

Self-Reflection on Three Dualisms: A Critical Utopian Study of Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*

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Abstract

The tradition of utopian thought in western culture has been a long one. Although the word utopia emerges from Thomas More's *Utopia* was published in 1516, the origin of utopian thought can be dated back to Plato's *Republic*. It has been inspiring people and encouraging people to fight against the conflicts in their society and work for a better world. However, utopian imagination and utopian writing encountered a bleak situation in the 20th century until the emergence of critical utopian novels in the 1960s. Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* is one of them. Although some scholars have studied this work and thought highly of the utopian world to eliminate sexism, racism, and anthropocentrism, the above criticism fails to explore the significance of this elimination from a self-reflective perspective, which is an essential reason for utopia revival in the 1960s-1970s. This article aims to analyze Marge Piercy's novel *Woman on the Edge of Time* from self-reflection to explore how this novel, as a critical utopian one, injects vitality into utopian writing.

Keywords

Woman on the Edge of Time, Critical Utopia, Self-Reflection, Sexism, Racism, Anthropocentrism

1. Introduction

Utopia is constructed to reveal social conflicts in current society, and to inspire people to against them and fight for a better future. However, the expose of controversies always lags behind its emergence. Specifically, sexism has never been emphasized in traditional utopian works until the contemporary age despite its

long-term existence before that. Racism and anthropocentrism encounter similar situations. Although the time gap between the emergence and its reveal is understandable, it can be reduced if utopia writers focus on these conflicts in a reasonable time. Indeed, writers of traditional utopia writings are representative of the interests of white male capitalists who devote themselves to maintaining current positions, therefore, aim at pointing out social inequalities between classes in public areas and displaying a utopian world eliminating them. At the same time, the imbalance between two genders, different races, as well as humans and nature were ignored. This ignorance leads to a consequence as Piercy mentions in *Woman on the Edge of Time*,

“The anger of the weak never goes away, Professor, it just gets a little moldy. It molds like a beautiful blue cheese in the dark, growing stronger and more interesting. The poor and the weak die with all their anger intact and probably those anger go on growing in the dark of the grave like the hair and the nails (Piercy, 2016).”

Thus, some conflicts will not disappear until be emphasized and eliminated. In light of this, although utopia writings aim to reveal and solve social problems, there is some of them remain ignored by the writers which indicate traditional utopias fail to represent the interests of marginalized groups.

This situation is improved since the emergence of the 1970s utopian writings. Tom Moylan identifies them as critical utopia since they express some inevitable social conflicts against the historical situation in an explosive way (Moylan, 2014). In this way, critical utopia is a self-reflection on traditional utopia's objects of criticism that injects vitality into utopia writings.

Woman on the Edge of Time is a characteristically critical utopia work in the 1970s written by Marge Piercy. It tells the protagonist Connie, a 37-year-old Mexican American woman who suffers physically and psychologically in a white male-dominated society. As a marginalized person in New York, she is betrayed by her niece Dolly and coops in a mental hospital where she comes across Luciente, a resident of Mattapoissett, in 2137, through Connie's gift of mental sensitivity. Luciente brings Connie to the utopia, a village that is decentralized and democratic, anarcho-communist, feminist, ecologically friendly. The visiting experience raises Connie's awareness of resistance. It drives her to carry out the plan of poisoning the doctors in the mental hospital who represent the male-dominated society. Although Connie is put into prison after that, her actions inspire the suppressed others to fight for a better future (Piercy, 2016).

