Titus Andronicus

Act 1: Election Day

Some Hints For Studying Old Plays

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Make a list of key terms that keep coming up in class (topics, ideas, historical events, concepts). Update it as the semester moves forward.

Some Hints For Studying Old Plays

Make a list of key terms that keep coming up in class (topics, ideas, historical events, concepts).

What are some terms that have been important for us already?

Some Hints For Studying Old Plays

Make a list of key terms that keep coming up in class (topics, ideas, historical events, concepts).

Make a list of *questions* we keep asking. Just notice during our discussions. What do we keep coming back to, over and over?

Make a list of *key terms*
Make a list of *questions*

When you're reading, you're looking for those topics and questions.

You can literally search an online edition of the text!

Even better: just pay attention as you're reading

Make a list of *key terms*
Make a list of *questions*

When you're reading, you're looking for those topics and questions.

When you come across a scene or passage or character that connects to one of those topics or questions, slow down and read more carefully. Make a note in your book. Write in the margins. Bring it up in class discussions. Talk to me about it in office hours.

Make a list of *key terms*
Make a list of *questions*

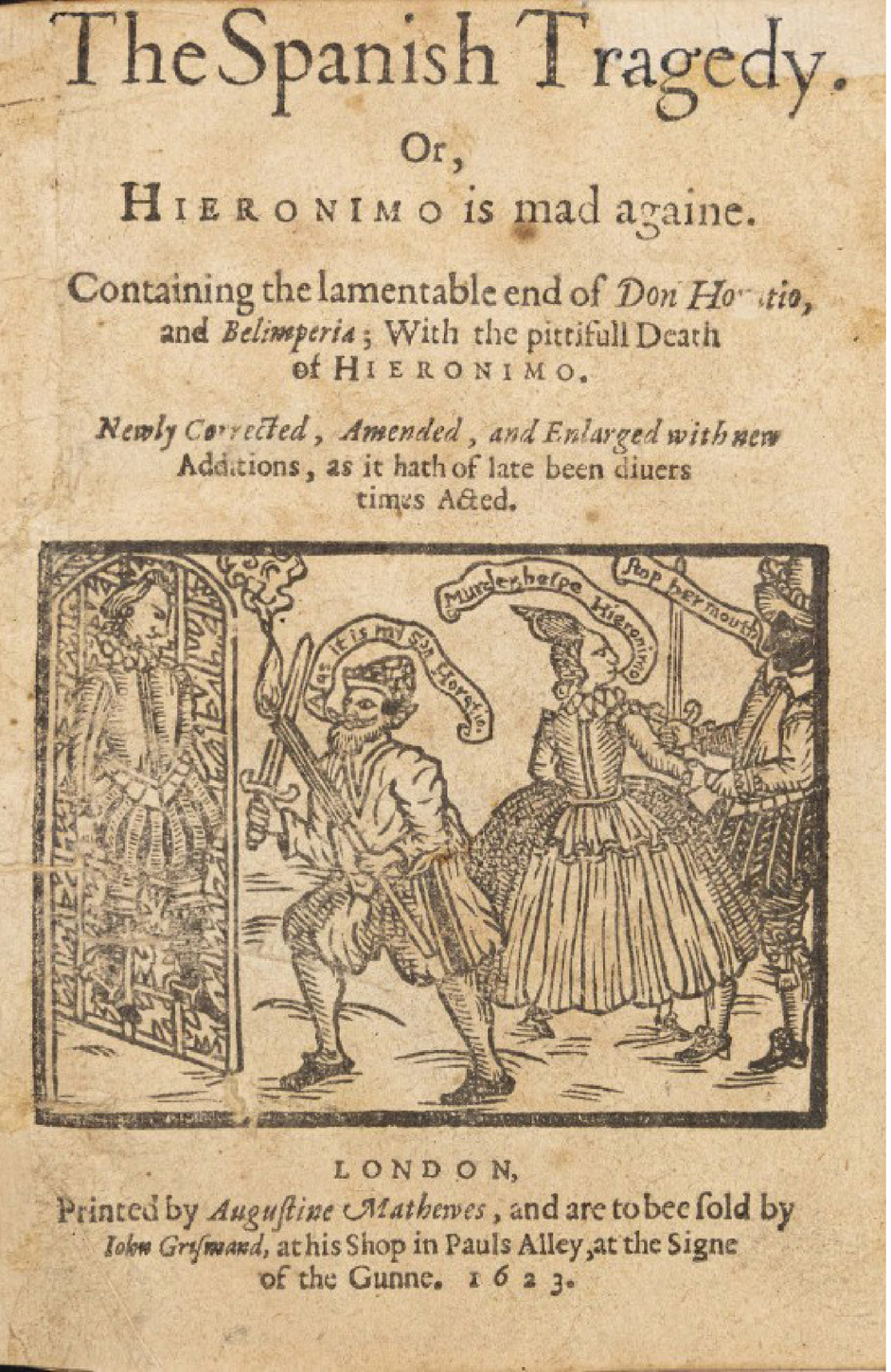
When you're reading, you're looking for those topics and questions.

All the scenes and passages that aren't connected to those questions and topics, you can pay less attention to them.

Make a list of *key terms*
Make a list of *questions*

When you're reading, you're looking for those topics and questions.

Every reading will add something new to our conversations. Each play works through these questions differently. You're trying to tune into that.



