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SEX, GENDER AND FAMILY STRUCTURE: BETWEEN UTOPIA AND DYSTOPIA IN  
MARGE PIERCY'S *WOMAN ON THE EDGE OF TIME*

ASHRAF ABDELBAKY

Assistant Lecturer in English Department- Faculty of Arts-Minia University- Egypt &  
Honorary Staff in School of Humanities and Social Sciences-  
Faculty of Education and Arts, University of Newcastle- Australia



ABSTRACT

This article examines some utopian and dystopian visions of Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976) such as sex, gender and family structure. The study presents a thematical and technical approach. Thematically, I deal with some themes such as sex, gender and family structure. Regarding technical features, I will focus on the futuristic setting, Time travel, language, science fiction elements, style and motives. The aim of this article is to explain how Piercy juxtaposes the dystopian visions of Connie's real society, the American society in the 1970s, against the depicted utopian visions of Mattapoisett in 2137. It presents how Piercy succeeded in calling for feminist issues like sex, gender, and race through creating a futuristic society. Therefore, this article stresses the function of science fiction works as a literary tool to explore the grim picture and the weaknesses of current societies and to provide a warning for the future of these societies.

**Keywords:** Science fiction, Piercy, Utopia, Dystopia, Mattapoisett

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INTRODUCTION

Feminist science fiction emerged as a prominent sub-genre of science fiction at the early of the twentieth century. It deals mainly with women's role in society. Science fiction has paved the way for female writers to present their actual subjects of sex and gender roles by exploring alternative prototypes for future societies with different beliefs and ideas. For most of these women writers, science fiction has become a very fitting tool for deliberating such taboo topics. Women writers engraved utopian and dystopian works that challenge the patriarchal world.

Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976) focuses on the presence of the feminist science fiction in America in the 1970s that has become a sub-genre of science fiction. Piercy offerings two possible futures for the central character in the novel where both utopia and dystopia are present. She introduces utopia and dystopia in a science fiction atmosphere where scientific developments play an essential role in shaping most of the events. Hence, the main character has two options; either to adapt to the rules of society

or to refuse them calling for a change. The novel intends to show the aim of the author of how utopian writings construct society and how it gives the chance to the writer to criticize their society ills efficiently. In addition, it illuminates how feminist utopia provides women the ability to call for their privileges in a male dominated society. Furthermore, the novel remarkably fit the concept of utopia and dystopia in science fiction.

Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* introduces America as a dystopian society dominated by men. Since the job of any author is to mirror what happens in society, Piercy presents the American society in a way that highlights the shortcomings and weaknesses of the society. The novel is a straight attack on the brutality of the American social, political, and economic systems. The core of the novel is to represent the real picture of repression in the American society. It also explores the social and political problems of the American society and compares them to a possible society in the future. The political and social systems reflect the terrible effects of American capitalism upon people and society as reported by Tom Moylan (1986), "The opposition to contemporary capitalism and the hierarchical state is no longer to be found limited to that of a single vanguard party or, at the other pole, an expression of pure negation and terror" (27). During the period from the late 1960s to early 1970s, there was a turbulent time that, according to Moylan, "significantly awakened subversive Utopianism" (10).

### **I Connie's Real Society**

Throughout the novel, we can trace how Piercy tries to involve her readers in the issues of sex, gender, and family structure in the novel. She introduces sex with a different perspective in the book. It plays a significant role in the events of the story. The opening scene of the novel is a clear evident to the dystopian picture of sex in that society. The reader sees these violent aspects of sex in the early pages of the novel when Connie, a second-generation Mexican woman living in the 1970s, opens the door to one of her relatives called Dolly and finds that her pimp who wants to force her to do an abortion beat her. The scene gives the reader a grim picture of the society in which Connie is living. Her niece's pimp attacks her later for defending her niece. Consequently, Connie ends up in a mental hospital, as the authorities believe in the testimony of the good-looking man ignoring that of a Mexican woman with a history of mental illness. Unfortunately, her brother Luis throws her as insane in "a hall with no door and no windows" (WET 60) with "four filthy walls" (WET 65). As Carol Farley Kessler suggests, Ramos's eventual violent reaction to the violence that has been done to her might be taken as a comment on the way violence in our society triggers more violence, showing "the violence that our utopian present perpetrates upon the innocent and sensitive powerless in our midst" (315). Those miserable events at the beginning of the novel clearly show how Connie's family was separated from each other and how miserable life she is living. Consequently, Connie has a negative picture regarding sex that turns to be violent with terrible feelings instead of lovely emotions. In that society, sex depicts as an awful experience where rape, prostitution, and other sexual abuse. The protagonist, Connie, is a victim of her male-dominated society and a victim of what might best be called "the system." The power of this system destructs those who cannot adapt to its social and economic rules. Women are a property of men in that society.

