

Exploring Socio-cultural Issues through Code-Switching in the Poetry of Hamid Khan

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Abstract

This article focuses on the use of code-switched words in Hamid Khan's collections of poetry, "Velvet of Loss" and "Pale Leaf" (Three Voices). The incorporated code-switching in Khan's poetry relates to the socio-cultural issues. Hamid Khan sings the local problems and issues and indirectly tries to resolve the problems faced by his fellow beings. His style is not verbose, yet his poems compel one to ponder over the social and political problems of the day. He does so through the device of foregrounding. The data were collected on the basis of foregrounding. The words that appealed to and attracted the scholar's attention deviated from normal use of English as they are foreign words. Moreover, the data are tabulated bearing the title of the respective poems and page numbers for ready reference. In addition, the code-switched words are discussed with reference to the issues and themes implied therein. These code-switched words are: Chowkidar, Burqa, Gibranic Sorrow, Deodasi, Abaseen, Swastika and Ku Klux Klan, and Babus. Lastly, the poems containing the foregrounded foreign words (code-switching) are given in the appendix section of the paper for ready reference.

Keywords: Hamid Khan, stylistics, foregrounding, deviation, code-switching

Introduction: Hamid Khan

This is perhaps a fresh study as no researcher has conducted research on the poetry of Hamid Khan. Hamid Khan is a local poet who writes in English, and he has so far published two volumes titled as *Velvet of Loss* and *Three Voices*. *Three Voices* is a collaborative work in which his portion carries the title as *Pale Leaf*. Other voices, in the said collection, are Daud Kamal and Raja Ikram. Hamid Khan has a vast experience as a civil servant apart from his academic excellence. He also got PhD in English. His style is terse and stenographic. More often, he leaves the sentences incomplete and fills the gaps through the code switched words that compels the reader to think afresh and to ponder over the possible connection of these words with the real world problems and issues. Apart from the deviation in the form of code-switching, Khan uses other tools as well, such as deviant punctuation marks, deviant syntax and other graphological effects. This paper has only focused on his use of code-switching as to how they are related to the socio-cultural issues. In order to explore the issues that Khan has embodied in code-switching, the scholar has sifted both the published works of the poet, i.e. *Velvet of Loss* and *Pale Leaf (Three Voices)*.

Literature Review

The purpose of the study is to explore the hidden messages in the poetry of Khan. It has been the trend to analyze poetic pieces through literary theories, but that is a subjective approach. Thus, in order to minimize subjectivity and to sift the poems objectively, stylistic tools have been chosen to explore the socio-cultural issues. Stylistics and the notions of stylistic analysis is discussed in this paper. Moreover, the concept and classification of foregrounding are also explained in a reader friendly way.

Stylistics

Stylistics helps the reader to explore objectively the hidden messages in a piece of literature. Since long, stylisticians have been working to devise various tools for the analysis of literary texts. These analytical tools can be used as teaching methodology as well in the language classrooms where language is taught through literature. Toolan (1990) also maintains the same idea that stylistic tools can be used in classrooms for language teaching.

In addition, Fauconnier and Turner (2002) maintain that though there is integration between poetic and conventional languages based on certain principles, yet they are poles apart too. The difference is with respect to the fact that poetic language is loaded with meaning, and it carries diverse

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connotations. These connotations and implied messages cannot be unearth merely on the basis of the principles of literary criticism rather linguistics notion can also be taken into consideration in this regard.

In this connection, taking for instance metaphor and irony, Leech (1969) says that without linguistics concepts they cannot be fully explained. It is so because the levels of stylistic analysis are multifaceted. The reader can easily explore the hidden messages through stylistic tools which the literary criticism fails to provide. Among the various ways and tools of stylistic analysis, the levels of phonology, graphology, morphology, and lexico-syntax are very helpful in exploring the implied messages in a piece of literature. With respect to lexico-syntax level of analysis Hussain and Mansoor (2017) quotes Tallerman (1998) stating that one can obtain Lexico-Syntactic choices through archaic words, specific parts of speech, oxymoron, metaphor, and simile, usual and unusual collocates. Despite the fact that stylistics provides various means to explore meanings, however, it depends on the researcher's choice as to what level they choose for their analysis. Definitely, every researcher picks what is best suited for their purpose of analysis.

