their own personal style and adapt it 'from passage to passage' (Rener 1989: 172–6).

Zimmermann's attention to rhetoric is evidenced, for example, by a passage in *Von der Ruhr* (1767: 237) which draws a parallel between his medical speech and Mark Antony's address to the Roman people. As Zimmermann explained, the preceding chapter was meant to influence the senses and the imagination, while the one at hand should appeal to the faculty of reason

(Zimmermann 1767: 237). The situated agency of Hopson – who was later confronted with this passage – is perceptible in the fact that he decided to exclude the entire chapter from his English translation. Puzzling as the choice may seem, it directs attention to factors behind the willingness of early-modern translators to 'domesticate' or 'rewrite' texts by measures that may now seem incomprehensibly drastic (Venuti 2018/1995: xii-xiii; Lefevere 2017 [1992]: 5–6). At the time, however, the rhetoric of such translations succeeded when it appeared natural enough to pass unnoticed (Smith 2020: 23–4).

The reason why Hopson thought that a chapter appealing to the senses should be included in *A Treatise on the Dysentery* while one which engaged the faculty of reason could be left out seems to lie in the sociopolitical dimension of Zimmermann's writing. In fact, Hopson omitted most of chapters I, VIII, and IX, which dealt with local circumstances and local government, because they were simply irrelevant to his British readership. Though beginning his translation with the opening paragraph of the first chapter, he swiftly moved on from the geography of the 1765 epidemic to the description of the disease itself (Zimmermann 1771: 2; Zimmermann 1767: 2–9). Perhaps for the same reason, he mistranslated 'nicht verschweigen' [not to withhold information] as not 'stilling' the dysentery in the body, whereas Zimmermann stressed that it was important not to keep quiet about the disease (Zimmermann 1767: 63; Zimmermann 1771: 38).

In short, Hopson did not translate Zimmermann's suggestions for the reform of public health policy in Switzerland but focused on descriptions of the disease, as observed in patients. This approach is already manifest on the translation's title page, which omitted all reference to the healing of prejudices as well as the engraving dedicating the work to 'dem Vaterlande' [the Fatherland]. The preface, in which Zimmermann presented himself as a physician serving the fatherland, was also omitted. Hopson wrote his own preface apologizing for the style of the translation, declaring his aim to be 'exactness' rather than 'elegance'. By way of explanation, he noted that Zimmermann had 'frequently indulged himself (agreeably to the genius of his countrymen) in such high flights of metaphorical expression and poetical language' that the English translation had 'not in general ventured to imitate' (Zimmermann 1771: 'Dedication', n.p.). This 'not imitating' typically meant omitting, arguably because Zimmermann used the styles of oration and poetry when discussing public health policy. In fact, Hopson referred to Zimmermann as a 'public-spirited author' who hoped 'to dissipate the prejudices of his countrymen (especially those of the lower class) with regard to the treatment to be used in the dysentery' (Zimmermann 1771: 'Preface', n.p.), thereby showing that he recognized Zimmermann's patriotic efforts.

Hopson's approach made sense from a strictly user-oriented perspective. At the beginning of the omitted chapter, Zimmermann presented

himself as a political orator laying out the prejudices which – he claimed – had prevented sound policy against the dysentery epidemic in Bern (Zimmermann 1767: 187; Zenker 2007: 36). Since this oration was not addressed to a British audience, its sardonic air might have discredited the author in the eyes of readers uninterested in the decisions of the Bernese *Gesundheitsrath* [Public Health Committee]. In fact, Hopson also toned down Zimmermann's irony on page 33, omitting his reference to a sardonic smile (Zimmermann 1771: 33; Zimmermann 1767: 56). Accordingly, Hopson introduced Zimmermann as capable of eloquence while telling the reader that the ethos of the translation did not reflect this aspect of his persona. Thus, the translator did not mean that the words and expressions he *had* translated were mere approximations, but rather that he had filtered out entire sections of 'oration', focusing on translating the 'history' contained in the original work.

