



# **A History of the Great Influenza Pandemics: Death, Panic and Hysteria, 1830-1920 (International Library of Cultural Studies)**

*Mark Honigsbaum*

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Influenza was the great killer of the nineteenth and twentieth century. The so called 'Russian flu' killed about 1 million people across Europe in 1889 – including the second-in-line to the British throne, the Duke of Clarence. The Spanish flu of 1918, meanwhile, would kill 50 million people – nearly 3% of the world's population. Here, Mark Honigsbaum outlines the history of influenza in the period, and describes how the fear of disease permeated Victorian culture.

These fears were amplified by the invention of the telegraph and the ability of the new mass-market press to whip up public hysteria. The flu was therefore a barometer of wider fin de siècle social and cultural anxieties - playing on fears engendered by economic decline, technology, urbanisation and degeneration. A History of the Great Influenza Pandemics is a vital new contribution towards our understanding of European history and the history of the media.

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