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Fashions in Shaving and Trimming of the Beard: The Men of the *Illustrated London News*, 1842–1972¹

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This research note presents sample-derived measures of comparative frequencies over time (1842–1972) for changing modes in men's facial barbering. Students of the dynamics of taste have been slow to follow up A. L. Kroeber's pioneering demonstration that shifts in the comparative proportions of women's dress design over time have generally tended to follow alternating directions over long periods which are notably consistent and regular in their recurrence. The remarkable similarity of the chronological patterns emerging from my measurements to those found by Kroeber strongly suggests that they are common expressions of underlying conditions and sequences in social behavior. The hypothesis that stylistic changes are subject to common behavioral influences is reinforced now that the two sets of data are available for comparison.

Almost as if in disregard of the arresting results of A. L. Kroeber's pioneering quantitative study of changing proportional dimensions in women's dress fashions, in which he (with Jane Richardson) found remarkably regular waves of approximately a century's duration, no comparable attempt has been made to trace fluctuations in other forms of ornament. Kroeber measured annual fluctuations in width and length of skirts, waistlines, and décolletage as ratios to women's heights. This report presents the results of a careful sampling of the comparative frequencies over time of men's choices of forms of grooming their facial hair. It does not recapitulate Richardson and Kroeber's article (1940) but points out where the present research replicates their findings. My data show that men are just as subject to fashion's influence as women.

SOURCE OF DATA AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

In selecting data, the first desideratum, as for Kroeber, was "ease of obtaining material which is not only fairly abundant but strictly comparable from decade to decade and even from century to century" (Richardson and Kroeber 1940, p. 111). I settled for the period of 1842–1972 on the

¹ My particular debt of gratitude is to Lois Wallace Fenske for her good work in conducting the sample counts. I am grateful to Professor Hirokuni Tamura for helpful discussion. Patricia Hall and Linda Van Kirk assisted in preparing the tables and manuscript. Responsibility is mine alone.

ground that those were the years of continuous weekly publication of the world's most venerable pictorial news magazine, the *Illustrated London News*, the single source of the sample. Although Kroeber's study covered three centuries, his detailed analysis was confined to the last 150 years sampled, a time span not much longer than the 130 years of this study.

The gentlemen of the *News* were, of course, members of a cultural subgroup, mainly British, and nearly all prominent in one way or another in their nation's affairs. This limitation of the sample carried with it compensating advantages. We could be sure that the more crucial socioeconomic characteristics of the subjects, particularly age, occupation, income level, and social status, would remain much the same over the years.

My procedure for gathering data was, quite literally, to take a head count, determining for any one year the comparative frequencies of men's choices among five major features of barbering: sideburns alone, sideburns and moustache in combination, beard (a category that included any amount of whiskers centering on the chin), moustache alone, and clean shavenness. To obtain distinct likenesses, to minimize duplication, and to avoid bias, I excluded pictures of groups (because such pictures often obscure parts of faces or show them at angles), pictures of royalty (because the royal family gets more press coverage than the average newsmaker), pictures illustrating fiction (because fictional time is not necessarily contemporary), pictures in advertisements (because models photographed are obviously selected with special purposes in mind), and pictures of non-Europeans (because individuals of other national origins are often subject to cultural influences unrelated to general Western tonsorial fashion).

I did not exclude likenesses of men in uniform. During war years the overwhelming majority of photographs were of young men in military service. Had I excluded them, I should have run the risk of compiling inversely biased samples. However, because of the strong likelihood that younger men are more inclined to follow the ascendant style and to avoid the outgoing, the statistical effect would naturally be to step up the rate of increase of the former and to accelerate the decline of the latter.

I was able to accumulate a considerably greater number of observations for every year sampled than was Kroeber, who rarely measured more than 10 dress models annually. My aim was to gather a minimum of 100 observations in each year by sampling either a three- or a six-month period. In the earlier years (1842-77), because illustrated likenesses were sparser, the average number of observations per annum was 76. From 1878 on, yearly sample numbers fell below 100 in only two years, 1931 and 1933, with 95 and 97, respectively (see Appendix).²

² For some years the more zealous compilers exhausted the issues of an entire year. The effect of such erring on the side of generous samples is in all probability to improve the frequency estimates for the years concerned.

