

From Doomscrolling to Touching Grass-Digital Affect, Spectacle, and Political Agency in Rachita Taneja's Touching Grass

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ABSTRACT

In *Touching Grass: A Book of Comics* (2026), Rachita Taneja looks at a familiar part of digital life: we have constant access to information, but that does not always help us understand what is happening or know what to do next. This paper reads doomscrolling as more than spending too much time on a phone. It is also an emotional and political condition shaped by the digital spectacle. Through Taneja's reflections on phone use, COVID-19, notifications, engagement metrics, rage bait, misinformation, and political paralysis, the paper explores how the need to stay informed can turn into exhaustion. I draw on Guy Debord's idea of the spectacle, research on digital affect and the attention economy, studies of doom scrolling and rage bait, and Nancy Fraser's idea of subaltern counter publics. I closely read the prose on pages 38–43 and selected comics about gendered media attention, patriarchy, political silence, misinformation, online misogyny, and advertising. I argue that “touching grass” is not about simply rejecting digital media. It is about reconnecting what we see online with embodied awareness, solidarity, and action in the world.

Keywords: *Rachita Taneja; Touching Grass; doom scrolling; digital affect; spectacle; attention economy; rage bait; counter publics; political comics; political agency*

Our phones have become part of almost everything we do. We use them to talk to people, follow the news, watch videos, shop, work, and discuss politics. Because they are so closely tied to everyday life, it is too simple to say that people just need more self-control. The phone is part of systems that keep asking for our attention. Taneja's *Touching Grass* takes up this contradiction from inside digital culture. Her comics circulate through the same networks they question, so the book is not asking us to reject the internet altogether. Instead, it asks us to think about how digital media shape our feelings and our ability to act.

Bloomsbury presents *Touching Grass* as a collection of political comics about authoritarianism, casteism, Islamophobia, transphobia, economic inequality, climate anxiety, and the challenge of staying informed without becoming overwhelmed. The publisher describes a movement through doomscrolling, brain rot, and hopelessness toward equality, solidarity, and hope. This gives us a useful starting point. The title is more than a joke about putting down a phone; it raises a political question about how we reconnect what we know through screens with the world around us.

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Taneja develops this problem most explicitly in the sequence on pages 38–43. She begins with a personal experiment: trying to count how many times she reaches for her phone during the day, only to abandon the exercise after the number quickly enters double digits (38). The failed measurement is significant. The inability to count use becomes an image of a larger inability to perceive the scale of attention capture. The phone is no longer an occasional tool; it has become a reflexive extension of everyday life.

The discussion then moves from personal habit to a social condition. Taneja connects the expansion of phone use during the COVID-19 pandemic to an increased desire for information that gradually becomes doom scrolling (38). The distinction between information and understanding is crucial. One can consume an enormous quantity of news without achieving comprehension, political clarity, or agency. Salisbury's study of pandemic doom scrolling similarly resists treating the practice as merely a simple addiction, instead examining its relationship to anxiety, lived time, and the desire to remain attentive to a crisis.

This paper explores four related questions: How does Touching Grass show doomscrolling as an emotional condition shaped by the attention economy? How do information, outrage, and political spectacle lead to exhaustion or paralysis? How do Taneja's comics challenge familiar stories about gender, violence, misinformation, and political silence? And how does "touching grass" suggest a way of moving from watching events online to being present and acting with others?

My main argument is that doomscrolling can leave people politically aware but unable to act. At the same time, Taneja shows that digital spaces can also make room for counter-discourses. Her satire brings out contradictions that dominant narratives often hide. The movement in the book can be read as: SCREEN → SPECTACLE → ATTENTION → AFFECT → OUTRAGE → EXHAUSTION → PARALYSIS → TOUCHING GRASS → EMBODIMENT → SOLIDARITY → AGENCY.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1 Debord and the Digital Spectacle

Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* helps us understand a culture in which social relations are increasingly organised through representations. For Debord, the spectacle is not simply a collection of images; it is a social relationship mediated by images. The concept becomes especially productive when applied to platform culture because political events, personal identities, crises, outrage, advertising, and entertainment are all presented through rapidly circulating images and fragments. The contemporary user does not merely see the spectacle; the user participates in its circulation through clicks, likes, shares, comments, and reposts.

Touching Grass repeatedly exposes this condition. The political event arrives on the screen as a panel, headline, notification, meme, argument, or shocking image. The subject reacts, but reaction can itself become part of the system of circulation. The political problem is therefore not simply whether a user knows that something terrible has happened. The deeper question is whether the form in which the event is encountered allows knowledge to become sustained attention and collective action.

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2 Attention Economy and Platform Engagement

Taneja's metaphor of social media platforms as "big insatiable monsters" is central to her critique (40). The metaphor personifies the platform as an entity that is never satisfied with one act of engagement: it wants more likes, shares, content, and user data. The language of appetite turns an abstract economic structure into a recognizable bodily relationship. The user's attention becomes a resource that can be repeatedly extracted.

Research on the digital marketplace of attention helps clarify this process. Social-media metrics transform visibility into a measurable form of value, making engagement itself an economic and cultural currency. Rage is particularly useful within such a system because it produces an immediate impulse to respond. Shin, DeFelice, and Kim distinguish information bait from rage bait and find that rage-bait headlines can be associated with higher audience engagement, demonstrating why emotionally provocative material is attractive within attention-driven environments.

