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of the feuerall Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies contained in this Volume

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Illyria

It is the evening before the Battle of Agincourt, and a small group among Henry V's war-weary troops wonder if, outnumbered as they are by the French forces gathered against them, they will survive the next day's battle. In an effort to think about something other than their likely deaths, the group, led by one Peter Quince, decides to make up and perform a play. What they stage, not without many creative challenges, is something we know better as Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Unknown to Quince and the others, the stranger among them, one Harry Le Roy, is really King Henry in disguise. But he too fully invests himself in the production as he is called upon to perform the role of the love-smitten Duke Orsino.

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Lads in Waiting: A Back-stage Fantasia on Shakespearean Themes

Two boy apprentices, Ralph (Emilia, the Abbess from CE) and Thomas (Hermione from WT) sit back-stage improvising ways that they could expand their respective roles before their important concluding scenes. Ralph creates a scene in which Emilia, wife of Egeon of Syracuse, arrives shipwrecked in Ephesus. Thomas feeds his colleague invented lines as horny fishermen/ pimps trying to seduce her while she begs for assistance and shelter. Pretty soon it is clear that Thomas, more worldly than Ralph, is trying to fondle the younger Thomas in too familiar a fashion. They switch to inventing scenes in which Thomas, as Hermione, bemoans the tedium of waiting in her hidden location for Paulina's scheme to climax. Ralph feed her invented lines as the ghost of Mamillius.

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The Comical Tragedy of Echo and Narcissus, or, Man oh Man

This isn't the Shakespearian play I'd write if I were to write a whole one--it's grading season and I don't have time to generate that--but it's an Ovidian tale I can imagine a very young Will Shakespeare messing about with. It's got a classical setting, a beautiful gay boy, or anyway a very queer one, criss-crossed unrequited loves, mirror images, echoes, a prophecy, a fixation, a greenwood, love-death (2), a character of multiple gender, beings from a non-mortal order of reality (Juno, Cephisus), and opportunities for comic stichomythia. It's got a backstory, and a future clouding its horizon. And it's easy to imagine what a Shakespearian clown might do with Echo's obduracy, or Narcissus's. If I'm going to learn about Shakespeare by doing this, I have to resist the (strong!) impulse to write a 21st-century play that hyperbolizes his techniques in the service of a plot and setting unimaginable to him. What Ovid never really develops is "the complication," so one experience this material offers is the chance to imagine Shakespeare imagining the complications that stretch his plots to the length of an afternoon at the theater.

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Thyestes

Though I now have “little Latin and less Greek,” I started out as a Classics major many years ago. So I’m going to return to the scene of the crime and adapt a section or two from Seneca’s *Thyestes* in the manner of Shakespeare. I’m planning to start with the scene of Thyestes’ return to Argo (404-545*), just to get a feel for the main characters: Thyestes and Atreus have their first encounter at the end of that scene. Then I’ll return to the opening of the play and work from there, starting with the Kydian exchange between the Ghost of Tantalus, the grandfather of Atreus and Thyestes, and a Fury (1-120). After that, I’m not sure: Maybe I’ll tackle all or part of the last scene—Thyestes’ recognition of the vengeance of his brother and his own part in the crime (920-1112). I also wonder what Shakespeare would have done with a Senecan chorus? I might experiment with one of them if there’s time and space.

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Many Flew into the Cuckoo’s Nest

Douglas King has taken two contemporary novels by Ken Kesey—*One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* and *Sometimes a Great Notion*—and created various monologues and a scene that convey key narrative elements of these two works. The pieces conflate various Shakespearean characters and situations with main characters and scenarios from the two novels, employing iambic pentameter *in imitation* of Shakespeare and in homage to the consciousness of Kesey’s novels.

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The Tragedy of Croesus

An episodic Tragedy of Croesus, surveying selected scenes from the Croesus traditions in Herodotus, *Romance of the Rose*, and Chaucer. The scenes include moments from Croesus’ debate with Solon regarding happiness, his testing and consulting of the Delphic oracle regarding war with Cyrus, his near-death on the pyre following his defeat, and, later in his life, his misreading of a dream vision despite his daughter’s help. His actions are presented as impious, and he ultimately falls despite several chances to reform. The style is an attempt at Shakespeare’s late style. Some cretics are used as a subterranean metrical pun on Croesus.

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The Fall of Robin Hood

The play treats Robin Hood in retirement, leading up to his eventual death. Dramaturgically, the play is structured around the four seasons, beginning in winter and ending in the "fall of Robin Hood." Each season is introduced by a choral figure named, cleverly, "Seasons," and the play features a young girl named Robin who, at play's end, assumes Robert Locksley's bow and mantle. The play is written on spec for the Blackfriars Playhouse in Staunton, VA, and is therefore designed to adhere to the conditions of an early modern indoor playhouse.

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The Fair Maid of Alexandria

"The Fair Maid of Alexandria" presents scenes from a "lost" Shakespeare play as an exercise in late Elizabethan/early Jacobean dramaturgy. The plot of the play derives from an untraced myth mentioned by Spenser in *The Faerie Queene* (3.2.20), and features the youthful historian Herodotus and his zany servant Solon, as they attempt to liberate the maiden Phao from an invisible glass tower in the wondrous (and wholly anachronistic) city of Alexandria. Such a tangled romance allows for the partial recreation of many of the dramaturgical challenges and opportunities facing the in-house playwright of the period (e.g. writing dialogue for apprentice boys, writing for a multi-level stage).

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A Tragedy of the Plantation of Virginia

This scene attempts to imaginatively resurrect a tantalizing lost anonymous play entitled *A Tragedy of the Plantation of Virginia*, licensed by the Master of the Revels in 1623. This enigmatic entry has been the object of much fascination, because if it had survived, *The Plantation of Virginia* would have been the earliest known English play to be set in the North American colonies. As it is, that honour goes instead to Aphra Behn's *Widow Ranter*, written some sixty years later. Given its date, the play was most likely about the Jamestown Massacre of 1622, but I have decided instead to imagine that it was about Pocahontas and Captain John Smith; after all, Smith himself claimed in 1630 that he was moved to publish his memoirs because "they have acted my fatal Tragedies upon the Stage". My intention, then, was to imagine what a 1620s play about Pocahontas might have been like and to attempt to write a scene from it. The scene in question is from the beginning of Act 5 and dramatizes Smith's awkward and enigmatic encounter with Pocahontas and her husband John Rolfe at a social gathering in Brentford shortly before her death. The direct sources include Smith's memoirs and other Jacobean narratives of Pocahontas and the Jamestown colony. The scene also borrows and reworks passages from John Fletcher's *The Island Princess* and Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*.

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Creative Respondent

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