

## TEETH IN VICTORIAN ART

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*By David Sonstroem*

IF JOURNAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE ERAS reflect their times truly, Victorians and their predecessors did not manage their faces as we do ours. We of the twenty-first century grin or grimace without restraint, but the Victorians checked the impulse to show their teeth. When we engage in an unguarded smile, our show of teeth is intended and taken to mean merely that we are in good spirits or good company. Pictorial evidence indicates that when the Victorians did likewise, the expression held other meaning.

The change occurred in the twentieth century — the latter half especially — on both sides of the Atlantic. During the nineteenth century, teeth were depicted as rarely in the United States as they were in England (and in the rest of Europe). To test the claim, I scanned a randomly chosen volume of the *Illustrated London News* — that for January through June 1878 — determining the frequency with which people are depicted with teeth showing. Then I did the same for *Harpers Weekly* for the same year. In the *Illustrated London News* there were 43 toothy faces out of a total of 1332 faces in which teeth would be visible if exposed; in *Harpers Weekly*, 65 out of a total of 2062 possibilities. Hence the ratio is 1 in 31 for the English journal, 1 in 32 for the American one. In both journals, by far the largest number of those depicted with teeth showing are non-Caucasians. Excluding them produces ratios of 1 in 118 and 1 in 68 respectively. This disparity between journals is mainly due to *Harpers's* penchant for caricaturing the Irish and vagrants as toothy creatures.

During the nineteenth century the ratio for the fine arts, in England at least, is exactly the same as that for the popular publications considered. A sampling of 870 figures in Jeremy Maas's *Victorian Painters* produces but 27 with teeth visible, 10 appearing in one work, Hunt's *May Morning in Magdalen Tower* (128). The ratio is 1 figure who discloses teeth in every 32 who might, and setting aside Hunt's toothy work produces a ratio of 1 in 51.

To determine the modern ratio, I did likewise for three issues of *Newsweek* (7, 14, and 21 July 1997) and six issues of the *London Times* (24–30 June 1997). In *Newsweek* I found 184 faces disclosing teeth out of a total of 485 eligible faces — a ratio of 1 in 2.6. In the *Times* I found 580 such faces out of a total of 1351 — a ratio of 1 in 2.3. In short, both sides of the Atlantic have the same ratio in the 1870s and the same ratio in the late 1990s. But in the earlier era, 1 pictured person in roughly 32 discloses teeth; in the later, 1 in roughly

2.5. A modern depicted face is 13 times more likely to display teeth than a nineteenth-century one.

Almost all the illustrations in the *Illustrated London News* and *Harpers Weekly* are drawings, whereas almost all in *Newsweek* and the *Times* are photographs. To test whether the great increase in teeth depicted might have been caused solely by the shift in artistic medium, I compared a sampling of non-photographic portraits of the nineteenth century with a sampling from the twentieth. In John Walker, *Portraits: 5,000 Years*, the chapter treating Europe and America from 1790 to 1914 reproduces 54 portrait figures, only 1 of them, a young girl, with teeth visible. The chapter treating European and American portraits from 1900 to 1983 reproduces 42 portrait figures, 13 with teeth visible. Allan Gwynne-Jones, *Portrait Painters: European Portraits to the End of the Nineteenth Century and English Twentieth-Century Portraits*, reproduces 18 English portrait figures of the twentieth century, all painted before 1950. Two of the 18 disclose teeth. The impromptu survey produces, for the nineteenth century, a ratio of 1 figure who discloses teeth in every 54 who might, and, for the twentieth century, a ratio of 1 in 4. In the journals (as I say above) a modern depicted face is 13 times more likely to show teeth than a nineteenth-century one; in non-photographic portraiture, a modern depicted face is 13.5 times more likely to show teeth than a nineteenth-century one. The strikingly similar ratios strongly suggest that the twentieth-century display of teeth is largely independent of medium: the increase in the depiction of teeth is not just due to the camera's reproducing what the limner chooses to overlook.

More striking than the numbers is the shift in what disclosed teeth signify: in none of the Victorian instances of displayed teeth does the display signify mere civility or mild happiness; in almost all the modern instances drawn from journals and newspapers the display signifies precisely that and no more.<sup>1</sup> There is, however, a sharp difference in this respect between twentieth-century mass media and twentieth-century fine art — a difference I touch on at the end of this essay.

My aim is not to account for or evaluate the change in the representation of faces but to call attention to the meanings embedded in the waning convention.<sup>2</sup> Because a Victorian artist's depicting a subject with teeth showing is so rare, we may assume that any display of teeth holds meaning. Modern traffickers in promiscuous grins are liable to treat the displays of teeth in Victorian art as holding as little purport as such displays in our own day. If viewers do treat them thus, they overlook an important aspect of the Victorian artist's symbolism. My aim is to refresh that meaning through a simple exercise in taxonomy. Considering a sampling of Victorian works of art, I sort into several groups the characters who display teeth, each group defined by a salient aspect of the characters' personality. Thereafter I summarize briefly and close by, first, examining a few problematic works of art in which a display of teeth guides us in interpreting them, and, second, glancing at the motif in twentieth-century fine art.

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THE WORK OF WILLIAM HOGARTH PROVIDES an excellent starting point for considering this aspect of Victorian art. (Although I shall focus on Victorian art, the convention under discussion originated well before the nineteenth century.) Teeth are far less prominent in his art than I had anticipated. Although occasionally depicting dying, drinking, or inane

characters with mouth agape (e.g., in *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane*, 1750, Paulson 2: 100 and 101), Hogarth almost always limits the display of teeth to perfervid characters. Teeth are uncharacteristically, strikingly prominent in his *Enthusiasm Delineated* (ca. 1760, Paulson 2: 299; Figure 13). Here he depicts a congregation in high passion, from the wide-mouthed preacher to the disorderly listeners, weeping, eating, fainting, and otherwise carrying on. Teeth are everywhere. In the foreground a toothy hound howls. Suspended over all is a gigantic globe with a face broken into a great rictus, jagged with six long, sharp teeth. The



Figure 13. William Hogarth, *Enthusiasm Delineated*, c. 1760. Drawing. © Copyright The British Museum.

whole world, Hogarth implies, runs rabid, as passion overpowers reason. Another work of Hogarth's in keeping with eighteenth-century distrust of enthusiasm is *John Wilkes, Esq.* (1763, Paulson 2: 387; Figure 14). Journalist and politician Wilkes, for whom the assassin of Abraham Lincoln was named, was a champion of liberty, whose outspoken criticism of George III led to his repeated expulsion from the House of Commons. Hogarth draws him as having his mouth open in a toothy grin. Wilkes looks mischievous, perhaps insane. The open smile marks him as lacking self-command, *mésure*. The same meaning pertains to



*John Wilkes Esq.*  
 Drawn from the life and Etched in Aquafortis by W. H. Hogarth.  
 Price 1/6. 1763. Published near the in. 1st of Parliament May 16. 1763.

Figure 14. William Hogarth, *John Wilkes, Esq.*, 1763. Engraving. © Copyright The British Museum.

the grin in the work of another eighteenth-century artist, Paul Sandby. His *The Author Run Mad* (1754, Paulson 2: 147) shows plenty of teeth in this facetious portrayal of an overwrought author who has lost his composure.

Other eighteenth-century artists — caricaturists especially — depict teeth far more liberally and indiscriminately than Hogarth does.<sup>3</sup> But at the core of the ridicule of the broader-gauge satirists, such as Thomas Rowlandson, is the same contempt for enthusiasm, the lack of self-control, that we find in artists like Hogarth and Sandby, who depict teeth more sparingly. The show of teeth is incompatible with temperance, right reason, common sense.

For nineteenth-century artists as well, displayed teeth connote lack of self-control. Under the first nine of the twelve headings that follow, I list and discuss variations on this basic meaning of the symbol. The final two headings present exceptions: those who are part of another culture, which, it is understood, does not observe the convention. The transitional tenth heading, “The Uncultivated,” includes illustrations of those who show their teeth because they lack self-control, those who do so because they are not part of the central culture, and those who do so because they fall into both camps.

### *The Child*

The artist in Victorian and earlier eras occasionally depicts younger children with exposed teeth without implying thereby any defect of character. Children have yet to reach the age of temperate right reason, and their lack of restraint in revealing their teeth can be endearing.<sup>4</sup> Edward Burne-Jones’s *Head of a Boy* (1876, Benedetti 110) and Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema’s *An Earthly Paradise* (1891, Becker 246) observe the conventional implications in portraying children disclosing their teeth in a smile. In all these works, the child is depicted as refined in every other way. In family portraits often only the youngest child is smiling, the show of teeth marking the child as the baby of the family and highlighting the older children’s relative maturity.

