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“Have you any Bread and Wine?”: Conflict and Reciprocity in a Traditional Children’s Game

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In this article, I examine the traditional children’s game Roman Soldiers as a vehicle through which children contemplated community amid sectarian strife. Drawing on published and archival sources from Ireland, Britain, and the Americas, I suggest that children played with, critiqued, and, at times, subverted the conflicts that engulfed their societies through this game. In the process, children frequently highlighted the necessity of reciprocity for the maintenance of communal accord.

The children’s game Roman Soldiers (RN 8255)¹ was once among the most popular singing games in Britain according to the inimitable Iona and Peter Opie.² I will argue that this Anglophonic game emerged in its current guise during the religious wars that followed the reformation in England, diffusing later to areas where similar conflicts emerged primarily as a result of English colonialism. Roman Soldiers proved to be a malleable resource that was recontextualized to particular socio-historical contexts in Ireland, Britain, and the Americas as a means of critiquing, and in some cases at least, subverting sectarian conflict.

Sources and Method

I have located 137 references to performances or versions of Roman Soldiers, approximately half of which pertain to England and a fourth each to Scotland and Ireland. Six versions from the U.S.A. and one each from the Isle of Man, Canada, and Trinidad were available to me. Accounts of the game varied from mere mentions to full descriptions and consisted of both manuscript and printed sources. I have relied

heavily on the Schools' Manuscripts Collection of the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin, the many British folklore collections available online through the Vaughan Williams Library, and the published works of Alice Bertha Gomme and the Opies.³

It is important to note that the vast majority of the published versions I consulted were collected by folklorists. Many of the authors in question either recorded versions of the game themselves at first-hand or had versions sent to them by trusted correspondents who were also engaged in folklore collecting.⁴ Despite the relative trustworthiness of my sources many of the versions of Roman Soldiers available to me were fragmentary and often reflected the training, skills, preoccupations, and resources of collectors. Most collections evince a focus on the dialogue and lyrics of the game and often neglect the accompanying melodies and kinesics, for instance. This is likely due to two not unrelated factors; namely, a lack of musical transcription skills and the foregrounding of verbal elements of texts on the part of some collectors.⁵

I am acutely aware that fragmentary texts of this nature may obscure certain contexts from the researcher's view, leaving room for potentially damaging conjecture. This risk is all the more salient with regards to children's folklore studies where, as Richard Bauman has noted, there has been a tendency to view "children's folklore from an adult imperative and perspective," primarily as a means of enculturation into adulthood.⁶ While mindful of these facts, I hope this article will demonstrate the potential benefits and affordances of historic-geographic studies, including their potential to reconstruct cultural history from a more democratic perspective and to uncover shared preoccupations across space and through time. Folklorists in the United States, Britain, and Ireland are privileged with especially vast collections of children's games amassed by members of their respective folklore societies; engagement with these collections holds great promise.

Roman Soldiers: An Overview

Roman Soldiers is a line game in which two opposing teams of even number face each other at the outset. Each line advances and retreats as they sing in a call and response format, and the game generally concludes with a contest or fight of some kind. One might have presumed that a violent game of this nature would be the preserve of boys. Gomme, for instance, seems to associate “contest games” — a category of games within which she includes Roman Soldiers — exclusively with boys.⁷ The evidence suggests, however, that Roman Soldiers was played by both girls and boys.⁸ Some sources even suggest that the game may have been more popular among girls.⁹ Very few collectors noted the participants’ ages, although the Irish Schools’ Manuscripts Collection does include versions of the game dictated by children between the ages of 11 to 14 from their own repertoires.¹⁰

The Opposing Parties

The *initial situation* of the game, in Vladimir Propp’s terms, involves the formation and naming of two lines.¹¹ In Britain, Gomme has noted that the first line of participants were variously referred to as the rovers, guardian soldiers, gallant soldiers, Roman soldiers, Prince Charlie’s men, and French soldiers, while the opposing lines went by the titles King William’s soldiers, King George’s men, or simply English soldiers.¹² On closer inspection most of the combinations will be shown to personify historical conflicts between Catholics and Protestants.

The lines were most commonly referred to as Roman and English soldiers in England.¹³ Little more than a handful of the English versions available to me include any other combination of identities, and in most of these exceptions the Roman soldiers are retained and the English soldiers are replaced by King William’s men,¹⁴ British soldiers,¹⁵ or, in one version, by Norman soldiers.¹⁶

In Scotland, King James's men,¹⁷ or Prince Charlie's men in one case,¹⁸ are most commonly faced by English forces, such as Queen Mary's, King William's, or King George's men. The Romans and British were also known to face each other in Scotland.¹⁹ Surprisingly, three Scottish versions pit Prince George's men against Prince William's men.²⁰

In Ireland, the two lines were referred to as English and Irish Soldiers most commonly—in 12 versions to be exact. The autobiography of the renowned playwright Seán O'Casey exemplifies the localization of Roman Soldiers in his native East Wall, Dublin, where one line was titled Parnell's men in reference to the Irish nationalist and leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, Charles Stewart Parnell. The Roman and English combination also reappears in three Irish versions analysed here.²¹ Frank Kidson noted that the opposing sides represented King James's men and King William's men in "many places in Ireland," and while it would make perfect sense for this combination to appear in Ireland given the historical importance of the Williamite Wars (1688–1691), I have not uncovered any other evidence for this combination in Ireland.²² As in Scotland, anomalies appear in five Irish versions in which Roman soldiers oppose Irish soldiers.

Conflicts between the French and English are represented in the game's manifestation in Canada, a conflict which also encompassed religious sectarianism.²³ It is also important to note that Roman Soldiers was, at least occasionally, adapted to conflicts of a non-religious nature, as illustrated by a version from North Carolina that includes the Confederate and Union forces of the American Civil War.²⁴ Similarly, three English versions seem to have taken inspiration from the World Wars and the Napoleonic Wars, as discussed in more detail below.

