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THE FUTURE OF MUSEOLOGICAL DISPLAY

Chitra Ganesh's Speculative Encounters

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At the heart of Chitra Ganesh's artistic practice is the desire to tell stories and intervene in the storytelling tradition.[1] Her projects *Eyes of Time* at the Brooklyn Museum (2014–2015) and *The Scorpion Gesture* at the Rubin Museum (2018–2019) stage rich encounters between permanent collections and temporary insertions – her site-specific mural and digital animations, respectively. She mines museums for objects representing the feminine divine that have rarely, if ever, been displayed. In the process, she targets not only colonial residues in collections, but also objects related to both white *and* brown imaginaries that forcibly relegate the feminine to the margins. She then juxtaposes these objects with the future-oriented, speculative, and/or science fiction aesthetic of her contemporary artworks, which are already racialized and gendered. While bringing into sharper focus the fictions reified by museological displays, Ganesh imagines a fiercely feminist future for museological display. In *Eyes of Time*, Ganesh's site-specific mural of the consortless goddess, Kali, towers over a vitrine of artworks. The encased objects highlight instances – across time and geography – of feminine power, ranging from sculptures of the ancient Egyptian goddess Sekhmet to Louise Bourgeois's iconic *Eye* drawings. Likewise, *The Scorpion Gesture* consists of digital animations of mythological figures using a science fiction aesthetic. Ganesh's animations are not exhibited in their own dedicated space but immersed in the permanent collection of objects depicting Asian mythology. Thus, by enacting a dynamic aesthetic of encounter that invites viewers to imagine alternative narratives for the feminine form within permanent collections, Ganesh incites another future for museological display.[2]

Queer possibility in speculative narratives

As a utopian call, queer of color theorist and performance studies scholar José Muñoz Esteban engenders a theory of futurity that "see[s] and feel[s] beyond the quagmire of the present" (2009, 1). In *Cruising Utopia* (2009), he defines cruising as a queer method of encounter that sidelines the regulatory practice of accumulating and recording knowledge in favor of more ephemeral connections. Muñoz's radical aesthetic develops a blueprint for cruising beyond the inadequate present toward the horizon of that which is not-yet-here/there. Several other

scholars also address how speculative aesthetics center historically marginalized voices as minoritarian practice (Muñoz 1999).[3] Compellingly, Alexis Lothian remarks in *Old Futures* (2018) that "queer theory is itself often a practice of speculative fiction" (18). Afrofuturist, ethnofuturist, queer, and feminist narratives arguably make up the most interesting interventions within the speculative tradition, given how the power of imagination is boldest "for those rendered futureless by global white supremacy" and hetero-patriarchy – those "left out of dominant imaginaries" (Lothian 2018, 26, 2).

I am especially attracted to the way Lothian examines the cross-fertilization of queer theories of time with speculative cultural production. To speculate is to imagine "things otherwise than they are, and [to create] stories from that impulse" (Lothian 2018, 15). Even more, "the act of speculation, is to play, to invent, to engage in the practice of imagining" since "imaginative worlds … catch glimpses of utopian possibility beyond our present paradigm" (Brown and Lothian 2012).

Muñoz's queer time and Lothian's observations about queer possibility offer a useful framework for Ganesh's museological interventions. By placing the remixed permanent collection in copresence with a speculative aesthetic, new narrative possibility emerges. Her use of a speculative aesthetic works *with* the permanent collection; rather than completely dismiss the past, she reworks conventional representations of transnational feminine forms across time, critically engaging with what remains in collections. Ganesh deploys the speculative as a decolonizing[4] tool in museological display, offering alternative futures unavailable within normative or dominant periodization that regulates museums. In disidentifying with the museum – by engaging paradoxically with longstanding collections and in imagining other modes of display – the opportunity emerges to tell another kind of story about the feminine form.

