

Few areas of the globe have been spared involvement in bloody conflict over the l...

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



The Role of a Conflict in Paul Clean`s “ Death Fugue” Being a Jew himself and having lost his both parents in the Holocaust Paul Cleantackled an extremely complex task - to reveal and transfer the atrocities of the Nazi system in WWII, one of the most tragic periods in world history. The poem “ Death Fugue” resembles musical work by the structure, and it is no wonder taking into consideration its title. Paul Clean tried to recreate this complex polyphonic melody in a poetical form in order to get the impression of chaos and dismay of Nazi concentration camps. The lack of punctuation, repetition of the words, and phrases help to understand the deterioration and confusion of the author`s mind. The author begins his poem with a striking metaphor of “ black milk”:

“ Black milk of daybreak we drink it at sundown

we drink it at noon in the morning we drink it at night

we drink it and drink it

we dig a grave in the breezes there one lies unconfined”

Milk has deep symbolic meaning of a new life, inception, nurturing, and innocence, and when milk becomes black it means that the eternal circle of life was corrupted and destroyed. The narrator of the poem is faceless “ we” signifying the Jews doomed to death in concentration camps. Nazi Germany leader, Hitler, proclaimed himself the Master of the World and made the people “ drink the black milk” and “ dig a grave in the breezes” which means face the death. Remembering that Jews were burned in the crematoriums explains another metaphor of “ digging a grave in the breeze”. It is only possible to admire author`s ability to turn such horrible images into powerful

<https://assignbuster.com/few-areas-of-the-globe-have-been-spared-involvement-in-bloody-conflict-over-the-last-hundred-years-and-the-attempt-to-cope-with-war-violence-destruction-loss-and-mourning-looms-large-in-twentieth-cent/>

images.

The mystical beast, who considers himself the Master, is the central image of the poem. He is embodiment of a demon, the oppressor with paranormal abilities. He plays with serpents, another Biblical image of evil and temptation:

“ A man lives in the house he plays with the serpents”

The author intentionally underlines that the man cannot be associated with a human being, he is separated from the rest of the characters of the poem, proclaimed as “ we”. From the first stanza we see that the man treats his dogs in the same way he treats his prisoners. As the rhythm and the tension of the poem progresses, the polyphony becomes more dramatic, the man orders the captives to dig better, to die faster. We see that the Master is mad and obsessed with murder; he wants to get rid of the victims as soon as possible:

“ he calls out more darkly now stroke your strings then
as smoke you will rise into air
then a grave you will have in the clouds there one
lies unconfined”

The conflict of aggressors and victims is represented in the opposition between two nations: Germans and Jews. Two women deeply associated with both nations are affected by the Holocaust in a different way. Margarete, to whom the Master writes letters has golden hair, while Shulmith has hair covered with ash, meaning ash from crematorium. Thus, women, those who have to bring life to this world regardless of the nation, race, and skin color

<https://assignbuster.com/few-areas-of-the-globe-have-been-spared-involvement-in-bloody-conflict-over-the-last-hundred-years-and-the-attempt-to-cope-with-war-violence-destruction-loss-and-mourning-looms-large-in-twentieth-cent/>

found themselves in the opposite sides of the wall. However, Paul Clean makes both women equal in the end, placing the lines together:

‘ your golden hair Margarete
your ashen hair Shulamith”

In such way he aims to say that breaking the natural cycle of life and death by the Germans will not remain unnoticed for German women as well.

This beautiful metaphorical poem evokes strong feelings of pain, suffering, and pity. The general atmosphere resembles apocalyptic. No one can comprehend the events that happened during Holocaust, the deaths of Jews, the atrocities of the Nazi. The author symbolically connected German power to demonic as it is impossible to imagine that people could send other people to crematoriums as easily as they did.