

**TEUCHTERS, NEWFIES AND HILLBILLIES:
COMPARING COMIC STEREOTYPES IN
SCOTLAND, NEWFOUNDLAND AND
APPALACHIA**

Richard Blaustein

**COMEDIC CONSTRUCTIONS OF MARGINALITY IN
APPALACHIA AND NEWFOUNDLAND**

If we seriously want to see ourselves as others see us, then we must come to terms with the role that comic stereotypes play in perpetuating preconceptions and prejudices. Though Aristotle in **The Poetics** defined the Comic as a species of the Ugly lacking the power to harm, much of the comic abuse various groups of human beings gleefully heap upon despised others stems from hurtful and hateful desires to denigrate and belittle. Pursuing the deeper meanings of these archetypal comic themes and images carries us across disciplinary and conceptual boundaries, taking us from the superficially ridiculous to the sublimated dialectic of derision and terror underlying comic stereotyping wherever it is found. Vicious xenophobic humour is truly no laughing matter.

On a lighter note, though, there is much we can learn from examining how marginalised people like Scots, Newfoundlanders, and Appalachian Americans have adopted and exploited comic stereotypes of themselves for fun and profit. When we compare the contents of locally-produced joke

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Scottish Affairs

books aimed at tourists visiting Scotland, Newfoundland and Appalachia, we find strikingly similar images and motifs. Though not great literature by any means, nonetheless these humble paperback publications greatly interest folklorists like myself, because they are filled with local variants of internationally distributed traditional humorous motifs and tale types.

I first addressed these questions in a paper I delivered at the Boundaries Conference sponsored by the Canadian Studies Centre and the International Social Sciences Institutue at the University of Edinburgh in May 1996. However, my exploration of Scottish tourist joke books began a year earlier when I returned to Edinburgh after a hiatus of four years. A few days after arriving in Edinburgh in June of 1995, I made my way to Blackfriars Music to renew my acquaintance with its proprietor, Willie Haines, whom I had last seen in 1991. Willie was filling me in about the state of the folk and traditional music scene in Edinburgh when a group of young men with close-cropped hair entered the shop and asked to see collections of bagpipe music. Willie turned to me and remarked, 'you can always tell a squaddie'. Suddenly we were 'divided by a common language', experiencing severe Trans-Atlantic communication difficulties. 'Willie,' I whispered, 'what's a squaddie?' 'A soldier,' replied Willie, who had momentarily forgotten that he was talking to a Yank. Evidently these were novice regimental pipers in mufti from Edinburgh Castle looking for tune books. One of them asked Willie if he had any tapes of teuchter music – Scottish ceilidh bands playing country dance tunes. Having just arrived from the Southern Appalachian mountains of East Tennessee, I instantly equated 'teuchter music' with 'hillbilly music'.

I had encountered the term 'teuchter' during my last stay in Edinburgh and understood that it was a slang label for Scottish Highlanders, but did not know its literal meaning or linguistic origin until I consulted **The Concise Scots Dictionary** and found:

Teuchter – disparaging or contemptuous term for a Highlander (HIELAND), esp. a GAELIC-SPEAKER, or anyone from the North; an uncouth countrified person.

This Lowland epithet for Highlanders derives from teuch, a Scots cognate of the English 'tough'. Applied to persons as an adjective, 'teuch' means 'rough, coarse'. Thus, a 'teuch-ter' is a 'rough 'un' or rustic ruffian.

The American South boasts several world-renowned varieties of homegrown teuchters, including rednecks, poor white trash, crackers, and hillbillies. J. P.

Teuchters, Newfies and Hillbillies

Fraleay, a great East Kentucky fiddler and retired coal mine engineer, told me this joke a few years ago at a fiddle contest: 'Do you know the difference between a redneck and a hillbilly? A redneck will get mad at you and shoot you, and a hillbilly will get mad at you, go home, think about it for a few days and cool off, then come back – and shoot you!'