The convention serves the artist in narrative art as well. In *One Touch of Nature Makes the Whole World Kin* (1867, Wood, *Victorian* 203), Thomas P. Hall depicts a crowd, comprising all classes and ages, looking through an art dealer’s window at a painting. Two gamins in the foreground expose their teeth in a grin. Likewise, in Arthur Boyd Houghton’s *Punch and Judy* (n.d., Wood, *Victorian* 166), several children as well as one lower-class woman show their teeth in appreciation of the street show. Especially apt to bring out the teeth in children is tomfoolery. In Philip Mercier’s *Playing Soldier (The Dog’s Education)* (ca. 1744, Steward 77), a boy in soldier’s uniform makes his dog stand at attention on hind legs, while a younger sister and brother display their teeth in glee. In Henry LeJeune’s *Tickled with a Straw* (1868, Reynolds 104), a toothily giggling little girl tickles a sleeping girl. In Charles Hunt’s *Ivanhoe* (1871, Mancoff, *Return* 112), a red-coated lad overthrows a lad with “Bois-Guibbert” emblazoned on his makeshift armor. Several onlookers, boys and girls, bare their teeth in amusement. In Matthais Robinson’s *The Battle of the Bolsters* (1863, *Art and Mind* plate 41), twelve children are having a free-for-all with pillows, as animal energies run wild. Three of the children show teeth: one in glee, one in some fear, and one, a bystander, in amusement. Robinson stresses the farcical nature of the rumpus by introducing in the background a proctor, entering with a helpless, thin-lipped, toothy gape of astonishment.

There is no *mésure* here, but artist and viewer enjoy the uproar, because unruly high spirits are the mark and privilege of youth. Artist and viewer condone the accompanying unguarded grins as suited to the young.

### *The Naïf*

Akin to the child is the innocent, whose openness of mouth symbolizes an unprotective openness to life. Sometimes the naïf is indeed a child, as in James Collinson's *Temptation: Bleeding a Freshman* (1855, Casteras, *McCormick* 31). An older boy, just returned to Eton, holds in his hand a knife, which he offers in exchange for the freshman's crown. The freshman, in revealing his teeth, reveals his gullibility. Another too-trusting child is the daughter in John Everett Millais's *The Woodman's Daughter* (1851, Wood, *Pre-Raphaelites* 32). Her mouth, slightly open, discloses her teeth, as the squire's son awkwardly, sullenly thrusts a handful of strawberries toward her. The painting, illustrating Coventry Patmore's "The Woodman's Daughter," in which the lad eventually seduces the daughter to her ruin, prefigures the seduction. The daughter's open mouth signifies unguardedness, vulnerability, as well as incipient sensuality.

The open lips of adults, too, can mark them as similarly naïve. In Abraham Solomon's *Doubtful Fortune* (1856, Casteras, *McCormick* 85; Figure 15), two young women listen to a fortune teller. A cupid carved on the support of the teller's table implies that the prognostication concerns love. One of the young listeners, mouth slightly open, discloses teeth; the other keeps her lips together. The former, leaning on the other in a waking swoon, has a dreamy look on her face; the latter looks skeptical and concerned for her companion. The open lips register credulity; the shut ones, common sense. Arthur Hughes's *April Love* (1856, Maas 140) expresses naïveté similarly but more compassionately. A delicate young woman looks away, as her kneeling lover in the shadowy background fervently grasps her hand. Deeply moved by his professions, she does not remark the torn pansy petals, lavender, like her gown, lying at her feet. The painting was inspired by lines from Tennyson's "Miller's Daughter" — lines that treat love failed:

Love is hurt with jar and fret;  
Love is made a vague regret;  
Eyes with idle tears are wet . . . (37)

The young woman's slightly parted lips, teeth barely showing, signify her youthful innocence, her unawareness of heartaches that lie ahead.<sup>5</sup>

### *The Fool*

Fools are those who, like the child and the naïf, lack appropriate inhibitions but who, unlike them, have no good excuse for the lack. These are the merely inane, and artists sometimes portray them with mouth agape, teeth erose and prominent. I have mentioned that Rowlandson habitually limns fools with dentate jaws agape, and such caricatures appear in Victorian journals, such as *Punch*, that make sport of folly. Teeth, the ammunition of the caricaturist, signify silliness. Especially in the earlier work, such as the illustrations for Dicken's *Pickwick Papers*, Hablot Knight Browne, or "Phiz," often draws toothy



Figure 15. Abraham Solomon, *Doubtful Fortune*, 1856. Oil on panel with arched top. Courtesy Picture Library, London.

people in ridiculous postures and predicaments. He is hardly alone in so doing. E. T. Reed's *Legal Expressions* (1893, Thorpe 25) portrays four barristers. Two show their teeth; all four look brainless. In Charles Henry Bennett's *Mrs. Bat's-Eyes and Mrs. Know-Nothing* (1860, Goldman 247), the latter worthy's slack, receding jaw, drooping lower lip, and buck teeth trumpet stupidity. A more ambitious drawing, employing the convention without caricature, is Matthew James Lawless's *Dr. Johnson's Penance* (1861, Goldman 111), in which Samuel Johnson stands bareheaded in the rain in the town square of his native Lichfield. Lawless introduces a variety of reactions from the several townspeople who observe him. Three onlookers, amused at the spectacle of Dr. Johnson standing in the rain, bare their teeth in a smile or laugh. Although the three are not equally inane, the show of teeth marks all three as too shallow to comprehend Dr. Johnson's deed and relegates them to the lower end of the spectrum of responses. Haynes King's *Jealousy and Flirtation* (1874, Reynolds 188) also uses the convention adeptly. A rustic young carpenter has eyes for only one of two rustic girls he is visiting. Basking in the attention,

the favored one beams, teeth bared, as she leans back in her chair, her arms raised, hands atop her head. Her grin connotes too-evident pleasure at the attention she is receiving, lack of cultivation, and unguarded naïveté. It also signifies selfish shallowness: her bliss entails lack of consideration for the feelings of the jealous girl ignored.

#### *The Drunkard*

Drunkards, too, show indiscipline by exposing their teeth. Hogarth's *An Election Entertainment* (1753–54, Paulson 2: 192), John Hamilton Mortimer's *Caricature Group* (ca. 1865, Plumb 116), and Alma-Tadema's *The Vintage Festival* (1870, Becker 160–61) delineate drinking scenes in which some participants betray tipsiness by revealing their teeth. Millais's *The Race-Meeting* (1853, Ironside plate 58) is more censorious in its use of the convention. A besotted swell, grinning fatuously in his top hat, lolls semiconscious in his carriage. The woman seated beside him buries her head in her hands in mortification and despair. A bystander, perhaps a bookie, takes the helpless man's money, as other onlookers jeer. Alexander George Fraser's *Tam O'Shanter in the Smiddie* (1846, Sloan 125) is more forgiving. Tam and the smith "sit bousing at the nappy, / And gettin fou, and unco happy." Tam, his right hand grasping a bottle, wears a broad, toothy grin. Like Robert Burns, whose poem furnishes the subject for the painting, Fraser stresses the warm conviviality of the moment.

#### *The Dead or Dying*

Those dead or on the verge of death lack self-control (I make bold to assert), so we may expect the artist to depict them with their teeth showing. In such works teeth signify not only uncontrol but also the emergence of the skull from the flesh. The dying are depicted thus in Hablot Knight Browne's *The Dying Beggar* (1838, Buchanan-Brown plate 3b), George Romney's *Howard Visiting a Lazaretto* (1791–92, Jaffé plate 99), and Ford Madox Brown's *The Prisoner of Chillon* (1857, Reid after 48). William Mulready, in *The Seven Ages* (1838, Gaunt plate 67), renders the final stage of life as an old, doddering man with his teeth exposed. In William Shakespeare Burton's *The Wounded Cavalier* (1856, Maas 157), the cavalier is not cadaverous, like the subjects of the works just mentioned, and may not be dying, but he is clearly helpless and beyond self-command, as the sight of his teeth implies.

In some such works the disclosure of teeth carries additional meaning. In *The Prisoner of Chillon*, for instance, another prisoner, probably dying, bares his teeth in terror. In Alma-Tadema's *The Death of the First-Born* (1872, Becker 173), the exposed teeth of the son may signify the exotic, Egyptian setting as well as the handsome young man's final stage of life. And in George Owen Wynne Apperley's *The Death of Procris* (1915, Christian 139), the teeth of Procris may indicate not only her last living moments but also her immoderate feelings. Naked, she lies supine, eyes shut, mouth slightly open. According to John Christian,

Procris, daughter of Erechtheus, King of Athens, followed her husband, Cephalus, into the woods when he went hunting, believing that he had gone to meet his mistress. There she was



accidentally wounded by him with an arrow, and died in his arms, confessing that ill-founded jealousy was the cause of her death. (139)

The depiction of her teeth may signify her ungoverned jealousy in addition to impending death.