Taneja's discussion of notifications, vibrations, and dopamine hits makes more sense as a structural problem than as a moral failure. The problem is not simply that individuals lack willpower. The interface is designed around repeated solicitation. Her reference to the idea that technology can "colonize every minute of your life" turns attention into contested territory. The language of colonization is deliberately strong: what is being occupied is not geographical space but time, concentration, and mental availability.

3 Digital Affect and Affective Publics

Zizi Papacharissi's concept of affective publics is useful because it shifts attention from purely rational communication toward the circulation of feeling through networked media. Political stories travel not only because people consider them important but because they evoke anger, fear, sympathy, disgust, anxiety, or hope. In such environments, affect is not an accidental addition to political communication; it is one of the means through which political visibility is produced.

This helps explain the strange emotional condition of doomscrolling. The doomscroller is not indifferent. The opposite may be true: the user continues scrolling because the events feel urgent and morally significant. Neijzen's work on "doombehaviour" is useful because it complicates the assumption that doomscrolling has no epistemic value. The desire to know can be genuine even when the practice becomes harmful or unproductive. Touching Grass captures precisely this contradiction: the subject scrolls because remaining informed seems necessary, yet the resulting information overload can weaken the ability to understand and act.

4 Doomscrolling, Anxiety, and Affective Exhaustion

Laura Salisbury's analysis of doomscrolling during the pandemic provides an important foundation for reading Taneja's account. Salisbury describes doomscrolling as compulsive engagement with anxiety-inducing online material and examines how it reorganises lived time. Taneja's COVID reference similarly marks a moment when the desire for information intensified. The pandemic created a condition in which information was not merely useful but existentially charged. Yet the endless search for updates could become a repetitive practice with no clear endpoint.

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On page 41, Taneja describes doomscrolling as exhausting and paralysing, producing a vicious circle. On page 43, she develops the metaphor of the flight/freeze response: when confronted with overwhelming shock, the body may either respond or become immobilised. The comic language of “doom nap,” “doom bag of chips,” and “doom-phone” turns paralysis into everyday humour while retaining its political seriousness. These phrases show how extraordinary political violence can be translated into ordinary routines of withdrawal.

5 Rage Bait, Misinformation, and the Economy of Outrage

Taneja's explanation of rage bait on page 41 reveals the platform's ability to transform political conflict into an engagement mechanism. A provocative statement such as “women belong in the kitchen” may not necessarily be posted because the speaker sincerely believes it. Its function may be to provoke enough anger to generate responses. The distinction between belief and engagement is crucial. Once provocation becomes a strategy, outrage itself becomes productive.

Brady and colleagues demonstrate that moral outrage expression can be socially amplified in online networks: users learn from the social rewards attached to outrage and become more likely to express it. Taneja's satire makes the same process legible at the level of everyday digital experience. The problem is not that anger is always politically useless. Feminist and anti-oppressive movements have repeatedly used anger as a political resource. The problem arises when anger is detached from organised action and redirected into repetitive platform engagement.

The gish gallop, which Taneja discusses on page 42, extends the problem from affect to epistemology. When a person is confronted with a barrage of false or illogical claims, responding to every claim becomes practically impossible. Quantity begins to imitate evidence. Speed overwhelms verification. The result is an environment in which fact-checking can occur after the emotional damage has already been done.

6 Counterpublics, Gender, and Political Comics

Nancy Fraser's concept of subaltern counterpublics helps us understand Taneja's comics as more than satire. Fraser argues that subordinated groups may create alternative discursive arenas in which they formulate counter-discourses and reinterpret their identities, needs, and interests. The comic can function as such an arena because it condenses an argument into a form that can circulate outside conventional institutional discourse.

The relevance to Taneja is especially clear in comics concerning rape, patriarchy, media attention, misogyny, and political silence. The comics do not simply add feminist opinions to an existing debate; they expose the assumptions that structure the debate itself. A short sequence can place two apparently equivalent statements beside each other and reveal their unequal social consequences. This is one of the strengths of political comics: juxtaposition can function as argument.

Charlotte Galpin's work on intersectional feminism and social-media engagement is helpful here because digital participation is never politically neutral. Access to visibility, safety, credibility, and speech is unevenly distributed. Taneja's comics repeatedly foreground these asymmetries, particularly when the supposedly universal language of protection, empowerment, mental health, or free speech conceals gendered or structural inequalities.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative close textual and visual analysis. The primary corpus consists of Taneja's prose reflections on pages 38–43 of *Touching Grass* and selected comic pages supplied for analysis from pages 13, 15, 99, 101, 106, 107, 108, 109, 111, and 116. The analysis attends to both verbal and visual form: panel arrangement, repetition, juxtaposition, dialogue, captions, typography, silence, visual absence, irony, and the relationship between image and text.

The selection is purposive rather than statistically representative. The chosen pages are those most directly connected to the paper's central concepts: doomscrolling, political spectacle, misinformation, gendered discourse, patriarchal protection, political silence, commodification, and the possibility of counter-discursive agency. The photographs of the book pages are reproduced here as research figures supplied by the researcher; page numbers are retained so that the visual claims can be checked against the primary text.