Appalachian cultural historian J. W. Williamson contends that we all have our own hillbillies. If the English looked down upon the Scots, making them the butt of low humour after struggling for centuries to subordinate them, then Lowland Scots looked down upon teuchters, and began laughing at them once they no longer had to worry about wild highlanders sweeping down from the hills and making off with their cattle. Teuchters became Scotland's hillbillies, just as the Scots became England's hillbillies. As Jerry Williamson says:

Someone is always beneath us, lending proof that the twig on which we stand is really the rung of a ladder leading upward to something we must defend with our lives ... what all these characterizations share, whether applied by urban outsiders or worn as self-defining badges themselves, is a common need for economic reassurance through the spectacle of want. But buried beneath the reassurance for an urban audience is an appalling ambiguity: the sense that these people survive and thrive despite our low opinion of their worth.
(Williamson 1995, p. 20)

Like Newfoundlanders in Canada, for instance. Physically isolated from the Canadian mainland on an enormous, remote island (geologically, the northernmost extension of the Appalachian continental mountain system that runs through most of eastern North America) and psychologically and culturally disassociated from mainland Canada by Newfoundland's long history as a separate British possession, 'Newfies' became maritime hillbillies when they began migrating 'up along' to the mainland looking for work they could not find at home.

What does the term 'hillbilly' mean, anyway? According to the **Oxford English Dictionary** (2nd ed.), 'hillbilly' is an Americanism first appearing in print in 1900, referring to 'a person from a remote or mountainous area, esp. of the southeastern U.S.', with no indication given of its ultimate origins. 'Billy' is an archaic word of Scots and Northern English provenance, meaning 'fellow, companion, comrade, mate', like Burns's 'chapman billies' in 'Tam O' Shanter', first appearing in Scots literature in 1505. Looking under 'hillman' we find 'one who frequents the hills, spec. applied to the

Scottish Affairs

Scottish Covenanters (cf. CAMERONIAN and hillfolk)'. 'Cameronian' refers us to 'Richard Cameron, a noted Scottish Covenanter and field preacher who rejected the indulgence granted to nonconforming ministers and formally renounced allegiance to Charles II'. Curiously, these nonconformist 'hillmen' or 'hillfolk' became ardent supporters of William of Orange, whose nickname was 'King Billy'. Between 1717 and 1775, approximately 250,000 Ulster and Lowland Scots Protestants migrated to America, gravitating to the colonial frontier marked by the Appalachian range, then termed the Southern Back Country. Many of them chose to fight for the Union when their states joined the Confederacy. Shortly after the American Civil War, they emerged in the national consciousness as a strange people with peculiar ways. The estrangement of Appalachian mountaineers from the dominant traditions of the lowland South and the mainstream American culture may have been germinating long before then, as Rodger Cunningham has persuasively argued (Cunningham 1987).

At first a colonial frontier, the Southern Appalachian region became an internally divided borderland, and then an impoverished, overpopulated hinterland, some would say an internal colony, politically and economically subordinate to outside interests. Appalachian social historian John Alexander Williams has observed that 'all mountain regions must import capital or export people. During the latter two thirds of the twentieth century, Appalachia has done both.' Roughly 3.3 million people left Appalachia between 1950 and 1970 to seek work in industrial cities, just as so many Scottish Highlanders and Newfoundlanders have done, and for the same basic reasons.

It should not surprise us that poor people on the margins of complex, cosmopolitan countries who migrate to the metropolis looking for work are portrayed in very similar ways. From the self-congratulatory viewpoint of the metropolis, the inhabitants of the hinterlands are pejoratively characterised as ignorant, backward, uncouth, animalistic. Much of the coarse humour directed at marginal people focuses upon their purported unfamiliarity with urban ways. These negative representations are countered in back country humour in the recurrent figure of the canny rustic, a trickster-hero who outwits dimwitted townies.

Folklorist William E. Lightfoot reflects upon these recurrent themes in 'Esoteric-Exoteric Dimensions of Appalachian Folk Humor' (Jones and Wheeler 1989). He credits the late American folklorist William Hugh Jansen

Teuchters, Newfies and Hillbillies

who first called our attention to intragroup and intergroup elements in his 1959 article 'The Esoteric-Exoteric Element in Factor in Folklore'. In Jansen's terms, the esoteric factor stems from the group sense of belonging and serves to defend and strengthen that sense – 'what one group thinks of itself and what it supposes others think of it' – while the exoteric factor encompasses 'what one group thinks of another and what that other group thinks it thinks', a product of the same sense of belonging, for it may result in fear of, mystification about, or resentment of the group to which one does not belong (Lightfoot 1989, p. 190).

In the early 1970s, Lightfoot collected circa forty humorous local character anecdotes in the Big Sandy Valley section of Northeast Kentucky; not fictional set pieces like jokes, but supposedly true stories about real people collected in the field from residents of this rural southern Appalachian community. All of these anecdotes dealt with comic discomfiture, roughly half involving tricks or lies.

