

CONCERNING BEARDS

Facial Hair, Health and Practice
in England 1650–1900

ALUN WITHEY



Concerning Beards

Facialities: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Human Face

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In this series, historians of all periods, experts in visual culture and literary scholars explore the many ways in which faces have been represented in the past and present, and in particular the issue of facial difference, disfigurement, beauty and ‘ugliness’. Faces are central to all human social interactions, yet have been neglected as a subject of study in themselves outside of the cognitive sciences and some work on aesthetics of the body. Titles in the series will range across themes such as approaching the difficult history of disfigurement, how facial difference and disability intersect, the changing norms of appearance relating to the face and other features such as the hair (facial and otherwise), violence targeted at the face, and the reception and representation of the face in art and literature.

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Concerning Beards

*Facial Hair, Health and Practice
in England, 1650–1900*

Alun Withey

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I dedicate this book, with love, to my father, Robert Withey, who grew his beard in the 1960s, and has never shaved it off. This one is for you dad.

The beard that has never been cut is beautiful ... There is, now, the distinguishing feature of a man. And, in the autumn of life, what dignity, what gravity does not its massive length give to the man laden with wisdom's fruit matured? When half a hundred winters have blown their sleets and snows upon it, until it has become as white as they are, how venerable does the patriarch look?

B., 'The Beard', *The Crayon*, 6:3 (1859): 69–70

Contents

List of illustrations	ix
List of abbreviations	xi
Acknowledgements	xiii
1 Introduction	1
Part 1 Contexts	17
2 Facial hair, health and the body, c. 1650–1750	19
3 The faces of politeness: Facial hair, masculinity and culture in the long eighteenth century	33
4 The dominion of the beard, c. 1850–1900	55
Part 2 The Practice and Practitioners of Facial Hair	79
5 The medical practices and practitioners of shaving in early-modern Britain	81
6 Economies of shaving, c. 1650–1750	107
7 Refining the face: Auto-pogonotomy and self-styling, 1750–1900	123
8 Hairs and graces: Barbers, hairdressers and shaving, c. 1750–1900	141
Part 3 Fashion and Class	161
9 The bearded classes: Facial hair and social status, 1700–1900	163
10 Cleanse, cut and control: The institutional history of facial hair	187
Part 4 Commodification, Consumption and Personal Grooming	207
11 The commodification of shaving, 1650–1850	209
12 Selling shaving in the age of the beard: The market for shaving products c. 1850–90	237
Conclusion	261
Bibliography	267
Index	309

Illustrations

Figures

5.1	Jost Amman, a barbershop, undated	96
6.1	Richard Livesay, 'William Hogarth making a drawing of his companions and himself as they shave and take their breakfast', 1781	121
7.1	Julia Margaret Cameron, portrait of Henry Taylor, 1864	137
9.1	Sir Joshua Reynolds, self-portrait, 1780	166
9.2	Sir Joshua Reynolds, a man's head, c. 1771–3	168
9.3	Balthasar Denner, 'Alter Mann' (old man), 1726	169
9.4	'Frequencies of Whisker Forms, 1842–1972'	178
12.1	Number of brands of shaving pastes in British newspapers per decade, 1830–99	242
12.2	Number of advertised shaving soap brands per year in British newspapers, 1830–99	244
12.3	Number of advertised shaving soap brands per year in British newspapers per decade, 1830–99	244
12.4	Average yearly numbers of shaving soaps advertised in British newspapers per decade, 1830–99	245
12.5	Advertisement for Williams' shaving soaps, <i>Illustrated London News</i> , 15 October 1898, 573	252
12.6	Number of branded razors advertised in British newspapers, 1850–80	254
12.7	Number of patent applications lodged for shaving-related products, 1850–80	257

Tables

9.1	Facial hair styles in British prisoner photographs, 1856–76	182
9.2	Facial hair styles in the total sampled British prisoner photographs, per decade of age	183
11.1	Proprietary razor manufacturers in British newspaper advertisements, one year per decade, 1750–1860	221

Abbreviations

Archives

BL	British Library
WL	Wellcome Library
NA	National Archives

Publications

HC	The Hairdresser's Chronicle
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Note: Newspaper advertisements are used throughout the book and are cited by the maker/seller/product name/title, newspaper, date and, where possible, page number, rather than using 'advertisement' in each case.

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Introduction

Many want the long beard, many the beard cut half way, some in two parts, rounded, shorn, with the moustaches, without moustaches, who shaved below, who on top, on the scruff of the neck, beneath the throat, and other bizarre things. Young people all keen on having a beard shave themselves often. Old men have their beards dyed to look and feel young.¹

So speaks Anima, the barber, in Anton Francesco Doni's sixteenth-century play *I Mondi*, responding to a question about what he thinks of the world given that barbers claimed to know so much about people and their characters.² His answer, drawing on the common literary trope of the beard in Renaissance drama, is partly a metaphor for the diversity found in humanity and everyday life, alongside the care taken by men in cultivating their beards and the panoply of beard and moustache styles worn by them. It also speaks to another truth. For each individual man in Anima's list and indeed for men through time, facial hair has involved choices: whether to wear or not wear facial hair, what style or length of beard or moustache and even whether to change its colour. Informing these choices were many factors, including age, location, social status, culture and fashion. But perhaps even more importantly, facial hair has also always been closely bound up with prevailing ideas about the body, health and medicine.

The period between 1650 and 1900 saw many important changes in conceptions of facial hair. First were fundamental shifts in ideas of its physical nature, generation and origins within the body. Second were changes in fashion, with the bearded seventeenth century supplanted by virtually 150 years of preference for the clean-shaven face, until the mid-Victorian 'beard movement' revived the fashion for effulgent facial hair. Third were shifts in the relationship between facial hair and prevailing concepts of masculinity. At some points beards symbolized virility, generative power and innate masculinity; at others a more rough and ready manliness. Fourth, this period brought deep changes to the material culture and associated practices of facial hair and shaving, to the practitioners involved and to who ultimately had authority for

¹ Patrizia Pellizzari (ed.), *Anton Francesco Doni, I Mondi e gli Inferni* (Torrino: Einaudi, 1994), 113.

² See also Douglas Biow, 'Manly Matters: The Theatricality and Sociability of Beards in Giordano Bruno's *Candelaio* and Sixteenth-Century Italy', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 40:2 (Spring 2010): 331.

fashioning the male face. But despite all of this, still relatively little is known about the significance, context and meanings of facial hair or its relationship to health norms, medical practice, material culture and consumption, technology, self-fashioning and, more broadly, its place within shifting conceptions of male bodies through time. What has largely been missing in previous studies is the lived experience of facial hair and shaving, particularly at different levels of society. Recovering this experience is the central purpose of this book.

On first reading, facial hair might appear to offer little as a lens through which to view the history of the body. And yet beards, whiskers, moustaches and even clean-shaven faces all offer unique opportunities to explore various corporeal contexts, including medical, social, cultural, gender and sexual, and, more broadly, to map the changing concepts of male appearance and the fashioning of men's bodies through time. Providing a new understanding of the complex meanings and motivations behind the wearing of beards, moustaches and whiskers, their associated practices, practitioners and material culture, *Concerning Beards* provides an important new long-term perspective on health and the male body in Britain between 1650 and 1900. It demonstrates not only the central place of facial hair within the shifting landscape of masculinity but also the importance of the male face more broadly as a site where bodily health, power, sexuality and control were constantly challenged and remade.

The historiography of facial hair

The place of facial hair as a masculine emblem has long been debated, as has its relationship to male (and female) physiology amidst long-term changes in concepts of the body for centuries. At some points, such as the eighteenth century, facial hair has fallen dramatically from favour. At others, beards have represented the very summit of manliness. Mid-Victorian men lauded their beards and whiskers, regarding them variously as God-given symbols of male authority, natural protection against the elements and public symbols of strength, marital and martial authority. If facial hair has at times been (un)fashionable, it has certainly been cyclical, with particular styles emerging and disappearing, often in response to changing ideals of male appearance and other sociocultural stimuli. At all points, however, it has reflected prevailing ideals of and ideas about the male body and men's appearance, whether as an intrinsic and vital component part of the corporeal fabric, a point which has itself been debated at various points in time, or as a supposed visual manifestation of masculine traits. It is a signally important element in the history of the body. And yet, in historiography, it is a relative newcomer. Even into the first decade of the twenty-first century, facial hair was still largely overlooked by academic historians. Aside from a few studies exploring facial hair in specific and generally narrow contexts, beards and moustaches have been more the stuff of popular histories of beard fashions, famous wearers or outlandish styles.

Recent years, however, have brought growing interest in the history of facial hair, with particular focus upon the early modern period and upon England. The variety of potential approaches and possibilities for future directions in the study of facial

hair have been highlighted by the contributions to a recent essay collection edited by Jennifer Evans and myself, incorporating academics and practitioners from various disciplines and spanning topics from portraiture and travel texts to theatrical beards and moustache combs.³

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the relationship between facial hair and constructions or representations of masculinity has been a dominant historiographical theme. Mark Albert Johnston's deconstructionist analysis of the semiotics of facial hair in early modern Britain, for example, has revealed the many and complex meanings carried by facial hair. For Johnston, beards were simultaneously part of the natural body and important signifiers of sex and gender. As much as they embodied strength, virility, mental capacity and health, they could also suggest vanity and both physical and moral weakness.⁴ Attempting to address such contradictions, philosophers and medical authors tried to 'fix' the nature of the beard by emphasizing its centrality to the male body and sexuality. As such the beard represented a proxy phallus and was also a synecdoche for the male body.⁵ Will Fisher's study of beards in early modern literature and culture similarly reveals contemporary concerns surrounding the meanings, symbolism and functions of beards. For Fisher they simultaneously constituted and reflected manliness, representing both 'a component of manhood [and] a means through which manhood was materialized'.⁶ Rather than a synecdoche for the male body, therefore, facial hair was here seen as an *enabler* of masculinity, something that was both a 'morphological reality' and a cultural artefact.⁷ In general, the beard was deemed a 'natural' ensign of a healthy male body and one that spoke of characteristics including sexual potency and martial strength. Most recently, Eleanor Rycroft has explored theatrical representations of the beard. Rycroft notes the multiple meanings carried by facial hair (whether as a 'thing, commodity, object or ornament') and the ways in which it blurs the boundary between 'subject' and 'object'. Here, the beard both reflected early modern culture, but also bore important value and meaning for men. It was a symbol of sexual difference and also, to some degree, of the supposed superiority of men's bodies over those of women.⁸ Overall, then, as an outward manifestation of the reproductive capacity of the individual man, the beard bore strong symbolic significance. The ability to grow one was a clear line of demarcation between masculine and effeminate men.

A second strong theme has been the place of facial hair within the humoral body and, in particular, its relationship to catamenia and the expelling of excess bodily fluids.⁹

³ Jennifer Evans and Alun Withey, 'Introduction', in Evans and Withey (eds), *Framing the Face: New Perspectives on the History of Facial Hair* (London: Palgrave, 2018). Part of this historiographical discussion is adapted (with the permission of Dr Evans) from the introduction to this volume, 2–4.

⁴ Mark Albert Johnston, *Beard Fetish in Early Modern England: Sex, Gender, and Registers of Value* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 43–6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁶ Will Fisher, *Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 99.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Eleanor Rycroft, *Facial Hair and the Performance of Early Modern Masculinity* (London: Routledge, 2020), esp. 8–10, 13.

⁹ Johnston, *Beard Fetish*, 43–6, 48–50; Fisher, *Materializing Gender*, 102–3, 108–9; See also Patricia Simons, *The Sex of Men in Premodern Europe: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge

As Fisher, Johnston and others have identified, facial hair was regarded (and described by contemporaries) as a waste product or excrement resulting from heat caused by the production of sperm in the reins, or lower abdomen. As this heat rose upwards through male bodies, it emerged and coagulated through the skin of the head and face.¹⁰ Some limited attention has also been paid to the effects of humoral balance upon the colour of hair and beards and its role in assessing individual humoral complexion.¹¹ Further work is being done in this area, including efforts to gain a deeper understanding of how venereal disease and other afflictions of the male sexual and reproductive organs were caused and were in turn revealed through the visible loss of facial hair.¹²

Again, with a strong focus on the early modern period, the role of barbers in shaving, as well as broader social and cultural symbols in their own right, has attracted recent study. Margaret Pelling's landmark work on barber-surgeons revealed the suite of corporeal tasks undertaken by barbers, as well as their position within structures of civic hierarchy and urban life.¹³ As well as shaving, these included bloodletting, tongue-scraping and ear cleaning. As Pelling argues, of all practitioners, it was barbers and barber-surgeons who managed bodily surfaces and regulated the body's noisome emissions and excretions.¹⁴ Outside England, Sandra Cavallo has charted the functions of the barber in early modern Italy, revealing the close associations between the hygiene practices of the barber and the 'medical' function of the surgeon.¹⁵ The status of early modern barbers as literary and cultural stereotypes has also been highlighted by Eleanor Decamp, whose *Civic and Medical Worlds in Early Modern England* explores the semiotics of barbering practices, tools and working spaces, alongside the importance of shaving as a key function of the barber. Decamp also discusses the troubled relationship between barbers and surgeons and the importance of terminology in negotiating occupational boundaries.¹⁶ Little work has yet focused on barbers during and after the eighteenth century, however, and particularly on how the decline of facial hair and rise of self-shaving affected the nature and status of the relationship between men and barbers.

Alongside the early modern period, Victorian England has also proved fruitful for historians of facial hair. Christopher Oldstone-Moore and others have explored

University Press, 2013), 27–30; Jennifer Jordan, “‘That ere with Age, his strength Is utterly decay'd’: Understanding the Male Body in Early Modern Manhood”, in Kate Fisher and Sarah Toulalan (eds), *Bodies, Sex and Desire from the Renaissance to the Present* (London: Palgrave, 2011), 35–7.

¹⁰ Johnston, *Beard Fetish*, 44–5; see also Simons, *The Sex of Men*, 27–30; Jennifer Jordan, ‘That ere with Age’, 35–7.

¹¹ Johnston, *Beard Fetish*, 44–5.

¹² Jennifer Evans, *Men's Sexual Health in Early Modern England* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming).

¹³ Margaret Pelling, *The Common Lot: Sicknes, Medical Occupations and the Urban Poor in Early Modern England* (London: Longman, 1998), 209, 242.

¹⁴ Margaret Pelling, ‘Appearance and Reality: Barber-Surgeons, the Body and Disease’, in A. L. Beier and Roger Finlay (eds), *The Making of the Metropolis: London, 1500–1700* (London: Longman, 1986), 91–5.

¹⁵ Sandra Cavallo, *Artisans of the Body in Early Modern Italy: Identities, Families and Masculinities* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), ch. 2.

¹⁶ Eleanor Decamp, *Civic and Medical Worlds in Early Modern England: Performing Barbbery and Surgery* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

the Victorian ‘beard movement’. Here, a new climate of ideas in the mid-nineteenth century surrounding male identity and corporeality, and in particular a new focus upon the physicality of the male body, saw beards and moustaches return to prominence as key signifiers of masculinity, after virtually 150 years of beardlessness.¹⁷ As John Tosh suggests, a combination of factors acted to sharpen gender distinctions and remodel concepts of masculinity and manliness.¹⁸ Among these were the physical and emotional challenges faced by men of adapting to a newly industrializing society and an increasing focus upon and valorization of work emphasizing men’s role as the domestic breadwinners.¹⁹ In addition was the increasing scrutiny of male authority, both in the workplace and at home. Tosh argues that men were forced to modify their behaviour and self-presentation in attempts to reassert authority over home and hearth, as women increasingly claimed dominion over the household economy.²⁰ A third factor was the apparent polarization of male and female bodies. On one level, this broad new emphasis upon the sexual ‘otherness’ and bodily difference of women led to the privileging of gender-specific bodily characteristics. It also encouraged a spectrum of male stereotypes which, at one extreme, manifested in fears about weak, effeminate and homosexual men. These were amplified by claims of the physical and moral laxity of the male population in the mid-century.²¹ At the other extreme, however, was a new stereotype: the ultramasculine, heroic soldier. The 1840s saw new respect for martial values and, in particular, for soldiers as exemplars of ideal masculine characteristics.²²

The themes addressed by historians of facial hair, in particular the symbolism and sociocultural meanings of facial hair, are echoed in the works of scholars investigating other types of head and body hair. Hair has become an emerging category for historical study in its own right. Recent works have mapped the cultural history of hair and the diverse contexts through which it can be understood from premodern to modern, including religion, fashion, production and practice, gender, race, sexuality, class and health.²³ Susan Vincent’s illustrated study of hair also provides a broad survey of the various meanings, practices and practitioners linked to hair through time.²⁴ Other studies have focused on specific themes. Malcolm Baker’s study of eighteenth-century portrait busts argues that representing hair was a key means through which sculptors could demonstrate their skill, since most men during this period were clean-shaven.²⁵

¹⁷ See Christopher Oldstone-Moore, ‘The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain’, *Victorian Studies*, 48:1 (2005): 7–34; Susan Walton, ‘From Squalid Impropriety to Manly Respectability: The Revival of Beards, Moustaches and Martial Values in the 1850s in England’, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 30:3 (2008): 229–45; Jacob Middleton, ‘The Beard and Victorian Ideas of Masculinity’, in Dominic Janes (ed.), *Back to the Future of the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2007), 27–40.

¹⁸ John Tosh, ‘Masculinities in an Industrializing Society: 1800–1914’, *Journal of British Studies*, 44:2 (2005): 330–1.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 334.

²⁰ Tosh, ‘Masculinities’, 332–3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 336, 338; Middleton, ‘The Beard’, 33; Walton, ‘Squalid Impropriety’, 234.

²² Walton, ‘Squalid Impropriety’, 235–8; Oldstone-Moore, ‘The Beard Movement’, 11–14.

²³ See, e.g., Edith Snook (ed.), *A Cultural History of Hair in the Renaissance* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019); Margaret K. Powell and Joseph Roach (eds), *A Cultural History of Hair in the Enlightenment* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), and other volumes in the same series.

²⁴ Susan J. Vincent, *Hair: An Illustrated History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).

²⁵ Malcolm Baker, ‘“No Cap or Wig But a Thin Hair upon It”: Hair and the Male Portrait Bust in England around 1750’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 38:1 (2004): 63–77.

Equally, Baker suggests that portrayals of hair were deliberately constructed by sculptors in order to reflect the status and character of their subjects.²⁶ Studies of the eighteenth century have also charted the problematic relationship between real and false hair, in the form of wigs. Michael Kwass, for example, argues that during the eighteenth century, wigs spread beyond the aristocratic elite, becoming virtually ubiquitous. As this occurred, wigs lost their association with elite luxury consumption and instead carried other meanings, such as convenience, nature and physiognomy.²⁷ A number of studies have also explored the practices, material culture and technologies surrounding the removal of hair. As Chris Evans and I have argued elsewhere, eighteenth-century razors and shaving were at the intersection between technology and culture, amidst a Europe-wide fashion for the clean-shaven face.²⁸ For the nineteenth century, Rebecca Herzig has described how home remedies for hair removal were gradually superseded by commercial, chemical commodities.²⁹ She highlights that this shift was in part connected to the centralization and mechanization of meat production that required an effective and efficient process to remove hair from animal carcasses.³⁰ Even away from academic history and perhaps encouraged by the recent global fashion for beards, a host of popular books and articles has served a niche interest in beards and facial hair styles, often playing on perceptions of the ‘quirky’ nature of the subject matter. Facial hair has long provided a ready source of inspiration and anecdote for writers, in a tradition dating back to the eighteenth century.³¹ These works have demonstrated the vibrancy of the topic and its potential to reveal the ways in which the experiences of people in the past were shaped by large scale trends and processes.

Despite all of this work, however, and notwithstanding the attention paid to beards and the humoral body, there remains a general lack of understanding of the place of facial hair within broader and longer concepts of health, medicine and the body. More troublingly, some (often very basic) questions have been overlooked. How did men of different status, age or location understand or conceive of their facial hair? What

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Michael Kwass, ‘Big Hair: A Wig History of Consumption in Eighteenth-Century France’, *American Historical Review*, 111:3 (2006): 631–59.

²⁸ See Chris Evans and Alun Withey, ‘An Enlightenment in Steel: Innovation in the Steel Trades of Eighteenth-Century Britain’, *Technology and Culture*, 53:3 (2012): 533–60; Alun Withey, ‘Shaving and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 36:2 (2013): 225–43. For the aesthetic reasons driving the removal of hair, see Johannes Endres, ‘Diderot, Hogarth, and the Aesthetics of Depilation’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 38:1 (Fall 2004): 17–38.

²⁹ Rebecca M. Herzig, *Plucked: A History of Hair Removal* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 36.

³⁰ Herzig, *Plucked*, 44.

³¹ For some examples, see Anon., ‘Curious Remarks on Beards’, *New London Magazine* (November 1788): 597–600; Anon., ‘Thoughts upon Beards’, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, 34 (October 1833): 670; Richard Wright Proctor, *The Barber’s Shop* (London: Simkin, Marshall), 183; William Andrews, *At the Sign of the Barber’s Pole: Studies in Hirsute History* (Cottingham: J. R. Tutin, 1904); Reginald Reynolds, *Beards: An Omnium Gatherum* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1950); Christopher Oldstone-Moore, *Of Beards and Men: The Revealing History of Facial Hair* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015). More recently, the materiality and style of beards has proved attractive for popular studies: Lucinda Hawksley, *Moustaches, Whiskers and Beards* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2014); Rufus Cavendish, *The Little Book of Beards* (London: Summersdale, 2014).

governed their choices about whether to style, shape or shave it? Who shaved them or who taught them to shave, and how often did they undertake this centrally important task? What materials did men own, and from whom did they purchase them?

This omission raises questions about the relationship between male bodies and concepts of masculinity through time – a theme picked up in recent historiography. As Joanne Begiato notes, the historiography of British masculinities has used established masculine ‘types’ in its periodization: the ‘man of feeling’, the ‘muscular Christian’ and so forth.³² While broadly useful they do not necessarily or uniformly capture the attitudes or experiences of individual men in different locations, or at different levels of society. Equally, as Begiato also argues, historians have tended to see embodiment and male identity as being linked only in certain periods whereas, in fact, the male body and its characteristics have always been inextricably bound.³³ As a key characteristic of the male body, facial hair offers the opportunity to explore these links in detail. The period between 1650 and 1900 saw a paradigm shift in conceptions of the body. As the humoral model slowly retreated, so ideas about the fabric of the body, its mechanisms and processes also changed. While the place of facial hair within the humoral body has been amply demonstrated, how those conceptions changed over a longer period, according to shifting ideas about the body through the eighteenth century and beyond, remains less clear. Equally, the nature of facial hair as a component of masculinity and manliness is far from static. At some points in history the beard has symbolized virility, authority and power: at others, the shaved face has been the acme of masculine appearance. Throughout the period of the book, it has borne close associations with life stage. The first appearance of beard hair was a key marker of the onset of adulthood. Both the colour and thickness of the beard have also been used, both medically and culturally, to represent the decline of the body through age. The *ability* to grow a beard, however, has remained an important signifier of masculine power. There are also issues in assuming homogeneity in any beard fashion, or in broader beliefs about the nature and status of facial hair. In exploring facial hair among men of different classes, locations and even different races, this book also moves beyond the ‘white, literate, middle-class and genteel men’ who have hitherto dominated discussions of British masculinity.³⁴

Another area in need of deeper investigation is that of the practice, practitioners and material culture of facial hair. Again, the broad focus upon the early modern period masks a series of important shifts, which saw responsibility for shaving gradually move away from barbers and towards individual men. During the eighteenth century, fundamental changes in the structure of the barbering profession, together with the growing preference for self-shaving, had a marked effect on the haircutting trades. Nonetheless, barbers continued to be the mainstay of shaving provision for many men until the late nineteenth century. Little work to date, however, has explored the relationship between barbers and shaving over the *longue durée*. The grooming

³² Joanne Begiato, *Manliness in Britain, 1760–1900* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 5.

³³ *Ibid.*, 7–8.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

practices of individual men remain similarly obscure, as do even basic questions such as how men learnt to shave, leaving open questions surrounding the materials, skills and costs required, either of self-shaving or visiting the barber; the frequency of shaving; and the impact of external factors such as class and location. Still less attention has been paid to the rise of a commercial market for shaving products – an important factor in assessing the place of facial hair within discourses of masculinity, but also a missing topic from histories of consumption.

Overall, except for broad narratives of changes in beard fashions through time, there has been no diachronic analysis of the trajectory of facial hair and, in particular, its health and medical contexts. While existing studies of facial hair frequently focus upon fashion and the meanings of beards as short- or long-term assertions of masculinity within prevailing social and cultural contexts, this book takes a different approach. Viewed through the broad lens of health and medicine, facial hair can be seen as part of much broader and deeper changes in both attitudes to and concepts of the male body through time. While ‘fashion’ provides a useful framework for short-term understandings of the beard, it is only by understanding the close relationship between facial hair and the lived experience of the corporeal, physical and sexual male body that a deeper narrative becomes possible.

Running throughout the book are a number of key arguments. First is that, over time, facial hair gradually lost its medical connections and moved instead towards a less well-defined concept of corporeal hygiene and health. By 1800 facial hair had largely ceased to be a topic in medical publications and by the mid-nineteenth century had moved into lay and popular publications.

Second, the period between 1650 and 1900 brought marked change in terms of who undertook, and claimed authority over, the practice of shaving. After 1750, increasing numbers of men begin to shave themselves, rather than rely on a barber, helped by etiquette manuals stressing the ability to shave as a key gentlemanly skill. Although this was not adopted instantly nor uniformly across the social spectrum, it set in train a fundamental shift in responsibility for maintaining the male face. Again, while shaving still related to daily routines of hygiene and sometimes specifically to health, it was largely demedicalized, becoming instead simply part of the broader suite of male hygienic grooming tasks such as washing, combing and dressing.

This highlights a third key argument – that of the increasing commercialization of shaving from the early modern to the modern periods. While the history of cosmetics generally overlooks products specifically for men, I argue that the proliferation of shaving products and paraphernalia explored here served to create a new category of male personal grooming, one linked firmly to the consumption of ‘product’. Indeed, shaving products are argued here to represent perhaps the first true example of a market for cosmetic goods created for, and targeted specifically at, men.

Finally, however, the book demonstrates that the rise of self-shaving did not necessarily diminish either the place of barbers as key male practitioners, or the importance of their shops. Instead, barbers remained important figures in the provision of shaving throughout the nineteenth century, and much evidence shows not only that they continued to be busy but that demand often overwhelmed them. As it also argues, however, the fracturing of the haircutting trades had long and deep consequences for

the different groups, reflecting long-held enmities about the status of the practice of shaving.

Through the book it also becomes clear that the eighteenth century was in many ways a fulcrum point for change. This period was indeed transitional, with gradual shifts in concepts of the body. It saw key changes in the structure of medicine and medical practice. Cultural shifts, notably the rise of politeness, privileged the clean-shaven face and stimulated the move towards self-shaving. Technological developments in steel fundamentally altered the experience of shaving, while the growth of consumerism and commodification of shaving goods established new practices and expectations for male personal grooming, each of which continued into the next century and beyond.

But the eighteenth century has also been seen as an important stage in the development of public and private spheres, coinciding with the rise of the 'private gentleman' and the value placed on private life, a development in turn closely connected with the rise of the middle class and the lower or pseudo-gentry. Themes of public and private recur throughout the book. Whereas knowledge about male personal grooming in the early modern period, for example, had come largely from the family, the eighteenth century saw advice about shaving and other grooming tasks increasingly available in books and newspapers, limited of course to the literate with some purchasing power. Jurgen Habermas noted the place of popular literature in the 'bourgeois public sphere' in constructing new ideals of private and domestic life; published materials including advice literature and advertisements for shaving products offer some potential insight into the question of identity and self-fashioning.³⁵ The physical spaces and locations of personal grooming also had complex public and private dimensions, which shifted in the eighteenth century. The barbershop, as a homosocial space, was at once both public and private, involving personal interactions but also encouraging micropolitics, which in turn might feed into broader public discourse. The wearing or removing of facial hair could be both public and private, reflecting personal choice, or equally, as occurred in the eighteenth century, the desire to fit in with prevailing expectations of idealized male appearance. The commercialization and advertising of shaving products could also be seen as locating personal grooming within the desire for a public, as well as private identity. The literature on public and private spheres is large and complex, and a deep theoretical engagement is beyond the scope of this book. Its subject matter, however, does offer something in terms of the dynamic that often existed between the public and the private.

A brief note must be made about the choices governing the time span of this book. The period discussed here encapsulates a series of broad changes in the wearing of facial hair in Britain, beginning with slow decline of beard and moustaches in the seventeenth century, continuing through the generally beardless eighteenth century, before the resurgence of full beards and the Victorian 'beard movement' around 1852,

³⁵ Steve Sturdy, 'Introduction: Medicine, Health and the Public Sphere', in Steve Sturdy (ed.), *Medicine, Health and the Public Sphere in Britain, 1600–2000* (Oxford: Routledge, 2002), 5; Colin Jones has explored the interplay between public and private in eighteenth-century French medical advertising in 'The Great Chain of Buying: Medical Advertisement, the Bourgeois Public Sphere and the Origins of the French Revolution', *American Historical Review*, 101:1 (February 1996): 13–40.

and finally a second decline in the last decades of the nineteenth century. It therefore maps a centuries-long journey, first out of, then back into and finally again away from facial hair in Britain. The choice of 1650 as the starting point is largely governed by questions of change over time. Between 1550 and 1650, socio-medical attitudes towards facial hair remained broadly consistent, firmly rooted in the humours and reflecting prevailing ideals of the significative power of beards. While an earlier start would doubtless allow for extra material to be incorporated, this remained a period of relative stasis. The mid-seventeenth century, however, allows the same medical, corporeal, social and cultural meanings of facial hair to be mapped, but at a point of the beginnings of change. The choice of the last decades of the nineteenth century as the termination date of the book, by contrast, offer a natural point of conclusion as the last gasp of the Victorian 'beard movement'. By 1900, many men (especially younger men) had begun to tire of their beards, turning to moustaches and, increasingly, to the clean-shaven face, bringing to an end a cycle of beard-wearing spanning half a century and heralding a marked shift in the meanings, frequency and patterns of facial hair characteristic of the twentieth century, which would easily fill another monograph.

The long time period spanned by the book also governs its structure. To attempt to weave more than three hundred years of the health and medical conceptions, beliefs, practices and material culture of facial hair into a single narrative would be problematic at best and almost overwhelmingly complex at worst. Instead, this book is structured into four thematic parts: contexts; practice and practitioners; fashion and class; commodification, consumption and personal grooming. Each of these four parts has been chosen to allow exploration of the diverse contexts through which facial hair was understood and articulated and also, perhaps more importantly, to best serve the aim of recovering the lived experience of facial hair through time. Each themed part has its own chronology and explores, in different ways, the concepts, practices, practitioners and material cultures of facial hair and how these both drew from and informed prevailing ideas about masculinity and male appearance.

Having outlined these broad arguments, it is instructive to outline the four parts of the book and their chapters in more detail.

Structure and key themes

Part I

The first part maps the complex and changing functions of facial hair within discourses of masculinity from the early modern to the late Victorian periods and, more broadly, its place within shifting health and medical concepts of the male body through time. Throughout this period, facial hair was a key element of the male body and also of prevailing concepts of masculinity. But, as is demonstrated, the significative power of facial hair depended greatly upon cultural, as much as medical, contexts. As Chapter 2 demonstrates, early modern beards represented strength and authority, as well as being key markers of sexual difference, life stage and health. Facial hair was a central component in the male humoral body and effectively an exhaust gas from the production of sperm, which rose up through the body and solidified on the face. As

such facial hair signified heat, which in turn betokened virility and fecundity, as well as character, read through the system of bodily signs consistent with temperament.

By 1700, however, as Chapter 3 discusses, new aesthetic standards of the body, partly aligned with expectations of polite manly appearance, saw facial hair effectively disappear from men's faces across Europe. Here, rather than strength and virility, facial hair suggested a rough plebeian or rustic masculine 'other', in contrast to the neat, elegant Georgian gentleman. But matters were not so clear cut. Despite social imperatives to shave the beard, the beard remained an important marker of male strength and virility; if a man should not display a beard, he should still be able to grow one. The eighteenth century also brought changing ideas in health and medical ideas about facial hair, and specifically gradual moves away from humoral conceptions of its origin and generation. First was the abandonment of specific links between facial hair and spermatoc production by the mid-eighteenth century, although overarching connections with inner heat lingered for decades afterwards. Perhaps the most important change in this period, however, was what I term the 'externalization' of facial hair. From the mid-eighteenth century, rather than originating deep within the body, facial hair was viewed as originating on, or just below the surface of the skin. No longer a waste product, it had moved from the body's interior to its exterior.

As the fourth chapter shows, the mid-Victorian period brought further change with the emergence of the so-called beard movement, which re-established and celebrated facial hair as a totem of masculinity and a 'natural', God-given symbol of male power, strength and supposed superiority. At the same time, however, the place of facial hair within health and medical discourse shifted further and arguably moved more into the popular, rather than professional arena. There was certainly a marked decline in discussions about facial hair by medical practitioners. While the long eighteenth century saw much debate about beards in formal medical texts, the nineteenth century saw little. One exception was the popular practice of physiognomy, within which facial hair provided both a subject for study and a complicating factor, hiding the features to be 'read'. Instead, as the chapter also explores, claims about the supposed health and medical benefits of beards, including protecting the face, throat, airways, chest and teeth, and as a natural protector ('nature's respirator') against climate, dust and germs, entered popular currency and were widely recycled. As this chapter argues, however, such claims were actually rooted in earlier debates about air quality and the utility of a new device – the 'respirator' – patented decades earlier.

Finally, as Chapters 3 and 4 both demonstrate, facial hair was a key component within growing debates about race and corporeal 'value'. From the eighteenth century, facial hair was one of the characteristics through which non-European races were judged. The presence of beards, along with their colour and texture and even the methods used in removing them, all fed into assumptions about the nature and status of 'foreign' male bodies and were used in assessing hierarchies of homo sapiens.

Part II

Part II turns to the practice of shaving and also the shifting role of barbers as providers of shaving through time. A central theme of the chapters in this part is the gradual shift away from barbers as the main providers of shaving and the slow rise of self-shaving.

As Chapter 5 highlights, in the early modern period, visiting a barber was the primary means through which most men were shaved. Moreover, well into the nineteenth century, dictionary definitions of barbers frequently identified shaving, rather than haircutting, as their key task. As the chapter suggests, the cost of purchasing and maintaining shaving equipment, together with lack of domestic space and perhaps even skill, meant that barbers were often the most expedient option for men. Barbers were ubiquitous across towns and villages in early modern Britain, often tailoring their costs to the pockets of their customers. As evidence from the probate inventories of early modern barbershops demonstrates, businesses ranged from large, well-equipped premises to smaller, ad hoc affairs or even rooms within houses. Some dispensed with shops altogether, acting as ‘flying barbers’, travelling to the houses of wealthy clients. Addressing the important and often neglected issue of training, this chapter also explores the nature of apprenticeships and the means through which apprentices learned to shave, from hands-on experience to practice on dead animals.

Questions of how often men visited barbers to be shaved, the costs involved and the broader implications in understanding men’s facial appearance in the long eighteenth century are explored in Chapter 6. Evidence from early modern diaries and household records suggest that being shaved was not a daily task but instead undertaken twice or thrice weekly, very often including a Saturday in preparation for church. It is also clear that the costs of shaving could vary and depended on whether men combined being shaved with other barber services, as well as social status. Middling and elite men frequently contracted barbers to visit their homes, paying them on account monthly, quarterly and sometimes annually, suggesting the long-term relationships that existed between barbers and clients. For poorer men, cheap and cheerful penny shaves were widely available with little to suggest that the same homosocial relationships existing between elites and barbers were not replicated lower down the social scale.

The second main theme in Part II, however, is that of the gradual rise of self-shaving, its effect on the barbering trade and the relationship between men and barbers. Before 1750, men certainly had experimented with self-shaving, but the means through which they learnt to do so has so far remained obscure. As Chapter 6 demonstrates, a variety of sources, including informal advice through social networks or fraternal mentors, learning through observation or even practising on family or friends, saw men begin to experiment with self-shaving. Much evidence also attests to the importance of servants in providing shaving services to gentlemen, bypassing the need both for barbers and to undertake the task oneself.

In the later eighteenth century, however, as Chapter 7 explores, it is clear that men across the social scale were beginning to shave themselves in greater numbers, assisted not only by new razor technology, but also by didactic literature on how to shave. These included dedicated manuals by razor-makers for individual men and servants, instructions included with products and even the ‘letters’ pages of newspapers, which widened opportunities to anonymously seek and receive advice about personal grooming. Amidst negative portrayals of rough, inept barbers and painful shaves too, men were encouraged to do the job themselves and avoid both a prodigious shaving rash and the stereotypical incessant chatter of the barber. But shaving was not the only facial grooming task. After 1850, with the onset of the ‘beard movement’, maintaining

a beard posed another new problem for men. The social importance of being able to grow a beard was played on by advertisers of hair growth products, who promised facially hairless men the chance for a luxuriant crop of beard. (Advertisements for such products also reveal underlying racial stereotypes relating to the colour of beards.) Men were also encouraged by etiquette manuals to keep their beards clean and neat, employing a variety of brushes and combs to keep them free of tangles. Nevertheless, by the 1870s, there were tensions between competing ideals of the appearance of the beard and also the broader question of whether men should engage in grooming practices, or instead let their beards grow 'natural'.

How, though, did the apparently increasing vogue for self-shaving affect the role of the barber both as shaver and as an effectively male practitioner? The second half of the eighteenth century certainly brought straitened times for barbers. In 1745, after several centuries yoked together in the hybrid form of barber-surgeons, the barbers and surgeons split into separate occupations and companies. This has generally been assumed as heralding the demise of barbering and its gradual transmutation into hairdressing. It is also easy to assume that the 'beard movement' put the final nail in the coffin of the shaving barber by removing his customer base almost overnight. As Chapter 8 shows, however, the situation was far more complex. The second half of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth did herald a downturn in the fortunes of barbers and saw the fracturing of the haircutting trades. It is also clear that the period saw the establishment of a lingering enmity between barbers and hairdressers, with the latter often refusing to provide shaving services as beneath them due to their 'polite' status. By the early nineteenth century, even hairdressers were in a period of decline, their business sharply affected by the decline of wigs. Perhaps the most surprising finding of this chapter, however, is the remarkable popularity of barbers as shavers, especially among the lower orders. Even throughout the height of the 'beard movement' barbers were under at times almost overwhelming pressure of demand from working-class men. Correspondence to trade journals reveals barbers regularly working all night on Saturdays to cope with the constant queues of labourers for their hebdomadal shave.

Part III

The third part turns to two alternative perspectives on both the relationship between facial hair styles and masculinity, and individual responsibility for fashioning the face. While much of the evidence for facial hair fashions is refracted through the lens of the middle and upper levels of society, Chapter 9 attempts to recover plebeian and working-class fashions through studies of, first, eighteenth-century 'wanted' advertisements for runaways, criminals and others and, second, Victorian prisoner photographs. In the eighteenth century, it has generally been assumed that British men wore little, if any, facial hair. As evidence from 'wanted' advertisements suggests, however, although beards appear to have been rare among the lower orders, certain other fashions, such as side whiskers, were not necessarily uncommon. Conversely, studies of the Victorian 'beard movement' have tended to suggest that the fashion was hegemonic and adopted across the social scale. As a detailed quantitative study based on visual evidence from

prisons across Britain shows, however, this was far from being the case. Large numbers of men appear to have remained clean-shaven, while the archetypal full Victorian beard was itself seemingly unusual among criminal men. Instead, facial hair styles varied according to factors, including age, status, location and even occupation.

While most of the book deals with 'civilian' men, Chapter 10 deals with a section of male society – institutional inmates – who are often ignored in studies of facial hair and in appearance more generally. For various reasons, a number of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century institutions imposed rules on facial appearance, in turn removing personal agency and authority over the body. Often this related to strictures of hygiene, but it could also be read as the purposeful exercise of power and control over inmates' bodies. In prisons, including prison ships and workhouses, for example, men were routinely washed and shaved upon entry in attempts to control vermin, to create a uniform appearance and also arguably to mark an important point of departure from the outside world and routines. Hospitals and asylums also imposed regular shaving and haircutting on male inmates, again for reasons of cleanliness and again perhaps to impose order and routine, perhaps especially important in the case of mentally ill patients. In many cases, barbers were employed by institutions specifically to shave inmates, offering a different perspective on the usual relationship between barber and customer. Equally, the removal of choice and the question of the physical enforcement of rules about shaving raises new questions about choice and authority over men's appearance.

Part IV

The final part of *Concerning Beards* maps the emergence and development of a market for male personal grooming products. Its chapters collectively argue that shaving products represent the first example of a socially acceptable market for male cosmetics and one that offered a chance for men not only to remove facial hair entirely but to style and even beautify their faces in ways previously stigmatized by connections with effeminacy. In essence, it suggests that what was created was a new concept of men's personal grooming, yoked to the use and consumption of 'product'.

The early modern period saw little in the way of commercially available shaving materials, with even razors hardly appearing in advertisements before the mid-eighteenth century. No evidence can be found of either shaving preparations or specific remedies for shaving cuts or rashes in early modern domestic remedy culture although, as Chapter 10 shows, a raft of skin preparations, were equally available to men as to women, and provided ample opportunity for men to treat shaving-related conditions.

After 1750, however, advertisements emerged for a whole range of shaving pastes, powders, oils and, most importantly, soaps, as well as new types of cast steel razors. At the same time came new social imperatives for men to fashion their own appearance. Refining the body was part of the broader concept of polite manliness which saw new attention focused on the appearance of various sites on the body, of which the face, as a publicly visible surface, was arguably the most important. Whereas overattention to personal grooming, and particularly the use of cosmetics, had previously been viewed as unmanly and even effeminate, it now formed part of the corporeal duties

expected of a polite gentleman. Chapter 11 explores this new world of commercial shaving products, through a detailed study of Georgian and early Victorian shaving product advertisements. It suggests that these reveal intriguing tensions in competing expectations of manliness and male behaviours. Razor advertisements played on themes of hardness, control, temper and authority, but those for shaving soaps and other products stressed softness, luxury and even scent. As it also explores, many advertisers also played on themes of health and treatment in their advertising puffs, as well as stressing improvements to functionality.

The final chapter turns to the market for shaving products after 1850, amidst the Victorian beard movement, and offers a new perspective on the trajectory of the beard fashion. Given the apparent popularity of the fashion, it seems logical to assume that, as men shaved less, they no longer relied on, or needed, shaving products including cosmetics and razors. As the chapter demonstrates, however, the picture is more nuanced. A quantitative and qualitative study of thousands of nineteenth-century newspaper advertisements does appear to show that the beard movement initially had a dramatic effect on certain types of cosmetic shaving products, with some experiencing a great decline in the frequency of advertising and others disappearing altogether. The pattern shown in advertising, however, suggests both that men were perhaps slower to join the fashion than has previously been assumed, and that, by the 1870s, it had begun to run out of steam, after which shaving product advertising not only began to increase but also changed noticeably in form and style. Equally, innovations in razor technology actually increased throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, with the numbers of patents reaching their highest point.

To sum up, therefore, this book is not simply a study of beards. Indeed, it is not *even* a study of beards, but rather of the much broader contexts of facial hair, worn or removed. It is not primarily concerned with beard fashions or styles, with who had the longest beard in history, which razor was the sharpest or which barber the quickest. Rather, it takes facial hair as a means rather than an end, a lens through which to address many questions to contribute to existing debates and hopefully stimulate new ones. It offers, for example new perspectives upon a variety of health and medical histories. First, its long-term study of the relationship between facial hair, health and changing notions of the corporeal body gives new insights into the gradual shift away from the humoral body from the eighteenth century, the effects of new technologies and emerging medical and corporeal theories upon belief and practice.

Second, it offers a wholly new study of male grooming and the material culture and commercialization of shaving, from its early incarnations in the seventeenth century, through to global branding by 1900. In so doing, it opens up new debates about cosmetic use by men – a factor hitherto largely overlooked. It also addresses some basic but, again, neglected questions about grooming practices, including how men learned to shave, who taught them and how far was self-shaving combined with barbering. In addressing these, it reveals the fraternal knowledge economy of personal grooming, encompassing family, friends and peer groups, as well as instructional literature.

Third, it provides a new, long-term study of barbers as providers of shaving services for men. While early modern barber-surgeons, as noted below, have attracted historical attention, far less is known about those who were ‘just’ barbers. The book

provides a detailed and multifaceted study of the nature and space of barbershops, the material culture, practices and instruments of barbering, the changing nature of the relationship between men and barbers through time and, perhaps most importantly, the trajectory of the barbering profession following the sundering of the barber and surgeons' companies in 1745. Thus far, barbers (as opposed to barber-surgeons) have perhaps been regarded as the 'poor relations' of the medical professions; here they are established as key practitioners of the male body.

Finally, while much literature on facial hair to date has tended to treat beard fashions and individual styles as homogenous, this book looks beyond elite and middle-class men and attempts to reconstruct facial hair fashions and practices at different times and across society. While not centrally concerned with fashion, it questions the uniformity of facial hair trends and assumptions of the social depth to which they penetrated.

Part One

Contexts

Facial hair, health and the body, c. 1650–1750

As a number of studies have recently shown, facial hair in the early modern period was freighted with a complex range of meanings. Unsurprisingly, the relationship between facial hair and constructions or representations of masculinity has been the dominant theme. As Mark Johnston's deconstructionist study of the semiotics of facial hair admirably demonstrates, beards carried many meanings including 'natural' strength, procreative power, mental acuity and the inner state of the body. At the same time, however, beard-wearing could also symbolize effete vanity, moral or physical weakness.¹ Faced with such contradictions, philosophers and medical authors attempted to 'fix' the role of the beard and did so by emphasizing its centrality to the male body and sexuality. In this reading the beard was both a proxy phallus and a synecdoche for the male body itself.² Will Fisher has also explored contemporary concerns with the nature, meanings and function of male facial hair, arguing that the beard was a marker of masculine identity, one that simultaneously constituted and reflected manliness. Here the beard is presented as 'a component of manhood [and] a means through which manhood was materialized.'³ Rather than a synecdoche for the male body, therefore, Fisher sees facial hair as an *enabler* of masculinity, one that was simultaneously a 'morphological reality' and a cultural artefact.⁴ In general terms, the beard was deemed a 'natural' ensign of a healthy male body and one that spoke of characteristics including sexual potency and martial strength.⁵

Fisher, Johnston and others have also explored the place of facial hair within the humoral framework and its relationship to catamenia and the expelling of excess bodily fluids.⁶ Beards were popularly linked to male bodily heat and specifically the

¹ Mark Albert Johnston, *Beard Fetish in Early Modern England: Sex, Gender, and Registers of Value* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 43–6. See also Edith Snook, 'Health and Hygiene', and Mark Albert Johnston, 'Gender and Sexuality', in Edith Snook (ed.), *A Cultural History of Hair in the Renaissance* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 85–114, published after this chapter had been written and late into production of this book and is therefore not incorporated in the discussion in this chapter.

² Johnston, *Beard Fetish*, 49.

³ Will Fisher, *Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 99.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Parts of the discussion on this and the following page are taken from Jennifer Evans and Alun Withey (eds), *Framing the Face: New Perspectives on the History of Facial Hair* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 2–3, reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.

⁶ Johnston, *Beard Fetish*, 43–6, 48–50; Fisher, *Materializing Gender*, 102–3, 108–9; also more briefly in Patricia Simons, *The Sex of Men in Premodern Europe: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 27–30; Jennifer Jordan, "'That Ere with Age, His Strength Is Utterly

production of semen. They were regarded variously as excrements, sooty residues or ‘fumosities’ and as a common (if also problematic in terms of gender binaries) adornment of the male body. Less attention has been paid, however, to the broader relationship between hair, the humours and ideas about the healthy body. Johnston, for example, briefly touches upon ideas about the role of beard colour in assessing humoral temperament and assessments of health based upon the quality of facial hair.⁷ Often, however, such discussions are refracted firmly through the lens of masculinity, obscuring the medical context. Perhaps more importantly, the nature of the relationship between beards and other types of facial hair has largely been overlooked. The question remains as to whether masculinity and ‘medical’ understandings of the beard were effectively coterminous, or whether there was conceptual space between them. As will be shown below, beards formed part of a skein of ideas about the nature and place of hair within humoral understandings of the body.

The nature and composition of hair, c. 1500–1750

As Edith Snook has recently argued, both the physical attributes of hair and its appearance, are culturally located. While historians have discussed topics relating to the appearance of hair – most notably debates about wigs – they have been more reticent in addressing the corporeality of hair.⁸ Ideas about the nature of hair were made and remade throughout the early modern period, affected by changing ideas about medicine, physiology and the body. Abundant, healthy and flowing hair was constructed through a variety of literary and medical discourses as a natural ensign of the body (and, specifically, the European body).⁹

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, knowledge of the origins, nature and construction of hair was firmly grounded within humoral medical theory. In broad terms hair, along with fingernails, was regarded as one of the common ‘superfluties’ or ‘teguments’ of the body. William Clever’s 1590 *Flower of Phisicke* defined it as ‘a material cause derived from the humours and inward partes of the body, as of the vaines’.¹⁰ For Clever, high temperatures within the body combined with a substance called ‘hypostasis’ in the ‘bleather’ (bladder), in turn, contributing to the formation of hair.¹¹ Such ideas were commonplace throughout the period. Over sixty years later, in 1654, the Wokingham physician and prolific medical author Robert Turner published a detailed study of the human body, in which he discussed the nature of hair, arguing them to be ‘superfluties made of the grosse fume or smoake passing out of the viscous

Decay’d”: Understanding the Male Body in Early Modern Manhood’, in Kate Fisher and Sarah Toulalan (eds), *Bodies, Sex and Desire from the Renaissance to the Present* (London: Palgrave, 2011), 35–7.

⁷ Johnston, *Beard Fetish*, 44–5

⁸ Edith Snook, ‘Beautiful Hair, Health and Privilege in Early Modern England’, *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 15:4 (2015): 22–3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 24–5.

¹⁰ William Clever, *The Flower of Phisicke Wherein Is Perfectly Comprehended a True Introduction and Method for Man’s Assured Health* (London: Printed by Roger Ward, 1590), 86.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

matter, and thickned [*sic*] to the form of hair'.¹² Hair was thus presented as a viscous substance resulting from heat in the lower body and abdominal area, which rose, cooled and coagulated on reaching the surface of the skin.¹³

The fundamental principle governing humoral concepts of the creation of hair was heat. Hair was viewed as a by-product of the body's vital inner warmth. The flexibility of humoral theory allowed for the variations in the appearance, abundance and distribution of hair, which could be neatly explained as a result of individual humoral temperament, as well as temperature differences between the sexes.¹⁴ The hot and dry nature of men, as Samuel Haworth pointed out, made them naturally hairier than women, since their (men's) 'agitating virtue cause the blood more briskly to ferment, and circulate with more velocity'.¹⁵ Such explanations changed remarkably little up to the first half of the eighteenth century. Even in 1750, books such as *Aristotle's Problems* were still in print, which attributed hair growth to heat and vapour rising from the body. Here women's natural cold and moist state was explained by their having 'more matter of hair' which increased 'in the time of their monthly terms'. Since women had no beards, the 'matter of the beard' was diverted to hair on their heads.¹⁶ While the continued publication of the book cannot be taken as evidence that its contents were unquestioningly accepted, it at least confirms that such ideas were still in common currency.

A variety of health functions were ascribed to hair. Some viewed it as a means of protecting the brain, and the body more generally, from excess heat. Others saw it as a natural waste product of the body – commonly described in terms of a form of excrement, which carried away potentially harmful substances. In humoral theory, the health of the body could be regulated by the evacuation of waste materials through urination, defecation, vomit, sweat and so on. While practitioners could artificially induce this through various types of physic, the body also provided its own, natural sources of evacuation. According to Turner, for example, hair performed a vital function since 'by it the fumosity of the brain[s] are purged'.¹⁷ In a healthy body, the continued evacuation of the humours through hair growth prevented potentially dangerous accumulations within the body. While in women, the monthly 'terms' acted to expel excremental matter, the growth of a man's hair and beard was viewed as essentially part of the same process. But problems might arise if the system became blocked, allowing 'degenerate humours ... [to] retire backe' within the body. If this occurred, changes in the appearance of hair could presage a potentially dangerous

¹² Robert Turner, *Mikrokosmopgrapha. A Description of the Little World, or, Body of Man, Exactly Delineating All the Parts According to the Best Anatomists* (London: Printed for Edward Archer, 1654), 4.

¹³ Jordan, 'That Ere with Age', 31.

¹⁴ Anu Korhonen, 'Strange Things Out of Hair: Baldness and Masculinity in Early Modern England', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 41:2 (2010): 380.

¹⁵ Samuel Haworth, *Anthropologia, or, A Philosophic Discourse Concerning Man, Being the Anatomy Both of His Soul and Body* (London: Printed for Stephen Foster, 1680), 193.

¹⁶ Anon., *Aristotle's Book of Problems, with Other Astronomers, Astrologers, Physicians and Philosophers, Wherein Is Contain'd Divers Questions and Answers Touching the State of Man* (London: Printed for S. N., 1749), 3.

¹⁷ Turner, *Mikrokosmopgrapha*, 5.

accumulation of humours. As William Clever noted, ‘for when the body is disturbed, by any fuliginous or smokie vapours, then the outward forme of the bodie altereth and changeth therewith: besides which, the haire doo eyther alter in their outward forme, and fall away, as leaues decay from the moisture of the tree’.¹⁸

Even beard hairs were sometimes attributed with health benefits. In his *Pro Sacerdotum bartis Apologia*, Joannes Valerianus took the usual humoral stance in arguing that long beards drew off superfluous humours. In addition, he claimed that facial hair protected the teeth from rotting and strengthened the gums, shielded the face from the sun and also helped prevent specific conditions such as quinsy.¹⁹ This is not to say that beards were universally acclaimed as a healthy appendage, however. John Bulwer’s encomium to the beard listed various complaints about the supposed disadvantages of facial hair. These included obstruction of the mouth, leading to the incorrect chewing and digestion of food, as well as inhibiting respiration, the unsightly trapping of food and liquid in the beard and the prevention of clear diction caused by the ‘gravity and weight’ of facial hair preventing ‘easie motion’ of the upper lip.²⁰

Since it offered a view into the hidden inner workings of the body, hair could be a useful means of divining humoral temperament. Its colour, physical properties, appearance and health were all regarded as potential signals of bodily constitution and also the relevant signs and planets which acted upon the individual body. ‘Dark flaxen haire’ was a characteristic of Leo, while Sagittarians displayed light brown or chestnut-coloured hair. Black hair was indicative of Capricorn.²¹ Hot planets like Jupiter, Mars and the sun itself were likely to show in ‘yellow complexion, and yellow haire, or reddish’ their physical properties manifest upon the body.²²

This same concept applied to assessments of individual constitutions. A fleshy, compact body, a high facial colour and smiling countenance, could indicate a hot, sanguine constitution. The hair of a sanguine person was likely to be of a bright, even red, colour, ‘the very colour of the Humour whereof it is generated’.²³ The hair of cold, moist and flabby phlegmatics, by contrast, was brown, straight and lank. Melancholic individuals, in line with their cold and dry constitutions, were slight of body, with ‘hair that is black, hard, rough or crass’.²⁴ Choleric, according to physician John Floyer in 1690, had yellow or black hair and a yellowish complexion of the face.²⁵ Some argued that the ‘wit and natural disposition’ of a person could be read through their bodily appearance. Juan Huarte’s 1594 *Examination of Men’s Wits* argued that thick, black, hard hair betokened imagination and understanding.

¹⁸ Clever, *Flower of Phisicke*, 86.

¹⁹ Quoted in Tom Robinson, ‘Beards’, *St James Magazine*, 4:40 (May 1881): 385–6.

²⁰ John Bulwer, *Anthropometamorphosis: Man Transform’d or the Artificial Changeling* (London: W. Hunt, 1653), 193–4.

²¹ Turner, *Mikrokosmopgrapha*, 150.

²² *Ibid.*, 153.

²³ Haworth, *Anthropologia*, 140.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 144–5.

²⁵ John Floyer, *The Preternatural State of Animal Humours Described by Their Qualities, Which Depend on the Different Degrees of Their Fermentation and the Cure of Each Particular Caco-chymia Is Performed by Medicines of a Particular Specific Taste, Described...* (London: Printed by W. Downing, 1696), 111.

The state of the hair pointed to the amount and type of moisture in the brain, in turn suggesting mental acuity.²⁶ Others, however, included the beard as a less than desirable characteristic. Alexander Barclay's *Shepherd's Kalender*, still in print in 1656, advised readers to 'beware ... specially of a man that hath no beard, for such be inclined to divers vices and evils, and one ought to eschue [*sic*] his company as his mortal enemy ... A man that hath black hair and a red beard, signifies to be lletcherous, disloyall, a vanter, and one ought not to trust in him.'²⁷ Given the connection between beardlessness and effeminacy, the first example is fairly obvious. The disparity between the colour of the hair and beard in the latter example, however, implied one whose humoral balance was dangerously out of skew. As Robert Basset explained, 'Because the diversity of colour of haire proceeds from the diversity of humours: one and the selfe same man having divers humours predominant in him, is commonly, inconstant, dissembling, and mutable.'²⁸

If the colour, aesthetic and physical properties of hair might betray humoral state, they could also provide a glimpse into the body's inner health.²⁹ Changes to the appearance, strength and structure of hair, were therefore important signs through which the health of an individual could be judged. Those whose hair fell short of aesthetic ideals could find themselves under suspicion of loose living, not least given the raft of evidence citing falling hair as a symptom of venereal disease.³⁰ Various medical authors attested that 'excesse venerie' caused men's hair to 'decayeth, waxeth thin and vtterly looseth in the roots'.³¹

Within the broader maintenance of health, removing hair could be a means to restore balance, encouraging further growth and thereby releasing trapped substance within the head. For a 'phrensy' or delirium caused by an obstruction of the spirits, John Shirley recommended that the head be shaved and bathed with a chemical preparation, to encourage the release of 'poysonous vapours'.³² Nevertheless, baldness was undesirable since it bore negative connotations. As Anu Korhonen points out, heads covered by hair represented the 'natural' state in the early modern period. While male baldness was surely common, various social, cultural and medical factors combined to render it undesirable. Shaming rituals, for example, degraded bald men (and women) and head shaving was a highly visible and public punishment.³³ Baldness was interpreted as an indicator of life stage and age, but its onset could also signal a shift from haleness to decrepitude.

²⁶ Juan Huarte, *Examen de ingenios. = The Examination of Mens Vvits in Whicch [*sic*], by Discovering the Varietie of Natures, Is Shewed for What Profession Each One Is Apt, and How far He Shall Profit Therein* (London: Printed by Adam Islip, 1594), 83–4.

²⁷ Alexander Barclay, *The Shepherds Kalender: Newly Augmented and Corrected* (London: Printed by Robert Ibbitson, 1656), 87.

²⁸ Robert Basset, *Curiosities: or the Cabinet of Nature Containing Phylosophical, Naturall, and Morall Questions Fully Answered and Resolved* (London: Printed by R. B. G., 1637), 46.

²⁹ Snook, 'Beautiful Hair', 26.

³⁰ For example, John Shirley, *A Short Compendium of Chirurgery Containing Its Grounds & Principles* (London: Printed by W. G., 1678), 115.

³¹ Quoted in Korhonen, 'Strange Things', 380.

³² Shirley, *Short Compendium*, 79.

³³ Korhonen, 'Strange Things', 374.

Beards and the male body

‘This is the last part of the face which one séeth outwardly, and also a goodly ornament of man; therefore men do desire to haue it grow, and stayed from falling out.’³⁴

As with hair on the head and body, facial hair was an outward manifestation of internal heat. Unlike other forms of hair, however, the beard was presented as the specific product of heat resulting from the production of sperm. It was heat that caused male genitals to protrude from the body. As another external protrusion, the beard was therefore closely linked to masculine sexuality and reproductive organs.³⁵ Beard hair was presented as the direct result of heat arising from the male genitals and ‘reins’ and, more specifically, as a ‘sooty’ residue of the production of sperm within the male body. Just like head hair, it was a ‘fumosity’, but also a type of ‘seminal excrement’ resulting from the heat and moisture generated from the male body’s production of sperm.³⁶ In this way the beard was directly linked to male sexuality and generative potential, and the strength and quality of beard pointed to a man’s reproductive abilities.³⁷

Early modern authors were at pains to establish a ‘normative corporeal ideal’.³⁸ In constructing the beard as the natural indicator of manliness, they both established and perpetuated ideals of gender and status.³⁹ Within the humoral framework, men’s bodies were naturally hot and dry, resulting in increased vapours within the male body, which explained why men were naturally hairier than women.⁴⁰ Since, as the Spanish physician Juan Huarte put it, it was impossible for women, who were by nature cold and moist, to achieve the requisite heat, they were therefore biologically incapable of growing beards. ‘If this not be so,’ he argued, ‘let the philosopher or physition tell me for what cause all women are beardlesse.’⁴¹ For men the inability to grow a beard was considered a sign of effeminacy (in the early modern sense of displaying feminine attributes) and of an inability to reproduce. A lack of ‘seminal ferment’ made men ‘womanish’ with shrill voices, low heat and lack of beards.⁴² The beard therefore signalled physical prowess and bodily strength, which were further constructed as masculine ideals; a man without a beard was scarcely a man at all. The beardless man

³⁴ Christof Wirsung, *The General Practise of Physicke Conteyning All Inward and Outward Parts of the Body...* (London: Printed by George Bishop, 1605), 117.

³⁵ Simons, *Sex of Men*, 131.

³⁶ Willis, *Dr Willis’s Practice*, 85.

³⁷ Fisher, *Materializing Gender*, 108; Patricia Simons, *The Sex of Men in Premodern Europe: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 30.

³⁸ Fisher, *Materializing Gender*, 103.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 104–5.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Jordan, ‘That Ere with Age’, 31.

⁴¹ Huarte, *Examination of Men’s Wits*, 271.

⁴² Thomas Willis, *Dr Willis’s Practice of Physick Being the Whole Works of That Renowned and Famous Physician Wherein Most of the Diseases Belonging to the Body of Man Are Treated of, with Excellent Methods and Receipts for the Cure of the Same* (London: Printed for T. Dring et al., 1684), 13; see also Lazare Rivière, *The Practice of Physick in Seventeen Several Books Wherein Is Plainly Set Forth the Nature, Cause, Differences, and Several Sorts of Signs* (London: Printed by Peter Cole, 1655), 506; Alexander Ross, *Arcana Microcosmi, or, The Hid Secrets of Man’s Body Discovered in an Anatomical Duel between Aristotle and Galen Concerning the Parts Thereof* (London: Printed by Thomas Newcomb, 1652), 85.

was lampooned in popular culture, both as an immature 'beardless boy' and as an unsuitable match for marriage. Smooth-faced men were seen as weak, poor at sports and unlikely to sire children. Literary fathers enjoined their daughters not to marry beardless men.⁴³ A husband without a beard, according to one play, was 'as unseemly as a wife with whiskers', a literal subversion of gendered appearance.⁴⁴ The character Hippolito in John Day's 1608 Italian comedy *Humour Out of Breath* commented upon the suggestion that a shop sign should carry the image of a 'proper man without a beard'. 'How?', he cries, 'a proper man without a beard? We shall scarce find that sign in all Venice: for the properness of a man lives altogether in the fashion of his beard.'⁴⁵ A number of pejorative terms also existed, with further highlighted the intrinsic link between the beard and expectations of the male body. 'Imperbicke' was a Latinate term used in 1623 to indicate one who was 'without a beard'.⁴⁶ 'Smock faced' was another derisory term used to indicate a lack of facial hair, implying therein physical and sexual immaturity.⁴⁷ How far these judgements were projected onto the shaven face is unclear though. It seems likely that the *ability* to grow a beard was the deciding factor, indicating that the man's body was functioning 'correctly'.

The first appearance of the beard in adolescence signalled the change into sexual maturity and the commencement of the generation of seed. It therefore marked a critical change in the body, signalling the transition from one gender category to another. Will Fisher suggests that boyhood, before the appearance of the beard, was considered to be a distinct, third gender.⁴⁸ This was not an immediate change however, since humoral alterations to the body occurred over periods of around seven years. Puberty began around the age of twelve but could last into the early twenties.⁴⁹ So important was this transition that remedy collections sometimes provided solutions where nature appeared to have stalled. The self-style 'expert operator' 'La Fontaine' suggested that either spirit of honey or oil of tartar were proper for those 'that have come to an age to have a beard yet want it, so nature do but cooperate ever so little'.⁵⁰ Cockeram's dictionary actually gave this first flush of stubble its own distinct term. To signify the 'Downe, or the bearde when it first appears to grow', the word 'Lanuge'

⁴³ Fisher, *Materializing Gender*, 109.

⁴⁴ Peter Motteux, *Love's Jest, A Comedy* (London: Printed for Peter Buck, 1696), 74.

⁴⁵ John Day, *Humour Out of Breath: A Comedy Lately Acted Divers Times by the Children of the King's Revels* (London: Printed for John Helmes, 1608), 20.

⁴⁶ Henry Cockeram, *The English Dictionarie: or, An Interpreter of Hard English Words...* (London: Printed for Edmund Weaver, 1623), unpaginated. Also in Edward Phillips, *The New World of English Words, or, A General Dictionary Containing the Interpretations of Such Hard Words as Are Derived from Other Languages* (London: Printed for E. Tyler, 1658), unpaginated.

⁴⁷ For examples, see J. S., *England's Merry Jester, or Court, City and Country Jestes New, and Suitable to the Humours of the Times* (London: Printed by J. Wilde, 1693), 23. In Motteux's *Love's a Jest*, 74, the term is used to indicate surprise at the youthful appearance of a young couple and the lack of difference between the two, who are subsequently revealed as two women.

⁴⁸ Fisher, *Materializing Gender*, 87.

⁴⁹ Victoria Sparey, 'Performing Puberty: Fertile Complexions in Shakespeare's Plays', *Shakespeare Bulletin*, 33:3 (2015): 448–9. For the application of this in stage performances including young men, see Eleanor Rycroft, *Facial Hair and the Performance of Early Modern Masculinity* (London: Routledge, 2020), 51–2.

⁵⁰ Edward Fountaine, *A Brief Collection of Many Rare Secrets Many of Which Are Approved and Physical and the Rest Most Pleasant and Recreative* (London: Publisher unknown, 1650), 4.

was applied.⁵¹ John Crawford's 1724 *Cursus Medicinae* was explicit in linking the first appearance of the beard with the onset of adolescence. For Crawford the beard, along with changes in voice and temper, was a crucial sign of the commencement of 'generation-seed'.⁵² Before the age of sixteen, the 'particles of which [beards] are form'd' were seen as contributing to bodily growth, before being diverted once sperm began to be produced.⁵³ Others took the simultaneous appearance of 'the seed and the beard' as 'convincing proof that there is some correspondence between them' and that they consisted of the same matter.⁵⁴ In this reading, facial hair essentially represented the male equivalent of menstruation. The underlying principle that the matter of which hair was consisted differed in its manifestation upon male and female bodies was common. But Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa's *Glory of Women*, still in print in the seventeenth century, argued that 'by the ordinance of nature, women through secret places every moneth expell their superfluties; but men's are continually expelled through the face, the most comely part of the body'.⁵⁵ Given the stigma attached to menstrual fluid and its connections both to private domestic spaces and the most private parts of a woman's body, this was perhaps a surprising concept, not least in its appearance in the 'most comely' and public part of a man's body. Pierre Dionis made a similar argument in 1716, suggesting that women's menstrual cycles carried away beard matter and that he had observed some women with beards upon suppression of their 'terms'.⁵⁶ Unlike women's monthly cycles, however, the evacuation of beard 'matter' occurred on a gradual, daily basis.

Like the hair, the physical appearance of the beard was also regarded as a potential indicator of inner health and temperament. A thin or scanty beard could auger male bodily weakness and effeminacy, since it suggested a lack of body heat and weak distribution of humoral matter. Physicians considered the loss of hair, eyebrows or beard as a potential symptom of general bodily decline, such as 'defect of the nutritive facility' or weakness of the skin.⁵⁷ Specific conditions such as 'pestilent fever' or skin complaints could cause hair and beard loss. Others like 'Morphew' or 'Pellaria', caused by corrupted humours, led to mortification of the hair and beard and were considered an important potential sign of pox.⁵⁸ Indeed, there was a strong connection between loss of beard hair and venereal disease, again reinforcing the link between facial hair and the male reproductive system. According to the *Sick Man's Jewel* (1674) the sudden

⁵¹ Cockeram, *English Dictionary*, unpaginated.

⁵² John Crawford, *Cursus Medicinae: or a Complete Theory of Physic, in Five Parts...* (London: Printed for W. Taylor, 1724), 236.

⁵³ Pierre Dionis, *The Anatomy of Human Bodies Improv'd ... Translated from the Third Edition, Corrected and Enlarged by the Author* (London: Printed for R. Bronwicke et al., 1716), 345.

⁵⁴ Dennis De Coetlogon, *An Universal History of Arts and Sciences...* (London: Printed and sold by John Hart, 1745), 85.

⁵⁵ Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, *The Glory of Women: or, A Treatise Declaring the Excellency and Preheminence of Women above Men* (London: Publisher unknown, 1652), 9–10.

⁵⁶ Dionis, *Anatomy*, 345.

⁵⁷ For example, Theophile Bonet, *A Guide to the Practical Physician* (London: Printed for Thomas Fleisher, 1686), 8.

⁵⁸ Leonardo Fioravanti, *An Exact Collection of the Choicest and More Rare Experiments and Secrets in Physick and Chirurgery* (London: Printed for William Shears, 1659), 9, 181.

loss of beard hair was one of the first symptoms of the ‘French Pox’.⁵⁹ Also, just as with the hair, the beard was considered another reliable indicator of humoral temperament and was affected not just by the predominant humour, but also by astrological influences. Thus, a man born in the ‘hour of Venus’ would have a round beard. A long beard, however, could identify one born under the influence of Mercury.⁶⁰ Saturn (and the sign of Capricorn) was distinguishable by a thin crop, whereas Jupiter begot a thick brown beard.⁶¹

The beard, then, was an ensign of manhood – one that spoke of the generative power of the individual man, together with multiple reference points to his health, strength and temperament. Nevertheless, the interpretation of the health function and symbolisms of facial hair was far from straightforward, due to the multiple and often conflicting meanings supported by humoral theory and also the lack of a coherent body of writing about beards. The lack of consensus around various factors relating to facial hair makes it unsafe to assume that a single, general approach existed. The situation was exacerbated by the lack of a homogenous medical ‘profession’, which meant that early modern writings about beards encompassed the opinions of a diverse group of authors, including clergymen and lawyers, as well as physicians.⁶² As such, beyond the basic consensus around the idea of beards resulting from inner heat, conceptions of facial hair were riven with contradictions and paradoxes.

The colour and quality of the beard as indicators of humoral temperament, for example, were acknowledged to be unreliable by early modern authors such as Thomas Hill, whose treatise on physiognomy allowed for discrepancies between ideals of male and female appearance.⁶³ Excessive facial hair could be a sign of ultramasculinity, demonstrating the torrid internal heat of a man. But, at the same time a thick beard obscured the face, features and expression, implying deceit or an untrustworthy character. A thick ‘bush beard’ also carried the risk of characterizing a body left fallow.⁶⁴ Likewise, just as easily as a thick beard could evince wisdom, this could easily tip over into accusations of pretence, or being ‘just for show’.⁶⁵ In the mid-seventeenth century, matters were further complicated by the theories of chemical physicians, which, although relatively short lived, offered alternative explanations for the origins of beard hair. The ‘Paracelsian’ physician Johannes Baptiste Van Helmont, while acknowledging that the beard was ‘bred by the stones’, nonetheless held that it was light, emanating from the testicles rather than heat, which was the principal driver of beard growth. Attempting to explain why the beard should appear on the chin,

⁵⁹ A. B., *The Sick-mans Rare Jewel Wherein Is Discovered a Speedy Way How Every Man May Recover Lost Health, and Prolong Life...* (London: Printed by T. R., 1674), 107.

⁶⁰ Anon., *The Compleat Book of Knowledge* (London: Printed by W. Onely, 1698), 61.

⁶¹ Joseph Blagrove, *Blagraves Astrological Practice of Physick Discovering the True Way to Cure All Kinds of Diseases and Infirmities* (London: Printed by S. G., 1671), 76–7.

⁶² Alexandra Shepherd, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 50.

⁶³ Quoted in Johnson, *Beard Fetish*, 44.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 45, 72–3.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

instead of the forehead, he admitted that this was a ‘most hidden root of philosophy’ and largely beyond the wit of man to uncover.⁶⁶

The degree to which the beard was even limited to male faces was a matter for debate. Some medical authors like Nicholas Culpepper and Daniel Sennert were adamant that only men grew beards, while a smooth face was the natural ornament of the female.⁶⁷ Levinus Lemnius argued that the hairs of the beard ‘consist the grace and ornament of a man’ and ‘contained a manlike force.’⁶⁸ But the obvious fact that some women did have hirsute faces (and that some men could not grow beards) could not be ignored. The satirist Thomas D’Urfey devoted several stanzas of verse to the question of whether women ‘may be hairy/in spite of arguments contrary’. Citing several examples of prominent women in history with facial hair, including the Queen of Sheba who reputedly ‘had a small beard of sandy red’, his titular character Collin claimed that even ‘My mother and my sister both/possessing beards of handsome growth.’⁶⁹ A number of supporting footnotes added that Asian women were known to have beards and also that several old women in Lancashire, suspected of witchcraft, also had beards of considerable length.⁷⁰

If there was at least broad agreement on the role of spermatic heat in generating beard hair, the nature of the relationship between head and body hair and beard hair remained unclear. According to one conduct manual, men with different coloured hair and beard were ‘accounted dangerous persons’ since this implied ‘an inequality of their humours and complexions, [making] them naturally variable.’⁷¹ How widespread was this belief is difficult to assess from a single reference. The question of whether head and beard hair were even of the same matter was often overlooked or simply ignored, but some medical authors, however, did differentiate. Steven Blankaart’s *Physical Dictionary* of 1702 named several different types of hair as well as identifying them with individual areas of the body. ‘Capillus’ was defined as ‘the Hair of the Head’, while ‘Cilia and Supercilia’ denoted the eyebrows. While beard hair was not specifically identified, Blankaart used the term ‘Pili’ to refer to ‘short hairs in any part of the body’, except for ‘the Hair on the Privy Parts’, which were termed ‘Pubes.’⁷² Pierre Dionis made a similar argument in his *Anatomy of Man*, translated into English, stating that hairs were of two sorts. The first were those that accompanied the body when it first entered the world, including head hair, eyelashes and eyebrows. The second was that which grew later ‘as those upon the Beard, Arm-pits and the “*Pubes*” (original italics).’⁷³

⁶⁶ J. C., *Van Helmont’s Works Containing His Most Excellent Philosophy, Physick, Chirurgery, Anatomy* (London: Printed by Lodowick Hoyd, 1664), 335.

⁶⁷ Fisher, *Materializing Gender*, 102.

⁶⁸ Levinus Lemnius, *The Secret Miracles of Nature in Four Books...* (London: Printed by John Streater, 1658), 257.

⁶⁹ Thomas D’Urfey, *Collins Walk through London and Westminster in Burlesque, written by T.D* (London: Printed for Richard Parker, 1690), 121–2.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Edward Philips, *The Beau’s Academy...* (London: Printed for O. B., 1699), 184.

⁷² Steven Blankaart, *The Physical Dictionary. Wherein the Terms of Anatomy, the Names and Causes of Diseases, Chyrurgical Instruments, and Their Use Are Accurately Describ’d* (London: Printed for Sam. Crouch and John Sprint, 1702), 50, 70, 89, 254.

⁷³ Dionis, *Anatomy*, 315.

The difference in appearance and nature of beard hair from head hair was also based upon assumptions about the reaction of hair to being shaved. In *Aristotle's Problems*, shaving off hair was argued to take away humours and vapours, which process then encouraged more to draw to the area. In areas where cutting or shaving was repeated, the humours accumulated thickly to form hair. On the face, therefore, where shaving was regular, the hair was liable to 'wax hard'.⁷⁴

Another issue that bears further scrutiny is that of life stage. As discussed above, the production of hair in men and women was closely linked to age. The appearance of the beard, along with increased body and pubic hair, demonstrated the commencement of seed production in males. In women, the matter producing beard hair was instead diverted to the 'courses'. Facial hair was, in a sense, a border between the normal operations of male and female bodies, but one that could be crossed. The interruption or impediment of menstruation, for example, was cited as one causal factor of beards on women's faces, as their bodies were masculinized. One aspect that requires further investigation, however, is that of the link between facial hair and the normative constructions of 'manhood'. The strong links between the beard and the display of masculine generative power meant that beard-wearing was closely bound to specific stages of a man's life. Puberty, as noted above, was a stage that spanned around seven years. 'Manhood' was another specific, but longer, stage that could last anywhere between ten and thirty years. Some authors broke this down further into specific periods such as 'staided youth' or 'middle age', but the 'lustie state of life' generally lasted between adolescence and the perceived onset of old age, which could begin anywhere between 35 and 50.⁷⁵

The distinction between beardless boys and 'men' with beards was an important one.⁷⁶ Randle Holmes's *Academy of Armory* made the link explicit; whereas children were smooth, and youths had hair on their heads but not on their faces, the mark of a 'Man' was 'having a beard'.⁷⁷ Medical authors including Nicholas Culpeper, Helkiah Crooke and Daniel Sennert specifically identified the beard with 'man', 'men' or 'manhode'.⁷⁸ But it is also clear that 'Man-Age' was precarious and temporary and, to a large degree, represented those in the supposed peak of life and still productive in sexual terms. As Eleanor Rycroft suggests, manhood was bounded on the one side by youthful effeminacy and imperfection, and on the other by old age.⁷⁹ If a beard suggested masculine power, then its fullness, shape, colour or distinctiveness also surely carried symbolic weight, acting as visual proof that the male subject was either in the prime of his life or descending towards the grave.

Mark Johnston and Eleanor Rycroft have explored the discursive significance of grey and white beards in context of cultural representations of age. Grey or white hair was presented as a mark of age and one in which hair was materially altered by the ensuing changes to bodily constitution.⁸⁰ This occurred as the man's body changed in humoral

⁷⁴ Anon., *Aristotle's Problems*, 5.

⁷⁵ Shepherd, *Meanings of Manhood*, 54–5.

⁷⁶ Fisher, *Materializing Gender*, 87.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁷⁹ Rycroft, *Facial Hair*, 138.

⁸⁰ Johnston, *Beard Fetish*, 75–9.

constitution from the hot and moist constitution of youth to the cold and dry state associated with old age.⁸¹ Since beards resulted from internal body heat, the whitening of beard hairs was a visible manifestation of this process.⁸² In theory, therefore, the beard should presumably have been expected to thin, or even disappear completely, with the onset of age. Not all early modern authors agreed however. Bartholin, argued that the hair of the old – presumably including the beard – was ‘thicker, stronger, harder and more plentiful’.⁸³ For Roger Bacon, grey hair and beard were ‘accidents of age’, caused by putrefying humours and the gradual drying out or putrefaction of the moisture within each hair.⁸⁴ He did not suggest that the beard itself would necessarily weaken or diminish. In fact, the Aristotelian view of the changing hue of hair was not internal dryness or changing humours, but external factors such as the covering of the hair by hats or other means, which allowed the wind to wick away the natural moisture within each hair.⁸⁵ Depictions of older men in Tudor and Stuart portraits also appear not to support the diminution of the beard in later life. Indeed, many portraits show older men with full beards, befitting their patriarchal status. While portraiture is problematic in assessing ‘real’ appearance, not least because of the strong potential for artistic embellishment, the numbers of portraits of older men displaying full facial hair in the early modern period is suggestive of the close connections between beard-wearing and age, but also perhaps of the deployment of the beard as a conscious means of displaying that the subject retained their male heat. This is clearly not to say that unbearded men had beards simply painted in. But, instead, the portrayal and potential manipulation of their beard may have been a conscious tool to emphasize the retention of masculine power, even in old age.

Finally, it is worth noting the issue of change over time and the gradual shifts in conceptions of facial hair that began to occur towards the end of the period. Rather than remaining static, – conceptions of hair and beards were affected by changes and challenges to prevailing medical theory, including the growing influence of microscopy. The early eighteenth century witnessed the beginnings of change both to perceptions of the hair as an indicator of inner temperament, and to its physical properties. A discussion of hair by the physician George Cheyne shows evidence of the new Georgian vogue for ‘nerves’.⁸⁶ While hair was still an outward indicator of inner character, for Cheyne it now spoke of the nervous state of the individual, rather than simply their humoral constitution. ‘Those who have naturally *soft, thin, small and short hair*, are of a *loose, flabby and relaxed state of nerves*’ (original italics).⁸⁷ The early eighteenth century also saw a new focus upon the materiality of hair and its physical properties. For Cheyne, hair was made of the ‘fleshy fibres [of the body] only lengthen’d

⁸¹ Ibid., 76.

⁸² Rycroft, *Facial Hair*, 142.

⁸³ Thomas Bartholin, *Bartholinus Anatomy Made from the Precepts of His Father, and from the Observations of All Modern Anatomists* (London: Printed by John Streater, 1668), 129.

⁸⁴ Roger Bacon, *The Cure of Old Age and Preservation of Youth by Roger Bacon* (London: Printed for Thomas Flescher, 1683), 25.

⁸⁵ Bartholin, *Bartholinus Anatomy Made*, 129.

⁸⁶ For a discussion of ‘nerves’, see Roy Porter and Dorothy Porter, *In Sickness and in Health* (London: Fourth Estate, 1988), 68–72.

⁸⁷ George Cheyne, *An Essay of Health and Long Life* (London: Printed for George Strahan, 1724), 187.

outwards and harden'd'. He postulated that each individual hair consisted of bundles of individual filaments, covered by an elastic membrane. As such, each hair was 'solid, transparent and elastick'.⁸⁸ Analysing hair using a microscope, the London surgeon and anatomist Thomas Gibson, however, defined it as 'a body cold and dry, thread-like, hard and flexible, budding from the skin'.⁸⁹ Gibson observed hairs to be square, or sometimes triangular rather than round, and porous, likening them to plant stalks.⁹⁰ In answering the question 'What is an Hair?', James Handley's *Colloquia Chirurgica* found it to be 'a small body, Thread-like, Hard and Flexible', while Gabriel Leclerc described hairs as 'Hollow Filaments planted in the Glandules of the skin'.⁹¹

If the eighteenth century brought new questions about the nature of hair, it also witnessed debate about the exact relationship between hair and body. Gibson raised another question of importance; that of the extent to which hair had 'life' of its own. On this point he was clear. '[Hairs] are no part of the body, and therefore have no *Animal life*' (original italics).⁹² Instead, he argued, hair grew independently from the living body, as fungus grew on a dead tree, evidenced by the fact that hair continued to grow after death.⁹³ Nonetheless, he was still convinced that hairs consisted of a 'viscid excrement of the third concoction'.⁹⁴ The seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries also saw the beginnings of debates about the function and intended purpose of hair. As already noted, some regarded hair as the body's natural means of expelling the noxious humours that might otherwise pollute the brain. Leclerc regarded it both as an adornment and a natural covering to those parts 'which Modesty requires to be conceal'd', as well as defending the body from the 'injury of the weather'.⁹⁵ Preservation of modesty was also a theme in Agrippa's assessment of why women had longer hair than men.⁹⁶ The French physician and anatomist Pierre Dionis, however, was adamant that hair was neither protective nor venerable, arguing instead that continually removing it actually encouraged the freer flow and weakening of 'excrementious particles'.⁹⁷

Hair, including the beard, was therefore bound up in a complex web of meanings in the early modern period, encompassing health, gender, sexuality and concepts of the natural emblems of the body. While there was debate as to the exact meanings of the beard, medical conceptions of the origins and characteristics of facial hair remained largely consistent across the period. The beard was nominally a waste product – literally a seminal excrement – but this did not diminish its power as a masculine symbol. It was a 'natural' symbol of manliness and one that both constituted and reflected male

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Thomas Gibson, *The Anatomy of Humane Bodies Epitomized* (London: Printed by T. W., 1703), 365.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ James Handley, *Colloquia Chirurgica: or, the Art of Surgery Epitomiz'd, and Made Easy, According to Modern Practice* (London: Printed for A. Bettesworth and C. Hitch, 1733), 213; Charles Gabriel LeClerc, *The Compleat Surgeon: or the Whole Art of Surgery Explain'd in a Most Familiar Method...* (London: Printed for W. Freeman et al., 1701), 10.

⁹² Gibson, *Anatomy*, 365.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Leclerc, *The Compleat Surgeon*, 10; Christof Wirsung also argued that hair had no other purpose than to 'garnish the head, decketh and coloureth it'. See Wirsung, *General Practice*, 45.

⁹⁶ Agrippa, *The Glory of Women*, 9–10.

⁹⁷ Dionis, *Anatomy*, 315.

characteristics of strength, heat and reproductive capability. There was actually little debate in the period about the relative merits or demerits of shaving. While some physicians recommended shaving as part of treatment for certain conditions, there was little sense that shaving yet formed part of any regimented health or grooming routines. As many authors argued, facial hair was essentially the default state of a man's face. Although the introduction of the microscope had begun to change views about the physical construction and appearance of individual hairs by the end of the seventeenth century, such observations took time to impact upon theories about hair and beards. As we shall see, many aspects of the humoral conceptions of hair remained stubbornly entrenched until well into the eighteenth century. The mid-eighteenth century, however, did begin to see change in the context of the enlightenment interest in nature, the body and gender. It is to those ideas that the following chapter turns.

The faces of politeness: Facial hair, masculinity and culture in the long eighteenth century

As Chapter 2 showed, early modern facial hair reflected humoral conceptions of the male body and, in particular, the reproductive system. Ideas about the generation of hair were firmly embedded within medical discourses and part of broader assumptions about the supposed ‘natural’ superiority of the male body. Assertions about the role of the beard as an emblem or public symbol of masculinity were equally bound with prevailing ideas about physicality and healthy male bodies. Such ideas remained deeply entrenched.

Nevertheless, the eighteenth century brought change. Where facial hair had been common through most of the 1600s, the new century saw a Europe-wide flight from the beard. The precise reasons for this change are unclear. Christopher Oldstone-Moore suggests that beard- and moustache-wearing began to decline from the 1680s, amidst redefinitions of masculinity coinciding with the proto-enlightenment climate of ideas.¹ This reconfiguring of masculinity into emerging aesthetic ideals of neatness and elegance was exemplified by new fashions in the court of Louis XIV. In 1701 the Sun King had a new portrait commissioned showing him with a clean-shaven face framed by a new-fashioned wig.² The French court certainly exerted a centripetal pull on the fashion consciousness of British elites, apparent in the adoption of wigs, but also in clothing styles and manners, to the extent that concerns were raised about the emasculating, ‘Frenchified’ affectations of English men during the eighteenth century.³

But new ideas about polite appearance and deportment also gave the beardless face deeper meaning. ‘Politeness’ as a system of form, language and behaviours, saw new aesthetic standards mapped onto the body and its surfaces. The new bodily ideal for men was neat and elegant, and the clean-shaven face swiftly became a *sine qua non*

¹ Christopher Oldstone-Moore, *Of Beards and Men: The Revealing History of Facial Hair* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 131–3.

² *Ibid.*, 133.

³ Michèle Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 1996), 9.

of male appearance.⁴ Where once beards had exemplified male power and strength, such ideas now shifted to the shaved face.⁵ As the beard was shunned by polite society, its position within discourses of masculinity and health also changed. Discussions about beards (and hair) were subsumed within emerging debates about physiognomy, corporeal aesthetics and also questions about race and ethnicity through which hair gradually lost its humoral associations. While connections with inner heat persisted in medical discourses, the specific link between beards and spermatic production was severed, reflecting shifting conceptions of masculinity and its embodied significance.

This chapter first maps the apparent disappearance of facial hair over the long eighteenth century, in the context of changing gendered expectations of male conduct and appearance. It argues that, as ideals of male facial appearance were remade, visible facial hair became linked with socially undesirable characteristics. Conversely, at the same time, the *act* of shaving was imbued with new meaning as a polite practice, becoming a central component in the gendered performance of masculinity. The second part of the chapter surveys medical conceptions of hair and facial hair in this period. While initially there was much continuity in definitions of the origins and functions of facial hair, the decline of beard-wearing brought shifts in the manner of its discussion. Rather than a distinct topic in medical texts, facial hair was instead enmeshed in broader debates about the nature and relationship of human bodies across spaces and cultures and about its potential as a marker of intellect and corporeal value. In tandem was the increasing physiognomic and physiological importance of faces as markers of health and character. Overall, this period saw what I term the ‘externalization’ of the beard, as it moved conceptually from the body’s interior to its surface.

The ‘polite face’

The decline of facial hair was rooted in broad changes in attitudes towards masculine appearance and behaviour and a redefinition of male manners over the long eighteenth century. As Karen Harvey has noted in her study of the male leg, the period after 1750 brought new focus on the outward appearance and physicality of men’s bodies, imbuing them with new significance.⁶ Rather than simply being performative, masculinity could be embodied, with the shape, form and structure of the male body all carrying and conveying meaning.⁷ As I have argued elsewhere too, the whole body was enmeshed in discourses of politeness. Polite bodies were supposed to be straight and erect. If they did not conform, many products were available, to push, pull, twist and otherwise force them into a socially desirable shape.⁸ Hence, the body was a malleable

⁴ Alun Withey, *Technology, Self-Fashioning and Politeness in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 7–9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁶ Karen Harvey, ‘Men of Parts: Masculine Embodiment and the Male Leg in Eighteenth-Century England’, *Journal of British Studies*, 54:4 (2015): 799.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 800–1.

⁸ Withey, *Technology*, ch. 1; David Turner and Alun Withey, ‘Technologies of the Body: Polite Consumption and the Correction of Deformity in Eighteenth-Century England’, *History*, 99:338

form, one that could be shaped by force of will and behaviour, as part of changing ideas about the relationship between mind and body. Like a machine, both body and mind needed constant attention to avoid seizing up. Addison's *Spectator*, for example, regarded training the body through shadowboxing, in tandem with training the mind through study and contemplation, as the 'double scheme of duties' necessary for the polite 'man-about-town'.⁹ As well as form and structure, the same applied to bodily surfaces, especially those visible to others and in public. As Harvey argues, changes to male fashion and clothing reflected the increased exposure of the male body and served to draw attention to specific attributes, such as the leg, which became a potent symbol of virility and sexuality.¹⁰ It could be argued that the face carried an equally powerful symbolic meaning.

As the seat of emotion and the most public of bodily surfaces, the face reflected the 'sentiments of the soul'. Facial appearance, features, expression and even tics all comprised a complex set of bodily meanings and were commonly observed and commented on in literature, as well as part of a broader social 'language' of expression. Faces dominated discussions of beauty, and its obverse – ugliness – in turn informing estimations of character. They were therefore a key marker of politeness.¹¹ Although a natural feature of the male face, however, facial hair was not a polite feature, perhaps due to the issue of concealment. Symmetry was a key element in expectations of the male body in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, both in terms of anthropometry and beauty.¹² But beards frustrated the symmetry of appearance and obscured the 'air and cast of the whole countenance', so important in assessing politeness.¹³ Not only was shaving an act of control, therefore, again reflecting the malleability of body and appearance, it was akin to removing a mask, enabling facial features to be seen and 'read'. Visibility was all, reinforced by the fact that faces were often the only unclothed or uncovered part of the body.¹⁴ There was also a powerful symbolism to the beardless face. An open countenance suggested an open mind, a key attribute of the enlightened gentleman; it also betokened honesty.¹⁵ Since the 'passions of the mind' determined facial features and expression, a 'man of sense' was easily identifiable by his noble

(2014): 775–96; see also Lynne Sorge-English, *Stays and Body Image in London: The Staymaking Trade, 1680–1810* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2014).

⁹ Quoted in Roy Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason* (London: Penguin, 2004), 119–21. See also Joanne Begiato, *Manliness in Britain: 1760–1900* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 36–7.

¹⁰ Harvey, 'Men of Parts', 801.

¹¹ For a broader discussion of the various social and political contexts of the face in this period, see Kathryn Woods, 'The Polite Face: The Social Meanings Attached to Facial Appearance in Early Eighteenth-Century Didactic Journals', *Conference Proceedings of the International Workshop 'Archives of the Body. Medieval to Early Modern'*, Cambridge University, 8–9 September 2011, 43–66, https://epistemocritique.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/4-_Woods.pdf (accessed 9 July 2019). Also see the broader discussions of the importance of male beauty in Begiato, *Manliness*, ch. 1.

¹² Begiato, *Manliness*, 38.

¹³ Nicholas Andry, *Orthopaedia: or the Art of Preventing and Correcting Deformities in Children* (London: Printed for A. Miller, 1743), 18.

¹⁴ Robert A. Houston, 'The Face of Madness in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Scotland', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 27:2 (2003): 51.

¹⁵ William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty: Written with a View of Fixing the Fluctuating Ideas of Taste* (London: Printed by J. Reeves, 1753), 125; Withey, 'Shaving and Masculinity', 229.

visage.¹⁶ Much effort was expended in defining ideals of facial appearance after 1750, and the shaved face became a touchstone of manly appearance and behaviour, allowing the individual features of a man's face to be scrutinized.¹⁷

A number of other factors provided a favourable cultural climate for the removal of beards, not least of which was the cultural 'othering' of facial hair. If the eighteenth-century male body was expected to please, something about facial hair was clearly *displeasing*. As well as disturbing the harmonious mien of the gentlemanly face it implied neglect of basic routines of care in appearance. The polite gentleman was clean-shaven; by extension, then, facial hair was presumably 'impolite', belonging to unfavourable stereotypes such as the scruffy pleb, the rustic, the lunatic or the decrepit. Facial hair, then, could be a useful barometer in assessing character and even state of mind. Manly control over the body was the key. Echoing earlier, humoral ideas about the origins of facial hair, the author of one manual of politeness stressed that passions and affections should be carefully controlled for 'as they are the excrescencies of our souls, like our hair and beards, look horrid or [un]becoming, as we cut or let them grow over our reason'.¹⁸ Besides looking 'horrid', beards could, almost literally, obscure rationality. As Robert Houston has noted, long hair suggested eccentricity or even insanity, marking out men with unkempt beards as problematic 'others'.¹⁹ Accounts of hermits or 'wild men' frequently used beard length as a visual metaphor for the extent of their withdrawal from society or barbarity. Reports of the capture of a 'merman', by fishermen off Vigo, Spain, in 1739 made particular reference to its 'long beard and moustachoes'.²⁰ The extent of the 'otherness' of facial hair was also highlighted in its ready adoption by certain French military regiments, at a time of high tensions between Britain and France.²¹ In each case, then, facial hair became a marker of difference, representing rough, disordered or 'foreign' masculinities.²²

Second, the aesthetic properties of facial hair were incompatible with several new aspects of eighteenth-century manliness and bodily appearance, but most notably the wig. Stylistically, the wig and beard made for a jarring clash and again raised issues of concealment. Wearing a large wig *and* a thick beard would obscure virtually the entire head and face, leaving nothing open for scrutiny. Combining beards and wigs would also create an awkward tension between natural and unnatural, and between dead and living, hair. While it is hard to prove convincingly that wigs were an explicit catalyst for the decline of beards, their rise certainly coincided with shifting attitudes towards the appearance, sites and management of men's hair.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹⁷ Begiato, *Manliness*, 53.

¹⁸ Anon., *The Young Gentleman and Lady Instructed in Such Principles of Politeness, Prudence and Virtue...* (London: Printed for Edward Wicksteed, 1747), 360.

¹⁹ Houston, 'Face of Madness', 53.

²⁰ 'London, May 3rd', *Caledonian Mercury*, 8 May 1739. See also Peter Longueville, *The English Hermit, or the Unparalleld and Surprising Adventures of One Phillip Quarll* (London: Publisher unknown, 1727), 13, 43; Anon., *A Full Account of Mr. John Harris, the English Hermit* (Banbury: Printed by T. Cheney, 1800).

²¹ Christopher Duffy, *The Military Experience in the Age of Reason* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), 103; Withey, *Technology*, 46–7.

²² Angela Rosenthal, 'Raising Hair', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 38:1 (2004): 1, 3.

The relationship between men's head hair and facial hair during this period was ambiguous. In terms of the performative gendered and sexual nature of men's hair as a form of display, the site of hair shifted away from the chin and cheeks and instead towards the head. This dovetails neatly with eighteenth-century concepts of the head as the site of authority, intelligence and learning, and also as a masculine feature of the body.²³ Wigs drew attention to the head, creating an elaborate illusion, forming a powerful semiotic encompassing social and professional identity. The face, by contrast, was ideally to be hairless suggesting youth and vigour. The 'cult of youth' of the 1780s made virtues of slender bodies and youthful personalities.²⁴ Shaving rendered the face more youthful at a stroke, revealing the soft skin underneath. Although facial hair had been abandoned long before the 'cult of youth', such associations nonetheless reinforced the need to shave. Smoothness was equally essential as a polite characteristic. For inspiration, Georgian men needed to look no further than the tactile, polished surfaces of Greek and Roman statues, which offered examples of athletic corporeal perfection, or to the heroic figures depicted in neoclassicist portraiture.²⁵ For Edmund Burke, commenting on the aesthetics of beauty, there was nothing in nature that was beautiful that was not also smooth.²⁶ If so, a bearded man could presumably never be beautiful.

As the beardless face was accepted as a key masculine characteristic, shaving became an essential grooming task for gentlemen.²⁷ The act of shaving evinced mid-century ideas about polite masculinity, encompassing control and self-mastery. As Philip Carter has noted, the performance of polite masculinity required a delicate balance between self-command and compassion. Men were encouraged to be temperate and measured in their social encounters, grave with other men, but sensitive to the delicacy of women.²⁸ Government of the senses and passions created a social bond with spectators, conveying character and breeding, but also reflected economic concerns. Careful management of finances, along with training the mind through intellectual pursuits, were seen as routes to commercial success. As the head of the household, men were expected to control finances, while acting as a family figurehead. Such ideas extended to the appearance of the body. For philosophers such as David Hume, the polite gentleman should be industrious and physically vigorous, to allow them to prosper in both commercial and private spheres.²⁹ Shaving dovetailed easily with such ideas. To shave (or even to be shaved) was to exert control over the body and appearance. It demonstrated care and attention to the self, as well as consideration for the social expectations of others. This was reinforced as self-shaving (auto-pogonotomy)

²³ Kathryn Woods, 'Dismembering Appearances: The Cultural Meaning of the Body and Its Parts in Eighteenth-Century Understanding', University of Edinburgh, Unpublished PhD thesis, 2014, 141–3.

