

A Gynocritical Study of Rowan Coleman's Novel, *the Summer of Impossible Things*

Abstract

This study focuses chiefly on the lead female characters of the story, Luna Sinclair and Marissa 'Riss' Lupo, to reveal the gender stereotyping in the novel. The study is based on Elaine Showalter's theory of gynocriticism to highlight the difficulties faced by women in a patriarchal society. The study deals with the misinterpretation of terms such as 'sex' and 'gender' as being synonymous in a society and the problems faced by women because of the misinterpretation. Textual analysis method is used to analyze the relevant sections of the text. The analysis of the novel reveals how women in a patriarchal society are stereotyped and are expected to confine themselves to their 'feminine' roles only. The study also brings to light how victim blaming is embedded within society, ultimately leading the victims to unwillingly take steps for themselves.

Key words: *Gynocriticism; Stereotyping; The Summer of Impossible Things; Gender, Rowan Coleman.*

INTRODUCTION

The subject of this study is the novel *The Summer of Impossible Things* (2017) written by the British author Rowan Coleman. The novel presents a unique story of love and the selflessness of a daughter for her mother. The book focuses on the lives of 30 years old Luna, and her mother Marissa - who after a long battle with depression - commits suicide. Marissa leaves behind video tapes which reveal the cause of her suicide i-e she was raped in the summer of 1977, as a result of which she killed her rapist, and eloped with her then boyfriend and now husband, Henry, on the same night. Marissa declares that her action of killing her rapist stemmed out of the certainty that justice would not be served to her, as the rapist was a well-respected man, highly regarded by everyone in the neighborhood. Moreover, the society in which she lived was governed by patriarchal views that stipulate that when a girl is raped, it is her own fault. Marissa also reveals that Luna is not the biological daughter

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of Henry but was rather conceived as the consequence of the rape. After the revelation, Luna and her sister Pia, decide to go to their maternal home in Brooklyn to sell Marissa's estate, where 'impossible' events await her. She mysteriously time travels and finds herself thirty years in the past, just days before Marissa is raped and Luna conceived. Luna is both amazed and confused when she encounters her mother (who is called Riss by her peers), her aunt and their friends, all in their prime. She befriends them all and instantly bonds with Riss, who obviously does not recognize Luna as her future daughter. Luna is surprised to see a different side of Marissa's personality in her youth. Luna learns that her actions in the time-travelled past have an impact on the present and all her actions create an alternate universe. Thus she decides to prevent Riss from being attacked by her rapist, and as a result, create an alternate universe where Marissa would be happy. Since Luna is conceived as the consequence of the rape, saving her mother from her attacker would mean Luna would cease to exist. Yet she decides to sacrifice herself and change the reality by doing the impossible. She eventually succeeds in saving her mother from the attack and expects to be dissolved into nothingness, but instead she wakes up in a new alternate universe where Marissa is alive, and as full of life as the time before that dreadful night. Luna is relieved to find herself with her family, this time as the biological daughter of Henry.

Although the plot of the novel is unique and Coleman's expertise of story-telling cannot be denied, a number of instances of gender stereotyping are observed in the novel. The characters e.g. are unable to distinguish between the concepts of 'sex' and 'gender' and often confuse them to be synonymous terms for the same concept. Moreover, they deem it inappropriate for a man or woman to deviate from their stereotyped gender roles. John Money and Robert Stoller, two psychologists, with the publication of their works *Gender Identity* (1955), and *Sex and Gender* (1968) respectively, made an attempt to bring to the foreground the difference between the terms 'sex' and 'gender' and presented gender as a theoretical concept. They tried to distinguish between what was real and what was discursive in the understanding of gender, and whether gender was 'construed' or 'constructed'. Money (1955/2016) proposed that 'gender' and 'gender roles' are two different concepts: gender is subjective, whereas gender roles are socially constructed in a society (Money 89). Stoller (1968) formulated his definition of gender, which dissociated the term 'gender' from 'sex':

Gender is a term that has psychological and cultural rather than biological connotations: if the proper terms for sex are male and female, the corresponding terms for gender are masculine and feminine, these latter being quite independent of (biological) sex. Gender is the amount of masculinity and femininity found in a person. (Stoller 158)