### *The Sensualist*

Another group lacking self-control is the sensualists. They, too, are often depicted with lips apart and teeth revealed. For instance, in Frederick Sandys's *Mary Magdalene* (1858–60, Marsh 91), Mary Magdalene discloses her teeth in an ardent smile. She holds a vessel containing ointment, with which to bathe Christ's feet. Although her ardor at the moment is not sexual, the exposure of teeth indicates her essentially unrestrained nature.<sup>6</sup>

In *Amor Mundi* (1865, Reid after 60) Sandys again portrays sensualists revealing their teeth. In this work he is less sympathetic than in *Mary Magdalene*. According to Forrest Reid, *Amor Mundi* presents

two lovers strolling down the easy path of sensuality to the hidden hollow where death lies waiting. Not Death as he is usually symbolized, but the dead and corrupted body of this very woman, now hanging in foolish soulless laughter on her lover's arm. (60)

The male lover — head tossed back, mouth wide open, teeth exposed — plays a stringed instrument and sings. The young woman's mouth, too, is open, with teeth slightly showing. She looks giddy, careless, fatuous, as she holds a piece of fruit in her right hand and gazes at her face in a mirror held in her left. There is a snake in the path before them. Amid the obvious Christian symbolism the significance of the two open, dentate mouths may go unappreciated, but the convention conveys wantonness nevertheless. In yet another etching by Sandys, *Danaë in the Brazen Chamber* (1888, Goldman 69), Danaë stands pensive, as the walls that her father erects to prevent her from begetting a son rise around her. Danaë reveals her latent sensuality in disclosing her teeth. Sandys implies thereby that the eventual mating with Zeus, transformed into a golden shower, will be urged from within as well as from without.

Among other works in which the display of teeth carries a similar meaning is Arthur Hughes's *Fair Rosamund* (1854, Ironside plate 64). Fair Rosamund, the mistress of Henry II, shows her teeth while gazing pensively into space. Meanwhile a shadowy figure — we assume Queen Eleanor, come to poison her — approaches from the background. Although Rosamund is portrayed sensitively, the show of teeth marks her transgressive nature and perhaps her fear. Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale's *The Little Foot-Page* (1905, Christian 131), “illustrates the well-known ballad theme of the peasant girl who, spurned by the knightly lover whose child she carries, dresses as a foot-page in order to follow him” (Christian 130). Attractive and brave, the page is sympathetically portrayed, but her show of teeth marks her sexual impulsiveness as well as her determination and low station. In John Byam Liston Shaw's *The Queen of Hearts* (1896, Christian 129), the Queen shows her teeth through parted lips, as do two of her handmaidens in the background. The modern effect that the smiles give to the work may mask for the modern viewer the immoderate passion that Shaw implies. But there is no missing the languorous abandon

of the bathers in Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *Les Grandes Baigneuses* (1885–87, Hofmann 207) — an attitude conveyed partly through the open half-smiles of several of the nude figures.

### *The Rapt*

Another group of subjects lacking self-command are those seized by a trance or experiencing an epiphany. The enraptured, blind to their immediate circumstances, do not keep their customary composure. The artist often registers rapture by depicting such characters with their teeth disclosed. We find such a display in eighteenth-century artist George Romney's *Margery Jourdain and Bolingbroke Conjuring up the Fiend* (1788–90, Jaffé plate 35). In this pencil drawing illustrating act 1 scene 4 of *Henry VI Part II*, Bolingbroke's lower teeth, gleaming in the darkness, signify his vatic trance.<sup>7</sup> Among Victorians, although Dante Gabriel Rossetti almost always portrays women with full, closed lips, he sometimes depicts teeth when he presents his subject as spellbound. *Beata Beatrix* (1863 and 1872, Ironside plate 44) is one such work, as is his *The Blessed Damozel* (1879, Wood, *Pre-Raphaelites* 103). Another is *The Loving Cup* (1867, Henderson 73), in which the teeth, visible through parted lips, imply that the pensive, longing maiden is already under the spell of the love potion. One of Rossetti's drawings of Elizabeth Siddal (n.d., Surtees plate 11) lacks such a setting, but her teeth, showing through parted lips, imply a trance-like state.

Other artists observe the same convention. Frederic Shields, *The Decision of Faith* (1863, Goldman 101), compassionately delineates a young evangelical experiencing a religious epiphany as he reads the Book of Psalms. The man's eyes are closed, and his slightly open mouth reveals his teeth. Joseph Noel Paton's *Sir Galahad and an Angel* (1884–85, Mancoff, *Arthurian* plate 75) depicts the Arthurian visionary in a night-time horseback ride. The angel sits behind him on his steed, her right hand resting on Galahad's left shoulder. Both stare raptly upward, lips parted, teeth bared. Marie Spartali Stillman's *Spells* (ca. 1870, Maas 145) portrays a woman casting a magic spell to induce the return of her wayward lover. She is in a trance, her teeth showing. Somewhat similar is Abraham Solomon's *Doubtful Fortune*, mentioned earlier, in which the fortune teller as well as the credulous young woman shows her teeth. Because we take the seer to be a fraud, we interpret her spiritual fit as merely histrionic. In John Everett Millais's famous *Ophelia* (1852, Wood, *Pre-Raphaelites* 33), Ophelia's teeth are visible through her parted lips as she floats to her death. The expression signifies her singing and her dying as well as her rapturous madness. In William Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* (1852–54, Ironside 29), both rake and mistress reveal their teeth. His expression denotes only shallow sensuality; hers, a great deal more. Besides indicating her own sexual abandon, her exposed teeth signal her epiphanal revelation. It is reported that Hunt repainted the face of the woman to suit the picture's buyer, who found the look of horror in the original too depressing. The look of wild gladness in the revision is certainly memorable and loses none of the visionary transport that Hunt must have intended.

Perhaps the most inventive use of the association between disclosed teeth and rapture is Hunt's *The Shadow of Death* (1870–73, Wood, *Pre-Raphaelites* 107; Figure 16). Christ, working as carpenter at home, has risen from his work and stretches, gazing upward at a brilliant light, which casts a shadow on the wall behind. His mother, Mary, her back to the