²⁴ Porter, *Flesh*, 241–2.

²⁵ Withey, *Technology*, 46.

²⁶ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: J. Dodsley, 1757), 213.

²⁷ Alun Withey, 'Shaving and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 36:2 (2013): 234–5.

²⁸ Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society. Britain, 1660–1800* (London: Routledge, 2014), 74–5.

²⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 76.

gradually became more popular around the 1770s, helped on by the introduction of cast steel razors, making the process easier and more comfortable.³⁰ Self-shaving added a new dimension to bodily management by allowing a man to assume more responsibility for his *own* appearance, rather than delegating it to a practitioner. Even visiting a barber, however, was part of the same process of managing and fashioning a public face. Governance of the body and behaviour, therefore, was analogous with careful management of business.

The decline of facial hair from the late seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth was therefore much more than simply fashion. Instead it was bound up with a number of sometimes competing discourses about expectations of manly appearance, as well as changing aesthetic ideals related to the enlightened climate of ideas. From these background factors, the chapter now turns to specific questions about the nature and status of facial hair in eighteenth-century Britain.

(Un)natural faces

Where once the beard had spoken of the generative power of men, the clean-shaven face now became the virtual synecdoche for virile masculinity. A smooth, face was the refined, manly and 'beautiful' obverse to the rough, unshaven brute. But in many ways, however, this new vogue for the shaved face complicated the question of what, in fact, *were* 'natural' male characteristics. As Michèle Cohen has argued, in endeavouring to create a 'pleasing' body, men defied nature by creating a soft, delicate and refined male 'other'.³¹ This created the paradox of a manliness that edged ever closer to femininity – a problematic issue amidst popular fears of effeminacy. The shaved face suggested male youthfulness, but equally removed a key mark of difference between male and female faces. The fact that so many of the processes involved in the articulation of politeness relied on the application of artificial means was also problematic. Polite literature cautioned against artifice, especially among young women. Cosmetics, in particular, were discouraged since they obscured the 'natural endowments and graces' of the 'real face'.³² Objections therefore surrounded covering up the face. But where cosmetics artificially obscured, razors equally artificially uncovered. To maintain a clean-shaven face required regular and careful attention and sometimes the use of cosmetic products including soap and lotions, rendering shaving as arguably no less an act of artifice. All this created a second paradox. On the one hand facial hair was still broadly construed as a 'natural' (in the sense of being biologically determined) component of the male body. In this reading, it was shaving that interfered with nature's work. On the other, however, the beard itself could be viewed as representing a mere prosthetic,

³⁰ See Withey, 'Shaving and Masculinity', 225–43.

³¹ Michèle Cohen, 'Manliness, Effeminacy and the French: Gender and the Construction of National Character in Eighteenth-Century England', in Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen (eds), *English Masculinities: 1660–1800* (London: Routledge, 1999), 50.

³² Anon., *Young Gentleman and Lady*, 163.

obscuring the true, natural, face beneath. The beard was simultaneously, and therefore problematically, natural and unnatural.

Such issues were certainly not limited to beards. Wigs, hair and the head all shaped debates about gender roles, sexuality, age and fertility and informed broader criticisms of display and social performance. Wigs could exemplify moral weakness, vanity and even effeminacy, blurring boundaries between the sexes. As with beards, there were also ambiguities about social acceptability in the wearing or removing of hair. Shaving both heads and faces replaced a 'natural' look with one that was managed. Wig-wearers then replaced their own hair with an artificial contrivance of 'false' or dead hair. Bald heads had long been socially undesirable, bearing negative connotations including old age, decrepitude, loss of control and even emasculation.³³ Appearing in public without a wig, or betraying the balding pate beneath, were serious social faux pas.³⁴ A *shaved* head, however, at least showed willingness to don a fashionable wig and was therefore a vital step on the path to polite appearance. It was no coincidence that some eighteenth-century busts depicted elites or thinkers with shaved heads to demonstrate their erudition and mental acuity.³⁵ The key difference between head and face shaving lay in the matter of covering. Heads were shaved with the specific intention of being re-covered by the wig. The opposite applied to the face however, where the stubbly covering itself was regarded as unseemly. Unlike the head, therefore, shaving the face was an end in itself.

Given the multiple meanings and obvious problems with facial hair, therefore, its absence from contemporary discussions about gender and appearance seems remarkable. Early modern practitioners, authors and playwrights had devoted reams to the beard, establishing it as a signal component of the male body. But its disappearance attracted scarcely a murmur. It was perhaps easier to simply ignore rather than try and reconcile the obvious skein of contradictions. Only occasional dissenting voices spoke up against its decline and even here the pitfalls of Georgian irony cannot be discounted. In 1783, A. R. Grey's letter (perhaps tellingly to the *Weekly Entertainer*) appeared to suggest that growing a beard was his defence against the lack of respect afforded him due to his 'smock-faced' handsomeness. In imitation of classical heroes, he professed himself content to grow a beard and had 'dismissed my barber'.³⁶ Suspicions of insincerity are aroused by the given address of 'St. Barbe, Cornwall' – 'barbe' being a Latinate term for the beard. In 1798, another writer, styling himself 'Joseph', wrote a paean to the beard in an attempt to win over a doubtful female. Here the beard was depicted as a natural adornment of the '*British race*' (original italics) and one that conveyed strength and a 'rougher beauty' than the soft manliness currently in vogue. 'British' here implied Celtic and often specifically Welsh people which, given the often-pejorative portrayals of Welsh people in English satires, perhaps explains the reference

³³ For attitudes to baldness in the early modern period, see Anu Korhonen, 'Strange Things Out of Hair: Baldness and Masculinity in Early Modern England', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 41:2 (2010): 371–91.

³⁴ Rosenthal, 'Raising Hair', 9–10.

³⁵ Malcolm Baker, "'No Cap or Wig But a Thin Hair upon it": Hair and the Male Portrait Bust in England around 1750', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 38:1 (2004): 69–70.

³⁶ A. R. Grey, 'New Essay on Beards', *Weekly Entertainer* (19 March 1787): 269.

to rusticity and roughness.³⁷ But, ‘If woman ever fear’d’, argued Joseph, ‘it was the man *without* a beard’ (original italics).³⁸

Some were less ambiguous in their support for beards. In letters in 1779 the MP Thomas Lord Lyttelton bemoaned the present ‘smock-faced days’ caused by the abandonment of facial hair. The beard, he argued, was the emblem of experience and wisdom (the ‘honours of the chin’ and a ‘flowing ornament’) and one that achieved its full magnificence while the rest of the body declined in old age.³⁹ It is worth noting that, despite his protestations, contemporary portraits reveal that Lyttelton was beardless. Beards were also ‘characteristick and essential marks of the Supreme Divinity’, adorning artist representations of Christian and Pagan deities since time immemorial. It therefore made no sense to him that the beard should be an object of dissension. Such connections also suggest, however, that men of sense could still appreciate the semiotic and symbolic value of the beard without necessarily feeling the need to grow one themselves. As such, although the shaved face suited polite appearance, facial hair still carried meaning and value as a male attribute. For Lyttelton, the true demise of the beard owed everything to the caprices of the church and ‘scythe of ecclesiastical discipline.’⁴⁰ Thus the ‘persecuted beard’ had been expelled from Europe but for the faces of ‘fanatical Jews’ or mendicant hermits.⁴¹

It is equally true though that relatively few spoke out against the beard. Peter Shaw’s 1762 *Tablet or Picture of Real Life* claimed to shed light on all the ‘virtues and vices, fopperies and fooleries [and] masks and mummeries’ of the age. In a chapter about fashion and appearance, Shaw’s advice was to ‘shave thy beard and appear like a man, for the fashion of beards is no longer among mankind ... Thy beard is an open declaration that thou art unwilling to pass for a man.’⁴² He went further, asserting the beard to be an ‘unmanly ornament’ and threatening ‘never to make peace with Thee, till thy beard is razed and leveled with thy chin.’⁴³ While many perhaps concurred with Shaw’s view, the general sense from these sources is that facial hair was a bodily feature that was, although unnecessary, still a central component of the male body. *Choosing* not to display a beard or stubble was far preferable to being unable to grow one in the first place.

The re-emergence of the supposed science of physiognomy in the late eighteenth century added further layers of complexity. Here again, discussions of the beard were muted. During the early modern period, the practice of assessing character from facial features was popular in European intellectual circles and closely linked to astrology.⁴⁴

³⁷ See, for example, Peter Lord, ‘A View from the Outside: Poor Taff, 1640–1740’, *Words with Pictures: Welsh Images and Images of Wales in the Popular Press, 1640–1860* (Aberystwyth: Planet Books, 1995), 33–53.

³⁸ Joseph, ‘The Message: Or an Apology for Beards’, *Monthly Visitor and Pocket Companion*, 3 (1798): 78.

³⁹ Anon., *Letters of the Late Lord Lyttelton* (New York: Printed and sold by Wright, Goodenow and Stockwell, 1807), 272.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 274–5.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 275.

⁴² Peter Shaw, *The Tablet, or Picture of Real Life...* (London: Printed for T. Longman, 1762), 165.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁴⁴ Kathryn Woods, ‘Facing Identity in a “Faceless” Society: Physiognomy, Facial Appearance and Identity Perception in Eighteenth-Century London’, *Cultural and Social History*, 14:2 (2017): 140.

In general, physiognomists focused upon ‘unchanging’ elements of the face, rather than expression or, presumably, prosthetic elements such as facial hair.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, early modern physiognomic texts make it clear that beards were legitimate indicators of character. Richard Saunders’s *Physiognomie, and Chiromancie* (1653) ascribed several characteristics to the beard. A red beard, for example, suggested a ‘placid forehead’ and a courteous and friendly man, albeit one ‘with some craft’. A man with a ‘decent beard, handsome and full of haire’ was ‘of good nature and reasonable of things’, while a thin, soft beard signified a man who was ‘lustfull and effeminate’.⁴⁶ For Marck de Vulson, having a pale complexion, a plump and full chin and a ‘beard that playes with the nose’ was a sure sign of ‘the luxurious’ man.⁴⁷ It was, though, something of a niche interest and, although beliefs in the idea continued to circulate throughout the early eighteenth century, the links of physiognomy to astrology and the occult saw a general decline in interest.⁴⁸

The publication, in 1789, of Johan Caspar Lavater’s landmark *Essays on Physiognomy*, however, revived interest.⁴⁹ While early modern physiognomy was based on individuals interpreting their own features to forecast future events in their life and health, eighteenth-century physiognomy had different aims, presenting itself as a science of reading identity through facial perception. As Kathryn Woods argues, this new focus was partly rooted in concerns about the depersonalizing effects of urban life and the decline of face-to-face relationships. The anonymity perpetuated by life in large towns, and the difficulties of identity perception in these new, metropolitan spaces, meant that physical appearance grew in importance as a means of divining the character of strangers.⁵⁰ As the most public of surfaces, heads and faces became sites of authority and signifiers of inner qualities from which character could be ‘read’.⁵¹ New theories postulated links between facial characteristics and personality traits, including intelligence, morality and temper, and sought to recover the hidden ‘language’ of facial features and expression.⁵² Anything acting to conceal the true features and inhibit or distort the facial ‘text’, such as cosmetics or masquerades, therefore, was considered potentially deceptive and suspicious.⁵³ On this reading, facial hair should have been regarded negatively, since it hindered physiognomic assessment by obscuring the lower face and chin.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Richard Saunders, *Physiognomie, and Chiromancie, Metoposcopia: The Symmetrical Proportions and Signal Moles of the Body* (London: Printed for Nathaniel Brook, 1671), 190. See also J. S., *The True Fortune-Teller, or, Guide to Knowledge, Discovering the Whole Art of Chiromancy, Metoposcopy and Astrology* (London: Printed for E. Tracy, 1698), 64–5.

⁴⁷ Marck De Vulson, *The Court of Curiositie, Wherein, by the ALGEBRA and LOT the Most Intricate Questions Are Resolved* (trans. J. G. Gent) (London: Printed for William Crooke, 1669), 195.

⁴⁸ Woods, ‘Facing Identity’, 140–1.

⁴⁹ Johan Caspar Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy, Designed to Promote the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind, by John Caspar Lavater, Volume 1* (London: Printed for John Murray, 1789).

⁵⁰ Woods, ‘Facing Identity’, 142–5.

⁵¹ Dror Wahrman, *The Making of the Modern Self: Identify and Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 297–9; Penelope Corfield, ‘Dress for Deference and Dissent: Hats and the Decline of Hat Honour’, *Costume*, 23 (1989): 71; Woods, ‘Facing Identity’, 138.

⁵² Houston, ‘Face of Madness’, 50.

⁵³ Woods, ‘Facing Identity’, 144.

Perhaps surprisingly, therefore, references to beards were relatively scarce in physiognomic texts although they featured prominently in Lavater's *Essays*. In a later edition, echoing older ideas about the correlation between beard quality and bodily strength, Lavater argued that a short, thick and curly beard was an indicator of 'tranquil, firm strength'.⁵⁴ While language and behaviour could belie true nature, beards represented a corporeal truth that could not be concealed. Discussing portraits of famous villains, Lavater saw the men's fortune in their faces: 'even the[ir] beard bears a character of sternness and inflexibility'.⁵⁵ The fact that large proportions of men throughout the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth were clean-shaven perhaps also rendered discussion superfluous.

Another group of sources, however, dictionaries and encyclopaedias, provide potentially useful insights into prevailing attitudes towards facial hair. Although obviously problematic in being prescriptive and difficult to fix in authorship or the origin of terms, they nonetheless provide consistent references to beards, allowing analysis of elite and vernacular terminologies and change over time. Dictionary authors varied widely in the amount of detail or terminology they included, but even this can be revealing of underlying attitudes towards the beard. The inclusion of specific entries at least suggests that beards were regarded as a distinct category of hair, separate from that on the head. Some provided only basic definitions. In 1735, Benjamin Defoe's entry for 'Beard' simply read 'the hair growing upon the chin'.⁵⁶ Francis Allen's *Compleat English Dictionary* of 1765 contained only two entries: 'Beard, S. the hair which grows on a person's cheek, lips and chin' and 'BEARDED, Adj. applied to persons, one who has a beard'.⁵⁷ Similarly brief entries appeared in James Buchanan's *Linguae Britannicae vera pronuntiatio* and John Ash's *New and Compleat Dictionary of the English Language* of 1775.⁵⁸ Some also gave alternative terminologies or descriptions. Nathaniel Bailey's 1730 *Dictionarium Britannicum* contained a number of entries. While 'Beard' was termed 'hair on the chin &c', Bailey included several other entries. The Latin 'Ba'rba' was defined as 'a beard, the hairy part of the chin and lips', while other Latinate terms were given, including 'Grani' for 'Mustachoes or Whiskers of a Beard' and 'Barbigerous' meaning 'bearded or wearing a beard'.⁵⁹ 'Barba' also appeared in John Barrow's 1749

⁵⁴ Johann Casper Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy; for the Promotion of the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind; Written in the German Language by J. C. Lavater, Abridged from Mr. Holcrofts Translation* (London: Printed for G. G. J. & J. Robinson, 1800), 29.

⁵⁵ Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*, 183.

⁵⁶ Benjamin Defoe, *A Compleat English Dictionary: Containing the True Meaning of All the Words in the English Language* (Westminster: Printed for John Brindley, 1735), unpaginated. See also the entry for 'Beard' in Anne Fisher, *An Accurate New Spelling Dictionary, and Expositor of the English Language*. (London: Printed for the author, 1773).

⁵⁷ Francis Allen, *A Complete English Dictionary: Containing an Explanation of All the Words Made Use of in the Common Occurrences of Life...* (London: Printed for J. Wilson and J. Fell, 1765), unpaginated.

⁵⁸ James Buchanan, *Linguae Britannicae vera pronuntiatio: or, a New English Dictionary* (London: Printed for A. Miller in the Strand, 1757); John Ash, *The New and Complete Dictionary of the English Language, Vol. I* (London: Printed for Edward and Charles Dilly in the Poultry; and R. Baldwin in Pater-Noster Row, 1775), unpaginated.

⁵⁹ Nathaniel Bailey, *Dictionarium Britannicum: or a More Compleat Universal Etymological English Dictionary Than Any Extant* (London: Printed for T. Cox, 1730), unpaginated.

Dictionarium medicum universal, 'the beard, a part too well known to need description', while 'Barb' was defined by Thomas Browne's *Union Dictionary* as 'anything that grows in the place of the beard'.⁶⁰

Other definitions, however, hint at the deeper meanings attached to facial hair, particularly in reference to life stage. Many dictionaries, for example, included specific terms for the first appearance of the beard in adolescence, reflecting older ideas about facial hair as a shift in body cycle. Nathaniel Bailey's dictionary included the term 'Impubescent', defined as the state of 'beginning to have a beard'.⁶¹ Barrow's dictionary defined the 'first appearance of the beard on the upper lip' as 'Probarbium'.⁶² The adjective 'beardless' appeared variously, denoting both the literal and figurative implications of a lack of facial hair. While Francis Allen defined beardless as simply being 'without a beard', others like John Ash used it to imply one who was 'young or youthful'.⁶³ Some definitions also suggest the continuing close links between a lack of facial hair and generative capacity, or sexuality. Here, being beardless could be a sign of boyhood or bodily immaturity but might equally signal weakness or effeminacy. Thomas Dyche's dictionary defined 'beardless' as 'one that has no hair visible on the chin, as children, women and *effeminate men*' (emphasis added).⁶⁴ The implication that an inability to grow beards signalled effeminacy is repeated elsewhere. Dyche used the slang term 'smock-faced' for 'a man or boy with an effeminate or womanish look, smooth and without a beard &c'.⁶⁵ Interesting to note here is the separation of 'effeminate' and 'womanish', suggesting sexual as well as physical ambiguity. John Barrow's medical dictionary listed the obscure term 'Spanopogones' to define 'persons whose beards are thin, or whose hairs fall off from their chins'.⁶⁶ Such definitions add a further layer of complexity to the already confused relationship between facial hair and the articulation of masculinity. To grow facial hair was uncouth and brutish; to shave it off, as we have seen, suggested control and the removal of a barrier to politeness. But, as lexicographers like Dyche and Ash also suggest, the *ability* to grow a beard was still a vital keystone of the male sex.⁶⁷

So far, we have explored the social and cultural meanings of facial hair and the factors contributing to its decline. But how far were changing social attitudes reflected

⁶⁰ Thomas Browne, *The Union Dictionary Containing All That Is Truly Useful in the Dictionaries of Johnson, Sheridan and Walker...* (London: Printed by J. W. Myers, 1800), unpaginated; John Barrow, *Dictionarium medicum universale: or, A New Medicinal Dictionary. Containing an Explanation of All the Terms Used in Physic, ... Botany, &c. ... The Whole Collected from the Original Authors, by J. Barrow, Teacher of Mathematics* (London: Printed for T. Longman and C. Hitch and A. Millar, 1749), unpaginated.

⁶¹ Bailey, *Dictionarium Britannicum*.

⁶² Barrow, *Dictionarium medicum universale*.

⁶³ Allen, *Compleat English Dictionary*; John Ash, *New and Complete Dictionary*; see also Browne, *Union Dictionary*.

⁶⁴ Thomas Dyche, *A New General English Dictionary; Peculiarly Calculated for the Use and Improvement of Such as Are Unacquainted with the Learned Languages...* (London: Printed for Catherine and Richard Ware, 1765), unpaginated.

⁶⁵ Dyche, *New General English Dictionary*.

⁶⁶ Barrow, *Dictionarium medicum universale*.

⁶⁷ See Karen Harvey, *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century: Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 95–7.

in medical literature relating to facial hair? As the eighteenth century progressed, was there a rupture between older ideas about the humoral body in light of changing medico-scientific debates about the body? It is to such questions that this chapter now turns.

Beards, hair and medicine in the eighteenth century

The eighteenth century saw renewed interest in the physiology of hair across public and professional, as well as medical, spheres. Discussions of the nature and formation of hair were part of a growing interest in the ‘animal economy’ and the place of the body in the natural world, driven partly by development and popularity of microscopy and in scientific instruments more generally. Optical instruments were the acme of enlightened enquiry, allowing dilettantes and philosophes alike to literally see the world in new ways.⁶⁸ Microscopes were perhaps the ultimate symbol of this and were, as Al Coppola suggests, ‘a transformative sensory prosthesis of the new science.’⁶⁹ Microscopes opened a window into the micro-mechanisms of the body and its operations, and demand was particularly fuelled by a growing interest in ‘animalcula’ and blood flow.⁷⁰ As an abundant and freely available resource, hair was an obvious choice for the microscope slide. While groups of virtuosi observers established formal groups and societies, amateurs too used microscopes to explore the micro landscape of their own bodies. In the early eighteenth century, new microscopes were supplied with sample slides containing typical specimens, to illustrate how they might be used. Hair was a common inclusion.⁷¹ At first, microscopic observation appeared in many ways to reinforce, rather than replace, humoral conceptions of the origins and nature of hair.

Early studies focused upon the composition and physical properties of hair, as observed through a microscope. Some merely described hairs in basic terms such as ‘short and thread like’ or ‘hard and flexible’, and microscopic analysis initially appeared to confirm structures of fibres and filaments.⁷² In 1701, Charles LeClerc identified hairs as ‘hollow filaments planted in the Glandules of the skin’, implying that they were surface, external, or even parasitical entities.⁷³ Later descriptions were more detailed. The perfumer and hairdresser J. Mather noted that hairs were knotted and hollow, consisting of five or six bound fibres. Although appearing round and cylindrical, Mather observed that they could also be triangular or square.⁷⁴ Even much later the

⁶⁸ Withey, *Technology*, 94–5.

⁶⁹ Al Coppola, “‘Without the Help of Glasses’: The Anthropocentric Spectacle of Nehemiah Grew’s Botany”, *Eighteenth Century*, 54:2 (2013): 264.

⁷⁰ Withey, *Technology*, 94.

⁷¹ Jeremy Burgess, Michael Marten and Rosemary Taylor, *Under the Microscope: A Hidden World Revealed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 186.

⁷² For example, Thomas Gibson, *The Anatomy of Humane Bodies Epitomized...* (London: Printed by T. W., 1703), 365; James Handley, *Colloquia Chirurgica: or the Art of Surgery Epitomiz’d and Made Easy...* (London: Printed for A. Bettesworth and C. Hitch, 1733), 191.

⁷³ LeClerc, *The Compleat Surgeon*, 10.9.

⁷⁴ J. Mather, *A Treatise on the Nature and Preservation of the Hair...* (London: Printed by A. Grant, 1795), 10.

debate about the shape of individual hairs was still raging. By 1832 they were argued to be ovular in shape and composed of a 'softish, glutinous or pulpy matter, contained in a semi-transparent bag'.⁷⁵ How hair should be classified was another matter for debate. In 1714, William Salmon's study of anatomy described hair as part of the 'vegetable system' and having a 'vegetable life'.⁷⁶

Such organic metaphors continued throughout the eighteenth century. William Moore's 1780 *Art of Hairdressing* described hair as an 'oeconomy' (a system that requires management), likening it to plants growing out of the earth.⁷⁷ Hairs were described variously as 'knotted like some form of grass ... [which] sent out branches from their joints', like 'the root of a tree'.⁷⁸ Just as the tops of vegetables grew back after being withered by cold weather, so the hair grew back stronger once cut.⁷⁹ The 'vegetable' analogy was further extended in discussions of how hair was nourished. Drawing life from the 'general stock of juice or moisture of the body' hair was portrayed as feeding 'as plants do out of the earth'.⁸⁰ Rather than being a living part of the body, therefore, it had its own distinct 'economy', which appeared to support observations of the continued growth of hair after death.⁸¹ The exact function and purpose of hair was also a topic of debate, although it was generally agreed that it served as a protective covering to shield the body from the harmful effects of environment and sunlight.

Where, though, were beards amidst this new climate of ideas? Early modern medical authors were confident in their assertions about the form and function of facial hair and its place within the embodiment and performance of masculinity. But the virtual disappearance of beards by 1700, and pejorative connections with roughness and inelegant manliness, complicated the significative power of facial hair as a symbol of virility and strength. Medical authors therefore faced a new problem of reconciling facial hair with changing views about the male body. Just as the beard was absent from advice literature and general discussions of gender and the social body, however, it appears similarly elusive in medical texts. As Emma Markiewicz notes, since facial hair was often considered a secondary category to that of head hair, it was therefore difficult to reconcile with medicine.⁸² Rather than attracting dedicated studies, facial hair was instead largely subsumed within new debates about the nature and origins of hair. One exception was the popular *Pogonologia* by the French politician, engineer and historian Jacques-Antoine Dulaure, translated into English and published in

⁷⁵ Anon., *The Toilette of Health, Beauty and Fashion* (London: Wittenoom and Cremer, 1832), 23.

⁷⁶ William Salmon, *Ars Anatomica: or the Anatomy of Human Bodies* (London: Printed by J. Dawkes, 1714), 3. This idea was still prevalent at the end of the century. See, for example, Mather, *A Treatise*, 10.

⁷⁷ William Moore, *The Art of Hair-Dressing, and Making It Grow Fast, Together with a Plain and Easy Means of Preserving It* (Bath: J. Salmon, 1780), 5–6.

⁷⁸ Cook, 'Natural History', 120; Rowland, *Familiar, Pleasing and Interesting Essay*, 5–6.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸⁰ Mather, *A Treatise*, 10. See also David Ritchie, *A Treatise on the Hair* (London: Printed by the author, 1770), 4; Atkinson, *Essay on the Hair*, 4.

⁸¹ Moore, *Art of Hair Dressing*, 5.

⁸² Emma Markiewicz, 'Hair, Wigs and Wig Wearing in Eighteenth-Century England', Warwick University, unpublished PhD thesis, 2014, 54.

1786, which provided a detailed history of the beard, but without in-depth or specific discussion of the physical make up or biology of beard hairs.⁸³

Where beards were discussed they generally fell within one of two themes. First, especially in the early eighteenth century, was the continuing relationship between the beard and the production of sperm. Pierre Dionis's *Anatomy of Human Bodies Improv'd* (1716) reinforced the 'great correspondence between the seed and the beard', since they appeared at the same time. Those with 'the greatest stock of seed' had the 'roughest' beards.⁸⁴ In other words, the stronger the beard, the greater the assumed quantity of semen being produced and the more potent the reproductive power of the man. The place of the beard as a signifier of the shift to adolescence was discussed in passing in John Crawford's *Cursus Medicinae* of 1724, while other prominent physicians such as William Cullen continued to reinforce beard colour as an important indicator of temperament as late as 1789.⁸⁵ Second was the place of shaving within broader discussions of the maintenance of health. Discussing the importance of cleanliness and bodily care, the Polish physician Anthony Willich argued that removing the beard (and also the nails) was 'no insignificant matter in the care of health', since shaving promoted healthy perspiration.⁸⁶ Others discussed shaving as a useful means of evacuation, ridding the body of excess humours and cleaning blockages from pores.⁸⁷ For George Cheyne, regular shaving of face and head was highly beneficial in treating headaches and eye complaints.⁸⁸ Beards also appeared in medical texts, in discussions of conditions affecting their growth or appearance, including 'furfuratio', or dandruff on the head and beard, and 'sycosis', causing ulcers in 'those parts which are covered with Hair; the hard and round chiefly in the Beard'.⁸⁹

To further understand the place of the beard in eighteenth-century medical discourses, though, it is necessary to map broader changes in concepts of both hair and skin. As Emma Markiewicz notes, concepts of hair were closely bound up with changing ideas about the body and, in particular, the retreat from humoral theory

⁸³ Jacques-Antoine Dulaure, *Pogonologia, or a Philosophical and Historical Essay on Beards* (trans. Edward Drewe) (Exeter: Printed by R. Thorn, 1786).

⁸⁴ Pierre Dionis, *The Anatomy of Humane Bodies Improv'd, According to the Circulation of the Blood, and All the Modern Discoveries* (London: Printed for R. Bonwicke, Tim. Goodwin, J. Walthoe, M. Wotton, S. Manship, J. Nicholson, R. Wilkin, B. Tooke, R. Smith and T. Ward, 1716), 345. See also Dennis De Coetlogon, *An Universal History of Arts and Sciences* (London: Printed and sold by John Hart, 1745), 85.

⁸⁵ John Crawford, *Cursus medicinae; or a Complete Theory of Physic: in Five Parts* (London: Printed for W. Taylor, at the Ship and Black-Swan, in Pater-Noster-Row; and J. Osborn, at the Oxford-Arms, in Lombard-Street, 1724), 236, 304; William Cullen, *A Treatise of the Materia Medica* (2 vols) (Edinburgh: Printed for Charles Elliot, 1789), 63.

⁸⁶ Anthony Willich, *Lectures on Diet and Regimen...* (London: Printed for T. Longman, 1799), 198.

⁸⁷ Robert James, *A Medicinal Dictionary; Including Physic, Surgery, Anatomy, Chymistry, and Botany, in All Their Branches Relative to Medicine, Volume 2* (London: Printed for T. Osborne and sold by J. Roberts, 1734-5), 213.

⁸⁸ George Cheyne, *An Essay of Health and Long Life* (London: Printed for George Strahan, at the Golden Ball over-against the Royal Exchange in Cornhill; and J. Leake, Bookseller at Bath, 1724), 198-9.

⁸⁹ Steven Blankaart, *The Physical Dictionary. Wherein the Terms of Anatomy, the Names and Causes of Diseases, Chyrurgical Instruments, and Their Use Are Accurately Describ'd* (London: Printed for Sam. Crouch and John Sprint, and are to be sold by William Davis at the Black-Bull in Cornhill near the Royal Exchange, 1702), 143, 295.

as an explanatory model.⁹⁰ This was by no means a rapid change. Despite repeated invectives about popular errors and superstitions, humoral theory continued to underpin diagnosis and treatment well into the nineteenth century. But such ideas were subject to continual challenge and erosion from empirical observation, medical education and new theories of anatomy. As focus began to shift away from humoral physiology and towards the ‘non-naturals’ (including air, sleeping and waking, food and drink, diet, rest, exercise and emotions), attention switched to external factors in governing health.⁹¹ Early modern writers, remember, had placed the source of hair deep within the body, with beard hair resulting from the waste heat of sperm production. But, amidst increasing attention on the form and functions of the body and also a new socio-medical focus upon bodily surfaces, beards were increasingly viewed as originating in or below the skin, rather than the abdomen and loins.

Even so, there was still much continuity. Despite arguments that ‘modern’ science had superseded the knowledge of the ‘ancients’, the essential concept of hair remained broadly that of two centuries earlier. The notion of hair as a ‘tegument of the body’, likened to nails, or even bird feathers, was still in common currency.⁹² New discussions of the animal oeconomy tended to reinforce, rather than challenge, humoral views. The physician William Cullen noted the ‘distinction of temperaments’ established by ‘the ancients’ and placed hair within the context of simple solids. Cullen saw no reason to abandon humoral explanations at that stage since it ‘appears to me to be founded in observation.’⁹³ David Ritchie began his book by appearing to suggest that ‘modern physicians’ had undermined humoral explanations of the hair. Much of the discussion that followed, however, was laden with humoral terminology and reference, from heat to excrement.⁹⁴

A 1776 article in the *Hibernian Magazine* suggested that hair was ‘commonly reputed as a recrement’ and one ‘more simple than the other humours of the body.’⁹⁵ Quoting anatomical specialists such as Richard Gibson (published in 1703) and James Drake, Ritchie noted that hairs were ‘commonly reputed to be excrements and esteemed to be nourished by such.’⁹⁶ There was, however, an important shift in the later eighteenth century, with the apparent abandonment of the notion of beard production as male catamenia. Seemingly no authors after 1750 still discussed the production of hair as a form of male menstruation, or explicitly linked it to the production of sperm. The implications of this seemingly minor change are actually profound in terms of gender conceptions, signalling a critical shift away from earlier models of the body. At least in medical terms, the beard was no longer specifically a sign or symptom of seminal

⁹⁰ Markiewicz, ‘Hair, Wigs and Wig Wearing’, 33–4.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁹² For examples, see Ritchie, *Treatise on the Hair*, 6–7; Andrew Fyfe, *A System of Anatomy and Physiology, with the Comparative Anatomy of Animals, Volume 1* (Edinburgh: J. Pillians and Sons, 1795), 477–9.

⁹³ William Cullen, *A Treatise of the Materia Medica, Volume 1* (Edinburgh: Printed for Charles Elliot, 1789), 63, 112.

⁹⁴ Ritchie, *Art of Hair Dressing*, 4, 6, 9.

⁹⁵ J. Cook, ‘The Natural History of Hair’, *Hibernian Magazine or Compendium of Useful Knowledge* (1776): 119–20.

⁹⁶ Ritchie, *Art of Hair Dressing*, 5.

ferment. Instead, it was causally linked to the blood and to a more general notion of bodily heat. It is worth noting too that Stewart's descriptions of hair concentrated upon the effects of heat upon its appearance, rather than as a factor affecting its generation or growth.⁹⁷

The broader concept of facial hair as a waste product or excrement, however, initially proved harder to shift. Alexander Stewart's 1795 study still identified hair as an excrement of the blood.⁹⁸ Classic humoral texts about the body, such as Culpeper's herbals and *English Physician*, were still in print in the nineteenth century, although their influence and reception by that stage is hard to assess. By 1800, though, this too had begun to change. While Erasmus Darwin described hair as being produced from the 'excretory' glands of the skin, he identified it as a product of the mucous glands.⁹⁹ Some authors actively sought to place distance between old and 'modern' ideas about hair. In 1791 Georges Buffon declared that while 'the ancients erroneously considered the hair as a type of excrement', such ideas had been replaced by the superior knowledge of 'the moderns'.¹⁰⁰ This was echoed by William Atkinson who broke with the 'ancients' view of hair as a 'sort of excrement, fed only with excrementitious matter', arguing instead that 'the moderns are agreed' that hair was a unique substance with its own individual nourishment.¹⁰¹ In 1818, Alexander Rowland was still quoting the thirteenth-century theologian and Catholic saint Albertus Magnus, referring to the production of hair when 'the brain is divested of gross humour, cholor or phlegm' which rose to the surface and solidified.¹⁰² Rowland suggested that his own observations led him to a broadly similar conclusion, but argued that hair began as a liquid substance in the 'cutis vera or inner skin' and was then 'exhaled by the heat of the body to the surface'.¹⁰³ Here was evidence of the second important shift in conceptions of facial hair. While Magnus held the traditional view of beard hair as a substance originating deep within the body, Rowland clearly saw it as emerging from within the surface of the skin. This process, which I term the 'externalization' of facial hair, took place in the context of broader changes in ideas about the permeability of skin. As Claudia Benthien and others have noted, early modern concepts of skin viewed it as a porous layer, one that allowed substances to both enter and exit the body.¹⁰⁴ In this sense, skin was 'excremental' allowing internal waste products, moisture, fluid and hair, to be expelled to maintain bodily balance.¹⁰⁵ It was, to use Barbara Duden's phrase, a 'surface on which the inside

⁹⁷ Alexander Stewart, *The Natural Production of Hair, or Its Growth and Decay...* (London: Printed by the author, 1795), 7, 11.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 11–12.

⁹⁹ Erasmus Darwin, *Zoonomia: or, the Laws of Organic Life* (London: Printed for J. Johnson, 1796), 44, 52

¹⁰⁰ George Louis LeClerc Buffon, *The System of Natural History, Written by the Celebrated Buffon...* (Perth: Printed by R. Morrison, 1791), 41.

¹⁰¹ William Atkinson, *An Essay on the Hair, Describing Its Nature and Means of Nourishment* (London: Nichols and Sons, 1814), 4.

¹⁰² Alexander Rowland, *A Familiar, Pleasing and Interesting Essay on the Curious Structure, the Varied Colours and Practical Essay on the Human Hair* (London: Printed by W. Solomon, 1818), 4–5.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Claudia Benthien, *Skin: On the Cultural Border between Self and the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 39.

¹⁰⁵ Steven Connor, *The Book of Skin* (London: Reaktion, 2004), 21–2.

[of the body] reveals itself'.¹⁰⁶ By the later eighteenth century, however, there were also shifts in the relationship between skin and the inner body, which saw skin recast as virtually a distinct organ. While still seen as a membrane and permeable, greater attention began to focus on its surface and layers.¹⁰⁷ It is into this changing context that shifting ideas about the origin of beard hair can be placed. Rather than originating deep within the body, beard hair was now conceptually part of the skin.

As the eighteenth century progressed, there was a noticeable change in the authorship of books about hair. While descriptions of hair were common in anatomical and physiological texts, it is noteworthy that virtually every dedicated study between 1770 and 1800 was written by barbers or hairdressers, rather than physicians. These included London hairdressers such as Peter Gilchrist, William Moore, David Ritchie and James Stewart, whose books were all published between 1770 and 1782.¹⁰⁸ In many ways this is unsurprising. Clearly occupational interest was a factor, and in the relatively new profession of hairdressing, some were keen to display knowledge as well as proficiency in their craft. Establishing themselves as published practitioners in the 'science' of haircutting, offered a potential elevation in status from mere trimming and wig-dressing. In 1770, Peter Gilchrist's *Treatise on the Hair* argued that the true nature and purpose of hair had been overlooked since the discovery of blood circulation, and he was keen to explore the nature of hair as well as its aesthetics.¹⁰⁹ David Ritchie emphasized the importance of the microscope in discovering the hidden structure and formation of hair.¹¹⁰ In part this perhaps reflected the growth of specialist knowledge and the claims of artisans, makers and practitioners to be the ultimate arbiters of their own product or service. But, on another level, it also highlights what might be regarded as the 'demedicalization' of facial hair – the point at which it began to move away from the ambit of medicine and practice and into a less-defined area of lay bodywork.

Perhaps one of the most important arenas for the discussion of facial hair in this period, however, was the emerging literature relating to race and hierarchies of human bodies. It is to such discussions that the final part of this chapter now turns.

Beards, race and corporeal value

Facial hair offered a useful lens through which to view British (and European) men's bodies, health, humoral temperament, manliness and character. But it also mapped on to broader debates about national and racial difference. Beards were central in discussions of the corporeal nature and aesthetics of race, amidst what was, in many ways, the 'great age of classification'.¹¹¹ Faced with the problem of trying to identify and

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Benthien, *Skin*, 40.

¹⁰⁷ Connor, *Book of Skin*, 24.

¹⁰⁸ Peter Gilchrist, *A Treatise on the Hair* (London: Publisher unknown, 1770); Moore, *Art of Hair Dressing*; James Stewart, *Plocacosmos, or the Whole Art of Hairdressing* (London: Printed for the author, 1782); Ritchie, *Art of Hair Dressing*.

¹⁰⁹ Gilchrist, *A Treatise*, 4.

¹¹⁰ Ritchie, *Treatise*, 2.

¹¹¹ Londa Schiebinger, *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 117.

categorize distinct types of human, naturalists sought criteria by which to measure them.¹¹² One was climate. Hippocratic climatic theory underpinned debates about the behaviour and capacity of non-European races. Temperate climates (the ‘civilized middle’ between the opposite extremes of temperature) were seen as producing temperate humans and those most likely to be moderate and intelligent.¹¹³ The more extreme the climate, the more ‘barbaric’ were its inhabitants. Although located in a northern zone, Britain was generally represented as a temperate region and, therefore, at or near the top of the theoretical hierarchy.¹¹⁴ The beard, was a central component in this ‘geohumoralism’, becoming one of the key indicators of racial ‘value.’¹¹⁵ It could be used to identify racial groups and mark out the foreign ‘other’.

The physical typology of northern Europeans was the standard against which all others were judged.¹¹⁶ Skin colour was an important barometer of the effects of hot or cold climates, as were bodily form, shape and features, including hair and beards.¹¹⁷ Francois Bernier’s *New Division of the Earth* used lips, hair, skin and the presence of only ‘slight beards’, alongside colour, to claim that black Africans were a separate race.¹¹⁸ European hair was characterized as long and blond as a result of the moderate climate, contrasting with the short, curly hair of Africans, or the black, straight hair of Americans, both of whom inhabited hot climates.¹¹⁹ Beards, as Angela Rosenthal suggests, were perhaps even more meaningful than hair, as they linked both gender and ethnicity.¹²⁰ By 1700, the quality, length and colour of beards were important elements in discussions of non-European bodies, becoming central components in establishing ranks or ‘sorts’ of homo sapiens. Unsurprisingly, bearded European and north African men were generally deemed superior to those of beardless or thinly bearded races. Whether or not they chose to grow them was another matter. Black Africans, East Asians or Laplanders were all described as having scanty beards and discussed in pejorative terms.¹²¹ A century later, the novelist and poet Oliver Goldsmith argued that variation in the manner of wearing beards was an important distinction between races, noting that ‘every nation seems to have entertained different prejudices at different times’ towards facial hair.¹²² Geographical compendiums, such as Michael Adams’s *New Royal Geographical Magazine* (1794) routinely recorded facial appearance, including facial hair, alongside other characteristics.¹²³

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Mary Floyd-Wilson, *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), ch. 1.

¹¹⁴ Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 111.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 96.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 2–3.

¹¹⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, 96.

¹¹⁹ Rosenthal, ‘Raising Hair’, 2.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Schiebinger, *Nature’s Body*, 122.

¹²² Oliver Goldsmith, *A History of the Earth and Animated Nature*, Vol. 2 (Dublin: Printed for James Williams, 1776), 96.

¹²³ Michael Adams, *The New Royal Geographical Magazine; or, a Modern, Complete, Authentic and Copious System of Universal Geography* (London: Published by Alexander Hoggatt, 1794), 11, 20,

The power of beards as measures of mental acuity and racial ‘value’ varied. Richard Bradley’s *Philosophical Account of the Works of Nature* (1721) suggested that beards were a defining characteristic of white races, especially white Europeans, but acknowledged that differences in appearance were matters of degree, rather than accurate measures of intellectual capacity.¹²⁴ Underlying European suspicion of non-bearded races was the lingering connection between beardlessness and effeminacy. As noted above, the ability to grow a beard was still symbolically important for European men, even if fashion and other forces dictated its removal. There were suggestions, even in Lavater’s work, of the lack of virility of some beardless nations. A passage quoted from M. De. Pauw’s *Recherche Philosophique Sur Les Americains* noting the lack of beard among American tribes, argued that while it was not correct to infer that they were necessarily ‘enfeebled in the organs of generation’, it was true that they, along with the Chinese and Tartars, were ‘far from being fruitful or much addicted to love.’¹²⁵

Even within discussions of beardless nations there was variation. Initially, Caribbean and American Indians were depicted positively, differing from Europeans only by degree.¹²⁶ They resembled Europeans in facial appearance, if not skin colour, and as such were perhaps seen as closer to them. By mid-century though, attitudes towards beardless races had hardened, with some naturalists arguing that their lack of beard follicles rendered them a different species of human.¹²⁷ This created an awkward paradox: in deliberately removing their beards to differentiate themselves from other nations and appear more ‘civilized’, Europeans were effectively mimicking the facial appearance of the (potentially effeminate or feminized) ‘savage’. The smooth faces of Europeans even led to suspicions regarding their masculinity by men of other races. On first encountering British men in 1788, indigenous Australians were reportedly confused by their lack of beards, thinking them to be ‘misshapen females’.¹²⁸ The shaved face therefore created ambiguities in the nature, symbolism and power of facial hair.

Why this occurred is more complex. The answer may lie in earlier precedents of shaving as a cultural reaction to ‘otherness’. Exploring its place within sixteenth-century ethnological discourses, Elliot Horowitz suggests that the discovery of the New World altered European perceptions of beards. Since they had once borne unfavourable connections with Jews and Turks, Europeans had therefore shaved to demonstrate their superiority to this perceived ‘other’.¹²⁹ According to Horowitz, the discovery of beardless white inhabitants in the New World shifted ‘otherness’ onto the clean-shaven face, leading to the widespread return of beards across Europe.¹³⁰ Others agree with the concept of facial hair as a cultural reaction. Douglas Biow’s study of beards in medieval

30–1, 37, 47, 62, etc.; Thomas Bankes, *A Modern, Authentic and Complete System of Universal Geography*, 2 Vols (London: Printed for C. Cooke, 1790), 467–8, 479, 497, 511, 528, 561, etc.

¹²⁴ Schiebinger, *Nature’s Body*, 122.

¹²⁵ Johan Caspar Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy Designed to Promote the Knowledge and the Love of Mankind* (trans. Thomas Holcroft) (London: William Tegg, 1797), 351.

¹²⁶ Wheeler, *Complexion of Race*, 72–3; Wahrman, *Making of the Modern Self*, 97.

¹²⁷ Schiebinger, *Nature’s Body*, 123.

¹²⁸ Quoted in Wheeler, *Complexion of Race*, 20.

¹²⁹ Elliott Horowitz, ‘The New World and the Changing Face of Europe’, *Sixteenth-Century Journal*, 28:4 (1997): 1185.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

Italy places ‘otherness’ within the contexts of urbanization and a crisis of masculinity among Italian elites. Whereas urban Italian men had shaved to emphasize their superiority to bearded rustics, Biow suggested that the invasion of Italy by France in the sixteenth century caused insecurity among Italian men. As a highly visible sign of manliness, the beard was here a response to the perceived weakness and vulnerability of the state, as well as the predominant style of the invaders.¹³¹ In both the medieval period and the eighteenth century, wearing facial hair, or not, was a conscious reaction to circumstance, rather than a neutral decision. It also involved a process of ‘othering’.

As well as the beard itself, the methods used to remove it in non-European nations were culturally loaded and used as a further basis for assessments of barbarousness and even for judgements about sexuality and effeminacy. The beards of Chinese men, for example, connoted age and wisdom, although their custom of plucking beard hairs did not meet European expectations of civilization. This practice supposedly began at an early age and continued until the age of thirty, after which the beard was allowed to grow and, like long fingernails, was viewed as a sign of ‘esteemed learning’.¹³² The issue of plucking beards was also discussed in relation to American Indians, where it was asserted that the habit gave the lie of beardlessness. Some argued that, if the young men had shaved rather than plucked their beard hairs, they would have beards as full and luxuriant as any European man.¹³³

If plucking the beard was questionable, though, shaving was a benchmark of civilization. Europeans were generally impressed with the ingenuity of other races whose men used implements to shave, largely because this mirrored their own practices. Non-Europeans who shaved were generally described in favourable terms than those who used other methods. James Cook’s account of meeting Tongan islanders noted that they shaved their beards with shells. These ‘singular instruments ... were found to be an excellent shift’ although ‘rather tedious’ to use. The island chiefs reportedly made repeated visits to the ship for the novelty of being shaved by the barbers on board.¹³⁴ This sort of cultural exchange in the adoption of European habits was also viewed positively. Occasions when native peoples were introduced to the razor through contact with Europeans were also noted. Richard McCausland noted that while many American Indians plucked out their beard hairs, ‘several of the Mohocks, Delawares, and others who live amongst white people (emphasis added), sometimes shave with razors’.¹³⁵ Oliver Goldsmith cautioned against the assumption that other races took no care of their appearance, arguing that ‘we have a very wrong idea of savage finery’.¹³⁶ Elsewhere he slipped into judgement however. Discussing the

¹³¹ Douglas Biow, *On the Importance of Being an Individual in Renaissance Italy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 186–9.

¹³² Noble, *A Voyage*, 144.

¹³³ Schiebinger, *Nature’s Body*, 124.

¹³⁴ Anon., *A Collection of Voyages Round the World Performed by Royal Authority* (London: Printed for A. Miller, 1790), 1399.

¹³⁵ Richard McCausland, ‘Particulars Relative to the Nature and Customs of the Indians of North-America’, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, 76 (1786): 229.

¹³⁶ Goldsmith, *A History*, 96–7.

Mongolian race, Goldsmith noted that ‘with but little beard that grows stragglingly upon the chin,’ the Calmucks were the ‘ugliest of all’ and ‘lead an erratic life.’¹³⁷

But shaving could also be deliberately deployed to stress difference. In 1780, David Ritchie was convinced that European men shaved precisely because of the desire to differentiate themselves from other nations. The fact, Ritchie noted, that the beard was commonly shaved across Europe ‘distinguishes them from all other countries of the world,’ and he suggested that shaving gave ‘a more significant physiognomy to their smooth chins.’¹³⁸ Buffon’s natural history concurred. While the Turks cut off their hair and let their beards grow, Europeans ‘shave their beards, and wear their hair.’¹³⁹ Here, both the beard *and* the act of shaving, could be cultural markers of difference.

Beards and hair, then, were central to concepts of manliness in Europe and in understandings of non-European bodies. The quantity, quality, colour and texture of beards and the methods of removing it all played into broader debates about racial hierarchies and value judgements of bodily ‘others.’

Conclusion

The eighteenth century saw various important changes to concepts of facial hair. Amidst the pan-European decline of the beard, facial hair drew negative associations, including age, madness, low status and bodily dereliction. Beard-wearing had ceased to be a ‘badge’ of manliness by 1700, and elite and middling men took great pains in removing facial hair as part of the articulation of a polite, refined appearance. Nevertheless, shaving complicated concepts of the ‘natural’ body, artificially removing a natural component of the male body and replacing it with soft skin and an open countenance. Shaving was also established as a manly act and one that showed self-mastery although – amidst concerns about cosmetics and artifice and the ever-present spectre of effeminacy – the smooth, pampered face of the polite gentleman complicated expectations of manliness.

In medical texts beards largely ceased to warrant prolonged or detailed discussion, although shaving was propounded as a healthy activity and one that promoted equilibrium by providing a useful means of evacuation. But the broader debates about hair reveal the continuation of the strong link between beards and the male body. Until the mid-eighteenth century the connection between beard hair and the production of sperm remained firm, as did the significance of the first appearance of the beard in signalling the transition to manhood. As the century wore on, however, the specific link to spermatoc production was severed and, despite the retention of links between bodily heat and beard growth, understandings of the origin of hair – and beard hair – shifted from the interior to the exterior of the body.

The centrality of beards to concepts of ‘foreign’ bodies also reveals the extent to which facial hair could be a marker not only of manliness, but of hierarchies of the

¹³⁷ Ibid., 220.

¹³⁸ Ritchie, *A Treatise on the Hair*, 41–2.

¹³⁹ Buffon, *System*, 41.

body. In Britain, the binary between bearded and beardless was a potential line of demarcation between manliness and effeminacy, just as it was a mark of difference between men and women. Older ideas about beard colour and personality also clung on tenaciously, although were in decline by mid-century. In assessments of non-European men, however, everything from colour to length and curl were scrutinized for what they might reveal about intelligence and capacity. Perhaps most importantly, however, despite the fact that they were to be shaved off, beards still made the man. If it was socially undesirable to display it, the ability to grow a beard continued to be a vital component in the articulation of masculinity. In a beardless age, beards were still an essential symbol of manliness and the health, strength and sexual vigour of the male body.

The dominion of the beard, c. 1850–1900

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, but for a relatively limited metropolitan fashion for side whiskers, facial hair remained generally unpopular in Britain.¹ In 1834, the *Toilette of Health, Beauty and Fashion* extolled the virtues of a clean shave, citing the beard as a mark of the plebeian. ‘An unshorn chin,’ it argued, ‘has a degenerating aspect and is only, if at all, excusable in the lowest labourer and mechanic for the infrequency of its removal.’² Shaving was still regarded as a manly act. The patience and skill required, along with the endurance of discomfort, built character, putting a gentleman in ‘a frame of mind favourable to his moral improvement.’³

Around 1850, however, a changing climate of ideas emerged around male identity, bodily appearance and, in particular, the physicality of the male body. Manliness and authority became allied with, and defined by, physical characteristics such as fitness and vigour, as well as corporeal male form, shape and appearance. In an effort to provide compelling evidence through which to reassert the ‘natural’ authority of men, the body became ‘the ultimate foundation of masculine authority and autonomy’ and a benchmark by which to measure the manliness and character of individual men.⁴ Bodily fitness was analogous with fitness to rule.⁵ The new Victorian man was physically robust, ready for action and also fit to lead if required. He was personified in the belligerent, martial bodies of fighting men, in the rugged, hardy physiques of new heroes, including mountaineers, explorers and hunters and in the ‘muscular Christianity’ advocated by religious writers such as Charles Kingsley.⁶ The physical strength of the male body was claimed as mandatory evidence of men’s ‘natural’ superiority and authority. As greater attention began to be paid to the attributes and physicality of the male body, so individual bodily features also acquired new prominence. As perhaps the most

¹ An article on this nascent ‘whiskers movement’ is currently in preparation.

² Anon., *The Toilette of Health, Beauty and Fashion, Embracing the Economy of the Beard &c* (Boston: Allen and Ticknor, 1834), 160.

³ Robert Southey, *The Doctor &c* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1838), 204.

⁴ Christopher Oldstone-Moore, ‘The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain’, *Victorian Studies*, 48:1 (2005): 9.

⁵ Jacob Middelton, ‘The Beard and Victorian Ideas of Masculinity’, in Dominic Janes (ed.), *Back to the Future of the Body* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2007), 34.

⁶ Oldstone-Moore, ‘Beard Movement’, 13, 15–20; Susan Walton, ‘From Squalid Impropriety to Manly Respectability: The Revival of Beards, Moustaches and Martial Values in the 1850s in England’, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 30:3 (2008): 235.

visible and public symbol of the male body, facial hair – and particularly the beard – returned to prominence as a key signifier of masculine traits such as manly strength and character.

This chapter explores the place of facial hair in defining gender (and in particular masculinity), class and race in the nineteenth century. First, it charts the relationship between beards and shifting concepts of masculinity after 1850. Second, it charts the place of beards within health and medical debates, including the emerging popular practice of physiognomy and the specific technological context through which arguments made in support of beards should be understood. The final part of the chapter then turns to broader questions about facial hair as a component in the construction of a specifically British manliness and, to some extent, national superiority, in the age of Empire.

Overall it argues that commentators deployed facial hair in popular (and some medical) writing in a variety of contexts in the nineteenth century, including navigating the complex challenges and changes wrought by modernity, industrial and urban life; shifts in medical and scientific understanding and new technologies; and also in attempting to demonstrate British national character and Imperial endeavour.

Facial hair and masculinity

In some respects, facial hair might seem an unlikely symbol for veneration. In an era that privileged control, a long beard might easily convey *loss* of control over the body implying, as in the previous century, that a man had neglected attention towards his appearance. Further unflattering connections of the bearded face with political radicalism, together with fact that beard-wearing was open to all classes, had the potential to render facial hair as undesirable. But as early as the 1830s there were calls for the return of the beard, based on both its physical and symbolic masculine power. In 1838 the *Penny Satirist* extolled its virtues, claiming that shaving ‘destroys the manhood’, made men weak and effeminate and threatened to ‘womanize the whole species.’⁷ Alongside an increasing awareness of the gendered significance of the beard, many factors coalesced to provide a febrile environment for the return of beards. One was simply a reaction against decades of beardlessness. Men born in 1820 were likely the third or even fourth generation living in a beardless age. Like other fashion trends, such as wigs, what began as a marker of civility and gentlemanliness had gradually shed its symbolic power through ubiquity. In the eighteenth century, being clean-shaven had evinced polite manliness. But after 1800, young men were beginning to seek their own fashionable alternatives.

Historians have located the return of facial hair within a number of deeper changes in, and challenges to, masculinity and manliness. As John Tosh has argued, the period between 1800 and 1914 in Britain brought increasingly sharp distinctions between

⁷ Anon., ‘A Chapter on Shaving’, *Penny Satirist* (15 September 1838): 19–20.

categories of gender and sexuality. Rapid industrial and economic change created new circumstances for men, in turn forcing the remodelling of concepts of masculinity, the construction of manliness and the male body.⁸ First were the physical and emotional challenges of adapting to a newly industrializing society. As well as having to navigate changing hierarchical structures and new working environments, men were under pressure to 'produce'. This, in itself, was not new, since men had always been regarded as providers for families.⁹ In the nineteenth century, however, these longstanding ideas were reshaped as a drive for working men to be given a wage that would support an entire family, thereby removing the need for a wife to contribute to the domestic economy. An increasing focus upon, and valorization of, work further emphasized men's role as breadwinners in the household.¹⁰ Second were shifting concepts of patriarchal authority and its exercise both in the workplace and the home.¹¹ As the domestic sphere became more important, and since women traditionally controlled the household economy, male behaviour and self-presentation focused upon their supposed authority over home and hearth.¹² Third was the increasing polarization of male and female bodies, with emphases upon the sexual 'otherness' and bodily difference of women and the privileging of gender-specific bodily characteristics. Fears about bodily and sexual 'difference' also manifested in attitudes towards effeminacy and homosexuality, reinforced by perceptions of the physical and moral laxity of the male population in the mid-century.¹³ Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the period after 1840 saw a new focus upon soldiers as exemplars of ideal masculine characteristics. The constraints of home and workplace acted to confine large numbers of Victorian men inside for long periods of time. This created tensions between the romanticized vision of manliness, emphasizing the fitness of male bodies for a life immersed in wild nature and harsh elements, versus the dull reality of a sedentary existence spent indoors. As Susan Walton has suggested, the late 1840s saw a remaking of the symbolism of military facial hair. Whereas British men had once avoided moustaches because of their supposed links to countries operating compulsory military service, the moustache now became a symbol of manly courage and belligerence, linked to military prowess.¹⁴ The successes and perceived heroism of (bearded) British soldiers in the Crimean War, further reinforced the beard as an accoutrement of the military ultramale.¹⁵ By cultivating his facial hair, the civilian man, perhaps embarrassed or constrained by his domestic and working life, could remake himself in their martial image.

All of these points are compelling, but it could be argued that the fashion for beards perhaps also related to broader and deeper concerns about the impact and effects of modernity itself. In Sharona Pearl's words, 'As modernity outpaced the words with

⁸ John Tosh, 'Masculinities in an Industrializing Society: 1800–1914', *Journal of British Studies*, 44:2 (2005): 330–1.

⁹ See, for example, Joanne Bailey, *Parenting in England, 1760–1830: Emotion, Identity and Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 67.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 334.

¹¹ Tosh, 'Masculinities', 332; Oldstone-Moore, 'The Beard Movement', 9.

¹² Tosh, 'Masculinities', 332–3.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 336, 338; Middleton, 'The Beard', 33; Walton, 'Squalid Impropiety', 234.

¹⁴ Walton, 'From Squalid Impropiety', 233–4.

¹⁵ Oldstone-Moore, 'Beard Movement', 12.

which to express itself, new languages and new modes of representation emerged, including the privileging of image and the visual over language and description. In other words, it was often easier to show than to tell.¹⁶ Obliquely this has utility for our understanding of the significance of facial hair. The beard after all was, and long had been, a visual statement as well as a metaphor or synecdoche for male strength. In the early modern period and at various other points in history, it had evinced physicality and belligerence, sexual and reproductive prowess and also mental acuity. It therefore harked back to a supposed golden age of patriarchy. Sensing the shifting sands of modernity, it is possible that men began to see the beard as a cultural touchstone – a symbol of some older, traditional and perhaps imagined manliness in an increasingly anonymous modern world. This would certainly be consistent, for example, with the motivations underlying the medieval or Gothic revival, evident in the art, architecture and literature of the period, which could itself be seen as a reaction against modernity and fears about industrialization and urbanization.

Whatever the direct motivations, around 1850, after a brief initial trend for moustaches, the fashion for full beards gathered momentum. Initial press coverage of this new ‘beard movement’ was mixed, ranging from bemusement to open hostility. In 1851 ‘Aguila’, a contributor to *The Leader*, reported having been laughed and hissed at by passers-by while walking in London, attacked with stones and called ‘a beast’ and ‘French dog.’¹⁷ Such brickbats stung all the more since ‘Aguila’ was in fact a retired soldier and had seen action against the French. The insult is particularly telling, highlighting lingering and pejorative associations between the beard and French Napoleonic troops. Aguila noted that his antagonists were not only ‘common people and boys’ but also ‘well-dressed ladies and shopkeepers’ clerks.¹⁸ Satirical magazines such as *Punch* were also initially unconvinced as to the merits of the beard. In 1854, as the fashion was in its rapid ascendancy, the magazine poked fun at beard supporters. It concluded that, in the last analysis, it was a matter for any ‘perfectly independent’ individual to ‘please other people or one’s self’, rather than be a slave to fashion, or in thrall to confusing and contradictory arguments as to the ‘natural’ function and meaning of the beard.¹⁹

By the mid-1850s, however, newspaper and journal articles unanimously lauded the beard, encouraging doubtful men to cast aside their razors. Endorsements for the beard took a number of forms. One was an appeal to its timeless and ‘natural’ place as a manly accoutrement, often invoking its venerated status in past civilizations. Writing in the *Crayon* in 1855, for example, H. W. noted the importance of the beard in successful civilizations from Ancient Greece to the ‘Mahometans’, to demonstrate the nobility and symbolic power of facial hair and the dishonour brought about by shaving.²⁰ ‘Artium Magister’ viewed shaving as a primary cause of the decline of the

¹⁶ Sharona Pearl, *About Faces: Physiognomy in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 14–15.

¹⁷ Aguila, ‘Are Moustaches and Beards Prejudicial to Their Wearers?’, *Leader* (19 April 1851): 375.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Anon., ‘Reason and the Razor’, *Punch* (11 February 1854): 60.

²⁰ H. W., ‘Beards and Their Bearers’, *Crayon*, 1:24 (1855): 377–8.

Roman Empire, by rendering its fighting men effeminate.²¹ Others lauded the beard as a symbol of man's journey through life and acquisition of experience. As a man aged, it merely emphasized his venerable, patriarchal appearance. If beards represented life stage, they were also said to contribute to the aesthetic symmetry of the male form – a longstanding corporeal measure of manly beauty and attractiveness.²² When a man's 'physical system [was] perfectly developed [with] capacious chest and stalwart frame' only a beard could 'harmonize with this vigorous outline.'²³ The beard, then, and its proportions, perfectly aligned with new ideals of the male body. The bigger the body, and therefore the bigger the beard, the better. Amidst such evidence the return of beards was therefore presented as virtually inevitable. Once right-thinking men considered the evidence, it was assumed, beards would become a *fait accompli*. In 1853, the *Daily News* quoted a commercial traveller who was persuaded by the arguments to grow a beard. While friends initially remarked upon the 'roughness' of his appearance, after a few days 'almost all thinking men approved' and were inspired to follow his example.²⁴ The new status of the beard even extended to art and literature. Pre-Raphaelite artists including Millais and Holman Hunt deployed bearded figures in their historical studies, stressing its place within a 'historic and unquestionable manliness.'²⁵ The likes of Thomas Carlyle and Charles Kingsley consciously linked beards to positive characteristics like wisdom, strength and a primal manliness.²⁶

Of all claims made in support of beards, however, those relating to its supposed health benefits were perhaps the most numerous and enduring.²⁷ While some attention has located health claims within broader themes of masculinity, less has been said about the place of beards, or indeed hair, within the broader aegis of nineteenth-century medical ideas. As will be shown, as much as it articulated masculine ideas, the beard also complicated them. Arguments about the potential healthiness of facial hair offered a rational justification for new ideological notions about manliness.²⁸ But the debates taking place across popular magazines and journals in the mid-Victorian period, obscure important questions about concepts and attitudes towards hair in medical thinking. How far, for example, did health claims made about facial hair reflect the view of physicians, or the medical profession as a whole? Where and how did beards fit with new and emerging theories about the face and head, such as physiognomy? It is to such questions that this chapter now turns.

²¹ Artium Magister, *An Apology for the Beard Addressed to Men in General, to the Clergy in Particular* (London: Rivingtons, 1862), 11.

²² Joanne Begiato, *Manliness in Britain, 1760–1900: Bodies, Emotion and Material Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 38.

²³ Anon., 'The Beard', *Living Age*, 42 (1854): 313–14.

²⁴ Anon., 'Three Months' Experience of a Beard', *Daily News* (29 November 1853): 3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁷ Oldstone-Moore, 'The Beard Movement', 20–2; Middelton, 'The Beard', 31–3.

²⁸ Middelton, 'The Beard', 30.

Healthy beards

As Chapter 2 discussed, the early modern period had seen facial hair closely bound with humoral ideas about individual constitution and temperament, with its colour, thickness and quality all acting as markers of internal heat and, by extension, male generative power. The early modern beard, therefore, was a key corporeal marker of manliness. During the eighteenth century, as the previous chapter showed, such discussions were increasingly pushed to the margins amidst redefinitions of the corporeal body and physiology. Even after 1800 older connections between facial hair and bodily constitution still lingered. Some medical texts still referred to temperaments and used the colour and quality of hair and beards as evidence for individual constitution.²⁹ There also remained a strong emphasis upon the beard, and upon men's hair more generally, as particular symbols of masculine strength. In 1815, the French physiologist Anthelme Richerand's *Physiological Dictionary* argued that male hairiness was a key indicator of the 'natural vigour and strength' of the sex.³⁰ Connections between the beardless face and physical and sexual enervation also still remained in medical writings. At the very least a lack of beard suggested delicacy, along with a feminine physical (and moral) constitution.³¹ At worst it suggested the complete lack of sexual desire and 'want of erection'.³² As with earlier periods, however, the key determining factor was still the *ability* to grow a beard. Some medical practitioners were actively hostile towards the beard. In 1831 the American physician and exercise advocate Edward Hitchcock linked facial hair to poor hygiene and cleanliness, arguing that a man might have the strongest mind or finest wit, but appearing in 'good society' with a long beard or uncombed hair would render him a 'disgusting object' to those assembled.³³ According to Hitchcock, removing the beard had health benefits, including relief from fits of dyspepsia and nervous depression, although this perhaps reflected more on his personal views than any specific medical theory.³⁴ Other non-medical authors alternatively sought to claim health benefits to beard-wearing. Anticipating claims relating to the utility of beards in urban environments, Sylvester Graham (the American Presbyterian minister and dietary reformer) described shaving as a specific 'evil' resulting from urban life. While still providing instructions to render the process of shaving more comfortable he asserted, with shades of the Biblical Sampson, that 'the habitual shaving of the beard diminish[ed] the physiological powers of man' and shortened his life.³⁵

In general, however, the first decades of the nineteenth century saw a marked decline in discussions of facial hair in medical publications. Despite a raft of texts exploring

²⁹ For example, Marshall Hall, *Diagnosis in Four Parts* (London: Longman et al., 1817), 26.

³⁰ Anthelme Richerand, *Elements of Physiology* (London: Printed for Thomas Underwood, 1815), 289.

³¹ Michael Ryan, *The Philosophy of Marriage* (London: H. Bailliere, 1839), 316.

³² *Ibid.*, 321. See also Robley Dungison, *Human Physiology, Volume 2* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea and Blanchard, 1836), 442.

³³ Edward Hitchcock, *Dyspepsy Forestalled and Resisted or Lectures on Diet, Regimen and Employment* (Amherst: J. & C. Adams, 1831), 240.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 241.

³⁵ Sylvester Graham, *Lectures on the Science of Human Life* (London: Horsell, 1849), 289.

the components and functions of the body, medical authors barely commented on the beard beyond stating its appearance at puberty, or any medical conditions pertaining to, or affecting it. Studies of diseases of the skin frequently noted medical conditions that could lead to its loss or degradation, ranging from Mentagra, a skin condition affecting the chin, to sycosis, an inflammation of the hair follicles, which matted the beard and could render shaving impossible.³⁶ Here the beard was a site of disease rather than a physiological component that could promote or protect health. Where facial hair was discussed it was generally subsumed within broader debates about the physical construction of hair. It is clear too that the longstanding links between beards and bodily heat or virility had largely been severed. Some, like Charles Lee, saw hair as part of the 'cellular membrane' of the body – a kind of gelatinous material, from which all solid parts were constructed.³⁷ Rather than being generated from within the body, hair was now commonly understood as a substance that grew upon it or originated just underneath the skin's surface. It was seen to consist of a bulb, from which nourishment was drawn to the hair, and a horny outer sheath, which extruded from the body.³⁸ Occasionally the physiology of beard hair and its place within the skin merited specific attention. Henry Hollingsworth Smith's *Anatomical Atlas* contained detailed plates of an individual beard hair and a cross-section of beard hairs growing in the skin, together with the surrounding tissue and veins.³⁹

The early 1850s, however, brought marked change. With the emergence of the 'beard movement' came an outpouring of literature extolling the potential health virtues of facial hair, restoring it to a central position within debates about the healthy male body. Such debates were not new; but the arena in which they occurred, and the manner in which such claims were made, certainly was. Rather than taking place in medical journals and among practitioners, medicalized discussions of the beard were now usually conducted in public and by popular authors in newspapers and journals. Indeed, as will be shown, arguments for the supposed health benefits of facial hair did not even necessarily come from the medical profession at all: some were appropriated or imported from other sources, while others were virtually fabricated. The appropriation of health debates about facial hair by lay authors has implications for our understanding of the nature, use and authority of medical evidence in popular debates about the supposed superiority of the male body and of the deployment of individual characteristics in 'proving' it.

Arguments made in support of beard-wearing usually adopted two approaches. First was a sustained attack on the supposed dangers of shaving. After 1850, removing the beard was increasingly depicted as a risky act, almost certainly leading to a rapid decline into ill health. Shaving supposedly weakened the body by removing vital

³⁶ For example, see Samuel Plumbe, *Diseases of the Skin, Arranged with a View to Their Constitutional Causes* (Philadelphia, PA: Haswell, Barrington and Haswell, 1838), 45, 65, 233; Jonathan Green, *A Practical Compendium of the Diseases of the Skin* (London: Wittaker, 1837), 168–71, 234.

³⁷ Charles Lee, *Human Physiology for the Use of Elementary Schools* (New York: American Common School Union, 1839), 27.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 36–7.

³⁹ Henry Smith, *An Anatomical Atlas: Illustrative of the Structure of the Human Body* (Philadelphia, PA: Lea and Blanchard, 1849), 65–6.

spirit and energy, which ‘destroys and enfeebles those virtues.’⁴⁰ Elderly men who had shaved all their lives had effectively ‘thrown away ... fifty feet of beard in fifty years,’ much to their own detriment.⁴¹ Those who abandoned their razors, by contrast, were promised immediate health benefits, even including recovery from illness. A friend of the beard-advocate ‘Barbaratus’ was reportedly cured of a pulmonary illness, causing him to spit blood, as soon as he ceased shaving and let his beard grow.⁴² Assertions about the dangers of the razor could be entirely plausible: Xerxes’s *Folly and Evil of Shaving* likened accidental shaving cuts to open doors through which infection could enter the body.⁴³ But they could also verge on the ludicrous. William Henry Henslowe described shaving as a ‘fatal fashion,’ somewhat unaccountably linking the practice to innumerable recent ‘suicides, homicides and murders,’ presumably linked to the availability and use of open razors.⁴⁴ Even late in the nineteenth century, phrenological and physiological texts continued to support the notion that shaving was inimical to health. Some mooted a symbiotic relationship existing between the heart and chin. A beard guarded the ‘heart and viscera from atmospheric changes’ while also protecting the throats and chests of (particularly elderly) men.⁴⁵ To remove it was therefore to render the body susceptible.

The issue of protection highlights the second key argument made by beard supporters, that facial hair was a natural *cordon sanitaire*, protecting the face, neck and respiratory system. Such claims rested on the assumption that facial hair must have a natural function or purpose since ‘nature never does anything in vain’ and would not ‘erect a bulwark were her domain unworthy of protection or were there no enemy to invade it.’⁴⁶ Facial hair was commonly argued to be nature’s protector – an anterior covering of the face and throat, resisting poor weather and cold, as well as protecting internal organs. Echoing idealized notions of man’s supposed true place among wild nature, the beard represented a universal, multipurpose armour, repelling everything from the scorching heat to the miasmatic damp, the *Siroccos* and *Simooms* of the deserts, or the chill blasts of the Arctic. It was, as the *New American Cyclopaedia* argued, nature’s ‘vigilant sentinel around the mouth.’⁴⁷

The idea of ‘vigilance’ also fed into claims about the utility of the beard as a protectant against pulmonary and respiratory illness, rheumatic afflictions of the face and upper body. T. S. Gowing’s *Philosophy of Beards* argued that a beard was the natural protector of the tonsils, throat and larynx. Bearded men, he claimed, seldom suffered from chronic sore throats, or from rheumatic pains in the face.⁴⁸ Others claimed that beards

⁴⁰ Anon., ‘Chapter on Shaving’.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Barbaratus, ‘Clerical Beards,’ *Times* (8 January 1861): 10.

⁴³ Xerxes, *The Folly and Evil of Shaving* (London: Edward Stanford, 1854), 5–6.

⁴⁴ William Henry Henslowe, *Beard Shaving and the Common Use of the Razor: An Unnatural, Irrational and Ungodly and Fatal Fashion amongst Christians* (London: William Edward Painter, 1847), 7.

⁴⁵ Lorenzo Fowler, *Fowler’s New Illustrated Self-Instructor in Phrenology and Physiology* (London: L. N. Fowler, 1895), 59.

⁴⁶ Anon., ‘Arguments for the Beard,’ *Ladies’ Cabinet* (1 January 1854).

⁴⁷ George Ripley and Charles A. Dana (eds), *The New American Cyclopaedia: A Popular Dictionary of General Knowledge, Volume III* (New York: D. Appleton, 1859), 12.

⁴⁸ T. S. Gowing, *The Philosophy of Beards* (reproduction of 1854 edition) (London: British Library, 2014), 16–17.

protected the wearer from ‘cough, stiff neck, sore throat and miserable hoarseness’, or pointed to the utility of facial hair for preventing pulmonary conditions, such as phthisis, or consumption.⁴⁹ In these readings the beard was a literal barrier between the inside and outside of the body. Another theory held that beards and moustaches naturally extruded carbon from the body and were therefore a vital form of respiration – one that shaving would interrupt with potentially dangerous consequences.⁵⁰ If beards preserved health, they could also convey it. The (bearded) Royal Academy artist James Ward regarded them as an outward sign of inner health and vigour, as well as allowing the unconstrained ‘open neck’ that he considered essential to a healthy body.⁵¹ In all respects therefore, facial hair was viewed as a vital component in the maintenance and regulation of bodily health.

The extent to which popular health claims reflected actual medical evidence, or arguments made by specific physicians, however, is less clear. Both Thomas Gowing and Alexander Rowland (a hairdresser) drew from the physician James Copeland’s *Dictionary of Practical Medicine*, which stated that beards, once grown, protected against ‘chronic sore throats’.⁵² Erasmus Wilson cited Edwin Chadwick’s remarks about the potential filtering function of moustaches and beards, along with the prevention of colds, bronchial affections and even mumps.⁵³ The portability of news items and the habit of local newspapers of recycling stories from the London press, meant that these and similar claims quickly gained currency and were widely cited in newspapers across the country.⁵⁴ As Nancy Tomes has argued in her discussion of the dissemination of germ theory in 1870s America, the popular press were often active in disseminating new health ideas, even when the medical profession remained dubious.⁵⁵ Although in a different context, it is plausible that a similar process took place regarding the health claims of facial hair, where initial scientific arguments, speculation or supposed ‘proofs’ were swiftly incorporated into public consciousness.⁵⁶

There were certainly some practitioners prepared to endorse such claims. In 1857 the physician, phrenologist and mesmerist George Holland saw beards as key ‘structural appendages’ of the body, the removal of which was ‘severely prejudicial to

⁴⁹ David, *The Beard: Why Do We Cut It Off? An Analysis of the Controversy Concerning It and an Outline of Its History* (London: Thomas Bosworth, n.d.), 9; Edwin Creer, *A Popular Treatise on the Human Hair, Its Management, Improvement, Preservation, Restoration, and the Causes of Its Decay* (London: Hunt and Son, 1865), 70.

⁵⁰ Middleton, ‘The Beard’, 32.

⁵¹ Robert Ward, *Defence of the Beard* (London: Lion and Unicorn Press, 1954, reproduction of original, c. 1840), 4–5.

⁵² Alexander Rowland, *The Human Hair Popularly and Physiologically Considered* (London: Piper Brothers, 1853), 93–4; Gowing, *Philosophy of Beards*, 17.

⁵³ Erasmus Wilson, *Healthy Skin: A Popular Treatise on the Skin and Hair, Their Preservation and Management* (Philadelphia, PA: Blanchard and Lee, 1854), 108–9.

⁵⁴ For just some examples from the many, see Anon., ‘The Beard Movement’, *Leader* (10 December 1853): 1183; ‘A Constant Reader’, ‘Beards and Moustaches’, *Daily News* (2 December 1853): 4; Anon., ‘Sanitary View of the Beard and Moustache’, *Daily News* (12 August 1853): 2; Anon., ‘Philosophy of Beards’, *Ipswich Mechanics Institution* (25 March 1854): 2; Anon., ‘Beard and Moustache Movement’, *Sheffield Independent* (24 December 1853): 4.

⁵⁵ Nancy Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs: Men, Women and the Microbe in American Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 38–9.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

the healthy condition of organs more or less interested in its development'.⁵⁷ In 1862, the prominent royal surgeon W. J. Moore also accepted arguments that the beard was a 'distinguishing appendage of man' and a sign of his physical and mental acuity, as well as beneficial in preventing disease.⁵⁸ One of the most detailed medical arguments for the healthiness of beards appeared in the *Edinburgh Medical Journal* by A. Mercer-Adams, a former physician to the Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary. Adams noted the variety of 'hygienic virtues' attributed to beards, citing evidence from a 1853 study of more than fifty men, who were compelled to shave, having previously worn beards for some time.⁵⁹ Once parted from their beards, all were supposedly stricken by illness, including neuralgia, rheumatism, abscesses and toothaches.⁶⁰ Adams further quoted claims attributed to the manager of the Great Northern Railway, that bearded railwaymen and engineers within the company 'enjoy[ed] better health than those who shave.'⁶¹ Linking the beard to labour and occupation widened its appeal as a helpmeet and comfort to the working man, but also reveals how facial hair had seemingly transcended the class associations it had carried only a few decades earlier. Rather than a mark of the 'lowest labourer and mechanic', as it had been in the 1830s, it no longer suggested class distinction and was now almost a unifying characteristic, common – and useful – for the working-class man and the gentleman alike.⁶²

As some were quick to point out, however, arguments about the protective qualities of beards overlooked the obvious question of 'why just men'? As an article in *The Ladies Repository* in 1863 pointed out, women across the world were equally exposed to 'the clemencies of the seasons' and, being of a 'more delicate organization' arguably needed more protection than men. As to the arguments for the filtering properties of facial hair as used in various trades and handicrafts, it hardly seemed reasonable to arm half a race with beards to accommodate a few scissor grinders!⁶³ Rather than 'nature's protector' or a sign of male strength and superiority, the article suggested, the beard represented little more than a 'universal toy and plaything', to occupy the restless hands of men.⁶⁴

By the mid-1850s the supposed medical advantages to beard-wearing had become so commonplace in popular publications that they were almost beyond question or further investigation. Instead, unsupported health claims attributed to mysterious acquaintances, anonymous practitioners or even personal experience were simply quoted and perpetuated. After resolving to wear a 'jolly old beard', one *North British Daily Mail* journalist proudly informed his readers that his new beard bestowed a new 'freedom of breathing' in the foggy December air and how he suffered no toothache,

⁵⁷ George Holland, *The Constitution of the Animal Creation, As Expressed in Structural Appendages* (London: John Churchill, 1858), 71.

⁵⁸ W. J. Moore, *Health in the Tropics or the Sanitary Art Applied to Europeans in India* (London: John Churchill, 1862), 254.

⁵⁹ A. Mercer Adams, 'Is Shaving Favourable to Health? A Plea for Beards', *Edinburgh Medical Journal* (December 1861): 8–9.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Anon, *The Toilette of Health*, 160.

⁶³ Anon., 'Beards', *Ladies' Repository*, 31 (1863): 143.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 144.

loss of voice or sore throats despite the ‘most biting blasts that blew’.⁶⁵ Others simply sidestepped the inconvenience of providing hard evidence and instead cited unnamed ‘medical gentlemen’, claimed that their arguments were ‘fully proven on good medical authority’, or ‘well known to physicians in England’, and therefore required no substantiation.⁶⁶ It seems likely that the wide variety of claims to endorsement by the medical profession actually originated from a limited pool of individuals.

Nature’s respirator

The mid-nineteenth century brought new anxieties about air quality in industrial, urban environments and the injurious effects of climate, environment and atmosphere upon the body.⁶⁷ Whether through foul smells or ‘the incessant dust flying in town streets’, a bevy of evils were concealed in the fuggy urban air. The putrid and pungent smells emanating from tanneries, soap-makers and various other works, combined with the thick, toxic gases and smoke emitted from factories and domestic chimneys, filled the air with particles.⁶⁸ Once inside the lungs, dust and smoke were virtually impossible to remove, and such ‘mechanical impurity’ threatened ‘morbid irritation, marked disease and premature death’.⁶⁹ For advocates of facial hair, such anxieties offered a further and handy opportunity to bolster their claims for the supposed utility of beards. It seems no coincidence that, by the 1860s, the supposed health benefits of moustaches and beards had widened to include protection of the voice and throat for the clergy and public speakers and a protective shield for workers in dusty environments, cementing in the public mind their important role as a natural filter.

Anecdotal evidence had been gathered from soldiers in the field as early as the 1830s, about the capacity of moustaches to protect against bronchial infection and consumption, as well as safeguarding the throat, teeth and eyes. In particular, the potential for the removal of facial hair to actually cause illness was cited.⁷⁰ ‘Hairy-lipped regiments,’ as one commentator noted, ‘are more free from diseases of the lungs than others.’⁷¹ The evidence and endorsement of the military certainly carried weight, particularly later, given their place as hirsute role models for young British men. But health claims identifying facial hair as a type of ‘respirator’ were actually rooted in earlier debates about pulmonary illness in Britain and accompanying developments in medical technology. The use of the term ‘respirator’ even had a specific context, in a device patented to regulate the temperature of inspired and exhaled air, with no connection to facial hair. Rather than citing any new medical evidence, beard

⁶⁵ Anon., ‘The Beard Movement’, *Bell’s Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* (5 March 1854): 12.

⁶⁶ Anon., ‘The Beard Movement’, *Leader* (10 December 1853): 1183; Anon., ‘The Beard’, *Phrenological Journal and Life Illustrated* (January–June 1871): 41; B., ‘The Beard’, *Crayon*, 6:3 (1859): 69.

⁶⁷ Oldstone-Moore, ‘Beard Movement’, 21; Middleton, ‘The Beard’, 31.

⁶⁸ Anthony Wohl, *Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain* (London: J. M. Dent, 1983), 206–7.

⁶⁹ Anon., ‘Why Shave?’, *Household Words* (26 August 1853): 158.

⁷⁰ Oldstone-Moore, ‘Beard Movement’, 12–13.

⁷¹ Anon., ‘Moustaches’, *John Bull* (27 March 1847): 202.

supporters instead simply appropriated the health claims for this new device and applied them wholesale to facial hair.

The device in question emerged in 1836, made by Julius Jeffreys, former surgeon to the British East India Company and sometime student of the Edinburgh medical school. The patent application stated that it was intended for ‘facilitating respiration, to be worn on the face by persons suffering from coughs, consumption, asthma, and other afflictions of the chest.’⁷² Underlying the invention was the supposed prevalence of ‘pulmonary consumption’ in Britain, which Jeffreys suggested resulted from England’s unpredictable climate and extremes of temperature and also the problems caused by moving from ‘warm apartments into cold air.’⁷³ This combination of coldness and dryness irritated the lungs and caused breathing difficulties.⁷⁴ Crucially, Jeffreys called his invention ‘The Respirator’ – seemingly the first instance of the term ever being applied to a specific device. Its principle was to capture the heat from an outgoing breath and transfer it to the next incoming breath, thereby regulating the temperature and protecting the lungs from cold air. The patent specification made no mention of trapping dust or germs. The utility of the device meant that it became extremely popular in the decades following, reported as entering general use and widely available across the country through agents.⁷⁵ Before 1850 Jeffrey’s ‘respirator’ virtually became a brand, with his patent preventing appropriation of the name by imitators.

Support from medical professionals was equally swift. In early 1837 the *Lancet* reported that the ‘Respirator’ was introduced to the ‘Westminster Medical Society’, who deemed it ‘ingenious.’⁷⁶ As ideas about the potential of an artificial barrier against the air gained currency, the term itself began to enter popular consciousness through references in literature, poetry and theatre. In Bram Stoker’s horror novel *The Jewel of Seven Stars*, respirators were worn by characters to ward off the unpleasant smell of mummies.⁷⁷ In his paean to spring, the poet Thomas Hood never dreamt of leaving off his respirator before the heat of July.⁷⁸ The burlesque play ‘George and the Dragon’ performed at the Adelphi Theatre London in 1845 even contained the dubious couplet ‘The freedom of my breathing is getting greater/I do not seem to need a respirator.’⁷⁹ Ideas about ‘respirators’ even transferred to the large scale. Public parks became

⁷² BL, Patent Number 6988, 1836. Julius Jeffreys, *Observations upon the Construction and Use of the Respirator* (Birmingham: T. Wright, 1836), cover.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷⁵ ‘Agents for Mr Jefferys Instrument’, *Morning Post* (9 March 1838): 1; ‘The Patent Respirator’, *Bristol Mercury* (9 December 1837): 3; Anon., ‘Invisible Respirator’, *Stamford Mercury* (9 January 1841): 1; ‘Respirator or Safeguard for the Lungs’, *Wolverhampton Chronicle* (7 December 1842): 1.

⁷⁶ Anon., ‘New Instrument for Preventing and Relieving Pulmonary Infections’, *Lancet*, 27: 698.

⁷⁷ Kate Hebblethwaite (ed.), ‘Bram Stoker’, *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (London: Penguin, 2008), 36–8, 40–1, 46, 49, 50; see also Herman Melville, *The Confidence Man: His Masquerade* (New York: Dix, Edwards, 1857), 118.

⁷⁸ Thomas Hood, ‘Spring: A New Version’, <https://literature.proquest.com/searchFulltext.do?id=Z300398972&childSectionId=Z300398972&divLevel=3&queryId=3052770864401&trailId=162C92A8E43&area=poetry&forward=textsFT&queryType=findWork> (accessed 15 May 2018).

⁷⁹ Gilbert Abbot, A. Beckett and Mark Lemon, *St George and the Dragon: A New, Grand Empirical Exposition* (London: National Acting Drama Office, 1845), 22.

regarded as oases of pure air, where wheezing urbanites could escape the dense city smog.⁸⁰ The park became, in a literal sense, ‘nature’s respirator’.

Around the early 1850s, however, advertisements for respirators began to emphasize their potential as barriers to dust and germs, as well as cold. Part of the context for this were perhaps the changing approaches to concepts of infection and ‘surveillance’ and the increasing onus on individuals to take responsibility for their own health habits and behaviours to prevent infection.⁸¹ In this sense, encouraging individuals to use devices such as the respirator could be seen as an active measure in the preservation of both their own and others’ health. In 1854 the *Mechanics Magazine* reported a proposal by the Edinburgh chemist Dr John Stenhouse to employ a ‘new species of respirator’, filled with powdered animal charcoal, to ‘absorb and *destroy any miasmata or infectious particles present in the air*’ (emphasis added).⁸² The device was designed to effectively cover the mouth and nose, thereby preventing the inhalation of particles.

Military reports also cited the success of respirators in preventing disease. Physicians in the Crimea reported the utility of charcoal respirators in limiting exposure to malaria and filtering out the ‘germs of infectious maladies.’⁸³ There were already signs of makeshift imitations. Turkish soldiers wore woollen clothes wound around their neck and mouth, both to protect from cold and sift out ‘malarious exhalations.’⁸⁴ It seems significant that, just as the makers of ‘respirators’ began to stress the filtering properties of their devices against disease and particles, supporters of beards began to make precisely the same claims for facial hair.

The specific filtering potential of facial hair had occasionally been noted before the ‘beard movement’. In 1842, John Davy’s journal of travel in Constantinople contained a prescient remark about protection from poor air quality. ‘The air-passages are in a measure protected by the respirator, and the wearing of the moustache and beard by the men, which has a somewhat similar effect.’⁸⁵ The contrast made here was that between an artificial and a natural respirator. But from the early 1850s, the idea of the beard as ‘nature’s filter’ was given full vent. As well as appropriating the supposed health benefits, it was at this point that beard supporters and some medical practitioners commandeered the term ‘respirator’. For Erasmus Wilson and Edwin Chadwick, ‘the Mustachio [was] a natural respirator defending the lungs against the inhalation of dust and cold’ as well as a protector against heat.⁸⁶ Wilson noted the utility of the moustache in both hot and cold climes and also in dusty trades, as well as warning of the medical conditions that could be brought on by shaving it off.⁸⁷ Mercer-Adam,

⁸⁰ Wohl, *Endangered Lives*, 210.

⁸¹ See Graham Mooney, *Intrusive Interventions: Public Health, Domestic Space and Infectious Disease Surveillance in England, 1840–1914* (London: Boydell and Brewer, 2015), 19–20.

⁸² Anon., ‘Charcoal Respirators’, *Mechanics Magazine* (4 March 1854): 202.

⁸³ Anon., *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Regulations Affecting the Sanitary Condition of the Army* (London: George Eyre, 1858), 72.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 9. See also Henry Letherby, *Report to the Honorably Commission of Sewers of the City of London* (London: M. Lowndes, 1858), 78.

⁸⁵ John Davy, *Notes and Observations on the Ionian Islands and Malta: With Some Remarks on Constantinople and Turkey...* (London: Smith and Elder, 1842), 424.

⁸⁶ Erasmus Wilson, *Healthy Skin: A Popular Treatise on the Skin and Hair, Their Preservation and Management* (London: John Churchill, 1859), 94.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 95.

noted above, stated that the ‘beard also acts beneficially as a respirator, for it not only mechanically prevents the entrance of foreign particles into the air-passages, but it also lessens the coldness of the air we breathe, by imparting to it, as it passes through the thick moustache, some of the heat which has been left there by the warm breath just expired.’⁸⁸ Interesting to note here that temperature control was relegated to second place. Alexander Rowland noted the prevalence of moustaches in cavalry regiments, that ‘act like a respirator’.⁸⁹ The aptly named physician George Beard also allowed that facial hair could be a useful appendage for sufferers of hay fever, in potentially directing the ‘irritating particles’ away from the nasal passages.⁹⁰

As for specific published medical evidence, however, articles claiming the filtering properties of beards were as circumspect as those for other health claims, usually citing unnamed physicians, or the medical faculty in general. Alexander Rowland’s claims about the utility of the beard against dust inhalation were again attributed to an unnamed ‘grave professor at Edinburgh’.⁹¹ It is indeed very hard to find any specific medical support for, or even discussion of, the potential utility of facial hair in medical publications relating to pulmonary or respiratory conditions. Even in the 1850s and 1860s, when the popularity of beards was at its height, there is little to suggest that the medical profession necessarily advocated or prescribed facial hair as a medical expedient.⁹² However, many medical authors certainly did endorse *artificial* respirators.⁹³ A 1857 report on ‘Sheffield Grinders’ disease’, authored by J. C. Hall, physician to the Sheffield Dispensary, noted the ‘perfect clouds’ of metal and stone dust created in grinding cutlery and razors and the resulting ‘evil’ to the workers’ health.⁹⁴ These included asthma, constriction of the chest, running eyes and nose and skin conditions. Given the emphasis laid upon the usefulness of moustaches and beards to workers in dusty environments, a recommendation to wear them might have been expected. But the nearest the report came was a reference to a ‘magnet used as a mouthpiece or, as the grinders term it a “magnetic moustache”’, which had been tried, but quickly abandoned.⁹⁵ The principle of attracting metal dust into the contrivance

⁸⁸ A. Mercer-Adam, ‘Is Shaving Injurious to Health? A Plea for Beards by Dr. A Mercer-Adams, Late Physician to the Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary’, *Edinburgh Medical Journal*, 7:1 (December 1861): 539.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Oldstone-Moore, ‘Beard Movement’, 22; Rowland, *The Human Hair*, 99.

⁹⁰ George Beard, *Hay Fever or Summer Catarrh: Its Nature and Treatment* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1876), 182.

⁹¹ Rowland, *The Human Hair*, 99.

⁹² For example, no references to the utility of facial hair can be found in specific medical publications on pulmonary illness, where they might logically have been expected, including Samuel Sheldon Fitch, *Six Lectures on the Functions of the Lungs* (London: L. H. Chandler, 1856); Francis H. Ramadge, *The Curability of Consumption* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longman, 1856); J. C. Hall, *Hints on the Pathology, Diagnosis, Prevention and Treatment of Thoracic Consumption* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longman, 1856); Thomas Bartlett, *Consumption: Its Causes, Prevention and Cure* (London: Hippolyte Bailliere, 1855); Henry McCormac, *On the Nature, Treatment and Prevention of Pulmonary Consumption* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longman, 1855).

⁹³ Ramadge, *The Curability of Consumption*, 69; Bartlett, *Consumption*, 75; John Stenhouse, *On Charcoal as a Disinfectant Being a Letter to the Editor of ‘The Times’... 22nd November 1854* (London: Publisher unknown, 1854), 4.

⁹⁴ J. C. Hall, *On the Prevention and Treatment of the Sheffield Grinders’ Disease* (London: Longman Brown, 1857), 17, 20.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

was perhaps grounded in the same idea as that put forward in popular publications. But it is noteworthy that a 'real' moustache was not suggested as an, after all cheaper and easier, alternative. Debates about the injurious effects of dust also carried on after, and despite, the rise of facial hair. In 1870 the *Gentleman's Journal* published the findings of Dr Tyndall's report on the health risks of dust, in tandem with the latest ideas about germ theory. Tyndall's experiments in the Royal Institution demonstrated the effectiveness of various substances as barriers to the inhalation of dust, of which the most useful was cotton wool.⁹⁶ Nowhere in the report was facial hair referred to as a useful expedient.

When beard advocates cited the filtering properties of beards, therefore, it is likely that they were simply 'cutting and pasting' the claims made by the makers of respirators. In the process the original purpose of respirators in regulating temperature was side-lined in favour of more appealing claims as to the prevention of infection. As this occurred facial hair was remade as the natural alternative to the artificial device. Arguments for the beard played upon both the popular distrust of quack medicines, but also the false economy of paying for something that nature had provided freely. Artium Magister's *Apology for the Beard*, for example, stated that while 'Man fashions his respirator of wire, curiously wrought; Nature makes hers of hair placed where it belongs' rendering it 'more efficient than the cunning hand of man.'⁹⁷ This created, however, a somewhat odd paradox. Moustaches and beards were claimed to fit men to negotiate the soot and smuts of the city, the damp, dust and grime of the factory, the railway or the workshop – environments that were all entirely and inherently *unnatural*. If so, nature had therefore somehow anticipated the rise of the city and the factory and swiftly equipped the male body accordingly.

In terms of both the medical evidence relating to beards as natural respirators and the broader skein of health claims made in support of facial hair, the remaining question is why was a popular discourse on facial hair using or ignoring scientific/medical writing and findings to promote beard growing, particularly despite the relative lack of such evidence from actual practitioners? Establishing precisely who were the main epistolary supporters of facial hair in books and journals is often complicated by the fact that they concealed their identities either by writing anonymously or used esoteric pseudonyms. That they were medical practitioners themselves cannot be ruled out; many were clearly familiar with medical texts. But it seems clear that they were writing for a popular audience, rather than trying to convince the medical profession. In many respects the processes involved in disseminating medical ideas about facial hair resemble Thomas Laqueur's model for understanding changing concepts of gender in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, whereby the prevailing discourse was driven primarily by non-medical/scientific assumptions which scientific evidence backed up, rather than scientific discoveries shaping gender ideologies.⁹⁸ In other words, popular

⁹⁶ Anon., 'Professor Tyndall on Dust', *Gentleman's Journal* (1 May 1870): 7–8.

⁹⁷ Artium Magister, *An Apology for the Beard, Addressed to Men in General, to the Clergy in Particular* (London: Rivingtons, 1862), 39.

⁹⁸ Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 153–63.

authors first shifted the ideology of beard-wearing, loading it with a wide variety of positive attributes, *then* looked to medicine for provenance, however scant. This was particularly noticeable in questions about the filtering properties of facial hair, where claims relating to a new technology were first appropriated then adapted, with little evidence to back them up. As they were continually and widely recycled in the public arena, they almost moved beyond doubt. This process raises questions (although beyond the scope of this chapter) about the spread of medical ideas and complicates the notion of top-down dissemination from elite to popular, or from ‘experts’ to the public.

So far, then, this chapter has explored the interplay between facial hair and medicine and the many and various health claims made in support of beards and moustaches. There was one area of nineteenth-century medico-science, however, where beards were potentially problematic. The popularity of physiognomy in the late nineteenth century complicated the ‘natural’ status of the beard insofar as it represented a barrier to ‘reading’ the face. It is to such debates that the final part of this chapter now turns.

Physiognomy and the beard movement

The previous chapter noted the growing popularity of physiognomy from the late eighteenth century. This continued, and actually increased, through the early decades of the nineteenth century, reaching its apogee around 1850. The early 1800s saw the proliferation of small, cheap and accessible physiognomical texts, most notably reprints and editions of Johann Caspar Lavater’s key works.⁹⁹ According to Sharona Pearl, physiognomy became normalized in the nineteenth century, across the social spectrum, forming a ‘widely understood visual language’ and an important semiotic component in understanding the body.¹⁰⁰ The flexibility and subjectivity of physiognomy (there was no, single, physiognomic standard) appealed to Victorian ideas of inclusivity and exclusivity. It allowed individuals to instantly measure themselves and those they encountered against broad standards of desirable or undesirable characteristics.

Victorian physiognomic texts retained their interest in the shape and proportion of the head and face and facial features, all of which carried and conveyed meaning. The forehead and eyes – even wrinkles under the eyes – could indicate more or less favourable personality traits.¹⁰¹ The shape and size of the nose was of principal importance in physiognomic interpretation, being viewed in one study as a ‘predaceous organ’ and a sign of ‘animal courage’.¹⁰² Large nostrils suggested greater capacity for inhalation and, therefore, an energetic individual and so on.¹⁰³ In the nineteenth century, the lower half

⁹⁹ Pearl, *About Faces*, 12.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 7–8.

¹⁰¹ James Redfield, *Outlines of a New System of Physiognomy* (New York: J. Redfield, 1849), 65. Redfield’s study suggested that having baggy wrinkles under the eyelids was a sure indication of a ‘love of mathematical accuracy’.