Lightfoot characterises these anecdotes as:

- Discomfiting tales exposing pretense and hypocrisy, particularly jokes about preachers and other authority figures;
- Trickster tales based on besting others through deception or through wordplay;
- Numskull tales based upon motifs of intellectual deficit such as absurd misunderstanding, stupidity, ignorance, excessive literal-mindedness;
- Derision of moral and ethical deficit, jokes about lying and bragging, stinginess, laziness, slovenliness, as well as excessive animal appetites, such as drunkenness and excessive sexuality,
- Motifs of comic confusion/chaos including the discomfiture of animals, and other humorous accidents.

According to Lightfoot, these contemporary local personal character anecdotes from Eastern Kentucky retain the stylistic characteristics of nineteenth-century American frontier humour, rhetorical devices including hyperbole and understatement, vernacular speech, colourful rustic expressions, mock ignorance of elite culture and language, indelicacy, cruelty, violence, deliberate incongruity and grotesque comic portraiture. These characteristics pervade George Washington Harris's **Sut Lovingood's**

Scottish Affairs

Yarns. Set in the mountains of East Tennessee in the early nineteenth century, these are mostly discomfiting tales expressing desire for revenge on a person or a group, especially authority figures and despised others, who are discomfited through deception or trickery (Lightfoot 1989. pp. 196-7). Lightfoot makes note of Appalachian jokes about tourists, particularly the motif of the lost traveller whose rudeness is countered with clever retorts, casting the canny rustic as trickster, highlighting the ignorance of the outsider.

The same themes appear in hillbilly and newfie joke books compiled and published by local residents for sale in souvenir shops catering to tourists. These home-published joke books from Newfoundland and the Southern Appalachian region of the United States share a common body of stereotyped images and themes clothed in distinctive localisms.

Bob Tulk's **Newfie Jokes** (first published by the author in 1971 in Corner Brook, Newfoundland) is an 80 page booklet of jokes compiled by Tulk with cartoons by Derm Duggan. On the title page Tulk declares: 'This book was published, not for the purpose of making fun of Newfoundlanders but to show that most of us can take a joke as well as give one.' (Tulk1971, p. 1). A localized take-off on a common riddle formula captures Tulk's idea of a good joke 'What is black and blue and floats in the bay? A mainlander after telling a Newfie joke.' (hostility towards outsiders/parody on existing genre – self-referential joke).

Tulk's crude, hostile comedy has the same features Lightfoot finds in **Sut Lovingood's Yarns**, particularly animosity towards others. Tulk's humour is intensely xenophobic, countering the humorous deprecation of Newfies expressed in numskull jokes. Hostility towards privileged others without regional/ethnic labels is directed at bosses, doctors and tourists: Newfie watches tourists get off ship, woman tourist calls out, 'where are all the wild Indians? Newfie: 'They're not all ashore yet, Madam!'. Most of these jokes pit Newfies against Torontonians, mainlanders, Nova Scotians, Frenchmen, Yanks, Texans, Negroes, Englishmen, and Scotsmen. Despised others are equated with faeces, filth, and garbage. Jokes about religion fall into three categories: Catholics vs. Protestants, jokes about Catholics, and Catholics vs Jews.

An item-by-item survey of the 222 jokes and 10 cartoons in this self-produced jokebook reveals that its principal comic motifs are absurd misunderstanding (55), ignorance (31) and stupidity (44), along with absurd

Teuchters, Newfies and Hillbillies

disregard of danger. Themes of material as well as intellectual deficit also occur, expressed in jokes about poverty, monotonous diet, unemployment and outmigration: 'How do you get ten Newfies into a Volkswagen? Throw in a codfish.' And: 'The way to get ten Newfoundlanders into a Volkswagen is to tell them you're going to Toronto.' Intellectual and material deficits are complemented by excessive animalistic appetites, revealed in jokes about alcohol and tobacco and, of course, improper sexuality, especially adultery and incest. Other themes of excessive animality include equation of animals and humans, filthiness, and brutality.

Purely coincidentally, **Favorite Jokes of Mountain Folks in Boogar Hollow**, compiled by Jack Runniger, with illustrations by Nick Powers, was issued in 1971, the same year as Bob Tulk's **Newfie Jokes**. Unlike **Newfie Jokes**, which only uses regional speech sparingly, this home-published hillbilly jokebook is entirely hand-lettered in rustic script accentuating 'eye dialect', deliberate misspellings and grammatical errors meant to evoke mountain speech, an American regional literary convention going back at least as far as George Washington Harris's **Sut Lovinggood's Yarns**.