That Hopson perceived the chapter which appealed to the senses and the imagination as more valuable than the one in which Zimmermann engaged the readers' judgement stresses the importance of taking the different styles of 'history' and 'oration' into account in analysing scientific translations (see Rener 1989: 330). What ended up being translated in *A Treatise on the Dysentery* consisted predominantly of observations enabling the reader to see patients' symptoms and reactions to treatment. Moreover, by modifying Zimmermann's syntax and voice, Hopson strengthened his ethos as a careful observer:

> Alle diese *von mir selbst* nicht mit einem unstätigen und über die Gegenstände der Kunst leichtsinnig wegflatternden Auge *gemachte Beobachtungen* erschöpfen unstreitig nicht alles, was auch andere Aerzte während unserer Epidemie werden gesehen haben, aber für meine Absicht sind sie zureichend.
>
> *(Zimmermann 1767: 19, our emphasis)*

> [All these *observations, made by me personally* and not with an inattentive eye that carelessly flits across the objects of the art, admittedly do not offer an exhaustive description of all that other doctors have also seen during our epidemic, but for my purpose they are sufficient.]
>
> *I have* taken the whole of these remarks from *observations made by myself*, and that not with a superficial inattentive eye, but *with all the exactness that the object of my profession required*; and though, without doubt, this does not comprehend every thing that other physicians might have seen during our epidemy, yet it is *quite* sufficient for my purpose.
>
> *(Zimmermann 1771: 9–10, our emphasis)*

Such preferences can be linked to the tradition of experimental science and the Royal Society of London's promotion of 'direct, plain observation' in lieu of 'rhetorical tropes and figures' (Skouen and Stark 2015: 2). This strategy sought to achieve a 'shared witnessing of experiments': if 'matters of fact' could be brought 'before the inner eye' of the reader, this provided a sense of presence (Skouen and Stark 2015: 9, 14). Thus, although close attention to 'what is lost' in translation may also reveal cultural differences, in this case, a shared culture of science directed attention to historical observations at the expense of political oration (Burke 2007: 38; Venuti 2018 [1995]: xiv, 14; Lefevere 2017 [1992]: 67–70).

The culture of experimental science is also present in *Von der Erfahrung*, a work about how doctors should relate experience to their reasoning when constructing medical knowledge. Zimmermann affirmed that diseases could be made 'durchsichtig' [transparent] with descriptions that related to them 'wie ein gutes Nachbild zu seinem Original' [like a good copy to the original] (Zimmermann 1763: 215, 248). He also stressed that 'die wahre Geschichte der Krankheiten' [true history of diseases] constituted 'die wahre und unveränderliche Grundlage' [true and immutable foundation] of medicine (Zimmermann 1763: 474; Boschung 1998: 36–7). Yet Zimmermann also wished to contribute to the discussion on the concept of experience. Consequently, *Von der Erfahrung* did not contain as much descriptive 'history' as *Von der Ruhr*. Instead, it can be seen as consisting mainly of 'orations' guiding the reader on the path to a proper understanding of the role of experience in medicine. Thus, as shown in the next section, a judicious translator could take the liberty of rewriting – or speaking over the original author – without annoying his readers.

Villebrune's Covert Orations

Since *Von der Erfahrung* explicitly stressed that a philosopher should put his penetrating eye and erudition to good use, Zimmermann can be seen as having given his 'philosophical' translators tacit licence to adapt his text (Zimmermann 1763: 4, 113, 129). Accordingly, Villebrune radicalized the approach of rhetorical translation, rewriting some of Zimmermann's orations with his French audience in mind. The 'persuasive eloquence' of his adapted translation thus supported its reception as a truthful piece of philosophy (Smith 2020: 31, 279–80). From this perspective, Villebrune's persona resembled that of Zimmermann, whom he introduced not only as a prudent philosopher and an enlightened physician, but also as a zealous citizen (Zimmermann 1774: I.vii–viii).

However, Villebrune's persona and translation style were not uncontroversial: his translation/re-edition of *Hippocratis Aphorismi ad fidem veterum monumentorum castigati, latinè versi* [Hippocrates' Aphorisms in

Latin Verse, Corrected Trusting Old Sources] (Paris: Clousier 1779) received thorough criticism from another Hippocrates translator/editor, Édouard François Marie Bosquillon (Anon 1779). This provoked a debate between Bosquillon and Villebrune, whose self-defence was perceived as lacking substance and courtesy (Anon 1780). Villebrune's entry in the *Biographie universelle et portative des contemporains* [Universal and Portable Biography of Contemporaries] (Anon 1836: 1524) characterized him as being maybe too harshly treated by his critics: it implied that their critiques were not unjustified but did not entirely invalidate his overall achievements as a translator.