¹⁰² John Cross, *An Attempt to Establish Physiognomy on Scientific Principles* (Glasgow: Andrew and John Duncan, 1817), 217.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 214.

of the face, and in particular the mouth and chin, assumed greater importance in the divination of character. According to Samuel Well's 1871 *New Physiognomy*, the shape, size and movement of the mouth and lips revealed much about individual character and temperament. While coarse, irregular lips might convey strength, a small, smooth and delicate ones suggested delicacy of character.¹⁰⁴ Likewise, narrow, closed mouths betokened lack of affection and reserve, while open mouths showed a frank, outspoken disposition.¹⁰⁵

If faces were increasingly to be read, then, the mid-century resurgence of beards created inconvenient problems for physiognomists, complicating the process and adding a note of discord to the otherwise overwhelming support for facial hair. One solution was to bypass the problem altogether by arguing that, since they were entirely under the control of the wearer, 'whiskers and beards do not, properly speaking, fall under the head of physiognomical features' and were useless as indicators of character.¹⁰⁶ Others took a different tack and simply denounced the whole premise of pseudosciences like physiognomy and phrenology, much less the potential of a beard to determine a man's worth. For the vehement anti-phrenologist John Wayte, the beard was of no more use than a bird's plumage in adjudging character and was merely a 'badge of distinction between the sexes,' and to suggest otherwise was an 'affront to God.'¹⁰⁷

For devotees of the new science, though, beards were an awkward barrier, since they obscured the whole lower portion of the face.¹⁰⁸ How were dilettante physiognomists to practice their art if the very subject of their study was concealed? This played directly into fears about concealment and deception. The extent to which facial hair altered a man's appearance clearly rendered it useful for those wishing to avoid detection or unwelcome attention. Its prosthetic nature also made it easy to adopt and just as easy to remove. While the disguising potential of a beard was never a specific argument made in its support by advocates, Victorians were going to increasing lengths to hide their faces from the intrusive gawp of strangers.¹⁰⁹ Sharona Pearl's discussion of the 1874 *Punch* cartoon 'At the French Play' notes the wearing of masks to public events as a conscious act to defy observation and protect identity.¹¹⁰ What is missed, however, is that while the image portrays a man wearing a mask to hide the top half of his face, the entire lower portion is also covered by a bushy beard, leaving no skin visible – an equally effective mask. The beard, then, could represent a 'masked battery, behind which a man of weak principles or deficient domesticity may hide.'¹¹¹ There were also

¹⁰⁴ Samuel R. Wells, *New Physiognomy or Signs of Character, as Manifested through Temperament and External Forms, and Especially in the Face Divine* (New York: American Book Company, 1871), 8.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Anon., 'The Comic Physiognomist, Chapter VI, of the Whiskers and Beard,' *Fun* (12 December 1863): 128.

¹⁰⁷ John Wayte, *Anti-Phrenology or Observations to Prove the Fallacy of a Modern Doctrine of the Human Mind Called PHRENOLOGY* (Lynn-Regis: Published by the author, 1829), 35.

¹⁰⁸ A point made by Alexander Stewart, *Our Temperaments: Their Study and Their Teaching* (London: Crosby, Lockwood, 1887), 122, 236.

¹⁰⁹ Pearl, *About Faces*, 33–4.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 36.

¹¹¹ Mary Olmstead Stanton, *A System of Practical and Scientific Physiognomy: or, How to Read Faces, Volume II* (Philadelphia, PA: F. A. Davis, 1890), 1011.

potential issues surrounding honesty and concealment. A beard effectively covered and disguised the face, and false beards or whiskers made perfect accessories for the criminal wishing to avoid recognition. To pick just one example from the many, among the possessions found at the house of the armed robber Thomas Caseley in 1865 were a false beard and moustache, while one of his accomplices wore 'false whiskers'.¹¹² Even if not purposefully grown to deceive, a full beard fundamentally changed appearance.

Physiognomists were therefore on their guard. In her *System of Practical and Scientific Physiognomy* (1890), Mary Olmstead Stanton claimed never to 'make a delineation of an individual whose face exhibits a beard and moustache without taking pains to discover the exact size and form of both [*sic*] the chin, jaws and upper lip'.¹¹³ It was these, rather than the beard, that revealed the truth in the face and character. Some even suspected that beard wearers had something to hide. The author of a 1859 article in the *American Medical Gazette* (tellingly titled 'Physiognomy Annihilated by Beards') held forth on the subject. If he had only foreseen the extent to which men would once again 'disfigure' their chins by growing beards, argued the author, Lavater would surely have put aside his toils.¹¹⁴ 'He whose chin, mouth and lips are rendered invisible, by neglecting the daily use of the razor, wears a mask, which conceals his character from the observer.'¹¹⁵

There were attempts, however, to bring the beards fashion into the physiognomic fold. Here again, the issue of modernity is salient. Physiognomy was itself to some degree a technology of the modern, a means of negotiating and coping with an increasingly anonymous modern world.¹¹⁶ Some argued that facial hair had potential for determining the character of its wearer, although the exact nature of the relationship was up for debate. James Coates's *How to Read Faces* suggested that while it was 'significant of character', the beard was one part of a broader palette of signs, rather than a marker in and of itself.¹¹⁷ Even despite her initial distrust, Mary Olmstead Stanton conceded that beards could be 'strong physiognomical signifiers' which stood as primary characteristics of sexual selection.¹¹⁸ Her reasoning related to the behaviours exhibited by beard wearers, such as the thoughtful brushing, twisting and caressing of their 'hairy ornaments', all performative indicators of 'the great mental meaning' of beards.¹¹⁹ Such gestures therefore implied an active and thoughtful mind. Supporters of the beard were quick to stress that a full beard actually enhanced, rather than inhibited, expression and character. In his discussion of physiognomy and expression, Paolo Mantegazza identified hair and beards as one of the key 'anatomical

¹¹² *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org; version 7.2, 8 July 2016), April 1865, trial of Thomas Brewerton, William Henry Jeffery, Louise Brewerton, Thomas Caseley, David Roberts, Martha Jeffery, Ann Caseley.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 780.

¹¹⁴ Anon., 'Physiognomy Annihilated by Beards', *American Medical Gazette*, 10:12 (December 1859): 936.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Pearl, *About Faces*, 14–15.

¹¹⁷ James Coates, *How to Read Faces: or, Practical Physiognomy Made Easy* (London: W. Foulsham, c. 1880), 124.

¹¹⁸ Stanton, *A System*, 1009.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1010.

and expressive elements of the human face.¹²⁰ There was also some acknowledgement of a ‘bearded physiognomy’ – a term, at times, used explicitly.

Others reiterated the view that beards simply indicated ‘the masculine element or virile forces’, held their own interpretive meanings and therefore needed no defence.¹²¹ Containing echoes of older humoral references to facial hair, one 1859 instruction manual in physiognomy and phrenology stated that an abundant beard signified the so-called vital temperament, while a thin beard indicated ‘sterility, and a thinly settled upper storey, with rooms to let’. As such, the beard was ‘very significant of character.’¹²² Citing Sir Charles Bell’s essay on expression, *Household Words* also claimed that beards enhanced facial expression. The portentous sight of a ‘beard curling visibly with anger’ was juxtaposed against that of a smooth chin, which, according to the article, portrayed a ‘sanctimonious oiliness’, which let down the rest of the face.¹²³ If the beard enhanced expression, it could also convey personality traits. For R. B. Wells, thick, well-shaped beards suggested loving, sociable and companionable men, while short, wiry beards betrayed a ‘proud, peevish and unsociable’ character.¹²⁴ Again recalling earlier connotations of effeminacy, Fowler also noted the weak voices and constitutions and diminished virility of beardless men, who ‘evince more or less strongly marked feminine traits.’¹²⁵

Still, the fact that the ‘chin might be hidden in an impenetrable thicket of beard’ complicated the observation procedure and forced the observer to focus upon other parts, such as the nose.¹²⁶ But while the issue of concealment was viewed negatively by some, for others it simply provided yet more evidence of the utility of the beard, for example to those with weak features. *Household Words* argued that the idea that ‘a growth of beard would cover up the face, hide the expression of the features, and give a deceitful mark of uniform sedateness to the entire population’ was erroneous.¹²⁷ Arnold Cooley similarly denied that ‘it is grievous to allow a beautiful chin to be covered by the beard’, arguing instead that wearing a beard was useful in concealing ‘the defects of an ill-formed or ungraceful chin.’¹²⁸ Its potential for disguising a weak chin was a common device in literature, particularly in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In Henry Merriman’s 1888 novel *Phantom Future*, the character Holdsworth ‘clasp[s] his hand round his weak chin, half-hidden by a fair beard of recent growth.’¹²⁹ The 1885 *Dictionary of National Biography* described the sixteenth-century reformer John Knox as having ‘common place eyes, and a weak chin, covered by a short, pointed beard.’¹³⁰

¹²⁰ Paolo Mantegazza, *Physiognomy and Expression* (London: Walter Scott, 1890), 28.

¹²¹ Wells, *New Physiognomy*, 292.

¹²² O. S. and L. N. Fowler, *New Illustrated Self-Instructor in Phrenology and Physiology* (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1859), 56, and quoted in Anon., ‘Physiognomy’, *Anthropological Review*, 6:21 (1868): 144.

¹²³ Anon., ‘Why Shave’, 561.

¹²⁴ R. B. Wells, *Faces We Meet, and How to Read Them* (London: L. N. Fowler, c. 1880), 87.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹²⁷ Anon., ‘Why Shave?!’, 561.

¹²⁸ Arnold Cooley, *The Toilet and Cosmetic Arts in Ancient and Modern Times* (London: Printed by Robert Hardwicke, 1866), 343–4.

¹²⁹ Henry Merriman, *The Phantom Future* (London: R. Bentley and Son, 1888), 124.

¹³⁰ Leslie Stephen (ed.), *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 22 (London: Smith, Elder, 1885), 327.

The weak chin ‘clothed in a long light beard’ of the character James O’Dell in the 1876 novel *A Woman Scorned* was in stark contrast to his high forehead where ‘if all be true that phrenologists assert, a genius ought certainly to sit enthroned’. Instead, ‘the whole face [was] a contradiction’ no doubt complicated by the obscuring nature of the beard.¹³¹ Again, it was down to the skill of the physiognomist to penetrate the disguise and divine the true form underneath. As the narrator in Josiah Holland’s 1876 *Story of Sevenoaks* commented about another character, ‘Even through Benedict’s ample beard, a good reader of the human face’ (emphasis added) would have detected the weak chin, while admiring the splendid brow, silken curls and handsome eyes above it.¹³²

As well as physiognomy, however, the place of the beard as a physiological characteristic of both European and non-European bodies continued to attract discussion well into the nineteenth century. As Edith Snook has noted, while skin colour has been a constant source of interest, the importance of hair as a racial characteristic remains obscure.¹³³ The same certainly applies to facial hair, still an important point of distinction in the nineteenth century, and closely enmeshed with concepts of racial difference. The human population of the New World, for example, was argued to suffer from the same general degeneracy that afflicted the animal kingdom there. A beard, or lack of it, could be taken as evidence of the comparative weakness and physical inferiority of foreign ‘others’.¹³⁴ In the early decades of the nineteenth century, climate was still a determining factor in bodily appearance, as well as character.¹³⁵ The author of ‘Beards’ in the *Penny Magazine* in 1834 viewed the ‘effects of climate and modes of life’ as key determinants in the thickness and quality of beard hairs. Hot and dry countries begat dark, dry, hard and thin beards, while in moist and cold climates it was likely to grow thick, light and curly.¹³⁶ Diet could also have an effect, with ‘poor, dry and indigestible food’ acting to make beards hard and bristly. But, more than either of these, the ‘circumstances of civilized life’ determined beard growth.¹³⁷ In other words, the ability to grow a beard was a characteristic of civilization; ‘we cannot recollect any savages that are furnished with large beards’.¹³⁸ As it had been in the eighteenth century, the manner of removing the beard was still viewed as a touchstone of development. Repeated references to the plucking of the beard by the Chinese and North American

¹³¹ E. Owens Blackburne, *A Woman Scorned* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1876), 198.

¹³² Josiah Holland, *The Story of Sevenoaks* (London: Frederick Warne, 1876), 130. For other examples, see Theo Gift, *Lil Lorimer: A Novel* (London: Ward and Downey, 1885), 71; Irving Montagu, *Wanderings of a War Artist* (London: W. H. Allen, 1889), 187; Walmer Downe, *The Bloom of Faded Years: A Novel* (Greenock: J. Mckelvie and Sons, 1896), 96.

¹³³ Edith Snook, ‘Beautiful Hair, Health and Privilege in Early Modern England’, *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 15:4 (2015): 23.

¹³⁴ Sir William Lawrence, *Lectures on Physiology, Zoology and the Natural History of Man* (London: Printed for J. Callow, 1819), 316; see also David Slack, *An Essay on the Human Color, in Three Parts* (Providence: J. Moore, 1845).

¹³⁵ Pamela K. Gilbert, ‘Popular Beliefs and the Body: A Nation of Good Animals’, in Michael Sappol and Stephen P. Rice (eds), *A Cultural History of the Human Body in the Age of Empire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 130.

¹³⁶ Anon., ‘Beards’, *The Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge* (20 September 1834): 367–8.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 367.

tribes provided further evidence of their alleged lack of sophistication and ‘disrespect to the beard’.¹³⁹ The inconvenient fact that, in 1834, most Europeans were still removing their own beards was simply dismissed as a ‘usage rendered convenient by the habits of modern civilization’.¹⁴⁰

By the mid-nineteenth century, however, the body was increasingly viewed as an ‘essential biological trait’, rather than a product of its environment.¹⁴¹ In contrast to pejorative depictions of the lack of beard as a sign of weakness in popular texts, medical authors sometimes played down the link and suggested in particular that, outside Europe, beard hair could not necessarily be linked to belligerence, or indeed to weakness. In his lectures on physiology and natural history, Sir William Lawrence commented on the facial hair characteristics of a wide variety of non-European races. Lawrence noted the general lack of beard among ‘dark-coloured nations’ and especially Mongolian, American and African.¹⁴² The martial skill and successful civilizations of many of these races, however, militated against physical weakness. In the case of tribes of the ‘American race’, for example, their tall and robust bodies ‘proves that the absence of this excrescence [i.e. the beard] is not a sure sign of weakness’.¹⁴³ But for others the lack of facial hair correlated directly to mental and physical condition. Its presence, or lack, was therefore a common point of reference. Charles Pickering’s 1848 volume on the races of mankind contained no fewer than fifty-nine separate references to beards, ranging from anecdotal and observational comments, to tabulated definitions of racial characteristics.¹⁴⁴ For Charles Hamilton Smith the beard was nothing less than a defining characteristic, separating ‘homogenous nations of the bearded and beardless forms’.¹⁴⁵ Smith’s book argued for the presence of three distinct human types; ‘Caucasian’, ‘Mongolian’ and ‘Negro’ and drew on supposed ‘scientific’ evidence to support its claim for the superior mental acuity of Caucasian men, based on skull shape, size and proportion. Thus, ‘the highest intellectual bearded nations’ were European. Those of the ‘Mongolic Nations’, Laplanders and some American tribes, by contrast, were habitually referred to as of ‘beardless stock’.¹⁴⁶

Nonetheless, older associations still lingered. In 1852 Charles Hamilton Smith’s *Natural History of the Human Species* used beards as a direct means of separating races, including a diagram, differentiated the ‘Caucasian or Bearded Type’ from the ‘Mongolic or Beardless Type’.¹⁴⁷ Even twenty years later, T. S. Gowing argued that the beard was a feature of ‘all the *leading races* of men, whether of warm or cold climates, who have stamped their character on history’ (emphasis added).¹⁴⁸ Discussions

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Gilbert, ‘Popular Beliefs’, 130.

¹⁴² Lawrence, *Lectures on Physiology*, 315, 317.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 317.

¹⁴⁴ Charles Pickering, *The Races of Man and Their Geographical Distribution* (London: John Murray, 1848).

¹⁴⁵ Charles Hamilton Smith, *The Natural History of the Human Species* (Edinburgh: W. H. Lizards, 1848), 279.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 156, 238, 250, 283.

¹⁴⁷ Hamilton Smith, *The Natural History of the Human Species* (Edinburgh: W. H. Lizards, 1852), 187.

¹⁴⁸ Gowing, *Philosophy of Beards*, 14.

were also sometimes founded in much earlier connections between the beard and physical strength, rather than intellectual capacity. The beard was a sign of ‘Healthy, wiry, vigorous and muscular men’ and betokened positive characteristics, including ‘manliness’, virility, sexual prowess and courage.¹⁴⁹ By implication, these were characteristics that beardless men, or races, did not possess.

Race also still continued to inform discussions of facial hair in medical dictionaries. The *Medical Vocabulary* of 1836 defined ‘Barba’ as ‘the hair on the chin and neighbouring parts’, but also linked the term to ‘barbarus’, defined as ‘savage’, and suggested that beard-wearing a mark of lower orders of humans, ‘because uncivilized nations allow their beard to grow’.¹⁵⁰ This definition rested on earlier examples, such as *Quincy’s Lexicon Medicum* (1817) where the derivation or root of ‘barba’ was again given as ‘barbarus’, since ‘wild nations are usually unshaven’.¹⁵¹ The semantic shift from the relatively benign ‘wild’ to the more loaded ‘savage’ over the course of twenty years is striking. *The Anatomy of the Human Body* (1844) noted the utilitarian difficulties of maintaining long beards and hair, but also pointedly remarked upon the popularity of long beards among ‘the most effeminate nations’, in this case ‘the Orientals’.¹⁵²

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, there were signs of change. Charles Darwin discussed the beard widely in *The Descent of Man* (1871). For Darwin, the beard was a secondary sexual characteristic of the male body and one that varied widely according to location and even within specific tribes or families. While beards were prevalent on the ‘Europaeo-Asiatic Continent’, they largely disappeared eastwards of India. The Siamese, Chinese, Japanese and Malays were largely beardless, although some inhabitants of northern Japanese islands were ‘the hairiest men in the world’.¹⁵³ For Darwin, however, beard growth had little to do with skin colour. While, as he argued, ‘negroes’ had beards that were ‘scanty and wanting, and they rarely have whiskers’, the Papuans of the Malay Archipelago, ‘who are nearly as black as negroes, possess well-developed beards’.¹⁵⁴ The meanings of the beard as a sign of sexual potency varied too. Men from ‘beardless races’ studiously sought to remove every trace of facial hair, viewing it as odious, while ‘men of the bearded races feel the greatest pride in their beards’.¹⁵⁵ The effects of Darwinian ideas in discussions of beards were clear to see almost immediately and seems to correspond with the end of the beard as a signal of racial value. In 1873 Rev. C. Austen’s ‘Plea for Beards’ noted the capriciousness of nature in providing facial hair, speculating that ‘beardless men sprang from some extinct species of beardless monkey’.¹⁵⁶ In discussing the beards of different continents,

¹⁴⁹ Coates, *How to Read Faces*, 123.

¹⁵⁰ Anon., *A Medical Vocabulary or Explanation of All Names, Synonymes, Terms and Phrases, Used in Medicine, Surgery, and the Relative Branches of Medical Science* (Edinburgh: John Carfrae and Son, 1836), 21.

¹⁵¹ Robert Hooper (ed.), *Quincy’s Lexicon Medicum: A New Medical Dictionary* (Philadelphia, PA: E. and R. Parker, 1817), 99.

¹⁵² J. Cruveilhier, *The Anatomy of the Human Body* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1844), 638.

¹⁵³ Paul H. Barrett and R. B. Freeman (eds), *The Works of Charles Darwin, Vol. 22. The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex, Vol. 2* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 557–60.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 560.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 602–3.

¹⁵⁶ Rev. S. C. Austen, ‘A Plea for Beards, Clerical and Lay’, *Churchman’s Shilling Magazine and Family Treasury* 13 (March–August 1873): 253.

Austen simply suggested that the difference was a quirk of nature; bearded men were proud of their ornaments, while beardless men regarded them with contempt. Neither was privileged.¹⁵⁷

By the end of the century too there were signs that the beard was even losing its status as a fundamental marker of manliness. In 1890, Paolo Mantegazza was explicit in his view that the beard no longer corresponded to intellectual rank.¹⁵⁸ For the first time in nearly 50 years, the beardless man began to supplant the bearded patriarch as the exemplar of manliness. A year later in 1891, Samuel Frith's book *How to Read Character* argued that beardless men had more sharpness and finesse, were more subtle and business-like and less sentimental than their hirsute counterparts.¹⁵⁹ As the new century approached, the physiognomical standard had shifted once again.

Conclusion

As this chapter has discussed, then, the mid-nineteenth century saw the dramatic return of the beard to men's faces, after 150 years of absence. Derided in the eighteenth century as markers of rough, rustic masculinity, beards were now viewed as the ultimate, natural emblem of masculinity amidst a new interest in the physicality of the male body. Underlying these changes were fears about the emasculating effects of industrialization, urbanization and changing gender and domestic roles. A wide variety of claims were made by advocates of beards, including the conveyance of manly attributes such as strength and courage, the place of the beard in bodily symmetry and harmony, the importance of facial hair as a marker of life stage and the broader concept of the beard as a natural, God-given characteristic of men.

It was health claims, however, that garnered most attention. Throughout the second half of the century, a wide variety of assertions were made regarding the supposed healthiness of beards and their place as a natural protector of the body. But it seems clear that such debates generally took place in the public and popular, rather than the professional, domain, with lay authors and hair practitioners proving the main sources of medical debate, often based on few, or even unnamed, medical sources. Perhaps surprisingly, given the centrality of health to endorsements of the 'beard movement', aside from a few brief references, there appears to have been little interest from the medical profession in either supporting or challenging such claims. As the chapter has also showed, claims about the potential filtering properties of facial hair and their accompanying health benefits were not based on empirical study, but instead adapted wholesale from a specific technological innovation, initially based on warming the air, rather than filtering germs.

As the chapter has also discussed, however, as much as the beard provided a useful and convenient totem, it was also problematic in other areas of Victorian corporeality.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Mantegazza, *Physiognomy*, 66.

¹⁵⁹ Henry Frith, *How to Read Character in Features, Forms and Faces: A Guide to the General Outlines of Physiognomy* (London: Ward, Lock, 1891), 12.

Amidst the recurring interest in physiognomy, beards caused issues for those who sought to divine character by 'reading' facial features, since it concealed much of the face. While some attempted to reconcile the beard with these ideas by arguing that it was a signal characteristic of itself, or otherwise tried to bypass the problem entirely, the general lack of discussion of facial hair within physiognomic texts reflects the fact that it remained an inconvenient truth.

Equally, as the discussion of beards and race reveals, facial hair continued to be an important part of the classification of the human species and the ranking of nations based on their physical appearance – a process that had begun in the previous century. While climate and environment continued to be important elements in the facial hair characteristics of non-European men, as did the place of beards as markers of mental and moral strength. Here again, however, there were complexities. A lack of beard among non-Europeans could betoken anything from want of intelligence to a lack of sexual potency and effeminacy. Here, bearded Europeans could claim superiority. But in other readings of facial hair, it was long beards that could imply barbarism, lack of control and even effeminacy. Much apparently depended on the method of removing facial hair. Towards the end of the century, such perceptions had begun to change, and the beard, or lack of it, gradually but finally lost its connections to supposedly innate characteristics. The end of the nineteenth century, therefore, finally brought to an end a view of facial hair that had predominated for over two hundred years.

Part Two

The Practice and Practitioners of Facial Hair

The medical practices and practitioners of shaving in early-modern Britain

Epitaph on a Barber's Boy

Here lies in blooming youth a barber's boy
 His master's grief now dead, alive his joy,
 His razor scarcely touch'd the tender skin,
 So sweetly soft he shav'd the hairy skin,
 O gentle earth lie lightly on his grave,
 Thou canst not lie so light as he could shave.¹

In 1677, Guy Miège listed a range of occupations in his English/French dictionary, together with the titles by which practitioners were known and descriptions of the main duties associated with each one. Barbers were one of the many occupations listed. For his entry 'Of Barbers', Miège wrote, 'some are only for shaving and cutting of men's hair, others are also peruke makers, and others practise surgery'.² At first glance the description and divisions appear straightforward: some barbers shaved and cut hair; some also made wigs; yet others undertook surgery. And yet, this simple description is deceptive. It demonstrates the diversity of tasks undertaken by barbers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But it also reveals the complexities of the early modern barbering trade and the tensions in the titles that its practitioners used and were known by.

In the early modern period, shaving was one of the primary tasks of the group of practitioners under the general aegis of the barbering trade. These included barbers, barber-surgeons, surgeons and hybrid forms such as 'barbers and perukemakers' as well as, later, hairdressers. But in many respects shaving was *the* defining task of the barber. In 1691, the lexicographer Stephen Skinner felt able to define a 'barber' simply

¹ Anon., *The Encyclopaedia of Wit* (London: Printed for Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, 1823), 310.

² Guy Miège, *A New Dictionary French and English with Another English and French According to the Present Use and Modern Orthography of the French Inrich'd with New Words, Choice Phrases, and Apposite Proverbs* (London: Printed by Thomas Dawkes, 1677), 38.

as ‘A Shaver’, with no reference to any other function.³ Even well into the eighteenth century, popular dictionaries still commonly defined a barber exclusively as ‘a shaver of persons.’⁴ The notion of shaving as a principal task of the barber was also enshrined in popular culture. Among Thomas Burton’s 1679 collection of comic anecdotes was the story of a ‘man with a great beard’ who, ‘standing near a Car-horse [*sic*] the horse took his beard for a tuft of hay, and snapt at it; A pox take you, says he, *who made you a Barber?*’ (original italics). The comic effect of the tale relied on the reader’s awareness of the conceit that barbers were the main providers of shaving.⁵

But, were *barbers* the mainstay of shaving provision in this period? That is to say, how far was shaving the dominion of the barbering profession as a whole, including barber-surgeons or surgeons, as well as those identified solely as barbers? As Eleanor Decamp has recently suggested, there was considerable slippage in the ways that occupational titles of barbering were deployed and understood. As Decamp suggests, to use the terms unquestioningly is potentially to misunderstand nuances that would have been all too apparent to early modern customers. At least in London, the unhyphenated term ‘barber-surgeon’, for example, could be used pejoratively as a catch-all term for an irregular, ‘jack of all trades’ medical practitioner. But, ‘barber-surgeon’ was also the official title of a freeman of the London Barber-Surgeons Company – one who had proved their ability through apprenticeship and examination.⁶ There were also potential layers even within single occupational terms. One seventeenth-century dictionary contained the term *Tonstriculus* to define a learner yet to achieve full proficiency in the trade of a barber.⁷

Matters are further complicated by the lack of rigid boundaries between medical tasks and trades in the early modern period. As Margaret Pelling and Sandra Cavallo suggest, occupational boundaries and definitional hierarchies between practitioner types, in particular between early modern barbers and barber-surgeons, are notoriously unreliable.⁸ The irregularity of demand, perhaps especially keenly felt in rural areas, meant that medical practice or retail was often insufficient to generate a living wage. In such cases income needed to be supplemented by other work. Likewise, in areas where practitioners were thin on the ground, individuals with some skill or experience in healing might find themselves practitioners by default, despite having a regular trade. Some medical occupations found natural bedfellows in related retail or manufacturing

³ Stephen Skinner, *A New English Dictionary Shewing the Etymological Derivation of the English Tongue. Part I* (London: Printed by E. H. and W. H. for Timothy Childe, at the White-Hart in St. Paul’s Church-Yard, 1691), n.p. (entries alphabetical).

⁴ Anon., *A New English Dictionary. Containing a Brief and Clear Explication of Most Words in the English Language, and of Difficult Words Derived from Foreign Languages, and Several Terms of Art* (Glasgow: Printed for Charles Hutcheson, 1759), see individual entry.

⁵ Thomas Burton, *Versatile ingenium, The Wittie Companion, or Jestes of All Sorts. From citie and countrie, court and universitie* (Amsterdam: Printed by Stephen Swart, 1679), 118.

⁶ Eleanor DeCamp, *Civic and Medical Worlds in Early Modern England: Performing Barbbery and Surgery* (London: Palgrave, 2016), 13.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁸ Margaret Pelling, *The Common Lot: Sickness, Medical Occupations and the Urban Poor in Early Modern England* (London: Longman, 1998), 208–10; Sandra Cavallo, *Artisans of the Body in Early Modern Italy: Identities, Families and Masculinities* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 50–1.

trades. The retail business of the apothecary, for example, lent itself well to combination with the sale of other types of goods, including grocery and merceryware. This was also reflected in the yoking together of different trades within town guilds. Barbers and surgeons were commonly found among the companies of a diverse range of retailers, including wax and tallow chandlers and mercers. While, in theory, practitioners were warned off occupational pluralism (as the sixteenth-century physician and polymath Robert Recorde put it, 'let no man meddle with another man's corn'), the boundaries between medical trades, as in other crafts, were continually crossed and re-crossed.⁹

Even within individual medical trades, such as barbering, boundaries were permeable. The hygiene practices of barbers were neither inimical nor incompatible with the 'medical' functions of surgeons. As Cavallo notes, the duties of the barber and the surgeon were 'contiguous and frequently indistinguishable'.¹⁰ Barber-surgeons, in particular, played to the social importance of facial appearance and the disguise of imperfections.¹¹ Barbers and barber-surgeons cleaned and maintained bodily surfaces, as well as performing other medical tasks including toothdrawing, cleaning teeth and paring nails, as well as syringing waxy ears. In their close, intimate contact and regular monitoring of customers' bodies, they also assumed an informal diagnostic role, reading the body's signs as portends of sickness.¹² These were 'medical' procedures – part of the broader skein of evacuative treatments.¹³ While some barbers doubtless concentrated on shaving and cutting hair, multitasking was probably the norm.

And yet, in collapsing the boundaries entirely between barbers and barber-surgeons, there is a danger in missing some of the nuances of the individual occupations. To try and address this issue it is precisely that group who were 'just' barbers (to paraphrase Miège, those who *only* shaved and cut hair) upon whom this chapter will focus. It is important to state at the outset that it is certainly not the intention here to suggest that barbers did not intrude into medicine. That they did has been amply demonstrated. Instead the question is effectively flipped: To what extent was shaving the domain of the barber, rather than the barber-surgeon, or surgeon? This approach has a number of advantages. First it allows shaving to be discussed as a unique task, rather than just as a component within the broader skein of hygiene and grooming operations. Through the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, as we have seen, the act of shaving assumed new significance as the clean-shaven face, and the bewigged head formed part of social expectations of male appearance and particularly the articulation of status. As the practitioner responsible for maintaining the head and face the barber both created and reproduced social status.¹⁴

Second, it tests assumptions about the nature of occupational boundaries *within* the barbering trade, raising questions about training and apprenticeship. Were, for

⁹ Robert Recorde, *The Urinal of Physick* (London: Printed by Reynold Wolfe, 1548), 138.

¹⁰ Cavallo, *Artisans of the Body*, 52–3.

¹¹ Margaret Pelling, 'Appearance and Reality: Barber-Surgeons, the Body and Disease', in A. L. Beier and Roger Finlay (eds), *London: 1500–1700: The Making of the Metropolis* (London: Longman, 1986), 91.

¹² *Ibid.*, 94–5.

¹³ Cavallo, *Artisans of the Body*, 40.

¹⁴ Don Herzog, 'The Trouble with Hairdressers', *Representations*, 53 (1996): 26.

example, the apprentices of those individuals identified solely as barbers taught basic surgery as a matter of course? Likewise, were apprentice barber-surgeons taught to shave and cut hair? As the chapter reveals, while there were potential fault lines between barbers and barber-surgeons in London, which had implications for training and career path, the situation in rural and provincial areas was more fluid.

Finally, focusing on the material culture of barbering through close examination of probate inventories, it explores the capacity of individual barbers to provide shaving services, along with literal and notional concepts of the use of the barbershop space. While some attention has focused on the premises of apothecaries in London and in Wales, far less is known about the retailing spaces of other types of medical practitioners, such as the size, fittings, equipment and use of space in rural and provincial shops.¹⁵ Here, barbers make a useful case study. As we will see, the provision of shaving services varied greatly according to location and status, and there is no clear distinction in the size or quality of urban and rural barber businesses. The evidence presented here also raises interesting questions about potential lines of demarcation between practices. Based on a study of more than 200 probate inventories from across the country, it suggests that, while the inventories of barber-surgeons often contained tonsorial equipment, there is far less evidence for individuals listed solely as barbers owning surgical tools.

Barber guilds, companies and training

By 1650, the formal links between barbers and surgeons were already longstanding. The Barbers' Guild in London received its first royal charter in 1462, which contained details for the regulation of surgery as well as barbering. There were also many obvious common features of barbering and surgery, not least in the broad concept of care of the body. Both barbers and surgeons undertook bloodletting, a crucial component in treatment and the general maintenance of health. Both dealt with bodily surfaces, particularly skin and hands, and treated various eruptions, boils and infections as well as monitoring bodily excretions.¹⁶ Both performed important cleansing functions, including washing, trimming and other small tasks such as dealing with earwax and scraping tongues. As Margaret Pelling has argued, 'the most important locality outside the home for washing, grooming and every function relevant to hygiene and the presentation of the body to the outside world, was the barber-surgeon's shop'.¹⁷ The close links between the two trades, in their central concern with the body and its surfaces, was confirmed by the amalgamation of the Barbers' Guild and the much smaller Fellowship of Surgeons in 1520, to form the 'Mystery and Communalty of

¹⁵ Patrick Wallis, 'Consumption, Retailing and Medicine in Early Modern London', *Economic History Review*, 61:1 (2008): 26–53; Alun Withey, "Persons That Live Remote from London": Apothecaries and the Medical Marketplace in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Wales', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 85:2 (2011): 222–47.

¹⁶ Pelling, *The Common Lot*, 204.

¹⁷ Pelling, 'Appearance and Reality', 94.

Barbers and Surgeons of London'.¹⁸ In 1540 this became the 'Worshipful Company of Barber-Surgeons'. Barbers' and barber-surgeons' guilds could be found in large towns across the country. Pelling has identified at least twenty-six barber-surgeons' guilds (often known as companies) in early modern England, Scotland and Ireland, although none in Wales, reflecting a broader lack of guild activity there. Sometimes these were specific to barber-surgeons but, at other times, they combined with other, often non-medical, trades, including wax and tallow chandlers, rope-makers and weavers.¹⁹ In Worcester, for example, the barbers were part of the impressively diverse 'Company of Haberdashers, Hats and caps, stationers, barber chirurgions, painters, hatt band makers and milliners, skynners and felt makers'.²⁰ Entries within the company minute book suggest that the barbers operated their own company within the broader structure. After the 1640s, one of the most regular allied trades to that of barbering was periwig or peruke-making.²¹ As a hair trade it made sense that wig-making and barbering should be yoked together and several guilds and companies of barbers and barber-surgeons, including those in Bristol, Shrewsbury, Chichester, Durham and Hull incorporated wig-makers.²² As well as the focus upon hair, wig-making had many skills in common with barbering, including manual dexterity, knowledge of and physical contact with the body and its surfaces, processes of hygiene and cleansing and the need for precise measurement.

Despite the obvious crossover between barbering and surgery, however, and the fact that in practice the boundary between them was likely extremely porous, in theory, these were separate crafts. In London within the company structure, the duties of barbers and surgeons were separated. An act of parliament by Henry VIII (Act 32, H.8 c.42) laid out clear lines of demarcation between the two crafts. It was stipulated that 'No barber in London shall practise Surgery, Letting of Blood, or any other thing relating thereto, except drawing of teeth'. But surgeons were likewise forbidden to keep a barber's shop in London or to 'exercise the craft of a barber'.²³ This partly had to do with contemporary concerns about public health and the treatment of the pox. The 1540 act noted the habits of some surgeons in treating sufferers of infectious disease, especially the pox, and also intruding themselves into the barber's domain of shaving and washing, thus increasing the chances of the spread of contagion.²⁴

One entry in the court minute book of the Barber-Surgeon's Company of London is particularly revealing of the potential fault lines between surgeons and barber-surgeons. On 13 January 1645/6:

¹⁸ Margaret Pelling and Charles Webster, 'Medical Practitioners', in Margaret Pelling and Charles Webster (eds), *Health, Medicine and Mortality in the Sixteenth-Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 173.

¹⁹ Margaret Pelling, 'Barber-Surgeons' Guilds and Ordinances in Early Modern British Towns: The Story So Far', 1–3, http://practitioners.exeter.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Pelling_BarberSurgeonsOrds-2.pdf (accessed 20 October 2016).

²⁰ Herefordshire Archives, MS CF50/186.

²¹ Margaret Pelling, *The Common Lot*, 224.

²² See Pelling, 'Barber-Surgeons' Guilds'.

²³ Anon., *Readings upon the Statute Law, Alphabetically Digested, Volume IV* (London: D. Brown et al., 1725), 356.

²⁴ Pelling, 'Appearance and Reality', 96.

Whereas Thomas Shaw a Member of this Company did present to this Court Henry Blinksopp to become his Apprentice and to be bound to him as to a Chirurgeon This Court finding the said Thomas Shaw to be reputed *only a Barber* and not to be entered into the Lecture Bill did deny the same But doth Consent and order That if the said Thomas Shaw upon his due examinac[i]on hereafter to be made according to the Ordinance of this House in that behalfe shalbe allowed a licentiate and be entered into the Lecture Bill That then the said Henry Blinksopp at the expirac[i]on of his Tenure of Apprenticeship may be received into the Freedome of this Company as an Apprentice who hath served a Chirurgeon (emphasis added).²⁵

The conflict arose when the barber Thomas Shaw attempted to take on Henry Blinksopp as an apprentice surgeon, suggesting that Shaw believed himself to have the requisite skill in surgery to train the boy. Finding against him, the company court ordered Shaw to be examined to ascertain his surgical knowledge, on which he would presumably be granted a surgical licence. On the one hand this could be read as evidence of the interchangeable nature of barbering and surgery; the bone of contention was not necessarily Shaw's proficiency in surgery after all, but rather his lack of surgical licence. On the other, however, emphasis was laid upon the fact that Shaw's status as a barber was 'reputed', suggesting that this was how he was regarded by others (and, it should be noted, part of the enquiry was likely to elicit a further fee) but also a clear line of distinction. He was, as the court pointed out 'only' a barber.

Barber-surgeons' guilds or companies were located across England.²⁶ Unsurprisingly, large towns such as Chester, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Newcastle and York contained some of the largest companies, although even smaller towns such as Abingdon in Oxfordshire and Hereford, already noted, contained conglomerate companies into which barbers and barber-surgeons were fitted.²⁷ In the Wiltshire town of Devizes, for example, barbers and barber-surgeons fell within the auspices of the Fraternity of Mercers, which also included apothecaries, innholders and grocers within its ranks.²⁸ The many duties of guilds and companies included regulating trade within towns, fixing prices and monitoring standards, and also regulating training through apprenticeship. The actual form and content of apprenticeship training in general, however, is frustratingly obscure, and certainly not least in the case of barbering, which, as a manual craft, relied on hands-on experience.²⁹ In essence, apprenticeship was a contract between a master and (most often) a young man, for a period of work of around seven years, in exchange for being taught the fundamentals of a trade. At its completion the apprentice was presumed fit to take up business on his or her own

²⁵ Worshipful Company of Barber-Surgeons, London, GL, MS 5257/5 (Barber Surgeons' Company Court Minute Book, 1621–1651), fol. 354. I am extremely grateful to Dr Ismini Pells for alerting me to this example.

²⁶ Pelling, 'Barber-Surgeon's Guilds', 2. For Welsh practitioners, see Alun Withey, *Physick and the Family* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 151–62.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2, 19, 23.

²⁸ Wiltshire Archives, MS G20/6/2, Fraternity of Mercers, Book of constitutions, admissions and accounts, 1614–1770, 2.

²⁹ Margaret Pelling, 'Apprenticeship, Health and Social Cohesion in Early Modern London', *History Workshop Journal* 37 (1994): 36.

account. In practice, as Peter Earle has noted, there was great disparity between the prescriptive language of indentures and articles and the reality of the apprenticeship. The experience could vary greatly depending on the benevolence (or otherwise) of the master and the type of trade.³⁰ An apprentice in a retail business might learn the ropes in little more than a few months, depending on the types and numbers of product sold, their understanding of the market and so on, and thus be able to work the counter relatively quickly.³¹ Artisans, however, among which barbers/barber-surgeons can be counted, often required several years of training to acquire proficiency.³²

Since shaving the beard was one of the principal 'arts and mysteries' of the barbering profession and was yoked firmly to the care and maintenance of the healthy body, it seems reasonable to assume that it would have formed an integral element of training. In early modern European texts, shaving was often regarded as the main activity of the barber. Indeed, the strong association with such a key male adornment, the beard, was seen as dignifying the barber's craft.³³ Tomaso Garzoni's sixteenth-century Italian text on barbers, still in print in 1665, noted the various purposes of the barber as cleansing the body 'which is brought about by shaving, the trimming of hair' and other processes of washing and cleaning. It was probably no coincidence that shaving came before haircutting in the list.³⁴ Most commonly apprenticeship records merely sketched out training in broad strokes, with generic statements about instruction in the essential elements or 'mysteries' of the trade. In 1668, Charles Johnes of Chester was apprenticed to his father to 'learn the arte and mysterie of a barber-surgeon'.³⁵ In Hereford, the barber Phillip Lawrence took on young Gyles Tony to instruct him in 'the Craftes, science and mysteries [of] the Barber's science [*sic*].'³⁶ While 'mystery' and 'science' were essentially formulaic, referring to knowledge special to the trade, they also hinted at the skilled nature of the barbering trade and the need for specialist instruction, especially in delicate procedures such as phlebotomy. Unlike the study of physic, surgery and barbering were manual tasks, learned by observation and imitation rather than through the pages of Latin medical texts. Surviving papers in the York barber-surgeons company, though, do suggest that visual imagery – diagrams and charts – could play a part in identifying sites for bloodletting, alongside pictorial representations of the body and its relationship to zodiacal signs.³⁷

Over the course of their apprenticeships, which in the case of Charles Johnes was to last nine years, apprentice barber-surgeons could therefore expect to learn a variety of corporeal tasks. At first this likely meant general, unskilled activities such as cleaning

³⁰ Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society and Family Life* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 95.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 98.

³² *Ibid.*, 99.

³³ Cavallo, *Artisans of the Body*, 42.

³⁴ Tomas Garzoni, *La Piazza Universale di Tutte le Professioni del Mondo* (Venice: Publisher unknown, 1665), quoted in Cavallo, *Artisans of the Body*, 38.

³⁵ Chester Archives, MS Z/G2/1, 'The written book of the society and company of barbour surgeons, waxe and tallow chandlers of the city of Chester', c. 1606–98.

³⁶ Herefordshire Archives, MS CF50/186.

³⁷ See the discussion in Margaret C. Barnet, 'The Barber-Surgeons of York', *Medical History*, 12:1 (1968): 23.

the shop floor or maintaining and sharpening equipment. If the apprentices were sons of existing barbers they might already have some proficiency in trimming hair, which could be exploited by the master.³⁸ Learning to shave was an important skill for young apprentices to master and of great import in establishing reputation. Discussing the essential qualities needed for prospective naval barber-surgeons, John Woodall noted that ‘it is a principall proof-piece for Mastership in Surgerie for a young man to take a base and ordinarie knife, and to fit it to shave a beard.’³⁹ ‘To shave well,’ noted Woodall, ‘is praiseworthy: wherefore I wish him to practise to do it, and be ever learning.’⁴⁰ Both statements imply that skill in shaving and the maintenance and preparation of instruments were good barometers of prospect for a career in surgery. Even if they chose not to take up the trade, shaving offered other opportunities for advancement, such as entering service in the house of an elite gentleman. As one 1730 complaint against youthful idleness noted, basic proficiency in French and dancing was all well and good and might even secure a young man a position as a footman. But only if he were ‘wise enough to learn in time the Art of Shaving and Buckling a Periwig,’ might he hope to one day reach the lofty heights of the Valet de Chambre.⁴¹

Descriptions of the actual processes through which shaving was learned are scant, not least since there were no instruction manuals dedicated to the practice of shaving. There are, however, fleeting references in sources that hint at the practices involved in training. In March 1645 in London, ‘Mr Callice, barber’ was the subject of a complaint to the court of the barber-surgeon’s company for ‘teaching to Trimm other than to his apprentices, Contrary to the Ordinances of this house.’⁴² ‘Trimming’ is often taken to refer to haircutting but could refer to cutting either (or both) hair and beards. Given the hands-on nature of training it might be assumed that apprentices simply learned by rote. Unlike haircutting, however, where the worst likely outcome was a botched hairstyle and a grumpy punter, shaving required confidence and a steady hand to avoid accidentally slitting the customer’s throat. The use of animal heads, particularly sheep, was one means by which young apprentices might learn their craft safely and the method was seemingly common knowledge. In the late nineteenth century, Richard Wright Procter claimed that ‘the shaving of the sheep’s head by way of innocent practice for our “prentice hands” is a popular fallacy that clings as tenaciously to the barber’s shop as the initiative red hot poker clings to the Odd Fellow’s Lodge.’⁴³ But there is evidence for the practice. In 1680 an entry in the account book of Sir John Foulis of

³⁸ Patrick Wallis, ‘Apprenticeship and Training in Pre-Modern England’, LSE, ‘Working Papers on the Nature of Evidence’, 22/7, November 2007, 20; Earle, *The Making*, 97. It is worth noting that Pelling’s study of barbers’ apprentices in Norwich, however, suggests that apprenticeships of barbers’ sons was relatively rare; see Pelling, *The Common Lot*, 214.

³⁹ John Woodall, *The Surgeon’s Mate or Military & Domestique Surgery* (London: Printed by John Legate, 1655), 2.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴¹ Anon., *Essays and Letters on Various Subjects* (London: Printed for J. Brotherton, 1739), 154. According to Samuel Johnson, to ‘buckle a wig’ was to ‘put it into curl’ – Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language in Which the Words Are Deduced from Their Originals* (2nd edn) (London: Printed for Longman, Rees et al., 1827).

⁴² Worshipful Company of Barber-Surgeons, London, GL, MS 5257/5, fol. 360, 9 March 1645/6.

⁴³ Richard Wright Procter, *The Barber’s Shop, Revised and Enlarged, with an Introduction by William E. Axon* (Manchester: Abel Heywood and Son, 1883), 201.

Ravelston, near Edinburgh, notes the payment of three shillings and sixpence 'to Jamie Gray to buy a sheep's head and soap to learn him to barbarize'.⁴⁴ Whether animals were commonly used in this way elsewhere is difficult to assess, but it was clearly safer to set a razor-wielding novice to work on a dead animal than a live customer.

For those barbers willing to risk censure or prosecution, there was another way of having their apprentices gain experience while also earning easy money on the side. In 1764, Thomas Legg's diatribe against various kinds of work illegally undertaken on the Sabbath (provocatively titled *Low-Life*) alluded to what he regarded as the sharp practice of barbers sending their apprentices to the 'Fleet, Marshalsea, Bridewell and other Prisons, during the time of Divine Service, in order to shave poor prisoners Gratis, that they may improve their hands in their business'.⁴⁵ Presumably this referred to faces and not heads. Aside from the main issue of shaving on a Sunday and during service time, how far 'Gratis' applied to the apprentice, and not the barber, is up for debate. Scattered references in court testimonies also suggest that apprentices, once proficient, might be trusted to shave customers while their master was out of the shop.⁴⁶ Apprenticeship, then, was a multifaceted experience and one often tailored to the individual needs of both master and apprentice.

The question remains as to whether there were material differences in the provision of training between barbers and barber-surgeons. Did an apprentice barber, for example, necessarily learn surgical techniques? Since, as we have seen, both barbers and barber-surgeons routinely shaved, cut hair, pared nails and so on (all of which were, after all, 'medical' tasks) it might be assumed that there was little distinction. But it could also be argued that a barber whose attention to the body was limited to haircutting, shaving and basic grooming services, *was* distinct from the barber-surgeon who dealt with wounds, surgery and other more invasive procedures. Although early modern Italy and England were very different societies, it is worth noting that, in Italy, the notional gap between barbers and barber-surgeons widened as the seventeenth century drew on, as surgery assumed greater dignity. It is possible that the same process took place in England. By the early eighteenth century, there was certainly clear water between the trades.⁴⁷

The few extant records do hint at practical differences in the training of apprentice barbers in the early eighteenth century. In January 1708 John Horton petitioned the Middlesex Sessions to be released from his apprenticeship to the barber and periwig-maker Peter Fountain. His specific complaint was that Fountain 'hath not instructed him in either shaving or cutting of hair neither doth he use the said Art'.⁴⁸ These were clearly the principal components of the training that Horton had expected. Likewise,

⁴⁴ A. W. Cornelli Hallen (ed.), *Foulis of Ravelston's Account Book* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the Scottish History Society, 1894), 218.

⁴⁵ Thomas Legg, *Low-Life: or One Half of the World, Knows Not How the Other Half Live, Being a Critical Account of What Is Transacted by People of Almost All Religions, Nations, Circumstances, and Sizes of Understanding, in the Twenty-Four Hours, between Saturday-Night and Monday-Morning* (London: Printed for John Lever, 1764), 52.

⁴⁶ For example, see Old Bailey Proceedings Online, t17640728-12, trial of Arthur Kane, 28 July 1764, www.Oldbaileyonline.org (accessed 21 August 2017).

⁴⁷ Cavallo, *Artisans of the Body*, 53.

⁴⁸ London Metropolitan Archives, MS MSP 1708 Jan/12, Petition of John Horton, exact date not given, February 1708.

when Thomas Nerssell was bound to the periwig-maker Richard Slaughter of St Martin in the Fields, London, in 1720, it was specifically 'to learn the Art of making perriwigg and shaving'.⁴⁹ If there were potential differences in the nature of training, however, it was less clear how far the career of the apprentice followed the trade of their master. One means to test any separation in practice is to explore records where some sense of career path can be assessed. Here, a useful source for analysis are the apprenticeship records of the Chester Company of Barbers. The potential gap between occupational titles and what an individual actually did, mean that the conclusions drawn here must be tentative. Nonetheless, it seems fair to assume that a company of barber-surgeons might be more than usually interested in recording separation in the occupational identity of its members, if any existed. The evidence from Chester appears to support a lack of consistent correlation between the occupation of the master and the later business and occupational title of the freed apprentice.

Between 1500 and 1742, the Chester Freemen Rolls, apprenticeship and admissions registers contain details of 181 individuals, including sixty-four barber-surgeons, eighty-two barbers, twenty-nine surgeons and other variations including 'surgeon and periwig maker'.⁵⁰ In the thirty-five cases where the evidence is sufficient to show both the occupation of the master and the later career of the apprentice, analysis suggests no straightforward correlation between the two.⁵¹ Apprenticeships between barbers and barber-surgeons and even other types of medical practitioner were often effectively interchangeable. Evidence from the Chester records reveals the unreliability of master's occupations as indicators of their apprentices' career paths. Of thirty-three barber-surgeons in the Chester company who had served their apprenticeship between 1591 and 1732, for example, almost half (fifteen) had originally been apprenticed to barber-surgeons. Four had been apprenticed to surgeons, seven to barbers and six to apothecaries. Of the thirty-one barbers whose masters can be located in the same time period, however, seventeen had been apprenticed to barber-surgeons, and eleven to barbers, suggesting that barber-surgeons were the most usual sources of apprenticeship for barbers. Two had been apprenticed to surgeons and one to an apothecary.

For early modern Bristol, Jonathan Barry has noted the relative lack of barbers freed by apprenticeship, in contrast to more than 90 per cent of barber-surgeons. Barry suggests that the discrepancy may be explained by the manner in which freedom was achieved.⁵² The need to provide proof of the apprenticeship via indentures and entries in civic books perhaps made adopting the occupational title of the master a logical step to oil the wheels of the procedure. In Chester the same disparity does not seem to appear, with virtually equal numbers of barbers gaining freedoms. An alternative suggestion is that barber-surgeon training was the most common option because it offered apprentices a greater choice in their later occupation. But the regular

⁴⁹ London Metropolitan Archives, MS MSP 1725 Dec/9, Petition of Thomas Nerssell, exact date not given, December 1725.

⁵⁰ See Chester Archives, MS Z/G2/1; MS MAB/1-2; H. E. Bennett (ed.), *The Rolls of the Freeman of the City of Chester, Part 1, 1392-1700* (Chester: Printed for the Record Society, 1906).

⁵¹ A slight note of caution here: it is possible that the given master's occupation here may be a nominal one reflecting the company he belonged to, rather than 'actual' occupation.

⁵² 52 Jonathan Barry, *Medical Practice in Early Modern Bristol* (In preparation, forthcoming 2022).

appearance of apothecaries as masters of apprentice barber-surgeons is also interesting and is not replicated in Bristol. Even despite the apparent disjuncture between the types of training required, the close relationship between medical retail and the shop business of the barber may perhaps have given grounds for overlap between the two.

Examples from individual cases illustrate the point. In several cases, apprentices who served with individuals identified solely as barbers later took up freedoms as barber-surgeons. In 1661, for example, Thomas Davenport was apprenticed to the barber Henry Mead for seven years, but later turned over to another barber, Thomas Blessing.⁵³ When Davenport took on his own apprentices Owen Shone in 1659 and Thomas Challoner in 1676, however, he was referred to as a 'barber-surgeon'.⁵⁴ The same applied to Hugh Stringer, apprenticed to a barber, Thomas Blessing, but later listed on his own account as a barber-surgeon.⁵⁵

In addition, the registers also demonstrate that occupational titles were far from static. After his apprenticeship to a barber in 1633, George Skellington took on his own apprentice Richard Francis and was himself listed as a barber, suggesting continuity in the type of occupational specialism, or that the title derived from the company he belonged to. When Francis took up his freedom, however, he was referred to across several sources as a barber-surgeon.⁵⁶ In other cases there was clear interdigitation between medical trades. In 1623 Thomas Taylor was made free after his apprenticeship to the Chester apothecary Robert Blease. Blease was a prominent figure in the company, appearing in its records for more than thirty years and taking on several apprentices in that time. When he took up his own business and his own apprentice, however, Taylor was listed as a surgeon, as was his own apprentice in 1661.⁵⁷ Matters are further complicated by individuals such as John Dicas and William Frost, both of whom were recorded as 'barber-surgeon and periwigmaker', suggesting a combination of tonsorial and medico-surgical functions and again highlighting the breadth of tasks encompassed by the barbering trade in practice.⁵⁸

The examples discussed here raise several possibilities. First, and most simply, they might be further evidence of the unreliability of occupational titles as indicators of an individual's primary activities. Much depended on how individuals described themselves or were described by others. There is also no reason to believe that medical occupations were static. Second, and perhaps more likely, the categorization of individuals changed over time, according to circumstance and location. Third, the Chester records suggest that, in the seventeenth century, medical training was an integral part of barbering apprenticeships, meaning that it was entirely possible for the apprentice of a barber to obtain freedom and practice as a barber-surgeon and vice versa. Fourth is the important element of choice. One who received medical training could presumably later choose to 'just' set up a barbering business, which after all still included medico-hygienic practices, or establish themselves more as a surgeon. In any

⁵³ Chester Archives, MS Z/G2/1.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Bennett, *Rolls of the Freeman*, 95, 107, 146.

⁵⁸ Chester Archives, MS MAB/1.

event, the evidence here suggests is that the lines of demarcation noted in the London Company were not necessarily replicated elsewhere.

If apprenticeships and training did not necessarily delimit the occupational activities of individuals, then, were there any material differences between barbers and barber-surgeons in their everyday practice and use of shop space? To explore the issue of occupational specialisms further it is useful to turn to evidence of the actual premises of barbers.

Fit to shave: The shop space and material culture of barbering

The early modern barbershop bore a multiplicity of meanings beyond its obvious and immediate function. It was, for example, a 'site of homo-social pleasures', where men could socialize, gossip, drink, smoke and listen to music, as well as having their faces and heads groomed. It was a retailing space, in which goods, as well as services, could be purchased and consumed.⁵⁹ As characterized in theatrical performances, the barbershop was a 'sound-marked cultural site of acoustic performance and practice', characterized by the cacophonous noise of music together with the general hubbub of barbers and customers.⁶⁰ The materiality of early modern barbering has also drawn some attention. Unlike many trades where customers were more likely to see the product, rather than the tools used, barbering had a well-defined and familiar set of instruments, practices and language.⁶¹

Despite a strong focus upon the barbershop environment in social, cultural and even some medical studies, the materiality and spatiality of the early modern barbershop has received relatively little attention. Particularly in literary depictions, barbershop interiors can appear static and homogeneous, with a standard (and recognizable) set of shop instruments, furniture and occupational identifiers, such as the barber's pole. In reality, however, the size, equipment, use of space and functionality of barbershops varied greatly according to many factors, from location to status. As we shall see, occupational boundaries, while not rigid, did appear to have some impact upon the types of activities undertaken. Rather than a single, standard shop layout, barbers utilized their available space in a variety of different ways and with varying levels of equipment. Neither was there a straightforward delineation between town and country businesses outside London. Some smaller and rural towns contained high-end businesses while, equally, large towns could also house small, basic shops.

The focus of this section will be a study of more than 200 barber and barber-surgeon's probate inventories, between 1650 and 1745, from Wiltshire, Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire, Gloucestershire and Wales. The sample is essentially random, based only

⁵⁹ Pelling, *The Common Lot*, 222–3; Susan Vincent, 'Men's Hair: Managing Appearances in the Long Eighteenth Century', in Hannah Greig, Jane Hamlett and Leonie Hannan (eds), *Gender and Material Culture in Britain since 1600* (London: Palgrave, 2016), 56.

⁶⁰ Decamp, *Civic and Medical Worlds*, 136.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 30–3.

on archival searches for the inventories of barbers and barber-surgeons within the given date range, including both large and small towns. The problems in using probate inventories as sources are well documented, and they cannot simply be read either as definitive lists of shop contents, or as reliable indicators of wealth. The inclusion of individual listings for shop goods or trade was entirely dependent on the diligence of the recorder. In many cases, opaque, generic terms such as ‘shop goods’ or ‘instruments belonging to his trade’ make assessment of equipment levels impossible. Where individual listings are given, however, they can reveal a great deal about the material culture and practice of barbering. In addition, much can also be gleaned from the use of shop space, rooms and evidence of ancillary trades, such as brewing. Yet again, too, the problem of occupational titles is apposite. An occupation listed in a will or probate inventory was usually that for which the deceased was either primarily known or was engaged in upon their death. It cannot be taken as evidence either that it was their only career, or that they had necessarily been engaged in it for a long period of time. As we shall see, however, unlike the evidence from apprenticeships, there were some fairly consistent differences between the inventories of barbers and barber-surgeons, which may have implications for our understanding of the functions of and relationship between both trades.

Beginning with the kit of a barber, some idea of the requisite tools of the trade can be gleaned from Randle Holme’s 1688 *Academy of Armory*, which set out the various instruments and terminologies used across a variety of common trades, informed by his occupation as a herald painter. Among these trades was an idealized barbershop. Holme first defined the appearance of the barber, ‘clothed in russet [and] known by his Cheque parti-coloured Apron’, without which he could not properly be termed a barber ‘or poller or shaver as anciently they were called’.⁶² If the list of ‘instruments of a barber’ identified by Holme are to be trusted then the initial costs of setting up a well-equipped barbershop may have been substantial, although businesses varied between the minimal and the elaborate, and basic, cheaper versions were also likely available. Once established, and again depending on the nature of the business and diligence of the barber, the ongoing costs of maintaining the equipment could be onerous. Razors and scissors required frequent stropping and resharpening – a job likely to have been undertaken by an apprentice. Waters and powders needed to be continually replenished, while shop fittings needed cleaning and repairing with the stress of daily use. The items in Holme’s description are listed below.⁶³

Instruments of a Barber.

The Instrument Case, in which are placed these following things in their several divisions.

The Glass, or seeing Glass.

A Set of Horn Combs, with Teeth on one side, and wide.

A Set of Box Combs.

⁶² Randle Holme, *The Academy of Armory or a Storehouse of Armory and Blazon* (Chester: Printed for the author, 1688), 128.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 128–9.

A Set of Ivory Combs, with fine Teeth, and toothed on both sides.
 An Ivory Beard Comb.
 A four square Bottle with a Screw'd head for sweet Water, or Benjamin Water, &c.
 The like Bottle with sweet Powder in; but this is now not used.
 A Row of Razers.
 A pair of Tweezers, or Twitchers: with an Ear pick at the other end of it.
 A Rasp or File, to file a point of a tooth that stands out.
 A Set of Cisers, for the cutting of the Hair and Beard.
 A Curling Iron, or Beard Iron, called the Forceps.
 A Hone, to [unclear] or sharpen the Razers.
 A Bottle or sweet Oyle, or Oyle Olive for the Hone.
 A Powder Box, with sweet Powder.
 A Puff or Tuff, to powder the Hair.
 A Barbers Candlestick, to stick at his Girdle.
 A Barbers Apron.
 A Bason or Barbers Bason, having a circle in the brim to compass the Man's
 Throat, and a place like a little Dish to put the Ball in after Lathering.
 Wash Balls, and Sweet Balls.
 Water made sweet with having Bay Leaves, or other Leaves heated therein.
 A Chaffer to heat Water in.
 A Small Chaffer to carry Water in, with a hanging or falling handle to hold it by.
 Linnens of several sorts; as
 Caps for the Head, to keep the Hair up
 Trimming Cloaths, to put before a Man.
 Napkins to put about the Neck, to dry the Face and Hands with.

The list of goods and materials here strongly highlights the interpolation of haircutting and shaving with other corporeal tasks. Much of the list is dedicated to the management of hair. Some attention is given to the shop environment, with its looking glasses, candles and basins. A variety of haircutting equipment is listed, including combs, scissors and irons, along with various scents and powders, hinting at the maintenance of wigs. Other items point to the barber's role in quasi-medical functions including filing and rasping the teeth and removing wax from ears. Unsurprisingly, though, shaving is also clearly a primary function of Holme's idealized shop. The basic equipment of shaving and general management of facial hair includes a basin, 'row of razers', trimming cloths and beard comb. Other items offer some insight into the processes of the task and suggest that, at least in some cases, attention was paid to making the experience comfortable, if not entirely pleasant.

Even more enticing is Holme's list of common barber terminology, giving a unique insight into the language and performance of the shave. First, the 'person to be trimmed' would 'take the chair' after which the barber would 'clap on the cap', dividing the (fashionably long) hair and tying it up under to prevent it from impeding the shave.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Ibid., 129.

If the beard was long it might first be trimmed with scissors ‘to take away stragling hairs and make it thinner’, or less bushy. Next, water would be poured into the basin and bowl and the customer’s face and beard were washed ‘with the suds which the ball maketh by chaffing it in the warm water.’⁶⁵ This was a scented washball, which was discarded into a dish after use. An account in Thomas Smith’s *Ancient Topography of London* suggests that, before the mid-eighteenth century, lather was usually applied by hand, rather than by brush.⁶⁶

With their neck and throat covered by linen napkins, the curved bowl containing warm scented water was held around the customer’s neck, allowing the barber to clean the razor after each stroke. The barber would ‘hand the razor’ setting it in a ‘right order between the thumb and fingers’, before beginning the shave and ‘tak[ing] off superfluous hairs.’⁶⁷ Once debarbed, the customer’s face was washed once with a ‘ball and water, or a sweet ball’ before being washed again ‘with clean water to take away the sopiness’ and wiped dry with napkins.⁶⁸ A mirror was held up to allow the customer to ‘see his new made face, and give the barber instructions where it is amiss’. Finally, one of the scented lotions – such as ‘Benjamin’s Water’ – was applied.⁶⁹ At this point the customer departed the premises presumably significantly fresher and sweeter-smelling than when they arrived. While this is likely the *ne plus ultra* of the barbershop, the terminology at least suggests that the practices were relatively commonplace. The impression given is not that of a rushed, prosaic task, but rather one where the customer’s comfort and experience was to some degree considered.

Holme’s volume, however, also contains an entry for surgeon’s equipment, offering an interesting insight into contemporary attitudes towards perceived distinctions between crafts. Notably, he appeared to differentiate between barbers, barber-surgeons and surgeons, implying, at least in principle, three lines of demarcation. Predictably the majority of entries are for instruments used specifically by ‘chirurgions’, ranging from knives, needles and saws to instruments for dedicated procedures. Some entries clearly suggest overlap between barbers and surgeons. Among the various surgical instruments listed is a ‘barber’s chasser [chaffer?]’ ‘wherein is carried hot water, for the trimming and shaveing of such as desire to go according to the mode.’⁷⁰ The surgeons’ list also included an ear pick and spatula and other barbers’ equipment including a ‘barber’s chafeing dish’, reportedly much used by them to warm the shop in wintertime, although the mechanisms or source of heat for that function are unclear.⁷¹ Also within the list, however, is a small subsection of ‘Instruments of the Barber Chyrurgions’ (note: no hyphen), including a candlestick to be mounted in the apron, a book protector and a ‘tooth pincer’, implying differences of function between surgeons and barber-surgeons. The reference to a ‘book protector’ is interesting (perhaps akin to covering

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ John Thomas Smith, *Ancient Topography of London* (London: Printed by J. McCreery, 1815), 38. ‘A good lather is half the shave’ was apparently a ‘very old remark among the trade.’

⁶⁷ Holme, *Academy of Armory*, 129.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 426.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, 430.



Figure 5.1 Jost Amman, a barbershop, undated. Copyright Wellcome Collection.

a modern cookbook to prevent splashes), suggesting that barber-surgeons used books for reference during surgical procedures. An entry for the razor in this list also seems particularly telling about the boundary lines between barber and surgeon: whereas the surgeon might take advantage of the keen edge of the razor when clean incisions were needed, 'Its use is well known to most, which is chiefly to shave away haire where and when necessity requireth, *which is the Barbers office*' (emphasis added). Also, while the barber held responsibility for cleaning teeth, removing them was the dominion of the

surgeon, using 'draughts or pincers' or a device called the 'tooth levitor' to prise rotten teeth from the gums.⁷²

As a prescriptive list, Holmes's idealized barbershop is interesting and suggestive of equipment and practices in a high-end, probably urban, barber business. The question, then, is how far these ideals reflect actual businesses and especially those outside large urban centres. One means to address this is by mapping the frequency and type of equipment found in Holme's list to actual evidence from probate inventories. The well-documented problem in using probate inventories lies in the selectivity of what was recorded, which was entirely subject to the whim and diligence of the appointed recorders. In the best cases other practitioners compiled the inventory, who could recognize and list the specific instruments of the deceased's trade. While extremely unreliable as indicators either of the value of goods, or of the wealth of individuals, based on their shop goods, inventories can nonetheless still offer a unique glimpse inside the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century barber's business.

First, the strong association between the barber and the shop obscures the fact that not all barbers worked from fixed premises. There are indeed good reasons to suppose that owning and stocking a shop could be a burden. A number of inventories containing individual listings show no evidence for shop premises, nor even of rooms within the testator's house that might function as shop spaces. A note of caution about occupational titles must again be added. Only one occupation was generally listed in probates, and not necessarily the only or even the primary one. A barber might have abandoned his business years before, but still continued to be referred to in that capacity. Nevertheless, in the rural Denbighshire village of Llandrillo-yn-Rhos, the inventory of Robert Eaton, identified as a barber, simply listed his livestock and crops, some basic furniture, brass and pewter, but nothing pertaining to his trade.⁷³ The 1716 inventory of the Brecon barber Roger Davies (with a total value of less than three pounds) again contained no reference to barbering, the only possible hint being an entry for eight chairs.⁷⁴ The lack of a separate shop listing highlights the importance of the barber's own house as a workplace, which could be utilized at need. As noted above, establishing, stocking and maintaining a shop required substantial capital outlay and was simply beyond the means of some.

The close relationship, not least in popular culture, between barbers and their shops also obscures the peripatetic nature of barbering and the fact that shaving and haircutting were often undertaken in the customer's home. As Susan Vincent has noted, barbering was an activity that could be performed at any time of day, in either the customer's own house, or in the shop. Barbers were therefore 'on call virtually all hours'.⁷⁵ Until at least the early nineteenth century, itinerant 'flying' barbers offered shaving services to customers, either in their own homes or even in ad hoc stalls in town centres and markets. In 1815 John Thomas Smith reported the dying trade of

⁷² Ibid. It is unclear what 'draughts' refer to in this context – perhaps a derivation of 'drawing' instruments.

⁷³ National Library of Wales (hereafter NLW) MS SA/1685/78, inventory of Robert Eaton of Llandrillo-yn-Rhos, 28 July 1685.

⁷⁴ NLW MS BR/1716/6/1, probate inventory of Roger Davies of Brecon, 6 March 1716.

⁷⁵ Vincent, 'Men's Hair', 55.

the 'flying barber' in his study of London. Their standard equipment was reported to be a basin, soap and napkin and 'a deep leaden vessel, something like a chocolate pot', enabling them to move relatively swiftly to find custom.⁷⁶ Many barbers were likely able to eke out a living by providing a mobile service in this way, rather than operating from fixed premises. Securing a regular contract with a wealthy gentry family, for example, providing shaving services in the comfort of their own country pile, might be lucrative and dispense with the need for a shop altogether.

Where inventories contain shop listings, they reveal a wide variety in the size, fittings and equipment of businesses. Some, like those of the Chippenham barber Thomas Holly in 1697, were clearly very basic, with an entry for 'the shoppe' listing just '2 chaires 1 lookeing glasse 1 stool', valued at five shillings.⁷⁷ In Chepstow, in 1697, Roger Williams's shop contained only a looking glass, a basin, some razors, one hone and a small amount of 'trimming cloth', while the Nottingham barber Thomas Rickaby's shop inventory contained '1 lookeing glass, some razours, three old chaires' and three wigs.⁷⁸ Such examples suggest small, perhaps part time or occasional businesses, capable of attending only a few customers at one time.

Other businesses appear closer to the idealized shop of Randle Holmes, revealing greater levels of equipment and the facilities to shave. In 1674, Edward Wheeler's Salisbury shop contained three basons, some chafers and 'barbers instruments' valued at a total of ten shillings.⁷⁹ Basins and chafing dishes were both requisites for warming and holding the water required for shaving. In Newark, Nottinghamshire, barber Thomas Claredge's shop contained glass cases and furniture, a large number of hones, brushes and basins, wash balls and a quantity of shop linen.⁸⁰ The inventory of the Nottingham barber William Hutchinson gives a good idea of what might be considered a high-end barber's business. Customers entering Hutchinson's shop were first greeted by a variety of furniture, including tables, chairs and benches and shelves occupied by wig blocks, together with a number of wigs, salve and powder boxes, as well as pewter pots and candlesticks. Among Hutchinson's equipment were two mirrors, six brushes, thirteen razors and a hone and a number of pairs of scissors and curling irons.⁸¹ A pile of 'trimming cloths' stood in readiness for use, while the customer's eye might also be diverted by the 'small pictures' on the walls, or by the noisy occupant of a bird cage also noted by the inventory takers.⁸² The impression left here is of a bustling and functional space on the one hand, but with elements of diversion, perhaps to occupy

⁷⁶ Smith, *Ancient Topography of London*, 38.

⁷⁷ Wiltshire Archives, MS P3/H/772 – Inventory of Thomas Holly of Chippenham, barber, 21 May 1697.

⁷⁸ NLW, MS LL/1696/32 – Inventory of Roger Williams of Chepstow, barber; Nottinghamshire Archives, MS PR/NW (Deanery of Nottingham), Inventory of Charles Rickerby, 1 July 1716. (NB: Nottinghamshire inventories are on microfiche and are listed by deanery, year and name, rather than specific MS number.)

⁷⁹ Wiltshire Archives, MS P4/1674/9 – Edward Wheeler of Sarum, Salisbury, barber, 29 May 1674.

⁸⁰ Nottinghamshire Archives, MS PR/NW (Deanery of Newark), admin bond and inventory of Thomas Claredge of Newark, barber, 1702.

⁸¹ Nottinghamshire Archives, MS PR/NW (Deanery of Nottingham), bond and inventory of William Hutchinson of Nottingham, barber, 4 May 1725.

⁸² *Ibid.*

customers while waiting. Even without individual listings, generic valuations can still hint at substantial businesses. The 'shop goods' of Miles Herring of Swindon totalled £2 10s, while 'all the Instruments and Toolles in the Shop of Maurice Whitmarsh' were valued at three pounds.⁸³

The sampled inventories reveal little consistency in the size and equipment levels of barber businesses between town and country. Large towns like Salisbury, as was the case in London, contained a mixture of businesses, from apparently basic premises, such as those of Edward Wheeler, to large, well-stocked shops.⁸⁴ A contemporary of Wheeler in Salisbury was Christopher Dominy, whose inventory contained much tonsorial and shaving equipment, including razors and scissors, ten basins, beard irons and a parcel of hair, suggesting wig-making as well as barbering.⁸⁵ Another neighbour was John Purchase, whose detailed shop listing suggests a well-equipped and bustling business. Among the goods were nineteen razors, combs, beard irons, powder boxes and wigs and a variety of chairs, '14 towells and 11 trimming cloths'.⁸⁶ Interestingly, Purchase's inventory also contains one of the very few separate listings for the 'glass and frame of ye shop window', valued at £1 2s.⁸⁷ In the largest Welsh town of Wrexham, Elias Preston's barbershop was clearly a thriving business, containing twenty-two chairs, all manner of barbers' instruments, blocks, an array of silver cups and plate and thirty-three periwigs, the latter alone valued at ten pounds.⁸⁸ The number of chairs here seems above what might be expected even in a large barber business in this period. One possibility, though entirely conjectural, is that Preston employed others, perhaps to make his stock of wigs.

But the same variation also applied outside large towns, where high-end, well-equipped shops could sit cheek by jowl with more humble premises. The shops of Wiltshire barbers such as William Player of Wilton, in 1719, and John Low in the small village of Ramsbury, in 1722, contained little except for basic shop furniture, a looking glass and a few razors.⁸⁹ But equally, over in the nearby town of Mere, Osmund Hill's inventory was more opulent, containing 'two Cases in looking glasses, 5 razours tipped with silver, ii paire of irons tipt with silver, one paire of sissars tipt with silver, 19 other old razours, 4 paire of old sissors and some other small instruments', along with other shop furniture and equipment, with a total inventory value of £107.⁹⁰

The size of barber businesses has implications for our understanding of barbering practices in early modern England and Wales. As with medical practice more generally, barbering in areas outside guild or company control was effectively a free for all. The issue of prices will be dealt with in more detail in the following chapter. But, unlike in towns such as Shrewsbury, where guild ordinances stipulated that no member

⁸³ Wiltshire Archives MS P3/H/611 – Miles Herring of Swindon [exact date not given] May 1685; MS P2/W/668ii – Maurice Whitmarsh of Fisherton Anger, 6 January 1686.

⁸⁴ Pelling, 'Appearance and Reality', 85–6.

⁸⁵ Wiltshire Archives, MS P4/1673/17 – Inventory of Christopher Dominy, barber, 20 March 1673.

⁸⁶ Wiltshire Archives, MS P4/1681/22, Inventory of John Purchase of Salisbury, barber, 18 August 1681.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ NLW, SA/1694/210 – Inventory of Elias Preston of Wrexham, 24 September 1694.

⁸⁹ Wiltshire Archives, MS P2/P/799 – Inventory of William Player of Wilton, barber, 9 October 1719; MS P5/1723/27, Inventory of John Low of Ramsbury, 28 January 1722.

⁹⁰ Wiltshire Archives, MS P5/1673/19 – Inventory of Osmund Hill Sr, Mere, Wilts 7 August 1673.

of the Guild of Barber-Chirurgeons was to charge less than threepence for a shave, provincial barbers were free to set their own prices.⁹¹ Although evidence is scarce, it is presumably also true that the usual company requirements, such as limiting the numbers of apprentices, could be bypassed.

Another issue to consider is that of the numbers of barbers, or even other wage labourers, potentially working within individual shops. It is easy to assume that barbering was a solitary occupation. It could be argued that the relative lack of regular custom, hinted at for example by the regular adoption of other trades, militates against the idea of a multi-staff business. The well-documented use of the barbershop as a social space, such as in the provision of musical instruments for customers to play while they waited, also suggests that waiting – perhaps for some considerable length of time – was the rule, rather than the exception. This is also supported by the obvious provision of chairs. Nonetheless, apprentices might be recruited to shave customers, and even spouses might take on the task. It is equally possible that more than one barber might work in a shop, sharing the expense of running and stocking it. As Margaret Pelling has noted in her study of medical occupations in early modern Norwich, some barber-surgeons were also ‘employers of labour’, taking on casual employees, or multiple apprentices.⁹² In some cases, however, equipment listings suggest that more than one barber may have been at work. The 1707 inventory of Edward Mellar, for example, contains ‘26 Russia Leather chayres, 1 wood chaire and 4 bass-bottom chairs,’ along with six basins and five cases of razors.⁹³ Assuming, of course, that they related to the shop and that Mellar did not have a side line in selling chairs, the number listed might suggest the capacity to accommodate many waiting customers and again may also reflect the broader context of the shop as a social space. Equally, however, it might suggest that several customers could be attended to at the same time, in turn implying that more than one barber was at work. This is also borne out by the presence of several basins in the inventory. Since these were presumably not items that required constant changing, or had excessive wear, the alternative is again that, in high-end barber establishments, more than one individual was trimming customers at any given time.

Next, what do the sample inventories suggest about the nature of barbering as a full-time occupation? Margaret Pelling’s study of Norwich practitioners suggests that the irregularity of demand forced barber-surgeons in particular to diversify into other forms of retail and production in order to boost their income, and that such diversification often varied according to local conditions. The brewing and sale of alcohol, along with tobacco, for example, was used to entice customers to the shop and also to placate them while they waited for a trim. There were also strong connections between distilling and the production of medicinal liquors and spirits, as well as alcohol, highlighting the close links between barbers and medicine.⁹⁴ This tendency is certainly supported in the sample inventories here, with many containing evidence of brewing

⁹¹ Rev. W. A. Leighton, ‘The Guilds of Shrewsbury’, *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological & Natural History Society*, 1:5 (1882): 267.

⁹² Pelling, *The Common Lot*, 217–19.

⁹³ Nottinghamshire Archives, MS PR/NW (Deanery of Nottingham), bond and inventory of Edward Mellar of Nottingham, barber, 12 January 1704.

⁹⁴ Pelling, *The Common Lot*, 242–5.

and often on a large scale. In 1705, the possessions of Warminster barber Walter Jeanes included razors, scissors, combs and a looking glass, but also a 'brewing house' in which was contained liquor to the value of £23. The total value of the brewhouse and its contents was the not insubstantial £65.⁹⁵ The Abergavenny barber William Harris had a number of wooden barrels and hogsheads, as well as 'Sider being here' in his house in 1694, while his contemporary Henry Lewis in Brecon had '2 hogsheads of beare' listed.⁹⁶ John Clerdew of Cricklade was listed in his will as a 'barber-chirurgion and innholder', although the only potential hint at his barbering activities were some stools, a basin, looking glass 'and other odd things', suggesting that barbering was the lesser of his trades.⁹⁷ Out of the thirteen surviving Welsh barber inventories, a total of six (46 per cent) listed some form of alcohol or brewing equipment. This was mirrored in Nottinghamshire, with twelve out of twenty-six barber inventories with individual listings (also 46 per cent) containing either a brewhouse or brewing vessels. In Wiltshire, out of twenty-seven inventories, the number of instances was lower, at eight (30 per cent).

In similar manner to the 'tippling' rooms noted by Pelling in Norwich barbershops, some inventories in this sample also suggest specific spaces dedicated to the consumption of alcohol.⁹⁸ The 1691 shop inventory of Nottingham barber Joseph Daft contains an entry for '2 drinking rooms' with tables and seats, along with brewing vessels and a copper, valued at five pounds.⁹⁹ Henry Andrews's Warminster shop contained a 'best drinkeing roome' as well as a 'litel drinkeing roome', both suggesting a more formal alehouse either within, or next to the shop.¹⁰⁰ That the production and/or sale of alcohol is clear in nearly a half of barbershops surveyed suggests the importance of alcohol as an ancillary trade. Even well into the eighteenth century, ale was used as a treat with which to entice customers, or to replenish them after bleeding. In 1754, the Bristol barber Henry Harnes promised customers who were to be bled 'two quarts of good ale, and those whom he shaves or cuts their hair a pint for each'.¹⁰¹ In Wem in Shropshire, the inventory of the barber William Higgins contained a coffee mill as well as a looking glass and a stock of hair, suggesting that some barbers also saw opportunities to tap the rising popularity of coffee house culture.¹⁰²

As Pelling has also noted, barbers were often closely connected to the food trade and the sale of grocery items.¹⁰³ Evidence from Wiltshire and parts of Wales suggests that one type of food in particular – butter – offered another potentially lucrative sideline for barbers. North Wiltshire, in particular, was a centre for dairy production

⁹⁵ Wiltshire Archives, MS P2/IJ/215 – Inventory of Walter Jeanes of Warminster, 14 May 1705.

⁹⁶ NLW, LL/1694/5 – Inventory of William Harris of Abergavenny, 24 April 1694; BR/1667/12 – Inventory of Henry Lewis of Brecon, 13 May 1667.

⁹⁷ Wiltshire Archives, MS P3/C/640i – Inventory of John Clerdew of Cricklade.

⁹⁸ Pelling, *The Common Lot*, 223.

⁹⁹ Nottinghamshire Archives, MS PR/NW (Deanery of Nottingham), admin bond and inventory of Joseph Daft of Nottingham, barber-surgeon, 23 November 1691.

¹⁰⁰ Wiltshire Archives, MS P2/A/207, Will and inventory of Henry Andrews of Warminster, barber, 12 January 1645.

¹⁰¹ R. Milnes Walker, 'The Barber Surgeons of Bristol', *Bristol Medico-Chirurgical Journal*, 90 (1975): 56.

¹⁰² Litchfield Joint Record Office, MS B/C/11, inventory of William Higgins, 20 April 1727.

¹⁰³ Pelling, *The Common Lot*, 244.

in the seventeenth century.¹⁰⁴ Lowland areas of Wales, including Monmouthshire and the Vale of Glamorgan, were also well suited to dairy production. If customers could be lured to a barbershop on the promise of a tippie, there is no reason why bread and butter might not also act as an inducement. It might also be a side product that could be peddled to customers as they waited. In Chepstow, the inventory of the barber Roger Williams listed ‘a buttery with barrels and tubs’, valued at over one pound.¹⁰⁵ Cardiff barber John Rowbotham’s cellar contained ‘fourteen small tubbs of butter’ plus ‘more five furkins of butter’, together valued at eleven pounds, suggesting more than personal consumption.¹⁰⁶ Similar records can be found elsewhere. In Wiltshire, Maurice Whitmarsh’s shop in Fisherton Anger, Wiltshire, had a shop and buttery, as did Osmund Hill in Mere.¹⁰⁷ In the Hampshire village of Kingsclere, John Golding ran a well-equipped ‘shaving shopp’ as well as having a buttery and brewhouse. In the preamble to his will, however, he was described as a weaver and left a number of looms to his sons, again highlighting the issue of occupational diversity and – particularly in the case of barber-surgeons – diversification into textile trades.¹⁰⁸

The inventories also shed some limited evidence on the use of barbershops as social spaces. Musical instruments were kept in barbershops for the use of customers, or perhaps even by the barber to entertain.¹⁰⁹ The shop of Thomas Wells of Southwell in 1693 contained ‘musical instruments’, as did James Preston’s Wrexham shop, which listed ‘instruments of musick.’¹¹⁰ In Salisbury, Wiltshire, John Purchase’s well-stocked shop contained a small ‘cittern’, valued at five shillings.¹¹¹ It is worth noting that, of the three, Wells and Preston were both identified as barber-surgeons. Two Nottingham inventories also contain listings for scientific or mathematical instruments. The Mansfield barber George Hanson owned a set of ‘mathematical instruments’, which was listed among his shop contents. William Hutchinson also had a multiplying instrument among his shop goods.¹¹² Clearly these are only two examples, separated by more than 40 years, so it is unwise to assume that these were regular features in the barbershop. But in the eighteenth century, mathematical instruments were essential for other artisans, such as builders and merchants. They may have been an expedient, to help the barber work out fees, or keep his accounts. It is also possible, however,

¹⁰⁴ See Elizabeth Crittall (ed.), *A History of the County of Wiltshire, Volume 4* (London: Victoria County History, 1959), 43–5.

¹⁰⁵ NLW, LL/1696/32 – Roger Williams of Chepstow, 10 March 1696.

¹⁰⁶ NLW MS LL/1709/40, Inventory of John Rowbotham of Cardiff, 14 March 1708; see also NLW MS SD/1721/188, Inventory of John Morris of Swansea, barber, 8 November 1721.

¹⁰⁷ Wiltshire Archives MSS MS P2/W/668ii, MS P5/1673/19.

¹⁰⁸ Hampshire Archives, MS 1610A/053, Will and Inventory of John Golding of Kingsclere, 3 October 1610. See Pelling, *The Common Lot*, 212, 220–2.

¹⁰⁹ Pelling, *The Common Lot*, 222–3; Rosemary O’Day, *The Professions in Early Modern England, 1450–1800: Servants of the Common Weal* (Harlow: Pearson, 2000), 217.

¹¹⁰ Nottinghamshire Archives, MS PR/SW/104/28, will and inventory of Thomas Wells of Southwell, 21 November 1693; NLW, SA/1694/210, Elias Preston.

¹¹¹ Wiltshire Archives, MS P4/1681/22, Inventory of John Purchase of Salisbury, 18 August 1681.

¹¹² Nottinghamshire Archives, MSS MS PR/MW/24/9, Will bond and inventory of George Hanson of Mansfield, barber-surgeon, 30 December 1677; PR/NW (in Deanery of Nottingham), bond and inventory of William Hutchinson of Nottingham, barber, 4 May 1725.

that they may, like musical instruments, or newspapers, have represented a further diversion for customers to occupy themselves as they waited.

Turning to the question of potential divergences between the medical functions of barbers and barber-surgeons, what do the inventories reveal of the possession of medical or surgical tools? Given the obvious permeability between these groups of practitioners, it is dangerous to overstate the importance of any potential differences allotted to them, based simply on the occupational titles given in probate documents. Enough evidence survives, however, to at least speculate. In the case of barbers, it is interesting to note that there is little evidence for medical equipment or procedures except, unsurprisingly, for fleeting references to bloodletting. Only five barber inventories revealed any evidence of phlebotomy. Among the shop goods of barber Edward Goulding of Great Faringdon in 1673 were '9 little pewter bleeding dishes', along with '1 case of launcetts'.¹¹³ Salisbury barber John Sanger's 1733 inventory also contained an entry for '7 blud dishes' valued at two shillings.¹¹⁴ Wrexham barber Elias Preston's inventory contained entries for a 'plaister box' as well as lancets and dishes.¹¹⁵ 'Bleeding basins' were among the shop contents of Henry Brown of Nottingham in 1708, while William Hutchinson, also of Nottingham, had '9 littel bleeding porringers' (dishes to catch blood).¹¹⁶ It is worth noting, however, that instruments of practice might well evade the inventory, being perhaps too small or ephemeral to list separately. In fact, the inventories of those identified as barber-surgeons in this sample yielded similarly low evidence of medical and surgical equipment. Some barbers clearly did practise medicine, and at least one even undertook home visits. In 1646 John Addis of Thornbury, Gloucestershire, described himself as 'a Barber & one who was wont to visit such as were sicke'.¹¹⁷

If the lack of medical equipment in barber and barber-surgeon's inventories is inconclusive, we can be more assertive in relation to the role of barber-surgeons in haircutting and shaving. A number of barber-surgeons' inventories in the sample data contain definite evidence of tonsorial duties. In Gloucester, every one of the six probate inventories surviving for barber-surgeons contained strong evidence for haircutting and shaving. These included, in 1698, the shop of the barber-surgeon Daniel Bishop, which contained a wide variety of equipment, suggesting a large-scale business. Along with his lancets, salvatory (a box containing salves and ointments) and 'box of Chyrurgery instruments' were twelve razors, two hones, looking glasses, scissors and basins, along with '6 doz of shop linen' and a number of periwigs.¹¹⁸ In 1696 'barber-chirurgion' William Mayo similarly had razors, scissors and beard irons, along with cards, powder box, brushes and a parcel of hair.¹¹⁹ The same pattern can be discerned

¹¹³ Wiltshire Archives, MS P5/1674/28, Inventory of Edward Goulding of Great Faringdon, 3 March 1673.

¹¹⁴ Wiltshire Archives, MS P4/1773/6, Inventory of John Sanger of Salisbury, barber, 3 May 1733.

¹¹⁵ NLW, SA/1694/210, Elias Preston.

¹¹⁶ Nottinghamshire Archives MSS PR/NW (Deanery of Nottingham) admin and inventory of Henry Brown of Nottingham, barber, 1708 and PR/NW (Deanery of Nottingham), bond and inventory of William Hutchinson of Nottingham, barber, 1725.

¹¹⁷ Gloucester Archives, MS GDR 205, Depositions, 8 August 1646.

¹¹⁸ Gloucester Archives, MS 1698 (163), Inventory of Daniel Bishop of Gloucester, 12 December 1698.

¹¹⁹ Gloucestershire Archives, MS 1696/203, Inventory of William Mayo of Gloucester, 25 January 1695.

in other parts of the country. Along with his surgical equipment and, unusually, a list of monies due to him for cures, Wrexham barber-surgeon James Preston's inventory contained a raft of goods relating to shaving and trimming, including 'Two cases of Trimming Instruments', fifteen razors, six basins, quantities of powder and washballs.¹²⁰

Overall, the evidence of apprenticeship and training of barbers and barber-surgeons in the seventeenth century clearly suggests little correlation between the occupational title of the master and that, later, of his apprentice. More broadly, the lack of rigidity in occupational titles supports arguments for the lack of boundaries in actual practice, as argued forcefully by Pelling and Cavallo.

Conclusion

As this chapter has sought to demonstrate, there was a wide variety in the forms, space, equipage and functions of the early modern barbershop. It is clear that barber businesses ranged from small, ad hoc spaces to high-end, lavishly equipped shops. These could exist in close proximity in towns and likely catered to the purses of their clientele. The place of the barbershop as a social hub is also reflected in references to things such as seating, musical instruments and also the production and sale of alcohol. As it has also suggested, however, other types of goods were sold by barbers to boost their incomes, and these were strongly affected by location and the nature of the local economy. As the inventories of Wiltshire barbers show, for example, the production and sale of butter was an important extra source of income.

It is clearly dangerous to generalize from a relatively small sample and from a narrow body of source material. Nonetheless, the evidence presented here from shop inventories at least confirms the presence of those who apparently did 'just' cut hair and shave, as distinct from those who combined minor surgical procedures and bodily maintenance with their tonsorial duties. While by no means definitive, the lack of evidence among barber inventories for medical equipment is interesting, and especially when set against the much greater frequency of barber-surgeons' inventories revealing that they shaved as well as treated. It is possible, for example, that it was simply easier for barber-surgeons to learn to shave and cut hair than it was for barbers to learn surgical tasks. Haircutting and shaving certainly required less book learning. Since surgery would not provide sufficient business to be a full-time occupation, it seems possible that barber-surgeons cut hair and shaved as a secondary trade, to secure a more regular source of income.

The extent of space or overlap between barbers and surgeons perhaps also depended upon location. Crudely, it seems fair to expect that the larger the market, the more division of labour and so the more likely that the skills of barbering and surgery could stand independent of each other, as in London. Conversely, where the market was small and irregular, individuals likely had to combine several activities. But working against that tendency might perhaps be an opposite one, namely the convenience to

¹²⁰ NLW, MS SA/1681/216, Inventory of James Preston of Wrexham, 10 January 1681.

the urban customer of having the skills available in a single place, especially one where he felt at ease. This might, for example, apply particularly in the case of treatments for certain conditions, such as sexual diseases, but also perhaps in terms of seasonal bleeding and other preventative or minor forms of surgery. The provision of barbering services by barber-surgeons, therefore, could be a natural basis for winning the client's trust to supply them with medical services, and so not something to be easily given up. A similar situation existed among early modern apothecaries, who used resort to their shops for medical products as the basis on which to offer medical advice and treatment.

Finally, as with medical practice more generally, it is often unsafe to assume a homogeneity that did not exist at the time. The barbering trades encompassed a host of often-overlapping medical and personal services and supported a wide variety of occupational titles. But shaving provided a common link between them, performed by barbers, barber-surgeons, periwig-makers and even surgeons. It is perhaps too easy to downplay the importance of shaving in early modern medical practice and to relegate it below other more signal procedures such as bloodletting. At the head of this chapter I suggested that shaving was *the* defining task of the barber. It was actually more than this. In many ways it was the defining task of male bodywork. Like phlebotomy this was a skilled procedure, requiring years of careful training. It required manual dexterity and knowledge of the body, as well as technological expertise in understanding and maintaining instruments. As simultaneously a medical and cosmetic procedure it was an essential task in the maintenance of the healthy body. While shaving cleansed and beautified the customer, therefore, it also served to elevate and dignify those in the barbering trades.

Economies of shaving, c. 1650–1750

On 25 May 1713, Richard Steele's *Guardian* newspaper ran a short article purporting to be a rebuke to the editor for his tatty appearance. It was signed by a group of 'capital artificers', including a noted haircutter Bartholomew Pidgeon, a barber, the perfumer Charles Lillie and a wig-maker. These 'cephalic operators' begged his 'more frequent attention to the mechanic arts' and humbly offered their services. With regard to the beard, 'Longbotham, above all the rest of mankind, is skilful in taking off that horrid excrescence on the chins of all males, and casting by the touch of his hand, a cheerfulness where that excrescence grew.'¹ Even with its humorous tone, the point of the letter was clear. By the early eighteenth century, the clean-shaven face had become an essential element in the conveyance of manliness. Barbers, unsurprisingly, argued that it was their place, not that of the individual man, to fashion the head and face.

But the true situation was not necessarily as straightforward as the 'capital artificers' would have it. In her brief study of barbers and shaving, Susan Vincent has drawn on the experiences of three early modern diarists – Pepys, Woodforde and Swift, to interrogate the place of the barber in male grooming. Vincent argues that, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, men used barbers interchangeably with shaving themselves, and that the provision and quality of barbering services varied widely.² The small scale of this study, though, raises questions about the typicality of the experience. Each of the three individuals chosen were from the south of England and two from London, and between them span more than a hundred years, leaving little sense of change over time. The issue of social status is also relevant. Can Pepys's experiences in mid-seventeenth-century London be easily comparable either with those of James Woodforde in rural Oxfordshire or Norfolk a century later, or of the urban or rural poor?

It is clear that the frequency with which men shaved in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries – and who performed the act – depended on many factors,

¹ Robert Lynam (ed.), *The Guardian: With a Biographical, Historical and Critical Preface, Volume 1* (London: Printed for Cowie, Low, 1826), 253–4. Despite their unusual names, Longbotham, Lillie and Pigeon were real men, based in St Clement Dane's Parish, on the Strand. For 'Bat Pidgeon', see John Nelson, *The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Islington* (London: Privately printed, 1829), 88.

² Susan Vincent, 'Men's Hair: Managing Appearance in the Long Eighteenth Century', in Hannah Greig, Jane Hamlett and Leonie Hannan (eds), *Gender and Material Culture in Britain since 1500* (London: Palgrave, 2016), 54.

including location (and access to a barber), social position, fashion, individual preference and necessity. Also important is the issue of change over time. In the 1660s, for example, the wearing of some form of facial hair was still relatively common. By 1700, however, the opposite was true. The role of the barber thus changed subtly according to fashion and the requirements of individual customers. How, then, did men in the long eighteenth century experience shaving, both in their interactions with the barber and in performing the task themselves? Relatively little is known about the relationship between barber and customer, even for some of the most basic questions. How often did men visit barbers to be shaved? What was the cost of shaving and how did it vary by region, status or practitioner? Also, how did the growing trend for the clean-shaven face from the later seventeenth century affect the role, and even the status and wealth, of the barber? This chapter first samples a broad range of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century diaries, along with records of barber accounts and payments, from across Britain, to address the frequency, costs and consumption of barber services. As will be shown, such sources reveal little uniformity in the use or costs of barber services.

Second, it explores the nature and frequency of self-shaving, arguing that, before the mid-eighteenth century, the practice was probably not as widespread as Vincent's case studies might suggest. Factors including the cost and inconvenience of purchasing shaving materials, the sometimes awkward act of shaving itself, the absence of instruction manuals and the easy availability of barbers and even servants to perform the task, all militate against self-shaving as the main, or even perhaps a regular, method of depilation by the majority of men.

There are obvious evidential problems in addressing such questions, not least the fact that the overwhelming majority of barber visits likely went unrecorded. Unless something remarkable occurred, or the diarist was preternaturally disposed to record the minutiae of their day, there was generally little reason to record such a mundane task. Contemporary diary references are necessarily skewed to middle and upper levels of society where, it could be argued, attention to the minutiae of personal appearance was closely bound up with self-fashioning and appearance in public. Also, aside from a few exceptional cases it is extremely difficult to gauge the regularity either of barber visits or self-shaving. As the chapter suggests, the cost of barbering was also by no means uniform and varied greatly depending on location and status. Investigating the economics of shaving is frustrated by the lack of separation between shaving and other barbering services in household and barber's accounts. Thus, a generic payment 'to the barber' could encompass shaving, haircutting and any of the ancillary medico-hygienic procedures he undertook. Even the terminologies used to describe these procedures are not straightforward. The word 'shaving', for example, is problematic since it could refer to depilation of either (or both) the face and head. 'Trimming' was another word used interchangeably and could refer variously to shaving (again, head, face or both), haircutting and perhaps wig-dressing too. In 1681 the barber Bartholomew Pigeon visited Sir William Kingsmill daily, for which he charged a shilling. Whereas most days on the bill, covering three months, merely have a line and the charge, every third day, the word 'shav'd' appears in the list, with the price rising to two shillings and sixpence, apparently indicating days on which the face was

shaved as well.³ Having a barber visit daily might appear excessive but, before the end of the eighteenth century, it was apparently common for gentlemen without valets to be dressed every morning by a barber and have their ‘face shaved very clean, and the hair of the head loaded with powder and pomatum, before being arranged according to the mode’.⁴

Acknowledging these limitations, however, it is still possible to reconstruct something of the consumption of barber services in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries through a qualitative study of barber interactions in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century diaries. As will be shown, men shaved themselves and also used barbers, but it was the latter that remained the primary source of shaving at least before the mid-eighteenth century. Many men employed barbers regularly and bargained with them for their services over relatively long periods. The frequency of shaving raises a number of questions about barbering in the long eighteenth century, including the regularity with which barbers were employed, the relationship between shop businesses and home visits and the costs of their services. As the chapter will also show, the issue of frequency also raises further questions about accepted norms of male appearance and the potential social acceptability of stubble.

