CONSUMING MEN:
SHAVING, MASCULINITIES, AND THE COMPETITION OF IDENTITY
AT THE FIN DE SIÈCLE

by

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Abstract

Fin-de-siècle England was marked by myriad tensions, both domestic and imperial. At home, gender constructions and assumptions were destabilized as women forced the re-evaluation of traditional spheres of experience. For both men and women identities could not merely be assumed. The pursuit of manliness, for instance, required industry and competence. Men had to prove their manliness, implicitly acknowledging the constructed nature of masculine identities. Fragmentation not only of empire but also of assumptions regarding gender and sexuality further contributed to anxieties regarding normative conceptions of masculinity. And increased consumerism even threatened the boundaries between public and private, male and female space.

Society appeared to be in a state of transformation, and in response to these complex and often inconsistent pressures, various masculine identities proliferated. Consumerism, however, offered solutions as well. It is through consumerism and product marketing, this paper argues, that additional masculine identities were constructed which contributed to the ongoing power of hegemonic masculinity in a period otherwise marked by change. Advertising for shaving products represented performances of masculinity which offered either validation of existing identities or new models for emulation. Despite contemporary invocations of a crisis, this paper further argues that historians' evaluations of hegemonic masculinity have been too uncritical of the fin-de-siècle "crisis of masculinity." Hegemonic masculinity was, through the incorporation of a plurality of identities responding to the perceived proliferation of inconsistent and contradictory threats, maintaining stability and power, even in a time of insecurities and flux.

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Having slept but little, enjoying only a fitful and restless sleep, Jonathan Harker, a clerk to a London lawyer, got up to shave. He was startled by the appearance behind him of his host, the Count Dracula, whose reflection had not appeared in his shaving mirror.

> In starting I had cut myself slightly, but did not notice it at the moment. … the cut had bled a little, and the blood was trickling over my chin. I laid down the razor, turning as I did so half round to look for some sticking plaster. When the Count saw my face, his eyes blazed with a sort of demonic fury, and he suddenly made a grab at my throat.[1]

It is significant that our first awareness in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) of the danger in which Jonathan Harker finds himself is realized while he is shaving. The threat Harker encounters while shaving appears obvious. The physical dangers posed by both the razor and the Count, however, are emblematic of other threats to middle-class masculinity. This scene is in fact only part of a much larger and more complex discourse regarding the nature of masculinity to be read in representations of shaving.

Unlike Stoker's male protagonist, most Victorian men did not find themselves threatened by the malevolent undead. Men in the fin-de-siècle English metropolis did, however, encounter threats to their persons and their masculinity. Real or perceived, these threats manifested themselves in beings no less fearful to many than Stoker's vampires. The New Woman, for instance, threatened to transform Victorian society, undermining gender relations and constructs of masculinity and femininity. At the same time, re-evaluations of domesticity, the allure of the Empire, as well as the hazards and opportunities afforded by modernity and urban life all destabilized notions of masculinity. Layered on to these threats, the additional risk of genuine injury while

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[1] Bram Stoker, *Dracula,* ed. Glennis Byron (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1998 [1897]), 56.

shaving, as well as resulting invasion of the body by germs and disease, posed palpable dangers, and evoked in men a terror not allayed until the development of asepsis in the early twentieth century.

Shaving imagery is therefore particularly revealing of the myriad social and cultural transformations underway in the England at the fin de siècle. Shaving technology was itself also undergoing significant transformation. From the 1880s implements such as the Kampfe Razor and the Star Safety Razor became widely available, challenging the centuries-long market domination of the traditional straight razor. And by 1905 an American entrepreneur with the unlikely name of King Camp Gillette had patented and begun to distribute his disposable razor. At this time of technological innovation (and cultural transformation) new shaving technologies increasingly pushed men's shaving out of the barbershop and into the home, both sites with a range of important symbolic meanings.

Shaving imagery was not just a depiction of the complexities of masculine identity, but was actively complicit in the construction of male identities. As anthropologist Clifford Geertz argues, societies have a characteristic order, but this order is incomplete, contradictory, and vague. It is at apparently conflicting sites where, according to Geertz, "human life takes shape within a moving and diversified frame of socially constructed meanings."[2] These sites which "generate and regenerate the very subjectivity they pretend only to display"[3] offer significant opportunities to "read" a society and its complexities. Geertz shows us, for example, in the case of the Balinese

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[2] Clifford Geertz, "Culture and Social Change: The Indonesian Case," *Man*, New Series, 19, no. 4 (Dec 1984): 513.
    [3] Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," in *Interpretive Social Science: A Second Look*, ed. Paul Rabinow and William M. Sullivan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 237.

cockfight, how daily rituals and activities can in fact offer important insights into much larger social and cultural themes. Gender relations, power differentials, and status hierarchies can all be "read" from everyday activities like the cockfight. But because society's underlying structures are embedded in "words, things, and conventionalized behavior,"[4] and because our existing repertoire of sources cannot always access them, we must seek alternative sites in which to find these structures. Historians' selection of sources tends to privilege experience and reception. This paper's use of advertising seeks to uncover, in representations of the everyday activities of men, the complexities of identity construction. Instead of experience and reception, this paper emphasizes intent and the production of meaning in the representation of masculinity.

Mundane and seemingly unexceptional activities such as shaving are actually quite difficult to uncover in the historical record. One place where it does appear is in advertisements in the illustrated press. This paper surveys the advertising primarily in the *Illustrated London News*, one of the most widely distributed middle-class publications of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Such middle-class publications would not necessarily remain fixed in a specific social setting. They were passed on to children and friends, read by guests and servants, traded for other publications, and finally thrown away or sent to a second-hand book shop where they were accessed by still others.[5] So while the exact nature of a publication's complete audience is difficult to gauge, we can speculate based upon its intended audience. Priced at 6d, while less expensive publications proliferated, and including advertisements for silverware, jewels, and the

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[4] Clifford Geertz, *The Social History of an Indonesian Town* (Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1965), 8.

[5] Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine, 1800-1914* (London: Routledge, 1996), 8.

latest West End fashions, the *Illustrated London News* was directed to middle-class consumers. This study utilizes this publication's advertising to access specifically middle-class discourses regarding masculinity.

The evolution of advertising production informs the date range selected for this study. Taxes on both paper and advertising severely limited ad production throughout most of the nineteenth century. Advertising taxes introduced in 1712 were abolished in 1853, but ads continued to be set in a space-saving, text-based, classified format.[6] Stamp taxes throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, which limited the number of sheets and constrained space in newspapers, further forced imagery out of papers and contributed to perceptions that illustrated advertisements were costly and wasteful.[7] Lingering prejudices associating advertising imagery with posters that defaced and vandalized cities further limited the use of picture advertisements. And to many, advertisements were themselves suspect as they undermined traditional sales cultures which relied upon inter-personal relations rather than puffery to sell goods.[8] Reluctant to soil their clean columns of text with base pictorial advertisements, editors avoided large text and garish images.[9] By the 1880s, when this study begins, the increased commercial power of national firms and the proliferation of illustrated magazines encouraged editors to reconsider their advertising policies. Advertising relying upon imagery and visual

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[6] Raymond Williams, "Advertising: The Magic System," in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), 173.

[7] See T. R. Nevett, *Advertising in Britain: A History* (London: Heinemann, 1982), 40-56. for a discussion of the impact of taxes on newspaper and advertisement production.

[8] Ernest Turner, *The Shocking History of Advertising!* (New York: Dutton, 1953), 101-102.

[9] On reluctance to include illustrations in columned newspapers, described as "the debauching of *The Times*" see Turner, *The Shocking History of Advertising!*, 196-197. See also Blanche B. Elliot, *A History of English Advertising* (London: Business Publications Limited, 1962), 171.

cues, rather than repetitious columns of text, then came into widespread use.[10] Beginning

with these early ads, companies such as J. B. Williams' Co., Wilkinson Sword, Cuticura

and other manufacturers of shaving implements and accessories directed their campaigns

at male consumers. Gender imagery in these advertisements was created by a diffuse

group of illustrators and marketers who were dispersed across England between the

1870s and the 1910s. Incorporating culturally available tropes and anxieties in their

productions, their work contributed to the creation of multiple ideologies of manliness.

The ads such individuals created represent consistent themes in gender representation

over thirty years. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, however, firms

expanded the scope of targeted consumers, directing their advertising for men's shaving

products at women. Since this paper will focus on the relationship between shaving

advertisements and the male consumer, the shift toward a female audience marks the end

of this study.

The period examined here has already been considered at length in studies of

British masculinity.[11] In 1991, Michael Roper and John Tosh, who were among the first

to interrogate British masculinities, asked historians to recognize these identities not as

"natural and monolithic [but] ... divergent, often competing and above all ...

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[10] Williams, "Advertising: The Magic System," 175-176; Nevett, *Advertising in Britain*, 67-86; and Elliott, *A History of English Advertising,* 174.

[11] Scholars are increasingly historicizing masculinity. In the British context see Angus McLaren, *The Trials of Masculinity: Policing Sexual Boundaries, 1870-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Michael Roper and John Tosh, eds., *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800* (London: Routledge, 1991); and John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999). The American literature on the subject is more extensive. See for instance Mark Carnes and Clyde Griffen, eds., *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); John F. Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan and the Perfect Man: The White Body and the Challenge of Modernity in America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001); and Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

changing..."[12] This call was answered by scholars who, while exploring the mutability and variability of masculine identities, couched their studies in terms of a "crisis of masculinity," citing as evidence transformations in masculine identities or the proliferation of inconsistent identities. This language of crisis assumes a stability which was disrupted by the appearance of new pressures which threatened to undermine existing gender constructions and relations. Historians, however, have found a "crisis of masculinity" at almost every juncture. While each sees their own period as distinct and uniquely susceptible to crisis, together their work creates in effect a perpetual "crisis of masculinity" predicated on the assumption that masculinity is inherently fragile and under threat.

