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Research Article

Female Subjectivity and Body Politics in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Zikora*

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Abstract

This paper examines the pregnant female body in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Zikora*. The protagonist's experiences of loneliness, abandonment and struggle during her pregnancy are situated within diverse socio-political relations, including patriarchy, sexuality, immigrant status, romance, transnational background and generation gaps. Drawing on critical insights from body politics, especially Elaine Scarry's concept of conscious body, Michel Foucault's notion of body discipline and Elizabeth Grosz's phenomenological reading of lived bodies, the analysis explores how the protagonist Adichie challenges the traditional understanding of the female body as a mere biological object. The paper argues that through her bodily experiences, the protagonist gains agency to critique and reassess gender relations and stereotypes. The journey of self-discovery and subjectivity emerges as the protagonist's aching body becomes a window to perceive existing relationships and meanings, resulting in a revitalized understanding of her own body and its significance.

Keywords: Female body, subjectivity, body politics, socio-political relations, gender relations

Introduction

Zikora, the autodiegetic narrator, in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Zikora* undergoes "something like pain and different from pain," which was "pulling downward, spiraling" and "felt like the Old Testament. A plague. A primitive wind blowing at will" (5). Due to her excruciating epidural, she becomes hysteric and speaks belligerently and violently. In other words, her body speaks. Such speech of the human body, particularly the female body, has been an interesting subject of investigation and analysis across multiple disciplines. An increasingly important area of study within African cultural production concerns the body and its potential for transgressive or destabilizing artistic expression, through techniques such as body writing and body voicing. In this

connection, Zikora's body has a special situation: she is a transnational; her lover, a Ghanaian, abandons her; and her demanding, self-possessed mother does not help her during the epidural pain, and she feels insulated. In this light, her body is an interesting subject of analysis from the postulations of body politics as the fundamental concept of body politics "brings this material together in an attempt to demonstrate how the boundaries of difference and the limits of universality converge upon women's bodies" (King and King viii).

The paper has three interconnected yet distinct objectives. Firstly, it delves into Zikora's perception of her body and how others understand it, forming a crucial aspect of the analysis. Secondly, the paper examines her quest for solace from overwhelming spasms and distressing emotions by retreating into her past. This pursuit involves a reassessment of her relationships with those around her. During her seclusion, she gains clarity and begins to reevaluate these connections. Finally, the paper explores how, as a result of this process, her pain-driven curiosity leads her to develop a renewed understanding of her body in relation to the people, society and culture that surround her.

Literature Review

Adichie's writing occupies a significant personal and cultural niche in the current scholarship of writing by women. Critical attention to her writing ranges from her writing as feminist questioning to transnational and diasporic experiences through a careful consideration and analysis of characters, language and settings of Nigerian culture and space. Silvana Carotenuto highlights Adichie's prowess as a storyteller, describing her prose as organic and enchanting, elevating her voice to a "supreme level of poetic expression" (169). Carotenuto further emphasizes how she adeptly employs language to recount narratives "of difficult realities, scenes of migratory experiences, and new utopias of future salvation" (170). Thus, Adichie's writings engage in the global discourse on writing with agency and responsibility, advocating for plurality, equality and poetic expression in shaping the future of humanity (Carotenuto 200).

Similarly, some of the critical readings point out significant political and national allegories in her writing. Maximilian Fledner, for example, observes that Adichie's *Of Half of Yellow Sun* historically retells the Biafran War, which still exerts significant influence on contemporary Nigeria (39). According to Feldner, the novel, with the use of literary techniques and narrative strategies, such as historical narrative, tells a story of the nation—"an account of Biafra's existence, and thus contributes to a diachronic sense of identity in a Nigerian context" (38). In a similar vein, many critics find Adichie, writing in/out of the postcolonial landscape, has engaged her writing in the ongoing recreation of the Gothic landscape in African literature. According to Lily G.N. Mabura, "she teases out the peculiarities of the genre on the continent; dissects fraught African psyches; and engages in a Gothic-like reclamation of her Igbo heritage, including Igbo-Ukwu art, language, and religion" (203). In addition, the novelist's depiction and representation of transnational and diasporic experiences are no less striking. As analyzed by Feldner, her characters' journeys between Africa, the United States and Europe bring to the forefront themes of migration and the portrayal of Nigeria in literature produced by the Nigerian diaspora (17). For instance, in her collection of stories *The Thing Around Your Neck*, Adichie depicts the experiences of young women who move from Nigeria to the United States, often with the support of their husbands or male family members. The stories contain many cultural comparisons between the United States and Nigeria (Feldnar 118).