The novel brings to light the problems women encounter in a society, especially in their workplace. It also sheds light on how girls are expected to conform to the stereotype of perfect ladies. Though the theme of gender stereotyping does not affect the main plot, there are recurrent lines in the novel which point towards both the major and minor issues that women confront in society. Since the author carefully weighs out every word and phrase, it is apparent that Coleman has deliberately used lines in the novel which focus on gender stereotyping. These lines are so subtly incorporated in the scenes that some readers miss the nuance of these lines. This symbolizes how deeply rooted the problem of gender stereotyping is in societies and that people often overlook it, considering stereotyping a normality. Hence, the researcher aims to view the novel as a gynotext in order to reveal gender stereotyping through the characters of Luna and Marissa and to understand the problems women face due to stereotyping in the workplace, homes and society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The present study deals with the theme of gender stereotyping. In the Oxford dictionary of Psychology, Andrew M. Colman describes stereotype as “A relatively fixed and oversimplified generalization about a group or class of people, usually focusing on negative, unfavourable characteristics, although some authorities recognize the possibility of positive stereotypes as well” (Colman 730). These generalizations attribute certain defining aspects to both genders, which later come to define both the sexes. These stereotypes assign fixed gender roles to both men and women and deem it inappropriate for the two sexes to deviate from their gender roles and base gender roles solely on biology (sex).

This study focuses on the stereotypes with respect to the female gender. The focus of the second wave of feminism was to develop an equality theory by attempting to eliminate the social and cultural differences between men and women. Simone de Beauvoir, in *The Second Sex* opines that gender is socially constructed. It means that each culture or society has specific gender roles assigned to the person of a particular sex and deviating from those fixed roles would mean ‘trouble’ (Butler vii). Reinforcing the same concept, the post-modern critics negate the concept of universal humanism by saying that the ideologies of individuals are illusory. Even their minds and thinking are controlled by their social construction which has nothing to do with their biology. The same is true in relation to individuals’ concept of gender and sex. Thus, gender is socially constructed (Wells 180). Joan Scott (1986), for instance, introduces gender as a variable by saying that “gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power” (Scott 1067). Judith Butler (1990) also explains the concept of gender stating that it is ‘performative’, meaning, we ‘do’ or ‘become’ a gender, we do not belong to a gender. Body,

sexuality and gender are socially constructed, and body and sexuality affect the notion of gender (Butler 25).

During the second wave of feminism, Elaine Showalter, gave the concept of gynocriticism in her essay “Towards a Feminist Poetics” in 1979. Gynocriticism is a mode of criticism that strives to construct a literary analysis framework that focuses on female identity. It also aims at bringing to the foreground, texts written by female authors which traditionally were kept off the category of great literature. Gynocritics study the gynotexts or women’s texts and try to identify themes which mainly concern the female authors and literary conventions that are associated with femininity. Following this tradition, the current study focuses on the themes that concern the female author Rowan Coleman, i-e gender stereotyping and issues faced by women at workplace as well as at their homes. Elaine Showalter in her theory of gynocriticism categorized the evolution of female writings in three distinct phases. In the first phase, called the ‘Feminine Phase’ the female writers imitated the writing style of the male authors (Showalter 217). In the second phase known as the ‘Feminist Phase’, the women rejected the male writing style and showed contempt towards the gender stereotyping of females by male writers and wound their literary works around themes which highlighted the problems of women (Showalter 217). The third phase was the ‘Female Phase’ in which the female writers focused on their individual talents. This phase is marked by a conscious effort by the female authors to bring about a transition of the stereotypical gender roles (Showalter 218). This study employs the second and third phase of gynocriticism to analyze Luna when she deviates from her gender role, and in doing so, the author shows disgust towards gender stereotyping. Apart from that, Luna embracing her personality as a strong-willed person by making her own decisions symbolizes the female author’s effort of shifting the gender roles.

With the rise in feminism, an abundance of researchers began to review literary works from a feminist perspective. Showalter’s gynocriticism introduced a literary analysis framework to view the female author’s texts as a projection of their struggles in the patriarchal society. One such example is Kubra Baysal’s research work in which she explores the novels *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) through Showalter’s gynocritical theory. *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a prequel written to *Jane Eyre* in 1966. Kubra argues that both the female novelists represent the time in which they wrote. She argues that *Jane Eyre* was written in the ‘feminine’ stage of Showalter’s gynocritical theory, in which women were not allowed to freely express their thoughts and ideas (Baysal 58). As identified by Showalter (217), this is shown in Bronte using a pseudonym instead of her real name when publishing the novel. On the other hand, Jean Rhys wrote her novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea* during the ‘female’ phase of gynocritical theory in which women began to freely express their individual sensibilities and talents by reflecting themselves through their writings as Rhys does