Visiting the barber

The barber was an important figure in the lives of early modern men. Among all medical practitioners, it was barbers with whom men came into most frequent contact. As the previous chapter showed, barbering required close proximity to, and intimate contact with, the customer’s body. On one level this required trust; to lie prone and submit to the swiping of a potentially deadly blade around some of the most vulnerable and sensitive areas of the neck and face required some faith on the part of the customer that the barber was skilful enough not to cut his throat. It also called for the suspension of propriety or embarrassment relating to the potentially foul emissions of the body. As well as removing the ‘excremental’ remnants of the beard it was, after all, the barber (and barber-surgeon) who picked and pulled carious teeth, scraped the sanious effluvia off the tongue, dug globs of wax out of ears and hived off the fetid scurf and dandruff accumulated after weeks of wig-wearing.⁵ Allowing the barber access to these intimate and unpleasant matters was not just to acknowledge their existence, but to freely open them up to scrutiny. While there were certainly female barbers, the close relationship between male barbers and men’s bodies rendered this a predominantly homosocial encounter. It was, as Vincent notes, a relationship that could be cultivated; the practice of billing customers by the quarter (known as the barber’s quarterage)

³ Hampshire Record Office, MS 19 M61/1666, Barber’s bill from Bartholomew Pidgeon to Sir William Kingsmill, June 1651.

⁴ Joseph Simms, *Nature’s Revelation of Character* (London: Printed for the author, 1873), 527.

⁵ Margaret Pelling, ‘Appearance and Reality: Barber-Surgeons, the Body and Disease’, in A. L. Beier and Roger Finlay (eds), *The Making of the Metropolis: London, 1500–1700* (London: Longman, 1986), 95; Sandra Cavallo, *Artisans of the Body in Early Modern Italy: Identities, Families and Masculinities* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 55.

enabled longstanding links to be established and trust to be built over time.⁶ But an examination of contemporary diaries also suggests that men were active agents in securing the best prices for barber services and did not necessarily always use the same barber for long periods of time.

There was certainly little uniformity in how often men took up the services of the barber, or in the ways that they recorded such encounters. Many barbers were paid quarterly – or sometimes even yearly – on account, a practice that unfortunately obscures the frequency of services. In 1717, for example, Thomas Milward, a Stourbridge attorney paid ‘Mr Hopkins the barber [for] 1 yrs shaving and powdring me’, but the number or frequency of visits covered by this sum is unknown, as is whether ‘shaving’ referred to the head, face, or both.⁷ In the mid-seventeenth century the Oxford antiquary Anthony Wood was diligent in his regular payment, over several years, of ‘quarteridge’, while others, like the Reverend Giles Moore, vicar of Horstead Keynes in Sussex, combined aggregate payments with ad hoc sums for individual visits.⁸ The diary of Thomas Mort, lord of the manor of Astley, Lancashire, also suggests that shaving could simply be done at need, rather than on a regular, fixed basis. An entry in December 1708 recorded that he simply paid his barber Thomas Green ‘when he trims me ... but doe not sett it downe.’⁹

In other cases, individual barber visits were separately accounted for, allowing some insight into the frequency of shaving. It is not clear, however, whether these men were visiting a barber in their shop, or whether the barber was attending them in their own houses. The account books of Sir John Foulis of Ravelston, a wealthy Edinburgh baronet, in the late seventeenth century, contain various entries for barbering services. In January 1680 he recorded a single payment to the barber John Wood. There were no entries in February 1680, but four the following month, on the 9th, 16th and 24th and again on the 27th, including one payment to Wood ‘for razing me’. This suggests visits to (or by) the barber roughly once a week. There is no mention of the barber in Foulis’s accounts for April 1680, but on 13 May he paid John Wood ‘for cutting my hair and barbourising me.’¹⁰ The irregularity of payments might suggest intermittent use and perhaps that he shaved himself in-between. On two occasions in 1705, there is a reference to the payment of the barber’s quarterage.¹¹ It is also worth noting that, while Foulis generally preferred John Wood, others were also involved, including barbers James Peacock and George Gourdone, a ‘barber lad [who] tooke of my bearde’ and a

⁶ Vincent, ‘Men’s Hair’, 55–6.

⁷ J. W. Willis-Bund (ed.), *A History of the County of Worcester, Volume 3* (London: Constable, 1913), 221–3. See also Huntington Library, Battle Abbey MSS, Vol. 3, no. 2, Cash accounts of Sir Thomas Webster, 27 December 1722. Webster paid ‘Mr Raycourt’ £2 for half a year’s shaving.

⁸ Andrew Clark (ed.), *Life and Times of Anthony Wood* (Oxford: Oxford History Society, 1891–1907), 210, 229, 238, 254, 260, etc.; Sussex Archaeology Society, *Sussex Archaeological Collections, Illustrating the History and Antiquities of the County* (London: John Russell Smith, 1848), 71, 76, 114.

⁹ Huntington Library MS HM 72811, account book of Thomas Mort (c.1648–1725), entry unpaginated/unfoliated, entry for 27 December 1708. I am very grateful to Sara Pennell for passing on these examples and alerting me to Mort’s book.

¹⁰ A. W. Cornelius Hallen (ed.), *The Account Book of Sir John Foulis of Ravelston, 1671–1707* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1894), 18, 26–8.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 367, 399.

servant.¹² The continuation of payments over a relatively long period, though, does at least imply regularity and consistency in the consumption of barber services.

The 1665–76 journals of the prominent Edinburgh jurist Sir John Lauder, Lord Fountainhall, are more suggestive, recording regular visits to the barber usually once or twice a week, for which payment was made each time.¹³ Like those of Foulis, Lauder's records show that shaving was undertaken by a variety of individuals, including barbers in various locations and a servant.¹⁴ The diary of Roger Whitley, royalist officer and later Member of Parliament for Flint, north Wales, also suggests weekly visits. Whitley regularly saw the barber to be trimmed, most often on Saturdays, presumably in readiness for his appearance at Sunday service.¹⁵ In other cases, however, as with Bartholomew Pigeon's visits to Sir William Kingsmill, it seems that two or three shaves per week was the norm.¹⁶ In seventeenth-century Westminster, Robert Phillips declared himself to be 'John Powell's barber', the use of the possessive adjective suggesting something of the exclusivity of this relationship.¹⁷ Phillips noted that he shaved Powell 'some times thrice, some times twice and at other times but once a week', as well as washing his feet and sometimes performing other tasks such as cutting corns.¹⁸ The costs of such indulgence were probably too prohibitive to be available to any but the wealthiest, however.

It is clear that charges for an individual shave varied widely according to location and probably also with status. The issue of where the shave was carried out also further complicates the matter. It might be assumed, for example, that payments to a barber to minister to a customer in their own home would be higher, reflecting the extra time, travel and trouble on the part of the barber. It might equally be countered, however, that the cost of maintaining a shop, its fixtures, fittings and materials, might make this the more expensive option. It is difficult to assess from extant sources. While there was almost no inflation between the mid-seventeenth and later eighteenth centuries, in general, there was little standardization in prices, and the amounts paid could vary from a few pence for a shave, to a shilling or more.¹⁹ At the lower end of the payment scale, for example, in Lancashire in 1708, Thomas Mort paid a penny to be trimmed, while his contemporary, Colonel Thomas Tyldesley, paid fourpence and sixpence.²⁰

¹² Ibid., 90, 172, 218.

¹³ Donald Crawford (ed.), *Journals of Sir John Lauder, Lord Fountainhall, with His Observations on Public Affairs and Other Memoranda 1665–1676* (Scottish History Society, May 1930), 238, 240–3, 245–6, 251–2.

¹⁴ Ibid., 248, 251, 259.

¹⁵ British History Online, 'Roger Whitley's Diary: May 1686', in Michael Stevens and Honor Lewington (eds), *Roger Whitley's Diary 1684–1697*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/roger-whitley-diary/1684-97/may-1686> (accessed 21 October 2016).

¹⁶ Hampshire Record Office, MS 19M61/1666.

¹⁷ Quoted in Peter Earle, *A City Full of People: Men and Women of London 1650–1750* (London: Methuen, 1994), 206.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ See Stephen Broadberry, Bruce M. S. Campbell, Alexander Klein, Mark Overton and Bas Van Leeuwen, *British Economic Growth, 1270–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 189–91; N. J. Mayhew, 'Prices in England, 1170–1750', *Past and Present*, 219 (May 2013): 4–5. I am grateful to Patrick Wallis for these references.

²⁰ Joseph Bellow and Anthony Hewitson (eds), *The Tyldesley Diary* (Preston: A. Hewitson, 1878), 30; Huntington Library MS HM 72811, account book of Thomas Mort, entry for 27 December 1708.

Sir John Lauder's accounts record twenty-seven different payments to Edinburgh barbers, including sixpence, ninepence, a groat, a mark and a shilling. In 1754, the Bristol barber Henry Harnes advertised his prices and services, with a shave costing twopence – a penny less than a haircut.²¹ By far the most frequent payment, however, was for sixpence a shave, accounting for thirteen of the entries.²² In early modern London the usual price of a shave, plus dressing the wig, has been put at sixpence.²³ Others, however, seem to have paid more and, in some cases, barber companies could act to keep prices artificially high, as a means to regulate the trade. The guild book of the barber-surgeons of the City of York contains a specific ordinance stating that no barber was to shave for less than one shilling.²⁴ In 1659, Reverend Giles Moore paid one shilling (twelve pence) to William Batchelor 'for barbouring mee'.²⁵

The sum taken by the barber depended on many factors, from the price they charged to the time taken to shave, and how many shaves they could physically undertake in a day as well as the cost of materials. In theory, assuming that a shave took around thirty minutes, and a barber worked ten hours a day and charged sixpence per time, then, even if he took only threepence profit each time after costs, this equates to five shillings per day. If that is multiplied by 300 days, it represents an income of £75 which, in the seventeenth century, represented a solid middling income. Obviously, this is speculative since there were many variables. Shaves might take longer, especially if combined with other tasks. Income relied on a steady stream of customers and also varied in time and costs depending on whether the barber travelled to his customers. Even so, it does suggest the potential earnings that could be achieved by some barbers.

The custom of paying barbers quarterly on account was fairly common. Here again prices could vary considerably and also raise questions about the regularity of shaving. It is worth noting, for example, that some barber guilds enforced minimum pricing for quarterage – in this case referring to the cost per quarter, rather than the more usual use of the term, relating to dues payable to a guild. (In Shrewsbury, the original fifteenth-century ordinances for the barber-surgeons' guild put this figure at threepence, and this likely remained in place until the revision of the ordinances in 1662.²⁶) The accounts of Anthony Wood, noted above, contain twenty-three separate quarterly payments to his barber Thomas Haselwood varying from three shillings to four shillings and sixpence, averaging at just below four shillings.²⁷ In December 1656, for example, he 'Paid the barber 6s 6d whereof 4s was for his quarteridge, and 2s and 6d was for powder and mending of my periwige'.²⁸ In Wood's case, the price for quarterage

²¹ R. Milnes Walker, 'The Barber Surgeons of Bristol', *Bristol Medico-Chirurgical Journal* 90 (1975): 56.

²² Crawford, *Journals*, 238, 240, 241, 242, 243, 245, 246, 251, 252, 259, 262, 264–5, 266–7, 248.

²³ This amount is given on the Old Bailey Online website, in an article about London wages. Frustratingly, the source is not given, so caution must be exercised: <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/Coinage.jsp#reading>

²⁴ British Library, MS 2572, *Guild Book of the Barber Surgeons of York*, 15th-17th century, ff 14 b-34.

²⁵ Robert Willis Blencowe, 'Extracts from the Journal and Account Book of Timothy Burrell, Esq., Barrister at Law, of Ockenden House, Cuckfield from the Year 1683 to 1714', *Sussex Archaeological Collection III* (1850): 114.

²⁶ W. A. Leighton, 'The Guilds of Shrewsbury', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society* 5 (1882): 267, 273. I am grateful to Margaret Pelling for drawing my attention to this source.

²⁷ Clark, *Life and Times*, 210, 215, 220, 238, 239, 254, 260, 264, 275.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 210.

actually dropped over time from four to three shillings between the 1650s and the last entry in 1670. The Reverend Giles Moore sometimes paid annually for his barber, averaging three shillings per quarter.²⁹ For six quarters in 1698 and 1699, however, Sir George Sitwell paid the much higher price to his Edinburgh barber of seven shillings or more each time. In January 1698 he ‘agreed wth my barber to trym me for 7 shillings per quarter. April 13th 1698, paid him 7 shillings for 1st quarter, July the 13th paid him 7 shillings for the second quarter, October the 13th paid him then the 3rd quarter, 7s 6d.’³⁰ It is possible that the higher prices reflected occasions when the barber came to him, and not vice versa. In April 1699 he noted paying five shillings for two months’ shaving, giving a figure of two shillings and sixpence per month.³¹ Even well into the second half of the eighteenth century, quarterage still usually cost between three and five shillings. It is clear that individuals were active agents in negotiating prices for barber services. Some sources refer to this as a process of ‘agreement’. In 1698, the Derbyshire baronet George Sitwell recorded that he had ‘agreed with my barber to trym me for 7s per Quarter’ and, in January the following year he ‘agreed then with Ledder my barber to trym mee.’³² The diary of the Reverend Giles Moore also noted that he had ‘agreed with William Batchelor of Lindfield to barbour mee.’³³ In November 1699, however, Sitwell also noted that he ‘bargained with my barber by the quarter’, again suggesting a process of negotiation, rather than a straightforward contract of work.³⁴ It is difficult to ascertain how many trims were covered under this blanket sum, but they are suggestive of either a major discount, or of fairly irregular shaving. At a figure of four shillings per quarter for example, assuming the common sum of sixpence per shave, this would only represent eight shaves in twelve weeks. Even with a 50 per cent discount, this would still only suggest one or two weekly shaves.

Evidence of the variety of corporeal tasks undertaken by barbers and barber-surgeons is also often reflected in account books and bills. Barber charges could vary according to the number and types of different tasks undertaken along with shaving. Entries in the 1714–28 diary of the West Sussex landowner Thomas Marchant show that he paid sixpence each time he had his face or head shaved, or a shilling when both were attended to.³⁵ Bloodletting was another common source of payment in accounts for barbering services. In 1659 barber William Batchelor was paid by Giles Moore for ‘bleeding mee in bed.’³⁶ In January 1713 Tyldesley was let blood for a cold and stitch in his arm but there were suggestions that his barber was perhaps not best suited to his occupation: ‘Tom Tomlinson, ye barber who shaved mee, was frighton [*sic*] with

²⁹ Blencowe, ‘Giles Moore’, 114.

³⁰ Sir George Sitwell, ‘Pocket Almanacks at Renishaw, 1671–1721’, *Journal of the Derbyshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, 12 (1890): 205.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 207.

³² Sitwell, ‘Pocket Almanacks’, 205.

³³ Blencowe, ‘Giles Moore’, 76.

³⁴ Sitwell, ‘Pocket Almanacks’, 208.

³⁵ Anthony Bower (ed.), *A Fine Day in Hurstpierpoint: The Diary of Thomas Marchant, 1714–28* (Hurst: Hurst History Study Group, 2005), 73, 76, 79, 83, 93, 104, 110. See again the variations in Pigeon’s bill to Sir William Kingsmill, Hampshire Record Office, MS 19M61/1666.

³⁶ Blencowe, ‘Giles Moore’, 71, 76.

the sight of ye blood.³⁷ Haircutting was another obvious reason for payment. In 1671, and again in 1674, Sir John Lauder's payments included haircutting as well as shaving, which saw the price paid rise to between tenpence and a shilling.³⁸ Adam Eyre's barber almost certainly earned his sixpence fee in June 1647 when he cut Eyre's hair, 'which hath not been cutt this 3 yeres.'³⁹ Although by no means conclusive, it is nonetheless interesting to note that, in each of the cases discussed above, individuals were described as barbers in account entries, rather than barber-surgeons.

To briefly summarize, then, the cost of a single shave therefore varied widely, from as low as a penny to more than a shilling, with sixpence appearing quite common. This was doubtless affected by many factors, from the social status of the client to the abilities, reputation and status of the barber. Quarterage could also vary from between three to seven shillings per quarter, although it is more difficult to ascertain what proportion of this sum was attributable to shaving the face alone.

Turning to the issue of social status, what effect did the price of barber services have upon the ability of individuals – and especially the lower orders – to utilize barbers? Like other medical practitioners, it is likely that barbers and barber-surgeons tailored their prices to the pockets of their customers. Moreover, barbers themselves varied widely in status and income. Evidence from probate inventories in the previous chapter demonstrates the wide variations in the size, equipment and value of barbershop contents and suggests a social structure of barbering, catering to all needs. In towns, small scale, single-room businesses sat cheek by jowl with high-end, well-equipped barbershops, each serving different customer bases. By the early decades of the eighteenth century too, the 'penny shave' had become a common metaphor in popular culture for a cheap and cheerful (if not entirely risk-free) operation and could be used as an enticement on the shop sign.⁴⁰ In 1798, the barber George Charlemore of Brighton was keen to stress that he 'condescends to shave the poor almost *gratis*, viz, for a PENNY each.'⁴¹ Charity clearly didn't quite extend to a free shave! It is certainly not safe to assume that men of the lower orders were excluded from being shaved by the barber. The place of the barbershop as a space for socializing and gossip arguably made it more appealing to the lower orders. It would also be problematic to infer that attention to personal appearance was only of concern to middling and elite men. Nonetheless, it is still worth considering the financial outlay of visiting a barber, versus capacity to pay. The average wage of a day labourer in London in the second half of the seventeenth century has been estimated at between twenty and twenty-four pence per day.⁴² For craftsmen it was higher, at between roughly thirty and thirty-six pence per day.⁴³ In rural areas the amount was

³⁷ Bellow and Hewitson, *The Tyldesley Diary*, 70. I am grateful to Peter Tydesley of Exeter University for pointing out inconsistencies in the diary transcriptions.

³⁸ Crawford, *Journals of Sir John Lauder*, 241–6.

³⁹ Charles Jackson (ed.), *Yorkshire Diaries and Autobiographies of the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Durham, NC: Surtees Society, 1877), 41.

⁴⁰ For example, see Banish'd Hermit, *Democritus, the Laughing Philosopher's Trip into England* (London: Printed for Sam Briscoe, 1723), 9.

⁴¹ W. C. A. Blew, *Brighton and Its Coaches: A History of the London and Brighton Road* (London: John Nimmo, 1893), 18.

⁴² Jeremy Boulton, 'Wage Labour in Seventeenth-Century London', *Economic History Review*, 49:2 (1996): 279.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 281.

likely to be lower still. If the popular trope of the penny shave is accurate then it was clearly affordable on a labourer's wage. But if the charges here are representative, then a shave by the barber would still amount to a substantial percentage of the daily wage, almost certainly ruling it out as a daily activity, and perhaps even one undertaken more than a couple of times per week. For middling or elite men these prices were unlikely to be prohibitive. But, for poorer men, a shave by the barber was more of a luxury than a necessity.

The issues of the frequency and costs of shaving also raise further questions about facial appearance, particularly lower down the social scale. As Chapter 2 showed, from the end of the seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth, at least for middling and elite men, the clean-shaven face spoke of polite masculinity. A visible beard bore unfavourable connotations of loss of manly control and even of rustic backwardness. What, though, of stubble – the growth of beard hair after one or two days of not being shaved? As we have seen, for those able to pay, a daily shave was possible, although two or three times per week seems more likely. By the mid-eighteenth century, James Woodforde was regularly contracting barbers to visit him at first twice, then several times a week.⁴⁴ Assuming that he was shaved on every visit, Woodforde's face was seldom marked by more than a couple of days' growth of beard. But if shaving was undertaken less frequently lower down the social scale, visible beard growth must surely have been the norm, given that, for many men, stubble is visible after two or three days, and heavy after five.

It seems likely that being truly clean-shaven was restricted to certain days and contexts. Perhaps the most obvious motivation was in preparation for appearance in church – the 'hebdomadal' or once-weekly shave. While direct evidence that shaving was expected here is scarce, the onus was certainly on individuals to appear respectable in church, and that slovenliness was censured. A shaved face could therefore be regarded as part of what might be termed 'Sunday best'. As noted above, there is certainly evidence that some men were shaved on Saturdays, consistent with appearance the next day at church, and also since this was often wage day. For the less well off, this might have been the only impetus for a single weekly shave, leaving them with heavy stubble by the end of each week. This was not necessarily even limited to the lower orders. In 1666 Samuel Pepys noted that he rose early and 'shaved myself after a week's growth'.⁴⁵ Given his notoriously ambivalent attitude to church services and also how 'ugly' he felt this stubble had made him look, this may simply have reflected a desire to freshen the face and appearance rather than an attempt at corporeal piety. As well as church, however, shaving could take place in preparation for business activities. In both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the clean-shaven face appears to have been a standard of commercial or formal appearance and one that again made men conscious of their stubble. Both Pepys and Jonathan Swift felt ill at ease when conducting business in public without having been shaved and groomed.⁴⁶ Even a century later, Thomas Tyler, prisoner in a 1779 fraud case, testified that, when officers

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Vincent, 'Men's Hair', 49.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

arrived to arrest him he was shaving ‘as it was my usual mode to do so between ten and eleven o’clock, in preparation for “Change”’ – in other words to visit the Exchange.⁴⁷ For labourers and working men, though, the social performance of facial hair likely worked on a different level. Shaving may well have been an occasional activity, simply undertaken once they considered that their beard growth had become unruly, or they had the means, motivation and time to do so.⁴⁸

Taken in the round, even if shaving were undertaken at a frequency of two or three times a week, many (perhaps most) men must have displayed some growth of beard for much of the time and often probably several days’ worth. To regard the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as ‘beardless’ is therefore perhaps to misunderstand the extent to which being truly clean-shaven was an achievable (or even wholly desirable) aim for large numbers of men in the long eighteenth century.

The emergence of self-shaving

So far, this chapter has explored the role of the barber as the provider of shaving, the potential frequency of barber visits and the costs involved. It now turns, however, to the question of self-shaving. It has been argued that self-shaving was fairly common in the seventeenth century. Vincent’s evidence from the diaries of Pepys, Swift and Woodforde seems compelling, not only in revealing the practices through which they removed facial hair and the practitioners they patronized, but also the broader somatic and emotional feelings connected with the act of shaving itself.⁴⁹ The question is how typical their experiences were and how representative of men elsewhere in Britain. Was self-shaving commonplace across Britain, and across society, in the long eighteenth century?

A broad survey of published diaries between 1650 and 1740, written by men of various occupations, status and locations, reveals scant evidence of references either to shaving or barbers. Since shaving was a mundane task, many diarists likely saw little point in recording. But among those who did, it is interesting to note that none recorded shaving themselves. Some entries are admittedly ambiguous. In June 1680 Sir Richard Newdigate of Arbury, Warwickshire, recorded that he ‘Four o’clock dined, five o’clock prayers and homily, six o’clock shaving and walked out; Eight o’clock prayers; undressed’.⁵⁰ It is not clear whether this implied that Newdigate shaved himself, or whether another performed the task. It is interesting to note that this was a Sunday and that he shaved in the evening *after* attending church earlier that day.⁵¹ The 1705

⁴⁷ Anon., Old Bailey Proceedings: Accounts of Criminal Trials (hereafter OB), Thomas Tyler, 20 October 1779, <https://www.londonlives.org/browse.jsp?div=t17791020-39&terms=shaving#highlight> (accessed 28 March 2018).

⁴⁸ For a fascinating discussion of Bulstrode Whitelocke’s removal of his beard and the circumstances surrounding it, see Margaret Pelling, ‘“The Very Head and Front of My Offending”: Beards, Portraiture and Self-Presentation in Early Modern England’, in Jennifer Evans and Alun Withey (eds), *New Perspectives on the History of Facial Hair: Framing the Face* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 66–7.

⁴⁹ Vincent, ‘Men’s Hair’, 51, 54.

⁵⁰ Lady Newdigate, *Cavalier and Puritan in the Days of the Stuarts* (London: Smith, Elder, 1901), 124.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

diary of Jacob Bee of Durham also contains an entry, noting that ‘I began with William Wood to shave and shaved one moneth.’⁵² This could imply that Wood was a barber with whom Bee had been shaved, but alternatively might suggest that he, and perhaps a friend, had undertaken to start shaving at the same time.

The very lack of references to barbers in diaries and account books could itself perhaps be read ‘against the grain’ as evidence for self-shaving, especially where the level of detail on other routine matters suggests that such encounters would normally be included. The diary of the Sussex barrister Timothy Burrell, between 1683 and 1717, included extremely detailed records of payments for medicines, medical practitioners and other ‘tradesmen’, but contains no references to barbers, shaving or trimming.⁵³ Joseph Taylor’s 1705 travel diary likewise recorded a host of detailed and intimate encounters with local people and customs over several months as he travelled, including such minutiae as obtaining a drink of water from an elderly woman. And yet, neither shaving, barbers or haircutting were mentioned.⁵⁴ Similarly, the accounts of the first Earl of Bristol, Sir John Hervey, are diligent in their records of payments for medicines, clothes and various goods and services but, again, contain nothing relating to shaving. Coincidentally, however, an entry in Hervey’s diary in 1715 does show a payment for wigs and cutting his son’s hair, made to Bartholomew Pidgeon, noted in the chapter introduction.⁵⁵ The lack of payments or references to barbers might suggest each man was shaving himself or, as with Hervey, having a servant do it for them. A further note of caution should be raised, however, regarding the nature of each of these sources as published editions. It is of course entirely possible that their Victorian editors saw little point in including such a prosaic task in their transcriptions and simply excised them.

In considering the propensity of men to shave themselves, it is worth considering the market for shaving utensils in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. From where would men buy razors and shaving materials? The proliferation of newspaper advertising and other mechanisms such as trade cards was extant before 1700, but there is little actual evidence for razor advertising before the mid-eighteenth century. Clearly this does not prove that they were not available, or even that they were not advertised or sold informally. Razor-makers could certainly be found in large towns and especially in centres of metal production, and they presumably sold to both retail and trade, although the latter were most likely the largest consumers. Cutlers might also sell razors and shaving tackle, along with other, somewhat surprising, retailers. In July 1702, for example, the ‘so much fam’d strops for setting razors’ were available at Jacob’s Coffee House in Threadneedle Street in London and were ‘very useful to all persons, Especially Surgeons, barbers &c.’⁵⁶

But early modern steel razors were notoriously difficult to sharpen and maintain. Before the mid-eighteenth century the type of steel used in their construction was prone to brittleness, meaning that razors required constant maintenance. Once

⁵² Surtees Society, *Six North Country Diaries* (Durham, NC: Andrews, 1910), 64.

⁵³ See Blencowe, ‘Extracts’, 117–72.

⁵⁴ William Cowan (ed.), *A Journey to Edenborough in Scotland* (Edinburgh: W. Brown, 1903).

⁵⁵ Anon, *The Diary of John Hervey, First Earl of Bristol, with Extracts from His Book of Expenses from 1688–1742* (Wells: Ernest Jackson, 1894), 102.

⁵⁶ Advertisement, ‘so much fam’d razor strop’, *Post Man and Historical Account* (23 July 1702).

the edge was blunted beyond the capabilities of a domestic strop, the services of a professional grinder would be required. Between 1674 and 1678, William Cunningham of Craigends, Renfrewshire, regularly sent his razors to the towns of Paisley or St. Johnston to be resharpened. In 1674, this was done every two or three months, at a cost of two shillings per razor. In February 1676 he paid four shillings 'for sharpening a razor and penknife'.⁵⁷ It also seems that he purchased shaving supplies by post. On 11 March 1678, for example, three shillings were paid 'for 4 ounces Sope to raze me with'.⁵⁸ Thomas Mort's also paid his regular barber for grinding old and new razors.⁵⁹ The fact that both men owned and maintained their own razors and also purchased soap strongly suggests that they shaved themselves, or kept shaving paraphernalia at their homes for use by servants or perhaps visiting barbers. Owning razors and shaving products also did not mean that barbers were not utilized. Sir John Foulis of Ravelston kept and maintained his own razors, but also regularly visited barbers.⁶⁰

Such examples also highlight the function of barbers as retailers of shaving goods as well as providers of services. A 1681 bill from barber Bartholomew Pigeon to the Hampshire gentleman William Kingsmill, for example, indicates that he sold Kingsmill horn combs and a sponge, as well as shaving him.⁶¹ Thomas Marchant's diary also shows that he received supplies including five dozen cakes of soap and 2lb of wash balls from an Arundel supplier – likely a barber – in 1716.⁶² But men like Kingsmill, Cunningham and Foulis were wealthy, with the means to afford such expenses. How far their experiences speak to those of 'ordinary' men in this period is up for debate.

Particularly lower down the social scale, questions might be raised about the fitness of domestic space, as well as ownership of equipment, for shaving. Shaving could be, and clearly was, carried out either in the barbershop or in the customer's own home.⁶³ But it was also a messy and potentially uncomfortable task, requiring time, patience and skill.⁶⁴ To make it even basically comfortable, shaving ideally required hot water, soap or wash balls to create lather, a basin or receptacle, as well as a useable razor and a hone or strop to maintain it. If a man wished to shave himself, a looking glass, mirror or other reflective surface was necessary to prevent accidents. Most houses could provide hot water from the fire and a receptacle to contain it. Soap and wash balls might be procured from local shops. But whether poor households could afford the costs of maintaining razors is debatable. Rough and ready strops could be fashioned from leather, but having razors properly sharpened and ground was expensive. Mirrors were a costly item, and ownership varied according to status and location. By the end of the seventeenth century in Kent, around 36 per cent of domestic probate inventories

⁵⁷ James Dodds (ed.), *The Diary and General Expenditure Book of William Cunningham* (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1887), 33, 39, 43, 93.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁵⁹ Huntington Library MS HM 72811, account book of Thomas Mort, entry for 27 December 1708.

⁶⁰ Cornelius Hallen (ed.), *Account Book*, 179, 187, 208, 220.

⁶¹ Hampshire Record Office, MS 19M61/1666.

⁶² Bower, *Diary of Thomas Marchant*, 67.

⁶³ Vincent, 'Managing Hair', 55.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

contained mirrors; in Cornwall for the same period, however, the figure was only 4 per cent.⁶⁵ A study of seventeenth-century domestic probate inventories from the Yorkshire town of Darlington yielded only two references to mirrors or looking glasses, both in elite households.⁶⁶ Joseph Harley's study of pauper inventories in Dorset, Kent and Norfolk suggests that ownership of looking glasses in poor households averaged only around 10 per cent, while further statistical analysis of probate inventories across early modern England has also shown that the ownership of mirrors occurred far more frequently in the houses of parish officeholders, linking them with higher-status households and also perhaps highlighting the need to appear respectable in parish duties, such as vestry meetings.⁶⁷ As Margaret Ezell points out too, modern mirrors, understood as a reflective coating over a glass surface, did not come into being until the end of the seventeenth century. Before this a 'mirror' was more likely to be a polished metal surface and also not necessarily flat, giving an unclear or distorted reflection.⁶⁸ Even small glass mirrors were prohibitively expensive; Pepys's gift of a small looking glass for his wife cost the equivalent value of over one hundred pounds in modern currency.⁶⁹ Clearly this does not rule out the potential to shave at home; a competent spouse, friend or servant might well perform the task. It is also worth noting that, as Adrian Green points out, the poor could make do with small shards of broken mirror, or pieces of reflective metal, in which they could check their appearance.⁷⁰ But the potential inconvenience and expense, along with the requisite skill to use and maintain the razor, made a visit to the barber quicker, cheaper and more convenient.

If men were beginning to shave themselves more frequently, how – and from whom – they learned to do so is harder to discern. Before the mid-eighteenth century, there were no manuals to instruct men in the processes of shaving, or broader issues of bodily care or appearance. Conduct literature offered men some general advice about dress and cleanliness, but none contained advice about shaving. Learning by observation and imitation was one possibility, although risky where an open razor was involved. It seems likely that, as was the case with informal medical advice networks, advice about shaving and personal grooming came from peers. Given its nature as a uniquely male task, advice about shaving likely formed part of a broader vernacular economy of homosocial knowledge about the body. Brothers or fathers were obvious sources of reference, and the limited extant evidence suggests that fraternal mentors

⁶⁵ Mark Overton, Jane Whittle, Darron Dean and Andrew Hann, *Production and Consumption in English Households, 1600–1750* (London: Routledge, 2004), 111–12.

⁶⁶ B. Flynn and V. Portass, *Darlington Wills and Inventories, 1600–1625* (ed. J. A. Atkinson) (Newcastle: Athanaeum, 1993), 112, 152.

⁶⁷ Henry French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England, 1600–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 164–6, 170–1, etc.; Joseph Harley, 'Material Lives of the English Poor: A Regional Perspective, 1670–1834', University of Leicester, Unpublished PhD thesis, 2016, 190–1. I am very grateful to Joe Harley for alerting me to these figures and also for the references to razor ownership in pauper inventories. See also Lorna Weatherill, *Consumer Behaviour and Material Culture in Britain, 1660–1760* (London: Routledge, 1988), 169–71.

⁶⁸ Margaret Ezell, 'Looking Glass Histories', *Journal of British Studies*, 43:3 (2004): 323.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 324.

⁷⁰ Adrian Green, 'Heartless and Unhomely? Dwellings of the Poor in East Anglia and North East England', in Joanne McEwan and Pamela Sharpe (eds), *Accommodating Poverty: The Housing and Living Arrangements of the English Poor, c. 1600–1850* (London: Palgrave, 2011), 86.

were important guides in matters of appearance and personal grooming. While Samuel Pepys was not taught to shave by a third party, for example, he was instructed by an acquaintance in the use of a pumice stone to rub away his beard.⁷¹ In other cases, male friends could serve a more practical function. When he was 20, the Yorkshire landowner Ralph Jackson noted in his journal that ‘I shav’d James & he shav’d me by way of learning ourselves, this being the first time we either of us shav’d any body.’⁷² Jackson’s note is interesting in highlighting the mutual benefit of a willing and familiar face upon which to hone shaving skills, but also in suggesting that, for both men, this was their first experience not only of shaving another person, but potentially of wielding a razor at all. If this example is in any way representative, the age at which this occurred seems late in puberty. The homosocial nature of shaving was reinforced in the barbershop, but also at home, and being shaved either by friends or in their company appears to have been fairly common. William Livesey’s etching after a 1732 drawing by William Hogarth was titled ‘Breakfasting &c’ and depicted various friends of Hogarth in their morning routine. Among the figures was ‘Mr Tothall shaving himself in a mirror’ and ‘Mr Thornhill’ being shaved by another man – a barber who was also by chance a fisherman. Here, shaving was a communal and homosocial activity, though this time carried out in the lodgings of the companions, rather than in a barbershop. Hogarth himself was the figure in the bottom left of the scene, making the drawing.⁷³

If able to shave servants could prove useful in bypassing the cost and inconvenience of visiting the barber at all and might also act as informal tutors. In 1710, the account book of Thomas Mort contained a payment of five shillings made to the barber, to teach Mort’s servant ‘how to trim’ – information and skill that could be passed on.⁷⁴ The didactic role of the barber here is interesting not only in providing ad hoc instruction for a fee but also for the fact that, in teaching the servant, he was effectively doing himself out of a job. That he agreed to do this for such a relatively small sum seems even more surprising, and some guild regulations actually forbade the practice of freemen teaching anyone but their apprentices.⁷⁵ Having a manservant trained to shave was also a useful asset. In the late seventeenth century, young men seeking posts in service of gentlemen often emphasized their ability to shave or manage a wig, especially after 1750, when the need to appear clean-shaven was more pressing.⁷⁶ Young men like ‘T. W.’ – who advertised in the *Times* newspaper in April 1788 seeking a position as a valet to a ‘single gentleman’ – commonly emphasized their ability to ‘shave and dress hair.’⁷⁷

⁷¹ Vincent, ‘Men’s Hair’, 59.

⁷² Middlesborough Record Office, MS U/WJ/F, Diary of Ralph Jackson, 1740–90, 10 January 1757, <http://greatayton.wdfiles.com/local-files/ralph-jackson-diaries/01-Introduction-to-diary.pdf> (accessed 1 March 2017). I am extremely grateful to Dr Andy Burn of Newcastle University for his generosity in sharing this reference with me.

⁷³ A description of this scene can also be found in John Nicols, *Hogarth’s Tour* (London: Publisher unknown, 1781), 79, which describes sending out for a barber, who was also a fisherman.

⁷⁴ Huntington Library MS HM 72811, Account book of Thomas Mort, 9 December 1710.

⁷⁵ See Frederick Furnivall and Percy Furnivall (eds) *The Anatomie of the Body of Man by Thomas Vicary* (London: The Early English Texts Society, 1888), 251.

⁷⁶ Jonathan Barry, ‘John Houghton and Medical Practice in William Rose’s London’, University of Exeter, Working Paper, <http://practitioners.exeter.ac.uk/working-papers/> (accessed 2 October 2018).

⁷⁷ ‘A Young Man Who Can Shave and Dress Hair’, *Times* (11 April 1788): 4. See also ‘Wants a Place as Butler and Valet’, *World* (22 February 1787): 4.



Figure 6.1 Richard Livesay, 'William Hogarth making a drawing of his companions and himself as they shave and take their breakfast', 1781. Copyright Wellcome Collection.

'F. G.' of Cavendish Square went even further, arguing himself to be a 'steady and sober man' who could 'shave and dress hair and wigs equal to any hair-dresser'.⁷⁸

Again, however, questions remain as to the ubiquity of the practice and also the social depth to which self-shaving penetrated. Advice literature about shaving was likely inaccessible to large numbers of men, and the cost of buying and sharpening razors was prohibitive. It is equally unclear as to whether men of the lower orders necessarily shaved, or even wished to do so.

Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, the relationship between men, barbers and shaving was complex and depended on a wide variety of factors, including social status, location, the costs of barbering services and the propensity of the individual to own their own shaving equipment.

There was, for example, little uniformity in the consumption of barber services. Some men visited the barber every few days for a shave; for others it was a weekly occurrence, in preparation for appearance in church for Sunday service. The wide variety of prices paid to barbers by individual men reflects differences in location and status, suggesting

⁷⁸ 'Wants a Place, a Steady, Sober Man', *World* (6 March 1787).

both that barbers tailored prices according to the purses of their customers and that there were poor barbers as well as better-off barbers. While some undertook to shave the poor for a penny, a well-heeled customer might pay up to a shilling. Prices were also dependent on whether the customer visited the barber, or whether the barber came to the customer's own home. There are also some suggestions that men might patronize individual barbers for long periods, establishing a relationship over time.

Despite the close association between barbers and their shops, however, it is also clear that barbering was not necessarily dependent on shop space. In some cases, barbers simply used a room in their house. Given the potentially prohibitive costs of establishing and running a barbershop, other 'flying barbers' made a living by visiting customers. Securing a regular contract for 'quarterage' in a wealthy country house could prove lucrative, but there are suggestions that barbers also undertook home visits lower down the social scale.

Throughout the period, self-shaving, as Susan Vincent has suggested, was used interchangeably with barber visits, although the extent to which men shaved themselves was greatly influenced by the costs of purchasing and maintaining equipment. That some men were shaving themselves in the seventeenth century is clear. But this was likely to have been more the domain of wealthy, metropolitan elites and middling sorts, who had the means to buy shaving paraphernalia, as well as access to places to purchase them, than of men lower down the social scale. Visiting the barber to be shaved was often simply cheaper and more convenient and meant that barbers remained key figures in fashioning the male face well into the eighteenth century.

As the following chapter will argue, however, the late eighteenth century brought important shifts in who was responsible for managing the male face. In part this reflected the increasing availability of high quality, fashionable, domestic razors and other equipment, along with a growing body of didactic literature instructing men in the art of personal grooming. But it also reflected deeper shifts in ideas about bodily refinement and grooming as the responsibility of individual men, rather than practitioners.

Refining the face: Auto-pogonotomy and self-styling, 1750–1900

In 1901, R. Kron's *Little Londoner* promised to guide foreign visitors through the complexities of language and daily life in the city, offering advice on everything from social proprieties, including visiting and shopping, to food and meals. One chapter, in particular, dealt with the 'toilet' of the gentleman and offered a complete (albeit idiosyncratic) guide to getting up in the morning.¹

When I wake up (or awake) after a good night's rest, I involuntarily rub my eyes, and then get up (or rise) in order to dress. I first put on my pants (or drawers) then my socks (reaching up to the calves), or stockings (reaching up to the knee), my trousers (familiarily: bags, or breeches; in America, pants or pantaloons), and my slippers.

Then I go to the wash(ing) stand and have a thorough wash in cold water, which is far more refreshing and wholesome than (luke)warm (or tepid) water. In washing I use a sponge, and a cake (or tablet) of unscented soap. I have a rough and a smooth towel to dry myself with. Many people have a bathroom close to their bed-room, and have (or take) a tub, i.e. a bath (hot or cold) every morning.

Then I clean (or brush) my teeth with a tooth-brush and tooth-powder (or dentifrice), and gargle (or rinse my mouth). After every meal I also rinse my mouth to prevent my teeth from decaying. When I have done washing (myself), I clean my (finger-)nail; after this I comb and brush my hair (with a comb and a [hair-]brush). I detest pomade and perfumes (or scents), and never put any on my hair.

My beard grows very fast, and so I (have a) shave (or I get shaved) every morning. Being (or Getting) shaved by a barber is an unpleasant affair for me, so

¹ R. Kron, *The Little Londoner: A Concise Account of the Life and Ways of the English, with Special Reference to London* (Freiburg: J. Bielefelds Verlag, 1907), 45. All parentheses and spellings are original.

I prefer to do it myself. I have a complete set of shaving tackle, viz., a (safety) razor, (razor-)strop, brush and shaving soap.

After shaving I put on my (under-)vest and (day-)shirt.²

As the account suggests, by the turn of the twentieth century, shaving was part of a complex suite of daily grooming tasks involving different actions, skills, instruments and products. How far this experience was reflective of men across all levels of society is up for debate, but it does suggest that shaving, and self-shaving in particular, was by then probably the norm.

This process had begun faltering in the early modern period but took firmer hold during the later eighteenth century. By the 1770s men were taking a more active role in the management of their own facial appearance. Grooming practices in general were often central to gender performance and self-expression. As I have argued elsewhere, amidst a new focus upon the 'polite body' the micromanagement of bodily surfaces, even in public, took on renewed importance. Of all bodily surfaces, it was the face that was arguably most important in the conveyance of politeness. For women, the necessity to shape the eyebrows and depilate the face made tweezers an essential accoutrement.³ For men, though, it was shaving (and by extension razors) that became the acme of enlightened self-presentation. After 1750, for the first time, advertisements for all manner of new products began to target men 'who shave themselves'.⁴ By the first decades of the nineteenth century, the practice had grown more widespread, assisted by new didactic literature, instructing men in the intricacies of shaving, maintaining razors and preparing lather.

But the second half of the nineteenth century brought an abrupt *volte face* in ideals of male appearance. The onset of the 'beard movement' saw facial hair again established as a touchstone of masculinity and an emblem of the Victorian man. While Georgian and early Victorian men had been forced to master the intricacies of shaving, men after the mid-nineteenth century faced new challenges in the myriad choices about how to manage and care for their abundant facial hair, including cleanliness, length, style and colour. In both periods, however, the choices surrounding facial hair, and the execution of shaving or beard styling, increasingly fell on individual men, rather than practitioners.

This chapter argues that what occurred between 1750 and 1900 was nothing less than a remaking of the male face, a shift in performed masculinity that saw both the increasing assumption of personal responsibility for managing facial appearance and the creation of a whole new category of male grooming. Importantly, although it still retained strong elements of cleanliness and bodily regulation and order, this new type of *personal* grooming was no longer linked specifically to medicine, or to medical practitioners.

² Ibid., 45–6.

³ See Alun Withey, *Technology, Self-Fashioning and Politeness in Eighteenth-Century Britain: Refined Bodies* (London: Palgrave, 2016), 66–7, 73, 79–83.

⁴ Alun Withey, 'Shaving and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 36:2 (2013): 229–30.

The rise of self-shaving

While accessing the grooming routines of individual men is still extremely difficult, there are strong suggestions that by the end of the eighteenth century, self-shaving was becoming more commonplace, at least among men of middling or elite status, since they were the social demographic for whom polite ideals mattered most. It was they who were the main audience for advertisements and the consumers of new-fashioned boutique steel razors, often priced and sold as luxury items. The journals of men such as the Irish statesman, author and philosopher Edmund Burke and physiognomist Johan Casper Lavater both reveal that they regularly shaved themselves.⁵ In a testimonial to the efficacy of ‘British Shaving Paste’ in 1796, the London stationer Benjamin Tiffin noted that the paste had helped him where his scorbutic face had meant that he could not ‘shave myself without a great degree of pain.’⁶

But passing references elsewhere make it clear that men lower down the social scale and away from urban centres were also routinely shaving themselves. Over the course of his diaries between 1755–61, the Scottish country parson George Ridpath made more than twenty references to having shaved himself at home, but none to barbers or others.⁷ The diary of the Somerset parson William Holland reveals that he preferred to shave himself rather than visit a barber, albeit with mixed results. One Sunday morning in July 1802 he cut himself deeply while shaving and fretted that ‘it bleeds so plentifully that I know not how to stop it.’⁸ Circumstantial evidence in court testimonies also reveals that self-shaving was beginning to be undertaken by plebeian men, hinting at the social depth to which the late Georgian fashion for shaving had sunk.⁹ In October 1782, officers entering the house of one George Franklin to arrest him, testified that they ‘found him shaving himself.’¹⁰ When his shop was broken into in 1784, the wool-draper William Beresford noted that he was in his parlour, shaving himself.¹¹ It is also interesting, although by no means conclusive, to note that court testimonies before 1745 contain only one account of a man shaving himself. Between 1745 and 1812 there were thirteen separate references.¹² Even in the poorest

⁵ Charles McCormick, *Memoirs of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, or an Impartial View of His Private Life* (London: Printed for Lee and Hurst, 1798), 281; Johan Casper Lavater, *Secret Journal of a Self-Observer* (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1795), 108.

⁶ ‘British Shaving Paste’, *Oracle and Public Advertiser* (10 May 1796).

⁷ Sir James Balfour Paul (ed.), *The Diary of George Ridpath, 1755–1761* (Edinburgh: Printed for the Scottish History Society, 1922), 48, 60, 80, 273, 312, 329, 355, 384, etc.

⁸ Jack Ayres (ed.), *Paupers and Pig Killers: The Diary of William Holland, A Somerset Parson, 1799–1818* (Stroud: Sutton, 2003), 69. Holland makes other references to shaving himself, for example, 146.

⁹ Biographies of criminals or crime narratives also contained passing references. See, for example, James McKaen, *Genuine Copy: The Life of James Mckaen, Shoemaker in Glasgow* (Glasgow: Brath and Keen, 1797), 40; ‘A Civilian’, *Trials for Adultery or the History of Divorces* (London: Printed for S. Bladon, 1779), 17.

¹⁰ OB, Trial of Isaac Votear and Thomas Dean, 16 October 1782, <https://www.londonlives.org/browse.jsp?div=t17821016-43&terms=shaving#highlight> (accessed 28 March 2018).

¹¹ OB, Trial of William Hubbard, 25 February, 1784, <https://www.londonlives.org/browse.jsp?div=t17840225-25&terms=shaving#highlight> (accessed 28 March 2018).

¹² Based on keyword searches of Old Bailey Online database. For the sake of clarity, it should be noted that this is raw data and may not take into account potential variances in the volume of entries each year, which might skew the numbers.

households, incidental references suggest that ownership of razors and shaving tackle was increasing. Among the goods of the pauper John Playne of Staplehurst in Essex in 1775 were a 'shaveing basin', while John Whayle of Little Wakering, Essex, owned '2 raizers' along with a box and strap. The 1816 probate inventory of the pauper William Lane of Buckland Newton in Dorset contained a 'shaving dish and brush', and others attest to similar goods.¹³

One possible influence upon this shift towards self-shaving may be the changing nature of the relationship between men and barbers. The figure of the inept or rustic barber had long been a comic staple, and the discomfort of being scraped with a blunt razor was painfully familiar to many men, providing much fodder for satirists. By the mid-nineteenth century, Sean Trainor has argued that relations between barbers and patrons had even further deteriorated.¹⁴ But the ready availability and continuing popularity of barbers across all levels of society suggests that pejorative depictions did not deter men from visiting them. Perhaps more likely was an increasing sense that shaving was one of the requisite skills of the gentleman. It was something that men *should* know how to do and, more importantly, should ideally be able to do for themselves. Part of this related to self-reliance and the belief that a gentleman should be able to do whatever his servants were required to, both to set an example and to allow him to be a good judge of their work. 'Hortator', author of the *Simplicity of Health* (1829), argued that 'every man should know how to shave himself', because it removed the need to be reliant on others and helped avoid the 'bad habits often contracted from the necessity of constantly going to barber's shops.'¹⁵ What 'bad habits' he was alluding to are unclear, but being able to shave oneself was certainly a useful expedient. A book of advice to young surgeon-apothecaries in 1800 recommended that they be able to shave themselves and dress their own hair to be presentable if called away at short notice.¹⁶ To shave oneself was seen as healthier than risking infection or contamination at the barber's. Benjamin Franklin reckoned it 'among my felicities, that I can set my own razor and shave myself perfectly well'. One of the 'daily pleasures' of this activity for Franklin was the unease of suffering the 'dirty fingers or bad breath of a slovenly barber.'¹⁷ As 'Hortator' also argued in *Simplicity of Health Exemplified*, though, shaving

¹³ Dorset History Centre, MS DHC PE-BCN/OV/3/2) (1813–1819), Inventory of William Lane, Buckland Newton, Dorset, 1816; Kent History and Library Centre, MS P99/8/1) (1811–1834), Vestry Order Book, Inventory of Widow Everst, Cowden, Kent, 1820; Kent History and Library Centre, MS P347/18/10) (1742–1831), Inventory of John Playne, Staplehurst, Kent, 1828; Essex Record Office, MS D/P 194/18/4) (1827–1830), Inventory of John Whale of Little Wakering, Essex, 1828; Norwich Record Office, MS PD 499/79) (1734–1772), Inventory of John Harvey, Norwich, 1734. I am extremely grateful to Joe Harley of the University of Derby for sharing these references from his study of pauper inventories. See Joseph Harley (ed.), *Norfolk Pauper Inventories, c. 1690–1834* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

¹⁴ Sean Trainor, 'Losing Control: The Nineteenth-Century Beard Movement in Europe and North America' (unrefereed article), http://vestoj.com/losing-control/?lipi=urn%3Ali%3Apage%3Ad_flagship3_profile_view_base%3BD6Sr7nftR0emuDQKcMniAQ%3D%3D (accessed 2 February 2018).

¹⁵ Hortator, *Simplicity of Health Exemplified* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1829), 29.

¹⁶ James Lucas, *A Candid Enquiry into the Education, Qualifications, and Offices of a Surgeon-Apothecary* (London: Printed and sold by S. Hazard, 1800), 158.

¹⁷ Jared Sparks, *The Works of Benjamin Franklin* (Philadelphia, PA: Sparks and Peterson, 1840), 280.

could also be a healthy activity in itself as part of a broader regime of the healthy body since ‘uneasiness of any kind, whether bodily or mental, is inimical to health.’¹⁸

The practice was further encouraged in the growing instructional literature on the art of shaving. While earlier in the century men had looked to family, friends and peers for advice, new books set out the processes and equipment needed for a clean shave. The first formal shaving manual to appear was *La Pogonotomie, ou L’Art D’Apprendre A Se Raser Soi-Meme* (*Pogonotomy: or the Art of Learning to Shave Oneself*), published in 1770 by the French cutler Jean-Jacques Perret.¹⁹ Although not initially translated into English, the treatise instructed men in all shaving-related matters, including the best angle at which to hold the razor to achieve clean cutting, how to avoid skin irritation and how to correctly set, sharpen and strop razors. Perret’s treatise is also credited with the first description of a safety razor. In Britain, razor-makers, as experts in the metallurgical construction and use of their products, also began to publish didactic texts on shaving. In 1786, the prominent London razor-maker and cutler John Savigny published his *Treatise on the Use and Management of the Razor*, part shaving manual and part technological treatise on the intricacies of steel. For Savigny, an expert metallurgist, razors were precision instruments, and he advised men to take into account factors such as the weight, balance and shape in their decisions to purchase.²⁰ As to the manner of shaving, he stressed the importance of washing and drying the face with warm water before applying a lather, either from shaving powder or, preferably, from soap, to soften the beard, allowing the razor to glide and cut more easily. A whole chapter was dedicated to ‘applying the razor’, discussing the importance of angling the blade (not too flat and not too elevated), shaving in one direction and not employing too much pressure, to ensure that the blade did not ‘make its way thro’ the Flesh.’²¹

Benjamin Kingsbury’s *Treatise on Razors* (1797), written partly in response to Savigny, also sought to guide men through the delicate and potentially dangerous operation of shaving. For Kingsbury, accidental cuts had far more to do with the ineptitude of the individual than any deficiency of the razor, and many a good razor was ‘injured by careless purchasers’ before it had even touched their faces. Shaving was a process that required little pressure or force.²² Again, an entire chapter was dedicated to the minutiae of the shave. First, Kingsbury recommended that the beard hair to be shaved should be stretched tightly with the left hand, to make it stand proud for the razor’s edge. The razor should then be ‘applied to the skin in a flat position’ with some pressure, determining the correct angle of ‘attack’ to remove hair at the root.²³ Once the beard had been removed, the razor should be washed and

¹⁸ Hortator, *Simplicity*, 28.

¹⁹ Jean-Jacques Perret, *La Pogonotomie, ou L’Art D’Apprendre A Se Raser Soi-Meme* (Paris: Par J. J. Perret, 1770).

²⁰ J. H. Savigny, *A Treatise on the Use and Management of the Razor with Practical Directions Relative to Its Appendages* (2nd edn) (London: Printed for the author, 1786), 1–5.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

²² Benjamin Kingsbury, *A Treatise on Razors: In Which the Weight, Shape and Temper of a Razor; the Means of Keeping It in Order and the Manner of Using It, Are Particularly Considered...* (6th edn) (London: Printed by E. Blackader, 1810), 9.

²³ *Ibid.*, 44.

dried to prevent rust, and the face splashed with cold water to strengthen the skin.²⁴ By the late 1830s, newspaper articles were being devoted to the best ways for men to ‘win over their troublesome friend – the beard – with greater facility’, including the ‘proper method of using a razor’, how to sharpen and strop it and even the best angle of ‘attack’ for the razor to cut through beard hair.²⁵ It is difficult to gauge the audience and impact of such books, but occasional evidence shows that they were used and adapted. Ebenezer Rhodes’s 1824 *Essay on the Manufacture, Choice and Management of a Razor* recommended dipping the razor into warm water before applying it to the face. A copy of the book held in the Wellcome Library in London contains the handwritten note ‘not in boiling hot water’, perhaps testament to a lesson learned by painful experience.²⁶

Didactic literature for servants provides continuing evidence of their important role in shaving, as part of expected knowledge about gentlemen’s toilette. Nineteenth-century instruction manuals, however, often identified the valet’s role more as preparing and maintaining razors and lather since it was suggested that many gentlemen still preferred to shave themselves.²⁷ Laying out a gentleman’s shaving kit was one of the first primary tasks of the day. An article titled ‘How to Begin the Day’ advised men to ‘shave unmistakably before you descend from your room; chins, like oysters, should have their beards taken off before being permitted to go down.’²⁸ According to John Maitland, the first responsibility of the dutiful manservant was to rise early, prepare and set out his gentleman’s shaving tackle, so that he might shave before going downstairs. This included setting the razor, placing it in readiness on a basin and ‘should he shave with boiling water, [to] be sure to have it in readiness.’²⁹ Being able to maintain a razor and provide a clean shave was a key function of valets and one repeatedly stressed in advice literature to domestic servants. Samuel Adams’s *Complete Servant* (1825) instructed valets in the art of stropping razors and also contained the method for a ‘new mode of shaving.’³⁰ *The Family Manual* of 1850 contained a whole section on how to maintain razors, under the duties of the valet, including how to prepare lather and also a special preparation for ‘those who, in their lips, or after shaving, are affected by frosty air.’³¹

Advice about shaving was even available in commercial literature, such as trade catalogues, along with the instructional guides included with products sold, offered further sources of practical instruction. The catalogue of the London razor-maker and cutler J. J. Mechi provided a whole section on how to shave, including how to sharpen, hold and use the razor correctly and, unsurprisingly, detailed instructions on how best

²⁴ Ibid., 46–7.

²⁵ Anon., ‘On Shaving’, *Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction*, 34:976 (1839): 307–8.

²⁶ WL, MS T.611.1, copy of Ebenezer Rhodes, *Essay on the Manufacture, Choice and Management of a Razor* (Sheffield: G. Ridge, 1824), 23.

²⁷ See, for example, Samuel Adams, *The Complete Servant* (London: Knight and Lacey, 1825), 362; Isabella Beaton, *The Book of Household Management* (London: Ward, Locke and Tyler, 1869), 1016.

²⁸ ‘How to Begin the Day’, *HC*, 62:5 (January 1871): 5.

²⁹ John Maitland, *The Servant’s Companion or Domestic Manual* (London: William Mason, 1850), 13.

³⁰ Adams, *The Complete Servant*, 362, 364.

³¹ Anon., *The Family Manual and Servants’ Guide* (London: John Limbird, 1850), 204–7.

to prepare and Mechi's own soaps and 'magic strop paste'.³² In 1800, 'Rogers' much-approved new balls for coating razor strops' came complete with 'a valuable instructor for the most comfortable and easiest method of shaving ever known, and a complete guide for those who are learning to shave themselves or others'.³³ This combination of guide and product offered a cheap and accessible means to learn the basics of shaving, but their extent and importance as didactic tools is unclear.

It is also worth noting the growing role of the correspondence pages of periodicals and newspapers, as informal forums through which men could seek and share experiences and advice about shaving. In August 1806, 'H. K.' wrote to the *European Magazine* on the matter of shaving, recommending both a thicker-than-usual lather and also the adaptation of a commonly available shaving powder by adding a few drops of oil which, he argued, both preserved and enhanced the cutting edge of the razor.³⁴ Others offered more general tips on how to maintain razors. One, styling himself 'Economicus', argued that expending more than two shillings for a razor was a waste of money since articles at that price were often 'tolerably good'. Economicus also shared his favoured method for sharpening razors, using 'a mealy kind of stone' used by engravers, known as 'snake stone'.³⁵ In some senses this was merely an extension of the earlier informal, fraternal networks of family and friends through which men could learn about shaving, noted in the previous chapter. In this sense, by the early nineteenth century, advice about men's personal grooming had clearly begun to move from the domestic to the public space, expanding the knowledge economy about men's personal grooming beyond immediate family and kin.

Managing the beard

It was not just shaving that required the acquisition of new skills. The onset of the 'beard movement' around 1852 added a new challenge to the emerging concept of personal grooming: that of how to care for a rapidly billowing beard. Much ink was expended in extolling the virtues of a long, thick beard. It is easy to assume from the pleas of pogonophiles that it was simply left to grow 'natural', and that styling was unnecessary, if not unmanly. Little attention has yet been paid to the extent to which facial hair was managed in the nineteenth century. What products were available, to clean, style or beautify the beard? As was the case for the Victorian body in general, the cleanliness of beards was an important issue, and etiquette manuals offered men some advice on the principles and propriety of keeping beards and moustaches clean and tidy.

³² J. J. Mechi, *Prices and List of Articles Manufactured and Sold, Wholesale and Retail, and for Exportation, by Mechi, Cutler, Dressing Case Maker, and Inventor of the Celebrated Razor Strop and Paste* (London: Publisher unknown, 1805), 17–19.

³³ 'New Inventions and Improvements Sanctioned', *Morning Post and Gazetteer* (28 April 1800).

³⁴ H. K., 'Facts Relative to the Art of Shaving', *European Magazine* (August 1806): 111–12.

³⁵ Luke Herbert (ed.), *The Register of Arts and Journal of Patent Inventions* (London: G. Herbert, 1825), 369.

Cultivating a decent beard in the first place was problematic for some. In an age which venerated the beard as a totem of masculinity, the ability to grow one was ever more important. Having a weak, patchy beard or, worse still none at all, implied fundamental bodily weakness and even effeminacy. This was perhaps particularly keenly felt by young men. As Maria Victoria Alonso Cabezas has shown in her analysis of Spanish self-portraits, young artists were keen to have artists include facial hair, even if this amounted to pre-beard ‘fuzz’ or even a shadow on the face.³⁶ Facial hair was the ‘must-wear attire in performative displays of masculinity’.³⁷ The late eighteenth century had seen a burgeoning market for products to remove facial hair, but the commercial market now expanded to include products for encouraging rampant growth. The context in which this occurred was the burgeoning market for hair products from the early decades of the nineteenth century. As Jonathan Shears notes, the demise of wigs made hair more visible, in turn encouraging the use of styling and beautifying products.³⁸ Hair dyes, oils and waters were part of self-fashioning and personal grooming, but were also seen as important in the maintenance of health, preventing dandruff, headaches and diseases of the scalp.³⁹ As well as head hair, facial hair was increasingly part of these developments.

It seems no coincidence that the inclusion of facial hair in advertising puffs for hair growth products coincided with the emerging trend for side whiskers among young, metropolitan elites around 1800. Early products such as ‘Russia Oil’ claimed to make hair ‘grow thick and long, even in bald places, whiskers, eye-brows &c’.⁴⁰ In 1814, Atkinson’s ‘Curling Fluid’ also promised to nourish the hair ‘as it grows on the whiskers and mustachios, with the most beautiful luxuriance’.⁴¹ With typical Georgian ingenuity, other alternatives for those who could not grow their own included wigs with detachable whiskers, to allow men to pick and choose their ‘look’ according to circumstance.⁴² But while the trend for whiskers was possibly an urban phenomenon and limited away from London, the 1850s ‘beard movement’ was national – indeed international – creating greater pressures upon beardless men.⁴³

Makers of hair growth products quickly seized upon the opportunities of a new audience, afforded by the ‘beard movement’. By 1855, products such as ‘Crinutriar’ promised ‘luxurious hair and whiskers’ for those left wanting.⁴⁴ Retailers played on

³⁶ Alonso Cabezas and Maria Victoria, ‘Beardless Young Men: Facial Hair and the Construction of Masculinity in Nineteenth-Century Spanish Self Portraits’, in Jennifer Evans and Alun Withey (eds), *New Perspectives on the History of Facial Hair: Framing the Face* (London: Palgrave, 2018), 98–102.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 91.

³⁸ Jonathan Shears, ‘Self and Society: Hair Consciousness in the Age of Empire’, in Sarah Heaton (ed.), *A Cultural History of Hair in the Age of Empire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 17.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 18–9.

⁴⁰ ‘Sold by Harmer and Green’, *Ipswich Journal* (22 March 1806).

⁴¹ ‘Patronised by the Royal Family’, *La Belle Assemblée* (1 February 1814).

⁴² The London wigmakers Ross and Co. stated that they had found a way to ‘attach whiskers to [wigs] with that remarkable adhesion as cannot be discovered from Nature itself’; see ‘Interesting Information’, *Morning Chronicle* (9 July 1800).

⁴³ Similar points are made by Sallie McNamara, ‘Production and Practice: Hair Harvest and Hairpieces, and Hairwork’, in Heaton (ed.), *A Cultural History of Hair*, 71–3, which was published after this section was written.

⁴⁴ ‘Fine Head of Hair, the Beard, Whiskers and Mustachios’, *Era* (4 November 1860).

the fears of beardless boys and ‘smock-faced’ men, stressing the innate masculinity of beards and the risk to those unwilling or unable to display this most manly appendage. Men who ‘wanted’ luxurious hair and whiskers were entreated to reach into their pockets and rescue their pride. The makers of ‘Crinutriar’ claimed that ‘Thousands ... who were once utterly destitute of Beard or Whiskers now have these *attributes of manhood*’ (emphasis added).⁴⁵ The terminology and imagery of the ‘destitute’ beardless man was as telling as it was striking. Speed was also often a selling point, perhaps to give the lie of natural growth. ‘Fox’s Noted Formula’ promised a heavy growth of beards or moustaches in six weeks, roughly the same time needed to grow them ‘naturally’ and sometimes substantially less.⁴⁶ The seemingly miraculous claims of such products even saw them enshrined in popular culture. The comic character ‘Adolphus Niegle’ in Basil Young’s 1868 play *The Happy Family*, for example, was a youth with pretensions of manhood. With a habit of lounging in railway station refreshment rooms, wearing an eyeglass that perpetually fell out, Niegle ‘withal cannot grow a beard, notwithstanding the fact that he has sent an endless number of stamps to those persons who profess to produce luxuriant whiskers in 24 hours’.⁴⁷

Women were particularly important manufacturers and sellers of beard and whisker growth products. In 1850, ‘Miss Graham’ promised to send her ‘Nioukrene’ on receipt of twenty-four stamps, and which had given at least one satisfied customer ‘a plentiful crop of whiskers’.⁴⁸ ‘Crinilene’ was made by Emilie Dean and again available through application to her by post, while ‘Crinutriar’, noted above, was one of the products of the perfumer Rosalie Coupelle. Some women had taken over the business of production from their late husbands: one, Emilie Lloyd, was apparently celebrated for producing a better quality of ‘Euxesis’ than her late husband had been.⁴⁹ Female perfumers also had expertise in products for the stimulation of hair growth, and it is possible that they were seen to have authority and skill in that area. Not everyone was enthusiastic, however. One etiquette manual for men suggested it was far more preferable for gentlemen to grow their own whiskers than to seek the products of Madam Coupelle and others.⁵⁰

If growing and wearing a beard was loaded with social meaning, its colour was no less important. Beard colour, like hair, was something of a thorny issue, revealing tensions in ethnic or racial characteristics. Products to dye the hair, beard, whiskers and moustache were overwhelmingly concerned with returning hair to shades of brown or black – generally established as the ‘natural shade of the hair’.⁵¹ W. H. Cockell’s beard dye was ‘Instantaneous’, returning hair to a ‘natural’ colour and shine,

⁴⁵ ‘Beautiful Hair, Whiskers &c’, *Nottinghamshire Guardian* (17 February 1853). Accompanying testimonials spoke for the efficacy of such products, such as ‘Serjeant Craven’ of Longford, Ireland, who stated that ‘Through using your Crinutriar, I now have an excellent moustache’.

⁴⁶ ‘Luxuriant Whiskers and Moustaches’, *Standard* (9 June 1869).

⁴⁷ ‘Mr Basil Young’, *Ipswich Journal* (10 October 1868).

⁴⁸ ‘Do You Want Luxuriant Hair, Whiskers &c?’, *Bell’s Life in London* (4 August 1850).

⁴⁹ Thanks to Jessica Clark for alerting me to this reference.

⁵⁰ Anon., *The Habits of Good Society: A Handbook for Ladies and Gentlemen...* (New York: G.W. Carleton, 1872), 94.

⁵¹ ‘An Infallible Hair Dye’, *Hampshire Advertiser and Salisbury Guardian* (8 August 1846).

with the added benefit of perfume, and ‘not a particle of poison.’⁵² Part of the reason was undoubtedly to mask the onset of age, giving the illusion of a youthful flush of facial hair. Prematurely grey beards were certainly undesirable for many younger men, since they obviously suggested advancing age, with all its deleterious connotations. But in singling out black and brown as ‘natural’ shades of beard hair, advertisers hinted at the negative ethnic and racial connotations that were borne by other shades. ‘Red’ (ginger) facial hair, for example, was constantly singled out as something to be disguised – an undesirable cultural other against the more ‘British’ shades. As early as 1807, perfumer John Chasson of Cornhill, London, advertised his ‘Incomparable Fluid’, for changing hair, whiskers and eyebrows from grey or ‘red’ to ‘*beautiful and natural shades of brown and black*’ (emphasis added).⁵³ Here, by definition, ‘red’ whiskers were not beautiful. Spencer’s Chinese Liquid Hair Dye promised similarly in 1844, although with a further layer of complexity given the ‘foreign’ implications of its name. In this case it may have referred to the renowned black hair of Chinese people.⁵⁴

As Sarah Cheang has argued, the texture, length and colour of hair were central to nineteenth-century debates about race and identity.⁵⁵ Amidst concerns about racial classification and hierarchy, black or brown hair characterized the Caucasian type – highest in the racial hierarchy, above Mongolian, African and American corporeal types.⁵⁶ ‘Red’ or ginger whiskers bore negative associations with Jewish ethnicity and as such, as one 1800 article about beards argued, had no place in Britain. While they might ‘please Hebrew beauties, we are not the descendants of Abraham, and prejudice has condemned this colour.’⁵⁷ Such connections lingered. One of the most infamous Jewish characters in nineteenth-century literature, after all, was Dickens’s Fagin, whose ‘villainous-looking and repulsive face was obscured by a quantity of matted red hair’ and a straggly beard. Dickens was swift to point out that his depiction of Fagin was based on race, rather than religion; a caricature not intended as an attack on Jewish people. Nonetheless, in her study of Jewish stereotypes in English literature, Deborah Heller notes the red beard as a literary shorthand in depictions of Jewish characters, one transmuted from medieval depictions of Satan, thereby creating an association in the reader’s mind between Jewishness and the devil.⁵⁸

⁵² ‘Cockell’s Instantaneous Dye for Beards and Whiskers,’ *Standard* (7 June 1869). See also ‘Parker’s Original Grecian Compound,’ *Examiner* (4 May 1844).

⁵³ ‘A Most Important Discovery,’ *Morning Post* (27 February 1807): 1.

⁵⁴ ‘A Most Important Discovery,’ *Morning Post* (20 March 1807). Other products included ‘Day’s Original Hair Water’ to colour ‘Red or Grey Hair, eye-brows, whiskers &c’ – *Morning Post* (2 October 1807); ‘Spencer’s Chinese Liquid Hair Dye,’ *Morning Chronicle* (6 November 1844).

⁵⁵ Sarah Cheang, ‘Roots: Hair and Race,’ in G. Biddle-Perry and Sarah Cheang (eds), *Hair Styling, Culture and Fashion* (London: Berg, 2008), 28–9.

⁵⁶ Alexander Rowland, *The Human Hair: Popularly and Physiologically Considered, with Special Reference to Its Preservation, Improvement and Adornment* (London: Piper Brothers, 1853), 19.

⁵⁷ Anon., ‘On Beards,’ *Oracle and Daily Advertiser* (13 November 1799).

⁵⁸ Deborah Heller, ‘The Outcast as Villain and Victim: Jews in Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* and Our Mutual Friend,’ in Derek Cohen and Deborah Heller (eds), *Jewish Presences in English Literature* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), 44. For earlier medieval associations between Jewish beards and satanic imagery, see Frank Felsenstein, *Anti-Semitic Stereotypes: A Paradigm of Otherness in English Popular Culture* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 28.

The aesthetic qualities, length and colour of beards, then, were all socially and culturally loaded in the second half of the nineteenth century. Wearing a beard evinced manly appearance and demonstrated conformity with prevailing arguments about the importance of facial hair as a 'natural' emblem of masculinity. Likewise, having a set of whiskers of the 'right' colour was also clearly important in order, presumably, in confirming ethnicity and, in particular, Britishness. To what extent though were beards groomed and refined by individual men, and what was commercially available to facilitate this process? It is to such questions that the chapter now turns.

The material culture of beard grooming

Sharon Twickler has explored the materiality of beard- and moustache-grooming instruments in nineteenth-century America and the social, cultural and medical meanings attached to them. The moustache comb, for example, stood for refinement and self-fashioning in America in the decades after 1850. Available in many forms, materials and prices, its pocket size also enabled men to refine their appearance even while in public or on the move.⁵⁹ Despite the focus on beard-wearing in the later nineteenth century, little attention has yet been paid to the extent to which men managed or groomed their beards, or the instruments or products used in the process. The issue of beard care actually raises questions about social expectations of beard- and moustache-grooming and their place within the construction of bearded masculinity in the late nineteenth century in Britain. Overt cosmetic use by men was generally frowned upon although, at the same time, expectations of cleanliness and neatness presumably required at least some attention to facial hair, to prevent it becoming matted or unkempt. And yet, much rhetoric in favour of beard-wearing actively promoted its 'natural' status. Explorers, returning from the wild, had grown their beards as a 'natural' barrier against wind, sun and dust.⁶⁰ The bigger the beard, the better the protection it supposedly offered. Nature's beard was ideally to be left to its own devices.

By the mid-nineteenth century, there were changes in the nature of advice literature for men, away from the conduct book form of the eighteenth century and towards broader etiquette manuals, offering advice on personal matters and appearance.⁶¹ There was also a marked difference in the advice given about personal grooming between the early and late decades of the century. Initially, etiquette manuals focused upon basic routines of hygiene, cleanliness and personal grooming, cautioning men against being slaves to fashion, or taking dress or appearance to extremes. But around 1850, the increased attention towards the physicality and corporeality of the male body again reframed the management of the male body. Amidst an increasingly visual culture in

⁵⁹ Sharon Twickler, 'Combing Masculine Identity in the Age of the Moustache, 1860–1900', in Evans and Withey (eds), *New Perspectives*, 149–53.

⁶⁰ Christopher Oldstone-Moore, 'The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain', *Victorian Studies*, 48:1 (2005): 17–18.

⁶¹ Claudia Nelson, *Family Ties in Victorian England* (London: Praeger, 2007), 28; Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, 83.

later nineteenth-century Britain, men were acknowledged to possess a 'physical, visible self', manifested in the sexualization of clothing and also appearance.⁶² Managing the body was an important part of the articulation of the male self. As it had in the Georgian period, the exterior of a man's body revealed the character beneath.

Men were advised, for example, to maintain good general standards of bodily health and hygiene and to engage in cleansing routines for medical as well as social, reasons. In stressing the necessity for personal cleanliness, *The Gentleman's Manual of Modern Etiquette* (1849) argued that the 'importance of personal cleanliness on the score of health as well as decency [renders it] unnecessary to dilate'. The skin, teeth and nails were to be 'cleansed at regular and fixed intervals'.⁶³ Arthur Blenkinsopp's *Shilling's Worth of Advice on Manners, Behaviour and Dress* (1850) also noted the importance for 'Hair, face and teeth' to be 'well-washed and clean'.⁶⁴ There was also, however, some unease over attention towards appearance. *The English Gentleman* (1849) advised men to 'have nothing slovenly in your appearance. But when you have left your dressing room, give yourself no further trouble about it'.⁶⁵ Following a fashion was one thing, but taking it to an extreme was quite another, risking a 'finical and effeminate appearance', from which commenced vulgarity.⁶⁶

Initially beards did not merit specific attention in men's manuals, but their obvious popularity from the 1850s attracted new advice about cleaning and maintaining facial hair. As with other forms of personal grooming, beards were to be kept neat and tidy. Although fussiness or over-elaborate styling was to be avoided, it was down to individual preference as to which style of facial hair to wear. A straggly, matted or otherwise unkempt beard was slovenly, if not downright vulgar. Cleanliness was also of paramount importance. *Good Manners* suggested that 'The beard should be carefully and frequently washed, well-trimmed and well combed, and the hair and whiskers kept scrupulously clean, by the help of clean, stiff hair brushes, and soap and warm water'.⁶⁷ Edwin Creer argued that a regular wash with soap and water was necessary to remove particles of dirt, smoke and dust which naturally accumulated from the atmosphere and also for general hygiene.⁶⁸ There was clearly concern about the potential for beards to harbour contaminants. Responding to claims that beards collected dirt and germs, Artium Magister's *Apology for the Beard* (1862) argued that, if good hygiene was practised for the body as a whole, there was no reason to single out the beard. Ideally, it should be washed daily and brushed as often as hair on the

⁶² Brent Shannon, *The Cut of His Coat: Men, Dress and Consumer Culture in Britain, 1860–1914* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 81.

⁶³ Anon., *The Gentleman's Manual of Modern Etiquette* (London: Paul Jerrard and Son, 1849), 46

⁶⁴ Arthur Blenkinsopp, *A Shilling's Worth of Advice on Manners, Behaviour and Dress* (London: Printed for the author, 1850), 15; see also 'A Lounger at the Clubs', *The Gentleman's Art of Dressing with Economy* (London: Frederick Warne, 1876), 96–7.

⁶⁵ Anon., *The English Gentleman: His Principles, His Feelings, His Manners, His Pursuits* (London: George Bell, 1849), 103.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁶⁷ Anon., *Good Manners: A Manual of Etiquette in Good Society* (Philadelphia, PA: Porter and Coates, 1870), 65.

⁶⁸ Edwin Creer, *A Popular Treatise on the Human Hair* (London: Published for the author, 1865), 73.

head.⁶⁹ If men neglected the cleanliness of their beards, then it was their responsibility to shave them off accordingly.⁷⁰

Such factors point to the importance of the outward appearance and aesthetics of facial hair throughout the early years of the ‘beard movement’. Merely having a beard was insufficient: how it looked spoke volumes about the man. According to the *Leicester New Monthly Magazine* in 1853, the ‘good and true beard’ was neither long, greasy nor dirty, but ‘moderately thick, dark, curling, rather short, glistening, and fragrant with the perfume of some precious unguent.’⁷¹ Here, though, was ambiguity in the masculine discourse of beard-wearing. Just as with dress and comportment in general, affectations, such as curling moustache ends, were considered foppish. Beards supposedly represented natural ‘ruggedness’ and physicality but were equally encouraged to be soft and luxuriant. If they were stiff and wiry (caused by previous years of shaving) then ‘recourse to art, to soften and improve [them],’ was perfectly permissible.⁷² It is also interesting to note here that the ‘good and true’ beard should presumably smell pleasant, as well as being well kept.

In particular, beards were to be kept ‘well-brushed and attended to.’⁷³ Some saw the ‘positively delightful sensation’ of combing and brushing the beard as a tactile, sensuous experience.⁷⁴ Artium Magister’s 1862 *Apology for the Beard* suggested that it was ‘quite the usual business of a man’s person to trim the beard,’ as part of general maintenance of appearance.⁷⁵ Trimming it with scissors was seen as necessary to prevent a beard becoming ‘unsightly’ or ‘too exuberant.’⁷⁶ Brushing beard hairs was necessary ‘to arrange them when accidentally disordered.’⁷⁷ Various references note the apparent popularity of ‘whisker brushes,’ specifically for removing the tangles from facial hair. These were seemingly a French innovation, adopted by English hairdressers after 1750, and later finding their way into domestic use. In 1843 the *Monmouthshire Merlin* suggested that the way to be regarded as a ‘nice young man’ was to ‘starch up and brush your whiskers.’⁷⁸ By 1850 whisker brushes were advertised in *Bell’s Weekly Messenger* as an ideal Christmas present for the bearded gentleman in your life, while a trade report in *The Hairdresser’s Chronicle* in 1867 noted ‘several novelties in whisker brushes’ and their general usefulness in maintaining beards and hair.⁷⁹ Servants again sometimes played a part in the process. Isabella Beeton’s *Book of Household Management* instructed valets to ‘brush the hair, beard and moustache, where that

⁶⁹ Artium Magister, *An Apology for the Beard, Addressed to Men in General, to the Clergy in Particular* (London: Hivingtons, 1862), 63.

⁷⁰ Edwin Creer, *A Popular Treatise on the Human Hair* (London: Publisher unknown, 1865), 75.

⁷¹ Anon., ‘De Tonsura,’ *Leicester New Monthly Magazine* (July 1853–June 1854): 126.

⁷² Creer, *Popular Treatise*, 75.

⁷³ Charles Gilman Currier, *The Art of Preserving Health* (New York: E. B. Treat, 1893), 62.

⁷⁴ ‘The Philosophy of the Beard,’ *Suffolk Chronicle* (25 March 1854): 4.

⁷⁵ Artium Magister, *An Apology for the Beard, Addressed to Men in General, to the Clergy in Particular* (London: Rivingtons, 1862), 62–3.

⁷⁶ For example, ‘Beards,’ *Broad Arrow* (16 October 1875): 494; ‘An Impostor,’ *Leicester Chronicle* (25 June 1853); ‘A Plea for the Beard,’ *Worcestershire Chronicle* (19 February 1851); ‘Barton on the Heath,’ *Oxfordshire Weekly News* (21 February 1883): 5.

⁷⁷ A. R. Nares, *A Glossary, Volume 1* (London: Reeves and Turner, 1888), 66.

⁷⁸ ‘Maxims,’ *Monmouthshire Merlin* (23 December 1843).

⁷⁹ ‘Christmas Presents this Month,’ *Bell’s Weekly Messenger* (8 December 1850); ‘Trade Report,’ *HC*, 4:1 (February 1867): 7.

appendage is encouraged, arranging the whole simply and gracefully according to the age and style of countenance'.⁸⁰

The degree to which these prescriptive guides were followed by individual men, however, is hard to discern. Photographic images of some prominent Victorian men around the 1850s and 1860s, for example, appear to support a preference for 'natural', almost scruffy beards, sometimes accompanied by unkempt hair. Several portraits taken by Julia Margaret Cameron in the 1860s and 1870s make an interesting case in point. Clearly it is hard to say with certainty from a photographic image, how much attention had been paid to grooming a beard. Equally, some of Cameron's other portraits (including that of the poet Robert Browning) show men with short, neat beards. Nevertheless, several depict men with long, seemingly untrimmed or ungroomed beards. Examples include her portraits of Henry Taylor in 1864, Henry Thoby Prinsep in 1865 and Alfred Lord Tennyson the same year, each of whom display a similar 'natural' style. As an arch critic of beard styling, it is no surprise that portraits of Walt Whitman show a man content to adopt a 'warts and all' approach to his facial hair. It could be argued that writers and artists might not be representative of men more generally, perhaps predisposed to embrace the more romantic notions of the beard as a venerable symbol.

With the 1870s, though, came further signs of change and moves towards a more austere approach to beard styling and grooming in general. While cleanliness remained a constant, style and fashioning were discouraged. The *Gentlemen's Book of Etiquette* advised men to 'let your hair, beard and moustache be always perfectly smooth, well arranged and scrupulously clean' but also warned men to 'use but very little perfume [since] much of it is in bad taste'.⁸¹ The style of the beard should ideally be suited to the shape and form of a man's face, but 'any affectation in the cut of beard and whiskers is very objectionable, and augers unmitigated vanity in the wearer'.⁸² The length of the beard was a matter for some debate, although most agreed that over-long, elaborate or 'exaggerated' styles led to a ridiculous appearance and, therefore, advocated regular trimming.⁸³ There was little consensus into how regular this should be, however. Isabella Beaton suggested that hair in general should be trimmed at least every three weeks, and the beard and whiskers 'as often as required', suggesting that leaving the beard to grow 'natural' was not fashionable. After trimming, Beaton suggested, the hair, beard and moustache should be brushed 'where that appendage is encouraged'.⁸⁴ *The Habits of Good Society* (1872) also suggested that beards and moustaches 'should be well combed and in neat trim ... well-kept and not fantastically cut'.⁸⁵ At the same time some advice literature for men even began to advocate a return to the clean-shaven face. If a beard was to be worn, argued Samuel Beeton, it should be worn in

⁸⁰ Beeton, *Household Management*, 1016.

⁸¹ Cecil B. Hartley, *The Gentleman's Book of Etiquette and Manual of Politeness* (Boston: J. S. Locke, 1874), 120.

⁸² Anon., *Good Manners*, 65.

⁸³ Artium Magister, *An Apology for the Beard, Addressed to Men in General, to the Clergy in Particular* (London: Hivingtons, 1862), 63.

⁸⁴ Isabella Beaton, *The Book of Household Management* (London: S. O. Beeton, 1863), 978.

⁸⁵ Anon., *The Habits of Good Society: A Handbook* (New York: G. W. Carelton, 1872), 94–5.



Figure 7.1 Julia Margaret Cameron, portrait of Henry Taylor, 1864. Copyright of Victoria and Albert Museum.

moderation, since extremes were vulgar. A 'smooth-shaven beard' by contrast 'was a mark of cleanliness, and evidence of attention to the duties of the toilet.'⁸⁶ *The Habits of Good Society*, while generally in favour of facial hair, acknowledged that many men still were not. If shaving were to be done daily, it should be done well, preferably with

⁸⁶ Samuel Orchard Beeton, *All about Etiquette, or, the Manners of Polite Society for Ladies, Gentlemen and Families* (London: Ward, Lock, 1875), 36, 133–5.

a different razor every day and using hot water, soft soap and a good quality brush. A clean-shaven chin was considered far preferable to short stubble, which ‘makes the face look so unlovely’. The author also noted the popularity of violet shaving powder among young men, which they considered injurious to the face and skin.⁸⁷

Overall, though, the impression left is that attending to facial hair was an important process. Men were encouraged to regularly maintain after their beards, by washing, brushing, trimming and softening them. In the eighteenth century, small instruments for personal grooming had risen to prominence as vectors to the articulation of the polite body. Items such as nail clippers and tweezers, sometimes included as part of toilette sets and even included on chains to be carried about the person, offered various options for attending to bodily surfaces and appearance.⁸⁸ Given Twickler’s point about the popularity of moustache combs in America and their status as vectors, allowing men to convey gentlemanly neatness and elegance, it is interesting to note, however, that these items were seemingly not advertised in Britain, either on their own or within broader product lists. That they existed and were presumably used seems likely, but direct evidence for either is elusive. Beard and moustache combs also turned up in reference to other cultures. John Kitto’s *Pictorial Bible* of 1856 noted the habit of Muslim men of carrying a comb, with which they combed their beards after prayers.⁸⁹ Patents were also lodged for various items, to deal with many potential issues arising from the growing, training and wearing of facial hair, from moustache cups to trainers, to allow men to grow their whiskers to a desired shape. It is possible that advertisers simply saw no need to single out such small, prosaic items for dedicated advertisements, accounting for their general invisibility in sources.

Conclusion

Between the late eighteenth century and the end of the nineteenth, as this chapter has showed, men were increasingly encouraged to take responsibility for their own facial appearance. Before 1850, responsibility for shaving – and later for maintaining the cleanliness, style and form of facial hair – became part of the essential grooming routines expected of individual men. After this, with the onset of the ‘beard movement’, washing, clipping, brushing and colouring facial hair instead became a focus for masculine self-fashioning, as beards contributed to the concept and articulation of harmonious self-presentation.

Such ideas were reinforced and disseminated through a growing body of literature, including etiquette manuals and advice books alongside newspapers and periodicals, providing public space for discussions about fashion and personal grooming, while also reinforcing the role of the individual man in mastering his appearance. As briefly discussed here, but explored in more detail in subsequent chapters, the domestic nature of men’s personal grooming was also supported by a growing market for

⁸⁷ Anon, *Habits of Good Society*, 92–3.

⁸⁸ See the discussion of grooming instruments in Withey, *Technology*, 65–84.

⁸⁹ John Kitto, *The Pictorial Bible: Judges-Job* (London: W. and R. Chambers, 1855), 235.

male grooming and styling products, including whisker dyes, beard brushes and preparations to encourage the growth of facial hair.

The remaining question, however, is that of what happened to barbers during this period. If men were beginning to assume responsibility for shaving and/or managing facial hair, did this herald a shift in the longstanding relationship with and functions of barbers after the mid-eighteenth century? It is to such questions that the final chapter in this section now turns.

Hairs and graces: Barbers, hairdressers and shaving, c. 1750–1900

Barbers, or Barber-Surgeons (which is the Term they were incorporated by) is a Trade very much in use now-a-days; but within less than an [*sic*] hundred Years past it was not so, when our Grandsires did not think so much of ornamenting their Heads with borrowed Hair as Multitudes now do. Their Business, besides that of Shaving, which is a very beneficial Article, is making all sorts of Periwigs or Perukes, and other new-invented Hair Attires.¹

As this comment from a 1747 volume about English trades suggests, the mid-eighteenth century saw the beginnings of important changes in the tonsorial trades. These changes, which unfolded over the next 150 years, not only affected the nature and status of the craft itself, and the practitioners involved, but also reflected broader shifts in responsibility for managing men's appearance. First, as the previous chapter showed, was the growing popularity of self-shaving and accompanying commercial availability of razors and shaving paraphernalia, both of which challenged the longstanding status (indeed virtual monopoly) of barbers as 'knights of the razor'. As we shall see in later chapters, the makers of new types of cast steel razor, developed in the decades after 1750, seized on the marketing opportunities afforded by their new products, using the language of their advertisements to appeal to masculine traits such as hardness and control, as well as linking razors to modish tropes of scientific and philosophical endeavour. Advertisers were increasingly appealing to a new target audience; men who shaved themselves. It is easy to see this fundamental shift as a potential threat to barbers' livelihoods.

Second was the separation of the barbers and surgeons. It has long been assumed that the sundering of the barber-surgeons' company had a profoundly different effect on both of its constituent groups. In the traditional narrative, while the 'gentleman surgeon' experienced a rapid rise to professionalism, the once-respectable trade of the

¹ Anon., *A General Description of All Trades Digested in Alphabetical Order...* (London: Printed for T. Waller, 1747), 12.

barber was severely diminished. With their traditional place within formal medical practice eroded, some barbers were assumed to have relocated themselves within the more aspirational and socially acceptable trade of hairdressing. The rest faced a slow descent into the social permafrost of manual trade.

Third, in the widespread adoption of beards over the three decades after 1850 might surely be found the coup de grâce which finally severed the link between the barber, his shop and shaving. The Victorian 'beard movement' advocated thick, luxuriant facial hair and, significantly, a beard that was 'natural' – in other words left to its own devices. It seems reasonable to assume that, as the faces of British men became more hirsute, demand for the shaving services of the barber correspondingly declined. Each of these points appears to confirm the fall of barbering from its once lofty position and, as broad sketches, are useful in mapping the trajectory of the trade. But each is also open to challenge.

This chapter offers a fresh perspective on the nature of barbering between 1745 and the end of the nineteenth century. It argues that barbers remained extremely important in the provision of shaving throughout the period. Although men were beginning to assume greater responsibility for shaving themselves, they did not abandon the barber at a stroke. Instead, barbering services likely continued to be used interchangeably with self-shaving. The issue of class is central in understanding the changing nature of barbering in this period, both in the status of practitioners and customers. Rural or rustic barbers in particular had long been lampooned in satire, often mocking their cheap and cheerful service and low status. But increasingly through the early nineteenth century, the division of the haircutting trades saw barbers recast as the poor relations of hairdressers. By the mid-nineteenth century, class lay at the heart of simmering tensions between the two groups. If barbers had seemingly sunk down the social scale, it seems that changes also took place in the types of customers they served. Before the mid-eighteenth century, they had shaved clients from across the social spectrum. Increasingly, however, partly as a result of elite and middling men shaving themselves, or focusing upon high-end establishments, it was the urban working man who became the mainstay of the barber's business. Rather than heralding decline, however, this at the very least sustained demand for barbers' services and may even have caused it to increase. As will be shown, even the most basic of shops were still deeply important elements of men's grooming routines and for those lower down the social scale too, the barber still represented the cheapest and most convenient means of being shaved. While this chapter does confirm classed divisions both between barbers and other practitioners, and within the haircutting trades, it challenges the broader narrative of decline that has hitherto proved powerful.

The chapter also questions the extent to which 1745 was even a point of rupture, particularly in areas away from company or guild control, since the longstanding and deep-set familiarity with the barbershop as a provider of pseudomedical and grooming tasks, and as a homosocial space, likely prevailed for much longer. Indeed, the focus on the rupture of the Company of Barber-Surgeons and on London itself, though perfectly logical given the availability of source material, is problematic in implying that events in train in the capital had immediate and far-reaching impacts elsewhere across the country. There are questions, for example, about the influence of the Company and

the impact of the split, outside London, when the vast majority of Britain's barbers had no contact with it, or a trade guild or corporation of any kind, and were not therefore bound by its regulations. Is it safe to assume that the changes occurring in London can be writ large across the whole of the country? As we shall see, barbers were certainly under increasing pressure from the middle of the eighteenth century. But how far this was as a direct result of the events of 1745 is far less obvious. It could be argued instead that the slow fragmentation of barbering through the late eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth actually reflected broader changes, including class structure and, in particular, the rise of the middle classes, urbanisation as well as shifting cultural attitudes towards facial hair.

Finally, it explores the occupational boundaries of barbering and challenges the long-held assumption that barbers simply *became* hairdressers since there are good reasons to suggest that, at least before 1800, barbering and hairdressing were entirely separate trades. While hairdressing certainly developed out of barbering and peruke-making in the second half of the eighteenth century, hairdressers initially made conscious efforts to establish themselves as high-status practitioners of an elegant craft, distancing themselves from the prosaic trade of the barber in general and his signal function, shaving, in particular. By the early nineteenth century, however, such efforts had failed amidst the decline in popularity of wigs and subsequent downturn in fortunes and status of hairdressers, forcing them back into shaving. Even so, hairdressers continued to try and place social distance between themselves and barbers. Drawing upon evidence from hairdressers and barbers' trade journals and raising issues about potential class differences in facial hair styles, to be raised in the following chapter, it argues that barbers were still in demand even at the apparent height of the nineteenth-century 'beard movement' and may have played an important part in the grooming and styling of facial hair.

Barbers, hairdressers and the remaking of occupational boundaries

In 1745, after a long period of growing enmity within the London Company of Barber-Surgeons, the two occupational groups originally yoked together by statute in the sixteenth century were separated to form distinct companies. The underlying reasons behind the split were many and complex. As Margaret Pelling has shown, a desire to jettison what they saw as the 'lowly barbers' was part of a broader move by surgeons to improve the status of their craft and also to gain control over licensing and company property.² Surgeons had long complained of the fact that barbers (members of what they regarded as a 'foreign' trade) were required to sign their diplomas and further objected to their presence in surgical examinations.³ Barbers were, they argued, a

² Margaret Pelling, 'Corporatism or Individualism: Parliament, the Navy and the Splitting of the London Barber-Surgeons Company in 1745', in Ian Anders Gadd and Patrick Wallis (eds), *Guilds, Society and Economy in London 1450–1800* (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2002), 61–2, 64–5, 73.

³ Sidney Young, *Annals of the Barber-Surgeons of London* (London: Blades, East and Blades, 1890), 154.

‘restraint upon their advancement.’⁴ The barbers, for their part, however, were far less supportive of the split and tried repeatedly to prevent it, before eventually yielding in the face of the increasing futility of their objections and a lack of support for their case.⁵

As a broad narrative this version of events is useful in understanding the plight of the barbers during the subsequent 150 years after the split, as they underwent changes and, to a degree, a diminishment in status. But the situation was actually far more complex, and it could be argued that the split between the barbers and surgeons actually precipitated a more significant rupture *within* the tonsorial trades, of which shaving was a key element. Between 1745 and 1900 there was a constant and unresolved tension between barbers and hairdressers regarding both the functions and occupational identities of their respective crafts. As the status of hairdressers grew through the second half of the eighteenth century, they initially shunned shaving as a task of the barber, instead attempting to position themselves as polite, elite practitioners. In response to declining fortunes by the turn of the nineteenth century, however, they increasingly diversified into shaving, while still retaining the supposedly loftier title of ‘hairdresser’. Even as late as the 1870s, tensions about the supposed occupational space between barbers and hairdressers still simmered.

Given their longstanding role in the provision of shaving, it is first of all interesting to consider the fate of barber-surgeons. The 1745 split effectively annulled the old and previously honourable title of barber-surgeon, but in practice this was neither instant nor definitive. Indeed, there is strong evidence to suggest that barbers continued their multiform activities and even retained the title of ‘barber-surgeon’ throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth. In Bristol, for example, as Mary Fissell has noted, around a dozen barber-surgeons were still practicing as late as 1793. According to the memoirs of Bristol surgeon Richard Smith, the last barber-surgeon there – James Parsley – continued to dress wigs, draw teeth and let blood until 1807.⁶ It is also clear from passing references in travel diaries and other sources, that many barbers still informally undertook bloodletting and teeth-pulling. In many ways this made sense. Given their long-held status as providers of bodywork, it seems logical to assume that barbers continued to be important sources of medical knowledge and practice. Late eighteenth-century satires continued to characterize the barber as a hybrid medical practitioner and something of a jack-of-all-trades. Henry Bunbury’s *Village Barber* of 1772 depicted a barber outside his shop, wielding a razor and set of lancets and blood bowl, with a caption stating that as well as dressing wigs, shaving and bleeding he (‘Bob Majors’) sold everything from wash balls to wigs, ‘powders for the itch’, sausages and Scotch eggs.⁷ Even as late as 1821, it was argued that there were few parts of England where barbers did not retain at least some functions of surgery and ‘may be seen brandishing the razor and the lancet by turns.’⁸

⁴ Ibid., 155.

⁵ Pelling, ‘Corporatism’, 75.

⁶ Mary Fissell, *Patients, Power and the Poor in Eighteenth-Century Bristol* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 55.

⁷ John Bunbury, *The Village Barber L.M., L’Inghilterra* (London: Printed by J. Brotherton, 1772).

⁸ Anon., *The Plain Englishman, Vol. II* (London: Hatchard and Son, 1821), 549.

What seems more certain is the increasing polarisation, and even fracturing, of the haircutting trades, a process which appears to have begun during the mid-eighteenth century. As noted above, it is easy to assume that there was little occupational separation in practice between barbers and hairdressers. Previous studies have tended to downplay any potential boundaries between the two. Don Herzog's study of hairdressers, for example, treated hairdressing and barbering as virtually coterminous, and even contemporaries noted the permeability between the two.⁹ But this assumption is problematic, since there were clear and longstanding boundaries between the trades. Since the early modern period, for example, hairdressing, along with peruke-making, had been considered a separate trade to that of barbers and was regarded as such in the occupational structures within companies and guilds.¹⁰ This distinction survived the decline of the guilds and the space between the two occupations apparently grew during the eighteenth century. It was sufficiently well known to be referenced in popular culture. A humorous sketch in *The Times* in 1786 neatly illustrates the point. The scene is a dressing room in the house of the well-to-do 'Jack Bawble'. A French hairdresser enters and is instructed by Bawble to 'shave me this instant!' The Frenchman is confused, protesting that he does not understand, leading to the following exchange:

Bawble: What, sir, are you not by profession a barber?
 Hairdresser: No, Milord, je suis Friseur.
 Bawble: And you really do not shave?
 Hairdresser: Jamais, Milord, Jamais.
 Bawble: Why, then, Mr. Friseur, pocket your combs, and bundle up your irons, or you shall go out of the window instead of the door. What insolence? Here is a reptile who, while he was starving in Provence, upon soupe maigre and sallad, would have shaved his whole parish for twopence. But the rascal no sooner arrived in London than he runs in debt for a pound of powder and a roll of pomatum and has the impudence to refuse performing the only useful part of his profession. But we deserve this treatment, because we are such fools as to submit to it.¹¹

The humour lay in the assumed affectations and 'othering' of the French hairdresser, as he attempts to use his 'Frenchness' as a mark of skill and urbanity. To some extent it might be seen as a broader criticism of the pretentiousness of the hairdressing trade. But it is also revealing of the extent to which hairdressers – especially those with social aspirations – were prepared to shun the rough trade of shaving as they tried to put on airs. Other sources, including court records, attest to the clear space between the two occupations. In April 1780, Francis Tilling was called to give evidence at the Old

⁹ Don Herzog, 'The Problem with Hairdressers', *Representations*, 53 (1996): 21–43, esp. 24.

