

Translating “English Humour” into modern English: An 18th-century perspective

HOP 2017 - TRANSLATING AND ADAPTING
HUMOURS OF THE PAST: FROM PRACTICE TO THEORY

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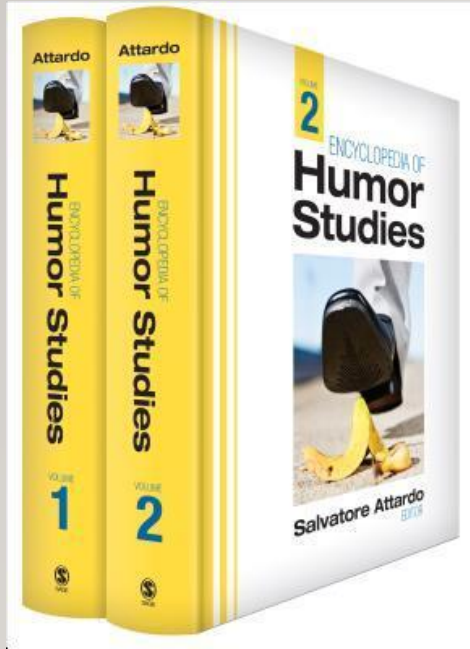


AIMS

- How can we improve our understanding of humour(s) of the past, including humour terms/concepts from the past?
- How can this type of understanding be applied to to the study of humour more broadly:
 - across linguistic and cultural boundaries?
 - across disciplinary boundaries (inside/outside field of humour studies)?
- How do we negotiate between broad/generic and culture-bound/historicised versions of terms/concepts like “humour”?
 - [New Historicist approaches (e.g. Greenblatt 1980, 1988; Pfister 2002; Halsall 2002)]
 - [Reception theories (e.g. Iser 1989)]
 - Translation/“translation”, foreignizing vs. domesticating (cf. Venuti 1995)

THE (BROADER) PROBLEM

- Humo[u]r studies as a maturing/mature field:
 - Established and growing body of academic literature, research communities
 - Recent publications as flagships for the field, e.g. *Primer of Humor Research* (2008), *Sage Encyclopedia of Humor Studies* (2014); book series (Mouton, Benjamins...), thematic and/or chronological collections on comedy/humour topics
- But (beyond “defining humour”) exchange among scholars can be problematic:
 - (Increasingly recognised?) lack of standardised terminology between fields
 - Difficulty negotiating between languages, and between scholarly traditions
 - General versus specific usage: does our broad use of “humo[u]r” erase potentially valuable cultural and historical specificities?
- Need to find a way to bring the past to bear on the present!



“In fact, there are so many terms, synonyms, partial synonyms, and overlapping definitions of humor and humor-related subjects [...] that a common understanding has been reached in the field of using the word *humor* as an umbrella term to cover all the synonyms. The word itself comes from the medieval theory of humors [...] but that is irrelevant in the technical sense just discussed.”

Attardo, introduction to
Sage Encyclopedia of Humor Studies (2014)

“What in my view the encyclopedia lacks is a glossary of major terms giving pithy definitions, but since neither Raskin nor Attardo have so far attempted this, maybe it has not been feasible.”

Chlopicki, review of *Sage Encyclopedia of Humor Studies* (2015)

WHY 18TH-CENTURY HUMOUR?

- Gradual drift in usage of “Humour” in English, from Elizabethan times:
 - Humoral imbalance > Character trait/Mood > Voluntary eccentricity > Stimulus for laughter
- Gradual development of association with laughter/ridicule and wit
- Influence of (a “domesticated” vision of?) select 18th-century thinkers over more recent theories of humour, e.g.:
 - Shaftesbury, *Sensus Communis*: read as response to Hobbes’s “superiority” theory, and thus (in a domesticating reading) as precursor of modern “incongruity” and “relief” theories
 - Hutcheson, *Reflections upon Laughter*: “the bringing together of images which have contrary additional ideas” read as precursor of modern “incongruity” theories
 - But need to remember (cf. Billig 2005) that it’s anachronistic to talk about “humour theory” in the modern sense, and that aggressive/cruel laughter (cf. Dickie 2011) is alive and well.
 - In what sense are we using the term “humour” here?