Adichie's impact on revamping the literary canon is an important aspect, as highlighted by Hewett. For instance, Hewett suggests that her novel *Purple Hibiscus* can

be seen as a revision of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, recontextualizing the theme of the breakdown of family and community under the pressures of colonialism and religion in post-independent Nigeria (79). Both novels feature a dominant father figure whose tragic flaw leads to harm inflicted upon the family. Hewett delineates her revision techniques:

She takes one of his themes, the breakdown of family and community under the pressures of colonialism and religion, and recasts it in post-independent Nigeria, at a time when colonialism's heirs - corruption, political strife, and religious dogmatism - strain family and community. Like her predecessor, Adichie weaves her story around the figure of a domineering father, and both novels explore how a father's tragic flaw propels him to harm his family. (79).

Her revisionist spirit and scrutiny of diasporic experiences are crucial to understanding how she makes roads into current feminist scholarship. Many of her short stories do examine female sexuality in the context of romantic relationships with men. However, like many writers of the third generation, she particularly deals with embodied experiences of female characters in Nigeria and the Nigerian diaspora. According to Pius Adesanmi, many of these writers emphasize an "aesthetics of pain" in their female characters to represent their "hopes and dreams tragically atrophied by the Nigerian system" (121-22). The phrase "aesthetics of pain" aptly describes the work of many women writers of the third generation, including Adichie, who have dealt with women's bodily or corporeal experiences in their literary creations such as poetry or fiction (Hewett 81).

However, how Adichie's treatment of pain as an instrument of understanding of her body is different and has not been a subject of critical inquiry yet. This paper offers a critical reading of the body/physical experiences of *Zikora*, and tries to explore a particular type of depiction of the character, her body and her experiences, that is significant to depart from the current notion of treatment of the body in feminist scholarship.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The paper delves into the analysis of a Nigerian-origin female body residing in American society, experiencing transcultural encounters. This examination is influenced by key deductions from the field of body politics, particularly emphasized within post-feminist scholarship. Post-feminists challenge the notion that the human body is merely a natural and ahistorical organism or the raw material to be further polished by culture and civilization. Instead, they view the body as a multifaceted entity intertwined with political, social, and cultural meanings and representations, heavily influenced by desire, signification and power dynamics (Grosz 18-20). This approach opposes traditional Cartesian dualism, which prioritizes the mind over the body. Theorists of the body call for the need to fuse the historical specificity of bodies with the biological concreteness of the body since "there is no body as such: there are only bodies - male and female, black, brown, white, large or small and gradations in between" (Grosz 19).

The purpose of the paper is to examine the body of *Zikora* as a powerful political and cultural signifier. To support this perspective, some theoretical important concepts have been employed, including Scarry's notion of the conscious body or body in pain, Foucault's idea of body discipline, and Grosz's phenomenological interpretation of lived bodies (86). According to these theorists, the body exists within a political landscape where power relations immediately affect it. It is subjected to investment, marking, training and even torture, to fulfill specific functions, perform ceremonies and convey symbolic meanings (Foucault, *The Foucault Reader* 173). While gender is a crucial factor in shaping the body, it is also influenced by other intersecting categories such as

class, ethnicity, sexual preference and (dis)ability. These factors can both connect and divide individuals based on their bodily experiences (Grosz 90). Ultimately, power operates through normalization procedures, which imbue the body with meaning (intelligible body) while rendering it controllable and manipulable (useful/manipulable body) (Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment* 136). The paper situates Zikora's body within this context, analyzing how her female subjectivity is shaped by these complex social and cultural forces.

