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Hairs and graces: Barbers, hairdressers and shaving, c. 1750–1900

Barbers, or Barber-Surgeons (which is the Term they were incorporated by) is a Trade very much in use now-a-days; but within less than an [*sic*] hundred Years past it was not so, when our Grandsires did not think so much of ornamenting their Heads with borrowed Hair as Multitudes now do. Their Business, besides that of Shaving, which is a very beneficial Article, is making all sorts of Periwigs or Perukes, and other new-invented Hair Attires.¹

As this comment from a 1747 volume about English trades suggests, the mid-eighteenth century saw the beginnings of important changes in the tonsorial trades. These changes, which unfolded over the next 150 years, not only affected the nature and status of the craft itself, and the practitioners involved, but also reflected broader shifts in responsibility for managing men's appearance. First, as the previous chapter showed, was the growing popularity of self-shaving and accompanying commercial availability of razors and shaving paraphernalia, both of which challenged the longstanding status (indeed virtual monopoly) of barbers as 'knights of the razor'. As we shall see in later chapters, the makers of new types of cast steel razor, developed in the decades after 1750, seized on the marketing opportunities afforded by their new products, using the language of their advertisements to appeal to masculine traits such as hardness and control, as well as linking razors to modish tropes of scientific and philosophical endeavour. Advertisers were increasingly appealing to a new target audience; men who shaved themselves. It is easy to see this fundamental shift as a potential threat to barbers' livelihoods.

Second was the separation of the barbers and surgeons. It has long been assumed that the sundering of the barber-surgeons' company had a profoundly different effect on both of its constituent groups. In the traditional narrative, while the 'gentleman surgeon' experienced a rapid rise to professionalism, the once-respectable trade of the

¹ Anon., *A General Description of All Trades Digested in Alphabetical Order...* (London: Printed for T. Waller, 1747), 12.

barber was severely diminished. With their traditional place within formal medical practice eroded, some barbers were assumed to have relocated themselves within the more aspirational and socially acceptable trade of hairdressing. The rest faced a slow descent into the social permafrost of manual trade.

Third, in the widespread adoption of beards over the three decades after 1850 might surely be found the coup de grâce which finally severed the link between the barber, his shop and shaving. The Victorian 'beard movement' advocated thick, luxuriant facial hair and, significantly, a beard that was 'natural' – in other words left to its own devices. It seems reasonable to assume that, as the faces of British men became more hirsute, demand for the shaving services of the barber correspondingly declined. Each of these points appears to confirm the fall of barbering from its once lofty position and, as broad sketches, are useful in mapping the trajectory of the trade. But each is also open to challenge.

This chapter offers a fresh perspective on the nature of barbering between 1745 and the end of the nineteenth century. It argues that barbers remained extremely important in the provision of shaving throughout the period. Although men were beginning to assume greater responsibility for shaving themselves, they did not abandon the barber at a stroke. Instead, barbering services likely continued to be used interchangeably with self-shaving. The issue of class is central in understanding the changing nature of barbering in this period, both in the status of practitioners and customers. Rural or rustic barbers in particular had long been lampooned in satire, often mocking their cheap and cheerful service and low status. But increasingly through the early nineteenth century, the division of the haircutting trades saw barbers recast as the poor relations of hairdressers. By the mid-nineteenth century, class lay at the heart of simmering tensions between the two groups. If barbers had seemingly sunk down the social scale, it seems that changes also took place in the types of customers they served. Before the mid-eighteenth century, they had shaved clients from across the social spectrum. Increasingly, however, partly as a result of elite and middling men shaving themselves, or focusing upon high-end establishments, it was the urban working man who became the mainstay of the barber's business. Rather than heralding decline, however, this at the very least sustained demand for barbers' services and may even have caused it to increase. As will be shown, even the most basic of shops were still deeply important elements of men's grooming routines and for those lower down the social scale too, the barber still represented the cheapest and most convenient means of being shaved. While this chapter does confirm classed divisions both between barbers and other practitioners, and within the haircutting trades, it challenges the broader narrative of decline that has hitherto proved powerful.

The chapter also questions the extent to which 1745 was even a point of rupture, particularly in areas away from company or guild control, since the longstanding and deep-set familiarity with the barbershop as a provider of pseudomedical and grooming tasks, and as a homosocial space, likely prevailed for much longer. Indeed, the focus on the rupture of the Company of Barber-Surgeons and on London itself, though perfectly logical given the availability of source material, is problematic in implying that events in train in the capital had immediate and far-reaching impacts elsewhere across the country. There are questions, for example, about the influence of the Company and

the impact of the split, outside London, when the vast majority of Britain's barbers had no contact with it, or a trade guild or corporation of any kind, and were not therefore bound by its regulations. Is it safe to assume that the changes occurring in London can be writ large across the whole of the country? As we shall see, barbers were certainly under increasing pressure from the middle of the eighteenth century. But how far this was as a direct result of the events of 1745 is far less obvious. It could be argued instead that the slow fragmentation of barbering through the late eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth actually reflected broader changes, including class structure and, in particular, the rise of the middle classes, urbanisation as well as shifting cultural attitudes towards facial hair.

Finally, it explores the occupational boundaries of barbering and challenges the long-held assumption that barbers simply *became* hairdressers since there are good reasons to suggest that, at least before 1800, barbering and hairdressing were entirely separate trades. While hairdressing certainly developed out of barbering and peruke-making in the second half of the eighteenth century, hairdressers initially made conscious efforts to establish themselves as high-status practitioners of an elegant craft, distancing themselves from the prosaic trade of the barber in general and his signal function, shaving, in particular. By the early nineteenth century, however, such efforts had failed amidst the decline in popularity of wigs and subsequent downturn in fortunes and status of hairdressers, forcing them back into shaving. Even so, hairdressers continued to try and place social distance between themselves and barbers. Drawing upon evidence from hairdressers and barbers' trade journals and raising issues about potential class differences in facial hair styles, to be raised in the following chapter, it argues that barbers were still in demand even at the apparent height of the nineteenth-century 'beard movement' and may have played an important part in the grooming and styling of facial hair.

Barbers, hairdressers and the remaking of occupational boundaries

In 1745, after a long period of growing enmity within the London Company of Barber-Surgeons, the two occupational groups originally yoked together by statute in the sixteenth century were separated to form distinct companies. The underlying reasons behind the split were many and complex. As Margaret Pelling has shown, a desire to jettison what they saw as the 'lowly barbers' was part of a broader move by surgeons to improve the status of their craft and also to gain control over licensing and company property.² Surgeons had long complained of the fact that barbers (members of what they regarded as a 'foreign' trade) were required to sign their diplomas and further objected to their presence in surgical examinations.³ Barbers were, they argued, a

² Margaret Pelling, 'Corporatism or Individualism: Parliament, the Navy and the Splitting of the London Barber-Surgeons Company in 1745', in Ian Anders Gadd and Patrick Wallis (eds), *Guilds, Society and Economy in London 1450-1800* (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2002), 61-2, 64-5, 73.

³ Sidney Young, *Annals of the Barber-Surgeons of London* (London: Blades, East and Blades, 1890), 154.