SO WHAT IS “ENGLISH HUMOUR”?

- Evolution (and domestication?) of “humour” in English has tended to erase conceptual and historical specificities...
- “English humour” easier to categorise in French:
 - Voltaire, 1761 « *ces saillies qui échappent à un homme sans qu’il s’en doute* » : older usage, but highlights debate over perceived « Englishness » of the term/concept (cf. Hölzle 2014, Minois 2000, Gifford 1980)
 - Mme de Staël, 1800 « *cette gaîté qui est une disposition du sang presque autant que de l’esprit ; elle tient à la nature du climat et aux moeurs nationales ; elle seroit tout-à-fait inimitable là où les mêmes causes ne développeroient pas. Quelques écrits de Fielding et de Swift, Peregrin Pickle, Roderick Random, mais sur-tout les ouvrages de Sterne, donnent l’idée complète du genre appelé *humour*. »*

SO WHAT IS “ENGLISH HUMOUR”?

- More recent tradition of *humour anglais* in French corresponding to “Shandean” definition, combining elements of reflexivity, generosity and eccentricity:
 - *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française; 1932-35: « Mot emprunté de l'anglais. Forme d'ironie à la fois plaisante et sérieuse, sentimentale et satirique, qui paraît appartenir particulièrement à l'esprit anglais. »*
 - Escarpit (1960): « *humour* » and « *self-consciousness* »
 - Desproges (1992): « *L'humour anglais souligne avec amertume et désespoir l'absurdité du monde. L'humour français rit de ma belle-mère. »*
 - Minois (2000): « *faut il réserver le mot et la chose, comme une appellation contrôlée, à l'Angleterre depuis le XVIIIe siècle? »*
- Growing recognition of problem among humour scholars working in English (cf. Beermann 2009, 2014), but relatively few attempts to historicise the concept (cf. Wickberg 1998).

PROPOSED VOLUME ON *HUMOUR IN 18TH CENTURY LITERATURE AND CULTURE* (WITH R. PHIDDIAN)

Aims

- A readable account of 18th century forms and genres of humour, mainly in France and Britain, aimed at native and non-native speakers of English
- Explore history of term/concept in English
 - “Domesticating” vs. “foreignising” approaches
 - Emphasis on how the period has influenced modern usage and concepts
- Explore/interrogate categories discussed: contrasting examples, groups of texts
- Reconcile historical, literary/cultural approach with an interdisciplinary humour studies framework

PROPOSED VOLUME ON *HUMOUR IN 18TH CENTURY LITERATURE AND CULTURE* (WITH R. PHIDDIAN)

PART 1: 18TH-CENTURY HUMOUR: HISTORY, THEORY AND DEVELOPMENT

1. Cultural and philosophical context
2. From “humours” to “humour”
3. Humour and Englishness
4. Humour and the Enlightenment

PART 2 : SATIRE TO SENTIMENT? CASE STUDIES IN 18TH CENTURY HUMOUR.

5. Broadsides, pamphlets and the press
6. Satire and the Scriblerians
7. Philosophical tales: *Candide* and *Rasselas*
8. The rise of the novel
9. The rise of the anti-novel
10. Drama, performance, ballad opera
11. Graphic humour

12. Humour and taste, influences on the Romantic/realist traditions

TOWARDS A TERMINOLOGY OF HUMOUR?

New project: set up a multilingual, multi/interdisciplinary and transhistorical terminology resource

Need to determine:

- Aims and approach (primary/secondary corpus; analyse for relationships, particularities, inconsistencies)?
- Scope (disciplines, languages, periods: “Humour studies of the past”...)?
- Methodology (corpus building > terminology extraction > termbase building)?
- Interface and modes of interaction for authors/contributors and end users?
- Who might be interested!