However, according to Maude Hines, just reading a body as "an empty text, covering, blurring, or otherwise dismissing subjectivity to project meaning onto bodily "markings," as Foucault primarily noted, is a specifically essentialist reading (39). Therefore, the critical and post-feminist theorists, building on the Foucauldian notion, emphasize the symbolic significance of the body, its importance in metaphorical discourse and, more importantly, read its use as a medium of both social control and resistance. Scarry's idea that the infliction of physical pain unmakes and deconstructs the body, while simultaneously making and reconstructing the body apposite is one way of revising essentialist reading of the body (9-10). Scarry argues that pain is both conscious(ness) and is also a result of consciousness. Here, Susan Bordo's postulation that the body is both "intelligible" and "useful" concedes with how Zikora's panicking body both deconstructs the traditional concept of the body and reconstructs her body in a more informed way as he states,

[I]ntelligible body includes our scientific, philosophic, and aesthetic representations of the body—our cultural conceptions of the body, norms of beauty, models of health, and so forth. But the same representations may also be seen as forming a set of practical rules and regulations through which the living body is 'trained, shaped, obeys, responds,' becoming, in short, a socially adapted and 'useful body'. (181)

Bordo builds on Foucault's notion of discursive inscription of power on the body and how it is made useful, and argues that "the intelligible body and the useful body are the two inseparable sides of the same discourse [;] they mirror and support each other" (181). Here, Bordo views the female body as a text that inspires the reproduction of femininity.

This paper acknowledges the political influence on the human body, shaped by containment and control throughout history. It argues that Zikora's pain challenges a society's stereotyped internalization of the body, leading to increased awareness of past relations and the development of subjectivity. By examining Zikora's lived experiences and her bodily materiality, the paper demonstrates that her consciousness, derived from paralyzing pain, enables a clearer understanding of power relations that are both constructed and resisted, ultimately shaping her sense of self.

Results and Discussion

Adichie's portrayal of the female body challenges traditional views of the female body. Through lived experiences and agency during her lonely, abandoned and unplanned pregnancy, the protagonist embarks on a journey of transformation and empowerment. The journey commences with understanding her own body, reassessing the relationship and forming a renewed understanding of her own body. The section on "Results and Discussion" has been divided into three sub-sections to discuss the findings of this study.

Understanding the Body

Adichie brings attention to the body's suffering and the significance of bodily expression to illustrate how power dynamics influence her physical being. During the epidural procedure, the male doctor conforms to societal values and established medical practices, expecting Zikora's body to adhere to a predetermined pattern that facilitates his medical duties. Unfortunately, his understanding of the pregnant female body is restricted to a specific and conventional response. He believes her body should progress in a certain way and insists that she is not "progressing" as expected (Adichie 6). The doctor views her body solely as an object for medical intervention, guided by his professional obligations and desires, enforcing disciplinary power relations. The priority lies in making Zikora's body comply with the medical process, allowing the doctor to fulfill his responsibilities efficiently. Consequently, the doctor perceives the body through a normative lens, disregarding its unique complexities. However, in this context, her body transcends mere biology; it becomes a socially constructed entity, bearing historical and interpersonal significance (Gross 40).

However, Zikora's reactions to pain reveal a deficiency in the doctor's understanding of the female body and subjectivity, influenced by a certain ideology. To borrow Don Hanlon Johnson's words, her lived experiences are "shaped within a cultural matrix of particular forms of child-rearing, exercise, medical care, sexual behavior, gestural styles, gender shapings, meditation practices . . . all of which create relatively predictable kinds of experience and exclude others" (41). The doctor's knowledge seems to ignore what Zikora felt, as she believed that childbirth could not be so harsh and meaningless (Adichie 6). The doctor's desires are detached from any responsibility since he views the body through a normal and disciplinary lens. Foucault's perspective sheds light on the power dynamics at play here. He highlights how disciplinary and regulatory techniques applied to the body demonstrate the productive nature of power, not only establishing control but also generating new desires and norms (*Discipline and Punishment* 115). Following this Foucauldian notion, the doctor's understanding of the body exemplifies how Zikora's body is shaped by medical norms. Simultaneously, she as the subject is prompted to produce her truths about herself. Her body is not merely reduced to a medical object; instead, through self-surveillance and confession, it becomes a medium for revealing new truths about her life.