Villebrune's translations of Zimmermann certainly form an important part of these achievements. They helped to familiarize the French audience with the Swiss medical writer, who was read by Diderot (Rudolph 1967: 40), and appreciated by the influential Montpellier medical school, which interpreted his work as pertinent to its vitalistic doctrine (Lohff 1997: 174–87), in connection with Zimmermann's mentor Haller. Unsurprisingly, Villebrune also used Haller's prominence when legitimating the translation of Zimmermann's oeuvre in his translator's preface to *Traité de l'expérience* (Zimmermann 1774: I.vii). In many respects, this preface is fairly typical of the time: it includes praise for the author of the original work and mentions the removal of repetitions and less relevant passages and the addition of references to other works contributing to the subject at hand. Even the seemingly vague expression 'Je me suis fait une loi essentielle de ne pas toucher aux choses qui regardoient l'art, de quelque maniere que ce fût' [I have made it my essential rule not to modify things concerned with the art in any way] (Zimmermann 1774: I.viii) is perfectly common, the rendering of the content of a work being considered as more important than stylistic resemblance to the source text in scientific translations of the time.

Somewhat less typical is the unusual length of Villebrune's preface, due not to Villebrune's desire to give an extensive account of the scientific context of Zimmermann's oeuvre or add his own observations – two frequent agendas found in prefaces – but to Villebrune's particular fondness for Hippocrates. His admiration far surpassed the generally high prestige in which the eighteenth-century French medical sphere held Hippocrates as a model for 'un sage raisonnement toujours fondé sur une observation exacte & judicieuse' [wise reasoning always based on accurate, judicious observation] (Anon 1765, VIII: 213). Besides his own translations of Hippocrates, Villebrune used every opportunity to present his knowledge of the 'father of medicine': his preface to Zimmermann's *Von der Erfahrung,* ends with lengthy citations of and a commentary on Hippocrates. He further commented on the source text in footnotes quoting from Hippocrates wherever he found reason to do so (Zimmermann 1774: I.257–9; II.12, 27–8, 35, 42–3, 62, 68, 75, 81, 219, 293; III.345).

Since Zimmermann himself generally held Hippocrates in high regard, these footnotes do not usually adopt an overly critical stance towards the source text. But in one passage where Zimmermann dares to point out an unsatisfactory aspect of Hippocrates's work, Villebrune immediately intervenes with a footnote in his defence (Zimmermann 1774: II.2–7). This disproportionate insistence on Hippocrates points to an aspect of Villebrune's translation that he might implicitly have alluded to in his own preface when he states: 'Du reste, je traduis sans m'attacher à la lettre, cherchant plus à m'approprier les réflexions de mon original, qu'à le rendre mot à mot' [Furthermore, I translate without focusing on the letter of the text, but rather seeking to make the considerations in the original my own, rather than rendering it word for word] (Zimmermann 1774: I.ix). At first sight, this phrase is perfectly in line with the strategy of translating the meaning rather than the word, but it also hints at Villebrune's very personal appropriation of Zimmermann's text.

This appropriation goes well beyond usual adaptations to the target context, in translations of terminology, with 'Franzosenholz' [guaiacum] (Zimmermann 1763: 78) becoming 'gayac' (Zimmermann 1774: I.77) and 'podagra' (Zimmermann 1763: 293) becoming 'goutte' (Zimmermann 1774: I.342). Other instances involve the inclusion of references closer to the target audience: Villebrune refers to Descartes (Zimmermann 1774: I.102) where Zimmermann only mentions Bacon and Newton as examples of great minds (Zimmermann 1763: 101). Moments of abridgement also occur when local particularities are excluded: Villebrune omits a passage where Zimmermann mocks practitioners who refuse to adapt their treatment routines by claiming them a necessity demanded by the 'Austrian climate': 'aber so oft der Herr von Haen wider diese Brechmittel Einwürfe machte, gaben die Practici zur Antwort: Das Oesterreichische Climat will es so haben' [but as often as Mr von Haen raised objections against this emetic, the practitioners replied: The Austrian climate wants it that way] (Zimmermann 1763: 73). The translation also goes beyond usual self-promotional references. For example, where Zimmermann only mentions Sydenham (Zimmermann 1763: 80), Villebrune includes pointers to other physicians such as William Grant, which let him refer to his translation of Grant in a footnote (Zimmermann 1774: I.79). Villebrune also brings in his own medical expertise, describing his experience with the therapeutical use of seasonal fruits (Zimmermann 1774: III.26).