Two recent studies by John Tosh and Angus McLaren have expanded our understanding of nineteenth and twentieth-century masculinity and are representative of the current state of the field. According to Tosh, never before or since the mid nineteenth century has domesticity been so central to masculinity. This domestic ideal, Tosh argues, came into direct conflict with two other long-standing elements of Victorian masculinity – homosociality and the heroic adventurism epitomized by life in the colonies. And from the 1870s, domesticity came to be seen as unfulfilling and even unmasculine.[13] Tosh even notes a "flight from domesticity" in late-Victorian England. According to Tosh, by the end of the century a shift to an imperial, even primitive, form of masculinity had displaced early and mid-Victorian models of domestic masculinity that emphasized men's relationships with children and the home. Angus McLaren also sees the close of

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[12] Michael Roper and John Tosh, "Introduction: Historians and the Politics of Masculinity," in *Manful Asserstions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800,* eds. Michael Roper and John Tosh (London: Routledge, 1991), 1.
[13] Tosh., *A Man's Place,* 6-7.

the nineteenth century as a period of crisis, however, he characterizes it differently. In identifying "negative" types, McLaren argues, reformers, sexologists, and jurists isolated a "dominant" masculine identity, creating it in opposition to multiplicitous "others." The 1890s saw a sense of "manhood under siege," undergoing both "deconstruction" and "reconstruction."[14] Older modes of identity relying upon men's relationships with women, servants, and children were being eclipsed by new modes associated with professional elites. New male identities – such as teacher, doctor, and policeman – were constructed by their relationship with "others." Such professionals disciplined members of new categories such as the truant, homosexual, and sexual predator. Government policy and sexological discourse, actively complicit in the production of multiple male identities, historians argue, challenged the authority and stability of late nineteenth-century masculinity, and contributed to the state of "crisis."[15]

Criticizing historians who have been "highly resistant to problematizing the masculinity of [their] male subjects," Roper and Tosh called for a history "which addresses the mutability of masculinity over time."[16] Tosh's own book, as well as McLaren's, is representative of growing interest in the mutable and transformative nature of masculinity. Such studies, however, fall into their own trap. While advocating the recognition of variable masculine identities, Tosh constructs a framework in which his subjects' identities change only from one monolithic form to another; they are solidly domestic or solidly imperial. He acknowledges very little tension between these identities. McLaren also constructs a solid hegemonic masculinity, which, while responding to new "negative" types, remains uncomplicated by competing and contingent

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[14] McLaren, *The Trials of Masculinity*, 35.
[15] See Tosh, *A Man's Place*, 145.
[16] Roper and Tosh, *Manful Assertions*, 2-3.

identities. Of course it was not McLaren's project to interrogate the internal complexity of hegemonic masculinity, but rather to explicate its construction in relation to a proliferation of "others." Nonetheless, McLaren's silence here leads one to assume a uniform and consistent ideology of manhood which is only further reinforced by its opposition to the "others" he notes. My research suggests a more complicated reading of hegemonic masculinity and also of its relationship with outside forces.

Middle-class, English masculinity did not merely adapt to social and cultural pressures by transforming over time from one uniform ideology to another, as Tosh would have it, or by buttressing itself against new and multiplicitous "others," as McLaren suggests. I would argue that men encountered a collection of possible positive identities, often competing and apparently contradictory, which proliferated in the illustrated press in this period. Hegemonic masculinity was in fact comprised of a range of culturally contingent identities. As perceived threats increasingly placed pressure on dominant masculinities, an array of male identities was deployed offering stability during this period of perceived threat. But these identities were neither uniform nor consistent. Imperial examples of masculinity existed comfortably beside representations of domestic masculinity. Men were exhorted to be both modern and traditional. These possible masculinities, which we will see identified in the iconography and promotional text of fin-de-siècle advertising, provided models for multiple performances of identity. These representations could either validate existing masculinities or provide new models for emulation. Only apparently contradictory, these representations of masculinity served to manage social and cultural pressures which were equally inconsistent, contradictory, and vague. It is through consumerism generally, and shaving imagery particularly, that we

can explore hegemonic masculinity and recognize in it an even greater malleability than historians have acknowledged. This apparent flux, not necessarily a sign of its perpetual state of crisis, indicates instead its continuing power.

Shave and a Haircut...

Few academic works consider the cultural and historical significance of shaving. While a number of studies have appeared over the last century, none has been a scholarly history. Most authors have sought to relate the long history of facial hair and shaving primarily through centuries of anecdotes.[17] A number of companies have also created official histories.[18] In a British Gillette Industries' 1948 publication, for instance, this is a narrative of progress, colonization – described as "the most peaceful and beneficial conquest in history" – and war heroism.[19] Recently, a few thin volumes have again surfaced acknowledging this daily ritual.[20] These, however, tend to be produced for a popular audience and offer little original analysis. While research is often extensive and creative, these follow the same pattern of chronologies and anecdotes. One notable exception is biographical work on King Camp Gillette, inventor of the first mass-produced, disposable razor.[21] These studies identify Gillette – who emphasized product

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[17] See Charles De Zemler, *Once over Lightly: The Story of Man and his Hair* (New York: by the author, 1939); and Reginald Reynolds, *Beards: An Omnium Gatherum* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1950).

[18] See Ian Coster, *The Sharpest Edge in the World: The Story of the Rise of a Great Industry* (London: Gillette Industries Ltd., 1948); and Alfred Lief, *The Mennen Story* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1954).

[19] Coster, *The Sharpest Edge in the World*, 5.

[20] See Allan Peterkin, *One Thousand Beards: A Cultural History of Facial Hair* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2001); and Wallace G. Pinfold, *A Closer Shave: Man's Daily Search for Perfection* (New York: Artisan, 1999).

[21] See Russell B. Adams, Jr., *King C. Gillette: The Man and His Wonderful Shaving Device* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1978); and Tim Dowling, *Inventor of the Disposable Culture: King Camp Gillette, 1855-1932* (London: Short Books, 2001).

disposability rather than durability – as complicit in the creation of modern, consumer society. A few academic monographs do discuss shaving through other avenues of historical enquiry such as masculinity, body culture, and sanitation.[22] Such mundane and daily rituals as shaving, I would argue, however, warrant much more sustained attention.

For centuries, the beard has been considered an important attribute of manliness, inscribing crucial cultural meanings onto the male body. For example, the beard has not only been seen as ornamentation or as an embellishment to distinguish men from women, but it has also acted as a racial marker. When, in 1684, Francois Bernier developed categories for four "species" of mankind, the characteristics of the beard acted as a key identifier of each. Richard Bradley, an English naturalist, also used the beard to differentiate between categories of individuals. His *Philosophical Account of the Works of Nature* (1721) listed only two white races, Europeans and Americans, which were identified solely by their beards.[23] In 1848 Charles Hamilton Smith, a student of George Cuvier, continued to racialize the beard, noting in his studies a "Caucasian or Bearded Type" and a "Mongolic or Beardless Type."[24] By 1871, with the publication of *The Descent of Man*, Darwin was using facial hair to call into question the relationship between man and animal as well as that between races. Humans, from "Vancouver's Island in the north to Tierra del Fuego in the south," actively removed hair from the body. The "Indians of Paraguay," for instance, removed hair from eyebrows and eyelashes to

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[22] See Rotundo, *American Manhood;* and Nancy Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs: Men, Women, and the Microbe in American Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[23] Londa Sheinbinger, *Nature's Body: Gender and the Making of Modern Science* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 122.

[24] *Ibid.,* 123 fig. 4.1.

avoid any resemblance to their horses.[25] The act of hair removal served to differentiate

mankind from the animals, to whom it was now dangerously linked through theories of

evolution. Ever politically aware or, alternatively, ethnocentric, Darwin added the caveat

that though "some races are much more hairy than others ... it must not be assumed that

the more hairy races, such as the European, have retained the primordial condition more

completely..."[26]

The razor too has an interesting history. The existence of the straight razor was

first noted by a Sheffield manufacturer in the late seventeenth century, and 100 years later

Jean-Jacques Perret, a cutler, suggested that men shave themselves. [27] This was no small

feat. In addition to the danger posed to the face by the sharp blade, fingers were also left

unprotected. In the mid nineteenth century, Londoner William Henson suggested placing

a blade perpendicular to the handle forming the first hoe-type model, a form still taken by

the modern razor. By 1880, brothers Otto and Frederick Kampfe patented the Star Safety

Razor, a hoe-type, single-edged implement.[28] Such "safety razors" were not, in fact,

fundamentally different from traditional straight razors. They were often little more than

sections of a traditional razor clamped hoe-like to a handle. And traditional straight

razors did not, in fact, significantly differ technologically from the earliest Bronze Age

models.[29]

Most men continued to use the straight razor in spite of the challenges it posed.

The threat of nicks and cuts suffered in home use meant that the traditional razor was

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[25] Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection [and] The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, Great Books of the Western World, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins, vol. 49: Darwin (Chicago: William Benton, 1952 [1859 and 1871]), 575.

[26] *Ibid.*, 587.

[27] Pinfold, *A Closer Shave*, 99-100; and Dowling, *Inventor of the Disposable Culture*, 33.

[28] Pinfold, *A Closer Shave*, 101-103.

[29] Adams, *King C. Gillette*, 12.

most efficiently used in the hands of a barber. At the close of the nineteenth century,

however, manufacturers sought to improve the safety of their products and eclipse the

popularity of the straight razor. The Star Safety Razor, for example, which saw limited

success through the last decades of the nineteenth century, incorporated fine wires around

the blade by the 1890s to prevent the worst of cuts.[30] Keeping the forged steel blade

sharp nevertheless remained a vexing problem. Periodically, such blades required

stropping on a leather strap or in a specialized mechanism to keep a keen edge. Generally

avoiding serious cuts to the face, men often cut fingers in the process of removing the

blade, stropping, and replacing it into the handle.[31] Eventually, blades would have to be

honed or re-sharpened professionally by a cutler or barber. It was in just such a position,

with his Star razor in need of honing, that entrepreneur King Camp Gillette imagined the

possibility of a new disposable razor blade.

Shaving fashions changed as well. By the 1880s and 1890s most American men,

notes Russell B. Adams, Jr., were clean-shaven. Dwight Robinson has found similar

trends in his statistical survey of men featured from 1842-1972 in the *Illustrated London

News*. Beardedness in Britain, he found, reached its zenith in 1892, while the frequency

of clean-shaven faces, lowest in 1886, continued to increase in popularity for the next 80

years.[32] The necessity and expense of daily visits to the local barber to maintain this

fashion prohibited many from indulging in such luxury.[33] Before fear of the five o'clock

shadow was rooted into men's minds by savvy marketers, a few days' growth was often

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[30] Dowling, *Inventor of the Disposable Culture,* 33-34.
[31] Adams, *King C. Gillette,* 13.
[32] Dwight E. Robinson, "Fashions of Shaving and Trimming of the Beard: The Men of the
Illustrated London News, 1842-1972,"*American Journal of Sociology* 81, no. 5 (March 1976): 1138.
[33] Adams, *King C. Gillette,* 12.

acceptable.[34] Men who did submit to the ministrations of a barber and his razor often did so not more than twice weekly. Many men would have agreed with an old Russian proverb: "It is easier to bear a child once a year than to shave every day."[35] Nonetheless, because of the expense associated with visits to the barber for a safe and effective shave, and because of the resources required to purchase and maintain an adequate male toilette at home, the display of clean-shavenness, beardedness, and its intermediate variations had definite implications for the performance of class, racial, and gender status.

