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Zuoyu Zhang April 4, 2018

A Comparison of the Published Scholarly English Translations of Paul Celan's "Todesfuge"

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Abstract

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Paul Celan's "Todesfuge" ["Deathfugue"] (1952) distinguishes itself as the most canonical Holocaust poem with its avant-garde modernist composition and Celan's complex identity as a German-speaking Jew and Holocaust survivor. On one hand, its bare poetic diction and minimal rhetorical devices convey the daily nature of death in the concentration camps in a neutral and monotonous tone; on the other hand, its striking metaphor and imagery, pulsating rhythm, severe syntactical effects, and first-person narrative present the gruesome realities of the Holocaust in an accurate and poignant manner.

Given the canonical status of "Todesfuge," it has been of decade-long scholarly interests and importance to translate the poem from its original language, German, into various languages. Up to this date, there have been, in the English language alone, 15 published scholarly translations of "Todesfuge," ever since its first publication in the German language in 1952. New translations have emerged every decade since the 1950s to the end of the twentieth century, with the exception of the 1980s.

Due to the prolonged impact of "Todesfuge" and the large number of English translations, this study aims to identity the strengths and weaknesses of these 15 published scholarly English translations based on the translation strategy outlined by Sándor Hervey et al. in *Thinking German Translation: A Course in Translation Method: German to English.*

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I. Introduction

a. Todesfuge"—The Canonical Holocaust Poem

On December 15, 2017, *USA Today* reported that "anti-Semitism is still alive in Germany as Jews face 'disturbing' discrimination," and the United States, under the new presidency, sees a similar trend, as Donald Trump is known for making racist, including anti-Semitic remarks. Given these circumstances of revived anti-Semitism, we must turn our attention to Holocaust literature, with renewed urgency.

Among the poems that convey the pains of the Holocaust, Paul Celan's "Todesfuge" has grown to an iconic status. Its translation into other languages has played a crucial part in its fame ever since its first German publication in 1952, as part of Celan's poetry collection *Mohn und Gedächtnis*. Up to this day, there have been in English alone 15 published scholarly translations of Celan's "Todesfuge." With the exception of the 1980s, new translations have emerged almost every decade. Not surprisingly, this poem has drawn more passionate attention than any other poem from World War II. John Felstiner, the foremost biographer of Celan, notes in his biography that "…no lyric has exposed the exigencies of its time so radically as this one, whose speakers [are the] Jewish prisoners tyrannized by a camp commandant" (Felstiner, *Paul Celan: Poet, Survivor, Jew*, 26).

The striking metaphors, powerful imagery, biblical and literary references, intricate rhythm, severe syntactical effects, bare poetic diction and rhetoric devices in "Todesfuge" continue to startle readers to this day. But most of all, it is the raw realities, accentuated by the first-person narrative and the simple present tense, in "Todesfuge" that generate the poem's prolonged impact. Although Celan was not deported to a death camp, but rather a labor camp in "Tãbãresti, Wallachia" today, his poem, nevertheless, reflects some of the gruesome realities

that we know all too well from Auschwitz and many other concentration camps, where the SS lieutenant commanded the Jews to play the fiddles "when the Germans took a group out to be shot" (Felstiner, *Paul Celan*, 30). "Todesfuge" is Celan's way of giving voices to the Holocaust victims, combined with the enduring memories of his own experiences. An apt statement by Patrick Bridgewater, one of his scholarly translators, reads, "[Celan's] work is a heart-felt search for reality; the language in which he writes is divorced from reality" (Bridgewater, lxix). However, given Celan's poetics, it is impossible to divorce the context from the content.

b. Paul Celan—German speaking-Jewish Poet and Holocaust Survivor

Paul Celan, born as Paul Antschel on 23 November 1920, grew up in a German-speaking Jewish family in Czernowitz, Bukovina, which originally belonged to the Austrian Empire before World War I, but was passed to Romania only shortly before Celan's birth. Celan was a native speaker of German and Romanian. While he learned fluent Romanian at school, Celan's knowledge of German came from his mother, who immersed Celan in High German and classic German literature. In contrast to Celan's father, who emphasized the Judaic education for Celan, whose ancestors were religiously Jewish, his mother stressed that "the German language [was] more important, and all her life she took care that a correct literary German should be spoken" (Felstiner, *Paul Celan*, 6). Undeniably, Celan's German came from his mother and was strongly emotionally bonded with his relationship to her. In a literal sense, German was Celan's "Muttersprache" or mother['s] tongue.

A prolific writer, Celan wrote a total of 800 poems from 1938 to 1970, and his lyrics often address a significant figure in his life: "his mother, his wife, or sons, a loved one or friend, the Jewish dead, their God…Prague's Rabbi Loew, Babel, [etc.]" (Felstiner, *Paul Celan*, xvi). His

early poetry was more or less a collection of memories of his mother. Shortly after Germany occupied Austria in 1938, Celan went to France to study medicine, and his poems then mostly addressed his longing for reunion and home. Upon Germany's threat of Poland since 1939, Celan returned home and studied romance philology instead. Not long after, World War II broke out, and Czernowitz was seized by Germany in 1941. This political move filled Celan's poetry with fear and grief (Felstiner, *Paul Celan*, 11-12).

Celan's parents were first rounded up by the German National Socialists on the night of 27 June, 1942, an event that left Celan traumatized. Celan himself, not long after his parents' deportation in the same year, was sent to forced labor from July 1942 to February 1944. By the end of 1942, Celan's father passed away from illness, and his mother was allegedly shot by Nazis as "unfit for work" (Felstiner, *Paul Celan*, 14-17). Such news shattered Celan to the extent that his poetry—now his only comfort and reason to continue living—deepened in its melancholy. These 19 months of internment also witnessed the birth of 93 poems, which Celan type-organized after he was released from the labor camp. "Todesfuge" was among them (Felstiner, *Paul Celan*, 25).

As we will see, it is of great scholarly importance to uncover the true location and circumstances during which Celan composed "Todesfuge." However, there have been controversies regarding the "birthplace and date" of the poem (Buck, 11). While Immanuel Weißglas, Celan's schoolmate and literary companion, and Celan's friend from Czernowitz, Edith Silberman, claimed that the poem was written in 1944, Felstiner argues that "[p]erhaps a first version came in Czernowitz and a final one only after he emigrated in April 1945. That was the impression of Petre Solomon, Paul's close friend in Bucharest, whose 1947 Romanian translation was the poem's first publication" (Buck, 11; Felstiner, *Paul Celan*, 27). The true

origin of the poem remains unknown, yet one thing is to be certain: "[d]ie 'Todesfuge' markiert mit dem Durchbruch des spezifischen 'Celan-Tons' das Ende der 'Lehrjahre' des Autors…Mit diesem Text hat Clean als Dichter zu sich selbst gefunden" ["Todesfuge" marks the end of the apprenticeship of the author, with a breakthrough from his previous "Celan-tone." With this poem, Celan had found within himself a poet] (Buck, 13)[1].

In spite of the scholars' consensus on "Todesfuge" marking Celan's literary maturation, the passionate attention "Todesfuge" has drawn after its publication is not solely positive. Foremost, Celan received "[eine] banausisch böswilligen Reaktion auf die Art seines Vortrags bei der Frühjahrstagung der Gruppe 47[2] in Niendorf 1952" ["a malicious reaction to his presentation at the Spring gathering of Group 47 in Niendorf, 1952"] (Buck, 9). He then encountered many "verletzend[e] Unverständnis etlicher Rezensenten sowie der Mißbrauch des Textes im Rahmen christlich-jüdischer Versöhnungs- und Bewältigungsrituale" ["hurtful misunderstandings as well as misuses of the text in Christian-Jewish reconciliation and coping rituals"] (Buck, 9). What's more, many West-Germans were angered, simply because "er ein Gedicht über die deutschen Vernichtungslager—die Todesfuge—geschrieben habe" ["he had written a poem—'Todesfuge'—about the German death-camps"] (Buck, 9). As a result, Celan himself grew skeptical when "Todesfuge" was incorporated in anthologies and textbooks or used as the introduction of the ARD documentation of the Holocaust, both of which exemplified the warm reception of his work at the same time (Buck, 9).

[1]This and all the following translations are my own if not noted otherwise.

[2] Gruppe 47: a literary group that emerged from the rubble of postwar Germany in 1947 and went on to unite the most important literary minds in a tormented country.

c. **Subject of the Study**

According to Felstiner, "Todesfuge" made its first public appearance not in German but Romanian; titled 'Tangoul Mortii' (Tango of Death)," it was translated by Petre Solomon from Celan's original German text in the Bucharest magazine *Contemporanul* in May 1947 (Felstiner, *Paul Celan*, 28).

In Felstiner's biography, he states that "[t]here are at least fifteen published English translations of 'Todesfuge'" (Felstiner, *Paul Celan*, 32). However, Felstiner has only provided six references in the "Notes" section at the back of the book, which is praised to be "the first critical biography of Paul Celan" (Felstiner, *Paul Celan*, No.29, 297). Based on my thorough research, there are, in fact, only 14 published scholarly English translations of "Todesfuge" across the span of 43 years from 1952 to 1995, the year Felstiner published his Celan biography. Christopher Middleton first translated "Todesfuge" in 1952, followed by Michael Bullock in the year 1955, Clement Greenberg in 1957, and Jerome Rothenberg in 1959. The translation attempts continued in the next decade, with Patrick Bridgewater publishing his in 1963, Gertrude Clorius Schwebell in the following year, and Donald White in the year 1966. The 1970s witnessed the peak of new English translations, with six new works published by Albert H. Friedlander in 1970, Joachim Neugroschel in 1971, Michael Hamburger in 1972, John Glenn and Beatrice Adrienne Cameron in 1973, and Karl S. Weimar in 1974. John Felstiner himself published his translation of "Todesfuge" in 1995.

Only one newer English translation was produced after Felstiner published both of his translation work of "Todesfuge" and his biography of Celan. This English translation by Charlotte Melin is also the latest published scholarly translation of "Todesfuge" in the English language and marks to be number 15.

d. Methodology of the Study

In order to compare the 15 published scholarly English translations, this study draws on the translation strategy outlined in *Thinking German Translation: A Course in Translation Method: German to English.* Sándor Hervey et al. outline five filters of properties that encompass the source text and its impact almost fully: the cultural, the formal, the semantic, the varietal, and the genre filter. The cultural filter addresses "the extent to which features of the source text are detachable from their cultural matrix … and the extent to which their culture-specificity is textually relevant"; the formal filter scans the formal properties (i.e. phonic and prosodic features) of texts; the semantic filter "[focuses] the translator's attention on the important decisions relating to the translating of literal meaning, as well as of textually relevant features of connotative meaning"; the varietal filter "sums up the stylistic aspects inherent in the use of different language varieties and invites the translator to pay due attention to the textual effects of sociolinguistic variation"; the genre filter "serves as a brief and necessarily sketchy reminder of the vital importance of assessing the genre-membership of texts, and discovering their genre-related characteristics" (Hervey et al., 224-225). A translator can apply all of these specific filters to one text to help distinguish the most important and respected features. Hervey et al. explain the principle behind such a translation strategy as follows:

> … the adoption of an appropriate translation strategy implicitly means 'ranking' the cultural, formal, semantic, stylistic and genre-related properties of the [source text] according to their relative textual relevance and the amount of attention these properties should receive in the process of translation. The aim is to deal with translation loss … and the attendant necessities of compromise and compensation … by sanctioning the loss of features that have a low degree of textual relevance, sacrificing less relevant textual

> details to more relevant ones, and using techniques of compensation to convey features of high textual relevance that cannot be more directly rendered (Hervey et al., 223).

Due to the strong interest and various approaches in translating "Todesfuge," it is reasonable and effective to adopt this translation strategy of filtering when comparing the 15 published scholarly English translations. This study will base its comparison criteria specifically on two of the five filters—the cultural filter and the formal filter, guided by the overarching semantic and genre filter. The genre filter provides the parameter that "to reproduce the total import of a poem in a [target text] would require re-creating the whole unique bundle of meanings and sounds presented in the [source text]," and a poetry translator must be aware that "it is inherent in poetry that a given poem's precise combination of literal meaning, connotative (or 'emotive') meanings, syntactic articulation, prosody and phonic patterning produces a text which works largely through suggestion" (Hervey et al., 127). The semantic filter, in a similar role, serves as a canopy filter, as meaning is an intrinsic property of individual words and, thereby, texts. On the contrary, the varietal filter will not apply to the comparison of the translations in this study, for there is no language variety or sociolinguistic variation in "Todesfuge." Therefore, this study attempts to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the translation works by examining their handling of the cultural and formal properties, which are the most textually relevant and thus most crucial elements to the composition of "Todesfuge."

Given the historic significance of Celan's "Todesfuge," it is essential to prioritize a close look at the transfer of culture from the original German text to the translated text. When contemplating cultural issues in translation, it is necessary to first determine the various degrees of cultural transposition. Hervey et al. define cultural transposition as a "cover-term for any degree of departure from purely literal, word-for-word translation that a translator may resort to

in an attempt to transfer the contents of a source text into the context of a target culture" (Hervey et al., 20). Hervey et al. then provide five degrees of cultural transposition: exoticism, cultural borrowing, calque, communicative translation, and cultural transplantation. These five degrees are hierarchically structured from one extremity of complete cultural foreignness from the source text to another of total reinvention in the target culture. In between the extremities, cultural borrowing "[transfers] a [source text] expression verbatim into the [target text]," and calque "[borrows] the model of [source language's] grammatical structures," whereas communicative translation is often employed when there is a culturally conventional formulae, in which the set phrases in the source text have "readily identifiable communicative [target language] equivalents" (Hervey et al., 23-25).

Following the general cultural issues, the formal properties are the next to hinder the translation process by causing many translation losses. As a result, the source text must be thoroughly examined as a linguistic object prior to the translation process. Hervey et al. borrow the fundamental notions in linguistics and suggest a hierarchical series of levels on which the formal properties can be examined (Hervey et al., 37). These levels, analyzed both independently and in conjunction with one another, help a translator in identifying the textual variables, the detailed parts where a text could have been different. This study will look at the formal properties in "Todesfuge" and its translations on six levels, which will be grouped, based on their affinities, into three big categories: the phonic and prosodic level, the grammatical and lexical level, and the sentential and inter-sentential level.

II. The Cultural Filter

There are three proper German names in "Todesfuge": the country name "Deutschland," and two people's names "Margarete" and "Sulamith." As with all names, they are, to a high degree, culturally coded and therefore can function as a culture filter. When it comes to translating names, Hervey et al. observe two alternatives:

> … [e]ither the name can be taken over unchanged from the [source text] to the [target text,] or it can be adapted to conform to the phonic/graphic conventions of the [target language]. The first alternatives is tantamount to literal translation, and involves no cultural transposition. It is a form of 'exoticism' in the sense that the foreign name stands out in the [target text] as a signal of extra-cultural origins…The second alternative, transliteration, is less extreme … [, and] the transliterate name stands out less clearly as a reminder of foreign and culturally strange elements in the [target text] (Hervey et al., 21).

This section of the study will then assess the translation approaches to these three names in a chronological order of their appearances in the poem and enumerate the translations that have deployed the extremities of cultural transposition: exoticism (including the two alternatives of translating names) and cultural transplantation.

Felstiner's English translation distinguishes itself from its previous 13 by initially translating the names in "Todesfuge" into what he considers to be their English equivalent before he gradually slips back into the German language. Felstiner translates verse 6, where the names first appear, into "he writes when it grows dark to Deutschland your golden hair Margareta"; he then translates those in the second section as "he writes when it grows dark to Deutschland your golden hair Margareta / Your ashen hair Shulamith…" (14-15). The names then reoccur in verses 22-24, and it is then when Felstiner starts to slip back into the German source language. He

translates these verses into “a man lives in the house your goldenes Haar Margareta / your aschenes Haar Shulamith he plays with his vipers / He shouts play death more sweetly” (22-24). In the second to last section, Felstiner translates verse 28 into “we drink you at midday Death is a master aus Deutschland,” verse 30 into “this Death is ein Meister aus Deutschland his eye it is blue,” and verse 34 into “he plays with his vipers and daydreams der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland.” The last section of “Todesfuge” in Felstiner’s translation remains completely unchanged from the original German text.

Felstiner is not the first to keep the country name as “Deutschland”; Rothenberg makes the prepositional phrases containing “Deutschland” the only phrases in German in his English translation in 1959. This approach exemplifies the cultural device of “exoticism” and emphasizes the source culture, which is, in this case, the culture of Germany in the time of the Third Reich from 1933 to 1945, thereby giving off a sense of cultural foreignness. Felstiner discusses his translation approach to the phrase “Der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland,” a recurring motif in the poem, in his essay *Mother Tongue, Holy Tongue: On Translating and Not Translating Paul Celan*, that

> After translating it the first time, “Death is a master from Deutschland,” I find that the next time round, I can bring back a touch of German without baffling the reader—“Death is a master *aus Deutschland*.” Then again the next time, a bit more —“Death ist *ein Meister aus Deutschland”*—until finally in my version the camp commandant “plays with his vipers and daydreams der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland”…Here it is Celan’s fugue that lets me render German back into German (Felstiner, *Mother Tongue, Holy Tongue*, 116).

This deliberate use of "Deutschland" instead of "Germany" in an English translation of "Todesfuge" is strategic in drawing attention to the German origin, and the historical background of the poem prevents this device from generating the potential irritation the reader finds in non-adapted translations. In addition, the average reader is familiar enough with the term "Deutschland" from the Third Reich's anthem *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* that it does not require academic explanations or intrusions—glosses, footnotes—that distract from the translated text itself.