‘restraint upon their advancement.’⁴ The barbers, for their part, however, were far less supportive of the split and tried repeatedly to prevent it, before eventually yielding in the face of the increasing futility of their objections and a lack of support for their case.⁵

As a broad narrative this version of events is useful in understanding the plight of the barbers during the subsequent 150 years after the split, as they underwent changes and, to a degree, a diminishment in status. But the situation was actually far more complex, and it could be argued that the split between the barbers and surgeons actually precipitated a more significant rupture *within* the tonsorial trades, of which shaving was a key element. Between 1745 and 1900 there was a constant and unresolved tension between barbers and hairdressers regarding both the functions and occupational identities of their respective crafts. As the status of hairdressers grew through the second half of the eighteenth century, they initially shunned shaving as a task of the barber, instead attempting to position themselves as polite, elite practitioners. In response to declining fortunes by the turn of the nineteenth century, however, they increasingly diversified into shaving, while still retaining the supposedly loftier title of ‘hairdresser’. Even as late as the 1870s, tensions about the supposed occupational space between barbers and hairdressers still simmered.

Given their longstanding role in the provision of shaving, it is first of all interesting to consider the fate of barber-surgeons. The 1745 split effectively annulled the old and previously honourable title of barber-surgeon, but in practice this was neither instant nor definitive. Indeed, there is strong evidence to suggest that barbers continued their multiform activities and even retained the title of ‘barber-surgeon’ throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth. In Bristol, for example, as Mary Fissell has noted, around a dozen barber-surgeons were still practicing as late as 1793. According to the memoirs of Bristol surgeon Richard Smith, the last barber-surgeon there – James Parsley – continued to dress wigs, draw teeth and let blood until 1807.⁶ It is also clear from passing references in travel diaries and other sources, that many barbers still informally undertook bloodletting and teeth-pulling. In many ways this made sense. Given their long-held status as providers of bodywork, it seems logical to assume that barbers continued to be important sources of medical knowledge and practice. Late eighteenth-century satires continued to characterize the barber as a hybrid medical practitioner and something of a jack-of-all-trades. Henry Bunbury’s *Village Barber* of 1772 depicted a barber outside his shop, wielding a razor and set of lancets and blood bowl, with a caption stating that as well as dressing wigs, shaving and bleeding he (‘Bob Majors’) sold everything from wash balls to wigs, ‘powders for the itch’, sausages and Scotch eggs.⁷ Even as late as 1821, it was argued that there were few parts of England where barbers did not retain at least some functions of surgery and ‘may be seen brandishing the razor and the lancet by turns’.⁸

⁴ Ibid., 155.

⁵ Pelling, ‘Corporatism’, 75.

⁶ Mary Fissell, *Patients, Power and the Poor in Eighteenth-Century Bristol* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 55.

⁷ John Bunbury, *The Village Barber L.M., L’Inghilterra* (London: Printed by J. Brotherton, 1772).

⁸ Anon., *The Plain Englishman*, Vol. II (London: Hatchard and Son, 1821), 549.

What seems more certain is the increasing polarisation, and even fracturing, of the haircutting trades, a process which appears to have begun during the mid-eighteenth century. As noted above, it is easy to assume that there was little occupational separation in practice between barbers and hairdressers. Previous studies have tended to downplay any potential boundaries between the two. Don Herzog's study of hairdressers, for example, treated hairdressing and barbering as virtually coterminous, and even contemporaries noted the permeability between the two.⁹ But this assumption is problematic, since there were clear and longstanding boundaries between the trades. Since the early modern period, for example, hairdressing, along with peruke-making, had been considered a separate trade to that of barbers and was regarded as such in the occupational structures within companies and guilds.¹⁰ This distinction survived the decline of the guilds and the space between the two occupations apparently grew during the eighteenth century. It was sufficiently well known to be referenced in popular culture. A humorous sketch in *The Times* in 1786 neatly illustrates the point. The scene is a dressing room in the house of the well-to-do 'Jack Bawble'. A French hairdresser enters and is instructed by Bawble to 'shave me this instant!' The Frenchman is confused, protesting that he does not understand, leading to the following exchange:

- Bawble: What, sir, are you not by profession a barber?
 Hairdresser: No, Milord, je suis Friseur.
 Bawble: And you really do not shave?
 Hairdresser: Jamais, Milord, Jamais.
 Bawble: Why, then, Mr. Friseur, pocket your combs, and bundle up your
 irons, or you shall go out of the window instead of the door.
 What insolence? Here is a reptile who, while he was starving in
 Provence, upon soupe maigre and sallad, would have shaved his
 whole parish for twopence. But the rascal no sooner arrived in
 London than he runs in debt for a pound of powder and a roll
 of pomatum and has the impudence to refuse performing the
 only useful part of his profession. But we deserve this treatment,
 because we are such fools as to submit to it.¹¹

The humour lay in the assumed affectations and 'othering' of the French hairdresser, as he attempts to use his 'Frenchness' as a mark of skill and urbanity. To some extent it might be seen as a broader criticism of the pretentiousness of the hairdressing trade. But it is also revealing of the extent to which hairdressers – especially those with social aspirations – were prepared to shun the rough trade of shaving as they tried to put on airs. Other sources, including court records, attest to the clear space between the two occupations. In April 1780, Francis Tilling was called to give evidence at the Old

⁹ Don Herzog, 'The Problem with Hairdressers', *Representations*, 53 (1996): 21–43, esp. 24.

¹⁰ The ordinances of the Company of Barber-Surgeons in Shrewsbury, for example, clearly set occupational boundaries. Along with apothecaries, hairdressers represented a distinct group within the company. See W. Leighton, 'The Guilds of Shrewsbury', *Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, 5 (1882): 274.

¹¹ Anon., 'A Morning Sketch', *Times* (28 October 1786).

Bailey in a theft case. When asked ‘what are you?’, he replied ‘a barber and hairdresser. I shaved and dressed Captain Malcomb [the defendant] at the time.’¹² The ‘and’, in both cases, is revealing. Barber *and* hairdresser, for Tilling, were separate and so were their duties. It was the act of shaving that marked Tilling out as a barber, while his other duties in dressing and attending the Captain simultaneously enabled him to identify as a hairdresser. For our purposes, though, the example is more revealing in again identifying shaving as a principal function of the barber, rather than the hairdresser. If there were no recognized distinction between the two occupations, there would seem little reason to mention both.

It also seems clear that hairdressers were keen to encourage separation, rather than unity in the tonsorial trades. As Chapter 3 noted, one method was to establish themselves as enlightened practitioners, versed in the theory and philosophy of hair, seen in the increasing numbers of hairdresser treatises from the later eighteenth century.¹³ But as Sean Williams has suggested in his study of literary depictions of hairdressers in France, the growing fashion for wigs from the late seventeenth century did much to elevate both the popularity of hairdressing and the dignity and status of hairdressers.¹⁴ Dressing and curling the tresses of ladies, or powdering the periwigs of gentlemen, could be puffed as part of the elegant performance of the polite hairdresser. Advertisements for new-founded hairdressing academies, such as those of ‘Mr Gunner’ in 1785 and ‘Mr Gannon’ in 1789, undertook to instruct ‘Ladies, Women and Gentleman’s valets’ in how to cut and dress hair, apply pomatums and preparations and to braid and curl wigs and hair.¹⁵ Hairdressers frequently adopted the obsequious language of polite advertising, to stress their proficiency in fashioning hair in the latest style, or in making and dressing wigs. In 1773, ‘Mathews’ was typical of this new breed of polite tonsorial practitioners, newly arrived in Philadelphia from London, and begging to inform ladies and gentlemen of the city of his new business ‘dressing ladies [hair] in the newest and most approved taste’ as well as selling ‘natural wigs’ and ‘tupees [*sic*]’ for gentlemen.¹⁶ Not content with their salons or cutting rooms, London hairdressers such as Alexander Ross latched on to the popularity of ‘warehouses’ as sites of polite consumption, selling everything from hairpieces and perfumery to watch chains, necklaces and other jewellery for ‘liberal and fashionable customers’ at his ‘Ornamental Hair and Perfumery Warehouse’.¹⁷ By emphasizing their role in the construction of the fashionable, society body, therefore, hairdressers could locate themselves as polite practitioners.

