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CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE REVIEW

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CONTENTS

From the Editor	1
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ARTICLES

"Have you any Bread and Wine?": Conflict and Reciprocity in a Traditional Children's Game	FIONNÁN MAC GABHANN	3
"I Know Just How He Feels": Deep Concerns in Young People's Lives	MARY TWINING BAIRD	33
Looking for Peekaboo	CLAIBORNE RICE	43
Propaganda and Propagation: The Education of Children in South Louisiana Through Their Own Schoolyard Lore	JEANNE PITRE SOILEAU	62

From the Editor

With this volume, I proudly begin my service as editor of *Children's Folklore Review*. First and foremost, I thank the *CFR* board members for putting their trust in me, and I thank the previous editor, Brant Ellsworth, for his guidance and assistance during our transition. I am humbled by *CFR's* history, by the quality of scholars who have published in this journal, and by the excellence that permeates the journal's archives.

Folklorists' commitment to children's folklore remains imperative. Leaning into analogy, I often say that the study of children's folklore must be as important to folkloristics as the study of language acquisition is to linguistics. Humans develop in patterned ways, and those patterns include situated opportunities for acquiring and activating folkloric competence. We folklorists have an important role to play in the study of human development. That said, children's folklorists also understand that our work is not bound by positivism or adultocentrism. In children's folklore, timeless enigmas—creative/conservative, universal/particular, instrumental/expressive, sense/nonsense—abound. It is precisely because our subject is happily irrational and comfortably upending that we have our very own seat at the table of the interdisciplinary study of childhood. Our intention is to bear witness to children's expressivity—free from the restraints of experimental artificiality, numerical anonymity, and historical invisibility.

On point, the articles in this issue constitute excellent contributions toward, while reminding us of the core issues in, the study of children's folklore. I thank the authors for their stellar work and for their patience during *CFR's* transitional period. In his opening 2020 W.W. Newell Prize-winning essay, Fionnán Mac Gabhann considers a wealth of archival examples from Ireland, Britain, and the United States of the children's singing game, Roman Soldiers. Reminding us of the importance of archives, Mac Gabhann identifies in the children's mock battles a poignant commentary on the importance of community and reciprocity. The second article grew out of a 2019 American Folklore Society conference presentation on children's folklore by none other than Mary Twining, whose crucial fieldwork among the African-descended people of South Carolina and the Georgia Sea Islands reminds us that children's folklore points not toward triviality, but toward deep concerns in young people's lives. Third, 2020 Opie Prize winner Claiborne Rice's preliminary report on a fieldwork-based study of peekaboo reminds us that folklorists are prepared to consider—in grounded and richly philosophical ways—human development in the contexts of play, social interaction, and everyday experience. Lastly, 2018 Opie Prize and 2018 Chicago Folklore Prize winner

Jeanne Pitre Soileau highlights the lessons she has learned during her remarkable fifty years of collecting children's folklore in Louisiana. Specifically, Soileau reminds us that children and youths form their own responses to cultural propaganda by testing boundaries, exposing contradictions, and exacerbating otherness.

Please be advised that some of the children's folklore in this issue (and in our journal's archives) deals with difficult topics, including violence, drug use, sexuality, and racist language. Children, too, live in an imperfect world.

K. Brandon Barker
Indiana University
Bloomington

● 2020 W.W. Newell Prize Winner ●

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

Fionnán Mac Gabhann
Indiana University

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

Will you give us bread and wine? We are the Ro - mans,

Will you give us bread and wine? For we are the Ro - man sol - diers

Melody 1 ⁷³

Have you got an - y bread and wine, Bread and wine, bread and wine?

Have you got an - y bread and wine? Me - thee - rie and Ma - thor - ie.

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

We are all King Geor-ge's men, King Geor-ge's men, King Geor-ge's men;

We are all King Geor-ge's men, Ma - thee - rie and Ma - tho - rie.

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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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.

“I Know Just How He Feels”: Deep Concerns in Young People’s Lives

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This essay is written in the ethnographic present. It is based on research in South Carolina carried out in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the cooperation and consent of the residents of the John’s Island Community. All lines from the games and songs were sung during the presentation October 18, 2019, 2:30 P.M. at the American Folklore Society Annual Meeting in Baltimore, MD. The description of the Vulture’s gait and the Ranky Tanky body shake were demonstrated.

People will ask what is Folklore used for? Parents use maxims and proverbs to admonish their children, politicians and legislators use sayings to make a point; there are many examples so familiar that we may not perceive them as folklore, such adages as: “God don’t love ugly.” “Every goodbye ain’t gone.” “Don’t count your chickens before they are hatched.”

The young people of the African American Sea Islands on the coasts of North and South Carolina and Georgia turned oral narrative into physical movement every day. One of the accomplishments of the call-and-response singing and movement is to demonstrate one’s movement acumen and singing abilities. Adept movement and wordsmithing are necessary, much admired, and valued skills that Africans brought with them from their home countries and within their legacy.

Like their African cousins, the pre-teens and teens carried their younger siblings on their hips as they moved around the community. They are included in the life concerns of the family and community early. They go to work in the fields in addition to their baby sitting or carrying duties and work around the house with their mother or grandmother as soon as they are able. When they have a chance to play, they have small narratives that inform their songs, “plays,” and dancing games within the context of

their lives. Sometimes, holding the hand of their young charge, they jumped, danced, and moved through the instructions contained in the text of the game.

They sing about drawing water, going to the brickyard, and encouraging each other to dance inventively, "Let me see your motion." The story of the borrowed and unreturned hatchet, the tragedy of Uncle Jessie and his lost crop, the account of Miss Julianne John's illness, decline, and death all reflect what the deeply rural lives of marginalized people, far from help and medical care, are like. They sang also such songs as "Little Johnny Brown" which is a young peoples' sized practice of the African "Buzzard Lope" dance which on an adult level is the re-enactment of the scavenger vultures attacking the corpse of the departed, as in nature, the vulture is programmed to do.

Bunkum, Bunkum

This game starts out, on one end of the line of players, with the spoken request: "Neighbor, Neighbor lend me your hatchet;" the reply from the other end of the line soon comes "Neighbor, neighbor step and get it." The story continues with a brisk singing of "Na na thread needle" during which the dancers go through the pattern, sometimes called rattlesnake, where the players work through the line of all those involved as an indication of the complexities of life and community relationships. Proclaiming "I lost my needle," the word has been introduced that reveals the next twist of the plot—*lost*. The lender asks for his Hatchet back which evokes the reply "Neighbor, neighbor I ain't got it." Lender is not pleased as the loss of valuable tools like a needle or an axe is a calamity which affects their ability to function and some restitution is required to calm the waters. The group, which functions somewhat as a Greek chorus commenting on the action, begins a ritual to sort out the problem. They sing "Wind up this bunkum, bunkum" while the line of players winds up into a coiled

knot. Once properly knotted, they sing "Shake down this bunkum, bunkum," and the whole knot jumps up and down together. By this time, they are all laughing and out of breath which leads to their singing "Unwind this bunkum, bunkum" indicating that peace is, more or less, restored while they unwind the knot.

Here comes Uncle Jessie
A running cross the field
With his horse and blanket/buggy
And I know just how he feels,

Now Step, Uncle Jessie, step, step
Step, Uncle Jessie, step, step

Here comes Uncle Jessie
He's looking very sad.
He's lost his cotton and corn
And everything he had.



Image 1: "And if you want a fella, I'll tell you what to do, you take some salt and pepper and sprinkle it in your shoe."