The word "Deutschland," appearing six times throughout "Todesfuge," is crucial to the poem not only because of its historic significance, but also due to its suggestion of Celan's ambivalent relation to his mother tongue, which also turned out to be the mother tongue of the murderers of his family and six million "relatives." When Celan survived the Holocaust, he was left with barely anything but his native language, which prevented him from cutting all connections with Germany and its barbarism. The German language is a constant reminder of the indelible sufferings of the Jewish people and the irreversible fate of his family. As a matter of fact, "Todesfuge" is the only poem of his entire collection to mention "Deutschland" (Felstiner, *Paul Celan*, 36). Therefore, Felstiner's translation strategy of gradually going back to the German language also serves to reveal Celan's complex relation to the German language and to bring barbarism back into the poem.

Whereas the term "Deutschland" leaves only two options in translation, the translation of the other two proper names in "Todesfuge"—"Margarete" and "Sulamith"—invites various English translations. In Goethe's *Faust,* Margarete represents the pure and pious heroine, and due to the iconic German play, she becomes a literary representation of a generic German woman. By evoking Goethe and Goethe's Margarete, Celan is tapping deeply into what have

been taken as quasi-quintessential figures in representing German and Germany. Goethe, one of the literary giants that ushered the Golden Age of German literature, was appropriated by the National Socialists as an example of "high culture" to disseminate their ideology of racial purity and German superiority. According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,

> [t]he new Nazi aesthetic embraced the genre of classical realism. The visual arts and other modes of "high" culture employed this form to glorify peasant life, family and community, and heroism on the battlefield; and attempted to exemplify such "German virtues" as industry, self-sacrifice, and "Aryan" racial purity (*Introduction to the Holocaust*).

The Nazis' reverence of "high German culture" for the purpose of spreading what they considered as traditional German values while eliminating foreign concepts starkly contrasts with their barbarian and racist politics, complicating the role of culture. The home of Goethe and Schiller birthed Weimar Classicism as well as the ravages of Nazi-Fascism; Goethe's and Schiller's plays were often staged to performances by theatre companies as a mode of "high culture" in the Third Reich (*Introduction to the Holocaust*); the Buchenwald concentration camp was built adjacent to Weimar and witnessed the death of more than 50,000 people; "Goethe's drawings [were] put on show—at Buchenwald" (Cohen, 1999). As a result, Celan refers to Goethe to point out such contrast and presents the complicated role and questionable celebration of the Nazis' hijacking of the culture icons, such as Goethe.

However obvious the evoking of Goethe and Goethe's Margarete is in German, it might be difficult for English speakers and readers to discern these culture-specific references. Thus, it is necessary to note the differences in the translations of "Margarete." In the 1950s, both Middleton and Greenberg import "Margarete" straight from the German text, while Bullock and Rothenberg

translate the name into English with some adaptation. Following in the footsteps of Rothenberg, all of the translators in the next decade expect Bridgewater choose to adopt the English equivalent of the pronunciation "Margareta." However, Margarete is, again, imported from German to the English translations in the 1970s, with Weimar's adaptation of "Marguerite" being the only exception. Consistent with his approach to translating phrases containing the term "Deutschland," Felstiner starts off with the English pronunciation "Margareta" and finishes with the German original "Margarete," once again slipping back into the German language. Melin, in the last English translation to date, returns to "Margareta" throughout. To summarize, more than half of the 15 translators did choose to keep the name "Margarete" in German, while one third use the English equivalent of the pronunciation, "Margareta." Bullock and Weimar translate the name as Margaretë and Marguerite respectively, neither of which is the most conventional version of the name. There is a favoritism among the 15 translators toward the original German "Margerete" and the culture device of exoticism with no cultural transposition.

Nonetheless, in order to make the reference to Goethe and Goethe's Margaret recognizable to as many English speakers as possible, the most important consideration to make in handling "Margarete" is to allude to the English equivalent under which Goethe's original work is known to English-speaking readers. Among the few translators who write down their interpretations of the poem alongside their translation attempts, Weimar states that "allusions must be translated into forms as familiar to the readers of the second language as they were to those of the original" (Weimar, 90). Yet, the number of different English equivalents of the name "Margerete" and that of various English translations of *Faust* must be taken into consideration. Whereas the English adaptation of "Margareta" dominate the English translations available as of the 1950s and 1960s, Weimar is more familiar with the name "Marguerite," as he expresses in the same essay that "in

all translations [he has] seen, Margarete and Sulamith have either been repeated unchanged or oddly modified, but not rendered into Faust's Marguerite and Solomon's Shulamite as they are known to English readers" (Weimar, 90). Weimar summarizes the potential danger of translating Margerete and Sulamith into even the English equivalents that are recognizable to the readers: "For too many readers [Marguerite] may very well be Gounod's Marguerite that comes to mind, and for too few will Shulamite signify anything Jewish at all" (Weimar, 90). His valid concern elucidates the complexity of the translation process.

While Margarete alludes to German literature, Sulamith serves as an allusion to the Jewish literary tradition. According to Felstiner,

> Shulamith is the beloved, a comely maiden the hair of whose head is like purple, a princess, the Jewish people itself and thus a promise of return from exile. Because the name Shulamith occurs only this once in the Bible, its meaning lies open: perhaps from the Hebrew root *shalem*, "complete," "whole," akin to *shalom*, "peace," and to *Shlomo*, Solomon; or perhaps from Yerushalayim, Jerusalem (Felstiner, *Mother Tongue, Holy Tongue*, 116).

Given its allusive meaning and historic significance, the translation strategy of "Sulamith" should also concern the familiarity of the reader with the English equivalent. Fortunately, unlike the numerous versions of English translations of *Faust*, the King James version of the Bible is the most widely used, and therefore it is most reasonable to import the English name "Shulamite" from it. In the 1950s, Greenberg preserves "Sulamith" from the original "Todesfuge", while the first two translators, Middleton and Bullock, translate the name into "Shulamith." Starting from Rothenberg, translators in the late 1950s and the 1960s favor "Shulamite" from the King James Bible. The 1970s and onwards see an equal division between

the use of "Shulamith" and "Shulamite," which appears in the English translations of Neugroschel, Cameron, and Weimar. In contrast to the translation options of "Margerete," there is no evidence of favoritism towards a particular English equivalent of "Sulamith"—five of the translators choose "Shulamite," and five translate the name into "Shulamith," while only three use the original German "Sulamith." As mentioned, Felstiner transitions from Shulamith to Sulamith. Glenn is the only one who translates the name into "Sulamite." In this case, the scholarly translators seem to prefer the device of transliteration in translating "Sulamith" rather than the first alternative of literal translation they prefer in translating "Margarete." Nevertheless, there is hardly any cultural transposition in translating both names.

The importance of Sulamith as a recurring motif lies in its modifier "aschenes Haar." Felstiner, in his biography, interprets "aschenes" as a kind of hair color—"Shulamith is no ash blond but the 'black and comely' maiden in the Song of Songs, a princess 'the hair of whose head is like purple' and whose dancing feet are beautiful in sandals" (Felstiner, *Paul Celan*, 38). However, the implication of death and doom in "aschenes" here is stronger—Sulamith is known to have purple hair, but it is now burnt to ash, whereas the Aryan-representing golden hair continues to live, with the word "golden" connoting healthy, lively, happy. The modifier "aschenes Haar" carries another significant reference within German culture and its many layers. Heinrich Heine, the first major Jewish poet in German and great admirer of Goethe, though two generations younger, wrote his most famous poem "Die Lorelei" as iconically as Goethe's *Faust*. In fact, Heine's "Die Lorelei" was so popular that the Nazis could not expunge it from the literary cannon because of its fame among the German readers. Heine's Lorelei "combs her golden hair" when it "grows dark," which has likely inspired the phrase "wenn es dunkelt nach Deutschland" in "Todesfuge." Heine himself was forced to convert to Protestantism with much

resentment due to anti-Semitism in the 19th century and was later exiled to Paris, where he lived until his death in 1856. His late years even witnessed a ban of his literary work by the Prussian-dominated Germany. Throughout Heine's life, he experienced troubled feelings towards his fatherland. This allusion to Heine again indicates Celan's ambivalent relation to his mother tongue. By juxtaposing "aschenes Haar Sulamith" with the German "goldenes Haar Margerete," Celan explicitly points out the German barbarism in exterminating the Jewish blood.

As we can see from the approaches to the three name features, most translators choose to keep the original German names to preserve the cultural foreignness of the source text. Yet there is one translation that stands out as a representation of the other extreme within cultural transposition. Rothenberg utilizes this filter of cultural transplantation in his English translations of "Todesfuge."

Upon first glance, Rothenberg's translation stands out due to its unusual translation of the phrases "spielt mit den Schlangen" and "ein Meister aus Deutschland." Instead of literally translating the phrase into "plays with the snakes" (Bullock, Greenberg) or its two modified versions "plays with the vipers" (Schwebell, Weimar, Felstiner) or "plays with the serpents" (Middleton, Bridgewater, White, Friedlander, Neugroschel, Hamburger, Cameron, Glenn, Melin), Rothenberg uses the verb "cultivate," which, according to *Oxford English Dictionary*, has the meanings "to refine or improve (a person, the mind, abilities, etc.) by education or training" and "to try to win the friendship or favors of (a person), now especially with implications of flattery" as a transitive verb. The translation into "cultivat[ing] snakes" rather than "play[ing] with the snakes/serpents/vipers" attempts to emphasize the evilness in the "man in this house," for the verb "play" is more spirited and playful, while "cultivate" is more serious in developing a bond with the snake, which is often associated with poison and evil.

Rothenberg also adopts an unconventional yet more idiomatic English translation of "a gang-boss aus Deutschland," instead of a literal translation "a master from Germany." In contrast to his strategy with "cultivating snakes," this strategy does not hold a comprehensive equivalent of masters. Rothenberg's translation is less serious than the original German connotation but more relatable to English speakers, as he reinvents the poem in the vernacular English language. Besides the aforementioned two phrases, Rothenberg explores the device of cultural transplantation throughout, and this study will discuss them later during the comparisons of approaches to the formal properties in the translated texts.

As we have seen, Celan's "Todesfuge," due to its theme of the concentration camps, carries a high degree of time- and culture-specific elements, embodied mainly in the three names "Deutschland," "Margarete," and "Sulamith," all of which challenge the translators in regard to the cultural filter. Most of the translators, when translating the names, deploy the device of "exoticism" with a minimal degree of cultural transposition in order to retain the cultural foreignness—specifically that of Nazi Germany—in the source text. This approach is successful in terms of conveying the poignancy of the gruesome realities of the Holocaust in the poem, yet it potentially keeps the references to Goethe and Goethe's "Margarete" and the biblical Jewish figure "Sulamith" indiscernible to the English-speaking readers. Rothenberg and Felstiner's translations stand out with their most unique translation approaches. While Rothenberg explores the device of cultural transplantation to make the translated text more relatable to the English-speaking readers with translation loss in tonal register, Felstiner achieves a balance between maintaining the cultural foreignness and making the references recognizable to the English speakers by first transliterating the names into their English equivalents and then gradually slipping back to their original versions in German.

III. The Formal Filter

a. The Formal Properties in the Original German Text

i. Phonic and Prosodic Features

a. Phonic Features—A Hidden Pattern of Regularization and Reduction

Before comparing the approaches to formal properties in the English translations, it is essential to identify the most textually relevant ones within the original German text of "Todesfuge." We will first begin with examining the two most fundamental poetic elements—the phonic and prosodic features—of the original German text of "Todesfuge."

At first glance, "Todesfuge" does not have a regular shape on the page, nor is it composed in an established, traditional form of lyrics, such as sonnets, blank verse, ballad, etc. Instead, "Todesfuge" is comprised of 36 verses of various length. Verses 3, 12, and 21, which all read "[w]ir trinken und trinken," mark the shortest verse with six syllables, whereas verse 7, "er schreibt es und tritt vor das Haus und es blitzen die Sterne er pfeift seine Rüden herbei," comprises the longest verse at a syllabic count of 23. There is no punctuation throughout the poem, which makes the syntactical structure harder to detect and analyze. However, there are nine verses whose first words start with a capitalized initial letter, which hints at their syntactical individuality, although on a subtle level. Among these nine verses are three thematic motifs—the primary one repeated four times and the rest twice each—whose thematic significance is emphasized through repetition as well as their widespread positions. The only exception is verse

15, whose initial semantic unit only appears at the front of a verse once, despite its reoccurrence as a motif.

Although the irregular shape of the poem stemming from the differences in verse length imposes complexity—specifically, in assessing the poetic structure and in discerning any classic forms, there is nevertheless a distinct pattern, though not such an obvious one. According to many literary sources, including Celan-Projekt.de, that either study the poem in detail or refers to it briefly, "Todesfuge" can be divided into six sections of different lengths. The first section is by far the longest with nine verses, and the last section marks the shortest with an unrhymed couplet. The second and third sections contain six and three verses respectively, while the fourth and fifth section share the same number, at eight verses. Interestingly, despite the separation of the second and third section, it is more helpful for accessing the poem and examining its structure when combining the two—because the combined section appears to have the same number of verses and a similar structural development to the first section. In short, one can discern somewhat of a pattern of verse length extension. The syllabic count in the first section progresses in a manner of 12-14-6-14-13-18-23-17-9, and the combined section (of the second and the third) progresses in a manner of 11-15-6-13-18-22-18-16-18.

Then what is the significance of Celan's decision to break off the second and the third section? The third section serves as a pivot point in the poem's structure—after the third section, there is less of a lengthening in the development of the verse; in its place is, rather, a regularity. The third section distinguishes itself through its consistency in verse length, consisting of one 16-syllabic verse in between two 18-syllabic ones. The difference in verse length shortens to only 5 syllables in both the fourth and the fifth sections, with the last verse of the fifth section being the only exception (to bring in the thematic feature of augmentation, which is a fugal

characteristic that will be more thoroughly explored in "b. A Special Prosodic Feature—the Recreation of the Fugue Form"). There are also more verses of the same length in the latter half of the poem, and the average verse length shortens to 12.6 syllables per verse. The ending unrhymed couplet also exemplifies regularity in its verse length, with the ending line only one syllable short of its preceding verse. Therefore, this change from irregular verse length to a gradual consistency and reduction in structure needs to be taken into consideration in both the translation process and the assessment of the published translation works.

However, there is another German version of "Todesfuge" in print, distinguished by its unique typesetting. As mentioned earlier, the original German text of "Todesfuge" made its first appearance in Celan's poetry collection *Mohn und Gedächtnis* [*Poppy and Memory*], which was published originally in 1952. In the collection, the poem is printed spaciously due to the long verses and narrow page width, which makes it especially difficult to acknowledge the poem's structure. Yet, there is clearly a separation between verse 23, "dein achenes Haar Sulamith er spielt mit den Schlangen," and verse 24, "Er ruft spielt süßer den Tod der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland," making verses 19-26, which are often lumped into a single fourth group, two separate sections:

19 Schwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken dich nachts
20 wir trinken dich mittags und morgens wir trinken dich abends
21 wir trinken und trinken
22 Ein Mann wohnt im Haus dein goldenes Haar Margarete
23 dein eschenes Haar Sulamith er spielt mit den Schlangen

24 Er ruft spielt süßer den Tod der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland
25 er ruft streicht dunkler die Geigen dann steigt ihr als Rauch in die Luft
26 dann habt ihr ein Grab in den Wolken da liegt man nicht eng

By doing so, "Todesfuge" is divided into seven sections, four of which start with the thematic motif "[s]chwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken," two of which begin with that of "[e]r ruft," and

the last of which concludes the poem with another thematic motif "dein goldnes Haar Margarete / dein aschenes Haar Sulamith." A sectional repetition of the thematic motifs in the structure becomes prominent in this version.

A potential factor that may have caused a difference in print might be the Romanian translation of the text by Petre Solomon. Unfortunately, I have found no print copy of Solomon's Romanian translation "Tangoul Mortii"; the text is only extant through the "Celan-Projekt" website and "Babelmatrix: Babel Web Anthology—the Multilingual Literature Portal." In both sources, verses 19-26 occurs as one section:

19 Laptele negru din zori te bem cind e noapte
20 te bem la amiaza si seara te bem
21 te bem si te bem
22 un om sta in casa, aurul parului tau Margareta
23 cenusa parului tau Sulamith el se joaca cu serpii
24 El striga cintati mai blajin despre moarte caci moartea-i un mester german
25 el striga plimbati un arcus mai cetos pe viori veti creste ca fumul atunci
26 veti zace 'ntr'o groapa in nori si nu va fi strict

Perhaps the version of the original German "Todesfuge," where verses 19-26 are treated as one entity, was deduced from this Romanian "Tangoul Mortii."

More strikingly yet, Felstiner photocopies the Bucharest Magazine *Contemporanul* reprinting of "Tangoul Mortii" in his biography of Celan, and it shows yet another structure of the poem (Felstiner, *Paul Celan*, 29). While indeed separating verses 19-26 into two sections:

19 Lapte negru din zori te bem cind e noapte
20 te bem la amiaza si seara te bem
21 te bem si te bem
22 un om sta in casa, aurul parului tau Margareta
23 cenusa parului tau Sulamith el se joaca cu serpii

24 El striga cintati mai blajin despre moarte caci moartea-i un mester german
25 el striga plimbati un arcus mai cetos pe viori veti creste ca fumul atunci
26 veti zace 'ntr'o groapa in nori si nu va fi strict,

it combines the oftentimes separated second and third sections into one:

10 Lapte negru din zori te bem cind e noapte
11 la amiaza te bem te sorbim dimineata si seara
12 te bem si te bem
13 Un om sta in casa se joaca cu serpii si scrie
14 el scrie 'n amurg in Germania Aurul parului tau Margareta
15 Cenusa parului tau Sulamith o groapa sapam in vazduh si nu va fi strimta
16 El striga sapati mai adinc iar ceilalti cintati
17 arma o 'nsfaca, o flutura, albastrii i-s ochii
18 sapati mai adinc iar ceilalti cintati pentru dans mai departe (Felstiner, 29).