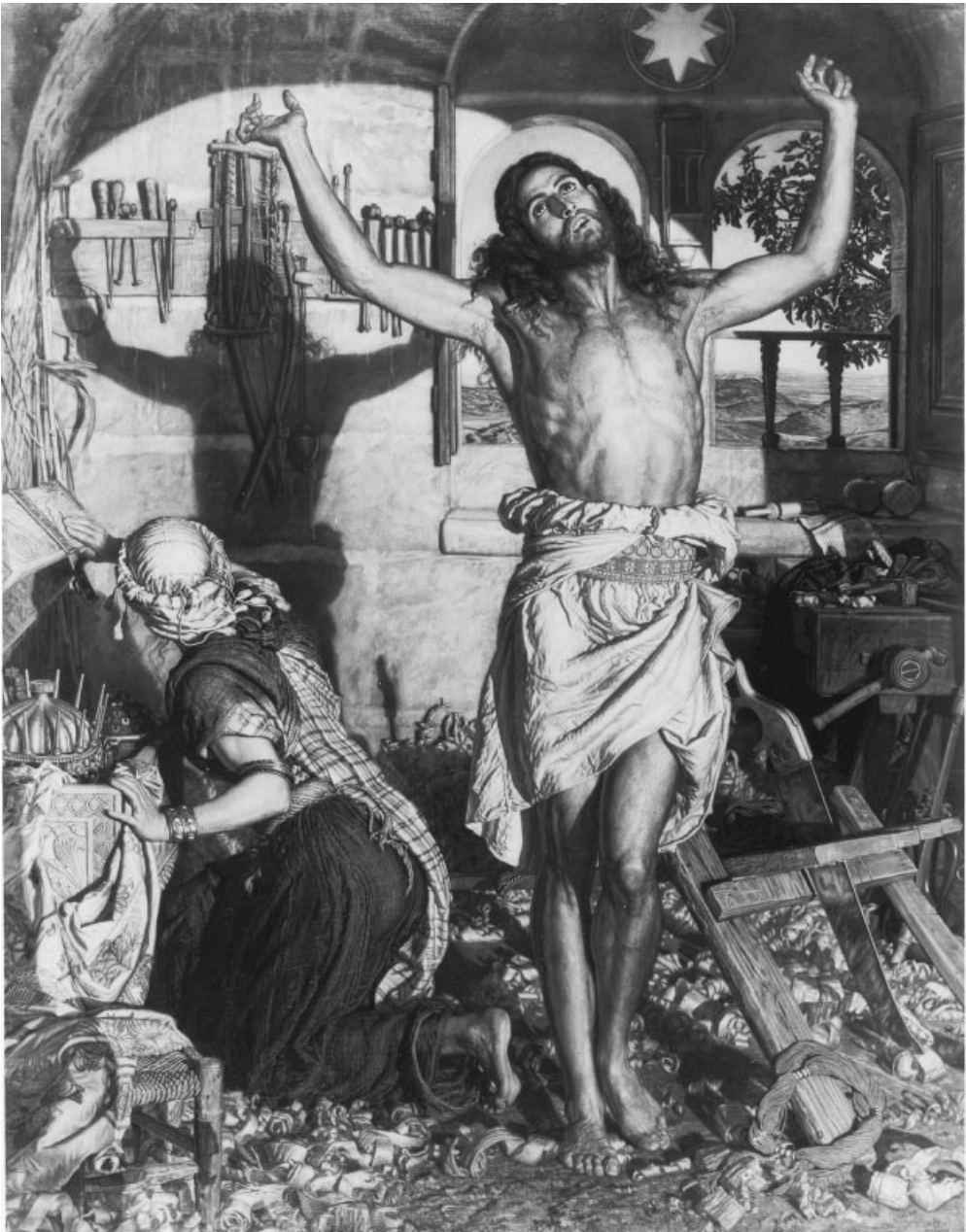


Figure 16. William Holman Hunt, *The Shadow of Death*, 1863. Oil. © Copyright Manchester City Art Galleries.

viewer, stares at the shadow, which forms an outline of Christ on the cross. The horizontal bar of the cross is formed by a board holding sharp-pointed carpenter's tools, forecasting Christ's wounds. As Mary beholds this foreshadowing of Christ's suffering and death, Christ's open mouth and prominent teeth, while also prefiguring his death, reveal primarily that he is undergoing an epiphany of his own. The light-and-shadow imagery may imply that whereas Mary's shadowy premonition is of Christ's suffering, his dazzling revelation is of the redemption he will accomplish. In boldly presenting Christ with gaping mouth, Hunt's painting suggests simultaneous epiphanies, one worldly, one divine.

### *The Victim*

Victims are another class who have lost self-control and who are therefore sometimes depicted with teeth showing. In these works the teeth signify helplessness and fear, as the victim is overpowered from within as well as from without. In Rossetti's *How They Met Themselves* (1851, 1860, Marsh 140–41), a couple walking at night meet another couple, ghostly versions of themselves. The ghosts are doppelgängers, and encountering them bodes the deaths of the human couple. In the work the ghosts glare at the human couple, whose open lips and exposed teeth convey their terror. In William Mulready's *The Wolf and the Lamb* (1820, Gaunt plate 18), one schoolboy is about to pummel another. The cowering "lamb" reveals his teeth in fear. In Sir Edward John Poynter's *Moses Slaying the Egyptian* (1863–65, Reid after 92), Millais's *Pizarro Seizing the Inca of Peru* (1846, Bennett plate 2), and Ford Madox Brown's *The Death of Eglon* (1881, Goldman 44), the victim displays his teeth. A potential victim, Andromeda, expresses fear in the same way in William Etty's *Andromeda* (ca. 1830–35, Sloan 104), although her expression suggests that she maintains her composure to some extent. Another young woman who reveals her teeth is victimized by a more figurative dragon. In Philip Calderon's *Broken Vows* (1856, Reynolds 181), a fiancée discovers the unfaithfulness of her lover by happening upon him as he flirts with another young woman. The astonished fiancée stands with mouth agape, eyes downcast and shut, as she presses her left hand beneath her heart, as if to uphold it. Through a gap in the wall we see part of the face of the new love, including her mouth, which reveals teeth in a shallow little smile. The teeth of one young woman signify victimization; those of the other, inanity.

Fear and distress are rendered less tolerantly in Alma-Tadema's *A Roman Emperor, A.D. 41* (1871, Becker 164). The work depicts the proclamation of Claudius as Emperor just after the assassination of his nephew, Caligula. Caligula and his guard lie slain in a heap beneath a grand, bloodied bust of a noble Roman — Caesar Augustus, perhaps. As a band of Praetorian guards and some inquisitive court women rush upon the scene, one Praetorian draws aside drapes to reveal a cringing Claudius. The Praetorian bows in insincere obeisance, proclaiming Claudius the new Emperor. Alma-Tadema makes the craven Claudius appear especially ridiculous by painting him with red slippers and with a single tooth gleaming in his gaping mouth.

### *The Assailant*

Many animals, including our distant kin the apes, curl their lips to communicate hostility; the expression seems universally instinctive. So in sampling Victorian art, I expected to

find many works in which assailants bare their teeth. There were far fewer than I had expected. In Rossetti's *How They Met Themselves*, Mulready's *The Wolf and the Lamb*, and Millais's *Pizarro Seizing the Inca of Peru*, only the victims expose their teeth; the attackers do not. The artist stresses thereby the self-possessed, cold professionalism of the assailant. On the other hand, in Poynter's *Moses Slaying the Egyptian* and Brown's *The Death of Eglon*, the two slayers, Moses and Ehud, like their victims, do reveal their teeth. Moses's display of teeth may well signify the rash impulsiveness of his act. Ehud, though, has coolly plotted the murder of the Moabite king. By presenting Ehud with bared teeth, Brown may mean to highlight the high pitch of the assassin's feelings at the moment, or he may mean to signify merely his aggression. It would seem, therefore, that Victorian painters occasionally expose the teeth of an assailant to connote sheer belligerence, but that they are more likely to do so to connote loss of self-command as well.

Certainly the ungovernably belligerent reveal their teeth. Hablot Knight Browne's amusing *Quilp and the Dog* (ca. 1840, Buchanan-Brown plate 35) presents irascible dog and irascible master snarling and snapping at each other. In William Holman Hunt's *Rienzi vowing to obtain justice for the death of his young brother, slain in a skirmish between the Colonna and Orsini factions* (1849, Gaunt plate 74), the overwrought Rienzi bares his teeth while gazing furiously heavenward. In Millais's *Lorenzo and Isabella* (1848–49, Marsh 49) a company sit at dinner while Lorenzo intently serves his beloved Isabella. In the source for the painting, Keats's "Isabella; or, the Pot of Basil," Isabella's two brothers kill Lorenzo to remove the obstacle to a marriage between their sister and "some high noble and his olive-trees." The most prominent figure in the painting is one of the brothers, who glares at the couple while furiously cracking nuts with a nutcracker. Baring his teeth, he malevolently kicks out at Isabella's greyhound, resting its head in her lap. The brother's brutish appetite and violent anger are evident.

More often than not, the aggressor baring teeth is female. Perhaps so many female assailants reveal their teeth because of the venerable view of women as being more passionate than reasonable. Evelyn de Morgan's *Queen Eleanor and Fair Rosamund* (ca. 1888, Marsh 121) differs from Arthur Hughes's treatment of the same subject in painting the assailant, not the sensual victim, with teeth showing. In de Morgan's work Queen Eleanor approaches with a glass of poison in her right hand. Although she seems in control of her emotions and of the situation, her lips are parted vengefully. Other female aggressors are more typical *femmes fatales*.<sup>8</sup> For instance, Ford Madox Brown's *Stages of Cruelty* (1856–90, Casteras, *Images* 93; Figure 17) depicts a smirking young woman showing her teeth in cruelly turning away from a swain ardently professing love. Her sadism is matched in the foreground by that of a girl — an apprentice in loving cruelty — who restrains a dog on a leash grasped in her left hand while she beats the long-suffering beast with a stick grasped in her right. The misogyny of the work is tempered by the mien of the suitor: eyes bulging, he, too, shows his teeth in an unflattering, goofy grimace. His teeth proclaim not only the victim but also the naïf and the fool. By far the noblest of the four figures depicted is the stoical hound.