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF THE TIME SERIES

The swings plotted for changing fashions in the disposition of facial hair exhibit as much "stateliness of march" as so impressed Kroeber in the history of dress, if not more (figs. 1, 2). The time series for clean shaving is the most persistently and uniformly regular of all the five categories (fig. 2). It may be noted that the number of clean-shaven men in any year

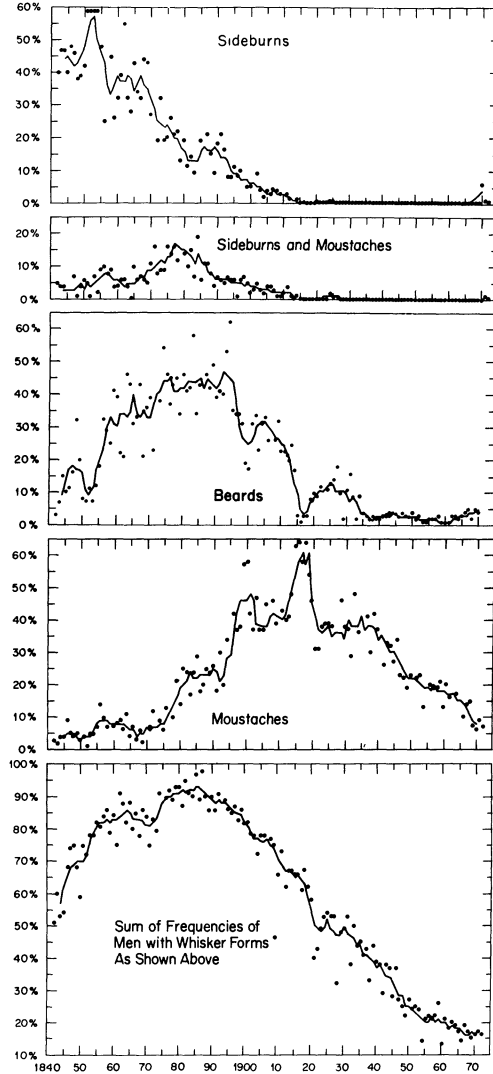


FIG. 1.—Frequencies of whisker forms, 1842–1972. Lines = five-year moving averages; dots = frequencies as percentiles of yearly samples. Source: *Illustrated London News*, 1842–1972.

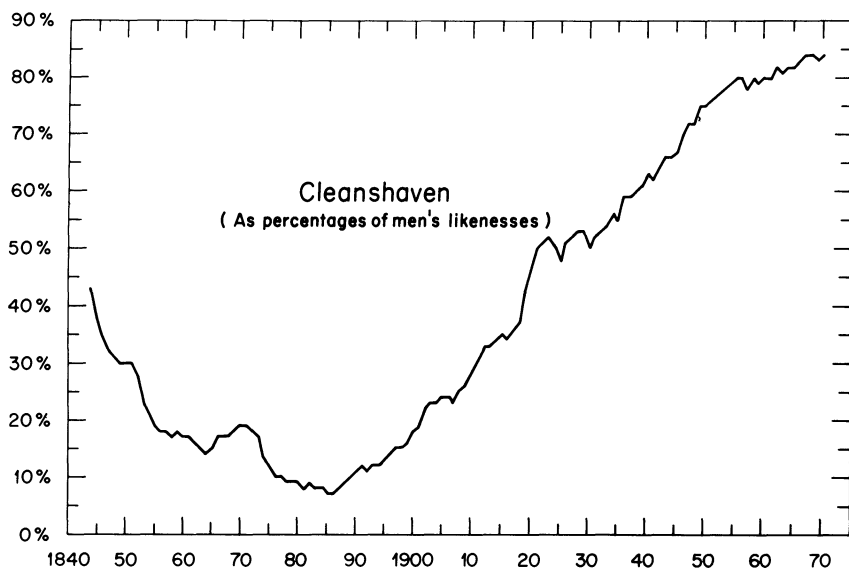


FIG. 2.—Frequencies of cleanshaven likenesses

is by definition the reciprocal of the sum of those in the four whisker categories. The two opposite directional swings in clean shavenness are marked by extreme longevity, as well as by very slight fluctuation in annual rates of change. The playing down, on the one hand, and playing up, on the other, of ornamentation appear to be fundamental to shifting style preferences in successive eras.