Moreover, the last two verses are not on their own as one independent section, but rather a part of the previous section. Clearly, the dichotomies in print have long been an issue. The style in which Celan first wrote "Todesfuge" remains a mystery, and resources have suggested that Celan had certainly revised the poem before eventually publishing the "Todesfuge" we know now. However, the original "Todesfuge" was drafted, the structure of the poem stays unconventional, and the verse length indeed gradually becomes more regular and shorter.

Similar to the form, there is no trace of any classic rhyme scheme in "Todesfuge." In fact, there is only one rhyme in all 36 verses, and it does not appear until the second-to-last section of the poem, in "blau" and "genau" in verses 30 and 31. The uniqueness of this end rhyme determines its importance within the whole poem and demands immediate and primary focus in translation attempts. An analysis of different translation approaches to the rhyme will be provided in the "Verb-Adverb Constructions" subsection of the "Grammatical and Lexical Features" of the 15 translated texts.

b. A Special Prosodic Feature—the Recreation of the Fugue Form

In addition to verse length and rhyme scheme, the rhythmic structure does not follow any conventional patterns as mentioned earlier. As a matter of fact, the rhythmic structure contributes greatly to the seizing nature of "Todesfuge."

The title "Todesfuge" binds music, through "fuge" ["fugue"], with death, or "Tod." Therefore, music or sounds are fundamental to the poem. Felstiner observes in his biography that "[t]here is verse music in Celan's varying rhythms, his refrains and recurrent motifs, his alliteration and rare rhyme. His speakers also talk of music: the whistling, the playing and dancing and singing, the fiddles and the fugue" (Felstiner, *Paul Celan*, 33). Schwebell, as a preface to her translation of *Contemporary German Poetry*, asserts that

> Celan's "Death Fugue" is the model of a remarkable skill in plotting a straight and uninterrupted course of feeling, made increasingly intense and complex by the repetition and variation of a few images and key words, the breathless chant, the hammering insistence on staying wth overwhelming and nightmarish memories of anguish and horror (Schwebell, XXXIV).

Celan's "Todesfuge" indeed paved the way for some of the prominent principles found in many contemporary German poems, the most resonant one being its compelling rhythm. The poem does not fit into any traditional rhythmic structure—iambs, spondees, trochees, dactyls, anapest—rather it is a mixture of all. While the majority of his contemporary poets were still composing in traditional forms, Celan's avant-garde free verse, pulsating yet intricate rhythm, and rare rhyme in "Todesfuge" embrace or even embody Modernism.

On a prosodic level, scholars have reached a consensus that Celan composed "Todesfuge" in imitation of the fugue form, which "ist die geschlossenste und konsequenteste polyphonische Form" [is the most enclosed and consistent polyphonic music form] (Chominiski, Formy, 1983, S.423). Originating in the late 17th century and early 18th century, fugue represents more of a compositional style or procedure than a specific form, as it is complex to define and describe. In spite of its general outline of three distinct sections—the exposition, the development, and the

final section—it is rare to find two fugues with an identical outline, and the unmistakable characteristics of the fugue form are, technically speaking, only commonly appearing features. As Ellis B. Kohs writes in his 1976 music theory textbook *Musical Form: Studies in Analysis and Synthesis*, "the 'typical fugue' form does not exist except as a musical abstraction…[and] it is important to keep in mind that any one trait may be altered or disguised in one or more ways, or may not be present at all" (Kohs, 177). The main elements of this diversity are the freedom of episodes and the flexibility in the order of voice entries, both of which will be discussed in detail in the following paragraphs. It is plausible that this resistance to restraint inherent in the fugue form frees Celan to pursue modernism.

The most defining characteristics of the fugue are its polyphonic property and its mono-thematic yet imitative form. Its polyphonic property lies in its number of voices or parts—at least two, but typically three of four. The juxtaposition of the voices generates "a gradual thickening of texture as the voices enter in turn, with entrances alternation at tonic and dominant levels" (Kohs, 177). Celan's application of the fugue form indeed exemplifies its polyphonic property: the main voices or parts in Celan's "Todesfuge" are evident thanks to the visual emphasis of capitalizations—one voice being that of the "Ein Mann," who is later referred to as the personal pronoun "er," and another being that of "wir." It is also reasonable to categorize the motif "dein goldenes Haar Margarete" and "dein aschenes Haar Sulamith" as a unit of "voice." The gradual thickening of texture is also present in "Todesfuge," with the voice of "er" entering the poem only in the middle of the first section in verse 5 and the superseding entrance of the voice "dein goldenes Haar Margerete" in the next verse. The latter half of the "dein" unit does not tune in until the end of the second section, and the full establishment of the "dein" voice further strengthens the polyphonic feature in the latter half of the poem where it dominates.

Another distinctive trait that intensifies the fugal polyphonic property, besides the gradual textural thickening, is the presence of subunits known as episodes. After the initial introductions of all voices, "subject statements appear in more or less regular alternation with episodes, an episode being a section in which the complete subject does not appear, and in which there is development of previously stated and/or new material," which is what the term "development" in the general outline of the three sections denotes (Kohs, 178). In the final section of the fugue, however, the episodes function to "restore the tonic key and a sense of tonal stability," which in turn brings back the initial and fundamental theme. The freedom of episodes is what complicates the definition of fugue as a music form and contributes largely to the resistance of restraint as previously discussed: on one hand, the episodes prevents monotony from the frequently repeated subjects, which are oftentimes the motifs, and brings about the possibility of a continuous expansion, creating harmonic tension and resolution, juxtaposing dissonance and consonance; on the other hand, such freedom challenges the composer's imagination.

Accompanying the polyphonic property is the fugue's mono-thematic yet imitative form. The three sections in the general outline of fugal composition differ from one another based on the freedom of episodes, but also are identical in their thematic focus. While the exposition is made up of successive statements of the principal theme by each voice in a hierarchical order, the development consists of both the principal theme in its initial form and the episodes that connect its frequent recurrence. The final section usually exploits special devices, including but not limited to stretto, inversion, augmentation, and diminution, but nonetheless returns to the principal theme.

Yet, such imitation in theme through repetition of motifs achieves a compelling rhythmic effect, rather than the structural aesthetics of the fugue form. Despite the capitalizations and

widely spread locations that underline the thematic motifs' syntactical independence and thematic significance, "Todesfuge" is not stanzaically divided based on these visual accentuations, or else its form would have not only hindered the motor-like quality and rhythmic energy of a fugue, but also diminished the unconventional, groundbreaking modernist approach in this quintessential modernist German poem.

In addition to their crucial role in the rhythmic effect, these repetitions are "ein technisches Mittel zur Durchführung des Themas in einer Musikfuge an: die Augmentation" ["a technical means of carrying out the theme in a music fugue: the augmentation"] (Kolago, 204). Both "[s]chwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken sie abends / wir trinken sie mittags und morgens wir trinken sie nachts" and "[e]in Mann wohnt im Haus der spielt mit den Schlangen der schreibt" appear four times in the poem, in verses 1, 10, 19, 27 and verses 5, 13, 22, 32 respectively, with slight variations, distinguishing themselves as the two main motifs in the poem. From the second repetition forward, the object "sie" in the first theme "[s]chwarze Mile der Frühe wir trinken sie abends" is replaced by "dich," and the temporal phrases "wir trinken sie abends / wir trinken sie mittags und morgens wir trinken sie nachts" interchange positions. Such transposition adds variation to the meter, although it does not result in any significant alteration in the meaning, the development of the rhythm, or the overall structure of the poem. By interchanging the disyllabic "abends" and monosyllabic "nachts," the first verse of each section is shortened to 11 syllables from 12, while the following line is lengthened by one syllable to 15.

The second motif, although unchanged during its first reappearance in verse 13, is significantly augmented in content in verses 22 and 32. In verse 22, "dein goldenes Haar margarete / dein aschenes Haar Sulamith," another repeated motif, is inserted in the middle, splitting the semantic units "Ein Mann wohnt im Haus" and "er spielt mit den Schlangen." Such

augmentation continues in verse 32, where the aforementioned two semantic units are split further by an entire verse: “er hetzt seine Rüden auf uns er schenkt uns ein Grab in der Luft.” This augmentation of content also affects the metric and rhythmic development. In short, this method of motif repetition in “Todesfuge” imitates the method of augmentation in the fugue form, and as a result, “[d]as Hauptmotiv wurde dadurch wesentlich verlängert” [the main motif is substantially extended] (Kolago, 204).

Besides the imitation of fugue form, there is also an imitation of rhythm. The semantic units that express the juxtaposition of “Rüden” [“male dogs”] and “Juden” [“Jews”] in the first section mirror each other in syntax, which in turn share the same rhythmic features—the anaphora of “er pfeift seine,” the internal slant rhyme in “Rüden” and “Juden” and the adverbs with same rhythms, highlight the analogy paralleling the Jewish people and male dogs, and underscore the inhumane behavior of the “er.” In a similar approach, the newly appearing semantic unit in the third section in verse 16 “[e]r ruft stecht tiefer ins Erdreich” is repeated with moderate modifications twice more in verses 24 and 25. Despite the variations in content, the meter and rhythm in the repetitions remain the same. All three versions—“Er ruft stecht tiefer ins Erdreich,” “Er ruft spielt süßer den Tod,” “er ruft streicht dunkler die Geigen”—have their stresses on the second, third, fourth, and seventh syllables. The stresses accentuating the verbs emit a sense of command, as if the predicates were syntactically imperative, and vividly mimic the harshness in the commander. Another motif of “schaufeln ein Grab in der Erde” is likewise repeated in an identical rhythmic pattern in spite of its more obvious syntactical alterations. All four recurrences of the motif—“läßt schaufeln ein Grab in der Erde” (17), “wir schaufeln ein Grab in den Lüften” (15), “dann steigt ihr als Rauch in die Luft” (25), and “er schenkt uns ein Grab in der Luft” (33)—contain stressed second, fifth, and eighth syllables. The mirroring

rhythmic structure suggests the haunting nature of cremation—the concept of having a grave in the air, the inescapable fate of the Jews. As Kolago observes, "[d]ie konstanten Elemente, die die semantischen Änderungen miteinander verbinden, bleiben hier der Sprachrhythmus und die Grundstimmung des Gedichtes" ["The constant elements that connect the semantic changes are the speech rhythm and the undertone of the poem] (Kolago, 207).

The fugue style blossomed in the works of J.S. Bach. He composed *Die Kunst der Fuge [The Art of Fugue]*, one of the greatest mono-thematic works, encompassing 14 fugues and 4 canons in an order of increasing complexity. The title of this strict fugal work of Bach's implies that "fugue is both a principle and a type of piece, where individual items are termed Contrapunctus" (Ledbetter, 75). Through this collection of work, Bach experimented with the contrapuntal possibilities within a single musical subject, "[d]emonstrating the use of different genera of counterpoint against a single subject," and tested "the making of simple fugues on a severe theme so interesting that he wrote no less than four without allowing himself any of the devices for which that theme was designed" (Ledbetter, 75; Tovey, 1). These first four fugues are remarkable in purposing the idea that

> a simple fugue is almost a pure effort of composition: it gives the composer no *a priori* guidance except that its subject is passed from voice to voice, and that this process is relieved by episodes arising naturally from the subject and its accompaniment. Obviously the art of composition here depends largely on the episodes; and if these are merely connective tissue without strong recurring features, the composer's power of rhetorics is indeed severely tested (Tovey, 2).

In a similar fashion, Celan delves into a severe theme—the Holocaust—in a relatively "simple" poetic form (in comparison to many traditional German and Austrian forms, such as Minnesang,

Bar Form, Dinggedicht), and the motifs expressed in semantic units in "Todesfuge," analogous to the episodes in the musical fugue form, embody Celan's power of rhetorics, which brings about variety of character and expressions.

c. The Significance of Recreating the Fugue Form

Surprisingly, Celan, a Holocaust survivor, chose to recreate a music form that came to full flower in the work of J.S. Bach, a world-renowned German composer, and is, therefore, closely associated with the German music tradition. The tension between his choice of an influential "German" form and an intense "Jewish" subject matter mingles poignancy with irony. Celan certainly has taken the perception of fugue into consideration. In its budding stage in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, fugue as a genre

> was considered to be the musical counterpart of various types of rhetorical projection, with consequent implications for the concept of fugal structure. If the prelude could be considered the equivalent of an oration, the fugue was a debate. …… Forkel uses very similar terms in describing Bach's attitude: "He considered his parts as if they were persons who conversed together like a select company" (Ledbetter, 76-77).

To imagine the "wir" voice that represents the persecuted Jews and the "er" voice that represents a German National Socialist (or a collective of German National Socialists) conversing together as a select company casts much irony and even horror on the poem. The appalling effect is also strengthened at the end of the poem, where both the "wir" voice and the "er" voice have faded, and the poem concludes with the imagery of Sulamith with her purple hair burned to ash, a metonymy of the annihilated Jews.

In order to examine commonly explored themes and subjects in a fugue, one should first understand that

> the invention of a fugue is its subject, and this provides a microcosm of the whole piece, not only in its technical ingredients but also in its expressive nature…[and] [s]ince the subject appears first, every slightest detail contributes vitally to its character (Ledbetter, 80).

The significance of the subject, the single subject, in a fugue is what distinguishes this style. By recreating the fugue form in "Todesfugue," Celan is calling for attention to the Holocaust in a yet-unexplored way.

d. A Traditional Fugal Topic—Danse Macabre

Dance meters and topics are often explored in fugues, as "[v]arious dance meters appear as standard section types in contrapuntal work for keyboard by Frescobaldi and his followers," and "much has been made of Bach's use of dance meters" (Lebetter, 83-84). The topic of dance is not novel to music compositions. In "Todesfuge," Celan also incorporates a dance topic, implied by the fiddle music which is often a cue to dance, and presents a portrayal of Jews fiddling for the dance of death. This image is not unique to Celan's poem; rather, it can be traced back to the Middle Ages in the age of epidemics, when the Dance of Death, also commonly known as the *danse macabre*, was a conventional manifestation of mortality. The first image of "the Dance of Death," according to Elina Gertsman's *The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages: Image, Text, Performance,* dates back to a painting of dancing corpses and their unwilling partners along the Charnier des Lingers gallery arcade in the Cemetery of the Holy Innocents in Paris painted in 1425. This twenty-meter long mural is remarkable not only in its juxtaposition of the insatiable

desire to live and the acknowledgement of an inevitable end, but also in its combination of poetry and imagery, which resulted in the image's popularity as "a literary and pictorial theme in Europe in the late-medieval era…quickly [spreading] throughout France…England, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland, and [surfacing] even in Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, and the Baltics" (Gertsman, 3, 8).

It is a deliberate choice of Celan's to use the Dance of Death as a reference. The cyclical structure of the Dance of Death not only sets it apart from its contemporary macabre counterparts, but also fits perfectly with the recreated fugue form in "Todesfuge"—the recurrence of the paired dancers underscores the inevitability of death despite the human protagonists' effort to break away, despite their diverse social standings, increasing the scale of death by zooming into individualized confrontations. No one can escape death—"prancing Death equalizes all: the King, the Merchant, the Bishop, the Hermit; for just this moment they all are alike in its grip" (Gertsman, 34). The personification of Death as a corpselike skeleton, "equipped with jaunty prancing movements and sprightly smiles, [embodies] the uncanniness of death," who mocks the decaying bodies of the dying and their fruitless resistance (Gertsman, 34). Moreover, the Dance of Death epitomizes inversion; the nature of dancing is inverted as it transforms from a pleasant activity into "a futile flight from and a mournful subjection to death[,] and joyful musicians are transformed into morbid skeletal performers" (Gertsman, 35). The juxtaposition of the two incongruent notions—dancing and death—dates at least back to the inception of Christianity, and dancing "plays the role of threshold in the dance macabre as it fundamental separates the world of the dead from the world of these who are about to die" (Gertsman, 64). Thus, verse 9 in "Todesfuge," recounting the demand from "er" that the Jews "spielt auf nun zum Tanz," accentuates the man's desire of the immediacy of dancing, the signal

of imminent perishment. By referring to the Dance of Death, Celan elevates the poignancy of the "wir" voice's doom, which, in other words, is the inescapability of the genocide of the Jewish people.

To Felstiner's surprise, the Romanian translation of "Todesfuge" suggests that "Todesfuge" is not the original title of the poem, but rather "Todestango" ["Death Tango"]. "Todestango," in comparison to "Todesfuge," lends the poem more direct authenticity:

> Not far from Czernowitz, at the Janowska camp in Lemberg (now Lvov), an SS lieutenant ordered Jewish fiddlers to play a tango with new lyrics, called "Death Tango," for use during marches, tortures, grave digging, and executions. Then, before liquidating the camp, the SS shot the whole orchestra (Felstiner, 28–30).

