

The Butch/Femme Couple: Reproducing Patriarchal Marriage in *Loving Her* (1974) by Ann Allen Shockley



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ABSTRACT: The historical objective of feminist movements, whatever their trends, has been the end of gender and patriarchal inequality in the society. In spite of the progress that these feminist battles have achieved, the traditional model persists in contemporary America, at least this is what is pictured in Ann A. Shockley's *Loving Her* (1974), the fiction which focuses attention in this work. In this novel, as a lesbian couple represented by Terry and Renay stubbornly challenges traditional gender and patriarchal forces in order to enjoy their sexual life, the reader discovers many signs of these forces on this relationship. In this study, which is conducted under the angle of feminism and queer theory, our aim is to show that this lesbian couple in which Terry plays the role of the Butch while Renay represents the Femme is nothing but the reproduction of the patriarchal system of couple.

KEYWORDS: butch/femme, gender equality, patriarchy, queer theory, feminism.

INTRODUCTION

Whether we are in the context of the United States of America, in Africa or wherever in the world, the issue of gender equality is an important subject that focuses attention. Since the 19th century when feminist campaigns started in reaction to patriarchy, capitalist exploitation, dictatorship, sexism and racism, three different waves of feminist movement have been created. The first wave started in America in 1848 on the occasion of the Seneca Falls convention. Their struggle was rather motivated by political and suffrage rights, and their share in property ownership. The actions of this movement, whose major American figures were Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Lucretia C. Mott, lasted until a little after the 1920s when the second wave feminism began. This second derivation of the feminist movement became really active in the 1960s and was concerned with patriarchy. Denouncing inequalities and exacerbated sexism, the leadership, represented by Betty Friedan and Simone de Beauvoir, expressed the need for women to have more gender equality, freedom, and above all they showed interest in the necessity to have control on their bodies.

However, the struggle of these early two waves didn't have great resonance, in spite of the importance of the cause defended. It failed, as M. Parry (2015, 244) observes, in only being oriented towards white, middle-class, heterosexual women. Indeed, the predicaments of women of color as well as those of women from sexual minorities were not really taken into account; and it was not until the birth of this third wave feminism, more inclusive and diversified, that these concerns were placed in the center of the feminist agenda. Beginning in the 1990s, this movement, of which Rebecca Walker is one of the torchbearers, has pushed the opinion to seize the woman's cause from a different angle, in promoting the concept of intersectionality, but also and more importantly in articulating a lesbian worldview.

While Kimberle Crenshaw coined the concept of Intersectionality to refer to the extent to which "race intersects with class, sex, [sexual and political orientation], and personal history in forming each person's complex identity" (Tyson, 376), Judith Butler another prominent figure of the third wave feminism elaborated a new lesbian vision known as queer feminism. Based on the idea that gender and sex are not static but rather dynamic according to the experiences of each individual, Butler's queer feminism highlights the difference between sex and gender, and holds that a person's gender does not define his/her sex. In other words, a person with male anatomy may live the experience of a female and conversely, hence Butler's notion of gender performativity. It is in this condition that the lesbian partner who assumes the role of the masculine is called "butch" while the other is identified as "femme".

It is this lesbian image that Ann Shockley's *Loving Her* (1974) represents with the story of Terry and Renay, two ladies who share a lesbian love in which Terry is the butch and Renay the femme. Where the problem lies is that neither Terry (the butch), nor Renay (the femme) assumes an attitude that breaks from that of the couple in traditional patriarchal society. In reading their

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story, we could not but ask the following questions: Is the lesbian couple not a replica of the traditional couple in patriarchal society? In what way can the lesbian couple adopt a vision/an attitude that complies with the real aspiration of feminist ideology? In answering these questions, we will conduct a critical work which is articulated around three axes: First, we will expose gender as it is represented in *Loving Her* (1974), then we will talk about heterosexual relationship in the context of patriarchy and its influence on the Terry-Renay lesbian experience. Finally, we will show how the feminist movement can help the new lesbian experience fight patriarchy.

I- The Representation of Gender in *Loving Her* (1974)

In everyday life, an individual's gender is defined by well-established rules. In addition to being dichotomized between masculine and feminine, gender is hierarchical and puts men in the privileged position. In the tradition of patriarchy, indeed, the male is always considered as the "proper self", to speak like post-colonial theorists while the female is the "other". This heteronormative perception of gender is what Judith Butler (1990) calls "heterosexual matrix" in reference to that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires, are naturalized (...) a hegemonic discursive/epistemological model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense, there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality." (Butler 1990: 151).