Because the paper studies comics as a multimodal form, visual evidence is treated as integral rather than illustrative. The argument does not depend only on what a caption says. It also considers how the panel sequence controls pacing, how repetition produces irony, how minimal drawings create recognisable political types, and how the final panel can reverse or intensify the meaning established by earlier panels.

FROM PHONE HABIT TO POLITICAL CONDITION: READING PAGES 38–43

1 The Failed Count and the Scale of Attention

Taneja's attempt to count how often she reaches for her phone is comic because the experiment fails almost immediately. Yet the failure has analytical significance. Counting assumes that the behaviour has discrete beginnings and endings. Platform culture undermines that distinction: the phone is always nearby, notifications interrupt other activities, and one act of checking can lead to another. The failed count becomes a miniature representation of an attention economy in which interruption has become normal.

The movement from the individual anecdote to a wider social statistic on page 38 is also rhetorically important. Taneja does not leave the problem at the level of personal weakness. The comic essay moves outward from "I" to "we." This movement is characteristic of political satire: the apparently private habit becomes evidence of a public condition.

2 COVID-19 and the Transformation of Information into Doomscrolling

The COVID-19 pandemic intensified the political and emotional importance of digital information. When physical movement was restricted and ordinary social contact was disrupted, screens became essential for news, communication, work, education, and companionship. Taneja's account recognises the legitimacy of the desire for information while showing how that desire can mutate into compulsive consumption.

The distinction between information and understanding is central. Information arrives continuously, but understanding requires interruption, context, comparison, reflection, and time. The platform environment often rewards the opposite: novelty, speed, immediacy, and emotional intensity. Thus the doomscroller may become increasingly informed about events while becoming less capable of constructing a coherent interpretation of them.

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This contradiction is why doomscrolling should be read as an affective condition rather than simply a behavioural problem. The subject remains engaged because disengagement can feel irresponsible. To stop scrolling may seem like abandoning people who are suffering. The very ethics of witnessing can therefore become entangled with the economics of attention.

3 “Insatiable Monsters”: Platform Desire and the Extraction of Attention

Taneja's description of platforms as “big insatiable monsters” (40) converts the invisible architecture of the attention economy into a bodily metaphor. An insatiable creature can never be satisfied. This is precisely how the engagement system functions: one click creates the possibility of another; one post generates comments; comments generate notifications; notifications generate return visits.

The metaphor also reverses the usual relationship between user and platform. Digital interfaces are commonly represented as tools that users control. Taneja's monster metaphor suggests the opposite: the user's behaviour feeds a system that has its own logic of accumulation. Likes, shares, content, and data are not merely expressions of personal choice; they become resources.

The political importance of this metaphor becomes clearer when considered alongside Debord. If the spectacle depends on mediated social relations, the platform economy intensifies the spectacle by making participation measurable and continuously renewable. The spectacle is no longer only something to watch. It is something to feed.

4 Notifications, Dopamine, and the Colonisation of Time

Taneja's attention to notification sounds and vibrations is important because it brings the abstract economy of attention into the body. The phone does not merely display information; it produces a physical anticipation. A sound or vibration can trigger an automatic movement of the hand. In this sense, the platform enters bodily routine.

The metaphor of “colonizing every minute of your life” extends this bodily observation into a political vocabulary. Colonisation usually names the seizure of territory. Here the territory is time. The user's minutes become contested space. What appears as a private decision to check a phone is therefore connected to a larger system in which attention has exchange value.

This is also why “touching grass” should not be reduced to a wellness slogan. If the problem were simply tired eyes or excessive screen time, the solution would be a digital detox. Taneja's argument is more political. The question is what happens to perception and agency when every minute is available for capture. Touching grass means reclaiming the capacity to experience a world that is not organised entirely by the feed.

5 Rage Bait and the Production of Reaction

The discussion of rage bait on page 41 reveals the platform's ability to transform political conflict into an engagement mechanism. The provocative statement is designed less to persuade than to trigger. The user's anger becomes the commodity.

This creates an important distinction between political affect and affective capture. Anger can be necessary for political recognition: it can make injustice visible, create solidarity, and motivate collective action. But rage bait extracts the energy of anger without requiring a path

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toward action. The user responds to the provocation, the platform records the response, and the cycle continues.

Shin, DeFelice, and Kim's findings help explain the economic logic behind this process: their study found rage-bait headlines associated with higher audience engagement than information bait. Taneja's satire therefore anticipates a problem that research now makes measurable: outrage is not merely an emotional response; it can be an economically useful form of attention.

6 The Vicious Circle: Exhaustion as Political Paralysis

By page 41, doomscrolling has become a "vicious circle." The phrase is significant because it describes a system rather than an isolated moment. The more anxious the user becomes, the more the user seeks information; the more information appears, the greater the anxiety; the greater the anxiety, the more difficult sustained thought becomes.

Page 42 adds the gish gallop to this structure. The problem is no longer simply too much information but the inability to process competing claims at the speed at which they arrive. In a digital environment, a person can be asked to refute one falsehood after another while the original emotional impression remains.

Page 43 makes the political consequences explicit. Taneja connects doomscrolling with flight, freeze, dissociation, and the feeling that there is nothing one can do. The everyday jokes about a "doom nap," "doom bag of chips," and "doom-phone" are funny precisely because they translate a large political crisis into small acts of personal retreat. The humour is not an escape from politics; it reveals how politics enters the ordinary body.