by challenging Bronte's story of *Jane Eyre* and giving it a new point of view (Baysal 59). Rhys, through deconstruction manages to provide a new point of view to the readers regarding the characters of Edward Rochester and Bertha Mason (Baysal 59). Baysal employs the gynocritical theory to argue that the female authors through their literature present their own struggles as women. Hence, she compares Rhys with her character of Bertha Antoinette Mason to suggest that Rhys presents her own struggle as a doubly marginalized individual (female and a Creole) through her character of Bertha, who goes through emotional and psychological trouble not only due to the patriarchal pressure to conform to the role of stereotypical gender role, but also due to the colonizers' (Englishmen) derogatory attitudes towards her for being a Jamaican living in England (Baysal 60). This study helped readers gain new insights into the two novels and to better understand the applied form of the gynocritical theory where female writers use the text to highlight the issues of the females.

A number of gynocritical researches also execute comparative studies to draw a parallel between the obstacles faced by women belonging to different times and cultural backgrounds. One such research is done by Maria R. Alfadel in her research study titled "Women's Image in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* and Fadia Faqir's *Pillars of Salt: A Feminist Approach*". In the study, Alfadel aims to explore the standing of women in different cultures. The researcher draws a comparison between the two gynotexts, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) and *Pillars of Salt* (1996) in order to explore how women are treated in a phallocentric environment. The selected literary works represent two different cultural backgrounds, American and Jordanian. Alfadel's study also aims to observe through the application and demonstration of feminism and specially gynocriticism, how women are stereotyped into fixed gender roles and how a society's social, cultural and political ideals reinforce these stereotypical images. Alfadel argues that *The Yellow Wallpaper* is a gynotext representing the problems of the females as the story has an autobiographical resemblance to Gilman's own life (iv), likewise she says that *Pillars of Salt* has a setting of Transjordan in which the struggles of the women in a strict patriarchal society are presented through literature. Alfadel suggests that although the stories have distinct cultural backgrounds but both of them are strongly connected in their central theme, which is the women victimization at the hands of patriarchy and their struggle to break through it (iv). Thus, she argues that gynotexts serve to present the problems of female through the writings of female authors as Showalter's Gynocritical theory suggests.

Apart from that, in a gynocritical study to observe how different cultures perceive and treat women, Najlaa R. Aldeeb analysed Saudi Arabian feminist author Raja Alem's *The Dove's Necklace* (2012). Aldeeb applied Showalter's gynocritical theory to observe the treatment of a doubly marginalized woman. In the study, the researcher brought forward the lines from the text, where women were deemed to be objects of

possession (by not giving them their due rights), alienation, social neglect and a source of physical pleasure (Aldeeb 137). The research highlights how the women are expected to have stereotypical feminine physical features in order to be accepted and admired. Aldeeb quotes a line from the novel, in which the 'Lane of Many Heads', which serves as a character, speaks of a woman, and shows its anger and contempt towards her because she had "broad shoulders, flat chest, and masculine frame" rather than the features of an ideal, perfect woman (Alem 88). Thus, the scholarship on *The Dove's Necklace* emphasizes its portrayal of the marginalization and mistreatment of women.

Conditions vary widely with respect to time, place, social, cultural and historical conditions and women are marginalized, victimized and stereotyped. This study also aims to add to the corpus of the studies which present females shackled in the patriarchal society. The study shows a contrast between two female characters Luna and Marissa, who struggle in their own ways in the patriarchal society. The study presents Luna as a female who attempts to break free from her stereotypical gender roles and is almost successful in doing so. On the other hand, Marissa represents a submissive character who gives up at the hands of the society. She fears not being trusted and tarnishing her family's honour. Both the characters represent the struggles women go through in their everyday life. The remarks they hear constantly reinforce the narrative that women always have to remain the weaker sex and when it comes to decide who is right and who is wrong, it is the woman who is at fault (Coleman 120).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

In order to analyze the text by employing the gynocritical theory, the researcher has selected dialogues from the novel through which Coleman presents the struggles of women who are confined to the stereotypical gender roles. Coleman, through the character of Luna addresses the issue of workplace problems, since Luna faces a lot of problems at her job. She feels uncomfortable being the only woman working among men. She states in the novel that, "There have been moments in my life before where I have felt excruciatingly out of place: my first day at work in a room full of men, who looked at me as if I'd arrived from out of space" (Coleman 288). Luna opts for the 'unconventional' job of a physicist and a researcher which is not the priority of most females. This is signified through the fact that she is the only woman working in her chosen field with thirty men. The aforementioned lines illustrate that from the very first day of her job, instead of being helped, she is alienated. The lines also signify that defying gender roles becomes a source of uneasiness for Luna.

