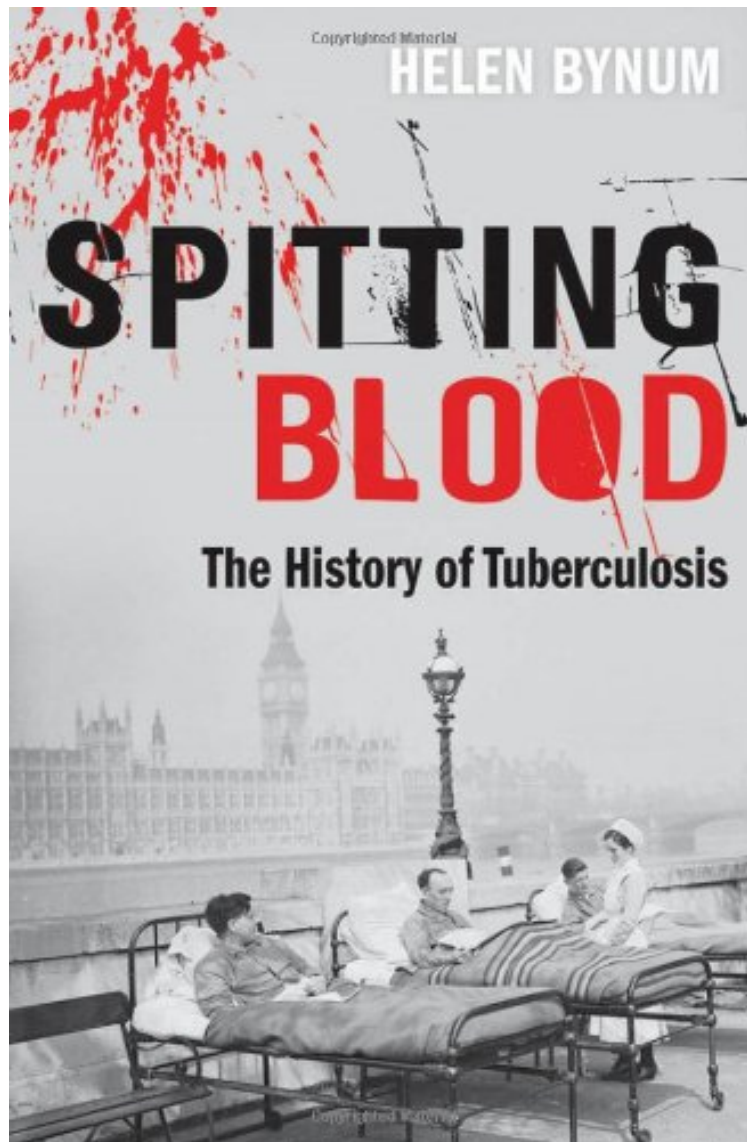


Spitting Blood: The history of tuberculosis

Helen Bynum

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Helen Bynum : Spitting Blood: The history of tuberculosis before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Spitting Blood: The history of tuberculosis:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Packed full of information, but very slow going.By CarrieThis book started out very strongly with a brief account of George Orwell's experience with tuberculosis, but I found that it went a little downhill after that. It became fairly dry and technical. I was expecting it to pick up steam when the author got to the recognition of germ theory in the tuberculosis timeline, but it really didn't. I was hoping for more personal

accounts of the disease, and while there were some, those accounts made up only a very small fraction of the book. A few pros and cons: Pros: The book is well-organized. I never felt "lost" in the timeline of this history of tuberculosis. It also explains in great detail the various phases of tuberculosis treatment, beginning with some of the more ridiculous so-called remedies before the arrival of modern medicine, progressing through the sanitarium phase, and ending with some of the modern approaches to the disease and the influence of drug resistance in modern treatment. The author also discusses the changing perception of tuberculosis, including the periods of time when TB or TB-like symptoms were considered almost fashionable and the role of TB in the eugenics movement. Cons: Like I said above, pretty dry and a little too technical. I am not a medical professional, and while I found the book to be understandable, some of the nuances of the disease or the development of a TB antibiotic were extremely boring to me. (And I do not bore easily - I have read other books about disease and have largely found the science to be interesting, but this time I couldn't muster up a lot of excitement for it.) In fairness, part of the reason the book and the science discussion felt boring to me may be due to the fact that TB is a chronic disease and not usually acute, so the disease tends to be protracted, whereas other illnesses I have read about (ebola, smallpox) are shorter-lived but very intense. Another con is that the editing (on the Kindle version at least) was a little lacking. I noticed a lot of typos, which I found disappointing for a ~\$14 Kindle book. And the last con: There is only a very brief mention of XDRTB (Extensively Drug Resistant TB), which is the latest major stumbling block in the fight against TB. This book was published in 2012, and XDRTB has been a confirmed problem for many years. I thought it deserved more than a mention in the epilogue, especially since it is a problem that stems from people not completing the prolonged treatments required for the effective management of TB. Overall, this is a good book if you are interested in the history of tuberculosis. It does not contain a lot of anecdotes from people who have had the disease and is instead largely focused on the evolution of treatment. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting story about the history, development, and symptoms ... By Patricia A. Guthrie Interesting story about the history, development, and symptoms of TB, once called the most prolific disease in history, and the frantic search for a cure. This book combines the technical, medical facts with the human and humane elements and turns the book into a fascinating read. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Not just ancient history By Keith Aspinall An excellent history and evaluation of the current status of TB. For those of us brought up in the world of antibiotics it is easy to believe that this disease is vanquished. It is not. Well written, perhaps a little slow, excellent in all other regards

Tuberculosis is characterized as a social disease and few have been more inextricably linked with human history. There is evidence from the archaeological record that *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* and its human hosts have been together for a very long time. The very mention of tuberculosis brings to mind romantic images of great literary figures pouring out their souls in creative works as their bodies were being decimated by consumption. It is a disease that at various times has had a certain glamour associated with it. From the medieval period to the modern day, Helen Bynum explores the history and development of tuberculosis throughout the world, touching on the various discoveries that have emerged about the disease over time, and focusing on the experimental approaches of Rene Laennec (1781-1826) and Robert Koch (1842-1910). Bynum also examines the place tuberculosis holds in the popular imagination and its role in various forms of the dramatic arts. The story of tuberculosis since the 1950s is complex, and Bynum describes the picture emerging from the World Health Organization of the difficulties that attended the management of the disease in the developing world. In the meantime, tuberculosis has emerged again in the West, both among the urban underclass and in association with a new infection - HIV. The disease has returned with a vengeance - in drug-resistant form. The story of tuberculosis is far from over.

Helen Bynum has written a book not only full of diverting asides but also of urgent importance. Richard Horton, Guardian Highly recommended. M.L. Charleroy, CHOICE About the Author Helen Bynum is a freelance historian of medicine and a former researcher for Wellcome. She is the author of *Tropical Medicine in the 20th century*. Together with Bill Bynum, they have edited the award winning *Dictionary of Medical Biography* (5 vols).