An Anatomy of Silence: Mapping Female Psyche in Kavery Nambisan's *The Hills of Angheri*

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Abstract

In literary discourse, the female experience within the medical profession is still seldom explored. Despite the profession itself being fraught with tension, emotional strain, and systemic pressures, the female experience of care and caregiving is far more demanding. This article elucidates the feminine imagination of a female doctor's psyche and affective experience in Kavery Nambisan's *The Hills of Angheri*. Through a close reading of the semi-autobiographical narrative, it decodes the fragmented female psyche and cartography of care. Therefore, drawing attention to the causes of rupture in the female psyche resulting as part of personal trauma, clinical duty, and emotional labour. Applying the methodology of feminist psychoanalysis by Kristeva, affect theory by Sara Ahmed and trauma studies by Herman, the analysis challenges dominant tropes of the emotionally neutral healer. It foregrounds the gendered and psychological costs of caregiving in a postcolonial rural landscape. This article thus positions Nambisan's work as an essential intervention in feminist medical humanities and contemporary Indian literature by women.

Keywords: Affective theory; Feminism; Trauma; Caregiving; Abjection

Medical humanities is an interdisciplinary study that allows the identification and interpretation of medicine through humanistic perspectives in literary fiction. Analysis of female perspectives in storytelling resonates with the broader collective experiences of women in the medical domain. This methodological approach strengthens critical inquiry, articulating discourse on ethics, care, and affect. Kavery Nambisan as a doctor and a writer showcases a distinct voice acquired through professional and personal experiences. She is an Indian medical professional educated in the UK and has worked extensively in rural India. Her novel *The Hills of Angheri* is a semi-autobiographical work, reflecting on aspects of Nambisan's medical journey through the protagonist

Nalli. Nalli is a village girl raised in India who aspires to become a surgeon. From a tender age, Nalli gets curtailed by patriarchal norms and societal expectations. As she periodically asserts herself despite the restrictions imposed, she confronts moments where silence becomes her only response. The novel traces Nalli's journey through medical education in England and her return to India, mapping a geographical trajectory.

Nambisan's novel highlights the silenced structural tensions of caregiving, embodied by a woman navigating personal trauma. This article situates *The Hills of Angheri* at the convergence of feminist medical humanities and postcolonial Indian literature, arguing that Nambisan's textual account delineates the fragmented psyche of a female doctor. Nalli's fractured consciousness progresses through cumulative trauma, the invisible drain of emotional labour, and the haunting moral ambiguities that define her medical profession. Her lived experiences reveal the quiet struggles that get unacknowledged for women negotiating care within hierarchical systems. The act of healing imposes psychic burdens, erasing the self. Therefore, smudging the boundary between resilience and exhaustion.

Julia Kristeva in her work *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982), featured in *Classic Readings on Monster Theory* (Mittman and Hensel, 2018) articulates the theory of abjection. Kristeva establishes her theory in psychoanalytic discourse, in the works of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. She conceptualises the abject as an entity which violates existing boundaries, transgressing fundamental roles and destabilising systems and structures. She says,it "does not respect borders, positions, rules……disturbs identity, system, order" (37). The abject possesses one attribute of the object and is opposed to the "I." As a defensive measure, boundaries between self and the other get constructed to preserve psychic coherence. Hence, abjection is a process by which the subject negotiates its own stability in familiar and threatening circumstances.

The abject is that which traverses and transgresses; that which endangers a structure and finds itself on the wrong side of the boundary, often giving rise to the prohibitions specified by the taboo. The boundary is in place to safeguard systems and functions and to separate and demarcate different states, such as life and death, and the sacred and the profane (37).

Motifs of bodily fluids, decay, and death exemplify the abject, foregrounding determinants that society deliberately excludes. Reflecting complexities within the life of a female surgeon consistently engaged in abject routine. Also remaining coherent in confronting physical revulsion and emotional boundaries between self and patient. Sara Ahmed's affect theory argues that emotions extend beyond individuals but circulate between bodies. Ahmed's concept of "sticky emotions," serves as space in which feelings adhere to the subject over time. The silence of the subject under radical circumstances acts as a response to oppression (125).

These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being. My body extricates itself, as being alive, from that border. Such wastes drop so that I might live, until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit—cadaver.