The peaks of the several whisker types were as follows (fig. 1): sideburns, 1853; sideburns and moustache, 1877; beards, 1892; moustaches, 1917-19. An interesting consideration that emerges from all the time series, except that for clean shavenness, is that a long period of disappearance or nearly complete dormancy of a style form seems to follow its decline. The patterns of the curves make it clear that the standard procedure of measuring curves from low point to low point is not entirely suitable to the data. However, simply to compare with Kroeber's finding of a mean wave length approximating a century, we may compute trough-to-trough measurements to arrive at wave lengths as follows: sideburns and moustaches (1846-1916), 70 years; beards (1840-1960), 120 years; moustaches (1850-1970), 120 years; with an average for the three of about 103 years.³

When we compare Kroeber's width of skirt wave, which rose and fell

³ Sideburns are omitted because the measurements of this fashion take into account only slightly more than their period of decline (1853-1915). The upward swing in clean shaving, which began in 1886, appeared to peak out only in 1966, which suggests the likelihood of a far longer wave.

between 1811 and 1926, and the beard wave, which rose and fell between 1842 (or very possibly 1840) and 1956, we find one of the most remarkable correspondences in the entire body of time-series measurements (fig. 3). Astonishingly, the respective lengths of upswings are 50 years and 48 or 50. Each wave occupied a period of almost exactly 115 years. With respect to ranges of variation, skirt diameters reached the anatomical minimum of approximately one-fifth of height of figure in the years 1811 and 1926, having peaked at 105% of figure height in 1861. (Five-year moving averages, Richardson and Kroeber [1940], table 8.) Beard frequencies rose and fell from less than 10% in 1844 to zero in 1957, attaining their maximum of 47% in the five years centering on 1892.

I computed the Pearsonian correlation coefficient between the two time series, allowing for different lead-lag intervals because the ups and downs of each series took place at different times, probably a consequence of age differences between fashion models and the prominent men of the *News*. An interval of 21 years added to the actual dates of the skirt width wave

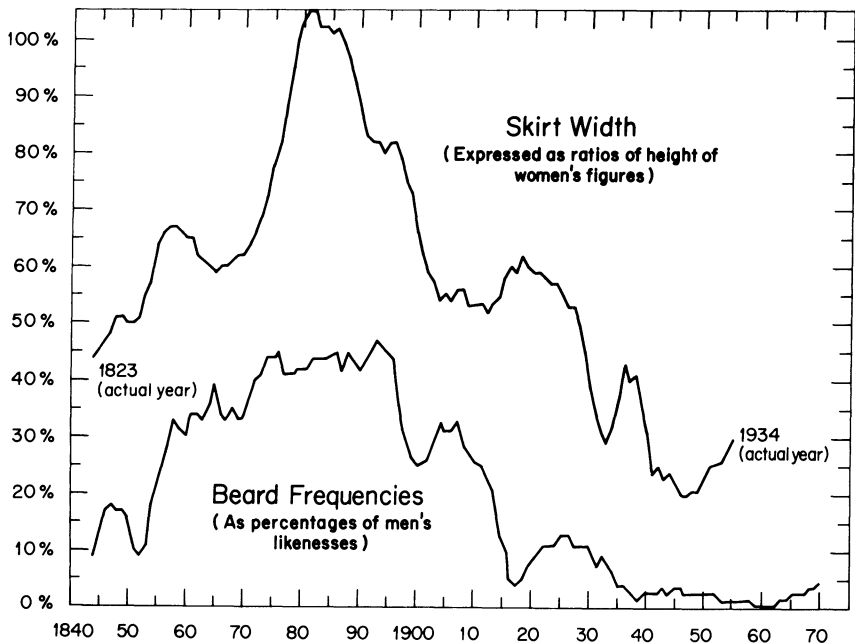


FIG. 3.—Skirt width (1823–1934) and beard frequency fluctuations (1844–1955), five-year moving averages. The time scales of the two curves have been positioned to allow for assumed 21-year lead in skirt fluctuations possibly related to comparative youthfulness of subjects in Richardson and Kroeber's population samples for dress (see text for further explanation). Coefficient of correlations for the two series, $r = .867$. Sources: skirt widths (Richardson and Kroeber 1940, table 8); beard frequencies, Appendix.

yielded the highest value (Pearson r equals .867) of the correlation coefficient.