### *The Uncultivated*

The show of teeth may also signify common folk, who may, like all those in the earlier groupings, lack self-command but who may instead merely be uninstructed in the conven-



Figure 17. Ford Madox Brown, *The Stages of Cruelty*, c. 1856–90. Oil on canvas. © Copyright Manchester City Art Galleries.

tions of the higher classes. A good eighteenth-century example of the latter case is Hogarth's *The Shrimp Girl* (mid 1750s, Paulson 2:247). The girl shows her teeth in a slight, open-lipped, "modern" smile. Although she is quite attractive in every way, treated by Hogarth without condescension, her show of teeth marks her as *déclassée* as clearly as does her costume. Victorian painters, too, treating common folk quite respectfully, sometimes present them with their teeth visible simply to indicate their station. For instance, Augustus Walford Weedon's *Washing Day* (1845, Wood, *Victorian* 157) portrays a wife with a welcoming smile for her husband, shovel over shoulder, as he returns home after work. In Henry Nelson O'Neil's *Eastward, Ho!* (1857, *Art and Mind* 15), an ardent, anxious wife, clutching her child, reaches up the side of a troop ship to grasp the hand of her husband, departing for India. Her revealing her teeth betokens her great concern in addition to her humble station. John Finnie's *Maids of All Work* (1864–65, Casteras, *Images* 109) introduces two servants chatting during a break from work. Both appear healthy, rather pretty, calmly enjoying everyday small talk. In delineating them with their teeth showing, Finnie implies nothing about their character but simply marks their status as servants.

*The Young Ragamuffin*, a drawing by Hablot Knight Browne ("Phiz") (1866, Buchanan-Brown plate 208; Figure 18), is more judgmental, although the judgment is mixed. The work portrays a lower-class young woman, one hand holding her child, the other clenched into a fist on her hip. Dressed in rags, she stands tall, feet apart in a jaunty strut. Mouth wide open, she bellows in angry defiance. She is at once repellent and attractive, crude and engagingly vigorous. Her snarling mouth reveals, in addition to her teeth, both her social class and her intemperate vitality.

Millais's *Cymon and Iphigenia* (1848, Hilton 34) deftly uses the association between teeth and lack of cultivation to comic effect. The work illustrates Dryden's poem of the same title. In the poem Cymon, a handsome but utterly cloddish youth, is confined to the family farm by his father, a Cyprian lord, who has despaired of civilizing him. On a stroll, Cymon happens on Iphigenia, napping half-naked with her handmaidens near a fountain:

The fool of nature stood with stupid eyes,  
And gaping mouth, that testified surprise. . . . (891)

The poem proceeds to tell of the remarkable civilizing effect that love for Iphigenia has on Cymon and of the many adventures leading at length to their union. Millais's painting portrays the diamond in the rough at the moment of his discovering Iphigenia: Cymon is certainly brawny and handsome, but his "gaping mouth, that testified surprise" also reveals teeth, which testify glad, lusty boorishness as well. Again teeth symbolize both unregulated energy and lack of cultivation. Iphigenia's alarm at being discovered in dishabille is tempered by her immediate attraction to the feral swain. Millais's urbane treatment of the subject is worthy of his source.

### *The Exotic*

In the final two groups the depiction of teeth does not signify lack of self-control. The first of these groups is foreigners — Asians and Africans especially. George Chinnery's *Study of a Chinese Girl* (1841, Maas 101) is a drawing of a demure, unsmiling, pensive girl, lips



Figure 18. Hablot Browne (Phiz), *The Young Ragamuffin*, 1866. Drawing. © Copyright The British Museum.

parted and teeth exposed. In addition to her costume and the shape of her eyes, the visibility of her teeth is precisely what is foreign about her: an English subject with the same obvious self-possession would not reveal teeth. True, Chinnery's subject is only a child, but the drawing stresses her maturity and refinement. Emma Sandys's *Portrait of a Woman in a Green Dress* (ca. 1870, Sato 108) gives this association a further turn. In the



work a young Caucasian woman reveals her teeth in a similar pensive expression. Sandys provides the woman a mien in keeping with her Japanese gown and the Japanese screen behind her. The exotic expression matches the exotic motif.

John Evan Hodgson's *European Curiosities* (1868, Gaunt plate 115) nicely creates a reciprocal lesson in cultural relativity. Four Asian onlookers behold a Western woman's shoe, suspended aloft by a fifth. Three of the onlookers reveal their teeth in mild amusement. The shoe looks odd even to Western eyes when seen as seen by the Asians. And the shoe is as strange to the Asians as the Asians are to the (presumably Western) viewers of the painting. The foreignness of the Asians is conveyed not only through their costume and furniture but also through the unguarded smiles. Because the open-mouthed onlookers are evidently quite placid and refined, their display of teeth does not signify what it would if some British character were to smile so. Again the show of teeth marks foreignness.

Customarily, continental Europeans are portrayed with teeth evident under the same circumstances that a British character would be. Sophie Anderson's *Guess Again* (1878, *Art and Mind* plate 1) portrays one little Italian girl covering the eyes of another. The challenger shows her teeth in a mischievous little smile. Although the setting is Italian, contemporary British artists depict juvenile British pranksters in the same way. François Rude's statue *Neapolitan Fisherboy* (1831–33, Rosenblum and Janson 207) reveals the boy's teeth in a way that would be appropriate to anyone of the same age anywhere. John Phillip's *A Chat Round the Braserio* (1866, Maas 97) depicts general mirth after a padre's joke. A laughing young man modestly covers his mouth with his hand, but a buxom young woman laughs openly, showing her teeth. Although the setting is Spanish, the artist could have depicted a young English cottager's hearty laugh in the same way. Similarly, Phillip's *La Bomba* (1862–63, Reynolds 44) introduces a robust peasant couple drinking, each with open, toothy mouth. The open mouths signify, not foreignness, but low station and alcoholic high spirits.

### *The Performer*

The final group of those portrayed with teeth showing are singers, actors, preachers, orators, and even silent performers, such as acrobats. Up to a point performers are exempted from self-restraint — from keeping a stiff upper lip. A certain facial athleticism is required to project oneself so as to be comprehended at a great distance. Consequently we find Victorian artists depicting the teeth of performers without implying what the same show of teeth would connote under non-theatrical circumstances.

Such works include Alma-Tadema's *An Egyptian Widow in the Time of Diocletian* (1872, Becker 170), in which two of four singers show their teeth. A work with a contemporary setting is Alma-Tadema's *Portrait of the Singer George Henschel* (1879, Becker 214; Figure 19). In the portrait Henschel, singing at the piano, reveals a few of his upper teeth, but he is presented as handsome and wholly personable. The teeth are depicted merely because his singing requires them to show. Similarly, Thomas Cooper Gotch's *Alleluia* (1896, Wood, *Pre-Raphaelites* 150) straightforwardly depicts several girls singing, some revealing teeth. And in Alexandre Bida's *The Blind Musician* (ca. 1855, Thompson 41), an earnest, intent African or Asian shows his teeth while playing an instrument and singing. Non-singing performers, too, show their teeth: in John Singer Sargent's *Ellen Terry as Lady Macbeth* (1889, Reynolds 170), the actress does so; in James Green's *The*



Figure 19. Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *Portrait of the Singer George Henschel at the Piano*, 1879. Oil on panel. Courtesy Van Gogh Museum.

*Indian Jugglers* (1814, Pal 140), the central juggler does so; in William Powell Frith's *Derby Day* (1856–58, Gaunt plate 93) a mountebank does so; in Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's *Au Cirque Fernando* (ca. 1888, Hofmann 248) a female circus performer riding a horse does so. A toothy smile is literally the trademark of the public performer.

But the Victorian artist seldom applies the trademark straightforwardly, usually merging it instead with one or more of the connotations already considered. In, for instance, Hablot Browne's *Theatrical Emotion of Mr. Vincent Crummles* (1839, Buchanan-Brown plate 23), Crummles's toothy histrionics, evidently insincere, exceed the requirements of any stage and reveal his asininity. Although Crummles is an actor, his profession does not exempt him from behaving moderately in everyday situations. Browne's *A Scene before the Curtain* (1838, Buchanan-Brown plate 18) presents three actors and one actress on stage. All four show their teeth as they throw themselves about, chewing up the scenery with excessive gusto. Again teeth mark not only the performer but also the fool: even theatrical exuberance can be overdone. The teeth of musicians, too, may lay them open to ridicule. John Hamilton Mortimer's *Choir and Orchestra* (ca. 1779, Yale 59) sets forth several droll toothy faces among both singers and players. Mortimer intends no criticism but simply offers as amusing the physiognomical contortions required for music making. Walter Richard Sickert casts another good-humored barb in *The Mammoth Comique* (ca. 1887, Gaunt plate 167). The upper teeth of a young male singer, seen from just below the stage, shine in the floor-level lights to comic effect. In both these works the performers are presented, not as fools, but just as looking foolish. Finally, in Thomas Webster's *The Village Choir* (1847, *Art and Mind* plate 44), the lead singer in the church choir reveals a few teeth as well as some gaps where teeth ought to be: the teeth of the performer are the irregular teeth of the common laborer. The gaps may suggest that the singing, too, is a bit ragged. The erose mouth brings the sacred music down to the earth of the English countryside.

