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**FAT AND SKINNY OR THE SUN  
AND THE MOON:  
A STORY BY MRS. ROBERTA  
GROSSETESTE**

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**TITLE PAGE ILLUSTRATION:** FRANCIS LAW DURAND,  
MOON DISC PAINTINGS FOR GRANDFATHER'S CLOCK  
INDEX OF AMERICAN DESIGN  
NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, DC  
PUBLIC DOMAIN

**COVER ILLUSTRATION:** G. HUNT AFTER M. EGERTON,  
A CUP OF TEA AND A DISH OF CHAT  
WELCOME COLLECTION, LONDON PUBLIC DOMAIN



**PIOUS READER!**

**AS SHOWN ELSEWHERE—MORE SPECIFICALLY, IN CHAPTER 2: “MONDAY” OF A CLASSIC WORK TITLED *BOMBONICA HOPARTEAN: A BOOK OF DAYS*, WHICH YOU CAN READ AT:**

<https://www.quasi-medieval.com/single-project>

**MRS. THOMASINA BONAVENTURE WAS A PERSON OF PHYSICAL AND MENTAL BULK (THE PHYSICAL BEING PLAINLY VISIBLE; THE MENTAL—INFERABLE). THROUGH HER DECEASED HUSBAND SHE WAS REMOTELY RELATED TO ST. BONAVENTURE (C. 1217-1274), WHOSE MOTHER’S SILK DRESSES SHE WORE, INNUMERABLE CENTURIES LATER AND IN SPITE OF HER CORPULENCE (MRS. BONAVENTURE’S, YOU UNDERSTAND, NOT ST. BONAVENTURE’S MOTHER’S), WITH AN ELEGANCE AND *SAVOIR FAIRE* THAT NEVER FAILED TO LEAVE THE INHABITANTS OF OUR SMALL TOWN, RIVULUS DOMINARUM, AT A LOSS FOR WORDS. SHE WAS THE PROUD PROPRIETOR OF A BOY GRIFFIN CALLED GALAHAD;**

**AND SHE WAS GOOD FRIENDS WITH**

**MRS. ROGERIA BACON, WHO LIVED ON THE SAME STREET, WHOSE PET WAS A CHIMAERA OF OBJECTIONABLE PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER, AND WHO (MRS. BACON, YOU UNDERSTAND, NOT HER CHIMAERA) WAS SKINNY AND NOT VERY PERSONABLE (WHICH DID NOT PREVENT HER FROM HAVING A NOTABLE LOVE AFFAIR WITH MR. THEODORE MACROBIUS (A DESCENDANT OF AMBROSIUS THEODOSIUS MACROBIUS [FL. C. A.D. 400]), OF WHOSE DEATH SHE HAD BEEN UNJUSTLY ACCUSED.**

**AND WITH**

**MRS. ROBERTA GROSSETESTE (LUMENA TO HER SUPPORTERS AND TO SOME BUT NOT ALL OF HER ADVERSARIES), WHO HAD BEEN FOR MANY YEARS MARRIED TO HER HUSBAND (NOW DECEASED), A DESCENDANT OF THAT MOST WORTHY PHILOSOPHER AND SCIENTIST, MAGISTER ROBERT GROSSETESTE (C. 1168-1253). MRS. GROSSETESTE HERSELF WAS NOT BEYOND BEING WHAT YOU COULD CALL “A LITTLE ON THE CHUBBY SIDE,” BUT THAT FACT NO LONGER TORMENTED HER AS IT USED TO WHEN SHE WAS A LITTLE GIRL.**

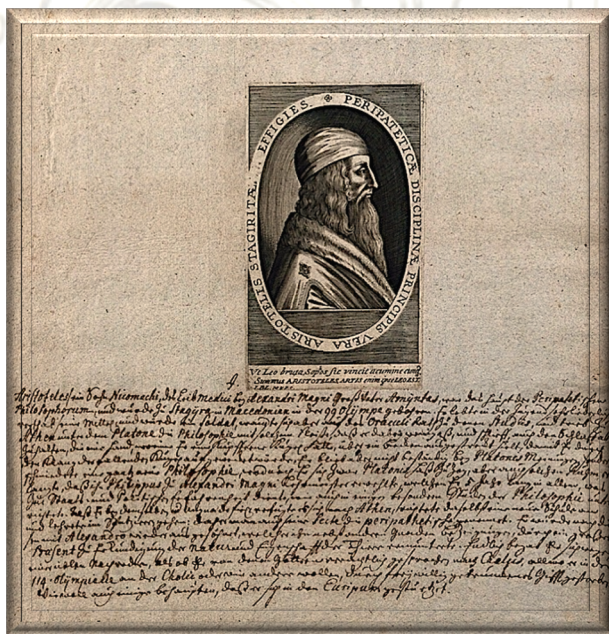
**AND NOW ON TO THIS MONTH’S SHORT STORY:**

Sitting on identical (yet clearly distinct from each other) rattan chairs in *Friar John's* beer garden, sipping lemonade to celebrate Mrs. Bacon's release from the local jail, these ladies were exchanging pleasantries of no consequence, when all of a sudden Mrs. Grosseteste said:

“You know, girls, in third grade I formed an inner conviction with respect to my fellow humans: they could be classified into two types, skinny and fat. Most of the girls in my class fell neatly into one of these two categories: Heloise, Edith, Erica, Eva, Georgette, Hildegard, Olga, and Susannah were skinny; Marika and I were fat. There were others, though, who sort of dangled in the middle, not being excessively thin, nor excessively stout; these were Hildegard and The Other Erica, whose grandma specialized in home-made chocolate with sour-cherries on top. And then there was a tiny, diminutive girl called Christina, who didn't belong in any of the above but was exceptionally skilled at playing the violin. She was in a league of her own.”