Barbers, by contrast, seldom advertised. Given the social value of shaving as a polite act and the importance of the shaved face to gentlemanly appearance throughout the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth, this might seem remarkable. As

¹² Trial of John Malcomb, 5 April 1780, <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t17800405-7&div=t17800405-7&terms=MALCOMB#highlight>, version 8.0 (accessed 1 February 2019).

¹³ Margaret K. Powell and Joseph Roach, ‘Health and Hygiene’, in Margaret K. Powell and Joseph Roach (eds), *A Cultural History of Hair in the Enlightenment* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 93.

¹⁴ Sean Williams, ‘E.T.A. Hoffman and the Hairdresser around 1800’, *Publications of the English Goethe Society*, 85:1 (2016): 54.

¹⁵ ‘Hair Dressing Academy’, *Times* (10 June 1785); ‘Hair Dressing Taught’, *Times* (11 April 1789).

¹⁶ ‘MATHEWS, Hair-Dresser of London’, *Pennsylvania Journal and Weekly Advertiser* (22 December 1763).

¹⁷ ‘Ross: Ladies Hair Dresser’, *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (6 December 1791).

experts on managing facial hair, barbers could surely have looked to elevate themselves and their craft as did hairdressers. And yet they did not take out space in newspapers or periodicals, and neither, it seems, did they produce elegant trade cards. The reasons are in actuality fairly obvious. First was the practical difference in demand between the two trades. Hairdressing, especially for ladies, was a long and potentially arduous process.¹⁸ As well as the haircut itself, colours and dyes could be applied, wigs powdered, curls fashioned and so on. The barber's business, however, was steady and probably fairly predictable, with peaks and troughs of demand, most notably on Saturday evenings, and relied on regular customers as well as passing trade. Trade cards were generally handed out after a transaction, to encourage a customer to return. For barbers it is likely that no such enticement was needed, making advertising an unnecessary expense. Indeed, given the relatively low status of many barbers, the cost of advertising may have been prohibitive in any case. It is also worth noting that the prosaic nature of the barber's trade sat uncomfortably with the delicacy and obsequiousness required for polite commerce. Scraping off beards still recalled surgery, with all its rough, ready and bloody connotations. Equally, if the raft of satirical and cultural depictions were to be believed, rather than a polite discourse between both parties, the conversation of barbers was incessant and one-way. It was admittedly difficult for customers to converse with barbers, though, who routinely held them by the nose, while swiping a lethally sharp blade around their neck and throat.

There were other differences between the two trades that could explain the lack of barber advertisements, of which perhaps the most important was the issue of function. While the boundaries were permeable – some barbers cut hair, just as some hairdressers shaved – the association between barbers and shaving was deeply entrenched. Throughout the eighteenth century and into the following, dictionaries continued to refer to shaving as a key characteristic of the trade. John Kersey's *New English Dictionary*, published in 1739, but still available largely unchanged in 1772, defined a barber as 'one that trims persons, makes and sells periwigs &c'.¹⁹ In the *New English Dictionary* of 1759, a barber was a 'shaver of persons', while the following year he was a 'shaver of beards &c' in Nathan Bailey's *New Universal Etymological English Dictionary*.²⁰ The *Encyclopædia Britannica* of 1797 elaborated slightly, identifying a barber as 'one who makes a trade of shaving, or trimming the beards of other men for money'.²¹ Many other dictionaries used similar formulations, using shaving as the key defining feature of the barber, sometimes with reference to shaving the head and also occasionally listing wig-dressing and haircutting.²² This distinction was also reflected

¹⁸ See, for example, 'A Caution to the Ladies', *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser* (3 May 1777), describing the 'fatigue' that could be brought on by dressing the hair.

¹⁹ John Kersey, *A New English Dictionary*... (London: Printed for J. and J. Bonwick, 1739).

²⁰ Anon., *A New English Dictionary* (Glasgow: Printed for Charles Hutcheson, 1759); Nathan Bailey, *The New Universal Etymological English Dictionary* (London: Printed for W. Johnson, 1760); see individual entries.

²¹ Anon., *Encyclopædia Britannica; or, a Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Miscellaneous Literature; ... The Third Edition*..., Volume 3 (Edinburgh: Printed for A. Bell and C. Macfarquhar, 1797).

²² See, for example, the entries for 'barber' in Robert Ainsworth, *Robert Ainsworth's Dictionary, English and Latin. A New Edition, with Great Additions and Amendments* (London: Printed by Charles Rivington &c, 1773); John Ash, *The New and Complete Dictionary of the English Language*... Volume 2 (London: Printed for Edward and Charles Dilly, 1775); Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopædia: or, an*

in the ordinances of the remaining barbers companies. In 1770, the Incorporation of Barbers in Glasgow laid out the principal tasks of the trade. The 'shaving of beards' was first on the list, followed by wig-dressing, trimming men and women's hair and wig-making.²³ Hairdressers could establish a visit as a sensuous, luxury experience, replete with obsequious attentions and rituals. A shave at the barber's, however, was often simply an expedient, dependent on little more than the keenness of the razor, the thickness of the lather and the dexterity of the barber's hand to affect how it was experienced. Even so, it is worth stressing the continued importance of barbers in the construction and conveyance of manliness and the fact that men still held them in high esteem. In 1774, for example, the Bristol apothecary Standfast Smith left the huge sum of £100 to 'Abraham Henry Whitaker Crook, the barber who shaves me'.²⁴ Smith also left five guineas to the widow of 'Thomas Shore, my late barber'.²⁵ While Crook's motivations for such generous bequests are unclear, one interpretation is that he simply appreciated the help that both barbers had given him in maintaining his appearance.

If shaving was so closely associated with barbers, it was logical for hairdressers with social aspirations to avoid reference to it. Among scores of hairdresser's advertisements in the British Library Newspaper database and British Newspaper Archive before 1800, I have not found a single example of an individual describing themselves as a hairdresser who also lists shaving as a task undertaken.²⁶ It could certainly be argued that gender specialisms are a factor in this since those identifying specifically as ladies' hairdressers clearly had no need to mention shaving, unless it related to the head. It is also worth noting that there appear to be far less advertisements by individuals referring to themselves as gentlemen's hairdressers. More usual were men such as John Ryall of Weymouth – a 'Ladies and Gentleman's Hair-Dresser'.²⁷ Nevertheless, the lack of reference to shaving is noteworthy.