¹⁰ The ordinances of the Company of Barber-Surgeons in Shrewsbury, for example, clearly set occupational boundaries. Along with apothecaries, hairdressers represented a distinct group within the company. See W. Leighton, 'The Guilds of Shrewsbury', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, 5 (1882): 274.

¹¹ Anon., 'A Morning Sketch', *Times* (28 October 1786).

Bailey in a theft case. When asked ‘what are you?’, he replied ‘a barber and hairdresser. I shaved and dressed Captain Malcomb [the defendant] at the time.’¹² The ‘and’, in both cases, is revealing. Barber *and* hairdresser, for Tilling, were separate and so were their duties. It was the act of shaving that marked Tilling out as a barber, while his other duties in dressing and attending the Captain simultaneously enabled him to identify as a hairdresser. For our purposes, though, the example is more revealing in again identifying shaving as a principal function of the barber, rather than the hairdresser. If there were no recognized distinction between the two occupations, there would seem little reason to mention both.

It also seems clear that hairdressers were keen to encourage separation, rather than unity in the tonsorial trades. As Chapter 3 noted, one method was to establish themselves as enlightened practitioners, versed in the theory and philosophy of hair, seen in the increasing numbers of hairdresser treatises from the later eighteenth century.¹³ But as Sean Williams has suggested in his study of literary depictions of hairdressers in France, the growing fashion for wigs from the late seventeenth century did much to elevate both the popularity of hairdressing and the dignity and status of hairdressers.¹⁴ Dressing and curling the tresses of ladies, or powdering the periwigs of gentlemen, could be puffed as part of the elegant performance of the polite hairdresser. Advertisements for new-founded hairdressing academies, such as those of ‘Mr Gunner’ in 1785 and ‘Mr Gannon’ in 1789, undertook to instruct ‘Ladies, Women and Gentleman’s valets’ in how to cut and dress hair, apply pomatums and preparations and to braid and curl wigs and hair.¹⁵ Hairdressers frequently adopted the obsequious language of polite advertising, to stress their proficiency in fashioning hair in the latest style, or in making and dressing wigs. In 1773, ‘Mathews’ was typical of this new breed of polite tonsorial practitioners, newly arrived in Philadelphia from London, and begging to inform ladies and gentlemen of the city of his new business ‘dressing ladies [hair] in the newest and most approved taste’ as well as selling ‘natural wigs’ and ‘tupees [*sic*]’ for gentlemen.¹⁶ Not content with their salons or cutting rooms, London hairdressers such as Alexander Ross latched on to the popularity of ‘warehouses’ as sites of polite consumption, selling everything from hairpieces and perfumery to watch chains, necklaces and other jewellery for ‘liberal and fashionable customers’ at his ‘Ornamental Hair and Perfumery Warehouse.’¹⁷ By emphasizing their role in the construction of the fashionable, society body, therefore, hairdressers could locate themselves as polite practitioners.

Barbers, by contrast, seldom advertised. Given the social value of shaving as a polite act and the importance of the shaved face to gentlemanly appearance throughout the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth, this might seem remarkable. As

¹² Trial of John Malcomb, 5 April 1780, <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t17800405-7&div=t17800405-7&terms=MALCOMB#highlight>, version 8.0 (accessed 1 February 2019).

¹³ Margaret K. Powell and Joseph Roach, ‘Health and Hygiene’, in Margaret K. Powell and Joseph Roach (eds), *A Cultural History of Hair in the Enlightenment* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 93.

¹⁴ Sean Williams, ‘E.T.A. Hoffman and the Hairdresser around 1800’, *Publications of the English Goethe Society*, 85:1 (2016): 54.

¹⁵ ‘Hair Dressing Academy’, *Times* (10 June 1785); ‘Hair Dressing Taught’, *Times* (11 April 1789).

¹⁶ ‘MATHEWS, Hair-Dresser of London’, *Pennsylvania Journal and Weekly Advertiser* (22 December 1763).

¹⁷ ‘Ross: Ladies Hair Dresser’, *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (6 December 1791).

experts on managing facial hair, barbers could surely have looked to elevate themselves and their craft as did hairdressers. And yet they did not take out space in newspapers or periodicals, and neither, it seems, did they produce elegant trade cards. The reasons are in actuality fairly obvious. First was the practical difference in demand between the two trades. Hairdressing, especially for ladies, was a long and potentially arduous process.¹⁸ As well as the haircut itself, colours and dyes could be applied, wigs powdered, curls fashioned and so on. The barber's business, however, was steady and probably fairly predictable, with peaks and troughs of demand, most notably on Saturday evenings, and relied on regular customers as well as passing trade. Trade cards were generally handed out after a transaction, to encourage a customer to return. For barbers it is likely that no such enticement was needed, making advertising an unnecessary expense. Indeed, given the relatively low status of many barbers, the cost of advertising may have been prohibitive in any case. It is also worth noting that the prosaic nature of the barber's trade sat uncomfortably with the delicacy and obsequiousness required for polite commerce. Scraping off beards still recalled surgery, with all its rough, ready and bloody connotations. Equally, if the raft of satirical and cultural depictions were to be believed, rather than a polite discourse between both parties, the conversation of barbers was incessant and one-way. It was admittedly difficult for customers to converse with barbers, though, who routinely held them by the nose, while swiping a lethally sharp blade around their neck and throat.

There were other differences between the two trades that could explain the lack of barber advertisements, of which perhaps the most important was the issue of function. While the boundaries were permeable – some barbers cut hair, just as some hairdressers shaved – the association between barbers and shaving was deeply entrenched. Throughout the eighteenth century and into the following, dictionaries continued to refer to shaving as a key characteristic of the trade. John Kersey's *New English Dictionary*, published in 1739, but still available largely unchanged in 1772, defined a barber as 'one that trims persons, makes and sells periwigs &c'.¹⁹ In the *New English Dictionary* of 1759, a barber was a 'shaver of persons', while the following year he was a 'shaver of beards &c' in Nathan Bailey's *New Universal Etymological English Dictionary*.²⁰ The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of 1797 elaborated slightly, identifying a barber as 'one who makes a trade of shaving, or trimming the beards of other men for money'.²¹ Many other dictionaries used similar formulations, using shaving as the key defining feature of the barber, sometimes with reference to shaving the head and also occasionally listing wig-dressing and haircutting.²² This distinction was also reflected

¹⁸ See, for example, 'A Caution to the Ladies', *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* (3 May 1777), describing the 'fatigue' that could be brought on by dressing the hair.

¹⁹ John Kersey, *A New English Dictionary*... (London: Printed for J. and J. Bonwick, 1739).

²⁰ Anon., *A New English Dictionary* (Glasgow: Printed for Charles Hutcheson, 1759); Nathan Bailey, *The New Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (London: Printed for W. Johnson, 1760); see individual entries.

²¹ Anon., *Encyclopaedia Britannica; or, a Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Miscellaneous Literature; ... The Third Edition...*, Volume 3 (Edinburgh: Printed for A. Bell and C. Macfarquhar, 1797).

²² See, for example, the entries for 'barber' in Robert Ainsworth, *Robert Ainsworth's Dictionary, English and Latin. A New Edition, with Great Additions and Amendments* (London: Printed by Charles Rivington &c, 1773); John Ash, *The New and Complete Dictionary of the English Language... Volume 2* (London: Printed for Edward and Charles Dilly, 1775); Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopaedia: or, an*

in the ordinances of the remaining barbers companies. In 1770, the Incorporation of Barbers in Glasgow laid out the principal tasks of the trade. The ‘shaving of beards’ was first on the list, followed by wig-dressing, trimming men and women’s hair and wig-making.²³ Hairdressers could establish a visit as a sensuous, luxury experience, replete with obsequious attentions and rituals. A shave at the barber’s, however, was often simply an expedient, dependent on little more than the keenness of the razor, the thickness of the lather and the dexterity of the barber’s hand to affect how it was experienced. Even so, it is worth stressing the continued importance of barbers in the construction and conveyance of manliness and the fact that men still held them in high esteem. In 1774, for example, the Bristol apothecary Standfast Smith left the huge sum of £100 to ‘Abraham Henry Whitaker Crook, the barber who shaves me.’²⁴ Smith also left five guineas to the widow of ‘Thomas Shore, my late barber.’²⁵ While Crook’s motivations for such generous bequests are unclear, one interpretation is that he simply appreciated the help that both barbers had given him in maintaining his appearance.

If shaving was so closely associated with barbers, it was logical for hairdressers with social aspirations to avoid reference to it. Among scores of hairdresser’s advertisements in the British Library Newspaper database and British Newspaper Archive before 1800, I have not found a single example of an individual describing themselves as a hairdresser who also lists shaving as a task undertaken.²⁶ It could certainly be argued that gender specialisms are a factor in this since those identifying specifically as ladies’ hairdressers clearly had no need to mention shaving, unless it related to the head. It is also worth noting that there appear to be far less advertisements by individuals referring to themselves as gentlemen’s hairdressers. More usual were men such as John Ryall of Weymouth – a ‘Ladies and Gentleman’s Hair-Dresser.’²⁷ Nevertheless, the lack of reference to shaving is noteworthy.

The apparent rejection of shaving by hairdressers appears to be confirmed by its absence in early hairdressing publications. The later eighteenth century saw several didactic manuals on cutting, dressing and managing hair, authored by hairdressers. Some, like William Moore’s *Art of Hair-Dressing*, spoke to a general readership, offering advice on hair care, cutting and styling for adults and children. Moore described himself as a ‘Ladies’ hairdresser and perfumer.’²⁸ But it was noticeable that even men’s hairdressing texts paid little attention to shaving, nor suggested it as a function

Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences (Dublin: Printed for Richard Gunn, 1740); Anon., *A Dictionary of the English Language, Both with Regard to Sound and Meaning* (London: Printed for W. Stewart, 1794); Anon., *A General Dictionary of the English Language, Compiled with the Greatest Care from the Best Authors and Dictionaries Now Extant* (London: Printed for J. and R. Fuller, 1768).

²³ James B. Tennent, *Records of the Incorporation of Barbers, Glasgow, Formerly the Incorporation of Chirurgeons and Barbers* (Glasgow: Bell and Bain, 1899), 170.

²⁴ Bristol Record Office, MS PROB 11/1003, will of Standfast Smith of Bristol, 6 December 1774. I am grateful to Jonathan Barry for sharing this reference.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Some hairdressers did occasionally advertise shaving goods for sale; see, for example, ‘Thomas Lisle’, *Newcastle Courant* (24 May 1783), although it is worth noting that Lisle diversified and was a ‘Peruke Maker, Hairdresser, Perfumer and Chandler’.

²⁷ ‘Ryall’, *Star* (18 May 1789).

²⁸ William Moore, *The Art of Hair-Dressing, And Making It Grow Fast, Together with a Plain and Easy Method of Preserving It* (Bath: Printed for J. Salmon, c. 1780).

of them. James Stewart's 1783 *Plocacosmos*, acknowledged as being the first English hairdressing manual, contained a detailed discussion about beard fashions in history, but nothing about shaving or managing the beard, or the practitioners involved.²⁹ Alexander Stewart's *Art of Hair-Dressing, or the Gentleman's Director*, published in 1788, contained no reference at all either to shaving or facial hair.³⁰ Even peripheral discussions of hairdressing, such as the 'Essay on the Hair' in the *New London Toilet* of 1778 contained nothing relating to shaving.³¹ It is worth noting that things may have been different on the continent however. In 1767, the first chapter of *The Art of the Wigmaker* by the Parisian hairdresser Francois De Garsault was dedicated to trimming the beard and the tools and techniques involved.³²

By the end of the eighteenth century, however, it was clear that the hairdressers' social climb had begun to turn into a rapid descent. Even as early as the 1760s, amidst changes in fashion towards simpler and more natural wigs, there were signs of what Williams terms 'a pan-European paradigm shift away from the perruquier'.³³ Before the French Revolution, hair had been a marker of civility, and those who dressed and attended it were elevated by association. But in its aftermath, popular distaste grew in Britain at the apparent degradation of French manners and appearance, and hair was at the centre of new debates about self-fashioning and propriety.³⁴ Other forces acted to push hairdressers from civility into servility. As Susan Vincent notes, the trade was hit hard by the introduction of hair powder tax in 1795, hastening the demise of the fashion for wig powdering and long hair.³⁵ Attitudes towards hairdressers themselves also began to change, with growing suspicions around their privileged access to female bodies. On the one hand, the sexual frisson afforded by the close proximity and intimate contact of male hairdressers with women threatened female virtue and marital honour. On the other, however, the very fact that they constantly kept company with women in part diminished their own manliness, leading to suspicions of effeminacy or emasculation.³⁶ For some the very occupation was intrinsically unsuitable for men. In 1773, a meeting between the Lord Mayor of London and trustees of a will bequeathing twenty thousand pounds to help young men establish themselves in business, refused the applications of two prospective male hairdressers and declared the occupation 'not fit for young men to follow', adding that the testator 'never designed his money should be lent to promote so pitiful and unmanly an employment'.³⁷

²⁹ James Stewart, *Plocacosmos: or, the Whole Art of Hair-Dressing* (London: Printed for the author, 1782), 186–91.

³⁰ Alexander Stewart, *The Art of Hair-Dressing or the Gentleman's Director, Being a Concise Set of Rules for Dressing Gentleman's Hair* (London: Printed and sold by the author, 1788).

³¹ Anon., *The New London Toilet* (London: Printed for Richardson and Urquhart, 1778), 96–103.

³² Francois De Garsault, *The Art of the Wigmaker* (3rd edn) (trans. J. Stevens Cox) (Guernsey: Toucan Press, 1991), 1, 5.

³³ Williams, 'Hoffman', 55.

³⁴ Herzog, 'Trouble', 24.

³⁵ Susan Vincent, *Hair: An Illustrated History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 176–7.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 83–4.

³⁷ 'Leyton', 'Hair-dressing a Pitiful and Unmanly Employment', *Notes and Queries*, 286 (21 April 1855): 299.

In the early nineteenth century, many clearly felt that the best days of their trade lay behind them and looked back misty-eyed to the ‘good old days’ when barbers were held in higher esteem and trade was plentiful.³⁸ The ‘Lamentation on the Decline of the Barbers’, reproduced in several journals in 1826, bemoaned their ‘sad reverse’, thrown down into chill penury and ‘forced to mind their Ps and Qs to scape the bailiff’.³⁹ It can also surely be no coincidence that, just as wigs began to decline in popularity, hairdressers seemingly began, perhaps reluctantly, to embrace the more prosaic arts of the barber, in order to make ends meet. There were certainly suggestions that the distance between the two trades was decreasing. In 1806, for example, the *Book of Trades* noted that the ‘Hair-Dresser cuts and dresses ladies and gentleman’s hair ... and in most cases the business includes the art of shaving’ (emphasis added).⁴⁰ The book also acknowledged the decline of the hairdressing trade, noting that ‘the business was of much more importance than it now is, previously to the year 1795’, through a combination of taxation on hair powder and scarcity of wheat – one of the primary ingredients in manufacturing powder.⁴¹

Likewise, just as hairdressers intruded themselves into shaving, so barbers continued to cut hair. In Liverpool in 1814, a report of a suicide noted that the man had gone ‘into a hairdresser’s shop ... to be shaved’ but found ‘the barber was occupied with another person’. Here, not only was shaving an activity taking place within the business of a hairdresser, but the individual working in it was referred to as a barber.⁴² Such cross-pollination seemingly grew over time. In 1831, David Booth’s *Analytical Dictionary* defined a barber as ‘properly one who shaves beards; but this art, and that of the Hairdresser, who cuts, curls and dresses the hair of the head, are usually united in the same person.’⁴³ Changing the order of earlier dictionary definitions, Edward Hazen’s *Popular Technology: or, Professions and Trades* suggested that the barber’s purpose was to ‘cut and dress hair, to make wigs and false curls, and to shave the beards of other men’, although it does appear that the distinction between the two trades was not as marked in America as it was in Britain.⁴⁴ In 1844, the author of the instructional manual the *Gentleman’s Companion to the Toilet, or, A Treatise on Shaving* styled himself ‘A London Hairdresser’.

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that either the occupational space, or the latent tensions, between the two occupations had disappeared entirely, since many still specialized. An entry of the young London clerk Nathaniel Bryceson suggests that he visited different establishments for haircutting and shaving. In April 1846 Bryceson recorded that he had his ‘hair cut in Queen Street Pimlico and shaved in

³⁸ Herzog, ‘Trouble’, 21.

³⁹ Anon., ‘A Lamentation upon the Decline of Barbers’, *The Spirit of the Public Journals for the year MDCCCXXIII, Being Volume 3* (London: Sherwood, Gilbert and Piper, 1826), 487.

⁴⁰ J. Johnson, *The Book of Trades, or Library of the Useful Arts, Volume 2* (London: Tabart, 1806), 21.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁴² ‘On the 22nd inst.’, *Lancaster Gazette and General Advertiser for Lancashire, Westmoreland &c* (31 December 1814).

⁴³ David Booth, *An Analytical Dictionary of the English Language, Volume 1* (London: J. and C. Adlard, 1831), 222.

⁴⁴ Edward Hazen, *Popular Technology: or, Professions and Trades, Volume 1* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1841), 104.

Elizabeth Street, and washed, all while waiting.⁴⁵ The thorny issue of occupational titles also remained contentious. A sure way to upset a hairdresser, it seems, was to refer to them as a barber. Evidence before the Parliamentary select committee in 1838 (examining whether one Richard Barnett of Hull was a ‘good vote’), included the cross examination of James Thistleton, an employee of Her Majesty’s Customs. When questioned, Thistleton was asked whether he was a barber before being put into his current post, to which he responded, ‘You may call me what you please; I am generally called a hairdresser’. When counsel sarcastically questioned why ‘Hairdressers shave shipwrights in Hull but object to being called barbers’, Thistleton dodged the barb and merely replied, ‘I have shaved him.’⁴⁶ This exchange is revealing. It suggests that shaving was still regarded in the popular view as a primary function of the barber, and that hairdressers considered themselves a cut above. Thistleton’s embarrassment at the jibe is apparent. But it also reveals the tensions still bubbling underneath the surface between the two trades, in which shaving played a central part. Nathaniel Whittock’s 1837 *Complete Book of Trades* poked fun at the assumed airs of ‘elegant hair-dressers and perruquiers’ who shrank from the ancient appellation of ‘barber’ when ‘if their heads were not as thick as their own blocks’ they should properly regard it as the esteemed title of an ancient art.⁴⁷

Even despite the apparent decline in the tonsorial trades and the rise of self-shaving, many barbers, and especially those in large towns and cities, clearly remained busy. The early nineteenth century saw the proliferation of the term ‘shaving shops’ suggesting specialized premises dedicated to shaving, rather than haircutting. With the caveat that such advertisements would logically wish to stress abundant trade, they suggest that good business could be done. One ‘shaving shop’ for sale in 1807 (reputedly ‘the most genteel, lucrative shaving shop in London’) promised to command an income of between fifty and one hundred pounds per year.⁴⁸ Another ‘old established shaving shop’ in Holborn in 1818 ‘returns 3l per week.’⁴⁹ In contrast with a journeyman hairdresser, who could expect to earn between fifteen shillings and a guinea per week, this was reasonable income.⁵⁰ Given the move towards self-shaving, the increasing availability of razors and instructional literature and, as later chapters will show, the growth in cosmetic products related to men’s shaving, it seems paradoxical that barbers should be so busy.

Some potential hints can be found in a 1841 court case in Sheffield, relating to the prosecution of several barbers for shaving on Sunday mornings. All work on the Sabbath, except for charity or absolute necessity, had been banned by statute 29 of

⁴⁵ Diary of Nathaniel Bryceson, 1846, <https://victorianclerk.wordpress.com/2016/04/04/saturday-4th-april-1846/> (accessed 12 April 2019).

⁴⁶ Anon., *Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons and Command, Volume 11, Minutes of Evidence Taken before the Select Committee on the Kingston upon Hull Election* (London: House of Commons, 1838), 410–1.

⁴⁷ Nathaniel Whittock, *The Complete Book of Trades or the Parents’ Guide and Youth’s Instructor in the Choice of a Trade, Business or Profession* (London: John Bennett, 1837), 24.

⁴⁸ ‘Shaving Shop to be Disposed Of’, *Morning Advertiser* (5 May 1807).

⁴⁹ ‘To Hair Dressers, to be LET’, *Morning Advertiser* (26 October 1818).

⁵⁰ Anon., *The Book of English Trades and Library of the Arts* (London: Printed for C. and J. Rivington, 1827), 1762.

Charles II and applied to all over the age of 14. A meeting of sixty-five Sheffield barbers had agreed that all would cease shaving on Sundays, but four were discovered in defiance of the ban. The prosecutor argued that ‘every man in Sheffield ought to shave himself’ and that he could not conceive why any man wishing to be shaved could not do so on a Saturday. He questioned the complainant, one of the barbers who remained closed, as to whether men attending barbers on Sunday mornings therefore did so because they were unable to shave themselves. The barber replied that ‘with very few exceptions, the persons who came to be shaved on a Sunday were the drunken and dissipated ... who stay at a public house to a late hour on the Saturday night’. The defence counsel, however, argued that, ‘many persons, such as publicans, drapers, butchers and others, were confined in their places of business, until 12 o’clock on Saturday night, and were therefore compelled to get shaved on a Sunday’. People arriving late on Saturday nights from long journeys might also desire to get shaved on a Sunday morning so that ‘the Sabbath-day be observed in a proper manner’. In this sense, he argued, barbers *were* providing a work of necessity and should not be prosecuted.⁵¹ The magistrates agreed and allowed barbers to continue to shave, but until no later than 9 a.m. on Sundays.⁵² The link between barbers and shaving, therefore, continued to hold fast throughout the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth.

The continuation of barber apprenticeships long after the split from the surgeons, and the continuing centrality of shaving as part of training, is also worth noting. While the eighteenth century had largely seen the collapse of the guild system and the dissolution of many of the previously powerful barber-surgeons’ companies, there are hints that apprenticeships continued to be the mainstay of training well into the nineteenth century. Without specific company apprenticeship registers it is hard to be precise about the nature of this training, although shaving was clearly an important part. Servant boys could be informally apprenticed to barbers on a short-term basis to enable them to learn to shave and therefore assist in dressing and shaving their wealthy employers. In Walton, Yorkshire, in 1832 a ‘foot-boy to a gentleman’ was put out for a year to a barber in Chesterfield ‘to learn to shave’. Evidence before the Court of Appeal suggests that he had hopes of setting up business on his own account but, unfortunately, as a ‘scholar to the barber, not a servant’ he was deemed by the court to have no settlement.⁵³ According to a report on barbering in 1870, ‘shaving [was] acquired partly by practice on friendly or interested faces, and partly by a very delicate test’, which apprentices had to pass.⁵⁴ In a nineteenth-century version of a modern test using a balloon, apprentice barbers were required to shave an ‘inflated gullet or “weasand” of an ox, which forms a long bladder, and is, of course, very thin’. This was covered with lather, and the novice told to shave it clean without cutting it and causing it to deflate.⁵⁵ There was clearly a demand for apprentices too. The pages of

⁵¹ ‘Closing the Barbers’ Shops on Sunday Morning’, *Sheffield Iris* (16 November 1841): 4.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ John Frederick Archbold, *A Summary of the Law Relative to Appeals...* (London: Richard Phoney, 1832), 136. See also the case of Sir Paul Jenkinson, with the same practice and result in this volume, 205.

⁵⁴ ‘On Barbers’, *HC*, 48:4 (1 October 1870): 85.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

The Hairdresser's Chronicle regularly saw advertisements for 'young men' required to learn shaving and the business of the trade, or from those seeking a position in such a business, stressing their ability to shave.⁵⁶ Some saw this as a potential problem, however. In October 1871, 'One Who Has Served His Apprenticeship' bemoaned the number of advertisements for 'youths of from 16 to 18 years of age' who might well 'be able to shave with ease to the customer, and cut hair after a fashion' but frequently left without formal indentures or legitimate apprenticeship and started life on their own account without the full set of skills. This, he argued, was detrimental to the trade and a poor reflection on the stinginess of many penny shavers.⁵⁷

Barbering and hairdressing in the age of the beard

So far, we have explored the changing fortunes of barbers and hairdressers, in the context of changes to formal occupational structures and also the predominance of the shaved face. In the mid-nineteenth century, however, a new set of challenges emerged for barbers. As we saw in Chapter 3, the emergence of the 'beard movement' in the early 1850s brought a barrage of articles extolling the many and various virtues of the beard, while also warning of the dangers of shaving. With the 'portentous advance of the great beard movement' the 'shaveable population' was clearly shrinking as 'men of all ranks, the lowest as well as the highest' seemingly cultivated their beards.⁵⁸ As the fashion gathered pace a spate of reports suggested tremors in the barbering trade. In February 1854, an article in *John Bull*, titled 'The Edge of the Razor', stated that 'If all the accounts which reach us from different parts of the country concerning the beard movement contain a reasonable flavouring of truth, the function of the barber is soon to be reduced to that of supplying fancy soap, pomatum and tooth-brushes, thus becoming a complete *lucus a non lucendo*' (i.e. an illogical or absurd concept).⁵⁹ The article further noted that barbers in Blyth, Northumberland, were forced by penurious circumstance into reducing their prices by up to a third in attempts to stimulate business.⁶⁰ The same year, the *Greenock Advertiser* quoted an American correspondent, claiming that barbers were becoming scarce in England in the face of the 'beard movement'.⁶¹ Another (though possibly humorous) report in the *John O'Groat* journal quoted a barber in court, refusing to pay his income tax on the basis that 'the beard movement [has] brought shaving with me nearly to a standstill'.⁶² It is easy to see how the return of beards could have acted to increase the pressures on barbers, by removing their main source of income. And yet, there are many signs

⁵⁶ For examples from the many, see 'To Hairdressers Assistants' and 'To Hairdressers', *HC*, 1:1 (1 November 1866): 1; 'Wanted in a First Class House', *HC*, 13:1 (1 November 1867): 1; 'Wanted, A Steady Young Man', *Glasgow Herald* (2 April 1858).

⁵⁷ 'Correspondence', *HC*, 62:5 (7 January 1871), 5.

⁵⁸ 'Police Intelligence', *Morning Post* (22 October 1839).

⁵⁹ 'The Edge of the Razor', *John Bull* (20 February 1854).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Anon., 'The Beard Movement and British Barbers Shops', *Greenock Advertiser* (28 March 1854).

⁶² 'Income Tax', *John O'Groat Journal* (26 May 1854).

not only that shaving continued, but that business was booming, at times almost to the point of collapse. To fully assess the situation for barbers during this period and the potential impact of the 'beard movement' upon them, it is necessary to explore the complex set of changes unfolding within the haircutting trades.

The second half of the nineteenth century saw deepening tensions within the tonsorial trades, reflecting dissatisfaction with working hours and conditions, declining status and the ever-widening gulf between hairdressers and barbers. The correspondence pages of Edwin Creer's *Hairdresser's Chronicle*, founded in 1868 partly in response to the situation, contained repeated calls for unity and the establishment of professional standards, instructional literature and institutions in line with those of surgeons. The low status of barbers and hairdressers compared with other trades was a constant complaint. As one correspondent to the *Chronicle* suggested,

In order to prove the opinion we entertain 'that the public generally does not estimate this business as it really deserves' let any member of this craft go into a company of gentlemen where he is a total stranger, and however good his appearance and demeanour may be – much as he may display his abilities in conversation or argument, he will feel himself lowered in the estimation of the assembly should it only transpire that he is a 'hairdresser' or a 'barber'.⁶³

The longstanding suggestion that the barbering and hairdressing trades were in decline also continued unabated. Through a quasi-comic tale about an apocryphal London barber called Gillys, one 1859 article titled 'The Barber's Shop' made a familiar argument. While city streets were still replete with barber's poles, it said, barbers themselves were experiencing a 'marked decline in the social scale'. This sad reverse had seen them shift from 'the ateliers of the artists in hair, the builders of forensic and judicial wigs, from the saloons of the fashionable friseurs, to the humble porticoes of the popular barber'.⁶⁴ Although likely written with tongue in cheek, it reinforced what many practitioners were clearly feeling. 'Popular' barbers like 'Gillys' were the last remnants of a once-proud trade, now forced to shave the faces of poor workmen for a few coppers. It was not perhaps so much that barbers themselves had declined in status, therefore, but rather that their key clientele had altered. In many respects, the ground was shifting beneath them.

Low income was another problem, and many shaving shops were forced to offer shaves for as low as a halfpenny. With only a slight note of sarcasm one article suggested that barbers and hairdressers might do well to consider a change of career, since Welsh colliers and furnacemen were earning far more per week than the 'beggarly' income of the barber and for less hours.⁶⁵ The increasing financial pressures upon practitioners led to practical action, most notably in the establishment of growing numbers of philanthropic societies around the country. Although there appear to have been none

⁶³ Anon., 'Hairdressers', *HC*, 31:1 (1 January 1867): 5.

⁶⁴ Anon., 'The Barber's Shop', *Leisure Hour: A Family Journal of Instruction and Recreation* (22 September 1859): 605.

⁶⁵ 'Hairdressers' Charges', *HC*, 174:7 (1 March 1873): 12–13.

specifically for barbers, many large towns saw hairdressers' societies established to support practitioners in distress and to highlight the concerns of its members. By 1870, philanthropic societies had been established in London, Birmingham, Bradford, Glasgow and Manchester. Other variations included the 'Amalgamated Hairdressers' Benefit Society' with an office in Oxford Street, London, the 'Master Hairdresser's Co-operative Society' in Piccadilly and the 'British Hairdresser's Benevolent and Provident Institution'.⁶⁶

The minutes of their meetings, regularly reported in the *Hairdressers' Chronicle*, reveal widespread dissatisfaction with their lot. At a meeting of the Bradford Hairdressers' Society in August 1871, the president bemoaned the general loss of respect in the trade and the long working hours and blamed both sets of practitioners and their societies for their lack of unity and laxity in professional standards.⁶⁷ The correspondence pages of the *Chronicle* in the late 1860s and 70s saw repeated calls for the establishment of standards of practice and pleas for the immediate foundation of a professional academy or 'institution where the higher branches of the business be encouraged'.⁶⁸ One suggested a 'United Kingdom Association of Hairdressers' for the 'advancement of trade interests' and to bring together all regional and provincial societies under a single umbrella organization.⁶⁹ Others called for a set of standardized instructional literature. 'Advocate', suggested a London club for the use of all, with its own library and reading room, where members could inform themselves of the latest developments in skin and hair, perfumery and microscopy, arguing that he was no dreamer or Utopian and that there was no reason why this should not be achievable almost immediately.⁷⁰ It seems, however, that 'Advocate' and his fellow idealists were whistling in the dark, since their calls went unheeded.

Further hindering unity were the clear occupational divisions and definitional problems that obviously still lingered, despite the acknowledgement that the boundaries between barbers and hairdressers were, in practice, now extremely permeable. It appears to have been commonly accepted that many hairdressers routinely shaved. Likewise, many barbers combined shaving and haircutting. But the issue of whether shaving represented an actual line of demarcation between the two trades was a matter of debate. In 1871, tensions were already simmering, and letters reveal the class assumptions that spurred resentment between the two groups. One correspondent (styling himself 'A Man with a Stocking') noted several recent allusions to 'the great distinction that exists in the trade between the fashionable hairdresser, attendant artiste in a fashionable saloon, and the humble barber who does the work of easy shaving'.⁷¹ He went on to defend barbers against the condescension of hairdressers' assistants, who looked down 'a little contemptuously from the altitude of their crimson-velveted

⁶⁶ See 'London and Provincial Trade Society Meetings for the Current Month', *HC*, 92:5 (5 August 1871): 72.

⁶⁷ 'Bradford Hairdressers' Society', *HC*, 92:5 (5 August 1871): 72.

⁶⁸ 'An Appeal to the Trade', *HC*, 153:6 (5 October 1872): 90.

⁶⁹ 'Hairdresser's Charges', *HC*, 153:6 (5 October 1872): 90.

⁷⁰ 'Hairdressers and Barbers', *HC*, 220:9 (6 February 1875): 17.

⁷¹ 'A Distinction with a Difference', *HC*, 101:5 (7 October 1871): 90.

apartments' but, with the 'beard movement' by now in decline, might one day find themselves needing lessons from 'those who are "only barbers"'.⁷²

A series of angry exchanges across several issues of the *Chronicle* in the spring of 1875, crystallized the debate and perhaps also exacerbated the problem. Here, again, class and status lay at the heart of the debate. A letter by J. Cooper had suggested that, while 'they may be, and frequently are, united', hairdressers (by which he meant 'ladies' hairdressers) and barbers were entirely separate trades. While it was entirely possible for the hybrid 'Hairdresser and Barber' to exist, 'all hairdressers are *not* barbers, and all barbers are *not* hairdressers' (original italics).⁷³ There were calls for a line of distinction to be more firmly drawn between the two trades before a club could be established, and suggestions as to the basis upon which such a distinction could be drawn.⁷⁴ Some, like 'M. M.', suggested that price might make a useful means of distinction since 'no hairdresser I know charges less than sixpence, and no barber more than threepence'. Perhaps more contentiously, 'M. M.' suggested that three-penny barbers could not help but to fall into 'a rough and ready style of dress and manner'; by contrast, hairdressers – charging a higher amount and catering 'principally to the upper classes' – could not help 'having their educated tone imparted to him'.⁷⁵ This touched a raw nerve, and such remarks were rounded upon, with some barbers objecting at being portrayed as 'poor strap', while others disagreed with the fundamental idea of any difference between the two.⁷⁶ 'A London Subscriber' suggested that formal distinction could only cause ill feeling, while 'W. E. S.' demanded to know whether he would find himself 'debarred from the advantages of the proposed club in consequence of my having taken to wielding the razor'.⁷⁷ As the debate unfolded, some compromises were put forward. One was to acknowledge that shaving and hairdressing were distinct occupations within but were so closely connected that separation was not practicable. They were, in the public's mind, different occupations within the same profession. On that basis there was little reason to suggest that barbers should not be allowed to use any club or institution. Another was to revisit the technical language and longstanding definitions of barbers and hairdressers, from which the inevitable similarities in etymology between them should become obvious.⁷⁸ A third option was to require all candidates for membership of any tonsorial club or society to produce their apprenticeship indentures or proof of their qualifications, both to demonstrate their professional proficiency and prove their designated occupation.⁷⁹ Even as late as 1882, matters had still not been resolved, and the division between the two trades was still apparent. An article in the *North Eastern Daily Gazette* referred to this as nothing less than a 'deadly breach between the plodding barber and the well-to-do hairdresser',

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ J. Cooper, 'Hairdressers and Barbers', *HC*, 218:9 (2 January 1875): 6.

⁷⁴ 'Hairdressers and Barbers', *HC*, 220:9 (6 February 1875): 17.

⁷⁵ 'Hairdressers and Barbers', *HC*, 219:9 (16 January 1875): 14.

⁷⁶ Cooper, 'Hairdressers and Barbers', 6.

⁷⁷ 'Hairdressers and Barbers', *HC*, 219:9 (16 January 1875): 14.

⁷⁸ 'Hairdressers and Barbers', 220:9 (6 February 1875): 17, 22.

⁷⁹ 'Hairdressers and Barbers', 221:9 (20 February 1875): 31.

which grew daily. To commit the 'egregious blunder of calling a hairdresser a barber' risked a very unfashionable haircut.⁸⁰ While hairdressers were prepared to undertake shaving, they were apt to remind customers that they '[did] not care about the work' and had ambitions to confine themselves to the scissors.⁸¹

But it was not only divisions between barbers and hairdressers that bedevilled the trade during this period. As Jessica Clark has noted, matters were further complicated by splits within barbering, especially in London, which saw the growing polarization of barbershops according to the class of customer they served. From the late 1860s, amidst a new focus on luxury consumption and consumer pleasure, some barbers began to position themselves as high-end businesses, serving a well-heeled metropolitan clientele.⁸² While traditional, penny shaving shops continued to ply their trade in poorer parts of London, new barber 'saloons' springing up in the West End satisfied the shaving needs of politicians, nobility and even royalty.⁸³ In echoes of their longstanding position as homosocial spaces, these new, elaborately decorated and luxuriously equipped barbershops became places of resort, as quasi-gentlemen's clubs, for elite and middle class men.⁸⁴ As Clark argues, in such establishments, a shave was promoted as a luxury experience, augmented by elaborate use of shop space and mirrors to focus attention on the male body and by the increasing production, use and sale of soaps, scents and other products.⁸⁵

The issue of class is in fact also central to the remaining question of demand for shaving during the 'beard movement'? The sense of decline, the obvious tensions in the tonsorial trades and the emerging beard fashion might all be assumed to have sounded the death knell for barbers as shavers. But, far from finding themselves out of work, traditional barbers were experiencing a period of constant and sometimes unmanageable demand for their services. Moreover, the main source of this demand, it is clear, was the urban working man. Each week, 'detachments from the sawmills, the brewery, the distillery or the coalyard' descended en masse to be shaved.⁸⁶ Barbers complained about the difficulty of dealing with the grit-filled beards of 'dustmen and coalwhippers', partly because they were seldom washed beforehand and also because their wiry facial hair constantly blunted razors. Rather than the high-end saloons, the key beneficiaries of this demand were journeymen barbers and 'halfpenny shaving shops', which were 'patronised by workmen'.⁸⁷ Descriptions of these business highlight the basic conditions in which they operated, clearly set up for speed and utility, rather than necessarily customer experience. '[The] customer is usually shaved in a very common chair and lathered with a well-worn public brush. The victim is obliged to throw his head back and rest upon his shoulders, there being no other

⁸⁰ Anon., 'The Deadly Breach...', *North Eastern Daily Gazette* (2 June 1882).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Jessica P. Clark, 'Grooming Men: The Material World of the Nineteenth-Century Barbershop', in Hannah Greig, Jane Hamlett and Leonie Hannan (eds), *Gender and Material Culture in Britain since 1600* (London: Palgrave, 2016), 104–5.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 108–9.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 111–13.

⁸⁶ Anon., 'The Barber's Shop', 606.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 607.

support, and then if he escapes without a cut, he may consider himself fortunate.⁸⁸ If gentlemen preferred to shave themselves and had the equipment and facilities to do so, it was claimed that working-class men were forced to use the barber through general ignorance about how to shave. A note in the *Huddersfield Chronicle* about the lack of hairdressers and shavers in the small Yorkshire town of Holmfirth in 1851 suggested that, while some men might manage to shave themselves, it was not easy or common.⁸⁹

Pressure on barbers was increased by the huge demand for their services on weekends, regularly confining them to their shops until the early hours of Sunday morning. As in previous centuries, men attended barbers on Saturdays both to remove the accumulated clag of the working week and in readiness for church. Having to work at any hour of the Sabbath was a cause of complaint. In the very first edition of the *Hairdresser's Chronicle*, an anonymous correspondent asked for the support of the journal in securing the closure of barbershops on Sundays since he was 'oppressed by the long hours as well as having to work hard until two o'clock on Sunday morning'. He was promised that the issue would receive the earliest attention.⁹⁰ The editor was as good as his word and subsequent issues continually supported calls for an Act of Parliament to prevent trade on Sundays, citing pressures on barbers. One reported that, depending on the whims of their customers and loath to lose even a single penny shave, many urban barbers regularly worked until midnight on Saturdays to satisfy the demand of the working man to 'pass his Sunday with a smooth face'.⁹¹ In Whitechapel it was reported that several barbershops remained open all day on Sundays when, if the practice were outlawed or made illegal, the demand could easily be satisfied by early opening on Monday morning. *The Hairdresser's Chronicle* invited readers to forward names of any offending Sunday openers.⁹²

Several years later there had clearly been no change. By 1870 the growing strength and power of unions in many trades was noted – a power that was actually stronger than needed. Journeymen barbers, however, badly needed such a 'complete trade bond' because of the isolation of their work and the long hours involved, reportedly second only to 'omnibus men' in their relentlessness. According to a report, working hours even in midweek, regularly saw barbers working from half-past-seven in the morning until ten at night.⁹³ On weekends, this regularly extended past midnight, with some barbers shaving continuously for more than seven hours on a Saturday evening. Remarkably, it was also claimed that 'extremely quick men' were able to shave sixty clients in an hour, although fatigue made that the exception rather than the rule.⁹⁴ This situation was certainly not unique to London. In August 1857, a journalist accompanying Liverpool police officers on duty noted a riotous crowd gathered about

⁸⁸ Anon., 'The Beard Movement and British Barber Shops', *Greenock Advertiser* (28 March 1854): 1.

⁸⁹ 'Hair-Dresser Wanted', *Huddersfield Chronicle* (11 January 1851).

⁹⁰ 'Answers to Correspondents', *HC*, 1:1 (1 November 1866): 7.

⁹¹ 'Sunday Closing', *HC*, 11:1 (2 September 1867): 5.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ 'On Barbers', 85.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

a 'halfpenny shaving shop' which it would appear does such a roaring business that on the occasion in question at least it had been kept open until at least half past one o'clock on the Sunday morning. The proprietor, his son and wife were at the door, and they complained that a rabble of boys had been throwing stones at the door and window.⁹⁵

Partly because of the nature of their clientele, but also through their own sharp practices, barbers frequently found themselves on the wrong side of the law. As with their early modern antecedents, nineteenth-century barbers sold other goods on the side. The illicit sale of alcohol and foodstuffs was common practice providing a handy extra source of income, as well as an inducement to attract custom. An investigation into 'flying public houses' noted the reputation of barbershops around Petticoat Lane in London for giving customers gin and water with their shave and, worse still, on Sunday mornings. One police Inspector claimed to have regularly observed many 'half drunken' but 'well-shaved' men around the area. When questioned they revealed that they had paid threepence for a shave 'with a glass of jacky [gin] thrown in to confirm the bargain'.⁹⁶ Barbers like Andrew MacGinty of Northumberland in 1858 faced fine or imprisonment for selling alcohol without a licence. The detective officer 'suspected the prisoner and on Sunday last some sailors went and bought rum and whisky in his shaving shop, one of whom he saw in the act of swallowing a glassful'. MacGinty was duly locked up in default of payment.⁹⁷ It is also worth noting though that occupational diversity was also common among Victorian hairdressers, with many diversifying into the allied trade of perfumery, but also other goods and services. One 1868 advertisement offered interested parties a 'Haircutting and Shaving business with Tobacconist and Photography combined'.⁹⁸ Another, in 1874, combined haircutting and shaving with the sale of 'fancy goods' and tobacco.⁹⁹

Passing references make it clear that barbers also played a role in styling beards, although how regularly this was done and how important a part of their business it was is difficult to ascertain since evidence is largely circumstantial. Nevertheless, it does seem that some men preferred to have their facial hair attended to by an expert, rather attempting to clip it themselves.¹⁰⁰ Occasional references in popular culture also point to the practice. A *Punch* cartoon of June 1880 depicted a barber with scissors in hand, asking a naval officer if he wished his beard to be trimmed in the style of 'torpedo' or 'gunnery', the joke based on the similarity between the shape of the ordnance and the beard style.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ 'Liverpool Life Chap. XX: Police, Prisoners and Prisons', *Liverpool Mercury* (10 August 1857).

⁹⁶ 'Police Intelligence', *Morning Post* (22 October 1839).

⁹⁷ 'A Spirituous Shaver', *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* (18 August 1858).

⁹⁸ 'To Be Disposed Of', *HC*, 20:2 (1 June 1868): 1.

⁹⁹ 'To Hairdressers', *HC*, 203:8 (16 May 1874): 84.

¹⁰⁰ For examples, see 'The London Comedy Company at the Theatre Royal', *Bradford Daily Telegraph* (1 August 1871): 3; 'Tracing the Dynamitards', *Western Daily Press* (6 March 1884): 8.

¹⁰¹ 'Regulation', *Punch* (12 June 1880): 275.

Conclusions

Reports of the regular queues and long hours, therefore, strongly suggest that barbers remained busy throughout the 'beard movement' indicating that the initial decline in trade noted by the journals was not necessarily reflective of the situation on the ground. As the author of 'Facts about Razors' noted in 1873, 'A large proportion of the community do not shave now, but still the razor is not obsolete among us. Increasing as the habit has become of wearing the beard and moustache, there are still shavers and shaved.'¹⁰² This last point, along with the potential divisions between barbers, however, again raises the important issue of class. It is easy to assume homogeneity in beard fashions but, as with clothing, it actually makes little sense to assume that elite appearance was necessarily mimicked, or even desired, lower down the social scale. In the eighteenth century, is it safe to assume that all men went clean-shaven? Likewise, if many barbershops continued to experience strong demand, and working-class men apparently continued to be shaved in large numbers throughout the beard movement, does this suggest that the 'beard movement' was limited in its impact and social depth? It is to such questions that the next chapter turns.

¹⁰² 'Facts about Razors', *HC*, 191:7 (15 November 1873): 160.

Part Three

Fashion and Class

The bearded classes: Facial hair and social status, 1700–1900

The history of facial hair fashions has been suggested as the almost overwhelming predominance of the clean-shaven face, punctuated by several distinct bearded phases.¹ The past five hundred years have witnessed two of these beard phases, first during the early modern period and again in the mid-nineteenth century, when beards were closely bound up with prevailing notions of masculinity and sexuality. The period between 1700 and 1850, by contrast, has generally been assumed to be a beardless age, one where the smooth face became the new exemplar of polite and refined manliness. As a general narrative this has much to commend it. In general, the sources are supportive of these broad trends, particularly for the second half of the nineteenth century when the popularity of beards across Europe appears conclusive. And yet, questions remain about the homogeneity of beard fashions and, in particular, the social depth to which beard fashions penetrated. Is it safe to assume, for example, that the lower orders simply followed class or elite fashions? Part of the problem in accessing plebeian facial hair fashions, however, is the relative lack of source material. As with so much historical evidence, the majority in society are either obscured altogether or refracted through source material created by, and therefore necessarily weighted towards, the middle and upper levels of society.

Nevertheless, it is possible to persuade the faces of lower-class men out of the shadows. While admittedly more difficult for the seventeenth century, some glimpses of eighteenth-century plebeian facial hair are possible from images and depictions in satirical literature and also through descriptions of the characteristics of runaway servants, apprentices, vagrants and outlaws. From the late eighteenth century, some institutions, most notably prisons, began to record the physical characteristics of individuals upon admission to an institution, which could include facial hair. By the mid-nineteenth century the increasing use of photography affords a direct view of criminal bodies.

¹ Christopher Oldstone-Moore, *Of Beards and Men: The Revealing History of Facial Hair* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 3–4.

There are obvious problems in this approach. First is the indiscriminate nature and patchiness of survival for each of these source types, ruling out a systematic, diachronic or regional study of plebeian facial hair fashions. In some cases, for example, it is not clear from institutional admissions registers (before photographs) whether facial hair has been consistently recorded as a physical characteristic. It is plausible, for example, that physical features were only noted if there was a danger of misidentification or confusion with another man, perhaps of the same surname. Second is the reliability of satires and cartoons as evidence of actual appearance, given their emphasis upon deliberately extreme or exaggerated characteristics. The inclusion, or lack, of facial hair in such depictions, however, might at least reveal expectations of appearance for the lower orders. Third, is the typicality of photographic evidence. It could fairly be argued that criminal ‘mugshots’ or physical descriptions may not offer a fair representation of the working poor. Men arrested for vagrancy, for example, might be assumed to be more likely to have facial hair, especially if they were too poor to shave or be shaved. But, as evidence from at least one institution (Bedford gaol) suggests, inmates came from a variety of social, economic and geographical backgrounds. Assumptions about the facial hair fashions of the lower orders are therefore far from straightforward.

With these limitations in mind, this chapter will suggest that the history of beard fashions is neither as neat nor as linear as might be assumed. Beard fashions varied according to time and location, but also class. Also, rather than simple binaries between ‘bearded’ and ‘beardless’, facial hair existed along a spectrum, was prosthetic and malleable. Beards could be long or short, thick or thin. There were many variations in style, from full beard to side whiskers or moustaches, and faces could be clean-shaven or stubbly. Many beard styles still required at least part of the face to be shaved. In some cases, plebeian fashions appear to confirm broad assumptions about facial hair fashions. But, in others, there are suggestions of important differences between classes. To explore such issues further, this chapter focuses on two particular time periods – the supposedly beardless eighteenth century and the height of the beard movement, after 1860. This approach allows us to test questions of ubiquity and homogeneity in facial hair fashions and what this might reveal about assumptions of masculinity and male appearance at different levels of society.

Facial hair in the age of shaving

The decline of facial hair from the end of the seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth might initially appear total. Contemporaries certainly viewed themselves as living in a beardless age. By 1802, the chemist and natural philosopher William Nicholson felt confident in declaring that the ‘caprices of fashion have deprived all the nations of Europe of their beards.’² As we have seen, shaving was an – perhaps *the* – essential grooming practice of the enlightened gentleman. The clean-shaven face evinced gentlemanly neatness and elegance. But is it safe to assume that what stood for

² William Nicholson, ‘Philosophical Discquisitions [*sic*] on the Processes of Common Life: Art of Shaving’, *Journal of Natural Philosophy, Chemistry and the Arts*, 1 (1802): 47.

elite men was necessarily reflected in the appearance of the lower orders? Questions might be raised, for example, about both the desire and means for men of the lower orders to maintain a shaved face. Even despite the availability of cheap penny shaves by barbers, shaving was still, for many men, a once-weekly task undertaken for Sunday service, leaving them with increasingly heavy stubble for the rest of the week. For the poorest men it was probably cheaper and easier to grow a beard, trimming it when it became too unruly. If poorer men did choose to shave, it is by no means clear if their motivations reflected the same ideals of manly appearance or politeness as those of middling or elite men. Given that there is seemingly little contemporary discussion of the decline of beards, visual sources or descriptions offer the best opportunity to explore the faces of eighteenth-century men. To begin with, it is useful to consider the place of facial hair within formal portraiture.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the portraiture of eighteenth-century gentlemen is the overwhelming lack of facial hair. On one level this is perhaps to be expected, given the elite social demographic of those who commissioned portraits. Even stubble or 'five o'clock shadow' was generally purged from portraits. To be sure, images of clean-shaven faces cannot be taken as *prima facie* evidence that sitters had no stubble at the time. Some may simply have indulged in a pre-portrait shave, or else relied on artistic licence to portray them with their 'best face'. But the almost total lack of bearded portraits strongly suggests that both artists and sitters were complicit in the desire to depict men with smooth faces.

The ways that artists depicted the face reflected new ideas about the portrayal of corporeal features and their significative power. Just as eighteenth-century portraiture used light and colour to draw attention to the leg and thus to the lower half of the body, depictions of smooth chin and cheeks emphasized the head – literally the 'public face'.³ Echoing physiognomic ideas, the *philosophe* Denis Diderot saw the face as a canvas from which the character or emotional state of a man could be divined.⁴ Painters paid particular attention to faces, both through individual qualities, such as the luminosity of the skin, and also their place in highlighting the relationship between the body's exterior and its surfaces.⁵ For this reason and reflecting the polite fashion for the smooth face and the open countenance, the subjects of portraits by celebrated artists such as Joshua Reynolds and Allen Ramsey were generally clean-shaven. In his 1780 self-portrait, Joshua Reynolds portrayed himself in academic dress, next to a bust of Michelangelo. Borrowing stylistically from portraits by Rembrandt, the main light in the image strikes Reynolds's cheek, showing a clear, healthy complexion, with only a hint of stubble around the lips and chin – in sharp contrast to Rembrandt, who often included facial blemishes. It is also interesting to note that the light striking Michelangelo's bust falls on the upper head, emphasizing his mental acuity and the

³ Karen Harvey, 'Men of Parts: Masculine Embodiment and the Male Leg in Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal of British Studies*, 54:4 (2015): 807.

⁴ Mechtild Fend, 'Bodily and Pictorial Surfaces: Skin in French Art and Medicine, 1790–1860', *Art History*, 28:3 (2005): 313.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 316.

status of the head as the site of learning. His bearded face, however, lies in heavy shadow.

This is not to say that facial hair played no part in eighteenth-century art: rather, where it did appear, its inclusion was usually freighted with meaning. As Reynolds's self-portrait illustrates, depictions of biblical or classical figures often showed them bearded. The fact that fashion had excised the beard from British men's faces did not diminish its symbolic power as a sign of the venerable wisdom of the philosopher, or the 'pard'. Given the popularity of genre paintings, bearded models were highly sought after by prominent artists. Various studies by Sir Joshua Reynolds, including 'A Man's Head' (c. 1771) and 'The Banished Lord' (1777), depict men with full beards. In some



Figure 9.1 Sir Joshua Reynolds, self-portrait, 1780. Royal Academy of Arts collection.

cases, the models for such portraits are known. One of Reynolds's regular sitters was George White, a labourer and beggar and sometime artist's model, favoured for his muscular physique.⁶ White was depicted in various situations, standing for a Pope in one picture and an imprisoned noble in another. James Turner, another elderly beggar, regularly sat for the English artist Nathaniel Hone, as well as Reynolds, charging them a shilling each time as a fee.⁷ But men such as Turner and White were in demand by artists as models precisely *because* their beards rendered them unusual. As the author and print seller James Caulfield suggested in 1820, the 'silvered locks and flowing beard[s]' of White and Turner gave them a 'patriarchal appearance'.⁸ Several painters were apparently struck by the 'singularly reverend character of [Turner's] aspect', making him an invaluable model for popular artistic themes, from neoclassical genre paintings to biblical studies.⁹ In European portraiture more generally, beards could be deployed as a visual shorthand for age, or poverty. Italian artists such as Gaetano Gandolfi (1734–1802) and Giacomo Ceruti (1698–1767) painted a series of portraits, sometimes of bearded saints and other biblical figures, but also of peasants and labourers, often with long, untidy beards, to emphasize their plebeian earthiness. Similar themes were also to be found in French art, in paintings such as François Le Moyn's (1688–1737) 'Head of a Bearded Man', or Jean-Claude Naigeon's 'Head of an Old Man'.

Some eighteenth-century portraits of elderly men, for example, deliberately chose rough, stubbly skins, perhaps to emphasize the abandonment of attachments to worldly considerations. The German artist Balthasar Denner's portrait of an old man in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, depicts a weary face with heavy stubble, but not a full beard, suggesting declining regard for personal grooming and perhaps vanity, accompanying the onset of age. Several others of Denner's portrayals of elderly men include stubble or light beards.

The apparent popularity of bearded models such as George White and James Turner, both of whom were labourers or beggars, raises the further issue of class and could be read as evidence that beards were common among the lower orders. It is possible that their low status and ragged appearance worked precisely because they matched the figurative and allusive qualities desired by artists for their particular subject matter. It seems almost certain that the intention in using them was not to formally portray the lower orders. In an artistic culture that valued precision, rule, harmony and the removal of nature's aberrations, the poor were not generally thought worthy subjects for the painter's brush. They were, however, regular subjects in satirical cartoons, either as individuals, or in among the crowd or 'mob'. Satirists naturally exaggerated grotesque features and bodily characteristics. But as Diana Donald has argued, eighteenth-century caricatures equally often depicted the crowd sympathetically, as a reflection of the diversity of English society and the absence of social regulation, allowing rich

⁶ William T. Whitley, *Artists and Their Friends in England. 1700–1799, Volume 2* (London: Publisher unknown, 1928), 266.

⁷ James Caulfield, *Portraits, Memoirs and Characters of Remarkable Persons, From the Revolution in 1698 to the End of the Reign of George III, Volume 3* (London: T. H. Whiteley, 1820), 223–5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 223.

⁹ *Ibid.*



Figure 9.2 Sir Joshua Reynolds, a man's head, c. 1771–3. Tate Gallery.

and poor alike to mingle at public events.¹⁰ Image and symbolism, rather than direct observation, were key in capturing the crowd. As Donald also argues, Georgian caricaturists sought to provide a 'picture of England', one sometimes sympathetic to the lower orders and as yet did not deploy the 'physiognomic and moral complexities' of Victorian cartoonists.¹¹

If caricatures relied on stereotypes, it seems fair to assume that any apparent plebeian fashion for facial hair would be emphasized. But depictions of the poor in

¹⁰ Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Age of George III* (Newhaven: Yale University Press, 1996), 113.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 109, 113.

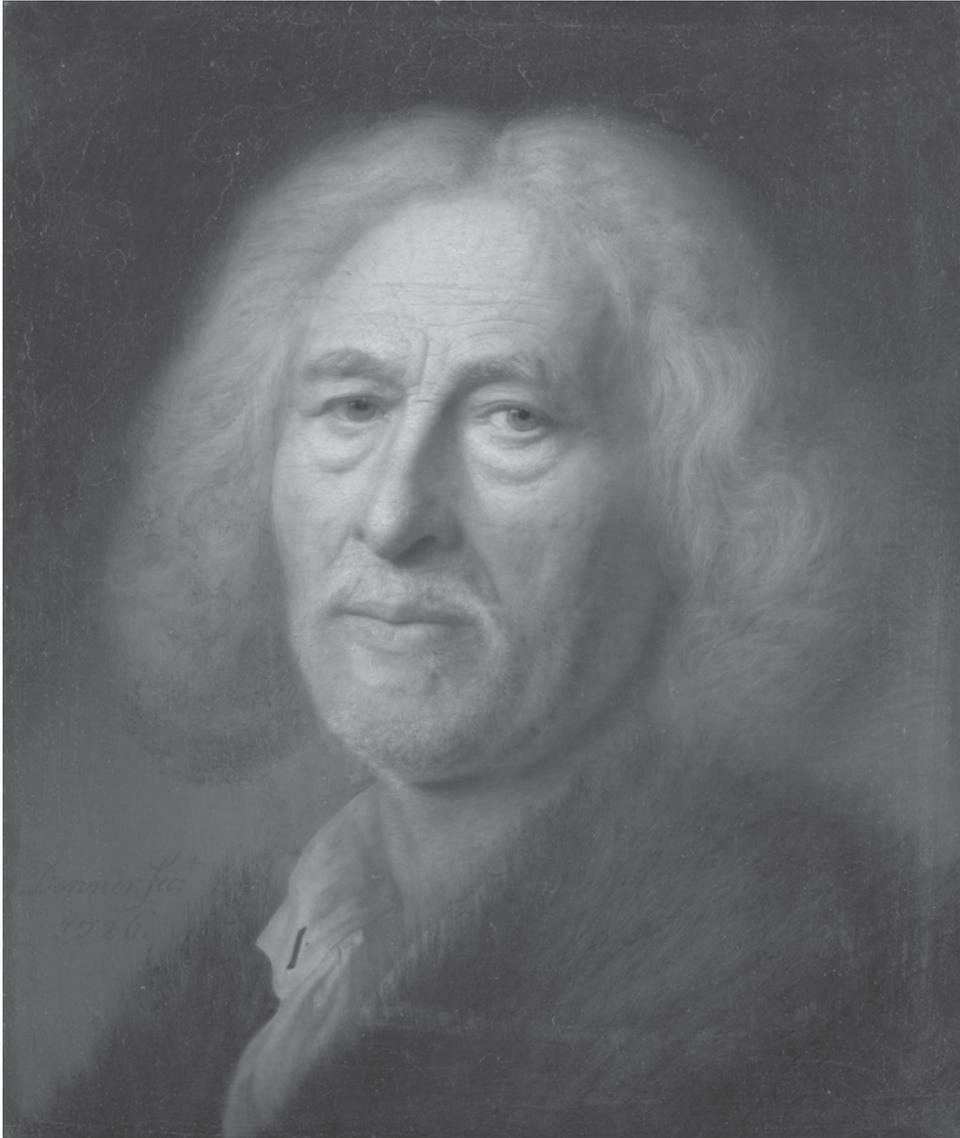


Figure 9.3 Balthasar Denner, 'Alter Mann' (old man), 1726. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Georgian caricatures and satires strongly suggest the ubiquity of the clean-shaven face. Caricatures containing street scenes and large, mixed crowds often contain no evidence for beards, or even whiskers. John June's *A View of Cheapside, as It Appear'd on Lord Mayor's Day Last* (1761) depicts a busy street in full carnival, including gentlemen, soldiers and unruly citizens hanging off balconies and brawling.¹² No bearded figures are visible. The almost Brueghel-esque attention to plebeian appearance among the onlookers in Luke Sullivan's (after Hogarth) *Representation of the March of the Guards Towards Scotland in 1745* shows no bearded figures, a feature repeated across similar

¹² John June, *A View of Cheapside as It Appear'd on Lord May's Day Last* (London: Smith, 1761).

scenes throughout the century.¹³ A character with a chin beard in Thomas Rowlandson's 1809 *Mad Dog in a Coffee House* is the only individual with facial hair among twenty-one visible male faces depicted in detail.¹⁴ As in portraiture, where facial hair was depicted in caricatures it was often intended to convey a specific point or purpose. James Gillray's *New Way to Pay the National Debt* (1786) contrasted the richly dressed William Pitt greeting the king emerging from the treasury, with the figure of a limbless and supplicant soldier begging in the gutter. The soldier's face is covered by a thick white beard, emphasizing his bodily dereliction and distance from polite society in not being physically able to attend to his appearance.¹⁵

If caricatures represented exaggerated, stylized or symbolic views of the body, how can the appearance of actual Georgian men, and particularly the poor, be assessed? As Gwenda Morgan and Peter Rushton have argued, the growing availability of printed material in the eighteenth century brought lower-class bodies into public view as never before.¹⁶ One of the most regular sources of information about bodies could be found in descriptions of men on the run. The proliferation of relatively cheap newspaper advertising space offered a ready means to seek information relating to runaway servants, apprentices and criminals. As their physical characteristics were described in the advertisements, the bodies of the 'poor, troublesome and criminal' were increasingly opened up to public scrutiny.¹⁷ As the most public surfaces of the body, the features of heads and faces were key elements in descriptions of criminals and runaways. Facial hair was regularly remarked upon. Using such advertisements as evidence for the wearing of facial hair is problematic, however, not least because it was a useful device for criminals wishing to evade detection. The prosthetic nature of beards meant that appearance could be swiftly and radically altered, either by shaving it off, growing it or even applying false whiskers. At the very least, however, 'wanted' advertisements, reveal the facial hair styles worn at the time of flight, offering a unique insight into the appearance of individual men.

In the seventeenth century, when facial hair was relatively common, the lack of a beard could be a distinguishing feature worth noting. The physical descriptions of two escapees from Dorchester gaol in 1658 both specifically noted their having no beards, while a French youth run away from his master in 1701 had but 'very little beard'. In each case, the lack of beard was unusual and could be used to mark an individual out.¹⁸ In the largely clean-shaven eighteenth century, however, facial hair was just the sort of characteristic worth noting in the limited space of an advertisement, particularly if it was of unusual size, shape or colour. If a runaway had a beard, moustache or whiskers, it seems reasonable to assume that this would be included. In many cases, rather than

¹³ Luke Sullivan after William Hogarth, *A Representation of the March of the Guards towards Scotland in the Year 1745* (London: Publisher unknown, 1750). See also Anon., *Christmass Gambolls* (London: P. Griffin, 1747); Thomas Rowlandson, *Miseries of London* (London: R. Ackerman, 1707).

¹⁴ Thomas Rowlandson, *A Mad Dog in a Coffee House* (London: Publisher unknown, 1809).

¹⁵ James Gillray, *A New Way to Pay the National Debt* (London: William Holland, 1786).

¹⁶ Gwenda Morgan and Peter Rushton, 'Visible Bodies: Power, Subordination and Identity in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World', *Journal of Social History*, 39:1 (2005): 39.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ 'Advertisements', *Publick Intelligencer* (28 February 1659); 'Run Away on Saturday Last...', *Post Man and the Historical Account* (8 February 1701).

suggesting widespread facial hair among poor men, references to facial hair often occur within broader narratives of bodily difference and otherness. This could occur in several contexts. If the missing man was considered mentally disturbed, for example, a beard could both embody and emphasize his disordered mind. John Boys, reported missing from his mother's house, was a 'walking melancholy man', wearing a long brown beard, while 'Peter the Wild Youth', run away from his 'keeper' in May 1748, had a 'shock head of hair and a long beard'.¹⁹ Here the beard evinced wildness and loss of care over the self. In other cases, as with portraits, beards emphasized dereliction and age. While the long beards of elite patriarchs commanded gravity and respect, the tatty fronds of old beggars and vagrants merely amplified their generally 'ragged' appearance.²⁰ Race offered a further context in which beards were mentioned, and prominent or unusual facial hair could be remarked upon as a marker of racial difference. Jewish men were often identifiable during the eighteenth century for their beards and ringleted hair, but such features could also be applied to exotic foreign 'others'.²¹ A seven-foot-tall 'fortune teller', arrested in Tothill Fields in 1767 who 'dressed like an Armenian, and says he came from that country', was noted as having an unusually large beard and whiskers.²²

Trial records also provide evidence for facial hair in the eighteenth century, especially in witness descriptions of criminals. Again, at a time when the shaven face was in vogue, large, thick or dark beards, like the thick black hair and black beard of the forger John Cattipodi in 1794, perhaps an Italian, were distinguishing features that witnesses were apt to recall.²³ Facial hair also offered criminals a useful means of disguise in attempts to evade justice. In January 1743, during the trial of reputed sodomites John Deacon and Thomas Blair, a witness was asked to confirm the identity of one of the men in the dock, at which he replied, 'I am sure he is the Person, he has a long Beard on now; I suppose that is to disguise himself'.²⁴

But beards were also noted in advertisements as part of general appearance, rather than simply being of an unusual shape, size or colour. While not numerous (often fewer than ten references in advertisements per decade of the eighteenth century) they

¹⁹ *London Gazette* (7 July 1705); see also 'Whereas a Person Insane...', *Daily Advertiser* (19 April 1773); 'Whereas on Saturday Last', *Daily Advertiser* (26 April 1744); 'Stray'd from Thomas Fenn's', *London Evening Post* (3 May 1748).

²⁰ 'Postscript', *St James Chronicle or the British Evening Post* (16 October 1781); 'Whereas Thomas Leach...', *Daily Advertiser* (10 October 1743); 'News', *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (5 May 1778).

²¹ For example, 'Whereas the Following Persons Stand Charged with Felony', *Public Advertiser* (21 October 1784); 'Whereas Joseph Solomons', *Public Advertiser* (27 January 1774); 'Whereas David Mani', *Public Advertiser* (24 October 1775).

²² 'London', *London Evening Post* (15 September 1767).

²³ Trial of John Cattipodi, 17 September 1794, <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t17940917-22&div=t17940917-22&terms=black%20beard#highlight> (accessed 23 April 2018); see also Trial of Luke Hand, 28 June 1780, <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t17940917-22&div=t17940917-22&terms=black%20beard#highlight> (accessed 23 April 2018); Trial of William Girdler, 19 February 1752, <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t17940917-22&div=t17940917-22&terms=black%20beard#highlight> (accessed 23 April 2018).

²⁴ Trial of John Deacon Thomas Blair, January 1743, <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t17430114-31&div=t17430114-31&terms=long%20beard#highlight> (accessed 23 April 2018).

are at least regular enough to suggest that the sight of facial hair was not necessarily rare. References to beards occur variously in descriptions of poor or criminal men of various ages and occupations, including the military.²⁵ Even after 1750 when 'polite shaving' was at its height, some men still chose to be bearded. When he deserted from the ninth Regiment of Foot in Bristol in 1756, William Williams had a 'brown beard and a jolly face'.²⁶ Appeals for information about another unnamed criminal in 1795 noted his 'strong black beard and whiskers'.²⁷ Whiskers and moustaches in general, however, seem to have been far less common than beards. In fact, it wasn't until the last decades of the century that 'whiskers' were specifically referred to. In 1788 a reward was offered for the arrest of William Brodie of Edinburgh for stealing. Among his distinctive characteristics were a set of whiskers, sandy at the ends and 'frizzed at the sides'.²⁸ In February 1794, Thomas Bell deserted from the Yorkshire Volunteers, and an advertisement was placed for his apprehension. As well as his 'fresh complexion' and sandy-coloured hair, it noted that he had 'reddish whiskers'.²⁹ Facial hair that was 'red' (ginger) was often particularly remarked upon.³⁰ Overall though, references to whiskers as distinct characteristics again number in the tens, rather than hundreds.³¹

Individual motivations for wearing beards during this period are difficult to assess. For those of limited means, unable to afford either their own shaving tackle or the barber's fees, a beard was apparently the cheapest option. Wearing beards to hide the physical marks of disease, such as smallpox, was a common motivation. A number of references to bearded criminals, for example, also mention pockmarks or scars. Wanted for robbery in 1747, Morgan Clarke of Dublin was a 'middle siz'd gross man, well-limbed, black beard' and also 'marked with the small pox'.³² The burglar Henry Tandy was described as having a large black beard, a dark complexion and 'pock-fretten' face.³³ While pockmarks could be useful in assessing the immunity of potential employees, some stigma over the scarring still lingered. A beard was therefore a useful means of concealment. But there were also some who still clung to the beard as a mark of masculinity. 'Temerarius', a correspondent to the *Morning Chronicle* in 1774, was inspired to examine his own beard, having just read a new treatise about physiognomy, testifying that large beards were a sign of temerity. Holding a looking glass in one hand and a candle in the other, he inadvertently set fire to his beard and 'sing'd off the best half of it'. After extinguishing the blaze, he felt compelled to add an annotation to the

²⁵ See 'Deserted', *London Evening Post* (4 December 1735); 'There Is Now in Nottingham Gaol...', *General Evening Post* (22 October 1745); 'Stolen Last Sunday Morning', *Public Advertiser* (27 July 1767); 'Stolen This Morning from the Cock in Clapham', *Public Advertiser* (29 August 1771); 'Country News', *True Briton* (30 November 1796).

²⁶ 'Deserted at Bristol', *London Evening Post* (8 January 1756); see also 'John Bell or Beal', *London Evening Post* (9 January 1773).

²⁷ 'Public Office Bow Street', *True Briton* (31 March 1795).

²⁸ 'Sheriff's Clerk's Office', *World* (20 March 1788).

²⁹ 'Deserted from the Yorkshire Volunteers', *World* (7 February 1794).

³⁰ For example, see 'Eight Pounds Reward', *True Briton* (28 July 1794).

³¹ Based on keyword searches of online newspaper databases. For other examples of 'whiskers', see 'Transport Office', *Sun* (7 August 1799); 'Public Office Bow Street', *Sun* (14 April 1800).

³² Such as 'Whereas It Appears by the Examinations of John Healy...', *Dublin Journal* (14 November 1747); 'Mickleham, June 3rd 1755', *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer* (5 July 1755).

³³ 'Whereas Henry Tandy...', *Lloyd's Evening Post* (4 April 1763).

physiognomical tract: 'As to this assertion, *Probatum Est*'.³⁴ The fact that he had a beard is, itself, noteworthy and suggests that some men were still wearing them.

Overall, however, the impression left from a survey of Georgian newspaper advertisements for wanted or missing men is that beards were by no means ubiquitous, but neither were they necessarily rare. Anyone perambulating the streets of a Georgian town would likely have encountered at least some men wearing some form of facial hair, rather than a sea of shorn faces. There is also little evidence to suggest marked class distinction in facial hair fashions during the eighteenth century. Despite the obvious existence of facial hair among poor and criminal men, it still seems likely that perhaps the majority of the poor and lower orders in late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Britain were, like the polite, elite gentleman, beardless. This is not to say, as discussed in an earlier chapter, that poor – or indeed elite – men were necessarily always completely clean-shaven, and it is worth noting again the problematic issue of stubble. The terminology of complexion, as described in advertisements, provides useful evidence of 'stubbliness' or swarthinness. As Morgan and Rushton suggest, for example, the term 'swarthy' could be used to denote an unshaven, stubbly face.³⁵ Scores of examples attest to the swarthy complexions of criminals, which could be taken as evidence of heavy stubble, in turn perhaps suggesting irregular shaving either through necessity or design. Care should be taken not to overstate the reliability of the term, however, since some descriptions noted a swarthy complexion *and* a beard.³⁶

Conversely, it was not only the lower orders who sometimes chose to grow facial hair, and the potential existed for sporadic, localized 'outbreaks' of particular beard or whisker styles. In the early nineteenth century, in London and some provincial towns, for example, an often-overlooked fashion for side whiskers spanned more than two decades. An emerging fashion for whiskers in France and Germany began to be noted in the English press in the early 1800s and, by 1806 the trend had spread to Britain. In December that year the *Hereford Journal* reported a new trend for whiskers among 'our young bucks of distinction'. Not content with their 'enormous whiskers', they had begun to 'add Jewish moustachios', which the writer considered an 'odious barrier'.³⁷ By 1812 the trend was apparently in full flower and certainly appears to have been popular in London. One correspondent to the *Tradesman, or Commercial Magazine* in July that year professed astonishment at the 'spreading proportion of hair on the human face' he witnessed there, describing it as nothing less than a 'whiskered *mania*' (original italics) which had 'very far over-stepped its bounds'.³⁸

There were certainly some who supported the return of facial hair after so long a period of beardlessness. One motivation was the apparent connection between beards and mental acuity, evidenced most prominently by the abundance of facial hair in

³⁴ 'For the Morning Chronicle', *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* (22 June 1774).

³⁵ Morgan and Rushton, 'Visible Bodies', 42.

³⁶ See, for example, the description of 'Colonel Lally' in 'News', *General Advertiser* (17 January 1746); 'Whereas a Person...', *General Evening Post* (16 August 1748).

³⁷ Anon., 'Friday's Post Concluded', *Hereford Journal* (3 December 1806): 4.

³⁸ Tim Bobbin Jr, 'On the Absurdity of Whiskers', *Tradesman or Commercial Magazine* (9 July 1812): 29–30. An article on the 'Whiskers Movement' of the early nineteenth century is currently in preparation and due for submission in 2021.

depictions of ancient philosophers. The beards of the great thinkers of antiquity were considered symbols of wisdom which, as one correspondent argued, made the weak appear strong; the old appear young; the cowardly appear brave, and the ugly look beautiful.³⁹ Another, 'Aenobarbus', argued that whiskers conjured up the 'grave and manly countenance' of the ancients. They were 'natural' and even 'beautiful'. Shaving, by contrast, was a cruel and unnatural act, which disfigured the 'Human Face Divine'.⁴⁰ Such arguments neatly prefigure those made during the 'beard movement'; facial hair was depicted as a natural, God-given, edifying feature of the male face. In an age 'so attached to antiquities', it was 'silly to oppose so ancient a custom' as the cultivation of whiskers.⁴¹ It was obvious too that whiskers were viewed as an affectation of the urban elite – *the* fashionable adornment of the young city beau.⁴² The popular song 'The Grand Panorama in London' lauded the vibrant culture of the capital and its inhabitants and included the verse 'Our bucks and gay loungers of spirit and fashion/ For whiskers terrific betray a strong passion.'⁴³ But there are also suggestions of the spread of the trend to other levels of society. The diary of an imagined apprentice in *The Scourge*, for example, noted that 'If my whiskers don't grow soon I'll buy a pair of false ones, *for whiskers I must have*' (emphasis added).⁴⁴ The implication, although humorously intended, was that whiskers had become an essential accoutrement to any young man with pretensions to adulthood.

Nevertheless, some saw the return of facial hair as a threat, one with connections to foreign, revolutionary and even effeminate men. In 1801, the *Ipswich Journal* noted the new French fashion for whiskers, which, it sneered, 'were spread too far upon the cheek'.⁴⁵ In January 1802 the *Morning Post and Gazetteer* felt confident in asserting that there was little danger of 'broad and black whiskers' being imported by British gentlemen. Such 'disgusting adornments' were specifically identified as an unwelcome effect of revolution.⁴⁶ For the satirical writer 'Tim Bobbin Jr', this 'absurd and indecent fashion' belonged to Europe; the '*visage a la baboon*' (original italics) had no place on an Englishman's face.⁴⁷ At a point when masculinity was also closely bound to the clean-shaven face, whiskers formed part of wider debates about gender, effeminacy and the 'dandy'. Questions were certainly being raised, for example, about what exactly represented the 'ideal' male body. There was no easy answer. As Joanne Begiato notes, the period was characterized by a series of alternative and overlapping models of male physicality.⁴⁸ Concerns about the physical appearance of young men reflected broader fears about their physical and moral degeneracy, and particularly about effeminate

³⁹ 'Whiskers', *Liverpool Mercury* (1 January 1813).

⁴⁰ Aenobarbus, 'Whiskers and Mustachios', quoted in Anon., *The Spirit of the Public Journals for 1813* (London: Printed for James Ridgeway, 1814), 147–50.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 150.

⁴² Eliza, 'The Value of Whiskers', *Lady's Monthly Museum* (12 March 1812): 153.

⁴³ 'New Songs', *Ladies' Fashionable Repository* (c. 1810): 26.

⁴⁴ Anon., 'The London Apprentice's Journal; or How to Pass a Sunday', *Scourge or Literary, Theatrical and Miscellaneous Magazine* (7 February 1814): 106–7.

⁴⁵ Anon., 'Friday's Post', *Ipswich Journal* (12 December 1801): 2.

⁴⁶ Anon., 'Our Connections with France', *Morning Post and Gazetteer* (2 January 1802): 2.

⁴⁷ Bobbin, 'Absurdity of Whiskers', 30.

⁴⁸ Begiato, 'Between Poise and Power', 130.

dandyism. While there was no explicit suggestion that whiskers were an effeminate adornment per se, they were seemingly part of the recognized 'uniform' of the dandy. Whether condoned or condemned, however, the debates surrounding the wearing of facial hair reveal much about attitudes towards those who chose not to follow prevailing fashions. Both the 'whisker mania' of the early nineteenth century and the evidence for bearded and whiskered men throughout the eighteenth century also demonstrate the dangers in assuming homogeneity in any beard trend.

Facial hair styles in the age of beards

As Chapter 4 showed, after 1850 men were bombarded by literature extolling the virtues of the beard and attempting to convince them that a clean-shaven man was scarcely a man at all. As we have seen, many and various arguments were put forward emphasizing the innate healthiness and natural protective qualities of the beard, as well as the deadly perils that supposedly accompanied each swipe of the razor. At first glance the triumph of the beard might appear total. So deeply entrenched is the image of the heavily bearded Victorian man that the two were virtually synonymous and, it has been claimed, this was consistent 'throughout society' after the 1850s.⁴⁹ That beards were popular has been amply proved, as has their relationship to changing concepts of manliness. But there are reasons to question whether the return of facial hair was either as rapid or complete as has been assumed. Again, class is central to questions about the potential spread and social depth of the fashion for beards.

There are certainly questions surrounding the social demographics of facial hair during the 'beard movement'. Discussions of male appearance in the nineteenth century often focus upon dress and consumption by elite and middle-class men. Brent Shannon, for example, argues that middle-class male interest in fashion after the mid-century was directly linked to consumption, and particularly the purchase of clothing and accessories that had formerly been markers of elite appearance.⁵⁰ A similar process had occurred during the eighteenth century, as the second-hand market for clothing made previously expensive, high-quality fashion items and other goods accessible to men lower down the social scale.⁵¹ As Shannon also argues, however, this was not a simple case of emulation. What emerged was the assertion of a distinct middle-class sartorial aesthetic.⁵² It could be argued that facial hair was an equally potent symbol of masculine self-expression, one reinforced continually across lay and medical literature. But, like fashion, it is by no means clear whether this new bearded aesthetic applied, or was meant to apply, to all classes, or simply to elite or middle-class men.

⁴⁹ Jacob Middelton, 'The Beard and Victorian Ideas of Masculinity', in Dominic Janes (ed.), *Back to the Future of the Body* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2007), 36.

⁵⁰ Brent Shannon, *The Cut of His Coat: Men, Dress and Consumer Culture in Britain, 1860–1914* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 10–11.

⁵¹ See John Styles, *The Dress of the People: Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2008).

⁵² *Ibid.*

The potential for class-based variations in the wearing of facial hair raises a second issue of style. The often-uncritical use of the collective term ‘beard’ obscures the myriad forms and styles of facial hair and the meanings that each could carry. As with side whiskers, for example, certain styles bore positive or negative associations, depending on the contexts of wearer and observer. Both contemporaries and recent histories of facial hair emphasize the full, heavy Victorian beard as virtually the standard. But the visual and even literary sources upon which this evidence is founded are generally weighted towards middling and elite men. Assessing the appearance of the criminal poor in this period offers a more nuanced understanding of the politics of Victorian facial hair styles. Just as with dress and consumption, facial hair was a powerful expression of male class identity and a highly visible, public and powerful means of self-fashioning. The evidence discussed in this part of the chapter suggests, first, that men wore a variety of facial hair styles in the second half of the nineteenth century, rather than simply the full beard, and that one, perhaps unexpected, variation appears to have predominated among the lower orders. This should not necessarily be surprising. By 1872, the proliferation of facial hair styles was beginning to draw ridicule. An article in the *Treasure of Literature* noted that:

Every man does exactly as he pleases with his beard. We have [facial hair] of all sorts and sizes now ... Here we see a ‘swell’ barbed after the drooping fashion. There goes a businessperson with beard as forked as lightning, and almost as fiery; and by him there shoulders a professional bully, with short blue-black moustaches nestling under his puggy nose. And Lo! to crown all, here comes somebody’s grandfather, looking like an Arctic Owl in the whiteness of his puffy beard.⁵³

As the evidence presented in this chapter also shows, there are clear signs that potentially significant numbers of men chose to remain beardless.

There is some precedent for quantitative analysis of Victorian facial hair, in Dwight Robinson’s 1976 study of images in the *Illustrated London News*.⁵⁴ Robinson’s article has tended to be used for its ‘headline’ findings suggesting that the numbers of images of clean-shaven men fell dramatically with the onset of the ‘beard movement’, while images of bearded men grew accordingly.⁵⁵ But a closer look at Robinson’s findings, based on images (generally cartoons and sketches, along with some photographs) of only around 100 men per year, actually reveals a more diverse picture. First, Robinson was concerned with facial hair in all its forms, and not simply beards. His study was predicated on five categories of facial hair: beards (defined by him as ‘any amount of whiskers centring on the chin’), sideburns alone, sideburns and moustaches in combination, moustache alone, clean-shaven.⁵⁶ The distinctions between these

⁵³ Charles Dawson Shanly, ‘Capillary Freaks: The Romance of Facial Hair’, *Treasury of Literature and Ladies’ Treasury* (1 February 1872): 181.

⁵⁴ Dwight E. Robinson, ‘Fashions in Shaving and Trimming of the Beard: The Men of the Illustrated London News, 1842–1972’, *American Journal of Sociology*, 81:5 (1976): 1135.

⁵⁵ For example, Christopher Oldstone-Moore, ‘The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain’, *Victorian Studies*, 48:1 (2005): 11; Middelton, ‘The Beard’, 35.

⁵⁶ Robinson, ‘Fashions in Shaving’, 1134.

categories are extremely important in order to fully understand the trajectory of facial hair fashions in the nineteenth century and also the extent to which men still needed to shave at least part of their faces. Figure 9.4 shows Robinson's graphs for each of his categories of those men with facial hair. Each line on the horizontal axis represents a five-year interval, starting at 1840. The vertical axis shows frequency in percentages. Dots on the graph represent the percentage frequency for each year, while the plotted lines give a five-year moving average.

With the exception of 'sideburns' alone, the trajectory of all categories seems plain enough, appearing to show a consistent period of growth in the second half of the nineteenth century. How many men were depicted wearing each style depended greatly on the specific type of facial hair. The frequency of moustaches before 1880 was low and generally less than 10 per cent, while combinations of sideburns and moustaches, although slowly increasing, never represented more than 20 per cent of men in any given year. In line with what might be expected given the apparent success of the 'beard movement', there was, however, a sharp rise in the numbers of bearded men depicted after 1850. The frequency of images of bearded men continued well above 40 per cent for several decades thereafter.⁵⁷ The figures for sideburns (i.e. side whiskers, not meeting under the chin) are interesting, peaking at around 60 per cent of men in 1853, before dropping back to between 30 and 40 per cent for the following two decades, logical if they were supplanted by full beards. It is worth remembering, however, that sideburns could be no more than short extensions from the hairline, as much as they could be large, bushy appendages running along the jawline. These variations are not discernible from Robinson's data. It is equally difficult to know how variations such as the 'chinstrap' or 'Shenandoah' styles with no moustache, or the 'goatee', just around the mouth and chin, were categorized within this data. As we shall see below, the distinction between these forms was potentially important.

Further, the bundling of clean-shaven men into a single category is problematic, since it creates the illusion of a simple binary between those who had facial hair and those who shaved. At first glance, Robinson's data for clean-shaven men again appears to provide compelling evidence for the domination of facial hair. In 1840, more than 40 per cent of images depicted men with no facial hair. By 1850 this had fallen to 30 per cent, after which there was a continued decline, reaching a low point of around 5 per cent in 1885.⁵⁸ But it was not just clean-shaven men who shaved. As the data also unwittingly reveals, a large number – perhaps even the majority – of Victorian men still needed to shave regularly. Both sideburns (or longer side whiskers) and moustaches required at least part of the face to be shaved, as did certain beard styles such as the 'goatee'. Here again, the lack of data for individual beard styles within the 'beard' category in Robinson's study makes this impossible to quantify but the suggestion is that, in addition to those men who wore no facial hair, a significant proportion of Victorian men still shaved, even at the height of the 'beard movement'.

Taken as a whole, while Robinson's graphs reinforce the dominance of facial hair, they offer little evidence that beards, or any particular facial hair style, was

⁵⁷ Ibid., 1135.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 1136.

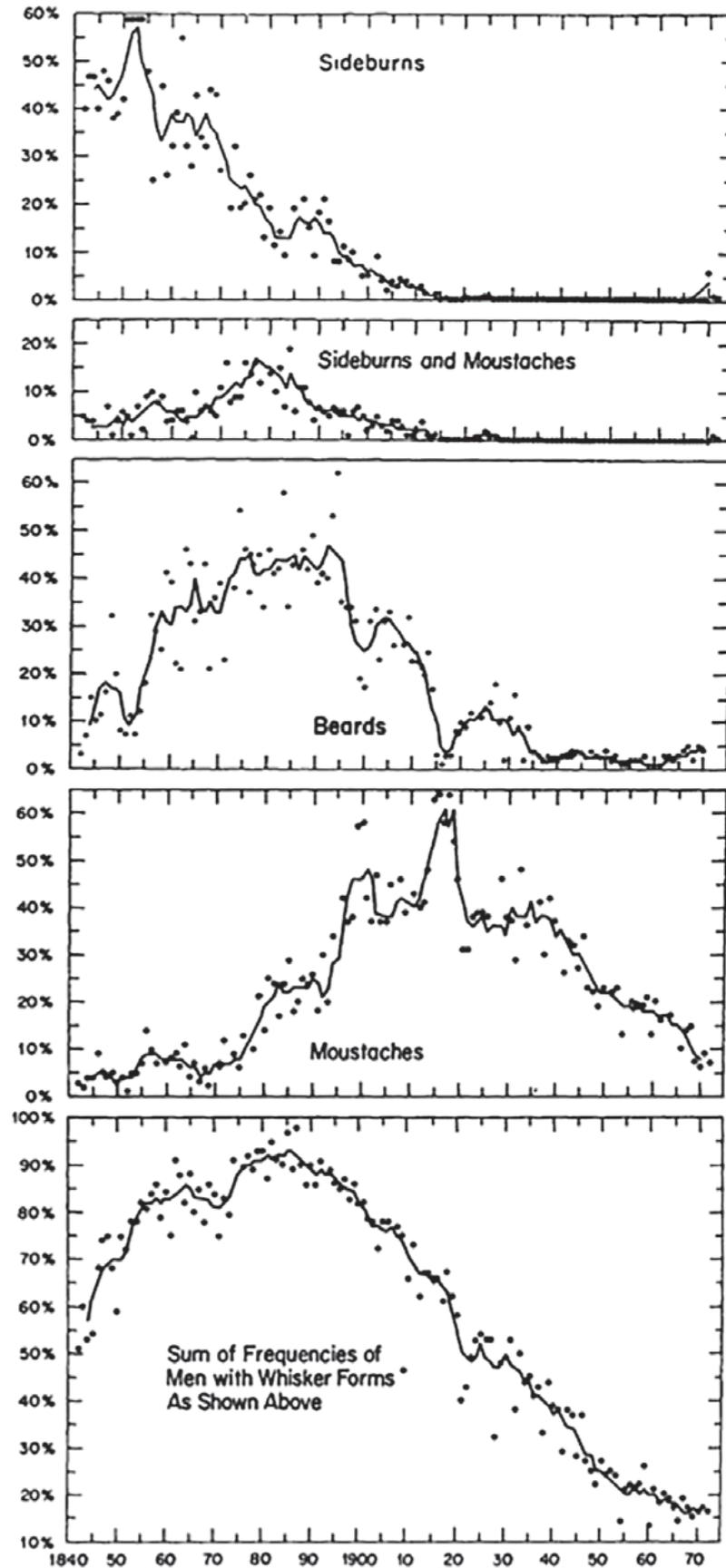


Figure 9.4 'Frequencies of Whisker Forms, 1842–1972', reproduced from Dwight E. Robinson, 'Fashions in Shaving and Trimming of the Beard: The Men of the Illustrated London News, 1842–1972', *American Journal of Sociology*, 81:5 (1976): 1135.

privileged. As a 1874 encyclopaedia entry on beards noted, ‘It is now rare to see a clean-shaved face, either beard or moustache, or both, being almost invariably worn, and cut according to the taste of the wearer.’⁵⁹ By his own admission, Robinson’s subjects were part of a ‘cultural sub group’ and often notable members of society.⁶⁰ The *Illustrated London News* specialized in stories about prominent figures in British life and current affairs, so its reliability for assessing the facial hair fashions of the majority of Victorian society is questionable. It is also unsafe to assume that men with facial hair necessarily kept the same style (or even kept it at all) over long periods of years.

How, though, are we to access facial hair styles at the lower levels of Victorian society? The nineteenth century saw renewed interest in working or poor bodies amidst broader concerns about the criminal ‘class’. Recording bodies was part of a campaign of monitoring criminal characteristics and habits, and institutions paid increasing attention to the physical characteristics of prisoners and inmates, partly to identify individuals, but also to monitor repeat offenders.⁶¹ In the earlier part of the century, many registers only recorded basic details of physical appearance, with no space for additional information. The Bridewell hospital in London, for example, had a tabulated admission register, with space for comment on eyes, hair, build and complexion, but nothing about facial hair.⁶² In other cases it was left to the discretion of the clerk as to whether to record it. A detailed register of criminals committed to Southwark Sessions in London from 1814 to 1842 provides a case in point. In a list of more than 1,600 individual prisoners, there are only around ten references to facial hair among the notes of physical characteristics.⁶³ In July 1819 John Brown, convicted of stealing a bed, was described as having a ‘fair complexion, sandy hair, rather bald’ and wearing ‘red whiskers.’⁶⁴ In 1828, John White, aged 25, was noted as having ‘dark bushy whiskers.’⁶⁵ The overwhelming absence of facial hair in this sample could be taken in several ways. First, it might be a genuine reflection of a preference for being clean-shaven among men during this period, which would certainly match with assumptions about fashions before the ‘beard movement’. In this case, whiskers might have been noted precisely because they were exceptional. As we will see in the next chapter, institutional rules often stipulated shaving for male inmates, so this may have been done before admission. Even so, in such a big sample, the almost total lack of facial hair (less than 1 per cent) does appear anomalous. Far more likely is the diligence, or otherwise, of the recorder and the perceived value of recording facial hair. It is worth noting that the register was compiled by at least three different individuals, with several examples of recorded hairiness appearing as a cluster. Perhaps more tellingly, most of the references

⁵⁹ A. Whitelaw (ed.), *The Popular Encyclopaedia: or ‘Conversations Lexicon’* (London: Blackie and Son, 1874), 468.

⁶⁰ Robinson, ‘Fashions in Shaving’, 1133.

⁶¹ Helen Johnston, *Crime in England, 1815–1880* (London: Routledge, 2015), 25–9.

⁶² London Metropolitan Archives, MS 33138/3, Bridewell Hospital Commitment Book, 1824–7.

⁶³ London Metropolitan Archives, MS CLA/031/01/009 – List of prisoners committed at Southwark Sessions, 1814–42.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 25.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 153.

to whiskers describe them as either 'red' or, more usually, 'carrotty'.⁶⁶ It may therefore be the case that 'red' whiskers were regarded as the exception, with dark or brown perhaps overlooked. Extrapolating general trends from such a sample is therefore too unreliable.

From the 1850s, however, the new technology of photography offered a solution to the problematic of reliance on written description to recognize and identify criminals. Photographs offered a quick and fairly easy means through which to identify previous offenders, or those who had breached conditions of release.⁶⁷ As the century wore on, more institutions began to include photographs within their admissions registers, analysis of which provides some intriguing insights and raises questions about the nature and spread of the Victorian beard trend. Crucially, since photographs were apparently usually taken just after sentence, they offer a window into the facial hair styles of criminals as they appeared on admission to prison, rather than once they had been admitted, processed and, presumably, washed and shaved. Given the range of ages, backgrounds and occupations of such men, they can shed light on important factors such as regional fashions, life stage and even occupation. Analysis of such registers therefore offers a rare glimpse into the faces of lower-class and criminal men at the height of the Victorian beard movement.

For the purposes of this discussion, photographic images of prisoners from three gaols in different parts of Britain (Bedford Gaol, Carmarthen, in West Wales, and Wandsworth in London) were collated, and details including age, place of origin and occupation recorded for each inmate, along with the facial hair styles visible in each case.⁶⁸ Some qualifications must be made. First, it is important to note that the smaller numbers of individuals, and restricted dates of the photographs, do not allow a direct comparison with Robinson's five-yearly data points. Instead, it has been necessary to consolidate and analyse the sample data by institution, and as a whole, across the available time periods – an approach which has drawbacks in assessing typicality, local variations or change over time. In order to give the best possible comparison with Robinson's data, though, the categories broadly follow his, but with one important distinction in the reclassification of sideburns as 'whiskers', which I again define as hair on the sides of the face, not meeting under the chin. Where variations in the length and appearance of whiskers appeared in photographs these were noted, in order to permit a more nuanced discussion of styles. Second, because of the relatively small numbers of individuals and the nature of the sources, some of what follows must be tentative. But, in the absence of a full database of all prisoner photographs, or other similar sources, beyond the scope of this book, it is at least worth some conjecture to open the door to further study.

The first register to be analysed is that of Bedford Gaol, a large prison that had been substantially expanded around 1850 and which was one of the pioneers of inmate

⁶⁶ For examples see *ibid.*, 21, 25, 26, 73.

⁶⁷ Johnston, *Crime in England*, 37.

⁶⁸ Bedfordshire Archives, MS QGV 10/4, Printed copy of List of Prisoners in Bedford County Gaol, 1859–1876; Carmarthenshire Gaol Felons Register, 1844–71, <http://www.welshlegalhistory.org/carms-felons-register.php> (accessed June 2017); NA, MS PCOM 2/290 and PCOM 2/291, Photograph Albums of Prisoners in Wandsworth Prison, 1872–3.

photography. The Bedford register covers the period from 1859 to 1876 and contains 181 photographs of male criminals. Taken as a whole across the period, within this sample, 111 men (62 per cent of the total) displayed some form of facial hair, with eighty-six men (47.5 per cent of the total) wearing beards. But there were variations in style. Perhaps surprisingly, only around a quarter of beard wearers had full, thick beards, redolent of the archetypal Victorian 'patriarchal' style. Instead, by far the most common style in the Bedford sample was the 'chin beard' or 'chin curtain'. This was a distinctive form, emerging from the sideburns and following the jawline down the sides of the cheeks and under the chin, but with much of the cheeks, and upper lip, shaved. More than two-thirds of Bedford prisoners with facial hair wore chin beards, amounting to 32.5 per cent of the total sample. Some styles, though, appear to have been relatively unpopular. For example, just thirteen men across the period (7 per cent of those with facial hair) wore only moustaches, and the same number wore side whiskers of varying lengths and styles. Three men in the sample wore 'goatee' beards.

But the other important fact to note is that seventy men (39 per cent across the period) were completely clean-shaven and, at times, the percentage was significantly more. With the caveat that the numbers of prisoner photographs in each year varied dramatically, from only five in some years to more than twenty in others, there were multiple years (1861, 1862, 1865, 1868 and 1873) in which 50 per cent or above of the photographed men had no facial hair, and the percentage rarely dropped below 33 per cent in others.

The second sample, from Carmarthen Gaol in West Wales, mirrors the same time period and numbers of prisoners as Bedford. Given the physical distance between the two gaols, the results here are remarkably similar. Among Carmarthen Gaol inmates, 114 (61 per cent of the total sample – virtually identical to Bedford) displayed facial hair, with seventy-six (39 per cent of the total sample) wearing beards. Here again, the 'chin curtain' beard was most common, with 55 per cent of bearded men in the Carmarthenshire sample wearing this style, compared to 36 per cent with full beards, and the majority of the rest having 'goatee' beards. Also, compared with Bedford, an identical percentage of men (39 per cent) were completely clean-shaven. There was some variation in whiskers and moustaches, however. Unlike Bedford, around a third of Carmarthen prisoners with facial hair wore side whiskers, while the incidence of moustaches was slightly lower, accounting for only 3 per cent of those with facial hair.

The results from the third register, from Wandsworth, cover only two particular years, 1872 and 1873, but contain a larger number, of 270. Here, 54 per cent of the total numbers of prisoners wore facial hair and 38.5 per cent of the total wore beards. The frequency of the chin beard was the highest out of the three registers, accounting for 79 per cent of beard styles. Only four individuals displayed full beards, and there were variations including goatee beards and trimmed sideburns, but also a distinctive style, worn by a number of Wandsworth inmates, of a thick patch of beard only beneath the chin – a style not replicated in either of the other registers, highlighting the relevance of regional variations.