Disparity and the Ethic of Reciprocity

The first proper function of Roman Soldiers, in a Proppian sense, is the introduction of a *lack*—a disparity between the two lines. The lack is generally introduced when one line offers bread and wine to the other,²⁵ when one line asks the other for bread and wine,²⁶ or, alternatively, when one line acknowledges possession of bread and wine, which automatically suggests a lack on the part of the opposing line.²⁷ The following example from Banteer, County Cork, gives an idea of the typical opening exchanges.

... the English Soldiers start off and say:

“Have you got some bread and wine, bread and wine, bread and wine?
Have you got some bread and wine for we are the English Soldiers?”

The Irish Soldiers then repeat:

“Yes, we have got some bread and wine, bread and wine, bread and wine.
Yes, we have got some bread and wine for we are the Irish Soldiers.”

English Soldiers then say:

“Will ye give us some of it, some of it, some of it?
Will ye give us some of it for we are the English Soldiers?”

Irish Soldiers reply:

“We will give ye none of it, none of it,
We will give ye none of it for we are the Irish Soldiers.”

The bread and wine is certainly the most common motif in Roman Soldiers appearing as it does in all of the Scottish versions available to me and in the vast majority of the Irish versions. A slice of cake is offered or requested in three Irish versions, replacing the bread on occasion.²⁸ The slice of cake motif is popular in English versions of the game but does not appear in any of the Scottish versions available to me.²⁹ There are several other motifs that appear in the opening section of English versions, including beer,³⁰ ale,³¹ and gin.³² The bread and wine remain

common in England appearing together in approximately 30% of the versions there. Wine often appears in English versions separate from the bread, however, and thus features in 79% of the versions from England overall.

Violating the Ethic of Reciprocity

A *violation* of some sort follows the introduction of the lack where one line refuses the offer of bread and wine—either for no apparent reason or because the offer is said to be too meagre—or is refused the bread and wine after requesting it from the opposing line. This action may be extended and intensified with the inclusion of additional requests or offers, as in the following example collected by Cecil Sharp in Somerset:³³

Have you any bread and wine?
For we are the English,
Have you any bread and wine?
For we are the English soldiers.

Yes, we have some bread and wine,
For we are the Romans,
Yes, we have some bread and wine,
For we are the Roman soldiers.

Then we will have one cup full,
For we are the English,
Then we will have one cup full,
For we are the English soldiers.

No, you won't have one cup full,
For we are the Romans,
No you won't have one cup full,
For we are the Roman soldiers.

Then we will have 2 cups full etc.

No, you shan't have 2 cups full etc.

Then we will have 3 cups full etc.

No, you shan't have 3 cups full.³⁴

The Threat of Violence

With repetition, offers usually intensify and develop into threats. As Jean Rodger from Forfar, Scotland, recounted: "When you march forward to begin this first line, you're quite pleasant, and then you get aggressive."³⁵

The threats generally consist of one line calling on an individual or group with authority. This threat is subsequently rejected or belittled by the opposing line, like so:

We will tell the policemen...
What care we for the policemen...
We will tell the red-coat men...
What care we for the red coat men...
We will tell the magistrate...
What care we for the magistrate.³⁶

The red-coats,³⁷ black and tans,³⁸ and the magistrates commonly appear in Irish versions as signifiers of English authority.³⁹ One version from Derryconnery, County Cork, includes the following significant reference to a shift in the access to power in the independent Irish Free State:

We will kill the old police,
We are roamy roamers,
We will kill the old police,
For ye are Irish Soldiers.

What about the new police.
We are Irish Soldiers.⁴⁰

In Scotland, red-coats, blue-coats, magistrates, and policemen are mentioned.⁴¹ The authority of one line might be announced and subsequently refuted by revealing their identities and the King or Queen to whom they are loyal, as in the following example:

We are all King James's men...
What care we for King James's men.⁴²

We are King George's loyal men...
What care we for King George's men.⁴³

Many of the same figures are mentioned in English versions. Significantly, however, the "Pope of Rome" is invoked in seven English versions I have examined.⁴⁴ In West Cumberland, for example, the following lines were exchanged:

We are fighting for the Pope...
And we for the English Queen.

Religious tensions are further exemplified in a version recorded by Cecil Sharp in Devon:

We will tell the magistrate...
We will tell the church...
We will tell the parson priest...
We don't care for the dirty old beast.⁴⁵

Also in Cambridgeshire, the Romans call on their "new born prince" — most likely a reference to Bonny Prince Charlie, evoking the Jacobite rebellions.⁴⁶ As in the Scottish versions, the English occasionally threaten to inform their king or majesty.⁴⁷

Alongside the more serious threats discussed up to this point, Roman Soldiers also typically included threats of a more humorous nature. In Somerset, England, for example, the lines threaten: "We will send our cats to scratch... We will send our dogs to bite."⁴⁸ One line threatens to send for "cripple dick" in Scotland and England.⁴⁹ In Banteer, Cork, the Irish soldiers threaten to inform "Mary Mac,"⁵⁰ and in parts of England one line threatens to "tell the fat-bellied man."⁵¹ These seemingly frivolous threats are, in fact, crucial to the meaning of the game and will be returned to in the concluding section of this article.

The Resolution

Roman Soldiers generally concludes with a “fight” or “contest.” The Opies noted that Roman Soldiers was one of only two singing games that could be called true “contests”: “‘Nuts in May’ and ‘Romans and English’ are games in the fullest sense of the word. There is a trial of strength, and doubt about the outcome. One side or the other can be said to have won.”⁵² The concluding section typically begins with a variant of the following verse:

Are you ready for a fight?
We are the Romans.
Are you ready for a fight?
For we are the Roman soldiers.

Yes, we’re ready for a fight,
We are the British,
Yes, we’re ready for a fight,
For we are the British soldiers.⁵³

The invitation to fight is developed humorously in some versions as follows:

We shall have a battle then.
At what hour does the battle begin?
Half past three the battle begins.⁵⁴

Accounts of the remainder of this concluding section vary substantially, often due to the fact that collectors neglected to comment more precisely on its form.