Although society labels her as insane, Connie is aware of everything around her and she can connect with the future. She seems perfectly sane until she starts to contact Luciente in the year 2137. Luciente says to Connie: "in truth you don't seem mad to me" (WET 65). Connie communicates with the future and finds herself can be in more than one time. Nadia Khouri notes: "In *Woman on the Edge of Time*, every past and present happening prepares the way for the modification of future events" (57). She is the first person to be able to live through such an experience in her society. It is the similarities between the world in which Connie lives, the mental hospital, and the world of the future that makes this communication with the future easy. Moreover, Connie extra sensitivity helps to do so. Claire P. Curtis describes Consuelo in the following lines saying:

Consuelo is a fighter for the utopian future. Piercy is taking a side against one of the criticisms of Utopia: that it justifies the use of violence to bring about a better world. The world of Mattapoisett is in danger, not simply because it is still fighting for its survival from external

enemies, but because it is not a future whose existence is guaranteed. Consuelo must thus act to help produce this future. She does so by poisoning the coffee of the scientists who are doing experiments in mind control on Consuelo and other psychiatric inmates. (161)

In the present, Connie attempts to stand against the rules that led to her suffering in the hospital. The struggle in the story began when choosing Connie as one of the patients for the brain-implant operation. Connie is one of the only people who have succeeded to communicate with the two worlds at the same time. Nadia Khouri describes Connie's struggle saying:

The whole narrative tends towards the development, on the one hand, of the heroine's unrelenting struggle in the hospital, a struggle which reinforces itself with her physical destruction, and on the other hand, of her progressive familiarity, her intimacy (through sexual intercourse) with the utopian world. (56)

Connie is completely in touch with the real world around her as well as her imaginative world. Being judged as insane makes Connie appears living on the edge of time, and Luciente takes her on a journey at a time meaning the present to another time meaning the future, over 150 years in the future. This time is supposed to be better than her time. Therefore, it was not her madness that makes her able to move to another time in the future as judged by people around her.

## II. Connie's Futuristic Society

According to Connie, Mattapoisett has some utopian visions and some dystopian visions as well that turn it from a utopian place to a dystopian place. Connie witnesses Mattapoisett as an equal society with no beliefs on gender, race, or any differences and welcomes any other differences. She finds that Mattapoisett is an uncivilized place that has unconventional family structure and genderless people. She revolts against these visions of the futuristic setting asking Luciente, her utopian guide, for a change.

### A peaceful and uncivilized Society

Upon the arrival of Connie to Mattapoisett, Luciente plays the role of the utopian guide. Connie feels that Mattapoisett represents the freedom she has never lived, as it is a peaceful world with no war or any suffering. There is no violence, war, diseases, suffering, or fear in Mattapoisett. Susan Magarey, the founding editor of *Australian Feminist Studies*, comments on the futuristic society of Mattapoisett saying, "My own reading suggests that Mattapoisett has to be the accumulated result of a multitude of individual acts against oppression and exploitation" (332). She also considers Mattapoisett as a utopian future, but it lacks that sense of continuing possibility of open-endedness. She summarizes the characteristics of Mattapoisett saying, "Other utopian characteristics of Mattapoisett include its flexible division of labor, allowing everyone who parents to combine work and childcare. They use technology to eliminate repetitive labor, to ensure a just and rational distribution of resources, and to maximize communication. Industrial and agricultural production computerized to give people the chance to engage predominantly in work that is rewarding farming in that society means helping things to grow; arts, crafts, design and performance; and the purpose of research is to improve the quality of life. (334)