IS A MULTILINGUAL TERMBASE THE SOLUTION?

Concept

> concept info

Index (language)

> index info

Term

> term info (definition/s)

> term info (usage)

> term info (discipline/s)

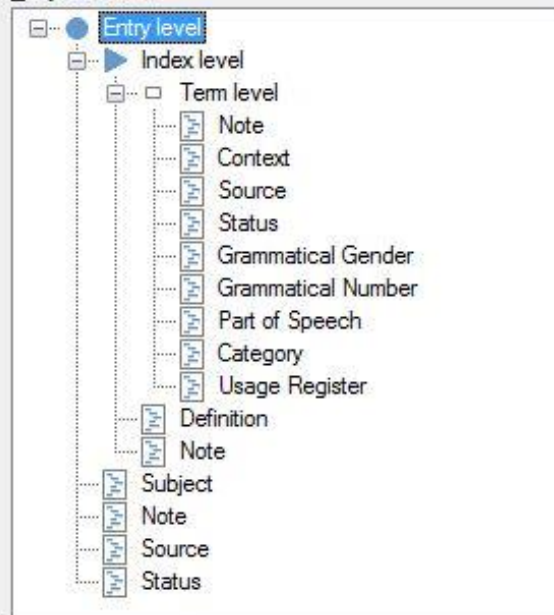
> **term info (period)**

> (etc)

Entry Structure

Create an entry structure for your termbase entries by specifying the level at which descriptive fields are used. Specify field settings if required.

Entry structure:



Available descriptive fields:

Category
Context
Definition
Discipline
Etymology
Grammatical Gender
Grammatical Number
Note
Part of Speech
Source
Status
Subject
Usage Register