Boogar Hollow is bucolic and homogeneous compared to the fragmented, tension-ridden world of Bob Tulk's Newfies. Unlike Tulk's truck-driving Newfies, who are compelled to seek industrial work on the mainland, Boogar Hollow's hillbillies are still poor but independent farmers in a pre-industrial world. City folk are the numskulls out here in the hinterlands of Boogar Hollow, and the rustic residents let them know it. There are no overt ethnic or racial tensions in this home-made hillbilly jokebook; only two varieties of outsiders (tourists and Yankees) and a restricted number of authority figures – preachers, teachers, judges and doctors – who are the subject of levelling humor. Most everyone in Booger Holler is known by a kinship term and personal name; there are few titles in evidence. There is one nameless church. Excessive appetites for sex and alcohol – particularly adultery and over-fecundity – are the major comic themes here as in Tulk's **Newfie Jokes**. There is not a whiff of incest in this particular collection of hillbilly jokes, though it is a strong undercurrent in the genre as a whole. There is a pungent scatological element, centering around the outhouse (privy), a paradoxical comic hillbilly icon. Other recurrent Appalachian comic themes evident here include confusion of indoors and outdoors, equation of humans and animals, also the intrusion of nature, especially animals invading clothes and houses, a motif extending, as Lightfoot notes, from **Sut Lovinggood's Yarns** to the humour of contemporary country comedians like Ray Stevens. The major

Scottish Affairs

sources of tension are internal, particularly between husbands and wives; laziness of husbands is a recurring theme. The primary comic devices here are ludicrous misunderstanding through ignorance and/or stupidity, countered by jokes based on the discomfiture of the pretentious and authoritative, and the besting of others through word play, suggestive allusion, or deliberate misunderstanding.

While there are obvious and important differences between these jokebooks, there are striking thematic similarities. Hillbillies and Newfies share much in common: poverty has driven them to migrate from the hinterlands to the metropolis where they have become the subject of jokes like these two localised variants making fun of rural migrants wanting to go back home. First, an Appalachian example told by Bill Lightfoot:

A guy died and went to heaven. St Peter was showing him around, and the guy thought it was wonderful. They went around the corner, and there was a bunch of people in chains, and the guy asked St Peter why in the world these people were chained. St Peter replied, 'That's a bunch of hillbillies, and every Friday at 5:00 p.m., they want to head home for the weekend!'

Lightfoot comments:

I first heard this story in Columbus, Ohio, told in such manner to express ridicule of Appalachian migrants who feel compelled to return home every weekend ... but I also heard the joke told by Mary Lozier, an Appalachian woman who felt it conveyed the idea that to Appalachian people, eastern Kentucky was infinitely more paradisiacal than Heaven itself.

(Lightfoot 1989, p. 192)

Compare this joke with its Newfoundland counterpart from local humorist Al Clouston's self-published jokebook **We Rant and We Roar**, and we find a local variant of the same theme:

During the war boom in Newfoundland, American foremen were appalled [sic] that a man would leave a good job, just to be at home for four or five months. These foremen did not know that Newfoundlanders 'went home in the fall'.

An Irishman, an American and a Newfoundlander all arrived at the gate of heaven at the same time. St Peter addressed the Irishman first and asked his nationality. He was told to take the next train north and he would get to the community where all the Irishmen were congregated. The American

Teuchters, Newfies and Hillbillies

was to take the next train south. When St Peter came to the Newfoundlander, he said, 'What are you?' 'I'm Newfoundlander,' was the reply. And St. Peter said, 'My son, you'd better stay right here by the gate because you'll want to go home in the fall.'
(Clouston 1988, p. 89)

Appalachian hillbillies are to America what Newfies are to Canada and arguably what Teuchters (Highlanders) are to metropolitan Lowland Scotland, that is, when they are not being cast in a romantic light, evoking an inverted set of equally distorted themes and images. Jerry Williamson says every one has their own hillbillies. Everyone seemingly needs to laugh at numskulls, identify with canny trickster heroes who outwit the pretentious and the gullible, and make light of dehumanising images perpetuated by malevolent others.

