

Hasan Nassour

Abortion-Related Anxieties and Colonizing the Female Body in Leni Zumas's *Red Clocks*

Abstract: The essay explores the rising popularity of feminist dystopian fiction in literary studies, focusing on Leni Zumas' novel *Red Clocks*. It investigates how political anxieties are depicted through the interior monologues of four main female characters, highlighting the colonization of the female body as they grapple with unwanted pregnancies and resort to illegal means for abortions. The study suggests that feminist dystopian fiction, exemplified by *Red Clocks*, can be prophetic, anticipating issues such as abortion rights restrictions in the United States. The paper underscores the genre's role in raising awareness among women, depicting a world where men dictate how women should manage their bodies.

Keywords: Feminist Dystopia; Reproductive Rights; Patriarchy; Abortion; Anxieties.

HASAN NASSOUR

Shoolini University, Himachal Pradesh, India
hasannassour7@gmail.com

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Introduction

Feminist dystopian fiction delves into themes of oppression and the control of women's bodies and rights by patriarchal entities. These narratives envision a future where reproductive rights are confiscated by a ruling elite that views the female body as a sight that must be tightly controlled and regulated. Leni Zumas's *Red Clocks* aligns with this tradition, portraying a dystopian USA where the Personhood Amendment criminalizes abortion. The narrative prompts critical reflections on women's predicaments in a society dictated by unelected officials, questioning patriarchal practices affecting mental health. In this concise exploration, *Red Clocks* contributes to the feminist dystopian tradition, advocating for women's autonomy amid oppressive systems.

1. Abortion-Related Anxieties

Mattie's narrative, which unfolds predominantly by a heavy use of the stream of consciousness narrative technique, is far away from being an adoption

narrative, one which Barbara Melosh describes as “quest narratives,”¹ with the primary goal being the search for lost biological origins. These origins are often seen as crucial in defining a character’s sense of self. Within adoption novels, the pursuit of an authentic origin carries significant importance. The author not only recounts their journey to uncover a narrative about their past but also seeks to establish their identity. Truth-telling holds immense value in this context, serving as an implicit assurance that the author will prioritize truth over fiction whenever possible. On the contrary, Mattie’s narrative serves to highlight not the mission of tracing back her origins or biological parents, but rather resorting to illegal activities under the new law in order not to make her child go through the trauma and the pain that she experiences as an adopted child, something that Mattie finds herself obsessively reflecting on throughout her narrative.

Mattie’s intense desire to terminate her pregnancy is intertwined with her obsessive contemplation of her biological mother’s identity and why she chose to place her for adoption. These two themes intersect, offering a dual perspective on the anxieties associated with adoption and abortion, which emerge as two interconnected aspects of the same traumatic experience within Mattie’s narrative. They both represent the profound emotional struggles and complexities inherent in Mattie’s journey, reflecting the deep-seated fears and challenges she faces throughout her exploration of her origins and the decision to terminate her pregnancy.

Mattie’s obsessive thinking about her biological mother is revealed to us through chunks of stream of consciousness that

permeate her narrative, something that serves to stress how adopted children struggle internally with adoption-related anxieties regarding their true identity though they may choose to not talk about it. In other words, it shows how Mattie, an adopted child loved by her adoptive parents and who never for once in the narrative verbalizes her longing for uncovering the truth about the identity of her biological mother, is consumed with feelings of loss and is obsessively wondering why she was abandoned. These feelings of abandonment and loss combined with an un verbalized longing to meet her biological mother are evident in the following extract:

Maybe she
 Was too young.
 Was too old – didn’t have the energy.
 Already had six kids.
 Knew she was about to die of cancer.
 Was a tweaker.
 Just didn’t feel like dealing.
 It was a closed adoption. There is no way to find her, aside from a private detective the daughter can’t afford yet.
 So she dreams.
 About her bio mother getting famous for developing a cure for paralysis and being on the cover of a magazine in the checkout line, where the daughter instantly recognizes her face.
 About her bio mother finding her.
 The daughter comes down the school steps, the three o’clock bell is ringing, and a woman in sunglasses rushes up, shouting, “Are you mine?”²