Eyes of Time (2014–2015)

Ganesh's speculative strategies in *Eyes of Time* are best understood in the context of her earlier work. After receiving her MFA from Columbia University in 2002, Ganesh completed a residency at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, during which she made *Tales of Amnesia*. This artwork zine comprises pages, frames, images, and text wholly unrelated to one another. They do not adhere to a linear narrative, yet these multiple, dissonant images come together to foreground feminine sexuality and power. Most notably, the zine uses the Indian comic book *Amar Chitra Katha* (*ACK*) as a point of departure; this series about Hindu myth and Indian history has been published since 1967, with over one thousand issues to date. Often told through a Hindu nationalist lens, *ACK*'s narratives also frame heteronormative tales about brave acts and dutiful characters. Ganesh grew up reading the series; in rereading *ACK* as an adult, she encounters previously overlooked dissonance. Rather than feeding her nostalgia, that quintessential diasporic longing for false origins, she reworks and undermines the feeling to explore storytelling in unprecedented ways.

Given the series' wide recognition across South Asia and its diaspora, *ACK* functions as a familiar point of entry for Ganesh and her audience. Yet *Tales of Amnesia* creates new mythographies that undermine the source material's narrative and iconographic logic. This is especially true for representations of women. The zine's cover page, loosely based on *ACK*'s cover for *Tales of Hanuman* (1971), features a centrally located character suspended between land and sky. In both *ACK* and *Tales of Amnesia*, the heroic main figure appears on the brink of an epic

adventure; however, Ganesh replaces the broadly built, muscular, adult monkey-god of *ACK* with a monkey-*girl*. Whereas the flame-ridden landscape and Hanuman's burning tail are iconographic to those familiar with Hindu myth, *Tales of Amnesia*'s landscape intentionally avoids such recognizable references. Furthermore, while Hanuman is a devoted disciple to Lord Rama called to save the latter's beloved consort Sita from the villainous Rawan, Ganesh's monkey-girl is not constrained by divine mission or mythic narrative sequence that leaves no room for *sheroes* – only victims in need of rescue. Thus, even as Ganesh repudiates the ideological underpinnings of myth and recovers gendered tropes from official canons, she creates her own iconography, untethered to conventional modes of narration.

The text accompanying *Tales of Amnesia*'s cover supports this claim: "How to stage the story? Her name was Amnesia, and it fit her like a brand new boxing glove." Ganesh pointedly names her protagonist Amnesia and sets her up for a battle: the challenge of constructing narrative. In this particular naming, though, Ganesh arguably mobilizes a methodology of memory loss or even forgetting as an alternative way of knowledge-making. Here I draw on *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011), in which Jack Halberstam argues against memorialization and advocates instead for erasure. He explains how "*forgetting* [can be] a way of resisting heroic and grand logics of recall and unleashes new forms of memory" (15). As such, he develops a method of unknowing as "relate[d] to ... lost genealogies [and] to erasure [versus] inscription" (15). Ganesh's Amnesia embodies such alternative modes of (un)knowing that undercut the authority and confines of teleological historical inquiry. *Tales of Amnesia* asks questions without seeking answers and stages a story without any allegiance to narrative logic as the crux of its dissonance.[5]

Like the zine, *Eyes of Time* reimagines the possibilities of narrative logic through feminine form in myth, but this time, Ganesh restages the story of museological display itself. A major aspect of the project comprised exhibiting objects Ganesh selected from the permanent collection alongside her own textual descriptions. Located in the Herstory Gallery of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, Ganesh displayed objects from ethnographic collections of the past together with objects classified as contemporary art within a single glass vitrine – an uncommon and provocative move for an art museum. For example, she placed two bronze sculptures together: an Egyptian statue of a seated Sekhmet from 664–332 BCE and a standing seventeenth-century Kali from Kerala, India. These stood just outside the glass vitrine in which she exhibited *The Goddess Matangi*, a Rajasthani watercolor from 1760; *Untitled* (1991; from the set *Banshee Pearls*), a lithograph by Kiki Smith; *Eyes* (1996), a drypoint print by Louise Bourgeois; *Relate to your Heritage* (1971), a screen print by Barbara Jones-Hogu; and *Between Vertical and Horizon – Descended Triangle No. 6* (1987), a color aquatint by Japanese artist Shōichi Ida. *Tales of Amnesia* (the museum acquired a copy) also features in Ganesh's vitrine; by placing her zine in the vitrine, Ganesh flags the new narrative openings inherent to *Eyes of Time*.