This critical utopian novel gets wide recognition for exposing and eliminating some long-standing but ignored social controversies especially sexism, racism and anthropocentrism. Specifically, Kathy Rudy (Rudy, 1997) mentions the technology developed in the utopian world such as ectogenesis dissociates the female body and biological reproduction which might contribute to the freedom of the female body and elimination of gender gaps. Although technological child-birth replaces traditional motherhood, Elaine Orr (Orr, 1993) claims mo-

thering is maximized through extra-uterine bonds since both females and males are offered chances to be mothers. Besides, motherhood is not a bond to physical child-birth but the nurture process. In addition to eliminating sexism, some scholars such as Agnieszka Rzepa (Rzepa, 1997) focus on the interdependence relationships between humans and nature which indicates the remission of anthropocentrism. Although Martin Delveaux elucidates that based on the biological knowledge, ecofeminism implicated in Piercy's utopian world falls to construct a utopian world "free from the misuse of science and power" (Delveaux, 2004), ecofeminist thoughts inspire people to construct a better society which is the significance of utopian projects. Regard other long-existed social conflicts, racism, scholars including Kimberly Lynn Mann (Mann, 2009) and Michael Pitts (Pitts, 2020) think highly of Piercy's solution to the controversies between whites and non-whites. Despite exposing and proposing solutions to three long-standing but ignored social conflicts, the pre-existed studies fail to display the process of self-reflection on traditional utopias' objects of criticism which injects vitality to utopian writings as the core element of critical utopia.

Research question

How does *Woman on the Edge of Time*, as a critical utopian work, contribute to the revival of utopian writing by self-reflecting on three social conflicts?

Aims and focus

To answer this research question, this study will aim at exploring self-reflection on three social conflicts in *Woman on the Edge of Time*. Specifically, it will emphasize self-reflection on three social conflicts between males and females, the white and non-whites, human and nature.

2. Self-Reflection on Male-Female Relations

Utopian writings' self-reflection on sexism develops with the progress of feminist movement and the increasing confidence, and courage of female writers to improve gender discrimination through utopian literature.

Male writers have neglected the inequality between males and females in their traditional utopia works for several centuries. Some classical utopian works seem to display a harmonious society but fail to reveal and eliminate sexism. Although the later feminist movements provide female writers with the power and courage to write for themselves, their utopian works still lack female confidence and are occupied with the shadow of male-patriarchal society. The fight against sexism becomes more radical since the emergence of critical utopia, Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* is a typical one of them.

2.1. Ignored Sexism in Male Writers' Utopian Works

Thomas More's *Utopia* is one of the classical utopian works written by a male writer. More creates a utopian society where resources are equally allocated, education is fair, people are working harmoniously. However, gender inequality seems common in this world. In *Utopia*, "husbands have the power to correct

their wives and parents to chastise their children unless the fault is so great that a public punishment is thought necessary for striking terror into others (More, 2020).” Obviously, in More’s utopia, although social equality is improved, females still suffer psychologically.

From the 16th century, utopian writing has gradually become a narrative form and a media between the present and the unfulfilled future. One bright pearl in this period is Tommaso Campanella’s *The City of the Sun* (1622). In Campanella’s utopia, the female body is still considered the object of reproduction. The power of fertility weighs its value. Specifically, infertile women are forced to join the group of public wives and serve others (Campanella, 2009). In Campanella’s *The City of Sun*, gender inequality is unsettled and female’s body oppression is not emphasized.

It seems that male writers’ traditional utopian writings fail to complete the task of emancipating females’ body and psychology. Thus, fail to eliminate sexism.

2.2. Female Writers’ Incomplete Fight against Sexism

From the 17th to 18th century, consciousness of gender equality and freedom inspires opposition to *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* which only emphasized the rights of men but ignored female rights. Some liberal feminists claim that both men and women are born natural rights and should engage in public affairs. At the same time, the first industrial revolution triggered the dissatisfaction of female workers. Influenced by Condorcet’s pamphlet about admitting women’s civil rights, Olympe de Gouges declared *The Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen* in 1792, which stimulated Mary Wollstonecraft to write *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* in 1792. Although those resistances were suppressed violently, they inspire female writers to take a step to fight for equal rights in their works.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* is one of the most famous traditional utopian works of that age. She is aware of the necessity of female emancipation and creates a feminist utopia. In *Herland*, the women are “athletic-light and powerful” and “highly intelligent”, capable of constructing their own society without male involvement (Gilman, 1915). Besides, females’ value does not base on reproduction. It seems that *Herland* realizes the physical and psychological emancipation of women, however, spiritual emancipation is not realized. In other words, there are still remnants of the male-dominant society in the thoughts of female residents. In addition, the actualization of female body emancipation is dependent on the assumption that residents live in a unisexual society forever, which is not a permanent solution.