In the novel *The Hills of Angheri*, the "laudable pus" motif manifests a symbolic connotation. 'Laudable Pus' is a malignant infection that is 'praiseworthy' once removed from the body. This grotesque yet poetic definition formulates Nalli's evolving perception of medicine. The profession of her choice is not limited to procedures but is a space of ethical confrontation and epiphanies. The term refers to visceral realities of surgical practice. On close reading, it resonates with Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection, where bodily fluids, blood, and pus denote the boundary between self and other as well as purity and pollution.

As a woman navigating the male-dominated sphere of medicine, by resisting patriarchal constraints imposed by both professional hierarchies and tradition, she translates as an "abject" figure. In environments where she owns agency, she becomes an outsider disrupting established norms. Nalli's presence as a woman becomes the laudable pus, an infection to be treated and cured. Nalli metamorphosis into an infection more threatening than the malady. The recurring medical imagery functions as a device for symbolic cleansing. Nalli redefines the meaning of caregiving in medical practice. Through Nalli, Nambisan questions societal construction of emotionally neutral doctor, oblivious to the notion of care. The text acts as a counter-narrative to dominant biomedical

discourses, asserting vulnerability and affect imperative to the profession of healing.

Julia Kristeva argues that abjection of the self originates from recognition of a void. In psychoanalytical criticism, theorists like Freud and Lacan reduce the concept of abjection to "object of lack." On the other hand, Kristeva asserts that "abjection" is not a result of lack but it comes from a sense of absence between the subject and the object. In such circumstances, abjection becomes the sole signified of the absence of object. The confrontation of the subject with the created instability becomes the expression of ontological dislocation "nourishment is not an other for me who am only their desire, I expel myself, spit myself out, I abject myself in the same movement by which I claims to be me…. I give birth to me in the violence of sobbing and vomit" (43).

Nalli does not verbalize her heartbreak over Jai or articulate the pain of being estranged from her village. She channels her emotional suffering into her medical practice. Her silence, therefore, is not indicative of passivity but of resilience. The void manifests into a form of resistance grounded in affective agency. Kristeva argues that female characters negotiate identity through repression. Nalli embodies this idea at the time of her father's death as she copes with the loss in silence. Also, when she gets betrayed by Jai, she hides her affection and remains numb. She chooses silence as her nonverbal response in vulnerable situations.

Kavery Nambisan's rendering of Nalli's journey is an anatomy of silence, an exploration of inner turmoil of women in medicine. Traditionally, scholars and institutions have conceptualized medicine as a domain governed by rationality and empirical detachment that privilege expertise, emotional neutrality, and stoicism. Such interpretations marginalise the gendered, affective, and subjective experiences of healthcare workers, particularly women. They translate as forms of invisible silences. Nambisan fictionalised the intensity of being a woman healer in a cultural setting that neither accommodates nor affirms her aspirations. Silence is theorised not as passive muteness but as an affective residue of systemic exclusion. It emerges as a condition produced through repeated encounters. The subtle trauma Nalli endures is lost in absence of a medium of conveyance. Nalli's experiences of ethical compromise are

not narrative detours. They constitute the ignored emotional cartography of female experience in medicine. Silence in the novel emerges not as absence but as an affective structure produced by institutional patriarchy. It accumulates through repeated encounters with gendered authority, shaping Nalli's psyche.

Judith Herman's discourse on trauma argues that periodic traumatic experiences lead to fragmentation of the self. Nalli's distress is not solitary, instead it is an incremental condition tailored by systemic oppression and patriarchy. As a child, Nalli gets subjected to scepticism within her own family. Her grandmother Ajji's cutting remark that "If God wanted you to be a doctor, you would have been a boy," marks the inception of her psychological wounding. "But Ajji did not ask. Worried about Nalli's health, Amma said Nalli should do something less difficult" (10). This moment solidifies the banal, habitual dismissal of female ambition in patriarchal settings. Community rejection and familial disbelief leave persistent voids in her sense of self, exacerbating emotional strain on her aspirations.

The novel subverts dominant tropes of the emotionally dispassionate healer by foregrounding caregiving as a site of profound vulnerability and affective engagement. As Nalli reflects, "Why do we become surgeons at all when we have to die so many deaths in a single life?" (11). This sentiment articulates the strain that comes with medical responsibility. Kavery Nambisan subverts the elevated image of the heroic doctor, an image constructed around masculine ideals of invincibility and control. The vulnerabilities of the female subject facilitate the necessary competence of the profession instead of diminishing facets of the caregiving profession. Her strength lies in the courage to acknowledge weakness, which redefines heroism in terms of emotional honesty. Her journey is a vivid example of epistemic disobedience, a conscious refusal to conform to patriarchal knowledge structures within masculinised spaces.