Reflecting Muñoz's method of queer encounter and futurity, Ganesh's vitrine "cruises" through the permanent collection and makes unexpected connections across visions of feminine fierceness from multiple mythological and mythologizing traditions. Uncommitted to any particular logic, Ganesh's cruising disrupts conventional narratives that exist around objects, thereby altering their relations to one another. The objects in the vitrine become "less like [them]selves, and more like each other" (Muñoz 2009, 66). For instance, by placing Sekhmet and Kali together, Ganesh highlights their associations with fire, healing, and menstruation; both refer to blood, death, destruction, and protection as feminine forms of power. Sekhmet and Kali are also often depicted with untameable felines such as tigers and lions – connecting them to the iconography of Matangi. At the center of the Rajasthani watercolor, the many-armed Durga is depicted riding her tiger.

However, her lesser-known incarnation, the even fiercer Matangi, appears in the upper left corner holding a severed head and sword.[6] In the label, Ganesh draws attention to Matangi as a marginal figure in the pantheon who is "worshipped among lower castes."

Ganesh's vitrine also includes a drawing by Bourgeois of fleshy and bulging eyes whose gawking stare parodies the male gaze. In the accompanying text, Ganesh again makes her own connections: "The third eye, as seen on Kali, has often been associated with supernatural powers in Indian mythology and continues to appear in contemporary imagery. The act of gazing into numerous eyes might also recall the practice of *darshan*."[7] Although her reading does not necessarily align with Bourgeois's intentions for the piece, Ganesh's archival cruising generates fleeting affinities between odd bedfellows, no longer strangers to one another. In this way, Ganesh's work demonstrates how the fierce feminine divine form transcends cultural borders.

In Shōichi Ida's work on paper, Ganesh sees an abstract form that resonates with Kali iconography. Vedic representations of the goddess manifest in pure geometric abstraction, or a yantra,[8] which consists of a red and black diagram of interlocking triangles, lotus petals, and other geometric forms. The Kali yantra symbolizes *shakti* or female divine energy. Although Ida meditates on modernist principles that disavow referentiality and representation, Ganesh points to new representational possibilities by bringing together disparate epistemologies that center abstraction. And finally, Ganesh includes the work of AfriCOBRA founding member Barbara Jones-Hogu and the brightly colored patterned screen sheet, *Relate to Your Heritage* (1971), which mythologizes black historical figures. In the label, Ganesh states that "both this work and *Eyes of Time* point to the importance of the feminine form in linking a collective mythic history to present-day autonomy and power." Hogu's bright and kitschy psychedelic poster art draws her audience in as an easily recognizable and pervasive aesthetic; with this investment in the popular, the artist's political message of black self-determination is rendered more legible to a broader audience.[9]

Ganesh is able to envision such a vitrine and generate unforeseen connections because of the Brooklyn Museum's encyclopedic collection. Nevertheless, the museum operates at least partially, like so many others of its kind, as "an ideological institution that produces and sustains political and social formations" (González 2008, 66). While it was one of the first institutions in the country to collect non-Western objects for their aesthetic (versus ethnographic) value, its archive is organized around region-specific genealogies grounded in colonial formations of geography and history. As a result, the unexpected but rich connections across cultures and time periods seen in Ganesh's vitrine are uncommon. As Ganesh "cruises the field of the visual" (Muñoz 2009, 18), her vitrine's narrative steps out of time – the oppressive linearity of colonial time, more specifically. In an unprecedented fashion, she calls upon the past and makes something of it. Ganesh engenders not-so-strange affinities – each a noncommittal connection across time and space that, regardless of how cursory, "promises a future" with a logic different than the past (Muñoz 2009, 6). Such "anticipatory illumination" makes it almost impossible to return to the conventional logics structuring museological display – almost (18). As is often the case with temporary displays, the immediate impact is fleeting – but, as I elaborate in the coda to this chapter, how such interventions leave a mark is an open question.