“Let me guess,” interrupted Mrs. Bonaventure. “I bet you the greatest advantage to being skinny was that one could eat as much as one liked and it would never show. The second-greatest advantage was that one could wear any kind of dress, long or short, tight or loose, and look good in it.”

“That is so,” said Mrs. Grosseteste. “And in gym class no one would make fun of one's plump thighs. I envied these girls no end.



I had built a whole philosophical system (as is—and was then—my wont) based on the dual concept of skinny-or-fat. One of its main tenets was that these physical attributes were naturally connected to moral ones (perhaps even engendered them): thus I had secretly decided, based on my daily arguments with Heloise—who was thin as a rail—that skinny persons made for bad people; I myself was chubby, so body fat must lead to goodness. In that vein I had created a syllogism of my own: Heloise is a skinny person; she is a bad person; it follows that any skinny person is bad.

Could it be that all skinny persons were bad? Or that all bad persons were skinny? Most probably, I thought, very satisfied with the

brilliance of my logical inference (for, being a precocious child, I had been engrossed in the study of Aristotle since first grade) ...”

“A thing not only laudable in itself,” cut in Mrs. Bacon “but which proved to be quite useful as well ...”

“Indeed,” agreed Mrs. Grosseteste “in that it was for that very reason that many years later Mr. Grosseteste, my now deceased husband—may God grant him peace and rest eternal wherever he may be at this moment ...”

“It's already been granted, and he's in Heaven,” said Mrs. Bacon.

“Yep. I was saying that it was because of my love of Aristotle and, generally speaking, of Thomistic scholasticism that Mr. Grosseteste took an interest in me and, at some point, asked for my hand in marriage. I don’t think he ever noticed I was a little plump ...”

(“You weren’t a little plump,” thought Mrs. Bonaventure. “You were plain fat, and that’s a fact. One would be blind to miss it.”)

She gave Mrs. Grosseteste a gracious smile, put down her glass, and said in her sweetest tone of voice:

“Go on, dear.”

“Thank you, dear,” said Mrs. Grosseteste. “Well, anyway, when I was a girl, I found it a little puzzling that so many of the skinny girls I knew were not so bad, after all. Georgette and Susannah, for instance (the rest were not my close friends).

‘Consider Susannah,’ I was pondering. ‘She is a delightful person: slim, pretty, kind, and smart.’

Susannah was Jewish and lived in a house behind the former City Mint, a building from the seventeenth hundreds which was now the Headquarters of the United Mining Industries, and later became the Municipal Museum of History. Every day she came to school with a different pair of ribbons fastened to her pigtails, and on Sunday mornings, when we went to the movies she would wear white crocheted gloves she had gotten from her aunt in America. Not only was she the only person I’d ever known to have an aunt in America but, additionally, out of the goodness of her heart Susannah helped me pass my physical ed. tests: for several weeks before the test she would practice with me long jumps and other strenuous stuff in the school yard, and I had no doubt I would have failed miserably had it not been for her.

Susannah had another strong point: a gorgeous mother. After I’d seen her portrait in their living room I had decided SHE, not my classmate Hildegard, looked like Queen Anne of Austria. The lady was a born aristocrat. Her daughter couldn’t be less than that. Alas, they were both skinny.

On the other hand, there were only two chubby girls in my class, including myself. But we were definitely good people.

One further example was provided by Dominica’s father, who was a very fat person and a very good man: he would stroll with the two of us in the Botanical Gardens, offer chocolate and strawberry syrup, speak in mellow tones, and never quarrel with Dominica’s mother. By contrast, Father was good-looking but skinny, steered the whole family through strenuous mountain expeditions, proclaimed that sweets were bad for me, and had the occasional disagreement with Mother over issues I didn’t understand.

(The matter of the sweets was really bothersome, for it was at about that time that Romanian economy surged to hitherto unattained peaks, and this translated into an outpouring of new chocolate brands in our sweetshops. There was one brand, *The Carpathians*, which I particularly favored, not so much for its taste—it was milk chocolate with cherry-syrup filling—as for its wrapping, which pictured a tall, stemmed glass from which two rivulets of milk and cherry syrup were pouring generously to form the chocolate bar itself.)

I shared my findings with Heloise, leaving out the syllogism part and retaining the case of the two fathers, one fat and one skinny, one good and one less so, and she got mad.

‘I don’t see why you’re so upset,’ I said. ‘Look, your father is a fat person, too, so by definition he must be a good man.’

She gave me a murderous look. She knew there were strings attached.

‘Yeah, but grandma says I am skinny. According to your theory, it follows that ...’

‘Oh, is that so? Are you a skinny person? Well, I swear to God I never noticed,’ I said.

And that was my revenge. She was less than skinny: she was skeletal and you’d be blind if you missed it.”

Mrs. Grosseteste leaned back on her rattan chair, put the glass to her lips, and took a fresh sip of lemonade.



**I**llustrations:

Aristotle. Line engraving, 16—. Wellcome Collection, London. Public domain

Girl holding a doll. Gouache. Wellcome Collection, London. Public domain

Theresia Fischer, a girl. Colored engraving, 1815. Wellcome Collection, London. Public domain