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ZYGMUNT BAUMAN AND THE CONTINUING LEGACY OF EXISTENTIALISM: AN INTERPRETATION OF COOKSHAW'S DOUBLE SOMERSAULTS

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes one collection of verse, i.e., Marlene Cookshaw's Double Somersaults (1999), with a view of exploring how, at the turn of the millennium, she highlights the continuing relevance of themes and issues popularized by the existentialist philosophy in the wake of the World Wars. In this regard, the analysis of this poet is contextualized by Zygmunt Bauman's pithy critique of the experience of modernity and postmodernity in his book *Modernity and Ambivalence*. Drawing on the continuities and discontinuities between modernism and postmodernism, this qualitative study expands the idea that even though the sensibility of Cookshaw at the turn of the millennium understandably does not focus obsessively on the sort of alienation or nihilism that characterized her predecessors, the recognition of strains of ambivalence, a central concern in Bauman's philosophy, in such themes as interaction with the other or hopes of salvation, does necessitate a partial leaning on the inheritance of what is most easily categorized as the early to mid-twentieth century existentialist mindset. The research scholars of existentialism will get benefits from this study.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research is to analyze one collection of poetry in English published at the very turn of the millennium, i.e., a year before and a year after

2000: Marlene Cookshaw's *Double Somersaults* (1999). The purpose of the analysis is to highlight, through a qualitative discourse analysis of selected pieces from the afore-quoted anthology, certain themes regarding the contemporary western man's anxieties and uncertainties about existence. This study explores the continuing legacy and influence of thought patterns typically associated with existentialism during the first half of the twentieth century. It will be seen how, while Cookshaw does not engage with massive carnage or trauma, or the ensuing hopelessness, found among the generations that lived through the two World Wars, he does seem fully conscious of the heritage of that sensibility.

The theoretical background for investigating the continuities and discontinuities between modernism and postmodernism will be provided in this study, among others, by Zygmunt Bauman's book *Modernity and Ambivalence* (published in 1991), which is a profound critique of such notions as the self's relations with its others, and the manner in which postmodernism has reversed modernism's emphasis on categorizations through its celebration of ambivalence.

This study, while focusing on the micro level of analyzing particular poems by one poet, is also essentially concerned with dialogically locating Cookshaw's poetry, on a macro level, within two traditions: the modernist trends in English poetry as well as the existentialist thought that was responsible for shaping her to a great extent.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several books have been written which reflect the discontents of the twentieth century, in every genre of literature writers have expressed the universal feeling of discontent and disillusionment that every individual felt, during and after world wars. Those books are the responses and reactions of the writers on chaos and confusion of the century.

Double Somersaults (1999) which mirrors the discontentment of the modern world after the world wars has been selected for this study. The discontentment after the World Wars remained a chief concern, which was constantly being discussed, even though many of those authors did not have first-hand experience of the War but were affected by it owing to the pervasive realities of the Cold War, which cast a long shadow across the entire twentieth century.

Plenty of international and national level articles are available which are based on the body of work produced in the 20th Century which reflects the problems of the time. Marotta's article "Zygmunt Bauman: Order, Strangerhood and Freedom" effectively summarizes Bauman's work about otherness, identity, social and cultural boundaries and about solid and liquid modernity. He investigates how the stranger is threatened by the social order, and draws his conclusion on Bauman's ideas how "us" and "them" mindset effects people collectively. And people can only live with the prevailing tension about strangerhood, otherness and order if they accept their moral condition. A

review by Eli Zaretsky on *Modernity and Ambivalence* by Zygmunt Bauman was also helpful in understanding Bauman's above-mentioned book.

The reviewer has both appreciated certain points and criticized others. Terry Austrin's review of "*Modernity and Ambivalence*. By Zygmunt Bauman." And Carlo Bordoni's article on "*Introduction to Zygmunt Bauman*." were a great help in understanding Bauman's work.