This passage reveals a compelling aspect of Mattie’s character as she endeavors to rationalize the circumstances

surrounding her biological mother's decision to abandon her. Despite lacking any expression of resentment or bitterness towards this act, Mattie engages in a process of self-justification, seeking reasons that could explain her mother's choice. Equally intriguing is Mattie's profound yearning to meet her biological mother, as evident in her contemplation of the question "Are you mine?"³ This longing for a reunion with her biological mother, coupled with her attempts to justify the abandonment, can be seen as a coping mechanism employed by Mattie to shield herself from feelings of bitterness and self-deprecation, a phenomenon commonly observed in many studies on adopted children.

Mattie, despite initially appearing as an adoptee unaffected by her experience, offers subtle glimpses into her journey of discovering her adoption through the use of indirect interior monologue. This narrative technique grants readers access to the psychological turmoil that adopted children often endure, both during their upbringing and into adulthood. As Mattie grapples with an unplanned pregnancy, her preoccupation with the decision of whether to keep the child or not becomes evident. Her decision to not keep the child serves as a poignant reflection of her determination to spare them the potential hardships of being raised in an adoptive family, where the knowledge of their biological mother's abandonment may eventually come to light. In this decision, two significant aspects come to the forefront. Firstly, it exposes the bitterness and emotional distress that Mattie herself experienced as an adopted child. Secondly, by choosing abortion, she seeks to protect another individual, her unborn baby, from the pain and

emotional turmoil associated with adoption. The following passage encapsulates this sentiment clearly:

She doesn't want to wonder; and she would.

The kid too – *Why wasn't I kept?*

Was his mother too young? Too old?

Too hot? Too cold?

She doesn't want him wondering, or herself wondering.

Are you mine?

And she doesn't want to worry she'll be found.

Selfish.

But she has a self. Why not use it?⁴

Mattie's decision to abort the baby is driven by her desire to protect the child from the potential trauma associated with adoption, considering her own inability to raise the child. Through her contemplation of the child's potential experiences if she were to keep it, Mattie confronts her own emotions as an adopted child. Throughout her life, she has always questioned why she was not kept by her biological mother, a query that unveils the underlying emotional distress she has carried as an adopted individual. This emotional distress and bitterness commonly observed in adopted children, which can later develop into trauma, have been extensively examined in various studies focused on adoption-related anxieties such as "I Knew Who I Was Not, but Not Who I Was". Public Storytelling in the Lives of Australian Adoptees" by Margaret Taft et al.⁵

Margaret Taft et al. offer insights into the experiences of adopted children through a confessional mode facilitated by online platforms dedicated to fostering

connection among adoptees and aiding them in coming to terms with their adoption. This study recognizes the importance of providing a voice to individuals affected by adoption, particularly those who have endured traumatic encounters. It acknowledges the significance of actively listening to their stories and respecting their unique experiences. The shared narratives from participants revealed that adoption can profoundly shape one's life, carrying a compelling power that is often intertwined with "grief and suffering and a pervasive sense of betrayal."⁶

The participants in the study shared their experiences in a confessional manner, revealing deep sadness, enduring emotional suffering, and a pervasive sense of betrayal. Their recognition of being adopted becomes a significant aspect of their identity, which can have detrimental effects on their overall well-being. This demonstrates the profound and lasting impact that adoption can have, leading to ongoing trauma that shapes adopted children's future choices and profoundly influences their psychological state. These symptoms of trauma and emotional distress are evident in Mattie's indirect interior monologue, which reveals the unspoken distress she internalizes. Furthermore, this trauma appears to influence her future decisions, driving her to consider abortion as a means to spare another individual from the psychological and emotional trauma associated with adoption.