STALKING THE ELUSIVE TEUCHTER JOKE: EXPLORING SCOTTISH INTER-REGIONAL HUMOUR

Though I had tentatively equated teuchters with newfies and hillbillies in the paper on humorous stereotypes I presented at the Boundaries Conference in Edinburgh in May 1996, I was not really sure that teuchters actually were Scotland's hillbillies, or that a genre of teuchter jokes even existed as far as Scots were concerned. Having analysed locally produced joke books marketed to tourists from Newfoundland and Appalachia, I was eager to locate their Scottish counterparts.

I began my search on Edinburgh's Royal Mile in a major Scottish tourist shop where I found several tourist-oriented jokebooks published in Glasgow. I asked the sales clerk, a pleasant young woman from Greenock, if she had ever heard any jokes about teuchters. She said that she had, though she could not actually recall one at the moment. She went on to say that teuchters were typified as slow and backward; classic rustic numskulls in other words, known for laziness and incestuousness due to their isolation. She did tell me a joke about Fifers, though: 'Q. How was copper wire invented? A. Two Fifers fighting over a penny!' (I would later see the same joke told about two Aberdonians printed in a weekly Edinburgh community newspaper.)

Apparently teuchter jokes were for domestic consumption only. There were no teuchter jokes in the tourist joke books I purchased. Nonetheless, an item-

Scottish Affairs

by-item content analysis of one of these books provided an interesting contrast with **Favorite Jokes of Mountain Folks** and **Newfie Jokes**.

McKinley's **Mixture of Jokes Galore** (McKinley 1981, often reprinted) is altogether a more professional commercial publication than **Newfie Jokes** or **Favorite Jokes of Mountain Folks**, including material by Wally McKinley, a writer for Scottish TV, and cartoons by McDonald, described as a well-known Scottish newspaper cartoonist, with additional drawings and back cover design by John Mackay. The slick four-colour front cover features a red-haired bulbous-nosed comic Scot in tam o' shanter, kilt and sporran modelled after Sir Harry Lauder stirring up a haggis, thistle, and bagpipe in a bubbling cauldron; in his other hand he holds a tray of seasonings including sauce, spice, salt and, inevitably, whisky. Despite its slick cover and more professional appearance, the intent of **Jokes Galore** is the same as its newfie and hillbilly counterparts: to capitalise upon the stereotyped preconceptions of tourists for fun and profit.

One of the silliest jokes in **Jokes Galore** features a talking haggis playing the bagpipes. In the latter half of the twentieth century, the Haggis has been transmuted from Robert Burns's sonsie-faced 'King of the Pudding Race' into a hedgehog-like creature with tartan fur (a snipe in plaid plumage). Emblazoned on Scottish tourist items like T-shirts, baby bibs and postcards, the latter-day Haggis is very similar to the Jackalope, the giant horned jackrabbit of the American West. There is no suggestion here, as with Nessie, that these overtly fakeloric creatures ever existed in myth, legend, or fact. Instead, they are running jokes fabricated by locals for the amusement of tourists, who love these fabrications precisely because they are so patently silly and inauthentic. Nobody is fooled, and everybody has a good time, except for humourless academic types who enjoy fretting and stewing over questions of 'purity' and 'authenticity'.

An item-by-item survey of **Jokes Galore** reconfirms Welsh sociologist Christie Davies's observation that Scots stereotype Aberdonians as stingy and Irish as numskulls (Davies 1990). Just as **Favorite Jokes of Mountain Folks** steers clear of incest and dwells instead upon comic domestic strife, excessive sexuality and scatology, so does McKinley's **Mixture of Jokes Galore** totally avoid bestiality, likewise stressing scatology, sex, and domestic discord. This particular joke book presents what seems to be typical if bowdlerised Scottish inter-regional and inter-ethnic humour, cleaned up and watered down for the tourist trade.

Teuchters, Newfies and Hillbillies

Here is a breakdown of the contents of **Jokes Galore**:

Total number of items: 147

(Aarne-Thompson international folktale motifs – where applicable):

Intellectual Deficit

(J1700) fools	36
Irish numskulls	33
Scottish numskulls	3

Moral Deficit

(W151) Excessive thrift	26
Aberdonians	14
Scots generally	12

Excessive Animal Appetites

(T 400) illicit sex	22
Scatology (latrinalia)	13
(X800) jokes about alcohol	11
Jokes about women	8
(women with big breasts)	3

Levelling Behaviour

(X583) jokes about tourists	15
Domestic Discord	5

Material Deficit

(U60) jokes about poverty	4
Isolation	4
Wealthy Americans	2
Harsh climate	2

Comic Devices and Themes

Scottish locale	13
Scottish reference	13

Scottish Affairs

Scottish localism	19
British localism	7
English locales or English references	4
Puns	53
Scottish dialect	25
Cockney	1
Misunderstanding of dialect	2
Jokes about kilts	2
Cross-dressing	2
Jokes about bagpipes	2

Joke about haggis

playing bagpipes	1
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Sheep 1 (in Irish numskull/tourist joke):

Scottish Shopkeeper: 'You know, it takes seven sheep to make one of these sweaters!' Irish Tourist: 'I didn't know they could knit!'