David Ben-Merre and Robert Scholes wrote an article "*War Poems in 1914*" which discusses about how poetry can play an important role in the society. Readers get an entirely different perspective of the poets who do not consider themselves a part of a "nationalistic program". They further studies how the poetry from different parts of the world varies in content and form, it is sometimes due to the motifs that are common in poetry but many things can be misunderstood like religion, which is sometimes questioned and even rejected. It also includes a collection of war poetry which was helpful in this research. An article "*War*" by John Kekes explains why does wars occurs in the world, and how inadequate are the existing explanations behind wars, he studies the reasons why wars are waged, and the reasons can be to dominate, for self-determination, for territorial supremacy, for ideology, for the conquest, independence, religion, power or because of hatred. He concludes that, since values are conflicting and numerous, war can be an unending adversity which a world cannot avoid.

"*Surrealism in Twentieth Century Russian Poetry*" is an article written by Simon Karlinsky, on surrealism in arts, not only it influenced painting and cinema but poetry as well, the audience and the reader started to understand the ordinary things and "unexpected context" in arts. The moment had a great impact on the arts and literature of the century. Karlinsky studies that surrealism blends the insight of Karl Marks and Sigmund Freud. As surrealistic imagery is a picture of a subconscious, the confusion of a mind and dreams, because most of the time the logic behind the dreams is Surrealistic.

"*Writing Poetry in Wartime*," written by Alice Templeton is an article based on Rukeyser analysis on one of the important poems from the volume *Poets Against the War* (2003) in which she draws a contrast with several other poems, to prove that poetry can provide positive energy without imitating the atrocities of war. Alice Templeton asserts that there is no use of writing poetry if the poems are capturing heart-rendering imagery and authentic scenery of wartime. They would reflect the same atrocities and indulge the readers into the same experience the poets are trying to protest. Templeton highlights that there must be some conscious detachment in order to let the deep consciousness of the reader work to decide what and where the wrong is being done, rather than offering a conclusion at first place.

Jed Rasula in her book *This Compost: Ecological Imperatives in American Poetry* talks about the necessary objectives in poetry which has very strong associations with culture she also talks about Muriel Rukeyser's book *The Life of Poetry*, which explains the influence of poetry and corrupt political agenda, and conflict which is a permanent part of an American culture,

because people still have hopes in democracy but the political agenda of the super power works for a never ending warfare as she says: "American poetry has been part of a culture in conflict....We are a people tending toward democracy at the level of hope; at another level, the economy of the nation, the empire of business within the republic, both include in their basic premise the idea of perpetual warfare" (qtd. in Rasula, p. 33). Elizabeth Daumer's "Introduction: Muriel Rukeyser's Presumptions." explained Rukeyser's view point about poetry and present time political scenario.

Fiona Jenkins article "A Senseate Critique: Vulnerability and the Image in Judith Butler's "Frame of War"" gave an insight about what Butler's is talking about the aggression in humankind and why she says that non-violent is unattainable because violence is inseparable from humankind. Tim Kendall's book Poetry of the First World War: an Anthology presents poetry of the best known poets such as Owen, Siegfried Sassoon and other soldiers and women poets as well mirrors the plight of mankind whose ideas transformed into disillusionment.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Existentialism: Twentieth Century Development and Influence

Fredrick Nietzsche (1844-1900) has influenced modern philosophy profoundly. His most controversial and contentious theme, of 'The Dead God' conceives that Christian God does not hold any power over people in the modern age, Christendom has been killed. And without this belief an individual cannot acquire the state of a superman, the concept of heaven and hell, good and evil limits people to a level of disillusionment, it does not let a person become one with nature. The concept of God and spirituality is made to control people and rule them by Church or spiritual mob. Nietzsche portrayed the character of 'Zarathustra' in his philosophical novel Thus Spoke Zarathustra in which his character 'Zarathustra' teaches people to transcend to a higher level. There must be a will to power, to be able for eternal reappearance. A will to power is a psychological state that gives ultimate meaning to man's life. Nietzsche's philosophy contains 'Nihilism', 'Nada' he asserts that who so ever would keep believing in God or spiritual being he would be ruled by Church or State. One has to rise above the idea of God, and assert his will to power not dominate others but to transcend himself.