A considerable variety of images representing all manner of bearded "others" appear in the advertisements printed in the back pages of the *Illustrated London News*. The working class, labourers, farmers, and country yokels are all identified by their beards. Pioneer Cigarettes demonstrates class-based categorizations particularly well in an ad entitled "Pioneers of Civilization"[36] (see figure 1). The ad alludes to the disreputable Dickens' character, Bill Sikes, and his respectable alter-ego, William Sykes. The two figures' class origins are clearly identified first by the choice of a clay pipe over a Pioneer Cigarette, but also by accent, and notably by Sikes' unkempt growth of beard. A range of additional "others" were also identified by beardedness, including South African colonists, Irish, Scottish, Russians, Arabs, Jews, the French, and (evoking Darwin's thesis of the dangerous

Figure 1: "Pioneers of Civilization"

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[34] Dowling, *Inventor of the Disposable Culture,* 36.
[35] Adams, *King C. Gillette*, 10.
[36] *Illustrated London News*, 4 August 1900, 172.

Figure 2: Sapolio Soap

proximity between man and animal) a rat-father for Sapolio Soap[37] (see figure 2). At the same time, more positive examples of beardedness are also prominent in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century advertising. Then, as now, associations between beards and wisdom existed, spawning a number of advertisements which displayed knowing greybeards hawking their wares. Further examples of respectable bearded men include King Edward VII and his son, the future King George V, both of whose bearded faces appeared regularly in print.[38] Associations evoked by both beardedness and clean-shavenness could be inconsistent and contradictory, and it is these inconsistencies which will be analyzed in this paper.

Defining Men

In the late nineteenth century we can see transformations that contributed to a sense of anxiety for middle-class men. This was the period when we see the initial use of terms such as "feminism" and "homosexuality," which indicates the impact and

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[37] *Illustrated London News*, 1 January 1887, 15.

[38] On King Edward's beard see De Zemler, *Once over Lightly,* 100. See also King Edward VII when Prince of Wales (*Illustrated London News*, 2 January 1889, Cover); C. Bond & Son Advertisement (*Illustrated London News*, 20 February 1897, 264); and King George V when Prince of Wales (*Illustrated London News*, 25 July 1908, Cover)

significance of gender and cultural transformation at the fin de siècle.[39] While the term "New Woman" only entered common parlance in 1894,[40] women were making steady gains against entrenched patriarchal authority for most of the nineteenth century. Ongoing feminist reform legislation improved the legal position of women while questioning the authority of patriarchal prerogatives.[41] Many traditional forms of masculinity, such as those associated with chivalry, moral guidance, and the role of provider, were predicated on the assumed inherent weakness of women. An articulate feminism not only undermined these roles, but also, by questioning accepted conceptions of "woman," destabilized the understandings of manliness to which they were tied.[42] Some men also advocated re-evaluations of masculine authority and systems of patriarchy. Through the 1890s, avant-garde artists, sexual radicals, and intellectuals all "challenged its class structures and roles, its system of inheritance and primogeniture, its compulsory heterosexuality and marriage, and its cultural authority."[43] As husbands and as fathers[44] middle-class men were found lacking. These were among the pressures levelled against hegemonic masculinity.

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[39] Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (New York: Viking, 1990), 3.

[40] Tosh, *A Man's Place*, 152.

[41] See Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, 7; Mathew Sweet, *Inventing the Victorians* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), 181-182; and Tosh, *A Man's Place*, 157.

[42] Tosh, *A Man's Place*, 181.

[43] Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, 11.

[44] For discussion of the destabilization of men's roles as fathers through the late-nineteenth century, see Tosh, *A Man's Place*, 159-168.

New roles available to women forced a further re-evaluation of hegemonic masculinity and threatened to destabilize accepted gender expectations and roles. An ad for the supposedly health-securing Beecham's Pills, for example, humourously illustrates the danger posed by the fashionable New Woman in the city[45] (see figure 3). Pictured in the ad, on one side of the woman, a man stands safely out of reach of the point of her hatpin, while on the other side, her other companion appears to be in immanent danger from its sharp point. As the ad warns, "It's best to be on the safe side," not only in terms of health, but also in one's interactions with women. Women consumers offered a particularly salient threat as they publicly disregarded the ideology of separate spheres. Observers worried that the sensual and exotic world of consumerism could seduce women, destabilizing their moral and ethical groundings.[46] Women's morals, perverted by consumerism, could then corrupt the domestic sphere and even poison the home.

Figure 3: "It's Best to be on the Safe Side"

The threat posed to a man from the promiscuous combination of women and the market extended even to his property. By the Married Women's Property Act, and its revisions from the 1870s to the 1880s, women gained increased rights over the ownership of property, but husbands, rather than wives, remained liable for many female debts.[47] The extension of credit to women thus threatened not only the stability of patriarchal

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[45] *Illustrated London News*, 30 September 1911, 533.

[46] T. J. Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 73.

[47] Erika Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure: Women in the Making of London's West End* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 56.

authority, but also a man's property (and potentially his liberty if convicted as a debtor). As such, credit offered the lurking spectre of an almost adulterous alliance between wives and shopkeepers threatening to defraud husbands.[48]

Intellectuals and jurists increasingly acknowledged alternate forms of masculinity and sexuality as well. These forms existed in tension with dominant masculinities. Through the 1880s and 1890s intellectuals such as John Addington Symonds and sexologists such as Havelock Ellis introduced the concept of the homosexual to Victorian society. Even more potent and more public were a series of trials from the 1870s seeking to identify and punish illicit male sexuality. The 1871 trial of Ernest Boulton and Frederick Park for "conspiracy to commit sodomy" was among the most sensational and well-publicized of its decade.[49] Later, the 1885 Labouchère Amendment to the Criminal Law Amendment Act made illegal "gross indecency" committed between men. Oscar Wilde's trial under this act in 1895 sharply foregrounded questions of the appropriate performance of manliness and sexuality in the public sphere. The spectacle of these trials publicly affirmed the presence of additional sexual types and further threatened Victorian hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy. The fin de siècle saw, in Foucault's words, a new sexual "species" emerge into the urban landscape.[50] Viewed by many as masculine counterpart of the New Woman, the "decadent," a euphemism for homosexual, was seen as no less subversive. These two were highly publicized characters engaged in the blurring of traditional gender ideologies.[51] Together they brought gender and class

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[48] *Ibid.*, 72-73.

[49] See William A. Cohen, *Sex Scandal: The Private Parts of Victorian Fiction* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 73-83.

[50] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 43.

[51] Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy,* 169-172.

transgression into popular discourse, and introduced changes to which constructions of masculinity responded.

While one response to these cultural transformations was, according to Tosh, an acute sense of anxiety, another was to valorize masculinity, reinforcing in men a sense of strength and virility to counter perceived emasculation.[52] This valorization of masculinity is exemplified in ads displaying power and sexuality through the act of shaving. An example is introduced by an ad entitled "Little Doors"[53] (see figure 4). Purporting only to refer to pores, this advertisement also evokes the imagery of penetration.

Figure 4: "Little Doors"

When applying shaving soap to one's face, the ad instructs men: "you apply it with the brush – and, as it were, *force it* into those willing little doorways" (emphasis in original). Masculinity here is represented in complex ways. The man in the ad is the active agent while his pores, in an evocative metaphor, remain passive and docile. While pores, the passive partners in this scene, are in fact part of the male's body, they are prevented from contributing to his identity. Perceived only through the double lens of magnifying glass and mirror, they are so distant as to become almost an independent entity against which he must rally. And that is what male consumers are asked to do in the text accompanying the ad. But even more potent than in other ads, the representation of masculinity here is

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[52] *Ibid.*, 8-10.
[53] *Illustrated London News*, 1 April 1899, 477.

dominating and violent. Men are told to "*force it*" into pores, described as "willing little doorways."

As liminal sites, doors act not only as a border between the external world of germs and contagion and the interior "life-giving current" of the body, but they are also boundaries separating the chaotic streets of the city from safe domestic spaces. The cultural currency of doors is made clear in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). The first chapter of the book is tellingly entitled "The Story of the Door." Marked by a "prolonged and sordid negligence," the door is "blistered and distained."[54] It is only through this back door that Hyde, embodiment of vice in this story, enters the house. Similarly, in the "Little Doors" ad, middle-class men are exhorted to master "little doorways," or pores, and eliminate the threat of vulnerability they represent. Men are reminded that these "doors" are "willing" agents, complicit in the potential corruption of the body. Threatened by these dangers, men must avoid impurities as they "would the deadliest poison." In light of metropolitan and bodily threats, it was imperative that men adopt the attributes of late-Victorian normalized masculinity: self-control, self-discipline, and mastery over one's environment. And it was these attributes which were represented through the performance of possible masculine identities in such ads. Other ideals of masculinity were represented in these advertisements as well. Only apparently contradictory, we will see below how together these diverse representations in fact contributed to the ongoing power of masculinity even during periods of instability and transformation.

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[54] Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,* ed. Jenni Calder (London: Penguin Books, 1979 [1886]), 30. For further discussion of the sexual significance of doors in *Jekyll and Hyde* see also Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy,* 110-113.

Reading the text accompanying another ad entitled "I Ought to Shave"[55] (see figure 5), both the erotic and civilizing/ domesticating opportunities afforded by shaving become still clearer. In a three-panel vignette, we see first a man who has gone without

Figure 5: "I Ought to Shave"

shaving for some time. He "realizes how disgusting his appearance is" and is described as "mean," "uncomfortable," and "distressed." Having failed to perform his manly act, the effect upon him is more than just the growth of stubble. In the second panel he is lathered up. He is ready, through use of J. B. Williams' product, to perform his domestic ritual. Having "applied the thick, creamy lather," "his 'stubby' beard immediately yields to its softening influence." Underlying sexual metaphors of virility appear in this *tableau vivant*. It is significant that his "beard immediately yields" following the actions he performs. In this representation of shaving, the man remains active and dominant while the subject of his attentions again "yields" passively. In the final panel we read the outcome of the now completed act. " 'He is a new man.' Feels at peace with the world." With almost sexual satisfaction he now experiences the "sensations that every man does," at least those who use Williams' Shaving Soaps. At the same time, it is the domesticating intervention of J.

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[55] *Illustrated London News*, 18 February 1899, 247.

B. Williams' products which have transformed him from "mean" and "uncomfortable" to a "new man." "See how happy he looks!"

Not merely signifiers of transformation and architects of male anxiety, women were similarly constructed as the solution to male anxieties, as well as the cause of those anxieties. Beginning with the 1861 census, British policy makers noted a gender disparity in the population. Continued "surpluses" of unmarried women throughout the century threatened to unbalance the state as their increasingly large numbers would, some thought, feminize and weaken England. Conversely, women held the promise of a more therapeutic effect overseas. British women in fact were "central to the creation and reproduction of new communities"[56] in the colonies. Essential to moral and spiritual health, according to Sarah Carter, women were icons around whom the colonies were to be built.[57] In mid to late-Victorian British Columbia, Adele Perry notes, white women were seen as correctives to the liminal status of this colony "On the Edge of Empire." As such, the importation of women promised not only domesticity and fecundity, but perhaps more importantly, respectability. Between 1849 and 1871, the British government sponsored four assisted immigration schemes from Britain to colonial British Columbia.[58] Not only would women direct men toward normative ideals of masculinity, but the export of "surplus women" to the colony would also provide domestic servants, counter inter-racial couplings, and address demographic distortions in Britain.[59] As

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[56] Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), xiii.