The Hills of Angheri probes into the nuances of silence, tracing the methods in which female aspirations are redirected. Since childhood, spatial environments have actively shaped Nalli's desires. She "would sit on one of its branches, look at the hills and dream her impossible dreams," reflecting that hope of becoming a doctor is not an abstract impulse but a feeling produced within and is connected to the landscape (11). Through the lens of Ahmed's

affect theory the hills from the novel emerge as a site of belonging. The hills as a space allow the protagonist to escape roles. The repressed dream becomes a vehicle to transport oneself to a prohibited future. Nalli's sense of hope is repeatedly reoriented by a gendered affective economy that associates female fulfilment with marriage rather than professional autonomy. In her conversation with Jai, Nalli's objectives are not loudly rejected but silently gendered. "All for a degree that'll be an ornament around your neck" rejecting education as decorative, realigning value towards material objects (23). Silence operates as a structure within established gender paradigms. Ahmed's argument that happiness is promised through confident normative life choices is indicative in Jai's remarks, "you will soon be someone's wife" (23). Nalli traverses the text as the normative woman whose ambitions are stifled by the constraints of a gendered society.

During her undergraduate education, her discovery of freedom is policed by the self. "There were movies, picnics and flirtations, a change in sensitivity" (79). Nalli's transformation from a closeted female to a liberal modern woman is accompanied by anticipatory restraint. She says, "Jai and family will disapprove of it" (79). Nalli becomes the archetype for self-policing women guilty of pleasures as they provoke external censure. This affective self-surveillance extends into her professional life, where she is repeatedly required to prove competence. She is coerced to suppress confusion, to advocate for patients to see beyond gender. The act of caregiving is feminised, but emotional restraint becomes a professional requirement while authority remains masculinised. It becomes obligatory for Nalli to gain legitimacy from the cyclical process of society.

During her practice in Royal College of Medicine, Nalli refuses to treat a British patient as he says, "I won't let a bloody immigrant treat me" (240). The remark of "bloody immigrant" reduces her professional identity as a doctor to a racial body, demonstrating Fanon's argument that colonial perception precedes competence. As she approaches Dr Hammer, the hospital administration acts as a site of colonised space that has institutionalised racial silence. The insult is normalised within the space, and it is rejected as a trivial matter. The Hospital and its staff demand that the subjugated standardise to a prerequisite level of emotional endurance. Fanonian colonial alienation is further revealed through

Nalli's visceral rejection of England "Damn the weather. The sameness of life annoyed me… I wanted noise and abuse, colour and chaos" (253). Fanonian conviction on lived dislocation converges with Ahmed's insistence asserting that belonging is felt before it is articulated. The Indian emotional register is perceived improper, as it is subordinate to the dominant register. Nalli is left with the sense of estrangement from colonized registers rejecting the naivety of the orient.

Nalli's enduring attachment to Angheri, despite its repeated acts of rejection and humiliation, reflects the adhesive nature of emotional investments. Her return to the village from the UK is an act of reclamation, reasserting her identity and politics of care within the postcolonial framework. The village is not idealised but reimagined as a contested yet reparative space where caregiving, memory, and resistance intersect. In this sense, the spatial politics of *The Hills of Angheri* become deeply entwined with feminist ethics. Landscapes become affective terrains embedded with gendered struggle. Nambisan crafts a literary intervention that bridges the medical, the emotional, and the political, offering a powerful vision of feminist reclamation and postcolonial healing.

Nalli's return to the hills of Coorg is a conscious and deliberate act of caregiving towards her ailing mother, her village, and community. By choosing to serve in a rural setting despite being trained in Western medicine, Nalli asserts her agency and reclaims her rightful role as a caregiver. She performs surgery on Makkan Singh's reproductive organ, a taboo for a woman doctor in the village. Despite initial resistance, he expresses heartfelt gratitude with teary eyes, saying, "I will never forget the seva you have done for me" (338). He folds his hands to form a gesture of namaste. Through such acts, Nalli breaks gender norms and earns recognition as a competent and respected physician. Nalli treats a woman suffering from elephantiasis of the vulva. Though doubtful of appropriate treatment, she performs duty as a caregiver to the village. In Nalli, Kavery Nambisan portrays a character who redefines methods of healing through empathy, humility, and unwavering commitment. Her practice is not an entity of reward but compassion that exceeds the boundaries of recognition. Thus, Nambisan reconfigures the concept of care not as a clinical duty or professional achievement, but as an act shaped by

intersecting histories of caste, class, gender, and memory. The rigid doctor-patient binary collapses into a labyrinth of relational ethics, where vulnerability is mutual and healing becomes a transformative process.

