



Fat, Gluttony and Sloth: Obesity in Literature, Art and Medicine

David Haslam, Fiona Haslam

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The UK is now in the throes of an obesity epidemic. Life expectancy has been improving for centuries, advances in hygiene, science, public health and medicine have enabled us to live longer and to lead more productive lives but now obesity, on its own, is threatening to herald a reduction in life expectancy in coming generations. The number of overweight people in the world has overtaken the number of malnourished for the first time. Much has been written about the dietary medical and social causes of obesity yet little work has been done on the cultural history of the subject. In *Fat, Gluttony and Sloth: Representing Obesity in Art Literature and Medicine*, David W. Haslam, Clinical Director of the National Obesity Forum, and MD turned art history PhD Fiona Haslam set out to put the current obesity crisis in historical perspective. Through innovative and enlightening work on art, literature and the history of medicine the authors examine the changing meaning of 'fat' in the public consciousness: from circus freaks to pharmacology, from 'John Bull' to Billy Bunter. The authors' convincing argument is that present day food, fashion, fads and fat cannot be dissociated from history and that can be lessons learnt from the mistakes of the past.

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