Luna's fashion sense is questioned throughout the novel (both in her present and her time-travelled past) and Luna gives the same response about her decision of dressing in a particular way—usually she wears a loose plain white t-shirt with jeans and

Converse shoes—every time somebody asks her. She mentions that her style is influenced by her workplace, where it is extremely uncomfortable to be the only female. When Pia asks Luna why she chooses not to dress up like the other girls, Luna explains by saying, “I dress how I dress because in my job the less men notice you are a woman the better.” (Coleman 26). In another place in the novel, when Luna time travels into the past and meets and befriends her mother, Riss, she also inquires about Luna’s unconventional dressing choice by asking “Do you always dress like a guy?” (Coleman 48), to which Luna replies, “my job means that... well, the men I work with are so easily distracted by... bits and bobs” (Coleman 49). Riss’s remark about Luna’s dressing like that of a ‘guy’ also represents the deep-rooted notion of stereotypical gender identities where both the genders have to be ‘doing gender’ (West and Zimmerman) by dressing up accordingly. Apart from that, Coleman through the aforementioned lines uttered by Luna signifies women’s problems in a male work environment.

Luna’s conscious efforts of defying the gender stereotypes are also evident when she calls herself the ‘mad woman in the attic’. When Luna begins to feel that she is going mad or hallucinating as the result of the shock of her mother’s death and the discovery that she is not Henry’s biological daughter, she fears that the news of her mental disturbance would spread through her community and that her colleagues would call her ‘the mad woman in the attic’. Here, the phrase madwoman in the attic refers to Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s 1979 publication by the same name. In their book, the madwoman in the attic is a reference to Charlotte Bronte’s character Bertha Mason in her novel *Jane Eyre* (1847). Bertha is locked up in the attic by her husband Edward Rochester on the accusation that she has gone mad. Gilbert and Gubar form an argument that when female authors start writing fiction, which is considered to be a masculine task in the West, they feel anxious, leaving their feminine role and trespassing into a masculine domain. According to Gilbert and Gubar, *Jane Eyre* and Bertha Mason represent the two sides of femininity, the angelic side, as represented by Jane, and the mad side, that is represented by Bertha. They argue that the angelic side of *Jane Eyre* represents the female figures who conform to the expectations of the patriarchy. On the other hand, the mad women like Bertha represent the anxiety that female authors experience when they step into a male domain and write literature. In the same way Luna compares herself with Bertha Mason as she transgresses from her stereotypical feminine role into an unconventional male dominated job.

Luna declares “The news that I had a psychiatric problem would spread through the research community in a matter of hours, and it’s hard enough to do the work I do as a woman, a young woman not yet thirty... The mad woman in the attic, that’s what they’d call me behind my back” (Coleman 17). These lines reveal Luna’s insecurities and anxieties as she steps into a field that is considered to be masculine and male

dominated just as Gilbert and Gubar represent the insecurities of female writers who stepped into a male dominated field of writing through the character of Bertha Mason. The allusion to 'the madwoman in the attic' also symbolizes Luna's struggle as she attempts to undermine the patriarchal society's stereotypical gender roles. Her strong will and conscious effort of defying stereotypes is also evident when she says, "I was a woman immersed in the most rational of sciences, determined that my sex wasn't going to hold me back, even though most of the rest of the world I moved in tried to." (Coleman 16).

Coleman, as mentioned in the Feminist phase of gynocriticism by Showalter, shows her rejection of the stereotype of women being the weaker sex by enabling her character Luna to be a strong willed person who is able to make decisions, but at the same time through the character of Michael also portrays the setbacks women face when they defy the stereotypes of being the weak and submissive ones. When Luna time-travels 30 years into the past, she makes new friends there. One of her friends is Michael who later becomes her love interest. Michael represents the qualities of a chivalric male who is always there to help Luna, but also believes that women need male assistance. He opines that women should not step out of fixed gender roles. Once when Luna and Michael are out on a walk during the night, they notice some boys beating up a young kid because he is black, and Luna remarks, "It's then I realise that it's not the boy they hate, it's the color of his skin. He's black and that's enough of a reason for them." (Coleman 66). Luna goes on to confront the bullies and saves the boy from getting beaten up. This leads to a quarrel between Luna, Michael and the bullies. Luna and Michael run away to avoid any mishap. Upon reaching a safe place, Michael chides Luna and says that what she did was wrong and highly unsafe for her as a woman. He says, "What was risky was you marching in there, grabbing the kid. Girls don't act like that round here." (Coleman 67). This line represents the man's idea of stereotyping women as the weaker sex who should not take any action themselves, but should let a man help them. But Luna still proves to be a strong-willed woman who defies gender stereotypes in every way possible.