Zikora's mother, who strongly adheres to traditional values of gender roles, perceives that Zikora's body should act and perform in a specific manner. According to her mother, Zikora should accept the pain as it is and not make a fuss about it. The pain Zikora experiences, as described by Adichie, is horrendous: "My body was turning on me in spasms and wrenches I had never before known, each with a dark promise of its return" (Adichie 6). However, the mother responds with the expectation for Zikora to "bear it, that is what it means to be a woman" (Adichie 7). The mother's perspective on the body aligns with an essential feminine nature, believing that women should be drawn to trivialities and be willing to endure any physical inconvenience that comes with it (Bordo 26). Both the doctor and the mother impose a series of "enforced cultural and political performances" on Zikora (Butler 187): "Bring your feet up and let your legs fall apart, . . . Let your legs fall apart" and so on (Adichie 7). Zikora finds it challenging to comprehend the language the doctor uses to describe and dictate the performance of her body: "What did that even mean? How could legs fall apart?" (7). When the doctor asks the mother to help hold Zikora still, the mother dismisses the suggestion, believing that Zikora can manage on her own (7). The mother views the female body in terms of "biological processes—menstruation, gestation—that are writ large upon the surface of the female body" (Carson 94). Zikora's mother has internalized the idea that the pain in

her body is not only manageable but should also be taken care of by her daughter. Both the mother and the doctor conform to a culture that "subordinates women's desires to those of men, sexualizes and commodifies women's bodies, and offers them little other opportunities for social or personal power" (Bordo 85). They expect Zikora's body to align with the existing power relations defined by social and cultural surveillance of the female body.

However, Zikora's body speaks to her quite differently than it speaks to the world. She "wanted nothing touching [her] body," which also means nothing torturing her body (Adichie 5). She believes that it is her body, her only. No one has the right to play with it as she expects "an invasion of fingers" (Adichie 5). The nurse, Zikora describes:

was gloved and [she] couldn't see her nails, but her false eyelashes, curving from her upper lids like black feathers, made me worry that her nails were long and sharp and would pierce through the latex and puncture my uterus. . . . The nurse looked at me with the resigned expression of a person who had seen all the forms of madness that overtook birthing women lying on their backs with their bodies open to the world. (Adichie 5)

In the words of Fiona Carson, the doctor and the mother, were "as voyeuristic spectators in this painful process", and they cannot "see[s] what you go through and what you look like" (102). Both the medical directives of the doctor and the feminine expectations of the mother are helpful to the bourgeois construction of the compliant body, how the new forms of discipline (schools, hospitals, families) have invited comprehensive surveillance to be exercised. In other words, "the body is increasingly brought into discourse, and supervised, observed, and controlled by a variety of disciplines" (Wolff 85).

Zikora experiences the pain and "with the pain came a wave of exhaustion, a tiredness limp and bloodless" as she felt like she was departing her own body (Adichie 6). This signifies the onset of an awakened consciousness triggered by the pain. Zikora believes that pain is not universally felt the same way. She asks: "I'd read somewhere that maternal mortality was higher in America than anywhere else in the Western world—or was it just higher for Black women" (Adichie 6). By presenting the typical reception of women, she challenges the conventional and universal understanding of the female body. When Zikora complains about the gratuitous and cruel pain, the epidural doctor and her mother consistently command her to "Get yourself together and stop making noise" (Adichie 18). The doctor states: "Nothing is wrong, Zikora, it's normal. . . . Epidural is almost here. I know it's difficult, but what you are feeling is perfectly normal" (6). The doctor assesses the body through different discursive practices. Johnson argues that judging a particular body based on specific experiences is not accurate because "a person embedded in one culture will be drawn to experience consciousness in stereotypically different ways from someone in another culture and to define it in relation to those particular experiences" (41). Zikora challenges the doctor's normal perception of her body, saying, "You don't know how it feels." To her, "Today was a monstrous man pontificating opaquely about things he would never experience. What was normal? That Nature traded in necessary pain. It wasn't *his* intestines being set on fire, after all" (Adichie 6). Adichie refutes the validity of the doctor's understanding of Zikora's body, questioning the universal claim that males understand the female body.

Zikora's agonizing pain destabilizes not only the assumption of knowing the body but also not knowing the female body. She believes that the doctor's knowledge that expressions and performances of her are normal is not accurate. By the same token, she also believes that Kwame does not understand her body that is equally invalid. The doctor defines her body under a specific disciplinary definition, such as in medical terms