In *The Hills of Angheri*, Kavery Nambisan offers a powerful literary intervention into feminist medical humanities. Theoretical frameworks of Frantz Fanon, Sara Ahmed, and Julia Kristeva trace the trauma, affect, and silence shaping Nalli's fractured psyche. In interviews, Nambisan has mentioned the systemic neglect of rural healthcare, the lack of emotional support for doctors, and the urgent need for compassion in medical training. Professional legitimacy often mediated through gendered and hierarchical power structures. She blends memory and fiction to construct a voice twice marginalised.Through Nalli's narrative, the novel dissects the silence of a young female Indian doctor within patriarchal structures.The discourse of South Asian feminine voices in medical fiction still remains limited. The text gathers value as a sole interpreter of subdued female voices in the field of medicine. Future research possibilities include psychoanalytic readings of feminine medical experience, analyses of Gothicism in healthcare fiction, and studies of postcolonial power structures and systemic discrimination within contemporary Indian English and vernacular literary traditions.

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Between Panels and Representation: Visualizing Gendered Experience through *Drawing the Line: Indian Women Fight Back*

Dinisha Nayak and Punyashree Panda

Abstract

Women, as per Helene Cixous, "have been driven away as violently as from their bodies," as from writing (875). While feminist writings, as Cixous refers to as *Écriture féminine,* have been growing since the 1970s, we live in what W.J.T. Mitchell refers to it as the "pictorial turn," wherein humans engage with the visual medium in their everyday functionality (11). It becomes crucial to understand feminist visual representations wherein women exercise their agency to share their distinct embodied experiences through visual iconography. This article analyzes the comics anthology *Drawing the Line: Indian Women Fight Back* (2015) by Priya Kuriyan, which reflects the intersectionalities of being an Indian woman. The article shall utilize Hillary Chute's perspective on embodied feminist expression in comics from her book *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics* (2010) to analyze the comics anthology. A comprehension of these narratives would shed light on how Indian women use visual stylistics to visualize their experiences of being women in modern-day India. This article aims to investigate how comics convey experiences of gendered oppression and status of Indian women, as they claim their bodies via the icon to exercise their agency of being.

Keywords: Indian Women; Comics; Visual; Embodiment; Gender

Introduction

Widely referred to as the Nirbhaya case, the case of the gang rape and death of Jyoti Singh, a 22-year-old physiotherapy intern, in a moving bus on 16th December 2012 in Delhi, led to the onset of a significant women's movement in contemporary India. This act of crime ignited wide-scale public protests across India, especially in metropolitan centers such as Delhi, Bangalore,

Kolkata, Chennai, and more. Tina Lapsia, in her study of Singh's death, observes that "rape became a topic of daily conversation in India," which was needed to "reverse the patriarchal, sexist, and troubling views on women, men, and gender roles, and to eradicate the culture of modesty and shame for women" (47).

Drawing the Line: Indian Women Fight Back (2015), a graphic anthology published by the independent feminist publishing house, Zubaan, comprises fourteen short graphic narratives by various Indian female artists that center on a plethora of feminine issues, is a reaction to the Nirbhaya Case. The text is crucial for its visualization of 'daily conversations' on the status of Indian women in post-Nirbhaya India (Lapsia 47). Edited by Priya Kuriyan, Larissa Bertonasco, and Ludmilla Bartscht, the text, as per Nisha Susan, falls under the umbrella term of "feminist visual art" (Kuriyan et al. 2). These embodied visualizations hold meanings, as Thapan states that embodiment is "experienced in our everyday lives as lived and communicative bodies" and can be expressed through bodily senses (3). Hillary Chute (2010) explores the concept of embodied feminine expression through the works of Alison Bechdel, Marjane Satrapi, and Aline Kominsky Crumb, examining the gendered visual renderings of these comic artists. While Chute's discussion is fixated on the aforementioned popular artists, this article employs the theorist's concept of embodied feminine expression and aims to bring into discussion the visual narratives and diversity of embodiment used by Indian female artists in *Drawing the Line*.