For Butler, indeed, the heterosexual matrix implies that women have a feminine presentation and have their desire directed towards men within the framework of a heterosexual relationship. This situation however is not, according to the feminist theorist, pertinent to the real experience of men and women, and especially women in society; since gender, for her, is not "a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is (...) instituted (...) through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (Butler, 191). In other terms, the gender of a man or a woman has nothing to do with his/her condition of anatomic existence; a woman can assume the sexual and social role of a woman, in the same way as the man can assume the sexual and social role of a woman. This is what makes Butler say that gender is performative.

In *Loving Her* (1974), feminist writer Ann Shockley makes an accurate portrayal of this performative perception of gender, by going beyond the ordinary heterosexual perception of human relation. In this fiction, indeed, Renay, one of the main protagonists is a black woman who is engaged in interracial, marital relation with Terry, a white woman. In the past, though, Renay had a real heterosexual life, which had made Renay to have a daughter known as Denise with Jerome Lee, a man who is described as irresponsible and unstable enough to refuse to take care of their daughter, while Renay manages "to work [and] take care of Denise." (Shockley 1974: 33). Even if the reader learns from this story that Renay's lesbianism has not been manifested until her adulthood, it is clear that to a significant extent, the irresponsible attitude of Jerome is what leads her to engage in a (lesbian) relation with Terry. In doing so, Shockley's protagonist transgresses the ordinary heterosexual norms, and thus shows that gender is not a fixed reality in human life. Therefore, it should not be related to some criteria established to judge one's belonging to a given sexual/social category.

In her review of Shockley's *Loving Her* (1974), critic Le-Ann Elgie argues in *MELUS* that this fiction "appears to be a postmodern novel that deconstructs dominant ideologies of race, gender and sexuality." (Elgie 2001: 253). This idea seems pertinent because in this novel, gender along with the many other identity categories are addressed in a way that challenges the norms that regulate them in society. By challenging the commonly shared idea on race and sex, Shockley definitely creates a norm-free gender and sexual identities in order to show that an individual is dynamic and not static. To reach her goal, she uses her two lesbian characters who are at the same time the instrument for deconstructing the binary view of gender from the perspective of queer theory. In their book *Queer Theory Now: From Foundations to Futures* (2020), Hannah McCann and Whitney Monaghan say that "queer theory is particularly concerned with resisting norms around gender and sexuality, and questioning what is considered "normal" versus "abnormal" in these contexts" (McCann and Monaghan 2020: 12-13). In other terms, this theory helps to subvert the socially constructed norms about gender and sexuality.

In *Loving Her* (1974), indeed, a careful look in the way Shockley shapes her protagonist of Terry shows that gender, and more precisely the female gender is not rigid and can have many facets. In fact, Terry is described as a "woman" (Shockley 1974: 35) and in addition to that, the narrator reveals that she also looks masculine. Her masculinity is indicated by the clothes she wears and also and more importantly her behavior. Presented as a wealthy writer who comes from a rich family, Terry is shaped after the model described in the queer theory. Given the fact that this theory was elaborated in the 1990s, we can say that Shockley was simply futuristic. Not only is Terry her lesbian protagonist white, but also her name is a male's name, even if she is always described as a woman. From this point of view, an individual can hold several identities; and chiefly the feminine gender is not strictly linked to criteria of heteronormative society. By doing this Shockley destabilizes the heteronormative conception of gender along with the heterosexual matrix.

Besides, the way Shockley addresses the issue of gender in her novel coincides with Butler's notion of gender performativity. Butler says that "there is no gender identity behind expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by very 'expressions' that are said to be its results." (Butler 1990: 33). In addition, Butler explains that gender is not a rigid identity

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category like the one we have in every heterosexual individual; it is rather built thanks to the habits and behavior of each person. She adds in this perspective that gender is designed “through a *stylized repetition of acts*.” (Butler 1990: 191).

Considering Butler’s definition of gender, the reader of Shockley’s fiction can obviously count Renay in the feminine category; after all, she considers herself as a female and she behaves accordingly. The fact is that, she describes herself as a woman and behaves according to the limit established by the feminine gender like, for instance, giving birth to a child, having a feminine appearance, or as the narrator says about her hair tied “into a sophisticated crown” (Shockley 1974: 54); or again, that she is “golden brown, so beautiful” (Shockley 1974: 42), etc., all this clearly shows that Renay undoubtedly belongs to the category of female.

