

## Bite of the Tooth

Ancient wonders? There are many  
but too little-considered is the Temple  
of the Tooth, the Buddha's tooth.  
It was in a shrine, on the high plateau  
of Kandy in the centre of Ceylon.  
The tooth was coveted by many  
as the constant pilgrim flow showed.  
They had come to worship from as far  
away as Burma a thousand years ago.  
Many kings and emperors had dared  
to acquire that treasure, that tooth  
of the great Buddha, that sacred thing.  
They had thought it had magic potential  
and so the king of Ceylon prospered,  
selling elephant teeth at exorbitant prices.  
And if taken away the tooth would return  
always flying back through the air,  
leaving behind a simulacrum. And today,  
the one and only tooth is still there  
in a golden box within a box  
within an ascending scale of boxes.  
But it is no longer an elephant's molar  
having grown into an elephant's tusk.  
Is it any wonder that when you rub  
his tummy, the Buddha doesn't smile?

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