The real reason why Celan changed the title from "Todestango" to "Todesfuge" remains unknown. Felstiner, however, believes that "[f]or Celan to call the poem 'Death Tango' was to annul the dance that fascinated Europe during his childhood—the essence of life as urbane, graceful, nonchalant" (Felstiner, 28).

e. A Further Implication of the Fugue State in Psychiatry

Celan's potential reasons for recreating a fugue in "Todesfuge" might extend beyond the distinctive characteristics of the music form. According to *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word fugue is also a term of psychiatry, "[a] flight from one's own identity, often involving travel to some unconsciously desired locality." It is further explained that

> A fugue is a dissociative reaction to shock or emotional stress in a neurotic, during which all awareness of personal identity is lost though the person's outward behavior may appear rational. On recovery, memory of events during the state is totally repressed but

may become conscious under hypnosis or psycho-analysis.

This loss of identity is both literally and figuratively discernible in the poem—the two main voices are represented only by the personal pronouns "wir" and "er," whose real identity can only be inferred by the historical content to which the poem alludes. The stark contrast of the living German Margarete and the dead Jewish Sulamith in the "dein" voice also parallels the loss of the Jewish identity accompanied by the loss of the Jewish lives, both of which are the result of the irretrievable and ineffable shock or emotional stress caused by annihilation. By evoking the fugue state, Celan both mourns the loss of the Jewish identity and condemns the atrocity of the Holocaust.

ii. Grammatical and Lexical Features

After examining the two most fundamental poetic elements of "Todesfuge," we will now investigate the grammatical and lexical features in the original German text, for they determine to a large extent the degree of translation loss and thereby remain a big challenge of anyone's translation attempt. Both the grammatical arrangement of meaningful linguistic units into larger units (complex words and syntactic constructions) and the actual meaningful linguistic units that figure in constructions must be taken into serious consideration during translation attempts (Hervey et al., 53). This section will enumerate five sets of grammatical and lexical details that are most pertinent to the interpretation of "Todesfuge": the temporal expressions, verb-adverb constructions, tense, the opening image "[s]chwarze Milch der Frühe," as well as the proverbial phrase "zum Tanz aufspielen."

On a broader level, the grammatical arrangement has to do with the ethos specific to each language that results in different grammaticality. Despite the similarities between English and German, there is a wide range of systematic discrepancies between the two, as well as characteristic difficulties in the translation of such construction. German distinguishes itself from other languages with its number of sentential particles yet syntactic simplicity that relates in particular to the strength of adverbial and particle function (Hervey et al., 180, 204).

The syntactic simplicity of the German language is evident throughout "Todesfuge," especially encapsulated by the temporal expressions, verb-adverb constructions, as well as the double-verb combinations. The compactness in the first motif of the poem lies in the temporal adverbs "abends," "mittags," "morgens," and "nachts." Instead of the lengthier options of prepositional phrases—"am Abend," "am Morgen," "am Mittag," and "in der Nacht," Celan uses the monosyllabic temporal adverbs to quicken the pace, which gives off a sense of urgency and suffocation. The verb-adverb constructions in "da liegt man nicht eng" in verses 4, 15, and 26, "es dunkelt nach Deutschland" in verses 6 and 14, and "er trifft dich genau" impose the greatest difficulties in the English translations, "as German tends to prefer verb-adverb constructions, while English tends to prefer verb-on-verb constructions, 'cleft' structures and subordinate clauses" (Hervey et al., 205). There is no verbatim translation of the aforementioned adverbs from German into English, and the English rendering might result in altering the translation of the verbs.

Another challenge in German-English translation is the expressions of starting, continuing, and ceasing, which are usually in the form of infinitive or gerund constructions in English. However, the simple present tense in German can also be used as an equivalent of the gerund construction in English. Thus, the simple present tense in "Todesfuge" becomes an obstacle in

the English translation. Should we translate all the verbs in the simple present tense into their English equivalents in the simple present tense? Are there any action verbs, whose continuation, duration, or immediacy are of particular importance in the context, that should be taken into consideration of the gerund construction in English?

Two specific lexical details pose further challenges. The opening image of "[s]chwarze Milch" ["black milk"] immediately seizes the reader with its oxymoronic metaphor. The noun "milk" has a physical property of whiteness, and by modifying the milk with the color "black," which is often negatively associated with impurity, bad luck, and even doom, Celan is differentiating the milk in "Todesfuge" from that in daily life altering its physical property—instead of pure, black milk is contaminated; instead of nourishing, black milk could potentially be poisonous; instead of sweet, black milk might taste bitter. Celan challenges the reader's imagination immediately at the beginning of "Todesfuge," demanding us to imagine something almost unimaginable. "Black milk—a flagrant metphor," Felstiner comments, "[i]t takes metaphor, our figure of speech that asserts something contrary to fact, to convey a fact. This metaphor is extreme, bittersweet, nullifying the nourishment to humankind" (Felsinter, 33). Is this almost unimaginable image of black milk not an accurate reflection and an appropriate synecdoche of the broader unfathomable image of cremation? More than just an oxymoron and metaphor, the image of black milk also illustrates a paradox of life and death, for "[d]eath is set in the context of everyday life, which is in itself a paradox…[,] which is further explored with the verse 'wir schaufeln ein Grab in den Lüften da liegt man nicht eng'" (Dillon, 35-36). Both of these semantic and symbolic paradoxes, along with its prominent position and its repetition demand the reader's full attention. The issue in translation does not necessarily lie in finding the equivalent meaning of the expression, rather in preserving the same amount of weight.

Although not salient enough to be a motif, the element of "zum Tanz aufspielen" deserves special attention. Its two occurrences in verse 9 and verse 18 differ from each other in the placement of the prefix in the separable verb "aufspielen." While verse 9 reads "er befiehlt uns spielt auf nun zum Tanz," verse 18 reads "stecht tiefer die Spaten ihr einen ihr andern spielt weiter zum Tanz auf." Instead of following the grammatical rule and placing the separable prefix at the end of the sentence like verse 18, verse 9 brings the prefix forward and positions it right after the verb. This unusual approach accentuates the verb and the temporal adverb "nun" ["now"] by creating a metrical combination of three stressed syllables and sharpens the tone of the "er," making his "behiehlt" ["command"] more assertive. Even though there are similar double-stressed syllables in "spielt weiter zum Tanz auf," the emphasis is shifted from the action of "aufspielen" and its immediacy to the adverb "weiter" ["further"] implying continuation. When it comes to translation, this distinction in accentuations needs to be addressed in order to minimize translation loss.

iii. Sentential and Inter-Sentential Features

The wonder of the composition of "Todesfuge" lies in the combination and permutation of its semantic units. For this study, the semantic unit investigated is in the form of sentences. Sentences are considered on the sentential level, which, linguistically, is the next higher level of textual variables. According to *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Language Sciences*,

> the sentence is the domain within which purely syntactic relations, constituent structure, and grammaticality are defined … and the one indecent syntactic entity. It expresses a

> prediction and is often regarded as the linguistic vehicle for the expression of a propositional attitude and thus the performance of a speech-act.

Alike, Hervey et al. define 'sentence' as "a particular type of linguistic unit that is a complete, self-contained[,] and ready-made vehicle for actual communication: nothing more needs to be added to it before it can be uttered in concrete situations" (Hervey et al., 63). In order to present a clearer analysis, this study limits the definition of sentence to a linguistic unit that consists of a subject and a predicate that is centered on a verb, modeling after the traditional definition of English sentences. Thus, the determination of semantic units in "Todesfuge" depends on the presence of a predicate.

Different from many poems in which one sentence may constitute many verses, "Todesfuge" is unique in the number of semantic units, or, sentences per verse. Each verse consists of at least one semantic unit, and the longest verse in "Todesfuge" contains up to three semantic units. The compactness of multiple semantic units into one verse, together with the omission of punctuations, intensifies the rhythm and pace of the poem.

There is, again, a hidden pattern of gradual regularization and reduction in the number of semantic units one verse contains in "Todesfuge," and such regularization is in accordance with the progression from irregular verse length to a gradual consistency and reduction in structure as discussed in the "Phonic and Prosodic Features" section. The nine verses of the first section have 1, 2, 1, 2, 3, 2, 3, 2 and 2 semantic units respectively; the six verses of the second section have 1, 2, 1, 3, 2, 3 semantic units; the shortest section in the middle consist of two two-semantic-unit verses and one three-semantic-unit verse in the middle. The fourth section notices a change in the number of semantic unit per verse—there is no longer a verse that has three semantic units, and the latter five verses of section four (or in different print, the last two verses of section four and

the whole section five) all have two semantic units. This new reduction and regularization persists into the next section as well; all eight verses have two semantic units. The concluding section epitomizes such pattern in its one-semantic-unit verses.

As the pattern of gradual reduction and regularization becomes more evident through the examinations of both verse length and the number of semantic units per verse, it is appropriate to claim that Celan's decision to forsake any traditional form is not an arbitrary one; on the contrary, Celan is deliberately composing a new form with patterns tailored to this specific poem. Its theme of death itself is a reduction, a reduction of life, a reduction of a people.

Such reduction is not only discernible in the prosodic and syntactical structure, but also in points of details on a discourse level, which assists with the assessment of

> the features that distinguish a cohesive and coherent textual flow from a random sequence of unrelated sentences. This level is concerned both with relations between sentences and with relations between larger units: paragraphs, stanzas, chapters, volumes, and so on (Hervey et al., 66)

The motif "ein Grab in den Lüften" and the late-appearing yet dominant element of "seine Augen sind blau" entail such reduction—both undergo the reduction from plural to singular form during their reoccurrence. In spite of its higher number of reappearance, the singularization in the prepositional phrase of location in the motif "ein Grab in den Lüften" is less conspicuous than the singularization of "seine Augen sind blau." The prepositional phrase of location, "in den Lüften," repeated wholly only once in verse 15, changes into its singular form of "in die Luft" in its latter two reemergences in verses 25 and 33. The difference in the article in "in die Luft" (25) and "in der Luft" (33) only signals different cases, a German grammatical feature.

The transition from the plural "seine Augen sind blau" in verse 17 to the singular "sein Auge ist blau" in verse 30 is more significant, for the singular not only contributes to the only end rhyme—"blau" and "genau"—in the poem, but also depicts a rather peculiar image. Notice that the preservation of the plural "seine Augen sind blau" does not break the only rhyme pattern. Therefore, one can raise the question: what is the purpose of the singularization? Moreover, while the possessive pronoun "sein" in the element's first occurrence in verse 17 clearly refers to the "er," who represents a German National Socialist, it is ambiguous to whom the same possessive pronoun in verse 30 refers. Is it referring to "der Tod" [a personified "death"] or "ein Meister aus Deutschland" ["a master from Germany"] in its preceding semantic unit? Why does this personified "death" or this "master from Germany" only have one eye? What is the effect of such depiction?

In terms of the impact on the end rhyme, the singular "sein Auge ist blau" creates a better harmony in musicality with its corresponding rhyming semantic unit "er trifft dich genau"—the singular form of the German "to be" verb "ist" forms an assonance of the short "i" sound with "trifft" and "dich," both of which (as a predicate) were repeated in the same verse. Additionally, the singular "ist" parallels the verb in its preceding semantic unit "der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland," thereby mirroring the same-verse repetition of "er trifft dich." Similarly, the transition from the plural "in den Lüften" to the singular "in die Luft"/ "in der Luft" implies a shift from lighter sound "ü" to a heavier-sounding "u" in support of the dark image of the impending life threat. The personification of "death" as "a master from Germany" with one eye renders him as more grotesque, inhumane, and horrifying; the observation of the color from both eyes to one particular eye suggests a degree of precision, which aligns with the precision of the action in "er trifft dich genau." What's more, one could even infer that by zooming in from both

eyes to one eye, there is an indication of a shortened distance between the "er"—the shooter—and "dich"—the persecuted, which in turn entails the imminent danger, doom, dire.

In addition to the simplification form plural to singular form, there is a gradual reduction in the development of the content, which falls on the exact spots of the recurrent motif "ein Grab in den Lüften." This motif makes its first appearance early in "Todesfuge"—positioned in verse 4, it is in fact the first direct revelation of the theme "death" in the poem, following the figurative image of the opening "[s]chwarze Milch" ["black milk"]. Its succeeding semantic unit "da liegt man nicht eng" can also be considered as a salient motif by itself, appearing a total of three times. Yet, the pattern of reduction surfaces when it is paired with "ein Grab in den Lüften" and considered as one motif. The combined motif originates in verse 4 and repeats itself in verse 15, but its latter two repetitions are altered to a noticeable degree. In the fourth section, the combined motif is broken up—the prepositional phrase in the first semantic unit is inverted and placed at the end of verse 25, preceding "ein Grab," which is now the beginning of verse 16. There is both an augmentation in the motif content and a change in the personal pronoun of the performer of the action. The additional information of "steigt ihr als Rauch" ["you will rise as smoke"] and "in den Wolken" ["in the clouds"] gives the image of death a more vivid touch—the simile comparing the ash as a result of cremation to smoke and the juxtaposition of horror and serenity represented by the cloud images offers a more concrete presentation of the ostensibly abstract notion of death, indicating the approaching of the doom. Likewise, there is a shift in the personal pronouns from "wir" to the "ihr," who is the addressee in the "er's" command, hinting at both the proximity of "er" and his taking up of the responsibility of the persecution. The last repletion of the motif occurs in verse 33, with the same shift in personal pronoun and complete omission of the "da liegt man nicht eng." Again, the change to "er" emphasizes his imminent approaching

and the immediacy of the persecution from "er's" perspective. The complete omission of an important element embodies elimination, extermination, eradication of life, of a people—the completion of the deed of the German National Socialists. Once again, the strategy of reduction functions to support the content in its progression towards the exact moment of death, which also legitimizes the conclusion of the poem with "dein aschenes Haar Sulamith" ["your ashen hair Sulamith"].

A similar reduction is seen in the repetition of the "dein" voice. Whereas "dein goldenes Haar Margarete" occurs five times throughout the poem, its counterpart "dein aschenes Haar Sulamtih" only appears three times in total: it does not make its appearance until verse 15 in the second section, and it is likewise omitted in the second-to-last section. One could argue that the omission in the fifth section hints at the loss of life after the completion of cremation, yet the same inference would not explain that in the first section. While such omission does not impact the translation in any way, it indeed reveals a unique structural pattern—there seems to be a pattern of antimetabole, with the third section as the pivot point. The element "er pfeift seine Rüden herbei/ er pfeift seine Juden hervor" (8-9) and the alone-standing "dein goldenes Haar Margarete" in the first section are repeated in the second-to-last session, and the two-part motif "dein goldenes Haar Margarete/ Dein aschenes Haar Sulamith" in the second section is mirrored in the fourth. Notably, their order in the combination of the semantic units remains the same, which is a characteristic of antimetabole—the position of the alone-standing "dein goldenes Haar Margarete" at the end of its verse is maintained in its repetition, and the enjambment-like separation between the motif "dein goldenes Haar Margarete/ Dein aschenes Haar Sulamith" is preserved in its mirroring part. It is meaningful how, throughout the poem, the German Margarete and the Jewish manifestation Sulamith never appear in the same verse. Does this

separation on paper not directly reflect the ethnic segregation? However, the modification in print in "[d]ein aschenes Haar Sulamith" from capitalization to lowercase is certainly conveying an additional intention: if the capitalizations means extra emphasis, then perhaps the loss of such emphasis, in a way, supports the loss of identity and life of the represented Jewish people. Together with the gradual reduction pattern on both semantic and sentential level, this deprivation of extra emphasis helps with the quickening of the pace towards the end of poem.

A major impact of the gradual reduction pattern lies in the rhythmic development. The singularization from "seine Augen sind blau" and "in den Lüften" to "sein Auge ist blau" and "in die/der Luft" respectively shortens the sound, thereby increasing the pace. The omission of part of the motifs, such as "wir trinken und trinken," "da liegt man night eng," and "dein aschenes Haar Sulamith," paired with the reduction of semantic units per verse, plays an even larger role in accelerating the poem's rhythmic development, elevating the tension, and echoing the forthcoming doom.

Besides the recognition of a gradual reduction and hidden antimetabole pattern, a cyclical nature is acknowledged in the combination and permutation of the semantic units of "Todesfuge." In the three reoccurrences of the motifs "Schwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken sie abends/ wir trinken sie mittags und morgens wir trinken sie nachts" (1-2), there is a conspicuous reorganization of the temporal phrases—the lastly-positioned "nachts" is immediately brought forward in the first repetition of the motif in the second section, and this new placement persists till the end. The initially positioned "abends" is now placed last throughout the following recurrence. The exception of placing the initially second-to-last "morgens" at the end in the last repetition exemplifies the cyclic development of the content, returning to the notion of the early morning in the opening image of "[s]chwarze Milch der Frühe." Similarly, the motif "wir

schaufeln ein Grab in den Lüften" that immediately follows is moved towards the end of each section since its first reappearance. The motif "er hetzt seine Rüden" echoes the element paralleling the Jews and male dogs in the first section. Notice that such element is only repeated once and towards the very end of the poem, which reinforces the cyclical pattern. Last but not least, the purposeful choice of concluding the poem at "dein aschenes Haar Sulamith" corresponds to the opening image of "[s]chwarze Milch," which invites a plausible interpretation that the daily nourishment in the concentration camp is contaminated by ash resulted from cremation. This cyclicality, again, hints at the juxtaposition of death in the context of daily life and highlights the frequency and daily nature of such an appalling deed. Death, for the Jews, is an inescapable cycle.

In general, there is sententially and inter-sententially a reduction pattern and a cyclical nature, both of which enforce the relentlessly quickening, manic quality of "Todesfuge."

b. The Formal Properties in the Fifteen Published Scholarly English Translations

i. Phonic and Prosodic Features

In print, all 15 published scholarly English translations have irregular shapes and unconventional forms on the page, just like the original German text of "Todesfuge." On one hand, they all stay true to the structure of the original text, with the slight variation in section divisions from verses 19 to 26 shown below.