The brief story tells the stark tragedy of the farmer losing his food for the year and the cotton crop to sell as well. Interestingly the next verse may provide a solution, or not: "Now if you want a fella, I'll tell you what to do, Just take some salt and pepper and sprinkle it in your shoe." (see Image 1, above)

Miss Julianne John

The Julianne John song and dance appears in Barbados as well as the Sea Islands. The young ladies gather to make a social visit singing "I come to see Miss Julianne John, Miss Julianne John, Miss Julianne John and how she is (Barbados - " how she are") today." (see Image 2, below) The reply indicates normalcy "She is ironing." It could be she is washing the dishes or whatever activity suits the singers that particular day. The singers retreat expressing joy at hearing all is well, "I'm very glad to hear that." Miss Julianne John, it is reported in subsequent verses, "is lying down sick," "taking an operation," "The doctor don't expect her to live," and she ultimately dies after each of these inquiries brings a negative, worsening situation. The chorus, again with singing commentary on the outcome, sings "I am very sorry to hear that, hear that, hear that, I'm very sorry to hear that, " followed by the practical question "So what you going to bury her in?" The answers are a catalogue of possible color choices and the uses of those colors as they are rejected as suitable options. "Yellow is for babies," "Blue is for Sailors," "Red is for fire" and so on. Finally, the color of choice is white as Miss John has transformed into a ghost (duppy in the Caribbean) and chases her well-wishers away.



Image 2: Youths perform, "I come to see Miss Julianne John"

Little Johnny Brown

"Little Johnny Brown," a game which the young people enjoy, is a pint-sized version of the "Buzzard Lope" which uses a piece of cloth to stand in for the corpse. "The Buzzard Lope" is a funeral dance of African provenance which was danced by grownups in the community and which re-enacted the coming of the vulture to pick at the corpse thus fulfilling the carrion bird's function in the grand scheme of things. The corpse is represented by a bandanna or a man's handkerchief; it is called a comfort, as in bed comforter, and is manipulated by the dancer who is playing Johnny Brown as he moves through the game. The whole group sings: Little Johnny Brown,

Spread your comfort down.
Little Johnny Brown,
Spread your comfort down.

"Johnny Brown" places the cloth in the center of the ring after making one turn around the inside of the circle. The lead singer intones: "Fold one corner;" the (ever present) chorus replies "Johnny Brown." Meanwhile Johnny Brown follows instructions and folds a corner. After he folds four corners, he is told to "take it to your lover," repeated twice and the chorus says firmly "Johnny Brown" after each one. As he stops in front of one of the other players, he is told to "Take it to your lover," (chorus) "Johnny Brown." The lead singer tells him to "Show her your Motion." The two players dance facing each other. He is then instructed to "Lope like a Buzzard," (chorus) "Johnny Brown." I do not know if you have ever seen a Buzzard lope; it is a loose-limbed sideways gallop with the shoulders working to imitate the wings of the buzzard with the arms spread out. At one point when we were doing this game, Bessie Jones's, renowned singer of traditional African American songs and games, granddaughter, Vanessa, did a buzzard lope, piercing gaze and all, that was masterful in its evocation of the bird's actual motion. Her grandmother dispatched her in my direction; it was a memorable experience. The next instruction is "Take it to your lover," (chorus) "Johnny Brown." The Johnny Brown player hands the folded cloth to the player who steps into the ring as the next Johnny Brown and begins the ritual again. The former Johnny Brown takes his place in the circle and the game continues. When the game continues, as in the "Buzzard Lope" for adults, there is a certain resolution of the process of life and death and some closure for the participants.

What does the Folklore do?

To get back to the question at the beginning of this article—What does the folklore do? The games reflect the labor of daily tasks in such song texts as “Draw me a Bucket of Water” (the hauling of water and extracting of frogs from bucket):

Draw me a bucket of water
For my oldest daughter.
We got none in the bunch,
We’re all out the bunch.
Go under, sister Sally.

In subsequent verses, each member of the original square formed by the dancers, is folded into the “bunch” and that is followed by “Frog in the bucket and I can’t get him out!” recited four times as the whole linked circle jumps or gallops sideways to a certain amount of excitement and breathless acknowledgement of each other.

The following song has been introduced with a spoken exchange about the lending of an axe, and followed with this lively, rhythmic dancing “sewing” of the line, thus concerned with sewing and wood cutting:

Nana,
Thread needle,
Nana
Thread needle,
I wants my needle,
Thread needle,
I lost my needle,
Thread needle.

Green Sally Up (cooking).
Green Sally up, green Sally down,
Green Sally bake her possum brown.

Other laborious tasks are minding their younger siblings and working in the surrounding fields, activities which are not as much mentioned in the games and songs.

The Uncle Jessie game presents a method to resolve the farmer's losses. The song offers sympathy and notification of Uncle Jessie's disasters and provides a small ritual with the salt and pepper in the shoe in hopes to bring about a helpful denouement (in the possible arrival of the "fella" to help with the work). The Julianne John game not only provides manners instruction, but also a review of a long list of color values and what each is best used for during the discussion of suitable burial outfits. Furthermore, they recount Julianne's decline from health to illness and death. Her transmogrification into a ghost in the Sea Islands and duppy in the Caribbean is noted, and the players react in a suitable manner by running and screaming, letting out some of the tension in the situation. Moreover, "Little Johnny Brown" furnishes a practice session for setting the universe to rights after a loss. The girls rejoice in songs like

We are the little Miss Walk-um, Walk-um
We like to walk, walk, walk

The boys join in on

Down in the Valley,
Two by two, my baby, two by two

And

Head and Shoulders, baby one, two, three
knee and ankle baby one, two, three

Truly joyful dances.

Not only do they exercise themselves, they sing as they play and dance which is good for their cardio-vascular systems, provides recreation, and development of leadership skills plus sheer amusement as well. They love "Ranky Tanky":

I gotta pain in my head, Ranky Tanky
Gotta pain in my shoulder, Ranky Tanky"

The chant continues on down through the anatomy finishing off with a complete body shake to “I gotta pain all over me, Ranky Tanky,” repeated as often as their fancy strikes them. It gives them a chance to move themselves all over and to demonstrate their inventiveness.

Their belief systems unfold and evolve as they work through the catalog of the colors in “Julianne John,” as the *Bible* works through the so-called “Begats” and *the Iliad* through the catalogue of the ships. These lists or indexes supply the records that form primary documentary histories of cultures and groups. Bibles and Epics, such as *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, begin with oral recitation placing them squarely within the realm of folklore. These games and songs recorded the daily history of ordinary people who found their way through the vicissitudes of life as they enacted the “plays” and told their stories as they coped with their lives and losses in an ethnographic present.

The film *Sundiata*, which is based on the African epic of the great King whose military skills built the Empire of Mali, shows one of the young boys telling the story of Sundiata to his friends up in a tree. He is passing on the history of Sundiata. The kind of tree is possibly a Baobab that the men keep counsel under in West Africa. The youngsters are already gathering, the boys becoming men in preparation to tell them something important. They translate the impact of life around them by telling the stories as they embellish them with song and dance. They are busy acting out these dramas with actions and gestures, which is why the games are called “plays.” The enactments are play for young people, but they also contain small scenes which are plays in the dramatic sense. As the domestic history is reflected in the pieces of the quilts taken from textiles harvested from clothing and household goods, the games reflect the ups and downs of life, and the passing on of the histories, as the young people sing, dance, and enact the “plays” and stories.

The young players make them their own and thus meet their own joys and sorrows through a psychological filtering which may be related to PTSD as we know it now. Their minds convey them back to the images of loss and destruction which inures them to seeing and, at various stages, understanding so they can shield themselves through having accustomed their minds to the complex nature of life in their communities and culture. Early in their lives, through dance and song, they are acquainted with some of the worst events life can bring. These dancing games provide the rehearsals for the future, and they may be seen to be gaming the system rather than playing games in the usual sense of play and game. These plays and games provide just a few examples of how folklore can have serious and significant roles in their lives.

Mary Twining Baird, retired professor of English and retired Director of Graduate and Undergraduate programs of Humanities, Clark Atlanta University, looks for the deeper significances of the all-important verbal mastery of the African-descended population of the South Carolina and Georgia Sea Islands.

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Looking for Peekaboo

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In the context of a preliminary investigation of peekaboo play in a local day care, this essay examines the particulars of one child's actions as she attempts to engage another child in peekaboo. Four elements of the child's performance contribute to its evaluation as peekaboo: the stylized motions of looking and eye-covering, the intent to make and keep eye contact with the play partner, the rhythmic timing of covering-uncovering motions, and the opportunistic nature of the attempt to play. Considering peekaboo as a folk illusion puts these kinds of early performances in the context of a developmental trajectory that spans the entire childhood.