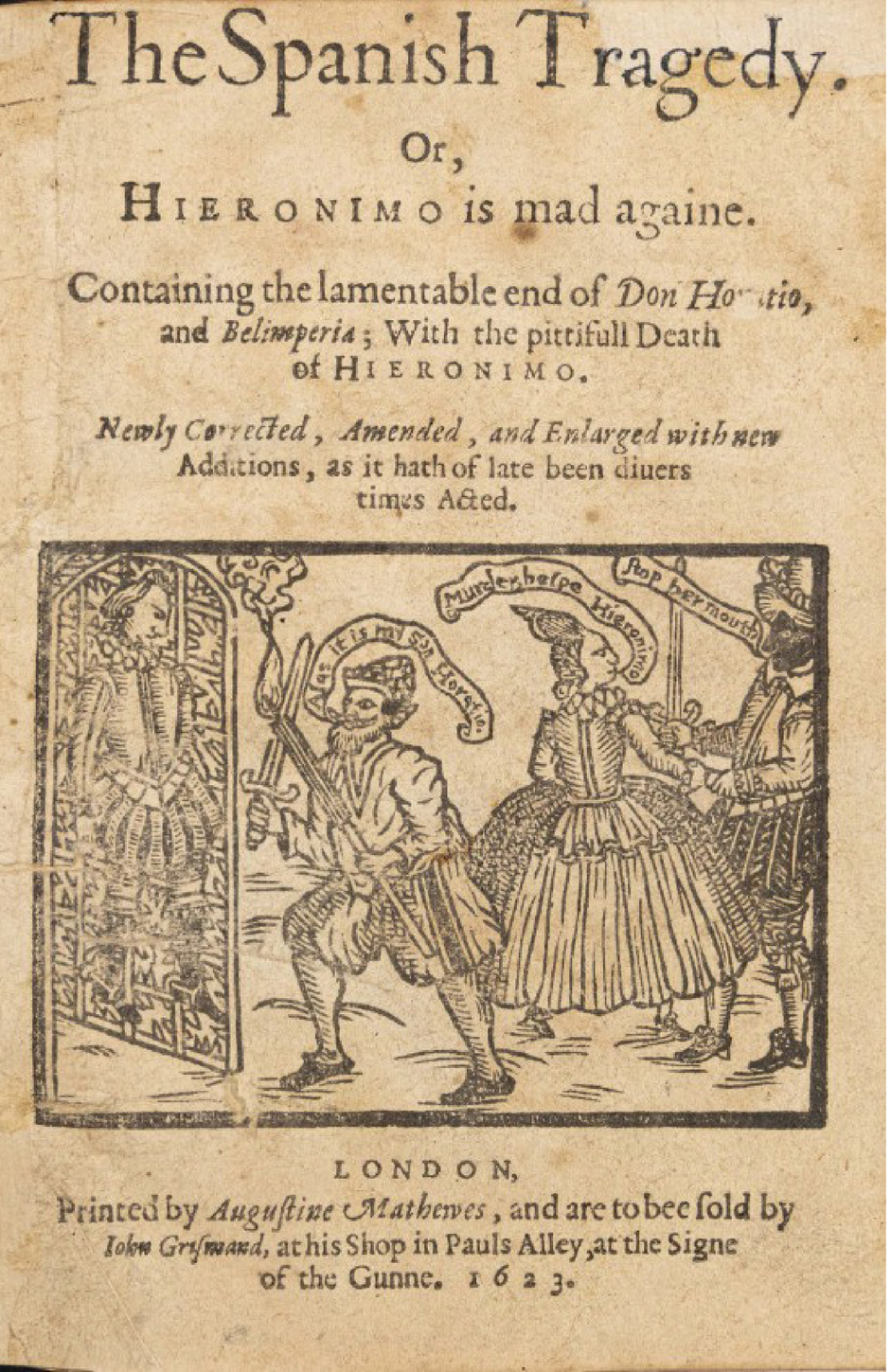
Revenge Tragedy (1560s - 1610)

- Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1560) sets off a craze

- an initial crime, usually murder or sexual violence, followed by a rampage

- not much plot or characterization?

- shocking violence, incredibly popular



The Spanish Tragedy.

Or,

HIERONIMO is mad againe.

Containing the lamentable end of *Don Horatio*, and *Belimperia*; With the pittifull Death of HIERONIMO.

Newly Corrected, Amended, and Enlarged with new Additions, as it hath of late been diuers times Acted.

LONDON,
Printed by *Augustine Mathewes*, and are to bee sold by *John Grismand*, at his Shop in Pauls Alley, at the Signe of the Gunne. 1623.

Initial crime insults the honor of an individual / family

- in an honor-based society, there are real repercussions to reputational damage (loss of legal privileges, access to power)

- necessary to respond to insults immediately and violently

Honor Code

- necessary to respond to insults immediately and violently

Masculine Honor (based on personal and familial integrity, inflict violence upon the source of dishonor)

Feminine Honor (based on chastity, inflict violence upon *self*)

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These are rules early modern Europeans inherited from ancient Rome

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Feminine Honor (based on chastity, inflict violence upon *self*)

“Love” marks a complicated social bond: you could be called upon to commit violence to defend their honor / your relationship

Honor: Political Problem

"Aristocracy is defined as 'the rule or strength of the best' (Greek: *arête*): thus it argues that evident, even conspicuous superiority or excellence should give a person social or political power, on the assumption that those who are visibly, publicly gifted are also best capable of bringing prosperity, stability, and well-being to the community...

An aristocratic society is also an honor-based society: the aristocrat requires public acknowledgment of his 'nobility' (literally, that which can be known, the 'notable'), expressed as the related poles of honor or reputation vs. shame or disrepute."

- Victoria Silver

Honor: Political Problem

Early Modern society was aristocratic: the king was an aristocrat, required the military and economic support of the nobility

The king was supposed to be the source of honor, manage it through ritual

... that makes things complicated for everybody involved

Revenge Tragedy / Honor

- everybody constantly worried about being insulted

- violence to protect your family, also toward your family

- social and political chaos, permanent threat of destabilizing violence