Another group of works aspires to the sublime rather than the ridiculous, conflating the exposed teeth of the singer with those of the rapt mystic. Such a work is Rossetti's *Mariana* (1868–70, Marsh 8), in which a female singer behind Mariana reveals her teeth dreamily. The singer serves as cue to Mariana's enervated, overwrought state of heart and mind, even as Mariana's own closed lips signify her composure. Rossetti's *The Maids of Elfinmere* (1854, Goldman 14), in which two of three ethereal singing maidens show their teeth, creates its own rapturous background music. The exposed teeth of the two singing maidens in the background of Rossetti's *The Blue Closet* (1857, Casteras, *English* 132) perform the same symbolic office, as do those of the singing maiden in Burne-Jones's *The Lament* (1866, Harrison plate 14). Less gossamer and more robust, William Holman Hunt's *May Morning in Magdalen Tower* (1906, Maas 128) portrays a procession of old and young choristers, at least ten of whom show their teeth in singing a moving anthem. Again the convention pertaining to the performer abets that pertaining to inspiration.<sup>9</sup>

\* \* \*

THE CATALOGUE JUST CONCLUDED may give the impression that Victorian art shimmers in a dazzling display of teeth. Not so: characters who reveal their teeth are a great rarity — a fact indicated by the survey with which I began. In Victorian art, characters who show their teeth are remarkable exceptions.

Such characters are exceptional because apparently in earlier days one strove to keep one's teeth covered as much as possible. Teeth were, so to speak, semiprivate parts, which one took pains to conceal. Hiding teeth requires discipline, and revealing them betrays the lack or loss of discipline. I have introduced twelve character types prone to bare their teeth. The open mouths of exotics, performers, and some common folk are due to their observing norms different from those of the typical Victorian: they live in their own world. The open mouths of the other character types — the child, the naïf, the fool, the drunkard, the dying, the sensualist, the rapt, the victim, the assailant, and some common folk — offer variations on the theme of intemperance.<sup>10</sup>

Except for nonjudgmental depictions of exotics, performers, and members of the lower class, all displays of teeth follow from the conventions and assumptions embedded in Hogarth's *Enthusiasm Delineated*. Although I have treated the works schematically and summarily, the mechanical mode of presentation should not hide the range and complexity in the many variations on the theme of intemperance. As we have seen, intemperance can be due to a wide range of conditions, from the ridiculous to the sublime. The appropriate attitude toward the enthusiast can range from contempt through condescension and amusement to awe. Sometimes the uncontrol is reprehensible, as in wantonness or cowardice; sometimes it is admirable, as in righteous indignation or vatic vision. Moreover, the Victorian artist often suggests multiple or ambiguous reasons for a subject's show of teeth: Webster's chorister's cloddishness and musicianship; Sandys's Medea's rapture and fury; Millais's woodman's daughter's naïveté and incipient sensuality; and Millais's Ophelia's singing, madness, rapture, and impending death. In Victorian art the show of teeth has just one basic meaning but a great range of potential significance.

Having developed the association between disclosed teeth and lack of self-control, I would assume the association to further the reading of a few works. My purpose is not to give conclusive interpretations but simply to show that awareness of what the display of teeth symbolizes advances a comprehensive reading of any work depicting them. Then I close by glancing at the motif in twentieth-century art.

Ford Madox Brown has been accused of depicting ugly, toothy faces, but when he paints teeth, he always does so for a purpose. For instance, in his *Chaucer at the Court of King Edward III* (1845–51, Wood, *Pre-Raphaelites* 47), Chaucer and several bystanders reveal teeth. Chaucer's display of teeth indicates performance; that of the others, shallow, lax inattentiveness. The lips of Edward, intent on Chaucer, are closed, and others of the company vary in their degree of attentiveness. As in Lawless's *Dr. Johnson's Penance*, teeth in *Chaucer at the Court of Edward III* mark the foolish end of the range of awareness.

Brown's *Work* (1852–65, Maas 131) also portrays teeth purposefully. The bared teeth of two workmen — a carpenter and a man carrying a bucket — signify their low station. The most striking bared teeth are those of Carlyle, whose face wears an idiosyncratic, not unpleasant grimace. Brown painted Carlyle from a photograph, in which Carlyle's lips are closed (see Maas 198–99). Therefore Brown went out of his way to paint Carlyle with teeth showing. Brown seems to allude thereby to Carlyle's own humble upbringing and his close kinship with the navvies surrounding him. Carlyle's companion and fellow "brain-worker," the Reverend F. D. Maurice, whose early station in life was considerably higher than Carlyle's, is depicted approvingly but more conventionally, with closed lips.

Perhaps Brown's most suggestive work in this regard is his *Take Your Son, Sir*, begun in 1852 but left unfinished (Ironsides plate 11; Figure 20). A young mother thrusts her infant to-



Figure 20. Ford Madox Brown, *“Take Your Son, Sir,”* 1851–192? Oil on canvas. Courtesy Tate Gallery, London / Art Resource, New York.

ward the father, who, standing in the viewer's position, is reflected in a round mirror, suggestive of a halo, directly behind the mother's head. The father holds out his hands, perhaps to welcome mother and son but more likely to ward them off. Although the scene has usually been taken to represent a mistress confronting the father with his illegitimate child, some recent viewers believe it represents a more loving scene, in which a wife proudly hands her husband their son. Agreeing with the former interpretation, I believe that those who hold the latter one misread the mother's rather grotesque display of teeth as a simple, "modern" smile, anachronistically connoting mere gladness. The room reflected in the mirror is well furnished, and the father is well dressed, whereas the mother is dressed in ragged street wear: the clothing and setting suggest that the pair belong to different social classes and that she is a visitor, not a resident. In addition, the thin-lipped young mother's bared teeth seem to me to accompany a glare of defiance. Again the show of teeth suggests low station and perhaps intemperate sexual behavior, but the main suggestion is passionate, vengeful aggression. By depicting the mistress with a halo and with starry wallpaper behind her, Brown implies her essential goodness or purity and the righteousness of her vengeful mission.

One of the most inventive uses of disclosed teeth occurs in Robert Braithwaite Martineau's *The Last Day in the Old Home* (1861, Wood, *Pre-Raphaelites* 72; Figure 21). The work depicts a once well-to-do family's eviction from their ancestral estate, because of the father's gambling debts and, doubtless, general extravagance. As arrangements are made for the disposal of the family's goods, the father, perched on a chair, raises a glass of champagne and rests a hand on the shoulder of his son, about ten years old, who also holds a glass of champagne. The distraught mother reaches toward them in futile remonstrance. Father and son display matching toothy grins. The father's wildly inappropriate grin implies escapist tipsiness, foolishness, and immoderacy generally. The son's mirroring grin implies the same, as well as the fact that the father is bringing up the son to follow in his own irresponsible ways. The greatest loss depicted is not the estate but the youngster's character.

A more cryptic work is William Strang's *Laughter* (1912, Christian 152). The main figure is a naked young woman, arms raised, head tossed back, who reveals her teeth within a barely open mouth. The woman's laugh is mirthless and not very hearty, and she is the only one of her company who is laughing. The company comprises the woman, two naked children — a young boy and a pubescent girl — and seven unsmiling, fully dressed adults. The clothed figures call attention to the nakedness of the woman and two children, making them seem out of place, open, vulnerable. And the woman's laugh is likewise out of place and open, revealing her vulnerability. Open-mouthed laughter is a childish, inappropriate act, in which the woman bares not only her teeth but her whole being. The work relies on conventional connotations: disclosed teeth signify child, naïf, fool, and perhaps victim.

Finally, *Portrait of Isabella Reisser*, by Austrian painter Anton Romako (1885, Rosenblum and Janson 379), epitomizes the significance of bared teeth in nineteenth-century art and points the way to the twentieth century. Rosenblum and Janson comment that the costume and posture are conventional for a portrait of the time, but that the observer is startled by the face,

which, like her body, is flattened into an awkward silhouette, more grotesque than graceful. The sharp eyebrows, the staring eyes, the lipsticked mouth and row of sharp teeth all give her a menacing, almost demonic character, more of a spiritualist, devil doll, or *femme fatale* than an 1880s fashion plate. (379)



Figure 21. Robert Braithwaite Martineau, *The Last Day in the Old Home*, 1862. Oil on canvas. Courtesy Tate Gallery, London / Art Resource, New York.