This is a preliminary report on fieldwork in progress on Peekaboo. I became interested in peekaboo while studying the genre of folk illusions with Brandon Barker (Barker and Rice 2019). Peekaboo is interesting as a form because it is widespread and well-known, it appears to have all of the qualities of a folk illusion, and it is played by kids and the people around them from early infancy until well into the pre-school years. This latter quality is especially attractive because it appears to offer an opportunity to study the emergence of children's performative folkloric competence (McDowell 1977, 187; 2007-08, 43). As with any other folkloristic form, observing the emergence of folk illusion performance in context can help us understand the nature of performance and of the purposes the performance of folk illusions may serve in the life of the individual and community.

Curiously, despite the ubiquity of peekaboo-like routines around the world, the form has been almost completely overlooked by folklorists. Simon Bronner mentions it in passing as a precursor to Hide and Seek (1998, 173; 2011, 210). Kate Schramm, in her perceptive essay "Nascent Folklore" (2011), offers the only sustained folkloristic examination of peekaboo. While inviting folklorists to explore "infant interaction in an ethnographic context," she acknowledges challenges that inhere in studying folkloric

forms in the “prelinguistic, pre-genre, pre-self arena of infant behavior” (7). Folklorists should not be distracted by interpreting children’s activities simply as precursors of adult social competencies and should remain aware that children’s forms are activated rather than transmitted, so that mutation and variation mark the creative expression of attempted forms (McDowell 1999, 62). Perhaps most importantly in the ethnographic context, pre-linguistic infants cannot report on their intentions, motivations, or goals. Schramm thus constructs a framework for interpreting infant behaviors in a folkloristic context. Her study of peekaboo illustrates how intention can be inferred by the researcher on the basis of certain behaviors of the child’s: her sustained gaze, her creative permutations on a theme, and her signals of emotion like laughter and smiling (20).

Schramm’s approach reads the child’s play for traces of intention, as if intention may or may not be present and the observer’s job is to witness it when it appears. There is a different way, however, to track the emergence of intention in the child’s activity. Henry Glassie has said about performance that it “is an existential proposition.” By this he means that it “establishes people as intelligent, sentient beings who receive and process and compose, and as beings who occupy and act upon the real world with all of its pain and wonder” (Glassie 2001, 45). From this perspective, as soon as we identify the play activity as a performance, then we have already identified the childish performer as an intentional agent, however small. Rather than scrutinizing behavior for traces of intention, we are instead asking what counts as performance.

If we consider the possibility that peekaboo is a folk illusion, then pre-linguistic peekaboo play is not necessarily also pre-genre.¹ Folk illusions as a genre evince intentionality. Mature performers shape their materials under guidance from audience expectations to achieve various goals that performers target in advance. In our definition of folk illusions, we reference intention explicitly; they are “a traditionalized

form including verbal and kinesthetic actions performed in order to effect an intended perceptual illusion for one or more participants” (Barker and Rice, 4). The director wishes to share an experience with the actor. Rather than telling the actor about their own experience, as we would for example in relating a personal story, the director instructs or shows the actor what to do, then waits for a reaction from the actor that is interpreted as evidence that the experience has happened. The fun of experiencing an illusion motivates kids to share their experience with others. Performances might be initiated by statements like “wanna see something cool?” or “I bet you can’t pat your head and rub your tummy at the same time.” Directors attempt to show or describe appropriate movements so that actors accomplish the illusions. Sometimes it takes more than one try to get a successful result. After the surprise or laughter subsides there might be some conversation about where the director learned the illusion or why it works. All of these performance elements imply intentionality. In addition, of course, intention becomes evident whenever we ask people about why they play folk illusions.

The age bands at which folk illusions tend to be played present an opportunity to examine how intention gets distributed throughout the forms as they are constituted and performed by youths of different ages and abilities (Table 1). Youths in their middle school years are the typical performers, but younger children are not left out. Certain forms are suited to the body awareness and socialization abilities of preschool kids. Most noticeably with younger children, older children or adults are the instigators of the fun. Some people remember an uncle or sibling showing them an illusion, but other illusions, like Got Your Nose (Barker and Rice, E1), do not come up as something people remember having been sprung on them as young kids. I have not yet met someone who remembers what it felt like to have their nose stolen and returned. So apparently it is possible to create an intended illusion for a person even if you yourself do not remember experiencing the illusion.

Table 1: Age Ranges of Folk Illusions (Barker and Rice, 169)

Ages	Typical Forms	Additional Characteristics
Young child (2–5 yrs)	Got Your Nose, Kiss Your Elbow, Separating Thumb	Adult or older child is instigator; illusions target immature body perception
Childhood through adolescence (8–18)	Pat and Rub, the Chills, Floating Arms, Crossed Hands, Light as a Feather	Simpler forms earlier; socially more complex forms later
Adulthood (18–80)	Floating Arms, Arms or Legs through the Floor	Illusions played as pranks, while stoned or high, or for nostalgia

Peekaboo as a form seems to have all the necessary elements of a folk illusion. In Chapter 7 of *Folk Illusions* we present a morphology of peekaboo as it is often played when the child is very young (three to eight months) and the adult is the initiator (the agent, in our terms).

Peekaboo Morphology (Barker and Rice, 181)

- a. Agent highlights performance space and time with eye contact / alert call
- b. Agent initiates hiding activity
- c. Priming period
- d. Agent reappears / release call
- e. Eye contact is re-established
- f. Agent and Patient respond to each other
- g. Optional re-initiation of hiding activity

The time span between the breaking and re-establishment of eye contact, steps (b) and (e), is when the intended illusion would be taking place. But what is the intended illusion?

When I ask adults what they think the baby is experiencing during peekaboo, the most frequent statement is that the parent “disappears” for the baby. Some people offer a folk psychological explanation that the baby lacks “object permanence” – the baby thinks the parent is gone when the parent is hidden from sight, then suddenly reappears (Barker and Rice, 182). Adults think this is evidently an illusion on the child’s part because of course the parents know they have not actually disappeared. As the children grow a bit older, though, between five to thirteen months, they begin gradually to demonstrate some agency in the context of peekaboo, able to key peekaboo play themselves with alert calls or by hiding their eyes, or grabbing the rag off mama’s face, for example, as if to uncover her. One person I spoke to, Janna Haller, had a child who had matured enough that she could instigate peekaboo herself—she could perform some of the actions of the agent, in folk illusion terms (Barker and Rice, 182-84). Janna thus had a slightly different take on her child’s experience. For her, the child thought that she was making herself disappear. The context of peekaboo play creates an environment where the child can be recognized as being an intentional agent, creating a desired effect for her, or for her mother.

We see a similar situation in Schramm’s description of her daughter’s peekaboo play. Schramm acknowledges that the play is a form that has been rehearsed many times within the family (19). Thus Schramm knows that when her daughter walks through the play area and disappears down a hallway, the child is keying a round of peekaboo:

I ask her where she is going (in high-pitched play tones) even as she disappears out of sight around a doorway. Then come the cue words of our game, which we

have played numerous times before: "Where's [Name]?" The sing-song chant is repeated at a higher pitch. As the repetition of the cue comes to a close, the child runs out from the doorway with a huge smile on her face, looking for my face.

(18-19)

Schramm's report of the event artfully elides her own role in delivering the alert call for their game. "Then come the cue words...." The form itself seems to have supplied the cue words, almost as if they have dropped dramatically out of the ether to affirm the child's intention. Though the pre-linguistic child initiates the play by disappearing down the hall, Schramm conspires with her child to establish the play frame formally. In terms of our morphology, the agent role in the form has been split between the two participants. The child takes step (b) first, then Schramm takes step (a) in response to her daughter's adoption of the agency afforded her by the form. Schramm recognizes in her discussion of the event that parent and child have worked together to bring the play frame into being, and that it is within the frame that the child can manipulate expectations, control the length of the priming period, and experience the delight and surprise of reappearance (20). Viewing peekaboo as a folk illusion helps us understand how agency is distributed among different participants in a particular performance and how adults construct the imagined mental state of their little co-conspirators.