[57] *Ibid.*, xiii-xiv, 194.

[58] Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 139. For discussion of emigration schemes see also Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, 20.

[59] Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 165.

"effective imperial agents,"[60] women promised to stabilize disrupted patterns of life in the colony, and the metropole. The civilizing powers of women were also invoked by the feminist reformer Josephine Butler. She argued, in contemporary critiques of the Contagious Diseases Acts, that what led both students and sailors into vice was the lack of feminine influence in the form of domesticity.[61] Not only would domestic masculinity, offered by the civilizing influences of wives and family, prevent exploitation of women, but it would also, according to Butler, check illicit sexuality. Domesticity offered safety not only to men but to society as a whole.

So, while some ads invoked the threat of woman, others alluded to her stabilizing powers. Some of the paraphernalia of the male toilette even came to be gendered female and appears to be complicit in a project to civilize and domesticate the English male, as we have already seen in "I Ought to Shave" (see figure 5). An untitled ad[62] (see figure 6) which refers to a "softening lather" with a "delicate, refreshing odor," makes the feminine associations of the imagery clear. Feminine imagery and its promise of safety, as well as the threats of danger in the metropole, reappear in an ad entitled "A Dream"[63] (see figure 7). The feminine personality of male hygiene products is here manifested in the appearance of seven "little fairies [that] are bringing

Figure 6: "Softening Lather"

[60] *Ibid.,* 19. See also Tosh, *A Man's Place,* 175.
[61] Tosh, *A Man's Place,* 154-155.
[62] *Illustrated London News,* 15 September 1900, 285.
[63] *Illustrated London News,* 8 December 1900, 848.

him all that the heart can desire." The fairies' banners read "fragrance," "soothing refreshing healthful," "cooling sensations," "delicacy," "purity," "ease," and finally "safety security." These are the promises offered by shaving products which are feminized by the imagery used to promote them in advertising. We must not read this gendered negotiation as a corporeal-colonial contest for control of the male, but rather as one of many projects in late-Victorian Britain which sought to inculcate him into the often conflicting masculine and domestic norms of the consumer metropolis.

A DREAM.

Under the soothing influence of Williams' Soap the man in the chair has gone to sleep, and dreams that little fairies are bringing him all that the heart can desire.

The BIG, THICK, CREAMY LATHER of Williams' Soap, softens the beard, soothes and refreshes the face and supplies all the heart could wish for in the way of a PERFECT SHAVING Soap.

Williams' Famous Shaving Soaps.
Williams' "Barbers" Luxury" Toilet Soap.
send 1d. stamp for sample.

THE J. B. WILLIAMS CO. Russell Street, London, W. C.,
Sydney,
Chief Offices and Laboratories, Glastonbury, Conn., U. S. A.

Figure 7: "A Dream"

Safety remains an important trope throughout the imagery and text of these advertisements, and suggests a number of concerns. The ever-present image of danger remains an integral part of the "Dream" ad (see figure 7). Lying asleep in the barber's chair, this customer appears in a state of vulnerability. Wielding blade and stropping strip, the barber has his back both to client and the fairies' promises of comfort, safety, and security. One product fairy controls the banner of "safety [and] security" which conspicuously surrounds the head of the barber and promises to mitigate any danger he may offer. In the "Softening Lather" ad (see figure 6) the barber again represents the possibility of danger and "terror" of shaving. Lying in the chair, his head restrained by the barber, the customer looks at the blade held above his head. The "lathery luxury" of Williams' Soap, which promises a "soothing influence," offers the only protection available.

As we saw above, these dangers were not purely metaphorical; shaving posed real dangers as well. And shaving ads not only celebrated the therapeutic benefits of shaving soaps, they also invoked fin-de-siècle masculine fears. "Terror" in shaving is expressed in an ad entitled "What a Glorious Lather"[64] (see figure 8). As in others, this ad constructs the product as feminine: "a delicately fragrant" product, "softening [and] soothing" in its activities. This feminized product "robs shaving of all its terrors." The civilizing influence of the product has negated the unseen dangers which threaten men. In an era before manufacturers offered three blades on springs protected by fine wires and augmented by microfins and moisturizing strip, the straight razor posed a genuine threat of bodily injury. From the

Figure 8: "What a Glorious Lather"

late seventeenth century until the late nineteenth century it remained the only widely available shaving implement, and as such demanded both respect and fear.[65] We are reminded of this fear in the passage from *Dracula* which opens this paper. It is no accident that Stoker has Jonathan Harker shaving during this encounter with the Count. The dangers of shaving – cuts, blood, and infection of all sorts – are associated here with threats posed by Dracula himself. Popular culture also reminded men of Sweeney Todd, Demon Barber of Fleet Street. This apocryphal figure's activities were related from the 1840s in Penny Dreadfuls such as Thomas Peckett Prest's "The Pearl Necklace," the

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[64] *Illustrated London News,* 4 February 1899, 177.
[65] Pinfold, *A Closer Shave,* 10.

reading of which was likely a childhood memory for many Victorian men. Less dramatic than a slit throat and culinary fate (Todd's victims were ultimately baked into pies), most men had experienced the cutting pain of a misplaced blade or finger. In an era before antisepsis, men knew the danger posed by infection of the smallest shaving nick. Even Henry David Thoreau's famous retreat to Walden Pond was taken in the wake of his elder brother John's death, the result of blood poisoning eleven days after cutting himself with a straight razor.[66]

The cultural currency of these threats is reinforced in the ad discussed above entitled "Little Doors" (see figure 4). The scene presents a barber with magnifying glass and mirror (described by Anne McClintock as a fetish object of enlightenment and self awareness[67]) showing his customer the many "Little Doors" or pores of his face. There are "myriads of them – unseen, *but always open* – [that] lead directly through the Skin – to the very life-blood. … Let no impure particle enter – to mingle with the life-giving current" (emphasis in original). These "Little Doors" are the sites through which a man can be violated, his "life-giving current" poisoned. By their very existence these pores indicate the vulnerability of the male body; they remain "always open," a portal through which impurity can enter. Hence the "imperative necessity," as the ad warned, "that you guard these doors."[68]

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Middle-class Victorians sought to read inner truths in bodily externalities, safely compartmentalizing evil within a securely definable "other." Building on earlier studies

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[66] Dowling, *Inventor of the Disposable Culture*, 83.

[67] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 217-219.

[68] *Illustrated London News*, 1 April 1899, 477.

of phrenology, Swedenborg's "Doctrine of Correspondences" suggested that every spiritual fact could be read in legible physical facts inscribed on the body.[69] Novels such as Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) provided readings of evil in the form of an alter-ego and painting respectively, but absconded with the middle class's security blanket by suggesting that its own members could harbour unspeakable evil behind deceptive bodily facades. Using the implications of skin deformations and the ideology of visible vice, Wilde even suggests in *Dorian Gray* that the degeneration of Gray's features in the painting indicates the presence of "secret vice," potentially homosexuality.[70] Like Stevenson's and Wilde's fallen characters whose own faces never betray the sins they have committed, the "protagonists'" actual faces in many ads remain largely illegible. It is noteworthy, however, that men in these ads share a remarkable resemblance to their barbers (see figure 4: "Little Doors"; figure 6: "Softening Lather; and figure 7: "A Dream"). Whether this was a pragmatic or an aesthetic choice, or whether it only reflected cost-cutting among illustrators, it was a further signifier of the complexity of male identities, as both barber and client in these ads display the same countenance. Simultaneously represented as subject and object in the act of shaving, the man of the fin de siècle would encounter in the advertising pages of popular illustrated publications dizzying variations of his identity.

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[69] Lears, *Fables of Abundance*, 60.
[70] Showalter (*Sexual Anarchy*, 177) suggests that the secret is venereal disease.

Colonizing Men

According to Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, only recently has scholarship on colonialism moved away from focusing almost exclusively upon the construction of distant colonial identities and looked back toward the metropole. Older studies began from the hypothesis that colonial identities, influenced by European contact, were dynamic and changing, and tended to contrast them to a stable and even monolithic European identity. Cooper and Stoler argue instead that, "the colonial experience shaped what it meant to be 'metropolitan' and 'European' as much as the other way around."[71] Acknowledging this inter-relationship, Anne McClintock returns studies of colonial imagery to the metropole, arguing that even the most familiar domestic commodities were used to promote the colonial project. Producers and marketers of consumer articles were complicit in this project, using advertising to promote what she calls "commodity racism."[72] Even McClintock's arguments, however, remain focused on how popular representations constructed the colonial subject through the inherent racism of Victorian advertising without explicating its effect on the metropolitan citizen. Tensions between domestic and colonial masculinities were not just issues of empire; they were very real to metropolitan men as well. And by the end of the century, tensions surrounding masculine domestication can even be seen in advertising for products that domesticate the body, and which are simultaneously promoted by fantasies of escape from that same domestication.

Further complicating this circular production of masculinities, metropolitan men were to be the colonizers of an empire whose imagery – real or imagined – had already

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[71] Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), vii.

[72] McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 207-231.

contributed to constructions of their own identities, and would continue to affect their lives even in England. Anne M. Winholz argues, for instance, that "British manhood would bring civilization to the hinterlands of the world; in turn, the hinterlands of the world would save British manhood from civilization."[73] For men feeling tamed by domestication, the promise of "untamed" wilderness offered opportunities to acquaint themselves with more aggressive and survivalist constructions of masculinity. Even if this was merely an elaborate imperial fantasy, such imagery held cultural resonance for men emasculated by the modern metropolis. E. Anthony Rotundo has noted similar new aggressive and "survivalist" masculinities developing in America at the same time. Rotundo argues that traits such as lust, greed, ambition and others, earlier seen as negative components of the male psyche, were now cast in a new light. Once perceived as dangers to individual and society, men's "animal instincts" and "primitive" characteristics were now embraced as liberating. So, for example, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, editor and Civil War Colonel, encouraged late nineteenth-century Bostonians out into the wilderness.[74] Away from the potentially emasculating threats of the city, middle-class men could discover new identities in the wilderness and empire.

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[73] On the mutually-constitutive relationship between middle-class men and the colonies see Anne M. Winholz, "An Emigrant and a Gentleman: Imperial Masculinity, British Magazines, and the Colony That God Away," *Victorian Studies* 42, no. 4 (1999): 631.