Instead of being proud of female virtues and their culture, they seem to think highly of the outside world. The residents consider culture established by the female is backward. But it is hard to get conclusion under the isolated situation unless through their female ancestors. “We cannot really understand it,” Ellador

concluded. “We are only half a people. We have our woman-ways and they have their man-ways and their both-ways. We have worked out a system of living which is, of course, limited. They must have a broader, richer, better one. I should like to see it (Gilman, 1915).”

According to Ellador, residents in herland do not have confidence in their own culture. In chapter 9, Somel (the local people of Herland) says to the narrator, “by no means, we are, as you soon found out, extremely limited in knowledge...the passionate eagerness among thousands of us to go to your country and learn-learn-learn (Gilman, 1915)!” It is pointed out that Gilman’s ideal society is a bisexual one, but the narrating process indicates that women cannot live a good life unless they know the male world. In other words, women have to rely on males to create a better world. In light of it, this novel fails to realize female psychological emancipation. Besides, the solution to an uncontrolled female body is not a permanent one.

2.3. Marge Piercy’s Radical Fight against Sexism

With the increasing awareness of the oppressed group influenced by the victory of the anti-fascist war, the revolution for the independence of many colonies, the rise of feminism, and the far-reaching influence of deconstruction theories, several writers from the subordinate position grasp their pens to write for themselves. As a female writer, Marge Piercy is brave and considerate enough to portrait a critical utopia concerning and eliminating the disharmonious relationships between males and females.

Connie’s awareness of the oppression has been raised through her experience of traveling utopia and dystopia. She realizes that if there is nobody to resist against the male dominant society, our dystopian future is approaching after visiting the hegemonic dystopia where female body and psychology have been contracted by male dominated society.

2.3.1. From the Controlled Female Body to the Liberated Female Body

The control of female body is reflected in several aspects including bonding female’s value to reproduction and child rearing, and regarding female bodies as tools for sex.

In Marge Piercy’s alternative society, brooders bear the task of reproduction. “This is the brooder, where our genetic material is stored. Where the embryos grow (Piercy, 2016).” The emergence of brooder unfetters females from the mission of reproduction which erases the biggest physical difference between two genders and unfetters females from the obligation of childbirth. Besides, the value of female does not be associated with reproduction. Thus, infertile females will not be discriminated against by the male-dominated society.

Except for the freedom of the female body, an important effect of ectogenesis is the raise of the female economic status. Since child reproduction costs a lot of energy and time for women which leads to less time to improve working abilities and makes them less competitive than men in works to some extent. Gilman

systematically demystifies the home, describing it “as a chaotic hothouse governed by ignorance where the woman is overwhelmed with work and where her emotional and intellectual energies are frustrated to the point of neurosis. From an economic point of view the system is enormously wasteful” qtd. in (Donovan, 2006). The economic value is weighed by capacities rather than gender differences. It is unequal that housewives do “countless” housework and give birth to babies while husbands go out to work and earn money with the exchange value. Women should be freed from maternal reproduction, choose their own ways of living and achieve their own value rather than depending on men. Obviously, the tradition of wives’ duties at home is a weapon of husbands’ approach to control wives. The freedom from maternal reproduction contributes to economic freedom from the male hierarchy.