During the 1940s and 1950s, Jean-Paul Sartre popularized existentialism which proclaims that humans are thrown into the world which apparently has no meaning and then he gives meaning to it by fulfilling himself, by choosing for himself. His philosophy is embodied in his philosophical work Being and Nothingness and in the introduction to his philosophy Existentialism is a Humanism he believed that if an individual jump into himself and realizes what he really values, and acted upon it he acted in good faith, but after discovering the true value he does not act upon it, he acted in bad faith. Man is solely responsible for his decisions. In every single moment human are condemned to choose, even if he is not choosing that is also his choice, Sartre defines in his work Existentialism and Human Emotions. Sartre also believes

that humans cannot escape anguish because anguish lies within us. (J. P. Sartre) Sartre depicts the anguish of human existence in his play *No Exit* which also reflects his notable idea "Hell is other people" (Sartre, p.26). A play pictures all the angst, a threat to existence, which are the key features of twentieth-century literature, where they are incapable to sleep, realization of the sins they have committed in the past, and the presence of other people along with the hell that was going on in mind, when one cannot find a mirror to reflect one's consciousness, its other people on whom one has to rely to reflect one's identity. The inability to survive with or without 'others' explains the very idea about other happens to be hell. In his very first novel *Nausea* Sartre pictures modern man's urge to fit in this universe which is completely indifferent towards their suffering or happiness, which makes him feel that he is unwanted and unfit in this world. And when he is able to figure out things, it makes him feel nauseating, because we have to keep on existing until everything and everyone dies. Sartre himself held as a prisoner to Germans, as a soldier he saw war very closely, (1940-1963) he absorbed what existing means, it was the time of great productivity during (1939-1940) he wrote *The Age of Reason*, in which he explains what according to him existing means as he says: "If I didn't try to assume responsibility for my own existence, it would seem utterly absurd to go on existing."

The absurdity and meaninglessness of life was the highlighted in work of the French philosopher Albert Camus (1913-1960). Camus believes that life is innately meaningless and absurd, so seeking knowledge about human reality is a futile struggle. Knowing the fact about the absurdity of life the quest for knowledge becomes an act of courage. There is always a fear that prevents us to concede our fate because with the acknowledgment of fate we accept that life is but a series of absurd episodes. Only a brave can bare consequences of truth. To find out the absurdity and still keeping pace with life in acceptance of that absurdity. In his most celebrated essay *The Myth of Sisyphus* Camus pictures the futility of human struggle through mythical character Sisyphus who is an allegorical representation of a human, who is doomed to take a heavy rock up the hill till eternity over and over again, he is bound to do this futile exercise from which he achieves nothing. Camus wants us to understand that humans are also bound to keep on living their lives which is absurd. This absurdity is due to the conflict between what we expect and what the actual reality is. But we have to be aware of our reality even though it is absurd just like Sisyphus found happiness because he found the purpose of his life.

The countless literary authors who have been consciously or unconsciously inspired in their works by existentialist thought include several giants, who themselves were quite influential in their turn. The pervasive influence of the movement has been such that one can regard it as the hallmark of the inter-War and post-War times. To cite just one example, strains of existentialism are readily visible in the works of Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), who probably never used a reference to the movement to describe his work. At one place, he talks about the plight of common people who suffer during a war regardless of who wins or loses it.

The war which is coming Is not the first one. There were Other wars before it. When the last one came to an end There were conquerors and conquered. Among the conquered the common people Starved. Among the conquerors the common people starved too (Brecht et al. p.288).

The same sensibility is also evident from Brecht's most famous plays *Three Penny Opera* and *Mother Courage and her Children*. He highlighted a crippled and corrupt political system, where a government seemed to be influenced by criminals. War was being viewed as a capitalist system, playing as a tool to make a profit out of it. "Who is the bigger criminal: he who robs a bank or he who founds one?" (Brecht, p.92).