Because the possibilities afforded by studying peekaboo are so rich for understanding nascent folkloric performance, I began visiting a daycare at my church in Lafayette, Louisiana. The Little Lambs Mother's Day Out Program is housed in the Saint Barnabas Episcopal Church building on Camelia Boulevard, a recently widened road running between 50- to 60-year-old subdivisions. Saint Barnabas was founded in 1966 by the Diocese of Western Louisiana as a suburban option to the older and larger downtown church. The parish erected a multi-use building in the early 1970s that I have heard accurately described as a large brown Pizza Hut. A sacristy was built ten years

later, and the local Episcopal School expanded their middle school program into the back of the original building. After the school moved into its own new building in 2011, the school rooms sat empty during the week. The day care program now occupies that space. The program is not intended to serve the congregation primarily but as a ministry to the local community. The day care is the brainchild of Kelly Labry, a life-long parishioner of Saint Barnabas, who realized when her first child was born that a part time day care would be a great service to people like her who needed a break sometimes but did not need full time day care. Mother's Day Out, as they refer to themselves informally, is open from 9-1 Tuesday through Thursday, with a few kids coming in on Friday as needed.

My initial goal was to observe peekaboo being played by different age groups, starting as young as possible. The psychologists Anne Fernald and Daniela O'Neill reported in 1993 that adults were playing versions of peekaboo with infants as young as three months old (270). I expected I would see the staff playing peekaboo with children or the children playing some form of hiding games amongst themselves. Mother's Day Out's youngest class is 12-18 months, though, so I selected them to start with. I began visiting in August of 2019 as a preliminary step toward exploring the possibility of a long term study.

All of the classes have a schedule posted by the door of their room, and the 12-18 month class is no exception. The teachers, Sharona and Sabrina, keep everyone moving smoothly through the schedule as the day progresses. They accept arrivals after 9 a.m. with free play in the room, then get a snack after everyone is there. After that they play either inside or outside, depending on weather. Some days a part of free play is taken up with "Movement," which consists of going down to a different room and playing with large, soft balls and pool noodles with scarves tucked into the ends. Music plays fairly loudly and the staff encourages the older kids to use a variety of rhythm

instruments like maracas or tambourines as they dance to the music. Our younger class, however, is content to play with the toys and explore the space.

After several days of observation I found myself focusing on the 10:30-11:30 a.m. time slot. After coming in from free play or Movement at 10:30, the class has lunch and lies down for naps, which begin around 11:30. Getting the whole class of eight lively kids through lunch and into naps is no easy task. As Anna Beresin illustrates in *Recess Battles*, transitions are tough on teachers and kids alike (23). Twelve months is about when most kids start walking. When the class started for the fall, three of the kids could walk, but by early October six of the eight could do it. All of the kids are mobile enough, however, to find their way around the 18 x 18 room in a hurry.

In order to manage everyone, the two teachers conduct a beautiful, intricate ballet of movements and tasks. As Sharona tells me, "you have to figure out how each child is and arrange for that. Some will sleep longer so you put them down first. Some will take other kids' food, so you have to feed them separately." The two teachers work together to get each kid's food out, get them fed and laid down on their nap-mats with their particular sleep aids. One child goes in a crib, two go down early, this one has to have a warm bottle, another must have a cloth over his head. All while this is going on, one of the teachers is making art with the kids. The room is equipped with a semi-circular table sporting small booster seats around the outer curve. A teacher—usually Sabrina but they trade tasks sometimes—can sit at the inner hemisphere of the table and supervise the kids as they eat, spooning some applesauce into one mouth, handing a carrot stick to another child. As the kids eat, the teacher maneuvers one kid onto her lap or into the nearest seat on her left, where she can paint the kid's hand or foot and use it to make one or more imprints on a sheet of paper. Each kid gets painted, imprinted, and cleaned up during lunch. Then, usually while the kids are sleeping, the teachers add lines or glue other things to the paper to make a simple but often clever piece of art. The

figure depicted on the page goes along with the school's "letter of the day." So for example they might make a handprint turkey for T day or a pink handprint elephant for E day. At the end of the month each child has a personal portfolio of art they have made, marked with a name and date to confirm it.



Hand Crafts and Snacks at Little Lambs Mother's Day Out Program

I watched over a month and saw no hint of peekaboo. Sabrina, who had graduated college in spring of 2017 and was taking classes for a nursing degree, said that she did not really play games with the kids. She liked to clap and sing with them instead. She thought the kids reacted well to music when they were crying. Sharona had graduated the year before with a degree in childhood education and was happy to be working with the younger group. She taught them some sign-language signs, such as those for drinking and eating, to help her communicate with them. When I asked if she played any games with the kids, she mentioned that if they were crying or in an angry

mood, she might play peekaboo or patty cake. Changing diapers would be a likely occasion for peekaboo, she said, but I did not observe any performances. When I asked what she thought the kids enjoyed about peekaboo, she said that they enjoyed "seeing different things each time. When they cover their eyes it's dark. When they uncover it's light again and they see something different." Based on my observations, both teachers primarily used singing, humming, music, and rhythm to engage the children who were grumpy or crying. Except in the middle of nap time, the room was filled with noise and constant motion. The teachers also confirmed my observation that none of the children had any verbal words yet.

On October 3, 2019, I arrived around 10:00 during play time. They had not gone outside that day because they were making special art projects for Muffins with Mom day the next week. Each child was making a large sun with a footprint aurora and a caption reading *MOM – You are my sunshine*. "The mothers will love them!" Sabrina told me, when they come to have muffins at lunch the next Wednesday.

Sharona reported that the kids had started to fight over toys the day before so they had hidden the toy cupboard behind a towel. I did not see the kids express any interest in looking for toys, as they had a few larger play stations out in the room, a table, a Playskool farm gate they could walk through if they chose to, and three of those wooden boxes with the doodads you can move around on colorful wires, sometimes called bead mazes or activity cubes.

I took my usual place in a low chair so I could observe everyone. I had decided for this first semester of visits that I wanted to cause as little disruption to the classroom and its routines as I could. Adopting the role of an observer (Fine 1999, 128), I did not interact directly with the children unless they approached or involved me first, which they occasionally did. I would play with them or share their toys if they came over to

where I sat, and I would return their smiles or waves if they smiled or waved first. As much as possible, though, I let the day go by as it normally would.

As I watched the kids who were not eating mill about on the floor, I noticed that dark haired, 15-month-old E— might be playing at hiding. At one point she was down on her hands and knees, moving toward the farm gate. She put her head through the gate and looked around until she saw me looking at her. Then she pulled her head back and looked at me from the other side of the gate. After a moment she put her head through again and looked at me, then looked away at something else and crawled through the gate. “Not quite a routine?” I wrote in my notes.

Later she stood on one side of a large activity cube and smiled at no one in particular. Then she put her head down and walked to the other side, then somewhat dramatically put her head up again. She looked around, and this time she caught my eye. She smiled, and I smiled back to let her know I had seen her. Then she walked back to the starting spot and repeated the looking and smiling. After she saw me looking back at her, she turned her attention to another toy and a different activity. I have to say I was a little disappointed -- “like just the verge of routine” I wrote.



Completed Artwork Displayed on the Class Bulletin Board

Later, after E— had eaten and made her art, it was her turn to be put down for her nap. When I began visiting, E— would cry herself to sleep every day, but she had eventually given that up and become a peaceful napper. Now she could start her naps with the main body of kids, neither early nor late. On this day Sharona set her nap mat down next to one of the boys, an early napper who took a bottle with him to sleep. He was on his side with his back to me, so I could not tell if he was asleep yet or not—he would usually nod off while sucking his bottle, so the motions I could see from behind his head did not give me any clues about his eyes. E— was sitting on her mat, so Sharona asked her to lie down. She did so, positioning herself on her left side facing me, looking at the child next to her. Sharona was sitting on the floor, rocking one of the other kids. She reached over and flipped E—'s cover over her, and as it covered her it also fell across her face. E— clasped the cover and slowly removed it from her face. She peeked across at the boy, then lowered the cover in front of her face again. After a beat she raised it up quickly and looked at him again. Maybe she didn't get a return look from him, because she next looked up and met my eyes. At once she covered and uncovered again in rhythm, this time seeking my eyes immediately. After a beat she covered up again. Before she could uncover again, Sharona addressed a loud "Lay Down" to another child. This might have distracted her, because she rolled over to look the other way at Sharona.