[74] Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 227. On this subject also see Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

The backcountry of Canada was promoted as one such site of escape and imperial fantasy. Though largely tamed by the 1840s, the rapids of the Long Sault, St. Lawrence, and others remained *de rigueur* for travelers into the twentieth century. By 1900, while the danger was diminished, the fantasy remained potent. Even the Duke and Duchess of York shot the rapids near Ottawa.[75] In an 1899 ad entitled "Shooting the Rapids"[76] (see figure 9), the male body is equated with the colonial terrain, particularly the rapids of the Canadian wilderness. Patricia Jasen has identified the gendering of this landscape. She argues that the Canadian backcountry was constructed as a "wild" and potentially dangerous territory. It became a site where metropolitan men could affirm, even reclaim, masculinity challenged by urban domesticity. Metropolitans even imagined this wilderness populated with ominously undefined threats to their safety. As the ad suggests, it was "often

Figure 9: "Shooting the Rapids"

very risky business" to explore this terrain. The act of shaving, which according to this ad "is risky too," becomes equated with "shooting the rapids," and by extension the imagery of the colonial terrain, constructed as hyper-masculine, becomes inscribed upon the male body. In this complicated circle of constructions, the image of a man shaving is invoked to reinforce the male gendering of the colonial landscape. This gendered

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[75] Patricia Jasen, *Wild Things: Nature, Culture, and Tourism in Ontario, 1790-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), non-paginated photo.

[76] *Illustrated London News*, 7 January 1899, 35; and *Illustrated London News*, 29 April 1899, 633.

landscape is then co-opted to validate the manliness of the ad's subject, and by extension

of consumers identifying with his performance.

Middle-class Victorian prescriptions for masculinity also propounded an ideal of

self-control and temperance. Even at these distant corners of the empire, notes Graham

Dawson in discussions of T. E. Lawrence, clean-shavenness was a signifier of English

manliness.[77] Epitomizing this ideal, the ad's character shaves even while "shooting the rapids." But in colonial British Columbia, men drank, gambled, and fought, even elevating these homosocial activities to a level of prominence unacceptable in England.[78] As a possible masculine identity, the

Figure 10: "Pioneers at Klondike"

west coast pioneer was unacceptable to metropolitan sensibilities. The "rough" image of

homosocial life in the empire is depicted in a Pioneer Tobacco ad entitled "Pioneers at

Klondike"[79] (see figure 10). Angus McLaren has noted that such men were seen to lack

manliness.[80] Deviating from normative ideals of proper domestic behaviour, these

unshaven men remain isolated from both the metropole and its expectations for the

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[77] Graham Dawson, "The Blond Bedouin: Lawrence of Arabia, Imperial Adventure and the Imagining of English-British Masculinity," in *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800*, eds. Michael Roper and John Tosh (London Routledge, 1991), 135. It is the absence of the "Blonde Bedouin's" beard which clearly defines his Britishness in the face of an otherwise outwardly Arab appearance adopted through clothing and language.

[78] Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 46.

[79] *Illustrated London News*, 7 January 1899, 31; and *Illustrated London News*, 21 January 1899, 105.

[80] McLaren, *The Trials of Masculinity*, 35.

colony. Their distance from authentic domestic and consumer norms is evidenced by one unshaven man's offer of an entire gold nugget for a tin of Pioneer Tobacco.

Life in the "Shooting the Rapids" ad, populated solely by men actively constructing an imperial, masculine fantasy, also belies the fact that many women participated in colonial, "masculine" activities.[81] This environment, falsely constructed for metropolitan consumers as gendered solely male and epitomizing male mastery over the "dangerous" elements of the "untamed" wilderness, is subsequently returned to the metropole through its association with male shaving. If we add to this elaborate fiction the fact that historically "shooting the rapids" was required for the transport of goods across vast distances, and was in fact undertaken by traders and *voyageurs,* who were often aboriginal or otherwise not "English," we see the complex layering of reality and fantasy already three tiers deep.

Like "shooting the rapids," shaving also posed risks of "hidden rocks" threatening men's safety. Safety was a recurrent trope in Williams' advertising. Shaving products promised to mitigate both the dangers of shaving and the dangers encountered in both empire and metropolis. The dangers or "hidden rocks" which threaten men in the "Shooting the Rapids" ad include "disease germs, rank poison, smarting and burning sensations." Charles de Zemler and Allan Peterkin have both noted the uncomfortable medical afflictions associated with shaving and barbering. "Barber's itch" (*tinea barbae*), for example, is a contagious fungal infection which can be transmitted in barbershops where razors are not maintained in an hygienic manner.[82] Men are thus

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[81] Jasen, *Wild Things,* 62.

[82] Peterkin (*One Thousand Beards,* 79) notes that the only three afflictions related to shaving identified in Victorian medical manuals – *tinea barbae* (barber's itch), *seborrhoeic dermatitis* (a waxy-

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warned against the "smarting and burning sensations" they will encounter if they fail to use products (or barbers) of *"known purity and long-established reputation"* (emphasis in original). Like these products or barbers, women of "known purity" were similarly valued in Victorian culture. At the fin de siècle, as women increasingly ventured unescorted among prostitutes and others throughout the city, such "purity" and "reputation" were not always certain to observers. It was women whose virtues were "known" and "long-established" who could best domesticate men in both the metropole and the colony, a concept these shaving ads exploited and reinforced.

The dangers posed by nicks, cuts, and open pores could also be microbial. Nancy Tomes offers some discussion of shaving in her study of germ theory in late nineteenth-century America. As understandings of microbial life and the dangers of infection developed, Tomes argues that a preoccupation with hygiene, what she calls (in the title of her book) the "Gospel of Germs," took hold of individuals. Men began to shave their beards and women to raise their skirts to avoid the danger of carrying infection.[83] In hospitals too, patients were made aseptic through scrubbing and shaving, while doctors followed by sacrificing beards and moustaches "on the altar of asepsis."[84] The anti-TB movement also made inroads against facial hair. The luxurious beard, a staple of masculine identity and popular until late in the century, was now to be sacrificed to "spare loved ones the curse of hairy, germ-laden kisses." One anti-TB slogan asked men to "Sacrifice Whiskers and Save Children."[85] This microbial danger is associated in the "Shooting the Rapids" ad with the cultural imagery and imagined reality of the colony.

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scaly affliction), and *pseudofolliculitis barbae* (PFB) – remain the only three listed in the 2000 edition of the *Merck Manual.* See also De Zemler, *Once over Lightly.*

[83] Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs,* 10.

[84] *Ibid.,* 103-104.

[85] *Ibid.,* 126-127.

Men are reminded that such "rocks" threaten not only "comfort" but also their and their family's "safety [and] health." Promises of safety return repeatedly in the ad, which ends by assuring men, "You can always rely on the *absolute purity* and *safety* of WILLIAMS' SHAVING SOAPS" (emphasis in original).

Promises of safety – colonial or metropolitan – held real cultural currency at this time and could be effectively employed by advertisers. Colonial safety was in fact under threat in China and South Africa in 1899. The Boxer Rebellion and the Boer War both undermined the assumed security of the empire, and, threatening to call men away to protect that empire, jeopardized personal safety as well. Metropolitan men were further threatened by consumerism and domesticity, each of which was transforming gendered spaces and identities. Erika Rappaport argues, for example, that new consumer and gender identities were being created in the commercial spaces of London's West End. Women had now colonized whole districts of the city (including the City – the centre of England's financial markets – itself), repositioning men in relationship to metropolitan spaces. Understandings of gender and consumption further cast the male shopper, presumably acting as his wife's assistant, as feeble and emasculated.[86] It was in response to this torrent of pressures, both colonial and metropolitan, that new identities would be deployed.

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[86] Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure,* 52 and 128.

This deployment of imperial and survivalist masculinities was present in late nineteenth-century literature. It was not only advertising which encouraged men to seek
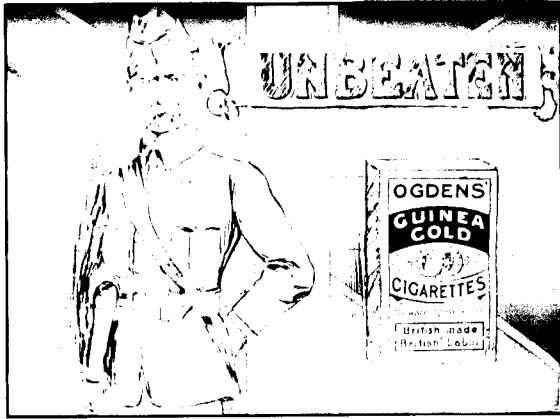

Figure 11: "Unbeaten"

authentic masculinities in the wilds of colonial adventure; an entire genre of fiction developed advocating the same response. Novels like Rider Haggard's *She* (1887) and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) provided examples of masculinity resituated away from the pressures and threats of women and urban domesticity. Both fictional characters and actual men of empire exhibited a specific masculine identity composed of "stoicism as in the death of General Gordon, steely self-control exemplified by Kitchener, [and] self-reliance in the case of Baden-Powell."[87] These men were also found in advertisements of the day. Baden-Powell, Kitchener, and Lord Roberts among others all appear in an Ogden's Guinea-Gold Cigarettes ad entitled "At the Front" printed at the height of the Boer War.[88] Utilized more often in fin-de-siècle advertising than others, the image of Lord Roberts appears in Pioneer Tobacco ads[89] and again in an Ogden's ad in 1901[90] (see figure 11). The lives of these men, many of whom were unmarried, were examples of colonial independence and life free from the fetters of most feminine influences.

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[87] Tosh, *A Man's Place,* 174.
[88] *The Graphic*, 18 August 1900, 252.
[89] *Illustrated London News*, 18 August 1900, 240.
[90] *Illustrated London News*, 5 January 1901, 20.

According to John Tosh, the large numbers of cultural productions, which were replete with dangerous women who must be tamed, further illustrates fear of women's sexuality in this new era.[91] For example in *Dracula*, Lucy Westenra's undead corpse must be ritually beheaded to ensure the safety of children on the Hampstead Heath. The gynophobic implications of these books become clear, claims Showalter, when we examine more closely their gender interactions, or lack thereof. Heterosocial interaction and heterosexual desire are almost nonexistent in examples of the "Male Adventure Romance" genre. Women, if present at all, play only minor roles. And asexual reproduction – reincarnation in Haggard's *She*; chemical transformation in Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*; transfusion in Stoker's *Dracula*; aesthetic replication in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*; or vivisection in H. G. Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896)[92] – minimizes even women's procreative utility.