Nonetheless, there are some commonalities throughout the descriptions available to us. Both lines frequently joined in a ring and sang a version of the following verse:⁵⁵

Now here we are in the battle field,
The battle field, the battle field.
Now here we are in the field,
Bang! Shot! Fire!⁵⁶

In some versions, this was succeeded by::

Now I have only got one hand, got one hand;
Shoot! Bang! Fire!

Now I have only got one eye;
Shoot! Bang! Fire!

Now I have only got one leg.⁵⁷

The concluding contest seems to have commonly taken the form of a tug of war between the two lines,⁵⁸ but in some places a “cock-fight” ensued where each side attempted to topple the other to the ground while hopping on one foot.⁵⁹ In Plymouth, Massachusetts, the tug of war consisted of “each player in one line seizing the hands of the opposing player of the other and engaging in an individual tug of war.”⁶⁰ John Hornby observed that the tug of war could take place as part of a ring dance in England, “the ‘English’ side of the ring against the ‘Romans’ still keeping the ring-form. The side containing the one who gives way is condemned...”⁶¹ Alternatively, a leader from each line might be selected to tug for winner’s rights.⁶²

Despite both the Opies’ and Gomme’s classification of Roman Soldiers as a game of contest,⁶³ it seems that contests were not ever-present in the game. The “loss of limbs,” described above, was followed by a dramatization of death and the resurrection of both lines in several places, for example. In Carrick-on-Suir, Tipperary, both lines conclude by singing, “Now we’re all dead and gone... Now we’re all alive again...”⁶⁴

Furthermore, several collectors suggested that Roman Soldiers concluded with the formation of a ring by both sides and with the participants singing in unison.⁶⁵ On the Isle of Wight the participants would sing:

Now we've made up friends again,
We are the English,

Now we've made up friends again,
We are the English soldiers.⁶⁶

And in Hampshire:

Then let us join our happy ring,
For we are the English/Romans!

Then let us join our happy ring,
We are the English/Roman Soldiers!⁶⁷

Dialogic and Melodic Form

Roman Soldiers is composed of four-line stanzas, each line consisting of four stressed syllables divided into two equal half-lines by a caesura, as is common in Anglo-Saxon poetry.⁶⁸ Anne Geddes Gilchrist argued that there were two typical forms of this game that differ in respect of their dialogic and melodic forms—one English (Type A) and one confined to Scotland and the border counties of England (Type B). Type A consists of a double refrain that alternates with the verse line as follows:

Will you have some bread and wine?
We are the Romans,
Will you have some bread and wine?
For we are the Roman soldiers.⁶⁹

Type B consists of three lines followed by a coda, as exemplified below:

Have you any bread and wine,
Bread and wine, bread and wine,
Have you any bread and wine,
My Theerie and my Thorie.⁷⁰

The regional distribution of these forms is more complex than Gilchrist suggests. Type A certainly predominates in England appearing in approximately 90% of the versions available to me; however, Type B was not restricted to the northern counties of England.⁷¹ Type B was far more common in Scotland and featured in just over half of the versions there. Interestingly, almost 80% of the Irish versions correspond to Type B.

Gilchrist further differentiates the Scottish and English ecotypes on the basis of their accompanying melodies: "one more or less like 'Bobby Shafto' [Melody 1] and the other the ever-useful 'Nuts in May' [Melody 2]." Gilchrist associates Nuts in May with Scotland and Bobby Shafto with England.⁷²

Melody 1 ⁷³

Melody 2 ⁷⁴

Melody 1 is the sole melody mentioned in connection with Roman Soldiers in England. The Opies documented one exceptional version in London where they

noted that Melody 1 accompanied the opening verses as usual but that the game was concluded with a ring dance performed to the tune of Nuts in May [Melody 2].⁷⁵

Of the 11 Scottish melodies available to me, six are versions of Melody 1. Nuts in May accounts for three of the Scottish versions. A third melody also appears in Scotland, which is more generally associated with the game London Bridge [Melody 3].⁷⁶

Further distinctions between English and Scottish versions might be made on the basis of codas. A variation of “My theerie and my-thorie” concludes over 60% of the Scottish versions, for example.⁷⁷ Occasionally a variant of the line “within a golden story” appears in Scottish versions also.⁷⁸ Both of these Scottish variants appear to have influenced versions of Roman Soldiers in the United States.⁷⁹ The Scottish influence is also evident in a version from Tyrone, Ireland, where John Marshall noted the following variant: “... Hissowry, O Hissowry (The refrain varies slightly in different localities, it may be ‘Mitheery, O Hithoory’ or ‘Mitheery, an Mithorey’.” English versions occasionally include the caudal refrain “Whether we are drunk or sober.”⁸⁰

Melody 3 ⁸¹

Distribution of Roman Soldiers

Origin and Meaning

Referring to Roman Soldiers in England, the Opies noted that "The general feeling now [among scholars] is that it is a struggle between the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches, the 'bread and wine' being highly significant."⁸² The Opies were skeptical of this interpretation, however, arguing that "quite apart from the fact that Roman and English are not the earliest known contestants, bread and wine were everyday fare (wine well into the nineteenth century) and are by no means to be confined to the bread and wine of sacrament."⁸³ Steve Roud has suggested that "the

presence of 'bread and wine' in some versions and 'Romans' in others means that the song is about the age-old enmity between Protestants and Catholics." Although, he concludes that "there is no evidence to support a notion based on such highly selective internal textual clues."⁸⁴

The formal and comparative study undertaken here provides additional evidence and support for the centrality of Protestant and Catholic strife to this game. As we have seen above, the vast majority of the opposing parties that feature in versions from England, Scotland and Ireland consist of Catholic and Protestant identities. The structural centrality of the bread and wine as the first action of the game and its appearance in all but a few Irish and Scottish versions adds further weight to the argument for the greater symbolic significance of the bread and wine. The predominance of Roman and English soldiers as well as the occasional references to the Pope in English versions further exemplifies the theme of religious strife in this game.