FASHION FLUCTUATION AND EXTERNAL FACTORS

The remarkable regularity of our wavelike fluctuations suggests a large measure of independence from outside historical events. The innovation of the safety razor and the wars which occurred during the period studied appear to have had negligible effects on the time series. King C. Gillette's patented safety razor began its meteoric sales rise in 1905. But by that year beardlessness had already been on the rise for more than 30 years, and its rate of expansion seems not to have augmented appreciably afterward. Far from initiating a great style wave, Mr. Gillette rode one to fame and fortune. As to wars, it seems that any significant alterations in rates of fluctuation in the time series are due mainly to sampling error. Beards (fig. 1) declined markedly in frequency during the Boer War, 1899–1902, and World War I. Clean shavenness (fig. 2) underwent a particularly rapid rise between 1915 and 1922. These changes probably reflect the unusually high incidence of younger men in the sample for the periods. High Commands do, of course, issue regulations permitting or proscribing whiskers, but I suspect that they merely reinforce the prevailing style.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Measurements of style shifts in other frames of reference, such as architecture, furniture, and industrial design, should be undertaken. Also, I would like to see the present study expanded to include men in countries other than Great Britain and to extend the time span. A follow-up study of biographical information on the men of the *News* might determine their birth dates and thus provide clues to the extent to which older men cling to declining modes of whisker grooming.

In this report, my attention has centered on Kroeber's concern with "problems of *how* aesthetic styles change in general, to which in turn we must have some answer before we can hope to inquire fruitfully *why* they change" (Richardson and Kroeber 1940, "Conclusions"; italics mine).⁴ My only venture here into the "why" is to subscribe to an explanation suggested by Agnes Brook Young, who observed that people consider two types of fashions ugly or ridiculous: not only the discarded variants of the current direction of style but even the fashions of the preceding era (Young

⁴ The present study is an outgrowth of a long-standing interest in the understanding of fashion causation (see, e.g., Robinson [1963] and references cited therein).

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1937).⁵ This means that as long as any considerable number of people who have stuck to a superseded form of personal appearance are still living, the young may tend to avoid such a mode as old hat. These distasteful associations seem to be safely overcome only after the passage of a century or more.

⁵ Miss Young was concerned with the shift in women's preference over time among three categories of skirt form: bell shaped, tubular, and full in the back. She found that each type dominated fashion to the exclusion of the other two for approximately a third of a century, but she made no attempt at time-series measurements.