Bestiality	0
Teuchters	0

At this point in my exploration of Scottish inter-regional humour, I was wondering whether teuchter jokes were a figment of my imagination or if they were only found in domestic Scottish comedy.

Informal joke-telling sessions in the tearoom of Edinburgh University's School of Scottish Studies soon yielded a bona fide teuchter joke; a local variant of an internationally distributed numskull joke concerning the subliterate policeman who drags a dead horse around the corner of a street with a long name to one with a short name so that he can fill in his report. A staff member of the School's archives repeated a joke he had recently read in a newspaper: 'A Highland policeman in Glasgow, heavy on brawn and light on education, finds a dead horse in Sauchiehall Street. He starts to write down the name of the street in his report. After writing a few letters he says "Och!" and drags the dead horse around the corner to Hope Street!' (collected 9 May 1996).

Teuchters, Newfies and Hillbillies

Purely coincidentally, Bob Tulk included a local variant, with a Newfie policeman in St John's, in his **Newfie Jokes**, which in turn reminded me of a version featuring an illiterate Irish cop in New York City. I was able to locate this New York variant in Jewish-American humorist Harry Golden's **Enjoy, Enjoy**. Golden apparently believed that this joke originated in New York when reform mayor George B. Gaynor ordered policemen, many of whom were uneducated Irish immigrants, to fill in and file written reports: 'This is when the old joke was born about the cop who found a dead horse on Kosciusko Street; he got a rope and dragged the carcass around to Third Avenue so he could fill out his report.' (Golden 1961, pp. 90-91).

The existence of Newfoundland and Glasgow variants, however, suggests other plausible alternatives. When I returned to Edinburgh in March 1997, I was delighted to hear veteran Scottish music hall comic Johnny Beattie tell the very same joke I had heard in the tearoom of the School of Scottish Studies, even specifically describing the Highland policeman as a 'big teuchter'. Nonetheless, does a single specimen constitute a genre? Teuchter jokes still were elusive and hard to pin down. As folklorist Gary West of the School of Scottish Studies remarked, teuchter is a relativistic term: 'Teuchters are people who live in the village to the north of your own.'

Continuing my pursuit of teuchter jokes, I took to the internet. If jokes about Scottish highlanders fall under the category of teuchter jokes, I found another example of the genre in a posting on <soc.culture.scottish>, a Usenet newsgroup:

A tiny Highlander suddenly popped his head over the battlements at Fort William and blew a raspberry at the guard. The whole watch immediately pursued him and the sounds of instant bloodshed could be heard by the few left behind. Soon a single survivor staggered back in the gate. 'It was a trap,' he gasped, 'There were two of them!'

Hoping to learn more about Scottish inter-regional humour in general and teuchter jokes in particular, I posted a query on <soc.culture.scottish>:

Christie Davies in **Ethnic Humor Around The World** (Indiana University Press 1990) notes that Aberdonian are characterized as canny in Scottish humour, while Irish are the butts of Scottish numskull jokes. Just as Scots tell jokes about canny Aberdonians (and occasionally Fifers), so do the Irish tell numskull jokes about Kerry men. Are there domestic Scottish numskull jokes? If so, are they presently or have they ever been associated with any particular Scottish region, town, or social

Scottish Affairs

group? Though some numskull jokes do crop up in the Scottish joke collections I have seen, they don't seem to be linked to any particular town (like Gotham in England or Chelm in Poland) or specific region (like Kerry in Ireland, Newfoundland in Canada, East Frisia in Germany, or the Southern Appalachian mountains in the USA). Instead, they mostly appear to local variations on the generic two numskulls pattern, like the old 'Pat and Mike' jokes about Irishmen once common in the States. Have Scots ever told jokes about Scottish Highlanders, Gaelic speakers, Northerners or 'teuchters' comparable to jokes about newfies and Hillbillies? Have Gaelic- speakers ever told jokes about Lowlanders and other Sassenachs [sic]? Any information regarding this subject, particular references to publications dealing with inter-regional humour in Scotland, would be greatly appreciated.