The apparent rejection of shaving by hairdressers appears to be confirmed by its absence in early hairdressing publications. The later eighteenth century saw several didactic manuals on cutting, dressing and managing hair, authored by hairdressers. Some, like William Moore's *Art of Hair-Dressing*, spoke to a general readership, offering advice on hair care, cutting and styling for adults and children. Moore described himself as a 'Ladies' hairdresser and perfumer'.²⁸ But it was noticeable that even men's hairdressing texts paid little attention to shaving, nor suggested it as a function

Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences (Dublin: Printed for Richard Gunn, 1740); Anon., *A Dictionary of the English Language, Both with Regard to Sound and Meaning* (London: Printed for W. Stewart, 1794); Anon., *A General Dictionary of the English Language, Compiled with the Greatest Care from the Best Authors and Dictionaries Now Extant* (London: Printed for J. and R. Fuller, 1768).

²³ James B. Tennent, *Records of the Incorporation of Barbers, Glasgow, Formerly the Incorporation of Chirurgeons and Barbers* (Glasgow: Bell and Bain, 1899), 170.

²⁴ Bristol Record Office, MS PROB 11/1003, will of Standfast Smith of Bristol, 6 December 1774. I am grateful to Jonathan Barry for sharing this reference.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Some hairdressers did occasionally advertise shaving goods for sale; see, for example, 'Thomas Lisle', *Newcastle Courant* (24 May 1783), although it is worth noting that Lisle diversified and was a 'Peruke Maker, Hairdresser, Perfumer and Chandler'.

²⁷ 'Ryall', *Star* (18 May 1789).

²⁸ William Moore, *The Art of Hair-Dressing, And Making It Grow Fast, Together with a Plain and Easy Method of Preserving It* (Bath: Printed for J. Salmon, c. 1780).

of them. James Stewart's 1783 *Plocacosmos*, acknowledged as being the first English hairdressing manual, contained a detailed discussion about beard fashions in history, but nothing about shaving or managing the beard, or the practitioners involved.²⁹ Alexander Stewart's *Art of Hair-Dressing, or the Gentleman's Director*, published in 1788, contained no reference at all either to shaving or facial hair.³⁰ Even peripheral discussions of hairdressing, such as the 'Essay on the Hair' in the *New London Toilet* of 1778 contained nothing relating to shaving.³¹ It is worth noting that things may have been different on the continent however. In 1767, the first chapter of *The Art of the Wigmaker* by the Parisian hairdresser Francois De Garsault was dedicated to trimming the beard and the tools and techniques involved.³²

By the end of the eighteenth century, however, it was clear that the hairdressers' social climb had begun to turn into a rapid descent. Even as early as the 1760s, amidst changes in fashion towards simpler and more natural wigs, there were signs of what Williams terms 'a pan-European paradigm shift away from the perruquier'.³³ Before the French Revolution, hair had been a marker of civility, and those who dressed and attended it were elevated by association. But in its aftermath, popular distaste grew in Britain at the apparent degradation of French manners and appearance, and hair was at the centre of new debates about self-fashioning and propriety.³⁴ Other forces acted to push hairdressers from civility into servility. As Susan Vincent notes, the trade was hit hard by the introduction of hair powder tax in 1795, hastening the demise of the fashion for wig powdering and long hair.³⁵ Attitudes towards hairdressers themselves also began to change, with growing suspicions around their privileged access to female bodies. On the one hand, the sexual frisson afforded by the close proximity and intimate contact of male hairdressers with women threatened female virtue and marital honour. On the other, however, the very fact that they constantly kept company with women in part diminished their own manliness, leading to suspicions of effeminacy or emasculation.³⁶ For some the very occupation was intrinsically unsuitable for men. In 1773, a meeting between the Lord Mayor of London and trustees of a will bequeathing twenty thousand pounds to help young men establish themselves in business, refused the applications of two prospective male hairdressers and declared the occupation 'not fit for young men to follow', adding that the testator 'never designed his money should be lent to promote so pitiful and unmanly an employment'.³⁷

²⁹ James Stewart, *Plocacosmos: or, the Whole Art of Hair-Dressing* (London: Printed for the author, 1782), 186–91.

³⁰ Alexander Stewart, *The Art of Hair-Dressing or the Gentleman's Director, Being a Concise Set of Rules for Dressing Gentleman's Hair* (London: Printed and sold by the author, 1788).

³¹ Anon., *The New London Toilet* (London: Printed for Richardson and Urquhart, 1778), 96–103.

³² Francois De Garsault, *The Art of the Wigmaker* (3rd edn) (trans. J. Stevens Cox) (Guernsey: Toucan Press, 1991), 1, 5.

³³ Williams, 'Hoffman', 55.

³⁴ Herzog, 'Trouble', 24.

³⁵ Susan Vincent, *Hair: An Illustrated History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 176–7.

³⁶ Ibid., 83–4.

³⁷ 'Leyton', 'Hair-dressing a Pitiful and Unmanly Employment', *Notes and Queries*, 286 (21 April 1855): 299.

In the early nineteenth century, many clearly felt that the best days of their trade lay behind them and looked back misty-eyed to the 'good old days' when barbers were held in higher esteem and trade was plentiful.³⁸ The 'Lamentation on the Decline of the Barbers', reproduced in several journals in 1826, bemoaned their 'sad reverse', thrown down into chill penury and 'forced to mind their Ps and Qs to scape the bailiff'.³⁹ It can also surely be no coincidence that, just as wigs began to decline in popularity, hairdressers seemingly began, perhaps reluctantly, to embrace the more prosaic arts of the barber, in order to make ends meet. There were certainly suggestions that the distance between the two trades was decreasing. In 1806, for example, the *Book of Trades* noted that the 'Hair-Dresser cuts and dresses ladies and gentleman's hair ... and in most cases the business includes the art of shaving' (emphasis added).⁴⁰ The book also acknowledged the decline of the hairdressing trade, noting that 'the business was of much more importance than it now is, previously to the year 1795', through a combination of taxation on hair powder and scarcity of wheat – one of the primary ingredients in manufacturing powder.⁴¹

Likewise, just as hairdressers intruded themselves into shaving, so barbers continued to cut hair. In Liverpool in 1814, a report of a suicide noted that the man had gone 'into a hairdresser's shop ... to be shaved' but found 'the barber was occupied with another person'. Here, not only was shaving an activity taking place within the business of a hairdresser, but the individual working in it was referred to as a barber.⁴² Such cross-pollination seemingly grew over time. In 1831, David Booth's *Analytical Dictionary* defined a barber as 'properly one who shaves beards; but this art, and that of the Hairdresser, who cuts, curls and dresses the hair of the head, are usually united in the same person'.⁴³ Changing the order of earlier dictionary definitions, Edward Hazen's *Popular Technology: or, Professions and Trades* suggested that the barber's purpose was to 'cut and dress hair, to make wigs and false curls, and to shave the beards of other men', although it does appear that the distinction between the two trades was not as marked in America as it was in Britain.⁴⁴ In 1844, the author of the instructional manual the *Gentleman's Companion to the Toilet, or, A Treatise on Shaving* styled himself 'A London Hairdresser'.

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that either the occupational space, or the latent tensions, between the two occupations had disappeared entirely, since many still specialized. An entry of the young London clerk Nathaniel Bryceson suggests that he visited different establishments for haircutting and shaving. In April 1846 Bryceson recorded that he had his 'hair cut in Queen Street Pimlico and shaved in

³⁸ Herzog, 'Trouble', 21.

