



Nosferatu in the Wake of the Covid Experience



BY JEFFREY A. TUCKER JANUARY 6, 2025

PSYCHOLOGY, PUBLIC HEALTH

6 MINUTE READ

Bram Stoker's classic *Dracula* (1892) was written as a Victorian-style moralizing tale of sin and its consequences. The author, a political and religious conservative of his times, never could have imagined that his novel would become a bestseller in his own time largely due to its lascivious imagery and terrifying plotline that fed into every anxiety over morality, science, and public health, much less kick off a century and a quarter of vampire films.

It also served as a crossover allegory with another concern of the time: the problem of infectious disease, which was then seen as traceable to some exogenous poisoning of the blood. Public health arose as an institution in the half-century prior, mostly dating from the identification and solution to the problem of cholera in London, which the famed epidemiologist John Snow traced to contaminated water from a pump on Broad Street.

Maintain cleanliness in mind, body, and spirit: that was the lesson of *Dracula*. It certainly stuck. And to this day, that same solution drives 21st purification measures. There is a persistent fear of a microbial planet, as Steve Templeton explains in his [brilliant book](#).

The population panic over Covid demonstrated that nothing has changed. People sprayed down their mail and grocery bags to protect themselves against a respiratory virus that does not live on surfaces, wore masks as a symbol of protection and penance, and took recourse to an untested novel injection despite widespread awareness that such a thing could not work to sterilize anything much less end a pandemic.

The notion of a pathogen on the loose was also offered up as a moral judgment, as if the gods were rendering a guilty verdict on the rise of populist nationalism in the US and UK. We must sanitize the surfaces and filter the air, literally and metaphorically, in order to clean up both the microbial and political kingdoms. The effort to cleanse the public square of the deplorables resulted in unfathomable destruction.

This period also revealed huge class differences in the way people respond to infectious disease. The professional classes with their clean laptop-based lives gladly sheltered in place (so long as the money flows kept coming) while pushing the lower thirds of society into a subservient role of keeping the goods and services flowing, while bravely facing the pathogen and bearing disproportionate burden of building up herd immunity. They were later forced to be the first in line to try out the cure by injection.

All of which takes us to the incredible brilliance of the new film *Nosferatu* by Robert Eggers, a remake of the 1922 silent film. The plotline is very similar to Bram Stoker's original Dracula, changed only to deal with possible copyright claims that came later in any case. But there were a few twists added as well, among which is the existence of plague brought by the demon figure himself. The small German town was overrun with death of the grimmest sort, and the scientists of the time ruled out an explanation that grappled with the occult.

In this way, the new film can be seen as an implicit critique of the scientism that ruled the day from 2020 to 2023 – and much of the modern and postmodern eras as well. In the book and in all movies, desperation to deal with the problem drives people to contact a famed scientist who lost his university post for his interest in seemingly primitive spiritual traditions. In the book he is Dr. Abraham Van Helsing; in the movies associated with *Nosferatu*, he is Dr. Albin Eberhart Von Franz. They were the same person, the wise dissident trained in the old ways who held the answer but had to be brought out of retirement.

The best lines in the new movie are given to Dr. Von Franz, as *pointed out* by the historian Alexander Burns.

“I have seen things in this world that would have made Isaac Newton crawl back into his mother’s womb!”

“We have not been so enlightened as we have been **BLINDED** by the gaseous light of **SCIENCE!**”

“I have wrestled with the devil as Jacob wrestled with the Angel, and I tell you that if we are to tame darkness we must first face that it exists!”

All the while, the enlightened medicine men continue to drug the poor afflicted woman with ether, force her to wear her corset to bed, tie her to the bed, and bleed her unceasingly, as if the bad poison will drip out of her at some point. The cure was not only worse than the disease; then as now, the cure became the disease.

Meanwhile, the peasants in Transylvania know well how to deal with the monster in the castle on the hill. They deploy prayers, crucifixes, garlic, and periodic hunts with wooden stakes to ward away and kill the evil in order to protect themselves and their communities.

Only Von Franz understands the point of all this superstition and is aware that it is ultimately more effective than any of the nostrums invented in the name of science.

The religious import and thematics of an infectious disease panic are impossible to avoid. They can take different forms, as they did most recently with preposterous rituals concerning six feet of distance, masking while walking and unmasking while sitting, the banning of singing and skateboarding, and pretending as if we know precisely where the bad pathogen resides (sometimes inside and sometimes outside; only the experts knew for sure).

These made-up sacramentals were fobbed on us in the name of science but there was also a distinct pre-scientific caste to the sociology of this pandemic. People dressed in loose woolens and slovenly rags in symbolic recreations of the flagellants, as I’ve **pointed out** many times. Anything and everything considered fun or celebratory was obviously banned, since revelry is aesthetically inconsistent with the community’s need for propitiation from sin.

Those who refused to go along with the mass mania, avoiding masking and potion injections, were scapegoated as the cause of the suffering of others. They were practicing

the neologism called “freedumb.” Even the US president wished them ill, lustily forecasting a winter of suffering and death.

It was the decidedly secular among us who were most on board with Covid controls while the first to dissent as a community belonged to non-mainstream sects of believers among Orthodox Jews, Catholics, Mormons, Amish, and Mennonites, while sections of the country dominated by Evangelicals were next in line to doubt.

The highly educated secular elite classes were still holding on to the religion of Covid despotisms long after they had any relevance, even to the point of sacrificing their own children to the god Fauci and his magical snake oil.

Faith of the ages proved to be a better guide than the expert class, the blindness of which prolonged and worsened the problem. After all, the doctors in the fictional stories of Dracula and Nosferatu used the same method as the monster: draining the afflicted of blood. The mystical scholar from abroad knew otherwise: “And so now, let us do our work. We must place a stake through the heart. That is the only way.”

The terror of infection and the deployment of science to ward it off is still with us as the psychological path through which modern man grapples with his fear of death. Neither Dracula nor Nosferatu were created in a lab and the lab helped none at all in their eventual defeat. But the overlaps and parallels of the fictional story serve as a powerful metaphorical template to understand the infectious disease mania through which we all lived most recently.

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