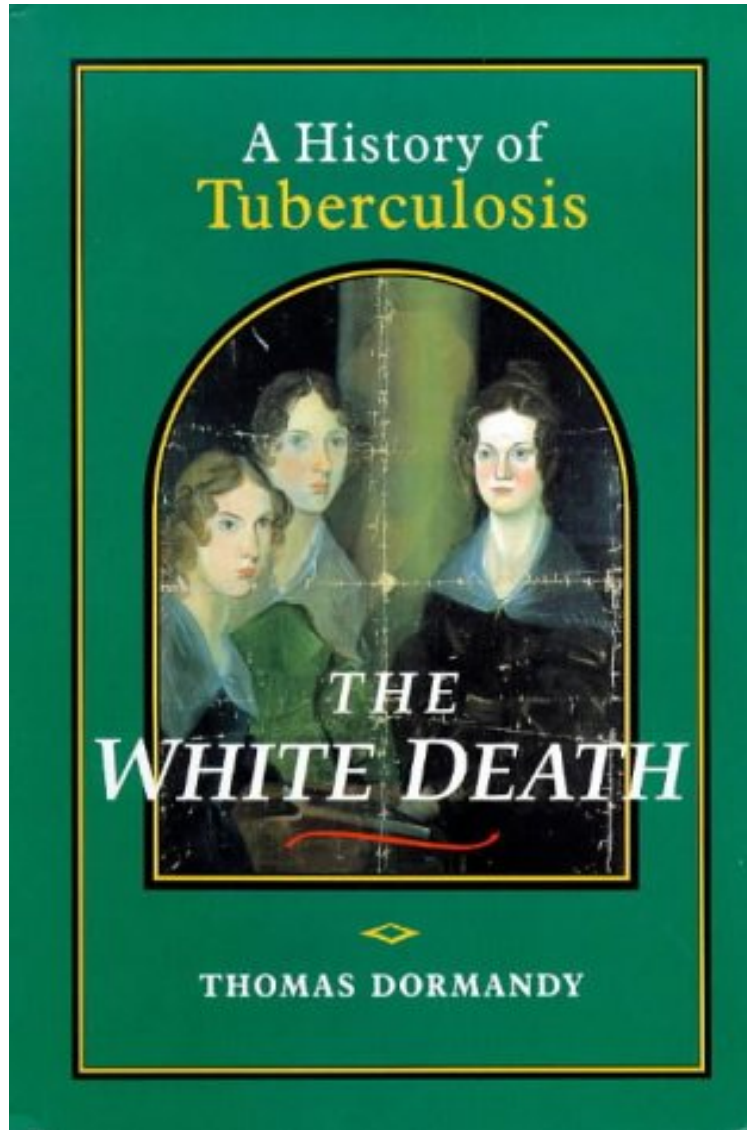


(Pdf free) The White Death: A History of Tuberculosis

The White Death: A History of Tuberculosis

William Henry (1897-1969) Chamberlin
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William Henry (1897-1969) Chamberlin : The White Death: A History of Tuberculosis before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The White Death: A History of Tuberculosis:

35 of 36 people found the following review helpful. A Consuming diseaseBy A CustomerWhen the whole world seemed to be suffering with flu last winter I read and thoroughly enjoyed "Flu" by Gina Kolata. I caught the sickness bug (bad pun) and read several more social-history books about deadly diseases and living conditions in the past, and Dormandy's "The White Death" was by far the best. We readers are all familiar with the idea of the limp, frail tubercular Victorian who is tragically going to waste away before his magnus opus is finished, but do we realise that

until fairly recently, tuberculosis was so common - in fact expected in certain circles - that the wasted tubercular look was actually fashionable amongst the artistic and indolent (early heroine-chic?)? This very readable book charts the long and difficult fight between the medical establishment and tuberculosis - a disease that wasn't fussy who it struck or where it struck. Of course, the poor slum-dwellers didn't stand a chance, but history does not record their names. What is striking is how many well known figures it hastened to an early grave - some of the finest artists, writers and minds of Europe, including the Brontes, Keats, Modigliani, Chekhov, D.H. Lawrence, Katherine Mansfield and George Orwell. It also rampaged through several royal households at various times. What made it so cruel was its slowness and the way it toyed with its victims. Availed with all that quackery could offer, the patient could have several seeming "recoveries" before eventually fading. Dormandy describes some of the practises of doctors in their battle against tuberculosis - you will have to read them for yourself! Gradually inroads were made by the scientific community but only after generations of sickness. Incredibly it was a long time before the idea of quarantine caught on (in Italy)! An interesting and readable medical and social history that becomes more compelling when you know that tuberculosis is again on the rise. Drug-resistant strains have been found, and it seems that whilst battles may have been won, the war may still be lost.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Brilliant
By Rodger Shepherd
I concur with the other reviewers. The important story of tuberculosis is very well told. The author erudition and skill earns the reader's respect and appreciation. For events prior to the publication in 2000, this could well be the best single book to read.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. TB and world history
By T. Washington
What Deborah Hayden's "Pox: Genius, Madness And The Mysteries of Syphilis" (Basic Books, 2003) does for STDs, so does "The White Death: A History Of Tuberculosis" by Thomas Dormandy do for "consumption" (as TB was known in Victorian times- just as syphilis was "the pox"), namely reveal how deeply both diseases shaped the course of European and world history, culture and social mores- indeed there are suggestive similarities between both diseases-both were mass killers from the Renaissance period well into the 20th century and (p.77) both were so feared that doctors usually put any other cause of death on the death certificates of sufferers , usually to spare the feelings of a grieving family, although ironically enough the idea of esp young women dying or suffering from "consumption" became so popular that some young women began to artificially pale their complexions so as to simulate a comsumptive condition. ("The White Death" referred to in the title was the tell tale facial pallor of its sufferers), this giving TB a romantic cachet that the "pox" never could or did get. Personally I fail to see what is so romantic about suffering or dying from TB anymore than I do the "pox"-in either case it was a wasting, agonizingly painful and protracted death. Be that as it may "consumption's" roll call of victims (much like syphilis's) is impressive: the three Bronte sisters, poet John Keats, Napoleon II, Polish composer Fredric Chopin, Simonetta Vespucci, the model for Botticelli's Venus, author George Orwell and actress Vivien Leigh- as late as 1950 and 1967 respectively, just to show that TB is no longer confined to the Victorian era(the cover painting is "The Sick Child" by Edvard Munch, reportedly inspired by the death of the artist's sister Sophie at the age of 16).Of course TB is still with us, a few months ago I saw an article in the Times noting that it was on the rise amongst down and outs, possibly encouraged by mass immigration from the Indian subcontinent and Eastern Europe(esp Poland).Like "the pox", it seems that TB will be with us for the foreseeable future!

