WHITE CIRCLE By Edward Knight

FADE IN:

INT./EXT. #1 - DARK

A figure stirs on soil. Around him are curls of wire, children's toys. The severed haunch of a percheron horse stands upright before him in the shallow crater. It smokes softly and the man regards it.

Stucco cornicing can be seen at the night's corners, high up. Sitting up, the man puts fingers to a hole in his temple which emits blood.

COMMANDANT

Salute! Salute properly, God devour you! Salute!

The man struggles to attention with fingertips inside his wound.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Salut! Salut, mio piccolo soldato! Dio vi benedica!

(in Polish)

Now untie your tongue and tell me what you're hiding. I'll tell Papa you've been a naughty boy.

Light shifts in the Italianate playroom-battlefield to recast it, showing gurneys and bandaged skulls. The ceiling is still cracked and open to the sky, which is black.

MAN

I confess. I'm harbouring Phoenician statues which should rightfully be in the Louvre.

NURSE

Well that's a novel way of requesting a new bedpan. You do say the oddest things.

MAN

I am Wilhelm Albert Włodzimierz Apolinary Kostrowscki, master poet!

The nurse shakes her head and tuts, the sound deepening to the thuds of distant artillery. A cannon is seen firing with men spacehopping around it, first in fatigues, loading shells, then in suits and bowler hats.

MAN (CONT'D)

Now stand aside. The premiere is about to begin!

The doorman, in nurse's uniform, recedes as cannon beat music and shells whistle piccolo melodies. The curtain lifts and the show begins.

MAN (CONT'D)

Yes! Munitions falling like petals! Starbursts lighting the orphic charge! Ecstasy illumined! Dancers dressed by Picasso as buildings and ideas; music scored by Satie for guns, aeroplanes, typewriters... Think of it: text is merely sheet music scored for the keyboard; drama - dialogue, direction - is music for the body, the queerest instrument. Yes, it's all in the practice!

A figure in the next seat whose face is bandaged turns to the man.

FIGURE

Oh Monsieur Apollinaire, with these words you coin you are truly mint-mouthed, fresh with thoughts! 'Orphic', 'metaphysical', 'surreal' - 'keyboard'! Whatever next?

The curtain falls and the audience is riotous with adulation, their hats soaring through the auditorium, arcing, swooping down and up, finally hovering in place. They hover on hatstand hooks in the corner of the ward as blood throbs musically from the man's head in a thin trail. He sees a trail of ants marching from his wound.

MAN

Militarised little ants in practised steps. You know, Hunter Thompson copied For Whom the Bell Tolls out longhand - merely to see what it felt like to write it. Practice! The act of things!

FIGURE

Who is Hunter Thompson?

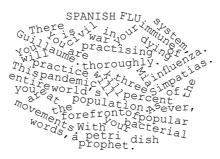
What year is this? Perhaps he is not yet born, nor has the Spanish civil war he experienced by copying that book occurred - but experienced it he has! Or will.

The figure unwraps his bandages to reveal not a face but instead a porthole into a room. In the room an artist finishes a painting, its foreground featuring a bust wearing sunglasses and its background a silhouette which the man recognises as his own. The final stroke applied by the artist is a white circle around the temple of the puts his fingers to the wound at $\dot{\gamma}_{i,0}$ dated to 1914, the $\dot{\gamma}_{i,0}$

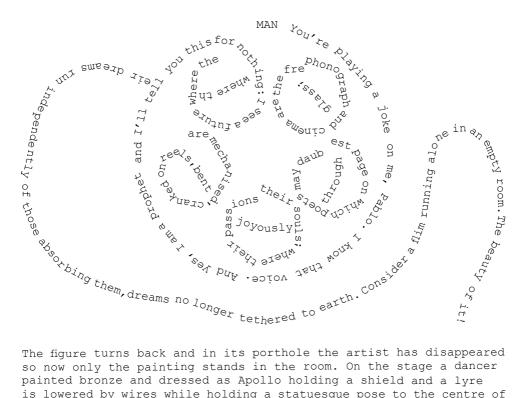
MAN (CON'T) pig-iron! Two sliver of years by a ago. not set Extra fate is ordinary! live? My (coughs) then, to Μv friend's is it. what painting ice. But of me was the pract an instruc Yes, all in tion manual which I have lived.

He descends into a fit of coughing as the faceless figure rotates its head back to the stage where dancers troupe on with only their legs visible, protruding from amorphous cloudlike costumes, grey and menacing. The coughing falls in time with their steps and kicks. Other dancers emerge from the opposite side in equally giant costumes but bright yellow. Juddering, clockwork movements.

A voice intones from the figure, who still looks forward.



The two sets of dancers clash in balletic violence as the man laughs deeply.



The figure turns back and in its porthole the artist has disappeared so now only the painting stands in the room. On the stage a dancer painted bronze and dressed as Apollo holding a shield and a lyre is lowered by wires while holding a statuesque pose to the centre of the stage. Here the warring pathogens and immune cells come to dance around him.

Watching this, the man looks at his hands S 0 0 slung Q are bronze, painte Λд they too wires.e SPANISH FLU 'n f m c p h r G d d f o e g n ir B seicehporpo V d u g a l p

A dancer dressed as Mother but wearing dark sunglasses emerges, and, contrariwise to the circling cells, chalks a large white circle around the statue so that Apollo is contained inside.

The throng moves concentrically around Apollo and Mother continues to drag the chalk over the circle, all increasing in speed. Mother's voice thunders out, chorused.

> MOTHER MOTHER (in English) (in Polish) Czym jest praktyka, What is practice jeśli nie if not odtwarzaniem $_{MO}$ retracing echa? echoes? ΤН ER (CON'D) (in Italian) Échos!

> > (in French) Echi! c h MAN oes! Yes, the first music! Dream music!

More danc ers s tream ons tage. Mannequin sin nurses' unif orms ghost r igidly in the cycl ic throng, the mselves rotating. More yellow immune c

that dancers knock e Duke of Monaco ent

The man is euphoric and n otes that his whole body is now bronze. Phoenician aisles on either side, th and into the dance, which ellow immune cells pack ement is now impossible. the stage's backdrop ou f lungs. Everything di ear to be fill

ells are produced and fill the stage so into one another. Th ers, a Swiss papal gu ardsman, and finally th e Popejerks on with a n englarged mitre whic hobs above the melee.

> soldiers storm down the rough the orchestra pit has seen more and more y out the floor so that mov The lights shift to show tlined as a large pair o ms as the lungs app ed utterly.