Research Paradigm

In the 1970s and 1980s, the concept of gendered language and the development of *Écriture féminine* (feminine writing) emerged among French feminist theorists, including Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray. This stream of thought called for a new language of women's writing that "becomes a calculated response to alienation and censorship, an evasion of material threat" (Lanser 11). Cixous contends women's bodies are "driven away as violently" from writing, underscoring the necessity for them to claim presence by putting themselves both in text and also in the world (875). The woman's body has been a site of exploration by prominent thinkers, including Judith Butler,

Elizabeth Grosz, and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, among others. Butler states that the body is "a materiality that bears meaning, if nothing else, and the manner of this bearing is fundamentally dramatic," (Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," 521) which refers to their idea of performativity, where the nature of this performativity and the meaning can be socially contextualized. Further, as Grosz states, women's bodies are not purely neutral or natural, but are "marked, engraved, by social pressures external to them" (x). The representation of these marked bodies and their subjective experiences is captured by the concept of embodiment. Eve Shapiro defines embodiment as "A state of being in which the body is the site of meaning, experience, and expression of individuals in the world" (3). This stress on plurality is also a marker in postcolonial or third world feminism in its emphasis on intersectionalities. As per Mohanty, women of the third world "embody and personify the intersection of sexual, class, and racial ideologies" (72). In the Indian context, where society is governed by familial systems, religions, castes, class, including gender, there is a need to rethink the existing ideas of embodiment.

The Indian woman's body, in the post-British era, has historically been a symbolic site of national identity through the image of Bharat Mata and in Vedic times, through the mythical character of Sita from the *Ramayana*, whereby their bodies are seen as carriers of purity, maternal feelings, and as the embodiment of ideal Indian women. However, this perspective has been subjected to active cultural and religious memorization of female bodies, and has shifted in contemporary India. Thapan states, "Social class, status, and education, among other factors, are significant markers in the construction of the embodied identity of the 'modern' Indian woman" (20).The significance of these markers extends beyond the written word, as Mitchell states, "modern thought has re-oriented itself around visual paradigms," suggesting a growing recognition wherein images shape understanding (9). The idea of feminist embodiment, which has been explored through oral and written feminist narratives, finds expression in the visual language as well, as Chatterjee states, "feminists have opened up a visible and audible space for asserting gender justice and a greater role for women in public life" (382). In the field of comics studies, Chute states that embodiment is inherent to comics "in its processes

of production—in which the hand-drawn mark indexes the body of the maker— helps to instantiate the form, whatever the genre is, as one that is deeply embodied on several different levels" (Chute,"Feminist Graphic Art" 157). Her concept of embodiment introduces a dialogue that addresses the representation of and by women in comics, serving as a crucial lens for this article.

Analytical Framework

This article intends a close reading of the selected visual icons and the textual material of *Drawing the Line*. These icons will be analyzed in the context of embodied feminist expression in comics, as used by Chute in her book *Graphic Women*. McCloud posits, "We see ourselves in everything. We assign identities and emotions where none exist. Moreover, we make the world over in our image" (33). Such that in the comics anthology, the female characters, through their fictionality and the abstraction inherent in their illustrated forms, connect with readers through the materiality of comics. Chute states that the medium of graphic narratives, with its "complex visualizing," suggests that "we need to rethink the dominant tropes of unspeakability, invisibility, and inaudibility" (3). This process of rethinking, through the illustrations from *Drawing the Line*, shall be done via an author-reader interaction, as Nikkilä and Vuorinne argue that graphic narratives foster the "reader's capacity to imagine the lives of others, but also to invite them to attend to the experiences of others, through affect, embodiment, and reflection" (4). The analysis shall include the reflections of the researcher as an embodied reader who, through "the shuttling back and forth between reading and looking at comics," (Chute, "Feminist Graphic Art" 157) engages with "ways to relate to the Other in terms other than identification" (Szeìp 8).