I excitedly marked a star in my notes to indicate this as a performance of peekaboo. My immediate judgment was that it was an intentional, opportunistic attempt to initiate peekaboo play. Now, looking back to the situation and the research context more broadly, I want to ask, what led me to categorize this third event as peekaboo while the other two only reached toward it? There are two elements that seem comparatively insufficient in the first two events to make the identification and two elements in the third event that stand out as important. One insufficient element is the

stylized or formal nature of the movements before and after E— looked around. In most peekaboo play the motions take on an exaggerated, stylized, or dramatic characteristic that seems parallel to the exaggerated intonations of the alert and release calls. The motions accomplish a step in the form, and performers seem intent on making the motions in such a way as to call attention to them as part of a form rather than simply an everyday action. When E— stuck her head through the farm gate she did it as if she were crawling normally through the gate, and likewise when she backed out again. The motions lacked stylization. Moving to stand beside the activity box, however, had a clearly stylized nature. She seemed to measure her steps, then pause and hold herself upright, then raise her head boldly to look around. Though she took her position on either side of the activity box, it was not nearly large enough to conceal her, nor did she engage with respect to the box as if it were hiding her. It is not absolutely necessary for peekaboo that a child have something to hide her or conceal her eyes. I have seen more than one example of a kid “hiding in plain sight” by simply closing her eyes and turning her face away from the adult. But E—’s motions with respect to the box lacked clear orientation to a particular person with whom she might be trying to engage. She might have been conducting some other ritual to which I had no privileged access, but I could not tell.

The second element present that nonetheless seemed insufficient to make the two early events count as peekaboo was the attempt to make eye contact. In the usual interpersonal peekaboo form as described by our morphology, eye contact is the crucial event that shapes the nature of the other steps.² That E— looked around and in fact did catch my eye at the farm gate and the activity box is at least part of what nominated the performances as peekaboo. But the quality of the eye contact is best described as looking around to see if someone had seen her. Once eye contact was made, she seemed

satisfied to turn attention to something else. Even though the motion was repeated, the eye contact itself did not seem to be the goal of the movements.

In the third event, however, E— was looking at the boy across from her before her nap mat cover concealed her eyes. Eye contact is the first element for getting peekaboo started. When she uncovered her eyes, she was still looking directly at him. It seemed evident to me that she expected him to be as surprised by the sudden interruption of their gaze as she was. Because I was sitting behind the boy, my eyes were not too terribly far away from her line of sight. When she saw that I was looking at her, she slowly covered her eyes with the nap mat cover again. She waited a moment, then uncovered swiftly and was looking directly at me again. Her quick, controlled movement of the cover as if to surprise me had the dramatic quality I would expect, especially in contrast to the hasty throwing off of the cover that I could easily imagine in its place. So the gaze quality and stylization of movements that seemed insufficient in the first two events looked more like peekaboo in the third.

Alongside those two qualities were two additional, recognizable elements of peekaboo. The first was the rhythmic timing of the covering and uncovering. In all of the peekaboo I have watched, there is a clearly detectable element of dramatic timing or rhythm that develops among both adult and kid performers. The psychologist Jerome Bruner thought that the timing of the constituent parts of peekaboo was its most intriguing feature (Fernald and O'Neill 278). In folk illusion terms, the time that elapses while the eyes or face is covered is what we call the priming period. It is an emergent element of folk illusion structure determined largely by the adaptations the body must make to the odd conditions that the folk illusion performance usually foists upon the actor (Barker and Rice, 188). Some relevant conditions for E— might include the dim lighting of the room at the time, the distance of the boy's or my eyes from hers, and perhaps some awareness of how long it takes for someone to realize that eye contact has

been broken. As Schramm also noticed in her description, the agent of peekaboo gets to manipulate expectations by controlling the timing element (20).

The other element of peekaboo evident in E—'s performance was the opportunism, a frequent element of adult descriptions of how peekaboo play works in both the psychological literature and among my interviewees. Psychologists describe how the sudden breaking of eye contact might happen, for example, when a shirt is pulled over a baby's head, and the parent will use the occasion to instigate a round of peekaboo (Bruner and Sherwood, 279; Fernald and O'Neill, 270). This opportunism sanctions play at unexpected moments, and allows for substitutions in what psychologists Nancy Ratner and Jerome Bruner first called the "semantic elements" of the form (392). The way the eyes are covered can vary, for example, from using a wash cloth or piece of clothing, to moving a child or adult body part to break eye contact. Adults I have spoken with also emphasized the flexible, opportunistic element of peekaboo. Janna Haller demonstrated how she would hold both her daughter's feet with one hand while changing her diaper, and raise the feet until the baby's face was obscured (Barker and Rice, 183).

The opportunism of peekaboo performances strikes me as an important creative element of the form. "Creativity," Henry Glassie once noted, "can be imagined as a combination of two processes. One is the mental process by which form is designed. The second is the bodily process of putting form into the world, adjusting it to have positive impact." A proverb, for example, is usually repeated verbatim, but "there is creativity in situating the proverb in the world in the right way, locating it in the flux of the instant so that it has consequence, function." At the other extreme from the proverb is the epic, where creativity far surpasses memorization (48). E— was presented with a sudden opportunity to play, and she grasped it immediately, manipulating the elements of her world to highlight the elements of the imagined form. If the child across

from her wasn't going to respond, she sought out someone who would. Taken altogether, and in contrast to the earlier two events, the four characteristics of E—'s nap-time performance worked together to compel me to label it as peekaboo.

The contrast of this episode with Schramm's description is also instructive. Schramm, with her daughter and husband, had built a community in which peekaboo was a shared form. Her description documents features of the household environment and the community that allowed her daughter to productively initiate a round of peekaboo that, in its opportunism and completion, allowed her daughter to be recognized as an intentional, creative agent. E—, on the other hand, was confronted with the same type of opportunity to initiate a form of play with which she seemed familiar, but discovered her environment and community, at that time at least, declined to join in her creativity and confirm her intentionality. Nonetheless, we are able to view E—'s performance as an attempt to transfer the familiar form into a new environment. Unfortunately, my research visits were interrupted by the restrictions put in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic before I could do more to follow up on peekaboo in the Mother's Day Out context. But E—'s performance demonstrated that in tracking the distribution of peekaboo play forms among the network of local communities, we may be able to learn more about how nascent forms of folklore play enrich communities in which we grow and live.

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¹ I use the term "peekaboo play" rather than "game," as we did in the book, because "play" is more inclusive and avoids implying that peekaboo necessarily involves an "element of competition, or the possibility of winning or losing" (Brunvand 1998, 479).

² Establishing eye contact is step (a) in the peekaboo morphology (Barker and Rice, 181). Often a severing of eye contact happens unexpectedly, and the Agent will seize the opportunity to begin a round of peekaboo built around whatever it was that happened to break eye contact. In forms of peekaboo which focus on hiding and revealing a toy or other figure, eye contact functions differently.

Propaganda and Propagation: The Education of Children in South Louisiana Through Their Own Schoolyard Lore

Jeanne Pitre Soileau

Propaganda is more a part of twenty-first century life than ever. Children are every bit as influenced by it as the adults around them. How do children respond to various means they encounter that seek to sway their minds? Through schoolyard games and rhymes schoolchildren show that they are cognizant of all the propaganda they are handed. Their lore reflects both an acceptance of some propaganda ideas, and a cleverly framed rejection of others.