³⁹ Anon., 'A Lamentation upon the Decline of Barbers', *The Spirit of the Public Journals for the year MDCCCXXIII, Being Volume 3* (London: Sherwood, Gilbert and Piper, 1826), 487.

⁴⁰ J. Johnson, *The Book of Trades, or Library of the Useful Arts, Volume 2* (London: Tabart, 1806), 21.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁴² 'On the 22nd inst.', *Lancaster Gazette and General Advertiser for Lancashire, Westmoreland &c* (31 December 1814).

⁴³ David Booth, *An Analytical Dictionary of the English Language, Volume 1* (London: J. and C. Adlard, 1831), 222.

⁴⁴ Edward Hazen, *Popular Technology: or, Professions and Trades, Volume 1* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1841), 104.

Elizabeth Street, and washed, all while waiting.⁴⁵ The thorny issue of occupational titles also remained contentious. A sure way to upset a hairdresser, it seems, was to refer to them as a barber. Evidence before the Parliamentary select committee in 1838 (examining whether one Richard Barnett of Hull was a 'good vote'), included the cross examination of James Thistleton, an employee of Her Majesty's Customs. When questioned, Thistleton was asked whether he was a barber before being put into his current post, to which he responded, 'You may call me what you please; I am generally called a hairdresser'. When counsel sarcastically questioned why 'Hairdressers shave shipwrights in Hull but object to being called barbers', Thistleton dodged the barb and merely replied, 'I have shaved him'.⁴⁶ This exchange is revealing. It suggests that shaving was still regarded in the popular view as a primary function of the barber, and that hairdressers considered themselves a cut above. Thistleton's embarrassment at the jibe is apparent. But it also reveals the tensions still bubbling underneath the surface between the two trades, in which shaving played a central part. Nathaniel Whittock's 1837 *Complete Book of Trades* poked fun at the assumed airs of 'elegant hair-dressers and perruquiers' who shrank from the ancient appellation of 'barber' when 'if their heads were not as thick as their own blocks' they should properly regard it as the esteemed title of an ancient art.⁴⁷

Even despite the apparent decline in the tonsorial trades and the rise of self-shaving, many barbers, and especially those in large towns and cities, clearly remained busy. The early nineteenth century saw the proliferation of the term 'shaving shops' suggesting specialized premises dedicated to shaving, rather than haircutting. With the caveat that such advertisements would logically wish to stress abundant trade, they suggest that good business could be done. One 'shaving shop' for sale in 1807 (reputedly 'the most genteel, lucrative shaving shop in London') promised to command an income of between fifty and one hundred pounds per year.⁴⁸ Another 'old established shaving shop' in Holborn in 1818 'returns 3l per week'.⁴⁹ In contrast with a journeyman hairdresser, who could expect to earn between fifteen shillings and a guinea per week, this was reasonable income.⁵⁰ Given the move towards self-shaving, the increasing availability of razors and instructional literature and, as later chapters will show, the growth in cosmetic products related to men's shaving, it seems paradoxical that barbers should be so busy.

Some potential hints can be found in a 1841 court case in Sheffield, relating to the prosecution of several barbers for shaving on Sunday mornings. All work on the Sabbath, except for charity or absolute necessity, had been banned by statute 29 of

⁴⁵ Diary of Nathaniel Bryceson, 1846, <https://victorianclerk.wordpress.com/2016/04/04/saturday-4th-april-1846/> (accessed 12 April 2019).

⁴⁶ Anon., *Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons and Command, Volume 11, Minutes of Evidence Taken before the Select Committee on the Kingston upon Hull Election* (London: House of Commons, 1838), 410–1.

⁴⁷ Nathaniel Whittock, *The Complete Book of Trades or the Parents' Guide and Youth's Instructor in the Choice of a Trade, Business or Profession* (London: John Bennett, 1837), 24.

⁴⁸ 'Shaving Shop to be Disposed Of', *Morning Advertiser* (5 May 1807).

⁴⁹ 'To Hair Dressers, to be LET', *Morning Advertiser* (26 October 1818).

⁵⁰ Anon., *The Book of English Trades and Library of the Arts* (London: Printed for C. and J. Rivington, 1827), 1762.

Charles II and applied to all over the age of 14. A meeting of sixty-five Sheffield barbers had agreed that all would cease shaving on Sundays, but four were discovered in defiance of the ban. The prosecutor argued that 'every man in Sheffield ought to shave himself' and that he could not conceive why any man wishing to be shaved could not do so on a Saturday. He questioned the complainant, one of the barbers who remained closed, as to whether men attending barbers on Sunday mornings therefore did so because they were unable to shave themselves. The barber replied that 'with very few exceptions, the persons who came to be shaved on a Sunday were the drunken and dissipated ... who stay at a public house to a late hour on the Saturday night'. The defence counsel, however, argued that, 'many persons, such as publicans, drapers, butchers and others, were confined in their places of business, until 12 o'clock on Saturday night, and were therefore compelled to get shaved on a Sunday'. People arriving late on Saturday nights from long journeys might also desire to get shaved on a Sunday morning so that 'the Sabbath-day be observed in a proper manner'. In this sense, he argued, barbers *were* providing a work of necessity and should not be prosecuted.⁵¹ The magistrates agreed and allowed barbers to continue to shave, but until no later than 9 a.m. on Sundays.⁵² The link between barbers and shaving, therefore, continued to hold fast throughout the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth.

The continuation of barber apprenticeships long after the split from the surgeons, and the continuing centrality of shaving as part of training, is also worth noting. While the eighteenth century had largely seen the collapse of the guild system and the dissolution of many of the previously powerful barber-surgeons' companies, there are hints that apprenticeships continued to be the mainstay of training well into the nineteenth century. Without specific company apprenticeship registers it is hard to be precise about the nature of this training, although shaving was clearly an important part. Servant boys could be informally apprenticed to barbers on a short-term basis to enable them to learn to shave and therefore assist in dressing and shaving their wealthy employers. In Walton, Yorkshire, in 1832 a 'foot-boy to a gentleman' was put out for a year to a barber in Chesterfield 'to learn to shave'. Evidence before the Court of Appeal suggests that he had hopes of setting up business on his own account but, unfortunately, as a 'scholar to the barber, not a servant' he was deemed by the court to have no settlement.⁵³ According to a report on barbering in 1870, 'shaving [was] acquired partly by practice on friendly or interested faces, and partly by a very delicate test', which apprentices had to pass.⁵⁴ In a nineteenth-century version of a modern test using a balloon, apprentice barbers were required to shave an 'inflated gullet or "weasand" of an ox, which forms a long bladder, and is, of course, very thin'. This was covered with lather, and the novice told to shave it clean without cutting it and causing it to deflate.⁵⁵ There was clearly a demand for apprentices too. The pages of

⁵¹ 'Closing the Barbers' Shops on Sunday Morning', *Sheffield Iris* (16 November 1841): 4.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ John Frederick Archbold, *A Summary of the Law Relative to Appeals...* (London: Richard Phene, 1832), 136. See also the case of Sir Paul Jenkinson, with the same practice and result in this volume, 205.