<< Add

Remove >>

Field settings

Mandatory

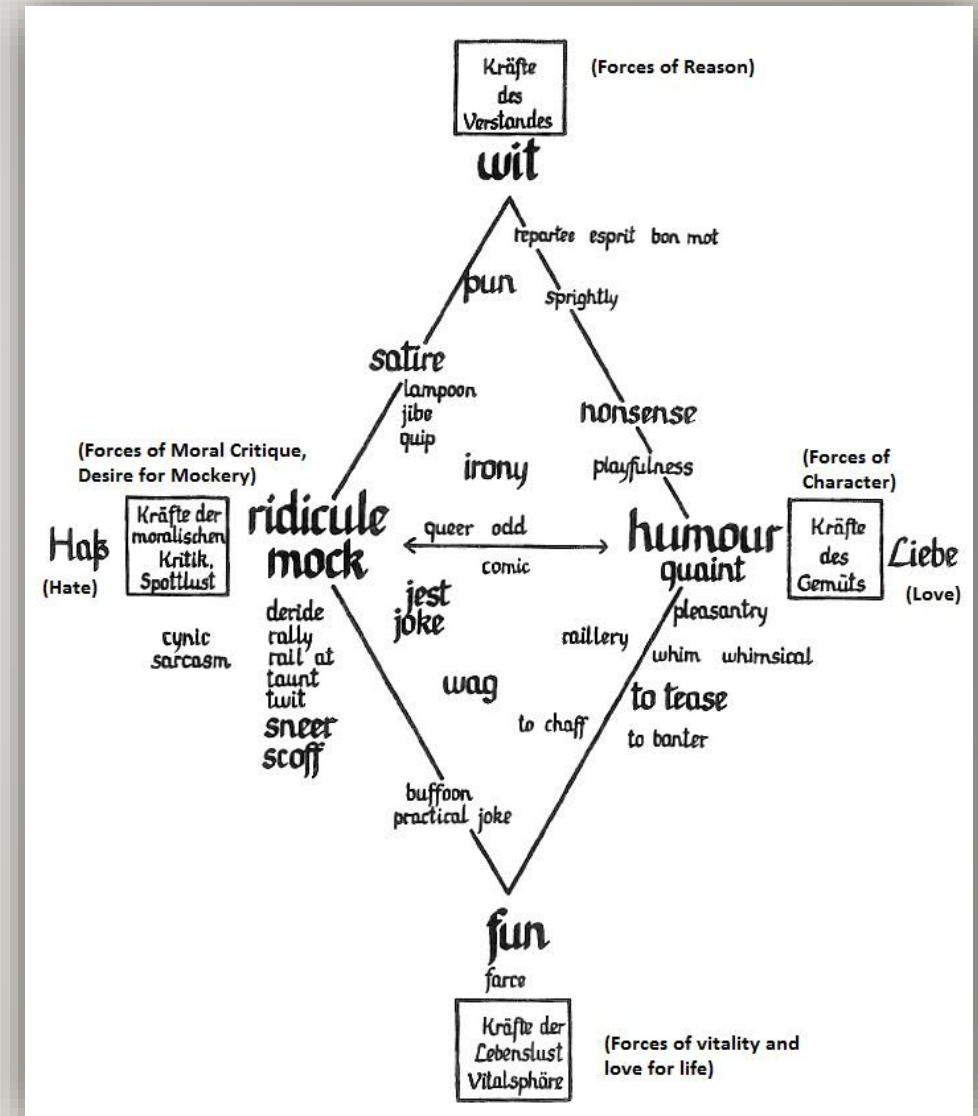
Multiple

Screenshot: SDL MultiTerm 2015

HOW MUCH HUMOUR IS THERE IN *TRISTRAM SHANDY* ?

- HUMOUR WORD CHART CF. SCHMIDT-HIDDING (1963)
- BASIC FREQUENCY/CONCORDANCE ANALYSIS OF E-TEXT
- DIGITAL TEXTS AS A SPUR TO NEW ANALYSES OF HISTORICAL HUMOUR WORDS (CF. LAVIE 2014)
- WHERE TO DRAW THE BORDER BETWEEN “PRIMARY” AND “SECONDARY” SOURCES?

banter	1	joke	2	repartee	1
bon mot	1	mock (trial)	1	ridicul*	8
chaff	2	nonsens*	15	satir*	8
farc*	4	odd	14	smil*	35
fun	0	pleasant*	8	sneer	1
gay*	7	pun	3	tease	0
irony	1	quaint	3	whim*	11
jest	8	rail*/rally	3	wit*	41



“HUMO[U]R” AND DERIVATIVES IN STERNE’S *TRISTRAM SHANDY*: A RANGE OF MEANINGS...

Humo[u]r (49 occurrences)