An equally temporary component of *Eyes of Time* is the large mural that accompanies Ganesh's vitrine in the Herstory Gallery. Ganesh takes Kali, the Hindu goddess of time, destruction, and renewal as the basis for her huge, mixed-media mural and reimagines goddess iconography through a speculative aesthetic that is racialized and feminine in form.[10] Distinct from anthropological accounts of the deity, the mural draws on the abstracted, philosophical idea of Kali that

describes her as an embodiment of cyclic time. As such, Ganesh's vision of the goddess is not singular. Bypassing the conventional markers of time (present, past, and future), Ganesh's mural gives form to three temporalities in an alternate relationship to one another: the present, mythological time, and a future-oriented embodiment of time.[11]

First, viewers see the figure representing the present, which Saisha Grayson, the project's curator, describes as a self-portrait. This painted outline of the artist's face depicts her holding a black, jagged patch over her eye, obscuring it from view. Ganesh adds glitter to the black paint, creating a scintillating and immaterial effect. The twinkling patch resembles a galactic black portal, implying that the artist's perspective is a meta-gaze. One eye is open, grounded in the here and now; the other eye is obscured, yet has the capacity to see into (and thus the potential to be copresent with) parallel universes that are still unknown. Next, Ganesh presents mythological time. At the center of the mural, she boldly reimagines versions of Kali recognizable to worshippers throughout Asia and the Asian diaspora. Kali's unkempt hair, bright blue skin, and skirt of arms recall a long tradition of religious iconography. However, by replacing Kali's iconic head[12] with Grand Central Station's golden clock and by painting her triple-breasted and with three legs, Ganesh renders the goddess unfamiliar. Ganesh's Kali is newly mutated and technologized. Finally, on the opposite end of the mural, Ganesh offers future-oriented time, combining the human and technological in a face profile, which is partly three-dimensional through the use of custom gears resembling the internal structure of a mechanical clock.

The location of the mural deepens its connection to and interrogation of traditional iconography. According to Grayson, exhibitions in the Herstory Gallery are mandated to dialogue with Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* (1979), installed permanently in an adjacent space. The famous second-wave feminist artwork is comprised of a triangular table with thirty-nine porcelain plates (thirteen along each equilateral side) sculpted into stylized vaginas. At each setting is the name of a historical or mythological female figure, such as Ishtar, Artemisia Gentileschi, Virginia Woolf, and of course Kali. Yet, upon contemplating the latter, Ganesh wondered: if the fierce goddess had, in fact, attended Chicago's hypothetical dinner party, would Kali have eaten with the knife and fork provided? Would she fold to the pressures of assimilating and adopt a culturally specific way of eating, or would she insist on using her hands? Extending this logic, *what* would she eat? These questions illuminate how *The Dinner Party* is limited by the Eurocentrism of second-wave consciousness (Ganesh and Grayson 2015). Although *The Dinner Party* aims to reclaim the past in order to build another kind of future, the artwork restricts most of its non-Western characters to prehistory by understanding mythological time as linear.

And so, while the exhibitors in the gallery are mandated to dialogue with Chicago's work, Ganesh does so only minimally, partly because of her interest in bringing a feminist gaze to more than one work in the permanent collection. Placing the mural in direct proximity with the mythological objects in the vitrine, Ganesh deepens the encounter between her work and the permanent collection. In Svati Shah's words, Ganesh asks her audience to "consider the histories of myth within the figures that populate her images, as well as, the histories of mythmaking that structure the narrative of the canon itself. If the story of the art historical record is that of categorizing the canon into the knowable forms and places of the 'universal' Western canon, under which emergent categories such as feminist, queer, or Asian art are produced and assimilated, then Ganesh's work abstracts this narrative, pulls it apart, and looks intently for what remains" (2011, 126).

As such, myth is not only a source of content for Ganesh; it also comprises a mode of critique. She ultimately proposes a radical archival rethinking by ushering in a vision for display not yet on the horizon.

