

**‘To lick thy fingers greasy or to dry them upon thy clothes be both unmannerly’: Napkins  
and Handkerchiefs in Early Modern Drama**

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What role do napkins play in early modern drama and what might it mean that napkins, so closely associated with food and good manners at table, are also used repeatedly in plays to signal the most heinous and uncivilized deeds? Might there be some acknowledgement in the plays that napkins mark the fine line between man and beast, their adoption being part of what Norbert Elias termed ‘the civilizing process’?<sup>1</sup> For the early moderns the napkin was apparently synonymous with the handkerchief, reputedly invented by King Richard II.<sup>2</sup> The handkerchief was, ostensibly, a small piece of cloth a gentleman or lady would carry about their person to wipe the face, eyes, nose or lips at meal-times. Napkins were especially important before forks became common. Knives and spoons would be provided for guests in wealthy households and sometimes napkins too. These niceties are inter-connected, because cutlery helped keep hands clean; it appears that the only distinction between the handkerchief (meaning ‘hand cloth’) and napkin (meaning ‘little cloth’) is the context.

Travelling across Europe, the early modern Englishman Thomas Coryate was impressed by the use of the fork in Italy:

I observed a custome in all those Italian Cities and Townes through  
the which I passed, that is not used in any other country that I saw  
in my travels, neither doe I thinke that any other nation of  
Christendome doth use it, but only Italy. The Italian and also most

strangers that are commorant in Italy, doe alwaies at their meales use a little forke when they cut their meat [...] . The reason of this their curiosity is, because the Italian cannot by any means indure to have his dish touched with fingers, seing all mens fingers are not alike cleane.<sup>3</sup>

Forks were expensive; an unusual find during recent excavations of the Rose Theatre was a brass-topped iron fork, from between 1587 and 1606, which reflects ostentatious consumption at the playhouse. In Ben Jonson's *The Devil is an Ass*, first performed in 1616 and printed in 1631, Merecraft (a spiv character) proposes a monopoly on the use of forks, which he envisages 'Brought into custom here, as they are in Italy' and that will be 'A mighty saver of linen through the Kingdom' (5.4.19, 26).<sup>4</sup> In his influential book on manners, first published in 1530 (English translation 1532), Erasmus stipulates that the napkin should be laid on the shoulder to wipe greasy fingers, and if none is provided the table-cloth may be used.<sup>5</sup> With no forks on the table, Early modern English people would have had dirtier fingers than Italians.

To see if and how the nomenclature changed, I've searched Literature Online (LION), which contains all English literary texts up to 1910, for plays first performed between 1580 and 1610 containing both the word 'napkin' and the word 'handkerchief' (in all their possible spellings) to see if they are distinguished and if either is more commonly associated with food.<sup>6</sup> Here are the plays:

#### **Non-Shakespearian**

Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy* (first performed 1585-1589; first printed 1592)<sup>7</sup>

Anon, *Arden of Faversham* (first performed 1588-1592; first printed 1592)

George Chapman, *An Humorous Day's Mirth* (first performed 1597; first printed 1599)

Anon, *A Warning for Fair Women* (first performed 1596-1600; first printed 1599)

Thomas Dekker, *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (first performed 1599; first printed 1600)

Thomas Heywood, *The Wise Woman of Hogsdon* (first performed c. 1604 (?); first printed 1638)

Ben Jonson, *Volpone* (first performed 1605-1606; first printed 1607)

Francis Beaumont, *The Woman-Hater* (first performed 1606; first printed 1607)

Nathan Field, *A Woman Is a Weather-Cock* (first performed 1609-10; first printed 1612)

### **Shakespearian**

*3 Henry 6* (first performed 1591; first printed 1595)

*The Merry Wives of Windsor* (first performed 1597-1598; first printed 1602)

*As You Like It* (first performed 1598-1600; first printed 1623)

*Othello* (first performed 1603-1604; first printed 1622)<sup>8</sup>

Forks occur in just one of these, *Volpone*, when Sir Politic Would-Be offers Peregrine advice for 'your crude traeller', including how to talk and eat:

Then must you learne the use

And handling of your silver fork, at meals,

The metal of your glass – these are maine matters

With your Italian – and to know the hour

When you must eat your melons and your figs. (4.1.27-31)<sup>9</sup>

This confirms that the fork was an exotic and expensive implement that an Englishman would encounter abroad. Napkins are used at dinner in early modern plays set at home and abroad and to wrap and carry pieces of food but most curiously they are also recurrently produced as evidence of lust, violence, adultery and murder.

In Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* from the 1580s, Hieronimo, having found the body of his son Horatio stabbed and hanging in an arbour, tells his wife Isabella, 'Sees't thou this handkercher besmeared with blood? / It shall not from me till I take revenge' (2.5.51-52).<sup>10</sup> In the next act, sympathizing with Bazulto, whose son has also died, Hieronimo says, 'Here, take my handkercher, and wipe thine eyes', and the accompanying stage direction indicates that Hieronimo 'draweth out a bloody napkin', an act that reminds him of his earlier oath to avenge his son's murder (3.13.86-89). In the play's denouement, having stabbed those who murdered his son, Hieronimus proclaims, 'And here behold this bloudie handkercher, / Which at Horatio's death I weeping dipped / Within the river of his bleeding wounds' (4.4.122-24). The terms 'handkercher' and 'napkin' are clearly synonymous in this play – although 'napkin' occurs only in the stage-direction – and nowhere is either term used specifically in relation to food. Although Hieronimo is present at a banquet in Act 1, scene 4, when he finds Horatio's body he has come straight from bed, the stage direction indicating that he is 'in his shirt' (2.5.0), meaning his nightshirt, and so it is unlikely that he would still have a dinner-napkin on him. The handkerchief/napkin that he dips in Horatio's blood is never connected with dining or good manners of any sort but immediately becomes a symbol of murder and revenge.

In the anonymous play *Arden of Faversham* from the late 1580s or early 1590s, Thomas Arden's adulterous wife Alice plots her husband's death but is unwittingly foiled by Franklin, Arden's friend, as the servant Michael explains to the would-be murderers Greene, Will, and Shakebag:

I did perform the outmost of my task,  
And left the doors unbolted and unlocked.  
But see the chance: Franklin and my master  
Were very late conferring in the porch,  
And Franklin left his napkin where he sat,  
With certain gold knit in it, as he said.  
Being in bed, he did bethink himself,  
And coming down he found the doors unshut.  
He locked the gates and brought away the keys,  
For which offence my master rated me. (7.6-15)<sup>11</sup>

This might be a culinary napkin, as Franklin and Arden stayed up late talking after dining at a nearby ordinary. Later in the play, whilst making their way to Faversham, Franklin tells Arden the story of a wife discovered in adultery who 'softly draws she forth her handkercher, / And modestly she wipes her tear-stained face' (9.83-84). Perhaps we are to think that Franklin illustrated this action by pulling out his own purely decorative napkin, since it would not be easy to remove food stains from cloth sewn with gold.

In George Chapman's *An Humorous Day's Mirth* from the late 1590s, old Labervele believes his wife to be passing his test of constancy by resisting the advances of Lemot.<sup>12</sup> He says, 'Hark you, wife, what sign will you make me now, if you relent not?' to which she replies,

‘Lend him my handkerchief to wipe his lips of their last disgrace’ (6.108-11). Labervele is being fooled since his wife has already pledged her love to Lemot. Here the use of the handkerchief is clearly figurative: what should be wiped is the love-making that issues from the mouth of Lemot. Later in the play the action moves to Verone’s ordinary and we have the stage direction ‘Enter VERONE with his napkin upon his shoulder, and his man JAQUES with another, and [a BOY], his son, bringing in cloth and napkins’ (8.0), recalling Erasmus about where diners should place their napkins. Amongst themselves the servants complain of the diners’ behaviour, with the Boy noting: ‘if there be any chebules in your napkins, they say your nose or ours have dropped on them, and then they throw them about the house’ (8.11-13). Chebules, a prune-like fruit (OED chebule, n.), was also a euphemism for snot.<sup>13</sup> Here food and bodily effusions are interchangeable, and I think that overlapping functions of the napkins and the handkerchief lie behind this arresting image. As we shall see, in later drama the two functions were distinguished, and the uses of napkins and handkerchiefs ceased to overlap. In a subsequent scene in this play Catalian, one of Lemot’s friends, who has been playing tennis, asks the Boy to ‘call for a coarse napkin’ (8.109), and, as the editor of the Revels edition observes, this must mean ‘a small towel (OED n. Ib)’<sup>14</sup> to absorb sweat.