⁵⁴ 'On Barbers', *HC*, 48:4 (1 October 1870): 85.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

The Hairdresser's Chronicle regularly saw advertisements for 'young men' required to learn shaving and the business of the trade, or from those seeking a position in such a business, stressing their ability to shave.⁵⁶ Some saw this as a potential problem, however. In October 1871, 'One Who Has Served His Apprenticeship' bemoaned the number of advertisements for 'youths of from 16 to 18 years of age' who might well 'be able to shave with ease to the customer, and cut hair after a fashion' but frequently left without formal indentures or legitimate apprenticeship and started life on their own account without the full set of skills. This, he argued, was detrimental to the trade and a poor reflection on the stinginess of many penny shavers.⁵⁷

Barbering and hairdressing in the age of the beard

So far, we have explored the changing fortunes of barbers and hairdressers, in the context of changes to formal occupational structures and also the predominance of the shaved face. In the mid-nineteenth century, however, a new set of challenges emerged for barbers. As we saw in Chapter 3, the emergence of the 'beard movement' in the early 1850s brought a barrage of articles extolling the many and various virtues of the beard, while also warning of the dangers of shaving. With the 'portentous advance of the great beard movement' the 'shaveable population' was clearly shrinking as 'men of all ranks, the lowest as well as the highest' seemingly cultivated their beards.⁵⁸ As the fashion gathered pace a spate of reports suggested tremors in the barbering trade. In February 1854, an article in *John Bull*, titled 'The Edge of the Razor', stated that 'If all the accounts which reach us from different parts of the country concerning the beard movement contain a reasonable flavouring of truth, the function of the barber is soon to be reduced to that of supplying fancy soap, pomatum and tooth-brushes, thus becoming a complete *lucus a non lucendo*' (i.e. an illogical or absurd concept).⁵⁹ The article further noted that barbers in Blyth, Northumberland, were forced by penurious circumstance into reducing their prices by up to a third in attempts to stimulate business.⁶⁰ The same year, the *Greenock Advertiser* quoted an American correspondent, claiming that barbers were becoming scarce in England in the face of the 'beard movement'.⁶¹ Another (though possibly humorous) report in the *John O'Groat* journal quoted a barber in court, refusing to pay his income tax on the basis that 'the beard movement [has] brought shaving with me nearly to a standstill'.⁶² It is easy to see how the return of beards could have acted to increase the pressures on barbers, by removing their main source of income. And yet, there are many signs

⁵⁶ For examples from the many, see 'To Hairdressers Assistants' and 'To Hairdressers', *HC*, 1:1 (1 November 1866): 1; 'Wanted in a First Class House', *HC*, 13:1 (1 November 1867): 1; 'Wanted, A Steady Young Man', *Glasgow Herald* (2 April 1858).

⁵⁷ 'Correspondence', *HC*, 62:5 (7 January 1871), 5.

⁵⁸ 'Police Intelligence', *Morning Post* (22 October 1839).

⁵⁹ 'The Edge of the Razor', *John Bull* (20 February 1854).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Anon., 'The Beard Movement and British Barbers Shops', *Greenock Advertiser* (28 March 1854).

⁶² 'Income Tax', *John O'Groat Journal* (26 May 1854).

not only that shaving continued, but that business was booming, at times almost to the point of collapse. To fully assess the situation for barbers during this period and the potential impact of the 'beard movement' upon them, it is necessary to explore the complex set of changes unfolding within the haircutting trades.

The second half of the nineteenth century saw deepening tensions within the tonsorial trades, reflecting dissatisfaction with working hours and conditions, declining status and the ever-widening gulf between hairdressers and barbers. The correspondence pages of Edwin Creer's *Hairdresser's Chronicle*, founded in 1868 partly in response to the situation, contained repeated calls for unity and the establishment of professional standards, instructional literature and institutions in line with those of surgeons. The low status of barbers and hairdressers compared with other trades was a constant complaint. As one correspondent to the *Chronicle* suggested,

In order to prove the opinion we entertain 'that the public generally does not estimate this business as it really deserves' let any member of this craft go into a company of gentlemen where he is a total stranger, and however good his appearance and demeanour may be – much as he may display his abilities in conversation or argument, he will feel himself lowered in the estimation of the assembly should it only transpire that he is a 'hairdresser' or a 'barber'.⁶³

The longstanding suggestion that the barbering and hairdressing trades were in decline also continued unabated. Through a quasi-comic tale about an apocryphal London barber called Gillys, one 1859 article titled 'The Barber's Shop' made a familiar argument. While city streets were still replete with barber's poles, it said, barbers themselves were experiencing a 'marked decline in the social scale'. This sad reverse had seen them shift from 'the ateliers of the artists in hair, the builders of forensic and judicial wigs, from the saloons of the fashionable friseurs, to the humble porticoes of the popular barber'.⁶⁴ Although likely written with tongue in cheek, it reinforced what many practitioners were clearly feeling. 'Popular' barbers like 'Gillys' were the last remnants of a once-proud trade, now forced to shave the faces of poor workmen for a few coppers. It was not perhaps so much that barbers themselves had declined in status, therefore, but rather that their key clientele had altered. In many respects, the ground was shifting beneath them.

Low income was another problem, and many shaving shops were forced to offer shaves for as low as a halfpenny. With only a slight note of sarcasm one article suggested that barbers and hairdressers might do well to consider a change of career, since Welsh colliers and furnacemen were earning far more per week than the 'beggarly' income of the barber and for less hours.⁶⁵ The increasing financial pressures upon practitioners led to practical action, most notably in the establishment of growing numbers of philanthropic societies around the country. Although there appear to have been none

⁶³ Anon., 'Hairdressers', *HC*, 31:1 (1 January 1867): 5.

⁶⁴ Anon., 'The Barber's Shop', *Leisure Hour: A Family Journal of Instruction and Recreation* (22 September 1859): 605.

⁶⁵ 'Hairdressers' Charges', *HC*, 174:7 (1 March 1873): 12–13.

specifically for barbers, many large towns saw hairdressers' societies established to support practitioners in distress and to highlight the concerns of its members. By 1870, philanthropic societies had been established in London, Birmingham, Bradford, Glasgow and Manchester. Other variations included the 'Amalgamated Hairdressers' Benefit Society' with an office in Oxford Street, London, the 'Master Hairdresser's Co-operative Society' in Piccadilly and the 'British Hairdresser's Benevolent and Provident Institution'.⁶⁶

The minutes of their meetings, regularly reported in the *Hairdressers' Chronicle*, reveal widespread dissatisfaction with their lot. At a meeting of the Bradford Hairdressers' Society in August 1871, the president bemoaned the general loss of respect in the trade and the long working hours and blamed both sets of practitioners and their societies for their lack of unity and laxity in professional standards.⁶⁷ The correspondence pages of the *Chronicle* in the late 1860s and 70s saw repeated calls for the establishment of standards of practice and pleas for the immediate foundation of a professional academy or 'institution where the higher branches of the business be encouraged'.⁶⁸ One suggested a 'United Kingdom Association of Hairdressers' for the 'advancement of trade interests' and to bring together all regional and provincial societies under a single umbrella organization.⁶⁹ Others called for a set of standardized instructional literature. 'Advocate', suggested a London club for the use of all, with its own library and reading room, where members could inform themselves of the latest developments in skin and hair, perfumery and microscopy, arguing that he was no dreamer or Utopian and that there was no reason why this should not be achievable almost immediately.⁷⁰ It seems, however, that 'Advocate' and his fellow idealists were whistling in the dark, since their calls went unheeded.