Regarding female sexuality, in current society, female body is considered a tool for male pleasure. This situation is common especially in traditional couples and other intimate relationships. However, this obligatory sexual life is over in Marge Piercy’s utopia with the abolishment of traditional marriages. As Piercy displays, “We couple. Not for money, not for a living. For love, for pleasure, for relief, out of habit, out of curiosity and lust (Piercy, 2016).” This transformation liberates females from sexual obligation and provides them with a chance for mastering their own bodies.

2.3.2. From the Controlled Female Psychology to the Liberated Female Psychology

As mentioned earlier, females are influenced by male-dominated families and muted to express their own feelings in traditional utopian writings. This influence originated from psychological oppression in traditional father-dominated family pattern, leads to self-objectification. Self-objectification is the dominant groups impose upon the subordinate ones to consolidate their position roots in females’ minds. In light of this, women regard themselves as objects subordinated to men.

Women in Connie’s world are absurdly socialized according to men’s conceptions of reality. Connie’s niece, Dolly, for example, “is a prostitute who changes her appearance so that she looks more like the white male’s idea of a beautiful woman (Maciunas, 2010).” And Gildina, the woman Connie meets in the dystopia, has been physically adapted to pleasing men in a way that recalls Chinese foot-binding and other forms of mutilation of female body by male society to establish and mark ownership. In the prevailing culture, women tend to live with men’s affection and attention, they try to please men to get achievements. Typically, women’s fashion-beauty complex is a kind of internalization. Most women spend money on the cost of various kinds of cosmetics, clothes, losing weight, even doing plastic surgeries. The advertisements and other media build a utopia full of consumption, creating a kind of illusion that the commodity will make consumers more beautiful and happier. In fact, most commodities are not that effective at all, the overuse of them even does harm to female health. Women

cost their money, hold a serious attitude towards their bodies, stand in front of the mirror several times every day, they cannot wait to transform themselves into dream girls of men and gradually forget who they are, what they like, what kind of person they want to become. If trapped in the swamp like Geraldo's, life will become miserable like a slave. The will of women is supposed to be held in their own hands rather than in control of men like Geraldo.

As a consequence of female emancipation, female residents in the utopian world have quit the lifestyle that flatters men, they can display true selves. The behavior of Luciente is a vivid example, when Connie first meets Luciente, she finds that "Luciente sat down, taking up more space than women ever did. She squatted, she sprawled, she strolled, never thinking about how her body was displayed (Piercy, 2016)." Apparently, the woman in Marge Piercy's utopia is independent and refuses to be an object of anyone else. They hold freedom both physically and spiritually. Since Luciente grows up in an environment where there is no bondage of gender to social position, she cannot understand the wired opinion that a female should behave gracefully like a so-called lady or she is not an acceptable woman. Therefore, the primary aim of female resistance is to get awareness of the oppressed situation and the position of women and raise the self-awareness of their own abilities and independent will.

3. A Self-Reflection on White-Nonwhite Relations

Although racism occurs later than sexism, traditional utopian writers have enough time to observe it. Nevertheless, they fail to reveal or resolve the problem of racism in their utopian works. However, as a female writer who concerns about the interests and rights of the oppressed groups, Marge Piercy uncovers the controversies between whites and nonwhites in her alternative society and achieves a harmonious relationship between them.

3.1. Establishment of Race Related Hierarchy

Racism is a biased way of thinking used by white people to oppress non-whites. There is no widely acknowledged evidence to prove that one race is superior to the other. But the research on physical typology increased the credibility of racial discrimination in the age of Enlightenment. After extensive research, the classical scholar Frank Snowden could find no evidence that dark skin color served as the basis of invidious distinctions anywhere in the ancient world. The early Christians, for example, celebrated the conversion of Africans as evidence for their faith in the spiritual equality of all human beings (Snowden, 1983). Thus, it can be seen that Africans did not be discriminated against because of their genes. (Fredrickson, 2002) also articulates that there was "no ethnic prejudice in antiquity". In other words, "one of the principal forms of modern racism—the color-coded, white-over-black variety—did not have significant medieval roots and was mainly a product of the modern period (Fredrickson, 2002)."