The Scorpion Gesture (2018)

In a more recent museum project, Ganesh also interacts with a permanent collection through a speculative aesthetic. In *The Scorpion Gesture* at the Rubin Museum (February 23, 2018–January 9, 2019), she engages with mythological objects representing the feminine, but this time, her temporary interventions take on digital form. *Silhouette in the Graveyard*,[13] one of her new animations, opens theatrically with a set of dancing curtains made of skeleton bones that quickly lift to reveal an underlying drama. As the work progresses, more skeletons fall, this time toward a hellish scene where waves, red like blood, carry ghoulish monsters, scavenging beasts, and tortured bodies to places unknown. Out of the sparkling, galactic skies emerges a triple-breasted pink silhouette. First, she appears cross-legged with her faceless head in flames, and as she slowly stands, the camera zooms into her torso, which projects apocalyptic scenes of the present. Crowds protesting the occupation of Palestine and other conflicts in the Middle East that have been funded by the West flash before the viewer's eyes. Also projected are images of the Women's March, migrants jumping ship, Rohingya women and children fleeing Buddhist supremacy, and posters stating *Black Lives Matter* and *I Can't Breathe*. All are superimposed on climate disasters such as forest fires, volcanic ash, melting icebergs, and torrential rain. At the close of the animation, the skeletons have the last dance as a grim line of skulls whirls in a creepy and cryptic race to the bottom.

As with her other interventions, these animations are not displayed in a dedicated gallery. They are situated among works on permanent display, which mostly consist of manuscripts, paintings, sculptures, and other objects up to fifteen hundred years old depicting Hindu and Buddhist mythology. However, Ganesh's speculative aesthetic does not simply exist alongside the Rubin's mythological representations. It encounters them, engendering dialogue across temporalities and through fantastical forms. *Silhouette in the Graveyard*'s display is particularly distinct; projected on the wall behind a late-eighteenth to early-nineteenth-century Mongolian sculpture, this animation appears as a looming shadow over the permanent collection. In an accompanying text regarding the sculpture, Ganesh remarks, "Maitreya is the Future Buddha, whose prophetic arrival is said to usher in a new age at a time when the terrestrial world has lost its way. The endless stream of images of political, social, and ecological upheaval that we are bombarded with daily seemed in uncanny alignment with the apocalyptic moment associated with Maitreya." As in *Eyes of Time*, Ganesh's intentional juxtapositions show how aesthetic objects from different eras reflect new meaning onto one another. Here, she pulls from the past, not only examples of feminine form, but of prophetic fierceness as well, as a way to speak to the precarity of our time. She seeks future-oriented models and perhaps also another kind of present.

Ganesh's other formal experiments with animation in *The Scorpion Gesture* reveal her methodologies for depicting temporal and spatial dislocations. Working with an animation studio, she enhances her drawings using multiple camera angles, zooming, and other technical manipulations.[14] For example, *The Messenger*[15] opens with a mandala that arguably functions as a point of entry for the entire show. Many other objects in the Rubin Museum tell complex stories with multiple levels of imagery; however, these layers are rendered on a single pictorial plane. Through animation technology, Ganesh translates the visual depth and dimensionality inherent to the objects in the permanent collection, allowing the viewer to

enter her image's time-space in visceral ways. Her aesthetic methodology is akin to moving through a wormhole – that quintessential speculative trope.

Overarching preoccupations in *The Messenger*, such as its layered imagery, cyclic narrative structure, and bodily transformations, recur throughout the animation series. Consistent with Ganesh's other digital animations in the show, *Rainbow Body, Adventures of the White Beryl*, and *Metropolis*[16] respond directly to nearby objects from the permanent collection. In the show's press material, the artist notes how "*Rainbow Body* takes inspiration from the cave on the right in the painting of the bodhisattva Maitreya, located adjacent to the animation. The cave structure is elaborated upon and extensively built out, introducing an interior depth where the ultimate transformation happens."[17] Likewise, *Adventures of the White Beryl* features a shapeshifting protagonist as a way to speak to the various stages of life described in a multi-leaf manuscript in a neighboring gallery. As the character can never be stopped, pinned down, or defined, the constant transformations bring to the surface a speculative potential inherent to the original manuscript. This particular work also indexes various media, including early stop-motion animation, vintage comics, and early video game aesthetics, thereby gesturing toward an alternative history of art.