The evidence also suggests that Roman Soldiers originated in England. It was in England that the earliest tensions arose between Protestants and Roman Catholics during the religious wars that followed the reformation, providing the earliest cultural conditions conducive to this game. Anne Geddes Gilchrist recognised as much when she wrote that "the game is a reminiscence of faction-fights between Romanists and their post-Reformation opponents."⁸⁵ Secondly, Roman Soldiers is an Anglophonic game and we can say with some certainty that it did not originate in either Gaelic or Welsh-speaking areas.⁸⁶ The fact that twice as many versions of Roman Soldiers have been documented in England might also be included as evidence in favour of this point of origin, although the concentration of folklore collecting efforts in England, especially in relation to children's games, may account for some of this disparity in representation. Finally, Roman and English soldiers are the only combination to appear in versions of the game in England, Scotland, and

Ireland which suggests that this may be the oldest combination.⁸⁷ While Roman and English soldiers maintained relevance in the contexts of Scotland and Ireland, children in each of these places favoured localized and contemporary identities in their articulation of religious strife.

Despite the fact that the earliest references to Roman Soldiers date to c. 1837 in Scotland, c. 1875 in England, and c. 1890 in Ireland,⁸⁸ it is possible that the identities employed by the participants provide evidence for the earlier diffusion of the game, given that there is evidence to suggest the game was adapted contemporaneously to more recent conflicts. The Opies mention a version that arose in the aftermath of World War II in which English and German Soldiers faced each other, for example.⁸⁹ The influence of World War I is evident in a version from Leeds where Russian and English soldiers confronted each other.⁹⁰ Gomme also provides a version from Sussex in which French and English soldiers were opposed and noted that "Miss Chase [one of Gomme's correspondents] says the game is said to date from the alarm of Napoleon's threatened landing on the coast".⁹¹ By extension, it seems possible that the Old and Young Pretenders were added to the Scottish versions during the Jacobite rebellions of the 17th and 18th centuries.⁹²

The structure of Roman Soldiers reveals a syntagmatic movement from peace to conflict, illustrating the central preoccupation of the game and its participants with the nature of war. The beginnings of war in the eyes of children involves the recognition of differential identities, based for the most part on national and/or religious affiliation.⁹³ Inequity between the two sides (i.e., the lack) and differential access to, or a contestation over, power (i.e., the threats and appeals to authority) intensify the interaction leading, inevitably, to a battle. As we have seen, neither side is left unscathed by war, and all participants suffer injuries (i.e., the loss of limbs).

No discernible pattern of good and evil sides has become apparent to me during my analysis. In general, the concluding contest seems to recognize that war is

unpredictable rather than dramatizing the defeat of one particular side. It is important to note, however, that unpredictability is characteristic of games as a genre.⁹⁴ Had I the opportunity to observe this game being performed, I may have found that the absence of symbolic representations and moral valuation of opposed warring groups had more to do with facilitating unpredictable outcomes to the contest in order to drive competition. A performance-centred analysis might have further shown the concluding contest to be less about chance and more about the strategic manipulation, limitation, or removal of chance.⁹⁵

Some versions of Roman Soldiers certainly acknowledge the realities and possible political leanings of the game's participants. In several Scottish versions, for example, the Catholics are in possession of bread and wine and the English forces are portrayed as demanding it from them, as follows:

Have you any bread and wine...
Yes, we have some bread and wine...
We shall have one glass of it...⁹⁶

The scant evidence from Ireland does not evince any such pattern. If the Irish are in possession of the bread and wine, the English will request rather than demand the bread and wine.⁹⁷ Alternatively, the English might offer the bread and wine and the Irish might refuse,⁹⁸ or the English might refuse to share after the Irish request the bread and wine.⁹⁹

All the above scenarios are evident in the English versions also, with no clear preference apparent in the versions available to me. Some English versions certainly reflect the political leanings of participants, such as the three versions in which the following line appears: "We are come to take your land, we are the Romans."¹⁰⁰ In a version that Cecil Sharp documented in Birmingham, the game concluded in a dramatization of conflict "in which [the] Romans are defeated."¹⁰¹

While *Roman Soldiers* clearly reflects children's articulation of the nature of war, it also subverts this reality, often through the use of parody.¹⁰² Parody is clearly apparent in what the Opies described as the "spellbinding irrationality" of the conflict in *Roman Soldiers*.¹⁰³ Take, for example, the humorous references to cats, dogs, cripple dick, etc., as figures of authority as well as the nonchalant manner in which both sides agree to fight. The movement from line formation, seemingly signifying confrontation and differences of opinion, to a ring or circle form which suggests "alliance, amity and kinship" further acts to playfully subvert the conflict.¹⁰⁴ The concluding "cock-fight" and the "loss of limbs" are also clearly humorous. Many collectors, in fact, referred to the concluding contest as a "mock-fight" in recognition of this playful subversion.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps the most extreme case of subversion occurs in the versions in which the contest is removed from the game altogether in favour of a dramatization of death and resurrection of all participants.

The conflict develops over bread and wine, which, given the divergences in the interpretation of this shared symbol's significance as either the literal or symbolic body and blood of Christ, might underscore differences between Protestants and Catholics. In most cases, however, the conflict seems to develop as a result of greed rather than difference in that the side in possession of bread and wine chooses not to share it sufficiently or the opposing side demands too great a share. The introduction of the bread and wine suggests that conflict may be avoided through adherence to the ethic of reciprocity. Interestingly, a similar provocation to war has been documented by Ray Cashman in a Christmas mummer's plays in Tyrone, in the north of Ireland, where Prince George demands payment from Saint Patrick for oats and hay he had fed to his horse.¹⁰⁶ Many further comparisons could be drawn between the British and Irish mummer's plays and *Roman Soldiers*. Not only do these cognate expressive forms share similar distribution patterns, but, most significantly, they both represent dramatizations of conflict—frequently between Catholics and Protestants.¹⁰⁷

Like the mummer's play, Roman Soldiers acted "as an expressive vehicle for epistemological contemplation and debate" on the nature, difficulties, and crux of community at times of division.¹⁰⁸ At certain points in time and in particular places difference and political allegiance might permeate the game, reiterating divides. At the same time, Roman Soldiers seems to invite, maybe even entice, participants to play with their realities.¹⁰⁹ As a performance this game invites social connection,¹¹⁰ and as a play genre it effects "a removal from the real world into the stylized one... allowing for a 'playing out' of motives we don't allow ourselves under the circumstances of real life."¹¹¹ I suggest that the widespread diffusion of Roman Soldiers evinces a shared preoccupation and desire among children to play with the realities of sectarian conflict. By employing parody and through the manipulation of form, children often achieved powerful bids toward an alternative vision of community in this game, one based on the recognition of difference but mindful of the imperative of reciprocity in maintaining social cohesion.