However, according to Fredrickson, the scientific thought of the Enlighten-

ment becomes a precondition for the growth of modern racism based on physical typology. In 1735, the great Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus included humans within the primate genus and then attempted to divide that species into varieties. This early stab at the scientific classification of human types included some mythical and “monstrous” creatures, still, the durable heart of the schema was the differentiation Linnaeus made among Europeans, American Indians, Asians, and Africans. Although he did not explicitly rank them, Linnaeus’s descriptions of the races had his preferences. Europeans he described as “acute, inventive...” governed by laws. Blacks, on the other hand, were “crafty, indolent, negligent...” governed by caprice (Fredrickson, 2002). The research of Fredrickson points out that one of the primary weapons of racist is called the genes-related hierarchy.

The Enlightenment witnesses the great progress of natural science which inclined to divide human beings into various species based on genes and preferred to establish a bond between genes and culture. Although the racist regimes have been overthrown, the invisible inequality is still spreading. In the words of Fredrickson, “the prejudice and discrimination, fortified by ideologies claiming that the differences between human groups of apparently divergent ancestry are immutable and have implications for social inclusion or ranking (Fredrickson, 2002).” And compared with the overt racist regime, the invisible discrimination and the inconspicuous rules can produce a more profound and lasting influence on human culture. The most obvious example is the Jim Crow laws [laws of the southern states and border states of the United States that the segregated people of color (mainly African Americans, but also other ethnic groups)] which proclaim insistently that the differences between the dominant group and the one that is being subordinated or eliminated are permanent and unbridgeable. This radical difference and alienation are most clearly and dramatically expressed in laws forbidding interracial marriage. Social segregation is mandated by law and not merely the product of custom or private acts of discrimination that are tolerated by the state. The object is to bar all forms of contact that might imply equality between the segregator and the segregated. Outgroup members are excluded from holding public office or even exercising the franchise, which keeps nonwhites especially black people deliberately impoverished (Fredrickson, 2002).

3.2. Racism in Traditional Utopias

The side effect of gene related discrimination successfully draws the attention of Aldous Huxley, in his *Brave New World*, despite the fact that the vitro propagation seems to be the good news for women’s body liberation, the ruling class manipulates science to oppress people before they are born. The genetics are set up and divided into five different ranks named Alpha, Beta, Gammas, Deltas and Epsilons. In his dystopia, “Alpha children wear grey. They work much harder than we do because they’re so frightfully clever. I’m really awfully glad I’m a Beta, because I don’t work so hard. And then we are much better than the Gammas and Deltas. Gammas are stupid. They all wear green, and Delta children wear

khaki. Oh no, I don't want to play with Delta children. And Epsilons are still worse. They're too stupid to be able (Huxley, 2000)."

The so-called advanced technology is used to classify people and consolidate the hierarchy. Science is controlled by the ruling class, while the ruled people have no choice but to accept the situation since their fates are decreed physiologically. "The lower the caste,' said Mr. Foster, 'the shorter the oxygen.' The first organ affected was the brain, after that the skeleton. At seventy percent of normal oxygen, you got dwarfs, at less than seventy eyeless monsters (Huxley, 2000)." From this perspective, human culture has overridden the hand of nature. The technology changes the reproduction mode and creates a delicate totalitarian. Racism can be found in this story, too. Mr. Foster talks about negro ovary in a disdainful tone, "You should see the way a negro ovary responds to pituitary! It's quite astonishing when you're used to working with European material (Huxley, 2000)." Since then, the clue shows that modern society is damaged by the genes-related hierarchy which aggravates racism and intensifies racial conflicts. According to George M. Fredrickson's research, "white supremacy attained its fullest ideological and institutional development in the southern United States between the 1890s and the 1950s (Fredrickson, 2002)." Although racist regimes have been overthrown later and the ideologies on which they were based have been discredited. What we may fail to realize is that "their demise also means that the virus of racism has been exterminated or that it has merely mutated into new and still-virulent forms (Fredrickson, 2002)."