In order to ask broader questions of the data, relating to factors such as age, occupation and styles, however, it is more useful to combine all three registers into one

Table 9.1 Facial hair styles in British prisoner photographs, 1856–76

Style	Number	% of total
Beard	264	41.60
Whiskers	85	13
Moustache	16	2.50
Other/combination	5	1
Total with facial hair	370	58.20
Clean-shaven	265	42

bigger sample, giving a total of 635 men, between 1856 and 1876, and aged between 16 and 68.

As Table 9.1 shows, taken as a whole over 58 per cent of the prisoners in this collated sample wore facial hair, with bearded men making up more than 40 per cent of the total number of those photographed.⁶⁹ Whiskers appeared less popular, while moustache-wearing in this sample (i.e. those wearing only a moustache, rather than as part of a beard) was extremely small, suggesting that this particular fashion was not popular. Equally interesting, however, is the large number of men in this sample – as many as wore beards – who were completely clean-shaven. If these figures are in any way representative of plebeian men in Britain more broadly (and when compared to the figures given in individual registers), then well over a third – and probably closer to around 40 per cent – of lower-class men in Britain potentially had no facial hair during the peak years of the Victorian beard movement. Despite the fact that men with facial hair clearly form the majority, this figure seems remarkably high, especially given the supposed ubiquity of the beard and the background ‘noise’ drummed up by the raft of literature in support of beards during this period.

Turning to the styles of facial hair among prisoners, the prevalence of the chin beard in photographs in each of the three, geographically distinct, gaols appears compelling. Across the whole sample fully 72 per cent of beard wearers displayed a variation of this style. What might be regarded as the more typical Victorian style of full, thick beard and moustaches, by contrast, accounted for just 15 per cent of beard wearers. Other styles such as ‘goatee’ beards, light beards or even thick stubble represented other choices. Generalizing from a relatively small sample is always difficult, but the frequency of this style and in different areas of the country does raise questions about class distinctions in beard styles. Was the ‘chin beard’ perhaps the working man’s manifestation of the ‘beard movement’? It might be speculated that full beards were inimical to certain types of work, where they could become dirty, or perhaps even get trapped in machinery.

Another question seldom considered is that of the age demographic of facial hair. It is unclear whether the imperatives levelled at men to wear beards were either universally adopted by, or even meant for, all adult men. Is it even safe to assume that

⁶⁹ The figure does not total 100 per cent because of rounding.

lower-class men were necessarily aware of or interested in the beards fashion? The evidence from the data here certainly suggests differences in the wearing of facial hair according to age. Table 9.2 shows beard styles broken down into age groups by decade. The figures in brackets represent the percentages for each category of the total numbers of prisoners for that age group.

The variations in the number of prisoners in each age group, and especially the lower numbers of older men, mean that conclusions can be no more than provisional. Nonetheless, there do appear to be some interesting variations in the adoption of certain styles according to age. Because of the smaller age range of the first group, it is instructive to widen the discussion to include men between the ages of 16 and 25, to give a bigger sample. These are represented in brackets in Table 9.2 for illustrative purposes, and do not appear in the final total to avoid double counting. Given the implications in the sample data of the late appearance of beards in younger men, it is perhaps unsurprising to find that the vast majority (179) of the 261 prisoners in the sample aged between 16 and 25 were completely clean-shaven. Of the eighty-two men with any kind of facial hair, forty-two had chin beards, but most occurred after the age of 20. Eleven prisoners in this age range had full beards of varying lengths, sixteen had side whiskers and a further seven had moustaches, with the remaining men displaying scattered examples of goatee beards or stubble. The earliest appearance of a full beard (and in fact of any form of facial hair) is that of the 18-year-old labourer David Jones of Llangeller, Carmarthenshire.

Among the next group, however, those aged 21–30, facial hair was much more frequent. Fifty-eight per cent of this age group wore facial hair, dominated by the chin beard, with no moustache. Seventy-nine men out of 112 with beards wore this style, suggesting its popularity among younger men. Only seventeen men (17 per cent of beard wearers) wore full or thick beards. Whisker-wearing among this group was close to the overall average, but there were some variations, including combinations

Table 9.2 Facial hair styles in the total sampled British prisoner photographs, per decade of age (extra category of 16–25 is not included in totals)^a

Age group	Beard	Whiskers	Moustache	Clean-shaven	Other/combination	Total
16–20	11 (9.4%)	2 (1.7%)	1 (0.85%)	101 (86.3%)	2 (1.7)	117
(16–25)	57 (21.8%)	16 (6.1%)	7 (2.7%)	179 (68.6%)	2 (0.8%)	(261)
21–30	112 (40.5%)	38 (13.7%)	7 (2.5%)	117 (42.3%)	2 (0.72%)	276
31–40	86 (63.7%)	17 (12.6%)	4 (2.4%)	28 (20.7%)	0	135
41–50	30 (52.6%)	12 (21%)	2 (3.5%)	12 (21%)	0	56
51–60	16 (64%)	6 (24%)	1 (4%)	2 (8%)	0	25
61+	9 (34.6%)	10 (38.5%)	1 (3.9%)	5 (19.2%)	1 (3.9%)	26
Totals	264	85	16	265	5	635

^a Again, variations from 100 per cent occur because of rounding.

of whiskers and moustaches and also a style apparently peculiar to parts of London in 1873, of a bushy outcrop of hair underneath the chin, but with all other parts shaved.⁷⁰ Why, then, did many young men seemingly choose to remain clean-shaven? It is possible that, for some younger men, beards were associated with patriarchal ideals of family formation, marriage and domesticity, attributes perhaps seen as the realm of older men. To remain clean-shaven (or even to display shaved cheeks) signified some retention of youthfulness. For others, however, beards instead represented a step *towards* manhood, a conscious decision to replace the smock face of youth with the manly tufts of maturity.

The popularity of the chin beard continued in those aged 31–40, with sixty-six (77 per cent of beard wearers) choosing this style. Here again, a relatively low percentage (17.4) of beard wearers chose to wear a full beard. Nevertheless, with the caveat that it is based on a much lower number of men, the percentage of beard wearers among those aged between 31 and 40 was significantly higher than in the previous cohort, while the percentage of clean-shaven men appearing in the sample dropped by almost a half.

Among 41–50-year-olds (again a frustratingly smaller sample) the pattern of the predominance of beard-wearing continues. While it could be assumed that older men might have been more likely to present with full beards, the chin beard was still undiminished in its popularity, accounting for more than 73 per cent of beard wearers, in contrast to only 20 per cent with full beards. The percentage of clean-shaven men remained relatively low, at around 20 per cent of the men in that age group. One noticeable change, however, was the apparent rise in the popularity of side whiskers among this age group. As Table 9.2 suggests, however, it was seemingly among men aged 51–60 that beards reached their peak, reaching their highest point in percentage terms, before dropping again thereafter. The figures also tentatively suggest the increasing adoption of whiskers with age, since they rose in popularity for nearly every successive decade of age. Remarkably though, despite the apparently overwhelming contemporary evidence in support of the full beard, its popularity – at least among this group of society – seemingly remained low.

Taken together, these results raise interesting questions, not only about the relationship between facial hair, masculinity and fashion in the nineteenth century, but also about the impact of health claims made in support of facial hair. The apparent popularity of the ‘chin curtain’ style of beard, together with the high incidence of clean-shaven prisoners, appears to suggest that arguments for the supposed health benefits of beards were either disregarded, failed to make an impact among working-class men, or never reached them in the first place. As this chapter has shown, many claims for the supposed health benefits of facial hair emphasized its role as a filter, protecting the throat and also the area around the mouth and nose. These were attributes that only a full beard could possess, the longer, thicker, softer and more luxuriant the better. The chin beard, however, depending on its size and thickness, was surely a poor relation, one that could neither filter nor protect. Often it simply

⁷⁰ See, for example, PCOM 2/291, John Lee, 18 May 1873, Alfred Waller, 21 June 1873 and Richard Leonard, 16 August 1873.

skirted the jawline, leaving shaved cheeks, chin and lips. As such, the primary areas designated as nature's protection against illness and the elements by beard advocates were left naked.

The particle-capturing properties of facial hair were especially commended for use within certain trades where the inhalation of dust or soot was potentially problematic. Although the numbers involved here are small, it is still worth some speculation. Among the prisoners in the Carmarthen register, for example, were eight coal miners – precisely the type of 'dusty' occupation appealed to by proponents of the beard. Half of those men were completely clean-shaven. Three wore chin beards, therefore missing arguably the primary component of the 'natural respirator' – the moustache. One other wore a light goatee beard, the filtering properties of which cannot have amounted to much. Other similar occupations show a like pattern. Of the eight chimney sweeps in the sample, three had no facial hair, three had chin beards and the others either a light beard or stubble. Four out of the seven railway workers in the sample (another occupational group directly encouraged to grow beards) were clean-shaven, with only two having chin beards and another just with a light beard. The sample data contains nineteen carpenters, ten of whom had beards, of which eight were chin beards. The suggestion from this limited sample is, again, that health claims were not necessarily accepted in large numbers.

Continuing the theme of occupation, there is little evidence for beard styles as tokens of occupational identities, although the limited number of examples of specific trades rules out detailed analysis. It is interesting to note, however, that among the recorded occupations, from travelling hawkers and rag gatherers to a variety of artisanal trades, retailers and, occasionally, white collar workers such as clerks or accountants, the sample also includes thirty-four vagrants, ranging in age and supposed occupation. It seems reasonable to assume that such men would be bearded, without (presumably) the means to shave themselves, or the money to spend on a barber. Seventeen of the men were bearded. But rather than long, unkempt beards, consistent with a life spent on the road, thirteen wore chin beards, and only two had full beards, with a further two wearing heavy stubble. The other half were clean-shaven. Again, based on a limited sample, the implications are nonetheless intriguing, suggesting that even the poorest of men still found the time, motivation and means to shave. Clearly possessing a basic razor and shaving crudely, perhaps without soap or hot water, when the opportunity arose was a possibility. But it also speaks of the importance of shaving as a male ritual, perhaps linked to the maintenance of dignity and routine, even amidst the hardest of circumstances.

Conclusions

What inferences are to be drawn from the evidence of prisoner photographs? The relatively small size of the sample, the patchiness of the data and demographic variations in these samples all serve to inhibit a deep statistical analysis. But comparing three gaols over a similar time period at least gives a first glimpse at the faces of poorer men in Britain, giving a benchmark against which to measure both broad assumptions

about the homogeneity of facial hair fashions and also the particular conclusions drawn in Robinson's original study of elite facial hair styles.

First, if the data sampled here is in any way representative of either other areas of the country or other groups or levels of society, it suggests that a large proportion of Victorian men were potentially clean-shaven, even at the height of the beard movement, and an even larger proportion still needed to shave at least part of their faces regularly. Facial hair was obviously a matter of choice. The majority of men here did wear some form of facial hair, which could be seen as lending weight to the broad success of the beard campaign. But a significant proportion also clearly chose not to, suggesting in turn that the sustained arguments put forward in support of wearing beards was not necessarily as all-conquering as has previously been assumed. This is a theme that will be returned to in a later chapter exploring the marketplace for shaving products in the nineteenth century.

There are other factors in the sample that appeared to influence choices about facial hair. Age was one. Men under 20 seemingly preferred to be clean-shaven or were perhaps less able to grow beards in the first place – the archetypal beardless boys. Thereafter, facial hair dominated, with more men wearing it than not. It does not seem to be the case, though, that the face of the 'ordinary' Victorian working man was necessarily adorned with a mighty patriarchal beard, or even a moustache. Rather, his was most often a hybrid beard, still requiring much attention to keep it trim and in shape. Other styles such as 'goatee' beards still required much of the face to be shaved. As they grew older, a proportion of men also seemed to prefer a set of side whiskers to a beard, a style again, according to their size and thickness, requiring the chin and lips to be shaved. Given, as we have seen, the vociferous attacks on shaving and the supposed dangers of the razor, this seems all the more surprising. Occupation does not seem to have been a particular factor, although location could lead to the emergence of local variations in fashion.

Turning finally to Robinson's study, how does the evidence from prisoner photographs match with the patterns displayed in the *Illustrated London News*? Again, the discussion here is based on a much smaller sample, but it suggests that Robinson's study showing that less than 30 per cent of men were clean-shaven after 1850, with a further decrease each decade, may not necessarily be representative of all levels of Victorian society. In fact, among the lower orders, it appears that significantly more men may have been clean-shaven throughout the 1860s and into the 70s.

Cleanse, cut and control: The institutional history of facial hair

In 1871, the set of ‘Rules for the Guidance of Attendants’ at the Surrey County Asylum contained strictures relating to the personal appearance of inmates. Every patient was to be daily washed and combed, ‘clean in their persons’ and neat and tidy in their dress.¹ But among these fairly standard rules was an unusual concession. While male patients were to be shaved weekly (and, it was stated, they could not shave themselves) any who wished to grow a beard was allowed to do so, on the condition that he kept it ‘scrupulously clean and tidy’.² In context of the regulation of appearance of institutional inmates, this was fairly revolutionary, restoring some degree of agency in facial appearance back to individual men. Before this, however, how had institutions regarded and dealt with facial hair?

Thus far, this book has treated facial hair as a personal choice for individual men. But, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there were large groups of men for whom decisions as to whether to shave or grow a beard were not their own. Various institutions, including prisons, workhouses and hospitals, exerted control over men’s appearance in various and complex ways. Michel Foucault’s arguments that the eighteenth century brought changes in methods of punishment, moving away from physically harming the criminal body and towards more subtle means of control, are well known. To take the Foucauldian line, in prisons, shaving heads and faces could be read as evidence of identity control, taking away the individual agency of men in determining their own appearance. In workhouses, barbers were often employed to shave paupers for similar reasons, while the military imposed strictures relating to facial hair as a means of instilling discipline, as well as part of the broader regulation of martial dress and behaviour. Outside institutions, decisions concerning facial

¹ Surrey History Centre, MS 3043/1/3/1/2, ‘Rules for the guidance of the attendants, servants, and all persons engaged in the service of the Surrey County Asylum at Brookwood’, 1871, 13. I am very grateful to Jane Hamlett for sharing this source. See the broader discussion of material comforts in Victorian asylums in Jane Hamlett and Lesley Hoskins, ‘Comfort in Small Things? Clothing, Control and Agency in County Lunatic Asylums in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century England’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 18:1 (2013): 368–86.

² Surrey History Centre, MS 3043/1/3/1/2, 40.

hair were closely bound with prevailing expectations of manly appearance. For male paupers, prisoners, asylum inmates and hospital patients, however, the mechanisms were different since such decisions were often not theirs to make. The place of facial hair within institutional histories therefore offers an alternative perspective on the interplay between identity, power, health and masculinity.

This chapter explores the place of facial hair and shaving within the institutional regulation of men's bodies in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the place of barbers in enforcing conventions of appearance. Drawing on prison and workhouse accounts and individual narratives, it argues that many institutions of various kinds assumed responsibility for determining men's appearance, in the process significantly altering the dynamics between facial hair and masculinity. As we shall see, the mechanisms through which this worked varied according to the institutional context. In prisons and, to a lesser degree, workhouses, shaving could be viewed as part of punitive measures to enforce institutional norms of appearance and the suppressing of individual agency over self-fashioning and appearance as well as hygiene and the control of vermin. In other ways, though, workhouses also acted to return respectability to paupers through hygiene and clean linen. In asylums and hospitals, the focus was more firmly upon cleanliness. In line with changing ideas about the material conditions in which institutional inhabitants were confined, keeping heads and faces closely shorn helped prevent fleas and lice which, along with a regime of regular washing and fresh clothing, aimed to prevent contagion.

Respectability and cleanliness

The eighteenth century brought debates about the place and importance of hygiene. In part this reflected the rise, from the early decades of the century, of a 'genteel aesthetic' in bodily appearance. Cleanliness was an expression of class. A clean, well-ordered and neatly groomed body conveyed taste and manners, in contrast to the rough, almost animalistic, bodies and habits of the unmannered plebs.³ This is not to say that the poor were unconcerned about hygiene and appearance. As Louise Falcini points out, the 'respectable poor' did subscribe to notions of cleanliness as a marker of respectability and also appreciated the physical comfort of clean clothing and clean bodies.⁴ This was exemplified in regular changes of body linen and also, for men, in regular bathing in rivers and open water, increasingly using soap through the second half of the eighteenth century.⁵ As well as the material comfort, being physically clean, decently appressed and, for men, being clean-shaven, meant potentially better access to charitable funds and institutions for the poor.

³ Kathleen M. Brown, *Foul Bodies: Cleanliness in Early America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 119. For a broader discussion of the importance of personal grooming as an expression of politeness, see Alun Withey, *Technology, Self-Fashioning and Politeness in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: Palgrave, 2016), 7–10, 65–90.

⁴ Louise Falcini, 'Cleanliness and the Poor in Eighteenth-Century London', University of Reading, Unpublished PhD thesis, July 2018, 97–8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 28–35.

Of more concern were the neglected bodies of the idle poor and criminal, whose ramshackle appearance attracted increasing attention. Set against the regular and refined bodies of the comfortable classes and the simple cleanliness and shift of the industrious poor, idle and criminal paupers were subject to ‘rhetorical brutality’ and referred to in terms of grotesquery.⁶ Beaten down by harsh existence, malnourishment, vice and alcohol, their bodies were portrayed as chaotic, filthy and unkempt.⁷ In newspapers and pamphlets, the bodies, physical features and appearance of criminals or deserters, were thrown open to scrutiny in ‘wanted’ advertisements, which listed physical characteristics including body shape, hair and beards.⁸ Clothing also played an important part in distinguishing ‘types’ of poor. While worthy objects were clean and neat in their apparel, the bodies of the ‘ragged poor’ shamelessly peeped out through the many holes in their tattered clothing. Paradoxically, those who appeared less in need of help were more likely to get it.⁹ In this context, therefore, the regulation of appearance and the imposition of standards of dress and appearance might be seen as encouraging the idle poor back towards to productivity and morality. At the same time, concerns about the health of the poor saw increased attention being paid to the material conditions in which they were housed, in particular to institutions including workhouses, asylums and hospitals.¹⁰

Control over the body was a central element in various kinds of punitive and non-punitive institutions throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As with many other aspects of the lives of supplicants, loss of agency over physical appearance was a consequence of receiving aid. If paupers were to be helped they should be prepared to submit to the regulation of their bodies. For prisoners, physical appearance was carefully managed and forcefully imposed. Hospitals and asylums also intervened to control the bodies, and faces, of patients. There were various reasons for this. One was the inculcation of a bodily regimen as part of institutional routines. Cleanliness, like work, took effort and application. But it was also an obvious physical manifestation of institutional ‘care’. In the parish, unkempt paupers reflected badly on those responsible for them, as well as on the individuals themselves. Surveillance of the clothing and cleanliness of the poor by parish vestries, JPs and others was also a way of checking up on overseers and workhouse masters or mistresses. Especially in the nineteenth century, the poor were inspected to check their own conformity to rules and personal hygiene, in turn offering a means to check the functioning of the institution.¹¹ Orderliness, then, was of signal importance and authorities intervened to ensure that certain standards of appearance were upheld.

⁶ Sarah Jordan, ‘From Grotesque Bodies to Useful Hands: Idleness, Industry and the Labouring Class’, *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 25:3 (2001): 62–3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 66–7.

⁸ Gwenda Morgan and Peter Rushton, ‘Visible Bodies: Power, Subordination and Identity in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World’, *Journal of Social History*, 39:1 (2005): 39.

⁹ Jordan, ‘Grotesque Bodies’, 67.

¹⁰ Susannah Ottaway, ‘The Elderly in the Eighteenth-Century Workhouse’, in Jonathan Reinartz and Leonard Schwarz (eds), *Medicine and the Workhouse* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2013), 48–9.

¹¹ See, for example, Samantha Shave, *Pauper Policies: Poor Law Practice in England, 1780–1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 124–7.

Even outside the physical walls of institutions, parish authorities were keen to police the appearance of the poor. In part this was charitable, driven by the desire to provide succour and comfort to those without means. But it also exemplified the wish to remove, or at least disguise, the visible signs of poverty in parishes. As one of the most public and immediate indicators of status, clothing was a central component. There were clearly expectations of decent and comely appearance, especially in church. As Steven King notes, the propensity to own and wear different clothing for different occasions, including ‘best’, was a measure of means.¹² To appear in tattered clothing, or with dirty, unkempt hair or beard, was a powerful symbol and signifier of being poor. General cleanliness was another important factor, and it was expected that people attended Sunday service clean and in good order.¹³ Satires such as Nicholas Breton’s *The Goode and the Badde* caricatured the poor and beggarly as being ‘seldome handsome, and often noysome’, their ragged and odoriferous bodies distancing them from decent churchgoing parishioners.¹⁴

Gifts of clothing offered the poor a chance to escape the censorious gaze of fellow parishioners, although the stigma of wearing (or indeed needing) parish clothing, or badges, was potent.¹⁵ Cutting hair and shaving poor men could also be viewed as a restorative measure, intended to confer some degree of bodily order and dignity. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, vestry books and churchwarden’s accounts contained regular payments to individuals like ‘Mr Gorst’ of Leyton, Essex, who was regularly paid several pounds for a variety of services, including haircutting, teeth drawing and shaving.¹⁶ In 1734, the overseers of Towcester, Northamptonshire made weekly payments to a barber to shave four men in the parish.¹⁷ The suggestion from accounts is that such shaving was generally done weekly, in preparation for appearance in church. Before the establishment of workhouses, this formed part of the provision of ‘outdoor’ relief in the parish. It is not clear where the task was undertaken in such cases. One possibility is that paupers were shaved in their own homes, but that obviously depended on individual circumstances. Another is that they were shaved in the shop of the contracted barber. It seems unlikely however, not least because of the potential conflict with their regular customers, that barbers would be overly keen on having the poor objects of the parish descend en masse upon their premises. A third, although not supported by firm evidence, is that of the local church, which was a site for the doling out of alms and payments from the parish chest and might also have provided a ready space for paupers to be shaved. It should be noted, however, that the employment of

¹² Steven King, *Poverty and Welfare in England, 1700–1850: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 136.

¹³ Steve Hindle, *On the Parish: The Micro-Politics of Poor Relief in Rural England, c. 1550–1750* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 189.

¹⁴ Nicholas Breton, *The Good and the Badde, or Descriptions of the Worthies, and Unworthies of This Age Where the Best May See Their Graces, and the Worst Discerne Their Basenesse* (London: Printed by George Purslowe, 1616), 26. My thanks to Michael Saunby for this reference.

¹⁵ King, *Poverty and Welfare*, 134–5.

¹⁶ John Kennedy, *A History of the Parish of Leyton, Essex, with Maps etc* (Leyton: Phelps Brothers, 1894), 161.

¹⁷ Northampton Record Office, MS 329P/119, Towcester Overseers Accounts, 1734–1760. I am grateful to Charlotte Young for this reference.

barbers and hairdressers as part of outdoor relief continued well into the nineteenth century, after the growth of workhouses. In 1833 the hairdresser Thomas Coxon was paid by the Uttoxeter overseers for shaving the poor and providing ivory combs for the parish.¹⁸ The parish of St Dionis in London paid for various poor men in the parish to be shaved weekly, usually at a penny each time.¹⁹

Shaving could be forcibly imposed on vagrants if their appearance was considered potentially offensive to others. In January 1776 the *Westminster Journal* reported the arrest of an old beggar in St Giles ‘with a long beard and a patch’d coat of many colours’. It was ‘proposed to shave him’ whereupon the man angrily protested ‘for he should not long survive it’. Despite his protestations he was shaved, perhaps by force, and reportedly died a few days later.²⁰ It is not clear in this case whether shaving took place within the gaol cell or poor house, or whether specific space was provided by the parish for shaving to take place if not in the barber’s own shop. A second example, perhaps apocryphal, or even a masked English satire on Irishisms, highlights the place of unkempt beards and long hair within narratives of vagrancy and poverty. In 1821 an English newspaper reported the Mayor of Cork’s idea that reversing the ragged appearance of mendicants would effectively leave them unable to beg. Half a dozen ‘beggars found strolling within the limits of the city’ were duly gathered up on promise of a reward, but instead found themselves taken immediately to a local barbershop where they were shaved, washed, dressed and powdered ‘in the genteelest manner’ and were so ‘completely metamorphosed’ that they left the shop resembling Macaronis.²¹ Once this had been done, however, they were dumped unceremoniously back the street, where their now-fashionable appearance was far less likely to attract a coin. The report noted the apparent success of the Mayor’s radical approach, noting that the ‘whole tribe’ now avoided the city’s jurisdiction, ‘as carefully as if it had been visited by a pestilence.’²²

Through the eighteenth century, institutions became increasingly important in regulating the bodies of the poor. The management of facial hair was a key aspect in this process, not least since unkempt, filthy beards represented self-neglect and loss of self-control. The general policy of institutional authorities was therefore to intervene to remove it, in turn taking away the agency of individual men in determining their appearance. Throughout the period, and across various different types of institution, the clean-shaven face was the norm for institutional inmates. It is to such institutions, practices and practitioners, that the chapter now turns.

Before proceeding it should be noted that the following discussion explores the place of shaving within broader regimes of cleanliness and hygiene. Except for a brief initial outline below, it takes institutions collectively, rather than separately by institutional

¹⁸ Stafford Record Office, MS D 3891/6/35/1/25, Bill from Thomas Coxon to overseers of Uttoxeter, 29 September 1833.

¹⁹ London Metropolitan Archives, MS DB/AC, Churchwardens and Overseers’ Account Books, 1758–62, 97, 198, 292.

²⁰ ‘News’, *Westminster Journal and London Political Miscellany* (13 January 1776).

²¹ Anon., ‘Ludicrous Punishment’, *Royal Cornwall Gazette, Falmouth Packet and Plymouth Journal* (19 May 1821).

²² *Ibid.*

type. This method is not without issue since institutions obviously differed in their purpose and approach, as well as following different trajectories. Also, before 1750, rules about facial hair were neither rigidly nor uniformly enforced. This should not therefore be seen as any suggestion of standardization of approaches to hygiene across institutions, but rather as a means of discussing and comparing attitudes towards the control of facial hair and of bodies more generally.

Prisons, for example, seem to have been unique among institutions in the ways that they dealt with hygiene and appearance, especially in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Since prisons were largely self-governing, the conditions in which prisoners were held depended much on whether they were able to pay keepers for basic necessities or luxuries. For those who could afford it, clean clothing, beds and even perhaps barbering services were relatively easy to obtain. Those who could not pay could be left hungry and filthy and, in such cases, shaving was likely a low priority.²³ Descriptions of escaped prisoners regularly describe the men as being bearded at the time of their escape. Edward Paine, for example, who escaped from Newgate Prison in London in 1725 was described as having a pale complexion and a black beard, while Thomas Richardson, who made off from Oakham County Gaol in Rutland in January 1740, was 'dark-bearded and hollow-voiced'.²⁴ In 1747, a report of the escape of several prisoners from Newgate Prison noted that one not only had a light-coloured peruke (interesting given that he was presumably wearing it while in gaol) but also a 'reddish' beard.²⁵ Such examples may suggest that men were not subject to strictures about facial hair, that there was no enforced shaving, or perhaps equally that there was no barbering provision. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that, even here, plebeian ideas about orderliness and self-regulation meant that prisoners could take responsibility for basic cleanliness of their bodies and prison spaces.²⁶ The beginnings of change came with the 1774 Health of Prisoners Act of 1774 also enabled Justices of the Peace to intervene in the prison administration, including promotion of cleanliness and the provision of bathing facilities, although the extent to which these were used and enforced varied widely.²⁷

In workhouses and hospitals, however, regimes of cleanliness and hygiene were firmly embedded in their rules from the outset, in the former case from at least as early as the 1720s. Here, cleanliness of both body and environment exemplified orderliness, and shaving formed an important and constant part of these routines. The provision of clean linen every week and parading neatly shaved and combed paupers at church on a Sunday was the mark of a successful workhouse. The provision of shaving in asylums was more problematic, as we shall see, in the capacity and willingness of inmates to shave and the obvious dangers of providing access to razors. Here, the question of

²³ Falcini, 'Cleanliness', 262–3.

²⁴ 'Advertisements', *Evening Post* (7 October 1725); 'Whereas One Thomas Richardson...', *London Evening Post* (29 January 1740).

²⁵ 'Custom House, London, 11 July 1747', *General Advertiser* (13 July 1747). See also 'Broke Out of His Majesty's Gaol', *Whitehall Evening Post or London Intelligencer* (30 June 1761).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 264.

²⁷ Roy Porter, 'Howard's Beginning: Prisons, Disease, Hygiene', in Richard Creese, W. F. Bynum and J. Bearn (eds), *The Health of Prisoners* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), 7.

‘control’ is also complicated, since the provision of shaving in asylums arguably had more to do with perceptions of asylums and the ease and comfort of patients.

Regulating bodies

From the early decades of the eighteenth century, institutions began to set down regulations regarding the appearance of inmates, including their hair and beards. Hygiene was an important consideration in attempts to limit potential outbreaks of contagion. In workhouses, hospitals and asylums the institutional environment was carefully regulated, with regular programmes of cleaning and washing of cells, wards and facilities. Emphasis was laid upon cleanliness of environment, with orders for the regular change of bed linen and clothing, and also that every effort should be taken to ‘keep the people and children free from lice and filthiness.’²⁸ Responsibility for maintaining standards of hygiene and cleanliness within hospitals, workhouses and, from the early nineteenth century, prisons was generally designated to specific individuals, often women. In workhouses this might be the mistress or Matron of the house, but also servants, or even other inmates, to ‘keep the house clean’, as well as ensuring that ‘the poor people be kept clean and neat in their persons.’²⁹ In the workhouse of St Mary, Islington, staff were instructed to be ‘careful to promote cleanliness’, as well as industry, echoing similar regulations across workhouses, hospitals, asylums and, later, prisons.³⁰

As well as environments, regulating bodies was important, given the risk of contagion caused by the constant flow of inmates – a process that often began immediately upon admission. In workhouses, for example, cleanliness and hygiene were key. On entering the workhouse, paupers were expected to surrender their own garments and dress in regulated workhouse clothes.³¹ In many cases, as in the newly founded Enfield workhouse in 1787, they were also subjected to a potentially humiliating and intimate medical examination, where they were ‘stripped and washed clean and examined by the surgeon and apothecary to see that they are not afflicted by any infectious disease.’³² Paupers hoping to enter St Mary’s Islington workhouse could get no further than ‘one of the rooms in the yard’ until they had been examined

²⁸ Anon., *Rules, Orders and Regulations for the Governance of the Workhouse Belonging to That Part of the Parish of St Andrew, Holborn...* (Publisher unknown, 1791), 12; Anon., *Laws and Rules of the Birkenhead Borough Hospital* (Birkenhead: Publisher unknown, 1875), 23, 27.

²⁹ See the references to cleanliness in several London institutions in the 1720s in Anon., *An Account of Several Workhouses for Employing and Maintaining the Poor* (London: Printed and sold by Joseph Downing, 1735), 7, 10, 11, 16, 79, 84.

³⁰ Anon., *Rules and Orders for the Better Regulation of the Workhouse Belonging to the Parish of St Mary, Islington in the Parish of Middlesex* (London: Publisher unknown, 1798), 4; Anon., *Rules and Orders of the Public Hospital in the Town of Cambridge* (Cambridge: Printed by J. Archdeacon, 1778), 15, 18, 19; Anon., *By-Laws of the Governors of the London Hospital* (London: Printed by H. S. Woodfall, 1769), 17, 22; Anon., *Statutes and Rules for the Government of the Kent and Canterbury Hospital* (Publisher unknown, 1793), 54.

³¹ Peter Higinbotham, *The Workhouse Encyclopedia* (Stroud: The History Press, 2014), 286–7.

³² Anon., *Rules and Orders for the Regulation of the Parish of Enfield in the County of Middlesex* (London: Printed by T. Sabine, 1787), 7.

by the surgeon and apothecary and, if necessary, 'properly cleansed and clothed'.³³ By the end of the eighteenth century, many prisons and hospitals had similar rules about entry. The Bridewell in Oxford in 1810 directed incoming prisoners to be examined as to their health and physical condition and, if necessary, washed and clothed.³⁴ At the Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh in the 1770s, incoming patients were given the option to swap filthy or tattered clothes for clean linen and could be directed by a physician to have a bath.³⁵

Partly underlying such procedures was the general concern for bodily cleansing and hygiene, but they also represented a 'ritual cleansing and re-clothing'.³⁶ When paupers crossed the threshold of a workhouse, they did so both literally and symbolically. The cleansing of bodies and change of clothes signalled a shift from their former degradation into a cleaner, more ordered existence, also offering access to cleaner environments and spaces than many paupers experienced outside.³⁷ Tim Hitchcock has argued that the strict regimes of cleanliness in eighteenth-century workhouses offered paupers the opportunity to escape the indignity and discomfort of filthy clothes and bodies, since poor and tattered clothes were the mark of the beggar.³⁸ As we have already seen, long, unkempt or dirty facial hair had equally strong connotations with poverty. In this sense, then, workhouses offered the most desperate in society the chance to remake their appearance, in the process perhaps escaping the social disgrace of poverty for at least a short period of time.³⁹ It could also be argued, however, that they merely substituted one kind of stigma for another.

Once settled within an institution, inmates continued to be subjected to strict and regular regimens of washing and cleaning, often including daily washing of hands and feet and weekly bathing in a cold or tepid bath.⁴⁰ By the nineteenth century, many prisons expected individuals to take personal responsibility for their own cleanliness and provided space and equipment. In Durham County Gaol, regulations stipulated that 'Every prisoner shall wash himself thoroughly, at least once every day, and his feet at least once each week; and he [i.e. the governor] shall see that there is a sufficient supply of soap, towels and combs'.⁴¹ The rules and orders for Newgate prison in 1814 stated that washing was to take be done immediately after rising at the first bell, when prisoners should 'immediately make their beds respectively, and wash their hands and faces'.⁴² Bedford County Gaol provided 'an adequate supply of wash and foot tubs, and

³³ London Metropolitan Archives, MS P83/MRY1/1769, 'Rules and Orders for the Better Regulation of the Workhouse Belonging to the Parish of Saint Mary Islington', 6 February 1827.

³⁴ Anon., *Regulations for the Government of the Common Gaol and Bridewell of the County of Oxford* (Oxford: Grosvenor and Hall, 1810), 17.

³⁵ Guenter B. Risse, *Hospital Life in Enlightenment Scotland: Care and Teaching at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 87.

³⁶ Ottaway, 'The Elderly', 48.

³⁷ Falcini, 'Cleanliness', 146.

³⁸ Tim Hitchcock, *Down and Out in Eighteenth-Century London* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2004), 100–1.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 106–7; Falcini, 'Cleanliness', 146.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁴¹ Anon., *Rules and Regulations for the Government of the County Gaol and House of Correction at Durham* (Durham, NC: George Walker Junior, 1850), 14.

⁴² MS CLA/035/02/032 – Rules and orders for the government of the common gaol of Newgate, 26 November 1814, unpaginated, Rule 6.

of water, soap, towels and combs', together with 'convenient places for the prisoner to wash themselves', while in Stafford County Gaol, prison 'wards' or 'courts' were each provided with clean towels, mops, soil pails and water buckets, and prisoners were instructed to 'wash themselves from head to foot and bathe when directed by the apothecary'. Each prisoner was also to be examined daily, and only given bread if found to be clean.⁴³ Washing and combing before assembly in the dining room were also part of the daily regime of workhouse life, and paupers were instructed to maintain themselves in a comely, decent and clean order.⁴⁴

Hair, including facial hair, was an important element within institutional regulations about hygiene and appearance, and shaving was often mandatory on entry to many institutions from the eighteenth century.⁴⁵ In Edinburgh Infirmary in the 1790s, the heads of men were ordered to be shaved, and their skin rubbed with mercury ointment to remove lice.⁴⁶ Given the potential for facial hair to harbour lice, it seems fair to assume that unkempt beards would also be shaved. Thereafter, a male inmate's hair was subject to regular inspection and control, which often meant keeping it short, with daily combing to remove vermin – a task that could be allocated to the turnkeys.⁴⁷ On occasions, some prisons also intervened to wash and shave sick patients at the expense of the institution, presumably in attempts to alleviate their suffering or hasten their recovery.⁴⁸ The length to which inmates could grow their hair varied by institution. Durham County Gaol in 1850 merely stipulated that the hair of male prisoners need not be cut, except 'for the purposes of health and cleanliness'.⁴⁹ Some were zealous in their enforcement of regulations. In 1875, George Winterbourne complained at having his hair and whiskers shorn without his consent in an Oxfordshire prison. While the prison rules stipulated that all prisoners should be shaved and that 'when he arrived, his hair was in a state which required cutting', Winterbourne pointed out that he was only detained for three hours while awaiting the arrival of money to pay his fine.⁵⁰

Many institutions standardized their approach to facial hair by regulating the frequency of shaving. While the length of beard considered acceptable varied between institutions, a weekly shave was perhaps most common. Part of the reason for this was likely the issue of identification. Both Petty Session and prison registers regularly noted facial characteristics and distinguishing marks, both of which could be hidden by a beard. It is possible that insisting upon the removal of facial hair was a means to aid warders and others in recognizing prisoners and preventing them altering their

⁴³ Bedfordshire Archives, MS QGV1, *Rules and Regulations for the Gaol and House of Correction of the County of Bedford* (Bedford: Hill and Son, 1841), 6, 7, 52–3; Anon., *Rules and Regulations for the Government of the Gaol and House of Correction of the County of Stafford* (Stafford: Printed by Arthur Morgan, 1824), 57, 68.

⁴⁴ Anon., *Rules and Regulations ... Stafford*, 8.

⁴⁵ Neil Storey, *Prison and Prisoners in Victorian Britain* (London: The History Press 2010), 57.

⁴⁶ Risse, *Hospital Life*, 188.

⁴⁷ For example, Anon., *Rules, Orders, and Regulations, for the Management of the New House of Correction for the County of Middlesex; Approved and Confirmed by the Justices at the Michaelmas Quarter Sessions* (London: Printed by G. Stafford, 1794), 12.

⁴⁸ Falcini, 'Cleanliness', 280.

⁴⁹ Anon., *Rules and Regulations ... Durham*, 15.

⁵⁰ 'Shaving in Prison', *Hairdressers Journal*, 228:9 (1875): 82.

appearance while incarcerated.⁵¹ The regulations of the poor house in Manchester, Durham County Gaol, Holloway Prison and the London hospitals of Bridewell and Bethlem, for example, all suggest weekly shaving of male inmates by barbers.⁵² Institutional accounts show the sums that could be expended in the provision of shaving. At the Leeds General Infirmary in the 1790s, around six pounds per year was expended for 'shaving patients'.⁵³ When the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital was established in 1772, shaving was initially carried out 'as required' by a porter, paid ten pounds per annum, possibly assisted by able patients, with no extra allowance for the task. Thirty years later, male patients were being shaved twice a week, at an annual cost of twenty pounds.⁵⁴ By the mid-nineteenth century, rules about the wearing of facial hair had seemingly been tightened. In 1860, rule 77 of Petworth Gaol and House of Correction stated that, in addition to hair being 'decently cut on reception and afterwards when necessary', male prisoners were 'to be shaved *at least* once a week, and no convicted prisoner shall be allowed to wear moustaches, or a beard under his chin' (emphasis added).⁵⁵ Here, the clean-shaven face was effectively part of prison 'uniform', with visible stubble clearly unacceptable.

This last example raises broader questions of control and authority over bodies. Shaving off beards kept inmates neat and tidy to be sure, as well as promoting dignity and self-respect and removing a potential vector for the spread of infection.⁵⁶ The routine of shaving offered regularity and structure for inmates and may have formed part of attempts to offset the demoralizing effects of incarceration.⁵⁷ In this reading, shaving and haircutting formed part of the structuring of institutional time and the preservation of comforting and familiar rituals of personal grooming and cleansing. But the routine removal of facial hair was nonetheless a tangible assertion of authority. While not always or necessarily punitive, regular weekly (or sometimes twice weekly) shaving removed decisions about the length and style of facial hair from individual men. In its place was a standard to which all inmates or patients were expected to conform. When they were bathed, shaved and clothed, therefore, paupers and prisoners were remade in the virtuous image of the authorities.

The question, then, is whether shaving could be considered as part of the construction of institutional male 'uniform'? There are certainly similarities. As Jennifer Craik has argued, a characteristic of formal uniforms is that they are 'rigorously managed by

⁵¹ I am grateful to Henry French for raising this point.

⁵² Anon., *Rules for the Government of the Poor House in Manchester* (Manchester: J. Harrop, 1794), 6; Anon., *Standing Rules for the Government of the Royal Hospitals, of Bridewell and Bethlem, with the Duty of the Governors, and of the Several Officers and Servants* (London: Thomas Parker, 1792), 52; Anon., *Rules and Regulations ... Durham*, 15; Anon., *Regulations for the Government of the City Prison at Holloway* (London: Publisher unknown, 1860), 81.

⁵³ Frederick Eden, *The State of the Poor or, an History of the Labouring Classes in England, from the Conquest to the Present Period* (London: Printed by J. Davis et al., 1797), 861.

⁵⁴ Sir Peter Eade, *The Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, 1770–1900* (London: Jarrold and Sons, 1900), 43–4, 73, 222.

⁵⁵ Anon., *Rules for the Government of the Common Gaol and House of Correction at Petworth, and for the Western Division of the County of Sussex* (Lewes: George P. Bacon, 1860), 22.

⁵⁶ Tim Hitchcock, 'The English Workhouse: A Study in Institutional Poor Relief in Selected Counties, 1696–1750', University of Oxford, Unpublished PhD thesis, 1985, 181.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 173.

external impositions.⁵⁸ That is, they reflect the standards and style of the particular authority who exercises control over an individual body. As Hamlett and Hoskins argue, this concept fits well with pauper dress in workhouses and also prison uniform, although pauper dress was not necessarily intended to be overtly punitive and, as we have seen, clean linen could be important in promoting respectability.⁵⁹ Others draw distinctions between uniforms, such as those of the military, which are ‘honorific’ and others, including punitive institutions and schools, which are ‘stigmatic.’⁶⁰ Uniforms, in other words, can carry either positive or negative symbolic meaning.

How far facial hair fits with such ideas again depends on the type of institution. In hospitals, the appearance of patients was not necessarily of paramount importance except where it was at odds with expectations of cleanliness and hygiene or presented a specific threat. With many patients only staying in hospital for short periods there was seemingly little expectation of a standardized hospital uniform appearance. In the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, verminous patients who refused to submit to the barber were summarily reported to the board, although it is not suggested that they were subsequently subjected to forced cutting of hair or shaving.⁶¹ In workhouses too (described by K. D. M. Snell as ‘instrument[s] of moral and disciplinary control’), despite the regimented and at times authoritarian regulations governing daily life, it is by no means clear if inmates were physically or forcefully compelled to be shaved.⁶² The weekly shave may even have been welcomed by inmates, as the desire to conform to plebeian notions of respectability – and not to be ‘othered’ – should not be underestimated. Given, as we saw in the previous chapter, that references to facial hair among the lower orders were relatively scant, it seems fair to infer that plebeian men in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries desired to be clean-shaven and regarded it as part of the broader presentation of a clean and decent body. A letter to the Southwell Union in 1837 referred to the illness of a pauper who regularly shaved the other men and asked for ‘guidance for providing this necessary assistance.’⁶³ Shaving was ‘necessary’ insofar as it maintained appearance but, depending on how it is interpreted, ‘assistance’ implies a positive or restorative action.

Asylums, however, offer a different perspective, being neither strictly penal nor medical. As Leonard Smith has noted, maintaining the respectable appearance of inmates was a conscious move undertaken to dispel notions of the wildness or savagery of lunatic patients.⁶⁴ Whereas an unkempt body suggested mental disequilibrium, irrationality and neglect of the self, a clean, orderly appearance demonstrated conformity with the broader conventions of society.⁶⁵ Cutting the hair and beards of

⁵⁸ Quoted in Hamlett and Hoskins, ‘Comfort in Small Things’, 98.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*; Falcini, ‘Cleanliness’, 147.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Eade, *Norfolk and Norwich Hospital*, 43–4.

⁶² K. D. M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 211.

⁶³ NA, MS MH 12/9524/110, Letter from Thomas Marriott to the Clerk of the Southwell Guardians, 16 January 1837.

⁶⁴ Leonard Smith, *Cure, Comfort and Safe Custody: Public Lunatic Asylums in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999), 139.

⁶⁵ Wynter, ‘Good in All Respects’, 41.

asylum patients conferred dignity, and at least gave the illusion of orderliness, belying their impoverished or wild appearance.⁶⁶ Shaving the head was also one of the treatments recommended for the symptoms of puerperal insanity and was undertaken on that basis.⁶⁷ There were other motivations though. In Bethlem hospital, a regime of regular shaving and reclothing was established for patients in the late eighteenth century, partly as a means to improve general cleanliness and the comfort and ease of the patient, but also since the hospital was open to the public. As Louise Falcini points out, it was no coincidence that prisoners were shaved on Mondays and Wednesdays – the same days on which the public were admitted.⁶⁸ In asylums, responsibility for shaving often fell upon attendants or ‘keepers’. These individuals performed a variety of tasks within institutions, ranging from protection and therapeutics, to the physical management of the body, often including shaving.⁶⁹ In Lancaster and Gloucester asylums, keepers were required to wash inmates’ hair daily, bathe them once a fortnight and shave them twice weekly. In the Middlesex County Asylum, two keepers ‘one of whom is a mechanic’, likely a barber, were employed in each ward ‘in getting up, washing and shaving the patients.’⁷⁰ In Bethlem in 1836, keepers were expected to ‘shave their own patients twice a week’ and also provide clean linen.⁷¹ While this was not necessarily a task that was welcomed, it did provide the compensation of extra income.⁷² This ranged from ad hoc payments of around a penny per head for shaving patients, or as much as five pounds as an annual payment.⁷³

Unsurprisingly, it was prisons that saw perhaps the most rigorous enforcement of shaving, especially after 1800. A number of prison regulations also refer to the shaving of prisoners as part of the daily routines of the institution. In 1825, the Millbank Penitentiary in London placed shaving within rules for the ‘allotment of time on weekdays’. Warders were responsible to see that such prisoners ‘that stand in need of it’ were to be shaved. This might suggest a degree of latitude, with facial hair only cut once it was considered overlong or unruly, but equally could imply that facial hair was not tolerated and that shaving was undertaken as soon as it was visible. It is worth noting that, unlike many institutions, Millbank did not specify the frequency of shaving.⁷⁴ It

⁶⁶ Adrian Green, ‘Heartless and Unhomely? Dwellings of the Poor in East Anglia and North East England’, in Joanne Mcewen and Pamela Sharpe (eds), *Accommodating Poverty: The Housing and Living Arrangements of the English Poor, c. 1600–1850* (London: Palgrave, 2011), 86. See also Wynter, ‘Good in All Respects’, 40–57.

⁶⁷ William Charles Ellis, *A Treatise on the Nature, Symptoms, Causes and Treatments of Insanity* (London: Samuel Holdsworth, 1838), 242, 336. It was certainly used in the Bristol hospital; see Leonard Smith, ‘Lunatic Asylum in the Workhouse: St Peter’s Hospital Bristol, 1698–1861’, *Medical History*, 61:2 (2017): 230.

⁶⁸ Falcini, ‘Cleanliness’, 246–7.

⁶⁹ Smith, *Cure, Comfort and Safe Custody*, 138.

⁷⁰ Ellis, *Treatise*, 305.

⁷¹ Anon., *Third Report of the Select Committee of the House of Lords Appointed to Inquire into the Present State of the Several Gaols and Houses of Correction in England and Wales* (London: House of Commons, 1835), 459. See also Falcini, ‘Cleanliness’, 247.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 138–9, 145.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁷⁴ Anon., *Rules and Regulations of the General Penitentiary, Millbank* (London: Philanthropic Society, 1825), 75, 81.

was, however, a regulation that prisoners' hair should be kept short.⁷⁵ The standardized 1840 regulations for prisons stipulated that 'Male prisoners shall be shaved at least once a week', while their hair was to be cut once a month.⁷⁶ Even aboard convict ships men were subject to strict and regular grooming regimes. In 1818, aboard the *Earl St Vincent*, bound for New South Wales, convicts were washed and shaved every few days.⁷⁷ On the *St Petre* this was done on Wednesdays and Saturdays.⁷⁸ The 1819 journal of another convict ship, the *Bencoolen*, recorded that prisoners were taken on deck in their mess groups – usually around twelve individuals – to bathe, shave and get air.⁷⁹ Here again this was in part due to fear of contagion and the effects of confinement in the mephitic air below decks. On some ships, convicts were selected to shave their fellows, and razors were issued as the men came on deck to prevent them being kept for use as weapons.⁸⁰ In August 1821, the surgeon aboard the *Claudine* recorded that he 'Took the irons off James Oxson, Joseph Watts and John Page, three men appointed to shave the convicts', and the practice was repeated on other ships, with convicts being 'employed as barbers'.⁸¹ It is unclear whether this was intended, or regarded, as a punishment or privilege.

These varying degrees to which shaving was enforced in different institutions raises further questions surrounding passivity. In hospitals and perhaps workhouses, male patients and paupers might risk being reported to the board for not submitting to the razor, but there is little evidence of them being physically compelled to be shaved. In penal institutions and, to some extent, also asylums, individual men were required to yield to the officers of the institution for tasks that, outside, would have been their own responsibility. What happened, though, when individuals challenged their lot? In prisons and aboard convict ships, it is clear that refusal to submit to shaving was punishable. In 1821 a convict named Spencer about the *Malabar* was confined in the 'black hole' of the ship, for refusing to be shaved.⁸² Conversely, the forced shaving of hair could also be used as a means of punishment for a variety of offences. In 1823, convicts Kelly and Bilford had half of their heads shaved for stealing biscuits and were

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁷⁶ Anon., *Regulations for Prisons in England and Wales (Issued by the Secretary of State for the Home Department)* (London: Shaw and Sons, 1840), 35.

⁷⁷ NA, ADM 101/21/7A/3, Journal of the Earl St Vincent Convict Ship by John Johnston, Surgeon, September/October 1818, ff. 10–13; NA MS ADM 101/21/7A/4, Journal of the Earl St Vincent Convict Ship, October/November 1818, ff. 13, 15.

⁷⁸ NA, MS ADM 101/44/8/4, 'Medical and Surgical Journal of Her Majesty's Convict Ship St Petre', 1843, ff. 26–30.

⁷⁹ NA, MS ADM 101/7/10/1, Medical Journal of the Convict Ship Bencoolen, by William Thomas, Surgeon, April/May 1819, ff. 2, 3; see also NA MS ADM 101/74/4/2, 'A Nosological Synopsis of the Sick Book ... of Her Majesty's Convict Ship Westmoreland', May 1841, 29–30.

⁸⁰ NA, MS ADM, 101/21/7A/2, Journal of the Convict Ship 'Earl St Vincent' by John Johnston, Surgeon, 15 August 1818, f. 5.

⁸¹ NA, MS ADM 101/17/4/1, Diary of the 'Claudine' convict ship by Henry Ryan, Surgeon, 21 August 1821, f. 2; see also NA MS ADM 101/1/2/1, Medical Journal of the 'Adamant' convict ship, 4 April 1821, f. 5; NA, MS ADM 101/46/6/3, Medical Journal of the 'Malabar', male convict ship, 11 July 1821, f. 24.

⁸² NA, MS ADM 101/46/6/3, Journal of the 'Malabar', 5 July 1821, f. 24.

confined to bread and water for twenty-four hours, a punishment at once humiliating and uncomfortable.⁸³

Perhaps the most remarkable and graphic illustration of the experience of forced shaving is that provided by John Thomas Perceval, confined in an asylum near Bristol in 1830, suffering from ‘derangement and melancholy’.⁸⁴ His beard was a central element in discussions about his sanity. It is clear, for example, that Perceval’s family considered his habit of wearing long hair in ringlets and a full beard as symptomatic of his mental decline, and both factored in their efforts to have him confined. On at least one occasion Perceval believed that had received a direct command from Christ to grow his hair and beard long, although he later argued that such ‘fancies ... had dissipated long ago’, and that his decision was thence little more than the exercise of free will and adherence to nature.⁸⁵ Whatever his motivations, his account shows authorities were perfectly prepared to use force to compel shaving. On one occasion, he lashed out at a keeper who had attempted ‘to collar me and to force me to come and be shaved’.⁸⁶ On another, hearing voices inside his head, taunting him for his submissiveness to the rules, Perceval resolved to wear his hair and beard long. This decision resulted in a violent struggle with several asylum keepers, one of whom dislocated Perceval’s thumb, another knelt on his stomach, while a third ‘seized my throat to suffocate me into submission’, before he finally yielded to the razor.⁸⁷ Sometimes his facial hair was arbitrarily removed as a direct form of punishment or ‘treatment’. As part of the ‘degradation and insult’ he endured at the hands of unscrupulous keepers, ‘I have had my whiskers cut off, which I have not touched, or suffered anyone to touch since I grew up [and] I have also had them shaved nearly off’.⁸⁸ Chief among Perceval’s objections, however, was the ‘filthy manner in which I was shaved’.⁸⁹ He was, as he noted, ‘shaved in a room full of servants and patients and ... washed in the dirty water others had been using’, before being ‘wiped with the servants’ begrimed towel’.⁹⁰ Only when Perceval was transferred to another institution in Ticehurst, Sussex, was he allowed to grow his beard.⁹¹

Institutional barbering

If, as seems clear, many institutions did require the regular shaving of inmates, who carried out the task? It is easy to assume that shaving was an act done *to* patients or prisoners, not by them. There were, of course, practical reasons for not allowing

⁸³ NA, MS ADM 101/63/6/2, Journal of the Convict Ship ‘Recovery’, 14 March 1823, f. 4. See also the entry for 21 March 1823, f. 5, for a similar punishment.

⁸⁴ John Thomas Perceval, *A Narrative of the Treatment Experienced by a Gentleman, during a State of Mental Derangement* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1840), 1.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 350.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 267.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 268.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 268.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 22, 348.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

paupers, prisoners and, perhaps especially, asylum patients access to sharp instruments like scissors or razors, not least of which was suicide. To give one example from the many, Joseph Farari, a patient at Saint Bartholomew's hospital, was found in the 'Lazarm [*sic*] ward' in 1795 with his throat cut and a razor in his hand, with part of his beard reportedly shaved off. Witnesses, including the house surgeon, testified that Farari had been allowed to shave himself and had probably cut his own throat.⁹² In prisons the need to keep dangerous men away from lethally sharp blades might seem even greater. And yet there is good evidence to show that many prisons did entrust convicts with razors and expected them to shave themselves and each other. The committee of aldermen appointed to visit gaols across England in the early nineteenth century noted the practice, in Woodbridge Bridewell, Suffolk, of requiring all prisoners to wash themselves twice a week, with the men 'obliged to shave themselves on every Wednesday and Saturday'.⁹³ In Manchester City Gaol too, prisoners shaved themselves, or were shaved by each other, under supervision of an officer.⁹⁴ The obvious dangers of the practice are highlighted by the murder of a prisoner in Millbank Penitentiary in 1853, whose throat was cut with a razor. In the subsequent inquest, the coroner asked whether it was usual for prisoners to shave themselves and be left alone with a razor, and was told that four razors were given out and the prisoners left to themselves to shave.⁹⁵ A similar incident in the Hotspur Street Compter in 1843 prompted the magistrate to suspend the practice of prisoners being allowed to shave their fellow convicts there.⁹⁶

Perhaps to lessen the burden on keepers, or even as a result of the reluctance of their own staff to do it, from the early eighteenth century, many institutions employed barbers to undertake the shaving of workhouse and asylum inmates. Among the first recorded, around 1680, was the Bridewell Royal Hospital, who employed John Cockery to 'shave the lunaticks in the Hospital of Bethlem'.⁹⁷

Between 1725 and 1742, St Martin's Workhouse in London made regular payments to a number of individuals for shaving the poor there, as well as purchasing razors, scissors and bowls to be kept in the house.⁹⁸ The workhouse for the parish of St Giles in London employed a barber to 'shave all the men patients every Saturday', presumably, as outside, in preparation for Sunday service.⁹⁹ The records of a number of London

⁹² London Metropolitan Archives, MS CL/IC 65008/00197, City of London Coroners' Inquests into Suspicious Deaths, Inquest into Death of Joseph Farari, 2 April 1795.

⁹³ Anon., *Report from the Committee of Aldermen Appointed to Visit Several Gaols in England, Dated the 19th Day of September 1815* (London: Nichols, Son and Bentley, 1816), 152.

⁹⁴ Westmoreland Epiphany Sessions, *Kendal Mercury*, 11 January 1851, 3. See also 'Shaving of Prisoners in Forfar Jail', *Montrose, Arbroath and Brechin Review* (9 January 1863): 7; 'County Prisons', *Stroud Journal* (4 January 1873): 2; 'Extraordinary Suicide of a Prisoner in Leeds Borough Jail', *Bradford Daily Telegraph* (3 June 1875): 2.

⁹⁵ 'Suicide of a Convict', *Morning Post* (11 January 1853).

⁹⁶ 'Police', *London Evening Standard* (27 May 1843): 3. See also 'Shaving of Prisoners in Forfar Jail', *Montrose, Arbroath and Brechin Review* (9 January 1863): 7.

⁹⁷ Bethlem Museum Archives, MS BCB 18, Bridewell Royal Hospital, Minute Book of the Court of Governors, 7 February 1710, 529.

⁹⁸ City of Westminster Archives, MS F22212, St Martin's Workhouse, 'Fortnightly Extraordinary', ff. 3, 17, 27, 33, 51, 55, 29.

⁹⁹ Anon., *Hints and Cautions for the Information of the Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor of the Parishes of St. Giles in the Fields and St. George, Bloomsbury* (London: Publisher unknown, 1797), 39.

workhouses and asylums and those of provincial workhouses across the country support the use of barbers as a fairly standard practice. By the end of the eighteenth century, payments to barbers can regularly be found among asylum bills and receipts. In St Luke's hospital in London, the Shoreditch barber and peruke-maker John Shafe was paid nine pounds twice annually for 'shaving the patients'.¹⁰⁰ This arrangement began around 1780 – some thirty years after the hospital first opened. In 1836, the Abingdon board of guardians employed John Abel as the barber of the workhouse, on the basis that he was to shave the children's hair every month and shave the male paupers once a week.¹⁰¹

In general, however, barbers did not appear among the permanent staff of institutions but were instead usually employed on contract or paid piecemeal. There were some exceptions, such as in the Manchester Infirmary in 1837, where a barber was paid fourteen pounds for 'shaving the patients'.¹⁰² Another was the Wakefield House of Correction in Yorkshire, which listed a barber among its officers and servants, paid the relatively large sum of thirty pounds per annum, although it is worth noting that his was the second lowest salary and fully twenty pounds less than the House's porter, miller, baker and watchman, suggesting, again, a low status.¹⁰³ Most commonly they were paid ad hoc, either weekly or for longer periods of work. Particularly in the nineteenth century, some authorities put services out to tender, advertising in newspapers. Along with calls for contracts from butchers, grocers and bakers, the Cambridge Union advertised for a hairdresser to undertake shaving and haircutting in the workhouse in 1839.¹⁰⁴ In 1856 the Billericay Union put out a tender for a 'Barber to shave the paupers in the house twice a week'.¹⁰⁵ The rules of the Bridewell and Bethlem hospitals contained detailed instructions as to the barber's duties. Here, he was directed to shave the patients and servants of the hospital at least once a week and was responsible for the provision of 'clean and proper shaving cloths and towels' in the room before he began his task.¹⁰⁶ A further rule setting out the tasks of the 'Third Assistant Keeper or Basket Man' suggests that he was to attend the barber once a week, but it is unclear whether this was to assist in the task, or be shaved himself.¹⁰⁷

As did their colleagues in urban barbershops, institutional barbers constantly complained about the low pay and poor working conditions. John Cockery, barber at the Bridewell Royal Hospital in London, petitioned for higher wages in 1710. Claiming to have shaved the inmates, officers and servants there for more than thirty

¹⁰⁰ London Metropolitan Archives, MS H64/D05/003, St Luke's Hospital Receipt Book, 1780–88. See entries for 31 December 1780, 31 July 1781, 31 December 1781, etc.

¹⁰¹ Berkshire Record Office, MS GA1/1, Minute Book of Abingdon Union Board of Guardians, 1835–6, entry 31 March 1836.

¹⁰² Anon., *Report of the State of the Manchester Royal Infirmary, Dispensary, Lunatic Hospital and Asylum from June 24th 1837 to June 24th 1838* (Manchester: J. Hayward, 1838), 11.

¹⁰³ Anon., *Third Report*, 618.

¹⁰⁴ 'Cambridge Union', *Cambridge Independent Press* (14 September 1839). See also 'Newbury Union Provisions', *Berkshire Chronicle* (5 March 1842); 'Whitby', *York Herald* (21 May 1864).

¹⁰⁵ 'Billericay Union', *Essex Standard and General Advertiser for the Eastern Counties* (10 September 1856).

¹⁰⁶ Anon., *Standing Rules and Orders of the Royal Hospitals of Bridewell and Bethlem* (London: Publisher unknown, 1792), 49.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

years, Cockery complained that he had originally received the sum of twelvecence per head, which decreased, first, to ninepence and, then, to threepence, amounting to a salary between £50 and £60 per year.¹⁰⁸ On finding the sum arbitrarily slashed by the committee to £30 per year, he complained that he had lost his shop business, 'grown antient' and had even been attacked by the 'lunaticks'.¹⁰⁹ Aside from the issue of pricing, it is interesting to note the length of time that Cockery had spent at the hospital, suggesting the regularity of the practice of shaving and also the potential longevity of the relationship with the individual barber. In 1776, the Cumberland barber James Noble petitioned the Westmorland Quarter Sessions, claiming that he had not been paid despite shaving the prisoners of the Appleby County Gaol for the previous two years.¹¹⁰

Even a century later, matters had not improved, and the *Hairdressers' Journal* sardonically congratulated the 'fortunate individual' who would obtain the advertised contract for shaving and haircutting in the Ipswich Union, at one-and-a-half pence per dozen: 'Truly the trade must feel itself elevated indeed by the conduct of this enterprising contractor', with the barber forced to shave 'two customers for a farthing'.¹¹¹ For working four days a week from 8 a.m. until 3 p.m. in the Islington workhouse, the barber there received a salary of twelve shillings per week – an amount he claimed was too low. To make ends meet he had to shave and cut the hair 'of hundreds a week in the workhouse' as well as 'cutting the hair of the children at the schools'.¹¹² The same year, John Williams, barber of St Pancras workhouse, submitted a list of grievances, from pressure of numbers to his poor dinner allowance, threatening to resign. His strongarm tactics backfired since the board immediately accepted his resignation and advertised for a new, salaried barber.¹¹³ The numbers of 'clients' involved suggest that institutional barbers would have been very busy and may even have struggled to cope with the task alone. In September 1726, barber William Blockley was paid the large salary of twelve pounds per annum, for 'Trimming the Officers and Pensioners' of Greenwich hospital that year, totalling 6,633 shaves at halfpenny per head.¹¹⁴ Although it is entirely possible that Blockley spent every single day of the year shaving eighteen patients per day, it seems far more likely that he took on helpers to share the workload. The 1833 accounts of the County Gaol of Fisherton Anger, Wiltshire, are explicit in allocating four pounds per annum for shaving the prisoners 'which is shared between the three Turnkeys'.¹¹⁵ As noted in Chapter 3, too, apprentices were sometimes used as assistants to barbers in shaving prisoners.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁸ Bethlem Museum Archives, MS BCB 18, Bridewell Royal Hospital, Minute Book of the Court of Governors, 7 February 1710, 529.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Cumbria Archive Centre, MS WQ/SR/403/14, Westmorland Quarter Sessions Michaelmas Rolls, 1776, Petition of James Noble, undated.

¹¹¹ Anon., 'A Nut to Crack for Hairdressers', *Hairdressers' Journal*, 9:1 (1 July 1867): 3.

¹¹² Anon., 'A Workhouse Barber', *Hairdressers' Journal*, 253:10 (17 June 1876): 98.

¹¹³ Anon., 'Resignation of a Barber', *Hairdressers' Journal*, 256:10 (5 August 1876): 123.

¹¹⁴ NA, MS ADM/68/374, Greenwich Hospital Accounts, 1 July–30 September 1726, unpaginated. I am very grateful to Dr Judy Stephenson of Oxford University for sharing this reference.

¹¹⁵ Anon., *Third Report*, 616.

¹¹⁶ Thomas Legg, *Low-Life: or One Half of the World, Knows Not How the Other Half Live, Being a Critical Account of What Is Transacted by People of Almost All Religions, Nations, Circumstances, and*

But, aside from the low pay and high numbers of prisoners to be shaved, there were also potential dangers to barbers, especially when shaving patients with psychological illness. In the Bridewell and Bethlem hospitals, for example, keepers were required to accompany patients to the barber, stay with them while they were being shaved and ‘take them away as soon as shaved.’¹¹⁷ This was presumably to ensure that the patients could not inflict harm on themselves, or the barber, either by acquiring the razor or attempting a struggle. There were certainly physical dangers in trying to shave the faces of men with mental illness. In 1827 the barber of Hendon Workhouse reported his difficulties in shaving an ‘alleged lunatic’ there, because the man would frequently leap from his chair with his face half shaved and walk around the room. Apart from the unpredictability of his attacks, the barber feared he could accidentally cut the man’s throat.¹¹⁸

As the case of John Perceval’s experiences at the hands of the asylum keepers highlights too, the homosocial dynamics of the barber–customer relationship were dramatically shifted within the confines of an institution. The shaved man, for example, was no longer a paying customer, but a potentially unwilling and unruly participant. Away from the familiar and largely jocular surroundings of the ‘civilian’ barbershop, the workhouse (or prison) barber was now the instrument of the authorities paid, if necessary, to exert force. The role of the barber as a conduit of homosocial relations, therefore, almost certainly operated differently within institutional walls. One exception, perhaps unique, is the Marshalsea debtor’s prison. The Marshalsea was separated into two distinct sections: the ‘common side’ and the ‘master’s side’. While the ‘common side’ was the notoriously squalid accommodation in which poor and desperate debtors and beggars were housed, the ‘master’s side’ contained those who still had some means to pay their way. Although imprisoned, they had freedom of movement, could even leave the Marshalsea to seek work and had access to some material comforts, including a chop house and coffee house.¹¹⁹ It was also home to a prisoner-turned-barber, known as ‘Trim’. The diary of the Italian musician John Grano, sent to the Marshalsea in 1728, records several examples of having been shaved by ‘Trim’, sometimes as frequently as twice in a week.¹²⁰ For Grano, whose usual acquaintances had included royalty and prominent society figures and presumably other men in the Marshalsea of similar status, being able not only to maintain appearance but also to pay for and choose the time of the act was a reassuring link with normality and the polite world beyond the prison walls. Unlike those on the ‘common side’ here was choice and agency over personal appearance.

Even despite the hardships noted by barbers, the attainment of a workhouse contract at least provided a regular income and some measure of security. For their part, however, some institutions began to question the financial necessity and even the propriety of engaging barbers to shave prisoners and inmates. In January 1851 the *Kendal Mercury* published the report of the new governor of Appleby County Gaol

Sizes of Understanding, in the Twenty-Four Hours, between Saturday-Night and Monday-Morning (London: Printed for John Lever, 1764), 52.

¹¹⁷ Anon., *Standing Rules Bridewell and Bethlem*, 52.

¹¹⁸ ‘Lunacy’, *Times* (23 January 1827): 3.

¹¹⁹ John Ginger (ed.), *Handel’s Trumpeter: The Diary of John Grano* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1998), 44–5.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 49–50.

and his recommendations for the improvement of conditions. One was the dismissal of the barber since the ‘evils calculated to arise from [shaving prisoners] are of no light character.’¹²¹ The comment was seemingly prompted by the propensity of the barber to spread gossip and convey information from prisoners to contacts outside. The *Leicester Journal* was perhaps only half joking when it suggested that the Board of Guardians at the Leicester Workhouse, ‘whose regard for economy is well known’ could save the quarterly cost of five pounds paid to a barber by allowing inmates to join the beard movement.¹²²

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the rise of institutional shaving from the early eighteenth century, the contexts in which it took place and the rigorousness with which it was enforced, as well as the practitioners involved. Before concluding it is worth returning to the question of precisely *why* removing facial hair was so obviously important. Frustratingly, institutional records are virtually silent as to precise motivations, but it is certainly worth some conjecture. Hygiene, as we have seen, was an obvious factor, and keeping the hair and beards of inmates short and clean removed an obvious vector for the spread of vermin. To be (literally) clean-shaven also afforded a neat, regimented appearance. Another possibility, though probably unlikely, is that the removal of prisoners’ beards followed the prevailing fashion which, after all, for the majority of the period under discussion here, was to be clean-shaven. The fact that shaving continued seemingly unabated once beards grew in fashion after 1850 militates against this, although it does seem that at least some institutions relaxed their strictures during this period to allow prisoners to grow beards.

This leaves the problematic issue of control. As we have seen, the regulation and standardization of hair and beards dovetails neatly with the concept of ‘uniform’ and, in a sense, the removal of individual identity. Taking away an individual’s agency regarding the length and style of their facial hair was a powerful statement of their subjection to institutional rules and their immersion within the system. Given the power of the beard as a symbol of innate masculinity too, and particularly after 1850, it is tempting to view the removal of facial hair in punitive institutions as an attempt to symbolically emasculate prisoners. While control fits well with prisons and, to some degree, with workhouses, it does not necessarily reflect the provision of shaving in hospitals or asylums. Perhaps more accurate is to say that institutions removed the element of individual choice in growing or removing facial hair. As we have seen in earlier chapters, the act of shaving was a defining element in masculine performance. In regulating the practice, frequency and nature of shaving, institutions acted to deny men the opportunity to determine their own appearance, either by shaving themselves or choosing to visit a barber. It was perhaps this *loss* of control that was most keenly felt.

¹²¹ ‘Westmoreland Epiphany Sessions’, 3.

¹²² ‘A Financial Aspect of the Beard Movement’, *Leicester Journal* (7 July 1854).

Part Four

Commodification, Consumption and Personal Grooming

The commodification of shaving, 1650–1850

As Karen Harvey and others have shown, material culture and masculinity have often been closely intermeshed. Despite the initial historiographical focus on women as consumers in the early modern period, men were equally regular and avid consumers of a range of goods.¹ Some work has also begun to explore the interplay between constructions of masculinity and individual objects. Harvey's object-driven study of ceramics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries notes the symbolic importance of male working practices and tools in decorations on domestic objects, along with the privileging of the masculine industrial skills that created them.² These objects were thus both created and consumed by men, but also served as a proxy for an emerging pride in industrial labour and identity. Matt Houlbrook suggests that ideas about the intersections of material culture, gender, normality and sexual difference are also historically contingent. That is, the relationship between masculinity and particular objects is not static and instead shifts according to time and context.³ Taking Harvey and Houlbrook's lead, each chapter in this section takes a long view of two important groups of masculine commodities – cosmetic shaving products and razors, and attempts to unravel the complex and changing associations of shaving paraphernalia with gender and expectations of manliness, from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. As a uniquely masculine act, shaving, along with its related paraphernalia and practices can provide a useful window into the relationship between men and things. Early modern men were limited consumers of shaving materials, both due to the restricted market and the prevalence of barbers as shavers and providers of post-shave care. By the early eighteenth century, however, an emerging material culture of shaving saw new razors and accompanying products beginning to be marketed and sold to individual men as well as trade. As refining the appearance to create a polite

¹ Karen Harvey, 'Craftsmen in Common: Objects, Skills and Masculinity in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', in Hannah Greig, Jane Hamlett and Leonie Hannan (eds), *Gender and Material Culture in Britain since 1600* (London: Palgrave, 2016), 68–89.

² *Ibid.*, 76–8.

³ Matt Houlbrook, 'Queer Things: Men and Makeup between the Wars', in Greig et al., *Gender and Material Culture in Britain*, 120–1.

mien rose in importance, so items such as razors became vectors for politeness and also key components in the construction and articulation of manly appearance.⁴

A central issue raised by this chapter is that of the gendered nature of cosmetics. The early modern period saw prolonged and vociferous debates, particularly on religious grounds, about the use of cosmetics by both sexes, as part of wider attacks on artifice and vanity. Makeup, face paint and other adornments, such as beauty spots and patches, were portrayed as unnecessary at best and deceptive at worst. For puritans, cosmetics and scented waters were nothing less than ‘the Devil’s liquor’; cosmetic use by men was viewed as unnatural and effeminate.⁵ As Edith Snook also argues, however, cosmetics, their ingredients and attendant practices, were an important part of early modern physic and body care, with a variety of preparations and recipes appearing in sources attributed both to women and men.⁶ In this sense, products to improve the body and its appearance were legitimized. But to what category, did shaving products belong? As other chapters have shown, shaving was an innately masculine act and one loaded with symbolic meaning. It was, however, also almost universally recognized as an uncomfortable and potentially painful process. For those with tender skin, or pockmarked or ‘erupted’ by smallpox, shaving could be a potentially agonizing operation.⁷ In the seventeenth century, shaving products, such as they existed, were essentially remedial and intended either to simply facilitate the shave or offset its painful effects. Here the barber was the usual source of post-shave care. But a host of remedies also existed in domestic medical culture to soothe skin conditions, which likely included damage to the skin from shaving. Shaving rashes and the like were therefore treated either by practitioners or by reference to the huge corpus of domestic medical knowledge. In either case, shaving, and its consequences, belonged firmly within the ambit of medicine, rather than as a cosmetic process of improvement.

As the eighteenth century progressed, however, there were changes both in socio-medical concepts of facial hair and shaving and of bodily appearance more generally. The later eighteenth century also brought changes to the concept of skin, from its earlier status as a porous and permeable layer to a closed, impenetrable barrier against the outside world.⁸ As this occurred, topical remedies such as post-shaving creams and pastes became more concerned with the surface of the skin, rather than treating an underlying pathological condition. As these changes occurred shaving began to shed its earlier connections to medicine and was instead subsumed within an increasingly exteriorized concept of bodily harmony and neatness, one that also began to include a proto concept of personal grooming. Shaving products moved closer

⁴ Alun Withey, ‘Shaving and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 36:2 (2013): 225–43.

⁵ Virginia Smith, *Clean: A History of Personal Hygiene and Purity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 210.

⁶ Edith Snook, ‘“The Beautifying Part of Physic”: Women’s Cosmetic Practices in Early Modern England’, *Journal of Women’s History*, 20:3 (2008): 10–33.

⁷ See, for examples, Benjamin Tiffin’s testimonial for the ‘British Shaving Paste’, *Oracle and Public Advertiser* (10 May 1796), and T. Higgins’s testimonial in the advertisement for ‘Twineberrow’s Highly Approved Paragon Shaving Soap’, *Liverpool Mercury* (28 June 1839): 1.

⁸ Kevin Siena and Jonathan Reinartz, ‘Scratching the Surface’, in Reinartz and Siena (eds), *A Medical History of Skin* (London: Routledge, 2016), 2.

in nature to cosmetics and, like beautifying products, were sold more by perfumers than barbers or apothecaries. Rather than simply treating wounds caused by shaving, the growing variety and form of shaving soaps were aimed at making the process of shaving – almost universally regarded as an ordeal – as easier and more comfortable. In addition, they suggest a new focus upon the somatic, sensory experience of shaving. Here were products that were sold on their aroma and unctuous creaminess. This ran counter to the advertising rhetoric of razors, which evoked martial imagery and male characteristics of hardness and temper.

Nonetheless, advertisements reveal a constant tension between, on the one hand, the promotion of what were, after all, highly feminized scented soaps and preparations as being essential components in articulating manliness and, on the other, expectations of manly conduct and appearance which often stressed the avoidance of effeminate practices or appearance. In their advertisements, manufacturers therefore steered a difficult course between utility and form.

The first part of this chapter briefly explores the nature and availability of shaving products in the early modern period, before turning to the emergence of a commercial market in the eighteenth century.

Shaving and early modern remedy culture

As Chapter 2 demonstrated, the removal of facial hair was important in ridding the body of extraneous and potentially harmful substances. As well as excising the stubble, shaving hived off scurf and debris on the skin's surface and cleansed the face since, at the very least, it was washed with warm water once before the application of the lather and again to remove it after the shave. Soap or wash balls further served to clean and freshen the skin before it was dried with a cloth or towel. But what, beyond the odd splash of 'sweete water', was applied after shaving was completed?⁹ What measures were taken to alleviate painful rashes, or soothe cuts?

The discomfort caused by shaving in the early modern period should not be underestimated. Seventeenth-century razors were usually made from imported German steel and were a potentially costly investment. While some higher status businesses had cases of razors, poorer practitioners likely relied on only one or two. Open razors required constant stropping and honing to maintain the cutting edge since over time, and with frequent use, the quality of the blade degraded. If badly blunted, they could be sent to specialist razor-makers for regrinding but, as we have seen, this too was expensive. As much therefore depended upon the means of the barber to purchase quality razors, and his preparedness to maintain them, as it did upon his skill in shaving. Equally, shaving was an act that routinely irritated, marked and broke the skin. Rather than cleanly slicing off beard hairs, a blunted razor rasped away at the upper dermal layers, causing anything from small nicks and cuts to painful lumps in the skin. These could last for days and, in the worst cases, become infected, especially

⁹ Thomas Dekker, *The Guls Horne-Booke* (London: Printed for R. S., 1609), 36.

if the razor used was not cleaned between uses. For those with existing facial skin conditions or marks, matters were likely worse. Skin left pockmarked from smallpox or acne, for example, could be extremely sensitive and also prone to cuts from the raised or pitted surface. Some medical authors actively discouraged shaving, for health reasons. In 1658, Leuius Lemnius argued that it was ‘not good for men in perfect health to have their beards and hair shaved close to their skins’. In particular, he cautioned men newly recovered from sickness not to ‘be shaved with a rasour’ since it caused movement of the humours and risked reawakening ‘reliques of ... disease’.¹⁰

Assessing the extent of treatments for (and even concepts of) damage done to the skin by shaving is complicated by the lack of any specific early modern concept of what would today be termed a ‘shaving rash’ or ‘razor burn’. The term ‘rash’ was not even used to denote skin conditions until the end of the seventeenth century, when it first appeared in Gideon Harvey’s treatise on smallpox and, for several decades afterwards, it most often appeared in discussions of smallpox or chicken pox.¹¹ As such, a ‘rash’ suggested a specific pathological disease, rather than a localized reaction to external stimuli. The shaving of hair in general was considered to draw humours to the surface. As the old hair was razed off, it cleared the way for new growth. Although never explicitly stated, it seems reasonable to assume that shaving rashes were considered a result of the hot humours being drawn to the surface through the beard hair, and breaking out on the skin, rather than as a direct result of contact with the razor. Nevertheless, the lack of explicit reference is interesting, and again suggests the strong connections between beard hair (and presumably the facial area where it grew) and the inside of the body.

This is not to say, however, that post-shave rashes and cuts were simply ignored. In fact, as acute and painful skin conditions, they were highly *unlikely* to be left untreated. In this reading, the application of post-shaving preparations was ‘medical’ and corrective rather than cosmetic, and therefore fully acceptable for men. With no commercial product available, barbers were likely the main source of post-shave treatment, again reinforcing acceptability through application by a male practitioner. References to immediate post-shave practice, though, are frustratingly rare. Barber inventories contain little to suggest what palliative measures were taken to soothe smarting skin. Randle Holme’s idealized barbershop hints at the application of scented waters after shaving, but makes no reference to salving cuts, or soothing rashes.¹² John Woodall’s inventory of barber’s equipment reveals equally little about post-shave care.¹³ And yet it seems unlikely that barbers would simply dismiss suppurating customers to the street untreated. As an analogy with the ‘comely tongue’ drawn by Richard Baxter in his *Christian Directory* pointed out, it was an ‘ill barber that cuts a man’s face and so deformeth him, when his work was to have made him more neat and comely’.¹⁴ Blood

¹⁰ Leuius Lemnius, *The Secret Miracles of Nature in Four Books* (London: Printed by John Streater, 1658), 257.

¹¹ Gideon Harvey, *A Treatise on the Small Pox and Measles* (London: Printed for W. Freeman, 1696), 2.

¹² Randle Holme, *The Academy of Armory or a Storehouse of Armory and Blazon* (Chester: Printed for the author, 1688), 128–9.

¹³ John Woodall, *The Surgeon’s Mate or Military & Domestique Surgery* (London: Printed by John Legate, 1655).

¹⁴ Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory...* (London: Printed by Robert White, 1673), 408.

could be simply wiped away be with a cloth or towel, but badly grazed or irritated skin probably demanded more attention. Far more likely, then, is that ad hoc remedies, either made in-house, or bought in, were applied at need. There are occasional hints in more detailed inventories. Among the stock of the barber-surgeon James Preston of Wrexham was ‘a pott of agyptiacum’, a cooling lotion or unguent used widely in the early modern pharmacopoeia to treat wounds and skin conditions.¹⁵ William Hutchinson’s 1725 shop inventory listed a ‘salve box’, presumably containing soothing unguents or ointments.¹⁶ Such examples hint at the potential for broader store and use of such products.

Aside from barbers, medical publications also contained recipes for possible preparations that could be used to relieve discomfort from shaving. Some, for example, dealt specifically with the head and the discomfort of being shaved in preparation for wig-wearing. One recipe called for equal parts of oil of roses and vinegar of roses ‘to anoint the head after shaving’, while another suggested bathing the head with a soothing mixture of brandy and honey.¹⁷ John Gerard’s popular herbal recommended a plaster of mustard seeds to soothe a head shaved as part of the process of curing lethargy.¹⁸ While, as Lemnius argued, shaving the face could injure health, some physicians heartily endorsed head shaving as a means of releasing pent up humours. Among the health advice meted out by Dr Richard Lower in 1700 was to ‘Shave the Head often, and, after shaving, bath it well with Brandy, or the Spirit of Honey, and twice every day anoint it with Bears-grease.’¹⁹ The physician George Cheyne advocated regular shaving of head and face and applying sweet-smelling lavender water as a means to preserve the health of the ‘Tender, Studious and Sedentary’.²⁰ Others were more specific. 1661’s *Panzooryktologia* suggested that a preparation made from donkey’s genitals, turned to ash and mixed with oil and lead, was useful after shaving, as well as for thickening and revivifying greying hair.²¹ Another remedy in the same volume was more specific, involving the use of powdered Musca fly, brimstone, hog’s gall and vinegar ‘after shaving and rubification’ – presumably referring to the redness caused after shaving.²² The physician William Salmon detailed a large number of cosmetic preparations specifically for the face within his 1672 textbook of artistic methods, including washes,

¹⁵ National Library of Wales, MS SA/1681/216, Will and Inventory of James Preston of Wrexham, 12 January 1681. For the uses of Agyptiacum, see John Aiken, *Biographical Memoirs of Medicine in Great Britain from the Revival of Literature to the Time of Harvey* (London: Printed for Joseph Johnson, 1800), 98.

¹⁶ Nottinghamshire Archives, MS PR/NW 4 May 1725, Probate inventory of William Hutchinson, 4 May 1725.

¹⁷ Moyses Charas, *The Royal Pharmacopoeia, Galenical and Chymical According to the Practice of the Most Eminent and Learned Physicians of France* (London: Printed for John Starkey, 1678), 202–3; Richard Lower, *R. Lowers, and Several Other Eminent Physicians, Receipts Containing the Best and Safest Method for Curing Most Diseases in Humane Bodies* (London: Printed for John Nutt, 1700), 61.

¹⁸ John Gerard, *The Herball or General Historie of Plantes* (London: Printed by Adam Ship, Joice Norton and Richard Whittaker, 1633), 245.

¹⁹ Lower, *Dr. Lowers*, 60.

²⁰ George Cheyne, *An Essay of Health and Long Life* (London: Printed by George Strahan, 1725), 198.

²¹ Robert Lovell, *Panzooryktologia. Sive Panzoologicomineralogia, or A Compleat History of Animals and Minerals...* (Oxford: Printed by Henry Hall, 1661), 3.

²² *Ibid.*, 271.

sweet waters and remedies for specific skin complaints. While aimed mainly at women, remedies for skins conditions such as ‘redness’ were equally applicable to both sexes. Justifying the inclusion of cosmetics within a book of art, Salmon argued that ‘the painting of a deformed face, and the licking over of an old, withered, wrinkled and weather-beaten skin’ were appropriate skills for a painter.²³

Extensive searches of early modern manuscript remedy collections have failed to turn up any specific receipts relating to post-shave treatment. But within domestic remedy culture, many creams and ointments existed under more generic terms, such as ‘redness’ or ‘heat’. Elizabeth Hirst’s late seventeenth-century receipt book, for example, contained several remedies for treating inflamed skin. One ‘to take away pimples or redness in the face’ involved anointing it with an unguent made from white wine, brimstone and cream.²⁴ Pimples were another common term relating to skin conditions and could denote either long-term conditions, such as acne, but also rashes and inflammation. Elizabeth Jacob’s ‘Suett to take away the redness of the skinn’ called for a complex mix of sheep’s suet, snails, sugar, rose water and wax in order to prepare an ointment, which could be kept in a pot and good for up to a year.²⁵ Another ‘Very good pomatum for redness in the face or swelling or broken skin’ used lard, rosewater, brandy and lemons – as well as snails – to construct a paste.²⁶ Pomatum was another form of ointment, which could be used to anoint the head or face, for example when chapped or inflamed.²⁷ Such pastes and ointments were often made in case of need, making them readily accessible within the home. In line with the humoral ‘doctrine of opposites’, promoting the treatment of hot conditions with cold remedies, some looked to treat inflamed skin with cooling substances. A 1675 ‘booke of useful receipts for cookery, etc’ suggested washing the face with an infusion of candied water, fresh barley and white wine.²⁸ Another contained a preparation made of raw egg, which was applied ‘to take away heate in ye face’ and was included within a page that also contained ointments for burns and scalds, grouping various soothing receipts together.²⁹

Receipts to make wash balls, used for ‘cleansing and preserving the skin’ of the face, but also to create a lather for shaving, are found in manuscript and printed remedy collections.³⁰ *England’s Happiness Improved* (1699) included a receipt ‘to make and

²³ William Salmon, *Polygraphice, or, The Arts of Drawing, Engraving, Etching, Limning, Painting, Washing, Varnishing, Gilding, Colouring, Dying, Beautifying, and Perfuming in Four Books* (London: Printed for R. Jones, 1672), 288–90.

²⁴ WL, MS 2840/20, Recipe book of Elizabeth Hirst, c. 1700, p. 309.

²⁵ WL, MS 3009, Receipt Book of Elizabeth Jacob, c. 1654, p. 44.

²⁶ WL, MS 4050, Anonymous Remedy Collection, c. 1675, p. 1.

²⁷ For example, see the receipt for ‘a good pomatum for the face’ in WL, MS 1320/104, ‘A Booke of Physick made June 2010’, p. 192.

²⁸ WL, MS 1325, Anonymous, ‘A Booke of Useful Receipts for Cookery, etc’, 1675–1700, p. 243.

²⁹ WL, MS 774, Recipe Collection of Townsend Family, c. 1636–47, p. 56. See also WL MS, 7892/181, *Cookery and Medical Recipe Book*, late 17th century, p. 243; WL MS 7391/14, *English Recipe Book*, c. mid-17th century, p. 24.

³⁰ A process noted in Randle Holme, *An Accademie of Armory OR A Store House of Armory & Blazon Containeing All Things Borne in Coates of Armes Both Forraign and Domes tick. With the Termes of Art Used in Each Science* (Chester: Printed by the author, 1688), 128; George Bate, *Pharmacopoeia Bateana, or, Bate’s Dispensatory Translated from the Second Edition of the Latin Copy* (London: Printed for S. Smith and B. Walford, 1694), 356.

perfume Wash-Balls' made from cake soap and powder and scented with orange or rose water.³¹ Another, authored by the (suspiciously aptly named) perfumer Simon Barbe, contained no less than ten different sorts of wash balls, scented with everything from Neroli to cloves and cinnamon.³² Here function met fashion. In part the gentle perfume of the wash balls was necessary since the soap used in their manufacture had 'an ugly smell'. But it also suggests awareness of and perhaps a desire to mask unpleasant personal odour.³³ Occasional cultural references confirm the use of wash balls by men, as well as women. The titular *English Rogue*, Meriton Latroon, in Richard Head's 1666 play, enters a darkened bedroom hoping to find a supine woman, but instead 'caught a man by the beard' who awoke 'thinking the Devil was come to trim him, or rob him of his wash balls' – here saucily analogous for other manly parts.³⁴

The early market for shaving products

Before the eighteenth century, the advertising of specific shaving products was limited. Although some men did shave themselves in the early modern period, the barber was still the main provider of shaving. Since barbers likely purchased their razors either direct from makers or wholesale from cutlery warehouses there was also little need for advertising to entice their custom. Where razors were mentioned it was generally within broader lists of cutlery products, rather than a specific entry. In 1673, the cutler John Gardener's advertisement (a response to rumours that he was dead!) noted that he was well known for his 'Razers, Cisars and other wares'.³⁵

The turn of the eighteenth century, though, did see the first advertising for commercial shaving products. Again, these often appeared within broader ads for soaps and other related products, with shaving one among many potential uses. Nevertheless, the specific inclusion of shaving in advertising rhetoric at all at least suggests that men were beginning to use such products as part of their toilette. In 1712 for example, the 'Royal Chymical Wash Balls' (also advertised repeatedly and widely in the years following) were available from London retailers, including a glover, a milliner and a 'toyman'.³⁶ Among the various claims made for these 'highly commended' items, was that they 'gave an exquisite sharpness to the razor' and were also 'admirable in shaving the head' in preparation for wearing a wig.³⁷ In 1722, William Cowpland's liquid soap was claimed to be valuable for washing and beautifying the hands, but

³¹ Anon, *England's Happiness Improved: Or, an Infallible Way to Get Riches, Encrease Plenty and Promote Pleasure* (London: Printed for Roger Clavill, 1699), 169.

³² Simon Barbe, *The French Perfumer...* (London: Printed for Sam Buckley, 1696), 32–41. For examples in manuscript collections, see WL MS 2840, remedy collection attr. Mrs Hirst, c. 1684–1725, 77; WL MS 8086/120, Anon., remedy collection, early 17th century, 232.

³³ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁴ Richard Head, *The English Rogue Described, in the Life of Meriton Latroon, A Witty Extravagant* (London: Printed for Francis Kirkman, 1668), 216.

³⁵ 'Several Gentlemen...', *Loyal Protestant and True Domestick Intelligence* (11 July 1682).

³⁶ 'Toys' in this period referred to all manner of small goods and ephemera, rather than children's playthings.

³⁷ 'This is to give Notice That...', *British Mercury* (23 June 1712).

also 'by gentlemen for shaving'.³⁸ Ten years later the qualities of Cowpland's soap had extended to include its scent ('more pleasant than any perfume') suggesting that shaving was already shifting away from its quotidian, pseudomedical connections and more towards a refined, sensuous practice.³⁹

Some products were even promising to spare men from the tyranny of the blade altogether. A report appearing variously in newspapers from London to Ipswich in 1736, noted the arrival of a German chemist, keen to obtain a patent for 'a certain water' which, when rubbed over the beard, 'instantly moulders away the hair of it, like Dust or Powder, cleaner and closer than shaving'.⁴⁰ Unlike the razor, 'it does not in the least soil or hurt the skin, or cause any smart', did not prevent the beard from regrowing, nor damage the mouth eyes or nostrils.⁴¹ The fact that this seemingly miraculous depilatory water was apparently never mentioned again suggests that it did not catch on.

The period between 1650 and 1750, therefore, saw gradual shifts in attitudes towards the nature of shaving, the methods and products used to facilitate the act and also the relief of discomfort. At the beginning of the period, shaving wounds and rashes were treated through domestic medicine, or by a medical practitioner, in the form of a barber or barber-surgeon. Any preparations applied or sold were equally likely to come from the barbershop. The turn of the eighteenth century, however, saw the beginnings of a commercial market that (in its advertising rhetoric) suggested that individual men, as well as barbers, were potential consumers. It is to that market that the next chapter turns.

The 'outward gentleman': The market for shaving products, c. 1750–1850⁴²

In his study of male dress and consumer culture in Victorian Britain, Brent Shannon argues that shaving supplies and male toiletries were big business by 1900.⁴³ But, the market was already well established long before that. The second half of the eighteenth century saw rapid expansion in the numbers and types of shaving products. From virtually a standing start, a whole range of goods, from razors to shaving boxes, began to be advertised in newspapers across the country.

³⁸ 'Sold by Retail', *Post Man and the Historical Account* (16 June 1722).

³⁹ Cowpland's advertisement appears in the back of Anon., *The Ordinary of Newgate, His Account of the Behaviour, Confessions and Dying Words of the Malefactors Who Were Executed at Tyburn on Friday the 14th of This Instant, May 1731* (London: Printed and sold by John Applebee, 1731), 17.

⁴⁰ 'London, October 9', *Read's Weekly Journal* (9 October 1736): 2. The same report also appears in the *Ipswich Journal* of 8 October 1736 and the *Old Whig or the Consistent Protestant* (7 October 1736): 2. I am extremely grateful to Sarah Murden for sharing these references.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² A phrase used by Lord Ashley and quoted in John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Harlow: Pearson, 2005), 84.

⁴³ Brent Shannon, *The Cut of His Coat: Men, Dress and Consumer Culture in Britain, 1860–1914* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 89.

The eighteenth century saw new focus upon the outward appearance of the male body in line with broader changes to concepts of polite masculinity. Managing corporeal shape, form and posture, as well as bodily surfaces, became requisite in order to meet changing sociocultural ideals of appearance. The importance of sociability – of seeing and being seen in public – created pressures, especially for elites and aspirational middling sorts, to conform to a bodily shape that was straight and erect, and to display bodily features that were neat, elegant and harmonious.⁴⁴ While spines should be straight and posture erect, even smaller features such as eyebrows and fingernails needed close attention and, for men, beards were to be closely shorn. As this process occurred, the instruments through which these bodily transformations were daily attended to, from posture devices to nail nippers, tweezers and razors, grew in importance.⁴⁵ Even the materials used in the construction of razors carried meaning, as part of enlightened interest in artisanal innovation and boutique metals.⁴⁶ Shaving, and its related paraphernalia and preparations, was therefore a central component within the polite culture of male self-fashioning.

But a further development actually had deep implications for concepts of personal grooming and ideas about acceptable practices for men. Just as toilette instruments took on new importance, a new market emerged for products to both improve the efficiency of shaving and emolliate its unpleasant effects. For perhaps the first time, men were able to buy cosmetic products created and advertised specifically for them. Whether because of, or in spite of this, shaving slowly shed its earlier connections with medicine and was instead subsumed within a new form of bodywork and self-fashioning. Put another way, what emerged was a wholly new concept of men's personal grooming, one yoked to the consumption and use of 'product'. This is certainly not to claim that men had not used cosmetic products before. As we have seen, early modern remedies for skin conditions could be used by either sex. Various generic instruments and preparations, such as hair colouring products, could be used by men as well as women, in the process of self-fashioning. But razors, along with shaving soaps, pastes and powders, were different. Here were products that were specifically advertised for and presumably bought and used by men. Also, rather than being undertaken by others, responsibility for maintaining appearance also now lay increasingly with individual men.

The later eighteenth century was a period of innovation in advertising techniques and marketing methods.⁴⁷ As well as the proliferation of newspaper titles and advertising space, other innovations, such as display copies, broadened the opportunities for makers of branded goods. Whereas before 1750 many types of domestic goods were

⁴⁴ Alun Withey, *Technology, Self-Fashioning and Politeness in Eighteenth-Century Britain: Refined Bodies* (London: Palgrave, 2016), vii.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Alun Withey, 'Shaving and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 36:2 (2013): 225–43. For broader discussions of boutique steel, see Chris Evans and Alun Withey, 'An Enlightenment in Steel? Innovation in the Steel Trades of Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Technology and Culture*, 53:3 (2012): 533–60.

⁴⁷ John Strachan, *Advertising and Satirical Culture in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 14.

advertised generically, or only within limited geographical areas, the second half of the century saw the emergence of nationwide brands in various types of products, and perhaps especially perishable goods that had previously not warranted the expense of advertising.⁴⁸ Shaving products were an important part of this dynamic marketplace. Competition stimulated product innovation, not only for razors but also other kinds of new shaving goods, including brushes, handles, strops, soaps and cosmetic products. The popularity of newspapers and growth of reading as a social activity afforded opportunities for advertisers to cast their nets widely.⁴⁹ Rather than supplying wholesale to trade, makers and retailers began to target individual men who shaved themselves or had a servant to do it for them. Manufacturers also sought to convince men to spend their cash on luxurious, as well as functional, items. The extent to which the availability of new products was specifically responsible for drawing men away from barbers is a matter for later chapters. It is equally plausible, for example, that the apparent growth in products served a demand that was already growing for personal shaving goods. Whichever (if either) is the case, men were enticed by makers and advertisers to treat their faces with all manner of oils, pastes and lotions.

There were, however, tensions in the gendering of shaving products and in the very act of shaving itself. On the one hand razors were (and were advertised as) innately masculine items. The language of razor advertising emphasized steely hardness and control, and razors bore strong symbolic and even literal connections with the military blade.⁵⁰ But, at the same time, advertisements for shaving soaps, creams and pastes used feminine adjectives and imagery to promote them. The act of shaving, along with the razor itself, was manly; but the processes of soothing irritated and cut skin recalled traditionally feminine qualities of softness and ease. The use of cosmetic shaving products by men therefore sat uneasily with contemporary debates about artifice and even effeminacy. It is unclear whether men were even considered to be part of such debates. One possibility is that the use of cosmetic products by men was so unusual – even inconceivable – so as to render discussion unnecessary. Such an assumption would be revealing, suggesting little expectation that men would either need or require cosmetics. Evidence strongly suggests though that shaving products were indeed a form of male cosmetic and, more than this, were often sold as sensuous, even luxurious, goods.

What follows is a study of the landscape of shaving products in the long eighteenth century, exploring the types of goods available and the language of advertising. It argues that advertisements reveal interesting fault lines in expectations of manly appearance and in what was deemed acceptable in refining and, to some extent, beautifying the male body. The problems of using advertisements as historical sources have been well documented. They are, for example, notoriously unreliable indicators of demand for particular products, not least because of the opacity of advertisers' motivations. A retailer, for example, might just as easily choose to advertise a particular product through *lack* of demand, as much as to ride a wave of popularity. Second are problems

⁴⁸ Ibid., 15.