Likewise, Terry is perceived as a woman; a perception which is reasserted in the story by the fact that she’s called “lesbian”; for indeed only female homosexuals are called lesbians. Eventually even if they are lesbian, Shockley attests that Renay and Terry remains authentic women.

Now that we have shown how gender is represented in *Loving Her* (1974), we are going to address the issue of patriarchy in heterosexual relationships.

II- Patriarchy in Heterosexual Relationships

Patriarchy functions as a metasytem that drives the oppression of women by men. It establishes a male-centered system of domination, generally qualified as hetero-normal and marked by sexism and heterosexual relation. In *Women’s Lives: Multicultural Perspectives* (2004), Allan G. Johnson gives a definition of patriarchy saying that it is about “the valuing of masculinity and maleness and the devaluing of femininity and femaleness. It’s about the primary importance of a husband’s career and the secondary status of a wife’s, about child care as priority in women’s lives and its secondary importance in men’s.” (Johnson 2004: 29). Following this definition of Johnson, we can say that in a patriarchal society, women occupy the less important roles while men are given the most important ones. Moreover, in a society ruled by patriarchy, women have no voice or if they have one, it is lowered by the weight of masculinity. Consequently, women remain subordinated to men and are the spectators of their life and existence instead of being the actors. They are kept away from the center of decision; they are “the Other” as French feminist Simone de Beauvoir (1997) writes.

Simone de Beauvoir introduced the concept of “the Other” to describe the place of the woman in the patriarchal society. In her *The Second Sex* (1997)¹ she writes that a woman is “defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her, she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other.” (De Beauvoir 1997: 16). This definition of the Other given by de Beauvoir clearly determines Renay’s place in her former marital life with Jerome Lee. It is noteworthy that Jerome Lee is a violent, hyper-patriarchal husband, who used to act as the boss to Renay while she was the subordinate. For example, when he comes home after wandering around and finds no food, he will say to Renay “now you find something for me to eat.” (Shockley 1974: 38). For him, it is the role of the woman to find food; and especially in his case Renay had to feed him and nothing else. When he goes outside, he does not warn her because as a woman, she deserves no account whatever from him. And when she asks “how did I know you were coming home tonight?” (Shockley 1974: 38), he will reply “ain’t for you to know” (Shockley 1974: 38).

As we can see, Jerome Lee shows that he is the master in their house and Renay should always take care of him.

Furthermore, the notion of the public/private dichotomy is also noticeable in the relationship between Jerome Lee and Renay. Jane Pilcher and Imelda Whelehan explain this notion in *Fifty Key Concept in Gender Studies* (2004). They asserts that this public/private dichotomy

Arises from its gendered nature, from the association of masculinity and the public and femininity and the private. Historically, it is men who have acted within the public realm, while women (and children) have been mostly restricted to the private realm, and subjected to the authority of men within it. (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004: 124-125)

The public space here refers to decision-making, work and the leader’s position in society, the authors tell us that it is men’s property. On the other hand, the private space which designates “marriage, sexuality, motherhood, household labour etc.” (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004: 127), is said to be for women. This categorization reinforces inequalities toward women since they do not take part in decision-making and are expected to remain under the authority of men, and this is of course because they are considered as the “Other”.

In *Loving Her* (1974), Renay is aware of this private space reserved for women in general and black women in particular. That is why she says that black women are “the ones left alone to bring up the children, the ones who head the families when the man isn’t **and often times is there**. (...) But strangely, they still love their men, work for them, pity them, bear the seed of their spawn, and take outrage of those who can’t be black warriors.” (Shockley 1974: 123). In her marriage with Jerome Lee, Renay was truly in the private space since she was the one who took care of their household chores while Jerome Lee was wandering from town to town to “work”. The narrator adds that while “Renay hurriedly left the room and went to the kitchen, where she began to prepare a quick supper for Denise” (Shockley 1974: 38) before going to work, Jerome was sitting somewhere in the house listening with “loud bass sounds. (...) a rock beat [that] shook the walls of the small cluttered kitchen.” (Shockley 1974: 38).

¹ *The Second Sex* written by Simone de Beauvoir has been originally published in 1953.