The first thing I learned was that I had misspelled (actually anglicised) the plural form of the Gaelic term for Saxon. A number of revealing bits of Scottish inter-regional humour followed, which I incorporated in the following response:

Many thanks to John Sutherland for his comments that the term 'sassenach' when applied to a Lowland Scot is purely a subtle form of abuse! 'Teuchter' is a form of subtle abuse about Gaels. North of the Ord of Caithness the term is 'gollach' which is a cheeky Gaelic term meaning 'horned headed ones', referring to alleged Viking pillagers that the gollachs were descended from. Mutual abuse, subtle and blatant, is in fact one of the generic features of inter-regional and inter-ethnic humour, which not only includes jokes but also epithets and derogatory characterisations (*maledicta* and *blason populaire*). Dehumanising despised others, particularly equating them with animals, is one of the recurring motifs of this genre. In this regard, it is interesting to note Micheil Rob Mac Phdruig's comment that 'Gollachan was a local word for an earwig in Muir of Ord, which seems to fit.' Again, equating horny headed invaders with annoying insects is rather subtle stuff as far as comic abuse of despised outsiders goes, especially when compared with accusing despised others of intercourse with horny headed, woolly fleeced beasts, which has to be one of the most ancient and widespread motifs in this hoary genre. Before venturing into those 'perilous pastures', it is clear that domestic regional and local numskull jokes do exist in Scotland, as demonstrated by Paul Crankshaw who commented: 'In Ayrshire jokes tend to be told about people from Kilwinning (a small town in Ayrshire), for example: Two Kilwinning youths are stranded in Irvine after a night

Teuchters, Newfies and Hillbillies

out. They decide to break into a bus depot and steal a bus. First youth says "Let's steal this bus". Second says "Don't be silly, it's going to Kilmarnock". Obviously, interurban abuse works both ways. As Willie Wilson in Columbia, Missouri commented: 'Don't forget the intense and often humorous rivalry between Edinburgh and Glasgow – Glasgow Celtic FC had a raffle. First prize was a week in Edinburgh; second prize was two weeks in Edinburgh. [W.C. Fields said the same thing about his hometown, Philadelphia, Pa.]. In Edinburgh, breeding is considered good form; in Glasgow, good fun. (The pretensions of Edinburgh are conveyed in the quip, 'fur coat but no knickers'. In Edinburgh itself, the same is said of the posh Morningside neighborhood.)

The responses I received from my initial queries on <soc.culture.scottish> seemed to suggest that Scottish humour concerning teuchters does exist in a shadowy, marginal fashion, but the spotlight of Scottish domestic humour shines directly upon the residents of Aberdeen, who are supposed to be exceedingly canny and thrifty; that is, when they are not being overly intimate with sheep. Just as other people tell demeaning jokes about Scottish misers and sheepshaggers, Scots tell these very same jokes about Aberdonians. As it happens, the principal numskulls of Scottish jokelore are not teuchters but their Irish cousins, and it is curious to note that the Irish tell these same jokes about Kerrymen, just as the jokes Americans tell about hillbillies become West Virginia jokes in the Southern Appalachians.

The cloning of Dolly the Sheep by Edinburgh University scientists at the Roslin Institute in February 1997 revived a venerable genre of bawdy jokes concerning bestiality with sheep. I will leave it to others to produce the definitive international compendium of sheep-shagging jokes. Here is one of the least offensive West Virginia sheep jokes and its Aberdonian counterpart:

Q. Do you know they've discovered a new use for sheep in West Virginia?

Wool!

Q. Do you know they've discovered a new use for sheep in Aberdeen?

A. Mutton!

This next example epitomises Aberdonian sheep jokes as a genre:

Q. What do they call four sheep tied to a lamp post in Aberdeen?

A. A learning centre!

Scottish Affairs

My queries concerning Scottish inter-regional humour and the various responses to them amused (and irritated) the readers of <soc.culture.scottish> for a few weeks in early 1997, until the cloning of Dolly the Sheep understandably captured the comic imagination of the group. As far as teuchter jokes are concerned, the most informative and generous response I received came from Dave M., a self-described teuchter born in Inverness-shire, now residing in the United States, who kindly answered a set of questions I sent to him via e-mail:

Where were you born and raised?