Zygmunt Bauman and his Contemporaries

Zygmunt Bauman (1925-2017) was a renowned sociologist and a philosopher, he was an eminent theorist known for his political theories, media studies, cultural studies, and ethics. His writings have an influence on arts, films, and literature. Bauman is best known for his analysis of liquid modernity, consumerism, holocaust, postmodernism and the link between the society and the 'stranger', society which is consumer-oriented, for whom the stranger is an attraction because of the diversity of culture, in scope of tourism, food, and fashion, but at the same time a stranger cannot be ordered or dominated, because he is the 'outsider' he is a constant threat. In his book, *Modernity and Ambivalence* Bauman asserts that the stranger tends to threaten the boundaries which are constantly trying to be stable and predictable. Bauman gives a concept of life that is constantly being structured by some powerful people who are structuring this world for others, who are not so powerful, the culture is deeply connected with the power who are called 'structures'. Bauman argues that this urge to order or structure generates new problems that Bauman calls ambivalence.

These ideas of Bauman can be further explored with reference to certain themes in Judith Butler for a very helpful additional perspective on notions that are central to my analyses of the three selected poets. Judith Butler is an American philosopher whose work has influenced political philosophy, ethics, literary criticism, and third-wave feminism. She is widely read because of her gender theory, but she has built a convincing critique on war in *Frames of War* Butler argues that the images that are being delivered to us through media are not random, they are implanted by the powerful to play with perception of reality to conform the vicious and bigoted state policies. She asserts that media plays an integral part in waging wars on our minds, media amends the frame to control our emotions, so that when we confront the 'others' who are suffering we annul the ethical responsibility to react against. Butler argues that the state is making hyper-defensive policies, which make perceive some of the population as a threat to life. They are not considered as a part of a normative society or a civilization. Butler's *Frame of War* is a chorus of disapproval against violent military actions and the media's portrayal of war conflict. She hopes to get a responsible political solution against violence, intimidation, and racism. In her book *Precarious Life, Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Butler argues about the US policies about fighting a 'holy' war against terrorism, in

post-9/11 times. She questions why some voices are heard more than others and why some of the lives hold more value than others. She criticizes US policies and suggests that in this time of great turbulence, we can aspire solidarity and justice on a broader level.

Trauma and War: Twentieth Century Inscapes:

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) influenced modern literature (which was considered to be an essential break from nineteenth-century Victorianism, it also led to postmodernism.) Postmodernism emphasized on self-consciousness, the twentieth-century produced such diverse literature regarding different genera, and every genre reflected the significance of self-conscious, and psychoanalysis. Freud asserts that our mind is responsible for our conscious or unconscious decision, there is a constant struggle deep inside our psyche, a literary work is a reflection of author's own psyche, and a certain important character can help to psychoanalyze the writer's own mind as it manifests his own psyche. Freud influenced writers, lyricists, painters and poets, and also presented a picture of civilization and the reasons of its discontents. "We are threatened with suffering from three directions: from our body, which is doomed to decay..., from the external world which may rage against us with the overwhelming and merciless force of destruction, and finally from our relations with other men... This last source is perhaps more painful to use than any other." (Freud, p.9) Freud highlights a major problem of human suffering in his book *Civilization and its Discontents*, that man is becoming a prosthetic god, which explains the psyche of dictators and of so-called democratic leaders.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is qualitative in nature. It deals with the discontents that wars bring into the lives of people of the twentieth century, and hope that people tried to find in the postmodern world. The research methodology is based on Zygmunt Bauman's theory of *Modernity and Ambivalence*. To meet the objectives of the research, this study will analyze poems of Cookshaw to draw conclusions under the umbrella of the above-mentioned theory.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This study locates the junction of the two theoretical grounds of existentialism and Zygmunt Bauman in Marlene Cookshaw. Her collection of poetry titled *Double Somersaults* was published in 1999, i.e., at the very end of the twentieth century. Most of the poems in it deal pithily with the late twentieth century's discontent and existentialist crises. In doing so, Cookshaw draws attention to the purposelessness of life; a complete sense of mundaneness moves one into questioning the meaning of one's existence. In her poems, there is a general sense that human beings relate with objects in this world half conscious of the fact that these interrelations do not depend on any intrinsic importance of their own selves. Rather, objects have a life of their own and their encounter with a certain person is a mere matter of chance— "The bus and the boat, unaffected, / they go as they go" (p.66). This tallies with a famous proclamation of Sartre in several of his writings, most notably in *Being and Nothingness*. Cookshaw's poetry also stresses on personal conflicts