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Another element of patriarchy that we have identified in the relationship of Renay with Jerome Lee is male violence. In her book *Theorizing Patriarchy* (1990), Sylvia Walby writes that “male violence against women includes rape, sexual assault, wife beating, workplace sexual harassment and child abuse.” (Walby 1990: 128). What Walby explains is also true to Renay’s experience since she has been raped by her husband. Indeed, while Jerome Lee wanted Renay to be his girlfriend, she was reluctant and as a result, “she became a challenge to him” (Shockley 1974: 29); his male ego could not accept that Renay refused to be his girlfriend. He managed to convince her with the help of Marissa, Renay’s roommate and she finally accepted. That was when he took profit of her and raped her. The extradiegetic narrator explains this rape scene. He says

Impatiently, savagely, he pinned her shoulders down with his weight, trying to shove his male dagger into the secret abyss of her being. He pushed and heaved and grunted against the virginal obstruction of her cavity. She cried out in pain as he finally penetrated her. (...). It was over, and all she knew was the hurt and the stickiness on her legs. (Shockley 1974: 31)

As we notice, Jerome Lee raped her because in his mind, he has the right to do whatever he wanted to Renay’s body, since he is a man and she is a woman. Therefore, since he has given power through patriarchy, he uses violence over Renay to sustain his domination. In *Ain’t I a Woman? : Black Women and Feminism* (1981), Bell Hooks states that “much of the violence against women in this culture is promoted by the capitalist patriarchy that encourages men to see themselves as privileged” (Hooks 1981: 146). Consequently “men use violence against women to restore their lost sense of power and masculinity.” (Hooks 1981: 146).

Through the experience of Renay, we clearly see that heterosexuality, reinforced by patriarchy works as an institution to oppress women and control their sexuality along with their body. For Adrienne Rich (1995), the “failure to examine heterosexuality as an institution is like failing to admit that the economic system called capitalism or the (...) system of racism is maintained by a variety of forces” (Rich 1995: 51). Through this statement, Rich points out the idea that in the same way as racism oppresses people of color and capitalism continues to be disadvantageous to the middle-class, heterosexuality contributes to the subordination of women by men.

Now, if the heterosexual system dominates the woman, what does the lesbian system do to her, a system which is reputed to protect the interest of women? The answer to this question will focus the attention in the last section of our work, devoted first, to the analysis of the relationship between Renay and Terry Stockley’s lesbian protagonists, and second, to the strategy to counter the action of patriarchy.

III- Lesbian Perspective: Counter-Patriarchy Feminist Strategy of Defense.

Women who experienced prejudice in the system of patriarchy and other male-centered systems began to fight for their rights and ensure gender equality within the mainstream movement called feminism. The struggle of feminist activists was first directed towards gender minorities, represented by women. Gradually, this fight was turned to sexual concerns, and led by lesbians and female transgender adepts who are now part of their agenda. Knowing that the origin of their marginalization was patriarchy—which is male-centered and valorizes heterosexuality— Lesbians decided to articulate their proper sexual philosophy known as lesbianism, which is essentially based on relationships between women. For them, this philosophy was an instrument to fight and claim for their rights, which is in itself a real challenge, as American lesbian feminist Cheryl Clark (2002) says in the following terms: “for a woman to be a lesbian in a male-supremacist, capitalist, misogynist, racist, homophobic, imperialist culture, such of that of America is an act of resistance” (Clarke, 141)². According to Clark indeed, by embracing lesbianism, lesbians are resisting the historical and socio-cultural legacy of patriarchy which fosters the domination of women by men and institutes gender roles.

In the struggle for their liberation, lesbians have resorted to many trends and strategies among which we have radical lesbianism. As a political movement, radical lesbianism considers heterosexuality as a system that has been established to dominate women. This is why the adepts of this new feminist trend found it as the only way for women to free themselves from male domination. The objective of this movement is to radically suppress heterosexuality which is, for them, the system that crystallizes women oppression. The supporters of this trend even took the liberty to challenge the existence of normative gender categories. For them, it is because gender is dichotomized between man and woman that heterosexuality continues to survive. The French philosopher and feminist activist Monique Wittig is one of the prominent figure of this ideology. In her essay *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (1992), Wittig says that “once the class, “men” disappears, “women” as a class will disappear as well, for there is no slaves without masters.” (Wittig 1992: 15).