The crucial claim is that scrolling can become a substitute for intervention. While the user watches violence, destructive policy, environmental damage, or social injustice unfold, the user may feel that witnessing itself is a form of participation. But Taneja asks what happens when witnessing never becomes action. This is the point at which the book's title becomes an ethical proposition: touch the world that exists beyond the screen.

VISUAL ANALYSIS: SATIRE AS COUNTER-SPECTACLE

Taneja's comics do not merely describe the digital spectacle; they produce counter-images that interrupt it. Their minimal drawings and compressed dialogues create a different rhythm from the endless feed. A platform feed encourages rapid movement from one item to another. A comic panel asks the reader to stop, interpret, compare, and notice the relationship between panels. In this sense, the page itself can resist the tempo of doomscrolling.

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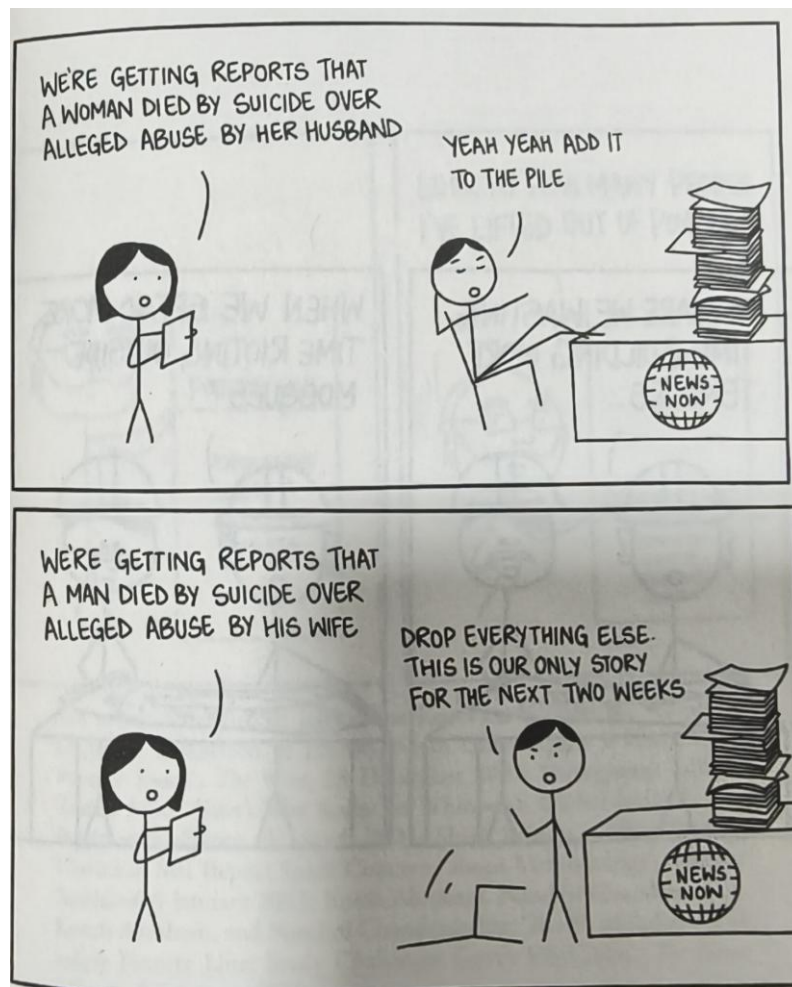


Figure 1. Rachita Taneja, *Touching Grass*, p. 15. Photograph supplied by the researcher. The page juxtaposes unequal media attention to women's and men's deaths, making visibility itself the subject of critique.

1 Gendered Visibility and the Politics of Attention

Page 15 provides a powerful example of how Taneja turns attention into a political object. The comic contrasts the treatment of women's deaths with the treatment of men's deaths, exposing how some forms of suffering become major media stories while others are reduced to another item in an accumulating pile. The political issue is therefore not simply representation but differential visibility.

This page can be read through Debord because the spectacle determines what becomes visible and how intensely it becomes visible. Yet the comic also exposes the limits of a purely spectacular model. If the media spectacle gives unequal value to different deaths, Taneja's counter-image asks the reader to perceive the inequality. The comic becomes a counter-spectacle: it makes the structure of attention itself visible.

The page is also relevant to affective publics. Media attention does not merely communicate information about death; it distributes grief, sympathy, outrage, and urgency. What receives repeated circulation can become emotionally significant to a public, while what disappears

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from circulation may become socially forgettable. Taneja's satire interrupts this unequal distribution of attention.



Figure 2. Rachita Taneja, *Touching Grass*, p. 99. Photograph supplied by the researcher. The comic juxtaposes contradictory claims around women's empowerment and the hijab.

2 Contradictory Discourses of Women's Empowerment

Page 99 demonstrates Taneja's method of exposing contradiction through juxtaposition. Statements about women's empowerment and the hijab are placed in relation so that the reader must confront the instability of apparently universal claims about freedom. The comic does not simply provide another slogan. It asks who gets to define empowerment and under what conditions.