Villebrune in fact rewrites entire passages from Zimmermann following a more or less transparent agenda. Some of these rewritings are clearly intended to render Zimmermann more 'acceptable' to a French audience: the softening of Zimmermann's tirade against Paracelsus (Zimmermann 1763: 118–23) is a case in point. Here Villebrune, accompanied by a cautionary footnote indicating his reservations about the following passage,

leaves out details – included by Zimmermann – about Paracelsus' drinking habits and views on menstruating women. However, Villebrune nonetheless maintains Zimmermann's main critique of Paracelsus and the 'indefensible' doctrine that his devotees fervently adhere to (Zimmermann 1774: I.124–8). Zimmermann's very personal engagement with Paracelsus, partly motivated by his conflict with medical competitors in Switzerland who supported Paracelsus, is thus omitted in the translation, which makes the critique on Paracelsus appear somewhat more objective and probably more convincing to an audience unfamiliar with Zimmermann's personal context.

Other omissions are harder to identify, but help make Zimmermann appear less eccentric to a French audience. When Zimmermann writes 'Wir entscheiden nicht, ob die Menschen durch Korn und Eisen zuerst gesittet, *und ewig unglücklich* worden […]' [We do not get to decide whether people first became civilized, *and forever unhappy*, through grain and iron […] (Zimmermann 1763: 13; our emphasis), Villebrune simply translates 'civilisé' [civilized] (Zimmermann 1774: I.19), thereby omitting Zimmermann's pessimistic expression relating civilisation and unhappiness. This is not to say that the idea of civilisation as making people unhappier was unthinkable in France (Rousseau was contemporary to both Villebrune and Zimmermann), but it must have appeared to Villebrune as an unnecessary obstacle to mediating Zimmermann's work in France. Moreover, it must have seemed counter-productive to his own agenda, given that he included a whole paragraph of his own about the necessity of the faculties of medicine to unite against charlatans who endanger people's health (Zimmermann 1774: I.42). This passage has no counterpart in the source text, but is not marked as an addition. Rather it involves the silent merging of the translator's voice and the 'I' of the source text, a merging which remains opaque to the vast majority of readers unable to compare source and translation.

Similar interpolations occur at several points, for instance when Villebrune silently introduces passages on Pyrrhonism, Sextus, and Voltaire (Zimmermann 1774: I.90), and the genius of Corneille and Homer (Zimmermann 1774: I.106–7). Villebrune also uses explicit and marked commentary, for instance when he opposes Zimmermann's cultural pessimism and critique of libertinage, stating that his contemporaries were no more prone to vice than their predecessors (Zimmermann 1774: III.292–3). However, Villebrune's translation does retain much of Zimmermann's individual style, almost joyfully at times. For instance, he renders Zimmermann's vivid imagery, 'Aber viel leichter wäre es Alpen zu versetzen, als ein hirnloses Weib von den Nachtheilen des Breies zu überführen' [But it would be much easier to move the Alps than to convince a brainless woman of the disadvantages of gruel] (Zimmermann 1764: 265) as the no less figurative, 'Mais il serait plus aisé de transporter les Alpes dans les vastes plaines de l'Asie que de désabuser une femme écervelée' [But it would be much easier to move

the Alps to the vast plains of Asia than to disillusion a brainless woman] (Zimmermann 1774: III.36).