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APPENDIX

TABLE 1. NUMBERS AND PERCENTAGES OF FACIAL HAIR STYLES COUNTED PER YEAR, 1842-1972

Source: Illustrated London News

Year	Months Counted	Clean Shaven		Moustaches		Sideburns		Moustache & Sideburns		Beards		Total Number in Sample (100%)
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1842	12	18	49	1	3	15	40	2	5	1	3	37
1843	6	43	40	2	2	51	47	4	4	8	7	108
1844	6	23	47	3	4	36	47	3	4	11	15	76
1845	12	31	46	1	2	27	40	1	2	7	10	67
1846	6	14	32	4	9	21	48	0	0	5	11	44
1847	6	11	26	2	5	20	46	3	7	7	16	43
1848	6	18	25	3	4	27	38	1	1	23	32	72
1849	6	19	32	3	5	23	39	2	4	12	20	59
1850	12	29	41	2	3	30	42	4	6	6	8	71
1851	12	25	25	4	4	60	59	5	5	7	7	101
1852	12	19	28	1	1	37	59	1	1	7	11	67
1853	12	20	22	5	5	55	59	7	7	7	7	94
1854	12	19	22	5	5	51	59	2	2	11	12	88
1855	12	17	18	6	7	45	48	9	9	17	18	96
1856	6	35	19	25	14	44	25	17	10	55	32	176
1857	6	21	16	13	10	48	37	10	8	37	29	129
1858	6	22	14	12	7	74	45	14	9	41	25	163
1859	6	30	21	12	8	38	26	6	4	58	41	144
1860	12	14	16	6	7	27	32	3	4	33	39	83
1861	6	9	25	3	8	14	39	2	6	8	22	36
1862	6	3	9	3	9	18	55	2	6	7	21	33
1863	6	6	12	3	6	16	32	2	4	23	46	50
1864	6	5	18	3	11	8	28	0	0	12	43	28
1865	12	7	12	2	4	25	43	6	10	18	31	58
1866	12	12	20	4	7	21	34	3	6	20	33	60
1867	12	8	15	2	3	18	32	4	7	24	43	56
1868	12	10	22	3	6	20	44	3	6	10	22	46
1869	12	8	14	1	2	25	43	3	5	21	36	58
1870	12	11	16	5	7	19	27	8	11	28	39	71
1871	6	11	25	3	7	13	29	7	16	10	23	44
1872	6	8	17	6	12	9	19	4	8	21	44	48
1873	6	9	21	0	0	14	32	4	9	16	38	43
1874	6	6	9	6	9	12	19	6	9	35	54	65
1875	12	20	12	10	6	33	20	25	16	75	46	163
1876	9	10	10	13	13	26	26	14	14	37	37	100
1877	12	5	8	8	12	14	21	11	16	29	43	67
1878	12	11	11	10	10	22	22	12	12	45	45	100
1879	9	7	7	21	21	13	13	25	25	34	34	100
1880	12	17	7	39	14	50	19	39	14	124	46	269
1881	6	13	13	25	25	11	11	10	10	41	41	100
1882	9	5	5	25	24	15	14	16	15	44	42	105
1883	6	9	9	17	17	9	9	7	7	58	58	100
1884	3	10	10	24	24	13	13	19	19	34	34	100
1885	12	5	3	60	29	38	19	13	6	88	43	204
1886	6	11	11	18	18	17	17	11	11	43	43	100
1887	9	2	2	20	20	21	21	11	11	46	46	100
1888	6	10	10	25	25	15	15	8	8	42	42	100
1889	6	14	14	24	24	9	9	4	4	49	49	100
1890	12	24	10	63	26	43	18	17	7	93	39	240
1891	3	14	14	18	18	21	21	6	6	41	41	100
1892	3	9	9	30	30	16	16	5	5	40	40	100
1893	3	12	12	20	20	8	8	7	7	53	53	100
1894	3	11	11	13	13	8	8	6	6	62	62	100
1895	12	64	14	163	34	54	11	26	6	168	35	475
1896	6	49	15	140	42	28	8	4	1	112	34	333
1897	6	55	13	159	37	40	10	27	6	148	34	429
1898	6	70	17	160	38	29	7	31	7	134	31	424
1899	6	93	14	362	57	34	5	30	5	128	19	667
1900	12	146	18	470	58	37	5	18	2	140	17	811
1901	3	35	18	80	42	11	6	6	3	59	31	188
1902	3	39	21	69	37	18	9	10	5	52	28	188
1903	3	44	23	88	47	7	4	5	3	43	23	187
1904	6	55	28	66	37	4	2	3	2	67	33	195
1905	12	102	22	167	37	17	4	17	4	153	33	456
1906	6	77	22	154	45	11	3	14	4	91	26	347
1907	6	129	23	217	41	23	4	18	3	150	29	537
1908	6	66	23	133	46	12	4	2	1	73	26	286
1909	6	97	25	157	39	10	3	2	1	126	32	392
1910	12	284	34	321	39	19	2	21	2	195	23	840
1911	3	96	27	122	43	8	3	11	4	66	23	283
1912	3	132	38	140	40	2	1	1	1	71	20	346
1913	3	59	33	72	41	4	1	0	0	36	25	172
1914	3	71	33	103	48	2	1	3	1	37	17	216
1915	12	583	34	1097	63	0	0	0	0	50	3	1730