Metropolis is likely Ganesh's most ambitious production within this series, referencing not only the nearby painting *Life Scenes of Master Shantarakshita* and other bronze sculptures of the prophet Maitreya, but also the Soviet silent film, *Aelita, Queen of Mars* (1924), and Fritz Lang's 1927 science fiction film *Metropolis*. By appropriating these predecessors, Ganesh envisions science fiction as inextricably linked to myth. Throughout Ganesh's work, scenes of imbricated environments and cityscapes recall the dystopic worlds of Octavia Butler and Manjula Padmanabhan, characterized by class divides, destructive imperial ambitions, and inequitable access to resources.

Finally, connecting back to *Silhouette in the Graveyard, Rainbow Body* and *Metropolis* embody a prophetic vision. In *Rainbow Body*, viewers are transported through a dreamlike journey to witness the tantric and transcendent union of Padmasambhava (the Second Buddha) with Mandarava, a *dakini*.[18] In contrast, *Metropolis* culminates with the dramatic resurrection of Ganesh's speculative version of Maitreya. Why does Ganesh exhume these particular mythological narratives that center upon the feminine form and reimagine them through an ethnofuturist aesthetic? Myth and science fiction, or the speculative more broadly, offer powerful metaphors for the human condition, asking what makes us distinctly human (and not spirit, demon, animal, or robot, for example). Science fiction also rubs against the teleological nature of history, even as it explores what it means to be embodied in the high-tech world of the present and potential future. As a fantastical device, science fiction exposes "real-world" sociopolitical aspirations and fears that instigate the desire for alternate worlds. When disarmed of its imperialist visions, science fiction has the capacity to mobilize its fabulatory heuristic to imagine a world otherwise, making reimagining a form of social critique and critical realism. Centering speculative feminine fierceness, Ganesh's mythographies highlight the urgency of these stakes for survival – stakes in much sharper focus now, given the rise of global fascism, right-wing populism, and religious fundamentalism.

Coda: Notes on ephemera

From *Tales of Amnesia* onwards, new possibilities for narratives that center on fierce brown femmes form the heart of Ganesh's art. Through *Eyes of Time* and *The Scorpion Gesture*, she targets museological display. Her practice reveals the restrictive architecture of storytelling while reformatting it in a disidentificatory way. If anything, she is committed to a contingent

logic of narratives: hers have no beginning or end, just long, extenuated middles. And yet, the immediate impact of *Eyes of Time* and *The Scorpion Gesture* is neither long nor enduring. Instead, these two museum projects are fleeting, temporary interventions within permanent structures. This ephemeral materiality of *Eyes of Time* and *The Scorpion Gesture* is integral to the way each project dares to imagine otherwise. If even only for a moment, they envision another future for the feminine form in museological display. Drawing on a long tradition of feminist and queer thought and tactics, Muñoz makes a case for ephemera as queer evidence, which may not count as everlasting, but lives "as an ephemeral happening that we remember" (2009, 70). By now, Ganesh's site-specific mural has been painted over, and the digital projections have faded from view – but their traces remain, if not in the archives of either museum, then in visitors' memories. Perhaps these traces were meant to slip away; if left to the institutions, such interventions would be appropriated and come to reify difference yet again. Instead, these ephemeral projects disrupt institutional permanence and as such function as institutional critique. Ganesh's tactic of mobilizing ephemera enacts a foundational rubric within women of color thought: rejecting the master's tools and refusing to rebuild the master's house. Ironically though, the museums themselves invited Ganesh to create her temporary interventions, begging the question, why? As gestures, might *Eyes of Time* and *The Scorpion Gesture* open institutions to a capaciousness they desire but cannot sustain? As gesture, Ganesh's projects linger, but as speculation they have yet to come.