We live in a world where propaganda swirls about us. It appears as television commercials, as political statements, as sitcom formats designed to subtly, or not so subtly, influence opinion. Children are assailed from infancy. The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles cartoon characters eat only pizza, and the mysterious girl from “Stranger Things” pines only for Eggos. As much as twenty minutes of every hour of children oriented commercial television features advertising that promises fantastic fun if one only buys water balloons, plastic automobiles, or puffy, convertible fabric animals.

Children’s lore shows that the young are aware of efforts to sway their minds. I would like to share with you some of the evidence contained in children’s schoolyard games and rhymes I have collected, which contain evidence that young children, from nursery school age to middle school age, are well informed about adult propaganda that nurtures elements of racism, gender conformity, adherence to corporate advertising lures, drug and sex enticements, and images of parenting.

The word “propaganda” is, according to Wikipedia, “information that is not objective, and is used primarily to influence an audience and further an agenda.”

Propagation more simply means “the action of widely spreading and promoting an idea.”

The relationship of these two concepts, propaganda and propagation, are neatly entwined with the underground play world of children. Examples of lore that I have collected over the years in south Louisiana 1970 to 2020, clearly show that anonymous child poets are profoundly informed of adult attempts to influence them. Child lore reflects both an acceptance of some propaganda ideas, and a cleverly framed rejection of others. Schoolchildren have concocted poetry aimed either to perpetuate, or to counteract, the brilliantly designed flood of commercial, corporate, and societal propaganda the young live with every day.

Children are often characterized as innocent, or unaware of the fantasies blaring from the television and blasting from the popular music. However, an acquaintance with the chants and poems shared on any playground can demonstrate that children are much more cognizant of all the folderol they are handed than many adults think.

Children have their own agenda, and it is not always of a type adults would dictate. Boys hold “dozens” contests and tell racist and prurient jokes. Girls encourage one another to adopt popular sexual roles, while at the same time making fun of those very expectations. Children’s playground lore often holds up a mirror to the adult world that shows just how distorted an image we adults present to the young and expect them to adhere to.

Following are some of the questions I devised for my own collection as a frame for demonstrating children’s own propaganda and anti-propaganda aimed at the world they inhabit. From the hundreds of answers to each question, I will select only one or two for analysis.

When I asked children to tell me how they chose who was “it,” my usual first question when recording, I was surprised to see them point to their feet to count. In my

childhood, every time we counted-out, we used our fists, or the tops of our heads. The children in south Louisiana consistently pointed to their feet. Counting-out, or choosing who's "it," is as much a part of most games as the game itself. I watched some boys spend their entire twenty-minute recess period negotiating who would be "it," and what game they would play, then the bell rang. This is one aspect of boy's play that sometimes contravenes the ideas of teachers and other adults. The adult mind says, "Get on with it!" The boy's minds say, "Hey, we could be Cylons and you could be Dracons. And I'm gonna be head of the Cylons. And you can carry the spear. And all you other guys chase us. And . . ." Then an argument erupts over who and what and how, and soon the bell rings and the boys walk off still arguing. Adults see this as unnecessary arguing. The boys see it as satisfying communication.

For New Orleans children, both African American and other, the most popular count-out formula from the 1970s to 2020 was:

Eenie meenie minie moe
Catch a fella (monkey, nigger, teacher, tiger)
By the toe
If he hollers let him go
Eenie meenie minie moe ¹

This simple formula is the most commonly used of all the counting-out rhymes. It is found in England, Scotland, and Ireland, as well as in Canada and New Zealand, and has a racist history going back to the earliest days of the United States. Teachers and parents banning the use of the "N" word have not made it any less popular with children.²

At St. Genevieve Catholic School in Lafayette, Louisiana (1997), I asked a second grader how he chose who was "it", and he told me "We put our feet, our two feet in, and we say, "Mickey Mouse stuck his finger up his butt/ How many inches did it go?" This was greeted by a chorus of hoots from the boys, and giggles from the girls in the

crowd. They all knew this to be a no-no. The boy knew it, too. I asked, "And you count out?" He said, "Yeah, and you pick how many inches you want, and you count, and you say, "You are not it for the rest of your life, life, life." Some rhymes used for choosing "it" also serve as handclaps, for example:

My mama and your mama
Were hangin' out clothes
My mama punched your mama
Right in the nose.
What color was the blood?
Green
G-R-E-E-N and you are not it.
With a dirty dishrag turned inside, outside, double-side out.³

An expanded version of "My mama and your mama," was collected at McKinley Junior High School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1974. Again, it was used as both a handclap and a count-out:

My Mama your Mama
Live across the street
1618 Beeston Street
Every night they have a fight
And this is what they say
Boys are rotten just like cotton
Girls are dandy just like candy
Itsy bitsy soda water
Itsy bitsy pooh
Itsy bitsy soda water
Out goes you.

"My Mama your Mama" includes several threads found often in girl's chants—fighting mamas, rotten boys, dandy girls—images that girls reference repeatedly. This form of subversive family and gender ridicule is a continuing refrain throughout girls' counting-out, jump rope and handclapping verse.

Question two in my list was, "What kind of handclapping game do you play?"

This question elicited hundreds of responses, from lightening fast handclapping performances, like “Slide,” where no words were needed, to lengthy chants where clapping and words complemented one another.

Following are three examples of children’s propaganda framed as a handclap, poking fun, in one case at a corporation, and in the other, at parents. All were recorded at Camp Ruth Lee, a summer camp for girls near Baton Rouge, Louisiana (1974). Two African American girls chanted:

McDonald’s is your kind of place
They serve you rattlesnakes
French fries from your toes
Drinks run from out of your nose
The last time I went there
They stole my underwear
McDonald’s is your kind of place

Then, two white girls stepped forward, and sang the following song popular since at least the 1940s. It is called “Playmate,” and I recorded it at numerous locations over the years:

Playmate, come out and play with me
And bring your dollies three
Climb up my apple tree
Slide down my rain barrel
Into my cellar door
And we’ll be jolly friends forever more
Oh, Playmate, I cannot play with you
My dolly has the flu
Boo hoo hoo hoo hoo hoo ⁴

At this point, two other girls interrupted the song. The new girls asked me if they could sing a second version of “Playmate.” They declared that they had made up the second version themselves. I said sure. The two new girls squared off, and began to clap and sing:

Say say say
Hippie Come out and smoke with me
And bring your LSD
Climb up my hashish tree
Slide down my pot barrel
Into my cellar door – KA-POW!
And we'll be jolly friends
Forever more more more

So sorry Hippie
I cannot play with you
My LSD turned blue
And pink and purple too
I got no rain barrel
I got no cellar door
But we'll be hippie friends
Forever more more more!

This is one answer to the parents' and teachers' incessant dinning about the danger of drugs. It also presents a delightful example of child lore parody.

I could cite over a hundred examples of children's answers to drug propaganda, but it is time to go on to the other most propagandized danger in children's lives – sex. This chant was recorded as the answer to question number three: "What do you say when you play jump rope?"

For many girls the answer was a four-line poem, so old and so well known, that my mother recalled chanting it when she played jump rope at Crossman Elementary School in New Orleans in the 1920s:

I like coffee
I like tea
I like the boys
And the boys like me.

Simple enough. For most white children, the rhyme stops there. The jingle supports the propaganda that boys should like girls, and girls should like boys. The jumper jumps

out, a new jumper jumps in, and the jingle is repeated. In 1986, the fifth and sixth grade African American girls at John Dibert Elementary School in New Orleans chanted an extended version of "I like coffee" which pursued "I like the boys/ And the boys like me" to a logical conclusion:

I like coffee
I like tea
I like the colored boy
And he likes me.
So stop that white boy,
Me don't shine,
I'm gonna give that boy
A kick in the behind.
Last night, the night before,
I met my boyfriend at the candy store.
He bought me ice cream,
He bought me tea,
He brought me home
And he try my gate.
I said, "Mama, Mama, I feel sick."
Call the doctor quick, quick, quick.
Doctor, Doctor, will I die?
Close your eyes and count to five.
1-2-3-4-5
See that house on top of the hill?
That's where me and my boyfriend live.
Cook that chicken, eat that rice,
Come on, Baby, let's shoot some dice.