and unfulfilled desires, the vulnerability of human relationships, uncertainty and ambiguity in life. Her work not only highlights the discontents and existential threats but is also concerned with reaching reconciliation with the ambiguities of the modern world.

Reconciliation with the Edges of Existence

The first poem that opens the book is titled “Full of Itself,” in which the very title, through its omission of the human subject, brings into attention the complexities of the lives that objects have in themselves and the way, including the degree, they are subject to change through interaction with the subject that grants them perception. Throughout the poem, phenomena seem to strive for and partly accomplish an existence without the intrusion of the human being who endows them with a perceiving mind. Conversely, this human being—reduced to a mere pronoun, “he,” while he understands that he cannot refer to anything he comes across as “merely” (Cookshaw, 1999, p.9) existing—strives to integrate himself as the center of consciousness. Failing in the process, he reconciles himself with his dislocation to the edges of existence: “He is happy with edges, they suit him” (ibid.). The poem plays on the image of a dance to demonstrate the moment of being flung into a disordered perception of one’s surroundings. To the dancer claimed by the ecstasy of his actions, nothing could be called by its usual name, the sky and the earth jump out of their proportions and are readjusted into a new continuum with “the golden proportions” (ibid.). With such reinventions of everything afoot, the prospect of the dancer’s future dawns upon him as a time liberated from the centrality of his being, he becomes “full of the future in its own / astonishing package” (ibid.). Finally, the music that enraptures him, perhaps the cause of his ecstasy, is also “full of itself, / not letting much go” (ibid.).

Living with the Paradox:

In the poem titled “I Keep Taking,” Cookshaw ponders over the options of living by the dreams of an ideal world and the dull alternative of being reconciled to the world as it exists with all its flaws. After detailing a very long list of the utopian, longed for world, she settles for the second option, with the difference that she sees redemption in merging ourselves with the world-spirit and ceasing to add to the chaotic destruction that human beings’ artificial life style stabs nature with. Her argument begins with a verbalization of the life that is by its very nature out of her grasp, a life that keeps eluding her “like a bargain I cannot afford” (p.22). This is followed by a radiant vision of a world in which all is happiness because nothing is ever amiss in it, and everything is attuned to the fulfilment of human desire:

I want to grow a greenhouse,
enough to feed us all through winter.
I want an In and Out basket.
I want the broccoli never to yellow
in the fridge, I want my favourite
black jeans to recover their seams (1999, p.22).

The sheer impossibility of such an existence reduces it to no more than a distant vision, and for as long as the poet associates this vision with her “life,” her life is an un-lived and un-livable domain. This life can best be described in Judith Butler’s terms as follows: “. . . there are ‘subjects’ who are not quite recognizable as subjects, and there are ‘lives’ that are not quite—or, indeed, are never-recognized as lives” (Cookshaw, 1999, p.4).

Reconciliation with Reality

After Cookshaw’s ecstatic affiliation with the impossible life, the second phase is the invention of a sort of reconciliation with the imperfect life of what can objectively be called the real world. The process begins with a determined effort to “cease taking lives in our hands . . .” (p.24) and allowing oneself to slip into the less glorious but ‘affordable’ mode of life. In the face of the impossibility of utopian dreams, one can nevertheless resort to making a small difference to the world by lessening the liberties one takes with nature. At the end of the twentieth century, humankind seems to take for granted a lifestyle that savagely destroys nature; environmentalism can make a healthy difference: “Let us not scoop dolphins from the sea / as if they were mould on a windowpane . . .” (p.24). The end-result of such a reconciliation with the imperfect life would be to “allow what indicates the world / to enter us” (p.24). In Bauman’s terms, this state of choosing the imperfect (real) world at the expense of the perfect (impossibly utopian) world indicates the ambivalence of modernity because in the relinquishing of the dreams, the terms of those dreams have been partly translated into the aim of the subject embracing the imperfect one with the environmentalist stance.