Through her novel, Coleman also points out the minutest form of gender stereotyping regarding the consumption of alcoholic beverages. During a party at Riss's house, Michael asks Luna if she wants a drink, upon which Luna asks for a beer. This answer surprises Michael and he suggests a more feminine drink for Luna who asks, "'You sure you want a beer?' he asks over his shoulder, 'We got rum and Pepsi if you'd rather?'" (Coleman 46). This line also reinforces the concept of traditional gender stereotypes where men are free to consume any kind of alcoholic beverages, but it is odd for girls to be drinking beer as it is considered to be a masculine drink. During the same incident, Michael refers to Riss's and Stephanie's father - Luna's grandfather - and says "He doesn't like his girls to drink, don't think it's ladylike." (Coleman 46). His statement asserts the stereotypical notion of drinking to be

considered as a 'manly' activity unfit for women. Coleman suggests that not only are the women fettered in the stereotypical roles in regard to their actions, but their language also has to be confined to the roles, thus introducing the use of language as a variable in the gynocritical study. In one of the scenes in the novel, Michael points out at the 'unladylike' language used by Riss when she uses a swear word in order to show her anger and frustration upon which Michael sarcastically remarks, "nice language from a lady" (Coleman 261). Coleman, in incorporating these lines, subtly points out at how patriarchy forces women to behave in a feminine way. They have to be gentle and patient; and not do anything which is considered to be 'manly' or 'masculine', whether it be saving a young boy from racist bullies, using a curse word or choosing beer over Pepsi; even drinking in general is an act that defies the stereotypical feminine role.

Showalter in "Towards a Feminist Poetics" suggests that in gynocriticism, women as writers emphasize the ordeals of the women through their subject matters and themes (Showalter 216). Thus, as a female producer of literature, Coleman brings forward the wrongs committed towards women with her theme of honour in the novel which is directly related to women and especially daughters. This in turn puts a lot of responsibility upon daughters to make decisions for their lives which do not compromise their father's honour, even if it means giving up one's own dreams and desires for that. Young Riss intended to marry Henry and move with him to England but the only problem was that Henry was not a Catholic, and in order to marry him, she had to seek permission from the priest as well as her father's approval, and she was anxious about talking to her father about Henry. Luna gives Riss the suggestion to marry Henry without involving the priest, Father Delaney (whom Luna suspected to be her mother's attacker), to which Riss replies that marrying Henry without Father Delaney's approval would mean dishonor and disrespect for her father, and that is something she cannot imagine doing. Riss tells Luna, "If I disrespect my father, his faith, my faith like that, he'll never forgive me. Having respect especially from your daughters means a lot around here" (Coleman 168). Thus, indicating how fathers' honour and dishonour depends upon the actions of daughters only, putting a lot of responsibility upon them. Coleman presents the struggles of women who are devoid of the right to live their lives according to their own will if it is a source of disrespect for their fathers. Riss is caught in the dilemma of following her heart, or conforming to the traditions of her society because of the fixed gender roles. Here again, women are forced to conform to the stereotypical role of being the submissive ones.

Coleman, through the theme of victim blaming, also highlights the physical as well as the psychological sufferings of women. Narrating the story of the unfortunate night of her rape Marissa admits that she had no other choice but to kill the rapist because nobody would have believed her, or punished him because her culprit was a 'respectable man' (Coleman 119). She states:

My father respected him. Thought he was a good man. So I knew that it would be my fault, it would be because of what I wore, that I'd invited him to my home. They'd say that I set out to seduce him. I knew it would be like that, because that's what it was like then. A girl like me, who liked short skirts and strappy tops, well, a girl like me was asking for it. God knows, before it happened to me, I felt that way too. (Coleman 120)