Although Mattie's decision to seek an abortion aims to spare her child from the hardships and psychological trauma associated with adoption, it does not shield her from the anxieties inherent in the abortion process. These anxieties, along with

feelings of guilt and regret, are commonly reported by women who undergo abortion. This paper delves into a comprehensive examination of these anxieties and explores the underlying reasons for the feelings of guilt and regret experienced by women immediately following the termination of a pregnancy. Additionally, I will argue that the existence of laws criminalizing abortion and the resultant necessity for women facing unwanted pregnancies to resort to unlawful methods contribute directly to the emergence of these feelings of guilt and regret.

In order to investigate the development of anxieties, guilt, and regret in women seeking abortion, I intend to examine the psychological well-being of women upon discovering their pregnancy and during the initial stages of decision-making regarding whether to proceed with the pregnancy or pursue abortion. To support my argument, I will reference a study conducted in Brazil, a country where abortion is considered a criminal offense. This study is particularly relevant as it mirrors the fictional world portrayed in Leni Zumas's *Red Clocks*, set in the United States, where reproductive rights and access to abortion are restricted. I chose this study due to its alignment with the societal context depicted in the novel, where women awaken to a new reality devoid of reproductive autonomy. Additionally, the study highlights the collective impact of abortion on women in patriarchal societies, wherein male legislators and policymakers exert influence over reproductive laws that directly affect women's physical and psychological well-being.

Mattie's experience with abortion is marked by physical and psychological turmoil, which can be traced back to the lack

of emotional support from Ephraim, the baby's father and her classmate. Ephraim breaks up with her before she discovers her pregnancy and remains disengaged from Mattie's life thereafter. This sense of abandonment directly influences Mattie's decision to terminate the pregnancy, as she feels unable to share this experience with the baby's father. Raquel Silva Barretto and Ana Elisa Bastos Figueiredo in their study on Brazilian women seeking abortion reported that those who underwent the procedure without emotional support from their partners described feelings of "loneliness and abandonment."⁷ The absence of emotional support from Ephraim serves as Mattie's primary motivation for seeking an abortion. Additionally, another factor that initially drives Mattie towards considering abortion is the bitterness she experiences upon discovering Ephraim's infidelity with another classmate. Witnessing this event intensifies her feelings of bitterness to the point of suffocation:

She thought it would go a different way. She thought the way it would go would not include taking the east stairwell to lunch and seeing Ephraim's hand in the shirt of Nouri Withers, whose eyes were shut and fluttering. The daughter makes no sound. She creeps back up the stairs. But she can't breathe. Breathe, *dumblerina*. She sits on the landing, spreading her rib cage to make room for air. Breathe, ignorant white girl.⁸

Mattie's overwhelming sense of suffocation and her experience of a panic attack serve as poignant indicators of the emotional and psychological turmoil she is

forced to endure on her own. What adds an intriguing dimension to this incident is the complete absence of involvement from Ephraim. This raises significant questions about the nature of laws that specifically impact women. Despite sharing responsibility for the pregnancy, Ephraim remains unaffected by the law that criminalizes abortion. This stark contrast highlights Ephraim's self-centeredness and indulgence in material pleasure, while underscoring Mattie's horror and fragile psychological state.

Upon realizing her unwanted pregnancy, Mattie is consumed by severe anxieties that disrupt almost every aspect of her life, as she becomes fixated on the desperate need to regain control and normalcy through obtaining an abortion. This pregnancy becomes a pivotal event that challenges societal norms and moral conventions. Zumas skillfully employs the technique of indirect interior monologue to unveil the unspoken insecurities and anxieties experienced by all four female protagonists, including Mattie. Once Mattie resolves to pursue an abortion, her interior monologue reveals her obsessive contemplation of the procedure and her moral stance.