Echoes of Kyd’s play *The Spanish Tragedy* resound through later plays, including the anonymous *A Warning for Fair Women* from the late 1590s.<sup>15</sup> After murdering George Sanders, Captain George Browne dips his handkerchief into the man’s blood to make a love-token he can send to the deceased’s wife, Anne (8.1385-86). John Bean, the servant of a business associate of Sanders, has been injured in the attack and his neighbour Old John instructs his maid Joan to ‘take my napkin and thy apron, and bind up his wounds’ (8.1465-66). Earlier in the play Joan tells Bean of a prophetic dream: ‘me thought your nose bled, and as I ran to my chest to fetch ye

a handkercher, me thoght I stumbled and so waked: what do's it betoken?' (6.1032-33). In this rather old-fashioned play, the handkerchief and napkin are not distinguished, and these pieces of cloth are mentioned exclusively and repeatedly for their function in soaking up blood.

In Thomas Dekker's slightly later but much more modern *The Shoemaker's Holiday* from 1599, Hamond, who is in love with Jane (another man's wife), enquires about certain items, including a handkerchief, that Jane has been working on.<sup>16</sup> The scene takes place in a sempster's shop, and there is a sense that the handkerchief is ornately decorated by Jane, not least because Hamond comments, 'How prettily she works! O prettie hand!' (12.13). Although Jane says that she will sell it 'cheap', it is one of many other delicate items in the shop, including 'Fine cambric shirts' (12.23). Later in the play the Shoemaker Eyre, newly made Mayor of London, holds a feast for the king at which his employees will officiate. The culinary specificity of the napkin is indicated in the stage direction 'Enter AYRE, HODGE, FIRK, RALPH and other shoemakers, all with napkins on their shoulders' (20.0), and these cloths are quite distinct from the fine work being constructed by Jane. As Will Fisher has pointed out, the handkerchief was 'a relatively new cultural artifact, and therefore its social connotations and the rules governing its use were still in process of being defined', but, increasingly, the handkerchief played an important role 'in materializing early modern notions of femininity, and the female body'.<sup>17</sup> Referring to the work of Stephanie Dickey, Fisher observes that that the handkerchief itself is a strangely contradictory artefact; as Dickey pointed out, 'to employ a costly, elaborately decorated article like the embroidered handkerchief [...] for actually blowing the nose would be [...] unthinkable'.<sup>18</sup>

'Unthinkable' is perhaps a bit strong, since the significant taboo is in retaining bodily effusions after use of the cloth. Today we certainly do not expect the handkerchief protruding from a well-dressed man's top pocket to be blown into and replaced, but, as with the myth of the

Earl of Essex laying down a valuable cloak to keep Queen Elizabeth's feet from the mud, the willingness to use a cloth that has become decorative for its original practical purpose strongly connotes gallantry. The brief encounter that initiates the affair in David Lean's 1945 film is Trevor Howard's use of his handkerchief to remove a piece of grit from Celia Johnson's eye, and his returning the soiled cloth to his top pocket adds to the symbolic intimacy of the moment. In the plays from the period I'm concerned with, 1580-1610, we see first emergence of the handkerchief as something primarily decorative and not ordinarily to be used to collect grease from food or bodily fluids. Five years after Dekker's *Shoemaker's Holiday* made the napkin/handkerchief distinction, Thomas Heywood's *The Wise Woman of Hogsdon*<sup>19</sup> of around 1604 confirmed it with a scene of similarly delicate labour: 'Enter LUCE in a sempster's shop, at work upon a laced handkercher' (1.2.0). Handkerchiefs come up again later when the rogue Chartley says of his father-in-law and Luce, 'Here's such wetting of handkerchers. / He weeps to think of his wife, she weeps to see her father cry' (3.3.136-37). The handkerchief is not solely decorative here, being used to wipe tears, but it is entirely distinct from the food-related napkins that are mentioned during the preparations for Chartley's marriage to Grantiana in the stage direction 'Enter TABOR and SIR BONIFACE with a trencher, with broken meat and a napkin' (4.5.0). Later in the same scene two more stage directions confirm the handkerchief/napkin distinction: 'Enter TABOR with a bowl of beer and a napkin' (4.5.27) and 'Enter CHARTLEY with his napkin as from dinner' (4.5.36). The distinction between the lust of the play's young men and the finer feelings of its young women is emblemized in the difference between napkins used at meals and the 'laced handkercher' that Luce works on.