The multiple ways of stylistic analysis are also supported by Leech and Short (1981) who say that the core levels for stylistic analysis are the four fields of semantics, phonology, graphology, and syntax. Among the mentioned four levels, graphology is further divided into the features of the foregrounded spacing, punctuation marks, italics and size of print, etc. This is supported by Alabi (2008) quoted in Yeibo and Akerele (2014).

Moreover, Richards (1929) mentions four types of meanings and textual functions. These are: sense, feelings, tone, and intention. Besides Richards' (1929) four functions, Jacobson's (1961) six functions are more elaborate with respect to stylistic analysis. These functions are referential, conative, emotive, poetic, phatic, and meta-linguistic. Among the mentioned functions, the poetic function is considered as the most important as Jacobson (1960: 358) points out that "the poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination". Halliday (1967) comes up with three functions: *ideational*, *interpersonal* and *textual* (Leech & Short, 1981: 30). In this connection, Fairclough (1995: 4) avers that texts are "multi semiotic" and give vent to different forms of graphic designs besides diagrams and photographs.

Foregrounding Theory

Since long, scholars and literary interpreters have been taking interest in the relationship between textual patterns and the way the text conveys. For example, the Greek rhetoricians took interest in the devices used for persuasive argument. Thus, stylistics is rooted in traditional rhetoric, though Russian Formalism and Prague School Structuralism have directly influenced contemporary stylistics. Most of the ideas of these schools of thought circles round foregrounding.

While exploring the worth of a piece of literature, Leech (1968) focuses on the elements of interest and surprise. In addition, borrowing from the Prague School of Linguistics, to Leech and Short (1981), foregrounding is deviation that is artistically motivated. The exponent of the notion of foregrounding is the Czech scholar Mukarovský (1964) who mentions the levels of phonetics, grammar and semantics for exploring the stylistic effects. He goes to the extent and maintains that foregrounding is also observed in daily life, though in daily life it is random, whereas in literature, it is structured. He further maintains that words give vent to imagery and feelings, when used poetically. (Mukarovský, 1977)

Verdonk (2002), however, connects foregrounding to the psychological effect of literature on the reader. Hunt and Vipond (1985), quoted in Miall and Kuiken (1994), conclude that readers mention the most striking linguistic choices in the given stories. On the contrary, the less attractive words and phrases were not reported by the same readers. Jeffries and McIntyre (2010) maintain that apart from the role of stylistics in interpretation of literary texts, in the twentieth century it has progressed enough to look for the linguistic foregrounded choices in the non-literary texts as well.

It is a fact that stylistic analysis have recently gained fresh momentum regarding literary and non-literary texts using various tools and techniques, but as far as poetry is concerned, foregrounding is one of the best choices of researchers, as poetry often abounds in the projected linguistic choices that take the reader to reach the implied themes. Martindale (2007), quoted in Lesley Moss (2014), states that foregrounding is mainly sub-categorized as deviation and parallelism.

In summary, foregrounding plays an important role in the process of interpretation of texts. The deviant and unfamiliar linguistic patterns strike the readers' attention thereby paving way for exploring the implied messages and themes. Though it is a bit time consuming on part of the reader to associate things during this process, yet the analysis carried out on the basis of foregrounding is objective and is acceptable to many. Van Peer and Hakemulder (2006) and Shen (2007) also agree to this classification.

Deviation occurs when the norms are violated. It may be in the form of syntactic, semantic, phonological, punctuations, or words other than the main language used in the text. This last category is referred to as code-switching. The violation of norms captures the readers' attention and prepares them for thinking extraordinary. As far as parallelism is concerned, it refers to the repeatedly occurrence of words, structure, sounds, or any other linguistic choices.

Thus, stylistic analysis attempts to objectively analyze literary pieces for which the stylisticians and scholars adopt various tools. Among these devices and tools, foregrounding plays an important role especially in the analysis of poetic works. The projection of the issues and themes are mostly done through the devices of foregrounding, i.e. parallelism and deviation. Among the tools of deviation, code-switching is notably striking to the reader as they are encountered with foreign words and phrases.