The victims of tuberculosis (usually known as consumption) included not only Keats, The Brontes, Chopin and Chekhov, but members of almost every family. It was a killer on a huge scale. The White Death is an outstanding history of tuberculosis. Thomas Dormandy's engrossing account of the search for a cure is complemented by a description of its complex natural history and by portraits of individual sufferers, including writers, artists, and musicians, whose lives and work were shaped (and often tragically curtailed) by the disease. But, tuberculosis is not just a disease of the past. In many parts of the world it is still a bigger killer than AIDS, while in America and Europe drug-resistant strains threaten its resurgence.

From Publishers Weekly
Accessible scientific and sociological history are combined by Dormandy, a consultant pathologist in London, in this account of a tenacious disease that has claimed victims from ancient Egypt to 1990s New York City. Focusing mostly on western Europe and the U.S., Dormandy vividly details the long struggle against tuberculosis. He takes readers through the high points of its history--from the discovery in 1882, by German physician Robert Koch, of the tubercle bacillus through the legendary tubercular deaths of writers, musicians and artists like Katherine Mansfield, George Orwell, D.H. Lawrence and Modigliani. He notes that before 1882, most observers thought infection was caused by a genetic predisposition, and doctors often treated it with measures such as bloodletting (which, Dormandy argues, hastened the deaths of famous sufferers like poet John Keats). Then he follows the disease as it made its way through crowded, poverty-stricken urban areas. He discusses the growth of the 19th century's sanatorium movement, examines the romantic, creative aura that was associated with it, and takes note of the post-WWII discovery and use of antibiotics, which began to effect dramatic cures. Dormandy points his research at present-day medical struggles--the global HIV epidemic, he notes, has combined with the emergence of multi-drug resistance to make tuberculosis, once thought almost eradicated, a threat to worldwide health again. Prodigious

research and an engaging anecdotal style blend to make this a fascinating foray into the history of medicine. Illustrations and bw photos. Editor, Niko Pfund. (Mar.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal British pathologist Dormandy weaves together cultural and medical history with the skill of a learned, witty, and humane scholar. Exhaustively researched and documented, his book describes the havoc wreaked by tuberculosis over millennia--which, horrifyingly, was sometimes inflicted by physicians themselves. Happily, the search for a cure led also to significant medical innovations, including the stethoscope, antibiotics, and X-rays. More mundane advances, including park benches, bobbed hair, and an end to ornate Victorian decor, also emerged, as an appalling number of citizens of all social classes sought cures in sanatoria, where carefully calibrated exercise was a standard prescription and dust was relentlessly suppressed. Dormandy illuminates his medical history through the stories of dozens of artists and writers, from Keats and Chopin to Orwell, D.H. Lawrence, and Vivien Leigh, whose lives were tragically shortened before effective antibiotics became available in the 1940s and 1950s. Sadly, however, TB's protean bacteria quickly began to mutate into drug-resistant strains, and the search for a permanent cure or effective vaccine continues. Strongly recommended for serious readers in all libraries.-Kathleen Arsenault, Univ. of South Florida at St. Petersburg Lib. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. "General readers will find much of interest in Dormandy's stories and anecdotes."-The Bulletin of the History of Medicine, "One of the most readable medical histories ever."-Sunday Express, "A gripping read, enlightening and moving by turns."-Evening Standard, "Like an experienced suspense writer, the author of this marvelous book reserves his good news until the end. . . . One of the additional pleasures of his book lies in its vivid parentheses, case histories, even footnotes. . . . [it is] enlivened by Dormandy's mordant wit and idiosyncratic style. . . . A fine book."-Anita Brookner, The Sunday Times "A model of how medical history ought to be written . . . lucid in its analysis and perspicacious in its commentary."-Peter Ackroyd, The Times of London