Ben Jonson's *Volpone* of 1607 sharply distinguishes between the napkin as a practical cloth and the handkerchief as a decorative and symbolic one.<sup>20</sup> Pretending to be the mountebank



Scoto of Mantua, Volpone describes the use of a napkin ‘To fortify the most indigest and crude stomach’ by ‘applying only a warm napkin to the place, after the unction and fricace’ (2.2.102-05). Still in the guise of the mountebank, Volpone puts on a show beneath the window of Celia, the pretty young wife of Corvino, telling the crowd who have gathered to ‘toss your handkerchiefs cheerfully’ (2.2.220-21). In response to this, ‘Celia at the window throws down her handkerchief’ (2.2.226). Brian Parker points out that ‘It was usual to throw mountebanks money tied in handkerchiefs, which were then returned wrapped around the purchase [...] so this in no way suggests flirtatiousness in Celia’.<sup>21</sup> In this context, however, it does emphasize her femininity. Dickey considers the early modern handkerchief ‘almost exclusively a female attribute’ and although Fisher argues that ‘the handkerchief was a detachable part and as such could not be tied exclusively to any one particular group or person’ he acknowledged ‘the ideological work’ – in the paintings and plays mentioned by Dickey – ‘to make it seem as if handkerchiefs were simply a female attribute’.<sup>22</sup> Fisher begins his essay with Thomas Randolph’s account of a story about Queen Elizabeth’s napkin, namely how the Earl of Leicester annoyed the Duke of Norfolk by taking her napkin to wipe the sweat from his face after a game of tennis.<sup>23</sup> Fisher does not seem to notice that the affront here was in the misuse of the cloth: even if called a ‘napkin’ a lady’s personal cloth had acquired the status that we now attach to a handkerchief, and, as we have seen, the plays of the period were beginning to make this distinction overtly and to separate the terminology.

In Francis Beaumont’s comedy *The Woman-Hater* of 1606, Lazarello ‘the Hungrie Courtier’ who ‘doth hunt more after novelty, then [than] plenty’ (1.2.77, 83-84), pursues not love but, rather, a particularly choice fish-head that has been prepared for the Duke:

Thither must I

To see my loves face, the chaste virgin head  
Of a deere Fish, yet pure and undeflowred,  
Not known of man, no rough bred countrey hand,  
Hath once toucht thee, no Pandars withered paw,  
Nor an un-napkind Lawyers greasie fist,  
Hath once slubbered thee: no Ladies supple hand,  
Washt o're with urine, hath yet seiz'd on thee  
With her two nimble talents: no Court hand,  
Whom his own naturall filth, or change of aire,  
Hath bedeckt with scabs, hath mard thy whiter grace:  
O let it be thought lawful then for me,  
To crop the flower of thy virginitie. (1.2.216-28)<sup>24</sup>

The lawyer's 'un-napkind' greasy fist is all the more disgusting because he cannot even wipe it clean. Chasing his object of desire across the play's scenes, Lazarello even considers the drama's favourite trick of cross-dressing, and he thinks a handkerchief would make the switch in clothing more convincing: 'My Lord, what doe you thinke, if I should shave my selfe, put on midwives apparell, come in with a hand-kercher, and beg a peece for a great bellied woman, or a sick child? (3.2.92-94).