Another interpretation of this poem can be shedding light on the helplessness of the masses who consider themselves patriotic but, at the same time, do not approve of the doings of the state institutions. They are simply caught in a state of uncertainty about whether or not to participate in the liabilities of what is officially thrust upon them: The plight of the citizens who are not sure about what is happening can be described again in terms of the dreamer equating life with dreams as studied in the poem “I Keep Taking,” because they have to endlessly make sense of things by fixing together incomplete pieces as they best could:

What is this desire of mine
for new structure, this attempt
to reorganize pieces, to make them speak
sense? (1999, p.22)

Impact of Wars and the present life scenario on human life

Marlene Cookshaw wails at the vulnerability of humankind, she highlights the unfortunate fact in the poem “Cheating Death” that wars have introduced human existence to a constant terror; death has started residing inside our consciousness. “as if it were a business deal. / Death has moved into our valley” (Cookshaw, 1999, p.33). Mankind has been led into a cheap bargain, by putting human lives on stake, in desiring a new order man have shattered

his peace of mind, in desiring the change in the modern world the heart of a man is filled with a constant threat, all that can be seen is suffering and death. "Death / undermines us. Now even / the smallest mumble sounds like terror," (pp.33-34). People live with the realization that their lives are on a stake; it can end, at any time, at any moment. Even though no one is certain when it will end, but the anticipation makes it even worse. They talk about death, because it seems to be the only certain thing in life, and the rest of the things are uncertain. If they are still living, they are cheating death. Due to so many atrocities that war brought to man's life; death seems to be normal as if it is like an ordinary wound. In her poem "Jan Garbarek's Saxophone" she compares falling from the tree with dying as if there is no prominent difference between the two. "What is done becomes right. Even / the falling from tree. Even dying" (Cookshaw, p.28). This reflects the worthlessness of human life.

The victims of horrendous acts become passive if they are repeatedly subjected to them. During the great wars that occurred, common people were used and abused, be they civilians or the soldiers who fought in the wars.

Hunting or hunted? Whee
whee. Hunting, without doubt.
The hunted are silent. We
stop breathing, we sink
at any rush of wings (Cookshaw, 1999, p.41).

Chaos and Perplexity: Aftermath of Atrocities

Cookshaw asserts that there might have been many reasons to wage wars, to build a new order in the world, to replace the existing order with something more meaningful, but in doing so, they created chaos and purposelessness in people's life. The man seemed to be filled with confusion and perplexity. The poetess explains the plight in her poem "Daughters of war."

...Think, says my father,
of what cannot last, what sustains you, what is
not this, not here, not now. No one
seemed to know even then what it was about.(Cookshaw, p.20)

Need of Standing with the Weak and the Marginalized

Marlene Cookshaw expresses her desire that the United States might become united as the States which would be able to replace its inaccuracy, in dealing with the world, with united struggle to make America a better place rather than only sticking to its economic interests. Because of which rich countries are getting richer and poor are getting poorer. The poem much discussed in this chapter "I keep Taking" suggests another interpretation such as Cookshaw stresses the need for helping the poor, the third world countries, rather than spending in the world where help is not needed.