In the struggle for lesbians’ liberation, we also had the ideology of lesbian separatism which promotes a radical separation of women, including lesbians from men and everything that can be related to them. The militants of this trend were also against patriarchy and all that it creates to jeopardize women’s lives. In *Feminist Social Thought: A Reader* (1997), Marilyn Frye explains that lesbian separatism requires the “separation of various sorts or modes from men and from institutions, relationships, roles and activities that are male-defined, male-dominated, and operating for the benefit of males and the maintenance of male privilege.” (Frye 1997: 408). From this statement of the American feminist activist, we perceive that the lesbian separatists are not tolerant at all with men and every system that is male-centered. For them, men are their main enemies.

² - For further reading refer to Cheryl Clark, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (2002), edited by, Cherrie L. Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa, Berkeley: Third Woman Press, pp. 141-151.

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Because lesbian separatists are opposed to heterosexuality, they virulently criticize their counterparts who are straight and engaged in heterosexual relationship. This is what historian Alice Echols reveals in *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America 1967-1975* (1989). She says that for lesbian separatists, “feminists (...) faith in the liberatory potential of passionate heterosexual relationships blinded them to the possibility that heterosexuality could reinforce rather than subvert female subordination.” (Echols 1989: 14). In their mind, having sex with a man as a woman is to be enslaved to him and those women who are straight are nothing more than traitors that collaborate with the enemy to keep women in the subordinate position. Rita Mae Brown, one of the torchbearer of this trend, harshly criticized heterosexual women. She says that straight women “don’t put women first. They betray Lesbians and in its deepest form, they betray their own selves.” (Brown 1975: 74), she adds that “you can’t build a strong movement if your sisters are out there fucking with the oppressor.” (Brown, 74). This socio-historical reminder of the different ideologies among many others that govern the struggle for the rights of lesbians is made to express their opposition to patriarchy as well as the other male-centered systems that promote inequalities towards them.

However, when casting a glance in Shockley’s novel, we see that the lesbian relationship that exists between Terry and Renay resembles that of a heterosexual couple. In fact, Terry who is the butch, that is to say the masculine lesbian plays the role of the man in their house; whilst Renay the femme, remains and continues to play the “dutiful wife” role (Shockley 1974: 37) like when she was with her husband Jerome Lee. The traditional gender character of Terry-Renay’s relationship is well illustrated by the following situation: The narrator describes a scene in which Renay buys “food with the money Terry had carelessly stuffed into her purse.” (Shockley 1974: 23). Just as in heterosexual and patriarchal relationships where the man provides for the family, Renay, the femme, entirely depends on Terry, who manages their new family. Furthermore, when Denise, Renay’s daughter said “Mommy, I’m hungry!” (Shockley 1974: 50), Terry who is also a woman did not react by feeding the little girl. On the contrary, she turned to Renay saying “Yes, so I am. What’s on the menu tonight, chef?” (Shockley 1974: 50). Terry even invited Denise to play while “Mommy’s preparing dinner.” (Shockley 1974: 50). This portion of illustration testifies to the fact that the function of patriarchy through gender roles did not completely disappear from Renay’s life when she left Jerome Lee to be with Terry. In her new life, Renay is still in charge of cooking and taking care of Terry and Denise, her ‘good-wife schedule’ is still the same within a lesbian relationship. In fact,

After dropping Denise at school, she would return to the apartment and prepare Terry’s breakfast of grapefruit juice, eggs, toast and the strong black coffee Terry liked. There is so many little things Terry ignored. She didn’t like to make a bed, cook or hang up clothes. These Renay did while Terry read over her night writing with the FM station playing in the background. (Shockley 1974: 53).

Even if Terry, the butch, says that men are lesbians’ “worst enemies” (Shockley 1974: 61), this does not prevent her from mimicking the male figure and behavior in her relationship with Renay. The narrator does not hide this information, he says that Renay and Terry’s “life together resembled that of a married couple, except that they could not proclaim themselves man and wife.” (Shockley 1974: 54). The fact that Shockley highlights the strong love that exists between her protagonists hides a “not-said” (Macherey 1966: 95). Although she is in a love relationship, Renay by her status as a femme is disadvantaged compared to the butch who is favored. Apart from the love Renay receives, nothing has really changed in her daily life compared to when she was with Jerome Lee.