Further hindering unity were the clear occupational divisions and definitional problems that obviously still lingered, despite the acknowledgement that the boundaries between barbers and hairdressers were, in practice, now extremely permeable. It appears to have been commonly accepted that many hairdressers routinely shaved. Likewise, many barbers combined shaving and haircutting. But the issue of whether shaving represented an actual line of demarcation between the two trades was a matter of debate. In 1871, tensions were already simmering, and letters reveal the class assumptions that spurred resentment between the two groups. One correspondent (styling himself 'A Man with a Stocking') noted several recent allusions to 'the great distinction that exists in the trade between the fashionable hairdresser, attendant artiste in a fashionable saloon, and the humble barber who does the work of easy shaving'.⁷¹ He went on to defend barbers against the condescension of hairdressers' assistants, who looked down 'a little contemptuously from the altitude of their crimson-velveted

⁶⁶ See 'London and Provincial Trade Society Meetings for the Current Month', *HC*, 92:5 (5 August 1871): 72.

⁶⁷ 'Bradford Hairdressers' Society', *HC*, 92:5 (5 August 1871): 72.

⁶⁸ 'An Appeal to the Trade', *HC*, 153:6 (5 October 1872): 90.

⁶⁹ 'Hairdresser's Charges', *HC*, 153:6 (5 October 1872): 90.

⁷⁰ 'Hairdressers and Barbers', *HC*, 220:9 (6 February 1875): 17.

⁷¹ 'A Distinction with a Difference', *HC*, 101:5 (7 October 1871): 90.

apartments' but, with the 'beard movement' by now in decline, might one day find themselves needing lessons from 'those who are "only barbers"'.⁷²

A series of angry exchanges across several issues of the *Chronicle* in the spring of 1875, crystallized the debate and perhaps also exacerbated the problem. Here, again, class and status lay at the heart of the debate. A letter by J. Cooper had suggested that, while 'they may be, and frequently are, united', hairdressers (by which he meant 'ladies' hairdressers) and barbers were entirely separate trades. While it was entirely possible for the hybrid 'Hairdresser and Barber' to exist, 'all hairdressers are *not* barbers, and all barbers are *not* hairdressers' (original italics).⁷³ There were calls for a line of distinction to be more firmly drawn between the two trades before a club could be established, and suggestions as to the basis upon which such a distinction could be drawn.⁷⁴ Some, like 'M. M.', suggested that price might make a useful means of distinction since 'no hairdresser I know charges less than sixpence, and no barber more than threepence'. Perhaps more contentiously, 'M. M.' suggested that three-penny barbers could not help but to fall into 'a rough and ready style of dress and manner'; by contrast, hairdressers – charging a higher amount and catering 'principally to the upper classes' – could not help 'having their educated tone imparted to him'.⁷⁵ This touched a raw nerve, and such remarks were rounded upon, with some barbers objecting at being portrayed as 'poor strap', while others disagreed with the fundamental idea of any difference between the two.⁷⁶ 'A London Subscriber' suggested that formal distinction could only cause ill feeling, while 'W. E. S.' demanded to know whether he would find himself 'debarred from the advantages of the proposed club in consequence of my having taken to wielding the razor'.⁷⁷ As the debate unfolded, some compromises were put forward. One was to acknowledge that shaving and hairdressing were distinct occupations within but were so closely connected that separation was not practicable. They were, in the public's mind, different occupations within the same profession. On that basis there was little reason to suggest that barbers should not be allowed to use any club or institution. Another was to revisit the technical language and longstanding definitions of barbers and hairdressers, from which the inevitable similarities in etymology between them should become obvious.⁷⁸ A third option was to require all candidates for membership of any tonsorial club or society to produce their apprenticeship indentures or proof of their qualifications, both to demonstrate their professional proficiency and prove their designated occupation.⁷⁹ Even as late as 1882, matters had still not been resolved, and the division between the two trades was still apparent. An article in the *North Eastern Daily Gazette* referred to this as nothing less than a 'deadly breach between the plodding barber and the well-to-do hairdresser',

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ J. Cooper, 'Hairdressers and Barbers', *HC*, 218:9 (2 January 1875): 6.

⁷⁴ 'Hairdressers and Barbers', *HC*, 220:9 (6 February 1875): 17.

⁷⁵ 'Hairdressers and Barbers', *HC*, 219:9 (16 January 1875): 14.

⁷⁶ Cooper, 'Hairdressers and Barbers', 6.

⁷⁷ 'Hairdressers and Barbers', *HC*, 219:9 (16 January 1875): 14.

⁷⁸ 'Hairdressers and Barbers', 220:9 (6 February 1875): 17, 22.

⁷⁹ 'Hairdressers and Barbers', 221:9 (20 February 1875): 31.

which grew daily. To commit the 'egregious blunder of calling a hairdresser a barber' risked a very unfashionable haircut.⁸⁰ While hairdressers were prepared to undertake shaving, they were apt to remind customers that they '[did] not care about the work' and had ambitions to confine themselves to the scissors.⁸¹

But it was not only divisions between barbers and hairdressers that bedevilled the trade during this period. As Jessica Clark has noted, matters were further complicated by splits within barbering, especially in London, which saw the growing polarization of barbershops according to the class of customer they served. From the late 1860s, amidst a new focus on luxury consumption and consumer pleasure, some barbers began to position themselves as high-end businesses, serving a well-heeled metropolitan clientele.⁸² While traditional, penny shaving shops continued to ply their trade in poorer parts of London, new barber 'saloons' springing up in the West End satisfied the shaving needs of politicians, nobility and even royalty.⁸³ In echoes of their longstanding position as homosocial spaces, these new, elaborately decorated and luxuriously equipped barbershops became places of resort, as quasi-gentlemen's clubs, for elite and middle class men.⁸⁴ As Clark argues, in such establishments, a shave was promoted as a luxury experience, augmented by elaborate use of shop space and mirrors to focus attention on the male body and by the increasing production, use and sale of soaps, scents and other products.⁸⁵

The issue of class is in fact also central to the remaining question of demand for shaving during the 'beard movement'? The sense of decline, the obvious tensions in the tonsorial trades and the emerging beard fashion might all be assumed to have sounded the death knell for barbers as shavers. But, far from finding themselves out of work, traditional barbers were experiencing a period of constant and sometimes unmanageable demand for their services. Moreover, the main source of this demand, it is clear, was the urban working man. Each week, 'detachments from the sawmills, the brewery, the distillery or the coalyard' descended en masse to be shaved.⁸⁶ Barbers complained about the difficulty of dealing with the grit-filled beards of 'dustmen and coalwhippers', partly because they were seldom washed beforehand and also because their wiry facial hair constantly blunted razors. Rather than the high-end saloons, the key beneficiaries of this demand were journeymen barbers and 'halfpenny shaving shops', which were 'patronised by workmen'.⁸⁷ Descriptions of these business highlight the basic conditions in which they operated, clearly set up for speed and utility, rather than necessarily customer experience. '[The] customer is usually shaved in a very common chair and lathered with a well-worn public brush. The victim is obliged to throw his head back and rest upon his shoulders, there being no other

⁸⁰ Anon., 'The Deadly Breach...', *North Eastern Daily Gazette* (2 June 1882).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Jessica P. Clark, 'Grooming Men: The Material World of the Nineteenth-Century Barbershop', in Hannah Greig, Jane Hamlett and Leonie Hannan (eds), *Gender and Material Culture in Britain since 1600* (London: Palgrave, 2016), 104–5.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 108–9.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 111–13.