Data Analysis

In this article, code-switching as deviation is taken for the analysis of foreign words used in Hamid Khan's poetry. Khan has used some foreign words and expressions in his *Velvet of Loss*. This sort of code-switching attracts the reader's attention. In the table, the first seven words are part of the poems from the collection, *Velvet of Loss*, whereas the last word, "Babus" occurs in the poem, *New Life* that is part of the collection *Three Voices*. All the deviant words are tabulated along with the poems in which they occur. Moreover, all the poems that include the mentioned words are also given, for ready reference, in the appendix section. In this article, for the sake of brevity, only the level of code-switching is chosen following Tellerman (1998) saying that it depends upon the researcher to choose one or more levels for the analysis of literary pieces.

The following table gives detail of the code-switched words and phrases along with the poems in which they occur.

Table for the Code-Switched Words

| Words/ phrases | Poems |
|------------------------|--|
| <i>Chowkidar</i> | <i>Load-shedding – I</i> |
| <i>Burqa</i> | <i>The Sin</i> |
| <i>Gibranic sorrow</i> | <i>Nostalgia</i> |
| <i>Deodasi</i> | <i>Dualism</i> |
| <i>Abaseen</i> | <i>Abaseen</i> |
| <i>Swastika</i> | <i>Bosnia – I</i> |
| <i>Ku klux klan</i> | <i>Bosnia – I</i> |
| <i>Babus</i> | <i>New Life</i> (occurs in <i>Three Voices</i>) |

Chowkidar

Through the word of *chowkidar*, the poet has attracted the reader's attention towards the fact that load-shedding can turn very bad for the watchman. If there is no light then there are greater chances of intruders and mischief makers. Though, in normal life, the personal life of a watchman is not always subservient to light, but as far as his place of duty is concerned, it affects his performance, and even in extreme terms, it can provide lame excuse as well for the guard. Thus, through this code-switched word, Khan takes the reader to ponder over the various issues related to electricity.

Burqa

The code-switched word, *burqa*, occurs in the poem, *The Sin*. The word, *sin*, can be contextually connected to *burqa*. Normally, *burqa* is considered as a symbol of modesty and protection, though it does not guarantee chastity on part of women. The word *burqa* takes the reader to ponder over the *parda* system in Pakistan, chiefly, in Pashtun belt. This gives confusing ideas to women for covering their bodies. It is very often noted that Pashtun women living in villages cover their body completely while going out of their homes. But, these women do not strictly cover their bodies whenever they visit Islamabad or Lahore, etc. They are often seen open faced or simply cover their half face instead of using over-all covering *abaya* or *burqa*.

In addition, the code-switching of *burqa* foregrounds the idea that a woman's chastity is not conditional to confinement as is made clear in the same poem where the word, *burqa*, occurs through the phrase, "all patched but clean" (from the same poem, *The Sin*)

Gibranic Sorrow

The sadness is foregrounded through the word "Gibranic" which gives the idea of the mother earth that was once a home and provided shelter to her children, though that peace is lost and is replaced by the obsessed sorrow that has taken nostalgia to the "cocoon/ of a human heart". In order to connect the code-switched word to the overall effect of the poem, the reader is prepared to think about the killing of man by man in the modern world. The nostalgia of the poet is juxtaposed to the nostalgia of Khalil Gibran who was saddened by the separation of Marry Haskell. Gibran (1972) himself admits that he seeks solace in reading the love letters of his beloved whenever he gets bore. Thus, *Gibranic sorrow* projects the overwhelming sorrow that is not going to an end and that needs serious measures to be taken in order to subside it.