However, Piercy depicts Mattapoisett with some utopian features such as equality, cooperation, and justice without any gender differences or racism, Connie disgusts some features considering them dystopian ones. Connie finds Mattapoisett society as a primitive one in "the dark ages" (WET 73), as any primitive village with its vegetable plots and goats. However, technology is an important part of Piercy's futuristic world; homes have solar panels, and transport is in "floaters", a type of hovercraft. She thinks that she will see "Rocket ships, skyscrapers into the stratosphere, an underground mole world miles deep, and glass domes over everything? She was reluctant to see this world" (WET 68). The following extract shows how technology reduced in Mattapoisett to present a utopian environment. Luciente describes her village to Connie who touches some differences between her real world and the futuristic world of Mattapoisett:

She saw [...] a river, little no-account buildings, strange structures like long-legged birds with sails that turned in the wind, a few large terracotta and yellow buildings and one blue dome, irregular buildings, none bigger than a supermarket of her day, an ordinary supermarket in any

shopping plaza. The bird objects were the tallest things around and they were scarcely higher than some of the pine trees she could see. A few lumpy free-form structures overrun with green vines. No skyscrapers, no spaceports, no traffic jam in the sky. [...] We don't have big cities—they didn't work. You seem disappointed, Connie?" (WET 60)

Through this detailed description of Mattapoissett, Connie appears dissatisfied in that society because it is uncivilized as her native Mexican society where she appreciates life. She says, "It's not like I imagined." Most buildings in Mattapoissett were small and randomly scattered among trees and shrubbery and gardens, put together of scavenged old wood, old bricks and stones and cement blocks. She saw bicycles and people on foot. In the distance beyond a blue dome cows were grazing, ordinary black-and-white and brown-and-white cows chewing ordinary grass past a stone fence. (WET 61)

Connie does not like the primitive society of Mattapoissett. In that society, they travel by bicycle, foot, or floater that is better than the loud air travel and needs no expenses. They look primitive in that community. They use bicycles as we find them. "Any bike not in use, I can use" (WET 364). There is a lack of luxury, prosperity, and modernity. Connie believes that such sufferings should have no place in Mattapoissett. Claire P. Curtis describes Mattapoissett saying, "The village of Mattapoissett is culturally and religiously Native American. Nevertheless, ethnically the association between inherited past and traditional past has been damaged. Thus, the novel mentions villages that are Ashkenazic and "Harlem-Black," but the inhabitants of every village are diverse. (157)

Therefore, Connie feels confused when she enters Mattapoissett in the year 2173 as they have some different principles and rules in that society. Everyone in this society is obligated to work in farming and cleaning. Other tasks like the prosperity of public, organizing the transportation, and public service are among the tasks that everyone should also participate. Men and women are equal in that society where education is an optional service.

### III. Unconventional sex, Gender and Family structure

People's social life is entirely different such as the concept of sex and gender in Mattapoissett. Mattapoissett people can couple with the same gender. There are only human emotions regardless of what your gender is. Piercy tries to explain how this futuristic society is different. She tries to stress that Mattapoissett is a genderless society; it only contains males and females biologically. Curtis explains the reason beyond presenting such a different picture of sexual freedom saying:

Piercy has produced this sexual and procreative freedom in a society where no sexual act is ever for the purpose of procreation. Thus, just as she has separated cultural identity from any physical appearance, so has she separated intercourse itself from any desire to leave a genetic nine months? This decision, which is described as having taken place once women saw pregnancy as a power that needed to be given up to achieve full equality with men, is understood to have been made deliberately, but also with a sense that any rational person would clearly make this choice. (158)

Family structure has another perspective in the world of Mattapoissett. Women are not responsible for pregnancy and giving birth. There are rooms known as "brooders" which produce embryos to replace the wombs. Luciente mentions "embryos are growing and ready to birth. They do that at nine month plus two or three weeks. Sometimes they wait ten month believing that extra time gives stronger babies". (WET 94). There is no traditional family structure in Mattapoissett due to the scientific development of the process of birth. Connie and Luciente talk about the role of science in society saying "But it sounds like some kind of dictatorship. I mean in our time, science was kept pure maybe. Only scientists could judge other scientists. All kinds of stories about how scientists got persecuted by the church or governments and all that because they were doing their science. (WET 96)