Such examples show that Zimmermann's 'literary' style is not in itself an obstacle for Villebrune. The latter chooses case by case which images to keep, and which to omit or modify. This can be observed in his rendering of Zimmermann's tirade against equating advanced age with competence: 'Ein unwürdiger Greis ist in meinen Augen mehr nichts als ein erwachsenes Kind, seine ganze Stärke ist Hartnäckigkeit, sein zahnloser Mund die Quelle seines Stolzes' [An unworthy dotard is from my perspective nothing more than an overgrown child, his entire strength lies in his obstinacy, his toothless mouth the source of his pride] (Zimmermann 1763: 9). In this case, Villebrune keeps most of the sentence, except the rather graphic 'toothless mouth': 'Un vieux médecin, sans mérite, n'est à mes yeux qu'un homme redevenu une seconde fois enfant. Il n'a de force que dans son opiniâtreté' [An old doctor, without merit, is in my eyes nothing more than a man who has once again become a child. His only strength lies in his stubbornness] (Zimmermann 1774: I.12).

Villebrune clearly does not render Zimmermann's literary persona in all its mannerisms and peculiarities. But nor does he hide the 'literary' aspects of Zimmermann's work, insofar as they are not merely empty rhetoric, but part of a work that engages its author not only as a physician but also as a citizen concerned with the welfare of his community. After all, *Von der Erfahrung* is not just a sum of observations on maladies and treatment options gathered from experience and current medical literature, but also a reflection on the nature of experience and the observed lack of such considerations in the medical field. Zimmermann takes issue above all with doctors who blindly follow routines rather than study the relevant literature and engage with complex pathologies. Yet in addressing the lived practice of medicine, Zimmermann obviously cannot help being personally involved in his writing, as evidenced by his style.

As a 'médecin philologue' (who also translated what we would now term 'literary' texts, such as Cervantes' novellas), Villebrune was doubtless not deterred by Zimmermann's writerly style. Furthermore, he agreed with one of Zimmermann's general tenets – the importance of observation supported by knowledge of former observations. As a result, despite the numerous modifications, his translation successfully mediated Zimmermann's work. This also applies to Villebrune's translation of Zimmermann's *Von der Ruhr* (1767) as *Traité de la dyssentérie* (1775), which according to Villebrune's (again rather long) preface has the merit of presenting observations of nature instead of 'systems' built upon selective quotations of literature favouring the author's hypotheses (Zimmermann 1775: iv). Villebrune then added many pages covering aspects of the literature on dysentery, including, but not limited to, Hippocrates – though such references are less frequent than in the (much longer) *Traité de l'expérience* (Zimmermann 1775: 41). As in the

earlier work, he also references his own translations (Zimmermann 1775: xxx) and his own expertise (Zimmermann 1775: 183–5).

Traité de la dyssentérie softens 'graphic' imagery in some instances: Zimmermann's 'die grossen Curen, die man uns ins Angesicht speyt' [the great cures, which are spat into our faces] (Zimmermann 1767: 224) becomes Villebrune's 'voilà les cures merveilleuses qu'on nous objecte' [the marvellous cures which others hold up as counterexamples] (Zimmermann 1775: 164). The French text also occasionally omits passages symptomatic of Zimmermann's rather eccentric style, for example, when he describes how Mark Antony held Caesar's bloodied cloak up for the Romans (Zimmermann 1767: 237). Significantly, Villebrune keeps more area-specific information than Hopson while nonetheless shortening certain chapters containing numerous details about local practices and jurisdictions – a decision he justifies in a footnote (Zimmermann 1775: 201–2).

Overall, Villebrune's *Traité de la dyssentérie* can be viewed as a successful mediation of Zimmermann's treatise on dysentery. A revised version correcting severe translation errors concerning dosages was included in the 1839 *Collection des auteurs classiques* [Collection of Classical Authors] (Encyclopédie des sciences médicales. 7e division), alongside Villebrune's other Zimmermann translation, *Traité de l'expérience*.