⁴⁹ Withey, *Technology*, 103–6.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 51–3.

surrounding the availability, cost and frequency of newspapers more generally, which can serve to artificially inflate the numbers of adverts, or equally mask the true scale of an advertising campaign. But, used carefully, advertisements can be extremely useful in discerning the range and types of products available, the language and rhetoric deployed by advertisers and how this changed over time and, more broadly, the underlying assumptions about masculinity that they generate. These are the factors around which this chapter, and the next, will be framed. While there is some overlap between the products and types discussed, this chapter focuses more on qualitative data, while the following chapter attempts some quantitative analysis.

Selling the razor

If the numbers of ‘hits’ for razors in newspaper databases were graphed, they would show a huge increase in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, suggesting both a significant growth in production and a proliferation of makers. In reality, however, the situation was not so straightforward. Assessing the size and scope of razor-making and retail in eighteenth-century Britain is fraught with difficulty. While online newspaper databases are extremely useful in identifying individual makers and their products, they can be London-centric and also selective in the publications used. As Charles Upchurch has noted, the accuracy of electronic database ‘hits’ depends greatly on the success of electronic character recognition and whether data is inputted manually or scanned, with allowance for ‘fuzzy’ searches.⁵¹ The quantity of advertisements is unreliable since numbers can be skewed by variations in advertising across different newspapers, the relative survival of particular publications, or fluctuations in yearly demand for advertising more broadly, rendering them unreliable for gauging availability or demand.

There are also problems in quantifying razor-makers, who were often not included within trade directories, or otherwise simply subsumed within the broader category of cutlers. The *London Directory*, for example, did not include razor-makers among lists of ‘merchants and principal traders’ in any volumes between 1768 and 1800, despite their certainly being present in other sources.⁵² Neither did Birmingham or its surrounding industrial towns, or in the Newcastle directories of 1787 or 1790. In the latter case, it may simply be the case that none were present in the town, since other specialized metalworking trades, such as nail manufacturing, were included.⁵³ They were more likely to appear in records of large metal-producing centres, such as

⁵¹ Charles Upchurch, ‘Full-Text Databases and Historical Research: Cautionary Results from a Ten-Year Study’, *Journal of Social History*, 46:1 (2012): 91–3.

⁵² As an example, Anon., *The London Directory for the Year 1772, Containing an Alphabetical List of the Names and Places of Abode of the Merchants and Principal Traders of the Cities of London and Westminster* (London: Printed for T. Lowndes, 1772).

⁵³ No razor-makers appear in Anon., *The Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Walsall, Dudley, Bilston and Willenhall Directory* (Birmingham: Pearson and Rollason, 1780); Anon., *The First Newcastle Directory, 1778, Reprinted in Facsimile with an Introduction by J.R. Boyle, F.S.A.* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Mawson, Swan and Morgan, 1889), 17.

Sheffield where, in 1787, forty individual makers or firms were listed as being within the town of Sheffield, with a further ten listed as being ‘in the Neighbourhood.’⁵⁴ In general it is therefore the prominent, high-end makers and their products, rather than ‘ordinary’ individuals and ‘common razors’ that necessarily dominate the discussion. Even here, with no surviving sales ledgers from eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century razor manufacturers, assessing demand or consumption for individual businesses or makers is difficult.

That razors were widely available, however, is clear. By the 1760s they featured regularly in the advertisements of cutlers and metalware wholesalers and warehousemen in London and in provincial towns across the country, such as ‘Mr Evill’ of Bath, whose list of products took up virtually an entire column in the *Bath Chronicle*.⁵⁵ From such suppliers could be purchased mass-produced razors of varying quality from London, Sheffield, Birmingham and other large manufacturing towns, at prices to suit every pocket. The makers of these ‘common’ razors, based in workshops and manufactories across Britain, are largely lost to history. An alternative approach, taken here, is to explore the landscape of proprietary razors, those made by individuals using their own name, or a brand. Rather than attempting a quantitative study for every year, which would be onerous and problematic, for the reasons noted above, a snapshot view will be used to gain some insight into the availability of proprietary razors across time. Drawn from detailed keyword searches of advertisements in the British Library Newspaper database and British Newspaper Archive, Table 11.1 shows the numbers of individuals advertising their own brand of razor, or including such products within their own stock lists, for one year in each decade. It does not include instances where advertisers were agents or where unbranded, generic razors appeared in warehouse stock lists. As such these numbers do not represent the total numbers of razor-makers, or razors, in general. It can, however, offer some insight into the nature of specialization in razor-making and the broad trajectory of branded products.

On first analysis it is the low numbers of advertisers of proprietary razors that seems most striking. Although the numbers rise towards the end of the eighteenth century, in percentage terms dramatically (which might be expected given the increasing popularity of new steel razors) they do so from a very low base. From two in 1760 (and only one ten years previously) nine individuals were advertising their own branded razors by 1790. Thereafter numbers appeared to stabilize; the figure for 1800 is suspicious, reflecting a slightly anomalous drop in the total numbers of keyword hits in general that year. Given the obvious ubiquity of shaving in the eighteenth century and the popularity of steel razors both in facilitating shaving and as desirable objects in their own right, the relatively low numbers of advertisers might seem unusual. Part of the reason may simply be the costs involved in advertising, which could be substantial. Between 1770 and 1820 advertising costs rose steadily in reaction to

⁵⁴ Anon., *A Directory of Sheffield, Including the Manufacturers of the Adjacent Villages* (Sheffield: Gales and Martin, 1787), 23–5.

⁵⁵ ‘At Evill’s London, Sheffield and Birmingham Warehouse’, *Bath Chronicle* (5 December 1765): 3. See also ‘William Richardson’, *Manchester Mercury* (2 July 1765): 3; ‘James Webster’, *Shrewsbury Chronicle* (25 February 1775): 2.

Table 11.1 Proprietary razor manufacturers in British newspaper advertisements, one year per decade, 1750–1860

Year	Number of proprietary razor manufacturers in advertisements
1750	1
1760	2
1770	5
1780	9
1790	9
1800	5
1810	10
1820	4
1830	7
1840	3
1850	8

increasing demand for space. Advertising duty also rose during that period, from 2s to 3s 6d per advertisement, while newspapers trebled their profits from advertising.⁵⁶ The costs depended on several factors including position, size and content. Regular advertisers may have been able to negotiate a lower price. Even so, many newspapers charged a fixed amount per line – often sixpence – but also imposed a minimum cost of six shillings per advertisement, even if it only ran to three or four lines.⁵⁷ For small businesses this could represent a substantial outlay. Razor-making, along with other metalworking trades, was often a small concern. Many razor-makers made and sold their products from the same premises, rather than having separate shops. Those who advertised likely represented high-end makers, the tip of a substantial iceberg, with perhaps a hidden majority unable to afford or justify the substantial outlay required.

It is also worth noting the nature and extent of advertising. Although newspaper databases contain publications from across Britain, London makers dominate. Rather than large numbers of individual makers advertising locally, the market for razors appears instead to have consisted of broad, concerted campaigns by a small number of prominent makers. To regular readers of London newspapers their names and products would have been very familiar. Given the cost of advertising, the scale of these campaigns is impressive for such a mechanical trade as razor-making. The perfumer and razor-maker Daniel Cudworth, for example, advertised his strops and razors widely and repeatedly between the 1750s and 70s, often several times per month and across several different newspapers simultaneously. In January 1760 alone for example, he placed more than twenty. Between 1780 and 1800 Robert Sangwine of the Strand similarly undertook comprehensive advertising campaigns for his cast steel razors,

⁵⁶ Ivor Asquith, 'Advertising and the Press in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries: James Perry and the Morning Chronicle, 1790–1821', *Historical Journal*, 18:4 (1975): 707.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 713–14.

sometimes running into hundreds in a single year. Other serial advertisers included the (aptly named) London razor-maker and perfumer Charles Sharp, the cutler and warehouseman William Riccard and the razor-maker and cutler Alexander Palmer, all of whom placed regular advertisements.

In the early eighteenth century, as the previous chapter showed, razors were not advertised singly. Instead they usually appeared among the stock lists of general retailers, including cutlers, hardware and tool warehouses, stationers, jewellers and perfumers. They also appeared under the broad categories of 'toys' or 'instruments'. Gervas Fletcher of London, for example, listed razors among his range of the 'nicest steel toys' in 1722, while Thomas Nuttall of Horncastle sold and ground 'all sorts of instruments'.⁵⁸ But after 1750 razors were increasingly advertised in their own right. The earliest 'branded' razors yet found were Thomas Henderson's 'Famous Liquid Steel Razors', advertised in the *Edinburgh Courant* in 1750.⁵⁹ In 1753 the London perfumer Daniel Cudworth promoted his own razors, while James Emon's 'Razors prov'd by Shaving' appeared in more than thirty separate advertisements in 1755.⁶⁰ This shift took place amidst the growing prominence of refining the body and corresponding rise in status of the instruments involved. As I have argued elsewhere, razors emerged from and reflected enlightened scientific expertise in metallurgy, but also fed into a continuum of ideas about polite masculinity. Razor-makers were often at the forefront of the emerging market for gentlemanly accoutrements. Men's travelling or dressing cases, containing everything from razors to 'teeth instruments' and even writing sets, were available from London-based razor manufacturers and perfumers such as Robert Sangwine and the firm of Riccard and Littlefear.⁶¹ This partly reflected demand for small portable grooming kits by travellers and Grand Tourists. But it also spoke of the willingness of men to refine their own appearance and, on the part of makers and advertisers, the recognition that men could be a distinct market. In the absence of sales ledgers, passing references offer brief glimpses into the nature of demand. In 1831 the razor-maker William Holmes noted the continuing success of his 'patent silver steel razors', including his recent sales figures as evidence. If Holmes's figures are taken on trust, in 1827 he had sold 1,300 razors and 418 strops. In 1828 this had risen to 4,720 razors and 1,014 strops, rose again the following year to 6,110 razors and 1,430 strops, and in 1830 he had sold 8,214 razors – an increase of more than 600 per cent. By the time the advertisement came out in 1831, Holmes was confident that demand for that year was rising in proportion.⁶²

The rhetoric of razor advertising reveals much about expectations of male appearance and of manly pursuits. One of the main advertising 'hooks' used by razor-makers was the appeal to assumed male interests in natural philosophy, science and technologies. As

⁵⁸ 'Gervas Fletcher', *Stamford Mercury* (19 April 1722); 'This Is to Give Notice', *Howgrave's Stamford Mercury* (26 September 1734).

⁵⁹ 'Thomas Henderson, at His Shop Opposite to the Cross Well, Edinburgh', *Edinburgh Courant* (30 October 1750): 3.

⁶⁰ See 'To All Gentlemen or Others Who Shave Themselves', *Public Advertiser* (7 September 1753); 'Razors Prov'd by Shaving', *Public Advertiser* (15 April 1755).

⁶¹ Withey, 'Shaving and Masculinity', 233–4.

⁶² 'Extensive Irish Cutlery Manufactory', *Freeman's Journal* (7 September 1831): 1.

artisanal experts in metallurgy, engaged in continual experimentation and refinement of their products, razor-makers could assert their position at the forefront of technological change and innovation.⁶³ Allying themselves and their products with enlightened science and philosophy, both expected pursuits of the polite gentleman, was a useful marketing tool. In the 1780s, several makers styled their products as 'philosophical razors'. Harrison's 'Philosophical Concave Razors', for example, were 'tempered with the greatest precision and manufactured under his own inspection'.⁶⁴ Joseph Wright of London's 'philosophical razors', 'wanted no setting nor grinding', while another claimed his razors to have been manufactured 'on philosophical principles'.⁶⁵ Others stressed their own labours in perfecting their products. John Palmer's 'Superior Razors' were brought into being through his 'indefatigable pains' in discovering the 'true temperature of steel'.⁶⁶ The emphasis upon the working and refining of steel in the manufacture of razors bore strong symbolic connections with masculine traits of hardness and, in particular, temper. Alexander Lowe's razors were of a 'peculiar temper, never known to fail', while John Palmer's advertisements stressed the high degree of purity as well as control over hardness and temper.⁶⁷ Although the term may not have been entirely consciously deployed, control over the temper of the razor offered a useful analogy for the self-government required of the polite gentleman—literally controlling one's temper. In putting a razor to his face, a man was exacting the same standards of care, control and mastery over his body as did the razor-maker in constructing the instrument.

If men were expected to control their appearance, though, they should not have to suffer in doing so. Some broke with the cold, hard, technological masculinity of razors and instead played to the acknowledged discomfort of shaving, claiming their products to be easier to use or gentler on the skin than earlier razors. The celebrated London metallurgist, razor-maker (and sometime actor) J. H. Savigny, promised that his razors would render shaving 'easy and pleasant' due to his 'peculiar art' of setting the edge to razors.⁶⁸ The prominent razor-maker and metallurgist James Stodart also advertised his razors of a new construction in 1791, promising that they rendered shaving 'easy, where it has been difficult'.⁶⁹ Help was also available for men to shave while travelling, or where facilities were limited. In 1800, William Dewdney stated that the quality and construction of his portable shaving boxes and newly invented razors prevented 'even the most nervous and infirm operator from cutting the skin'. Not only this, they were 'of infinite use' for travellers, the army and navy, able to be used 'on the seas in the most boisterous weather with ease and safety'.⁷⁰ Some razor manufacturers were also

⁶³ For a discussion of 'enlightened metals', see Chris Evans, 'Crucible Steel as an Enlightened Material', *Historical Metallurgy*, 42:2 (2008): 79–88.

⁶⁴ 'Harrison's German Steel or Philosophical Concave Razors', *Gazetteer or New Daily Advertiser* (26 June 1783).

⁶⁵ 'Philosophical Razors', *General Evening Post* (12 April 1875); J. Palmer, 'At No. 40 Castle Street', *World* (23 February 1790); 'Concave Razors', *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser* (25 November 1784).

⁶⁶ 'Superior Razors', *Morning Herald* (17 April 1796).

⁶⁷ 'Razors Warranted', *Oracle* (6 May 1791); Palmer, 'No. 40 Castle Street'.

⁶⁸ 'Shaving Rendered Pleasant and Easy', *Morning Chronicle* (9 January 1810).

⁶⁹ 'A New Razor, By Stodart', *Star* (3 October 1793). For Stodart's place within metallurgical innovation, see Chris Evans and Alun Withey, 'An Enlightenment in Steel? Innovation in the Steel Trades in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Technology and Culture*, 53:3 (2012): 552–3.

⁷⁰ 'An Important Invention', *Morning Chronicle* (11 January 1800).

keen to elevate their trade by riding the wave of popularity for ‘manufactories’ and warehouses as sites for polite shopping. By 1790, the razor-maker J. H. Savigny and the perfumer Charles Sharp both operated from a ‘razor manufactory’, rather than a mere ‘mechanical’ shop.⁷¹

It is worth noting too that the language and symbolism of razor advertising remained largely consistent across this period. Razor advertisements throughout the first half of the nineteenth century continued to stress the tempering of razors, novelty and innovation in their construction and comfort in use.⁷² This is consistent with continuities in conceptions of masculinity between the Georgian and early Victorian periods. ‘Gentlemanliness’ (as contrasted with emerging ideas of an interiorized ‘manliness’ towards the mid-century) was conveyed by refinement and sociability and was outwardly manifest in clothing and appearance, as much as by manners and breeding.⁷³ The continued preference for the shaved face across the period also presumably acted to preserve demand.

Evidence from patent applications also suggests a continuing drive for innovation in shaving paraphernalia. Between 1789 and 1850, six patents for razors or related products, were lodged. Some, like that of John Horatio Savigny, related to the quality and construction of the blade. Unsurprisingly, given his metallurgical expertise, Savigny’s specification for a razor constructed on a new principle of tempering, was only one of several he submitted for metal items, including skates.⁷⁴ Some patents were sought for devices to render shaving safer. In 1804 the Sheffield cutler Samuel Bennett proposed ‘a mode of making or casting razors of a new and improved form’, consisting of a ring in the handle to enable the razor to be held securely.⁷⁵ The same year, the Sheffield ‘razor manufacturer’ Edward Greaves applied for a patent for his ‘improvements on razors’, which involved a pin system to lock a straight razor in either an open or shut position, again to prevent accidental injury.⁷⁶ In 1836, William Samuel Henson (later an aviation pioneer) patented his T-shaped safety razor, including a comb guard and ‘protector’ to prevent the user from accidentally cutting themselves.⁷⁷ Other than Savigny, however, it is worth noting that none of these new innovations appear to have been advertised in newspapers.

As well as razors, a host of new products looked to improve the mechanical processes of shaving. As with razors, these were often given elaborate names to bely their quotidian function. J. T. Rigge’s ‘Magnetic Razor Tablet’, effectively a razor strop, promised to ‘supersede all grinding, honing &c’, to ‘render shaving as easy and agreeable as it was before unpleasant and painful’.⁷⁸ An apparatus proposed by Thomas

⁷¹ ‘Arrivals from India’, ‘Savigny’s Patent Razor’, *Diary or Woodfall’s Register* (3 August 1790).

⁷² For just some examples, see advertisements for J. Barker, *Hampshire Telegraph* (17 September 1810); Field and Co., *Morning Chronicle* (9 November 1810); J. Weiss, *Morning Chronicle* (8 April 1820); W. Parkin, *Morning Post* (12 June 1820); William Coleman, *Morning Post* (16 February 1820); ‘Damascus Steel Razors’, *Freeman’s Journal* (24 September 1830); J. and T. Rigge, *Morning Post* (14 May 1840).

⁷³ Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, 84–7.

⁷⁴ BL, MS Patent 1789/1716, 8 December 1789, Specification of John Henry Savigny.

⁷⁵ BL, MS Patent 1804/2789, 20 October 1804, Specification of Samuel Bennett.

⁷⁶ BL MS Patent 1804/2780, Specification of Edward Greaves, 4 August 1804.

⁷⁷ BL, MS Patent 1836/6979, 11 April 1836, Specification of William Samuel Henson.

⁷⁸ ‘Ease and Comfort in Shaving’, *John Bull* (25 November 1821): 399.

Ryall of York, comprising simply of a small metal band to lock the razor in place while shaving, was styled ‘The Useful and Elegant Facilitator.’⁷⁹ Some concentrated on the practical problems of providing hot water for shaving, which razor-makers advocated for comfort, and since heated razors were said to cut more cleanly. ‘Jones’s Improved self-acting alcohol blow pipe’ was ‘peculiarly adapted for boiling water for shaving,’ supposedly boiling a pint in five minutes.⁸⁰ Others sought to refine the shaving process itself through innovative, if not always entirely necessary, inventions. To rescue men from the apparently onerous task of dipping their shaving brush into a pot of lather, the London perfumer James Woodman designed a brush with a hidden chamber filled with soap or paste, which could be squirted directly into the bristles of the brush by way of a pin or piston.⁸¹

Throughout the period, therefore, razors were an important element in the construction of male grooming routines. Razor-makers deployed various strategies to attract new male customers, appealing to their supposed natural authority, hardness and temper, as well as enticing them with new, innovative products with desirable materials. In the process, the act of shaving was imbued with new meaning as one of the principle components of fashioning the male body, and razors were naturally an important element in this. But, at the same time, other products, from soaps to oils, pastes and scents, rose in significance as part of a broader male toilette. It is to those products that this chapter now turns.

Soaps, powders, pastes and oils

As Morag Martin has argued in relation to men’s hair products in eighteenth-century France, the growth of products for male beautification argues against notions of a ‘Great Renunciation,’ wherein late eighteenth-century men supposedly adopted a more austere method of dress and deportment.⁸² Men were actively encouraged to refine their appearance, in response to new ideas about physicality and other factors such as the ‘cult of youth’ which, as we have seen, privileged smoothness and delicacy. But, as Martin also argues, while men were still encouraged not to neglect their appearance, the early nineteenth century saw a new version of manliness, one that suggested an aversion to vanity and something of a disdain for the toilette arts.⁸³ Shaving products offer an interesting insight into these supposed changes. The late eighteenth century saw the proliferation of advertisements by an emerging category of retailer – the perfumer. With strong links to the masculine trade of barbering and as experts in the management of hair, Georgian perfumers diversified into a wide variety of cosmetic products, of which those for shaving and hair were an important part.⁸⁴ From almost

⁷⁹ William Newton, *The London Journal of Arts and Sciences* (London: Sherwood, 1828), 487. See the description of the device in Herbert, *The Register*, 187.

⁸⁰ ‘Patronised by the Royal Family,’ *Age* (3 February 1828): 40.

⁸¹ Newton, *London Journal*, 357.

⁸² Morag Martin, *Selling Beauty: Cosmetics, Commerce and French Society, 1750–1830* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 154–5.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁸⁴ Strachan, *Advertising and Satirical Culture*, 204–6.

a standing start in the 1750s, a new market emerged for all manner of new shaving products, which began to be advertised in the pages of Georgian newspapers. Such advertisements reveal much not only about the products themselves and the advertising strategies of makers but also about men as consumers and the varying attributes of masculinity and male appearance to which such advertisements spoke.

This apparent surge in shaving products also occurred in context of a major expansion of soap-making in Britain. Throughout the period both the production of and demand for soap soared. Between 1720 and 1800, excise revenue accounts show that consumption had nearly doubled. Between 1800 and 1820, it had doubled again and continued to rise dramatically thereafter.⁸⁵ Demand was stimulated after 1831 on the halving of soap duty and saw a huge rise again in 1852 when the duty was abolished altogether.⁸⁶ While the number of soap-makers decreased by almost half over the same period, their output virtually tripled, especially in centres of production in London, Cheshire and Lancashire.⁸⁷ Changing ideas about bodily cleanliness from the early nineteenth century also drove the demand for soap. As hygiene increasingly became part of public health measures, so individual hygiene took on new importance. Medical manuals stressed the importance of soap as an enabler of hygiene and its role in removing dirt and cleansing the skin.⁸⁸

But soap, or its derivatives, were also essential in the creation of a lather for shaving, acknowledged as a key element by the authors of shaving manuals, such as John Savigny and Benjamin Kingsbury. For Savigny, lather was the 'proper vehicle of the beard'. The more copiously it was applied, the 'task of the razor would be much eased' and the less painful the operation would therefore be.⁸⁹ Acknowledging the proliferation of shaving soaps, Savigny recognized that customers more often chose products 'on account of their odiferous qualities' rather than their utility, he advised instead that 'the Nose must be everyone's Arbitrator'.⁹⁰ For Savigny, a high-quality soap, infusing well into water and providing a consistent lather was the best option. In his *Treatise on Razors*, Benjamin Kingsbury agreed about the importance of lather, but felt shaving powder or paste to be superior, applied thickly by brush or by hand.⁹¹ Cleansing was also a factor. Washing the face before shaving, as Kingsbury noted, acted to remove dust and dirt that clung to the beard, while the application of both lather and razor was important in the issue of 'cleanliness'.⁹² Overall, as shaving assumed growing importance, so products for achieving a high-quality, reliable and functional lather, and generally to expedite the process, also became essential. As with razors, a large-scale quantitative

⁸⁵ L. Gittins, 'Soapmaking in Britain, 1824–1851: A Study in Industrial Location', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 8:1 (1982): 30–1.

⁸⁶ Virginia Smith, *Clean: A History of Personal Hygiene and Purity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 290–1.

⁸⁷ Gittins, 'Soapmaking', 32.

⁸⁸ Georges Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness: Changing Attitudes in France since the Middle Ages* (trans. Jean Birrell) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 169.

⁸⁹ J. H. Savigny, *A Treatise on the Use and Management of the Razor with Practical Directions Relative to Its Appendages* (2nd edn) (London: Printed for the author, 1786), 12–3.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12–14.

⁹¹ Benjamin Kingsbury, *A Treatise on Razors* (London: Publisher unknown, 1797), 52–3.

⁹² Savigny, *Treatise*, 12; Kingsbury, *Treatise*, 51, 53.

study of shaving products is frustrated by the nature of the evidence, although the smaller numbers of products do allow some limited studies of the numbers and types available. The following discussion is based on a systematic search of advertisements in the British Library Newspaper database and British Newspaper Archive encompassing local and national newspapers from across the country, and aimed at readers across the social scale.

The social importance of shaving, combined with the availability and advertising of new steel razors, quickly stimulated the market for products targeted at ‘gentlemen who shave themselves’, rather than visit the barber to be shaved. This new type of consumer – the male domestic shaver – therefore offered new opportunities for manufacturers. The period after 1750 saw the proliferation of products for use in shaving, and especially those advertised *solely* for shaving. By the late 1760s, manufacturers had begun to develop and market dedicated shaving soaps. Among the earliest was Bayley and Sons’ ‘Improved Shaving Soap’, advertised in October 1767 and widely available across the country for more than fifteen years and soon joined by perfumer Richard Warren’s ‘Sweet Amber soap for shaving.’⁹³ Between 1750 and 1850, more than fifty different soap brands appeared, either specifically advertised as shaving soaps, or including shaving as part of a broader list of attributes. In 1810, one particular issue of *La Belle Assemblée* magazine contained advertisements for no less than five different examples of shaving soap on a single page.⁹⁴ Perhaps unsurprisingly, perfumers were regular advertisers of their own or others’ shaving soaps, although, like razors, shaving soaps also filled the shelves of diverse retailers from toymen to booksellers, reflecting both their quotidian nature and status as a polite accoutrement for men.

Soap-based products for shaving appeared in a variety of different forms, each with its own trajectory. Shaving powder, for example, made from small soap flakes, offered a quick and portable means of working up a lather. The first advertisement for a commercially available shaving powder came in 1751, with ‘Richard Barnard’s new-invented Powder for Shaving.’⁹⁵ Some, like the perfumer James Emon, promised that their shaving powders ‘excel[led] all soaps’ and stressed the care taken in their construction.⁹⁶ Others claimed their product to be more suitable to travelling than hard soap and less likely to spoil in damp climates.⁹⁷ Shaving powder was advertised consistently between 1751 and 1850, although the numbers of specific brands was never great. During that period, at least eighteen different shaving powder brands were advertised, eleven of which appeared before 1800. Like razors and soaps, some makes of shaving soap were advertised over long periods, sometimes spanning more than two decades.⁹⁸

A second product was shaving paste, a ready-made preparation which lathered quickly and easily and was also widely claimed to prevent the irritation that could be

⁹³ ‘Shaving Soap Improved by Bayley and Son’, ‘Warren’s Sweet Amber Soap for Shaving’, *St James Chronicle or British Evening Post* (29 October 1767).

⁹⁴ See *La Belle Assemblée*; or, *Bell’s Court and Fashionable Magazine* (1 May 1810).

⁹⁵ ‘Richard Barnard’s New-Invented Powder for Shaving’, *General Advertiser* (14 May 1751).

⁹⁶ ‘James Emon’s New-Invented Powder for Shaving’, *London Evening Post* (5 May 1752).

⁹⁷ Such as Daniel Cudworth’s ‘True Shaving Powder’, *London Evening Post* (16 January 1752).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* See also ‘Warren and Co.’s Best Violet Shaving Powder’, *Public Advertiser* (24 February 1768).

caused by caustic, alkaline soaps. While shaving powder was seemingly more popular during the second half of the eighteenth century, shaving paste was more a feature of the early nineteenth. ‘Woodcock’s Paste for Shaving’ appeared in 1772 and followed in 1793 by ‘British Shaving Paste’.⁹⁹ Between 1800 and 1850, a further twenty different brands were advertised.

A third, although not as popular, option, was shaving oil, used to lubricate the face, thereby removing the need for either lather or water. Between 1761 and 1835, eight different varieties of shaving oil appeared in advertisements, at the rate of only one or two per decade. ‘Hart’s Shaving Oil’ (‘greatly useful where there is a scarcity of water’) was the only brand to be advertised over several years in the eighteenth century, while Ogden’s Eukeirogension and ‘Barber’s Medicated’ varieties were the subject of repeated advertisements in different publications and across the country during the 1830s.¹⁰⁰ A small number of other products were also infrequently produced across the later half of the eighteenth century, including shaving liquids and waters and shaving cakes, which were not advertised widely.¹⁰¹

Shaving soaps, pastes and powders were available from various types of urban retailers including barbers, tobacconists and especially perfumers. If London directories were quiet about razor-makers, they appear to reveal the proliferation of perfumers in the later eighteenth century. In 1768 only two perfumers were listed in the London Directory – John Bowden and John Dyce – both of whom were named as ‘perfumer and tobacconist’.¹⁰² Numbers remained low for the next few years and fluctuated, but by 1786 there were at least sixteen perfumers active in the city.¹⁰³ The clustering of perfumers and producers in London did not limit the market to the capital however. As well as carrying stocks within their shops, perfumers offered mail order through advertisements in regional newspapers, enabling those who could not visit in person to partake of the latest goods, or sold through a network of regional agents. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, products from large perfumery businesses, such as that of Richard Warren in London, or popular brands, such as the ‘British Shaving Paste’, were available through agents throughout the British Isles.¹⁰⁴

A further, albeit niche, type of shaving product promised to revolutionize shaving by removing the need for soap, lather, razor and even a mirror, altogether. In 1804,

⁹⁹ ‘Woodcock’s Paste for Shaving’, *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* (28 March 1772); ‘The British Shaving Paste’, *Sun* (26 November 1793).

¹⁰⁰ For examples of each, see ‘N. Hart’s Shaving Oil’, *Public Ledger or Daily Register* (10 October 1761); ‘Ogden’s Eukeirogension or Shaving Oil’, *Bristol Mercury* (30 November 1830); ‘Barber’s Medicated Vegetable Shaving Oil’, *York Herald* (12 December 1835).

¹⁰¹ For examples, see ‘Cudworth’s Liquid for Shaving’, *London Evening Post* (18 January 1753); ‘Pearl Water’, *Public Advertiser* (13 February 1760); ‘Sharp’s Alpine Shaving Cakes’, *Morning Chronicle* (1 August 1788); ‘Sharp’s Citron Water’, *Morning Chronicle* (1 August 1788).

¹⁰² Henry Kent, *Kent’s Directory for the Year 1769* (London: Printed and sold by Henry Kent, 1769), 28, 53.

¹⁰³ See individual listings in Anon., *The London Directory for the Year 1786...* (London: Printed for W. Lowndes, 1786).

¹⁰⁴ See ‘John Newsome, Chemist, Druggist and Perfumer from London’, *Leeds Intelligencer* (20 March 1781): 3; ‘British Shaving Paste’, *Leeds Intelligencer* (17 February 1794): 4; ‘British Shaving Paste’, *Manchester Mercury* (2 August 1796): 1.

Hyman's 'Tonsor, or Imperial Shaving Composition' promised to save men from the dangers of wounds caused by the razor, requiring only gentle friction to work. It was a 'most fortunate invention' for travellers, and especially seafarers, and enabled depilation to be safely undertaken in bed or even in the dark.¹⁰⁵

There were, then, a wide variety of options for men, and advertisements offered a means both to increase awareness of new products and, more subtly, to appeal to (or even instruct men in) different aspects of polite masculinity. Across the range of products, advertisers consistently highlighted several key themes: first, was a focus on health and hygiene, particularly in shaving soap advertising; second was the promise of facilitating and improving the act of shaving; third was the preservation of tender skin and the promise of relieving the acknowledged discomfort of shaving. Finally, however, and perhaps most revolutionary was the creation of the idea of shaving as a sensory and even a luxury experience. Exploring these themes in more detail offers a new perspective on changing ideas about masculine products and male appearance.

Advertising shaving products

First, and broadly speaking, in often emphasizing what their products did *not* do, shaving soap advertisements can provide useful evidence of the quality and perceived deficiencies in existing or common goods – something that is otherwise missing in the historical record. Among the many pricks against which makers and advertisers kicked were that shaving soaps could be slimy and glutinous, rather than unctuous. The lather they created might either be too thick and heavy, making it fall from the face or stick to the brush, or too light, making it dissipate before the task was complete. Alkali soaps were claimed to be too harsh and corrosive, making shaving uncomfortable and drying the face. Addressing such deficiencies was the stated aim of those at the vanguard of the new market.

Advertising strategies involved several themes, and health and medicine were an important element. At first, ideas about shaving as part of a broader health regimes proved hard to displace and, as late as the 1770s, the removal of facial hair still retained echoes of humoral ideas of perspiration and evacuation and about 'cooling' as a healing process for reddened skin. Early modern recipes for burns or scalds commonly referred to taking the 'fire' out of the burn, a concept that was clearly still in evidence in products such as Berwick's 'new-invented vegetable soap' and others which offered to 'effectually prevent that burning on the face after shaving'.¹⁰⁶ Stressing the utility of products in relieving discomfort was therefore an obvious strategy to increase sales. Another was to attribute broader healing properties to the product. Some, such as Atkinson's Ambrosial soap made general claims about removing freckles, redness and hardness, or chapping.¹⁰⁷ The 'Emollient Balm', advertised in 1800, claimed to heal

¹⁰⁵ 'By His Majesty's Royal Letters Patent', *London Courier and Evening Gazette* (10 March 1804).

¹⁰⁶ 'Berwick's New-Invented Shaving Soap', *World* (21 January 1790).

¹⁰⁷ 'Atkinson's Ambrosial Soap', *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post* (3 September 1818); 'Sangwine's Shaving Oil', *Public Advertiser* (31 January 1765).

‘pimples or eruptions on the face,’ thus rendering shaving safer, with less liability to cuts.¹⁰⁸ ‘Solomon’s Abstergent Lotion’ offered the ‘only recourse’ for Gentlemen ‘when shaving is become a dreadful operation,’ due to the poor or damaged condition of the skin.¹⁰⁹

Others based their claims on specific conditions and particularly those with symptoms or marks that hindered shaving. Scurvy was one such condition. Testifying to the efficacy of the ‘Botanical syrup in 1800, the London stockbroker William Bidwell noted that a longstanding “scorbutic complaint” caused him to shave only if “necessity required” and that the operation was performed with pains most excruciating.’¹¹⁰ Scurvy was referred to in several shaving soap and paste brand advertisements, including Seauzet’s ‘newly-invented shaving paste’ (‘a most admirable restorative to those with scurvy’) and the ‘British Shaving Paste,’ particularly recommended to those with ‘scorbutic faces.’¹¹¹ The problems of shaving for men with smallpox scars were also addressed by products such as Twineberow’s ‘Paragon Shaving Soap’ which offered to alleviate the ‘excruciating pain thro [sic] tenderness and eruption after smallpox.’¹¹² Not all, however, were comfortable with the idea that men should apply soothing products. In 1829, *The Simplicity of Health* argued that ‘The milks and washes for taking away unpleasant smarting after shaving will be unnecessary’ if men used a ‘scrubbing preparative’ before shaving and cold water to shave with. ‘We hear a great deal of “tender faces”’, argued the author, ‘but it is mostly a delusion.’¹¹³

There were also signs of the changing relationship between personal grooming routines and specific health practices. Shaving products still bore clear links with medicine, remedy culture and healing, but the emerging market for domestic shaving products, targeted at individual men, increasingly located shaving within a broader set of grooming practices – ones which contributed to health, but were not necessarily ‘medical’. Various makers, for example, claimed that using their products when shaving would ‘impart a glow of health’ to the face.¹¹⁴ Others went even further in claiming to contribute to the holistic maintenance or restoration of bodily health. Seauzet’s shaving paste, for example, laid particular emphasis upon its ‘medicinal virtues,’ while Burgess’s ‘Lilac Flower Shaving Paste’ even promised men the ‘appearance of youth in old age.’¹¹⁵ Unsurprisingly too there could be ambiguity. Georges Arnaud’s ‘Medical Cosmetic Wash’ of 1774 was ‘peculiarly contrived for gentlemen’ and offered to promote a healthy perspiration, while keeping ‘catarrhus humours’ away from the mouth and

¹⁰⁸ ‘A Curious Invention Preferable to Soaps’, *Hereford Journal* (18 June 1800): 3.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Solomon’s Abstergent Lotion’, *La Belle Assemblée; or, Bell’s Court and Fashionable Magazine* (1 June 1808): 46.

¹¹⁰ ‘To the Prejudiced against Advertised Medicines’, *Chester Chronicle* (10 January 1800): 1.

¹¹¹ ‘The British Shaving Paste’, *Sun* (26 November 1793); ‘Seauzet’s’, *Newcastle Courant* (17 June 1805).

¹¹² ‘Twineberow’s Paragon Shaving Soap’, *Liverpool Mercury* (28 June 1839).

¹¹³ Hortator, *Simplicity of Health Exemplified* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1829), 32.

¹¹⁴ ‘Mrs Avis Hallet’s Savon Nonpareil’, *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser* (10 November 1781); ‘Ogden’s Eukeirogension’, *Bristol Mercury* (30 November 1830).

¹¹⁵ ‘Seauzet’s’, *Newcastle Courant* (17 June 1805); ‘Burgess’s Lilac Flower Shaving Paste’, *Leeds Mercury* (10 March 1832).

nose.¹¹⁶ While medicine clearly came first in the title and its healing properties were promoted, this was also, by definition, a male ‘cosmetic’.

Somewhat surprisingly, however, given the strong connections of soap with regimens of hygiene, cleanliness was not a particular selling point for shaving products, in turn suggesting that shaving was not itself viewed as a cleansing process. Indeed, I have found no dedicated shaving products that specifically include cleansing as an attribute. Even into the early nineteenth century, relatively few noted hygienic properties in relation to shaving. In 1838 the easy-lathering properties of Spence’s ‘Chemical Shaving Soap’ supposedly circumvented ‘the dirty and filthy practice of making lather in a pot.’¹¹⁷ It should also be stressed however, that hygiene was often implied, rather than stated since, as well as specific shaving soaps, many brands simply included shaving as one of many generic uses for their soaps.¹¹⁸ Thus Berry’s ‘Palm Soap’, for various purposes including shaving, was ‘cleansing and bracing’, while the ‘Convent Soap’ cleansed and beautified the skin, as well as being ‘the best shaving soap so far known.’¹¹⁹ In 1810, wholesale perfumers Faulder, Humbert & co. took out a half-page advertisement for various perfumery and shaving goods, under the banner heading ‘Cleanliness, Health and Beauty’. The order of the words was surely no coincidence.¹²⁰

A second common advertising trope, particularly after 1800, was functionality. All manner of soaps, pastes and oils were claimed to help razors cut more easily, closely and comfortably, or to improve the quality and quantity of lather.¹²¹ Since shaving was a mechanical process it could presumably be improved by simple and careful adoption of the right materials. New types of steel razor might cut closer to be sure, but manufacturers of shaving soaps and preparations claimed that their products were truly the *ne plus ultra* of the good shave. Just like razor-makers, soap manufacturers were keen to emphasize the processes involved in refining or perfecting their product and to talk up its scientific credentials, again nodding to masculine interests in science and technological innovation. The artisanal knowledge of soap-makers placed them on a par with razor-makers since soap boiling was a skilled process requiring delicate balancing of the raw materials, densities and temperatures.¹²² Perfumers too were regarded as skilled artisans, involved in complex manufacturing procedures and the balancing of different substances and scents.¹²³ The London perfumers Bayley

¹¹⁶ Georges Arnaud, *Dissertation on the Use of Goulard’s Original Extract of Saturn or Lead* (London: Printed for the author, 1774), 10.

¹¹⁷ ‘Spence’s Chemical Shaving Soap’, *York Herald and General Advertiser* (1 December 1838).

¹¹⁸ For shaving within soap advertisements, see ‘C. Mason’s Celebrated Belleisle Convent Soap’, *Morning Post and Gazetteer* (21 February 1801); ‘Measam and Co.’s Incomparable White Cream Soap for Washing and Shaving’, *Morning Post* (3 August 1841).

¹¹⁹ ‘Berry’s Palm Soap’, *Morning Post* (5 January 1804); ‘The Convent Soap’, *Jackson’s Oxford Journal* (13 September 1800).

¹²⁰ ‘Cleanliness, Health and Beauty’, *La Belle Assemblée; or, Bell’s Court and Fashionable Magazine* (1 May 1810): 31.

¹²¹ See ‘Shaving Oil’, *Public Advertiser* (31 January 1765); ‘Woodcock’s Paste for Shaving’, *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* (28 March 1772); ‘Currie’s Improved Almond Shaving Paste’, *Belfast News Letter* (20 February 1835); ‘Alpine Shaving Cakes’, *Morning Chronicle* (1 August 1788).

¹²² Gittins, ‘Soapmaking’, 36.

¹²³ Jonathan Reinartz, *Past Scents: Historical Perspectives on Smell* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 69.

and Sons echoed the rhetoric of razor advertisements in stating that their products were ‘developed by repeated experiments’, but common terms such as ‘improvement’, ‘perfection’ and ‘uniqueness’ in other brand advertisements also hinted at the continuum of development in which soap-makers were continually engaged.¹²⁴

Accompanying functionality, however, was a new focus upon improving the sensory experience of shaving and on offering pleasure over utility. Perhaps unsurprisingly, perfumers were again at the vanguard of this new phenomenon, one offering his ‘unremitting zeal for the comfort of gentlemen.’¹²⁵ Underpinning many advertisements, from the late eighteenth century until well into the nineteenth, was the promise of transforming the experience and rendering shaving ‘easy’ and even pleasant.¹²⁶ In 1823, Rigge’s ‘Aromatic Shaving Soap’ was sold on the basis of rendering ‘the operation of shaving, hitherto painful and unpleasant, now easy and pleasing.’¹²⁷ Perhaps the most ambitious product name belonged to James McCulloch of Covent Garden, promising to ‘render shaving easy’ with his ‘Mellifluous Shaving Soap.’¹²⁸ If ‘ease’ could be explained as simply part of the language of improvement in functionality, others went further in emphasizing softness, smoothness and even luxury, particularly among high-end products. Companies such as Pears and Price and Gosnell sold ‘shaving cakes’ ranging from the plain and basic to the luxurious and emollient.¹²⁹ Advertised widely between 1768 and 1770, ‘Bayley’s Improved Soap for Shaving’ ‘soften[ed] the beard’ and ‘renders shaving easy to the most tender faces.’¹³⁰ Perfumer James Emon claimed that the unique care taken in its preparation meant that his shaving powder left faces soft and smooth.¹³¹ Others offered luxury, richness and unctuousness, emphasizing, for example, a ‘creamy’ lather.¹³² Some makers were cautious of overstating softness, lest it be taken as effeminizing: in 1835, Currie’s almond shaving paste rendered the beard ‘particularly soft’ but, they stressed, only insofar that it ‘caus[es] the razor to act with greater effect.’¹³³ Others, however, relished the opportunity to ‘make shaving a luxury.’¹³⁴ The ‘China Rose Botanic Shaving Oil’ claimed to be ‘easy even unto the

¹²⁴ ‘Shaving Soap Improv’d by Bayley and Sons’, *St James Chronicle or British Evening Post* (29 October 1767). See also Anon., *Pearson and Rollason (Late Aris), Printers, Booksellers and Stationers...* (Birmingham: Publisher unknown, 1782), 2. For the emphasis upon experimentation and refinement in razor advertisements, see Withey, ‘Shaving and Masculinity’, 234.

¹²⁵ ‘MATTER OF FACT’, *Morning Post* (8 February 1810).

¹²⁶ ‘Sharp’s Curious Shaving Soap’, *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* (26 March 1778); ‘Shaving Soap’, *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser* (7 March 1783). See also ‘Widdup’s Original Powder for Shaving’, *Morning Post* (21 December 1785), ‘easy and pleasant for the tenderest face’.

¹²⁷ ‘Rigge’s Aromatic Shaving Soap’, *Morning Post* (28 June 1823).

¹²⁸ ‘To the Public: Shaving Rendered Easy’, *Whitehall Evening Post* (22 April 1783).

¹²⁹ For examples, see advertisements for ‘Pears Transparent Soap’, *La Belle Assemblée; or, Bell’s Court and Fashionable Magazine* (1 January 1816): 43; ‘Atkinson’s Ambrosial Soap’, *La Belle Assemblée; or, Bell’s Court and Fashionable Magazine* (1 April 1817): 192; ‘Johnson’s Royal Patent Windsor Soap’, *La Belle Assemblée; or, Bell’s Court and Fashionable Magazine* (1 January 1818): 43.

¹³⁰ ‘Bayley’s Improved Soap for Shaving’, *Archer’s Bath Chronicle* (3 November 1768): 1. See also ‘Richard Barnard’s New-Invented Powder for Shaving’, *General Advertiser* (14 May 1751), which rendered shaving easy and softened the hair.

¹³¹ ‘James Emon’s New-Invented Powder for Shaving’, *London Evening Post* (5 May 1752).

¹³² ‘Hendrie’s Genuine Old Naples Soap’, *Berrow’s Worcester Journal* (7 July 1836).

¹³³ ‘Currie’s Improved Almond Shaving Paste’, *Belfast News Letter* (20 February 1835).

¹³⁴ ‘Lee’s Patent Shaving Oil’, *Caledonian Mercury* (27 October 1808).

tenderest face.' It nourished the skin, removed 'scaly roughness' and produced excellent and emollient lather. More than this, it was an 'admirable cosmetic'.¹³⁵ Again, the use of the term is revealing; cosmetics were now an acceptable part of gentlemanly toilette. If the task needed to be done, there was no reason why it could not be comfortable, even enjoyable. 'What a man has to do every day,' stated the makers of 'Rhodora Shaving Paste' ('one of the greatest luxuries in shaving') 'he should do well'.¹³⁶

The issue of 'luxury' and the hesitancy in Currie's advertisement actually reveals an interesting fault line in gendered discourses of masculinity. The gendered language of Georgian advertising has been noted by John Strachan, where some cosmetic products used a 'sexually-differentiated rhetoric' for their male and female customers.¹³⁷ In shaving product advertisements, there were differences in the rhetoric aimed solely at men. In the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth, razor advertisements appealed to a model of manliness based on strength, authority and control. Razor-makers played on the steely hardness of their products and the keen edge. The symbolic and literal connections between the razor blade and the military sword were clear and, as we have seen, 'temper' provided a useful metaphor.¹³⁸ But it is hard to reconcile such austere versions of late Georgian masculinity with advertisements for products such as the 'Sun Dew', an 'innocent wash for gentlemen' which could be used to soothe the face after shaving in 1761, or Delcroix's 'Polish Vegetable Soap', promising men an 'exquisite delicacy of complexion'.¹³⁹ While razors promoted toughness, durability and self-mastery, in the world of cosmetic shaving products all was softness, tenderness and ease.

The tension in these apparently competing versions of masculinity is further highlighted by the use of scent as a selling point, suggesting its growing importance in men's toilette. The importance of smell within male cosmetic and grooming products has yet to be fully explored. In many ways scent complicated expectations of manliness. Georges Vigarello argued that perfume was highly criticized in the late eighteenth century, as part of wider attacks on artifice. Strong scents in particular were even considered effeminate.¹⁴⁰ Criticisms of wigs and makeup often centred upon accusations of artifice and the illusion of a 'natural' body created by unnatural means – a full head of curls made from cut-off hair, for example, or the lie of a rosy cheek given by rouge. But, since the human body did not naturally smell of lavender or lilacs, scent was intrinsically unnatural, if not downright deceptive. Perfume has generally been associated with use by women, but its inclusion within shaving products, and emphasis within advertisements, suggests that it was also desirable for men. In discussing the gendering of perfume, Jonathan Reinartz argues that male scents were often been 'harsher' than those for women and that eighteenth-century 'men applied their scents more subtly'.¹⁴¹ From the late eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, floral

¹³⁵ 'Dr Bremen's China Rose Botanic Shaving Oil', *Morning Post* (26 June 1806).

¹³⁶ 'Rhodora Shaving Paste', *Bury and Norwich Post* (2 May 1838).

¹³⁷ Strachan, *Advertising and Satirical Culture*, 58–9.

¹³⁸ Alun Withey, 'Shaving and Masculinity in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, 36:2 (2013): 234.

¹³⁹ 'Worthy of Public Notice', *Jackson's Oxford Journal* (5 November 1808): 2.

¹⁴⁰ Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness*, 137.

¹⁴¹ Reinartz, *Past Scents*, 133–4.

scents were often used by women rather than men.¹⁴² Evidence from shaving product advertisements both supports and nuances these points. In 1771, for example, perfumer Richard Warren sold his own brand of 'sweet Amber soap for shaving' and bottles of scent including bergamot, lemon and musk.¹⁴³ The following year Woodcocke's shaving paste promised a 'beautiful white, sweet-scented lather' while Warren's shaving powder was scented with violets.¹⁴⁴ Others offered gentlemen a choice between scented or plain shaving soaps.¹⁴⁵ J. T. Rigge's products included his 'newly-invented Liquified Amber Shaving Cakes' promised to be a 'certain corrective against irritation of the skin' but were also 'far superior to the Naples soap in fragrance.'¹⁴⁶ Shaving pastes were particularly sold on their fragrance. Particularly in the first decades of the nineteenth century, many included them as part of the product name, with rose, almond and lilac proving popular.¹⁴⁷ This period also saw the beginnings of commercially available post-shave scents. The London-French perfumer Mosenau sold his 'Vinaigre Unique for use after shaving', while 'Pearl Water' was another scented product targeted at male shavers.¹⁴⁸ By 1810, Mosenau's advertisements to 'the Male Sex in General, or Gentlemen who shave themselves' included 'Arquebusade de Cologne', an aromatic distilled water, and 'Hungary Water'.¹⁴⁹

Undoubtedly part of the reason for scenting soaps was to hide the unpleasant smell of the raw ingredients. Large quantities of animal fats were used in production, which could go rancid and taint the soap.¹⁵⁰ In their basic form, popular hard soaps such as Naples soap had an unpalatable smell, requiring the addition of scent to render them usable. But the addition of scent also added a public element to shaving. In the same way that razors took off unsightly facial hair and opened up the countenance, so scented soaps and oils were as much intended to create a pleasing sensory illusion for the benefit of others, as for the wearer.

Conclusion

The increasing availability of shaving products and the ways in which they were advertised raise new questions about concepts of masculinity and expectations of male practices and appearance. On the one hand, shaving was a socially important element

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ 'Richard Warren, Perfumer', *Reading Mercury and Oxford Gazette* (21 October 1771): 1.

¹⁴⁴ 'Woodcocke's Paste for Shaving', *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* (28 March 1772); 'Best Violet Shaving Powder', *Public Advertiser* (24 February 1768).

¹⁴⁵ 'Sharp, Hair-Dresser &c', *Northampton Mercury* (26 September 1774); 'John Newsom, Chemist, Druggist and Perfumer from London', *Leeds Intelligencer* (13 March 1781).

¹⁴⁶ 'Shaving Soap', *Morning Post* (3 January 1803).

¹⁴⁷ See 'Jean Deveraux's Otto of Rose Shaving Paste', *Liverpool Mercury* (17 October 1828); 'Hendrie's Almond Shaving Paste', *Liverpool Mercury* (3 December 1830); 'Burgess's Lilac Flower Shaving Paste', *Leeds Mercury* (10 March 1832); 'Rose and Almond Shaving Paste', *Belfast News Letter* (20 February 1835).

¹⁴⁸ 'Just Imported from Paris', *Public Advertiser* (13 February 1760); 'To the Nobility, Gentry and Public in General', *Morning Herald* (22 May 1800).

¹⁴⁹ 'To the Male Sex in General', *Morning Post* (16 July 1810).

¹⁵⁰ Gittins, 'Soapmaking', 37.

in the conveyance of polite manliness. It facilitated the smooth, elegant and open face of the polite gentleman and demonstrated a man's mastery over his own appearance. The razor was an essential tool in this process and one that bore reassuringly masculine connections to military blades and martial prowess, as well as appealing to gentlemanly dilettante interest in technology and science. On the other hand, shaving soaps and other related products, while still closely bound to the intrinsically masculine act of shaving, appealed to markedly different ideas about manliness. Here, in their advertisements, was a softer, gentler male consumer, one who appreciated luxury and scent as much as expediency.

The place of shaving products as a uniquely male corner of the cosmetic market also complicates our understanding of masculine performance. Traditionally, women have been viewed as the main consumers of cosmetics, perhaps on the assumption that men avoided cosmetic products because of their female connections and, therefore, to prevent accusations of effeminacy. The makeup, face powder and beauty spots of the Macaroni and fop, for example, were derided because these were products created for and associated with women. But shaving soaps, pastes and powders, and in most respects also razors, were intended for and presumably purchased by men. With no surviving narratives from individuals about their own experiences of using these products, we can only speculate as to how individual men understood and regarded them.

Thirdly, the growth of the market for shaving products also highlights the tensions raised by shaving with regard to concepts of public and private. The shaved face was a public statement – a visible symbol of a man's conformity to norms of male appearance – and, to some degree, an example of what Steve Sturdy terms an example of 'configuring the private' to shape public identity.¹⁵¹ But the gradual drift towards self-shaving began to redefine shaving, from a public activity, undertaken in the homosocial environment of the barbershop (itself at once a public and private space), to an activity done at home. Traditionally too, the barbershop had provided perhaps the only acceptable public space for the use of cosmetic products on men, legitimized as part of the barber's service. But at home, of course, away from the critical gaze of others, men were free to slather on as much fragrant cream or lotion as they saw fit.

There was, then, an unresolved tension between these two competing versions of masculinity. It is unclear which, if either, was the stronger, or how far men accepted, understood or aspired to them.

¹⁵¹ Steve Sturdy, 'Introduction: Medicine, Health and the Public Sphere', in Steve Sturdy (ed.), *Medicine, Health and the Public Sphere in Britain, 1600–2000* (Oxford: Routledge, 2002), 5.

Selling shaving in the age of the beard: The market for shaving products, c. 1850–90

The fashionable return of beards coincided with huge changes in the economic and social climate of Britain. The mid- to late nineteenth century saw the British economy booming, with massive industrial output and exotic goods imported from across the Empire. A growing affluent and aspirational middle class fuelled a ‘retailing revolution’, buying the latest goods and fashions from general shopkeepers and traders who proliferated in Britain after 1820, and spending their cash in one of the many new department stores in large towns and cities.¹ Men were an important part of this new market and were active and avid consumers. Among the goods they purchased were a growing number of products for personal grooming. As the previous chapter argued, the late eighteenth century saw a new concept of male personal grooming based around the consumption and use of products. For Georgian and early Victorian men, the use of often luxurious soaps, pastes and powders was acceptable, so long as it was not taken to effete extremes. This continued after 1850, with men devoting time and expense towards refining their bodies and dress, urged on by etiquette manuals and advice literature. The use of shaving soaps, oils, creams and scents was performative, enabling men to meet shifting ideals of masculine appearance. They also reflect the continuing appropriation of grooming routines, as men continued to take responsibility for their own appearance. But the period after 1850 saw a sustained attack on shaving, as support for facial hair grew. To what extent, therefore, did the emergent fashion for beards affect the market for personal grooming products after 1850.

While the place of Victorian men as consumers, and the products they bought and used, has attracted recent attention by historians, the availability and consumption of male personal grooming or ‘beauty’ products is less defined. Jessica Clark places men’s consumption of soaps, shampoos, oils and other paraphernalia within the highly gendered space of the barbershop. Such products were a useful means of boosting the income of barbers, who either made their own, or sold branded goods on at a small

¹ Brent Shannon, *The Cut of His Coat: Men, Dress and Consumer Culture in Britain, 1860–1914* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 3–4; Peter Winstanley, *The Shopkeeper’s World: 1830–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), 12–13.

profit.² With little primary source evidence available from male consumers, however, it is difficult to assess how men themselves viewed such products, or from whom they purchased them. There are certainly questions about the place of male ‘beauty’ products and regimes within broader (and sometimes competing) Victorian concerns about men’s bodies. Indeed, the concept of male personal grooming appears at some points to confirm – and at others to confound – expectations of male conduct. It is clear that there was no single or fixed understanding of the extent to which men should groom or ‘beautify’ their faces. There was certainly some resistance in advice literature to the use of cosmetics by men, or towards over concentration upon the minutiae of appearance, for fear of raising the ever-present spectre of effeminacy. In part this reflected the setting of nineteenth-century manliness against a feminine ‘other’, noted by John Tosh.³ In this reading, manliness implied separation from a feminine body and habit; it was everything that femininity was not.⁴ Practices that brought the male body closer in appearance or manner to the female were therefore, by definition, unmanly. At certain points too, as Matt Houlbrook has noted, the association of certain objects with feminine practices has seen their use, and even possession, by men as potentially dangerous. Men caught in possession of powder puffs or makeup in the 1920s were immediately and automatically suspected of deviant sexuality.⁵

But there were other aspects of masculinity with which personal grooming dovetailed neatly. One was a new focus on the head as the site of knowledge and learning, as well as the ‘governor’ of the body. Amidst popular interest in physiognomy and phrenology, the head and face, even if covered by a hat or beard, were still the most public of bodily surfaces and the means through which others made judgements about character.⁶ For gentlemen, keeping heads and faces neat, clean and, therefore, presumably also neatly groomed was important. As Stephen Rice notes, it was no coincidence that the primacy of the head was reinforced through the language of commerce and industry; the owners or managers of a business were its ‘head’, and heads governed hands – that is, exerted control over the body (and bodies) of workers.⁷ In the late nineteenth century too, amidst a new focus on bodily fitness and physicality, ‘improving’ the structure and musculature of the body was considered laudable and allowed individuals agency and control over their appearance.⁸ Refining the body and its surfaces could be argued to be equally ‘improving’. As Paul Deslandes has also suggested, regulation of the male body went hand in hand with the regulation of

² Jessica P. Clark, ‘Grooming Men: The Material World of the Nineteenth-Century Barbershop’, in Hannah Greig, Jane Hamlett and Leonie Hannan (eds), *Gender and Material Culture in Britain since 1600* (London: Palgrave, 2016), 111–12. See also Shannon, *The Cut of His Coat*, 86–90.

³ John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Longman, 2005), 91.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁵ Matt Houlbrook, ‘Queer Things: Men and Makeup between the Wars’, in Greig et al., *Gender and Material Culture in Britain*, 120–1.

⁶ For the popularity of public or ‘pocket physiognomy’, see Sharona Pearl, *About Faces: Physiognomy in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 26–30, 116–8.

⁷ Stephen P. Rice, ‘Picturing Bodies in the Nineteenth Century’, in Michael Sappol and Stephen P. Rice (eds), *A Cultural History of the Human Body in the Age of Empire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 227.

⁸ Michael Hau, ‘The Normal, the Ideal and the Beautiful: Perfect Bodies during the Age of Empire’, in Sappol and Rice, *A Cultural History*, 167.

morals. Accompanying a new focus on purifying and regulating the body and concern with the physicality and attributes of male corporeality were attempts to prevent 'immoral' practices, most notably masturbation.⁹ Here, then, male bodily cleanliness – often emphasized in conduct and etiquette literature – formed part of a wider focus on bodily control, although the extent to which rampant facial hair should be actively controlled was a matter for debate.

The trajectory of the 'beard movement' itself has implications for our understanding of the market. It is perhaps too easy to assume that the Victorian 'beard movement' was a single entity: in fact, it contained several distinct phases. First was the gradual return of beards around 1853, after a brief foray into 'military' moustaches a few years before. The second phase, when the fashion was at its peak, occurred between the late 1850s and early 70s. But by 1880, as John Tosh argues, it was clear that younger men were beginning to reject the paternalistic and often austere manliness of their fathers.¹⁰ Around this time, etiquette manuals noticeably began to include instructions to men as to how and how often to groom their beards, and even to hint at a return to shaving. It is perhaps easy to assume that the 'beard movement' heralded the end of shaving products, but this was far from the case. As discussed below, however, there were distinct shifts in the marketing of such products, corresponding neatly with the various phases of the fashion. Before the early 1850s, shaving soaps had continued to emphasize feminine qualities such as softness, smoothness, ease and comfort, as well as scent. The 1850s and 60s, however, appeared to see a decline in the numbers and types of products available and also changes in emphasis in advertising, focusing on function rather than comfort. Others disappeared altogether. By 1880, however, luxury in shaving products returned amidst a proliferation of products, including scents specifically sold for men.

This chapter explores the complex and shifting landscape of shaving products and the material culture of men's personal grooming after 1850. What follows is a quantitative and qualitative study of the advertisements of named, branded or proprietary shaving products in several major newspaper databases: the British Newspaper Archive, British Library Newspaper Database and Welsh Newspapers Online, comprising of hundreds of titles from across the country and throughout the century. As discussed in the previous chapter, simply counting keyword 'hits' in newspaper databases is unreliable because of the unevenness of the data sample, but also due to the fact that raw numbers of advertisements are not proxies for demand; successful products might be advertised in greater numbers to further promote expansion, as much as they could seek to revivify demand for struggling goods. The alternative approach, taken here, is to explore the numbers of brands, or proprietary products. This has the advantage of smoothing potential fluctuations in newspaper numbers and hits, but also offers its own insights into the numbers of particular types of goods being marketed at given points. It seems reasonable to assume, especially given the close correlation between

⁹ Paul Deslandes, 'The Male Body, Beauty and Aesthetics in Modern British Culture', *History Compass*, 8:10 (2010): 1194.

¹⁰ John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2007), 182–3.

shaving products and prevailing fashion, that product types or brands might fluctuate according to demand. If more men were shaving, for example, more perfumers might be enticed to enter the market, and vice versa.

Some qualifications must also be made regarding the nature of the data on which the following discussions are based. First, the numbers of brands here must be regarded as minima. They can only reflect products advertised in newspapers; many small perfumery businesses likely made their own preparations but did not advertise, so it is inevitable that some (perhaps many) more were available 'on the ground'. Second, the products discussed below only represent 'branded' products or those attached to an individual (proprietary), and not generic terms such as 'shaving soap' which appear in large stock lists, with no maker identified. Third are the potential variances in the numbers of available brands at given points, caused by limited (or indeed large) advertising runs, local or limited availability and gaps between advertising. To address these, the discussion explores the data in various ways, including numbers of brands advertised for each individual year as well as over longer periods, and both the numbers and averages available per decade. None of these approaches is failsafe, and no claim is made that the numbers are conclusive, but this study does at least offer the first potential glimpse of the impact of fashion upon commercial shaving products, as well as their nature, form and place within discourses of masculinity.

The landscape of shaving products

The onset of the 'beard movement' around 1853 saw a vociferous and sustained attack upon shaving. Being naturally beardless was problematic enough; removing it by choice was deemed nonsensical. Much literature sought to dissuade men from submitting to the razor. Some cited the impracticalities of shaving, along with the time lost in doing it, the expense of purchasing the necessaries and the widely acknowledged discomfort of 'scraping from the tender skin of the face any or every vestige of hair'.¹¹ Others argued that shaving encouraged disease. A 1854 letter published in *The Leader*, supposedly signed by more than 400 Dublin police officers, argued that they should be allowed to grow beards because of the risk of 'diseases of the respiratory organs'. The terminology was telling; it was the 'practice which obtains of shaving off the beard' that was considered hazardous.¹² Danger apparently lay in pores and nerve tips being exposed by the razor as it rasped away the dermal layers of skin, inviting colds, hoarseness and sore throats. Among the many thoracic and pectoral woes supposedly engendered by shaving, consumption was 'bequeathed from generation to generation, from the shaven father to the shaving son'.¹³ If shaving was unhealthy it was also portrayed as unmanly. A hairless male chin imitated the smooth face of a woman; it was, almost by definition, effeminate. Again, as 'Artium Magister' contended, the removal of beard hair was 'the

¹¹ Ibid., 30–1; Magister, *Apology*, 4; Anon., 'A Short Chapter on Beards', *Preston Chronicle* (16 November 1867).

¹² 'News', *Leader* (25 February 1854).

¹³ Magister, *Apology*, 17.

most effectual neutraliser of the contrast between [the sexes].¹⁴ The act of shaving was therefore depicted as at best pointless and at worst calamitous. Furthermore, its end result, the shaved chin, was not deemed natural for a man. As beards grew in size and popularity in Britain, the products involved in shaving, now virtually regarded as a shameful process, should therefore presumably have become guilty by association and suffered declining demand. The question, then, is how far the market in general, as well as individual product types, were affected by these developments.

Around the mid-nineteenth century the commercial market for shaving products still encompassed many different product types, from essential razors and soaps, to other, smaller groups of goods for facilitating the removal of facial hair, such as shaving oils, pastes and creams. Because of their perhaps narrower appeal and more manageable numbers, it is instructive to begin by analysing these smaller groups in more detail. Shaving oils, for example, were an innovation advertised throughout the first decades of the nineteenth century. Unlike modern shaving oils, which are generally used to soften the beard before shaving, nineteenth-century examples were a form of concentrated liquid soap. A few drops were added to a brush, which was dipped in water, and the lather applied to the face. Shaving oil offered convenience by removing the need for a lather box or sink, rendering it useful for travellers or men in a hurry. Certain brands grew in prominence towards the mid-century, with vigorous campaigns for Ogden's 'Eukeirogension' and Barber's 'Medicated Vegetable Shaving Oil'. 'Eukeirogension', in particular, was advertised widely across the country throughout the 1830s and 40s. But the advertising of shaving oils appears to have stopped abruptly in the early 1850s, after which the product did not reappear.¹⁵ Only two Belfast manufacturers continued to advertise shaving oils after 1850 – 'Dr Locock's Cosmetic' in 1855 and 'Grattan's Shaving Oil' in 1858, with only a few advertisements between them.¹⁶ The same is true of shaving powders, another innovation promising efficiency and minimum fuss or equipment to make lather, and which required, according to one advertiser, only as much powder as would lie on a penknife.¹⁷ Shaving powders were advertised consistently after 1751, but had largely disappeared by 1860, only appearing occasionally among larger stock lists of perfumers. Cowan's 'Vegetable Shaving Powder' was advertised until 1855 but, by 1860, advertising of both shaving oils and powders in British newspapers had seemingly ceased entirely.¹⁸ In both cases there are clear suggestions that the new fashion for beards at the very least coincided with, and quite possibly had a marked effect on, the advertising of products.

A third product type, shaving cream, emerged around 1833 and proliferated quickly and, between 1833 and 1853, at least fifteen brands were available.¹⁹ Like shaving oils, shaving creams claimed advantage and convenience over soaps both in

¹⁴ Ibid., 51.

¹⁵ For a typical form of the advertisement, see 'Ogden's *Eukeirogension*', *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* (27 September 1841).

¹⁶ 'Dr Locock's Cosmetic', *Belfast News Letter* (26 January 1855); see also the reference to shaving oil within 'Currie's Rosemary and Honey Hair Wash', *Belfast News Letter* (5 June 1858).

¹⁷ 'Willis's Oriental Chemical Shaving Powder', *Leeds Intelligencer* (3 May 1819): 2.

¹⁸ For example, 'Cowan's Vegetable Shaving Powder', *Newcastle Courant* (10 December 1841).

¹⁹ Including 'Guerlain's Ambrosial Shaving Cream', 'Gosnell's Ambrosial Shaving Cream', 'Prince Albert's Ambrosial Shaving Cream', 'Ponting's Shaving Cream', 'Fishers's Shaving Cream', 'Royal Shaving Cream', 'Hendrie's Emollient Petroleum Shaving Cream', 'Hendrie's Ambrosial Shaving

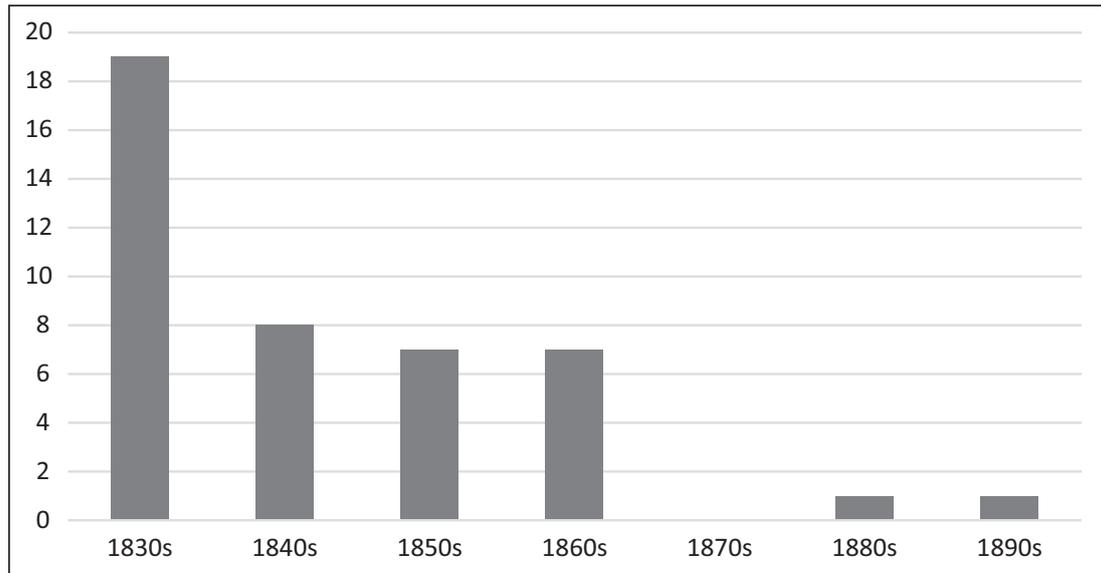


Figure 12.1 Number of brands of shaving pastes in British newspapers per decade, 1830–99.

providing strong lather with little water and in rendering shaving pleasurable. In 1847, the makers of Ponting's shaving cream sought to bring it 'to the attention of all who are so unfortunate to be the owner of beards.'²⁰ Again, although based on low numbers, it seems that shaving cream was perhaps more resistant to the beard fashion, continuing to be advertised throughout the 1850s, 60s and 70s. The majority of these were products by large London perfumery businesses, such as Gosnell's, available by post or from agents and advertised around the country.²¹ Gosnell's was one of the earliest brands to appear, and their shaving cream was one among many perfumery products in their range. Others, such as the Barnstaple perfumer William Hill's 'Almond Shaving Cream', were only advertised locally.²² Nonetheless, there were some potential signs of impact in the 1860s and 70s, as the 'beard movement' reached its peak, since only Guerlain and Gosnell, continued to advertise their product widely in England, with a scattering of local makers also taking out occasional advertisements.²³

Another product, shaving paste, was advertised fairly regularly in British newspapers, albeit with relatively small numbers of brands. Here, though, the greater frequency of advertisements allows for a limited quantitative study. Figure 12.1 shows the numbers of shaving paste brands advertised in English newspapers between 1830 and 1900.

Cream', 'Euston's Eureka Shaving Cream', 'Wick's Almond Shaving Cream', 'Fred Lewis's Royal Irish Shaving Cream'.

²⁰ 'Never Shaved So Easy in My Life', *Liverpool Mercury* (27 August 1847).

²¹ For examples, see 'Gosnell's Ambrosial Shaving Cream', *Daily News* (5 May 1856); 'Guerlain's Ambrosial Shaving Cream', *Morning Post* (22 October 1864); 'Ponting's Shaving Cream', *Essex Standard* (26 July 1865).

²² 'W. Hill, Haircutter and Perfumer', *North Devon Journal* (11 December 1851): 1.

²³ Aside from Gosnell and Guerlain's advertisements, 'Gilbert's Ambrosial Shaving Cream' was only available in London, and 'Butcher's Shaving Cream' in Cheltenham.

The trend here appears even more compelling, suggesting that shaving pastes survived the early years of the 'beard movement', with various brands continuing to be advertised throughout the 1850s and 60s, before declining markedly. But it should also be noted that the data is based on very low numbers and is far from smooth. No shaving pastes were advertised between 1844 and 1849 for example, skewing the data for that decade. In the 1850s, the numbers of brands being advertised annually varied from one to three; four years in the 1860s saw only one brand being advertised and then only in Leicester newspapers. It seems certain however, that none at all were advertised between 1869 and 1886, with only two brands appearing thereafter, one in 1886 and a further in 1891. Again, this might suggest that, as the 'beard movement' took hold, smaller, niche shaving products were marketed less. It may have been no coincidence that one Liverpool auctioneer was left with 200 boxes of 'perfumed shaving paste' to try and shift in August 1863.²⁴

To seek deeper insights into the Victorian shaving product market, it is necessary to explore a bigger product group. By far the largest category of shaving products was soap. In certain respects, the market for soap might be expected to have been more resilient than that for other products. The fact that shaving was often one among several stated uses, for example, made them more resilient if one area of demand declined. The discussion here is based on products either specifically styled as shaving soaps or expressly identifying shaving as an attribute and includes brands as well as proprietary soaps under the name of the maker – for example, 'John Williams' Incomparable Shaving Soap. To facilitate discussion, all are included and grouped under the single broad term 'shaving soap'. Figure 12.2 shows the numbers of branded shaving soaps advertised per year in British newspapers, between 1830 and 1899. Figure 12.3 shows the numbers of brands per decade from 1830–1900, and Figure 12.4 shows the average number of shaving soap brands advertised per year for the same period.

The numbers represented here are clearly not high, never reaching double figures in any given year, but the pattern in each case appears striking, suggesting a period of growth in during the early nineteenth century, reaching a peak in the late 1850s, then falling away markedly in the 1860s and 70s, only recovering some of the lost ground after 1880. This appears to coincide with the trajectory of the 'beard movement', and it seems logical to assume that demand for shaving soaps would fall as men returned to growing beards. But the situation was more complex than the raw data suggests. A closer look at the data in Figure 12.2, for example, shows that advertising was not uniform, with one peak in the numbers of brands occurring in 1852 (and therefore before the 'beard movement'), followed by a marked fall in the middle years, before a second peak in 1858. It is hard to account for this volubility. Variations in the numbers of available newspapers for these years cannot be discounted. The numbers of brands advertised per decade are also potentially problematic since not all were available at the same time, and their longevity varied. Large perfumery companies such as Guerlain, Rigge's, Mechi's and Pears produced products over many decades. Some, such as 'Pear's Transparent Shaving Stick', for example, were available for long periods, in this case

²⁴ 'Two Hundred Dozen Pomatum, Circassian Cream, Perfumed Shaving Paste &C', *Liverpool Daily Post* (27 August 1863): 2.

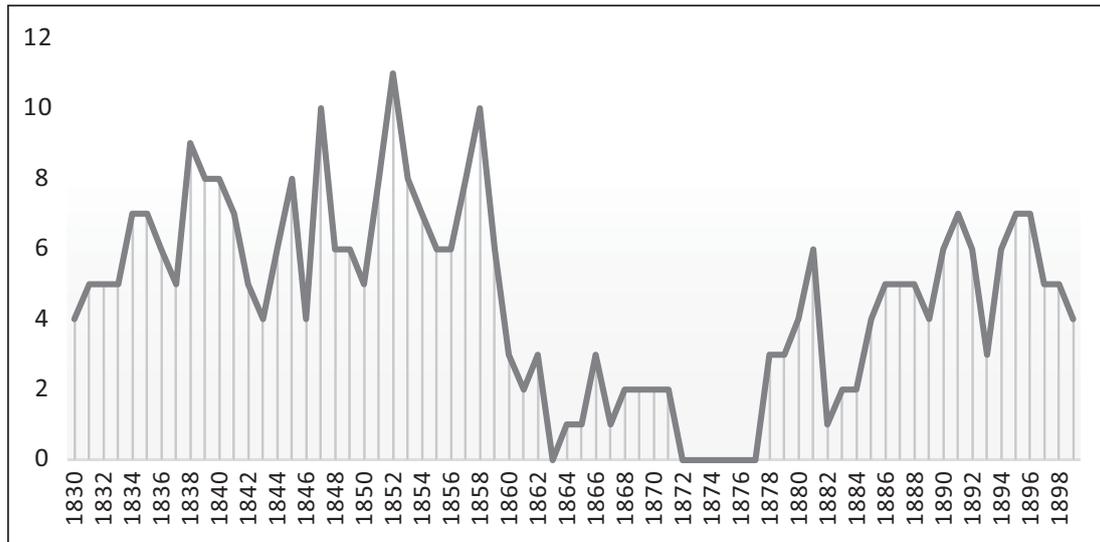


Figure 12.2 Number of advertised shaving soap brands per year in British newspapers, 1830–99.

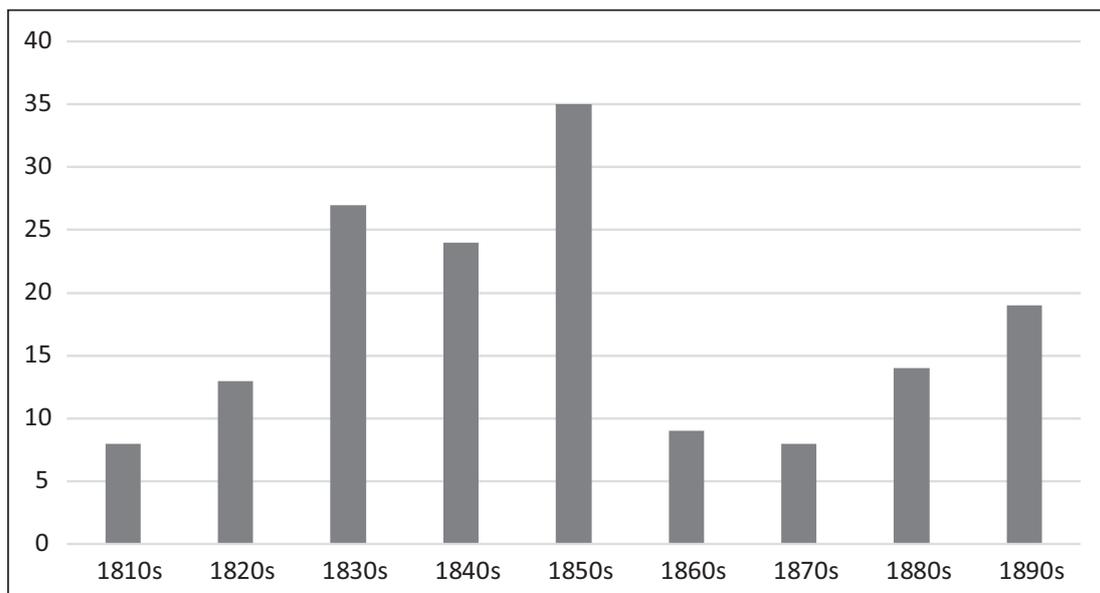


Figure 12.3 Number of advertised shaving soap brands per year in British newspapers per decade, 1830–99.

between at least 1849 and 1888. Others, such as perfumer Charles Grossmith's 'Original Shaving Soap', had shorter runs, available between 1851–6, although he also sold other varieties of his proprietary shaving soap. Some, such as Kay's *Almond Shaving Soap*, advertised in the *Preston Guardian* in 1852–3, seemingly only lasted a year.²⁵

²⁵ For example, 'Kay's Almond Shaving Soap', *Preston Guardian* (7 February 1852): 1.



Figure 12.4 Average yearly numbers of shaving soaps advertised in British newspapers per decade, 1830–99.

But if the fashion was adopted as swiftly as has been assumed, it seems strange that apparently the greatest numbers of shaving soaps during the whole century – at least thirty-one brands, were available and advertised between 1850–9. These included products from large, longstanding perfumery companies including Pears (established 1789) and Gosnell (established as a perfumer in 1760) and brands such as Dunn’s *Worcester Concentrated Shaving Soap*; Carter’s *Botanic Shaving Soap* and the *Albion Milk and Sulphur Soap*, each of which was advertised widely throughout the period and across the country.²⁶ Others, such as the shaving soaps of Wallington’s of Birmingham or Groux’s of Buckingham, were made and advertised only locally.²⁷ Several more fell in between, being advertised widely over several years. This raises questions about the ubiquity of the fashion for beards and the rapidity with which it was adopted. On the one hand, it is possible that demand continued and that many men continued to use these products. This would certainly appear to be supported by the evidence presented in Chapter 9. On the other, however, it is possible that the peaks in advertising represented a reaction by manufacturers to falling demand caused by the adoption of beards.

²⁶ See ‘Arthur Dunn’s Concentrated Worcester Shaving Soap’, *Berrow’s Worcester Journal* (7 February 1850); ‘Shaving Made Easy’, *Bradford Observer* (7 November 1850): 8; ‘The Albion Milk and Sulphur Soap’, *Luton Times and Advertiser* (2 February 1855): 6.

²⁷ ‘Wallington’s Saw-Edged Razor’, *Aris’s Birmingham Gazette* (18 December 1854): 3; ‘Dickens’ Chemist &c’, *Bucks Chronicle and Bucks Gazette* (2 September 1854): 1.

Across all product types, however, it seems clear that the early 1860s brought change, and a sharp fall in the average numbers of advertised brands, represented in Figure 12.2, appears compelling. In 1858, nine brands were marketed; the following year this had fallen to five and, in 1861 only two – Moorley’s ‘Eukeiristic’ shaving soap, and another simply styled ‘The Best Shaving Soap Ever Used’.²⁸ Between 1872 and 1877 I have found no specific advertisements for branded shaving soaps in newspaper databases, with only generic, unbranded examples appearing within stock lists of large perfumery businesses or general warehouses. Remarkably, except for these occasional references, no advertisements for any types of cosmetic shaving products appear in the sample data between 1871 and 1876. It is also worth noting that most soap-makers continuing to advertise through the 1860s and 70s were long-established large businesses, such as Pears and Rigge’s, who sold a wide variety of beauty and perfumery goods as well as their shaving soaps. They may have been more resilient than smaller perfumers, who perhaps felt that the expense was no longer justified. Seemingly few new shaving soap brands became available at all between 1860 and 1878, coinciding precisely with the peak period of the ‘beard movement’.²⁹

In addition to numbers of brands, however, there were also changes to the style of advertising during different phases of the ‘beard movement’. In the early 1850s was a continuing emphasis upon utility, with many advertisers still promoting improvements to the process of shaving or for easing the passage of the razor.³⁰ Themes of comfort and luxury also still prevailed. Products such as ‘Dunn’s Worcester Concentrated Shaving Soap’ promised not to irritate tender skin and to make shaving a pleasure.³¹ Others were still described in florid terms such as ‘perfectly delicious in all respects ... a toilette luxury’.³² Even some ‘military’ or ‘service’ soaps, perhaps surprisingly given the usual emphasis upon tough, martial masculinity, promised to prevent damage to tender or sensitive skins.³³ But by the late 1850s, both the language of advertising claims and the veracity of ‘campaigns’ began to suggest the effects of negative attitudes towards shaving. One was the paring back of rhetoric and the reduction of space devoted to shaving products. Early advertisements for Moorley’s ‘Eukiristic’ shaving soap, for example, were accompanied by detailed testimonials and a long list of its attributes.³⁴ By the early 1860s, however, it had been relegated to a secondary position within a larger advertisement and then only advertised occasionally in a single newspaper. Instead of a detailed puff, the advertisement merely stated that the soap was suitable

²⁸ ‘Rose’s Shaving Soap’, *Jackson’s Oxford Journal* (6 July 1861); ‘Moorley’s Eukeiristic Shaving Soap’, *Hampshire Advertiser* (31 March 1861).

²⁹ Only five brands were advertised between 1861 and 1868, for example.

³⁰ See advertisements for ‘Dunn’s Worcester Concentrated Shaving Soap’, *Berrow’s Worcester Journal* (1 January 1852); ‘Royal Metropolitan and Universal Shaving Soap’, *Liverpool Mercury* (28 October 1853); ‘John Williams’ Incomparable Shaving Soap’, *Blackburn Standard* (17 June 1857).

³¹ See advertisements for ‘Dunn’s Worcester Concentrated Shaving Soap’, *Berrow’s Worcester Journal* (1 January 1852); ‘Kay’s Almond Shaving Soap’, *Preston Guardian* (7 February 1852); ‘Royal and Universal Shaving Soap’, *Daily News* (30 March 1853).

³² ‘John Gosnell and Co.’s Ambrosial Shaving Cream’, *Daily Post* (16 September 1856); ‘Royal Eukiristic or Easy Shaving Soap’, *Birmingham Daily Post* (19 April 1858).

³³ For example, ‘Kay’s Almond Shaving Soap’, *Preston Guardian* (7 February 1852); ‘Rigge’s Celebrated Military Shaving Soap’, *Morning Post* (5 October 1868).

³⁴ ‘Moorley’s Eukiristic’, *Birmingham Daily Post* (9 January 1862).

for either hard or soft beards.³⁵ In the winter of 1868, J. T. Rigge of London took out a few advertisements in two London newspapers for their 'Military shaving soap', headed 'Real Comfort in Shaving', but gave little detail.³⁶

Another apparent change was the virtual disappearance of scent from shaving soap advertising after 1850. Between 1850 and 1870, only one product (Kay's Almond Shaving Soap) contained a fragrance in its brand name, and none specifically mentioned scent within the list of attributes of their products.³⁷ The same was true of advertisements for shaving cream, where mention of fragrance disappeared almost entirely, and advertisements generally reverted to basic details of product name, price and seller.³⁸ Gosnell's advertisements continued to stress luxury and convenience in the 1850s and 60s, but these were essentially reproductions of their adverts of 20 years previously. The suggestion is that shaving products lost their associations with comfort and luxury and instead concentrated upon utility and expediency. As masculinity 'hardened', with increasing focus on physicality and a 'natural' (albeit clean and hygienic) appearance was embraced, it is possible that luxury, scent and comfort was no longer popular. There was certainly some cultural pressure on men to abandon cosmetic products and go 'natural'. The American poet Walt Whitman versified on the honesty of the natural, physical body, with all its attendant odours and imperfections. For Whitman, writing in 1855, 'washes and razors [were] for fofoos'.³⁹ For roughly two decades after 1853, therefore, the effects on both the availability and marketing of shaving products appear to have been significant.

The 1870s, however, again saw signs of change and the gradual decline of beard-wearing. In part this was likely due to simple and organic changes in taste and style. After nearly 30 years of beards, men were perhaps tiring of their facial hair, while the various arguments made in support of beards had also likely begun to pale. Those men who had first embraced the 'beard movement' were, by the 1880s, middle aged and, in some cases, approaching old age. As Figure 12.3 reveals, the mid-1870s appear to represent the nadir for branded shaving products but, after 1877 the numbers of brands advertised began to rise, reaching five in 1880/1, falling back in 1882, but rising continually thereafter until the end of the century. One obvious interpretation is a gradual return to shaving and corresponding increasing demand for cosmetic products. If true, it might seem strange that the apparent rise in shaving soap brands was neither steep nor steady, never returning to the peaks of the 1850s. But, again, the figures do not reveal the whole story. What actually occurred was a marked shift in the landscape of shaving products, one that brought moves away from small-scale local products linked to individual makers and instead towards large companies, advertising

³⁵ 'By Royal Letters Patent', *Birmingham Daily Post* (13 February 1865).

³⁶ For example, 'Real Comfort in Shaving', *Morning Post* (9 November 1868). 'Field's United Service Soap' was advertised briefly in *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* in 1870, among other products, stating that it was the 'most delightful shaving soap ever invented'.

³⁷ 'Kay's Almond Shaving Soap', *Preston Guardian* (7 February 1852).

³⁸ Again, with one exception, 'Gilbert's Ambrosial Shaving Soap', *Standard* (22 December 1870), which claimed to be beautifully perfumed.

³⁹ Quoted in Christopher Oldstone-Moore, *Of Beards and Men: The Revealing History of Facial Hair* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 185.

nationally and prolifically. This can be usefully illustrated by brief case studies of individual products. The 'Albion Milk and Sulphur' soap, for example, styled as 'the very best for shaving' had been available since the mid-1850s, although not advertised in great numbers. The mid-1880s, however, saw a systematic, nationwide campaign. In 1885 it was advertised only six times. The following year this rose to 57, increasing to 237 separate advertisements, across British newspapers, in 1887. 'Vinolia' shaving soap was the subject of at least 315 advertisements between 1890 and 1899, in thirty-nine different newspapers, while 'Cuticura' was advertised on at least 436 separate occasions between 1880–9, again across Britain.⁴⁰ Cuticura also appears to have been one of the only brands to translate its advertisements into Welsh, to cater for readers in the Principality. Rather than the small artisan firms of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, therefore, shaving soap production became dominated by large companies, who established themselves nationally as commercial leaders in the field.

The absence of sales data renders long-term quantitative comparison impossible, but one surviving set of figures for Pear's Soaps offers insight into the potential growth of this portion of the market. Frustratingly the figures only run from 1884 until 1900, but this at least coincides with and apparently confirms the apparent growth seen in product advertising. Usefully the accounts give separate figures for washing and shaving products, the latter consisting of shaving cakes and shaving sticks – small tubes of compacted shaving soap, similar in appearance to a large lipstick, which were rubbed over a moistened brush to produce lather. Pears had produced shaving sticks since the late 1840s and advertised them vigorously towards the end of the century. In 1884–5, the company sold 45,252 dozen cakes and 281,928 dozen sticks equalling 327,180 dozen, or 3,926,160 products in total. By 1890 this had risen to 430,908 dozens or 5,170,896 total units. A decade later, the company regularly still sold anything between four and four and a half million units per year.⁴¹ Compared to the sales of their other soap products the sales of shaving soaps initially appear miniscule. In 1884–5 sales of shaving soaps were only around 3 per cent of those of washing soaps and generally hovered around that figure for the following fifteen years. But it should be noted that the 'washing' category contained five different types: soap balls, tablets, squares and the extremely popular glycerine and unscented soaps, the latter regularly exceeding fifteen million dozens sold per year, or a staggering 180 million units.⁴² Also Pears was just one maker among a number selling similar products. By the end of the nineteenth century, therefore, the market for shaving cakes, sticks and other such products was likely substantial. It seems logical to conclude that men had returned to shaving.

This same period also saw changes again to the form of advertisements, both in the language of advertising and also the increasing use of imagery. Notably, health was now attributed to shaving, rather than beard-wearing. In 1876, a small notice in *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, partly a puff for James Murray's 'Fluid Magnesia', apparently

⁴⁰ Based on keyword searches of advertisements in the British Newspaper Archive, <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>.

⁴¹ Unilever Archives and Records, MS AFP-9/1/2/(2), 'Pieces' ledger for Lever Brothers' Soap products, 1884–1904.

⁴² *Ibid.*

confirmed this apparent shift in attitudes. ‘The conditions of existence in the present day are very artificial, and in order to promote health, without which life becomes almost a burthen, it is necessary to adopt artificial means.’⁴³ ‘First and foremost in the ranks,’ it stated, ‘are those appliances which promote cleanliness and disinfection.’ Shaving cream was third on the list, only exceeded by toilet soap and tooth powder, identifying it as an essential tool in the preservation of health.⁴⁴ *Fin de siècle* shaving advertisements showed the strong influence of ideas relating to the permeability of the skin and the notion of pores as gateways or doorways to germs. As Justin Bengry has argued, advertisements such as ‘Little Doors’ (in which a barber holds a magnifying glass to the face of a customer to reveal his skin pores) promoted the idea that the skin was vulnerable to penetration.⁴⁵ Another, for ‘Dagmar shaving cakes,’ stressed that it ‘contained no baneful substances’ and was ‘eminently adapted for cleaning the pores of the skin, without deteriorating the capillary bulb.’⁴⁶ Any type of vulnerability, such as that represented by the pores, was potentially emasculating. Men were encouraged to draw on masculine traits of strength and virility to be masters of their bodies and minds and to counter the threat.⁴⁷

This is not to say that shaving had entirely lost its negative associations. One nasty cut from a razor, after all, threatened to throw open a whole building’s worth of ‘little doors.’ There was plenty of evidence to support the potential lethality of shaving cuts. In 1857 the Rev. Lockhart of Kilmaurs died suddenly after cutting himself while shaving whereupon ‘some poisonous substance, supposed to have been in the soap passed through his whole body.’⁴⁸ After cutting his chin slightly, a patient in Boston hospital suffered an infection causing his lip to swell, rapidly spreading to his neck and face and obstructing his breathing. Death swiftly followed ‘from exhaustion and partial suffocation.’⁴⁹ Suddenly, emphasizing health, safety and protection was a useful marketing strategy, especially in brand names. Cuticura’s ‘Medicinal Shaving Soap’ was advertised in 1880 while another, ‘Dr Nichol’s Sanitary Soap,’ managed to incorporate both a medical practitioner a nod to hygiene in its brand name.⁵⁰ ‘Dr Mackenzie’s Arsenical Toilet Soap,’ listing shaving among its many uses and was touted as a hygienic beautifier. Perhaps the fact that it was potentially toxic and actually used by taxidermists, as well as being subject to regulation in France, led the makers to stress that it was ‘warranted harmless.’⁵¹ Others stressed the cleansing properties of their shaving soaps. The ‘Magic Shaving Soap’ was marketed as having ‘extraordinary washing properties.’⁵²

⁴³ *Jackson’s Oxford Journal* (8 July 1876): 7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Justin Bengry, ‘Consuming Men: Masculinities and Shaving Advertisements,’ Paper delivered at ‘Framing the Face: New Perspectives on the History of Facial Hair’, 28 November 2015, 3.

⁴⁶ ‘Dagmar Shaving Cakes’, *Graphic* (1 May 1886).

⁴⁷ Bengry, ‘Consuming Men’, 3.

⁴⁸ ‘Miscellaneous General News’, *Bury Free Press* (29 August 1857): 3.

⁴⁹ ‘Death through Shaving Cut’, *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* (23 February 1914): 8; see also ‘Infection Due to Shaving’, *Derry Journal* (27 July 1891): 7; ‘Infection in Shaving Water’, *Lincolnshire Echo* (16 October 1895): 4.

⁵⁰ ‘Cuticura Remedies’, *Daily News* (25 February 1880); ‘Tuckwoods of Sheffield’, *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* (16 March 1878).

⁵¹ ‘Dr Mackenzie’s Arsenical Toilet Soap’, *Morning Post* (12 December 1895).

⁵² ‘American Toilet Soaps’, *Belfast News Letter* (13 January 1880).

But as well as health and hygiene, the late nineteenth century also saw narratives of softness and luxury returning to advertising, after seemingly disappearing during the 'beard movement'. From the mid-1880s through to the end of the century, shaving soap advertisements again began to stress gentleness, lack of irritation and utility for men with 'sensitive and delicate skins'.⁵³ Products such as Ferris and Co.'s 'Thymol' soap claimed to leave skin soft. Cleaver's 'Juvenia Shaving Soap' was agreeable, pure and invigorating, while Pears offered '12 months luxury for twelve pence'.⁵⁴ After nearly three decades of absence, scent also returned to shaving product advertisements, with many advertisers stressing the 'pleasant' or 'agreeable' odour of their products.⁵⁵ But the late 1870s also saw the introduction of a number of shaving lotions and colognes aimed specifically at men, and these give some insight into what were considered acceptable scents for men. Arnold Cooley's 1873 study of perfumes noted several preparations used by men to soothe irritated skin after shaving. These included 'cherry laurel water', a distilled water used described as a 'shaving wash', along with a 'shaving lotion' known as 'emulsion of bitter almonds'. Cooley advised caution due to the poisonous effects of potassium cyanide, which was present in both preparations.⁵⁶ Lavender, citrus and 'woody' scents were popular choices. The London perfumer George Trumper introduced a number of colognes in the late nineteenth century, including 'Marlborough' in 1877, containing lavender, geranium and cedar 'West Indian Limes'; 'Astor' cologne, which combined sandalwood and caraway; and by 'Curzon' in 1882, which contained spice and citrus. Both Penhaligon's of London and the soap-maker Yardley also sold their own Lavender colognes, which were intended for both sexes.⁵⁷

If, as John Tosh argues, younger men were beginning to reject the hard, patriarchal model of manliness of their fathers towards the later nineteenth century, it is possible that the apparent changes in the market for shaving products reflected demand from younger men, desiring comfort and luxury after decades of being assured that real men avoided them.⁵⁸

A final key change in the advertising of shaving products came in the use of images, which were used both to highlight the product, but also to reinforce new expectations of manly behaviour and appearance. Here again there are some suggestions that younger men were the intended audience. Many advertisers still promoted shaving as a manly activity, emphasizing strength, virility and mastery over technology, and a common device was to depict men in the act of shaving. Far from being vain

⁵³ See advertisements for 'Vinola Soap', *Era* (24 May 1890); 'Homocea Shaving Soap', *Liverpool Mercury* (21 December 1894); 'Cuticura Shaving Soap', *Graphic* (20 January 1900).

⁵⁴ 'Ferris and Co.'s Thymol Soap', *Bristol Mercury and Daily Post* (16 June 1888); 'Cleaver's Juvenia Shaving Soap', *Yorkshire Herald* (28 April 1891); '12 Months Luxury for 12 Pence', *Graphic* (21 July 1888).

⁵⁵ See, for example, 'Field's Fleur De Lys Shaving Soap', *Morning Post* (2 September 1895), which was 'delightfully perfumed' while Juvenia, noted above, had a 'perfectly delightful' fragrance.

⁵⁶ Arnold Cooley, *Respecting the Selection and Use of Perfumes, Cosmetics and Other Toilet Articles* (Philadelphia, PA: Spottiswoode, 1873), 417–18, 712.

⁵⁷ 'Yardley and Co.', *Star* (14 September 1875).

⁵⁸ John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Harlow: Pearson, 2005), 109–10; John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 150–2.

creatures, effeminately powdering and puffing themselves, these were typically young, muscular and virile males, whose shaving enhanced, rather than diminished their manliness. Late 1880s advertisements for Pear's Shaving Soap, for example, depict a heavily whiskered man lathering his face with a shaving brush. His open shirt and muscular frame imply sexuality, strength and vigour, while his dark, curly hair and whiskers suggest youth. The tightly framed image places the man in the centre; one hand operates the brush, while the other (tightly clenched) rests on the table, next to an array of toilette instruments. But all was not rugged utility, however: the most prominent word in the advertisement was 'comfort'.⁵⁹ Advertisements for J. B. Williams's shaving sticks portrayed a handsome, fashionable young man wearing a stud-collar shirt and holding lather brushes to either side of his face, one with his previous brand (unsurprisingly with little lather) and the other using Williams's products.⁶⁰ The product itself was described variously as soft, rich, comforting, cooling and healing. Advertisements for Cuticura shaving soap depicted a similarly fashionable and youthful man at his shaving mirror, with the razor to his face, while the headline read 'To Tender-Skinned Men', and the text again stressed comfort, ease and prevention of irritation.⁶¹ Such ambiguity recalled the longstanding tensions in male product advertising, of negotiating 'conventionally female beauty concerns' while appealing to masculine hardness and virility.⁶² By 1898, though, it seems that all caution had been thrown aside. This advertisement for the J. B. Williams company depicted a host of cherubs in a cloud of lather, each brandishing a banner extolling the virtues of Williams's shaving soaps. The banner words included 'luxurious', 'cream-like', 'rich', 'healing' and 'delicate'.⁶³

Razors in the age of the beard

So far, the evidence for the marketing of cosmetic shaving products appears to suggest that the onset of the Victorian 'beard movement' did affect the types and numbers of available brands. This seemingly occurred in three distinct phases: First was a period of growth from the early nineteenth century up to the early 1850s. This was followed by an apparently marked contraction in the market, lasting for roughly twenty years after the reappearance of beards, with less brands being advertised and some types of shaving goods disappearing altogether. The third phase, from the early 1880s, though, suggests a resurgence in the market as the 'beard movement' gradually lost its potency and as (perhaps especially younger) men began to reject the patriarchal manliness of the previous generation and returned to shaving.