and references. Similarly, the fact that Kwame, after sleeping with her and living for a long time, does not know her body is equally unpersuasive. Again, it is her physical status crippled with pain that makes her reassess her relationship with her fiancé, Kwame, "a clean-looking Black man," and like her, a highly educated lawyer, of Ghanaian descent (Adichie 8). Throughout her pregnancy, Zikora remains consumed by Kwame's absence. She still cannot understand what happened and why Kwame suddenly decided not to know her. She obsessively searches her memories for an answer: she rereads their old texts, tries calling Kwame without success and recalls the idyllic moments of the past. Kwame, before the birth of the child, agrees with the criticisms they make about traditional and patriarchal values (Adichie 8). However, the mutual acceding breaks away the moment Zikora discovers she is pregnant. Immediately after, Kwame changed his tune: "Ours was an ancient story, the woman wants the baby and the man doesn't want the baby and a middle ground does not exist" (Adichie 13). From that moment on, Kwame refused to have anything more to do with Zikora. He simply disavows both the bodies: the mother and the child under the pretext of unprotected sex. She just does not understand: "It's as if an artery burst inside him and suddenly his whole body is wired differently and he is no longer the person he was" (14). When Mmiliaku says, "Zikky, have you considered that maybe he didn't know?" (14). Zikora cannot believe this:

It was possible that a sophisticated, well-educated man with a healthy sex life could still harbor a naivety, a shrunken knowledge, about the inner workings of female bodies. Could it be that Kwame was fuzzy about this, that it had not occurred to him that I might get pregnant, that when he said "Okay, babes" to my "I'm stopping the pill," it was not what I thought it was? (Adichie 15)

Both of the male members have not understood the female body quite correctly. However, she begins to advance the idea of "the gestation drive—just like the desire to write: a desire to live self from within, a desire for the swollen belly, for language, for blood" (Cixous 428). She is determined to give birth to the child because she wants to live with a laced-up dignity.

Reassessing the Political Relations

Zikora assesses the matrix between and among the female body, male figures and society. His assessment comes as a recluse from the present unbearable pain. Amidst of the pain and suffering, her assessment comes as a protest, too. She begins to question as well as make meaning out of those relations. In that sense, her present condition could be deemed as an "embodied protest" and may look like "unconscious, inchoate [. . .] without an effective language, voice or politics, but protest nonetheless (Bordo 175).

As an example of reassessment, Zikora reviews Mmiliaku's life, who settled for a mediocre life after graduating from university, working a low-paying job and living with strict rules set by her parents. She has a penniless boyfriend who wants to go to China for better opportunities. Then, she meets Emmanuel, an older and wealthy man who wants to marry her, and she sees it as her (body) only way into adulthood. Zikora, living in America, questions her friend's decision to marry for financial security and describes Emmanuel as merely "nice," which she believes is not a strong enough reason to marry someone. She does not understand why her friend feels compelled to marry and wonders why she cannot pursue her dreams and independence. However, now she understands how society and the female body are intertwined. Similarly, Zikora reflects and evaluates other significant different occasions on which the female body has been received, understood and practiced. Zikora recalls her cousin, Mmiliaku, in Nigeria: she is pregnant and already has five children, of whom the youngest is six months old, and

whose supposedly "older and wealthy" husband Emmanuel waits until she's asleep and climbs on top of her, effectively subjecting her to the rap for sixteen years (Adichie 10). This shows how Emmanuel is only "concerned with how women's bodies are controlled within a patriarchal system, which regulates women's access to such services as contraception and abortion" (Carson 94). Mmiliaku is made completely subservient to men's claim of supposedly superior social and cultural status and conforms to the way the female body is defined, understood and used. Her body is completely objectified and fetishized. However, Mmiliaku does not resist or oppose the intention of her husband. She concedes to the power of males and agrees. When Zikora asks why she did not run off to China with a person she loved. As an indication of conformism to the patriarchal power, she states: "Please, I am not in America like you. Daddy will never allow me to get my place. And Emmanuel is nice" (Adichie 10). Her conformism shows that patriarchal power "control [over body] operates through internalization, and becomes, to a large extent, self-surveillance . . . large areas of bodily experiences, such as sexuality and illness, are delimited and redefined (Wolff 85).