The wild expression joined with the staid pose is disconcerting. Along with the burst of lurid light behind the figure and the other details that Rosenblum and Janson mention, the sinister, toothy grin suggests primal interior forces erupting through the conventional veneer. Rosenblum and Janson describe the woman's appearance as that of a supernatural, enraptured assailant, but because there is no context, the grin could imply almost any of the variations on incontinence that we have observed. What is clear is that ungovernable interior forces threaten to overwhelm the traditional fashionable façade.

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BARED TEETH IN VICTORIAN ILLUSTRATIONS for the popular press mean the same thing as those in Victorian works for galleries and private patrons; the mass media and the fine arts agree. But during the twentieth century popular art and the fine arts diverge: the mass media increasingly display teeth merely as a sign of affability, whereas (if the major illustrated texts surveying modern art reflect the fine arts accurately) representational art produced for galleries and patrons cleaves to and builds on the traditional connotations. Paradoxically, the twentieth-century artistic vanguard are the conservatives in this matter, while artists for the mass media change with — and shape — the times.

The quintessential popular artist of the twentieth century, Norman Rockwell, exemplifies this change in popular art. There are fewer dentate smiles in his works than one might expect, and many of them, those of children especially, signify what they do in nineteenth-century works. But there are also works in which such smiles express mild pleasure or simple affability — expressions alien to nineteenth-century works. The latter works include a portly cellist amused by a young girl, who seems to be trying to assume his cello's shape (1923, Buechner plate 195); a mother looking proudly at her son (1934, plate 290); a young mother smiling as she meets her son's teacher (1935, plate 302); a jolly Santa Claus (1942, plate 370); several gossiping faces (1948, plate 456); and, in *Freedom from Want* (ca. 1942, plate 390), six happy, expectant family members enjoying the sight of the Thanksgiving turkey, proudly placed on the table by Grandmother. We find, too, among Rockwell's works a trio of grinning politicians: Dwight D. Eisenhower (1956, plates 488 and 493), Hubert H. Humphrey (1968, plate 492), and Richard M. Nixon (1968, plate 496). Taken together, Rockwell's smiles project innocence, friendliness, and well-being, with none of the loss of control implied by open mouths in nineteenth-century works.

Twentieth-century fine artists, on the other hand, either re-employ the traditional connotations or treat the new connotations with irony and from afar. Among works that carry on the traditional connotations we find Käthe Kollwitz, *Never Again War!* (1924, Janson and Janson 810), in which a woman grimaces in passionate suffering. In Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* (1937, Janson and Janson 802), a corpse or a dying man in uncontrolled agony bares his teeth. A wounded horse does likewise. In Picasso's *Weeping Woman* (1937, Beckett plate 395), the subject's open mouth, exposing teeth, expresses suffering. In James Rosenquist's *Two 1959 People* (1963, Hamilton 394), the slack-jawed gaping betrays inanity. Similarly, Ida Applebroog's *God's White Too* (1985, Sandler 253) reveals the vacuousness of the couple through their empty, toothy grins. And Lucian Freud, too, preserves the traditional iconography, albeit in attenuated form. He often depicts figures with slightly parted lips.<sup>11</sup> The figures are akin to Victorian subjects portrayed in rapture, but Freud's sensitive subjects seem placidly pensive rather than rapturous, abstracted



rather than carried away. They disclose their teeth in careless forgetfulness, marking thereby the weakening of the inhibition.

Two other twentieth-century artists, Francis Bacon and Willem de Kooning, carry the traditional connotations to new extremes. Both artists paint teeth to represent, not just wildness or loss of self-control, but the atavistic, charnel, carnal, libidinous, ferocious core of human nature. In Francis Bacon's *Head Surrounded by Sides of Beef* (1954, Janson and Janson 825), the beast within the man is conveyed partly by depicting the man's sharp, irregular, piscine teeth. Bacon's triple *Portrait of a Man with Glasses* (1963, Trucchi plates 90, 91, 92) contrasts the glasses and combed hair of everyday life with the toothy, decaying, skeletal mouth. Although in Bacon the toothy mouth can represent mere phlegmatic animality (see *Man Eating a Leg of Chicken*, 1952, Trucchi plate 21), more typically the mouth gapes in a scream of agony (see *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X*, 1953, Trucchi plate 26; Figure 22). Finally, Willem de Kooning in his *Woman* series (1949–53, Cummings 177–82; Figure 23) renders women in slashing, twentieth-century strokes, but the toothy mouth is the traditional one, implying all the old pejorative possibilities. Indeed, de Kooning outdoes the Victorians in the savage, libidinous ugliness of the grin. Bacon and de Kooning, amplifying Victorian suffering, aggression, and sexual abandon into primal Darwinian and Freudian urges, depict the open mouth as an entry-way to the messy, meaty, hideous abyss within.

But if twentieth-century representational artists follow the nineteenth century in observing this convention, how can we account for the thirteenfold increase in the incidence of disclosed teeth in faces represented? One possible reason for the increase is that twentieth-century artists, such as Bacon and de Kooning, are more preoccupied than their nineteenth-century counterparts with primal human nature, less so with everyday social situations. Another reason is that other twentieth-century artists, noting the new prevalence and new symbolism of the toothy mouth in popular art, cite and often parody depictions of it in their own painting. These artists depict up-to-date toothy smiles, but from a remove, focusing on the popular media that propagate such smiles. The artists quote the smiles rather than depicting them straightforwardly. For instance, Audrey Flack's *Marilyn (Vanitas)* (1977, Stokstad 1142) depicts a vanity, which holds, among other objects, a glossy photograph of Marilyn Monroe, duplicated in a mirrored image, and a snapshot of a barely school-age boy and girl of ordinary mien, probably brother and sister. We infer that the vanity is that of the girl, now in her teens at least, and that she aspires to the face and dazzling smile of Monroe. The title renders judgment on this sad instance of life's emulating popular art.<sup>12</sup>

Other twentieth-century artists are less judgmental about such smiles but similarly aloof. Although the concerned listener in Roy Lichtenstein, *Forget It! Forget me!* (1962, Hamilton 395), shows her teeth, the work depicts, not a woman, but a comic-book rendition of one. She is presented as a convention of the popular medium. The same is true of the open-mouthed young woman in Lichtenstein's *Oh, Jeff. . . I Love You, Too, . . . But . . .* (1964, Stokstad 1129). Andy Warhol, *Gold Marilyn Monroe* (1962, Janson and Janson 834), portrays, not an open-lipped Monroe, but a multiplied photograph or movie frame of her. His *Sixteen Jackies* (1964, Walker 263) portrays, not Jacqueline Kennedy, but four quadrupled photographs of her, two of them revealing teeth. One might argue that the women in the Lichtenstein and Warhol works expose teeth because they are either performing in public or expressing mild distress (sincere or feigned) — conditions



Figure 22. Francis Bacon, *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X*, 1953. Oil on canvas. Courtesy Des Moines Art Center. Photograph Michael Tropea, Chicago. © Copyright 2000 Estate of Francis Bacon / Artist's Rights Society, New York.



Figure 23. Willem de Kooning, *Woman and Bicycle*, 1952-53. Oil on canvas. Courtesy Whitney Museum of American Art / Art Resource, New York.

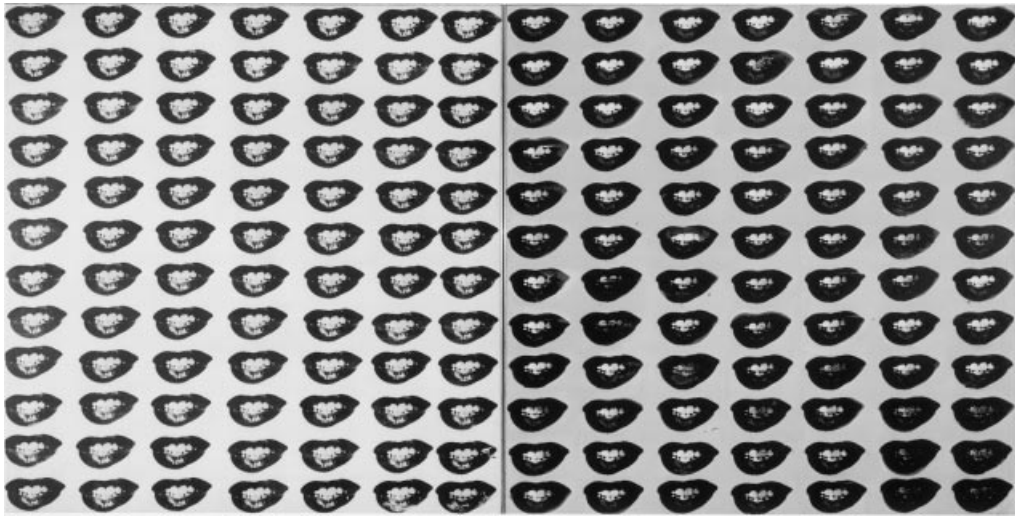


Figure 24. Andy Warhol, *Marilyn Monroe's Lips*, 1962. Synthetic polymer, enamel, and pencil on canvas. Courtesy Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1972. Photograph Lee Stalsworth.