One important product, the razor, remains to be analysed. Of all shaving products, razors might logically be expected to show strongest evidence of the

⁵⁹ '12 Months of Comfort for 12 Pence', *Illustrated London News* (7 April 1888).

⁶⁰ 'Williams' Shaving Soaps', *Illustrated London News* (6 April 1895).

⁶¹ 'To Tender-Skinned Men', *Graphic* (20 January 1900).

⁶² Shannon, *The Cut of His Coat*, 89.

⁶³ 'Williams's Shaving Soaps', *Illustrated London News* (15 October 1898). Author's own image.

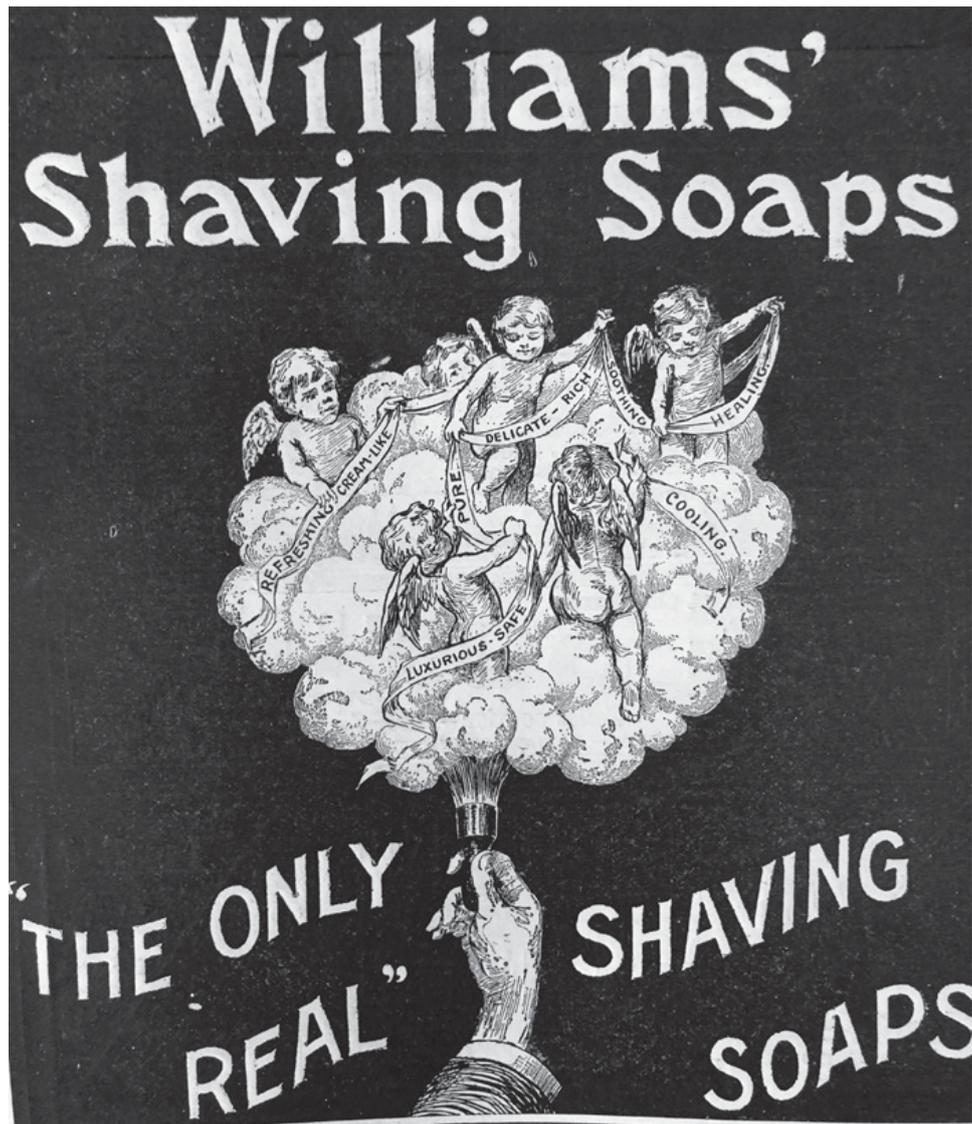


Figure 12.5 Advertisement for Williams' shaving soaps, *Illustrated London News*, 15 October 1898, 573. Author's own image.

effects of the return of beards. To replicate the methods used above for razors, however, is difficult. The sheer volume of newspaper references to them, which can include anything from advertisements to reports of suicides, renders a full quantitative study unfeasible. Furthermore, while shaving soaps, powders, pastes and oils were commonly given specific brand names and can therefore be tracked with relative ease, razors could be found among the stock of various retailers, including cutlers, ironmongers, general stores and warehouses, and often listed simply as 'razors' or 'steel razors'. Matters are further complicated by technological developments in razor production which saw a huge expansion and diversification of the market in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This included the proliferation of both open razors and safety razors, which competed for space in an increasingly crowded market, causing a corresponding leap in razor advertisements, from the late 1880s onwards, again making a quantitative analysis

unmanageable. Little academic attention has yet been paid to razor manufacturing and marketing in late Victorian Britain, and a full study is beyond the scope of this chapter. For these reasons, this section of the chapter stops at 1890, in order to focus upon the potential impact during the period of the ‘beard movement’. As such it is less concerned with the developing technology of razors.⁶⁴ With these issues in mind and acknowledging the limitations of the data, this chapter now turns to the landscape and form of razor advertising, based on the same search criteria as cosmetic shaving products, to allow some basic comparisons.

Throughout the 1830s and 40s, the pattern of razor advertising remained fairly consistent, reflecting both proprietary razors and examples within generic advertising. In 1830, for example, seven proprietary razors were available in England. In 1835, there were four, and in 1840 nine. But the relatively limited number of advertisements for individually made proprietary razors were dwarfed by the hundreds placed by large companies such as ‘Mechi’s Manufactory and Emporium of Elegance’, located in Leadenhall Street, London, selling everything from stationery and cutlery to chess sets. Mechi’s advertised widely and repeatedly in newspapers across England and Scotland, and their own branded razors were commonly noted throughout the century.⁶⁵ To explore the longer potential trajectory of razor advertising and to keep the sample manageable, Figure 12.6 shows the minimum numbers of branded razors advertised at two-yearly intervals, between 1850 and 1880.⁶⁶

It is immediately apparent that the patterns here do not closely match those of cosmetic shaving products. While there appears to be a general decline in numbers after 1858, broadly agreeing with the trajectory of soap brands, the fall is neither consistent nor dramatic. Also, unlike soap brands, razors clearly continued to be advertised throughout the period, with only 1872, 1874 and 1876 appearing to show marked drops in numbers. The data does, however, seem to correlate to the upturn noted above, from 1880, coinciding with the return to shaving. To address this, it is useful to draw on other types of evidence to explore the nature of razor-making and marketing during this period.

The ‘beard movement’ coincided with a period of innovation in razor-making. Following the pattern of metallurgical innovation in razor production of the later eighteenth century, the early 1850s saw razor manufacture and design in full flourish. The catalogue for the Great Exhibition of 1851 included several of the latest types of razors as examples of technological prowess. In the North Gallery, among the ‘Cutlery, Edge and Hand Tools’ could be found ‘the Clydesdale razor’, ‘exhibited for symmetry and execution’; the ‘organic razor’, with various improvements to the design of the blade; and the ‘Hypenetome or Beard Plane ... a new instrument for shaving, constructed on the principles of the carpenter’s plane’ and able to be

⁶⁴ Between 1870 and 1879 there were roughly 8000 database hits; between 1890 and 1899 the number rose to 19,000. For a detailed study of the technology of razors and patents in the nineteenth century, see Robert K. Waits, *Before Gillette: The Quest for a Safe Razor. Inventors and Patents 1762–1901* (Raleigh: J.IV.IX, 2009).

⁶⁵ For example, ‘Mechi’s Elegancies’, *London Evening Standard* (2 December 1840): 1.

⁶⁶ These again include all ‘named’ razors and not examples in stock lists, unless the name is also provided there.

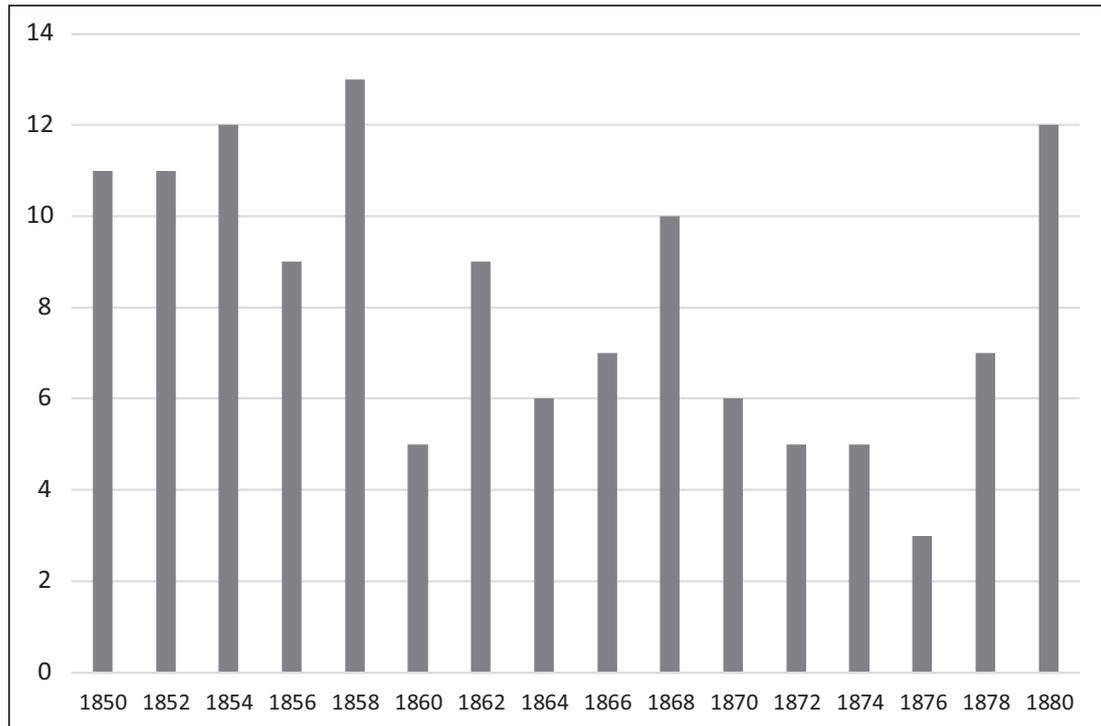


Figure 12.6 Number of branded razors advertised in British newspapers, 1850–80.

used in either the left or right hand.⁶⁷ In the context of the exhibition, razors were evidence of the wonders of technology and of mastery over nature and the body. Makers were keen to demonstrate that they could be beautiful as well as functional. Patriotic pride in British technological prowess was reflected in the grandiose names given to many mid-century razors. Evoking images of historical chivalry, Stewart and Co. of Bristol made and advertised their ‘Plantagenet Guard Razors’, promising that they could be used in bed, in the dark or aboard ship.⁶⁸ Tyzack’s ‘New British Razors’ offered durability and solidity, promising to stand the test of time.⁶⁹ Some invoked martial imagery in their product names: The Sheffield cutler John Heiffor created his own brand of ‘Army Razors’, available from 1850, and other military brands included Manchester cutlery firm Gradwell’s ‘Army and Navy Razors’ and ‘Sutton’s Army Razors.’⁷⁰ Others linked their products to other areas of technology and engineering. Perhaps hitching a ride on the mid-nineteenth-century ‘railway mania’, Ross and Co. of London styled their product the ‘Triple-Converted Railway Razor’ – one of their ‘four essentials for a comfortable shave.’⁷¹ The brand names of razors, then, were closely linked to mid-Victorian technological triumphalism and patriotism.

⁶⁷ Waits, *Before Gillette*, 18.

⁶⁸ ‘C. Stewart and Co.’, *Daily News* (4 January 1850).

⁶⁹ ‘New British Razors’, *Norfolk News* (12 January 1850).

⁷⁰ ‘Heiffor’s Army Razors’, *Manchester Courier* (14 September 1850); ‘Gradwell’s Army and Navy Razors’, *Manchester Courier* (31 May 1856); ‘Sutton’s Army Razors’, *Hampshire Advertiser* (14 August 1858).

⁷¹ ‘Ross and Co.’, *Morning Post* (5 May 1850).

The period between 1850–70 also saw various applications for patents for razors and related items, including razor handles, shaving brushes and cases, continued to be lodged throughout the apparent height of popularity for beards between the 1850s and 70s, again suggesting innovation and some expectation of potential demand for new products, even despite the ‘beard movement’. These included variations such as spring guards or detachable blades, to improve safety, or improvements to the production of blades.⁷² Others proposed machines to facilitate the processes of shaving, such as devices to heat razors, or rapidly heat water.⁷³ Some specifications even combined emerging technologies to produce innovative variations on the razor. In 1860, for example, Benjamin Matthewman of York applied for a patent for his new method of inserting photographs into the handles of instruments, including razors, offering shavers the chance to gaze adoringly upon their inamorata as they swiped away their stubble.⁷⁴

It is also clear that razors, unlike some cosmetic shaving products, continued to be advertised throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. In April 1854 the London perfumer Mechi’s advertised their razors, strops and soaps widely.⁷⁵ Makers such as Mappin and Sons, whose ‘lancet-edged razor’ was regularly promoted in the 1840s, continued to advertise as the beard movement took hold.⁷⁶ In 1850, at least eleven different razor brands were being advertised ranging from individual makers to nationally available products, and by the end of that decade, there were at least thirteen. Some, like Tyzack’s ‘British Razor’, Heiffor’s ‘Army Razors’ and Mappin’s razors, were available for more than ten years, allowing manufacturers to claim ‘celebrated’ status in their advertisements. While the numbers of brands did fall in the 1860s, razors were clearly still commonly available.

Nevertheless, there were changes. By 1860, the numbers of branded or named razors appear to have dwindled. Rather than warranting their own dedicated advertisements, razors now more commonly appeared within ironmongery or cutlery advertisements, or as part of larger stock lists. Where branded razors appeared, they were usually noted among many similar products. In January 1865, for example, Rodgers and Sons advertised their table cutlery and simply noted selling their own brand of razors and scissors, without even including the price.⁷⁷ It does seem that manufacturers felt less inclined to devote much effort or advertising space to razors at the height of the fashion for beards. There was certainly some sense of disquiet among cutlers and razor-makers about the popularity of beard-wearing. With more than a hint of whistling in the dark, the 1866 article ‘Razors and How to Use Them’ (perhaps tellingly from a newspaper in Sheffield, the centre of cutlery and razor production) claimed that shaving was still

⁷² See, for example, BL, Patent 1856/223, Specification of Henry Hilliard, 28 January 1856; BL, MS Patent 1856/1006, Specification of Thomas Heiffor, 26 April 1856.

⁷³ BL, Patent 1858/2621, Specification of Henry Bailey, 19 November 1858; BL Patent 1883/1731, Specification of W. Williams, 6 April 1883.

⁷⁴ BL Patent MS 1860/241, Specification of Benjamin Matthewman for ‘Inserting photographs into the handles of cutlery items’, undated, c. 1860.

⁷⁵ See, for example, ‘Comfort in Shaving’, *Daily News* (24 April 1854).

⁷⁶ ‘Razors, Razors, Razors!’, *Daily News* (18 April 1854).

⁷⁷ ‘Rogers and Sons’ Table Cutlery’, *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* (11 January 1865): 1.

a frequent operation despite the 'beard movement'. Extensively quoting Benjamin Kingsbury's earlier treatise on razor maintenance, the article implied that shaving was linked to civilization and that only 'savage men ... except themselves from shaving altogether'.⁷⁸

There were also changes in the language of advertising. Throughout the 1850s and 60s, razor advertising remained firmly focused on utility, with manufacturers keen to stress sharpness, durability and price. One of the most common razor brands was Mappin's of London, whose widespread campaigns focused upon 'quality and excellence' and adaptability for 'hard and soft beards'.⁷⁹ Here the emphasis was on practicality, rather than ornamentation. Also important was safety, since razors made from cheap or inferior 'pig metal' were blamed for much of the discomfort suffered by men in shaving. While a bad knife might still make a pen, or cut food for dinner, a cheap, blunt, 'detestable scraper' would ever cause smarting and 'daily misery'.⁸⁰ Various contrivances sought to prevent men from cutting themselves. One 'guard razor', exhibited at the Great Exhibition, had a detachable toothed comb guard, which was placed over the razor, protecting the face while leaving enough of the cutting edge free to shave efficiently.⁸¹ Guard razors swiftly became popular, with several different variations appearing in patent applications in Britain and America and advertised in newspapers in the 1850s in particular, including one that boldly promised that it was 'warranted not to cut the flesh while shaving'.⁸²

But if razors needed to be durable and sharp, they also had to be affordable, and from the late 1850s came a growing emphasis on low price as a selling point and, in particular, the growth of so-called shilling razors. An early example was Mappin's 'shilling razor', first advertised in London newspapers in 1855.⁸³ While other companies initially distanced themselves from this approach (Mechi's, for example, advertised its products in Ireland using the tagline 'Makes no shilling razors'), Mappin's was joined by a further nine such products by 1868 and others, such as 'Razors for the Millions', which also played on low price in their product names.⁸⁴ Precisely why low price became a selling point during this period is hard to pinpoint. In the face of the 'beard movement' it is tempting to see price reductions as a direct reaction. Since razors were not generally expensive in the first place, however, a further discount would seem unlikely to entice bearded men back to the lather, brush and bowl.

As Figure 12.6 shows, however, the late 1870s appears to show evidence of an upturn, increasing from three brands in 1876, to twelve in 1880. At the same time, it is noticeable that patent applications for razors and shaving products increased

⁷⁸ Anon., 'Razors and How to Use Them', *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* (17 April 1866): 7.

⁷⁹ 'Mappin's Razors', *Era* (5 February 1860).

⁸⁰ Rev. Dyonisus Lardner (ed.), *The Cabinet Cyclopaedia, Vol. II, Iron and Steel* (London: Longman et al., 1833), 25–6.

⁸¹ Waits, *Before Gillette*, 16.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 27.

⁸³ 'Mappin's Shilling Razor', *Globe* (20 March 1855): 1.

⁸⁴ For Mechi's, see 'Comfort in Shaving', *Cork Examiner* (20 February 1854). Other cutlers and makers advertising their own brand of 'shilling razor' included the Mappin Brothers, Rogers and Sons, Moses and Sons and Shaw and George, all of Sheffield, Taylor's 'celebrated shilling razor', Piccadilly, Snowden's, Shaw's, Miller's and Joseph Gleave of Manchester.

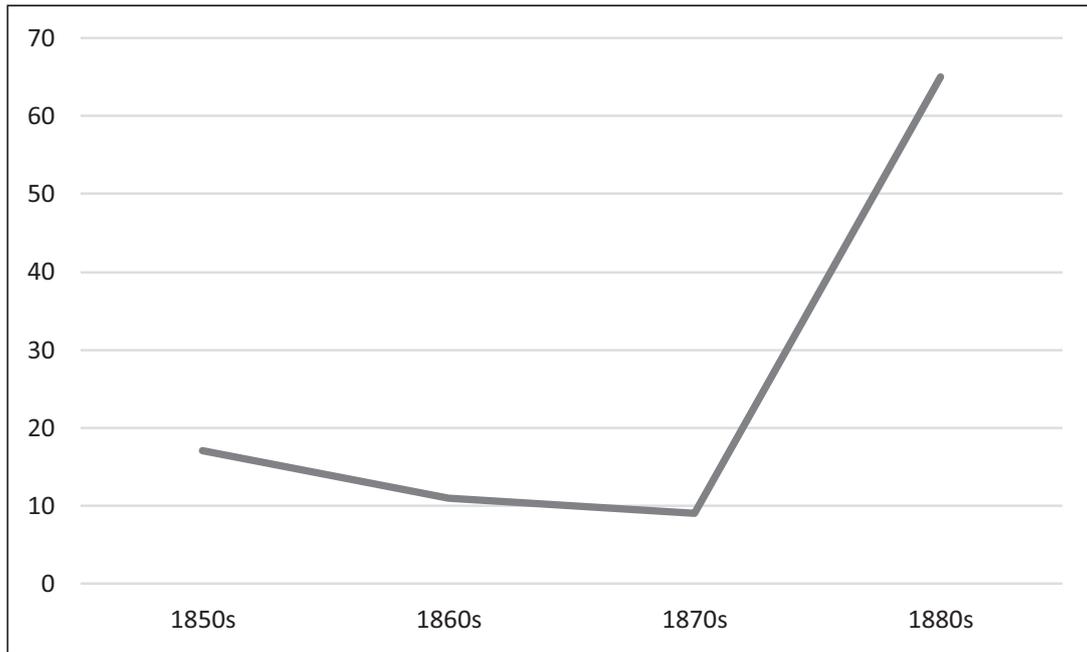


Figure 12.7 Number of patent applications lodged for shaving-related products, 1850–80.

dramatically. Whereas the 1850s and 60s both saw only two applications for razor patents and three in 1870, the 1880s saw thirty specifications lodged. For razor strops and sharpeners, patent applications rose from three in the 1860s and one in the 1870s, to twenty-five in the 1880s. Figure 12.7 shows the combined totals of all patent applications for shaving-related products, comprising razors, strops and sharpeners, razor handles, shaving brushes, shaving cases and boxes and other related devices such as razor warmers. Between 1880 and 1885 alone, there were more than forty patent applications for razors and related products.

As was the case with shaving soap advertisements too, there appears to have been a corresponding change in the rhetoric of razor advertising from the mid-1870s. First was a return to detailed advertisements, extolling the virtues of razors in their own right. The long-established London firm Mechi's took to including lines of self-aggrandizing verse in its advertisements for razors and strops, filling an entire column of page space.⁸⁵ Imagery also began to appear in razor advertising, with products such as 'Edward Smith's Hollow Ground Razors' depicting a young, curly haired man shaving his lathered face, underneath the caption 'Makes shaving a pleasure.'⁸⁶ Others, such as Kropp's, chose instead to depict their razors, shown half open, with accompanying text stating price, durability and pleasure in use.⁸⁷ Hovenden's 'Midget Safety Razor' was even depicted in great detail and at actual size in their advertisements of the early 1890s, allowing consumers to see exactly what they were buying.⁸⁸ Also as occurred

⁸⁵ 'Mechi's Magic Strops, Pastes and Razors', *Daily News* (29 January 1880).

⁸⁶ 'Makes Shaving a Pleasure', *Field* (3 June 1882): 63.

⁸⁷ 'Kropp Real German Hollow Ground Razor', *Field* (26 September 1891): 16.

⁸⁸ 'The Midget Patent Safety Razor', *Field* (24 September 1892): 63.

with soaps and other products, the end of the nineteenth century also saw a return to luxury in the rhetoric of razor advertising. Wood and Co.'s razors were advertised in 1880 under the headline 'A Luxurious Shave'.⁸⁹

As with shaving soap products, therefore, it seems that razor advertising followed a similar trajectory, with changes in availability, the form and nature of advertising and the language used to appeal to masculine consumers. After an apparent lull in the 1860s and 70s, razors again became goods to be advertised in their own right and, on the evidence of patent applications, subject to a new phase of innovation and experimentation.

Conclusion

Both studies in this chapter appear to confirm that the availability and advertising of both cosmetic shaving products and razors changed during the second half of the nineteenth century. The remaining questions are how far such changes are linked to the 'beard movement' and what they might reveal more broadly about the extent of the fashion. The 'beard movement', as we have seen, emerged in the early 1850s and has been argued to have grown rapidly in popularity through the 1860s and 70s, before coming to gradual end in the 1880s as young men began to favour moustaches, while older men still cleaved to their beards. Also, by the 1880s, the various health and medical arguments made in support of beards had begun to pall and began to be associated with the older, more conservative generation.⁹⁰

First, both analyses appear to confirm an impact on the commercial market for shaving between the 1860s and late 70s, although they differ in extent. The data for shaving soaps, pastes, oils and powders seems to point very strongly to a decline in advertising during the 1860s, falling away virtually to nothing in the 1870s, before rising again in the 1880s. Although not as dramatic, the numbers of razor brands advertised also fell noticeably during the same period. This tends to support an argument that the fashion for beard-wearing did have a marked overall effect. During the same period, the rhetoric of advertising changed, moving from luxury and comfort around the mid-century to more of a focus on utility and safety through the decades of the 'beard movement', before returning to luxury and the increasing use of imagery from the 1880s.

The data for both shaving soap products and razors, however, does raise an interesting question regarding the rapidity with which the 'beard movement' was assimilated and its extent. In both product groups it appears that the number of brands not only continued to grow throughout the 1850s, coinciding with the first years of the 'beard movement', but in some cases reached their highest points. Why, then, would shaving products apparently expand when it might be assumed that demand would fall? There are several possible explanations. First, this might suggest that men were

⁸⁹ 'A Luxurious Shave', *York Herald* (6 April 1880).

⁹⁰ Christopher Oldstone-Moore, 'The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain', *Victorian Studies*, 48:1 (2005): 29.

slower to join the fashion than previously assumed and that demand remained for such products. As the evidence of prisoner photographs and continuing demand for barber services both attest, potentially large numbers of men remained clean-shaven or still shaved part of their face. This could account for the continuing – indeed apparently growing – numbers of shaving soap brands in the first decade of the beard movement. Conversely, however, it is possible that soap-makers and perfumers innovated and advertised to stimulate demand in the face of declining business due to the return of beards. (It is perhaps worth noting that the manufacturers of modern razors and shaving products experienced similar pressures during the ‘hipster’ beard trend of c. 2012–7.⁹¹)

A second question relates to the apparent disjoint in the patterns of both product groups. If the data presented for razors is in any way representative, why it does not correspond more closely to shaving soaps and other products? Why might razors continue to be advertised while soap products – after all a requisite for shaving – fell away? This is more difficult to answer, not least since the availability of razors does not necessarily reflect demand and, here again, it may have been the case that advertising was used to stimulate flagging demand, rather than catering to a ready audience of shavers. But it may be instructive here to revisit to the conclusions of Chapter 9 and the photographic evidence of the wide variety of facial hair styles worn by men throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. As the images of prisoners suggest, many facial hair styles still required at least some part of the face to be shaved, making razors necessary accoutrements for styling and managing facial hair.

⁹¹ In summer 2019, changes in male personal grooming habits forced the global healthcare company, Procter and Gamble, to devalue their Gillette shaving business by \$8 billion. <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-proctergamble-results/pg-posts-strong-sales-takes-8-billion-gillette-writedown-idUKKCN1UP16R> (accessed 17 August 2019).

Conclusion

The research project on which this book is based was titled ‘Do Beards Matter?’ – a deliberately provocative question which sought to draw attention to the issue of whether something as quotidian as a beard could potentially shed light on the histories of gender, masculinity, the body, medicine health and practice and even broader social, cultural and economic conditions. The short answer, as this book has argued, is ‘yes’. But as it has also shown, the question itself does not go far enough. Not only have *beards* mattered fundamentally through time, but so has facial hair in all its forms, including moustaches, whiskers and stubble, and so too has the clean-shaven face, which has proved equally culturally loaded.

Previous studies have often focused on the symbolic, theoretical or literary significance of facial hair and its respective place within prevailing constructions of masculinity. But the extent to which such theories affected the daily decisions of individual men as to whether they cultivated, shaved or styled their facial hair has remained elusive. What was it like to shave or be shaved in the past? How did men interact with barbers and how did this change over time? How did men learn to shave and what products did they use to facilitate the process? Recovering such experiences has been at the heart of this book.

The period between 1650 and 1900 saw a number of important changes in the history of facial hair. First, was the gradual ‘demedicalisation’ of facial hair as debates about its nature and origin gradually shifted the focus from the interior, to the exterior of the body. In 1650, facial hair was conceived of in humoral terms. In physiological terms, facial hair in early modern England was regarded as one of the body’s excrements – essentially an exhaust gas left over from the production of sperm deep within the body, which gradually made its way upwards and outwards, solidifying on the surface of the face. This process, at least initially, was viewed as a form of catamenia, virtually the male equivalent of female menstruation. The strong connections between facial hair and spermatic production informed cultural ideas about the beard as a symbol of male strength and virility. The thickness, quality and colour of facial hair were important markers of inner heat, which in turn betokened generative power. Such views remained largely intact well into the first decades of the eighteenth century.

By the mid-eighteenth century, however, it was clear that changes were occurring, both to concepts of the origin and nature of facial hair. The growing popularity of microscopes and enlightened interests in scientific experiment and empirical

observation more generally began to cast doubt on the veracity of links between beard hair and the production of sperm. New studies increasingly began to suggest that hair grew in, or just beneath the skin, rather than from some essential spirit deep within the body. Rather than originating deep within the body, beard hair came to be seen as a material emerging either within or just below the skin.

The second change involved the practices of shaving and the practitioners involved in the process. Between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth centuries, barbers were the main providers of shaving for the majority of men. As part of the hybrid occupation of barber-surgeons, barbers were medical practitioners, reflecting lingering ideas of shaving as a medical procedure – one that rid the body of waste material. As much as physicians might have disagreed, barber-surgeons were part of the civic fabric of early modern towns, and their guilds and companies were important institutions. As Chapter 5 explored, barbershops were common in towns and villages across the country, varying in size, status and fittings. As with other forms of medical practice, prices were tailored to suit the pockets of customers, with some barbers offering swift and cheap penny shaves, while others looked to create something more of an experience. In either case, the barbershop was an important homosocial space for men, who used it for socializing, tipping and merrymaking, as well as submitting to the razor. For elite gentlemen able to procure the services of a barber in their own home under a long-term contract arrangement, having a personal barber on call was a mark of status. Learning to shave was part of the formal training of the apprentice barber, and a variety of means were used to do this, from practice upon live customers to dead animals.

The mid-eighteenth century, however, brought fundamental changes to both the practice of shaving and the structure of the haircutting trades. The split between the barbers and surgeons in 1745, effectively relegated barbers to a sort of medical auxiliary, still linked to various forms of bodywork, including shaving, bloodletting and minor procedures, but sundered from formal structures of practice. A second effect of the split was the further sundering of the haircutting trades into barbers and hairdressers, the latter abandoning shaving in favour of ministering to the wigs and coiffeurs of the wealthy and distancing themselves from the rough and ready trade of barbering.

At the same time, with the increasing availability of high-quality razors and the social imperative for the clean-shaven face linked to expectations of polite manliness, men were beginning to shave themselves, breaking the long-held monopoly of barbers as the sole providers of shaving. Although self-shaving was initially limited to wealthy elite and middling gentlemen, who could afford the often-costly equipment, over time it began to sink lower down the social scale, becoming more popular and viewed as part of the suite of tasks expected of a man. The emergence of the 'beard movement' around 1853 could be seen as the final point of rupture between men and barbers, as attacks on shaving and a wealth of apparent medical evidence for the healthiness of beards rendered their trade moribund.

But it is clear that neither the split between the barbers and surgeons, the rise of hairdressers or the resurgent Victorian fashion for beards dealt anything like a coup de grace to barbers. Indeed, it could be argued that the nineteenth century was a high point, that saw barbershops busier than ever before. The continuing connection

between barbers and shaving was reinforced, as we have seen, in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century dictionary definitions that continued to define barbers first and foremost as 'shavers'. What had changed, though, was the customer demographic. Whereas once barbers shave the faces of men across the social scale, it appears that they now concentrated on the urban working classes, establishing small, ad hoc businesses to cater for the weekly shave of working men. The demand for their services on weekends often overwhelmed barbers, leading them to work through the nights on Saturdays to deal with the queues. There was also a lingering enmity between the old rivals and a resistance towards removing either the occupational boundaries or terminologies of the haircutting trades. By 1800, hairdressers had diminished in status and were falling on hard times. Throughout the nineteenth century, they attempted to re-establish themselves as a high-status trade, with professional associations, trade manuals and journals, along with calls for training academies and clubs ... none of which were replicated by barbers.

A third key change was that of the gradual emergence of a new market for cosmetic shaving products from the eighteenth century and, perhaps more importantly, the increasing emphasis upon individual responsibility for managing the face. As the book has argued, this represented a new category of men's personal grooming, one that was firmly linked to the consumption and use of particular goods. This was, in many respects, the prototype for the huge market in male cosmetics and shaving products in the modern age. Men have often been missing from the history of cosmetics. In the early modern period, there was virtually no commercial product available for individual men either to facilitate the act of shaving or emolliate its aftereffects. But, the large number of skin preparations in domestic remedy culture offered an opportunity for men to deal with cuts, rashes and abrasions. The mid-eighteenth century, however, saw the beginnings of what was to become a huge corner of the cosmetics market. From virtually a standing start, a whole host of shaving products began to become commercially available and advertised in the growing number of Georgian newspapers. Such advertisements are revealing of the expectations of manliness, but also of the contradictions within prevailing ideals of masculine traits and behaviours.

Fourth, the period covered by the book also saw a number of changes to beard fashions. The face of an Englishman before 1650 was likely to be bearded. The disappearance of beards and moustaches from male faces across Europe from the last decades of the seventeenth century, however, raised new questions about the nature of facial hair and its generation and introduced tensions in its place as a symbol of innate manliness. In sociocultural terms, facial hair (at least among elites and middling sorts) had become undesirable amidst a new 'polite' focus upon refining the body. Other factors contributed to the demise of facial hair, including the rise of wig-wearing, changing aesthetic preferences for smoothness and youthfulness and, perhaps, the association of facial hair with a rough, rustic manliness, set against the neat and elegant visage of the polite gentleman. Despite this, the ability to grow facial hair remained important, since 'smock faced' men unable to produce an abundant crop of whiskers, were at risk of assumptions about effeminacy. Facial hair was still therefore regarded as a key element of the male body, albeit one that required manly self-mastery to control. This predilection for the shaved face lasted virtually 150 years, until the Victorian

beard movement saw the widespread fashion for large bushy beards that has become virtually synonymous with the age. Here, amidst a new focus upon the physicality of the male body, the beard was remade into a totem of manliness; an outward symbol of inner strength as well as a natural protector against the harsh, outdoor life for which men were supposedly fitted.

But, as the book has argued, this grand narrative of facial hair, while revealing of broad trends in fashion and ideas about masculinity, fails to encapsulate the nuances and variations that could occur according to age, location, status and so on. It also ignores the agency of individual men in determining their own facial hair style. It is easy to assume, for example, that all eighteenth-century men were clean-shaven. The absence of facial hair in imagery, together with the general emphasis on neatness, elegance and smoothness, all militate towards the predominance of the shaved face. But, as Chapter 8 argued, such source material is often weighted strongly towards middle and elite men. While evidence is sparser for the lower orders, there are suggestions, for example in 'wanted' advertisements for criminals and runaways, that some types of facial hair were potentially popular among plebeian men. This should be unsurprising since there is little reason to assume that men lower down the social scale should choose to mirror elite fashions, especially given the connections of shaving with performative politeness. It is not even clear to what extent assumptions about the clean-shaven face among middling and elite men are accurate. As Chapter 6 discussed, the fact that many men only shaved once or twice a week suggests they may have spent much of the week with heavy stubble, further complicating the idea of the eighteenth century as a beardless age. A similar situation could be argued for the nineteenth century. The mass of literature in support of beards that emerged after 1850, together with the large numbers of images of hirsute Victorian men, appears to confirm the ubiquity of beards. Here again though, as the study of prisoner photographs suggests, a potentially large proportion of Victorian men may well have been clean-shaven, while others wore a variety of styles, from side whiskers to chin beards, rather than the archetypal full beard.

In each period, personal choice likely remained the key determining factor. For a variety of reasons, decisions to wear or not wear facial hair, although influenced in part by prevailing ideas about fashion, masculinity and health, were still a matter for the individual man. Even here, there was nuance, however. Men in various institutions, including prisons, workhouses and asylums, had little agency over their appearance, but instead were compelled, sometimes forcibly, to submit to the razor.

Finally, the meanings of facial hair changed dramatically across the span of this book, according to different times and contexts. In broad terms there were three key stages. First, in the early modern period, as we have discussed, facial hair was a symbol of masculine virility and an essential marker of inner heat. Notwithstanding the fact that some women clearly and obviously had facial hair, it was also a badge of distinction between the sexes. Being unable to grow a beard suggested a lack of seminal heat and, therefore, corporeal and sexual weakness and the suspicion of effeminacy. Second, the eighteenth century saw the denigration of the *display* of facial hair as representing a rough, alternative model of manly appearance. If it was not necessarily to be worn, the ability to grow facial hair was still of paramount

importance, though, with lingering ideas about the connection of facial hair to inner heat. By the mid-nineteenth century, the pendulum had swung back and the full beard was again held up as an important display of masculine power and authority. In each case, whether facial hair was in or out of fashion, the importance of being able to grow a beard remained undiminished.

But even here there were variables. The colour of facial hair, for example, complicated simple binaries between bearded and non-bearded. In the seventeenth century, as Chapter 2 suggested, close connections with the humoral body meant that the colour of hair and beard could act as a visible sign of temperament and also, according to some authors, point to more or less desirable characteristics. This allowed for a virtual hierarchy of quality and colour. Beliefs about the significative power of hair and beard colour were still prevalent in the mid-nineteenth century. Advertisements for hair and beard dyeing products promoted black and brown as 'natural' colours, set against undesirable ginger or 'red' whiskers, which potentially bore undesirable racial characteristics.

This raises a further point about the centrality of facial hair to debates about racial classification. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, facial hair was of signal importance in the ranking of *Homo sapiens*, and beards were seen as an important indicator of civilization. Climate was one factor that was argued to determine the quality, colour and thickness of facial hair. But the quantity, quality and colour of facial hair could also be proxies for physical strength, mental acuity and reproductive and sexual power. Europeans, able to grow beards, were confident in asserting their own place at the top of the hierarchy. Bearded non-European races were regarded more highly than those unable to grow facial hair, who were described in terms of weakness, inferiority and effeminacy. Even the manner of removing facial hair offered potential insight into the extent to which relative a non-European people were 'civilized'. Unsurprisingly, nations whose men shaved, and were therefore closest to European practices, were viewed more favourably.

Inevitably, in covering more than three centuries of history and surveying thousands of sources in a research project that has spanned seven years, there have been many blind alleys, shifts of emphasis and certainly much more that could have been said on many topics. Indeed, the material left out of this book could easily make another. But it is to be hoped that the evidence presented here, and questions raised, will stimulate debate, offer opportunities for further research and open up new lines of enquiry.

In 1855, towards the end of his lengthy encomium to facial hair, 'Beards and Their Bearers', in *Crayon*, the author H. W. fretted that he had perhaps 'pull[ed] the beard to a greater extent than my readers' patience will be inclined to bear'.¹ More than 150 years after H. W.'s article, facial hair is still a subject of intense interest and debate; his concern for not stretching the patience of his readers, though, also makes a fitting conclusion to this twenty-first-century book about beards.

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MS P2/T/87 – Will and inventory of John Tyllery of Hindon, barber.

MS P1/T/192 – Admin bond and inventory of Stephen Taylor of Marston, barber.

MS P2/R/398 – Admin bond and inventory of John Ridgeley Jr of Fisherton Anger, barber.

MS P5/1685/101 – Will and inventory of Henry White of Sherborne, barber.

MS P4/1686/18 – Will and inventory of Edward Deane of Salisbury, barber.

MS P2/W/668 – Will and inventory of Maurice Whitmarsh of Fisherton Anger, barber.

MS P23/176 – Will and inventory of Thomas Wells of Wantage.

MS P29/S/40 – Will and inventory of Walter Somner of Corsham, barber.

- MS P4/1694/11 – Will and inv of William Sanger of Salisbury, barber.
 MS P5/1693/60 – Will and inventory of John Wilkins of Mere, barber.
 MS P1/B/681 – Will and inventory of William Bell of Devizes, barber.
 MS P23/243 – Will and inventory of George Wells of Wantage, barber.
 MS P4/1703/5 – Will and inventory of William Sanger of Salisbury, barber.
 MS P1/P/444 – Will and inventory of John Parsons of Marlborough, barber.
 MS P1/H/636 – will and inv of George Hurle of Melksham, barber.
 MS P5/1710/74 – Admin bond and inventory of Robert Patient of Hungerford.
 MS P1/B/783 – Will and inventory of Edmund Browe of Devizes, barber.
 MS P3/C/684 – Will and inventory of William Chivers of Chippenham.
 MS P1/H/777 – Will and inventory of Thomas Hickson of Amesbury, barber.
 MS P1/M/427 – Admin bond and inventory of William Minty of Salisbury, barber.
 MS P1/L/325 – Admin bond and inventory of William Leacock of Marlborough, barber.
 MS P5/1734/46 – Will and inventory of John Loaden of Sherborne, barber
 MS 2664/2/5B/8 – no. 26, receipted bill from Richard Fleming, barber, for lodgings and shaving (amongst household bills of Henry Davenport).
 MS 2664/2/4B/34, no. 21, bill from unknown for shaving and powdering (amongst household bills of Henry Davenport).
 MS 2664/2/4B/44 – no. 13, receipt from the barber for shaving and powdering.
 MS 2664/2/4B/92 – no. j – receipted bills for ‘Master Wheatley’ for shaving.
 MS 2664/2/1b/32 – 3 – Bill of Edward Grist to John Talbot for shaving, April 1767.
 MS 2664/2/3B/4 – Bill from Thomas Seymour to John Talbot for shaving and dressing, March 1763.

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Index

- ability(ies)
barber 114
to grow beard 3, 7, 25, 43, 51, 54, 60, 74, 130
to grow facial hair 263–4
individuals 114
man's reproductive 24
to shave 8, 120, 153
- Academy of Armory* (Holme) 29, 93
- accidental shaving 62; *see also* shaving
- act of shaving 34, 37, 53, 83, 108, 116, 146, 205, 218, 225, 229, 235, 241, 250, 263;
see also shaving
- Adams, Michael 50
- Adams, Samuel 128
- Addis, John 103
- Addison, Joseph 35
- adolescence
beards in 25–6, 43, 46
life stage 29; *see also* life stage
old age
- advertisements/advertising
barber 147
beards in 171
cost 221
duty 221
hair and beard dyeing products 265
hairdresser 148
hairdressing academies 146
hair growth products 130
language of 141, 256
problems 218
promotion 211
public scrutiny 170
razors 15, 125, 220, 224, 232, 252, 257
respirators 67
for shaving creams 218, 247, 249
shaving products 9, 15, 227, 229–34, 246, 248, 250–1, 257
strategies 229
for young men 153
- Agrippa, Heinrich Cornelius 26
- 'Aguila' 58
- 'Albion Milk and Sulphur' soap 245, 248;
see also shaving products
- Allen, Francis 42–3
- 'Almond Shaving Cream' 242
- Almond Shaving Soap* 244
- American Indians 51
- American Medical Gazette* 72
- Analytical Dictionary* (Booth) 150
- Anatomy of Human Bodies Improv'd* (Dionis) 45
- Anatomy of Man* (Dionis) 28
- Anatomy of the Human Body, The* 76
- Ancient Greece 58
- Ancient Topography of London* (Smith) 95
- Andrews, Henry 101
- Anon 21, 29
- Apology for the Beard* (Magister) 69, 134–5
- apothecary 83, 90–1, 148, 193–5
- Appleby County Gaol 203–4
- apprentice 84
- apprenticeship
admissions 90
barbering 91
barbers 90, 152
barber-surgeons 90, 152
examination and 82
legitimate 153
multifaceted experience 89
reality 87
training and 83, 86, 92, 104
- Aristotle's Problems* (Anon) 21, 29
- 'Army Razors' 254
- Arnaud, Georges 230
- 'Aromatic Shaving Soap' 232
- 'Arquebusade de Cologne' 234
- artificial respirators 68
- Artium Magister 240
- 'Artium Magister' 58

- Art of Hairdressing* (Moore) 45
Art of Hair-Dressing (Moore) 148
Art of Hair-Dressing, or the Gentleman's Director (Stewart) 149
Art of the Wigmaker, The (De Garsault) 149
 Ash, John 42
 Asian women 28
 asylums 14, 188–9, 192–3, 197–9, 202, 205, 264; *see also* prisons
 Atkinson 229
 Atkinson, William 48
 'At the French Play' (cartoon) 71
 attitudes
 change 8, 34, 43
 facial hair 10, 42–4, 143
 negative 246
 socio-medical 10
 towards beardless races 51
 towards beards 42
 towards effeminacy 57
 towards facial hair 42–4, 143, 192
 towards hair 59
 towards hairdressers 149
 towards homosexuality 57
 towards nature of shaving 216
 towards perceived distinctions 95
 attributes
 beard hairs 22
 cleansing 231
 feminine 24
 gentleman 35
 male 40
 manhood 131
 masculinity 226
 physical 20
 physicality and 55, 239
 positive 70
 shaving 243
 unsupported health claims 64
 Austen, C. 76–7
 authority
 female perfumers 131
 male 2, 5, 55
 manliness and 55
 marital and martial 2
 masculine 55
 medical evidence 61
 natural 225
 patriarchal 57
 personal agency and 14
 power and 7
 practitioners 1
 strength and 10
 superiority and 55
 temper and 15
 Bacon, Roger 30
 Bailey, Nathan 147
 Bailey, Nathaniel 42–3
 Baker, Malcolm 5–6, 5n25
 baldness
 life stage 23
 male 23
 negative connotations 23
 'Barba' 76
 'Barbaratus' 62
 'barbarus' 76
 Barbe, Simon 215
 barbering 83–4
 in the age of the beard 153–9
 apprenticeship 91
 hairs and graces 153–9
 barbers
 ability 114
 advertisements/advertising 147
 apprenticeship 90, 152
 customers and 4, 142
 equipment 12, 84, 88, 94–5, 98–9, 103–4, 122, 127, 212
 as general retailers 83, 100–3, 118, 222, 225, 227–8
 guilds 84–92
 hairdressers and 13, 49, 143–53
 hairs and graces 143–53
 in institutions 200–5
 inventories 12, 84, 92–3, 97–104, 114, 118–19, 212
 negative portrayals 12
 occupational boundaries 143–53
 prices 100, 110–15, 121–2
 as retailers of shaving goods 118
 seventeenth century 89
 social status 12, 83, 114
 status of 4, 13, 108, 114, 143–4, 146–7, 154–60
 tasks 81
 visiting the 95–7, 109–16
 Barbers' Guild 84

- barbershop 9, 12, 16, 92–3, 95, 97, 100–2, 104, 114, 118, 120, 142, 158–9, 191, 202, 204, 212, 262; *see also* barbers
- ‘Barber’s Medicated’ 228
- barber-surgeons 4, 82
- apprentice 84, 87, 90–1
 - apprenticeship 90, 152
 - early modern 15, 82
 - fate 144
 - guilds 85–6, 112
 - hybrid form 13
 - hybrid occupation 262
 - inventories 84, 93, 103
 - prices 114
 - seventeenth century 89
 - tasks 81, 83, 103–5
 - training 89
- Barber-Surgeon’s Company of London 85
- Barclay, Alexander 23
- Barnard, Richard 227
- Barrow, John 42–3
- Barry, Jonathan 90
- Basset, Robert 23
- Batchelor, William 112–13
- Bath Chronicle* 220
- Baxter, Richard 212
- Bayley and Sons 227, 231–2
- ‘Bayley’s Improved Soap for Shaving’ 232
- beard(s) 64
- ability to grow 3, 7, 25, 43, 51, 54, 60, 74, 130
 - in adolescence 25–6, 43, 46
 - in advertisements/advertising 171
 - among ‘dark-coloured nations’ 75
 - appearance of 134–8
 - attitudes towards 42
 - attributes 64
 - barrier 71
 - bodily heat and 61
 - brushing 135
 - colour 20, 27, 131–3
 - combing 135
 - corporeal value 49–53
 - cross-section 61
 - difference from head hair 29
 - disrespect 75
 - in eighteenth century 44–9
 - ensign of manhood 27
 - ‘excremental’ remnants 109
 - as excrements 20
 - expression 73
 - ‘externalization’ 34
 - facial hair 24–32, 175–85
 - false 72, 170, 174
 - fashion 6–8, 15, 25, 40, 57–8, 72, 153, 157, 166, 175, 183, 205, 245, 255, 262, 264–5
 - filtering properties of 69
 - hairs and 72–3
 - health benefits 22, 59–60, 65
 - healthiness 64
 - heat 19
 - humoral balance 3
 - humoral body and 6
 - humoral temperament 20, 27
 - ill health 61
 - and insanity 36, 198
 - life stage 29, 59
 - linked to labour and occupation 64
 - linked to male bodily heat 19
 - linked to production of semen 20
 - loss of control 56
 - maintaining 76
 - managing 129–33
 - as a mark of plebeian 55
 - masculine sexuality 24
 - masculinity and health 34
 - medical conditions 61
 - mid-century resurgence of 71
 - moustaches and 63, 69, 72
 - natural function 58
 - natural protector 62
 - as natural respirators 69
 - origin 49
 - physical and mental acuity 64
 - physical appearance 26
 - physical strength and 76
 - physiology 61
 - plucking 52, 74
 - popularity 68, 76
 - positive characteristics 59
 - protection 62–3, 65
 - protective qualities 64
 - quality 27
 - race 49–53, 75
 - razors in the age of 251–8
 - removing 60–1, 63, 75, 240
 - as respirator 68

- return of 56, 59
- as secondary sexual characteristic 76
- seventeenth century 9
- shaving 60, 87
- styles 1–2, 6, 164, 173, 175–85, 186, 264
- trimming 147, 149
- usefulness of 68
- utility of 62, 65, 68
- whitening of 30; *see also* dominion of beards (1850–1900)
- Beard, George 68
- bearded classes 163–86
 - facial hair in the age of shaving 164–75
 - facial hair styles in age of beards 175–85; *see also* class
- bearded faces 56, 166; *see also* face(s)
- ‘bearded physiognomy’ 73
- beard grooming 133–8; *see also* personal grooming
- beard growth 74, 76
- beardless 43, 76, 116
- ‘beardless boy’ 25
- beardless face 60
- beardless men 73, 76
- beardlessness 5, 23, 51–2, 56, 173
- beardless races 76; *see also* race
- ‘beard movement’ 1, 5, 9–10, 58, 61, 67, 124, 129–30, 142–3, 153–4, 156, 160, 175, 177, 179, 239–40, 242–3, 246–7, 250, 253, 255, 258–9, 262, 264
- beard-wearing 19, 60–1, 76, 133
 - ideology of 70
 - medical advantages to 64
- Bedford 181
- Bedford County Gaol 194
- Bedford Gaol 180
- Bee, Jacob 117
- Beeton, Isabella 136
- Beeton, Samuel 137
- Begiato, Joanne 7, 174
- Bell, Charles 73
- Bell, Thomas 172
- Bell’s Weekly Messenger* 135
- Bencoolen* 199
- Bengry, Justin 249
- ‘Benjamin’s Water’ 95
- Bennett, Samuel 224
- Benthien, Claudia 48
- Beresford, William 125
- Bernier, Francois 50
- Berry 231
- ‘The Best Shaving Soap Ever Used’ 246
- Bidwell, William 230
- Billericay Union 202
- Biow, Douglas 51–2
- Birmingham 155, 220
- Bishop, Daniel 103
- Blair, Thomas 171
- Blankaart, Steven 28
- Blease, Robert 91
- Blenkinsopp, Arthur 134
- Blessing, Thomas 91
- Blinkesopp, Henry 86
- Blockley, William 203
- bodily constitution 60
- bodily fitness 55
- bodily heat 26, 30, 48, 53, 61; *see also* heat
- Book of Household Management* (Beeton) 136
- Book of Trades* 150
- Booth, David 150
- Botanic Shaving Soap* 245
- Bowden, John 228
- Bradford 155
- Bradley, Richard 51
- ‘Breakfasting &c’ 120
- Breton, Nicholas 190
- Bridewell Royal Hospital 201
- Bristol 91
- British Hyman 228–9
- British Library Newspaper 148, 220, 227, 239
- British men 57, 65; *see also* men
- British Newspaper Archive 148, 228, 230
- ‘*British race*’ 39
- ‘British Shaving Paste’ 125, 228, 230
- Brown, Henry 103
- Browne, Thomas 43
- Browning, Robert 136
- brushing 72, 135, 138
- Bryceson, Nathaniel 150
- Buchanan, James 42
- Buffon, Georges 48
- Bulwer, John 22
- Bunbury, Henry 144
- Burgess, Jeremy 230
- Burke, Edmund 37

- Burrell, Timothy 117
 Burton, Thomas 82
- Cabezas, Maria Victoria Alonso 130
 Cambridge Union 202
 Cameron, Julia Margaret 136
 'Capillus' 28
 Caribbeans 51
 caricatures 132, 167–70, 190
 Carlyle, Thomas 59
 Carmarthen Gaol 181
 Caseley, Thomas 72
 catamenia 3, 19, 47, 261
 Cattipodi, John 171
 Caulfield, James 167
 Cavallo, Sandra 4, 4n15, 82–3
 Cavendish Square 121
 'cephalic operators' 107
 Ceruti, Giacomo 167
 Chadwick, Edwin 63, 67
 challenges
 manliness 56
 masculinity 56
 physical and emotional 57
 Challoner, Thomas 91
 changes
 attitudes 8, 34, 43
 manliness 56
 masculinity 56
 charcoal respirators 67
 Charlemore, George 114
 Charles II 152
 Chasson, John 132
 Cheang, Sarah 132
 'Chemical Shaving Soap' 231
 Chepstow 102
 Cheshire 226
 Chester 86
 Chester Company of Barbers 90
 Chester Freeman Rolls 90
 Cheyne, George 30–1, 46, 213
 'China Rose Botanic Shaving Oil' 232
 chin beard 170, 181–5, 264; *see also*
 beard(s)
 Chinese 76
 Choleric 22
Christian Directory 212
 'chronic sore throats' 63
 'Cilia and Supercilia' 28
- Civic and Medical Worlds in Early Modern
 England* (Decamp) 4, 4n16
 civility 56
 Claredge, Thomas 98
 Clark, Jessica 157, 237
 Clarke, Morgan 172
 class
 criminal 179
 customer 157
 facial hair 176
 fashion and 10
 identity 176
 middle 9, 16, 157, 175
 race in nineteenth century 56; *see also*
 bearded classes
 cleanliness 14, 46, 60, 119, 124, 129, 133–8,
 134, 188–93, 197–8, 226, 231, 239,
 249
 clean-shaven 55–6
 chin 138
 face 1, 6, 9–10, 33, 38, 51, 83, 115, 163–5,
 169, 174, 191
 men 177, 184
 prisoners 184
 cleansing 226, 231
 Clerdew, John 101
 Clever, William 20, 20n9, 22
 'the Clydesdale razor' 253
 Coates, James 72
 Cockell, W. H. 131
 Cockery, John 201–3
 Cohen, Michèle 38
Colloquia Chirurgica (Handley) 31
 colour, thickness and quality of facial
 hair 60
 combing 8, 135, 195
 commercialization 8–9, 15
 commodification of shaving
 (1650–1850) 209–35
 advertising shaving products 229–34
 early market for shaving
 products 215–16
 market for shaving products,
 c. 1750–1850 216–19
 oils 225–9
 outward gentleman 216–19
 pastes 225–9
 powders 225–9
 selling the razor 219–25

- shaving and early modern remedy
 - culture 211–15
 - soaps 225–9; *see also* shaving
- companies
 - apprenticeship 86–8
 - barber and surgeons 16, 83, 85–6, 148, 152
 - conglomerate 86
 - distinct 143
 - guilds and 85, 145, 262
 - occupational structures 145
 - occupations and 13
 - perfumery 243, 245
 - regulation of trade 86, 112
 - shaving 84–92
 - training and 84–92; *see also* guilds
- Company of Barber-Surgeons 142
- Compleat English Dictionary* (Allen) 42
- Complete Book of Trades* (Whittock) 151
- Complete Servant* (Adam) 128
- composition of facial hair 20–3; *see also* facial hair
- control
 - body 189
 - emasculatation 39
 - facial hair 192
 - finances 37
 - identity 187
 - inmates 14
 - loss 56, 115, 191
 - masculine traits 141
 - over men's appearance 187
 - razor advertising 15, 218
 - self-mastery 37, 263
 - sexuality 2
 - shaving an act of 35
 - temperature 68
 - vermin 14, 188
- 'Convent Soap' 231
- Cook, James 52
- Cooley, Arnold 250
- Cooper, J. 156
- Copeland, James 63
- Coppola, Al 44
- cordon sanitaire* 62
- corporeal body 60
- corporeality 5
- corporeal value 49–53
- Coupelle, Rosalie 131
- Cowan 241
- Cowpland, William 215–16
- Coxon, Thomas 191
- Craik, Jennifer 196
- Crawford, John 26, 45
- Crayon* 58, 265
- Creer, Edwin 134–5, 154–5
- 'Crinilene' 131
- 'Crinutriar' 131
- Crooke, Helkiah 29
- Cudworth, Daniel 221–2
- Cullen, William 47
- Culpeper, Nicholas 29
- Culpepper, Nicholas 28
- 'cult of youth' 37
- Cunningham, William 118
- curling 146
- 'Curling Fluid' 130
- Cursus Medicinae* (Crawford) 26, 45
- Cuticura 248–9
- 'Cutlery, Edge and Hand Tools' 253
- Daft, Joseph 101
- 'Dagmar shaving cakes' 249
- Daily News* 59
- dangers
 - of razor 62
 - shaving 61, 63
- Darlington 119
- Darwin, Charles 76
- Darwin, Erasmus 48
- Davenport, Thomas 91
- Davies, Roger 97
- Davy, John 67
- Day, John 25
- Deacon, John 171
- Dean, Emilie 131
- Decamp, Eleanor 4, 4n16, 82
- Defoe, Benjamin 42
- De Garsault, Francois 149
- Delaware 52
- Delcroix 233
- demarcation 95
- demedicalization 49, 261
- Denbighshire 97
- Denner, Balthasar 167
- de Pauw, M. 51
- Descent of Man, The* (Darwin) 76
- Deslandes, Paul 238

- 'destitute' beardless 131
 de Vulson, Marck 41
 Dewdney, William 223
 dexterity 85
 Dicas, John 91
Dictionarium Britannicum (Bailey) 42
Dictionarium medicum universal
 (Barrow) 42–3
Dictionary of National Biography 73
Dictionary of Practical Medicine
 (Copeland) 63
 Diderot, Denis 165
 Dionis, Pierre 26, 28, 31, 45
 disadvantages of facial hair 22
 'Do Beards Matter?' (research project) 261
 dominion of beards (1850–1900) 55–78
 facial hair and masculinity 56–9
 healthy beards 60–5
 nature's respirator 65–70
 physiognomy and beard movement 70–7
 Dominy, Christopher 99
 Donald, Diana 167
 Doni, Anton Francesco 1, 1n1
 Drake, James 47
 'Dr Locock's Cosmetic' 241
 'Dr Mackenzie's Arsenical Toilet Soap' 249
 'Dr Nichol's Sanitary Soap' 249
 Duden, Barbara 48
 Dulaure, Jacques-Antoine 45
 'Dunn's Worcester Concentrated Shaving
 Soap' 246
 D'Urfey, Thomas 28
 Durham County Gaol 194, 195–6
 Dyce, John 228
 Dyche, Thomas 43
 dyspepsia 60

 Earle, Peter 87
 early market for shaving products 215–16
 Eaton, Robert 97
 economies of shaving (1650–1750) 107–22
 emergence of self-shaving 116–21
 visiting the barber 109–16; *see also*
 shaving
 Edinburgh 86, 194
Edinburgh Courant 222
 Edinburgh Infirmary 195
Edinburgh Medical Journal
 (Mercer-Adams) 64

 'Edward Smith's Hollow Ground
 Razors' 257
 effeminacy/effeminate 24, 41, 210
 accusations 235
 artifice 218
 assumptions 263
 attitudes towards 57
 beardlessness 23, 51
 beards 24
 bodily weakness 26, 130
 connotations 73
 cosmetics and artifice 53
 fears of 38
 homosexuality 57
 imperfection 29
 inferiority and 265
 manliness 54
 sexuality 52
 sexual potency 78
 sexual weakness 264
 vanity 39; *see also* beardlessness
 eighteenth century, beards, hair and
 medicine in the 44–9
 elderly men 62
 embodied manliness 3, 34
 emergence of self-shaving 116–21
 'Emollient Balm' 229
 Emon, James 222, 232
Encyclopaedia Britannica 147
 England 66, 85–6, 99, 107, 242, 261
England's Happiness Improved 214
English Gentleman, The 134
English Physician 48
English Rogue 215
 equipment 93–4; *see also* shaving products
*Essay on the Manufacture, Choice and
 Management of a Razor* (Rhodes) 128
Essays on Physiognomy (Lavater) 41–2
 'Eukeirogension' 241
 'Eukiristic' shaving soap 246
 'Europaeo-Asiatic Continent' 76
 Europe 75, 263
European Magazine 129
 'Euxesis' 131
 evacuation 21, 26, 46, 53, 229
 Evans, Chris 6, 6n28
 Evans, Jennifer 3, 3n3, 4n12
Examination of Men's Wits (Huarte) 22
 'excesse venerie' 23

- excrement 4, 20–1, 24, 31, 47–8, 109, 261
 ‘excremental’ remnants 109
 externalisation/externalization 11, 34, 48
 Eyre, Adam 114
 Ezell, Margaret 119
- face(s)
- beardless 60
 expression 73
 (un)natural faces 38–44
 polite face 34–8
 reading 71
 ‘unchanging’ elements 41
- facial appearance 50–1, 83, 115, 124, 138,
 187; *see also* face(s)
- facial hair 124, 130
 ability to grow 263–4
 in the age of shaving 164–75
 attitudes 42, 143
 ‘beard movement’ 175
 beards 24–32
 bodily constitution and 60
 catamenia 3, 19, 47, 261
 characteristics 75
 class associations 64
 cleanliness 188–93
 colour of 60, 265
 composition 20–3
 conceptions 1
cordon sanitaire 62
 corporeal hygiene and health 8
 ‘demedicalization’ 49, 261
 disadvantages of 22
 discourse 69
 discussion in medical publications 60–1
 eighteenth century 6, 33
 as enabler of masculinity 3, 19
 as evacuation 21, 26, 46, 53, 229
 as excrement 4, 20–1, 24, 31, 47–8,
 109, 261
 externalisation/externalization 11, 34, 48
 fashion 8, 55, 168, 174
 filtering potential of 67
 filtering properties of 62–70 *see also*
 respirator
 in Great Britain 10
 haircutting 94
 head hair and 37
 health benefits 61, 63
 health claims 63, 65–6
 healthiness of 59
 health virtues of 61
 heat 4, 11, 24
 historiography 2–10
 humoral balance 4
 within humoral body 3, 7, 11, 19, 24
 humoral ideas 60
 inspiration and anecdote for writers 6
 institutional barbering 200–5
 internal heat 24
 life stage 43, 77
 male body and 24–32
 masculinity 8, 56–9
 material culture 7, 10
 medicine and 70
 mental and physical condition 75
 nature 7, 20–3
 nature’s protector 62
 origin 180, 261
 origin and nature of 261
 ‘othering’ 36, 58–9
 perriwiggs 90
 quality and colour 261
 race 76
 razors and 6
 regulating bodies 193–200
 removal of 65, 76, 211, 241
 respectability 188–93
 return of 56
 shaving 1–2
 significance of 58
 status of 7
 styles 2, 6, 13–14, 143, 170, 173–85
 symbolic power 58
 as symbol of learning 52
 thickness and quality 60
 trajectory of 8
 ultramasculinity 27
 unpopular in Great Britain 55
 utility of 63, 68, 68n92
 as waste product 4
 wearing or removing of 9; *see also* heat
- Falcini, Louise 198
 false beards 72, 170, 174; *see also* beard(s)
 false whiskers 72
Family Manual, The 128
 ‘Famous Liquid Steel Razors’ 222

- Farari, Joseph 201
- fashion
- beards 6–7, 15, 25, 40, 57–8, 72, 153, 157, 166, 175, 183, 205, 245, 255, 262, 264–5
 - changes 1, 35
 - clean-shaven face 6
 - facial hair 8, 55, 168, 174
 - personal grooming 138
 - whiskers 55, 173; *see also* manliness
- Faulder, Humbert & co. 231
- Fellowship of Surgeons 84
- Ferris and Co. 250
- Fields, Tothill 171
- Fin de siècle* 249
- Fisher, Will 3–4, 3n6, 19, 19n3, 19n5, 25
- Fissell, Mary 144
- fit to shave 92–104
- Fletcher, Gervas 222
- Flower of Phisicke* (Clever) 20
- Floyer, John 22, 22n24
- ‘Fluid Magnesia’ 248
- flying barber 97–8, 122; *see also* barbers
- Folly and Evil of Shaving* (Xerxes) 62
- forced shaving 199–200; *see also* shaving
- Foucault, Michel 187
- Foulis, John 88, 110–11, 118
- Fountain, Peter 89
- ‘Fox’s Noted Formula’ 131
- France 52, 173, 249
- Francis, Richard 91
- Franklin, Benjamin 126
- Franklin, George 125
- Fraternity of Mercers 86
- ‘French Pox’ 27
- French Revolution 149
- Frith, Samuel 77
- Frost, William 91
- fumosity(ies) 20, 24
- Gandolfini, Gaetano 167
- Gardener, John 215
- Garzoni, Tomaso 87
- gender
- changing concepts of 69
 - sexuality and 57
- ‘genteel aesthetic’ 188
- gentlemanliness 56, 224
- Gentleman’s Journal* 69
- Gentleman’s Manual of Modern Etiquette, The* 134
- Gentlemen’s Book of Etiquette* 136
- geohumoralism 50
- ‘George and the Dragon’ (play) 66
- Georgian men 237
- Gerard, John 213
- Germany 173
- Gibson, Richard 47
- Gibson, Thomas 31
- Gilchrist, Peter 49
- Gillray, James 170
- ginger whiskers 132
- Glasgow 86, 155
- Glory of Women* (Agrippa) 26
- Gloucestershire 92
- ‘goatee’ beards 182
- Golding, John 102
- Goldsmith, Oliver 50, 52–3
- ‘good and true beard’ 135
- Goode and the Badde, The* (Breton) 190
- Good Manners* 134
- goods for personal grooming 241; *see also* personal grooming
- Gosnell 232, 242, 247
- Goulding, Edward 103
- Gourdone, George 110
- Gowing, T. S. 62–3, 75
- Graham, Sylvester 60
- Grano, John 204
- ‘Grattan’s Shaving Oil’ 241
- Gray, Jamie 89
- Great Britain 56, 108, 116, 132–4, 143, 219, 221, 226, 237, 241
- facial hair 10, 55
 - wearing of facial hair in 9
- Great Northern Railway 64
- ‘Great Renunciation’ 225
- Green, Adrian 119
- Green, Thomas 110
- Greenock Advertiser* 153
- Grey, A. R. 39
- Grossmith, Charles 244
- Guardian* 107
- ‘guard razor’ 256
- Guild of Barber-Chirurgeons 100
- guilds
- apprenticeship 86
 - barber 84–92, 112

- barber-surgeons 85–6, 112
- collapse 152
- companies and 85, 145, 262
- control 142
- decline 145
- dues payable 112
- duties 86
- Guild of Barber-Chirurgeons 100
- ordinances 99
- regulation of trade 86
- regulations 120
- town 83
- trade 143; *see also* companies

- Habits of Good Society, The* 136–8
- hair
 - appearance 20, 23
 - attitudes towards 59
 - beards and 72–3
 - cultural history 5
 - in eighteenth century 44–9
 - humoral balance 3
 - humoral conceptions 44
 - humoral concepts 21
 - importance 74
 - maintaining 76
 - natural vs unnatural 36, 39
 - origin 53
 - physical attributes of 20
 - real and false 6
 - relationship between head and body 28
 - removing 6, 23
 - seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries 31
 - strength and structure 23
 - trimming 87–8
- haircutting 88
 - equipment 94
 - fundamental changes 262
 - shaving and 94
 - wig-dressing and 147
- hairdressers 263
 - barbers and 13, 49, 143–53
 - hairs and graces 143–53
 - occupational boundaries 143–53
- Hairdresser's Chronicle* (Creer) 135, 153–5, 158
- Hairdressers' Journal* 203
- hairdressing in the age of the beard 153–9
- hairiness 60
- hairless male chin 240
- 'the Hair of the Head' 28
- hairs and graces (1750–1900) 141–60
 - barbering 153–9
 - barbers 143–53
 - hairdressers 143–53
 - hairdressing in the age of the beard 153–9
 - occupational boundaries 143–53
- Hall, J. C. 68
- Handley, James 31
- Happy Family, The* (Young) 131
- Harley, Joseph 119
- Harnes, Henry 101, 112
- Harris, William 101
- 'Hart's Shaving Oil' 228
- Harvey, Gideon 212
- Harvey, Karen 34, 209
- Haselwood, Thomas 112
- Haworth, Samuel 21, 21n14
- Hazen, Edward 150
- Head, Richard 215
- head and body hair 5, 24, 28, 31
- head hair 37
- healthiness 59, 64
- Health of Prisoners Act of 1774 192
- healthy beards 60–5; *see also* beard(s)
- heat
 - beards 19
 - body 26, 30, 48, 53, 61
 - capture 66
 - facial hair 4, 11, 24
 - hair growth 21
 - inner 261, 264–5
 - internal 27, 30, 60
 - lower body and abdominal area 21
 - male 30
 - male genitals 24
 - protector against 67
 - razors 255
 - reproductive capability and 32
 - seminal 264
 - source 95
 - spermatic 28
 - of sperm production 47
- 'hebdomadai' 115
- Heiffor, John 254
- Heller, Deborah 132

- Henderson, Thomas 222
 Henry VIII 85
 Henslowe, William Henry 62
 Henson, William Samuel 224
 Hereford 86
Hereford Journal 173
 Herring, Miles 99
 Hervey, John 117
 Herzig, Rebecca 6, 6n29
 Herzog, Don 145
Hibernian Magazine 47
 Higgins, William 101
 Hill, Thomas 27
 Hill, William 242
 Hirst, Elizabeth 214
 historiography of facial hair 2–10
 Hitchcock, Edward 60
 Holland, George 63
 Holland, Josiah 74
 Holland, William 125
 Holloway Prison 196
 Holly, Thomas 98
 Holme, Randle 29, 93–4, 97–8, 212
 Holmes, William 222
 homosexuality 57
 homosocial space 9, 142, 157, 262
 Hone, Nathaniel 167
 Hortator 126
 Horton, John 89–90
 Hotspur Street Compter 201
 Houlbrook, Matt 209, 238
Household Words (Bell) 73
 Houston, Robert 36
 Hovenden 257
How to Read Character (Frith) 77
How to Read Faces (Coates) 72
 Huarte, Juan 22, 24
Huddersfield Chronicle 158
 humoral balance 4, 23
 humoral body 6–7
 humoral complexion 4
 humoral conceptions 32–3, 44
 humoral framework 24
 humoral ideas of perspiration 229
 humoral medical theory 20
 humoral references to facial hair 73
 humoral temperament 20, 21, 22, 27, 49
 humoral texts about body 48
 humoral theory 21, 27, 46–7

Humour Out of Breath (Day) 25
 ‘Hungary Water’ 234
 Hunt, Holman 59
 Hunt, Millais 59
 Hutchinson, William 98, 102–3, 213
 ‘hygienic virtues’ 64

 ideals
 of facial appearance 36
 of male and female appearance 27
 of male facial appearance 34
 masculinity 24, 237, 263
 of neatness and elegance 33
 sociocultural 217
 ill health 61
Illustrated London News 176, 179
I Mondi e gli Inferni (Doni) 1, 1n1
 ‘imperbicke’ 25
 ‘Improved Shaving Soap’ 227
 Incomparable Shaving Soap 243
 Incorporation of Barbers in Glasgow 148
 innate masculinity 131
 inner heat 261, 264–5; *see also* heat
 institutional barbering 200–5; *see also*
 barbering
 institutional history of facial hair 187–205
 cleanliness 188–93
 institutional barbering 200–5
 regulating bodies 193–200
 respectability 188–93; *see also* facial hair
 ‘Instruments of the Barber Chyrurgions’ 95
 inventories of barbers 12, 84, 92–3, 97–104,
 114, 118–19, 212
Ipswich Journal 174
 Ipswich Union 203
 Ireland 85
 irregular shaving 113
 Italy 52

 ‘Jack Bawble’ 145
 Jackson, Ralph 120
Jackson’s Oxford Journal 248
 Jacob, Elizabeth 214
 Japanese 76
 Jeffreys, Julius 66
Jewel of Seven Stars, The (Stoker) 66
John Bull 153
 Johnes, Charles 87
John O’Groat 153

- Johnston, Albert 3–4, 3n4, 3n9–10,
4n10–11, 19–20, 19n1, 19n5
Johnston, Mark 29
John White 179
June, John 169
- Kay 244
Kendal Mercury 204
Kent 118–19
Kersey, John 147
King, Steven 190
Kingsbury, Benjamin 127, 226, 256
Kingsley, Charles 55, 59
Kingsmill, William 108, 111, 118
Kitto, John 138
Knox, John 73
Korhonen, Anu 23
Kron, R. 123
Kropp 257
Kwass, Michael 6, 6n27
- La Belle Assemblée* 227
Ladies Repository, The 64
Lancashire 28, 111, 226
Lancet 66
landscape of shaving products 240–51
Lane, William 126
Laqueur, Thomas 69
Latroon, Meriton 215
Lauder, John 111–12, 114
Lavater, Johan Caspar 41–2, 70, 72, 125
Lawrence, Phillip 87
Lawrence, William 75
Leader, The 58, 240
LeClerc, Charles 44
Leclerc, Gabriel 31
Lee, Charles 61
Leeds General Infirmary 196
Legg, Thomas 89
Leicester Journal 205
Leicester New Monthly Magazine 135
Lemnius, Levinus 28, 212–13
Le Moyn, François 167
Lewis, Henry 101
life stage 7, 180
 adolescence 29
 baldness 23
 beards 29, 59
 facial hair 43, 77
 health and 10
 light beards 182; *see also* beard(s)
 ‘Lilac Flower Shaving Paste’ 230
Lillie, Charles 107
Linguae Britannicae vera pronuntiatio
 (Buchanan) 42
Liquified Amber Shaving Cakes 234
‘Little Doors’ 249
Little Londoner (Kron) 123
Livesey, William 120
Llandrillo-yn-Rhos 97
Lloyd, Emilie 131
Lockhart of Kilmaurs 249
London 31, 49, 84, 92, 99, 107, 112,
 142–3, 146, 155, 157, 198, 216, 220–1,
 226, 228
London Barber-Surgeons Company 82
London Company 92
London Company of Barber-Surgeons 143
London Directory 219
Louis XIV 33
Low, John 99
Lowe, Alexander 223
Lower, Richard 213
luxury 6, 15, 115, 125, 148, 157, 229,
 232–233, 235, 239, 246–247, 250, 258
Lyttelton, Thomas Lord 40
- MacGinty, Andrew 159
Madam Coupelle 131
Mad Dog in a Coffee House
 (Rowlandson) 170
‘Magic Shaving Soap’ 249
‘magic strop paste’ 129
Magister, Artium 69, 134–5
“magnetic moustache” 68
‘Magnetic Razor Tablet’ 224
Magnus, Albertus 48
‘Mahometans’ 58
Malabar 199
Malays 76
male appearance 2, 34
 facial hair 9
 man’s conformity to norms of 235
 masculine products 229
 masculinity 10, 164, 226
 nineteenth century 175
 social acceptability 109
 social expectations 83

- male body 55
 - appearance 55
 - attributes 55
 - facial hair and 24–32
 - manliness and 57
 - masculinity and 7
 - physicality 55
 - physical strength 55
 - secondary sexual characteristic 76
 - sexuality and 19
- male cosmetics 14, 218, 233, 263; *see also*
 - personal grooming
 - shaving products
- male identity 5, 7, 55
- male personal grooming 8–9; *see also*
 - personal grooming
- ‘man-about-town’ 35
- managing the beard 129–33
- Manchester 155
- Manchester City Gaol 201
- Manchester Infirmary 202
- manhood 29, 56
- manliness 52, 76
 - authority and 55
 - British 56
 - challenges 56
 - changes 56
 - construction of 57
 - conveyance 148
 - corporeal marker 60
 - effeminacy/effeminate 54
 - eighteenth-century 36
 - embodied 3, 34
 - Europe 53
 - expectations 233
 - historic and unquestionable 59
 - male body and 57
 - masculinity and 5, 7
 - nineteenth-century 238
 - patriarchal 251
 - polite 14, 56, 163, 235, 262
 - primal 59
 - romanticized vision 57; *see also* fashion
 - personal grooming
- man’s reproductive ability 24; *see also* ability
- Mantegazza, Paolo 72–3, 77
- Mappin and Sons 255
- Marchant, Thomas 113, 118
- market for shaving product 216–19, 237–59
 - landscape of shaving products 240–51
 - razors in age of beard 251–8
- Markiewicz, Emma 46
- Martin, Morag 225
- masculine sexuality 24
- masculine strength 60
- masculine traits 56
- masculinity
 - assumptions 219
 - attributes 226
 - beards 5, 120
 - British 7
 - challenges 56
 - changes 56
 - class and race in nineteenth century 56
 - clean-shaven face 174
 - crisis 52
 - discourses 240
 - early modern 10
 - embodied manliness 3, 34
 - facial hair 2–3, 7–8, 11, 13, 19, 43, 56–9, 188, 261
 - fashion in nineteenth century 184
 - gendered discourses 233
 - Georgian 233
 - head and body hair 5, 24, 28, 31
 - health and 34, 264
 - ideals 24
 - innate 1, 131, 205
 - late Victorian 10
 - male appearance 10, 164, 226
 - male bodies and 7
 - manliness and 5, 7
 - martial 246
 - material culture and 209
 - moustaches 5
 - nineteenth century in Britain 133
 - performance 45
 - personal grooming 238
 - polite 37, 115, 217, 222, 229
 - remodelling concepts of 57
 - representations 19
 - rustic 77
 - sexuality and 163
 - technological masculinity of razors 223
 - through time 7
 - types 7
 - virile 38
- material culture 7, 10, 92–104, 133–8

- Materializing Gender in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (Fisher) 19n3, 19n5
- Mather, J. 44
- Matthewman, Benjamin 255
- Mayo, William 103
- McCausland, Richard 52
- McCulloch, James 232
- Mead, Henry 91
- Mechanics Magazine* 67
- Mechi, J. J. 128–9
- ‘Mechi’s Manufactory and Emporium of Elegance’ 253
- ‘Medical Cosmetic Wash’ 230
- medical equipment 103
- Medical Vocabulary* 76
- ‘Medicated Vegetable Shaving Oil’ 241
- ‘Medicinal Shaving Soap’ 249
- medicine
- in eighteenth century 44–9
 - facial hair and 70
- Mellar, Edward 100
- ‘Mellifluous Shaving Soap’ 232
- men
- beardless 73, 76
 - behaviour 57
 - generative power 60
 - patriarchal appearance 59
 - self-presentation 57
- Mentagra 61
- Mercer-Adams, A. 64, 67–8
- Merriman, Henry 73
- middle class 9, 16, 157; *see also* class
- Middlesex County Asylum 198
- ‘Midget Safety Razor’ 257
- Miège, Guy 81
- military facial hair 57; *see also* facial hair
- ‘military’ moustaches 239
- military prowess 57
- Millbank Penitentiary 198
- Milward, Thomas 110
- mirrors
- availability 119
 - class distinction in ownership 119
 - costs 118–19
 - use in shaving 95, 98, 118, 157, 228, 251
- ‘Miss Graham’ 131
- M. M. 156
- modern remedy culture 211–15
- Monmouthshire 102
- Monmouthshire Merlin* 135
- Moore, Giles 110, 112–13
- Moore, William 45, 49, 64, 148
- Moorley 246
- Morning Chronicle* 172
- Morning Post and Gazetteer* 174
- ‘Morphew’ 26
- Mort, Thomas 110–11, 118, 120
- moustaches 58
- beards and 63, 69, 72
 - comb 133
 - false beard and 72
 - health benefits of 65
 - ‘natural respirator’ 185
 - to protect against bronchial infection 65
 - seventeenth century 9
 - styles 1
 - usefulness of 68
 - utility 67
- Murray, James 248
- ‘muscular Christianity’ 7, 55
- Natural History of the Human Species* (Smith) 75
- ‘natural respirator’ 185
- nature
- of facial hair 7, 20–3
 - respirator 65–70
- negative attitudes 246; *see also* attitudes
- Nerssell, Thomas 90
- nervous depression 60
- New American Cyclopaedia* 62
- New and Compleat Dictionary of the English Language* (Ash) 42
- ‘New British Razors’ 254
- Newcastle 86
- Newdigate, Richard 116
- New Division of the Earth* (Bernier) 50
- New English Dictionary* (Kersey) 147
- New London Toilet* 149
- New Physiognomy* (Well) 71
- New Royal Geographical Magazine* (Adams) 50
- New South Wales 199
- New Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (Bailey) 147
- New Way to Pay the National Debt* (Gillray) 170

- Nicholson, William 164
 Noble, James 203
 non-European men 54, 78
 'normative corporeal ideal' 24
 Northamptonshire 190
North British Daily Mail 64
North Eastern Daily Gazette 156
 Nottinghamshire 92, 98, 101
 Nuttall, Thomas 222
- occupational boundaries 143–53
 occupational pluralism 83
 Odd Fellow's Lodge 88
 O'Dell, James 74
 Ogden 241
 oils 225–9
 old age 29–30, 39–40, 230, 247; *see also*
 adolescence
 Old Bailey Online database 125n12
 Oldstone-Moore, Christopher 4–5,
 5n17, 33
 'organic razor' 253
 Osmund Hill 99, 102
 'othering' 36, 58–9
 'otherness' 5, 51–2, 57
 outward gentleman 216–19
 Oxford 194
 Oxfordshire 86
- Paine, Edward 192
 Palmer, Alexander 222
 Palmer, John 223
 'Palm Soap' 231
Panzooryktologia 213
 'Paragon Shaving Soap' 230
 Parsley, James 144
 pastes 225–9
 patents 15, 138, 224, 255, 257
 patriarchal authority 57
 Peacock, James 110
 Pearl, Sharona 57, 70
 'Pearl Water' 234
 Pears and Price 232
 Pear's Shaving Soap 251
 'Pear's Transparent Shaving Stick' 243
 'Pellaria' 26
 Pelling, Margaret 4, 4n13–14, 82, 84, 100–
 1, 104, 143
Penny Magazine 74
Penny Satirist 56
 Pepys, Samuel 115–16, 119–20
 Perceval, John Thomas 200, 204
 Perret, Jean-Jacques 127
 personal grooming 10, 124, 259n91
 advice 12
 cleanliness and 133–4
 cleansing 196
 consumption and 10
 cosmetics 14
 fashion 138
 male 8–9, 129, 139, 217, 237–9, 263
 physical spaces and locations 9
 products 14
 self-fashioning and 130
 shaving and 119
 shaving products 210, 230, 237
 small instruments 138; *see also* male
 cosmetics
 personal shaving 218
 'pestilent fever' 26
 Petty Session 195
Phantom Future (Merriman) 73
 Philadelphia 146
 Phillips, Robert 111
*Philosophical Account of the Works of
 Nature* (Bradley) 51
 'Philosophical Concave Razors' 223
 'philosophical razors' 223
Philosophy of Beards (Gowing) 62
 phrenology 71, 73
 phthisis 63
 physical attributes 20; *see also* attributes
Physical Dictionary (Blankaart) 28, 28n71
 physicality 239
 attributes and 55, 239
 male body 55
 physical strength
 beard and 76
 male body 55
Physiognomie, and Chiromancie
 (Saunders) 41
 physiognomy 6, 27, 41
 beard movement and 70–7
 flexibility and subjectivity of 70
 phrenology and 71, 73
Physiological Dictionary (Richerand) 60
 physiology 60
 Pickering, Charles 75

- Pictorial Bible* (Kitto) 138
 'picture of England' 168
 Pidgeon, Bartholomew 107–8, 117–18
 'Pili' 28
 pimples 214
 Player, William 99
 Playne, John 126
Plocacosmos (Stewart) 149
 plucking beard 52, 74; *see also* beard(s)
Pogonologia 45
Pogonotomy: or the Art of Learning to Shave Oneself (Perret) 127
 'Polish Vegetable Soap' 233
 'politeness' 33, 35
 political radicalism 56
 Pomatum 214
Popular Technology: or, Professions and Trades (Hazen) 150
Popular Treatise on the Human Hair (Creer) 135
 portable grooming kits 222
 powders 225–9
 'poisonous vapours' 23
 Preston, Elias 99, 103
 Preston, James 102, 104, 213
 Preston Guardian 244
 prices charged by barbers 100, 110–15, 121–2
 primal manliness 59
 Prinsep, Henry Thoby 136
 prisons 14, 89, 163, 187–8, 192–5, 198–9, 201, 205, 264; *see also* control
 private identity 9
Probatum Est 173
Pro Sacerdotum bartis Apologia (Valerianus) 22
 puberty 25
 "Pubes" 28
Punch 58, 71, 159
 Purchase, John 99, 102

 Queen of Sheba 28
Quincy's Lexicon Medicum 76

 race
 aesthetics 49
 American 75
 beardless 76
 beards 46–53, 75, 171
 British 39
 classification of human species 78
 corporeal value 49–53
 ethnicity 34
 facial hair 76
 hierarchies 49
 identity 132
 Mongolian 53
 nineteenth century 56
 Ramsey, Allen 165
 'rash' 212
 razor
 advertisements/advertising 15, 117, 125, 219–25, 232, 252, 254–8
 in the age of the beard 251–8
 costs of 118
 dangers of 62
 maintaining 117–18
 patents 224, 255, 257
 'pig metal' 256
 quality 211, 220, 223
 scissors and 93
 selling the 219–25
 technology 12, 15
 'Razors for the Millions' 256
Recherche Philosophique Sur Les Americains (de Pauw) 51
 'red' whiskers 132
 refining the face (1750–1900) 123–39
 managing the beard 129–33
 material culture of beard
 grooming 133–8
 rise of self-shaving 125–9; *see also* face(s)
 regulating bodies 193–200
 Reinarz, Jonathan 233
 relationship between head and body
 hair 28
 Rembrandt 165
 removing
 beards 60, 61, 63, 75, 240
 facial hair 65, 76, 211, 241
Representation of the March of the Guards Towards Scotland (Sullivan) 169
 respectability of facial hair 188–93
 respirator 66
 advertisements/advertising 67
 advertisements for 67
 artificial 68
 beards as 68
 beards as natural 69

- charcoal 67
 - purpose of 69
 - success of 67
- 'The Respirator' 66
- return of beards 56, 59
- Reynolds, Joshua 165–7
- Rhodes, Ebenezer 128
- 'Rhodora Shaving Paste' 233
- Riccard, William 222
- Rice, Stephen 238
- Richerand, Anthelme 60
- Rickaby, Thomas 98
- Ridpath, George 125
- Rigge 232
- Rigge, J. T. 224, 234, 246–7
- Ritchie, David 47, 49, 53
- Robinson, Dwight 176–7, 179
- Roman Empire 59
- Rosenthal, Angela 50
- Ross, Alexander 146
- Ross and Co. 130n42, 254
- Rowbotham, John 102
- Rowland, Alexander 48, 63, 68
- Rowlandson, Thomas 170
- 'Royal Chymical Wash Balls' 215
- 'Russia Oil' 130
- Ryall, John 148
- Ryall, Thomas 224–5
- Rycroft, Eleanor 3, 29

- Sabbath 89
- Salmon, William 213
- Sanger, John 103
- Sangwine, Robert 221–2
- Saunders, Richard 41
- Savigny, John 127, 223–4, 226
- scents 94, 123, 157, 225, 231, 233–4, 237, 239, 250; *see also* personal grooming
- scissors 93
- 'scorbutic faces' 230
- Scotland 85
- Scourge, The* 174
- scurvy 230
- Seauzet 230
- self-presentation 57
- self-shaving 4, 7–9, 8, 12–13, 15, 37–8, 108
 - emergence of 116–21
 - rise of 125–9; *see also* shaving
- selling the razor 219–25
- 'seminal excrement' 24
- 'seminal ferment' 24
- Sennert, Daniel 28–9
- servants
 - apprenticeship 152
 - domestic 128
 - manuals for 12
 - role in maintaining beards and hair 135
 - role in shaving 12, 108, 111, 117–20, 128, 218
- sexual desire 60
- sexuality
 - control 2
 - effeminacy/effeminate 52
 - gender and 57
 - male body and 3, 19, 24
 - masculine 24
 - virility 35
- sexual 'otherness' 57
- sexual prowess 76
- Shafe, John 202
- Shannon, Brent 175, 216
- Sharp, Charles 222, 224
- shaved faces 7, 34, 36, 38, 40, 51, 115, 146, 153, 165, 224, 235, 263–4; *see also* face(s)
- shaved head 39
- shaving 81–2
 - ability 8, 120, 153
 - accidental 62
 - act of 34, 37, 53, 83, 108, 116, 146, 205, 218, 225, 229, 235, 241, 250, 263
 - attitudes towards nature of 216
 - barbers 7, 107, 263
 - beards 60, 87
 - benchmark of civilization 52
 - commercialization 8
 - commercial market for 258
 - dangers 61, 63
 - discomfort 211, 213
 - dishonour 58
 - early modern remedy culture 211–15
 - equipment 12, 84, 88, 94–5, 98–9, 103–4, 122, 127, 212
 - facial hair 164–75, 210
 - as 'fatal fashion' 62
 - frequency of 8, 107–12, 115–16, 195, 198
 - fundamental changes 262
 - haircutting 94, 103–4

- in institutions 200–5
- instructional literature/manuals 127–9
- as key task of barber 81–3, 85–8, 148–51
- learning to (shave) 87–9, 152–3
- manhood 56
- negative aspects 61–2
- otherness 51
- in preparation for church 115, 121, 190
- resistance to 199–200
- washing 198, 248
- shaving creams
 - advantage and convenience over soaps 241–2
 - advertisements/advertising for 218, 247, 249
 - brands 241–2n19
 - emergence 241
- shaving in early modern Britain 81–105
 - barber guilds 84–92
 - companies 84–92
 - fit to shave 92–104
 - material culture of barbering 92–104
 - shop space 92–104
 - training 84–92
- shaving paste
 - advertisements 14, 242–3
 - almond 232
 - fragrance 234
 - popularity compared with shaving powder 228
 - preventing irritation 227
- shaving products 9, 15, 227, 229–33, 246, 248, 250–1, 257
 - advertising 229–34
 - early market for 215–16
 - landscape of 240–51
 - as male cosmetics 217–18, 234–5
 - market for 216–19
- shaving rash 12, 210, 212, 214
- ‘shaving shops’ 151
- Shaw, Peter 40
- Shaw, Thomas 86
- Sheffield 220
- ‘Sheffield Grinders’ disease 68
- Shepherd’s Kalendar* (Barclay) 23
- ‘shilling razor’ 256, 256n84; *see also* razor
- Shilling’s Worth of Advice on Manners, Behaviour and Dress* (Blenkinsopp) 134
- Shirley, John 23
- Shone, Owen 91
- ‘shop goods’ 93
- shop space 92–104, 122, 157; *see also* barbers
- Shrewsbury 99
- Siamese 76
- Sick Man’s Jewel* 26–7
- Simooms* 62
- Simplicity of Health* (Hortator) 126, 230
- ‘single gentleman’ 120
- Sitwell, George 113
- Skellington, George 91
- Skinner, S. 81
- Slaughter, Richard 90
- Smith, Charles Hamilton 75
- Smith, Henry Hollingsworth 61
- Smith, John Thomas 97
- Smith, Leonard 197
- Smith, Richard 144
- Smith, Standfast 148
- Smith, Thomas 95
- ‘smooth-shaven beard’ 137
- ‘snake stone’ 129
- Snook, Edith 20, 20n7, 74, 210
- soaps 225–9, 243–9; *see also* shaving products
- social status 83, 114
- ‘Solomon’s Abstergent Lotion’ 230
- Spain 36
- ‘spanopogones’ 43
- Spectator* (Addison) 35
- Spence 231
- Stafford County Gaol 195
- Stanton, Mary Olmstead 72
- steel
 - German 211
 - hardness and control 218
 - intricacies 127
 - razors 14, 38, 117, 125, 141, 220–2, 227, 231, 252
 - technological development 9, 252
 - type 117
 - use in razor manufacture 223
- Steele, Richard 107
- Stenhouse, John 67
- Stewart, Alexander 48, 149
- Stewart, James 49, 149
- Stewart and Co. 254

- Stodart, James 223
 Stoker, Bram 66
Story of Sevenoaks (Holland) 74
 Stringer, Hugh 91
 stubble 25, 40, 109, 115, 138, 165, 167, 173,
 182–3, 185, 196, 211, 255, 261, 264
 Sturdy, Steve 235
 styles
 beards 1–2, 6, 164, 173, 175–85, 186, 264
 clothing 33
 exaggerated 136
 facial hair 2, 6, 13–14, 143, 170, 173–85
 moustache 1
 whisker 173
 Sullivan, Luke 169
 ‘Sunday best’ 115
 ‘Sun Dew’ 233
 superfluties 20
 ‘Superior Razors’ 223
 Surrey County Asylum 187
 ‘Sweet Amber soap for shaving’ 227
 Swift, Jonathan 115–16
 symbolic power of facial hair 58
*System of Practical and Scientific
 Physiognomy* (Stanton) 72

Tablet or Picture of Real Life (Shaw) 40
 Tandy, Henry 172
 Taylor, Henry 136
 Taylor, Joseph 117
 Taylor, Thomas 91
 Tennyson, Alfred Lord 136
 Thistleton, James 151
 Tiffin, Benjamin 125
 Tilling, Francis 145
 time, masculinity through 7
Times, The 120, 145
 ‘tippling’ rooms 101
Toilette of Health, Beauty and Fashion 55
 Tomes, Nancy 63
 ‘Tonsor, or Imperial Shaving
 Composition’ 229
Tonstriculus 82
 Tony, Gyles 87
 ‘tooth levitor’ 97
 ‘tooth pincer’ 95
 Tosh, John 5, 5n18, 56, 238, 250
 trade guilds 143
Tradesman, or Commercial Magazine 173

 training
 apprenticeship and 83, 86, 92, 104
 barber-surgeons 89
 shaving 84–92
 Trainor, Sean 126
Treasure of Literature 176
Treatise on Razors (Kingsbury) 127, 226
Treatise on the Hair (Gilchrist) 49
*Treatise on the Use and Management of the
 Razor* (Savigny) 127
 trimming 84
 beards 147, 149
 cloth 98–9
 customers 100
 defined 88, 108
 hair 87–8
 scissors 135
 shaving and 104
 wig-dressing and 49
 ‘Triple-Converted Railway Razor’ 254
 Trumper, George 250
 Turner, James 167
 Turner, Robert 20–1, 21n11
 Twickler, Sharon 133, 138
 Twineberow 230
 Tyldesley, Thomas 111
 Tyler, Thomas 115

 ultramasculinity 27
Union Dictionary (Browne) 43
 United Kingdom Association of
 Hairdressers 155
 ‘unmanly ornament’ 40
 Upchurch, Charles 219

 Vale of Glamorgan 102
 Valerianus, Joannes 22
 Valet de Chambre 88
 Van Helmont, Johannes Baptiste 27
 ‘Vegetable Shaving Powder’ 241
 veneration 56
 venereal disease 23
 Victorian Britain 253
 Victorian men 55, 57, 237
*View of Cheapside, as It Appear’d on Lord
 Mayor’s Day Last, A* (June) 169
 Vigarello, Georges 233
 ‘vigilance’ 62
Village Barber (Bunbury) 144

- Vincent, Susan 5, 5n24, 97, 122, 149, 107109
 'Vinolia' shaving soap 248
 virility 35, 76
 visiting the barber 109–16
- Wales 85, 92, 99, 101–2
 'want of erection' 60
 Ward, James 63
 'warranted harmless' 249
 Warren, Richard 227–8, 234
 wash balls 214–15
 Wayte, John 71
 Well, Samuel 71
 Wells, Thomas 102
 Welsh Newspapers Online 239
 West Indian Limes 250
Westminster Journal 191
 Whayle, John 126
 Wheeler, Edward 98–9
 whisker
 fashion 55, 173
 styles 173; *see also* moustaches
 White, George 167
 Whitley, Roger 111
 Whitman, Walt 136, 247
 Whitmarsh, Maurice 102
 Whittock, Nathaniel 151
 wig-dressing 147
 wigs 99
 adoption 33
 builders of forensic and judicial wigs 154
 as catalyst for decline of beards 36
 combining beards and 36
 corporeality of hair 20
 criticisms 233
 curl 146
 decline in popularity 143
 decline of 13
 with detachable whiskers 130
 dressing 144, 146
 elaborate illusion 37
 elite luxury consumption 6
 fashion trends 56
 gender roles, sexuality, age and fertility 39
 growing fashion 146
 importance 130
 made by barbers 81
 maintenance 94
 natural 146, 149
 payment for 117
 real and false hair in the form of 6
- Williams, John 203, 243, 251
 Williams, Roger 98, 102
 Williams, William 172
 Willich, Anthony 46
 Wilson, Erasmus 63, 67
 Wiltshire 92, 101–2, 203
 Winterbourne, George 195
 'without a beard' 25
 'womanish' 24
Woman Scorned, A (O'Dell) 74
 women, bodily difference of 57
 Wood, Anthony 110, 112
 Wood, John 110
 Wood, William 117
 Woodall, John 212
 Wood and Co. 258
 Woodcocke 234
 'Woodcock's Paste for Shaving' 228
 Woodforde, James 107, 115–16
 Woodman, James 225
 Woods, Kathryn 41
Worcester Concentrated Shaving Soap 245
 Wright, Joseph 223
- Xerxes 62
- York 86
 Yorkshire 92
 Young, Basil 131