This is important for Fraser's concept of counterpublics. Dominant public discourse frequently presents its own categories as neutral or universal. Counterpublic discourse challenges those categories by introducing experiences and interpretations that have been excluded or flattened. Taneja's feminist satire performs this function through compression: a few panels reveal how the same language of empowerment can be used selectively.

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Figure 3. Rachita Taneja, Touching Grass, p. 101. Photograph supplied by the researcher. The comic contrasts rape by a stranger with rape within marriage.

3 Sexual Violence and the Limits of the “Stranger Danger” Narrative

Page 101 challenges a familiar cultural script in which rape is imagined primarily as an attack by a dangerous stranger. By placing rape by a stranger alongside rape by a husband, Taneja exposes the ideological work performed by the conventional narrative. The juxtaposition forces the reader to recognise that sexual violence cannot be understood only through the figure of the visibly threatening outsider.

The visual simplicity is crucial. The repeated figures make the difference between the situations easy to perceive while also making the underlying similarity impossible to ignore. Taneja’s satire thus works through a form of visual equivalence. The panel sequence asks the reader to compare rather than accept the hierarchy built into conventional discourse.

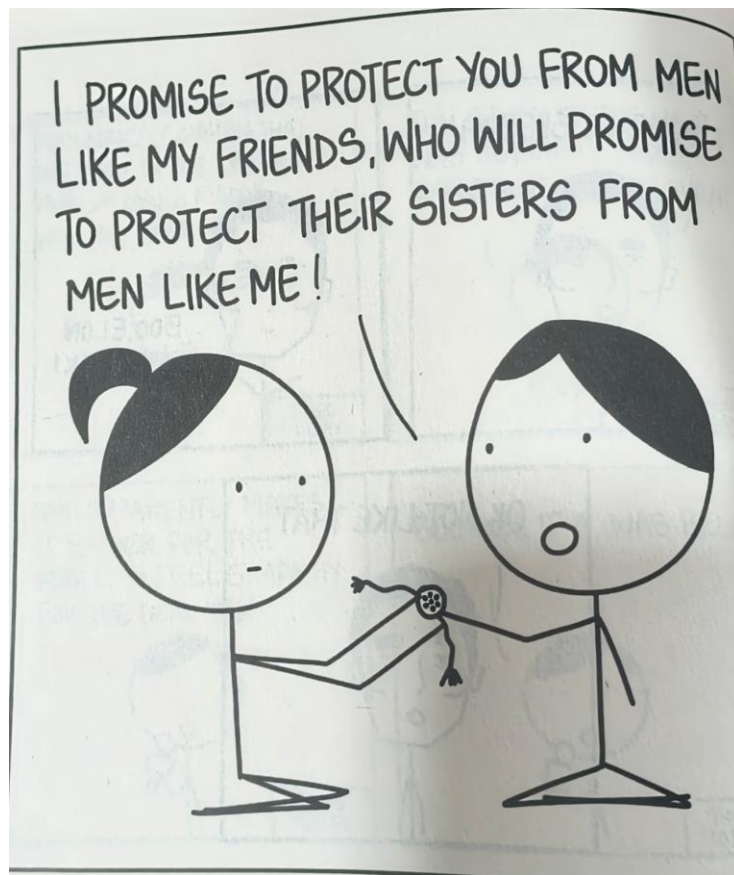


Figure 4. Rachita Taneja, *Touching Grass*, p. 106. Photograph supplied by the researcher. The comic satirises male “protection” by revealing its dependence on other men’s violence.

4 Protective Masculinity and Circular Patriarchy

Page 106 offers one of Taneja’s sharpest formulations of patriarchal contradiction: a man promises to protect a woman from men like his friends, while those friends promise to protect their sisters from men like him. The circularity is the joke and the argument. “Protection” does not eliminate patriarchal violence; it reproduces a social world in which men imagine themselves as legitimate protectors while other men are constructed as threats.

The comic is particularly effective because the contradiction is structural rather than psychological. The individual speaker may sincerely believe that he is protective, but the social system continually recreates the category of the dangerous man. Each protector therefore depends on the existence of another man who must be protected against. The comic turns patriarchal logic back on itself.

In counterpublic terms, the page also reverses the perspective from which the issue is normally narrated. Instead of asking which man can be trusted to protect women, it asks why women’s safety is organised through male authority in the first place. The shift is small in form but large in political implication.

