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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: Sickness, 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 Barbery 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. Jürgen 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 spermatic 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.