Three or four years later, Nathan Field's play *A Woman is a Weather Cock* has the familiar use of napkins when refreshments are brought in: 'Enter with Table Napkins. Count, Worldly, Neuill, Pendant, Sir Innocent, Lady, Sir Abraham, Seruants with wine, Plate, Tobacco and pipes' (E3v).<sup>25</sup> Later in the play, we see the entrance of Sir Abraham 'knowing [gnawing] on

a Capons Legge' (H2v). Nevill tells him, 'Soule man, leaue eating now, looke, looke, you haue all dropt a your sute', to which Abraham replies, 'Oh Sir, I was in loue to day, and could not eate, but heere's one knowes the case is alter'd, lend mee but a Handkerchiefe to wipe my mouth, and I ha done' (H2v). This might look like evidence against my thesis that the culinary napkin and the decorative handkerchief were increasingly distinguished, but here the capon-gnawing Sir Abraham is a fool and a boor: it is a mark of his poor manners that he does not know to ask for a napkin rather than a handkerchief. The point would be made all the more clearly in performance if Nevill daintily gives him what he asks for and looks on in disgust as it is misused.

Finally we come, as all such surveys must, to Shakespeare's habits. Shakespeare uses the term 'napkin' and 'handkerchief' without distinction in his plays. In *3 Henry 6* from the early 1590s, audiences would have been reminded of Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* when Queen Margaret tauntingly rubs in the Duke of York's face a 'napkin' dipped in his son Rutland's blood (B1v), and York replies that his tears 'wash the bloud awaie' (B3r).<sup>26</sup> When a messenger later reports this scene to Richard Gloucester he calls the cloth a 'handkercher' (B4r). Behind the apparent synonymy of napkin/handkerchief lies a tension between the vulgar and the delicate mopping of bodily effusions. Put to its right purpose of mopping tears, says York, the cloth will be cleansed of the child Rutland's blood and so symbolize the triumph of remorse over blood-lust.

Shakespeare takes Kyd's image of the bloodied cloth and makes it bear additional symbolic freight as a token of repentance. He does the same with the napkin/handkerchief in *As You Like It* from the end of the 1590s, which a reformed Oliver brings from Orlando to excuse his lateness.<sup>27</sup>

Although here Shakespeare seems to use the terms interchangeably (4.3.94-98, 4.3.139-56), Rosalind's mask of masculinity slips when she faints at the sight of the bloodied cloth, and in

explaining this itself as a pretence of femininity she perhaps betrays herself further by using its feminine name: ‘Did your brother tell you how I counterfeited to swoon when he showed me your handkerchief’ (5.2.25-26).

In the quarto of Shakespeare’s late-1590s play *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, foolish Slender swears that Pistol has picked his purse: ‘I by this handkercher did he. Two faire shouell boord shillings, besides seuen groats in mill sixpences’ (A3v).<sup>28</sup> It is likely that the affectatious Slender carries the handkerchief as a kind of stylish accessory. Later in the play the failed seducer Sir John Falstaff complains that, hiding in a laundry basket, he endured ‘foule shirts, stokins [stockings], greasie napkins, / [...] a compound of the most / Villanous smel, that euer offended nostrill’ (E3v). In Shakespeare, grease may come from food or the human body, although Sir John’s gluttony would make culinary napkins a particularly suitable punishment.<sup>29</sup> Picturing his wife soiled by Sir John and himself cuckolded, Ford imagines himself humiliated by the horns growing on his head serving for others’ convenience: ‘they may hang hats here, and napkins here / Vpon my hornes’ (E4r).

The most famous dramatic handkerchief must be the one that in 1603 or 1604 Othello first gave to Desdemona.<sup>30</sup> Its loss stands for the soiling of Desdemona: it passes through hands that should not touch it, and it gets called a napkin in the play. To emphasize the crude misuse of this strawberry-spotted cloth, Iago claims to have seen Cassio ‘wipe his beard’ with it (3.3.439). Unlike the chebules in napkins mentioned in Chapman’s *An Humorous Day’s Mirth*, strawberries were not vulgar, but, as critics have noted, they carried sexual connotations and suggested hymeneal blood.<sup>31</sup> We see here the blurring of boundaries between food and bodily effusions that we saw in Chapman, but with tragic rather than comic significance.