The male domestic ideal did not, however, disappear at this time. It even offered fin-de-siècle men another identity alternative. By embracing and redefining manliness to incorporate exactly those characteristics which proponents of imperial masculinity sought to expunge, many Victorian men found another means by which they could potentially restabilize unsure gender dynamics. "Not just a pattern of residence or a web of obligations, but a profound attachment: a state of mind as well as a
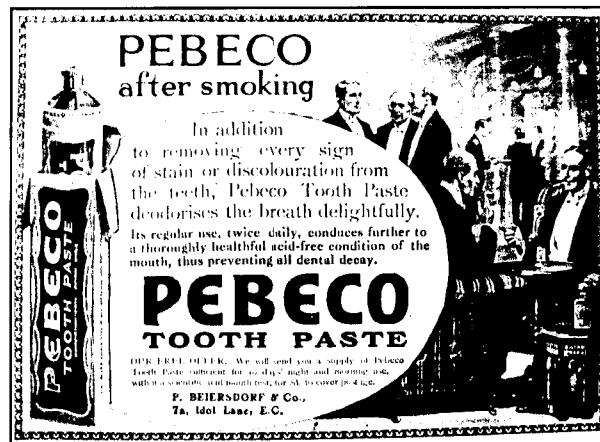

Figure 12: "Pebeco after Smoking"

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[91] Tosh, *A Man's Place*, 153; and McLaren, *The Trials of Masculinity*, 24.
[92] Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, 78.

physical orientation integral to masculinity,"[93] domesticity had a profound effect on gender identities for most of the nineteenth century. By the turn of the century, more "virile" and imperial representations of masculinity were frequently being presented in the advertising of the *Illustrated London News*. Pebeco Toothpaste (see figure 12),[94] Dewar's and Buchanan Whiskey, J. B. Williams' Co. (see figure 9), Pioneer Cigarettes (see figure 10), Autopiano, and others presented the use of their products in entirely homosocial or imperial environments. But even while empire and homosociality were writ large across back pages of the publication where ads were to be found, one could

Figure 13: "Feels Good on the Face"

also find numerous examples advocating domesticity and the security offered by home's hearth.

While the fin de siècle is often characterized by a "flight from domesticity," – indicated by a preponderance of imperial imagery, and increased rates of bachelorhood and homosociality (as in men's clubs and the military) – shaving product advertisements indicate a more complex negotiation of identity. A Williams Co. ad entitled "Feels Good on the Face" (see figure 13) shows a couple embracing while the man shaves.[95] Promising "all possible comfort, convenience and safety," the ad tells men, "You owe it to your face." Representing "safety," "comfort," and "convenience" in a scene of domestic fidelity, "Williams' Shaving Stick guarantees these." Another ad from Williams' Co. entitled "Just Fun" shows a couple

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[93] Tosh, *A Man's Place*, 4.
[94] *Illustrated London News*, 1 December 1913, 159.
[95] *Illustrated London News*, 3 March 1906, 323.

frolicking during the man's "morning shave."[96] This ad tells men that it is "<u>JUST FUN</u> to Shave with Williams' Shaving Soaps" (all emphasis in original). Children too, symbols of domestic stability and conjugal fidelity, take active roles in shaving ads after the turn of the century. This is particularly obvious in a Cuticura ad entitled "Up-To-Date Shaving" (see figure 14), in which both modernity and domesticity are illustrated by the child's participation the manly ritual of shaving.[97] This advertisement conflates modernity and domesticity, representing a good father as "up-to-date." The active voice in the ad is in fact the child's. It is Cuticura's formula, he tells men, which "Makes Papa's face as smooth and soft as mine." Rather than distancing him from the bonds of home life, this product transforms father, making him more like his son, a full-time resident of the domestic sphere. Represented by these and other ads, the threat to masculinity from the domesticating forces of women and the home appear much diminished. In fact, it is *within* the home, where feminine and domestic influences are so clearly illustrated by the active participation of wives and children in the act of shaving, that men can find security and safety from dangers lurking *without*.

Figure 14: "Up-to-Date Shaving"

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Metropolitan identities, for fin-de-siècle English men and women, were constructed on the basis of colonial realities and colonial fantasies. These realities – and these fantasies – were themselves often the product of European influences and

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[96] *Illustrated London News*, 3 April, 1899, 323.
[97] *Illustrated London News*, 29 April, 1911, 639.

imagination. This imagery and these multi-layered constructions could be re-imported back to the metropole to create still more complex and increasingly layered understandings. This inter-relationship with the colony – transatlantic and mutually-constitutive – illustrates the complicated nature of fin-de-siècle constructions of masculinity. Complicating identities for metropolitan men, the home remained a locus of middle-class life. Domestic masculinity, more prominent earlier in the century, was never expunged from men's lives. The concomitant representation of imperial and domestic masculinities in fin-de-siècle advertising indicates the enduring cultural significance of both. Never mutually exclusive, these apparently contradictory constructions of manhood were both consumed by middle-class men. That imperial and domestic masculinities could exist side by side in this advertising indicates a more complicated and mutable understanding of masculinity than historians have previously acknowledged.

Modernizing Men

Clean-shavenness as a signifier of modernity was complex and sometimes contradictory. Even before the beard became unfashionable, aesthetes like Aubrey Beardsley and Oscar Wilde deliberately sported a smooth face to express their antipathy for stifling middle-class values and expectations.[98] And the beard's popularity, though declining from the 1890s, was never completely eclipsed by new fashions in facial hair. Royal and military examples remained, as did long-standing bearded stereotypes of wisdom and experience, all illustrating additional identities and assumptions associated

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[98] Pinfold, *A Closer Shave,* 103.

with beardedness. Modernity was, nonetheless, a recurrent trope in the marketing of shaving products. This modernity was embodied in the citizens, architecture, and advertising which comprised the metropolis.

The appeal to modernity was most clearly illustrated in a Wilkinson Sword ad entitled "Which Do You Prefer."[99] Pressing men to "Shave the safe modern way" (emphasis in original), Wilkinson establishes the opposition between modernity and its alternative with photos of two men. The first illustrates the effects of "ONE KIND OF SHAVE." The man's face has been nicked and pockmarked, presumably by a traditional straight razor. His shave is incomplete and stubble remains. The modern alternative demonstrates "THE WILKINSON SAFETY SWORD STEEL SHAVER SHAVE."

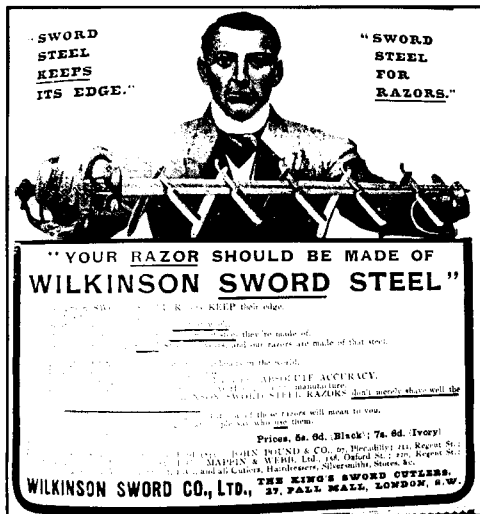
Figure 15: "Your Razor should be made of Wilkinson Sword Steel"

This man, marked by modernity, has no marks on his face at all. The Wilkinson "Sword," not shown in the ad, has "in about 60 seconds...solve[d] the problem." Another ad from Wilkinson printed just one month later shows the "modern" man's razor. While the safety razor and other innovations had been available for at least twenty-five years, the razors displayed in the ad entitled "Your Razor Should be made of Wilkinson Sword Steel" (see figure 15) appear to be traditional straight razors.[100] Paradoxically, it is the sword steel used in the razor's manufacture by Wilkinson for "133 years," which offers modernity. And it is the sword itself, symbol of feudal power and

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[99] *Illustrated London News*, 4 November 1905, 657.
[100] *Illustrated London News*, 2 December 1905, 815.

authority, which participates in this construction of modernity. With razors draped across its blade, the sword simultaneously inhabits medieval worlds of power and virility as well as the world of modernity and hygiene. With competing images and appeals, Wilkinson's advertisements participate in the production of a plurality of masculine identities.

The city, most obvious site of modernity, offered fin-de-siècle men both challenges to, and solutions for, insecure manliness. While metropolitan streets divided disparate classes and categories of individuals, they could also be a site of class and gender encounters complicit in the negotiation and contestation of identity.[101] As we have seen, this space, traditionally gendered male, was increasingly gendered female by the forces of consumerism and women shoppers. The existence of these women in new department stores was for many, however, a significant sign of modernity. Perceived by others as outright colonization, this encroachment further complicated relationships between gender and space. According to Erika Rappaport, forays of women consumers into the city imbued it with new meanings and "fundamentally altered the English metropolis." [102] Women's "colonization" was not limited to prominent Oxford Street and Regent Street shopping districts in the West End. Women's excursions also included sorties into St. Paul's Churchyard and the City,[103] traditional finance and business bastion of masculine authority. Tensions between masculine and feminine space peaked with plans to redevelop Regent Street. No compromise was to be found between advocates of

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[101] On urban identity and encounters see Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); and Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[102] Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, 3-6.

[103] *Ibid.*, 23. See also 109-116 for further discussion of women's presence in the territory of the urban rambler and its destabilization of further masculine identities associated with the metropolis.

"masculine," imperial architecture and shopkeepers demanding "feminine," consumer-oriented designs.[104]

Women consumers exploring the metropolis were seen as one embodiment of modernity in late-Victorian London. This was especially true with the development of consumer emporiums such as Whiteley's and Selfridge's which eclipsed smaller draper's establishments, the traditional site of consumption in the city. Selfridge's in particular tied together consumption and modernity, associating them both with America where Gordon Selfridge was trained. In fact, his department store, opened to great fanfare in 1909, was organized based upon Selfridge's own experiences at Marshall Field's in Chicago.[105] While five years earlier an advertising expert had complained that no British department store was utilizing marketing techniques pioneered by Philadelphia department store owner John Wanamaker,[106] Selfridge's advertising took full advantage of American techniques. He also relied upon consumer assumptions to imply that his brand of American modernity would liberate English women from moribund English men.[107]

Modernity could similarly be offered to men in American terms. Another Williams' ad from 1905 associated manliness and modernity with youthful "College Students"[108] (see figure 16). Rather than English connotations limiting "college" to educational residences, this ad invokes "college" in a uniquely American association with university, knowledge, and modernity. Reminding men that college students "are pretty

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[104] *Ibid.*, 153.
[105] See Bill Lancaster, *The Department Store: A Social History* (London: Leicester University Press, 1995).
[106] Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure,* 156.
[107] *Ibid.*, 143-144.
[108] *Illustrated London News*, 17 June 1905, 871.

good judges of 'what's what' and … have about the best of everything," these young men

clearly become the intended object of emulation. In representing the use of Williams'

product by "educated" students, the implication is clear: those identifying with modern,

educated identities shave with Williams' products. Two Yale pennants are prominently

displayed in the room, and one student wears a cap

emblazoned with the letter "Y." Alluding to this Ivy

League institution, the ad associates notions of

modernity and manliness with America and with

youth.

Representations of masculinity associating

modernity with America, however, were also fraught

with contradictions. While Williams' Co. alluded to

New World modernity, Shavallo "The Ideal Shaving

Soap" described itself as "British and the Best."[109]

Kropp Razors also promoted themselves as "English

Manufacture" and "Real Hamburg Ground,"[110] clearly relying on expectations of old-

world tradition and quality. Advertising for other products was similarly complex.

Further complicating the associations between America and modernity, Provost Oats

asked aghast: "Americanising our Porridge. – What Next?"[111] Invocations of a

specifically American modernity could be used in two contradictory but related manners.