Notes

1 A shorter version of parts of this chapter previously appeared online. "A Prophetic Vision that Dares to Imagine Otherwise" was uploaded to the Indian arts site *Critical Collective* on June 19, 2018 (http s://www.chitraganesh.com/portfolio/critical-collective-natasha-bissonauth-summer-2018/). I am grateful for permission to include some of the material in this book.

2 In this chapter, I intentionally use the term *feminine form* as opposed to, say, *feminist representation*. I am working with a vast, global set of objects, and the latter term would flatten multiple feminist epistemologies across time and space. Since I analyze fantastical figures, as opposed to live, human ones, I also prefer not use a biological term, such as *female*. Most of all, Ganesh uses a science fiction aesthetic to reimagine feminine power. In consequence, I am invested in the shifting notion of the feminine as a politics of form, which I mobilize in a feminist critique of objects on display in museums.

3 There is a vast body of critical writing on race, gender, and science fiction, including but not limited to Suvin (1979); Haraway (1991); Dery (1993); Schueller (2005); Jackson and Moody-Freeman (2011); Lavender (2011, 2014, 2017).

4 The decolonial potential of speculative imagination is in some ways ironic given the roots of science fiction. The nineteenth-century period of the most fervid European imperialist expansion coincides exactly with the rise of the genre. Since its early days as pulp literature, science fiction has alternately romanticized and demonized the imaginary Orient, while its dreams of space travel may be seen as a continuation of the settler imaginary. The opportunity to dissect how science fiction's narratives of otherness, otherworldiness, and alienation reflect systemic social injustices tied to histories of empire has often been missed. Yet black, brown, queer of color, and women of color fiction writers and theorists have reimagined the genre. Tapping into the inherent emancipatory potential of speculative imagination, they continue to expand the genre (Kilgore 2003; Rieder 2008).

5 If the nationalist fantasy of *ACK* is itself a kind of historical amnesia, then *Tales of Amnesia* calls out this privilege of "forgetting" to know otherwise – the willful amnesia of Hindu fundamentalist retellings of history and myth.

6 Both versions of the goddess, Durga and Matangi, represent some of the fiercer forms of feminine divinity. Her multiple representation in a single work of art points to the goddess's inherent plurality, another feature which renders her terrifying.

7 *Darshan* refers to seeing and being seen by the deity and its representations.

8 Yantras are spiritual visualization instruments specific to the philosophy and ritual of Tantra, an esoteric sect of Hinduism and Buddhism.

9 For images of objects in Ganesh's vitrine, visit https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/ chitra_ganesh/. For a discussion of another use of a vitrine and disparate objects to queer a museum, see chapter 6 in this book.

10 Afrofuturist cultural productions take the lead in carving out a space within the speculative tradition where main characters and plotlines empower gendered and racialized protagonists and narratives (Jackson and Moody-Freeman 2011; Womack 2013). For example, the alien spaceship is often aligned with concepts of mother Africa (Eglash 2002). Significantly, the first known example of South Asian science fiction is Hossain's *Sultana's Dream* (1905), a feminist story set in a world without men.

11 Readers may wish to consult the online version of this artwork: http://www.chitraganesh.com/p ortfolio/eyes-of-time/.

12 In religious iconography, Kali's tongue hangs from her mouth. She is also often shown in a state of ecstasy while defeating her most recent demonic enemy; a garland of severed heads illustrates the fate of her opponents.

13 This work may be seen at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHnMPTIkwLY.

14 For an earlier example of Ganesh using the moving image and digital animation, see *Rabbithole* (2010).

15 This work may be seen at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-AqM7zjN-G8.

16 *Rainbow Body* can be seen at https://vimeo.com/267294128; *Adventures of the White Beryl* at https:// vimeo.com/267295370; and *Metropolis* at https://vimeo.com/267296079.

17 Press material from *The Scorpion Gesture*, the Rubin Museum, 2018.

18 In Buddhist philosophy, a *dakini* is an archetype of spiritual enlightenment in feminine form.

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