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Primary Sources

My primary sources are organized below in accordance with their geographic location. For the benefit of future researchers, I have differentiated between more complete versions of the game (ver.), fragmentary texts (frag.), and mere mentions of the game (men.). Sources that included melodies have also been noted (mel.). As stated previously, NFC refers to the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin; NFCS to the Schools' Manuscripts Collection. The following collections may be accessed through The Vaughan Williams Memorial Library website (<http://www.vwml.org>): Cecil James Sharp Collection, Lucy Broadwood Collection, Anne Geddes Gilchrist Papers, Frank Kidson Folk Song and Music Collection, Fred Hamer Collection, Ralph Vaughan Williams MSS Collection. For further information regarding the Gwilym Davies Collection, see <http://www.gwilymdavies.co.uk/>.

Canada

Fowke (ver. & mel.) 1969, 29.

England

Bedfordshire: Fred Hamer Collection (ver.), FH/4/2/41. Berkshire: Gomme (ver.) 1894–98, 347–348; Cecil James Sharp Collection (frag.), CJS2/9/2245; Lucy Broadwood Collection (ver.), LEB/2/44. Bristol: Cecil James Sharp Collection (men.), CJS2/9/1467. Cambridgeshire: Gomme (ver.) 1894–98, 456. Cheshire: Opie (frag.) 1985, 284. Cumberland: Thornley (2 vers. & frag.) 1901, 273–274; Opie (ver.) 1985, 280–281. Derbyshire: Cecil James Sharp Collection (frag. & mel.), CJS2/10/1699; Hickson (ver.) 1991, 24. Devon: Cecil James Sharp Collection (ver.), CJS2/9/1467; (ver. & mel.) CJS2/9/2058 & CJS2/10/2206; Chalk (ver. & frag.) 1920, 50–51. Dorsetshire: Pentin (ver.) 1953, 37; Gillington (ver. & mel.) 1913, 6; Udal (ver.) 1922, 361. Durham: Folkways Records FG 3565 (ver. & mel.). Gloucestershire: Gwilym Davies Collection (2 vers. & 2 mels.); Gomme (ver.) 1894–98, 353; Cecil James Sharp Collection, CJS2/10/2570 (frag. & mel.); CJS2/10/2215 (ver. & mel.); CJS2/10/2272 (ver. & mel.); CJS2/10/2142 (frag. & mel.). Hampshire: Gomme (ver.) 1894–98, 347; Lucy Broadwood Collection (ver. & mel.), LEB/5/144–147; Opie (frag.) 1985, 285. Isle of Wight: Gillington (ver. & mel.) 1909, 19. Kent: Gomme (vers.) 1894–98, 345–346. Lancashire: Anne Geddes Gilchrist Papers (frag. & mel.), AGG/1/5/33B; Shaw (frag.) 1970, 79; Gomme (ver.) 1894–98, 346; Lucy Broadwood Collection (ver.), LEB/4/79/3; Frank Kidson Folk Song and Music Collection, (frag. & mel.) “Children’s Tunes” (m18056), FK/1/15; (frag. & mel.) “Traditional Tunes” (m18058), FK/3/97; Kidson (ver. & mel.) 1916, 13. Leicestershire: Opie (frag.) 1985, 284–285. London: Opie (ver. & mel.) 1985, 280–281; Opie (frag.) 1985, 282; Opies (men.) 1985, 284. Norfolk: Gomme (ver.) 1894–98, 355–356. Northamptonshire: Gomme (ver.) 1894–98, 348. Northumberland: Gomme (ver.) 1894–98, 351; Bosanquet (ver. & mel.) 1929, 131; Ralph Vaughan Williams MSS Collection (mel.), vol. 3, book 9, 379. Oxfordshire: Cecil James Sharp Collection (ver. & mel.), CSJ2/10/2692. Shropshire: Burne (ver.) 1883, 517–518;¹¹² Opie (frag.) 1985, 285. Somerset: Cecil James Sharp Collection, CJS2/9/1380–1381 (ver.) & CJS2/10/1539 (mel.); CSJ2/10/2508 (ver. & mel.); CSJ2/9/1682; CJS/10/1770 (1. ver, 1. frag. & 1 mel.), CSJ2/9/1502 & CSJ2/10/1648; CJS/10/1847 (frag. & mel.); CSJ2/9/1424–1425 & CSJ2/10/1579 (ver. & mel.); Opie (frag.) 1985, 283; Gomme (frag. & mel) 1894–98, 343.¹¹³ Staffordshire: Gomme (ver.) 1894–98, 349–349, Opie (frag.) 1985, 285. Surrey: Opie (frag.) 1985, 284. Sussex: Gomme (ver.) 1894–98, 349; Anne Geddes Gilchrist Papers (frag. & mel.), AGG/1/18/1/31b. Warwickshire: *Warwick & Warwickshire Advertiser*. “Some More Village Play Songs: Old Time rhymes and games which are still sung in Warwickshire.” 6.04.1935;¹¹⁴ Cecil James Sharp Collection (ver.), CJS2/9/1560–1561. Westmoreland: Anne Geddes Gilchrist Papers (frag. & mel.), AGG/1/18/1/32a. Wiltshire: Opie (frag.) 1985, 284. Worchestshire: Cecil James Sharp Collection (ver.), CJS2/9/1558–1559. Yorkshire: Gomme (1 ver. & 1 frag.) 1894–98, 353–354; Opie (frag.) 1985, 284. Unspecified location: Hornby (ver. & mel.) 1913, 46–47; Opie (men.) 1985, 283; Cecil James Sharp Collection (frag. & mel.), CJS2/9/2058 & CJS2/10/2206.