Simmons's Anonymous Notes

While Villebrune reshaped the points of reference in *Von der Erfahrung* and covertly redefined the aims of its persuasive eloquence, the English translator Samuel Foart Simmons chose to add judicious notes which, as observed by *The European Magazine* (Anon 1782b: 42), increased the value of his own translation. It is unclear why Simmons chose to remain anonymous and merely marked some of his notes with the initial 'S.' (Zimmermann 1778: I.255–6, 258). That he was aware of Villebrune's substantial adaptations seems, however, a possible explanation: perhaps he did not wish to be known as someone translating indirectly via French and, in so doing, accrediting a version which was not entirely faithful to Zimmermann. In his address 'To the Reader', he called himself an 'editor' and declared 'that the translation is not, in every place, strictly conformable to the original' (Zimmermann 1778: I.iii). Still, Villebrune's liberties were far greater than indicated in this address, which gave the impression that except for the notes, all 'alterations' to the original work consisted of cuts (Zimmermann 1778: I.iv). Simmons also made it clear that all notes were his own. They spoke to the reader in the first person, referring to Zimmermann as 'Dr Z.' and localizing the English translation with references such as 'in Britain', 'this country', 'our Shakespeare', and 'our English Aristophanes' (Zimmermann 1778: I.50, 52, 69, 168). As the translation suggested, a good physician was 'able, from his

reading, to draw together all the lights which different authors may afford him on the subject' (Zimmermann 1778: I.89). Strikingly, Simmons put this principle into practice at the very beginning of the first chapter by adding a note quoting Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, implying an affinity of ideas between this work and the source text (Zimmermann 1778: I.1–2). Moreover, he added a similar note on Hannah More's *Essays on Various Subjects* to the opening of the second volume (Zimmermann 1778: II.5).

One note also includes a reference to Simmons's own work, *Elements of Anatomy and the Animal Oeconomy* (Zimmermann 1778: II.326). Generally, the notes offered complementary and explanatory information, but at times Simmons also expressed disagreement with Zimmermann's claims (Zimmermann 1778: II.190–1). Appearing not only as a translator but also as an expert mediator, Simmons used his own voice in the footnotes to relate the main text to the experience of his target audience:

> (*f*) None of our English surgeons, I believe, now think of performing the operation of the paracentesis, without making a suitable compression on the abdomen, but they almost all of them place the patient in a chair, during the operation; and even Mr. Sharpe recommends such a position. An horizontal posture, however, will be found to be much more safe and advantageous.
>
> *(Zimmermann 1778: II.29–30)*

Simmons's notes also informed readers about his career, such that some colleagues may have been in a position to guess his identity (Zimmermann 1778: I.258). Besides building the anonymous ethos of the translator-editor Simmons, separate from the translated ethos of the author, the notes enabled him to assess the arguments in the main text. Though professional, Simmons at times also assumed a casual manner:

> (*y*) I have heard a very celebrated anatomist, of this country, relate, with his usual pleasantry, in one of his lectures, that after a smart attack of fever, which had confined him during many days in his chamber, he felt this return of appetite, and a longing for something savory [sic]. He immediately sent out his servant to a cook's shop, who soon returned to him with a plate of ham, and another of cold beef. I very greedily devoured both, said the professor, and from that moment I dated my recovery.
>
> *(Zimmermann 1778: I.295)*

While Zimmermann wrote for students and Villebrune for the 'lecteur curieux' [curious reader] as well as practising physicians, Simmons's declared aim was to provide 'a useful work to Gentlemen who devote themselves

to the study of physic' (Zimmermann 1763: iv; Zimmermann 1774: I.vi, 8; Zimmermann 1778: I.iv). Interestingly, this target audience was likewise mentioned in passing in the source text (Zimmermann 1763: 31). Reading Simmons's translation, gentleman physicians therefore had to ask themselves whether England was a place 'where the most celebrated physicians sacrifice their leisure moments to the fine arts, philosophy, and the mathematics, rather than in composing any works which may contribute to the progress of physic' (Zimmermann 1778: I.23–4). In the second volume, Simmons confessed to abridging his source text in several places, first and foremost in a section on gynaecology. Here, he indicated awareness of an audience that was not limited to physicians but extended to 'every class', including women:

> (*c*) If an apology for altering and mutilating the expressions of Dr Z, is any where necessary, it will be particularly so in this part of the work, where I say much less than he has said, and with considerable variations. The truth is that some of his observations, tho' exceedingly just and useful, seemed improper for readers of every class, and they who read with a view to instruct themselves in physic will find the same things in a work written by Dr Tissot.
>
> *(Zimmermann 1778: II.253)*

According to one contemporary commentator, Simmons's translation was useful not only to 'the faculty'; owing to the 'elegance' of its language, it also 'found its way into other hands' and instructed 'the softer sex' (Zimmermann 1797: xv).

