

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
Kostrowski, 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?

MAN

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 silhouette's head. Seeing that the painting is dated to 1914, the man puts his fingers to the wound at his temple.

MAN (CON'T)

pig-iron!	Two
sliver of	years
by a	ago.
not set	Extra
fate is	ordinary!
live? My	(coughs)
then, to	My
is it,	friend's
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.

SPANISH FLU: system
There is civil war in our immune
Guill you are practising dying
will practice thoroughly.
This pandemic is the three of the
entire world's 11 percent
you are at population as ever,
the forefront of popular
movements with your bacterial
words, a petri dish
prophet.

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 (in English) Czym jest praktyka,
jeśli nie if not
odtworzeniem MO retracing
e c h a ? T H echoes?
E R
(CON'D)
(in Italian)
Échos!

(in French)
E c h i !
E c h MAN o e s !
Yes, the first music!
Dream music!

More dancers stream onto the stage. Mannequins in nurses' uniforms ghost rigidly in the cyclic throng, themselves rotating. More yellow immune cells are produced that dancers knock into one another. The Duke of Monaco enters, a Swiss papal guard, and finally the Pope jerks on with a enlarged mitre which h bobs above the melee.

The man is euphoric and notes that his whole body is now bronze. Phoenician soldiers storm down the aisles on either side, through the rough the orchestra pit and into the dance, which has seen more and more yellow immune cells pack out the floor so that movement is now impossible. The lights shift to show the stage's backdrop outlined as a large pair of lungs. Everything disappears as the lungs appear to be filled utterly.

FADE OUT, FADE IN
Orchestral wheezing
slows the dance
into long pulses,
dimming the lights
each time, and each
time the wheeze
rasps fainter.

FADE OUT, FADE IN

As his fingers rake
across his chest
and he gasps for
words the man thinks
of when he was a boy
and staring directly
into the sun.

MAN (CONT'D)

I am devoured by
dreams!
God devour me!

FADE OUT, FADE IN

Grabbing at the
figure beside him

he sees the flickering
image in its face.

The image is of him
writing in a

hospital bed.

He and his image
gasp together and,

FADE OUT
their eyes smile.
melting,
gasp together and,