*The Contention* written, also in collaboration, by Marlowe and Shakespeare. A comparison of the two texts leaves it hardly possible to doubt that the differences between them are to be explained by revision rather than by piracy; but the question of authorship is more difficult. Greene’s parody, in the “ Shake- scene ” passage of his *Groats-worth of Wit* (1592), of a line which occurs both in *The Contention* and in 3 *Henry VI.,* while it clearly suggests Shakespeare’s connexion with the plays, is evidence neither for nor against the participation of other men, and no sufficient criterion exists for distinguishing between Shakespeare’s earliest writing and that of possible collaborators on grounds of style. But there is nothing in∞nsistent between the reviser’s work in 2, 3 *Henry VI.* and on the one hand *Richard III.* or on the other the original matter of *The Contention,* which the reviser follows and elaborates scene by scene. It is difficult to assign to any one except Shakespeare the humour of the Jack Cade scenes, the whole substance of which is in *The Contention* as well as in *Henry VI.* Views which exclude Shakespeare alto­gether may be left out of account. *Henry VI.* is not in Meres’s list of his plays, but its inclusion in the First Folio is an almost certain ground for assigning to him some share, if only as reviser, in the completed work.

3. A very similar problem is afforded by 1 *Henry VI.,* and here also it is natural, in the absence of tangible evidence to the contrary, to hold by Shakespeare’s substantial responsibility for the play as it stands. It is quite possible that it also may be a revised version, although in this case no earlier version exists; and if so the Talbot scenes (iv. 2-7) and perhaps also the Temple Gardens scene (ii. 4), which are distinguished by certain qualities of style from the rest of the play, may date from the period of revision. Thomas Nash refers to the representation of Talbot on the stage in his *Pierce Penilesse, his Supplication to the Dwell* (1592), and it is probable that 1 *Henry VI.* is to be identified with the “ Harey the vj.” recorded in Henslowe’s *Diary* to have been acted as a new play by Lord Strange’s men, probably at the Rose, on the 3rd of March 1592. If so, it is a reasonable conjecture that the two parts of *The Contention* were originally written at some date before the beginning of Henslowe’s record in the previous February, and were revised so as to fall into a series with 1 *Henry VI.* in the latter end of 1592.

**4.** The series as revised can only be intended to lead directly up to *Richard III.,* and this relationship, together with its style as compared with that of the plays belonging to the autumn of 1594, suggest the short winter season of 1592-1593 as the most likely time for the production of *Richard III.* There is a difficulty in that it is not included in Henslowe’s list of the plays acted by Lord Strange’s men during that season. But it may quite well have been produced by the only other company which appeared at court during the Christmas festivities, Lord Pembroke’s. The mere fact that Shakespeare wrote a play, or more than one play, for Lord Strange’s men during 1592-1594 does not prove that he never wrote for any other company during the same period; and indeed there is plenty of room for guess-work as to the relations between Strange’s and Pembroke’s men. The latter are not known to have existed before 1592, and many difficulties would be solved by the assumption that they originated out of a division of Strange’s, whose numbers, since their amalgamation with the Admiral’s, may have been too much inflated to enable them to undertake as a whole the summer tour of that year. If so, Pembroke’s probably took over the *Henry VI.* series of plays, since *The Contention,* or at least the *True Tragedy,* was published as performed by them, and completed it with *Richard III.* on their return to London at Christmas. It will be necessary to return to this theory in connexion with the discussion of *Titus Andronicus* and *The Taming of the Shrew.* The principal historical source for *Henry VI.* was Edward Hall’s *The Union of the Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York* (1542), and for *Richard III.,* as for all Shakespeare’s later historical plays, the second edition (1587) of Raphael Holinshed’s *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1577). An earlier play, *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third* (1594), seems to have contributed little if anything to *Richard III.*

5. Many scholars think that at any rate the greater part of the first two acts of *Edward III.,* containing the story of Edward’s wooing of the countess of Salisbury, are by Shakespeare; and, if so, it is to about the time of *Richard III.* that the style of his contribution seems to belong. The play was entered in the Stationers’ *Register* on December 1, 1595. The Shakespearian scenes are based on the 46th Novel in William Paynter’s *Palace of Pleasure* (1566). The line, “ Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds ” (ii. **1.**451), is repeated verbatim in the 94th sonnet.

**6.** To the winter season of 1592-1593 may also be assigned with fair probability Shakespeare’s first experimental comedy, *The Comedy of Errors,* and if his writing at one and the same time for Pembroke’s and for another company is not regarded as beyond the bounds of conjecture, it becomes tempting to identify this with “ the gelyous comodey ’’ produced, probably by Strange’s men, for Henslowe as a new play on January 5, 1593. The play contains a reference to the wars of succession in France which would fit any date from 1589 to 1594. The plot is taken from the *Menaechmi,* and to a smaller extent from the *Amphitruo* of Plautus. William Warner’s translation of the *Menaechmi* was entered in the Stationers’ *Register* on June 10, 1594. A performance of *The Comedy of Errors* by “a company of base and common fellows ’’ (including Shakespeare?) is recorded in the *Gesta Grayorum* as taking place in Gray’s Inn hall on December 28, 1594.

**7.** *Titus Andronicus* is another play in which many scholars have refused to see the hand of Shakespeare, but the double testimony of its inclusion in Meres’s list and in the First Foh\*o makes it unreasonable to deny him some part in it. This may, however, only have been the part of a reviser, working, like the reviser of *The Contention,* upon the dialogue rather than the structure of a crude tragedy of the school of Kyd. In fact a stage tradition is reported by Edward Ravenscroft, a late 17th-century adapter of the play, to the effect that Shakespeare did no more than give a few “ master-touches ” to the work of a “ private author.” The play was entered in the Stationers’ *Register* on February 6, 1594, and was published in the same year with a title-page setting out that it had been acted by the companies of Lords Derby *(i.e.* Strange, who had succeeded to his father’s title on September 25, 1593), Pembroke and Sussex. It is natural to take this list as indicating the order in which the three companies named had to do with it, but it is probable that only Sussex’s had played Shakespeare’s version. Henslowe re­cords the production by this company of *Titus and Andronicus* as a new play on January 23, 1594, only a few days before the theatres were closed by plague. For the purposes of Hen­slowe’s financial arrangements with the company a rewritten play may have been classed as new. Two years earlier he had appended the same description to a play of *Tittus and Vespacia,* produced by Strange’s men on April 11, 1592. At first sight the title suggests a piece founded on the lives of the emperor Titus and Vespasian, but the identification of the play with an early version of *Titus Andronicus* is justified by the existence of a rough German adaptation, which follows the general outlines of Shake­speare’s play, but in which one of the sons of Titus is named Vespasian instead of Lucius. The ultimate source of the plot is unknown. It cannot be traced in any of the Byzantine chroniclers. Strange’s men seem to have been still playing *Titus* in January 1593, and it was probably not transferred to Pembroke’s until the companies were driven from London by the plague of that year. Pembroke’s are known from a letter of Henslowe’s to have been ruined by August, and it is to be suspected that Sussex’s, who appeared in London for the first time at the Christmas of 1593, acquired their stock of plays and transferred these to the Chamber­lain’s men, when the companies were again reconstituted in the summer of 1594. The revision of *Titus and Vespasian* into *Titus Andronicus* by Shakespeare may have been accomplished in the interval between these two transactions. The Chamber­lain’s men were apparently playing *Andronicus* in June. The stock of Pembroke’s men probably included, as well as *Titus and Vespasian,* both *Henry VI.* and *Richard III.,* which also thus passed to the Chamberlain’s company.