Birth is an entirely different concept from our own. In that futuristic society, no child can be born until someone in society dies. Piercy tries to show how they control society strictly. She also indicates that the age of human is not long. They create a new child when they lose one to replace this person in society. Thus, the population remains the same as they replace the highly qualified people in society with similar ones. For

example, when one of the characters, Jackrabbit, dies in war; a similar one is created to replace him and maintain his role in society. They create persons with higher characteristics when a special person dies.

Kathy Rudy mentions, "In *Mattapoisett*, motherhood is available to people of both genders. Indeed, Piercy virtually eliminates fatherhood as a function in her utopian world, without eliminating men. Then she concludes saying, "Piercy's novel teaches us that the very fact that women have babies is already inside a system that presumes fixed gender roles and heterosexual coupling for reproduction; for Piercy, these aspects of the system warrant serious critique. Because there is no live birth and men can have the position of mothers, there is no need to oppress women. In this Utopia, live birth is surrendered in order that women may escape oppression. (29)

There is a different system of mothering in that society. It is strange that there is no mention of fathers in that society. In *Mattapoisett*, it is not common that all mothers get pregnant and breastfeed their children. Mothering is a matter of choice, and the two words "father" and "mother" are not used anymore as a sex-determined. Both the mother and the father can breastfeed. Connie says, "How can men be mothers! How can some kid who isn't related to you be your child?" (*WET* 105). In fact, this radical change in the family structure shocks Connie horribly. Some hormones produce milk to fathers to give them the ability to breastfeed like mothers. Claire P. Curtis comments on the use of technology to give fathers the opportunity to breastfeed their children by saying:

Piercy wants to rethink reproductive technology so that a woman's body need not be the only gestational locale, and male breast-feeding is not only possible but clearly desirable. The irony of Piercy's work (*He, She, It* plays with the same idea) is that Connie is herself being proposed as an experimental subject in a brain procedure (not unlike an electronically induced lobotomy) to control what are seen to be her violent tendencies. This technology points toward the future of virtual reality and contract sex. (157)

Curtis stresses Piercy's aim beyond using technology in the novel saying that the irony is that having a technology of one kind that will lead to the end of human life necessitates having a technology of another kind that will save it. In this sense, Piercy is thinking about the relationship among humans, the natural and the artificial in a different way (157). On the other hand, there is a freedom of changing the sexual partner because desires change from time to time. In his book *Feminist Utopia*, Francis Bartkowski states: "the sexual rearrangements of Piercy's vision allow her to construct a comprehensive alternative family: a non-gender-specific world in terms of tasks, functions, behavior, yet still a world of people biologically male and female" (69).

Mothering consists of a group of three called kid-binding who vow to care for the child. The three mothers can be a mixture of males and females. Those three persons must stay together for mothering. All children are living together in large nurseries. Members of both sexes participate in all kinds of physical work. Children have the freedom to be isolated from their family. They do not belong to their mothers. Rather, they belong to their community. They can leave their families at the age of twelve or fourteen.

Piercy tries to tell her reader about the suffering of mothering in the current society. S. Lillian Kremer points out in her article "Marge Piercy (1936- ) From "Holocaust Literature: An Encyclopedia of Writers and Their Work":

Because birth and motherhood made women a target population in the camps, it is not surprising to find inmate response to pregnancy, abortion, and infanticide in the work of a feminist like Piercy. These subjects enter the novel through secondary characters who collaborate in hiding pregnancy and birth from camp guards. (3)

Piercy uses this concept of mothers as a mirror to reflect it in her real society. In her article "When Women and Men Mother," Diane Ehrensaft discusses family structures in the private level and the public level of work and politics. She states that "female dominated household to believe it could not be otherwise: motherhood is women's "natural" calling and her obligation, or her sphere of power and expertise" (44).