Deodasi

Deodasi refers to girls who are supposedly married to the Hindu god. These girls are left by their parents at the temple in order to seek solace. They dance in the temple and even share bed with the temple men. This cruelty has been in vogue since long. They are deprived of their basic human rights in the name of religious obligation. In the modern day India, after much hue and cry, the supreme court of India put ban on these malpractices in February, 2015. (*Deodasi*, www.youtube.com)

In the poem, the code-switched word *Deodasi* (wife of god) is in contrast to the title of the poem, *Dualism*. In this way, the concept of dualism is foregrounded – the dance of *deodasi* represents a search for finding the truth about abstract ideas which is further foregrounded through "capturing her dream". In order to probe into the matter, it is apt to quote Robinson (2017) who gives an explanation of the term "dualism".

The term 'dualism' has a variety of uses in the history of thought. In general, the idea is that, for some particular domain, there are two fundamental kinds or categories of things or principles. In theology, for example a 'dualist' is someone who believes that Good and Evil—or God and the Devil—are independent and more or less equal forces in the world. Dualism contrasts with monism, which is the theory that there is only one fundamental kind, category of thing or principle; and, rather less commonly, with pluralism, which is the view that there are many kinds or categories. In the philosophy of mind, dualism is the theory that the mental and the physical—or mind and body or mind and brain—are, in some sense, radically different kinds of thing. Because common sense tells us that there are physical bodies, and because there is intellectual pressure towards producing a unified view of the world, one could say that materialist monism is the 'default option'.

Thus, through the foregrounded word, Khan has raised the voice of the subaltern and the down-trodden of the society. It does not necessarily mean that injustice to women is done only in Hindu society rather the code-switching takes the reader to visit every nook and corner of the world where women are suppressed on the false and misinterpreted religious notions.

Abaseen

Through the deviational use of *Abaseen*, life is compared to the smooth running of water in the form of the river. Moreover, the idea of freshness is also projected here. It creates monotony to discuss the same thing repeatedly. In this regard, one should take inspiration from the incessant movement of water. The word *Abaseen* occurs in the poem *Abaseen* only in a comparison; the rest of the poem is about inability to write and the disgusting feelings about themes of finding excuse for being in a how-do-you-do.

The people's attitude towards life is highlighted through the code-switching. Thus, the problem of the local writers is exposed that they depict life in the form of repetition only and forgets that human life is full of variety. They should take interest in diverse issues and themes in order to attract the readers' attention towards the modern day problems and to their possible solutions.

In addition, the word, *Abaseen*, also takes the reader to the Pashtun nomadic life along the bank of the river Indus. In this way, Khan has juxtaposed the lack of variety in the form of nomads, and continuity and freshness in the form of water.

Swastika and Ku Klux Klan

The word *swastika* means good fortune and well-being. It is often seen on temples or houses in Indonesia and India. Schliemann, for the first time in the nineteenth century, discovered the hooked cross on the site of Troy (Turkey). He assumed that it was a religious symbol after he also found similar shapes on pottery in Germany. Moreover, the phrase, *Ku Klux Klan*, refers to the secret hate group originated in and sponsored by America in 1915 in order to carry out nefarious designs against certain ethnic groups, especially black people, the Muslims and other notable foreign individuals. (<http://www.dictionary.com>)

Khan has projected the problems of the war-torn people of Bosnia through the code-switched words *Swastika* and *Ku Klux Klan*. Human life, in general, is replete with tribulations everywhere in the world, but focusing on the specific location and the words that relate to it give us the idea that it is the difference of opinion that leads human to daggers drawn situation. Most of the time, difference of opinion rests in the religious norms that are akin to specific community and that hampers tolerance on part of the community, though essentially no religion teaches us intolerance. Here, the manipulation and support of the mischief makers by the advanced countries is also highlighted which, in turn, too is the outcome of intolerance. Thus, Khan's code-switching indirectly compels the reader to think that it is not possible to have well-being and be at daggers-drawn at the same time. In other words, you do not have a cake and eat it.

Babus

The young aspirants are compared to the *babus* who end up their lives by attaching themselves to file-work. It also highlights procrastination on their part. This foregrounds death and the phrase *new Life*, takes the reader to think of the hereafter. It also foregrounds that the youth hold fast their dreams, but they do not take serious steps to give practical shape to their ideas. In this way, they reach their dotage and ultimately leave this mundane life forever with unfulfilled desires. Here, Khan brings to the surface, through the local word, *babus*, the consequences of inactivity on part of the youth especially in the context of Pakistan.