In Kyd's early and influential play *The Spanish Tragedy*, the napkin and handkerchief are used synonymously, and the bloody cloth is a symbol of murder, something that occurs also in Shakespeare's *3 Henry 6* and the anonymous *Warning for Fair Women*. In later plays there emerges a distinction between the napkin as an item specifically associated with food, grease and practical applications and the handkerchief as an ornate, delicate and specifically effeminate item, carried about the person and intended primarily for intimate use or decoration. There is less clear evidence of this distinction in Shakespeare. Why might this be? In Shakespeare's collaborations with other playwrights, for example John Fletcher, it is possible to attribute particular scenes to a specific author. As Jonathan Hope points out, Fletcher and Shakespeare emerged from very different socio-economic backgrounds: Fletcher was 'born in 1579 in the south-east and brought up in an upper-class, urban environment [...] and [probably] attended Cambridge University', whereas Shakespeare was born 'fifteen years earlier in the rural south-west midlands', with a 'lower class status, and lack of higher education'. The co-authored plays reveal differences in word-usage; as Hope puts it, 'Fletcher will use more in-coming prestige variants than Shakespeare'.<sup>32</sup> It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that Shakespeare would be behind his colleagues in the latest and most fashionable terminology, for example using 'napkin' instead of 'handkerchief'.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, trans. Edmund Jephcott; Revised Edition, Ed. Eric Dunning, Johan Goudsblom and Stephen Mennell (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000).

<sup>2</sup>George B. Stow, ‘Richard II and the Invention of the Pocket Handkerchief’, *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 27 (1995): pp. 221-35.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas Coryate, *Coryats Crudities*, STC 5808 (London: W[illiam] S[tansby for the author], 1611): sig. I6v-I7r.

<sup>4</sup>All quotations from early modern plays will be from a good modern edition where available.

<sup>5</sup>Desiderius Erasmus, [*De Civilitate Morum Puerilium*]. *A Lytell Booke of Good Maners for Chyldren . . . [Translated] By Robert Whytyngton*, STC 10467 (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1532).

<sup>6</sup>To find the first performance and publication date for these plays I have used the electronic resource Database of Early English Playbooks or ‘DEEP’ <<http://deep.sas.upenn.edu/>>. Where DEEP gives both a precise date and a date range in square brackets, the latter showing a degree of uncertainty, I have used the latter.

<sup>7</sup>The 1592 text of *The Spanish Tragedy* is the sole authoritative text of the play (Thomas Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, ed. J. R. Mulryne, The New Mermaids (London: Ernest Benn, 1970): p. xxxiii). It was enormously popular and reprinted in many times; curiously, the words ‘napkin’ and ‘handkerchief’ do not appear in the 1602 edition that reflects the play after revision by Ben Jonson.

<sup>8</sup>In *3 Henry 6* the words ‘napkin’ and ‘handkerchief’ occur together only in the Octavo of 1595 and not in the 1623 Folio text; in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* they occur together only in the 1602 Quarto, known as the ‘bad quarto’, not the Folio of 1623; *As You like It* appears only in the 1623 Folio text and both terms occur together; in *Othello* both terms occur together in the Quarto and Folio texts.

<sup>9</sup>Ben Jonson, *Volpone, or The Fox*, ed. Brian Parker; Revised Edition, The Revels Plays (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1999).

<sup>10</sup>Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*.

<sup>11</sup>Martin Wiggins, ed., *A Woman Killed with Kindness and Other Domestic Plays: The Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham, A Woman Killed with Kindness, The Witch of Edmonton, The English Traveller*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008).

<sup>12</sup>George Chapman, *An Humorous Day's Mirth*, ed. Charles Edelman, The Revels Plays (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2010).

<sup>13</sup>Chapman, p. 116n11.

<sup>14</sup>Chapman, p. 122n109.

<sup>15</sup>Anon, *A Warning for Fair Women: A Critical Edition*, ed. Charles Dale Cannon (Paris: Mouton, 1975): pp. 28-43; Jeffrey Kahan, 'The 1597 Additions to *The Spanish Tragedy* and Its Subsequent Influences on *A Woman Killed with Kindness*', *ANQ*, 17.2 (2004): pp. 20-4.

<sup>16</sup>Thomas Dekker, *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, ed. Anthony Parr, New Mermaids (London: A&C Black, 1990).