This modernity could be applied to a product as a signifier of its unique appeal and

distance from stagnant English competitors. American modernity, still noted for its

Figure 16: "College Students"

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[109] *Illustrated London News*, 5 March 1910, 368.
[110] *Illustrated London News*, 22 October 1910, 644.
[111] *Illustrated London News*, 15 November 1902, 757.

distance from English tradition and values, could also be cited by other manufacturers as a threat to English men and women. And by extension, products identifying with this modernity could be denigrated for the threat they posed.

For men, life in the modern city was presented as another defining characteristic of masculine identity. Professions increasingly marked men's status while offering identity stability. Products were thus directed specifically to the clerk or the manager alike based on these professional categories.[112] Nonetheless, John Tosh notes that in the late nineteenth-century men of education and means came to find their professional lives alienating, or at least the polluted environment and relations with which they were associated.[113] Purgen, a medicinal tablet, relied upon this metropolitan identity in ads directed to men who worked in the City[114] (see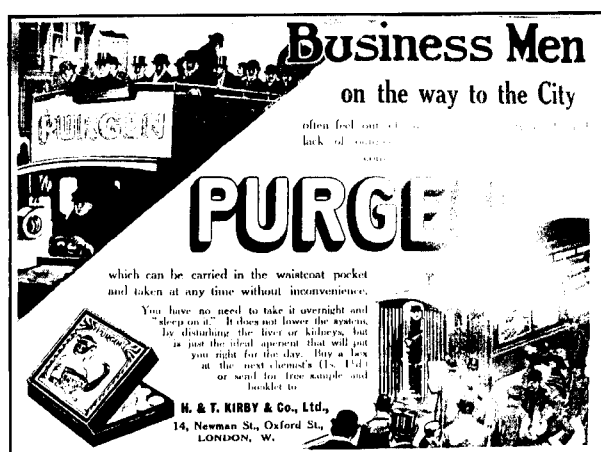 figure 17). While offering a site for men to construct professional identities, the City also produced men who "often feel out of sorts," and, confined to either home or office, experienced "a lack of outdoor exercise." The threat of the City is further illustrated by an advertisement for Formamint, another medicinal tablet[115] (see figure 18). Scores of dour,

Figure 17: "Business Men on the way to the City"

scarf-cloaked, and mostly male victims of modernity stream from the dark metropolis. Smokestacks behind these "City Dwellers" belch pollutants and irritants "which we

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[112] See *Illustrated London News*, 14 May 1910, 754; and *Illustrated London News*, 28 May 1910, 810.

[113] Tosh, *A Man's Place*, 6.

[114] *Illustrated London News*, 27 May 1911, 817.

[115] *Illustrated London News*, 8 January 1910, 65.

cannot help inhaling." It is in this environment that "invisible organisms" infect the body and bring illness. This "overcivilized," "urbanized," "bureaucratized" metropolitan environment further jeopardized the manliness of men who resided there.[116] Illustrated by the ad, this threat appears uniquely directed at the middle class. And men, more prominently and plentifully represented, face the greatest danger. So full of contagion and a litany of gendered and professional pressures, this environment threatened to
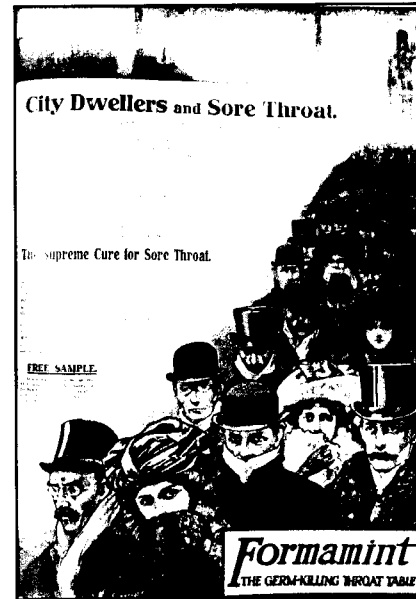

Figure 18: "City Dwellers and Sore Throat"

turn men who could not compete into weaklings. In Darwinian fashion, men unable to endure metropolitan life risked their own survival.[117]

The concept of a safe place in the metropolitan farrago of modern life is clearly identified in an ad, staged outside a barbershop[118] (see figure 19). Charles de Zemler – barber, amateur historian, and owner/ curator of his own pre-war, high-end barbershop/ tonsorial museum at New York's Radio City Music Hall – identifies the barbershop as a space gendered masculine, where men could talk about business or, alternatively, to avoid business (or family) pressures. Historically, it was also a site of safety for men engaged in dubious nocturnal adventures, and offered opportunities either to mend wounds or provide alibis if necessary.[119] It was in this context that ads assured customers they need

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[116] McLaren, *The Trials of Masculinity*, 219.

[117] *Ibid.*, 142 and 156.

[118] *Illustrated London News*, 13 October 1900, 533.

[119] De Zemler, *Once over Lightly*, 4-5. Peter Bailey also notes the importance of barbershops in working-class districts. Peter Bailey, "Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday: Comic Art in the 1880s," *History Workshop* 16 (Autumn 1983): 9.
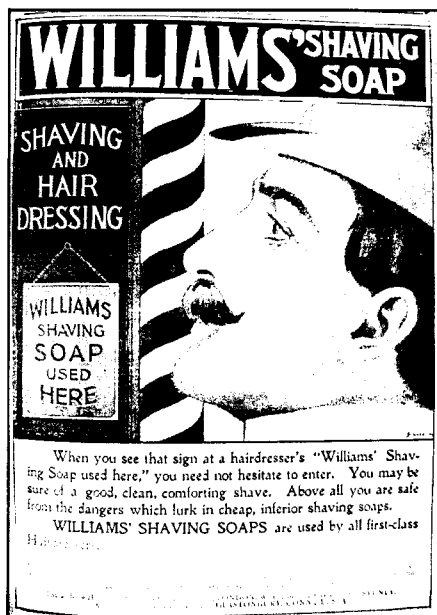
Figure 19: "Williams' Shaving Soap used here"

not hesitate to enter establishments advertising the use of Williams' Shaving Soap. Situated immediately outside the door, the man in this ad occupies a liminal space, one dividing the public streets of the metropolis from the private interior of the barbershop where masculine rituals are performed. Importantly, in this gendered space he is told: "you are safe from the dangers which lurk in cheap, inferior shaving soaps" and by extension, the dangers which lurk outside the barbershop – throughout the metropolis.

New socio-medical ideologies were also seen as the apotheosis of modern life and living. Threats to men in the modern metropolis included contagion and disease. Carrying with it physical, sexual, and moral implications, disease was a notable threat against which the apostles of modernity rallied. In her study of germ theory in America, Nancy Tomes associates the "Gospel of Germs" with the "Cult of the New." Aseptic modes of living, including shaving, became associated with modernity, and new technologies introduced by men such as Gillette and the Kampfe brothers reinforced this association. A new, stripped-down aesthetic – domestic and bodily – was one aspect of the "Cult of the New." Jackson Lears has also noted in 1890s America an ideology of hygiene set in opposition to the "tyranny of things." Victorian ornamentation, known for intricacy and detail, provided innumerable surfaces upon which dust and contagion could collect. Homes bursting with such bric-a-brac were not only havens for contagion but

"embodied the sickness of the self which resided within."[120] For "modern" individuals, such ornamentation was not only unfashionable, but also represented a "reckless disregard for health."[121] As we have seen, the beard was another example of this excess ornamentation. And no action more clearly demonstrated a man's personal dedication to modernity and distance from the unscientific, outmoded, and potentially deadly peculiarities of the Victorians than having his whiskers shorn.[122] "Antisepticonscious" individuals met the challenge of this new aesthetic not only in decoration and architecture, but also in personal ornamentation and body decoration. For middle-class men, Tomes notes, participation in both the "Gospel of Germs" and the "Cult of the New" took the public face of clean-shavenness.[123]

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Associating clean-shavenness with modernity was complex and remained an incomplete project. Additional associations with the city and women further complicated men's relationship with modernity, and appeals to traditional signs of masculinity, such as the Wilkinson "Sword" coexisted with signifiers of the modern. Angus McLaren has noted that manliness was not automatic; it needed to be learned and proved.[124] Modernity also needed to be learned. An 1895 Williams' Co. ad told men that, "Shaving – like anything else is *easy when you know how*,"[125] (emphasis in original) while a 1902 ad gave explicit directions for use of their product. "Wet the face, rub on a little soap, and

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[120] Lears, *Fables of Abundance*, 381.
[121] Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs*, 159.
[122] *Ibid.*, 158.
[123] *Ibid.*, 159.
[124] McLaren, *The Trials of Masculinity*, 33.
[125] *Illustrated London News*, 5 January 1895, 31.

with your brush work up a big, thick, close lather..."[126]   Even the ad's accompanying

image showed a man properly removing foil to access a stick of Williams' soap. Both

manliness and modernity were demonstrated by industry and competence, and Williams'

Co. offered men directions to achieve both.

Consuming Men

Mirroring the Victorian tendency to associate consumerism almost exclusively

with women, scholars too have largely ignored male consumerism.[127]   Among the first

even to consider the intersection between masculinity and consumerism was Stuart Ewen.

Ewen's study, however, is of twentieth-century American mass consumer culture and its

origins. He has little to say about masculinity and consumerism before World War II,

and argues that little advertising was even directed to men at that time.[128]   Further

discussion in the American context is offered by E. Anthony Rotundo who examines the

role of consumerism in male self-expression. Entertainment and leisure form the

backdrop of his discussion. The "commercialization of sport" and the "male love affair

with the automobile," he argues, allowed men to express identities "through their choice

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[126] *Illustrated London News*, 15 February 1902, 268.

[127] For studies of male consumerism see Christopher Breward, *The Hidden Consumer: Masculinities, Fashion and City Life, 1860-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); and Tom Pendergast, *Creating the Modern Man: American Advertising and Consumer Culture* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000). More plentiful are recent studies of consumerism and femininity including Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Woman's Magazine, 1800-1914* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996); Helen Damon-Moore, *Magazines for the Millions; Gender and Commerce in the Ladies' Home Journal and the Saturday Evening Post 1880-1910* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); and Simone Weil Davis, *Living up to the Ads: Gender Fictions in the 1920s* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

[128] Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the American Roots of Consumer Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976), 151.

of goods and services and the style in which they used them."[129] Frank Mort notes that

consumerism offered opportunities for the self-identification of late twentieth-century

urban men.[130]   Jonathan Rutherford also argues that in light of 1980s gender

transformations in Britain, which included such new categories as "toy boy, new man,

new father, lager lout, [and] the yuppie," it was "consumerism and the market, rather than

political struggle and therapy that was providing a language for changing masculine

identities."[131]

Consumerism is a particularly important site for the performance of masculine

identities. Judith Butler argues that gender identities, "performatively constituted,"[132] are

created in the exhibition of culturally available, gendered behaviours.   This

performativity, she argues, is culturally contingent, allowing "openness to resignification

and recontextualization."[133]   According to Butler, then, not only are gender identities

constructed and expressed through performances, but these performances are dynamic

and mutable, allowing for the possibility of new identities as the culture evolves. Such a

matrix of identities tied to masculine consumerism is not just a phenomenon of the late

twentieth century, described by Mort and Rutherford. Rather, it existed a century earlier

in advertising campaigns directed specifically at male consumers. It was in these ads that

middle-class men could see the performance of a plurality of masculine identities.