This relationship between Terry and Renay reveals an internal contradiction in the lesbian feminist agenda and calls for the redefinition of the lesbian feminist struggle; that which guarantees equality for all, including the relationship between butch and femme. In fact, playing the masculine role within a lesbian relationship is antithetical to women’s liberation struggle. Heather Love says in *Transitions* that the butch is most of the time regarded as “an even more insidious threat to the lesbian feminist community [because they are seen as] the enemy” (Love, 2000: 106).

To be able to resist patriarchy and win the fight for gender equality, the butch must come back to the basics of feminism. Because as Athena Nguyen says, “being butch does not consist of an assumed access to masculinity; rather, it is a defiant claim of masculinity. (...) butch is not an imitation of masculinity.” (Nguyen 2008: 674). The butch role among others is to queer masculinity that is to say to deconstruct the heterosexual matrix by denaturalizing “the connection between masculinity and men.” (Nguyen 2008: 676). This could contribute to undermine male privilege.

Moreover, even though some lesbians may look masculine, they are still considered as women. It is in this perspective that Ann M. Ciasullo affirms that the butch body cannot be “delesbianized” (Ciasullo, 2001: 602). The butch is generally seen as a threat to the order established patriarchal society, and as such is, subject to sexism, heterosexism, and other form of gender oppressions experienced by women. This can be verified in the light of *Loving Her* (1974). Although Terry is a masculine lesbian, this does not prevent Jerome Lee to stigmatizing her. He uses for example pejorative terms such as “bulldikers” (140), “he-she friends” (140), “lady-lover” (143) and “bitch” (144) etc. to identify her. Therefore, instead of seeking to mimic masculinity and implicitly or explicitly reproduce patriarchy, the butch should resolutely turn to feminists struggle. The butch should not renounce to their masculine self, however, they should be aware that a recourse to feminism struggle is a necessity if they really wish to challenge the heteropatriarchal society and they should also work toward gender equality in their relationships with the feminine lesbians.

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CONCLUSION

This analysis was an opportunity for us to question the relationship between masculine lesbians (butch) and feminine lesbians (femme). Based on the novel *Loving Her* (1974), by Ann Allen Shockley, we demonstrated how gender itself is perceived by society and how the author represents it in her work. As a matter of fact, gender, as society conceives it, is dichotomized and hierarchical, and in this binary opposition, men are at the top while women are underprivileged. But in Shockley's novel, she goes beyond this gender binary and offers an alternative in which gender is queerized. By queering gender, Shockley wants to show that gender is dynamic instead of being static as society thinks. She draws the construction of gender on queer theory which is a theory that is rather recent. When taking a look on this 1970s' novel, we come to know that Shockley was visionary because her definition of gender in this novel accommodates the description of gender in contemporary literary works.

Moreover, we can notice that the author condemns patriarchy and its henchmen, from a feminist perspective. Through the heterosexual marriage of Renay with Jerome Lee, we see that heterosexuality is somehow a burden for women because as an institution, it contributes to deprive women of their liberty. In this marriage, Jerome Lee is shown as the executioner of Renay, he subjects her to several forms of violence to establish his authority and as a good hyper-patriarchal man, he promotes gender roles through his behavior. As we have seen, household chores, cooking or taking care of their child are tasks devoted to Renay while he is busy doing men's thing.

Nevertheless, we also notice that when Renay got into a lesbian relationship with Terry, her situation did not improve. In fact, Terry who takes the name of the butch in reference to her masculine attribute, continued to perpetuate patriarchal behavior in their relationship. Terry is described as a person who is hostile to cooking, laundry, dishes etc. and of course, these tasks are carried out by Renay because she is the femme. Although Shockley tries to camouflage this fact by putting forward the love between these characters, this hidden truth undoubtedly comes to the surface. The reader can see that patriarchy and its subsidiaries are not only present in heterosexual relationships as feminists and lesbian activists thought but they also intervene in lesbian relationships

Therefore, it is important to consider a perspective in which the butch becomes aware of the fact that by mimicking the male figure and behavior, she consciously or unconsciously perpetuates gender inequality. Besides, whether or not one is considered as a woman in society, or whether one's gender identity is queerized by masculinity, the fact remains that a lesbian always faces, in one way or another, the same gender oppressions. Such is what Terry experiments, whatever her reputation as butch; she has been verbally assaulted by Jerome Lee.

To have an effective feminist struggle for women and lesbians' rights, the butch must become feminist and then be careful with the attitudes of patriarchy to ensure that they are avoided in their relationships with the femme and even with straight women.

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