<sup>17</sup>Will Fisher, 'Handkerchiefs and Early Modern Ideologies of Gender', *Shakespeare Studies*, 28 (2000): p. 201.

<sup>18</sup>Fisher, p. 205; Stephanie Dickey, 'Women Holding Handkerchiefs in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Portraits', *Image and Self-image in Netherlandish Art, 1550-1750*, ed. Reindert Falkenburg, Jan De Jong, Herman Roodenburg and Frits Scholten Scholten, Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art (Zwolle: Waanders, 1995): IV6, p. 336.

<sup>19</sup>Thomas Heywood, *Three Marriage Plays: The Wise Woman of Hogsdon, The English Traveller, The Captives*, ed. Paul Merchant, The Revels Plays Companion Library (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1996).

<sup>20</sup>Jonson.

<sup>21</sup>Jonson, p. 153n220. Parker adds that ‘Handkerchiefs were invented in Venice in the fifteenth century, and were still used more for fashion than hygiene’ but provides no evidence for this assertion, whereas Stow makes a compelling argument for its invention by Richard II at the English court.

<sup>22</sup>Dickey, p. 340; Fisher, p. 205.

<sup>23</sup>Fisher, p. 199.

<sup>24</sup>Fredson Bowers, ed., *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon, The Woman Hater*. Ed. George Walton Williams, 10 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1966), I: *The Knight of the Burning Pestle; The Masque of the Inner Temple and Gray’s Inn; The Woman Hater; The Coxcomb; Philaster; The Captain*.

<sup>25</sup>Nathan Field, *A Woman is a Weather-cocke*, STC 10854 (London: Printed for John Budge, 1612).

<sup>26</sup> William Shakespeare, [3 Henry 6] *The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke, and the Death of Good King Henrie the Sixt*, STC 21006 (O) BEPD 138a (London: P[eter] S[hort] for Thomas Millington, 1595). Shakespeare, *The Third Part of King Henry VI*, ed. Andrew S. Cairncross, The Arden Shakespeare (Harvard: Methuen, 1964): p. 184; Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part Three*, ed. Randall Martin, The Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001): p. 52. In his 1765 edition of the play Samuel Johnson adds a note clarifying Queen Margaret’s actions: ‘A napkin is a handkerchief’ (*Mr Johnson’s Preface to His Edition of Shakespear’s Plays* (London:



Printed for J. and R. Tonson, H. Woodfall, J. Rivington, R. Baldwin, L. Hawes, Clark and Collins, T. Longman, W. Johnston, T. Caslon, C. Corbet, T. Lownds, and the Executors of B. Dodd, 1765): p. 136n2).

<sup>27</sup> Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, ed. Alan Brissenden, The Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993). In his 1778 edition of the play George Steevens adds a note, ‘napkin, i.e. handkerchief’, and directs the reader to the use of the word in *Othello*: ‘Your napkin is too little’ (Shakespeare, *The Plays of William Shakespeare. In Ten Volumes. With the Corrections and Illustrations of Various Commentators; to Which Are Added Notes By Samuel Johnson and George Steevens*, 2nd edn. Revised and Augmented (London: C. Bathurst [and] W. Strahan [etc.], 1778): p. 363n1).

<sup>28</sup> Shakespeare, [*Merry Wives of Windsor*] *The Most Pleasaunt and Excellent Conceited Comedie, of Syr Iohn Falstaffe, and the Merrie Wiues of Windsor*, STC 22299 (Q1) (London: Thomas C[reed], 1602).

<sup>29</sup> Joan Fitzpatrick, *Shakespeare and the Language of Food: A Dictionary*, Arden Shakespeare Dictionaries (London: Bloomsbury, 2010): ‘grease/greasy’.

<sup>30</sup> Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. Michael Neill, The Oxford Shakespeare (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006).

<sup>31</sup> Marion Lomax, *Stage Images and Traditions: Shakespeare to Ford* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987): p. 36; Andrew Sofer, ‘Felt Absences: The Stage Properties of *Othello*’s Handkerchief’, *Comparative Drama*, 31 (1997): pp. 381, 392n33.

<sup>32</sup> Jonathan Hope, *The Authorship of Shakespeare’s Plays: A Socio-linguistic Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994): p. 8.