What had been a four-line jump rope jingle for the white girls had become for this group of fifth and sixth grade African American girls a poetic narrative, featuring a beginning, a middle, and an end. "I like the boys/And the boys like me" became a lengthy cautionary tale where liking boys came with consequences. The chanters, like troubadours of old, utilized a repertoire of ready-made set phrases that float from

childhood chant to childhood chant, and propagated a "be careful what you wish for" gem.

Another question I asked was "Do you play ring games?" Again there were hundreds of examples to choose from that revealed the children's clear-eyed awareness of the expectations promoted by their adult society. Here is a transcript of a recording made by a group of girls from Andrew Jackson Elementary School in New Orleans (1976), who had mastered the euphemistic signifying vocabulary for sex, and had accepted (or perhaps were mocking) a particular body conformation viewed as appealing. The girls formed a large ring and clapped from side to side while they took turns entering the ring as central player:

(Throughout the chant, all girls in the circle stepped in time, clapping, right foot first, then left foot, in a jaunty, flat-footed pattern.)

The boys like the bacon

The girls like the eggs

The boys like the girls with the big fine legs.

(All girls thrust right leg forward and touch the thigh on "big fine legs.")

Now here's the captain,

(One member of the ring steps into the center.)

Ain't she fine?

(Center girl struts, friends all strut.)

She gonna turn around.

(Lead turns, all turn.)

She gonna touch the ground

(Lead bends and sweeps hand to ground, others follow.)

She gonna shimmy, shimmy, shimmy,

All the way around.

(Lead shimmies in a circle, others follow.)

To the front

(Hands on hips, jumps forward.)

To the back

(Jumps back.)

To the side, side, side,

(Jumps to the side, all follow.)

To the front,

To the back,
 To the side, side, side.
 She never went to college
(Raises hand, wags finger.)
 She never went to school
(Shows palms of hands to players.)
 But I found out,
 She was a alligator fool.
(Bends forward, wags head.)
 Under my bed I got a big .44
(Makes a "gun" with index finger and thumb.)
 If you mess with me I won't boogie no mo'.
(Turns in circle and points with gun-finger to choose a new player. On "no mo," stops.)

This chant touches on sex preference, body type, personal presentation, education, and bravado. As the chant continues, each girl in the circle got to take the center position and perform. With each repetition the players laughed and jostled one another, rendering the words more ridiculous.

The ring formation lends itself well to encouraging players to imitate and mock the adult world. The following two ring performances, one recorded by African American fourth graders (1976), the other by white second graders (1977), are variations of a very old English game included in Lady Alice B. Gomme's collection, *The Traditional Games of England, Scotland, and Ireland* Vol.2, 1898. In her nineteenth century fashion, Lady Gomme wrote in her commentary: "It will be seen, from the description of the way this game is played, that it consists of imitative actions of different events in life, or of actions imitating trades and occupations" ([1894] 1898, 372). Here is the group of elementary school African American girls' version of the English game:

When I was a baby baby baby	
When I was a baby	
This what I do	
Unh unh unh unh unh	<i>(Thumb in mouth.)</i>
All day long	<i>(All imitate.)</i>
All day long	

When I was a girl girl girl
 When I was a girl
 This what I do
 Stomp stomp stomp stomp stomp (*Stamp feet loudly on "Stomp."*)
 All day long (*All imitate.*)
 All day long
 When I was a teenager a teenager a teenager
 When I was a teenager
 This what I do
 Woomp woomp woomp woomp woomp (*Shake hips from side to side.*)
 All day long (*All imitate.*)
 All day long
 When I was a lady lady lady
 When I was a lady
 This what I do
 Swish swish swish swish swish (*Sweeping motion.*)
 All day long (*All imitate.*)
 All day long
 When I got married married married
 When I got married
 This what I do
 Smack smack smack smack smack (*Kissing motion from side to side.*)
 All day long (*Loud smacking and laughter.*)
 All day long
 When I had a baby a baby a baby
 When I had a baby
 This what I do
 Unh unh unh unh unh (*Snuggle an imaginary baby in the arms.*)
 All day long (*All imitate holding baby.*)
 All day long
 When my husband died died died
 When my husband died
 This what I do
 Hooray hooray hooray hooray hooray (*Jump up and down with arms raised.*)
 All day long
 All day long
 When my baby died died died
 When my baby died
 This what I do

Boo-hoo boo-hoo boo-hoo boo-hoo boo-hoo (*Put hands over face.*)
 All day long (*All cover face and boo-hoo.*)
 All day long
 When I died died died
 When I died
 This what I do
 UNH UNH unh unh unh (*Slowly collapse in a heap.*)

The girls ended up flailing around in a pile, laughing and poking at one another.

One year later I recorded another variant of the same ring game. This time it was from white second graders at Happy Face Day Nursery School in Chalmette, Louisiana. Their version of "When I was a baby" recounted very different "events in life" from those lampooned by the girls in Baton Rouge:

When Courtney was a baby a baby a baby
 When Courtney was a baby
 She acted just like this
 Waa waa (*Put hands over face and cry.*)
 When Courtney was a child a child a child
 When Courtney was a child
 She acted just like this
 Brush your teeth and go to bed (*"Brush" teeth, put clasped hands on side of face.*)
 Brush your teeth and go to bed
 When Courtney was a teenager a teenager a teenager
 When Courtney was a teenager
 She acted just like this
 Oh, my beautiful hair (*Sweep hand, push back hair dramatically.*)
 Oh, my beautiful hair
 When Courtney was a mother
 She acted just like this
 Brush your teeth and comb your hair (*Shake finger at "child."*)
 Brush your teeth and comb your hair
 When Courtney was a grandma a grandma a grandma
 When Courtney was a grandma
 She acted just like this
 Oh, my aching back (*Hand on back, bend over.*)
 Will you hand me my pillow? (*Creep forward, holding back.*)
 When Courtney was dead dead dead

American and white children in New Orleans used the dreaded word “nigger.” African American kids used it in both a positive and a negative way. If they called each other “nigger” while playing and laughing, it was taken lightly. When there was anger in the voice, or a jeering tone, brutal fights broke out on a playground full of African American kids. I have comforted several very dark children who were being teased by their African American classmates for being “Black like a field hand.”

There are lots of ethnic jokes told on New Orleans school grounds featuring “niggers,” “dagoes,” and “chinks.” Here is a small sampling of elementary school ethnic humor:

From a fourth-grade white boy at Lacoste Elementary in Chalmette, LA. “How many dagos does it take to screw in a light bulb? Three. Two to turn the ladder, and one to hold the bulb.” (I heard the same joke as a Polish joke years ago.) From the same boy: “How many dagos does it take to paint a house? Fifty. One to hold the brush, and forty-nine to turn the house.” From an African American eighth grade boy from Beauregard Junior High School in New Orleans:

There was this white boy walking through the project, and he had to use the bathroom. So he goes up to this house and asks this boy, “Can I use your bathroom?”

The boy goes, “Wait,” and he goes upstairs and asks his mother, “There’s this boy outside wants to use the bathroom, can he?” And since the boy was white and the people was black, the mother goes, “No.”

So he goes finds some black paint and paints himself. He goes back. “Can I use the bathroom?” Kid goes, “Yeah, come on in.”

So he goes up and the maid sees him and says, “Bless my heart, bless my soul, never see a nigger with a white asshole.”

This joke was told in a mixed class of African American and white students, and

everybody laughed. Nobody seemed surprised by the appearance of a maid in the project. Jokes like this one on the theme of black and white conflict, sex jokes, and scatological jokes are favorites among pre-teen and teenage boys. While on the surface they may seem to make fun of sex and racism, their real function, I believe, is to diffuse tension through laughter.

Children often consider racial characteristics funny. It seems that whenever a really ridiculous image was needed, the children called it "Chinese." Here is a short list of games played in south Louisiana using the word "Chinese":

"Chinese stuck in the mud" – A tag game where the children have to run between each other's legs after being tagged.

"Chinese freeze tag" – A tag game in which the child has to hold onto whatever part of him has been tagged while he continues to run after the other kids.