44 of/his whole house might take their turn from the **humour**s and dispositions/which were then uppermost
83 bones, marrow, brains, glands, genitals,/ **humour**, and articulations;--is a Being of as much
123 concerns you.//It is in pure compliance with this **humour** of theirs, and from a/backwardness in my nature
464 less scruple in/bantering the extravagance of his **humour**,--instead of giving the true/cause,--he chose
476 spirits.//At different times he would give fifty **humorous** and apposite reasons for/riding a meek-spirited
646 cold phlegm and exact regularity of sense and **humour**s, you would/have looked for, in one so extracted
694 to be enlivened throughout with some drollery or/ **humour** of expression, it gave wings to Yorick's indiscretion
698 in life, of scattering his wit and his/ **humour**,--his gibes and his jests about him.--They were
722 from an honesty of mind, and a mere jocundity of **humour**, they/would all of them be cross'd out in course
1032 into the country, in but a pettish kind of a **humour**. The first twenty/or five-and-twenty miles he
1053 a little by vexation,/he would give so many **humorous** and provoking descriptions,--and place/his
1164 from the mass of corrupted matter and ulcerated **humour**s in/our constitution, which he hoped was not
1487 things, has got so strongly into our habit and/ **humour**,--and so wholly intent are we upon satisfying
1642 knocking/the ashes out of his tobacco-pipe.//His **humour** was of that particular species, which does honour
1747 Truth is my/sister.//This contrariety of **humour**s betwixt my father and my uncle, was the/source
2020 And in this, Sir, I am/of so nice and singular a **humour**, that if I thought you was able to form/the
2527 should persist to the very last in this obstinate/ **humour** of hers, in trusting the life of my child, who
2914 and in the little ebullitions of this subacid/ **humour** towards others, but particularly towards my
2934 beg thy/pardon;--forgive, I pray thee, this rash **humour** which my mother gave/me.--My dear, dear brother
3078 //Trim's reason put his audience into good **humour**,--all but Dr. Slop, who/turning his head about
4269 Nature been in one of/her nimble moods, and in **humour** for such a contest--and she and Dr. Slop/both
4356 --They serve, continued my father,/to stir the **humour**s--but carry off none of their acrimony:--for
4361 endeavour to proportion the vent given to these **humour**s, not only to the/degree of them stirring within
4640 wherefore.//Great Apollo! if thou art in a giving **humour**--give me--I ask no more,/but one stroke of native
4641 me--I ask no more,/but one stroke of native **humour**, with a single spark of thy own fire/along with
4873 be wished for! and/the petulancy of my father's **humour**, in putting a stop to it as he did,/was a robbery
5013

humour

en > fr (domain: Any domain, type of search: All)

Medical science [COM]

EN aqueous humour

FR humeur aqueuse

Medical science [COM]

EN aqueous humor

FR humeur aqueuse

Medical science [COM]

EN aqueous fluid

aqueous humor

FR humeur aqueuse

Medical science [COM]

EN vitreous humour

FR corps vitré

Medical science [COM]

EN vitreous humor

FR humeur vitrée

Medical science [COM]

EN cardinal humours

FR humeurs cardinales

Other languages: [DA](#) [DE](#) [EL](#) [ES](#) [ET](#) [GA](#) [IT](#) [LT](#) [LV](#) [MT](#) [NL](#) [PL](#) [PT](#) [RO](#) [SL](#) [All](#)

[Feedback](#)

Domain

Medical science

en

Definition

the clear, watery fluid which fills the anterior and posterior chambers of the eye

Definition Ref.

Max Schapero, David Cline, Henry W. Hofstetter. Dictionary of Visual Science. Chilton Book Company, 1968

Term

aqueous humour

Reliability

3 (Reliable)

Term Ref.

Max Schapero, David Cline, Henry W. Hofstetter. Dictionary of Visual Science. Chilton Book Company, 1968

Date

24/09/2003

fr

Definition

liquide transparent contenu dans les chambres de l'oeil, de part et d'autre de l'iris

Definition Ref.

Reallex Med

Term

humeur aqueuse

Reliability

3 (Reliable)

Term Ref.

Reallex Med;DF: Bien-être et Santé, octobre 1997

Date

24/09/2003



FICHE TERMINOLOGIQUE




TAILLE DU TEXTE

[« Retour aux résultats de la recherche](#)
[« Retour à la page d'accueil](#)

humour

CHERCHER



Préférences de recherche 



humour



[Anglais \[EN\]](#)



Domaine publicité

Auteur Dubuc, Robert, 1991

Définition

Biais comique introduit dans une annonce.

Terme

humour n. m.

A MODEST (GRANT APPLICATION) PROPOSAL:

One suggestion: apply for EU COST Action (www.cost.eu) funding for research networking

- 4 year networking funding, as prelude to research funding proper
- Minimum participation of 7 COST network states, other international partners possible
- **A good opportunity to develop a multilingual, interdisciplinary and tranhistorcial framework for a future resource?**
- **Next call deadline: 7 September 2017 (!)**
- **Interested researchers please contact will.noonan@u-bourgogne.fr**