Gender has a different perspective in Mattapoisett as it appears as a genderless society. Even the existence of males and females cannot affect the concept of gender in Mattapoisett. There are no differences among human beings. The difference of being male or female does not exist anymore. Children raised in artificial wombs in laboratories. In that society the pronouns, he and she are illuminated. They are no longer used in people's speech and communication. These two pronouns replaced by the word person. Piercy tries to show her reader the clear picture of the utopian society which is free from any suffering or discrimination. You cannot distinguish between the appearance of the males and the females and their role in their families. Someone can say that we can determine the gender of any person by his or her physical appearance like having a breast. But individuals in that community have breasts because men develop breasts to help women with breastfeeding. Connie fails to determine the gender of Luciente at the beginning. She thinks that she is a man because of her physical appearance and voice saying:

He had breasts. Not large ones. Small breasts, like a flat-chested woman temporarily swollen with milk. Then... he began to nurse. The baby stopped wailing and begun (sic) to suck greedily. An expression of serene enjoyment spread over Barbarossa's intellectual schoolmaster's face. (WET 134)

Men are co-mothers with women in that society. Through such differences between Connie's society and Mattapoisett, Piercy builds new ideas of gender and sex. The following extract by Luciente stresses how gender has an entirely different perspective in Mattapoisett.

Yes, how dare any man share that pleasure? These women thought they had won, but they had abandoned to men the last refuge of women. What was special about being a woman here? They had given it all up; they had let men steal from them the last remnants of ancient power, those sealed in blood and in milk (WET 134).

As Luciente explains the structure of family in Mattapoisett:

It was part of women's long revolution. When we were breaking all the old hierarchies. Finally, there was that one thing we had to give up too, the only power we ever had, in return for no more power for anyone. The original production: the power to give birth. Cause as long as we were biologically enchained, we'd never be equal. And males never would be humanized to be loving and tender. So we all became mothers. Every child has three. To break the nuclear bonding. (WET 97)

The extract shows how women struggle to have such social equality with men in Mattapoisett. It also reflects the genderless society that has no rules or laws to determine the male or female position in society. The following lines are a proper analysis of the previous passage by Claire P. Curtis who states:

Piercy recognizes first, the obvious, that women do maintain a power that does not emancipate; and second, that technology can and should be harnessed to improve the conditions of human life in such a way that allow the business of human life to continue. Finally, she creates a community where both men and women share the bodily attachment to children (breast-feeding) without any member of a family (which includes three parents) monopolizing early childcare. (158)

In the previous extract, Connie clearly shows her dissatisfaction with Mattapoisett perspective of gender when she meets a man breastfeeding a baby. "She felt angry," writes Piercy. "Yes, how dare any man share that pleasure? These women thought they had won, but they had abandoned to men the last refuge of women. What was special about a woman here? They had given it all up; they had let men steal from them the last remnants of ancient power, those sealed in blood and in milk" (WET 134).

The idea of having three parents is highly unacceptable for Connie, and Piercy herself comments: "three parents allows for eight-hour shifts, which gives everyone a reasonable chance of getting some rest" (WET 102) where embryos grow into babies. Connie is disgusted by this "baby factory", but Luciente explains: "It was part of women's long revolution . . . . Finally, there was one thing which we had to give up too ... the power to give birth. Cause as long as we were biologically enchained, we'd never be equal" (WET 105). Connie

is initially resistant to what she regards as "canned" babies but comes to the realization that her daughter, in a society like Mattapoisett, would have had a chance to "grow up much better and stronger and smarter than I" (WET 141). It is highly significant to mention that what Piercy imagined in her world of Mattapoisett has become realistic. In 1978, two years after the publication of *Woman on the Edge of Time*, the first test-tube baby introduced to the world.

#### IV. Technique of the novel

The technique of the novel is truly distinctive because the novel details two stories in two different settings and two different periods. It is significant that each period has its features. It appears that Piercy uses many literary tools to reflect a clear dystopian picture of the American society in the 1970s. Some elements of Piercy's style help her to present such a feminist science fiction novel. Piercy introduces the feature of each period and setting. It is worthy to note that Piercy herself does not consider Mattapoisett as utopian. *Woman on the Edge of Time* is a utopian novel, a science fiction novel, and a feminist novel. Using a faraway setting in the future classifies the novel under the utopian genre of literature. The excessive use of technology also labels the novel also under the genre of science fiction. Introducing feminist themes in the novel classifies the novel as a feminist novel.