19 Schwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken dich nachts
20 wir trinken dich mittags und morgens wir trinken dich abends
21 wir trinken und trinken
22 Ein Mann wohnt im Haus dein goldenes Haar Margarete
23 dein eschenes Haar Sulamith er spielt mit den Schlangen
24 Er ruft spielt süßer den Tod der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland
25 er ruft streicht dunkler die Geigen dann steigt ihr als Rauch in die Luft
26 dann habt ihr ein Grab in den Wolken da liegt man nicht eng

While Middleton, Greenberg, Rothenberg, Bridgewater, Schwebell, Friedlander, Neugroschel, Hamburger, Glenn, Weimar, Felstiner, and Melin break verses 19-26 into two sections—one from verses 19 to 23, another from verses 24 to 26, Bullock, White, and Cameron treat verses 19 to 26 as one section. The 12 translators seem to have the original print of the German "Todesfuge" at hand and copy the structure. It is also possible that they consider the verses beginning with "[e]r ruft" as building one of the more salient motifs, rather than an episode, (recall from the "The Significance of Recreating the Fugue Form" section that in an episode the complete subject does not appear, and there is development of previously stated and/or new material). On the contrary, the four translators who treat verses 19-26 as one section may have the other print version of "Todesfuge," in which the verses 19-26 are printed as one section, as their source text. Likewise, they may plausibly have recognized the structural pattern of

antimetabole, using the third section as the pivot point, discussed in the previous section. Their translation of the verses 19-26 as one section obeys such (vertically) mirroring structure.

Despite the three versions of the "Todesfuge" in print, I personally believe that verses 19-26 should be considered as one section. The cue for this assertion lies in verse 23, whose first word "dein," unlike that in verse 15 where "[d]ein aschenes Haar Sulamith" made its first appearance, is printed in lower case, rather than capitalized. This inconsistency indicates that verses 19-23 are more than a sectional repetition of the second section (verses 10-15), and that verses 24-26 likewise should not be a sectional repetition of the third section (verses 16-18). Nonetheless, if there is further evidence convincing that Celan, in fact, intended to have verses 19-26 separated into two sections, I would, without a doubt, respect the original structure of the poem.

On the other hand, two translations stand out on paper in print: Schwebell's and Cameron's. Schwebell's rendition contains caesuras in almost every verse. It is interesting to note the caesuras' effect in exaggeration, yet this incorporation of caesuras seems to have strayed from the original German text by disrupting the rhythmic flow of "Todesfuge." Cameron's translation isolates the first verse from the rest of the poem. It is unknown if it was a printing issue in Cameron's dissertation, but it is certain that the first verse should not stand on its own.

As for punctuation, almost all of the English translations acknowledge the lack of punctuation in the original German text, except for Bridgewater's translation, which is printed in *The Penguin Poets: Twentieth-Century German Verse*, a collection introduced and edited by Bridgewater himself. In this translation, "Todesfuge" is translated into three verse paragraphs, as if it were a prose poem, that all lead with the imagery of "[b]lack milk of dawn," instead of the original seven-section (or six-section depending on the print) poem. We can find a reason for

such an approach on the cover page of the anthology that this collection presents readers "with plain prose translation of each poem." It is also stated in the "General Editor's Foreword" that

> the purpose of these Penguin books of verse in the chief European languages is to make a fair selection of the world's finest poetry available to readers who could not, but for the translations at the foot of each page, approach it without dictionaries and a slow plodding from line to line (Bridgewater, v).

Bridgewater's prose rendition is certainly helpful at first glance for a reader with no knowledge of German, but it nevertheless misses the poem's inherent formal quality of rhythmic sound (as previously discussed).

Capitalization is also a minor but important graphic element of "Todesfuge," for it signals larger semantic units. As mentioned earlier, there are nine capitalizations embedded in this dense yet unpunctuated poem, in verses 1, 5, 10, 13, 15, 16, 19, 24, and 27. There is a notable number of translators who miss the capitalization in verse 15, "[d]ein aschenes Haar Sulamith wir schaufeln ein Grab in den Lüften da liegt man nicht eng." Middleton, Greenburg, Schwebell, Friedlander, Neugroschel, Cameron, Glenn, Weimar, Felstiner, and Melin have preserved these nine capitalizations in their translated texts, whereas Bullock, Rothenberg, Bridgewater, White, and Hamburger have either eight or ten capitalizations in their English translations. Rothberg, Bridgewater, White, and Hamburger simply miss the capitalization in verse 15, while Bullock and Rothenberg together add a capitalization in verse 30, capitalizing the term "Death" and treating it as a person's name, and placing it in the beginning of the verse. When it comes to such technical details (such as graphic features), there is no particular reason not to maintain the arrangement of the original text.

In terms of the verse length and syllabic count, all 15 translations have undergone more or less a reduction in verse length as the poem comes to an end, just like the original German text of "Todesfuge." Middleton, Cameron, and Melin are the only exceptions. Even though the reduction in verse length contributes to the rhythm of the poem, it is not as influential as the regularity in verse length, especially in quickening the pace towards the end of the poem. However, this gradual regularization in verse length in the original poem is not addressed by all. Bullock, Friedlander, Neugroschel, Felstiner are the few translators who keep this pattern of gradual regularity of verse length in their translated texts, and the pattern in Felstiner's translation is the closest to the original German text. In Felstiner's translation, the three verses of the same length in the third section mark the starting point of such consistency, and the progression of the verse length in the rest of the poem is almost identical to that of the original German poem, with a margin of error of only one syllable. Such regularity in the verse length in the latter half of the poem is essential in the rhythmic development of "Todesfuge," whose pace quickens after the third section and throughout the rest of the poem during Celan's own reading of the poem.

The most unique feature—the single rhyme connecting verses 30 and 31—imposes a real challenge in the translation process and sparks different English translations. 12 English translations manage to transfer the end rhyme from the German language into English, with Bridgewater, Schwebell, and Friedlander being the outliers, who prioritize conveying the meaning. The effect of different handling of the end rhyme will be further investigated in the next section, but given its uniqueness in the poem, it is best to preserve such an end rhyme in the translated text.

ii. Grammatical and Lexical Features

As discussed in the "Grammatical and Lexical Features of the Original German text," five sets of details need to be highly respected in the translated English text. This section will address each of these challenges in the order previously discussed: the temporal expressions, verb-adverb constructions, tense, the opening image "[s]chwarze Milch der Frühe," and the proverbial phrase "zum Tanz aufspielen."

a. The Temporal Expressions

It is plausible that the temporal expressions in "Todesfuge" have generated the greatest variety of English translations, since rarely do two translations share the identical temporal phrases. Below is a comprehensive list of different temporal expressions by the 15 translators:

"… abends" (verse 1)

… at nightfall	(Middleton, 1952)
… at dusk	(Bullock, 1955)
… evenings	(Greenberg, 1957)
… at dusktime	(Rothenberg, 1959)
… at evening	(Bridgewater, 1963)
… in the evening	(Schwebell, 1963)
… at sundown	(White, 1966)
… at even	(Friedlander, 1970)
… at dusk	(Neugroschel, 1971)
… at sundown	(Hamburger, 1972)
… at evening	(Cameron, 1973)
… in the evening	(Glenn, 1973)
… at evening	(Weimar, 1974)
… at evening	(Felstiner, 1995)
… at dusk	(Melin, 1999)

"… mittags und morgens … nachts" (verse 2)

… at noon in the morning… at night	(Middleton, 1952)
… at noon and at dawn … at night	(Bullock, 1955)
… noon and morning … nights	(Greenberg, 1957)

… at noontime and dawntime … at night	(Rothenberg, 1959)
… midday and morning … at night	(Bridgewater, 1963)
… at noon in the morning … at night	(Schwebell, 1963)
… at noon and at dawning … at night	(White, 1966)
… at noon and mornings … at night	(Friedlander, 1970)
… at noon and at daybreak … at night	(Neugroschel, 1971)
… at noon in the morning … at night	(Hamburger, 1972)
… at midday and morning … at night	(Cameron, 1973)
… at noon and in the morning … at night	(Glenn, 1973)
… at noon and at daybreak … at night	(Weimar, 1974)
… at midday and morning … at night	(Felstiner, 1995)
… at midday and morning … at night	(Melin, 1999)

Some of the popular translations of the temporal expression "abends" are: "at evening" deployed by Bridgewater, Cameron, Weimar, and Felstiner; "at dusk" translated by Bullock, Neugroschel, and Melin; "in the evening" by Schwebell and Glenn; and "at sundown," by White and Hamburger. The other four translations are "at nightfall," "evenings," "at dusktime," and "at even," used, respectively, by Middleton, Greenberg, Rothenberg, and Friedlander.

We will begin with the most uncommon translation approaches and then progress to the more popular translations. "Even" is a rather archaic expression, which is superseded by its synonym "evening" in ordinary use; unless otherwise justified, the archaic language is unnecessary. Similarly, "dusktime" is also fairly outdated, and the only example given by *Oxford English Dictionary* dates back to 1890 in J.D Robertson's *A glossary of dialect & archaic words used in the county of Gloucester*. "Evenings" is used mainly colloquially in the United States, and it is fairly old-fashioned as well. It is not the most fitting to use a U.S.-specific expression for a poem unrelated to the United States. As for the more popular translations, "sundown" and "nightfall" are still often used nowadays, yet "sundown" is used less frequently than "nightfall." "Dusk," while still as frequent in current use as "nightfall," seems an obsolete word when used with the meaning "[t]he darker stage of twilight before it is quite dark at night, or when the

darkness begins to give way in the morning" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). "In the evening" is more frequently used as an idiomatic expression than "at evening."

The German "abends" has the advantage of succinctness in both meaning and syllables, which contribute to the overall rhythmic development of "Todesfuge." To be consistent with these qualities of the German word, the disyllabic phrase "at dusk" seems to be the best choice among the four popular translations "at evening," "at dusk," "in the evening," and "at sundown." However, Celan's "Todesfuge" and the later German poetry of the same period are known for their "neither vague nor pretentious, neither flamboyant nor impulsive" speech, which "shuns slurring and all inarticulate outbursts" (Schwebell, XXXIV-XXXV). By that logic, "at evening" and "in the evening" are the most suitable as they are the most modest expressions, without any rhetorical touch. Considering the syllabic length, the tri-syllabic "at evening" is more compact than the quad-syllabic "in the evening," thereby making "at evening" perhaps the most fitting English translation for "abends."

As for translating "mittags," there appears to be more of a consensus, with nine translators writing "at noon." "At midday" is also a favorable option, chosen by Cameron, Felstiner, and Melin. Bridgewater also uses "midday," only omitting the preposition. The other translations are "at noontime" and "noon." "Noontime" as a noun is not frequently in current use, and it is a synonym of "noontide" and "nooning," both of which are obsolete. "Noontime" is also used in the United States to express "an interval in the middle of the day," as well as figuratively "[t]he culminating or highest point of something" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). It is not the best English translation and is especially redundant when it pairs with "at dusktime" and "dawntime" in the translation proposed by Rothenberg. Additionally, there is no such repetition of suffix in the German "abends," "mittags und morgans" and/or "nachts." Greenberg, intending to stick to

the German temporal expressions in structure, uses "noon" as an adverb. Yet, "noon" is not conventionally used as an adverb, but rather as a noun, or, in some cases, a verb. The nouns "noon" and "midday" are synonyms with identical frequency in current use according to *Oxford English Dictionary*, but "midday" can also be figurative when denoting "[t]he middle of the day; the time when the sun is at its highest point in the sky, noon." Moreover, "midday" is formed within English, by compounding, while "noon" is "a word inherited from Germanic" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). If "at evening" is chosen to be the most fitting English translation for "abends," then "at noon" can best correspond to "at evening" in both an identical prepositional structure and a matter-of-fact description.

Similarly to "abends," "morgens" has inspired multiple English translations, and the preceding conjunction "und" linking "mittags und morgens" only complicates the translation process. Two-thirds of the translators agree on "morning" as the English equivalent of the German noun "morgen," foregoing the repetitive meaning of "morgens." The rest of the translations are: "dawn," "dawntime," "dawning," and "daybreak." While "dawn" is very frequently in current use, it has a figurative connotation, and "dawning" is its earlier equivalent before "dawn" "appeared late in the 16th century" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). "Daybreak" is not as frequently in current use and can also be used figuratively. The compound noun "dawntime" seems to have been created by Rothenberg and does not even have its own entry in *Oxford English Dictionary*. Therefore, "morning" is the most appropriate English translation to express the German "morgen."

There are three different approaches in translating "und morgens:" seven translators maintain the conjunction while omitting its preposition to avoid redundancy with that of the "mittags;" Middleton, Hamburger, and Schwebell omit the conjunction while maintaining the

preposition in the temporal expression; the other five translators have preserved both. Given the compact rhythm strengthened by the monosyllabic and disyllabic words, keeping both the conjunction and the long temporal phrase hinders such compelling rhythmic quality. As previously discussed, the redundancy in Rothenberg's choices, in my eyes, disqualifies "and dawntime" as a viable option.

Only nine translations are left, five of which read "and morning," three of which translate it into "in the morning," and the one left writing "and mornings." Among the five "and morning" translations, Greenberg's treats "morning" as an adverb, as it does with the previous temporal expression "noon." While "morning" can be "[u]sed adverbially … for 'in the morning,'[it is now] only in phrases as morning and evening, etc." (*Oxford English Dictionary*). This adverbial use of morning does not constitute a pattern that "noon" follows. The same theory applies to Bridgewater's translation "midday and morning." Although the closest to the original German text in its compact diction and compelling rhythm, Greenberg's and Bridgewater's translations are not the most idiomatic English. Friedlander also adopts a similar adverbial use of the word, but this time, "morning" is "used adverbially in plural: habitually in the morning, every morning (now chiefly North American)" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Whereas "mornings" is still in use and does not impede the pulsating rhythm, the inconsistency in structure with "at even," "at noon," and "at night" breaks the consistency in the identical construction of the German temporal expressions "abends," "mittags," "morgens," and "nachts." The same criteria apply to Middleton's, Schwebell's, and Hamburger's translation of "at noon in the morning," which awkwardly accentuates "in the morning" due to its different construction. Hence, "at midday and morning," as translated by Cameron, Felstiner, and Melin stands out as the most appropriate among these 15 English translations of the temporal expressions "mittags und morgens." Not

only does “at midday and morning” still follow an intricate rhythm, “at morning” is also a valid use of the word in prepositional phrases, and the alliteration of “midday” and “morning” imitates that of “mittags” and “morgens.” Personally, however, I would translate “mittags und morgens” as “at noon and morning,” for the five syllables of this phrase correspond to the five-syllabic “mittags und morgens,” and flamboyant rhetorical devices such as alliteration are not prioritized in “Todesfuge.”

In contrast to the previous three temporal expressions, “nachts” only results in two English translations: “at night” preferred by 14 of the 15 translators, and “nights,” preferred by Greenberg. “Nights,” as an adverb, is not frequently in current use, and chiefly used in North American colloquial speech. It is evident that “at night” is the better option, as it apparently wins the majority. “At night” keeps the identical construction as “at evening,” “at noon,” or “at midday,” and “at morning” without hindering the rhythm.

As a result, when assessing the combination of the most appropriate English translation of each temporal expression in “Todesfuge,” Cameron and Felstiner’s translations of “at evening,” “at midday and morning,” and “at night” seems to be the most fitting.

b. Verb-Adverb Constructions—

“da liegt man nicht eng,” “wenn es dunkelt nach Deutschland,” “er trifft dich genau”

As previously discussed, the verb-adverb construction in “da liegt man nicht eng” in verses 4, 15, and 26, “es dunkelt nach Deutschland” in verses 6 and 14, and “er trifft dich genau” impose the greatest difficulties in English translation. Not surprisingly, all three verb-adverbial constructions result in a number of various English translations.

The first and the most challenging verb-adverb construction appears in the last semantic unit in verses 4, 15, and 26, “da liegt man nicht eng.” Below is a list of all 15 English translations of this unit:

… it is ample to lie there	(Middleton, 1952)
… there you lie without crowding	(Bullock, 1955)
… you won’t lie cramped there	(Greenberg, 1957)
… where it’s roomy to lie	(Rothenberg, 1959)
… there will be plenty of room	(Bridgewater, 1963)
… where we will not be crowded	(Schwebell, 1963)
… there’s no crowding there	(White, 1966)
… there one lies not crowded	(Friedlander, 1970)
… there’s room for us all	(Neugroschel, 1971)
… there one lies unconfined	(Hamburger, 1972)
… there is room for us all	(Cameron, 1973)
… there one is not confined	(Glenn, 1973)
… there is room enough there	(Weimar, 1974)
… where you won’t lie too cramped	(Felstiner, 1995)
… there no one lies cramped	(Melin, 1999)

The difficulty in translating this phrase is obvious even at a glance: it is almost impossible to render the translation into vernacular English. The simplicity in the “liegt nicht eng” has to be unpacked into longer phrases in English. The subject “man” further complicates the translation process as it brings about various options, such as “one,” “you,” or “we.” In addition, the locative adverb “da” also poses an obstacle during the German-English translation.