In addition, this also highlights red-tapism (which should now be called as black-Tapism, as the now-a-days black taps are used in file-work) in Pakistan, where files move on but with the help of bribes and gifts. Sometimes, jealousy and narrow-mindedness also get the upper hand in delaying the smooth running of the process. Such malpractices create discouraging and demoralizing effects on the psyche of the diligent and hardworking people. It happens so that those who fail to pay bribes or gifts are often left in the lurch.

Conclusion

Hamid Khan's code switching embodied in his poetry projects various social issues and problems on both the national and international levels. His *Gibranic sorrow*, *Swastika*, and *Ku Klux Klan* compels the reader's attention towards pan-Islamism and Africa with respect to usurpation and racism. Moreover, Khan projects through *Deodasi* the miserable condition of girls, especially in Hindu society and generally elsewhere. Thus, Khan's poetry takes the reader to visit around the world and to become conscious of the problems and issues. Again, the words, *chowkidar*, *burqa*, *abaseen*, and *babus* reflect the social life in the context of Pakistan.

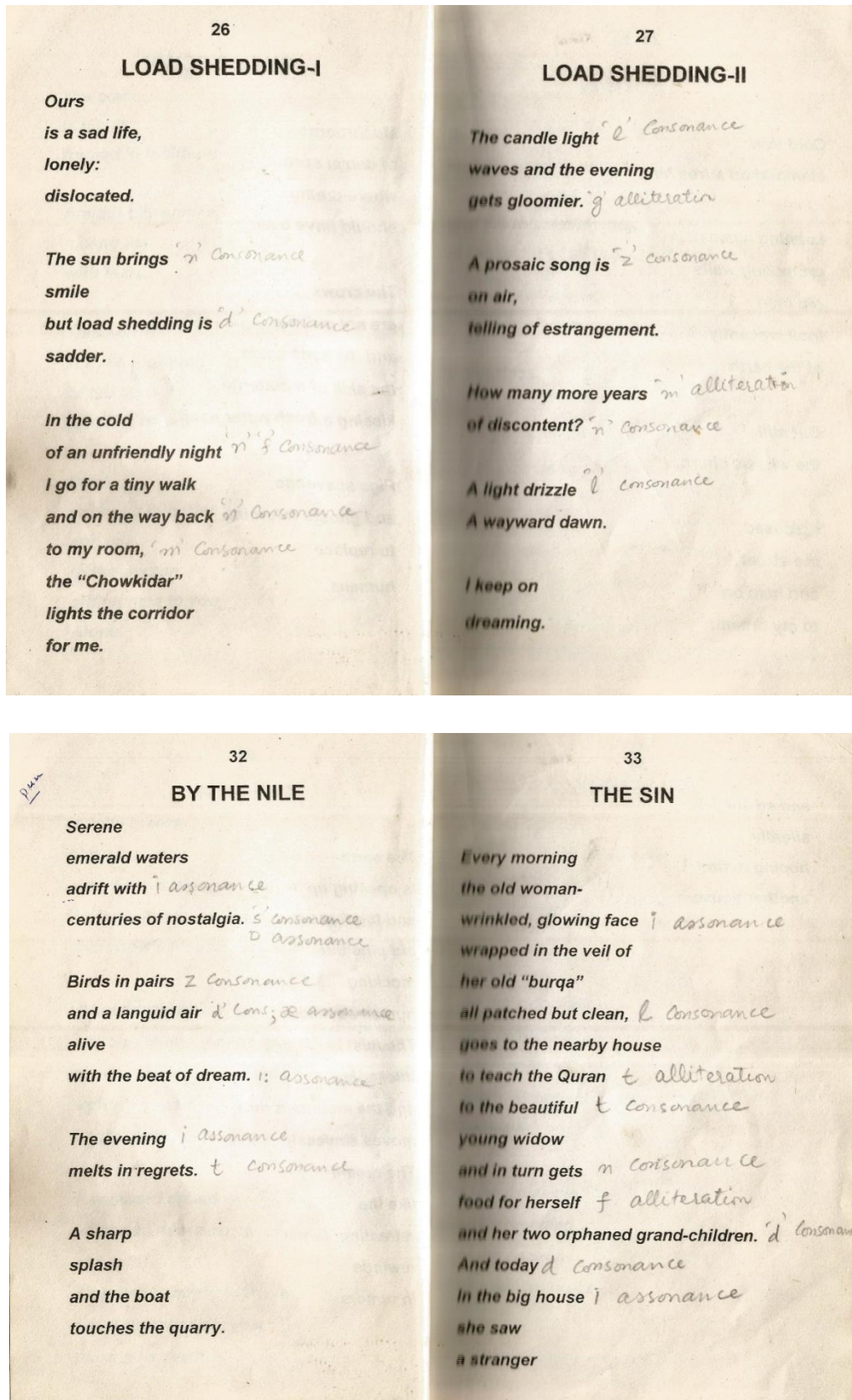
Khan first makes the reader to understand the miserable condition of the people, and then he indirectly stirs the sense of hope in them for the betterment and an effort to face the challenge of eliminating all the problems from the society so that they could leave happily. Khan makes the reader to own the problems, as when one owns something then he take care of it as well. In this way, Khan has succeeded in instilling into the mind of the reader the sense of reformation and revitalization.