"Ching Chong Chinaman sitting on a fence" – A foot dexterity game in which the players jump from foot to foot in a repetitive pattern until one misses.

"That Crazy Old Man From China" – A lengthy song featuring a dimwitted old Chinaman courting a young girl.

"Chinese jump rope" – A jumping game where a collection of colorful rubber bands is tied together, and girls jump in and out of a circle made by the "rope" around their feet and ankles.

A handclap from Chalmette –

I went to a Chinese restaurant
 To buy a ya ka mein
 They asked me what my name was
 And this is what I said said said
 My name is Kasey
 The boys say oh oh oh
 And I say ah ah ah
 Mess with me and I'll mess you up

And finally, a teasing rhyme used by my playmates and me in the 1940s –

“Ching Chong Chinaman eats dead rats/ Swallows them down like
gingersnaps.”

The examples above, from the counting-out formulas to the ethnic slurs, were gathered in schoolyards, summer camps, and classrooms. I stood there, face to face with young people, holding a tape recorder, and scribbling hastily in notebooks. That was then (1970-2017). This is now (2020). We are in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic. Fear of illness has closed schools, cancelled summer camps, and mothballed play dates from the month of March to the middle of August - so far. Today, while a notebook and tape recorder are still useful, the face to face opportunities have become severely limited.

Luckily for me, I have two of my grandchildren who are with me daily, and while they cannot mix in person with their friends, they still manage to play. How they play is through the miracle of technology. What they play can be surprisingly traditional.

We begin with Max, aged 10, and his friends. I decided to ask a couple of the same questions I had used since the 1970s. I asked Max, who was on the phone with his friend, Mike, “How do y’all choose who is it?” I got two answers:

Mike: “We all yell, “not it,” and the last person to yell “not it,” is it.”

Max: We sometimes say,

Eenie meenie minie moe
Catch a tiger by the toe
If he hollers let him go
My mother told me to choose the very best one
And you are not it.

So, it seems that the most commonly used formula for counting-out is still chanted in 2020.

While I had Max and Mike on the phone, I asked them how they played together while being quarantined. Max said, "On the PlayStation. You create a PlayStation party. When you're on the PlayStation party, you invite people to it. Or they could join in on their own. You play multi player games, or just talk."

I asked, "What multi player games do you play?"

Max answered, "Grand Theft Auto 5 – it's a game where you just race around and shoot people, and have crimes – rob banks – pretty fun."

I asked, "Does your mama know you play Grand Theft Auto 5?"

Max, "Uh, she likes me to play Call of Duty, and Minecraft, but we like GTA5 the best."

The adult propaganda here is that the Grand Theft Auto series is a set of online games full of violence and criminality. It is rated M, for players 17 and over in the United States. Young boys like Max and Mike often find it fascinating, while parents just as often monitor computer use to try to block it.

I asked, "What else do you two do online?"

Max, "We watch silly cat videos, and random stuff on YouTube. We make prank phone calls. You just get a bunch of numbers, and call them, and say something random."

I asked, "Like what?"

Mike said, "Sometimes we call a number, and when the people answer, we say, "I have a message for you from President Trump. And then we go Pftttt, pftttt, pftttt."

I laughed, because I remember that sixty-five years ago, my friends and I used to prank call "random" numbers and say silly things to those who answered. We did this at sleepovers and on boring summer afternoons.

My granddaughter, Monique, walked in, and I cornered her and tried to pick her brain about what she is doing during quarantine. I asked, "Can you remember any

handclapping games?" She looked blank. "Grandma, I'm twenty-eight! I do other stuff now. I never played handclapping games much, but I was in an Anime Club in high school. We met once a month or so, and watched Anime, and talked about it, and put out a newsletter about anime. Now, I still watch Anime, and two of my friends, we read Manga together, and we call each other, and tell each other about different stories. We play Dungeons and Dragons on Saturday night. Me, my mama, my brother and his girlfriend, and some of my friends, all join in on "roll20," and play." I can attest to this, because Monique lives with me, and I can hear her on Saturday nights, laughing, and sometimes shouting, while she conducts the game as Dungeon Master.

Monique began playing Dungeons and Dragons with her father, Richard Soileau, and her mother, Deanne. They used to host games of five to seven people on Saturday nights, when she was a child. My son, Richard, who is now forty-seven, told me in one of my interviews with him, "I learned about Dungeons and Dragons in 1984, when I was a student at Holy Cross High School, in New Orleans. I walked into the library, and saw a group of students playing, and I joined in. That was before it was banned. I had no idea what I was doing then, but I got books and read up. We used to play, two people, and sometimes twelve people. I still have all of my Dungeons and Dragons books." I asked Richard if he still plays Dungeon and Dragons, and he said, "Oh, no. All my player friends are scattered all over. I do play online computer games that are based on Dungeons and Dragons, though. I play "Curse of the Azure Bonds (1989)," and "Baldur's Gate (1998)," and Neverwinter Nights (2002)."

Monique sees her cousin, Max, every day. She has become the mentor for Max into the world of Anime and Dungeons and Dragons. The two of them sit in the T.V. room and watch "Avatar the Last Airbender," and "My Hero Academia," and laugh and kibitz about the series. On his own, Max watches "Naruto Shippuden," "Inu Yasha," and "Attack on Titan". Max sits at his cousin's elbow while she prepares for her

Dungeons and Dragons sessions on Saturday nights. He is learning the basic elements of the game, and will be the third generation of player in my son's family.

Dungeons and Dragons has a controversial history. The teachers at Holy Cross High School banned its playing, as Richard remembers. The teachers claimed that the game glorified the occult. The parents of two of his friends in Violet, Louisiana, who belonged to a conservative Protestant church, claimed that the game promoted witchcraft, and invited demons into the home. The two friends were kept at home when Richard and his other friends played. Richard and his companions rejected the idea that the game promoted witchcraft, or glorified the occult, and happily engaged in a Saturday night ritual that lasted until they parted ways as young adults.

An examination of the child lore above shows most children to be perceptive of the propaganda adults attempt to control them with. It is part of growing up to challenge authority, and to learn to think for oneself. Child lore sometimes perpetuates, sometimes counteracts, the agenda of adults, and provides a platform where children can examine new ideas and pick and choose the elements they wish to retain.

Most adults never enter the world of children's folklore, so they never see the richness and variety expressed there. In many ways children are propagating their own answers to the bewildering swirl of options offered by society, by using sly wit, broad satire, droll humor, and outrageous parody.

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¹ I realize that the words "nigger" and "dago" are unpleasant for many to read. However, the lore recounted in this article comes from actual recordings of children's speech and to eliminate these words would give a less than truthful account of what the children said. Children's vocabulary is learned from adults around them and perpetuated in their schoolyard lore.

² For a discussion of racist elements in children's counting-out rhymes, see: Mary and Herbert Knapp's *One Potato, Two Potato*, "Prejudices: Blacks" (1976, 190-198). The Knapps also compiled further reading references to "Prejudice: Blacks" (1976, 232-233); See also: Henry Carrington Bolton's *The Counting-Out Rhymes of Children: Their Antiquity, Origin, and Wide Distribution: A Study in Folk-Lore*, (1882, 46-51); Josepha Sherman and T. K. F. Weisskopf's *Greasy Grimy Gopher Guts* (1995, 114, 138-140); Simon J. Bronner's *American Children's Folklore* (1988, 55); Roger D. Abrahams and Lois Rankin's *Counting-Out Rhymes: A Dictionary* (1980, 45-68); Peter and Iona Opie's *Children's Games in Street and Playground* (1969, 36, 40-45); Brian Sutton-Smith's *The Games of New Zealand Children* (1959, 70); and William Wells Newell's *Games and Songs of American Children* (1883, 199-200).

³ See Bolton (1882, 95,98,99,102,104,109,111,115). Bolton's book is available online at <https://Archive.org/details/countingoutrhymeOObolt>.

⁴ See: Wikipedia.org "Playmates" song, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Playmates_\(song\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Playmates_(song)). See also: Opie (1969, 474-45); Knapp (1976, 131); and Soileau (2016, 168).