Firstly, given that there are already locations mentioned in the previous semantic units “wir schaufeln ein Grab in den Lüften” (4, 15) and “dann habt ihr ein Grab in den Wolken” (26), it is unnecessary to translate the locative adverb into English as “there,” for it makes the entire translated verse sound redundant, which in turn impedes the pulsating rhythm and concise nature of “Todesfuge.” Rothenberg, Bridgewater, Schwebell, Neugroschel, Cameron, and Felstiner are among the six translators who either use the “where”-clause or completely omit the translation of “da,” as listed below:

… where it's roomy to lie	(Rothenberg, 1959)
… there will be plenty of room	(Bridgewater, 1963)
… where we will not be crowded	(Schwebell, 1963)
… there's room for us all	(Neugroschel, 1971)
… there is room for us all	(Cameron, 1973)
… where you won't lie too cramped	(Felstiner, 1995)

The informal language, indicated by the use of contraction, in Rothenberg's and Neugroschel's translation appears unfitting, as there is no such equivalent informal language in the original German text of "Todesfuge." Felstiner's translation of "liegt eng" into "lie too cramped" is worthy of note in its attempt to preserve the verb-adverbial construction, but it certainly is unfitting, since "cramped" is only an adjective, and it is grammatically unconventional or even incorrect to construct a verb-adjective construction in the formal use of English language. "To lie cramped" may still get by in colloquial language, but a serious poem like "Todesfuge" could find such expression jarring. What's more, in verse 4 and 15, Felstiner's translation of "man" to "you" is overshadowed by the translation to "we," which corresponds to the subject in the previous semantic unit "wir schaufeln ein Grab in den Lüften" (4, 15). It is clear that the acting "we" here refers to the Jewish people, who are commanded to dig a grave for themselves. Such poignancy is best conveyed when the subject "man" is translated to a first person plural pronoun, "we" or "us" depending on the grammatical structure. There is a translation loss of such poignancy in Bridgewater's "there will be plenty of room," for he completely omits the subject. Accordingly, Schwebell's translation "where we will not be crowded" and Cameron's "there is room for us all" seem most fitting and idiomatic English, even though Schwebell's translation may sound more tedious than Cameron's. Notably, both translators make modifications accordingly when translating the subject—in verse 26, "you" is used in both translations to be consistent with the subject in the previous semantic unit "dann habt ihr ein Grab in den Wolken," emphasizing the imperative-like syntactic structure that highlights the Nazis' harshness.

The next challenge in translating the German verb-adverb construction lies in the semantic unit “wenn es dunkelt nach Deutschland” in verses 6 and 14. The 15 English translations are listed below:

when the night falls to Germany	(Middleton, 1952)
at nightfall to Germany	(Bullock, 1955)
at dusk to Germany	(Greenberg, 1957)
when it’s nightfall nach Deutschland	(Rothenberg, 1959)
when night falls to Germany	(Bridgewater, 1963)
when the night falls to Germany	(Schwebell, 1963)
back home when the dark comes	(White, 1966)
when the dark comes to Germany	(Friedlander, 1970)
when it darkens to Germany	(Neugroschel, 1971)
when dusk falls to Germany	(Hamburger, 1972)
when it darkens to Germany	(Cameron, 1973)
when it grows dark to Germany	(Glenn, 1973)
when it darkens to Germany	(Weimar, 1974)
when it grows dark to Deutschland	(Felstiner, 1995)
when darkness descends to Germany	(Melin, 1999)

The main difficulty of translating this semantic unit is the unconventional language in the original German text. There is also a high degree of ambiguity in the meaning in context: does “er” write to Germany or does the dark fall to Germany? In other words, does “nach Deutschland” modify “wenn es dunkelt,” or “der schreibt,” which is in the previous semantic unit? Due to the lack of punctuation and the flexibility in syntactic structure, this verse remains ambiguous. At a glance, Bullock’s “at nightfall to Germany,” Greenberg’s “at dusk to Germany” sound the least convincing as their own independent clauses, mainly because of the preposition “to.” In terms of translating the verb “dunkelt,” it is appropriate to make the verb into noun form and choose another verb, in order to achieve a more vernacular English translation. However, “darkness” is certainly a better choice than “night” or “nightfall” or “dusk” if translating into the noun form, for “darkness” is more matter-of-fact and less figurative in depicting the evil of German National Socialism. Eight translations remain after applying this criterion:

back home when the dark comes	(White, 1966)
when the dark comes to Germany	(Friedlander, 1970)
when it darkens to Germany	(Neugroschel, 1971)
when it darkens to Germany	(Cameron, 1973)
when it grows dark to Germany	(Glenn, 1973)
when it darkens to Germany	(Weimar, 1974)
when it grows dark to Deutschland	(Felstiner, 1995)
when darkness descends to Germany	(Melin, 1999)

White chooses to omit Deutschland or Germany entirely, which results in a significant translation loss of "Todesfuge's" historic and cultural significance. His translation is also the most casual and almost light-hearted, which is unfitting for a poem on a severe matter like the Holocaust. Friedlander also uses the noun phrase "the dark," which is appropriate in expressing "a dark state or condition; darkness; the dark time," neither obsolete nor wholly figurative, yet the verb "come" does not sufficiently express the sense of immediacy in the German original phrase (*Oxford English Dictionary*). The more popular "when it grows dark to Germany" manages to maintain the German syntactical structure of "wenn es dunkelt nach Deutschland" and sounds idiomatic, although the preposition "to" might be better replaced with "in." Similar comments can be said about Neugroschel, Cameron, and Weimar's translation "when it darkens to Germany." However, "darken" as an intransitive verb more conventionally takes "down" as its preposition when denoting "[t]o grow or become dark, said esp. of the coming on of the night"—the phrase "darken to" only appears in E.Young's 1745 work *Complaint: Night the Eighth*, meaning "[t]o grow clouded, gloomy, sad; esp. of the countenance: to become clouded with anger or other emotion" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Melin's translation appears to use the most vernacular English, yet one could argue that the alliteration in "darkness descends" is unnecessary, thereby intentionally rendering the poem more lyrical. In short, all three of the versions "when it grows dark to Germany," "when it darkens to Germany," and "when darkness

descends to Germany," in spite of space for improvement, are the best among these 15 published translations.

The third verb-adverb construction "er trifft dich genau," though appearing only once and late in "Todesfuge," deserves the most contemplation, for it is not only part of the only rhyme in the poem, but also represents somewhat a climax. The 15 English translations are, again, listed below:

… he will hit you	(Middleton, 1952)
… he hits you true	(Bullock, 1955)
… his aim is true	(Greenberg, 1957)
… his aim is true	(Rothenberg, 1959)
… he will strike you with precision	(Bridgewater, 1963)
… he hits you precisely	(Schwebell, 1963)
… he will pierce you right through	(White, 1966)
… he will hit you exactly	(Friedlander, 1970)
… his aim is true	(Neugroschel, 1971)
… his aim is true	(Hamburger, 1972)
… he will drill you right through	(Cameron, 1973)
… his aim is true	(Glenn, 1973)
… his target is you	(Weimar, 1974)
… shoots you level and true	(Felstiner, 1995)
… he shoots with precision at you	(Melin, 1999)

First and foremost, it is essential to preserve the only end rhyme in the English translation, or, really, translation in any language. 12 out of these 15 translations succeed in respecting this unique point of structure. While the "his aim is true" is the most frequent English translation, it differs from the original German text in its tone: both the action and the viciousness are lost in this translation. This sense of viciousness is expressed most sufficiently in White's and Cameron's translations, yet their choices of verb differ from the German verb "treffen," which denotes "to shoot" in this circumstance. Many translators choose to translate this verse in simple future tense, which nonetheless does not reflect the daily nature of death. Felstiner and Melin have managed to repeat the verb "shoot" and thus recreate the anaphora of "er trifft dich" in their

translations of the entire verse 31, despite the fact that both can be condensed. I personally find the "level" in Felstiner's translation unnecessary, but I understand his purpose of keeping the regularity in the verse length. If he had omitted "level and," verse 31 would have been 11 syllables long, disrupting the consistency in the verse length of the entire section. On the contrary, Melin could have easily rephrased the tedious-sounding modifier "with precision." However, Melin's translation of the first semantic unit in verse 31 "er trifft dich mit bleierner Kugel" is the strongest of all of the translations. Thus, if I were to translate verse 31, I would combine the strengths of Melin's and Felstiner's, along with White's and Cameron's, and write "he shoots you with a leaden bullet he shoots you right through."

c. Tense

"Todesfuge," written in simple present tense, leaves the reader with the impression of the presence and immediacy of death. The simple present tense in the German language can function like the simple present tense, the present progressive tense, and/or the simple future tense in English, to convey routine, continuation, and immediacy respectively. It is not surprising that the 15 translators have come to different conclusions when determining the tense of the poem. Bullock, Greenburg, Rothenberg, Bridgewater, Hamburger, Glenn, Felstiner, and Melin simply choose to create the English translation in the simple present tense, whereas Middleton, Schwebell, Friedlander, Neugroschel, Cameron, and Weimar incorporate the present progressive tense in their translations, emphasizing the ongoing process of digging a grave. White, however, is the only translator who deploys the simple future tense together with the simple present tense. Given the paradox of life and death throughout "Todesfuge," as discussed in the "Grammatical and Lexical Features of the Original German text" section, the simple present tense turns out to

most effectively express the daily nature of death, and thereby intensifying the representation of the horrors.

d. "Schwarze Milch der Frühe"

The paradox of life and death is first presented by the opening image of the poem—the unconventional, strange oxymoron of "[s]chwarze Milch." The translation of such an image is not necessarily a challenging one, but the genitive "der Frühe" and the meter of the entire phrase complicate the translation. Listed below are all the 15 translations of "[s]warze Milch der Frühe":

Black milk of daybreak	(Middleton, 1952)
Black milk of morning	(Bullock, 1955)
Black milk of the dawn	(Greenerg, 1957)
Black milk of morning	(Rothenberg, 1959)
Black milk of dawn	(Bridgewater, 1963)
Dark milk of dawn	(Schwebell, 1963)
Coal-black milk of morning	(White, 1966)
Black milk of dawn	(Friedlaner, 1970)
Black milk of dawn	(Neugroschel, 1971)
Black milk of daybreak	(Hamburger, 1972)
Black milk of the dawn	(Cameron, 1973)
Black milk of dawn	(Glenn, 1973)
Coal-black milk of morning	(Weimar, 1974)
Black milk of daybreak	(Felstiner, 1995)
Black milk of dawn	(Melin, 1999)

While most translators agree on translating "[s]chwarze Milch" verbatim into "black milk," it is one syllable short of "[s]chwarze Milch," and it is a spondee, rather than a cretic. Yet the other two expressions do not outweigh "black milk." On one hand, "[d]ark milk of dawn" creates an unnecessary alliteration of "dark" and "dawn," which strays from Celan's modernist approach because alliteration accentuates traditional poetic rhetorics. On the other hand, "[c]oal-black milk of morning" adds the extra content of coal, which has a negative connotation in this case, for

coal catalyzes the process of cremation that turns the Jews into ash. This translation brings about more circularity to the poem by corresponding to the last verse "dein aschenes Haar Sulamith" (36). Nonetheless, such addition in content can also categorized as a translation loss.

Since "black milk" ends up being the most fitting translation of "[s]chwarze Milch," a certain kind of translation compensation is expected to make up for the loss in syllabic length and the disruption in the metric development, both of which heavily influence the prosodic feature of the poem. Compensation denotes "techniques of making up for the loss of the important [source text] features through replicating [source text] effects approximately in the [target text] by means other than those used in the [source text]" (Hervey et al., 27). According to Hervey et al., there are four aspects of compensation, most of which oftentimes occur together: compensation in kind, in place, by merging, and by splitting. While compensation in kind refers to "making up for one type of textual effect in the [source text] by another type in the [target text]," compensation in place "consists in making up for the loss of a particular effect found at a given place in the [source text] by creating a corresponding effect at an earlier or later place in the [target text]" (Hervey et al., 27, 29). Compensation by merging "[condenses] [source text] features carried over a relatively long stretch of text…into a relatively short stretch of the [target text]," whereas compensation by splitting occurs "where there is no single [target language] word that covers the same range of meaning as a given [source text] word" (Hervey et al., 30, 31). If none of the compensation is desirable, compromise in translation takes place, meaning that "while one would like to do full justice to the 'richness' of the [source text,] one's final [target text] inevitably suffers from various translation losses" (Hervey et al., 26).

Among the 12 translators who use the English equivalent "[b]lack milk," five translate the entire phrase to "[b]lack milk of dawn," three went with "[b]lack milk of daybreak," and the rest

divide equally between "[b]lack milk of morning" and "[b]lack milk of the dawn." To translate into "[b]lack milk of morning" is to create an alliteration, just like the previous example of "[d]ark milk of dawn," neither of which reflects Celan's modernist approach in the composition of "Todesfuge." Although "[b]lack milk of the dawn" stays closer to the original German text in preserving the article "the," it takes the risk of slightly slowing down the rhythmic development of the first verse. The German word "Frühe" means "erste Periode eines Zeitabschnitts, besonders eines Tages"["the first episode of a period of time, especially of a day"] and comes with an elevated tone (*Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*). What's more, "Frühe," when denoting "morgendliche Zeit, Anfangszeit"["morning time, starting time"], dates back all the way to year 1000, where the old high German form "fruoī (um 1000), frühnhd. früe (15. Jh.)" were used (*Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*). Therefore, in the context of "Todesfuge," "Frühe" represents the morning time in both a figurative and well-worn way. Based on this information, perhaps "daybreak" is a more proper English translation than "dawn" because it not only figuratively conveys the time in the morning when daylight first appears, but also traces back to 1530, earlier than the word "dawn," which "[appeared] late in 16th century" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Furthermore, "[b]lack milk of daybreak" stays more precisely to the metric pattern of "[s]chwarze Milch der Frühe"—3 trochaic feet—than "[b]lack milk of dawn," which consists of one trochaic foot and one iambic foot. Despite the lack of an overall traditional metric pattern, Celan deliberately develops different meters in the poem to create an ever-shifting and therefore compelling rhythm.

Unfortunately, this English translation of "[s]chwarze Milch der Frühe" inevitably suffers from an alteration of the original metric pattern due to the lack of adjective ending in the English modifiers, in this case, "black." The next step is to examine if the three translators who write

"[b]lack milk of daybreak" deploy any kind of compensation, and the range of examination will be grounded between verse 1 and verse 3, for they belong to the same thematic motif. When it comes to the meter, both Middleton and Hamburger come up with identical English translations and create a slight alteration in verse 2 as they translated "mittags" to "at noon": the original verse 2 is composed of three identical amphibrachic feet in "wir trinken sie mittags und morgens" and two almost-identical amphibrachic feet in "wir trinken sie nachts" (note that the later two repetitions of verse 2–verses 11 and 20 have two identical amphibrachic feet in "wir trinken sie abends"), while "at noon in the morning" breaks the identical amphibrachic feet, since "in" creates a stressed syllable instead of an originally unstressed one. Felstiner, on the contrary, manages to preserve the same metric pattern as in the original German text. As for verse 3, Middleton's "drink it and drink it" breaks the original pattern of two amphibrachic feet by omitting the translation of the subject "wir"; Hamburger, although maintaining the original meters, disrupts the correspondence of the meter and the semantic unit in his translation "we drink and we drink it." Felstiner's translation "we drink and we drink" is one syllable short of the original "wir trinken und trinken" (3), yet he compensates for the loss of metric emphasis by creating more stressed syllables on the conjunction "and" and the subject "we," forcing the pace to slow down within the still-pulsating rhythm. Felstiner is thereby utilizing the technique of compensation in place to make up for the compromise in meter in verse 3, but nonetheless, none of the translators succeed in compensating for that in translating "[s]chwarze Milch der Frühe" in verse 1.

e. "Zum Tanz aufspielen"

The two different placement of the prefix in the separable verb "aufspielen" in verse 9 and 18 of "Todesfuge," although a minor grammatical issue, add difficulty to the translation process because of their different emphasis. Recall that verse 9 "accentuates the verb and the temporal adverb 'nun'['now'] by creating a metrical combination of three stressed syllables and sharpens the tone of the 'er,' making his 'behielt' ['command'] more assertive," whereas in verse 18, "the emphasis is shifted from the action of 'aufspielen' and its immediacy to the adverb 'weiter' ["further"] that implies continuation." By investigating this minor point of detail, the translators' knowledge of German and attention to detail show through.