Born Inverness Scotland. Lived there and in a wee village called Melviegh away up at the end of the road in the North West Coast of Scotland. (Where they use wooden money and the women eat their young – Teuchter joke.) Parents immigrated to Canada. I spent half the year in Canada and the other half in Scotland with my family there. Very poor student, hated school except for the social parts.

What are teuchters? Where do they live?

Teuchters come from the North West Coast of Scotland. In the old days they all spoke Gaelic. My father and the older ones all spoke it between themselves, and we were brought up with it, but never used it so we lost it. It is great to say that the English took it, but in fact it just more or less became obsolete (Don't tell the English I said that.) Now the term basically includes anyone from the North or the Islands.

Do other Scots tell jokes about teuchters? If so, how are teuchters portrayed? What are their typical characteristics?

Billy Connolly (Scottish comedian) has a bit on one of his albums where he is heckled by what are supposed to be teuchters. He identifies the lassies as the ones with their nylons doon tae their ankles. He says we are called teuchters because we eat each other and we are teuch: tough to the taste. (In the old days people ate stewing hens because they were cheap and they called chicken 'chewks' (phonetic 'Teuchs'.)) He says he saw a family from the north walking down the road and when they saw a double decker bus they screamed out 'Look, a hoose wi' wee wheels!' We are depicted as drunken, lazy but good natured and always the gentleman. (See North American Indian ca 1955-1985. Same shit, different country). There is unfortunately some truth to this as the highlander/teuchter tends to get rather melancholy when away from home and unable to advance in their job due to the opinions and prejudices of others.

Teuchters, Newfies and Hillbillies

When is teuchter an abusive or insulting terms? When is it favourable or positive?

It is very hard to offend a teuchter as we tend to be very patient in most things and I don't know anyone who would take offense unless it was said as an obvious and intentional hurtful remark, and you can do that with 'have a nice day'.

Do teuchters tell jokes about lowland Scots or other outsiders? If so, how are lowland Scots characterised in these jokes?

Lowlander are broken into groups, and characterised by areas. 'Keelies' Glaswegians (from Glasgow) portrayed as bow legged, wee and half pissed most of the time. (There is some historical truth to this shape of a Jimmy due to the pre-1960s high rate of rickets in Glasgow from poor diet and lack of sunshine.) Jimmies are very friendly and always good for a song at the local (Pub). Definitely working class and blue collar. Edinburgh: You may as well be in London. Very anal retentive and proper. After all they do have the Mod and the Tattoo so they are very Scottish and artsy. (Glasgow getting the cultural award from Europe must have really pissed them off. hahahaha.) Even the winos in Edinburgh tip their hat, say please and thank you sir. Pain in the royal arse. [...] Aberdeen: Now there is a lot to behold. So tight they squeak when they walk. Talk slowly and almost totally not understandable. 'You'll have had your tea then.' Inverness (where I was born): Can't make up their minds whether they are city teuchters or not. Considered teuchters by the south and fast city people by those farther North and in the Isles.

How are teuchters similar to newfies or hillbillies? How are they different? Is it valid in your opinion to compare teuchters to hillbillies and newfies?

All one in the same. Why not? Basically the same stock. I visited the Appalachian Mts and felt very much at home with the people, especially in the smaller, more remote areas. You being in Tennessee are very exposed to the exile culture of the teuchters. Especially in the religion and the practice of it.

Any further thoughts re: inter-regional and inter-ethnic humour in Scotland or Scottish jokes with international variants?

There is nothing funnier than a group of people from different parts of the world sitting, having a few brews and telling ethnic and national or regional jokes. It has been my good fortune to travel and make friends all

Scottish Affairs

over the world. I have also had the opportunity to sit with large groups of people from various backgrounds in the US and Canada and hear the humour, both in English and French. It is all interchangeable. No matter what race, religion, nationality, we are all the same and just as stupid as each other. As long as the jokes are told in a non-hurtful manner it can cause a great deal of bonding and a great night with friends. This humour can be a problem in the hands of the haters who find isolated truths and/or are able to isolate single groups and stereotype them via ignorance and lack of tolerance. We are all basically the same.

It was Robert Burns who wrote, 'O wad some Power the giftie gie us / To see oursels as ithers see us!' In Dave M.'s last comment, an echo of Burns' 'A man's a man for a' that' resonates through cyberspace.

Viewed in comparative perspective, comic stereotypes lose their power to harm once we realise how similar and how ridiculous they truly are. Rather than railing against them, perhaps the best way to explode comic stereotypes is to expose their universality and ultimate absurdity.

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Teuchters, Newfies and Hillbillies

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