Interestingly, one of Simmons's footnotes issues a call to a colleague in response to a rhetorical question added by Villebrune: 'The celebrated Dr Cadogan, will at once reply to this query of the learned author' (Zimmermann 1763: 234; Zimmermann 1774: I.276; Zimmermann 1778: I.175). The footnote, extending over six pages, explored the value of classical learning for the modern physician. Given that Simmons here referred to 'the learned author' instead of 'Dr Z.', he may have known he was engaging with one of Villebrune's interventions.

The surgeon and apothecary William Bewley, who reviewed the second edition of Simmons's translation for *The Monthly Review* (Anon 1783: 205–12; Nangle 1934: 4, 212), chose to examine the work from the perspective of the curious patient, rapidly turning his review into comedy by ridiculing Zimmermann's blunders. He further observed that 'Though the Translator informs us, that he has abridged many passages in this work, and has omitted others, the English reader will, we apprehend, wish with us, that he had taken these liberties much oftener' (Anon 1783: 206). Accordingly, Bewley's review left the English readers just as ignorant of Villebrune's added orations as other reviewers had left them of Hopson's extensive omissions. Akin to

the French reviews of Villebrune's translation cited above, it also represented the view that a medical translator could legitimately make changes to the source text, at least by way of omission.

Conclusions

Evidently, the persona of the philosophical 'Dr Zimmermann' mentioned on the title pages of his various works was transformed in the hands of the three expert translators discussed in this chapter. While introducing Zimmermann as a Swiss patriot and an eloquent German-language author, they adopted diverse strategies to domesticate his patriotic orations. While Hopson confidently left out sections which he considered irrelevant for a British audience interested in medical texts, Villebrune rewrote Zimmermann's work by adding elements tailored to a French audience and to his own personal agenda. Simmons's agency is particularly palpable in the footnotes that documented his own medical expertise, as indicated by Zimmermann's letter to John Coakley Lettsom. Why Simmons chose to translate Villebrune's translation instead of Zimmermann's original cannot be determined with absolute certainty. On the one hand, the practice of indirect translation was widespread, with French often serving as a pivot language for German. On the other hand, however, the ideal of translating directly from the original was already established, which might well explain why Simmons chose not to clarify his use of Villebrune's translation.

In any case, the relative lack of German language skills in eighteenth-century France and England must be taken into consideration when dealing with translations of Zimmermann. While Zimmermann was perfectly able to judge the quality of French and English translations, the majority of readers of his translated works had little or no access to the original. Particularly in the French context, the *belles infidèles* translation still influenced the reception of translations. Readability and accommodation to French taste were widely appreciated and the approving reference to stylistic adaptations, including shortening and rearrangement of text, a common feature in translational paratexts. This is not to say that translations were not criticized for lack of 'faithfulness', but readability might have been more of a priority than victims of bad translations such as Zimmermann might have wished. This also often applies to the ideal of traceability of authorship within a translation, with little clear distinction between the translated text and the translator's additions, footnotes, etc.

While Villebrune clearly pushed the limits of contemporary norms of translation when he embedded his own deliberations into his translation without in any way signalling them as his own, contemporary reviews indicate that such practices were still widely tolerated, provided that the result was readable and did not falsify the basic tenets of the source text.

If Simmons was aware of these changes, he also seems to have considered Villebrune's translation true enough to be passed on to English readers, though his choice to remain an anonymous editor might signal discomfort with the necessity of relying on a French version of Zimmermann's work. In the case of Hopson's translation, English readers could certainly gain new knowledge from Zimmermann's experiences with dysentery in Switzerland, but they did not get the full picture of Zimmermann as a patriot serving his fatherland. Rather, the role of the patriot was in all translations reserved for the translating physicians whose efforts could be seen as improving knowledge among their own target audience.

Note

1 All translations are by the authors unless otherwise stated.

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