Comics as Counterspace for Indian Women's Experiences

Compared with goddesses such as Durga and Kali, the divine embodiments of strength and bravery, Samidha Gunjal's "Someday" utilizes the icon of Kali to reflect on its association with Indian women (Kuriyan et al. 147). The story centers around a destructive ending to eve-teasing (public sexual harassment), which the author calls "a daily reality for most women in India" and has been a serious concern and "national problem" in India (Rana 1). The multiplicity of

images drawn emphasizes the materiality of the male gaze on "the girl," an everyday affair in the lives of Indian women (Kuriyan et al. 151). When the girl walks on the street, the female body is stripped of dignity as the reader witnesses that the roundness of watermelons, through a persistent male gaze, is reimagined, with explicit sexual connotation, as a female body part, highlighting the problematic analogy of women and their body parts as objects, underlining the sexualization of the female gender. The men are illustrated with their explicit gestures of waving, pointing, showing tongues, pouting for a kiss, smirking, laughing, and catcalling, through the suggestive onomatopoeia in their respective speech balloons. The poster of *Murder 3* on the background wall, with a silhouette line art of a woman in a licentious position, hints at the sexualization of the female body for entertainment. The men's bodies are comfortable and expansive throughout the page, suggestive of the gendered spatial entitlement in both the page and Indian society. On the other hand, the girl's physical posture, clutching her bag tightly, and the absence of a mouth, suggest a sense of threat and silence and/or lack of voice. The girl's embodied presence reflects the tension between the desire to be unseen and the threat of being seen. This bodily restrictive posture of the girl is also reflected in Kaveri Gopalakrishnan's "Basic Space," that is, the personal bodily space of an individual (119). Gopalakrishnan illustrates an ideal posture (blank/stern face, straight back, stiff arms, battle stance, and bag over chest) and gestures that she adopts to "tell people where [my] space begins," keeping her safe from the men and their side-eyed gazes on her in a local train (121). This bodily regulation is reflected in her visualized interviews with different Indian women. For example, the angry, stern looks in public contrast with the resting eyes, the need to keep safety pins in bangles and dupattas while traveling, or being alert in uncomfortable situations (122). These drawn bodies with subjective corporeality embody a constant struggle for space. Returning to Gunjal's "Someday," the girl's shrinking body reflects her embodied fear, which is centrally placed within the panel transitions, contrasting with the overpowering monstrous morphed men, suggesting a loss of bodily autonomy against the collective embodiment of oppression (152). As metamorphosed men splash the pages suggesting their dominance over the space and mobility of the girl, crepuscular rays erupt through them (153-154). The final explosive splash page depicts distorted bodies of the surreal monsters flying across the page,

and the girl has metamorphosed into *Kali*, with four arms, naked, and sporting a rolling tongue and white eye sockets, yet without any visible weapons. The multiplicity and identical surreal monsters can also be replicative of the clones of *asuraRaktabijas*, defeated by *Kali*. This hand-drawn visual icon of *Kali* embodies resistance grounded in the lived experiences of Indian women, reinstating the necessity and relevance of *Kali* in contemporary India. Reimagined as a feminist symbol, this *Kali*, through the radiating lines and the fragmentation of the assailants, embodies strength, wherein the female body becomes a site of resistance, protest, and myth.

In the case of Gopalakrishnan's narrative, the protagonist's corporeal act of erasing the drawn dotted line and stepping into the borderless space acts as a reclamation of embodied freedom, mobility, and space—a visual and ideological shift from containment to expression (128). Through various vignettes of embodied freedom, her narrative also visualizes an alternative imaginary "world without boundaries" from the interviews, such as spreading legs, going braless, scratching publicly, eating ice cream naked in Delhi, and playing Holi in whites (127). It reflects the heightened visibility of women's bodily gestures, which are typically policed. This comic makes one feel how gender is not internalized but somatically experienced (the heat of summer, the discomfort of bras, the taboo of scratching), all felt through the skin, nerves, posture, and presence. These vignettes reflect the desire for bodily autonomy of various contemporary Indian women and rupturing "repeated stylizations" (such as covering up, crossing legs, being modest) that society expects from them (Butler 43).

Multiplicity in Embodied Acts of Gendered Resistance

Chute asserts, "graphic narratives that bear witness to authors' traumas and those of others materially retrace inscriptional effacement; they reconstruct and repeat in order to counteract" (173). Hemavathy Guha's "Asha, now" depicts such reconstruction. Asha's body is resurrected on the page as vulnerable and violated, naked in the shower and exposed to her brother's and the reader's gaze (Kuriyan et al. 113). Guha illustrates the "not entirely fictional" account of Asha, who undergoes sexual abuse by her brother within the domesticated space of home since childhood (110). As her characters