

Karel Čapek, *The White Plague*, trans. by Peter Majer and Cathy Porter

The White Plague can be construed as an openly political play in which Karel Čapek warns against the danger of impending Nazi totalitarianism. The plot is simple: people who have reached middle-age and are most likely in positions of power and influence become victims to a pandemic of an infectious disease: an incurable white plague. In a war-mongering dictatorship very much like Nazi Germany, a heroic doctor, Dr. Galén, discovers a cure for the disease, but he refuses to make it generally available unless the country's dictator and its military-industrial complex abandon their militarism and pledge themselves to eternal peace. This allows the author to examine several complex ethical dilemmas.

Čapek, Karel *The White Plague*. In: Čapek, Karel, *Four Plays*, London: Methuen Drama, 1999.

Film version

Bílá nemoc [videorecording] = *The white disease* = *Die weisse Krankheit*. Dir. by Hugo Haas (1937), a DVD release Praha: Filmexport Home Video, 2008.

Secondary Reading

Holý, Jiří. "Karel Čapek In: Serafin, S. (ed.) *Twentieth-Century Eastern European Writers. Series: Dictionary of literary biography* (215). Detroit: Gale Group, 1999, pp. 43-53.

Klíma, Ivan. *Karel Čapek: Life and Work*. North Haven, CT : Catbird Press, 2002.

Makin, Michael and Jindřich Toman, eds. [On Karel Čapek: a Michigan Slavic colloquium](#), Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1992.

Harkins, William E. , *Karel Čapek*. New York ; London : Columbia University Press, 1962.

[Čapek, Karel](#) and [Renata Flint](#), [Robert M. Philmus](#), [Preface to "Bílá Nemoc"](#)

Science Fiction Studies, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Mar., 2001), pp. 1-6.

Nikol'skiĭ, S.V., *Karel Čapek - fantast i satirik*. Moskva: Nauka, 1973.

Nikol'skiĭ, S.V., *Nad stranitsami antiutopiĭ K. Čapeka i M. Bulgakova : poëtika skrytykh motivov*. Moskva: Indrik, 2001.