Through these lines, Coleman hints towards the problems women goes through when living in a patriarchal society. They are blamed for provoking the men by their dressing but men are exempted from any accusation regarding their actions. The idea of a woman being victim blamed is so deeply rooted in the society that even the women themselves start believing in the fact that if a girl is raped, she has to be held responsible for it. Riss's fear of being blamed for the tragedy that befell her was a legitimate one. As the recent studies suggest almost fifty-five percent of men in the United Kingdom are of the opinion that if a woman is sexually assaulted or harassed, it is mainly because of her manner of dressing (Oppenheim). Hence the article suggests that the victim blaming culture is embedded in our society. Another problem that women encounter in our society is that they are taught techniques to avoid getting raped, but men are not schooled not to rape a woman. The same report states that different university campuses in the United States have introduced sexual assault prevention programs which aim to minimize cases of sexual harassment by giving guidelines to the females to abstain from wearing short clothes, not going out alone in the dark, not taking a lift and so on (Oppenheim). These guidelines in return have sparked an outrage among the students as this assault prevention program further encourages victim blaming by making it the fault of the girl if she is assaulted, thus pointing out a major loophole in the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act 2013 (Jago & Christenfeld). In other words, since her rapist was a well reputed man, Riss's apprehension, of not being believed in, is increased.

Coleman also points towards the deep rooted mindset of the young boys and girls where they feel the need to conform to their gender roles. When Luna joins Riss and her friends at a party at Riss's house, she observes a clear line of demarcation between the two sexes. One such example is when she notices "A few young men, drinking beers out of bottles, girls sipping something out of white paper cups, divided by gender." (Coleman 36). The phrase 'divided by gender' illustrates that the choice of boys to drink from the bottle and the girls to drink out of paper cups is a conscious one in order to fit into the norms of the society. The selection of bottles for drinking beer represents a manly and masculine attitude of the boys, while the girls sip their drink from paper cups to fit into the feminine criterion of the society. The words like 'drinking' for boys and 'sipping' for girls also reinforces the concept of gender stereotyping as sipping is a more feminine action as compared to 'drinking'.

The problems women usually face in the presence of men is also clear in another scene where Luna feels extremely uncomfortable when a group of boys stares at her during her first visit at Riss's house. Michael tells Luna, "They've got no idea how to talk to a woman, only how to look at one" (Coleman 44). Thus through Showalter's model of gynocriticism, Coleman demonstrates through her writing, how women in a society are sometimes reduced to merely an object that is to be looked at, but not respected. The novel provides evidence of how Coleman incorporates Showalter's gynocritical theory to reveal the struggles and uneasiness of women at the hands of patriarchal society through her theme of gender stereotyping, work-place struggles, rape, victim blaming, and convoluted ideas about honour. Coleman also suggests that sometimes girls have to conform to strict gender roles and be 'feminine' in order to avoid being viewed as 'abnormal'. Other times they have to dress up in a certain way to avoid unwanted attention. They also have to be the guardians of their father's respect, even at the expense of their own happiness. The aforementioned textual evidence reveals that women are victimized in a male dominated society even when they are wronged. If she is raped, she is blamed for 'asking for it' by provoking the man. Men, too, find reasons to blame the girls for their own wrong doings. This attitude is mentioned in Khalid Hosseini's novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* where a mother advises her daughter saying: "Learn this now and learn it well, my daughter: Like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman. Always" (Hosseini 7).

CONCLUSION

The *Summer of Impossible Things* as a gynotext reveals the struggles and victimization of women by employing Showalter's model of gynocriticism to bring forth the issue of gender stereotyping in a male oriented society as well as the problems women face living in such a society. In case of Luna, she feels uneasy at her workplace. Being the only female working as a physicist among men, she is not equal to them; instead she is made to feel like an alien or a showpiece. To counter this problem, she tries to merge into the workplace by trying to hide the fact that she is a woman, so that any male attention towards herself can be avoided. In case of Marissa, she suffers from a lifelong depression only because she knows that she would not be trusted. Marissa is raped, but she has nowhere to seek help, because the man who did her wrong was a 'respectable' man, and the custom of the patriarchal society was to victim-blame the woman for the wrong doings of a man. So, Riss in order to save herself, as well as other girls like her who could fall victim to his cruel intentions, attempts to kill the rapist and flees to England with Henry thinking she has murdered the culprit. The guilt of killing someone leads her to severe depression, and she finally commits suicide. Had there been justice for her, and she had the hope of being believed in, she would not have committed suicide. Apart from that, the novel also illustrates that patriarchal society wants a woman to fit into the traditional role of a

‘damsel in distress’ who has to be helped by a male, and if she breaks her shell, it is considered strange and abnormal.

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