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[129] Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 282-283. Representative of many discussions of masculine consumerism, Rotundo's discussion is disappointingly brief and supported solely by two footnotes to other secondary sources.

[130] Frank Mort, *Cultures of Consumption: Masculinities and Social Space in late Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1996).

[131] Jonathan Rutherford, *Men's Silences: Predicaments in Masculinity* (London: Routledge, 1992), 63.

[132] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 25.

[133] *Ibid.*, 138.

The performance of identity, generally applied to late twentieth-century life,[134] is also important to consider when we examine the fin de siècle. Peter Bailey, the historian of popular culture and of the music hall, has already identified performance in the construction of class identities in studies of the characters Ally Sloper, Bill Banks, and Champagne Charlie.[135] We can consider masculinity, much as Bailey considers respectability, as a "role (or cluster of roles)," rather than a "universal normative mode."[136] And like Bailey's approach to respectability, we can further recognize that masculinity can accommodate multiple *"seemingly contradictory* modes of behaviour"[137] (emphasis added). The performance of various possible masculinities becomes clear in the shaving advertisements examined above. These ads express the plurality of possible identities available to men at the fin de siècle. Possible identities included the concomitant performance of apparently contradictory imperial and domestic masculinities. Ads invoking modernity and traditional masculinities also exist side by side. While masculinity is mutable and its performances are no more static, the apparent contradiction of identities being offered through advertising requires more discussion.

It is important to consider, first, why advertisers would tie their products to such a range of possible masculine identities, and second, why they would also invoke threats to masculinity in many of those same ads. Peter Bailey tells us, in his discussion of the cartoon imagery found in *Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday*, that marketers are engaged in the

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[134] See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble;* and Sue-Ellen Case, Phillip Brett, and Susan Leigh Foster, eds., *Cruising the Performative: Interventions into the Representation of Ethnicity, Nationality, and Sexuality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

[135] See Bailey, "Ally Sloper's Half Holiday;" Peter Bailey, " 'Will the real Bill Banks please stand up?': Towards a Role Analysis of Mid-Victorian Working-Class Respectability," *Journal of Social History* 12, no. 3 (Spring 1979): 336-353; and Peter Bailey, "Champagne Charlie and the Music-Hall Swell Song," in *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[136] Bailey, "Will the Real Bill Banks Please Stand up?" 338 and 343.

[137] See *Ibid.*, 341. for discussion of Banks' ability to play multiple roles, each apparently of a "distinct, separate, and exclusive type within the working classes."

project of "selling identity."[138] While Bailey's interest is in class identities, this is no less true for gender identities as well. These identities are linked through the ads to products which are presented for consumption. The act of consumption is, like the masculinities to which it is tied, performed in the imagery of many advertisements. These ads then offer not only products for consumption, but also the possible identities being performed there. But why tie these consumables to masculine identities in the first place? By associating shaving implements and products with various identities – domestic, imperial, modern, and traditional – and actively involving them in the performance of these masculine identities, the product could itself then take on many of these meanings. The razor would be modern, and by extension, so too was the man who used it. Offering more than just utility, marketers tied new and extant masculinities to their products. But, Bailey reminds us, those advertisers "who trade in reassurances also take care to perpetuate the anxieties that [they] demand..."[139] Identifying products with solutions, and maintaining a psychic need for a product by associating it with stability of identity also requires the creation of tension in order to create the need for a solution. So there is, in fact, a double project here.

The second project was maintaining an environment where these identities had cultural currency as solutions and were valued for either their validating properties or emulative potential. To that end, situations were also portrayed which evoked threats to dominant understandings of masculinity. As discussed above, the threats inherent in urban life, embodied by women, and posed by the infiltration of home or body by contagion are all evoked in these advertisements. Invoking such anxieties was important.

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[138] Bailey, "Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday," 27.
[139] *Ibid.*

For marketers, this authenticated the need for solutions which their products also promised. But because these threats – and their representations – are contradictory, it is also necessary to present a range of masculine identities – contradictory and inconsistent as well – which can respond to them. A single, monolithic construction of hegemonic masculinity could not adequately counter the manifold threats perceived at the fin de siècle. And because challenges to masculinity were perceived and represented as inconsistent and contradictory, it was necessary that hegemonic masculinity could include a plurality of identities to address these threats and anxieties. Only apparently fractured, the power of hegemonic masculinity was in fact stable. This is not to say that crisis was not invoked or even perceived in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century England, but rather, that historians have been too uncritical of the ubiquity and power of crisis in their readings of masculinity. So, the proliferation of masculine identities, which historians have cited as an example of both the fragile nature of masculinity and of the "crisis of masculinity" at this time, was in fact a sign of the enduring power of hegemonic forms of masculinity, a logical and stabilizing response to perceived threats encountered at the fin de siècle.

Like the masculinities in fin-de-siècle advertising, the threats encountered by men at this time were also inconsistent, contradictory and vague. Women were presented as colonizers of urban space who could undermine patriarchal prerogatives, bankrupting their husbands morally and even financially. Women were also presented as civilizing influences whose stabilizing abilities were so powerful they were even exported to remedy imperfect trajectories of the colonial project. The city too offered opportunities to exert and define professional masculinities. But the city also offered threats of

contagion and pollution. Modernity, finally, offered answers to medical and sexological predicaments, while also bringing to life new social and cultural problems. The pressures encountered by masculinity at this time were complex, manifold, and often contradictory. It follows that responses to them would be equally inconsistent. While invoking anxieties encountered at the fin de siècle, advertisements also displayed performances of masculinity which offered solutions in the form of apparently stable identities.

It is through consideration of these performed masculinities that we can reconsider the notion of a "crisis of masculinity" in historical studies. Described as "pervasive" in a recent review by Judith Allen, crisis remains foundational to most studies of masculinity.[140] Consideration of crisis as an historical framework in the study of masculinity – and some anxiety regarding its application – is not new. Roper and Tosh noted more than a decade ago that the "crisis of masculinity" may be just a construction of 1980s academics, but they continued to use the term nonetheless, describing crisis as "precisely what many male office clerks experienced in the late Victorian period."[141] Since that time, as Allen notes, most studies continue to rely upon this framework to understand masculinity. But we must ask whether crisis as a framework for understanding masculinity is in fact accurate and valid. Allen asks for instance, why, if social transformations were so chaotic and crisis so pervasive, no similar "crisis of femininity" literature exists.[142] Despite such apt questions, historians nonetheless frame masculinity as "fragile, defensive, threatened, and at risk. Inherently unstable, masculinity is always in process, under negotiation, needing to be 'shored up,' reinforced,

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[140] Judith A. Allen, "Men Interminably in Crisis? Historians on Masculinity, Sexual Boundaries, and Manhood," *Radical History Review* 82 (2002): 193. And for an excellent bibliography of masculine "crisis" studies see Allen, note 10.
[141] Roper and Tosh, *Manful Assertions*, 18-19.
[142] Allen, "Men Interminably in Crisis?" note 11.

buttressed against its many enemies."[143]   The enemies apparently included new urban

subcultures, female activism, and the products of modernity outlined above. If, however,

as this paper argues, the multiplicity of masculine identities proliferating at the fin de

siècle is, rather than an indication of chaos, a stabilizing response to threats which were

themselves constructed as varied and contradictory, it follows that masculinity is a far

less fragile construct than most historians have acknowledged.

Conclusion

In 1900, *Queen* noted the popularity of "advertising parties" where guests would

dress as their favourite ad campaign.[144] As we have seen in the above discussion, many

of the ads which could have been selected by patrons of these parties would, ironically,

have embodied contemporary gender apprehensions. Not only were fin-de-siècle English

men and women offered identities and constructions of gender through the products they

consumed in private, but these parties remind us of an environment where men and

women actually performed publicly the identities found in contemporary advertising.

The rhetoric and iconography of advertisements is evidently more than just commodity

propaganda. T. J. Jackson Lears argues that advertising along with other institutions

promoted the aspirations, anxieties, and personal identities of the age.[145] Whether

dressed as Lord Roberts from an Ogden's Guinea-Gold Cigarette ad or as the Brooke's

Monkey, who reminded consumers that his soap was not for the laundry, patrons

indicated by their costumes the reception and infiltration of such characters into the

public consciousness. And these characters were not just hawkers of smoke and soap.

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[143] *Ibid.,* 199.
[144] Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure,* 189.
[145] Lears, *Fables of Abundance,* 2-5.

They were all complicit in the construction of new imperial, domestic, and modern gender identities.

Mathew Sweet states bluntly that fin-de-siècle prescriptions for masculinity "didn't make a great deal of sense." Whatever the source we consult, he argues, Victorian theorists and polemicists "failed to offer a uniform, coherent blueprint for proper masculine behaviour."[146] These statements betray an expectation of a unified and monolithic masculinity. The fact is that no such monolith existed. This realization was followed by the assumption that late nineteenth-century masculinity was fragile and fractured by the myriad threats it encountered. These assumptions were then used by historians to reinforce readings of crisis which remain in current literature. Calls to acknowledge the mutability of masculinity have only resulted in an acceptance of change from one monolithic and stable construction to another. These studies allowed for change, but it could be neither constant nor ongoing. Rather, change was an anomaly in an otherwise static masculinity. This paper argues that hegemonic masculinity was comprised of a plurality of competing and conflicting possible identities which, rather than indicating a state of chaos or crisis, are in fact indicative of its continuing power, even in a period otherwise marked by instability and change.

In the performance of masculine identities, shaving advertisements presented competing and polyvalent images. Competing and even conflicting images and ideologies, both within and between ads, give insight into the complicated constitution of masculinities and "others" during the period. Just as fin-de-siècle anxieties and tensions were inconsistent and contradictory, so too were the solutions. Paradoxically, it is in the

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[146] Sweet, *Inventing the Victorians,* 183.

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plurality of identities, where many historians have found chaos, I suggest masculinity found stability. Only apparently fractured, masculinity was in fact comprised of multiple possibilities. Appearing inconsistent and even contradictory, these identities are actually more cohesive than they appear. In an era of transformation and change, the ability of masculinity to adapt, as shown in contemporary shaving advertisements, is necessarily stabilizing. In the ads for products they consumed, men could find validation of their own lives as domestic fathers, or even of their dreams of frontier life away from Britain. It is the performance of this adaptability and ongoing mutability of masculinity which, in an era perceived by many as chaotic, offered men anything but chaos.

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