Ireland

Antrim: Hammond (ver. & mel.) 1986, 24–25; Kane (ver.) 1983, 74–75; Daiken (frag.) 1949, 18. Clare: NFCS 610:139 (ver.). Cork: NFCS 280:406–408 (men.); NFCS 361:748 (ver.); NFCS 380:47 (men.); NFCS 393:32 (men.); NFCS 392:76 (ver.). Donegal: NFCS 1035:364 (men.). Dublin: Brady (ver. & mel.) 1975, 112–115;¹¹⁵ O'Casey (frag.) 1960, 127–128; Opie (frag.) 1985, 285. Galway: NFCS 33B:3–4 (ver.). Kilkenny: NFCS 844:200–203 (ver.); NFCS 849:62 (men.); NFCS 849:64 (men.); NFCS 849:68 (men.). Leitrim: NFCS 197:162–163 (frag.). Limerick: NFCS 518:230 (ver.). Meath: NFCS 699:92 (frag.). Roscommon: NFCS 265:129 (frag.). Tipperary: Daiken (frag.) 1949, 17; *The Clancy Children—So Early in the Morning* (ver. & mel.).¹¹⁶ Tyrone: Marshall (ver.) 2015, 20–21. Waterford: NFCS 636:433–435 (men.); NFCS 638:114 (men.). Wexford: NFCS 893:55 (men.).

Isle of Man

Dr John Clague Manuscript Books (frag. & mel.), Manx National Heritage Library, C1/45:4 TE.¹¹⁷

Scotland

Aberdeenshire: Lucy Broadwood Collection (frag. & mel.) LEB/7/23; *The Buchan Observer*. "A Buchan Village: Origin and Rise of New Pitsligo." 16.04.1929: 2.¹¹⁸ Arbroath: McBain (ver.), 1887, 342–343. Argyll: MacLagan (ver., frag. & mel.) 1901, 205–206; Gilchrist, Sharp and Broadwood (frag.) 1910, 68.¹¹⁹ Banffshire: Opie (men.) 1985, 283. Edinburgh: Ritchie (ver. & mel.) 1965, 148–150 & 173. Forfar: Opie (frag.) 1985, 284; School of Scottish Studies (ver. & mel.), <http://tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/31335>. Glasgow: Ford (ver.) 1904, 80. Kirkcudbright: Gomme (2 vers.) 1894–98, 352 & 355. Lanarkshire: Opie (frag.) 1985, 284. Lossiemouth: Anne Geddes Gilchrist Papers (frag. & mel.), AGG/1/5/33B. Perthshire: Gomme (3 vers.) 1894–98, 350 & 352. Unspecified location: Shuldham-Shaw, Lyle & Campbell (ver., frag. & 2 mels.) 2002, 158–159; Frazer (ver., men. & mel.) 1975, 95; Anne Geddes Gilchrist Papers (frag. & mel.), AGG/3/3/6c;¹²⁰ Kerr (ver. & mel.) 1912, 8.

Trinidad

Lomax (ver. & mel.) 1997, 30–31.

USA

Massachusetts: Linscott (ver. & mel.), 1939, 40–42; Newell (ver.) 1903, 248–249. North Carolina: Brown (ver.) 1952, 43. Washington DC: Babcock (ver.) 1886, 249–250.¹²¹ Unspecified location: Lomax (men.) 1997, 30; Chase (ver.) 1949, 26–29.

¹ This game has appeared under a host of titles. The title “Roman Soldiers” has been documented in the oral traditions of Ireland and Britain (e.g. NFCS 893:55; LEB/5/144–145) and has also been utilized by American folklorists (Chase 1967, 26; Lomax 1997, 30).

² Opie 1985, 282.

³ The Schools’ Manuscripts Collection was the result of the Schools’ Folklore Scheme, initiated by the Irish Folklore Commission in cooperation with the Department of Education and the Irish National Teachers’ Organisation in 1937. During the following academic year children were encouraged by their teachers to collect folklore from their families and neighbours (Ó Catháin 1988). Children also seem to have documented games from their own repertoires (e.g. NFCS 638:114). The vast majority of this collection has now been digitized and made available online at www.dúchas.ie.

⁴ See, for example, Gomme 1894–98, 458.

⁵ See Baumann 1972, 8, for a discussion of the broadening conceptualizations of text in folklore and related disciplines as part of the performance turn in the US. Contemporary scholars of children’s folklore have responded to previous oversights by drawing attention to the importance of embodiment in children’s play (Beresin 2010; Barker & Rice 2019).

⁶ Bauman 1982.

⁷ Gomme 1894–98, 481.

⁸ See, for example, Brady 1975, 100 & 112; Stewart 1975, 95; School of Scottish Studies, <http://tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/31335>.

⁹ Robert Craig MacLagan, referring to Roman Soldiers as played in Argyleshire, claims that it is a “girls’ game” (MacLagan 1901, 205). William Babcock describes girls playing the game in Washington D.C. (Babcock 1888, 261). Four accounts from the Schools’ Manuscripts Collection associate this game specifically with girls (NFCS 33B:3–4; NFCS 197:162–163; NFCS 392:76; NFCS 844:200–203) and only two accounts describe boys as participating in the game (NFCS 638:114; NFCS 610:139).

¹⁰ See, for example, NFCS 638:114; NFCS 610:139; NFCS 893:55; NFCS 849:62.