The classic dystopian novels represented by Huxley's *Brave New World* reveal the racial conflict of this stage radically. The genetics are set up, and divided into five different ranks named Alpha, Beta, Gammas, Deltas and Epsilons respectively.

Alpha children wear grey. They work much harder than we do, because they're so frightfully clever. I'm really awfully glad I'm a Beta, because I don't work so hard. And then we are much better than the Gammas and Deltas. Gammas are stupid. They all wear green, and Delta children wear khaki. Oh no, I don't want to play with Delta children. And Epsilons are still worse. They're too stupid to be able (Huxley, 2000).

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3.3. Elimination of Race Related Hierarchy in Marge Piercy's Critical Utopia

2137's Mattapoissett (the critical utopian world) in *Woman on the Edge of Time* exposes and proposes solutions to the disharmonious relationship between different races. In that utopian world, race is not considered as a standard of evaluating people. The idea is displayed by Luciente in the story as follows.

At grandcil—grand council—decisions were made forty years back to breed a high proportion of darker-skinned people and mix the genes well through the population. At the same time, we decided to hold on to separate cultural identities. But we broke the bond between genes and culture, broke it forever. We want there to be no chance of racism again. But we don't want the melting pot where everybody ends up with thin gruel. We want diversity, for strangeness breeds richness (Piercy, 2016).

From this perspective, the abolishing of the bond between genes and culture contributes to the elimination of racism. The value of diversity does not mean the existence of the dominant and the subordinate but the coexistence of equal beings. Just as residents in the alternative society give up evaluating a person by gender, they also quit the evaluation based on race. On the contrary, people in this critical utopia respect the "Creeps", like Indians. As Luciente introduces, "those lands are strongly protected, under their control...The Cree have a mixed way of living. They hunt and fish; they've created some Far North agriculture, some handicraft, limited manufacture. They have to take care, for the land is fragile (Piercy, 2016)." Instead of killing Indians and taking their lands, residents in Marge Piercy's critical utopia choose to respect them, protect their lands and learn their discipline of wholeness. It is a great privilege to learn ancient totality, and sometimes people have to wait six years to get the chance. Thus, breaking the bond between genes and culture contributes to harmonies between different races in Marge Piercy's critical utopia.

4. A Self-Reflection on Human-Nature Relations

According to Neil Kessler, "it is the split and imposed imbalance between human and more-than-human that is seen as the foundation of anthropocentrism

(Kessler, 2019).” These disharmonies mainly lie in the anthropocentrism, which results from the split of human beings and nature. This disharmony is also eliminated in Marge Piercy’s critical utopia.

4.1. Establishment of Anthropocentrism

Before the agricultural society, human beings survived relying on nature’s nurture. At that time, they worshipped nature and even feared nature. In the agrarian community, human beings began to cultivate and make use of natural resources. In the natural state, human beings struggle with nature for their survival and form a good and straightforward virtue in the mutual relationship with nature. However, the harmonious relationship has gradually changed since the 17th century. According to Descola’s research, in the seventeenth century, however, a separation between nature and humanity gained acceptance among both the supporters of a mechanistic world and the partisans of an organicist one. From then on, nature becomes an autonomous ontological domain, a field of inquiry and scientific experimentation, an object to be exploited and improved (Descola, 2013).

With the development of human ability, the relationship between human beings and nature has changed. Human beings gradually separate from the natural world and establish a human society by governing nature and letting nature become an inferior part of the human world. This action indicates the rejection of the interdependence between human beings and nature and leads to opposition.

Val Plumwood elucidates that “the western model of human/nature relations has the properties of dualism...which results from a certain kind of denied dependency on a subordinated more-than-human other (Plumwood, 1993).” Kessler (Kessler, 2019) further explains dualisms in his words, “dualisms and the ontological conceptualizations they undergird form a self-fulfilling, self-reinforcing, and ultimately hegemonic lens through which human-nature relational experiences are filtered in the modern world (Kessler, 2019).” Since then, the separation between human beings and nature has evolved into a hegemonic relationship.