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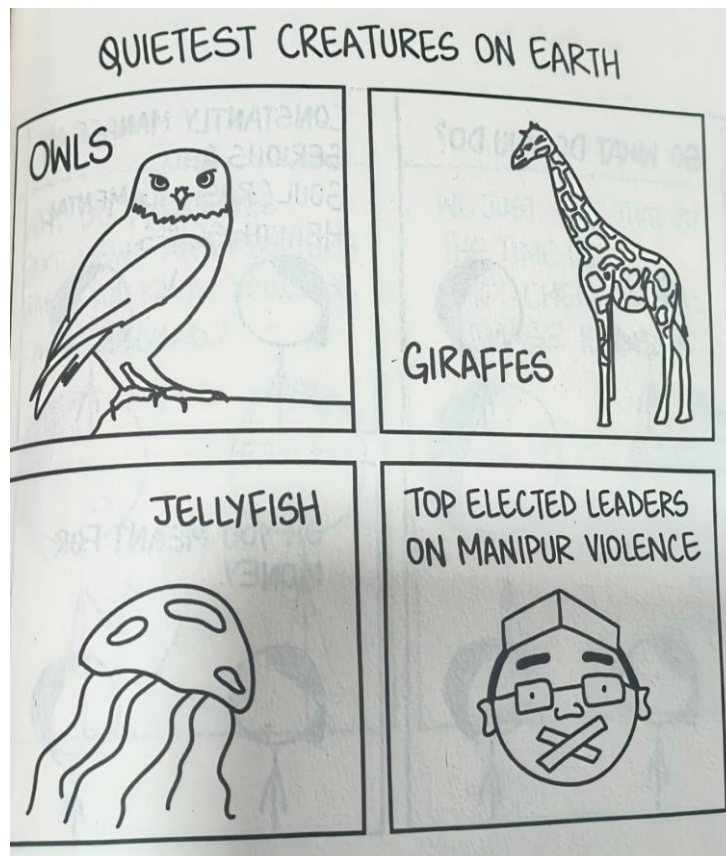


Figure 5. Rachita Taneja, Touching Grass, p. 107. Photograph supplied by the researcher. The “quietest creatures” gag links animal silence with the silence of political leaders concerning Manipur.

5 Political Silence as Spectacle

Page 107 transforms silence into an object of satire. By comparing political silence with the quietness of animals, Taneja creates an ironic scale in which political leaders are measured against creatures whose silence is natural rather than strategic. The joke depends on a recognition that political silence is itself communicative.

From the perspective of the spectacle, silence can be as significant as speech because public figures manage visibility not only by speaking but also by withholding attention. The absence of commentary on a crisis can therefore become part of the politics of representation. Taneja's comic makes absence visible.

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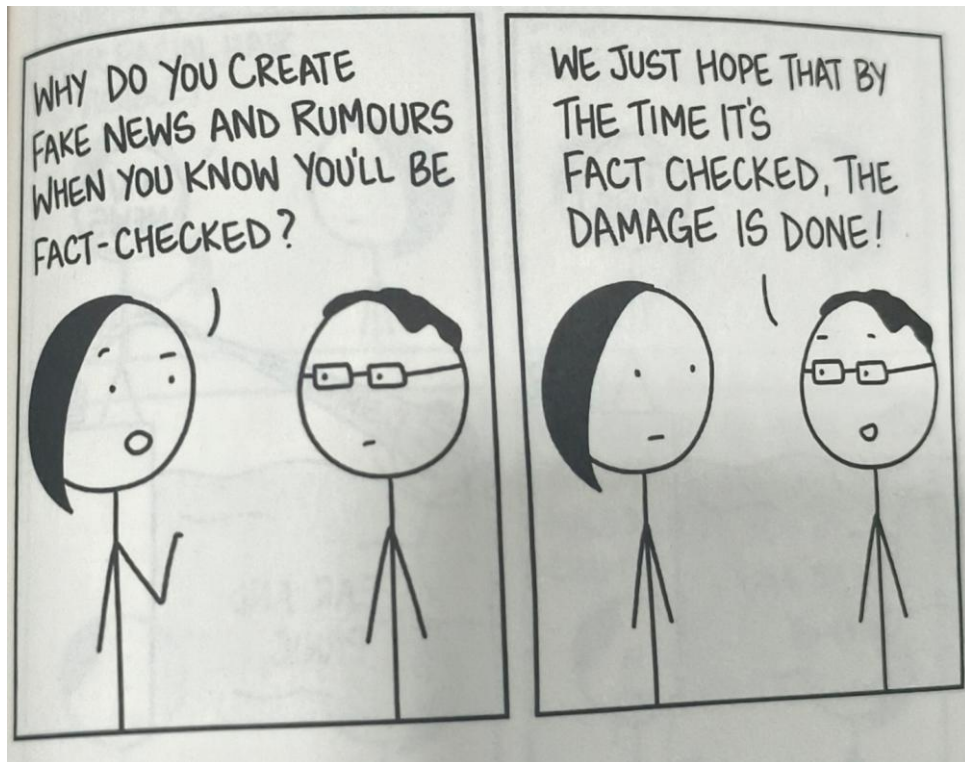


Figure 6. Rachita Taneja, Touching Grass, p. 109. Photograph supplied by the researcher. The comic addresses misinformation and the idea that fact-checking may occur after damage has already circulated.

6 Misinformation and the Afterlife of Falsehood

Page 109 addresses a central problem of digital information: correction does not necessarily erase circulation. Once a false claim has been encountered, it may continue to influence perception even after it has been disproved. This is why Taneja's argument about misinformation belongs alongside her discussion of doomscrolling. Both involve an environment in which the volume and speed of information exceed the individual's capacity to process it.

The page also complicates the assumption that the solution to misinformation is simply more information. A false claim followed by a correction still creates an additional informational burden. The reader must remember the false statement, encounter the correction, evaluate credibility, and resist the emotional residue of the original claim. The attention economy thus produces a peculiar epistemic problem: even truth may have to compete for attention with falsehood.

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Figure 7. Rachita Taneja, *Touching Grass*, p. 111. Photograph supplied by the researcher. The page connects online misogyny, body-shaming, and selective concern about men's mental health.