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APPENDIX TABLE 1 (Continued)

Year	Months Counted	Clean Shaven		Moustaches		Sideburns		Moustache & Sideburns		Beards		Total Number in Sample (100)
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
1916	3	83	33	157	64	0	0	0	0	2	1	242
1917	3	90	39	134	58	0	0	0	0	5	3	229
1918	3	79	33	154	64	0	0	0	0	7	3	240
1919	6	38	38	54	54	0	0	0	0	8	8	100
1920	12	197	42	218	46	4	1	2	1	48	10	469
1921	3	152	60	79	31	0	0	0	0	22	9	253
1922	3	104	57	56	31	0	0	0	0	22	12	182
1923	3	56	51	42	38	0	0	0	0	12	11	110
1924	3	56	47	47	39	1	1	2	2	14	11	120
1925	12	189	46	159	39	1	1	1	1	55	13	405
1926	3	47	47	38	38	0	0	1	1	14	14	100
1927	3	47	47	35	35	0	0	0	0	18	18	100
1928	3	68	68	22	22	0	0	0	0	10	10	100
1929	3	58	52	51	46	0	0	0	0	2	2	111
1930	12	178	51	130	38	0	0	0	0	39	7	367
1931	3	45	47	35	37	0	0	0	0	15	16	95
1932	3	68	62	32	29	0	0	0	0	10	9	110
1933	3	48	50	47	48	0	0	0	0	2	2	97
1934	3	61	55	40	36	0	0	0	0	10	9	111
1935	12	239	55	177	41	0	0	0	0	20	4	436
1936	3	69	59	44	38	0	0	0	0	4	3	117
1937	3	197	57	140	41	0	0	0	0	6	2	343
1938	3	91	67	41	30	0	0	0	0	4	3	136
1939	3	69	56	52	42	0	0	0	0	2	2	123
1940	12	284	61	172	37	0	0	0	0	12	2	468
1941	3	90	62	50	35	0	0	0	0	5	3	145
1942	3	88	71	32	26	0	0	0	0	4	3	124
1943	3	95	62	51	33	0	0	0	0	6	5	152
1944	3	94	63	48	32	0	0	0	0	6	5	148
1945	12	434	72	160	27	0	0	0	0	7	1	601
1946	3	110	63	59	34	0	0	0	0	6	3	175
1947	3	91	73	28	23	0	0	0	0	5	4	124
1948	3	79	75	22	22	0	0	0	0	4	3	103
1949	3	135	78	31	19	0	0	0	0	6	3	172
1950	12	243	73	78	23	0	0	0	0	12	4	333
1951	3	80	76	23	22	0	0	0	0	2	2	105
1952	3	92	75	27	22	0	0	0	0	3	3	122
1953	3	116	76	35	23	0	0	0	0	2	1	153
1954	3	122	86	19	13	0	0	0	0	1	1	142
1955	12	401	79	99	19	0	0	0	0	9	2	509
1956	3	104	78	27	20	0	0	0	0	2	2	133
1957	3	107	79	26	19	0	0	0	0	3	2	136
1958	3	110	78	28	19	0	0	0	0	5	3	143
1959	3	74	74	21	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	100
1960	12	119	87	18	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	137
1961	3	115	79	30	20	0	0	0	0	2	1	147
1962	3	165	81	32	16	0	0	0	0	6	3	203
1963	3	170	80	36	17	0	0	0	0	6	3	212
1964	3	150	81	32	17	0	0	0	0	4	2	186
1965	3	151	83	27	15	0	0	0	0	5	3	183
1966	3	228	86	27	10	0	0	0	0	10	4	265
1967	3	227	81	40	14	0	0	0	0	13	5	280
1968	3	153	83	28	15	0	0	0	0	4	2	185
1969	6	195	85	15	7	6	3	0	0	12	5	228
1970	3	180	84	14	6	12	6	0	0	9	4	215
1971	3	168	83	18	9	2	1	2	1	13	6	203
1972	6	195	84	17	7	1	½	1	½	17	8	231

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