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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, Levius 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 Levius 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 Moyse Charas, *The Royal Pharmacopoeia, Galenical and Chymical According to the Practice of the Most Eminent and Learned Physitians 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 Panzoologicominerologia, 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 'Suet 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 shaveing 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 provid 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 Provid 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 stop, 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 Eukeirogenion 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 limited 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 Eukeirogenion 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 'Vinaugre 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.