appropriate to nineteenth-century depictions as well. But this observation overlooks the second-hand, parodic element of these works. The Pop artists depict teeth in ironic, arch imitation of popular artistic genres that typically depict teeth often, but they seldom do so for the old reasons. In this respect the Pop Art works mentioned are quite unlike Victorian ones but also quite unlike the popular works they imitate. They cite the popular works without endorsing or embracing them. The Pop artists' aloofness toward such works and the mouths they present is similar to that of the dramatic monologists toward their eccentric speakers. Pop artists do not adopt the new facial convention; they rather call attention to it, inviting the viewer to behold and judge it, as well as the mass media, which disseminate it. A summary example of this artistic approach is Warhol's *Marilyn Monroe's Lips* (1962, Brown 229; Figure 24), in which Monroe's trademark toothy, sensuous lips are disembodied and deployed in prodigal proliferation. The mouth is separated from the rest of the body; the smile, from any inner human meaning. And, thanks to the popular artistic media, the famous gleaming smile is endlessly everywhere.

Although disclosed teeth imply wild intemperance to almost no one today, artists are the last to relinquish the rich old resonances.

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## NOTES

1. I do not claim pinpoint accuracy for the results of my rough-and-ready survey. It was not always possible to ascertain in an illustration whether unclosed lips reveal teeth, so I sometimes excluded a questionable figure from my listings. Nor did I go to great lengths to

establish that the *Illustrated London News* exactly matches *Harpers Weekly* in every respect or that the *Times* matches *Newsweek*. I would observe, though, that the format, the ratio of text to illustrations, the topics covered, and the drawings in the *Illustrated London News* are very similar to those in *Harpers Weekly*. Indeed, often the same illustration appears in both. And although the *Times* and *Newsweek* are very different kinds of publication, I purposely choose an English publication directed to a readership at least as educated as that addressed by the American publication. Although I expected the tonier *Times* to present a stiffer upper lip than *Newsweek*, my survey did not support my expectation. In any case, comparing English and American displays of teeth is quite secondary to comparing nineteenth- and twentieth-century displays (as well as to discerning what the displays signify). And I would maintain that the tremendous disparity in frequency — disclosed teeth appearing thirteen times more frequently in modern illustrations than in nineteenth-century ones — easily overrides any shortcomings in scientific method inherent in my survey. The disparity is, I believe, obvious once attention is called to it, and I have simply tried to give a rough measure of it.

2. Improved dentistry and faster camera shutter speeds likely have something to do with the change. It is also likely — my survey of nineteenth- and twentieth-century portraits notwithstanding — that Victorians disclosed teeth more than they were depicted as doing, but that, because almost all illustrations were drawings or paintings rather than photographs, disclosed teeth went unrecorded. Here is a further speculation: all the world has become a stage; Hollywood has metastasized. The old labial proprieties exist now only in fits and starts, as in Queen Elizabeth's recent rejection of Gordon Brown's bronze sculpture of her because it showed too much tooth.
3. For instance, in Thomas Rowlandson's drawings for *The Dance of Death*, skeletal Death displays teeth perforce, but so do hundreds of the human beings he encounters. The overall effect is of universal shallowness or silliness. Because of the general devaluation of humanity, we side with Death rather than with the victims and relish the diverse inventive touches of poetic justice with which he accosts his prey.
4. In the eighteenth century we find such depictions in Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Master Crewe as Henry VIII* (1775–76, Steward 78), Reynolds's *Lady Caroline Scott as Winter* (ca. 1777, Steward 14), Sir Thomas Lawrence's *Emma and Laura Calmady* (1824, Steward 93), George Henry Harlow's *Mother and Children* (ca. 1816, Steward 120), Hogarth's *The Graham Children* (1742, Steward 41), and Sir Henry Raeburn's *Boy and Rabbit* (1786, Steward 72).
5. In addition we find Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Il Ramoscello* (1865, Gaunt plate 121) and Millais's *The Bridesmaid* (1851, Marsh 50). Each portrays a beautiful woman in her late teens, with lips slightly parted and teeth barely visible and shaded. As we shall see shortly, disclosed teeth can imply sensuality, and each artist probably intended the implication. The chief implication of the expression, though, is juvenile naïveté (*Ramoscello* means “little branch”). Both young women are old enough to know amorous feelings but, guileless, as yet lack the inhibitions to mask them.
6. The same connotations of the open mouth are evident in Jean-August-Dominique Ingres's *Odalisque with Slave* (1839–40, Rosenblum and Janson plate 22), as well as in a series of works by John Frederick Lewis: *Life in the Harem, Cairo* (1858, Sweetman 136), *The Hhareem* (1850, Great 51), *A Houri* (Maas 90), and *Two Women in a Harem* (Maas 92). The teeth in these works by Lewis may signify the exotic as well as the sensual.
7. As we might expect, the visionary Romantic poets are sometimes portrayed with teeth showing: Wordsworth, for example, in a portrait by W. Shuter (1798, Byatt frontispiece), and Coleridge, in a portrait by Robert Hancock (1796, Byatt 14).
8. I mention four further examples: in Anthony Frederick Sandys's *Medea* (1868, Marsh 117), the distraught Medea pours a potion into a flaming container, as Jason's ship embarks. Her

- lips are parted, teeth revealed, as she begins to work her revenge. The displays of teeth may indicate sensuality and rapture as well as fury. Sandys's *Morgan le Fay* (1862–63, Wood, *Pre-Raphaelites* 129), in which Morgan le Fay casts a sinister spell, also uses bared teeth to indicate aggression as well as rapture. In Solomon Joseph Solomon's *Samson* (1887, Gaunt plate 143), Delilah points a finger in taunting triumph at Samson, struggling but bound by four Philistine men. Her bared teeth suggest wantonness as well as aggression. In William Russell Flint's *La Belle Dame sans Merci* (1908, Christian 136), the knight lies supine and asleep. La Belle Dame kneels behind his head, her fingers in a grasping position. Her profile reveals a toothy little smile.
9. Yet another blending of connotations occurs in Edward Matthew Ward's *Charles II and Nell Gwynne* (1854, Reynolds 56). In chatting with Charles, Nell Gwynne reveals her teeth in a coquettish smile. The depiction of her teeth could signify her profession, her extramarital liaison with Charles, or both. And the show of teeth in Walford Graham Robertson's portrait of Ellen Terry (ca. 1900, Auerbach 340) could signify the same three alternatives: actress, mistress, or both.
  10. I met with two anomalies, portraits of young women with teeth disclosed for no reason I can discern. They are Frederick, Lord Leighton's *Isabel Laing (Lady Nias)* (1853, Jones 105) and Franz Xaver Winterhalter's *The Young Queen Victoria* (1843, Mancoff, *Return* 36). In neither work has the subject lost her composure, nor does the artist seem bent on criticism, but the exposed teeth seem out of keeping with the impression intended. Little wonder that Susan P. Casteras, commenting on the portrait of the Queen, observes that she "looks more like a peasant girl with a lover's locket around her neck than the queen of England" (*Images* 20).
  11. See *Head of a Woman* (1950, Hughes plate 8); *John Minton* (1952, plate 12); *A Young Painter* (1957–58, plate 18); *Woman Smiling* (1958–59, plate 20); *Naked Girl* (1966, plate 35); *Naked Man with Rat* (1977–78, plate 58); *Rose* (1978–79, plate 61); *Bella* (1981, plate 67); *Blond Girl, Night Portrait* (1980–85, plate 72); *Double Portrait* (1985–86, plate 80). Of Freud's works illustrated in Hughes's volume, 17 figures in 95 disclose teeth through barely parted lips — that is, 1 in 5.9.
  12. In *George Washington Carver Crossing the Delaware: Page from an American History Textbook* (1975, Sandler 205), Robert Colescott renders similar judgment on a more traditional smile. The work, alluding to the well-known painting by Emanuel Leutze, ironically makes Washington and all his boat mates black. All the figures, with thick lips and wide, happy-go-lucky grins (wholly inappropriate to the perilous mission), are mordant caricatures of the old stereotype. There is nothing modern in the grins: we find such faces in the *Illustrated London News* and *Harpers Weekly* in 1878. What is modern in Colescott's work is his treatment of them — his quoting the old mode of representing African features to examine and condemn the mode.

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