7 Online Misogyny and Selective Empathy

Page 111 demonstrates how affect can be selectively distributed. Public concern for mental health may appear progressive while simultaneously coexisting with misogynistic attacks and body-shaming. Taneja's satire exposes the contradiction between a general language of empathy and the specific targets to whom empathy is actually extended.

This is another example of counterpublic intervention. Feminist counter-discourse does not simply demand inclusion within an existing public; it can reveal that the dominant categories of concern have been unevenly applied. Taneja's comic therefore asks the reader to examine the politics of empathy itself.

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Figure 8. Rachita Taneja, *Touching Grass*, p. 116. Photograph supplied by the researcher. The deodorant advertisement juxtaposes gendered expectations: women are associated with cleanliness while men are associated with sex.

8 Advertising, Commodification, and the Spectacular Body

Page 116 shifts the analysis from overt political discourse to advertising. The deodorant comparison shows how gendered consumer culture assigns different meanings to the same product category. Women are addressed through cleanliness and bodily management, while men are linked to sexual desirability. The joke exposes the ideological work performed by advertising: commodities are sold not only as objects but as promises about gendered identities.

Debord's spectacle is particularly useful here because advertising is not peripheral to the political world; it is one of the mechanisms through which social meanings are produced. The body becomes an image that must be managed, improved, cleaned, desired, or displayed. In this sense, the advertisement belongs to the same attention economy as political outrage: both transform human experience into forms that can circulate and generate value.

DISCUSSION: FROM SPECTATORSHIP TO AGENCY

The visual and textual analyses together suggest that *Touching Grass* is organised around a paradox. The digital sphere is simultaneously a space of exhaustion and a space of counterpublic possibility. The same networks that circulate rage bait and misinformation can also circulate feminist critique, political satire, testimony, and solidarity. The task, therefore, is not simply to leave the screen.

Taken together, the text and comics show a central tension in *Touching Grass*: digital spaces can exhaust us, but they can also help people speak back. The same networks that spread rage

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bait and misinformation can carry feminist criticism, political satire, testimony, and solidarity. So the answer is not simply to leave the screen.

It is easy to read “touching grass” as a wellness message telling people to disconnect. But that would miss the point of Taneja’s own work, which depends on digital circulation. Her comics use these networks to make counter-discourses possible. What she questions is the idea that visibility automatically leads to action. A post may be shared widely without changing anything materially, while a small act of organising may have a real effect without attracting much attention.

The movement from doomscrolling to touching grass is therefore a move from watching to taking part. Doomscrolling keeps us in contact with one crisis after another, but it can also make action feel impossible. Touching grass brings things back to a human scale: bodies, places, relationships, communities, institutions, and the material conditions people live with.

Fraser’s idea of counterpublics helps explain why this return to the material world is not an escape from politics. Counterpublics give subordinated groups space to develop their own language, interpretations, and strategies. Taneja’s comics do this by naming issues such as victim-blaming, patriarchal protection, political silence, misinformation, misogyny, and the commodification of gender.

Papacharissi’s work on affective publics adds another point. Political communication is shaped by feeling, so the goal cannot be to remove emotion from politics. We need to ask whether a feeling helps people connect and act together, or whether it is captured and recycled as engagement. Anger can become solidarity, but it can also become another click. Anxiety can make us alert, but it can also keep us checking endlessly. Hope can encourage action, but it can also become something we simply consume.

One of the book’s strongest points is that it does not treat online life and “real” life as separate worlds. Digital media are already part of our reality. What matters is how online experience connects with material consequences. Taneja asks us to notice injustice online, think about it critically, understand the structures behind it, and take part in collective responses that go beyond the screen.

This paper has argued that Touching Grass presents doomscrolling as an emotional and political condition, not simply a lack of self-control. In her reflections on pages 38–43, Taneja shows how the wish to stay informed can become tangled up with attention capture, notifications, rage bait, information overload, anxiety, and paralysis. Political events keep appearing as things to look at, while the ability to respond in a sustained way becomes harder.

Debord’s idea of the spectacle helps explain why this is political: social life increasingly reaches us through images and representations. Research on digital affect and the attention economy helps explain why outrage and anxiety can hold our attention so effectively. Doomscrolling studies also remind us that this behaviour may come from a genuine wish to know what is happening, rather than from meaningless addiction. Fraser’s theory of counterpublics helps us read Taneja’s comics as interventions that challenge dominant ways of talking about gender, violence, misinformation, political silence, and commodification.

The selected comics show how Taneja uses visual satire to make readers compare ideas that are usually kept apart. Page 15 draws attention to unequal media coverage; pages 99 and 101

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question selective ideas of women's freedom and sexual violence; page 106 exposes the circular logic of male protection; page 107 makes political silence visible; page 109 looks at how misinformation keeps circulating; page 111 points to selective empathy and online misogyny; and page 116 shows how advertising gives gendered meanings to the body. These comics do more than illustrate political ideas—they make an argument through images.

In the end, “touching grass” is not a command to abandon digital media. It is a way of turning back toward the world with more care and purpose: from compulsive witnessing to embodied attention, from isolated reactions to solidarity, and from consuming political images to taking part in material struggles. Taneja offers neither blind faith in technology nor a wish to return to a pre-digital past. She asks for a more thoughtful connection between digital life and the world we share.