Mattie's persistent need to justify her decision reflects her partial internalization of the new law that categorizes women who terminate pregnancies as second-degree murderers. This societal accusation, unfairly targeting women, leaves Mattie to grapple with moral judgment in isolation, exacerbating her anxieties and emotional turmoil. Despite her firm determination to undergo the abortion, Mattie frequently reflects on her own adoption and poses questions like "What if your bio mother

had chosen to terminate?”⁹ and “Think of all the happy adopted families that wouldn’t exist!”¹⁰ These contemplations aim to assess the morality of her decision but only serve to intensify her emotional and psychological distress.

Throughout the narrative, Mattie strives to reject the notion of being a murderer if she chooses to proceed with the procedure. She tries to convince herself that the developing cells do not possess identities, dreams, or opinions yet, therefore absolving herself of any guilt associated with the act. At other times, she openly challenges the validity of the new law, questioning its fairness and highlighting the exclusion of women from the law-making process. This direct criticism serves as a testament to the systemic disregard for women’s agency in legislation that directly impacts their lives:

Why do some walruses in Washington, DC, who’ve never met the daughter care what she does with the clump? They don’t seem bothered that baby wolves are shot to death from helicopters. Those babies were already breathing on their own, running and sleeping and eating on their own, whereas the clump is not even a baby yet. Couldn’t survive two seconds outside the daughter.¹¹

This passage is a direct criticism of the policies of law making that seem to colonize women’s bodies and deprive them from access to reproductive rights. Mattie, although torn emotionally and psychologically, is seen here contesting the new law and directly reexamining and assessing its validity and the people involved in making

it. This passage also offers criticism against patriarchy and its exclusion of women from any involvement in law making.

There are plenty of other instances in *Red Clocks* where women are not seen as passive in the process of law making. Roberta, who proves to be a positive example for Mattie by encouraging her to rethink all around her, is seen also contesting the new law that outlaws abortion in the United States by the questioning the nature of law, the people who make it, and its desired outcomes:

A year and a half later the Canadian border patrol arrests American seekers and returns them to the States for prosecution. “Let’s spend the taxpayers’ money to criminalize vulnerable women, shall we?” said Ro/Miss in class, and somebody said, “But if they’re breaking the law, they are criminals,” and Ro/Miss said, “Laws aren’t natural phenomena. They have particular and often horrific histories. Ever heard of the Nuremberg Laws? Ever heard of Jim Crow?”¹²

This passage emphasizes the resistance of women against the exclusionary nature of patriarchy and their active attempts to contest and challenge oppressive laws. The influence of Roberta’s argument on Mattie’s decision-making process showcases the power of alternative perspectives in questioning the legitimacy of laws. By invoking the historical context of the Jim Crow laws that enforced racial segregation, Roberta highlights the arbitrary and unjust nature of law-making processes, which are often influenced by dominant ideologies of different eras.

Roberta's argument provides Mattie with a sense of relief from the guilt associated with breaking the law, encouraging her to reconsider her decision and view it from a different perspective. However, despite this reassurance, Mattie continues to grapple with internal conflicts and doubts. Her indirect interior monologue, where she constantly tells herself that what she is doing "it will be a crime"¹³ reflects the fear and guilt instilled by social institutions, particularly those influenced by patriarchal ideologies.

Mattie's internal struggle between her desire to terminate the pregnancy and her fear of breaking the law contributes to her heightened anxiety and sense of guilt. The repeated thoughts and overthinking in her narrative indicate the psychological toll of societal norms and the pressure to conform to legal and moral expectations.

This underscores the complex emotional and psychological dynamics faced by women who challenge oppressive laws and navigate the conflicting forces of personal autonomy and societal constraints. It highlights the profound impact of patriarchal ideologies on women's sense of guilt, fear, and self-doubt, while also portraying their resilience and attempts to reclaim agency within a restrictive system.

Also, it underscores the profound impact of laws criminalizing abortion on women's emotional well-being and sense of guilt. The association of guilt with seeking an abortion can be attributed to the illegal status of the procedure in many countries, including the one depicted in the narrative. The narrative raises important questions about the origin of this guilt and locates it within the social institutions of patriarchy that render abortion unlawful.