Zikora also reflects on the previous relationship she had in college, with a man "who was very dark and very beautiful, near comical in his self-regard," who used her body and "did not do commitment" regarding using her body (Adichie 21). At the age of nineteen years, she did not have any other alternative except to feed the insecurities of that age. She made herself boneless and amenable:

The first time I knelt naked in front of him, he yanked a fistful of my braids, then pushed at my head so that I gagged. It was a gesture replete with unkindness. He could have done it differently, had he wanted me to do things differently, but that push was punitive, an action whose theme was the word bitch. Still, I said nothing. I made myself boneless and amenable. (Adichie 21)

She was impregnated and had to abort the child. The boy as an embodiment of a male-constructed continent incarcerates and denigrates women's bodies while controlling and censoring their sexuality (Cixous 421). On this occasion, both the female bodies, that of Zikora and Mmiliaku, are "objectified, by various means, for male consumption and sexual delectation" (Carson 94). Next, she dwells upon her own mother's marriage to her father; her father left the family home, still married to her mother, to go and live with his second wife because Aunt Nwanneka [second mother] "was young, plump, skin glistening as though dipped in oil" (Adichie 22).

The three bodies: Zikora, Mmiliaku and the mother have become the victims of what Helen Cixous identifies as "cosmic" libido, which inscribes its stories of de-censored sexuality and "native strength" onto the pages of an already symbolically charged and racialized space of blackness (420). For example, Zikora's father discriminates between the male and female bodies within the social system he lives in. He chose Aunt Nwanneka over Zikora's mother, for Aunt Nwanneka could provide sons to inherit the family fortune, while Zikora's mother had only one daughter, was unable to give birth to a son as she had undergone miscarriages and a hysterectomy.

Formation of the Self

To express the experiences of discomfort with these varieties of relations, the novelist places the body in a *special* grid of relations and social-historical forces. Zikora is a professional lawyer, is in epidural pain, is abandoned by her husband who denies taking responsibility for the child, is a transnational immigrant, comes from Nigeria and is a black woman. Due to these series of mental struggles and physical spasms, she is able to transform her understanding quite radically—to an understanding or consciousness that her body now means something more. As pain pricks, she

understands that some concept of the body is essential to understanding social, oppression, and resistance; and that the body need not be just a physiological object. Zikora, moving toward constituting her subjectivity—an attempt to see the reality from her historicity, begins to see that her "firm, developed body has become a symbol of correct attitude" and can have "willpower, energy, control over infantile impulse, the ability to shaper [her] life" (Bordo 195). She begins to look at the development constituted by her activities and roles as contributing (or not) to her identity and meaning. The moments of realization begin to cascade in her memory: "I did not understand that then . . . I was not facing labor with lace-up dignity" (Adichie 7-10).

Zikora's understanding of her body and realization grows in tandem with reassessing the relationships. She begins to constitute her consciousness as a woman along with every activity that indicates that her close persons were disavowing her. Kwame after the news of pregnancy acts as if "all his features paused, and suddenly this communicative man retreated into the cryptic" that Zikora could see "the almost imperceptible shrug" (Adichie 11). The physical pain along with the mental agony caused by the disownment of her most trusted person wrecks the moment of realization. Her painful bodily and mental "conditions [that] are objectively (and on one level, experientially) constraining, enslaving, and even murderous, come to be experienced as liberating, transforming, and life-giving" (Bordo 251). The formation of subjectivity requires a serious development of consciousness. Zikora attempts to see the history of relations from the perspective of the individuals who lived that history, especially her mother, Aunty Nwanneka and Mmiliaku. Now, with the amount of paralyzing pain, she comes to perceive that body as an active participant in various sorts of social/human relations. She realizes that her body as an agent or subject cannot assert that subjectivity per se.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of Zikora's pregnancy journey exemplified the profound impact of pain on a pregnant woman's understanding of her body within a complex grid of social and political relations. Through this journey, she gains insights into her lived experiences, grappling with the challenges of wrong timing, unplanned parenthood and an unsuitable partner, all while striving to embrace the joy of impending motherhood. Hence, Adichie's portrayal of the pregnant female body situates it as a symbol of society, revealing the interplay of rituals, rules, boundaries and the human body in understanding social norms and hierarchies.

The experience of epidural pain becomes a transformative catalyst for Zikora, pushing the boundaries of her perception of body and self beyond conventional limits. This pain inscribes not only the protagonist's physical struggles but also speaks to broader social pathologies and hidden violence lurking within society. Through her lived and living experiences, she redefines her body's relationship with society and human connections, fostering a renewed realization of self and interconnectedness. Ultimately, the novelist's narrative highlighted the significance of the pregnant female body and its centrality in shaping and reflecting societal norms. Zikora's journey becomes a powerful lens to examine the complexities of human experiences, providing a deeper understanding of the human condition and the intricacies of social dynamics.

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