¹¹ Propp 1968. I have found Vladimir Propp’s structural schema of the folktale germane to the analysis of Roman Soldiers. Alan Dundes was the first to apply Propp’s *Morphology of the Folktale* to the study of children’s games (Dundes 1975).

¹² Gomme 1894–98, 343–355.

¹³ Gilchrist 1910, 67; Opie 1985, 283.

¹⁴ Gomme 1894–98, 345–346.

¹⁵ Kidson 1916, 13; Opie 1985, 285; *Warwick & Warwickshire Advertiser*, 6.04.1935.

¹⁶ Bosanquet 1929, 131.

¹⁷ Opie 1985, 284; MacLagan 1901, 205–206; AGG/3/3/6c; LEB/7/23; School of Scottish Studies, <http://tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/31335>.

¹⁸ Gomme 1894–98, 350.

¹⁹ Frazer 1975, 95. See also <http://tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/31335>.

²⁰ Gomme 1894–98, 352; *The Buchan Observer*, 16.04.1929:2. William Newell documented another example of this combination in Plymouth, Massachusetts (Newell 1903, 248).

²¹ NFCS 610:139; Kane 1983, 74–75.

²² Kidson 1916, 13.

²³ Fowke 1969, 29.

²⁴ Brown 1952, 43.

²⁵ NFCS 392:76; NFCS 844:200–203.

²⁶ NFCS 197:162–163; NFCS 265:129.

²⁷ NFCS 33B:3–4.

²⁸ NFCS 844:200–203; NFCS 610:139; Opie 1985, 285.

²⁹ Gomme 1894–98, 347–48; *Warwick & Warwickshire Advertiser*, 6.04.1935; CSJ2/10/2508; LEB/2/44/3; CJS2/10/2570; CJS/10/1847; CJS2/9/1558–1559; CJS2/9/1560–156; AGG/1/18/1/31b; Opie 1985, 284; *Ibid.* 283.

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- ³⁰ Burne 1883, 517–518; Gomme 1894–98, 353–354; CJS2/10/2570; LEB/4/79/3.
- ³¹ Gillington 1913, 6; Gomme 1894–98, 346; CJS2/10/2272; Kidson 1916, 13.
- ³² Gomme 1894–98, 353–354.
- ³³ The structure of the game is shown to be recursive at this point, a feature which has been noted previously with regard to the structure of games and folktales (Dundes 2007, 83; Propp 1968, 58–59).
- ³⁴ CJS2/9/1380–1381 & CJS2/10/1539.
- ³⁵ <http://tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/31335>.
- ³⁶ Gomme 1894–98, 252.
- ³⁷ NFCS 265:129; Marshall 2015, 20–21.
- ³⁸ NFCS 361:748.
- ³⁹ NFCS 197:163–163.
- ⁴⁰ NFCS 280:406–408. See also NFCS 844:200–203.
- ⁴¹ See, for example, Ritchie 1965, 148–150 & 173; Frazer 1975, 95; Gomme 1894–98, 352 & 355.
- ⁴² <http://tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/31335>.
- ⁴³ McBain 1887, 342–343.
- ⁴⁴ CSJ2/10/2508; Thornley 1901, 273–274; LEB/5/144–147; CSJ2/9/1682; CSJ2/10/1847; Chalk 1920, 50–51; CJS2/9/2058 & CJS2/10/2206. The “highest priest” is mentioned in another version (CJS2/9/1380–1381 & CJS2/10/1539).
- ⁴⁵ CJS2/9/1467.
- ⁴⁶ Gomme 1894–98, 456.
- ⁴⁷ CJS2/9/1682; FH/4/2/41.
- ⁴⁸ CJS2/9/1682. See also NFCS 392:76; NFC S 610:139, NFCS 518:230; Pentin 1953, 37; Burne 1883, 517–518; Opie 1975, 284.
- ⁴⁹ Gomme 1894–98, 351.
- ⁵⁰ NFCS 361:748.
- ⁵¹ Thornley 1901, 273–274; Hickson 1991, 24.
- ⁵² Opie 1985, 276.
- ⁵³ Kidson 1916, 13. See also Gwilym Davies Collection; Pentin 1953, 37; NFCS 844:200–203; NFCS 361:748; NFCS 280:406–408; NFCS 610:139; Tradition TCD 1053.
- ⁵⁴ Opie 1985, 284. See also <http://tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/31335>; CJS2/10/2272.
- ⁵⁵ NFCS 844:200–203; NFCS 610:139; NFCS 392:76; Hornby 1913, 46–47; CSJ2/10/2508; CJS/10/1770. For other, more general accounts of the ring formation see CJS2/9/2245; Opies 1985, 280–281.
- ⁵⁶ NFCS 392:76.
- ⁵⁷ NFCS 610:139; NFCS 392:76; NFCS 844:200–203; Tradition TCD 1053; Brady 2009, 112; CSJ2/9/1502 & CSJ2/10/1648; *Warwick & Warwickshire Advertiser*, 6.04.1935; CSJ2/10/2508; CJS/10/1770; Opie 1985, 285.
- ⁵⁸ Kidson 1916, 13; Opie 1985, 285; Kane 1983, 75; Gillington 1913, 6.
- ⁵⁹ Gomme 1894–98, 73; NFCS 265:129; <http://tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/31335>.
- ⁶⁰ Linscott 1939, 40–42. This was also the case in Glastonbury, Somerset (CSJ2/10/2508).
- ⁶¹ Hornby 1913, 46–47.
- ⁶² NFCS 636:433–435; Folkways Records FG 3565; Opie 1985, 282.
- ⁶³ Gomme 1894–98, 481; Opie 1985, 276.
- ⁶⁴ Tradition TCD 1053. See also Brady 2009, 112; *Warwick & Warwickshire Advertiser*, 6.04.1935; Opie 1985, 283–285 (i.e. Taunton, Leicester, and Claverly).
- ⁶⁵ Daiken 1949, 16–20; Bosanquet 1929, 131; CSJ2/10/2508. In another version the Opies collected in Cumberland, England, a cockfight precedes the ring dance (Opie 1985, 280–281).
- ⁶⁶ Gillington 1909, 19.
- ⁶⁷ Gomme 1894–98, 347.
- ⁶⁸ Ní Dhuibhne 1982, 77.
- ⁶⁹ Gilchrist 1910, 67.
- ⁷⁰ *Idem*, 69.