*Woman on the Edge of Time* includes a clear of science fiction elements. Time travel from (the 1970s) to (2137) and using scientific techniques for the process of birth are clear science fiction elements. Time-travel plays a central role in the events of the story. The purpose of using time travel in the novel is to juxtapose the misery and the terrors of Connie's real society against Mattapoisett. Piercy uses time travel as a metaphor to stand against the current conditions and aims to "speak to those who listen" (WET 196). Connie's journey to Mattapoisett has two aims. First, it takes her to a new place with struggle and evils. Second, it supports Piercy to introduce her story of the depicted utopian world that encourages individual growth and prosperity. Connie plays the role of the central character that connects these two times and places together. The use of different methods of technology in the novel also labels the novel as a science fiction. The Brooders, which they use instead of wombs, is a clear example of how technology helps women for not having pregnancy and feeling the suffering of giving birth.

The utopian novel always has a faraway place in the future where the central character has a utopian life with no suffering or dystopian life with suffering. Choosing Mattapoisett as a futuristic setting is one of the elements that classify the novel under the genre of utopian and dystopian novels. In her article "Towards an Open-Ended Utopia", Bülent Somay writes, "Mattapoisett is not a predominantly feminist or ecological utopia, but a conglomeration of the various utopian aspirations of the '60s and '70s: it strives to bring together the concepts of racial, cultural and sexual liberation in a vision predicated on economic transformation, particularly in regard to property and production" (30). Connie plays the role of the hero who experiences in her community and desires to lead a utopian life. In that distant place, she enters a journey of suffering like that of her society. She is unable to adapt to the principles of that society. Marge Piercy presents utopian and dystopian visions of *Woman on the Edge of Time*. She introduces Mattapoisett give a clear picture to her readers to see the differences between the two societies. According to Connie, utopia lies in the satisfaction of social desires in the community. As Peter Ruppert notes, such open utopias typically achieve their openness through increased reader participation. In particular, he suggests that "in making the reader aware of his or her role in shaping what the future will be, Piercy shows that the struggle for Utopia depends on our actions in an open-ended historical process" (139). Luciente says to Connie "Maybe we exist. Yours is a crux-time. Alternate futures co-exist. Probabilities clash and possibilities wink out forever" (WET 177). Piercy wants to stress to her reader all the defects of the system in her American society in the 1970s.

Piercy employs different techniques to present her feminist issues through this novel. She tackles feminist social concepts like gender, race, class, rape, and sexuality. It introduces a new non-sexist language for depicting human feelings. Piercy invents a different concept of mothering and sex in Mattapoisett to call for her feminist demands. The gender-neutral pronoun "per" is a definite proof of how Mattapoisett deal with the concept of sex. Mothering also reflects equality between males and females in that genderless society of

Mattapoisett. Marge Piercy primarily uses the genre of utopian fiction in *Woman on the Edge of Time* for portraying a feminist revolution. Piercy makes use of utopia and dystopia to criticize some political and social issues in society. She succeeds in calling for her feminist concerns like sex, gender, and race through building a futuristic society.

Piercy presents contradictions between the present and the future. Piercy uses opposition as a technique throughout the events: she shocks us with a present that is clearly full of restrictions and problems that influence the characters negatively. Connie, Dolly and Luis's third wife Adele take drugs at times of crisis. Many of the men in the present are physically violent, like Connie's father and her husband Eddie, or verbally cruel, like Luis. Piercy tries to say that the time of the novel is the same as her time of writing by referring to 1976 in chapter fifteen (WET 289). Piercy juxtaposes this 1970s society with a future in which they solve some of the problems in the present. Margaret Atwood and Piercy have produced insightful reviews of each other's work. Writing about the world of Mattapoisett in *Woman on the Edge of Time*, Atwood states: "Some reviewers treated this part of the book as a regrettable daydream or even a hallucination caused by Connie's madness. Such an interpretation undercuts the entire book" (273).