Barretto and Figueiredo support the notion that criminalization leads to negative emotional experiences for women seeking abortion. Participants in the study expressed feelings of depression and loneliness due to the criminalization of the procedure, which resulted in a lack of support from reliable sources such as family members. The quote from one participant describing the experience as "desperate, lonely, could not count on my conservative family"¹⁴ illustrates the detrimental effects of criminalization of abortion on emotional well-being.

Mattie's reluctance to share her experience with her adoptive parents reflects the fear of judgment and the desire to protect herself from external influences. This highlights the emotional vulnerability she experiences throughout her journey, as she tries to navigate the process of abortion without the emotional support of her closest circle. The lack of a supportive environment exacerbates her anxieties and contributes to her feelings of loneliness and isolation. Her narrative raises concerns about the process of lawmaking and its failure to consider the consequences of enforcing such laws. By criminalizing abortion, society fails to address the emotional well-being of women and disregards the need for a supportive environment during such a challenging experience. The narrative invites readers to critically examine the impact of these laws on women's mental health and highlights the importance of comprehensive reproductive rights that prioritize the well-being and autonomy of women.

2. Women Contesting the New Law

The prohibition of abortion and the accompanying secrecy surrounding it, driven by fear of judgment or prosecution,

have far-reaching consequences for women's physical and mental well-being. According to Barretto and Figueiredo's study, many women experience long-term anxiety and depression as a result. One participant stated, "I developed anxiety and depression, I felt alone (...) it is still hard to this day, and I seek to bring awareness to other women."¹⁵ This highlights the significant and lasting impact of abortion laws in countries where the procedure is illegal. Barretto and Figueiredo also note that while not all women experience feelings of loneliness, the grief they feel continues to affect them. For some, this suffering exacerbates or leads to depression, while anxiety remains present either in conjunction with or separate from depression. These mental health issues can be attributed to the lack of consideration for the side effects of enforcing such laws during the lawmaking process. In contrast, Barretto and Figueiredo report that in supportive environments where abortion is not outlawed, such as in scenarios outside of Brazil, participants experienced a sense of relief and respect due to receiving care from a team of specialists who provided emotional support.¹⁶ This underscores the significant impact of these laws on women's long-term mental health and self-perception.

Furthermore, in Mattie's narrative, the exploration of the physical risks faced by women under abortion bans is brought to light. Determined to terminate her pregnancy, Mattie turns to undercover termination houses that operate without adhering to any safety regulations or measures to protect women's health. Accounts from other girls who have sought these services paint a distressing picture for Mattie, describing scenes of blood-soaked surroundings, the

use of rusty equipment, and the involvement of unscrupulous practitioners.

"Term houses charge a shit ton," says Ro/Miss, "and take shortcuts because nobody, obviously, is regulating them. They use out-of-date equipment, don't disinfect between patients, administer anesthesia without" – the first bell rings – "training." The fingers stop, mid-rake.¹⁷

The existence of these term houses serves to underscore the desperate measures women are forced to take under the constraints of laws that strip them of agency and deny them control over their own bodies. What is particularly alarming is the extent to which women are willing to risk their physical well-being, sometimes with irreparable consequences, in order to obtain access to abortion. This distressing reality is poignantly depicted in Zumas's text through Mattie's reflection on her friend Yasmine, who suffered severe complications immediately after the procedure, resulting in the removal of her uterus:

Yasmine didn't die either. But she lost so much blood she needed transfusions. All night the daughter and her parents waited at the ER with Mrs. Salter, who rocked back and forth in her pink ski jacket. The lights squeaked. The daughter had to pee horribly but wanted to be there when the doctor brought news. Yasmine's uterus was so badly damaged it had to be removed. The cops came while she was still in the hospital.¹⁸