Here is a list of 15 English translations of verse 9 and the last semantic unit of 18 in pairs:

he commands us now on with the dance
… play on for the dancing (Middleton, 1952)

he commands us *Strike up a dance tune*
… *go on with the tune* (Bullock, 1955)

he orders us strike up now for the dance
… keep playing for the dance (Greenberg, 1957)

he commands us to play for the dance
… play up again for the dance (Rothenberg, 1959)

he orders now play on for the dance
… play on for the dance (Bridgewater, 1963)

he commands us to strike up for a dance
… strike up for a dance (Schwebell, 1963)

he commands us play sweet now for dancing
… play on now for dancing (White, 1966)

he commands us now play for the dance
… play on for the dance (Friedlander, 1970)

he commands us to play for the dance
… play for the dance (Neugroschel, 1971)

he commands us strike up for the dance

… play on for the dance	(Hamburger, 1972)
he commands us play music for dancing … play on for the dancing	(Cameron, 1973)
he commands us to strike up the music for the dance … play on for the dance	(Glenn, 1973)
he commands us strike up a tune for the dance … keep playing that dance tune	(Weimar, 1974)
he commands us play up for the dance … play on for the dancing	(Felstiner, 1995)
he tells us now strike up the dance … play on for the dance	(Melin, 1999)

In general, Bullock, Greenberg, Rothenberg, Friedlander, Hamburger, Cameron, Glenn, Weimar, Felstiner, and Melin have distinguished between the emphases on "nun" in verse 9 and "weiter" in verse 18 in their translation work, but with different approaches. Bullock italicizes all the imperative-like construction in "Todesfuge," as if they were direct statements from the "er." This italicization is effective in mimicking the harsh tone of the German National Socialists, but Bullock's verb choice in his translation "go on with the tune" reduces this effect. Rothenberg manages to underscore the continuation in action in verse 18 by incorporating the adverb "again," but he omits the emphasis on "nun" in verse 9. Greenberg and Weimar take a similar approach in distinguishing the different emphasis: they both explore two verb-adverb constructions—"strike up" and "play on"—to express the same German verb "aufspielen" and deplore the "keep+gerund" construction in English to underscore the continuation in verse 18. However, Weimar does not underline the immediacy of action in verse 9 in the way that Greenberg does with the adverb "now" in his translation. Neither do Hamburger and Glenn, both of whom also utilize "strike up" and "play on" for the German verb "aufspielen" for distinction. Melin, in contrast, succeeds in highlighting both the immediacy in verse 9 and continuation in

verse 18 while using two different English translations for "aufspielen," but her verb choice "tell" loses the harsh tone in the German verb "befiehlen." Nonetheless, in spite of the multiple possibilities of translating "aufspielen" to enrich the translated text, "strike up" as used to mean "to beat or sound (a drum, etc.) esp. in order to 'beat up' for recruits or as a signal to march" is an obsolete term and only in the historical usage category (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

Friedlander, Cameron, and Felstiner exploit only one English translation—the verb "play"—to articulate "aufspielen," yet they underscore the different emphases with different adverbs. All three of them enunciate the continuation of the action with the adverb "on" in the verb-adverb construction of "play on." However, while Cameron explicitly translates "aufspielen" as "play music for dancing," Felstiner decides that the phrase "play up" already entails the connotation of playing music. Indeed, "play" as a transitive verb has the meaning of "to accompany, dismiss, or lead with instrumental music," but it is "[w]ith adverbial complement" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Therefore, Friedlander's translation "play for the dance" might be too vague in conveying the musical element. Nonetheless, Friedlander manages to maintain the sense of immediacy in verse 9 with the adverb "now," whereas both Cameron and Felstiner omit translation of "nun" in verse 9 of the original German text. However, Felstiner goes above and beyond in emphasizing the continuation in action in verse 18 by changing the noun form from "dance" in verse 9 to "the dancing." His translation would have been impeccable for this important element "zum Tanz auspielen," had he added the temporal adverb "now" in verse 9.

iii. Sentential and Inter-Sentential Features

The compelling rhythm stands as the most salient quality of "Todesfuge," and as previously discussed, the compactness of multiple semantic units (in this study, sentences) into one verse majorly contributes to this quality. What's more, gradual regularization and reduction in the number of semantic units per verse emerge after a close-up analysis of the original German text—there is a reduction of the maximum semantic units per verse from three to two from verse 19, and all verses of the last section have the two semantic units. However, it is rather a challenge to preserve such a pattern in the English translations, as shown in these 15 published scholarly translation.

Only six of the 15 English translations—Middleton's, Bullock's, Greenberg's, Rothenberg's, Bridgewater's, and Glenn's—manage to keep the pattern of regularization and reduction in the number of semantic units per verse, and the majority of them are among the earliest published translations before 1965. Among these six, Greenberg's and Bridgewater's translations are the only two that follow the exact progression of the number of semantic units per verse in the original German text. The rest make minor modifications here and there when changing the syntactical structure and incorporating additional conjunctions and relative pronouns during the translation process, of which Bullock and Rothenberg are good examples. Bullock's translation of "er pfeift seine Juden fervor läßt schaufeln ein Grab in der Erde" (8), which originally contains two semantic units, into "he whistles his Jews and makes them dig a grave in the earth" shortens the number of semantic units to one. Rothenberg, upon translating "wir schaufeln ein Grab in den Lüften da liege man night eng" (4) as "we scoop out a grave in the sky where it's roomy to lie," reduces the number of semantic units from two to one. Still, such modifications are trivial in that they hardly impede the pace of the poem.

The main problem that breaks the regularization and reduction of semantic units per verse in the English translations lies in the translation of "wir trinken und trinken" (3, 12, 21). Schwebell, Friedlander, Neugroschel, Hamburger, Weimar, Felstiner, and Melin all translate this phrase into "we drink and we drink," and the repetition of the subject results in the addition of semantic units in this verse. Thus, when "wir trinken und trinken" is combined with the semantic unit "wir trinken dich abends und morgens" to make verse 29, the total number of semantic units in verse 29 increases from two to three, thereby breaking the regularization and reduction pattern. Still, Glenn prevents this breaking of pattern by modifying the translation of "wir trinken und trinken" in verse 29—although he likewise translates verse 3, 12, and 21 into "we drink and we drink," Glenn omits the repeated subject in the translation to keep the maximum semantic units in verse 29 at two.

In the original German text of "Todesfuge," there is also a reduction of content, exemplified in the singularization of two dominant elements "seine Augen sind blau" (17) and "ein Grab in den Lüften" (4, 15). While most translators (with the exceptions of Middleton, Schwebell, White, Hamburger) had no problem retaining the singularization from "seine Augen sind blau" (17) to "sein Auge ist blau" (30), the majority failed to translate the singularization from "ein Grab in den Lüften" (4, 15) to "ein Grab in die Luft" (25) and "ein Grab in der Luft" (33). Only Friedlander, Hamburger, Cameron, and Weimar manage to secure this singularization. Both Friedlander and Weimar translate the plural form of "in den Lüften" as "in the skies," and the singular forms as "in the sky." Although "in the skies" comes across as unnecessarily poetic in a poem that lacks poetic diction, it acknowledges this hidden yet significant reduction on a technical level. Hamburger and Cameron implement a similar approach—while Hamburger translates the plural as "in the breezes" and the singular as "in the air," Cameron translates the

plural into “in the winds” and the singular into “in the air” as well. Similar criticisms of overly poetic diction can apply to these two approaches, though the word “breezes” is less grandiose than “skies” or “winds.” Also, it is a strange coincidence that four out of the five translators in the 1970s have acknowledged this pattern.

Three attempts from the other translations address this singularization of “in den Lüften” but fall short. Greenberg translates “in den Lüften” as “in the wind” and its singular forms as “in the air”; Bridgewater translates the plural form as “in the air” and the singular forms as “in the sky”; White translated the plural into “in the heavens” and the singulars first as “in the air” and later “in the sky.” Although there can be a reduction in power from “wind” to “air,” in scope from “air” to “sky,” such inferences are unconvincing. The rest of the translators translate all of the plural and singular forms into either “air,” “sky,” or “clouds,” neglecting the reduction in content that this singularization pattern entails.

Last but not least, the gradual reduction in the content development supported by the fading repetition of the motifs “ein Grab in den Lüften” and “dein aschenes Haar Sulamith” is shown in all English translations, as they followed the overall structure of the original German text.

IV. Conclusion

In his quintessential poem "Todesfuge," written shortly after he had survived a labor camp, Paul Celan presents the gruesome realities of the Holocaust through unconventional approaches: an intricate and compelling rhythm, severe syntactical effects, bare poetic diction, minimal rhetorical devices, striking metaphors, and biblical tone and imagery, all of which contribute to the poem's seizing nature and its profound impact.

The number of English translations over the span of 47 years between 1952 and 1999 is striking, showing high academic interest in Celan's "Todesfuge," thereby exemplifying its canonic character and resilience to an "accurate" translation. There is a reduction in the production of new English translations since the 1970s—there are four translations published in the 1950s, three in the 1960s, five in the 1970s, none in the next decade, and only two in the 1990s. Although none of these 15 published scholarly English translations perfectly capture the intricacies of Celan's "Todesfuge," the 1970s indeed witnessed improved quality in new translations by Friedlander, Hamburger, Cameron, Glenn, and Weimar. Cameron's translation manages to convey most textually relevant formal properties on five of the six levels, especially those on a grammatical and lexical level. The most significant translation losses in her translation are the prosodic features. 12 years later, there came, based on the translation strategy of filtering proposed by Sándor Hervey et al., what I consider to be the most suitable translation of "Todesfuge," from the author of the first critical biography of Paul Celan in the English language, John Felstiner. Although there is still room for fine-tuning in his translation approaches to some of the grammatical and lexical properties, Felstiner's translation successfully communicates most of the qualities and subtleties both under the cultural filter and across all six levels of formal filters.

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VI. Appendix

Todesfuge

Paul Celan, 1948/1952

Schwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken sie abends
wir trinken sie mittags und morgens wir trinken sie nachts
wir trinken und trinken
wir schaufeln ein Grab in den Lüften da liegt man nicht eng
Ein Mann wohnt im Haus der spielt mit den Schlangen der schreibt
der schreibt wenn es dunkelt nach Deutschland dein goldenes Haar Margarete
er schreibt es und tritt vor das Haus und es blitzen die Sterne er pfeift seine Rüden herbei
er pfeift seine Juden hervor läßt schaufeln ein Grab in der Erde
er befiehlt uns spielt auf nun zum Tanz

Schwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken dich nachts
wir trinken dich morgens und mittags wir trinken dich abends
wir trinken und trinken
Ein Mann wohnt im Haus der spielt mit den Schlangen der schreibt
der schreibt wenn es dunkelt nach Deutschland dein goldenes Haar Margarete
Dein aschenes Haar Sulamith wir schaufeln ein Grab in den Lüften da liegt man nicht eng

Er ruft stecht tiefer ins Erdreich ihr einen ihr andern singet und spielt
er greift nach dem Eisen im Gurt er schwingts seine Augen sind blau
stecht tiefer die Spaten ihr einen ihr andern spielt weiter zum Tanz auf

Schwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken dich nachts
wir trinken dich mittags und morgens wir trinken dich abends
wir trinken und trinken
ein Mann wohnt im Haus dein goldenes Haar Margarete
dein aschenes Haar Sulamith er spielt mit den Schlangen
Er ruft spielt süßer den Tod der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland
er ruft streicht dunkler die Geigen dann steigt ihr als Rauch in die Luft
dann habt ihr ein Grab in den Wolken da liegt man nicht eng

Schwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken dich nachts
wir trinken dich mittags der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland
wir trinken dich abends und morgens wir trinken und trinken
der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland sein Auge ist blau
er trifft dich mit bleierner Kugel er trifft dich genau
ein Mann wohnt im Haus dein goldenes Haar Margarete
er hetzt seine Rüden auf uns er schenkt uns ein Grab in der Luft
er spielt mit den Schlangen und träumet der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland

dein goldenes Haar Margarete
dein aschenes Haar Sulamith

Fugue of Death

Christopher Middleton, 1952

Black milk of daybreak we drink it at nightfall
we drink it at noon in the morning we drink it at night
drink it and drink it
we are digging a grave in the sky it is ample to lie there
A man in the house he plays with the serpents he writes
he writes when the night falls to Germany your golden hair Margarete
he writes it and walks from the house the stars glitter he whistles his dogs up
he whistles his Jews out and orders a grave to be dug in the earth
he commands us now on with the dance

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
we drink in the mornings at noon we drink you at nightfall
drink you and drink you
A man in the house he plays with the serpents he writes
he writes when the night falls to Germany your golden hair Margarete
Your ashen hair Shulamith we are digging a grave in the sky it is ample to lie there

He shouts stab deeper in earth you there you others you sing and you play
he grabs at the iron in his belt and swings it and blue are his eyes
stab deeper your spades you there and you others play on for the dancing

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
we drink you at noon in the mornings we drink you at nightfall
drink you and drink you
a man in the house your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamith he plays with the serpents

He shouts play sweeter death's music death comes as a master from Germany
he shouts stroke darker the strings and as smoke you shall climb to the sky
then you'll have a grave in the clouds it is ample to lie there

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
we drink you at noon death comes as a master from Germany
we drink you at nightfall and morning we drink you and drink you
a master from Germany death comes with eyes that are blue
with a bullet of lead he will hit in the mark he will hit you
a man in the house your golden hair Margarete
he hunts us down with his dogs in the sky he gives us a grave
he plays with the serpents and dreams death comes as a master from Germany

your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamith

Fugue of Death

Michael Bullock, 1955

Black milk of morning we drink it at dusk
we drink it at noon and at dawn we drink it at night
we drink and drink
we dig a grave in the air there you lie without crowding
A man lives in the house he plays with the snakes he writes
he writes at nightfall to Germany *Your golden hair Margaretë*
he writes it and steps out in front of the house and the stars are aflash and he whistles his hounds
he whistles his Jews and makes them dig a grave in the earth
he commands us *Strike up a dance tune*

Black milk of morning we drink you at night
we drink you at dawn and at noon we drink you at dusk
we drink and drink
A man lives in the house he plays with the snakes he writes
he writes at nightfall to Germany *Your golden hair Margaretë*
Your ashen hair Shulamith we dig a grave in the air there you lie without crowding

He calls *You there cut deeper the ground—you others sing now and play*
he grasps the steel in his belt he brandishes it his eyes are blue
You there thrust deeper the spades—you others go on with the tune

Black milk of morning we drink you at night
we drink you at noon and at dawn we drink you at dusk
we drink and drink
a man lives in the house *Your golden hair Margaretë*
your ashen hair Schulamith he plays with the snakes
He calls *Play Death sweeter* Death is a master from Germany
he calls Pitch darker the strings then you rise as smoke in the air
then you have a grave in the clouds there you lie without crowding

Black milk of morning we drink you at night
we drink you at noon Death is a master from Germany
we drink you at dusk and at dawn we drink and drink
Death is a master from Germany his eye is blue
he hits you with a leaden bullet he hits you true
a man lives in the house *Your golden hair Margaretë*
he sets his hounds on us and gives us a grave in the air
he plays with the snakes and dreams Death is a master from Germany

your golden hair Margaretë
your ashen hair Schulamith

Death Fugue

Clement Greenberg, 1957

Black milk of the dawn we drink it evenings
we drink it noon and morning we drink it nights
we drink and drink
we dig a grave in the wind you won't lie cramped there
A man lives in the house who plays with the snakes who writes
who writes at dusk to Germany your golden hair Margarete
he writes it and comes out of the house and the stars twinkle he whistles his hounds out
he whistles forth his Jews has a grave dug in the ground
he orders us strike up now for the dance

Black milk of the dawn we drink you nights
we drink you morning and noon we drink you evenings
we drink and drink
A man lives in the house who plays with the snakes who writes
who writes at dusk to Germany your golden hair Margarete
Your ashen hair Sulamith we dig a grave in the wind you won't lie cramped there

He cries dig deeper in the ground you ones you others sing and play
he reaches for the iron in his belt he swings it his eyes are blue
dig your spades deeper you ones you others keep playing for the dance

Black milk of the dawn we drink you nights
we drink you noon and morning we drink you evenings
we drink and drink
a man lives in the house your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Sulamith he plays with the snakes

He cries play death sweeter death is a master from Germany
he cries fiddle lower then you'll rise in the air as smoke
then you'l have a grave in the clouds you won't lie cramped here

Black milk of the dawn we drink you nights
we drink you noon death is a master from Germany
we drink you evening s and mornings we drink and drink
death is a master fron Germany his eye is blue
he strikes you with leaden balls his aim is true
a man lives in the house your golden hair Margarete
he sicks his hounds on us he gives us the gift of a grave in the air
he plays with the snakes death is a master from Germany

your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Sulamith

Death Fugue

Jerome Rothenberg, 1959

Black milk of morning we drink you at dusktime
we drink you at noontime and dawntime we drink you at night
we drink and drink
we scoop out a grave in the sky where it's roomy to lie
There's a man in this house who cultivates snakes and who writes
who writes when it's nightfall nach Deutschland your golden hair Margareta
he writes it and walks from the house and the stars all start flashing he whistles his dogs to draw near
whistles his Jews to appear starts us scooping a grave out of sand
he commands us to play for the dance

Black milk of morning we drink you at night
we drink you at dawntime and noontime we drink you at dusktime
we drink and drink
There's a man in this house who cultivates snakes and who writes
who writes when it's nightfall nach Deutschland your golden hair Margareta
your ashen hair Shulamite we scoop out a grave in the sky where it's roomy to lie

He calls jab it deep in the soil you lot there you other men sing and play
he tugs at the sword in his belt he swings it his eyes are blue
jab your spades deeper you men you other men you others play up again for the dance

Black milk of morning we drink you at night
we drink you at noontime and dawntime we drink you at dusktime
we drink and drink
there's a man in this house your golden hair Margareta
your ashen hair Shulamite he cultivates snakes

He calls play that death thing more sweetly Death is a gang-boss aus Deutschland
he calls scrape that fiddle more darkly then hover like smoke in the air
then scoop out a grave in the clouds where it's roomy to lie

Black milk of morning we drink you at night
we drink you at noontime Death is a gang-boss aus Deutschland
we drink you at dusktime and dawntime we drink and drink
Death is a gang-boss aus Deutschland his eye is blue
he shoots you with leaden bullets his aim is true
there's a man in this house your golden hair Margareta
he sets his dogs on our trail he gives us a grave in the sky
he cultivates snakes and he dreams Death is a gang-boss aus Deutschland

your golden hair Margareta
your ashen hair Shulamite

Fugue of Death

Patrick Bridgewater, 1963

Black milk of dawn we drink it at evening,
we drink it midday and morning we drink it at night,
we drink and drink,
we dig a grave in the air there will be plenty of room.
A man lives in the house he plays with the serpents he writes,
he writes when night falls to Germany your golden hair Margarete,
he writes it and walks from the house and the stars are gleaming he whistles for his hounds,
he whistles for his Jews has a grave dug in the earth,
he orders now play on for the dance.