The movement is not from the screen to silence, but from the screen back to the world: from spectacle to perception, from feeling to reflection, and from reflection to solidarity and action. The challenge is not just to know more, but to let what we know move us beyond the feed.

Appendix A: Additional Visual Evidence

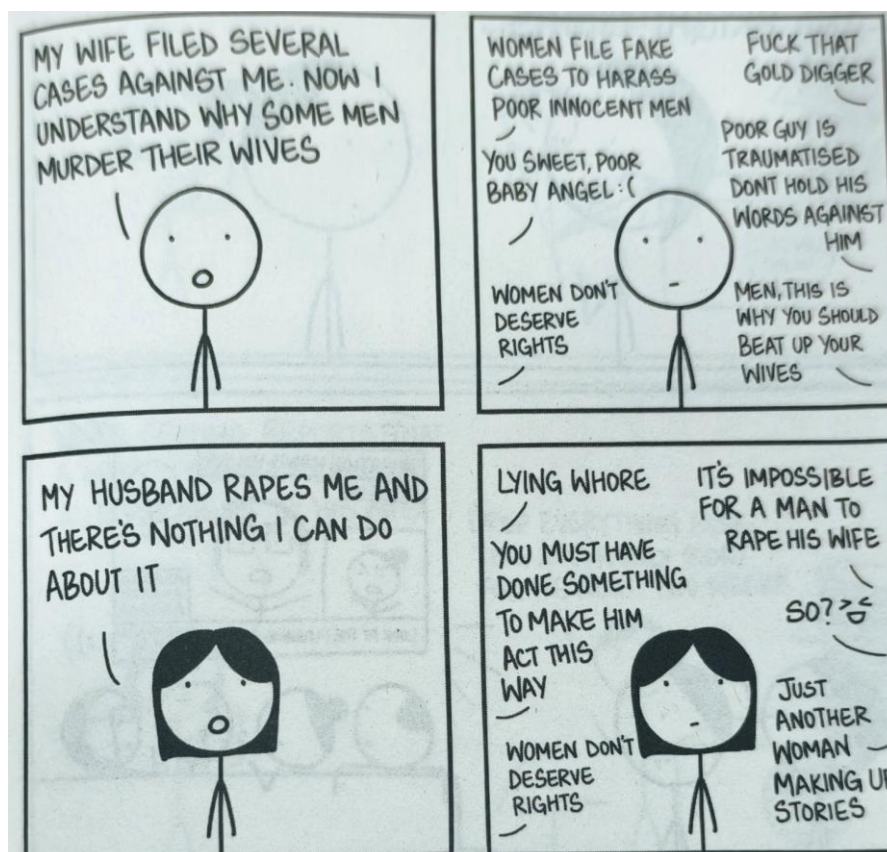


Figure 9. Rachita Taneja, *Touching Grass*, p. 13. Photograph supplied by the researcher. Additional visual evidence concerning gendered victim-blaming and unequal standards.

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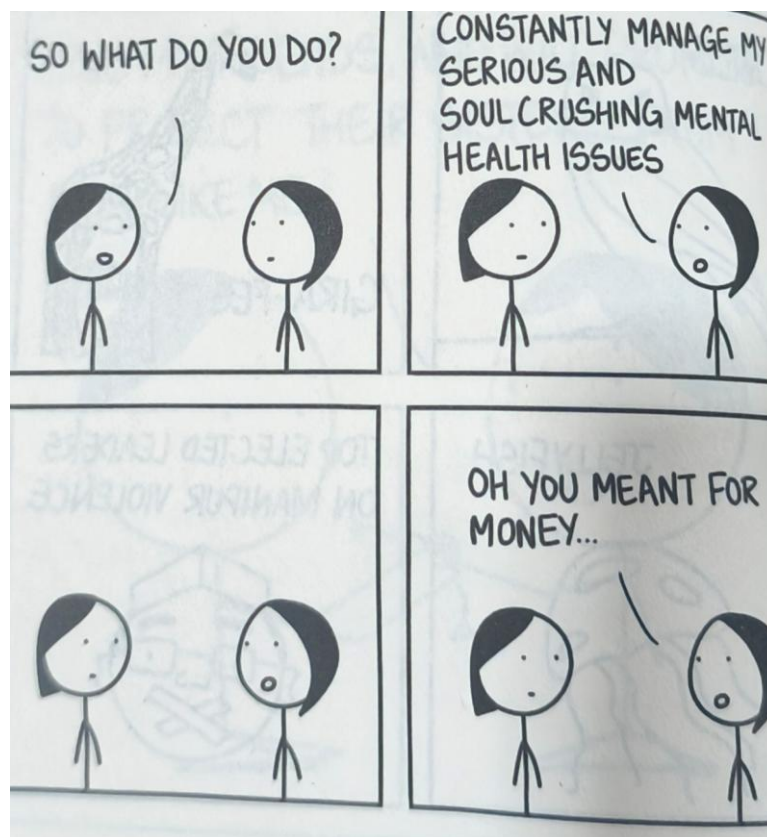


Figure 10. Rachita Taneja, *Touching Grass*, p. 108. Photograph supplied by the researcher. Additional visual evidence concerning the commodification/monetisation of mental-health discourse.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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