⁸⁶ Anon., 'The Barber's Shop', 606.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 607.

support, and then if he escapes without a cut, he may consider himself fortunate.⁸⁸ If gentlemen preferred to shave themselves and had the equipment and facilities to do so, it was claimed that working-class men were forced to use the barber through general ignorance about how to shave. A note in the *Huddersfield Chronicle* about the lack of hairdressers and shavers in the small Yorkshire town of Holmfirth in 1851 suggested that, while some men might manage to shave themselves, it was not easy or common.⁸⁹

Pressure on barbers was increased by the huge demand for their services on weekends, regularly confining them to their shops until the early hours of Sunday morning. As in previous centuries, men attended barbers on Saturdays both to remove the accumulated clag of the working week and in readiness for church. Having to work at any hour of the Sabbath was a cause of complaint. In the very first edition of the *Hairdresser's Chronicle*, an anonymous correspondent asked for the support of the journal in securing the closure of barbershops on Sundays since he was 'oppressed by the long hours as well as having to work hard until two o'clock on Sunday morning'. He was promised that the issue would receive the earliest attention.⁹⁰ The editor was as good as his word and subsequent issues continually supported calls for an Act of Parliament to prevent trade on Sundays, citing pressures on barbers. One reported that, depending on the whims of their customers and loath to lose even a single penny shave, many urban barbers regularly worked until midnight on Saturdays to satisfy the demand of the working man to 'pass his Sunday with a smooth face'.⁹¹ In Whitechapel it was reported that several barbershops remained open all day on Sundays when, if the practice were outlawed or made illegal, the demand could easily be satisfied by early opening on Monday morning. *The Hairdresser's Chronicle* invited readers to forward names of any offending Sunday openers.⁹²

Several years later there had clearly been no change. By 1870 the growing strength and power of unions in many trades was noted – a power that was actually stronger than needed. Journeymen barbers, however, badly needed such a 'complete trade bond' because of the isolation of their work and the long hours involved, reportedly second only to 'omnibus men' in their relentlessness. According to a report, working hours even in midweek, regularly saw barbers working from half-past-seven in the morning until ten at night.⁹³ On weekends, this regularly extended past midnight, with some barbers shaving continuously for more than seven hours on a Saturday evening. Remarkably, it was also claimed that 'extremely quick men' were able to shave sixty clients in an hour, although fatigue made that the exception rather than the rule.⁹⁴ This situation was certainly not unique to London. In August 1857, a journalist accompanying Liverpool police officers on duty noted a riotous crowd gathered about

⁸⁸ Anon., 'The Beard Movement and British Barber Shops', *Greenock Advertiser* (28 March 1854): 1.

⁸⁹ 'Hair-Dresser Wanted', *Huddersfield Chronicle* (11 January 1851).

⁹⁰ 'Answers to Correspondents', *HC*, 1:1 (1 November 1866): 7.

⁹¹ 'Sunday Closing', *HC*, 11:1 (2 September 1867): 5.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ 'On Barbers', 85.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

a 'halfpenny shaving shop' which it would appear does such a roaring business that on the occasion in question at least it had been kept open until at least half past one o'clock on the Sunday morning. The proprietor, his son and wife were at the door, and they complained that a rabble of boys had been throwing stones at the door and window.⁹⁵

Partly because of the nature of their clientele, but also through their own sharp practices, barbers frequently found themselves on the wrong side of the law. As with their early modern antecedents, nineteenth-century barbers sold other goods on the side. The illicit sale of alcohol and foodstuffs was common practice providing a handy extra source of income, as well as an inducement to attract custom. An investigation into 'flying public houses' noted the reputation of barbershops around Petticoat Lane in London for giving customers gin and water with their shave and, worse still, on Sunday mornings. One police Inspector claimed to have regularly observed many 'half drunken' but 'well-shaved' men around the area. When questioned they revealed that they had paid threepence for a shave 'with a glass of jacky [gin] thrown in to confirm the bargain'.⁹⁶ Barbers like Andrew MacGinty of Northumberland in 1858 faced fine or imprisonment for selling alcohol without a licence. The detective officer 'suspected the prisoner and on Sunday last some sailors went and bought rum and whisky in his shaving shop, one of whom he saw in the act of swallowing a glassful'. MacGinty was duly locked up in default of payment.⁹⁷ It is also worth noting though that occupational diversity was also common among Victorian hairdressers, with many diversifying into the allied trade of perfumery, but also other goods and services. One 1868 advertisement offered interested parties a 'Haircutting and Shaving business with Tobacconist and Photography combined'.⁹⁸ Another, in 1874, combined haircutting and shaving with the sale of 'fancy goods' and tobacco.⁹⁹

Passing references make it clear that barbers also played a role in styling beards, although how regularly this was done and how important a part of their business it was is difficult to ascertain since evidence is largely circumstantial. Nevertheless, it does seem that some men preferred to have their facial hair attended to by an expert, rather attempting to clip it themselves.¹⁰⁰ Occasional references in popular culture also point to the practice. A *Punch* cartoon of June 1880 depicted a barber with scissors in hand, asking a naval officer if he wished his beard to be trimmed in the style of 'torpedo' or 'gunnery', the joke based on the similarity between the shape of the ordnance and the beard style.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ 'Liverpool Life Chap. XX: Police, Prisoners and Prisons', *Liverpool Mercury* (10 August 1857).

⁹⁶ 'Police Intelligence', *Morning Post* (22 October 1839).

⁹⁷ 'A Spirituous Shaver', *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* (18 August 1858).

⁹⁸ 'To Be Disposed Of', *HC*, 20:2 (1 June 1868): 1.

⁹⁹ 'To Hairdressers', *HC*, 203:8 (16 May 1874): 84.

¹⁰⁰ For examples, see 'The London Comedy Company at the Theatre Royal', *Bradford Daily Telegraph* (1 August 1871): 3; 'Tracing the Dynamitards', *Western Daily Press* (6 March 1884): 8.

¹⁰¹ 'Regulation', *Punch* (12 June 1880): 275.

Conclusions

Reports of the regular queues and long hours, therefore, strongly suggest that barbers remained busy throughout the 'beard movement' indicating that the initial decline in trade noted by the journals was not necessarily reflective of the situation on the ground. As the author of 'Facts about Razors' noted in 1873, 'A large proportion of the community do not shave now, but still the razor is not obsolete among us. Increasing as the habit has become of wearing the beard and moustache, there are still shavers and shaved.'¹⁰² This last point, along with the potential divisions between barbers, however, again raises the important issue of class. It is easy to assume homogeneity in beard fashions but, as with clothing, it actually makes little sense to assume that elite appearance was necessarily mimicked, or even desired, lower down the social scale. In the eighteenth century, is it safe to assume that all men went clean-shaven? Likewise, if many barbershops continued to experience strong demand, and working-class men apparently continued to be shaved in large numbers throughout the beard movement, does this suggest that the 'beard movement' was limited in its impact and social depth? It is to such questions that the next chapter turns.

¹⁰² 'Facts about Razors,' *HC*, 191:7 (15 November 1873): 160.