Black milk of dawn we drink you at night,
we drink you morning and midday we drink you at evening,
we drink and drink.
A man lives in the house and plays with the serpents he writes,
he writes when night falls to Germany your golden hair Margarete,
your ashy hair Shulamith we dig a grave in the air there will be plenty of room.

He shouts stab deeper into the earth you lot you others sing and play,
he grabs at the iron in his belt he swings it his eyes are blue,
stab your spades in deeper you lot you others play on for the dance.

Black milk of dawn we drink you at night,
we drink you midday and morning we drink you at evening,
we drink and drink,
a man lives in the house your golden hair Margarete,
your ashy hair Shulamith he plays with the serpents.

He shouts play death more sweetly death is a master from Germany,
he shouts stroke your fiddles more darkly then you will rise into the sky as smoke,
then you will have a grave in the clouds there will be plenty of room.

Black milk of dawn we drink you at night,
we drink you midday death is a master from Germany,
we drink evening and morning we drink and drink,
death is a master from Germany his eye is blue,
he will strike you with a lead bullet he will strike you with precision,
a man lives in the house your golden hair Margarete,
he sets his hounds on us he gives us a grave in the sky,
he plays with the serpents and dreams death is a master from Germany,
your golden hair Margarete,
your ashy hair Shulamith.

Fugue of Death

Gertrude Clorius Schwebell, 1963

Dark milk of dawn we drink it in the evening
we drink it at noon in the morning we drink it at night
we drink and we drink
we are digging a grave in the clouds where we will not be crowded
In the house lives a man who plays with vipers who writes
who writes when the night falls to Germany your golden hair Margareta
he writes it and steps out of doors the stars glitter there and he calls to his hounds hey come here
he calls to his jews come here come on dig a grave in the ground
he commands us to strike up for a dance

Dark milk of dawn we drink it at night
we drink it in the morning at noon we drink it in the evening
we drink and we drink
In the house lives a man who plays with vipers who writes
who writes when the night falls to Germany your golden hair Margareta
Your ashen hair Sulamith we are digging a grave in the clouds where we will not be crowded

He calls dig the ground deeper you here and you there play the fiddle and sing
he clutches the gun in his belt he waves it how blue are his eyes
drive the spade deeper you here and you there strike up for a dance

Dark milk of dawn we drink it at night
we drink it at noon in the morning we drink it in the evening
we drink and we drink
in the house lives a man your golden hair Margareta
your ashen hair Sulamith he plays with vipers

He calls play the death tune sweeter for death is a master from Germany
he calls play the fiddles darker then you'll rise as smoke to the sky
then you'll have a grave in the clouds where you won't be so crowded

Dark milk of dawn we drink it at night
we drink it at noon death is a master from Germany
we drink it at dusk and at dawn we drink and we drink
death is a master from Germany blue are his eyes
he hits with a leaden bullet he hits you precisely
in the house lives a man your golden hair Margareta
he sets his lean hounds on us he gives us a grave in the clouds
he plays with vipers and dreams that death is a master from Germany
your golden hair Margareta
your ashen hair Sulamith

Fugue of Death

Donald White, 1966

Coal-black milk of morning we drink it at sundown
we drink it at noon and at dawning we drink it at night
we drink it and drink it
we'll shovel a grave in the heavens there's no crowding there
A man's in the house he plays with his serpents he writes
he writes back home when the dark comes your golden hair Margareta
he writes it and then leaves the house and the stars are atwinkle he whistles his dogs to come near
he whistles his Jews to come here and shovel a grave in the earth
he commands us play sweet now for dancing

Coal-black milk of morning we drink thee at night
we drink thee at dawning at noontime we drink thee at sun-down
we drink thee and drink thee
A man's in the house he plays with his serpents he writes
he writes back home when the dark comes your golden hair Margareta
your ashen hair Shulamite we'll shovel a grave in the heavens there's no crowding here

He shouts you there get the earth open deeper you here sing and play for the dance
he grabs at the gun in his belt he lifts it his eyes are bright blue
you there get the earth open faster you others play on now for dancing

Coal-black milk of morning we drink thee at night
we drink thee at noon and at dawning we drink thee at sun-down
we drink thee and drink thee
a man's in the house your golden hair Margareta
your ashen hair Shulamite he plays with his serpents

He shouts play death very sweet now Death is a proud German master
he shouts make the fiddles sing darker you'll rise as grey smoke in the air
your grave will be high in the clouds there's no crowding there

Coal-black milk of morning we drink thee at night
we drink thee at noontime and Death is a proud German master
we drink thee at dawning and sundown we drink thee and drink thee
and Death is a proud German master his eyes are bright blue
he'll get you with missile of lead he will pierce you right through
a man's in the house your golden hair Margareta
he'll sic his big dogs on us all he'll give us a grave in the sky
he plays with his snakes he dreams nightly and Death is a proud German master

your golden hair Margareta
your ashen hair Shulamite

Death Fugue

Albert Friedlander, 1970

Black milk of dawn we drink it at even
we drink it at noon and mornings we drink it at night
we drink and we drink
we are digging a grave in the skies there one lies not crowded
A man lives in the house he plays with the serpents he writes
he writes when the dark comes to Germany your golden hair Margarete
he writes it and steps from the house and the stars flash he whistles up his dogs
he whistles out his Jews 'let a grave be dug in the earth'
he commands us now play for the dance

Black milk of dawn we drink you at night
we drink you mornings and noon we drink you at even
we drink and we drink
A man lives in the house he plays with the serpents he writes
he writes when the dark comes to Germany your golden hair Margarete
Your ashen hair Shulamith we are digging a grave in the skies there one lies not crowded

He calls stab deeper into the earth you there you others sing and play
he reaches for the iron in his belt he swings it his eyes are blue
stab deeper your spades you there you others play on for the dance

Black milk of dawn we drink you at night
we drink you noon and mornings we drink you at even
we drink and we drink
a man lives in the house your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamith he plays with the serpents

He calls play sweeter of death death si a master from Germany
he calls stroke darker the violins than you will climb as smoke into the sky
than you will have a grave in the clouds there one lies not crowded

Black milk of dawn we drink you at night
we drink you at noon death is a master from Germany
we drink you at even and mornings we drink and we drink
death is a master from Germany his eye is blue
he hits you with a lead bullet he will hit you exactly
a man lives in house your golden hair Margarete
he sets his dogs upon us he gives us a grave in the sky
he plays with the serpents and dreams death is a master from Germany

your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamith

Death Fugue

Joachim Neugroschel, 1971

Black milk of dawn we drink it at dusk
we drink it at noon and at daybreak we drink it at night
we drink and we drink
we are digging a grave in the air there's room for us all
A man lives in the house he plays with the serpents he writes
he writes when it darkens to Germany your golden hair Margarete
he writes it and steps outside and the stars all aglisten he whistles for his hounds
he whistles for his Jews he has them dig a grave in the earth
he commands us to play for the dance

Black milk of dawn we drink you at night
we drink you at daybreak and noon we drink you at dusk
we drink and we drink
A man lives in the house he plays with the serpents he writes
he writes when it darkens to Germany your golden hair Margarete
You ashen hair Shulamite we are digging a grave in the air there's room for us all

He shouts cut deeper in the earth to some the rest of you sing and play
he reaches for the iron in his belt he heaves it his eyes are blue
make your spades cut deeper the rest of you play for the dance

Black milk of dawn we drink you at night
we drink you at noon and at daybreak we drink you at dusk
we drink and we drink
a man lives in the house your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamite he plays with the serpents

He shouts play death more sweetly death is a master from Germany
he shouts play the violins darker you'll rise as smoke in the air
then you'll have a grave in the clouds there's room for you all

Black milk of dawn we drink you at night
we drink you at noon death is a master from Germany
we drink you at dusk and at daybreak we drink and we drink you
death is a master from Germany his eye is blue
he shoots you with bullets of lead his aim is true
a man lives in the house your golden hair Margarete
he sets his hounds on us he gives a grave in the air
he plays with the serpents and dreams death is a master from Germany

your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamite

Death Fugue

Michael Hamburger, 1972

Black milk of daybreak we drink it at sundown
we drink it at noon in the morning we drink it at night
we drink and we drink it
we dig a grave in the breezes there one lies unconfined
A man lives in the house he plays with the serpents he writes
he writes when dusk falls to Germany your golden hair Margarete
he writes it and steps out of doors and the stars are flashing he whistles his pack out
he whistles his Jews out in earth has them dig for grave
he commands us strike up for the dance

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
we drink in the morning at noon we drink you at sundown
we drink and we drink you
A man lives in the house he plays with the serpents he writes
he writes when dusk falls to Germany your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamith we dig a grave in the breezes there one lies unconfined

He calls out jab deeper into the earth you lot you others sing now and play
he grabs at the iron in his belt he waves it his eyes are blue
jab deeper you lot with your spades you others play on for the dance

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
we drink you at noon in the morning we drink you at sundown
we drink and we drink you
a man lives in the house your golden air Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamith he plays with the serpents

He calls out more sweetly play death death is a master from Germany
he calls out more darkly now stroke your string then as smoke you will rise into air
then a grave you will have in the clouds there one lies unconfined

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
we drink you at noon death is a master from Germany
we drink you at sundown and in the morning we drink and we drink you
death is a master from Germany his eyes are blue
he strikes you with leaden bullets his aim is true
a man lives in the house your golden hair Margarete
he sets his pack on to us he grants us a grave in the air
he plays with the serpents and daydreams death is a master from Germany

your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamith

Death Fugue

Beatrice Adrienne Cameron, 1973

Black milk of the dawn we drink it at evening

we drink it at midday and morning we drink it at night
we drink it and drink it
we are shoveling a grave in the winds there is room for us all
In the house lives a man he plays with the serpents he writes
he writes when it darkens to Germany your golden hair Margarete
he writes it and steps from the house the stars lighten he whistles his dogs up
he whistles his Jews out he orders a grave to be dug in the earth
he commands us play music for dancing

Black milk of the dawn we drink you at night
we drink you at morning and midday we drink you at evening
we drink you and drink you
In the house lives a man he plays with the serpents he writes
he writes when it darkens to Germany your golden hair Margarete
Your ashen hair Shulamite we are shoveling a grave in the winds there is room for us all

He shouts dig deeper in earth you there you others keep singing and playing
he grasps for the gun at his belt he swings it his eyes they are blue
strike deeper the spades you there you others play on for the dancing

Black milk of the dawn we drink you at night
we drink you at midday and morning we drink you at evening
we drink you and drink you
in the house lives a man your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamite he plays with the snakes
He shouts play death play it sweeter for death is a master from Germany
he shouts stroke darker the strings then you'll rise as a smoke through the sir
then you'll all have a grave in the clouds there is room for you all

Black milk of the daybreak we drink you at night
we drink you at midday for death is a master from Germany
we drink you at evening and morning we drink you and drink you
for death is a master from Germany his eye it is blue
he will shoot you with bullets of lead he will drill you right through
in the house lives a man your golden hair Margarete
he sets his dogs on our track he grants us a grave in the air
he plays with the serpents and dreams death is a master from Germany
your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamite

“Todesfuge”

John Glenn, 1973

Black milk of dawn we drink it in the evening
we drink it at noon and in the morning we drink it at night
we drink and we drink
we shovel a grave in the air there one is not confined.
A man lives in the house he plays with the serpents he writes
he writes when it grows dark to Germany your golden hair Margarete
he writes it and steps in front of the house and the stars sparkles he whistles his dogs to his side
he whistles his Jews to appear has them shovel a grave in the ground
he commands us to strike up the music for the dance

Black milk of dawn we drink you at night
we drink you in the morning and at noon we drink you in the evening
we drink and we drink
A man lives in the house he plays with the serpents he writes
he writes when it grows dark to Germany your golden hair Margarete
Your ashen hair Sulamite we shovel a grave in the air there one is not confined

He calls dig deeper in the ground you over there you others sing and play
he reaches for the weapon in his belt he waves it his eyes are blue
push the spades deeper you over there you others play on for the dance

Black milk of dawn we drink you at night
we drink you at noon and in the morning we drink you in the evening
we drink and we drink
a man lives in the house your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Sulamite he plays with the serpents

He calls play death more sweetly death is a master from Germany
he calls play the violins more darkly then you will climb into the air as smoke
then you will have a grave in the clouds there one is not confined

Black milk of dawn we drink you at night
we drink you at noon death is a master from Germany
we drink you in the evening and the morning we drink and drink
death is a master from Germany his eye is blue
he will hit you with a lead bullet his aim is true
a man lives in the house your golden hair Margarete
he sets his dogs on us he gives us a grave in the air
he plays with the serpents and dreams death is a master from Germany

your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Sulamite

Fugue of Death

Karl S. Weimar, 1974

COAL-BLACK milk of morning we drink it at evening
we drink it at noon and at daybreak we drink it at night
we drink and we drink
we shovel a grave in the skies there is room enough there
A man lives in the house he plays with his vipers he writes
he writes when it darkens to Germany your golden hair Marguerite
he writes it and steps out of doors and the stars are shining he whistles his dogs to come up
he whistles his Jews to come out to shovel a grave in the ground
he commands us strike up a tune for the dance

Coal-black milk of morning we drink you at night
we drink you at daybreak and noon and we drink you at evening
we drink and we drink
A man lives in the house he plays with his vipers he writes
he writes when it darkens to Germany your golden hair Marguerite
Your ashen hair Shulamite we shovel a grave in the skies there is room enough there

He shouts dig deeper into the earth you here and you there start singing and playing
he clutches the gun in his belt he waves it his eyes are blue
dig deeper your spades you here and you there keep playing that dance tune

Coal-black milk of morning we drink you at night
we drink you at noon and at daybreak we drink you at evening
we drink and we drink
a man lives in the house your golden hair Marguerite
your ashen hair Shulamite he plays with his vipers

He shouts play the death tune sweeter death is a master from Germany
he shouts strike up the fiddles more darkly you'll rise like the smoke to the sky
you'll have your own grave in the clouds there is room enough there

Coal-black milk of morning we drink you at night
we drink you at noon death is a master from Germany
we drink you at evening and at daybreak we drink and we drink
death is a master from Germany his eye is blue
he hits you with bullets of lead his target is you
a man lives in the house your golden hair Marguerite
he sets loose his dogs after us he gives us a grave in the sky
he plays with his vipers and dreams death is a master from Germany
your golden hair Marguerite
your ashen hair Shulamite

Deathfugue

John Felstiner, 1995

Black milk of daybreak we drink it at evening
we drink it at midday and morning we drink it at night
we drink and we drink
we shovel a grave in the air where you won't lie too cramped
A man lives in the house he plays with his vipers he writes
he writes when it grows dark to Deutschland your golden hair Margareta
he writes it and steps out of doors and the stars are all sparkling he whistles his hounds to stay close
he whistles his Jews into rows has them shovel a grave in the ground
he commands us play up for the dance

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
we drink you at morning and midday we drink you at evening
we drink and we drink
A man lives in the house he plays with his vipers he writes
he writes when it grows dark to Deutschland your golden hair Margareta
Your ashen hair Shulamith we shovel a grave in the air where you won't lie too cramped

He shouts dig this earth deeper you lot there you others sing up and play
he grabs for the rod in his belt he swings it his eyes are so blue
stick your spades deeper you lot there you others play on for the dancing

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
we dink you at midday and morning we drink you at evening
we drink and we drink
a man lives in the house your goldenes Haar Margareta
your aschenes Haar Shulamith he plays with his vipers

He shouts play death more sweetly this Death is a master from Deutschland
he shouts scrape your strings darker you'll rise then as smoke to the sky
you'll then have a grave in the clouds where you won't lie too cramped

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night
we drink you at midday Death is a master aus Deutschland
we drink you at evening and morning we drink and we drink
this Death is ein Meister aus Deutschland his eye it is blue
he shoots you with shot made of lead shoots you level and true
a man lives in the house your goldenes Haar Margarete
he looses his hounds on us grants us a grave in the air
he plays with his vipers and daydreams der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland

dein goldenes Haar Margarete
dein aschenes Haar Sulamith

Death Fugue

Charlotte Melin, 1999

Black milk of dawn we drink it at dusk
we drink it at midday and morning we drink it at night
we drink and we drink
we shovel a grave in the air there no one lies cramped
A man lives in the house he plays with the serpents he writes
he writes when darkness descends to Germany your golden hair Margareta
he writes it and steps from the house and then the stars glitter he whistles his dogs together
he whistles his Jews out he has a grave dug in the earth
he tells us now strike up the dance

Black milk of dawn we drink you at night
we drink you at morning and midday we drink you at dusk
we drink and we drink
A man lives in the house he plays with the serpents he writes
he writes when darkness descends to Germany your golden hair Margareta
Your ashen hair Sulamith we shovel a grave in the air there no one lies cramped

He shouts dig deeper into the earth you there you others sing and make music
he grabs for the iron in his belt he waves it his eyes are blue
dig the spades deeper you there you others play on for the dance

Black milk of dawn we drink you at night
we drink you at midday and morning we drink you at dusk
we drink and we drink
a man lives in the house your golden hair Margareta
your ashen hair Sulamith he plays with the serpents

He shouts play that death sweeter for death is a master form Germany
he shouts bow more darkly those fiddles then rise as smoke in the air
then you have a grave in the clouds there no one lies cramped

Black milk of dawn we drink you at night
we drink you at midday death is a master from Germany
we drink you at dusk and morning we drink and we drink
death is a master from Germany his eye is blue
he shoots with a leaden bullet he shoots with precision at you
a man lives in the house your golden hair Margareta
he drives his dogs at us gives us a grave in the air
he plays with the serpents and dreams for death is a master from Germany

your golden hair Margareta
your ashen hair Sulamith