The denial of interdependence is rooted in human thoughts. Human beings begin their exploitation of natural resources and the environment without restraint since from their perspectives, nature is inferior and mute, nature will not resist and revenge on human beings. Therefore, human beings neglect the outcome of ecological damages, which turns out to be narrow and limited. The dualism of human culture and nature brings about numerous disasters in the world. Plumwood describes a scene of ecological disasters.

We are mainly going backward in the vital area of containing energy consumption. We are facing growing pollution of land, air, and water, growing problems of the destruction of the forests. On the wild side too, primate researchers speak of an “animal holocaust”: we hear of the massive displacement of orangutans, the slaughter of African gorillas, ivory is once again on the world

trade menu, and there is a movement to resume the full-scale slaughter of whales (Plumwood, 2005).

4.2. Anthropocentrism in the Dystopian World

The disharmony of humans and nature has not been criticized until 1970s, and most traditional utopias fail to reveal it. The self-reflection on the relationship between humans and nature bases on the dystopian world Piercy created.

It is not hard to determine the catastrophic outcome in a dystopia when Connie breaks in and comes across Gildina by accident. Gildina's mother, like the other middle people in that era, lives an average life of 40 years or so. What's worse to the poor people is that they are all diseased, just walking organ banks, as Cash says, and even half the time the liver's rotten. It isn't like they have any use. Some are pithed for simple functions, but they live like animals out where it isn't conditioned. Such a sight—if you could see far, it would stretch forever. Luckily, you can't see more than a few feet (Piercy, 2016).

The disharmonious development of humans and nonhuman society has led to an extreme deterioration of the ecological environment, which aggravates the gap between the ruling class and the ruled people. The fact proves that victims are always the subordinate ones. The rich people who can afford the medicos, organs and space platforms live much longer than 200 years, while ordinary people only live an average life of 40 years (Piercy, 2016). The dominant class exploits the natural environment for their own benefit and can afford to survive despite the terrible outcomes. In contrast, the ordinary people have no choice but to wait for their death in the toxic environment. Compared with human beings as the dominant, the plantations, animals, and lands have faded out without any protection. The beautiful natural scenery cannot be found any longer. If you are keen on scenery, many pictures can be accessible to change.

If human beings are genuinely independent of nature, they won't miss the past scenery of nature and won't be influenced by natural disasters. They are suffered and pay for what they have done in everyday life and begin to regret their behaviors of exploiting the natural environment. The food for ordinary people "comes in packets, which is made from coal and algae and wood by-products, only rich people eat animal tissues (Piercy, 2016)." From this perspective, the inharmonious relationship between human beings and nature reduces the overall living quality of human beings. They destroy the nature and at the same time ruin the life of themselves. As the expansion of human desire, they transform grassland into highways, animals into furs and decorations, fields into buildings. Human beings take it for granted that natural sources are always available to exploit and have no hesitation in taking rather than giving.

4.3. Elimination of Anthropocentrism in Marge Piercy's Critical Utopia

Connie's prevailing world and the dystopia she breaks in by accident witness a failure and disasters of anthropocentrism. However, Marge Piercy's utopia dis-

plays a balanced view between human culture and nature. The residents of 2137's Mattapoisett think highly of the wholeness of human beings and nature, which is the critical factor of their harmonious life. In chapter 14, Connie met a drifter named Waclaw, he waited for 6 years to get privilege of studying with "Creeps" who enjoy a mixed way of living, "only hunting, gathering, and some scientific activities go on...They hunt and fish, they've created some Far North agriculture, some handicraft, limited manufacture (Piercy, 2016)." From this point of view, the sense of wholeness is highly valued in this alternative world. Residents there respect the indigenous people and their living which indicates the interdependency of human beings and nature. Compared with the utilization of land in skyscrapers and factories under construction, local people in Mattapoisett choose to keep grounds for woods which draws Connie's attention,

"How come you leave so much woods?" Connie asked. "Like that argument at the council. All over Mouth-of-Mattapoisett, I see patches of woods, meadows, swamps, marshes. You could clear a lot more land." Luciente said, "Every patch of woods as a bank of wild genes. In your time, thousands of species were disappearing (Piercy, 2016)."