Piercy's well-crafted narrative led by her great depiction of her main character. Piercy gives space in her work to the reader to follow her main character's experiences and relationships. It is the main character in the novel that helps Piercy to introduce her aim beyond writing the novel. She tackles different issues through her stages of life either in her present society in New York or her utopian society in Mattapoisett. In flashbacks throughout the novel, Piercy gives the reader more information about her central character who struggles in her society. Aged fifteen, she declares: "I won't grow up like you Mama, to suffer and serve. Never to live my own life! I won't!" Marianna's response, "You'll do what women do" (WET 46). This clearly shows how gender controls her destiny. Along with gender, there are some factors like social class and race that stand against Connie. She feels that it is a "crime to be born poor as it was a crime to be born brown" (WET 62). Between these flashbacks into Connie's tragic past and present, we move with her to Mattapoisett for a society that is entirely different from real society. Each visit shows a different aspect: she experiences how relationships work, enjoys a celebration, and witnesses a death. Luciente plays the role of the presenter by showing how this society works, and Connie asks questions and objects some aspects. Connie truly plays a central role as the link between the present and the future. If Connie is mad, then Mattapoisett is a vision of a diseased mind and her journey into the future is unreal. She depicts Connie to clarify the intersections of gender, class, race, and mental illness. She puts her as the powerless woman who suffers in her world. Piercy explores a mixture of utopia and dystopia. According to M. Keith Booker, "the purpose of Piercy's mixture of realism with fantasy of both utopian and dystopian kinds is to challenge [the ideology of rationalism that declares Connie to be mad by presenting explicit alternatives. She projects a Utopia based on fundamentally different principles than those which inform her contemporary society, then depicts a nightmarish Dystopia whose principles are in fact similar to those of present-day America." (341)

Another character in the novel that plays a central role in the events is Luciente. The choice of the character of Luciente helps to link the present and the future. She creates the character of Luciente to be the guide of Connie where she escapes from the utopian world of New York to the utopian world of Mattapoisett. She details different events to emphasize her aim beyond the story. Piercy tries to use distinguished names for her characters to introduce a different language to her story. It is worth noting that the choice of names of the characters and the places is a characteristic feature of utopian literature. The names of her characters carry a symbol beyond using them. For example, the name of Luciente shows a beautiful tone in the novel. "Shining, brilliant, and full of light" (WET 28). She truly plays the role of the light that guide Connie in Mattapoisett. Even Connie name which is Consuelo is a Mexican name which classifies her as a Chicana woman.

Piercy uses metaphoric places in the novel to reflect some issues in her present society. Choosing places like the hospital is very useful. Piercy creates the image of the hospital as a reflection of the American society. In that hospital, some wealthy male doctors take the responsibility for some other casual staff



workers and some other poor nurses who work to have some money to survive financially. On the other hand, patients are women, gay men, and lower class individuals. The patients have no sense of real life.

### Conclusion

Throughout the novel, Piercy gives a detailed description of the difference between the utopian life of Mattapoisett and Connie's dystopian life. The juxtaposition of Connie's two societies serves the author's aim, which is to criticize gender, race, and sex. With the juxtaposition of the two communities, the reader can realize that wrong policies of any system may lead to a dystopian society. Piercy presents Mattapoisett as a typical community in the future with many different aspects from real communities. Some of these aspects are regarded as dystopian ones to some people and utopian ones for others. Childbirth and parenting appear as the most dystopian ones. Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* is regarded as a utopian and a dystopian novel depending upon reader's perspective. It depicts a terrible future with no hope of salvation. Throughout her narrative, Piercy narrates how her main character struggles to survive and live in her world. Connie, the heroine of the novel, leads us to the main events in the narrative. She obviously gets lost in that society because she has no hope. In fact, the novel calls for the society's ability to achieve utopia. Marge presents a message to her reader who realizes by the end of the story that it is the task of people to change their future. The novel poses different questions like: Is Connie insane? , or does she manage to time travel? The novel is ambiguous about these issues. Piercy depicts the events of the novel towards answering these questions.

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