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- ⁷¹ See, for example, *Warwick & Warwickshire Advertiser*, 6.04.1935; LEB/2/44/3; CJS2/10/2570.
- ⁷² Gilchrist, 1910, 67. The most common melody associated with Bobby Shafto today is less similar to Gilchrist's melody than she suggests.
- ⁷³ Gilchrist, 1910, 67.
- ⁷⁴ Gilchrist, 1910, 68.
- ⁷⁵ Opie, 1985, 280–281.
- ⁷⁶ Melodies 1 and 3 have been documented in Ireland also (Hammond, 1986, 24–25; . *The Clancy Children—So Early in the Morning*). The melody documented by Eilís Brady in Cabra, Dublin, seems unrelated to any of the three above-mentioned melodies.
- ⁷⁷ Gomme documented a version of this line in Northumberland, northern England (Gomme 1894–98, 351).
- ⁷⁸ Kerr 1912, 8; MacLagan 1901, 225–226; Opie 1985, 284. This line also featured in a version from Yorkshire, northern England (Gomme 1894–98, 353–354).
- ⁷⁹ Linscott 1939, 40–42; Babcock 1888, 261–262.
- ⁸⁰ Gomme 1894–98, 353–354; LEB/4/79/3; CJS2/10/1699; Hickson 1991, 24; Opie 1985, 284.
- ⁸¹ Shuldham-Shaw, Lyle & Campbell 2002, 158.
- ⁸² Several scholars have argued that religious strife is central to the meaning of Roman Soldiers (Roud 2010, 285; Gilchrist, Sharp, and Broadwood 1910, 67; Thornley 1901, 273–274).
- ⁸³ Opie 1985, 284.
- ⁸⁴ Roud 2010, 285.
- ⁸⁵ Gilchrist, Sharp, and Broadwood 1910, 67.
- ⁸⁶ Roman Soldiers has not been documented in the *Gaeltacht* areas of Ireland and seems to have been largely absent from the Scottish highlands. The absence of references to the game in Wales may have been due to the lack of collecting there. Similarly, the sparse references to the game in the northern province of Ulster might be explained to some extent by the fact that the counties of Northern Ireland did not partake in the Schools' Folklore Scheme. It seems likely, given the cultural influence of Britain in the northern counties, that Roman Soldiers would have been more widespread in Ulster than my distribution map suggests.
- ⁸⁷ Edith Fowke has suggested, similarly, that the game "began as 'The Roman Soldiers', then switched in different localities to tell of the Irish and English, English and French, Yankees and Rebels, or simply 'the rovers' and the 'gallant' soldiers." (Fowke 1969, 210).
- ⁸⁸ McBain 1887, 342–343; Burne 1883, 517–518; O'Casey 1960, 127–128; NFCS 392:76.
- ⁸⁹ Opie 1985, 282–283.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid. 284.
- ⁹¹ Gomme 1894–98, 359.
- ⁹² Críostóir Mac Cárthaigh has noted similar surface level adaptation in a mummer's play composed in Carrigart, Donegal, in 1941, which makes reference to Winston Churchill and Adolf Hitler (Mac Cárthaigh 2007, 169).
- ⁹³ Bauman 1972.
- ⁹⁴ Dundes 2007, 82. See also Sutton-Smith 1959a 14–15.
- ⁹⁵ Goldstein 1999.
- ⁹⁶ Gomme 1894–98, 350–352 & 355; Ford 1904, 80; MacLagan 1901, 205–206; McBain 1887, 342–343; <http://tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/31335>.
- ⁹⁷ NFCS 33B:3–4; NFCS 265:129; NFCS 361:748.
- ⁹⁸ NFCS 392:76; NFCS 610:139.
- ⁹⁹ Kane 1983, 74–75.
- ¹⁰⁰ AGG/1/5/33B; Burne 1883, 517–518; Frank Kidson Folk Song and Music Collection, "Children's Tunes" (m18056), FK/1/15.
- ¹⁰¹ CJS2/9/1560–1561,
- ¹⁰² McDowell 1986, 320.
- ¹⁰³ Opie 1985, 282.

¹⁰⁴ Gomme 1894–98, 477–479.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, Lomax 1997, 30–31; Kerr 1912, 8; Ritchie 1965, 148–150; Stewart 1975, 95; NFCS 361:748; Marshall 2015, 20–21; CJS2/9/1560–1561.

¹⁰⁶ Cashman 2000, 37.

¹⁰⁷ Gailey 1969.

¹⁰⁸ Bauman 2006, 748; Glassie 1975; Cashman 2007; Cashman 2021.

¹⁰⁹ Cashman 2007; Glassie 2007.

¹¹⁰ Glassie 2007.

¹¹¹ Abrahams 1976, 203.

¹¹² See also Gomme 1894, 52–55.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ <https://www.vwml.org/record/RoudFS/S415092>, accessed 13.04.2021.

¹¹⁵ Brady's version also appears in Leyden 1993, 46–48.

¹¹⁶ *The Clancy Children—So Early in the Morning: Irish Children's Songs, Rhymes & Games*, Tradition Records, 1960.

¹¹⁷ https://www.manxmusic.com/bio_page_129756.html, accessed 7.03.21.

¹¹⁸ I would like to thank the staff of Peterhead Library, Aberdeenshire, for locating and sharing this version with me.

¹¹⁹ This version seems to correspond with a version that appears in the Anne Geddes Gilchrist Papers (AGG/1/2/86). The manuscript copy was attributed to Lossiemouth, however.

¹²⁰ This version corresponds very closely with the Broadwood version from Aberdeen (see above). It seems likely that copying occurred between these collectors.

¹²¹ See also Babcock 1888, 261–262.