

The Extravagant

# Georges Fattet:

## Caricature and French Dentistry



A Booklet Accompanying the Exhibit, "Dentistry in Paris, 1830-1860: Georges Fattet and his Contemporaries," on display January 14 through April 27, 1991 at the National Library of Medicine, organized in conjunction with the National Institute of Dental Research, Bethesda, Maryland.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
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# Caricature and French Dentistry



Parisian dentistry of the 1840s offered an inviting arena for the caricaturist. As an occupation it included an incongruous mix of surgeons and charlatans, scholars and journeymen tooth drawers. Practitioners licensed by the Faculty of Medicine were attempting to drive out the unlicensed and less trained dentists. However, the latter often continued to have practices that were as successful and remunerative as those of the licensed dentists. Individuals of both groups could be found competing for their clientele among Paris's upper classes and treating their patients in lavishly furnished salons.

Among the most extravagant and frequently caricatured of the unlicensed dentists was Georges Fattet. Born in 1820 in the provinces of France, and trained in dentistry through apprenticeships, Fattet went to Paris about 1840. There he quickly established himself in stylish offices and went on to have a flamboyant but meteoric career. During the following decade he attracted much attention with such things as the long brocaded dressing gown that he wore in his

*Caricature by CHAM: Fattet addresses a would-be*

*patient who appears to be in great pain: "I can't fit you*

*in until next month. We'll extract that tooth on*

*February 20."*

*Cover Illustration: Georges Fattet in his office, ca. 1847.  
A modern adaptation by Al Laoang from the oil painting by  
Edouard Pingret.*

# Georges Fattet

operatory and his retinue of black attendants dressed in formal morning coats. He also rode in a carriage shaped like a large set of false teeth. However, his successes were relatively short-lived. While he survived several contentious lawsuits, his career as a society dentist nevertheless seems to have ended abruptly and unceremoniously around the end of the 1840s.

Fattet did not make any particularly notable contributions to the science of dentistry. Even the "Dents osanore" (false teeth) whose virtues he proclaimed to his patients were no different from those fabricated by other dentists. Rather, he was known in his own era as he is remembered today, as the most shameless of showmen and most audacious of self-promoters. He advertised widely in the Parisian press, and he published books on dentistry that were more promotional than instructional. But, for the most part, his persona was created by the art of caricature.

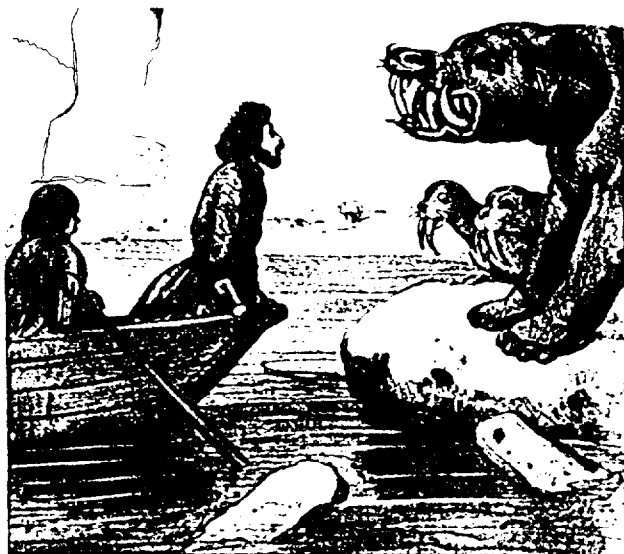
Parisian painters and caricaturists such as Edouard Pingret and Amédée Noé (known as CHAM) seemed to gravitate to Fattet as a natural subject for caricature. During his career, they produced a succession of such works that appeared first in the periodical press and reviews and even on the covers of sheet music, but which were sometimes also distributed separately as lithographs. Far from resenting these works, Fattet welcomed them for the publicity they gave his dental practice. Moreover, to advance his practice yet further, he deliberately commissioned still other caricatures. The lithographs reproduced in this booklet thus include several examples of an art form that was enlisted as an auxiliary to an outrageous, but not entirely unique, mid-nineteenth century French dental career.

**Caricature**



*Caricature by Pingret:*

*At the North Pole,  
seeking quality  
materials for the  
manufacture of false  
teeth, Fattet admires  
the tusks of walrus,  
bears, and other  
animals.*



*Caricature by Pingret:*

*Fattet extracting teeth  
on an assembly-line  
basis.*



*Caricature by CHAM:*

*A satisfied client who  
already has two sets of  
dentures asks Fattet to make  
him a third.*

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Chapman

## *Acknowledgements*

The accompanying exhibit was conceived by Dr. Bernard S. Moskow, Clinical Professor of Dentistry at Columbia University, School of Dental and Oral Surgery, and Dr. Harald Løe, Director of the National Institute of Dental Research. It has been made possible both by Dr. Moskow's special knowledge of the subject and by his continuing advice. The History of Medicine Division at the National Library of Medicine organized the exhibit to feature a selection of original art works from Dr. Moskow's collection, supplemented by related caricatures, photographs, and books from the Library's collections. The exhibit has been further augmented by the loan of several rare books from the University of Pennsylvania libraries and a number of nineteenth century dental objects from the Fauchard Dental Museum of Paris and from Dr. Benjamin Swanson, Director and Curator of the Dental Museum at the University of Maryland. Additional objects were loaned by Dr. Pierre Laudet of Toulouse, France.

*Caricature by CHAM: Napoleon's statue*

*in Paris is shown replaced by one of*

*Fattet.*