The harrowing details of Yasmine's experience with term houses, particularly the

irreversible physical and mental harm she suffered, along with her subsequent confinement to a juvenile correctional facility, exemplify the blatant disregard for women's well-being within patriarchal systems that marginalize women from the lawmaking process and silence their voices. While Yasmine's story serves as a cautionary tale due to its horrific and tragic consequences, it does not sway Mattie's determination to proceed with her own abortion, although she frequently reflects on the horrors associated with term houses throughout the narrative. *Red Clocks* also presents other instances of pregnant teenagers risking their physical health in order to terminate their pregnancies:

Last year one of the seniors threw herself down the gym stairs, but even after she broke a rib she was still pregnant, and Ro/Miss said in class she hoped they understood who was to blame for this rib: the monsters in Congress who passed the Personhood Amendment and the walking lobotomies on the Supreme Court who reversed *Roe v. Wade*.¹⁹

The sense of confinement and desperation experienced by women in Zumas's narrative is profoundly suffocating, particularly when one considers the striking resemblance to our present reality, with the exception that *Roe vs. Wade* has been revoked. Women find themselves in a state of panic and resort to desperate measures to terminate unwanted pregnancies. Yasmine's story, however, does not serve as a cautionary tale in the traditional sense. It does not dissuade women from following in her footsteps to avoid having their uteruses

removed. Instead, it serves to magnify the mental and physical turmoil that women endure in such circumstances. Yasmine, in this regard, attains a heroic status within the novel, and her story, whenever revisited by Mattie, takes on the qualities of a tragic heroine. Her words and actions provide emotional and mental support for Mattie, who, due to the criminalization of abortion, is unable to confide in anyone for fear of being reported. Yasmine's story becomes a recurring motif in Mattie's narrative, a source of solace in times of desperation and vulnerability. Yasmine becomes, in a sense, Mattie's companion in the struggle, and her words and shared experiences with Mattie are recounted with great fondness and affection:

She has never missed Yasmine more than exactly right now.
Yasmine, lover of strawberries, queen of whipped cream.
Singer of hymns and smoker of weed.
Who'd say: Forget that Transylvanian slut.
Who'd say: Are you even going to remember his ass in five years?²⁰

The emotional connection between Mattie and Yasmine is evident in Mattie's ability to envision what Yasmine would have said if she were still around. Mattie's reminiscences of Yasmine are filled with a romanticized language that elevates Yasmine to the status of an omnipresent heroine within the narrative. Yasmine becomes a guiding force for Mattie, providing the emotional and psychological support she requires as she navigates the challenging path of abortion. Even in her absence, Yasmine's presence remains influential,

offering guidance and solace to Mattie throughout her journey.

Thus far, I have explored the portrayal of termination houses in the narrative, shedding light on the desperate measures women take to terminate pregnancies in countries where the procedure is prohibited, and the subsequent risks to their psychological and physical well-being. Another significant function of these term houses is their role as a form of resistance against dominant male power. By defying and subverting the new law, these structures challenge and undermine the prevailing authority. What makes this opposition even more intriguing is that it operates within the confines of male dominance, effectively challenging and defying it. The fact that Mattie successfully terminates her pregnancy without encountering medical complications or legal repercussions serves as a form of resistance in the narrative, showcasing women's determination and their ability to contest male ideologies even in oppressive circumstances.

The narrative critically examines and questions the laws in these scenarios, highlighting their deficiencies and disregard for individual cases. The legislators and the entire process of lawmaking come under scrutiny and criticism, exposing their failure to consider instances of rape, sexual abuse, and incestuous relationships, which often leave deep scars on the survivors. The narrative delves into the shortcomings of the legal process, exposing the myopic perspectives of lawmakers who fail to assess certain laws from diverse angles, resulting in irreparable consequences that negatively impact women's physical and mental well-being in the long run. Mattie's story meticulously examines, scrutinizes, and challenges these issues.

When viewed as a whole, Mattie's narrative emerges as a critical exploration of unjust patriarchal laws and their woeful exclusion of women from the lawmaking process. Furthermore, it underscores the failure of these laws to exert complete control over women. This failure reaches its pinnacle when Mattie successfully terminates her pregnancy, defying the oppressive system.