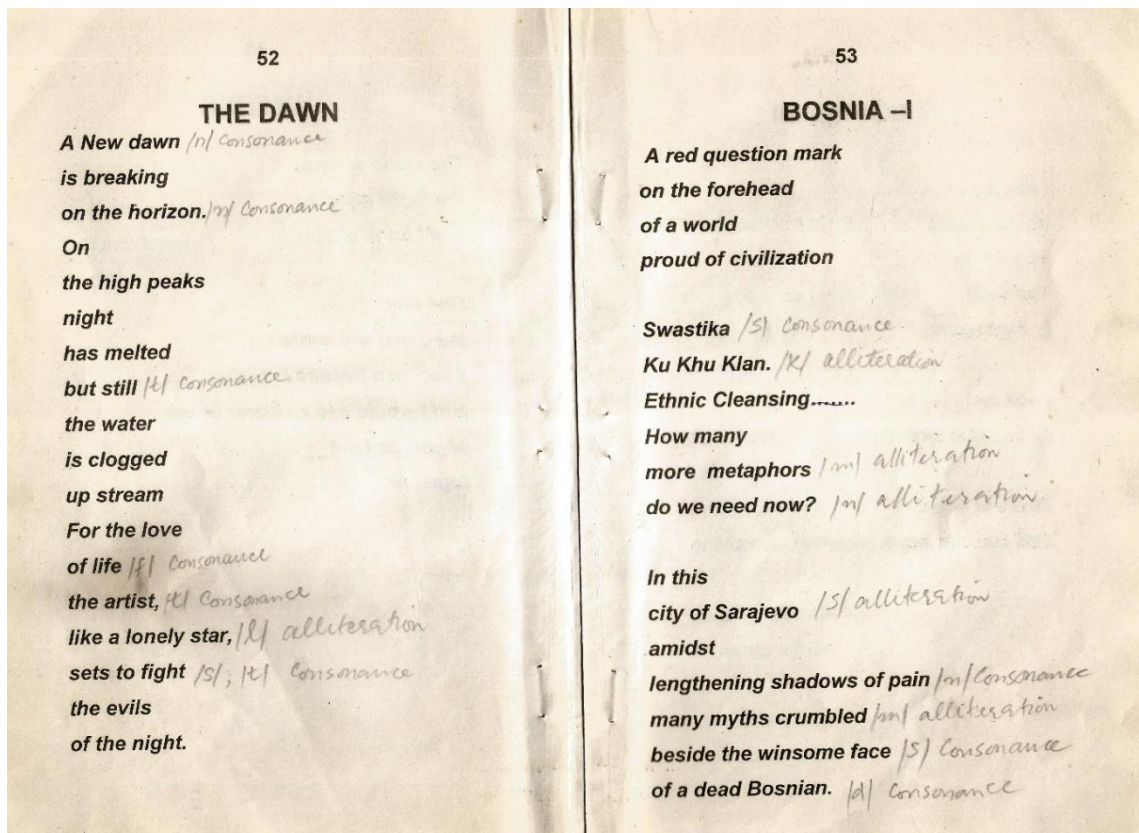
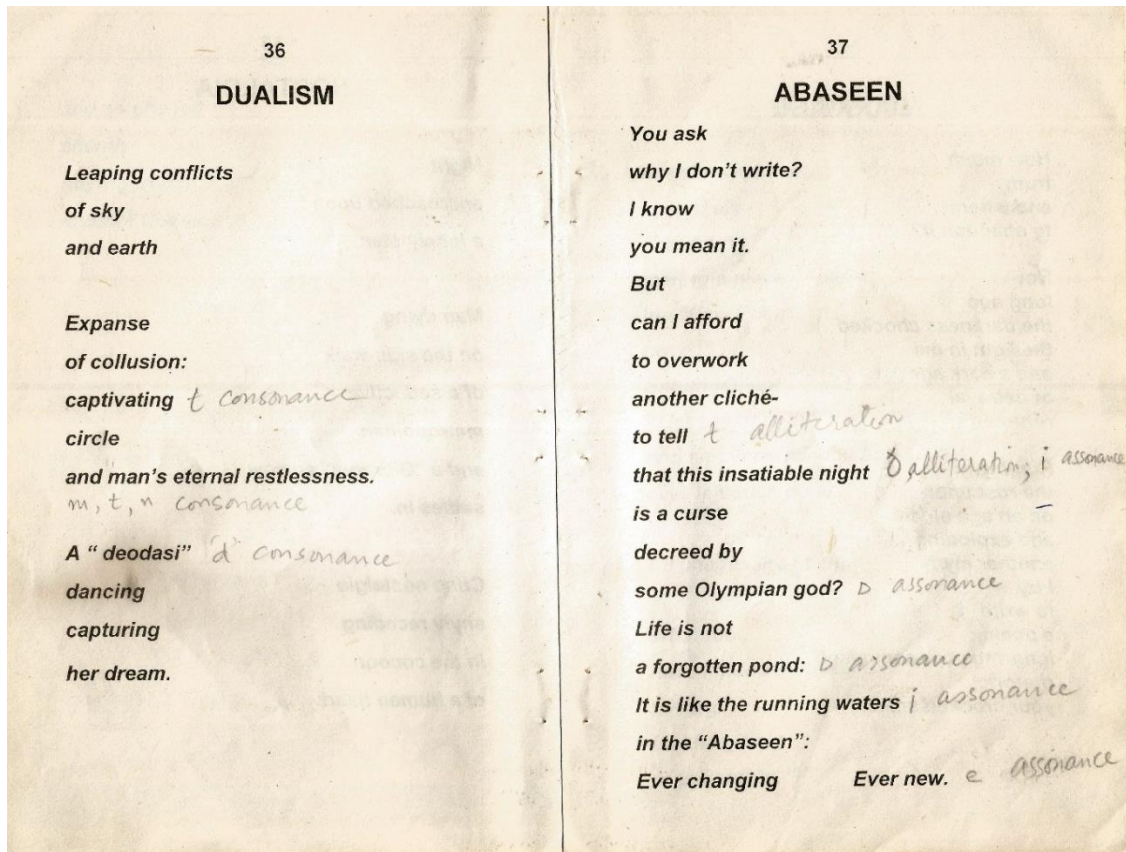
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Appendix





34

New Life

You ask
How I came through?
You won't believe.
And I myself am trying hard not to believe it too.

But it is true.

I belong
Where old men have nightmares
Having seen too much of life.

Where young men
Dream high dreams
And end in some dusty rooms
To get old
As 'Babus'.

Night will subside.
And the morning
Will bring new life.

Sin

Every morning
The old woman —
Wrinkled, glowing face —
Wrapped in
The veil of
Her old 'burqa'
All patched but clean.
Goes to the nearby house
To teach the Quran
To the beautiful
Young widow
And in turn gets
Food for herself
And her two
Orphaned grand-children.
And today