In the mind of the citizens in 1976 New York, everything of nature can be used to make benefits since human beings are superior to nature and independent of nature. But this dualism has led to revenge by nature. At the top of the food chain, the elimination of biodiversity can bring about devastating disasters. To keep the original state of the natural environment, the residents of alternative societies choose to live an agricultural life since they know the significance of maintaining biodiversity. Instead of believing in anthropocentrism, they regard human beings as a part of nature. Human beings and nature are interdependent. The harmony between the two can be recognized as a guarantee of a harmonious life between human beings and nature. Therefore, Luciente expresses her opinion towards human beings and nature,

"We're part of the web of nature. Don't you find that beautiful?"

"Like dumb animals? No! Dust to dust and all that?" "We have a hundred ceremonies to heal us to the world we live in with so many others. Listen."

Luciente waved toward the child and the old man, who had finished picking blackberries. They sang together as they got ready to leave:

"Thank you for fruit.

We take what we need.

Other animals will eat."

"Thank you for fruit,

carrying your seed.

What you give is sweet.

Live long and spread!"

"We learn when we're kids to say that to every tree or bush we pick from (Piercy, 2016)."

These words indicate the revival of the worship of nature. One of the reasons why Luciente and other residents is that the agricultural lifestyle is a proper state of human civilization and nature. Although the development of the technology and urbanization contributes to the advanced daily life of human beings, this improvement is at the expense of the natural environment. People in the alternative society think more highly of the harmonious life between human beings and nature, and this thought leads to agricultural life. Compared with modernized metropolises, an agrarian life is not civilized in appearance. However, the ideal of establishing this environmentally friendly utopia is more civilized in ways of thinking.

5. The Self-Reflection on Dualism

The disintegration between males and females, whites and nonwhites, human beings and nature are dualisms. But in the beginning, most human beings fail aware of it, which leads to more severe consequences. Plumwood notes that dualisms “may lurk in the background in the unexamined and concealed form...and form a web or network. One dualism passes easily into the other, linked to it by well-traveled pathways of conventional or philosophical assumption (Plumwood, 1993).” The dualisms of male and female, whites, and nonwhites, and human and nature have existed in people’s minds and one influenced by a type of dualism can be easily affected by another dualism. The essence of duality is a hegemonic constellation. Ursula K. Le Guin once points out that.

The central problem is the problem of exploitation-exploitation of women, of the weak, of the earth. Our curse is alienation, the separation of yang from yin. Instead of a search for balance and integration, there is a struggle for dominance. Divisions are insisted upon, interdependence is denied. The dualism of value that destroyed us, the dualism of superior/inferior, ruler/ruled, owner/owned, use/used, might give way to what seems to me, from here, a much healthier, sounder, more promising modality of integration and integrity (Le Guin, 1992).

Thus, the awareness of dualism is the first step of transforming the world into an interdependent and integrated one which is one of the vitality of Marge Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time*.

6. Conclusion

This article analyzes Marge Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time* from the perspective of utopia’s self-reflection on objections of criticism—dualisms between two genders, whites, and nonwhites, human and nature. This analysis points out the significance of this novel not only lies in the elimination of three long-existent conflicts which traditional utopian novels have neglected, but also bases on its awareness of dualisms as an origin of human disaster. Although the problems of dualism cannot be resolved thoroughly because of the emergence of this novel, its awareness contributes to the becoming of an interdependent and integrated world.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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