The underlying indirect interior monologue present throughout Mattie's narrative exposes her unspoken anxieties and psychological struggles. This narrative technique serves an important purpose in feminist dystopian fiction, including *Red Clocks*, as it embodies an inclusive approach. In contrast to patriarchal discourse, which overtly marginalizes women and suppresses their voices, the female discourse within the novel embraces diversity by incorporating counterarguments and amplifying the voices of those who hold differing opinions regarding women's anatomy and reproductive rights.

This inclusive nature of the narrative allows for a multifaceted exploration of the complexities surrounding women's experiences. It recognizes the existence of diverse perspectives and provides a platform for these contrasting viewpoints to be heard. By doing so, the novel challenges the monolithic portrayal of women's issues and fosters a more nuanced understanding of the ongoing discourse.

Through the incorporation of diverse voices and the exploration of opposing opinions, *Red Clocks* encourages dialogue and invites readers to critically engage with the complex social and political dynamics surrounding women's bodies and reproductive autonomy. It promotes an inclusive space where different perspectives can coexist and where the diverse experiences

and struggles of women are acknowledged and validated.

Through Mattie's narrative, readers are prompted to explore a range of conflicting perspectives concerning the contentious topics of abortion and adoption. The narrative takes an investigative approach, allowing the character to freely contemplate the advantages and disadvantages of undergoing an abortion. Adding complexity to the issue is Mattie's status as an adopted child, which further complicates the discussion of abortion, as her own existence is a result of her birth mother's decision not to terminate the pregnancy, even when it was legally permissible.

By embracing an inclusive approach to abortion, Mattie's story illuminates the intricate nature of the subject matter. It emphasizes the significance of considering diverse viewpoints and brings attention to the flaws and limitations inherent in the process of lawmaking, particularly when it is driven by a patriarchal system that seeks to control women and restrict their reproductive rights. The narrative encourages readers to engage with the complexities of these issues and to critically reflect on the societal dynamics and power structures at play.

Meda Chesney-Lind & Syeda Tonima Hadi argue that the topic of abortion has long been "a key issue in the race for the presidency in the United States."²¹ This observation underscores the exploitation of women's issues for political gains. The

stance on abortion often aligns with political affiliations, with figures like former president Donald Trump opposing abortion to appeal to conservative Christians who share those beliefs. Conversely, during her presidential campaign, Hillary Clinton explicitly expressed unwavering support for women's right to safe access to abortion, aligning with Leftist ideologies of liberalism.

Conclusion

In *Red Clocks* narrative, while there is a strong critique of male power and control over women, the argument against abortion is not trivialized. On the contrary, Mattie considers both perspectives, as she grapples with the haunting presence of her birth mother's decision to keep her. Her adoptive parents' ability to form a family was made possible by women who chose not to abort. A subtle argument that runs throughout Mattie's story is how her ultimate decision can impact parents struggling with infertility, for whom adoption becomes an emotionally fulfilling experience, as demonstrated by the love and support of her adoptive parents. While Mattie's narrative encompasses both viewpoints, her assertive choice to terminate the pregnancy serves as an act of resistance against the dominant male discourse and its deficiencies in acknowledging the female experience. Furthermore, her decision symbolizes emancipation from the colonization of the female body by male influence.

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NOTES

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2. Leni Zumas, *Red Clocks*, Little, Brown, 2018. p. 101.
3. *Ibidem*, p. 101.
4. *Ibidem*, p. 247.
5. In this paper, Margaret Taft et. al. discuss the findings of their online project that aims to elicit responses from Australian children in an online confessional mode.
6. *Ibidem* p. 74.
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17. Leni Zumas, *Red Clocks*, p. 197.
18. *Ibidem*, p. 259.
19. *Ibidem*, p. 49.
20. *Ibidem*, p. 72.
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