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“Don’t you think I’m a jolly old man?”

A Folk Play Scripts Explorer Case Study
http://www.mastermummers.org/scripts/explorer.htm
Investigating a line from Beelzebub’s speech

In comes our old Belzebub
Over my shoulder I carry a club
In my hand a dripping pan
Don’t you think I’m a jolly old man?
If you don’t, I do.

Guysers’ play from Underwood, Notts.
Searching for a whole line tends to find relatively few or no matches, because of variations in wording.
Displaying non-matching variants of the line type shows many near misses as well as some radically different variations.

Near misses

Significant variations
It is generally more helpful to search using single words, short phrases, or strings of characters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Std.ID</th>
<th>Sample Result</th>
<th>Plays with Fragment</th>
<th>Plays Without</th>
<th>All Variants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>164</td>
<td>and tis a jolly old christmas time</td>
<td>1 (Map)</td>
<td>35 (Map)</td>
<td>36 (Map)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1310</td>
<td>as jolly as i am christmas comes but once a year</td>
<td>1 (Map)</td>
<td>32 (Map)</td>
<td>33 (Map)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2440</td>
<td>ain't beat the jolly dutchman till i made their hearts to ache</td>
<td>5 (Map)</td>
<td>4 (Map)</td>
<td>9 (Map)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2490</td>
<td>don't you think me a jolly old man</td>
<td>28 (Map)</td>
<td>18 (Map)</td>
<td>46 (Map)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2495</td>
<td>and i think myself a jolly old man</td>
<td>26 (Map)</td>
<td>2 (Map)</td>
<td>28 (Map)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4920</td>
<td>come all you jolly mummers</td>
<td>2 (Map)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 (Map)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, searching for “jolly” reveals two related line types with subtly different meanings.

Some non-matching variants still remain.
A quick outline distribution map of the two line types shows discrete zoning which suggests that the variation is significant.
Building the map more carefully…
In the Google Maps view, clicking on a marker shows the local variant of the line and its context.
Line type Std ID 2495 containing “jolly”. Different colour key.

Points with question marks indicate the location is imprecise, or may not represent a place of performance.
Substituting “funny” for ‘jolly’ reveals another Std ID 2490 variant cluster.
Lastly, there are a few “handsome” men
The key to the final printable map includes dates for the earliest line in each result set.

The dates may help in determining the genealogical sequence and geographical transmission routes of the variants.