I want to uninvent
perfectly interchangeable parts...
I want United States to be united,
I want butter to stop sailing
across the ocean to a country full of cows. (pp.23-24)

Failed project of Modernity and Existentialism

Cookshaw also talks about the psychological damage done by the marginalization and the boundaries created for the perfect order, which did put mankind into the existential crises. The search for order and certainty was an impossible project because it had fixed boundaries (solid modernity). According to Bauman, solid modernity was delusional and the liquid modernity was not able to construct a better order and replace the defective one. "At the very heart of the modern project is a paradox. Modernity seeks to eliminate chaos and ambivalence, but reproduces them" (Marotta, p.39). Modernity failed to add value in people's lives, the social order that modernity brought was not enough to fill the void, it did not appease the discontent which was the present reality of a human mind. As Nietzsche describes the role of the Superman who in shouldering the responsibility of superimposing order on a primarily chaotic universe, directs attention to the artificial nature of his 'order', also "Modernity proclaimed the essential artificiality of the social order and the inability of society to attain an orderly existence on its own" (Bauman, p.99).

People lost hope in the present order; they started taking everything casual, their lives, death, relationships, self-definition, and self-identity. Everything seems to be a casual thing, recreational drugs, whose purpose was to create timely pleasure and artificial happiness. Casual sexual encounters were also taken normally. Rather than indulging in a serious relationship, people started taking sex as a slapdash. In her poem "Whosoever's Responsible" Cookshaw mirrors the journey of a mind of the man whose consciousness is overshadowed by the constant fear of death and worthlessness. How the deep relationships started losing its warmth. "That morning we made love, we made it out of / the dreams of milk and eggs and anxiety" (p.69). People started losing urge to be deeply involved; they started losing desire of the intense bonding, "This morning we make love, we make it out of nothing" (p.69). The constant question of the meaning of their existence, and a sense of being wasted did not let them experience a true pleasure out of the intimacy with their partners. Cookshaw started a poem with the question asked by Spalding Gray "When you got up this morning how did you avoid thinking about death?" (p.69). Cookshaw wants to assert that a human heart is lingering between the desire of freedom and possibility and with the dread of desire itself. Because nothing seems to stay, nothing is certain. Life, relationships and desire seems to be dispersed in a fit of a moment. The heart of a man/woman fills with melancholy and depression which they cannot condone.

Losing Ties with Religion and Existential Crises

As most of the existentialists think that there is not any moral code to live by, there is nothing totally good or bad. There is only nothingness that we are left

with, and to find a reason in a world having no reason is absurd. In the utter absurdity and hollowness, religion is supposed to play an important role, Christian preachers could not satiate the spiritual need of an empty, feeble and fragile heart because it seems to distribute either hell or heaven, "If Christianity promises rewards ...as if it were an offer to bribe, as it were, to exhibit good conduct;.Christianity would not be worthy of love" (Cavell, p.10). The Christian doctrine left people in conflicts and being skeptical of religion. People felt it difficult to make a personal connection with God and receive His love. "Do you love Jesus?" / I can't imagine what I could have said to that, / or what did I say" (Cookshaw, 1999, pp.20-21).

CONCLUSION

This research has attempted to study one anthology of poetry published at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century. The philosophical premise that governed the analyses of selected poems by Marlene Cookshaw included the alternatives for the self-defeating venture of modernity to purge out uncertainty and ambivalence, and impose meta-order which was supposed to lead to transparency and construction of certain boundaries. It has been seen how Modernity's attempt – especially in the first half of the twentieth century – to bring enlightenment to the world through knowledge and reason introduced wo/man to the fear of immense knowledge of limitless freedom, countless choices, and the burden of responsibility of these choices.

Partly, this study has projected a postmodern critique of modernism through the selected poems of the above-mentioned poet, Cookshaw, against the setting of modernist experience which mirrored uprooted and displaced contemporary individuals, she was under constant existential threat, she is the strangers to herself and to the society she lives in. This poet did not only highlight the need to stand with the weak and marginalized but also to recognize their importance as a society depended on them to establish itself. Cookshaw stressed the acceptance of ambivalence and recognition of diversity as interpreted by Zygmunt Bauman's conceptualization of the stranger in his book *Modernity and Ambivalence*, which has contributed thoroughly to the debate on the role of modernity's attempt to seek order, and postmodernity as the realization of the failure of the same quest.

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